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CONCEPTS OF
GOD IN AFRICA

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African Religions and Philosophy

CONCEPTS
OF GOD
IN AFRICA

JOHN S. MBITI



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VERENA

for the richness of your
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NOTE

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Preface

African peoples are not religiously illiterate. This book presents a portion of their traditional religious and philosophical wisdom, gathered from over two hundred and seventy different peoples (tribes). The subject is God both alone and in relation to the universe of spiritual beings, man, animals, plants, natural objects, and phenomena. A glance at the Table of Contents would no doubt quickly indicate the wide range of material covered in the book.

This is a pioneer piece of work containing a systematic study of practically all the information I could find in writing and otherwise, on African reflection about God. It covers more than two hundred and seventy peoples, listed at the end of the book, together with their countries and names of God. The information is gathered from nearly two hundred authors and students; and one cannot pretend that it is in every respect accurate. On some of the peoples, the written information is fairly comprehensive, but for the majority it is only in small fragments. I should be grateful if readers who detect errors of facts, spelling, confusion, or otherwise, would kindly inform me through the publisher, so that corrections could be incorporated should a new and revised edition be necessary. Even more important, one hopes that the many blanks in this book will stimulate scholars, students, and writers, to do research and more writing, so that our written knowledge of African concepts may be bettered.

Concepts of God in Africa is intended for use by students in universities, colleges, theological seminaries, senior secondary schools, and other institutions of higher learning, as well as by readers who have attained any of these levels of education.

I assume in this book, that there is but One Supreme God. I take it also that the majority of the concepts presented here, have sprung independently out of African reflection on God. This reflection is influenced, naturally, by geographical, historical, cultural, and social-political factors. Since these factors may parallel similar factors in other countries and continents, the concepts also parallel those of other societies. This is strikingly so in the case of biblical concepts,

particularly those of the Old Testament, though with obvious differences.

It needs to be borne in mind that Africa is going through a tremendous and rapid change in every aspect of human life. Many individuals are becoming increasingly detached from the corpus of their tribal and traditional beliefs, concepts, and practices. On the other hand, these concepts have not all been abandoned, nor are they likely to be wiped out immediately by these modern changes. Traditional religions neither send missionaries nor make proselytes: their strength lies in being fully integrated in all the departments of human existence. As such, they cannot and need not be completely wiped out, so long as those who follow them are alive.

I want to express my gratitude and appreciation to various people, institutions, and organizations, without whose help this book could not have been written. First to the many writers (anthropologists, missionaries, research scholars) and to my students at Makerere University College, from whom I have gathered my information and material. (I have tried to make faithful acknowledgements to those sources, particularly in the notes.) Then to the publishers who have generously given me their encouragement and ready co-operation, from the time they received the manuscript of this book, up to the time it was published. To Professor N. Q. King and my other colleagues in the Department of Religious Studies who arranged for me to have a year's study leave during which, *inter alia*, I was able to complete this work. To the Ford Foundation for defraying some of the costs involved in preparing the book, through a grant under the East African Teaching Materials scheme, sponsored by the University of East Africa. To the Deutsche Evangelische Missions-Rat and the Evangelische Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Weltmission, both of Hamburg, and the Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung of Bad Godesberg (near Bonn), for making it possible for my wife and me to spend one year (1966-67) in Hamburg, West Germany. This provided me with the opportunity to complete writing the book, in addition to pursuing some research and lecturing at the Theological Faculty of Hamburg University. Finally to my wife Verena, for the countless ways through which she has been a wonderful partner in this undertaking as well as in other dimensions of our life together.

May God forgive me for attempting to describe him, and for doing it so poorly. Even if I am presenting here the wisdom and reflections of many African peoples, it is at best only an expression

of a creature about the Creator. As such, it is limited, inadequate, and ridiculously anthropocentric. God is still beyond our human imagination, understanding, and expression. Here then is only one scene of man's groping after his Creator, the voice of a stammering child calling unto the Parent.

JOHN MBITI

31 *March* 1967

PART ONE



The Nature of God

I *The Intrinsic Attributes of God*

THE OMNISCIENCE OF GOD

By attributing omniscience to God, African peoples are placing him in the highest possible position. In their sight, wisdom commands the greatest respect of everyone. A person who is considered wise is in a special class of his own.

The Akan refer to God as "He who knows or sees all . . .",¹ while the Zulu and Banyarwanda simply call him "the Wise One". On reaching the limits of their knowledge, the Bacongo often say, "God knows all". When the Banyarwanda face sorrows, uncertainty, and ambiguity, they mention God by a name which means "God only knows all things".² The Suk assert firmly that God knows all secrets;³ and the Yoruba commonly say, "Only God is wise".⁴ The Bambuti Pygmies, who live in the dense Congo forests, believe that God knows even the darkest areas of the forest by day and night.⁵

In these names and short phrases, God is described as the one to whom complete wisdom, knowledge, or understanding belongs. People admit that man's wisdom is limited, whereas God's is not; and that even if men may know *some* things, it is God only who knows *all*. No one else is worthy of, or is given, the attribute of omniscience. In practical situations it is often at the end of men's imperfect and incomplete knowledge, that they affirm God to be omniscient.

God as the All-seeing and All-hearing: to grasp, convey, and express the concept of God's omniscience, African peoples use the metaphors of seeing and hearing, which are obviously easy to understand.

In a popular Yoruba song, this concept is put in the context of a rhetorical question: "Whatever do you do in concealment that God's eyes do not reach?" To the Yoruba, God is known as "he who sees both the inside and outside [of man], the Discerner of hearts". They hand offenders over to him saying, "God sees him!" or "God sees you!"⁶ The Barundi praise God as "the Watcher of everything";⁷ and the Akan as "the All-seeing".⁸ One of the superlatives by which the Meru think of God, describes him as "the All-Seer".⁹ No doubt

the Bambuti are pointing to the same idea when they say that God sees their activities, even in the densest parts of the forest, whether it is in the daytime or at night. In a powerful use of this metaphor, the Ganda refer to God as "the big Eye".¹⁰ There are other peoples like the Balese, Galla, Hadya, Nandi, and Sidamo, who attribute one or more eyes to God; and many others who associate the sun with him indicating, among other things, that he beams into the entire universe.

Exactly how God sees is not often explained by African peoples. To see means, however, to bring something under one's observation. When God is regarded as "the All-Seer", the metaphor carries with it the force of God keeping watch over all things, so that they remain perpetually within his sight. To keep all things within such vision is to know them singly and collectively. Just as nothing is hidden from his all-embracing sight, so nothing is hidden or removed from his comprehensive knowledge. As the sun of suns, God pierces through even the most hidden of all things. He is the omniscient X-ray of everything, seeing (as the Yoruba put it) "both the inside and outside of man" and of all things.

God's "Great Eye" is keeping a perpetual watch everywhere and at all times, without limitation and without exhaustion. It never tires, never blinks, and never sickens.

Hearing is another metaphorical way of describing God's omniscience, parallel to that of seeing. With due reverence, the Ila say that "God's ears are long".¹¹ The Bamum word for God means "He who sees and hears everything".¹² The Kurama believe that the departed constitute, as it were, the ear of God, so that through them he can hear what the living are doing or saying.¹³

Whether people take it literally or not that God has "long ears", is immaterial. The metaphor conveys with emphasis the fact that nothing can escape the notice of God, since his power to "hear" extends far and wide. His omniscience acts like an organ of hearing which detects everything. So God knows all things through keeping them within his hearing, just as he keeps them within his sight. His constant attention over all things means that no secret in sound can escape his hearing, just as no visual secret can escape his observation. Because "his ears are long", there is no period or space when and where he cannot hear. He hears the most silent and most secret whispers. That God's capacity of hearing is different from that of his creatures, is summed up by the Bena who say that although God is without a body and does not speak, nevertheless he hears and sees;¹⁴

and the Nuer who, without attributing a body to God, believe that he sees and hears everything.¹⁵

Thus, God is not only omniscient, but his ability to know is complete and comprehensive. He knows everything, observes everything, and hears everything, without limitation and without exception.

THE OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD

Among the Karanga, God is spoken of as "the Great Pool, contemporary of everything". In a hymn which employs the same metaphor, they sing to God saying:

Great Spirit . . .
Waters of the pool that turn
Into misty rain when stirred.
Vessel overflowing with oil . . .
Thou bringest forth the shoots
That they stand erect . . .
Thou givest of rain to mankind . . .¹⁶

Rain is the immediate reference here, but the metaphor contains also the idea that God's presence, like water, is to be found everywhere. Life itself is an indication of God's omnipresence "bringing forth the shoots" or supplying "rain to mankind". The name "Great Pool" is suggested by the annual flooding of the Zambezi and its tributaries and other rivers in the region where the Karanga live. These rivers with their perpetual, if fluctuating, flow suggest to the people the unending presence of God which stretches from one generation to another, from one part of the country to another. Like an ever-filled pool of water, God's presence is "contemporary of everything", that is, he embraces everything within his presence, making it "contemporaneous" with him.

The Bena believe that God "is everywhere at once";¹⁷ and the same concept comes out in the Bamum name for God which means "he who is everywhere".¹⁸ The Banyarwanda express the same belief when they speak of him as "God who is met everywhere".¹⁹ With almost identical words, the Kono say that God is "the One you meet everywhere".²⁰ The first two of these expressions are what one might call theological and philosophical statements, and the other two are practical. So when, among the Kono, a person has wronged another, the latter says, "May God see this person!" or, "God will see him!" With a similar awareness of God's omniscience, they invoke his blessings upon one another. It would seem that for them the

omnipresence of God is felt in terms of blessing and judgement. The Kono and many other peoples know that in trouble they can call upon God anywhere and at any time; and that their offenders cannot hope to escape from God's presence.

Of a person who escapes from danger, the Akamba remark: "He is a man of God!", or, "God was with him!" The person himself would proudly tell his experiences emphasizing that "except for God's presence, I would be dead by now". The obvious implication is that the omnipresence of God shields people from danger. Similar expressions are used when a person prospers or succeeds in hunting, searching for a wife, breeding cattle well, and in other ways. The Akamba thus conceive of God's omnipresence in terms of blessings, benefits, and protection, as far as human beings and their welfare are concerned.

So also the Vugusu invoke God's presence in pronouncing blessings, and if a person prospers they say, "this person has his God". They believe that good things befall a person or community directly from God's presence, and are expressions of his good will. So they can invoke this presence to bring them blessings and prosperity, as well as justice and judgement.²¹

The Ila put it firmly, that "God has nowhere or nowhen" and that "he comes to an end".²² This would clearly mean that God's presence stretches beyond human imagination, so that as far as man can think, God cannot be absent. We may add that this omnipresence of God neither diminishes nor increases, whether man feels it or not. It is part of God's inherent nature to be omnipresent simultaneously, equally, and absolutely.

Air and wind are two common ways of expressing metaphorically the Omnipresence of God. The Lango believe that God is invisible but present, like air and wind.²³ The Lugbara regard God as being in the wind, and therefore omnipresent like the air, though not confined to the air, since in one aspect he is also in heaven.²⁴ The Nuer think of God as being ubiquitous and invisible like the wind and the air.²⁵ The Shilluk consider him to be "omnipresent or multipresent" and invisible like the wind, even though he has no fixed mode or form of being. In one of their prayers, they relate God's omnipresence to their own lives:

... When I sleep in the house, I sleep with thee ...
The soul is kept [alive] by thee ... And the soul [of
man] is it not thine own? It is thou who liftest up
[the sick].²⁶

So like the air we breathe, God's omnipresence encircles men, giving them the breath of life, the means of sustenance, and preservation of life. Life itself is associated with breath, and if God's presence is like the air, one can readily see how much people would associate it with life.

Special localization and manifestations of God's Omnipresence: a number of peoples regard certain objects, events, and phenomena as being particularly associated with the presence of God, even though his omnipresence is assumedly distributed throughout space and time. Such associations help people to focus their attention on God's presence.

Thus the Gikuyu have sacred mountains believed to be God's resting places when he comes to visit the earth, even though nobody knows exactly where he dwells.²⁷ The Lango believe that hills are associated with God, and that it is therefore dangerous to build homes close to them.²⁸ The Sonjo have a mountain known as "the Mountain of God".²⁹ The Banyarwanda who believe that God is met everywhere, consider his presence nevertheless to be associated especially with "every terrifying place".³⁰ These so-called "terrifying places" are probably those that are desolate, deserted, and out of people's way. They are the spots and places which give or inspire a sense of mystery, even if they might appear empty. It would seem that people's awareness of God's presence increases as they approach these areas that are removed and distant from human activities. The more desolate or "terrifying" they look, the more they seem to summon the visitor to a feeling of mystery and the presence of God.

The Herero believe that God dwells in heaven, but that he is omnipresent throughout the universe. The Nuer consider God to be omnipresent, "particularly in the sky", and yet they speak of him as "falling in the rain and being in lightning and thunder".³¹ One could readily comment here that God's presence is in the sky but not confined there, and that the Nuer see it as being manifested in the concrete form of rain, thunder, and lightning. These natural phenomena are visible and audible, but represent the otherwise invisible presence of God.

The Ganda, Gisu, and Amba speak of God's presence in form of a cock supposed to be seen when there is lightning. This special presence is said to be so deadly that if anyone touches the cock, he dies immediately.

The Lango consider the presence of God to be manifested in

dangerous situations and objects, such as lions, leopards, buffaloes, fighting, and journeying. People take precaution against such dangerous manifestations of God's presence.³² For the Lugbara, God "is everywhere, in a relation of equal intensity with all lineages".³³ The Nyakyusa believe that God's presence is especially in the sexual act of the husband and wife, causing conception.³⁴

In these and many other ways, African peoples acknowledge the omnipresence of God. He may be in the thunder, but he is not thunder; he may shoot forth like a waterfall, but he is not the waterfall; he may be associated with the sky, but he is not identical with it. Since people are more immediately concerned with the daily affairs of human life, their awareness of God's presence is not uppermost in their consciousness. They often relegate it to events, phenomena, and objects which are "dangerous", desolate, dynamic, and removed from the centre of human life. The chief of these is heaven or sky, which forms the furthest bounds of human imagination, and it is "there" where he is specially believed to dwell.

THE OMNIPOTENCE OF GOD

When a missionary asked Africans in Zanzibar to tell him something about their concepts of God, they simply said, "God thunders!"³⁵ The man had crossed the waters to come, as he so sincerely believed, to tell "the heathen" about God. But for these and many other African peoples, the tropical thunder is the most powerful thing that they know. In it they discern not merely the sound of a natural phenomenon, but the almighty power of God himself. Thunder is not simply an impersonal force of nature: it is the mighty voice of God, which nothing can silence. We have many examples of how people conceive of the omnipotence of God.

The Yoruba popular name for God means "the Almighty".³⁶ They believe that God is most powerful in heaven and on earth. He is able to do all things; he is the enabler of all who achieve any ends. Things are possible only when and because they are ordered by him; they are impossible when he does not permit them or give his aid. For this reason, the people use the concept in a saying which has a practical application: "Easy to do as that which God performs; difficult to do as that which God enables not".³⁷

The Ngombe praise God as "the All-powerful", "the Strong One", who helps them find lost things, who metes out justice upon man, and who removes the curse when it is unjustly invoked upon someone. Among them God is also praised as "the One who clears

the forest".³⁸ In human relationships, the curse is the most powerful thing that the people presumably know; but God is seen as stronger, in that he controls its effects. Living as they do, in the midst of dense forests, they regard God as all-powerful in that he clears the forest.

The Zulu, who were the most warlike nation in southern Africa, conceive of God's omnipotence in political terms. They describe him as: "the Irresistible", "He who bends down . . . even majesties", and "He who roars so that all nations be struck with terror".³⁹ These designations for God come from a nation which, for many centuries, terrorized other nations and produced great generals and rulers like Chaka and Dingane. These people know what it is to have power and strength. Yet they recognize that there is one whose might is greater than theirs, who is irresistible, and who can deal with majesties and nations until they succumb under his greater might.

The Abaluyia look at the omnipotence of God in a different context. They believe that God has the power to alter the natural laws which he has established, as well as any other course. They, therefore, pray him to let natural phenomena continue normally—⁴⁰just in case he should change them!

To the Akan and the Ashanti, God is "the Powerful One", who is the source of power for all other beings.⁴¹ Thus, his omnipotence is seen as the inexhaustible fountain of all other power, the central well which supplies power to all other objects, beings, and phenomena. The Bacongo may be groping after the same idea when they say that "God is almighty", and that he is not made by any other.⁴² His omnipotence would thus seem to belong to his inherent nature.

The Bakene who live in "floating houses" in the marshes of Lake Kyoga, consider God's power to be manifested through his rule and control over the sky and water.⁴³ Their entire life depends on water: they build houses in (on) it, they live on fish, and use the water for travel. It is something sacred and powerful. But God rules over water, an indication that his power is great.

In Bambuti cosmology the moon is taken to be a living being, close to God and powerful. But God commands it and it obeys him. The people believe also that when he looks at it, the moon comes out of its "hiding place" and shows itself to the world.⁴⁴ For them God must therefore be all-powerful, since the moon is so readily subject to him.

In three proverbs the Banyarwanda vividly express their concept of God's omnipotence. They say, "The plant protected by God is never hurt by the wind"; "God goes above any shield"; and "God

has very long arms".⁴⁵ Arms are a symbol of power and might. Since God's arms are "very long", so his power must likewise be great. This omnipotence is exercised over the entire creation, so that even plants are not unnecessarily exposed to the injury of passing wind. The shield is a symbol of protection, but God is thought to be "above any shield" in that he needs no protection, nor can any shield withstand his power. In these sayings, God is clearly pictured as having supreme power above that of natural phenomena and of men. The Banyarwanda say in addition, that it is God "who gives or breaks dignities".⁴⁶ This is used in a political context, such as we have seen among the Zulu, to mean that it is God's power which makes rulers stand or fall, and that of their own they have no power. As the Bena put it, "He does what he likes",⁴⁷ and nobody can hinder or command him. He is under no outside obligation and is not commanded or controlled by any other being.

From observing the changes, the propagation, and the mysteries of life, the Barundi seem to have reached the conclusion that God has the ultimate control over it, for which reason they use three names describing him as "the Almighty".⁴⁸ The logic here is that since life is the greatest mystery of which they know, he who controls it must be both all-wise and omnipotent. The people believe too, that the traditional doctors, witches, and magicians have but a limited power which is given them by God. The exercise of this power is also chiefly in connection with matters of life, whether for better or for worse, but God is ultimately able to control that human use.

The Nuba believe that God comes to the rainmakers at night, and imparts his power to them.⁴⁹ The rainmakers are the central figures of the religious and economic life of the people. In spite of their great power, both real and attributed, they must solicit the power of God to send rain and cause the crops to grow. The rainmakers are also considered to be the guardians of the customs and traditions of the people, the breach of which is punished by God with death. Thus the rainmakers symbolize the power of God among the people, and through them this power is harnessed for the physical and moral welfare of the nation.

Among the Shona, God's omnipotence is expressed in two names, which describe God as "the One who can turn things up-side-down" and "the One with power to destroy completely both people and objects".⁵⁰ Here, God's omnipotence is conceived of in reference to human life, especially as regards (unwanted) change and destruction.

Man may plan, but God is so powerful that he can upset the plan. The Shona believe that destruction through death, loss, or damage, comes through the power of God which nothing can resist.

The Lugbara consider God to be the source of all power, especially that of their moral order.⁵¹ The authority and strength of the moral code derive from God, so that the good of society comes ultimately from him. He is thus seen as the Almighty God of order and purpose, ruling not only over natural but also over spiritual and moral order.

Among some peoples, God's omnipotence is seen in connection with natural phenomena. The Kiga refer to God as "the One who makes the sun set", and say that what he wants he takes away that very day without waiting even one day more.⁵² Near or at the equator where these people live, the rhythm of the rising and setting of the sun is seemingly the same throughout the year. It is something beyond human power, but God controls it and he must therefore be omnipotent. The Gikuyu turn to God in times of great crises such as epidemics, droughts, calamities, and (formerly) wars. In making a sacrifice for rain, they pray to God in words which refer and appeal to his omnipotence, saying:

You who make mountains tremble and rivers flood; we offer to you this sacrifice that you may bring us rain. People and children are crying; sheep, goats and cattle [flocks and herds] are crying . . . We beseech you to accept this, our sacrifice, and bring us prosperity.⁵³

Here, both people and animals appeal to God to use his great power and intervene with rain and prosperity, for it is only he who controls the weather.

From our sources of information, we have many other peoples who consider God to be almighty. We, however, do not have fuller information to indicate under what circumstances the concept of this attribute is applied. Thus, the Akamba and Meru speak of God as "the Owner or Possessor of [all] strength". The Ngoni refer to him as "the Almighty King".⁵⁴ The Chagga say that God "has power to do all things".⁵⁵ A similar concept comes out in a prayer of a Barotse man, who says to God that "everything is possible for thee", and that he reigns "over all things".⁵⁶ No doubt the same idea is expressed by the Ganda when they consider God to be "the Master of all things".⁵⁷ In this reference, the power of the Ganda kings readily forms the background against which God's even greater power is to be grasped. Just as the kings had complete rule over their country,

so God has absolute power over the entire universe. Other peoples, like the Akamba, Gikuyu, Nyanja, Pyem, Teso, Tswana, Vugusu, and Watumbatu, see God's omnipotence in terms of his being more powerful than the spirits which otherwise are generally considered to be more powerful than men. In this context, power is viewed hierarchically, so that God is at the top as the omnipotent; beneath him are the spirits with lesser power; and lower still are men with comparatively little power or no power at all.

THE TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD

The transcendence of God is a difficult attribute to grasp, and one which must be balanced with God's immanence. The two attributes are paradoxically complementary: God is "far" (transcendent), and men cannot reach him; but God is also "near" (immanent), and he comes close to men. This could be taken as the general distinction. Many foreign writers constantly harp on the note that for African peoples God is "too remote" and virtually excluded from human affairs. This assertion is false, and the many facts contained in this book show clearly that people consider God to be both "far" and "near". God's transcendence is conceived of in various ways.

(i) *In terms of Time*: African concepts of time lay greater emphasis on the "past" and "present" than on the "future", making the "future" virtually non-existent beyond a few months or years. All our myths (of creation, the first men, the coming of death, the birth of our nations, etc.) look towards the "past", and we have no myths about the "future". People's lives are anchored in the "past". God is seen as being in and beyond the "past". So the Akan praise him as "He who is there now as from ancient times", that is, He who endures forever.⁵⁸ The Tonga refer to him as "the Ancient of Days".⁵⁹ The Akan believe, furthermore, that God is eternal and infinite.⁶⁰ These peoples' concept of God's transcendence would clearly indicate that for them there is no terminus of time when God was not, since from the most ancient time of which man can think, God was in existence.

The Ngombe, who live in thick forests, express this concept in terms relating to the forest. They cannot think of its never having been in existence, and it is their most concrete indicator of longevity. They look upon God as "the everlasting One of the forest".⁶¹ As far back as they can imagine, the forest was there, and so was God who antedates it, since he created it. The Zulu also take a natural

phenomenon as a concrete way of expressing the concept of God's transcendence in terms of time. They describe him as "He who thunders from far-off times [i.e., from the beginning]".⁶² They cannot imagine a time when thunder was non-existent, but God antedates it since he created it. To the Ngoni, God is known as "the Beginning of all things" and "the Greatest of all".⁶³ In these terms, God is placed as far as possible, portraying him as transcendent beyond all things in temporal comparison.

(ii) *In terms of Space, Distance, and Outreach:* Space is a concrete form from which it is relatively easy to draw parallels and comparisons, and spatial language is the commonest medium through which African peoples express their conception of God's transcendence. The Ila have a legend of an old woman who went in search of God, *Shikakunamo* (the Besetting One), who had afflicted her since she was young. Thinking that he dwelt in the sky, she built one tower after another, but each time, before she could reach him, the bottom timbers rotted and the tower tumbled down. She gave up this method and started on a journey, travelling from country to country, hoping to reach the point where the earth and sky touched and there to find the road to God. But she never came to that point, and wherever she met people, they said to her, ". . . In what do you differ from others? The Besetting One sits on the back of every one of us, and we cannot shake him off!" The poor woman never solved her problem and died heart-broken. The people say that to this day nobody has ever solved the same problem.⁶⁴ In a dramatic way, this story clearly illustrates both the transcendence and immanence of God. He is far beyond human search and reach; but paradoxically he is so near that he "sits on the back of every one of us".

When the Mende call God "the High-up One",⁶⁵ the Nuba say that there is nothing higher than God,⁶⁶ and the Banyarwanda that "nothing is above God";⁶⁷ they are all thinking primarily in spatial terms. In the dry season, the sky is generally clear, so that one can gaze as far as the eye will reach. Indeed, the sky seems to invite men to gaze in it, exhibiting before them infinite space and distance. The invisible God is "above" or "higher than" this otherwise boundless distance and space. Many other peoples associate God with the sky, the sun and the heavens, all of which suggest great distance and aid men in trying to comprehend and describe the transcendence of God.⁶⁸

The Lugbara conceive of God in two aspects, one of which is transcendence and the other, immanence. In his transcendent aspect he is the Creator, takes breath away, and is out of contact with his creation. So, transcendently, he is thought to be remote "both spatially and in intensity of contact".⁶⁹ The Herero have the same idea in mind when they consider God to live so high up that man cannot come to him.⁷⁰ Among the Gikuyu it is forbidden to look towards the heavens during a thunderstorm, lest a person should catch glimpses of God's intense manifestation, since the heavenly bodies and phenomena are believed to be God's manifestations. The Gikuyu make contact with God at the key moments of life, during crises and other special times of sacrifice and prayers; otherwise it is considered unnecessary if not dangerous to "bother" God.⁷¹

(iii) By some peoples, the transcendence of God is conceived of in terms of worship and exaltation. The Akan praise him as "He who is beyond all thanks".⁷² This may derive from the fact that God's acts are so innumerable that human thanks cannot match them even if men spend their entire lives thanking him. It means that God cannot be exhausted by praise and thanksgiving, for he is "beyond" that point. The Ngoni, Lamba, and Sukuma-Nyamwezi peoples say that God cannot be reached in worship. The Sangama on the other hand, believe that God can be reached by human prayers only through the mediation of a special council.⁷³ The use of intermediaries between men and God, which is a widespread practice among many African peoples, readily suggests the concept of the transcendent God being linked with men through the ladder of intermediaries.⁷⁴

(iv) For some, the transcendence of God means *limitlessness*. So the Tonga describe God as "the Limitless One who fills all space" and "the surpassingly great Spirit".⁷⁵ The Akan conceive of him as "He beyond whom there is nothing",⁷⁶ or "He who alone is full of abundance".⁷⁷ As in a creed, the Bacongo believe that "He is made by no other, no one beyond him is".⁷⁸ In the only Shilluk prayer said to be addressed to God, he is invoked in a transcendental context: ". . . There is no one above thee, thou God . . .".⁷⁹

From all these appellations and sayings about God, it emerges clearly that as spirit God has no limit and transcends all boundaries. There cannot be and there is no "beyond" God, for he is omnipresent and there is no vacuum of existence which he does not fill up. He is or has the most abundant reality of being, lacking no com-

pleteness and possessing all fulness of being. He is the ultimate, the final and the absolute Supreme Being, beyond the aspiration and imagination of man.

(v) God's transcendence is considered in terms of man's explanation or understanding of God. The Ngombe describe him simply as "the Unexplainable".⁸⁰ The Alur believe that God is "effectively unknowable" concerning his ultimate Nature.⁸¹ In talking about the transcendental aspect of God, the Lugbara say, "We do not know what God is like; he is everywhere, in the wind and in the sky".⁸² God evades or defies human comprehension; he cannot be grasped within the confines of the human mind. His beginning is unknown; his dwelling place is unknown; what he looks like is unknown; how he carries out his work is unknown; and in every aspect of his nature or being, he is utterly "the Unexplainable". It is perhaps for this reason, that many African peoples have only a few phrases and words that describe the fact of God's existence, and beyond that they readily admit that they do not know much about him.

(vi) Other peoples consider God's transcendence in terms of his supreme status in relation to other beings, divinities, objects, and human institutions. The Akamba, Dinka, Shilluk, and others believe that God is above the spirits.⁸³ The Ashanti consider him to be over and above the spirits and divinities who derive their power from him.⁸⁴ The Indem call him "the Big God", who is "the biggest deity of all".⁸⁵ When the Ganda consider God to be "the Father of the gods", they are recognizing his supremacy over all other spiritual beings.

The Ila hold that God "cannot be charged with an offence, cannot be accused, cannot be questioned, [and] cannot be claimed from . . .".⁸⁶ This and the Banyarwanda saying that God "goes above any shield", indicate that God is beyond human laws, regulations, taboos, prohibitions, customs, traditions, and judgement. Nobody can bring him to court, nobody can charge him with any offence, nobody can take revenge upon him, and nobody can harm or hurt him. He is altogether the transcendent OTHER. The Watumbatu believe that God is above human needs and requirements,⁸⁷ such as hunger, sleep, rest, protection, and so on. His very nature requires nothing to sustain, nourish, or prosper his being.

We have already seen that God is supremely omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. In these attributes he transcends all other beings.

Many writers mention African peoples who consider God to be supreme, transcendent, or "remote", without mentioning exactly in what context or words these peoples describe the transcendence. Such societies include the Ambo, Chagga, Egede, Embu, Galla, Ibibio, Kaonde, Kiga, Lodagaa, Nandi, Ovimbundu, Sangama, Suk, Toro, Tswana, Turkana, Vugusu, and no doubt many more.

THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

From the Lugbara we have perhaps the fullest written account of the concept of God's immanence. Accordingly, the people think of God as transcendent (*Adroa*) and immanent (*Adro*). As we have already mentioned in the previous section, in his transcendent aspect God is thought to be creative and "good". But in his immanent aspect he is considered "bad" and "dangerous". People think of him anthropomorphically, believing that as *Adro* he comes into direct contact with his creatures on earth, and lives temporarily in the rivers, large trees, thickets, and mountains. Although invisible, he may become visible to a person who is about to die, and is then said to have a human body which is split in the middle and "very terrible to see". While not being intrinsically "evil" as such, people fear him nevertheless, and therefore consider him to be "bad". In the immanent aspect, he is associated with the diviners (called "the people of God"), witches, sorcerers, and death. Elders are thought to be "nearer" to him than are other people, and can go to places where he is to be found and "sit there in the place of God's children . . . Those places are 'bad'." This twofold conception of God reflects Lugbara society and cosmology in which contrast is often made between good and evil, heaven and earth, God and man.⁸⁸

The Turu draw a similar distinction about God, considering him to be transcendent in the sky but immanent in the bush. In his immanence he manifests himself in form of the lion, hyena, python, lightning, storms, pools of water, and high wind. As nearly all of these animals and phenomena are dangerous to human beings, it would seem that God's immanence is also "dangerous" to man and safe only when it is "retained in the bush". In Turu society, the lion is a symbol of punishment and protection; the python symbolizes benevolence and forms the bridge between God and the departed. Their birth rites include the dangerous but only symbolic act of "catching the lion" from the bush.⁸⁹ Thus, the immanence of God is seen as paradoxically benevolent and dangerous, welcome and unwanted. The people re-enact this paradox in their *rites de passage*,

partly providing an outlet to their fears and partly reaffirming their belief in the immanence of God.

The Lango consider God to be "a neutral power, permeating the universe, neither well nor badly disposed towards mankind, unless made use of by man".⁹⁰ They believe that his immanent aspect is manifested chiefly on Mount Agoro (which formerly was in their country) and other hills. In this immanent aspect, he is most dangerous, not from his "ill-will, but from the divine essence, contact with which without due safeguards is beyond mortal endurance". So, people avoid such hills and do not build their homes in places considered to be the paths where he traverses habitually. Everybody is believed, however, to be a spark or part of God, and God is generally benevolent.⁹¹

Our sources do not give as full accounts as those we have just considered. We have only brief statements from a few other societies. The Ngombe praise God as "the One who fills everything", in one of their five best known praise-names.⁹² The Azande conceive of him as "the All-pervasive";⁹³ and the Gikuyu think that all the phenomena of nature are to some degree "imbued with the Spirit of God".⁹⁴ A Shilluk informant is reported as saying that God is "present to a greater or lesser degree in all things".⁹⁵ A similar belief is reported among the Tiv, for whom God "is the force behind nature and is immanent throughout the universe".⁹⁶ The Nuba consider God to be immanent in the rainmakers, giving them the power they possess.⁹⁷ The Dinka believe him to make contact with the earth through falling or letting something fall, such as rain, lightning, comets, and meteorites, and in the divinities which "fall" and possess men.⁹⁸

These examples indicate that God is involved in his creation, and is immanent and close to everything. He is "the Great Pool, contemporary of everything", and "He who was found", as the Karanga call him.⁹⁹ There is no space where, or time when, he cannot be found, for he is contemporaneous with all things. While God is believed to be immanent in all things, there is no evidence that everything is considered to be God. This would be pantheism, and as far as our sources are concerned, pantheism does not occur among any of the African peoples studied here.

The commonest acknowledgement of God's immanence comes out in the various acts of worship, such as sacrifices, offerings, prayers, and invocations. In this way, people affirm their belief that the transcendent God who is above all, is also the immanent God who is

close to all and to whom they can turn through these acts of worship. For most of their life, many African peoples place God in the transcendental plane, making him seem remote from their daily affairs. But they know that he is immanent, being manifested in natural objects and phenomena, and they turn to him in acts of worship at any place and any time.¹⁰⁰ Thus for them, God is in theory transcendent, but in practice immanent.

2 *The Eternal Attributes of God*

THE SELF-EXISTENCE OF GOD

In very precise language, the Bacongo describe the self-existence of God when they say that "He is made by no other, no one beyond him is".¹ This statement, which is so pregnant with meaning, is like a creed. As the Maker of all things, God is unmade: he exists of his own. Beyond him there is none, for he is the totality of being.

The Bambuti say that God "was the First, who had always been in existence, and would never die", and "if he should die, the world would also collapse".² This is a way of declaring that God has always been, is immortal, and upholds the universe. The Banyarwanda believe that God "existed from the beginning",³ and give him a name which means "God only lives [or exists]".⁴ That he does not need outside means of sustenance, comes out in a statement of the neighbouring Barundi that "God needs nothing".⁵ For his existence, God is self-containing, just as he is self-originating. This concept is clearly expressed by the Zulu in one of their names for God, which means "He who is of himself", or "He who came of himself into being".⁶ One of their informants is reported as saying that God "came into being, and gave being to man".⁷ In two names, the Shona attribute the same concept to God, when they call him "the One who existed in the beginning", and "He who was found".⁸ All these examples point to the fact that God has no other origin apart from himself, that he just "was" and "is", that he has neither beginning nor ending, and that outside of him there is no existence or being. The Banyarwanda rightly praise him as "the Ancient of Days" and "the One from the first".¹⁰ The Bena describe him by a name which means "He who speaks by himself".¹¹ This name indicates that he is self-sufficient, self-communicating, and self-supporting; he is both the Speaker and Hearer, the Subject and the Object.

Among some peoples, the self-existence of God is expressed in a biological language. The Herero say that "He has no father, he is not a man, he lives in Heaven".¹² From another part of Africa we get an identical statement among the Gikuyu who believe that God has

No father nor mother, nor wife nor children;
 He is all alone.
 He is neither a child nor an old man;
 He is the same today as he was yesterday.

They point out that he has no messengers and does not eat.¹³ An old Zulu informant is reported as saying that "the Lord who is above, I never heard our fathers say he had a mother or wife. I never heard such a thing".¹⁴ These statements are clear and definite in emphasizing that in human terms, God is uncreated, without parents, without family, without any of the things that compose or sustain human life. He is truly "all alone", self-dependent, absolutely unchangeable, and unchanging.

THE PRE-EMINENCE AND GREATNESS OF GOD

Many of the attributes of God which we have already considered give him a high, indeed, a unique status, so that he is pre-eminent in all things. There are other explicit expressions by which African peoples describe the pre-eminence and greatness of God.

The Akan speak of him as "Grandfather God who alone is the Great One";¹⁵ and the Ashanti refer to him as "Alone, the Great One",¹⁶ and "the Great One who appeared on Saturday".¹⁷ The Baluba call him "the Great King" and invoke him as "Great God!"¹⁸ The Barotse address him as "the Great King".¹⁹ The Ngoni regard God as the chief and source of all created things, calling him "the Greatest of all".²⁰ One of the many Shona names for God describes him as "the Great One of the Sky".²¹ All these names have in common the concept of God's greatness, which is supreme and unchallengeable. In him is greatness, for he is "alone, the Great One". As ruler and king, he is great and pre-eminent.

Among some peoples, the greatness of God is considered relative to the position of the spirit beings. The Igbo name for God is derived from words that mean "the Great Spirit".²² The Indem speak of him as "the Big God . . . the Biggest Deity of all".²³ The Tonga describe him as "the Surpassingly great Spirit".²⁴ Almost identical words are used by the Ndogo in referring to him as "the greatest Spirit" who rules over the many inferior spirits, who must obtain his permission to act among men.²⁵ The Tiv consider thunder to be the voice of God saying to the spirits of wicked men, "I am greater than you!"²⁶ The main Zulu name for God has the sense of "a Great-great-One".²⁷ It has been borrowed by other peoples, among

them the Ndebele, for whom it means "the Greatest of the great".²⁸ The Swazi call him "the Great First One".²⁹ In these names and descriptions, God is placed in a position of greatness and pre-eminence, far above all other spiritual beings. He is superior even to the greatest of them all.

Some peoples express God's greatness in physical metaphors. Thus, the Karanga speak of him as "the Great Pool, contemporary of everything",³⁰ and the Shona as "the Big Pool".³¹ To the Tonga and Tumbuka he is known as "the Great Bow in the heavens".³² The Zulu praise him as "the Immense Ocean whose circular head-dress is the heaven [horizon]".³³ These metaphors try to convey the concept of God's pre-eminence in physical terms. He extends over and above all things. This is summed up by the Ila who say that "He has nowhere, or nowhen, that he comes to an end".³⁴ Even human description does not embrace his supremacy, for his pre-eminence and greatness defy human conception and language. This comes out in a statement by the Karanga when asked, "Who is God?", to which they answer, "It is HE",³⁵ that is, God is just God; or, He is who he is.

GOD AS THE FIRST AND LAST CAUSE

This concept particularly describes God as the first in terms of of existence, the cause of all things and as the one who has the final power and authority over all things.

The Zulu speak of God as "the One who sprang up first", saying that he "was older than all of us . . . made all things, but we do not know whence he sprang".³⁶ These ideas refer to the origin of men and all things, which God caused to be or to come into existence. The Zulu narrate that God made all things "spring up" from "a bed of reeds", which symbolizes the state of non-existence. So God called them into existence, he caused them to be, and gave them form.

Among the Shilluk, God is considered to be "the first principle".³⁷ The Ngoni call him "the Original Source" and "the Beginning of all things".³⁸ In almost identical words, the Ashanti call him "the First, the Creator of all things", saying that he is "older than all the things that live on the wide, wide earth".³⁹ The Bambuti believe that "God was the first, who had always been in existence", and created all things.⁴⁰ The Ngombc praise him as "the Beginner" from whom all things took their origin, the One who caused them to be. As the

forest is the most significant item in Ngombe life, they relate it to the concept of God as the First Cause, by praising him as "the One who began the forest".⁴¹ A Pygmy hymn starts with the words, "In the beginning was God . . .".⁴² The Igbo believe God to be "the Great First Cause",⁴³ who continues to create more people and without whom they cannot be formed (born). Two of the Ila names for God contain the same concept. He is called "the Giver, the Allotter" and "from whom all things came".⁴⁴ The Shona also describe him as "He who was the first to be".⁴⁵ God is for the Lodagaa, the ultimate explanation of what is otherwise inexplicable.⁴⁶

In these descriptive names, God is clearly considered to be the first cause who is himself uncaused. He is the spring of being, the fountain from which all other forms of existence came into being. He began all things, and apart from his first cause they could not be. He borders all things as their beginning and their ultimate explanation. But he is simultaneously the Last Cause as well. This concept comes out particularly when people come to the end of their mental, physical, and other abilities.

When the Ila describe God as "He who gives and causes to rot", they are considering him as marking off the termini of beginning and ending. God causes "to be" and God causes "not to be". Apart from him there is nothing beyond these two termini. The Ila believe that God ordains the destiny of all, for which reason they call him "the Owner of his things".⁴⁷

The Lugbara look upon God as "the ultimate fountainhead of all power and authority, of all sanctions for orderly relations between men".⁴⁸ The same idea is found among the Mende who hold that God "is the ultimate source and symbol" of power which permeates the entire universe and which manifests itself in waterfalls, lightning, men, animals, etc.⁴⁹ For the Shilluk, God "is the final explanation both for what is good and what is evil, from a human point of view, but he is not himself good or evil".⁵⁰ The Bena regard him as "the summation of the supernatural".⁵¹ We are told that for the Akan, God is the beginning and ending of their life's experience.⁵² When, in times of need, all other help has failed or does not suffice, many African peoples turn to God as their final source of help. Otherwise, the concept of God as the Last Cause is not understood in terms of teleology or eschatology, that is, African peoples do not look upon creation and history as "moving" towards a final goal in God (or otherwise).

GOD AS SPIRIT

In thinking and talking about God, African peoples often use anthropomorphic images. But they also consider him to be a spiritual being, a concept which they try to express in various ways. As far as it is known, there are no images or physical representations of God by African peoples. This is one clear indication that they do not consider him to be physical even if they may use physical metaphors to describe him, and may take certain physical phenomena and objects as his manifestations.

One of the most explicit descriptions of the concept of God as spirit is in a traditional Pygmy hymn. It says:

In the beginning was God,
Today is God,
Tomorrow will be God.
Who can make an image of God?
He has no body.
He is as a word which comes out of your mouth.
That word! It is no more,
It is past, and still it lives!
So is God.⁵³

As spirit, God is the same now as he was in the beginning and as he will be "tomorrow". Because he is spirit, nobody can make an image of him, nor can he be confined to space and time.

According to the Ashanti, the universe is "full of spirits", but God is "the Great Spirit" who made them all.⁵⁴ The people believe that he is "the fathomless Spirit who has made all creation".⁵⁵ As such, he has no termination and his origin is unfathomable. The Dungi worship God as the universal spirit.⁵⁶ The Ga say of him that "He comes and goes like the wind".⁵⁷ The metaphor of the wind, examples of which have already been cited in discussing the omnipresence of God, is used also to convey the concept of God as spirit. It draws attention to the contrast between physical and spiritual, visible and invisible. The Bena speak in the same contrasting manner, describing God as having neither face nor body, neither hands nor legs, but being able, nevertheless, to hear and see.⁵⁸ The Banyarwanda also believe that he is non-physical and non-material.⁵⁹ The Nuer word for God means spirit. They consider his essence to be spirit, though he has modes by which he manifests himself in natural phenomena. As spirit he has no fixed place of abode, though he is thought to be in or of the sky but not identical with it. They regard

him as limitless, creative, and sustaining human (or physical) life with his breath.⁶⁰

There are peoples who consider God to be active spirit. Among the Ewe he is praised as “the Creating Spirit” and “the Saving Spirit”.⁶¹ In praying for rain, the Shona sing a hymn to God, in which they address him as:

Great Spirit!
 Piler-up of the rocks into towering mountains . . .!
 Who seweth the heavens like cloth . . .
 Caller forth of the branching trees:
 Thou bringest forth the shoots
 That they stand erect.
 Thou fillest the land with mankind,
 The dust rises on high, O Lord!
 Wonderful One, thou livest
 In the midst of the sheltering rocks,
 Thou givest of rain to mankind!
 We pray to thee,
 Hear us, Lord!
 Show mercy when we beseech thee, Lord.
 Thou art on high with the spirits of the great.
 Thou raisest the grass-covered hills
 Above the earth, and createst the rivers,
 Gracious One.⁶²

In this hymn, God is pictured as an active spirit, creating the mountains, working in the heavens, causing trees to grow, increasing mankind, providing rain, and making the hills covered with grass.

The Kagoro regard God as the protecting spirit who guards them against the spirits of the departed.⁶³ So also the Nandi call him “the Guardian Spirit”.⁶⁴ When the Tonga speak of him as “the surpassingly great Spirit”; and the Ndogo and Igbo refer to him as “the greatest Spirit”, it is probably in connection with both his being and his activities. The Moru believe that it is the spirit of God which empowers the rainmakers to “produce” rain and perform other duties. Since they regard God as holy, the person into whom his spirit enters is thought to acquire a certain degree of that holiness and is consequently regarded as ritually “dangerous”.⁶⁵ This means that the spirit of God is an activating and sanctifying power. The Nuba also believe that God’s spirit is immanent in the rainmakers and enables them to “make” rain.⁶⁶ The Naron Bushmen, in whose land rain falls only rarely and then as a sudden heavy storm accom-

panied by a strong wind, speak of God as "the God of Wind, Rain, Breath [Spirit]".⁶⁷ The invisible spirit is "behind" these natural phenomena, and is associated with the support of life (breath). One Shilluk informant is quoted as saying that God "is from one side spirit, and from the other side spirit, but from front and back he is body".⁶⁸ Perhaps this is in reference to the physical signs of the activities of the otherwise invisible God as spirit.

THE INVISIBILITY OF GOD

As spirit, God is *ipso facto* invisible. Many peoples in Africa acknowledge that nobody has ever seen God. Some, like the Ga, Shilluk, Lango, and others, say that, like the wind, God is invisible, but his effects are physically felt. Others consider natural phenomena and objects to be his manifestations or the result of his activities. We have already told the Ila story of the old woman who went in search of God. Those who met her and heard her story informed her that "God sits on the back of every one of us, and we cannot shake him off!" This dramatic and moving story illustrates, among other things, the way the Ila think of the invisibility of God. Among the Yoruba, he is known as "the King invisible", and "the King who cannot be found out by searching".⁶⁹

In some societies it is firmly believed and told that it is fatal to see God. One of the Bambuti myths of how death came into the world tells that God, having made the first men, commanded them that they should never seek to look at him. The woman, however, broke this commandment, caught glimpses of God's arm, and consequently death came into the world.⁷⁰ The Lugbara believe that God is invisible, but in his immanent aspect he "may become visible to a man who is about to die". They hold that should a healthy person see him, he would know that soon he is to die, for God "is very terrible to see".⁷¹ The Vugusu say that nobody has ever seen God, "but who sees God must die!"⁷² From these few examples, it emerges that the eyes of man are too feeble to see God, and that he who dares to catch glimpses of God must die, as God is too terrible for human endurance!

There are, however, a few stories or references of men seeing a theophany or other physical form of God. The Suk tell that long, long ago, old men who now are dead, saw God in form of a man with huge wings whose flapping causes thunder and lightning.⁷³ The Bushmen tell that although God has gone up into the heavens, he is often "seen" there, passing by "with a bright light, and his voice is

heard during thunder"; but he is otherwise invisible.⁷⁴ Even for these few examples, it is only the manifestations of God which were or are seen. His essence remains completely invisible. We note, furthermore, that these references are not too clear historical events as such, but are mainly mythological explanations of natural phenomena of thunder and lightning. We may therefore dismiss them and say that as far as our records go, there are no concrete references that anyone has ever seen God. He is invisible, and on this concept there is complete consensus from every part of Africa.

GOD AS INCOMPREHENSIBLE AND MYSTERIOUS

Just as people say that God is invisible, so they hold that he is incomprehensible. The Ashanti express this concept by speaking of him as "the fathomless Spirit" who has made all things.⁷⁵ Thus no mind can measure him, no intellect can comprehend or grasp him. For the Bacongo, God is "the Marvel of marvels", of whom they say that he is self-created. When confronted by a phenomenon which they cannot understand, such as the flow of blood in the body or the immensity of the forest, they say that it is "a thing of God".⁷⁶ They indicate thereby, that the phenomenon belongs to the mystery of God, that it bears the marks of his own mystery and incomprehensibility.

The Bambuti say that the exact name of God is unknown, though they give him "common" names, and sometimes refer to him as "Father" or "Grandfather".⁷⁷ In African societies a name generally describes some personality or characteristics of someone or some object. When the Bambuti say that God's real name is unknown, they mean that his real being or personality is unknown or unknowable. The Zulu also say that all things were made by God, but they do not know his name, nor was it ever heard of.⁷⁸ One writer claims that the Maasai word for God means "the Unknown", and "embodies their apprehension of power beyond human faculties of coping with".⁷⁹ Another holds that the Lunda name for God "signifies 'the God of the unknown'".⁸⁰ The Ngombe give him a title which means "the Unexplainable".⁸¹ The Moru believe that while God is the creator of all things, he is, nevertheless, unknowable.⁸² Similarly, the Urhobo-Isoko say that God is indescribable.⁸³ The Ila story of the old woman who unsuccessfully went in search of God, ends with the comment that she died of a broken heart because her desire was never fulfilled, ". . . and from her time to this, nobody has ever solved her problem!"⁸⁴ And so it is, that God is utterly elusive

and incomprehensible, even if, as the Ila say, "He sits on the back of every one of us". The Lugbara hold that "We do not know what God is like . . ." and that "A man does not know the words of God".⁸⁵ Similarly the Zulu say that in reality they do not possess the words of God.⁸⁶ Words are the vehicles of someone's thoughts, and to a certain degree they give a portrait of the speaker. When the Zulu and Lugbara say that they do not know the words of God, this means that they do not know or have a means of communicating with him and getting to know him. The Zulu say furthermore, "We know nothing of his mode of life, nor of the principles of his government. His smiting is the only thing we know". They add that no more knowledge of God exists among them, that nobody can say he knows all about God, and that his origin is unknown.⁸⁷ The Ngoni say that they do not know much about God and therefore do not worship him directly. They approach him through the spirits of the departed who, they believe, know God but the living cannot know him. The spirits convey human messages to him.⁸⁸

This is a long list of what different peoples say concerning the concept of God as incomprehensible and mysterious. From these expressions and names, God is described as shrouded with a mystery deeper than can be fathomed. His real nature is absolutely unknown, so that even his personal name is also a mystery. To know his proper name would in effect amount to penetrating into his mysteriousness and incomprehensibility. People might, and indeed do, know some of his activities and manifestations, but of his essence they know nothing. It is a paradox that they "know" him, and yet they do not "know" him. He is not a stranger to them, and yet they are estranged from him; he knows them, but they do not know him. So God confronts men as the mysterious and incomprehensible, indescribable, and beyond human vocabulary. He is the Mystery of mysteries, the Marvel of marvels, the very *Mysterium Tremendum* par excellence.

THE ETERNITY, INFINITY, AND IMMUTABILITY OF GOD

To the Ngombe, the forest symbolizes agelessness, and they use it metaphorically to praise God as "the Everlasting One of the forest".⁸⁹ Just as there is seemingly no end of the forest, so is God without termination: he endures forever, from everlasting to everlasting.

The Ila and the Baluba conceive of God's eternity and infinity in terms of the sun. The Ila call him "He of the suns", and address

him by a title which means "the Eternal One". They also say that "he has nowhere, or nowhen, that he comes to an end".⁹⁰ The Baluba call him "He of many suns, the Eternal God".⁹¹ Just as the sun seems to be everlasting, so is God, whose eternity is like the sum of many suns. The Tonga name for God means also heaven, and they say in a proverb that "Heaven never dies, only men do!"⁹² This means that just as heaven is incapable of dying or destruction, so is God: he is eternal and immutable. He endures for ever, from eternity to eternity. In the Pygmy hymn which we have quoted in full, God is described as being the same as he was in the beginning, today, and forever.⁹³ His eternal nature makes him impervious to change and limitation. There is no boundary to him. The Gikuyu express the same concept when they say that God "is the same today as he was yesterday", and that "He is neither a child nor an old man".⁹⁴ Thus, God cannot be described in terms of age, growth, change, or development, for he is eternal, infinite, and immutable. The Ganda address him as "the Eternal";⁹⁵ the Ashanti as "the Eternal one"⁹⁶ whom they regard as "the fathomless Spirit".⁹⁷ Likewise the Akan think of him as "eternal, infinite, and the Creator of the Universe",⁹⁸ "beyond whom there is nothing, the Supreme of the Thing, of all that is in being".⁹⁹ The Bambuti say that God has always existed and would never die.¹⁰⁰ For the Shona, God is "the One who was just found to exist", "the One who existed in the beginning".¹⁰¹ The Mende express the same concept by saying, "In the beginning there was God".¹⁰² So God embraces all space and time; he is eternal and infinite.

In speaking about God's immutability, the Shona describe him as "the One who can turn things up-side-down".¹⁰³ This means that he can change things, but is himself the unchangeable, the immutable. In connection with death, the Lugbara believe that God's will is immutable: once death has struck, they cannot persuade God to change this.¹⁰⁴ The Lodagaa believe that "one can swear by God with impunity, for nothing one can say or do can alter his disposition of things".¹⁰⁵ They see the immutability of God in the laws that govern the world and which do not change. The Chagga simply say that "God does not change".¹⁰⁶ Some of the peoples of northern Ghana express the concept of God's immutability by saying that "the sun falls in the evening, but he is always there".¹⁰⁷ The sun is here a symbol of change—it "falls in the evening"—but God is not like that, for he does not "fall" and remains forever. The Yoruba

supreme name for God carries the meaning of being “stable, unchanging, constant, [and] reliable”. The Yoruba also call him “the Mighty, Immovable Rock that never dies”. In a popular song they sing of him that “one never hears of the death of God”.¹⁰⁸

THE UNITY AND PLURALITY OF GOD

To emphasize the oneness or unity of God, both the Herero and Gikuyu say that God “is all alone”, without either parents or companions. The Lugbara, who talk of God in transcendent and immanent aspects, believe that he is one in essence. They say that he is “one but many”.¹⁰⁹ Similarly the Shilluk conceive of God as having “many facets, which seem to refract him into a multiplicity of ‘beings’”, “a plurality but he is also One Spirit”.¹¹⁰ The Vugusu believe that there is a plurality of God, headed, however, by the supreme God.¹¹¹ The Meru narrate that their national hero who brought them out of the land of suffering, prayed to God addressing him as “One Body and Possessor of strength . . .”.¹¹² They put their faith in this one God who delivered them and with whom they are in constant contact. The Maasai speak of the oneness of God in a myth, according to which there were originally four gods. Through a fierce quarrel three of these gods vanished, and there remains now only one.¹¹³

Every African people recognizes one God. According to the cosmology of some, there are, besides him, other divinities and spiritual beings, some of whom are closely associated with him. These divinities are mainly the personification of God’s activities, natural phenomena and objects, or deified national heroes, and some are said to have been created as such by God. We discuss them in the third part of this work. But even where other spiritual beings are recognized, people do not lose sight of the one supreme God who is regarded in a class of his own.

Among some peoples, dual aspects of the one God are recognized, which serve to explain mysteries like the remoteness and nearness of God, and the experience of “good” and “evil” in the world. We have already mentioned the Lugbara and Turu, who see the transcendental aspect of God as being associated with creation and remoteness, and the immanent aspect as being associated with “the bush”, streams, and “dangerous” animals. The Bari also regard God in two aspects. According to this conception, “God above” is benevolent, and associated with the sky, rain, and lightning; but “God below” is associated with the earth and the supply of food, and is regarded as the

younger brother of God above, and subordinate to him.¹¹⁴ The Barundi see two aspects of God, in one of which he is good, brings health, harvest, and other benefits; but in the other aspect he brings sickness and kills children and cattle.¹¹⁵ The double name of God which is used by the Herero is said to refer "to one deity, but it can also refer to two separate deities", one being associated with God's heavenly aspect, and the other with his aspect in the earth, water, and underworld.¹¹⁶ Among the Lango, God is said to be "a dual entity, male and female", and yet he is one in essence.¹¹⁷

A form of God's Trinity or Triad is reported among the Shona and Ndebele peoples. In one area of the Shona country, God is conceived of as "Father, Son, and Mother".¹¹⁸ Among the neighbouring Ndebele, there is a similar belief "in a Trinity of spirits, the Father, the Mother, and the Son".¹¹⁹ Our sources do not, however, give us further information on this concept. We do not know of the functions, the origin, the relationship, the link, and authority of each member of the Trinity. This may well be a logical convenience to fit into African conception of the family.

3 *The Moral Attributes of God*

THE PITY, MERCY, AND KINDNESS OF GOD

(i) Speaking of *the pity of God*, only three examples are available from our sources. The Ila consider God to be "the Compassionate One";¹ the Banyarwanda call him "the God of pity";² and the Ewe look upon him as "God full of pity", who comes to their rescue in time of need.³

In addition to these concrete references, we must point out that, when people turn to God (through sacrifice, prayer, or invocation) in moments of crisis or other need, they do so in the belief that he is compassionate and would take pity on them. Likewise, when individuals are cured of serious illness or of barrenness, or saved from danger; and when communities are spared or helped in time of need, people feel that God had pity on them. The pity of God is felt and solicited more than it is expressed in words.

(ii) From the lips of elderly people among the Akamba, it is often exclaimed, "Oh, the God of mercy!",⁴ or "Oh, if God were not the God of mercy!" These phrases are used when people invoke the mercy of God in connection with important events or undertakings; or when they perceive God's mercy to have been shown in such circumstances. Thus, an elderly person pronounces a blessing upon his relative who is about to take a long journey, saying, "Oh, may the God of mercy, guide you and make you like a young shoot!" If after a long separation, an elderly person sees his relative again, he sighs in gratitude, "Oh, how profoundly merciful God is!" On recovering from a serious illness, a person might recount the experience saying, "If God were not the God of mercy, I would not be talking with you now!" On getting her first child after the cure of barrenness, a woman might call the child by a name which means "Of-mercy", to indicate that the child came as a result of God's mercy.

The Barundi say, "God is merciful",⁵ and the Chagga see him as being particularly "singular for his mercy and tolerance". The Chagga have legends telling how God showed mercy upon a few

individuals when he destroyed the rest on account of their wickedness. In one of these stories, they emphasize that when God destroyed mankind for the second time, only one person and his companions were saved and that this person was a merciful man.⁶

The Ila believe that God is merciful and does not stop doing good to people, no matter what they say about him. He shows his mercy to all people and at all times.⁷

On occasions of great solemnity, the Kullo make sacrifices and call upon God saying, "Lord Christ, have mercy on me!" There are unconfirmed reports of ruined churches in their country, and available evidence indicates that the Kullo had been Christian at one time.⁸ Although the people are no longer "practising" Christians today, it is significant that this invocation should be the only remaining trace of Christian influence which has now been incorporated into their traditional life.

(iii) Among the many attributes that the Bacongo give to God, two describe his kindness. The people say, "God is kind", and "God looks after the case of the poor man".⁹ According to these sayings, the people assert that God is the main hope of the poor, and that his kindness is shown even to the most destitute members of society.

In a Barotse prayer, it is said that nobody can be compared to God, for he shows innumerable favours and great compassion to his servants who go to him "to receive" his blessings and "to be strengthened".¹⁰ The people [servants] recognize God's kindness in concrete terms of getting enough to eat, being strengthened when weak, being saved from danger, and in similar ways. One of the Barundi names for God means "the Kindly Disposed".¹¹ The people use it in blessings, curses, oaths, farewells, and congratulations, believing that in his kindness, God upholds life, spares it, and takes care of it. It is a name of safety and security.

The Herero believe that God is well-disposed towards them, showing his kindness through giving them rain, healing the sick, and upholding the life of old people. Even the death of the aged is taken as a benign act, partly because it is from God who is essentially kind, and partly because thereby he calls the person back to the land from where the Herero originated and where new life is created.¹²

There are others who hold a similar attitude. The Nuer believe that God is compassionate and spares the poor and miserable man. They accept calamities, misfortunes, and the death of human beings or of cattle, with resignation and without complaint, believing them

to be acts of the kind and compassionate God.¹³ The Urhobo believe that even though God may punish evil by death, he is essentially good and kind.¹⁴ The Akamba say firmly that God is so well-disposed towards them that he does them no evil whatsoever.¹⁵

THE LOVE OF GOD

In their daily lives, Africans do not talk much about love, and this is something perhaps too deep to be discussed in words. A person shows his love for another more through action than words. In the same way, it is rare to hear or find people talking about the love of God. They, however, assume that God loves them and shows his love through concrete acts and blessings. We do not have many examples in which people talk about the love of God.

The Abaluyia suppose God to have said, "It is I who made the people; whom I love, he will thrive; and whom I refuse, he will die".¹⁶ For these people, the love of God is seen in the concrete terms of human survival. Thus, God's love is creative and sustaining.

Two authors record that "before Christian missions had ever been heard of", the Gikuyu believed that "God was a God of love, but those who disobeyed him he punished by famine, disease, and death". One informant is reported to have told them that "God loves everyone, but if people are poor, or if a warrior loses his wife and child, then he says God does not love him".¹⁷ Another writer says that God loves or hates according to the behaviour of the people.¹⁸

The Nuer believe that God can love and can be angry.¹⁹

THE COMFORT OF GOD

In times of distress and sorrow, the Akamba speak of God as "the God who comforts".²⁰ One of the Akan praise-names for God describes him as "the God of comfort",²¹ or "He upon whom you call in your experience of distress: a Consoler or Comforter who gives salvation".²² In both examples, the comfort of God is felt in distress, sorrow, affliction, trouble, or other forms of discomfort.

One writer argues, though not very convincingly, that the name *Lesá* (or *Lezá*) which a number of central African peoples use for God, is derived from the causative form of the verb *lela* which means "to nurse or cherish".²³ If this is valid, then the root concept in the name *Lesá* is essentially the comfort of God.

The Nuer invoke God to "comfort the people".²⁴ There is no doubt that when different peoples pray to God in times of crisis, they

do so believing that he will help and comfort them. The pity of God manifests itself in terms of comfort to his people when they are in distress.

THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

In private and public prayer, the Akan use a personal praise name for God which means "the God in whom you (one) may put all trust".²⁵ Another prominent name for him means "He in whom you confide troubles which come upon you".²⁶ In both names the people show their belief that God does not reveal secrets confided to him, that he will not let anyone down, and that he is reliably unchangeable. This is how the Akan conceive of the faithfulness of God.

The Chagga say that God never lies.²⁷ This means that God is true to his nature, and acts in accordance with his faithfulness. The Ila believe that God does not cease to do them good, "no, whether they curse or whether they mock him, whether they grumble at him, he does good to all at all times. That is how they trust him always". They say with confidence, "God is the good-natured One; he is the One from whom you beg different things. We Ba-Ila have no more that we know".²⁸ This is like a firm confession that the people know nothing else about God, other than his faithfulness. They say, furthermore, that even when God is grieved at their foolishness, he "takes steps to repair the damage they have done to themselves".

The Kagoro see the faithfulness of God in the fact that when there is drought, they set apart a special day of sacrifice and prayer to God, and the rain "always comes within a day or two".²⁹ Practical experience shows them that God is faithful and never fails them in the hour of their greatest need.

THE GOODNESS OF GOD

On the concept of the goodness of God we have many examples. With jubilation, the Bacongo say, "Rejoice, God never wrongs one", and attribute nothing evil to him.³⁰ The Herero believe that God "does only good, therefore we do not make offerings to him".³¹ In almost identical words, the Akamba say that "God does us no evil", and they consequently see no reason for sacrificing to him. The Banyarwanda follow the same argument, that God is so good that he does not require any offering.³² When the Ewe survey the acts of God, they say with great conviction, that "He is good, for he has never withdrawn from us the good things which he gave us".³³ The

Kpelle look at natural phenomena as an indication of the goodness of God, and observe that "He causes rain to pour down on our fields, and the sun to shine; because we see all these things of his, we say he is good".³⁴

The Hottentots believe and say that God is good, that he does nobody any harm, and that no one need be frightened of him.³⁵ Likewise the Igbo hold that God is essentially good and only good comes from him.³⁶ To the Ila, God is known as "the Good-natured One", who never stops doing good to them no matter what they say about him.³⁷ In these examples, the goodness of God is shown to belong to his essential nature and being, so that nothing changes it.

Among the Jie, God's goodness is felt or noticed in his acts of averting calamities, punishing those who contravene rituals, supplying sufficient rain, and providing health and fertility to the people.³⁸ The Kagoro see it in the help which God gives them against the spirits of the departed. At the sight of the new moon, they invoke God to give them health and prosperity; and in times of drought they invoke him for rain which always comes within a day or two,³⁹ confirming his goodness towards them.

In various ways, the Lango see the goodness of God. These include rich harvests, seasons with sufficient rain, dry seasons for hunting, God's attentiveness to their prayers, and his advice through the seers on matters both small and great. But God also punishes neglect or transgression by means of sickness, failure in hunting, and painful death. Yet the people take such punishment to be ultimately for their good and to be caused by themselves. They believe that when he brings diseases, he also tells the person concerned what to do in order to get cured.⁴⁰ A similar belief is reported among the Urhobo.⁴¹

The Nuer so firmly believe in the essential goodness of God, that even in times of death and misfortunes, they proclaim that God is good. His goodness is shown through delivering them from evil, keeping them "cool" (i.e., at peace), and in other ways.⁴²

When unexpected beneficial happenings befall a person or family, the Vugusu take them as indications of the goodness of God. They say, "What God offers you with one hand, you should take with both hands". They believe that God is the Author and Maintainer of all good things, and only goodness comes from him. So they pray for his help in hunting, (formerly) warfare, and other undertakings. In his goodness he warns them, through sneezing, to refrain from murder, theft, and other evil deeds. When he occasionally kills

people, he does so out of his goodness, "because he wants them to live with him". Otherwise he does not even punish them for bad deeds, except in certain cases of adultery.⁴³

All the examples given above are drawn from peoples who consider God to do them only good. There are, however, others who believe that God acts in ways which are both good and bad, at least as far as human life is concerned. The Nandi believe that ultimately all good and evil come from God; and they invoke God's goodness in pronouncing blessings and call upon his name in uttering curses.⁴⁴ A similar belief exists among the Makaraka by whom God is "vaguely considered the author of good or bad fortune".⁴⁵ The Herero are also said to attribute both good and evil to God;⁴⁶ and the Bongo name for God may also "denote good or ill luck",⁴⁷ which would mean a close association of God with both good and evil. While for the Shilluk, God is the final explanation of what is good and evil, he is not himself thought to be either good or evil.⁴⁸ He protects people, but he also brings them sickness. The Barundi see the goodness of God through his protecting the poor and giving children and cattle to the people. They believe that it is his right to do good things to them, and so he is not thanked. But he is said to act in a bad aspect, for which he is known as the God "who hates children".⁴⁹ The Lugbara who view God in transcendent and immanent aspects, believe that he is good and creative in his remote, transcendent aspect; but that he is "bad" and destructive in his immanent aspect in which he is close to his creatures. But he is not intrinsically "evil" as such.⁵⁰ The Balese believe that God is surrounded by two spirits, one of whom is responsible for good and the other, for evil deeds.⁵¹

When faced with the mystery of suffering, for which there is neither escape nor clear explanation, some peoples tend to attribute this experience to God. In the Katanga area, God is spoken of as "the Father Creator who creates and uncreates".⁵² This description is used to cover the paradoxical acts of God in which he creates and destroys life, supplies and takes away life. The Tonga believe that God is benevolent and helpful towards them, but "bad" when he sends them thunderstorms, sudden maladies, locusts, and other harmful things.⁵³ So also the Kyiga believe that the same God works both good and evil among them.⁵⁴ I have not come across any indication that God is thought to be evil; and some societies attribute evil to other spiritual beings, when they do not blame it on sorcerers, witches, and workers of harmful magic.

THE ANGER OF GOD

Among some societies, the experiences of sorrow, misfortune, and calamities are interpreted or explained as signs of the anger of God.

In their myth of how death first came into the world, the Bambuti say that God became angry when the people disobeyed him by eating the forbidden tree. In his anger he sent them death as punishment and withdrew himself from them. In another myth they tell how God, in a great rage of fury, slaughtered the people, sparing only a few, lest he should be left alone!⁵⁵ The Bushmen have a myth which also attributes the withdrawal of God and the coming of death to men to his anger, provoked by the disobedience of the first men.⁵⁶ The Barotse also narrate that the first men angered God by their disobedience in killing and eating animals, and consequently he disappeared from among them.⁵⁷ The Chagga have myths telling how twice the early men angered God through their wickedness and disobedience, and in turn he destroyed them, sparing only a few through whom mankind propagated itself.⁵⁸

Among some societies, death is personified and considered the most explicit manifestation of God's anger. Thus, the Bambuti believe that a spiritual being (*Tore*), presides over the souls of the dead, and loves the dead more than the living.⁵⁹ The Ganda take death to be a being (*Walumbe*), believed never to have smiled ever since it was created.⁶⁰

When the Gikuyu sacrifice and pray for rain, they inquire from their seers as to why God is angry and has not given them rain. If lightning strikes a person, others interpret it as an indication of God's anger upon the family concerned, and both prayer and sacrifice are offered accordingly, to soothe his anger.⁶¹ These acts and inquiries indicate the people's belief that their manner of life can and does arouse the anger of God.

The Barundi believe that adultery arouses the anger of God, and that he punishes them with misfortune.⁶² Likewise, the Bavenda believe that when a chief provokes God, God in his anger punishes the whole community with calamities like drought, floods, and locusts.⁶³ The chief is the head or representative of the people, and when he provokes God to anger, the corporate community shares in the provocation and the consequences. The Tonga refer to God as "the Angry One who strikes men and trees with his lightning".⁶⁴ When a person dies, the Gimira-Maji offer sacrifices to appease the anger of God,⁶⁵ no doubt believing that he has been provoked. The

Tiv consider thunder to be the manifestation of God's anger provoked by the spirits of evil men who, after death, plead with him not to give rain to mankind. This plea infuriates him, he refuses to grant it and releases thunder to indicate his anger and might, and put the wicked men to silence.⁶⁶

But there are other peoples who do not attribute anger to God. These include the Akamba and the Herero, who argue that since God is always well-disposed and does them no evil, they have no need to sacrifice to him.⁶⁷ The Ila believe passionately that God is merciful and never gets angry.⁶⁸

THE WILL OF GOD

A number of African peoples attribute a will to God, particularly in connection with events and circumstances which defy their understanding and which are, therefore, best explained as pertaining to, or being caused through, divine agency.

The Bambuti believe that the animals of the forest belong to God who has the power to give or deny them to the hunters. When, therefore, they go hunting and return home without having shot any game, they take this as "the will of God", against which they can do nothing.⁶⁹ It is perhaps this belief which prompts them to pray each time before they go out to hunt. The Barundi see the will of God in terms of his complete control over nature, for which reason they say, "Nothing perishes without God's will".⁷⁰ In both of these examples, the will of God is pictured as a "lock" which he opens or closes to let something "perish".

Among some, the will of God is acknowledged in connection with the execution and realization of human plans and hopes. Believing that God has emotions, intelligence, and a will, though he is non-material,⁷¹ the Banyarwanda hold that he constantly exercises his will upon human life. They believe that he gets someone the right wife, riches, a job, or restoration of health. For this reason they call him by a name which means "God only looks for something for someone".⁷² The Banen often use the phrase, "if God grants . . .",⁷³ no doubt indicating their resignation to the will of God. When planning to do something, or when parting from each other for a long time, the Akamba say, "If God keeps us alive . . .", or "If God wills [wants] . . .". Accordingly, the Mende end their traditional prayers with the phrase, "God willing".⁷⁴ In arranging something for the future, the Yoruba usually add the words, "If the Owner of life does not withdraw it", meaning, "If by God's permission one is still

alive".⁷⁵ All these are like precautionary "prayers" by means of which people resign their hopes, plans and expectations to God. They are also an acknowledgement that the will of God keeps men alive, assists, permits, and approves their undertakings, and controls their destiny.

Some societies regard death, calamities, and misfortunes as an expression of God's will. When death strikes, the Lugbara say of God, "His will is immutable". They hold, however, that occasionally, when a person is sick, offerings might make God "think and remember that man and he may live yet another year". But generally they believe that death cannot be avoided and God cannot be persuaded, by prayer or sacrifice, to spare a person when the time comes for God to "strangle" him or stop his breath.⁷⁶ The Gikuyu accept misfortunes saying, "It is God's will".⁷⁷ Similarly the Nuer, who are very conscious of the will of God, "accept misfortunes with resignation"; adding, without complaining, that God is good and that he is always in the right. This is not a fatalistic attitude, for the Nuer believe that God is compassionate and gracious, rewarding good to those who follow right conduct with their fellow men, and evil to those who follow wrong conduct.⁷⁸ The Gelaba are also reported to "accept death as the expression of God's will".⁷⁹

There are other ways in which the will of God is acknowledged. The Chagga see it in terms of his permission to the lesser spirits to afflict "men for their own purposes". These spirits cannot harm men against God's will, or without his consent.⁸⁰ The Hadya rainmakers cannot produce rain against God's will,⁸¹ which controls nature and its functions. In a proverb, the Ganda say that "God saves the afflicted according to his will".⁸² The Vugusu believe that there are two spirits who act as "messengers and executives of the divine will".⁸³ According to these concepts, the will of God is final, supreme, and absolute, to which both spirits and men are subject, even though God may use them to execute it.

Both the Nuer and the Fon see the will of God on a cosmic scale. The Nuer believe that the universe came into existence as an expression of God's will. They hold that the universe is God's Word, the result of his will.⁸⁴ The Fon believe that God has a will which is expressed in terms of *Fa* ("the Word" of God). This *Fa* functions as "the chief agent of creation".⁸⁵ In both examples, the will of God is dynamic, creative, and personified, originating all things and upholding them, so that, without it, the entire universe would collapse and disintegrate.

