

veloppements des recherches sur les langues sudarabiques modernes" (pp. 321-337).

The volume closes with a final address of Professor Lionel Galand (pp. 341-344)

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Stanisław PIŁASZEWICZ, *Religie Afryki. Ewolucja wierzeń rodzimych w kontaktach z islamem i chrześcijaństwem* (Religions of Africa. Evolution of the Traditional Beliefs in Contacts with Islam and Christianity), Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 1992, 182 pp.

In order to understand the religious processes in contemporary Africa one has to remember that the Africans have for many centuries been exposed to the influences of Islam and Christianity. Contacts and interferences of African traditional belief systems with these two monotheistic religions were introducing many changes and transformations into the spiritual and social life of the Africans.

This book is a result of the author's long-term research in the field of religious phenomena in Africa. The volume under discussion is an important source for learning what, in fact, the African religions are. Here, however, the great attention has been paid to the processes of development of the African traditional beliefs under the influence of Islam and Christianity. In a short Introduction (pp. 5-7) the author explains that the aim of his book is to provide a much wider view of various phenomena which are discussed by him.

The first chapter entitled "Afrykańskie wierzenia rodzime" (African Traditional Beliefs, pp. 9-20) deals with the most important features of the African religions before the European expan-

sion. First of all, it is pertinent to emphasize that in those traditional religions there is no sharp differentiation between the spiritual world and the world of the reality, and human life can be described as strongly religious. The esoteric character of the African beliefs is also an important feature. On the other hand, however, they are open to the influences of other systems – they even tend to adopt some of them.

African traditional beliefs have also been defined as polytheistic religions. The concept of Supreme Being, however, appears in many African belief systems. Then the major problem is how to overcome the cultural and linguistic barriers to interpret and translate the African traditional religions into Western patterns of expression. One has to remember that there are significant differences between African and Western philosophy of life which is reflected in their languages. That is why the author's attention has been turned to the question of defining African beliefs in general.

In the second chapter of the book "Religie rodzime wobec postępów chrześcijaństwa i islamu" (Traditional Religions in the Face of the Progress of Islam and Christianity, pp. 21-36) attention has been paid to the process of the progressive development of the religious syncretism. The influence of Islam and Christianity was an important factor bringing about essential changes in the traditional social structures. It is of special interest to learn how the African religious doctrines have been modified through the adaptation of some new elements of the world religions.

The successive chapter headed "Proces islamizacji Afryki" (The Process of Islamization of Africa, pp. 37-60) deals with the history of Islam in Black Africa. The author analyses the main stages of the infiltration of the Mohammedan religion into the local belief systems. Particular note should be taken of the fact that Islam was quite easily adopted by the Africans. Merchants, dealers, and teachers of the Moslem religion figured prominently in the propagation of the Islamic values and new patterns of life. Moreover, we have to pay attention to the role of the Arabic language being the bearer of Moslem culture and religion. In view

of African peoples, for many reasons Islam was not entirely alien to their nature, and particularly because of its tolerant attitude towards the African traditional social institutions and rituals.

The author accepts the theory of the three stages of Islamization in Black Africa. The first one was the surface adaptation of some material and non-religious elements borrowed from the Moslem environment. The second stage of Islamization can be described as a peculiar assimilation of the local beliefs with the Islamic influences. And the third one was characterized by religious renewal and a complete transition to the Moslem society. The author emphasizes, however, that the three-stage process of Islamization was not homogenous. Its forms depended on the Africans' attitude towards the new religion.

The role of Christianity in Black Africa seems to be much more complex. Its turbulent history has been presented in the chapter entitled "Proces chrystianizacji Afryki" (The Process of Christianization of Africa, pp. 61-97). Unlike the Moslems' activities, the presence of Christians in Africa was often associated with the advance of colonial authority. The character of Christianity itself which did not pay much respect to African conditions, local languages and cultural differences was an unhonorable fact in the early period of Christianization of the African continent.

The activities of the Christian missions, both Catholic and Protestant, were the main channel through which the Western values were being transmitted to the Africans. The first missionaries, however, often ignored traditional religious systems and even strongly condemned the Africans who practiced their own beliefs and rituals. Moreover, the rivalry between different Christian confessions was a contributing factor which made the process of Christianization more difficult.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the Africans have had reasons to regard Christianity as being alien to their nature, culture, and life-style. The author points out the conflict of values which arose from a large number of factors. For many years, however, we

can observe positive changes in the attitudes of missionaries to the culture and spiritual life of the Africans. Numerous attempts to make the Christian theology more palatable to the Africans have shown new ways of seeking for the African identity in the new situation. Of special interest are the author's remarks dealing with the newest efforts of the Catholic Church to "inculturate" Christianity in Africa.

The next is the chapter "Dziedzictwo religii rodzimych w kociołach afrochrześcijańskich" (The Heritage of the Traditional Religions in Afro-Christian Churches, pp. 98-119). The author presents here the genesis of the religious syncretic movements in Black Africa. He divides them into two basic groups: the independent separatist churches and the prophetic movements. It must be said here that the problem of the classification of contemporary African syncretic movements and churches is the matter of numerous researches and discussions. The author pays attention to the role which the African syncretic religions played in the formation of supra-tribal consciousness as a new phenomenon in Black Africa. In African Christianity we can observe the development of a new theology. It seems that the so called "African Theology" has not yet formulated its concept. Many researches try to define this phenomenon. Although there is one common element in these syncretic movements (i.e. in all of them we can find some elements of traditional beliefs), this tribal heritage found very different ways of manifestation. On the other hand, a distinction should be made between this "African Theology" and the "Black Theology" which did not originate in Africa but in North America, and its initiators were Afro-Americans.

The chapter headed "Wybrane problemy zmian religijnych w Afryce" (Some Selected Problems of Religious Changes in Africa, pp. 120-138) presents the theories explaining the process of religious transformations in Black Africa. The author refers to four theories as follows: 1. theory of the shattered microcosm of J. Spencer-Trimingham; 2. intellectual theory of R. C. Horton; 3. historical

explanation of H. J. Fisher and 4. socio-cultural explanation of G. Ifeka-Moller.

J. Spencer-Trimingham pays attention to the decadence of the African traditional social structures as an important factor of the turn in course to Islam or Christianity. According to R. C. Horton, the factors of the evolution of the African societies under the new conditions, as well as the activity of missionaries should be emphasized. R. C. Horton finds that the practices of the universal religions can be adopted only when they co-occur with the changes of traditional cosmology. J. H. Fisher proposed his own theory of the development of Islam in Black Africa. Finally, the theory of G. Ifeka-Moller emphasizes some of the psychological factors resolving to acceptance a new religion.

In the concluding part of the book entitled "Innowacja i adaptacja w tradycyjnych wierzeniach Czarnej Afryki" (Innovation and Adaptation in the Traditional Beliefs of Black Africa, pp. 139-160) the author presents some chosen examples of the African belief systems and their transformations under the influence of Islam and Christianity. The book has been completed with a short Conclusion (pp. 161-163), Index of Geographical Names and the Names of Languages, and Index of the Religious Terms. They are very helpful, especially for the common run of audience. The book contains also a comprehensive bibliographical guide.

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