

# Foreign Influences on the Idea of God in African Religions

SOME REMARKS ON A GREAT PROBLEM

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“The White man’s God and the White man’s gold” have influenced and changed African beliefs and behaviour to a considerable extent, Professor Sundkler says.<sup>1</sup> We may add, with regard to the religious conditions, that the White man’s God has had—and has—a very important competitor in the Muslim Allah in furnishing the Africans with new religious ideas. When in the present contribution to the debate about religious syncretism we speak about foreign influences we think of these two sources in the first hand, the Christian and Muslim faiths. Sometimes, however, there can be talk of Jewish influence on the African tribal religions. The study of primitive peoples has often neglected influences from the environments. The sociologists and the anthropologists regard the influence as a concrete fact that is taken in account with regard to the behaviour. They have—as a rule—no interest in studying the historical development. They take facts as they meet them in life.<sup>2</sup> Studying African religions we must bear in mind that the influences of missions, for example Christian and Muslim, are clear among many of the African peoples. Therefore a study of foreign influences upon African religions is necessary in order to provide an analysis and an understanding of the contemporary religious situation. In the present paper we shall analyse the impact of foreign religions on the God-idea in order to see if the Christian or Muslim ideas of God are reflected in the indigenous religions of Africa.

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<sup>1</sup> B. G. M. Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Social Anthropology: Past and Present*, p. 121. A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*, pp. 3, 49 f.

When Andrew Lang 1898 published his important book dealing with primitive monotheism<sup>1</sup> and tried to show that traces of monotheism existed among different peoples at the most primitive level of culture, he was contradicted by scholars who supposed that the monotheistic ideas were due to Christian or Muslim influences. Many scholars wished, as Nathan Söderblom says, to derive "all so-called primary monotheistic gods among the primitives from the Bible or from the Koran".<sup>2</sup> This tendency can be studied also in works of our times.<sup>3</sup> Insufficient knowledge about the religions of the primitives gave rise to the idea that these religions must have borrowed concepts from Christianity or Islam, if any similarities existed between the African and Christian or Islamic religions. Of course, we must reckon with a foreign influence on the different African religions; this is a definite fact.<sup>4</sup> A great and important question arises however, viz. what are genuine African ideas and what are foreign—Christian or Islamic—ideas in the African tribal religions: This problem is very complicated. I will give an example from the Sonjo tribe in Tanzania. Sonjo is a small tribe, with only 4500 members. They speak a Bantu language and are agriculturists in the inner of the Masai District. The Sonjo have been related to the Masais and their predecessors for about 200 years.<sup>5</sup> Their technical state is characterized as archaic by Robert Gray and their social organization seems to have developed independent of foreign influences.<sup>6</sup> The most characteristic element in their religion does not seem to be—*mirabile dictu*—the ancestral worship but the belief in a god who is named Khambageu or Hambageu. Round him all national worhsip circles. Among other things they celebrate four annual feasts in honour of him.<sup>7</sup> It is worth noticing that the myths dealing with the origin of the god contain traits which re-

<sup>1</sup> A. Lang, *The Making of Religion*, see for instance pp. 160 ff.

<sup>2</sup> N. Söderblom, *Gudstrons uppkomst*, p. 110.

<sup>3</sup> See, for examples, R. Karsten, *The Origins of Religion*, p. 182: "Of course there is no question of the beliefs in these beings having arisen simply as the result of missionary teaching or European influence."

<sup>4</sup> See R. J. B. Moore, "The Development of the Conception of God in Central Africa", pp. 412 ff.

<sup>5</sup> H. A. Fosbrooke, "Hambageu. The God of the Wasonjo", pp. 38 ff. R. F. Gray, "Some Parallels in Sonjo and Christian Mythology", pp. 49 ff.

<sup>6</sup> R. F. Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

<sup>7</sup> Regarding these festivals, see Gray, *op. cit.*, pp. 54 ff.

semble the Biblical, and especially the New Testament ones, to a high degree. We will mention some of them.<sup>1</sup>

The god Khambageu made his entrance into the men's world by a supernatural birth. He had no mother. According to some records he also was without a father. Khambageu died because people did not believe in his divine character. He ascended to heaven. His grave was empty and it is said that somebody witnessed his ascension. In heaven he was connected to the sun-god, Riob. They form an entirety in the prayers and other actions of worship. The god will, however, return to the world again and save his believers, who wear the *ntemi*—an incision scar with which all his followers are marked.

Are the mentioned traits due to Christian influences? Have the Sonjo added Christian elements to their myths? It is difficult to answer these questions. We know that the Christian Mission began its work among the Sonjo in the 1940's for the first time. At this time the Sonjo met Christian ideas directly for the first time as far as we know. The Sonjo myths are, however, much older. It is possible that foreign—Christian—influences may have arrived with the first Portuguese in the 15th century or by the Copts of Ethiopia. But also these hypotheses are uncertain. Gray says that difficulty with these hypotheses is “that there seems to be no trace of Christian cult or myth among the peoples interposed between the Sonjo and possible sources of diffusion”.<sup>2</sup>

I wanted to quote this example in order to draw attention to the difficulties that exist when we analyse the foreign influences on African religions. The existing records are unsatisfactory, and often we have no records at all; and when the records are missing we cannot reach any conclusions. In the continuation of the present contribution to the problem of foreign influences on African religious ideas we will analyse material from such areas where foreign influences are without any discussion. As far as possible, I will take clear and distinct examples in order to demonstrate the way in which foreign influences may change the African ideas of God. This method may

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<sup>1</sup> The survey follows Grant, *op. cit.*, pp. 56 ff.

