

Chapter 1 : African Religion Beliefs & Culture by Ali Rahimi on Prezi

*The Religious Traditions of Africa: A History [Elizabeth Isichei] on calendrierdelascience.com *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers. This work is a first of its kind historical introduction to the major religions of Africa.*

In an age of increasing encounter between very different cultures, it is critical that we attempt to understand religious traditions that are not historically our own. In this course we will encounter primarily the religious traditions of India Hinduism and Buddhism and China Confucianism and Taoism. Readings are in sacred texts and secondary sources. REL Hinduism W 3hrs. A study of the nature of Hinduism and its development, literature, philosophy, and religious practices. REL Buddhism W 3hrs. Study of Buddhism, its development, literature, and religious practices. We will begin with the life story of the Buddha and explore his teachings as they developed from their beginnings in Theravada and expanded as Mahayana, Vajrayana, Zen, and various other contemporary expressions. A constructive study of Buddhism and Islam, two dynamic world religions propagating differing world views. In the past, they have had historical interactions with one another. This course is an examination of their founders, their development, their major texts, their beliefs and rituals. Special attention is given to their historic collisions and to the manner in which they have met the challenges posed by the different cultural and geographic contexts they have encountered. Their contrasting appeals for contemporary Americans are considered. REL Zen W 3hrs. An inquiry into the complex nature of Zen--thought by some as the essence of Buddhism, by others as a Buddhist-Daoist hybrid-- this course focuses on the intellectual difficulties in understanding a teaching which represents itself as "beyond words and phrases. It continues with an examination of classic texts of influential Vedic schools-Samkhya, Yoga, Vedanta and Tantra-as well as of Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhist schools. It explores historical and recent interactions with these traditions outside of their homeland, and the practical contemporary implications of their psychological, ethical and metaphysical positions. An investigation into the nature and expression of unique ethos which made for survival of Afro-American humanity. This course helps to answer questions of cultural identity for people of African descent by demonstrating in what ways we are African, and looking at the results of the confrontation between African and European culture in New Europe. This course is a survey of some of the most salient forms of African-based religions in the Caribbean and South America, and in New York City. The course will include some consideration of the transformations that have occurred in the journey of the belief systems from Africa to the New World, but the focus of the course will be on the integrity of the Afro-Caribbean forms of religion. The course will include not only attention to beliefs, but to art and ritual forms in which these religions have expressed themselves. In addition, the course will raise the question of the ongoing appeal of these religions. Using primary and secondary sources, we will examine how the inhabitants of these regions constructed and expressed their worldviews. One of the main questions to consider will be whether these religious traditions are products of cross-cultural or particular processes. We will also briefly address the contemporary manifestations of these traditions and their implications for modern populations. REL Religions of Early Europe Both Greek and Roman classical authors described the peoples north of the Danube River as "barbarians," tribes uncultured and illiterate, warlike and unmatched in their banality. We know from what they left behind, however, that this was far from true. We know very little about the tribes of ancient Europe, and even less about their religious systems. This course, therefore, is a course in guesswork. We examine these early religious systems found in Europe, long before the classical Greeks, the Romans, and the Christian world redefined their existence, and attempt to consider them for what they actually were. This course is designed as a panoramic survey of the effects of Islam and Christianity as they interact with traditional religious beliefs on the peoples of Africa. The course will start with the earliest contact of the Judeo-Christian religion with Africa, which, many people believe, dates back to the reign of King Solomon and the establishment of the Ethiopian Coptic Church. Special attention will be paid to some fundamental issues such as the rise of the nativistic separatist, independent churches, the phases of Islamic expansion and Islamic culture zones in Africa, and the religious life of African Muslims. A historical and sociological examination of the evolution of the Black Church in the United States: An inquiry into the nature of the relationship between

religious thought and revolution as a response to problems of colonialism, oppression and slavery. This course explores religious traditions which conceive of the world as constituted by mutually exclusive, and indeed antagonistic, realities. Gnosticism and Manichaeism were once historically potent movements, but are no longer practiced. Others, like Zoroastrianism and Jainism, are not only of historical importance, but still claim adherents. Dualistic currents of thought also manifest themselves in non-dualistic contexts. The magnificent civilizations that they built had an enormous influence on subsequent human culture. This course is based on primary material, of both archeological and literary natures, and will discuss the most important texts produced by religious and secular sources. Attention is given to the influence of dualistic thought from Zoroastrianism and Gnostic systems, and to some mystical and contemporary interpretations. An introduction survey of the development of the Jewish religious tradition from its origins to the present, with special attention to the interaction between Judaism and other civilizations, ancient, medieval, and modern, and to the role of Judaism in the formation of Christianity and of Islam. The Jewish people from origins to late antiquity; social, economic, and intellectual developments from the Biblical to the Talmudic periods. Not open to freshmen. Comprehensive study of ancient Israelite history as reflected in Biblical and ancient Near Eastern sources, and as illuminated by archeological discoveries in Israel and the Near East. Course begins with the patriarchal period and ends with the Israelite settlement of Canaan. Readings and lectures in English. Introduction to the tools and methods of modern biblical criticism. The Jewish people from late antiquity to the 17th century; social and legal status under Islamic and Christian rulers; religious and intellectual movements. After describing the social, economic, and religious features of Jewish life in Christian and Muslim lands in the 15th centuries, the course deals with the changes and crises in Jewish history during the modern era, political and economic forces on the Jewish people, the rise of Jewish nationalism, Zionism, and Jewish socialism, the spread of virulent anti-Semitism, and Jewish migrations to America and Palestine. The last part of the course focuses on the Nazi holocaust of World War II, the establishment of the state of Israel, and the condition of other Jewries at present. REL Islam W 3hrs. An introduction to the major concepts, practices, and texts of Islam, as well as an examination of the life and faith of the prophet Mohammed. REL Sufism W 3hrs. Within the Muslim community, Sufism has been alternatively regaled as being profoundly un-Islamic and hailed as the completion of the Straight Path which is Islam, by supplementing right action and belief with matters of the heart. While considering the origins of Sufism within Islam, this course concentrates on Sufism in its integrity, focusing on the nature of Sufi path, its historical transformations, and its theological-doctrinal and metaphysic underpinnings. The nature of Greek mythology and its relationship to religious experiences and practices, oracles and mysteries. A study with modern theoretical analysis of official rites, family cults, private rituals, and the relations of all classical sources. CLA Pagans and Christians 3hrs. Discussion of the various religious forces and ideas in the Later Roman Empire, both East and West; the collisions and compromises, the amalgams of religion and politics which influenced Christianity. Readings from primary sources, both pagan and Christian, both Eastern and Western, in translation. REL Christianity W 3hrs. An upper level introduction to the liturgical, doctrinal, and spiritual heritage of the various forms of Christianity. A scholarly consideration of the religion of the New Testament and earliest Christianity. Examination of the theological interest of the authors of the books of the New Testament in order to consider the major facets of New Testament religion: Reading in the New Testament and secondary sources. In this course, we will examine the Christian form of theology with regard to key doctrines in key works: A history of the Christian religion from the birth of Christ, ending before the Protestant Reformation. For the period after about A. Our approach will be historical with the development of Christian theology viewed as response to the changing needs of the church over a long period of time. The history of church discipline and ecclesiastical institutions will be studied in the context of development of European civilization with emphasis on social, economic, and psychological impact of the church upon the people of the West. Selected topics in American religious history including the changes in European religions in an American environment; and the relationship of churches to other aspects of American history. REL Tribal Religions: From Australia to the Americas W 3hrs. Study of the theological implications of myths and rituals ideas of God, good and evil, humanity and the world , consideration of social values and the role of the individual in relation to the group,

discussion of the meaning found in life and in death in traditional cultures. REL Special Topics: Religious Traditions W 3hrs. Different topic each time offered. Specialized study of specific tradition or groups of religious traditions. Independent research and writing on a specific topic within the field under the supervision of a Religion professor. REL Seminar in Religion 3 hrs. Specialized studies in Religion. May be taken a second or third time with another subject. Individual research and writing on a specific topic within the field under the direction of the Honors Committee of the Program in Religion. This course may be taken as a one semester 3 or 6 credit, or as two consecutive 3 credit courses. Permission of Program Director; majors only.

