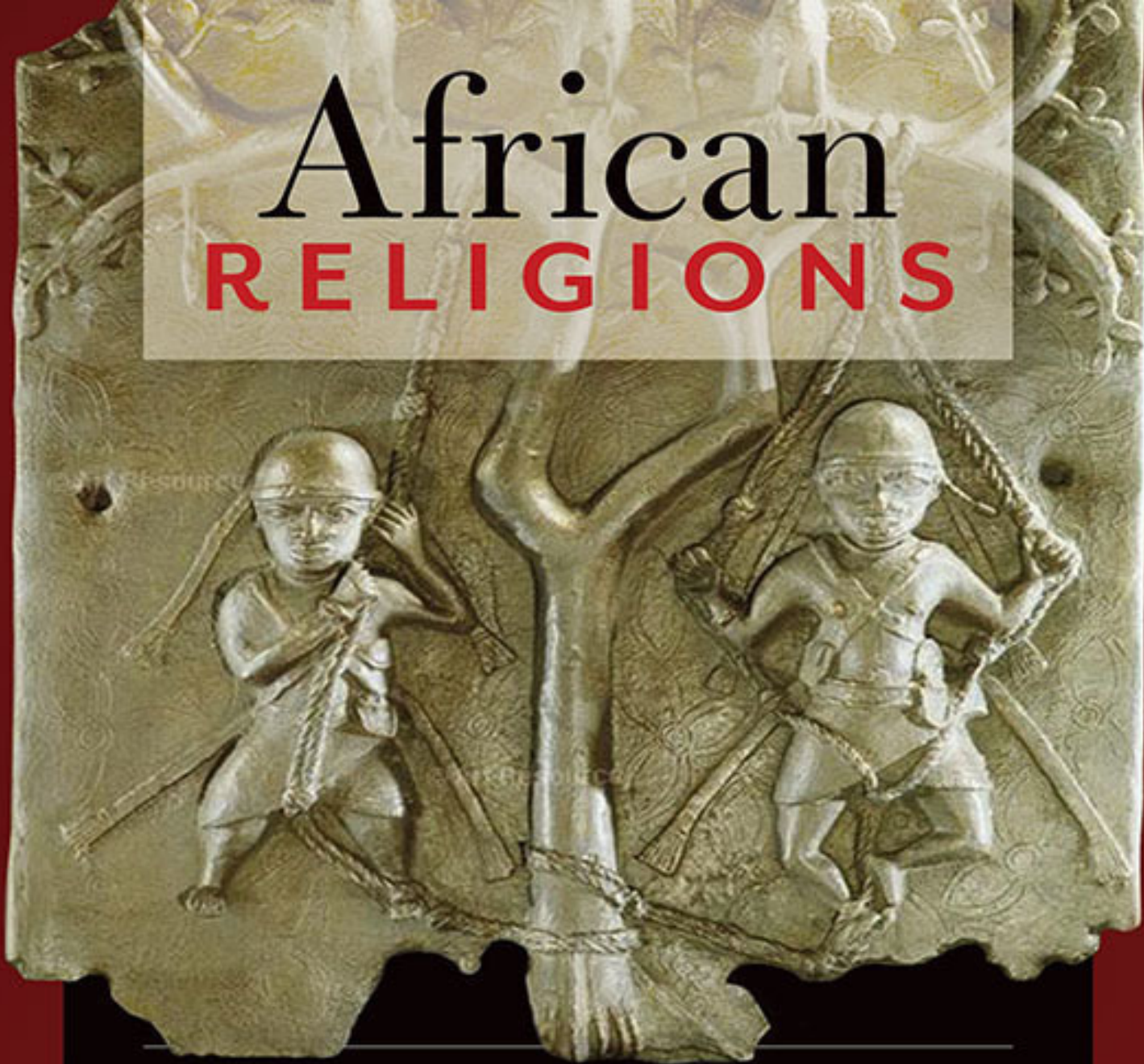


African RELIGIONS



Beliefs and Practices through History



DOUGLAS THOMAS AND TEMILOLA ALANAMU, EDITORS

African Religions

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Beliefs and Practices through
History

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EDITORS



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Allen, Richard
Baba, Ahmed
Bamba Mbacké, Cheikh Ahmadou
Beatriz Kimpa Vita, Dona
Bello, Muhammad
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Preface

Africa has a long and rich religious history. Interesting and significant in its own right, the African continent has also played an important role in shaping world history and continues to influence the rest of the world today. Religion has been a powerful force in defining the varied cultures and civilizations of Africa, and thus knowledge of African religions is fundamental to an understanding of Africa and, in turn, the larger world. Written for high school students, undergraduates, and general readers, this reference work surveys the complex and diverse landscape of African religions across times and societies. In doing so, it helps address the need for a nonspecialist reference on the religious traditions of Africa.

The volume begins with an alphabetical list of the reference entries included in the work. This list helps users quickly gain a sense of the breadth of the volume and identify subjects of interest. The alphabetical list of entries is followed by a topical list of entries. This list groups the entries in a host of categories, such as Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and other religious traditions; religious leaders and scholars; gods and goddesses; and areas such as Central, East, North, South, and West Africa. By perusing this list, users can locate related entries on broad topics of interest to them.

These finding aids are followed by an introductory essay on the religious traditions of Africa. This essay underscores the difficulty of defining religion, the diversity of African religions, and the influence of Eurocentrism and colonialism upon our ideas about the continent and its faiths. It also gives a succinct overview of indigenous African beliefs and some of the major Western faiths that figure in African societies.

The introductory essay is followed by the heart of the book, roughly 170 alphabetically arranged reference entries on topics related to African religions, including people, groups, deities, particular religions, places, and so forth. While the focus is on religions of the African continent, the book also explores the religions of the African Diaspora as a continuation of the African spiritual tradition. As is appropriate for a reference work, the entries provide objective foundational information and strive to be synthetic rather than argumentative. Here, the reader will find entries on such topics as the Coptic Orthodox Church, Allah, Sufism, Anansi, Dinka beliefs, Santeria, Vodun/Voodoo, John Mbiti, Desmond Tutu, Rastafarianism, and many others. To ensure the authority of the volume, the entries are written by a range of expert contributors from around the world. These contributors have backgrounds in history, anthropology, theology, sociology, and other disciplines, and some are among the leading scholars in their fields. Each entry cites works for further reading, so that the user can explore a topic in greater detail through other resources.

The volume closes with a selected, general bibliography of print and electronic resources suitable for student research, profiles of the editors and contributors, and an extensive index.

Introduction

African religion is an anachronism. The concept of a religion separate and apart from another realm of existence known as the secular is a relatively recent invention of the post-Enlightenment Western European mind. This concept of a religion as something that a person can take on and practice at will and at various times of the day or periods in their lifetime and then put aside is foreign to African cosmology.

Speaking of anything as African is also difficult and loaded. As the scholar Benjamin Ray states, the term “African” has been traditionally used to “refer to the darker skinned, black peoples who live south of the Sahara desert and have been assumed to possess the ‘same’ culture” (Ray 2000). Africa and the concept of being African is another invention of the European and American mind. Africa is the second largest continent in the world. To label anything as African is to assume some level of uniformity. Uniformity among various African ethnicities is more imaginary than real. Are there similarities? Yes. But uniformity? No.

Why then do we engage these terms “African” and “Religion” in our title? Coming to a different way of being is an arduous task when one has only his/her own way of being with which to perceive the world. We live in the West and there is religion and the secular. We live in the West where very little about Africa is taught in the schools. Though the trend is changing, for the more than two centuries of existence of the United States of America, Africa as a subject has been and remains largely absent from all levels of school curricula.

The case in Europe is worse because for centuries, most of the information taught on Africa has been erroneous and has served the

purposes of a White Supremacist ideology. For example, many European countries teach their schoolchildren that European conquest and colonization of Africa was positive. This is not just a matter of opinion. Traditional kingdoms, societies, and cultures were overrun, destroyed, and at best irreversibly impaired. The end result was artificially drawn lines on a map creating countries with no unifying ethos or legitimacy. The introduction of modern technologies and medicines cannot make the wholesale destruction of an entire continent and her peoples worthwhile. Yet European schools teach this narrative as factual.

In spite of the European conquest and colonization of Africa, the mass marketing of Western ideas and culture to Africa, and the Transatlantic slave trade that brought African people to the Western Hemisphere, the average Westerner is not familiar with the colonial-concocted countries of Zimbabwe or Mali. Beginning a discussion by talking about the Shona or the Malinke would be an even bigger hurdle for the average person in the West. In America particularly, we tend to live in a post-tribal society where race is the primary identifying factor. In Europe they imagine themselves to not be tribal, though all modern-day European countries originated from a tribal identity. Modern English evolved from the tribal language of the Angles. The Angles and the Saxons are Germanic ancestral tribes of the English people. The Franks came and conquered Gaul, which is present-day France where people speak French.

In much the same way, precolonial African nations originated from tribal identities. Usually one tribe, like the Angles, would overpower other tribes and exact tribute from them. This happened with the Malinke tribe when they built the Mali Empire. The Europeans, however, convinced of their possession of an inherent superiority, saw Africans still in the tribal “stage” of history as being backward. Thinking that their conquest and colonization of Africa would ameliorate the situation, the Europeans came and caused destruction that still has not been repaired.

The end result is that Americans are in the dark about Africa. Westerners of every nationality tend to have either no knowledge of Africa or, worse, misinformation about the continent. Ideas are the

most potent factors in human history. As such, in the face of all the information available at our fingertips, old ideas persist. The ideas that Africans are all one persists. The idea that people with darker skin are inferior to those with lighter skin persists. The idea that certain languages are better than others persists.

In an attempt to banish these misguided ideas and the misinformation that fuels them, we present this modest attempt at a compendium of knowledge on the religious realities of peoples of Africa and African descent. A work of this type cannot possibly tackle the entirety of religious traditions on the second largest continent in the world. The diversity of ethnicities, languages, and traditions renders any work on African cultures or religion a true impossibility. We have, however, managed to give the explanations of religious traditions indigenous to Africa as well as indigenous African expressions of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism.

Indigenous African Religions

Indigenous African religions are the religious traditions and belief systems that the various peoples of the African continent practiced before colonization. In an article in *Christianity Today* entitled “Looking for Ancient African Religion? Try Christianity,” pastor and scholar Ernest C. Grant II writes that the tenets of Christianity are the fulfillment of the spiritual tenets of the various traditional African religious belief systems (Grant 2018). In his classic work *Precolonial Africa*, Cheikh Anta Diop says Islam integrates well within the African cultural context because of the spiritual side of Islam that doesn’t exist in Christianity. The adherents of African traditional belief systems, however, do not see their beliefs as capable of accommodating these other religious traditions.

Traditional African religious belief systems all share a core affirmation that each individual human is made of spirit and flesh. Flesh is temporary. Spirit is eternal. Built upon the foundation of these tenets are a plethora of different gods, legends, prophets, rituals, and cultures. Another aspect that most of the belief systems in Africa have is a creator god and a creation story. Sometimes the creator

deity is a goddess. Sometimes creation is the effort of several gods, but there is always one that can be looked to as a primary actor in creation.

Another stable feature of the majority of the indigenous African religious traditions is the existence of a chief god or goddess. This chief deity is often not directly worshiped and has no shrines or temples. He or she has no form or likeness usually. There are intermediary spirits, however, that work on behalf of this chief god/goddess. The intermediary spirits are comprised of nature spirits or ancestors or both. The ancestors are seen as an active part of the lives of the living, and finally all things in the physical world are known to be results of happenings in the spirit world. So when someone is sick or experiences sudden loss, diviners are contacted to determine what has happened in the spirit world to bring on this misfortune.

These features present a different reality from what we have in the West. All of this is rooted in the primary fact of African belief systems alluded to above. There are no African religions in the way there are religions in the West. The African cosmologies operate on a set of rules that govern every area of an individual's life, so there is no room for a separate secular space.

Christianity

I once asked a class to tell me where Christianity originated. A student proudly raised his hand and answered confidently "Europe!" This is a regular misconception of people in the West and the world over. The reason is that Europeans exported their version of Christianity to the rest of the world and used it to justify their declarations of their own superiority. Western cultural traditions were, and still are, presented as foundational elements of Christianity. Christianity, however, began in Israel, which is in the Middle East and initially, it comprised Jewish and other Semitic cultural traits.

The first area outside of the Middle East to receive Christianity was Northeast Africa. With that being said, initially Christianity was not a foreign religion to the Africans. Christianity in Egypt, Nubia, and Aksum (Ethiopia) developed within the context of these African

cultures. These Christianities, however, are not well known to the Western world. Once the Europeans brought the Christian message to other parts of Africa, the indigenous Africans insisted on realizing the Christian gospel within the context of their cultures and cosmologies. Thus, the mission churches sponsored by Western nations soon lost their monopoly on Christian theology and practice. Indigenous Christian churches were founded and proliferated faster and stronger than the mission churches.

After the initial penetration of Christianity into Africa in the early centuries of the new faith, Roman Christianity was the next expression of Christianity brought to the continent. The Portuguese brought their Catholicism to Kongo, the Swahili city-states, and wherever else they went in Africa. The Dutch then brought their Dutch Reformed Church to Southern Africa. Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists, and Pentecostals followed. The mission churches that had the most rapid successes in finding converts in Africa were, and still are, the Pentecostal churches. The Pentecostal churches' focus on the spiritual working of God fits neatly into the tradition African cosmology. The Roho Churches of Kenya are representative of this trend.

Islam

Islam was founded as a religious tradition in 610 CE. It came to Africa a few decades later. It spread initially where the people were Christians in North Africa. It eventually spread across the Sahara Desert into sub-Saharan Africa. Like Christianity, Islam came with proselytizing travelers. With the case of Islam, they were usually traders and were not supported by any foreign nations. The result was after the initial conversion process, the newly converted Africans were left to interpret Islam however they wanted.

Sufism, the more spiritual expression of Islam, facilitated the spread of the religion across the continent. The indigenous Africans' understanding of the spirit world and how it operates fits better into the parameters of Sufism than the more legalistic expressions of Islam. The Sufi *turuq* (plural of *tariqa*, a school or order of Sufism)

proliferated throughout the continent with some indigenous turuq founded such as the Layenne Tariqa and the Mouride Tariqa of Senegal.

Judaism

Judaism's experiences in Africa are different. One could technically consider Judaism as a traditional African belief system. Moses gave the Children of Israel their laws while leaving Egypt. Yahweh spoke to Moses in the Sinai Desert. I have heard no one else make this claim, but if we are just looking at geography, it could be made. There were Jews who migrated to the African continent from ancient times. Alexandria in Egypt had a significant Jewish community, as did Cairo. Jews settled all across North Africa with a significant community of them in each of the northern African countries up until colonization.

There is the matter of communities in Africa who practice Judaism or elements of Judaism. The Beta Israel has been recognized by the state of Israel as a Jewish group. The Abayudaya in Uganda are a group of mostly Baganda practitioners of Judaism whose foreparent converted to Judaism at the end of the 19th century. Still others such as the Lemba, who were "discovered" by scholar Tudor Parfitt, raise the eyebrow of scholars when the similarities of their religious traditions to ancient Judaism are examined. Others made claims of ancient Israeli origins only after contact with Western Christianity such as the Igbo and Zulu.

In the African Diaspora, many groups claim descent from the ancient Hebrews. These groups, called collectively Hebrew-Israelites, have extreme variations in their beliefs and practices. Some have gone full-scale conversion to Judaism. Others retain belief in Christ but practice Jewish dietary laws. Some such as the African Hebrew Israelites of Jerusalem have created their own expression of Judaism based on the Torah. The proliferation of Judaism on the continent and in the Diaspora are just another view of the diversity of African peoples and their religious expressions.

These religious traditions presented here are just a modicum of what exists on the African continent and in the Diaspora. Our sincere

wish is that this work serves as a point of departure for young people interested in the diversity found within. None of the entries presented here is exhaustive. There is much more research available for the interested scholar.

Douglas Thomas

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ABASI

Abasi is the creator god for the Efik People, who live in southeastern Nigeria in Cross River State (see also Efik Religion [Abasi, Atai, Ndem, and Ekpe]). Abasi's wife, Atai, suggested that he create humans. He created the first couple, who were their children. Abasi and Atai live in the sun, but the humans wanted to live on the earth. Abasi reluctantly allowed them to go to earth, but they were not allowed to work or reproduce and had to return home when Abasi rang the dinner bell. Eventually the first man and woman discovered sex and began to reproduce. Because of their disobedience, Abasi and Atai killed the couple. They then gave gifts of chaos and death to humans in exchange for their disobedience.

Though Abasi is the creator god and removed from the people, Atai is seen as the mediator between Abasi and humanity. Abasi interacts with humanity through the priests providing healing and other remedies to human ills. Humans communicate with Abasi through prayers, chants, and songs.

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ABAYUDAYA

The Ba-Yudaya are a group of Jews who live in present-day Uganda. *Yudaya* is a Lugandization of the word “Jew” or “Judaism.” *Ba* is the prefix denoting the plural of a group of people. For example the Ganda People are known as the Baganda. Luganda is the language of the Ganda People. An individual Ganda person is known as a Muganda. The full name of the Ba-Yudaya community is Kibiina Kya Bayudaya Absesiga Katonda, meaning the “Community of Jews who trust in the All-Powerful God.”

They are the descendants of a grouping of people primarily from the Ganda tribe who converted to Judaism under the leadership of Samei Kulungulu, a prominent Ganda politician and soldier. He converted to Protestant Christianity in the 1880s and learned to read the Bible in Swahili. A rivalry eventually led to open conflict between Roman Catholic and Protestant factions within the court of the *kabaka* (king) of Buganda. Because of his Protestant Christianity and his connections at the kabaka’s court, Kulungulu became an important ally of the British colonial forces. The British used him and his contingent of soldiers to subdue the Bukedi and Busoga regions outside of the Bugandan Empire. Kulungulu assumed that they would allow him to be kabaka over one or both of these areas. The British made him a provincial chief, although he styled himself as kabaka. After some years of not getting what he wanted from the British, Kulungulu got frustrated and distanced himself from his former allies. Because of his large contingent of soldiers and their families along with other followers, Kulungulu could not be ignored. Avoiding pressure, he moved to a place called Gangama in the foothills of Mt. Eglon.

It was in Gangama that Kulungulu decided that the missionaries were not reading the Bible properly. He began to meditate on the Old Testament. First, he and his group converted to Malaki Christianity, a local sect. The Malaki believers celebrated the Sabbath on Saturday and did not eat pork. They also did not accept medicine or doctors. Kulungulu held on to that belief until he died, as did two of his sons, even after their conversion to Judaism.

Around 1919, Kulungulu continued to meditate more on the Old Testament and the Mosaic Law, Kulungulu decided that the Jewish

way was best. Much to the consternation of his former Protestant co-religionists, Kulungulu led all of his followers into Judaism. He and his sons were circumcised, which was controversial; the Ganda see any type of mutilation of their bodies as taboo. Kulungulu dismissed that inhibition and went wholeheartedly into his new religion. He built a small temple next to his home for his followers. Initially not many in his group followed him into Judaism, but with time the number grew until it reached about 2,000 at the time of Kulungulu's death in 1928.

At the beginning, the Bayudaya lived according to a mixture of Christian and Jewish beliefs and customs. They still baptized new converts and babies. They also held Jesus in high esteem, though they no longer worshiped Jesus as the son of God. Kulungulu wrote a 90-page book entitled *Ebigambo Ebiva Mukitabo Ekitukuvu*, which means "Words from the Holy Book." The book details the rules for his community. One of the rules was to cease using the word *Mukama*, which translates as "Lord," because this word is used among Christians to refer to Jesus. Though his book still includes scriptures from the New Testament, the community ceased to believe in the New Testament and adopted the Old Testament as their only scripture. They observed the original Jewish Sabbath (Shabbat), fasting, and some of the rituals and festivals in the Old Testament.

In 1925, a European Jew working with the British came into contact with the Bayudaya. This man, Joseph (Yusef), told them that baptism was not needed for conversion. He also said the only thing was for one to swear allegiance to the commandments and be circumcised. Kulungulu ended baptism and adhered more closely to the rules that the European Jews taught them. Joseph also taught them about kosher slaughtering of animals, some Hebrew prayers, and various other aspects that they did not know. Kulungulu also divorced his Protestant wife because of her refusal to convert after learning that such a marriage did not conform to the dictates of Judaism. Upon leaving Kulungulu, Joseph left the community with a Bible in Hebrew with an English translation.

The reinforced community built a new synagogue and a school. Joseph had taught Kulungulu and the elders of the community the

Hebrew alphabet. The school was built to teach to young people and anyone who wanted to be a prayer leader.

Kulungulu was in the process of revising his book when he died in 1928. After his death, there was a protracted struggle over leadership of the community. There were smaller disputes over theological issues. Some of the people wandered back to Christianity. The group dwindled to around 300 by 1965 because of these challenges. Another challenge to growth was intermarriage. There were not many young men to marry the young women, so the women married outside of the group. Further contact with other Jews helped to stem the tide of this trend as donations from Jewish communities abroad helped to strengthen the community.

In addition to the challenges of leadership and division, the Abayudaya experienced persecution from the dictator Idi Amin in the 1970s. Contact with the outside world resulted in visitations and donations, however. They have since built a new synagogue and school. A synagogue in the United States donated Torah scrolls, which are ornate and a central ritual piece of the Jewish worship space. With this encouragement, the Abayudaya was strengthened and experienced growth. By the 1990s the group had grown to about 600. As of 2015, they numbered more than 1,000 members living in seven villages.

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ABDULAH I BN MUHAMMAD, KHALIFA

Khalifa Abdulahi ibn Muhammad (ca. 1846–1899) was the second ruler of the short-lived Mahdist State in present-day Sudan. After the death of Muhammad Ahmad ibn Abdallah al-Mahdi, Khalifa Abdulahi

was one among three khalifas, or assistants, to Muhammad Ahmad ibn Abdallah. Khalifa ibn Muhammad won out and became the leader.

In June 1881, Muhammad Ahmad ibn Abdallah sent letters out to Muslim leaders in the area from the island of Aba in the White Nile. The letter proclaimed that Muhammad Ahmad was the awaited Mahdi, the anointed of Allah sent to bring justice and peace to the world before the end. Holt and Daly suggest that Abdulahi ibn Muhammad was probably the one who had given Muhammad Ahmad the idea of being the Mahdi.

Khalifa Abdulahi ibn Muhammad was born around 1846 to the Ta'aisha Baqqara tribe in Southern Darfur. His father was a soothsayer. Khalifa Abdulahi believed in the coming of the Mahdi and earlier tried to put the title on the merchant-prince al-Zubayr Rahma Mansur. Zubayr refused the title. Khalifa Abdulahi eventually found Muhammad Ahmad at his retreat and became a follower. Approximately three years after Khalifa Abdulahi became his follower, Muhammad Ahmad proclaimed himself the Mahdi.

In 1885, Muhammad Ahmad died suddenly and unexpectedly after defeating the British and driving them and their Egyptian allies out of Sudan. The three ansar, supporters of the Mahdi, groups that fought with Muhammad Ahmad and accepted him as their leader and al-Mahdi began to devolve into rivals after his death. As stated above, Khalifa Abdulahi ibn Muhammad prevailed and declared himself Khalifat al-Mahdi, or successor to the Mahdi. He had to suppress three revolts across the country and eventually solidified his rule.

In March 1889, after having dealt successfully with some of the interior threats, Khalifa Abdulahi turned his attention to expanding the jihad of Muhammad Ahmad. He continued the fight against the Ethiopians led by their emperor, Yohannes IV. Yohannes IV had sent letters asking for peace, to which the Khalifa replied, expressing his desire to defeat the Ethiopians. Yohannes IV and his men engaged the Sudanese in war and were winning. Then suddenly, a bullet wounded Yohannes IV. The Ethiopians began to retreat. The Mahdist army chased them and took the dead emperor's head with his crown.

Then Khalifa Abdulahi turned his attention to the Egyptians, who were abandoning their garrisons in Sudan. Seeing themselves as

liberators of the Egyptians from the English control, the Mahdist Expeditionary Army entered Egypt. They were not aided by the Nubian villagers as originally expected. On August 3, 1889, the Anglo-Egyptian defeated the Mahdist Expeditionary Force and killed the commander, Nujumi.

In 1891, there was another interior threat to the khalifa's authority. The third and last revolt was pacified when peace was arranged between the khalifa and the other group led by his rival, Khalifa Muhammad Sharif. Khalifa Abdalahi then created a 9,000-strong force directly dependent on him. He began to appear less in public. Bad harvests in 1889 and 1890 put an economic strain on the Mahdist State. People starved to death. His soldiers had low morale, as eating became increasingly difficult.

In 1891, an Anglo-Egyptian force defeated the Mahdist army and took the Mahdist headquarters near Tokar. Then the Italian army, which had taken Eritrea, defeated a Mahdist expeditionary force, which had entered Eritrea in 1893. The Italians took Kasala, another Mahdist area in 1894. In 1896, the Anglo-Egyptian army took the province of Dongola from the Mahdist State. The Anglo-Egyptian force advanced, eventually reaching just outside of the khalifa's capital at Omdurman. On September 1, 1898, the Anglo-Egyptian forces led by General Kitchener took Omdurman and effectively ended the rule of the Mahdist State in Sudan. An estimated 11,000 Mahdist troops died, while another 16,000 were wounded.

Khalifa Abdulahi rode back to Omdurman and led what was left of his previously 52,000-man army south to Kordofan. He went into hiding until on November 24, 1898, an Anglo-Egyptian force led by Reginald Wingate killed Khalifa Abdulahi ibn Muhammad.

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ABIKU

Abiku is a spirit among the Yoruba people of southwestern Nigeria. This spirit comes and takes children, usually before age 12. According to the Yoruba belief system, the Abiku spirits congregate in certain areas (large trees, dark corners, etc.) at odd hours (early morning, just after dawn or dusk) and come into pregnant women. Once inside, the Abiku spirit does away with the fetus and makes itself a fetus. Once the Abiku is born, it often transforms into an adult at night while the mother sleeps and goes to night gatherings of Abiku spirits. Abiku spirits are said to be made wealthy on a mother's tears, so they die as infants or young children and are reborn to the same mother, sometimes repeating the process until the mother reaches menopause and is childless. The parents in turn suffer repeatedly from their child's death.

In desperation, the parents usually consult the *Babalawo*, or priest, to appease the spirit or induce it to stay on earth. The Abiku reportedly disregards all efforts and rejoices in the money that the parents waste hiring the *Babalawo*. Some Abiku live into their teens, some live until just before marriage, and some live until they have their first child. In the Yoruba belief system, the Abiku spirits are malevolent spirits bent on making the parents' lives miserable. There is apparently no cure or remedy within the Yoruba belief system for the attacks of Abiku spirits.

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ABUK OR BUK OR ABEK

Abuk was the first woman in the belief systems of the Nuer and Dinka peoples (see also Dinka Beliefs), who live in South Sudan and Ethiopia. According to the mythology, Abuk was born a very small

child and swelled to a normal size like a bean when placed in a pot of water. Her first mate was Garang. Heaven and earth were connected by a rope at that time. Nhalic, the supreme god, gave each of them a grain of millet each to eat every day. Abuk grew tired of this because she and Garang were starving. She stole grain from heaven and planted fields of millet on earth. As she worked, her long-handled hoe hit Nhalic in heaven. In his anger at her disobedience and the disturbance of her hoe poking him, Nhalic severed the connection between heaven and earth. The stories about Abuk are varied, and each is aimed at explaining certain conditions faced by the people to whom they are told.

In one story, Abuk is married to Deng, the rain god. The two of them had two daughters, Candit and Nyaliep. Another story records them having a daughter and two sons. With time and the prevalence of stories about Abuk, she was elevated from human status to divine status. She is the goddess of women, gardening, and fertility, and her followers worship her as a water goddess. Her symbols are snakes, the moon, and sheep. Worshipers often sacrifice sheep by drowning them in the river. Abuk is the goddess of fertility for the Nuer and the river goddess for the Dinka.

Douglas Thomas

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ACHIMI

Achimi is the buffalo god for the Kabyles people of present-day Algeria. The Kabyle people are mostly Muslims today, although there is a large minority of Catholic and Protestant Christians. The Kabyle live in a mountainous area of northern Algeria that served as a deterrent to invaders earlier in their history. Prior to the coming of

Christianity and later Islam, the people of this area had animistic beliefs. Achimi was one among many spirits they believed helped them make sense of their environment.

Achimi and his father, Itherther, are both buffalo gods who are responsible for introducing hunting and meat eating to the Kabyle people. Itherther was a primordial being who mated with another goddess named Thamuatz. Both of them came from a dark underworld known as Tlam. Preferring the light of this world to that of the underworld, Thamuatz and Itherther stayed. Eventually they mated and had a son, Achimi, and a daughter. Achimi ran off to a village of humans, who tried in vain to capture him. On his way home, Achimi met an ant who told him he had two choices in life. If he wanted to live long but miserably, he should go off and live away from humans. If he desired to live a short life with plenty of food and safety from predators, however, he should live among humans, who would feed him and protect him from predators.

Achimi chose a long life. He returned home and mated with his sister and his mother, producing a herd of buffalo. Once Itherther found out, he fought Achimi, who was victorious. Itherther left in defeat but couldn't forget about his bride, Thamuatz. Each time he thought of her, he discharged semen in the mountains. From this discharged semen came all the game animals.

Douglas Thomas

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ADINKRA

Adinkra is the system of Ashanti symbols that are a prototypical writing system used to communicate ideas and values. The Ashanti use the symbols everywhere. Followers weave Adinkra symbols into

fabrics, adorn pottery with them, and shape or paint them on homes and other structures. Adinkra's history can be traced back to the medieval Ashanti state of Gyman (Jamang), located in the present-day Ivory Coast. Descendants of Africans in the Western Hemisphere have adopted Adinkra symbols as they seek to reconnect to their ancestral homeland. Earrings, clothing, and other artifacts contain the Adinkra symbols. In the Western Hemisphere, the Adinkra symbols *sankofa* and *gye nyame* are some of the most often used. Sankofa means "to look back," portrayed by a bird looking back or an ornate heart shape. Gye nyame means "God."

Douglas Thomas

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ADROA, ADRO, AND THE ADROANZI

Adroa is the creator god of the Lugbara people. The Lugbara live in Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Adroa has two aspects: good and evil. His good side appears as a half body tall and white. His bad side appears as a half body that is short and black. He is creator of heaven and earth and everything on the earth. He is even credited with creating himself. He appears to people just before they die. Adroa's evil side is called Adro, and he brought all the evil, illness, and sorrow to humanity.

His good side remains in heaven while his bad side remains on earth committing evil. Adroa produced offsprings, snake demons known as Adroanzi. The Adroanzi live in rivers, lakes, streams, rocks, and trees. They are seen as nature spirits who are helpful. The Adroanzi follow people at night and protect them from robbers and other dangers. If the protected person looks over his or her shoulder at the Adroanzi, however, the Adroanzi kills that person.

Douglas Thomas

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AFRICAN AMERICAN BAPTIST TRADITIONS

This article explores those themes that impact black Baptist worship traditions in the United States. Afro-Baptist rituals did not abandon African cultural and religious practices. Black Baptists historically use a dual approach in their worship practices. Black Baptists tend to believe in a literal interpretation of the Bible; however, they were impacted by a liberal interpretation of the Bible when it came to addressing matters that concerned social affairs. The development of Black Baptist theology was profoundly impacted by events associated with the Protestant Reformation. The traditional and conservative mindset inherent in Black Baptist theology causes conflict with black middle-class Christianity.

Africa, Europe, and Black Baptist Traditions

Herskovits argued that black Baptist worship is a holdover from African religious and cultural tradition. These remnants are commonly referred to as Africanisms. Africanisms are defined as holdovers of remnants of African culture among African Americans. For instance, burial practices like wakes and long funerals are classic Africanisms used in black Baptist traditions because they celebrate the life of the deceased. Another classic Africanism is the tendency of black Baptist ministers to include storytelling in their sermons. This Africanism arose out of the importance that Africans placed on storytelling as a means to convey and pass on secular and spiritual values.

Herskovits argued that early black Baptist pioneers made a conscious decision to retain Afroisms in their worship practices. This hypothesis suggests that slavery and discrimination were important factors that aided the decision to retain Africanisms in black Baptist

worship traditions. Williams enhanced Herskovits's theory when he stated that African religion has always involved the worship of a supreme god he referred to as the sun god. Burns and Ralph fortified William's thesis when they argued that African religion reserved roles for lesser gods in their religious practices. Herskovits believed that the conscious to retain Africanisms aided black worship practices by fostering religious and cultural continuity.

Foner argues that black Baptist worship traditions were deeply impacted by American and European religious traditions. For example, black Baptists believe that one must accept Christ as your personal Savior in order to secure salvation. The idea of Christ as your personal; Savior came of the religious changes that occurred during the Reformation This Foner stated that the black Baptist Worship practices developed out of the Anabaptist Movement. Gerald Flurry supported these authors by stating that people like the Anabaptists owe their development to the followers of Peter Waldo who tried to adhere to worship practices associated with the true or early Christian church. For instance, Peter Waldo and his followers believed in a literal interpretation of the Bible when it came to worship practices.

Eric Foner strengthens Flurry's arguments by stating that American Baptists during the time of the Great Awakening adopted theological concepts that stated that members could have a personal relationship with God. This concept focused on the idea that Jesus Christ is your personal savior because he died for your sins. While black Baptists adopted many theological practices of their white counterparts, slavery and the practices associated with it insured a parting of the ways that resulted in splitting the Baptist movement. For instance, the fact that black Baptists had a limited role in white worship services ensured that the Baptist movement would divide when black parishioners gained freedom after the Civil War. As white Baptists in the South sought to support slavery and black inferiority, their black peers endorsed a Christianity that empathized freedom and liberation.

Practices, Ritual Traditions, and Conflict

Taylor Branch and Tommy Johnson argue that black Baptist worship traditions have a conservative mindset when it comes to worship beliefs and practices. For instance, black Baptist tradition tends to deempathize trained clergy. Often times black Baptist theology empathizes ministerial calling that is based on a visionary experience with God. This concept suggests that a minister has to provide visionary proof or testimony of God's calling in his ministry. Thus black Baptist theology tends to place visionary experiences and personal testimony over seminary training when addressing a calling to the ministry. The rituals that impact black Baptist worship practices are often dual in nature. Rituals associated with the first part of the service tend to be devotional in nature. A devotional ritual like morning prayer, which centers on the worship of God, was inherited from Euro-American traditions. Rituals like the altar call and the congregational hymn, which often centers on the message associated with the sermon, come from African traditions that center on praising God. Conservatism that impacts worship rituals and black Baptists is in line with the tendency of black Baptists to believe in a literal interpretation of the Bible.

Branch argues that conservative tendencies inherent in black Baptist worship tradition often clash with the so-called refined traditions that characterized black middle-class Christianity. For instance, so-called black middle-class Methodists and Baptists tend to shy away from literality interpreting the Bible. Black middle-class churches often employed seminary-trained ministers over men and women whose call to the ministry focused on a vision-centered experience with God. Branch cites the experience of Pastor Vernon Johns, who wanted to use Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, as a tool for black economic development and as a classic example of what happens when Black Baptist Christianity clashes with the middle-class Christianity of black America. It was bad enough for the membership when Johns used church property as a marketplace. However, the conflict became personal when Johns wanted to introduce Negro spirituals to the worship services. The mere fact that traditional-minded black Baptists

use practices and traditions associated with literality interpreting the Bible ensures conflict with so-called progressive Christianity.

Liberation, Social Action, and Black Baptist Traditions

John Blassingame suggests that black Baptist rituals like the Negro spirituals were also associated with liberation. He believed that spirituals like “Go Down Moses” carried coded messages that empathize the slaves’ desire for liberation and freedom. Therefore, Negro spirituals were coded because the slaves had to hide their true message from the eyes and ears of the white power structure. Johnson fortified Blassingame by stating that Black Baptist churches were the center of social action in the South. In addition to training ministers and leaders, Baptist churches also served as incubators for artistic, music, and entrepreneurial development. Baptist social action is not surprising when one considers the participatory/recall nature of the worship. For instance, in the devotional and congregation aspects of the services, the entire audience is expected to participate in the singing. Branch argued that it was social action tradition inherent in Black Baptist traditions that provided the fuel for the civil right movement and the rise of Martin Luther King Jr.

The importance and significance of black Baptist worship traditions cannot be overstated. Afroisms, defined as holdovers from African culture, were incorporated into the worship traditions of the Black Baptist movement. Congregational traditions were adopted from the Europeans. Moreover, slavery and the accompanying racism fueled black people to develop the rituals adopted in black Baptist churches. Black Baptist rituals tend to center on worship and praise. Black Baptist traditions often contained coded messages that empathize freedom and liberation. It was the social action inherent in black Baptist traditions that fueled the civil rights movement.

Tommy L. Johnson

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AFRICAN HEBREW ISRAELITES OF JERUSALEM

The African Hebrew Israelites are a group of African Americans who practice tenets of Judaism. The Israeli government does not consider them Jews because some of their practices don't align with the major tenets of Judaism. The group was started in 1968 by Ben Carter, a steelworker. One day while getting a drink at the water fountain, one of his colleagues, Elder Eliyahu Buie, approached him with the idea that African Americans are the true descendants of the Israelites. He eventually affiliated with a Jewish congregation in Chicago called the Abeta Hebrew Israel Cultural Center. After studying Hebrew, he changed his name to Ben Ammi, meaning "son of my people."

Ben Ammi Ben-Israel, as he came to be known, quickly became a teacher. His enigmatic charisma drew others into the movement. In 1966, the group chose him as part of a delegation to look at Liberia as a possible destination of migration, which he and the others approved. Some of the group went to Liberia and settled on land donated to them by a community of African Americans living in Liberia. They suffered hardships; because they were primarily from urban areas—namely, Chicago—they had difficulty clearing the land for agriculture. While attempting to celebrate the Passover feast, they chose a kid (young goat) for the ritual sacrifice. When they went to get the kid, they found that someone had strangled it, which made it ineligible for sacrifice. Despondent and disappointed, they listened to Ben Ammi when he said that all God wanted from them was their devotion for a sacrifice.

Ben Ammi was not satisfied with Liberia as a migration point. He took a trip to Israel and inspected it. He convinced followers to leave Liberia and go to Israel. They sold two ice cream shops that were operating in Liberia and migrated to Israel. The Israeli government

refused them citizenship status under their law of return. They were encouraged to convert to Judaism, and some of them did. Ben Ammi, however, refused and told his companions and followers not to convert. He stated that they were Hebrews and not Jews. This designation is based on their acceptance of the Torah alone as an authority. They disregard all the commentary of the Talmud and other collections.

For the better part of their time in Israel, the group struggled. The group arrived on temporary visas. They were denied work permits and other benefits of citizenship. They received some help from Chicago. With time they founded the Soul Vegetarian Restaurant, which operates in several locations internationally. They also have congregations in the United States, the Caribbean, and Africa. In 1990, the main group in Israel was granted permanent residency status, which is a path to Israeli citizenship.

Beliefs

The foundational belief of the African Hebrew Israelites of Jerusalem is that black people are the descendants of the ancient Israelites. They believe in the God of the Old Testament. They have moderated views on Jesus; they do not believe in Jesus as the son of God. Their dietary rules encompass a vegan lifestyle. This diet is based on Genesis 1:29, which says, "I have given you every herb bearing seed which is upon the face of all the earth." A life of strict veganism with activity is thought to enable adherents to live forever. This belief has been muted or moderated since Ben Ammi's death in 2014.

The African Hebrew Israelites of Jerusalem take Ben Ammi as their messiah. They believe that in 1966 Gabriel, the archangel, visited him and told him to lead God's people to the Promised Land. That was also the year that he emigrated to Liberia. By 1969, he had led the group to Israel. His role as a divinely anointed and inspired leader continues strongly even after his death.

Practice

The African Hebrew Israelites have worship services on Friday evenings. They start their Sabbath at sundown Fridays and end at sundown on Saturdays. They fast on the Sabbath week. They also have raw-food week every three months. Children under 12 fast Saturday morning until noon. All African Hebrew Israelite members are advised to participate in some physical activity three times a week that will make them sweat.



Ben Ammi Ben-Israel (center), the leader of the African Hebrew Israelites of Jerusalem, dances during festivities marking the Shavuot harvest festival in the southern Israeli town of Dimona, May 30, 2010. Ben Ammi, who was born Ben Carter, founded the African Hebrew Israelites of Jerusalem in Chicago, Illinois, in 1966, and moved his followers to Israel in 1969. The polygamist group are not recognized as Jews by Israel despite their belief in the Torah but were granted permanent resident status by the Jewish State in 2003. (David Silverman/Getty Images)

The African Hebrew Israelites observe the holy celebrations outlined in the Torah. Passover (Pesach) is observed at the time determined in the Torah, as are the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot) and the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot). They also observe Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Rosh Hashanah is the Day of Atonement, which is the first day of the seventh month on the Hebrew calendar. Yom Kippur is the tenth day of that seventh month. The African Hebrew Israelites fast for 24 hours on Rosh Hashanah, accompanied

by prayer and contemplation for the next 10 days, ending on Yom Kippur.

In addition to the holy feasts of the Torah, the African Hebrew Israelites observe New World Passover, which is in mid-May. This day commemorates their migration to Israel, the Promised Land. Visitors come from all over the world—primarily the United States and the Caribbean—to celebrate and reconnect with friends and relatives. Not all the visitors are members of the group; many come to reconnect with their relatives and friends who are members. They also have International Brothers Day, International Sisters Day, and Youth Day, when they invite visitors in to explain their views.

The community observes circumcision of an infant boy eight days after his birth. Women respect the laws concerning ritual impurity during their menstrual cycle and during and after childbirth. Genders are separated during worship services, and tasks are assigned along the divide of traditional gender roles. Men are allowed to have up to eight wives. Ben Ammi himself had four wives at his death, 25 children, 45 grandchildren, and 15 great-grandchildren.

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AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

The African Methodist Episcopal Church is a predominantly African American Methodist denomination headquartered in the United States. It was founded in 1816 by Richard Allen as he invited other independent black Methodist churches to join him in starting a denomination. The early impetus for the church grew from the Free African Society of Philadelphia.

Richard Allen was born a slave in Delaware in 1760. His master sold his mother and all of his siblings except one brother and a sister when he was still a child. Allen and his remaining siblings began attending the Methodist meetings and converted. His master, Mr. Sturgiss, encouraged their attendance and eventually started attending himself. The antislavery message of the early Methodist church reached Sturgiss. He allowed Richard Allen to work outside to buy his freedom. Richard Allen officially bought his freedom in 1780 and changed his name from Negro Richard to Richard Allen.

After buying his freedom, Richard Allen became a qualified Methodist preacher in 1784 at the founding Methodist Conference in Baltimore, Maryland. He moved to Philadelphia, where he became a preacher at St. George Methodist Episcopal Church in 1786. In 1790 Allen married his first wife, Flora, who helped him with the ministry. Tragically, Flora died in 1801 after a long illness. Allen then married his second wife, Sarah Bass, with whom he had six children. Sarah also helped in the ministry.

In St. George Methodist Episcopal Church, Allen was allowed to preach only in early morning services and was restricted to seating in the balcony along with all other blacks during the larger services. Once Allen and his fellow black minister, Absalom Jones, were praying in one area and a trustee told them to move. Allen and Jones asked the man to wait until the prayer was finished. The trustee refused and tried to force them off their knees.

Following this event, Jones and Allen, who were members of the Free African Society, a mutual aid society for free blacks living in Philadelphia, together led the black members out of St. George's and formed an independent body in 1787. Most of those who left wanted to join the Protestant Episcopal Church. Allen and a smaller group wanted to continue in Methodism, and thus established Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia in 1794.

Allen bought an old blacksmith's shop and had it moved and converted into a church. They were at first affiliated with the Methodist Episcopal Church, which sent whites to serve them communion because Allen was not yet ordained. In 1799, Bishop Francis Asbury ordained Allen a deacon, which meant he still could

not serve the sacraments. Although whites continued to try to wield authority over the congregation, Allen won control in two separate lawsuits. In 1816, he formed the African Methodist Episcopal church when three other congregations joined him at a conference in Philadelphia. The group elected Allen as their first bishop.

The first congregations were primarily on the East Coast. Eventually, the denomination moved across the nation, reaching the West Coast in the 1850s. They had very few congregations in the South. The large congregation in Charleston, South Carolina, was implicated in a thwarted slave revolt by Denmark Vesey, and its pastor, Morris Brown, was run out of town. Vesey was a founding member of the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston. Morris Brown later became the second bishop of the AME church and the founder of the conference in Canada. Morris Brown College is also named for him.

Daniel Coker was a founding pastor of the AME church, leading Bethel AME in Baltimore, Maryland. He later settled in Sierra Leone and founded the first AME congregation on the African continent. In the 1890s, Henry McNeal Turner founded AME congregations in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and South Africa. Today the AME church has approximately 7,000 congregations organized into 20 episcopal districts in 39 countries on 5 continents. Their membership totals approximately 2.5 million individuals.

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AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL ZION CHURCH

The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church is a predominantly African American Methodist denomination. It was formed and organized in 1821 after several congregations on the upper East Coast met in New York City to form a new, independent denomination. It is not to be confused with the African Methodist Episcopal Church, which was formed in Philadelphia more than a decade earlier.

In 1800, black congregants of John Street Methodist Church were fed up with the white congregants' racism and segregation. Blacks met at separate times, and there were really two separate congregations. They had been refused entries and forcibly removed from the church, and at some point, they had just had enough. They formed the Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church in New York. The congregation grew at a remarkable rate. Eventually other offshoot congregations developed from the original. These congregations were black, but they had white pastors because there were no ordained black Methodist ministers in the area. Though there were several black preachers, only an ordained minister could administer the sacraments. Six of the congregations met in 1820 and ordained James Varick as their first black Methodist minister.

James Varick, unlike most African Americans of that time, was born free in 1750 in Newburgh, New York. He received an elementary education in the schools in New York City and supported himself as a cobbler (shoemaker) and a tobacco cutter. He married Aurelia Jones, with whom he had four sons and three daughters. Varick eventually became the first leader of the AME Zion church.

Richard Allen, founder and leader of the AME Church, came to New York and sent representatives to encourage the new group to join the AME Church. In 1821, the leaders met and refused to join Allen's church. They then established their own denomination and ordained Varick and another preacher as the first ministers of the new denomination. In 1822, white Methodist leaders ordained Varick and the other preacher, and Varick became general superintendent of the AME Zion Church.

The new denomination grew by leaps and bounds, adding congregations outside of the New York metropolitan area. The church

did not grow at the rate of their rival denomination, the AME Church, however. In their early history, both denominations were largely set only in the Northeast. After the end of the Civil War, however, the AME Zion Church spread into the American South.

Today the AME Zion Church has approximately 1.4 million members in North and South America, Africa, and the Caribbean. They were the first of the Methodist denominations to fully ordain women.

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AFRICAN-INITIATED CHURCHES

Christianity came to Africa in the early days of the religion. Egypt, Nubia and other parts of North Africa were Christianized from the 1st century until the 5th century. The kingdom of Axum (present-day Ethiopia) was Christianized in the 4th century. However, Christianity did not spread much from those areas to the rest of the continent until the late 19th century, when European colonization spread in earnest.

There was often friction between the various Christian sects and the European countries that colonized Africa. By and large, the European Christian missionaries supported the so-called civilizing mission, which denigrated and demonized indigenous cultures and praised and deified European cultures. As indigenous Africans accepted Jesus Christ and began to read the scriptures for themselves in their own languages, they developed new

interpretations that in many cases reconciled their Christian faith with their indigenous cultures. As a result of this phenomenon, indigenous Africans began to form their own churches with doctrines that were more palatable to their individual cultures. An early recording of the phenomenon happened in the 17th century in the former Kingdom of Kongo, when Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita took on the persona of St. Anthony, defying the local Roman Catholic priests.

One of the issues that many traditional Africans had with Christianity was the ban on polygamy. Some of the African Indigenous Churches allow polygamy, though with limits and restrictions. Most of the AICs, however, either do not allow polygamy or do not address it. The AICs are found throughout the continent and often have ethnic or tribal bases. In present-day Nigeria, certain churches are referred to as Aladura (literally translated as “the people who pray”) churches because they place great emphasis on prayer. These Aladura churches are not one denomination but several denominations with different doctrines, yet their emphasis on prayer and the book of James has led to them being grouped together. The Eternal Order of the Seraphim and Cherubim church was founded in 1928 by Moses Tunolashe and Abiodun Akinsowon. Former road construction driver Joseph Babalola began a revival and founded Christ Apostolic Church in 1941 after breaking from the British Apostolic church over doctrinal and ritual issues as well as control issues. Today there are several indigenous churches in Nigeria, many of whom have spread to surrounding nations of Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Liberia, among others.

In the early 20th century, a Liberian apostle, William Wade Harris (1865–1929), walked across southern Ivory Coast and into Ghana, preaching and converting tens of thousands to Christianity. He is rumored to have baptized 120,000 adult converts in one year alone. Harris reached people who were previously untouched by Christianity. He built churches and baptized, telling the people to wait for others to arrive with Bibles. European missionaries soon arrived with Bibles and were stunned to find the people already with churches and a rudimentary form of Christianity. French colonial authorities beat Harris and his wives, who had assisted him, and banished him from

the colony. Many Harris converts subsequently organized in the Ivory Coast under the leadership of John Ahui, although they faced much persecution. Harris converts in Ghana, Grace Tani and Kwesi John Nackabah, formed the Church of the Twelve Apostles.

Throughout the continent similar stories abound of how Indigenous Africans became dissatisfied with the European and American mission churches and founded their own Christian churches. Isaiah Tshembe formed the Zulu Nazareth Church in South Africa. There are Zionist churches throughout Eastern and Southern Africa as well as the Horn of Africa. The trend continues today as Christianity expands throughout the African continent. Today a reverse evangelism trend has begun, whereby African churches spread to Europe and America, where they are gaining converts from the local populations.

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AFROCENTRICITY AND RELIGION

As polemical Afrocentric scholar Molefi Kete Asante notes, Afrocentricity is not a religion or a closed system of beliefs. Instead, Afrocentricity is a philosophical idea, social theory, and an intellectual paradigm that compels humans to center Africa in any discourse, event, history, or situation relative to the African person. One of Afrocentricity's major goals is to preserve the integrity and accuracy of any inquiry that involves African people. Although Afrocentricity is not a religion, the philosophy can guide and inform discussions or

examinations regarding religion, particularly in relationship to Africa and African peoples, both on the continent and in the diaspora. In cases involving religion, the Afrocentric scholar centers African religion, along with its realities and implications for Africans and all people, as the primary mode of analysis to ensure that the subject is investigated in a manner that provides agency to the entire African historical experience.

Afrocentrists argue that the theory is capable of and useful for examining any religious tradition including Ifá, Vodun, Candomblé, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Judaism, and so forth because they believe that the model serves as a method of directing thought and ideas to a place where the African experience is central. According to Afrocentrists, Afrocentricity can spark a consciousness that propels someone to adopt a religion or spiritual system. Yet, one does not have to be a part of any religious tradition to be an Afrocentrist because the theory is a means for viewing history and reality in a manner that first locates the African subject and situates her, him, or it properly within the global experience. Although the theory is not a religion, esteemed Afrocentric scholars like Marimba Ani have reasoned that, different from the West's prioritizing empirical truth, African spirituality is a connecting force that unifies blacks across the diaspora under a central, cosmic ethos. Even with its spiritual leanings, Afrocentricity is not limited to the study of history or religion. The theory can be used to examine any phenomenon, but Afrocentricity is particularly interested in reorienting the Africans with the traditional African cultural system.

Although the theory is not a religion, many religious movements have emerged in the African Diaspora that have been considered Afrocentric. Among them are the Vodun, Palo, Candomblé, Santeria, Rastafari, Afrikan Village, Shrine of the Black Madonna, and the Nation of Islam. In light of their Afrocentric characteristics, Afrocentricity as defined by Asante has a number of particularisms that many of the aforementioned religious movements do not entirely meet. Yet, their connections speak to their common goals of liberating black people from their oppressed condition by way of recapturing a preslavery, precolonial black reality. Similarly, an

Afrocentric scholar does not have to be African, just as a Marxist does not have to be European, because Afrocentricity is an intellectual perspective that is used for recovering and interpreting African realities. Noted historian Martin Bernal is considered an Afrocentric scholar by some, and he is white.

The need for the Afrocentric framework emerged from the burden of European thought and behavior dominating the African psyche. Due to the nature of white supremacy presenting itself as the only truth, Asante and other Afrocentric scholars formalized a system of thought and behavior to help Africans recenter themselves in their traditional African experience—an African experience that demystifies whiteness and reclaims their indigenous African traditions. Afrocentrists believe that only Afrocentricity can properly prepare Africans across the diaspora for an autonomously enduring future due to the group's severe dislocation from their own traditions and cultures. From the Afrocentrist point of view, slavery, colonialism, and European domination at large disrupted the African way of life and thought process by forcing non-African languages, values, practices, and even religions onto African people. Because of the theory's deliberate and deterministic framework, many people mistakenly consider Afrocentricity a religion. Instead, the idea is an avenue for complementing and properly contextualizing religion—including African religions.

Nija, which is Kiswahili for “the way,” is a metaphysical concept associated with Afrocentricity that merges virtuous thought and action with African traditions to assist Afrocentricity's goal of liberating African people from their decentered place. *Nija* expresses that Afrocentricity is a way of life that seeks to unify Africans with their own cultural system by way of intellectual liberation. For Afrocentrists, reshaping, reframing, and recentering African culture is important. Followers of the theory may wear traditional African clothes, learn and speak African languages, and practice traditional African religions, but the theory is not confined to those concepts alone. According to its followers, Afrocentricity is an all-encompassing way of life that intersects and seeks to properly address and reorient African experience in totality.

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AFRO-PENTECOSTALISM

In 1906, the Azusa Street revival erupted on the religious scene and took the whole world by a storm. Visitors from all over the world came to Los Angeles, California, to experience the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. The reports said that it was a repetition of the initial Holy Ghost experience described in the second chapter of Acts. Biblical signs and wonders confirmed the gospel. The fervor swept the United States and the entire world, particularly the poorest and most destitute areas.

At the time slavery ended in the New World gradually from 1830 to 1888, New World descendants of African slaves found themselves economically, socially, and, in many cases, culturally vulnerable to the forces of a capitalistic system fueled by greed and white supremacist bias. Many who had adopted Christianity during or after slavery appreciated the focus on the spiritual well-being and harmony found in Pentecostalism. During and after slavery in the United States of America, the holiness revivals spread like wildfire among the African slaves. Holiness doctrine of one's life fully devoted to God and his rules for life fit the typical African understanding of the role of religion.

African Spirituality and Religion

The African religions surveyed in this volume contain belief in a spirit world that mirrors the physical world we see. The insistence on the spirit world is not unique to Africa. Asian religions and pre-Christian European religions all acknowledge the spirit world and its connection

to the world of the living. The so-called Age of Enlightenment focused on what could be observed with only the five senses, however, and thus annulled the existence of the spirit world.

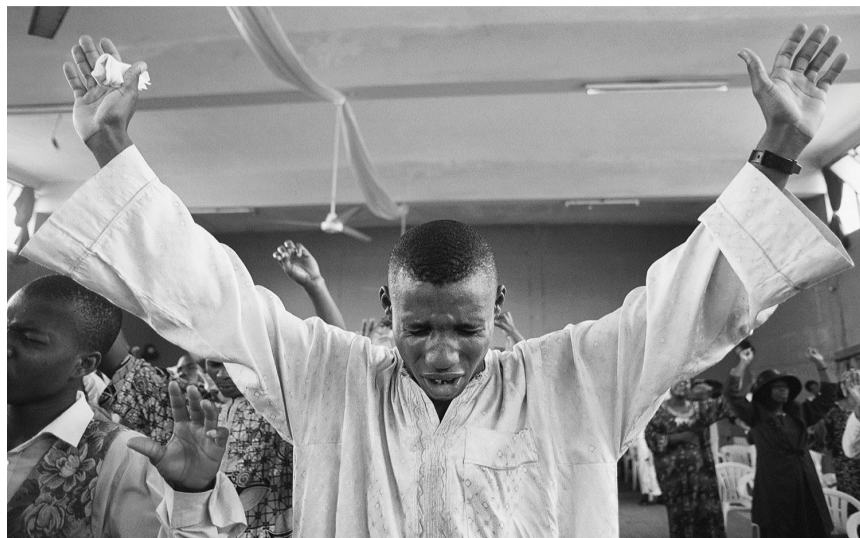
No such developments took hold in Asia or Africa. African spirituality can be defined as a systematic set of beliefs and practices that consider the existence of the spirit world and its real and present effects on the world of humans. African spirituality has permeated the lived experiences of Africans throughout the world, whatever religion people practice. In Islam, we see a tendency of African practitioners to turn to Sufism, which is a practice of Islam that emphasizes the cultivation of one's spiritual well-being. In much the same way, Africans who profess Christianity have turned more readily to Pentecostalism.

African spirituality encompasses the belief in spirit possession. The belief in the possibility of spirit possession opens the door to explanations for the ecstasy that individual adherents to the various religions feel when they worship. Indigenous African religions, such as Vodun or the Yoruba beliefs, teach that one can become possessed by the spirit of one or another deity during worship. In Christian Pentecostalism, they teach that the Holy Ghost can lead worshipers to dance and to experience glossolalia, the ability to speak in unknown tongues.

Furthermore, the traditional African religions teach that one or another deity can give the adherent the capability to accomplish the self-denial necessary to follow the rules and regulations of those various religions. For Pentecostal Christians, there is a belief that the Holy Ghost empowers the believer to fulfill the demands of his/her religious convictions. The adherents of the traditional African religions believe that they can affect change in their lives on earth (such as healing sickness, changing negative economic conditions) through sacrifice, prayer, and worship. Similarly, Pentecostals believe that through prayer one can receive healing, blessings, and other life-changing results.

African traditional belief systems also included initiation processes as one entered as a full adherent to the belief system. These initiations were most commonly displayed in manhood and

womanhood training for boys and girls. Some religious traditions also require another initiation in order to enter the service of a particular deity as either as a priest/priestess or a layperson. The calling of the adherent to deity-specific initiations often come through dreams in which the adherent sees uncommon experiences. The initiation experience itself is often lengthy and always spiritual. In a similar fashion, the baptism in the Holy Ghost is central to the Pentecostal experience and often takes days, weeks, and sometimes years as the adherent “tarries” for the Holy Ghost. The time difference depends on the readiness of the seeker and/or the teachings of the leader.



A Nigerian man prays in a Pentecostal church in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, March 2001. Because of similar focus on spirituality and other parallels with traditional African religions, many Africans have turned more readily to Pentecostalism than to other forms of Christianity. (Chris Hondros/Getty Images)

Various worship forms accompany African spirituality. Among these are communal dancing and singing that usually result in spiritual possession and/or ecstasy. Other worship forms include the separation of males and females in the worship experience. They are usually seated together in gender groups and often dance in gender groups. Another worship form is connected to an authority structure that, unlike the male-dominated authority system of the West,

includes women in separate spheres of authority often called the West African dual-gender authority system.

All these beliefs are predicated on an assumption that the spirit world's events produce results and/or consequences in the physical world and vice versa. These beliefs still exist rather insistently in the lives and worldviews of the descendants of African slaves. The prevalence of Pentecostalism among this population and the continental African population is easily understood because of African spirituality.

Afro-Pentecostalism in North America

In the wake of the 1906 Azusa Street revival, the Pentecostal experience spread throughout the country. Leaders of existing Christian denominations like Charles Harrison Mason of the Church of God in Christ came to Azusa and received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. These people went back to their constituent communities to teach the new doctrine. The millions who received the message and the doctrine of Holy Ghost baptism evidenced with glossolalia further spread the message and established numerous denominations.

The Church of God in Christ was already in existence before the revival, as was the United Holy Church of America and various others. Because of the Holiness revivals of the 19th century, there were many independent Holiness churches on the East Coast and throughout the South. When the Pentecostal message came, many of them accepted and adopted it. Some independent Holiness churches had joined Holiness denominations and/or associations. Early on in the Pentecostal revival, there were splits over Christology. Those who believed and taught the oneness doctrine went against the orthodox teaching of the Trinity, instead presenting the idea that Jesus and God are one without the mystery of the Trinity. The Trinitarian Pentecostals withdrew the right hand of fellowship from those who taught the oneness doctrine, which is often called apostolic. Focus on clean living and Holy Ghost baptism continued to be prominent in spite of the division. Thus, in the Afro-Pentecostal experience, the

traditional African worship forms continued on both sides of the divide.

Many of the Holiness denominations and associations accepted the Pentecostal doctrine. The message thus spread throughout the South and followed the lines of the Great Migration of African Americans out of the South into the North and West. These new Afro-Pentecostal denominations, along with their white co-religionists, also spread their message with missionary zeal into Central and South America, the Caribbean, and Africa.

As mentioned above, traditional African worship forms and theology ran philosophically hand in hand with Holiness doctrine because of the African traditional belief system's denial of the secular and focus on total commitment and submission to the rules of the deities. Traditional African religion fit in with Pentecostal belief and practice because of the traditional African belief system's belief in spirit possession.

Afro-Pentecostalism includes a prominent role for women in their leadership. The Church of God in Christ instituted the West African dual-gender authority system. In this system, each male leader has a female equivalent. The United Holy Church of America and other denominations gave women parity in the leadership, in which women were allowed to pastor. With time some of these denominations allowed women to become district leaders and bishops. Ida Robinson did not wait for that evolution. In 1924, she left the United Holy Church of America amicably and founded the Mt. Sinai Holy Church with the intent to give women the opportunity to minister without limitations or restrictions. She was the first bishop and president of the organization, and other women followed her until 2001, when the first male leader was elected president.

Afro-Pentecostalism in the Caribbean

Pentecostalism hit the Caribbean islands and quickly gained adherents. By the end of the first half of the 20th century, all of the Afro-Pentecostal churches had established missions in at least one of the Caribbean Islands. The white Pentecostal groups also sent

missionaries to the Caribbean. In both cases, the natives of these islands took the Pentecostal teachings and gave them their own flavor; even when the white Pentecostal churches initiated the missions, Afro-Pentecostalism flourished in the Caribbean. The Church of God in Christ sent missionaries to Haiti, Cuba, and eventually to all the English- and Spanish-speaking islands. Haiti is still the only French-speaking Caribbean island where the Church of God in Christ is present. Mt. Sinai Holy Church has churches in Guyana and Cuba. The United Holy Church of America has churches in Barbados. The Fire-Baptized Holiness Church of God of the Americas has churches in Jamaica and the Virgin Islands. The Pentecostal Assemblies of the World have churches in Dominica. Most of the other predominantly Black Pentecostal churches did not stretch out to the Caribbean.

The Pentecostal Church of God of Puerto Rico is an example of an indigenous Pentecostal church. The founder, Juan L. Lugo, was working in Hawaii when he received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. He returned to Puerto Rico in 1917 and started preaching, eventually founding the church. Two missionaries from the Assemblies of God founded the Evangelical Pentecostal church of Cuba. Some of the pastors from this church went on to establish the Pentecostal Christian Church of Cuba.

When the churches begun by the North American denominations stayed, they usually had local pastors. Some even had local leaders above the local pastoral level. Although keeping the name and connection to the parent body in the United States, the local churches thrive through development of their own worship forms and rituals.

Afro-Pentecostalism in South America

Most of South America is Spanish-speaking. A large portion, namely Brazil, speaks Portuguese. Belize and Guyana are the only English-speaking countries in Central and South America. Many of the African-American Pentecostal churches leaped over the hurdle of the language barrier. As mentioned earlier, the Church of God in Christ established churches in Cuba. They have around 80 churches in

Brazil. The work there was started by a Pastor Ruben dos Santos and his family. His initial work grew into a flourishing jurisdiction. They also have churches in Chile, Venezuela, and Guyana.

The Assemblies of God, Church of God (Anderson, Indiana), United Pentecostal Church, and others have churches throughout Central and South America. The local populations also have independent Pentecostal churches. This flourishing of Pentecostalism has led not only to worship forms and theology of African roots, but also to restoration of Native American worship forms and others.

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AHMADOU CHEIKHOU BA

Shaikh Amadou Ba (also known as Ahmadou Cheikhou in French) (ca. 1829–1875) was born in Wuru Mahdiyu in the province of Tooro in the kingdom of Futa Tooro (modern-day northern Senegal). His father had declared himself Mahdi and founded a village called Wuru Mahdiyu. Not much is known about Ahmadou Cheikhou's early life. He, like most Muslim boys, received an excellent Qur'anic education. His father was an adherent of the Tijanniyya *tariqa* (Sufi missionary) and initiated Ahmadou Cheikhou into the *tariqa*. This initiation required the passing of the *wird*, or litany, of the group from the elder to the follower. The Tijaniyya was one of the *tariqa* more openly passionate about open jihad. Ahmadou Cheikhou also reportedly loved his fellow Tijani Peulh El Hajj Umar Taal.

His father as Mahdi had a community of disciples. In 1862, his father died, and Ahmadou Cheikhou was chosen to take leadership of the community. Things went typically well for the leader of the small community until 1868–1869, when a cholera epidemic hit Futa Tooro.

Ahmadou Cheikhou began to preach that the cholera epidemic was God's wrath on an unrepentant nation. He found ready ears for this doctrine.

In the preceding decade, France had become more aggressive in their presence. In the previous two decades, the French had gone from tribute-paying traders with a post here and there to overlords to most of the kingdoms. In 1855, the French annexed Waalo to the colony at St. Louis. They annexed Kayoor in 1868. The leaders of Fouta Tooro were afraid of the French and acquiesced to their demands. In the Muslim view, infidels were in charge of their countries and dictating to Muslims. Their view was that the Muslim leaders were just too afraid or materialistic to stand up to the French. They were ready for Ahmadou Cheikou's rhetoric because it resonated with their own thoughts.

The cholera epidemic grew, and Ahmadou Cheikou's followers increased. His appeal was rooted in his claims that lax Islam had opened the door for the catastrophe. His proclamation was a return to pure Islam. He said that all who followed him would be spared the cholera epidemic. He was critical of the leaders of the kingdom Fouta Tooro and particularly his home province of Tooro, which had accepted French protectorate status in 1859. His movement grew among the Wolof from the kingdom of Jolof so quickly that they soon outnumbered his Peul followers.

As followers grew, Ahmadou Cheikhou sent proselytizers to the French colony of St. Louis, Kayoor, and Jolof, among other kingdoms. The French arrested two of his preachers and forbade the recitation of the Tijinayya wird in St. Louis. Ahmadou Cheikhou's brothers, Bara Ba and Ibra Penda Ba, were important leaders and proselytizers. Ibra Penda Ba's mother was a Wolof from Kokki in the province of Njambur in Kayoor. Njambur was a Muslim province run by marabouts, Muslim holy men. The people in Njambur responded favorably to Ibra Penda Ba's preaching and became dissatisfied with the chief of Njambur. The two sides ended in open conflict when Ahmadou Cheikhou sent disciples from Tooro to help out in Njambur.

Toward the middle of 1869, the fighting started. The *buurba* (king) Jolof sent 200 mounted soldiers to support the chief of Njambur.

Ahmadou Cheikhou's disciples prevailed and deposed the marabout chief of Kokki. The chief ran to St. Louis for exile and protection.