THE JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

When punishing a witch by means of death, the Bacongo would invoke God, saying, "God is just and merciful".⁸⁶ Presumably this means that God is just in punishing evil, showing mercy unto the people by removing from their midst the enemy of society. No matter what befalls them, the Nuer believe that God is always right. With reference to the poor and the rich, they say, "God evens things out". They hold that he rewards good to those who follow good conduct, and evil to those who follow evil conduct. If a person offends another, goes to him, and admits his fault, asking for forgiveness and the offended forgives him, it is believed that God also frees the guilty man from the consequences of his fault. Similarly God may overlook it when a person commits a breach accidentally or in error.⁸⁷

It is customary, among some African peoples, to invoke the name of God when taking oaths or making solemn affirmations. For example, the Gikuyu say, "If I do not say the truth, may God thunderstrike me!"⁸⁸ In such cases, people are invoking the justice and impartiality of God. The Chagga say that God is the ultimate arbiter.

In connection with difference in talents, prosperity, and other situations of life, the Ganda have a proverb which says, "God gives his gifts to whomsoever he favours".⁸⁹ This should guard one from envying the gifts of another person, since these are justly distributed by God. The Ila say that God cannot be accused of or charged with an offence, nor can he be questioned. Whatever He does is right and just. They say furthermore, that "He gives and rots. Vengeance is his own . . ." ⁹⁰ He is thus the Fountain of Righteousness and Justice.

Some writers see the concept of righteousness in God's name, *Mulungu*, which is used by more than forty peoples in eastern and central-southern Africa. Thus, Campbell suggests that *Mulungu* means "the Righteous One", arguing that its root verb, *lunga* means "to be right, straight, righteous". The vowel *-a* of the root verb is changed to *-u* to become "the personal vowel, and the prefix *mu-* is the form of derivative personal nouns".⁹¹ Young also assumes that the name *Mulungu* is derived "from a verb which conveys the picture of one concerned with 'rightness' or 'undeviating direction' ".⁹² The etymology of this name is notoriously difficult. Since the concept of God's righteousness is rarely expressed, as far as recorded evidence has shown, I find it hard to imagine that it would dominate the thinking of the peoples concerned, to such a degree as to evolve a personal name out of it.⁹³

THE HOLINESS OF GOD

I have not come across direct references to the holiness of God. The concept is present among many African peoples, but one arrives at it by inference. This comes out primarily in moral and ritual matters.

In saying that God cannot be charged with an offence, the Ila show their attitude that God is holy. He lives or exists above the level of "fault", "sin", "failure", "wrong", and "unrighteousness".⁹⁴ We have already pointed out the belief of many peoples, that God does only what is good and cannot do evil. This belief puts him in the category of ethical holiness, purity, and cleanliness. Among the Yoruba, God is known as "the Pure King"; "the King who is without blemish"; "the One clothed in white robes, who dwells above"; and "Whiteness without patterns [absolutely white], essentially white object".⁹⁵ All these appellations clearly point to the concept of God's holiness.

During rituals of sacrifice, great care is taken to insure that a high degree of purity is observed. Among some peoples, the sacrificial animal must be of one colour only and without blemishes. This is a symbol of holiness, with which, no doubt, the people associate God. A full account of worship is given in the fourth part of this book, but we may here take a few examples to illustrate the concept of God's holiness. When making a sacrifice, the Gikuyu require that the animal which must be of a particular colour, should come from a person who has not committed "murder, theft, rape", or had connection with witchcraft. Among those taking part in the sacrifice for rain, are two children under the age of eight, for these are "pure in heart, mind, and body, and are free from worldly sins". The officiating elders must refrain from sexual intercourse for six days before and two days after the day of sacrifice. This is observed as "the day of peace", and God is then looked upon, or known as, "the Possessor of Whiteness".⁹⁶ The Meru have a traditional "messenger of God", known as the *Mugwe* who, among other high qualifications, "must avoid sin, [since] he is considered to be very near to God . . .".⁹⁷ The Sonjo have sacred temples which are carefully guarded both by taboos and manpower, lest they should be profaned.⁹⁸ The Shona used to observe a solemn cult in which they made an approach to God, with a deep sense of his holiness.⁹⁹ In Igbo country one still finds shrines pervaded by a feeling of holiness, where people take their offerings and sacrifices. All these examples from the ritual life of African peoples, suggest clearly that they have an awareness

of God's holiness, show great respect for it, and, at least on ritual occasions, try to conduct themselves accordingly. The word "holiness" or "holy" in its theological usage does not seem to exist in (many) African languages, but the concept is not lacking.

PART TWO



The Active Attributes of God

4 *God as Creator*

CREATION IN GENERAL

Our written sources indicate that practically all African peoples consider God as creator, making this the commonest attribute of the works or activities of God. The concept is expressed through saying directly that God created all things, through giving him the name of Creator (or its equivalent), and through addressing him in prayer as the Creator or Maker.

One of the titles by which the Akan refer to God, means "Excavator, Hewer, Carver, Creator, Originator, Inventor, Architect". They describe him as "the great Builder or Excavator who created the Thing";¹ and as "He who alone created the world".² These names emphasize God's position as the originator of all things, the one alone from whom they derive their architectural origin and shape. God is here pictured as the artist of the universe, carving it with omniscient skill and artistry.

To describe the activity of God as creator, the Akamba use two names which mean Maker (or Creator) and Cleaver.³ The second is a metaphor taken from the act of splitting wood with an axe, or slicing meat with a knife. The two names are complementary. In the first, God creates or makes things; and in the second, he gives them details, shape, distinctiveness, and character. He makes the hand and cleaves it to give it the fingers; he cleaves the trees, giving them their branches and leaves; he cleaves the land, giving it valleys and hills.

The Banyarwanda look upon God as the potter of life, who shapes clay into a child in the mother's womb. Taking this metaphor literally, wives who have not passed their menopause make water ready every night before they go to sleep, so that God may use it to create children in their wombs. It is called "God's water",⁴ and its provision is a concrete indication of the people's belief in God as creator, their awareness of his nearness to them and even the need of their co-operation with him. Concerning the origin of creation, they say, "There was nothing before God created the world".⁵ This is a clear belief that God created the world *ex nihilo* (out of nothing).

The Basoga recall God's creative activity in a song. The leader

sings the main part, and the rest of the people respond in a chorus, after each line:

God created:	CHORUS Yea, yea, yea!
He created man,	
He gave him a wife	
To bear children.	
He created the earth,	
He blesses it. ⁶	

This is a communal song, by means of which the people recall jointly the teaching of the community, and the belief of their forefathers that it is God who created the earth and all things, including men.

The Ila have three names for God, by which they express this concept of his work as Creator. They call him "Creator, Moulder, and Constructor". The first is derived from a verb which means "to make, originate, to be the first to do anything". Thus, God is pictured as the first originator of all things. The second name is derived from a verb which describes the activity of the potter. This pictures God as the potter of the universe, making "pots" of different shapes and kinds. The third name comes from a verb which means "to arrange, put together, set in order, construct".⁷ The three names together describe God as the One who originates things, builds, moulds, shapes, and constructs them, producing a finished end-product.

Among the Tiv, God is known as "God the Carpenter".⁸ Carving or woodwork is one of the activities of Tiv life, and their women wear beauty scarification around and above the navel, a living mark of Tiv carving skill. When the people consider God as "the Carpenter", they indicate that he "carves" the world, producing the different shapes and forms of creation. The world bears the beauty scarification of God.

The Kiga call God "the Fashioner". The name comes from a verb which means "to fashion or set in order, put shape to something".⁹ The Ngoni have several appellations by which they describe God as the creator. They call him "the Great Deviser", "the Original Source",¹⁰ and "the Beginning of all things". These related names place God in the position of being the first and only source of all things, the One who devised their existence and brought them into being.

Among many peoples, the concept of God's creative activity is expressed in names or short phrases. As we have not the details, we

may list only some of the expressions, as follows: The Ankore speak of God as "the Creator who sets things in order, creates everything, and gives new life".¹¹ For the Ashanti, God is "the Fathomless Spirit who made all things".¹² According to the Banyoro, God is the Creator of all things, but having accomplished his work, there was no need to ask further favours of him, as other divinities could do the rest.¹³ The Bari hold that God created all things, and continues to create one hundred men every month¹⁴ in order to keep alive the human race. The Fajulu believe that God is the Creator of all things, and that his creative work is perfected and completed.¹⁵ The most ancient name for God among the Ganda, means "Creator, Master of life";¹⁶ and the people refer to him as the "God of Creation" or "Creator of Creation".¹⁷ The Lunda speak of him as "the Father Creator who created all countries".¹⁸ The Tswana regard him as "the only Creator, Originator, and Cause of all things".¹⁹ The Lango believe that God "created the two worlds contained in Lango cosmology together with their inhabitants".²⁰ The Lugbara say that God "made things, as his work", in his transcendent aspect, a long, long time ago, and later created men. They "conceive of their generic unity in terms of blood; they are 'one people, all of one blood' which came from God the Creator".²¹ The Nuer look upon God as a creative spirit, and the father of men both as their Creator and their Protector. In praying, they speak of the universe as God's "universe; it is thy word". The term by which they describe God's creating act, "signifies creation *ex nihilo*", and creation by imagination or thought.²² The Shona call God the "Begetter", "Bearer",²³ "Creator", and "Creator of human beings".²⁴ Their word for "creator" comes from a verb which describes the act of producing fire through rubbing. This could mean that either God created things *ex nihilo*, or used existing substance to produce them. Since he is looked upon as "Bearer" and "Begetter", it would seem more probable that his work of creation was *ex nihilo*. The Suk believe that God made all things and continues to cause the birth of both men and animals.²⁵ The Urhobo hold that God is the Creator of the world, life, and death.²⁶ In their prayers the Vugusu address God as Creator; and hold that the substance of and manner in which heaven was made, are a mystery. They say that God created it "like lightning".²⁷ The Yoruba speak of God as "the Creator", "the Maker", and "the Owner of Life".²⁸ The Zulu believe that God "made all things"; and, pointing to heaven, they say, "The Creator of all things is in Heaven".²⁹ The Lodagaa believe that God created all

mankind, as a potter does his pots.³⁰ The Acholi hold that God created all things and taught men the essentials of their life such as beer-making, cooking, and cultivation.³¹ The Fon conceive of creation as having taken place through the Word (*Fa*) of God. *Fa* "represents the expression of the will of God regarded as the chief agent of creation". They believe that the present existing world is the result of a succession of creations and the work of God.³² The Nandi say that God created the universe, but both heaven and earth were one in the primeval stage. Then God "prepared them, and the sky went up, and the earth stayed below".³³

All these are different ways of expressing the same concept of God as the Creator. We have not a written record of all the myths of creation in general, but most of those pertaining to the creation of man are analysed in a German work.³⁴

THE ORDER OF CREATION

The myths vary widely with regard to the order of creation. We have, therefore, to consider them singly.

According to one of the Vugusu myths, God took two days to create the heavens. During this period, he made first his dwelling-place, which he supported with pillars. Then he created his two assistants. Afterwards he created the moon, the sun, the clouds, two bright stars (one on the east and the other on the west), and then other stars. He created rain and put it into the clouds; and to stop it falling down when unwanted, he made two rainbows (the narrower of which was the male, and the broader the female), which must act jointly to halt the falling of rain. Mysteriously God created the earth, with mountains and valleys, as a place for his two assistants to work. This completed, he then created man for whom the sun would shine. Since the man needed someone with whom to talk, God created for him the first woman. The couple now wanted water to drink, so God let rain come down, which filled up the depressions and formed lakes, rivers, and streams. God then created the plants, animals, birds, and other creatures which live in the water, on land, and in the soil. The Vugusu believe that "God completed the whole work of creation in six days. On the seventh day he rested because it was a bad day . . . The Vugusu have all sorts of beliefs and taboos referring to this day and the number seven".³⁵ This myth reflects and provides an explanation of the geographical environment of Vugusu country (with its fair amount of rainfall, rivers, etc.), natural phenomena, and social life.

In the Ashanti order of creation, God made first the sky, then the earth, rivers, waters, plants, and trees. Then he made man, and for man's use he made animals. In order to keep the animals alive, he ordered them to eat the plants, which men were also to eat in addition to eating the animals. Then God made spirits of the waters, forests, and rocks, in order to protect man. The people say that God "created things in an ordered fashion", for everything fits into a harmonious relationship, and every creature was meant to perform or fulfil its duties. In another version, the earth is elevated as "the first of his creations", and "personified as the fertile, great-breasted goddess. . . . Through her, God created their children, the rocks, the forests, the hills", and other things. Thursday is dedicated to the earth, and on that day it "lies in quiet rest, untrammelled, unturned".³⁶

The Azande creation story has many versions. According to one, God put all the world's creatures in a canoe which he sealed up, leaving only one hole plugged with wax. Then he called to him his sons: sun, moon, night, cold, and stars. When they came to him, he set them the problem of undoing the canoe to discover what it contained. The secret had, however, been revealed to the sun by God's messenger. The sun therefore heated and caused the wax to melt, thus opening the sealed canoe. From the canoe came out men, animals, trees, rivers, hills, and grass.³⁷

The Bambuti story tells that in the beginning the earth was above and the heaven below as God's throne. Dust and dirt fell down from above into God's food, until he became weary of having his food contaminated. So he ordered the lightning to find for him a place above the earth. In obedience the lightning divided up the earth and travelled upwards, where it found a place for God and the moon, which is his closest being. God and the moon then went up to this new place of abode. One day the chameleon, the most sacred animal in Bambuti thought, heard some noise in the branches of a tree. Then it dug round this tree, after which a river sprang up and distributed itself throughout the earth. In this way water appeared on the earth. Then two human beings, first a woman and then a man, appeared, or God made them. The chameleon then planted the seeds of the first tree (*Tii*), and in that way all other trees came into being. God sent to earth the "celestial goat", which became the ancestor of all the animals, and for which reason the Pygmies call the animals of the forest "the goats" of God.³⁸ We may summarize the order of creation as having been the earth and heaven first, then the moon, lightning, chameleon, water and trees, men and animals. These

are items which feature strongly in the geographical environment where the Bambuti live: the Ituri forest, the tropical storms (with thunder and lightning), major tributaries of the Congo river, and animals on some of which the people depend so much for their existence.

The Banyarwanda are said to have no creation myth as such, but they believe that God created the world out of nothing. They say that there are three storeys of the universe: the one above is richer and more fertile than the others; then there is our world, and underneath is another which is similar to ours. Men and animals can travel from one storey to another. The people believe that God prepared their beautiful country first, and when he was rather tired, he prepared other lands. Therefore the mountains in these other countries are not as "finished off" as the Banyarwanda countryside.³⁹

The Dogon myth of creation sets the universe in form of an enormous egg which contained "the appointed model of creation, *Nommo*, the Son of God". The egg was divided into two twin placenta, each with a pair of twin *Nommo*, the "direct emanations and sons of God, according to the Dogon, and the prefiguration of man". It took over twenty years to order the creation.⁴⁰ Of a similar nature is the Fon myth according to which there was a succession of creations and creators. Somewhere or sometime, there appeared *Da*, the assistant of God, who remained at God's side and helped him in ordering the world. *Da*, who "is sometimes described as the first created being", set up four pillars to sustain the sky, and his excreta formed mountains and metals of the earth, while the route of his travels over the earth formed the waterways. God set the universe in order, created vegetation and animals, and finally "formed the first human beings from clay and water". He also created the divinities as his children.⁴¹

According to the Zulu, God made the earth, then men, cattle, other animals (in pairs), and finally corn. They say that "all things came out of the water, dogs and cattle", as God created them.⁴² The Lozi myth says that God first created the world and all things, and finally man (both husband and wife).⁴³ The Mende believe that God ended his creation by creating man, both husband and wife.⁴⁴ The Nandi story tells that God created heaven and earth which were one, then he prepared or separated them, and finally made man, both husband and wife.⁴⁵

From these creation stories we see that heaven and earth were the first to be created. According to the majority of them, man was the

last to be made. The creation of the other things is fitted into the picture without a particular order which we could generalize.

GOD'S ESTABLISHMENT OF NATURAL ORDER, LAWS, AND CUSTOMS

According to a number of African peoples, God not only created the material world, but also established laws of nature and human customs.

The Bacongo believe that God made natural laws which govern the universe, such as the flowing of water and of blood. They say:

Water never sleeps,
God made it to be always flowing;

and with regard to plants, that "God works in the leaves".⁴⁶

The Abaluyia believe that having created the world, God "also established an order which enabled man to live in this world". They hold that God did not create evil, because the order which he established "was perfect, endowing man even with the blessing of eternal life". The people say that God has still the power to change this order.⁴⁷ The Akan believe that having created all things, God made provision of sanctions for laws and customs.⁴⁸ The same concept is reported among the Ashanti who say that God "created things in an ordered fashion", and that he created an orderly and harmonious world where everyone could perform his own duties.⁴⁹ According to the Fon, God set the universe in order before he made vegetation, animals, and men. They celebrate this in a four-day week, the first day of which is believed to be when God set the world in order and when he created man. On the second day appeared the agent of civilization, with the task of making the earth habitable for men. On the third day man was given sight, the gift of speech, and a knowledge of the external world. On the fourth day, man received "technical skills".⁵⁰ The Banyarwanda believe that God established the laws that govern nature, but he can alter them if and when he wishes. The Dinka consider God to have established the order of the things he created.⁵² The Yoruba attribute the times and seasons to God, saying that "He is the Author of day and night", and for which reason he is known as "the Owner of this day". The people regard each day as his offspring.⁵³

Among the Lugbara, it is held that God is "the ultimate fountain-head of all power and authority, of all sanctions for orderly relations between men", and "the ultimate source of all power and of the

moral order".⁵⁴ The Nandi say that God set the world in order at the beginning, continues to be responsible for that order and regulates the balance between man and nature.⁵⁵ The Nuba regard God as the "Guardian of the patriarchal traditions, any transgression of which he may punish with death".⁵⁶ The Nuer look upon God as the Author of custom and tradition, and the One who instituted marriage prohibitions.⁵⁷ The Nyakyusa do not consider twins to belong to the natural order which God established, though it is he who creates twins. For these people, the normal order is to have one child at a time.⁵⁸ Many other African peoples regard the birth of twins as abnormal, and formerly either or both of them were killed in some societies. The Ila believe that God founded many of their customs, laws, and regulations, in addition to creating the world.⁵⁹ The Zulu believe that God instituted marriage, saying, "Let there be marriage among men, that there may be those who can intermarry, that children may be born and men increase on the earth". They hold that he is the Institutor of their present order of society.⁶⁰

GOD CONTINUES TO CREATE

A number of peoples hold that God has not stopped his creative activity. The Twi say that "God never ceases to create things".⁶¹ The same belief is reported among the Akan.⁶² The Bacongo express it by saying that "God works in the leaves".⁶³

It is mainly in connection with human life that the concept of God's creative work is thought to continue. The Azande consider God to be responsible for the creation of individuals, so that without his approval no conception can take place.⁶⁴ The Bambuti say that God creates every person who is born into this world, just as he created the first man.⁶⁵ The Banyarwanda believe that God creates each new child, shapes it in the mother's womb, and decides whether it will be happy or unhappy in its life after birth.⁶⁶ For this reason, they call him by a name which means "God only brings forth children".⁶⁷ The Barundi, who are their neighbours, believe the same, and both groups provide water at night so that God can use it for his work of creating children.⁶⁸ The Bondei believe that God uses dust out of the ground, with which to create each person. Therefore, at death the body must be returned to its original place so that, as dust, it can be mingled with the remainder of the earth at the spot from whence it originated.⁶⁹ The Indem say that God "sends the spirit into new-born babes".⁷⁰ According to Bari beliefs, God keeps mankind alive by creating one hundred men every month.⁷¹ Like-

wise, the Igbo hold that "God is always creating more people".⁷² The Lango believe that a spark from God enters a woman's body at coition, to become the source of life. They say, "God that is within her causes a woman to bear", and "God visited so-and-so: she has borne twins". They think that the same applies to animals.⁷³ Their neighbours the Lugbara, believe that only God can create living beings, and consequently refer to him as "God the Creator of men". They also hold that he intervenes to bring about changes, by re-creating "the structure of Lugbara society so that the changes are incorporated into it".⁷⁴ The Suk say that God "causes the birth of mankind and animals".⁷⁵ The Nyakyusa regard God (and the spirits) to be responsible for birth, because "without their support a man is impotent, a woman barren". They hold that God and the spirits are present in the intercourse which produces conception, and exercise control over it; and that God causes the blood of a woman to flow, which forms the child in her womb.⁷⁶ The Luo,⁷⁷ Tonga,⁷⁸ and Watumbatu⁷⁹ believe that God causes both births and deaths of individuals.

According to the Dogon, the development of each person manifests ultimately the development of *Nommo*, "the appointed model of creation", "the symbol of the ordered word". The new-born baby is the head of *Nommo*; as herd-boy he is the chest of *Nommo*; at betrothal he is the feet of *Nommo*; at marriage he manifests the arms of *Nommo*; and when he is a full adult "he is the complete *Nommo*". Finally, as "an elder and still more as a supreme chief, he is both *Nommo* and the totality of the world and mankind".⁸⁰

GOD AND HUMAN PREDESTINATION

Some African peoples hold that God predestines the life of each person. This is with regard partly to the whole destiny of life, and partly to the length of life itself.

The Yoruba believe that a man's doings on earth have been predestined by God. It is said that before a person is born, he stands before God in order to choose, receive, or have his destiny affixed to him. The rite being over, he then comes to the world. His destiny may, however, be altered for the worse by "the children of the world".⁸¹ Similarly, the Igbo believe that God arranges the nature and length of each person's life. According to them, when God creates a person, he also "fixes how old he is to grow".⁸² The Ila hold that God ordains the destiny or fate of every person, and for this and other reasons, the people call him "Master, Owner of his

things".⁸³ It is believed, among the Mende, that God predetermines the life of each person, and that this cannot or should not be changed. They express the concept in a proverb, that, "If God dishes your rice in a basket, do not wish to eat soup!". This is meant to teach that, if God has made a person poor, that person should not desire to be rich.⁸⁴ The Nuer firmly believe in the predestination of God, and say categorically that everything is as it is, "because God made or willed it so". They explain it that if a person is slow in running, God made him so; if one is healthy and another weak, they were made so by God.⁸⁵ The Tswana consider God to be responsible for moulding the destiny of each individual.⁸⁶ In looking at personality differences, the Bacongo say that God endows each person with peculiarities and temperament and "also creates individual tastes and soul qualities". They express this concept further in a proverb, that "What comes from heaven cannot be resisted".⁸⁷ Thus, whatever God gives to a person is final and unchangeable, and man has no control over it. The Barundi hold that God predestines the state of each person, so that one is poor, another is rich, one gets many children, another is barren. For this reason, the people call him the "One who does all".⁸⁸ Their neighbours the Banyarwanda believe that although only good things come from God, there are unfortunate predestinations which originate from him as well.⁸⁹ The Balese say that God is surrounded by two spirits. One of these spirits is God's son, knows all the thoughts of God, and decides for the good or ill of men in the world.⁹⁰ The Yao believe that God predestines the state of both men and spirits. They represent him as "assigning to [the] spirits their various places. He arranges them in rows or tiers".⁹¹

In connection with the length of individual life, the Abaluyia suppose God to have said:

It is I who made the people,
Whom I love he will thrive,
And whom I refuse he will die.⁹²

This provides explanation for the phenomenon of death and life even if the people may find other causes of death. When a person is sick, the Lugbara say of him that, "If God wants him to die, then truly he will die. If God wants him to recover, then truly he will recover".⁹³ Thus they believe that God predestines the length of a person's life. Their neighbours, the Lango, also believe that God is the dispenser of death and determines how long a person may live.

He sends sufficient rain for good harvests and dry seasons for the joy of hunting.⁹⁴ Likewise, the Toposa hold that God determines the length of every person's life on earth.⁹⁵

Through these different sayings, phrases and names for God, African peoples express their concept of God as the Creator of all things, and their belief that he continues with his creative activity.

5 *The Providence and Sustenance of God*

I PROVIDENCE

GENERAL

In various ways God provides for the things he has made, so that their existence can be maintained and continued. African peoples are aware of God's providence, and many of them acknowledge it. The Akan consider God to have sanctioned their laws and customs, by means of which their society is protected and prospered. He also provides life, for which reason they call him "the Ever-ready Shooter".¹ Thus, he "shoots" or "injects" life into the individual, so that society does not wither away physically: "He opens for man an appetite for life, makes life worth living for him".²

The Ovimbundu name for God means "he who supplies the needs of his creatures".³ The Dorobo believe that God supplies or withholds the needs of the people;⁴ and the Gikuyu believe that he is the source of all things.⁵ In a proverb, the Ganda say that "God gives his gifts to whomsoever he favours".⁶ The providence of God functions entirely independently of man, so that nobody has the right either to complain or envy another person's gifts. The Ewe hold that God "is good, for he has never withdrawn from us the good things which he gave us".⁷ Among the Kiga, God is known by a name which means "the One who gave everything on this earth and can also take it away".⁸ God provides and God takes away. In a similar way, the Shona describe God as providing both good and bad.⁹ When the new moon appears, the Kagoro pray that God will give them health and good prosperity during the coming month.¹⁰ This is as if the lunar cycle symbolizes for them the rhythm of God's providence and his faithfulness in supplying human needs. The prayer is both a request for and an affirmation of God's providence. The Ankore look upon God as the benefactor of all the good things, which he supplies freely, without people asking for them or making an offering to him in return.¹¹

The Lele see the providence of God through his giving animals to men for meat, milk, and skins.¹² Led by their religious head

(the *Mugwe*), the Meru pray to God for the supply of children, goats, and cattle.¹³ To possess plenty of domestic goods is considered a sign of prosperity from God, a status symbol, and an economic convenience.

The Shilluk consider intelligence and success to be special providence of God given to individuals.¹⁴ When unexpected benefits befall a person, the Vugusu take them to be a special manifestation of God's providence. They accept them saying, "What God offers you with one hand, you should take with both hands".¹⁵

Some societies consider magic to be God's providence. The Ewe believe that God "sent [magic power] into the world when he made man".¹⁶ The Lango hold that the knowledge of magic art comes partly from God and partly from the departed, though he gives other benefits to men.¹⁷ The Kaonde believe that God gave men medicinal herbs as his gifts; and the Zulu that he gave men traditional doctors for the treatment of diseases.¹⁸

SUNSHINE

The Akan speak of God as "the Giver of Light or Sun".¹⁹ The sun appears every day, providing light, warmth, and a change of the seasons, and causing crops to grow and ripen. The people regard this as an important activity, and for this reason they call God "the Shining One".¹⁹ It is as if he is involved in the light of the celestial bodies, whose shining symbolizes his presence in the universe.

The Ankore hold that God causes the sun to shine by day and the moon by night. One of their names for God means "Sun", and they believe that his presence in the universe is symbolized by the "moving" of the sun across the whole earth.²⁰ The Kpelle say that God "causes rain to pour down on our fields, and the sun to shine; because we see these things of his, we say [that] he is good".²¹ Sunshine is a blessing, an indication of God's providence towards his creation. Sunshine is not for individuals but for the whole universe. The Igbira consider it to be an indication of God's benevolence.²² The Ila associate sunshine with God so intimately that when the weather becomes very hot, they say that "God is much too hot, let it be overclouded!"²³ Sunshine, light, and heat are all manifestations of God's presence and providence. One of the titles by which the Kiga praise God, means "the One who makes the sun set".²⁴ Just as he causes the sun to rise, so it is only he who causes it to set. Sunrise sets in motion human activities, such as herding the cattle and flocks, working in the fields, going to the market places,

etc.; and sunset signals the commencement of night activities like gathering at home, driving home the cattle and milking them, resting, exchanging news, sharing food, and going to dance or sleep. These are all possible because of the rhythm of the sun which is ultimately a manifestation of God's providence.

RAIN

To African peoples, rain is always a blessing and its supply is one of the most important activities of God.

The Hottentots consider God to be "the Rain Giver" who looks like rain and comes from rain to cover the earth with green colour. The Akan also speak of God as "the Giver of Rain", who causes rain to fall copiously and makes waters overflow".²⁵ For the Bavenda, God is "the Water Giver, the Master of Rain".²⁶ A similar set of names is used by the Ila, who speak of God as "the Rain Giver" and "the Water Giver". They associate the rain with God so intimately that when it rains the people say that "God rains", or "God falls".²⁷ This intimate association makes the supply of rain the most explicit sign of God's providence towards his people. The Mende believe that even though God has retired far into the sky, he still "sends rain to fall on his 'wife' the Earth".²⁸ For them, rain is a love token, a sign of God's care for the earth. The Ngoni consider rain to be God's method of nourishing the earth.²⁹ Thus, rain is the food of the earth, the sustenance without which the earth would perish away and become a sheer piece of waste. When rain fails to come in its season, the earth thirsts and hungers, the ground is parched, the countryside turns yellowish brown, and both animals and men wander about in search of water. But as soon as the rain returns, everything seems to become jubilant: the birds of the air sing, butterflies come out in their full splendour, insects roam about eating and drinking, animals have enough grass and leaves, and man goes to the fields to work. Life multiplies itself in a thousand ways.

The Tswana are speaking for many other peoples, when they say that "We look to God to give us rain", or "God has helped us with rain".³⁰ Petitioning God for rain is the main cause and objective for many prayers and sacrifices of African peoples. The Swazi believe that God has given them medicine, rain, and the secrets of rain-making.³¹ Indeed, many rainmakers throughout the continent know that they are only the agents of God, and praying to him is part of their ritual of rainmaking. The Igbo recognize three main activities of God, holding that "He sends rain, controls fertility and creation,

and is the source from which men derive their *chi* or soul".³² A similar threefold concept of God's activities is found among the Gikuyu, who believe that God gives them children, sends misfortunes, and provides rain.³³ Part of this is echoed in a hymn of appreciation and gratitude:

God has given the Gikuyu good land,
That lacks neither sun, nor water, nor "land",
It is therefore good
That we always thank God,
Because he has shown us great generosity.³⁴

In the rite or act of blessing, many societies use the spittle as a symbol of prosperity, health, good welfare, and happiness. The Akamba say that rain is God's spittle; and when it is raining, the Tiv comment that "God is spurting water out of his mouth".³⁵ Rain is thus regarded as God's symbol of blessing the earth and mankind.

We will say more about rain in the third and fourth parts of this book.

FERTILITY, HEALTH, AND PLENTY

These three related items are another avenue of God's providence which African peoples recognize and value highly.

This concept is expressed by the Chagga, through an act of sacrifice and prayer. When someone falls sick, people come together on a market day and make a sacrifice, reciting a prayer part of which says:

. . . Chief, receive this bull of your name.
Heal him to whom you gave it and his children.
Sow the seed of offspring with us,
That we may beget like bees . . .³⁶

Similarly, the Edo pray for health and increase of children, addressing God as "the Bringer of children".³⁷ The Jie annual ceremonies include sacrificing and praying to God for rain, fertility, and health.³⁸ The father or husband of a barren woman, among the Ingassana, blesses her saying,

You want fruit,
God give you fruit!³⁹

When there is drought, the Meru religious leader (the *Mugwe*), prays to God for the fertility of women, for the health of all, and for the plentifulness of goats, cattle, food, and honey. At that time a special rite is held when the *Mugwe* blesses the country and prays

God "that we may live, have strength. May we bear children, and cattle . . . help our children". In a prayer of an old Meru man, God is requested to give strength, millet, beans, goats, health, work, and protection from danger.⁴⁰ These are the items that matter most to many people; they feel that God provides them and they confidently ask him for them.

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

God, guard for me the children and cattle,
God, guard for us the cattle,
God, give us health!⁴¹

When young men have gone to war, their mothers pray every morning that God will give them health. People also pray for the health and safety of their cattle; and at harvest time they ask God to give them health, strength, and milk. When women and cattle are pregnant, people pray for God's care over them.⁴² Similar requests are made by the Nuba who, at the beginning of the rain season, gather and perform the ceremony for the increase of cattle. They pray, saying:

God, we are hungry,
Give us cattle, give us sheep!

At their sacrifices, the officiating elder prays,

God, increase cattle,
Increase sheep, increase men!⁴³

The Zulu believe that God is responsible for health, fertility, and increase, and that he commanded men to increase and be perpetuated upon the earth. They hold that God told the first men:

Let there be marriage among men,
That there may be those who can intermarry
That children may be born
And men increase on earth!

The people repeat the teaching of their forefathers, that

The Source of being is above,
Which gives life to men;
For men are satisfied,
And do not die of famine,
For the Lord gives them life,
That they may live prosperously,
On the earth and not die of famine.⁴⁴

Children, cattle, life (health), and food—these are the signs of prosperity. Marriage is the means, *par excellence*, through which fertility is perpetuated and confirmed. The Maasai have a special ceremony of blessing the women, especially barren ones, and pleading with God to give them children. Because the Bambuti believe that God creates every person born into this world, their barren women implore God to give them children.⁴⁵ The Bachwa show the same belief when, on realizing that she is pregnant, a woman prepares food and takes a portion of it to the forest, and offers it to God, saying:

[God] from whom I have received this child,
Take thou and eat!⁴⁶

This prayer and offering are the fruit of deep gratitude, in recognition of God's providence of fertility. We have already quoted the Gikuyu and Igbo, who consider God's provision of children as one of his chief activities. Among a number of peoples, including the Ankore, Azande, and Banyarwanda, it is customary to incorporate God's name to those of their children. This is a recognition that the child is gift from God, a token of his providence, a "humanization" of his personal presence among the people. In another connection we have already mentioned that the Nyakyusa believe that God is actually present in the act of sexual intercourse and is responsible for the conception of children.⁴⁷ The Lango similarly believe that God is in the woman, causing her to conceive and bear a child; and that he is also responsible for crop fertility, so that rich harvests are due to his intervention and providence.⁴⁸

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

Po! God, may the day dawn well;
May you spit upon us the medicine
So that we may walk well!⁴⁹

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

Among a number of peoples, God's providence is personified. The Ankore have a divinity of plenty and fertility, supplying them with an increase and sustenance of humans, cattle, sheep, goats, and crops.⁵⁰ A similar divinity is reported among their neighbours, the

Banyoro. They also have a divinity of harvest to whom cooked millet is offered before harvest; a divinity of health, supposed to help them in time of sickness; and another divinity to whom herdsmen pray for a rapid increase of cattle.⁵¹ Among the Basoga pantheon of divinities, are those associated with the birth of children, help in childbirth, and healing of sickness.⁵² The Edo have a divinity responsible for health, and another for medicine and the medical profession.⁵³ The Konjo have a female divinity that assists women at childbirth, and another that assists barren women.⁵⁴ The Madi hold that there is a supernatural power or spirit responsible for reproduction, and to this spirit prayers for rain are addressed.⁵⁵ The Sonjo believe that the ultimate control of fertility is in the hands of their national and religious hero (*Khambageu*).⁵⁶ The Tiv believe that God's assistant is in charge of the fertility of mankind, animals, and crops, and that he reminds God when it is time to send the rain.⁵⁷

II SUSTENANCE

GENERAL

The Fon believe that God has an assistant (*Da*) and together they “sustain the world, coiled in a spiral round the earth which they preserve from disintegration—if they slacked it would be the end of the world—and under the sky which they uphold, with the world of gods”. This assistant is said to have set up four pillars to support the sky.⁵⁸ Similarly, the Banyarwanda hold that God’s action is necessary to maintain the world, for without him it would not continue to exist. They do not consider God to intervene in the laws of nature as such, but his action is “conceived rather as an underlying force which sustains the whole universe”.⁵⁹ The Bambuti show the same concept when they say that “If he [God] should die, the world would also collapse”.⁶⁰ They believe that the phenomena of nature are dependent on God. For the Lozi, God’s sustenance of the universe is maintained through his not intervening in it. They say, in a proverb, that

God does not speak to anything;
If he should speak to anything,
The world has come to an end!⁶¹

This is as if sustenance is exercised through a mysterious, inaudible, and invisible power from God. The Shilluk hold that God not only created the world but also “maintains it and informs it in its entirety”.⁶²

With regard to human life, various peoples hold the belief that it is God who sustains it. The Abaluyia say that God allows whom he wills to survive or live on, and whom he rejects dies.⁶³ It is reported that for the Akan, God gives life, a hum, and a song and “opens up for man an appetite for life, makes life worth living for him”.⁶⁴ The Herero hold that the life of an old man is sustained by God, and his death is caused by God calling him away.⁶⁵ The Shilluk see God’s sustenance in a historical context, believing that God gave them cattle, millet, and spearfish for their sustenance, and is still the giver and sustainer of life through his breath.⁶⁶ One Zulu informant is reported as saying that God “made us, and is as it were, in us his work. We exist because he existed”. Another informant narrated that “the ancient men said, ‘The source of being is above, which gives life to men; for men are satisfied, and do not die of famine, for the Lord gives them life, that they may live prosperously on earth and not die of famine’”.⁶⁷ Among the Ovambo, God is held to be both the author and sustainer of life.

According to these views, God sustains both the universe and human life.

GOD AS KEEPER AND GUARDIAN

The Barundi describe God by names which mean Keeper and Guardian. They call him "the Protector of the poor, the Keeper of the poor", and use another name which means: "there is a Saviour and only he can keep our lives".⁶⁸ Their neighbours the Banyarwanda believe that God has the power to protect or hurt, to heal or destroy.⁶⁹ The Ashanti say that even though God may seem withdrawn from men, he has not forsaken them, and has created the divinities who "provide the day-to-day assurances that men are not alone in the world",⁷⁰ and who protect men. Thus, God exercises his keeping and guarding care over mankind and creation through the intermediary of the divinities. The same belief is reported among the Fon, who hold that God has set divinities to have dominion over different parts of creation, to guard and preserve the world, with the help of God's chief assistant.⁷¹ The Gumuz believe that there are guardian spirits who also act as intermediaries between God and men.⁷² The Limba hold that one spirit is their guardian and gathers to himself their spirits after death.⁷³ The Lugbara have a belief that at the birth of everyone, God gives him a "guardian spirit" and a "personality", both of which are associated with divine power. When people die, the "guardian spirits" leave them and go into the bush where they become "the children of God".⁷⁴

For many peoples, however, God exercises his keeping and guarding activity directly. The Ganda express this concept in a proverb saying, "What God puts in store for someone never goes rotten".⁷⁵ This means that God guards not only men's lives but also their talents and property. The Ila call him "the Guardian".⁷⁶ The Nuba regard him as the "Guardian of the patriarchal traditions, any transgression of which he may punish with death".⁷⁷ The Tonga speak of God as "the Keeper" (or "the Preserver");⁷⁸ and the Nyanja look upon him as "the Great Caretaker of life", "the One who gives a fixed spirit".⁷⁹ In this same connection, the Yoruba call God "the Owner of life".⁸⁰

Other peoples show this concept through their prayers and petitions. The Meru pray that God will guard them; the Nandi ask him to guard their children, pregnant women, and cattle, and speak of him as "the Guardian Spirit"; and in one prayer the Shilluk invoke God to guard the sick.

GOD AS PROTECTOR

The concept of God as protector is closely linked to the previous one of his guarding and keeping activities. The Banyarwanda express it in three proverbs: "The plant protected by God is never hurt by wind"; "God has very long arms"; and "God goes above any shield".⁸¹

These proverbs clearly indicate that God's protection is exercised over the whole of his creation, because he stretches his "very long arms" over all things, so that nothing can hurt them. The people call him by a name which means "In God I entrust my property" or "I surrender my property to God".⁸² This name is an absolute guarantee of perfect protection of property and life. The neighbouring people, the Barundi, speak of him as "the Protector" and "the Protector of the poor";⁸³ and say that "nothing perishes without God's will".⁸⁴ When on a journey the Ila make offerings to God, praying him to prosper and shepherd them well in their journey.⁸⁵ The Nuer, considering God to be the father of men, their creator, and protector, speak of him as "God who walks with you"; and say that "God is present".⁸⁶ For them, God's omnipresence is protective, just as the presence of the human father protects his child.

The Lele believe that God owns men, protects, and orders them, showing his protective care through avenging injustice.⁸⁷ The Lunda believe the same, and also that God protects the weak, to whom he speaks and sends messengers.⁸⁸ The Mondari regard God as both creator and protector of mankind.⁸⁹ The Warjawa hold that God protects and avenges his people, to whom he "appears in visible form every fourth year for initiation rites".⁹⁰ To the Turu, the lion is paradoxically the symbol of God's punishment and protection, terror and care.⁹¹

Some peoples show their recognition of God as protector, through praying for his protection. At their annual ceremonies, the Jie sacrifice to God and invoke him to ward off cattle diseases and give them prosperity of children, cattle, rain, fertility, and health.⁹² The Nandi also pray God daily to protect their children, wives, and cattle.⁹³ The Shilluk address him as "the Protector", and beseech him to "Protect us, we are in your hand, and protect us, save me...".⁹⁴ The Vugusu believe that God is ever present, working for the well-being of all things, and that he is the maintainer and promoter of "all forces and things which are good and helpful to men". They also pray him to protect them.⁹⁵

Others see the protective work of God as being mediated through spiritual beings. The Ashanti believe that God created the divinities last of all, so that they would protect men.⁹⁶ The Banyoro have two divinities who care for and watch over the health of the royal family.⁹⁷ The Dogon hold that God protects their art of cultivation through the female *Nommo*.⁹⁸ The Ganda acknowledge many divinities under God, each of which has charge over certain departments of nature, protecting and controlling them.⁹⁹ The Haya hold a similar belief, and one of these divinities is the patron of travellers and protects them in hazards.¹⁰⁰ The Igbo believe that God protects people against witchcraft and magic, and that the female earth-divinity protects farmers and nations.¹⁰¹

THE CONTROLLING WORK OF GOD

The Bacongo see God's control over nature in causing the water to flow without ceasing, and in the movement of the leaves, about which they say "God works in the leaves".¹⁰² So also the Ovambo say, "God is in the trunk and in the low branches of it".¹⁰³ The Bemba hold that God controls thunder, which for them, as for other peoples, is one of the most dynamic forces of nature. The Chagga believe that God controls the entire universe, so that a person cannot be killed without God's permission, nor can spirits hurt men without his consent.¹⁰⁴ The Gikuyu are convinced that God controls the spirits, and when these become notorious, the people implore God to send them away.¹⁰⁵ The Nandi are anxious that a balance be maintained between men and nature. They believe that it is God who regulates this balance; otherwise if it is upset, there is calamity. They look to God as "the far-off driving force behind everything, the 'balance of nature' ".¹⁰⁶ Likewise, the Tonga consider God to be "regulating and presiding over all unaccountable or inevitable phenomena of human existence and the world of nature".¹⁰⁷ Other peoples like the Igbo, Igbira, Kiga, Lele, Luo, and Tswana, believe that God controls the universe and the phenomena of nature.

Among some societies, like the Basoga, Ganda, and Tumbuka, it is believed that God exercises his control over the world of nature, through divinities which he has put in charge of different departments of the universe. The Dogon hold that God's word, *Nommo*, controls the habitable land.¹⁰⁸ The idea of divinities having authority over certain areas of nature parallels and reflects strongly the traditional political structure of the people concerned.

THE NURSING AND CHERISHING WORK OF GOD

Among many central African peoples, such as the Bemba, Kaonde, Lamba, Tonga and others, the name for God is *Leza* (*Lesa*). It is held by some writers that this name is derived from the verb *lela*, whose basic meaning is "to nurse or cherish",¹⁰⁹ and which is "applied to what a mother does to her child or a chief to his community".¹¹⁰ If this be the concept behind the name for God, it indicates people's attitude towards him, that for them he is their nursing parent or their beneficent head of the large family.

One of the Ganda names for God means "Pastor".¹¹¹ This obviously carries with it the concept that God shepherds his people. The Chagga believe that God cares for the poor and the orphans.¹¹² They narrate that one reason why God punished the early men with devastation, was that the rich molested the poor. One of the Kiga names for God describes him as "He who carried everyone on his back".¹¹³ This comes from the custom, found among many African societies, of nursing women carrying the babies on the back. The name is a vivid metaphorical description of how God cares for his people, and nurses and cherishes them as the mother does her baby. When his people cry, he comforts them; when they hunger, he feeds them; when they thirst, he gives them to drink; and when they tire, he puts them to sleep. The Nuba speak of God as "the Great Mother", who "gave birth to the people" and "gave birth to the world, earth". In praying they use this name, saying "Our God [Great Mother], who has brought us [to this world] . . .". This is done at the hour of death, in times of drought, and when growing crops in the fields.¹¹⁴ These are the occasions when people most need the assurance of God's nursing care. In one Shilluk prayer God is addressed as, ". . . Thou who liftest up [the sick] . . .".¹¹⁵ This is a medical or nursing metaphor which carries with it the concept that God heals the sick, lifts up the fallen, and revitalizes human life. He is the great Physician of mankind. The Nyanja look upon God as "the Great Caretaker of Life", and speak of him as "the One who gives a fixed spirit".¹¹⁶

THE HEALING WORK OF GOD

The Chagga believe that a person cannot be healed unless God permits it, and that sometimes he assists the spirits to cure the sick. When a person is sick, the people pray and sacrifice to God, asking him to heal the sick.¹¹⁷ The Herero attribute recovery from illness to

God, and believe that the life of old people is sustained by him. Even when the aged die, the rest of the people think that they have been called away by God.¹¹⁸ In time of serious illness in an Ila home, the head of the household offers food and water to God, and prays him to heal the sick person.¹¹⁹ The Indem are reported as doing exactly the same.¹²⁰ The Lele on the other hand, believe that God gives power to human specialists (like doctors and diviners) to cure barrenness and heal sickness.¹²¹ The Nyakyusa believe that God has the power to drive away the witches who, in African societies, are thought to be the main cause of sickness and misfortune. God may, however, delegate this power to the headman of the village to drive away the witches.¹²² This is like prevention rather than direct healing, but it belongs to the whole phenomenon of combating evil. When, among the Barundi, someone recovers from a serious illness, the others remark to him, "God still causes you to stand up", or "He still stands upon you [i.e., keeps you alive]".¹²³ In time of a serious or chronic illness, and when human help is slow or ineffective, the Akamba say, "God is the most superior Physician". On being healed of such sickness, a person, or one of his relatives, says, "Ah, if it were not for God's help, I [he] would be dead by now!" The Turkana believe that God can send or take away diseases from men.¹²⁴ In the Shilluk prayer to which we have already referred, God is addressed as the one who "lifts up the sick".¹²⁵ In their former assemblies of prayer and sacrifice, the Shona used to entreat God to heal all sickness in their country.¹²⁶ The Vugusu reaffirm their belief in God's healing work through praying every morning, asking him to "spit" upon them his all-powerful medicine,¹²⁷ to heal and prevent illness.

These beliefs, sayings, and prayers, show clearly that many societies look upon God as the one who heals, and people turn to him for this purpose in cases of barrenness, serious illness or accident, and misfortunes.

Among some societies, the healing work of God is personified into, or delegated to, special divinities. The Banyoro have a divinity of health, whose help they seek in time of sickness; and the Basoga are said to have a divinity of healing.¹²⁸ The Edo have a divinity of medicine, whose assistance is enlisted to ensure effective use of all medicines.¹²⁹ The Hadzapi consider the sun to be responsible for making people ill, and traditional doctors sing to it (i.e., the sun) no doubt soliciting its help in their profession. The people believe that recovery depends entirely on its desire.¹³⁰

GOD'S WORK OF SALVATION

The Ganda describe God's work in a proverb which says, "God saves the afflicted according to his will".¹³¹ When, among the Bavenda, a person escapes from danger such as drowning, he says, "I have been saved by God!"¹³² One of the names by which the Ila describe God means "Deliverer of those in trouble". These people believe that even when they do harm to themselves, God takes steps to repair the damage and put things straight for them once more. For this reason they call him "Deliverer of those in trouble".¹³³ The Jie consider God to intervene in human affairs in order, among other things, to save men by averting calamities.¹³⁴ In their prayers and attitude, the Shilluk look upon God as the one who saves and protects them.¹³⁵ The Abaluyia name for God conveys, among other meanings, the idea of "One who saves, helps, or steers".¹³⁶ The metaphor of "steering" is derived from the experiences of fishermen in the nearby Lake Victoria, being "steered" (directed) home safely in time of danger or without getting lost. After danger or misfortune, the Akamba exclaim, "Ah, if God had not been there, I would have perished!" When going through desperate moments, the Banyarwanda say, "I now leave it in the hands of God alone"; and when danger is over, or a person has recovered from sickness, they refer to God by a name which means "It is only God who can save a man".¹³⁷ Similarly, the Barundi describe his saving work in two names which mean: "There is a Saviour" and "Only he [God] can keep our lives".¹³⁸ One of the Akan names for God means "He upon whom you call in your experience of distress: a Consoler or Comforter who gives Salvation".¹³⁹ These attributes, names, and expressions describe God as saving men from physical danger, afflictions, distress, and trouble, all of which are frequently encountered in African societies.

Some of our peoples speak of God's saving activity in course of their history. The Aushi believe that God came to rescue them in times of distress, especially during warfare.¹⁴⁰ The Chagga narrate how twice God intervened to save mankind from utter destruction. Accordingly, men provoked God through their wickedness, and on one occasion he sent a big monster which devoured men and animals, except one woman, her son, and daughter. Men increased once more, both in numbers and wickedness, and again God sent his minister who caused a great deluge of water to destroy men, their homes, and possessions, saving only one merciful man and his companions.¹⁴¹

The Meru tell that originally they lived in subjection in the country of Mbwa, but God intervened to save them from bondage, through the leadership of one religious leader (the *Mugwe*), and brought them to their present land.¹⁴² The Sonjo believe that their religious and national hero, *Khambageu*, who has "the character of a benefactor or saviour", will appear at the end of the world, to "save all Sonjo who are properly marked with the *ntemi* [scar under the left breast]".¹⁴³ For that reason all the Sonjo are marked with this scar at a religious ceremony.

A few peoples conceive of God's salvation in moral terms. The Lunda believe that God saves the innocent and punishes the guilty.¹⁴⁴ The Meru say that God saves the afflicted as well as one's adversaries. When the adversary is thus saved, one is then bound (or reconciled) to the adversary, and harmony between the two is restored.¹⁴⁵ One of the two fundamental ideas in Nuer religion is "deliverance from evil". The people ask God in many of their prayers, to deliver them from evil, so that they may have peace which for them is denoted by sleep, ease, softness, coolness, abundant life, and the like.¹⁴⁶ Among both the Akamba and Gikuyu, the sacred groves are regarded as sanctuaries for human and animal life, and animals or men hiding there must not be killed or attacked, nor must the grove be cut down.¹⁴⁷ The place which is thus associated with God is at the same time the externalization or symbol of his salvation.

The Baluba have a name for God which means "the sorrowful or suffering One".¹⁴⁸ We do not know, however, how or in what circumstances they use this name. The Ila believe that God is grieved at their foolishness and takes steps to repair the damage they cause to themselves.¹⁴⁹

6 *The Governing Work of God as King, Lord, and Judge*

GOD AS KING AND RULER

It is generally in societies which traditionally have or have had kings and rulers where we find the concept of God as King and Ruler. Although this concept thus reflects the political structure of the peoples concerned, it is also found among others who do not have traditional rulers.

The Banyarwanda, who had a strong central monarch ruling through chiefs and sub-chiefs under him, conceive of God according to their image of the king. They call him by names that mean "the Ruler", and "God only rules".¹ Their neighbours, the Barundi, who have evolved a similar political structure, refer to God as "the Governor".² The Edo are reported to have a strongly anthropomorphic image of God "as a king, living in splendour with many wives and children". According to mythology, their kingdom is believed to have been founded by the youngest of God's children.³ When praying, the Baluba invoke God as "the Great King".⁴ Similarly, when making their daily morning offerings to God, the Barotse old men address him as "the Great King . . . reigning over all things".⁵ Among the Twi-speaking peoples, God is said to "rule the world" and to "maintain order".⁶ The Akan consider him to be the ruler of the sky, earth, and underworld.⁷ The Bachwa believe that he reigns and rules as king in heaven; and the Bambuti that the "kingdom of the dead" is subject to God who is the ruler of the universe.⁸ The Indem say that "He rules over all the other tribes",⁹ including their own. Believing God to be "an almighty King", the Ngoni dare not approach him directly in worship, but seek the help of spirits who act as intermediaries and convey human messages to God.¹⁰ This is a typical attitude towards human kings and rulers, whose subjects do not normally reach them directly, but do so through servants or other people closer to the rulers. Although the Gikuyu did not have traditional central rulers, they recognize God as "the Ruler and Governor of the universe".¹¹ Just as in their

national life, political authority was in the hands of the elders; so on the scale of the universe, the final authority is in the hands of God.

Among the Yoruba, God is regarded as a king with a unique and incomparable majesty. They speak of him as "the King who dwells in the heavens", and "the King whose behests never return void [i.e., his will is absolute]". Concerning his great majesty, he is "the Master in resplendence". Again they call him "the Proposer who wields the sceptre, King of the Superlative Attributes", who is above all divinities and men, the omnipotent in heaven and on earth.¹² A similarly high status of God as king and ruler is acknowledged by the Zulu, whose title for God means "either Chief of chiefs, or King of kings, or Lord of lords".¹³ The Zulu know what it means to rule, for many a time they conquered other nations. When they speak of God as king, the title conveys supreme authority and absolute power. We have already seen that they describe him as "He who roars so that all nations be struck with terror", and as "He who bends down majesties".¹⁴

The Bena speak of God as "the Chief of the spirits".¹⁵ In making their sacrifices and praying to God, the Chagga invoke him as "Chief", saying, "We praise you . . . and fall before you . . .".¹⁶ Their attitude is one of obeisance before him as their King, which is a sign of complete loyalty, utter submission, and unreserved obedience. When the Ila go hunting, the eldest person in the group leads the rest in prayer, addressing God as "Chief" and pleading with him that he would let them kill the game they are going to hunt. This prayer indicates the people's attitude that God is the chief or ruler of the world of nature, and must give his permission to men to hunt and kill his animals. They call him by a name which means "the Owner of his [or all] things".¹⁷

As king and ruler, God is thought to be rich and to own all things. The Banyarwanda convey this concept in two names which mean "God has all things", and "It is only for God".¹⁸ The Barundi have also two names which describe God as "the Owner of everything" and "the Owner of all powers".¹⁹ The most ancient Ganda name for God means, among other things, "Creator" and "the Master of Life".²⁰ The Kaonde say that "God owns the rain, and only he can give it".²¹ The Ila believe and say that "All things are his".²² The Lele and Lunda believe that God owns human beings, as well as all things. One of the Ngoni names for God means "the Owner of all things".²³ A similar name among the Shona describes him as "the Owner of many things".²⁴ The Suk picture God living above, where

he owns much land, livestock, ivory, and every good thing.²⁵ These are the items of property which people esteem highly. The Urhobo consider him to be "the Owner of the world".²⁶ The Shilluk believe that the soul of man belongs to God.²⁷ When a person or cow dies, the Nuer neither grumble nor complain, but simply say that God "has taken only what was his own".²⁸ This is a practical acknowledgment of the concept that all things belong to God.

We have already seen that God is considered all-wise and almighty.

GOD AS LORD AND MASTER

The Ashanti consider God to be the head and lord of all their pantheon of spirits and divinities.²⁹ The Bambuti believe that God is lord of all men, who observes all their doings, and is also "the Lord of magic power".³⁰ This means that his power is stronger than that of magic which otherwise is a constant source of fear and suspicion in African societies. The Banyarwanda give God the title of "the Master of all", in addition to many other titles and appellations.³¹ For the Balese, God is the absolute master of the universe which he created;³² and similarly the Galla hold that God is both Creator and Lord of the earth.³³ The Ganda who, traditionally have a high regard for their king, speak of God as "Master" and "Master of all things".³⁴ These titles describe God as the supreme master of the universe, just as traditionally the Ganda king was the supreme master of their country. The Suk and Meru recognize God as the master and lord of life and death.³⁵ In two titles, the Yoruba speak of God as "the Owner or Lord of the heaven" and "Lord".³⁶ When lightning strikes cattle, the Zulu say, "The Lord has taken the cattle", or "The Lord has slaughtered for himself among his own food. Is it yours? Is it not the Lord's?" They hold that rain comes from "the Lord" in heaven.³⁷

The concept of God as lord and master is closely related to that of king and ruler. The title "Lord" or "Master" is one of respect and honour, describing the status which people give to God, and their attitude of humbleness and submissiveness before him.

Since God is lord and master, a number of peoples consider him to be able to do all things. The Banyarwanda give him three titles which mean "the God of destinies", "God only manages all things" and "God only plans".³⁸ Among the Barundi, he is known as "the One who does all".³⁹ The Songhay regard God as "the One who can do everything".⁴⁰ Among other peoples, God is considered the cause or explanation of mysterious phenomena. These ideas portray God

as the controlling power and the great architect of the destinies of his creation.

Some look upon God as their *Helper* and *Teacher*. One of the commonest Banyarwanda prayers is a short invocation: "I hope that the God of Rwanda will help me!" In this connection, the people speak of him by a title which means "only God looks for something for someone". They use this name and invocation when searching for a wife (or husband), trying to find wealth or riches, and in similar circumstances.⁴¹ In a proverb the Ganda say, "Better become lame through God's aid than die!"⁴² This means that God's help is to be recommended and preferred in any circumstances. The Baluba look up to God as "the Bearer of burdens", and speak of him as "the Sorrowful or Suffering One".⁴³ The idea here would clearly seem that God is ever ready to help and enlighten the burdens of his people. The oldest man in each of the Barotse villages has the duty of praying on behalf of his community. In one such prayer, God is addressed as "helping the weak one, and feeding the hungry one".⁴⁴ This prayer reveals an attitude of mind which regards God as ever ready to help the weak and the hungry, groups of both of which are found in many African villages. The Meru believe that God helped them get out of their former land of bondage and continues to help them in their daily lives. In a prayer of one old man, God is asked to help him get up healthy the next morning and to show him work to do.⁴⁵ There are many references in Shilluk texts to God as the helper of the poor and the final court of appeal in trouble. In a proverb the people say, "God threads good and evil men on a single string",⁴⁶ which means that all people, regardless of their status and moral conditions, are entitled to receive God's help. When it rains, the Tswana say, "God has helped us with rain".⁴⁷ In undertakings like war and hunting, the Vugusu pray for God's help; and the Mende frequently seek his help over their use of medicine.⁴⁸ Thus, because or even though God is lord and master, people consider him as their helper, and frequently make their requests for help in different circumstances, or attribute to him help received in time of need.

Different peoples consider God as *Teacher*. The Tiv narrate that God came to live with men on earth and taught them how to cultivate and produce other foods, because they had been living exclusively on fish.⁴⁹ The Kakwa believe the same, that when God had put man on the earth, he taught him how to cultivate, an art highly respected by the Kakwa to this day.⁵⁰ Similarly, the Acholi hold that God

taught men all the essentials of living, such as cultivation, beer-making, and cooking.⁵¹ The Lodagaa have a myth according to which "one of the two first men climbed up into the sky to visit God and was there taught by him how to reproduce his kind"; otherwise men learnt all the other arts "from the beings of the wild".⁵² The Gikuyu believe that, through dreams, God instructs the elder officiating at their annual sacrifices.⁵³ In a Barotse prayer offered by an old man in a village, God is specially requested to educate the children by his power.⁵⁴ This education possibly refers to children's behaviour towards the parents and a knowledge of their national customs. One Ila name for God describes him as "Leader", and people normally use it when undertaking a journey, with the hope and expectation that God guides or leads them.⁵⁵ We have already mentioned that the Ganda regard God as their "Pastor",⁵⁶ a term which conveys the idea of both "shepherding" and "teaching". As master and lord, God helps and teaches his people. Although people often ask for God's help, it is rare that they ask him to teach them, though some societies say that formerly he taught them various arts of living.

A fairly common concept is one in which God is regarded as the *Giver*, especially of life. He is the master and lord of all things, therefore it is he who gives things to men. The Akan speak of him as "the Ever-ready Shooter", with reference to his giving life.⁵⁷ The Ankore believe that "God's smile brings life", just as "his displeasure" brings sickness and death.⁵⁸ This is a picture taken from their political life in which the king's moods determined the fate of his subjects. The Bacongo hold that God not only creates individuals but gives them their different tastes and soul-qualities. They say with confidence, "God gives life, he does not destroy it".⁵⁹ The Igbo also regard God as the giver or source of their souls.⁶⁰ The Mende believe that all life and activity have their source and origin in God.⁶¹ The Suk consider him to be the supreme Lord of life and death; and the Zulu say, "the Source of being is above which gives life to men".⁶² There are others, like the Nyanja, Shilluk, Vugusu, Nuer Nyakyusa, Ovambo, Lango, Lugbara, and many more, who also regard God as the giver of life.

But besides life, God gives other things as well. The Akan have several names by which they speak of God, as "the Giver of repletion [i.e., the sufficiency of Good]", "the Giver of rain", and "the Giver of light or sun".⁶³ These items are comprehensive and cover everything that men want: light, sunshine, rain, and sufficiency. The

Ankore simply speak of him as "the Giver", which implies that all things come from him. The Tswana look upon him as the giver of food and other good things.⁶⁴ Among the Bavenda he is known as "the Water Giver".⁶⁵ The Ganda call him "Giver", and say that "God gives his gifts to whomsoever he favours".⁶⁶ For the Gisu, God is "the Giver of food".⁶⁷ It is held among the Gikuyu that God is "the Giver", with the power to give things to men and to take things away.⁶⁸ Faced with a similar paradox of receiving and losing, the Ila describe God as "He who gives and causes to rot", and "the Giver who gives also what cannot be eaten".⁶⁹ The Kiga describe him by a similar name as "the One who gave everything on this earth and can also take it away".⁷⁰ The Meru consider him to be "the All-Giver"; and in prayer the Shilluk address him as "God the Giver"; as do also the Shona, calling him "the One who gives to all".⁷¹ The many who believe and say that God gives them children, include the Banyarwanda, Barundi, Bemba, Chagga, Indem, Lango, Lugbara, Ovambo, and Tswana. Some, like the Azande, Bemba, Lango, and Tswana hold that God gives magic power or the ability to heal. In these references, God is shown as benevolent lord and master.

GOD AS JUDGE

The concept of God as judge includes associations with justice, punishment, and retribution. The Abaluyia believe that God established the order of their society the breach of which causes him to punish the offender. The spirits are the police and judges of tribal law and custom, helping God in punishing those who break or deviate from them. As the ultimate dispenser and judge, God is known as "the Distributor", since he gives to each person his own portion of talents, fortune, and estate of life.⁷²

The Azande hold that God punishes with thunder those who commit wrong deeds like stealing. In time of crisis, they pray, declaring to God that they have not stolen or coveted other people's goods, and that all men are acceptable to them. They address him as "the One who settles the differences between us who are men". It is their belief that magic is God's gift to men as an instrument of punishment, since he allows it to function without thwarting it.⁷³ The Elgeyo consider lightning to be God's weapon of destroying the people who secretly wrong their neighbours.⁷⁴ The Igbo say that God punishes those who do evil and protects people against witchcraft.⁷⁵ Similarly, the Jie believe that God intervenes in human affairs to avert calamities and punish those who offend against

ritual.⁷⁶ The Ila hold the same belief, when they say of God that "Vengeance is his own". In one of their names for God they describe him as "He who gives and causes to rot",⁷⁷ indicating the working of his justice. Although the Lunda do not regard God as the rewarder of righteousness, they believe that he punishes certain transgressions.⁷⁸ The Nuba who, like many other peoples, have a high regard for the traditions of their nation, hold that transgression is punished by God, who is the guardian of these traditions.⁷⁹ The Nuer believe that good follows right conduct and ill follows wrong conduct, even if this may take a long time to be accomplished. They are convinced that "if a man does wrong, God will sooner or later punish him". Doing wrong means bad actions against one's family members, age-set, guests, and the like.⁸⁰

In many societies, it is believed that God punishes individuals through illness, misfortune, barrenness, or death. The Bachwa think that God punishes through these means as well as through accidents like falling off the trees when one is collecting fruit. The Bambuti consider and fear lightning and storms as God's means of punishing those who act and talk wickedly or commit adultery.⁸¹ Among the Banyarwanda, those who disobey God's order or abuse his name, are punished with misfortunes.⁸² Misfortunes are also interpreted by the Barundi to be God's punishment when human deeds, especially adultery, anger him. When people neglect to sacrifice to God or commit other transgressions, the Lango believe that he punishes them in form of disease, accidents, leprosy, failure in hunting, or painful death.⁸³ Luo elders pray God to strike dead with thunderbolts those who are notorious wrongdoers.⁸⁴ The Turkana believe that God punishes with death any person who commits incest or contravenes important ritual.⁸⁵ Although the Urhobo consider God to be kind and good, they say that he punishes evil, sometimes even by death.⁸⁶ According to the Vugusu, God does not punish people for their bad deeds, except when a woman who has many children commits adultery.⁸⁷ The Dinka and Kono attribute barrenness to God's displeasure.⁸⁸ The only two occasions when the Anuak sacrifice to God are when a person is ill or has been wronged by another. In the former case, they expect God to heal the sick; and in the latter case, to punish the wrongdoer.⁸⁹ The Hottentots regard God as "the Arbiter" of the world. The Yoruba consider God to be judge over all, and when misfortune befalls a moral offender, people say, "He is under the lashes of God".⁹⁰ For the Ovambo, rudeness to elderly people, murder, and stealing are punishable by God. They say, for

example: "If you are a murderer, God will come for you; he does not like blood".⁹¹

Some societies consider God to judge and punish them in form of calamities on a national scale. The Bavenda think that when God is angry with their chief, he punishes the people with drought, flood, or locusts.⁹² The Chagga believe that when a person commits treason, God rejects him, so that consequently both he and his clan die out. With God's permission, minor spirits may afflict men for men's ultimate good; but God punishes robbers by placing them in the hands of the tribal judges.⁹³ The Embu hold that if God is offended, he punishes either the offender or the whole nation (with war or drought). The Shona likewise believe that God punishes with war, drought, lightning, and locusts, during which time he might also withdraw himself, so that the people cannot reach him when seeking for his help.⁹⁴ The Gikuyu say that those who disobey God are punished by famine, sickness, and death.⁹⁵ According to one Nuer myth, the "white" people have pink skins as God's punishment for incest committed by their first ancestor with his mother.⁹⁶ It is held, among the Nyanja, that God strikes men for misdeeds, by sending them national catastrophes like drought, pestilence, or war.⁹⁷ The Tikar fear that if they neglect and do not observe their religious ceremonies, God will send them plagues.⁹⁸ Among the Tswana, natural phenomena, like wind, hail, heat, and drought, are regarded as God's punishment for innovations or departure from established usage.⁹⁹ An informant is reported as saying that the Zulu know nothing about God's life, and the only thing they know is his smiting. When lightning strikes a person, people say, "The Lord has found fault with him"; but when it strikes a cow they say, "This village will be prosperous!"¹⁰⁰

GOD AND WARFARE

We have mentioned that in some societies people interpret wars as God's punishment upon them. Others, however, seek God's help during warfare, believing, like other peoples of the world, that God is on their side! When Vugusu soldiers are sharpening their spears before going to war, they pray God to help them.¹⁰¹ In time of war, the Luo sacrifice black sheep or hens and appeal to God to assist them.¹⁰² The Dogon believe that every group "warfare is controlled by the male *Nommo* [i.e., the son of God]".¹⁰³ The Fon conceive of God in a dual aspect, part of which stands for motherhood and gentleness, and the other part for power, warlike strength, and

toughness.¹⁰⁴ When it thunders and hails, the Zulu say, "The Lord is arming . . . Put things in order!"¹⁰⁵ Thunder symbolizes power, force, might, and strength; and hail would symbolize darts, arrows, and spears. The Lango consider fighting to be one of the ways in which God's power is manifested.¹⁰⁶

A number of peoples have divinities of war, some of whom are a personification of warfare or of God's activity, while others are deified national heroes. The Ankore have a war-divinity with a temple and priest. In time of war women pray to him for their husbands, and upon victory the men thank him and ask him to preserve them from further danger. During peace time he is left "undisturbed".¹⁰⁷ The Banyoro have their divinity of war to whom each general would send an offering, before and after an expedition. In some of the expeditions, the priest would accompany the generals, carrying a special war drum.¹⁰⁸ The Ga have many war divinities recognized in different places and "worshipped" by various methods.¹⁰⁹ The Ganda have two divinities of war, to whom prayers, sacrifices, and offerings are or were made.¹¹⁰ Besides the Supreme God, the Itsekiri have a divinity of iron and war, but without a regular priesthood.¹¹¹ The highest ranking divinity of the Yoruba is "the divinity of war and warriors; of hunters and the chase", believed to have been originally a hunter. To this divinity, blacksmiths sacrifice dogs every fortnight.¹¹²

It is significant that there is so little mention of God in connection with the so-called "tribal wars". Perhaps these wars were not as frequent or as significant as many "colonial" books have repeatedly emphasized. Silence is not in itself sufficient evidence, but it is certainly significant here, and may throw some light upon the history and activities of African peoples before the colonial period.

7 *God and Afflictions*

GENERAL

Even when their immediate causes may be known or attributed to a particular source, afflictions are seen as mysteries which often defy explanation. For this reason, many peoples attribute them to God as either causing them, allowing them to happen, or being in some ways connected with them.

The Tonga name for God is *Tilo*, a word which also means "the blue sky", "a power which acts and manifests itself in various ways . . . regulates and presides over great cosmic phenomena to which men must submit". People trace events of a sudden or unexpected nature to the influence and direction of *Tilo*, such as thunder, lightning, death, convulsions, and the birth of twins. They say that "It is *Tilo* that kills and makes alive". When a person is in deep trouble, he exclaims, "*Tilo* has forsaken me!" The birth of twins is one of the greatest misfortunes that could come to a Tonga family. "The mother of twins is called *Tilo* and the twins are called '*Tilo*'s children'. The mother is said to have made *Tilo*, to have carried *Tilo*, to have ascended to *Tilo*. The day after twins have been born nobody tills the ground, for fear that if they did so they would prevent the rain. . . . [The twins] are in some sense a manifestation on earth of the power of *Tilo*".¹ The Tonga clearly attribute these afflictions ultimately to *Tilo*, who must here be identified as God.

The Lango believe that God brings upon people afflictions in form of "psychic disturbances or virulent diseases".² The Lugbara say that God sends or approves of a kind of affliction known as *nyoka* which means "unending trouble or disaster which follows a man and his lineage", such as the sterility of women, livestock, or fields.³ We have already told the Ila story of the old woman who, thinking her afflictions to have come from God, built towers and went on a long journey in a vain search for God, to get an explanation.

DISEASES

Although magic, sorcery, and witchcraft are universally regarded as the main causes of individual diseases, people may, in addition,

consider God to be responsible, especially for epidemics. The Ambo believe that God causes epidemics and game-pest; and the Azande vaguely associate epidemics with God. The Bambuti and Bongo think that God sends or causes sickness, even if witchcraft and the spirits may also be responsible. The Bavenda consider pests and epidemics to be some of God's manifestations. Among the Shilluk, certain diseases are associated with God, though the people believe that he protects them from harm and cures them when they are sick. The Turkana similarly hold that God sends and takes away diseases, but serious breaches like incest or failure in important ritual may cause him to strike the offender dead. The Suk consider calamities and cattle diseases to be God's punishment to men for their sins. The Tikar fear that God will send them plagues if they do not carry out the religious ceremonies due to him. The Gikuyu believe that God sends disease only as punishment to those who disobey him. The Lugbara believe that God sends meningitis, and that ill-conduct, that is, "the deed that destroys good words", leads to sickness and endless disasters sent or approved by God.⁴

Some societies see divinities, spirits, or personifications of God's manifestations as being responsible for various types of diseases. The Chagga believe that God has a spirit which he sends to men to bring them sickness and smallpox, though a person is killed only when God permits it. The Swazi have two divinities who send sickness.⁵ The Banyoro hold that there is a divinity of smallpox, thought to be one of the most powerful divinities. People send offerings to him and plead with him to keep away smallpox epidemics.⁶ The Basoga have a divinity of plague, who is greatly feared.⁷ Similarly the Gisu have one of plague, and another of smallpox, to whom sacrifices and offerings are made when there is an outbreak of either epidemic.⁸ Among the Yoruba, there is a divinity "whose main scourge is smallpox", and who is "depicted as prowling about when the sun is hot, robed in scarlet", with the earth as his domain.⁹ The Hadzapi consider the sun to be responsible for making people both ill and well again, all depending on its desire. Among the Lango, many diseases are attributed to God's different manifestations. One such manifestation is responsible for spiritual diseases, and another for bubonic plague.¹⁰ The Sukuma-Nyamwezi peoples believe that there is a dangerous spirit (or monster) who keeps boxes with evil and destructive contents. One of the boxes "contains dangerous diseases and with a little push of its lid out comes smallpox . . . and other epidemics". This he does when angered.¹¹ The Vugusu narrate

that diseases and death came upon men as a curse from the chameleon, when men refused to give it food. They have, however, an evil divinity who is said to bring illness, either directly or through his spirit servants. One Kaonde myth tells that God sent three pots to men, instructing the bird which carried them not to open the pots on the way. The bird became overcome with curiosity, opened the pots, and out of one came sicknesses. The bird was unable to put them back into the pot, and since then they have spread among men. In one of the other pots, God sent men herbs with which to combat these diseases.¹²

MISFORTUNES AND EVIL

One of the two main concerns of Nuer religion, is "deliverance from evil", and the people have many prayers directed towards that goal. In one common phrase they ask God to "remove all evil from our path".¹³ Thus, they look towards God as their deliverer from evil, whatever may be the metaphysical or other cause. The Zulu say firmly that "God was unable to create what is evil";¹⁴ and as we have seen elsewhere, there are other peoples who consider God to be good and to work entirely and only what is good.