Chapter 2 : A Religious Portrait of African-Americans | Pew Research Center

The traditional African religions (or traditional beliefs and practices of African people) are a set of highly diverse beliefs that include various ethnic religions.

African Traditions African Traditions are expressed through music, art, dance and sculpture African Tradition is expressed through many different art forms, such as music, dance, art, sculpture and beadwork. These traditions are deeply ingrained into the whole African culture. Oral Tradition Oral tradition is very important in African culture, as it insures the passage of cultural practices from one generation to another. Listening is an equally important skill, which has been perfected by the traditional oral practices. Numerous songs and dances have been transmitted by word of mouth. Music and Poetry in African Traditions Naturally, singing is very important to the African society because the melody and rhythm follow the intonation of the song text. The songs are often sung in call-and-response form. In West Africa, a griot is a praise singer or poet who possesses a repository of oral tradition passed down from generation to generation. They must know the traditional songs and must also be able to improvise songs about current events and chance incidents. Music is a form of communication and it plays a functional role in African society. Songs accompany marriage, birth, rites of passage, hunting and even political activities. Music is often used in different African cultures to ward off evil spirits and to pay respects to good spirits, the dead and ancestors. Although the musical styles and instruments vary from region to region, there are some common forms of musical expression. The most significant instrument in African music is the African drum. It expresses the mood of the people and evokes emotion. Dance is an integral part of the African culture, and it utilizes symbolic gestures, masks, costumes, body painting and props to communicate. The dance movements can be simple or complex with intricate actions including fast rotation, ripples of the body and contraction and release. Dance is used to express emotion, whether joyful or sorrowful and it is not limited to just the dancers. Often spectators will be encouraged to join in. Dancer wearing traditional African mask Traditional African Masks The African masks that are used in dances have religious, ceremonial and functional origins. The artist who carves the mask will ceremonially purify himself and offer prayers to his ancestors for guidance before he begins the actual carving of the mask. The African mask represents a spirit and it is believed that the spirit possesses the dancer as they wear the mask. The chosen dancer goes into a trance-like state in order to receive guidance and wisdom from the ancestors. The dancer will utter and moan the messages received and a wise man, who accompanies the dancer will translate the message. Art Although music and dance are extremely important African traditions and are very common forms of communication, many African people express themselves in other art forms as well. Zulu woman wearing intricate bead work only her husband would understand The Zulu people are well known for their intricate beadwork. The colour of each bead carries a specific meaning. It is an African tradition for young girls to send a boy a beaded bracelet of different colours. The boy will court her for a while and at the appropriate time, he will ask her the meaning of the beads. The male figure with a weapon or animal, represent honour to departed ancestors. African men are often honoured in warfare and there is a great emphasis on weaponry in African art, as it depicts survival and power. When the stranger is represented in African art, it usually depicts someone from a foreign country or tribe that is not welcomed. [Links to Related Topics.](#)

Chapter 3 : Religion in Africa - Wikipedia

The main religions in Africa include Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Judaism and traditional African religion. Traditional African religion encompasses all the religious beliefs of the indigenous African people. Most of Africa's organized religions were brought to the country from Europeans and other.

This is a 3-hour summary lecture on the basic components of African Traditional Religions. The purpose of this is to help to orient a person who would like to work in the context of Africa. There are more than 40 separate nations that occupy the continent of Africa south of the Sahara desert, each with its own history, political situation, numerous ethnic groups and multiple languages that comprise sub-Saharan Africa. African religions are very diverse. Unfortunately, missionaries and the colonialists who came in to Africa originally often portrayed Africans as savages, as backward. Often, regions were denigrated as un-evolved as compared to the west, with no civilizations. They were people that were caricatured as involved in superstition and animism and ancestor worship and so forth, and so there was a sense that it was not really worthy of study such as the higher religions of Hinduism, Buddhism, or Islam. Anthropologists actually contributed to this as well, and oftentimes wrote denigrating studies of these early religious encounters which helped to create false impressions. So part of what we want to do is to redress some of the miscommunications that have occurred about African religion, and seek to develop a way of looking at this which would be coherent. What we want to do is to construct an African traditional cosmology. Now let me explain what a cosmology is, as opposed to traditional examination of a world religion. Oftentimes when you look at world religion, you ask questions like: So instead, what we try to do is develop a cosmological framework or a theoretical framework that brings together many of the broad concepts and relations that are descriptively present in much of African Traditional Religion. If you look at African religion region-by-region, generally sub-Saharan Africa is divided into west Africa, east Africa, and south Africa. It stretches from Senegal along the Atlantic coast, all the way to Nigeria, down along the Gulf of Guinea. And so one of the things we want to do in this study is focus on how ATR, African Traditional Religion has worked itself out in the practice of Nigeria. There are more than distinct indigenous societies, all with different languages and economic systems and cultures, all very unique. Traditionally, east Africans were farmers and livestock herders. They had a lot of trade with the Arabs along the coast of east Africa, and this is where Islam is actually the strongest, in this area. In southern Africa, the coast of Africa, you have South Africa itself, you have Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Swaziland, Lesotho, Namibia – all of these countries in south Africa represent a place where western colonization did in fact put the presence of the west with African societies and cultures. In looking at African religion, there are a number of things that we have to look at. But we also want to balance that out as E. But nevertheless, we want to distance ourselves from a number of the terms that have been used. Fetishism refers to the use of a natural or artificial object which is believed to have supernatural power or preternatural power to protect or aid its owner. Oftentimes these fetishes would be ritually consecrated or animated by a spirit of some kind. As you can see from some of the early reports of Africa, African religion was simply not taken seriously, or it was dismissed wholesale as crude idolatry. Generally speaking, early observers of African religious practices all too quickly took appearance for reality, and symbol for the symbolized, and means for the end. Again, this implied that at the bottom of the religious scale was the un-tutored African. However this has a lot of problems. Although animism still is in fact present in Africa like fetishism or juju, it is simply inadequate as an all-encompassing expression that is descriptive properly of African Traditional Religion. The earlier idea was that African Traditional Religions were incompatible with monotheism. One of the more creative suggestions that we have come across is one by E. That is, a belief in a single god in which there exist other powers which get diffused out in to subordinates who serve that one god. But in my view none of these terms will ever be fully adequate to describe the African religious tradition. And therefore a better approach is to construct a broader African religious cosmology which extends beyond any one term. The fundamental problem with constructing an African religious cosmology is to understand how the one god and the many gods or lesser deities can co-exist in the African context. This is what one finds when you walk into Africa,

