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The page numbers of this article appear in bold and between square brackets in this PDF. I have made quite a few changes – corrections, emendations – in this text and added two later publications by me, one on Akan ‘monotheism’ in footnote 39, and another on the question whether the Lemba were Jews in footnotes 146 and 190.

[46]

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THE RELIGIONS OF AFRICA IN THEIR HISTORICAL ORDER

In this contribution I present a ‘history’ of the religions of Africa. I order them chronologically after the moment they appeared on the continent of (sub-Saharan) Africa. The ‘indigenous’ as well as the ‘immigrant’ religions have been included in the category ‘the religions of Africa’, the sole criterion for inclusion being whether or not a religion has believers who are permanent residents in sub-Saharan Africa, irrespective of the colour of their skin and whether or not their sense of identity is an ‘African’ one. This criterion allows me to show that as many as thirteen distinct religions, or rather types of religions, are being practised in Africa, be it with very different spans of time, some being indigenous since palaeolithic times, and others residing in Africa since only a few centuries, decades or even years. They are, in historical order, the African traditional/indigenous religions (ATRs); Christianity; Islam; Judaism; Sikhism; the Parsee religion; Jainism; the Chinese religion; Buddhism; the new esoteric religions; Baha’i; and Afro-American religions returning to Africa.

Histories of humans, their societies, cultures, and religions, do not begin only at the moment they become literate and begin to produce the texts from which historians can produce their histories. However important an event the advent of literacy is in the history of a society, it is not the beginning of its history.¹ Humans, as well as their societies, cultures and religions, are historical by the mere fact that they exist, or existed, for a specific period in a specific place, that is by being time- and space-bound. So are the societies, cultures and religions of Africa south of the Sahara, those of the past as well as those of the present. Because the pre-colonial societies of tropical Africa did not produce texts, they have been said not to have a history. As a result, they were effectively marginalised in text-based Western academic traditions, and homogenized as primitive in Western perceptions.² Their marginalisation and homogenisation were required especially in the colonial period, when an ideology of ‘civilisation’, and in particular of the superiority of Western civilisation, was constructed to legitimate the colonisation of Africa by inventing and upholding the contrast between ‘civilized society’ as ‘progressive’, and ‘primitive society’ as ‘static’; and by constantly imposing the role of ‘regressive counter-images’ upon the colonised societies.³

¹ An example of the widely held scripto-centric view, that history began only with the advent of literacy, is Smart (1992: 30) where he writes about ‘the depths of *the past* [...] *before history began*’, about which we may know something ‘from the things which have been left to us *from beyond the historical record*’ (my italics).

² Cf. Shaw 1990a: 349-350, *passim*

³ Cf. Mudimbe 1988; Ranger 1988: 864-866; Hackett 1990; Lewis 1990: 311, 314, 319; Murphy 1990; Baum 1990

However, in the four decades since the decolonisation of Africa, it has been possible to develop proper historical perspectives on African societies before the advent of colonialism by the critical use of their oral histories, external written sources, and archaeological, linguistic and other data. These efforts, described in somewhat greater detail in my other contribution to this volume, have created a general historical framework in which work on the history of the religions of Africa,⁴ its oral as well as its scriptural ones, has become an exciting possibility which has been pursued by both African and non-African historians in the past few decades, 'though it remains true that African religious history is the least fully developed'.⁵

[47] This article seeks to provide a general background to this book on the study of the religions of (sub-Saharan) Africa by an overview of the rich reservoir of religions, indigenous as well as immigrant, subsumed under the term 'the religions of Africa'. I survey that abundance historically by ordering the religions of Africa chronologically after the moment they appeared on the African scene either as transformations of religions already present, or when they began their transformation into an African religion by immigrating into the continent of (sub-Saharan) Africa. This survey will take us back as long ago as palaeolithic times, which is longer ago than the history of religions can be taken back in any part of the globe. It will also take us up to this very day, which is also as far as the history of religions can be taken forward in any continent.

By this procedure, the religions of Africa south of the Sahara are de-marginalized: they are put on an equal footing with the religions of humankind in any other part of the world, and treated as an integral part of the history of the religions of humankind. And they are contextualized: I discuss at least some of the several secular factors (ecological, economical, social, political, etc.) by which they became parts of the history of Africa. I also show their plurality by exhibiting their diversity. And I insist on their interactive and dynamic character by indicating, however briefly, the ranges and qualities of their interactions. These range from the isolation cultivated by some diaspora religions to the receptivity of the African traditional religions; and from the hostility of the exclusivist doctrinal faith religions to the ecumenicity of their liberal inclusive varieties. By exposing the contextuality, plurality, and dynamic character of the religions of Africa, I show they have a history in common of – several degrees and sorts of – interaction and co-transformation.⁶

The panorama presented can, however, only be the barest outline of a history within the confines of an introductory article. I have merely chronologically ordered Africa's 'rainbow of religions' into the distinct types, and major forms, which have thrived, and are prospering, on the continent. Virtually all the specifics of the histories of the particular religions must be ignored except that certain major varieties of some are fleetingly indicated, again mostly in chronological order.

⁴ 'Africa', when used without further qualification in this article, refers to Africa south of the Sahara, as it does in the rest of this book.

⁵ Ranger 1988: 866

⁶ Hackett's analysis of the Calabar religious scene (Hackett 1989) is an excellent example of such an integrated approach to the dynamics of religious life at the level of an African town; as is also the collection of studies she edited (Hackett 1987) at the level of an African nation.

Africa's rainbow of religions

Africa south of the Sahara is viewed by most palaeoanthropologists as the cradle of humankind, both in the long term perspective of the genesis of humans from the other primates over the past six million years,⁷ and in the shorter term of the origin of modern humankind, *Homo sapiens sapiens*, which has peopled the earth in [48] the past 200,000 years.⁸ The Sahara has played a crucial role in both the long and short term history of humankind, and in that of the societies, cultures and religions of Africa. When much cooler climates⁹ brought it adequate rainfall, it was a well-watered, fertile and relatively densely populated area. A few such periods also occurred between 100,000 and 38,000 years BP ('before present'), during the Middle Stone Age (MSA),¹⁰ as is attested by archaeological evidence, and between 10,000 and 3,000 years BP, in the Later Stone Age (LSA),¹¹ as is clear from rock paintings in the Sahara. They show that not only elephants and rhinos lived there, but also that humans began to supplement food gathering, fishing, and hunting, with incipient forms of animal husbandry and agriculture. They domesticated not only cattle but also antelopes and giraffes.¹² In these pluvial periods, the Sahara allowed for easy communication of humans and ideas between North, West, and Central Africa, and between the African and Eurasian continents. Before the beginning of the Iron Age, however, the Sahara had become again the arid sea of sand which it had been in all earlier warmer periods and is still now, with very few inhabitants, and very limited traffic of humans, goods and ideas till the nomadic Bedouin introduced the camel into it. In time, they, and Muslim merchants from North Africa, began to use the camel as the beast of burden along caravan routes established in the Sahara since at least neolithic times, Muslim merchants also carrying Islam across the Sahara to the empires of ancient Ghana, Mali, and Songhay, emerging in the Sahel in medieval times.¹³

⁷ Cf. e.g. Clark 1973: 34-43; Tanner 1981; Weaver e.a. 1985; Phillipson 1985: 11-57; Johanson & Shreeve 1989; Coppens e.a. 1990

⁸ Cf. e.g. Weaver 1985: 616-617; Garrett e.a. 1988. Against the majority view that all modern humans (*Homo sapiens sapiens*) are the descendants of an ancestress who lived in Africa some 200,000 years ago (cf. e.g., Putman 1988: 456-462), some palaeoanthropologists maintain that modern humankind has descended from more than one of the earlier stocks of humans (cf. Putman 1988: 462-465). Cf. also the caution sounded by Rightmire (1984: 165) against the conclusion that the Border Cave hominid remains (cf. below note 9) definitively prove that modern man evolved first in sub-Saharan Africa.

⁹ On their chronology, cf. Volman 1984: 171; Deacon 1984: 238; Phillipson 1985: 50-51, 88-89, 131

¹⁰ From roughly 140,000 to 40,000 years ago. It is preceded by the Early Stone Age (ESA), from 2,000,000 years, when the first stone artefacts, mainly hand axes and cleavers, appeared. From 140,000 years ago, ESA hand axes and cleavers began to be replaced by flake and blade stone tools, such as points and scrapers (Volman 1984: 169-170, 172, 193).

¹¹ From c.40,000 years ago, when microlithic tools, such as arrow points for hunting, polished bone points for fishing, bone needles and awls, ostrich eggshell beads, bored stone digging stick weights, engraved stones, etc. began to appear (Deacon 1984: 221-222, 240, 294-298), to the Iron Age. The more precise times at which the transitions to a new technological complex (ESA, MSA, LSA, Iron Age) were made vary by region (cf. e.g. Deacon 1984: 237-238). Towards the end of the LSA age, pottery began to appear (Deacon 1984: 223, 296). Iron began to be worked in North Africa from 800 BCE ('before the common era'); in the Sahel from 300 BCE; in Nigeria between 400 and 200 BCE; in Ghana after 100 CE ('common era'). Between 300 BCE and 300 CE, it spread over East and Central Africa and as far south as Natal (cf. Phillipson 1985: 148-171).

¹² Phillipson 1985: 131-135

¹³ The earliest evidence of the use of camels for transport purposes across the Sahara dates from the last two centuries BCE. Before that time, Berbers used mules and horses to travel along well-established routes. After 700 CE, when most of North Africa had become Muslim, these routes were plied regularly by large camel caravans (Phillipson 1985: 150, 155).

[49] Documentary evidence of humans practising religion appeared in sub-Saharan Africa even earlier than in the Near East and Europe,¹⁴ in the burial by anatomically modern humans of their dead with grave goods, such as tools, trophies, ornaments, and red ochre,¹⁵ and in the rock paintings and engravings.¹⁶ As humans most likely have entertained religious beliefs long before this earliest documentary evidence appears, and, in addition, other ones than those expressed in it, it is unlikely that we will ever discover, in Africa or elsewhere, when, why and how humans began to be religious.¹⁷ Africa must, therefore, be presumed to have as long a religious history as, and most likely a longer religious history than, any other part of the globe, and one of which the origin is most likely irretrievably lost in the six million years long [50] process of anthropogenesis: the biological evolution by which the human species gradually emerged, along several distinct lines, from the other primates.

In this long history of the religions of sub-Saharan Africa, several categories of religions have emerged in a distinct order. Though much of their histories is, and will for ever remain, unknown, and the little we know is often obtained by very fallible means,¹⁸ yet we have sufficient data to establish as historical with some confidence a number of categories of African religions. We may therefore order them chronologically after the moment at which they appeared on the continent of sub-Saharan Africa. From that moment in time onwards they became part of the ever more widening 'river' of Africa's ever more complex history of religions, indigen-

¹⁴ Where graves of Neanderthals (*Homo sapiens neanderthalensis*) as well as of anatomically modern humans (*Homo sapiens sapiens*) have been found from 95,000 BP onwards. Neanderthals lived in Europe, North Africa, and the Near East. Whether they also lived south of the Sahara is a matter of debate among palaeoanthropologists (cf. Clark 1973: 48-51). They did live there according to Phillipson (1985: 47, 81, 97). Beaumont, de Villiers & Vogel (1978: 416; also 414), however, state that the population succession south of the Sahara is bereft of any tangible evidence for Neanderthals or "Neanderthaloids". So does Rightmire (1984: 162). As Beaumont *et alii* found only 'anatomically modern *Homo sapiens* [a.m.H.s.] remains' in sub-Saharan Africa, they classify all human remains south of the Sahara after 200,000 BP as anatomically modern *Homo sapiens* and as ancestral to present humankind in Africa and elsewhere (Beaumont *et alii* 1978: 409, 415-417). Rightmire (1984: 163-164, 167-168) contests this undifferentiated continuity hypothesis. Unlike Beaumont, he considers e.g. the Cave Border hominid remains (a cranium, the skeleton of a child, and two mandibles) to lie 'in fact closest to Hottentot (Khoi) and Bushmen (San) groups' (Rightmire 1984: 165; cf. Klein 1977: 123; Deacon 1984: 222).

¹⁵ The earliest documentary evidence of the religion of a society of an anatomically fully modern *homo sapiens* (*sapiens*) nomadic food-gatherers in palaeolithic times so far are the remains of a child, bearing traces of red ochre and being buried with a perforated *Conus* shell. They have been found in 'the Border Cave' near Phongolo River on the border of Natal and Swaziland. They have been dated to about 103,000 years BP by Beaumont *et alii* (1977: 409, 414; cf. also Deacon 1984: 298-299; Prozesky 1995a: 4), and were estimated to be 'approximately 115,000 years old' by Rightmire (1984: 164). But, in contrast to the several Neanderthal burials found in Europe in the Middle Stone Age, they have so far not been discovered in Southern Africa, and the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, except for fairly late ones from the Later Stone Age (Volman 1984: 216-217, 218). It is only after 14,000 years BP that LSA peoples are frequently found to have buried their dead in relatively elaborate graves in occupation sites, such as caves, and open sites in Southern Africa, and in cemeteries in North Africa and in Egypt (Klein 1977: 122, 123, 126, note 136; Phillipson 1985: 71-72, 92, 99); for Iron Age burials in Zaire, cf. de Maret 1994: 182, 188-191.

¹⁶ The earliest of which date back to 28,000 years ago (Klein 1977: 122; Volman 1984: 215; Deacon 1984: 300-304; Phillipson 1985: 72-75, 84; Lewis-Williams 1990: 11; de Maret 1994: 186).

¹⁷ And be able to explain religion by such knowledge of its 'origin'.

¹⁸ I.e. by archaeological evidence, internal oral histories, written external histories full of biases, and ethnographies of varying quality, etc., all of which pose dense problems of testing their relative reliability and representativity, apart from the problems of hermeneutics (cf. Platvoet 1982: 8-20); or, if the researcher gathers his/her own data, by methods of the so-called 'field work', such as 'participant observation'. That method is often beset by many problems of its own, such as lack of funds, time, knowledge of the language, and well-established relations with the believers to be studied, and the need to employ an interpreter. All these impose severe constraints on ethnographic research (cf. Baum 1990: 358-359).

ous traditions interacting with immigrant religions, each transforming the others. These categories of African religions are, without claims to exhaustiveness, so far the following:

1. the indigenous religions of the traditional societies of Africa, mainly south of the Sahara, which have usually been termed African traditional/indigenous religions (ATRs)¹⁹
2. Christianity
3. Islam
4. Judaism
5. Hinduism²⁰
6. Sikhism
7. the Parsee religion
8. Jainism
9. Chinese religion
10. Buddhism
11. the new esoteric religions
12. the Baha'i religion
13. African-American²¹ religions in Africa.

It must be emphasized that some of these categories are themselves complex groups with several divisions and subdivisions, harbouring a much greater internal diversity than is apparent from these labels. This 'rainbow of religions' will now be briefly discussed, each after its chronological position in the religious history of Africa.

Africa's indigenous religions

The category of the 'African traditional – or indigenous – religions' comprises all the 'community religions' of the indigenous societies of Africa since palaeolithic times.²² These religions,

¹⁹ The adjective 'traditional' is not a happy one, because it evokes associations of 'ancient', 'static', 'pure' and 'a-historical' (Shaw 1990a: 341; 1990b: 181-182). These connotations severely misrepresent the actual properties of the indigenous religions of Africa, which are the modern, open, adoptive and adaptive end products of long histories of dynamic change. Nor is the label, 'the classical religions' [of Africa] which Smart (1989: 297, 298, 303, 305, 310, 520) uses, a felicitous one, as it suggests that they are the religions of the pre-colonial past, which are now 'wilting away' (Smart 1989: 517).

²⁰ Cf. also Parrinder 1976 for an a-historical discussion of these five categories

²¹ 'Afro-American' is used here to refer to all religions of African origin in the Caribbean, North America, and Latin America.