<sup>2</sup> R. F. Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 60. Regarding the difficulties to determine foreign influences in African religions see E. Dammann, *Die Religionen Afrikas*, p. 263.

be regarded as a form of "culture pure" and is often used in literature in order to clarify and analyse a problem.<sup>1</sup>

As an introduction to my analysis something must be said about the characteristics of the so-called high-gods in the African tribal religions. Firstly, we will state that the African high-gods have a tendency to flow together with the ancestral spirits. It is often difficult—or impossible—to decide if an African worships the high god *or* his ancestors and the high god at the same time. This fact has been mentioned by several scholars, i.e. Raffaele Pettazzoni.<sup>2</sup> The African high-gods have a diffuse character in spite of the fact that they own a personal name.<sup>3</sup> However, when J. J. Driberg<sup>4</sup> states that no ideas of a personal god exist in African religions, this must be regarded as an exaggeration. Driberg thinks that the god is conceived as a "power". This statement may be correct to some extent. Driberg has, however, overlooked an important fact, viz. that this "power" is always equipped with a more or less clear trait of a will. The gods have a tendency towards an abstraction, towards an indefinable "power". This fact leads to a very important thing: these high-gods can easily be assimilated with the ancestral gods. Because the characteristics of the high-gods are so indifferent and vague, different foreign traits can be associated with them. It seems as if something of this way of looking at problems is found among Father Tempels' analysis of African religions.<sup>5</sup> In Sweden the Missionary Director Holger Benettsson has laid stress upon similar ideas.<sup>6</sup> Benettsson writes that the god of creation is "the absolute power of life, the combining principle of life. He is the highest one in a hierarchy of powers that form the reality. Below him the ancestors who own powers in different degrees are placed."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See T. Parsons, *Structure of Social Action*, p. 601.

<sup>2</sup> See R. Pettazzoni, *The All-knowing God*, p. 34, where it is said that the celestial character of the high-god has been overshadowed by the animistic traits and that he has been identified with "the primal ancestor or primeval man". Cf. E. Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, p. 39, where the author states that the Supreme Being of a celestial structure seems to represent the archetypal norm of the religious experience.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. R. J. B. Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 412.

<sup>4</sup> J. H. Driberg, "The Secular Aspect of Ancestor Worship in Africa", pp. 7 ff.

<sup>5</sup> P. Tempels, *La Philosophie bantoue*, pp. 23 ff., et passim.

<sup>6</sup> H. Benettsson, *Négritude-afrikansk livsåskådning*, p. 35. Cf. J. Jahn, *Muntu. Neoafrikansk kultur i vardande*, pp. 35 ff.

<sup>7</sup> H. Benettsson, *op. cit.*, p. 45. Cf. Jahn, *op. cit.*, pp. 120 ff. et passim.

Even if we cannot share the view that the high-gods always have supremacy over the ancestral gods we will notice that an important trait is emphasized in the quoted statement, viz. that the high-gods are placed in the great group of superhuman powers that is very characteristic of African tribal religions in general. However, we must remember that the powers are always connected with gods, spirits, persons, names of formulas. The "powers" do not exist as independent greatnesses.

When we wish to analyse the doctrine of the high-gods in African religions we must remember that there is a clear difference between the gods in the myths and those in the worship. The difference is limited not only to the fact that the high-gods have a more dominant place in the myths than in the worship. As is well known, this difference caused some scholars to regard the high-gods as philosophical-mythological beings who did not play any role in the worship or in the daily life of men. He was only a "first cause".<sup>1</sup> This conclusion is, however, one-sided too. It overlooks a very important fact, viz. the difference between myth and worship. Myths are always more or less rational. They describe logically and systematically. They explain and arrange the ideas in a system: gods, spirits, heroes etc. are placed in systems and hierarchies.<sup>2</sup> What I have said about the character of the myths has not to be interpreted in such a way that myths are only rational. Myths have, of course, also characteristics and functions. It falls outside the scope of the present contribution to deal with this problem.<sup>3</sup> Summing up I may only state that the rational character of the myths gives an apprehensible picture of the high-gods. They are much more concrete and manifest in the myths than they are in worship and in every day beliefs and sayings. As a rule the myths describe the high-gods as the first cause. He is the first being and he gave rise to the different conditions, as well in the universe as in the human world. There is no monotheism in the myths: the high-god is a god beside other gods and spirits and sometimes he has no supremacy over the different deities and spirits.

Regarding the role played by the high-gods in the worship we can state that the name of the high-god is often mentioned in prayers and invoca-

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. N. Söderblom, *op. cit.*, p. 144. M. P. Nilsson, *Primitive religion*, pp. 100 ff.

<sup>2</sup> R. J. B. Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 416.

<sup>3</sup> See E. Ehnmark, "Anthropomorphism and Miracle", p. 211.

tions. Even if the importance of the high-gods varies in different tribes it is clear that he is invoked and worshipped. However, a difficult question arises: Which superhuman powers—gods, spirits etc.—are concealed under the name of the high-god? Is it a personal god, creator-god determiner of fate, from whom they wish to get help or whom they thank for received help? As a rule, the African high-god is assimilated with that of the ancestors. It seems as if the high-god is the entirety of what they worship, especially the ancestors and other superhuman spirits.<sup>1</sup> It seems as if the high-gods stand for all the gods, spirits etc. on which man feels dependent. In the myths we meet a system of gods and spirits, heroes and ancestors. In the worship there is no system. There the borders are blotted out and the different beings form a unity, more or less diffuse.

The high-god has often the character of being a *deus otiosus* in the African religions, even if this characteristic may vary in the different areas. In the worship the *deus otiosus*, however, may appear as an active deity, but that seems to be due to an influence from the ancestor worship.

Regarding the categories "almighty", "omnipotent", "all-knowing" that some scholars<sup>2</sup> have mentioned as being important characteristics of the African high-gods, we must remember that these categories do not mean that the god knows everything and can do everything. They mean only that the god knows more and is able to do more than men. Pettazzoni writes regarding this problem: "But in every instance omniscience, varyingly associated with universal vision or hearing or with omnipresence, is the attribute of a supreme skygod (or sungod, or both), and it is directed to the behaviour of men."<sup>3</sup> Pettazzoni bases his statement on such utterances as "the god sees everything", "he is everywhere", "he can do everything". It is clear that such utterances exist. Records give many examples of similar utterances. However, the interpretation of them is not an easy task. What is nearest to hand for Western scholars is to interpret them according to the Western idea of the previously mentioned categories. A Western scholar construes them after a Christian, monotheistic model. We may give an

<sup>1</sup> I have in a paper, "Monotheism or Polytheism?", pp. 48 ff., tried to demonstrate the tendency towards an entirety in the worship in African religion. See also my *Afrikas religioner*, pp. 111 ff.