and this is what the anthropologists discovered early on, and the missionaries. It seemed to be that Africans worshipped innumerable mystical forces, ghosts, ancestors, divinities of various kinds, and yet they seemed also to have occasional references to a supreme god. How can all of these exist as actors or participants in a system that is non-contradictory? Well, this is achieved when one understands three basic assumptions which I think are characteristic of all African cosmologies. First of all, unlike Christian cosmological thinking, African systems do not recognize a fundamental distinction or clear demarcation between the visible world and the invisible world. To the African, the visible and the invisible – the material and spiritual, the temporal and non-temporal, the sacred and the profane -- all overlap and shade into one another. Now this is important because we have kind of an enlightenment world-view in the west which creates a real firm barrier between that which we can see – the observable world of science reflective of the world of hypotheses and concluding proofs of those hypotheses , that embraces science -- and the invisible world. The world beyond us is simply put aside as not really subject to our normal societal inquiry. In many ways the Africans inhabit a very big universe, a much bigger universe. We live in the west in a rather crunched-down universe because the invisible world, the spiritual world, has been taken away. And the world of the enlightenment only gives us the world obtainable by the five senses. Of course the Christian world- view comes in and challenges this by saying there is a world beyond the sensory world; the enlightenment world-view is inadequate. We even talk about the incarnation, where God transcends this wall of separation in the seen world and the unseen world, and he steps into our human history. In the African context, this is not the case. Christianity explains that which we cannot see. We had a Christian overlay that gave us a strong sense of heaven, of God, eternal life, of the life to come – the eternal verities of the Christian faith we all accepted. He calls this the flaw of the excluded middle. Things like demons or spirits that are just normal in African cosmologies are alien to the western world-view. But certainly traditionally, in the Christian world-view in the west, we did not have this kind of open frontier approach that you find in Africa between the visible and the invisible world, where spirits and deities and God all interact in a very dynamic way. The second fundamental difference between the African and the western world-views is that fundamental to the African world-view is the belief in the hierarchy of power and being. For the African, the universe is filled with various levels and sources of power and energy. Now the Greco-Christian cosmology is far more static, as we already saw in the last point -- far more radically demarcated and predictable. The African cosmology is essentially dynamic, with various levels of power and being and vital interaction with one another, and with humanity. So things are done with levels of power. This affects even the more practical considerations of life. In our society, we want to portray the idea that even important people, even powerful people are very approachable. But in African society, everything is done through intermediaries. So if you wanted to discuss the possibility of a marriage arrangement, you would go through a wide range of people in order to finally get back the answer, rather than going directly. Everything is done through intermediaries. Thirdly and finally and these are just some general observations about the different cosmologies , Africans believe that the world was created in a spiritual harmony or equilibrium between all the forms of creation and the sources of power. So all of African religion involves in some way rituals designed either to maintain this harmony or in some cases to restore this harmony back to their society. There are innumerable African stories and myths which are told which talk about how the world got off kilter, how things got out of harmony, and why certain rituals are being used to get things back. Now this is important because many times in the west we think of religions in terms of belief systems. So we will often ask the question: With African Traditional Religions you must be much more careful about speaking about belief systems in the same way, because Africans will actually tolerate quite a wide variety of beliefs as long as it supports the same rituals or certain rituals or ritualistic explanations of why this is being done or why this is being believed. So keeping these observations in mind, we should posit in our minds basically three levels or three tiers of power which are generally characteristic of African religion. At the highest tier, Tier 1, resides a supreme being who oversees the entire cosmological system. Now I want to stop right there and say that in the early missionary encounters with Africa, many of the missionaries did not believe that the Africans worshipped a supreme being, and so they came back and said they were polytheistic, that is, they believe in many gods rather than monotheistic belief in one god. However, this supreme being as

they studied more and learned to understand the African system more, was a kind of a distant figure, a deus otiosus, a person, a deity who is beyond us. But a well-known African scholar named John Mbiti did a study of African gods – this is found in actually several of his books, but one is entitled *Concepts of God in Africa* – and when John Mbiti studied, he wanted to particularly look at African traditional religious practitioners in tribes that had not received either Christianity or Islam, and look at them and see if in fact they had a belief in a supreme being. He found that frequently they did. Instead, we should see at the top tier a supreme being, but this supreme being is frequently a distant figure, maybe associated with creation or some kind of larger power to keep things in order or in harmony, but is not the focus of the daily religion of Africa. That occurs on the second tier. The second tier is often, though not always, bifurcated between a group of non-human divinities and a cult of human but divinized ancestors. In Nigeria they call the supreme being Olodumare, and Olodumare represents the supreme being at the highest tier. A divinity is another spiritual power, oftentimes non-human though sometimes in some cases the ancestors can evolve into these non-human figures. And so therefore divinity and deity are separate in Africa. That is to say they have a supreme being, but they have multiple deities that serve in a subsidiary way that serve the supreme deity. He was trying to find a way to capture the one and the many in the African context. You also have in this same second tier oftentimes ancestors who have been divinized. The third level in African Traditional Religion is the earthly tier, which is the functionaries who are responsible for maintaining the harmony, balance, and order in the African traditional system. Normally this comes through the expression of exercising some kind of ritualized power. This is a basic cosmology. Then in the third tier you have these mediators. And even nature itself is part of this ongoing continuum. So what you should envision is a spectrum that does not have clear demarcation, and sometimes the categories can become confused or overlap. It starts out with the supreme god at the highest level -- the supreme being or creator, and shades down into the pantheon of divinities, which would include sometimes a hierarchy of divinities, some that are more powerful than others and so forth, and would include also in that same level potentially a pantheon of human but divinized ancestors. And then that shades down once again into various functionaries – mediators, priests, and so forth, herbalists, that mediate this power. And that shades down into humans and also nature itself. And so you should always view this kind of shading going on. One of the problems that we found in the early observations of African religion which we alluded to was they observed that magic and sorcery and witchcraft was often practiced by these people in the third tier of African religion these priests. So these figures became almost mythically viewed in the western literature that more or less summarized western Africa and other parts of Africa, and their traditional religion. So what we are trying to do in this case is to acknowledge the fact that we do have people, and most traditional communities in Africa have resident experts who are experts in divination, in rituals, and the performance of magic.

Chapter 4 : What is traditional religion in Africa? - Naij Nigeria

African religions, religious beliefs and practices of the peoples of calendrierdelascience.com should be noted that any attempt to generalize about the nature of "African religions" risks wrongly implying that there is homogeneity among all African cultures.

In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content: Doubtless, the reason why no one has attempted the task previously is because it is a Herculean one, demanding not only immense erudition but also hard choices about the selection of material and its presentation. Isichei certainly has a splendid grasp of the three enormous literatures, but is less sure-footed when it comes to their organization; in consequence, the results are somewhat mixed. Isichei makes great use of primary sources, and well-chosen selections of these are used to preface each chapter. There is a useful annotated and up-to-date guide to further reading at the end of the book. But the structure of this work is problematic. After a thoughtful chapter on the study of traditional [End Page] religion and another on the Early Church in North Africa, the text is split into three main parts: Islam, Christianity and Traditional Religion. The book does an admirable job in historicizing the traditions, but because it covers so much ground the reader is fed no more than a few morsels on particular religious expressions. The book is very descriptive in places, particularly its sections on Islam, which have the appearance of amplified lecture notes. But the reader still has to work hard to find the broader patterns. Moreover, the preponderance of West African material comes at the expense of other regions, particularly eastern and south-western Africa. Because the traditions are treated separately, the reader is left with the impression that they are relatively hermetic rather than collections of ideas and practices that encountered each other and changed in the process. There is some discussion of religious interactions pp. In Chapter 21 she discusses the impact of biblical stories on the content of pre-existing myth and legend, and in the following chapter she describes how Yoruba diviners have borrowed organizational structures from Christianity. But none of these interesting ideas are given enough room to develop. Synthesis could have been achieved if there had been an introduction and conclusion – but, oddly, these chapters are missing. There are, however, some particularly tasty morsels and Isichei is at her best when she leaves behind the secondary literature to introduce new material or offer her own opinions. This is particularly the case with her treatment of Christianity. The chapter on the historic mission church in the twentieth century has some nice touches, with Isichei describing how liberal missionaries came to appreciate the values of traditional religion and how African theologians built upon them. There is also a very nuanced and perceptive chapter analysing

Chapter 5 : African Traditions - Centuries of African heritage

A solid basis for understanding the whole spectrum of the religions of Africa! Concise, expert, and fully accessible, this is an excellent introduction to the complex, diverse religious traditions of Africa practiced by peoples with vastly different cultures and languages.