²² Their number has never been determined. It must have varied in the course of history, e.g. through political processes. It is likely that they were over 1,000 in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The diversity of these societies must be emphasized, in size, social structure, political organisation, environmental setting, modes of economy, degree of communication with other societies, level of technological achievement, presence or absence of urbanisation, etc. They ranged in demographic size from less than 50,000 to more than 18,000,000 members by 1960; in social structure from very egalitarian to some of the most elitist in the world; in political structure from fully stateless and acephalous, to autocratic states with an incipient bureaucracy. What many of them had in common is that kinship, and its rules of descent, was a central principle of organisation in them, which informed, and overlapped with, political, economic, religious, and other institutions. Kinship was overwhelmingly unilineal in African indigenous societies. Most societies were patrilineal, but a sizable minority was matrilineal, and a very few were bi-unilineal. Bilateral kinship was, and is, virtually absent. Unilineal kinship systems organized a society's members into extended households, minimal and maximal lineages, and clans. Together these constituted a society by providing the members with graded identities, in concentric circles, and by effectively and dynamically unifying them into 'plural' societies marked by restricted interaction, regulated by processes of sociological fission and fusion (cf. Paden & Soja 1970b, II: 3, 17-19, 23-27, 33-37; Cohen 1970).

each usually co-extensive with its own society,²³ were the normal, and normally the only, religions in Africa south of the Sahara before the heyday of European colonialism (1920-1950) save those which had come to be dominated by an immigrant religion before 1900 (to be discussed below). African traditional religions consisted, and consist, of the cult practices and religious and cosmological notions particular to African societies as they had evolved them in long ages of restricted outward communication. Or, as Hunwick says, they are the 'ethno-specific polyspiritual systems operating within a micro-cosmic environment'.²⁴ African societies and their religions should, however, not be viewed as sharply demarcated, highly stable, or very ancient systems.²⁵ On the contrary, they were dynamic, open [52] and often recent conglomerates which constantly changed, not only through the creativity of their members but also through the interaction with societies and religions nearby, and sometimes far away, in as far as the ecology of their region and the existing patterns of the flow of goods and persons between settlements allowed.²⁶ Indigenous believers are known to have eagerly adopted, and adapted, the religious practices, ideas, and at times institutions, brought in from far and near²⁷ by traders,

²³ Which means that virtually all members of an African 'society' practised that religion and that its practice was restricted to that one 'society' only. As these societies possessed no, or a relatively low degree of institutional differentiation, its religions also were not, or minimally, organized into a separate institution, but pervaded most of a society's other departments. As a result, African indigenous religions had a low visibility.

²⁴ Hunwick 1988: 482. On their 'micro-cosmic' quality, cf. below where I discuss their open and dynamic qualities and Horton's theory of the shift from a micro to a macro horizon.

²⁵ Ranger (1988: 866) warns that 'the whole notion of an African "society" has come under question. Many historians argue [...] that the tribal units into which twentieth century Africa seems to be divided are of relative recent origin. If this is the case, then it makes no historical sense to talk of 'Kamba religion', or 'Zulu religion' prior to the nineteenth century. Such constructs have their own, and very recent history'. Ranger's warning is timely but must not be taken to extremes. The map of Africa was certainly more fluid in pre-colonial times in large parts of Africa than it was in most of Europe in the last few centuries and a fair number of the more prominent African traditional societies, and modern ethnic identities, emerged only in the 19th century. Even so, major political realignments, and the construction of the new ethnic, national or other identities that support them, are a constant feature of the histories of all continents. That includes Europe, not only in the past – cf. the unification of Germany under Bismarck in the late 19th century – but also at this very moment as the political events east of Berlin in the last decade amply demonstrate. Moreover, though the history of the area inhabited by the speakers of the Akan language in West Africa in the last five centuries allows us to spot the emergence of e.g. the Fante and Asante 'societies', *casu quo* 'peoples', in the late 17th century, and that of Akwapim in 1730, it does not support the conclusion that the Akan speakers did not see themselves, and were not seen by others, as belonging to identifiable societies, of course of variable size, sort, stability, identity consciousness, and prominence in the history of a region. Ranger's notion of 'a society' seems to be too closely wedded to the high historical profile and strong cultivation of identity of modern 'strong political units', such as France – which emerged as a nation only in the fourteenth century!

²⁶ Ranger (1988: 867), however, correctly insists on the 'broad regions of interaction [in pre-colonial Africa] between village-based agricultural peoples [across which] flowed [...] hunters, and traders, and people in search of salt, and pilgrims to shrines', and, one may add, the exchange between agriculturalists and nomadic pastoralists, etc.

²⁷ Some ecological factors restricted, others promoted circulation of ideas. A major one was the desiccation of the Sahara. It severely restricted communications with North Africa in the past two thousand or so years. Another limiting factor were the dense forests of West and Central Africa. So were the diseases, endemic in particular in the forested areas of Africa, which prevented men from using beasts of burden, like horses, mules, and camels, for transport along the many long and short distance trails. Transport was, therefore, along footpaths and by head portage. The wheel and horse drawn cart were never introduced south of the Sahara (though they are depicted in rock paintings in the Sahara from the first millennium BCE; cf. Phillipson 1985: 150). The savannahs of Africa, however, allowed unhindered movements of cattle nomads, migration, traffic, and trade from the Atlantic coast to East Africa and all the way down to South and South-West Africa.

hunters, pilgrims, and visitors, or members who had travelled, or those who had married into their society.²⁸

This most basic, and most African, category of religions is as heterogeneous as were, and are, the African societies themselves. It may be subdivided into a number of subcategories after certain properties common to the societies practising them. One major distinguishing trait is environmental and cultural: African traditional religions differ markedly after the specific economic use which a society [53] makes of the food resources of its environment for its livelihood: whether it gathers or produces food; and in case of the latter, whether it does so by animal husbandry, by agriculture, or by some combination of the two. That gives us three groups of ATRs: those of the food gathering, pastoralist, and peasant societies. If the first two were, or are, nomadic, the latter adopted different patterns of sedentarisation, ranging from dispersed types of residence through villages to urban types of society. Other divisions of the indigenous religions of (sub-Saharan) Africa may be derived from the political organisation of their societies: whether they were, or are, egalitarian and stateless, or built states.

All these, and a number of other factors, caused a great variety of patterns of some similar, and many dissimilar traits among the single African indigenous religions. Divisions stressing similarities have in addition been derived from linguistic research into the languages and dialects spoken in Africa.²⁹ When the 'glottochronological depth'³⁰ between the languages of a particular linguistic region of sub-Saharan Africa is great, the similarity of the cultural and religious practices, ideas, and institutions is usually small, as is the case in many parts of West Africa. Vice versa, in the Bantu-speaking parts of Africa, where the languages closely resemble each other because of shallow glottochronological depth, the cultures and religions exhibit many more similarities than is the case in other parts of sub-Saharan Africa.³¹ The major regions of Africa are also important as factors of convergence, because contiguity of societies, identical ecological settings, and various forms of contact fostered similarities among a region's religions, which were normally open and receptive, inarticulate belief systems.

The by far oldest subcategory after the type of economy a society practised is that of the religions of the nomadic food-gathering societies. The history of the religions of the modern foraging bands recedes back as far as paleolithic times. Examples are the religions of the San in

²⁸ Cf. Ranger 1988: 869. For the general marks common to African traditional religions, cf. Platvoet 1989b, 1993; for marked examples of religious receptivity, cf. e.g. Drewal 1989, and Wicker forthcoming; and for the flow of devotees through regions, cf. Werbner 1979

²⁹ Africa is the linguistic scholar's paradise. Its 600 million people, roughly 10% of that of the globe, speak over 800 distinct languages, which is one third of the known languages of humankind (Paden & Soja 1970b: 13). Many of these have unique or special features, such as the clicks in the Khoisan languages of Southern Africa; the tones in the Kwa and other languages, especially along the Guinea Coast, West Africa; the classes in especially the Bantu languages; the use of idiophones; the development of trade languages; Africa's high degree of multilingualism; etc. (cf. Alexandre 1972: 16-17, 34-39, 59-62, 113-114).

³⁰ I.e. the distance in time of two different but related languages, or families of languages, to an often hypothetical parent language, from which linguists assume they have both developed. The assumption of the relation of a specific glottochronological depth between two languages, or families of languages, is an important theoretical device for explaining both the differential development of, and the similarities between, two modern languages or groups of languages. This theoretical device may also be used to attempt to explain cultural and religious similarities and differences over time and space, between (groups of) cultures and their religions that are postulated to have had a common origin in the – usually distant – past.

³¹ One must, however, beware of a simplistic use of this model, because linguistic diversity and cultural and religious diversity do not always match neatly; the two may, and do, vary independently, to a greater or smaller degree.

the Kalahari semi-desert in Southern [54] Africa,³² and the Bambuti and other Pygmy and Pygmoid groups in the tropical rain forests of Central Africa, from the Atlantic coast to the Lake region in the East.³³ They live in small, nomadic, egalitarian, loose and open bands of kin and friends that roam over a fairly large territory of semi-desert or forest without fixed residence, kinship based social structure, or political organisation. The San peoples speak one of the several Khoisan languages; the Pygmies have lost their original languages and speak those of the Bantu societies surrounding them.³⁴

The next oldest category, the history of which recedes back as far as late LSA (7000-2000 BCE), at a time when the Sahara was sufficiently moist in its highland areas,³⁵ are the religions of the food producing societies, either by animal husbandry, or by agriculture, or by any combination of the two (and with certain forms of gathering, such as fishing, hunting, etc.). After the Sahara had begun to become too arid for them after 2000 BCE, these food producing societies moved south, the cattle nomads into Africa's great savannah belt, from the Atlantic coast to the Indian Ocean and down to the South as far as the Cape; and the agricultural societies into parts of the savannah and later into the forests. The social, political, economical, and other relations in these societies were often organised primarily in terms of corporate kinship groups, the extended households and the localised lineages, with supra-local clans at a more remote level of identity management, often constituting them into 'segmentary', or 'plural', societies. Much of their religion was also informed by it, the cult of ancestors being prominent in many of them, and/or the cult of God, and of the gods or spirits in which he was refracted, especially where belief in ancestors was lacking. Political organisation ranged from acephalous and stateless to unitary, monarchical states, in some cases with an incipient bureaucracy.³⁶ The states were not primarily territorial or nation states, but military states for tribute and trade.³⁷ Residential patterns varied from transhumance – the seasonal moving of a group of people with their livestock to an other region – to sedentarism in the dispersed, village, and urban modes. Parallel to the great glottochronological depth between languages in West and Sudanic Africa, up to 5,000 years, and consequently [55] their greater number and diversity, one finds in these regions a much greater diversity of cultures and religions than in Bantu Africa – from Cameroun to Kenya, to Angola, and Natal, South Africa –, where glottochronological depth is less than 2,000 years, and cultures and religions exhibit much greater similarity.

³² The central rite of modern San religion, the curing dance, is well documented in San rock art all over Southern Africa Cf. Vinnicombe 1976; Lewis-Williams 1983, 1990; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989; Garlake 1987; Barnard 1988; Dowson & Lewis-Williams 1994; de Maret 1994: 186-187; Platvoet 1995: 89-90, 107; Kiernan 1995a: 16-18

³³ Cf. e.g. Dupré 1975: 151-190; Bahuchet & Thomas 1987

³⁴ Dupré 1975: 151sq

³⁵ Phillipson 1985: 113sq., 131sq

³⁶ Cf. e.g. Evans-Pritchard 1971⁹; Evans-Pritchard 1970; Fortes & Evans-Pritchard 1970a; Middleton & Tait 1970a. Apart from the segmentation by corporate kinship groups, Middleton & Tait (1970a: 2-3) distinguish three more types of political organisation of a-cephalous societies: (1) those of societies without corporate kinship groups in Central Africa, in which the residents of villages are free to choose a village of residence and the headman in whom political authority is vested; (2) societies, especially in East Africa, in which authority is vested in holders of statuses in age set and age grade systems; (3) societies in Nigeria, such as Igbo and Yakö, in which political authority is vested in village councils and associations of titled men.

³⁷ Cf. e.g. Wilks 1975 on Asante in the 18th and 19th centuries

As African traditional societies continually changed, so did the highly dynamic and adaptable African traditional religions.³⁸ Instead of being encumbered by rigidifying canonical scriptures in which some system of religious beliefs, deemed to have its source in a unique, complete, exclusive, and immutable ‘revelation’, was codified, as are the so called world religions, they consisted of complex combinations of several, loosely articulated, adaptable systems of belief, e.g. in a creator God;³⁹ in several types of gods and/or spirits of nature; and/or in ancestors⁴⁰ and deceased of several sorts; in a constantly renewable collection of charms and ‘medicines’; in witches and/or sorcerers; in oracular devices, mantic procedures, and spirit possession; in other beings, such as forest dwarfs, which are non-verifiable by empirical means; etc.; and in several cults: not only towards God, and gods, spirits, ancestors, and ‘medicines’ of several sorts, but also related to several institutions, or sets of social relations, such as state and territorial cults; the cults of hunting guilds; the cults of affliction; possession, healing and witch cleansing cults; [56] esoteric cults; etc.⁴¹ As these compartments of the belief and cult system of an African indigenous religion are each often more specifically linked to special parts, processes, or institutions, of an African society, major changes in a society were, or are, always followed by major adaptations in its religion.

One example of this correlation is articulated in Robin Horton’s theory on the consequences for the African religious scene of the micro-macro shift, which occurred in African societies by their incorporation into the global colonial empires of England and France after 1870. That colonisation caused a vast expansion of horizon and communication with the world at large. Horton postulated firstly, that in the relatively bounded and closed ‘micro-worlds’ of African indigenous societies in pre-colonial times, ritual attention would be greatest towards the ancestors and/or (lower orders of) gods or spirits of nature, because they were structurally and function-

³⁸ Like other religions, the indigenous religions of Africa have changed not only with their societies, when these for some reason or other were being transformed. These religions might themselves also be active agents of change. A modern example is the role of the traditional spirit mediums during the *chimurenga* war of liberation against the UDF government of South Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe (Lan 1985; cf. Ranger 1988: 867).

³⁹ Many African traditional religions are at once ‘monotheistic’ – the creator God is conceived as the unique and ultimate source of everything, natural and ‘supernatural’ –, and thoroughly polytheistic. I term that combination ‘inclusive monotheism’. It is that widespread form of ‘monotheism’ that historically precedes the exclusivist, anti-polytheist ‘Abrahamitic’ monotheisms of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Whether, and for how long, the belief in a supreme God has been endogenous in particular African traditional societies, or is recent and exogenous in some other communities, is a thorny question which time and again re-emerges in the debates on the indigenous religions of Africa. It must be decided on ethnographic and historical evidence. Cf. for example Kiernan (1995a: 25-26; 1995b: 77) who argues, that, with the exception of Nomkhubulwana, the Zulu goddess of spring, the Southern Bantu religions did not know the concept of a creator god before the advent of the Christian missionaries. The latter mistook the original progenitor and first settler of a group, *uNklunkulu* for the Zulu, *Modimo* for the Tswana, for their High God, thus ‘putting the gloss of divinity upon an aspect of ancestral religion’ (Kiernan 1995a: 26). Missionary influence in this matter was so thorough and complete that not only converts, but the traditional believers ‘now also professed a belief in a Supreme Being’. It is now ‘commonly assumed that African societies [in South Africa] have always acknowledged the existence of a Supreme Being’ (Kiernan 1995b: 77). For similar hegemonic influences, or conceptual conquests, of Christian missionary translation of concepts of God in Igbo religion, cf. Shaw 1990a: 347-349; and of Christian concepts of evil, Hackett (1990: 305, 306-307) about the ‘Satanisation’ of Esù, the trickster deity in Yoruba religion. A similar conversion of a ‘tricky’ god into an absolutely evil being occurred in Akan traditional religion when Christian missionaries translated Satan by the name of the Akan forest god Sasabonsam. Cf. also Meyer 1992: 104sq; and Platvoet 2012, in which I develop a history of Akan notions of the visible, audible, touchable (as rain) sky god *Nyame* who was transcendentalised into a purely spiritual, invisible creator God in heaven by Akan believers interacting in trade with Muslims and Christians since the fifteenth century.

⁴⁰ Cf. Kiernan 1995a: 20-25; 1995b: 77-79

⁴¹ Cf. Ranger 1988: 868

nally connected with it as a 'micro-world', that is as a world structured in terms of kinship with a mainly local horizon. Secondly, that ritual attention towards the summit of a society's spiritual hierarchy, the creator God, would be absent or minimal, because of the very limited outward communication of such a society. And thirdly, that its incorporation into the much wider and much more open 'macro-world' of a particular colonial society – into which several traditional societies were simultaneously incorporated, but which was itself merely part of a global colonial empire with a centre far away – would cause an important shift in the relative importance of the several departments of African indigenous religions. That meant concretely that Horton postulated that the 'structural' importance of ancestors and lower gods or spirits, and cultic attention to them, would decline in this new situation of incorporation into a macro-cosmos society, because ancestors, gods and spirits represent the small range interests of a localised society; and conversely, that the cult of the creator God would expand, because he correlates with the global horizon.