There are, however, peoples who regard God as being connected with misfortunes. The Ila, while believing God to be good to all people, nevertheless "trace much of the evil and sorrow of life" to him. At the same time, they are convinced that God is always delivering those in trouble.¹⁵ The Nandi believe that ultimately all good and evil come from God. The Kyiga believe the same, holding, however, that the spirits are the immediate agents. While holding that without God's approval no conception can take place, the Azande attribute to him both barrenness and unnatural births. The Banyarwanda have the same belief, that even though "only good things come" from God, he may also give unfortunate predestinations. Only when all other explanations fail, do the Ndogo attribute misfortunes to God's agency. The Gikuyu believe that God has three aspects, in one of which he sends various kinds of misfortune; these, however, they accept saying, "It is God's will".¹⁶ Both the Tonga and Nyakyusa regard the birth of twins as unfortunate, and hold God responsible, even when (among the Nyakyusa) other agents may be blamed. The solution is then, for the Nyakyusa, to cleanse the parents ritually; and for the Tonga (formerly) to kill one of the twins, thus putting nature right where it had "gone wrong".¹⁷

Among some societies, evil and misfortunes are attributed to

spirits, divinities, or other spiritual beings. The Vugusu have an evil divinity who, with his spirit-servants, is responsible for misfortune and all evil in the world. This divinity is said to have been created by God, but when God noticed that he was evil-minded and bent upon killing men, he (God) drove him away. The people pray God to "drive away" the evil divinity.¹⁸ The Ganda consider the divinity of death to be responsible for other evils, such as diseases, bad omens, and the like. This divinity is said to have many spirits under him, who carry out evil among men.¹⁹ The Darasa believe that there is an evil being which permeates the whole of nature and is ever ready to work evil among men, until they become possessed.²⁰ The Balese say that God has a son who knows all the thoughts of God and who decides for the good or ill of men. Besides this being, there is another held to be the spirit of evil which is responsible for evil in the world.²¹ In these examples, God is not held directly or indirectly responsible for evil in the world, although the agents of evil are not hidden from him, and God may intervene to help people and counteract the evil.

The reader is referred to another work, *African Religions and Philosophy* (1969), in which I have discussed further the concept of evil in its natural and moral context. More is also said here, in chapter 21 below.

POVERTY, DROUGHT, AND FAMINE

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

O God my Father, give me goats,
Give me sheep, give me children,
That I may be rich, O God my Father.²²

The Ila believe that it is God who gives and takes away life and material wealth.

Rain is the greatest public blessing in African life. In times of drought, peoples in every part of the continent sacrifice, pray, and make offerings to God, pleading for his help. In connection with drought, God is first and foremost the giver of rain. There are, however, a few societies who consider droughts as coming from God. The Azande vaguely associate drought with God; the Bavenda take it

as one of God's revelations by means of which he punishes them when he is angry with their chief. The Tswana and Shona hold the same belief as the Bavenda, that drought is punishment from God.

Famine is generally caused by drought, and either often means the other as well. The Gikuyu regard famine as one means by which God punishes disobedience. The Chagga believe that he sends a spirit to bring famine, among other bad and good things. The Zulu believe that God gives life, rain, the sun, and the moon to satisfy men, so "that they may live prosperously on the earth and not die of famine".²³

LOCUSTS, CALAMITIES, AND DESTRUCTION

The Bavenda regard locust invasion, floods, and other calamities as punishment from God when he is angry with their chief. According to their belief, the locusts live in an enormous cage in the sky which God opens, thereby letting loose these voracious pests. The Tonga also hold that God sends locusts to harm men. The Lango consider them to be one of the manifestations of God's power. The Shona take them as God's punishment. Among the Sukuma-Nyamwezi, it is believed that locusts are kept in a box by a spirit which opens the lid, after which they spread everywhere, causing destruction upon the earth.

The Male, Nyanja, Ngoni, and Suk consider calamities to be sent by God. When calamities come, the Nuer accept them as God's will, about which they can do nothing, as they are beyond human control. They believe that God is always in the right. The Jie say that God intervenes to avert calamities; and the Teso think that there is a divinity which sends them calamities, since God is benevolent.

One of the many Shona names for God describes him as "the One with power to destroy completely" both persons and things.²⁴ The Lunda-Luena regard God as both creator and destroyer, and the Nandi look upon him as the ultimate protector and destroyer. The Nandi invoke him to protect their children and cattle; and at other times to destroy those whom they curse. In the latter they say, "May God kill you!", or "May God hate you!"²⁵ In three names for God, the Ila indicate how they connect destruction with God. They call him "He who gives and causes to rot", "He who takes away till there is only one left", and by another name which contains the idea of "to cut down and destroy".²⁶ These names depict God as wearing away, demolishing, destroying, disrupting, and causing

disintegration. There are myths among the Banyoro, Bushmen, Chagga, Edo, Herero, Yoruba, and others, telling of great destructions through flood or conflagration, originating from God directly or through his agents. In some of these myths the catastrophes came as punishment for men's evil doings.²⁷

DEATH

We have mentioned death in connection with other activities of God, and will return to the subject in the fourth part of the book when we consider concepts of "the end". We must, however, discuss death here, as it pertains to the mysteries of life and to the category of God's activities.

With reference to life, the Akan speak of God as "the Ever-ready Shooter"; but in connection with death, he is known as "the Killer Mother", who rules among the dead, just as he rules among the living.²⁸ The Bachwa are convinced that God will cure them when they are sick, unless he has already decided that the sick person must die. The Bacongo firmly believe that nothing evil comes from God, and say, "Rejoice, God never wrongs one". Nevertheless, God may occasionally allow death to occur, and then they say, "He died by God [i.e., there is no witchcraft about the death of the deceased]"; although normally witches and spirits cause death and other evils.²⁹ The Barundi think that God kills children, and for this reason they call him "He who hates children".³⁰ The Barotse believe that God calls back all men to himself and that none can refuse this summons. We have seen that the Ila consider God to give and destroy. When a person is bereaved, they say that he is "one upon whom God has looked".³¹ The Ingassana women say, at the death of a person, "God killed him".³² This is intended, among other things, to comfort the bereaved, because if death is blamed on an individual, its pains would be almost unbearable to the relatives of the deceased. But once the cause is lifted to God, then at least people realize that he acts this way towards all and without respect or favouritism. Holding that God determines the length of a person's life, the Lango believe that he dispenses death when that period is over; and that he punishes with painful death.³³ The Lugbara believe that while other agents may cause death, it is ultimately God, in his transcendent aspect, who is responsible for death. For this reason they call him "God the taker of men". Other agents simply bring the victim to God's notice, and then "God hangs or strangles him" or "God takes away breath".³⁴ In two situations the Ndogo attribute death to God. One

is when no other cause or explanation is available; and the other is when a person dies after all attempts to cure him have failed. The people say that "A man's days on earth are counted".³⁵ The Nuer believe that God brings death through agents like natural circumstances, animals, and spirits. When a person dies, they say, "God has taken him, for it was his man; he has taken only what was his own". They accept bereavement and other misfortunes without complaining, arguing that God is always right in what he does.³⁶ At the funeral dances, the Ovimbundu women sing saying, "God has cheated us of a life³⁷ [i.e., God has robbed them of one member of their community]". It is commonly believed, among the Yoruba, that death is the creation of God, for the specific purpose of recalling the person whose time on earth is fulfilled. Therefore they call it "Heaven's Bailiff", and think of it as a debt to be paid. Through the intervention of the divinities, it may, however, be delayed. But the people say, "It is sickness that can be healed; death cannot be healed".³⁸

Many other peoples associate death with God. These include: Ankore, Azande (through lightning), Bachwa, Bari, Gelaba, Gikuyu, Herero (old men), Indem, Lokoia, Luapula, Luo, Meru, Nandi, Nuba, Ovambo, Tswana, Vugusu, Zulu, and undoubtedly others. Some regard death as God's punishment, others, as his manifestation, others, as being for the good of the persons concerned, since God wants them to live with him; and yet others think that death comes when people invoke a curse upon an offender. The sacrifices, offerings, and prayers made to God during serious illness are another indication that people associate death with God, of which he may or may not be the ultimate cause and which they believe he can certainly avert or delay.

Some societies have divinities of death, who are considered responsible for it. The divinity of death among the Ganda, is believed to keep a rope representing the life of each person, and only he knows how long that rope is. When he cuts the rope, then the person dies at once. This divinity is unkind, unfriendly to mankind, always seeking to kill, and has never laughed since he was created.³⁹ The people believe that God does not kill. The Edo have a "king of death" who takes away people when the time to die has come. The people make sacrifices to him in the hope that he would delay his mission.⁴⁰ The Basoga have a divinity of death, to whom people are believed to go and report themselves when their human life is over. We have

already mentioned the evil divinity of the Vugusu who, with the assistance of his servants, brings illness, trouble and death among men.

It needs to be emphasized, however, that even when death may be associated with God, it is only one of his many activities. These we have tried to sketch in the second part of the book, and we now move on to another category of the attributes of God.

PART THREE



Anthropomorphic and Natural
Attributes of God

8 *Anthropomorphic Attributes and Associations*

GENERAL

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

GOD AS FATHER

In traditional communities the meaning of kinship-relationship is applied to a much wider radius than the immediate biological implications. This is the social background against which these terms of kinship must be seen when applying them to God. In addition, God is Father in terms of his position as creator and provider.

In a riddle game, the Akamba pose the question, "What are the two equal-sized 'bowls' of the Father?", to which the answer is, "They are heaven and earth". The people do not normally speak of God as Father, but here they visualize him as the one who "fathered" the universe, owns it, and cares for it. The Lunda and others around them speak of God as "the Father Creator who created all countries". In the same region he is known as "the Father Creator who creates and uncreates". The Bemba think of him specifically "as a universal Father, and his people as 'the children of God' ".¹ The Herero look upon him as the father of their forefathers, but distinct from them. As a caution they add that "He has no father, he is not a man".² The Suk say that God "is the universal Father".³ For the Akan, "God is truly Father, and men, in all things, are his children, because he created them". They regard him also as the Father of the lesser divinities.⁴ Likewise, the Ganda consider God to be the Father of the divinities.⁵ The Banyoro regard him as "the Creator and Father of mankind".⁶ The same belief is reported among the Burji-Konso. In the Ndebele and Shona triads, God is thought of as "the Father, the Mother, and the Son".⁷ We have two examples

where the name for God contains the concept of, father. These are the Chawai who call him *Bawai* (derived from "Father" and "sun"); and the Teso who call him *Apap* (meaning "Father").⁸ These references convey the fatherhood of God in relation to creation.

The concept of God as Father, also comes out in prayers, indicating that people think of him not only as the universal creator-father, but also as the personal Father with whom they communicate and to whom they may turn in time of need. In critical moments, the Azande address God in prayer as "Father". When praying, the Bambuti speak to God as "Father", "Great Father", or "Grandfather". They tell that originally they had no name for the Creator, referring to him only as "Father" or "Grandfather". They have retained these titles, since they still have "no exact name for their conception of God".⁹ Some of the Tswana peoples address God as "Father of my fathers".¹⁰ Similarly, in prayer the Nuer speak with God as "our Father", whom they regard as "a living Person", although their anthropomorphic conceptions of God are said to be very weak. For the Nuer, God is first and foremost spirit.¹¹ The Urhobo and Nuba pray to him as "our Father".¹² At their communal prayers, the Sonjo open their invocations with the phrase "Father God".¹³ The Gikuyu sigh to God as "my Father"; and when the Rabai pray during drought, they address him as "Father".¹⁴

GOD AS MOTHER

Only a few examples of this concept are available, as it seems uncommon. In the previous subsection we mentioned that the Ndebele and Shona have a triad according to which they think of God as Father, Mother, and Son. Our information does not indicate under what circumstances, or in what connection, these peoples think or talk of him in the person of "Mother".

The southern Nuba, who have a matrilineal system of descent, refer to God as "the Great Mother", and speak of him (her) in feminine pronouns. Thus, in commending a dying person, they pray,

Our God, who has brought us [to this world],
May she take you.

Here, and in prayers for rain and good crops, they use the same title ("Great Mother") for him. They say that "God gave birth to people", or "God gave birth to the world, earth". This usage of the name, "Great Mother", has two meanings. One carries the concept that God "mothered", created, "gave birth" to the world and to

mankind. Secondly, God cares for, nurses, and helps his (her) children in the hour of need (death, drought, etc.). In connection with man's origin, the Ovambo say, "The Mother of pots is a hole in the ground; the Mother of people is God".¹⁵ The Ovambo are also matrilineal; but they speak of God figuratively as male, though they do not regard him as either Father or Mother as such.

GOD AS GRANDFATHER AND ELDER

In traditional societies, the person of the "grandfather" and the "elder" is respected for his age, experience, and wisdom. Grandchildren are in an intimate and very friendly relationship with him. We find these two titles used of God, with approximately the same meaning as "Father".

The Ashanti say that "of the wide, wide earth, the Supreme Being is the Elder", in the sense that God is superior since he is the Creator of the earth and all things, and is above all things.¹⁶ The Akan honour him with the titles "Grandfather 'Nyame' who alone is the Great one", and "the Grand Ancestor".¹⁷ These are terms of respect. The Bavenda regard God as the grandfather of their chiefs, and when there is thunder, the chiefs enter their houses and pray, addressing him as "Grandfather".¹⁸ Before starting on their hunting expeditions, the Bambuti invoke him as "Grandfather" and "Father", titles by which God is known to them.

PEOPLE AS CHILDREN OF GOD

The Bachwa, who believe that they were the first people on earth, consider themselves as "the Children of God".¹⁹ When in danger, the Bambuti appeal to God saying, "Father, thy children are afraid . . .".²⁰ The Bavenda consider their chiefs to be the grandchildren of God, a position which entitles them to an intimate relationship with him, since the chiefs are the representatives of the people before God. The Bemba, who think that God is the universal father, call themselves "the children of God". It is reported of them, that "one hears natives calling each other, 'the sons of God' ".²¹ The Lugbara look upon their elders as the "children of God", when they function at the shrines at night. They refer to the diviners by the same title, and most of these are women.²² Those who observe the rainmaking cult among the Ndebele are referred to as the "children of God" or "people of God".²³ The Shilluk hold their kingship to be divine, and honour their king with titles like "the first-born of God", "child of God", "reflection of the ancestors",

“master of the world”, “last-born of God”. According to their thinking, the first- and last-born, respectively, opens and closes the way for a generation.²⁴ The Nuer refer to twins as the “children of God”, and to two of their clans as “God’s people”. When praying, they refer to themselves before God as “thy children”.²⁵ Among the Tonga, twins are considered a curse and a misfortune, and people refer to them as “God’s children”. In time of danger, such as thunder and lightning, people in a village say to a twin, “Help us! You are a child of God . . .” The child goes out and prays to God, and when the danger is over, the people thank the child.²⁶

This concept of people as the children of God is not expressed widely. Even if people do not speak verbally about it, they make prayers, offerings, and sacrifices in an attitude of “children-father” relationship.

GOD AS FRIEND

Although friendship is something highly valued in African societies, it is surprising that we do not have many examples where God is spoken of as “Friend”. As a sign of an intimate feeling towards God, the Nuer address him as “Friend”. Zulu traditional doctors invoke him as “Thou greatest of friends”, when dealing with thunderstorms and lightning.²⁷

BODY AND BODILY PARTS

One report from the Shilluk says that God “is from one side spirit, and from the other side spirit, but from front and back he is body”.²⁸ The Aushi imagine him as a person, “to be small—about two feet in height—black and hard like stone”.²⁹ The Lugbara say that, in his immanent aspect, God may take on a human form in which he is very tall, with the body split in the middle.

A number of peoples attribute *eyes* to God. The Ganda speak of him as “the Great Eye”. But the others take one or more natural objects as the eyes of God. Thus:

PEOPLE	THE EYES OF GOD ARE REPRESENTED BY
Akan	Firmament
Balese	Sun (right eye), moon (left eye)
Galla	Sun
Hadya	Sun
Nandi	Sun
Ovambo	Sun
Sidamo	Sun and moon

Mouth and Saliva: The Akamba consider rain to be God's saliva; and when it drizzles, the Tiv say that "God is spurting water out of his mouth".³⁰ In their morning prayers, the Vugusu ask God to "spit upon us the medicine" by which they may walk in peace and health.³¹

Nose: I have no example of this, except by implication from the Bambuti who burn incense to God, believing that he "smells" it and gives them attention.

Ears: The Ila say metaphorically that "God's ears are long". This is intended to indicate that his ability to hear is great and that he hears even in secret.

Beard: The Bambuti and Jumjum picture God as having a long beard.

Wings: The Suk visualize God as having huge wings, whose flapping produces thunder and lightning.

Belly: The Koma call the sky "God's Belly".

Blood: The Lugbara consider themselves generically to be "'one people, all one blood' which came from God the Creator".³² For the Akan, human life is "one continuous blood, from the originating blood of the great source of that blood".³³

BODILY ACTIVITIES

Eating and Drinking: References to these activities are few and either vague or liturgical. When the Indem make offerings to God, they hope that he will either eat the food or pass it on to their departed relatives and friends. When conducting the ceremony of praying for rain, the Nuba rainmakers pour beer on the ground and invoke God, saying, "Drink you first, and give increase to others".³⁴ It may be assumed that people expect God to "eat" symbolically or mystically the offerings and sacrifices they make to him.

When lightning strikes cattle, the Zulu say that "the Lord has slaughtered for himself among his own food . . . he is hungry; he kills for himself".³⁵ This is possibly a rationalization of the tragedy of losing cattle, and does not need to be taken literally. The Lugbara fear that, in his immanent aspect, God will eat people if he meets them at night. This is only a fanciful fear and there is no evidence that it has ever happened.

Playing: When it thunders, the Zulu merrily say at times that "the King is playing". At other times they say that God is arming.³⁶

Seeing, Hearing, and Smelling: The Bambuti believe that when they are in danger of a storm and pray to God, he “hears” their prayers, “sees” their plight, and chases away the storm. Although the Bena hold that God has no physical form, they say that nevertheless he “hears and sees” everything. When a person is bereft of his children, the Ila say that he is “one upon whom God has looked”. They believe also that God’s ears are long, by which they mean that he hears everything. The Bamum name for God means the One “who sees and hears everything”. The Gikuyu believe that God “hears and answers prayer”. The Ovambo say that “God does not ask for a witness”, since he sees everything. We have already considered these metaphors in dealing with the omniscience of God.

When the Bambuti burn incense to God, they believe that he “smells” it and heeds their cries.

Sleeping and Walking: The Karamoja believe that “God is asleep and does not hear the prayers of man”, but requires the mediation of the spirits.³⁷ The Shona say that God “sleeps” among the clouds; but this sounds poetical and metaphorical rather than literal. The Jumjum think that God “sits on a horse”; and the Gikuyu have five sacred mountains which they consider to be the resting places of God when he visits the earth.

When there is an earthquake, the Bambuti say that “the Lord is taking a walk”.³⁸ The same belief is held by the Shona, who think that God walks in earthquakes. The Ga call God by the name *Dzemawon* “because he walks about the world and the towns”.³⁹ The Lango believe that there are certain paths where God traverses habitually, and people avoid building their homes nearby. According to the Luvedu, when God had created man, he left his footprints on rocks which are still soft, where they can be seen.

Getting Tired: In their daily prayers, the Nandi ask God to guard their children and cattle, and not to say that he has become tired. The Mende have a myth according to which God told the first men to go to him for everything they needed. But they went so frequently that he said to himself, “If I stay near these people, they will wear me out with their requests”. So he made for himself another place far away, and while they slept, he went off there. He nevertheless continued to supply their needs, though they grew less dependent on him.⁴⁰

Rejoicing and Getting Angry: The Lango say that God has a good sense of humour. The Chagga teach their children that God “re-

joices" at good men and blesses them. The Ankore believe that God's smile brings life and health to the people, whereas his displeasure means sickness and death.

The Ila believe that God gets grieved at their foolishness. When it thunders, the Watumbatu hold that God is angry. The Nuer believe that he can become angry. In one Bambuti myth, it is narrated that when the first men ate the fruit which God had forbidden them, he became so angry that he sent death among them. On another occasion human behaviour angered him so much that he slaughtered the people, sparing only a few of them to whom he bequeathed the banana crop. The Chagga have similar stories, in which they tell how the first men made God angry through eating the forbidden yam, and twice again through their wickedness. It is feared, among the Gikuyu, that praying too often might pester God and make him angry.

Speaking, Thinking, and Remembering: In a proverb the Bacongo say that "Man is a speaker, God is the Answerer".⁴¹ This possibly means that God has the last say. The Lunda believe that God speaks to the weak, whom he also protects and aids. The Shona hold that God speaks to them from their sacred caves, and formerly spoke to them from trees in the same area. The Lango say that, in one of his manifestations, God speaks their language. The Bambuti, Bavenda, and Bena take thunder to be the voice of God. The Sidamo say that he speaks to men by means of echoes.

When a Bamum woman who has experienced stillbirth or has been frequently bereaved of her children bears another child, she keeps it unnamed, believing that "God will therefore think that the child is a thing, not a human being, and will not harm it".⁴² The Lugbara say that in certain circumstances, when a person is not ready to die, offerings may make God "think and remember that man and he may live yet another year".⁴³ The Tiv believe that God has an assistant who reminds him when the rain is due. The Nuer conceive of God creating the universe out of nothing, through thought and imagination.

These then are the anthropomorphisms that African peoples attribute to God. Some of them may be literal, but the majority are metaphorical, poetical, and liturgical. The peoples who use them may, however, not always draw these distinctions.

9 *God and Animals*

GENERAL

The Barotse relate that originally God gave animals to the first men to be their brothers, forbidding men to eat them. But the men disobeyed him, and killed and ate the animals. For this reason God withdrew himself from men. The Lele, on the other hand, consider the animals to have been given by God to men for food, though remaining under his power. The Zulu tell how, having created the animals, God gave them names: "He looked on all things and said, 'So-and-so is the name of every thing' ".¹ The Kaonde narrate that cruel animals came from one of the three pots which God gave to a bird to take to the early men, but which it opened on the way, contrary to God's instructions.

DOMESTIC ANIMALS—

DOG, CATTLE, SHEEP, GOATS, AND HORSES

The Dog: In one of their myths concerning the origin of death, the Nandi say that the dog came to the first men, bringing with it a threatening message that if they did not give it food, it would cause them to die. The message said, furthermore, that if they gave the dog food, it would cause them to rise again after three days. The men segregated themselves against the dog, set food before it but on a stool, and laughed at it. Consequently the dog cursed them to die and not return to life. The Herero believe that the dog was God's gift to men.

For their monthly rites, the Butawa sacrifice and feast upon black dogs at their sacred caves. Yoruba blacksmiths sacrifice dogs to their divinity of iron. The Warjawa celebrate their planting and harvesting festivals, with the slaughtering and eating of dogs. Every twelfth month the Koma sacrifice a dog and feed their king with its tail, to renew his investiture for another similar period.

Cattle and Milk: The Zulu believe that cattle sprang from the same spot as did human beings, and that God gave them to men for sustenance, saying, "Let them be your food; eat their flesh and their

milk". They, however, consider the cattle to belong to God, and when lightning strikes them, the people simply say that "the Lord has taken the cattle . . .", or "the Lord has slaughtered for himself among his own food. Is it yours? Is it not the Lord's? He is hungry, he kills for himself". The people take this as a blessing, and say, "this village will be prosperous". They believe that God created grass and ordered cattle to eat it.²

The Herero regard cattle as sacred, and as having originated from their mythical "tree of life". For them cattle have a primarily religious significance, and it is prohibited to get rid of them. They eat them only when sacrificed in religious ceremonies.³ The Akamba say that cattle, sheep, and goats accompanied the first pair of human beings which God lowered from the sky. As such these domestic animals are part of man's life. The Maasai consider themselves to be the rightful owners of all cattle, believing that God gave them cattle from the very beginning. They think that nobody else has the right to own cattle, and that they are therefore entitled to raid cattle from other peoples, without feeling that they are committing theft or robbery. The Toposa narrate that when the first men descended on a rope from heaven, they found cattle on earth, tasted their milk, liked it, and decided to domesticate them.

The Nuer believe that God gave them cattle for sustenance. They tell in a myth, that Nuer and Dinka were sons of God, and he promised to give the old cow to Dinka and her calf to Nuer. But Dinka went at night to God and, imitating Nuer's voice, deceived him. So God gave Dinka the calf. Afterwards when God discovered what had happened, he charged Nuer to raid Dinka's cattle to the end of time. In another myth, the Nuer tell that once God offered men a choice between cattle and rifles. The Europeans and Arabs chose rifles, but the Nuer and Dinka chose cattle. They regard all cattle as belonging to God, and when one of them dies, the people simply say, like the Zulu, that God has taken what is his own.⁴

The Bavenda keep sacred cattle. The Nandi pray daily to God for safety and prosperity of their cattle. The Dinka consider both cattle and children to be gifts from God, and to belong ultimately to him. For them, "every bull or ox is destined ultimately for sacrifice. . . . Each beast represents the community of the people present at a sacrifice, though their eating of the flesh is not a communion meal or 'mystical' communion as that word has been used in anthropological literature. . . . Human beings and cattle are substituted for each other and are symbolically linked". They give personal names

to their cattle, and it is bad to number them (or children). At times the Dinka value cattle above human life, dying and killing to acquire or defend them.⁵

The Banyoro have divinities for cattle welfare.

The Watumbatu believe that the world rests on the horn of a cow, and when one horn gets tired, she transfers the world to the other horn, in the process of which there is an earthquake. A man from the Lango reported that he was taken up by God to the other world, far away in the invisible sky, where he saw innumerable reddish-black men and cattle.

Many peoples use cattle for sacrifices, about which we will say more in the fourth section of this work.

Milk is the principal food of the Herero. They milk their cattle both morning and evening by the holy fire. The priest-chief must first taste the milk before anyone else drinks it, for it is regarded to be holy, and this tasting neutralizes its holiness, making it harmless for human use.⁶ At harvest time the Nandi pray for milk, among other items. Thinking that spirits of the departed relatives travel in the bodies of snakes, rats, and moles, the people offer milk and beer to these animals. The Suk, their neighbours, do the same, offering milk to the spirits thought to travel in snakes.

Sheep and Goats: These are used by many peoples for sacrifices, an account of which is given in the fourth section of this book.

The Akamba believe that sheep and goats accompanied the first pair of human beings which God lowered from the sky. The Bambuti tell of a mythical celestial goat which God sent to earth and from which sprang all other animals. "Finally it dropped a kid and returned to God". They refer to all game (which, together with fruit gathering, is the source of their sustenance), as "the goats of God".⁷

Among the Barundi, the sheep is regarded as holy, and people do not eat it. They believe that the departed might be living in it.⁸ When teaching their children, the Chagga tell them that good men are blessed by God with sheep and goats.

A number of peoples use the sheep for reconciliation rites. Among the Gikuyu, a person who offends his father gives him a sheep (or he-goat) and beer. This is a sign of repentance on the part of the son, who thereby searches for appeasement and reconciliation. The Turu regard the sheep as "a thing of God", and use it as a symbol of reconciliation, because it is gentle and amicable.⁹ The Lugbara say that the sheep is a distinct animal, "a thing of God". When used in

rites, it brings people "into contact with God", but the Lugbara do not offer it as sacrifice to him, although a ram's blood is "offered with prayers to God".¹⁰

The Horse: The Jumjum picture God as sitting on a horse.

WILD ANIMALS

Africa has still a wide variety of wild animals, and many of them are mentioned in connection, or associated, with God or concepts pertaining to him. Our written information tends to leave out these animals, though many animal folk-stories are available.

Elephants: The Elgeyo narrate that elephants accompanied the first man whom God sent down to the earth. The Nandi hold that when God came to prepare the earth, He found an elephant, thunder, and a Dorobo man. The man killed the elephant, and when thunder saw that, it became frightened and fled to the sky, leaving man in possession of everything on earth. According to the Chagga, elephants originated from the transformation of the people whom God destroyed on account of their wickedness.

The Lango associate God with the *buffalo* and other fierce animals. The Chagga hold that *eland*s originated from the transformation of cattle belonging to the wicked men whom God destroyed.

The Shona consider the *zebra* to be a sacred totem, with which they associate their worship of God.

The *lion* is for the Turu, a symbol of punishment and protection, and an aspect of God's manifestation in his most terrifying forms. The women perform an initiation rite of going into the forest to catch "the lion". This experience is said to be the most dangerous procedure in Turu thought. The Lango also consider God to be associated with the lion and other fierce animals.

According to Chagga mythology, *leopards* originated from the transformation of dogs belonging to the men whom God destroyed on account of their wickedness. The Lango consider God's power to be present in the leopard and other fierce animals. The Southern Kurama are said to "revere the leopard", regarding its flesh as taboo. This probably means that the animal is a totem of one of the clans. One Akamba clan has the leopard as its totem.

The Lozi narrate that originally God lived on earth among men, and had two councillors one of whom was an *antelope*. These two acted as intermediaries between him and men.

The Lele diviners regard water *pigs* as animals "most highly

charged with spiritual powers".¹¹ For the Chagga, both pigs and *porcupines* came from the transformed sheep of the wicked men whom God destroyed.

In the same Chagga myth, the *hyena* is said to have originated from the transformation of dogs. According to the Meru, God sent the mole to take to men the message and gift of the resurrection. On the way it met the hyena who inquired concerning the message. On hearing that men would rise again, the hyena feared that it would not have enough to eat. So it threatened to kill the mole, unless the latter promised to alter the message to the effect that men would die and not rise again. The mole agreed to this, and so the message reached men in a form contrary to what God had originally sent it. The Fajulu, Madi, and Nuer blame the hyena for having cut off the cow-skin rope which once joined the earth to heaven.

The Lugbara believe that God uses the hyena to show his intentions. The Turu consider it to be one of the animals in whose form God manifests himself in his immanent aspect. The Sidamo regard it as an intermediary between God and their chief ritual experts. We are told that the Giryama "venerate" the hyena, but the information does not say under what circumstances.

Among the Ndebele, the rainmakers belong to the *monkey* or baboon clans. The Shona think that the monkey is God's totem.

Among a number of peoples, the *hare* is associated with the message (or loss) of human immortality. The Herero tell that the moon sent the hare to bring to men the message of immortality. The hare delivered the message but with the wrong interpretation. The result was that death appeared among men. For that reason the moon punished the hare, though it continues to nestle there. In a similar myth, the Hottentots tell that the hare got confused, and added a "not" to the moon's message. It now reached men in the form of: "As I die and dying am born again, so you shall die and dying *not* [!] be born again".¹² The moon was annoyed, hit the hare with a stick, and split the lip. The Ila narrate that the hare was the messenger of mortality, because the chameleon which carried the message of immortality, loitered en route. Therefore the hare, being faster in movement, arrived before the chameleon and gave men the tragic news.

During severe droughts, the Akamba capture the rock *hyrax* and sacrifice it to God when praying for rain. At other ceremonies they may use its dung. The Bakwena use kidney portions of the hyrax as one of the ingredients for rainmaking.

We have mentioned the Meru myth according to which the *mole* was sent by God to take the message of the resurrection to men. On the way it was threatened by the hyena and changed the message. The Meru go on to tell us that on returning to God, the mole reported what had transpired. When God heard it, he punished the mole, to live "far away from me in heaven". Since then the mole lives in the earth, coming out only at night when men do not see it, lest they should destroy it.¹³ The Nandi believe that their departed return to people's homes, travelling in the bodies of moles or *rats*.

ANIMALS THAT CREEP, CRAWL, LEAP, OR SWIM

The Snake: There are many concepts connected with the snake. Some of the examples we have here do not directly link God with the snake, but they are relevant to our discussion in this book.¹⁴

There are mythological ideas about snakes. The Elgeyo tell that God sent to earth a man and a snake,⁵ with the instruction that the man was not to eat any food until God arrived. When the two reached the earth, the snake persuaded the man to eat before God's arrival. On discovering it, God punished the snake by compelling it to move on its stomach. The Meru have a myth according to which the snake deceived the first men and caused them to eat forbidden fruit. Consequently God cursed the snake to the effect that its "head shall be crushed".¹⁵ The Herero consider the serpent to belong to the netherworld and to be associated with the red colour. They say that it plays part in the functions of priests as physicians.

Some peoples connect the snake with rejuvenation and immortality. The Chagga tell a myth according to which the first man and his children were permitted by God to remove their skins like snakes, in order to renew or rejuvenate their youth. Unfortunately they lost this gift. The Vugusu believe that the snake has been blessed with the gifts of immortality and rejuvenation, because it was kind to the chameleon whereas men were not. On getting old, snakes simply have to remove their skins and they are young once more, so the people believe. The Sidamo regard snakes as immortal.

Some take the rainbow to be a snake. Thus, the Bambuti consider the rainbow and lightning to be God's vassals dwelling in heaven. They say that "the lightning is a person, the rainbow a serpent".¹⁶ The Makaraka hold that the rainbow is a large python dwelling in an ant-hill, and is attended by their rainmaker. According to the Fon, God has an assistant whose name (*Da*) means "serpent". This assistant governs life and motion, and has many manifestations the

chief of which is the rainbow. The Bushmen regard rain to be a supernatural being which protects snakes, fish, tortoises, and frogs.

In one example, we hear that the Sidamo consider snakes (and hyenas) to be intermediaries between God and their chief ritual expert. The people believe that the python in particular is a manifestation of a divine being. They rear pythons in houses, feeding them with meat.

Some peoples have sacred snakes. These include the Banyoro, Bari, Bemba, Gisu, Turu, and Zala. The Zala are said to "venerate" them; the Bemba and Gisu make sacrifices to them; and Turu keep pythons which may not be killed. The Bari consider God in his earthly aspect, to be manifested in a non-poisonous green snake which appears frequently around people's homes. The Turu also take the python to be one of God's manifestations in his immanent aspect.

A considerable number of peoples associate snakes with the spirits of the departed. The Acholi and Alur think that spirits manifest themselves in snake forms. The Dorobo believe that the spirits return to them in bodies of snakes, in order to get food and drink. In the same area, the Suk hold a similar view, and when snakes enter their houses, people give them milk and are careful not to kill them. The Nandi do the same, offering the snakes beer and milk. The Ndebele believe that the departed may be reborn in harmless snakes which people do not kill. So also the Maasai hold that the soul of a rich or important man turns into a snake; and that the departed forefathers return in form of snakes to visit their relatives.¹⁷ The Ganda consider pythons and big snakes to be representations of the divinities or of other spirits.¹⁸ The Zulu say that the departed turn into snakes, and people are said to "pray" to (or speak with) them.

The Ambo picture God as having a scaly tail like that of the *crocodile*, with which he causes fire and lightning when shaken. The Zala take the crocodiles to be horses of the spirit of their river, the Omo.

The lizard appears in myths of many peoples, as the messenger who brought the news from God that men should die. But the lizard was sent only after the dispatch of the message of immortality or resurrection through another messenger when this other messenger, for one reason or another, failed to deliver the message quickly. It is generally the chameleon which is said to have carried the message of

immortality or resurrection. The swift movement of the lizard contrasts well with the slow one of the chameleon. The peoples who tell these myths include the Bemba, Lamba, Ngoni, Tswana, Zulu, and others.¹⁹

The chameleon is widely featured in myths dealing with the coming of death. Although there are variations to these myths, the common content is that God sent the chameleon to inform men that they would live for ever, or rise again after dying. The chameleon loitered on the way, or stammered in delivering the message, or altered it slightly but significantly. Meanwhile God sent another message to inform men that they would die and never rise again. The new messenger, a lizard, hare, weaver bird, or another animal, arrived or delivered the message before the chameleon did so. This myth is spread all over Africa, among peoples like the Akamba, Bemba, Ila, Limba, Ngoni, Tonga, Yao, Zulu, and many others.²⁰ In a different version, the Vugusu tell that the chameleon cursed mankind to die because someone refused to give it food. When the snake gave it food, it blessed the snake with the gift of immortality.

The Bambuti have a better regard for the chameleon. They consider it to be the most sacred animal, because it climbs up to the top of the trees and "is, therefore, nearest to the Deity". They are careful not to maltreat it. In one myth they say that the chameleon was responsible for the flow of water throughout the world, after God had created the world. It was the chameleon then, which dug up the first well, out of which water sprang and spread all over the earth.²¹

The frog is said by peoples like the Tonga and Yao, to have carried the message of death from God to mankind. The Bambuti narrate that in the time of the first men, an old woman died and God asked the frog to keep watch over her body, intending to raise her to life. But the *toad* demanded the body, to which God agreed but on condition that the toad did not fall into the pit near which the body was resting. As the toad kept vigil over the corpse, it accidentally or deliberately fell into the pit, together with the corpse. Misfortune now followed, as the old woman could not be brought to life again. The toad jumped into a deep pool and hid itself in the mud. Since then death has remained in the world.

The Bamum believe that God "announces the birth of a child" through the medium of a toad; and if one enters the house, it is honoured and anointed with palm oil.²²

References to *fish* are not many. The Tiv narrate in a myth that the first man and wife lived entirely on fish for a long time, until God came down and showed them other food and the art of cultivation. The Shilluk hold that their national hero, *Nyikang*, captured fish among other animals, and turned them into human beings who now compose the commoners in their society. The Nuer believe that God gave them the spearfish in addition to cattle and millet, for their sustenance.

The Murle use fish as offerings (sacrifices). Believing that fish are God's messengers which come to earth in the lightning, the Didinga do their best to avoid them. In some parts of the Igbo country, it is forbidden to fish because the people believe that fish embody the souls of the departed. The Bushmen represent rain (or water) as a supernatural being which protects fish and other animals.

BIRDS

Of the birds, the *chickens* are used most for religious purposes, mainly as sacrifices. Nearly all African homes have chickens running about, and almost every person can afford a hen or a cock. They are neither expensive nor difficult to handle. Since they are small, however, not many people in a group can partake of their meat when one is slaughtered. For these reasons, chickens are sacrificed more by individuals or family groups than by regional or larger communities. If sacrificed by larger groups, they are normally in addition to sheep, goats, or cattle. The following peoples are said to sacrifice chickens: Abaluyia (white hen), Akamba (of one colour), Banyoro, Basoga, Butawa, Ganda (white), Gimira-Maji, Gisu, Gofa (white cock), Igbo, Lugbara (by sick individuals), Luo, Maravi, Moru, Sebei, Walamo, Warjawa (cock), and Zala.

There are also other religious uses of, or associations with, chickens. The Akamba and Bondei use chickens for divination; the Barundi regard hens as "holy", and fear that they might be vehicles of the departed, for which reason they do not eat them. The Ganda say that their divinity of the air and space comes down in form of a white cock or goat. The Abaluyia narrate that God created a big reddish rooster which lives in the clouds. Thunder is its crowing and lightning the shaking of its wings.

*Other Birds:*²³ The Toposa tell a myth according to which, during the primeval period, a bird flew from earth to heaven, carrying a rope with which it established a bridge between the two worlds.

Before then, people lived only in heaven, but with the new bridge they were now able to slide down to the earth, and in this way the earth was populated with mankind. In an Akamba myth, the *weaver* bird brought the message of death to mankind, when the chameleon failed to bring that of immortality in time. The Kaonde tell the myth in which God sent the bird that leads people to honey, with three pots to take to the first men. Against God's instructions, the bird opened the pots on the way, and out came all sorts of evil.

The Herero associate God with the *eagle*; and possibly the Bavenda do the same, since the names for both are related.²⁴ The Nuer consider the birds which fly high up in the sky to be "children of God". When these migrate and disappear seasonally, people say that they have gone to visit God's country.²⁵ The Ganda designate the *wagtail* to be the prime minister of God, or the mediator between him and his people.²⁶

When a chief dies, the Rukuba believe that his spirit resides temporarily in a star or bird. The Barundi have sacred birds which it is forbidden to kill. The Sonjo expect a large flock of birds to eclipse the sun just before the world comes to an end.

INSECTS

Both the Bavenda and Shona consider *locusts* to be an expression of God's punishment upon them. The Bavenda believe that they are one of God's revelations; and that they live in an enormous cage in the sky, which God opens when he is angry with their chief. The Lango also consider locusts to be one manifestation of God's power. The Tonga associate a species of them with God, believing that he sends them together with other evils to harm men. The Sukuma-Nyamwezi imagine that the locusts are kept in a box, by a dangerous spirit subordinate to God. When this spirit lifts off the lid, out go the locusts which immediately spread everywhere, causing great damage on earth.

Bees and Honey: According to Bambuti belief, when a person dies, his soul is carried by bees or flies, to God. The Sonjo expect a large swarm of bees to eclipse the sun just before the end of the world. In a figure of speech, the Chagga pray God to make them bear abundantly like bees.

From every honeycomb they find, the Bachwa offer portions of honey to God as a token of thanksgiving. When the Moru are searching for water, they offer honey to God and solicit his aid.

Flies and Maggots: The few examples we have, point to an association of flies with spirits of the departed or with the next world. The Bambuti believe that flies (or bees) carry the soul to God, after death. The Lozi say that those who do not wear the tribal mark are rejected when they come to the next world. Then they are given flies to eat, and are put on a road which leads nowhere but gets narrower and narrower until it ends in a desert where the person dies of hunger and thirst.²⁷ One man from the Lango people, who is said to have been taken up to the other world where he stayed for four days, reported that in the other world people ate flies. He went on to say that when he was offered flies for food, he refused to eat them and was therefore sent back to this world.²⁸

When the Banyarwanda make a sacrifice, they return a day or more later, to see whether there are maggots in the meat. If they find them, they interpret this as a good sign that God has sent spirits to eat their sacrifice.

The Nuer speak metaphorically about themselves in the sight of God, and liken their smallness to that of *ants*. They say that they are like "small black ants". This is a sign of humility before God.

The mantis, though a little creature, plays an important role in Bushmen mythology and life. The Cape Bushmen peoples think that the mantis created the moon and is able to resurrect people. They give it great respect but do not "pray" to it. The Lesotho Bushmen consider it to have created all things and to be concerned with food supply. They "pray" to it, possibly as an intermediary, for food, hunting success, and other necessities.²⁹

The spider is another small creature featured in many myths from all over Africa.³⁰ In one such myth, the Lozi tell that when God left men on earth, he climbed up the spider's web to go to his heavenly city (*Litooma*). So that the spiders would not show men the way, He put out their eyes. Among the Akan, the spider is the common hero in folk-stories. Both the Akan and Ashanti praise God by a title which means: "the Great Spider, that is, the Wise One".³¹

We will return to animals in the fourth part of this book when we consider sacrifices and offerings. Many of the concepts we have encountered in this chapter have been of a mythological nature. More research is needed in this, as in other subjects, to shed light on what African peoples actually think and say about the world of animals and its relationship with God.

10 *God and Plants*

FOREST, WOOD, BUSH, AND GROVES

The Ngombe, who live in one of the densest equatorial forests, conceive of God in terms derived from and linked with the forest. Some of their concepts come out clearly in the following names by which they describe God:

The everlasting One of the forest, which expresses his unending nature and existence, like that of the forest;

The One who clears the forest, a name which describes God's omnipotence;

The One who began the forest, a name which indicates that God originated the forest, and therefore made all other things as well; and

Master or Owner of the forest, a title used in reference to God's greatness and superiority over all things, and his ownership of them.¹

The Lugbara and Turu associate the forest with God in his immanent aspect. The Lugbara say that the "children of God" are found in the bush; and the Turu take the forest to be the place where God's immanence is manifested.

A number of peoples have sacred groves where they perform religious ceremonies. For the Gikuyu, the sacred groves are around fig and sycamore trees, where they sacrifice and pray to God. Both the Akamba and Meru, their neighbours, have similar groves. Among the Akamba and Gikuyu, such groves are a sanctuary for human, animal, and bird life. The Butawa perform their quadrennial ceremony of sacrificing to God, in a sacred grove. The Igbo have many sacred groves used for making sacrifices, offerings, and prayers.

The Akamba, Bacongo, Bambuti, Lele, and Ngoni locate the land of the departed in the woods and forests. The Haya, Shilluk, Sukuma-Nyamwezi, and Zinza consider forests to be under the charge of, or occupied by spirits or divinities.

MYTHICAL TREES

A number of peoples have a myth telling that men originated from a tree. These include the Herero, Nuer, Sandawe, and others.² According to the Nuer, men emerged from a hole at the foot, or dropped off the branches, of a tamarind tree which was destroyed by fire in 1918. Until that time, offerings were placed at its foot.³

The Herero speak of their mythical "*tree of life*" located in the netherworld. According to their beliefs, life emanates from this tree. Both the first men and the sacred cattle sprang from "the tree of life". It also grows in this world, and when the Herero come under it, they cast bush branches of another tree (*omwapu*) saying, "Hail to thee, father", or "You are holy, great father". It symbolizes the father and mother of the Herero, and represents their first man (*Mukuru*) and forefathers.⁴

There are various myths speaking about "*the forbidden tree*" (or fruit) which the first men ate and thereby earned punishment for mankind. In the Bambuti myth, it is told that when God had created the first men, he allowed them to eat fruit from all the trees of the forest, except from the *tahu* tree. They lived happily observing this law, until a pregnant woman developed a strong desire to get the forbidden fruit. She asked her husband to get it for her, but at first he refused. She kept on urging him until he was persuaded. So at night he crept into the forest, climbed the *tahu* tree, and picked its fruit. He peeled it and hid the peel under the foliage. But the moon was watching everything, and went and told God about it, saying, "The people which thou hast created have disobeyed thy command, and have eaten the fruit of the *tahu* tree". God was angry and sent death among men as punishment.⁵

The Chagga have a similar myth, narrating that God provided the first men with a garden full of potatoes, bananas, and yams. He instructed them to eat all these crops, except one type of yam (called *ula* or *ukaho*). For a while they observed this rule, until a stranger came and cheated them by informing them that God had sent him to tell them that they might eat the *ula* yam. Together with the stranger they took the forbidden yam, cooked it, and began to eat it. God's minister smelled the yam, rushed down to them, grabbed the pot with the cooked yam, and took them to God to show him. God punished the people with sickness, and they would have died if the first man had not prayed to God for mercy.⁶

The Meru myth similarly tells that God gave the first men (husband and wife) food, but forbade them to eat of a certain tree. A crawling creature came to them, deceived them and persuaded them to eat of the forbidden fruit. When God came and saw what had happened, he chased them away.⁷

SACRED TREES

Among the Akamba, Egede, Gikuyu, Meru, and Tonga, sacrifices, offerings, and prayers are made around or under the (wild) *fig tree*, though not every fig tree is considered sacred. The Egede plant it in their family compounds. Both the (eastern) Akamba and Ambo use the *baobab* for worship purposes, placing their sacrifices or offerings under it or in its grove.

The Barundi make shrines under a sacred tree (*amashinge*), sit underneath on its leaves, and kneel to pray. Both they and the Banyarwanda say in a proverb that "the plant protected by God is never hurt by wind".

The Beir, Butawa, and Murle place their offerings or sacrifices at the foot of certain sacred trees.⁸ The Gisu do the same, at the foot of trees in their home compounds. The Igbo also use trees in their home compounds as well as others in their sacred groves, to place their sacrifices and offerings there. The Gikuyu use some *sycamore* trees for sacrificing, making offerings, and praying to God. The Galla sit underneath their sacred trees and pray. At sunset, the Masongo also sit under large trees and recite their prayers. When the Teita perform certain rituals, including circumcision, they do so under the sycamore trees, which are known by the same name used for God.⁹ The Toposa are said to have sacred trees. The Sonjo observe strict taboos in connection with their sacred trees and other objects.

The Ngombe have a sacred tree, generally the kapok or silk-cotton tree. This is known as the *libaka*, which means "the tying". It binds together men with God and the departed with the living, as a "symbol of the unity of the seen and the unseen". The people plant it ceremonially at each village, in front of the chief's house. Then it is consecrated by hunting, ending with a sacrifice of a fowl whose blood is sprinkled on the tree, on plants around it, and on the ground. The *libaka* is regarded as the place (altar) where God is invoked, though he may be invoked elsewhere, and the people respect it highly. When hunting, the hunters erect a temporary *libaka*, to which they give a name which means "there will be

animals". Here they pray to God, and eat their "sacramental meal" on the first day of hunting.¹⁰

TREES THAT SYMBOLIZE GOD'S PRESENCE OR MANIFESTATION

Trees mentioned in the previous sub-section certainly symbolize the presence of God in his relationship to man's worship. In addition there are other associations of God with trees. The Banyarwanda believe that God lives in very big trees, although he is present in every "terrifying" place. They speak of one tall, evergreen tree, as "the tree of God".¹¹ Akan chiefs keep in their compounds, a three-forked branch of tree, used as an altar. This is known as "God's tree", and here they offer eggs to God.

The Idoma take the white silk-cotton tree (in one area) or the fig tree (in another), to symbolize God. Individuals plant such trees for themselves. Among the Itsekiri, it is a forked bamboo staff, whitewashed with chalk, to which is tied or hooked a yam, a string of cowries, and white cloth or white chicken at the forked end. The Yachi have a tall molia tree, at whose foot are three large stones, A fence of palm mid-ribs surrounds it. In these three cases, the "trees" seem to act as "altars".

Among the Lango, one manifestation of God is associated with the cult of trees. Sometimes God may be associated with certain trees, which then become shrines where offerings are placed and oracles received.¹² The Lugbara conceive of God in his immanent aspect as living in large trees and thickets. The Luo also consider God to be "found in large trees", under which offerings and sacrifices are made in time of need.¹³

TREES ASSOCIATED WITH BURIAL, SPIRITS, AND DIVINITIES

The practice of "tree-graves" for special individuals, is reported among the Azande, Pare, Sandawe, and others.¹⁴

The Akamba consider the (wild) fig tree to be one of the favourite dwelling places for the spirits, who are said to love eating the figs. The Ashanti consider the divinities to require a temporary abode which may be a tree, river, or rock. The Lodagaa believe that when the soul of the departed arrives in the land of the dead, older spirits make it sit in the sun on top of a withered tree, for durations ranging from three months to three years, depending on the person's former life.

REEDS, GRASS, AND FOOD CROPS

A number of southern African peoples mention reeds in myths of man's creation. The Zulu, for example, say that "men came out of a bed of reeds, where we had our origin [i.e., where they 'were created']". They explain that the bed of reeds simply "swelled, and when it had burst they came out"; afterwards there emerged cattle and other animals in pairs. They attribute the creation of all things to God, but this was the method he employed.¹⁵ The same myth, with variations, is found among the neighbouring peoples like the Ndebele and Swazi. The Zulu are said to have a "Queen of Heaven" who is supposed to be of great beauty, from whom mist and rain emanate, and on whose body are growing grass, reeds, and forest.¹⁶

The Maasai employ grass in various rituals.¹⁷ When the Maasai pray, they offer grass to God. If a Nuer traveller hits his "bad foot" against a stump or stone on the path, he stops, prays to God, and knots grass together so that it may retain the badness.¹⁸ The Zulu believe that God created grass and commanded cattle to eat it, just as he commanded men to have cattle for their use.

Crops and foodstuffs of different types are used as offerings. A fuller account of this is given below in the chapters on worship. Different herbs and plants are used for medicinal, magical, and other purposes.

II *God and other Spiritual Beings*

GOD'S "WIFE" AND GODDESSES

In African traditional societies, marriage is a duty for everyone. It is to be expected that some of these societies would attribute a wife (or wives) to God. This is more of a logical necessity than a serious conviction, springing from the social structure which makes it more convenient to give God a wife than to think of him as having none. It is noteworthy, however, that those who attribute a wife to God are extremely few, and some say firmly that since he is not a man, he has no wife. The latter could be reversed to the effect that because he has no wife, he cannot be a man; this is just as logical and satisfactory to African thinking.

The Edo imagine God to be a king with many wives and children, living in great splendour. This is clearly an anthropomorphic picture of human kings and chiefs, for whom and for whose people, many wives and children are a symbol of greatness, wealth, prosperity, and power.

It is said that in the Herero double name for God, *Ndjambi Karunga*, the latter is the earthly aspect of God and in this he is married to one wife, with two or three children.¹ The Lugbara say that, in his immanent aspect, God "has wives and many children", but nothing is known of the wives who "seem to be included merely for the sake of logical consistency".² According to one view of the Zulu, God has no wife; but according to another, he is said to have (have had?) a wife and children.

Some peoples take an astronomical object to be the symbolic wife of God. Thus the Maasai assign the moon, the Mende and Yachi designate the earth, and the Suk designate the Pleiades, as the wife of God.³

For others, the mention of God's wife is only in mythology. The Bushmen say that when God had created men, he took to himself a wife who, however, later died. God wanted to raise her to life and give men the gift of the resurrection, but because of men's disobedience, this never took place. God withdrew from them into the heavens.⁴

According to a Lozi legend, when God lived on earth, he "created for himself many wives of all kinds and by them had children who 'formed the nations so different in forms, customs, and languages' ".⁵ Although the Ila do not suggest that God was ever a man, in some of their legends he is given a wife and family.

The Madi speak of God's wife (or mother) who fell (or was expelled) from the sky to earth, where she reproduced her kind, maintaining contact with the sky by means of a cow-hide, which the hyena eventually bit and broke.⁶

Mention of *goddesses* appears in accounts of several peoples. One (female) writer calls God among the Akan, the Lunar Mother-Goddess, but this view is not supported by other writers.⁷ The Ashanti consider the earth as "the great-breasted goddess", who is second to God and for whom Thursday is observed as her day.⁸ The Ewe acknowledge a goddess "said to be kind".⁹ Among the Igbo, the earth is acknowledged as a goddess, the daughter of God, which protects people and farmers and helps with the crops.¹⁰ The Nkum are reported to have an "earth goddess", to whom they make sacrifices at planting time and in crises. Similarly the Orri have an "earth goddess" to whom they are said to give more attention than to God.¹¹ The Konjo hold that there are two female divinities who assist sterile women and other women at childbirth.

The Zulu have the so-called "Queen of Heaven", said to be of great beauty. The rainbow, mist, and rain are emanations of her glory; and she is a virgin, surrounded by light and connected with nature, visiting the earth in mist. It is she who taught men, among other useful arts, how to make beer. Women hold a rite for her in the Spring (October).¹²

GOD'S SON, DAUGHTER, AND CHILDREN

We have already mentioned the Ndebele and Shona triads, according to which God exists as Father, Mother, and Son. The Dogon speak of Nommo, "the Son of God", described as "the appointed model of creation", the "symbol of the ordered world", existing in a male and female forms and representing the universe.¹³

Where mention of God's son is made, it is mainly in mythology. The Azande speak of the sun, moon, night, cold, and stars, as the sons of God, to whom on one occasion he gave the puzzle of opening a sealed canoe which contained the creatures of the world. Only the sun was able to solve the puzzle, by melting the wax with which a hole had been plugged.¹⁴ The Ganda say that in the beginning there

was only God and his two sons.¹⁵ In a Nuer legend, it is mentioned that Nuer and Dinka were sons of God, of whom Dinka deceived God over the inheritance of cattle. The Suk assign children to God, of whom the moon is the first-born son and the rain is another son.¹⁶ The Tiv narrate that God has a son who became the father of the Tiv and Uke (foreigners). Tiv had two sons, one of whom became the father of the circumcised Tiv and the other of the uncircumcised.¹⁷ The Shilluk refer to their king as the "first born of God" or "child of God", and by other titles.¹⁸

The Suk refer to the evening star as God's first-born daughter.¹⁹ Among the Igbo, the earth is represented as the daughter of God. The Lodagaa tell that after death, the soul travels to the land of the departed, and on the way it is met by God's child, "the One-Breasted Woman" who helps such travellers.²⁰

We have already considered concepts connected with the phrase "children of God". Here we need to add only three other references. The Ganda consider God to be "the Father of the gods".²¹ Both the Ewe and Nuer regard the spirits as "children of God".²²

GOD'S BROTHER AND SISTER

On the concept of God's brother we have only a few examples. The Bari take "God Below" to be the younger brother of "God Above", and subordinate to him. This younger brother is responsible for cultivation, and is known as "the Spirit of food".²³

According to one version, the Tiv consider God's assistant to have been his younger brother and the first ancestor of mankind. This brother with his wife descended to earth, and for ages both lived solely on fish, until God came and showed them other foods and the art of cultivation.²⁴

The Vugusu consider the evil divinity to have been God's younger (or twin) brother, or created by him with the rest of the world. God noticed later that he was evil-minded and bent on killing people, so he drove him away. He now stands as the symbol of evil and the opponent of God.²⁵

The Suk say that the sun is God's "younger brother who is angry in the dry season".²⁶

Only one example exists in our sources, in which God is assigned a sister. Some of the Dorobo take the moon to be God's sister, but others regard it as his mother.²⁷

OTHER DIVINITIES AND DEMIGODS

Of these there are many, but our sources make it hard to know what terms to employ in discussing them or how to classify them. In this book I am using the word "divinity" in a very broad sense, to cover personifications of God's activities and manifestations, the so-called "nature spirits", deified heroes, and mythological figures. To avoid confusion and pave the path for a scientific study of these concepts, it seems necessary for theologians and anthropologists to reach some definitions and agreement on such and other terms related to the study of African peoples and their thinking.

It is best simply to summarize the nature of divinities and demigods as may be acknowledged by the different peoples, taking each society by itself.

ASHANTI: have a pantheon of divinities through whom God manifests himself. They are known as *abosom*; are said to "come from him", to be "parts of him", and to act as servants and intermediaries between him and other creatures. The number of the divinities is on the increase, though some disappear after a while, and many act as children of the rivers. There are festivities for tribal ones. Beneath the *abosom* are minor divinities (*asumon*) which seem to be for the protection of individuals. It is said that God created the *abosom* last of all, to protect men.²⁸

BAKENE: have a divinity (*Kibumba*) reported to be second to God, and consulted when people do not get help from God (possibly as an intermediary).²⁹

BAMBUTI: have a divinity (*Tore*) in charge of death, known as "the Gate of the Abyss", and "the Spirit of the dead" (*Matu*).³⁰

BANYORO: have innumerable divinities departmentalized according to the people's activities, and social and political structure. These include the divinity of war (*Muhingo*), of smallpox (*Ndaulo*), of the lake (*Mugizi*), four of cattle (*Kauka*, *Nyalwa*, *Kagoro*, *Kigare*), of harvest (*Kaikara*), two of royalty (*Mulindwa* and *Nyinawhira*), of health and healing (*Lubanga*), of the weather (*Munume*), and many clan divinities.³¹

BARUNDI: are said to have two lesser beings, the "bad divinity" (*Imana Mbi*) who kills children and (steals) cattle, and the "good divinity" (*Imana Nziza*).³²

BASOGA: have several departmentalized deities according to services supposed to be derived from them. They have those who help in epidemics (*Nalongo*), in private sickness (*Nawandyo*, female), in healing sickness (*Lubanga*), in general public needs (*Ingo*), in child-birth (*Kintu*), and in detecting thievery (*Nakiwulo*, female). There are others associated with natural phenomena, such as death (*Walumbe* or *Semuganda*), earthquakes (*Musisi*), plague (*Bijungo*), and thunder (*Kiwanuka*).³³

DINKA: have powers or divinities (*yeeth*) of two kinds. One is the group of tutelary spirits of descent-lineages (or clan divinities), and the other comprises divinities belonging to families and individuals. One prominent divinity is *Macardit* ("the Great Black One"), said to be "bad" and to "kill people". The Dinka say that "*Macardit* does not treat people with respect [kindness]", and that "*Macardit* is stupid". This divinity is the final explanation of sufferings and misfortunes which cannot be explained otherwise, and "resolves contradictions" like suffering and death. People make sacrifices to him, and even ask him to leave them. Two other divinities are *Garang* and *Abuk*. *Garang* is associated with men, entering the bodies of some men by falling from above. He is addressed in prayers as "father" or "red father". *Abuk* is the "archetypal woman and mother, and presides over the occupations of women", being represented in western Dinka as a female.³⁴

EDO: have several divinities according to human needs, activities, and experiences. One is connected with wealth, human fertility, and the supply of children (*Oloku*); another is of iron (*Ogu*), another of medicine (*Osu*), and another of death (*Ogiuwu*). Each receives some form of "worship".³⁵

FON: have so many divinities, cults, and myths about them "that no detailed account of them has ever been given". The divinities (*Vodu*) are said to have been given birth (created?) by God.³⁶

GA: have many divinities (*Dzemawodzi*) associated with hills, lagoons, animals, and human activities like fishing, giving birth, war, etc. There is a hierarchy of them, and people play music and hold dances and festivals to celebrate or observe their cults.³⁷

GANDA: have several known as *Balubale*, originally numbering more than seventy, some of whom are deified heroes, others being personifications of natural phenomena and human activities. They are hierarchical, reflecting the traditional political structure. Major

divinities include those of the weather, air, and space (*Musoke*), of death and underworld (*Walumbe*), of the seas or lakes (*Mukasa*, the chief of the divinities), and two of war (*Kibuka* and *Nnende*). Formerly these had temples, priests, and mediums, and were consulted by both king and subjects alike.³⁸ Minor ones are still "active" today.

GOFA: have the divinity (or spirit) of the Omo river (*Tala*), to whom people offer a white cock thrown into the river.³⁹

IDOMA: have an earth spirit (*Aje*).

IGBO: have the earth divinity (*Ale*), and minor divinities who may be intermediaries. The divinities were created by God and serve as his agents, but some are said to be evil.⁴⁰

INDEM: have innumerable minor divinities.

ITSEKIRI: have divinities according to natural objects, such as those for the sea (*Umale okun*), for iron and war (*Ogun*), and for the earth (*Ale aja*). There is no regular priesthood for them, except for the one for the sea, which has a priest.⁴¹

MAO: have an antagonist divinity (*Kiwi* or *Kewa*) living among the clouds and causing rain when he hurls lightning.⁴²

SONGHAY: have divinities inhabiting the heavens between the earth and God's "seventh heaven". They are partly autonomous and partly subject to God. There are also the *Zin*, said to have been the first inhabitants of the earth, who became invisible when men were created, and now inhabit special places like trees, rocks, rivers, and mountains.⁴³

SUK: have personifications of natural phenomena and objects, giving them the divinity of the Pleiades (*Seta*, thought to be God's "wife"), of the moon (*Arawa*, thought to be God's first-born son), of rain (*Ilat*, another son), of the stars (*Kokel*, other children of God), of the evening star (*Topogh*, said to be God's first-born daughter), and of the sun (*Asis*, God's younger brother).⁴⁴

SUKUMA-NYAMWEZI: in addition to the spirits, the people have two divinities. One is described as a "demon" (*Ibambangulu*) with two heads, one face being kind and smiling, the other face being fierce and angry. The second divinity (*Simungala* or *Ilimingala*), which seems to be associated with the sun (*limi*), is described as a "dangerous demon"; when angry he lets out locusts from a box, causing

destruction; and he keeps another box containing smallpox and epidemics. There is no cult for these divinities.⁴⁵

TESO: are said to have a divinity of calamity (*Edeke*).

TUMBUKA: have divinities connected with hills and natural phenomena.

VUGUSU: have an evil divinity (*Wele gumali*) who works evil against men, and has servants.⁴⁶

WALAMO: have one divinity connected with rain, and said to dwell on Mount Umbut, where people take gifts in time of drought.

YORUBA: have one thousand and seven hundred divinities [(Orisa)—easily the largest collection of them in Africa!]. They are connected with natural phenomena and objects, as well as with human activities and experiences. They are said to render to God “annual tributes of their substance in acknowledgement of his lordship”. There is a hierarchy of them, and we may mention here only the chief ones. *Orisa-nla* is “the supreme divinity of Yorubaland”, and God’s deputy on earth in creative and executive functions. *Orunmila* is God’s “deputy in matters pertaining to omniscience and wisdom”, the oracle of divination, “said to be a linguist and to understand every language spoken on earth”; promotes success and happiness, and is “reputed to be a great doctor”. *Ogun* is “a most indispensable divinity, inasmuch as all iron and steel belong to him”. According to tradition he was originally a hunter who descended by a spider’s thread upon the marshy waste before the earth was made, and paved the path for other divinities to come to earth. For this service he was crowned with the title “Chief among the divinities” (*Osin-Imale*). To him belong iron and steel and all implements made from them. Those who use these tools “owe him some tribute”, and he is acknowledged as “the divinity of war and warriors, of hunters and the chase, of all artisans . . . [and] all who deal in anything made of iron and steel”. He is ubiquitous, being praised as “*Ogun*, the owner of the house of money, the owner of the house of riches, the owner of the innumerable houses of heaven”, and the “Support behind the orphan . . .”. By nature *Ogun* is “hard, fierce, and terrible”. . . “yet evil is not associated with him; rather, it is strongly believed that he demands justice, fair play, and rectitude”. *Esu* is like an inspector-general, for he reports the deeds of men and of divinities to God, and checks and reports on the correctness of worship and sacrifices. By virtue of his office, the Yoruba have a dread towards *Esu*, and “everyone

seeks therefore to be on good terms with him". *Sango* is the manifestation of God's wrath, but legend makes him a historical figure in the region of Oyo (near Ibadan). He is associated with lightning, and there is a cult for him. *Sopona* who has the earth as his domain, is "a dreadful reality to the Yoruba", since smallpox is his main scourge. He is "depicted as prowling about when the sun is hot, robed in scarlet". *Ela* who is not clearly defined, is "depicted as one who regenerates . . . as a deliverer". He is "frequently invoked during worship to come and bless offerings and make them acceptable".⁴⁷

ZINZA: have divinities connected with natural objects and phenomena.

ZULU: possibly have some, but the different accounts of the Zulu do not make the picture clear.

GOD'S ASSISTANTS, SERVANTS, MESSENGERS, AND AGENTS

According to Fon cosmology, there is a being (*Da*) who, during creation, acted "at once as instrument and as conscious assistant in the work of ordering the world. . . . [He is] sometimes described as the first created being". He now "controls all life and motion and without him God could not have organized the world . . . In the most firmly established opinion he is coexistent with Mawu [God]".⁴⁸

The Tiv speak of the assistant who reminds God when it is time to give men rain, and is responsible for the fertility of all living things in the world.⁴⁹ The Banyarwanda have two spiritual beings with whom, it is thought, God collaborates, or who act as his messengers. They are said to be sent by him to eat sacrifices which men make.⁵⁰

In their creation story, the Abaluyia say that God first created the heavens unassisted, and then created his two assistants. In order to provide a place from where the assistants would work, God created the earth.⁵¹ The Bambuti speak of God making the first man with the help of the Moon, a "being" believed to be very close to God.⁵²

Of servants, messengers, and agents, we have several examples. Our sources do not, however, always tell us the duties of these beings. The many divinities of the Ashanti are thought to be God's servants and mouthpieces, acting between him and his creatures.⁵³ The Ewe consider the divinity of the cowries to be God's servant.⁵⁴ It is said that the Igbo divinities are God's agents, though more in theory than in practice.⁵⁵

The Chagga believe that God has a minister or servant who carries out his instructions. It was he who detected that men had broken God's commandment by eating the forbidden yam, and reported the matter to God. Then God sent him to punish the people, and on two other occasions to warn them against living wickedly. This or another messenger is thought to be sent by God to cast sickness, bring famines, cause smallpox, bring war, mock bad people, provide children, kill men, and demand cattle, sheep, and goats in order to take them to God.⁵⁶ The Swazi say that God has a "one-legged" messenger.⁵⁷ The Songhay believe that there are "angels" who survey the world and men, from God's (seventh) heaven.⁵⁸ The Lozi assign two councillors to God, one of whom is his messenger, and both are intermediaries between him and men.⁵⁹

According to the Vugusu, God has servants who are the spirits of people that died long ago, and who now act as guardians of families and individuals. The spirits of the first two men are regarded as being nearest to God in rank, and acting as his "messengers and executives of the divine will". The evil divinity is also said to have servants who are the spirits of wicked men like witches and sorcerers, and who are similarly evil-minded, bringing sickness and death to men.⁶⁰ The Yao visualize God as having many servants. The Igbira think that the departed are God's humble agents or servants.

The religious leader of the Meru is referred to as "the messenger of God", whom God selects and who stands as his representative.⁶¹ The Nuer believe that God uses various agents like natural circumstances, spirits, spears, and beasts, as agents through whom or which he takes human life.⁶²

Some peoples personify natural objects, or mythologically describe them as God's servants or agents. Thus, the Ashanti hold that God once sent the rivers and sea, who were his children, to "receive honour from men, and in turn [to] confer benefits on mankind".⁶³ The Bambuti consider lightning and the rainbow to be servants of God. They hold also that he has spirit servants in charge of game.⁶⁴ Rain is considered by the Suk to be God's servant whose duty is to carry water. When this water spills, men experience or see it as rain.⁶⁵ The Didinga do not eat fish, believing that fish came down to earth in lightning, as God's messengers.⁶⁶

A number of peoples consider their kings and chiefs to be God's special agents, through whom he carries out his rulership of the world, and is represented. Such societies include the Bavenda, Sangama, Shilluk, and Shona. The concept of intermediaries also

falls into this category, but we reserve it for the next and final part of this book.

SPIRITS, CULTURE HEROES, AND OTHER BEINGS

Again we are faced here with the difficulty of definition of terms, a task which it is not the intention of this work to undertake. Myriads of spirits are reported from every African people, but they defy description almost as much as they defy the scientist's test tubes in the laboratory. We take examples from different peoples to summarize the concepts connected with spirits.

ACHOLI: have spirits (*Jok*) which are divisible into three categories. One group comprises the clan spirits with shrines on hills and by rivers, and said to be "owned" by the chief. Another group comprises spirits of known relatives, some being heads of lineages and looked upon as benevolent and protective; and some being of relatives who died with grudges, and are greatly feared. The third group comprises "spirits of unknown persons and dangerous beasts . . . believed to dwell in streams, rocks, bushes, etc. They are hostile and cause sicknesses and other misfortune to an individual".⁶⁷

AKAMBA: have spirits (*Aimu*) some of whom were created as such, and others who were once human beings. They are considered ubiquitous, but controlled by God who sometimes may send them as messengers.⁶⁸ Some are friendly and benevolent, others are malevolent, and the majority of them are "neutral" or both "good and evil" like human beings.

ALUR: have spirits (*Djok*) of different types, some being associated with natural phenomena and objects in which they are manifested.⁶⁹

ANKORE: have guardian spirits (*Emandwa*) for lineage groups, which are benevolent and helpful; and family spirits (*Emizimu*) which punish bad actions, and are thought to be responsible for many misfortunes.⁷⁰

ASHANTI: have spirits animating trees, rivers, animals, charms, etc.; and below these are family spirits (*Nsamanfo*) thought to be ever-present.⁷¹

BAKENE: have water-spirits that are propitiated by fishermen.⁷²

BAMBUTI: have spirits (*Mbefe*) mainly in stories, said to serve God as "game-keepers"; and described as small, dark-skinned, bright-eyed, white-haired, and bearded, living in tree hollows and stinking.⁷³

BANEN: have water and forest spirits.

BANYORO: have spirits (*Mbandwa*) of the (legendary?) founders of the *Bachwezi* dynasty who vanished mysteriously; and spirits of wells, pools, etc., some being attached to the clans.⁷⁴

CHAGGA: recognize spirits of the departed, as well as God's spirit (or messenger) which he sends to do various duties among the people. The people make private and public sacrifices and offerings to the spirits.⁷⁵

DINKA: have what are referred to as "free-divinities" and "clan-divinities", some of which would come under our category of spirits, but mentioned above under "divinities".

EWE: have spirits (*Trowo*) said to have been created by God to act as intermediaries between him and mankind and to protect human beings. They are invisible with human form, living in natural phenomena and objects, being both male and female and capable of self propagation.⁷⁶

FAJULU: believe that every person has two spirits, one being good and the other evil.⁷⁷

GALLA: hold that there are spiritual powers surrounding God, one of which is "*Saytan*, the evil spirit" thought to be a water spirit, and said to be "always hungry and thirsty", to which people give meat or goats.⁷⁸

GANDA: have family spirits (*Mizimu*) of the departed; and other spirits (*Misambwa*) associated with natural objects, which are feared and thought to be ubiquitous. They also have, in addition, the clan and national spirits or divinities (*Balubale*).⁷⁹

GIKUYU: have three groups of spirits (*Ngoma*). Family spirits (*Ngoma cia aciari*) are made up of departed members, especially the parents; clan spirits (*Ngoma cia moherega*) are concerned with clan welfare; and age-group spirits (*Ngoma cia riika*) are in charge of tribal affairs. Various acts and rites are observed in respect of each group of spirits.⁸⁰

GUMUZ: have malevolent spirits or genii.

HAYA: have mainly clan spirits (*Mizuka*).

IGBIRA: have human and animal spirits, as well as others that inhabit or animate natural objects.

IGBO: have both family spirits and “evil spirits”, to which offerings and sacrifices are made. Family spirits are of departed members, and surviving members give them regular attention through offerings, libation, and sacrifices, often at the house of the oldest man in the family.⁸¹

KAKWA: recognize a malevolent spirit (*Ngulete*) that causes illness, and to which they give offerings. Sometimes the people exorcise the spirit by drumming. There are other male and female spirits (*Ngulete*) as well as those of the departed.⁸²

KIGA: have a host of spirits; some are of the departed (*Bazimu*) and others of a different kind (*Mandwa*).

KONTA: have spirits, especially of lakes.

LANGO: their spirits are of three types, and similar to those of their neighbours the Acholi (which see above).

LELE: have non-human spirits (*Mingehe*) said to be under God’s power, immortal, free from illness, inhabiting forests, and controlling men’s hunting and women’s fertility.⁸³

LOGO: have spirits of the departed.

MAMVU-MANGUTU: have two types of spirits, both of which are feared. One type is of water spirits (*Mudumbi*) who are said to be polyglottic (including speaking French!); and the other type is of forest spirits (*Muri-muri*).⁸⁵

MAO (southern): acknowledge two spirits or beings, *Sanci Gai* and *Karifo*, who are subject to God.⁸⁴

MONDARI: recognize spiritual forces which cause illness; and have family spirits.

