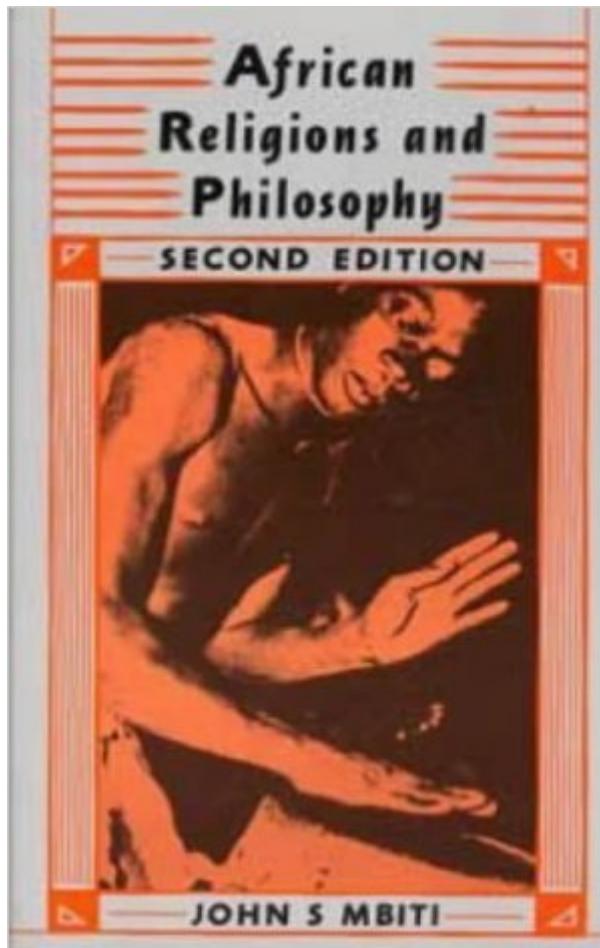


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African Religions & Philosophy



Synopsis

African Religions and Philosophy is a systematic study of the attitudes of mind and belief that have evolved in the many societies of Africa. In this second edition, Dr Mbiti has updated his material to include the involvement of women in religion, and the potential unity to be found in what was once thought to be a mass of quite separate religions. Mbiti adds a new dimension to the understanding of the history, thinking, and life throughout the African continent. Religion is approached from an African point of view but is as accessible to readers who belong to non-African societies as it is to those who have grown up in African nations. Since its first publication, this book has become acknowledged as the standard work in the field of study, and it is essential reading for anyone concerned with African religion, history, philosophy, anthropology or general African studies.

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Customer Reviews

John Mbiti's volume, African Religions and Philosophy, is a classic in the study of African religiosity, as well as the field of religious studies. Published originally in 1969, the work is an attempt to discuss the theology and religious practices of sub-Saharan Africans. At the start, it must be noted that Mbiti himself is not only a scholar of religion, but is also himself a parish minister, thus he not only a scholar but also a practitioner as well. This book is often cited for its scathing deconstruction and refutation of racist anthropological work that had up to that point been the main systematic effort to 'understand' African religiosity. No less than Molefi Asante, in his significant anthology of African Intellectual and Cultural History, excerpted most of Mbiti's first chapter, which contains his well-known critique. The goals of Mbiti's book are threefold: to refute previous racist scholarship, to

highlight the continuity of African forms of religion with other forms of human religiosity, and to establish the diversity of African religion from other forms of religiosity. To accomplish these goals, Mbiti establishes two fundamental concepts in African religiosity: "God," and Time. The term God is not significantly explored at the outset, except as a stand-in for a "supreme Being" in terms largely familiar to Europeans and Americans. Time, on the other hand, is discussed as a facet of African linguistics. By analyzing verb tenses from different language groups, Mbiti claims that African forms of time are different than other human concepts of time, such as linear ones. Ultimately, Mbiti establishes two kinds of Time- Sasa, and Zamani (Swahili). Sasa is understood as "small time," or time that is centrally located close to the present moment.

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