Introduction The primary objective of this paper is to define the African traditional religious system as the basis of understanding Christian spiritual warfare within an African context. This background is essential to any application of Christian spirituality in Africa. For this reason, the paper serves only as an introduction to the application of Christian spirituality in Africa. There are basic African religious foundations that need to be presented and defined. These are essential for any Christian spiritual inquiry and application in Africa. African Traditional Religious System African traditional religious system has the following components: Foundational Religious Beliefs There are four foundational religious beliefs in the traditional religions: These foundational religious beliefs are essential to our theological interpretation and analysis of the traditional religions. Any meaningful and effective Christian approach to the traditional religions must begin from here. Belief in Impersonal Mystical Power s What is the influence and impact of this dominant religious belief in impersonal and mystical powers upon the whole of traditional African life? The Bible and Christian theology have to address this foundational and dominant influence and impact upon the traditional African life. The belief in the impersonal mystical power is dominant and pervasive in traditional African religious thought. The whole of creation, nature and all things and objects are consumed with this impersonal power. This impersonal power is what Edwin Smith called *mysterium tremendum*. This same power has been given various names, such as, *mana*, life force, vital force, life essence and dynamism. The manifestation and the use of the impersonal powers are related to the practices of medicine men and women, diviners and seers who use natural objects, plants and animals for medicine, magic, charms and amulets. Some specialists believe that mysterious powers imbedded in things or objects can be extracted for specific uses. Mystical and mysterious powers can be transmitted through certain object media or by pure spiritual means. Mystical powers can be sent to specific destinations for an intended good or evil. Mystical powers can be contagious by contact with objects carrying or mediating such powers. The impersonal powers can be used for both good and evil. The life of a traditional African with this belief in the impersonal powers is at the mercy of the benevolent or wicked users of the mystical powers at their disposal. This belief is very much reflected in the traditional religious practices and behaviour. As stated earlier, the belief in the impersonal mystical powers is dominant and pervasive among traditional Africans. This belief has a theological basis. Christianity must recognise and study the theological basis of the traditional African belief in the existence of mystical and mysterious forces. The religious and social role and function of this belief must be thoroughly studied and understood. The application of the Bible and the Christian Gospel to this very religious belief must address it at its foundations and roots: The Bible and the Gospel of Christ must address this traditional religious core value and its dominant influence upon man in traditional Africa. A Biblical and Christian theology has to be formulated and developed so as to address the traditional theology of mystical and impersonal powers. How do we apply the Bible and the Gospel of Christ to the nature of this belief and to the nature of its impact or influence upon man in traditional Africa? How do we study and apply the Bible and the Gospel of Christ to all the various practices, attitudes, rituals, rites and ceremonies that traditional Africa has fundamentally developed from this belief? Our theological approach must go beyond matching Biblical texts with specific traditional beliefs to addressing the theological, philosophical, moral and ethical bases and foundations of these beliefs. We must lay the axe at the root. Religious beliefs, feelings, practice and behaviour have roots and bases. The traditional conception of mystical and mysterious powers has deep theological roots. When Christian categories are introduced, such as: The traditional theology of power and forces is what should be addressed by the Bible. When a belief in the potency of mystical and mysterious powers and forces are condemned as demonic, man in traditional Africa needs to know why such things are demonic. They seem to work and he sees and experiences their power, potency and efficacy. A mere reference to a Bible verse may not be enough to dissuade and convince him to

do and believe otherwise. His religious beliefs and practices are structured within the framework of his traditional religious worldview. They must be addressed at the root, at their theological basis and worldview. What is that theological foundation of the belief in the mystical and mysterious powers and forces and its accompanied feelings, practices and behaviour? This is what a Christian theologian must find out. The African needs more than just a Bible verse, he needs a Christian worldview which contains such. He needs to know why he should believe differently.

Belief in Spirit Beings What is the influence and impact of this dominant religious belief in spirit beings upon the whole of traditional African life? The Bible and Christian theology have to address this dominant influence and impact upon the traditional African life. Traditional African concepts of reality and destiny are deeply rooted in the spirit world. The activities and the actions of the spirit beings govern all social and spiritual phenomena. The spirit world can be divided into two broad categories: Non-human spirits are regarded in hierarchical order in accordance with their kind and importance, depending upon their power and the role they play in the ontological order in the spirit world.

Oji, Man stands between this array of spiritual hosts in the spirit world and the world of nature Ikenga-Metuh, **What Constitutes the Spirit World?** What constitutes the spirit world is summarised below in the words of Kato In defining the religious worldview of Africa, Mbiti stresses the fact that the spirit world of the African people is very densely populated with spirit beings, spirits and the living-dead or the spirits of the ancestors Mbiti, The spirit world is the most pervasive worldview. There is a very close relationship between the spirit beings and the mystical or impersonal powers and forces described in the previous section. This realm of the supernatural operates mystical power, magic, witchcraft, sorcery and many others. The spirit world or the realm of the supernatural is, in a sense, a battleground of spirits and powers that use their mystical powers to influence the course of human life. These mystical powers can be designated as positive or negative, good or evil, which may bring blessings or curses. If man only knew how to master and control the realm of the supernatural, the world would be a much happier place. Belief in the mystical powers as described already, the spirit beings behind them and the human quest to control or influence them had produced a variety of specialists such as medicinemen, rainmakers, mediums, diviners, sorcerers, magicians and witches. Superstitions, totems, taboos and rituals grew out of such beliefs. For safety and protection in a world dominated by the spirit beings and powers, one needs a spiritual compass for guidance and practical efforts for control, protection and security through religious rites, reverence to ancestors, symbolic totems and regulative taboos, rituals, superstitions, customs and specialists. For guidance and protection in life, one needs some, if not all, of these. As we have already observed, in the African traditional religious thought, spirits are believed to dwell or inhabit certain trees, rocks or mountains, caves, rivers, lakes, forests, animals, human beings, the skies, the ground and other sites, carved or moulded objects, charms, amulets. The spirit beings are usually divided into two categories: The ancestors are close to the humans and serve as their custodians. All spirit beings are endowed with certain powers and they apply these powers upon the humans for their good or for their harm. Because the spirit beings are malicious, capricious and sometimes benevolent, man must be wise in his dealings with the spirit beings. They can easily be angered, provoked or injured by the humans and so man requires tact and wisdom in dealing with them. In dealing with both the impersonal mystical powers and the spirit beings, man needs human specialists who have gained experience and access to these two types of mysteries to help them live a successful life and acquire good human well-being. This belief, just as in the case of the previous one, has a theological basis. Christianity must recognise and study this very theological basis of the traditional African belief in the existence of spirit beings. The religious and social role and function of this belief in the spirits must be thoroughly studied and understood.