This micro/macro shift, Horton suggested, explained neatly why Africans had massively converted to Islam and Christianity in the colonial and post-colonial periods,⁴² be it in the synthetic way of traditional religion.⁴³ He held that these two monotheistic religions provided ready-made religious models matching the global horizons at precisely the time when Africans were in need of some such model and when such change was in the air anyway. Horton held that if these immigrant monotheist religions had not met it, traditional religions would have [57] responded by expanding cultic attention towards the creator God, as they had already done to some degree in some African societies in the past; or that new religions specializing in this field would have done so.⁴⁴

Horton's argument was hotly contested,⁴⁵ but the central part of his theory, to wit that the shift from local to global horizons through incorporation into wider contexts of communication would cause major changes in the religious scene of Africa, seems sound and unobjectionable. That is clear not only from the relatively greater cultic prominence of the creator God in those traditional religions in sub-Saharan Africa which had relatively wider horizons in pre-colonial times;⁴⁶ as it is from the emergence, in colonial times, of a few, often iconoclastic, new mono-

⁴² By 'plural religious allegiance' (Dickson 1975: 92), 'multi-membership', 'religious mobility', etc., i.e. by incorporating significant portions of traditional religiosity into their Islamic or Christian observances, or by expanding traditional religion with (elements from) Christianity or Islam, or by 'associat[ing] with a range of religious groups concurrently' or consecutively, and/or by developing personal configurations of 'affiliational' (more stable) and 'associational' (more temporary and supplementary) memberships of religious organisations. 'Conversion', says Hackett (1989: 348), needs to be understood in most of modern religious history of Africa in a weak sense, as the adoption of additional religious orientations. Cf. also her analysis of the different levels and modes of affiliation and association with religious organisations, and the variation, dynamism, and fluidity of these personal configurations (Hackett 1989: 349-355). Cf. also Platvoet 1979; Kuper 1987: 150-166.

⁴³ Cf. Hunwick 1988: 482-485 on how Islam accommodated both the micro-cosmic, particularist religious needs of African societies and their macro-cosmic, universalizing ones.

⁴⁴ See Horton 1971; for a summary, cf. Horton 1975: 219-220; for a similar argument, cf. Wilson 1971, chapters 2 and 3.

⁴⁵ Fisher 1973, 1979, 1985; Horton 1975; Ifeka-Moller 1974; Horton & Peel 1976; Hiskett 1984: 305-309; cf. also Barrett 1991: 14-18. It caused also a controversy over the methodology appropriate to the study of the religions of Africa (Wyllie 1980; Horton 1984).

⁴⁶ Such as the rites at the *Nyamedua*, tree of God, in Akan traditional religion; cf. e.g. Rattray 1923: 139-144; cf. also Shaw (1990b: 186) on the emergence of the Igbo belief in Chukwu, God, in connection with the network of Aro traders which had the famous Arochukwu oracle as its centre (cf. also Falola & Babalola 1991: 158-159).

theistic religions,⁴⁷ such as the Harrist movement and Marie Lalou's Deima religion in the Ivory Coast;⁴⁸ the monotheistic witch cleansing Igbe cult in Isoko, Nigeria;⁴⁹ the 'Godianism' of the National Church of Nigeria; Orunmilanism, also in Nigeria;⁵⁰ the *religion d'eboga*, or Bwiti cult, among the Fang of Gabon;⁵¹ etc.. Most, though not all, of them remained outside the ambit of Christianity.⁵²

It is also clear from the strong increase of possession by the Holy Spirit – a possessing agent with patently macro-cosmic qualities – in the last decades, not only in the 'spiritual churches', indigenous as well as immigrant, but also in the mainline churches through the emergence of the charismatic movement and faith healing groups in them;⁵³ and in general from the many other instances, in the general history of [58] religions, of the changes produced in religions by situations of increased contact among societies, cultures, and religions.⁵⁴

Christianity in Africa

Three major varieties of Christianity may be distinguished in sub-Saharan Africa. They are, in chronological order, (1) the Christianity of Ethiopia, indigenous there since the middle of the fourth century CE; (2) 'missionary Christianity', the oldest extant forms of which date from the early 19th century; and (3) 'indigenous Christianity', developed by the numerous African Christian prophets, preachers, healers and visionaries since the late 19th century.⁵⁵

Ethiopian Christianity

Ethiopian Christianity developed from the fourth century CE when the ruler of Axum, Ezana, converted to a monophysitic variety of early Christianity 'with strong Jewish-Christian tendencies'.⁵⁶ It became the state's official religion in the early fifth century.⁵⁷ It strongly developed

⁴⁷ Termed 'neo-pagan' by Turner (1967: 7). 'Neo-traditional' (Hackett 1991a: 137) is a more appropriate label. Their propagators demanded that people burn charms, medicines, and other ritual objects of traditional religion. They denounced them as instruments of evil practices. They offered baptism as a protection against them.

⁴⁸ See Köbben 1960, 1964: 121-129; Paulme 1962; Haliburton 1971; Pritchard 1973; Piault e.a. 1975; Augé 1975; Walker 1979a, 1979b, 1979c, 1980, 1983; Shank 1983, 1985; Krabill 1990

⁴⁹ Akama 1987a; Hackett 1987a: 12-13

⁵⁰ Parrinder 1953: 10-11, 126-129; Turner 1967: 7; 1970: 176, 177, 179; Hackett 1987a: 7-8; 1991a: 136-138; 1990b: 286

⁵¹ Cf. Swiderski 1976, 1978, 1979, 1983, 1987, 1988, 1989; Fernandez 1982, 1990; Werbner 1990

⁵² For appreciative criticisms of Horton's thesis, cf. van Binsbergen 1981: 28-40; Droogers 1985: 116-119

⁵³ Cf. Hackett 1989: 332

⁵⁴ For instance, the replacement of the exclusive theologies of religions in the so called world religions by inclusive ones. The academic study of religions itself is a product, and a function, of such shifts of horizons and intensification of communication (cf. Platvoet 1993a: 231-233, 236-237, 241-242). Another instance, from Africa, are regional cults; cf. Werbner 1979

⁵⁵ For a brief survey of the historical study of modern Christianity in Africa, cf. Hastings 1990. It must be pointed out that the discrimination between the 'missionary' and 'indigenous' Christianities of Africa is only a rough and ready division. It may be disputed, for one reason because 'mission Christianity' was for the greater part spread by Africans and so more the product of African Christians than of Western missionaries, as recent historiography of African mainline Christian churches has shown (cf. e.g. Verstraelen in this volume); and for another because evangelical, charismatic and pentecostal streams and groups have become markedly prominent in many of the mainline churches of modern Africa in recent decades, thereby diminishing the earlier differences between 'mission churches' and 'indigenous' forms of Christianity.

⁵⁶ Cf. Kaplan 1982: 103. Braukämper (1992: 195-196) states rather categorically that these 'Jewish influences originat[ed] mainly from Yemen [and] antedated the arrival of Christianity in the fourth century'.

⁵⁷ Heldman 1992: 225

its Judaic elements in medieval times, when the Amharic ‘Solomonic’ dynasty (1270-1500) constructed its mythic charter in the *Kebra Nagast*, ‘the Glory of the Kings’. That document asserted that the Amharic rulers descended from Menelik, son of the Queen of Sheba by King Solomon;⁵⁸ that Menelik had later visited his father, and had returned with the firstborn of the twelve tribes of Israel and with the Ark of the Covenant; and that these ‘true Jews’ had been the very first to become Christians, having being converted by the Chamberlain of Queen Candace mentioned in Acts 8: 26-39. It was from these medieval [59] times onwards that the rectangular Greek basilica, standard in the first six centuries of Ethiopian Christian history, began to be replaced by the round, tripartite church plan which became virtually universal in the Amharic highlands. These churches have the Holiest with the *tâbot*, Ark – accessible only to the officiating priest – at their centre. The *maqdas*, ‘sanctuary’, for celebrating mass, is around it. That again is surrounded by the *qenê mâhelêt*, ‘choir’, for the singers and lay persons.⁵⁹ Cultic dancing during mass around the *tâbot* was a prominent liturgical feature. Monasticism strongly developed, as did asceticism: monks, nuns as well as the lay believers observed numerous days of fasting. Not only boys were circumcised, but female excision was also practised. Animals were ritually slaughtered. Pork was considered unclean and not eaten. Some scholars consider Ethiopian Christianity ‘the most thoroughly Africanized of any Church on [the African] continent, [and] the fullest example of the assimilation of African culture by Christianity’.⁶⁰

Modern missionary Christianity

Modern missionary Christianity in Africa is the result of the ‘second missionary era’, that of Protestant and R.C. missionary societies from 1792, when the first of them, the Baptist Missionary Society, was founded, till now. It was preceded by attempts by Augustinian, Capucin, and Dominican friars to convert ethnic groups in the vicinity of major Portuguese trading castles on the Ivory, Gold and Slave Coasts of Guinea, West Africa, between 1471 and 1684;⁶¹ by secular priests and Dominican and Capucin friars to christianise the Ba-Kongo in the estuary of the river Congo between 1491 and 1717;⁶² by Jesuits to convert from Sofala the rulers of inland Mutapa state in the mid-17th century; and by Portuguese chaplains to establish parishes around the forts at Mombasa, Malindi and on Zanzibar in the 17th century till the Arabs destroyed the hegemony of the Portuguese over the coast of East Africa in the middle of the 18th century.⁶³

The high mortality among the missionaries, their isolation from Christian Europe at a time of very slow communication, and the slave trade context were severe constraints upon the missionary work in tropical Africa in that first missionary era. Its results were very meagre on the Guinea coast, and only slightly better among the Ba-Kongo. When mortality and other reasons forced the missionaries time and again, and in the end for good, to abandon these Christian communities, they were soon re-absorbed into the local traditional religions, though they retained marks distinctive of their Christian past. An example is the rain god career of Saint Anthony in Elmina, the Gold Coast, now Ghana. He had been solemnly introduced into the chapel of the Castle in 1632, only five years before the Dutch ousted the Portuguese [60] from this

⁵⁸ After I Kings 10: 1-13; II Chronicles 9: 1-12

⁵⁹ Heldman 1992: 233-235

⁶⁰ Pawlinowski 1972: 179n3

⁶¹ Cf. Wiltgen 1956: 1-106; Sanneh 1983: 15-52; Clarke 1986: 7-28; 1988: 244; Law 1991

⁶² Cf. MacGaffey 1986: 191-211; Gray 1990: 11-56

⁶³ Clarke 1988: 245

castle, their main stronghold in West Africa. The Dutch were tolerant of traditional religion, but sternly forbade all 'popery'. After the Dutch withdrew from the Gold Coast in 1872, R.C. missionaries returned in 1880, and found that the cult of Saint Anthony had become a major part of the traditional religion of Elmina as that town's rain god *Nana Ntona*.⁶⁴ For the history of the religions of Africa, these processes of the re-absorption of Muslim or Christian communities, which have become isolated from their parent bodies, into traditional society and its religion, are of special interest as illustrations, in the reverse, of the micro-macro shift theory of Horton.⁶⁵

Modern missionary Christianity in Africa developed numerically very slowly in sub-Saharan Africa between 1800 and 1920, for several reasons. One was that many parts of Africa remained the white man's grave until 1920. Another was the pietism of the missionary societies, which recruited their missionaries mainly 'from servants, shoemakers, clerks', that is from the untutored, lower orders of Europe; they 'cramped their heads in the course of a few years with the crudest orthodoxy'.⁶⁶ At the centre of that orthodoxy was a theology of religions that viewed all the other religions of humans as 'paganism', and as the works of the Devil. In addition, they espoused the Euro-centric myth of white supremacy, which took the religions of the 'brute savages' of Africa as the very lowest of mankind. They regarded them as childish religions of fear, contrived by the fraud and trickery of deceitful priests; as greedy materialism, full of black magic, witchcraft, sorcery; and as the base superstition; in brief, as non-religions that must be eradicated in order that their benighted believers be saved, and which are anyway doomed to disappear, as darkness before light.⁶⁷ These missionaries strictly segregated their widely dispersed, tiny Christian congregations – part of them the outcasts of traditional societies: slaves bought free, accused 'witches', and political dissidents –,⁶⁸ from 'pagan' society at large, at times in separate villages or plantations ('Salems'). In addition to this cultural and religious segregation, they kept them under strict patriarchal, 'aggressive, if often benevolent' supervision.⁶⁹ Early missionary Christianity did not only alienate, but also [61] fragment. It introduced in Africa the full division of the European and North American Christianity: R.C. and Protestant, and the latter as divided into the various mainline churches, their modalities, and the 'Free Churches';⁷⁰ and introduced even its most recent, late 19th century Christian millenarist religions, such as the Watchtower Society.⁷¹

⁶⁴ Cf. Wiltgen 1956: 142-152. Elmina is situated in a narrow coastal strip of savannah, in which rainfall is minimal and unpredictable, at least compared to the abundant and predictable rains of most of southern Ghana. The Portuguese used to hold processions in times of drought. Saint Anthony's prominent place in them laid the basis for his career as rain god.

⁶⁵ Cf. Mandivenga 1983, 1989, and Braukämper 1992 for examples of the (partial) re-absorption of Muslim communities in Southern Africa and South Ethiopia into traditional religion.

⁶⁶ These observations were made by 'a university man among the Danish officers at Christiansborg [at Accra, the Gold Coast, JP] in 1831' (Debrunner 1967: 97; cf. also Kenyatta 1961: 270).

⁶⁷ On this missionary myth, cf. Kuper 1987: 150-166; on its consequences for the study of ATRs, cf. Idowu 1973; Ranger 1988: 864-866.

⁶⁸ Gray (1990: 63) terms them 'the marginal outcasts of the mission station'.

⁶⁹ Gray 1990: 62; Clarke 1974, 1988: 251; Williamson 1974: 56, 171; Debrunner 1967: 197-198

⁷⁰ Cf. e.g. Clarke 1988: 246-249

⁷¹ It was founded in the US in the 1870, spread in parts of South and Southern Africa through Russell Booth from 1909, and through Elliot Kamwana among the Tonga of South Nyassaland in 1909; and after 1925 among the Komo of Katanga in the Belgian Congo (Kaufmann 1964: 32-55, 69-75, 79-101); and through Tomo Nyirenda, as Mwana Lesa, 'Son of God', among the Lala, also in Nyassaland (Ranger 1975; Mwene-Batende 1981). It is

All these churches, and especially the ‘mainline’ churches that were intimately associated with the government of a colony through their establishment as state-religion in the colonial metropolis, expanded impetuously after 1920 for a number of reasons. One was improved medical knowledge about the tropical diseases that had until then taken so many missionary lives: it allowed a much larger and longer input of Western missionary work force. Another was better communication, to the metropolis by steam ships, telegraph, and the first aeroplanes; and in the colonies by the construction of roads and railways, and the introduction of newspapers and broadcasting. A third was the further integration of the colonies into the world market, be it mainly as suppliers of raw materials, and the expansion of the colonial economies, be it often through mono-cultures. As a result, the colonial governments, the merchant companies, the colonial armies, etc. created many jobs for lower echelon African personnel with a modest Western formal education. To satisfy that demand, the colonial governments⁷² teamed up with missionary Christianity for the development of colonial systems of education. Schools were partly subsidized, and supervised, by the colonial governments but owned and run by the ‘Mission Churches.’⁷³ Schools became the major means in the conversion of huge numbers of Africans to some form of denominational Christianity, and the major source of conflict and competition between the Mission Churches. For most prospective Christians did not convert to a particular Church for a religious reason – the doctrines that were special to it –, but for the pragmatic reason that a particular church happened to offer education, the instrument of social advancement, at a particular place and time.⁷⁴

This situation, widely prevailing in the colonial societies of Africa after 1920, though nowhere completely identical, had huge consequences, not only in the economic and social spheres, but also in the political and religious ones. Not only was literacy, particularly in its more advanced forms, the fountainhead of the political movements for independence from an early date. It resulted also, continent-wide, in [62] the ‘classroom religion’⁷⁵ of the mission schools which presented Christianity as ‘a daylight religion of reason and reasonableness set over against the darkness of superstition’;⁷⁶ and, more importantly, in the inclusivist plural religious allegiances following Horton's micro/macro shift; in huge numbers of Christians being permanently marginalized in their congregations because of the wide rift between European monogamy and African polygamy;⁷⁷ and in ‘independency’: the numerous indigenous Christian churches born from the visions of African Christian leaders, prophets, and healers.