NUER: have spirits in the sphere between heaven and earth, through whom God participates in human affairs.⁸⁶ They also have spirits of the departed.

RABAI: have a water spirit (*Koma msisima*) which is approached when the family spirits (*Koma*) fail, through sacrifices and prayers.⁸⁷

SHONA: have “major and minor spiritual beings” to whom God is “intimately related”.⁸⁸

SONGHAY: have spirits (*Holey*) said to have been created, but are invisible, immortal, and fast in movement, now inhabiting the earth,

water, and the first heaven. There are other spiritual beings (*Zin*) said to have been the first inhabitants of the earth, but which are now living in trees, mountains, rocks, and rivers.⁸⁹

VUGUSU: have various spiritual beings, known as *Wele*, some of whom are spirits of the departed.

WALAMO: have the spirit of the *Omo* river (*Talehé*).

YORUBA: have many spirits in addition to their many divinities.

ZALA: have the spirit of the *Omo* river (*Tsala*), to which sacrifices of chickens and sheep are made.

Material on the so-called *Culture Heroes* is rather confused by the fact that some writers see only culture heroes where other writers talk about founding ancestors, national founders, and deified heroes.

The Shilluk have *Nyikang*, the chief hero who founded the nation and established its kingship. His ancestry is traced to a man who came from heaven or from a special creation of God, and his mother has attributes of the crocodile. People do not believe that he died, but that he just disappeared: "he was lost", "he went up", "he went and lives", etc., they say. He separated the Shilluk from other people, and gave them their customs. All the kings are said to be descended from him, and his spirit is believed to be in all his successors, of whom there are over thirty. *Nyikang* is now regarded as semi-divine or divine, has ten shrines, receives sacrifices and prayers, is intimately associated with God, and acts as the intermediary between God and the people.⁹⁰

The Sonjo have *Khambageu*, to whom we have already made several references. He is believed to have come into the world without father or mother, to have lived among the people, performing miracles of healing, opening the eyes of the blind, etc., and to have been maltreated by some of the people. Finally he died, but rose again and ascended to the sun, where he is now identified or associated with God. The Sonjo follow a religious system, with temples, priests, and traditions, centred upon him; and observe many sacred places, objects, customs, and taboos associated with his life. They make offerings, sacrifices, and prayers to him; and believe that the world will end one day, at which time *Khambageu* will come and save all the Sonjo, both dead and living. For this reason, each one must wear a scar (*Ntemi*) on the left shoulder, as a mark of identification.⁹¹

Among a few peoples, there are *spiritual beings* which are difficult to define, and about which there is not sufficient written information. The Banyoro speak of the *Bachwezi*, believed to have lived in the country some centuries ago, but to have disappeared suddenly. The *Bachwezi* left behind them priests with whom they could communicate, and who obtain favours and blessings from the *Bachwezi*. People turn readily to these beings for various purposes.⁹²

The Lango speak of (spiritual?) inhabitants of the other world which is older than ours, from among whom came the first man (*Olum*) and his wife.⁹³ The Elgeyo believe that the other world is peopled by spirits that are both good and evil, among whom is *Chessoloi*, described by one writer as "Satan".⁹⁴ The Vugusu have a spirit-like being (*Emongo*), said to harm people only for their anti-social deeds.⁹⁵ Formerly the Temne had a pantheon of divinities, besides God, of whom only one now remains (*Kumba*). This being is said to "own all the rice in the world", and for him special rice is planted each season.⁹⁶

One writer reports that the Darasa, Sidamo, and Udhuk have "devils". The Darasa "regard the devil (*Durissa*) as being diffused throughout the whole of nature and always ready to wreak evil on men until he has caused them to become possessed". The Sidamo acknowledge "the devil" who is said to preside over war; and the Udhuk have "a strong belief in devils".⁹⁷ It seems that the writer from whom these reports come, is "fond of the devils"; and the beings he so designates as "devils" are spirits similar to those we have encountered among other peoples.

THE WORD OF GOD

In discussing God as spirit, we quoted (on page 23), the Pygmy hymn in which God is said to be:

. . . as a word which comes out of your mouth.
That word! It is no more,
It is past and still it lives!
So is God.⁹⁸

We do not have further information which would throw light on the concept behind this metaphor of "Word".

It is said, among the Fon, that "*Fa* is the Word of God", and "represents the expression of the will of God regarded as the chief agent of creation".⁹⁹ It is not clear how much of this might be salt added by the writer of the article.

In their prayers, the Nuer mention the universe as God's "universe, it is thy Word". This is understood almost to mean "the creative Word: he created the world, it is his Word".¹⁰⁰

The Chagga say that since the first men disobeyed God's commandment concerning the forbidden yam, God has not sent his word to them again.¹⁰¹ Similarly, a Zulu informant is reported as saying that "[we] are like people who are still in possession of his [God's] Word; but we do not really possess it, but do our own will only, doing it in his name; but we have no union with [God] . . . We do not even know where we separated from him, nor the Word which he left with us".¹⁰²

The Mondari religious and political head (the *Mar*) is believed to be given his words by God when giving or passing judgement.¹⁰³

Although a number of peoples consider thunder to be the voice of God, and many have priests and intermediaries who offer prayers to God, there is no evidence that God has given his word to men. The nearest we come to this is in the Nuer and Fon understanding of God's Word in the creative sense.

12 *God: Heavenly Objects and Phenomena*

HEAVEN OR THE HEAVENS, SKY, AND FIRMAMENT

Two main concepts are conveyed by these related terms. One refers to the counterpart of the earth. The other describes "where", or "what" people imagine or believe to be, the dwelling place of God. African peoples, and our sources, do not always indicate clearly which of these two concepts they intend to convey or emphasize. The context may, but does not always, indicate whether or not both meanings are intended. It seems also that no special significance need be attached to the singular or plural usage of "heaven"; and some African languages have both forms.

Concerning the creation of heaven, we have not many myths. Among most peoples, it is simply told that God created both heaven and earth. The Vugusu narrate that God made heaven first, as his abode, and supported it by pillars. He created it without assistance, and "like lightning". They say that its substance is a mystery, that heaven is always bright by day and night, and that it is "a place of scintillation". Afterwards God made all the other things.¹ According to one Bambuti myth, the earth was in the beginning above, and the heaven, as "the throne of God", was below. Dust repeatedly fell into God's food, contaminating it, until he became weary of it. Then he commanded the lightning to find out a place above the earth, and with a great crash the lightning divided the earth and travelled upwards. "When a place in the heavens was prepared, God and the moon followed".² The Nandi hold that "the earth and sky were once one, till God prepared them, and the sky went up, and the earth stayed below".³

Some tell how it is that there are these two parts of the universe, heaven and earth, and that God dwells in heaven. The Lozi narrate that men's deeds forced God to ascend to his city (*Litooma*) in heaven. Similarly the Bushmen have a myth, according to which the first men disobeyed God; after this he forsook them and went up into the heavens "where he is often seen to pass with a bright light, and his

voice is heard during thunder".⁴ In the region of the White Nile, stories are told how that originally the heaven and earth were united by a rope which, for various reasons, got broken, and thus the two were separated.

Practically all African peoples studied here associate God with the heavens, sky, or firmament, in one way or another. The Ganda speak of him as "God who art [or is] up in heaven". The Bachwa, Sonjo, Yoruba, and Zulu conceive of God as reigning in heaven. The Suk say that God has much land, livestock, ivory, and good things in his world above. The Ashanti consider the firmament to be God's eyes. When Sebei children cast their teeth, they are instructed to throw them up towards the sky, saying, "Give me new and better teeth".⁵

The peoples who believe or say that God lives in the heavens or in the sky include the Akamba, Ankore, Bachwa, Bambuti, Bari, Barundi, Basuto, Bavenda, Bemba, Dinka, Embu, Ewe (in the second and invisible sky), Fajulu, Ganda, Gikuyu, Gisu, Hadya, Herero, Igbira, Ila, Indem, Jie, Jumjum, Lodagaa, Lozi, Lugbara (in his transcendent aspect), Maasai, Madi, Mao (in serene heaven), Masongo, Meru, Mondari, Murle, Nuba, Nuer, Ovambo, Sherbro, Shona, Songhay (seventh heaven),⁶ Sonjo, Suk, Swazi, Tiv, Toposa, Tswana (far away), Turkana (above clouds), Vugusu, Walamo, Watumbatu (presides in the sky), Yoruba, and Zulu. Detailed information would certainly make this list much longer.

In addition to the above list, we may mention other peoples who associate God with the sky. These include the Alur, Ashanti, Bakene (He has power over it), Banen, Beir, Chagga, Didinga, Dogon(?), Dorobo, Egede, Fon, Galla, Gimira-Maji, Ibibio, Idoma, Igbo(?), Iyala(?), Kagoro, Kakwa, Katab, Koma, Kullo, Lango (other world above), Lunda, Meban, Mekan, Mende, Nupe, Sangama (far away), Shilluk, Sidamo, Suri-Surma, Temne, Teso, and Urhobo. Again we have to note that detailed information would lengthen the list; and certainly many of these peoples also consider God to dwell in the sky.

For some, the same word (or its cognate) is used for both God and the sky (heaven or "above"). We can chart these as follows:

PEOPLE	NAME OR WORD FOR GOD	MEANING
Banen	Ombang	Above, up above
Bari	Ngun lo ki	God in the above (sky)
Dinka	Nhialic	Locative form of nhial: up, above, sky ("sky", "in the above")

Dorobo (some)	Tururit	cf. Turur (above)
Fajulu	Ngun lo ki	God in the sky
Hadya	Wa'a	God, cf. sky: Imen-waha
Idoma	Owo, Owoico	God above
Kagoro	Gwaza	Universe, sky?
Kakwa	Nguleso	God in the sky
Kullo	Tosa	God, cf. sky: Bolatosa
Maasai	En-kai	Sky, rain
Nuer	Kwoth	God (Spirit) in the sky
Shilluk	Juok, Juok mal	God, God above
Shona	Nyadenga; Wokumusoro; Gore	The Great One of the sky; the One above; the One amongst the clouds
Suk	Tororut	Sky
Teso	Akuj	The One above
Tiv	Aondo	Heavens, sky
Tonga	Tilo	Sky, heaven
Turkana	Akuj	(of) Up, above

THE SUN AND MOON

There are various myths about the sun and the moon. For example, the Abaluyia tell that the moon used to shine more brightly than the sun, its younger brother. Therefore the sun grew jealous, and assaulted the moon. The two wrestled, knocked each other down, and splashed themselves with mud. Then God intervened and separated them, assigning more light to the sun in order that it would shine for great men like kings, rulers, and leaders. The moon, with less light was to shine for thieves, witches, and nocturnal things. According to another version, mainly among the Vugusu, when these two got covered with mud, they agreed to clean each other. The moon cleaned the sun first, but the latter refused to clean the older brother. Since then the moon shines less brightly than the sun.

The Zulu consider the sun and moon to have been provided by God for the sake of men. They say that when God had finished creating the sun, he told men, "There is a torch which will give you light, that you may see". Then God made the moon to give "a white light during the night, that men may go and not be injured".⁷ The

Azande take the sun, moon, stars, night, and cold, in their mythology, to be the sons of God. The Balese regard the sun as God's right eye, and the moon as his left eye. The Nuba consider both to be in God's house. According to one view of the Bacongo, the moon is the place of coolness and happiness where good men go after death; and the sun is the place of punishment for the wicked. When there is a halo round the sun or moon, the people take it to indicate that God is holding a court of judgement, confirming the sentence of the newly departed.⁸ Some Ankore consider God as causing the sun and moon to shine. Other peoples, like the Gikuyu, take them to be God's manifestations.

The Sun is personified by a number of peoples. We may list them and their concepts, as follows:

PEOPLE	PERSONIFICATION CONCEPT
Amba	As a divinity
Azande	One of God's sons (in mythology), who solved the puzzle of opening the wax-sealed boat which contained all creatures
Bushmen	As a young girl, the wife of the moon
Dorobo	As responsible for people's needs
Fon	Connected with God's aspect of strength, power, toughness, heat, labour, and day (<i>Lisa</i>)
Hadzapi	As a being to be feared but not worshipped
Haya	As a spirit
Igbo	As a son of God, associated with good fortune and wealth
Ingassana	At times as a living being, creator
Madi	As a spirit
Meban	As a divinity bigger than the rain divinity, since it appears daily
Sandawe	As a divinity

Although without personifying the sun, the Banyarwanda and Herero attribute life to it. The Banyarwanda think that when the sun sets, a strong man kills it, cuts it up, and throws its main bone across the heavens to the east. Here it grows up, and the next morning the process of moving towards the west starts once more. The Herero also imagine that the sun dies in the west after setting, but receives new life by which it conquers the power of life-destruction,

and rises up to heaven the next morning. They connect it with God.

Some peoples take the sun to be a manifestation of God. For the Galla, Hadya, Nandi, and Sidamo, the sun is God's eye. For the Balese it is God's right eye. When Watumbatu babies begin teething, they are taken out on a mat and shown the sun. Those performing the rite ask the children to open their eyes to see the sun and God. They tell them, "See the world and fear God!"⁹ The Luo regard the sun as God's revelation, and pray (through it?) every morning, for long life. Among the Kiga, God is known as "the One who makes the sun set".¹⁰ Some of the Ankore say that God inhabits the sun, and others consider him to move across the universe like the sun. The Baluba speak of God as "He of many suns, the Eternal God", to describe his unendingness and eternal nature.¹¹ A similar concept is expressed by the Ila when they describe him as "He of the suns [or days]".¹² The Nuer say that God shines in the sun. Sunshine and rain are said by the Kpelle to be caused by God, as an indication that he is good.

A number of peoples make a close association between God and the sun, in some cases reaching a form of identification between the two. This apparent identification is chiefly metaphorical; and comes out in the similarity of words for God and sun, found as follows:

PEOPLE	NAME/TITLE FOR GOD	WORD FOR SUN
Afusare	Daxunum	Kunom (ada = father)
Ankore	Kazooba	Kazooba
Ashanti hinterland	We	We
Chagga	Ruwa	Ruwa
Chawai	Bawai	Wai (mba = father)
Dorobo	Asis	Asista
Elgeyo	Asis	Asis
Ingassana	Tel	Tel
Luo	Chieng	Chieng
Nandi	Asis	Asista
Sonjo	Riob	Riob
Cf. Akan	Nyame (Shining One)	
Cf. Nandi	Cheptalil [because] "He has one round eye", or "Something that always gleams"	
Cf. Pyem	Wudidi (The sun above)	

There are a few more religious concepts about the sun. The Lango imagine that the sun flashes at night across to the east, where it remains hidden until the morning. To see this dangerous phenomenon is regarded as "sin" which must be remedied by means of "scapegoats" of special leaves.¹³ The Lodagaa say that the sun is very close in the next world, and every person (soul) who arrives there must endure its scorching heat for durations of three months to three years. In their myth of the end of the world, the Sonjo say that the sun will be darkened by a large flock of birds, a swarm of bees, and a cloud of dust. At that point, another sun will rise in the west, and when the two meet overhead, the world will then shrink to an end. It is reported that the Bushmen pray "to" the sun for success in hunting and fruit gathering. Probably this means that they consider the sun to be an intermediary between them and God, or a personification of his activities. There are a few other peoples who are said to pray facing the sun, or at sunrise and sunset. In this case, the sun marks for them the time for prayer, since there are no clocks to do this job.

I have not come across any clear indication that the sun is considered to be God or God to be the sun. As our evidence shows, different peoples personify the sun, others take it to be a manifestation of God, and others closely associate it with him.

The Moon: concepts concerning the moon are similar to those we have considered about the sun. Among some peoples, the moon is personified according to the following ideas:

PEOPLE	PERSONIFICATION CONCEPT
Akan	As the Mother-goddess ¹⁴
Amba	As a divinity
Azande	As one of God's sons (in mythology)
Bambutu	As a close companion of God, living just above God's throne and having two wives. It was the moon which watched as men broke God's commandment and ate the forbidden fruit, after which it went and reported the matter to God
Bushmen	As an old man, sun's husband
Dorobo	As sun's sister or mother
Fon	Connected with God's aspect of motherliness, gentleness, rest, joy, and night (<i>Mawa</i>)
Haya	As a spirit
Lele	As a spirit that never dies completely, the symbol of immortality and fertility.

Luo	As the divinity of growth
Maasai	As the wife of God
Madi	As a spirit
Nandi	As the wife of God
Sandawe	As a divinity
Suk	As God's first-born son

Some attribute life to the moon in a mythological form. The Bambuti say that it has two wives; the one on the east feeds it (him) well, so that it grows fatter, but the one on the west feeds it poorly so that it gets thinner and pale when in that region. The Zulu also say that the moon has two wives. One of these wives is "the morning star", who feeds it (him) well so that it grows bigger. The other wife is "the evening star" who feeds it poorly so that it grows thinner. In Hottentot mythology, the moon is said to have sent the hare with the message that men would die and rise again. The hare got confused and announced that men would die and *not* rise again. The moon, annoyed, hit the hare and split its lip. The Bushmen represent it as the shoe of the mantis which the mantis created and threw into the sky to provide it with light. The Herero associate it with the underworld, with the hare as its messenger.

There are various other associations of the moon with God. The Balese regard it as God's left eye, the sun being the right eye. The Turu think that it symbolizes God. The Watumbatu hold that God's signs are on the moon which should not be stared at for long. For the Nuer, the moon belongs to God and he shines in it. The Nuba say that it is in God's house; and the Sidamo that it is God's eye. Some Bambuti think that the Creator of all things lives over the moon.

Among some societies, religious rituals are observed in connection with the new moon. The Banyoro make sacrifices and suspend work on the following day after the new moon is spotted. Although the Bushmen do not regard it as God, they observe the new moon with prayers "to" or "through" it. The Nuer hold ceremonies during which they address prayers to God. The Ingassana greet it by shouts; and the Suri-Surma-Mekan peoples by holding a communal feast.

It is reported that, among the Lango, the full moon is said to mark the highest point in a woman's madness. The Luo believe that praying daily to God would enable a person to get married early; and young people ask the moon for marriage partners and children.¹⁵

STARS, COMETS, AND METEORS

On these we have little information, which, however, contains a number of concepts.

One concept concerns the creation or origin of stars, comets, and meteors. The Abaluyia say that God created the stars to assist the sun and moon; and that he started with the "two" most brilliant ones, on the east and west (i.e., the planet Venus). Some of the people hold, however, that the stars are spirits of human beings who died a long time ago, and who are now "stuck on the sky".¹⁶

The Bushmen who, living in desert and semi-desert regions, see much clear sky at night, hold that stars were once human beings or animals of long ago. The people ask them for aid in hunting and food collecting, requesting certain stars (like Canopus) for particular foods. Some of the Bacongo consider comets and meteors to be spirits of wicked men which have broken away from the sun, their place of punishment. Others say that meteors are the spirits playing or travelling in the sky. The Zulu think that the stars are the eyes of the departed; and the Mamvu-Mangutu take them to be the fires of the departed warming themselves. The Balese regard stars as the water of the morning dew.

Some stars are personified or given life. The Zulu consider "the evening star [Venus]" and "the morning star [Venus]" to be the wives of the moon. The former feeds the moon poorly, making it grow thin; the latter feeds it well, making it grow big and fat in the east. The Bambuti hold the same belief. The Haya think that there is a spirit or divinity of the stars. The Rukuba say that upon dying, the chief's spirit may lodge temporarily in a star (or bird).

There are various astronomical concepts as well. The Dogon say that the starting point of creation "is the star which revolves round Sirius", and which they regard "as the smallest and heaviest of all the stars. It contains the germ of all things. Its movement on its own axis and around Sirius upholds all creation in space".¹⁷ The Lango look upon stars and other heavenly bodies as being situated between this and another, distant world. For the Akamba, comets herald drought and severe famine; but certain positions of the Pleiades indicate that the rains are near and will be sufficient.

Some peoples associate God with these heavenly bodies. The Akan take the Pole star to be God's seat. The Azande, Bambuti, Chagga, and Sonjo consider the stars to be God's children; while the Nuer simply take them as belonging to God. For the Gikuyu, stars and

other heavenly bodies are God's manifestations. The Bavenda think that meteors indicate that God is travelling by; and that both comets and meteors are his revelations. The Shona hold that God reveals his presence through meteors, among other things; and that he lights his pipe with the stars. For the Suk, the Pleiades are God's wife, and "the evening star [planet Venus]" is his first-born daughter.

RAIN, RAINBOW, AND CLOUDS

Many concepts about rain exist among African peoples. One of these is that rain is a blessing, the chief source of life. It is said of the Luvedu that "to them the ultimate good is rain". They regard it as the source of happiness, the basis of man's physical security, and a symbol of spiritual well-being and social order.¹⁸ This comment can be applied to all other African peoples.

Concerning the origin of rain, the Abaluyia say that God created it and put it in the clouds. When it rains, the Mamvu-Mangutu think that the children of their forefathers, now living in the sky, are amusing themselves by throwing about their water calabashes. Many peoples, however, regard God as the giver of rain. These include the Akamba, Akan, Bambuti, Bakwena, Bavenda, Dinka, Ga, Ganda, Gikuyu, Herero, Ila, Kaonde, Kpelle, Maasai, Nandi, Nuba, Piti, Shona, Tiv, Tonga, Tswana, and Zulu. For this reason, the Akan call him, "He who causes rain to fall copiously and makes waters overflow".¹⁹ The Bambuti think that God causes it to rain when he swings his beard to and fro. The Tiv say that he does so when his assistant reminds him that the rain is due.

Some peoples personify rain, or hold that there is a being in charge of it. The peoples and their ideas are as follows:

PEOPLE	PERSONIFICATION CONCEPT
Bushmen	As a supernatural being
Elgeyo	A divinity or spirit of rain
Igbo	A divinity of rain
Mao	Rain caused by a spiritual being or divinity
Meban	As a divinity which is lesser than the sun-divinity, because the latter appears daily while the former comes only seasonally
Suk	As the second son of God, or his servant
Tonga	Spirits of rain
Walamo	The lord of rain

Young women among the Bushmen must hide from rain, which is thought to be a supernatural being but not regarded as God. It is feared that the rain might get angry and punish the transgressors. The Suk consider rain as God's second son or servant, whose duty is to carry water, "and when he spills it, it rains".²⁰ Among the Ganda it is held that a minor river divinity (*Mayanja*) blows water from the lakes, using his mouth, thereby sending it up to the clouds where the divinity of the air and sky (*Musoke*) beats it and spreads it out in the clouds. Then he gives it back to the people as rain.²¹

Many peoples associate God with rain, in addition to those who regard him as giver of rain. For some, the words for God and rain are identical or related. These include the following:

PEOPLE	NAME FOR GOD	WORD FOR RAIN
Beir	Tummu	Tummu
Didinga	Tamukujen	Tamu
Idoma ²²	Owo	Owo
Iyala	Owo	Owo
Maasai	En-kai	En-kai (also for sky)
Nuba (southern)	Kalo	Kalo
Piti	Ure	Kire
Suk (some)	Ilal	Ilal

The Bavenda take rain to be God's instrument, and speak of him as "the Master of rain". For the Gikuyu it is one of his manifestations; for the Kaonde it is God's gift; the Nuer speak of him as "falling in the rain"; and the Tiv take it to be an emanation of divine presence. When it drizzles, the Tiv say that "God is spurting water out of his mouth";²³ and the Akamba consider rain to be God's saliva. The Lango take it as a manifestation of his power. The Ila have concepts in which God and rain are very intimately connected or even identical. When much rain has come, the Ila say, "God falls too much". During the short rain season, they say, "God ties up the sky". When the rain period begins, they say, "God softens the day"; and at the end they comment, "God changes the day". When performing the rainmaking rites, they sing, invoking God's praise-names and saying, "Come to us with a continued rain, O God, fall". At the start of the wet season, when the rain first falls, the Ila observe a day or two. This is done as reverence to God, and the people do not work in the fields, for they say, "Do not wound (him) with a hoe,

do not wound his water, his urine". In connection with rain, they speak of God as "the Faller", "the Rain Giver", and "the Water Giver". But the people clearly distinguish between God and the rain which he gives, and which they do not consider as a being.²⁴

Many peoples pray and make offerings or sacrifices to God in connection with rain, especially during periods of drought. Among many, there are rainmakers whose duties include performing rites and praying to God to produce rain, or to halt it if too much rain falls. We shall say more about the rainmakers and prayers for rain, in the fourth part of this book. Some peoples take it as God's punishment when droughts come, believing that he has the power to give and withhold rain.

Concerning the *rainbow* we have little information. The Abaluyia say that God made two rainbows, a male (narrow) and a female (broad), to act simultaneously in order to halt rain when it is not needed. When the rainbow appears, the Akamba fear that only small quantities of rain would fall, or nothing at all. If they see the rainbow, the Bambuti do not undertake any business in the forest, for fear that it would end in a complete failure. The Mekan take the rainbow to be a bridge connecting men with God, and their priests communicate with him through it. In Dahomey there is a myth about the "rainbow-serpent", which lives in the sky and carried the Creator when he formed the world.²⁵

As far as our sources are concerned, *clouds* are rarely mentioned. The Shona describe God as "the One amongst the clouds", and say that he sleeps among the clouds.²⁶ The Akamba, Jie, and Turkana say that God lives among or beyond the clouds. The Sonjo believe that a cloud of dust (together with a swarm of bees and a flock of birds), will eclipse the sun at the end of the world. Among the Mao, it is held that there is an antagonist of God who lives in the clouds and hurls lightning, thus causing rain. In a Bambuti story it is told of man's first ascension to heaven, after which he was lowered through the clouds back to the earth.

THUNDER AND LIGHTNING

The Herero, Kuku, Lokoia, Suk, and Zulu say that God produces *thunder*. For many, thunder is the manifestation of God or of his power. Thus, by the Bachwa, Bambuti, Bavenda, Bena, Ewe, and Ila, thunder is taken to be the voice of God. The Ila say, "God thunders"; and the Bavenda that God speaks to their chief when it thunders. Others hold that thunder is an indication of God's movement in the

sky. The Gikuyu say that thunder is the cracking of God's joints, and it is for them a taboo to look up when there is a thunderstorm. If it thunders in the summer, the Zulu say that "the King is playing". The sound of thunder makes the Ila say that "God is beating his rugs"; and the Zulu that "the Lord is arming". Speaking metaphorically, the Zulu describe God as "He who thunders from far off times [the beginning]", and "He who roars so that all nations be struck with terror".²⁷ These titles describe God's eternity and omnipotence. The Tiv, Watumbatu, and Yoruba take thunder to be a revelation or manifestation of God's anger and power; while for the Suk it is the whirring of his huge wings. The Nuer hold that God is in thunder; and the Shona that he reveals his presence through thunder.

Some peoples think of thunder as a being, personify it or take it to be under the charge of a spiritual being. We may consider these as follows:

PEOPLE	CONCEPTS OF THUNDER
Abaluyia	A big rooster, created by God, the crowing of which produces thunder
Banyarwanda	As a king
Banyoro	A divinity of thunder
Basoga	A divinity of thunder
Dorobo	As a being who produces rain
Elgeyo	A being who controls thunder, and causes it by drawing water from the lakes which he pours away as rain
Ewe	A divinity of thunder
Nandi	As a gigantic bird which fled from the first man when he killed an elephant; it is good when faint and distant, but bad when loud and near
Tonga	Celestial dwarfs whose singing produces prolonged peals of thunder
Yoruba	A divinity of thunder whose headquarters are at Oyo near Ibadan

Concepts about *lightning* are similar to those about thunder, since the two phenomena are physically related. There are peoples, like the Ambo, Lokoia, Shona, Suk, Tonga, and Zulu, who say that it is God who produces lightning. For the Ambo, he does so by shaking his tail which creates sparks of fire; for the Shona, it is when he is

passing by; and for the Suk, it is through the flashing of his huge wings. The Ganda say that lightning is produced by the divinity of the air when beating the clouds with a big stick. Among the Mao it is held that lightning is caused by God's antagonist.

Some peoples interpret lightning as God's instrument by means of which he punishes people or accomplishes his intentions. This concept is held by the Bachwa, Bambuti, Elgeyo, Ila, Lango, Nuer, Shona, Tonga, and Zulu. The Bambuti say that God punishes wicked people, especially adulterers, with death by lightning. The Zulu say that God takes cattle by striking them, when he is hungry. The Gikuyu consider lightning to be God's weapon or sword with which he clears the way, when moving from one sacred place to another. The Bambuti call God "the Lord of the Lightning", to indicate that it is under his control. In telling how God created the world, the Abaluyia say that he made all things "like lightning", to describe his great power and speed of accomplishing his intentions. The Nuer think of God as being in the lightning; and the Shona as indicating his displeasure or revealing himself through lightning.

Some peoples personify lightning, or consider it to be under the charge of a particular being. We can indicate these ideas as follows:

PEOPLE	CONCEPT OF LIGHTNING
Bambuti	As God's servant which he commanded to prepare his dwelling place for him
Banyarwanda	Salute it as they salute their king
Banyoro	Make offerings to the divinity of thunder when someone is struck by lightning
Elgeyo	A being controls it and thunder
Igbo	A divinity, God's son (child)
Nandi	A gigantic bird which has lightning as its wings
Yoruba	A divinity of thunder and lightning whose cult is centred near Ibadan

WIND, STORM, HAIL, AND MIST

These phenomena do not feature much in our sources, and we have only a few examples of each.

A number of peoples use the metaphor of the *wind* to speak about some aspect of God. The Nuer think of God as Spirit, saying that he is like the wind and blows on it. The Lugbara describe his omnipresence by saying that he is everywhere, in the wind and whirlwinds.

The Lango say that he is "like moving air" and like the wind. A similar simile is used by the Ga who say, of God's omnipresence, that "He comes and goes like the wind".²⁸ Similarly, the Shilluk hold that God, being spirit, formless and invisible, "like the wind", air, and the whirlwind, does not exist in a single mode. One writer mentions some African peoples who "speak of God descending on the wings of the wind and in fire".²⁹ In a proverb already quoted, the Banyarwanda and Barundi say that a plant protected by God is not hurt or shaken by the wind, to indicate his infinite care, protection, and control over nature. For the Turu, high wind is one of God's manifestations in his immanent aspect. The Vugusu think that God is "like air or smoke and, therefore, can penetrate everywhere".³⁰

The Bavenda consider the wind to be one of God's vehicles by means of which he travels in great power through the sky. The Logo have the same word for God, wind, and echoes;³¹ and the Sidamo say that he speaks to men by means of echoes. For the Tswana, strong wind and hail are brought by God in order to punish the people.

The Bushmen personify the wind, making it a person who changes himself into a bird, lives in a mountain, goes out daily to catch food, and returns at night to rest in his abode. The Haya have a spirit of the wind and weather; and the Yoruba have a divinity of the heavy wind which precedes rain.³²

Storms are held by the Shona, Tonga, and Zulu to be God's manifestations; and by the Bavenda to be God's fire when he comes to make his wishes known to their chief. For the Watumbatu, hurricanes indicate God's anger; and for the Yoruba, thunderstorms manifest the power of the divinity of thunder. The Amba think that there is a divinity of the storms.

When the Bambuti see a thunderstorm, they become frightened and burn incense for God, praying that he would avert the storm. They believe that he then commands it so that it takes another course. They think that violent storms are caused by the swinging to and fro of God's beard, and that he uses them to punish people for their wicked talk and actions.³³ The Azande also pray to God for protection from thunderstorms.

The Tswana interpret *hail* as God's punishment for innovations or departure from established usage. To the Zulu, hail is an indication that God is arming. The Tiv hold the same view, for when hail is falling they say that "God is shooting darts". The Lango take it to be one of God's manifestations.

For the Yao and neighbouring peoples, *mist* is believed to have been sent by God to keep the sun "from burning up the crops". The Zulu take it to be one of the manifestations of their "Queen of Heaven". She is said to come and move with the mist at springtime, as does also the Swazi one-legged sky being.³⁴

The Akamba interpret mist as an indication that the rains will not return or only in small quantities.

LIGHT AND ECLIPSES

Recorded concepts about these two items are few and brief. The Zulu say that God gave men the sun "to give you light, that you may see", and the moon to provide "a white light at night, that men may go and not be injured".³⁵ They think that their "Queen of Heaven" is "surrounded by light". One of the Nandi names for God possibly has the meaning of "something that always gleams".³⁶ The Akan name for God means "the Shining One".³⁷ We have already pointed out names which are similar or identical for both God and the sun, indicating that he is associated with light and brilliance.

The Bushmen say that when the first men disobeyed God, he retired to heaven, but passes by in the sky, "with a bright light".³⁸ In one of their myths, they say that the mantis threw the moon into the sky, as its shoe, to give it light. The Dogon regard *Nommo* as "the son of God", who is "a being of the day".³⁹

On eclipses I have practically no information. The Akamba consider them to be bad omens. The Watumbatu fear that the end of the world is near, when they see eclipses. Concerning lunar eclipses they say that the moon is "eaten" or has lost its way. Lunar eclipses are considered to be God's mystery which should never be observed.⁴⁰

13 *God: Earthly Objects and Phenomena*

EARTH AND EARTHQUAKES

It is mentioned in creation myths that God created the earth as he did all other things. Even where no creation myths are available as such, different peoples say that God created the earth. The Ashanti consider the earth to be second only to God in power, being "the first of his creations . . . personified as the fertile, great-breasted goddess, *Asase Yaa*". They say that through her, God created their children—the rocks, forests, etc.—; and the people observe Thursday in honour of the earth, when no work is done on the ground.¹

Among some peoples of the upper White Nile valley, God is thought to have two aspects. In one aspect he is transcendent and associated with the sky. In the other aspect he is immanent and associated with the earth. This belief is reported among the Bari, Fajulu, and Lugbara. In the same region there are myths telling that originally the earth and heaven were joined by a rope (or tower) which got broken and thus severed the two worlds. This myth is reported among the Bari, Fajulu, Lugbara, Madi, Mondari, Nuer, Sidamo, and Toposa. The Nandi (but not in the same area) hold that, in the beginning, the sky and the earth were one, and God prepared them, so that the sky went up and the earth remained below.

We have various concepts according to which God is connected with the earth. The Mende regard the earth as God's "wife" to which (whom) he sends rain, even if he has moved far away into the sky. The Moru think that God lives on earth, but is unknowable. The Urhobo imagine God to be dwelling at the junction of the earth and sky. God's name among the Bulu means "the One who bears [carries] the world".² The Herero double name for God, *Ndjambi Karunga*, carries with it the concept that *Ndjambi* is more heavenly and *Karunga* more earthly.³ The Jumjum say that although God lives in the sky, he may come to earth at times. The Gikuyu believe that God visits the earth from time to time, in order to inspect it, and makes his abode on Mount Kenya and other sacred mountains.

Some peoples, like the Egede, Haya, Igbo, Itsekiri, Iyala, Nkum, and Orri, have a divinity or spirit of the earth. For the Igbo, this earth spirit is prominent, and is regarded as the queen of the underworld and owner of all men, both dead and living and held to be the judge of human morality.⁴

Concerning the “*underworld*” we have no information apart from casual mention of the word.

Earthquakes occur fairly frequently in and near the region of the Great Rift Valley which stretches across Africa from Ethiopia through Kenya, Tanzania, and Malawi to Mozambique, with branches into Zambia, eastern Congo (Kinshasa), Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, and the southern Sudan. Others occur elsewhere, though less frequently, but all our examples of the relevant concepts come from peoples living in or near this earthquake-ridden region.

Concerning the cause and meaning of earthquakes we have different views. The Bambuti think that “the Lord is taking a walk”, while the Banyoro say that departed kings are moving. The Shona hold that God walks in earthquakes; and the Bavenda take them to be one of God’s means of self-revelation. The Nandi think that earthquakes are caused by the spirits changing houses. Among the Basoga there is a divinity of earthquakes supposed to cause the earth to quake when he is travelling. The people have a shrine beside the rock thought to represent this divinity, where they take offerings and pray. The Ankore and Kiga have earthquake divinities, who are presumably thought responsible for causing earthquakes.⁵ For the Watumbatu, earthquakes occur when the cow, which is believed to carry the world, gets exhausted and changes the globe from one horn to the other.

WATER, RIVERS, FLOOD, AND LAKES

We have already seen the prominent role that rain plays in African concepts and life. The provision of water in its various forms is attributed to God; and different peoples make prayers, sacrifices, and offerings to solicit God’s aid in times of drought or when searching for water. One of the Akan names for God refers to him as “He who causes rain to fall copiously and makes waters overflow”.⁶

There are various myths concerning water in the primeval period. According to the Bambuti, water first appeared on earth when the chameleon, God’s closest companion, hoed the ground at the foot of a tree, from whence flowed water which distributed itself throughout

the earth. The Fon hold that when God finished setting the world in order, he formed the first men "from clay and water". There are legends of how God caused human destruction through great floods, sparing only a few individuals through whom mankind later propagated itself. Examples of these myths of a great deluge, are reported among the Ashanti, Chagga, Dorobo, Herero, Nandi, Yoruba, and other peoples, especially in the regions of the Congo basin and the Niger delta.⁷ According to one view among the Ovimbundu, in the beginning everything was water from which animals eventually emerged. The Zulu also hold that all things were made by God, but came out of water.

The Ila refer to God as "the Flooder", no doubt in connection with the annual flooding of the Zambezi river whose northern bank they inhabit. If a person is travelling and crosses a river, or is sick, he offers water to God, making a short prayer that the journey would prosper or his health be restored.

The Ambo associate extraordinary floods and cloudbursts with God.⁸ The Lango hold that God's presence may be felt in springs and pools of water, among other things. Similarly the Turu say that God manifests his immanent aspect in pools of water. The Tonga use some of the springs as natural spots for shrines. The Shona speak of God as "the Little Pool" and "the Great Pool, contemporary of everything", in connection with rain and his omnipresence. They have sacred pools at which, in some areas, cattle are sacrificed and the chief's virgin daughters consecrated to God, in connection with rainmaking.⁹ When God speaks, as he is supposed to do at the sacred ceremony of approaching him, performed (formerly?) at the Zimbabwe ruins, it is reported that a nearby well overflows.¹⁰ The Sonjo, whose entire life depends on water from springs, have myths of how their national hero miraculously created springs at three villages. The people observe strict taboos in connection with some of the springs, which they hold sacred.

Rivers and streams are said in Fon mythology to have been traced in the travels of God's assistant (*Da*). In western Ashanti, the *Tano* river is considered to be the most beneficial child of the earth-female divinity. The Lodagaa hold that there is a river which separates this world from the land of the departed, and which every soul must cross. This crossing is a judicial experience, so that those who have lived wickedly suffer, while good men are ferried across without difficulties.

For the Shilluk, the river *Nile* forms one of their "tripartite division of the universe" (into earth, sky, and river), which dominates their visible environment and with which they associate their national hero. They acknowledge a river spirit.¹¹

The Amba are said to worship God at the deep and gloomy point of the river, which is also considered the place of the spirit. They erect a shrine here, if the water decreases.¹² The Azande perform prayer ceremonies during drought at the head of a stream, supposing God to dwell there. They, however, pray to him daily, without having to go to the sources of the streams. The Lugbara believe that, in his immanent aspect, God dwells in rivers and streams, as do also the little creatures known to them as the "children of God". When a person is sick, he takes with him a chicken which he sacrifices on a rock in a stream, eats part of it, and leaves the rest there for "God and his children".¹³ When praying for God's aid, especially in time of drought, the Nandi take a black sheep and push it into a river; when it emerges, they say their prayers. We have mentioned the Ila who, on crossing a river, take some of the water, offer it to God, and pray that God will shepherd and prosper them on their journey. The Bari have sacred rivers, among other things, but no more information on them is available.

Belief in the existence of river spirits (or divinities) is reported among the Acholi, Alur, Ganda, Haya, Lango, Ndogo, Walamo, and Yoruba. Detailed information would certainly make the list longer.

The Mende consider *waterfalls* to be a manifestation of God. For the Nandi they mark the point where smoke comes out from the spirits in the other world. Among the Gisu it is believed that each waterfall has a spirit, and that such spirits help children thrive. Consequently, mothers go through great danger, to fetch water from waterfalls, which they sprinkle over the heads of their children to give them good health. The Bemba are said to sacrifice to pythons living near waterfalls.

We have only a few examples of concepts regarding *lakes*, *seas*, and *oceans*, even though many African peoples live close to them and use them for travelling, fishing, swimming, and drawing water. There exist some myths of a primeval sea or soft earth, among the Ewe, Igbo, Yoruba, and others.¹⁴ The rest of the concepts deal with divinities or spirits of lakes and seas. We may sum them up as follows:

PEOPLE	SPIRIT OR DIVINITY OF LAKE (OR OCEAN)
Banyoro	A divinity of Lake Albert, to which offerings have to be made when a person wishes to cross the lake in a canoe ¹⁵
Edo	The senior son of God (in mythology), identified with the sea and connected with rivers; for whom a cult exists ¹⁶
Elgeyo, cf.	The divinity of thunder draws water from the lakes, pouring it away as rain
Ga	Divinities associated with lagoons and activities like fishing.
Ganda	The divinity of the seas and lakes, whose seat is on one of the Ssesse islands on Lake Victoria. He was once a national hero, but later deified. He is thought to be kind, and holds the highest rank (as <i>Neptune</i>) among the Ganda divinities. There was a temple for him near the king's palace. Women in search of fertility turn to him; and fishermen in danger or facing a scarcity of fish appeal to him ¹⁷
Haya	A Spirit of Lake Victoria ¹⁸
Itsekiri	A divinity of the sea ¹⁹
Ovimbundu	A being (divinity?) associated with the sea and other things ²⁰
Sukuma-Nyamwezi	Spirits of Lake Victoria and Lake Tanganyika ²¹
Yoruba	A divinity of the sea ²²
Zinza	A spirit of Lake Victoria ¹⁸

ROCKS, STONES, METALS, AND CLAY

It is held by some of the Zulu that God split a stone, out of which came men. The Luvedu believe that God left his footprints on certain rocks which are still soft, and where they can still be seen. According to one version of the creation myth, the Akamba hold that one pair of the first men came out of a rock, which can still be seen.²³

Some societies have rocks and stones used in connection with worship or religious rites. The Akamba have shrines around certain rocks; the Tikar use stone altars; and the Yachi keep three large stones at the foot of a sacred tree, surrounded by a fence. The Banyarwanda, Bari, Basoga, Bavenda, Butawa, Fajulu, Ingassana,

Kakwa, Lokoia, Madi, Sonjo, and Toposa are reported to have sacred stones and rocks. The Ingassana have the "stone of the sun", with which a cult is associated; the Fajulu, Kakwa (male and female), and Madi have rain-stones used in the rainmaking rites. Those of the Madi are white and said to have come from the sky. A stone cult is reported among the Zala.

The Lango regard Mount Agoro as the place where the immanence of God is most intense. From the top of this mountain, travellers or pilgrims take home with them pebbles believed to contain power which they can extract and use for fertility and to make childbirth easy for their wives. The people hold that God's presence is felt in rocks as well as other objects and activities.²⁴ The Lugbara say that in his immanent aspect, God is found in streams and rocks, where many "children of God" are also found.

Among some, it is believed that the spirits of the departed dwell in, or are associated with, rocks. The Bambuti say that the divinity of death lives in rocks and caves. The Alur believe that the departed appear in large rocks. The Gisu also hold that certain rocks or boulders are the abodes of the spirits. There is a huge granitic rock said by the Akamba to be one of the major dwelling places of the spirits. People report hearing spirits and seeing their fires at night, around this rock. It is believed that if a person goes round the rock seven times, a man becomes a woman and a woman becomes a man.²⁵

Concerning *metals* our information is very little. The Fon consider metals to have been formed from the excreta of God's assistant in organizing the world. The Bavenda speak of God manifesting himself in a mountain, as a great flame accompanied by the sound of clanking irons.

The Edo have a divinity of iron or metal, said to be worshipped by iron-and-brass-smiths, warriors, and specialist hunters.²⁶ The Itsekiri have a divinity of iron and war, for whom there is no regular priesthood.²⁷ Among the Yoruba, the divinity of iron is described as "a most indispensable divinity inasmuch as all iron and steel belong to him". He is the divinity of "all who deal in anything made of iron and steel", i.e., of hunters, smiths, warriors, mechanics, and others.²⁸

Our sources contain only a few religious concepts about *clay*. A number of peoples describe God as a Potter, in connection with his creation of men, and some mention that he actually used clay. The Bambuti tell in one myth that God made the body of the first man

“by kneading”, then “covered him with a skin and poured blood into his lifeless body”.²⁹ The usage of “kneading” is perhaps metaphorical here, but it implies clay or dough. The Fon say that God formed the first human beings from clay and water. One of the Yoruba names for God means “the Owner of the best clay”, and the people believe that he forms people out of clay.³⁰ The Banyarwanda and Barundi wives keep water in a vessel, so that at night God would use it (like a potter) to make children in and for them. In one Shilluk myth it is narrated that God made man out of clay of different colours, which explains the different skin pigmentation of individuals and peoples.³¹

MOUNTAINS, HILLS, AND DESOLATE PLACES

Among some peoples, there are sacred mountains associated with God. From our sources we can list the peoples with the names of their mountains and the concepts connected with them.

PEOPLE	MOUNTAIN AND CONCEPT
Bavenda	Matoba hills: where God manifests himself
Gikuyu	Mount Kenya, Kinangop (Aberdares), Kea-Njahe (Dony Sabuk), Keambiroiro, and Longonot: temporary dwelling places of God when he visits the earth; prayers made facing Mount Kenya (the chief sacred mountain)
Ila	Nambala mountains: said to have been piled up by God
Jumjum	Jebel Tunya: where God resides, no one goes there
Lango	Mount Agoro is the chief hill for pilgrimage, but God is connected with all hills (at least vaguely) and these must be avoided
Lugbara	Mount Eti and Mount Liru are the chief ones, but God in his immanent aspect is associated with high mountains
Mende	Hills associated with the supernatural.
Meru	Mount Kenya: the earthly abode of God
Shona	Matopo mountains: the central place of the (supposed) revelation of God, and the focal point of sacrifices and prayers
Sonjo	Mogongo jo Mugwe: means “the Mountain of God”, the national founder and religious hero, <i>Khambageu</i> , dwells partly there
Toposa	Moru Nakwuge: means “the Hill of God”

It is possible that the Lendu associate God with Mount Dra which has the same name as God.

Among some, there are hills and mountains associated with spirits or divinities. The Akamba say that they see fires of the spirits at night on the side of some hills; and in the southern region, the world of the departed is localized around Mount Kyumbe. People say that they hear spirits conversing near this mountain, and see lights and ashes from their fires. The Alur believe that spirits are manifested in mountains. There are hills in Basoga country where people take offerings to the spirits.³² The Ga have divinities of the hills, as do also the Tumbuka. For the Limba, their spirit guardian inhabits Kaboia hill where he gathers the spirits of the departed.³³ Among the Walamo, the divinity (lord) of rain is believed to dwell on Mount Umut.

Of *desolate* and *waste places* we have only a few examples. Before the Europeans came to their land, the Shona had already made the Zimbabwe ruins a sacred place where they held solemn assemblies every two or three years. At these assemblies, which lasted three days, the people approached God with offerings, sacrifices, and prayers. Since the arrival and occupation of the Europeans, this sacredness attributed to the ruins has dwindled away.³⁴ The Turu have a famous shrine at Tita, a place whose environment becomes a waste-land in the dry season. It was here that, according to tribal mythology, the original inhabitants of the country first settled. The spot, marked by granite boulders, has since become the centre of Turu rituals, mythology, and priesthood.³⁵

When a Turkana man is about to become a diviner, he first retires into a desert area for a period lasting from one day to several months. On return home, he begins his profession of receiving prophetic dreams, healing, combating witchcraft, and curing barrenness.³⁶

The Lugbara believe that God in his immanent aspect lives in desolate places where people fear to go, build homes, or make fields. The Vugusu, on the other hand, think that the evil divinity which brings death, dwells in lonely and deserted places, in caves, and in bushes.

HOLES AND CAVES

In some myths it is related that men sprang, or were brought by God, out of a hole or cave. Such myths are reported among the Akamba, Basuto, Ewe, Tswana, Yao, and others.³⁷

By some peoples, God is associated with special holes and caves. Thus, the Azande have holes known as "the footprints of God".

The Bavenda have a cave in their sacred mountains, believed to be the spot where God has manifested himself. The related Shona peoples have their famous sacred caves from which God is supposed to speak.³⁸ The Nuba associate him with a cave said to be "a very holy place which only the rain-maker may enter".³⁹ According to one legend of the Basoga, God once lived in a deep hole on the volcanic Mount Elgon. The Butawa hold their monthly rites at sacred sites around caves in rocks, no doubt associating God with them.

The Bambuti say that the divinity of death dwells in caves and rocks. A similar belief exists among the Vugusu, as we have just mentioned above.

FIRE AND SMOKE

We have a considerable number of examples of concepts connected with fire. Concerning the origin of fire, the Zulu believe that God gave it to men as a gift, when he said, "Let firewood be fetched, that a fire may be kindled, and food be dressed".⁴⁰ The Bambuti narrate in one of their legends, that one man, clothed in raven's or swallow's feathers, stole fire from the mother of the divinity of death, causing her to die of cold. This embittered the divinity, causing him to declare that "for this the people shall be punished by death". So men acquired fire, and with it death as well.⁴¹ The Ambo believe that God's tail causes fire when shaken.

For some peoples, fire is associated with God's revelation. The Bavenda hold that when God wants to communicate with their chief, "He appears as a great fire near the chief's kraal . . . This fire always disappears before any person can reach it". They have a sacred mountain where God is said to manifest himself appearing as a great flame on a rock platform.⁴² One of the Shona names for God is thought to indicate his self-revelation through fire on the sacred mountain. This fire is supposed not to have been lit by human beings.⁴³ The Lango say that one of God's manifestations "eats fire".⁴⁴ It is held among the Lugbara, that in his immanent aspect, God may be heard crying "whee whee whee" in grass fires on hills or mountains. We have already quoted the writer who reports that Africans "speak of God descending on the wings of the wind and in fire".⁴⁵

Some societies keep or use a "holy" fire for religious purposes. The Ganda have (had?) a temple fire which burns both day and night, and which is cared for by vestal virgins.⁴⁶ Each Herero group has its own altar in the sacrificial place near the village centre. A

sacred fire burns on this altar, and "the welfare of the village is connected intimately with that of the fire". It is never allowed to die, as this would symbolize the extinction of the nation. The daughter of the priest-chief's main wife cares for this fire. God is "mentioned as being responsible for the fire". It is reported that "the holy fire can be prayed to", and that the departed can be reached through it and its firesticks.⁴⁷ The fire is the symbol of national life, welfare, prosperity, and contact with the unseen world.

When the crops begin to bear, the Gikuyu hold a ceremony to purify them. Part of the ceremony involves lighting the holy fire from all the sacrificial items (like wood, bones, hoofs, etc.). Then, four groups of the officiating elders carry this fire in the form of torches to all the districts in the east, south, west, and north. The people look upon it as a "purifying flame"; and wait in their field to catch it with grass and twigs, after which they carry it to their homesteads where all the old fires have already been extinguished. The fire is not allowed to die out until the next season when a new sacred fire is lit and the ceremony repeated.⁴⁸

The Nandi hold a ceremony after harvest, at which they light a sacred fire and offer prayers to God for the well-being of the people and cattle. The Gelaba are reported to have a well-developed "fire-cult", but we have no further information on this. Early in the morning, Ila men light their pipes and offer smoke, thanking God for causing them to rise in health, and asking him to prosper them in course of the day.⁴⁹

In a few myths, it is held that men's fires and smoke drove God from among them. The Ewe tell that smoke from men's fires, forced God to move further into heaven. In a Yao story, it is told that when men learnt to make fire, by friction, they set the grassland on fire. This caused God to flee from them into heaven.

The Amba have a divinity of fire; and the Nandi take spray from waterfalls to be smoke from the fires of the spirits in the other world beneath.

DAY AND NIGHT, HEAT AND COLD

Written information about concepts concerning these items is very little. According to the Fon, God (as *Mawu-Lisa*) assumes the rhythm of day and night. *Mawu* is the principle of night, freshness, rest, and joy; and *Lisa* is the principle of day, sun, heat, labour, and hard things.⁵⁰ The Zulu believe that God gave men the sun as a torch, and the moon to provide them with "a white light during the night,

that men may go and not be injured". Here then, night is associated with blindness and possible injury which is preventable by means of light.

The Nuba say that God comes to their rainmakers at night, in dreams. Thus, the night is (at least for a few persons) a symbol of time for communication and contact with God. In their myth of how men lost the gift of the resurrection, the Meru lay the blame on the mole. They hold that God punished it by banishing it from him, so that it comes out only at night when men do not see it. The night symbolizes here, shame, fear, and punishment.

The Sonjo believe that the sun will be darkened just before the end of the world. This will be caused by a cloud of dust, a swarm of bees, and a flock of birds. Those who will witness the event must then put out their fires as well, so that there is absolute darkness.

One belief among the Bacongo designates the moon as the place of coolness, happiness, and joy, where the souls of good men go after death. The sun is designated as the place of heat and punishment where the souls of wicked men go and are scorched "like a locust on the burning grass", yet without dying.⁵¹

The Nuer and Luvedu conceive of evil in terms of heat, and good in terms of coolness. For the Nuer, coolness denotes peace and deliverance from evil. They ask God in prayer: "May we be cool", or "May the souls of the people be cool".⁵² The Tswana believe that God punishes people by sending them strong heat. The Ila who associate God with the weather, say when heat comes, "God is much too hot, let it be overclouded!"⁵³

COLOURS AND NUMBERS

Black: A number of peoples sacrifice or offer black animals and items. We can mention these as follows:

PEOPLE	ITEMS FOR SACRIFICE AND OFFERING
Basoga	Black animals sacrificed to the divinity of death
Bavenda	Black animals sacrificed and black goods offered to God annually
Butawa	Black dogs and goats sacrificed
Luo	Black sheep sacrificed to God
Meru	Only black animals are sacrificed, as black is regarded to be "a colour sacred to God" ⁵⁴
Nandi	Black sheep used in the ceremony for praying for rain

Ndebele	Black oxen, goats, and sheep sacrificed or used in the rain-making ceremony
Sandawe	Black oxen, sheep, and goats sacrificed or employed in the rainmaking ceremony
Sebei	Black cows presented (offered) alive to God
Shona	Black cattle and goods sacrificed, offered, and employed in the national religious assemblies

When the sky is overcast, the Galla refer to God as "black". According to one Maasai myth, there were originally four gods, of whom the black was "very good", the white was "good", the blue was "neither good nor bad", and the red was "bad". The only one who now remains is "the Black God".⁵⁵

One man among the Lango, reported how that he was taken up to heaven where he saw innumerable people, all of whom were reddish black.

The Dinka divinity believed to be the final explanation of sufferings and misfortunes, is known as "the Great Black One".⁵⁶ Similarly, the evil divinity of the Vugusu is spoken of as "black".

White: Some few peoples sacrifice white animals and offer white articles. We can mention them as follows:

PEOPLE	ITEMS FOR SACRIFICE AND OFFERING
Abaluyia	White hens sacrificed
Ganda	White goats and fowls sacrificed and white articles offered; white cocks kept to prevent lightning from striking homes
Gofa	White cocks sacrificed
Watumbatu	White cows sacrificed in times of crisis

The Ganda regard white as the colour of superhuman powers, and use it in sacred rituals. The Itsekiri tie a white cloth or chicken at the end of their forked bamboo staff which seems to serve as an altar.

At the time of sacrifice, the Gikuyu address God as "the Possessor of Whiteness",⁵⁷ and pray facing the snow-capped Mount Kenya. The Yoruba speak of God as "the Pure King", "the One clothed in white robes, who dwells above", and "Whiteness without patterns (absolutely white), essentially white object".⁵⁸ These superlatives emphasize God's association with white, which here is symbolic of his nature and purity. To distinguish God from other spiritual beings, the Vugusu refer to him as "the White God".⁵⁹ The Lugbara

say that God, in his immanent aspect, may take on a white (not pink!) body which is split in the middle. In the above Maasai mythology, the "white" God was "good".

Red: When the sun shines through an overcast sky, the Galla speak of God as "Red", since the sun is his eye. According to Maasai mythology, the "red" God was the worst of the four original ones, but does not exist any more.

The Warjawa sacrifice red cocks and pray to God in time of need.

The Herero say that the first man made by God was red, and that he is still alive in the land of God. This is the first ancestor of their nation.

Blue: In the Maasai mythology mentioned above, the "blue" God was the "neutral" one out of the four, but is no longer in existence.

The field of numbers is poorly represented in research into African concepts. We can only mention here a few ideas and uses of numbers, as far as our sources go.

Two: When rain first falls, the Ila do not work for two or three days, out of reverence to God.

Following the death of a person, the Mamvu-Mangutu hunt for his soul, remaining at the tomb for two days.

Three: The Nandi narrate that men were to have been given the gift of rising again after three days following their death; but, because they mistreated the dog which brought them this message, the gift was withheld. Now, only the moon comes back to life (resurrects) after "three days' absence".⁶⁰ The Kaonde tell that God sent three pots to the first men, containing different things, including medical herbs, diseases, and death.

The Lodagaa hold that when the soul arrives in the land of the departed, it is made to sit in the scorching sun, for periods ranging from three months (for those who led good lives) to three years (for witches and rich men). Witches take three years to cross the river which separates this and the land of the departed.⁶¹

Four: The Fon say that God's assistant set up four pillars (east, south, west, and north), to support the sky. Some of the Fon (in Dahomey) have a four-day week.

The Warjawa hold that God(?) appears in visible form every fourth year for their initiation rites.

According to the Lodagaa, liars are made to sit in the scorching sun in the land of the departed for four months.

Five: According to the Lodagaa, the souls of thieves are punished in the scorching sun in the next world, for a period of five months.

The Mao annual propitiatory celebrations last five days, taking place at the beginning of, or during, the rainy season.

Six: As part of the celebrations at their big assemblies, the Shona sacrifice six cattle. At their rain invoking ceremony, the Jie sacrifice six oxen to God.

The Vugusu hold that God completed his work of creation in six days. They have taboos about this number.

Seven: For the Akamba, the number seven is "bad", and they refer to it as "the seven of dogs". On the other hand, they say that going round the Nzambani rock (mentioned above), seven times, would reverse a person's sex. Both the Akamba and Vugusu have taboos attached to the number seven.

At the Gikuyu sacrifice for rain, the procession of those taking part, goes round the ritual tree seven times, sitting down on the eighth. For seven days the Watumbatu perform the ceremony of showing the teething child the sun, telling it to fear God.

Eight: The Chagga narrate that on the eighth day after God had destroyed men for the first time, his minister came to take out the woman and her two children, who were the only survivors. On the second occasion, God sent his minister to warn men, and on the eighth day he let a great flood come and sweep them away, except for a few individuals. The people say that it takes eight days for the soul of the departed to cross the desert between this and the next world.⁶²

Nine: For the Ganda, the number nine or its multiples, is sacred. All gifts, offerings, and sacrifices must number nine, and many sacred vessels are made with nine bowls.

Ten: no information on this number is available to me.

Miscellaneous numbers: The Dogon hold that the period of ordering creation lasted over twenty-two years.

The Fon believe that God sustains the world in a spiral of 3,500 coils above and 3,500 coils below.

The Yoruba use the numbers 8, 16, and their multiples in a form of divination known as the Ifa system.

PART FOUR



God and Man

14 *The Creation and Original State of Man*

Almost every African people has one or more creation stories. The concepts contained in these myths cover a wide range, and it is helpful to group and consider them under different headings.

THE CREATION OF MAN

IN RELATION TO THAT OF OTHER THINGS

According to many stories, the creation of man is placed at, or towards, the end of the creation of all things. I have not come across any myth which places man as the first or earliest creature. These stories point out also that man was created as husband and wife, and a number of them give the names of the first human beings.

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

The Bambuti narrate that God created the earth and heaven (his throne, which was below), then water, trees, man, and animals. The men were a young man called *Mupe* and his wife, *Uti*. In another version, these two originated or came from God, and peopled the world, starting with the Pygmies themselves.²

In the Banyarwanda story, the first man is known as *Kazikamuntu*, a name which means the "Root-of-men". He begat three sons (*Gatutsi*, *Gahutu*, and *Gatwa*), who now represent the three racial-social classes in the country.³

The Kaonde believe that God placed one man and one woman upon the earth, in the beginning. In the Basoga song of creation, which we have already quoted in full on page 46, God is represented as creating the first man and giving him a wife in order that she may bear children. He blesses the earth in which men live. The Lozi narrate that the first man, *Kamunu*, was created after all

other things had been created, and that God was then still on the earth when he formed different peoples with their different customs, languages, and manners.⁴

The Lugbara tell us that in his transcendent aspect, God created the first men long, long ago, and put them on earth. They were called *Gborogboro*, which means "the person coming from the sky"; and *Meme*, which means "the person who came alone". They bore a son and a daughter, who in turn bore male and female children, and so mankind increased upon the earth.⁵

In the Mende story it is narrated that God made all things first, and afterwards he created men, both husband and wife.⁶ According to the Meru, God made first a boy, but since he had nobody else with whom to play, he told God that he was not satisfied. "So a girl came out. They played together."⁷ A similar story is told among the Nandi, that God made a small man-child and sought someone with whom this man-child would live. The story goes on to say: "and he killed [i.e., put to sleep] that man, and took out one of his ribs, from which he made a girl who grew up and bore children". But this act of bearing children annoyed God, who then told the couple, "I have given you death and health", and said, "Go".⁸

The Zulus have several versions of their creation myth, but accordingly, the husband appeared first, followed by the wife. "Men sprang from God, as if he had made them because he existed [before them] . . . [God] begat men; he gave them being, he begat them". Some say that God split a stone into two, and out came the first men. Others say that "men came out of a bed of reeds, where we had our origin". This bed "swelled, and when it had burst, they came out", and afterwards came cattle and other animals. According to the Zulu, the first men came out as complete and perfected beings.⁹

GOD MADE MAN FROM CLAY

We have already mentioned that one of the commonest descriptive names for God is Maker or Potter. This is metaphorical, but at the same time there are myths which describe God as creating man from clay, like a potter.

The Bambuti tell in another of their creation stories, that God made the body of the first man by kneading, and then "covered him with a skin and poured blood into his lifeless body. Then the first man breathed and lived, and God whispered softly in his ear, 'You will beget children who will live in the forest' ". This man was called *Baatsi*.¹⁰

The Fon believe that when God had set the universe in order and had created animals and vegetation, He then formed the first human beings from clay and water.¹¹ The Shilluk also tell that God made man out of clay of different colours, which explains the difference in skin pigmentation. Then he gave man legs with which to walk and run; hands with which to plant grain; eyes with which to see that grain; and a mouth with which to eat it. Afterwards God gave him the tongue with which to sing and talk; and finally ears, so that he may enjoy the sound of music, of dance, and of the talk of great men. Then God sent man out, a complete man.¹²

According to the Lodagaa, God evidently created all mankind as a potter does his pots. But having created the first humans, God showed them how to re-create themselves, this being the only "art" that man learnt directly from his Creator, since the other arts he learnt from the beings of the wilderness.¹³

Many other examples could be cited. Baumann, who has made a study of more than two thousand creation myths, summarizes this when he says, "We must content ourselves by stating that the idea of creation [of man] from clay is very widespread in Africa".¹⁴

THE CREATION OF MAN FROM A HOLE, MARSH, OR TREE

In one of the Akamba stories, it is told that God brought out the first man and husband from a termite hole. In another version, it is narrated that there were two pairs who came out of the hole, after God had created them. This hole is supposed to be on Nzau rock in the central western part of the country.

The Yao and other peoples around Lake Malawi believe that the first human being sprang from a hole in a rock, as did also the other animals. Afterwards "the people of God" closed up the hole, but it is said to be in the northern part, in a deserted section of the country.¹⁵ Similar myths are told among the Basuto, Shona, Tswana, and others.¹⁶ Among the Zulu, it is said that the hole was in a marshy ground.

The Herero believe that God caused the first human beings, *Mukuru*, and his wife, *Kamangarunga*, to come from the mythical "tree of life", situated in the underworld.¹⁷ As Baumann has shown, the myths which connect man's origin with trees, are widespread from the coast of Angola to the Zambezi region, and in smaller areas of the Congo, the Sudan, and elsewhere.¹⁸

In the Nuer story, it is narrated that the creation of man took

place in the western part of their country, "at a certain tamarind tree", which was destroyed by fire in 1918. According to one version, men came out of a hole at the foot of this tree; but according to another, they dropped off its branches like fruit. But it was God who created them, making some dark and others pink, some fast in running and others slow, some strong and others weak. God is thought of as the Creator and not "Begetter" of men.¹⁹

GOD BROUGHT MEN OUT OF A VESSEL

There are not many stories about this concept. The Azande myth, with its many versions, says that God created all things (of this world) and put them in a canoe. He sealed off the canoe, leaving only one hole plugged with wax. Then he sent for his sons—Sun, Moon, Night, Cold, and Stars—and gave them the problem of opening the canoe to discover what it contained. The sun had been shown the secret by God's messenger, and was therefore able to heat the wax which melted and let open the hole of the canoe. From this canoe came out men, animals, plants, and other things.²⁰

In one Chagga myth, it is told that God liberated the first human beings by bursting open a mysterious vessel in which they were "locked up" (as it were). For this reason, the Chagga refer to him "God who burst [out] men". In their prayers they address him as "He who burst forth men that they lived . . .".²¹ It seems here that it was God who had created and placed them in that vessel, and when he brought them out, he made provision for their welfare.

MAN MADE FROM A LEG OR KNEE

A fairly good number of myths describe the concept that men originally sprang from the leg or knee of someone. These are found among the Baluba, Ewe, Maasai, Nandi, Nupe, Nyanja, and others.²² In one of the Nandi stories, it is told that mankind sprang from the knee or leg of the first Dorobo man. The leg of this man got swollen until eventually it burst. Then "a boy issued from the inner side of his calf, whilst a girl issued from the outer side. The two in course of time had children, who were the ancestors of all the people upon earth".²³ According to the Ewe and Nupe, it was a woman from whom this knee-birth took place; but according to the Maasai, it was a man.²⁴

It must be admitted that these sound like fairy stories, but they are, nevertheless, an attempt to dramatize or express the origin of mankind.

MAN WAS BROUGHT FROM HEAVEN TO EARTH

In a considerable number of myths, it is narrated that man came from heaven or another world. The general idea behind this is that God created man elsewhere, and only lowered him afterwards to this world, or man descended here and for various reasons began to inhabit the earth.

Another creation myth of the Akamba says that God lowered the first pair (or two pairs) of mankind, from the clouds to the earth. Cattle, sheep, and goats came along as well. The two pairs reproduced, their children intermarried, and formed families which in turn increased and produced all the peoples of the world. The Akamba emphasize, however, that it is God who created man.²⁵

The Bachwa tell how that God made everything, including the first men. He lowered them from the sky to the earth, and these were Pygmies. Later, other peoples sprang from them. Since the Bachwa were the first men on earth, they call themselves "the Children of God".²⁶

In another story, the Chagga say that the first man came from heaven, on the spider thread. This man was called "the Tailed-one". For this reason, the spider is still "venerated".²⁷ The Kakwa believe that God "threw" a man down from the sky, and taught him the art of agriculture, so that he could live in this world.²⁸

According to the Lango, there is another world beyond the sun, moon and stars. It is similar to this world but older, invisible, and very far away. It was from that other world that the first humans, *Olum* and his wife came to this world. God created them as he created other things in both worlds.²⁹ A similar story is told among the Mondari, according to which originally heaven and earth were joined by a rope. There were inhabitants of both worlds, who went up and down this rope. One day, two brothers came down from the society in the sky, but one returned there and the other remained on earth. The brother who remained here begat sons who in turn founded different clans (or tribes?). One of the sons, however, killed his younger brother, and this crime caused the earth and sky to separate. He killed him "because he was jealous of his miraculous powers".³⁰ The Sidamo say that God let down the first men on a rope.

The Ovimbundu story tells that God made all things, including man. The first man, however, dropped down from the sky, and caused dry land to appear, as everything was water in the beginning. Then he began to hunt, and as he was hunting on the bank of a stream,

he saw an animal disappear in the water. He was about to shoot it when he noticed that it was a being like himself, though slightly different. He took the "animal" home, mated with her, and raised up a family. In that way, mankind began to increase upon the earth. This myth describes the first man as being a calf with human attributes, which left both animal and human foot-prints on the rocks where it walked and which are still visible to this day.³¹ The Shona myth is rather similar, and tells that the first men descended from God. They left marks on rocks in the Dzalanyama mountains. Certain markings on these rocks are believed to have been made by the first men and animals, at the time of creation, when the rocks were still soft.³²

The Maasai story says that God sent one group of his children to the earth, as the first men. In another version it is said that one of the original four gods came from the sky and became man. From him sprang all the Maasai.³³

Stories telling that the first men came down from the sky, are reported among the Ashanti, Azande, Banyoro, Bemba, Elgeyo, Ila, Lugbara, Luo, Turkana, Vugusu, and others, in addition to the examples we have mentioned above.³⁴

THE CREATION OF MAN AS A PROCESS OR EVOLUTION

We have one concept from among the Fon, in which the creation of man is presented as a process or an evolution. On the first day, God set the world in order, and then formed man out of clay and water. The third day, God gave man sight, speech, and knowledge of the external world. On the fourth day man was given technical skills, which evidently equipped him to live on this earth.³⁵

THE ORIGINAL STATE AND NATURE OF THE FIRST MAN

According to the many myths, the state of the original man was one of happiness, childlike ignorance, immortality, or the ability to rise again after dying. God provided man with the necessities of life, and man lived more or less in a paradise.

The Abaluyia narrate that the first couple lived in a house which was suspended in the air by poles. From there they descended by a ladder to the ground, and every time they went back to their house, they pulled up the ladder. For many years the man and his wife did not know how to have sexual intercourse, but finally they discovered how to do it, and the wife became pregnant. The first child was a son named *Lilambo*, and the second a daughter called *Nasio*. The two

children grew up and married each other, from whom were born sons. The first couple also begat two more daughters, and these married their nephews. Through this intermarriage, mankind increased upon the earth. God originally endowed men with the gift of immortality. In the Vugusu version of this myth, it is told that in their ignorance, the first man and wife attempted sexual intercourse in the armpit, but discovered the right organs when the wife climbed the granary to get millet and her husband watched her from beneath. At first she refused to sleep with him, and when she finally agreed, it was painful, but a month later she conceived. In that way men began to increase upon the earth.³⁶

According to the Ashanti, the first man enjoyed a privileged position in creation. God made things for man's use and protection. "He ordered animals to eat the plants, and he ordered man to do the same, and to drink from the waters; he also ordered man to use the animals as meat. Lastly he created the gods to protect men".³⁷ The Bacongo summarize the original state of man in their common saying that "Man is God's man".³⁸ Thus, man is specially connected with God as his property, linking him with God in a way that other creatures are not so intimately linked.

In one of the Bambuti myths, it is told that the first people lived happily, lacking nothing, as God provided them with food, shelter, and immortality. When they grew old, God rejuvenated them and they became young once more.³⁹ The Tswana say that the primeval state was one of happiness, peace, and blessedness; the men neither ate, nor drank, nor died.⁴⁰ The Meru also believe that the primeval men did not need to eat or drink.

The Fajulu picture two worlds, that existed long ago, linked by a rope made of cow-hide. The inhabitants of both worlds held dance parties and festivities, inviting one another by the sound of the drum. It was a very happy state of affairs, which ended only when the hyena cut the rope into two.⁴¹ The Lugbara and other peoples in the upper White Nile valley, tell similar myths, in which men and God were originally in direct contact.

According to the Zulu, the first men came into being already "perfected", i.e., as adults. The husband and wife found themselves crouching in a bed of reeds, but did not see the One who had created them. But the story goes on to say that God gave them the following order: "Let men circumcise, that they may not be boys".⁴²

GOD'S PROVISION FOR THE ORIGINAL MAN

We have already touched on this concept, but there are other examples to mention. The Abaluyia tell us that God let rain come down, and filled the depressions and valleys with water, so that man would have something to drink. He also instructed the first couple to eat only the animals with hoofs and all types of fish, but neither crawling animals nor scavenger birds.⁴³

The Acholi say that God taught the first men all the essentials of living, including cultivation, beer-making, and cooking. According to the Akamba, God gave a cow, a goat, and a sheep to the first human beings. In order to provide marriage partners without the dangers of incest (which is abominable to the Akamba), one myth says that God made two pairs of the first human beings. The children of these couples could then intermarry freely.

The Azande believe that God provided man with the art of magic, the knowledge of making medicines, and of how to avenge crimes.⁴⁴ The Bemba also say that magic is a gift from God, but it is not clear whether this was given to the original men or to their descendants later.⁴⁵ The Ewe believe that God sent magic power into the world when he had made the first men.⁴⁶ According to the Lango, magic art is derived partly from God and partly from the spirits, but it is not certain when men first learnt it.⁴⁷

In another myth, the Bambuti tell that having created the first men, God sent down to earth the heavenly goat which mothered all the animals. For this reason the people speak of them as "the goats of the Deity". It would be surprising if the creation story of the Pygmies, who depend so much on hunting, did not include the provision of game, for it would have been a sad world if the first ancestors had no animals to hunt! The myth goes on to say that God gave the early men tools and weapons, and taught them how to use the forge and other arts necessary for life. In another legend it is narrated that at one point, God destroyed the early men, sparing only a few, to whom he bequeathed the banana crop.⁴⁸

The Barundi narrate that originally God lived with the men he had made, creating children for them. The Basoga say that God made both husband and wife, so that they would bear children.