Belief in Many Divinities What is the influence and impact of the dominant religious belief in the divinities upon the whole of traditional African life? African traditional religions in some parts of Africa, have had an elaborate pantheon of divinities. But there are exceptions to this general observation, especially in Southern Africa and some parts of West Africa. Some African ethnic groups do not seem to have divinities, while some were known to have no special shrines or worship places designated to the divinities or to the Supreme Being. However, the Yoruba of Nigeria are known for having several hundreds of divinities. African scholars for the past three decades, have changed certain perspectives and even the definition of African divinities Idowu, ; Mbiti, Some African scholars no longer accept the term

polytheism worship of many gods. In this argument, a view is being held that sacrifices, offerings and prayers offered, are not directed to the divinities or the ancestors, as ends in themselves, but are directed ultimately to God. We have no intention of discussing this debate here, but simply to mention it in passing. African divinities are many and each has its specific area of influence and control. Some of these divinities were originally mythological figures in some African legends and primordial histories and cosmologies, while some were tribal heroes or heroines. Divinities covering different aspects of life, society and community were usually established, such as divinities of the sea or the waters, rain, thunder, fertility, health or sickness, planting or harvest, tribal, clan or family deities. African divinities took the forms of mountains, rivers, forests, the mother earth, the sun, the moon, the stars, and ancestors. The plurality of the divinities with their varying powers, influence, hierarchy, territoriality, even within one ethnic group or community, says a lot about the African religions, worship, beliefs and practices. This leaves an open door for religious accommodation, tolerance, assimilation and adaptation within the traditional religious thought. The traditional African understanding and the interpretation of Christianity have deep roots in these fundamental beliefs of the African traditional religions. This belief, just as in the case of the previous one, has a theological basis – the plurality of divinities polytheism. With the introduction of Christianity or other religions, such as Islam, this belief with its worldview may have an added feature and it is henotheism, the worship of one god without denying the existence of other gods. There is a possibility that the Christian God who has been introduced, can be worshipped along with other gods. The theological basis of this traditional belief allows it to take place without creating any serious theological crisis in the traditional religion. Plurality of gods or divinities permits plurality of beliefs, practices, feelings and behaviour in one religion. This belief also gives room for accommodation, adaptation and domestication of new gods or divinities into the old religion.

Chapter 6 : Religious Traditions – Hunter College

Traditional African religion is based on oral traditions, which means that the basic values and way of life are passed from elders to younger generation. These traditions are not religious principles, but a cultural identity that is passed on through stories, myths and tales.

Personal use only; commercial use is strictly prohibited for details see Privacy Policy and Legal Notice. The New World enslavement of diverse African peoples and the cultural encounter with Europeans and Native Americans produced distinctive religious perspectives that aided individuals and communities in persevering under the dehumanization of slavery and oppression. As African Americans embraced Christianity beginning in the 18th century, especially after , they gathered in independent church communities and created larger denominational structures such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, and the National Baptist Convention. These churches and denominations became significant arenas for spiritual support, educational opportunity, economic development, and political activism. Black religious institutions served as contexts in which African Americans made meaning of the experience of enslavement, interpreted their relationship to Africa, and charted a vision for a collective future. The early 20th century saw the emergence of new religious opportunities as increasing numbers of African Americans turned to Holiness and Pentecostal churches, drawn by the focus on baptism in the Holy Spirit and enthusiastic worship that sometimes involved speaking in tongues. The Great Migration of southern blacks to southern and northern cities fostered the development of a variety of religious options outside of Christianity. Groups such as the Moorish Science Temple and the Nation of Islam, whose leaders taught that Islam was the true religion of people of African descent, and congregations of Ethiopian Hebrews promoting Judaism as the heritage of black people, were founded in this period. Earlyth-century African American religion was also marked by significant cultural developments as ministers, musicians, actors, and other performers turned to new media, such as radio, records, and film, to contribute to religious life. Black religious leaders emerged as prominent spokespeople for the cause and others as vocal critics of the goal of racial integration, as in the case of the Nation of Islam and religious advocates of Black Power. The second half of the 20th century and the early 21st-first century saw new religious diversity as a result of immigration and cultural transformations within African American Christianity with the rise of megachurches and televangelism. African American , African American religions , black churches , new religious movements , Civil Rights movement , women and religion , religion and politics Enslavement and Religious Transformation African American religious cultures were born in the crucible of American slavery, a system that not only ruptured direct connections to African history, culture, and religious community, but also set the context for the emergence of transformed and new religious systems. Africans brought forcibly to the Americas came from a variety of cultural, linguistic, and religious environments in West and West Central Africa. Most practiced ancient religious traditions focused on maintaining harmonious relationships with nature and supernatural beings, including gods, spirits, and ancestors. Some enslaved Africans in America, especially those from the Senegambia region, were Muslim while others, such as those from the West African kingdom of Kongo who had come into contact with the Portuguese, were Catholic. African traditional religions dominated among those pressed into New World slavery, however, and these worldviews would serve as the ground for the development of varied African diaspora religious cultures. The horrors of the Middle Passage in which more than 10 million Africans were transported to the Americas and consigned to chattel slavery made it impossible to perpetuate language, culture, and religion as they had existed in African contexts. The cultural and religious resources they brought with them proved resilient and adaptable, however, and would contribute to the worldviews and practices that emerged under American slavery. Change over time, regional differences, and religious context are important considerations for understanding how African American religious cultures took shape in antebellum America and why they differ in significant ways from other parts of the African diaspora. The large number of Africans transported to the Caribbean and Latin America and the longer duration of the trade in some regions meant that cultural and religious ties here were more vibrant than in the North American colonies, where only 5

percent of those transported from Africa arrived, primarily in the period from to . In addition, the predominance of Catholicism in the French and Spanish colonies created a context in which enslaved Africans were able to combine their ritual work to maintain connections to gods and spirits with veneration of the Catholic saints. Africans in the North American colonies were most likely to be enslaved by Protestant Europeans, who were more resistant to such blended religious practices. Although enslaved Africans in North America did not reproduce the varied religious systems of West and West Central Africa, these worldviews were among the many resources on which they drew to produce distinctive African American cultures, identity, and forms of resistance. Invested economically in the institution of slavery and committed to the notion of the inferiority of Africans, many slaveholders worried that conversion would require manumission and disrupt racial hierarchy. Even with assurance from church and political leaders that conversion to Christianity did not mandate freedom for the enslaved, resistance among slaveholders remained strong, as white Anglican cleric Francis Le Jau found in his mission work in early 18th-century South Carolina, where the brutality of the slave system shocked him. Le Jau also faced discomfort in a range of forms by slaveholders to shared religious commitment with blacks, including the refusal of one man to take Communion when enslaved Africans were at the Holy Table and queries from a woman about whether she would be forced to see her slaves in heaven. Many European Americans could not imagine African Americans having the capacity to understand Christianity and also feared that extending baptism and Christian fellowship would convince the enslaved of their equality to whites. Consequently, the substance of Christian teaching that most missionaries and slaveholders conveyed focused not on liberation and equality but on divinely ordained racial hierarchy. It is not surprising that this sort of theological framework did not appeal to the majority of enslaved African Americans in colonial America. The ranks of the evangelical Baptists and Methodists grew through the spread of the revivals and, motivated by a commitment to spiritual equality, some white Baptists and Methodists questioned the moral grounds of slavery. Ultimately, the opposition to abolition of most southern white Christian slaveholders motivated these denominations to step back from their antislavery positions. Despite the turn away from an explicitly antislavery Christian posture, Baptists and Methodists supported the development of black Christian leadership, licensing African American men to preach and helping to foster the beginnings of institutional life among black Christians. The revivals of the Second Great Awakening of the late 18th and early 19th centuries extended the geographic reach of evangelicalism as the nation expanded into new territory and also drew increasing numbers of African Americans to Christianity. In enthusiastic and embodied communal worship they also sang spirituals that spoke of sorrow, joy, justice, salvation, and liberation, and they danced the ring shout in a counterclockwise circular movement meant to make the Holy Spirit present. Slave religion, then, served as a source of individual and communal comfort and the means to endure the brutality of slavery. Black abolitionists, such as lecturer and journalist Maria W. Stewart , who grounded her claims for social justice in biblical exegesis, and David Walker , whose Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World warned of divine punishment on America for the sins of oppression, exemplified this approach. In other instances, religion fostered open rebellion against slavery, as with the planned revolt in Richmond, Virginia, that participants organized in religious meetings led by Gabriel Prosser , the appeal to scripture and use of religious meetings to plan the aborted revolt of Denmark Vesey in South Carolina in , and the rebellion in Northampton, Virginia, organized by religious visionary and preacher Nat Turner . Even as the influence of religion on the men who led these rebellions against slavery is clear, evidence also exists that Christianity served to accommodate some enslaved African Americans to their status, as demonstrated in the address of enslaved poet and preacher Jupiter Hammon in which he enjoined enslaved blacks to be the obedient servants he felt Christ called them to be and await their reward in heaven. Conjure, derived from West Central African ritual work to harness the power of the natural and spiritual world to protect, heal, and sometimes harm, was a feature of African American culture, as were other folk healing practices using roots and herbs. Islam was also part of the religious world of enslaved Africans in the antebellum American South, with the relatively small number of Muslims struggling to maintain their religious practices, create community, and preserve the Arabic language across generations. Muslims such as Omar ibn Said c. Taken together, this range of religious expressions provided resources for the development