Just as he had with Maba Jakhu Ba (see also Maba Jaakhu Ba), Lat-Joor Latyre Ngoné Joop joined forces with Cheikhou Ahmadou, hoping to ride his coattails back to the throne. Lat-Joor was a former chief of a province in Kayoor and briefly the buurba of Kayoor. Ahmadou accepted Lat-Joor's alliance, and they fought together and defeated a French army in Kayoor. Lat-Joor stayed in Kayoor to consolidate his position and push for the throne, which he succeeded in doing.

Ahmadou Cheikhou and his talibeas (disciples) returned to Tooro. In 1870, the French governor Valere sent an expeditionary force to Tooro to punish Ahmadou Cheikhou. The force burned many villages. Ahmadou Cheikhou and his forces retreated to central Futa Tooro. The people there soon got tired of feeding him and his large and growing retinue.

Ahmadou Cheikhou decided to turn his attention to the kingdom of Jolof. The Jolof buurba, Bakantam Khady Ndiaye, was hostile to Maba's movement and actively helped the chief of Kokki to fight Ahmadou Cheikhou. Ahmadou Cheikhou sent messages to Bakantam Khady, asking him to convert to Islam. Bakantam Khady killed the second messenger that Ahmadou Cheikhou sent. Ahmadou Cheikhou invaded Jolof with his followers and went directly to the kingdom's capital, Yang-Yang.

Jolof was in an extremely dry country. To avoid destruction and death, Ahmadou Cheikhou and his troops surrounded the wells of Yang-Yang. He put out the word that those who wanted water had to come and convert to Islam. If they came and did not convert, he would kill them.

After several days of no one even approaching the wells, one woman came closer, and Ahmadou Cheikhou explained her that if she wanted to drink water, she would have to convert or be killed. She agreed to convert. He asked her to repeat the shahada (the affirmation that Allah is god and Muhammad is his prophet), and she did. After getting water, she told everyone else what happened. People started coming and converting in droves. Eventually all the

notable title holders in Jolof had converted except Bakantam. Finally his nobles and assistants told him he should go and convert. He wanted to commit ritual suicide, and they refused. He wanted to go into exile, and his people wouldn't allow him. So he finally went to the wells and converted to Islam.

Some of the chiefs and nobles/notables from Jolof left and ran to the French, rather than convert. In the meantime, Ahmadou Cheikhou left his brother in charge of Jolof while he and part of his army went unsuccessfully to gain control of Tooro. Eventually he and his followers returned to Jolof, and from there he launched attempts to spread Islam to other kingdoms. His continued attempts to stir the Muslims in Njambur angered his former ally, Lat-Joor. Njambur, the Muslim province, had given previous *dameles* (kings) of Kayoor many problems and had even openly revolted many times over the years. Lat-Joor saw Ahmadou Cheikhou's followers' activities in Njambur as a threat. Lat-Joor saw himself as a Muslim leader and didn't think Ahmadou's followers should be preaching in his kingdom. This led to open battle in 1872, when Lat-Joor invaded Jolof after driving out all the Tijanis from Kayoor. Ahmadou knew he was outnumbered, so he retreated to the interior of Jolof.

Sanor Njie, one of the chiefs who left Jolof for French protection, tried and failed several times to eject Ahmadou from Jolof. In 1873, he moved back to Jolof and submitted to Ahmadou Cheikhou. Alburry Njie, future king of Jolof, aligned with Lat-Joor and tried unsuccessfully to drive Ahmadou Cheikhou out of Jolof three times between 1873 and 1874. In 1874, Ahmadou Cheikhou, with help from Futa Tooro, invaded Kajoor and took over when Lat-Joor fled to the French for protection. Though he won, Ahmadou had to handle the large loss of life in his army. He retreated to Kokki.

Meanwhile, Lat-Joor was regrouping and rebuilding his army. Valere was not happy with Ahmadou's advances and offered Lat-Joor help in regaining his throne. Lat-Joor's army and 600 French troops with the most modern weapons of the time met Ahmadou's reduced forces on the battlefield close to Kokki on February 11, 1875. Ahmadou Cheikhou's ally, Abdul Bokar, and his troops returned to Futa Tooro in September 1874. Lat-Joor and his French allies

defeated Ahmadou Cheikhou. Ahmadou Cheikhou died in that battle, ending his Islamic government.

Douglas Thomas

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AIGAMUXA

Aigamuxa is a desert-dwelling creature in Khoikhoi and Xhosa mythology who has his eyes under his feet. The Khoikhoi people live in Southern Africa and are commonly referred to as Bushmen. Aigamuxab are beasts that roam the desert at night, devouring creatures that they find. No creature can defeat them; because their eyes are in their feet, however, one can outsmart them and escape their wrath. They love human flesh, so any human they chase must first hide, then knock down the Aigamuxa. For the Aigamuxab to see their prey, they must stand on their hands or head and then chase it. They are malevolent spirits and are to be avoided at all costs. They roam at night and usually are met along the way or follow people who travel alone at night.

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AJE

Aje is a term often translated as “witch.” This translation may be inappropriate in the Yoruba context, because unlike European conceptions of witchcraft, Yoruba aje are neither antisocial nor the personification of evil and can be both malevolent and benevolent. In the Yoruba belief system, witchcraft, like fertility, is considered innate to womanhood. Although men may also be suspected of witchcraft, all women are considered potential witches. Since women give life through birth, they are believed to also possess the ability to take life by spiritually consuming the life essence of their victims.

Because witchcraft is directly linked to women’s reproductive capacities, their activities are also directed toward reproduction. Aje can use their power to either enhance or diminish reproduction in their families and communities. Their negative influences on reproduction include their ability to cause infertility in both men and women, their capacity to cause difficulties in menstruation, stillbirths, miscarriages, and false pregnancies. Witches are also credited with the ability to prevent delivery of a child, sometimes for years, and are thought to kill children by eating their ethereal bodies.

To carry out their activities, witches are said to transform at night into nocturnal creatures such as bats, devour their prey, and attend meetings in covens. Before British colonization, people suspected of witchcraft were tried in witchcraft ordeals. An ordeal involved a suspected witch drinking an unknown liquid concoction. If the individual was innocent, then the drink had no effect, and the person was set free. If guilty, the poison was said to have a certain negative effect, such as choking, and the accused was executed.

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AJOK

Ajok is the creator god of the Lutoko people, who live in South Sudan. According to tradition, Ajok created all of humanity. When people died, Ajok brought them back to life. One time a woman's child died. She prayed repeatedly to Ajok to bring her child back to life. Ajok complied and brought the son back to life. Once her husband heard about it, however, he was angry and scolded his wife for begging for the child's life, Then he killed the child again. Angry, Ajok vowed never to bring another human back to life, declaring that death would always be permanent. Ajok is also called Najok and can sometimes be referred to as a not only a deity, but a spiritual force.

Douglas Thomas

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AKAMBA BELIEFS

Akamba spiritual beliefs have relevance to all aspects of life. The Kamba (also referred to as Wakamba) are a large ethnic group in Kenya located primarily in the south-central part of the country. They are mostly found in the counties of Machakos, an area of 5,700 square miles, and Kitui, an area of 11,696 square miles. These locations are collectively referred to as Ukambani. In Ukambani, spiritual beliefs permeate various aspects of social and cultural life such as childbirth, circumcision, initiation ceremonies, marriage, death, law, political structures, social systems, warfare, medicine, art, dance, music, dress, economic systems, agriculture, animals, hunting, and food. They are not merely a basic appurtenance of or the basis for prayer and worship. Akamba beliefs shape and define life in all its ramifications, revealing the importance of spiritualism and religion to the people. In general these beliefs encompass ancestral spirit worship, called *aimu*, and faith in a Higher Being, called Mulungu (or Mulugga). The Kamba believe in life after death, holding

that the spirit/soul of departed ancestors live on. They also hold that the aimu spirits (ancestors) live in the mountains, not under the earth as one might suppose. Therefore, the mountains are sacred spaces and areas to avoid.

The various beliefs of the Kamba have traditionally shaped their worldview, and despite the passage of time and the influence of modernity, these beliefs still have relevance in the daily lives of the people. Kamba beliefs are a product of location, time, and circumstance. In precolonial times, the Kamba lived in interior communities, where they practiced their traditional religion and expressed belief in their ancestors.

With the advent of British colonial rule, however, traditional beliefs were systematically and deliberately consigned to the inferior position of anachronism following the introduction of Christianity and Western belief systems that were part of colonial rule. The colonialists' system of domination also involved the introduction of laws that cast Kamba beliefs and practices in a negative light while restricting traditional worship and other religious practices.

Many of these colonial laws and social stereotyping that stymied the development of Kamba religious life are still in place. Indeed, at present, Christianity is the prevalent religion and is widely embraced in Ukambani. This is not to say that the Kamba have completely abandoned their ancestral religion and belief system. As mentioned above, traditional beliefs and practices, largely defined by all sorts of circumstances, still exist among the people. Traditional beliefs and rituals still hold sway in remote areas such as Kitui (compared to Machakos, which is closer to Nairobi). In these remote areas, the locals regularly patronize traditional healers, ritual specialists, and diviners because of limited access to modern healthcare facilities.

Similarly, there are areas in Ukambani where drought is a perennial crisis, and this is seen as a sign of spiritual imbalance requiring acts of prayer, sacrifice, and worship. Under these circumstances, some Kamba seek the intervention of the rain god and spirits that have power to control and predict rainfall levels. Many Kamba believe that all life events and crisis irruptions are a disorder arising from a lack of harmony between man, nature, the spirits, deities, and or the

ancestors. Thus, they believe that ritual acts and ceremonies restore balance that functions to stabilize the community.

The Kamba, like many African people, continue to wrestle with the role of traditional belief systems in a changing world. Kamba rituals and beliefs continue to evolve. As a result, beliefs, practices, and prayers designed to invoke various gods, deities, spirits, and curses continue to find a place in Kamba society.

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AKAN

The Akan are an ethnic group living in Ghana and the Ivory Coast. Akan People are the largest of the ethnic groups in both of these countries. The 2005 Census of Ivory Coast put the Akan groups there at 42 percent of the population with the Baule, an Akan group, as the largest single ethnic group. The 2010 Ghana Population Census put the percentage at 47.5 percent of the total population of Ghana. They are mainly found in the middle and the southern part of the country. The presence of Akan in two separate modern countries is a result of the balkanization of the African continent during the colonial period (Auwah-Nyamekye 2009).

The Akan are made up of different linguistic subgroups. The tongue of each subgroup constitutes a dialect of the Akan language, but most of these dialects are mutually intelligible. Two are widely known and spoken in the country. They are called Twi and Fante. The Twi dialect has two versions: Asante (Ashanti) Twi and Akwapim Twi. Of these two, the Asante Twi is the one with the wider usage in Ghana.

To talk about the Akan religious traditions is to refer to the religious beliefs and practices of the indigenous Akan, which have evolved and

been practiced over the years. In other words, it is the religion/spirituality known to and practiced by the Akan before their encounter with Christianity (the first of the impinging religions to arrive in Ghana on January 20, 1482; see Agbeti 1986, 3 citing Groves, p. 123, Islam and other Eastern religious traditions. Akan religion is part of what is now known as African traditional religions. It believes in myriad spirit beings. The spirits are believed to inhabit images, rocks, mountains, caves, trees, rivers, animals, and so forth. This explains the Akan's reverential attitude toward natural entities.

Central to the Akan spirituality is the belief in the Supreme Being, ancestors, lesser gods, and impersonal or nonmoral forces. These are thought to manifest themselves in the working of magic, witchcraft, sorcery, and charms and amulets. All these entities qualify for cultic attention because they are capable of influencing the life of humans either positively or negatively. These sacred entities do not receive equal cultic attention; they are placed in a hierarchical order with the Supreme Being (God) as the head (Rattray 1927), followed by the ancestors, then the lesser gods, and, last, the impersonal forces.

The adherents of Akan religion believe that the Supreme Being is the creator of the universe, including everything in it. He is, therefore, called by the names, *ɔboadeɛ* (creator), *Amowia* (giver of the sun or light), and *Amasu* (giver of rain) (Opoku 1978). This belief that the Supreme Being is the creator is supported by many cosmological myths explaining how the Supreme Being created the universe and also how he serves as the originator and sustainer of life (Opoku 1978, 16–26).

The non-Akan or non-African may be tempted to think that there is less cultic attention given to the Supreme Being by the indigenous Akan believers because it has neither a priest to minister to him nor a temple designated for his worship—but this is what makes the indigenous Akan religion stand out. For the Akan, the reality and the presence of God is not in doubt at all. In fact, his existence is taken for granted. He is viewed as the unseen “presiding officer” of all activities, both secular and sacred. All religious activities center around him. Thus he is seen as the ultimate recipient of all cultic

attention. Many Akan names and attributes of the Supreme Being point to such concept. He is Onyame, a name made of two Akan words: *nya*, meaning “to get” and *me*, “to become satisfied.” *Onyame* in Akan religious thought thus means that anyone who has the Supreme Being becomes satisfied in life. He is also known as *Onyankopɔn* (dependable friend). This is the most common name for God among the Akan.

He is also thought to have representatives. These are the ancestors (*nananom nsamanfoɔ*), and the lesser gods (*abosom*). They serve as ministers in his theocratic government. For this service and position, the gods are deemed worthy of attention in cultic service.

But so also are the ancestors, the *nananom nsamanfoɔ*—those dead but who while on earth led exemplary lives or whose lives society considered worth emulating. They married, bore children, and were brave, left behind inheritances, and died through natural means. They live in the underworld, called in Akan *Asamando*, yet are considered part of the social group. They are considered senior members of the lineage because having lived the earthly life before; they are thought to have acquired the experience and so are in the position to advise the living about issues concerning this life. Some of them may have been the founders of the various states. Such founders, if they were chiefs, would have their stools blackened. They are also honored during the celebration of festivals such as the *Addae* and *Odwira*.

The Akan religion also considers witchcraft but as a negative force, and so anyone suspected of practicing it is thought of as antisocial. This explains the antiwitchcraft shrines dotted around Akan communities. Just like witchcraft, sorcery is part of the belief system of the Akan, but its practice is abhorred in Akan society, and those who practice it are tagged as enemies of society. Sorcery is seen as using one’s spiritual power or knowledge for evil purposes.

In the life and thought of the Akan people, the universe is divided into sacred and profane. The sacred refers to the immaterial (spiritual world), and the profane, the material (physical world). A close study of the Akan shows that the division of the universe into sacred and

profane is for convenience, however, because the two are paradoxically one entity; one cannot exist independently of the other. One has no meaning without the other; the two must unite to become meaningful. This explains why indigenous Akan are able to live in harmony with nature and the environment.

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AKHENATEN

Akhenaten is an ancient Egyptian pharaoh (or ancient *kemit*) known for his attempt to abandon traditional Egyptian polytheism and introduce a monotheistic religious approach. Akhenaten's throne name was Amenhotep IV, and he ruled from about 1353 to 1356 BCE. His wife was Nefertiti. He ruled in the 18th Egyptian dynasty, and his reign would have been relatively unnoteworthy were it not for his tampering with religion.

In the fifth year of his reign, Akhenaten embraced his new name, which translates as "effective for Aten." Aten was the sun god. Amenhotep was a name in praise of the god Amun, seen as a creator god. Amun was also the patron god of Thebes, where Akhenaten was crowned and from which he ruled. After his zealous pursuit of the worship of Aten, he abandoned Thebes and built a new city named Akhenaten (Amarna). He withdrew royal support from the temples of Amun, focusing all his support and attention on the worship of Aten.

Clearly the priests of Amun were not happy, because they found themselves without financial support and devoid of the political influence they had so long enjoyed. Historians are not clear as to the

level of repression Akhenaten put on the worship of Amun or other gods. He definitely did not criminalize the worship of other gods. What is clear is that Akhenaten and Nefertiti worshiped Aten exclusively and led a whole nation in that direction. Once Akhenaten died, his people gradually returned to their worship of other gods.

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AKONGO

Akongo is the creator god of the Ngombe people, who reside in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire). According to their legend, Akongo once lived among humans. He saw how wicked humans could be and left for the forest to separate himself from humanity. Some say humans were too noisy, so he went to live in the sky to be rid of them. Another myth says Akongo and everyone lived in the sky at the beginning. The noise that humans make disturbed Akongo. He then sent humans to live on earth, and he stayed to himself in the sky.

Yet another story records Akongo as having lived in the sky and come to earth via a rope to visit the humans he had created. Once he lived among humans, their constant fighting and dissatisfaction troubled him. He gave them over to their state of discontent and climbed back to the sky, pulling the rope behind him. Once he was back home in the sky, his children kept up such a confusion that he put them in a basket with food and necessities. Then he lowered his own children to earth so he could have peace in the sky. The separation of the creator from his creations is the central theme in all the stories.

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ALADURA

Aladura—meaning “those who pray” in Yoruba—denotes a movement and a group of churches that emerged among the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria between the two World Wars, the age of high colonialism. It coalesced from several distinct local initiatives, which interacted with influences from Euro-American evangelical, especially Pentecostal, sources.

The first was a prayer group founded by members of St. Saviour’s (Anglican) Church, Ijebu Ode, during the 1918 influenza pandemic, which later affiliated itself with Faith Tabernacle, a divine-healing group based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in the United States. Next came the Cherubim and Seraphim, founded in Lagos in 1925 through the mutual encounter of Christianah Abiodun Akinsowon, a teenage girl who fell into a trance after seeing an angelic vision, and Moses Orimolade, an older man who was already an itinerant visionary and evangelist. The late 1920s saw the emergence of other young charismatics with a prophetic message, such as Josiah Ositelu and Joseph Babalola. Babalola joined Faith Tabernacle and was at the center of a religious revival that burst out in 1930 at Ilesha, drawing immense crowds from far and wide. Within an atmosphere of millennial expectations, these Aladura prophets, or *woli*, preached the confession of sins, the destruction of all artifacts of idolatry, and sanctified water as a medium of healing and blessing. In 1931 the main body of Aladura adherents joined a British Pentecostal group, the Apostolic Church. Nearly a decade later, doctrinal disagreements (mainly over divine healing) led to the majority seceding, eventually to form the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) under the leadership of I. B.

Akinyele, a former Faith Tabernacle member from a prominent Ibadan family. Prophet Ositelu had already established his own Church of the Lord (Aladura), and the last main branch of Aladura, the Celestial Church of Christ (CCC), was founded in 1947 by Samuel Oschoffa, with affinities to the Cherubim and Seraphim but also some Roman Catholic borrowings, from its origin in Porto Novo in the French colony of Dahomey (now Benin). All these branches had their own numerous splits and secessions.

Aladura has been seen as an oblique form of political protest; but while it might be regarded as loosely “nationalist” in being a self-directed African initiative under specific colonial conditions, it was addressed to practical and existential problems that arose on the interface between two very different religious cultures. These were the evangelical Protestantism (particularly Anglican) of the mission background and an African ontology of being, which not only upheld healing and well-being (in Yoruba, *alafia*) as key religious objectives, but also gave spiritual protection against evil forces active in the world, such as witches. Aladura churches may be placed on a continuum between two poles, some closer to Euro-American Pentecostalism (such as the CAC), others more exclusively dependent on African springs of spirituality. The latter (such as the CCC or “Celes”), now often termed “spiritualist” (but not in the conventional European sense), lay a greater emphasis on visionary guidance and are outwardly distinguished by the white prayer gowns they use for worship. Despite the rise of a new wave of neo-Pentecostal or Charismatic churches (so-called born agains) in the last 30 years, the Aladura still attract a large number of adherents. Though they are sometimes demonized (especially the Celes) by the born agains for incorporating dubious (even satanic) elements into their ritual practice, both groups of churches share the same essential premises about the ends of religion and the “enchantedness” of the world.

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ALLAH

In Arabic, Allah simply means “God” (and therefore Pre-Islam Arabs, Christians, and Jews used it as well). In the context of Islam, it refers to the “one and eternal, [who] neither begets nor is born” God, who “has no equal” (Qur’an 112:1–4).

In Islamic tradition, Allah has at least 99 agreed names that are built as adjectives to describe him. From them, we learn that Allah is an “exceedingly compassionate” and “exceedingly merciful” God who is an “utterly just judge and arbitrator.” He is “omniscient,” “all seeing,” and “all hearing,” and therefore is also the “watchful” and the “witness.” He is the “giver of life” and “bringer of death” as the “creator, evolved and shaper.” He is the “controller” who “grants security,” “bestowing” and “providing” for his believers and is “the victory giver.” He is also the “subduer” and “humiliator,” not only “the giver of honor” but also “the giver of dishonor.” He is a “magnificent” and “vast” God, who is “loving” and also the “resurrector,” “unique” and “single,” the “all-powerful” and the “determiner.” Therefore, he is the “firm” “friend” and the “hidden” and “evident” “finder” and “ever-relenting” “avenger.”

As is the case in Judaism and Christianity, Allah is believed to use prophets to communicate with the people, who are his creation, through revelations. The first prophet is also the first human, Adam, and the last prophet to date is Muhammad. Also similar to Judaism and Christianity is the belief in creation through command (Qur’an 2:117).

According to classical Islamic thought, Allah does not need clergy to be in touch with his believer. As Allah says in the Qur’an (translated by Sahih International): “And when My servants ask you, [O

Muhammad], concerning Me—indeed I am near. I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he calls upon Me. So let them respond to Me [by obedience] and believe in Me that they may be [rightly] guided” (Qur’an 2:186).

Due to the religious similarity between the three Abrahamic religions (Islam, Judaism, and Christianity), Allah is often a main point of differentiation. In its formative period, Islam was understood to be a non-Trinitarian heresy: the same religion other than the rejection of the belief in the three personas of God. The similarity has also been seen as bridge between the religions, however, because they “had and continue to have just and true notions of God and his attributed” as Louis Maracci, the confessor of Pope Innocent XI, said in 1734 (as quoted in Watt 1983).

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ALLEN, RICHARD

Richard Allen (1760–1831) was born a slave in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was the property of Daniel Chew, the attorney general for Pennsylvania. Early in his life, Allen and his family were sold to Chew’s friend, Stokeley Sturgis. Sturgis had money problems and sold Allen’s mother and three of his siblings. Allen was left with a brother and a sister on the Sturgis plantation.

As a young man, Allen began attending Methodist meetings with his brother. Their master encouraged their interest in Christianity.

Allen and his brother were converted and began attending Methodist classes. They were eventually baptized. Other slave masters criticized Allen and his brother for attending services. The brothers decided to prove that religion made slaves better, so they decided to work harder than ever for their master and pray for his conversion. Within a little time, Sturgis began to come around to their religious point of view. Sturgis even invited an itinerant preacher, Reverend Freeborn Garretson, to come preach at the plantation. Garretson had freed his own slaves because of his own conviction on the evils of slavery. Garretson's preaching convinced Sturgis, who in turn offered Allen and his brother an opportunity to buy their freedom. Within a year, the brothers had raised enough money and bought their freedom.

As a freeman, Allen meandered about from one place to another working odd jobs. His passionate faith led him to embark on circuit preaching. He traveled a circuit throughout the middle states region, often with other preachers. His preaching, to a largely white audience, was impressive, and he soon garnered a reputation. In addition to preaching to local communities, which hosted him and which paid very little, Allen did other jobs.

Allen worked at one time in a brickyard for \$50 a month. He hauled salt during the Revolutionary War. He also worked for a time as a woodcutter. Transportation was a challenge for him also; someone gave him a scrawny horse, which he later traded for a blind horse. With the blind horse, he at least didn't have to walk everywhere.

Allen traveled the Baltimore circuit with Reverend Whatcoat, who would later become bishop. Bishop Francis Asbury, one of two original US bishops of Methodism, asked Allen to travel with him. Allen would be guaranteed regular income from the denomination, unlike the paltry sums he received for the preaching he had been doing. There was a condition, however, to traveling with Bishop Asbury: Allen would not be allowed to mingle with slaves when traveling in the South, and sometimes he would have to sleep in the carriage. Allen turned Bishop Asbury down,

In 1786, the Methodist elder in charge of Philadelphia invited Allen to preach. Allen decided to settle in Philadelphia, the city of his birth.

The elder asked him to speak to groups of blacks throughout the city that St. George Methodist Episcopal serviced. Allen loved it; although he originally planning to stay two weeks in the city, he remained on.

Allen preached everywhere he was asked. He led the 5:00 a.m. service at St. George's, which was largely attended by black members. He also ministered specifically to black members, holding regular prayer meetings that attracted up to 42 people. With a regular number that size, he toyed with the idea of having a separate church. Already, the black members of the church were filling it up. The white members of St. George asked the black members to give up their places in the pews and put chairs around the wall to accommodate them. This solution was not good enough.



Richard Allen, founder and first bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. (Payne, Daniel Alexander. *History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, 1891)

The membership continued to grow as more blacks responded positively to Allen's preaching. The sanctuary was regularly full, and the church decided to remodel. The black members donated heavily to the effort, and many contributed work. In November 1787, on the day that the new church opened, blacks were asked to sit in second-

floor galleries. Allen and his friends arrived, and the sexton showed them to the galleries. In the middle of prayer, as Allen and his friend Absalom Jones kneeled, a trustee came and tried to force them off their knees. Jones asked him to wait until the prayer was over. The man insisted, saying that they must leave at that moment. Another trustee came over to help him force them out of their seats. The other blacks saw this. When Allen and Jones complied, they left the church, and all the other black members followed them en masse.

After this, Allen again thought of starting a separate church. Seven months prior, Allen and Jones had started the Free African Society, which was a nonsectarian self-help society. Most of the black members of St. George were already members of the FAS. The FAS served as an organization that held the group together as they decided what to do about their worship situation. Allen was pushing for the FAS to get Methodist affiliation. There was still animosity over how the FAS were poorly treated at St. George. Allen was not happy and persisted in seeking Methodist affiliation in spite of the group leaders discouraging him. In 1789, Allen separated from the group and sought some of the members to help him start a separate black Methodist congregation. Jones succeeded in getting FAS affiliation with the Episcopal Church of America.

With smaller numbers than Jones's group, Allen persisted in building a Methodist Church for black members. He asked white abolitionists for help. Dr. Benjamin Rush and Robert Ralston came to his aid. The Methodist administration of St. George ridiculed and insulted Allen. In 1796, they did allow a separate church for blacks to be organized called Zoar, after the little village in the Bible. When the angels were leading Lot and his family out of Sodom and Gomorrah before their destruction, they told Lot to flee to the mountains. Lot asked the angels to let him and his family move to a little village called Zoar, just on the outskirts of Sodom and Gomorrah. The angels assented. Naming the church Zoar sent the message that they thought the blacks were just barely out of a spiritual Sodom and Gomorrah.

The difference between Zoar and Allen's proposed church was administration and control. The Methodists did not like the idea of an

independent black congregation, but Allen was a preacher capable of leading his own congregation. Zoar hired white ministers to preach and administer the sacraments to them. Allen was not deterred by St. George and the Methodists' refusal to help him. He bought two blacksmith shops, hauled them to a vacant lot and fashioned them together as a small chapel. Not long afterward, the place proved too small for his growing congregation.

As Allen persisted in raising money for his church building, the elder in charge of Philadelphia, John McClaskey, threatened to disown him and his members if he persisted. If McClaskey had succeeded, he would have thrown Allen out of the denomination. Allen reminded him that the threat was pointless because he and his members currently did not have a home in St. George because of their ill treatment. Allen continued and raised enough to dedicate his church on June 29, 1794. Bishop Asbury presided over the dedication service. The elder in charge at that time was John Dickens, who suggested the name Bethel, meaning "house of God." Beth-el is the name Jacob gave the place where he dreamed of angels ascending to heaven and descending to earth. This name was transcendent because it was connected to a great revelatory moment in the Bible, and not a time of running, as Zoar had been.

Allen and his new congregation had other issues. Bishop Asbury ordained Allen a deacon in 1799. Deacons cannot administer the sacraments. Bethel had St. George send them ministers periodically to preach and administer the sacraments. They had to pay the church money for this, which they did because they weren't capable of providing the service for themselves, despite disputes over whether to pay the individual preacher or pay the church.

There was also the issue of church property ownership. Since the blacks had raised the money themselves with no help from the denomination, they thought that they should own the church. As a matter of fact, they had raised the money in spite of the denomination's leaders' constant discouragement. In the Methodist church, the conference owns all church property. St. George's assistant minister, Ezekiel Cooper, demanded that Bethel sign over their property to the local Methodist Conference. Allen and his

congregation refused. Cooper came back and offered to write them up a charter. They agreed. They had no idea that in endorsing the charter, he signed church property and the authority to choose a pastor over to the conference. St. George also continued to list Bethel's members on St. George's membership rolls.

A new elder in charge of St. George came in 1796 by the name of James Smith. Prior to his arrival, the white leaders of St. George and the denomination at large left the blacks at Bethel to their own devices. Smith came in and wanted to take advantage of his right to preach at Bethel. They did not deny that. When he came, he asked that they turn over the books, keys, and other effects to him. They refused, saying that the building was theirs. He informed them of the reality. Bethel in turn went to a lawyer and discovered what he had said was right. They retained counsel and had their lawyer draft a supplement to the charter, giving them the right to their church property and the right to nominate whomever they wanted to preach and serve the sacraments in the absence of St. George's elder in charge. This dispute was the beginning of an embattled showdown.

The elders of St. George Methodist Episcopal Church tried in vain to make the members of Bethel rescind the order. An elder named Robert Roberts even had the church sold at public auction. Since the conference still owned the property, it was legal. Allen outbid the others at the auction and bought it for a little over \$10,000. Then another elder, Robert Burch, who succeeded Bird, took Bethel to court seeking a writ of mandamus so that he could preach at Bethel. He lost. Allen and his members then organized their own separate denomination and named it the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

In 1790 Allen married a woman named Flora. They worked together in the ministry. She died March 11, 1801. Grief-stricken, Allen continued his labors building St. George's church and later establishing a separate congregation named Bethel. In 1802, he married Sarah Bass, a former slave. He and Sarah had six children. She also helped him build the church.

For the years that Allen pastored Bethel under St. George, he received no compensation from the congregation or the denomination. He served faithfully and worked secular jobs to earn money. He was

a chimney sweep, a grocer, and a blacksmith, among other jobs. He always had jobs that gave him the flexibility to serve the church also. Eventually he bought property around Philadelphia and managed to provide for his family.

When he stepped out from the Methodist Episcopal Church, he convened a meeting of other black Methodists, who had done similar things. From the initial meeting, he had approximately 2,500 members of the denomination in four congregations. At the present time the denomination has approximately 2.5 million members in over 700 congregations on five continents.

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ALMOHAD CALIPHATE

The Almohad caliphate (1122–1269) was established in the Atlas Mountains of present-day Morocco. The caliphate was established by a scholar/warrior by the name of Ibn Tumart. Ibn Tumart adamantly proclaimed the unity of Allah (*tawhid*) and resisted all doctrines that celebrated the various attributes of Allah. His insistence on the tawhid of Allah led to his followers being called al-Muwahhidun, loosely translated as “those who proclaim the unity of Allah.” The anglicized version of this name is Almohad.

Ibn Tumart is from the Masmuda Berber confederation of tribes. He was born in the Atlas Mountains of southern Morocco. He studied in Al-Andalusia (present-day Spain) and went from there to Baghdad to continue his studies. While there he was exposed to scholarship that left him with a deep belief in tawhid and a preference for the

Zahiri approach to Islamic Law as opposed to the Maliki approach, which the Almoravide rulers of southern Morocco and Spain used.

Ibn Tumart returned from Baghdad, preaching in present-day Libyan cities and eventually traveling back to Morocco. In Morocco he debated scholars, passionately debating even the emir of the Almoravides, Ali ibn Yusef. In Fez, the debate ended with him being declared a teacher of blasphemy and being ordered from the city or killed. Ali ibn Yusef let him live but expelled him from Fez.

Ibn Tumart in turn moved to a cave close to his home village. He lived a life of asceticism, leaving the cave only to preach. In 1121 after Ramadan, he preached and declared that he was the al-Mahdi, the Islamic messianic figure and that he had been revealed to right the wrongs of Islam. People believed him, and his followership increased.

He left the cave and climbed a mountain, where he and his followers built a ribat, or small fortification. Several of the surrounding Berber tribes supported Tumart and his movement. After building up a large following in his mountain commune, Ibn Tumart and his troops descended from the mountain in 1130 and began attacking Almoravide towns. They laid siege to Marrakesh but were soundly defeated in April. In August 1130, Tumart died. Abd al-Mumin took the helm of the group and by 1132 was leading a strong coalition of tribes again. Under Al-Mumin, the Almohads took control of all of North Africa from Morocco to Egypt. Al-Mumin died in 1163.

Abu Yaqub Yusef took the helm in 1163 and led them to conquer all of Al-Andalusia gradually from 1146 to 1173. Over the next century, the Almohad leaders moderated their religious positions and concentrated their power in southern Morocco, leaving all areas outside of Morocco to be ruled by provincial governors. In the 1200s Christian kingdoms of Spain gradually took back territory from the Almohads. Eventually the Almohads lost all power outside of Marrakesh, where the last Almohad ruler was murdered in 1269.

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ALMORAVIDES CALIPHATE

The Almoravides Caliphate (1040–1147) ruled Morocco and Al-Andalusia (present-day Spain) in the 9th and 10th centuries. The Almohads overthrew the Almoravides in the middle of the 10th century. The Almoravides movement grew out of the preaching of a zealous Berber convert to Islam called Abdallah ibn Yasin.

Abdallah ibn Yasin was born in the village of Tamnarte. He was of the Berber Guezula tribe located in Morocco. He was a student at the rural Islamic seminary of Waggag ibn Zallu al-Lamti. The rural seminary was called a *ribat*. Yahya ibn Ibrahim, chief of the Gudala Berber Tribe, came to the ribat of Waggag ibn Zallu looking for a scholar who could thoroughly train his tribe in the ways of Islam. Waggag suggested Abdallah ibn Yasin.

Ibn Yasin followed Yahya ibn Ibrahim back to his tribe. Ibn Yasin's strict adherence to the letter of the law was offensive to the Gudala. The Sanhaja Berbers at this time were reportedly superficial in their practice of Islam. Ibn Yasin came with fundamental Sunni Islam and a strict adherence to the Maliki approach to Islamic Law, or sharia. After Yahya ibn Ibrahim died, the Gudala expelled Ibn Yasin and his followers. They joined up with Yahya ibn Umar al-Lamtuni, chief of the Lamtuna Berbers.

Around 1040, Ibn Yasin established the Al-Murabatin movement, from which comes the anglicized version, Almoravides. With the support of the Lamtuna Berbers and their chief as military commander, Yasin and his men built a *ribla* and attracted many followers. The Lamtuna went about reestablishing the Sanhaja Union, which had fallen apart in a few decades before.

In 1053, the Almoravides united the Sanhaja Berbers and began to expand their power throughout North Africa. Ibn Umar was killed in battle in 1057. Ibn Yasin continued as spiritual leader of the group

while Ibn Umar's brother, Abu Bakr ibn Umar, became the military leader. In 1059 Abdallah ibn Yasin was killed in battle. The Almoravide continued to expand under Abu Bakr's leadership, and he eventually divided the realm with his cousin, Yusuf ibn Tashfin, as viceroy of the more settled parts. Abu Bakr conquered more territory, including the Ghana Empire south of the Senegal River in 1076. In 1087, Abu Bakr was killed fighting south of the Senegal River.

The Almoravide Caliphate expanded under Ibn Tashfin's rule, conquering what is most of present-day Morocco and Western Sahara and establishing the city of Marrakech and setting up his capital there. The Almoravides lost the former Empire of Ghana after the death of Abu Bakr, leaving a power vacuum that the Empire of Mali later filled. However, in 1086 the leader of Al-Andalusia invited Ibn Tashfin and his forces to help defend their lands against the encroachments of the Christian kingdoms of Leon and Castille. Tashfin went to rescue the Islamic lands there and went back in 1090 to annex Al-Andalusia to his caliphate. Ibn Tashfin died in 1106. His successors gradually lost more territory to the Christian kingdoms and in 1147 lost Marrakech to the Almohads, signaling the end of the Almoravide Caliphate.

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ALOUROUA

Alouroua is the creator god for the Baule people. The Baule people live primarily in the present-day Ivory Coast (Côte d'Ivoire). According to legend, Alouroua, also known as Anangamen, is a reclusive god. He is never depicted in their masks or statuary because he is

considered without visible form. Alouroua is also seen as unreachable and beyond the realm of humanity, even though he is the creator.

Though he is reclusive, Alouroua is seen as all-powerful. He created all things and lives in the realm of the gods known as Nyamien. There are other gods who control various parts of existence, but Alouroua is the originator. He is not really worshiped but feared and honored. The other gods are worshiped and appeased for their help in various matter.

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AMHARA

The Amhara people live in the northern and central mountain regions of Ethiopia. They are also known as Abyssinians, a term that applies as well to the Tigray people. The Amhara people speak Amharic, which is a written language called Ge'ez and is the liturgical language of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church.

The highlands, in which the Amhara people live, have served as a natural barrier. This has insured relative stability but also isolation. Amhara people are thought to have migrated to the spot from southern Arabia. The people claim descent from King Solomon and Queen Makeda, known in the Bible as the queen of Sheba, or Saaba/Seba in present-day Yemen.

According to the legend recorded in the *Kebrä Negast*, a 14th-century account, Queen Makeda went to see King Solomon to marvel at his wisdom. She brought a large retinue and had many talks with Solomon. The talks on wisdom resulted in her converting to Judaism. On her last night there, Makeda attended the great feast that Solomon had in his palace and spent the night there. During the meal,

he promised not to have sex with her by force if she promised not to steal from him. She got up in the night to drink water. He saw her drinking the water in his house and admonished her to remember her oath. She thirstily drank her water and said to forget the oath. He in turn took her, and they conceived a child. On her way back home, she gave birth to a son she named Baina-lekhem, meaning “son of the wise man.” He later was called Menelik.

Further legend, also in the *Kebrä Negäst*, says Menelik grew up and returned to Jerusalem to visit his father, Solomon. He is said to have brought the Ark of the Covenant back to Ethiopia with him and left a fake ark in its place. The Ethiopians are believed to be in possession of the Ark of the Covenant today. Monks from the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church guard it jealously.

Conversion to Christianity

Legend says the Amhara converted to Christianity as a result of Ethiopians (meaning “people with burnt faces” in Greek) receiving the faith and Holy Ghost Baptism on the day of Pentecost. John Chrysostom says these Ethiopians are responsible for the gospel being preached in Ethiopia. There is also an account of an Ethiopian eunuch receiving the gospel from Phillip in the book of Acts (8:26–27). This use of the word *Ethiopian*, again, was not in reference to a particular nation, as no nation of Ethiopia existed at that time. It was used to refer particularly to darker-skinned people, which included the whole of Africa. The fact that this “Ethiopian” is the treasurer of Candace (Kandake in Greek) points to his origin being in Meroe, which was the major city of Nubia and not present-day Ethiopia.

There is an Ethiopian version of this account that gives the name as Hendeke, which was the name of a queen who served the Aksum Kingdom from 42 to 52 CE. That was too late for the eunuch to have been associated with her as the account in Acts occurs not long after the Crucifixion and Resurrection. The more accepted version is that a Syrian Greek named Frumentius brought the Gospel to Emperor Ezana in the 4th century CE. According to the story, Frumentius and his brother, Aedesius, were shipwrecked off the coast of Eritrea (then

apart of the Aksumite Empire). They were brought to the royal court and eventually rose in influence. They witnessed to Emperor Ezana and baptized him. The state in turn adopted the religion.

At some point Ezana sent Frumentius to Athanasius, patriarch of Alexandria, to appoint a bishop for Aksum. Athanasius appointed Frumentius to this new position. From the 4th century, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahado Church came into existence as an administrative branch of the Alexandrian Orthodox Church. During those centuries, the patriarch of Alexandria always appointed a Copt (a person of ancient Egyptian stock) as *abuna* (archbishop) of Ethiopia. In 1959, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahado Church freed themselves from that situation when the first Ethiopian-born Abuna Basilios was crowned as the patriarch of Ethiopia.



Amhara people of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church celebrate Timkat, or Epiphany, in Gondar, Ethiopia, January 19, 2015. (Barbarico/Dreamstime.com)

The Nature of Christ and the Sacraments

During the early centuries of Christianity, debates on the nature of Jesus Christ arose and raged in the 3rd Century. Some said Christ was of one nature, human, a position referred to as monophysite. Others said Christ was of two natures: human and divine. The Council

of Chalcedon championed this view in 451. The result was the Chalcedonian Schism, resulting in the Oriental Orthodox Churches breaking from the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches. The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahado Church is one of the Oriental Orthodox churches.

The Christological position of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahado Church is one referred to as “miaphysite,” which means that Christ’s two natures are joined and inseparable. Hence the name Tewahado, meaning “becoming one” in Amharic.

Spiritual practices that are a part of the Christian practices among the Amharic include exorcisms. The patients are brought to the priest or exorcist for diagnosis. Usually a sick person is brought to a prayer meeting. Once the person in charge knows the spiritual cause for a person’s illness/behavior, the exorcism process is begun.

The pre-Christian traditions and beliefs of the Amharic are not remembered or recorded. These traditions have undoubtedly colored and shaped their views of God and nature. However the numerous centuries of continued Christianity have obscured any memory of what these beliefs were. In light of this fact, one can say the traditional religion of the Amhara is Christianity.

Douglas Thomas

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AMMA

Amma (also known as Amen) is the creator god of the Dogon people. The Dogon live in present-day Mali. Known for their exact calculations for the planets and other heavenly bodies without telescopes, the Dogon have baffled 20th- and 21st-century scientists in the West.

Their religion is old and steeped in an esoteric practice with many details unavailable to the uninitiated outsider.

Amma is believed to have created the formless universe, usually portrayed as an egg. Some unknown force caused the egg to break, and a whirlwind ensued, which flung all the things inside the egg everywhere. That's how the Dogon explain the existence of the planets and heavenly bodies.

Amma also created all life in the universe. Usually portrayed as male, Amma is known also to have female attributes. Sometimes he is depicted as not having a gender. Amma is seen to hold the world in his hand. His name is also a verb in the Dogon language which means "to hold, establish, or firmly grip" something.

According to legend, Amma penetrated Earth in order to conceive twins, which is the norm according to Dogon belief. Something went wrong and only a jackal was produced. Amma tried again with Earth and conceived the primordial twins known as the Nommo.

Douglas Thomas

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AMUN-RA/BAAL-HAMMON

Amun-Ra is the sun god of ancient Egypt. He was also seen as the king of the gods. Amun-Ra is a combination of two gods. The first god, Amun, was a local fertility god in Thebes. His consort was Amaunet. He was a local god of little importance. Amun means "the hidden one" or the "obscure one." His image as obscure made room for anyone who worshiped him to make him into whatever they wanted him to be.

Ra, who is also known as Atum, was seen as the creator god in Thebes. Ra was also seen as the god of sun and air. Atum retained a separate identity from Amun-Ra. During the New Kingdom of Ancient Egypt (1550–712 BCE), however, these two gods were conflated into one, Amun-Ra. His preeminence over the other gods led to many adherents to the cult and worship of Amun-Ra. This translated into great wealth for the priests and temples of Amun-Ra. One source says that this was equivalent to monotheism, as worship of Amun-Ra outstripped that of the other gods.

Amun alone had many praise names, among them was King of the Gods, the god of many names, and the self-created one. The last epithet is what lent to him the qualities necessary to be considered above all the other gods. It is said that he not only created himself, but also everything else and everyone else. In addition to being conflated with Ra, Amun was also sometimes added to Min, the god of war for the city of Thebes.

During the reign of Akhenaten (1353–1336 BCE), worship of all gods other than Aten was forbidden. However, after that theological interregnum, Amun-Ra regained his place of prominence among the deities of Egypt. The worship of Amun-Ra was so widespread that it crossed into other neighboring areas. Ba'al-Hammon, the chief god of Carthage, is identified with Amun-Ra, as is Zeus of Greece, particularly when he is depicted with ram's horns. Ba'al-Hammon is also depicted with ram's horns. Both of these gods took on the characteristics of Amun-Ra after their countries came into sustained contact with Egyptian civilization.

Douglas Thomas

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ANANSI

Anansi is the trickster spirit of the Ashanti people who live in Ghana, West Africa. This god, which is sometimes called the spider god, is known for his ability to do tricks. He uses his trickster ability to gain victories over larger animals. Anansi was used by Nyame, the sky god, to create the world. Later, Anansi lost favor with Nyame. The loss of favor has varying circumstances depending on the story.

Anansi's reputation is rooted in his ability to dupe others in nearly every story that's told about him. Anansi's stories spread throughout West Africa, where they were called the Anansi stories. When these stories got to the West Indies and the Southern United States they were called the Nancy stories. Anansi and his stories are important because they argue that with intelligence, the underdog can beat the top dog.

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ANI OR ALA

Ala, also known as Aní, Ale, Ana, and Ali in different Igbo dialects, is the Igbo fertility goddess of the earth. The Igbos refer to her as the mother of all things, the goddess of morality and death, the omnipotent protector of the earth, and the guardian of marriage, family and the home. Ala is created by Chukwu and is the most important deity after Chukwu. Her name translates to "ground." She is believed to be the wife of Amadioha, the sky god.

As the goddess of morality, Ala, who controls the earth and the laws and customs of the Igbos known as Omenala, punishes humans for wrong deeds. Taboos and crimes that are against the will of Ala are called "nso Ala." For the Igbo, *Ala* is as near to them as the

ancestors, for they are buried in her pocket or womb. Ala sends the dead back again in rebirth, and she is the spirit of fertility both for the family and for the land. Barren women or mothers whose children have died pray to Ala for children. Men also ask her for success in trade and increase of their livestock.

Her messenger and living agent on earth is the python (*eke*), which is revered in Igbo communities. Ala is represented as a mother figure carrying a child on her lap. Sometimes, she bears a sword on her right hand. In other art forms, Ala is represented as a regal figure seated on a throne, surrounded by her family. Her image could be seen in Mbari, a festive shrine dedicated to the worship of Ala.

Chike Mgbeadichie

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ANOTCHI

Komfo Anotchi was sent down by the goddess Nyama. He had a variety of roles for the Ashanti people. One of his roles was that of the medicine god, protecting and healing. His role was similar to the Greek goddess Athena, who protected the Greeks in time of war. Anotchi protects as the archangel Michael does in Christianity. He also has the healing qualities Christians associated with Jesus Christ.

Anotchi dealt with Ashanti kings through a golden stool. He told the kings that the Ashanti people would survive as long as the golden stool was protected. Anotchi told the Ashanti people that nobody, including the king, could come near the stool. The role of the golden stool in the Ashanti religion served the same purpose as the Ark of the Covenant in the Jewish religion because nobody came near the Ark without special permission from God. This argument suggests

that if Anotchi's healing is to apply, it must be in his will and the supplicant must follow his advice.

As long as Anotchi's advice was followed, the Ashanti people prospered. By the time Europeans came to West Africa, gold and slave trading caused the Ashanti People to prosper. It seemed that this prosperity would never end. It ended, however, when the British conquered the Ashanti Empire after nearly a century of wars.

Tommy L. Johnson

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AREBATI

Arebati is the creator god of the Efe people (a pygmy group), who live in the Ituri forest of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. According to the Efe beliefs, Arebati created all human beings and is still responsible for creating everyone who is born. Arebati made the first humans from clay. He shaped the clay into human forms and covered the clay with skin. Once this was done, Arebati poured blood into the body in order to bring the person to life.

According to the tradition, in the beginning, death was not permanent. Once people got old and died, Arebati would come back and make them alive again. According to legend, an old woman died. Arebati commanded a frog to move her body to the side of the road. A toad asked Arebati if he could have the body. Arebati thought a while, then he agreed with one condition: The toad and the woman's body would have to stay beside a pit for a while without either falling into the pit. The toad was not happy with this condition. In his anger, he swiftly pushed the frog aside and in doing so, accidentally knocked the woman's body into the pit. The woman never came alive again.

From that point on, Arebati was angry with the creatures in the world and retired to his home, promising to leave humans to die permanently.

Another story recounts that Arebati took all the dead people to live with him in the sky. He told humans to eat all the fruits that they found in the forest except the tahui fruit. One day a pregnant woman saw the tahui fruit and craved one. She asked her husband to bring her one, and he complied. When Arebati found out, he told humans that they could simply die. He wouldn't take any more to the sky with him.

Arebati is also revered by a neighboring group, the Bambuti, who live in the forest too. Arebati is also often called Baatsi (see also Tore).

Douglas Thomas

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ASAASE-YA

The name for the earth among the Akan in Ghana is Asaase, which means "land." The belief is that the earth is a goddess and the goddess of fertility. The Twi-speaking Akan believe that the earth was born on a Thursday; hence they call her Yaa (the name given to an Akan female born on a Thursday); thus Asaase Yaa. The Fante-speaking Akan, on the other hand, call her Asaase Efua, Efua being the name of a female born on a Friday.

Asaase Yaa, as goddess, is believed to be the spouse of Nyankopon—the Supreme Being. Because she is born on a Thursday, it is her sacred day. Thus, no work is permitted on the land on Thursdays. As the goddess of the land, she considers certain actions on the land taboo: tilling the land on a Thursday, having sexual intercourse in the bush, not offering a libation prayer before tilling the land, digging graves to bury corpses, and burying a dead pregnant

woman without her stillborn child. It is believed these are a defiling of the land and lead to severing of relationship between the goddess and the community. The result is that misfortune may befall the community, such as diseases, sudden deaths, and poor crop yields. Only purification rites can restore the relationship that has been severed. All these show the anthropomorphic nature of the Akan religion.

Samuel Awuah-Nyamekye

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BA'AL (BAAL)

Ba'al is an ancient Canaanite word meaning "owner" or "lord." Ba'al was originally the storm god in Ancient Canaan. His father was El, the patriarch and father of gods. His mother was Asherah, the mother goddess. His sister was Anat, goddess of war. Ba'al was also the god of war, whom many people looked to for help in the ancient Middle East. Worship of Ba'al spread throughout the region into northeastern Africa. His nature changed as he was exported. To some, Ba'al was also the god of fertility and good crops. To others, he was simply a god of war. Others just used the name Ba'al as lord and attached a moniker to specify certain qualities.

Douglas Thomas

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BABA, AHMED

Africa's intellectual history, literature, and scholarship predates the grandest centers of learning in medieval Europe. During Europe's medieval period, West Africa's history from the fourteenth century to the time of the Moroccan invasion in 1591 flourished. The city of Timbuktu and the University of Sankore in the Songhay Empire were the intellectual centers of Africa. During this period of African erudition, the University of Sankore was the educational capital of

western Sudan, and among the University of Sankore's elite scholars was Ahmed Baba (1556–1627). Ahmed Baba, also known as Ahmad b. Umar b. Muhammad Aqit al-Tinbukti, al Sudani, al-Musufi, al Sanhaji, was born in the Songhay Empire. Ahmed Baba was born in an aristocratic family of scholars prominent in Timbuktu, where he was educated in Islamic law, theology, science, and cultural history. After completing his studies, he began publishing writings in treatises on theology, Islamic jurisprudence, history, Arabic grammar, mathematics, and the sciences.

After the Moroccan invasion in 1591, Ahmed Baba was exiled in Morocco during the Moroccan occupation of the Songhay Empire in 1594 because he supported the resistance against the Moroccan invaders. The entire Aqit family of renowned scholars were dead in exile, except him. While exiled, Baba wrote the *Nayl al-Ibtihaj*, detailing the biographies of Maliki ulama (scholars) of the western Sudan who brought great prestige to the University of Sankore in jurist theory and Islamic law. To Baba's credit was his collection of books and his works as a bibliophile. During his exile in Morocco, his library collection of 1,600 books, one of the richest libraries of his day, was lost or destroyed. Dr. John Henrik Clarke's essay "The University of Sankore at Timbuctoo: A Neglected Achievement in Black Intellectual History," suggests that West African scholarship experienced a drastic decline. "During the Moorish occupation wrecked and ruined became the order of the day. When Europeans arrived in this part of Africa and saw these conditions, they assumed that nothing of order and value had ever existed in these countries." Ahmed Baba was the last chancellor of the University of Sankore, and he is considered as one of the greatest African scholars of the late 16th century. Baba published an estimated 56 books to his credit. Many of his writings and other Western Sudan scholars were rediscovered and are annotated in *The Hidden Treasures of Timbuktu: Rediscovering African's Literary Culture* (2008).

The Ahmed Baba Institute in Timbuktu was established in 1970 through a UNESCO initiative to serve as a national repository and conservation center for manuscripts for the region. The Institute has a collection of nearly 30,000 manuscripts for conservation, cataloging,

and research. Considering the number of manuscripts collected, aside from the Ahmed Baba Institute, many manuscript collections are in private collections and private ownership. Manuscripts are passed down through family lineages lasting generations and centuries. The manuscript collection established a national documentary African heritage that proves that African societies valued knowledge. Ahmed Baba and the scholars of the Western Sudan established a foundation for African scholarship that continue to the 21st century.

Latif Tarik

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BA-DIMO

Ba-dimo is a term that refers to the ancestors' spirits of the Tswana People of Botswana. Ba-dimo are also the agents of Modimo, the supreme god of the Tswana people. The Ba-dimo have different roles in nature. Some are attached to specific tasks while others are just there as intermediaries for their descendants still living.

Ba-dimo is also a general term describing the traditional religious beliefs of the Tswana. Today most people of Botswana are Christians, though many still retain beliefs and practices that hark to their time before European colonization. These beliefs usually involve invoking spiritual powers to regulate or manage things on earth in the supplicants' favor. Ba-dimo is also used when Western medical

science and/or other methods have not yielded desired results (see also Tswana).

Douglas Thomas

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BAMALAKI (MALAKI CHRISTIANITY)

The Malaki Christian Church is popularly called such for its founder, Malaki Musajakawa. Musajakawa was an Anglican preacher. The official name for the church is Katonda Omu Ayinza Byona, which is Luganda for “God is all-powerful.” The adherents of the church abbreviate it as KOAB. The church grew to a membership of 100,000 in the 1920s.

Beginning with Mutesa I in the 1870s, the *kabaka* (king) of Buganda, there were competing camps of religious backgrounds vying for the monarch’s allegiance. There were the White Fathers from France, representing the Roman Catholics. The Anglican Church missionaries represented the Protestants. The Muslims had been trading with the Ganda Kingdom for a while. Once Mutesa I died, the remaining religious camps were still there. Mwana accepted Islam, which set off some violent confrontations. In 1890, the British East Africa Company sent Lord Lugard to establish a protectorate over Buganda. Once this was done, the Protestant Christian influence was secure.

Malaki Musajakawa (ca. 1875–1929), a teacher in the Anglican Church, was a disciple of an independently minded Ganda chief named Joswa Kate Mugema (1850–1942). Mugema was chief of the Busiro area and head of the Nkira clan in Buganda. In 1893, Mugema was licensed as a lay reader in the Anglican Church. He, Musajakawa, James Biriko, and Reuben Musoke began meeting and

talking about their differences in beliefs and practices with the Christian Missionary Society (CMS) of the Anglican Church. All of these men held positions within the Anglican Church. Biriko had been a catechist. Their chief difference at this time was their strong opinion that Christians shouldn't take medicines or visit doctors.

By the turn of the century, there had been more than four decades of Christianity in Buganda. There were hardened lines of separation along doctrinal lines. This environment produced Joswa Kate Mugema and his comrades. His intensive study of the Bible led him to certain doctrinal stances unorthodox in Western Christianity. First, he insisted that the Sabbath was on Saturday. He tried to convince the British to respect Saturday as the Sabbath. They refused.

Mugema then cast himself in the light of a modern-day Moses against a modern-day Pharaoh, the British. He said he was charged to give a new set of laws to his people. He forbade the eating of pork. He was adamantly against any idol worship. Unlike the other Christian groups in the area at the time, Mugema's group allowed polygamy, citing Abraham's polygamous marriages to Sarah and Hajar.

Mugema also took issue with Western medicine. Mugema did not believe in using doctors or any medicine that was not mentioned in the Bible. He took this doctrinal stance from Jeremiah 46:11, which says, "in vain thou shalt use many medicines: for thou shalt not be cured." He taught that doctors were tools of Satan. His teachings spread. His opinion was that if God could rescue the three Hebrew boys in the fiery furnace (Daniel 3), then he could cure any illness with faith alone.

Eventually Musajakawa took a greater leadership role in the group as they began to sever from the Anglican Church. In addition to the teachings of Mugema, Musajakawa's central difference with the Anglican Church was over baptism. The CMS required six months of instruction before one could be baptized. Musajakawa cited John the Baptist's baptizing of believers on the spot and protested against the Anglican Church's requirement. Musajakawa also cited the apostle's baptizing of new converts without a long instruction requirement.

In 1914, they established their first church in Kitala and first spread among the Ganda. Musajakawa and Mugema began baptizing. Their only requirement was that the new believers promise to not take European medicine and to drink only water when they were ill. Many desired to be baptized. By October 1914, the Malakite church had reportedly baptized 9,360 people from various tribes.

This early and swift success alarmed the Roman Catholic and Anglican authorities. The two rivals worked together to undermine the success of the Malaki movement. First, they tried to create a rift between Mugema and his former disciple, now comrade and fellow leader, Musajakawa. They also worked to hamper the movement's missionary efforts in the various provinces. The Anglican and Roman Catholic churches issued a statement that they would not accept baptism from the Malaki Church as valid and wouldn't recognize the baptismal names received from the church.

In spite of the opposition from the Anglicans and the Roman Catholics, it was the opposition to Western medicine that led to the church's demise. Mugema and Musajakawa continued to refuse inoculation of their livestock, in spite of the rinderpest plague that killed many cattle in 1917. In 1919, Mugema was relieved of his position as chief. During a plague in the 1920s, the two leaders insisted that their followers refuse vaccinations, which resulted in violent clashes with the British. The two leaders were exiled outside of Buganda in 1929. Musajakawa died there during a hunger strike the same year. Mugema died in 1942 from old age. James Biriko took over as leader of the church. Membership declined in the 1950s.

Douglas Thomas

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BAMBA MBACKÉ, CHEIKH AHMADOU

The other name of the major Senegalese Islamic religious leader known as Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba (1854–1927) is Cheikh Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Habiballah. Bamba was born in the village of Khuru Mbacké. Bamba had an elite background since “He came from a scholarly family at the court of the king, *damel*, of Kayor; his father also had relations with the Gambian resistance leader Ma Ba.” In 1886, Bamba founded Murīdiyya, which is the second largest Islamic brotherhood of Senegal. One year later, he founded the city of Touba, in west-central Senegal, where he taught his followers about the precepts of Islam and the virtues of righteousness, peace, and hard work. Bamba’s teachings and life were founded on solid and undivided belief in and devotion to God. He theorized faith as Iman (belief) in God but also as *tawhîd*. Cheikh Anta Babou defines *tawhîd* as the “the science of the oneness of God,” which, along with *tasawwuf* (mysticism), Bamba considered as “the soul and body of the religion [Islam].

Yet, even though his main preoccupation was scholarship and Islam, Bamba’s status as a teacher who rallied peasants made him an enemy of the French colonials. Even if they were apolitical, Bamba’s teachings were perceived as radical in a colonial context; the French wanted the Senegalese populations to be docile, servile, and subservient to them. In an attempt to impose their civilizing and colonial missions, the French designed a plan to eliminate Bamba. Ousmane Oumar Kane explains: “Taking seriously the warnings about the potentially subversive nature of Ahmadu Bamba’s activities, the French colonial state arrested him on August 10, 1895, at the village of Diéwol. On September 5, 1895, a meeting of the Conseil Privé de la Colonie du Sénégal ruled to send Bamba into exile in Gabon on September 21 of that same year.” Bamba’s belief in *tawhîd* allowed him to overcome the deadly ploys that the French devised against him. First, as Shakh Moustapha Mbacke notes, when the French designated him for “execution,” after he signed “the Chapter of the Purity of Faith,” saying that “He is Allah, the One and only; Allah, the Eternal, Absolute,” “he [Bamba] was put in the lion’s chamber to be

slaughtered as the others.” However, Mbacké notes, the French later found Bamba “alive with a tamed lion sitting next to him in a docile fashion.” Another demonstration of Bamba’s faith was when he “took his prayer mat and threw it in the midst of the Atlantic Ocean” when “the French attempted to prevent him from praying aboard the boat” that was supposed to take him to Gabon during the exile. These pivotal moments remembered during Murid religious chants attest to Bamba’s faith in the power of righteousness over materialism and tyranny.

Babacar M’Baye

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BANYAKOLE OR NKOLE

The Banyakole live in what is now southeastern Uganda. They had their own kingdom, known as Ankole, and they speak a language called Runyakole. Cattle were and are important among them as items of wealth and status symbols. The kingdom was traditionally divided between two status groups: Bairu, who are farmers, and the Bahima, who are pastoralists. In a kingdom where cattle are valued, obviously the chiefs were Bahima, and the Bairu were more like second-class class citizens. The Mugabe, an absolute king, ruled over the kingdom of Ankole until traditional kingdoms were abolished under the regime of Milton Obote.

Beliefs

The Banyakole believe Ruhanga created the world. Ruhanga is a sky god, considered remote and unapproachable. According to one legend, Ruhanga created the first man, Rugabe, and the first woman, Nyamete. These two were charged to procreate and populate the earth. They had a son, Isimbwa, who became the first king and is reported to have lived forever, becoming a god. Others became monarchs who were deified after their deaths, becoming gods of different phenomena in nature such as wind, fertility, earthquakes, and the like. Ruhanga also created a man and woman to be Rugabe and Nyamete's servants. These were thought to be the ancestors of the farmers.

According to another legend, Ruhanga decided to stop living on earth and move to heaven. So the earth wouldn't be without population, he created human beings. He took three seeds and planted them. Within one day the three seeds germinated into three calabash (trees). From the first, he took a man and a woman. From the second, he took a man and woman. From the third he took a man only. He named the three men Kairu, Kahima, and Kakama. To choose which one would rule the earth after his departure, Ruhanga gave them a test. Each was to spend the night with a pot of milk on his head and not fall asleep or cause any milk to fall to the ground. Kairu fell asleep and all his milk fell out. Kakama fell asleep and half his milk fell out. Kahima was the only one to not sleep the whole night or lose any milk. Kahima was chosen as the leader. Kakama was chosen as a cattle keeper. Kairu was ordered to be a forager and farmer. This story clearly explains the divisions in Nkole society.

Another story accounts how Ruhanga decided to leave the people without grief. He banished death. No more grieving would be had for dead relatives. One old woman was grief-stricken over her dog who had died, however. She asked Ruhanga why he didn't extend the banishment of death over pets too. He told her it was a gift only for humans. She persisted in her complaining. Finally, annoyed, Ruhanga promised he would make everything equal between animals and humans. He rescinded his gift of eternal life.

Practice

The Banyakole believed in other gods besides Ruhanga, as mentioned above. Prayer and supplication were addressed not to Ruhanga, but to these other deities. Early European visitors report no temples or professional clergy. This is clearly untrue. The shrines were their temples and the mediums had priestly duties. For example, the priest of Kagoro carried the gods' symbols to wherever help was needed. Once there, a cow was sacrificed, and a shrine was built to honor Kagoro. Kagoro was an actual king of the Busongora (a neighboring kingdom to the Banyakole) who lived in the 13th century. Over time he was honored as a god.

In such a manner, prayers, petitions, and praises were addressed to the various deities through mediums and others who kept the shrines of these deities. Guardians of specific worship items connected to the various gods lived in Mugabe's house. They often traveled to where people requested them and helped them build shrines and make sacrifices to the particular god they wanted.

In addition to the Ruhanga and the other lesser gods, there were the family spirits, referred to in the literature as "ghosts." These ancestral spirits were appeased with shrines and offerings of milk. Cows were dedicated to certain ancestors. Milk from the particular cow would be placed out for these spirits as offerings. A person's father's and mother's spirits were left bowls of milk daily between the bed and the wall farthest from the door.

Appeasing the ancestral spirits with offerings and shrines was important. These spirits lived among the people and could cause many problems. All problems were assessed and diagnosed as the result of some infraction against the ancestor spirits. Remedies were then prescribed to set right the wrong. Today most Banyakole are Christian, but many of their traditional religious practices persists even into the 21st century.

Douglas Thomas

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BANYARWANDAN BELIEFS

The Banyarwandan people live primarily in Central-East Africa, present-day Rwanda, and also parts of eastern Uganda and southern Democratic Republic of the Congo. They were all once in the same kingdom, but some migrated because of their search for more pastureland for their herds of cattle. There are two classes, sometimes described as tribes within a tribe. The Bahutu have historically been primarily cultivators of the land, and the Watutsi were cattle herders. According to the oral tradition, the Watutsi came from the Horn of Africa and imposed their suzerainty over the Bahutu farmers, creating a permanent peasantry. Through centuries of intermarriage and intercultural exchange, the two groups melded together, using one language, Kinyarwandan, and creating a unified culture.

Beliefs

The Banyarwanda believe in one supreme creator god who sits in majesty over the entirety of the earth. His name is Imana, but various names refer to his different attributes. Iyambere means the "essence of existence" or "he who does not rely on others for his existence." Imana is also often referred to as Rurema (the beginning) and Rugabo (the almighty). The references to Imana's independence are particularly striking, considering the central tenet of Banyarwandan belief system is *umbumwe*.

Umbumwe means "the unity of existence." This means simply that humanity exists in harmony with other living humans and those who are already gone; the unity in this system of thought is not limited to those who are living. The dead are prominent in the Banyarwandan cosmology. The ancestors are divided into groups: *abakurambere*

(literally elders, but direct ancestors of an individual), *impagu* (abakurambere who are not as closely linked to the living), *ingabwe* (dead elders who are charged with the task of governing the family from the other side), and *abagagwasi* (spirits of dead who are outside of the community and thus unknown to the community).

Banyarwanda believe that when one dies, his/her spirit is separated from the body and goes to exist in the spirit world, which is a plane of existence that parallels the physical world but is distinctly different. The spirit world and the physical world intersect at various points, and individuals must take care not to engage in behavior that will disrupt the harmony between the two worlds. The spirits are believed to have the capacity to affect the lives of mortals, so a system of rituals is in place to ensure the maintenance of balance and harmony between all concerned. This is called *umbumwe*.

Practice

The Banyarwanda revere Imana, proclaiming his preeminence and greatness in a body of proverbs and praise songs. The bulk of their religious practices focus on *guterekera*, or “communion with the spirits.” They build shrines for the abakurambere and offer them sacrifices regularly. This is a practice aimed at maintaining *umbumwe* through appeasing the ancestors. Ancestors are evoked during family gatherings and friendship ceremonies. The prevailing belief is that the spirits need the attention of the living as expressed in the proverb “the dead are nourished by the living.”

There are also two cults that are practiced among the Banyarwanda and are connected to historical personalities. The first is the Cult of Lyangombe. Lyangombe was a hunter who migrated to the land of the Banyarwanda in the 16th century. Once while out hunting with his men, an antelope killed him. His men committed suicide around his body. Not long after, an epidemic swept through the kingdom, killing many. It was discovered through divination that the spirits of Lyangombe and his hunters troubled the living with this plague. The king declared that all Banyarwanda should become members of the Cult of Lyangombe. Initiation into the Cult of

Lyangombe is as protection against the attack of sickness that the spirits of Lyangombe's hunters brought.