The Tswana believe that the original men lived in a state of immortality. But when they made God angry, death came upon them. God, however, provided them with the gift of resurrection which, unfortunately, they also lost.⁴⁹

In the Chagga story of how God liberated the original men from a mysterious vessel, it is told that he gave them a banana grove, with potatoes and yams. The Elgeyo narrate that when God sent the first man to the earth, he gave him the elephant and the snake to accompany him. We have mentioned the Fajulu myth, according to which the early men lived in a state of jubilation, dancing, and feasting, being able to move up and down between this and the upper world. The Herero believe that God provided men with the dog.

In the Kaonde myth to which we have alluded a number of times, it is told that God sent three pots to the first couple. The bearer of the pots disobeyed God's instructions, and opened the pots, one of which contained evil, disease, and death. In that way, evil spread into the world. But God had already made provision in the other two pots, which contained herbs for medicine, and these were God's gifts to his people so that they would not be destroyed.⁵⁰

The Lozi say that the first man borrowed skills from God. We are not informed what these were, but presumably they included cultivating, cooking, hunting, and building houses. The Kakwa believe that God taught the first man how to farm; but in another version they say that God sent down someone from the sky to teach people this art. According to the Lugbara, the original men were given the ability to move up and down between the earth and the sky, so that they were in direct contact with God. This state of affairs ended when the link was broken and men fell down, scattering into different parts of the world.

The Hottentots, like many other peoples, believe that the first men were endowed with the gift of rising again after dying. The Meru tell that God sent the mole with the gift of resurrection, but this did not reach men, because the hyena threatened to kill the mole if the latter did not alter the message from God.

Among the Moru, one clan (Böri) is in charge of rainmaking. The people believe that members of this clan are in some sense "holy", because when God created them, he put his spirit in them. At the same time he gave them their special powers, and for this reason, the rainmakers are greatly feared and respected.⁵¹ The Nupe say that, when God had created men, he gave them "access to certain mystical forces", one of which is "the compelling power of ritual [*kuti*]" which men can harness and utilize. God also put the power of witchcraft into the world.⁵²

According to the Zulu traditions, the original man was to have been endowed with the gift of immortality. The messenger did not

bring this news in time, and another messenger arrived to inform man that he would die. However, God provided for him, doctors, diviners, and medicine, to treat diseases. He also gave the first men cattle, saying, "... let them be your food; eat their flesh and drink their milk!" God gave them fire and its uses, and assigned different names to all things. "He looked on all things and said, 'So-and-so is the name of everything' ". He gave them the sun for light, saying, "There is a torch which will give you light, that you may see". God ordered or instituted the work of cultivating the fields and growing food on the land, saying, "Let there be men and let them cultivate food and eat".⁵³ Thus God gave men all they needed for their sustenance: medicine, doctors, diviners, cattle, fire, light (sun), and names (personality). But they had to work on the land, lest they should remain lazy and idle!

The Nuer narrate that God provided them with cattle, millet, and spearfish for their sustenance. He also gave them certain ritual powers, though it is not certain when this happened. On one occasion God offered men the choice between cattle and rifles. The Nuer and Dinka chose cattle, but the Arabs and Europeans chose rifles.⁵⁴

The Pare believe that God lived among the early men, and gave them cattle, forest fruits, and the skill of tilling the ground. The Tiv say that the first ancestor of man, *Tukuruku* and his wife, lived solely on fish, for a long time. Finally, God came down from heaven and showed them other food (maize) and the art of cultivation. But he withheld from man the knowledge of making rain, which he guards jealously, but sends rain from season to season.⁵⁵

The Sonjo narrate that the children of the first man founded the different tribes (peoples) of the world. God gave each people the gift of whatever it requested. The Sonjo asked for, and received the digging-stick. For this reason, they hold the digging-stick as the symbol of life, sustenance, and divine care. They resolutely refuse to part with it, and have not changed it even for the hoe.⁵⁶

So God created man, and provided him with the means of inhabiting the earth.

15 *The Separation of God from Man*

GOD'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ORIGINAL MAN, AND THE CAUSES LEADING TO THEIR SEPARATION

From many a story we hear that God and the original man were in a very close relationship. Some peoples picture God as living among men or visiting them from time to time. It was like a family relationship in which God was the parent and the men were the children. We shall examine here the nature of this relationship, and the events or causes that led to its termination, alteration, or change.

A long, long time ago, say the Ashanti, God lived in the sky but close to men. One woman, who was pounding the national food (*fufu*) constantly, went on knocking against him with her long pestle. God decided therefore, to go up higher. The woman advised her children to construct a tower of mortars piled one on top of another. This they did, and when he had used up all the mortars, there was only a short distance left, the length of one mortar. The woman instructed her children to take the bottom-most mortar in order to fill up the final gap. They did so, but then the entire tower went tumbling down and killing many people. Those who survived gave up the attempt to reach God.¹

The Bambuti say that God actually lived with the first men (two sons and a daughter), but he was alone, without either a wife or a brother. He communicated with the men, but never showed himself to them. He lived in a big house, was kindly disposed towards the children, made them happy, and supplied them freely with everything they needed. He commanded them that they should never seek him out. The daughter's duty was to draw water and fetch firewood for him, placing them at the door of his house, from where God took them in without being seen by the children. This happy and close relationship ended when one day the daughter was overcome by curiosity and tried to watch God as he took in the pot of water. She hid herself nearby and saw him "stretch forth his arm, which was well covered with brass rings, outside his abode, to take in the pot. She had seen it—the richly adorned arm of God. How her heart rejoiced! But alas! Her sin was immediately followed by punishment".

God had already seen her and her crime was not hidden from him. Immediately he summoned his children, reprimanded them for their disobedience, and told them that they would live without him. Their bitter weeping did not change his decision; and he withdrew himself from them. In one account it is narrated that "God left his children secretly, and disappeared downstream along the banks of the river. Since then no one has seen him. But with God went also happiness and peace; and everything which he formerly offered them freely went from the people: water, fish, game, and all kinds of fruit. They must work hard in order to eat their daily bread away from God".² The "river" mentioned here is one of the Congo tributaries. Going "downstream" symbolizes a departure, a separation, a disappearance, and an irreparable loss to men.

In the Chagga story, it is narrated that God used to visit the first men, every morning and evening, to greet them and enquire after their welfare. We have mentioned that he provided them with bananas, yams, and potatoes. But he forbade them to eat of one yam. So long as they observed this commandment, the relationship remained on a family basis, and the men were happy.³

The Mende tell that the first couple used to go to God so frequently, to ask him for things, that he went off to another dwelling place where they could not so readily reach him. These first men did not know God's name, but referred to him as "Grandfather". Because he did not refuse to give them whatever they asked of him, they began to call him *Mangee* which meant "Grandfather take it". Before he completely left them, he made an "agreement" (covenant) with them, that they should not have an evil heart towards one another. The fowl was the symbol of this covenant, and God said to them, "Whenever one of you does wrong to his companion you must call me, and when I come you must give me back my fowl". They agreed to it. Then he went to his abode in the heavens, and for that reason the people called him *Leve*, which means "Up" or "High".⁴ This myth is a clear illustration of the relationship between God and the first men. From his side, he was generous and always at their disposal, and he required that they also should have a good relationship with one another. Even when he left them, he did not just desert them: he established a covenant, by means of which part of the relationship could still be maintained between him and the people, as well as between themselves.

According to the Yao, God originally dwelt on earth with men

until they learned the art of making fire by friction. They set the grasslands alight, and God withdrew himself into heaven, ordering that men should now go there after death. The Pare believe that God dwelt on earth with men, supplying them with whatever they needed. He commanded them that they should not eat eggs, but they did not keep this law. When they ate eggs, the happy relationship also ended, God took away all the food, and slaughtered everyone except a single woman and man. Then he withdrew himself from them, leaving them alone on earth. Similarly the Barotse narrate that God lived with the first man and woman, and animals. The relationship ended when men killed and ate the animals, which God had forbidden them to do as these were men's brothers. God withdrew himself from the first men.⁵ This myth indicates that there was peace and harmony among all the creatures in the primeval period, which ended only through man's murderous deeds. Damage in the relationship between man and animals resulted in a similar damage of relationship between God and man.

The Barundi narrate that God lived among the first men, creating children for them. This in itself indicates God's care for men, and his supply of their greatest need. It is told that one day God formed a crippled child, and the parents became so angry that they threatened him with a spear or knife. He therefore withdrew himself and fled to the skies.⁶

Among the Bari, Fajulu, Lugbara, Madi, Mondari, Toposa, and others in the upper White Nile region, the relationship between God and the early men is represented in stories telling that the sky or heaven and earth were originally united. The bridge, generally a rope, is a symbol of communication. God and men could communicate directly. According to the Bari version, God lived both in heaven above and on earth below, and the two worlds were joined by a rope. In some myths the rope was cut into two by the hyena, and thus the direct link or relationship between God and men was severed.

The Shilluk tell a myth the similarity of which I have not encountered from other peoples. They say that originally the people lived with God in his land. Then they ate a fruit which made them sick. Consequently God sent them away, evidently to this earth.⁷

GOD'S COMMANDMENT AND MAN'S DISOBEDIENCE

We have already mentioned God's commandment to the first men, in the previous sub-section. We have more examples to add here, as well as previous ones to elaborate further.

The Banyarwanda narrate that God commanded all the people to remain indoors, so that death, personified as an animal, would not find a hiding place while he hunted it. But one old woman went to work in her banana grove, where the fleeing death came and begged for her protection. She took pity on him and allowed the animal to hide under her skirt. When God saw what had happened, he punished men by letting them keep death among them.⁸

The Bushmen represent the Creator as having had a wife. When he had finished creating men, she fell sick and he left her in a cave, and went on a long journey to fetch medicines. He commanded the people not to bury her if she died in his absence. She died, but the people disobeyed and buried her. This made God angry; he told them that had they obeyed him, he would have given them the gift of rising again after death. So they lost the resurrection and God withdrew himself from them.⁹

The Elgeyo narrate that God told the first man to wait for him, and refrain from eating until he arrived. The snake persuaded the man to eat, which he did. When God arrived, he punished the man for his disobedience.

In the Chagga story mentioned above, it is told that God commanded the first man telling him "to eat all the fruit of the bananas, also all the potatoes in the banana grove. But the yam which is called *Ula* or *Ukaho*, truly you shall not eat it. Neither you nor your people may eat it, and if any man eats it, his bones shall break and at last he shall die". A stranger visited the first man, deceived him about eating the forbidden yam, and so man disobeyed. Immediately sickness broke out among the first men, but when their elder prayed to God for mercy, he intervened with the message that when the man grew old, he would cast his skin as the snakes do, and become young again. This was to be done in secret, so that none of the other people would see him in course of the process of rejuvenation. When the time came for him to remove his skin, he sent away the granddaughter who looked after him, to fetch water. While alone in the house, he removed the skin from half of his body, and when he was about to remove the rest, the daughter arrived and saw him. The process ended at once, and the gift of rejuvenation vanished away. The old man cried out aloud in sorrow:

So be it, I have died,
All of you will die,
I have died,
All of you shall die,

For you granddaughter,
Entered while I cast my skin.
Woe is me, woe is you!

Then he died.¹⁰ In this dramatic way, man disobeyed God.

In a myth which may not be altogether original, the Meru say that when God had created the first men, he gave them food but forbade them to eat the fruit of one tree. A crawling creature (*mugambi*) came and deceived them. The woman climbed up the tree, picked one fruit, ate it, picked another, and gave it to her husband. At first the man refused to take it, but she threatened to leave him alone. He succumbed and ate it. "Having eaten it, his throat-apple . . . came out. It is since then that man has got a throat-apple".¹¹

The Bambuti tell in another myth, that after creating the first man (*Baatsi*), God gave him and his children one rule. He said to them, "From all the trees of the forest you may eat, except the *tahu* tree". The man had many children, he taught them God's command, and eventually he "returned to God in the heavens". One day a pregnant woman developed an irresistible desire to eat the fruit of the *tahu* tree, and she asked her husband to fetch it for her. At first he refused, but she persisted until "her husband crept into the forest secretly, plucked the fruit of the *tahu*, peeled it quickly, and hid the peel carefully in the foliage, so that his act should not be discovered. But all the precaution was in vain. The Moon had already seen him and had told what she had seen to God: 'The people which thou hast created have disobeyed thy command, and have eaten of the fruit of the *tahu* tree!' God was so angry at the disobedience of his people, that he sent death among them as punishment".¹²

The Zulu believe that God decreed a path in which they should walk, but that they no longer know what that path is. They say that certain customs, such as circumcision and marriage, were instituted or ordered by God from the very beginning. These, the people seem to have kept and observed.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE SEPARATION

In giving an account of the different myths of the separation of God from man, we have mentioned some of the consequences as far as man is concerned. We may now give a summary of these and a few others.

PEOPLE	BROKEN COMMANDMENT AS CAUSE OF THE SEPARATION	CONSEQUENCES
Bambuti	I Forbidden to eat the <i>tahu</i> fruit	I God left men alone; death came among men
Bambuti	II Forbidden to look at God	II God withdrew himself; man lost happiness, peace and the free supply of food; man was cursed to work hard in order to eat; the woman was cursed "to be the wife of her brothers. In pain she would bring forth children"; and death came upon men ¹³
Banyarwanda	Forbidden to hide death	Man was told to keep death
Barotse	Forbidden to kill and eat animals	God withdrew himself
Bushmen	Forbidden to bury a dead woman while God fetched medicine	Man lost the gift of resurrection; and death came among men
Chagga	Forbidden to eat the <i>ula</i> yam, and to be seen while taking off the skin in old age	Diseases and old age came; the gift of rejuvenation was lost; and death came
Elgeyo	Forbidden to eat before God arrived	Man to work for food; the snake to move on the stomach and suffer enmity of men ¹⁴
Meru	Forbidden to eat the fruit of one tree	The throat apple of the man "came out"; death came later; and the snake was cursed to "be crushed"
Pare	Forbidden to eat eggs	God withdrew from among men, taking away food and causing nearly all mankind to perish

In another group of stories, the separation of God from man came by accident, and the consequences are generally less dramatic, though still serious. According to the Ashanti, it was the long pestle of the old woman which, by constantly knocking against God, "forced" him to withdraw further. The men tried to follow him by building a tower of mortars, but this crumbled and killed many of them, and the survivors gave up trying to reach God by this means. Among the Bari, Lugbara, and others who speak about the broken rope or bridge which once united heaven (sky) and earth, the main consequence is said to be man's loss of a direct path to reach God or go to heaven. In the Yao story, men set the grassland on fire, "forcing" God to retreat into heaven. But he decreed that men must die in order to be able to go to him, when they would then become his slaves.

And so the original direct contact and relationship between God and man was broken. The unfortunate consequences for man include the loss of immortality, resurrection, rejuvenation, and free food, in addition to the coming of death and suffering. Yet, through acts of worship, man tries to counteract this separation, and to maintain some form of contact with God. To the discussion of this important theme we shall now turn and devote a number of chapters.

16 *Worship: Sacrifices and Offerings*

GENERAL

The sources from which we derive our written information use the term "worship" inconsistently. One reason for this derives from the fact that the word itself as such, does not exist in many African languages. Another reason is that the anthropologists who have collected and written down most of our information are not theologians, and use the term loosely.

In this book I employ the word "worship" broadly to mean man's act or acts of turning to God. These acts may be formal or informal, regular or extempore, communal or individual, ritual or unceremonial, through word or deed. For the sake of description, I draw a distinction between "sacrifices" and "offerings". "Sacrifices" is used where animal life is destroyed in order to present the animal or part of it, to God, supernatural beings, spirits, or the departed. "Offerings" is used to refer to all the other cases in which animals are not killed, and in which items like foodstuffs, utensils, etc., are used for presenting to God or other recipients.

There are many African peoples whose worship of God is reported to be neither formal nor regular. These include the Amba, Ankore, Ashanti, Bacongo, Bamileke, Banyarwanda, Beir, Didinga, Edo, Embu, Herero, Ibibio, Kaonde, Kiga, Kitimi, Lala, Lokoia, Luapula, Luo, Mamvu-Mangutu, Ngoni, Ovimbundu, Rishuwa, Tonga, Tswana, Zulu, and no doubt some others. Of these, it is said that there is "no worship" among the Bamileke, Lala, Lokoia, Luapula, and Ovimbundu; but it is possible that this is due to insufficient information, and that there are acts of worship which have not been recorded in writing. On the other hand, the Dinka and Nuer seem to spend nearly all their waking time in acts of worship.

SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS

These constitute one of the commonest acts of worship among African peoples. The examples are overwhelmingly many. In some cases, the sacrifice or offering is made to God alone; in others it is to both God, the spirits, and the departed; in others it is only to the

spirits and the departed, who are considered intermediaries between God and men.

There are four popularized theories about the function and meaning of sacrifice: the gift theory, the propitiation theory, the communion theory, and the thankoffering theory. No doubt some of these ideas are present, but it is not our main concern to discuss them here. One may add, however, that sacrifices and offerings are acts of restoring the ontological balance between God and man, the spirits and man, and the departed and the living. When this balance is upset, people "experience" misfortunes and sufferings, or fear that these will come upon them. Sacrifices and offerings help, at least psychologically, to restore this balance. They are also acts and occasions of making and renewing contact between God and man, the spirits and man. When the sacrifices and offerings are directed toward the departed, they are a symbol of fellowship, a recognition that the departed are still members of their human families, and tokens of respect and remembrance of the departed. The departed who are still remembered personally by someone in their family, are chiefly the recipients of sacrifices and offerings from the family group. These go back four or five generations, and we may call them the *living-dead*.

It is best to take different peoples separately and summarize their acts and concepts of sacrifices and offerings.

THE ABALUYIA sacrifice to God, for which reason they refer to him as "the One to whom sacred rites and sacrifices are made (or paid)". They believe that he receives or rejects the sacrifices, which are made at harvest time or at the birth, naming, circumcision, wedding, and funeral of a person. They slaughter bulls, goats, or chickens, and call upon God. At the naming ceremony, the child's grandmother strangles a white chicken. At a funeral, the sacrifices and prayers are intended to secure peace for the deceased. At harvest time, they are an expression of joy and gratitude to God.¹

THE AKAMBA consider God to be so good that he does them no evil, and they see no reason, therefore, for sacrificing to him. They make sacrifices only on important occasions including planting time, before the crops ripen, at the harvest of the first fruits, at threshing time, when they purify a village after an epidemic, (formerly) when men return from successful raids, and most of all when the rains fail or delay. Normally the sacrificial animals are oxen, sheep, goats, or the mountain coney (which is not eaten). In cases of severe drought,

they formerly sacrificed a child which they buried alive in a shrine.²

THE AKAN AND ASHANTI have altars in their home compounds at which they make offerings to God. The offerings consist of food (especially eggs among the Akan) and wine.³

THE ALUR have few occasions when they make annual offerings of the first fruits of maize and finger millet; and sacrifices of black goats when they need rain. This is normally done at their main shrine, and for the harvest offerings only the priest and his lineage may go there.⁴

THE AMBO make offerings of sorghum flour, at the time of the first fruits and when there is a drought. The headman of a village leads in the ceremony, which is accompanied by praying and clapping of hands. The offerings are directed to the spirits of the departed chiefs, who possibly act as intermediaries between God and men.⁵

THE ANKORE are said to make no sacrifices to God, thinking that he does not expect any. But they make offerings to the spirits and the living-dead. This is done on the third day following the new moon, the offerings being dedicated to the guardian spirits (*emandwa*), and the people take a rest so that they do not work in their fields. Offerings are also made at the shrines of the living-dead (*emizimu*) of up to three generations back.⁶

THE BACHWA: When a woman first becomes pregnant, she cooks food and takes portions of it to the forest where she offers them to God. In doing so, she invokes him saying: "[God] from whom I have received this child, take thou and eat". The people "sacrifice to God a portion of the heart of every animal killed, of every honey-comb that is found, and of every fruit that is plucked". They believe that if one fails to give to God even this small portion of the game, one would fall sick or never kill any more animals thereafter.⁷

THE BANYARWANDA say that God is so good that he does not require sacrifices or offerings. They make sacrifices to the two main spirits believed to collaborate with God or to be his messengers. They think that God sends these spirits to eat the meat. If the people find maggots in the meat, this is taken to be a sign that the two spirits have been pleased with what was given to them.⁸

THE BANYORO have many divinities, as we have already seen. They make offerings and sacrifices to these divinities. To the divinity of

plenty are sacrificed cows with bull calves, the meat being placed on a throne in the temple or near the king's palace. To the divinity of war, offerings were (formerly) sent by generals before going on an expedition and upon return. Occasionally offerings are made to one of the cattle divinities (*Nyalwa*). When people wish to cross Lake Albert by canoe, they make offerings to the divinity of the lake. When a person is struck by lightning, offerings are sent to the divinity of thunder. The divinity of the weather, being very important, receives an ox from the king, and sheep and fowls from the people. The same divinity gets offerings when too much rain has fallen, or when the rain has delayed. The sacrificial animal is slaughtered and eaten by both the priest and people, at the temple door, and its blood poured out by the temple. When a new moon is observed, the king makes a sacrifice of two or more sheep, and all work is suspended the next day. In times of distress, the people call upon God the Creator; and rainmakers pray to him for his aid.⁹

THE BARI make sacrifices to God, and ask him to cure their diseases.

THE BAROTSE make a daily offering to God by placing a wooden plate full of water in the cattle shed every morning. This is done by the oldest member of the household, who kneels down facing east and makes a salutation invocation.¹⁰

THE BARUNDI believe that their hero, *Kiranga*, acts as the intermediary between them and God. To *Kiranga* they make sacrifices, but if he fails to help them, then they turn to God.

THE BASOGA have, in addition to God, a few divinities to whom they sacrifice and make offerings. To the divinity of death they sacrifice black cows, goats, sheep, and fowls. To the female divinity that helps in private sickness they sacrifice cows and sheep, and offer beer. To God the Creator, for whom there are many shrines, the people sacrifice chickens which are killed in front of the shrines.¹¹

THE BAVENDA hold yearly ceremonies at which black oxen are sacrificed, and a special messenger offers a black ox and a black cloth to God. The ox is set free in the forest, so that it would join the wild animals which form "the herd" of God. This is done at the place of "revelation", in the Matoba hills, where God is said to have revealed himself in a big flame above the sacred cave.¹²

THE BEIR make food offerings to God, placing them at the roots of certain trees.

THE BUTAWA sacrifice to the living-dead. This is done by the elders who hold monthly rites, at which the priest sacrifices black dogs and offers guinea-corn beer, at a sacred cave, followed by a ritual feasting of the group. At intervals of three to five years, there are rites connected with initiation and sowing periods, during which the people make sacrifices of black goats and pray to God. The blood of the goats is gathered in a huge pot and placed at the foot of a sacred tree. On the first day of the ceremony, hens are sacrificed and prayers offered at the sacred grove. On the second day two bulls are sacrificed. On the third day, the women are given their portion of the sacrificial meat, and return home. The men remain at the sacred grove and eat their meat there. Afterwards they also go home and join the women and children in a festival of dancing and singing.¹³

THE CHAGGA sacrifice to God only in times of great distress, at rare intervals. But they make many sacrifices to their living-dead and the spirits.¹⁴

THE CHAWAI make occasional sacrifices to God, but generally through the living-dead who act as intermediaries. The family head officiates for household sacrifices; and the senior priest for each area officiates at the public sacrifices at the end of the harvest period. Possibly these public sacrifices are directed to God.¹⁵

THE DINKA seem to lead a life occupied with the making of sacrifices. They consider every event or occasion as suitable for sacrifices. For them, "every bull or ox is destined ultimately for sacrifice . . . Each beast represents the community of the people present at a sacrifice, though their eating of the flesh is not a communion meal . . ." "Animal sacrifice is the central religious act of the Dinka, whose cattle are in their eyes perfect victims". They consider cattle to be gifts from God and to belong ultimately to him. Before an animal is sacrificed, the Dinka "announce" to it "the important and necessary purpose for which it is victimized"; and they compensate the animal for its death "by naming the next child after it", thus "preserving its memory". They give names to their cattle, and before the sacrifice is made, the people address the animal by name, making invocations.¹⁶

THE DURUMA sacrifice black or red sheep and bullocks, possibly directed to the living-dead and the spirits of the departed. On important occasions they pray to God, but it is not clear whether or not they make sacrifices then as well.¹⁷

THE EDO rarely make blood sacrifices, but individuals offer kola nuts, gourds, or other things to God. In some villages there are priests who conduct the rituals. Formerly the divinity of death received generous sacrifices in order to delay taking away people. These sacrifices included a man, a woman, a goat, a cow, a ram, or a he-goat. The meat was left to rot away, without being eaten by the people.¹⁸

THE EGEDE are said to have family fig trees in each homestead, where individuals sacrifice and make offerings to God. In one area there is a communal shrine.

THE ELGEYO consider the sun to be the intermediary which forwards their supplications to God. They therefore sacrifice a sheep or goat, and make prayers for rain, good harvest, and other needs, which they entrust to the sun to convey them to God. It is the old men who perform the necessary ceremonies and offer the prayers.¹⁹

THE EMBU offer sacrifices to God when crises occur, such as drought, epidemics, or war, which they interpret as punishment from God. Otherwise they make no regular sacrifices or prayers.²⁰

THE EWE regard the spirits as having been created by God to act as intermediaries between him and mankind. The spirits watch over and protect the people who in turn make sacrifices to the spirits and these transmit the sacrifices to God.²¹ There are priests in charge of the sacrifices, acting in effect as intermediaries between the spirits and the people.²¹

THE GANDA formerly made sacrifices and offerings to their divinities. For example, the divinity of the waters (*Mukasa*) received annual sacrifices and offerings consisting of nine men, nine women, nine white goats, nine fowls, nine loads of barkcloth, and nine cowrie-shells, presented at the temple.²²

THE GIKUYU have several occasions when they make sacrifices and offerings to God. These include periods of crisis like famine, drought, and epidemic; planting and harvesting time; and the birth, initiation, marriage, and death of the individual. Communal ceremonies are conducted by local or regional elders at the sacred groves. For minor family needs, it is the eldest male member who makes offerings and sacrifices to the living-dead. For communal sacrifices to God, a lamb or goat of one colour is used; and at the harvest ceremony, grains of food from the fields are offered to God.²³

THE GIMIRA-MAJI make periodical sacrifices to God, consisting of a fowl or cow, or they offer an axe instead. This is done when someone has died, with the aim of appeasing God. The flesh of the animal is not eaten, and the vessels used for the ceremony are kept in a sacred house. In one section, the people sacrifice animals and make offerings of the first fruits to God.²⁴

THE GISU make offerings of the first fruits, consisting of millet, potatoes, and a bit of the previous year's grain, in addition to sacrificing a fowl. This is done at harvest time before people eat of the new crop. At the initiation of young people, more offerings and sacrifices are made; and if cows do not bear well, the priest sacrifices one barren cow. All these are directed towards God, but the divinities also receive attention. The divinity of plague is given meat and food, which are placed at the foot of special trees planted in front of houses. During an epidemic, the divinity of smallpox is given a goat. The birth of twins is taken as a great misfortune due to the wrath of the divinities, and the medicine-man sacrifices a fowl in addition to the many offerings made by the members of the clan where the twins are born. These are thought to pacify the divinities.²⁵

THE GOFA sacrifice a white cock to the spirit of the Omo river. The fowl is thrown alive into the river.

THE HADYA sacrifice animals to God, but make food and drink offerings to the tree spirits.

THE IGBO rarely or never sacrifice directly to God, but believe that he is the ultimate recipient of the frequent sacrifices, offerings, and prayers made to the lesser divinities and the spirits. They regard these divinities as intermediaries.²⁶ The sacrifices and offerings include sheep, goats, chickens, blood, kola nuts, pieces of cloth, cooking utensils, etc. Family heads make daily offerings to their living-dead; and there are shrines in the homesteads, in addition to the public shrines in groves.

THE ILA have several occasions when they make sacrifices and offerings to God. When hunters have no success, the oldest member of the band leads the others in praying for God's aid. On succeeding in killing, they give portions of the meat to God, with the leader addressing him, "I thank thee for the meat which thou givest me. Today thou hast stood by me". The rest clap their hands, and the leader offers more meat, which is cut up in bits and thrown into the

air. The hunters divide the remaining meat among themselves, eating some and taking some home.

When someone is travelling and comes to a river, he fills his mouth with water, which he then squirts on the ground as an offering to God. At the same time he addresses God as the One who leads him, and asks him to prosper and shepherd him on the way, so that he may eventually return home in safety.

When a man is smoking a pipe in the morning, he offers some of the smoke by blowing it in the air and addressing God. In the prayer he says that God has caused him to rise in health, and he asks God to give him prosperity that day. During a serious illness, the head of the family offers food and water, placing them on the right threshold of the house, and praying God to heal ("leave") the sick. The person fills his mouth with water and squirts it out.²⁷

THE INDEM frequently make offerings of food and drink to God, depositing them in baskets or fragments of pottery and calabash. These are then generally placed on forked poles planted, for that purpose, on the ground outside the homes. When a person is sick, he or a relative makes offerings, believing or hoping that God would cure him after he has eaten the food or given it to the departed parents or friends of the sick person.²⁸

THE INGASSANA make animal sacrifices to the sun, placing them on altars and making prayers, in times of crisis, such as drought, sickness, and barrenness.²⁹

THE JIE observe an annual ceremony at which they sacrifice and pray to God. The first part takes place at the start of the rain season, when an ox of one colour is sacrificed, the ceremony being conducted by the most senior age-set. The elders take blood from the ribs, which they drink kneeling; and then the meat is cooked and eaten by those who attend the ceremony. Then the most senior man gets up and, holding a freshly-cut wooden staff, conducts prayers. The rest of the men respond by affirming that the rain will continue to come, the crops to grow, etc. Finally, each man rises up and offers extempore prayers for rain, health, and fertility of the people.

The second part of the ceremony is conducted in course of the rain period. This time, six oxen are sacrificed, and there is great rejoicing and dancing. The people observe other ceremonies when there is an outbreak of a cattle disease (rinderpest), and at the annual blessing of cattle. The same procedures of sacrificing and praying are

followed as for the rain sacrifice. The Jie believe that they have to pray often to God, in order to claim his close attention.³⁰

THE KAGORO get together on an appointed day, when there is drought in the country, and make offerings to God, asking him to send them rain. Rain always comes within a day or two, afterwards.³¹

THE KIPSIGIS have altars erected outside their houses, on the right-hand side of the door. Here the people sacrifice animals and make offerings to God. The communal ritual is conducted by an hereditary head (priest?), whose duties are to invoke God at all important ceremonies. This man is regarded as an intermediary between God and men.³²

THE KOMA kneel when they pray to God, and sacrifice a dog every twelve lunar months. The tail of the dog is given to the king to eat, thereby symbolically renewing his investiture. It is not clear whether or not this dog is meant to be sacrificed to God.³³

THE KONTA who are neighbours of the Koma, have altars on the paths leading to their homes, where they deposit offerings of food and farm produce. It seems that God is the object of these domestic offerings.³⁴

THE KULLO sacrifice bulls and offer beer occasionally, at what are reported (but the report is unconfirmed) to be the ruins of churches. While so doing, they make invocations saying, "Lord Christ, have mercy on me!"³⁵ This seems like a mixture of traditional rites and a liturgical remnant of extinct Christianity.

THE LAMBA pray and make offerings to God through the spirits whom they consider to be intermediaries between him and men.³⁶

THE LANGO believe that if they neglect to make sacrifices to God, he becomes "jealous" and punishes them with disease, accident, or painful death. Some trees outside the villages are used as shrines at which offerings to God are placed.³⁷

THE LOTUKO believe that whereas by nature God is benevolent, he must be kept so through their constant sacrifices and prayers. This they specially do at their harvest festivals and when they seek success in hunting or fishing.³⁸

THE LOZI make sacrifices, but it is not clear to whom they are directed. When a person is sick, his relatives entreat the spirits of

departed royal members, to intercede for the sick before God. In national crises, a priest receives gifts from the people, and offers or sacrifices them to God.³⁹

THE LUGBARA are said never to come together as a nation to offer sacrifices to God. But groups of them, on a local or regional level, unite and send a ram as scapegoat to God. The animal is sent to the hills and mountains, which are thought to be the abode of God in his immanent aspect, together with the first two heroes of the nation. When two brothers quarrel, a sheep is killed and its blood is used as a sign of reconciliation. People believe that the sheep is "a thing of God", and that the use of its blood "shows the words of God". Yet they say firmly that they do not give food to God, and that the sheep is not really sacrificed to him. They make offerings to him in his immanent aspect, but not in his transcendent aspect, concerning which they say that "sacrifice cannot be made to God".⁴⁰

THE LUO get together in time of trouble, and sacrifice animals under large trees. They cook and eat the meat either nearby or away from the shadow of the sacrificial trees. Before building new houses, the people make offerings to God, hoping that he will drive away any harmful spirits and will prosper the children and livestock.⁴¹

THE MALE hold two annual ceremonies for sacrificing to God.

THE MAO make animal sacrifices and grass offerings to God, generally after sunset, and pray to him.

THE MERU sacrifice black bulls to God, conducted by their religious leader (the *Mugwe*), in time of crisis. Prayers and sacrifices are also made at other times.⁴²

THE MONDARI make annual sacrifices, conducted by their religious leader (the *Mar*) who holds a priestly office.

THE MORU make offerings of juice from the wild vine stem and honey, invoking God to help them when they are searching for water, or in other great need.

THE NKUM only sacrifice to God in time of trouble, though they pray to him every morning. At planting time and during crises, they make sacrifices to the earth divinity.⁴³

THE NUBA sacrifice to God invoking him to reward them with prosperity and abundance. They also offer beer to him, which is poured

on the ground. The sacrificial ceremony is conducted by an old man, and the offering by the rainmaker.⁴⁴

THE NUER have many occasions when they sacrifice to God. Cattle are the usual animals for sacrifice, and on important occasions, the people make long invocations. When a person is on a journey, he knots grasses together at the side of the path, and prays to God.⁴⁵

THE SANDAWE priests sacrifice black oxen, sheep, and goats, when soliciting for rain.

THE SEBEI make offerings to God, especially in time of illness. An old person of the same sex as the sick one, goes to the shrine, taking with him (her) a pot of beer or milk. On arrival, he stirs the pot, saying,

This is for you, spare so-and-so,
Let him go well!

In addition, a goat or chicken is sacrificed, and those attending the ceremony eat it. Cows may be offered but not killed. When the whole clan is gathered, the cow is sacrificed and eaten, but replaced by another animal. When a child begins to teethe, the people sacrifice a goat, as teething is considered a bad omen.⁴⁶

THE SHILLUK make sacrifices to God, either directly or through their national hero (*Nyikang*) who is expected to intercede with God to send them rain. A cow or another domestic animal is used for the occasion.

THE SHONA used to kill a child ritually when they were in desperate need of rain. Formerly they performed a major ceremony every two or three years at the Zimbabwe ruins. At this sacred ceremony, a great crowd came together, and the priest, assisted by two virgins, sacrificed cattle and made offerings of other possessions like ornaments and tobacco. Six black cows and a black ox were killed by suffocation, and left in the wilderness to be eaten by wild animals. One black cow was burnt alive, and a black ox was killed and eaten by the people. The priest also offered beer, which he sprinkled over the sacred cave where the ceremony took place.

Much of this has either died out or decreased since the arrival of Europeans in the latter part of the nineteenth century. But in some parts, black cattle are still sacrificed at sacred pools, especially in connection with rainmaking and prayers for rain.⁴⁷

THE SONJO make sacrifices to God, through their priests. They believe that their religious and national founder (*Khambageu*), takes note of the sacrifices and prayers. At the harvest festival, offerings are made in the temples. When cure or prevention of disease is sought, the people make sacrifices to *Khambageu*.⁴⁸

THE SWAZI are said to make no direct sacrifices to God. They have divinities or spirits to whom they offer beer or sour milk, praying that these would send away sickness.⁴⁹

THE TEITA make sacrifices and offerings to God, thanking him when a famine is over and when barrenness has been cured.

THE TEMNE sacrifice to God.

THE TIKAR make sacrifices to God at their annual agricultural and fertility ceremonies. Individuals also make offerings or sacrifices, on behalf of their villages or relatives.⁵⁰

THE URHOBO do not sacrifice to God, but to his messenger. This is done at the family altar which is found in every homestead. The head of the family prays every morning, for the health, wealth, and peace of the people.⁵¹

THE WALAMO sacrifice goats and chickens along the Omo river, to the divinity or spirit of that river. In so doing they hope that the spirit would not punish them with sickness. In time of drought, they take offerings to their sacred mountain where the controller of rain is believed to live. If he accepts their offerings, it is a sign that the rains are near.⁵²

THE WARJAWA sacrifice red cocks in times of public need. The entire community comes together, dances, and calls upon God, the sacrifice being made by their priest. The people also observe two festivals, at planting and harvesting time, which they celebrate with drinking, and sacrificing and eating dogs.⁵³

THE WATUMBATU sacrifice a white cow, when there is a hurricane, or rough currents arise. They interpret these natural phenomena as indicating the anger of God.⁵⁴ The sacrifice would thus act as a means of pacification.

THE YORUBA make various types of sacrifices and offerings, for these are considered to be "the essence of Yoruba religion". All kinds of living things and almost all types of food and drink are used as

sacrifices and offerings. Different divinities are the recipients, but in practice the worshippers eat what can be eaten. It is thought that sacrificing human beings, which was done formerly in order to invoke special blessings, may still be going on. Some of the divinities like *Ogun*, were given human sacrifices annually.

Yoruba sacrifices serve several purposes, according to the study made by Idowu. There are meal- and drink-offerings made daily at the shrines. Gift or thankofferings are made to divinities in appreciation for success, health, children, etc. Votive offerings are made when a person receives a favour for which he vowed to make offerings. Propitiation offerings and sacrifices are made during drought, famine, or serious illness. Substitutionary sacrifices and offerings are made when it is required to alter an agreement. Some are made to ward off attack, evil, or misfortune; and others to appease the spirit of the earth.⁵⁵

Blacksmiths sacrifice dogs every fortnight, to *Ogun* the divinity of iron and war. At Ondo there is an annual communal festival, during the reason season, when sacrifices are made to the same divinity. The people dance round the town, and eat dogs, for three days.⁵⁶

THE ZALA sacrifice chickens and sheep to the spirit of the Omo river.

ANIMALS AND ITEMS USED FOR SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS

We have already mentioned these in the previous sub-section, but it is useful to consider them together as a whole. Unless it is otherwise indicated, God is the recipient of the sacrifices and offerings mentioned in each category. Where animals of a particular colour are used, these are indicated, as are also other specifications where they are mentioned in our sources.

Cattle are sacrificed as follows: by Abaluyia, Akamba (male, unspotted, and of one colour), Banyoro (to the divinities of plenty and the weather), Basoga (black cow, to the divinity of death and the divinity of illness), Bavenda (black), Butawa, Chagga, Dinka, Duruma (black or red, the recipient is unspecified), Edo (cow, to the "king" of death), Gimira-Maji (cow), Gisu (barren cow), Herero, Jie (oxen, of a particular but unspecified colour), Kullo (bull), Meru (black), Ndebele (black), Nuer, Sandawe (black oxen), Sebei (cow, presented and kept alive), Shilluk (cow), Shona (black), Teita, and Watumbatu (white cow).

Sheep are sacrificed as follows: by Akamba (one colour only), Banyoro (recipient unspecified), Basoga (to the divinity of death and to the female divinity of illness), Duruma (black or red, recipient unspecified), Edo (ram, to the "king" of death), Elgeyo (to the sun), Gikuyu (lamb of one colour either black, red, white, or brown and without spots), Herero (black), Igbo (to spirits and the living-dead), Kullo, Lugbara (ram, either sent as scapegoat, or its blood offered), Luo (black), Nandi (black, pushed into a river), Ndebele (black), Sandawe (black), and Zala (to the spirit of the Omo river).

Goats are sacrificed as follows: by Abaluyia, Akamba (unspotted and of one colour only), Alur, Basoga (black, to the divinity of death), Butawa (black), Edo (to the "king" of death), Elgeyo (to the sun), Ganda (nine white to the divinity of the waters), Gikuyu (of one colour, to God and the living-dead), Gisu (to a snake, in connection with seeking cure for barrenness; and to the divinity of plague), Igbo (to divinities, spirits, and the living-dead), Luapula (to the living-dead), Maravi (to the living-dead), Ndebele (black), Sandawe (black), Sebei, Sonjo, and Walamo (to the divinity of the Omo river).

Dogs are sacrificed as follows: by Butawa (to the living-dead), Koma (recipient unspecified, but the king eats the tail wherewith to renew his investiture), Warjawa (recipient uncertain), and Yoruba (to the divinity of iron).

Fowls or Chickens are sacrificed as follows: by Abaluyia (white hen, strangled), Akamba (of one colour only), Butawa (hen), Ganda (nine white, to the divinity of waters), Gimira-Maji, Gisu (to a snake, in connection with barrenness), Gofa (white cock, thrown alive into a river), Lugbara (chicken, by individual sick persons), Luo (black hen), Maravi (to the living-dead), Moru (hen), Sebei, Walamo (to the spirit of the Omo river), Warjawa (red cock), and Zala (to the spirit of the Omo).

Human beings were formerly sacrificed as follows: by Akamba (child, buried alive), Bari (unspecified), Edo (man and woman, to the "king" of death), Ganda (nine men and nine women, to the divinity of the waters), Shona (ten-year-old child, mainly boys, burnt alive), and Yoruba (to the divinity of iron).

Foodstuffs are offered as follows: by Akamba (first fruits), Akan (eggs), Alur (maize and finger millet), Ambo (sorghum flour),

Ashanti (food), Bachwa (food, honey, and fruit), Banyarwanda (meat, to God through his spirit messengers), Beir (food), Edo (kola nuts and fluted gourd), Gikuyu (first fruits), Gisu (first fruits), Hadya (to tree spirits), Igbo (to spirits and living-dead), Ila (meal), Indem (food and drink), Konta, Lozi (seeds for blessing before planting), Luapula (cassava, to the living-dead), Murle (vegetables, recipient unspecified), Moru (honey and juice of wild vine stem), and Swazi (sour porridge, to the female divinity which sends sickness).

Drinks are offered as follows: *milk* by Bari (to a green snake), Sebei and Swazi (sour, to divinities or spirits); *beer* by Ashanti (wine) Akamba (to God and the living-dead), Basoga (to a female divinity connected with illness), Butawa (to the living-dead), Gikuyu (to the living-dead), Giriyama (recipient unspecified), Kullo, Nuba, Sebei, Swazi (to the female divinity that sends sickness), Yoruba and Zulu (to the "Queen of Heaven"); and *water* by the Barotse and Ila.

Many more African peoples offer foodstuffs and drinks both to God, the spirits, and the living-dead. These offerings are often made informally by families and individuals. In some societies, like among the Igbo and Yoruba, this is done daily at the family shrine.

Incense is burnt by the Bambuti and Ngombe.

Smoke from tobacco pipes is offered by the Ila.

Leaves from the *liduka* tree are offered by the Ngombe. These leaves are regarded as symbols (or substitutes) for fowls.

Miscellaneous items of a wide variety are used as sacrifices, offerings, and gifts, or for religious rites; and others are regarded as sacred. We may mention these and concepts or uses attached to them, as follows: the hyrax is sacrificed, or its dung offered, by the Akamba; meat from animals killed in hunting, is offered by the Bachwa and Ila; black cloth and money are offered by the Bavenda; in addition to foodstuffs, the Edo offer chalk to God; the Ganda offered nine loads of barkcloth and nine cowrie-shells to their high-ranking divinity of the waters; in addition to animal sacrifices, the Gimira-Maji offer axes; the Giriyama offer blood (but neither its victim nor recipient is specified); the Hadya sacrifice unspecified animals to God, and offer food and drink to the spirits; the Kipsigis make unspecified sacrifices and offerings; the Konta offer unspecified goods; the Lozi offer their agricultural implements to be blessed by God before the cultivating season starts; the Murle sacrifice (or

offer) fish, but the recipient is unspecified; the Shona offer money, ornaments, snuff, and tobacco; and the Yoruba are said to use all kinds of animals and nearly all types of foods and drinks for sacrifices and offerings to their vast number of divinities. The Zulu do not sacrifice to God, but when lightning strikes cattle, the people say that God has slaughtered for himself from among his own property.

The Bushmen regard the mantis as sacred; the Herero keep a sacred fire in God's temple, which is not allowed to die out; the Kurama regard the leopard as sacred; the Lele take the "water pigs" as endowed with "spiritual power"; the Lugbara believe that God uses the hyena to show his intentions; and the Shona consider the zebra to be sacred, associating it with their worship of God.

Our information on the use of sacrificial *blood* is very little. At their quadrennial sacrifices, the Butawa collect the blood of the sacrificed goat, put it in a big pot, and leave it at the sacrificial site. The Ila offer blood to God in connection with murder. At the Jie pre-rain ceremony, the senior men drink blood from the ribs of the ox which has been sacrificed, kneeling while drinking. The Lugbara use the blood of sheep when two estranged brothers get reconciled; and sometimes the people offer blood and prayers to God. The Giryama offer both blood and beer, but neither the animal whose blood is used, nor the recipient, is mentioned. When the Shilluk sacrifice an animal, they think of its blood as going to God and to their national founder (*Nyikang*).

17 *Worship:* *Prayers, and Other Appeals to God*

PRAYERS

As a rule, there are no sacrifices without prayers. But praying is not always associated with, or accompanied by, sacrifices, and many African peoples pray without making sacrifices and offerings. Prayers are the commonest acts of worship, some of which may be long and formal, but most of them are short, extempore, and to the point. Most of the prayers are addressed to God, and some to the living-dead, divinities, or other beings, many of whom serve as intermediaries.

Praying is reported among at least half of the peoples studied in this book and no doubt the number would be greater if more information were available. We list these peoples below and take out of them some examples of the concepts and contents of their prayers. Those who are said to pray include the following: Abaluyia, Acholi, Akamba, Akan, Ankore, Anuak, Ashanti, Azande, Bachwa, Bakene, Bambuti, Bacongo, Bamum, Banyarwanda, Banyoro, Bari, Barotse, Barundi, Basoga, Bavenda, Bemba, Bena, Binawa, Bondei, Bushmen, Butawa, Chagga, Chawai, Dinka, Dogon, Dorei, Dorobo, Duruma, Edo, Elgeyo, Embu, Ewe, Ga, Galla, Ganda, Gikuyu, Gisu, Gumuz, Hadya, Igbira, Igbo, Ila, Ingassana, Jie, Kadara, Kagoro, Kaibi, Kaje, Katab, Kipsigis, Koma, Konta, Kullo, Kurama, Lamba, Lango, Lotuko, Lozi, Lugbara, Lunda, Luo, Maasai, Madi, Mao, Masongo, Mende, Meru, Mondari, Moru, Nandi, Nkum, Ngombe, Nuba, Nuer, Nyakyusa, Nyanja, Orri, Ovambo, Rabai, Rishuwa, Rukuba, Rumaiya, Sebei, Serer, Shilluk, Shona, Sidamo, Sonjo, Srubu, Teita, Temne, Tikar, Tonga, Tswana, Tumbuka, Turkana, Turu, Urhobo, Vugusu, Yoruba, and Zulu.

Every morning ABALUYIA old men rise up early, kneel facing east, and pray to God spitting and asking him "to let the day dawn well and spit his medicine upon the people, so that they may walk well". They also ask God to drive away the evil divinity which is thought to

cause them harm. The traditional doctors and diviners also seek God's help through prayers.¹ Another common morning prayer which the old men use, says:

O, sun,
As you rise in the east through God's leadership,
Wash away all the evils I have thought of throughout the night.
Bless me, so that my enemies will not kill me and my family;
Guide me through hard work.
O God, give me mercy upon our children who are suffering;
Bring riches today as the sun rises;
Bring all fortunes to me today.²

ACHOLI rainmakers approach God in prayer to ask for rain.

THE AKAMBA do not pray often, except in times of great need, particularly for rain, and on special occasions. Here is a prayer by one of them, on the occasion of the birth of his child:

O Creator, who dost all human beings create,
Thou hast on us a great worth conferred
By bringing us this little child!³

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

O God, thou art great,
Thou art the One who created me,
I have no other.
God, thou art in the heavens,
Thou art the only One:
Now my child is sick,
And thou wilt grant me my desire.⁴

THE ASHANTI mention God's name in prayers, though they seem also to ask the divinities to grant them health, prosperity, and protection from misfortune and witches.

THE AZANDE turn to God in prayer, in times of sickness and difficulty, and invoke him at other times for protection and prosperity. A person would, for example, put water in his mouth, squirt it out, and pray, saying:

Father, as I am here, I have not stolen the goods of another, I have not taken the goods of another without recompense; I have not set my heart after the of goods another: all men are good in my eyes!

Then he squirts out more water, and continues praying:

God, it is indeed thou who settlest the difference between us who are men.⁵

THE BACHWA pray in sickness, asking for God's help and trusting that he will cure the sick "unless he has already made up his mind that I should die" (as one old man is reported saying). They pray before taking a journey, so that God will guide them. They also pray before going hunting that God will bring them game which they can shoot. In difficulties they ask for his help; and when a woman first conceives, she offers food to God and addresses him as the One who has provided her with the child.⁶

When thunderstorms arise, the BAMBUTI become very terrified, and burn incense, calling upon God to help them. They pray:

Grandfather, Great Father, let matters go well with me, for I am going into the forest [to hunt].

If the storm arises while they are in the forest, they pray:

Father, thy children are afraid; and behold, we shall die!

They believe and say that God then hears their cry, stretches out his hand, and the storm flees away. Before going to hunt or collect fruit in the forest, they pray that God will help them find game and fruit; and barren women invoke him to bless them with children.⁷

THE BANYARWANDA mention God's name frequently in prayers, blessings, and salutations. One common prayer says: "I hope that the God of Rwanda will help me"; and a blessing runs: "May the God of Banyarwanda bless you!"⁸ The BANYORO rarely pray to God except in distress, though their rainmakers do so more often. When people pray, they do it in the open, with their hands and eyes lifted towards the sky. Otherwise their attitude is that God has done his job of creation, and there is no need to solicit further favours from him. They have divinities who help them in their daily and minor needs.⁹

THE BAVENDA pray for rain, felicity, and peace.

When the TSWANA pray, they address God as "God of our fathers . . .", or "Father of my fathers . . .".¹⁰

THE BONDEI start their family ceremonies with a prayer, said by the head of the family, in this formula: "From whom shall we ask?" The rest of the people reply, "God!" Then they proceed with the ceremony.¹¹ The BUSHMEN are reported to have many prayers, some

of which are made at the new moon when people ask (the moon?) for food. They also address the sun and stars, for success in hunting and collecting food. Some of them consider the mantis to be the creator of all things, and address to it prayers for food, hunting success and other needs.¹²

THE BUTAWA pray to God through their forefathers and living-dead, though at their quadrennial ceremony individuals pray directly to him when they make their sacrifices. In times of distress, epidemics, and other needs, the DOREI pray to God. One common prayer among the DOROBO says, "God, fill us with meat!"¹³ Anyone among the EDO may pray to God for health, children, and other benefits.

Regarding the sun as their intermediary, the ELGEYO believe that it transmits their prayers to God when they make sacrifices and pray for rain, good harvest, and other benefits. The EMBU do not pray regularly, doing so only in times of crisis and when they seek God's guidance in making decisions or his protection from danger. The EWE make all their prayers through the spirits who are known as God's children. These transmit or relay the prayers and sacrifices to God. There are priests who are trained, "ordained", and consecrated, and whose duties include offering prayers, performing rites, and pouring out libation for both the community and individuals (e.g., barren women).

THE GALLA are said to make frequent prayers and invocations to God. They do so standing upright. Often they pray every morning and evening, asking for protection against their enemies, for their cattle, crops, and families. One such prayer says:

O God, thou hast given me a good day,
Give me a good night;
Thou hast given me a good night,
Give me a good day.¹⁴

THE BAROTSE also pray every morning, the old men rising up early and making an offering of water in a wooden plate which is placed in the cattle shed. The head of the family kneels down and, facing east, repeats twice the royal salute, "Yo-Sho". In one such recorded prayer, a man addresses God as the Great King, to whom no man is comparable, the One who shows innumerable favours and great compassion to his servants; to whom the servants go "to receive his blessing and be strengthened". The prayer goes on to address God as powerful, "everything is possible for thee", and reigning over all

things; as the One who can call to himself all men and none can refuse; and as him who helps the weak and feeds the hungry. In this same prayer, the man goes on to tell God that the people are bringing to him their children so that he might "educate them by thy power". This is the court language of addressing the paramount ruler or chief of the Barotse.¹⁵

It is around noon on the market day that the CHAGGA would normally make their sacrifices. The people face towards Mount Kilimanjaro at whose foot they live, and recite the following prayer:

We know thee, God, Chief, Preserver . . .
 He who burst forth men that they lived.
 We praise thee, and pray to thee, and fall before thee . . .
 Chief, receive this bull of thy name.
 Heal him to whom thou gavest it and his children.
 Sow the seed of offspring with us,
 That we may beget like bees . . .
 Now, Chief, Preserver, bless all that is ours.¹⁶

THE GANDA pray to the divinity of the seas (lakes) to protect the sailors from all evil, to control the crocodiles, and to hold up the storms.¹⁷

It is believed among the GIKUYU, that during prosperity there is no need to pray to God, and to do so would bother God for which reason he might punish the people concerned. So, they pray only in times of great need and when they make sacrifices and offerings. These include times of epidemics, drought, birth, initiation, marriage, and death. The people believe that God "hears and answers prayer". Individuals do not pray alone, because it is held that God is interested in the affairs of the community, clan, or nation. The male head of the family may, however, pray on behalf of the family. One such prayer says:

O God my Father, give me goats,
 Give me sheep, give me children,
 That I may be rich, O God my Father.

In case of sickness, one approaches the traditional doctor first, then the living-dead, and if no cure is found, one may then appeal to God. When people pray, they do so facing Mount Kenya, and with their hands raised towards the same. Prosperity is a sign that God is pleased with them, but when there are genuine needs, they may approach God without the fear of arousing his anger.¹⁸

THE GISU appeal to God in case of serious illness, and during their initiation ceremonies. The priest conveys God's blessings upon the boys undergoing initiation, for it is thought that he is present at these ceremonies.

THE GUMUZ believe that there are spiritual intermediaries who convey their prayers to God. The IGBO frequently pray to the lesser divinities whom they regard as intermediaries conveying their petitions to God. Likewise, the IGBIRA approach him indirectly through the intermediary of the living-dead and the spirits.

In special need the ILA turn to God, and solicit his aid. When there is a drought, they come together, join in singing and invoke God saying, for example, "Come to us with a continued rain, O God, fall!" When men go hunting and get no success, they sit down, and the eldest of them, sitting in the centre of the circle, leads the rest in prayer, saying:

O *Mutalabala*, Eternal One . . . we pray thee,
Let us kill today before sunset.

The others, falling on the ground, respond,

O Chief, today let us kill!

After succeeding in killing some animal, they cut up pieces of meat and the oldest man offers them to God, saying:

I thank thee for the meat which thou givest me.
Today thou hast stood by me.

The rest of the men clap their hands, and when the ceremony is over, they divide up the meat among themselves and return home.¹⁹

At their annual ceremonies, the JIE offer sacrifices and prayers to God under the leadership of the most senior man. He stands up and, holding a freshly-cut staff, conducts the prayers affirming the belief that the rain will come in sufficient quantities and that the crops will grow. All the other men respond in a chorus, affirming the same hope. Then each man gets up and prays for rain, health, and fertility of the people. At other ceremonies, prayers are made that God would ward off rinderpest, bless the cattle, bring rain, good harvest, health, and fertility.²⁰

When there is a drought, the KAGORO assemble on a special day to pray and make sacrifices, and "rain always comes within a day or

two". They also pray at the new moon that God would give them health and prosperity during the coming month. Their neighbours, the KATAB, pray to God only at the sight of the new moon; but normally, they pray through their living-dead and forefathers, whom they regard as their intermediaries. The rainmakers always pray to God when performing their rites, but thank their forefathers when they succeed. The LOTUKO pray to God for success in fishing and hunting, and at their harvest festivals. They believe that their departed intercede with God on their behalf for rain.

Before the sowing activity starts, the LOZI assemble at sunrise, around their headman who erects an altar of sticks and clay. On this altar a dish is placed, into which every household puts some seeds, hoes, and axes. The headman kneels before the altar and, facing east, puts his hands together, bows down, looks up and stretches out his hands. He turns right, then left, and repeatedly stands up and kneels down. The people repeat the same movements. Finally, the headman prays on behalf of the community. In this prayer he addresses God as the Creator of all things, and reiterates that men have no strength whilst God is omnipotent. He tells God that they now bring him their seeds and implements to bless them and the people, so that by his power the people may use them. The headman blows his horn and the crowd responds with the so-called "royal salute". The people bow many times and clap their hands. Planting may now start.

There are also other times when the Lozi pray, such as before going hunting, and when one has dreamt or is sick. A sick person abstains from working the whole day and spends it praying to God, until sunset.²¹

It is narrated, among the LUO, that before leaving their former land of settlement, they prayed to God for mercy and victory in their journey. The prayers were conducted by a delegation of "honourable and straightforward" members. When parents have disobedient children, they pray God to "punish" these children. The people pray early in the morning, asking God to grant them longer life. They look upon the sun as God's special revelation, and regard the moon as his "sun at night". So young men and women address the moon when asking for children, as it is the symbol of growth. Those who are not married ask the moon to help them find boy or girl friends. It is believed that praying to God every day ensures a young person of getting married in early life. The elders ask God to strike

dead those who become notorious wrongdoers. In time of war, the traditional doctors offer sacrifices of sheep or hens, and make long prayers.²²

THE MASONGO recite individual prayers to God at sunset. For this purpose they go under a large tree, and each person kisses his necklaces and lays them down on the ground.

THE MENDE generally end their prayers with the expression: "God willing". Although they pray directly to God, they more often do it through the intermediary of the spirits and the living-dead, a practice which reflects their practices in social and political life. This is clearly illustrated from the following prayer:

O God, let it reach to [through?] *Kenei Momo*,
 Let it reach to [through?] *Nduawo*,
 Let it reach all our forefathers who are in thy hands.

The Mende also pray for blessings, deliverance, or God's retribution. For example, if a son leaves home against the wish of his parents, the father stands inside or outside the house and prays:

O God, thou knowest this is my son; I begat him and trained him and laboured for him, and now that he should do some work for me, he refuses. In anything he does now in the world may he not prosper, until he comes back to me and begs my pardon.

If the son meets with misfortunes and comes to his senses, he returns home repentant and, through his mother, approaches his father asking for forgiveness. The father now prays for the curse to be revoked and blessings to fall upon his son, saying:

O God, this is my son; he left me without any good fortune in the world because he knows I have cursed him; he has now come back to beg me; he knows he cannot stand behind me; he has come now to beg me to pull the curse as I am pulling now. Wherever he goes now may he prosper and have many children.

Members of the family who are present, consent to these petitions. A girl in similar circumstances is accordingly dealt with by her mother.²³

THE MERU tell their traditional history according to which they were formerly in bondage in another country. There there arose one religious-political leader (the *Mugwe*), who led them out to their new land of freedom. This *Mugwe* prayed to God before the start of the historic exodus, saying:

One Body and Possessor of strength,
 Give me thy help,
 That I may lead this people of thine
 Free from all their sufferings.

It is the duty of the *Mugwe* to pray for young people that they may be loved by all, become parents, have goats, and beget many children. In time of drought, he performs a special rite of blessing and praying for the country, asking God to give them strength, children, cattle, and life. When blessing, the *Mugwe* asks God for life, rich life, health, fertility of women, increase of goats, cattle, food, and honey, and for the removal of unknown troubles from other lands. Some of the Meru men pray daily, asking God to give them strength, protection, increase of millet and beans, help to get up healthy the next morning, and work for them to do. When there is a public crisis like drought, epidemic, or death, or cause for rejoicing, such as marriage, the people offer public prayers. Otherwise, it is the *Mugwe* who is entrusted with praying to God on behalf of the entire nation, and this he fulfils regularly.²⁴

THE NANDI have a common prayer which every adult is supposed to recite twice a day. The old men in particular do so in the morning, sitting down with their arms crossed. One version of this prayer says:

God, guard for me the children and the cattle.
 God, guard for us the cattle,
 God, give us health.

When there is a war, mothers whose sons are in the forces pray every morning for their sons, spitting towards the sun and saying:

God, give us health.

The warriors are accompanied by an elder who also prays for them every morning, saying:

God, give us to drink milk.

(The reference to milk is a metaphorical way of asking God to keep the warriors in safety, so that they may return home and drink milk, i.e., remain alive.) At the end of a successful raid, they thank God. If the raid is not a success, they hold a ceremony of repentance, at which they ask for God's forgiveness and humble themselves before him. At harvest time the people pray God to give them health, strength, and milk. In time of drought they ask him for rain and

protection for their pregnant women and cattle. When a person blesses another, he prays,

May God be good to you!

There are many other occasions when the Nandi pray.²⁵

THE NUER pray often to God, addressing him as "Grandfather", "Father", or "Our Father". When praying, they raise their eyes and hands towards the heavens. Some of their prayers are, at times, quite long, during which a person may even walk up and down his cattle-kraal brandishing his spear; or may remain sitting or squatting, with eyes towards the heavens, but moving his hands up and down with the palms facing upwards. Many of the prayers are for deliverance from evil, so that the people may have peace of which they speak in the metaphors of sleep, ease, coolness, softness, and abundant life. The Nuer hold the attitude that they may pray at any time, because "they like to speak to God when they are happy" and when they go about their daily work. Here is a typical prayer, illustrating the concepts contained in their prayers:

Our Father, it is thy universe, it is thy will, let us be at peace, let the souls of the people be cool; thou art our Father, remove all evil from our path.²⁶

THE SHILLUK, in their prayers, ask God to help them in this life, for they say that "Man does not think about death". Normally they approach God through their national hero, *Nyikang*, but there are times when they pray directly to him or utter blessings in his name, e.g., "May God guard you!" A sick person may sigh to him for help, "Why, O God?" The people regard *Nyikang* as their intermediary not only in prayers but in their endeavour to understand the world. The intermediary position and importance of *Nyikang* come out clearly in the following prayer:

We praise thee, thou that art God. Protect us, we are in thy hand, and protect us, save me. Thou and *Nyikang*, ye are the ones who created; people are in your hands . . . The cow [for sacrifice] is here for you, and the blood will go to God and thee [*Nyikang*] . . .²⁷

The Shilluk have a traditional prayer which old people, chiefs, or other respected persons use on important occasions, like sickness, war, or famine. They say that *Nyikang* taught them this prayer, part of which says:

I implore thee, thou God,
 I pray to thee during the night.
 How are all people kept by thee all days! . . .
 When I sleep in the house, I sleep with thee . . .
 The soul is kept [alive] by thee.
 There is no one above thee, thou God.
 Thou becamest the Grandfather of *Nyikang*,
 It is thou [*Nyikang*] who walkest with God,
 Thou becamest the grandfather [of man], and thy son, *Dak* . . .
 Thou God, to whom shall we pray:
 Is it not to thee? . . .
 And the soul [of man] is it not thine own?
 It is thou who liftest up [the sick].²⁸

THE SONJO consider *Khambageu* their national hero, to be in an intermediary position between them and God. They believe that he takes note of their prayers, and they mention him when praying. For example, in a short prayer they say,

Father *Riob*, Father *Khambageu*,
 Bless us and open for us the sluices of *Belwa*.

Prayers are made for benefits like bearing children, good crops, fertility of goats, recovery from sickness, and prevention of diseases.²⁹

All the TURKANA men who have been initiated are expected to pray on behalf of the community. They do so under the leadership of the senior men, praying formally at most meat feasts and other ceremonies like weddings.

When someone is sick or thought to be bewitched, a small group prays together for him. It is believed that, although God is benevolent towards the people, they must constantly solicit his help.

Among the TURU, it is the priests who lead in praying and sacrificing for rain, at the chief shrine. The prayers are brief, committing the sacrifices and offerings to God and asking him to let rain come.

Among the URHOBO, it is the head of each family who makes daily offerings to God's messenger, praying for health, wealth, children, and peace. In the Isoko area, God is addressed as "Our Father".³⁰

THE VUGUSU solicit God's help for various undertakings and needs such as war, hunting, travelling, and the like. In the morning, they greet the new day with a short prayer. When leaving the house, the adults look towards the rising sun, spit once, then look west, and spit again. The morning prayer says:

Po! God, may the day dawn well;
Mayst thou spit upon us the medicine,
So that we may walk well!

At other times they also pray to be defended against the evil divinity, asking God to drive him away.³¹

Prayers are said to be at the heart and centre of YORUBA religious life. The people pray at worship, at any time and at any place, even when they are on their way to the shrines. At the shrines people kneel throughout; and some individuals go there every morning before they speak to anyone else. Prayers are for material blessings like protection against sickness and death, children, victory over one's enemies, and longevity.³²

INVOCATIONS AND APPEALS

Invocations and appeals are shortened and common versions of prayers, some being spontaneous and others being regular formulae of addressing God. Practically all African peoples use invocations and appeals of this kind, and a few examples here will suffice to indicate their nature and the concepts contained in them. Some of them have been quoted in the previous sub-section on prayers.

When punishing a witch publicly, the Bacongo make her drink a poisonous cup, and they invoke God saying, "God is just and merciful".³³ At the coronation of their king, the Bamum invoke God "to bless the king, to grant him many children, to make his war-spear mighty, and his work strong", to increase his wealth and to give him guidance.³⁴ In addition to formal prayers, the Galla invoke God frequently in their conversations. Among the Ganda, on waking up, the head of the family looks up towards heaven and invokes God's blessings upon the household.³⁵ When the spirits become notorious, the Gikuyu implore God to send them off. When invoking God, the Maasai frequently use their children to assist in the ceremony. The Banyarwanda believe that although God is aloof, he intervenes in individual lives when he is invoked, and they invoke him as "the God of Rwanda". When there is a crisis in national or individual life, the Ingassana invoke God. For example, at the rain-making ceremony they say, "God, give [us] rain!"; and the father or husband of a barren woman blesses her saying, "You want fruit, God give you fruit!"³⁶ The Nuba have an annual ceremony for blessing cattle, at which they invoke God, saying, "God, we are hungry, give us cattle, give us sheep". In one area of their country,

it is believed that God causes the crops to grow when the rainmakers invoke him to do so. In another ceremony, they invoke him saying, "God, increase cattle, increase sheep, increase men!"³⁷ At their communal prayers, the Sonjo open with the invocation: "Aba [Father] Riob, Aba Khambageu . . .".³⁸

When in difficulties, or in extreme trouble, the Bacongo utter appeals to God, crying, for example, "I wish God had never made me!" or, more positively, "God, pity me!"³⁹ In moments of desperation, such as sickness or misfortune, the Banyarwanda appeal to God in these or similar words: "I have done all to the spirits and now I leave it in the hands of God alone". When the person prospers or recovers thereafter, he says, "*Hakizimana*", i.e., "It is only God who can save a man". If a person has lost something, he goes to a priest for help, and the priest appeals to God saying, "For the God of Rwanda's sake, we will succeed!" [or "Let us succeed"]. Then the priest approaches the lesser divinities, as these act as intermediaries between God and the people in need.⁴⁰ The Banyoro also appeal to the divinities, instead of calling upon God for assistance. When the Baluba appeal to God, they address him as "O Great God".⁴¹ In time of public need, the Warjawa gather themselves "to dance, and call upon God for what is required", and the priest sacrifices a red cock.⁴²

"POSITION" IN PRAYING

Little information is available on the different positions taken by African peoples while praying. Those who *kneel* include the Barundi, Barotse, Koma, Lozi, and Yoruba. Those who *stand* include the Galla, Jie, Lozi (alternating with kneeling), and the Nuer (who may at times pace up and down, brandishing their spears and praying at the same time). The Chagga *fall down* before God.⁴³ The Ila and Nandi remain *sitting*, the Nandi having their arms crossed. It would seem that this is the position used by most peoples, though those conducting the prayers on public occasions, may stand up. Some, like the Ila, Lozi, and Shona, *clap* their hands in prayer.

A number of peoples face a particular direction, and may use bodily gestures as well. The Nandi spit towards the rising sun. The Vugusu face eastwards, spit, then face westwards, and spit again, saying their morning prayer. The Nuer raise hands and eyes towards the sky or heavens. The Kagoro start praying when facing the south, and continue turning towards the other points of the compass. The Lozi bow down, look up, raise outstretched hands, and clap, in addition to

kneeling and standing. The Gikuyu face Mount Kenya, and the Chagga face Mount Kilimanjaro. The Masongo kiss their necklaces, laying them down on the ground in course of their praying. The Ganda look up towards the heavens when invoking God.

BLESSINGS

The pronouncing or requesting of blessings is another form of prayers. As a rule, the person who pronounces the blessing is older or of a higher status than the one who receives it. The rite is generally simple, but in some societies it may be accompanied with spitting or sprinkling water (or other substance) upon those who are being blessed. Public blessings are requested directly from God. Blessings upon individuals are pronounced by those qualified to do so, but it is normally understood that God is the executor who confers the articulated blessing.

When the Akamba pronounce a blessing, the giver spits gently on the recipient, saying, "May God go with you!" or "Let God bear you in peace like a young shoot!" or, "God preserve you and keep you, until you may see your children's children!" The Banyarwanda say, "May the God of Banyarwanda bless you!" It is believed among the Ganda that "God's blessing is never to be hindered", and that "God's favours should not be refused". When the head of the family wakes up in the morning, he therefore invokes God's blessings upon his household.⁴⁴ We have already mentioned the blessing that Ingasana fathers and husbands of barren women pronounce upon them saying, "You want fruit, God give you fruit!"⁴⁵ The Maasai hold ceremonies to bless their barren women. When the Nandi pronounce a blessing, they say, "May God be good to you!"⁴⁶ The Nuer bless their children by spitting on them and uttering "some opprobrious remarks, sometimes a string of obscenities, over them". It is believed that "the worst offence is to praise a baby", and people refer to it as "this bad thing". When a Nuer person offends another, and the two are reconciled, the offended person blesses the offender by spitting or blowing water on him and saying that the matter is nothing, and may he be at peace. The people believe that God sees all this and frees the guilty man from the consequences of his act.⁴⁷

The Vugusu pronounce blessings in this form: "May God make [your] feet light!" or, "May God protect you!" In their daily prayer which we have quoted in a previous sub-section, they ask God to bless the day to them, spitting on them his medicine of health, life, and prosperity.⁴⁸

The Zulu narrate that when God finished creating all things, he blessed men by giving them the sun and saying, "There is a torch which will give you light, that you may see!" He also gave them cattle, as a blessing to mankind, saying, "Let them be your food, eat their flesh, and drink their milk".⁴⁹

Chagga parents teach their children that God blesses those who do good, who honour and care for their parents, and those who do not steal. The blessing is in form of goats, cattle, and children. The teaching is given at noon, and "those who are taught point to the sky with one finger and spit thrice". In their main prayer, the people request God to "bless all that is ours".⁵⁰ Likewise, in their prayers the Barotse tell God that they go to him to receive his blessings and to be strengthened. Before planting their fields, the Gikuyu hold ceremonies at which they ask God to bless their seeds. The Lozi do the same, asking him to bless both their seeds and their agricultural implements. Ceremonies held by many peoples before harvesting the fields possibly carry the same concept of asking God to bless the new crop. One of the chief functions of the Meru leader (the *Mugwe*), is to pronounce God's blessings upon the people, for rich life, health, fertility, and increase of livestock and honey. At the initiation of Gisu youth, the priest pronounces the blessing of God upon the initiates.

GREETINGS, SALUTATIONS, AND FAREWELLS

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

Among the Banyarwanda and Barundi, when two people are parting, one says, "Go with God", and the other responds, "Stay with God". Those who are sleeping in the same house say to one another: "Pass the night with God"; or, "May you meet with the Kindly-disposed One". The Banyarwanda include God's name in their congratulations, of which there are many occasions. When a child is born, old women go immediately to the mother and, kneeling beside her, wish her well, saying, "Leap the cliff, and God will light a fire, and you can warm yourself!"⁵¹ In the next few days, more people go to the mother and congratulate her saying, "God has saved you from destruction", or, "God has brought you back from the battle in safety!" When a woman who has been barren finally gives birth, people congratulate her and the husband saying, "He has saved you at last!" or, "God has taken you from between the teeth

of scorners", or, "God has removed your shame"; and to the woman only, "He has built for you" (by which it is meant that her position as a married person is now secure in that particular home). When a person escapes from danger or recovers from illness, others congratulate him saying, "God shielded you", or, "You had God", or, "He still causes you to stand up", or, "He still stands upon you" (to keep the person alive). Following the death of someone, people say, "God has let him go (or dropped him)", or, "God has taken his hands off him".⁵²

Other examples of God's name being used in farewells and salutations come from the Kono, Mende, Shilluk, and Tswana. In greetings the Kono say, "Confession is not on God". This means that God's favour is shown by the good health or well-being of the person concerned.⁵³ In bidding one another farewell, the Mende say, "May God walk you well", or, "God take care of you". If, when greeting a person, one asks the other how he is, the reply is: "No fault with the Chief [God]", meaning that all is well.⁵⁴ The Shilluk say in their salutations, "May God guard you!"; and a sick person might pine, "Why, O God?"⁵⁵ When they bid farewell to one another, the Tswana say, "Remain with God", that is, "May God be with you who remain behind".⁵⁶

THANKSGIVING

A number of African peoples offer individual, family, or communal thanksgiving to God. This may, in some cases, be done indirectly through intermediaries. The main events prompting thanksgiving are harvest, birth of children, cure from illness or barrenness, success in hunting or raid, and the supply of rain, especially after a drought.