of culture in common, a sense of collective identity as African Americans, and affirmation of black humanity. Early independent black Baptist churches include the Silver Bluff, Georgia, church led in the 1700s by David George c. The Baptist framework appealed to those in bondage because its structure of congregational autonomy supported local leadership and independence. Although these formerly enslaved men and their largely enslaved congregants faced monitoring and restrictions on religious practice, the institutions they founded became important sites promoting African American interpretations of Christianity that affirmed the humanity of black people. Free black Baptists in northern states, where slavery was abolished gradually following the American Revolution, also established important congregations. In many cases, black Methodists founded independent congregations in response to the racism they experienced in the predominantly white congregations to which they belonged. In Philadelphia, Richard Allen ‐, a former slave and licensed Methodist preacher, belonged to the predominantly white St. Allen, along with Absalom Jones ‐, another former slave and lay preacher, and other black congregants objected to the increasing discrimination they suffered in their home church, marked most clearly by the new policy relegating black members to the church balcony. Two congregations emerged from this movement, reflecting the varied theological and institutional interests among the former members of St. One contingent founded the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas in with Absalom Jones, the first African American to be ordained an Episcopal priest, as its first rector, and the other formed Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in with Allen as its pastor. In Allen called together the leaders of a number of other black Methodist congregations in the region and they formed the African Methodist Episcopal AME Church, the first black denomination in America, with Allen as the first bishop. Conflicts between leaders of various contingents of African Methodists led Varick and Zion Church to organize a small group of independent black Methodist congregations in under the denominational umbrella of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. Clergy and members of the AME and AME Zion Churches often became public voices on pressing issues, a role that highlights the significance of churches in fostering black leadership throughout African American history. African American denominations also contributed to black public life and culture throughout the 19th century by creating and supporting a range of economic enterprises, including publishing houses that produced journals and newspapers, including the AME Church Review, the Christian Recorder, and the Star of Zion, that covered religious and secular issues. By the end of the 19th century, black denominations also established a range of educational institutions. From their founding moments, then, independent African American denominations served as more than spiritual homes for black Christians; they also offered education, opportunity for economic development, a platform for political advocacy, and an environment that supported a collective sense of peoplehood. Black women preachers such as Jarena Lee b. Grounding their insistence on a right to leadership in both biblical interpretation and the claim to have experienced a direct call from God, Lee and other 19th-century preaching women in the AME and AME Zion Churches called their denominations to live up to their stated missions of proclaiming the equality of all under God. Facing resistance from the male leadership of their churches and from many male and female members, these women persisted in their work as itinerant evangelists and some published spiritual narratives to recount their experiences and promote their claims. Zion became the first black denomination to ordain women when Julia Foote ‐ was ordained a deacon in , a status women in the AME Church gained in Despite the limited access to formal leadership roles, women within these independent black church denominations, who constituted the majority of members, were active contributors to the life of the church, serving as fundraisers, evangelists, and missionaries, for example. Culture and class differences sometimes led to conflict, however, as AME Church leaders sought to restrain the enthusiasm of southern black worship and impose their own standards of respectability. The Reconstruction period also saw the founding of the Colored now Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in in Jackson, Tennessee, by former enslaved members of the white-controlled Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Drawing together independent black Baptist congregations and mission and educational societies, the NBC emerged at its founding moment in Atlanta under the leadership of former slave Elias C. In addition, black Baptist women in the 19th and early 20th centuries contributed to the life of the church as individual evangelists or as licensed preachers. Although the women of the WC and the NBC at large did not organize to

press for ordination, black Baptist women nevertheless initiated significant public discussions within their denomination about religion, gender, and equality. Some African Americans found spiritual homes in predominantly white churches, including Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, and Episcopal denominations, drawn by family ties, theological appeal, or style of worship. For many who had been enslaved in regions with large Roman Catholic populations, Catholicism was the dominant culture that shaped their religious lives. As with other predominantly white denominations, access to leadership in Roman Catholicism was often restricted and African American men found it difficult to gain admission to the priesthood. A few prominent black priests made their mark on 19th-century black Catholic life, however, including former Missouri slave August Tolton , who was ordained in Rome in , and Charles Randolph Uncles of Baltimore, who became the first African American ordained in the United States. In a number of important instances, black women were successful in founding religious orders through which they could pursue their religious vocations. Although the orders remained small, black Catholic sisters were visible figures in 19th-century African American Catholic life. African American lay Catholics organized at the end of the 19th century to represent their interests as a group to the church at large and, despite experiences of racism and exclusion, to promote Catholicism among black Protestants as a universal and inclusive tradition. Former slave and Ohio journalist Daniel A. Rudd founded The American Catholic Tribune in to promote black Catholic interests, and he stood at the forefront of the Colored Catholic Congress movement that called black Catholics together from to to discuss their status within the church and to strategize to oppose racism in church and society. Christian Mission at Home and Abroad In the late 19th century, African American denominations turned their attention to Africa as a mission site and, in some instances, as a place to settle and pursue black self-governance. While black missionaries had worked through white mission societies earlier in the century, the support of black-led denominational structures made additional connections to Africa possible and allowed African Americans to frame their work in ways that spoke directly to their concerns. Where the biblical story of the Exodus had provided a map of meaning and a ground for hope for many enslaved and free African Americans in the antebellum period, after the end of slavery African American Christians looked to the Bible for other sources of inspiration and knowledge about their future. Some interpreted Psalm The American Colonization Society ACS , founded in by northern and southern whites concerned about growing numbers of free people of color in the United States, advocated transporting free blacks to Africa and, to achieve that goal, established a settlement that would eventually become part of Liberia. The ACS encouraged free blacks to emigrate and secured funds to purchase the freedom of enslaved people on the condition that they agree to be transported to Africa. Some individuals, such as founding member Daniel Coker , argued that prospects for free blacks would be better in Africa given restricted opportunities in the United States. Most AME leaders opposed colonization, however, holding that as Americans they should not have to leave the country of their birth to secure liberty and rights. Moreover, many argued, it would be devastating to the cause of abolition for free blacks, who could serve as advocates for the enslaved to leave. The denomination formally condemned the colonization scheme; nevertheless, some members continued to find the idea appealing. In Coker joined with the ACS to embark on missionary work in Sierra Leone, traveling aboard the Elizabeth with eighty-five other colonists in a largely unsuccessful venture. In the s AME clergy and church members constituted part of the Liberian Exodus movement in which a number of groups, most famously the company of people aboard the Azor that sailed from Charleston to Monrovia in , gave up on the possibility of safety and prosperity in America and sought to build lives and communities elsewhere. Black Methodists, such as internationally recognized traveling evangelist Amanda Berry Smith , also engaged in independent missionary work, largely without institutional support. In AME bishop Henry McNeal Turner traveled to West Africa and southern Africa to incorporate into the denomination the churches that earlier missionaries had established. In Levi J. In Carey traveled to Sierra Leone as a missionary, accompanied by his wife, two children, and twenty members of his congregation. The group settled in Liberia the following year and Carey founded Providence Baptist Church in Monrovia, which he pastored until his death in Later black Baptists saw Carey as a model for their work, establishing the Lott Carey Foreign Mission Convention in , which, along with state mission boards, supported Baptist missions. African American members of predominantly white denominations also