The other cult is the Cult of Nyabingi (see also Nyabingi Cult). According to legend, Nyabingi was a queen who ruled the kingdom of Karangwe in present-day Tanzania during the late 17th and early 18th centuries. Extremely beautiful and powerful, Nyabingi was also known for her intelligence. She married Ruhinga, a king of the Mporo Kingdom. Ruhinga came and lived with her in Karangwe, but he wanted the kingdom for himself. He plotted and killed her and took the kingdom. The spirit of Nyabingi was angry and wreaked havoc on Ruhinga. The culmination came when the Rwandan *mwami* (king) annexed the kingdom, ending their independence. Through another series of events, the cult was brought to the Banyarwanda. Nyabingi means "she who brings abundance." The adherents to the cult begin their initiation, giving large quantities of money, beer, and other items to the priestess. Once one is an adherent, Nyabingi assures them they will receive riches and success in their professional lives.

Today most Banyarwandan are either Christian or Muslim. Christians are in the majority, and among them Roman Catholics dominate. Some combine their traditional practices either wholly or partially with their Christian or Islamic beliefs. There are a rather small percentage who uniquely follow their traditional religious belief system. Certain rituals are still maintained, particularly their singing and dancing and veneration of ancestors, though to a lesser degree than before colonialism.

Douglas Thomas

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[BARON SAMEDI \(VOODOO/VOUDOU\)](#)

Baron Samedi (Baron Saturday) is a powerful loa, or intermediary, in Haitian voodoo. He and his wife, Madam Brigitte, are members of the Gede loa, who are considered spirits of the dead. He is depicted as being ready for a funeral, with a black suit jacket, top hat, and cane. His face is painted like a skull, and he is often shown wearing dark glasses.

Baron Samedi is associated with cemeteries and crossroads, especially on the road to Guinee, a place to which souls of African slaves travel in the afterlife. In this role, he can be contacted to communicate with the dead, and people wanting to use voodoo to create zombies must have his permission before opening a grave.

Although he is often considered frightening because of his appearance and connection with death, Baron Samedi is able to heal people. He is often petitioned for help because he is able to turn people back from entering death. He is particularly eager to heal children, as he does not like to see them die.

He is also known as a fun spirit and is present at most parties and ceremonies. He enjoys singing as well as crude jokes and dancing, and he has the ability to possess people and make them dress and act like him. Baron Samedi enjoys rum and tobacco, and people offer him liquor, candy, coins, and candles when seeking his favor. He is particularly revered in rituals on the Day of the Dead (November 1).

Kevin Hogg

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BASUTO BELIEFS

The Sotho people live in Southern Africa in the Kingdom of Lesotho. They are divided into the northern Sotho and southern Sotho, also known as the Pedi. They developed two separate kingdoms, the

South African Colony absorbed that Pedi Kingdom, and later became a part of the Republic of South Africa. Lesotho became a British protectorate named Basutoland and later declared independence as the kingdom of Lesotho.

Beliefs

The Sotho beliefs are similar to other ethnicities of the Southern Africa region. They believe in the creator god called Modimo. At some point, humans were separated from Modimo because of some human transgression. This separation made easy access to Modimo impossible for humanity.

The Sotho also believe, like most people in Africa, that humans are both spirit (*mele*) and flesh (*nama*). The ancestors, called *balimo*, are the mediators between Modimo and humanity. People consult the *balimo* when they people have problems that they cannot solve with carnal solutions.

Practices

The *ngaka*, or “healer,” is consulted. The *ngaka* in turn divines to determine the source of the problem. Then he/she prescribes a solution in terms of a ritual or some type of medicine. Sometimes they must build an altar and offer sacrifices to the *balimo* in order to set aright some spiritual imbalance. Today most Sotho are Christians. Of those who are Christians, most are Roman Catholic, though there are many changing to African Initiated Churches.

Douglas Thomas

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BAULE

The Baule people (spelled Baoulé in French) are the largest ethnic group in the modern-day Ivory Coast. They are an Akan people who originally migrated from present-day Ghana when the Ashanti people established their kingdom. According to the oral history, around 1750 CE, Abla Poukou, a princess from Kumasi, ruled over a section of the Ashanti Empire. Once her uncle, the founding emperor of Ashanti Empire, Osei Tutu, died, his nephew took over. After that nephew died, there was a power struggle between Abla Pokou's elderly uncle Itsa and her brother Dakon. Dakon was killed and Abla Pokou knew that, as his sister, her life was in danger. She led her people to the northwest away from the Ashanti Empire. Once they reached the Komoe River, it was too turbulent for them to cross safely. She asked her priest what was needed to cross it. He replied that the river spirit was troubled and wanted a sacrifice of something they held dear. Their children were their most precious assets. Abla Pokou sacrificed her only child, a son who was still an infant. Once she threw him into the river, she turned and said in her language, "Ba oulay!" This translates as "the child is dead." This is how the ethnic group's name originated. The people then crossed the river and settled between the Komoe and Bandama rivers, where most Baule still live.

Baule Beliefs

The Baule people see the world existing in three realms: the area of the gods, the area of people and nature spirits, and the area of the ancestors. Ancestor veneration is a central part of their understanding of the world, rooted in the central belief that the soul is immortal. They believe they were created by an untouchable god, Alouroua. Alouroua had creative breath called Gou. Gou brought into being Nyamien (heaven) and Asyé (earth). Nyamien and Asyé married and produced Assassie-Oua (the sun). Nyamne-Ba, or Sara, is the moon. Nyamien and his second wife (polygamy is a part of Baule culture) produced two sons, Kaka-Guie (god of the dead) and Gbékéré. The gods are worshiped and celebrated with food offerings.



Baule moon mask, Ivory Coast, ca. 1880. Baule dancers wear moon masks for entertainment, rather than religious or life-cycle rituals. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Purchase, Mrs. Howard J. Barnet Gift, 2015)

The god of the world is named Asie. He is in control of humans, animals, and the earth. They also believe in the influence of *amuen*, which are nature spirits that live in bodies of water, trees, rocks, and other parts of the physical environment. They believe in appeasing these spirits in order to placate them and/or obtain protection. The Bonu Amuen are bush spirits. Dances and songs ask the Bonu Amuen for protection from malevolent spirits.

Gbloblo bla and Gbloblo bian

Among these amuen are the *gbloblo bla* (spirit husband) and the *gbloblo bian* (spirit wife). The Baule believe before coming to earth, humans existed in the spirit world and had spouses there. Often these spirit spouses become jealous of one's human spouse and created problems in the marriage. These jealous spirit spouses can create arguments, prevent pregnancies, or destroy finances, among other things. In order to have peace and order in the home, once the *gbloblo bla* or *gbloblo bian* are identified by mediums, the affected party must build a shrine to the spirit spouse (including a statuette

depicting the spirit spouse) and shower attention on it in order to placate the injured spirit spouse.

Masks

The Baule are known for their beautifully carved masks. They use different types of masks in religious/life-cycle rituals as well as for entertainment. The masks are believed to be potent articles embodying spirits/gods. The wearer of the masks takes on the characteristics of the spirit/gods he/she represents. One particular ritual dance used to secure protection of the village is the *bonu amuen*. In this particular dance, the participants wear wooden helmets with bull horns and raffia bracelets.

Douglas Thomas

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BAYANNI/BABAYANMI

Bayanni is the sister of Shango, the god of thunder (see also Sango). According to legend, Bayanni had long coils of hair. Her long hair is represented by the cowrie shells, and she is often called the goddess of the headdress, *ade bayanni*. Bayanni is said to have cried when Shango went away. Another version describes the *ade bayanni* as having belonged to a king named Ajaka, third *oba* of Oyo. Cowrie shells were used as money in parts of West Africa. Because of her representation by cowrie shells, Bayanni's praise name is the "the owner of the money that makes noise."

Douglas Thomas

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BEATRIZ KIMPA VITA, DONA

Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita (1684–1706) was born in the kingdom of Kongo (present-day Angola) to a family of Kongolese nobility. She was born near Mt. Kibangu and was baptized a Roman Catholic shortly after her birth. At the time of her birth, her home country of Kongo was in political turmoil. King Antonio I had been killed, the capital abandoned, and rival leaders of client kingdoms fought one another to fill the power vacuum.

She was known for the visions and dreams she had as a young girl. She was trained as a *nganga marinda*, or spiritual medium, despite her Roman Catholicism and was chosen at a young age to be initiated into the line of *nganga marinda* for her natural spiritual inclinations. She was married twice when she was young, and both marriages failed. She devoted herself to spiritual things.

King Pedro IV wanted to repopulate the capital of Sao Salvador and sent people to move there. Dona Beatriz was among these colonists. Also among them was a prophetess by the name of Appolonia Mafuta who proclaimed that God was not happy with the series of civil wars in Kongo. Mafuta went on to say God would punish the people of Kongo for their selfishness. She also said that the worship of the *nkisi*, objects with spiritual power, should be ended. She however, did not cast aside traditional religious objects. Mafuta also said that the cross and statues of saints were to be avoided. She drew lots of followers in Sao Salvador and although the region's Roman Catholic priests wanted Mafuta destroyed, King Pedro IV did not do it.

In 1700, Dona Beatriz began to draw from the traditional belief system and her role as *nganga marinda*. She fell so ill in 1704 that her family and friends feared for her life. One day she recovered and claimed that she had died. According to her, St. Anthony of Padua

took over her body. As a representation of a male saint, she flipped the gender roles. At the height of her popularity, all her attendants were men dressed as women and she dressed as a man. Mafuta supported her, saying Dona Beatriz was the voice of God.

She acquired many followers. Her preaching deviated from the norm of Roman Catholicism as she proclaimed that Jesus, Mary, and the saints were all not only black but from Kongo; she publicly berated the European Roman Catholic priests for keeping this from the people. Much to their consternation, she further alienated the Roman Catholic priests by saying her authority was higher than theirs.

She said she died every Friday and visited heaven. In heaven she was instructed to unite all of the Kongo under one Kongo Catholic Church. She also preached that the Kongo had to unite under one king. She preached to King Pedro IV, and he wouldn't heed her call to reunite the kingdom. She then went to his main rival, King Joao in Mbula who also refused to listen.

Undeterred, Dona Beatriz took up residence in the ruined cathedral of Sao Salvador. Thousands of people moved back to the previously abandoned capital. With time, her mostly peasant following increased with nobles joining her movement. The Roman Catholic Capuchin priests were livid with her and wanted her destroyed.

King Pedro IV soon saw her as a threat and also wanted to destroy her. Some of his vassals had joined the movement and rebelled against him. His own wife had also become an Antonian adherent. There was more controversy within her movement before her enemies closed in on her. She proclaimed that she was celibate but had apparently been having sex with one or more of her twelve male attendants because she became pregnant. She and her lover escaped to her village to have her baby. Yet they told her followers that she was going to heaven for a while and that they should wait for her.

The troops of King Pedro IV passed by her village and when they heard her baby Antonio crying, they then searched and found her and her lover. Once caught, they were tried in civil court and convicted. King Pedro IV sentenced them to be burned at the stake. She made

her confession to one of the Capuchin priests who didn't like her. Her lover, Joao Barro, and she were burned at the stake in 1706. Her movement never completely died out.

Douglas Thomas

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BELLO, MUHAMMAD

Muhammad Bello (1781–1837) was the son of 'Uthman dan Fodio, Fulani founder of the Sokoto state, located in northern Nigeria. After 'Uthman dan Fodio consolidated the Hausa states, he divided the duties of administration between his brother and his son, Muhammad Bello. Bello distinguished himself from his father, dan Fodio, who was an astute political leader and scholar, by establishing himself as an Islamic jurist, political leader, and administrator of the state. Bello established his authority through precise writings on theories of Islamic government and politics. He inserted his authority within the Sokoto state and the region by punishing the states that were not aligned with Islamic law.

Radical and militant Islam developed with the concept of *takfir*, which designated those who were considered Muslims to be infidels. Many of the jihads of the region were against city-states who were considered Muslims but did not practice *fiqh* (Islamic law) according to Islamic jurisprudence, which provided the understanding of Sharia (law). Muhammad Bello and his father, 'Uthman dan Fodio, justified the jihads because accommodations and the acceptances of Islam with traditional African religions had been legitimized for centuries. Spiritual worship such as *bori* was a Hausa practice of spiritual possession and Islamic worship. However, according to Bello and dan Fodio, this common practice was *haram* (forbidden). In the practice of Islam, all things are deemed to be lawful unless explicitly prohibited

in the Qur'an. The treatise of Bello and his famous writing, *Infaq al-Maysur* (Expenditure on what is available) was a correspondence between Bello and the ruler of the rival state of Bornu, Muhammad al-Amin ibn Muhammad al-Kanemi, on Islamic law and African religionist syncretism.

Al-Kanemi/Bello: The Case for and against Holy War from Infaq al-Maysur, written by Muhammad al-Amin Ibn Muhammad al-Kanemi to Muhammad Bello, was an examination of Islamic jurisprudence and traditional African belief systems. Muhammad al-Amin questioned Muhammad Bello's charges of paganism. Muhammad al-Amin insisted that they were innocent of paganism because they "pray, give alms, have knowledge of God, fast during Ramadan, and build mosques." Al-Amin stated that those practices were unquestionably Islamic, and they did not warrant punishment. Al-Amin pointed out the contradictions in Bello's worshiping practices because he performed Jumu'ah (Friday's prayer) in the "churches, synagogues or fire temples." When Bello captured a region, he often seized the places of worship for proper Islamic worship and jurisprudence. Al-Amin asked Bello if the captured buildings were other than Muslim places of worship, why did he worship in them? He therefore exposed a contradiction that did not justify punishment or jihad.

Muhammad Bello responded with a rebuttal in his correspondence *Bello: The Case against Bornu*. Bello addressed the syncretizing of traditional African beliefs with Islam. He charged Bornu with making sacrifices to rocks and trees, building shrines with idols, and almsgiving. Bello's interpretation was based on Qur'anic understanding. He told Al-Amin that there were witnesses to the charges because "those seen sacrificing to rocks and trees we have charged with paganism."

It was clear to Muhammad Bello that the religion of its sultan determined the legal judgment of a country. "If he is a Muslim, then the country is dar-al-Islam; if he is a pagan, then the country is dar kufr [nonbelievers]." The jurisprudence of Muhammad Bello was interpreted within Islamic legal systems, which differed from traditional African systems. Traditional African systems have maintained a syncretic blend that allowed for practical use. However,

Islamic law is administrated by rulers who established themselves in direct judicial roles while in consultation with scholars, legists, and the Islamic judges. Often Islamic law attempts to replace traditional systems with a legalist view or introduce Islamic jurisprudence based on religion. The interpretations of Muhammad Bello and Muhammad al-Amin continue to divide modern-day Islamic Africa.

Latif Tarik

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BETA ISRAEL

The Beta Israel (meaning House of Israel), also known as the Falashas, are a group of Jews who lived primarily in Ethiopia, until the 1990s, when most of them immigrated to Israel. The Beta Israel practice Judaism in much the same fashion as Orthodox Jews. However, the Beta Israel have no knowledge of Hebrew. They also know nothing about the Talmud, a collection of law and legal commentary compiled from records dating from the Babylonian Captivity. The Jewish Bible consists of the Torah (first five books of the Old Testament also known as the Books of Moses), the Nevi'im (books of the prophets), and the Ketuvim (poetry and some history). There is a cloud surrounding the origins of the Beta Israel. Their lack of knowledge of the Talmud provides some clues to their origins.

As Jews, the Beta Israel believe in one transcendent God, but they discount the status of Jesus as son of God. They celebrate the ancient Jewish festivals of Passover, Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot), and Atonement (Yom Kippur). In addition to these, the Beta Israel have an additional day of prayer and fasting known as Sigd, meaning prostration. This day is on held 50 days after Yom Kippur. On the day of Sigd, the Beta Israel pray for a return to Israel. The Beta Israel

also have a priesthood and monks (unlike other Jewish groups) who live lives of self-abnegation and preach adherence to the faith.

There have been various theories about the origins of the Beta Israel. A group of practicing Jews in Ethiopia raises questions for historians and other scholars. The fact that they have no current knowledge of Hebrew adds to the mystery. The first question is how did they or their faith get there? How long has the faith been there? Lack of Talmud gives the impression that it has been here for quite a few centuries. Finally, how has the faith been maintained in a nation and society with clear Christian dominance?

One theory was that the Beta Israel are descended from Jews who came during the Solomonic era and settled in Ethiopia. Another theory is that they are the offspring of a community of converts to Judaism. Other theories have elaborated as studies of them continued over the last century. James Quirin, a scholar who studies the Beta Israel, has another theory. According to Quirin, a combination of factors led to the creation of the Beta Israel community. He theorizes that smaller groups of Jews came together after their conquest by Christian forces. He adds that monks from Christian groups joined the Falashas and added elements of Ge'ez, the liturgical language of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

What is generally known is that the Beta Israel has existed since the 1st or 2nd centuries CE, though in scattered communities. Falasha is a pejorative word meaning "outsider." This term denotes their lack of integration into the overall Ethiopian community. Each Beta Israel village/town had its own religious leader and secular leader. There was little contact between the various Beta Israel villages. In the 15th century, an order of monks was initiated. This added some consistency to the life of the community. According to Quirin's theory, these monks were renegade Christian monks who brought the Ge'ez script into Beta Israel ritual.



Members of Beta Israel, the Jewish community of Ethiopia, pray in Jerusalem during Sigd, November 11, 2015. Sigd is an ancient holiday of the Beta Israel that highlighted their desire to move to the Land of Israel and be reunited with their fellow believers. (Rndmst/Dreamstime.com)

Over the centuries, as Christianity came to Ethiopia, the Beta Israel survived significant pressure to convert to Christianity. From the 4th century on, when Christianity came to Ethiopia, the Beta Israel faced repression, which forced them to move into the Lake Tana area of northern Ethiopia. They faced efforts to wipe them out throughout the following centuries, particularly the 15th and 16th centuries. In the 15th century, Emperor Yeshaq proclaimed that those who were not baptized Christians should not be allowed to inherit their father's land. He also added that non-Christians should forever be *falashas* (strangers) in Ethiopia. The Beta Israel were not united in one geographical area, but they all clung to their religious beliefs. Some Beta Israel communities used military resistance against full integration into the Ethiopian state.

In 1624, Emperor Susenyos I took properties belonging to the Beta Israel, forbade them to own land, and tried to force them to convert to Christianity. Seeking military aid from the Portuguese against his enemies the Oromo, Susenyos converted to Roman Catholicism in 1622 and unsuccessfully tried to force all his countrymen to convert from Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity to Roman

Catholicism. He was most probably acting under European influence in persecuting his Jewish population. His confiscation of their land left them largely bereft of any hope of ever acquiring political autonomy. They survived as economic clients of powerful lords, working mostly as artisans.

During the Gondar Dynasty (1632–1755), the Beta Israel fared better, although they were still mostly landless. Many moved from rural client status to thriving artisans in Ethiopian urban spaces. From 1769 to 1855, a period known as the *zimana mesafent* or “time of princes,” central authority was essentially nonexistent in Ethiopia. The Beta Israel as a minority religious community was especially vulnerable as scapegoats and were persecuted. Though they already had their ancestral land confiscated centuries before, particular individuals had received grants of land from emperors for exceptional service to the state, which was taken from them during the *zimana mesafent*.

The *zimana mesafent* was also the time when cultural and linguistic assimilation spread among the Beta Israel. Historically, the Beta Israel spoke a dialect of the Agaw language. They gradually began to speak Amharic during this period. By the mid-19th century only their elders had any memory of the Agaw language, which had been their mainstay. Even though they mostly speak Amharic, there are Agaw words still present in their religious liturgy. They relaxed their traditional Jewish sacrificial and dietary laws; Their poverty made keeping all the laws difficult. Though the Beta Israel were engaged in greater assimilation because of their economic and social condition, they were also increasingly ostracized as more people accused them of *buda* (the evil eye). The Beta Israel responded through a policy of not touching or allowing themselves to be touched by people outside their religious community. The Ethiopian Orthodox Christians accused the Beta Israel of becoming hyenas at night and drinking the blood of Christians. The Beta Israel became more solidly convinced of their religious superiority and mocked the idea that the Eucharist became the body of Christ.

A religious revival took place among the Beta Israel in the 19th century. In the 1840s, the monk Abba Wedaje galvanized the

community with his preaching. This period brought more of the believers back into unwavering practice of their rituals.

Protestant missionaries came on the scene and aggressively proselytized among them. In the early 20th century, European Jews came into contact with the Beta Israel. These contacts were further strengthened after the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. When the Ethiopian drought hit in the 1980s, the state of Israel began to airlift Beta Israel out of Ethiopia. Today the majority of them live in Israel.

Douglas Thomas

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BOKAR, CERNO SAALIF TAAL

Cerno Bokar Saalif Taal (ca. 1883–1940) was born in Segou in the present Republic of Mali and resided from his youth in Bandiagara, where he became a noted and respected religious teacher. His life history reflects the conflicting forces of the times in which he lived. Great nephew of al-Hajj ‘Umar Taal, nineteenth-century jihadist and proselytizer of the Tijaniyya Sufi order in West Africa, Cerno followed in the Taal family traditions of Muslim scholarship and adherence to the Tijaniyya order. At the time, Taal political hegemony in the region had been replaced by French colonial conquest. Al-Hajj ‘Umar was dead, and Cerno’s father had abandoned his family and fled eastward with the retreating Taal armies. Remnants of Taal political authority were retained only through collaboration with the French.

Cerno Bokar was a contemplative and reclusive teacher who never sought political authority. He taught all levels of the Muslim religious sciences, including the oral transmission of basic Muslim doctrine to

nonliterate adults in the form of a catechism known locally as *mā 'd-dīn* (Arabic for “What is religion?”), his version of the Fulfulde-language teaching known as *ka₆₆e* (Fulfulde for *'aqā'id*, “creed” or “dogma”), prevailed among West African Fulfulde-speaking Muslims from at least the seventeenth century.

He never composed any religious text, although his most prominent disciple, Amadou Hampaté Bâ, committed to writing much of what he heard him say. These texts include Cerno’s reflections on humanity, religion, and faith and provide insight into the humility and compassion with which he engaged with those around him.

But humble as he may have been, Cerno was also resolute in his own convictions, which led to a crisis of tragic consequences. In 1937 he was “re-initiated” into the Tijaniyya by Shaikh Hamallah, recognized by many as the *qutb* or spiritual “pole” of the age. Cerno traveled to Nioro to judge Hamallah’s qualities for himself and consequently renewed his initiation with him. Reactions to this event were immediate and dramatic. ‘Umarians and Hamallist Tijanis differed over what seems a minor doctrinal issue, the number of times they recited the *jawharat al-kamāl*, one of the prayers in the Tijani *wird* that ‘Umarians recited twelve, and Hamallists eleven times. But many ‘Umarians also felt that Hamallah threatened their claims to spiritual superiority and that submission to him by such a prominent figure as Cerno Bokar was a betrayal of the Taal family. The French were also suspicious of Hamallah because he had never explicitly accepted their authority, and they considered his followers to be dangerous agitators.

On his return from Nioro, Cerno was detained and questioned by colonial authorities in Mopti. Despite insistence and threats, he refused to renounce his reinitiation and was eventually allowed to return to Bandiagara on condition that he keep his Hamallist affiliation secret. But in 1938, a member of the Taal family was appointed “chief” of Bandiagara, who renounced the earlier agreement and moved against Cerno. His school was closed, he was banned from entering the mosque, and he was forced to spend the remaining months of his life under house arrest.

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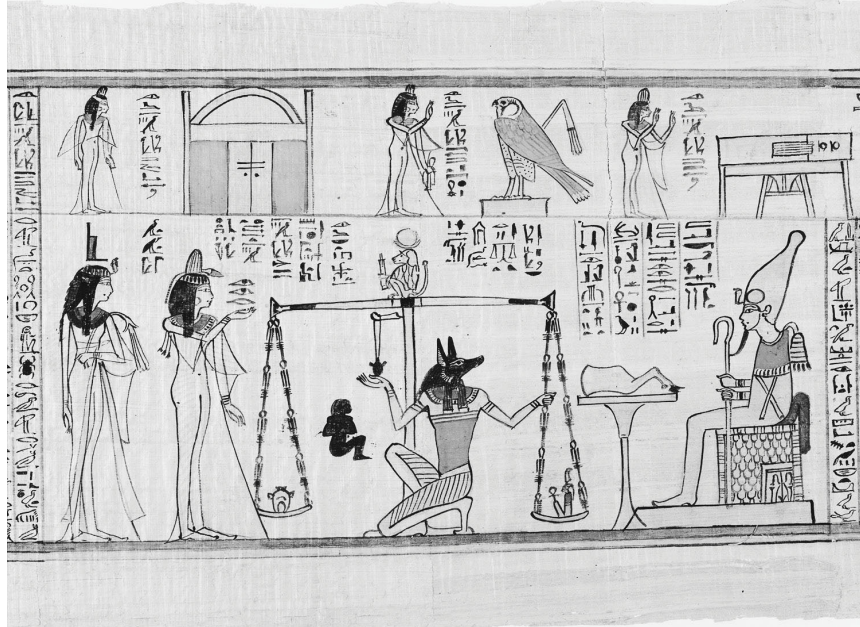
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BOOK OF THE DEAD

The *Book of the Dead* or *Egyptian Book of the Dead* is a collection of spells with the purpose of helping the soul navigate the afterlife. The origin of the text can be traced to the Third Dynasty of Egypt (ca. 2670–2613 BCE). The spells, charms, passwords, and other mystical writings were carved into the walls of the tombs of the Egyptian elite, the oldest of whom was Queen Mentuhotep. In the centuries that followed, the collection was written on papyrus. Since the book is a collection of texts, it is often compared with the Christian Bible. The two are very different, however. Whereas the Bible focuses on living and shares stories to guide one's life, the *Book of the Dead* contains instructions and is a guide to the afterlife. Throughout the centuries the text has come to represent Egyptian mysticism and religion. The *Book of the Dead* is one of the most influential books in history.

The collection is rooted in the Legend of Osiris, with Osiris's brutal murder, dismemberment, and resurrection as the central theme. Osiris, king of Egypt, was responsible for modernizing the kingdom, establishing a code of laws, and encouraging his people to worship the gods. Later Osiris himself would become worthy of worship. His success inspired enemies, most notably Typhon, the evil one who conspired with 72 coconspirators to murder him. With Osiris's story as a base, the texts include the Doctrine of Eternal Life and instructions for funeral ceremonies. These includes instructions on the proper dismemberment of the body following death, proper burial, and what will be faced during judgment.



Scene from the *Book of the Dead* for Nany, a singer of the god Amun, 21st Dynasty, ca. 1050 BCE. Anubis is shown in the throne room of Osiris supervising the weighing of the heart of the dead Nany. Her heart is being weighed against Maat, the goddess of justice and truth, who is represented as a tiny figure wearing her symbol, a single large feather, in her headband. On the right, Osiris, god of the underworld and rebirth, presides over the scene. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Rogers Fund, 1930)

In the centuries since it was first discovered, the use of the collection expanded beyond the Egyptian aristocracy to the common man. Individualistic in nature, the collection has never been codified into one canonical text. There are hundreds of spells, charms, and passwords included in the book. For example, there are over 192 spells, yet there is no one text that contains them all. People often choose which spells, chapters, and texts would suit their particular needs for their journey to the afterlife. This means that nearly every version is different.

Efforts to codify the collection began in earnest in 1805 with the publication of J. Marc Cadet's *Book of the Dead*. The first major study of the text came in 1842, when Karl Richard Lepsius published his *Book of the Dead* and introduced a spell numbering system to track the various texts that make up the book. In 1867, Samuel Birch of the British Museum published the first extensive English translation

of the collection. Later, E. A. Wallis Budge, also of the British Museum, published his own interpretation of the *Book of the Dead* and used the Papyrus of Ani as his basis. In the years that have followed, researchers have continued to decipher the hieroglyphic texts that make up the collection and increase our knowledge of Ancient Egyptian life and religion.

Lopez D. Matthews Jr.

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BRAIDE, GARRICK SOKARI IDIKATIMA

Garrick Sokari Idikatima Braide (ca. 1882–1918) was born sometime between 1882 and 1885 in present-day Southeast Nigeria. His father was an Igbo, and his mother was from the Agu family of Ogbonna. Her family were traditionally the guardians/priests of the local deity. According to the sources, his gestation was a difficult one for his mother. The family discussed aborting the baby because his mother was very sick. She tried aborting the pregnancy more than once but was unsuccessful. She had a dream in which she heard a voice tell her that if she continued to try aborting the pregnancy, she would die. She stopped her efforts and the baby was born. They named him Sokari, meaning “a baby who came of his own effort.”

After his birth, there were other complications involving the family. When they consulted a diviner as to why certain negative things happened to the family, the diviner said Garrick had evil bumps over his head. The diviner offered as a remedy killing Garrick or banishing him from the village. Garrick’s parents chose banishment and took their son to the house of Garrick’s mother’s first cousin, Chief

Igbanibo Will Braide of Bakana. Garrick, as a member of his older cousin's house, took the chief's family name, Braide.

As custom dictated, Garrick worked for Chief Igbanibo until he was around 20 years old. After that, he began to work for himself, engaging in fishing and doing some trading on the side. He married Bene Marion Braide, the chief's daughter, around 1909. Sometime around 1910, Garrick converted to Christianity, practicing the Anglican faith as taught in the Niger Delta Pastorate. His catechist, Moses A. Kemmer, became his mentor.

The catechetical classes were held in the Igbo language. Garrick early on showed a keen passion for his newfound faith. He prayed a great deal, sometimes asking for permission to stay all night in the church praying. He fasted often and asked for forgiveness and divine grace for greater sincerity in his practice of Christianity. He studied the Bible. Before he was baptized and confirmed, his fervency in prayer is said to have led to many miracles. People were often reported to have been healed and delivered from curses as a result of his prayer. Kemmer often took him to visit or sent him to pray for the sick. The people of Bakana, remembering his mother's family history as guardians of Ogu, often said Garrick's power was a result of paganism. With time, as more people were healed, Kemmer trusted Garrick with more duties. Kemmer encouraged the people to trust that Garrick's miracles were a result of God's power working in his life.

As Garrick's fame spread, people began to call him Elijah II. Kemmer was actually the first to compare him to Elijah in a sermon. Like Elijah, supernatural signs and wonders accompanied Garrick's preaching and praying. He went throughout the Niger delta region healing and preaching against the use of fetish objects. He also taught the people to believe in Jesus and worship the Christian God alone. Fetish practitioners brought their implements for public burning when he showed up. Garrick created deputies through prayer and laying on of his hands. These deputies went along with the anointing and power that Garrick exhibited. They called forth people who secretly practiced fetishism, healed the sick, and preached belief in Jesus and his power alone, just as Garrick did.

Garrick's early success with converts was applauded and encouraged by the Niger Delta pastorate of the Anglican Church. His increasing popularity stirred up ill feeling among the British clergy, however who saw themselves as masters of the Gospel. Bishop James Johnson of the Anglican Church Niger Delta pastorate was instrumental in bringing up Garrick on charges of fomenting insurrection because of his insistence on destroying idols. Johnson showed concern at Garrick's use of the appellation Elijah II as well as his simple preaching, which did not underline Anglican doctrine or direct his listeners to join an Anglican congregation. One source says that in 1909, the combined baptized Christians in the Niger Delta area were numbered at 900, counting Catholics and Protestants. By 1917, after Garrick Braide's evangelism, the recorded number of baptized Christians was at 11,700. This included a 500 percent increase for Roman Catholic converts between 1912 and 1917.

In addition to interdictions against idol worship and fetish practices, Garrick Braide preached strongly against drinking alcohol. The people of the Niger delta consumed large amounts alcohol annually. As a result of the excise tax on liquor, the colonial government earned large sums from the sale of alcoholic beverages. After Garrick Braide's evangelism yielded large numbers of converts, the British officials noticed significant losses in tax revenue from alcohol. Not long after this, colonial surveillance of Garrick's activities led to his prosecution.

Garrick was convicted and spent two years in prison with hard labor. Once released, Garrick faced eight more charges. He was jailed again in 1916. He was released and died November 15, 1918. His followers started a new church called Christ's Army, which continues to this day.

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BUSHONGO/BAKUBA BELIEFS

The Bushongo is a kingdom in present-day southeast Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The kingdom is made up of 19 different ethnicities, all speaking one the Bushongo languages. Their land is between the Kasai and Sankuru rivers. The Bushongo refer to themselves as Bushongo, but their neighbors call them the Bakuba, and their kingdom is known as the kingdom of Kuba. Bakuba means "the people of lightning." This name is thought to be a reference to their national weapon, which is a shiny spear that sparkles as it turns in the light when thrown.

The kingdom was created as a uniting of smaller constituencies of similar tribes in the first half of the 17th century. The ruling class and aristocracy are from a central Bushongo group and the other ethnicities have traditionally occupied different levels of the social strata. The kingdom is still in existence and operates much as it has for the last four centuries. There has been a reorganization to a system more akin to merit-based promotion, although still grounded in traditional aristocratic control.

Beliefs

The Bushongo believe in a creator god named Bumba. Bumba is not worshiped but respected. Bumba vomited the world into existence. First he lived in darkness and the world was all water. He started with vomiting the sun. The sun in turn shone and the waters began to part, thereby exposing land. He vomited humanity, animals, the moon, lightning, and everything else. At some point, which varies in the oral traditions, Bumba left humanity to its own devices and returned to heaven.

Bomazi is an ancestor god who descended from heaven and found a childless old couple living by a river. He predicted to them that the

woman would give birth to a daughter. They had a daughter, Nchienge, and Bomazi married her once she reached puberty. The daughter had five sons with Bomazi. Among the sons were twins, Woto and Moele. Moele's son slept with three of Woto's wives. Moele refused to punish his son, so Woto left. Moele noticed there was no sun after the departure of Woto, so he sent men to plead with Woto to return. The men failed, and Moele sent a dog with another group of men. The dog helped them find Woto. Woto sent them back with three birds: a cuckoo, a rooster, and a weaver bird. Woto told the men to let the three birds loose in the village and then retreat into their homes. Once they heard the cuckoo and the rooster they were to stay indoors. Once the weaver bird sounded, however, they were to come out. They followed the instructions and found that the sun shined brightly. These stories are two of many used to explain the origins of things among the Bushongo.

The Bushongo also believe in nature spirits called *mingesh* (plural) or *ngesh* (singular). These spirits live close to waters, forests, and villages. The *mingesh* behave like humans and have different personalities. The *mingesh* can negatively affect harvests, births, and other human affairs. The individuals have to find ways to live with the *mingesh* in harmony. The *mingesh* are also seen as the intermediaries between humanity and Nyima/Nyeem, the supreme spirit.

Practice

The Bushongo do not venerate Bumba in practice, but they did practice rituals to venerate their ancestors. Reportedly, these activities have largely stopped. They still use divination to determine the cause of illness, bad fortune, poor harvest, and other ills of society. The diviners determine which of the *mingesh* have been offended or need to be appeased. Since colonization, the Bushongo have been exposed to various other spiritual and religious influences. At their core is their traditional cosmology, which continues to shape how they view the world.

The Bushongo are known for their raffia weaving. These weavings are made into ritual clothing that, along with masks, is used for

initiation rituals of boys and girls into manhood and womanhood. They are also used for court rituals. Since the king reigns with divine right, all court rituals are also religious rituals. As with other traditional African societies, there really is nothing outside of religion, because the secular does not exist. The Bushongo are known for their masks. Starting in the 18th century wooden statues/portraiture called *ndop* were made of each king. These were not carvings of the king's physical likeness, but of his spirit.

The masks are thought to be likenesses of the mingesh. According to the tradition, the first mask carver saw a ngesh in the forest. He was rattled once he returned to the village and carved a mask, which was the likeness of the ngesh he saw. When the dancers perform in the masks, the mingesh are thought to possess them, which accounts for their changed, often aggressive, behavior while dancing. The Bushongo make a mask honoring each ngesh and there are more than 20 masks used in Mukanda manhood initiation rites.

The raffia clothing is made from the fibers of the raffia palms. They are often colored with a die called *twool*. Twool, which is made with tree fibers, have ritual purposes. It is also put on the face and body for spiritual protection.

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BWITI

Bwiti is a traditional religion practiced in Gabon, Togo, and Cameroon among populations of the Fang, Mitsogo, and Balumbo ethnic groups. It began as the religious system of the Mitsogo, Tsongo, and Babongo. The cult is reformative in nature—that is, it tries to recapture religious beliefs and practices that have since passed. It

was and is primarily an ancestral cult with reference to an overarching deity. The latest version of it originates in the early 20th century among the Mitsogo. It soon passed to the Fang. With the Fang, the practice has experienced expansion, reformation, and constant updating.

The adherents of Bwiti believe that Mbeghe-me-Nkwa laid a cosmic egg. Nzame-Mbeghe, Nyingone-Mbeghe, and None-Mbeghe emerged from the egg. Evus, the embodiment of all things wicked and bad, instigated an incestuous relationship between Nyingone-Mbeghe and her brother, None-Mbeghe. This incestuous act was the primordial act of disobedience. As a consequence of her disobedience, Nyingone-Mbeghe is required to carry the earth on her head. Nzame-Mbeghe is the primary god of Bwiti. Nyingone-Mbeghe is a goddess of fertility, femininity, and night. None-Mbeghe is the god of population and reproduction.

Bwiti as it is now began as a syncretic religion involving elements of various traditional belief systems of the area. In the last 20 years, elements of Christianity have been added to the rituals and practice. However, it remains at the core a traditional African cult. Central to the practice is the use of the ebonga (ibonga) root. The root of the ebonga tree has medicinal powers and in large quantities can induce hallucinations. The adherents of Bwiti believe that the use of ebonga aides the initiates and adherents in their search to reach the spirit world.

Bwiti is polytheistic. The forest people in Central and West Africa generally name one god, sometimes seeing the forest itself as a god/protector. They are not generally considered monotheistic because ancestor veneration and the acknowledgment of other spirits/divinities are a part of their belief systems, as they are also a major part of Bwiti. The forest is an important spatial aspect of Bwiti because most preparations for initiations and other ceremonies are done in the forest or involve materials taken from the forest. A central goal of the cult is to access the spiritual power and presence of ancestors and the deities in an attempt to make sense of and set aright the things of this material world. Regular contact with the spiritual forces of the ancestors and the deities are thought to give

the adherent the integral balance a person needs to live a well-rounded life.

There is no unifying text or theology of Bwiti. The organizational structure is decentralized with each temple of Bwiti being independent and led by its founder/priest. There are many subsects; five main subsects are recognized. In spite of this, there is a unifying similarity among the various Fang Bwiti congregations. Usually a new congregation is found by a member of a preexisting one, guaranteeing continuity. Fang Bwiti priests also visit churches, looking for new material (ritual, belief, or organizational) to use in the proliferation of their cult. As stated previously, Christian elements have been added to the practice.

In Bwiti, the actual practice of revitalization is more important than belief or doctrine. Bwiti grew and expanded during the early days of European colonization. Though one scholar noted that the Fang, Mitsogo, and Tsogo experienced relatively little colonial violence, the fact that their culture and ways were being eroded spurred the original practitioners of Fang Bwiti to react with evangelical zeal. The amalgamation of various religious traditions of the region came together to produce what is known today as Bwiti. As such, Bwiti continues to live and expand based on individuals seeking an escape from despair, a way to make life more livable.

In Bwiti, each adherent must be initiated. The initiation process is protracted, and the actual ceremony lasts three or four days. Prior to the initiation, the participants must go to the forest to gather materials to begin the purification process, which lasts for another three or four days. There is also an initial purging process, during which initiates drink a concoction and regurgitate. This process is a couple of days long. Then there is ritual washing that includes various elements. A trip to the forest involves another purification ritual involving smoke and fire. The initiation ceremony itself has at its centerpiece dancing rituals that last into the night, sometimes all night long. The initiates take ebonga and experience visions or at least gets well intoxicated. Once the initiation process is over, there is another ritual washing before the ending ceremony, which requires more dancing. The dancing is worship and a way of getting past the pressing stress of

one's reality and crossing to the ancestors and eventually to their god.

Currently, there are around 15,000–20,000 adherents of Bwiti. They comprise approximately 10 percent of Gabon's population. The majority of Gabonais practice some form of Christianity. Although it is practiced in Cameroon and Togo, Bwiti has gained notoriety among Western scholars from the Fang practice found in Gabon.

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CAGN

Cagn is the supreme god of the San or Bushmen people of Southern Africa. His job focuses on activities that relate to the hunt, unsurprising because the Bushmen are people who are on the hunt. One of his main duties as a god is to ensure a successful hunt, often involving protecting the San from animals or people who can endanger it. Cagn is a trickster god who can disguise himself into a variety of animals to protect himself against enemies. For instance, a walking stick (praying mantis) often protects him/her by pretending to be a stick. A person, on the other hand, may lie to protect him/herself.

Cagn is a classic nature/trickster god. He is a nature god because he is involved in the hunt for food. His duties may range from protecting the hunters to insuring a good hunt. He is the protector and the sustainer in San religion, especially in hunting. The role that Cagn plays in the hunt makes him the supreme god in the Bushman religion.

Tommy L. Johnson

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CANDIT

Candit is the water goddess of the Nuer people of South Sudan. She is one of the daughters of Abuk and Garang, who along with another of her sisters, Nyaliep, drowned and became divine. Candit lives in streams and rivers and is seen as the source of life for the Nuer. The Dinka see her as the goddess of streams, while her mother, Abuk, is considered to be the goddess of the river.

Tommy L. Johnson

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CANDOMBLÉ

Candomblé is a religion that began in Brazil during the days of slavery. The religion has spread to other Latin American countries, including Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Venezuela. There are reportedly two million practitioners worldwide. Candomblé means “dance in honor of the gods.”

The religion combines elements from Kongo, Yoruba, and Fon belief systems. Slaves from these ethnicities in West Africa were transported to plantations in the Western Hemisphere to work. In Latin America, they were mostly taught Roman Catholicism. Some from the Kongo had been Roman Catholics in their native land, and a syncretism took place, which involved language (creole languages were invented) and an evolution of culture, and religion.

Beliefs

The practitioners of Candomblé believe in one creator god named Olodumare, who is the creator god of the Yoruba people and the practitioners of Santeria (see also Olodumare). They also believe in lesser gods known as *orixa* (*orishas*). The orixa are also called *vodun*. The orixa/vodun are ancestors who have achieved god status.

The adherents of Candomblé also believe that recent ancestors play a role in the lives of the living.

They believe in the primacy of destiny. The personal orixa/vodun of each individual helps him/her to realize his/her destiny. There are priests who practice divination using cowrie shells to determine one's destiny and orixa.

Practice

The practitioners of Candomblé worship at temples or in a believer's home. Dance and song are a big part of their worship. Dances are carefully choreographed as they are meant to call the spirits. In the midst of the dancing and singing, the orixas come and possess people. The practice spread throughout Latin America. Portuguese, Spanish, and various elements of Yoruba, Kikongo, and other African languages are used in worship.

Douglas Thomas

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CHI

Chi in Igbo cosmology has two distinct meanings. The first is translated as “god,” “angel,” “guardian,” “personal spirit,” “soul,” “spirit-double,” and the like. The second meaning is “day” or “daylight,” and it is commonly used to depict transitional periods between day and night or night and day. Thus, the Igbos speak of *Chi ofufo* to mean daybreak and *Chi ojiji* as nightfall. There is also the Igbo word *Mgba chi*, which represents the most powerful hour of noon, a time favored in folklore by itinerant spirits and feared by children.

Chi as personal spirit, guardian, and god is central in Igbo land. It is the basis of Igbo spirituality. Similar to *Ori* in Yoruba, and *Ka* of

Ancient Egypt, Chi is the fundamental force of creation. Everyone and everything has a Chi. Chi as personal spirit and guardian of a person is conceived as *mmuo*, a spirit that determines and protects the destiny of a person. The universal Chi indirectly in charge of everything is *Chukwu*, who is the supreme being beyond the limit of time and space. The personal Chi connects an individual to the supreme god, who determines the trajectory of a person's journey on earth. Chi is assigned to an individual at birth by Chukwu. Chi is unique and personal, and it determines and guides a person's destiny. Those with strong Chi, the Igbos believe, would have prosperity, good health and good fortune, while those with weak Chi would be prone to sickness, poverty, and bad luck.

Chike Mgbeadichie

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CHIUTA

Chiuta means "great bow in the sky." Chiuta is the creator god of the Tumbuka people of the present-day countries of Malawai, Zambia, and Tanzania. The rainbow is his symbol. Chiuta is self-created and in turn created the whole world. He is also regarded as all-knowing (omniscient) and all-powerful (omnipotent). As a giver of life, Chiuta is also the god of water and rain. There is a river named after him in Malawi.

According to legend, the world was dry and lifeless. Suddenly thunder and lightning appeared. The Chiuta was there in the form of a spider. He created the first man and woman. Then he descended from heaven on spider silk with the first pair of humans. He set them

up on earth and told them not to play with sticks to avoid making a fire. The humans were disobedient. They played with sticks and started a fire and it burned and destroyed a great many things.

Chiuta was angry and scolded the people. He told them that because of their disobedience, he was leaving them to their own affairs. As a result of their disobedience, all humans would have to die and return to the sky. The Tumbuka know of Chiuta and his power, but do not really worship him because Chiuta is a faraway god, and they have intermediary ancestor spirits and other nature spirits whom they contact when they need them.

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CHIWARA

Chiwara, Chi Wara, or Tiwara is the mythical hero who brought agriculture to the Bambara (Bamana) peoples of West Africa. Translated literally as “laboring wild animal,” it denotes a “good farmer.”

After Chiwara came down from the sky and taught the Bambara how to farm the earth, they began to grow and prosper. The people became complacent, however, and began to waste their surplus crops. Upon seeing this, the Chiwara was so distraught that he buried himself in the ground. Upset that they had been abandoned, the elders commissioned the creation of a mask of the Chiwara to be worn during festivals appealing for his return.

This practice continues today, where the Bamana carve elaborate wooden headdresses in the form of the Chiwara. He is often depicted as an antelope; however, some include aspects of an armadillo or pangolin as well. These animals are revered due to their claws and horns used for digging the earth, simulating farming.

Within the Malian Bambara culture, there are three main styles of headdress depending on region: the northern group around Ségou, the southern group around Bamako, and a third near Sikasso, which all have distinct styles. The female is represented with the presence of a baby and straight horns, while males are represented with a phallus and curved horns. These are worn by the Chi-wara-ton—a secret society of both males and females—during ceremonial dances, which are intended to ensure a prosperous millet crop.

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CHURCH OF CHRIST (HOLINESS)

The Church of Christ (Holiness) is a predominantly African American holiness-Pentecostal denomination. Its history is older than its name. The founder, Charles Price Jones, was the pastor of Mt. Helm Baptist Church in Jackson, Mississippi, in 1895, when he began to preach the holiness doctrine of sanctification as a separate act of grace in the process of salvation. He was excommunicated from the Baptist Association and endured a protracted legal battle with the members of Mt. Helm, who did not agree with his new teachings.

He later established an association of Baptist pastors who were also teaching the holiness doctrine. Among them were C. H. Mason, J. A. Jeter, and W. H. Pleasant. These men were all dismissed from their Baptist associations and got together to start another denomination. They first chose the name Church of God, but there were (and are) so many denominations with that name. Mason said that God revealed the name Church of God in Christ to him while he walked along the street in Little Rock, Arkansas. The group liked the name and chose it.

In 1906, Jones sent Mason and Jeter to Los Angeles to investigate the Azusa Street Revival. Reportedly, the Holy Ghost had fallen and miracles like those told of in the Bible were happening. Mason went and received the baptism in the Holy Ghost with the evidence of glossolalia (speaking in tongues). Jones was not too keen on this development. They discussed the development, but in the end Jones did not accept it and withdrew the right hand of fellowship from Mason.

Mason sued and kept the name and went on to establish the largest Holiness-Pentecostal denomination in America. Jones went through a series of names and settled on the name Church of Christ (Holiness). Currently, they have approximately 14,000 members in 154 churches. They are scattered throughout the United States with a significant presence in Mississippi and California.

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CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST

The Church of God in Christ is a holiness-Pentecostal Christian denomination. It is called holiness because the doctrine is focused on holy and clean living promulgated in the holiness doctrine articulated by many in the 19th century. It is Pentecostal because the doctrine insists on the baptism and indwelling of the Holy Ghost as it is described in the second chapter of Acts on the day of Pentecost. The denomination is predominantly African American and was founded and spread among primarily African Americans in 1897.

The founders of the Church of God in Christ are many, but the primary leaders are recognized as Charles Price Jones and Charles

Harrison Mason. Both of them were Baptist preachers in the Deep South of the United States, Mississippi and Tennessee, respectively. Both had studied at Arkansas Baptist College (now in Little Rock). Jones graduated, but Mason quit after hearing teachings that went against his strongly held beliefs.

Mason's parents had been slaves and as such clung to the remnants of their Christian faith interpreted through the prism of their African understanding of the world. Though they had been slaves in America, the cultural basis of West African ethnicities was foundational to the worldview of slaves throughout the Americas. In West African cultures, religion is not a separate sphere of society and life as in the Western European cultures to which the slaves were brought. For the Africans, there is no secular or realm outside the reach of one's spiritual and religious beliefs.

With that in mind, when slaves turned to Christianity, their beliefs and practices permeated every area of their life. Early on, the teachings of holiness that insist on living lives free from the burden and practice of sin took hold in the Afro-Christianity that the slaves developed. Spiritual conversion experiences were also an endemic part of the Afro-Christianity and the holiness movement. So, the doctrine of holiness intertwined with the West African worldview permeated Afro-Christian practices and theology.

At the end of slavery, there was a move to make everything about African Americans more "American"—that is, more culturally European. This went from speech patterns to lifestyles. Theology was not exempt from the widespread trend. When Mason went to Arkansas Baptist, he encountered the teachings of Charles Lewis Fisher, a then-recent graduate of what would become the University of Chicago Seminary. Fisher was teaching a new twist to Calvinist doctrine prevalent among mainstream American Christianity then and now. This doctrine was primarily that once one accepted Jesus Christ as personal savior, his/her salvation was sealed, despite what he/she did later. This is in direct opposition to the holiness doctrine and that of the Afro-Christian theology that developed for centuries under the burden of slavery. Mason was not willing to abandon his beliefs and left Arkansas Baptist College over the issue.

Mason and Jones met and became friends. Together they taught the holiness doctrine, which led to conflict in the Baptist Associations in Mississippi. As the new doctrine preached by Fisher and others infiltrated the Baptist churches, the old Afro-Christian faith came under attack. The Baptist Association of Mississippi withdrew the right hand of fellowship from Mason and Jones. Jones and Mason and others who agreed with them established a new denomination in 1897. They first used the name Church of God, but when they went to register their new group, they found many other denominations with the same name. They prayerfully sought a name. According to the oral and written tradition, Mason was walking along a certain street in Little Rock, Arkansas, when God revealed to him the name Church of God in Christ based on 1 Thessalonians 2:14, where Paul writes of the churches of God that are in Christ.

Jones and the others accepted and adopted the designation as their official name. In 1906, the Azusa Street Revival began in Los Angeles, California. This revival attracted international attention as it was reported that the Holy Ghost fell there on the day of Pentecost. Jones as leader of the newly established holiness denomination sent Mason and another preacher, J. A. Jeter of Arkansas, out to California to investigate the revival. Mason went and received the baptism of the Holy Ghost with the evidence of glossolalia, or speaking in unknown tongues.

Jones was not convinced of the validity of glossolalia. The group split over the issue with Mason and the other pastors who followed him, meeting in 1907 and forming the first general assembly of the Church of God in Christ under Mason's leadership. The two factions went to court over the name. The courts awarded Mason and his faction the use of the name. Jones in turn renamed his faction the Church of Christ (Holiness).

Mason organized the Church of God in Christ according to the dictates of his conscience and the Bible. At the time the debate for women's place in the ministry was a driving force. Female evangelists had a role in the holiness movement throughout the world. Women evangelists were also prevalent during the Pentecostal revival throughout the world, with some women leading congregations, such

as Aimee Semple McPherson of the Foursquare Gospel Church. Others founded denominations and led them, including Ida Robinson of Mt. Sinai Holy Church of America, Inc.

Mason turned to the West African dual-gender authority system under which most Afro-Christian organizations operated during and shortly after slavery. In 1911, Mason established a women's department and asked new convert Lizzie Robinson to lead it. Robinson was a devout Baptist and served as the matron of the Baptist Academy. Once she received the baptism of the Holy Ghost, she was fired from her job at the Baptist Academy. Robinson had previously served Joanna Moore and her Bible Band organization by selling their booklets and organizing Bible Bands among African-American women in the South. She used those skills in the Church of God in Christ. She began her work with vigor and established women's auxiliaries in every church. Women's auxiliaries included Sunshine Band (youth ministry for those under 12 years old), sewing circle, Bible Band, Home and Foreign Missions, among others.

Mason allowed the West African dual-gender authority system to permeate every level of the church. In some West African kingdoms, there was historically a king and a queen mother who was usually the king's mother, older sister, aunt, or grandmother. This woman ranked higher than all the women in the kingdom and usually lobbied the king and/or his council of advisers for things that concerned women. In the Church of God in Christ, Mason put an equitable female leader on each level. Each church had a pastor and church mother who oversaw the women's ministries and often functioned with powers of an assistant pastor. The district level had a male as district superintendent and a female as supervisor of women, commonly called the district missionary, whose job it was to organize, survey, and advise the women's work in the local churches on the district. At the jurisdictional level there was a jurisdictional bishop (previously known as state overseer or state bishop) and a jurisdictional supervisor of women, commonly called state or jurisdictional mother. At the apex of the church's leadership was Mason as senior bishop and Robinson as national mother. This system still operates in the Church of God in Christ.

Mason led the group until his death in November 17, 1961. There was another controversy after Mason's death. Mason had established the office of senior bishop similar to that of Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (CME). Ozro Thurston Jones Sr. was named senior bishop after Mason's death. There was a disagreement over the power and position of senior bishop. After some wrangling, the Church of God in Christ convened a constitutional convention, in which they reformed the administrative structure of the church and the office of senior bishop was abolished. The office of presiding bishop along with eleven jurisdictional bishops serving as the general board made up the executive branch of the church. The General Assembly (made up of all ordained elders and certain licensed female evangelists, jurisdictional and district supervisors of women) comprised the legislative branch of the church. The Judicial Board makes up the judiciary branch of the church. Under this structure, the Church of God in Christ has grown to over 10 million members in all 50 states and on every continent of the world.

Douglas Thomas

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COKER, DANIEL

Daniel Coker (1780–1846) was born Isaac Wright in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1780. His mother, Susan Coker, was a white indentured servant and his father, Edward Wright, was an enslaved African. His parents' legal situation created problems for him. Under the law, children received the status of their mother. Though his mother was an indentured servant, she was still legally free but his father was enslaved. He was required to spend 31 years in slavery because his

parents' union was not legal in Maryland. It was illegal for him to learn, but his white half-brother, whose father was the master, refused to go to school unless Isaac went with him. As a result, Isaac, also known as Daniel Coker, received his elementary education, though he attended as a valet to his white half-brother.

He ran away to New York City when he was a teenager. While he was there, he converted to Methodism and changed his name to Daniel Coker. Francis Asbury, Methodist bishop, licensed Coker to preach. Coker returned to Baltimore but used his white half-brother's identity to avoid capture and reenslavement. Friends helped him buy his freedom and once free from the obligation of slavery, Coker began to openly condemn slavery. In 1802, Asbury ordained him a deacon. He published a work, *Dialogue between a Virginian and a Minister*, in 1810 and opened and taught at the African School that was housed in Sharp Street Methodist Church from 1807 to 1817. He was also the headmaster and so well known for it that it was commonly called the Daniel Coker School.

In 1787, prior to Coker's ascension in the Methodist hierarchy, another Methodist congregation in Baltimore, Lovely Lane Methodist Church, experienced problems when whites refused to worship with blacks. The blacks from the Lovely Lane Church left and established the Colored Methodist Society. By 1801, Coker and the blacks from Sharp Street grew tired and established the African Methodist Bethel Society. Coker founded branches of the society throughout the Baltimore area. Later, after officially becoming a part of the AME Church, they incorporated as Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church. They joined forces with Richard Allen (see also Allen, Richard) and his congregation in Philadelphia to establish a new denomination: the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Coker represented more than 600 congregants when he came to the meeting.



Daniel Coker, one of the founders of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. (Payne, Daniel A. *History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, 1968)

In the founding conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Daniel Coker was initially elected first bishop in 1816 at the foundational meeting. He declined in favor of Richard Allen the next day. There may have been some jealousy on Allen's part, for later that same year at the first AME conference, Allen publicly rebuked Coker for ridiculing Allen's preaching style. For reasons not readily known, Coker resigned his pastorate and was excommunicated from the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1818. In 1819, he successfully petitioned for readmittance to the AME church. His readmittance, however, came with restrictions to the pulpit: he was no longer allowed to pastor and allowed to preach only when invited by a pastor.

Following this turn in his fortunes, Coker, who was previously against the idea of colonizing Africa with freed slaves, changed his stance. He emigrated to Liberia and then Sierra Leone with his family in 1820. Coker established the first AME church in Liberia with three other missionaries, who soon died. Coker then led the remaining group to Sierra Leone where they settled. He established an AME

church in Freetown, which he pastored until his death in 1846. He left behind a large and prominent family in Freetown.

Douglas Thomas

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(COLORED) CHRISTIAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

The roots of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church can be traced all the way to the founder of Methodism himself, John Wesley. Wesley was originally a priest in the Anglican Church, also known as the Church of England. As early as 1769, Wesley presided over itinerants sent to America to organize Methodist Churches. The official original Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) was founded in Baltimore, Maryland, in December 1784 (Noll 2004).

As the climate of the still brand-new country of America began to develop, the prevailing issue of the time, slavery, would become a divisive topic in the newly established MEC. Wesley was a staunch opponent of slavery in the colonies of Britain, and that belief carried over to the United States. To permanently cement his position on the issue, he wrote and circulated a pamphlet condemning the institution of slavery in 1774. In the pamphlet, titled *Thoughts upon Slavery*, Wesley railed against the unjust nature of slavery and the false reasoning for maintaining it even within the Christian Church. He concluded the following:

I deny that villainy is ever necessary. It is impossible that it should ever be necessary, for any reasonable creature to violate all the laws of justice, mercy and truth. No circumstances can make it necessary for a man to burst in sunder all the ties of humanity. It can never be necessary for a rational being to sink himself below a brute. A man can be under no necessity, of degrading himself into a wolf. The absurdity of the supposition is so glaring, that one would wonder any one can help seeing it. (p. 38)

While slaveholding was frowned upon by the very founder of Methodism, it was not exactly prohibited for entry into the MEC. Alexander (1907) noted that the issue led to a “compromise” at the General Conference of 1816. The law, which became known as the Compromise Law, was outlined in the *Journal of the General Conference* of 1816 as follows:

Your committee find that in the South and West the civil authorities render emancipation impracticable, and they are constrained to admit that to bring about such a change in the civil code as would favor the cause of liberty is not in the power of the General Conference. They beg leave to submit the following resolution:

Resolved, that no slaveholder shall be eligible to any official station in our church where the laws of the State in which he lives will admit of emancipation and permit the liberated slave to enjoy freedom. (p. 170)

The philosophical schism on the issue of slavery eventually became too great for the MEC to contain and continue as one united organization. At the 1844 General Conference in Louisville, Kentucky, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (MECS) was born (Alexander 1907). It is from this group that the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church would be organized.

Many African American members of the MECS wanted desperately to form their own church with their own polity. At the

1866 MECS General Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana, these desires were discussed by their white sponsors. The 1866 General Conference approved the request of its African American constituency to organize their own independent Methodist Church. The Colored Methodist Episcopal Church was officially organized on December 16, 1870, in Jackson, Tennessee. The original Organizing Conference of 1870 consisted of 41 delegates (former slaves) from eight Colored Annual Conferences of the MECS (Christian Methodist Episcopal Church 2010).

The newly formed CME Church adopted Wesley's *Articles of Religion* and elected their first two bishops. Bishop William H. Miles and Bishop Richard H. Vanderhost would become the first and second bishops respectively of the brand-new denomination. In 1954, at the General Conference in Memphis, Tennessee, the name was officially changed to the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church.

According to the World Council of Churches (2016), the CME Church currently has a membership of 858,670 in the United States, Africa, and the Caribbean. The CME Church reports a US membership, however, of more than 1.2 million. There are 11 Episcopal districts, including 9 in the United States and 2 on the continent of Africa. The CME Church sponsors four liberal arts colleges: Lane College in Jackson, Tennessee; Miles College in Birmingham, Alabama; Texas College in Tyler, Texas; and Paine College in Augusta, Georgia. Their theological seminary of choice is the Phillips School of Theology of the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, Georgia (CME Church, 2016).

Today, the CME Church is ever-evolving in what they consider to be the will of God. The church elected its first female bishop, Teresa E. Snorton, at the 37th General Conference in Mobile, Alabama. At the same General Conference, Bishop Godwin Umoette was elected the 60th bishop of the CME Church and first indigenous bishop to the continent of Africa. Bishop Lawrence L. Reddick III, the 51st bishop of the CME Church, currently serves as the senior bishop/CEO and presiding prelate of the Eighth Episcopal District.

Jeffrey Flanigan

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COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

According to legend, the Coptic Orthodox Church was founded around 43 CE when St. Mark entered Alexandria, Egypt, and began his work of proselytizing and church building. John Mark, who is credited with writing the Gospel according to St. Mark, the second book of the New Testament, was the nephew of St. Peter and a cousin to St. Barnabas. Legend says Mark was born in Cyrenaica, present-day Libya. He and his parents were attacked by raiders and lost their property and returned to their ancestral homeland of Judea (present-day Israel).

After the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, the Christian Church was founded. Mark was a young evangelist with Paul and Barnabas when they went to preach to the Gentiles. Legend records that after these episodes, he went on to have an illustrious career as an evangelist in Libya before going to Alexandria, Egypt.

In 64 CE, St. Mark was martyred in the city of Alexandria when a pagan mob dragged him through the streets. After his death, the church that he founded continued and continues until this day. The word *Copt* is derived from *Aegyptos*, which is a Greek term describing natives of Egypt. The Arabic word *qbt* is also derived from Copt. The ancient Egyptian language is called Coptic. The Bible and all liturgical literature was in Coptic.

The Coptic Church is responsible for the oldest Catechetical School founded about 190 in Alexandria. This school was instrumental to the spread of Christianity throughout the rest of Egypt. With the Bible in the vernacular of the period, the Coptic language, there was easier access to the scripture and thus education about the church. Though there was some conflict with practitioners of pagan religions, gradually Christianity spread throughout the population.

The Coptic Church is also credited with the development of monasticism in Christianity. There was a history of Christian hermits going into the Egyptian desert from the early days of Christianity and devoting themselves to living a godly example. Anthony the Great was one of the more notable early Egyptian monks because he was one of the first to leave his life and go into the desert to live an ascetic life. With time as more people sought this life, organization came to the monastic life.

Council of Nicea

The Council of Nicea was called in 325 CE in response to the Arian Controversy. Arius was a Berber monk from Cyrenaica in present-day Libya, and thus a part of the Coptic Church. Arius studied in Antioch and developed some theological ideas about Christianity that went against the grain of what was publicly accepted theology. Arius taught that Jesus Christ was not eternal but created. He also taught that Jesus Christ was not as powerful as God the father. These teachings gathered followers and created conflict in the church.

Emperor Constantine called the church council to meet at Nicea (present-day Iznik, Turkey). St. Alexander, bishop of Alexandria, presided over the meeting along with Hosius of Cordoba. Constantine invited all 1,800 bishops of the Christian Church of the Roman Empire at that time. Fewer than 300 showed up. In the early days of Christianity, each major city had a bishop with one bishop that often presided over a national area and whose authority superseded those of the bishops in cities. The purpose was to set orthodox theology about the nature of Christy (Christology) and other beliefs. The result was the Nicene Creed, which, among other things, says that Jesus

Christ was co-eternal with the father and all God and all man. Only two of the bishops refused to sign the Nicene Creed and they and Arius were exiled to Illyria in present-day Albania. The Council of Nicea gave the exclusive responsibility of deciding the time of Easter to St. Alexander, bishop of Alexandria.

The council was also tasked with dealing with another Coptic bishop, Meletius. Meletius was bishop of Lycopolis (present-day Asyut, Egypt). In 303, Diocletian, a Roman emperor, and his successors began to curb the legal rights of Christians. They issued edicts that took away Christians' rights to own property. During this time, Meletius and Peter, bishop of Alexandria, were victims of persecution and they witnessed Christians renouncing their faith in order to avoid persecution, including Meletius's predecessor, Apollonius. Meletius refused to take communion with those who had renounced their faith but came back when things were safe.

There was deeper trouble when four imprisoned Egyptian bishops wrote to Meletius, complaining about him entering their dioceses and ordaining priests and deacons. Peter, the bishop of Alexandria, was in hiding but he eventually was heard on the issue. There was already a system of men known as "visitors" who took up the duties of imprisoned bishops. Meletius had heard that these "visitors" were in hiding, fearing arrest or further persecution. Whether Meletius was acting out of concern of the congregants of the Nile Delta churches or looking for a chance to usurp authority during a time of trouble is unclear. Although the persecutions died down, the instability that his actions had started in the Coptic Church had to be settled. In order to maintain the integrity of the church, the Council of Nicea allowed the bishops that Meletius ordained to remain in their positions but ordered him not to ordain any more. Meletius died shortly after the Council, after which many of his followers gathered with Arius's followers and operated as a separate church until the 5th century.

Council of Chalcedon

The Arian controversy did not just go away. As Roman emperors changed, so did attitudes toward Arianism. There were also other

questions concerning the nature of Jesus Christ. One came from Nestorius, the bishop of Constantinople from 428 to 431. Nestorius taught that Jesus had a human and divine nature that were loosely bound together while Jesus was on earth. There was another view that developed in Egypt that said Jesus had one nature that was essentially divine.

The Council of Chalcedon was called in 451 to deal with these discrepancies. During this time, councils were often called to mediate controversy and disagreement. The Council of Constantinople had been called in 381 to deal with Macedonian heresy that declared that the Holy Spirit was not divine. The council contested that view, stating that the Holy Spirit emanated from the Father and was divine. The Council of Ephesus of 431 dealt with the Nestorian controversy and its refusal of the term Mother of God for Mary instead of Mary of Christ. The Council of Chalcedon again dealt with the Nestorian issue. There was still trouble in the church over Christology and other issues. The Second Council of Ephesus in 449 did nothing to help it.

The Council of Chalcedon led to the monophysite split in the church. The Coptic Church split from the other Orthodox churches that rejected the monophysite view. The emperor of the Byzantine Empire appointed bishops of Alexandria who persecuted the Coptic Church members who did not accept the Council of Chalcedon's view.

Arab Invasion and Occupation

Arab Muslims invaded Egypt in 639. The Muslims put a special tax on the Copts. Islamic rule also confiscated property from Christians. Gradually many of the elites converted to Islam, particularly traders. The church did not die but it continues today. The seat moved from Alexandria to Cairo during the reign of Pope Christodolos. Christodolos was pope of Alexandria from 1047 to 1077.