Those who offer thanksgiving at harvest time include the Abaluyia, Akamba, Alur, Ambo, Chawai, Gikuyu, Gimira-Maji, Gisu, Kaje, Katab, Lamba, Lotuko, Mamvu-Mangutu, Mao, Nandi, Shilluk (to *Nyikang*), Shona, and Sonjo. The Abaluyia do it by making sacrifices. The Akamba, Alur, Ambo, Gikuyu, Gimira-Maji, Gisu, Katab, and Shona do so by offering the first fruits. The Chawai hold thanksgiving rites at the end of the harvest, which are conducted by the senior priest of each region. The Bachwa, who live on hunting and fruit-gathering, offer to God portions of the fruits which they gather, of the honey which they find, and of the animals which they kill. The Gisu offer the first fruits to God, before anyone tastes the new crop. At their harvest ceremony, the oldest men from each Katab household, offer thanks for the supply of food, and some of the first

fruits are placed at the graves of the living-dead. At the end of the harvest period, the Nandi pray to God for health, strength, and milk. It is to the spirits that the Shona offer first fruits and thanksgiving. But at their (former) biennial and triennial assemblies, which took place after the harvest, it appears as if some of the prayers and sacrifices to God were an expression of thanksgiving.⁵⁷ The Sonjo have harvest festivals lasting five or more days after harvest, at which they make offerings at the temple of their national hero. These offerings are taken there by eight men and eight women of good moral and bodily health.⁵⁸

The Gikuyu have a thanksgiving song which we have already quoted in full, in which they thank God for their land and its fertility. When the crops are ready for harvest, the people observe a day of thanksgiving, on which a lamb whose colour resembles that of the fields is sacrificed to God. They build small granaries on the sides of the paths leading to the fields, and these are regarded as symbolic granaries for God. Here, the people place some grains as they take home their harvest from the fields, and later the grains are gathered by the elders who use them for the ritual tasting of the crops.⁵⁹

Formerly on returning from successful raids, those who offered thanks included the Akamba, Ankore, and Nandi. The Akamba, Bachwa, Basoga, and Teita thank God for the birth of children. The Bachwa women do it by offering him portions of food; Basoga parents who desperately want a child, sacrifice a goat and chickens at the shrine; and the Teita make offerings to him when barrenness has been cured.

Others thank God for rain. The Azande hold a thanksgiving ceremony during a drought or other misfortune, at which they thank God for his former gifts of good crops, and ask him to prosper their land. When the rains start, the Ila observe two or three days when they do not work, as an expression of reverence and thanksgiving to God. Although the Katab rainmakers ask God for rain, they thank their remotest progenitors when the rain comes! The Teita make offerings to God at the end of a famine.

The Bachwa, Ila, and Ngombe offer thanksgiving to God after successful hunting. The Bachwa do it by giving him portions of the heart from every animal they kill. The Ila do the same, giving him bits of meat from the animals killed, thanking him verbally, and clapping their hands. When the Ngombe succeed in their hunting, they sing thanksgiving to God. Groups sing:

God of the fathers,
Our God,
We rejoice . . .

Individuals sing thanksgiving, saying:

I have killed a boa,
I give it to my ancestor;
God of my ancestor, do you hear?
If I lie,
You, God of my ancestor, have heard.⁶⁰

The Vugusu take unexpected benefits to be expressions of God's good will, and accept them gratefully. They say, "What God offers you with one hand, you should take with both hands".⁶¹

OATHS AND CURSES

Oaths are often taken, and curses pronounced, in the name of God. This is a form of prayer, in which God is asked to witness the oath or execute the curse. Oaths are taken seriously and curses are feared greatly in African societies. Information on these two items of considerable importance in African life, is, however, very scanty, and we have only a few examples of them.

One of the four ways in which the Bacongo use God's name is in the taking of oaths. They use it to affirm or vouch for the truthfulness or gravity of the statements being made. In taking oaths the Gikuyu say, "If I do not say the truth, may God thunderstrike me!"⁶² The Itsekiri and Lunda use God's name when taking oaths, though for the Lunda this has no special binding power. If, among the Kaibi, a man is accused of murder and brought to court, he takes oath in the name of God. Both the Banyarwanda and Barundi include God's name occasionally when taking oaths, in expressions like: "May God give me a stroke!" and "May I be killed by God!"⁶³ While the Kono do not specifically mention the name of God, they implicitly address him in the common judicial saying, "Let me die if I help one party in this case more than the other!"⁶⁴ The Igbo are said to make laws and swear in the name of the female divinity of the earth.

Curses are the contrary of blessings, and whenever one of these concepts and practices is found, the other is also to be found there. On the other hand, the name of God is not used as frequently for curses as it is in pronouncing blessings. The principle is, however, that God will execute the curse if it is justifiable. As with pronouncing blessings, it is the older person, or one of a higher status,

who can effectively curse one younger or of a lower status than himself. Curses are pronounced and feared most of all among close relatives in the family or kinship group, especially by parents to the children, or uncles and aunts to their nieces and nephews. Someone may, however, curse an unknown or suspected evildoer who may or may not be a close relative. Another principle is that curses can be revoked, generally through a ceremony or ritual, depending on the seriousness of the curse.

The Banyarwanda and Barundi rarely use God's name in curses, but when they do so, the cursing is taken very seriously. In doing so, God is in effect being "turned" from his position of Parent, Friend, and Creator, into one of being an "enemy" of the person who is cursed, and this is the worst experience which that person could meet. The formula of formal cursing is in one of these forms: "May you be hated of God!", "May you be cursed by God!", "May you be given a stroke by God!" or, "May you be killed by the propitious God!"⁶⁵

The Nandi use a similar language when pronouncing serious curses. They say, "May God kill you!" or, "May God hate you!"⁶⁶ The Ila use God's name in formal curses and solemn affirmations. We have already quoted the Mende prayer in which the father of a disobedient son curses him to have no success in the world until he returns to beg his father's pardon; and later, when the son does return, the father revokes the curse.

The Kono pronounce curses in God's name, but make them rather gentle, putting the responsibility on God to take revenge. They say, "May God see this person [the wrongdoer]!" or, "God will pay him". At times they simply resign with the words: "It is in God's hands", or "I left it to God". A younger person wishing the curse to fall upon an older person, pronounces it anonymously, saying, "Let God pay him", or, "May God see that person", or, "I leave it to God". Thus he assigns to God a higher status than that of the person being cursed.⁶⁷

18 *Other Acts and Expressions of Worship*

THE USE OF GOD'S NAME

There are many ways in which African peoples use the name of God. These include incorporating it in names of individuals, using it in proverbs, blessings, oaths and curses, greetings, songs and hymns, congratulations, praises, thanksgiving, prayers, rituals and ceremonies, and ejaculations. We have already come across many of these uses, but there are others which we need to consider here.

Incorporating the name of God in children's names is reported among the Azande, Banyarwanda, Barundi, and Nuer. When the Nuer name children after God, this indicates that they have been born in answer to prayer. The Banyarwanda and Barundi, from whom we have many examples of this practice, express a number of concepts in incorporating God's name or act in people's names. Some express the power and wisdom of God, e.g., *Bizimana* (meaning "God knows everything") and *Ntawuyankira* ("No one can refuse him his way"). Others express gratitude to God, such as *Ndihokubgayo* ("I am alive because of him") and *Ntirandekura* ("He has not let me drop yet", i.e., die). Other names are like dedications of the children to God, e.g., *Mujawimana* ("Servant of God") and *Bigirimana* ("For the sake of God"). In other names, the people express praise to God for his goodness, e.g., *Niyonzima* ("He is the living One") and *Uwimana* ("He is God's"). When parents have waited long for a child to arrive, they might name it *Niyimpagaritse* ("It is he who has caused me to stand"), *Irambona* ("He sees me"), or *Niyibogora* ("It is he who perpetuates the family name"). In other cases, the children are named to show the parents' trust and dependence on God, e.g., *Niyibizi* ("He knows all about it"), *Niyonizigiye* ("It is he whom I trust"), or *Ndayiziga* ("I depend on him"). If there is strife in a family or neighbourhood, children born at this time may be named accordingly, e.g., *Ntigirankabo* ("He does not do [unkindly] as they do"), *Sibomana* ("They are not God"), or *Ndayihaya* ("I boast in him").¹

The use of God's name in proverbs seems relatively common, but our sources do not include many proverbs. We have already quoted some from the Bacongo, Ganda, Nuer, and a few other peoples. We shall add here some new examples from the Banyarwanda and Barundi who are said to have many such proverbs. When comforting those in distress, the Banyarwanda say, "The enemy prepares a grave, but God prepares you a way of escape [little door]". In the same circumstances the Barundi say, "God is greater than an army [of enemies]". To the proud, the Banyarwanda say, "Rather than praise yourself, you should be praised by God"; and the Barundi, "The creature is not greater than its Creator". Against worrying, the Barundi say, "God knows the things of tomorrow"; and of a happy end they add, "To him to whom he gives, he does not give by measure". Concerning God's safe keeping, one proverb says, "No one can take from him to whom God has given".²

For the use of God's name in songs, we draw examples from the Barundi and Ngombe. In hushing or pacifying babies, the Barundi sing the following song among others:

Hush, child of my mother,
Hush, hush, O my mother!
God who gave you to me,
If only I could meet him
I would fall on my knees and pray to him,
I would pray for little babies,
For little babies on my back.

You came when the moon was shining,
You came when another was rising.
Hush, field that we share,
That we share with God!
God who gave you to me
May he also bring you up for me. . . .

Part of a Barundi lament dirge says:

As for me, God has eaten me,
As for me, he has not dealt with me as with others.
With singing I would sing,
If only my brother was with me . . .
Woe is me!³

The Ngombe use God's name extensively in hunting songs. They take group hunting very seriously, for which they make solemn

preparations lasting several weeks. En route to the hunting ground, the men stop, form a circle round a tree, sing, and dance, ending with the following song:

God made a mistake,
He made us eat hope;
He made us fast.

When they succeed in their hunting expedition, they acknowledge this success to God, and sing him songs of thanksgiving, two of which we have already quoted in the previous chapter.⁴

It is reported that, among the Lunda, the name of God is heard often in jokes and ejaculations.⁵ This is the only such example that I have found in our sources.

We have seen other uses of God's name in previous sections of this book. The peoples who use the name of God in pronouncing blessings include the Akamba, Banyarwanda, Barundi, Chagga, Ganda, Gikuyu, Gisu, Ingassana, Jie, Lozi, Maasai, Mende, Meru, Nandi, and Nuer. Those who use it in taking oaths include the Bacongo, Banyarwanda, Barundi, Gikuyu, (Igbo), Ila, Itsekiri, Kaibi, Kono, and Lunda. The peoples who use it in pronouncing formal curses include the Banyarwanda, Barundi, Ila, Kono, Mende, and Nandi. Those who use it in salutations, greetings, farewells and congratulations include the Banyarwanda, Barundi, Kono, Mende, Shilluk, and Tswana. Many use it in prayers and thanksgiving, in rituals and ceremonies, examples of which are found in virtually all African peoples.

In two cases it is reported that the use of God's name is forbidden. Among the Tswana it was formerly forbidden to use the name *Modimo* when referring to God, though this is heard more commonly now.⁶ Except in rare occasions, the mention of God's name is not allowed among the Herero. It is mentioned only in thanksgiving after unexpected blessings, or when all other help has failed. The observation of this restriction seems to have become relaxed in recent times.⁷

DEDICATIONS AND RESIGNATION TO GOD

Some of the Shona consecrate the virgin daughters of their chiefs to God.⁸ The Sebei present or dedicate cows to God, keeping them alive. When such cows are killed, they are eaten by the whole clan, and others are dedicated in their place.⁹

Formerly the Ganda had women servants dedicated to some of the

national divinities. These were children dedicated by parents who had prayed to the particular divinity to give them children. The children would remain in the temple service until they reached puberty, when they would get married to the grooms chosen by the divinities whom they served.¹⁰

Among some of the Igbo, parents introduce children at the age of six months to the earth divinity. When cutting teeth, the children are presented at the shrines of the living-dead of their families.¹¹

A feeling and act of resignation to God seem to come upon people of different societies when they come to the end of human abilities and knowledge. This happens mainly in time of serious illness or misfortune. At such times the Bacongo say, "Leave it to God"; and the Banyarwanda express the same concept saying, "I have done all to the spirits and now I leave it in the hands of God alone". In time of serious illness or desperation, the Akamba sigh, "Ach, we hold him up together with God". This means that it is entirely up to God to spare or take away the sick person. The Lugbara show the same mood of resignation or submission to God by saying of a sick person, "If God wants him to die, then truly he will die. If God wants him to recover, then truly he will recover".¹² A similar expression is reported among the Mende who remark, "If God says I shall perish, I shall perish". When an accident occurs, they say with a sigh, "It is God [i.e., God permitted it]"; or "Only that which God shows will remain [i.e., nothing happens but with God's consent]". They seem to be conscious of God's final authority as they end their prayers with the expression "God willing".¹³

When the Nandi make an unsuccessful undertaking (like a raid), they hold a ceremony of humiliation and repentance before God. The Maasai do the same when national calamities come upon them. The Nuer consider themselves to be extremely small, simple, and tiny before God, and "accept misfortunes with resignation", as being the will of God.¹⁴ At such moments they do not complain; they say instead that God is good. The Urhobo are said to address "prayers of a submissive nature" to God.¹⁵

VENERATION, FEAR, AND PRAISE

On the concept of veneration, awe, and reverence to God, there is no information in our sources.¹⁶ We are not equipped therefore, to judge or indicate what sort of feeling African peoples have when they worship God. In some cases, they definitely show a sense of reverence or fear.

It is difficult to define "the fear of God", since "fear" can mean both "horror" and "respect, honour, or esteem". That Africans fear God in the sense of esteeming him, is obvious, though they fear him more in attitude and action than in words. He is, for them, in the category of the Creator, the Father, the Sustainer, and Giver of providence, all of which entitle him to be feared, esteemed, and respected. This can be judged from the many examples of their concepts which we have already cited here.

On the concept of praising God, we have only a few oral examples. Again it would seem that Africans express their praise in deeds and attitudes more than in words. When the Chagga offer sacrifices, they pray for various benefits, telling God that "We praise thee, and pray to thee, and fall before thee . . ." ¹⁷ In their prayer to God, the Shilluk have a phrase in which they say, "We praise thee, thou that art God . . ." ¹⁸ When the Ila perform the rainmaking rites, they sing God's "praise-names".

The term "praise-names" is used in some of our sources. These names describe mainly the nature and activities of God, rather than literally "praising" him as such. There are many examples of them from all over Africa. The Akan "praise-names" describe God as Creator, Giver of rain, the God of comfort, and he who is beyond all thanks. ¹⁹ Among the Banyarwanda and Barundi, they describe God as the Creator, Ruler, Giver, the Seeing One, the One from the First, the Ancient of Days, the Father of the placenta, and the like. ²⁰ Among the Ngombe, these "praise-names" describe God's activities as the Moulder, the One who clears the forest, the Beginner, and the All-powerful. ²¹ The Kiga names describe God as "the One who makes the sun set", "the One who gave everything on this earth and can also take it away", and as "He who carried everyone on his back". ²² The Ewe "praise-names" of God mean the Almighty, the Creating Spirit, God full of pity, and the Saving Spirit. ²³

We may say that "praise-names" are summaries of people's concepts of the nature and activities of God. They are not liturgical praises of God. This is another of the terms that need redefinition by theologians and anthropologists, and may have to be abandoned for a better term, in order to avoid confusion and misleading implications.

MUSIC, SINGING, AND DANCING IN WORSHIP

Written information on the place and use of music, singing, and dancing in worship is disappointingly little. Religious ceremonies and

rites are often accompanied by one or more of these activities which are a very popular part of African life in general.

The Bavenda are said to worship God with singing and dancing. When the Ila invoke him to send them rain, they do so with singing and presumably dancing. Likewise, at their annual sacrifices and prayers, the Jie affirm with singing that God will give them rain and cause the crops to grow. They dance and rejoice as well. At their big religious assemblies, the Shona used to use cymbals and trumpets, with much clapping of hands and singing. The Tonga ceremony of praying for rain is accompanied with communal singing and dancing. Among the Warjawa, when there is public need, whole communities assemble to sacrifice, dance, and call upon God for his aid.

On the occasion of sacrificing to the divinity of plenty, the Banyoro dance and sing throughout the night, dispersing and returning to their homes the next morning. The Ga have different songs and styles of dancing for each of their divinities.

The Fajulu narrate that before heaven and earth were severed, the inhabitants of both worlds used to invite each other to festivities at which there were dances. They picture dancing and music as dating from the primeval days of human existence.

Examples of music, singing, and dancing in worship are certainly more plentiful, and one hopes that research will make these activities and their study available for readers. Some rites do not involve either singing or dancing, but for most religious ceremonies, it is impossible to imagine that African peoples could assemble and part solemnly without singing and dancing in honour to God, or as an expression of their feelings. As the drum is the commonest musical instrument, we can safely assume that it is used in most cases, though other instruments like whistles, bells, horns, guitars (modern), etc. are also used.²⁴

FAITH AND SEARCH AFTER GOD

African peoples have no creeds to recite: their creeds are within them, in their blood and in their hearts. They have a body of beliefs about God, but this is not formulated into single creeds that can be recited. Their beliefs are expressed through concepts of God, attitudes towards him, and the various acts of worship. Furthermore, they are collective, communal, or corporate beliefs, held by groups or communities. The individual "believes" what other members of the corporate society "believe", and he "believes" because others "believe". We have shown with innumerable examples, how African

peoples manifest their body of beliefs in and about God. They trust him that he will bring them rain, deliver them from trouble, accept their prayers and sacrifices, give them children, and so on. African peoples are not spiritually illiterate, but the word "Faith" in its technical sense seems something foreign to them. To assert, however, that they have "no faith" in God, would be absolute nonsense, and there are no atheists in traditional African societies. An Ashanti proverb seems to summarize the situation well; it says, "No one shows a child the Supreme Being", because even the child knows of God almost automatically by instinct.²⁵

We have shown that people seek after God's help and attention through prayers, invocations, sacrifices, and offerings. They believe that he responds and helps them. This search after his attention is utilitarian and not purely spiritual; it is practical and not mystical. As far as our sources are concerned, African peoples do not "thirst after God" for his own sake alone. They seek to obtain what he gives, be that material or even spiritual; they do not seem to search for him as the final reward or satisfaction of the human soul or spirit.

19 *Worship:* *Intermediaries and Other Specialists*

GENERAL

The concept of intermediaries is widespread in African societies. Man feels that he cannot or should not approach God alone or directly, and must do so through the mediation of special persons or other beings. The reason for this feeling and practice derives mainly from the social and political life of different African peoples. It is the custom, for example, among some societies, for the children to speak to their fathers through their mothers or older brothers and sisters. In others, the subjects approach their king or chief only indirectly through the intermediary of those who are closer to him. Certainly these examples do not apply in many societies, but they illustrate the social and political background which has fostered the birth and development of the concept of intermediaries in religious life. There are, however, occasions when people approach God directly without the use of intermediaries.

PRIESTS

The existence of priests is reported among many societies, including the Abaluyia, Alur, Amba (also priestesses), Ankore (hereditary), Ashanti, Aushi, Bakene, Banyarwanda, Banyoro, Barundi, Basoga (also priestesses), Bavenda (hereditary), Binawa (hereditary), Butawa, Chawai, Edo, Ewe, Ga, Ganda, Gisu, Herero, Igbo, Kipsigis, Kitimi, Kurama, Lango, Lozi, Mekan, Mondari, Rukuba, Sandawe, Shona, Sonjo (hereditary), Srubu (hereditary), Tikar, Turu, Vugusu, Warjawa, and Yoruba.

In some of these societies, the priests are formally trained and commissioned ("ordained"). The duties of priests are mainly making sacrifices, offerings, and prayers, conducting both public and private rites and ceremonies, giving advice, performing judicial functions in some societies, helping in search of lost things (in some societies), caring for the temples and shrines where these exist, and above all, fulfilling their office as religious intermediaries between men and God.

The study of African traditional priesthood is still at its infancy, and we do not have many full accounts of it. We shall take examples from some of the peoples mentioned above to illustrate the concepts attached to the priesthood among them.

The Ewe believe that their priests are "called" by God. Before someone becomes a priest, he is trained first, then initiated and finally cleansed (or "consecrated"). Priestly duties include the performing of daily and weekly rites, the offering of prayers for blessings, for the barren and other needy persons, and the making of libation.¹ The Lozi have a supreme priest above the others, who makes offerings to God on national crises. Under him are other priests appointed by the king in council and put in charge of the royal graves; these also make national offerings and sacrifices.² The Mekan believe that God communicates with the priests through the rainbow which bridges them with him.

The Sonjo priesthood is said to have originated with God's call to a man in a dream, "to perform sacrifices for the Sonjo". Henceforth it became hereditary, and each of the six villages has its own temples and priests, in addition to those found in the headquarters. The priests and their families wear only skin garments, and qualified priests wear a bracelet on the left wrist. The numbers, names, and activities of the priests are not divulged to outsiders. Their duties are mainly temple rites, and the priests are said to be the "repositories of mythology and . . . experts on questions of theology".³

The priest officiating at the Shona assembly of approaching God is not allowed to partake of alcoholic drinks. The religious leader (the *Mugwe*) of the Meru must observe sexual continence before and after making sacrifices and special prayers.

In some societies, the priest has also political duties. Among the Herero, the priest is also the chief of the local group. He is regarded as representing God among the people. His duties include the care of the holy fire in the temple, sacrificing, the maintenance of national (tribal) ceremonies and customs, and the ritual tasting of milk, before which nobody may taste or use it. The tasting of milk is regarded as neutralizing its holiness, thus making it safe for people to use it.⁴ The Mondari priest is also the political head, the rainmaker, and the judge. The people believe that when he is giving judgement, his words are given to him by God.⁵ The same is reported among the Rukuba, whose priests are also the political heads of their villages. The duties of these priests include interceding with God on behalf of the people, performing the rainmaking ceremonies, and leading the communities

in their fertility festivals. Each priest is put on probation for seven years, and at one place the period is between thirty-six and forty-two years. If drought, pestilence, or shortage of wives arises during the probation of a priest, he is disqualified and deposed.⁶

The Butawa political headman also presides as the priest at the religious rites. Similarly, the Tikar political head (*fon*) performs priestly functions on the occasion of the annual sacrifices to God and the departed. These sacrifices are to ensure the fertility of the women and land. It is reported that in 1946 this king-priest had ninety-four wives. There is, however, an elected high priest who is known as "the father of the country", and a high priestess who is known as "the mother of the country". These two assist the head of the country in making major sacrifices at planting time and during the dry period. This is done at the royal cemetery, but there are altars along the paths, at which minor rituals are carried out. Each political subdivision has centres with shrines and stone altars, where offerings and sacrifices are made to God.⁷

Among some societies, priests serve both God and the divinities, or only the latter. The Ankore hereditary priests are only for the divinity of war, and there are none for God.⁸ The same is reported about the Ashanti and Banyoro, who have priests only for their divinities.⁹ The Basoga priests serve both God and the divinities. The Ganda had formerly a highly developed priesthood for the divinities, and some of the temples had up to four priests. The duties of these priests were to receive the people who came to have an interview with the divinities, take offerings, intercept the oracles given through the mediums, and maintain the temple areas. The priests are regarded as sacred; they wear barkcloths, nine white goat skins round the waist, and a head-dress of a jackal skin. When the priests are robed for duty, people may neither touch them nor draw near to them.¹⁰ For the Yoruba, "the priest has always been an important social figure. . . . Virtually nothing is done without the ministration of the priest". He is said to look after the "soul" of the community and to feature prominently in the installation of kings and making of chiefs.¹¹

SEERS, PROPHETS, AND ORACLES

Written information on the subject of these specialists is very slight, and the terms tend to be used loosely.

Among the Gikuyu, the seers are ritual elders supposed to be in direct communication with God. He gives them instructions in

dreams, and they decide the time for the agricultural sacrifices.¹² The Lango are said to receive God's advice through the seers on matters both great and small.¹³ When special needs arise, the Ila go to a "prophet or prophetess", who guides them in performing the necessary ritual and invocations to God.¹⁴ The Turkana diviners are said to receive prophetic dreams and to foretell the future.¹⁵ It is held by the Tswana that formerly they had seers or prophets who foretold droughts, diseases, and other major events. They received their revelations either from God or the spirits.¹⁶

The Meru religious leader (the *Mugwe*) is said to derive his power from God. He is considered "a wise man, a man of God, the chief, leader, and saviour of his own people". It was one such *Mugwe* who led the Meru from their former land of bondage. They say that "the *Mugwe* is the one who knows and teaches about God". His calling comes from God, and he becomes God's messenger as well as representing the people's needs before God. He is like the father of the Meru, "he prays to God for 'this people of mine'. . . . He is regarded as a man of God . . . he is identified with God". He is also the tutor of young initiates and the guarantor of the society's prosperity.¹⁷

The Ganda mediums or oracles act as the mouthpieces of the divinities. They are both men and women chosen through being possessed by the divinities concerned. A woman medium is regarded as the bride of the divinity, and remains chaste all her life.¹⁸ Among the Yoruba, the Ifa oracle of divination has priests whose training lasts three years and who are also physicians.¹⁹

DIVINERS, MEDICINE-MEN, AND WITCHES

Diviners are mentioned often in our sources, but no serious or detailed study of them is given. They are briefly described in E. G. Parrinder's *West African Religion* (1961) and J. S. Mbiti's *African Religions and Philosophy* (1969). We shall take a few examples here. In time of drought, the Ila go to the diviner to find out why God does not give them rain. The Jie believe that some of their diviners receive revelations from God. The Lugbara believe that their diviners are connected with God in his immanent aspect, and that he gives them their mystical power (*tali*). Nearly all their diviners are women; their power is hereditary and God is thought to possess a would-be diviner in her adolescence. She then wanders in the woods for several days, at the end of which she returns home, with the power to divine. On getting married she becomes a diviner, and a shrine is erected to her, to which people refer as "the hut of God". The

diviners are spoken of as “the children of God” and “the people of God”, being regarded as “the link between men and God”. Among other things they bring back the dead to the living, and these are thought to help the people live in peace.²⁰

The Turkana believe that the diviner is God’s chief representative. He begins his career by a period of complete retreat from other people, lasting from one day to several months. During this period of withdrawal, he lives in deserted areas. When he returns to society, he begins to have prophetic dreams, “foretells the future, heals the sick, combats witchcraft and sorcery, cures barrenness, purifies or fortifies age-sets, predicts successful raids, and induces rain”.²¹

Among the Toro, diviners are said to derive their power from God. The Zulu narrate that when men lost the gift of immortality, God gave them doctors, medicines, and diviners—a most worthy consolation!²²

Medicine-men or traditional doctors are generally given bad publicity by foreign writers who simply harp on their preconceived notions, which do not match the facts. The medicine-men are the greatest friends of African societies, and each community has one or more of them. Their main duties are medical, but in some societies the medicine-men perform religious functions in addition. We shall give some examples of the latter practice.

Among the Akamba, the medicine-men determine the nature and form of rite to be performed in times of need, and some of them direct the actual performance of it.²³ The Bena associate medicine and medical skill of these doctors with God.²⁴ It is said among the Lango, that God gives advice through the doctors. The Tswana believe that the professional knowledge of the medicine-men “is a gift of God”.²⁵ In time of war, the Luo medicine-men make prayers and sacrifices to God.²⁶

When twins are born, the Gisu medicine-men sacrifice fowls to the divinities. The medicine-men of the Hadzapi, are reported to sing “at certain times” to the sun, which is associated with God.²⁷ It is the Kyiga medicine-men who recommend when offerings are to be made to the spirits.²⁸ The Lango diviners who also fulfil the office of the medicine-men, are said to derive their power from God.

Witches and sorcerers are the great enemies of society, performing anti-social deeds, which poison its welfare. Sometimes people create imaginary ideas about witches, and innocent women are often suspected of, and even persecuted for, being witches. Sorcerers may or may not use magical means to harm their enemies, but they are

feared perhaps more than they deserve. In no single case have I come across any indication that witches or sorcerers act in an intermediary capacity between God and men. There are, however, a few examples in which witches, sorcerers, or their powers, are linked with God. The Lango say that sorcerers can generate the power of God through certain acts.²⁹ The Lugbara associate God's immanent aspect with witches and sorcerers.³⁰ The Lunda believe that all things belong to God, including the power of the sorcerers.³¹ It is also said, among the Barundi, that God gives power to the magicians and witches.³² The Bena associate the power of wizards with God.³³

Magicians belong partly to the category of sorcerers and partly to the category of medicine-men. They use their magic power and knowledge for both good and evil purposes as far as the rest of society is concerned. When they use it for good purposes, they are really diviners, medicine-men or rainmakers; and when they employ it for evil purposes, they are witches (wizards) and sorcerers. It is doubtful whether "pure" magicians really exist, apart from these two major groups and the category of conjurors. There is, however, magic power, comprising partly a knowledge and manipulation of secrets generally unknown to the public, and partly common sense, deceit, and conjuring tricks. The Zulu believe that God loves "certain magicians" whom they call "the shepherds of heaven", and through whom he influences the weather if they are ritually clean.³⁴

RAINMAKERS

Rainmakers are another useful and important category of specialists found in many African societies. On the whole they exercise their profession in consultation with God, through prayer, sacrifice, and trust. Many of them are well-versed in the knowledge of the weather, the heavens, the plants, and the insects whose habits indicate changes in the weather. In some societies they hold high positions, which are often hereditary. Their duties are mainly to make rain, but they may also stop it when too much is falling; and in some societies they bless the seeds before planting or the harvest before it is gathered in or used. They may also take part in other religious ceremonies.

The best known and studied example comes from the Luvedu, with their famous "Rain-Queen". She is the political head of the nation, the symbol of its welfare and prosperity. With the help of other experts, she not only makes rain for her people, but may stop it from falling on the land of her enemies.³⁵

The Acholi rainmaker approaches God in prayer, and the people believe that God sends rain thereafter.³⁶ The Banyoro rainmakers pray to God for help, as do also those of the Bari.³⁷ The Hadya rainmakers are said to "make rain without supplicating the sky God but not against his will".³⁸ Among the Katab, the rainmakers perform rites involving the living-dead, but prayers are directed to God; and when the rain comes, the rainmakers thank their remotest forefathers who presumably are thought to act as intermediaries.³⁹ The Lugbara believe that God gives special mystical power (*tali*) to rainmakers and diviners. They say that "Rainmakers know the words of God; that is their work".⁴⁰ This indicates that rainmakers are thought to be in a special relationship with God, so as to get to "know his words", and to get power from him.

Among the Madi, the rainmaking ceremony is the most important religious rite, and there are at least forty-five centres for this purpose. Using a special set of stones believed to have come down from the sky, the rainmaker prays to God for rain.⁴¹ The Moru rainmaking ceremony involves the rainmaker going to the grave of a famous rainmaker, carrying a pot of water with him. When he arrives there, he washes his face with this water and prays to God for rain. A hen is sacrificed, its head being cut over the pot. The people believe that the spirit of God possesses the rainmakers to perform their duties and produce rain. This power of God gives the possessor a dangerous ritual status, and rainmakers are consequently feared greatly. They belong to one particular clan (*Böri*), whose members are said to be possessed by God's power, making them to some degree "holy". The Moru believe that God gave the Böri clan this power when he created them.⁴²

The Nuba believe that God appears at times to the rainmakers in dreams, and that he causes the crops to grow when the rainmakers ask him to do so. The people have a sacred cave which only the rainmaker is allowed to enter. At the rainmaking ceremony, the rainmaker pours out a little amount of beer on the ground, and invokes God saying, "Drink thou first, and give increase to others". Another short prayer says, "Our God, who art in the sky, we want thee to bring us water [because] we are about to die".⁴³

A number of rainmakers are said to exist among the Nandi. During a severe drought, a public ceremony for making rain is held, at which a black sheep is pushed into the river. When it comes out, the old men pray to God for rain.⁴⁴ Among the Ndebele, the rainmakers come from one clan, and those who observe the rainmaking cult

are known as "the Children of God" or "the People of God". They sacrifice black cattle, sheep, or goats, and offer black cloths, at the cult shrine, when they plead with God for rain.⁴⁵ The Shona believe that the spirit of God possesses the rainmaker who is also a priest. The people affirm, however, that rain comes from God,⁴⁶ which puts the priest-rainmaker in the position of simply being the instrument of God. It is reported that the land of the Tonga is well supplied with rainmakers, each of whom has a shrine for the rain cult. These shrines, which are both natural and man-made, are believed to be inhabited by spirits that have the power of interceding with God for rain and other national needs like help in epidemics. The rain-making rite is performed annually, at which occasion the whole community in each region or area assembles round its own shrine. The people first undergo a ritual cleansing, from "any disrespect that might have been shown towards the shrine". Afterwards they dance and pray for rain.⁴⁷

Other information indicates that there are rainmakers among the Akamba, Didinga, Elgeyo, Fajulu (hereditary), Ganda, Gelaba, Gisu, Kamasya, Lokoiya (hereditary and transmittable), Luo, Makaraka, Teuso, Toposa, and others. We have already pointed out that rain is extremely important in African life. Rainmakers have a special duty, both intercessory and psychological. In the literature available to me, I have not seen mention of a single rainmaker who claims to have absolute power of making rain as such. The rainmakers intercede with God, and the performance of their rites has the secondary and psychological, but equally important, value of binding together and outwardly expressing the "faith" of the community in its expectation of rain. The eyes of rainmakers are constantly lifted towards the heavens, observing the clouds and heavenly bodies, and pleading with God. Once they take off their eyes from the heavens, they fail badly in their profession.

KINGS AND CHIEFS, ELDERS, AND OTHER SPECIAL PEOPLE

The subject of *kings and chiefs* has received considerable attention from scholars.⁴⁸ Not all African peoples had traditional rulers, but where kings and chiefs existed, their office is regarded in some societies as having been divinely instituted. The king or chief would thus be looked upon as both a political head and a mystical religious figure whose person is "sacred" and who symbolizes the prosperity and welfare of his nation. In some situations, the king leads or takes

part in religious ceremonies; but in any case, the religious life of his subjects meets with his approval and reflects his person and position. We have not the space to deal at length with this subject here, and we can only take a few examples to illustrate the religious concepts connected with kings and chiefs.

The Bavenda believe that when God is angry with their chief, he punishes the country with drought, locusts, or flood. They also hold that God appears as a great fire in thunderstorms, near the chief's house, and in a voice of thunder makes his will known to the chief. The chief then immediately enters the house and converses with God before God moves on in another clap of thunder.⁴⁹

Among both the Butawa and Kaibi, the chief presides at the religious ceremonies.

The Ganda regarded the king as being ultimately their religious head and the symbol of their prosperity. In the traditional structure, the king ruled through chiefs and subchiefs under him. The people conceive of God in a parallel structure, in which the Creator God has under him divinities who are in charge of different departments of nature.

Among the Herero, the chief is also the priest and his house is the temple of God. In this temple-house are kept holy things, including the "ancestor sticks" and two firesticks. The chief is God's representative, maintaining the tribal customs and observing the traditional ceremonies. His daughter from the main wife takes care of the holy fire, with which the welfare of the people is intimately connected.⁵⁰

It is the Kaonde headman or chief who prays to God on behalf of the people.⁵¹ At the planting ceremony which the Lozi observe annually, it is their village chief who erects an altar, upon which some of the seeds for planting and the agricultural implements are placed and afterwards blessed. The chief conducts the ceremony, praying God to bless the seeds and the implements. The people believe that the royal ancestors act as intermediaries between them and God.⁵²

The Shilluk believe that their national founder *Nyikang*, was also their first king. He has now become "a mythological personification of the timeless kingship", as well as being the intermediary between men and God. The spirit of *Nyikang* is believed to be in every king since the line began thirty-one successions ago, counting back from 1948. We have already quoted the special vocabulary used of the Shilluk king, who is described as "the first-born of God", "the

child of God", "the reflection of the ancestors", "the master of the world", "the last-born of God", etc.⁵³ The Sangama speak of their king as *Zabi-babi* (king-god), and he is also their religious head.⁵⁴

Sacral rulership is found also among the Ashanti, Luvedu, Swazi, Zulu and others.⁵⁵

Elders are given a place of great respect in traditional African societies. Leading and taking part in religious functions are among their many duties. Even where priests exist, elders often take part in some or all of the ceremonies, in addition to conducting domestic and minor rituals.

The Akamba, like many other societies, have no formal priests, and it is the elders, both male and female, who officiate in making sacrifices and offerings. They are required by traditional regulations, to refrain from sexual intercourse one day before and six days after the ceremony. It is only they who may enter the shrines; and they are regarded as authorities in religious customs and practices. Age, social status, and experience are their main qualifications.⁵⁶

For their religious life, the Gikuyu depend very much on the services and wisdom of their elders. It is the elders, both men and women (who have passed their menopause), who lead their communities in making offerings, sacrifices, and prayers. During the ceremonies connected with the rites of passage, the head of the family is the key person. It is the elders who sacrifice and pray for rain, take charge of the planting ceremony, purify the crops, and perform other ceremonies. They also officiate in the rites of making libation and other means of contact with the living-dead. As the Gikuyu have no formal priesthood, it is their elders who fulfil that office.⁵⁷

Among the Ila, the elders conduct prayers during sickness in the family and when men go out hunting. The senior members of the Jie community or tribe conduct the annual prayers and ceremonies. It is the Kaje elders who assemble to perform the rainmaking ceremony; and the Katab thankoffering ceremony is also led by the senior male members of each household. The Luo elders take part in the religious ceremonies, and it is they who pray God to strike dead any notorious wrongdoers in the community.⁵⁸ Nandi elders pray frequently to God, both in private and public needs. The Sangama believe that only through the king's councillors, who undoubtedly are elders, can their prayers reach God.⁵⁹ During sickness, it is the Sebei old people who make offerings and pray to God. The men do so for the

sick male persons: and the women for the sick female members of the community.⁶⁰ Among the Shilluk only the old people, chiefs, or other respected persons may use the prayer to God, which is believed to have been taught them by their national founder *Nyikang*.⁶¹

These are but a few examples mentioned in our sources, in which elders play a leading or important role in the religious life of their communities. There are others mentioned among the Ambo, Barundi, Barotse, Basuto, Kaibi, Maasai, Nuba, Urhobo, and no doubt many more peoples.

In some societies there are additional "*special people*" who serve, in one capacity or another, in the religious life of their communities. These have not been well studied, and we have only a few examples of them. At the Turkana community prayers, ceremonies, and feasts, all the initiated men offer prayers on behalf of the community.⁶² When the Shona formerly held their big religious assemblies, the sacrifices were offered by the priest, assisted by two virgins.⁶³ At some of their prayers, the Maasai may use children to assist the elders who are conducting the prayers. When the Gikuyu make sacrifices and prayers for rain, two children under the age of eight must take part in the ceremony. These children, a boy and a girl, are said to be "pure in heart, mind, and body, and are free from worldly sin".⁶⁴ They are not, however, formally dedicated to God. Formerly the Ganda had "vestal virgins", who had been "brought to the temples after weaning", as presents to the divinities concerned, from parents who had prayed to them for children. Their duties were to keep the temple fire burning, supply firewood and water, and guard the sacred pipes and tobacco which the mediums smoked before giving oracles. These "vestal virgins" remained there until they reached puberty, when the divinity concerned decided whom they should marry.⁶⁵

THE LIVING-DEAD AND THE SPIRITS

In the ontological structure, the *living-dead* (i.e., the departed of up to four or five generations back) occupy the intermediate position between men and the spirits and God. They "speak" a bilingual language of human beings whom they recently "left" through physical death, and of the spirits to whom they are now joined, or of God to whom they are now nearer than when they were physical men. Because of this ontological position, the living-dead constitute the largest group of intermediaries in African societies. This

explains, to a great extent, the reason why African respect for the departed is so great and the cult connected with the living-dead is so deeply rooted in African life and thought. In many societies the approach to God is regarded as a corporate act performed by the whole community of both the living and the departed. The departed may also be expected to relay human requests and needs to God, and sometimes to relay his response back to human beings. There are many references in our sources to the cult or activities connected with the departed, but hardly any thorough study of this subject has been made. We give here some examples illustrating the intermediary functions of the living-dead.

When, among the Basuto, someone wants to approach God, he does not do so directly. He first starts a chain reaction, by asking his brother (whether alive or dead) to relay his request to his father. The father in turn approaches his own father, who is supposed to approach his own father, and so on. This continues on until the message reaches someone among the departed, who is sufficiently worthy to approach God. This "person" then finally relays the human request which has travelled through many "hands" and "mouths".⁶⁶

A similar practice is reported among the Ngoni, who confess that they do not know much about God. They approach him, therefore, through the living-dead and the departed, whom they entrust with conveying their messages to God. In making their prayer requests, they recite the names of the departed whom they knew, and these in turn are expected to intercede with their more remote forefathers, who do the same until the message finally reaches God. The people believe that the living-dead know God in a way which is not possible for human beings.⁶⁷ The same is believed and done by the Shona. Their priests mention first the name of the most recent living-dead, then the next, and the next, until they reach the name of the first known tribal chief. They ask this chief then to pass on their requests to God.⁶⁸ Both the Shona and Bavenda consider the living-dead of the royal family to be the intermediaries between God and the people.

When praying for rain, the Kaonde solicit the help of their living-dead, because they think that ordinary men cannot pray directly to God. Among the Chawai, it is the heads of the families who sacrifice and pray to God through their living-dead. The Kurama consider the living-dead to be "the voice" of men in the other world. Their priests intercede with them, therefore, creating in effect two categories

of intermediaries. The Lunda approach God through their living-dead and other human spirits. When praying to God, the Butawa address their prayers through the living-dead.

The Nandi believe that God can only be approached through the mediation of the living-dead. These are regarded as active agents in human affairs, up to the third generation from the oldest surviving members of the family. The living-dead are also thought to punish human beings in order to prevent them from upsetting the "balance of nature" through their crimes.⁶⁹ When the Gikuyu assemble to approach God in sacrifice or prayer, they believe that their living-dead assemble with them, because such acts of worship involve the whole community in the human and spiritual worlds.⁷⁰ The Luo believe that when the living-dead have been properly buried, they pray to God to bless their human families. The Lotuko say that their living-dead intercede with God for rain.

Many other peoples hold the same concept that the living-dead are the intermediaries between God and men. Those mentioned in our sources include the Ashanti, Igbira, Katab, Lunda, Mende, Nupe, Rumaiya, Tikar, Tonga, and Tswana.

There is only a little information about the intermediary functions of the *spirits* and *divinities*. Some of these spirits were once human beings, and some belong to the "race" of spirits. Our literature does not draw a distinction between these two categories of spirits, and it is not always clear which group is meant.

The Ewe believe that God created the spirits specifically to act as intermediaries between him and human beings.⁷¹ Although the Ila believe that "God's ears are long", they are said to seek contact with him through the spirits, at times.⁷² Other societies among whom the spirits are believed to act as intermediaries include the Amba, Ashanti, Basuto, Igbira, Lamba, Mende, Nandi, Ngoni, Shona, and Tonga. Our sources do not give us further information beyond casual references.

The Igbo are said to have divinities to whom prayers and offerings are frequently made, and who convey the prayers and offerings to God.⁷³ The Ashanti divinities act as intermediaries, and it is believed that they were the last to be made by God in order to protect men.⁷⁴ The Banyarwanda have divinity intermediaries who are associated with the shrines, but when these fail, the people pray directly to God.⁷⁵ It is reported that the Gumuz have "guardian angels who act as intermediaries" between men and God, and who refer human

prayers to God.⁷⁶ The Lozi believe that God has two councillors, and that these, together with the departed kings, are the intermediaries between him and men.⁷⁷

The Barundi consider their national hero (*Kiranga*) as their mediator with God; but if he fails to help, the matter is left in the hands of God.⁷⁸ The same concept is held among the Shilluk, who consider their national founder (*Nyikang*) to be their chief mediator and intermediary with God. They invoke him alone, or occasionally with God.⁷⁹ The Sonjo also have the same concept and practice with regard to their national hero (*Khambageu*), whom they believe to be associated intimately with God and to whom they address their prayers.⁸⁰ The Ila are said to have a similar figure (*Bulongo*) who, however, is the intermediary between God and the spirits of the departed. There are priests for him, and offerings are made to him. Little is known about *Bulongo* who may, or may not, have been a historical figure around whom mythology has now grown.⁸¹

ANIMALS AND INANIMATE THINGS

It is remarkable that in a continent so full of animals both big and small, they do not seem to be regarded as intermediaries. According to our sources, the only exceptions to this observation are few and unclear. The Ganda regard the wagtail as God's prime minister, and as the mediator between him and his people.⁸² The Sidamo consider the hyenas and serpents to be intermediaries between God and the chief ritual expert.⁸³ The Turu put the python in an intermediary position between God and the departed.⁸⁴ The Igbira believe that animals have spirits who, together with human spirits, act as the intermediaries through whom people approach and reach God.⁸⁵

There is no mention in our sources of any inanimate objects being regarded as intermediaries. Where some natural phenomena or objects are personified, or thought to be inhabited by spiritual beings, it is possible that people may address their prayers to them. In such cases, the prayers are addressed to the "divinity" or "spirit" and not to the object or phenomenon as such. The Elgeyo are said to regard the sun as their intermediary which forwards their prayers to God.⁸⁶ It is possible that the sun is either personified or thought to be inhabited by a spiritual being. One writer says that among the Nandi there are three types of intermediaries: spiritual beings, living beings, and material objects. He does not give us further information on the subject.⁸⁷

Until more knowledge comes to light, we may conclude that African peoples do not regard either animals or inanimate objects as intermediaries between God and men. They seem to have a sufficient number of other intermediaries, in the persons of the priests, rainmakers, elders, diviners, medicine-men, kings, chiefs, and the living-dead.

20 *Times and Places of Worship*

In this chapter we shall consider when and where African peoples turn to God in acts of worship such as prayer, sacrifice, offerings, and the like.

TIMES OF WORSHIP

These may be grouped as follows:

Every day: a number of peoples pray to God every day. These include the Abaluyia (morning), Azande (daily), Galla (morning and evening), Ila (with offerings, morning), Luo (morning), Mao (with offerings or sacrifices, after sunset), Masongo (at sunset), Nandi (morning, sometimes twice daily), Nkum (morning), Nuer (any time), Ovambo (morning and evening, during war), Urhobo (morning), Vugusu (morning), and Yoruba (morning).

At the observation of the rites of passage: the four main rites of passage are birth, initiation, marriage, and death. Not all African peoples observe these four, and some rites receive more emphasis than others. The societies in which prayers and sacrifices to God are made at some of these key moments include the Abaluyia (also at the naming ceremony), Gikuyu, Gisu (at initiation time), Ingassana, Meru, Teita (at circumcision), and Turkana.

At the harvest ceremony: this is a happy time, often marked with ceremonies and festivities. Some societies give thanks or make sacrifices and offerings to God at this time. These include the Abaluyia, Akamba (also before the crops ripen and at threshing time), Alur, Ambo, Chawai, Gikuyu, Gimira-Maji, Gisu, Kaje, Katab, Lamba, Lotuko, Mamvu (to, or through, the living-dead), Mao, Nandi, Shilluk (to their national founder), Shona, and Sonjo (including offerings to their national hero).

At planting time: this is the time when people ask God to bless the seeds and their work on the fields. Some pray, and some make sacrifices as well. Our sources mention the following peoples as turning to God at this time: the Akamba (with prayers and sacrifices),

Binawa (prayers), Gikuyu (prayers, and when crops begin to bear), Kadara (prayers), Kaibi (prayers), Kitimi (have a "planting priest"), Kurama (prayers), Lozi (prayers and blessing the seeds and agricultural implements), Lunda (prayers to God through the departed), Nuba (including prayers for the increase of cattle), Rishuwa (prayers for good harvest), Temne (plant a special crop of rice for the divinity of agriculture), and Tikar (sacrifices and prayers).

In time of war or raid: this was observed formerly, when people used to seek God's protection from the enemies and his help in fighting successfully, as well as thanking him afterwards. Those who observed this occasion include the Akamba (upon return from a successful raid), Luo (during war, sacrificing black sheep or hens and making long prayers), Nandi (daily, during war), Ovambo (twice daily, during war), Serer (during an invasion from the enemy), Shilluk (during war), and Vugusu (while sharpening spears before going to war).

In time of drought or when rain is needed: this is by far the commonest time when African peoples turn to God. They pray, sacrifice, perform rainmaking rituals, and invoke God to help them. Acholi rainmakers pray; the Akamba pray and sacrifice sheep, oxen, or even a child (in severe cases); the Alur sacrifice goats; Ambo offer sorghum flour; Azande pray; and Banyoro sacrifice ox, sheep, and fowls to the divinity of the weather (during drought and when too much rain falls). Drought calls for a solemn sacrifice of a lamb and prayers to God, among the Gikuyu. For this purpose, a date is announced beforehand, and all the regions simultaneously observe the ceremony.

The Ila perform rainmaking rites in time of drought, and when the rain comes, they suspend work on the fields for two or three days, in reverence to God. Others who have rainmakers that undoubtedly pray or perform rites at this time include the Didinga, Elgeyo, Fajulu, Ganda, Gelaba, Gisu, Kamasya, Lokoiya, Luo, Makaraka, Teuso, and Toposa. The Ingassana perform their rainmaking ceremonies and call upon God; the Jie sacrifice an ox and affirm their trust that God will give them sufficient rain; the Kagoro set apart a special day to make offerings and pray for rain; and the Kaonde turn to God only at the time of drought, when their headmen (or chiefs) offer prayers on behalf of the people. It is at this and at other times, that the Mondari religious-political head offers prayers at the rainmaking rite. The Nandi hold public ceremonies to

make offerings and prayers to God. The Rabai assemble to invoke God, and the Nyanja call upon him, in time of drought. Before the rains come, the Shilluk hold one of their two annual ceremonies for rainmaking. If there is drought, the Sonjo perform rites of praying for rain, making appeals to their national hero. The Tonga believe that their departed intercede on behalf of them when rain is needed. In severe drought, the Tumbuka approach God for help. When searching for water, the Moru offer honey and juice of the wild vine, invoking God for his help.

At the time of distress, illness, calamity, or other disaster: these times come upon African peoples constantly. They then turn to God making prayers, invocations, offerings, and sacrifices, and seeking his help. The Akamba sacrifice sheep or oxen at the cleansing ceremony after an epidemic. The Azande hold a public ceremony during an epidemic and pray in sickness. Bambuti women who are barren invoke God to grant them children; and Maasai barren women assemble for a ceremony of praying for cure. At the point of death the Barundi call upon God, but the Banyarwanda do so when sickness is incurable. The Chagga seek God's succour in time of great distress; and the Dorei offer special prayers to God in time of similar circumstances. When there is an epidemic or serious illness, the Gikuyu and Gisu pray to God and the Embu sacrifice as well. When cows do not bear well, the Gisu sacrifice one of them to God but they sacrifice fowls to the divinities at the birth of twins. Although the Herero do not normally pray to God, they do so during illness. The Ila and Ingassana invoke God to give children to barren women; and the Ila offer him water and food in time of illness. During a cattle epidemic, the Jie hold a ceremony to pray for God's help.

When a person is sick, the Lozi devote a whole day to praying; and in national distress the priest makes sacrifices and offerings to God. In time of trouble the Luo and Nkum sacrifice and pray to God; the Mao and Meru pray. The Sebei pray, sacrifice a goat or fowl, and offer beer or milk to God, to spare the sick. In time of sickness and famine, the Shilluk pray to God, using the prayer which their national hero (*Nyikang*) taught them. The Sonjo perform rites during epidemics. The Srubu, who do not normally pray to God, do so in times of distress, such as drought. When a famine is over or barrenness cured, the Teita make sacrifices and offer prayers of thanksgiving to God. The Tonga living-dead are expected to intercede with God on behalf of the people in time of epidemics and pests.

The Tumbuka are said to approach God only in time of calamity, plague, or drought. The Turkana pray during illness.

In sudden danger like thunderstorms, the Azande pray for God's protection; and the Bambuti burn incense, asking him to protect them and chase away the thunderstorm. The Watumbatu pray or sacrifice to God during thunderstorms and hurricanes.

Before or during an undertaking: before taking a journey, the Bachwa pray for God's guidance; and before and during hunting, they pray for success. The Bambuti pray before going to hunt or collect fruit. When on a journey, the Ila make an offering of water to God, on reaching a river, asking him to shepherd and prosper them well; and if they have no success in hunting, they pray for his help. The Lotuko pray and make sacrifices for success in hunting and fishing. Before undertaking a hunting expedition, the Lozi spend a whole day praying to God, and doing no other work. The Ngombe also make long preparations through prayer before going hunting, and during the expedition they constantly pray and sing to God. Before they go hunting the Vugusu ask for God's benevolence. When on a journey, the Nuer knot grass together and pray to God. During a hunt, the Mamvu sacrifice to their living-dead.

Annually or monthly: turning to God monthly or annually is determined mainly by the phenomena of the weather and the moon. At their annual ceremony, the Bavenda sacrifice black oxen and make prayers to God. The Jie hold an annual ceremony of blessing cattle and asking for God's favour upon them. Twice a year the Male sacrifice to God. The Mao hold an annual ceremony of "propitiation", lasting five days and attended only by men. The Tikar observe annual rituals at which they pray and sacrifice to God, generally at planting and dry periods. The Lotuko pray and sacrifice to God at their end of the year festival.

The Butawa hold monthly sacrifices of dogs, and perform major rites every three to five years. Yoruba blacksmiths sacrifice every fortnight to the divinity of war and metal (*Ogun*). The Banyoro observe the new moon with sacrifice and suspension of work for a day; the Bushmen observe it with prayers; and the Nuer hold ceremonies at which they address prayers to God. The Katab pray to God directly at the new moon, while at other times they do so through the intermediary of their living-dead; and the Kagoro ask God for health and prosperity in the coming month.

On Special Days and Occasions: the Ashanti observe Thursday as the special day for the female earth spirit, regarded as the first of God's creations. They do no work on the ground that day. The Bamum invoke God at the coronation of their king, asking that he would bless him with many children, victory, and strength. Every twelfth lunar month, the Koma sacrifice a dog whose tail is eaten by the king in order to renew his investiture. Before the Luo build a new house, they make offerings to God and ask him to bless them in their new home. The Shona observe the eighth day of the month as holy to God; and formerly, every two or three years, at the end of the harvest, they used to hold big religious assemblies to pray and sacrifice, which lasted for three days. The Sonjo believe that their national hero (*Khambageu*) visits each of their six villages once a year, and they mark this occasion with a special festival in honour of him. When there is an eclipse, the Watumbatu turn to God with prayers and singing. The Nuer pray and sacrifice at all important occasions, in addition to praying at any time. The Dinka do the same.

At other times: the Chagga sacrifice and pray to God at noon on the market day, but we are not informed how regularly this is done. The Dinka look upon every event as an occasion for making sacrifices. The Duruma are said to pray to God "on important occasions". In addition to their daily prayers, which at times the Galla recite for periods of a week or longer, they pray on many other occasions. The Gikuyu are said to offer sacrifices to their living-dead every three months. When a notorious evildoer arises among the Luo, the elders pray God to strike him dead. The Turkana hold community prayers at their meat festivals and other ceremonies. Whenever the Vugusu make offerings to their living-dead, they also do so to God.

These then are the "official" times when African peoples turn to God in acts of worship. There are many other occasions when different needs call for turning to God. Priests, rainmakers, and other "special persons" who function as intermediaries, no doubt turn to God on many more occasions, whether the common people are present or not. As far as "chronological" (or mathematical) time is concerned, there is no set hour as such: African peoples turn to God at any time and whenever the need arises.

PLACES OF WORSHIP

As for the places of worship, people do not feel bound to any "official

spots", for they turn to God at any place just as they do so at any time. There are, however, shrines, temples, altars, groves, and other sacred places which are used particularly for public sacrifices and prayers.

Shrines: formerly the Akamba had many shrines all over their country but today only a few remain. A shrine is generally a grove at the centre of which is a large tree, such as the fig tree, or the baobab, or just a rock. It is considered a place of safety, and no person, animal, or bird may be killed there. Each community makes sacrifices and offerings at one such shrine. The Gikuyu have similar shrines, mainly around sacred fig trees or sycamore trees. Such trees may not be cut down, and the shrine is regarded as a sanctuary for animals and human beings alike.¹

The Amba have shrines for the spirits and divinities. Some of the shrines (or temples) are said to be bigger than average houses, and to be under the charge of priests.² The Ankore also have shrines for the lineage spirits (*emandwa*) where people make their offerings to celebrate each new moon. Among the Barundi, shrines are made from special trees, and when people go there to worship, they sit on the leaves of these trees, but kneel to pray. Only with the permission of the priest, or in his presence, may the shrines be entered by other people.³ Nearly all the diviners among the Lugbara are women, and each has her own shrine, erected by the community and known as "the hut of God".⁴ The Rabai shrines are also known as "the huts of God", though they are used more for the cult of the departed.⁵

There are shrines all over the land of the Yoruba, "in all places which are traditionally connected with the presence of the divinities, or such places as have been consecrated to them". Almost all the 1700 divinities have shrines in people's dwelling houses, where the divinity concerned is both the "owner" of the house and part of the domestic life. Some divinities and spirits have shrines in groves, especially those whose cults are secret. The shrine is regarded by the Yoruba as the "face" of the divinity.⁶

Mention is also made in our literature, of the existence of shrines among the Alur, Basoga, Balese, Barundi (for the spirits), Bemba (for the hunting divinity), Dogon, Gimira-Maji, Gisu, Igbo, Lango, Lokoia, Ndebele, Sebei, Sonjo, and Tonga.

Temples: these are difficult to define, and the word is used loosely in our sources. We may here regard a temple as a sizeable building or house used for religious purposes and generally cared for by a priest.

It may be, however, that in some of our sources the term simply refers to shrines of a minor size.

It is reported that, among the Akan, temples built for God can still be seen in the older palaces.⁷ The Banyoro have temples for some of their divinities. The divinity of plenty has a temple near the king's palace; the divinity of smallpox has one near the tombs of the kings; and the female divinity caring for the royal family has hers in the royal palace. There is no temple for God the Creator.⁸

The Ganda had temples for their national divinities, shaped like the king's houses, i.e., conical with thatched roofs. Some of the temples had up to four priests each, and in addition some had mediums and women servants. When a divinity proved worthless, the king ordered his temple to be raided and looted.⁹

Among the Sonjo, there are temples in each of their six villages. The principal temples are situated in Rokhari, which is the headquarters of the priesthood and the centre of Sonjo religious life. Here, the temple precinct is said to occupy one-third of the entire village, and it is strictly forbidden for anyone, except those who are ritually pure, to enter the precinct. Those who enter it may do so only occasionally and for the purpose of carrying out religious rites. Each of the other villages has at least one temple, with priests serving there.¹⁰

Mention is made of temples among the Ankore, Bakene, Basoga, and Shona (at least formerly).

Altars: these are the sacred spots where sacrifices and offerings are made. Generally they are found inside the shrines or temples, but they may also be erected in the open. In some Akan homesteads there are altars "in the form of a three-forked branch or cement pillar bearing a bowl: this is . . . God's tree. It is the place for direct offering to God".¹¹ A similar report is made about the Ashanti, who place a basin, pot, or gourd between the forks of "the tree of God".¹²

Nearly every Edo woman and household has an altar, and any person may pray to God for health, children, or other blessings, making offerings of foodstuffs.¹³ Many Igbo households have altars at which the head of the family makes offerings mainly to the living-dead. The Ila use the foot of the central pole in their houses as altars at which family offerings are placed. They also have public altars in the villages where hunting "trophy" are offered.¹⁴ Kipsigis altars are on the right side of the door outside every house. They are made of sticks, and are used for making offerings and sacrifices to God.¹⁵

The Konta have altars on the roads leading to their homes, where they place their agricultural offerings.¹⁶ For minor rituals the Tikar have altars along the paths, but each of their regions has a stone altar where offerings for God are placed.¹⁷ At their annual pre-planting ceremony of the Lozi, the chiefs erect altars of clay and sticks, on which are placed dishes into which every household puts some seeds and agricultural implements, which are blessed before the planting starts.¹⁸

There are *miscellaneous other places of worship*, mentioned in our sources. The Ambo carry out their collective offerings under a big tree, generally the baobab. In time of need, the Basoga go to their sacred hills and rocks where they make offerings and pray to their living-dead. They have, however, shrines where they sacrifice and pray to God.¹⁹ From time to time the Butawa make sacrifices to God at their sacred caves and groves.²⁰ The Gikuyu have fig and sycamore trees as their sacred places of worship, though not each of these trees is considered sacred. They conduct their ceremonies facing Mount Kenya, which is considered to be the chief dwelling place of God when he visits the earth.²¹

In time of serious sickness, the Ila turn the ground on the right side of the threshold of their houses into a place of worship. Here they make offerings and prayers to God.²² The Indem make their offerings to God just outside their villages, at cross-roads, or by the roadside. Within each of their compounds, they have a small mound where they also worship God.²³ When, among the Lugbara, a person is sick, he goes to sacrifice a chicken on a rock in the stream. He cooks it there, eats part of it, and leaves the rest there for "God and his children".²⁴

The Masongo recite their prayers under large trees; and the Murle place their offerings at the foot of certain trees.²⁵ We have already considered the sacred tree of the Ngombe, known as the *libaka* (i.e., "the tying"), which is generally the kapok or silk-cotton tree. Each village must have a *libaka*, which is the focal point of all relations between men and the departed, and between men and God. It is consecrated by hunting, and used for making sacrifices, prayers, and offerings, and for drawing up covenants.²⁶ The Sangama religious ceremonies are conducted in a sacred wood near the king's palace, as he is considered to be the earthly representative of God.²⁷

The Shona regard the Zimbabwe ruins as a sacred place, and "no living creature may be killed there". If somebody tries to break off a

twig from a tree, it says, "Do not break me". If one should attempt to slaughter an animal, it says, "Do not kill me". It is here that formerly the people held their big assemblies every two or three years, and made sacrifices, offerings, and prayers to God.²⁸ The Nuba have a sacred cave which only the rainmaker may enter, as it is regarded as very holy.²⁹

The Sonjo have many sacred places and objects associated with the life of their religious and national hero (*Khambageu*). These, in addition to the temples and shrines, include trees, rocks, and objects which are kept in the six villages. The small country is dominated by "the mountain of God", which is also associated with *Khambageu*.³⁰ The Toposa have sacred rocks and trees on which much of their ritual is centred. They also have a mountain known as "the hill of God".³¹

The Yoruba believe that the divinities transmit what is necessary to God, and do not therefore, have a "visible" cult for him. They have no temples, but they worship him "in the open". The worshipper makes a circle of ashes or white chalk, whose centre is the symbol of eternity. Here he pours libation of water and places a kola-nut on cotton wool at the centre of the circle. Then he splits the nut, and holding the two halves in his palms, he stretches them up and prays to God, offering the kola-nut by casting it on the circle. At this point a white fowl may also be sacrificed. There is a priest at Ile-Ife who performs this ritual prayer every morning on behalf of all the Yoruba.³²

Such then are the main "official" places of worship among African peoples. They are used mainly for important occasions. Families or individuals turn to God in acts of worship anywhere, without being bound to the feeling that God should be worshipped at a particular place. He is omnipresent, and for that reason they worship him at any place, at any time, where and when the need arises.

21 *God, History, and Ethics*

GENERAL

Evidence from our sources shows clearly that African peoples consider God to be both active and interested in the historical and ethical affairs of men. Although the history and legal systems of some African peoples have been studied, their concepts of history and ethics have yet to be examined carefully. We have mainly the references to such concepts, and our sources rarely go further than that. We present these concepts then, more or less in the form of "references", as they are found in our literature.

GOD AND HUMAN HISTORY

According to the Acholi, God concerns himself with the world.¹ The Akamba believe that God is well-disposed towards mankind, coming into the picture of human affairs in time of crisis and desperation. A similar concept is held by the Akan, who think that God is remote from men, but they may, nevertheless, call upon him in time of distress.² While the Ankore regard God as distant, they believe that nothing can happen outside the order that he has created or established.³ When everything else within man's abilities fails to cope with misfortune, the people say, "Leave it to God". The Azande believe that God takes an active interest in their affairs; and they demonstrate this in their custom of praying to him daily.⁴

The Aushi say that God saved them from disasters, especially wars, in course of their history.⁵ The Banyarwanda hold that God "acts as the prime cause of the universe and therefore any event may be imputed to him. On the other hand, nature itself includes the secondary causes which account for the regular unfolding of its course". They do not think that he intervenes directly, but rather that he acts "as an underlying force which sustains the whole universe". Unless he is invoked, he does not interfere much in the life of the individual; otherwise he is regarded as remote but benevolent.⁶

The Barotse think that God is removed from minor human affairs, though he is almighty. The Tswana hold the same concept, but pray to him in time of need, addressing him as "God of our fathers" and

“Father of my fathers”.⁷ These words indicate that God is in the midst of the people as the Father of every generation. A nineteenth-century writer reports that “the Bushman is eminently superstitious, and is a believer in an Invisible-Agency-in-human-affairs-distinct-from-man”, which they call God.⁸ Other than the cancer of prejudice which plagues many foreign writers about African life, there is no reason why such a belief in God should be labelled “superstitious”.

Although the Chagga regard God as taking only a little part in human lives, they tell how twice in their history, God destroyed people on account of their wickedness, saving only a few persons who later multiplied.⁹ The Meru believe that God led them out of the land of bondage (Mbwa), through one religious leader (the *Mugwe*) whom God equipped with the courage and strength for the task. Every *Mugwe* is said to be “selected by God” and to be his “messenger”. The people conceive of God as continuing his intervention in their national life, his presence among them being represented in the *Mugwe*.¹⁰

The Shilluk believe that God chooses their king and supports the kingship. They have titles linking the king with God, such as “the first-born of God”, “the child of God”, and “the last-born of God”. The king is mystically linked with God and in effect keeps God’s presence in the midst of human life.¹¹ This concept is, no doubt, also present in societies that have sacral or divine kingships.

The Embu hold that although God dwells in the sky, he visits the earth from time to time, camping on Mount Kenya when he comes.¹² The same belief exists among the Gikuyu, their more numerous neighbours. They hold that God comes to inspect the earth, bestow blessings, and mete out punishment. They observe a special communication with him at the key rites of passage and during national crises. God is said to convey his instructions to elderly people in their dreams; otherwise he is concerned with national affairs rather than those of the individual. It is as a nation that the Gikuyu worship him, saying that “there is no one man’s religion or sacrifice”. When he visits the earth he stays on Mount Kenya and a few others which we have already mentioned.¹³ The Ga call God *Dzemawon* “because he walks about the world and the towns”.¹⁴ Thus, he is not detached from the life of the people. Some of the Galla say that once God came to earth and talked with mankind; otherwise he now only looks on the world through the sun which they believe to be his eye.¹⁵

The Bavenda tell that God reveals himself from time to time, both to them as a nation and when he communicates with their

chief.¹⁶ Their neighbours, the Shona, hold that he intervenes and interests himself in the affairs of the nation rather than of individuals.¹⁷ The Jumjum believe that although God lives in the sky, he comes to earth at times.¹⁸ The Gisu say that God is present at their circumcision rites.¹⁹ Conceiving of God in two aspects, the Lugbara say that God is near in his immanent aspect. He is also said to be "behind" all things, in contact with human action, and concerned with the welfare of the whole nation. As such, he intervenes to bring about changes, by re-creating "the structure of Lugbara society so that the changes are incorporated into it".²⁰ Some of the Lunda-Luena peoples hold that God takes keen interest in human activities, saving the innocent, protecting the weak, and punishing the guilty. Others say that he knows the purposes of all things and disposes of life and death.²¹ The Lango believe that God gives advice on various matters through the seers, and punishes transgression or neglect.²² Some of the Jie diviners are said to receive revelations from God.²³

Aware that God is active in human affairs, the Mende end their prayers with an expression of submission, saying, "God willing". On the other hand they think that he has little immediate contact with them.²⁴ The Sidamo believe that God speaks to men by means of echoes.²⁵ Considering God to be present actively and working for the welfare of his creation, the Vugusu pray daily, asking him to bless them in their work.²⁶

The Sonjo hold that one day the world will come to an apocalyptic end by shrinking. At that point their national hero *Khambageu* will appear to save the Sonjo, including those who have died. For this reason every one of them is marked with a scar under the left breast. The end of the world will be signalled by an eclipse of the sun caused by a flock of birds, a swarm of bees, and a cloud of dust. "Then two suns will arise from the horizon, one in the east and one in the west", and when they meet above the head, the world will then shrink to an end.²⁷ To my knowledge this is the only myth in African concepts, in which human history is viewed as moving towards an end. The more probable interpretation, however, is that the Sonjo have transposed to a possible future the repetition of volcanic calamities which have occurred in their country in the past.

It is reported of a number of other African peoples that God is not regarded as playing an active part in their daily life. This statement must be taken with caution, because our written knowledge of African concepts is very slight, and further research will no doubt

shed more light on this subject of God and human affairs. It is to be remembered that, for many African peoples, God's active part in human history is seen in terms of his supplying them with rain, good harvest, health, children, and cattle; his healing them when sick or barren; his helping them in times of difficulties; and making his presence felt through natural phenomena and objects like thunder, lightning, earthquakes, the sun, the moon, the mountains, etc. We have also seen that African peoples constantly turn to God in acts of worship, which in effect constitute man's response to God's interest and active part in human affairs. Indeed, further research may reveal that African peoples are so dependent on God that they expect him to do for them even what they can do for themselves.

ETHICS AND MORALS

The Abaluyia believe that God did not create evil, but that he created a perfect world and established a good order in which man could live. They identify the east with all that is good, like life, health, wealth, and prosperity. The west symbolizes what is evil, like misfortunes, illness, evil magic, and death. Among the Vugusu, who are one of the Abaluyia peoples, it is held that evil is produced by a spiritual being, "the evil divinity", which is said to be independent of God. Some of them conceive of a dichotomy between good and evil forces.²⁸

Among the Acholi, it is held that the spirits of the departed are responsible for much of both good and evil which come upon men. Spirits of known relatives normally work good; while the spirits that work evil belong to relatives who die with grudges and those of abnormal birth (such as twins).²⁹ The Akamba consider God to be well disposed towards mankind, doing them only what is good. Some of the spirits are thought responsible for mischief, particularly those of unknown persons.³⁰ It is sorcery, witchcraft, and magic which tend to be blamed for all forms of evil.

Although the Ankore do not think that they can offend God, they consider him to be "the principle of order", outside of which nothing can happen.³¹ It is reported that the Akan have a cult for God, but that this "has no great effect on the religious or moral life of the people".³² The Embu hold that God must be obeyed, and that if offended, he punishes the community with war, drought, and the like, though he may also punish the individual alone or with his family.³³

According to the Ashanti, God's "greatest taboo is evil. . . . He

has created the possibility of evil in the world; that is, he has created evil, but not people to be evil". They believe that God "does not force his will upon them". They hold that "before people are born, they tell God what ideas and opinions they will hold and what actions they will perform; he permits them all these; he does not force his will upon them . . . God has created the knowledge of good and evil in every person and allowed him to choose his way. An evil man may have a long life, if he has asked for it, but he cannot successfully escape his punishment". This is the view expressed by one of the Ashanti priests.³⁴

The Bachwa hold that God "has laid down a code of morals and a rule of life which all good Bachwa implicitly obey". Some regulations include prohibitions to steal, murder, commit adultery, and neglect one's ageing parents. Others concern eating habits. Any breach of these rules invites God's punishment in this life.³⁵ The Bambuti believe that God punishes crime, sends all sickness, and controls magic power.³⁶

The Chagga narrate that in former generations the people angered God through their wickedness or idleness; they were oppressing the poor and the rich were molesting the wives of the poor. God punished them with a destruction from which only an old woman with her two children were saved. When the people increased, they committed the same kind of crimes, and God punished them once more. These stories depict God as being displeased with human wickedness. The parents teach their children that God rejects those who disobey or dishonour their parents, and those who steal, so that they die before getting married. They teach the children also that God places robbers into the hands of the judges, and rejects people who commit treason. On the other hand God blesses those who do good, who do not steal, and who honour and care for their parents, so that they prosper with children, cattle, and goats.³⁷

It is believed, among the Fajulu, that every person has two spirits: one is good, the other is evil. When the good spirit is properly fed, it prevents the evil spirit from doing harm. Misfortunes are attributed to neglected spirits.³⁸

According to the Banyarwanda, God "is not the guardian of ethics and social order. He is not offended when somebody is robbed, but only if the offence is directed against himself, as when somebody disobeys a particular order of his or abuses his name. Then he punishes the offender by sending him misfortunes during his earthly life". The people define good and evil by saying that

“that is good [or evil] which tradition has defined as good [or evil]”.³⁹ According to this definition, evil and good are relative values attributed and categorized by society, with regard to certain events, actions, and practices.