<sup>2</sup> See for example, R. Pettazzoni, *op. cit.*, pp. 31 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.*, p. 34.

example illustrating this fact. A record states that the god "Kalunga has long ears", and that "his eyes can see even in the dark".<sup>1</sup> When a scholar draws the conclusion from this utterance that Kalunga is an all-knowing god, the conclusion must be regarded as being too rash. It depends on the tendency of the scholar to interpret the foreign records according to Christian thoughts.

The same thing can be observed when scholars say that the high-god is the "only god". I will illustrate this fact with an example, taken from a Swedish dissertation by Dr Berta Millroth.<sup>2</sup> The author gives many interesting original texts dealing with the high-god in South-Africa. The texts are translated into English. The translations are—as a rule—correct with regard to grammar and vocabulary but in the main they are false. An example may illustrate this. It is said about the high-god Liwelelo (Lyuba): *Liwelelo lili lyene* and this statement is translated with "God is alone".<sup>3</sup> This is a false interpretation. The interpretation has a monotheistic model as background. *Liwelelo lili lyene* means correctly *God is what he is*.

I will sum up what is said above. It seems as if we do not find any clearly concrete and personal African high-gods, who are almighty and all-knowing in the Western sense of the word and who demonstrate their love of and active care of the *individual*. We meet high-gods in the African religions but there are no gods who can be placed into a Christian or Islamic scheme.

My problem in the present paper is to illustrate how the character of the high-god can be influenced by the Christian and the Islamic God-idea. The problem may be formulated in the following question: To which degrees does the God-idea in the African tribal religions change after a confrontation with Christian or Islamic ideas of God? I will not discuss the problem of monotheism contra polytheism, because the border-line between Christianity and Islam on one side and African tribal religions on the other is not determined by the categories monotheism-polytheism. I wish to lay stress upon other border-lines: the personal God-idea, according to which the god shows his interests in the individual, the concrete apprehensible God-idea, the categories almighty, all-knowing, God as a creator of the

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<sup>1</sup> *Ib.*, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> "Lyuba. Traditional Religion of the Sukuma."

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.*, p. 99.

world. I think that we can best analyse the new element in the African God-idea by studying the previously mentioned things.

The ideas of uNkulunkulu or uMvelinqangi among the Zulu has been heavily influenced by Christian thoughts. This influence has not given a monotheism as result but a new epithet to the god, viz. *umninimandla onke*, it means the Almighty, "the omnipotent".<sup>1</sup> In the old texts uNkulunkulu is creator and called the "very, very Old One". In olden times the Zulu believed according to the myths that uNkulunkulu came from the interior of the earth or from the Uthlanga, the reed-grove.<sup>2</sup> This idea does not seem to exist in the myths and sayings according to the modern Zulu traditions.<sup>3</sup> The Christian influences have resulted in uNkulunkulu being now placed in heaven. His connection with the inner part of the earth or with Uthlanga has no place in the Zulu idea of God in our times.<sup>4</sup> Another new thought—due to Christian influences—is that uNkulunkulu is the source of all virtue and goodness, also for the individual.

The passive role played by uNkulunkulu in worship is, however, the same in our times as it was in olden days. Christian influences have not changed anything with regard to the worship of uNkulunkulu. The Zulu speak about him as the "Almighty" and as the "source of all virtue and kindness", but they do not pray to him. The non-Christian Zulu will often answer the Christian Missionary speaking about God in the following way: "If you want to pray to some deity, pray to your ancestors, and if you want any kind of help you will be served by your ancestral spirits."<sup>5</sup> Vilakazi comments upon the religious situation among the Zulu in the following way: "In all my experience of a Zulu, living among Zulu carriers of the culture, and in the field, I cannot remember a single instance when I heard a prayer by a traditionalist offered to uMwelinqangi. It is always to the ancestral spirits that prayers are made in the cases of sterility in women, in cases of illness or when the cattle are dying unaccountably. In diagnosing the cause of the disease of misfortune, the diviner always discovers the cause either in

<sup>1</sup> A. Vilakazi, *Zulu Transformations*, pp. 87 ff.

<sup>2</sup> See H. Callaway, *The Religious System of the Ama-Zulu*, pp. 15 ff. J. W. Colenso, *Ten Weeks in Natal*, p. 137.

<sup>3</sup> A. Vilakazi, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. H. Callaway, *op. cit.*, p. 55. O. Pettersson, *Chiefs and Gods*, pp. 151 f.

<sup>5</sup> A. Vilakazi, *op. cit.*, p. 89.



witchcraft and sorcery and/or in the anger of the spirits, not of uMvelinqangi. When the seasons are out of joint, and everything seems to be going wrong in nature, it is not uMvelinqangi who is invoked. The cause is always that the ancestral spirits (unkulunkulu bethu) are angry. Thus people devote much time and care to studying the whims and fancies of their ancestral spirits ... In the day-to-day practice of traditional Zulu religion, the ancestral spirits are pivotal and each Zulu hut has, at the *umsamo* (back part of the hut) what may be called a shrine—a place which is specially respected and is specially associated with the ancestors. Thus a Zulu hut is not just a dwelling; it is, together with the cattle kraal, a temple, and when an ancestral spirit chooses to visit his family, his spirit may enter into a snake, and he would then glide into the house, move right up to the *umsamo* and then coil himself upon the ancestral shrine.”<sup>1</sup> They always pray to the ancestral spirits in situations of crises. From olden times *one* prayer to uNkulunkulu is recorded by Callaway.<sup>2</sup> The records mention also other prayers to uNkulunkulu, but in these cases uNkulunkulu is to be regarded as an ancestor.<sup>3</sup>

Regarding the worship, the situation in our time is the same as it was about 100 years ago. The Christian influences, thus, have not changed the otios character of uNkulunkulu. Today the God is just as unimportant for men as he has been for as long as we have known anything about the Zulu religion. The contents of the myths have, however, changed through the Christian influences. From this fact I will draw the following conclusion: In the cases where uNkulunkulu has played a dominant role, viz. in the myths, the foreign influences are clear. In the myths new ideas due to Christian thoughts have been assimilated with the old ideas of uNkulunkulu. But in the cases where—as far as I know—uNkulunkulu has never played any role, viz. in the worship, nothing has been changed; in the worship no new ideas due to foreign influences have been introduced. uNkulunkulu’s character as an abstract mythological being has not been displaced by the new religious ideas. As we have shown, the ancestor worship remains as the dominant characteristic of the traditional tribal religion of the Zulu. It belongs as an integral part of the centripetal organization, to use Fernando

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<sup>1</sup> *Ib.*, pp. 89 f.