The persecution of Coptic Christians has continued intermittently over the centuries since the Arab invasion and occupation. Egypt went from being a country with a Christian majority to one of a small Christian minority. The resilience of the Coptic Church there is due to not only to the adherents but to periods where the Christian leaders

kept good relations with the Muslim leaders and governmental leaders.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church was attached to the Coptic Church until it was made independent with its own patriarch in 1959. The Coptic pope consecrated bishops of Eritrea in 1994, making it independent of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

Douglas Thomas

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COUNCIL OF AFRICAN APOSTLES

A yearly meeting of Africa's advocate intermediary, the Council of African Apostles (CAA) is one of Africa's most prolific organizations. The meetings are held in a variety of cities in Africa, habitually during last week of January. Apostles of authentic reliability congregate for three days to talk about and share thoughts in relation to the topics that influence the church in Africa and the African nations. The major members of the program include: Bishop Tudor Bismark (Zimbabwe), Dr. Mensa Otabil (Ghana), Archbishop Nicholas Duncan-Williams (Ghana), Bishop Enock Sitima (Botswana), Bishop Mike Okonkwo (Nigeria), Bishop Joe Imakando (Zambia) (Olanrewaju), among others. The CAA summits give Africa's missionaries the occasion to share thoughts, practices, and tactics so that the kingdom of God is apparent in the continent of Africa. A fraternity to a certain extent, the council also offers responsibility, leadership, and brotherly fortification in a common connection of mission, a fate, worship for Africa, and the freedom of Christ Jesus, the King of Kings.

The council aspires to be the voice and the axis of sacred wherewithal of Africans, as well as to lecture on the various aspects

of individual necessity for Africa and its inhabitants. Its assignment is to furnish and free humanity in the kingdom of God for participation in the dealings that notify and pressure Africa's adaptive principles and actions throughout the ethical ideology and values God's dogma.

The Apostles' Doctrine

The CAA accepts God as true, the Father as Omnipotent, the maker of paradise, earth, and that Jesus Christ was envisaged of the Holy Spirit, delivered to the Mother Mary, underwent tremendous pain at the hands of Pontius Pilate, was nailed to the cross, died, and was ultimately interred. Furthermore, the CAA believes that Christ slid down into hell and that on the third day, he was resurrected once more from the deceased. Christ soon rose to God's Kingdom and sat at the right hand of God. From heaven, Jesus Christ judges both those still alive and those departed. With a firm belief in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Universal Church of Christ, the communion of saints, the pardon of sins, the renaissance of the body and existence eternal, the Council of African Apostles is one of the largest religious organizations in Africa.

The Council of African Apostles' Statement of Belief

The CAA has a strong conviction in the authority of communal answerability as brothers. It maintains its brother as keeper of benevolence and temperance. The member's principal conviction is in the immutability of holy bequest. Religious contributions are mystic and are unrestricted onto humans for limited and comprehensive influence. The CAA's main belief is that the excellence of Africa is wrought with kingdom ethics, while maintaining the God-intended fate of Africa.

Convictions

The Council of African Apostles expresses its convictions as: "Africa's geopolitical, social, economic, and spiritual needs to pay attention to

an understandable, succinct and dependable advocate from the church” (Olanrewaju). The countless people who feature Africa in their mission and indication require getting together at regular periods and attending to concerns that involve Africa and work out explanations for neighboring, nationwide, and continental interference. God’s realm is authorized by the church’s attendance to guarantee and uphold the liberation of Africa piously first and have it then visible in the corporeal. The church’s responsibility is to pressure Africa and its communes; the disciples’ requirement to congregate, concur, and verbalize a single communication, and consequently discharge apostolic power and organization with the intention to revisit the unique contemplation of God.

Apostle Michael Adeyemi Adefarasin is one of the CAA’s most prominent spokespersons. “Educated partly in Nigeria and England, he attended a B.Sc. degree programme in aeronautics at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach Florida, U.S.A., and pursued a career as a pilot before answering the call to full time ministry over twenty-one years ago” (Vadney 259). He is “an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, is the overseer of Kingdom Lifeline Apostolic Ministries International (KLAM)” and has more than twenty years of ministry experience, “working first in Ghana and then Republic of Benin, where he pioneered a charismatic move of God from 1997 to December 2010 where he presided over Action Chapel International” (“Our Leadership”).

Having worked for Action Chapel Ministry International since 1989, Apostle Michael Adeyemi Adefarasin heard his call to Action Chapel International in the early 1990s. During this time, he was present at Action International Bible school, where he was enrolled an undergraduate program and was appointed into office. Subsequent to his ordination, Adefarasin was appointed the Action Chapel Church Coordinator (InJesus.com). His role ended in 1997.

Later that year he was summoned to the Republic of Benin to act as an overseer of Action Chapel International-Benin. The ministry developed to about a dozen vivacious sects countrywide while he was its leader.

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CROWTHER, SAMUEL AJAYI

The Right Reverend Samuel Ajayi Crowther (ca. 1806–1891) was the first African consecrated to the office of bishop in the Church of England. His path to this office was wrought with troubles and obstacles. In 1820–1821, a teenage Crowther was captured and sold into slavery during the intra-ethnic wars that raged in his Yoruba homeland. An advancing Fulani jihad initiated by Uthman dan Fodio from 1804 in the north, the proliferation of the slave trade, the weakness of the central Oyo government, the head government of the Yoruba at the time, and the rise of the Sokoto Caliphate, which challenged an already weak kingdom, resulted in pervasive warfare that disrupted the lives of many, including Crowther's.

After being captured, sold, and resold, the young Crowther found himself on a slave ship headed to Brazil when the British navy stopped the ship. Crowther along with the other captives were sent to Sierra Leone, a British Colony that was a return point for recaptured slaves. The Church Missionary Society of the Anglican Church educated Ajayi as a carpenter. In 1825 he was baptized Samuel Crowther. His name was given by Reverend J. C. Raban in honor of an Anglican priest in England and patron of the CMS.

Because of his obvious intelligence, Crowther was chosen for further education. One of the priests took him to England for school. He studied at Islington Parish School in 1826. In 1827, he returned to study at Fourah Bay College, the first four-year Western-style

institution of higher learning in sub-Saharan Africa. Crowther went on to a career teaching at a CMS school. He taught for eleven years.

In 1827, Crowther married Susan Thompson. They had six children, three sons and three daughters. Their youngest son, Dandeson Coates Crowther, followed his father's footsteps into the ministry. He reached the position of Anglican archdeacon of the Niger Delta from 1876 to 1926. His daughter Abigail married T. B. Macaulay, and bore a son, Herbert Macaulay, who was active in the formation of Nigerian nationality.

In 1841, Crowther went with Thomas F. Buxton on an expedition of the Niger. He published an account of their experiences that so impressed the CMS officials that they sent him to a CMS Training School for the Christian ministry. The church ordained him in 1843. He was invited on an expedition into what became the colony of Nigeria primarily because of his fluency in Yoruba, his native tongue.

Crowther was instrumental in establishing the Niger Delta Mission. In 1846, he and the mission team established the mission station at Abeokuta. It was here that he reunited with his mother and other family members. He baptized the first three converts, including his mother. He went on to baptize other relatives as the work progressed. His evangelization efforts yielded great results. He translated the Bible into Yoruba, setting a standard and pattern of translation that other Anglophone missionaries used when translating the Bible into other African languages. His further work as a linguist included the writing of grammars for the Igbo, Yoruba, and Nupe languages.



Samuel Crowther, the first African to serve as a bishop in the Church of England. (Page, Jesse. *Samuel Crowther: The Slave Boy who Became Bishop of the Niger, 1888*)

In spite of the prevalence of white supremacist sentiments among the church leaders, Crowther was consecrated bishop of the Niger Mission in 1864. Most of the white missionary priests thought that only whites were good enough to hold leadership positions. These church leaders ensured that no white missionaries fell under Crowther's authority. Eventually they made sure that all financial oversight of the Niger Mission was in the hands of whites. This virulent doctrine of white supremacy active in the CMS is what led to the creation of African-Initiated Churches throughout the continent.

Crowther was a trailblazing member of the Anglican Church. His contribution to the furtherance of the Christian message into the interior of present-day Nigeria was enormous. Despite slavery and racism, Crowther left an indelible mark on the history of Christianity and the history of West Africa. He died in 1891 after having suffered a stroke.

Douglas Thomas

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DA OR DAN

Da is a serpent god of the Fon people who live primarily in the country of Benin. Da helped the moon goddess, Mawu, and her husband, Liza, the sun god at creation. According to legend, Da is a rainbow-colored serpent who brought Mawu through the cosmos to create earth. According to their belief, currently Da is coiled around the earth, holding it together. When believers see the rainbow, they are simply seeing Da. Da is worshiped with his shrines usually of rainbow colors accented with the image of a serpent's head (see also Vodun/Voodoo).

Douglas Thomas

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DADA OR IDA OR EDA

Dada is the Yoruba *orisha*, or “goddess of abundance.” She is also connected to children and crops as she ensures the abundance of both. According to legend, Dada is the seventh child of Yemaya (see also Yemoja), which makes him the brother of Sango (see also Sango) and 12 other Yoruba orisa. Dada is also seen as the orisa of all things connected to organic reproduction.

According to legend, Dada was born when people were without purpose. She came and brought the people purpose, which is why

she is associated with the brain and intelligence. Reportedly, she lives in the head of every human being and will be there until the person dies. Dada is also seen as a sort of patron of unborn children. As such, she is looked to by expectant parents to keep their embryos safe. Some portray Dada as a woman and others say she has more masculine characteristics (see also Yoruba).

Douglas Thomas

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DAMBALLAH

Damballah is the Haitian Voodoo loa (spirit) version of Dan/Da, a serpent god (see Da or Dan and Vodun/Voodoo). According to the Haitian version of the legend, Damballah is the sky god who also created the earth using the 7,000 coils of his body to create the heavens, stars, and planets. His coils also were used to shape the mountains, hills, valleys, and rivers, of the earth. He shed his skin, and it became the rivers on the earth. As the creator, he is seen as the source of life.

Like Da, he has a rainbow color. He is the loa of peace and harmony. During the voodoo ceremonies the loa possess the celebrants who take on the habits of the loa. It is said when Damballah possesses a human, he or she doesn't speak but only hisses. His worshipers use white rum to honor him.

Damballah's wife is Aiya-Wedo and Erzulie Freda is his concubine.

Douglas Thomas

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DAN FODIO, UTHMAN

Uthman dan Fodio (1754–1817) was an Islamic scholar, leader, and empire builder. He was a Fula (Peulh) Islamic teacher who settled in the Hausa city-states. His family were of the torodbe group of Fulani clerics who came originally from Futa Tooro in present-day Senegal. They settled among the Hausa and continued their practice of Islam. He was born in a village called Matta in the country of Kwonni in present-day Niger. Early in his childhood, his father moved to the kingdom of Gobir.

Dan Fodio's father taught him the Qur'an, reading, and writing. From there he travelled around, which is the tradition in Islamic societies, and learned from various masters. He learned Islamic sciences, theology, jurisprudence, and exegesis among other topics. He had many teachers including many among his family. His uncle Uthman Binduri was one of his more influential teachers, along with Jibril ibn Muhammad. Uthman was known especially for his insistence on following Islamic rules closely. Jibril was from the Maghreb (North Africa) and openly advocated for the renewal of Islam and cessation of non-Islamic practices in the lands of the Hausa. Jibril was passing through the Hausa kingdoms on his way to Mecca for his second hajj. His preaching had him forced out of the area at one point.

Following the example of his uncle Uthman and Jibril, dan Fodio developed a theology rooted in a strict observance of Islam, which ran counter to the practices of the rulers at that time. He started preaching in 1774 around age 20. His preaching gained converts rather gradually. While still learning, going from master teacher to master teacher, he continued preaching against the moral excesses of the day. He established his base at Degel in the Kingdom of Gobir. Some sources say he was an Islamic teacher of the kings, even teaching Yunfa, the sultan who tried to kill him. Other sources say he

never associated much with rulers. Whatever the case, he was a popular preacher who after 20 years had amassed a considerable following.

In 1787, he went to Zamfara and spent five years preaching there. He gained many converts during that time. One Islamic scholar criticized dan Fodio publicly for preaching to crowds of males and females. The tradition was that men needed to learn, and women learned at home. Dan Fodio defended himself, saying that he segregated the crowds by gender (which is part of the Islamic tradition). Dan Fodio went on to defend teaching women saying they had a right to learn their religion. While he was at Zamfara, the sitting sultan of Gobir, Bawa Jan Gwarzo, called all Islamic scholars to do Eid prayer there. Oral tradition says that Bawa wanted to kill dan Fodio at the prayer session, but dan Fodio was surrounded by 1,000 followers. Bawa, finding it impossible to destroy dan Fodio in that environment, offered each Islamic scholar 500 mithqals (4.25 grams) of gold. Dan Fodio refused, saying he and his disciples didn't need the sultan's money. Instead he asked the sultan to not inhibit his preaching and conversion efforts, not to harshly tax the people, to let the political prisoners go free, and to respect his disciples. The sultan agreed and freed the prisoners.

He returned to Degel for a year or so. Then around 1792–1793, dan Fodio went on a preaching tour of to the west of Degel, visiting Kebbi and Zauma. His preaching continued to net him followers. After 1793, he stayed at Degel and sent out followers on preaching tours. His adherents then moved to Degel and enlarged his following. Other scholars grew jealous of him, and the rulers of the region began to see him as a threat. The Hausa region of what is now northern Nigeria was at the time divided into small city-states. Dan Fodio's followers went around the entirety of the region preaching and gaining converts.

In addition to the preaching, dan Fodio had an Islamic school. Education was the base of his reformist movement. Part of his school taught the Qur'an and the basics of Islam. Another part of his school taught higher subjects to the more advanced students. His fame as a scholar also encouraged Muslims from the region to send their

children to him for instruction. Dan Fodio's son, Muhammad Bello, and his brother, Abdullahi dan Fodio, both helped with the school and the community at large, as did other family members and disciples.

In 1795, Uthman dan Fodio decided to fight a jihad against the unjust rulers of the Hausa states. He told his disciples to arm themselves. He and his son and brother began also to acquire weapons. The sultan of Gobir, Nafata, was alarmed at reports that dan Fodio and his people were arming themselves. Nafata, who succeeded Bawa, disliked the doctrines of Islam and actively tried to limit its advance among the Hausa. In an attempt to diminish dan Fodio's power, Nafata decreed that only dan Fodio could preach, there would be no more conversions to Islam, and that those who were not born Muslims were to renounce Islam and return to their previous religious practices. Nafata also declared that men should no longer wear turbans and women should not wear veils. Since Dan Fodio's followers all wore turbans and veils, they found the declaration particularly vexing. Before he could enforce these new rules, Nafata died. However, his son, Yunfa, took his place and was even harsher than Nafata.

Yunfa reportedly had been a student of dan Fodio and was not hostile to Islam, as had been his predecessor. Yunfa didn't want any rivals for his authority, however, and as some of his soldiers were preparing a campaign, they asked Abd al-Salam of Gimbana, an Islamic scholar and holy man, to give them a blessing before they went off. Abd al-Salam refused. When the soldiers returned to Yunfa, they reported Abd al-Salam's refusal to bless them. Yunfa sent a force to attack Gimbana. The troops took the town, captured the inhabitants and sold them into slavery. As the troops passed Degel with these slaves, Dan Fodio noticed that they were Muslims. Moved by anger, dan Fodio loosed the Muslim slaves. Yunfa was angered and summoned dan Fodio to court. He also decided to conduct a punitive raid against Degel. He told dan Fodio to stay away from Degel for a while, so he could come in and punish the disciples. Uthman refused and said he and his people would emigrate out of the country. Yunfa then said he would not raid but asked them to stay. Dan Fodio and his followers did not believe Yunfa, and they left.

On June 21, 1804, Yunfa and his troops met Shehu Uthman dan Fodio and his followers on the battlefield by Lake Kwotto. Yunfa and his troops were defeated and Uthman dan Fodio was declared *amir al-muminina*, meaning “commander of the faithful.” In 1805, Abdullahi and a contingent of troops took the kingdom of Kebbi. In 1808, Muhammad Bello and another contingent of troops took Alkalawa, the capital of Gobir. They killed Yunfa, and Gobir came under the rule of dan Fodio. In 1809, Muhammad Bello founded the city of Sokoto, which became the center of the caliphate. By 1810, the Sokoto Caliphate included all the Hausa city-states, Adamawa, Nupe, and parts of Bornu. The caliphate included 30 smaller emirates and covered a population of around 10 million people. Dan Fodio divided the caliphate into eastern and western halves. He gave his brother Abdullahi the east and gave Muhammad Bello the west. He then retired to his teaching until his death in 1817.

Uthman dan Fodio had four wives and 23 children. His son Muhammad Bello became the ruler after his death. His daughter Nana Usmau was noted for her efforts to teach women throughout the empire the basics of the religion using poems written in Hausa. The Sokoto Caliphate inspired other 19th-century jihads in West Africa and it endured intact until the late 19th century.

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DINKA BELIEFS

The Dinka live in South Sudan and southeastern Ethiopia. They share cultural and religious traditions with the Nuer, a neighboring tribe. Dinka believe in a spirit world that mirrors the physical world. They venerate their ancestors as members of the spiritual world and believe that all humans pass on to the spirit world upon death. They, like many other traditional religions, believe that the spirit world and the physical world intersect and, as such, that spiritual explanations are suitable for physical phenomenon.

The Dinka are essentially monotheists. They believe in a creator god called Nhalic. There are other spiritual beings they venerate, but only one lord and god Nhalic, called Kwoth Nhali among the Nuer. They ascribe much of the unseen to *jok*, or “powers,” including Nhalic and the lesser spirits called *yath* (*yeeth* plural). In addition to Nhalic, there is the malevolent spirit called Macardit, who is responsible for undeserved misfortune. There are also various clan deities and spirits related to the natural world.

The Dinka believe in the effectiveness of men who can help in their fight to stay well and healthy. These men are believed to have spiritual powers to cure illness and regulate situations. There are also diviners among them who are believed to be able to understand why certain things happen in the physical world through discovering the cause in the spirit realm. The Dinka also reverence men of Nhalic known as prophets. All of the prophets come from the priestly clan and have the power of the spoken word to work good or misfortune on people. Prophets are by and large men of peace.

Masters of the Fishing Spear

The Dinka priestly clan are called the Masters of the Fishing Spear. Their clan deity is Ring, who lives inside each of them as they execute the duties of their priestly office. During prayer, the power of Ring is manifested in the twitching of the priests and sometimes culminates in the slumping, or fainting, of the tethered live animal before sacrifice. Among the Nuer, the priestly clan is called the Leopard-Skinned Clan.

The first of the priestly clan was Aiwel Longar. According to one variation of the legend, a man was dancing with a lion. The lion asked

for the man's bracelets. The man refused, so the lion bit off his thumbs. Consequently, the man died, leaving behind a wife and a daughter, but tragically no son. The woman went to the river and cried. The river spirit asked her why she was crying. Once she explained her plight, the river spirit asked her to raise her skirt and allow the waters to rush up against her womb. She complied and shortly thereafter conceived a son: Aiwel Longar

Early on, Aiwel Longar exhibited power and eventually could no longer live with his family. He went to live by the river and learned there. He eventually came back among his people and warned them to leave their land. After disagreements, the people eventually followed him to a different place. From that time on, the Dinka have looked to Aiwel Longar's clan for spiritual leadership.

Practices

The Dinka's understanding of the physical world's intersection with the spirit world guides their social organization. Boys go through manhood training, and the girls go through womanhood training. They pray to Nhalic, ancestors, other gods, and other spirits. Their prayers are thought to invoke favor and blessings from these gods. They sacrifice their cows, which are central to their economy. People sacrifice in order to appease a god or spirit and/or to right a wrong that has brought misfortune upon one's family or an individual.

Throughout Dinka and Nuer history, they have had prophets arise with manifested spiritual powers who help lead them through difficult times. Arianhdit is one of the more recent prophets, who died in 1948. Other prophets who arose during the colonial days were Gwek and his father, Ndungeng. When Ndungeng died, he passed his powers down to his son, Gwek. Gwek led a force against the British colonizers and was killed. Because of the leadership of influential priests and prophets, the Dinka largely resisted conversion to Islam. Many have converted to Christianity, but their traditional beliefs and practices remain.

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DOGON

The Dogon is an ethnic group in south central Mali. The republic of Mali is one of the largest countries in West Africa. The people of Mali are known as Malians, composed of several ethnic groups. The Mande is the largest group, which includes Bambara, Malinke, and Soninke. They account for 50 percent of the country's population. The Soninke and the Malinke live in western Mali. A small nomadic group, the Peul, accounts for 15 percent of the population. The Sarakole and the Senufo account for 10 percent each of the population. The Dogon are 9 percent of the population and the Songhai and the Tuareg are fewer than 1 percent of the population each. In modern-day Mali, most of the population live in the southern part of the country; the capital, Bamako, has a population of 2.5 million. Approximately, 40 percent of the population lives in urban enclaves, while 10 percent of the population is nomadic. French is the official language. However, Mali has 30 national languages. The Bambara, a subgroup of the Mande language group, include 43 percent of the population. Peul, Dogon, Maraka, Malinke, and Sonrhai are spoken within their ethnic communities. The Dogon language family has branches with the Niger-Congo language family. A total of 94.8 percent of Malians are Muslim, 2 percent are Animist, and about 2.4 percent are Christians.

Dogon Beliefs

The native people of Mali have inhabited the region for 50,000 years. Mali is located along the Sahara Desert, and farming was introduced around 5000 BCE. In the first century, Mali was a part of the three great kingdoms of West Africa that contributed to the country's modern ethnic population. The Ghana Empire ruled until the eleventh

century, comprising the Soninke ethnic group. The kingdom of Malinke ruled until the Songhai Empire took control of the rulership in the fifteenth century. Each empire traded gold, salt, and slaves. The Dogon population is about 600,000, and the majority of them live in the rocky hills, mountains, and plateaus of the Bandiagara Escarpment. The cliffs at the edge of the escarpment protected the group from outside invaders. The cliffs of Bandiagara were recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site due to the specific cultural landscape, which includes the ancient traditions of Dogon architecture. The Dogon live 125 miles from Timbuktu. The rugged terrain protected them from Islamic conversion and European Christian missionaries and preserved their ethnic culture. They were chiefly an agricultural society.

Traditionally, they were patrilineal with a decentralized social hierarchy. The Dogon maintain a caste system based on occupation. The farmers rank at the top of the caste system, while blacksmiths and hunters are a part of the lower caste. In modern times, new specialized skills in traditional craft making, performance arts, and tourism were developed as new occupations not associated with the original caste. The Dogon recognize a two-caste system: the *inneomo* (pure) and *innepuru* (impure). The *hogon*, who lead the inneomo caste, are forbidden to sacrifice animals and hunt. They also cannot conduct burial rituals, while the innepuru can do all the forbidden tasks of the inneomo. The status of “pure” or “impure” is inherited. The act of rituals for agricultural fertility is conducted by the *olubaru*, who lead the *innepuru*.

The Dogon are known for their resistance against French colonial rule and conversion to Islam. Their traditional spiritual, religious, and cosmology persevered due to their isolation from other African ethnic groups and religious influences. Dogon culture adheres to the cosmogony and mythology closely related to the ancient Egyptian systems. They revere the star Sirius as the origins of humanity, and their god is named Nommo, a worshiped ancestral spirit ritualized on family shrines. The Dogon have a three-part conceptualization of death: First, the soul leaves the physical realm and joins the ancestors in the spiritual realm. Second, rites are performed to

remove any ritual polluting. Finally, when multiple members of the community transition to the spiritual world, a rite known as *dama* is performed. During *dama*, a sacrifice is made to the Great Mask, which depicts a large wooden serpent and which is never actually worn. Dancers perform rituals to scare off lingering souls. The Dogon have three distinct secret societies that perform rites, celebrations, and cultural rituals. The *awa* are dancers used during the funeral rituals and anniversaries of deaths. The earth god society, Lebe, is concerned with agricultural cycles and fertility. Hogon of the village perform rituals that guard the soil's purity and preside over ceremonies relating to farming. The Binu is responsible for communicating with spirits, ancestors worship, and sacrifices. Binu priests make a sacrifice using blood, millet, and porridge when the help of an ancestor is needed for each clan within Dogon society. Despite the secret societies, the council of village elders has decision-making power.



Dogon dancers wearing *kananga* (a type of mask) perform during *dama* in Tireli, Mali, February 3, 2006. (Insights/UIG via Getty Images)

Distinctly different from the majority Muslim population, most Dogon practice a traditional religion with complex mythology. Every sixty years they celebrate the appearance of the star of Sirius, which is the brightest star in the night sky. The Dogon metaphysical system

is categorized by physical objects, personifies good and evil, and defines the spiritual principles of the community. During the sixty-year ceremony called the *sigui*, Dogon males conduct a rite of passage where the males are taken into seclusion for three months to learn the secret language of the secret societies. The general ceremony acknowledges the belief that some 3,000 years ago, amphibious beings from Sirius visited the Dogon with a secret spiritual science. In recent years, Dogon culture has gained the attention of the world's leading anthropologists and ethnographers. Researchers agree the Dogon are an ancient African ethnic group. In the book *The Master of Speech*, researchers agree that "Dogon mythology is older than Greek and Egyptian mythologies. The Nummo (with their serpent, fish, and lizard like descriptions) are identified with the serpent and Goddess religions found throughout the world. It is an Earth-centered religion that indicates human spiritualism is connected to human DNA, which is connected to the Earth itself."

Latif Tarik

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DUBIAKU

Dubiaku is a legendary figure from the Ashanti tribe of present-day Ghana. According to legend, Dubiaku's mother had 11 sons. She was weary of raising and feeding all those children. In her distress, she prayed to the gods, and they sent Death to her home for her children. The arrangement was for Death, a female figure, to bring her 11 children and look after Dubiaku's mother's children too.

Dubiaku gave Death all kinds of trouble. Fed up, she decided to just eat the 11 children as she had been bidden to do. She ate 11

children, then went to check on her own children. To her chagrin, Dubiaku had snuck his siblings out of the house. Death had mistakenly eaten her own children. She looked for Dubiaku and his siblings. They were in a tree hiding. As she stood under the tree, Dubiaku urinated on her.

Looking up, Death spoke a spell that caused Dubiaku's siblings to all fall down dead out of the tree. The tree was on the banks of the River of Life. When Death went up the tree to make sure she had killed all the children, Dubiaku shouted a spell at her, causing her to fall dead immediately. Dubiaku immediately got water from the river and splashed his siblings until they all jumped up alive. He inadvertently splashed some of the life-giving water on Death and she sprang up, chasing the children. All of them swam in the river away from her except Dubiaku, because he couldn't swim. Death threw stones across the river at the children. Dubiaku disguised himself as a stone. She threw him across the river, where his siblings thought that he was a stone. They all scampered away from Death.

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EFIK RELIGION (ABASI, ATAI, NDEM, AND EKPE)

The indigenous and long-standing religious worldview of the Efik starts with the creator and sky God known as Etinyin Abasi (“our father God”) and his wife, Atai, the goddess of life and death. There are a number of similar creation stories involving Abasi and Atai, each with its own variations and emphasis. The general premise of these narratives centers on the human children of Abasi and Atai: a male and female who become restless and adventuresome as they grew into adulthood. Fearing human ambition, Abasi wished to keep his children under his guidance and parental control. Ultimately, Abasi feared humans were not ready to live on their own, and such attempts would only lead to misfortune. After Atai persuaded Abasi to allow his children to visit Earth, the children slowly became self-sufficient, learning how to cultivate the land, hunt, and procreate. Their children rarely returned to the visit their parents in the Heavens, angering Abasi, who blamed Atai. Atai responded by killing their children and causing disparity and tension between her children’s offspring, forever planting the seed of calamity within humanity.

It is interesting to note that however widespread these deities seem to be in Efik cultural identity and history, worship of Abasi and Atai appears to have never been formalized. Most acknowledge no formal institutions or priesthoods dedicated to these gods. Rather, individual homes often kept shrines for propitiation and prayer on the eighth day (*akwa ederi*) of the traditional Efik eight-day week. On the day of observance, markets were closed, hunting and fishing ceased, and all forms of other religious and ritual activity suspended.

The two most formalized and often cited religious forces and institutions among the Efik are Ndem and Ekpe. Their origins remain heavily debated, especially in the case of Ekpe. Some scholars have suggested they gradually formed from a possible need for more formalized religious structure. Despite their blurred origins, *ndem* are known as Efik tutelary deities, water spirits often linked to Mami Wata, the widespread religious entity and water deity (somewhat similar to the Western concept of mermaids) among many African and diasporic cultures. Ndem are understood as supernatural powers residing in trees, rivers, and ponds. Each traditional Efik town possesses a particular Ndem, in which a group of priests and priestesses form official Ndem associations responsible for sacrifice to, and maintenance of, community shrines. During formal Ndem rituals and performances, devotees dress in white cloth garments often tied and fixed to the body with a red sash and carry mirrors as well as a special ceremonial knife known as *ika*. Sacrifices to Ndem include, but are not limited to, native eggs, fowls, cows, goats (all of which are usually white) and *ekete*, plated mats made from palm frond.

Ndem spirits are as harmful as they are helpful: they are believed to inflict people with a number of mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual ailments if not properly honored. Further, Ndem are renowned for seducing a husband or wife with endless riches, only to bestow them (or their spouse) with marital misfortune, barrenness, and general unhappiness. Ndem are thought to seduce and possess their victims through the medium of dreams, producing an alternate consciousness, one that can have disorienting and even dangerous effects on the living. If properly revered and sacrificed to, Ndem can help one achieve good fortune, happiness, and prosperity.

Another important aspect in understanding the broader extent of Efik religious practice is the Ekpe secret society, which according to many Efik, originally came from the river or sea, indirectly linking this institution to that of Ndem. Efik Ekpe was at the center of colonial interest as well as recent scholarly attention for over the last one hundred years. Its religious dimension has been overshadowed by writers' interest in its political, judicial, and executive functions as well

as its role in helping facilitate the slave trade at Old Calabar. Ekpe is a highly stratified governmental association where membership is attained only through formal initiation. Each Efik town has its own Ekpe lodge, with its own head, subsidiary chiefs or titleholders, and junior members. As a secret society, rituals and lodge activities are reserved for members only.

The uninitiated interact with Ekpe through elaborate public rituals and masquerade performances meant to showcase and reinforce the society's wealth and power. The most common type of Ekpe masquerade includes a performer dressed in a tight-fitting raffia knit body suit. A raffia mane fits over the masquerader's chest, while his arms and ankles fashion raffia tufts, visually suggesting a lion or leopard. In fact, in English, Ekpe translates to either lion or leopard; both are often used. However, this animal symbolism has caused some to erroneously label this institution as a "leopard-worshipping cult," creating an inappropriate and generalized name for all of the versions of this institution throughout the Cross River region: "leopard societies." The lion or leopard idea is meant as a metaphor only, linking the society to the powers and dangers of the wilderness. Ancestral veneration is the real religious force at the core of this institution, and this practice is made clear during ritual and masquerade performance.

At the start of every assembly, meeting, ritual, and performance, a prayer is administered with the pouring of libation as an offering to the ancestors. During libation, specific ancestors are called upon to protect and guide the living as well as the individual lodge conducting the ritual. As members explained to me, libation "wakes" the ancestors, inviting their spiritual presence and participation during official activities. Beyond Ekpe ritual, many members offer libation as a way to open communication to their Ekpe ancestors on their own time, asking for their wisdom, help and strength with matters pertaining to their family and professional and daily lives. Many explain further that ancestors answer their offerings during their dreams, healing or offering council and advice for the living to ponder and reflect upon before action is taken and decisions made. The act of pouring of libation follows specific protocol, yet the process is open

to individualization as long as the compulsory steps are followed. For example, Abasi is usually called upon first, initiating the prayer with the Efik sky and creator God. However, due to the influence of Christianity in the region, some Efik equate Abasi to their Christian God, shedding light on the ways in which world regions have blended with or even replaced local indigenous religiosity.



Men masquerade in Ekpe regalia—in this case, wooden masks and raffia of the leopard sect, Cameroon. (Eye Ubiquitous/Alamy Stock Photo)

The Efik people reside in Calabar, an important port city, once heavily involved in the slave and palm oil trades spanning the 16th to 20th centuries. Acting as the middlemen during these trades, the Efik and the city of Calabar experienced extensive and layered contacts with Europe. Today, Calabar is the metropolitan capital of Cross River State, Nigeria, and long-standing home to the Efik, the Efut, and the Qua-Ejagham peoples. It is also a city populated by other Nigerians and international travelers, investors, and others interested in business and commerce. Because of this, the city's religious landscape is pluralistic because it is home to indigenous, Christian, and Muslim believers, some of which, especially in the case of the long-standing residents—the Efik, for example—adhere to either their indigenous beliefs or various versions of Christianity. In many cases, both religions are blended as demonstrated by how Abasi is locally

understood during libation. Discussions of Efik religion, like many in Africa, are therefore complicated and multifaceted, one of which that must account for an individual's own preference and religious motivation.

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EGUNGUN

Egungun, translated as "bones" or "skeleton," is the cult of the ancestors manifested as the Yoruba ancestral masquerade. They are said to be the deceased ancestors, returned to earth to determine the conditions and conduct of the living and punish or take away, presumably through death, those upsetting the established social order. As such, Egungun is a supernatural inquisitor.

In their physical state, Egungun are beings covered from head to toe in cloth. Their faces are covered with masks, their heads with hoods, their entire bodies with cloth, and their shoes, like moccasins, completely hide their feet. It is said that anyone who touches Egungun dies. In precolonial times, although all men knew that Egungun were people covered in cloth, women were supposed to be ignorant of this and believe instead that they were ancestral spirits. Indeed, in some parts, women were forbidden from climbing to the ceiling of houses under the pain of death, supposedly to guard this secret because that was where Egungun clothes were kept.

During the annual festival of Egungun, held in either May or June and lasting seven days, people were supposed to lament and pray to the dead while women made sacrifices and prepared enormous feasts for Egungun to propitiate their ancestors. All women had to make these sacrifices and feasts, which were eaten by men. With the

advent of Christianity and Islam however, Egungun worship has largely diminished to an annual festival.

Temilola Alanamu

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ELUKU

The Eluku festival, popularly called *Oro eluku*, is practiced in certain parts of southwest Nigeria, including the states of Lagos and Ogun. Held once a year, Eluku is a source of social commentary and is believed to protect and guide the people of the region. According to oral mythology, royalty brought Eluku to the region, and as a result, only males belonging to the royal, chiefly, or bourgeois lineages are allowed to see, watch, and participate in Eluku. In fact, in the regions where it is practiced, all chiefs and all rulers must participate in Eluku. Women and foreigners are forbidden to see it, and it is believed that if they do, they would either be killed by Eluku using a cutlass called *E/e* or they would go blind. Due to the secrecy surrounding its practices, there are many unanswered questions about the practice.

Eluku is revealed only on the third day of the annual Eluku festival. On the first day, Orisa Oja (the market god), believed to be the wife of Eluku, dances at the marketplace as a type of masquerade, after which Lire (another masquerade) dances around the entire community. Eluku (in physical form) would then perform in the middle of the night, visiting the homes of the upper classes to comment on their conduct and either condemn or praise their past actions. When a member of the Eluku lineage dies, Eluku is also believed to bury them.

Items used to propitiate Eluku include hens, palm oil, bitter kola, goats, kolanuts, and pigeons.

Yewande M. Olatinjo

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FALL, CHEIKH IBRA

Cheikh Ibrahima Fall (also spelled as Faal) (1855–1930) was born in the village of Niамby Fall, Sénégal. Even if, like Bamba, the Senegalese religious leader who founded the Mouride Brotherhood, Fall came from an educated and religious family, he did not have the aristocratic background that the former had. Thus, as Donal B. Cruise O’Brien argues, “He [Fall] was the eldest son of an unimportant *marabout* [hermit] named Amadu Fall, who divided his time between the cultivation of his fields and the teaching of Koranic recitation.” Ibra Fall became so obsessed with Bamba’s message and faith that he became one of his strongest supporters and educators. Recognizing Fall’s unmatched devotion to hard work and the Murid creed, Bamba sealed his relations with his zealous yet humble adherent by making him one of the propagators of his faith. According to critic Cheikh Anta Babou, sometime between 1886 and 1888, Bamba gave a selected number of his disciples, including Faal, the title of “sheikh,” which bestows “a discretionary privilege of the founder of the tariqa that is rooted in his baraka.”

In addition, Cheikh Ibrahima Fall is known for having created a distinct part of the Murid community that absolves itself of prayer in order to serve God and Bamba. O’Brien explains: “Sheikh Ibra did not pray at all, for he declared that prayer was merely a means to turn one’s mind to God, of which he had no need as the service of God was the object of his whole life. During the month of Ramadān he did not fast, as this impaired his capacity to work for his *marabout*.” Fall’s unique approach to faith has endured in Senegal, especially among his followers who are known as the Baye Fall (also spelled as Baay-Faal). Translated in the Wolof language as “Father Fall,” the

term “Baay-Faal” refers to an “order of mendicant followers of Cheikh Ibra Fall, who follow the example of Fall by devoting their lives to their marabout.” Today, the Baye Fall are known for their unquestioned allegiance to the leaders of the Murid brotherhood, to whom they remain faithful just as their ancestor was toward Bamba. Yet the Baye Fall are also known for their work ethic. The critic Fallou Ngom explains: “To them, devotion to physical labor (a key principle of Muridiyya) is one of the highest forms of worship.” The Baye Fall devotion to hard work has strongly influenced Senegalese culture, in which these fervent disciples of Muridiyya are revered for cultivating the fields of their religious leaders in recognition of their supreme leader’s faith in God and Bamba. The influence of the Baye Fall in Senegal is noticeable in the public fascination with their clothing, hairstyle, and philosophy, which permeate the country’s popular culture and music.

Babacar M’baye

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FARO

Faro is the great light and creator god of the Bambara (Bamana) people of West Africa. Faro is an androgynous god, taking both male and female forms at different times. Because of his role in the Bambara creation myth, he is also known as the god of restoration and fertility.

That he may stem the disorder created by the deity Pemba, God (Ngala) shaped Faro into twin catfish as a sacrifice. They were cut into 60 pieces and distributed across the earth, becoming the trees. Faro was resurrected in human form and sent to earth in a golden ark, carrying eight male and female humans that would become the ancestors of all men. One of the ancestors, Simboumba, was given the first 30 words by Faro, thus imbuing speech with sacredness. The ark rested at the Malian town of Kri, where the first village was established.

Pemba, and his twin, Musso-Koroni, conspired to plant impure eleusine seeds throughout the earth. Faro created the Niger River by flooding the places where the seeds were planted until he reached Pemba's field. There, *Faro* vanquished *Pemba*, where he spread himself out, creating Lake Debo. Because of this, the Niger River above Koulikoro represents the body of Faro.

Due to his original form, Faro is associated with the catfish, which has become taboo for some of the Bambara people. Every seven years, a ceremony is performed at Kaba, to reconstruct the sanctuary built by the first ancestors, honoring Faro's journey and victory over Pemba.

Peter R. Coutros

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GANDA OR BAGANDA

The Ganda or Baganda people are the largest ethnicity in Uganda at more than 16 percent of the current population. One Ganda is known as a Muganda. The people collectively are called Baganda. They were the people who built the Buganda Kingdom in precolonial East Africa and they live in what is now the center of Uganda.

Beliefs

Their beliefs consist of understanding that there are two worlds: physical and spiritual. The spirit world mirrors and affects the physical world. In the spirit world, there are three levels of inhabitants. On the first level is Katonda, the creator god and father of all gods. As creator and supreme god, Katonda is separate from the human plain of living. He is referred to sometimes as Gguludene (the great one), Kagingo (owner of life), Namusinga (the one who shapes), and Sseswannaku (he who has no end). He set a process of ranking for the spirit of the dead. Some become his advisers. Others become servants. Worthy ones return to earth as animals. Others, deemed unworthy, never return to earth. Though he traditionally had three shrines and priests to manage them, he is not expected to intervene much in the affairs of humans.

On the second level in the spirit world are the *balubaale*. They have all lived before and are ancestral hero spirits who serve as intermediaries. They are traditionally thought of as gods beneath the operation of the creator god. There are upwards of two dozen balubaale, and they intercede in the affairs of humans. Similar to the Orisa of the Yoruba, the Lubaale of the Baganda occupy different

jobs and are connected to various natural phenomena. For example, Wanga is the earthquake lubaale. His son, Muwanga, is the lubaale known as the most powerful. Kiwanuka is the lubaale of fertility and thunder, while his wife, Nakayaga, is the lubaale of fertility also.

The third level in the spirit world consists of the guardian spirits. These spirits each have shrines (*ekiggwa*) with a priest/priestess (*mandawa*) who serves as oracle of the guardian spirit to which he/she belongs. Beneath the guardian spirits are the numerous lesser spirits. Among these lesser spirits are local spirits embodying nature, known as *misambwa*, and ancestral spirits known as *mizimu*.

Creation

According to one creation myth, Katonda's grandson, Kintu, was the first human. One day Katonda called Kintu and told him he was going to the earth. Katonda gave Nambi Natutululu as a wife to Kintu. Katonda also gave Kintu a seed of every kind, a tree for each kind of food, and one of each of the domesticated animals. The next day they had a parting feast for Kintu. After the feast, Katonda gave him specific instructions: he was not to return under any circumstances, and he was not to let his brother, Malumbe, know about the journey. Katonda told him Malumbe was sure to give him trouble.

Kintu and his wife, Nambi, started out early and everything was going well until she realized she forgot a grain. She said it was in her doorway. Kintu did his best to dissuade her from going back. She insisted and ran back. Once she got the grain, she looked up and saw Malumbe. He asked her where she was going. She tried to shake him, but he insisted on walking with her. When she joined her husband and he saw Malumbe, he expressed his displeasure. They could not shake Malumbe, and he followed them to the earth. Malumbe sat and waited. Each time Kintu and Nambi had a child, Malumbe killed the child. Kintu searched for Malumbe to kill him. Malumbe fled. Malumbe is known as the origin of all disaster and death.

Practices

Prayer is a central activity of the Baganda. They pray to Katonda and the balubaale. They also pronounce prayers to the lesser spirits and their ancestral spirits. Prayers are usually made to affect change in an immediate situation. Prayers for the community are important because redemption is not an individual affair with the Baganda, but a communal one. The balubaale were called on to help the whole nation of Buganda. Other personal prayers are made also to lesser spirits and/or ancestral spirits. Prayers often are accompanied by offerings/sacrifices.

Offerings were given at the shrines for Katonda and the various balubaale. The importance of offerings is evident in that they serve as a source of support for the shrine and the priests/priestesses. Offerings also have a spiritual importance as they show contrition and/or respect to the balubaale. There are family shrines to honor ancestors. Offerings are regularly collected there from the family exclusively.

Dance is a part of everyday life for the Baganda. Celebrations of life and celebrations of death all require dancing. Dancing at religious ceremonies and music are essential. The music elicits the necessary mood and provides an avenue for the spirits to arrive and participate in the ceremonies.

Douglas Thomas

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GBEKRE

Gbekré is a monkey-faced god in the religious philosophy of the Baoulé of modern-day Ivory Coast. He is seen as a protector and judge of souls. People appeal to him for protection from bad events, people, and/or spirits. He is usually carved roughly and is carrying a bowl or cup. Gbekre is also useful to diviners when uncovering someone's future. Gbekré also is in charge of punishing the souls of those who have died.

Gbekré is the son of Nymien, the god of heaven, and his second wife, Ago. Gbekré's brother is Kaka-Guie, the god of funeral and the protector of men. Gbekré portrayed as a monkey-faced man is usually a carved statue. He is worshiped and offered food as a sacrifice.

Douglas Thomas

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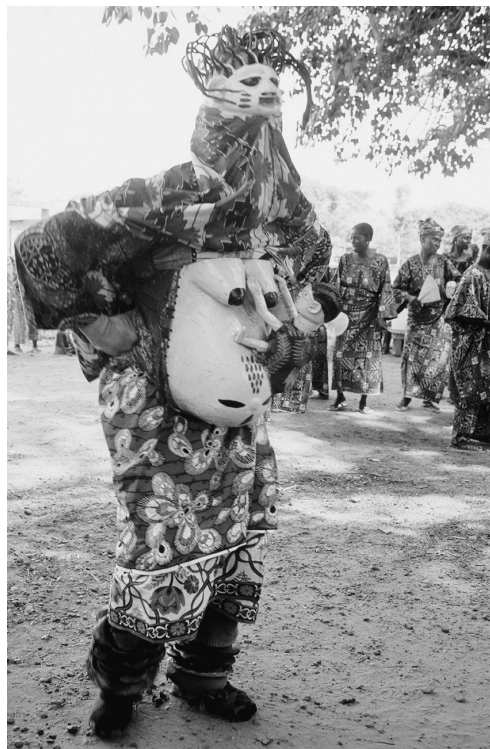
GELEDE

In Yoruba cultural and spiritual experience, the masquerade generally exists as an important transcendental connection between the world of the living and the dead. The masquerade represents the ever-abiding need to create spiritual and social equilibrium in the people's existence. Hence, Gelede combines both spiritual and secular aspects. The origin and practice of the Gelede masque is identified with the kingdoms of Ketu and other neighboring settlements around Benin Republic, such as Awori, Nago, Ogori, Sabe, and Egbado. Although Gelede has value for its social and entertainment offerings, it is primarily a spiritual cult connected with women and witchcraft. In this sense, Gelede serves as a counterbalance to the overreaching male-centered principles underlying the propatriarchal existence of

the Yoruba. The membership of Gelede accommodates both male and female initiates.

Gelede is primarily woven around the homage-paying ritual in honor and celebration of Iya-Nla (Great or Big Mother) who is believed by initiates to be the forebear of all women, particularly as represented by witches. The commencement of the Gelede masque festival is always signaled in the night by the satirical performance of a male masque called Efe, and a day after, the actual ritual observance opens. The secular aspect is characterized by entertainment performances. The props and headdresses on the Gelede costume reflect the local occupations of the people and key female icons in their society.

Abiodun M. Bello



Gelede masquerader, Benin, April 15, 2006. Gelede is a Yoruba society connected with women and sorcery, although its membership includes both males and females. (Eye Ubiquitous/ UIG via Getty Images)

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HARRIS, WILLIAM WADE

William Wade Harris (1865–1929) was born a Grebo man from Liberia. His mother was a Christian, and his father practiced the traditional beliefs. As a young man, he became the ward of his uncle, a Methodist Episcopal minister named Reverend Jesse Lowrie. Lowrie was a former slave who had been freed and returned to Sierra Leone, taught to read and write, and became a minister. Lowrie taught Wade to read and write. When he was only 12, he converted to Christianity, and Lowrie baptized him. As a young man he worked and traveled on ships as a crew member. His job took him up and down the coast of West Africa. While in Lagos, Harris attended classes at the Tinubu Wesleyan Mission, directed by Reverend J. F. Kufeji. Tired of life at sea, Harris returned to Cape Palmas and took up the brick mason trade. In 1885, he married his first wife and had six children.

His wife, Rose Fair, was the daughter of an Episcopalian catechist, John Fair. In 1888, probably under the influence of his in-laws and/or wife, Harris left the Methodist Church of his youth and was confirmed an Episcopalian. He became a catechist and worked for the next 15 years as an agent of the Episcopalian Church in Liberia.

The French and the Liberian government made a treaty that included adding some of the Grebo people to their domains, including the Kru, of which branch William Wade Harris was a member. This change included new taxes. The Grebo rose up and attacked the Americo-Liberian Mission. The reprisals were significant. William Wade Harris was arrested and put in prison in 1910 for his role in the uprising. While in prison, he had a vision of the angel Gabriel, who

sent him on a mission to preach the gospel of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

In 1912, Harris began his work preaching up and down the coast of Liberia with very little success. After a second brief imprisonment, Harris continued preaching. In 1913–1914, he took a missionary journey into the Ivory Coast. His preaching was met with large crowds of people. He preached in pidgin English, and an interpreter translated it into the local languages and/or French. The response was tremendous. Carrying water in a bowl with which he baptized approximately 100,000 people, he wore a cross and started hundreds of churches.

Initially he was traveling with two women. One was Mrs. Helen Valentine, an educated widow. The other was Mary Pioka, a native rural woman from Liberia. Mary Pioka had a son with Harris once they returned to Liberia. While preaching in present-day Ghana, he acquired another woman follower, Grace Thannie. His arrival into the village began with the women singing, dancing, and playing rattles. He also went into Sierra Leone twice, returning the second time in 1921 and working with other evangelists there.

Harris did not preach anything beyond the basic orthodox Protestant teachings. He taught the basic conversion process accompanied by baptism. He taught the rudiments of Christian theology and built churches, leaving elders over each. One thing he emphasized was the burning of spiritual fetishes that were popular in the traditional African religions of that area. He told his members that others would bring Bibles. Some waited as long as ten years for people to come and read the Bible and preach to them. Missionaries were surprised to enter the forests of Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast and find churches.

He crossed into Ghana in 1914, preached there, baptized many converts, and started churches where there were none. When he returned to Ivory Coast in 1915, the French authorities were alarmed by the crowds. They decided to arrest him. The man sent to arrest him found Harris preaching to a crowd of hundreds at Port Bouvet. He arrived with his men and servants. After preaching, he asked if anyone wanted to be baptized. The French administrator reported

that his cook and servant asked his permission to be baptized, and he agreed. After baptizing everyone, the prudent French administrator asked Harris to follow him to the Liberian border. Harris in turn told his followers to go home peacefully and serve God. Harris obeyed peacefully, and once at the border, the French ordered him not to return to their territory. This version of events contrasts with Harris's version; he said the French arrested him and his singers and beat them. Mrs. Valentine died shortly after her return to Liberia as a result of the beatings.

One controversial factor of his theological practice was polygamy. Harris traveled with three women who sang and assisted in his revivals. These women were reportedly his wives. The people to whom he preached were also polygamous. Once the missionaries came, this was an issue. In many instances, the churches Harris established retained their independent nature. In other cases, they folded into the European-based churches.

Harris said that the search for money was nauseous to the spiritually minded. He could have been very wealthy if he had sought wealth. He could have led a revolution to overthrow colonial rule if he had so desired. These assertions were made by those who saw him work. He taught humbly that people should turn to Jesus and live their conviction. He died in poverty in Liberia in 1929.

Douglas Thomas

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HOLY ARUOSA CHURCH

The Edo people live in present-day Nigeria, primarily in Edo state in southwestern Nigeria. Their ancestors were the founders of the Benin

Empire. They are also called Bini, which is reportedly a derivative of a Portuguese mispronunciation of the word Ubinu, which means the “center of governmental power” or “the capital.” Early on they had trade relations with the Portuguese, which led to a major contribution to the Transatlantic slave trade.

The Holy Aruosa church is a distinct center of worship located in Benin City, in Edo state in southern Nigeria. It shares similar architectural patterns with the modern Christian church. Its interior is a segmented worship space with a raised dais for an altar, from which the presiding minister, known as the Ohen-Osa, directs worship. It has a central aisle with rows of seats for congregants and choristers. This design shares a lot in common with many orthodox Christian worship centers. Its time of worship, like many other Christian churches is on Sundays.

It differs from other Christian churches in two key areas. First, its worship is oriented to the supreme deity known in Bini as Osa. It is a strict monotheistic religion that has no roles for intermediaries of the deities in the Benin cosmological order. Second, its structure and social organization is established and maintained by the Benin monarchical traditions.

Aru-Osa literally translates to the “eye of God” in Bini language. Osa is the supreme deity in the Benin cosmological order credited with creative power. The consciousness of Osa permeates the culture of the Binis. It is the binding force that holds Benin society into one cohesive social unit. The Holy Aruosa Church is linked to the Benin monarchy, and the church as it stands today is a reconstruction of one of the early churches traced to the Portuguese contacts of the 15th century.

Historical accounts trace its establishment to the cultural interaction between the warrior kings of the 15th century CE and the earliest missionary activities in the west coast of Africa. Osadolor argued from historical evidence that the warrior kings of the 15th century consolidated power through dominance of all the social institutions of the society. A notable feature of such influence is the strong link between the religious landscape of precolonial Benin and the monarchy. Cultural exchanges with the Portuguese led to the

establishment of churches around Benin Kingdom. The character of worship brought by the Portuguese was the Roman rite of Catholic worship. The inability of the Portuguese missionaries to sustain their catechising activities in Benin kingdom left a lacuna that was filled by a synthesis of Benin cosmological principles and aspects of Christian worship that have crystallized into the form of worship in the church today.

Peter Itua Akahome

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HYEL

Hyel, a moon god, is the supreme deity and creator of the Pabir/Bura people. According to legend, not long after creation, when the human population began to grow, a man stopped breathing. This was the first time such a thing had happened, and the people did not know what to do. They sent a messenger to Hyel. They chose a worm, and the worm went to Hyel and a lizard, Agadzagadza, followed. Once the worm explained the situation, Hyel told the worm to tell the people to hand the dead body from a tree and throw mush at the corpse. Once they followed those instructions, the body was to revive and the man would live again.

Agadzagadza heard the story and ran ahead of the worm with a lie. Arriving before the worm, he told the people that Hyel said bury the body. The people dug a hole, placed the body inside, and piled the dirt on top of the corpse. Just as they were finishing the job, the worm arrived. The worm told them in horror what Hyel had instructed

them to do. He urged them to dig the body up and hang it from the tree and throw mush at it. The people were too lazy to do so and left the corpse buried. According to this legend, that is how humanity lost the power over life and death.

Douglas Thomas

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IBEJI

The Yoruba of southwest Nigeria have the highest rate of twin births in the world, estimated at about 45–50 sets of twins per 1,000 live births. All twins, without exception, are given the names Taiwo and Kehinde. The first twin born is named Taiwo, translated as “to have a taste of the world” because the people believe that the second twin, Kehinde (one that lags behind), sent the first twin to appraise the world in preparation for his/her arrival. In precolonial times, the birth of twins was regarded as a deep mystery, and they were believed to be sacred beings with extrahuman powers. On the day of naming, twins were dedicated to Ibeji (god of twins), and they worshiped this god until their death. This deity is represented by an idol known as Ere Ibeji (Twin Idol).

In Yoruba tradition, the death of a twin is considered an evil omen. It is believed that the deceased twin, now lonely in the afterlife, would do everything possible to take the surviving twin. Under such circumstances, an Ibeji idol, representing the deceased twin, would be made for the living one. The surviving twin was required to take this idol everywhere, treat it as living, and give it a share of everything eaten and drunk as a sort of sacrifice to the deceased twin. The deceased twin, now presumed a spirit, was meant to look upon these foods as offerings. He/she was to receive it, be pacified, and allow the living twin to survive.

Temilola Alanamu

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ISLAM

Islam is a religion that began in the Middle East. It is classified as an Abrahamic religion, along with Judaism and Christianity. Starting in 610, Muhammad, a Bedouin trader, began meditating in the hills close to his house in Mecca. While meditating, an angel, Jibreel, appeared to him and commanded him to recite. This recitation was the beginning of the spiritually inspired recitations that were written and became the surah of the Qur'an, the holy book of Islam.

Muhammad began to preach. Central to his message was monotheism. Allah, the deity about which he preached, was described as having no children nor a wife. Mecca at the time was polytheist and made much revenue from the pilgrimages people made to the Kaaba. The Kaaba was a black building that had all the gods worshiped in the region. Muhammad's insistence on monotheism caused apprehension as those who made so much money were alarmed at the growth of his followers. The people began to persecute Muhammad and his followers, particularly after the death of his grandfather, who was his protector.

In 622, the people of Yathrib, a city to the north of Mecca, heard of Muhammad's reputation as an honest and wise man. Just as the persecution in Mecca had grown to an attempt on Muhammad's life, the people of Yathrib sent a delegation, asking him to come and live among them. He went to Yathrib and called it al-Madīnatu 'l-Munawwarah, meaning the "radiant city" or "enlightened city." Muhammad's move from Mecca to Medina is called the *hijra* in Arabic meaning "migration." The Muslim calendar starts that year and is called the Hegira, which is another spelling of *hijra*.

Muhammad and his followers established a base of operation at Yathrib, now known as Medina. While there, he attacked caravans from Mecca and conquered other areas of the Arabian Peninsula. In 629, after years of fighting, the people of Mecca made peace with Muhammad and his followers and allowed them to come and make the pilgrimage. Muhammad took all the idols out of the Kaaba and established the Islamic pilgrimage. Muhammad returned to Medina and died in 631, after having conquered the whole Arabian Peninsula.

Succession crisis led to a split in Islam between the Sunni Muslims and the Shia a Ali, or the partisans of Ali, Muhammad's son-in-law. Today the Shia a Ali are known as the Shiites and are prevalent in Iran and parts of Iraq. Sunni Islam spread beyond the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf.

Islam has developed local variety beyond the initial divide of Sunni and Shiite as it spread throughout the world. Belief and practice of the five pillars of Islam are nearly universal throughout the Muslim world. The first of the five pillars is the *shahada*, which means "witness." It means that the convert says he/she believes that Allah is the only god and Muhammad is Allah's prophet. The other pillars are as follow: *zakat*, "giving of alms"; *swam*, "fasting during the month of Ramadan"; *hajj*, "pilgrimage to Mecca" at least once in a lifetime if possible; and *salat* "ritual prayer five times a day facing Mecca."

Douglas Thomas

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ISLAM IN EAST AFRICA

Islam came to East Africa in 615, before the death of Muhammad. According to legend, followers of Muhammad fled to Axum (present-day Ethiopia) from people seeking their life in Mecca. Once these men came to the Axumite emperor, seeking that he turn Muhammad's followers over to him, they recited a part of the Qur'an. This so moved the Christian emperor that he preserved their lives. Thereafter, Muslim traders were allowed to settle there with limited rights to worship and no rights to proselytize. When the Fatimid Dynasty rose in Egypt in the late 10th century, Muslim traders in Axum had a protector from excesses. Trade flourished, and the Muslims were active in this thriving trade.

Horn of Africa

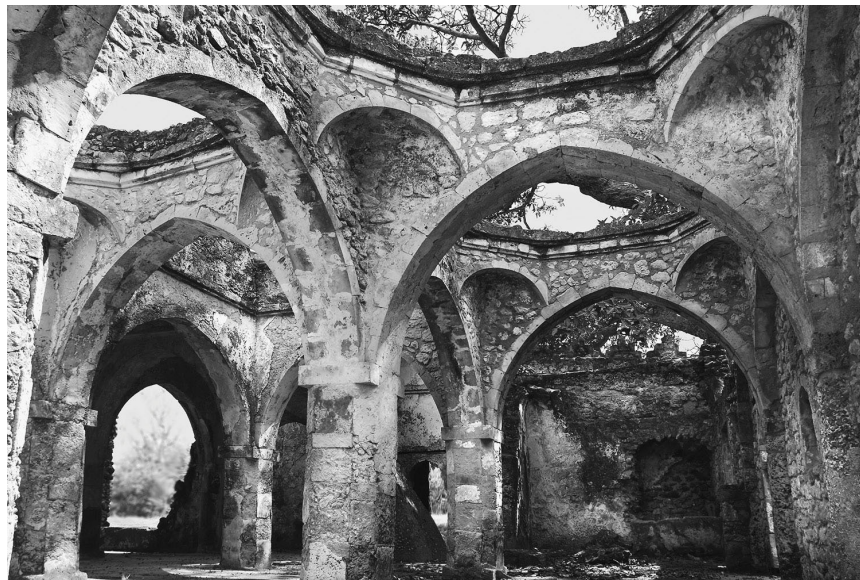
Around 1270, the Axumite Empire moved their capital farther south, opening up an avenue for the flourishing trade to facilitate the spread of Islam throughout the Christian kingdom. An Islamic political entity known as a sultanate was established in Shewa. Mogadishu, once a part of Axum, became an Islamic city-state around the 8th century. By the 13th century, the nomadic Afar and Somali clans were Islamized. These and other Islamized populations clashed with the Solomimid Dynasty over control of trade routes as they expanded southward. These clashes culminated in the jihad of Imam Ahmad ibn Ibrahim al-Ghazi, who conquered most of Ethiopia and ruled it from 1529 to 1543. Imam Ahmad was encouraged by the Ottoman Empire, which had taken Egypt to the north and Yemen to the east. Portugal was operating along the East African coast, looking for trade and conquest opportunities. Finding a Christian nation, the Portuguese cooperated with the Ethiopian state. A small contingent of Portuguese came to the weakened Ethiopian state's aid, killing Imam Ahmad in 1543.

Though the Christian state retook their lost territory, many of the inhabitants had converted to Islam. Ottomans and Portuguese had become involved in the region's affairs and developed a taste for their power in the affairs of the parties involved. The Portuguese sought to make the Ethiopian Orthodox Church into a version of the Roman Catholic Church. The Ottoman Empire invaded parts of Ethiopia and further weakened the existing Islamic states and the Christian state. In the middle of the conflict, the Oromo pastoralists moved into the fertile lands. Most of the Oromo would later convert to Islam and become major players in the spread of their new faith.

East African Coast

Archaeologists found remains of mosques dating back to the 8th century on the coast of East Africa at Shanga. Further evidence of early mosques has been found at Pemba and Zanzibar, dating back to the 10th century. Kilwa's oldest mosque dates to the 13th century.

Historians attribute these early signs of Islamic settlements to the trade routes of the Indian Ocean that encompassed the Indian subcontinent, Far East Asia, as well as the Arabian Peninsula and the East African Coast. This trade is also seen as the condition that gave birth to the Swahili language and Swahili people, both of which are by-products of Arabian and various Coastal East African traders. The resulting offspring of Arab traders and their East African wives/concubines are called Swahili people today. Islam was firmly implanted from these early interactions.



Interior view of the Great Mosque of Kilwa, present-day Tanzania, 13th century. (Elene [Blossfeld/Dreamstime.com](#))

In 1498, the Portuguese arrived off the coast of East Africa and tried to participate in and take control of the Indian Ocean trade. They imported soldiers and Roman Catholic missionaries, much to the chagrin of the Muslim communities there. The Portuguese were initially successful in taking the Swahili city-states but could not hold them. The Swahili and other Muslim communities of the Indian Ocean coastal lands fought against Portuguese domination. Traditions of Islamic learning and jurisprudence experienced a renaissance during the period of struggle against the Portuguese.

In the 19th century, the Omani rulers relocated their court to Zanzibar and stayed until the onslaught of European colonization. By

this time, the Muslim communities of coastal East Africa were intellectually, culturally, and religiously integrated parts of the Indian Ocean Islamic civilization.

Muslim Traders and Inland East Africa

Trade was the catalyst for the spread of Islam in Ethiopia and the East African coast. During the 19th century, trade caravans went from the coast into the interior of East Africa into present-day Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and as far as present-day Democratic Republic of the Congo. The first trade routes between the coast and the interior were run by Africans from the interior bringing items to trade on the coast. By the mid-19th century, Muslim traders ran these caravans. Slaves were a major commodity traded along these routes with other products. Many of these traders established posts in the interior. They took local women as wives and gradually spread Islam among the local people. In most places, Islam did not spread much further beyond the families of the Muslim traders' wives and immediate surroundings.

Tabora and Ujiji on the eastern coast of Lake Tanganyika was a strategically important staging point for the trade routes. In order to ensure smooth passage, the Muslim traders sought to form alliances with the local leaders. These alliances were often mutually beneficial. For example, Muhammad bin Juma married the daughter of Fundikira I, the ruler of Uynayembe. When Fundikira had troubles with his neighbors, the Muslim traders offered military aid. Fundikira's successors were not as open to the Muslim traders and kept them confined to Tabora with their families and slaves. The Nyamwezi were trading competitors with the Muslims, and apart from Fundikira, did not see their presence as a benefit. Mirambo, one of Fundikira's successors, played Muslim and Christian missionaries off one another for his benefit in the 1870s.

Buganda

Islam came to Buganda during the reign of Kabaka Suna (1832–1856). Muslim traders came in small groups. Ahmad bin Ibrahim, a known proselytizing Muslim trader, came to Buganda. Suna was nice to him, and Ahmad in turn told him about Islam. Suna did not convert, but many in his court did. His son and successor, Mutesa, received Islam and learned to read and write in Arabic, committed parts of the Qur'an to memory, observed Ramadan for 10 years, and taught his nobles. Once the Anglo-Egyptian Islamic forces started to threaten his kingdom from the north and Christian missionaries arrived, Mutesa I took a different, moderated view toward Islam. After his death, Roman Catholic White Fathers, Protestant missionaries, and Muslims vied for influence in the court. Mutesa had left chiefs and nobles in place who had converted to Islam and as such gave a hand up to Islamic influence in the court. The Christian missionaries, however, were constantly looking for an angle to convince the monarchs of their point of view. Eventually the British colonial conquerors came and tipped the balance in favor of the Christians, and thus it has remained to the present day.

Douglas Thomas

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ISLAM IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

The relatively late arrival of Islam to Southern Africa was directly connected to European colonization. Islam came to Southern Africa through the brutality of the Dutch. Dutch international colonial brutality led them to topple leaders on Southeast Asian Islands. They sent

these former rulers as exiles to their post on the tip of Southern Africa, called the Cape of Good Hope. There were around 200 who were there at some time or another between 1652 and 1795. Among these captives were some devout men such as Shaikh Yusuf, a learned Muslim who served in the court of Sultan Agenge of Bantam. The sultan's son was Shaikh Yusuf's former student. This son, Sultan Haji, led a coup d'état against his father, Sultan Agenge. Sultan Agenge asked the Dutch for help in a counter coup. Shaikh Yusuf continued to struggle against the Dutch with guerilla warfare. He eventually turned himself in to the Dutch, thinking he would be pardoned. He was never pardoned but sent into exile, eventually arriving with his two wives, servants, disciples, and other family and friends number, who numbered 49. The Dutch sent him to an isolated farm of a Dutch Reformed Church minister in Faure. There he and his entourage built some buildings and received friends and followers. His home was soon a stopping point for Muslims. According to the record, they multiplied there. When he died in 1699, the Dutch government was relieved because his living expenses were heavy, and the expansion of Islam in Southern Africa made them nervous.

During the entirety of the period of the East Indian Company, prisoners and exiles came from the Indian subcontinent, most of whom were Muslims. Among the Muslim population were some imams who came and let their presence as moral authorities be felt. Some preached openly; others taught. Their presence was limited as prisoners, but some served their terms and settled in Cape Town. Sixty-three thousand slaves were brought from Southeast Asia to South Africa between 1652 and 1807. Many of them were Muslims. Islam was a force among this slave population. The Dutch Reformed Church taught that if a slave became a Christian, he or she was to be treated as an equal. This rule led many slaveholders to avoid proselytizing to their slaves.

Slaves who acquired their freedom remained Muslim. Some of the African natives converted to Islam. There is record of Muslims freeing their slaves who converted to Islam. Some who owned wineries preferred Muslim workers because they didn't drink wine. Another source of Muslims were the so-called Prize Negros, who were people

who had been on slave ships that the British navy intercepted. They were then brought to the Cape Colony and given a 14-year apprenticeship before they could be free. Because of the racism of the Dutch Reformed Church, most of these Prize Negroes who were not already Muslims converted to Islam.

Slaves who were Muslims had opportunities for leadership that they wouldn't have had in other avenues of life. The egalitarian application of Islam in the Cape community opened the door for merit and devotion to be the deciding factors of one's position in the community. The Muslim community expanded, fed by slaves and indentured workers and their families over the centuries to a sizable one that exists there today.

Douglas Thomas

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ISLAM IN THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

In the African Diaspora there is a reemergence of studies focusing on African religions and spiritual systems that syncretized and diffused African cultures in the Americas, the Caribbean, and Europe. Often, spiritual systems such as Yoruba or Akan are mentioned with little regard given to Islam. However, major studies such as *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*; *Islam in the African-American Experience*; *The Call of Bilal Islam in the African Diaspora*; and *The Walking Qur'an: Islamic Education, Embodied Knowledge, and History in West Africa* are scholarly monographs that examine the impact that African Muslims played in the Western Hemisphere and throughout world cultures. Dr. Joseph E. Harris's essay "Return Movements to West and East Africa: A Comparative Approach" applied a comparative methodology for African-descended

communities to explore their historical roots and develop a Pan-African worldview.