engaged in missionary work in Africa, including Virginia native and ordained Presbyterian minister William H. Incorporating Africans into their biblical interpretations of the divine plan for black Christianity to lead the way to human redemption, missionaries and colonists rejected African traditional religions and worked to transform African societies according to the standards of Western Christian civilization. Even many of those who learned indigenous languages and attended to the social, economic, and medical needs of Africans in the regions of their missionary work still viewed indigenous religious and cultural systems as heathen and in need of reform.

African traditional religions have creatively responded to this religious onslaught by formulating new ways of survival, such as developing literature, institutionalizing the traditions, establishing associations of priests, and creating schools for the training of its priests.

However, there were many traditional religions practiced prior to the arrival of these two religions. Today, around 10 percent of the African population still practice some form of traditional religion. Common Beliefs Although Africa is a huge continent with many different peoples and traditional religions, some beliefs and practices are common through many of the religions. Supreme God - Many African religions believed in a supreme god that created the world. Some examples include the gods Oludmare of Nigeria and Katonda of Uganda. In some religions this god may be prayed to for help, but in others the supreme god does not interact with humans. Nature Spirits - Beneath the supreme god are a number of spirits who mostly live in nature including animals, water, and the earth. Ancestral Spirits - The spirits of dead ancestors often played an important part in traditional African religion. By honoring these spirits, believers hoped that the spirits would help them or would talk to the supreme god on their behalf. Sacrifice - Most Ancient African religions offered some sort of sacrifice to their gods or the spirits. This sacrifice varied from small items, like a portion of food or drink, to much larger items like cattle or even human sacrifice. Rites of Passage - Traditional religions played an important role in the rites of passage. These included rituals surrounding marriage, entering adulthood, birth, and death. Magic Many traditional African religions believe in mysterious forces and magic. Priests sometimes called witchdoctors could cast spells or provide charms to help people with their illnesses or other problems. Sometimes the witchdoctors used herbs and other remedies to help the sick. Certain artisans were considered to use magic in their craft. The most powerful of the artisans were the ironworkers. Ironworkers would keep the secret of how they forged iron within their group in order to maintain the mystery and power of their craft. Rituals Traditional rituals and ceremonies played an important part in the community. Masks, drums, chanting, and dancing were often a part of the ritual. Generally the rituals called on the spirits of ancestors or the spirits of nature for help and assistance. They believed in both good and bad spirits. Good spirits would protect them, while bad spirits could make them ill or make them misbehave. In the dry areas of Africa, certain priests would specialize as "rain-makers. Although many Africans today identify with Christianity or Islam as their religion, many of them still participate in traditional African rituals. Some traditional beliefs and rituals from Africa spread to the Americas in places like Brazil and Cuba. Activities Take a ten question quiz about this page. Listen to a recorded reading of this page: Your browser does not support the audio element. To learn more about Ancient Africa:

Religion in Africa is multifaceted and has been a major influence on art, culture and calendrierdelascience.com, the continent's various populations and individuals are mostly adherents of Christianity, Islam, and to a lesser extent several Traditional African religions.

Traditional religions and music The partnering of the terms music and religion in regards to Africa can only have an a priori informative value. For centuries, the relationship between the two fields has seemed so intimate that it is difficult to believe that one ever existed without the other. Apart from Islam, which has debated the place of music in its religious practices, music and religion seem to form a homogenous couple. But if this criterion was rigid, religious music would be reduced, at least in Africa, to virtually nothing. We propose to take a look, both diachronic and synchronic, at the relationship religion maintains with music in Africa. Do not be misled by the usage of the singular in regards to the nature of religion. Beyond the initial global perspective, we will also examine the specific relation that specific religions hold with music.

Traditional African religions and music To speak of sacred music in regards to African religions necessitates caution. Some prefer to speak of sacred music in Africa only in regards to religions of the book, especially Christianity. Thus, they see it as debuting during colonisation. In fact, it is difficult to discuss sacred music in traditional religions without taking some precautions. The first concerns the notion of traditional religion. What is it exactly? It is a bit of all of those. But if one looks a bit closer, traditional African religion has a primarily social function of structuring and moralizing. In this sense, traditional ceremonies cannot be separated from the sacred, even if they maintain a relatively secular character. The second precaution arises from the vision one has of the sacred and the profane. On the other hand, one cannot deny that there are purely sacred tam-tam rhythms. It can be argued that these rhythms belong to the secular repertoire as well. This is also true. However, as for the rest, it does not seem judicious to establish such a radical separation between two spaces which, for most African peoples, juxtapose and interact. That being said let us try to understand the relationship between traditional religions and music. In Africa, songs are always associated with life events: Among certain peoples, traditional music is so diversified that each rhythm carries its own symbolically valuable imprint. Thus, during a festive occasion such as a marriage or the naming of a newborn, the sounds of the tam-tam spread the news. When there is mourning, that is broadcast too. The music also announces the steps to follow during a ceremony. For example, among the Moba of Togo, all the phases of a funerary ceremony, starting with the announcement of the death to the burial and including the other expressions that will follow through the burial and the end of the mourning period, are punctuated by different rhythms. When one reaches the stage of the washing of the body, everyone learns of it by the sound of the tam-tam. One can thus follow all the stages of a traditional ceremony even from a distance. Music thus holds a large place in traditional practices and is, in this way, related to religious practice. Those who limit traditional African religion to a set of diabolical magic practices while removing it from the social field that it structures only see music as playing a trivial role. No traditional religion holds itself separate from the traditional ceremonies which structure social life and anthropological time. Beyond this general framework, it is necessary to bring up the specific case of peoples among whom music not only accompanies the ceremony but plays an integral role in all its stages and their unfolding. This is the case of the atigali and blekete ceremonies in Togo and of voodoo in countries on the coast of the Gulf of Benin. The spirits or fetishes take possession of the persons through which those spirits will manifest themselves vodussi to the rhythm of the tam-tams that call them. A sort of euphoric atmosphere sets in during which the spirit penetrates the person of its choosing, provoking in that person a violent trance. The gods manifest themselves through dance during the trance and during the possession in the course of voodoo ceremonies. Dance and music fill a decisive function in the symbolic configuration of the link with the divinity; dance forms the foundation of a physical rapport between man and the divine. During the ceremonial dance a process of conquest-recuperation of the body, which is no longer controlled by the individual, establishes itself. This process is achieved by the intermediary of the tambour so that the spirits can incarnate themselves through the bodies of their followers. Each rhythm of the tambour is

supposed to correspond to a specific god. Thus, dance seems to be a method of communication with ancestors and the gods. It would be false however to pretend that all traditional music is sacred. In addition to the sounds and rhythms that cannot be played outside of appropriate events, there is purely playful music that can be played, without offence to anyone, in traditional ceremonies. This music distinguishes itself by its festive spirit and invitation to dance. The last characteristic led to the adoption of certain rhythms, once reserved for religious occasions, to also be used at festive events. As a result, certain rhythms once strictly reserved for one, are used at both type of events. This double usage gives proof to the remark made above about the superposition, homogeneity even, of these categories.