<sup>2</sup> H. Callaway, *op. cit.*, p. 85, n. 50.

<sup>3</sup> O. Pettersson, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

Camara's words.<sup>1</sup> The contents and symbolism of this organization are oriented towards a conservation of an already established social-cultural order. "This order is traditional, homogeneous, collectivistic, well integrated and obligatory." In it the well-being of the community is placed before the welfare of the individual. The ancestral worship cannot be eliminated from such an organisation.<sup>2</sup> Members of an African society feel, Evans-Pritchard says, "their unity and perceive their common interests in symbols".<sup>3</sup> Their attachment to those religious and secular symbols give more than anything else the cohesion and persistence. The ancestor worship is a condition precedent for the function of the society as a collective. I will quote some lines from Vilakazi: "Of all the agents that have been at work among the traditional Zulu, none has been as far-reaching in its effects as Christianity working through the Christian Church and the schools. The government and the new economic system have produced very important results, but their influences has left the people's world view and their religious ideas intact."<sup>4</sup>

A very interesting example of how foreign religions can influence the old tribal religions is given by the Xhosa-speaking tribes of the north-east Cape Province of South Africa (Xhosa, Thembu, Pondo etc.). Among these tribes we meet a twofold influence, partly from the Hottentots in olden times, partly from the Christianity in modern times. The first Christian missionary among the Xhosa was van der Kamp at the end of the 18th century. He was accompanied by a Hottentot interpreter on his missionary journeys and from him van der Kamp overtook the name Tuigra (uThixo) that was a Hottentot name for the god. Van der Kamp then used this name when he preached Christianity among the Xhosa and so his successors on the field of the mission continued to use this name for god. In the year 1833 Stephen Kay,

<sup>1</sup> F. Camara, "Religious and Political organization", p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> The Christian missionary Henry Junod who worked among the Thonga tribes, says that the Bantu easily accept the Christian ideas of God. This statement is correct with regard to the god-idea, but it cannot be interpreted in such a way that the Bantu would easily change their religion. See H. A. Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe*, p. 449: "It is wonderful to notice how easily the idea of the Christian God is accepted by the Bantus."

<sup>3</sup> E. E. Evans-Pritchard, "Values in African Tribal Life", p. 56. Cf. also below, p. 54.

<sup>4</sup> A. Vilakazi, op. cit., p. 94.

from the Wesleyan Mission, wrote that the name for the God uThixo was unknown among the Pondo.<sup>1</sup> This people believed in a creator-god whom they called uDali—"Creator", "Maker". He plays a great role in the myths. 103 years later the situation changes. Monica Hunter shows that uThixo is known by the Pondo in general, also by those who had no direct contact with Christianity.<sup>2</sup> We meet here an important fact: the usual name for god, uThixo, among the Xhosa-speaking tribes is due to the Christian mission. The point of connection between the old ideas represented by uDali and the new ones represented by uThixo is the idea of creation. The few and diffuse traces of the old Xhosa god uDali show that he may be thought of as a creator, as the "first cause" to the order of men and the world. However, the old records contain only vague intimations of uDali and his character. We have to base our interpretation of the old god-ideas on the meaning of the word uDali. The word means, as stated above, "creator", "maker". There is no worship of the god mentioned in the records. When the new god-name uThixo was introduced by the Christians and was spread and accepted also by non-Christians it is connected with the function of the old god uDali, Creator. uThixo becomes also a creator-god. Thus in this respect he does not differ from the old god. But uThixo gets many other characteristics that have their origin in the Christian god-idea: uThixo is regarded as governor and *active sustainer of the world*. He has become a god who punishes evil and rewards good. Generally speaking, uThixo has been an active god; he is not uninterested in his creation.<sup>3</sup> The dwelling-place of the god is heaven, even if this fact does not seem to be absolutely self-evident.<sup>4</sup> The old creator-god was never thought to live in heaven, and this idea is still current, even if uThixo, as a rule, is said to reside above—in heaven.

An analysis of the worship gives the following picture of uThixo. He is never worshipped directly but always connected with the ancestral spirits. It seems as if in the worship uThixo had the function of an abstract of all the super-human powers that men invoke. Christian Xhosas say that their non-Christian fellows pray to uThixo through the medium of the ancestors

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<sup>1</sup> S. Kay, *Travels and Researches in Caffraria*, p. 339.

<sup>2</sup> Monica Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest*, pp. 219 ff.

<sup>3</sup> See J. Henderson Soga, *The Ama-Xosa Life and Custom*, p. 149.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. H. Callaway, *op. cit.*, pp. 63 ff., 105 ff.

as the Christian pray to God through the intermediary Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup> The worship does not show any divergence from the old practice. Thus the new god-ideas have not altered the worship practice. The tribal religion of the Xhosa remained unaltered on the whole as far as worship is concerned, as was the case with the religion of the Zulu which is mentioned above. The god-ideas of the myths are altered but the "practical" religion does not change. There is, however, an important difference between the Zulu and the Xhosa with regard to the high-god in the worship. Among the Xhosa the god-name uThixo occurs more frequently in the cultic invokes than the god-name uNkulunkulu does among the Zulu, where uNkulunkulu is almost non-existent in the worship, as we have tried to demonstrate above.<sup>2</sup> It is plausible—more cannot be said—that the relatively high frequency of the god-name uThixo in the cultic invokes is a result of foreign influences. These influences may have contributed to make uThixo a living god whose name is used in worship.

New influences, however, must find some connecting-point in the old ideas to be accepted and to be assimilated with the old thoughts. The connecting-point for the new god uThixo was—with regard to worship—the dominant role played by the ancestral worship.<sup>3</sup> uThixo could be placed into the old pattern of worship, viz. into the ancestral worship. In spite of the fact that uThixo shows characteristics that were unknown with regard to uDali, his place in the ancestral cult was guaranteed by the fact that he was not a new god in reality but a new name of an old idea: he stands for the entirety of the powers. That uThixo was equipped with new characteristics did not prevent him from taking his position in the pattern of ancestral worship where his function seems to be limited to a name used in the invocations. Behind the name the ancestral spirits conceal themselves—now as in former times. uThixo is not a concrete god in the worship.