Dr. Harris suggested four key elements that African-centered scholars should use: (1) trace the changes of *identity* that occurred among Africans forced abroad during slavery; (2) trace *transformation* that occurred to which African customs and memories survived abroad; (3) know how ideas of Africa arose and manifested within new *settlements* in the diaspora as it relates to Africa; and (4) note a physical, spiritual, or metaphysical *return to the homeland* (Africa) being the origins of return. The main goals of Edward E. Curtis IV's monograph, *The Call of Bilal Islam in the African Diaspora*, are "to offer the first synthetic account of Islam in the global African diaspora, to create a portrait of the diverse ways in which Islam is practiced by people of African descent, and to explore how those practices of Islam are influenced by the experiences and interpretation of diaspora."

Sylviane A. Diouf's 15th-anniversary edition of *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas* traces Islam's long, deep roots in the Western Hemisphere. She attests that Islam was not just brought to the United States due to the Atlantic slave trade, but Islam influenced the entire Western Hemisphere "from Cuba to Peru and from Guadeloupe to Guyana, and [that it] had been maintained by enslaved Africans was nothing short of mystifying for most people. That these Africans had written documents in Arabic (*ajami*) as a fact that shattered ingrained stereotypes." Diouf places Islam in a global hemispheric disposition starting in the 1500s, showing Islam as one of the primary religions introduced to the New World, along with Catholicism, before Judaism and Protestantism—"thus exposing its longevity, its continental reach, and its followers' resilience even under the worst circumstances." West/Central African kingdoms and the Atlantic slave trade were powerful mechanisms that dispersed African Muslims throughout the Western Hemisphere. African Muslims' religious heritage was much older than Protestantism, and its roots originated in Africa. Diouf attests that Islam had African origins that predated many Christian denominations: "there were some Catholics among the West Central Africans who had been deported to the

Americas, but Islam had been implanted in sub-Saharan Africa at least five centuries before the Portuguese sent missionaries to Kongo.”

In the African Diaspora, Islam was the foundation of resistance against slavery. In Brazil, African Muslims were the primary organizers and leaders of a major slave uprising in Bahia in 1835. African Muslims’ knowledge of Arabic and Islam were important factors in organizing rebellions against slavery and maintaining African culture. Richard Brent Turner’s book *Islam in the African-American Experience* records that African Muslims were recognized for their courage and their bravery in resisting Christian conversion. “Muhammad Sisei, an African Muslim in Trinidad in the early nineteenth century, noted that the Free Mandingo Society on the island was instrumental in converting a whole royal West Indian regiment of blacks to Islam.” In Jamaica, in the early 1800s, Muslims circulated a letter encouraging African Muslims in their communities to stay faithful to their religion. African Islam in the Atlantic world provided resistance in the Caribbean and South America in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The historical account of African Diaspora Muslim experiences can be found in historical literature and slave narratives. Job Ben Solomon (ca. 1700–1730), was born Ayuba Suleiman Ibrahima Diallo in the kingdom of Futa in Senegal. Solomon was from a prominent Muslim family and received education in Arabic and Qur’anic recitation. He was captured by Mandingo slave traders, and Solomon landed on a plantation in Maryland before receiving help from a Christian minister, who arranged an escape to England. Solomon then returned to Futa in Senegal. Other notable slave accounts include that of Yarrow Mamout, an African Muslim and former slave, who in 1819 posed for a portrait by Charles Willson Peale housed in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Abd al-Rahman Ibrahima (1762–1825) is an African Muslim who wrote his capture by slave traders written in an original Arabic text. Ibrahima’s story provides a context of global Islam, slave resistance, and his connection to the American Colonization Society, which helped him retain his freedom and return to Africa. Modern Islam in the Diaspora did not reemerge until the Ahmadiyya Muslim

sect from India influenced black communities in North America. Islamic communities such as the Nation of Islam and other orthodox Islamic communities continued African Islamic traditions traced to the kingdoms of West and Central Africa, the home of their slave ancestors.

African Islamic diasporas can also be found in the Middle East and the Indian Ocean. African Islamic networks have inspired culture and resistance for more than six hundred years. Despite Islamic orientation or ethnographic foundation, Islam is a driving force in creating, maintaining, and establishing African identities, despite geographical boundaries and transnational Islamic networks. Modern African Islam can trace its roots to the Ethiopian Bilal ibn Rabah, who issued the *adhan*, the first Islamic call to prayer. African-descended Muslims and other oppressed groups can relate to the symbolism of Bilal's fight to overcome slavery and oppression. Muslims of African descent claim Bilal's Africanism and faithfulness as historical legitimacy to be Muslims. The modern Islamic African Diaspora is rooted in the Islamic and cultural traditions of medieval Africa. African Islam during modern times hosts many practices and cultural traditions. Many of these practices are foreign to Arabs, Middle Easterners, and Asian Muslims. However, the heirs of Bilal can claim Islam within their African and cultural milieus.

Latif Tarik

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ISLAM IN WEST AFRICA

Islam came to West Africa via North Africa through the area around Lake Chad. These two paths had different impacts on the evolution of the religion in the region. Coming through the Empire of Bornu, when Islam arrived in the area of northern Nigeria, it had the backing of a solid government. Coming in the eighth century across the Sahara Desert into the Empire of Ghana, it was dominated by traders who were first commercial agents and second religious agents. Added to these two situations are the variables of the early Fula conversion, Berber tribes and their desire to control trade routes, militant resistance to Islamic conversion, and those bent on conversion over generations through peaceful means.

Conversion

The process started with the trans-Saharan trade routes. The connection between sub-Saharan, Saharan, and north-of-the-Sahara peoples has been in place since ancient times. Once Islam came from the east, it spread along these routes into sub-Saharan West Africa. Initially the processes were peaceful and has been described as *enclavement*, the process when a Muslim minority establishes residence in a non-Muslim space, starts schools, builds mosques for their communities, and invites their non-Muslim neighbors to send their sons to the schools. Writing was prized in the region because it enabled ideas to be dispersed across the expanse of great distances without modification. Writing also enabled kings to send messages to different parts of their realm and/or other kings without the messenger exposing the message to others. So kings throughout the period sought Muslim clerks for their realms to simplify governmental communication. With this in mind, it was no wonder that kings would allow their sons to go to the Muslim schools to learn to write. The writing lessons came with religious lessons. Within a generation or two, the male members of the royal family and nobility would be Islamized. However, because these men married local women, their women usually continued traditional religious practices, sometimes combining them with Islamic practices. Islam would thus go through a

(usually violent) purification process every couple of generations or so.

In 1076, the Almoravides raided the Empire of Ghana and took the capital, Koumbi-Saleh. By this time there was significant Islamization among the elites of the area, with some mixing of Islam with traditional religious practices. The Almoravides, far from their base, were not able to hold Koumbi-Saleh. The Empire of Ghana began a nearly two-centuries-long disintegration process. The resulting power vacuum left smaller kingdoms that had been a part of Ghana fighting among themselves for supremacy.

Around 1203, Soumaoro (also known as Sumunguru) Kante (sometimes spelled Conde), ruler of the Susu kingdom of Kanianga (which had been a part of the Ghana Empire) continued the empire-building efforts of his immediate predecessors and took the kingdom of Diara and conquered Koumbi-Saleh. The Muslims of Koumbi-Saleh moved north and established Walata, beyond the reach of Sumunguru. For a while Sumunguru lorded over many of the former kingdoms of the Empire of Ghana. Around 1240, however, the leader of the small kingdom of Kangaba, Sunjata Keita, defeated Sumunguru. Shortly thereafter, Sunjata Keita established the Empire of Mali along with the support of twelve Malinke kingdoms that supported his leadership.

Sunjata was not an especially observant Muslim. Legend has it that he would pray once a day, then call the five names of the prayers and say, "Divide that among yourselves." It was also said that he paid others to fast for him during Ramadan. However, the oral record paints him as a good Muslim but depicts Sumunguru as a shameless, evil magician. He also was not the first Muslim ruler of Kangaba. The first recorded king of Kangaba and relative of Sunjata Keita was Barmandana, who was a Muslim and made his pilgrimage around 1050 according to the Arab chronicler Ibn Khaldun.

With this heritage, Islam expanded under the Keita dynasty in Mali. Mansa Kankan Musa, emperor of Mali and Sunjata's grand-nephew, made one of the most celebrated pilgrimages to Mecca in the Middle Ages. In 1324, Mansa Musa began a nearly two-year-long journey to Mecca, where he stopped and visited other Muslim realms, including

Cairo. His trip did much to expose Islam of Western Africa to those outside the region. He also was exposed to other things, bringing home scholars, architects, and others to help him transform Mali into a model Islamic realm. The long-term influence of this injection of Islamic culture into the West African scene is not directly measurable. We do have, however, the scholarship of that period and the written records of Ibn Battuta

In Kanem-Bornu the Zaghwa established a trans-Saharan state along the route from Tripoli to Lake Chad. The Zaghwa settled among the So people, intermarried with them, and established the Sefwa Dynasty. Initially these people were not Muslims. Around the 12th century, the leaders of Kanem-Bornu converted to Islam. Their conversion resulted in the foundation of an empire that over the centuries became an agent of Islamic expansion. When they conquered the Bulala, they spread Islam there and farther south. Even with the level of Islamization exemplified in the reigns of Mai Ali Ghaji (1476–1503) and Mai Idris Alooma (1571–1603), charges of persistent un-Islamic practices continued into the 18th century.



Djinguereber Mosque in Timbuktu was built in the 14th century during the reign of Mansa Musa. (Emilio Labrador)

Islam came to the Hausa states from the Dyula traders, also known as Wangara. The initial penetration was peaceful. With time the entirety of the Hausa Kingdoms was at some level of Islamization. A class of Islamic scholars developed in the region and the purification of Islamic practice of the whole region of West Africa was the next foregone development.

Ulama

The Ulama is the collective community of Islamic scholars in any given Islamic society. In West Africa there were whole social classes of scholars that developed early. Two of the more active throughout the region were the Torodbe and the Jakhanke.

The Torodbe class were scholars of the Fula ethnicity. They were strong in Fouta Toro and had developed their influence and erudition over centuries. They were influential in the overthrow of the Denianke Dynasty of Fouta Toro. Their general influence on the region is exhibited in the number of scholars from other areas that came to study at Fouta Toro. Timbuktu had been the regional scholarly city, but once its influence was eclipsed with the various invaders, other areas rose to replace it. Timbo in Fouta Jalon was one of such scholarly centers. It was the teachings of the Torodbe that gave the intellectual foundation to the jihads that created the states of Bondu, Fouta Toro, and Fouta Jalon. As such they yielded great influence in these states.

Another clerisy was the Jakhanke, which were also active in trade. El Hajj Salim Suware (Souware) led people from the town of Jakha (Diakha) to Bondu. From Bondu they spread throughout the region with a large group of them going into Fouta Jalon and some going to Waalo. The Suware and others were active in spreading Islam peacefully in a similar manner of the Dyula/Wangara before them. As “soldiers” of Islam, the Torodbe and the Jakhanke laid the foundation for the reform movements that followed in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Reform

Once one kingdom or city had a strong Muslim population, they sometimes resorted to violence to convert others in that same space and/or other kingdoms and cities. The violent phase normally came after the peaceful phase of enclavement. In some communities, there was no violent phase of conversion recorded. All the Muslim societies experienced a period of renewal, however, where lax Muslims were encouraged to correct their unorthodox practices. In some cases, wars were fought between kingdoms.

In 1776 Abd al-Qadir Kane and Suleiman Bal defeated the Deniaka Dynasty in Futa Tooro and established a theocratic government. The reason given was the lax Islam of the Denianke rulers, but there was also the issue of insecurity because of Berbers raiding Fula villages with impunity for slaves. Kane and Bal had the support of the population but not necessarily for religious reasons. The people were tired of having their villages raided and their loved ones stolen and sold across the Sahara as slaves. Kane and Bal seized on this insecurity and fear, infused Islamic theology, and created a justification for jihad.

In 1804, Uthman dan Fodio, a Fulani Islamic scholar living among the Hausas in the city-state of Gobir, went into exile with his students/followers as a response to increasing repression from the local leaders. Eventually his followers spread the word to other Fulani scholars. With the help of nomadic Fulani and devout Hausa followers, dan Fodio defeated Gobir and other Hausa Kingdoms and established the Sokoto Caliphate. His initial issue was the lax Islamic practice of the Hausa rulers and their realms. His issue was thus not so much converting but reforming the state of Islam among the Hausa.

In 1862, after conquering the non-Muslim kingdoms of Segou and Kaarta, El Hajj Umar Taal attacked the small kingdom of Hamdulilahi because of perceived laxness in their Islamic practice. He went on to attack Massina, where a coalition of small Muslim states repelled him. Hamdulilahi and Massina were known as solidly Islamic states. It appears that El Hajj Umar Taal had political ambitions that

superseded his desire to Islamize the area. His attack of the non-Islamic Segu and Kaarta was understandable. However, there was no viable religious reason for his attack on Hamdulilahi or Masina.

These reform movements continued into and beyond European colonization. Faced with the superior weaponry of the European armies, the Islamic reformers turned more fully to Sufism as a rallying tool for their jihad. Sufi leaders El Hajj Malik Sy, Alassane Niasse, Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba Mbacké, and Limamou Laye, all of Senegal, created strong, viable movements that led to increased reform and an intense practice of Islam. With the destruction of the traditional monarchies and erosion of their societies at the hands of European colonials, many turned with fervor to Islamic practice under the auspices of one of the four major sufi brotherhoods: Qadre, Mourides, Layennes, or Tijani.

In the 20th and 21st centuries the impulse to reform still continues. Technology and globalization have also facilitated the connections of Islamic communities throughout the world. The result for West Africa has been the widening influence of the Wahabis and the Shia Islamic communities.

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JOHNSON, JAMES

James Johnson (1838–1917) was born in Freetown, Sierra Leone. His parents were Yoruba who had been captured and sold as slaves. The British intercepted the ship on which they were traveling and resettled them in Freetown. He was raised in the West African Methodist Church, which separated from the Wesleyan Mission under the direction of Daniel Coker in 1821.

Johnson attended elementary school at the West African Methodist Church school. He went to the Christian Mission Society grammar school and on to Fourah Bay College. The Christian Missionary Society was an organization under the auspices of the Anglican Church, as was Fourah Bay College. After graduating from Fourah Bay in 1857, Johnson worked as a catechist for two years in Kent, England. He worked as a tutor in 1860 for his alma mater, the CMS Grammar School in Freetown. From 1863 until 1874, Johnson served as a pastor in Pademba in Sierra Leone.

He was disgusted with the lax Christianity in Sierra Leone. He taught lessons on moral philosophy to the young women in an attempt to keep them from falling into immorality. He railed against consuming alcohol to his congregation. He prayerfully sought a wife to his liking. Once he found a young woman, he sent her to England for training in the mission field. She died in England. He did not marry for 26 more years. His fiancée's death set his resolve that European culture and customs were deadly to Africans.

Henry Venn was an Englishman who directed the CMS. Venn actively advocated for a native pastorate and the eventual creation of an economically independent native Anglican Church in Africa run by native clergy. Venn greatly influenced Johnson, which led to Johnson

openly advocating for a native-run church. While in Sierra Leone, Johnson actively defended Venn's plan to create a native church against other European missionaries who were against it. In 1874, the CMS sent him to be a missionary among the Yoruba at Abeokuta. His work as a missionary was not very successful, so he was subsequently assigned to pastor the St. Paul's Church at Breadfruit in Lagos, Nigeria, in 1880.

In 1890, James Johnson was appointed assistant bishop of the Niger Delta Pastorate. He served in this post until his death in 1917. A controversy erupted during his tenure at Breadfruit, which led to a church schism. While Bishop Johnson made a preliminary trip to view his new area of the Niger Delta Pastorate, a new pastor was appointed to St. Paul's, and Bishop Johnson's family was unceremoniously evicted. His belongings were even thrown outside, where some were damaged in the rain. The parishioners who saw this were angered. Johnson, who was a staunchly firm Anglican, tried in vain to mediate a solution. When the members told him they would leave, he cried then calmed down. In the end, they left the Anglican Church and started a new denomination, known as the United African Church. Johnson refused to leave the Anglican Church, and in spite of his vociferous railings against the unfair treatment, remained an Anglican until his death. James Johnson was a Pan-Africanist Christian who was a foundational factor in the creation of African nationalism.

Douglas Thomas

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JONES, CHARLES PRICE

Charles Price Jones (1865–1949) was born in a Texas valley close to Rome, Georgia. He was born the same year that slavery ended with

the passage of the 13th Amendment. When he was a young man of 17, his mother, Mary Jones, died. He worked a series of odd jobs to make ends meet. A young man from Talladega College in Alabama by the name of J. E. Gush, along with Ada F. Dawson, taught Jones to read.

Jones traveled and worked as a young man, never forgetting his mother's prayer life. In October 1884, he was converted, and Elder J. D. Petty baptized him at the Locust Grove Baptist Church in Cat Island, Arkansas. He began teaching Sunday School the same day. He acknowledged his call to Christian ministry in 1885. Early on, he desired to be a missionary to Africa. He went to Helena, Arkansas, and spoke with Elias C. Morris, pastor of Centennial Baptist Church. Morris encouraged him to go to college.

Jones began his education at Arkansas Baptist College in Little Rock in January 1888. Not long after entering college, Jones was called to pastor Poplar Creek Baptist Church. In October 1888 he was ordained a Baptist minister at Mt. Baptist Church under the direction of Reverend Charles Lewis Fisher, who was also the academic dean of Arkansas Baptist College. In November 1888, the very next month, Jones was called to pastor St. Paul Baptist Church. Until he graduated in 1891, Jones pastored two churches and was a full-time student.

In 1891, after having finished his education, Jones accepted the call to pastor Bethlehem Baptist Church in Searcy, Arkansas. At the same time, he was the editor of the *Arkansas Baptist Vanguard*, the official organ of communication of the Arkansas Baptist Association. Jones's talents were observed and respected by the leaders of his state association. He became corresponding secretary for the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, a trustee and auditor of Arkansas Baptist College, and continued up the ladder, attracting attention from outside the state. In 1892, Jones married Fannie Brown, with whom he had one daughter. The same year, Jones left Arkansas to answer the call to pastor Tabernacle Baptist Church in Selma, Alabama.

While pastoring in Alabama, Jones began to desire more of God's grace and power. He prayed and sought God. After three days and nights of fasting, he said he was sanctified. After having resisted the

call for two years, Jones accepted the pastorate of Mt. Helm Baptist Church in Jackson, Mississippi, in 1895. While at Mt. Helm, Jones stirred controversy among his local congregation and the Mississippi State Baptist Association through his preaching of sanctification and holiness. He allied with Charles Harrison Mason of Tennessee, J. A. Jeter of Arkansas, and W. H. Pleasant of Hazlehurst, Mississippi. The three men began preaching holiness and held a series of revivals in 1896, which gained many converts. Jones also published his first booklet, entitled "The Work of the Holy Ghost in the Churches."

Jones and his new partners in ministry were all eventually put out of their state associations for preaching holiness and sanctification. In 1897, they formed a network of churches called the Church of God until Mason proposed the name of Church of God in Christ. The others accepted the new name and Jones was the leader. In 1906, the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles exploded on the church scene. Word spread of the healings and miracles happening in Los Angeles. Jones sent Jeter and Mason out to investigate the revival and report back to him. Mason came back speaking in tongues (glossolalia). Mason testified he had received the Baptism of the Holy Ghost and the tongues were evidence. Jones did not agree with speaking in other tongues. Eventually the difference turned sharp between the two friends and they split. Mason called a meeting in 1907 and formed a new church. Both groups wanted the name Church of God in Christ. They went to court, and Mason and his group were awarded the name. Jones's group was renamed the Church of Christ (Holiness), the name under which it still operates.

Jones continued to lead his group with vigor and talent. In 1915, he went to California, where he helped William Washington establish Bethel Church of Christ (Holiness). Tragedy occurred when Jones's wife, Fannie Brown Jones, died in 1916. Their daughter had died earlier in a fire when she was only four years old. In 1917, Jones moved to Los Angeles, California, and established with fellow workers Christ Temple Church of Christ (Holiness). In 1918, Jones married Pearl E. Reed, with whom he had three sons.

Jones was also a noted hymn writer. He composed words and music for more than 100 hymns, many of which are still sung today.

Two of his more popular hymns are “Come unto Me” and “I Will Make the Darkness Light.” His role as hymn composer has reached beyond the boundaries of race and denomination.

The Church of Christ Holiness grew and expanded out of the Deep South under Jones’s leadership. In 1920, they established a council of bishops. Jones’s church bought a parsonage in 1926. He settled in California and moved the denomination’s printing press to California, making Los Angeles the de facto headquarters. In 1943, after years of building churches and preaching, Charles Price Jones fell sick and underwent major surgery. In 1944, the church voted him senior bishop emeritus. He died in 1949.

Douglas Thomas

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JUDAISM

Judaism is the religion given to the ancient Hebrews as recorded in the Book of Exodus and the other books of the Torah. The religion centers on the belief in one transcendent god, whose name has been transliterated as YHWH, or sometimes rendered JHVH. The Hebrew alphabet has only one vowel, *aleph*. The other vowel sounds are made with markings. The name of the Hebrew God was written without vowel markings. For centuries it was forbidden to pronounce the name in fear of “using it in vain.”

The religion began as a family religion starting with Abraham, literally meaning “father of many nations” and his wife, Sarah. The two had one son, Isaac, meaning “he who laughs.” Isaac had two sons, Jacob, also known as Israel, and Esau. Jacob had 12 sons by his two wives and two concubines: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah,

Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin. Joseph's son Ephraim and Manasseh were considered the leaders of half-tribes as they were adopted into the inheritance by their grandfather, Jacob, before his death.

Jacob's son Joseph became the viceroy of Egypt after a series of mishaps and adventures. Famine spread in the land where Jacob lived. He and his other 11 sons traveled to Egypt and lived among the Egyptians at the invitation of his son Joseph. Generations later, according to legend, Jacob's descendants were used as slaves. Yahweh sent Moses to lead them from this slavery and back to their promised land in Canaan, present-day Israel. It was during this exodus from slavery that the legal basis of the religion was established, and Yahweh revealed to them that he is the God above all other gods.

Judaism has significance as being one of the earliest portable religions. All religions during that time were tied to specific sacred places. The history of Judaism gave it an edge of portability. According to legend recorded in the Old Testament, the laws were given during the sojourn of the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan. The sacred worship place was ordained in Jerusalem. Solomon, their third king, built a magnificent temple for the worship of Yahweh. Three festivals were observed. The first one, Passover, or Pesach, was mandated to be celebrated at the Temple in Jerusalem. The Harvest Feast, or Shavuot, and the Feast of Shelters, or Sukkot, also required that the males come to the Temple in Jerusalem. Outside of these specific festivals, however, one could worship Yahweh anywhere.

This feature was particularly important when the Jews, as adherents to Judaism are known, were exiled from Canaan. During the exile, they had no access to their sacred space. They are recorded as observing their feasts as best they could under the circumstances. This exile period is commonly called the Babylonian Exile because the people of Judah and Benjamin were sent in exile to Babylon (present-day Iraq).

Prior to that exile, there were few practitioners of Judaism who were not of the family of Jacob. After the exile, there is mention of

aggressive proselytizing leading to a spread of the belief. There were also Jewish communities spread throughout the world. In ancient times, Jewish communities were established throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Jewish communities moved into Europe. There were Jewish communities as far east as China, and with the “discovery” of the Western Hemisphere, Jewish communities were established in the Americas. In the Middle Ages, one central Asian empire converted to Judaism, the Khazar Khanate (652–1016).

Judaism in Africa

Among the Jewish communities, there is a distinction between those who are of the descendants of Jacob and the converts. The Jewish communities that settled in North Africa and the Horn of Africa are considered the descendants of Jacob. One such group, the Beta Israel, were airlifted to Israel in the 1990s. The Abayudaya in Uganda are a group of primarily Buganda people who converted to Judaism under the leadership of Semei Kulungulu. There are other supposed groups of Jewish origins in Africa. Some Zulu claim to be descendants of the ancient Jews, as do some Tutsis, Igbos, and Masaai. These claims have various roots. Some were the result of parallels that Christian missionaries drew between the traditional religious systems and what they read of in the Old Testament. Some are the root of comparisons that the indigenous Africans drew themselves.

Black (African American) Hebrew Israelites

African American Jewish groups started at the turn of the century. There were Christian groups who kept the Sabbath on Saturday and observed other parts of the Mosaic Laws, such as the dietary rules. The oldest of such groups was the Church of the Living God, Pillar Ground and the Truth founded in Steel Springs, Tennessee, in 1886 by F. S. Cherry. Another such group was the Church of God and Saints of Christ founded in 1896 by William Saunders Crowdy. They

are Christians who follow the tenets of Judaism and believe that blacks are descendants of the Jews.

In 1919, Wentworth Arthur Matthews, a Caribbean immigrant and former minister of the Church of the Living God, founded the Commandment Keepers. Matthews's group abandoned the New Testament and have conformed to the traditional practice of Judaism. In 1966, Ben Ammi Ben-Israel started the African Hebrew Israelites of Jerusalem. This group migrated to Liberia and later to Israel. Now they live primarily in Dimona in Israel and have attained permanent residency there. They follow a blend of Judaism and other practices. They are strict vegans, practice polygamy, and practice communal living. There are offshoots of these two main groups and other smaller groups that practice exclusively Judaism or a blend of it and Christianity.

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KABUNDUNGULU AND SUDAKI-MBAMBI

Kabundungulu and Sudaki-Mbambi are twin-brother heroes. They are gods of the Mbunda people of present-day Angola. According to legend, Kabundungulu and Sudaki-Mbambi are the grandsons of the hero Kimanaueze through their father of the same name. Their mother is the daughter of the Kumbi (sun) and Mbeji (moon).

When their mother was pregnant with them, she heard a voice speak from her womb saying, “My sword is coming. My knife is coming. My kilembe is coming. My staff is coming. Get ready, Mother, I am coming.” Surprised, the mother braced herself and Sudaki-Mbambi came out. He promptly told her that his name was Sudaki-Mbambi, meaning “the thunderbolt.” He also told her to go plant his kilembe, a tree, in the family compound. Then the mother heard another voice from her belly saying the same thing. She braced herself again, and Kabundungulu told his mother his name. The twins immediately started building. They built a house for their parents, whose home had been destroyed in an attack of the Ma-kishi, some terrible monsters. The monsters had also killed their grandfather, Kimanueze, in the attack.

After the home was completed, Sudaki-Mbambi and Kabandungulu told their parents to go inside and rest. Sudaki-Mbambi then announced to the family that he was going to kill the Ma-kishi. He asked Kabundungulu to stay behind and take care of their mother and his kilembe. The kilembe tree represents, and has a connection to, the soul of the one for whom it was planted. If the kilembe dies while one is away from home, the people at home know that the person has died.

Sudaki-Mbambi went off and encountered many adventures. He successfully killed the Ma-kishi with the help of four supernatural beings called the Kipalendes. As he was fighting the Ma-kishi, three of the Kipalendes went with him while one stayed home. An old woman and her granddaughter went to the home where the one Kipalende was. The old woman challenged the Kipalende to a fight, promising if he won, he could marry her beautiful granddaughter. He lost, and the old woman put him under a stone.

Sensing that something was wrong, Sudaki-Mbambi stopped fighting the Ma-kishi and told the three Kipalendes, "Your comrade is under a stone." They said, "How can you see that from so far away? You're mistaken." Sudaki-Mbambi insisted so they went home to find that Sudaki-Mbambi was right. They rescued him from the stone and he told them what happened. The next day they left another Kipalende with the one who had been trapped under a stone. Sudaki-Mbambi and the two went out to fight against the Ma-Kishi. The old lady came back and did the same thing to the Kipalende who had stayed with his comrade. Sudaki-Mbambi again sensed it and returned. The old lady came the next day and fought and defeated the remaining Kipalende. She challenged Sudaki-Mbambi. He killed her and married the beautiful granddaughter.

As the granddaughter rejoiced at being free from her cruel grandmother and prepared to marry Sudaki-Mbambi, the Kipalendes seethed in jealousy and plotted to kill Sudaki-Mbambi. They dug a pit, put a mat over it, and sat around it. They invited Sudaki-Mbambi to sit in the spot where the pit was. He sat, unknowingly, and fell into the pit. They then took his new wife for themselves.

At that moment, Kabundungulu saw that his brother's kilembe was withering. Worried, he thought about what his brother was doing and prepared to go after him. Meanwhile, Sudaki-Mbambi did not die from the fall. He saw an underground road, followed it, encountered other adventures and eventually arrived in the land of Kalunga-Ngombe, the god of the underworld. Sudaki-Mbambi said he wanted to marry Kalunga-Ngombe's daughter. Kalunga-Ngombe agreed with the stipulation that Sudaki-Mbambi must rescue the daughter from

Kinioka. Sudaki-Mbambi complied, killed Kinioka, and brought back Kalunga-Ngombe's daughter.

Once they arrived back at Kalunga-Ngombe's house, Kalunga-Ngombe informed Sudaki-Mbambi that in order to have his daughter's hand in marriage, he must kill the giant crocodile named Kimbiji. Sudaki-Mbambi asked for a suckling pig and baited a hook with it. He then cast the pig into the lake where Kimbiji lived. Kimbiji bit the bait. Sudaki-Mbambi tried in vain to pull Kimbiji from the lake. Kimbiji pulled Sudaki-Mbambi into the lake and swallowed him whole.

At this moment, Kabundungulu noticed that his brother's kilembe dried up. He arose and announced to his parents that he was going after his brother. He followed the path and encountered the Kipalendes, who lied about trying to kill his brother. Kabundungulu saw through their subterfuge and found the hole where his brother fell. He promptly jumped into the hole and followed the path to Kalunga-Ngombe's house. He asked, "Where is my brother?" Kalunga-Ngombe explained what happened. Kabundungulu also asked for a suckling pig. He then baited a hook and tossed it in the lake. Kimbiji again bit. Kabundungulu asked all the people of that village to help him, and together they pulled Kimbiji onto dry land. Kabundungulu then pulled out his knife and cut Kimbiji open. Finding Sudaki-Mbambi's bones, he pulled them out into a heap and said, "Elder brother, arise." Sudaki-Mbambi miraculously obeyed, coming back to life.

They returned to the surface with the daughter of Kalunga-Ngombe. They then together fought off the Kipalendes and retook Sundaki-Mbambi's first wife. All four returned home. Kabundungulu asked his brother for one of his wives, saying, "Since you have two, give me one." Sundaki-Mbambi replied, "No." As time went by, whenever Sundaki-Mbambi went hunting, Kabundungulu came and slept with his wives. One of the wives told Sundaki-Mbambi, and the brothers fought. Neither prevailed, so Sundaki-Mbambi went to the east while Kabundungulu went to the west. When we hear thunder, the two brothers are calling to each other.

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KAKA-GUIE

Kaka-Guie is the god of funerals for the Baule. Kaka-Guie has a bull's head and appears at funerals to lead souls away from the world of the living to the world of the dead because their souls can be distracted by their grieving relatives and friends. Kaka-Guie is the child of Nyamien, which is heaven, and his second wife, Ago. His brother is Gbreké, god of the underworld and divination. Kaka-Guie presides over funerals also.

Kaka-Guie is represented by a bull mask. Another role of his is the protector of men. As such, Kaka-Guie secures the supremacy of men over women. Festivals involving his mask are done at night away from the eyes of women. Women are not allowed to see this mask, or they could be punished with death (see also Baule).

Douglas Thomas

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KALUMBA (LUBA)

Kalumba, also known by the title Sendwe Mwlaba, is the supreme deity of the Luba religion in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He is credited with creating the first human from a stick and breathing life into it. Kalumba's name, which means "wind," is connected to this breath of life. He is said to have come from the east and created the

sun to provide light for humans. Humans originally lived with Kalumba but disturbed him by fighting with each other. Kalumba sent them away to earth, where they were forced to work to meet their basic needs.

Kalumba tried to protect humans from death when Life and Death were traveling along a road. He set a dog and a goat to stand guard and prevent Death from reaching the humans. The dog took the first watch but fell asleep and let Death by. The goat later guarded the path but caught Life, mistakenly believing him to be Death. Because of this confusion, humankind encountered Death and became mortal.

Because the earthly life leads to death, people looked for ways to avoid this fate. They learned that they could regain their easy, immortal lives by building a tower to the home of Kalumba. Having succeeded at returning to their former home, they beat loud drums to announce their success to the people back on earth. Kalumba was angered by their noise and destroyed the tower to prevent more humans from reaching him.

Kevin Hogg

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KATONDA

Katonda is the creator god of the Ganda people, who built the Buganda Kingdom. He is seen as the king of all the gods and the judge of all creation. His name means “creator of all things” or “Lord of all creation.” According to myth, Katonda (literally translates as “creator”) created the first man, Kintu, and the first woman, Nambi, in heaven. Katonda then sent Kintu and Nambi to earth to produce children. He provided them with food and everything they needed. Then they disobeyed Katonda. As a result, the enemy Rumba (which

translates literally as “death”) began to kill their children. Kintu and Nambi cried out to Katonda, and he sent his son, Mulokozi (savior), to deliver them from the tyranny of Rumbi. As most Baganda are now Christians, this story is folded over into the Christian narrative with Mulokozi being used to describe Jesus Christ.

According to the legend, after creating the world and humanity, Katonda left the running of the world to a hierarchy of spirits. Katonda is seen as the father of all these gods and ranks the ancestral spirits and other spirits according to their importance and usefulness. There were three shrines built to Katonda in Namakwa, Buzu, and Bukule, all in the county of Kyaggwe. Some of Katonda’s praise names are Mukama, meaning “master”; Lugaba, meaning “provider”; Nyinigulu, meaning “owner of heaven”; Liisoddene, meaning “the big-eyed one” or “all-seeing one”; Kagingo, meaning the “one who has all creative power”; Ssewanaku, meaning “the ageless one”; and Ddunda, meaning “the shepherd.” Although one source said that Katonda’s power was seen as equal to that of the other spirits, these praise-names tend to point to the belief that Katonda held greater authority than the other spirits/gods.

Douglas Thomas

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KEBRA NEGAST

Kebra Negast translates from Amhara as “The Glory of Kings.” The *Kebra Negast* is a long epic poem depicting the early history of the Axumite Empire. It is written in Ge’ez, the official alphabet and

language of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. According to the tradition recorded in the *Kebrā Negast's* colophon, it was originally written in Coptic, the Ancient Egyptian language. Then it was translated into Arabic in 1225 CE. It was finally translated into Ge'ez in the early 1300s.

The poem begins as a debate between the church fathers, who met at the Council of Nicea. One of these fathers says that he's found a book in the church at Sophia and begins to recite it. In the many stories recounted is one about Queen Makeda, known in the Old Testament as the Queen of Sheba (Saba) and her visit to King Solomon.

According to the legend recounted in the *Kebrā Negast*, Solomon had a sexual relationship with Queen Makeda, and she conceived. She left Solomon and returned to her kingdom. She gave birth to a son named Menelik. At age 22, Menelik returned to Jerusalem to meet his father, Solomon. Solomon asked him to stay in Jerusalem and become the next king of Israel as the firstborn son. Menelik insisted on returning home to his mother. Solomon sent a group of men back with him. The legend recounts that the men stole the Ark of the Covenant and took it back to Axum with them, unbeknownst to Menelik.

This particular story does two important things. It places the Ethiopian Empire in a kinship alliance with the ancient kingdom of Israel. Thus, the emperors of Ethiopia took the praise-name/title Lion of Judah. The story also places Ethiopia as an important geographic place for Christians and Jews as the holder of the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark of the Covenant is said to be held in the Church of St. Mary of Zion in the city of Axum (Aksum) in Ethiopia. Monks guard the Ark and do not allow anyone to enter and see it.

The *Kebrā Negast* has special significance to Rastafarians (see also Rastafarianism). The Rastafarians see Ras Tafari as God. Ras Tafari took the throne name of Haile Selassie when he became emperor of the Ethiopian Empire in 1930. The Rastafarians view the *Kebrā Negast* as sacred scripture. Some Rastafarians even claim that the *Kebrā Negast* was edited out of the King James Version of the Holy Bible in 1611. There has been no evidence presented to

support this claim. Nonetheless, many Rastafarians believe it to be true. They read and study the *Kebrá Negast* as an inspiration for the greatness of black people.

Douglas Thomas

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KHODUMODUMO

Khodumodumo is a mythical monster of Sotho legend. Khodumodumo means “great noise.” According to the story, Khodumdumo meandered its way through the land, swallowing entire villages, including people and animals. As he went along swallowing everything in his path, he missed a woman who was pregnant. She was resting on a manure pile, which masked her smell from Khodumodumo’s instincts. He passed her by, not seeing anything else to swallow, and went up into a mountain to rest.

Not long afterward the pregnant woman gave birth. She temporarily left her new baby to find more manure to rest on. When she came back, her baby had grown into a man dressed in animal skins. She asked him where her son was. He responded that he was her son, Senkatana, meaning “boy hero.” He in turn asked her where everyone was. She told him Khodumodumo had swallowed everyone. Senkatona asked where Khodumodumo was and his mother showed him.

Senkatona grabbed his assagais (short spears) and faced Khodumodumo. Khodumodumo tried to spear Senkatona with his tongues. Senkatona sliced off all of Khodumodumo’s tongues. Then Senkatona went around the side and back of Khodumodumo. Full of all the people and animals he had swallowed, Khodumodumo was too heavy to turn. Senkatona sliced open Kodumodumo. The people and

animals were alive inside. Senkatona accidentally injured one of the men. Once he realized it, he was careful in slicing open the monster in order to free the people. Because of his bravery, Senkatona became a great and respected chief. All the people loved him for rescuing him, except the man he accidentally cut. This man and his descendants tried to kill Senkatona. Growing tired of humanity's greed and ingratitude in general and the injured man's ingratitude in particular, Senkatona, the great warrior, allowed himself to be killed.

Douglas Thomas

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KHOI-SAN BELIEFS

San or Bushman are a group of people who live on the southern tip of Africa. Scientists believe that the San or Keresan were the dominant group of people who lived in Southern Africa before Bantus, whites, and other people came to the southern part of the continent. The San are a nomadic people who roam from place to place in their hunt and focus on a type of antelope called the eland. It is said that the San creator goddess birthed the land during the creation process.

Culture and Religion

San religion is polytheistic in the sense that believers worship many gods while they also worship lesser spirits. The San gods seem to be nature gods, whose jobs focus on addressing issues that relate to hunting and protection. Man-eating spirits are viewed as beings believers need to fear while trickster gods use tricks and disguises in their dealings with the San people.

Gods of the San People

The San worship a variety of gods whose jobs center on protection and matters that relate to the hunt. For instance, one god addresses sickness and illness. Another god deals with thunder. A goddess played a role in the creation of the eland, which is a staple in the San diet. Another god was given the San name for the god of Abraham, whom the Bible called El Shaddei or the Many Breasted One. The lead god, Cagn, and his wife rule over matters that relate to the hunt.

Cagn is the supreme god of the San or Bushmen people of Southern Africa. His job seems to focus on activities that relate to the hunt. This is not surprising because Bushmen hunters. Cagn is a god of the hunt, and one of his main duties is to insure a successful hunt. This often involves protecting the San from animals or people who can endanger the hunt.

Hei-tusi: The Hero God

Hei-tusi is the hero god of the San religion. Though he may be considered a trickster god, he assists in protecting and guarding matters that relate to the hunt. This god seems to serve under the supervision of Cagn. No doubt he assists the lead god in protecting the hunt. Hesi Tusi's role in San religion is similar to that of Jesus in Christianity. Like Christ, this god rose from the dead. Christ serves under the supreme God, which means he takes his orders from God the Father. Hesi Tusi seems to work under the supreme god in the San religion. Jesus Christ intercedes on behalf of the father for the people. Hesi Tusi seems to serve as the people's intercessor for the San religion. Jesus has unconditional love for people. Hesi Tusi seems to care for the San people, which make him a god hero in the San religion.

Lesser Gods and Spirits

Lesser gods and spirits have smaller roles to play in the San religion. For instance, there are man-eating spirits, whose role is to punish and strike fear into people. Nature spirits aid in addressing issues that govern the natural environment and the hunt. No doubt these

spirits work under Cagn's supervision. There seems to be a role for ancestor spirits in the religion of the San. These spirits assist in matters concerning how a person relate to his or her ancestors. In addition to serving a variety of gods, the San worship Cagn's wife as a creator goddess. The San religion argues that this goddess helped Cagn in creating the world.

Spirituality and the San People

The San are a spiritual people whose religion center on matters that relate to the hunt. This especially applies to the eland, which is the main staple of the San diet. The San believe that the eland is a sacred animal, and they center their religion on this animal. Like Christians, the San believe you can communicate with God using trances. The San gods use mediums in their efforts to communicate with humanity. Spirituality that relates to the hunt plays a critical role in San religion.

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KHONVOUM

Khonvoum is the creator god and supreme ruler for the Bambuti people of Central Africa. The Bambuti are forest dwellers and hunter/gatherers. Naturally, their supreme god is also the god of the hunt. Khonvoum is said to have created people from clay. Whites were made from white clay. Blacks were made from black clay. Bambuti were made from red clay. Khonvoum made the people and lowered them to the earth and put them in a lush green forest to live. Khonvoum also provided all the animals for them.

As god of the hunt, Khonvoun carries a bow made of two snakes intertwined. He makes the hunt advantageous to the Bambuti. He is also responsible for the rising of the sun each day. Khonvoun takes stars each evening as the sun sets. He then throws fragments of the stars at the sun to ensure that the sun rises again the next day.

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KHUZWANE

Khuzwane is the creator god of the Lovedu/Lobedu people (Balobedu). He is also known by the name Raluvhimba among the Venda (see also Venda) and Mwari or Nwari. He is said to have created the world and everything in it. Afterward, he walked away and left footprints in the rocks when they were still soft. People know where these footprints are and perform an annual ceremony where they pour beer into the footprints as an offering. For the Lovedu, like the Venda, their ancestors are the mediators between them and Khuzwane. Since Khuzwane created the earth and left, the Lovedu believed he has not been heard from. The Venda do accord him some contact. The Lovedu look solely to their ancestors for protection from spiritual ills and for guidance on their life decisions.

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KIKUYU

The Kikuyu are Kenya's largest tribe, made up of more than 6 million people, or approximately 16 percent of the population. They are all thought to be the descendants of the first people, Gikuyu and Mumbi. The original homeland of the Kikuyu is around Mt. Kenya, which is fertile land and was a source of contention when the British wanted to settle the land.

Beliefs

Kikuyu, like all other traditional belief systems, is not limited to certain aspects of human existence, but covers the entirety of one's life. Birth, love, sex, marriage, death, and everything in between are covered by rules of orthodoxy and regularity that are seen as the harmonious workings of humanity, their immediate environment, and their deity.

The Kikuyu believe in the monotheist god Ngai. Ngai is also known as *mwene nyaga*, meaning "he who possesses brightness or light." He is the supreme creator and master of everything, Ngai is thought to live in the sky. He has places where he meets his creation on mountains—namely, Mt. Kenya, which is an anglicization of the Kikuyu *Kerenyaga*, meaning "mountain of brightness." Mountains are revered in general as sacred high places and resting places of Ngai. In addition to *Kerenyaga*, the Kikuyu revere *Kerenjahi*, "mountain of big rain"; *Keambiroiro*, "mountain of clear sky"; and *Keanyandarwa*, "the mountain of places to sleep." The adherent of Kikuyu indigenous religion pray facing Mt. Kenya, or *Kenrenyaga*. All these mountains are thought to be resting places for Ngai.

Ngai is also the supreme deity of neighboring ethnicities, the Masai and the Kamba. In addition to Ngai (*Mogai* or *Mungai*), the Kikuyu believe in ancestor spirits who rule at a level beneath that of Ngai. They believe that problems in their lives are the consequence of some spiritual infraction. As such, they see everything in this world as relative to the spirit world.

Ngai is seen as all-powerful and too busy to be concerned with the affairs of individual persons. It is said that he watches over the

households and clans. Sun, moon, thunder, lightning, and rain all are seen as manifestations of Ngai. Thunder and lightning are announcements and warnings for humans to get out of Ngai's way so he can do his work. Looking up into the sky during a storm is forbidden. A person struck by lightning is said to have disrespected Ngai by looking up during a storm. Even when they're lying down in the house, the Kikuyu turn on their sides to avoid lying on their backs with their heads facing the sky.

Practices

The Kikuyu have a saying that roughly translates into "Ngai must never be pestered." As such, there are no regular prayer days or worship ceremonies, as in Christianity. Prayers are offered for life-cycle ceremonies and when there are problems. Otherwise, people go on with their lives. In spite of this, the Kikuyu are ardent in their prayers to Ngai while facing Mt. Kenya. They raise their sacrifices to him. Though Ngai is seen as a distant deity who visits earth only occasionally to look things over, the Kikuyu pray to him at important times in their lives, namely, birth, initiation, marriage, and death. Prayer and sacrifice are rituals important to them in their worship of Ngai and appeasement of the ancestral spirits. When they approach Ngai for help or blessings, the Kikuyu always do it as a family or clan group; the leader of the group offers the prayers and sacrifices. There are also prayers for rain when there is none. If ancestral appeal does not yield desired results, there are more prayers offered directly to Ngai, usually by the father of a sick person.

There are no priests who teach the religion because it is interposed into every level of society and culture so that everyone learns as he/she grows. However, there are *arathi* (*morathis*), who are seers. The arathi receive messages directly from Ngai and deliver them to the people. As mentioned above, when the rains do not arrive on time, the elders call on arathi and look into what to do. If sacrifices must be made, the morathi or arathi give specifications to the elders. Then they find those who can help with the sacrifice: men who have grown old enough to not care about earthly pursuits and see the good

of the community as paramount and women who are past childbearing age and accept the responsibility of being mothers of the whole community. Then a male and female child under the age of eight are brought in because their age guarantees a pureness of heart. The sacrifice period takes eight nights. All chosen have their individual parts, even the children. The elders prepare honey beer and fresh milk. The boy carries the milk and the girl carries the honey beer followed by the sacrificial lamb and then the elders. Once they get to the actual slaughter, the two children place their thumbs on the lamb while the elders strangle the animal. The thumbs of the children represent the hands of the undefiled killing the lamb. The sacrifice itself is offered on behalf of the entire community.

Sacrifices are held when praying for rain. Sacrifices are also held for the planting, purification of crops, and harvesting. The Kikuyu also have special sacrificial ceremonies for chasing epidemics and community-wide misfortune.

Individual sickness and/or misfortune is handled spiritually if medical treatment doesn't resolve the issue. A *mondo-mogo*, or "diviner," is called to find the spiritual cause. The ancestors are first consulted. If after all rites are performed to satisfy the ancestors and the person remains ill, then the family turns to Ngai. In that situation, the Kikuyu believe that the living and dead of the family approach Ngai together for the help of the community.

The majority of Kikuyu identify as either Christian or Muslim. Their new religious affiliations coupled with "modernization" have led to the spread of secularization of Kikuyu. Attachment to the old ways is waning, and the Western perception of life and religion has taken hold.

Douglas Thomas

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KIMBANGU, SIMON

Simon Kimbangu (1887–1951) was born in Nkamba in the present-day Democratic Republic of the Congo. He was also known as *nguzu*, or “prophet,” in Kikongo, one of the Bantu languages. Kimbangu’s father was a Bakongo traditional healer. Kimbangu came under the influence of missionaries from the Baptist Missionary Society and was baptized a Baptist in 1915. He sought, unsuccessfully, to become a catechist within the Baptist faith. The missionary who baptized him rejected his application on the basis of his limited formal European education. Claiming to hear from God, he was convinced that God heard his desire to become a teacher of the faith. He also said that God had given him the spiritual ability to become a teacher.

In 1918, Kimbangu reportedly had a vision of Jesus Christ in which Jesus said Kimbangu had a mission to prepare people for the Kingdom of God. Initially he rejected the call, preferring to pursue economic activities in Leopoldville (now Kinshasa). According to his autobiographical account, he was not successful in Kinshasa and returned to Nkamba in 1921 to do God’s work.



Members of the Kimbanguist Church sing at a parish in Beni, Democratic Republic of the Congo, November 13, 2016. Kimbanguism is a religious movement founded by Simon Kimbangu in 1921. It is considered a branch of Christianity and claimed by some to be the largest church founded in Africa. (Eduardo Soteras/AFP/Getty Images)

Many miraculous events are reported to have happened during Kimbangu's childhood. By the hagiographical record, he was a peculiar child. Reportedly he turned a rotten coconut fruit into a ripe one. He once fell into a pit in the forest. When his foster mom went to get help to rescue him, she returned to find him already out of the pit. These and other early miracles are still told and sung among his followers.

Kimbangu did not begin his public ministry until 1921. From April to September of that year, Simon Kimbangu stirred the countryside around Nkambu and throughout what was then known as the Congo Free State. His wife reported often hearing Kimangu talk to another voice that she didn't recognize. She asked whose voice it was. He replied that it was the voice of Jesus Christ that spoke with him, telling him to do the work of the Holy Spirit.

Beginning among the Bakongo, Kimbangu's reputation caused his work to spread to neighboring peoples. His healing and other miraculous events attracted the attention of the people of the Congo Free State, who were suffering under the harsh Belgian colonial administration that worked overtime to remind the natives that they were inferior to the whites. The psychological assault was accompanied with brutal physical punishment and crushing poverty. These people often suffered and even died from illnesses that their traditional healers couldn't treat. Kimbangu's ability to heal was of particular interest. He is credited with having called a woman from the sleep of death after three days. He is also credited with many healings and praying other dead people back to life. These occurrences caused people around him to respect his abilities.

Though Kimbangu had no known political ambitions and engaged in no political activities, the crowds stirred the attention of the Belgian authorities. He predicted the end of colonial rule in the Congo, which alarmed all who were a part of the colonial regime in the Congo,

including missionaries. The real trouble started when the European-led Protestant and Roman Catholic churches were alarmed because Kimbangu's activities drew people in a way that neither of these religious groups could. Consequently, they saw Kimbangu and his group as a threat to their activities among the peoples of the Congo. The various Protestant leaders met with Roman Catholic leaders and Belgian colonial officials to decide how to handle the situation that Kimbangu's public ministry had caused. Reportedly the Protestants wanted a soft censure or some sort of action to try and caution Kimbangu. The Roman Catholics, however, wanted to be more finite and harsher in reining in Kimbangu. In the end, the Belgian colonial authorities arrested Kimbangu on June 6, 1921. He escaped and went into hiding, continuing his ministry as best he could.

After some months on the run, Kimbangu turned himself in to the Belgian colonial authorities in September 1921. They brought him up on charges of disrupting the peace and tranquility of the colony. He was sentenced to death. The Belgian king Albert commuted his sentence to life in prison with 120 lashes. He continued in prison as a religious leader despite the colonial authorities keeping him separate from his followers. The faithful continued to believe in him and his followers. He died in custody in 1951. His followers led by his youngest son, Joseph Diangienda, officially organized the Église de Jésus Christ de Simon Kimbangu, commonly known as the Kimbanguist Church in English.

Douglas Thomas

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KWOTH/NHIALIC

Kwoth is the creator god of the Nuer people. Nhialic is the name the Dinka use to describe the same deity. The Nuer and their neighbors, the Dinka, live in present-day South Sudan and Ethiopia. The Nuer traditional beliefs are polytheistic. Kwoth/Nhialic is seen as the sky spirit. Other lesser spirits exist on the earth and are at the service of humanity in exchange for prayer, sacrifice, and/or worship. Kwoth/Nhialic is omnipotent and omnipresent but unapproachable and transcendent. Rain, lightning, and thunder are manifestations of Kwoth/Nhialic descending from the sky to the earth. Rainbows are said to be the necklace of Kwoth/Nhialic. The air is inaccessible, as is god. Even the lesser spirits of the air are thought to be more powerful than the lesser spirits who live on earth.

The Nuer and Dinka practice ancestor veneration. They believe when a person dies, the spirit separates from the body and goes to the land of the ancestors. When one dies, an ox is sacrificed and the spirit of the departed goes with the spirit of the ox to the other world, where Kwoth lives. Kwoth pays special attention to the poor and unhappy people.

Douglas Thomas

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LANG'O CULT

The Lang'o Cult is a spirit-possession cult practiced within the traditional religious beliefs of the Luo People of western Kenya. According to tradition, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a series of wars took place between the Luo and the Nandi peoples of Kenya. The Nandi warriors, also known as Lang'o, made quite a spectacle. Their desire for war led to violent throwing of swords, jumping, and yelling. These wild warriors inflicted terror in the heart of the Luo as they raided with violent flourish at night. There is a belief that many of the Luo became possessed by the spirits of the warriors who were killed during the raids.

The Lang'o Cult spread among the Luo during the early-to-mid-20th century. Most adherents are women. A central legend to the cult is the story of Awiti nyar Lang'o (daughter of Lang'o). She was the most beautiful and courageous woman among the Lang'o. According to legend, she vowed not to die until she had captured her own cattle from the enemy. She rode into battle with the men and fought as hard as they did. Legend has it when she killed a man, she pulled out one of her breasts to show her victim that a woman killed him, adding humiliation to the pain of his death.

Douglas Thomas

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LAYE, LIMAMOU

Limamou Laye (1843–1909) was the founder of the Layenne tariqa, which is one of the major Sufi orders in Senegal. Known as Seydina Mouhamadou Limamou Laye, the founder of the Layenne tariqa (order), was born as Libasse Thiaw (also spelled as Chaw) and was an ordinary member of the Lébou village of Yoff. Therefore, the Layenne differ from other tariqas of Senegal because its founder did not come from a wealthy or elite Muslim family.

Libasse was born in 1843 or 1844 to Assane Chaw and Coumba Ndoye and “was given the name Limamou because of a prophecy his father and other Lebu men received from Sheikh Ahmadou Hamat Ba also known as Mouhamadou Ba or Limamou of Ouro-Mahdi.” As Douglas Thomas suggests, Mouhamadou Ba made a prophecy when he told Assane Chaw and other Lebu who visited him “that the Mahdi would be born among the Lebu and that his name would be Limamou.” The term Mahdi derives from Islamic theology, where it refers to the savior of the world. Yet, as Andrew F. Clark and Lucie Colvin Phillips point out, the Mahdi also alludes to “an apocalyptic figure who will rule the world and bring in the universal true religion immediately before the end of time.” Thus, Libasse Chaw’s life paralleled that of Prophet Muhammad. For instance, as Eric Ross explains, both Thiaw and Muhammad were “illiterate” and received their first revelation from God at the age of forty. In a similar vein, as Cécile Laborde indicates, both Limamou and the Prophet Muhammad were forced to go into exile (*hijira*).

Limamou’s revelation occurred on June 6, 1883, when, according to available records, he told a public, which had begun to see him as insane due to his isolation after the loss of his mother when he was 40, that he was God’s messenger. During his revelation, Limamou stressed the key expectations of the Islamic faith such as the giving of the zakat alms and the practice of ablutions, prayers, social justice, and constant invocation of God and the Prophet Muhammad. Limamou’s blend of spiritual and social message attracted many followers, raising the suspicion of French colonial officials, who accused him of recruiting soldiers and preparing a jihad against them. Thus, according to Khadim Mbacké, the colonials arrested Limamou in September 1887, even though he had left Yoff to settle in

Cambérène after the French compelled him to dismiss his followers and go on exile. The French freed Limamou after his three months of imprisonment in Gorée. These trials show that Limamou was a de facto anticolonial leader because, like Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba, the French perceived him as a threat to their imperial order who preached the virtues of social justice and spirituality as path to divine salvation.

Babacar M'baye

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LAYENNES

Based on the island of Ngor, located about 13 kilometers from the center of Dakar, Senegal, the Layennes (also written as Layeene, Layène, or Layenne) are a Muslim brotherhood that counts memberships throughout Senegal, Africa, and the rest of the world. According to Khadim Mbacké, “The name ‘Laayèene’ is derived from the Arabic term *ilāhyīn*, which means ‘people of God,’ or ‘deists.’ This designation is inspired by the Qur’ānic verse: ‘Our people, harken to the one who invites [you] to God, and believe in him’ which the Laayèene *tariqa* uses as its motto.”



Layennes gather for prayers outside a mosque in Yoff, Senegal. (Michel Renaudeau/Gamma-Rapho via Getty Images)

The Layennes venerate Limamou Laye and consider him as God's messenger and a reincarnation of the Prophet Muhammad. According to Ousmane Oumar Kane, "the Layène worldviews are deeply rooted in the belief that" Limamou Laye "is Muhammad resurrected with black skin." Thus, the Layennes Africanize Muhammad by representing Limamou as the last messenger who was resurrected not in Saudi Arabia, but in the Senegalese black fishermen's village of Yoff. Such a worldview dismantles the stereotyping of Africa and its languages as inferior to those of the Semitic and Indo-European worlds and idioms. Thus, as Douglas Thomas argues, if Limamou Laye's self-proclamation as "The Prophet Muhammad" who is "now awaken[ed]" and the "Arab [who] has come back" is "to be believed," then, "the Wolof language is as good as the Arab language for transmitting God's word, the Lebu are as just as much a chosen people as the Arabs are, and thus by extension Yoff and Camberene (Layenne spiritual centers) are as good as places for pilgrimage as are Mecca and Medina."

The perception of Limamou Laye as a resurrection of Prophet Muhammad has made it open to the criticism of Senegalese clerics, who perceive the Arab prophet as irreplaceable. However, as Khadim Mbacké argues, such a criticism mainly comes from a part of the

Senegalese elite Muslim scholars (*ulamā*) whose “theoretical rejection of what they consider to be a heresy has not translated into practical opposition to the Laayène movement.” Consequently, the Layennes’s order has prospered in Senegal and, just like Muridiyya, Tidjianiyya, Qadiriyya, and other Sufi orders in the country, has its own pilgrimages in the nation and followers from around the world. Just like the other tariqas, the Layennes place emphasis on the pillars of Islam such as the five prayers, the giving of Zakat alms, the veneration of the Prophet Muhammad, and, especially, the importance of honest living and hard work.

Another important part of Layennes theology is the belief in miracles. For instance, the Layennes interpreted the unexpected appearance, a few years ago, of dolphins in the sea of Yoff, when thousands of devotees were worshiping their leader, as a sign of Limamou Laye’s continuous presence in the life of his followers and the truth of his divine status. Such an example attests to Limamou’s enduring influence in the faith of Layennes.

Babacar M’baye

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LUCUMI

Lucumi is the dialect of Yoruba used in Cuba and the term used to denote those of Yoruba origin in Cuba. It is also the liturgical language of Santería, which is often referred to as the religion of the Lucumi or Regla de Lucumi in Spanish. The people of Cuba who originated Santería identify themselves as Lucumi. Slaves in Cuba of Yoruba origin were called Lucumi because they addressed one

another as *oluku mi*, meaning “my friend” in Yoruba. Today, most Lucumi do not speak Yoruba fluently or any version of Lucumi, though it is still the language of worship for the adherents of La Regla Lucumi.

Douglas Thomas

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LUGBARA

The Lugbara people live in northwestern Uganda, the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and southern Sudan. They number approximately 900,000. Their language is a Central-Sudanic language of the Niger-Congo family of languages, which denotes their migration there from farther north. They were once known as the “naked people” because clothing was not a central part of their day-to-day practice in the precolonial days.

Beliefs

The Lugbara people see their reality as intertwined inextricably with that of the spiritual world. They believe that the living and the ancestors have an unbreakable bond. As such, if sickness comes, it can be a result of the ancestors sending it in response to a breach of the obligation of veneration. They believe in a deity Adroa or Onyiru, who has an evil side known as Onzi or Androanzi. He is Adroa and good in the sky and bad in the water when he is Androanzi.

Practice

The Lugbara make shrines on which they leave offerings for their ancestors. The idea is to avoid any punitive action from the ancestors. They also seek to understand the reasons for different situations. Shrines are made for various relatives in special situations. For example, if a man died without leaving any sons, a special shrine is made for him to appease any anger he may have for the incompleteness of his life on earth. People build shrines for their maternal uncles because their relationships are deemed special. The shrines are small and are found in specific places. Food and beer are often used as offerings.

Douglas Thomas

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LUO BELIEFS

The Luo people live in present-day western Kenya, northern Uganda, and northern Tanzania. They are the fourth largest ethnic group in Kenya, where the majority of them live. They have traditionally practiced agriculture and fishing as their main economic activities. Their most eaten dish consists of fish and *ugali*, which is boiled corn or cassava flour. Former U.S. president Barack Obama is an ethnic Luo. The former Kenyan prime minister Raila Odinga is also an ethnic Luo.

Beliefs

Central to Luo beliefs is the spiritual power called *jok*. Similar to the *jok* of the Dinka and Nuer, the *jok* of the Luo is not one central spiritual character. *Jok* among the Luo is manifested in different form. The *jok* of a chiefdom, for example, described the mystical power of protection and correction that is an integral part of the leadership and

authority system of that particular chiefdom. There can be a jok connected to an ancestor that protects and guides members of a particular lineage.

The Luo believe in a creator god known by several names, such as Were and Nyasaya. The Luo concept of god has many praise names. These names are used when referring to the god of Christianity. Seemingly, the Luo have conflated the image of their original concept of god with that of the Christians. Nyasaya created the world and is active in the lives and affairs of humanity. One of his praise names is Nyakalaga, which translates to “he who is everywhere at the same time.”

The Luo also venerate their ancestors. They believe that living humanity and dead humanity are locked into a reciprocal relationship. The ancestors receive prayers and sacrifices in exchange for guidance, wisdom, and protection. The ancestors are strengthened as long as there is someone alive who remembers and venerates him or her. Otherwise, the ancestor can become obsolete. This belief is tied to how the Luo see the existence of humanity. Humans, according to the Luo, consist of two parts: physical matter and their shadow. Once a human dies, the body or physical matter decays and turns to dust. The shadow develops into a spirit. If the death was not favorable, the dead person’s spirit becomes a demon. If not, the dead person’s spirit becomes a part of the ancestors.

Practice

Prayer among the Luo in their pre-Christian belief system was reserved for problems. Otherwise people went along without more than the perfunctory respect due the ancestors and Nyakalaga. Sacrifice is a part of their worship practices. An animal was chosen and consecrated for sacrifice and they performed the sacrifice ceremony.

Sacrifices to solve issues are also common. If the ancestors are not happy, they can wreak havoc on their descendants or other living people who do harm to their descendants. When either of these situations arises, an *ajwaka* is called. The *ajwaka* is the diviner who

has power to examine a situation/problem in order to know how to fix the issue. To know the spiritual root of the problem, the ajwaka must perform a divination ritual, which usually requires the casting of pebbles or cowrie shells. From the results of the divination, the ajwaka knows the spiritual cause of the problem, and from there, proceeds to prescribe the sacrifice or medicine needed to fix it. Ajwaka are also healers and makers of medicine.

Some Luo are thought to resort to sorcery. The sorcerers are called *jojuogi*, meaning “those who are friends of the spirits.” Sorcery is the manipulation of spiritual forces in order to insure a desired effect in the physical world. Sorcery is looked upon unfavorably in Luo society, yet people turn to it. Those accused of sorcery can be severely punished.

Douglas Thomas

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MABA JAAKHU BA

Maba Jaakhu Ba (1809–1867) was born in Rip, Badibou (present-day Senegal), within the kingdom of Saalum. Maba's father, Njogu Ba, was an Islamic teacher of the Torodbe clerisy (a group of families whose men are all Islamic teachers) originally from Fouta Toro who moved to the Sereer Kingdom of Saalum. Maba's mother was Jakou Jeye, a Sereer woman from the kingdom of Jolof. Raised in a home that valued erudition and piety, Maba pursued education in the region going as far as the kingdom of Kayor and the kingdom of Jolof. While in Jolof he started teaching and married Maty Ndiye, niece of the *buurba* (king) of Jolof.

Having finished his education, Maba returned to Rip and take up his father's job as an Islamic teacher. Maba's father was a part of a cosmopolitan, tightly knit Muslim community in the largely pagan Sereer Kingdom of Saalum. The Muslims who settled in Rip were of primarily Wolof and Peul (Fula) ethnicities. During those days, *ceddo* soldiers, who were slave soldiers of the kings, raided villages for food and slaves. The Muslims formed strong communities in order to defend themselves against these raids and protect their families and property. Their preaching and teaching was peaceful, however.

During this period, the French began to move more aggressively with their colonization. In 1855, they annexed the kingdom of Waalo. In the 1860s, they were beginning to take a stronger hand in the internal affairs of Kayoor and Bawol. Saalum was a neighboring nation. Prior to 1549, Jolof, Kayoor, and Waalo were constituent parts of the Jolof Empire. The empire broke up in 1549, yet the familial, cultural, and economic ties of the various parts were not cut. Thus, as the different kingdoms gradually succumbed to the

destruction of French colonization, the others were sensitive to the plight.

Around 1850, Maba met his fellow Peulh (Fula) El Hajj Umar Taal. El Hajj Umar had been named the khalifa of the Tijaniyya during his hajj (pilgrimage) to Mecca. He initiated Maba into the tariqa (doctrine). This may have been the spark to Maba's more militant approach to the spread of Islam. Shortly thereafter, in 1861, Maba began his jihad, proclaiming Rip independent of Saalum. Peanut cultivation for exportation had generated unprecedented levels of economic gain in southern Saalum. Maba took advantage of this economic growth and bought weapons from the British. He declared jihad and easily defeated the mansa of Badibu. Badibu was a southern province of the kingdom of Saalum and it had been ruled by a Mandingo/Seerer lineage for 400 years. Maba ended that provincial dynasty. Encouraged by his victory, Maba did not stop with Badibu/Rip. He gradually conquered provinces of Saalum until he had taken the entire kingdom by 1864.

With that first victory, Maba established the Islamic government and served as a support for other Muslim leaders who were attempting to defend themselves against the excesses of their leaders' *ceddo* raids. He took the title *almamy*, a Pulaarization of the Arabic title al-imam. Then Maba was a major player in the political fluctuations of the Senegambia region at that time. The British were active economically in the Gambia River area. Maba made peace with them when he recognized the independence of the neighboring small Mandinka kingdom of Niimi (Noomi) at the mouth of the Gambia River. The British wanted peace to facilitate their trade along the river.

Maba wanted to expand farther north, where the French were active. The French governor of the colony of St. Louis in Senegal, Louis Faidherbe, had as a goal to annex Kayoor and Bawol. Fearing Maba's power and influence, Faidherbe made a treaty with Maba in 1864, proposing to help Maba isolate and defeat Lat-Joor Latyre Ngone Joop, former and future *damel* (king) of the kingdom of Kajoor. Faidherbe simultaneously opened talks with the British aimed at forming an alliance to oust Maba from the region. Faidherbe's last

year as governor of the French colony of St. Louis ended in 1865. His machinations in Kayoor had ousted Lat-Joor. Lat-Joor in turn allied with Maba on the stipulation that he shave his head and convert to Islam.

Lat-Joor's contingent of soldiers were one of the strongest arms of Maba's military machine. They both settled in Mbakke-Bawol. Lat-Joor raided Kayoor from his base in Mbakke-Bawol as a means of destabilizing Kayoor. Maba successfully occupied the kingdom of Jolof by July 22, 1865. At this time he moved to achieve his major goal: he invited the Trarza Moors of present-day southern Mauritania and the Almamy of Futa Toro of present-day northern Senegal to form an Islamic alliance as a counterbalance and check to French colonial expansion. Because of French military presence at the mouth of the Senegal River, the Moors and the Peulh were not able to contribute much to Maba's jihad.