Before I turn to them, two developments in Mission Christianity must briefly be mentioned since 1957 when the colonies began to become independent nations. One is the theological re-

also found in Nigeria, both in its ‘regular’ form and as an autonomous society: Gideon Urhobo’s God’s Kingdom Society, which he founded in 1934 (cf. Ilega 1987).

⁷² Particularly in the British and Belgian colonies, and in those of France with traditional (i.e. non-Muslim) societies; cf. Clarke 1986: 87sq., 113-115, 121-125, 137-143, 146-147, 148-150. For the Belgian Congo, cf. Kimpinga Kia Mahaniah 1973

⁷³ On state-church relationships in colonial Africa, cf. Hastings 1979: 5-34

⁷⁴ In addition, hospitals were developed as the major mission instrument for the mass conversion of African colonial societies.

⁷⁵ Taylor 1963: 15-25, esp. 20: ‘For forty years or more the advance of the Christian Church in tropical Africa has depended more upon her virtual monopoly of Western education than upon any factor’; cf. in this volume the contribution by Hinga.

⁷⁶ Taylor 1963: 20

⁷⁷ Cf. Kenyatta 1961: 271-273

valuation of the traditional religions of Africa, mostly after 1960,⁷⁸ when liberal theology had become dominant worldwide in all the mainline churches, Protestant as well as R.C. This development was, in retrospect, both crucial and limiting for the emergence of a major strand in the study of religions in Africa: that which took the form of 'African Theologies', the main purpose of which was the contextualisation and indigenization of mainline church Christianity in Africa. The other was the rise, after 1970,⁷⁹ of charismatic groups within the mainline churches,⁸⁰ and more recently a proliferation of autonomous Pentecostal churches, for example in Ghana.⁸¹

Indigenous Christianity

There is a historical correlation, if not a causal connection, between literacy as spread, for religious reasons, by Protestant missions, and the origin of indigenous Christianity in Africa.⁸² 'Independency', as fissiparous as Protestantism itself, emerged earliest in the modern era, and gained most followers in areas of intensive Protestant evangelisation: Southern Africa from Natal to Zambia, the Congo basin, Central Kenya, and the former Guinea coast from the Ivory Coast to Cameroun.⁸³ [63] Following Sundkler, Harold Turner has roughly divided the indigenous Christian churches in Africa into 'Ethiopian' and 'prophet-healing' churches.⁸⁴

The central trait of the 'Ethiopian' churches was autonomy: they were governed by African Christians who broke away from the parent mission churches because of their persistent practice of racial inequality in the government of these churches. For the rest, they usually resembled closely the churches from which they separated, in matters of liturgy, doctrine, government, rules of conduct, etc, and were therefore often rather 'Western' in outlook and appearance, though some have allowed polygamy. Their congregations are often urban, fully literate, and well-to-do. The oldest 'Ethiopian' church emerged in the Gold Coast in 1861 already. This *Akanonomsu*, or Methodist Temperance Society, led by R.J. Gartey, existed in Anomabu till 1881.⁸⁵ 'Orthodox-independent', or 'African Churches', began to secede from the Protestant Mission Churches in Lagos, Nigeria, from the 1880s onwards.⁸⁶ In South Africa, 'Ethiopian' churches emerged from 1892 on.⁸⁷

The prophet-healing churches, better known as the Zion Churches in South Africa, the *Aladura* ('Prayer People') in Nigeria, and the *Sunsum Asore* ('[Holy] Spirit Churches') in Ghana, are generally ecstatic faith-healing churches. They are African Christian varieties of glossolalic

⁷⁸ Cf. Tempels 1945; Kagame 1956; Idowu 1962; Taylor 1963; Mbiti 1971

⁷⁹ The Jamaa ('Family') movement, founded by Placide Tempels in 1956, also joined 'Catholic Pentecostalism' when that 'global commodity' was introduced into Zaire by Jesuits after 1970. Like Milingo afterwards, Tempels' book (1945) as well as his movement were strongly opposed, and at times repressed, by the R.C. hierarchy of the Belgian Congo/Zaire (Hastings 1979: 63, 117-118, 244-245; Fabian 1994: 258, 260).

⁸⁰ Cf. e.g. ter Haar 1992; ter Haar & Platvoet 1989: 187-189. Like the 'prophet-healing' indigenous churches, mainline church Pentecostalism demonises the traditional religions of Africa; cf. e.g. Milingo 1984, 1991; Meyer 1992.

⁸¹ Cf. Gifford 1994

⁸² Cf. also Hackett 1991b: 282

⁸³ Cf. Hastings 1979: 67; for a map, cf. Hastings 1979: XI

⁸⁴ Sundkler 1970; Turner 1967: 21-29

⁸⁵ Dickson 1964: 1-7

⁸⁶ Hackett 1987a: 6; 1991b: 285

⁸⁷ Sundkler 1961: 38-43; Daneel 1987: 49-53; Kiernan 1993c: 118-121. They were, however, preceded by seven years by Nehemiah Tile's Tembu Church, an 'ethnic' church (Daneel 1987: 48; Kiernan 1995c: 119).

Pentecostalism and independent varieties of recent upsurge of charismatic spirituality in the mainline churches. They often practise baptism by immersion, have numerous purification rites and fasts, cultivate dreams, visions, and possession for a close and emotional experience of the meta-empirical (as they believe it to exist and to communicate with them), practise exorcism to drive off 'evil possessing spirits', and cleanse those afflicted with misfortune from the 'witchcraft' which is believed to have caused it. Their ritual practices are markedly 'African' in terms of 'symbolism, music, dance and more direct religious experience characterised by dreams, visions and spirit possessions, and spontaneous emotionalism'.⁸⁸ And they are as pragmatic as are African traditional religions.⁸⁹ They have often deviated from their Protestant background by introducing monarchical forms of church government, but they have inherited from the early pietist missionaries their virulent demonisation of African traditional religions, which they equate with witchcraft and alliance with the devil.⁹⁰ The earliest of them emerged somewhat later than the Ethiopian churches, from 1908 in Southern Africa;⁹¹ in Ghana in 1915, as an offshoot of the [64] Harris movement;⁹² and 'early in the 20th century' in Nigeria.⁹³ Their members have generally speaking more limited literacy, less income, and live predominantly more in the rural areas or in the poorer parts of the towns.

The primary mark of both types is at present, however, no longer secession, schism or independency, nor Africanisation in opposition to Western religious traditions, but active self-determination as religious bodies transforming, and being transformed by, the modern societies of Africa and in a dynamic relation with 'religious internationalism'.⁹⁴ That is apparent from the links which several African indigenous churches, in for example Ghana, Nigeria and Zaire, have forged, or tried to forge with international religious organisations such as the World Council of Churches, and with kindred evangelical bodies outside Africa. That is also apparent from the fact that some actively adopt beliefs and ritual practices of Western and Eastern esoteric societies; and from the missionary work which some have undertaken both in other nations in Africa, and in Western countries.⁹⁵ Though most African indigenous churches are small local groups, a few have branched out into other African nations and even outside Africa, possess a stable organisation, impressive cathedrals, institutes of higher education, broadcasting and business enterprises, and have acquired a large following, some of several millions.⁹⁶ As a

⁸⁸ Hackett 1991b: 286

⁸⁹ Cf. e.g. MacGaffey 1994

⁹⁰ Mainline church revivalist Christians usually espoused the same theology and formed prayer bands, some of which conducted evangelistic campaigns to exhort traditional believers to renounce indigenous religion; cf. e.g. Akama 1987b; Meyer 1992, 1994, 1995.

⁹¹ Cf. Sundkler 1961: 48sq; Daneel 1987: 53-59; Kiernan 1995c: 121-127

⁹² Cf. Baëta (1962: 20-21) and Breidenbach (1975) on Grace Thannie and John Nakaba's 'The Church of William Waddy Harris and his twelve apostles', also known as the Water-Carriers' Church.

⁹³ Hackett 1987a: 6-7

⁹⁴ Hackett 1990b: 199

⁹⁵ Hastings 1979: 179; Hackett 1987a: 10; 1987d: 240; 1989: 195-196, 342-344; 1990b: 194-197, 198-199; 1991b: 293-295

⁹⁶ Examples are Kimbanguism in Zaire (cf. Martin 1971, 1975; Sinda 1972: 61-147; Daneel 1987: 60-67); Engenas Lekhanyane's Zion Christian Church, Isaiah Shembe's *amaNazaretha* and John Maranke's *Vapostori* in South (ern) Africa (cf. Sundkler 1961: 110-111, *passim*; 1976: 161-205; Daneel 1971: 315-339; 1987: 55-59; Jules-Rosette 1975). Other examples are the Aladura churches in Nigeria which spread all along the coast of West Africa (cf. Peel 1968); the Celestial Church of Christ in Dahomey (now Benin) and Nigeria (cf. Hackett 1987c); the Brotherhood of the Cross and the Star founded by O.O. Obu in Calabar, Nigeria, in 1955 (cf. Offiong 1987; Mbon 1987: 210-217, 226-229; Hackett 1989: 186-192, 227-229, 247-248); etc.

group, the African indigenous churches represent in some regions of Africa the largest, and in others the most popular type of Christianity now. Their members rose from 26,6% of the total number of Christians of South Africa in 1980 to 33,5% in 1991.⁹⁷ The total membership of the roughly 7,000 independent churches in sub-Saharan Africa must conservatively be estimated at over 20% of the total number of Christians in Africa.⁹⁸

[65]

Islam in sub-Saharan Africa

African Islam is different in different periods and places and has long and short histories in Africa. One may distinguish (1) the Sahelian-West African Islam, the history of which began as long as twelve centuries ago; (2) the Islam of the Nilotic Sudan; which began in the thirteenth century, and (3) that of the Horn of Africa, which has been in touch with the Arab world from before the advent of Islam, but into which Islam began to spread only in the fourteenth century; (4) the Swahili Islam along the coast of East Africa, which began to develop from the twelfth century onwards; and (5) forms of 'Asian' Islam in East Africa and Southern Africa, which developed in the context of Dutch colonialism from the mid-seventeenth century, and of the British 'empire' from 1860 onwards. I must warn that my survey of African Islam by these contiguous regions – from Sahel to South Africa – matches the chronology of Islam's immigration into Africa only in a rough manner and not in every detail.

The qualifications 'foreign' and 'indigenous' apply to African Islam in a different way from how they may be used for African Christianity. African Islam has its own continuum of high to low indigenisation. It has, on the one hand, created societies which are at once thoroughly Muslim and thoroughly indigenous, notable those in the Sahel, the Sudan, and parts of the Horn of Africa, some of which became Muslim in long and sometimes violent processes of reform. On the other hand, it took the form of much more recent Muslim 'diaspora' communities with a strong allochthonic stamp, as in East and South Africa, where some groups of immigrant Muslims kept very much to themselves by cultivating the Islam of their region of origin outside Africa. The remainder exhibits all the shades between indigenised and foreign Islam.

Within African Muslim societies another important form of indigenous Islam may be pointed out: the *borii*, *zar*, *pepo* and other spirit possession cults.⁹⁹ They flourish in particular among women. They have an ambiguous position in African Muslim societies. Muslim scholars, traditionalist as well as reformist, often consider and condemn them as a continuation of pre-Muslim pagan practices. They reject them as *jahiliyya*, pagan 'ignorance' and superstition. Orientalists have usually accepted that verdict and described them as relics of the pagan past. They may, however, perhaps better be seen as thriving examples of religious pluralism in African Islam for four reasons. One is that the 'possessing agents', the *zar*, *borii*, *pepo* and similar spirits are held to belong to, or to be local variants of, a type of spirits which is acknowledged and frequently mentioned in the Koran: the *jinn*, or *shaytan*, or *ifrit*.¹⁰⁰ Another is that if these

⁹⁷ Prozesky & de Gruchy 1995: 237. Turner (1988: 950) quotes their number as 5,900,000 in 1980.

⁹⁸ Daneel 1987: 25; cf. also Barrett 1968: 64-80; Hackett 1990b: 192. Barrett (1982: 782) quotes the total number of Christians in Africa in 1980 as 236 million, and the number of 'professing' members of indigenous churches as 27,5 million, while another 24,5 million are loosely associated to them.

⁹⁹ Cf. Boddy 1989, Cerulli 1936, Giles 1987, Lewis 1966, 1969, 1971, 1986, Lewis *et alii* 1991; Middleton 1992: 170-178

¹⁰⁰ Sura 72 is even called *Sūrat al-Jinn*, the 'chapter of the Jinn'.

spirits were ‘pagan’ spirits, they would have to be banned by the male officiants of local Islam. But they usually do not forbid them. Instead, the women who are afflicted with the *jinn* are ritually brought into a regular, and often lifelong relationship with them.

They become members of a cult group under a female leader. These cults of affliction [66] enjoy the status of a *de facto* tolerated, semi-autonomous sub-religion with its own specific clientele, women and other marginal members of a Muslim society.¹⁰¹ These cult groups have a number of important functions, religious, ritual, therapeutic, social, and other, for both their clientele and society at large. Thirdly, their most important variety, the *zar* spirits, cannot be shown to have any pre-Islamic roots. They emerged in the Muslim societies of the Horn of Africa only in the late 18th and early 19th century. However, the Quranic *jinn* as well as the *zar* are ‘exogenous’ spirits, deemed to intrude upon local, ordered society from ‘the wilds’, that is from foreign societies. *Zar* were introduced into Somalia from Ethiopia – where they may have originated in Christian (Amharic) Ethiopia in the 18th century – in the wake of Arab slave trade from the littoral, and into Egypt after 1880, and into Sudan after 1900.¹⁰² Fourthly and lastly, *zar* cults possess a very fluid and malleable spirit repertoire, which constantly and effortlessly adapts to modern circumstances, adopting into it whatever a specific historical moment presents as a point of identification for women and other marginal members and is worthy of their ritual attention. For example, not only were famous local saints integrated into the Sudanese *zar* pantheon, but so were Pashas, Arabs, Europeans (e.g. General Gordon and Lord Cromer) as well as Nasser and Sheik Yamani (famous as Saudi oil minister in OPEC).¹⁰³

Like modern missionary Christianity, Islam too has won most of its converts in Africa after 1920, because the infrastructure the colonial states developed allowed more travel, and their secularism not only provided freedom of religion but also far greater opportunities for the propagation of Islam in the colonial and post-colonial eras than in any earlier period. Islam was also more successful because the colonial authorities used literate Muslims for the local administration in some regions.¹⁰⁴ The growth of Islam has especially been significant in the last three decades.¹⁰⁵

Sahelian Islam

Islam’s longest history in sub-Saharan Africa is in the Western Sahel. Muslim merchants travelled to the Soninke kingdom of (ancient) Ghana, west of the Niger, since the 8th century CE to trade salt from the Sahara for the gold of West Africa. [67] At first, they lived apart, in a separate town, several miles from the royal palace.¹⁰⁶ By the 11th century, the separation had bro-

¹⁰¹ Mainly male slaves or migrants of non-Arab origin (Lewis 1986: 104).

¹⁰² Lewis 1969: 205; 1986: 34-35, 47, 103-104, 116n24

¹⁰³ Lewis 1986: 102-103; Boddy 1988

¹⁰⁴ The Germans did so in East Africa. For this reason, Tanzania has more Muslims than Kenya and Uganda (communication from Dr. David Westerlund, dd. 25 January 1996).

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Clarke 1990a: 211. The number of Muslims in Africa south of the Sahara was 130 million in 1985 (Hunwick 1988: 470). Barrett (1982: 782) quotes the following numbers of Muslims for the whole continent of Africa, North Africa included: 34,5 million in 1900; 142 million in 1970; 189 million in 1980. He expects their number to have risen to 338 million in 2000. The comparable numbers for Christians in Africa were 10 million in 1900, 143 million in 1970, and 203 million in 1980. It is expected to rise to 393 million in 2000. One should, however, beware of a distinct Christian bias in the work of Barrett.