Although the Swazi hold that God does not intervene in their ethical life, they believe, nevertheless, that he gave them their code of laws which carries his authority.⁴⁰ The Zulu say that God “was unable to create what is evil”. He ordered that men should cultivate food and eat, be circumcised, and get married. One informant says that the Zulu love God because “He told us to take ten wives . . . to eat our meat . . . and to drink our beer”. Otherwise they regard themselves as orphans who freely do their own will.⁴¹

The Igbo have a female divinity, said to be the judge and source of human morality. Offences against her include adultery, homicide, poisoning another person, stealing farm products, and giving birth to twins. She punishes all evil doers, and the departed act as her agents and guardians of human morality.⁴²

For the Ila, God is always in the right. They say that “He cannot be charged with an offence, cannot be accused, cannot be questioned . . .”. Their behaviour does not affect the dispensing of his goodness towards them, for they say that “whether they curse, whether they mock him, whether they grumble at him, he does good to all at all times”. God is only grieved at their foolishness, but then he “takes steps to repair the damage they have done to themselves”. They hold him responsible for both evil and sorrows in human life. Believing that God founded many of their customs and laws, the Ila refer to them as “God’s prohibitions”. But they do not look upon him as judge, neither do they consider their actions as offences against him, except in the case of murder.⁴³

According to Lango concepts, a sexual act generates the power of God. Adultery is evil because it is a forbidden generation of this power, and the people believe that children conceived in adulterous acts become ill or die. It is reported that adultery was “rare and prostitution unknown before the coming of the British and with them the Indian traders”.⁴⁴

Incest and fratricide are considered evil by the Lugbara because they involve estrangement between the two parties concerned, who should be of one lineage. Whatever “destroys good words” is evil and punishable by God and the departed, in the form of sickness and endless disaster. God is considered “the ultimate source of all power and of the moral code”. There is, however, no moral content in the

relationship of man to God, as there is between man and the departed.⁴⁵

The Lunda hold that God punishes "certain transgressions" though he is not "the rewarder of righteousness".⁴⁶ Among the Luo, it is believed that God punishes disobedient children and notorious wrongdoers. To this end the parents of such children and the elders of the community may pray that God would intervene and execute judgement. The people believe that a good man comes back after death to live in the children who are given his name, whereas a bad man dies completely with his name since nobody wants to give a bad name to his children.⁴⁷ The Turkana believe that God may punish a person who commits incest or contravenes an important ritual.⁴⁸ The Vugusu, on the other hand, hold that God does not punish people for doing evil, except when a woman who has several children commits adultery: then God may kill her. The people say that God warns them, by means of sneezing, to refrain from committing wicked deeds like murder and theft.⁴⁹

The Nuer use the metaphor of cold to speak of good, and heat to speak of evil. For them, much fortune is dangerous since it may cause the owner to become proud, which in turn makes God take away the fortune. They say that "God evens things out", giving to the poor and taking away from the rich. They hold firmly that a person cannot hide his evil deeds from God, and that sooner or later God punishes him. Relationship between individuals is at the centre of Nuer concepts of ethics. Accordingly, to be in the right with God means being in the right with men. When a person wrongs another, he goes to him, apologises, and both are reconciled. This act of reconciliation is watched and approved by God. The two basic ideas, said to be central in Nuer religion, are being in the right in dealing with God and men, and being delivered from evil. If a person commits a breach by mistake, he is not held responsible, for the people say that God "takes deliberation into account in breaches of moral laws". The people pray often that God would deliver them from evil.⁵⁰

If God saves one's adversary, the Meru feel that the two people concerned should automatically become reconciled to each other and be bound together as friends. The office of the religious leader (the *Mugwe*) requires great moral values, since the holder is considered to be very close to God and must refrain from evil. The *Mugwe* is, among other things, the epitome and example of good moral and ethical standards.⁵¹

For the Nandi, nature is viewed in terms of its friendliness or

hostility to their cattle, and its use or lack of use to them. For example, wild animals are good or bad according to whether or not they are harmful to men, cattle, and crops. Men may, however, upset the "balance of nature" through their crimes; but the spirits, standing between God and men, act to prevent men from causing this upset of balance.⁵²

It is held among the Shilluk that God is indifferent to their moral acts, neither punishing the wicked nor rewarding those who do good. They say that "God threads good and evil men on a single string". But he is regarded as the Judge and the ultimate sanction for their customary law.⁵³ The Nuba also regard God as the guardian of their traditions, the transgression of which he punishes with death.⁵⁴ For the Shona, murder and incest are offences against God. The people observe the eighth day of the month as "holy" to God.⁵⁵ The Suk interpret calamities as God's punishment for their evil deeds.⁵⁶

According to Lodagaa beliefs, when a person dies he must cross a big river. Those who lead good lives cross it immediately. Wrongdoers, on the other hand, drop through the bottom of the boat which ferries people across; they do not drown, but must keep on swimming for a long time which may last up to three years, during which they suffer and hunger much. If a person owes something to another, he has to wait for him at the bank until the latter also dies, arrives there, and is refunded. The same happens to those who steal, for they must refund the stolen goods. Witches undergo the worst ordeal, including eating part of their own bodies while crossing the river. God is said to punish evil men in the next world, and when they ask him why they suffer, he tells them, "Because you sinned on earth". This notion of retribution after death does not, however, oppress the Lodagaa.⁵⁷

The Tiv believe that evil men continue to be evil after death, and that in the other world they request God to withhold rain from men. But God does not listen to them; instead their request angers him, and he unleashes a thunder-crash, at which they fall down in fear of him.⁵⁸

For the Azande, God is said to have "no influence on moral values". Magic plays an important role in their affairs, both for good and evil. They hold that God is the originator of magic and that his will is its final sanction, permitting it to reach its end, or destroying its effectiveness. They associate him vaguely with epidemics and drought.⁵⁹

When the Gikuyu make a sacrifice for rain, the animal must be given by someone whom people trust, who has acquired it lawfully, who has not murdered another or stolen, and who has not committed either rape or magic offences.⁶⁰ Before the Tonga perform their communal rites, they undergo a cleansing ceremony, so that they may be clean from any disrespect shown towards their shrines. They describe a bad person as "the one who shaves even heaven!"⁶¹

"With the Yoruba, morality is certainly the fruit of religion". A man's character is of supreme importance, and it is what God judges. The Yoruba put great emphasis on character (*iwa*). For them, good character means: chastity before marriage, hospitality, being against selfishness, kindness, condemning wickedness, truthfulness, protection of women as men's responsibility, keeping covenant, and showing respect and honour to people of old age. They severely condemn stealing, falsehood, and hypocrisy.⁶²

Such then are some of the ethical concepts held by African peoples. With only a few exceptions, these concepts have not been properly studied, and our sources simply mention them without elaborating on what they mean within the life of the people.

22 *Eschatological Concepts*

In Christian theology, eschatology covers a wide range of ideas, but our concern here is with the traditional African concepts. In this chapter we shall, therefore, consider only those concepts that are found in African societies. These pertain chiefly to death and the hereafter, and there are innumerable examples of them from all over Africa. We have already encountered some of them in this study, but it will be useful to consider them together and under one main heading, in order to bring out more fully their meaning and relationship with other relevant concepts in the same general field. Many of our sources make mention of eschatological concepts but, with only a few exceptions, none of them gives a full account of these concepts. Elsewhere I have, however, attempted a detailed study of African and Christian eschatology, entitled *New Testament Eschatology in an African Background* (1970).

DEATH, DISAPPEARANCE, AND ASCENSION

We do not seem to get away from the subject of death, which we have already studied in the context of other themes! But this is the last time we shall deal with it here, and it will be in connection with what happens in the hereafter.

The Bachwa believe that the soul of man is a visible object as small as the pupil of the eye where it can be seen. At death the eye breaks, the soul departs, and the body ceases to function.¹ According to one view, the Bambuti hold that the soul leaves the body through the nose, "and is carried to God by bees or flies".² The Bari think that God takes away the soul at death.³ The Barotse believe that God calls men back to himself, and that none can refuse.⁴ This view is also held by the Akamba, that death is like a "call" which must be answered with a "yes", and to which nobody can say "no". The Ila regard God as taking away people at death, and say metaphorically that "God snaps off his pumpkin". When a person is bereft of his children, people call him "one upon whom God has looked".⁵ The Ingassana make a similar remark at the death of a person that "God killed him".⁶ The Herero believe that God calls away old people.

According to the Lozi, a person has four parts, one of which is the soul. It is the soul which, at death, goes to God.⁷ The Lugbara think that each person has a "guardian spirit" and a "personality", given to him by God at birth. These two leave a person at death, and the "guardian spirit" goes to dwell with God, in his immanent aspect, in the streams. Here it becomes "part of a collectivity of 'God's children' ". "The "personality" goes to dwell with God in the sky, in his transcendent aspect. In this aspect he is referred to as "God the taker away of men". Even if other agents are involved, they simply bring the person to God's notice. Only God "causes him to die", just as it is only he who is "the Creator of men". God is said to hang or strangle a person, to stop or take away his breath. A person who is about to die may even see glimpses of God in his immanent aspect.⁸

The Nuer regard God as taking life through agents such as natural circumstances, spirits, beasts, spears, and the like, which are his instruments. He takes the souls of the people who die through lightning to dwell with him and act as the protectors of their kinsmen. In their myth of how once heaven and earth were linked with a rope, the Nuer say that since the hyena broke the rope into two, people who grow old must now die in order to find their way back to heaven. So the Nuer accept death as God's will.⁹

Among the Luo it is very unfortunate when a girl dies before she is married. People bury her outside the homestead, since she has no place within her home. If at death she is still a virgin, the virginity must be broken by an elderly woman before she is buried, otherwise her spirit would return to cause trouble in her home. Death is thought to come from the bad spirits of God, though they may be warded off with the beating of the drums.¹⁰

The Vugusu hold that God permits death to take place, and may even kill people occasionally "because he wants them to live with him". There is, however, the evil divinity held responsible for all sorts of mischief, including death, but once this has killed a person, God does not undo the deed.¹¹

It is reported that the Shilluk are indifferent to the hereafter. They say that "Man does not think about death". They pray therefore, to be helped in this life.¹² The Tonga conceive of heaven as being the source of life, saying in a proverb that "Heaven never dies, only men do".¹³ The Lunda fear that if they attempt to make an image of God, death would strike them.¹⁴

Among the Lodagaa, the death of a person who leaves sons behind,

is "an act of God, a decision from heaven". By this they mean that it is the destiny of all men to die. In practice the people rarely attribute death to God, since there are other actual causes of death, except that of old men. At first the soul becomes a ghost, but when a shrine has been erected at the final funeral ceremony, it becomes a spirit. Thereafter it travels to the land of the departed.¹⁵

The Gisu mourn their dead for three days, at the end of which they shave their heads and resume normal duties. Closer relatives, however, continue to mourn in the house of the deceased for three months, ending the period with a sacred meal of an ox.¹⁶ Some of the Mamvu-Mangutu peoples hunt the souls of the departed, after death, and keep watch at the graves for two days.¹⁷

The Yoruba commonly believe that death was created by God for the specific purpose of recalling people when their time on earth is fulfilled. They speak of it as "Heaven's Bailiff", and think of it as debt. They comment that "It is sickness that can be healed; death cannot be healed". The old people anticipate their death, saying, "I am going home", or "I am ready for home". Some days after the death of a person the survivors perform the rite of "Bringing the spirit of the deceased into the house". This gives them the opportunity to have social intercourse with the deceased once more.¹⁸

The concepts of *disappearance* and *ascension* are rare to find among African peoples, and I have only one example of each. According to tradition, the Shilluk say that their national founder *Nyikang* did not die but simply disappeared. They describe the disappearance saying that "he was lost", "he went up", "he became wind", "he went and lives".¹⁹ The Sonjo believe that their hero *Khambageu* died, rose again, "ascended into the sky, and became identified with God".²⁰

THE JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF THE DEPARTED

Some African peoples make preparations for the journey to the land of the departed. This is done mainly in form of funeral rites. Among many, however, there are no special preparations probably because the land of the departed is thought to be close and similar to this.

According to Chagga beliefs, the journey to the next world is long, dangerous, and terrifying. The soul must travel through a desert region where the sun is very hot. It takes eight days to cross this desert, arriving on the ninth day. There are guards at the entrance to the spirit chief's residence, and these bar the soul from entering until its grandfather has paid a bull of admission. To equip the soul

for this demanding journey, people anoint the corpse with fat, pour milk and fat into the mouth, and wrap the corpse in a hide believed to protect the soul from the hot sun on the way. They sacrifice a bull to the grandfather of the deceased, and petition him to help the new-comer.²¹

The Herero bury their dead facing north, where they believe the land of the departed to be situated. When a priest-chief dies, the people kill the sacred bull of the clan and wrap him in its skin.²² The Lozi wear tribal marks on the arms and holes through the ears. They believe that, on account of these marks they will be received by God when they die. Men are buried in graves pointing east, women in graves that point west, in the belief that they would thereby know how to get to God.²³

According to the Lodagaa, the land of the departed lies to the west, being separated from this by the River of Death. Soon after death, the soul lives on treetops, wandering about the world for a while. When final burial rites are carried out, it commences on its journey. On the way, "the One-Breasted Woman", known also as "the child of God", meets the soul in order to help it. At the River of Death, it is ferried across, at a fee of twenty cowries which friends provide at the funeral. The crossing is an ordeal whose hardness depends on the nature of the life that a person has led among his human society. Good people get across easily. Bad people fall through the boat, and must keep on swimming for up to three years, with much suffering and without food. Debtors, thieves, witches, and people who denied something to others, must all wait at the bank until the persons they offended also die, arrive there, and are paid back. In addition, witches must eat half of their limbs while crossing the river, and for them the water is soaked with pepper; and when they arrive at the other bank, everybody is waiting there to scorn them.²⁴

The Ga also believe that the departed must cross a river. On arriving at the other side, their noses are broken, and "the dead are said to speak in nasal tones".²⁵

At the death of Luapula kings, their wives and slaves are sacrificed. This is done to provide them with full households similar to those they had in this life. The practice is presumably forbidden now.²⁶ The Abaluyia make animal sacrifices and perform other rites as a means of securing peace for the departed.²⁷ Both the Bavenda and Shona are said to mummify their dead, but our sources do not give us more information about this practice.²⁸ It is the custom, among

the Zulu, to burn the property of the deceased, as people fear to use it.²⁹

Among many African peoples, food, drink, weapons, tools, and other objects may be buried with the corpse, to equip the dead for the journey and provide him with some means of establishing at least the start of his new life in the next world. Elaborate rites are also carried out by various societies, some of them covering a period of several months or even years.³⁰ It is the general feeling that if the dead are not properly buried, they may take revenge upon the living or remain unpeaceful in the land of the departed.

THE LAND OF THE DEPARTED

Concerning the location and nature of the land of the departed, there are many views, some of which vary considerably. We shall consider these concepts under several categories, given below.

According to a number of peoples, the land of the departed is *in the underground, underworld, or netherworld*. The sphere beneath the earth is known to the Abaluyia as "the country of the dead"; and to the Bambuti as "the kingdom of the dead".³¹ For the Banyarwanda the land of the departed is in the lower world, which is ruled by "the one with whom one is forgotten".³² For the Herero it is in the netherworld which they consider to be situated in the north, or over the sea, where there is "the tree of life".³³ Among the Igbo it is thought that that land is governed by "the queen of the underworld; is a place of rest for those who have the second burial, but of sorrow for those who die badly".³⁴ Others who place it in the same region include the Akan, Embu, some Ewe, Gikuyu, Lunda-Luena, Nandi, and Zulu.

For some people, the land of the departed is situated *in the woods, bush, forest, or wilderness*. These include the Akamba (in the woods, solitary rocks and pools), Bacongo (a spirit-town in a great mysterious forest), Bambuti (forest, rocks and caves), Bemba (caverns), Chagga (far away beyond a desert region), Gisu (rocks), Lele (deep in the forest where the streams start), Mamvu-Mangutu (caverns), Ngoni (bush near people's homes), and Teita (caves and rocks).

Others locate it *around the homes of human beings* where the departed linger around either indefinitely or for a while. These concepts are held by the Bamileke (each dead person remains in his own skull), Barundi (the dead are ubiquitous), Basoga, Bemba (the spirits linger around their former homes at dawn and dusk), Ga (the departed linger around their former homes for forty years, moving

on after that), Ganda, Gikuyu (at evening time), Gisu (associated with skulls), Kuku (a man's spirit dwells under the house of his major wife), Lozi (royalty), Lugbara (around home, partly in the streams and partly in the sky), Maravi (the spirits must also be moved when people change their dwelling places), Mende, Ngoni, Sebei, Serer (temporarily), and Sukuma-Nyamwezi.

According to others, it is located *on special mountains*. Those who hold this view include the Akamba (who name Mount Kyumbe in southern Kitui, as the place where the departed continue to live as they did in this world), Bavenda, Bondei (two mountains, Mlinga and Tongwe, though a person must be buried where he was born), Limba (on Kaboia hill, under the guardian spirit Kumba), Mamvu-Mangutu (especially on Mount Meu), and Turkana.

Other peoples associate it with *rivers, lakes, waterfalls, and pools*. The Akamba have certain pools which they avoid, as these are associated with the departed. The Bavenda avoid certain lakes and rivers, associated with the departed, whose drums and voices are heard there. The Igbo consider fish to embody the souls of the departed, and single out many fishing spots as being the dwelling places of the departed. The Bemba and Nandi associate the departed with waterfalls; and the Itsekiri with creeks (said to be inhabited by the spirits of the departed). The Konta recognize spirits of lakes; the Lele, Makaraka, and Mamvu-Mangutu hold that the land of the departed is situated at the river sources; and the Lugbara that a person's "guardian spirit" returns to the rivers after his death.

For some societies, the land of the departed is *in this world but separated from that of human beings by a river*. The Ga say that it is beyond a river (*Nsatsi*); the Kagoro that it is beyond a stream which divides the two worlds; and the Lodagaa that it lies to the west beyond the River of Death, the land being known as "the Country of God".³⁵ Some of the Herero think that it is beyond the sea.

Among a few societies, the land of the departed is situated *on the moon, sun, or stars*. Some Bacongo say that the spirits of good men go to the moon; and some Bambuti think that the land is over the moon. Some Ewe place it on the sun; and some Bacongo think that the spirits of evil men go to the sun. The Cape Bushmen consider the stars to be ancient people (or former animals); the spirits of Rukuba chiefs are thought to dwell temporarily in the stars; among the Mamvu-Mangutu, the stars are taken to be the fires of ancient men who are warming themselves; and the Zulu consider the stars to be the eyes of the departed looking at the human world.

In some societies, it is thought that *the dead go where God is*, which may or may not be located. Those who hold this view include the Bachwa, Bambuti, Basuto (above the earth), Bena, some Gisu (heaven), Indem, Kadara (cities of the dead thought to be in God's presence), Lozi, Lugbara (the "personality" goes to him in the sky, and the "guardian spirit" to him in the streams), Shilluk (near to God), Tswana (heaven), Turkana (above the clouds) and Yoruba. It is believed among the Yoruba, that the dead report themselves before God, to give account of their lives on earth. The dead are said to go to "the abode of the Deity", and God places them in either of two places: one being good, the other bad.³⁶

For most peoples, the land of the departed, wherever it might be situated, is very much like the carbon copy of the countries where they lived in this life. It has mountains and valleys, rivers and lakes, forests and plains. The activities there are similar to those of human life here, so that the departed work on the fields, look after cattle, get married and bear children, fight or quarrel.

JUDGEMENT, REWARD, AND RETRIBUTION IN THE HEREAFTER

Apart from one or two exceptions, African peoples do not expect any form of judgement in the hereafter. If judgement has to come, it comes in the course of one's earthly life. As far as the sources available to me are concerned, we have two examples where it is expected that the departed undergo a form of judgement in the next world.

The Yoruba believe that, following death, a person appears before God to render account of his earthly life. The people say:

All that we do on earth,
We shall account for, kneeling in heaven . . .
We shall state our case at the feet of God.

What follows after that depends on the kind of life the individual leads on earth.³⁷

The Lodagaa say that when the spirit of the departed arrives in the next world, older spirits pass judgement upon it, according to the person's earthly life. God does not seem to take a direct part in this judgement, though he steps into the picture when the wicked plead for mercy and he then puts an end to their suffering.³⁸

To these two examples we may add the view held by some of the Baongo, possibly through Christian influence from former years, that the halo of the sun or of the moon is an indication that God is

holding a court of judgement for the newly departed. He confirms the reward of the good who remain on the moon, and the punishment of the wicked who remain on the sun.³⁹

The majority of peoples do not expect the next life to reward the departed in any way. In a few cases, the life after death is pictured as being better than this. The Bachwa believe that when they die, they go to the city of God where they live happily, comfortably, and free from suffering.⁴⁰ This is not, however, a reward for individual merits, but simply the nature of the life in the next world. We have mentioned the Bacongo belief according to which good men go to the moon, which is a place of coolness and happiness, whereas evil men go to the sun, which is a place of heat and punishment. This belief is possibly a muddling of Christian teaching, and, in any case, is not held by everyone. We are told that the Gumuz expect the next life to give them rewards or punishment, but our sources do not say more on that.⁴¹ The Lozi wear tribal marks on the arms and ears so that in the next life they may be recognized and be admitted to live happily "there".⁴² The marks are not moral or personal virtues for the individual, and living happily seems to belong to the nature of the next life rather than being a reward for individual merits as such.

It is among the Lodagaa that we get a fairly clear example of personal rewards or privileges in the next life. According to their belief, good people are aided on the journey to the next world in crossing the River of Death and in facing the hardships which older spirits impose on new arrivals. In the next world, the souls of good men do not farm very long; "they just think what they want to eat, and they get it"; and older spirits give them food and rest. This belief does not, however, exert moral or ethical demands on individuals in this life, as they believe that rewards or punishments come in the earthly life, from parents, the living-dead, and other spiritual beings.⁴³

Concerning retribution and punishment, nearly all the evidence points to the fact that African peoples consider punishment to come in this life and not in the next. There are only a few examples where the concept of punishment in the next life is mentioned. We shall consider first the nature of punishment in this life, and then punishment in the hereafter.

The Bachwa think that God punishes only in this life, in form of illness and death through lightning or falling off trees.⁴⁴ The Abaluyia hold the same view, that God punishes in this life the people who break established orders of marriage and taboos, or those

who contravene tribal law and custom. In the latter case, the spirits of the departed who are the guardians of tribal law, may also take part in punishing the offenders.⁴⁵ The Banyarwanda hold that offences against God are punishable with misfortunes in this life.⁴⁶ The Shona believe that a person may be punished by God in this life, but there is no retribution in the hereafter.⁴⁷

Some of the examples of concepts of retribution in the next life are not clearly defined. According to one writer, the Akamba say that the souls of sorcerers are banished to waste places.⁴⁸ One Ashanti priest is reported as saying that evil people in this life receive punishment from God when they die; but we are not informed more about this.⁴⁹ Some of the Bacongo hold that evil men are punished on the sun where they "are tortured like a locust on the burning grass; it wants to die, but is kept alive". Others think that punishment takes place in the netherworld, for the spirits of people who have been greedy, rude, discourteous, disagreeable, and unsociable.⁵⁰

The Kagoro believe that although the departed lead a life similar to that of human beings, they are always thirsty and hungry. Since this applies to everyone, perhaps we could not consider it as retribution.⁵¹ The Lozi who fail to wear tribal marks in this life are barred from entering the land of the departed. They are given flies for food, and put on a road which wanders about, narrowing gradually until it ends in a desert where they die of hunger and thirst.⁵² Although the Yoruba are uncertain about the final lot of the deceased, they hold that God puts them in either of two places: a good place or a bad place. Evil men are thought to suffer without end, but good men meet their relatives and associates, and with them continue to live as they did on earth.⁵³

It is again from the Lodagaa that we get a fairly comprehensive picture of the concept of retribution after death. Wrongdoers begin to face their punishment when they arrive at the River of Death, and some are completely excluded from the land of the departed. If they stole or denied something to someone in this life, the wrongdoers must wait at the bank to repay the persons concerned. When they get into the boat to cross the river, they sink through into the water, but do not drown. Now they must swim, some for as long as three years, without food, even though the opposite bank always lies just in front of them. Witches must, in addition, eat one of their legs and arms, and swim in water filled with red pepper. On arrival in the land of the departed, the newcomer is forced by older spirits to endure greater hardships. He is placed on top of a withered tree and scorched for

durations varying according to one's earthly life. Everyone is scorched for three months; thieves for five months, people of evil disposition for six months, liars for four months, and witches and rich men for three years. The sun is said to be very close there. When this ordeal is over, everyone must then farm or fight, in accordance with how little or much he worked in his earthly life. Women who were wicked and may have had witches, thieves, or liars among their progenies, together with their descendants, are given "all the bad things in the country, everything that brings pain. Salt water will be their only drink". Finally, evil men ask God why they are suffering so much, and he replies, "Because you sinned on earth". After a long time, God finally puts an end to their suffering, and sets them "to farm to get food". But the Lodagaa fear more the punishment which comes in this life than what may come hereafter.⁵⁴

HEAVEN, PARADISE, AND HELL

A few societies hold the notion that after death a person goes to heaven. This need not be understood in a technical sense, as it probably means "sky". We have mentioned the few peoples who say that at death the spirit goes to God. Of these, the Gisu, Kadara, Shilluk, Tswana, and Yoruba think that this is in "heaven" or above the clouds. Other than these references, we have no clear picture of this concept.

Our sources do not mention any concepts of what would be the equivalent of either paradise or hell in the hereafter.

THE NATURE OF THE HEREAFTER

There are many similarities between the life now and in the hereafter; but there are also some differences. These will become clear from the examples which we quote below.

According to the Bachwa, in the next life people do not suffer hardships like hunger, thirst, sickness, or death. They are happy, comfortable, and with a lot of game for hunting.⁵⁵ One view among the Bacongo, is that, in the hereafter, the spirits live in a great forest town, eating, drinking, and getting married, just as people do here. Another view is that the spirits of good men live happily on the moon, while those of evil men undergo endless torture on the sun. Good spirits may be seen playing in the sky in the form of shooting stars and comets, though some people think that these are bad spirits that have broken away from the sun.⁵⁶

The Banyarwanda hold that life in the hereafter is like the present;

people retain their names, but do not eat, drink, or mate, and class distinctions are dissolved. For the departed, "life is neither pleasant nor unhappy", and some return to where they lived in this world.⁵⁷ The Bena on the other hand, hold that status continues there, corresponding to what it is here.⁵⁸

The Bushmen take the stars once to have been either animals or the early people; and the Zulu think that the stars are the eyes of the departed who are watching the world. It is not clear whether either of these peoples expect one to change into a star in the next life.⁵⁹

The Chagga think that those who are rich here continue to be rich there, but the poor remain poor. A person may, however, sacrifice cattle or goats, before dying, so that he may receive them in the next world.⁶⁰ This is certainly a clever insurance plan!

The Didinga believe that, after death, the souls become independent of God.⁶¹ But it is not so with the Dinka, who hold that the spirits of clan founders and other heroes receive more power from God than the spirits of ordinary people. It is their belief that a person's spirit is powerful immediately after death, but that its power weakens as it becomes forgotten, unless it happens to belong to the more important category of heroes and clan founders.⁶² The Kurama say that the departed have more power than the living, but we are not informed of the nature of this power or how it is acquired.⁶³ The Vugusu hold that after a long time in the hereafter, the spirits become guardians of human individuals and families, acting as God's servants. The spirits of the first man and wife have now become the executives of God's will, ranking nearest to him.⁶⁴ The Kadara consider the hereafter to be in the presence of God, but we are not given more information on this concept.⁶⁵ The Lango vaguely conceive life in the hereafter as being like air.⁶⁶ The Lele hold that the spirits are under God's power; that they neither die nor fall sick; and that they sleep in the daytime but roam about at night. Such spirits are said, however, not to have been human beings; but it may be that human spirits lead a similar life.⁶⁷

Among the Kgoro, it is held that the next world is divided from this by a river. At the death of a person, his crossing of this river must be decided by his predecessors, and if these do not consider it time for the person to die, they drive back his spirit and he revives or recovers. Sometimes this important decision takes time, during which the soul shrinks, and if it returns to the body, the person does not fully recover physically. The life of the spirits is like human life here, but they are indestructible, always hungry and thirsty.⁶⁸

According to Lodagaa beliefs, immediately after death, a person becomes a ghost which wanders about for a while, living on tree-tops and retaining his rights in women, property, and position. Eventually the ghost becomes a spirit and relinquishes all former claims except those which belong to the forefathers. Now it travels to the land of the departed where, on arrival, older spirits subject it to hardships, depending on a person's earthly life. Thereafter, the good live happily, with much rest; the evil endure more hardships, but eventually God sets them "free" and their life is made easier. People refer to the next world as "the land of wood-chopping", using a metaphor which describes the hardships that new arrivals must first endure.⁶⁹

The Lugbara think that the departed are near to God but far away from people. The diviner may, however, bring them "back to us", and then "they are 'good' and help us to live in peace", so the people say.⁷⁰ The Kuku hold that the spirits visit their human relatives in order to get food, and that if neglected, they take revenge in form of punishment. This concept is found among many other societies.

It is widely held that relatives, families, and friends meet in the hereafter. The Igbo summarize this concept well, when they say that "we die in order to meet again".⁷¹ That is the expectation of practically all African peoples.

THE CONTINUATION OF LIFE AFTER DEATH

Without exception, African peoples believe that death does not annihilate life and that the departed continue to exist in the hereafter. I have not found evidence in any of our sources where this belief is not held. But how long the departed continue to exist, is not indicated in our sources. For some peoples, at least, this continuation of life lasts as long as the individual is remembered by those who knew him in his earthly life. According to this belief, the departed of up to four or five generations back, are still living, as far as human beings are concerned. It is this group of them that I have named "the living-dead". Beyond five generations, the individual vaguely gets "lost" in oblivion, as far as human society is concerned, though national heroes, clan founders, and other outstanding men and women are held in remembrance longer. In some cases, it is definitely said that the spirits of the departed are imperishable. It seems as if the living-dead move on beyond the horizon of human memory, and merge into the group of spirits some of which were once human beings

and others of which have other origins. Perhaps we could describe these concepts as indicating a belief in some form of immortality. This is possibly the peak of human existence, for beyond it African peoples know nothing and await nothing more in the hereafter.

RESURRECTION, REINCARNATION, AND TRANSMIGRATION

There are many myths, legends and stories which speak about human *resurrection*. We have already quoted some in connection with the first men. The concept of resurrection lingers on among many peoples, in stories and myths describing what happened, or what man should have inherited, but not as a possibility for the future. As far as our evidence goes, African peoples do not expect any form of individual or collective resurrection after death. Man has neither the hope nor the promise to rise again: he lost that gift in the primeval period, and he knows of no means to regain it.

The belief in *reincarnation* is held by a number of peoples. This type of reincarnation means that certain traits of character, personality, or physical marks of the departed are reproduced in a child generally born in his immediate family. I have not come across any mention that the entire person who has died is reborn so as to lose his separate identity or existence in the world of the departed. Nor has one found any notion that the soul of the departed undergoes a series of reincarnations in different forms. When a child is noticed to have traits of the departed, it is a common practice to name that child after the person who is thus reincarnated, unless that person was reputed to be bad. Not everybody, however, is reincarnated; nor is the phenomenon something that individuals look forward to, or hope for. Examples of this belief of reincarnation are reported among the Akamba, Akan, Dungi, Lango, Luo, Ndebele, Rukuba, Rumaia, Sebei, Shona, and Yoruba. This concept of partial reincarnation is certainly held more firmly by some than by others.

The concept of the *transmigration* of souls has not been clearly studied and described, though it is reported among a number of African peoples. The Bavenda believe that the spirits of some people, particularly of chiefs, return to this life in form of animals like lions, leopards, and snakes.⁷² The Maasai hold that the souls of their departed, especially of old men, return or live in snakes and these are not killed.⁷³ For the Ambo, the transmigration takes place in male animals like elephants, lions, and leopards; for the Barundi in sheep and hens; for the Dorobo in snakes; for the Gikuyu in cattle, hyenas,

mongooses, snakes, kites, and caterpillars; for the Igbo in fishes; for the Rukuba the chief's spirit lodges temporarily in a star or bird; for the Serer in animate or inanimate body; for the Suk in snakes which must not be killed; and for the Zulu also in snakes. Among some societies it is believed that, through magical power, certain people change themselves into animals, especially for the purpose of doing harm to an enemy or his property, or for the purpose of escaping from danger. We have very little knowledge of the concept of the transmigration of souls and must await further research.

SPIRIT POSSESSION AND APPEARANCES OF THE DEPARTED

These two concepts are widely held, and mention of either or both of them is made in many of our sources. Spirit possession seems to occur in all African societies, though in different forms, but careful studies of it are rare. The possession is sometimes harmful, but at other times it is useful and may even be induced through dance and drumming. The departed appear generally to the older members of their surviving human families, for a friendly visit, to inquire about family affairs, to warn of impending danger, or to demand a sacrifice or offering, or the observation of a particular request or command.

Some Akamba believe that each woman has a spirit husband who may possess her and who assists in her fertility functions. The Ambo fear that unnamed spirits roam about in the bushes, and drive people mad or possess them.⁷⁴ The Bemba believe that the spirits of chiefs possess men and women who then practise healing and divining.⁷⁵ The Dorobo, Maasai, Ndebele, and Suk think that the departed return to watch or visit the living, travelling in snakes.⁷⁶ The Embu hold that the departed come back to visit their friends who are still living.⁷⁷ The Ganda have many spirits which possess people, making their demands known that way. If a person refuses to be possessed the spirit (*lubaale*) may bring him misfortune until he yields.⁷⁸ The divinities may also possess a person making him their mouthpiece (or medium).⁷⁹ The Gisu consider almost every rock to be inhabited by a spirit which may render services or cause harm among the people in the neighbourhood. Waterfalls are also thought to have spirits which help the health of children.⁸⁰ According to the Igbira many natural objects are animated by spirits.

It is the custom among the Konta, that if a person "believes himself to be persecuted by a spirit, he changes his name. Nobody eats in public or in the sunlight for fear of the spirits".⁸¹ The Lamba

hold that woodland spirits possess people, becoming visible to their victims who then dance and create songs. The spirits of chiefs possess commoners, and the person so possessed wanders about the country acting as a healer (doctor) and helping people in trouble.⁸²

Among the Lugbara, the diviners are said to bring back the living-dead, who then help people to live peacefully.⁸³ The Mondari believe that their living-dead return to relatives to receive food and drink.⁸⁴ According to the Nandi, the departed are friendly, except when insulted or neglected, and return to visit their relatives.⁸⁵ For the Ndebele, dreams are a medium of communication between the departed and the living, and significant dreams precede spirit possession.⁸⁶ The Ngoni perform three rites of bringing back the spirits of the departed;⁸⁷ and the Yoruba perform one of "bringing the spirit of the deceased into the house".⁸⁸ The Watumbatu believe that a person may even own spirits of the departed who guard homes and help with the earning of money!⁸⁹

HUMAN CONTACT AND RELATIONSHIP WITH THE DEPARTED

Every African society has ways of establishing and maintaining contact between human beings and the departed. These include the pouring of libation, giving formal and informal offerings (mainly of food), making sacrifices, propitiating, praying, and fulfilling requests made by the departed. These acts serve as a means of contact, communion and fellowship; they are a token that the departed have not been forgotten; they symbolize welcome and hospitality towards the departed; they serve as a means of appeasement if the departed have been offended and angered; and they are the "goods" which a person renders to another when asking for a favour, since the departed may act as intermediaries between God and men. The offerings or sacrifices may be taken from the property which the departed once owned, and as such they are being given to the "owner". It is to be remembered too, that the living-dead are still members of their human families, and people include them in activities in which they would normally have taken part if they were still physically alive.

In some societies, there are shrines for the spirits of the departed. It is more common, however, to pour libation, and make offerings and sacrifices in the homestead, generally in the house where the head of the family lives. We have seen many examples that the spirits are the stepping stones towards God, the intermediaries through whom men may contact God. For minor matters, these acts of

contact are directed only to the spirits concerned; but for major concerns of life, they are meant ultimately to reach God, whether he is mentioned on every occasion or not. These are acts and concepts that belong to the body of African religious consciousness. African peoples are extremely sensitive to the existence of the spirit world which presses hard upon that of human beings. Indeed there is practically no gap between these two worlds. The spirit world is as real as the physical world, and cannot be excluded from African ontology.

These means of contact and relationship between human beings and the departed (mainly the living-dead), are reported as being observed among a large number of peoples, including the Abaluyia, Akamba, Ambo, Ankore (up to three generations back), Ashanti, Balese, Bamileke (symbolized by their skulls), Banyoro (special spirits, *bachwezi*), Barundi (who wash hands first before sacrificing), Basoga, Bavenda, Bemba (especially on major agricultural periods), Bena, Bondei (towards the chief of the spirits), Chagga, Digo (on critical occasions), Dinka, Dorobo, Dungi, Duruma, Ewe, Fajulu, Galla (sometimes daily prayers to them and God), Ganda, Gikuyu, Gisu, Hadya, Herero (reached through the "holy fire"), Ibibio, Igbo, Ila, Itsekiri, Kadara (holding festivals), Kakwa, Kaonde (on many occasions), Kuku, Kurama, Kyiga (on spirits' demand), Lala, Lamba (with shrines), Lango, Lendu, Lodagaa, Logo (with shrines), Lokoiya, Lozi (of royalty), Luapula (with shrines), Luo, Maravi (with shrines for those of chiefs; family living-dead must be ceremoniously removed when a village shifts to another spot), Mamvu-Mangutu, Nandi, Ndebele, Ngombe, Ngoni, Nuer, Nyakyusa, Orri, Piti, Rabai, Rukuba (with shrines), Sandawe, Serer, Shilluk (to spirits and the national hero *Nyikang*), Shona, Sonjo (and to the national hero *Khambageu*), Srubu, Sukuma-Nyamwezi, Teita (symbolized by skulls which are gathered), Teuso, Tikar, Toro, Tswana, Tumbuka, Turu (with shrines belonging to the larger groups in the community), Vugusu, Watumbatu (the spirits have to consent when marriage proposals are made), Yao, Yoruba, and Zulu. No doubt this list would be longer if we had more information available.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND THE DEPARTED

Many references are made in our sources, to the relationship between God and the departed. The subject has not been carefully studied,

but we can summarize here the concepts held by different African peoples.

According to the Akamba, the spirits of the departed are under God's control, and he may at times relay his message through them to human beings.⁹⁰ When praying and pouring libation, the people mention names of the departed, concluding with the mentioning of God's name. Before hunting, the Bambuti appeal jointly to God and the spirits, since the spirits are thought to be very near to him, dwelling in his village as his children.⁹¹ Because the Basuto consider the departed to be living with God, they approach him through the long chain of the departed, starting with one's dead father or grandfather.⁹² When the Dinka pray, they start their prayers with the words: "God and our ancestors".⁹³ The Herero call him "the father of all the Ovakuru [i.e., ancestors]".⁹⁴ The Fajulu also associate God's earthly aspect with the departed. In these and other examples, God and the departed are pictured as being in close relationship though distinct and not identical.

The Kuku, Acholi, Lango, Lotuko, and possibly others, use the same word for both God and the spirits. This no doubt encourages a certain amount of confusion, but reports indicate that people make a distinction between the two. One writer interprets this situation among the Lango, by saying that the word *Ƴok* conveys "the sum total of the long departed merged into one pre-existent deity called *Ƴok*, a plurality of spirits unified in the person of a single godhead, a spiritual force composed of innumerable spirits, any of which may be temporarily detached without diminishing the oneness of the force".⁹⁵

We have already seen that in many societies, the departed are considered to be intermediaries through whom men may approach God and sometimes God may relay his message or activities to mankind. Among the Kurama, this concept has earned the departed the name of "the ear of God".⁹⁶ The Lozi believe that God receives the spirits of those who wear the national (tribal) mark on the ears and arms; and that spirits of the royal members act as intermediaries. The Lunda hold that the departed are intimately linked with God, and act as intermediaries for the living. The same concept is reported among the Mende, Nandi, Nupe, Tikar, and Tswana. The Luo believe that if they bury their dead properly, the latter will intercede with God on behalf of their human families.⁹⁷ For the Ngombe, the departed are so intimately connected with God that prayers and sacrifices are addressed to both simultaneously. They invoke God

as the "God of our fathers", "God of fathers", or "God of my father/mother/sisters", etc.⁹⁸ From the standpoint of men, the departed are on a plane nearer to God than are men, though they and God are neither identical nor equal. Men do not think of one without thinking of the other, at least in some societies.

The Lugbara consider the dead to be "near to God as were . . . the first creatures of God", but to be "far from us here". According to their beliefs, a person has a "guardian spirit" and a "personality". At death the "spirit" goes to live with God in his immanent aspect and becomes part of a collectivity known as "God's children". The "personality" goes to live with him in his transcendent aspect in the sky.⁹⁹ Whereas it is dangerous for men to get close to God, this is not so when they die, for their "guardian spirit" and "personality" evidently become immune to the dangers of God's proximity.

The Nyakyusa think that both God and the spirits receive those who die; and that together they create sexual desire and control conception.¹⁰⁰ It is reported of other societies that the dead go to God, but we have not more information on what sort of relationship they establish. Such societies include the Bena, Gisu, Indem, Jie, Kadara, Lozi, Nuer (some?), Tswana, Turkana, and Yoruba. One informant from among the Suk reports that God "has nothing to do with men after death",¹⁰¹ but this remark may have been prompted by the question put to the informant, and it is not clear how we should interpret it. I have not come across the same view from any other society.

The Shilluk attribute a very close relationship between God and *Nyikang* their national hero. Both are regarded as participating in each other. People seldom pray to God without mentioning *Nyikang* who acts as their intercessor. The departed are thought to be nearer to God than are men.¹⁰² The Sonjo similarly consider their national hero *Khambageu* to have ascended to God with whom he has now become identified. They pray to *Khambageu* and expect him to save them at the end of the world.¹⁰³

The Vugusu say that God occasionally kills people "because he wants them to live with him", and not as punishment. Spirits of bad people, like witches and sorcerers, become servants of the evil divinity. Spirits of good people become God's servants and after a long while, act as guardians of human individuals and families.¹⁰⁴ According to the Shona, some spirits get closer to God than do others, and the people accord them higher respect.¹⁰⁵ The Sukuma-Nyamwezi also think that the spirits are subordinate to God, and are

arranged hierarchically.¹⁰⁶ The Tiv say that the departed are close to God, but evil ones try to persuade him not to send rain on earth. He does not consent; instead he rebukes them in a thunderous voice saying, "I am greater than you!"¹⁰⁷ The Yao believe that God assigns various places to the spirits, who serve him as his servants and whom he arranges in rows.¹⁰⁸

And with that final arrangement, we come to the end of this book.¹⁰⁹

NOTES

Notes

CHAPTER 1

1. Danquah, 55, with reference to the name *Brekyirihunuade*.
2. Mbanzabigwi, essay; the name is *Bizimana*.
3. Beech, 19.
4. Idowu, 41.
5. Schebesta, II, 172.
6. Idowu, *ibid*.
7. Soboke, essay, referring to God's praise-title *Indaavyi* (or *Indavyi*) which can also be translated "the Seeing One" (so Guillebaud in Smith, 187).
8. Evans in Smith, for the praise-name *Brekyirihunu*; cf. Danquah, *ibid*.
9. Bernardi, 123.
10. Lugira, 27 (and in personal communication, Dec. 1966), with reference to the name *Liisoddene*.
11. Smith and Dale, 208.
12. McCulloch, Littlewood, and others, 80. The name is *Njinyi* or *Nnui*.
13. Gunn, II, 45.
14. Culwick, 100.
15. Evans-Pritchard, III, 7.
16. Smith, 127, 129; the Karanga name is *Chidzipa-chopo*.
17. Culwick, 100.
18. McCulloch, Littlewood, *ibid.*, for *Njinyi* or *Nnui*, which has also this other meaning.
19. Mbanzabigwi, essay.
20. Parsons in Smith, 161-2.
21. Wagner, 170.
22. Smith and Dale, 202; for this reason, the Ila call God *Mutalabala*, a name derived from the verb *kutalabala* which means "to be age-lasting, be everywhere and at all times".
23. Driberg, 217.
24. Middleton, II, 253.
25. Evans-Pritchard, III, 4, 7.
26. Lienhardt in Forde, II, 155; Westermann, 171.
27. Kenyatta, 236. The mountains include Mount Kenya the most important of them all.
28. Driberg, 218.
29. Gray, 24, called *Mogongo jo Mugwe* (and in Maasai *Oldonyo Lengai*), which reaches a height of 11,000 ft.
30. Haje-Gashegu, essay.
31. Evans-Pritchard, III, 2.

32. Hayley, 15.
33. Middleton, II, 28.
34. Wilson, 112 ff., the so-called "shades" (departed) are also said to be present in the act.
35. Dale, 27.
36. Parrinder in Smith, 228, with reference to the name *Olodumare*. The etymology of this name is difficult, but a very helpful discussion of it is given by Idowu, 30-7.
37. Idowu, 40-1.
38. Davidson in Smith, 167; the names are *Anjombe* and *Eliamokonda*, respectively.
39. Smith, 109; the Zulu terms are: *uQugabadele*, *uGobungqongqo*, and *uMabonga-kutuk-izizwe-zonke*, respectively.
40. Wagner in Forde, II, 43.
41. Evans in Smith, 249; and Busia in Forde, II, 192, with reference to the name *Otumfoo*.
42. Claridge, 269; the Bacongo phrase is *Nzambi ampungu*, where *Nzambi* means God, and the adjective *-mpungu* means "out and out, tiptop, utmost, supreme".
43. Roscoe, II, 154.
44. Schebesta, II, 168.
45. Maquet in Forde, II, 169.
46. Mbanzabigwi, essay.
47. Culwick, 100.
48. These names are: *Rangicavyose*, *Rugiravyose* and *Mushoboravyose*, according to essays by Bafutwabo and Haragakiza.
49. Seligman, 394-5.
50. The Shona names are: *Chipindikure* and *Chirozva-mauya*, respectively, according to Merwe, 8.
51. Middleton, II, 252-3.
52. Edel, 160.
53. Kenyatta, 247.
54. Elmslie, 35.
55. Dundas, 121.
56. Junod, 137; the man prays on asking God to educate his and other parents' children, by God's power, for which purpose the man has brought them to him.
57. Lugira, 27. That the Ganda consider God to have greater power than the divinities, comes out in their title for God as "Father of gods" (op. cit., 28).
58. Danquah, 55, in translating the Akan name *Tetekwaframua* which Harris in Smith translates as "Enduring from ancient time", 249. The same general concept is contained in both works.
59. Hopgood in Smith, 73, with reference to the Tonga name *Munamazuba*, supposing it to be etymologically equivalent to the similar Semitic expression (cf. Daniel 7.22).
60. Manoukian, I, 55.
61. Davidson in Smith, 166, with reference to the name *Bilikonda*.
62. Smith, 109.

63. Read, 190-1.
64. Smith and Dale, 197-8.
65. Harris in Smith, 278-9.
66. Seligman, 394.
67. Haje-Gashegu, essay.
68. God's relationship with the heavenly objects and phenomena is described fully in Part III of this book.
69. Middleton, II, 252.
70. Luttig, 8.
71. Kenyatta, 234 ff.
72. Evans in Smith, 249; the Akan term is *Daasabre* or *Daase-ensa*.
73. Cerulli, 115, comprising king's councillors from different parts of the country.
74. The topic of intermediaries is considered in Part IV of this book.
75. Hoppood in Smith, 74; Smith, 116. The Tonga terms are *Mutalabala* and *Shikwembu shikulukumba*, respectively.
76. Danquah, 28, with reference to the name *Odomankoma*.
77. Evans in Smith, 248-9, 252. This is, however, another possible meaning of the same name *Odomankoma*.
78. Claridge, 269.
79. Westermann, I, 171.
80. Davidson in Smith, 167; the Ngombe name is *Endandala*.
81. Southall, 97.
82. Middleton, II, 252-3.
83. Lindblom, 244; Seligman, 179; Butt, 62, respectively.
84. Busia in Forde, II, 193, 196; Lystad, 163.
85. Partridge, 273.
86. Smith and Dale, 199.
87. El-Miskery, essay.
88. Middleton, II, 31, 251 ff.
89. Jellicoe, essay.
90. Hayley, 3; Driberg, 218.
91. Driberg, 218, 224.
92. Davidson in Smith, 167, with reference to the name *Elimalima*.
93. Seligman, 519.
94. Kenyatta, 241.
95. Lienhardt in Forde, II, 156.
96. Abraham, 22.
97. Seligman, 395.
98. Lienhardt, 33.
99. Smith, 129; the Karanga names are *Chidzipa-chopo* and *Muwanikwa*, respectively.
100. See Part IV of this book, which deals with worship.

CHAPTER 2

1. Claridge, 269.
2. Schebesta, II, 171-2.
3. Mbanzabigwi, essay.

4. Haje-Gashegu, essay, for the name *Habimana*.
5. Bafutwabo, essay.
6. Smith, 109, for the name *uZivelele*.
7. Callaway, 31-2.
8. Merwe, 10; Smith, 129; for the names *Mutangakugara* (which can also be rendered "He who was the first to be") and *Muwanikwa* (which can also be rendered "the One who was just found to exist"), respectively.
10. Guillebaud in Smith, 187-8, for the names *Iyakare* and *Iyambere*, respectively.
11. Culwick, 100, for the name *Mlongaweka*.
12. Westermann, II, 197.
13. Routledge, 225-6; Kenyatta, 233.
14. Callaway, 61.
15. Danquah, 22, for *Nana Nyankopon*; cf. Evans in Smith, 244 ff.
16. Busia in Forde, II, 192, for *Onyankopon*.
17. *Ibid.*, for *Onyankopon Kwame*.
18. Campbell, 245.
19. Junod, 137.
20. Read, 191, for *Umkulu Kakulu*.
21. Merwe, 7, for *Nyadenga*.
22. Cf. Forde and Jones, 25, for *Chuku* (from *Chi* and *uku*).
23. Partridge, 273.
24. Smith, 116, for *Shikwembu shikulukumba*.
25. Baxter and Butt, 100-1.
26. Abraham, 23.
27. Smith, 103, for *Unkulunkulu*.
28. Kuper, Hughes, etc., 103, for *Unkulunkulu*.
29. Kuper, II, 42, for *Mkulumncandi*.
30. Smith, 129, for *Chidziva-chopo*.
31. Merwe, 10, for *Dzivaguru*.
32. Smith, 50-1, for *Chiuta*.
33. Smith, 109, for *Icibi-eliomnqwazi-pezulu*.
34. Smith and Dale, 202.
35. Smith, 128. One is tempted to note the striking parallel of this statement to the answer given by God to Moses, in Exodus 3.14, when Moses asked God for his name, to which God replied, "I AM WHO I AM". To change the Karanga question and statement from the third to the first and second persons, would easily make the verbal situation like that of the Exodus passage.
36. Callaway, 62, *et passim*.
37. Lienhardt in Forde, II, 156, without elaborating in what context this idea is considered.
38. Read, 190-1, for the name *Uluhlanga*.
39. Busia in Forde, II, 192, for the name *Bore-bore*.
40. Schebesta, II, 172.
41. Davidson in Smith, 167, for the names *Ebangala* and *Ebangala-emokonda*, respectively.
42. Young, 146, quoted in the next subsection below.
43. Talbot, 19.

44. Smith and Dale, 201-2, for the names *Chaba* and *Namakungwe*, respectively.
45. Pettersson, 194; Smith, 129, for the name *Mutangakugara* (which is translated by Merwe, 10, as "the One who existed in the beginning").
46. Goody, 209.
47. Smith and Dale, 202, for the names *Ipaokubozha* and *Ushatwakwe*, respectively.
48. Middleton, II, 27.
49. McCulloch, III, 39.
50. Lienhardt in Forde, II, 158.
51. Culwick, 100.
52. Danquah, 22.
53. Young, 146, without specifying which group of the Pygmies he is describing. He uses *Kmvoum* for God, here.
54. Busia in Forde, II, 191.
55. Lystad, 163.
56. Gunn, II, 57.
57. Manoukian, I, 94.
58. Culwick, 100.
59. Maquet in Forde, II, 169.
60. Evans-Pritchard, III, *passim*.
61. Parrinder in Smith, 231.
62. Smith, 127.
63. Tremearne, 166.
64. Huntingford, II, 135, for the name *Chepopkoiyo*.
65. Baxter and Butt, 111.
66. Seligman, 395.
67. Smith, 91.
68. Lienhardt in Forde, II, 155.
69. Idowu, 45, the first name being *Oba Airi* in Yoruba.
70. Schebesta, II, 177 ff.
71. Middleton, II, 254.
72. Wagner, 172.
73. Beech, 19.
74. Kidd, 78.
75. Lystad, 163, without quoting the exact words.
76. Claridge, 268-9.
77. Schebesta, II, 170-1, 186-7, giving names like *Arebati* and *Epilipili* by which God is known, but adding that the Bambuti have "no exact name for their conception of God".
78. Callaway, 9-10; cf. Pettersson, 153, that God's name had been forgotten.
79. Hinde, 99, for *Ngai*; cf. Huntingford, III, 125, who says that the name stands for God, rain, and sky.
80. Campbell, 245, for the name *Njambi-Kalunga*; cf. Pettersson, 144, who says that one theory of the meaning of *Kalunga*, *Karunga*, and *Mulungu*, used by various peoples for the name of God, is that the words come from the "root *longa, lunga*" which means "depth, ocean, river, land".

81. Davidson in Smith, 167, for the name *Endandala*.
82. Nalder, 172-3.
83. Bradbury, 159.
84. Smith and Dale, 197-8 (and chapter 1 above).
85. Middleton, II, 141, 253.
86. Callaway, 24.
87. Callaway, 1, 20, 23, 62.
88. Read, 191-2.
89. Davidson in Smith, 166, 174.
90. Smith and Dale, 202-3, 210, for the names *Munamazuba* and *Mutalabala*, respectively.
91. Campbell, 245, for the expression *Kafula mova ilunga wa visera*.
92. Junod, 135, for the name *Tilo*.
93. Young, 146 (and chapter 3 above).
94. Routledge, 225-6.
95. Lugira, 27, for the name *Ssewannaku*.
96. Busia in Forde, II, 192, for the name *Otomankoma*.
97. Lystad, 163.
98. Manoukian, I, 55.
99. Danquah, 28, explaining the name *Odomankoma*.
100. Schebesta, II, 172.
101. Merwe, 10, for the names *Muwanikwa* and *Mutangakugara*, respectively.
102. Little, 217.
103. Merwe, 8, for the name *Chipindikure*.
104. Middleton, II, 253.
105. Goody, 209.
106. Dundas, 121.
107. Rattray, II, 43, without specifying which people.
108. Idowu, 36, 43, using the name *Olodumare* for God.
109. Middleton, II, 253-4.
110. Lienhardt in Forde, II, 155-6; Seligman, 76; Butt, 63.
111. Wagner, 175.
112. Bernardi, 61.
113. Hinde, 99-100.
114. Seligman, 274-5; Huntingford, IV, 42.
115. Haragakiza and Kamenge, essays.
116. Luttig, 9.
117. Driberg, 222-3.
118. Merwe, 11-12; the Shona names are *Soro-re-Zhou*, *Runji*, and *Va Marumbi* or *Va Nyachava*, respectively, reported in the Belingwe area.
119. Hughes, Kuper, etc., 104; the Ndebele names are *Shorogulu*, *Marumbi*, and *Luntshi*, respectively.

CHAPTER 3

1. Junod, 133.
2. Mbanzabigwi, essay.
3. Parrinder in Smith, 231; the Ewe term is *Mawu-homefato*.

4. The Akamba term is *Ngai* (or *Mulungu wa Tei*).
5. Bafutwabo, essay.
6. Dundas, 107, 117 ff.
7. Smith and Dale, 200.
8. Cerulli, 115.
9. Claridge, 274.
10. Junod, 137.
11. Guillebaud in Smith, 188-9, the name is *Iyeze*.
12. Cf. Luttig, 7.
13. Evans-Pritchard, III, 12 ff.
14. Cf. Bradbury, 159.
15. Lindblom, 244.
16. Wagner in Forde, II, 43.
17. Routledge, 227.
18. Kenyatta, 233, making the Love of God dependent on human behaviour. Possibly what this writer means is that in prosperity people consider their situation to be an expression of God's love; and in sorrows they feel that he "hates" them. This is what seems to be in the statements recorded by the Routledges.
19. Evans-Pritchard, III, 7, without giving the context of this belief.
20. The Akamba term is *Ngai* (or *Mulungu ula ukiakiasya*).
21. Evans in Smith, 249, for the name *Abommubuwafré* or *Nyamanekeose*.
22. Danquah, 55, in explaining the name *Abommubuwafré*.
23. Campbell, 246.
24. Evans-Pritchard, III, 9.
25. Evans in Smith, 248 ff., 307, for the name *Tweaduampon* which among the Ashanti means "the Dependable One" (according to Busia in Forde, II, 192, spelling it as *Twiaduampon*).
26. Danquah, 55, explaining the name *Nyaamanekeose*.
27. Dundas, 121.
28. Smith and Dale, 200, 207.
29. Tremearne, 166.
30. Claridge, 272-3.
31. Westermann, II, 197.
32. Maquet in Forde, II, 169.
33. Westermann, *ibid*.
34. Westermann, *ibid*.
35. Callaway, 105.
36. Ezeanya, lecture; Talbot, 19, who adds that God can do no evil.
37. Smith and Dale, 200.
38. Gulliver, 47.
39. Tremearne, 166.
40. Driberg, 223-4; Hayley, 9.
41. Bradbury, 159.
42. Evans-Pritchard, III, 12-13, 22 ff.
43. Wagner, 170-1.
44. Huntingford, II, 153.
45. Nalder, 225.
46. Luttig, 8.

47. Baxter and Butt, 135, for the name *Loma*.
48. Lienhardt in Forde, II, 158.
49. Kamenge and Mtahirata, essays.
50. Middleton, II, 27, 31, 252 ff.
51. Geluwe, 166; the spirits are known as *Mutshemi* (thought to be God's Son) and *Fondi*, respectively.
52. Campbell, 245; the expression is *Shakapanga upanga no kupangulula* (said to be used by the Balomotwa and Katanga peoples).
53. Pettersson, 191-2.
54. Roscoe, IV, 48.
55. Schebesta, II, 178 ff.
56. Kidd, 78.
57. Young, 145.
58. Dundas, 112-21.
59. Schebesta II, 174-5.
60. Kasozi, essay.
61. Kenyatta, 240, 243-4.
62. Kamenge, essay.
63. Stayt, 230.
64. Hopgood in Smith, 74.
65. Cerulli, 94.
66. Abraham, 23.
67. Lindblom, 244; and Luttig, 23, respectively.
68. Smith and Dale, 200.
69. Cf. Schebesta, II, 171.
70. Bafutwabo, essay.
71. Maquet in Forde, II, 169.
72. Mbanzabigwi, essay, for the name *Hashakimana*.
73. Dugast in McCulloch and others 151, without explaining under what circumstances the phrase is used.
74. Little, 218.
75. Idowu, 53
76. Middleton, II, 140, 253.
77. Cagnolo, 27.
78. Evans-Pritchard, III, 12 ff.
79. Cerulli, 84.
80. Dundas, 107.
81. Cerulli, 129.
82. Lugira, 29.
83. Wagner, 177.
84. Evans-Pritchard, III, 5-6.
85. Mercier in Forde, II, 215.
86. Claridge, 272.
87. Evans-Pritchard, III, 12 ff., 19.
88. Cagnolo, 27.
89. Lugira, 129.
90. Smith and Dale, 199-200.
91. Campbell, 245.
92. Young, 127.

93. See further discussion of the name *Mulungu*, by Smith, 58 ff. The same work contains notes on other names for God, the discussion of which is not included in this book.
94. Cf. Smith and Dale, 199-200.
95. Idowu, 47.
96. Kenyatta, 244 ff., 234 (for the name *Mwene-Nyaga*).
97. Bernardi, 94, 107, *et passim*.
98. Gray, 119 ff., *et passim*.
99. Merwe, 23 ff. The fact that the cult was run by an esoteric group of priests which, with great secrecy, used some "tricks", does not invalidate the fact that at the solemn assemblies the rest of the people believed that they were actually approaching the presence of God, and conducted themselves accordingly. Cf. Smith, 126 ff. Some reports speak of this cult as if it were already dead, and others as if it is still observed.

CHAPTER 4

1. Danquah, 28, 30, with reference to the title *Borebore*, and the expression *Borebore a aboo Adee*, respectively.
2. Meyerowitz, 46; another translation of *Odomankoma*.
3. With reference to the names *Mumbi* and *Mwatuangi*, by which the Akamba describe the activities of God.
4. Guillebaud in Smith, 190-1.
5. Maquet in Forde, II, 166.
6. Examination paper, March 1966.
7. Smith and Dale, 201, for the names *Chilenga* (verb *kulanga*), *Lubumba* (verb *kubumba*), and *Shakapanga* (verb *kupanga*), respectively.
8. Abraham, 26, for the name *Aondo gba tar*.
9. Edel, 160, for the name *Sebahanga* (verb *(ku)hanga*).
10. Read, 190-1, for the names *Umkulunqango* and *Uluhlanga*, respectively.
11. Welbourn, conference paper, with reference to the name of *Nyamuhanga*.
12. Lystad, 163; Busia in Forde, II, 192.
13. Roscoe, III, 23, with reference to *Ruhanga*.
14. Nalder, 130.
15. Nalder, 200.
16. Lugira, 27, for the name *Kagingo*.
17. Musoke, essay, for the phrase *Katonda we butonda*.
18. Campbell, 245, for the name *Sakatanga*.
19. Schapera, II, 264, with regard to *Modimo*.
20. Driberg, 223.
21. Middleton, II, 253; Middleton and Tait, 208.
22. Evans-Pritchard, III, 5 ff., with reference to the term *Cak*.
23. Pettersson, 143, with reference to *Mwari* and *Mnari*.
24. Merwe, 8-9, for the names *Musiki* (verb *kusika*) and *Musikavanhu*, respectively. Another name for Creator is *Marure*, and *Mwumbi* is used to mean Moulder or Fashioner.
25. Beech, 19.
26. Bradbury, 159.
27. Wagner in Forde, II, 28 ff.

28. Idowu, 39, the last term with reference to *Elemi*.
29. Callaway, 19, 53.
30. Goody, 209.
31. Butt, 87.
32. Mercier in Forde, II, 215 ff.
33. Huntingford, II, 123-4.
34. Baumann (see bibliography).
35. Wagner in Forde, II, 28 ff., who adds that God gave men the instruction about which animals and fish to eat.
36. Lystad, 164-5.
37. Baxter and Butt, 94-5, who note that the Azande do not use canoes.
38. Schebesta, II, 168 ff.
39. Guillebaud in Smith, 193; Maquet in Forde, II, 166.
40. Dieterlen in Forde, II, 85 ff.
41. Mercier in Forde, II, 217 ff.
42. Callaway, 41 ff., 90.
43. Turner, 48.
44. Little in Forde, II, 114.
45. Huntingford, II, 123-4.
46. Claridge, 270-1.
47. Wagner in Forde, II, 43.
48. Manoukian, I, 55.
49. Lystad, 164.
50. Mercier in Forde, II, 222 ff., who points out that *Gu* assists God in ordering the world of human beings, and *Da* assists in ordering the natural world.
51. Maquet in Forde, II, 167.
52. Seligman, 179.
53. Idowu, 39; the name is *Olojo-oni*.
54. Middleton, II, 27, 252.
55. Huntingford, II, 123 ff., 135-6.
56. Seligman, 394-5.
57. Evans-Pritchard, III, 6.
58. Wilson, 168.
59. Smith and Dale, 211.
60. Callaway, 57; Schapera, II, 263.
61. Westermann, II, 197.
62. Danquah, 46.
63. Claridge, 270-1.
64. Baxter and Butt, 95.
65. Schebesta, II, 169.
66. Maquet in Forde, II, 169.
67. Haje-Gashegu, essay, for the name *Habyarimana*.
68. Soboke, essay.
69. Mbwana, essay.
70. Partridge, 273, 282.
71. Nalder, 130.
72. Talbot, 24.
73. Driberg, 221 ff.

74. Middleton, II, 251-2.
75. Beech, 19.
76. Wilson, 112 ff., 129.
77. Butt, 116.
78. Junod, 135.
79. El-Miskery, essay.
80. Dieterlen in Forde, II, 85 ff.
81. Idowu, 173 ff.
82. Talbot, 24.
83. Smith and Dale, 202, for the name *Ushatwakwe*.
84. Little in Forde, II, 113.
85. Evans-Pritchard, III, 6-7.
86. Schapera, III, 59.
87. Claridge, 270-1.
88. Haragakiza, essay, with regard to the name *Rangicavyose*.
89. Maquet in Forde, II, 169.
90. Geluwe, 166.
91. MacDonald, 67.
92. Wagner in Forde, II, 43; cf. Wagner, 169.
93. Middleton, II, 87.
94. Butt, 105.
95. Gulliver, 92.

CHAPTER 5

1. Manoukian, I, 55; Meyerowitz, 24.
2. Danquah, 40.
3. Campbell, 245, with reference to the name *Suku*.
4. Huntingford, III, 68.
5. Cagnolo, 26.
6. Lugira, 29.
7. Westermann, II, 197.
8. Edel, 160, with reference to the name *Rugaba*.
9. Merwe, 8, with reference to the name *Chirazamauya*.
10. Tremearne, 166.
11. Roscoe, II, 131.
12. Douglas in Forde, II, 9.
13. Bernardi, 113.
14. Lienhardt in Forde, II, 159.
15. Wagner, 170.
16. Manoukian, I, 50.
17. Driberg, 225.
18. Young, 143; and Callaway, 4, respectively.
19. Danquah, 21, 40, for the names *Amowia* and *Nyame*, respectively.
20. Welbourn, conference paper, with reference to the name *Kazooba*.
21. Westermann, II, 197.
22. Brown, 70.
23. Smith and Dale, 200.
24. Edel, 160, with reference to the name *Kazoba*.

25. Danquah, 40, 54.
26. Junod, 134.
27. Smith and Dale, 199-200, 202; the names are *Shakemba* (or *Kemba*) and *Namesi*, respectively.
28. Little, 218.
29. Cf. Read, 191.
30. Pauw, 32.
31. Pettersson, 155.
32. Forde and Jones, 25.
33. Middleton, I, 66.
34. Githae, essay. "Good land" means a fertile productive land which never loses its fertility (i.e., which never "lacks land", as the second line says).
35. Abraham, 26.
36. Dundas, 146 (which I have arranged in verse form).
37. Bradbury, 52-3.
38. Gulliver, 48.
39. Seligman, 436.
40. Bernardi, 113-14, 124-5.
41. Huntingford, II, 135.
42. Hollis, II, 42 ff.
43. Seligman, 394-5.
44. Callaway, 57 ff. (which I have arranged in verse form).
45. Schebesta, II, 169, 173.
46. Schebesta, I, 235.
47. Wilson, 112 ff.
48. Driberg, 218, 221 ff.
49. Wagner, 170 ff.
50. Taylor, 111, names it *Wamara*.
51. Roscoe, II, 91 ff.; III, 22. The names are *Wamala* (of plenty), *Kaikara* (of harvest), *Lubanga* (of health) and *Kagoro* (of cattle increase).
52. Roscoe, II, 249; III, 104. The names are *Gasani* (who controls birth), *Kintu* (of childbirth), and *Lubanga* (associated with healing).
53. Bradbury, 52-3; the names being *Oloku* and *Osu*, respectively.
54. Taylor, 94, naming them *Nyabingi Nyabibuya* and *Nyabahasa*, respectively.
55. Baxter and Butt, 118-19.
56. Gray, 62.
57. Abraham, 23, names him *Takuruku*.
58. Mercier in Forde, II, 217, 221.
59. Maquet in Forde, II, 167 ff.
60. Schebesta, II, 171.
61. Turner, 49.
62. Lienhardt in Forde, II, 154.
63. Wagner in Forde, II, 43.
64. Danquah, 40.
65. Taylor, 142.
66. Evans-Pritchard, III, 6-7.
67. Callaway, 7, 59.

68. Kamenge, essay; and Soboke, essay. The names are *Rutangaboro*, and *Haragakiza* and *Harerimana*, respectively.
69. Mbanzabigwi, essay.
70. Lystad, 163-4.
71. Mercier in Forde, II, 224.
72. Cerulli, 32, calls them "guardian angels".
73. McCulloch, III, 71, names it as *Kumba*.
74. Middleton, II, 31, 254.
75. Lugira, 29.
76. Smith and Dale, 202, for the name *Muninde*.
77. Seligman, 295.
78. Hopgood in Smith, 74, for the name *Ciyobolola*.
79. Merwe, 13.
80. Idowu, 39, for the name *Elemi*.
81. Maquet in Forde, II, 169.
82. Haje-Gashegu, essay; and Mbanzabigwi, essay, for the name *Ndagi-jimana*.
83. Kamenge, essay, for the names *Rutungu* and *Rutangaboro*, respectively.
84. Bafutwabo, essay.
85. Smith and Dale, 211.
86. Evans-Pritchard, III, 7 ff.
87. Douglas in Forde, II, 9.
88. McCulloch, I, 73.
89. Huntingford, IV, 66.
90. Gunn, II, 28.
91. Jellicoe, student paper.
92. Gulliver, 48.
93. Hollis, II, 45 ff.; Huntingford, II, 135.
94. Lienhardt in Ford, II, 158; Seligman, 75.
95. Wagner, 170.
96. Lystad, 164.
97. Roscoe, II, 92; III, 24, the names are *Mulindwa* and *Nyinawhira*.
98. Dieterlen in Forde, II, 89.
99. Kasozi, essay.
100. Taylor, 142, names the one as *Irungu*.
101. Talbot, 19-20; the earth divinity is *Ake*, said to be the daughter of God.
102. Claridge, 270-1.
103. Dymond in Smith, 145.
104. Dundas, 107, 122-3.
105. Middleton, I, 66.
106. Huntingford, II, 136; III, 38.
107. Schapera, II, 263.
108. Dieterlen in Forde, II, 87.
109. Campbell, 246.
110. Smith, 76, giving other possible meanings as well.
111. Lugira, 27, for the name *Ddunda*.
112. Dundas, 122.
113. Edel, 160, for the name *Biheko*.
114. Stevenson in Smith, 214-16, for the name *Masala*.

115. Westermann, I, 171.
116. Merwe, 13; the phrase is *Woleza mtima*.
117. Dundas, 122, 146.
118. Luttig, 8.
119. Smith and Dale, 210.
120. Partridge, 281-2.
121. Douglas in Forde, II, 7.
122. Wilson, 61.
123. Guillebaud in Smith, 190.
124. Gulliver, 85.
125. Westermann, I, 171.
126. Merwe, 24.
127. Wagner, 172-3.
128. Roscoe, II, 93 and IV, 104, respectively, giving the name *Lubanga* for both societies.
129. Bradbury, 53, giving the name *Osu* for the divinity.
130. Huntingford, III, 134.
131. Lugira, 29.
132. Junod, 134.
133. Smith and Dale, 203, 207; the name is *Luvhunabaumba*.
134. Gulliver, 47.
135. Seligman, 75.
136. Okwemba, essay, for the name *Wele (Were)*.
137. Haje-Gashegu, essay, for the name *Hakizimana*.
138. Soboke, essay, the names are *Haragakiza* and *Harerimana*, respectively.
139. Danquah, 55, for the name *Abommubuwafre*.
140. Whiteley, 9.
141. Dundas, 112-20.
142. Bernardi, 56-62.
143. Gray, 108, 129, *et passim*.
144. McCulloch, I, 73.
145. Bernardi, 16.
146. Evans-Pritchard, III, 25.
147. Middleton, I, 67, 93.
148. Campbell, 245, for the name *Wamaneme*, adding that "this was no missionary importation".
149. Smith and Dale, 207.

CHAPTER 6

1. Guillebaud in Smith, 187; and Haje-Gashegu, essay, for the names *Rugaba* and *Hategekimana*, respectively.
2. Bafutwabo, essay, for the name *Segaba*.
3. Bradbury, 19, 52.
4. Campbell, 245, for the name *Vidie Mukulu*.
5. Junod, 137-8.
6. Westermann, II, 197.
7. Meyerowitz, 145.
8. Schebesta, I, 234, and II, 173, respectively.

9. Partridge, 273.
10. Read, 190-1.
11. Cagnolo, 26.
12. Idowu, 40.
13. Callaway, 53, for the term *Inkosi*; cf. Smith, 108-9. The *Zulu-English Dictionary* (by C. M. Doke and B. W. Vilakazi, 2nd edn, 1964) gives several meanings to this term, including "King, paramount chief" and "term of respect for royalty or for a person in high governmental authority; Lord, sir" (p. 405).
14. Smith, 109.
15. Culwick, 99.
16. Dundas, 146.
17. Smith and Dale, 210, for the name *Ushatwakwe*.
18. Haje-Gashegu, essay, for the names *Bigirimana* and *Semana*, respectively.
19. Soboke and Bafutwabo essays, for the names *Rugoba* and *Nyeninganyi*, respectively.
20. Lugira, 27, for the name *Kagingo*.
21. Willoughby, 217; Smith, 76-7.
22. Smith and Dale, 199, 202; Junod, 133.
23. Read, 190, for the title *Umnikaze we zinto zonke*.
24. Merwe, 8, for the name *Sagomakoma*.
25. Beech, 19.
26. Bradbury, 159.
27. Cf. Westermann, I, 171.
28. Evans-Pritchard, III, 12 ff.
29. Rattray, I, 395 (from addendum by R. R. Marett).
30. Schebesta, II, 172 ff.
31. Mbanzabigwi, essay.
32. Geluwe, 166.
33. Huntingford, V, 74.
34. Lugira, 27, for the names *Mukama* and *Ssebintu*, respectively.
35. Beech, 19-20; and Bernardi, 123, respectively.
36. Idowu, 37; and Parrinder in Smith, 228, for the titles *Olorun* and *Oluwa*, respectively.
37. Callaway, 53, 56, 59, 60; for the title *Inkosi* (Lord), see note 13 above.
38. Mbanzabigwi, essay; and Haje-Gashegu, essay, for the last two titles *Hategekimana* and *Hashakimana*, respectively.
39. Haragakiza, essay, for the name *Rangicavyose*.
40. Rouch, 60.
41. Mbanzabigwi, essay, for the name *Hashakimana*.
42. Lugira, 29.
43. Campbell, 245, the name is *Wamaneme*.
44. Junod, 137.
45. Bernardi, 61, 124-5.
46. Lienhardt in Forde, II, 160.
47. Pauw, 32.
48. Wagner, 170-1; and Little in Forde, II, 114, respectively.
49. Abraham, 21-2.