Pinet-Laprade realized the threat Maba posed to the colony of Kayoor and sent weapons and ammunition to the buurba of Jolof. On November 30, 1865, Maba faced French forces under the leadership of the new governor, Pinet-Laprade. The French were defeated and Pinet-Laprade was wounded. On their march to Kaolack, however, the French burned many villages and their crop yields, which led to widespread famine, making it a pyrrhic victory for Maba.

Seeing his chances for the alliance crumble before his eyes, Maba retreated in 1865 to Saalum, taking with him many devout Muslim clerics and scholars. There were mixed feelings about this semiforced migration, with some disagreeing with Maba's manner. One cleric who smoked challenged Maba to give him religious doctrinal basis for Maba's forbidding of tobacco use. Maba is said to have responded, "Religious doctrine is not important to me; my weapons make me right."

Many Muslims celebrated Maba's zeal for the advance of Islam despite his focused and often rough manner. All agreed that his goal of an Islamic superpower state was admirable given the political instability plaguing the whole region. Clerics and scholars from Jolof, Kayoor, and Bawol all converged on Saalum at Maba's insistence. He told those who wanted to stay that they would be attacked by his

enemies once he withdrew or punished by the rulers he had replaced during his presence in these three kingdoms. Most of the Muslims followed Maba.

Back in Saalum, it was a brief interlude of satisfaction for Muslims there. The atmosphere is compared to that of Timbuktu during the heyday of the empires of Mali and Songhai. Maba governed according to his interpretation of the dictates of Islam. After lifetimes of living under rulers who were at best lax Muslims and at worst pagan enemies of Islam, the Muslim population of Saalum found the place refreshing in spite of their rough experiences during the migration.

Maba attacked the French trading post at Kaolack in May 1866 while Lat-Joor went to Kayoor, consolidating support for his bid for the throne of that kingdom. The French were perturbed by Lat-Joor's activities and Pinet-Laprade had warned Maba that he would be held responsible for everything Lat-Joor did. On March 28, 1867, in an attempt to weaken Maba, the French sent an expeditionary force into Saalum, attacking villages and destroying property. On April 1, 1867, the French inflicted a particularly bloody attack in Saalum. Maba responded with an attack on the French trading post again at Kaolack on April 20, 1867, inflicting heavy loss of life on the French forces and practically destroying the expeditionary force. Maba was seen thereafter as a hero for all the indigenous people who resented the French presence in the region.

In the face of that defeat, Pinet-Laprade determined to destroy Maba. He resorted to espionage and recruited spies even within the immediate entourage of Maba. From the spy network, Pinet-Laprade knew of Maba's intention to invade and take over the neighboring kingdom of Siin. Pinet-Laprade made alliance with Kuumba Ndoffene Juuf (Diouf) buurba Siin. Together they amassed 3,500 troops in Jaxao. Kuumba Ndoffene also called on the help of the Pangool (see also Serrer/Seereer), spiritual inhabitants of Siin-Saalum.

The two sides met at the Battle of Somb on July 28, 1867. Lat-Dior and his troops defected, leaving Maba and his remaining forces to face the French and Seerer troops of Siin alone. It rained on Maba's troops, making his gunpowder and by extension his guns

ineffective. Legend says this rain was the result of the work of the Pangool. The end result was a defeat for Maba's forces. Maba Jakhu Ba lost his life in that battle, ending his dream of a massive Islamic alliance.

Douglas Thomas

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MAGHILI, 'ABD AL-KARIM B. MUHAMMAD AL-

A 15th-century Islamic scholar from Tlemcem, Algeria, 'Abd Al-Karim b. Muhammad Al-Maghili (d. ca. 1504) left an enduring legacy in Islamic thought in West Africa. His career flourished in the ferment of the millenarian expectation of the Mahdi by the Muslim world of his time. His hardline theological orientation and puritanism ensured the expulsion of Jews from Tlemcem and eventually drove him from home to embark on a peripatetic teaching career among the fledgling Muslim communities of West and Central Sudan. His activities there prepared the ground for Islamic reform movements in precolonial West African Islam.

Al-Maghili visited Air, Takedda (present-day Niger), Katsina, and Kano (present-day northern Nigeria). There he taught courses in Qur'anic studies and Islamic law. In Kano, in about 1492, he made his monumental contribution to Islamic thought and literature when Sarki Muhammad Rumfa, the ruler of the city, asked him for guidance on how a good Muslim should govern his subjects. His response was a treatise he titled *The Crown of Religion concerning the Obligations of Princes*. Written nearly two decades before Niccolo Machiavelli's *The Prince*, Al-Maghili's treatise demonstrated insights into the psychology of power, especially its inherent temptation. Hence, a

repeated refrain in the work is the warning to the Muslim ruler: “The Height of Affliction is the Isolation of the Ruler from the Subjects” (Clarke 1982, 62).

In *The Obligations of Princes*, Al-Maghili sought to comprehensively address the social injustices that were prevalent among the emerging Muslim rulers of Sudan by promoting the egalitarian ideals of Islam. He had no misgivings about the need to wage war. The conscientious Muslim ruler must maintain a versatile war machine, not only to defend the country against external aggression, but to also rid society of corruption. The corruption he had in mind included practices such as giving and taking bribes, imposing illegal taxes, exploiting the vulnerable, immorality, and mixing Islam with beliefs and practices of traditional religions. For this *alim* (scholar of Islamic law), the jihad of the heart must express itself in the jihad of the sword against those who perverted the faith and society.

Al-Maghili’s work did not immediately create a revolutionary change in the quality of governance in Kano; the pervasive influence of traditional religions and privileges of office made it difficult for his ideals to flourish. Nevertheless, his activities in the city left behind a band of Islamic scholars who kept his vision alive. Furthermore, his activities and teachings prepared the ground for future revolutionaries who would, three centuries later, take up his arguments against the traditional rulers of western and central Sudan to launch their jihads.

Al-Maghili left Kano for Gao, in Songhay (present-day Mali), during the reign of Askiya Muhammad I. There he continued his push for reform. He not only gave his host the counsels he gave Rumfa in Kano; he also taught that a *mujaddid* (Muslim reformer) would be made manifest every one hundred years to purify the faith and banish from it all ungodly accretions. “‘He believed himself to be the *mujaddid* of his time’ and thereby contributed to the millenarian spirit of his age” (Flint 1976, 129). Possessed of a strong mind with an unflinching purpose, he died in 1504.

Kehinde Olabimtan

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MAHDI, MUHAMMAD AHMAD IBN ABD ALLAH AL-

Muhammad Ahmad ibn abd Allah (August 12, 1844–June 22, 1885), also known as Muhammad al-Mahdi, was a Muslim leader of the Sufi order Samaniyya in present-day Sudan. In 1881, he proclaimed himself the Mahdi, an Islamic messianic figure, and established his government. He died unexpectedly of typhus six months after his soldiers had captured Khartoum from the Turko-Egyptian and British forces.

Muhammad Ahmad was born to a family of boat builders. The family claimed descent from Muhammad, the prophet of Islam. Muhammad Ahmed's siblings followed in their father's profession. Muhammad exhibited early a leaning toward Islamic learning and piety. As a young man, he sought out the leadership and training from Sheikh al-Amin al-Suwaylih, later going to study under Sheikh Muhammad al-Dikayr 'Abdallah Khujali. At the age of 27, Muhammad Ahmad sought out the leadership of Sufi master Sheikh Muhammad Sharif Nur al-Dai'm who was the grandson of the founder of the Samaniyya Sufi order. With time his asceticism and piety earned him the title of sheikh, which gave him authority to initiate new followers into the sect.

Muhammad moved with his family in 1870 to Abba Island on the White Nile River. He built a mosque and established a Qur'anic school. As his followers grew, he invited his Sheikh Muhammad Sharif to move closer to him. Sharif moved to an area close to Aba Island, and conflict developed between the two leaders. The former master resented his former student's popularity, and the conflict eventually

led to Sharif dismissing Muhammad Ahmad from the Samaniyya order. Muhammad then joined another Samaniyya master, Sheikh al-Qurashi wad al-Zayn. Sheikh al-Qurashi was elderly, and when he died, his followers accepted Muhammad Ahmad as their leader.

The political situation in Sudan was burdensome and unpopular. Sudan had been a nominal colony of Egypt for years, but the Egyptians exerted no direct control over the lives of the people until the invasion. The Egyptians invaded and conquered the area in 1820 as part of the Egyptian Muhammad Ali Pasha's effort to eradicate the Mamluks, who had run to Sudan and established a base for their slave-trading activities. The Egyptian soldiers were harsh to the Sudanese people, ravaging the land and imposing heavy taxes. Eventually Egypt again loosened their grip on Sudan until the reign of Ismail Pasha, who was granted the title of khedive (viceroy) of Egypt and Sudan.

Ismail built two military forts in Sudan and conquered Darfur. Ismail also appointed European governors in some of the provinces. Britain pressured Ismail to end the slave trade and modernize. These steps caused more oppression and unrest leading to the situation under which Muhammad Ahmad proclaimed the Mahdiyya, the Mahdist state/organization.



Muhammad al-Mahdi was a spiritual and military leader in Sudan. Declaring himself to be the Mahdi, or messiah, he began a militant crusade against the Egyptian occupation of Sudan. His victorious campaigns led to the creation of a theocratic state, but he died very soon after. (Rischgitz/Hulton Archive/Getty Images)

In 1881, Muhammad Ahmad declared his role as Mahdi through letters to surrounding leaders. The ulema, or Islamic scholarly community, dismissed his claims and discredited him as al-Mahdi. However, the other leaders and the people supported him. He received support from southern Sudanese tribes. The movement grew quickly. He established his government and an army. They defeated all attempts to thwart him, eventually taking the capital of Khartoum and killing British commander Major General George Gordon, who had been named governor general of Sudan and charged with the evacuation of Egyptian troops from the Sudan.

Six months after conquering Khartoum, Muhammad Ahmad died of typhus. The Mahdiyya survived under the leadership of his assistant, Abdallahi ibn Muhammad, known thereafter as the khalifa (ruler). The Mahdiyya collapsed under the weight of attacks from the Ethiopians and the British. In 1898, General Kitchener killed the khalifa, destroyed Muhammad Ahmad's tomb, and threw his bones in the Nile River.

Douglas Thomas

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MALIK SY, EL HAJJ

According to a 1922 issue of *Les annales coloniales*, El Hajj Malik Sy (1855–1922) was born in the village of Dowfal, within the municipality of Gaya and the commune of Dagana, Senegal. His father was

Ousmane, the son of Modj (who, in turn, was the son of Mamadou), and his mother was Faouad Wele. Sy is one of the most revered leaders of Tijaniyya, which is the second largest Islamic Sufi order in Senegal. Sy established his own version of the international brotherhood in the holy city of Tivaouane. According to Knut Vikør, in this town, Sy “started to draw followers in considerable numbers from the Wolof of the area.” In a similar vein, the French colonial paper, *Les annales coloniales*, described Sy as a former pilgrim to Medina and Mecca and a renowned Qur’anic legal scholar who built a major mosque in Dakar and drew masses from around French West Africa through the power of his virtues.

According to extant records, Sy was initiated to Tijaniyya by his maternal uncle, Alpha Mayoro Wele, who was a student of El-Hadj Umar Taal, the founder of Tajaniyya in Senegal. Sy’s maternal uncle, Tierno Malick Sy, taught him the Qur’anic verses while his paternal uncle, Amadou Sy, traveled with him to Diolof, Sine, and Sagata before bringing him back to Gaya (Gaïa), where he followed the Wolof teachings of Ngagne Ka before residing in Futa Toro for months. Sy later perfected his studies in Saint-Louis, where he learned theology, literature, grammar, and law, among other things, before moving to Djambour and, later, to Cayor, to perfect his legal studies from Birima Diakhaté and Ma Silla Mane, respectively.

Disputing David Robinson’s thesis that Maodo (another name of Sy) settled in the town of Ndiande in 1895, a year when his disciples labored in fields and suffered from poor nutrition, the Senegalese sociologist Mouhamadou Mansour Dia argues that this settlement did not occur and that the cleric only demanded that his followers do the Wazifa, which signifies the continuous repetition of certain words and clauses such as the names of Allah. Such a practice, which has endured to this day among the Tijani of Senegal, stems from the Sufi order that Sy promoted in Senegal. In his preface to Dia’s book, the Senegalese scholar Abdoulaye Bara Diop describes this Tihaniyya as an orthodoxy founded on knowledge of the holy Qur’an, the adoption of the fundamental laws of Islam, and the application of the Shari’a.

Babacar M’baye

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MAMADU LAMINE DRAMÉ, EL HAJJ

El Hajj Mamadu Lamine Dramé (1840–1887) was a Senegalese Muslim cleric and opponent to French colonialism. Dramé, whose full birth name was Ma Lamine Demba Débassi, was born in 1840, at Goundiourou, in the village of Khasso, located eight kilometers from Kayes, in western Mali. After being educated by his father, who was a Muslim religious leader, Dramé was sent to the town of Bakel, where he learned Arabic. Later, Dramé fought in a war against the village of Gamou, in the Ferlo Boundou region, and was later captured and imprisoned for six years by Amadou, the sultan of Ségou. When he became free, Dramé traveled to Fouta, where he was exposed to the holy war ideologies of El Hadji Omar Taal and began a seven-year trip to Mecca. After his pilgrimage and passage in Turkey, Dramé, who had many *taalibés* (Muslim followers), aroused the jealousy of Amadou and the French army, who both wanted to eliminate him.

When he returned to his native village, Dramé, who was revered for his pilgrimage, began his own religious campaigns against infidels. As Andrew F. Clark and Lucie Colvin Phillips note, “he [Dramé] returned to Khasso and preached religious reform and attacks on non-Muslim states in the upper Senegal.” Thus, in 1886, Dramé, who began to dream of the creation of a Sarkholé empire, created an army that fought against the French in the villages of Kounguel, Taabo, then located near Bakel and also in Kayes and Boundou. Later, French soldiers surrounded and fatally injured Dramé at the village of Ngoga-Sukota, located a few kilometers from the Gambia. In addition to fatally shooting Dramé’s 18-year-old son, Souaïbou, the French military severed the cleric’s head and put it in a bag. Through this macabre act, the French hoped to end combats they perceived

not as anticolonial resistance, but as holy wars against infidels that El Hadji Omar and other Muslim leaders had instigated in West Africa from the land of the Haoussa, to the Macina, Ségou, Fouta-Djalou, and Fouta Toro. A French colonial paper describes Dramé's death as the destruction of a "prophet" that signified the complete pacification of Senegal.

Babacar M'Baye

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MAME COUMBA BANG

Mame Coumba Bang is one of the major water goddesses in Senegal. She is the deity of the Senegal River and the waters of Saint-Louis, where, according to legends, she is still alive. She is one of many "guardian spirits" of Senegal such as Mame Ndiaré (of Yoff), Mame Coumba Lamb (of Rufisque), Mbossé Djiguéne (of Kaolack), Kumba Kastel (of Gorée), and Coumba Thioupam (of Popenguine). These deities are called *rap* (or *rab*) in Wolof and are known to take people away from seas and rivers when offerings and other spiritual duties are neglected. Yet they protect people who do not forget to appease and worship them. A parallel deity in the Americas is the Haitian voodoo sea goddess Erzulie, who is also known for her ability to snatch people from seas and rivers whenever she pleases. Due to their power over the visible world, the *rab* are highly revered by the Wolof people, who praise their genealogies in order to have their blessings and forgiveness.

Among divinities, Mame Coumba Bang is adored by Senegalese people, who still hold on to a few traditional religious practices despite the advent of Islam, Christianity, and modernity in their society. According to Fatou Sow, such practices include the “sacrifice [of] an animal when a newborn child is given a name, or during funerals” or the “spill[ing] [of] animal blood before undertaking an important event, to call upon the spirits (rab) and [the] enlist[ment of] their support, or in order to mollify their wrath.” But as Malick Diarra argues, other offerings for Mame Coumba Bang are made in Beulbeu, Saint-Louis, which is the meeting point between the Atlantic Ocean and the Senegal River, where fishermen used to weep to be shielded from the goddess’s wrath. Such reverence for Mame Coumba Bang for good omens has continued to this day. Walking on the Faidherbe Bridge of Saint-Louis, one can see calabashes of food, soda, liquor, and other provisions float in the Senegal River as means to seek the goddess’s protection from evil. Michelle Margoles explains: “She [Mame Coumba Bang] watches over the city and protects the inhabitants from harm, such as sickness, death, drowning, and troubles during pregnancy and giving birth.” Yet the inhabitants of the fishing community of Guet Ndar remain the goddess’s most faithful devotees. According to Fatou Sow, “Fishermen’s wives make offerings to Mame Jaare and Mame Coumba Bang as boats prepare to leave the shore at the beginning of the fishing season.” Such reverence of Mame Coumba Bang has prevailed in Saint Louis, where every native-born inhabitant is expected to know about her.

Babacar M’Baye

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MANGO, ALAFAYO ODONGO

Alafayo Odongo Mango (ca. 1884–1934) was a religious leader and founder of the root of Roho Churches in Kenya. Of the Luo ethnic group, Mango was born to Konya Ojanja and Nding. Early on in his life, there were land disputes with the Wanga branch of the Luhiya tribe, with the British colonial government taking the Wanga's side. As a result of this trouble, his father died when he was an infant. His mother died when he was a small child, and he was raised by relatives.

When Mango was a young man, he married a wife shortly before going away to another region to work. Once he returned, his brother had taken his wife. He then married a new wife named Oloyo. His work as a farmer was successful. With his profit, he took another wife named Autot. At some point while visiting an uncle in Ulumbi, he saw some Christians studying with two books, presumably an Anglican prayer book and the Bible. They asked him to join them, and he did. After returning home he fell ill. He started having seizures; reportedly these two books haunted him. His family called in a traditional healer, and Mango recovered.

Shortly thereafter, he went to Mandunga to visit a friend. He saw people with the same books. They asked him to join. He did again and came back every morning for four days. After the fifth visit, he returned with a reader. He informed his wives that he had become a Christian. His first wife reportedly wanted nothing to do with Christianity. His second wife, Autot, however, went to Bible readings with him and showed an interest. At the time, the Anglican Church was evangelizing heavily in the area. One Reverend Chadwick had come in from Buganda (present-day Uganda) with helpers. Chadwick took note of Mango's passion. Polygamists were not allowed to be baptized or partake of the sacrament, however. Noting this, Mango sent his second wife away because the church recognized only the senior wife.

After his baptism, Chadwick sent Mango to the Christian Mission Society's Normal School in 1913 in Maseno. He learned reading, writing, math, brickmaking, and other useful skills. Mango had already built a mud-and-dung church with a thatched roof in Musanda in 1912. His education was to prepare him for work as a catechist and

evangelist. In Mango's church, Luo and Luhya people worshiped together. Mango didn't limit his work to the one church. He evangelized throughout the region, going to various villages and proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In 1916, while visiting a small church in Alego Nyadhi with a small entourage of four young women and one young man, Mango had a vision. In the vision he saw a dark figure surrounded by a bright light. The voice told him that he would know God's voice. Mango kept the vision to himself. While traveling back that night, the Holy Ghost struck Mango and his traveling companions in the woods, where they were passing to get home. They all fell down. Mango suddenly knew that there was sin among them. He told them all to confess their sins. Three of the women were Luo and one was Luhya. The three Luo women had forced the one Luhya to carry their straw mat, thinking such labor was beneath them. Localizing the problem in their pride, they confessed, and Mango prayed for them. The young man, Zakayto Wandeyi, did not confess, saying he had no sins to confess.

At this time, according to the oral record, Mango said that the Holy Ghost informed him that his people were not yet ready to hear his preaching. He continued as an Anglican catechist while preaching against certain Luo practices such as the interdiction of married women eating chicken.

Opposition to Mango came from a Wanga Luhya chief named Mulamu. Mulamu was a known polygamist with more than 30 wives and numerous children. However, he lived in his capital with one wife. The Archdeacon Owen upheld Mulamu as an example of a good native Christian. Zakayo Wandeyi asked the archdeacon why Mulamu was allowed to take the sacrament of communion while other polygamous converts were not allowed unless they denounced all their wives except the first. The Archdeacon replied that Mulamu had only one wife, saying they had been married in the church and all their children were studying. Wandeyi took the Archdeacon Owen to the place where Mulamu's other wives were living with their children. Owen asked several of the women who their husband was. The majority of them replied that Chief Mulama was their husband.

Surprised, Owen revoked the chief's status as full member and refused him the sacrament.

Angry, Mulama took revenge in 1919 against Wandeyi and his close associate, Mango. They burned Mango's thatched-roof, mud-and-dung church. Mulama and his accomplices framed a tailor named Koth for the arson. When the trial took place, the colonial authority's response to the issue was to exile Wandeyi and Koth from the region. Mango, bereft of a close associate and friend and without a place of worship for his people, built another brick-and-mortar church with his own hands.

Mango's work in ministry enlarged, and his superiors could not avoid seeing it. At one Anglican gathering in Nairobi, Canon Burns asked Mango to help lead the church. Mango stood to lead the prayer. He prayed so fervently until some say his head enlarged and stretched to heaven. Canon Owen was so impressed by the wording of his prayer that he reportedly wrote it down and hung it on the walls of the church in Nairobi until his superiors asked him to remove it.

Not long after this, in 1927, Archdeacon Owen appointed Mango as a deacon over a complex of Anglican churches serving mostly Luo congregants. The next year, Mango was chosen to go to St. Emmanuel's Divinity School in Freretown, close to Mombassa, to study theology. Mango and his family moved to Mombassa for two years while he completed his course.

Returning to Musanda in 1930, Mango found his church in disarray. The Luo and Luhya had allowed the ethnic fissures outside the church to disrupt their fellowship within the church. The Luhya eventually withdrew and built another church not far away. In the meantime, Mango had gotten in the fray with his fellow Luo in a vain attempt to recover land their parents lost when the British colonial warrior Campbell annexed it to the colony and allowed the Wanga Luhya to come in and take the land. The British colonial government frowned upon the Luos' attempt to hire a lawyer and actively discouraged it. At some point Mango and his family were expelled from their land in Musanda.

Later Mango was allowed to return on the condition that he recognized that he was a tenant on the land. His house had remained

largely untouched, and he restarted his life. He experienced hard opposition from the Luhya. When he left his compound, he risked attack with sticks and rocks from Luhya children whose parents had encouraged the attacks. When he went on his evangelizing trips, the harassment continued. He restricted his movement and left much of the evangelization to younger followers, including his nephew, Lawi Obonyo, and the charismatic preaching evangelist Sylvano Nyamogo. Because of his role as leader of the fledgling Roho movement in the Anglican Church, people came from near and far to visit, worship, and pray with Mango. As a tenant, his invitation of large groups to his house went against the traditional norms for a tenant. This further angered the Luhya people.

Lawi and Sylvano proved to be powerful preachers. Miracles were attributed to Lawi, and the movement grew. The archdeacon eyed this development with suspicion. He shut down one of Lawi's prayer meetings. On November 15, 1933, Lawi, Sylvano, another preacher, Yohanas, and Mango were called before the local church council. When asked about this new development, Mango said he did not know about the things that Lawi and the others were doing. Owens charged Mango with the responsibility of restraining Lawi and the others within the confines of accepted Anglican belief and practice.

On December 1, 1933, Lawi called a meeting of believers. After prayer, people began to come for Lawi's teaching. After days of prayer, certain people were chosen and sent forth as messengers, or *jote*, to preach the power of the Holy Ghost in surrounding regions. Mango had asked that his candidates for confirmation be allowed to test at his home church. Owens refused, ordering him to bring them on December 6, 1933, with the others. Mango did not show up. On December 17, 1933, while about to baptize children whose parents had been waiting for the baptism by Mango—the only one authorized to baptize for miles—Mango removed his cassock and gave it to Lawi. Lawi wore the cassock and prepared to baptize. Certain of the members refused, stating that Lawi had not been ordained deacon and was not even an official catechist. The congregation split over the issue, with the dissenters leaving. There was also either a storm or

earthquake that day that Roho adherents attributed to the displeasure of the Holy Ghost at the split.

Following that, there was a dispute over who should be allowed to use the building. The dispute came before church officials and colonial officials. The decision was for the members who refused Lawi's offer to baptize their children. Mango and Lawi's members were barred. They resorted to going in the evenings to pray and worship and run back to Mango's house down the hill. In January 1934, a mob caught Mango's followers coming from the church and attacked them. They largely left the women alone but sharply attacked the men, killing one follower named Barnaba. According to the oral tradition, Lawi prayed until Barnaba came back to life. A drunk man named Siguru, who had come to see the man killed in the fray, found Barnaba alive. He renounced alcohol at that moment and converted to the Roho movement.

The opposition to Mango continued throughout the community. Eventually it came to a head when two Luyo men stirred a mob and attacked Mango's compound. They burned every building, including where Mango was with children. Some of the children escaped. Some were burned alive with Mango. One of the men speared Mango as he was burning. Lawi was also killed the next day when the Luhya mob came again. Mango's tragic end did not stop the Roho movement, and the subsequent denominations that evolved from his initial activities look to him as their founder, although he never officially left the Anglican Church.

Douglas Thomas

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MASON, CHARLES HARRISON

Charles Harrison Mason (1866–1961) was born to Jerry and Eliza Mason close to Memphis, Tennessee, in unincorporated Shelby County, Tennessee. The area was named Prior Farm and is now called Bartlett, Tennessee. This was just one year after the end of the Civil War and passage of the 13th Amendment, which ended slavery. When Mason was 12 years old, his family left the Memphis area and moved to Preston, Arkansas, in the wake of the yellow fever epidemic. In 1879, Mason's father died from yellow fever.

The next year when Mason was nearly 14, he fell gravely ill. Everyone feared for his life. On the first Sunday of September 1880, while his family was at church, Mason said a light came into his room, and he was ordered to get up. He stood up and was healed. His mom took he and his half-brother to church and Reverend I. S. Nelson baptized him.

From that day on he became a lay preacher. He went to revivals and camp meetings, giving his testimony and preaching. He also worked with souls on the mourner's bench as they sought a spiritual conversion experience. In 1891, he was licensed to preach and ordained a minister of the gospel in Preston, Arkansas.

At this time, he married Alice Saxton, the daughter of his mother's best friend. For whatever reason, Alice did not want to be married to a preacher. Mason had received the call to preach and was active, yet he held back from full-time ministry for his new wife's sake. This arrangement did not stand the test of time, and Alice divorced him after two years of marriage.

Mason fell into a state of despair. He even considered suicide because of his heartbreak. He was restored in mind and spirit after coming across a copy of Amanda Berry Smith's autobiography, in which she recounted her evangelistic travels in America, India, West Africa, and England. Mason says he received the grace of sanctification after having read this book. At this point, Mason decided to get an education.

He was accepted to Arkansas Baptist College, a new institution founded and supported by the state association of black Baptists in

Arkansas. After a brief period, Mason became disenchanted with the education. Charles Lewis Fisher, a graduate of Morgan Park Seminary (which would later become the University of Chicago Divinity School) introduced different interpretations of the Bible that Mason found at odds with his belief.

In 1895, Mason made one of the pivotal friendships of his life. He met Charles Price Jones and the two became close friends. Jones was a graduate of Arkansas Baptist and a noted preacher. Jones also accepted the call to pastor Mt. Helm Baptist Church in Jackson, Mississippi, the same year.

Jones and Mason both had an interest in the holiness doctrine and sanctification. They began to preach this doctrine at the churches they pastored and any other church that would allow them the space in Arkansas, Mississippi, and Tennessee. They were joined by J. A. Jeter of Little Rock, Arkansas, and W. S. Pleasant, from Hazelhurst, Mississippi. In 1896, these men led a series of revivals that yielded many converts.

There was controversy over this new doctrine among the Baptists of Mississippi. The controversy ended with the Baptist Association of Mississippi withdrawing the right hand of fellowship from Jones and Mason. In 1897, these men started an association of churches called the Church of God. Mason continued to seek God for a name and while walking along a certain street in Little Rock, Arkansas, he said God spoke to him the name Church of God in Christ. Jones and the others adopted the name. In 1899, the National Baptist Convention expelled Mason and Jones over the matter of sanctification and holiness.

Jones was the leader of the new Church of God in Christ. When the Azusa Street Revival broke out in Los Angeles in 1906, the word spread that the Holy Ghost had fallen, and a new manifestation of God's grace was among men. Jones sent Mason and Jeter to inspect the revival. Mason went with an open mind and received the baptism of the Holy Ghost with the evidence of glossolalia (speaking in tongues). When he and Jeter returned to report to Jones, Jones was suspicious of glossolalia. The assembly of the new denomination studied the situation. Jones did not agree with it and withdrew the

right hand of fellowship from Mason. In 1907, Mason in turn called a meeting of men interested in starting a new group that believed in glossolalia. Men came and chose Mason as leader.

There was a fight for the use of the name. Jones's group wanted to keep the name Church of God in Christ. Mason's group desired it. They went to court and Mason and his group were allowed to keep the name. Jones's group chose the name Church of Christ (Holiness), by which it is still known.

Mason said God told him that with that name, no building would ever be big enough to hold all the members of the church. Today the Church of God in Christ counts 6 million adherents in the United States and at least 3 million more on foreign soil. The Church of Christ Holiness remains a small denomination by comparison, with fewer than 1 million members.

Mason presided over the church during its most explosive era of growth. Armed with a strong organization of dual-gender authority system and members who gave up everything for the way of holiness, Mason saw the Church of God in Christ expand to every state of the contiguous United States of America and many foreign nations.

Mason remained unmarried as long as Alice Paxton was alive. Alice Paxton died in 1904, twelve years after she divorced him. Mason was a firm believer in one living wife and taught against what he termed "double marriage." In 1905, Mason felt free from the obligations of his marital vows and married Leila Washington. They had seven children together. In 1943, Leila Washington Mason died. Mason then married Elsie Washington, with whom he stayed until his death in 1961.

Douglas Thomas

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MBABA MWANA WARESA

Mbaba Mwana Waresa is the Zulu goddess of rainbows and fertility and the daughter of the sky god Umvelinqani. According to legend, she lives in a hut in the clouds and announces her intention to pour out rain with ceremonial drums. The Zulu love, honor, and revere her because of her sending the rain, her teaching humanity how to cultivate millet and sorghum, and her creation of beer. The legends that tell of her come in many variations.

Once she scoured the heavens looking for a suitable mate. When none was found among the gods, she came to earth and looked among men. She found a cow herder singing. His song touched and moved her, so she decided he would probably make a good husband. Before the marriage was finalized, she put him through a series of tests. One of these tests involved her sending a beautiful woman from her palace to him while she disguised herself as an old hag. If he failed and chose the beautiful woman over her, she would know that he would not make a faithful spouse. The man was not fooled and recognized her immediately. Having passed all the tests, she married him.

Choosing a mate among mortals was an insult to the other gods. These gods became more hostile in their dealings with men. Mbaba Mwana Waresa created beer as a means of making men feel closer to the gods. In traditional Zulu society, it is a ceremonial drink made from sorghum. Women are the only ones who brew it. After brewing the beer, the hostess skims the froth and pours it to the ground in honor of the gods and ancestors. She then tastes it to assure her guests it is safe to drink. Her husband also drinks to assure that it is of good quality for his guests. Then the calabash bowl is passed around, and each guest drinks to his or her delight. Mbaba Mwana Waresa is consulted when Zulus need to make important decisions.

Douglas Thomas

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MBITI, JOHN

John Samuel Mbiti, the father of contemporary African theology, was born November 30, 1931, in Mulango, Kutui, Kenya. His parents, Samuel Mutuvi Ngaangi and Velesi Mbandi Mutuvi were members of the Akamba tribe. After finishing high school in 1949, Mbiti studied at Makerere University College in Kampala, Uganda. He earned his bachelor of arts in 1953 and went on to study theology at Barrington College in New England, where he earned a bachelor of theology in 1957. John Mbiti matriculated at Cambridge University, where he obtained his doctorate in 1963. His dissertation, *New Testament Eschatology in an African Background: A Study of the Encounter between New Testament Theology and African Traditional Concepts*, was published by Oxford University Press in 1971. He met his wife, Verena Mbiti-Siegenthaler (they married in 1965), at Cambridge, and the couple have four children, Kyeni Samuel, Maria Mwendu, Esther Mwikali, and Anna-Kavata.

After the completion of his doctoral work, Mbiti returned to Makerere University, where he taught New Testament and African religion. He immersed himself in African religion and published his seminal work, *African Religions and Philosophy* (1969). Mbiti wrote that Africans are tremendously religious people, and each tribe has its own religious system. He argues that as African tribal religions have no sacred writings, it is imperative to study the religious journeys of individuals as well as beliefs concerning God and the spirits. According to Mbiti, the key concept for understanding the religious and philosophical perspective of African religion is the concept of time. In African religion, time is a two-dimensional phenomenon with a long past, dynamic present, and virtually no future. The linear concept of time, with an infinite future, is practically absent in African religion, because events that lie in it have not taken place (Moreau). Mbiti also claims that both Christianity and Islam are

indigenous to Africa, and these two faiths are encroaching upon the areas of traditional tribal religion.

From 1974 to 1980, John Mbiti was the director of the Ecumenical Institute of the World Council of Churches at the Chateau de Bossey in Geneva, Switzerland. He taught theology at the University of Bern, from 1983 to 2003, where he is presently professor emeritus.

Wendell G. Johnson

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MBUNDU BELIEFS

The Mbundu people live in present-day Angola. They are divided into two groups: Ambundu (northern Mbundu) and Ovimbundu (southern Mbundu). Together they number 10 million people with approximately 4 million Ambundu and 6 million Ovimbundu. They had kingdoms and their own societies before they began trading with the Portuguese. The slave trade was heavy in this region, resulting in eventual Portuguese colonization of the area. They built the Ndongo Kingdom, which was ruled by a monarch called the *ngola*. The Portuguese took the name Angola for their colony from this monarchical title.

The kingdom of Kongo raided the Ndongo Kingdom for slaves. The Ndongo fiercely resisted these raids. Their most famous leader is Nzinga, who is celebrated for her brave resistance against the Portuguese. Nzinga, like her brother before her, ruled both Ndongo and the kingdom of Matamba, which was the kingdom that the Mbundu inhabited. Today both groups in addition to their own languages speak Portuguese.

Beliefs

Like all Ubuntu peoples, the Mbundu believe in a creator god who retired to himself after creation, leaving humanity to a layer of ancestral spirits and heroes who are now considered gods and goddesses. Nzambi a Mpugu is the creator god who lives outside the world and created the world. This concept fit with the Christian concept of God and was used by Roman Catholics. There are intermediary spirits in the Mbundu pantheon who deal directly with the adherents. Among these adherents were the ancestors. Specific stories tell the origins of their world (see also Kabundungulu and Sudaki-Mbambi).

Practices

Mbundu practice coming-of-age ceremonies for their young men and women. These ceremonies are a part of their religious practices. They also offer sacrifices to their gods and sing and dance in honor of their gods. Today most Mbundu are Roman Catholic.

Douglas Thomas

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MENDE BELIEFS

The Mende people live primarily in southern and eastern Sierra Leone with some living in Liberia and Guinea. They are from the larger Mande family of ethnic groups, which includes the Bambara, Mandinka, and Vai, to name a few. The Mende people are approximately 30 percent of the population of Sierra Leone. Their language is widely spoken in Sierra Leone and parts of Liberia, as it was a lingua franca in the region during the precolonial era.

Traditional Mende beliefs center around the creator-god Ngewo-wa. According to legend, Ngewo-wa created heaven, earth, and all creatures including humans. He lived on earth with humanity and animals. When people needed something, they just came to Ngewo-wa and asked for it and he said, "Take it." Humanity became careless and began to take Ngewo-wa for granted, treating him as if he existed just to satisfy their desires. Ngewo-wa built himself a realm in the sky and went there to live. The day after, when men came to get what they wanted, they searched and couldn't find him. One of them looked up and saw Ngewo-wa stretched out over the entire sky. He warned them not to fight one another because he had made them to live in peace. He then closed himself off in the sky. That's why they call him Ngewo-wa or "he who lives on high."



Mende people gather for a Gbeni (chief spirit of the Poro Society) dance, Gola Rainforest, Sierra Leone, November 29, 2016. (Georg Berg/Alamy Stock Photo)

Prayer, as in all religious traditions, is a significant part of the traditional Mende religious practice. Separation from Ngewo-wa necessitated that the people reach him through prayer. According to legend, Ngewo-wa wanted, in spite of his distance, to make his will known to all people. So, he placed a mountain among them and gave the mountain the ability to talk. People would go to the mountain to

pray, and the mountain would communicate with them. Ngewo-wa also gave humans the ability to dream.

One man had a dream that an old man came to speak to him. The old man in the dream told the dreamer to go tell the chief that the people should bring food to the mountain as a sacrifice. The dreamer asked the old man, "Who are you?" The old man replied, "I am the mountain." So the dreamer awoke and related the dream to the chief. The chief convened a meeting of the people, and they all agreed that they would sacrifice food to the mountain. The chief then asked the dreamer to request that the mountain help them catch the animals to slaughter for the sacrifice.

The dreamer went with his sons to the mountain and picked up 20 stones along the way. Once there, he cleared a space at the base of the mountain. He then laid the 20 stones before the mountain and asked that the mountain show them how many animals to sacrifice through arrangement of the stones. He and his sons went home and came back to the mountain in the morning. They found 9 stones facing the mountain, 10 stones facing the man, and one stone in the middle. The man understood that 10 animals should be slaughtered, 9 animals released, and one animal kept alive until the dreamer sacrificed it at the mountain.

The women were then asked to donate rice, palm oil, and salt. They took all these provisions with the meat to the base of the mountain. The women were asked to stay home because there was not enough food for them. The men sacrificed and ate the sacrificial meal at the mountain. The men broke in two a kola nut and threw it up in the air. It landed with the white side up. This was repeated four times and interpreted as the mountain being pleased with the sacrifice. Prayer was made for the good of the village and protection of its inhabitants, including the women and their childbirth. Being left out, the women didn't like it. Ngewo-wa had pity on the women and sent a dream to one woman, instructing her to pray at a rock. So now both men and women pray at rocks, trees, and bodies of water.

The Mende believe in lesser spirits beneath Ngewo-wa called *dyinyinga*. The first set of spirits are the ancestral spirits, which are spirits of those who used to live on earth. As spirits, they are closer

to Ngewo-wa. They are believed to use their proximity to serve as mediators between humanity and Ngewo-wa. They also serve as guardians of the community at large as well as guardians of their particular descendants' homes. If anyone transgresses against the ancestral spirits, they must right it with purification rituals and sacrifice. The Mende distinguish with ancestral spirits of old, *ndeblaa*, and those who are still in the memory of the living, *kekeni*. Sacrifices and prayers are made to the ancestral spirits for help at times of planting, harvest, and other significant events. A week or so prior to the prayer and sacrifice, a group goes to the chosen spot (under a tree, at the riverbank, or at a great rock) and announces to the ancestors when the ceremony will be held.

The Mende also believe that Negwo-wa left behind some spiritual powers on earth to be used to thwart evil forces. This spiritual force is called *halei*. The secret societies Poro Society and Sande Society are embodiments of *halei*. Other objects have *halei* and still others can be embodied with *halei* through ritual processes. The traditional "medicine" has *halei* along with other fetishes and charms. *Halei* is conceptualized as a river that flows throughout Mende life. Though *halei* is neutral, it can be used by witches and others in a malevolent fashion. This is called *halei-nyamui* or "bad medicine."

Douglas Thomas

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MOURIDES/MURIDES

The word "Mouride" is a French spelling for the Arabic term Murid (pl. Muridiyya), meaning "disciple" or "novice." Mouridism is a Sufi movement steeped in the mystical teachings of a particular saint—in this case, Sheikh Amadou Bamba."

The disciples of Bamba are called Mourides (murīd), a word that, according to Donal B. Cruise O'Brien, identifies "a brotherhood of a type well known in the world of Islam, a Sūfī tarīqa organized by the descendants of a holy man, where the followers hope to attain paradise through the special holiness and redeeming power of their religious guides." Yet, as Cheikh Anta Babou suggests, the term "brotherhood" is not an accurate translation of the idea of *tariqa* (path) that Murid disciples and leaders use to describe their organization. According to Babou, "the bond that ties the Murid goes beyond mere fraternity in pursuit of worldly accomplishment that the word brotherhood implies. Murids share common beliefs and trust in Amadu Bamba and rely on his guidance for the fulfillment in this world and their salvation in the hereafter."

A large part of the Senegalese immigrants in America are followers of Cheikh Ahamadou Bamba. These Mouride migrants leave by Bamba's encouragements of his adherents to guarantee their community's success by submitting to a religious leader (Shaikh) and cultivating the spiritual virtues of hard work. Bamba's teachings have found their way to New York City, where 12,000 of his adherents live. These Mouride expatriates have achieved remarkable success by using the system of social and economic organization that Bamba created. This system is centered on the Da'ira, a religious school that trains its members in spiritual, administrative, and financial matters. As Donald Martin Carter argues, the Da'ira provides the followers a chance to study Bamba's texts and chants, collect funds, organize members for job recruitment, and stay in contact with the central organization of the khalifate.

The Da'iras in the United States fulfill similar functions, especially in New York City, where Mourtada Mbacké, the son of Bamba, came once a year to bless his disciples and encourage them to continue working hard.

Women play a vital role in the Senegalese community in New York City. Following the Nigerian, Liberian, and Ghanaian women, hundreds of Senegalese women began migrating to the United States in the 1980s and 1990s to join their husbands or do business. In "Brotherhood Solidarity," Babou found women Mouride migrants

working in “summer markets” and in other commercial trades similar to those of their husbands. These Mouride women have their own Da’ira, in which they fulfill expectations similar to those of the men. As Babou suggested, these women have other occupations as hair braiders, cooks, beauty salons owners, and traders.

Babacar M’Baye

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MUSSO-KORONI

Musso-Koroni, also known as Mousso Koroni Koundye, is the goddess of disorder and dishonesty of the Bambara (Bamana) peoples of West Africa. She is depicted as a small, gray-haired woman and is also believed to be the mother of sorcery and magic. The Bambara creation myth often places her at odds with the creator god, Faro.

First, God (Ngala) created twin sorghum seeds, which were placed in the egg of the world. The first twins were Musso-Koroni and her brother, Pemba. Wishing to control creation, Pemba left the seed early, and Musso-Koroni followed. This betrayal caused disorder in the world. Ngala sent Faro to reorganize creation and destroy the impure seeds that Pemba had also stolen. The arrival of Faro made Musso-Koroni jealous, however, and she encouraged mankind to act lawlessly.

Musso-Koroni then retreated to Bounan, where she cultivated the impure sorghum seeds and ate them with Pemba. When Faro forced her to leave Bounan, she secretly planted the seeds along a trail, leading to her field at Kri. When Faro found out, he flooded the trail and destroyed some of the seeds, with the others becoming fish roe.

The trail thus became the Niger River, and the first village was laid out in the four cardinal directions at the site of her field.

After Faro vanquished Pemba, Musso-Koroni traveled the earth looking to fight Faro and retrieve the lost seeds. She went, starving and miserable, to the east, and was never seen again.

Peter R. Coutros

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NAITERU-KOP

Naiteru-Kop is the originator of the Masaai people, who live in East Africa, mainly southern Kenya and northern Tanzania. Naiteru-Kop means “beginner of the earth” in Maasai. According to one version of the legend, the supreme god Engai created Naiteru-Kop and his wife (no name is given for her). Engai then summoned Naiteru-Kop and his wife to the top of a mountain. Engai gave Naiteru-Kop and his wife cattle and told them to live on the mountain, and thus life began.

Another version says Engai made Naiteru-Kop and his wife. After creation, Engai sent Naiteru-Kop and his wife to live on earth with a few hundred head of cattle, goats, and sheep. Engai entrusted all the bounty of earth to this first couple on one condition: they were commanded to guard all of nature and keep it well to pass it on to future generations.

Naiteru-Kop and his wife had three sons and three daughters. (Again, the women remain nameless in the tradition.) The oldest son was given a bow and arrow with which to earn his living. He in turn became a hunter. The hunter is seen as the direct ancestor of the Kamba people. The second son was given a hoe with which to earn his living. He became a farmer. The farmer is seen as the direct ancestor of the Kikuyu people. The third son, Leeyio, was given a rod with which to earn his living. He used the rod to drive his father’s cattle. Leeyio became a herder and is seen as the direct ancestor of the Maasai people.

Douglas Thomas

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NANA ASMA'U

Nana Asma'u bint Shehu Usman 'dan Fodio (1793–1864) was raised in a scholarly Qadiriyya Sufi ethnic Fulani family whose surname, Fodio, means “learned” in the Fulfulde language. Customarily both men and women in this extended family were taught by their mothers and grandmothers. This was the case for Asma'u's illustrious father, Shehu Usman 'dan Fodio, and his successor, Asma'u's brother, the caliph Muhammad Bello. Thus, women's education among the Fodios was central to their ways of practicing Islam because they focused on the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad. The Fodios emphasized both gender equity and the importance of the pursuit of knowledge. Asma'u was quadrilingual; she spoke Arabic, Fulfulde, Hausa, and Tamchek and wrote poetry in the first three of these languages. As a scholar and teacher of both women and men, Asma'u understood the need to resocialize ethnic Hausa women displaced by the battles of the Sokoto Jihad (1804–1830) and help them to understand the ways in which they could practice Islam reformed from pre-Islamic religious practices in the region; such reformation was the purpose of the jihad. To this end, Asma'u established a program of itinerant women teachers of rural women. The teachers, known collectively as the 'Yan Taru (Hausa, “the Associates”), studied with Asma'u in her home in Sokoto, and then traveled in procession on foot to rural villages, led by women known by their leadership title, Jaji. In the villages they taught rural women Asma'u's poems, which they had memorized. The topics of these poems ranged from history to Qur'anic studies to lessons in ethics and recommended comportment.

Following Asma'u's death, her sister, Maryam, continued the 'Yan Taru educational program, and following Maryam's death, the program has continued to operate throughout the British colonial period, the postcolonial period, and to the present time. It has also been established in the United States through the influence of a

contemporary U.S. Muslim, Shaykh Muhammad Farid Shareef, who studied for many years among Fodio family scholars in Sokoto. For their studies, contemporary American 'Yan Taru women use English translations of the same poems by Asma'u that have been used for 'Yan Taru instruction in Nigeria since the program's inception.

Nana Asma'u's erudition and accomplishments were recognized in her lifetime by scholars throughout the Maghreb. In addition to her role as a scholar, she was a trusted confidante of her father, the shehu, and her brother, the caliph. Asma'u and the women of her extended family were respected as scholars, authors, teachers, and social activists in their own lifetimes and into the present. The current sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Sa'adu Abubakar, is a descendant of Nana Asma'u who sees her as a model of women's education and an inspiration for Muslim women's education throughout the region of northern Nigeria.

Beverly Mack

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NANA BULUKULU

Nana Bulukulu is the creator goddess of the Fon people of present-day Benin, the Akan people of Ghana and Ivory Coast, and the Ewe of Togo. She is also known as Nana Burukuru. Nana Buluklu is also venerated by the Yoruba and Igbo peoples of Nigeria. Among the Yoruba she is known as Nana Bukuu. The Igbo call her Olisabuluwa.

According to Fon tradition, Nana Bulukulu created the earth. She then gave birth to Mawu, the moon goddess and Lisa the sun god.

Mawu and Lisa took over the governing of the world as Nana Bulunkulu retreated to her dwelling place. Mawu and Lisa were tasked with finishing creation also.

In Yoruba tradition, Nana Burukuru gave gifts to the orisha (gods). These gifts were pertinent to their cosmic abilities. To Obatala she gave a leadlike metal for use against his enemies. To Osun, she gave copper bangles. Osun was told that whenever she hit her enemies with the bangles, they would suffer from swollen limbs. To Ogun, she gave iron. He was advised to use the iron against his enemies. She also asked the creator god, Oludumare, for the power to cure smallpox. She in turn gave this to Obaluaiye for use against his enemies.

Douglas Thomas

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NASILELE

Nasilele is the wife of the creator god, Nyambe, of the Lozi people. The Lozi live along the floodplains of the Zambezi River in present-day Zambia. Nasilele translates from the Lozi language as “she who is associated with long things.” According to one version of the tradition, Nasilele and Nyambe had a daughter named Mwambwa, which means “a person of whom others talk.” Mwambwa in turn gave birth to Mbuyu, the first Lozi queen.

In one version of the tradition about the coming of death, Nasilele and her husband were on earth living among humans. Nyambe’s dog died. He thought of reviving the dog. Nasilele objected, saying he should let the dog remain dead. Later Nasilele’s mother died. She asked Nyambe to revive her mom. He reminded her how she didn’t allow him to revive his dog. Nasilele insisted, and eventually Nyambe

gave in to her demands. While Nyambe was completing the ritual, Nasilele interrupted him, and he wasn't able to complete it. Later when Nyame decided to allow humans to die and then be reborn, he sent a chameleon to announce his decision. Nasilele sent a rabbit to tell humans that death would be forever. The rabbit outran the chameleon and delivered the message first. According to the Nozi, that is why death is permanent.

Douglas Thomas

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NASR AL-DIN

Nasr Al-Din (d. 1674) was a Lamtuna Berber imam, or Muslim religious leader, who led a jihad in the Senegal River area. This jihad ignited a series of religious wars that stretched south of the Senegal River from the Fulas of Fouta Tooro into the Wolof Kingdoms of Jolof, Cayor, and Bawol. Nasr Al-Din was from a Berber tribe known as Zawaya, which concentrated on Islamic piety and learning. They were in a tribute-paying relationship with the Hassani Arabs, who held a sway over the area of present-day Mauritania. In exchange for the tribute money, the Hassani were to protect and provide order for the Zawaya. The Hassani, however, were not holding up their end of the bargain.

The French came to the area in the 1650s and established a trade post on the upper Senegal River. Gradually, the trade shifted from the trans-Saharan trade routes that had been a source of income for the Berbers and the Arabs. These trade routes had been in use to carry goods and slaves from as far south as the forest region of Africa to the Mediterranean Sea, from which the trade items and slaves found their way to Europe and the Middle East. With French influence, the majority of trade shifted to the Senegal River, from where it was

shipped to the Atlantic and thereby the rest of the world in European ships.

This loss of income upset a delicate balance between the Hassani Arabs and the Zawaya Berbers. The Zawaya paid protection money to the Hassani. With the redirection of trade, however, the slaves on which the Zawaya depended to work their fields decreased in number. Production in turn decreased, which meant less revenue for the Zawaya and by extension the Hassani.

In 1673, in the midst of all this economic and political upheaval, Nasr al-Din declared an Islamic state among the various Zawaya tribes. The Zawaya leaders swore independence to him, and he attacked Fouta Tooro south of the Senegal River. There were two groups of Torodbe, a group of Islamic cleric families, who supported al-Din at the expense of their ruling dynasty, the Denianke. The Denianke rulers were defeated and a ruler loyal to Islamic reform named Abd al-Qadir came to power.

At this point, Nasr al-Din turned his attention toward consolidating his forces on the north side of the Senegal River. One of the tribes asked for help from the emirate of Trarza. Other Hassani joined in fighting Nasr al-Din's forces. Nasr al-Din's army won, but in 1674, he died in battle. His Islamic state was later defeated and destroyed. The jihad he started in Fouta Tooro spread farther south, however, and lasted in one form or another into the 1800s.

Douglas Thomas

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NATIONAL BAPTIST CONVENTION

The Christian faith has been the backbone of the African American community since the days of slavery. The oppression and racism faced by African Americans as part of white churches forced them to look to alternative forms of worship. They found this in the Baptist

faith. The autonomous nature of the faith meant that the churches founded by African Americans would be free of white interference and supervision. By the 1840s, a desire for greater collaboration among black Baptists began to develop. This desire culminated in the creation of the National Baptist Convention of the United States (NBC).

The NBC was formed in 1880 at a meeting of black Baptists in Montgomery, Alabama. It was developed through the convergence of three groups: the Baptist Foreign Mission Convention, the American Baptist Convention, and the National Baptist Education Convention. To maintain their focus, the three separate conventions formed three separate boards within the convention, each focusing on its own issues, foreign missions, home missions and education. Educator and minister William H. McAlpine is considered the first president of the NBC. Despite the formation of the convention, the African American churches that form the NBC retain their autonomous nature.

Like many African American organizations of its day, the NBC had to provide academic opportunities to its members, which were denied to them by the larger society. The Jim Crow policies of the American Baptist Publication Society meant that they would not publish the writings of black ministers. In response, the NBC created the National Baptist Publication Board. With Richard Boyd at its head, the board began publishing material for ministry and Sunday school for National Baptist Churches throughout the country. The NBC continued providing opportunities for educational advancement through its affiliation with several universities and colleges, including Morehouse College, Shaw University, and the American Baptist College.



Nannie Helen Burroughs holds the banner of the Women's Convention of the National Baptist Convention, between 1905 and 1915. Burroughs helped establish the National Association of Colored Women in 1896. (Library of Congress)

A notable section of the NBC is the Women's Auxiliary. The work of the Women's Auxiliary focused on education, social issues, and youth advocacy. Its first president was Sarah Willie Layten. Layten was active working with national and international missions. She also helped found the National Baptist Missionary Training School. The convention's second president was the venerable educator and activist Nannie Helen Burroughs. Burroughs gained fame and recognition with her speech at the National Baptist Convention titled "How the Sisters Are Hindered from Helping," where she called women to be allowed to work within the organization and the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement. The organization's third president, Mary Olivia Brooks Ross, a champion of youth and young adults, continued the work of Layten and Burroughs.

The convention has not been without controversy. Issues surrounding foreign missionary work led to the creation of the Lott Carey Foreign Mission Convention in 1897. The National Baptist Convention of America, Inc., separated in 1915. Frustration over a lack of support for the Civil Rights Movement led to the creation of

the Progressive National Baptist Convention in 1961. Despite this, the NBC maintains 31,000 congregations and 7.5 million members.

Lopez D. Matthews Jr.

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NDRIANANHARY

Ndriananhary is the creator god of the Malagasy people. His name means “I am the originator of life,” in Malay. The Malagasy People live in Madagascar, an island off the southeast coast of Africa. According to legend, Ndriananhary created the earth from moist mud. He wondered about the suitability of living on earth, so he sent his son, Ataokoloinona, to test the suitability of earth. Ataokoloinona went to earth and vanished. Ndriananhary sent humans to earth to look for his son with no success (see also Zanahary).

Douglas Thomas

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NEITH

Neith is a goddess of ancient Egypt. She was the patron-goddess of the city of Zau (Sais) in Lower Egypt. Her image varied over time and

space because over the centuries deities changed in ancient Egyptian belief and practice. One remaining is her role as the primary creator goddess. As such, she was later accepted as the mother of Ra. The mother goddess, Neith is often portrayed as one to whom the other gods come to for consultation and advice.

Neith is usually shown in the hieroglyphics as a woman wearing the red crown of Lower Egypt. At other times, she is depicted as a cow in relation to her role as the mother of Ra. In the predynastic period of Egypt, she was depicted with crossing arrows and a bow. At that time she was venerated as the goddess of hunting. Other times, she is shown with weaving implements because she was also venerated as the goddess of weaving. Some stories tell of her creating the world by weaving it into existence. As a weaver, she was sometimes connected to funeral rites as the one who weaves the cloth in which mummies are wrapped.

Douglas Thomas

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NGAI (ENGAI)/MULUNGU

Ngai (sometimes spelled Engai, Mogai, or Mugai, among other variants) or called Mulungu is the creator god of the Kikuyu (Gikuyu), the Kamba, the Maasai, and other ethnicities of Eastern and Southeastern Africa. The creation stories vary among the various groups that claim Ngai as their god. He is seen as transcendent, however, in all the cultures. He is above and controls human affairs. They all have him performing the acts of creation and placing humanity in earth. They all speak of him living on a mountain. For the Kikuyu it is Mt. Kenya. For the Maasai it is Ol Doinyo Lengai, which translates from Maasai into “the mountain of god.” For the Kamba it

is Mt. Nzai. The three ethnicities have Ngai placing the first humans on or near the venerated mountain.

Mulungu is used interchangeably with the English word *god* among the groups as is Ngai/Engai. Mungu in Swahili is a contraction of Mulungu. Mulungu means “he who sets things aright.” Ngai is thought to mean “the divider of provision.” These terms are primary among other names of adoration to describe the single deity of the peoples of East Africa.

In addition to the mountain creation stories, the people who venerate Ngai also have stories that tell of him becoming exasperated with humanity and returning to heaven. Their genesis stories begin with earth and sky being connected. Ngai comes down to a mountain and either creates humanity or leaves them on the mountain. There is some incident that leads to Ngai returning to heaven, leaving humanity on earth. The Kikuyu say that Ngai returns periodically to earth on one of the sacred mountains. In the belief systems that venerate Ngai, there is also a belief in mediating ancestor spirits. One can, however, address Ngai directly for aid.

Douglas Thomas

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NGBANDI BELIEFS

The Ngbandi peoples, numbering fewer than half a million, live on either side of the Ubangi River, which forms the physical boundary between the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic. Like most ethnic groups in Africa, the Ngbandi should not be considered in isolation: borders between populations are porous, and exchanges in areas of religion and ritual take place throughout history. This holds true especially in the Ubangian culture area, where

the Ngbandi share several key beliefs and practices about the Supreme Being, twin births, and spirit possession with their neighbors, including the Banda, Ngbaka, and Nzakara peoples.

Historically, the lifestyle of most Ngbandi groups was closely related to the Ubangi River, as they controlled a large section of the river's trade and traffic. This not only brought them into contact with neighboring groups for centuries, but also confronted them with the first European explorers in this part of the continent at the end of the 1800s. Catholic missionaries started professing among the Ngbandi during the first decade of the 20th century, followed by Protestants. Christianity greatly impacted traditional Ngbandi beliefs, which have changed over time. Even so, missionary writings often constitute the primary and only source about these beliefs.

Traditionally, the Ngbandi believed in a Supreme Being they called Nzapa. Considered as the primary ancestor of all spirits and humans, he was the giver of life. He used to be invoked in morning prayers, together with other great spirits, related to cardinal points, geographic places, and natural phenomena, and with ancestor spirits, the *toro*. It was these ancestors that were most closely involved in family affairs, looking after their descendants' health, prosperity, fertility, and general well-being. Nowadays, Nzapa designates the Christian God. The veneration of *toro* spirits, in the past centered around a small shelter owned by the elder of each family, is no longer pursued.

At the present time, Ubangian peoples' attitude toward twins is complex. Twins are still regarded as ambiguous beings, at once feared and revered, and their birth is considered a manifestation of the presence of higher powers among the living. The Ngbandi continue to perform purificatory and propitiatory rituals, meant to celebrate twin births and to protect twins' parents and the community at large. Ngbandi twins do not receive their personal names from their father, as is common, but reveal them through a dream to one of their relatives. The most striking feature is that the Ngbandi consider twins to be snakes: both are designated by the same term, *ngbo* (plural: *angbo*). One of the interpretations for this is that twins, like snakes, belong to two worlds, the world of the village and the world of the

bush. Seen as “wild” humans, their condition requires special ritual observances, yet at the same time gives them power over the outcome of hunting and fishing.

Jan-Lodewijk Grootaers

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NGEWO-WA

Ngewo-Wa is the creator god of the Mende people. Ngewo-Wa is also often called Maanda, meaning “grandfather.” According to their belief, Ngewo-Wa created everything. He also lives in the sky. One version of the Mende creation story says that at the beginning Ngewo-Wa lived in a cave alone. His power was unquestionable, and his words caused things to happen. However, he was alone. He spoke animals into existence to cure his lonely state. He also spoke the first human couple into being. They had open and easy access to Ngewo-Wa. They made requests openly and freely to him. Over time, he grew tired of the constant requests and retreated into the sky.

At some point, Ngewo-Wa returned to earth and bade humanity farewell. His parting words were for them to be kind to one another. He also brought two chickens for them with instructions. When humans are to pray to him, he will return and take a chicken. This explains their tradition of sacrificing a chicken when praying to Ngewo-Wa.

Ngewo-Wa’s retreat to heaven does not denote his absence from the affairs of humanity. He is invoked in prayers. He is also seen as

omnipresent in the life force that he has placed in all creation. His mate is Leve, the earth goddess. He rules the universe with the *dyinyinga*, ancestral and nature spirits. The *dyinyinga* serve as intermediaries between humanity and Nwego-Wa.

Douglas Thomas

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NGOMBE BELIEFS

The Ngombe people live in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic. They are called Kikongo-Ngombe also, as they were a part of the Kongo Kingdom that existed in precolonial Africa. The Ngombe number over 600,000 and are a part of a group of people of the Adamwa-Ubangi triangle. They are referred to as water people because they live close to a complex of rivers.

Beliefs

The Ngombe believe in a creator god named Akongo. Akongo once lived among humans, but he grew tired of people quarreling. Once men were fussing and fighting with each other so much, Akongo left them and went to live in the forest. The Ngombe do not know much about Akongo because he left them so long ago.

Another version of the story says Akongo went back to heaven on a rope to escape the disorder and disagreement among humanity. Once he arrived back at his home in the sky, his family, including his daughter, Mbokomu, were as rowdy and disruptive to his peace. He in turn put his family in a basket and lowered them to the earth.

Yet another version of the story tells that humans lived in the sky with Akongo from the beginning. One of the humans, Mbokomu, was so quarrelsome and disruptive that Akongo put her and her children in a basket and lowered them to the earth. Mbokomu had a son and a daughter. They planted a garden and made the best of life. Mbokomu explained to her son that once the three of them died, no one would exist to tend the garden and continue life. She instructed her son to procreate with his sister. The son was reluctant but Mbokomu insisted. In the end, he did, and the sister became pregnant. The sister met a man who was covered in hair. She was frightened but he talked to her until she felt he was a friend. She took a razor and shaved off the hair and discovered he looked like a normal man. This stranger was named Ebangala, which means “the beginning.” Ebangala turned out to be the personification of evil. He bewitched Mbokomu’s daughter and in turn took and raised the first of the offspring. Ebangala introduced evil and suffering to humanity through this act.

These stories point to the layers of spirits in the Ngombe cosmology. Akongo is at the top as creator god. He is seen as a creator god and is accessible to humanity, although he lives far from humanity in the sky. The second layer of spirits are the ancestors. Mbokomu is an ancestral goddess and considered the daughter of Akongo. She and her offspring are ancestors who are active in the daily lives of all humanity. Ebangala is the evil impulse in life who seeks to destroy humanity.

Practice

Because Akongo is far from the people yet accessible, they must use prayer to reach him. They approach him through prayer at the sacred tree, the *libaka* (cottonwood) tree. Libaka means “union” in Ngombe. The tree is seen as a tree of union or covenants. As such it is where prayers take place because it is where the ancestors and the living reunite for communication.

The libaka tree is so important that no village exists without them. When a new settlement is founded, the chief must plant a libaka tree.

The tree is then dedicated with a hunt, in which the successful participants take sticks of wood and plant them around the libaka tree.

Mbokomu and the ancestors are also reached at the libaka tree. The Ngombe have their festivals at this tree, at which they approach their ancestors through ceremonies and prayers. Evil spirits are acknowledged and avoided in Ngombe beliefs. Good spirits who are helpful are also venerated.

Douglas Thomas

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NGULA

Ngula is the mother of the god Nyambe, creator god of the Lozi people of Zambia. In the Lozi language, Ngula means “she who is pregnant.” Nyambe created his mother Ngula and his wife, Nasilele (see also Nasilele).

Douglas Thomas

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NIASSAN TIJANIYYA

Also known as Niassiyya, Niassan Tijaniyya is the branch of Tijaniyya that developed in the town of Medina Baye, located in the current city of Kaolack, Senegal, during the early 1920s. As Knut Vikør points out, “The founder of the branch was Abd Allah (Abdoulaye) Niasse (d. 1922), who took the Tijani word from Ma Ba, the Gambian student of

Umar and jihadist in his own right.” Yet, as Vikør also notes, it was Ibrahima “Baya” Niasse (1902–1975), Abd Allah’s other son, who, following his brother Muhammad’s work, gathered the most followers of Niassiyya, becoming “the real founder of the order from about 1930.” Another credit given to Ibrahima Niasse is the broadening of women’s rights in Tijaniyya. According to Lucy Creevey, Ibrahima Niasse “was himself very supportive of women being educated in Islam.” Such a liberal attitude toward women and education has created a neat gender equality in Niassiyya.

Niassan Tijaniyya became popular by 1937, when, as Christopher Harrison suggests, Ibrahima Niasse began the construction of the mosque of Kaolack. Ibrahima Niasse was “very soon to be recognized by the North African Tijani as the khalife of the West African Tijaniyya and had close relations with Muslim leaders in the Gold Coast and Nigeria.” Moreover, as Harrison points out, Ibrahima Niasse is known for having promoted the development of a Westernized form of education based on the *de médersa* (also called *médresa*), or Westernized Qur’anic schools, where children and other followers learn the Qur’an and gain Arabic writing and speaking skills before acquiring manual skills that will help them earn a living. However, records show that Ibrahima Niasse was, during the second half of the twentieth century, not as open to modernization as he was during the previous decades. Thus, as Andrew F. Clark and Lucie Colvin Phillips argue, in 1958, “[Ibrahima] Niasse was active as a conservative in defense of the faith, against innovations that threatened it” and “opposed modernizing socialist legislation, including the Code de la Famille and the Law on the National Domain.”

Niasse’s ambivalent attitudes toward modernity have influenced Niassan Tijaniyya, in which acceptance of modern technology and increasing rights for women and other persons prevail alongside rejection of the cultural looseness and economic greed that secularism and ruthless capitalism promoted in West Africa. Niasse’s successors, including Cheikh Nazirou Niasse, Cheikh Hassan Cissé (1945–2008), and the current leader of the brotherhood, Cheikh Tijani Cissé, have carried the legacy of their elders with pride and vision that have dramatically increased the followers of the Tijani branch.

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NIMBA

Nimba is the goddess of fertility for the Baga people of Guinea-Conakry in West Africa. Nimba is also used to refer to the headdress that is representative of the goddess. Nimba is associated with good crops and pregnant women. The Nimba headdresses are adored in the Western art world as representative of outstanding African art.

The Baga are rice cultivators. In their harvest ceremonies, the Nimba mask is used to insure Nimba's aid in successful crops. The Baga religion is comprised of a priesthood that has secret meetings in the forest. If one is not initiated into the priesthood, he/she cannot attend the meetings. Thus, many of the details about their religious practices and beliefs are not open to the noninitiated.

Douglas Thomas

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NKULUNKULU

Nkulunkulu (or Unkulunkulu, “the great-great one”) is one of the names used for the Supreme Being in which indigenous Zulu speakers of South Africa believed (other names include Mveliqangi and Uhlanga). Conceived of as a remote creator God, he was generally not worshiped by ritual sacrifice or prayer, except in cases of extreme crises such as droughts or infertile women.

Nkulunkulu as a name for the Supreme Being was prioritized by the Anglican missionary John William Colenso (ordained as bishop of Natal in 1853). On the basis of his investigation of the beliefs of Zulu speakers, he concluded that Nkulunkulu, though inferior in terms of evolution, was similar to and could be adopted for missionary purposes as a name for the Christian God.