¹⁰⁶ Hiskett 1984: 305; 1994: 93; cf. Hunwick 1988: 474

ken down, and the rulers were employing Muslim scholars as clerics at their court¹⁰⁷ for government business and the administration of trade, but also for divination, dream interpretation, the production of amulets, prayer, and religious healing.¹⁰⁸ The Soninke rulers were 'peacefully persuaded [by desert Almoravids] to adopt Sunni Islam as the official religion in the Ghana empire' around 1076 during the time of the Almoravid *jihad* in these parts.¹⁰⁹

This type of urban and elite Islam of the – usually illiterate – African rulers and nobility and indigenizing Muslim scholars and traders became the upper echelon tolerant religion of the trade empires of Ghana (4th century-1235), Mali (circa 1240-1400), and Songhay (1452-1592) which centred on the emporia for the trans-Saharan trade on the upper parts of the river Niger. In these two tier societies, the farmers and cattle nomads of the Sahel continued in their traditional religions till the mid-twentieth century.¹¹⁰ The wealth of the ruling families of the trade centres allowed them to support Muslim families of scholars (*ulama*) specializing in religious learning, some of the members of which became famous scholars who had studied in the centres of learning of the Islamic world of their time. They taught in for instance the Sankore mosque at Timbuktu, which was famous in the Islamic world of scholarship, and from which 'Islamic scholarship spread far out into the Sahara and the western Sudan'.¹¹¹ This type of upper class Islam spread east to the medieval Bornu and Kanem states in the vicinity of Lake Chad; south-east to the Hausa states north of the confluence of the Benue and the Niger; south to the Mossi and Dagomba states on the upper reaches of the river Volta; and south-west into the Futa Jalon and Futa Toro regions from which the Niger sprung.¹¹²

This first phase ended in 1725, when a turbulent period of *jihad* warfare began which was marked by Islamic puritanism, especially in doctrinal matters, rejection of the cult of the saints, and of 'pagan' religions, incipient islamisation of the lower classes, Mahdist (eschatological) expectations,¹¹³ and the building of theocratic states ruled by a *Sarkin Musulmi*, 'Commander of the Muslim [believers]'.¹¹⁴ After the Fulani *jihads* in the Futa Jalon in 1727, and in the Futa Toro in 1776, those in the Hausa states by Shehu Usumanu dan Fodio in 1804, and [68] his son Shaykh Muhammad Bello in 1817 established this type of Islam in the Hausa states and began to extend *Dâr al-Islam*, the 'territory of Islam', southwards towards the forested regions of the Yoruba speaking peoples by establishing a Fulani emirate in Ilorin in 1831.¹¹⁵ This period lasted until the integration of Muslim West Africa into the French and British colonial empires around 1900.¹¹⁶

In colonial times, a number of mechanisms favoured the islamisation of certain regions of West Africa. One was that the colonial peace and order allowed Muslim settlers, merchants,

¹⁰⁷ Though a tradition of shunning the capital and living in separate towns was continued by the more puritan families of scholars (Hunwick 1988: 475).

¹⁰⁸ Cf. e.g. Sanneh 1981; Bravmann 1983.

¹⁰⁹ Hiskett 1984: 22-23; 1994: 93-94; cf. also Conrad & Fisher 1982, 1983.

¹¹⁰ Hunwick 1988: 475, 477; Hiskett 1994: 99-103.

¹¹¹ Hiskett 1984: 40-41; 1994: 103; cf. Hunwick 1988: 474-476.

¹¹² Cf. Hiskett 1984: 19-155; 1994: 104-114.

¹¹³ On Mahdism in West Africa, cf. Clarke 1987: 96-115; Hunwick 1988: 478-479; Hiskett 1994: 107, 109-114; cf. also for Mahdism among the Yoruba of Nigeria, cf. Doi 1971, Clarke 1979: 107-110.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Hiskett 1984: 156-157 for the general background of the Sahelian *jihads*, and Hiskett 1984: 138-201 for a detailed description of them. Cf. also Hunwick 1988: 475-480.

¹¹⁵ Hiskett 1984: 163-193; cf. also Clarke 1979.

¹¹⁶ Though 'numerous uprisings [were] staged by Mahdists' between 1900 and 1950 in French and British territories (Clarke 1987: 101-102).

missionaries, and orders to propagate Islam in security. Another was the British policy of Indirect Rule, or Dual Mandate, by which local rulers continued to apply traditional law, but now with the backing of British power. That backing gave the rulers of Muslim regions actually more pervasive power throughout their realms than they had had in pre-colonial times, particularly in matters of religion and religious customs. Moreover, the British as well as the French often forbade the Christian missions to proselytise in Muslim regions, which again favoured the islamisation of a region, but also put it in arrears in education and economic development.¹¹⁷ The islamisation of Muslim regions was also greatly fostered by the many 'pagan' labourers from the Muslim regions in the North migrating to the coastal regions to the south where they went to live in the *zongos*, the special quarters for Hausa Muslim merchants, and all other Northerners, traditionally found in the margin of each southern town. The strongly Islamic atmosphere of the *zongos* caused most of the migrant labourers to return in due time to their native region as Muslims.¹¹⁸ The colonial order also allowed the Ahmadiyya, a movement from the Punjab in India on the fringe of Islam which adopted modern Christian methods of mission, to gain converts in especially the coastal parts of West Africa, where the Sahelian Maliki Islam had found little response.¹¹⁹

The colonial order did suppress Muslim reformist puritanism in West Africa, and especially Mahdism, for a time, but did not remove its long term causes. Nyang argues that it actually added considerably to those causes.¹²⁰ Islamic militancy has, therefore, re-emerged in recent years in parts of the Sahel. The *Yan Izala* movement, formed in Jos 1978, is notable in 'the rising tide of Muslim militancy in Northern Nigeria'. It considers many beliefs and practices of the Sufi brotherhoods, which are popular and influential in Nigeria, as *bid'a*, '[reprehensible] innovation', and their members as *Kafir*, pagan unbelievers.¹²¹ Notorious were the [69] followers of 'Maitatsine',¹²² a movement deemed heterodox by other Muslims, because Maitatsine denied that Muhammad was the last of the prophets and his followers called him '[just] another Arab'.¹²³ In Kano, which had been an important centre of Mahdism all through the 20th century, it caused bloody riots, with thousands killed, including Maitatsine himself, in 1980 and 1984; likewise in other places in Northern Nigeria in 1982, 1984 and 1985.¹²⁴

Nilotic Islam

The last in the wave of the reformist *jihads* occurred in the Nilotic Sudan, the former Christian Nubia, between 1881 and 1898. Islam began to penetrate into Nubia only in the 13th century by the immigration of Arab pastoralists. Arabisation and islamisation continued when they were followed, after the fall of Dongola in 1323, and 'Alwah in 1504, by Arab settlers.¹²⁵ The islamisation of the Nilotic Sudan was completed in the 16th and 17th centuries by *ulama* families and Sufi brotherhoods, the latter gaining many followers. This Islamic Sudan was incorpo-

¹¹⁷ Cf. Abu-Lughod 1970: 562-563; Hiskett 1994: 114-117, 124

¹¹⁸ Cf. Trimmingham 1962: 225-226; Froelich 1966: 170-171

¹¹⁹ Cf. Hiskett 1984: 291-293; 1994: 118-119; Trimmingham 1959: 230-232; Platvoet 1979: 588-589; Smart 1992: 487-488

¹²⁰ Nyang 1993: 236-244; cf. also Hiskett 1994: 119-120, 124-129.

¹²¹ Olupona 1991a: 40; Hiskett 1994: 127-128, 130

¹²² Mallam Muhammadu Marwa, from Maroua in Northern Cameroun

¹²³ Clarke 1987: 94, 114, note 70; cf. also Hiskett 1994: 129-130

¹²⁴ Cf. Clarke 1987: 93-95, 111-115; Isichei 1987; Hiskett 1987; Nyang 1993: 258-260

¹²⁵ Cf. Fadl Hasan 1966; Hiskett 1994: 67-69

rated into the Egyptian-Turkish empire in 1821.¹²⁶ Mahdist expectations found wide acceptance in the Nilotic Sudan when the slave trade and the recruitments for the Egyptian-Turkish army wrought havoc in the late 19th century. In 1881, Muhammad Ahmad ibn `Abdallah proclaimed himself the expected Mahdî in 1881 and revolted successfully against Turkish overlordship. The movement was crushed in 1898 by an Anglo-Egyptian force. Islam and Arabic identity, however, had become the major marks of Sudan by that time.¹²⁷

Islam in the Horn of Africa

Most Semitic peoples of the Horn of Africa, particularly the Christian Amhara of the Ethiopian highlands, have resisted Islam when it entered into that region from across the Red Sea, but a few urbanites in Eritrea accepted it in the course of the 8th and 9th centuries CE, as did the nomads of the lowlands coast of Somalia after the 10th. Some pockets of Muslim minorities were also found in the Sidama region to the south-east and south of the Ethiopian highlands. There 'Islam became the force of resistance against the expanding power of the Ethiopian state'.¹²⁸ When the 'pagan' Galla migrated in great numbers into that area in the 16th century, Islam was at first nearly wiped out, but it made many converts among the Galla in the 18th and 19th centuries. Trading and the religious orders were the major means by [70] which Islam was diffused and consolidated in this region,¹²⁹ as they were in many other regions.

Swahili Islam

From the 12th century onwards,¹³⁰ Muslim merchants from Arabia, Persia, and India established communities of Muslim traders on the littoral of East Africa in towns, such as Mogadishu in Somalia, Malindi and Mombasa in Kenya, on the islands of Lamu, Pemba, Zanzibar, Mafia and Kilwa, in Bagamoyo and Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, and in Sofala in Mozambique.¹³¹ These traders had little intention of spreading Islam. Theirs was a diaspora Islam, of communities in quarantine, with no more interaction with the Bantu societies of East Africa than trade demanded,¹³² though the traders did initially marry Bantu wives because of a scarcity of females in their own group, and employed locals as servants. These Muslim Sawâhila, 'coastalists',¹³³ kept their cultural and religious focus oriented towards the Islam of their countries of origin. They developed the 'Shiradzi' culture during the first phase of their presence in East Africa (1100-1500).¹³⁴ It suffered serious decline between 1500 and 1700, when coastal trade was dominated by the Portuguese.¹³⁵ After the power of the Portuguese had been broken, *ulama* from Hadramawt in Yemen began to write Swahili, the trade language these 'coastalists' had developed, in Arabic script.¹³⁶ 'The fusion of the various Islamic elements, remnants of the

¹²⁶ Cf. Trimmingham 1980: 22-26; Boddy 1989: 25; Hiskett 1994: 69-71

¹²⁷ Lewis 1966a: 4-6; cf. also Hunwick 1988: 471-472; Hiskett 1994: 71-74

¹²⁸ Trimmingham 1980: 26-30; cf. also Lewis 1966a: 6-8; Hiskett 1994: 137-142

¹²⁹ Trimmingham 1980: 29; cf. also Hiskett 1994: 142-143

¹³⁰ Perhaps from as early as the middle of the eighth century (Hiskett 1994: 152)

¹³¹ Cf. Pouwels 1987: 22-31; Middleton 1992: 12-15

¹³² On their culture of religious insularity, cf. Pouwels 1987: 28-31; Middleton 1992: 161; Hiskett 1994: 157-163

¹³³ From *ahl al-sâhil*, 'the people of the coast'; on the pre-islamic phase of Swahili culture, cf. Pouwels 1987: 15-21

¹³⁴ Cf. Pouwels 1987: 32-37; Hiskett 1994: 154-155

¹³⁵ Cf. Hiskett 1994: 158-160

¹³⁶ On the Swahili language, cf. also Topan 1992; Hiskett 1994: 161

Shirazi, and new Bantu with the Hadramis, led to the Swahili culture synthesis as it exists today',¹³⁷ which is that of an ancient maritime and mercantile group of Muslim communities of middlemen with a strong sense of collective identity despite its being strewn all along the coast of East Africa, its diversity, and its counting only half a million members.¹³⁸

After 1840, Swahili and Arabs began to ply trade routes deep into the mainland of East and Central Africa, as far Congo¹³⁹ and Nyassaland (modern Malawi), for the lucrative trade in ivory, with African slaves as porters. That trade led to some spread of Islam into Kenya,¹⁴⁰ Tanganyika (now Tanzania),¹⁴¹ [71] Uganda,¹⁴² and Malawi.¹⁴³ A 'vestigial Islam' was found also among dispersed African groups in Southern Africa, variously known as the Varembe, Balembe, Lemba, Remba, Vamwenyi, Amwenye, or Malepa.¹⁴⁴ They are scattered groups of 'indigenous Muslims' from southern Malawi through the eastern half of Zimbabwe¹⁴⁵ to the Zoutpansberg area in Venda land in the north of Transvaal, South Africa. The Varembe/Lemba are probably the descendants of Muslims, and perhaps Jews (Falasha),¹⁴⁶ who traded from Sofala on the coast of the Indian Ocean, and the towns of Sena and Tete on the Zambezi river, with the Mwenemutapa empire and other states in the interior¹⁴⁷ and were reported by the Portuguese to have considerable influence at the court of that empire in the 16th century.¹⁴⁸ Some 2,500 Varembe¹⁴⁹ in the Masvingo area in Zimbabwe may have re-converted to Islam when Malawian and Asian Muslims, of the Zimbabwe Muslim Mission, introduced them to the doctrines of Islam after 1966.¹⁵⁰ The Zimbabwe Muslim Mission also established a *darul-ilm*¹⁵¹ in Harare: a institute for training *imams* in which also some Varembe were educated to serve as *imams* for the re-converted group. Most Varembe, in Zimbabwe and elsewhere, have, however, not been re-islamised.¹⁵²

¹³⁷ Trimmingham 1980: 32. Cf. also Hunwick 1988: 480-481

¹³⁸ Middleton 1992: VIII; for an extensive structuralist analysis of Swahili Islam in the town and island of Lamu, cf. el-Zein 1974

¹³⁹ On Islam in the Congo (modern Zaïre), cf. Hiskett 1994: 172-173

¹⁴⁰ On Islam in Kenya, cf. Holway 1973; Hiskett 1994: 167

¹⁴¹ Cf. Hiskett 1994: 164-165, 169-170. The Germans encouraged Islam and fostered education among the Swahili Muslims in Tanganyika during their period of rule between 1885 and 1919 (Hiskett 1994: 164-165).

¹⁴² Cf. Kasoki 1981; Hunwick 1988: 482; Hiskett 1994: 168

¹⁴³ Cf. Bone 1982; Thorold 1993; Hiskett 1994: 172; cf. also Mandivenga 1983: 38-44 on Malawian Muslims in Zimbabwe

¹⁴⁴ Mandivenga 1989: 98-100; Hiskett 1994: 167-168

¹⁴⁵ There are some 20,000 Varembe in Zimbabwe (Mandivenga 1983: 4)

¹⁴⁶ Mandivenga (1989: 103-104, 108) dismissed as speculation the theories of earlier writers that some Varembe are Jews of Falasha origin. They are, in his view, not supported by any evidence, which could not be better explained by their Islamic past. These theories can, however, no longer be rejected so easily because some Lemba from Vendaland, in South Africa, have publicly insisted that they are Jews. Cf. the last section of Hellig's contribution to this volume. Cf. however also Platvoet 2007 in which I critically discuss the plausibility of the hypothesis that the Lemba were Jews of pre-exilic or Falasha origin.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Beach 1980: 106-110, 213

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Mandivenga 1983: 1-3, 30-37; 1989; Moosa 1995: 129-130

¹⁴⁹ According to the Muslim Mission in Zimbabwe. Mandivenga's own estimate is more conservative: at least 1,000.

¹⁵⁰ According to Mandivenga (1983: 2-3, 30-31), however, they were reconverted in 1961.

¹⁵¹ Literally: 'House of knowledge'

¹⁵² Cf. Mandivenga 1983: 30-37, 43-44, 72-79; 1989: 109-121

Asian forms of Islam in East and Southern Africa

Other forms of Islam emerged in East and Southern Africa as the by-product of the migration of Muslims for labour, trade or other purposes in the contexts of the Dutch and British colonial empires. The earliest, and after three centuries of existence in the Cape a highly indigenized Islam,¹⁵³ is the 'Malay' Muslim community [72] in the Cape of South Africa.¹⁵⁴ It originated from Muslim Moluccan mercenaries, slaves, servants, convicts, and political prisoners, brought by the Dutch to the Cape from Indonesia after 1658.¹⁵⁵ Because the Dutch forbade, and suppressed, any other religion other than the 'Public', Calvinist one,¹⁵⁶ the Malay Muslim community obtained the right to the public practice of its religion only in 1804 when the Dutch granted freedom of religion to all the inhabitants of the Cape Colony for political reasons. Their spiritual leader at the time, Tuang Guru – a political prisoner from the Moluccas – established not only a *madrasah* school, in which books on jurisprudence in Afrikaans in Arabic script were used, in 1793, but also the first mosque, in 1806, and a separate cemetery.¹⁵⁷ By 1842, the 6,000 Malay Muslims accounted for one-third of the population of Cape Town; in 1891, their number had grown to 11,287, partly by a high rate of conversion, because the *imams* of its seven mosques were sensitive to the social needs of the recently emancipated slaves and Free Blacks.¹⁵⁸ They practised a folk Islam in which shrines of saints (*karamats*), ecstatic rites, *dhikr* (the liturgical repetition of the divine names as a mystical exercise), and burial rites were important.¹⁵⁹ In 1980, half of those registered as 'Coloured' in South Africa were Muslims.¹⁶⁰ The number of Malay Muslims had risen by 1991 to 157,702.¹⁶¹

Another special group are the Muslim 'Zanzibaris',¹⁶² a small community in Durban, descendants from some 500 African ex-slaves – most of them Sunni Muslims – which the British had liberated from Arab slave ships in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean between 1873 and 1880 and sent as indentured labourers to Natal. The Natal government did not count them among the local Africans ('kaffirs'), but reckoned them among the indentured labourers from India. On this count, the Muslim Zanzibaris developed a close association with the Muslims from India and kept [73] themselves distinct from the Natal Africans. Despite their protests, they were classified as 'Bantu' in the 1930s, and subjected to the same legal discriminations as were other South Africans who had been classified as Bantu. In 1959, however, they were reclassified as 'Coloured', and in 1961 as 'Other Asiatics'. By 1980, the Zanzibaris were a dis-

¹⁵³ Moosa 1995: 129, 144

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Tayob 1995: 39-54; for bibliographical and other general information on Islam in South Africa, cf. Mahida 1995.