50. Nalder, 31-2.
51. Butt, 87.
52. Goody, 373 ff.
53. Middleton, I, 68.
54. Junod, 138.
55. Smith and Dale, 203, 211.
56. Lugira, 27, for the name *Ddunda*.
57. Meyerowitz, 24; cf. 145, for the name *Atoapoma*.
58. Roscoe, II, 131.
59. Claridge, 270 ff.
60. Forde and Jones, 25.
61. Little, 217.
62. Beech, 19; and Callaway, 59, respectively.
63. Danquah, 40, for the names *Amaomee*, *Amosu*, and *Amowia*, respectively.
64. Dornan, 287.
65. Junod, 134.
66. Lugira, 29, for the name *Lugaba*.
67. Sweeting, essay.
68. Kenyatta, 233; and Mwara, essay.
69. Smith and Dale, 199, 202-3, for the names *Ipaokubozha* and *Chabawakaaba-ochitadiwa*, respectively.
70. Edel, 160.
71. Bernardi, 123; Seligman, 75; and Merwe, 11, respectively, the Shona name being *Mupaose* or *Mupavose*.
72. Wagner in Forde, II, 43; and Okwemba, essay, for the name *Khakaba*.
73. Seligman, 519-20.
74. Massam, 189.
75. Talbot, 19-20.
76. Gulliver, 47.
77. Smith and Dale, 199 ff. (for the name *Ipaokubozha*); and Junod, 133.
78. McCulloch, I, 73.
79. Seligman, 395.
80. Evans-Pritchard, III, 16 ff.
81. Schebesta, I, 236; and II, 171, respectively.
82. Maquet in Forde, II, 170.
83. Driberg, 224.
84. Muango, essay.
85. Gulliver, 85.
86. Bradbury, 159.
87. Wagner, 171.
88. Butt, 131; Parsons in Smith, 269, respectively.
89. Butt, 79.
90. Idowu, 42.
91. Dymond in Smith, 149.
92. Stayt, 230-1.
93. Dundas, 107, 122.
94. Pettersson, 163; Merwe, 19.
95. Routledge, 227.

96. Evans-Pritchard, III, 6.
97. Merwe, 13.
98. McCulloch, and others, 40.
99. Schapera, III, 59.
100. Callaway, 20, 60.
101. Wagner, 171.
102. Muango, essay.
103. Dieterlen in Forde, II, 85 f., 89.
104. Mercier in Forde, II, 219, speaking about *Mawu-Lisa*.
105. Callaway, 56.
106. Driberg, 218; Hayley, 15.
107. Roscoe, II, 131 f., names him as *Kazoba* which is in fact another name (*Kazooba*) for God the Creator who causes the sun to shine by day and the moon by night, and who preserves peace; cf. Welbourn, conference paper.
108. Roscoe, II, 91; III, 23, names him *Muhingo*.
109. Manoukian, I, 94 ff.
110. Lugira, 30, names them *Kibuka* and *Nnende*.
111. Bradbury, 200, named *Ogun*.
112. Idowu, 85 ff; Forde, I, 30, named *Ogun*.

CHAPTER 7

1. Smith, 113 ff.; Junod, 135-6.
2. Butt, 104; cf. Driberg, 224.
3. Middleton, II, 22.
4. Middleton, II, 22, 114, 255.
5. Pettersson, 191, names them *Nomkululwane* and *Umlenzengamunye*.
6. Roscoe, II, 91; III, 24, named *Ndhaul* (but spelt differently by the same author!).
7. Roscoe, II, 247, named *Bijungo*.
8. Roscoe, IV, 9, named *Gibini* and *Enundu*, respectively.
9. Idowu, 95 ff., named *Sopona*.
10. Driberg, 220-1; Hayley, 6 ff.; Butt, 104. A similar state of affairs exists among the Acholi, who are closely related to the Lango, according to Okot.
11. Cory, 59, named *Simungala* or *Ilimingala*, but we are not told what might anger him.
12. Young, 142-3.
13. Evans-Pritchard, III, 22 ff.
14. Callaway, 26.
15. Junod, 133; Smith and Dale, 200 ff.
16. Cagnolo, 27; Middleton, I, 66.
17. Smith, 115 (Tonga); Wilson, 166 ff. (Nyakyusa).
18. Wagner, 175 ff., named *Wele evimbi*.
19. Kasozi, essay; the divinity of death is *Walumbe*.
20. Cerulli, 130, named *Durissa*, which the writer mentions as a "devil". It is possible that this concept is from outside influence—if this divinity is a "devil".

21. Geluwe, 166, names the two as *Mutshemi* and *Fondi*, respectively.
22. Routledge, 227.
23. Callaway, 59.
24. Merwe, 8, for the name *Chirozva-mauya*.
25. Huntingford, II, 135.
26. Smith and Dale, 202-3, for the names *Ipaokubozha*, *Chembwe*, and *Mukubwe*, respectively.
27. Baumann, 307 ff.
28. Meyerowitz, 24, 145.
29. Claridge, 272-3; Weeks, I, 248.
30. Kamenge, essay; Haragakiza, essay.
31. Smith and Dale, 202, 207.
32. Seligman, 436; Cerulli, 31.
33. Driberg, 224; Butt, 105.
34. Middleton, II, 193, 253, 257, the name is *Adroa 'ba o' dupiri*. The writer points out that in his immanent aspect, God is also associated with death.
35. Baxter and Butt, 100 f.
36. Evans-Pritchard, III, 7, 12-12.
37. Hambly, 344.
38. Idowu, 187 ff.
39. Kasozi, essay, names him *Walumbe*.
40. Bradbury, 54, named *Ogiuwu*.

CHAPTER 8

1. Campbell, 245, 251; the Lunda name is *Sakatanga*.
2. Luttig, 7; Westermann, II, 197.
3. Beech, 19.
4. Danquah, 23; Manoukian, I, 55.
5. Roscoe, I, 312.
6. Roscoe, III, 21.
7. Kuper, Hughes, etc., 105; Merwe, 12.
8. Gunn, I, 58; Gulliver, 56, respectively.
9. Schebesta, II, 172, 174, 186-7.
10. Dornan, 287, referring to the Barolong group.
11. Evans-Pritchard, III, 7, 22.
12. Bradbury, 159; Stevenson in Smith, 213, respectively.
13. Gray in Fortes and Dieterlen, 59, for *Aba Riob*.
14. Routledge, 225 ff.; Prins, 88, respectively.
15. Stevenson in Smith, 215 f.; and Dymond in Smith, 146, respectively, for the title *Masala*.
16. Busia in Forde, II, 196.
17. Danquah, 22, 55, for the terms *Nana Nyankopon* and *Nana*, respectively.
18. Stayt, 230, 232, for the title *Makhulu*.
19. Schebesta, I, 235.
20. Schebesta, II, 174.
21. Campbell, 250 f.
22. Middleton, II, 31, 249, 252.
23. Kuper, Hughes, etc., 104.

24. Lienhardt in Forde, II, 162.
25. Evans-Pritchard, III, 3, 8.
26. Smith, 115, cf. 113 ff., for the discussion of the term *Tilo*, used here for God.
27. Smith, 109, for the title *Usonganiso*.
28. Lienhardt in Forde, II, 155.
29. Whiteley, 8-9.
30. Abraham, 26.
31. Wagner, 172.
32. Middleton and Tait, 208.
33. Danquah, 28.
34. Seligman, 395.
35. Callaway, 60.
36. Callaway, 19-20, 56.
37. Huntingford, I, 33.
38. Schebesta, II, 202.
39. Manoukian, I, 94.
40. Harris in Smith, 278-9.
41. Claridge, 272, without explaining its meaning or its application.
42. McCulloch, Littlewood, etc., 80.
43. Middleton, II, 140.

CHAPTER 9

1. Callaway, 42.
2. Callaway, 41, 53, 57, 60, 90.
3. Luttig, 4, commenting that this situation was more so formerly than it is today, because of interruption by the Germans, who in 1904 took away Herero cattle; and by the Europeans of South Africa, which for many years has administered the Herero.
4. Evans-Pritchard, III, 11 ff.
5. Lienhardt, 21 ff.
6. Luttig, 36-7.
7. Schebesta, II, 169-70.
8. Haragakiza, essay. I have not been able to ascertain this statement, but I have no reason to doubt it.
9. Jellicoe, examination paper.
10. Middleton, II, 100, 110, 114.
11. Douglas in Forde, II, 10, but without telling us in what sense these animals are charged with spiritual powers.
12. Kidd, 77-80.
13. Bernardi, 53.
14. Further myths and beliefs about snakes, are contained in Baumann's book (see bibliography).
15. Bernardi, 53, commenting that this is essentially the biblical story of Genesis 3.
16. Schebesta, II, 202.
17. Hinde, 101; Huntingford, III, 125.
18. Lugira, 187.

19. Baumann, 269 ff.
20. Baumann, *ibid.*; Abrahamsson, *passim*.
21. Schebesta, II, 169.
22. McCulloch, Littlewood, etc., 80.
23. Where the names are not mentioned, it indicates that these birds are not specified in our sources.
24. Stayt, 230, the name for God is *Raluwhimba*, and the word for eagle is *luwhimba*.
25. Evans-Pritchard, III, 3.
26. Lugira, 186.
27. Turner, 49.
28. Driberg, 217.
29. Schapera, I, 177 ff.
30. Baumann, 120 ff., 139 ff., 178-9, *et passim*.
31. Busia in Forde, II, 192, for the name *Ananse Kokroko*.

CHAPTER 10

1. Davidson in Smith, 166-7; the Ngombe names are *Bilikonda*, *Eliamokonda*, *Ebangala-e-mokonda*, and *Moswa mokonda*, respectively.
2. Baumann, 224 ff.
3. Evans-Pritchard, III, 6.
4. Luttig, 25-6, names it *Omumborombonga* (its botanical name is *compretum primigenium*); Smith, 130.
5. Schebesta, II, 179.
6. Dundas, 108-9.
7. Bernardi, 53 ff., commenting that this is essentially the biblical story.
8. Some of these trees are not mentioned by name in our sources, otherwise I would mention the exact names.
9. Prins, 127-8; the name is *Mlungu*.
10. Davidson in Smith, 167 ff.
11. Mbanzabigwi, essay; the name is *Ikimana*, but he does not identify it.
12. Driberg, 218, speaking of *Jok Adongo*; Butt, 105.
13. Roscoe, II, 290, 292.
14. Baumann, 235 ff.
15. Callaway, 9, 45 ff.
16. Pettersson, 184 ff.
17. Hinde, 102 ff.
18. Evans-Pritchard, III, 23.

CHAPTER 11

1. Luttig, 9, names her as *Musisi*.
2. Middleton, II, 254.
3. Huntingford, III, 125 (names it *Ol-apa*, adding that grammatically the moon is masculine, while God's name, *En-kai*, is feminine); Little, 218 (named *Ndoi*); Armstrong in Forde, III, 150 (named *Mbache*); Beech, 19 (named *Seta*), respectively.
4. Kidd, 78.

5. Turner, 48; one of the wives, perhaps the chief one, is named *Nasilele* and the moon is her symbol, while the sun is God's symbol.
6. Baxter and Butt, 118.
7. Meyerowitz, 23-4, 46, 145; but not supported by Danquah or by Manoukian, I.
8. Lystad, 165, named *Asase Yaa*.
9. Manoukian, III, 46, named *Mawu Sodza*.
10. Talbot, 19-20, known by the names *Ake, Ala, Ana* or *Aja*.
11. Armstrong in Forde, III, 133, 152, respectively, known as *Aprija* among the Nkum.
12. Pettersson, 184 ff., named *Inkosazana* or *Nomkulwane*.
13. Dieterlen in Forde, II, 85-91. It is not clear how much of this "philosophizing" originates from the writers, for it sounds rather like the Logos concept of Philo.
14. Baxter and Butt, 94-5.
15. Young, 140, naming the sons as *Kintu* and *Kufwa*, but I have no confirmation of this myth.
16. Beech, 19, named *Arawa* and *Ilat*, respectively.
17. Abraham, 13, named *Shon*.
18. Lienhardt in Forde, II, 162.
19. Beech, 19, called *Topogh*.
20. Goody, 372.
21. Lugira, 28.
22. Evans-Pritchard, III, 3; Manoukian, III, 45, respectively.
23. Seligman, 274, the names are *Ngun lo kak* (God Below) and *Ngun lo ki* (God Above).
24. Abraham, 21, called *Takuruku*.
25. Wagner, 175-6; known as *Wele Gumali* (or *Wele Evimbi*).
26. Beech, 19, called *Asis*.
27. Huntingford, III, 68, called *Araua*.
28. Busia in Forde, II, 191 ff.; Lystad, 163-4.
29. Roscoe, II, 154.
30. Schebesta, II, 174-5.
31. Roscoe, II, 90 ff.; III, 21 ff.
32. Haragakiza, essay.
33. Roscoe, II, 246 ff.; IV, 104-5.
34. Lienhardt, 81 ff.; full discussion in chapters II-III.
35. Bradbury, 53-4.
36. Mercier in Forde, II, 211, 222.
37. Manoukian, I, 94; Field, 4-5 (for the classification).
38. Lugira, 30, and in personal communication; Kasozi, essay.
39. Cerulli, 114.
40. Forde and Jones, 25; Ezeanya, lecture.
41. Bradbury, 200.
42. Cerulli, 32.
43. Rouch, 60; it is to be noted that the Songhay have been strongly influenced by Islam, as can be seen in these concepts.
44. Beech, 19.
45. Cory, 59.

46. Wagner, 175 ff.
47. Idowu, 55-106, a very interesting and illuminating study of the Yoruba divinities.
48. Mercier in Forde, II, 217, 220, but the concept of "co-existence" with God could be the interpretation of the writer.
49. Abraham, 23, called *Takuruku*.
50. Haje-Gashegu, essay, names them as *Ryangombe* and *Nyabingi*; cf. Guillebaud in Smith, 181 ff., suggesting that *Ryangombe* was originally a historical person.
51. Wagner in Forde, II, 28-9, names them as *Wele Muxove* and *Wele Murumwa* (note that *Wele* is the name for God).
52. Schebesta, II, 179, without telling us how the moon "helped".
53. Busia in Forde, II, 193, speaking of the *abosom*.
54. Manoukian, III, 46, named *Mawu Sowlui*.
55. Ezeanya, lecture.
56. Dundas, 109, 112, 115 ff., 122.
57. Kuper, II, 42, named *Mlentengamunye*.
58. Rouch, 60; we have noted the strong Islamic influence.
59. Turner, 48, called *Sashisho* (the messenger) and *Kang'ombe*.
60. Wagner, 177, naming the first men as *Wele Muxove* and *Wele Mungoma* (cf. note 51 above; it is not clear whether these two groups are identical or not).
61. Bernardi, ix, 126, 159, 188.
62. Evans-Pritchard, III, 7.
63. Busia in Forde, II, 192-3.
64. Schebesta, II, 189, names the spirit servants *Mbefe*.
65. Beech, 19, named *Ilat*.
66. Seligman, 363.
67. Okot, 17 ff., an interesting and illuminating article.
68. Hobley, 85.
69. Butt, 177; Southall, 371 ff.
70. Taylor, 111; Welbourn, conference paper.
71. Busia in Forde, II, 191 ff.
72. Roscoe, II, 154.
73. Schebesta, II, 189-90.
74. Taylor, 38.
75. Dundas, 122 ff., 134 ff.
76. Manoukian, III, 45 ff.
77. Huntingford, IV, 70.
78. Huntingford, V, 74-5.
79. Lefournour, essay.
80. Kenyatta, 266-7.
81. Ezeanya, lecture; and personal observation.
82. Huntingford, IV, 55.
83. Douglas in Forde, II, 9-10.
84. Cerulli, 32.
85. Geluwe, 81-2.
86. Evans-Pritchard, III, 9, *et passim*.
87. Prins, 88.

88. Merwe, 6.
89. Rouch, 60.
90. Evans-Pritchard, I, 9, 19; Lienhardt in Forde, II, 142, 146, 149 ff.
91. Gray, 100 ff. *et passim*; an interesting account.
92. Roscoe, III, 21-2.
93. Driberg, 217.
94. Massam, 189, without telling us more about "Satan".
95. Wagner, 176-7.
96. McCulloch, III, 70.
97. Cerulli, 32, 129-30.
98. Young, 146; and chapter 3 above.
99. Mercier in Forde, II, 215.
100. Evans-Pritchard, III, 5-6.
101. Dundas, 109.
102. Callaway, 24, 27.
103. Baxton in Middleton and Tait, 70.

CHAPTER 12

1. Wagner in Forde, II, 28.
2. Schebesta, II, 168.
3. Huntingford, II, 124.
4. Kidd, 78.
5. Roscoe, IV, 74.
6. The Songhay have come under much influence from Islam, and the idea of seven heavens is clearly borrowed from (or through) Islam.
7. Callaway, 41, 59.
8. Weeks, I, 248-9; II, 279. It is to be noted that in the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, there was a church established at the estuary of the Congo, around and near where the Bacongo live. It is most likely that the idea of judgement after death originates from distant contact with Christian teaching.
9. El-Miskery, essay.
10. Edel, 160, for the name *Kazoba*.
11. Campbell, 245.
12. Smith and Dale, 203, for the name *Munamazuba*.
13. Driberg, 217-18.
14. Meyerowitz (a female writer), 23-4, 46, *et passim*, referring to *Nyame* (God); but other writers use the masculine.
15. Muango, essay.
16. Wagner in Forde, II, 29, 32.
17. Dieterlen in Forde, II, 85; it is not clear whether these views are held in this form by the Dogon, or they are so interpreted by the two writers of this essay.
18. Krige in Forde, II, 68; see their book.
19. Danquah, 54.
20. Beech, 19.
21. Kasozi, essay.

22. It is claimed (by the Idoma reportedly), that the name for God and the word for rain have no connection: so, Armstrong in Forde, III, 100.
23. Abraham, 26.
24. Smith and Dale, 200, 202, 204 ff., 208-9; the name for God is *Leza*, but for rain the word is *invula*.
25. Herskovits, II, 249 f.
26. Merwe, 7, for the name *Gore*.
27. Smith, 109, for the names *uDumakade* and *uMabonga-kutuk-izizwezonke*, respectively.
28. Manoukian, I, 94.
29. Campbell, 247, without specifying which peoples he is describing, or in what context they use this concept.
30. Wagner, 172.
31. Baxter and Butt, 114; the name is *Tore* (or its variations).
32. For the Haya this is *Mugasha*; for the Yoruba *Oya*.
33. Schebesta, II, 171 ff.
34. Pettersson, 184 ff., 188; names the Swazi figure as *Umlenzengamunye*, and the Zulu one as *Inkosazana* or *Nomkulwane*.
35. Callaway, 41, 59.
36. Huntingford, II, 135, referring to the name *Cheptalil*, in a footnote.
37. Danquah, 21, with reference to the name *Nyame*.
38. Kidd, 78.
39. Dieterlen in Forde, II, 87.
40. El-Miskery, essay. In connection with the idea of "the end of the world", it should be noted that Zanzibar where the Watumbatu live, is a strong seat of Islam on the east coast of Africa.

CHAPTER 13

1. Lystad, 165; Parrinder, 48.
2. Ngally, personal communication, for the name *Mebée*.
3. Luttig, 9.
4. Forde and Jones, 25; the names of the divinities of earth, among these peoples (except the Orri) are: *Eji*, *Irungu*, *Ale* (female), *Ale aja*, *Aje*, and *Aprija* (female), respectively.
5. Among these three peoples, the earthquake divinities are known as *Kitaka* (or *Musisi*), *Musisi*, and *Nabinge*, respectively, so Roscoe, II, 93, 250-1; IV, 166.
6. Danquah, 54, for the name *Totorobonsu*.
7. Baumann, 307 ff., *et passim*.
8. Whiteley, Stefaniszyn, etc., 49; the association is with *Lucele*, which is either another name for God, or refers to another being.
9. Smith, 129; Merwe, 10; Kuper, Hughes, etc., 33.
10. Merwe, 31-2.
11. Lienhardt in Forde, II, 145, 149, the spirit is known as *Juok Nam*.
12. Kibulya, essay.
13. Middleton, II, 252, 254-5.
14. Baumann, 189-90, tends to see Egyptian and Asiatic influence.
15. Roscoe, II, 92, named *Mugizi*.

16. Bradbury, 52-3, called *Oloku*.
17. Lugira, 30, and in personal communication dated 11 December 1966; named *Mukasa*.
18. Named *Mugasha*, in both societies.
19. Called *Umale Okun*.
20. Known as *Kalungu*, but he is not God (*Suku*).
21. Cory, 59, known as *Ngaba* and *Kitabi*, respectively.
22. Known as *Olokun*.
23. Situated at Nzaui, a short distance south of Machakos.
24. Driberg, 218.
25. It is known as Nzambani rock, near Kitui; but it takes at least one hour to go round it once.
26. Bradbury, 53, known as *Ogu*.
27. Known as *Ogun*.
28. Idowu, 85 ff., called *Ogun*.
29. Schebesta, II, 179.
30. Baumann, 204-5, for the name *Almorere*.
31. Young, 146.
32. The chief spirit is known as *Watambogo*, the divinity of hills and gifts, so Roscoe, IV, 105.
33. The guardian spirit of all Limba is *Kumba*.
34. Merwe, 23 ff., quoting from diaries of early European visitors between 1867 and 1871.
35. Sick, 57, probably describing this shrine; Jellicoe, 43-9.
36. Gulliver, 85.
37. Baumann, 173, 219-20.
38. Merwe, 29 ff. It is reported, however, that the "voice" is made by priests beating drums in, or from the far end of, a secret tunnel known only to the priests of this esoteric cult; Smith, 127-8.
39. Seligman, 394, known as *Kulgnala*.
40. Callaway, 42, 57.
41. Schebesta, II, 182 ff.
42. Stayt, 230-1.
43. Merwe, 8-9, referring to the name *Musiki*, and to "fire" on Mount Rungai.
44. Driberg, 220, referring to *Yok Orongo*.
45. Campbell, 247, without specifying which Africans or in what connection.
46. Lugira, 34; it is not certain whether this custom has completely died out, or is still observed in some areas.
47. Luttig, 27 ff., 42.
48. Kenyatta, 254 ff.
49. Smith and Dale, 211.
50. Mercier in Forde, II, 219.
51. Weeks, I, 249; we have already observed that this idea of punishment after death is possibly a relic of Christian teaching in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.
52. Evans-Pritchard, III, 22 ff.
53. Smith and Dale, 200.
54. Bernardi, 92.

55. Bernardi, 92; Hinde, 99-100 (saying that it is "the great White God", who now remains. It would seem more consistent that it is "the very good One" who survives).
56. Lienhardt, 81-2, names him *Macardit*.
57. The Gikuyu name is *Mwene-Nyaga*, and Mt Kenya is known as Kere-Nyaga. (Cf. the name Kenya originates from the Akamba name of the same mountain, Kilinyaa, contractable to "Kinyaa".)
58. Idowu, 47.
59. Wagner, 175, the name is *Wele Omuwanga*; while the evil divinity is known as *Wele Evimbi* or *Gumali* (black or evil divinity).
60. Hollis, II, 98.
61. Goody, 372-3.
62. Dundas, 115, 119, 124.

CHAPTER 14

1. Wagner in Forde, II, 29; Wagner, 169.
2. Schebesta, II, 169, 179-80.
3. Maquet in Forde, II, 173-4.
4. Turner, 48.
5. Middleton, II, 27, 231, 253.
6. Little in Forde, II, 114.
7. Bernardi, 52 ff., commenting that the story "is essentially biblical".
8. Huntingford, II, 124, adding that he heard this story from an old man, and that it was not "derived from Christian missionary teaching".
9. Callaway, 7 ff., 16, 31 ff., 45 ff.
10. Schebesta, II, 179-80, commenting categorically that when he heard this story, "any biblical influence on the Pygmies was out of question".
11. Mercier in Forde, II, 223-4.
12. Young, 146. Another Shilluk story says that the common people were made by *Nyikang* (the national founder) out of insects, fish, and animals (Lienhardt in Forde, II, 150-1).
13. Goody, 209, 375.
14. Baumann, 203 ff. (my own translation).
15. MacDonald, 74.
16. Baumann, 186 ff., 193 ff., 219-20.
17. Luttig, 17, 21, 24.
18. Baumann, 224-35, *et passim*.
19. Evans-Pritchard, III, 6 ff.
20. Baxter and Butt, 94-5.
21. Dundas, 108, 146, the name is *Ruwa mopara w'andu*.
22. Baumann, 221 ff.
23. Hollis, II, 98, from the *Moi* clan.
24. Baumann, *ibid*.
25. Lindblom, 252.
26. Schebesta, I, 235.
27. Baumann, 206, speaking of a "clan" (*Sippe*) ancestor, whom he names in German, *Der Geschäntze*; but the context seems to refer to the Chagga as a whole.

28. Nalder, 31.
29. Driberg, 217, 223.
30. Baxton in Middleton and Tait, 70.
31. Hambly, 262.
32. Merwe, 9-10.
33. Hinde, 99-100; Baumann, 206; cf. 57 ff.
34. Baumann, 206 ff.
35. Mercier in Forde, II, 223-4.
36. Wagner in Forde, II, 29-30, 43; Wagner, 169-70.
37. Lystad, 164.
38. Claridge, 270.
39. Schebesta, II, 169, 177-8, 180.
40. Dornan, 288-9.
41. Nalder, 200.
42. Callaway, 34, 46, 58.
43. Wagner in Forde, II, 29, 43.
44. Baxter and Butt, 95; Seligman, 520.
45. Whiteley, 29.
46. Manoukian, III, 50.
47. Driberg, 225; Baxter and Butt, 105.
48. Schebesta, II, 169-70, 178 ff.
49. Dornan, 288-9.
50. Young, 142-3.
51. Baxter and Butt, 111.
52. Forde, III, 45.
53. Callaway, 3-4, 23, 41-2, 57.
54. Evans-Pritchard, III, 11.
55. Abraham, 21-2.
56. Gray, 98.

CHAPTER 15

1. Busia in Forde, II, 192; Lystad, 163; but we are not informed what this relationship really involved.
2. Schebesta, II, 178-9.
3. Dundas, 108-9.
4. Harris in Smith, 278-9.
5. Young, 144-5.
6. Soboke and Haragakiza, essays.
7. Lienhardt in Forde, II, 145, without giving us more information on this myth. It sounds like the Genesis story, distorted but intended to be told back to the Europeans (missionaries) who may originally have brought it there in the first place.
8. Maquet in Forde, II, 174.
9. Kidd, 78.
10. Dundas, 108 ff. (I have arranged the last part in verse form).
11. Bernardi, 53 ff., saying that he never heard this story told in other parts of the country, and that it is "essentially biblical".

12. Schebesta, II, 178 ff., adding that he heard this story from an eighty-year-old man, Sabu, who told him that he heard it originally from his own father. "At that time any Biblical influence on the Pygmies was out of question". The author claims to have been the first European to reach that part of the country.
13. Schebesta, II, 178-9.
14. Massam, 194-5, adding that the old man who told him this story had "heard it when a small boy long before western civilization came to the highlands of Kenya".

CHAPTER 16

1. Okwemba, essay, giving the name of *Isaywa*.
2. Middleton, I, 93; Lindblom, 244; these have nearly all died out, except for rain.
3. Manoukian, I, 55; Busia in Forde, II, 192.
4. Southall, 370-1.
5. Whiteley, Stefaniszyn, etc., 49.
6. Roscoe, II, 131-2; Welbourn, conference paper.
7. Schebesta, I, 235.
8. Maquet in Forde, II, 169; Haje-Gashegu, essay.
9. Roscoe, II, 90 ff.; Taylor, 38.
10. Junod, 137. He adds that in one such invocation, God is addressed as the Great King, who shows great compassion to his servants, rules over all, and as the One to whom people go to receive blessings. This is the royal salute, "*Yo-Sho*".
11. Roscoe, II, 246 ff.; IV, 104-5.
12. Stayt, 231-2, pointing out that today people send money and other gifts as offerings.
13. Gunn, II, 18.
14. Dundas, 107, 134 ff.
15. Gunn, I, 58.
16. Lienhardt, 10, 21 ff., *et passim*.
17. Prins, 88.
18. Bradbury, 52, 54.
19. Massam, 187; Huntingford, III, 73.
20. Njeru, essay.
21. Manoukian, III, 45-6.
22. Lugira, 193.
23. Kenyatta, 243 ff., with a full account; Middleton, I, 66 ff., giving a summary.
24. Cerulli, 94.
25. Roscoe, II, 167, 179; IV, 8-9, 14, 25-6.
26. Forde and Jones, 25.
27. Smith and Dale, 209-10.
28. Partridge, 281-2.
29. Seligman, 436; cf. Cerulli, 31; the sun is regarded as a divinity (or possibly an intermediary).

30. Gulliver, 47-8.
31. Tremearne, 166.
32. Huntingford, III, 52.
33. Cerulli, 33.
34. Cerulli, 115.
35. Cerulli, *ibid.*
36. Whiteley, Stefaniszyn, etc., 64.
37. Driberg, 224; Butt, 105.
38. Huntingford, IV, 90.
39. Turner, 50.
40. Middleton, II, 28, 110, 114, 252, 266.
41. Roscoe, II, 290-1; Muango, essay.
42. Bernardi, 91-2, 107, 123.
43. Armstrong in Forde, III, 133.
44. Seligman, 395; cf. Stevenson in Smith, 213-14.
45. Evans-Pritchard, III, for the full account.
46. Roscoe, IV, 58-9.
47. Merwe, 21 ff.; cf. Kuper, 33.
48. Gray, 98, 107 ff., 123.
49. Pettersson, 187.
50. McCulloch and others, 47.
51. Bradbury, 159.
52. Cerulli, 113.
53. Gunn, II, 29.
54. El-Miskery, essay.
55. Idowu, 118-125.
56. Forde, I, 30; and an informant who has witnessed the festival.

CHAPTER 17

1. Wagner in Forde, II, 31, 44, 46.
2. Yokoo, diploma dissertation, 66.
3. Cf. Lindblom, 245-6, recording the prayer in Kikamba, but giving a wrong translation of it.
4. Seligman, 111 (I have substituted "Thou" for "You" and arranged the prayer in verse form).
5. Seligman, 519.
6. Schebesta, I, 235.
7. Schebesta, II, 172 ff.
8. Mbanzabigwi, essay.
9. Roscoe, III, 21, ff.; Taylor, 38.
10. Dornan, 287 (using the name Bechuana).
11. Mbwana, paper.
12. Schapera, I, 172 ff., 182, pointing out that these beliefs and practices are not held by all the Bushmen peoples. It would appear as if these heavenly bodies and the mantis, are looked upon as intermediaries.
13. Huntingford, III, 68.
14. Huntingford, V, 74 ff. (I have set the prayer in verse form).

15. Junod, 137-8.
16. Dundas, 146.
17. Kasozi, essay.
18. Kenyatta, 234, 237 ff.; Routledge, 226-7.
19. Smith and Dale, 208 ff.
20. Gulliver, 47-8.
21. Turner, I, 49.
22. Muango, essay.
23. Harris in Smith, 281 ff. (I have rearranged the first prayer in verse, and have substituted "Thou", etc., for "You"); Little, 218.
24. Bernardi, 61, 113-14, 124-5, *et passim*.
25. Hollis, II, 41 ff.; Huntingford, II, 135, 144-5, 153.
26. Evans-Pritchard, III, 7, 9, 22, ff., *et passim*.
27. Lienhardt in Forde, II, 161; Seligman, 74-5.
28. Westermann, I, 171 (I have arranged this in verse form).
29. Gray, 13, 116, 123. *Riob* is their word for both God and the sun, and *Khambageu* is associated with *Riob*. Belwa is one of the villages traditionally associated with the life of *Khambageu*, but it is no longer in existence. The village "is now understood as a symbol of the Sonjo homeland, and has been elevated to heaven in mythology".
30. Bradbury, 159.
31. Wagner, 168 ff., 172, 176.
32. Idowu, 111-18.
33. Claridge, 272.
34. McCulloch, Littlewood, etc., 80.
35. Lugira, 28.
36. Seligman, 436.
37. Seligman, 394-5.
38. Gray in Fortes and Dieterlen, 59.
39. Weeks, I, 248.
40. Haje-Gashegu and Mbanzabigwi, essays.
41. Campbell, 245.
42. Gunn, II, 29.
43. Cf. Dundas, 146, quoting a prayer in which the worshippers tell God that they "fall before" him. This might, however, be used metaphorically and not literally.
44. Lugira, 28-9.
45. Seligman, 436.
46. Huntingford, II, 153.
47. Evans-Pritchard, III, 14 ff.
48. Wagner, 170, 172.
49. Callaway, 41.
50. Dundas, 122-3, 146.
51. The meaning is that giving birth is a trial—leaping the cliff; but God has seen her through it all, and now she may rest in peace and safety—warming herself.
52. Guillebaud in Smith, 189-90.
53. Parsons in Smith, 261.
54. Harris in Smith, 280.

55. Seligman, 75.
56. Pauw, 32; he points out that formerly it was forbidden to use God's name (*Modimo*) when referring to him, but that the name is heard more commonly today.
57. Merwe, 21, 24.
58. Gray, 109.
59. Kenyatta, 257 ff.
60. Davidson in Smith, 172 (retaining the word *Akongo* for God, in the text).
61. Wagner, 170.
62. Cagnolo, 27.
63. Guillebaud in Smith, 188.
64. Parsons in Smith, 262.
65. Guillebaud in Smith, 188-9.
66. Huntingford, II, 135.
67. Parsons in Smith, 262.

CHAPTER 18

1. Guillebaud in Smith, 194 ff.
2. Ibid.
3. Guillebaud in Smith, 197 ff.
4. Davidson in Smith, 170 ff.
5. McCulloch, I, 73.
6. Pauw, 31-2.
7. Smith, 133, adding that this prohibition partly explains why missionaries among the Herero worked first for nearly thirty years without hearing the name of God mentioned.
8. Kuper, Hughes, etc., 33.
9. Roscoe, IV, 58-9.
10. Lugira, 32, 34, without mentioning which divinities.
11. Forde and Jones, 25.
12. Middleton, II, 87.
13. Harris in Smith, 280; Little, 218.
14. Evans-Pritchard, III, 11-12.
15. Bradbury, 159.
16. It is reported that the Ashanti "have a feeling of awe and veneration for the Supreme Being . . ." (Busia in Forde, II, 193), but we are not informed more on this. Two other writers on the Ashanti say that God is venerated and respected but "scarcely worshipped" (Rattray, I, 395; Lystad, 165).
17. Dundas, 146.
18. Seligman, 75.
19. Evans in Smith, 245 ff.
20. Guillebaud in Smith, 187-8.
21. Davidson in Smith, 166-7.
22. Edel, 160.
23. Parrinder in Smith, 231.

24. Of some relevance here is the study made by H. Weman, *African Music and the Church in Africa* (Uppsala, 1960), which has useful information and literature.
25. Busia in Forde, II, 192.

CHAPTER 19

1. Manoukian, I, 46.
2. Turner, I, 50.
3. Gray, 107, 120 ff.
4. Luttig, 31 ff.
5. Baxton in Middleton and Tait, 70.
6. Gunn, I, 41.
7. McCulloch, Littlewood, etc., 36-7, 47.
8. Roscoe, II, 131-2.
9. Busia in Forde, II, 192-3.
10. Lugira, 32.
11. Idowu, 129-39.
12. Middleton, I, 68.
13. Driberg, 224.
14. Smith and Dale, 208-9.
15. Gulliver, 85.
16. Pauw, 30, calls them "prophets".
17. Bernardi, ix, 62, 101, 126, 159, 188.
18. Lugira, 33.
19. Forde, I, 29-30.
20. Middleton, II, 31, 249 ff.
21. Gulliver, 85.
22. Callaway, 4; a full description of Zulu doctors, their profession, and wealth of knowledge is given by V. C. Mutwa in *Indaba my Children* (Johannesburg 1964)—an interesting account marred only by the *apartheid* propaganda meticulously injected into it.
23. Middleton, I, 93.
24. Culwick, 99, says that medicine is known as *Mulungu*, which is also the word for God.
25. Pauw, 29, though some people believe that this special knowledge comes from the spirits.
26. Muango, essay.
27. Huntingford, III, 134, without telling us which "certain times", and the nature of what the medicine-men sing.
28. Roscoe, IV, 46.
29. Hayley, 13.
30. Middleton, II, 257.
31. McCulloch, I, 73.
32. Haragakiza, essay.
33. Culwick, 99, this power is known as *Mulungu*, a word which is also the name for God.
34. Schapera, II, 263.

35. Krige, E. J., and J. D., *The Realm of a Rain-Queen*, is a fine study of the Luvedu rainmaker.
36. Seligman, 122.
37. Taylor, 38; Seligman, 274, respectively.
38. Cerulli, 129.
39. Gunn, II, 79-80.
40. Middleton, II, 31, 207.
41. Baxter and Butt, 118-19.
42. Baxter and Butt, 111.
43. Seligman, 393, 395; Stevenson in Smith, 216.
44. Huntingford, III, 38.
45. Kuper, Hughes, etc., 103 ff.; it is not certain whether the practice of sacrificing these animals is still going on or has died out.
46. Kuper, Hughes, etc., 33; Merwe, 9.
47. Jaspán, 60.
48. The literature on this subject is vast and includes such works as: Cory, H., *The Ntami* (London, 1951); Evans-Pritchard, E. E., *The Divine Kingship of the Shilluk* (Cambridge, 1948); Fortes, M., and Evans-Pritchard, E. E., *African Political Systems* (Oxford, 1955); Hadfield, P., *Traits of Divine Kingship in Africa* (London, 1949); Krige, E. J., and J. D., *The Realm of a Rain-Queen* (2nd edn, Oxford, 1960); Irstam, T., *The King of Ganda* (Stockholm, 1944); Beukes, W. T. H., *Der Häuptling in der Gesellschaft der Süd-, Ost-, und Zentral-Bantuvölker* (Hamburg, 1931); and many others.
49. Stays, 230.
50. Luttig, 27-8, 31 ff.
51. Whiteley, Stefaniszyn, etc., 68.
52. Turner, 49-50.
53. Evans-Pritchard, I, 9, 14, *et passim*; Lienhardt in Forde, II, 162.
54. Cerulli, 106.
55. Parrinder, 67 ff.
56. Middleton, I, 93.
57. Kenyatta, 240-67 (for the full account); Middleton, I, 67-8.
58. Muango, essay.
59. Cerulli, 115.
60. Roscoe, IV, 58.
61. Westermann, I, 171.
62. Gulliver, 85.
63. Merwe, 24.
64. Kenyatta, 245.
65. Lugira, 31, 34.
66. Sheddick, 67.
67. Read, 191-2.
68. Merwe, 20.
69. Huntingford, II, 131, 136; III, 38.
70. Kenyatta, 240, 245.
71. Manoukian, III, 45.
72. Smith and Dale, 208.
73. Forde and Jones, 25.

74. Busia in Forde, II, 193; Lystad, 164.
75. Mbanzabigwi, essay.
76. Cerulli, 32. The concept of "guardian angels" seems to have come through Gumuz contact with Ethiopian Christianity. Otherwise the term may simply be introduced by the writer, to refer only to what we would call "spirits".
77. Turner, 48; the councillors are named *Sashisho* and *Kang'ombe*, the former being also God's messenger.
78. Guillebaud in Smith, 181-2; Soboke, essay.
79. Evans-Pritchard, I, 17-21; Lienhardt in Forde, II, 156; Seligman, 74 f.
80. Gray, 11 ff., 106, *et passim*.
81. Jaspán, 41.
82. Lugira, 186, names it *namunye* (*motacilla aguimp*), but does not say more about its intermediary activities.
83. Cerulli, 129.
84. Jellicoe, student paper.
85. Brown, 70.
86. Massam, 187.
87. Huntingford, II, 131.

CHAPTER 20

1. Middleton, I, 67.
2. Taylor, 86.
3. Haragakiza, essay; calls this tree *amashinge*.
4. Middleton, II, 249.
5. Prins, 88.
6. Idowu, 125 ff.
7. Manoukian, I, 55.
8. Roscoe, II, 89 ff.; whether some of these temples still exist today, I do not know; but a recent work by B. K. Taylor on the Banyoro, does not mention them.
9. Lugira, 31-2.
10. Gray, 30 ff., saying that he could only catch glimpses of the main temples from a distance.
11. Manoukian, I, 55.
12. Busia in Forde, II, 192.
13. Bradbury, 52-3.
14. Jaspán, 41.
15. Huntingford, III, 52.
16. Cerulli, 115.
17. McCulloch in McCulloch, Littlewood, etc., 47.
18. Turner, 49.
19. Roscoe, IV, 104.
20. Gunn, II, 18.
21. Kenyatta, 236.
22. Smith and Dale, 210.
23. Partridge, 281 f.

24. Middleton, II, 255, notes that God, in his immanent aspect, is said to dwell in streams.
25. Cerulli, 50, 70, respectively, but does not specify the trees.
26. Davidson in Smith, 167 ff.
27. Cerulli, 115.
28. Merwe, 24.
29. Seligman, 394.
30. Gray, 98, *et passim*.
31. Gulliver, 92; Nalder, 81, giving the name of the mountain as *Moru Nakwuge*.
32. Idowu, 140 ff.

CHAPTER 21

1. Seligman, 122. Cf. Okot, who denies that the Acholi acknowledge God's dealing and concern with them (see bibliography). A similar position is taken by J. K. Russell in *Men Without God?* (London, 1966). Both writers even go as far as asserting (wrongly) that the Acholi have no idea of God. All other evidence is against these two writers, at least in this respect.
2. Danquah, 55; Manoukian, I, 55.
3. Welbourn, conference paper.
4. Baxter and Butt, 94.
5. Whiteley in Whiteley, Stefaniszyn, etc., 9-10.
6. Maquet in Forde, II, 167, 170.
7. Dornan, 287.
8. Mackenzie, 138.
9. Dundas, 107, 112 ff.
10. Bernardi, 61, 126.
11. Lienhardt in Forde, 157, 162; Seligman, 75.
12. Njeru, essay.
13. Kenyatta, 233 ff.
14. Manoukian, I, 94.
15. Huntingford, V, 74-5.
16. Junod, 134.
17. Pettersson, 163, 171.
18. Butt, 161.
19. Sweeting, essay.
20. Middleton, II, 31, 207, 251-2, 256-7.
21. McCulloch, I, 72-3.
22. Driberg, 220 ff.
23. Gulliver, 49.
24. Little, 218.
25. Cerulli, 129.
26. Wagner, 170, 173.
27. Gray, 98, 107-8.
28. Wagner in Forde, 33, 43 ff.
29. Butt, 87; Okot, 18-19.
30. Lindblom, 244 ff.; Middleton, I, 91.

31. Welbourn, conference paper.
32. Danquah, 85 ff.; Manoukian, I, 55; the former writer also deals with the elimination of evil.
33. Njeru, essay.
34. Lystad, 163 ff.
35. Schebesta, I, 236.
36. Schebesta, II, 172-3.
37. Dundas, 112-23.
38. Huntingford, IV, 70.
39. Maquet in Forde, II, 170, 184.
40. Pettersson, 155.
41. Callaway, 25-6, 84.
42. Forde and Jones, 25; her name is *Ale*, *Ala*, or *Ane*.
43. Smith and Dale, 199-200, 207, 211.
44. Hayley, 12.
45. Middleton, II, 22, 111, 252, 254.
46. McCulloch, I, 73, but does not tell us what constitutes these transgressions.
47. Muango, essay.
48. Gulliver, 85.
49. Wagner, 171, 175-6.
50. Evans-Pritchard, III, 14-15, 17 ff., 25, 177 ff.
51. Bernardi, 16, 94, 188.
52. Huntingford, II, 127 ff.; III, 38.
53. Lienhardt in Forde, II, 160-1.
54. Seligman, 395.
55. Merwe, 15 ff.
56. Beech, 19.
57. Goody, 371 ff.
58. Abraham, 23, without saying what constitutes an "evil" person, as far as the Tiv are concerned.
59. Baxter and Butt, 94 f.; Seligman, 520; a full study is made by E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford, 1950).
60. Kenyatta, 244 ff.
61. Jaspán, 60; Junod, 135.
62. Idowu, 144-68, an interesting summary.

CHAPTER 22

1. Schebesta, I, 236-7.
2. Schebesta, II, 174-5, 179-80, 187.
3. Seligman, 276.
4. Junod, 137.
5. Smith and Dale, 204; Junod, 133.
6. Seligman, 436.
7. Turner, 51.
8. Middleton, II, 31, 193, 253-4.
9. Evans-Pritchard, III, 7, 9-10, 12.

10. Muango, essay.
11. Wagner, 169, 171, 176-7.
12. Lienhardt in Forde, II, 161.
13. Junod, 135.
14. Dammann, 31.
15. Goody, 209, 371.
16. Roscoe, II, 178.
17. Geluwe, 81.
18. Idowu, 187 ff.
19. Evans-Pritchard, I, 21; Lienhardt in Forde, II, 150.
20. Gray, 97-8.
21. Dundas, 124-5.
22. Luttig, 13, 27.
23. Turner, 49.
24. Goody, 371-2.
25. Manoukian, I, 102.
26. Slaski, in Whiteley, Stefanszyn, etc., 93.
27. Okwemba, essay; Yokoo, dissertation, 39 ff.
28. Merwe, 21.
29. Callaway, 13.
30. One of the fascinating studies on this subject of funeral rites, is by M. Wilson, *Rituals of Kinship among the Nyakyusa* (Oxford, 1957).
31. Wagner in Forde, II, 34.
32. Maquet in Forde, II, 170, for the name *Nyamuzinda*.
33. Luttig, 13 ff.
34. Ezeanya, conference paper.
35. Goody, 371 ff.
36. Idowu, 189, 197 ff.
37. Idowu, 189, 199.
38. Goody, 371 ff.
39. Weeks, II, 279.
40. Schebesta, I, 236.
41. Cerulli, 32.
42. Turner, 49.
43. Goody, 371 ff.
44. Schebesta, I, 236.
45. Wagner in Forde, II, 43, 48.
46. Maquet in Forde, II, 170.
47. Merwe, 19.
48. Middleton, I, 91; I have not heard of this belief from the Akamba, of whom I am one.
49. Lystad, 165.
50. Weeks, I, 248 ff.; II, 279, it is to be noted that the first, or both, of these beliefs may be through Christian influence, as the Church once thrived at the mouth of the Congo in the sixteenth century.
51. Tremearne, 172-3.
52. Turner, 49.
53. Idowu, 197 ff.
54. Goody, 371 ff.

55. Schebesta, I, 236.
56. Weeks, II, 278 ff.
57. Maquet in Forde, II, 170.
58. Culwick, 101.
59. Schapera, I, 174; Campbell, 251, respectively.
60. Dundas, 125.
61. Cerulli, 79.
62. Butt, 130.
63. Gunn, II, 45.
64. Wagner, 177.
65. Gunn, II, 135.
66. Hayley, 18.
67. Douglas in Forde, II, 9.
68. Tremearne, 170 ff.
69. Goody, 371 ff.
70. Middleton, II, 251.
71. Ezeanya, lecture.
72. Stayt, 239-40.
73. Hinde, 101 (where in one book an unknown reader has scribbled the word "LIES").
74. Stefaniszyn, in Whiteley, Stefaniszyn, etc., 49.
75. Whiteley, *ibid.*, 30.
76. Huntingford, III, 68; Hinde, 101; Hughes and van Velsen in Kuper, etc., 103; Huntingford, III, 89, respectively.
77. Njeru, essay.
78. Ssegumba, essay.
79. Lugira, 33.
80. Roscoe, II, 180-1.
81. Cerulli, 115.
82. Whiteley, 63-4.
83. Middleton, II, 251.
84. Huntingford, IV, 66.
85. Huntingford, IV, 38.
86. Kuper, Hughes, and van Velsen, 106.
87. Read, 192 ff.
88. Idowu, 190.
89. El-Miskery, essay.
90. Hobley, 85.
91. Schebesta, II, 172-3, 175, 188-9, but another view is that the dead are under the control of the divinity of death known as "the Gate of the Abyss".
92. Sheddick, 67.
93. Seligman, 179.
94. Luttig, 7.
95. Driberg, 223; the issue is discussed at some length by Okot, in a fascinating manner, and followed up by Russell.
96. Gunn, II, 50.
97. Muango, essay.
98. Davidson in Smith, 170 ff.

99. Middleton, II, 31, 251, 254, 258.
100. Wilson, 62, 129.
101. Beech, 20.
102. Lienhardt in Forde, II, 156, 161; Seligman, 75.
103. Gray, 97-8.
104. Wagner, 171-2, 177.
105. Merwe, 20-1.
106. Cory, 59.
107. Abraham, 23.
108. Macdonald, 67.
109. The author has made a comparison of Christian and African concepts of eschatology in *New Testament Eschatology in an African background* (1970).

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LIST OF
AFRICAN PEOPLES
THEIR COUNTRIES AND
NAMES FOR GOD



INDEX OF
AFRICAN PEOPLES



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List of African Peoples their Countries and Names for God

Where the information is available on the English translation of the names for God, this is included in brackets. A question mark indicates uncertainty; and this sign -?- shows that there is no available information in the sources at my disposal. An asterisk (*) is placed after the peoples whose concepts are not included in the main body of this book, for my lack of information on them, but whose names for God were later supplied to me by the Reverend Dr David B. Barrett and the Reverend Stephen Kanta in personal communications. As far as one could ascertain it, the personal name for God is given first on the list, though there are societies which use more than one personal name.

Abaluyia (Kenya): Wele or Were, Nyasaye, Nabongo (Supreme One),
Khakaba (Distributor), Isaywa (One to whom sacred rites are made
or paid)

Acholi (Uganda): Juok or Jok, Lubanga

Adjuru (Ivory Coast):* Nyam

Afusare (Nigeria): Daxunum

Akamba (Kenya): Mulungu, Ngai, Mumbi (Creator, Maker, Fashioner),
Mwatuangi (Clever, Distributor), Asa (Father)

Akan (Ghana): Nyame (Shining One), Nana Nyankopon (Grandfather
Nyame who alone is the Great One), Amowia (Giver of light or sun),
Amosu (Giver of rain), Amaomee (Giver of sufficiency), Totorobonsu
(Causes rain to fall copiously), Brekyirihunuade (He who knows or sees
all), Abommubuwafré (Consoler or Comforter who gives salvation),
Nyaamanekose (He in whom you confide troubles which come upon
you), Tetekwaframua (He who is there now as from ancient times),
Nana (Grand Ancestor), Borebore (Excavator, Hewer, Creator,
Originator, Inventor, Carver, Architect)

Alur (Uganda, Congo¹): Jok, Jok Rubanga

Amba (Uganda): Nyakara

Ambo (Zambia): Lesa, Cuta (Creator)

Ankore (Uganda): Ruhanga (Creator), Nyamuhanga (Creator), Omuhangi
(Creator), Rugaba (Giver), Kazooba (Sun), Mukameiguru (He who
rules or reigns in the sky)

¹ Congo Kinshasa is meant here and elsewhere, unless it is otherwise indicated.

- Anuak (Sudan): Juok
 Arusha (Tanzania):* Engai
 Ashanti (Ghana, Ivory Coast): Nyame, Onyankopon (Alone, the Great One), Bore-Bore (the First, Creator of all things), Otumfoo (the Powerful One), Otomankoma (the Eternal One), Ananse Kokroko (the Great Spider, the Wise One), Onyankopon Kwame (the Great One who appeared on Saturday)
 Aushi (Zambia): Makumba
 Azande (Sudan): Mbori or Mboli, Bapaizegino
- Bachwa (Congo): Djakomba, Djabi
 Bacongo (Angola): Nzambi
 Bakene (Uganda): Gasani, Kibumba(?) (Creator?)
 Bakwena² (Botswana): Modimo
 Balese (Congo): Katshonde, Tole, Mongo, Mbali, Londi
 Baluba (Congo): Leza, Lesa-Waba, Kalunga Nyembo(?)
 Bambara (Mali):* Jalang
 Bambuti (Congo): Arebati, Epilipili, Baatsi
 Bamileke (Cameroon): Si
 Bamum (Cameroon): Njinyi or Nui (He who is everywhere, He who sees and hears everything), Yorubang
 Banen (Cameroon): Hoel, Kolo, Ombang (Above, Up Above)
 Banyarwanda (Rwanda): Imana, Hategekimana (God only rules) Hashakimana (God only plans), Habyarimana (God only brings forth children), Ndagijimana (In God I entrust my property), Habimana (God only lives), Bizimana (God knows all things), Bigirimana (God has all things), Ruremakwaci
 Banyoro (Uganda): Ruhanga (Creator)
 Bari (Sudan): Ngun
 Barotse (Zambia): Lesa, Nyambe
 Barundi (Burundi): Imana, Rangicavyose and Rugiravyose (Almighty), Indavyi (Watcher of everything), Rurema (Creator), Rugoba (Owner of everything), Haragakiza and Harerimana (Saviour), Rutunga (Protector), Rutangaboro (Protector of the poor), Segaba (Governor), Umusemyi (Creator), Mushoboravyose (Almighty), Nyeninganyi (Powerful, Owner of all powers), Rushoboravyose (He is surprised by nothing), Ntakimunanza (He does no evil), Inchanyi (the Fire), Ruremabibondo (Maker of children), Rufashaboro (He is merciful), Ntirandekuva (He has not let me drop yet)
- Basa (Nigeria):* Agwatana (Sun)
 Basoga (Uganda): Kibumba (Creator), Kiduma (God of rain, wind, and thunderstorm), Kyaka (God of Lightning), Nambubi, Lubanga
 Basuto (Lesotho): Molimo

² These are part of the Tswana peoples.

Bavenda (S. Africa): Raluvhimba, Mwari
Baya (Central African Republics):* So, Zambi (Creator)
Beir (Sudan): Tummy
Bemba (Zambia): Lesa
Bena (Tanzania): Mulungu
Berta (Ethiopia): -?-
Binawa (Nigeria): Kashiri
Birifor (Ghana):* We (Sun), Nawe, Wene, Yini
Bondei (Tanzania): Mlungu
Bongo (Sudan): Loma, Hege
Boran (Ethiopia, Kenya):* Waqa
Bulu (Cameroon): Mebee (the One who bears the world)
Burji-Konso (Ethiopia): Illalei, Bambelle, Adosheba(?)
Bushmen (Botswana): Urezhwa (Creator?)
Butawa (Nigeria): Kashiri(?)

Chagga (Tanzania): Ruwa (Sun)
Chawai (Nigeria): Bawai (Mba = Father; Wai = Sun)
Chewa (Malawi):* Mulungu, Namalenga, Leza, Cham'njili, Mphambe,
Chisumphu, Chanta, Mlengi, Mlamulili, Mcizi, Mpulumutsi, Mlezi,
(Caretaker of Children), Wolera (same as Mlezi), Mtetezi, Muweluzi
Chokwe (Angola):* Kalunga, Zambi
Chopi (Mozambique):* Tilo (Sky)

Darasa (Ethiopia): -?-
Didinga (Sudan): Tamukujen (the One over the rain)
Digo (Kenya): Mulungu
Dilling (Sudan):* Abradi (Maker)
Dinka (Sudan): Nhialic (In the Above), Acek, Jok
Dogon (Upper Volta, Mali): Amma
Dorei (Nigeria): Nillah
Dorobo (Kenya): Asis (Sun), Tururit (Above?)
Duala (Cameroon):* Loba, Owasi, Iwonde, Ebasi (Omnipotent Father)
Dungi (Nigeria): Kasiri or Kashira
Duruma (Kenya): Mulungu

Ebrie (Ivory Coast):* Nyangka
Edo (Nigeria): Osanobua, Osa
Egede (Nigeria): Ohe
Ekoi (Cameroon, Nigeria):* Osawa, Nsi
Elgeyo (Kenya): Asis (Sun)
Embu (Kenya): Ngai
Ewe (Dahomey, Ghana, Togo): Mawu

Fajulu (Sudan): Ngun

Fang (Cameroon, Gabon, Spanish Guinea):* Nzame, Nyame

Fanti (Ghana):* Nyame, Nyankopon

Fingo (S. Africa):* Qamata

Fon (Dahomey): Mawu-Lisa

Ga (Ghana): Dzemawon, Numbo

Galin (Sudan):* Allat, Uzza, Manat

Galla (Ethiopia, Kenya): Waqa

Ganda (Uganda): Katonda (Creator), Kagingo (Creator, Master of life), Mukama (Master), Ssewannaku (the Eternal), Ddunda (Pastor), Lugaba (Giver), Ssebintu (Master of all things), Liisoddene (the Great Eye), Nnyiniggulu (the heaven is his), Kazooba (He who has seen many, many moon-periods, the Everlasting One), Namuginga (the One who shapes), Sewaunaku (He who has pity on the poor and the suffering), Gguluddene (He who is gigantic, the Great One), Namugereka (He who arranges and distributes according to his discretion)

Gbari (Nigeria):* Shekohi, Sheshu, Soko, Esse, Sheko

Gelaba (Ethiopia): Yer

Gikuyu (Kenya): Murungu, Ngai, Mwenenyaga (Possessor of whiteness)

Gimira-Maji (Ethiopia): Dau(?)

Giryama (Kenya): Mulungu

Gisu (Uganda): Weri or Wele, Omubumbi (Creator), Wele Wehangagi

Gofa (Ethiopia): Tsuossa, Buolla(?)

Gogo (Tanzania):* Mulungu

Grunshi (Ghana):* We

Gumuz (Ethiopia): Robboqua, Fogatza, Musa or Musa Gueza

Gusii (Kenya):* Erioba (Sun)

Gwere (Uganda):* Kibumba (Creator)

Hadya (Ethiopia): Wa'a

Hadzapi (Tanzania): -?-

Haya (Tanzania): Ishwanga

Hehe (Tanzania):* Nguluvi

Herero (S.W. Africa): Ndjambi Karunga, Mukuru

Hottentots (S. Africa): Utixo

Ibibio (Nigeria): Abassi, Chuku

Idoma (Nigeria): Owo, Owoico

Igbira (Nigeria): Hinegba, Ihinegba

Igbo (Nigeria): Chuku (Great Spirit), Chi, Chineke (Creator)

Ijaw (Nigeria):* Egbesu (Supreme Protector)

Ila (Zambia): Leza, Chilenga (Creator), Lubumba (Moulder), Shakapanga

(Constructor), Namulenga (Creator), Mutalabala (Everlasting), Namakungwe (Originator, He from whom all things came), Muninde (Guardian), Chaba (Giver, Allotter), Ipaokubozha (He who gives and causes to rot), Ushatwakwe (Master, Owner of his things), Shakatabwa (the Faller), Mangwe (the Flooder), Shakemba or Kemba (Rain-Giver), Namesi (Water-Giver), Munamazuba (He of the suns, the Everlasting One), Luvhunabaumba (Deliverer of those in trouble), Mukubwe (Destroyer?), Chembwe (He who takes away till there is only one left), Munakasungwe (Leader), Chaba-wakaaba-ochitadiwa (the Giver who gives also what cannot be eaten), Shikakunamo (the Besetting One)

Indem (Nigeria): Osowo

Ingassana (Ethiopia): Tel (Sun)

Isoko, *see* Urhobo

Itsekiri (Nigeria): Oritse

Iyala (Nigeria): Owo

Jie (Uganda): Akuj

Jukun (Nigeria):* Shido or Chido (Sky God), Ama or Ma

Jumjum (Sudan): Dyong

Kadara (Nigeria): Onum (Sun)

Kafa (Ethiopia):* Yaro (Sky God)

Kagoro (Nigeria): Gwaza (Universe)

Kaibi (Nigeria): Kashiri or Kashira

Kaje (Nigeria): -?-

Kakwa (Sudan): Nguleso (God in the sky)

Kaliko (Sudan): Andrangi(?)

Kamasya (Kenya): Asis

Kaonde (Zambia): Lesa

Karamoja (Uganda): Akuj

Karanga (Rhodesia): Nyadenga (He who is in, or owns the sky)

Katab (Nigeria): Gwaza

Kemant (Ethiopia):* Sanbat (Sabbath deified, female)

Kiga (Uganda): Ruhanga, Sebahanga (Fashioner), Kazoba (the One who makes the sun set), Rugaba (the One who gave everything on this earth and can also take it away), Biheko (He who carried everyone on his back)

Kipsigis (Kenya): Asis, Chebtalel, Chebongolo (Sun)

Kissi (Guinea, Liberia):* Hala (Sky God)

Kitimi (Nigeria): Kashila or Kashiri

Koma (Ethiopia): Yere Siezi, War, Wal

Konjo (Congo, Uganda): Nyamahanga (Creator of all)

Konkomba (Ghana, Togo):* Omborr

- Kono (Sierra Leone): Meketa (the Everlasting One), Yataa (the One you meet everywhere)
- Konso (Ethiopia):* Bamballe, Adota (Sun), Waq
- Konta (Ethiopia): -?-
- Kony (Kenya): Asis
- Korekore (Rhodesia): Wokumusoro (the One Above), Musiki (Creator), Chikara (Creator), Dzivaguru (the Big Pool)
- Kpe (Cameroon):* Lova or Loba
- Kpelle (Liberia): Yala
- Kuca (Ethiopia): Tosso
- Kuku (Sudan): Uletet, Ngulaitait or Nguletet
- Kullo (Ethiopia): Tosa
- Kuba (Congo):* Nceme, Mbombo, Njambe
- Kung (S.W. Africa):* Khu, Xu, Xuba, Huwa (Creator and Upholder)
- Kurama (Nigeria): Ashili, Bakashili
- Kyiga (Uganda): Weri
- Lala (Zambia): Lesa, Mulenga (Creator of all), Cuuta, Lucele (He who is heard in the world, Lord of life)
- Lamba (Zambia): Lesa
- Lango (Uganda): Jok
- Lele (Congo): Njambi
- Lendu (Congo): Gindri
- Limba (Sierra Leone): Kanu, Masala, Masaranka
- Lobi (Ivory Coast):* Tangba You
- Lodagaa (Ghana, Upper Volta): Na'angmin
- Logo (Congo): Tore, Ore, Ori, Djuka
- Lokoiya (Sudan): Oicok
- Lotuko (Sudan): Ajok, Naijok
- Lozi (Zambia): Nyambe
- Luapula (Zambia): Lesa
- Lugbara (Congo, Uganda): Adroa or Adronga (God in the sky, Transcendent), Adro (God on earth, Immanent)
- Luguru (Tanzania):* Mulungu
- Luimbe (Angola):* Nzambi, Kalunga
- Lunda-Luena (Angola, Congo, Zambia): Nzambi, Kalunga
- Luo (Kenya): Nyasaye, Wang' Chieng', Nyakolaga, Were (Father of grace), Tham, Wuonwa (Our Father), Wuon kwere (Father of the "ancestors"), Wuon ji (Father of all), Ja Mrima (the One with a temper), Jan'gwono (the kind One), Jahera (of pity, mercy, and kindness), Nyakalaga (the dragging One, the Ancient of days), Janen (Seer), Wuon Ogendni (the Origin and Father of all peoples), Hono (Worker of miracles), Polo (God of the heavens), Wuon lowo (Owner of the earth), Ratego (Almighty, Owner of power), Jalweny (the

- Great Soldier), Kwar ji (Grandfather of all), Rahuma (the God of fame), Piny k'nyal (the Unconquerable One), Wuon oru (the Owner of the coming days), Ruodh Ruodhi (King of kings)
Luvedu (S. Africa): Khuzwane (Creator), Mwari
- Maasai (Kenya, Tanzania): En-kai (Rain, Sky), N'gai, Ai, Parsai (the One who is worshipped), Emayian (the One who blesses)
Madi (Uganda): Ori, Rabanga
Makaraka (Sudan): Mboli
Male (Ethiopia): Sosi
Malinge (Guinea, Mali):* Gala, Guele, Jalang
Mamvu-Mangutu (Congo): Mai, Oti, Tore, Kundumbendu, Oto
Mao (Ethiopia): Yere, Yeretsi
Marakwet (Kenya): Asis(?)
Maravi (Malawi): Mulungu(?)
Masongo (Ethiopia): Waqiao
Matengo (Malawi):* Ciuta, Mulungu, Mlezi, Cisumphu (Creator)
Meban (Sudan): Juong
Mekan (Ethiopia): Tuma
Mende (Sierra Leone): Ngewo, Leve (the High up One)
Meru (Kenya): Murungu, Ngai, Mwene inya (the Owner of force, Almighty)
Mondari (Sudan): Ngun
Moru (Sudan): Lu
Mossi (Upper Volta):* Winnam, Ouennam, Winde, Naba Zidiwinde (all these names mean Sun)
Murle (Ethiopia): Tummu
- Nama (S.W. Africa):* Tsui-Goab (Supreme Being), Cagn or Kaang (Creator of all), Khub (Ruler), Nanub (Thundercloud)
Nandi (Kenya): Asis, Cheptalil (He who has dazzling or who gleams), Chepkeliensokol or Chepkelienpokol (something with nine (or a hundred) legs—in reference to the sun's rays), Chepopkoiyo, Chebonamuni
Ndebele (Rhodesia): Unkulunkulu, Umlimo, Mwali
Ndogo (Sudan): Mbiri, Mviri
Ngombe (Congo): Akongo, Bilikonda (the Everlasting One of the forest), Ebangala (the Beginner), Ebangala-e-mokonda (the One who began the forest), Eliamokonda (the One who clears the forest), Elimalima (the One who fills everything), Endandala (the Unexplainable)
Ngonde (Malawi):* Kyala, Mbepo Mwikemo, Ndolombwike, Kamanyi-manyi, Mpoki
Ngoni (Malawi): Unkurukuru, Utixo, Inkosi, Umkulunqango (the Great Deviser), Uluhlanga (the Original Source), Umkulu Kakulu (the Greatest of all), Umnikaze we zinto zonke (the Owner of all things)

Nkum (Nigeria): Oshowo, Ebutokpabi

Nkundo (Congo):* Djakomba

Nuba (Sudan): Kalo, Elo, Bel, Bel Epti (God the Maker), Kando (Sky), Kwarak (Sky God), Masala (the Great Mother), Elem (Fashioner, Moulder)

Nuer (Sudan): Kwoth

Nupe (Nigeria): Soko

Nyakyusa (Tanzania): Kyala, Tenende (Owner of all things), Nkurumuke (the Undying One, the Everlasting One), Chata (the Originator), Kyaubiri (the Invisible, the Unseen), Kalesi (the Omnipresent, He who is everywhere present), Ndorombwike (Creator), Mperi (Maker)

Nyamwezi, *see* Sukuma

Nyanja (Zambia, Malawi): Mulungu, Cuata, Leza, Mphamba (Excelling, Almighty), Cisumphu (Omnipresent), Cimjili (the Almighty One who has to be feared), Namalenga or Nyamalenga or Mlengi (Creator)

Orri (Nigeria): Lokpata

Ovambo (S.W. Africa): Kalunga, Pamba (Chief), Mbangu, Mufifi

Ovimbundu (Angola): Suku (He who supplies the needs of his creatures)

Pare (Tanzania): Kyumbi (Creator?), Mrungu, Izuva (Sun)

Piti (Nigeria): Ure

Pokomo (Kenya):* Muungu

Pondo (S. Africa):* uDali (Creator), uMenzi (Worker), u Tixo

Pygmy (Congo): Kmvoum

Pyem (Nigeria): Wudididi

Rabai (Kenya): Mulungu

Rishuwa (Nigeria): Kashiri, Kasiri

Rukuba (Nigeria): Katakuru

Rumaiya (Nigeria): Kashillo, Kashira

Safwa (Tanzania):* Nguruvi (Sun)

Sakata (Congo):* Nja

Sandawe (Tanzania): Waronge, Murungu

Sangama (Ethiopia): Zabi

Sebei (Uganda): Oiki, Oinotet

Serer (Gambia, Senegal): Rog (Creator)

Sherbro-Bullom-Krim (Sierra Leone): Hobatoke

Shilluk (Sudan): Juok

Shona (Rhodesia): Mwari, Nyadenga (He who is in, or owns, the sky, the Great One of the sky), Wokumusoro (the One above), Gore (the One amongst the clouds), Runji, Chipindikure (the One who can turn things up-side-down), Chirozva-mauya (the One with power to

destroy completely), Chirazamauya, Sagomakoma (the Owner of many things), Musiki (Creator), Muvumbi (Moulder, Fashioner), Marure (Creator), Musikavanhu (Creator of human beings), Dzivaguru (the Big Pool), Chidziva (the Little Pool), Mutangakugara (the One who existed in the beginning), Muwanikwa (the One who was just found to exist, the Eternal), Mupavose (One who gives to all), Wemumbepo, Muponesi, Muyaradzi, Muratidzi

Sidamo (Ethiopia): Magano

Songhay (Nigeria): Yerkey

Sonjo (Tanzania): Mugwe, Riob

Sotho (Lesotho):* Molimo, Molimo o matla (God of all power, Almighty)

Srubu (Nigeria): Kasiri, Kahiri

Suk (Kenya): Tororut (Sky), Ilat (Rain)

Sukuma-Nyamwezi (Tanzania): Mulungu, Mungu, Seba, Kube (the One who embraces all), Kube-Nyangasa (the One who furnishes us with what we need, the One who fits all things together), Limi (Sun), Linyabangwe (Creator), Liwelelo, Ng'wenekili (the Owner of everything), Ling'wenekili (the Great Owner), Likubala (the One who embraces all, the Great Counter, the One who counts and follows every step)³

Suri-Surma (Ethiopia): Tuma

Swazi (Swaziland): Mkulumncandi (the Great First One), Umkhulumncandi, Inkosatana, Umvelingquangi

Tallensi (Ghana, Upper Volta):* We (Sun), Wene (Sky God), Nawe, Nabwe

Teita (Kenya): Mlungu

Tembu (S. Africa):* uTixo

Temne (Sierra Leone): Kuru, Kurumasaba

Tenda (Guinea):* Hounounga (the Unknown)

Teso (Uganda): Akuj (Sky, Firmament)

Teuso (Uganda): Didikwari, Nakwit

Thonga (S. Africa, Mozambique):* Tilo (Heavens), Hosi (Chief), Xikwembu

Tikar (Cameroon): Nyooiy

Tiv (Nigeria): Aondo (Heavens)

Tlhaping (S. Africa):* Modimo

Tonga (Malawi, Zambia): Tilo, Chiuta or Ciuta, Leza (Lightning), Mlengi (Creator), Chata (Creator), Nyangoi, Wamu yaya (Everlasting), Wanthazizose (Almighty), Mkana Nyifwa (He who never dies), Kajati (Self-Creator), Mtaski (Saviour), Msungi (Sustainer), Mlezi (Food-Giver), Mlengavuwa (Creator of rain), Mnanda, Mananda, Mangazi

³ Apart from the first three names here, the rest were supplied by P. Schöneberger, "Names for 'God' known and used by the Nyamwezi", *Anthropos*, 56(1961), 947 ff., and in a personal communication.

Toposa (Sudan): Nakwuge

Toro (Uganda): Nkya, Ruhanga, Kagaba, Nyamahanga

Tswana (Botswana, S. Africa): Modimo

Tumbuka (Malawi): Chiuta (the Great Bow in the heavens), Mulengi (Creator), Leza, Mwati (Designer), Mweni-Nkongono (Almighty), Kajilengi (Self-Creator), Wamtatakuya (Eternal), Cinyetenyete (Immanent), Mweneco (Owner of all things), Mupi (Giver of all things), Cilera-balanda (the Upkeeper or Guardian of Orphans), Karonga wa mabanja (Lord of hosts: The writer cannot ascertain whether this is the traditional name or one borrowed from the Bible), Cimbatakwinya (the Great One), Kamphanda (Alone), Kamanyimanyi (Omniscient), Wamalumya

Turkana (Kenya): Akuj (Up, Above)

Turu (Tanzania): Murungu, Matunda (Creator)

Twi peoples (Dahomey, Ghana): Onyankopon

Udhuk (Ethiopia): Arumgimis

Urhobo-Isoko (Nigeria): Oghene, Oghenukpabe

Vai (Liberia):* Kamba (Big Space)

Vili (Congo):* Nzambi Mpungu

Vugusu (Kenya): Wele

Walamo (Ethiopia): Tosa

Warjawa (Nigeria): -?-

Watumbatu (Zanzibar-Tanzania): -?-

Xam (S. Africa):* Kaang, Kaggen, Huwu or Huwe

Xhosa (S. Africa):* uThixo, uDali (Maker, Creator), uMenzi, uHlanga, Qamata

Yachi (Nigeria): Phahia

Yako (Nigeria):* Ubasi (Creator)

Yao (Malawi, Mozambique): Mulungu

Yoruba (Nigeria): Olodumare (Almighty, Supreme), Olorun (the Owner or Lord of heaven), Olofin-Orun

Zala (Ethiopia): Tsosa

Zinza (Tanzania): Isewahanga (Creator?), Kazoba, Rugaba

Zulu (S. Africa): Unkulunkulu, Inkosi (Chief, Lord), uDumakade (He who thunders from far-off times), uGobungqongqo (He who bends down even majesties), uGuqabadele (the Irresistible), uKqili (the Wise One), uMabonga-kutuk-izizwe-zonke (He who roars so that all nations be struck with terror), uSomnganiso (the Greatest of friends), uZivelele (He who is of himself, the Self-existent One)

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