In Northern Rhodesia we meet several names of the high-gods. One of the most common is *Leza* or *Lesa*. He seems to be regarded as the first

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<sup>1</sup> J. H. Soga, op. cit., p. 151: "Just as we say it in all reverence God is worshipped through the intermediary, Jesus Christ, so the Xhosa worships the Supreme Being, Tixo, through the medium of the ancestral spirits."

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 41.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. H. Stirnimann, "Nguni und Ngoni", pp. 142 ff.

cause according to available records.<sup>1</sup> It is not very clear if the Thonga believed *Lesá* to be a personal being. All events are due to *Lesá*, they say. Sometimes the phenomena are identified with *Lesá* himself: *Leza wawa*—"God falls", it means "it is raining", or *Lesá wamweka*: God shines, it means "it is lightening" etc. We often meet such thoughts in the African tribal religions in general and they are not unique for the religion of the Thonga. However, when a village chief said "*Lesá* is our father; he always saves me from disaster",<sup>2</sup> we are surely dealing with non-African ideas. Hoppood thinks, however, that such an utterance may be an example of a genuine African idea.<sup>3</sup> I do not think that Hoppood's interpretation is correct. A village headman dissented from the idea that *Leza* was man's father. He said, "If *Leza* is our father why is he always bringing trouble upon us? The very fact of death speaks against such a conception of him, for what man is there who has begotten a child and wishes to kill his own offspring? Such a thing is unthinkable, yet we have to face the fact that, if God is our father, he has assigned death as the lot of all his children."<sup>4</sup>

I have quoted these lines because I think that they reflect something important of the African world view and religious ideas. The village headman represents the old view, according to which the idea of the father is limited to the ancestors. A man who has begotten a child cannot be thought to kill his child. Life and death are uncombinable ideas according to old African way of thinking. Thus, because the high-god sent death into the world,<sup>5</sup> according to the genuine African concepts, the high-god cannot be a father. This combination is absurd for an African whose ideas have not been influenced by foreign thoughts. The idea of the father is common in African religions, it is true, but this idea is connected with the ancestral cult. Even if the ancestors may punish the living men in different ways, so that they become ill and die, the ancestral spirits have nothing to do with the dead as a fate,

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<sup>1</sup> See C. R. Hoppood, "Conceptions of God amongst the Thonga of Northern Rhodesia", pp. 62 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.*, p. 65.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.*, p. 65: "The conception of *Lesá* as the father watching over the interests of his human children seems quite apart from Christian influence that is making itself felt today, to be fairly common amongst the Thonga."

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.*, p. 66.

<sup>5</sup> See H. Abrahamsson, "The Origin of Death", pp. 4 ff. et passim.

a fixed order. Death has the character of being a part of the world-order that was stated in the mythological times. Nobody, not even the ancestors, is able to alter this law of nature.<sup>1</sup> These ideas must be taken into consideration when we analyse the discussion quoted above.

As we have already stated Lesa is a diffuse deity. The Bemba people say: *Lesa ni Shimuelanganya*, "Lesa is an incomprehensible thing".<sup>2</sup> In some respect the ideas of Lesa seem to have undergone some changes due to Christian influences: The personal character of the god has been developed to such a degree that some Africans can call him "father". Another Christian idea, it seems, can be traced in the myths when it is said that Lesa dwells in heaven where he lives in his great village. There he sits on his throne of metal, from where he pronounces sentence on men.<sup>3</sup>

Regarding the worship of Lesa, it seems as if prayers to him—separately or in connection with ancestral worship—have been more frequent in our days. There are prayers to Lesa. The fact that there exists an excitement between the worship of Lesa and that of the ancestors speaks in favour of the supposition that the prayers are from a later time. This excitement is clearly shown by a statement given by Hopgood.<sup>4</sup> Dry weather had prevailed for a long time in the village and the crops were seriously threatened by drought. A member of the village proposed that the villagers suggested that they should pray to Lesa for rain. "Maybe Lesa will help us", he said. But one of the villagers was sceptical regarding Lesa and said: "Who is Lesa?" he asked.—"Our father who formed us all", was the reply.—"Well, for my part, I do not worship Lesa. I pray to the spirit of my own father ... One can worship the spirit of a man whom one has seen, but how can one worship Lesa whom no man has ever seen?" We meet a new idea in this discussion. In the old tribal religion there was no contradiction between the ancestors, mizimu, and Lesa. The mizimu and Lesa formed a unity where Lesa, because of his vague indifferent character, could represent the ancestors and the superhuman world as well. It is said that Lesa was the greatest of the ancestral spirits (*Leza ngumuzima mupati*).<sup>5</sup> In the myths we meet a unity

<sup>1</sup> Cf. O. Pettersson, "Divinity and Destiny", pp. 158 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Africa's God*, ed. by J. J. Williams, p. 251. Cf. R. J. B. Moore, *op. cit.*, pp. 413 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. C. M. Doke, *The Lambas of Northern Rhodesia*, pp. 225 ff.

<sup>4</sup> See C. R. Hopgood, *op. cit.*, pp. 66 ff.

<sup>5</sup> *Ib.*, p. 68.

of Lesa and the ancestors that is not discussed. However, when Lesa became a more personal, concrete being—a change due to foreign influences—he began to differentiate himself from the ancestors—mizimu—and this change caused a tension between Lesa and mizimu. This tension may be bridged over when the mizimu are made to be intermediaries between the great god and men. This method is clearly connected to the old practice of finishing the prayers to the ancestors by mentioning the name of Lesa. The saying of the name Lesa was accompanied by a summary of the prayers said to the mizimu. Thus, Lesa seemed to represent all the concentrated power of the ancestral collective:<sup>1</sup> a summary of the prayers was said to him who represented the abstract of all the ancestors.

With regard to the North-Rhodesian tribes we have traced a change not only in the myths but also, to some degree, in the worship. A necessary condition for introducing new ideas is that these ideas have some points which connect them to the old thoughts. The new ideas must find an anchorage to the old ones.