Foreign religions and traditional religions: The historical evolution of sacred music is inextricable from the history of the people. While the evangelisation of sub-Saharan Africa dates back many centuries, holy Christian music that is specifically African only dates back a few decades. The oldest musical manifestations date from the beginning of the s when, to ratify the liturgical reform initiated by the Council, some African churches dared to introduce songs, rhythms and even dances of the land into the liturgy. But even before this cultural adaptation, during the period when Latin was still the official language of the Catholic Church and the liturgical language par excellence, missionaries found themselves obligated, for evangelisation and pastoral needs, to translate the existing liturgical songs into local languages. Some even had to translate the songs from their own native languages. The French would also have to do this in the North beginning in the s. Regarding Catholicism before Vatican 2, even though the need to adapt Christianity to local realities of the different peoples was evident, the African traditions were kept at a distance because they were considered, by ignorance, devilish. To do this, African Christians did not at the outset attempt to invent a new genre. They contented themselves with repeating the existing popular tunes while giving them a new sense. The festive parts of the liturgy copied the joyous melodies of traditional music and the meditative parts, particular airs of traditional religion. When all is said and done, traditional music produced and fed Christian music. In the countryside, for example, the melodies are still very traditional. On the other hand, the music is moving farther and farther away from traditional music, especially with the influence of polyphony, choirs and Gospel music. In regards to Islam, there is no African particularity. Among Muslims, sacred art has always been a point of debate. Music, for example, has never been able to take a dominant place in Islam as it has in Christianity. In most cases, the usage of music is limited to the recitation of the Koran which is sung more than spoken when done in the company of others. Nevertheless, here and there, one finds the usage of local languages in religious songs composed, not for prayer itself, but for gatherings of worshipers. In fact, outside of prayer where singing, strictly speaking, has little place, most socio-religious ceremonies marriage, circumcision have religious songs that honour the glory of the Prophet. As in the case of Christians, the songs are modelled on existing tunes and rhythms of local culture, even if the Arab and Eastern influence is less perceptible. Gospel at the crossroads of the holy and the profane

If Catholic churches have travelled a long road to arrive at a music dear to African worshipers, Protestant churches have had less difficulty. Not only did they introduce traditional instruments into their liturgy in the s, but they also adopted the musical tradition born of the adaptation and reinterpretation of white Protestant hymns by Africans taken to the United States between the 17th and 19th centuries which imposed themselves throughout the Anglophone Protestant world. In Togo, the first missionaries being German, then French, the influence was, for a long time, European. It was later that gospel music was adopted. Gospel, an evangelical and reverential music sung, after its birth, in a more emotional tone, transformed into songs of celebration, joy, exhortation, and communion in the heart of African churches between the preacher and his congregation. Gospel maintained its evangelical lyricism that often called for obedience to God and refusal of the kingdom of sin in order to gain rewards in Heaven. However, gospel is especially music of celebration of faith and love of God. The songs are built on a chorus of voices, either singing in unison or led by one singer. They are executed with a fervent enthusiasm and energy motivated by spiritual inspiration while leaving room for improvisation and solo vocalisations. For a long time, gospel remained confined to churches. It was in the beginning of the s, during the explosion of independent churches, that so-called Christian orchestras singing gospel appeared. Little by little, it asserted itself to gain a place beside secular music as a popular music that one could sing and dance to during the same occasions. It was therefore not because gospel dug deep into the

roots of African traditions that it was so quickly adopted in Africa. It was its resolutely festive and rhythmic aspect that made it so popular. Many among them are linked to churches, conducting ceremonies and, at the same time, leading ceremonies and church services in less holy spots. From popular religious songs interpreted during services, gospel has progressively left the church for the stage. These songs have become the works of artists who have gained fame, glory and profit from them. They borrowed certain elements and instruments drums, but also brass then electric guitars from secular music. Gospel songs rapidly secularized and adapted themselves to the commercial exigencies of a world where radio has become the primary tool of diffusion. This evolution was facilitated by the fact that African-Americans, following Africans, never separated the spiritual from the temporal. Work songs and traditional celebrations were always mixed, feeding off each other. Today, gospel is sung in places of worship and on stage. Believers and non-believers alike compose these songs so well that it is difficult to demarcate between secular and religious music, especially when it comes to sound, orchestration, and choreography. The two genres converge; they use the same instruments, chords, rhythms, and sources. The current trends in rhythm and cadence call for the same gestures and surface behaviour. Gospel has become a serious competitor to secular music that shows no sign of diminishing. From Togo to the Congo A festival uniting all the big names of African gospel has been going on for several years. The latest, held in , showcased, once again, the importance of the phenomenon. Starting in , gospel was included amongst the different musical categories presented at the Koras in South Africa.

Chapter 9 : Lesson 1 - Introduction to African Traditional Religion | Free Online Biblical Library

Africa is a massive continent with diverse religious traditions, to the extent that within the same tradition there have been variations. The three main religious traditions—African traditional religion, Christianity, and Islam—constitute the triple religious heritage of the African continent.

Those originating within the continent are generally termed traditional, although it would be wrong to think of traditional beliefs and practices as static or unchanging. Cultural borrowing from parts of the Middle East and Europe began in North Africa well before the beginning of the Common Era, twenty centuries ago. Because of the absence of written records outside the Nile Valley, little is known about the early history of traditional cultures in Africa other than that they had millennia to develop and spread. Detailed descriptions of some African societies south of the Sahara occur in Islamic accounts from the later Middle Ages and from the s in European accounts of the Atlantic coasts. Consequently, pockets of African Muslims and Christians came into existence south of the Sahara. Although some Africans learned languages and beliefs from abroad, Islam and Christianity were also Africanized as they spread. Those Africans whom the slave trades transported across the Sahara, the Indian Ocean, and the Atlantic brought their cultures with them and, in turn, their cultures were altered by contact with other societies. The greatest cultural changes within Africa have come within the last two centuries under the influence of European colonial rule and Muslim and Christian missionaries. Despite profound changes, Africans maintain and cherish strong cultural continuities with their past. General Overviews The systematic, comparative study of African religion and culture largely began in the colonial era, when Western anthropologists were preceded by Christian missionaries. Historians took up studies even later, but the important introduction and case studies in Ranger and Kimambo show what historians should and can do. Vansina is a guidebook to recovering history from oral traditions, while Herbert uses physical objects as a basis for exploring ideas and beliefs. Horton is an intellectual rigorous effort to define the cultural boundaries of African religious thought, though nonspecialists may find the account of African religions in Ray more accessible. Lapidus places African Islam in the larger Islamic world. Mintz and Price is essential reading for the development of African-derived cultures in the Americas. Iron, Gender, and Power: Rituals of Transformation in African Societies. Indiana University Press, Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West: Essays on Magic, Religion, and Science. Cambridge University Press, Taking off from an attempt to understand African religion, these essays by an influential anthropologist range over many aspects of African intellectual life and propose an original way of thinking about religion. A History of Islamic Societies, 2d ed. This sweeping history of the entire Islamic world allows one to understand the Islamization of African societies and the Africanization of Islam. The Birth of African-American Culture: The Historical Study of African Religion. University of California Press, A pioneering work on religion from antiquity through the colonial period, this scholarly collection is primarily concerned with traditional religions in eastern Africa. Symbol, Ritual, and Community. Upper Saddle River, NJ: This wide-ranging, well-organized introduction to African religious history focuses primarily on traditional African religions but also includes substantial treatment of religion, nationalism, African Islam, and African independent churches. Oral Tradition as History. University of Wisconsin Press,