¹⁵⁵ The first Muslims to arrive were the 'Mardyckers', mercenaries from the Moluccan islands in Indonesia whom the Dutch employed as soldiers for guarding their settlement against marauding indigenous groups, and as servants (Moosa 1995: 130; Tayob 1995: 39-40; Dangor 1991: 65).

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Prozesky 1995a: 8; 1995b: 229-230; Villa-Vicencio 1995: 45-47; Moosa 1995: 130; Hellig 1995: 160

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Yusuf [1990]; Chidester 1992: 158-166, 167; Moosa 1995: 130-133, 135; Tayob 1995: 42-45, 48

¹⁵⁸ Chidester 1992: 162; Moosa 1995: 134; Tayob 1995: 45-48

¹⁵⁹ Moosa 1995: 137-138; Tayob 1995: 45-46, 48-49. The Cape Peninsula alone has 27 *karamats*.

¹⁶⁰ They numbered 163,700 (Haron 1992: 3).

¹⁶¹ Mahida 1995: 85

¹⁶² Or 'Makua', as several hailed from the Makua area of Northern Mozambique, and continued to use the Makua language. As that area was under the aegis of Portugal, some Zanzibaris spoke fluently Portuguese, and a few were Roman Catholics (Oosthuizen 1982: 8, 13-16). These, and some other Zanzibari converts to Roman Catholicism, had integrated into a local RC Zulu community in Durban by 1890 (Oosthuizen 1985: 6). In addition, some of the freed slaves were originally Muslim Yao who hailed from Malawi.

tinct Muslim community of 900 with a separate mosque, rituals for the ancestors – to which rites the more orthodox among them objected –, the *pepo* possession cult, other ecstatic rituals, such as *ratieb* and *dhikr*, (much reduced) traditional rites of initiation with circumcision for boys, and without for girls, belief in witchcraft, etc.¹⁶³

Most of the allochthonic Muslim communities in East and Southern Africa, however, hailed from the Muslim parts of the Indian subcontinent. They migrated in the context of either the expanding opportunities for trade within the British Commonwealth for Indian merchant castes, or as indentured labourers who were contracted to work for five years on colonial plantations, or for military purposes.¹⁶⁴ An example of merchant migration were the Bohras, an Isma'ili (Shi'ite) caste of merchants from the Gujarati coast, some of whom had already participated in the trade on Arabia and East Africa in the 18th century. They began to settle in Zanzibar and the towns of East Africa from 1840 onwards. By 1861, Zanzibar had five to six thousand Indian traders: Ismaili (i.e. Shi'ite) Bhoras and Khojas, Sunni Muslim Memons, and Hindu Banyans, working 'as merchants, clerks and financiers in the great commercial houses of Zanzibar and [providing] banking facilities to the wealthy Arab landowners. Almost all the retail, wholesale and foreign trade passed through their hands'.¹⁶⁵ The Bohra community numbered 318 members in Zanzibar, and 225 elsewhere in East Africa in 1873. Most traders had brought their wives and children, but a few married African or Arab wives in the first decades.¹⁶⁶ As their communities grew, partly by new Bohras arriving from Gujarat, partly by their communities prospering and expanding, the practice of mixed marriages was discontinued. 'Wherever the Bohras went in East Africa, they organised themselves as a congregation with separate mosques, *Jamatkhanas* and cemeteries', and practised residential segregation. 'In this exclusive and insular environment Bhoras found comfort and familiarity' and preserved the customs they had brought from India.¹⁶⁷ When Bhoras promoted Islam on their travels into East Africa, they encouraged Africans to embrace Sunni Islam, not their own Bhora Isma'ili faith.¹⁶⁸ The Islam of the Bohras, therefore, represents a clear example of a 'diaspora' religion.

In South Africa, 47%¹⁶⁹ of those registered as 'Asians' – descendants from immigrants from the Indian subcontinent since 1860 –, are Muslims. As in East [74] Africa, most are well-to-do traders, who like the other Indian immigrants settled mainly in the British territory of Natal. They established their first mosque in Durban in 1884. They often styled themselves 'Arabs' to mark themselves off from the 'coolies': the low caste immigrants from especially South India who had arrived as indentured labourers.¹⁷⁰ In Natal and Transvaal, Islam was dominated by powerful mosque committees, and through the trading families, which manned them, strongly linked to the caste, ethnic, linguistic, and other divisions of their regions of origin in India. In addition, they had a leaning towards communalism and isolation from political involvement in the wider community.¹⁷¹ In line with their penchant for segregation, most Indian Muslims were

¹⁶³ Oosthuizen 1982: 8-11; 1985: 4-23; Dangor 1991: 67-68

¹⁶⁴ An example of the latter are the contingent of Parthans which came to South Africa in 1899 to fight in the Anglo-Boer war (Dangor 1991: 67).

¹⁶⁵ Amiji 1975: 36

¹⁶⁶ Amiji 1975: 36-37

¹⁶⁷ Amiji 1975: 40-41

¹⁶⁸ Amiji 1975: 40

¹⁶⁹ Or 154,300 (Haron 1992: 3). Mahida (1995: 85) gives their number as 166,012 in 1991

¹⁷⁰ Chidester 1992: 166

¹⁷¹ Cf. Tayob 1995: 54-73, 89-90, 190

accommodative to the divisive plurality of South African apartheid during the greater part of the 20th century.¹⁷² In the 1980s, however, the more militant Islamic movements, such as the Muslim Youth Movement (MYM), joined the pluralist front which was then emerging, carrying on a tradition of opposition to apartheid which had always been endemic in ‘the underclass history’ of the Malay Muslim community in the Cape.¹⁷³

The total number of Malay and Indian Muslims in South Africa was 323,959 in 1991. In addition, some 10,000 Black Africans, and some 2,000 Whites have embraced Islam.¹⁷⁴ They bring the total number of Muslims in South Africa to *c.* 336,000; which is less than 1% of the population.¹⁷⁵ There are over 250 mosques in South Africa today.¹⁷⁶

Judaism in Africa

Four forms of Judaism may possibly be distinguished on the African continent. They are, in chronological order:

- (1) the Beta Israel, or Falashas, who lived in Ethiopia since the fourteenth century CE;
- (2) the Jewish Lemba of Vandaland in South Africa, who have recently begun to claim publicly that they are Jews of Falasha origin, but about whose history too little is known as yet to ascertain that they are Jews, and to assign them a place in the chronology of Judaism in Africa;¹⁷⁷
- (3) the European Jews, many of them from Lithuania, who migrated into South Africa [75] from the 1820s onwards;¹⁷⁸ and
- (4) the Bayudaya, converts to Judaism from an African form of Christianity in Uganda after 1919.¹⁷⁹

Beta Israel

The Beta Israel have long been held to be the descendants of Jews who either had migrated into Africa in pre-exilic times, or had been converted by Jews in Upper Egypt, or by Jewish missionaries in Yemen, in pre-Christian times.¹⁸⁰ Those claims would have made Judaism the most ancient immigrant religion into Africa. Scholarship has veered away from this opinion in recent years¹⁸¹ and established that the history of the Falashas cannot be traced back with certainty earlier than the fifteenth century CE. The history of these ‘Ethiopian Jews’ must be seen against the background of the many Hebraic elements that were a prominent part of Ethiopian Christia-

¹⁷² Cf. Moosa 1995: 142, 145-147, 150, 151

¹⁷³ Chidester 1992: 166-168; Moosa 1995: 147-152; Tayob 1995: 82-86; 106-187, 190-192; and his contribution to this volume.

¹⁷⁴ Dangor 1991: 68-69

¹⁷⁵ Mahida 1995: 85; *pace* Dangor 1991: 68; Moosa 1995: 151

¹⁷⁶ Dangor 1991: 70

¹⁷⁷ Cf. however the addendum dd. 5.08.2012 in footnote 146

¹⁷⁸ Congregations of European Jews, however, are found also in major African towns outside South Africa, for example in Nairobi and other major towns of Kenya. The foundation stone of the synagogue in Nairobi was laid in 1912. It had 300 practising, and 250 non-practising members in 1972 (Barrett *e.a.* 1973: 314).

¹⁷⁹ Barrett (1982: 782) quotes the following total numbers of Jews for the whole continent of Africa: 398,000 in 1900; 207,000 in 1970 (because of massive migration of North African Jews to Israel); 233,000 in 1980. He expects their number to have risen to 364,000 in 2000.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Kaplan 1992: 209-210 for a survey of older scholarship

¹⁸¹ Cf. Haile 1987; Kaplan 1992; Shelamy 1992: 253

nity from its inception in the fourth century CE;¹⁸² their intensification, for political reasons, into the myth of the descent of the Amharic 'Solomonic' dynasty (1270-1500) from King Solomon through the Queen of Sheba, and the Amharics being both the 'true Jews' and the 'true Christians', as codified in the *Kebrā Nagast*, 'Glory of Kings'; and the use of this mythical charter against political and religious dissenters by the 'Solomonic' rulers between 1300 and 1500 CE. It was in this period that 'a number of inchoate groups of *ayhud* (['heretical'] 'Jews', JP) living in Northwestern Ethiopia coalesced into the people known as "Falasha".¹⁸³ They were deprived of the right to own land and either became tenant farmers or began to practise the crafts of smithing, pottery, and weaving. Their landlessness and crafts became the distinctive marks of their group, as well as their further 'Judaisation' by the former Christian monks Abba Sabra and Sagga Amlak. They introduced monasticism, purity laws, holidays, and a prayer liturgy, and began to develop the Beta Israel corpus of sacred books which reached them from Jews in Arabia through the Ethiopian (Christian) Church and were translated into Ge`ez from the Arabic.¹⁸⁴

[76] *The Lemba of Vendaland, South Africa*

Claims that not all Lemba, or Varembe, groups were descendants from itinerant Muslim traders travelling from Sofala, Sena and Tete over large parts of Southern Africa in the sixteenth and following centuries, and settling in dispersed groups from Malawi to Vendaland, but that some were Jews of Falasha descent, have been made for Varembe in Zimbabwe as early as 1942 by L. Thompson¹⁸⁵ and by H. von Sicard in 1950.¹⁸⁶ Mandivenga has rejected their views as unsubstantiated theories,¹⁸⁷ though he had to admit that 'a Jewish element in Lemba culture [is] not impossible'.¹⁸⁸ The plausibility of Thompson's and von Sicard's theories has increased greatly recently since some of the southernmost Lemba groups, from Vendaland in South Africa, have begun to proclaim their Falasha origin and Jewish identity at academic conferences which were held at South African universities in the late 1980s on the then hot issue of the Falasha of Ethiopia. Parfitt's book on them,¹⁸⁹ discussed by Hellig in her contribution to this volume, seems to lend credence to the claims of a Falasha origin of the Jewish culture and religion of some Lemba groups.¹⁹⁰

South African Jewry

The history and study of Jewry in South Africa are dealt with in the contribution of Jocelyn Hellig to this volume.¹⁹¹ I merely point out that chronologically they belong in this place, as

¹⁸² Such as 'an Israelite self-identity, the Saturday Sabbath, circumcision, Biblical dietary laws, and a threefold division of houses of worship in imitation of the Temple in Jerusalem' (Kaplan 1992: 210).

¹⁸³ Kaplan 1992: 210

¹⁸⁴ Kaplan 1992: 211

¹⁸⁵ Thompson 1942: 85

¹⁸⁶ Von Sicard 1950: 142

¹⁸⁷ Mandivenga 1989: 103-104, 108, 109. Cf. my *addendum* dd. 5.08.2011 in footnote 146 in support of Mandivenga's position.

¹⁸⁸ Mandivenga 1989: 108

¹⁸⁹ Parfitt 1992

¹⁹⁰ Cf. however Platvoet 2007 in which I critically discuss the plausibility of the hypothesis that the Lemba were Jews of pre-exilic (or Falasha) origin.

¹⁹¹ Cf. also Werblowsky 1993: 314-316

they began immigrate to into South Africa, and form Jewish congregations, from the early 1820s onwards.¹⁹²

The Bayudaya

The Bayudaya in Kenya were first noted by Schlosser and more extensively studied by Oded.¹⁹³ Its founder, the ambitious Ganda chief Kalungulu, who had been thwarted in his political ambitions in the new British colony, had joined the strongly hebraicizing Bamalaki, an independent African Christian Church that had heaved off from the Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS). The Bamalaki forbade the eating of pork, allowed polygamy, worshipped on Saturdays, abolished the Christian holidays, and fiercely forbade the use of all medicines and medical help from European and African doctors. Kalungulu added circumcision in 1919. When the Bamalaki refused to make circumcision obligatory on all males, he seceded with some 2000 circumcised males, who called themselves *Bayudaya*, 'Jews'. The secession [77] from the Bamalaki became definite in 1926, when the Bayudaya received instructions into Judaism for six months from the travelling Falasha merchant Yusuf. The Bayudaya began to wear the black Falasha dress, discontinued Christian baptism, introduced the ritual slaughter of animals, and began to read the Bible in Hebrew. After Kalungulu's death in 1928, the Bayudaya community dwindled slowly, to 300 circumcised men by 1961, when Jewish organisations from Israel and the US began to support it. By 1972, the Bayudaya had expanded again to 1000 circumcised men, and their numbers were growing as they eagerly introduced Jewish practices of liturgy and law, to which they were introduced by the representatives of world Jewry. They had abandoned their anti-medicine stand.¹⁹⁴

Hinduism in Africa

Among the Indian merchants communities on the coast and islands of East Africa, some – such as the Banyans – were Hindu¹⁹⁵ merchant communities.¹⁹⁶ Communities of indentured labourers – most of them low caste Hindus from the northern parts of the Indian subcontinent – were also established in the British colonies in East and Central Africa between 1880 and 1920. Another immigration gulf occurred between 1945 and 1960. It consisted mainly of Hindu traders, merchants, shopkeepers from Gujarat, and of teachers, doctors, and others with a professional training from the Punjab. By the early 1960s, Kenya harboured 178,000 'Asians', 55% of whom were Hindus, 17% Jains, 12% Sikhs, and the rest Muslims;¹⁹⁷ Tanganyika 91,000; Zanzibar 19,000; Uganda 77,000; Nyassaland (now Malawi), and the Rhodesias (now Zambia and Zimbabwe) 26,000; and Mozambique 16,000.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹² A few Jews arrived as early as 1669, but tended to convert to Afrikaner Calvinism as the only public religion permitted in the Cape settler community; cf. Hellig 1995: 160-161.