Among the Herero, a West African Bantu speaking people, a new name of god occurs in the middle of the 19th century,<sup>2</sup> viz. the name *Ndjambi*. From this time this name began displacing the old name, *Mukuru*, “the very very Old One”. The name Ndjambi came to Herero from the Congo.<sup>3</sup> When Herero altered the name of their god, the question arises whether it was only the name that altered or whether new ideas were also introduced with the new name. The name Ndjambi is recorded for the first time in the year 1871 when a Herero chief used this name as a denomination of the high-god who was believed to dwell in heaven. Men were dependent on his kindness and all good things came from him and he is the creator of mankind and the world.<sup>4</sup> Thus, it seems as if Ndjambi was a very active god. The characteristics with which Ndjambi is equipped and which make him a personal and active god seem to be due to foreign influences—Christian or Islamic. Ndjambi is too concrete and personal to be a *genuine* African high-god. Hy-

<sup>1</sup> *Ib.*, pp. 68 ff.

<sup>2</sup> J. Irle, “Die Religion des Herero”, p. 344. H. Vedder, *The Herero*, p. 164. A. Ihle, *Christliche Einflüsse im Gebiet des alten Königreiches Kongo*, pp. 107 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. O. Pettersson, *Chiefs and Gods*, pp. 168 ff.

<sup>4</sup> J. Irle, *op. cit.*, p. 342. H. Vedder, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

pothetically I wish to say that foreign characteristics have been added to the old supreme being Mukuru. The process may have begun when his name was altered to Ndjambi. These new ideas were introduced in the course of time. The point of connection between the old and the new ideas was the idea of god as a creator,<sup>1</sup> the first cause.

We may interfoliate an excursus here regarding the idea of creation in African religions. When it is said in the records that god is the creator of everything and therein also is included the creation of the world it must be due to foreign influences. The idea that heaven and earth should have been created by the high-god is an absurd thought according to the genuine African concepts. When Robert Moffat, the well-known Christian missionary in South Africa, had once preached about God as being creator of heaven and earth among the Chwana, a chief said that he found it terrible that a person whom he had thought to be wise and sound in judgment was able to tell the people stories according to which God had created heaven and earth. Moffat writes: "Calling about thirty of his men, who stood near him, to approach, he addressed them, pointing to me, 'There is Ra-Mary (=Moffat) who tells me that the heavens were made, the earth also, by a beginner, whom he calls Morimo. Have you ever heard anything to be compared with this?'"<sup>2</sup> Similar thoughts are recorded from other parts of Africa.<sup>3</sup> The African idea of creation is an idea of an anthropogenesis and ideas of a world-creation are of non-African origin.

The name Ndjambi is very wide spread in Africa: we find it in the areas from the Congo in the West to the Rotse in the East, from the Nyala in the North to the Herero in the South. The name has probably its origin among the Akan-tribes on the Guinea-coast, where strong Islamic and Christian ideas were in circulation at a very early time. It was, probably introduced to the Congo by Diego Cao's interpreters.<sup>4</sup> These men who had learnt the local language stayed in the Congo area and acted as mediators between the first Christian missionaries and the Congo natives. Ndjambi came into use with

<sup>1</sup> H. Baumann, *Schöpfung und Urzeit des Menschen im Mythos der afrikanischen Völker*, p. 163.

<sup>2</sup> R. Moffat, *Missionary Labours and Scenes in Southern Africa*, p. 267.

<sup>3</sup> See E. Casalis, *Les Bassoutos*, p. 25. A. Gardiner, *Narrative of a Journey to the Zulu Country in South Africa*, p. 283.

<sup>4</sup> See A. Ihle, *op. cit.*, pp. 107 ff.



the co-operation of these foreign interpreters who were Christians and, consequently, equipped Ndjambi with Christian ideas of God.<sup>1</sup> The original vague creator-god among the Congo who was not more than a principle of creation became a concrete personal creator-god. This development is due to foreign ideas—at least to a great extent. The ancestral religion may also have contributed to this development in an indirect way. The ancestral gods are here, as in other places in Africa, always active deities but they are never creator-gods. The Christian god-idea where the personal and active characteristics are striking may have found a point of connection in the ancestral worship: the ancestors are active personal deities who show their interests in the living. The original Congo religion was familiar with active gods, viz. the ancestral divinities, but an idea of an active high-god was missing, as far as we know. First after a confrontation with Christian ideas of the heavenly Father the high-god was an active personal god. The Christian influences in the Congo have been striking. Today we have survivals from the Christian mission of the 17th century.<sup>2</sup> The Christian Cross is regarded as a fetish in some districts of the Congo and has been regarded as a royal emblem, etc.

In the worship Ndjambi is as a rule assimilated with the ancestors. There is no cult dedicated separately to Ndjambi. Ndjambi seems to represent the ancestral collective. Thus we meet here the same phenomenon with regard to the Zulu and other tribes mentioned above: the ideas of the changing of the god, the worship does, as a rule, not alter in any appreciable way.

The Ambo who live in West Africa have the god-name Kalunga. This name has been taken over by the Christian missionaries for the Christian God. According to the Ambo, Kalunga lives “above”, viz. in heaven, but his power is not greater than that of the ancestors, the “theologians”, the magicians, suppose. Common people say, however, that he has all power and therefore has supremacy over the ancestral spirits which they regard as his helpers and messengers.<sup>3</sup> According to common belief Kalunga is the creator of everything. The relation between Kalunga and the ancestral spirits reminds one of the relation between God and the angels and the

<sup>1</sup> See E. Torday, “Dualism in Western Bantu Religion and Social Organization”, pp. 225 ff.

<sup>2</sup> See A. Ihle, *op. cit.*, pp. 114 ff.

<sup>3</sup> See G. W. Dymond, “The Idea of God in Ovamboland, South-West Africa”, p. 144.

saints in Catholic Christianity. Common people believe that Kalunga gives rain and makes seed sprout and grow. However, all prayers for rain and for the fertility of the fields are directed to the ancestors. It is mentioned in the records that missionaries have heard the natives pray to Kalunga for a good harvest saying "*Kalunga ketu*" = O, our Lord. If this statement is correct the prayer must be due to Christian influences. The natives cannot address their god with invocations like "*Kalunga kange*", o, my Lord, or "*Kalunga ketu*", o, our Lord, for in the genuine, original religion of the Ambo the intimate relation between the high-god and man is missing. There are no traces of a personal relation between the high-god and men in African tribal religion. He is not the object of man's love or trust. His area is the universe; the individual is beyond his interest. There are, however, popular sayings according to which Kalunga is said to punish crimes that men commit.<sup>1</sup> It seems as if in these types of sayings Kalunga is regarded as a representative for all the superhuman powers, especially the ancestors. We may compare such utterances with the Christian phrases: Lord have mercy on us! So help me God! etc. where as a rule God may represent the supernatural powers more than a personal god.<sup>2</sup>

I said above that the magicians—the religious experts of the tribe—have another idea of Kalunga's power than common people have. According to the magicians, Kalunga is parallelized with the ancestors. According to common people Kalunga has supremacy over the ancestral spirits. The magicians may represent the orthodox idea; they keep watch over the old ideas and practices.<sup>3</sup> The faith of common people is easier to alter than that of the theological experts. Therefore, I do not think it is too hypothetical to conclude that the magicians may be the spokesmen for the old god-idea.