Another Anglican missionary, Henry Callaway, arrived at the same time as Colenso in Natal, but came to differ radically from Colenso’s view of Nkulunkulu. On the basis of his investigation of Zulu beliefs with the help of the Zulu convert Mpengula Mbande, Callaway maintained that Nkulunkulu was a generic name that Zulu speakers used for the first ancestor of humanity. According to Callaway, Nkulunkulu did not refer to a Supreme Being, and could therefore not be used as a name for the Christian God lest the mission become entangled in the worship of ancestral spirits.

In *The Religious System of the Amazulu* (1868–1870), Callaway listed diverse interpretations of Nkulunkulu as referring to the ancestor of a specific Zulu-speaking tribe, of all Zulu speakers, or of humanity as a whole, or as a name for the Supreme Being. These meanings correlate with the extent that European missionaries had contact with and influenced indigenous Zulu speakers in 19th-century Natal.

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NOMIYA LUO CHURCH

Yohana Owalo founded the Nomiya Luo Church in 1912. He converted to Christianity early in his life under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church. He studied at Roman Catholic schools and was baptized a Roman Catholic in 1906. Subsequently, he worked with Roman Catholic missions. At one point he worked as a “houseboy” for a British magistrate in Mombasa. Owalo’s ideas were based on a vision he had in 1907. In the vision, the angel Gabriel came and took him to heaven. He said that heaven was beautiful. He went to three heavens. The first heaven was the abode of men. He asked the angel where the pope was. The angel asked Owalo who the pope was. Surprised, Owalo told the angel that the pope was the supreme leader of the Roman Catholic Church. The angel replied that the pope could not make it to heaven because he taught believers to revere images of Jesus and Mary. Owalo then asked where Mary was, and the angel showed him Mary, where she was with some other women.

Owalo says they progressed to the second heaven, which is the abode of angels. Then he moved on up to the third heaven, the abode of God. There he says he met Jesus. When he tried to bow to Jesus, he says Jesus stopped him, explaining that they were both servants of God. He bowed to God and learned that the sacrament was against the rules as a sacrifice. Owalo asserts that God only wanted a pure and contrite heart as a sacrifice.

After his vision, he went back to the Roman Catholic mission for more education. He also worked for the mission to convert people. He was expelled from his last Roman Catholic mission job because he refused to accept the infallibility of the pope, the veneration of Mary, the Trinity, and the deity of Jesus. After leaving the mission, he sought to be circumcised. He asked a friend who directed him to Muslims. He joined the Muslims with the name Omar and was

circumcised. These religious experiences influenced Owalo in the development of Noyima Luo Church's doctrine.

Early on, Owalo's church included a school. He encouraged people to read and write and started teaching many himself. Not long after starting his first church in his hometown, he moved to Oboch. From Oboch his church grew very quickly and spread among the Luo. One of the factors of the spread was the trust that people had in him. This trust led to the older people sending their children to his school. At the school he taught reading, writing, math, and religion. His religion lessons were the basics of his church's beliefs.

The Noyima church does not accept the Holy Trinity or the divinity of Jesus. They focus on God as their deity with no comparison or companions. They do not deify their founder, Owalo. He is referred to as Nabi, meaning "prophet." They do not celebrate the Eucharist or practice any type of communion. They see Jesus as a superior being with superb powers and they celebrate Easter. They believe in the virgin birth, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. They just do not put Jesus in their concept of God. Also, Owalo does not articulate much about the Holy Ghost other than he saw it emanating from God as smoke. Owalo discounts the divinity of Jesus because he says the smoke of the Holy Ghost was not coming from Jesus but from God only.

Owalo at one time used the Anglican prayer book. Over time, however, he wrote his own prayer book based on his unique combination of beliefs. This book was not available to his followers until after his death, when his followers found his handwritten prayer book. They copied it and had it printed and made available to all adherents.

The Noyima Luo Church allows polygamy, which made it popular early on to Luo people. There were many Luo who were refused baptism and/or the Eucharist because they took a second wife. Owalo allowed polygamy, and his followers still practice it. They also allow for the levirate, which is the practice of a man's relatives inheriting his wives. When a member of the Noyima Luo Church dies leaving wives, his family is contacted, and the wives are given to his relatives. These are Luo practices that the church allows. Some think

that it is just a Luo cultural church. However, drinking, smoking, and dancing are forbidden, though they are part of traditional Luo cultural traditions.

There are some offshoot groups. The Luo who have experienced the Holy Ghost have different practices and often fellowship with other Holy Spirit/Pentecostal churches. There is the “saved” group of members of the Noyima Luo Church who insist on the lordship of Jesus Christ. These forces within the church make the group all the more interesting.

Douglas Thomas

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NONGQAWUSE

Nongqawuse (d. 1898) was a young Xhosa prophetess who predicted in 1856 that mysterious “new people” would come and help the Xhosa against their enemies—namely, the British. She was 15 years old when she went to her family’s fields to chase birds away from the grain and heard voices that gave her instructions for the Xhosa people. Primary to these instructions was the killing of all their cattle.

The voices related to Nongqawuse that the Xhosa had contaminated themselves through their reliance on sorcery. All their possessions were also contaminated. These voices instructed Nongqawuse to have the Xhosa kill their cattle, which were deemed cursed and contaminated. They were also to get rid of their copper and other precious possessions through destroying or selling them.

Nongqawuse was an orphan. Her parents had been killed during war when she was a young girl and her paternal uncle, Mhlakaza, raised her. When she and a younger sister-in-law, Nombonda, returned from the fields with their tale, no one believed them. The

next time they went to the fields to chase away birds, the new people were there. They inquired about whether or not the people had listened to her. She replied that they had not. The voices then insisted that she bring Mkalaza to see them. She was given instructions that he bathe himself and sacrifice two animals before coming. On the fourth day, Mhlakaza was to come see them.

When Nongqawuse returned home, she gave these instructions to Mhlakaza, and he listened intently. Aroused by her passionate descriptions, Mhlakaza assumed that his dead brother, Nongqawuse's father, had come to talk to him. He complied and went to the spot with her. He saw nothing and heard nothing. The voices came to Nongqawuse, and she relayed the message to him. He was convinced and began to spread the message to all the Xhosa.

In response to Mhlakaza's communication, the important chiefs and the king of all Xhosa, Sarhili, sent emissaries to investigate. None of these men saw the new people who were described as wearing garments made from animal skins and having many blankets, horses, and cattle. When the emissaries arrived, Mhlakaza told them that the new people were off on an expedition against the British colonial government. The emissaries reported back to their bosses that Mhlakaza's message was believable. One reason that people could believe that their cattle were contaminated was the lung sickness that was spreading among the cattle across that region. Sarhili himself sent four head of cattle to Mhlakaza as a gift. Sarhili ordered his people to start killing their cattle. The other chiefs followed his lead. Though some people killed a few cattle and waited to see if anything would come from these new people, there were others who slaughtered all their cattle quickly.

The promise given was that when the people killed their cattle, the new people would show up with cattle to replace what they had killed, and a force would come help defeat the British. The people were also told to stop cultivation yet build new granaries for the new grain that the new people would bring. New cattle enclosures were also ordered to be built in anticipation of all these cattle the new people would bring. New milk sacks were to be produced, and the people were to abandon all forms of sorcery, adultery, and incest.

Sarhili was in a precarious situation. Although he had managed to maintain the geographical integrity of his kingdom, he was under threat of colonial seizure of Xhosa land at any moment. There were also internal threats. He had grown up sickly himself and kept magicians, diviners, and healers around his whole life. As an adult, Sarhili still had to deal with issues beyond his control. He continued to engage healers and diviners to navigate through these issues. One of his issues was a male heir. In rapid succession, Sarhili's sons died and everyone suspected it was the result of sorcery. His counselors called in an outside healer, who blamed Sarhili's official healer and ordered him tortured until he died.

Distraught over the death of his sons and no answers as to why they died, Sarhili went to see Mhlakaza himself and arrived on July 10, 1856. Mhlakaza and Nongqawuse related to him their visions. At some point it is believed that Sarhili heard the voices himself. Thoroughly convinced, he asked if there were any other way to receive the necessary purging and new cattle without killing the existing cattle. Nongqawuse said no. He submitted to the prophecy and asked for three months to kill his personal cattle. He owned around 150,000 cows. He then issued the official announcement to his entire realm to destroy their cattle.

In light of Sarhili's proclamation, many more Xhosa made their way to see Nongqawuse and Mhlakaza. Some attested to being led to a river and seeing dark figures rise from the water. The vision was accompanied by loud sounds described by one witness as great chunks of the cliff breaking off. When the people asked to get closer to the dark figures to see the new people better, Nongqawuse ordered them to go home and destroy their corn and cattle. Others did not see the shadows. Some only saw her talking to seemingly invisible people and relating the messages to Mhlakaza. Sometimes when Nongqawuse was too sick to talk to visitors, her little sister-in-law, Nombanda did.

Ultimately, there was large-scale starvation and weakening of the entirety of the Xhosa people and by extension the people of the region. The population of the region dropped by nearly 50 percent.

Nongqawuse was handed over to the colonial government. She was eventually released and lived on a farm until she died in 1898.

Douglas Thomas

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NTISIKANA

Ntisikana (ca. 1780–1821) was a Xhosa prophet who encouraged his people to stop fighting and accept Christianity. He was born to Gaba, a counselor to the king of the Ngqika Xhosa. Shortly before his birth, his father's senior wife accused his mother, a junior wife, of witchcraft. His mother fled to her maternal compound. Not long after that, she gave birth to Ntisikana. When he was a teenager, his father brought him back to his paternal homestead. The senior wife adopted Ntisikana because she had no sons, and he needed a male heir.

When his father died, he became a counselor to the king. At some point he moved closer to the Ndlamba Xhosa and came under the influence of the Xhosa prophet Nxele. Sometime in the years before 1818, Ntisikana had a mystical experience. He was known for his expert singing and dancing. One morning as he was watching his cattle, a strange ray of sunlight showed broadside on one of his cows. Later that same day, he went to a dancing contest. On three separate occasions when he rose to dance, a great wind rose and blew so much sand that all the dancing stopped. It was later interpreted that this experience was when the Holy Spirit entered Ntisikana. On the way home, he had a strong urge to wash the red ochre from his body. He plunged into a stream on the way home and washed himself clean.

The next day his strange behavior continued. He spent the entirety of the day in the cattle kraal (pen). He was in a meditative state and began to hum an unfamiliar tune. This tune became one of the four hymns in the Xhosa language that he composed. He told people that

the thing that entered into him told him that the people should pray. He said everyone should bow the knee. He did not get much attention from the amaNdlama Xhosa. (The ama-prefix in Xhosa and Zulu translates as “the people of.”) He moved back closer to his branch of the Xhosa, the amaNgqika. The majority of the amaNdlama listened to their prophet, Nxele.

Among the amaNgqika, Ntisikana found ready ears and amassed a sizable following. His services were simple. He would stand in front of his hut and sing the “bell” song. People would come, and he would have his religious service. There was a lot of singing, some dancing, and preaching. His preaching included admonitions against sin and the need for repentance.

Ntisikana is seen as a prophet because his teachings to the Xhosa were in their language and delivered in the idiom of their culture. The Xhosa took to his explanations of the Christian faith because they understood it. He called his people “the hornless heads,” in reference to cows without horns—meaning defenseless. Ntisikana preached that his people should humbly submit to God’s will regardless of the suffering they endured.

Ntisikana’s teachings were in opposition to the teachings of Nxele, who declared that god was on earth and that there were two gods. Nxele’s teachings also encouraged resistance to the Europeans. The two prophets’ teachings were wrapped up in the Fifth Xhosa War. The war was between the European colonial government and the Xhosa. They were fighting for land. The British had expelled the Ndlama Xhosa from their land and pushed them across the Fish River. This led to conflict with the Ngqika Xhosa. The Ndlama won that intertribal war. The Ngqika asked their European allies for aid. The Ndlama, led by Nxele, in turn attacked the British settlement of Grahamstown in 1819 and were roundly defeated. The fifth war between the Xhosa and the British began in that manner.

Ntisikana died in 1821. Before dying, he felt death coming soon. He gave his family instructions to bury him in the ground like the Europeans did. They disagreed with the idea. He rose and took a spade and dug the first few shovelful of his grave. He then died.

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NYABINGI CULT

The Nyabingi Cult is a spirit-possession religion in which the priestesses are said to be possessed by the spirit of Nyabingi. Nyabingi translates from the Kiga language into "she who brings bounty or abundance." The spirit, true to its name, gives its priestesses/priests supernatural abilities. Who Nyabingi was is not clear because there are conflicting versions of the story of her origins. The narrative seemingly most repeated in the sources is as follows. Around 1700, Nyabingi was a queen of Karangwe (present-day northern Tanzania). Extremely beautiful and powerful, Nyabingi was also known for her intelligence. She married Ruhinga, a king of the Mporo Kingdom. Ruhinga came and lived with her in Karangwe, but he wanted the kingdom for himself. He plotted and killed her and took the kingdom for himself.

The spirit of Nyabingi was angry and wreaked havoc on Ruhinga. The culmination came when the Rwandan *mwami* (king) annexed the kingdom, ending their independence. The spirit of Nyabingi did not stop there. Her spirit possessed someone of Kigeri, Rwanda. The Mwami Lwagera resented the admiration the possessed woman received from the people and had her killed. Not to be abated, the spirit of Nyabingi reappeared in the mid-19th century, possessing Kanzanira, the daughter of Kahaya, a Rwandan noble during the reign of Mwami Lwabugiri Kigeri IV. Kahaya had his own daughter killed.

The latest murder still did not stop the spirit of Nyabingi. She possessed a peasant woman by the name of Rutajira Kijuna. Rutajira traveled around Rwanda, healing and ministering to the people's spiritual needs. In spite of her poverty and lack of noble birth, people greeted her with salutations reserved for royalty. The Mwami ruling at that time killed Rutajira. Her son Katwonde succeeded his mother as an adherent and medium of Nyabingi.

Another legend of Nyabingi involves the Queen Kitami cya Nyawera of Busongora. It is said she married a fugitive prince of Rwanda named Murari Kamali. Murari was a claimant to the Rwanda throne, but his brother Mwami Kigeri II was on the throne and sought to destroy Murari. Kitami and Murari had a son, Kahaya Rutindangyezi, meaning "he who bridges waters." After the birth people began to refer to Kitami as Nyinakahaya.

Mwami Kigeri II invaded Busongora in pursuit of Murari and thus began a bloody war. During the war, a bee stung Kitami, who died from toxic shock. After her death, according to this legend, her spirit took the name Nyabingi. Some say Kitama was simply a priestess of Nyabingi herself. Whatever the case, this legend connects Kitami with the cult.

The priestesses/priests of Nyabingi are called *bagirwa*, *mugirwa* in the singular. They are usually women. They call up the spirit of Nyabingi with a series of incantations. Once Nyabingi answers, the woman falls into a trancelike state while Nyabingi speaks through her. Some are reportedly able to cure illnesses and perform other miracles.

Within the religious traditions of Africa, there are many spirit-possession cults. The Nyabingi Cult became famous because of Queen Muhumuza. Muhumuza's husband was the Mwami Lwabugiri of Rwanda. In the late 19th century she was exiled with her son, the heir to the throne, when another opposing clan took the throne after her son's death in 1894. One version says her husband was poisoned by his stepmother so her son could take the throne.

The end result is that Muhumuza and her son went into exile in the area of the Mporo Kingdom. That she was of the ruling class Watutsi was not readily accepted by the Bahutu. She however harnessed the

power of the Nyabingi cult and became the primary priestess. As such she ceased to appear before the people, thereby mystifying herself in their minds. Consequently she drew thousands of followers. She went on to build a military and mount a bid to retake the throne for her son.

She found out that the Germans were propping up the Mwami. She in turn fought the Germans. In 1908, they arrested and imprisoned her for two years. Once she was released, she established her own kingdom in Ndorwa. As such she waged war against the Europeans. In 1911, the British ambushed her and her soldiers, killing 40 of them and shooting her in the foot. They imprisoned her until she died in 1944.

After her arrest, the bagirwa followers of Muhumuza continued the resistance against European colonization. In 1915, a mugirwa by the name of Ndochibiri amassed an army of 2,000 soldiers and attacked an Anglo-Belgian post. In 1918, he plotted a battle to expel the British and the Belgians from the region. His army was ambushed, and he was killed. They sent his head to Britain. His unique two-fingered hand was chopped off and displayed to show the natives that he was indeed dead. The legacy of resistance to the establishment is still alive among the Nyabingi priestesses and priests today.

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NYANKOPN

Nyankopon (Nyankopɔn) is the name given to the Supreme Being by the Akan of Ghana. Some scholars have tried to explain the term from its etymological root. Quarcoopome, for instance, postulates that the name is derived from the Akan words *Nyame* and *koro*,

meaning “great” and *pon* meaning “one only.” Thus, Nyankopɔn means the only great *onyame*—the Only Great God of fullness and satisfaction with perfect attributes (Quarcoopome, 63). An Akan priestess explains that the name Nyankopɔn was chosen based on God’s nature as known to the Akan. She says Nyankopɔn is a derivative of two Akan words: *Nyanko* (friend) and *pon* (great); therefore, the Supreme Being is seen as a great friend. Nyankopɔn is viewed in an anthropomorphic sense. He is believed to be a male, born on a Saturday and thus called Nyankopɔn Kwame (Kwame is a name given to a male born child on a Saturday among the Akan), and Asaase-Ya as his wife. In Akan worldview, Nyankopɔn is credited with creation of the universe including other divinities in the Akan pantheon of gods. He is, therefore, over and above all the divinities in the pantheon. One key attribute of Nyankopɔn according to the Akan belief is that he knows or sees everything (omniscience) (Parrinder 1962). He is also seen as the source of morality. Nyankopɔn is the foundation of Akan spirituality and thus considered as the ultimate recipient of all cultic attention.

Samuel Awuah-Nyamekye

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NYINGONE-MEBEGHE

Nyingone-Mebeghe is the goddess of femininity and the night. She is a deity of the Bwiti religion, which is a religious tradition related to the Fang and Mitsogo people of southern Cameroon and Gabon. According to the legend, Nyingone-Mebeghe is one of three children

born to the goddess Mbeghe-me-Nkwa. The other two children are the god None-Mebeghe and the goddess Nzame-ye-Mebeghe. The stories vary on it (see also Bwiti).

Ninepone or Nyingone-Mbeghe emerged from an egg that her mother Mbeghe-me-Nkwa laid. Because of Evus, her evil half-brother and the embodiment of all things wicked and bad, she wound up in an incestuous relationship with her brother, None-Mbeghe. This incestuous act was primordial act of disobedience. As a consequence of her disobedience, Nyingone-Mbeghe is required to carry the earth on her head.

Douglas Thomas

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OBATALA

Obatala, also known as Orisanla (literally translated as “big or great deity”) is a Yoruba deity often conceived as male. He is thought to have been one of the original rulers of the indigenous Yoruba people of southwest Nigeria. He was however displaced when Oduduwa, the man now regarded as the father of the Yoruba, arrived in the region sometime around the seventh century BCE and established a monarchy.

Over time, Obatala lost his earthly characteristics and is now more commonly regarded as a heavenly deity. In the Yoruba belief system, he is considered to be the head deity and is credited with the molding of the human form. He is said to favor the physically different including albinos, the disabled, and the deformed. As a result, these people are regarded as sacred and are called *eni orisa* (belonging to the deity).

Obatala is a nonviolent god. He is the deity of purity and peace, and his worshipers are physically distinguished through their dress code of pure white with white beads. All Obatala worshipers are forbidden from drinking alcohol because a Yoruba creation myth suggests that Obatala’s intoxication allowed another divinity, Oduduwa, to deprive him of the honor of creating the world. After this incident, Obatala swore off alcohol and in consequence, his devotees are expected to do the same. The Obatala festival is celebrated in many Yoruba towns. Events at such festivities include prayers and supplications, dramas, sacrifices, drumming, singing, and dancing.

Temilola Alanamu

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OGUN

In Yoruba cosmology and religious thought, Ogun is the deity associated with metallurgy, and he is believed to be in complete charge of all that is connected with metalworks, metalware, and warfare. Hunters are the most prominent group of Ogun devotees because of their use of iron weaponry in hunting. Other worshipers include vehicle drivers, barbers, circumcisers, trinket merchants, butchers, and all traders and artisans who deal in, or handle, metal. Hence, the totem object of Ogun is iron.

The Yoruba believe that in the beginning, when the gods descended from the chthonic (lower) or heavenly realms, Ogun was the pathfinder who, by virtue of his divine metallurgical skills, opened up the pathways to allow for passage by the rest of the deities. Ogun is believed to be an intemperate and eccentric god, and dogs as well as fowls are slaughtered in the worship and celebration of Ogun. The choice of dogs apparently is a way of representing the fauna as hunters' main field of expedition, and the dog is totemic of it. Other ritual items of Ogun worship include kolanuts, palm fronds, and palm oil. Ogun was said to always clad himself in palm fronds.

As a result of Transatlantic slavery, Ogun worship extended from the West African home of the Yoruba to other parts of the world, such as the Americas and the Caribbean Islands. Ogun is recognized and worshiped in Candomblé (Brazil) and Santería (Cuba), among other syncretic religious practices in the New World.

Abiodun M. Bello

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OLODUMARE

In the Yoruba belief system, Olodumare (also known as Eledumare or Olorun) is God. Often characterized as male, he is thought to exist eternally. Much like the Christian God, Olodumare is believed to be immortal, holy, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, supreme, perfect, stable, reliable and the source of all morality. Olodumare is the ultimate creator who brought all the deities into being and commissioned them to create the earth. He is therefore called Eleda (the creator or the maker). He gives instructions to deities on their roles, responsibilities, and conducts and monitors their relationship to man. The deities in turn report to him on all matters.

The Yoruba consider Olodumare much too high a god to worship or supplicate directly. Therefore, the people worship Olodumare through the deities who act as intercessors and go-betweens. All matters are referred to him for sanction, judgment, and settlement and only he can give life, children, earthly possessions, and other comforts. Likewise, he can take life, punish, and rescind all pleasures and luxuries. In essence, Olodumare is the supreme deity or God.

Temilola Alanamu

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OPONG, KWAME SAMPSON

Kwame Opong (1884–1965) was born to a slave father named Yaw. Samory Toure captured Yaw when he was a young man and sold him in present-day Ghana as a slave. Yaw married two slave women, one of whom was Kwame's mother. He then married a freeborn Ashanti woman. As her husband, Yaw had access to property. Kwame

moved in with his father's Ashanti wife's brother, who was a magician.

Kwame learned how to work magic from his uncle. When the British outlawed domestic slavery in their colony, Kwame was free to do what he liked. He found a job in the French colony of Ivory Coast, where they were building a new railroad. They hired Kwame as a foreman over a crew of men who cut wood for the rails. His job was to collect his men's pay and give it to them at the end of each week. One day the money was in bills too big to be divided, so Kwame went looking for change. As he was far away from the initial town looking for change, he decided to just run away and spend the money. He met and saw a woman he liked. His attraction to this woman led him to tell his story. She was a policeman's wife and exposed Kwame, which ended in his arrest.

While in jail he met an old man who prayed all the time. The third day, the older Christian gentleman was released. Kwame asked him for a few coins so he could buy some food. The old man told him he had no money, but he would leave him with God. Angered, Kwame wondered to himself how being left with God would help with his hunger. Later he calmed down and thought about God. He prayed to God and had a dream. In the dream, two big white men were behind him. One said, "I am the God of Moses." That same man freed him from his chains and told Kwame to serve God.

The next day, the prison guard informed Kwame that he was being set free because his witness was unavailable. Kwame forgot about his vision and started working magic again. He used the magic to seduce women, steal chickens, and sell out his products before the other vendors at the market. He worked for a while on a cocoa farm. Then he got a job working for a Christian woman. She took him to church and he enrolled as a student convert. Frustrated because he had difficulties learning to read and write, he left the church and started again working magic. At some point he was in a village where he was said to put a spell on some girls that gave them rashes. The people of the village ran him out.

He settled somewhere else and took up living with a Christian woman. She prayed fervently, and her prayers greatly irritated him.

He decided he would kill her. He tried to twice and was unsuccessful. Later, a boy came and contracted Kwame to kill his uncle through magic. Kwame went into the forest to practice his magic. While he was eagerly looking to see if his magic was working on the boy's uncle's soul, he was suddenly in a big room full of white men. On a table he saw all the things he used to work magic. He saw a big man again. The man told Kwame that he was the one that freed him from jail and asked why he was still living in sin.

The man told Kwame again he was the God of Moses. He said he wanted Kwame to take up his cross and preach about it to the whole world. Kwame retorted that he couldn't read or write or even speak English. The man replied, "I will be with you."

Kwame went home and burned all his magic implements. He took the name of Sampson. He had a carpenter make him a wooden cross and a tailor make him a long white robe. He then began preaching. For years, he helped the Methodist church, and he was responsible for around 10,000 converts. He preached a simple message of repentance and told his hearers to burn all their fetishes and put their trust in God. He warned that if they did not change their ways, God would pour out fire on them. In the 1920s, one missionary reported that he backslid and started drinking. By 1957, however he was reconciled to the Methodist Church and began preaching in his town of Akuntanin. He was instrumental in the Methodist Church of Akuntanin. He lived and preached there until he died in 1965.

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ORI

Ori (head) worship in the Yoruba belief system is a deeply spiritual act. Ori is a man's inner god and the core of human existence. Ori is believed to be a man's destiny, fate, and distinctive character given to him in heaven, which aids him in his daily life and struggles on earth. In other words, it is a man's whole personality. The Yoruba believe that when a man is alive, his ori is really in heaven, and the man must worship his head because it is close to God and can go to Him and petition on the man's behalf. Accordingly, people need to worship their heads to gain a good life from God and their deities. Therefore, the worship of ori is the veneration of the very essence of life, represented by the physical head.

When a person is born, a sacrifice must be made to its head to propitiate it for guidance, fortune, and good graces throughout the child's lifetime and also to keep the individual from harm. Believers need to give their heads the first portion of everything eaten or drunk, usually by lightly touching this article on the head before it is consumed. The Yoruba believe this act is necessary because the head is the principal part of the body, which must be given a little amount before other inferior parts. By so doing, the individual would receive blessings and protection. Since the advent of Christianity and Islam in Yorubaland however, ori worship has diminished among the population.

Temilola Alanamu

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ORISA

In the Yoruba belief system, *orisa* is the collective name given to the pantheon of deities. The orisa amount to more than 400, most of which are of little note. The most prominent of them are Obatala (a

god associated with creation and purity), Sango (the god of thunder), Ogun (the god of war and iron), Sopono (the god of smallpox and affliction), Ibeji (the god of twins), Orunmila or Ifa (the god of ifa divination), Osun (the female deity of fertility, healing, wealth, and witchcraft), and Esu/Elegbara (the trickster god), a god associated with trickery and wickedness, and later named Satan by Christian evangelists.

There are two types of Yoruba orisa. The first are those who were human beings living on earth and were deified after they left earth, either through death or other mystical means. The second type of orisa are those considered to have been eternally heavenly beings, such as Esu/Elegbara. Many Yoruba orisa are connected with natural phenomena such as wind, water, and thunder, and these deities are thought to have the power to control these phenomena. The orisa are intercessors between Olodumare (God) and human beings. Therefore, through the worship of the orisa, the people worship God.

Temilola Alanamu

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ORISA OKO

Many deities in the Yoruba pantheon were once people who, after distinguishing themselves in one way or another, were deified and worshiped. Orisa Oko (the deity of the farm or agriculture) was one such deity. Yoruba mythology states that his human name was Ogunjemiji, and as a young man, he was famous for his skill in hunting etu (a type of bird). After decades of studying Ifa divination, he became a powerful Ifa priest who was reputed to render all evil entities around him impotent. Historically, he is believed to have lived in a town called Ipolo, where he became famous for cleansing the

town and its environs from witches, wizards, and other malevolent beings. As a result, the town flourished and experienced a yearly bounty of harvest.

For this reason, it is believed that the true worship of Orisa Oko brings increased productivity of agricultural produce. To commemorate his valiant acts, Orisa Oko is worshiped on a yearly basis, either during or after the New Yam Festival, which celebrates the yearly yam harvest. This festival is important to the Yoruba of southwest Nigeria, and the people believe that it is a taboo for the worshipers of Orisa Oko to eat newly harvested yams before the celebration of the festival. Whoever disobeys will be afflicted with a swollen neck.

Ayodele Solomon Oyewale

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ORUNMILA

Orunmila, also known as Ifa, is the deity of wisdom, knowledge, and divination. Orunmila, which can be translated as the “parting my way to heaven” or “revealing heaven,” is a key deity in the Yoruba belief system. It connects and supports indigenous religion because it is believed that through a Yoruba divination method called ifa divination that humans can communicate with gods. During ifa divination, Orunmila takes man’s supplications to the gods and returns with responses and instructions. Therefore, he is the source of all guidance. Orunmila is said to be second only to Olodumare (God) and is believed to have witnessed creation.

There are conflicting accounts regarding the origin of ifa divination. One story states that Setilu, a man from Nupe, introduced it to Yorubaland, while another credits King Onigbogi, an ancient Yoruba king. To become an ifa priest, one needs to undergo decades of

study, and those who become proficient enough to practice are called *babaláwo* (priest-diviner or father of secrets) if male and *Ìyánífá* (mother of ifa or mother of secrets) if female. The entire divination system is built around innumerable oral traditions including stories, myths, legends and histories known as *ẹsẹ* (stories or verses), grouped under sixteen sections called *odù ifa*. These stories have been likened to Bible or Qur'an verses. When an enquirer consults a priest, the priest divines by casting and manipulating palm nuts. The final position of the seeds will determine the verses that would be recited from memory because, like Bible and Qur'an verses, ifa verses are directly related to the enquirer's questions. The priest would then give further guidance on how to proceed in order to permanently solve the problem.

Temilola Alanamu

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OSUN

Osun is a Yoruba female deity often referred to as the Great Mother. She is a deity of fertility, wealth, and healing and can grant fecundity, riches, and good health to anyone who worships and propitiates her. Osun is uncompromisingly feminine, as she loves bathing in cool waters, using fragrant soaps and oils, adorning jewelry and ornaments, and changing her luxury attire several times a day. She is also considered something of a femme fatale, having used her femininity to ensnare male deities into teaching her their secrets, which she then co-opts. Osun is also vengeful, and one Yoruba creation myth depicts her as foiling the plans of creations because the male deities excluded her from their activities. Osun is a great warrior. She is considered the head of the women's military and she

is the leader of all *aje* (witches). She is said to have links to several male deities including Orunmila (deity of divination) and sango (deity of thunder), both believed to be her husband. The image of Osun is therefore simultaneously one of a wealthy, nurturing mother and a powerful and vengeful warrior-witch.

Osun is predominantly worshiped in the town of Osogbo in southwest Nigeria, a town through which the Osun River flows. The secret grove of Osun in Osogbo was certified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2005. The Osun-Osogbo festival, celebrated yearly in August, is one of the biggest religious and cultural festivals in the world, attracting thousands of spectators yearly. It commences with the lighting of sixteen lamps, and the festival incorporates the cleansing of the town, prayers, dramas, dancing, singing, and processions.

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OYA

There are many historical perspectives to the origin of Oya, the Yoruba goddess of wind and the Niger River, called Odo Oya. The common origin story is that, like many other deities, she was once human, born in the ancient town of Ira. Oya is believed to be the third wife in the polygamous household of Sango (the god of thunder), whose other wives were Osun and Oba, who are also deities. Of his three wives, Sango is said to have favored and cherished Oya most of all because she was as powerful, brave, and as hardhearted as he was. According to Yoruba mythology, Oya is said to have transcended from human form to that of a deity by entering into the ground in the town of Ira, where she became the source of the Niger River.

The worshipers of Oya believe that she protects and guides her followers in times of trouble, and she meets all their needs when consulted and propitiated. Oya is also believed to hate theft, and it is said that if she is consulted regarding a theft, she will kill the thief and put whatever was stolen on the dead body. The annual Oya Festival, which lasts for 17 days, must be attended by all of her worshipers. The festival is usually the last of the year because as a deity, she desires to have her festival while no other is ongoing. Oya worshipers usually have buffalo horns as her major emblem, and they are also forbidden to eat mutton.

Opeyemi Yusuf Fadairo

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PEMBA

Pemba is a male deity of the Bambara (Bamana) people of West Africa, revered as the god of trees and represented by grain and the acacia. Pemba is most well known for his role in the Bambara creation myth. Diverse versions of this myth are told by all Mande-speaking populations (e.g., Bozo, Kurumba, Samogo, Dogon).

In the process of creation, God (Ngala) produced a twin set of eleusine seeds within the egg of the world. God then created six more seeds associated with the cardinal directions and four elements, providing order to the world. One of the twins, Pemba wished to rule over all of creation; thus, he broke from the egg prematurely and descended into the empty space. During his escape, Pemba tore a piece of the placenta that fell into the empty space, and that became the world. Seeing the barrenness of the earth, Pemba attempted to return to the egg, and find his twin, Musso-Koroni. However, God had already reconstituted the damaged egg into the sun.

Pemba then stole eight eleusine seeds from one of God's clavicles and attempted to plant them near the Malian village of Bounan, beside Lake Debo. All but one seed died from lack of water, while the surviving seed germinated in the blood of Pemba's torn placenta. When the creator god Faro made humans, Pemba tried to control them and lusted after the women. Through these acts, the earth became impure and disordered. After being vanquished by Faro, order was returned to the world.

Peter R. Coutros

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PORO SOCIETY



Young men, between the ages of 15 and 25, return from a Poro Society initiatory school where they undertook endurance tests and learned ancestral values, Sirasso, northern Ivory Coast, March 17, 2007. (Kambou Sia/AFP/Getty Images)

The Poro Society is the secret society of the Mende men. The society is also a part of life for people in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea. Mende men begin the process of initiation when they are 20 years old. The initiation process takes seven years. During the seven years, the men are taught the secret language and handshakes. They then communicate the secrets of the society using the secret language and signs. The training is extensive and involves various aspects of hunting and other skills that are designed to prepare the men for leadership in their community. Spiritual knowledge is also passed to the next generation during the initiation. The precise details of the initiation process are scarce because a serious oath of secrecy is taken. To violate the oath is a serious offense.

Poros Society meetings usually occur during the dry season. A man in a sacred mask leads the meetings. He is referred to as the Poros Devil. The Poros Devil addresses the crowd through a long tube. The meeting area is an undisclosed place in the forest where apartments are built for the participants. The Poros Society attendees are divided into three groups: chiefs and important men; priests/healers; and the crowd of men who don't belong to either of the previous groups.

A primary tenet of the society is the acknowledgment of the existence of a spiritual world where things happen beyond the view and knowledge of those in the material world. Some of the secrets of this other world are shared in Poros Society initiations and meetings. As an organization of men, the group has traditionally served as a fraternal order as well as an educational institution designed to prepare boys for manhood. People respect the Poros Society elders and turn to them in situations that require wisdom and judgment. The whole society has a goal of maintaining the order of society.

Civil War raged in Liberia and Sierra Leone for much of the 1990s. The traditional societies along with all the rest of the region were disrupted. It is said that Charles Taylor, the former rebel and later president of Liberia, co-opted the Poros Society to add a veneer of mysticism to his rebel group. Various elements of Poros Society knowledge were used in Sierra Leone by the rebel soldiers, particularly the magical elements. Different ones were said to have protection from bullets. Though the Poros Society is definitely not a cannibalistic secret society, initiation rituals from Poros as well as the older cannibalistic Leopard and Crocodile Societies were used in rebel groups' makeshift initiations, including consuming the raw human flesh of their enemies.

In spite of war and societal instability, the resilient Poros Society is still in existence and provides training for young men who want to enter manhood. They are also active in politics. In 2009, Poros Society members stopped the election of the first woman chief of the Niminyama in Sierra Leone. They gathered at her house and threw stones to keep her from leaving the house. Her nephew was chosen as chief, securing the traditional patriarchal leadership.

Douglas Thomas

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QAMATA

Qamata is a Xhosa god. According to legend, he is the son of Thixo, the sun god, and Lobela, the earth goddess. Qamata is seen as an omnipresent god and the creator of humanity in some myths. Qamata is great and aloof. He is without form or description. Worshipers do not pray to him or offer him any sacrifices. When the Xhosa converted to Christianity in the 19th century, they chose the word Thixo to describe the Judeo-Christian God (see also Xhosa).

Douglas Thomas

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RASTAFARIANISM

On November 2, 1930, Ras Tafari Makonnen was crowned Negusa Negast, meaning “king of kings.” Thus, he became the emperor of Ethiopia, taking the name Haile Selassie. Haile means “power of” and Selassie means “the Trinity.” His coronation was recorded on film and shown on newsreels, which played before the motion picture presentations. Most of the European governments sent representation, including Great Britain, under whose political power the Jamaicans suffered. Blacks all over the world were either living in postslavery horrible conditions or under the ravages and brutality of colonization. For them to see a black man being honored and even receiving bows from whites was a surprise. Certain Jamaicans saw it and proclaimed that Ras Tafari was the African king that Marcus Garvey had predicted would rise and redeem the black people of the world. Painting the event with the broad messianic brush that comes from centuries of exposure to Christianity, certain men proclaimed that Haile Selassie was god incarnate come to deliver his people. Rastafarianism was born.

In 1933, Leonard P. Howell, also known as Gong (short for Ganguguru Marangh), was the first to proclaim Rastafarianism. Initially, people thought he was insane. He was put on trial for sedition and jailed for two years. He also spent time in an asylum. By most accounts, he was abrasive in his manner of preaching, often calling Christian pastors liars and publicly encouraging people to stop going to church. Howell’s most controversial statements were his call for the end of colonization at a time when Jamaica was a British colony. The colonial authorities were not thrilled with the self-sustaining community he built called Pinnacle. The Jamaican government raided

the community many times. In spite of being jailed and persecuted, however, Howell managed to amass a community of approximately 4,500 followers and a working farm devoted to growing marijuana.

From that rather boisterous beginning, Rastafarianism developed into various subgroups. These subgroups or branches are referred to as Mansions of Rastafari. Of the better-known branches are the Twelve Tribes, Bobo-shanti, and the Nyabinghi Order. These are just a few. Rastafarianism covers a broad geographical area and the breadth of ideological religious stances. The Nyabinghi Order is considered to be the oldest of the strands, with its roots in the 1940s. According to their official website, the Nyabinghi Order traces its origins to Melchisidek King of Salem, mentioned in the book of Genesis 14:18–20. The Bobo Shanti branch began in 1958. Prince Emmanuel Charles Edwards is the originator of the Bobo Shanti and is considered the Black Christ. In 1968, Dr. Vernon Carrington founded the Twelve Tribes, a subgroup to which Bob Marley belonged. Carrington also proclaimed that he was a reincarnation of Gad, one of the sons of Jacob/Israel.

Beliefs

There is no unitary authority in Rastafarianism. The various Rastafarians hold their faith along the lines of various convictions. There do seem to be some unifying beliefs that all Rastafarians hold. Chief among these beliefs is the assertion that Ras Tafari is God. They all believe in the liturgical use of marijuana as a means of becoming more spiritually aware. There is a tendency to respect nature among the Rastafarians. For example, most of them are vegetarians with some even being vegans. Those that eat meat usually do not eat pork.



Haile Selassie was Ethiopia's regent from 1916 to 1930 and emperor from 1930 to 1974. He became a religious symbol for Rastafarianism—a social, religious, and cultural movement founded in Jamaica in the 1930s. Rastafarians believe that Haile Selassie was a divine being and a savior for the black race and that Africa is the promised land. (Library of Congress)

One belief that stands strong among Rastafarians from the beginning is the assertion that whites are evil devils. With the expansion of Rastafarianism into the white race, that particular belief has undergone some modification. Some Rastafarians have altogether dropped that belief. However, many still retain some version of the hatred of whites because the religion was born of the frustration of slavery and racism.

The original Rastafarians said that Jamaica was hell and Ethiopia was heaven. They rejected the otherworldly heaven presented in Christianity and later Islam. They believed that heaven can be experienced here on earth once one returns to Africa. Reincarnation of all life was also a central tenet of the original Rastafarianism.

Haile Selassie is revered with certain names of respect, many of them from his official praise names as emperor. He is called the Lion of Judah, referring to his being a descendant of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (see also Amhara). They also refer to him as “king of kings,” the direct translation of Negusa Nagast in Amharic. This title

for the Ethiopians referred to their political organization in which the empire was divided into kingdoms. The emperor was the king of all the other kings, hence king of kings. The Rastafarians, however, took the title “king of kings” in the same manner it was applied to Jesus.

Rastafarians do not cut their hair. They grow it long and twist it into locks. The locks are meant to give the appearance of the mane of a lion, reminding the world that their god is the Lion of Judah. Men and women grow their hair into locks, wearing it in various styles.

Early Rastafarianism taught that women held the position of servant and helper to men. Women were to be called to Rastafarianism through their husbands. They did not come on their own. Their primary role was to take care of the home and bear children for the family. Western cultures perceive this as a subordination of women. Over the years, since the beginning of Rastafarianism, this particular doctrine has been modified or ignored.

Another common belief among the many manifestations of Rastafarianism is the assertion that blacks are the chosen people. The superiority of blacks is affirmed in word and practice. There are branches that do not believe that whites could ever achieve salvation and righteousness.

Practices

Rastafarians generally meet at least once a week. They don't necessarily have a place where they meet. They can meet in a communally owned space or an individual member's home. They have reasoning sessions, where they smoke marijuana and meditate. The drug is thought to make them more spiritually aware so that they can embark on experiences of spiritual enlightenment.

They bless newborn babies and have a drumming session. They do the same when people die. Their daily practice of their religion varies as much as their beliefs. As a religion, Rastafarianism leaves a lot of space for individual choice. The growing and maintaining of the dreadlocks, the ritual smoking of marijuana, and the Nyabinghi drumming form the corpus of their central religious practice.

Mansions of Rastafari

The oldest of the “mansions” is the Nyabinghi branch, which is also called the Haile Selassie I Theocratical Order of the Nyabinghi Reign. This group is known for their music and chanting, which include the drum as a central instrument. The group takes their name from a legendary East African queen/goddess. In the late 19th century, a woman named Muhumusa led armed resistance against German colonial forces. She was said to be possessed by Nyabinghi. The drumming is a medium through which Nyabinghi can possess the adherents of the Nyabinghi branch of Rastafari.

Three drums are primarily used in the Nyabinghi music. The bass drum is often called the Vatican smasher. This name is in reference to the Rastafarian belief that the Roman Catholic Church is connected to evil Babylon, which some see as Europe. The other drums are pitched higher than the bass drum and are called *akete* and *funde*. The drumming is not unique to the Nyabinghi Branch because all Rastafarian sects practice it.

The Nyabinghi believe that Haile Selassie is the messianic savior of all black people of the world. They preach that he is not dead. He just disappeared. He will reappear and establish an international theocratic government and lead as his head. Like all other Rastafari sects, the Nyabinghi use the Bible and chant some of the psalms during their drumming. The Bible, however, is for them just a book of reference.

The Bobo Shanti Branch was started in 1958. Bobo means “black” and Shanti comes from the Ashanti tribe. Prince Emmanuel Charles Edwards started the group. His followers view him as a reincarnation of Jesus Christ. As their messiah, Prince Emmanuel is part of the Bobo Ashanti trinity, which includes Marcus Garvey, Haile Selassie, and Prince Emmanuel. Haile Selassie is Jah, “God.” Marcus Garvey is the prophet. Prince Emmanuel is the high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Like the Maroons of Jamaican history, whom they tend to emulate, the Bobo Shanti live apart from the rest of society. Producing their own food and adhering to a strict vegan diet, the Bobo Shanti are

self-sufficient. They consider marijuana sacred, though they don't smoke it in public. They use marijuana only in religious rituals. They are known for their long flowing robes, their locks wrapped up in turbans, and their brooms that they carry around as a symbol of cleanliness. Twice a week the members of the community fast and again the first day of the month. They are Sabbath keepers, beginning Friday at sundown. They don't eat salt or oil during the Sabbath observance.

The Bobo Shanti observe certain of the Mosaic laws, particularly the ones governing women's activities during their menstrual cycle. Due to the confinement rules concerning the menstrual cycle, women live apart from men for most of the month. The women are in the confinement area when their cycle begins and stay there until 21 days after their cycle begins. This leaves one week for women to cohabitate with their husbands. All women from puberty to menopause, whether married or single, must observe this rule. The Bobo Shanti invite outsiders to visit their community regularly. The rule on the menstrual cycle, however, applies to visiting women also. They are not allowed until the 22nd day after the beginning of their last menstrual cycle. Women must also cover their arms and legs.

The Twelve Tribes of Israel branch does not teach that blacks are superior to whites. It is considered to be the most liberal of all the branches of Rastafarianism. Its teachings center on the value of all human life and that all humanity can receive salvation. The founder of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, Dr. Vernon Carrington, is thought to be the reincarnation of Gad, son of Jacob/Israel. All the members of the Twelve Tribes of Israel believe they are the descendants of the twelve sons of Israel. Dr. Carrington is called Prophet Gad.

Dr. Carrington was a member of the World-Wide Ethiopian Federation. He was inspired to read the Bible one chapter at a time. He read it through twice. Once he established his group, Dr. Carrington taught his followers to do the same. It is still a foundational practice of the Twelve Tribes. They allow women equal representation and rights within their group. They also allow people of all races to be a part of the group. Prophet Gad's central focus is the repatriation of Rastafarians to Africa, namely Ethiopia. Unlike other

Rastafari, the Twelve Tribes see Haile Selassie as a divine king, representative of God. They do revere Jesus as their savior, yet Haile Selassie has a semidivine posture in their belief system. Their focus on the Bible is specific to the Scofield Study Bible. They point out the fact that Scofield was a former alcoholic who became an observant Christian. The power of the Bible to transform lives is inherent to their theology.

Bob Marley, Reggae, and Rastafari Evangelism

Bob Marley accepted Rastafarianism and became a member of the Twelve Tribes of Israel. He was a member of the Tribe of Joseph. Bob Marley and his group, the Wailers, are responsible for introducing Rastafarianism to international audiences. His songs, which are still popular, stated important positions of the Rastafarian belief system. He stated in the song “Get Up, Stand Up,” “my god is a living man,” a clear reference to Haile Selassie. Many of his songs are peppered with references to Rastafarianism. As a result, Rastafarianism expanded beyond the Caribbean and the Caribbean diaspora communities. Today there are Rastafarians of a variety of races and national/regional origins.

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ROHO CHURCHES

The Roho Churches are located in Kenya. Roho refers to “spirit” in Swahili and Dholuo languages. The Holy Ghost moved among the Luo People of Kenya and Uganda starting in 1912. According to the oral

tradition, the Holy Ghost first came as a voice that people could hear around the outdoor corner of their homes. Then the Holy Ghost fell on a group of new Christian converts to the Anglican church as they worshiped in an outdoor service led by catechist Jeremiah Otang'a. When confessing their sins, the people fell under the power of the Holy Ghost, and their tongues stretched out. They cried in agony until Otang'a prayed for them, and their tongues shrank to the normal size.

The next event involved a young fervent convert named Ibrahim Osodo. Osodo had built a small prayer house where Christians could meet and pray. He had a desire to see believers become one. The Holy Ghost manifested on the people who assembled in the prayer house and people prophesied. Then, the Holy Ghost entered Osodo and the Holy Ghost used him to speak to the community. He began to prophesy at Christian gatherings in the area. As most Christians in the area were Anglican, they told him to stop. Jeremiah Otan'a is reported to have told Osodo to stop talking and go away because his "words were too much."

Some people even thought that Osodo was demon possessed. Others thought he was genuinely an instrument of the Holy Ghost. As he continued his activities, a group of young people began to follow him. They met and prayed and sang hymns with vitality. They also organized in military formations and marched as they sang. They even designed uniforms. Once World War I came and the British sought young men to conscript, the Paramount Chief saw the healthy young members of Osodo's group as fair game. The current Anglican archdeacon asked him not to send them all, however, because that would hurt the progress of Christianity in the area. He relented, but he drafted three of the group including the leader, Ibrahim Osodo.

The Holy Ghost again manifested in 1916 in the young catechist Alfayo Odongo Mango. Mango converted to Christianity in 1912 and shortly thereafter built a small church in Musando. In 1913 Mango was sent to the Christian Missionary Society Normal School at Maseno, where he learned reading, writing, and other skills. During this time the Luo and Luyia tribes worshiped at Mango's church in peace. Mango pursued evangelism in the surrounding villages and countryside.

In 1916, he received the Holy Ghost while visiting a small church in Alego Nyadhi. He had a vision at the church. He had traveled there with four young women and a young man. He didn't tell any of his traveling companions of his vision. While returning home that night, they passed through a forest. The Holy Ghost knocked them all down. Mango suddenly was aware of his traveling companions' sins. He told them to confess. Three of the young women confessed to allowing their pride to make them mistreat the fourth young woman.

According to the oral tradition of the church, the Holy Ghost told Mango that he couldn't preach to his people yet because they were not ready to hear the message. The working of the Holy Ghost was said to be evident in his life. He continued to work as a catechist and evangelist, but his preaching turned on some of the Luo customs and his prayer life was noteworthy. His superiors in the Anglican church noticed his work and he was asked to help lead a service in Nairobi. When he prayed, Canon Burns, who asked him to pray, thought the prayer was so powerful that he wrote the words down. The archdeacon appointed him as deacon over a network of Luo churches in 1927.

In 1933, the Holy Ghost began to move in Sylvano Nyamogo and Lawi Obongo, Mango's nephew. The two went separately preaching and performing miracles among the Luo. At first they were not working together but eventually they joined forces. Mango had run afoul of the colonial authorities and the Luyiha tribal leaders over ethnic land disputes. His movement was restricted. Sylvano and Lowi continued the evangelism and the visits to the churches they started. Their adherents were called Joroho, meaning "people of the Spirit." They were accused of deviating from the norms of Anglican practice and belief.

Lowi's meeting attracted the attention of colonial officials and the Anglican archdeacon. At one meeting, the crowd heard an angel sing, the sick were healed, and the dead were brought back to life. It is said that boy, who had been in the grave for two days, was resurrected. People fell under the power of the Holy Ghost in a trance and were later revived. Anglican authorities didn't like this. The

archdeacon of that time broke up one meeting after describing what he saw as hysterical.

The opposition continued in earnest. There were the opposing ethnic powers who were allied with the British colonial government and the Anglican Church authority, who did not see the movement of the Holy Ghost among the Luo as authentic. Lawi, Sylvano, and others would not be deterred or discouraged. Mango, though keeping mostly to his home, eventually gave these younger men his support and approval.

In December 1933, Lawi called a meeting of the adherents. They met at Mango's house for prayer, then those who stayed went to Lawi's house. There they prayed and worshiped. Others came from their homes and stayed at Lawi's house for prayer, worship and teaching. These people were then sent out as *jooté*, meaning "messengers." In 1934, they organized a skeletal church structure with Mango as spiritual leader, Lawi as archbishop, Baranaba Walwoho as bishop, Silvano Nyamogo and Isaya Goro as catechists, and Josiah Obala as leader of the secular education. Shortly after, Mango and Lawi were killed in an attack on their compound.

For the time immediately after the massacre, Mango and Lawi's followers considered themselves a part of the Anglican Church. Over the next few months, however, there were several visions and revelations. One member had a vision of Mango coming into her house and knocking down the interior wall that separated the sleeping quarters from the area where the faithful met. She took it as a sign, and she and her husband started sleeping in their kitchen. Another vision came to a member about clothing, so a uniform was created from this vision. A third vision gave them the information that Mango was called Israel in heaven. So they began to see Mango as another savior.

With these unique identifying actions, a clear break with the Anglican Church was just a matter of course. The Roho Community then embarked upon a campaign of proselytization. Women and men alike preached. Starting with their families and in-laws, they preached in their native villages. They then spread to other villages, eventually covering all the Luo areas. Branching from Musanda and Ruwe,

where many of the Musanda members moved after the massacre, they also established ties with other Roho communities in Maragoli and Kitosh.

From this expansion, varied spiritual praxis developed, and divisions developed. These divisions led to denominational formations, but no deep doctrinal divisions occurred. Some of the resulting organizations were the Ruwe Holy Ghost Church of East Africa and the Musanda Holy Ghost Church of East Africa. The Kikuyu base African Independent Pentecostal Church was in existence, as were the Buluku Holy Spirit followers, who formed the Holy Spirit Church of East Africa. All of these churches are ethnic-based manifestations of Afro-Pentecostalism in East Africa and claim to be the original Holy Ghost church in the area. None, however, can deny the important role that Mango played among the Luo and the establishment of the Roho Church.

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RUWA

Ruwa is the primary god of the Chagga people, who live in Tanzania. Ruwa means “god” and/or “sun.” He is seen and worshiped as a benevolent god. Ruwa is not seen as the creator of anything. The Chagga say that the world and the universe have always been here. There is, however, a story in their tradition similar to the Christian story of Adam and Eve. According to the legend, Ruwa freed humanity from some sort of vessel, hence his praise name “the liberator.”

Ruwa then planted a banana grove and told the humans to go there and live. They were allowed to eat anything in the garden

except a sacred species of yam. Once a stranger came and asked for food. The chief elder of the village told the stranger that Ruwa had instructed them to not eat the special species of yam. The stranger replied that Ruwa had sent him and told him to eat the yam. So the old man brought the stranger a cooking pot and oil. The stranger dug up the yam, peeled it, and cooked it. The elder shared some with him. The minister of Ruwa smelled the cooking yam and came to see what it was. He admonished the two and told them they would be punished. Death was decreed on humanity from that day.

Douglas Thomas

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SANDE SOCIETY

The Sande society is a female secret society charged with teaching women the female secrets of their respective tribes and practicing female genital mutilation involving the removal of the clitoris and the labia. Though this society is existent in various tribes, we list it here as part of the Mende. It is thought to have began with the Gola people (a tribe of Liberia) and spread to the Mende and the Vai. Today the Sande Society is active in Liberia and Sierra Leone among the following tribes: Bassa, Gola, Kissi, Kpelle, Loma, Mano, Kono, Limba, Sherbro, Temne, and Yalunka in addition to the Vai, Gola, and Mende. These tribes all live in the forest region between the Scarcies River in Sierra Leone and the Cape Palmas area of Liberia. They all speak different languages and have different, though similar, traditions. The purpose of the Sande Society is to prepare girls for womanhood and to provide a source of moral and often material support for the members after they reach womanhood. The Sande Society has always served as a political and social counterbalance to the Poro Society, which is its male equivalent. Traditionally, land use is even divided between the two with the Sande Society having control of land use for three years and the Poro Society having control of the land use for four years alternating. The use of the land provides income for whoever farms it.

The Sande Society has an established and controlled hierarchy. In the Mende Sande Society, the top tier of the Sande Society is called *sowie*. The *sowie* are the guardians of the Sande Society secrets and the women in the broader society. They are charged with identifying and removing anything that can harm women in the society. They are also charged with the maintenance of proper relationships. Just

below the *sowie* is the *ligba*. *Ligba Wa* is the senior woman of the *ligba* and their leader. *Ligba Wulo* are the junior *ligba*, who are under the direction of the *Ligba Wa*. Below *ligba* is the *nyaha*, which includes the regular members who haven't ascended to *ligba*. *Nyaha* is a woman who is ready to be married or already married. The initiates are known as *mbogdoni* and nonmembers are *kpowa*, a word that denotes ignorance.

Initiation into the society requires an initial fee paid either by the initiate's father or fiancé. Women are not to be married until they are initiated. The initiates are brought to a special place in the forest and remain there. The first part of the process is the operation to remove the clitoris and the labia. The girls are given time for recuperation after the operation. Then the training starts. The dance training is rigorous and often involves girls practicing until they drop from exhaustion. There are two women responsible for teaching the dance. The first is called the *Ndoli Jowei*, which means "dance expert." Both are essentially *Ndoli Jowei*, but the second one is called *Gonde*. The *Ndoli Jowei* is the firm taskmaster, often waking the girls in the middle of the night to practice. Sometimes they practice as long as 48 hours with nearly nonstop dancing. When they make mistakes, they are whipped with a switch to encourage them to get it right. The *Gonde* is the lubrication that helps the stressful process along. The *Gonde* befriends the girls and uses comedy and playful encouragement in order to keep them focused and provide relief. The harsh process is meant to provide the girls with the resilience to face any situation, no matter how stressful, with grace and persistence.

They are taught the secrets of the tribe, mystical things that are not disclosed. They are also taught to be moral and other skills that are beneficial to their society. The time of the initiation may last from a week to months. With the European-style schooling, traditional education is often abridged because it disrupts the Western education. Traditionally, sometimes the initiates would stay with the society up to a year, during which they would work on the farms of the leaders of the Sande Society.

Douglas Thomas

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SANGO

Sango, the god of thunder and lightning, also known as Jakuta (one who fights with pebbles) was the third *alafin* (ruler) of the Oyo Empire, the greatest empire in the Yoruba region until the early nineteenth century. He was the second son of Yemoja and her husband Oranmiya, the son of Oduduwa (the progenitor of the Yoruba people). Sango was a brave, powerful, but violent ruler who spat fire when he spoke and was said to have the ability to control lightning. According to oral traditions, his seven-year reign was marked by incessant wars of expansion, wars that he was alleged to win with the help of his third wife, Oya, who had the power to summon and control rain. Despite his propensity for violence, Sango is also reputed to have been a prosperous ruler who augmented Oyo's influence and enriched his people. He was therefore a man of contradictions who personified masculine procreative energy.

Sango's reign ended when, in a fit of rage, he unintentionally destroyed his palace and all its occupants with lightning. While some oral traditions state that he committed suicide out of remorse, others claim that his body disappeared into heaven, from where he controls lightning. Sango followers are also believed to have the power to manipulate lightning, and due to his tragic demise, the worship and veneration of Sango is said to give people both a great deal of power while encouraging self-control. Items used in propitiating Sango include dogs, goats, rats, fishes, and kolanuts.

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SANTERIA

Santeria, also known as Regla de Ocha or Religion of the Lucumi, is a version of the ancient Yoruba belief system developed in the former Spanish colonies of the Caribbean. Today those nations are mainly Cuba and the Dominican Republic along with the US territory of Puerto Rico. The adherents of Santeria worship the Orisa (Oricha in Spanish) of the Yoruba and combine them with the Roman Catholic saints. Each Orisa has a corresponding saint.

The belief system was brought to the Caribbean with Yoruba slaves from West Africa. During slavery, anything connected with the native traditions of Africa and African religions was deemed wicked. Masking their religious beliefs and practice through an amalgamation of their Orisa with the Roman Catholic saints was a coping and survival technique. So, for example Shango, god of thunder, lightning, and iron was connected to St. Barbara, patron saint of armorers and artillerymen. Later scholars branded Santeria, Vodun/Voodoo, and other similar religions as syncretism without understanding the historical context that necessitated such a step. Some sects of Santeria require that their adherents be baptized Roman Catholics before joining Santeria.

Santeria is Spanish for "saint worship/veneration." This term is appropriate for what happens on the surface. A deeper inspection reveals that Santeria is simply the Yoruba traditional religious belief system thinly disguised. The inclusion of some beliefs and practices from the Christian and Carib Indian Tribal traditions does not dilute the Yoruba core of the belief system.

Like the Yoruba belief system, Santeria is polytheistic. They worship Ogun, Osun, Elegua, Yemaya, and Shango, among other Orisa, though Oludumare, Olofi, and Olorun are seen as manifestations of a supreme god. The Orisa are the intermediaries between the supreme god and humanity. It is believed that Olofi gives *aché* (spiritual power or energy) to the Orisa, with which they maintain order and harmony in the world. Each adherent of Santeria spends time trying to find out which Orisa “owns his head,” meaning to which does he/she belong. Once the adherent determines his/her Orisa, he/she spends the rest of his/her life in devotion and worship to his/her Orisa. They never place any Orisa above Oludumare.

There is no unifying sacred text or book that orders the rituals and practices in Santeria. The adherents worship in homes that double as temples called an *ilé* or *casa de santos* in Spanish. These temple-homes are usually the dwelling places of priests and priestesses. The shrines are constructed with inspiration from the god that it honors. The priest/priestess of a particular orisa is the point of contact for humanity and that deity. As such, the priest/priestess builds the shrine where he/she worships and offers sacrifices to the orisa. The shrine contains an altar known as the *igbodu*, where worship takes place. In the *igbodu* there are three thrones draped with royal blue, white, and red satin respectfully representing the monarchs and warriors of old.



A Santeria priest ministers to a follower in Cuba. Santeria is the common name given to Yoruba religion as it manifested among Africans forcefully brought to the Spanish-controlled islands of the Caribbean during the 18th and 19th centuries. (Francoise De Mulder/Roger Viollet/Getty Images)

People come to the ilé seeking advice, healing, or direction from the priest/priestess. Others seek to become initiates to the priesthood. The initiation process is an intensive week-long process but also involves months or years of training in preparation before one is initiated. The initiation involves a cleansing process, obtaining various objects, and spiritual ascension.

Healing is central to Santeria's practice and belief. Santeria has as a guiding principal the attainment of harmony between the individual, the natural world, and the spiritual world. Accessing *aché* (see also Aje) from the *orisa*, the adherent is empowered to experience this harmony through the realigning of the spirit, soul, and body with the continuum of all creation. From this vantage point, one could say the practice of La Regle Ocha is in and of itself a search for healing.

Santeria healing rituals are much respected and sought after within and without the community of adherents. Their healing rituals are

spiritual but also rely on extensive knowledge of herbal medicines. Certain herbs are used to bring adherents to a hallucinogenic state to experience the spirit world through trances. Some priests serve as mediums and ask the orisa for advice to guide particular adherents in their day-to-day decisions. Casting and reading the cowrie shells is one form of divination as well as reading *patakis*, the Yoruba parables used to guide and give moral lessons. The spiritual rites are seen as psychologically soothing, while the herbal medicines treat the physical ailments.

As Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and Dominicans left their respective islands, so did their ideas and culture. In this manner, Santeria spread with immigration beyond the borders of the old Spanish Empire in the Caribbean. There are Santeria churches in the United States, Canada, Europe, and other countries throughout the world.

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SERRER/SEEREER

The Serrer live primarily in Senegal, Mauritania, and the Gambia. They are an ethnoreligious grouping of two main factions. The Seekh speak a language called Seereer-Sine with various local dialects like the Fadiouth-Palmerin, Noominka, and Jegem. The Seekh are the largest group, numbering around 2 million people. The Cangin language grouping is the second one. The Cangin languages are Saafi-saafi, Sili-sili, Noon, Ndut, and Laa-laa. The groups have the same culture and the same traditional belief system, although most are now either Muslim or Christian. Of the Christian Serrer, the majority are Roman Catholic.

Seereer Beliefs

Traditionally, the Serrer are polytheistic with belief in one supreme deity referred to as Roog Sene. The Serrer belief system is called a fat Roog, translated as “the way of the divine.” Roog Sene has different names in the other language groups. For the sake of brevity, we will use the Seekh language for our explanations.

The Serrer cosmology is detailed and precise. At the center is Roog Sene (*roog* also means “sky”) who is the creator and originator of everything. Roog is understood to be above human gender classification and as such can display feminine or masculine characteristics depending on the context. Roog, like many other creator gods, is far away and is not addressed in prayer. There are no representations of Roog among the Serrer nor any house of Roog. Roog created the earth and humanity and left them to their devices. Roog is addressed through the Pangool or lesser spirits/gods, who interact with humanity.

The number seven is the number of perfection because it is what is needed to create human life. Three is the number of femininity and carries special importance in Serrer beliefs. Four is the number of masculinity. Three is prominent in creation.

Pangool

The Pangool (Fangool, singular) are ancestral spirits or *nguus* (genies) or nature spirits. Some of the Pangool are related to certain families. Others are related to specific places as protector spirits. Still others are connected to certain aspects of creation or society such as Adna Kumba Njaay, the earth goddess, or Takhar, the god of justice/vengeance.

Some of the Pangool are former kings or queens of Serrer monarchies. Others are people noted for an extraordinary act or piety. The Pangool have the responsibility as intercessors between Roog Sene and humanity. As such, humans turn to them for healing, remedy of personal problems, direction, and protection from malevolent spirits and misfortune. Pangool have altars within homes

or outside homes. They are worshiped with sacrifices of blood, milk, or water. They are classified by their status as human ancestors or nonhumans (*nguus*, or animals) and further classified by their desire for blood, milk, or water sacrifice.

Pangool who desire blood sacrifice are usually appeased with the sacrifice of an animal such as a goat, sheep, or cow/bull. Pangool who desire milk are simply offered milk. Those who desire water are offered water.

Saltigue

The saltigue are the priests of the *fat Roog* (way of the divine). They possess the ancient knowledge of the Serrer and are revered for their knowledge and power. Their knowledge is closely guarded, and the initiation into the saltigue is not easy. It is reserved for those found deserving and able. The saltigue are also the chief servants for the lesser sprits and for Roog. Each year at the Khoy Festival, the chief saltigue preach and predict how the year is going to go. They can tell whether or not there will be floods and other information of interest to the people. This ceremony attracts Serrer and Lebou. Serrer from all over the world converge on Sine to participate in this important ceremony.

Creation Stories

The Serrer have various versions of their creation story. They all have some things in common. According to their belief, Roog is the designer and creator of all the universe and everything in it. Roog existed alone before he created the universe. He made the waters of the underworld, the air and the sky, then he fashioned earth. The first creatures in the Serrer story were trees. Trees are thus very important for them. There are five sacred trees for the Serrer. There is no agreement as to which ones existed first in the primordial swamp. These five trees are in Serrer: Saaf, Nquf, Somb, Nqual, Mbos. In the Serrer creation story, a woman was the first created. She was born of the female aspect of Roog. In other words, she

came from Roog's womb. The woman and the man who was later created came after the animals and trees.

Death and the Afterlife

The Serrer do not put forward a concept of heaven or hell. They believe that those who die become ancestral spirits and part of the Pangool. As such they have the responsibility of being available for intercession on the part of their living relatives. The Serrer also believe in reincarnation. The dead live in *jaainiw*, which is the night world.

In the precolonial days, the Serrer mummified their dead nobility and kings. They are thought to be the ones responsible for the ancient rock circles of Senegal and Gambia. They buried their kings in pyramid shaped tombs. Cheikh Anta Diop posited in his work *Precolonial Africa* that the Serrer migrated from the Egypt/Nubia area. He used the pyramid burials of kings along with some scant linguistic evidence as support for his claim.

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SHEMBE, ISAIAH

Isaiah Shembe founded the Nazarite Church—Ibandla lamaNazaretha—in 1910 in the region of Kwa-Zulu Natal. When he died on May 2, 1935, his church had more than 40,000 members, and today it is the second largest African Independent Church (AIC) in South Africa.

Shembe was born around 1870 at Ntabamhlophe in the Drakensberg region of Natal, but his family soon moved to the area around the mountain of Ntabazwe, close to Harrismith. Here they worked as tenant farmers for the Graabes family. After the South

African War, Shembe left his family and went to the Rand to look for work. Between 1906 and 1910, he moved around as an itinerant preacher, healing people. His followers saw him as a prophet—a term loaded with different biblical and cultural meanings. Shembe was, and is, understood as a prophet in the sense of the Old Testament leaders like Elijah and Moses. As a prophet he was a visionary, someone fighting for justice and truth, a leader of God's people and an agent of God's work. In terms of Zulu culture, a holy man is someone who can heal misfortune and ill health because he can divine or see into the problems that are holding someone captive. His abilities to heal are also empowered by his connection to the ancestors. An AIC prophet, like Shembe, is therefore someone called by God to lead his people, speak to them on behalf of the ancestors, and heal them. Since his death, Isaiah Shembe has become deified by many members in his church.