¹⁹³ Schlosser 1949: 363-368; Oded 1974

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Oded 1974

¹⁹⁵ Barrett (1982: 782) presents the following numbers of Hindus in Africa: 280,000 in 1900; 990,000 in 1970; and 1,024,000 in 1980. He expects their number to have risen to 1,738,000 in 2000.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Amiji 1975: 34, 36

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Day 1973: 302, 307, 309

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Morris 1968; Tinker 1977; Oosthuizen 1993: 286-288

These diaspora Hindu communities in East Africa were isolationist. Homogenized by the breakdown of the caste divisions within their own communities through the migration and the diaspora context, they replaced their former internal plurality by a quarantine-like segregation from the African societies and often dealt with Africans in the manner in which the low castes were treated in India.¹⁹⁹ After the British colonies in East Africa had gained independence in the 1960s, the governments of Kenya and Tanzania forced many Hindus and other Indians to leave East Africa for India, Pakistan, or Great Britain, and Amin expelled 88,000 'Asians' from Uganda in 1972.²⁰⁰ This eviction, and other factors, contributed to the [78] integration of Hindus in the East African societies, and to changes in their religion. For example, Kenya's 60,000 Hindus founded in 1971, together with the Jains and Sikhs, the Hindu Council of Kenya to represent their interests to the government, and to bolster the image of their religious communities by publications and public manifestations. In these, they stressed their scriptures and doctrines over rituals and pilgrimages. This process of Hinduism becoming more doctrinal was also manifest in gains of the Arya Samaj, which counted some 15% of the Hindus of Kenya as its members. It also proselytized among Africans: 'at least 1,000 Africans' had converted to the Arya Samaj, and at least one to the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISCON), by 1972.²⁰¹

In South Africa, 150,000 indentured labourers²⁰² were brought in from Tamil Nadu and Telugu in South India, and from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Gujarati in North India, between 1860 and 1911 to work on the sugar estates of Natal. Free, or 'passenger', Indians, many of them well-to-do Muslim merchants from Gujarat, but also some professionally trained Hindus, such as Gandhi, began to arrive in South Africa after 1870. The immigrants from India were granted right of permanent residence in 1961.²⁰³ In 1990, the number of Indians had grown to 987,000, and that of Hindu Indians to 520,000.²⁰⁴ Most of them reside in Natal, and especially in Durban, and are Sanatanis, or traditional, Hindus, with a mainly ritual religion.²⁰⁵ Neo – or Reform – Hinduism has also attracted adherents: the Arya Samaj since 1909,²⁰⁶ Neo-Vedanta groups, such as the Ramakrishna Movement after 1934,²⁰⁷ and the Divine Life Society after 1949.²⁰⁸ Others, like the Sai Baba and Hare Krishna (ISCON) movements began to spread in the 1970s and 1980s.²⁰⁹

The Hindus of South Africa are by origin very diverse: linguistically because they hail from different regions in India, and religiously, because religious diversity has been endemic in Hinduism throughout its three millennia long history. The homogeneity of South African Hin-

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Oosthuizen (1993: 292-297) who is careful to stress the positive effects of this cultural isolationism also.

²⁰⁰ Barot 1991: 192. Oosthuizen (1993: 192) quotes that figure as 40,000.

²⁰¹ Day 1973: 302-306, 313

²⁰² Two-thirds came from Tamil Nadu and Telugu in South India; the rest were Hindustani from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, and Gujarati (Diesel & Maxwell 1993: 6).

²⁰³ Hofmeyr & Oosthuizen 1981: vii

²⁰⁴ Or 62%. The Indian Muslims were 19%, while 13%, mainly low caste Indians, had converted to (especially Pentecostal) Christianity. 6% had other, or no, religious affiliation (Maxwell, Diesel & Naidoo 1995: 177; Oosthuizen 1975: 5-7, 47-48).

²⁰⁵ Cf. Diesel 1990, 1992, 1993; Diesel & Maxwell 1993; Maxwell, Diesel, & Naidoo 1995: 182-191

²⁰⁶ A national *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* was formed in 1925 (Naidoo 1985: 5; 1992: 56-73; Maxwell, Diesel, & Naidoo 1995: 192-193).

²⁰⁷ Cf. Sooklal 1990: 119-131; Maxwell, Diesel, & Naidoo 1995: 194-195

²⁰⁸ Oosthuizen 1993: 301-303; Maxwell, Diesel, & Naidoo 1995: 193-194, 195-196

²⁰⁹ Cf. Sooklal 1986, 1987: 21-22, 25-38; Maxwell, Diesel, & Naidoo 1995: 196-199

duism has, however, increased considerably in the last few decades through urbanisation – 85% of the Hindus live in towns –, forced relocation,²¹⁰ Western education, the replacement of the joint-family system by [79] the nuclear family, and Neo-Hinduism.²¹¹ These factors not only created ‘a rootless conglomeration of individuals rather than a community’,²¹² but also caused South African Hinduism to shift from a primarily ritual religion towards a doctrinal belief system, and from the temple to the meeting hall.²¹³ The caste system has, moreover, virtually disappeared,²¹⁴ and the distinctiveness of the regional traditions of origin is fading, because many younger Hindus no longer have a command of the language of the region of origin, which is no longer spoken in the homes.²¹⁵ Segregational attitudes, and accommodation of apartheid, seem to have dwindled rapidly among young, educated, urban Hindus in the last decade.²¹⁶

*Sikhism in Africa*²¹⁷

A few thousand Sikhs²¹⁸ came to East Africa around 1885 in connection with the construction of the Kenya-Uganda railway, some to police it, others to work on it as indentured labourers. After its completion, most of them opted to stay on in the British colonies in East Africa where they had grown into a modernizing, yet cohesive, prosperous community of 26,000 by 1972, active in business and in the [80] professions, with their own *gurudwaras* (Sikh temples), *khal-sa* (‘purity’, i.e. Sikh) schools, hospitals, and other organisations. Though in principle a missionary religion and open to other Asians, Africans, and Europeans, the Sikh community has remained virtually closed, more in particular in its centre, the Sikh Brotherhood, the *Khalsas* who have taken the vows of the Elect.²¹⁹ A very few Sikhs migrated early in this century also to South Africa. Their number has, however, remained very small because of the severe restrictions on immigration into South Africa after 1913.²²⁰

²¹⁰ More than 300,000 ‘Indians’ were relocated under the Group Areas Acts of 1950 and 1957 (Hofmeyr & Oosthuizen 1981: IV-X, 90).

²¹¹ Hofmeyr & Oosthuizen 1981: 18-19, 24-25, 91

²¹² Hofmeyr & Oosthuizen 1981: VIII. A fair number of poor Hindus converted to Pentecostal forms of Christianity, which has pursued a vigorous evangelisation campaign among them in the past three decades (Hofmeyr & Oosthuizen 1981: IX, 4-9, 58-59, 92, 93-96, 106-107, 109; Oosthuizen 1975).

²¹³ Hofmeyr 1982; Hofmeyr & Oosthuizen 1981: 3, 8, 9, 14, 23, 27, 28, 39-40, 41-46, 64, 91, 133, 140. Maxwell, Diesel, & Naidoo (1995: 191) disagree. They point to the increased popularity of Hindu festivals, particularly the Kavadi and Draupadi (fire walking) festivals involving trance, and that for the fierce goddess Mariammam, which may involve blood sacrifices.

²¹⁴ Maxwell, Diesel & Naidoo (1995: 181) say that it has ‘become considerably eroded’.

²¹⁵ Cf. Hofmeyr 1982; Oosthuizen & Hofmeyr 1981: 3-4, 5, 12, 52-55, 62-64, 66. Language and identity erosion is, however, actively resisted by at least one group, the Telugu speaking *Ândhras* (cf. Prabhakaran 1993).

²¹⁶ Oosthuizen 1993: 297-301; cf. also Sooklal 1993

²¹⁷ The number of Sikhs in Africa was 2,200 in 1900, 25,200 in 1970, 24,300 in 1980, and is expected to have risen to 36,000 in 2000 (Barrett 1982: 782).

²¹⁸ Sikhs are the followers of the religion which Guru Nanak (1469-1504) founded in North India in the late 15th century. He emphasized the unity of all religions, especially of Hinduism and Islam in their ‘mystical’ and devotional (*bhakti* and *sufi*) forms, and the vibration of *mantras* such as *Om* and other sacred words or texts as means of communication with the divine. The Sikhs were led by nine more Gurus till 1708 when Guru Gobind Singh – having turned the persecuted community of his followers into a martial group from which caste divisions were banned – declared that the *Adi Granth*, Sikh Scripture, was henceforth their Guru. The Sikh religion has its centre in the ‘Golden Temple’ at Amritsar in the Punjab (cf. Smart 1992: 98-99, 383, 385-388; cf. also Nesbitt 1990 for a survey of the study of Sikhism).

²¹⁹ Cf. Day 1973: 309-311, 313; cf. also Smart 1992: 558

²²⁰ Day (1973: 309) quotes their number as 4,000; cf. also Oosthuizen 1993: 294

*Parsism in Africa*²²¹

There are a few Parsis in Africa. A few Parsi families arrived in South Africa as 'passenger' (or free) Indians in the late 19th century. They settled in Natal, Johannesburg, and Cape Town and had grown to roughly 200 in the whole of South Africa in the beginning of the 20th century. Being in high esteem with the local governments, some Parsis obtained posts in local government, and as a group, they enjoyed unofficially special privileges in Transvaal, and even for a brief period the same privileges as British citizens. They renounced these when Gandhi challenged the restrictions imposed upon Indian immigrants. Their number has since then decreased to below 100 because of restrictions on immigration since 1913, and in particular in the apartheid era.²²² Likewise, small Parsi communities existed in other parts of East Africa, for example in Kenya, where the number of Parsis in the 1911 census is given as 97. The Parsi community of Nairobi counted 270 members in 1972.²²³

Jainism in Africa

A few thousand Jains²²⁴ settled in East Africa between 1886 and 1896.²²⁵ [81] Though they originally came as business employees of the wealthy Indian Muslim merchant families from Gujarat, they soon became independent middlemen in small retail, and later in wholesale business. By 1972, their number had grown to 40,000 in East Africa, 30,000 of whom lived in Kenya. They are divided religiously into lay supporters of the *Svetambaras* (80%) and of the *Digambaras* – though no Jain monks live in Africa –, and socially into a number of castes.²²⁶ In South Africa, there were never more than six Jain families, all *Svetambaras*. They entered South Africa between 1901 and 1903.²²⁷ They grew into a well-to-do merchant community of sixty members only. Jainism in Africa is a diaspora religion, which is strongly oriented towards their two or three million fellow believers in India. Jainism has shown no missionary urge.²²⁸

²²¹ The number of Parsis in Africa was 200 in 1900, 470 in 1970 and also in 1980. It is expected to have risen to 700 in 2000 (Barrett 1982: 782).

²²² Cf. Oosthuizen 1995: 221, 223, 224-226, 227-228. For a brief introduction to the Parsi, or Zoroastrian, religion, and how it is practised in South Africa, cf. Oosthuizen 1995: 221-227, and Naidoo 1987.

²²³ Barrett *e.a.* 1973: 225, 314

²²⁴ Jains practise the ascetical, strictly vegetarian religion founded by Mahavira in Northern India in the sixth century BCE. Like Buddhism, Jainism is a religion of ascetic monks and devoted lay followers who support the monks. Central to the Jain religion is the practice of *ahimsa*, 'nonviolence'. The killing, and other forms of injury, of any animate being is believed to heap the dust of *karma* upon a person's *atman* and keep that soul in the bonds of endless reincarnation. The monks belong either to the *Digambara* – 'clad with air [only]' - order of naked ascetics, or to the 'white-clad' *Svetambaras*. It may be pointed that naked ascetics, of a martial type (*nagas*), are also found in Hinduism.

²²⁵ The number of Jains in Africa was 3,100 in 1900, 31,800 in 1970, 40,600 in 1980, and is expected to have risen to 61,000 in 2000 (Barrett 1982: 782).

²²⁶ Day 1973: 307-309, 313

²²⁷ Oosthuizen 1993: 294-295; 1995: 217

²²⁸ Cf. Oosthuizen 1995: 217-221

*Chinese religion in Africa*²²⁹

Chinese immigrants arrived in South Africa during the early 1900s, some as bachelors, some as married men with, or without, their families, and others as merchants, or as labourers in the gold- and diamond-mines of Witwatersrand. Some returned to China when they had earned enough to marry, or to retire, but most remained in South Africa, where they grew to a (diffused) community of 13,000 by 1980.²³⁰ Central in their religion was, and is, the cult of one's family ancestors at an altar in the family home. In addition, a triad of popular gods²³¹ is often addressed. A third element is *Sanchiao*, the 'three teachings': an eclectic intertwining of the ancient Taoist teachings of Lao-Tzu, the Confucian ethics of K'ung Fu-tzu, and sinicised forms of the teachings of Gotama the Buddha. By 1980, Chinese religion in South Africa had considerably weakened: some 2000 South African Chinese had converted to Christianity.²³² A new influx of Chinese migrants in the 1980s, however, not only doubled the number of Chinese in South Africa, but also considerably revitalized the traditional religion.²³³

[82]

*Buddhism in Africa*²³⁴

If Hinduism was mainly present in East and South Africa as a diaspora religion of allochthonic groups trying, or not even trying, to overcome a history of religious isolationism, Buddhism has a history in Africa as both a diaspora reform movement among Hindu immigrants from the Tamil Nadu parts of India since the beginning of this century, and more recently as a 'missionary' religion promoting Buddhist views and practices among the natives, black and white, of Africa, though not necessarily attempting to gain converts.²³⁵

One of the fruits of the missionary work in India, since 1891, of the Buddhist reformer Dharmapala²³⁶ was the foundation of the South India Buddhist Association in Madras by Pandit Dass. By 1911, this early Indian reform Buddhism, which rejected the caste system, had been introduced to low caste Hindus from Tamil Nadu in Natal, some 400 of who had converted to it collectively, as total families.²³⁷ They began to receive reform Buddhist literature from Pandit Dass in 1916. In 1917, they formed the Natal Buddhist Society. By 1920, it had grown from 25 to 100 families. In the 1921 Population Census, the number of Buddhists among the Indians of South Africa is given as 12,472 (or 7.62% of the Indian population), but van Loon finds this figure 'highly suspect'. In his view, the 1936 census gives their correct number: 1,771.²³⁸ The Natal Buddhist Society 'was relatively dormant', however, after 1945,

²²⁹ The number of adherents of the Chinese religion in Africa was 1,900 in 1900, 7,240 in 1970, 8,600 in 1980, and is expected to have risen to 13,000 in 2000 (Barrett 1982: 782).

²³⁰ Cf. Song 1982: 23-24

²³¹ Guan Yin, goddess of mercy; Guan Ti, god of war; and Choi Sun, god of wealth (Song 1995: 204).

²³² Cf. Song 1982: 25-26; 1989; 1995: 203, 207

²³³ Cf. Song 1982, 1995

²³⁴ Barrett (1982: 782) gives the number of Buddhists in Africa as 3,400 in 1900, as 11,250 in 1970, and as 12,140 in 1980. Their projected number for 2000 is 13,000.

²³⁵ Van Loon 1995: 215

²³⁶ On Anagarika Dharmapala (1864-1933), founder of the Mahabodhi Society for the restoration of the ancient Buddhist sites of pilgrimage in North India, cf. Smart 1992: 406.

²³⁷ Van Loon 1980: 6-7, 10; 1995: 210-212; also van Loon 1979

²³⁸ Van Loon 1980: 8; 1995: 211. There seem to have been some Buddhists also in Rhodesia in the 1920s (Oosthuizen 1993: 304, 305).

and a process of re-Hinduisation through marriages to wives educated in the Natal Hindu religion set in among the second generation Buddhists.²³⁹ In 1979, the Natal Buddhist Association counted its strength at approximately 60 widely dispersed families, but they were, in van Loon's view, 'in a spiritual limbo'.²⁴⁰ In recent years, the Society has been considering whether or not it ought to disband itself, as the number of its members continues to decline.²⁴¹

'Missionary' Buddhism became active in South Africa in the 1970s. By 1980, 10,780 native whites – usually well-to-do and well-educated – had become Buddhists, often practising it in addition to their earlier religious affiliation.²⁴² At [83] least six Buddhist retreat centres were started in South Africa after 1979; four of them were associated with Zen, and two with Tibetan Buddhism. Apart from these centres, 'numerous groups [were] active in the major cities and towns in South Africa: Zen, Tibetan and Theravadin orientated', as well as among Whites in Lesotho, Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique.²⁴³ In addition, the Taiwanese community at Bronkhorstspruit near Pretoria is planning 'a vast cultural complex, including a Buddhist temple'.²⁴⁴

As for the other nations of Africa, in Zaire the *Union Bouddhique au Zaire* is reported as having founded the Buddhist Church of Kinshasa. It is also planning to establish an Institute of Buddhist Studies in Kinshasa.²⁴⁵ When I visited the University of Ghana in 1980, it was rumoured that a Buddhist monastery had recently been established in a suburb of Accra, and that its monks had been seen around on the campus of the University. That is confirmed in the *Journal of the Buddhist Society* of 1987, which reports that the Mahabodhi Society had successful meetings in Accra in 1982, had been broadcasting on the local radio, and was preparing translations of Buddhist scriptures into Ewe, Ga, and Twi.²⁴⁶ The same journal reported that Dar es Salaam had a Buddhist temple with a resident monk; and that a Buddhist society was active in Zambia.²⁴⁷

Esotericism in Africa

Hackett's research into Calabar religiosity has brought a new category of very recent and extremely heterogeneous immigrant and indigenous religions to light which had gone undetected till 1986,²⁴⁸ but seems destined to become an important part of the religious scene of especially the metropolitan cities of Africa. She has termed them the 'spiritual science' movements, or

²³⁹ Van Loon 1980: 11-15; 1995: 212

²⁴⁰ Van Loon 1980: 8, 16. His view of them has since then become even more dim: Buddhism 'is now virtually extinct among them' (van Loon 1995: 209). I think that this is a normative judgement made from the perspective of a particular doctrinal type of Buddhism. It seems, moreover, to be contradicted by his research data (van Loon 1980: 11-15).