Another example taken from a non-bantu-speaking tribe, the Akan, may finish my short survey. The high-god among the Akan is named Nyame.<sup>4</sup> He is described as being eternal, all-knowing and graceful. They speak of the Grace of God. When a person asks another "How are you?", he answers "By the grace of God I am well". Further, Nyame is believed to be the *world-*

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<sup>1</sup> *Ib.*, p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> See my paper "Monotheism or Polytheism", pp. 56 f.

<sup>3</sup> G. W. Dymond, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

<sup>4</sup> J. T. Evans, "The Akan Doctrine of God", pp. 241 ff.

creator. He is worshipped. In most villages there are cultplaces, named Nyamedua, "The Tree of God". It is a kind of altar placed on treeprops. Here the offerings to Nyame are made and there prayers to him are said. In the villages of the chiefs there are, according to Evans, temples where special priests officiate. They are called the "soul-washers of God".<sup>1</sup>

The ideas of Nyame differ, as we have seen, in many important respects from the concepts of the high-gods that we have met before and that we have regarded as being general in Africa. I wish to lay stress upon the following four characteristics:

1. Nyame is the world-creator.
2. Nyame's relation to men is characterized by a personal intimateness.
3. Nyame is worshipped in special shrines where special priests act as cult-performers.
4. Nyame is a personal and an active god.

It is not to be wondered at that Sir A. B. Ellis regarded Nyame as a non-African god.<sup>2</sup> He thought that Nyame may have been borrowed from Europe.<sup>3</sup> Later Ellis altered his opinion, but it can be questioned whether he was not right to some extent in his first statement: the ideas of god were so influenced by foreign thoughts that Nyame had become a god who bore characteristics similar to those of the Christian god. He seemed to be a non-African god. The coastal areas of West Africa have had very intensive relations with the Europeans since the 15th century. Thus, the Akan have received foreign influences for a long time. In the worship we can see influences from the Biblical ideas. We may mention an example that may illustrate this fact. The annual feast in the honour of Nyame has to be celebrated on a Saturday.<sup>4</sup> It seems probable that we have here to see a result of the Christian missionaries about the Biblicae creation-myth.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ib.*, p. 253.

<sup>2</sup> See A. B. Ellis, *Tshi-speaking Peoples of the Gold Coast of West Africa*, pp. 22 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.*, p. 24: "Nana Nyakupon was the God of the Christians, borrowed from them and adopted under new designation." p. 27: "Many of the attributes which had formerly been peculiar to Bobowiss (an original god), gradually became transferred to Nyankupon." Cf. also *id.*, *The Ewespeaking Peoples of the Slave Coast of West Africa*, pp. 35 f.

<sup>4</sup> J. T. Evans, *op. cit.*, pp. 253.

<sup>5</sup> E. L. R. Meyerowitz, *The Akan of Ghana*, pp. 131 f., has given parallels between the Akan and the Phoenician religions. His hypothesis has however, been criticized. Regarding this critic see *Orientalische Literaturzeitung*, 55, pp. 539 f.

The ideas that came from abroad have been associated with an original high-god of the common African type. The points of connection have been the same ones that we dealt with above: the character of the god as being that of a creator, the first cause. To these characteristics the Christian ideas of god as the world-creator, the all-knowing and almighty God in heaven could easily be associated. The Christian missionaries often mention this fact.<sup>1</sup> A great problem is how the role played by Nyame in the worship may be explained. Dammann<sup>2</sup> thinks that we have to reckon with a fusion of two gods, an active god who was worshipped by special priests, on one hand, and the high-god, Nyame, on the other. His hypothesis may be correct, as far as I can see. Who was the god whose cult was assimilated with the cult of Nyame? It is probable that this god was a national god. The fact that we have a national state speaks in the favour of this hypothesis. A national state with its well-developed political organization promotes the rise of a national unitary worship with temples and priesthood and fixed rituals. A national state wants a national religion. We can study this fact in different parts of Africa. When a national state with a strong military and social organization has arisen, the religion shows tendencies to be a state religion. The national ancestors form, as a rule the basis of such a national religion. The national state had its focus in the worship of the national ancestors.<sup>3</sup> Among the Akan the national religion was shaped in another way: Among the Akan there was an active high-god—a result of influences from abroad—and with him the national tribal ancestor—or ancestors—were assimilated. The very well-developed worship of Nyame is due to the fact that this worship is borrowed to a great extent from the ancestral religion. If this hypothesis is correct, two things have contributed to shape an active high-god out of Nyame:

1. Influences from abroad.
2. The need of a national religion for the national state.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See E. W. Smith, *African Ideas of God*, pp. 152 ff., 178 f., 238 ff.

<sup>2</sup> E. D. Dammann, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

<sup>3</sup> See O. Pettersson, *Chiefs and Gods*, pp. 205 ff.