Just before the Native Land Act of 1913, Shembe bought a piece of land in the area of Inanda near Durban, where he set up his church and the village of Ekuphakameni. The village soon became a place of social, economic, and political refuge for the marginalized urban poor struggling under colonialism and then apartheid. In 1912 Shembe claimed a mountain outside Durban as the holy mountain of his people after spending 12 days praying and meditating there. Every January, members make a pilgrimage up the mountain to find healing, reconnect with ancestors, and be restored by God. Shembe reimagined the landscape of South Africa such that the once unimportant mountains of Ntabazwe and iNhangakazi and the anonymous village of Ekuphakameni have become key sacred nodes of healing and rebirth.

During his lifetime Shembe wrote more than 200 hymns and texts, which have inspired generations of followers. In these and the ritual practices, symbols, and clothing of his church, he reimagined a syncretic merger of Zulu culture/religion and Christianity. He offered his followers a reshaped social code based on sobriety, hard work, Old Testament moral and dietary laws, and key African social practices such as uBuntu. As Zulu chiefs began to lose their cultural and political power, giving their testimonies as converts to the

amaNazaretha church legitimized their divine appointment as leaders of their people. Through this and his rhetoric, Shembe offered nationalist aspirations to the fragmented Zulu nation.

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SHONA BELIEFS

The Shona people live in the present-day nation of Zimbabwe. Many of them are Christians; however, the traditional belief systems are still prominent. Central to their belief system is the tenet that every living thing and many inanimate objects have a spirit. Like many other traditional belief systems, the Shona think that the souls of the dead continue to exist in the spirit world, and they are a part of the lives of humans in the material world. Ancestor veneration is an important practice in this belief system.

In Shona cosmology, Mwari created the world and everything in it. His name means “he who is.” Mwari is the sustainer of the earth and an active agent in the lives of humanity. Mwari is so far removed from humans that they need intermediaries to communicate with him. The dead ancestors, *vadzimu*, serve as mediators. The *vadzimu* take human prayers, praises, sacrifices, and other sorts of communication to Mwari. Because humans exist in the physical plane, they need spirit mediums to serve as mediators between them and the *vadzimu*. *Vadzimu* have a guardian role over the lives of their descendants and in turn receive recognition and ritual remembrance.

There are also the *ngozi*, who are malevolent spirits. The *ngozi* are the spirits of people who experienced some level of great injustice. Some *ngozi* are the victims of murder. Others were victims of the

negligent behavior of spouses or other loved ones. The ngozi attack the living through sudden death or prolonged illnesses that resist treatment. Ngozi are feared in much the way demons are feared in Christian cosmology.

One version of the Shona creation story is as follows: Mwari, also known as Dzivaguru (the great pool), created the first man, Musikavanuhu. Mwari put Musikavanuhu into a deep sleep, and he fell softly to the earth. He made contact with a white stone and heard Mwari's voice from it. The stone became the stone of the pool and the venerated place called Matopos. Musikavanuhu lay down and slept. He dreamed of animals and birds jumping from stone to stone. When he awoke, he saw all the creatures he had dreamed of. Mwari gave him rules about what to eat and what not to eat. The dietary rules were vegetarian. Even the animals were not to eat one another.

Once when Musikavanuhu was asleep, a snake crawled across his genitals, leaving a mark. Musikavanuhu was aroused. A voice told him to go to the pool. He went and found a beautiful young woman who was like him but unmovable. Musikavanuhu was instructed to touch the woman. Once she was touched, she came to life. A snake in turn crossed her genitals and she was aroused. Mwari told Musikavanhu that this woman was his wife and he was to treat her well. Mwari also commanded them to treat all the animals well.

Musikavanhu taught his offspring Mwari's laws until it was time for him to return to Mwari. At some point, Musikavanhu's descendants became drunk and arrogant. They declared that Mwari was dead and decided to make one of themselves god. A voice spoke to warn them of their error, but they ignored the voice. Their disobedience led to a world where disorder and chaos reigned as animals began to eat other animals and attack men. Men ate animals and began to attack one another. Mwari withdrew from disobedient men, and his voice was no longer heard. Now they are forced to communicate through the ancestral spirits, who in turn communicate with humanity through spirit mediums.

Musikavanhu is also another name for Mwari. Musikavanhu means "creator." The Shona concept of creation is seen through the metaphor of making fire from two sticks. One stick has a hole in it.

When one wants to make fire, they put grass in the hole of one stick. They then take the other stick and put the tip in the hole and rub it. The ensuing friction makes sparks which ignite the grass making fire. In much the same way the male sex organ enters the female sex organ and through movement life is created. The Ndebele people follow the same religion with different names for the various forces according to their language.

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SONGHAI BELIEFS

The Songhai, also spelled Songhay or Sonrai, people live in West Africa in the present-day nations of Mali, Benin, and Niger. They are a conglomeration of smaller tribes all united through their language, culture, and attachment to the Empire of Songhai. The empire began with the rebellion of the city-state of Gao against the Empire of Mali in the mid-to-late-15th century. The empire fell to Moroccan invaders in the late 16th century.

Beginning with the 11th century, the Songhai began to convert to Islam. Some sources cite an earlier time for conversions. Before Islam, they had their own organic belief and practices. The Songhai grew their city Gao on the banks of the Niger River. The centrality of the river to their lives is played out in the story of their ethnic hero, the giant Faran Maka Bote.

Faran Maka Bote was the offspring of a fisherman father, Nisili Bote, and Maka, a water spirit. Faran grew into a giant with magical powers. He successfully battled the water spirit Zinkibaru for control of the Niger River. The victory led Faran into pride and arrogance. This attracted the negative attention of the lightning/thunder god

Dongo. Thunder and lightning flashed from the sky, igniting villages and killing many people. Dongo called Faran to him and demanded that he pay tribute in song and praise with dancing. Faran in turn offered praise-poems and music to Dongo. Dongo promised that if Faran taught the people how to praise and worship Dongo with praise, music, and dance, then Dongo would come down and possess the dancers. Dongo also promised to help the people along the Niger. Today the Songhai believe the praise-singing caste, the Sorko, are the direct descendants of Faran Maka Bote.

Once Islam took root among the Songhai, they made significant contributions to Islamic scholarship. The city of Timbuktu (also spelled Timbuctoo) was an important center of learning in the Islamic world. When the emperor of Mali, Mansa Musa, returned from his Islamic pilgrimage (hajj), he brought scholars, among other persons. Many of the scholars settled in Timbuktu, which had several universities based in mosques, the most famous of which is the University of Sankore. Several prominent scholars studied and flourished there, one among them is Ahmed Baba. The Songhai emperors funded, protected and at times fought with the scholars in Timbuktu. The greatness of Timbuktu waned after the Moroccan invasion in 1591–1592.

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SOPONA

Sopono (also spelled Sanponna) is the divinity of smallpox. Unlike other divinities in the pantheon of the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria, Sopona is one of the primordial divinities who existed before the earth was formed. According to a Yoruba historical myth, Ifa (the deity of divination) directed Esidale, who is believed to be the first man to

sacrifice to Sopona, for the sustenance others denied him. Esidale obeyed and was blessed abundantly. As a way to protect Esidale, Sopona shot arrows of smallpox to whoever attempted to take away Esidale's bounty. As a result, Sopona is worshiped and placated any time a person is afflicted with smallpox.

The Yoruba believe that the relatives and friends of anyone who dies from smallpox must not cry. If they do, they will also be infected. Hence, a famous appellation for the god reads *alapadupe* (the one who is thanked whenever he kills). It is also believed that Sopona kills whomever he wants to marry regardless of their sex and the relatives must accept it in good faith. It is the duty of Sopona worshipers to bury whoever dies of smallpox, and they take all of his/her belongings in return. In order to avoid the wrath of Sopona, in the past, the Yoruba were known to keep tagiiri fruit (*Adenopus brevifloris*) and palm wine in their rooms so as to ward off the arrows of the god.

Since the eradication of smallpox in 1979, Soponna worship has reduced among the people.

Ọládélé Caleb Orímóògùnjẹ

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SPIRITUAL BAPTISTS

The Spiritual Baptists are an international religious movement that began in Jamaica. It soon spread to Trinidad, Tobago, Guyana, St. Vincent, Grenada, and Venezuela. Later as people migrated out of the Caribbean Islands, the Spiritual Baptists established congregations in Canada, the United States of America, and the United Kingdom. Each congregation is independent, though affiliated rather loosely with one another. The Spiritual Baptists are not affiliated with the traditional European and/or American Baptist

churches and they are known by many names throughout the Caribbean. Chief among these names are the Shouters. Members are also known for their practice of the orisa cult of Shango as well as the Spiritual Baptist Faith. They are also noteworthy for combining African worship practices and styles into their church.

The Spiritual Baptists believe in the authenticity and lack of error of the Bible. They also believe in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ; the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ as an act of salvation, and the existence of miracles. Their ecstatic religious worship has caused many to compare them to African American Pentecostal groups.

In addition to the concurrent ritual of orisa cult practices, some Spiritual Baptists also practice the mystic cult of Kabbalah. These other religions are practiced in the privacy of the individuals' homes and not in the church, though some observers have noted a combination of Kabbalah in the worship service of the Spiritual Baptist churches.

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SUFISM

According to *Key Words in Islam* (2006) Sufism is a systemized method of bringing the Sufi Muslim into a perfect alignment with Allah (God). The Sufi's experiences of union with God allow the Sufi to achieve a nature of divinity and allow the Sufi to reach a oneness of Allah (Tauhid). In the Sufi order, Sufism requires the Muslim to have a spiritual teacher who guides the Murid (disciple) through various spiritual disciplines based on spiritual repetition and internal stages to

purification of the heart. Sufi scholars claim that the Qur'an's call for *ihsan*, which means "during what is beautiful," is ritually translated for Sufis into *dhikr*, honoring God through the methodical repetition of reciting the Qur'an and through saying Allah's name in various forms. Piety and devotion to alleviating oneself of ego to unify with God is the primary objective. The word Sufi, derived from the Arabic *suf*, means "wool." The term "Sufi" was originally used to describe a type of ascetic Muslim who wore coarse woolen garb. Sufism appeared as a formal distinct discipline around the second century after the hijra. The hijra is the dating of the Islamic events based on a lunar year and the year 622 (CE) when Prophet Muhammad escaped to al-Madinah to escape political prosecution. It was during the 2nd century where fiqh and other classical Islamic religious sciences became an integral part of Islamic jurisprudence utilizing Islamic methodology.

During the 12th century CE, Sufi groups with distinctive rituals, rites, and organizational practices developed. The Sufi called such organizations *tariqah*, meaning the "way," signifying both a manner of doing something and a path leading to a spiritual destination. Each Sufi order or the distinctiveness of each "way" was established by the founder of the order, whose name usually determined the *tariqah*. The Qadiriyya, the most popular and the world's largest Sufi *tariqah*, was founded by Abdul-Qadir Jilani in Baghdad during the 12th century. In Africa, by the 18th century, Islam reached the western Sudan through Sufi sheikhs. The earliest *tariqah*, and the most widespread in sub-Saharan Africa, is the Qadiriyya order. The Tijaniyya order, founded in the 18th century by Ahmad al-Tijani in Morocco, formed throughout West Africa due to the 19th-century jihads of its Fulbe adherents, especially al-Hajj Umar Taal. "The Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya Sufi orders spread to Wolof country through the bonds of blood and ink linking clerics throughout Senegambia and the Western Sahara."

Clerics sought to augment their learning, prestige, and mystical interpretation (*baraka*) through the study of spiritual or esoteric paths of Islam (*tassawuf*). A common element in Sufi Islam in Africa is its rich musical traditions. According to Sufi mystics, *sama* is the term used to describe listening to music as a spiritual discipline. As a

means to explore the spiritual or esoteric, divine music is allowed. Many Sufis cite surah 33, verses 41–42 of the Qur'an as the inspiration for their religious ceremony, which can include singing, dancing, and even musical instruments. Throughout, Africa Sufi orders maintain their tradition of *dhikr* (submission guidance) in old and new Sufi brotherhoods.

Tarik Latif

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SUYUTI, JALAL AL-DIN AL-

Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti (1445–1505) was an Islamic scholar of note who lived and worked in Egypt in the 14th century. He was the son of a scholar of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) of the Shafi'i school. Al-Suyuti's father died when he was a very young child. He reportedly memorized the entire Qur'an at age 8. By age 18, he is said to have begun his teaching career at the same mosque where his father taught.

In 1486, al-Suyuti was appointed the leader of the Sufi lodge connected to the Baybars mosque in Cairo. He wanted to reduce the stipends of Sufi scholars. When the word got out, the scholars rioted. In the course of these events, al-Suyuti nearly lost his life. Subsequently, al-Suyuti was brought to trial for misappropriation of funds. Later he was put under house arrest on the island of Rawda. He spent the rest of his life there in seclusion, writing his volumes of works.

Al-Suyuti was a scholar of wide berth, having covered many subjects in his long academic career. In the Islamic traditional

education, a scholar, after having mastered the Qur'an, went from master to master, earning certificates of mastery in various subjects. Among these subjects were fiqh (jurisprudence), *hadith* (traditions of the prophet), *kalam* (theology), *falsafa* (philosophy), and *tafsir* (Qur'anic exegesis) which many erudite Muslim scholars mastered. Al-Suyuti, however, went beyond the norm and added mathematics, medicine, timekeeping, and other subjects to his list of masteries.

Al-Suyuti was a prolific author, producing more than 700 written works, including poems, pamphlets, and full-length books. His writings were on a wide variety of topics, just as his studies were. Some of his works have been translated into English and other European languages. Other works are still used in Islamic schools throughout the world.

In addition to al-Suyuti's scholarship's wide reach, al-Suyuti strongly influenced the direction of Islamic relations with non-Muslims in West Africa. Al-Suyuti was also famous in sub-Saharan Islamic scholarly circles for his allowance of amulets also known as gris-gris. Al-Suyuti said only that there should be nothing un-Islamic in them. Islamic scholars make gris-gris from protective Qur'anic verses written on paper and sewn into a leather pouch. The adherent wears the amulets for spiritual protection and good fortune. Muhamad al-Maghili, the Islamic reformer from the Tlemcen (present-day Algeria), preached against the making of amulets as un-Islamic. Al-Suyuti also wrote that association with non-Muslims is permissible, whereas al-Maghili believed that Muslims and non-Muslims were in a constant state of jihad. Al-Suyuti's views were more widely followed in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly by El Hajj Salim Suware, founder of the Jakhanke clerisy.

Muslims believe that every century a person will appear with the express mission to renew Islam for the world in that century. Al-Suyuti was proclaimed the renewer for the 10th century of Islam, which is the 1400s on the Western calendar. Al-Suyuti also made a personal claim of being a legal scholar of such prominence that he could give unopposable scholarly opinions in certain areas. Contemporary scholars were outraged. He later qualified his statement by saying he was above other scholars of his era, though not on par with the four

rightly guided caliphs. He later said that there was no one alive with more knowledge of the Arabic language or and the hadith than he, although others disputed this claim. Nevertheless, he was an influential Islamic scholar. He died in 1505 at the age of 60.

Douglas Thomas

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THOTH

Thoth, also known as Djehuti and by several other names, is an Ancient Egyptian god. He is the husband of Ma'at and is often depicted as a man with an ibis head; at other times, he is portrayed as a baboon or as a baboon-headed man. Among other things, he is the god of wisdom, time, medicine, and writing. He is credited with developing science and magic. He also invented writing and hieroglyphics, and he serves as the scribe of the gods. This job includes recording verdicts during the judgment of the dead.

Thoth is concerned with balance in all its forms. He ensures that the scale judging souls in the underworld is balanced. He also keeps good and evil from overtaking each other. He is often called on to intervene and help other gods. He retrieves and returns Ra's eye when it escapes. When Seth kills Osiris, Thoth helps restore Osiris's body, although he cannot bring it back to its fully living form. In the ensuing battle for supremacy over Egypt between Horus and Seth, Thoth helps heal both combatants. The goddess Isis also gets involved in the battle, and Horus cuts off her head. Thoth heals Isis, replacing her head with the head of a cow. Ultimately, he negotiates a peace agreement, dividing Egypt between Horus and Seth.

Khmunu (later renamed Hermopolis) was the center of Thoth's cult. Because of his role as messenger and connection to writing and magic, Thoth was associated with Hermes in ancient Greece.

Kevin Hogg

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TIJĀNĪ, AḤMAD AL-

Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Tijānī (1737–1815 CE/1150–1230 AH) was a prominent North African Islamic scholar, descendant of the Prophet (*sharīf*), and Sufi shaykh whose Sufi path, the Tijāniyya, is today one of the largest Sufi orders in the world. The Tijāniyya is especially widespread in West African countries such as Mauritania, Senegal, Mali, Ghana, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria. On the basis of waking encounters with the Prophet Muhammad, beginning in 1782, al-Tijānī founded a new Sufi order and claimed to be the “seal” of Islamic sainthood (*khatm al-walāya al-Muḥammadiyya*).

Al-Tijānī was born in the Algerian oasis of Ain Maadi and traveled throughout North Africa and the Hijaz before taking up permanent residence in Fez, Morocco, in 1798. Before leaving Ain Maadi at age 21, he completed the standard curriculum of Qur’an memorization and study of jurisprudence, theology, prophetic traditions, Qur’an exegesis and Arabic literature, gaining license to issue legal opinions at an early age. His travels as an itinerate teacher and in search of further Sufi learning led him to stays in several North African centers of knowledge, such as Fez, Tlemcen, and Tunis. During these years, he received initiation into various branches of the Shādhiliyya, the Qādiriyya, and the Khalwatiyya. He accomplished the pilgrimage to Mecca in 1774. During this trip, he received initiations from prominent Khalwatī shaykhs Maḥmūd al-Kurdī (d. 1780) in Cairo and Muḥammad al-Sammān (d. 1775) in Medina.

While making spiritual retreat (*khalwa*) in the Algerian town of Abū Samghūn, he experienced his first waking encounter with the Prophet Muhammad. Al-Tijānī claimed the Prophet told him to leave aside his previous Sufi initiations and gave him the distinctive litany (*wird*) of the Tijāniyya Sufi path. This *wird* consists of asking God’s forgiveness (*istighfār*), invoking blessing on the Prophet (*ṣalāt ‘alā l-nabī*), and

declaring the oneness of God (*tahlīl*). Al-Tijānī laid particular emphasis on invoking blessing on the Prophet, specifically invocations such as the “Prayer of Opening” (*ṣalāt al-fātiḥ*) and the “Jewel of Perfection” (*jawharat al-kamāl*). The claimed direct involvement of the Prophet Muḥammad in the establishment of the Tijāniyya, as well as the disciple’s constant visualization of the Prophet’s enduring spiritual presence, meant that followers of the Tijāniyya considered their order the “path of the Prophet Muḥammad” (*al-ṭarīqa al-Muḥammadiyya*).

Upon his final establishment in Fez, al-Tijānī joined Sultan Mawlay Sulaymān’s council of scholars, and initiated several prominent Moroccan figures into the Tijāniyya, such as the jurist and theologian ḥamdūn b. al-ḥājj, government minister, and author Muḥammad Akansus, and perhaps even the sultan himself. A number of Moroccan sultans have since maintained close relations with the Tijāniyya, most recently funding the restoration of al-Tijānī’s final burial place and main lodge (*zāwiya*) of the Tijāniyya in Fez, as well as al-Tijānī’s original house in the city.

Al-Tijānī’s teachings, most of which disciples ‘Alī Harāzim al-Barāda and Muḥammad al-Mashrī recorded during his lifetime, centered on thankfulness (*shukr*) for divine grace (*faḍl*), the overflowing bounty and mercy of God (*fayḍ*), the spiritual reality of the Prophet (*al-ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya*), and the actualization of human potentiality. Most of these ideas are a coherent summary of past Sufi learning, particularly the teachings of Ibn al-‘Arabī. Some understandings are apparently new, however, such as the existence of a “hidden saintly pole” (*al-quṭb al-maktūm*): the hidden intermediary for the Prophet’s spiritual provision to the entirety of saints, including to the saintly pole (*quṭb* or *ghawth*) of any given time. Thus al-Tijānī declared, “No saint drinks or gives to drink, from the beginning of time until the day of judgment, except from our ocean.”

Zachary Wright

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TIMBUKTI, MAHMUD KATI (KUTI) IBN MUTAW

El Hajj Mahmud al-Kati ibn El Hajj Mutawakil Timbuktu (ca. 1468–1552 or 1593) was born in the northern Mali area of Kurmina. He was a relative of the ruler of the Songhai Empire, Muhammad I, also known as Askiya Muhammad and Askiya the Great. As a young man, Mahmud al-Kati became a member of Askiya Muhammad's staff and traveled with the ruler on his celebrated pilgrimage to Mecca. The trip lasted more than two years from around 1494 to 1497. The scholar Nehemia Levtzion, however, theorizes that al-Kati never traveled with Askiya Muhammad because he believes al-Kati was born in the early 1500s.

Scholars agree that Mahmud al-Kati did not write all of the *Tarikh al-Fattash*. Written over several years by Mahmud al-Kati and his grandsons and great-grandsons, the *Tarikh al-Fattash* is a detailed chronicle of the history of the Empire of Mali and the Empire of Songhai with details about Askiya Muhammad and others. Mahmud al-Kati is of the Soninke ethnicity. His descendants go by the name Konte, which is a common Soninke name. The confusion comes with the transliteration of the name from the Arabic into English. Sometimes it is rendered Kuti and most often Kati.

Mahmud al-Kati spent most of his adult life in Timbuktu. He was considered a great scholar, though the *Tarikh al-Fattash* is his most famous contribution. His tomb is the second largest shrine in Timbuktu

and is a site of pilgrimage for the faithful. The history surrounding the details of his life does not diminish the importance of El Hajj Mahmud al-Kati's contribution to the history and religious practice of sub-Saharan West Africa.

Douglas Thomas

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TORE

The Efe ethnic group who live in the Ituri Forest in northeastern Democratic Republic of Congo use the term Tore to refer to a number of supernatural beings. In the Efe belief system, Tore is thought to have originally created the forest, Efe ancestors, and also govern animals and supernatural beings in the forest. Tore decides which forest animals Efe hunters are to kill, and when Efe hunters go into the forest to hunt and gather, they may call out to Tore to give them forest food over which Tore presides. They then offer some of the gathered fruit or honey in return to Tore.

Tore also decides who dies in the near future and takes the dead to his dwelling. The dead and other supernatural beings are also called Tore—for example, Dilipo, a supernatural being who is said to cause earthquakes by running around underground; Akurupi, the guardian of forest animals such as elephants; Ajua, a flying fireball that searches for people to kill at night are all also called Tore.

Earlier researchers conceived Tore as a distinct entity and assumed that Tore was an omnipresent being because it appears in the sky, in the forest, and underground. They also speculated that

Tore was omnipotent because of its many capabilities. Therefore, the omnipresent and omnipotent Tore was regarded as the Supreme Being, and researchers concluded that the Efe were monotheistic. On the contrary, recent research suggests that “Tore” is a generic word that indicates the multiplicity and diversity of superhuman or supernatural beings and should not be considered to be a single entity, such as the Supreme Being.

Masato Sawada

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TSWANA

The Tswana people live mainly in the nation of Botswana with some residing in the Republic of South Africa. They are all concentrated in Southern Africa. Their origins are not really known, though scholars assume that they migrated south from the Great Lakes region of East Africa. Their settling in Southern Africa probably occurred in the 1600s in three successive waves of migration.

Today the Tswana are mostly Christian, but their traditional religious practices have not been completely abandoned. The core of their beliefs rests around the creator god Modimo. Not only did Modimo create the world, humans, plants, and animals, he is also responsible for the destiny of all humans. Like many African religious traditions, the Tswana belief system has as a primary tenet the harmonious arrangement of nature and man’s place in it. Man is to live out his destiny according to the rules of nature, careful not to upset the balance. If humanity violates the harmony through their infractions, Modimo sends them signs of his displeasure with bad weather, storms, deaths, and other significant events.

The Tswana have other deities. One notable evil figure, Dingwe, is a demon to be avoided. The Tswana produce charms to protect their

children from him. They also use prayer, ritual, or magic to ward off bad things and otherwise navigate through the spiritual domain. When bad signs appear, the Tswana use diviners to determine where the infraction is and do their best to correct it. They appease Modimo or their other deities through proper rituals. People who have crossed from life into the eternal are an important part of the Tswana cosmology. Once one dies, he/she becomes an ancestor. The ancestors are venerated and remembered through ritual observances. The ancestral spirits, known as Ba-dimo, are also called on to intercede for the Tswana and a distant Modimo in times of trouble.

The Tswana live in a dry environment and rainmaking is an important part of their spiritual beliefs and practices. Like other peoples in dry climates, the Tswana traditionally prayed for rain. They also have rituals meant to hasten the rain. The chiefs have a central role in the rainmaking rituals and possess rain “medicines” that are thought to be effective in bringing the rains for their people. The Tswana observed annual rainmaking ceremonies and certain special rites thought to bring on the rain. Field sprinkling, cloud summoning, and land cleansing are among the special rites performed to bring rain.

Starting in the 19th century, the Tswana began converting to Christianity when the Dutch Reformed Church began evangelizing among them. The Methodist, Lutheran, Anglican, and Roman Catholic missionaries also came and gained converts. The prominent pattern of conversion usually began with the chief. Once the chief was converted, his people usually followed suit. Their pre-Christian traditional beliefs and practices have not been totally abandoned.

Douglas Thomas

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TUTU, DESMOND

Desmond Mpilo Tutu was born in Klerksdorp, South Africa, on October 7, 1931. He was the second of four children born to Zacheriah Zililo Tutu and Aletta Tutu. Desmond was the only boy. When Desmond was 12, he and his family moved to Johannesburg. His father was an elementary schoolteacher and principal. His mother cooked and cleaned at a school for the blind. During Tutu's childhood, South Africa was segregated, and black South Africans were not allowed to vote. In addition, black South Africans were limited as to where they could live. Nevertheless, black South African children found ways to make their lives full and joyful by making and playing with toys and cars.

Desmond realized the differences in treatment of black South Africans and white South Africans. He learned a powerful lesson one day when he was walking with his mother in Sophiatown, a black slum area. There, he observed a white priest named Trevor Huddleston as he politely tipped his hat to Desmond's mother as he walked past her on the street. Trevor Huddleston would go on to become Tutu's mentor and fellow activist. This was an amazing sight for Desmond, for he had never seen a white man give respect to a black working-class woman. This experience did much to form the foundation for his thoughts with regard to discrimination. Desmond opined that religion could be used to advocate for racial equality.



Former Anglican archbishop Desmond Tutu at a press conference on the island of Mallorca, Spain, November 28, 2005. (Enrique Calvoal/Dreamstime.com)

Shortly after Desmond and his family moved to Johannesburg, he became ill with tuberculosis and almost died. He was inspired to become a doctor and discover the cure for tuberculosis. When he graduated high school in 1950, Desmond had been accepted into medical school. Nevertheless, because his family was poor, they were unable to provide the financial support needed to pay for medical school.

Desmond became a teacher like his father. He studied at the Pretoria Bantu Normal College from 1951 to 1953 and graduated with the teacher's certificate. He earned the bachelor's degree from the University of South Africa in 1954 and returned to Johannesburg Bantu High School to teach English and history. He later taught at Munsivenille High School in Mogale City. Tutu protested the poor educational prospects for black South Africans and resigned from his position as a teacher after the passage of the Bantu Education Act, which legalized segregation. Thus, he went back to school at St. Peter's Theology College in Rosettenville, Johannesburg, to study theology. In 1960, he was ordained as an Anglican priest. He received the bachelor's and master's degrees in theology from King's

College in London in 1966. While studying in London, he worked part-time as a curate for St. Alban's Church, Golders Green, and later at St. Mary's Church in Bletchingley, Surrey. In 1967, he became chaplain at the University of Fort Hare and lectured at the National University of Lesotho from 1970 to 1972. He returned to the United Kingdom in 1972 and was appointed vice-director of the Theological Education Fund of the World Council of Churches, at Bromley in Kent. In 1975, he returned to South Africa, where he was appointed Dean of St. Mary's Cathedral in Johannesburg.

Tutu married Nomalizo Leah Shenxane, on July 2, 1955. They had four children, and in 1974 he and his family moved to Soweto. Tutu became a social rights activist and the first black archbishop of Cape Town. He rose to fame during the 1980s as an opponent of apartheid and is a Nobel Peace Laureate.

Rory L. Bedford

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UHLANGA

In Zulu mythology, Uhlanga is the origin source of life and humanity. Uhlanga is a divine, complementary configuration of male and female fertility, embodied in fecund soil, water that ranges in form from springs to oceans, and, most importantly, a bed of reeds, *umhlanga*. The sharpness of reeds and their growth of many new shoots lend them to be known as cutting or breaking off elements of themselves in the creation of all living things, including people. Cattle, other animals, and plant life are also said to originate from Uhlanga. Some personify Uhlanga as the male creator god Umvelinqangi or Unkulunkulu, who created and then broke off the first man to live in the world. The first woman followed after him. Reeds' phallic qualities suggest their penetration of the earth as female divinity, which led to the first reproduction, sometimes of humanity in total and sometimes of distinct groups of people or nations.

Significantly, reeds are symbolic of vitality, used in the making Zulu material culture like mats, flutes, and tools for administering enemas. Mats feature as objects of marital exchange and are interred with bodies at funerals. Special flutes were made and played by ritual specialists, *abelusi bezulu*, to stave off destructive lightning storms, and customary treatments using herbal medicines involve enemas. Uhlanga has been inspiration for several African independent Christian churches like those of Mbiyana Ngidi and Isaiah Shembe. In Shembe's Nazarite Church, some worshipers carry reeds in pilgrimage to the holy mountain called iNhlankakaze, or the large female reed.

Casey Golomski

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‘UMAR TAAL, AL-HĀJJ

Al-Hājj ‘Umar Tāal or al-Hadj Omar Taal (1797–1864), in Arabic and French respectively, was an important 19th-century Islamic scholar, intellectual, and political leader. He is best known for his writing, his role as a Sufi *shaykh*, and his military campaigns in West Africa.

Taal was born to a Pulaar-speaking scholarly family in Halwar in 1797, in the province of Futa Toro (northern Senegal). He followed a rigorous curriculum in the Islamic sciences, studying with numerous teachers in and around his home village. By his early twenties, he had mastered Islamic jurisprudence, Qur’anic exegesis, Arabic grammar, and poetry. He then traveled throughout West Africa and spent time in important Muslim political and educational centers in Futa Jallon (Guinea), Sokoto (Nigeria), and Masina (Mali).

In 1826 Taal journeyed to Mecca, to perform the *hajj*—the fifth pillar of Islamic ritual practice. During the pilgrimage he met Muhammad Ghali, a student of Ahmed Tijani (d. 1815), who was the founder of the important North African Tijani Sufi brotherhood. After three years of training and study, Ghali designated Taal as a *khalifa* (deputy) of the Tijaniyya. As a khalifa, Taal had authority to spread the teachings of the order and induct new disciples in sub-Saharan West Africa.

Returning to West Africa in 1830, he began mentoring a growing number of disciples. Taal then established a community in Jegunko, Futa Jallon, in the 1840s. It was during this period that he also penned several works, including poems, legal opinions, and his magnum opus, *al-Rimah hizb al-raheem ‘ala nuhur hizb al-rajeem* (The lances of the party of the merciful against the throats of the

party of the accursed)—one of the most widely read books written by a West African intellectual.

Facing hostility from the ruler of Futa Jallon, Almamy ‘Umar Sori, Taal migrated and established a new community in Dingiray, in the neighboring territory of Tamba in 1848. Here he wrote his most significant literary work, a praise poem of the Prophet Muhammad, *safinat al-sa’ada li-ahl du’uf wa najada* (The vessel of happiness and assistance for the weak). While Taal’s community flourished, his growing prestige began to worry Yimba, the king of Tamba, who decided to attack Dingiray in 1852. Taal and his disciples retaliated and decisively defeated Yimba’s army. Marking a turning point in Taal’s career, this event was the catalyst that drew him into a prolonged conflict with regional powers.

For the next 12 years he engaged in numerous battles, conquered vast territory, and established one of the largest polities in West Africa. In the process, he fought against the powerful Bambara kingdoms of Kaarta and Segou, the French, and the Muslim polity of Masina. Incessant rebellions and changing alliances, however, made it difficult for Taal to govern his territory. He died in 1864 in a cave in Degembere, Mali, after being pursued by his enemies. His legacy rests on the wide-scale social and political changes he instituted and the establishment of the Tijaniyya among West African Muslims.

Syed Amir

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VENDA

The Vhavenda/Vhangona people live in northern South Africa close to the Zimbabwe border. In 1688, Dambanyika created the Venda State and consolidated previously independent clans/ethnicities under his rule. Language, culture, and other traditions evolved, bringing unity among the disparate groups. According to legend, the Vhavenda had a drum known as Ngomalungundu, which was the drum of Mwari, the creator god of the Shona people and the Vhavenda. The Vhangona people regarded Ngomalungundu highly, seeing it as the voice of their great god, Raluvhimba.

Raluvhimba is a reclusive god who lives in the sky. His name actually means “father eagle.” He is seen as the creator of all things and the supreme deity. Some sources actually say he is monotheistic. Mwari, the Shona creator god, and Raluvhimba are the same deity. Similarly, Raluvhimba (also known as Nwari) is credited with the making all of creation and rules over it all with the help of badzimu (ancestral spirits), who serve as mediators between Raluvhimba and humanity. The badzimu are responsible for delivering the prayers of the people to Raluvhimba. The badzimu also bring Raluvhimba’s response to the people. People in turn appease the ancestral spirits with ceremonies and offerings as a way of honoring Raluvhimba. Raluvhimba visits a place called Lhuvimbi and sometimes reveals himself to humanity there. The sudden thunderclap is interpreted as the announcement of Raluvhimba’s arrival. Fire and/or thunder are interpreted as manifestations of Raluvhimba’s presence.

Raluvhimba is in control of all natural phenomena and uses it to show his displeasure with humanity. Heavy rains, floods, thunderstorms, and the like are seen as evidence of Raluvhimba’s

displeasure. In such cases, the chief, who doubles as a priest, the closest human to Raluvhimba, is responsible for interpreting his will. These chief/priests, called *nkosi*, would recommend what to do to appease Raluvhimba.

The Venda also have sacred sites referred to as Zwifho and Zwitaka. These sacred sites have clans who serve as guardians. Among the guardian clans are chief/priests who are responsible for interpreting the spiritual happenings at these sacred sites. Unfortunately, sacred sites are vulnerable to action by so-called developers. One sacred site was lost during colonization when Afrikaaners forcibly removed the guardian clan from the Tshivula sacred site.

Douglas Thomas

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VODUN/VOODOO

Voodoo is a New World reproduction of an Old World religion, Vodun. Vodun is the belief of the Fon people of Benin, formerly known as the kingdom of Dahomey. Both Vodun and Voodoo have the same gods and general beliefs and have been syncretized with Roman Catholicism. With a change in environment and situation, however, slaves who were brought to America adapted Vodun to the changes and thus there are palpable differences between the two spiritual paths.

Vodun is practiced by quite a few of the Gbe-speaking tribes of West Africa, but most notably the Ewe and Fon people. Vodun means “spirits.” As with many religious systems, central to the spiritual belief system is the idea that there is a spirit world that mirrors the physical or material world. Unlike Christianity, there is no search for salvation in Vodun. The primary goal for an adherent of Vodun is to find

harmony as he/she successfully navigates the divide and intersections of the spirit and physical world.

According to Vodun, the spirit world has a pantheon of spirits within a hierarchy. The creator god is Mawu-Lisa. Mawu is the feminine aspect and Lisa is the masculine aspect of this god. Sometimes Legba is seen as the masculine aspect. Mawu is representative of the moon and Lisa/Legba of the sun. Mawu's son, Dan, is androgynous and is the mediating element between Mawu and humanity. Since Vodun is practiced so widely over a vast area with different peoples, there are significant variations in the details of their deities. Each version has recognizable archetypes: creator gods, mediating spirits, nature spirits, and ancestral spirits.



Vodun high priestess Mamissi Kokoe, in her convent with her disciples, prepares for a divination ceremony, Lomé, Togo, 1992. (Wendy Stone/Corbis via Getty Images)

Prominent in the practice of Vodun is the use of what anthropologists have termed fetishes. Fetishes are objects derived from nature that are used in religious rituals for their spiritual potency. Fetishes include dead animal parts, wood, stones/rocks, and earth. This has been a source of contention and confusion for people from the West (Europe and America). The fetishes do not conform to Western ideals of beauty. They also stray from a belief current in

Western secularism that inanimate objects cannot have power. Vodun, however, has this practice in common with Roman Catholicism.

In Vodun, all creation is sacred. Fetishes derive their power from the fact that they are all part of creation. Dead animals' parts, wood, stone, and earth are all used in making fetishes (objects of worship). These fetishes are in turn prominent parts of rituals and incantations used mainly to influence the physical world through the spirit world.

The spiritual authority in Vodun is masculine and feminine with each gender having roles in his or her spiritual communities. The priests/priestesses are called to their position through oracles, in which their status is announced as chosen by the gods and/or spirits. As practiced in West Africa, each home has a priestess whose job is to lead the family in worship and preside over life-defining ceremonies such as weddings and funerals. The priestess of the clan is usually the oldest surviving female. The family clans focus worship on their family spirits, which are their ancestors. They offer sacrifices to and ask advice of these spirits and are careful to cultivate a culture of caring and reverence surrounding the family worship.

In West Africa, Vodun is not a vehicle for casting spells on people. The major focus is honoring the ancestors and living in harmony with the earth. Adherents to Vodun do not actively seek or contact Mawu-Lisa. They deal with their ancestral spirits and the *loa*, pantheon of Vodun. The priests are called Vodunon and the priestesses are called Vodunsi. The role of the Vodun clergy is to contact the loa and ancestors, who in turn contact the supreme god if needed.

Vodun was transported with the African slave trade across the Atlantic Ocean and now has several variants. In North America, Louisiana Voodoo and Haitian Voudou are the most widely known. There is also a Cuban variant as well as a Brazilian variant, among others in the Western Hemisphere. These variant practices have come under the influence of other West African beliefs and practices that were also transported during the slave trade as well as Christianity, most prominently Roman Catholicism, which shares a practice of contacting dead people (saints) for intervention/aid in the

affairs of humans. Many of the loa (pantheon of Vodun) have been syncretized with Roman Catholic saints.

Louisiana Voodoo has as a major historical personage Marie Laveau and her daughter of the same name. Marie Laveau was a freeborn black hairdresser for wealthy white women. She was also a devout Roman Catholic and a voodoo priestess. She is known as the Voodoo Queen. One historian reported that one of Marie Laveau's voodoo rites in 1874 attracted 12,000 people to the shore of Lake Pontchartrain. The wealthy and powerful sought her advice as well as did slaves and the poor. Even today adherents come to her grave to pray and leave offerings, seeking her aid in the spirit world.

Contrary to popular belief, voodoo dolls have no connection to Vodoo originally and are not a part of regular Voodoo practice. Voodoo dolls have a European origin and were used in the pre-Christian religions of Northern Europe. Western popular culture connected the effigy with pins used to harm with voodoo. Hollywood movies took the idea and expanded it in movies that portrayed Voodoo. To date, the connection between Voodoo and the voodoo doll is still considered factual, though it all began with a misrepresentation and combination of one traditional practice with a vastly different traditional religious system.

With no central authority dictating practice and belief, Vodun/Voodoo has not only national variations, but also regional variations within a given nation. For example, in northern Haiti initiation rituals involve one activity, whereas in Port-au-Prince they involve three activities. There is also Louisiana Voodoo, among other varieties. The central tenet of voodoo remains the same, the family as a sacred unit in harmony with the natural environment and the spirit world.

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WAAQ

Waaq is the ancient Cushitic sky god. He is known as the creator and supreme god to the Oromo of Ethiopia and the Somali people of Somalia and Djibouti, among other Cushitic people. The pre-Islamic Oromo faith system is called Waaqeffannaa, which means “believe in Waaq.” Waaqeffannaa is monotheistic, with a total focus on the belief and worship of Waaq.

Waaq is the creator of all things and the originator of all truth and justice. According to tradition, Waaq once lived among humans. Once he noticed humans fighting, beating, stealing, and engaging in other disruptive activities, Waaq withdrew himself and went to live in the sky. In Waaqeffanna, Waaq gives each human an *ayyaana*, or spiritual protector. Once a person engages in disruptive or evil behavior, Waaq withdraws himself from that individual. The *ayyaana* from Waaq leaves that individual. Waaq is not seen as a punitive deity. He just withdraws from the offending individual, which in turn allows the negative consequences of evil actions to consume that individual.

In Waaqeffannaa, there is no stated devil, as in the Judeo-Christian religion. There are, however, evil *ayyaana* who are not of Waaq. Similarly, in Waaqeffanna there is no sacred collection of scripture nor are there rules comparable to the Ten Commandments. There is Waaqa-lafaa, or the law of Waaq, which is not precisely written, but understood as the march of the harmony of nature. These things are known instinctively.

With no singular scripture, practice of Waaqeffana obviously varies. Some Oromo believe that Waaq has a close relationship with the earth. Though the earth is not seen as a deity, it is seen as the

wife of Waaq. Waaq and the earth work together to provide good things for humanity. Waaq created earth and maintains earth's bounty with his actions. For example, rain and sun enable the crops to grow. A primary tenet of Waaqeffana is Safuu, which denotes traditions that ensure order based on balance. There must be balance between male and female, material and spiritual, young and old, and so forth.

Among the Somali, Waaq is also known as Eebe and is seen as the creator in pre-Islamic Somali religious beliefs. Waaq lives in the sky and provides them with rain. The Somalis envision the balance as the connection of love between male and female depicted with a bull and cow. If the cow turns her focus from the bull, earthquakes, storms, and other elements of disorder occur.

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WELE

Wele is the creator god of the Abaluyia people (consisting of 19 tribes) of Kenya. According to legend, Wele created everything and everyone in six days and rested on the seventh day. Originally the sun and moon were twins, but Wele separated them because of their constant quarreling. The first people Wele created were Mwambu and Sela. Mwambu and Sela built the first home on stilts.

Wele was historically worshiped in the following three manifestations: Wele Baba (god the father); Wele Mukhobe (god the herald); and Wele Murumwa (god the messenger). Wele Baba is known to possess among other attributes the creator referred to as

Muumba. The evil god is known as Wele Kubi. In the traditional Abaluyia beliefs, they would ask Wele Baba, Wele Mukhobe, and Wele Murumwa to prevent Wele Kubi from meddling in their affairs. Some people worship Wele Kubi.

The similarity of Abaluyia and Christianity cannot be ignored. One theory explains the similarity between the Judeo-Christian conceptualization of God and that of the Abaluyia. According to this theory, the Abaluyia were the original founders of Kush. As such, their beliefs were a part of the ideological currency of Eastern Africa and the Middle East. One commentator posits that the Abaluyia are the originators of the tripartite god idea. There is no way of knowing who originated the idea, but the tripartite conceptualization of god is not unique to the Judeo-Christian tradition. In Ghana, the Akan god, Nyame is worshiped as a triune god. Clearly a triune god is not the sole possession of any one religious tradition.

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WOLOF

The Wolof live primarily in Senegal and parts of the Gambia. The Wolof did not begin as an ethnicity. The language Wolof was a trade language adopted centuries ago. The Jolof Empire was established circa 1350 and broke apart into its constituent parts in 1549. The parts were the Jolof, Cayor, Siin, Saluum, Waalo, and Bawol. The Wolof language was one of the unifying institutions of the empire, though the empire contained Serrer, Fula, Bambara, and Mandingo, among other ethnicities. At some point the Wolof identity developed.

The Wolof have been Islamized for nearly a thousand years. So thorough is their Islamization, there is scant knowledge of their pre-Islamic religious traditions. What we do know is that, like other African ethnicities, they believe in the spirit world and its interaction with the physical world. They believe that ancestors join the spirit world and should be remembered and venerated. There is still a belief in what Muslims call *jinn*, which are nature spirits. They are thought to live in rocks, trees, rivers, and other places. Some Wolof still make offerings to these jinn and try to appease them. Some of the nature spirits still recognized are Mame Coumba Bang and Mame Cantaye, her sister.

This pre-Islamic belief in spirits that reside in nature has not been extinguished by Islamization. There are still “specialists” who are for all practical purposes priests/priestesses who can divine and detect spiritual infractions and tell how to remedy the consequence of the infraction. In the case of Mame Coumba and other spirits, these specialists are usually beyond the limits of Islam. There are spiritual Muslim men who possess powers to see into the spirit world and manipulate things for others, however. These are men are known as *marabout*.

Marabout

The term *marabout* comes from the Arabic word *murabit*, which is translated as “holy man.” The marabout in Senegal are men, sometimes Islamic scholars or sometimes, they only have a rudimentary Qur’anic training. Their central job is to look into the spirit world, diagnose the spiritual cause of the ills of life, and offer a remedy. Sometimes they require animal sacrifice to remedy the issue, which can be expensive. Other times, they provide sacred objects or natural medicines for simpler problems.

Marabout also manufacture amulets for protection against malevolent spirits and bad events. These amulets are called *gris-gris*. The gris-gris are usually worn under the clothes around the neck, waist, upper arm, or other part. The gris-gris are usually verses from the Qur’an thought to be protective. The verses are written on scraps

of paper, rolled up and sewn into a leather pouch, which is then attached to a belt, string, or necklace. Babies tend to have many gris-gris around the ankles, upper arm, and waist, which are not removed, even for baths. Some gris-gris are made to be hung in a new home, a new business, or a vehicle to ward off malevolent spirits and prevent misfortune. Some are so small that they are imperceptible. They are usually hung over doors to establishments as a deterrent to misfortune.

Some marabout are religious leaders. Others are simply spiritual consultants with at least a rudimentary knowledge of Arabic. Among the Wolof and other Senegalese, Muslims, Christians, and animists consult marabout for various issues in their lives. The marabout relies on either donations or firm prices for his services.

Islam

Most Wolof are Muslims. The few who are Christians are usually Roman Catholic. Among the Muslims, most of them belong to one sufi *tariqa*. The four most prevalent in Senegal are Quadre, Tijani, Muride, and Layenne. Each of these *turuq* (plural of *tariqa*) have a founder who is venerated as well as leaders, past or present, who are venerated. The Quadre and Tijani originated outside of Senegal. Among the Tijani there are two main groups: Niassan Tijani and Sy Tijani. The Niassan revere their former leader, Alassane Niasse, and look to Kaolack as a city of importance. The Sy Tijani venerate their leader former leader, El Hajj Malik Sy (who was Fula and not Wolof), and look to Tivouane as their city of importance.

The Muride and Layenne *turuq* are native to Senegal. Shaikh Ahmadou Bamba Mbacké founded the Muride *tariqa* after having been initiated into the Khadre and the Tijani *turuq*. Shaikh Ahmadou Bamba founded the city of Tuuba, where the Murides look to as a holy city. Murides revere their founder as the *khadim rassoul allah*, meaning “the servant of the prophet of Allah”—that is, Muhammad.

The Layenne *tariqa* was founded by Libasse Thiaw, also known as Limamou Laye (pronounced *lie*). Limamou Laye was a member of the Lebou ethnic group, which is a subgroup of the Wolof. Layennes

revere Limamou Laye as the reincarnation of the prophet Muhammad. They believe that Limamou Laye's son, Seydina Issa Rohou Laye, is the reincarnation of Isa ibn Maryama, which is how Muslims refer to Jesus Christ. The tariqa is small and known for their ecstatic singing before prayers and their insistence on strictly observing the rules of Islam.

There are Wolof Muslims who are not adherents of either of the aforementioned turuq. Some simply say they are Muslims, though many follow the teachings of the Wahabian Islamic teachers. Others just chose to simply follow the basics of Islam without the added requirements of the various turuq.

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WOYENGI

Woyengi is the goddess of creation amongst the Ijaw people of Southern Nigeria. The Ijaw People live in the Niger Delta region in the southwestern area of Nigeria. They are traditionally fishermen and have historically lived close to rivers and/or the Atlantic Ocean. Now their region is well known for the oil it supplies. Water spirits, called collectively Owuamapu, are a significant part of their spiritual beliefs. They, like most African peoples, also practice ancestor veneration and divination as a way of making sense of events in the world.

According to their creation myths, Woyengi looked from the heavens and found earth full of animals and vegetation. After descending to earth on a thunderbolt, she found a table, a chair, and a creation stone along with lots of mud. She took the mud and sculpted dolls. She then inhaled deeply and breathed the breath of life into the clay dolls. These dolls became the souls of humanity. After

having created them, she asked all the souls what they wanted. She asked what gender they wanted, what type of blessings they wanted, and what job they preferred. She also asked each soul how he or she wished to die and which diseases they would prefer. The souls then flowed down to earth in rivers of water, were born to women, and lived the destinies they had chosen.

There is a cautionary tale of a woman, Ogboinba, who did not like her destiny and decided to try to change it. Ogboinba wanted children instead of the blessings she had. Having asked for the ability to heal, see into the spirit world, and to use mystic arts, Ogboinba saw her close friend having babies and longed for one. She decided to try to change her destiny. After a rather eventful journey, she arrived before Woyengi and asked to be born in a different destiny. Woyengi refused.

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WULBARI

Wulbari is the creator god and ruler of all for the Krachi people of Togo. According to one myth, Wulbari created heaven five feet above mother earth. Men kept bumping their head against Wulbari, and it bothered him. Then an old woman making food kept knocking him with her pestle while grinding and mashing her food. The smoke from her cooking fire got into his eyes, making them water. He thought he would just move heaven up a little bit. People continued to annoy him, however, with their habits. They used the beautiful blue of his heaven to wipe their hands. One woman even tore a bit of the blue of heaven to add flavor to her soup.

Further annoyed, Wulbari moved his heaven a bit higher. He set his court up high away from the humans and their annoying habits. His court was made of animals and the spider Ananse was their leader.

Ananse was clever and eventually thought he was equal or even smarter than Wulbari. To handle this problem, Wulbari called Ananse to him and said he must bring him something. Ananse initially agreed and left. Not knowing what it was that Wulbari wanted, Ananse was perplexed and returned to Wulbari for specification. Wulbari told Ananse that if he was indeed equal to Wulbari, he must prove it and bring him what he wanted without information.

Ananse went to earth and called all the various birds, taking a feather from each. He made a coat of all the feathers and wore it as he climbed back to heaven. Once there, Wulbari came out and saw the bird of many colors. Wulbari asked his council what kind of bird that was. None of them knew, but they suggested he ask Ananse. He explained that he had sent Ananse away to bring him what he wanted without telling Ananse what it was he wanted. The council of animals laughed and asked what Wulbari really wanted. Wulbari, laughing, said he wanted the sun, the moon, and darkness. Hearing undercover of his cloak of feathers, Ananse left and got the sun, moon, and darkness and put it in his bag. He brought it back to Wulbari and bested him.

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WUNI

Wuni is the creator god of the Dagomba people of Ghana. He is credited with having created everything and everyone. According to myth, humanity was complaining about the harsh life they had on earth. They didn't die. The majority of humans continued in a miserable existence as slaves to their chiefs. The slaves got together and sent a dog to deliver their message of complaint, asking Wuni to end their eternal servitude. The dog was delayed and passed the

message to a goat. Once the goat met Wuni, the message was mixed up and the goat said humanity wanted to end their servitude with death. Wuni responded with anger and sent death as a response. According to the myth, each man must experience death as a result of the mixup.

Another myth explains Wuni's reason for relocating to the sky. An old woman in pounding her fufu (a staple food in many countries in Africa) kept hitting Wuni with her pestle. He moved higher and higher to get away from her and the offending pestle. At one point he just stayed away so no one else could hit him.

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XHOSA

The Xhosa people live in Southern Africa, mostly in the Republic of South Africa, primarily in the Eastern Cape, though they have expanded into other regions of the country. There are approximately 8 million Xhosa people, who are divided into smaller tribes. There are also other tribes who use the Xhosa language but are not counted as part of the large Xhosa ethnic group.

Xhosa Beliefs

According to legend, the Xhosa are one of the four main groupings of Nguni peoples, the other being Zulu, Ndebele, and the Swazi. Nguni was a warrior who led a migration from north of the Great Lakes region of Southeastern Africa. Nguni and his group grew and spread. Historians place the migration as a gradual one. They brought their cattle with them, which is central to Nguni economies. Like the other groups, Xhosa count cattle wealth as an important resource.

There has been much cultural sharing between the Khoi-San people and the Xhosa. The Xhosa also share cultural traditions with the other Nguni groups. Like other traditional religious perspectives across the globe, the Xhosa recognize the physical and spiritual worlds and their connections. As such, the living owe the dead respect and honor. The living are also to be wary of malevolent spirits and offending the gods and/or ancestors.

Of primary concern of such religious traditions is the difficult task of maintaining an agreeable balance between the physical and spiritual world. When something goes wrong in the physical world (such as sickness, accident, job loss, etc.), it is seen as a

consequence of some spiritual infraction, which must be set aright. The diviners, *amagqirha*, are used to diagnose the spiritual issue that causes problems and develop a method for righting the wrong.

Thixo/Tsui Goab

The Xhosa are traditionally polytheistic. Their main god is known as Thixo or Tsui-Goab. Thixo is the sun god and creator of all living beings. Thixo, known as Tsui-Goab among the Khoi people, is known as an ancestor of the Khoi. With time, he evolved into the sun god and creator of the Xhosa. According to one legend, Thixo created three nations—the Khoi, the Xhosa, and the whites. During creation, a bird flew by, and the Khoi ran after it, shouting in excitement and trying to catch the bird. Thixo declared them a people who would live off roots and berries their whole lives. The Xhosa then saw the cattle and loudly claimed ownership of the cows of all colors along with their bulls. Thixo, exasperated, declared them a people who would only own cattle. The whites waited patiently and quietly, so Thixo granted them all types of animals and land.

In another legend, Thixo created every plant and animal on earth. His process of creation was to take on the shape of everything he wanted to create. After taking the shape of a particular being, he then replicated it. Once he was pleased with the replication, he shed the shape as a snake sheds its skin and took another shape, repeating the process each day and resting at night. At some point he succeeded in creating all plants and animals.

In yet another legend, Thixo or Tsui-Goab, his Khoi name, fought the evil Guanaub (chief of death) and defeated him. In the fight he wounded his knee and was thus called Tsui-Goab, which means “wounded knee” in the Khoi language. Thixo is an Xhosa appropriation of the Khoi name.

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YASIGI

Yasigi is the goddess of beer, dancing, and masks amongst the Dogon people of Mali. According to the myth, she was born from the primordial egg, a creation of Amma. Her twin brother, Yurugu (also known as Ogo), god of chaos, went wild shortly after birth. Yasigi was put in the care of the Nommo, twin gods, to protect her from Yurugu's destruction. Yurugu is said to still be searching for Yasigi. She later mated with Amma in order to populate the world.

Yasigi discovered the first mask. As a statue, she is always depicted as a large-breasted woman dancing with a beer ladle. Every sixty years, the Dogon have a Sigi festival in which they honor their dead. The Sigi festival is also a period of purging of the Dogon's collective sins, seen as a way of stemming the tide of their cultural erosion.

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YÉBAN

Yéban and his brother, Andumbulu, are Dogon gods of the underworld. Their father is Ogo (also known as Yurugu), who copulated with his mother, Earth, in an incestuous union through which

he introduced disorder and chaos into the world. Menstrual blood first came from the union of Ogo and his mother. Yéban is also used to describe spirits who live in the bush and the trees similar to the jinn/genie of Arab belief. The Yeban are associated with Lewe, the earth god.

The Dogon people live in the Bandiagara Mountains of Mali, where they migrated in an effort to avoid forced conversions to Islam. The Dogon who have migrated out of their native areas are primarily Mulims.

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YEMOJA

Yemaya (often spelled Iemoja, Yemaya, Yemoja) is a Yoruba orisa (deity) and the mother of all orisha. Her name is a combination of the Yoruba words *iyé omó eja*, which means "the mother whose children are like fish." She is credited with having given birth to 14 Yoruba gods and is seen as a mother goddess and ultimate mother of all humanity. Worshiped as the goddess of rivers (and all flowing waters) and often portrayed as a mermaid with a blue breastplate, Yemaja is the archetypical water goddess to whom the krio/pidgin term Mami Wata refers. She is the daughter of Olokun and the wife of Obatala and the sister of the goddess Osun. Her origins are at the Ogun River near Oyo and Abeokuta in present-day Nigeria.

Like many Yoruba orisha, Yemaya is also worshiped in the New World religions of Santeria (Cuba) and Candomble (Brazil), primarily as a sea goddess. Blue is her sacred color and seven and its multiples are her sacred numbers. Her associated symbols are the

crescent moon, water, and femininity. As such, Yemaya is seen as a source of strength for women and in charge of all things feminine—childbirth, pregnancy, and the like. Being that she is worshiped in so many places, the stories about Yemoja are numerous. She is known as a superb fortune teller and keeper of secrets. It is said when she gave birth, her water broke and served as the origin of all rivers.

Douglas Thomas

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YORUBA

The indigenous religion of the Yoruba people of Southwest Nigeria is a complex form of diffused or implicit monotheism based on the worship of Olodumare (the supreme God) through numerous deities called orisa, with whom the people communicate through prayer and divination. There are more than 400 orisa in the Yoruba pantheon, some of which are more prominent than others. These orisa are represented by idols to whom people pray, propitiate, and sacrifice. This is perhaps why early Western observers of Yoruba culture erroneously referred to indigenous religion as idol worship.

The Yoruba also worship and venerate the ancestors. Ancestor worship is a more personal form of devotion than that of the deities. Since ancestors represent deceased kin, living relations have an intimate familial connection to them. Devotees believe that the deceased are vigilant, watching over the living and protecting or punishing them in accordance to their deeds. Elaborate funeral rites are considered vital because the dead are said to carry good or bad reports to departed relatives, who act on these reports to either bless or harm their descendants. Once a year, the Yoruba perform

egungun, the Yoruba ancestral masquerade, an important festival and ritual in honor of the deceased. It is believed that during *egungun*, the ancestors, covered from head to toe in garments, come back to earth to interact with the living. During *egungun*, one has to sacrifice to one's ancestors, offer a feast to all of one's neighbors, and, in turn, partake in the feast of others.

The Yoruba belief system is a pragmatic one. Unlike Christianity and Islam, which emphasize life after death, Yoruba religion is primarily focused on gaining tangible benefits in the secular world. The people refer to these benefits as *alafia* (well-being). However, *alafia* is not just good health; it incorporates spiritual health, wealth, and posterity. It is believed that only through the worship of the *orisa* and ancestors, and by performing all the rites and rituals associated with this worship, can one obtain well-being. Such rites and rituals include prayers, observing religious taboos, participating in religious and cultural festivals and ceremonies, and performing sacrifices.

Sacrifice is deeply rooted in the cosmology and practice of Yoruba religion. Since Yoruba people believe that supernatural entities have the power to influence, sustain, or destroy humankind, the people consider it vital to maintain a communion with these entities. They do so by making regular offerings to show gratitude for blessings, to ward off attack, and to avoid destruction. Sacrifice is the heart and core of devotional worship, be it the worship of one's deity or ancestor. Indeed, to worship is to sacrifice. Sacrifice reaffirms the reciprocal bonds between humans and the supernatural, and only through it can humans maintain a relationship with his deity or ancestor.

Since the advent of Christianity and Islam, however, indigenous Yoruba worship and its associated practices have severely diminished among the Yoruba populace, and the majority now identify as Christian or Muslim.

Temilola Alanamu

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ZANAHARY

Zanahary is a commonly used term among the Malagasy of Madagascar to refer to a creator god and/or divinity itself. How Zanahary is portrayed is dependent on the area of Madagascar from which any given person originates. He is married to the queen of heaven, Andriamanitra, and they have a son named Andrianerinerina. There are various myths about Zanahary and his exact role in creation, but all the versions agree that he is responsible for creating the universe and the world.

One myth says Zanahary created the earth but left it unpopulated. Then Ratovoantany sprung up from the ground and began to form human flesh from clay. Unable to give them life, Ratovoantany continued making the clay forms. Zanahary came down to visit and noticed the clay forms. Zanahary agreed to give them life in exchange for them going to live in heaven with him. Ratovoantany refused, so they struck an alternative bargain. Zanahary would give the clay beings life through his divine breath, and they would go live with him after their death. Ratovoantany had them while they lived on earth and retained their corpses after they died.

Another creation myth cites Zanahary as having two forms, a heavenly or “light” form and an earthly or “dark” form. The earthly form shaped humans from clay and the light heavenly form breathed life into the clay. A dispute rose between them because the heavenly Zanahary wanted to have all humans to himself in heaven, yet they remained on earth until they reproduced. According to this version, there remains tension between Zanahary of heaven and Zanahary of earth: Zanahary of heaven is constantly trying to revoke his gift of life from humanity.

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ZIONIST CHURCHES

South African Zionist Churches originated as the result of visits from a group of missionaries from the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church of John Alexander Dowie based in Zion, Illinois, and founded in Chicago in 1896. From 1904 to 1908, missionaries from the church led by Daniel Bryant visited South Africa to evangelize. Two of their initial followers were Pieter Louis le Roux and Daniel Nkonyane of Wakkerstroom. These two followers continued to evangelize and teach Zionist doctrine after the departure of the missionaries. It was not until John G. Lake, a Zionist who had converted to Pentecostal, arrived in South Africa that the Zionist movement began to flourish.

The Illinois-based church belief stressed divine healing, threefold-immersion baptism, and the impending Second Coming of Christ. However, the African members of the Zionist Church expanded the belief system of the church to include the second Baptism of the Spirit and founded Zion Apostolic Church. This concept was embraced by John G. Lake, and his influence helped to recruit the majority of former Zionists to the Apostolic Faith Mission. The Apostolic Faith Mission was appealing because it blended Pentecostalism with Dowie's original Zionist belief system that supported faith healing.

The Zionist church movement flourished during the early 1900s. Le Roux's deputy, Daniel Nkonyane, was instrumental in proposing and implementing significant changes to doctrine while Le Roux, now an Apostolic Faith Mission official, spent the majority of his time in Johannesburg. Nkonyane's stalwart leadership led to his removal from Wakkerstroom. With approximately two-thirds of the

congregation, Nkonyane secured property in Charlestown, Natal, and built the first South African "Zion." A number of small Zionist churches have been established as a result of Nkonyane's church. Most are located in Swaziland and Natal.

Isaiah Shembe is also credited with increasing the momentum of the growth of the Zionist church movement. He used faith-healing techniques as a method to increase the number of followers. He later established the Narazeth Baptist Church in 1911, which became the largest Zion church until Zion Christian Church surpassed its numbers in the 1950s. Shembe is distinguished from other Zionist churches because of his belief that he was a prophet sent from God to the Zulu nation.

In the 1920s, migrant workers who returned from South Africa established Zionist Churches in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). Rifts and disputes led to the formation of numerous different congregations. In the 1980s, the largest Zionist Church was the African Apostolic Church of Johane Maranke, which had more than 250,000 followers in Zimbabwe and surrounding countries. More recently, the largest Zionist congregation has become the Zion Christian Church led by Barnabas Lekganyane, which has more than 3 million followers.

Over the years, the Zionist movement has grown. Ethiopian worries about religious and political independence are diminishing. Zionist churches have evolved with their practices resembling white evangelical or revivalist churches. Two of the largest South African groups, the Zion Christian Church and Limba's austere Church of Christ, are such examples. In addition, the churches have become recognized by several different names. For example, Zionist Churches are known as Spirit Churches, or the prophet-healing groups in Southern Africa. They are associated in Nigeria with Aladura, in Ghana, with "spiritual" phenomena, and in other parts of Africa with "prophet-healing churches." Each church is identifiable as a Zionist Church because the words Zion, Apostolic, Pentecostal, Faith, or Holy Spirit are used in their names to represent their biblical charter. Research suggests that more than 40 percent of all black South Africans are members of the Zionist church.

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ZULU RELIGION

The Zulu people evolved from a group of tribes called Nguni. According to legend, Nguni was a warrior who led a migration from north of the Great Lakes region of Southeastern Africa. Nguni and his group grew and spread. Historians place the migration as a gradual one, with them bringing their cattle; cattle are central to Nguni economies. The four original Nguni groups were Ndebele, Swazi, Xhosa, and Zulu.

All of them live within what is now the Republic of South Africa, Kingdom of Swaziland, and the Kingdom of Lesotho. In ancient times, Nguni clans organized into chiefdoms under a paramount chief. Without a strong military, paramount chiefs often had a hard time retaining the allegiance of their subordinate chiefs. As a result, there was frequent switching of alliances and organizing of new chiefdoms. The son of chief Malandela, named Zulu, meaning “heaven,” took his wives and followers toward the Mkhunbane River with a new clan and established his chiefdom as kwaZulu, translated as “place of heaven” or “paradise.” From these humble beginnings, the Zulu tribe grew into one of the region’s largest ethnic groups (tribes) and the most powerful. They are the largest ethnic group in the Republic of South Africa.

The Zulu belief system combines a belief in the closeness of ancestral spirits with the belief in a pantheon of gods. Like most traditional belief systems, there is no formal theology. The Zulu system of beliefs is based on a collection of stories handed down

orally over the centuries. There are often differing versions of these stories, although certain commonalities prevail. For example, in some stories the sky god, Umvelinqani, is brought together with the supreme god, Unkulunkulu. Other stories make a distinction between these two and their realms of power.

Among the commonalities that permeate all versions of Zulu stories is the understanding that man is flesh, umZimba, and spirit/soul, iDlozi. The Zulu believe that the spirit never dies. The amaDlozi, spirits of those who are already dead, are always around the living and should be respected and looked to for help navigating life in the physical world. The Zulu, along with most traditional societies, believe that the spirit world runs parallel and in tandem with the physical world, where they have a symbiotic relationship. As such, any and everything in the physical world is connected in some way to the spiritual world.



Zulu sangomas, or spiritual healers and diviners, in a consulting room in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, April 23, 2008. (Eye Ubiquitous/UG via Getty Images)

In order to better navigate through life between the two worlds, the Zulu use divination, consulting the umNgoma, a man or woman who through rituals communicates with the spirit world to determine how an individual should respond to any given stimulus in order to avoid

offending the spirits. The umNgoma also helps individuals remedy situations in which they have already offended spirits or gods and are living with the negative consequences.

In the Zulu creation story, the sky god Umvelinqani descended from heaven and married Uthlanga, goddess of the marsh. Their union resulted in the creation of reeds from which Nkulunkulu emerged. Nkulunkulu is worshiped as the supreme creator god and the first man. His name is also used by Christian Zulus when referring to the Judeo-Christian god.

Umvelinqani is the sky god who reveals himself in thunder and earthquakes. Though he is the god who provided the situation for the springing forth of Nkulunkulu, Umvelinqani is not considered the supreme deity. Nkulunkulu means “the greatest one.” There are other gods and goddesses that make up the Zulu pantheon. Among these are the already mentioned Uthlanga, goddess of the marsh, who married Umvelinqani. Two other are Inkosazana, goddess of agriculture who makes the corn grow and Mamlambo, goddess of rivers. Though many Zulus practice Christianity today, their traditional religious beliefs and practices have not faded into obscurity.

Douglas Thomas

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The African Association for the Study of Religion's website is found at that link.

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A general resource on Wim van Benschur's study of African religions.

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