²⁴¹ Van Loon 1995: 213

²⁴² Chidester 1992: xii; van Loon 1995: 215

²⁴³ Oosthuizen 1993: 304; van Loon 1995: 213-215, 217

²⁴⁴ Van Loon 1995: 215

²⁴⁵ Van Loon 1979: 18

²⁴⁶ Oosthuizen 1993: 305. Ewe, Ga, Twi are indigenous languages of Ghana. Ewe is spoken to the east of the Volta; Ga is the traditional language of the Accra area, and Twi is a major dialect of the Akan language and is spoken in most of Southern Ghana.

²⁴⁷ Oosthuizen 1993: 305

²⁴⁸ Or virtually so. Debrunner (1967: 321-322), however, reported in 1967 that at least three esoteric groups, of Theosophical, Rosicrucian and (American) Metaphysical origin were active in Southern Ghana in the 1950s.

‘spiritual technology’, and has described both their ‘exogenous’ varieties, and their indigenous reproductions, as she found them in Calabar, Nigeria, between 1978 and 1983.

The exogenous ones began to be introduced into Calabar by mail, by Africans who had studied abroad, in Europe or the US, or by Western propagandists from 1956 onwards. The first was AMORC, a Rosicrucian society with its headquarters in California.²⁴⁹ Another was the Aetherius Society, an UFO (flying saucer) religion, founded in England in 1955 and introduced [84] into Calabar in 1982. A third is the Swedenborgian Church of the New Jerusalem, which was propagated in the University of Calabar between 1978 and 1982 but had been active in other parts of South Nigeria since 1930. A movement with a background in Eastern religions is Eckankar, ‘the secret science of soul travel’, which began to spread in Calabar in 1982. The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISCON) began to spread its literature in Calabar in 1981, as did Moon’s Unification Church from Korea, and the Subud Brotherhood from Indonesia.²⁵⁰

Indigenous parallels were quick to emerge. Hackett includes Akpan’s Spiritual Fellowship (1980), Inyang-Ibom’s Esom Fraternity Company (which became associated in 1980 with the largest indigenous church of Calabar, the Brotherhood of the Cross and the Star), and Owan’s Universal Body. Spiritual Science is also an element in the Chrystal Church, one of Nigeria’s electronic churches. The spiritual science cults have also inspired traditional healers to incorporate spiritual science elements into the services they offer.²⁵¹

Esoteric religion is special because it is the product of the African jet set – university lecturers, civil servants, lawyers, medical doctors, etc. – participating in the global information and communication processes and the huge diversity of new religions on offer for private choice and practice, or in the seclusion of small, select societies, or as the private supplement to, and outside the bounds of, the massively institutionalised and doctrinalised ‘major religions’, though not in opposition to them. These religions are highly elitist, eclectic and synthetic. They are also ‘holistic’: they ‘spiritualise’ science and the modern scientific world view by blending the Western conception of ‘empirical reality’ with Eastern ones and presenting Eastern cosmologies as ‘scientific’, and not as ‘religious’.²⁵²

The recent upsurge of these esoteric religions is an important new field in the study of the religions of Africa, which needs to be studied by more scholars. So far, apart from Hackett’s

²⁴⁹ AMORC was also briefly, from 1960 to 1963, active in Kenya (Barrett *e.a.* 1973: 314).

²⁵⁰ One may wonder whether ISCON, the Unification Church, and perhaps also the Subud Brotherhood, should be included in the category of ‘spiritual science religions’, as Hackett does (1986: 158; 1989: 159-161). ISCON may better be classed as an American form of Hinduism, and the Unification Church as a Korean form of Christianity.

²⁵¹ Hackett 1986; 1989: 153-165, 200-203, 224-226; cf. also Hackett 1991b: 288, 289. Hackett has also traced the influence of ‘spiritual science’ upon the London branch of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church, one of the oldest and largest of the Aladura faith-healing churches in Nigeria (Hackett 1986: 161).

²⁵² Hackett (1986; 1989: 163) has stressed that their adherents believe they derive power from such ‘spiritual science’. She terms them therefore ‘spiritual technology’ and views them as ‘an instrumentalist and manipulationist type of religion’. I am wary of this utilitarian emphasis, and would prefer to stress the aspect of spiritual knowledge in most cases rather than that of spiritual power, though that may be predominant in some.

pioneering research, one finds only scattered references to it,²⁵³ such as Kristie Steyn's research into the New Age movement in South Africa.²⁵⁴

The Baha'i religion in Africa

The Baha'i religion²⁵⁵ spread into sub-Saharan Africa from the early 1950s onwards as part of a ten year concerted missionary drive, launched in 1953 by Shoghi Effendi, then 'Guardian of the [Baha'i] Faith', to spread the Baha'i religion to all parts of the world and to turn it into a worldwide religion.²⁵⁶ That campaign did indeed establish it in most nations of the world, albeit in often only a minute manner.²⁵⁷ The number of Baha'i in sub-Saharan Africa is reported to have risen in 1968 to 200,000, and to c. 1,000,000 in 1988, which was roughly a quarter of its worldwide membership.²⁵⁸ The Baha'i religion is strongest in East and Central Africa, and particularly in Uganda, Kenya,²⁵⁹ and Zaire, where it has spread especially through its publications, especially in Swahili, its tutorial schools and its agricultural and health projects.²⁶⁰ The Baha'i are active in Calabar, Nigeria, since 1955. They established their first 'Spiritual Assembly' – of minimally nine converts – in Calabar in 1956, and a Baha'i Centre in 1983. By that time, however, their numbers had grown to only 30: a few Iranians and the rest Nigerians.²⁶¹ They claim to have 10,000 members in Nigeria, and to be strong also in Cameroun.²⁶² Research of the Baha'i religion in Africa is as yet very sparse.²⁶³

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Afro-American²⁶⁴ religions in Africa

Through the slave trade from the 17th to the late 19th centuries, African religions were brought to many parts of the Americas and developed a rich history of their own there. More recently, forms of African traditional religions, as well as forms of African Christianity and forms of African Islam have been exported to many parts outside Africa, from as far apart as Iran and Kuwait, to the Netherlands, Britain, Canada and the USA through the migration of Africans. In our 'imploding' world, the movement of religions is, however, not only outwards, but also in-

²⁵³ E.g. that the Theosophical Society is making headway in South Africa (Oosthuizen 1993: 296) and in Kenya (Barrett *et alii* 1973: 314), where Freemasonry also flourishes. It had '3,400 subscribing members of all races' in 14 lodges in Nairobi in 1972, and 22 more lodges in the other towns of Kenya (Barrett *et alii* 1973: 314).

²⁵⁴ Steyn 1994a, 1994b

²⁵⁵ Barrett (1982: 782) gives the number of Baha'i in Africa in 1900 as 225 (in Egypt), as 695,000 in 1970, as 1,024,000 in 1980, and their projected number in 2000 as 2,462,000. For a brief sketch of the Bahai'i religion, cf. Smart 1989: 479-481.

²⁵⁶ Kasenene 1993: 102. The Baha'i had some 180,000 followers in Iran by 1950, some 20,000 in the rest of the Near East and North Africa, and 'fewer than 10,000' in the Western nations of North America, Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand and Japan (Smith & Momen 1989: 70, 72).

²⁵⁷ For a survey of these developments, cf. Smith & Momen 1989: 62-63, 67-75

²⁵⁸ Smith & Momen 1989: 72

²⁵⁹ Baha'i mission to Kenya began in 1951. By 1972, it claimed 30,000 adherents, all of them Africans except for 50 followers from Asia and 15 from Europe (Barrett *et alii* 1973: 275, 314).

²⁶⁰ Smith & Momen 1989: 71, 79-80

²⁶¹ Hackett 1989: 104, 161-162

²⁶² Hackett 1986: 158, 165n11

²⁶³ An exception is Kasenene's (uncritical) account of the establishment of the Baha'i religion in Swaziland by Baha'i missionaries from the US and Iran (Kasenene 1993: 100-109, 124, 127, 128).

²⁶⁴ 'Afro-American' is used here in its widest sense to refer to all the religions of African origin in the Caribbean, North America, and Latin America.

wards, from these 'peripheral' African diaspora religions, with a long or brief history of change elsewhere, back into Africa. This is also an area of research, which has as yet been poorly documented. I can only point out that Christian varieties of Afro-American religion from North America have had a limited influence on developments in mission and indigenous Christianity in Cape Coast and other towns on the littoral of the Gold Coast (now Ghana) since 1898 when the American Methodist Episcopal Zion Church appointed Egyir Assaam as its representative in Cape Coast.²⁶⁵ For the non-Christian varieties of Afro-American religions re-entering Africa, two examples must suffice for the moment. They respect religions native to the West Indies and Surinam, which migrated first to Britain and the Netherlands and from there back to Africa. One is Rastafarianism, a black militant millennialist religion from Jamaica, which has many followers among Blacks from the West Indies in Britain. It has also found 'a few thousand adherents' in Soweto and other South African townships in the late seventies.²⁶⁶ Another is Winti, the religion which the Black slaves practised on the sugar plantations in Surinam from the 17th century onwards, and continued to practise after the colonial authorities finally agreed that they might also be baptized and become members of Christian churches.²⁶⁷ Winti is also widely practised, in addition to Christianity, among the 100,000 Surinamese Creoles – descendants of the plantation slaves – who migrated to the Netherlands in the mid-1970s. A female Winti medium, who is also a Christian, is reported recently to have travelled *en somptueux equipage* to Gambia by a chartered aeroplane to be welcomed there by high military and government officials, all of them Mandingos and Muslims, as the spirit medium of an ancient Mandingo king. In the oral traditions of the Mandingo, that king was said to have been sold for political reasons as a slave to Dutch slavers some two or three centuries ago. It is believed that he has now 'at long last been found again' in this Winti spirit medium from the Netherlands. In her, 'the long lost king' was given a big 'welcome home' again.²⁶⁸

[87] *In conclusion*

This division of the religions of Africa into thirteen categories is, of course, no more than a first introduction to the huge religious diversity past, present, and future of (sub-Saharan) Africa. It is also a provisional instrument: it must be refined further in order to cover Africa's rainbow of past and present religions more adequately. New data may change the order in which the religions have been presented. New categories will have to be added to cover e.g. the religions which were, or are being, practised in Africa, but for which the data available are as yet too minimal to allow their formal inclusion at this moment.²⁶⁹ In addition, new categories will also

²⁶⁵ Cf. Debrunner 1967: 234-235, 322-324, 326-327

²⁶⁶ Oosthuizen 1989

²⁶⁷ It was then generally known as *afkodre*, 'idolatry' (from the Dutch *afgoderij*, idolatry). Winti is a new, 'respectable' name, which has become current only since the 1960s.

²⁶⁸ Heighton & Hollander 1995. The story is given as reported in a Dutch newspaper. Further research is necessary to establish the facts of this case more securely. It serves only to illustrate the influence which Afro-American and other African 'diaspora' religions may already be exerting in Africa, and are likely to have in the future, and not as a case properly established by scholarly research.

²⁶⁹ As is e.g. the case with the *Bana Israela*, 'Children of Israel', a tiny group in North Nigeria which began as a reform movement among the Muslim Hausa in the 1860s. It insisted on absolute monotheism, and refused to accept any source of authority but revealed scripture. Because they refused to acknowledge Muhammad as the final Prophet, they were regarded as no longer part of the *umma*, the 'community' of Muslim believers and persecuted as heretics. They saw themselves as the spiritual descendants of the original Israelites, and had ac-

have to be devised for the inclusion of the several completely new religions which are being produced at this very moment or will be founded in the near future from all the rich materials which are already available on the African continent itself, and through the increasing interaction between believers in Africa and in other continents in this modern world's 'global village'.

It must be stressed that in this division of the religions of Africa into thirteen categories we are dealing with concepts constructed by scholars, African and other, on the basis of the denotation and connotations which the term 'religion' acquired in the European languages in the past three centuries. Though this division is not without foundation in the historical realities of African societies, and speaking about them as religions is quite normal in scholarly as well as non-scholarly discourse both in Africa and elsewhere, the abstract, and therefore theoretical nature of these thirteen terms, and their lower level members,²⁷⁰ must be stressed.

It must, however, also be stressed that the utility of this analytical instrument varies with the analytical perspectives of the researcher, the social situation in which they are practised, and the purposes pursued. The instrument is useful whenever African religions function in the public domain, as institutions, or in the context of other institutions, in situations of little religious diversity, as they did on occasion in the pre-colonial societies of Africa, in some contemporary rural areas, and in the allochthonic groups which cultivate their religion of origin publicly in such a [88] way that it expresses their distinct identity and is used to establish the boundaries of their social group. In these and similar cases, African religions manifest their distinctive morphologies in several ways so well that they can analytically be defined as a specific religion, or as a lower member of a particular category of African religion. The thirteen categories, and their subdivisions, are then useful.

However, in another social setting, the boundaries between what we have defined as specific categories of religions have been found to blur and even to disappear altogether.²⁷¹ That happens in particular when religion is practised privately for pragmatic reasons in situations of dense ethnic, cultural and religious pluralism in which a great many religious options are on offer. That situation prevails in particular nowadays in urban Africa, in particular in the major cities outside the sphere of Islam. This shopping around is practised in particular – though not exclusively – by literate believers.²⁷² When believers privately look for healing, protection, or the means for competition, in situations with a high incidence of disease and unemployment in the major towns, to which many have migrated from many different ethnic regions, the distinctions between not only the several African traditional religions blur,²⁷³ but also those between the many other forms of religious (and non-religious) healing on offer, and those between the religious organisations – indigenous and exogenous – that offer them. At the level of the pri-

corded an important place to Isa [Jesus] as *Ruhu Lahi*, 'Spirit of God', and to *Lingila*, the Jewish and Christian scriptures. In 1913, the *Bana Israela* converted to Christianity (cf. Linden 1979).

²⁷⁰ For example, the indigenous religions of specific African peoples by means of the category 'African traditional religions'.

²⁷¹ This has especially been well documented in Hackett's study of Calabar religion; cf. especially Hackett 1989: 325-360, 365.

²⁷² Cf. Hackett 1989: 353

²⁷³ Cf. Hackett (1991: 145): 'Distinguishable entities such as "Yoruba" or "Efik" religion are a rapidly disappearing phenomenon'. The indigenous religions of Africa were receptive systems and never strongly bounded; nor were they ever internally unified. Our ethnographies were never able to do justice to their internal variation and variability.

vate practice for pragmatic purposes, most African popular religion²⁷⁴ has remained as open, eclectic, adoptive, pragmatic, self-determinant, synthetic, non-doctrinal and tolerant as ever.²⁷⁵ That unbounded search for effective means is as major a drive behind the dynamic developments in the modern religions of Africa as it was in the traditional ones.²⁷⁶ And that demand for new effective means compels all the religions on offer, but especially the more recent and more peripheral ones, to develop remarkable capacities for fluidity and change.²⁷⁷

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²⁷⁴ On the concept 'popular religion', cf. Hackett 1989: 261; on the phenomenon, cf. Platvoet 1979; Hackett 1989: 257-291

²⁷⁵ Hackett 1989: 362; 1991b: 289-295

²⁷⁶ 'Th[e] pragmatic approach to religion which derives from traditional religio-cultural conceptions is the motivating force behind the dynamism and mobility [of much of the religious scene in Africa]' (Hackett 1989: 352; cf. also Hackett 1987d: 237-239). For an example, cf. Drewal 1989 and Wicker forthcoming on West African *Mami Wata* cults.

²⁷⁷ For example, the traditional Okopedi Healing in Calabar 'also draws on astroscience, meditation, astral projection, clairvoyance, Rosicrucian philosophy and Kabbalism, as well as the Bhagavad Gita and Egyptian religion' (Hackett 1990b: 287; cf. also Hackett 1987: 8-9; 1989: 184, 204, 230-234).

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