<sup>4</sup> S. G. Williamson has in a Ph.D. thesis of University College of Ghana, 1957, with the title "Akan Religion and the Christian Faith: A Comparative Study of the Impact of the two Religions", given an analysis of the confrontation between Akan

The short survey given above where examples are given from the Zulu, the Xhosa-speaking tribes, the Tonga and the Bemba of Northern Rhodesia, the Herero, the Ambo and the Akan points on the first hand on the great problems that are connected with a study of the foreign influences on African religions. I think that the following conclusions may be drawn:

1. The diffuse and vague characteristics of the genuine African high-gods facilitate the adoption of foreign ideas. The new ideas from abroad easily find points of connection in the African high-gods.
2. The new concepts are most striking in the myths dealing with the high-gods. The new ideas about the god are connected with the old ones. It is thus worth noticing, the the new concepts are most distinct in the theoretical-rational parts of the religions—the myths. It seems to be clear that the theoretical ideas of the high-god were altered, because the African high-gods had their importance in this respect, viz. as theoretical abstraction as the “first cause”. The new conceptions deal with characteristics such as the following ones: the high-god as

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religion and Christianity. See pp. 97 ff. where Williamson seems to share Westermann's opinion that the Supreme Being is a philosophy rather than a living faith. On pp. 100 f. Williamson discusses the relation between the Supreme God and the individual. He says, that the god gives nkrabea (the destiny) with the okra (the soul) and continues in the following way: “This teaching relates Onyame (the god) directly to the individual ... This destiny is a general destiny; it is not divine control of life in its detail. The thought is analogous to that of being born with a silver spoon in one's mouth, or ‘being born to sorrow’ ... This link, natural and personal, *even though it lies in the realm of doctrine rather than of practical religion*, is an important aspect of the Akan's estimate of his own relationship to the Supreme Being” (my italics). Regarding the inroads of Westernism he states: “For more than two centuries ... there has been contact between the Akan people and the Western world. This has resulted in interaction and change within the whole field of traditional life, religious, social, economic, political. The result of this interaction is a changing of the unstable social medium within which the individual seeks to adjust himself” (pp. 112 f.) ... “There is ... some evidence that the church's attitude to participation in the ancestor-cult or State functions regarded as essentially heathen was sterner in former generations than it is today” (p. 125). On p. 151 he states that the Christian faith and Akan reveal themselves as basically different at five points: The Christian doctrines of monotheism, revelation, ethics (sin, grace etc), nonethnic universal faith; and the possession of a sacred book. The two religions “meet without a common viewpoint and with fundamentally different emphases. They constitute two different levels of religion, able to view each other from afar but finding no common ground of fellowship.”

the world-creator, the high-god as a father, the high-god as the active helper of the individual.

3. The role played by the high-god in the worship is, as a rule, not altered. In the worship the high-god had a very vague and unimportant position in former times. This fact has not changed after the confrontation with the ideas from abroad. Sometimes, however, we can discern a tendency towards a more frequent use of the god-name in the worship in modern times. This fact may be due to the foreign influences. The modern sociological-economic changes may also contribute to this development: when people move from their villages to towns to live and work there they cannot worship their ancestors, because those are connected with their country and their graves. People cannot bring with them their ancestral gods and, thus, the high-god may serve as a substitute for the old ancestral spirits. This development may take place when the tribal collective is dissolved.
4. National and political factors can contribute to giving the high-god an important place in the national worship. The national state wants a state religion with a national god, whose worship is common to all members of the state. This national god can be the result of an assimilation between a national ancestor or hero, on one hand, and the high-god, on the other.

However, as a rule we dare to state that the influences from abroad have not altered the worship to any striking degree. Their effects are limited to the myths.

The situation in modern Africa is complex. There are the traditional religious beliefs—the ancestral worship with its reverence and service to the dead—the belief in the existence of a high-god, and the belief in magic. Into this religious situation two new and important religions, Christianity and Islam, have come. The Africans who have come in contact with one or with both of these two religions continue to follow their old ritual behaviour they practise ancestor worship and magic. Thus the three mentioned elements in the traditional religion are still living even after confrontation with Christianity and/or Islam. Even if they convert to Christianity or to Islam they neither abandon the old worship nor the magical practices. The three

traditional elements continue to exist simultaneously with a Christian and/or Islamic belief. The “theoretical” belief in the Christian or Islamic God does not discredit or replace the traditional worship, even if these doctrines are assimilated with the old ideas of the myths.<sup>1</sup> These facts are recorded from different parts of Africa.<sup>2</sup>

This condition depends on the fact that the African society is traditional. The old myths, fictions, dogmas, ritual, sacred places and persons represent the unity. Evans-Pritchard has pointed out this very important fact in African society when he says that “the social system is ... removed to a mystical plane, where it figures as a system of sacred values beyond criticism or revision”. The African regards “the ritual observances as the supreme safeguard of the basic needs of his existence and of the basic relations that make up his social order—land, cattle, rain, bodily health, the family, the clan, the state”.<sup>3</sup> The society is the source of the whole people’s livelihood. The observances and ceremonies, the taboos, the magical practices, in one word the tradition is a sacred condition for the existence of the order. Therefore, foreign influences of a religious character seldom result in the changing of the worship. The theoretical elements of the religion may alter, the practical religion as manifested in worship does not change.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Hunter, “From the Old Culture to the New”, pp. 29 ff.

<sup>2</sup> See for the Baganda L. P. Mair, *An African people in the Twentieth Century*. For Cameroons, E. and S. Ardener and W. A. Warmington, *Plantation and Village in the Cameroons*, where it is stated that although 74 % of African plantation workers gave their religion as Christian both animist and magical practices were universal. For Ghana, Margaret J. Field, *Search for Security*, where we find the statement that many of those who came to consult local oracles at the shrines were Christians. For Ghana see also J. Stöckle, “Die ursprünglichen religiösen Vorstellungen und die Entwicklung des Christentums in Ghana”, pp. 247 ff. See also E. Benz (ed.), *Messianische Kirchen, Sekten und Bewegungen im heutigen Afrika*, pp. 27 ff. The author gives many interesting examples of the ideas of Christ in African religions. He demonstrates, for example, how the old idea of the Culture-hero (der Heilbringer) may influence the concept of Christ. For Yoruba see C. J. A. Ojo, *Yoruba Culture*, pp. 186 ff., where we on p. 189 find an interesting statement: “Not only has Yoruba traditional religion survived at home, but more than other West African religion, it has shown its capability of thriving on another soil across the ocean. The seeds of the religion were scattered on the strange soil of Cuba, Brazil and Haiti, the sowers being the Yoruba slaves. In the face of all drawbacks the seeds grew and blossomed by putting on a syncretic cloak.” The Yoruba deities were syncretized with the Christian ones.

<sup>3</sup> E. E. Evans-Pritchard, “Values in African Tribal Life”, pp. 56 f. Cf. id., Introduction, pp. 19 f.

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