

**COURSE
GUIDE**

**CRS491:
AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION AND CULTURE**

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Introduction

Welcome to CRS491: African Traditional Religion and Culture. The course is a two-hour credit unit course offered in the second semester of the first year to undergraduate students of Christian Theology in National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). The Course comprises three modules of sixteen units. The course is designed and developed with the appropriate theological accent suitable for Christian understanding of African traditional religious beliefs and culture.

This guide is conceived as one of the major resources to help you successfully complete your course in “African Traditional Religion and Culture” and ultimately your programme.

The Study Guide, therefore, provides you with basic information about the entire course, such as the aims and objectives, course material and structure, available services to support your learning, information on assignment and examination. You will also be guided on how to plan your time for study; the amount of time you should spend on each study unit and your tutor-marked assignments.

Go through this course study guide carefully before going through the main course content. You are encouraged, at your earliest possible convenience, to make your observations about the course content and presentation known to the Department through your Study Centre Director/Desk Officer.

It is my hope that this study guide will answer most of your questions. I also advise you to contact your study centre if you have further questions. I wish you all the best in your learning experience and successful completion of this course.

Course Aims

This course aims at helping you gain some general knowledge about African Traditional Religion and Culture, and some of the common shared values, especially in matters of African theology, beliefs, and the inextricable relationship between the religion and culture of the Africans. The course therefore equips you with the necessary *theoretical*, *theological* and *practical* knowledge to critically evaluate, appreciate the traditional religion of Africans and their culture in all ramifications.

The thinking also is that after going through this course, you will disassociate yourself from erroneous terminologies that have been ascribed to the religion, thereby promoting a sense of respect for the African heritage. This course then will serve as a source of motivation thus encouraging you becoming a missionary of peace, shunning any form of hatred, violence and/or persecution. The course, therefore, challenges

you to defend and protect all values associated with tolerance, respect and mutual coexistence.

Course Objectives

You will find out that each unit in this course has stated objectives that it seeks to achieve. Pay close attention to those objectives for good understanding of the course. However, by the time you are through with the course content, especially when you have studied the material with some devotion, you will be able to:

1. Understand the definition of African Traditional Religion and Culture and describe the various disparaging terms or misconceptions in African Religion and Culture.
2. Identify the reasons for the study of African Traditional Religion and examine the future of African Traditional Religion.
3. Describe the nature of African Traditional Religion and establish the relationship between religion and culture.
4. State the significance of the rites of passage in African Traditional Religion and explain what proverbs and wise sayings are.
5. Discuss the classification and significance of Taboos in African Traditional Religion.

Working through this Course

The 14 units from the 3 modules in this course are designed and presented in strata of a stair-step fashion, erected piece by piece with each unit standing on its own, and with each additional part providing a stabilising effect for the whole. The implication is that you are expected to follow the units step-by-step for effective understanding and appreciation of the issues raised in the course. As a student, you will do yourself a lot of good if you consult the recommended texts and other texts that are relevant for the course. These will help, in no small measure, to broaden your knowledge of the course.

There are self-assessment exercises for each section of the unit, and tutor-marked assignments (TMAs) at the end of each unit.

In designing and writing of the course, I have consciously generated many self-assessment exercises at the end of each section and subsection in order to assist you to test your level of understanding. This is also in agreement with the nature of the course design, which gives you the advantage of approaching the issues of African traditional religions and culture from many different beliefs. Thus, the self-assessment exercises and the TMAs are to your own benefits. Do not hesitate to test yourself with them as they will help to sharpen your understanding as you progress in the course. They will also be helpful to reinforce your understanding of the material. Together with tutor-marked assignments, I strongly

believe, these exercises will assist you in achieving the stated learning objectives of the individual units and of the course in general.

As occasions demand, you will from time to time, have assignments to write. If I were you, I will equally take the assignments serious, knowing that they may constitute a part of my final performance in the course.

Course Materials

There are four major components of the course, excluding this course guide. These are:

1. Study units
2. Textbooks
3. Assignments' file
4. Presentation schedule

The study units

This course contains three modules of sixteen study units. They are divided and classified as follows:

Module I:	General Introduction to African Traditional Religion and Culture	
	Unit 1	Definition of African Traditional Religion and Culture
	Unit 2	Errors of Terminologies of African Traditional Religion
	Unit 3	Justification for the Study of African Traditional Religion and Culture
	Unit 4	Characteristics of African Traditional Religion
	Unit 5	Sources of African Traditional Religion and the problems confronting its study
Module II	God and Man in African Traditional Religion and Culture	
	Unit 1	Concept of God in African Traditional Religious Beliefs
	Unit 2	God and the World in African Traditional Religion and Culture
	Unit 3	Revelation in African Traditional Religion
	Unit 4	Ancestral Veneration in African Traditional Religion
Module III	Relationship between African Traditional Religion and Culture	
	Unit 1	Relationship between Religion and Culture
	Unit 2	God and the World in African Traditional Religion and Culture

	Unit 3	Justification for the Study of African Traditional Religion and Culture
	Unit 4	Totems and Taboos in African Traditional Religion and Culture
	Unit 5	Symbols in African Traditional Religion and Culture

References

At the end of each unit, you will find references and list of books for further reading. It makes easier for you to identify relevant literature relating to each unit. You will gain much if you can read such books and similar ones on the topics treated. Reading the books will help to build your knowledge and thereby enhance your understanding of the course.

Assignment File

Your assessment in this course will come in two forms: the tutor-marked assignments and a written examination. The tutor-marked assignment which will be organised by your tutor carries 30% of the total marks for the course.

Tutor-Marked Assignment

There is a tutor-marked assignment at the end of every unit. You are advised to solve the assignments and submit your solution to your tutor. At the end of the course, the tutor-marked assignments will carry 30% of the total marks of the course.

Final Examination and Grading

Your final examination, which carries 70% of the total marks, comes at the end of the course. This will constitute a two-hour examination, where you will be asked questions on the issues that you have already encountered in the course of your study.

Course Marking Scheme

The total marks accruable to you from this course are broken down as follows:

Assessment	Marks
Assignments	Three assignments of 10% each, out of which the best three is selected to make up 30% of the total marks
Final Examination	70% of the total course marks
Total	100% of course marks

Course Time Schedule

This course is designed to cover 14 weeks outside the first week which is dedicated to the studying of this course guide. You are expected to complete the assignment for the unit at the end of every week (beginning

from week 2), and submit the same to your tutorial facilitator. See the table below for the study plan. However, your tutorial facilitator may decide on the number of assignments taken from the assignments at the end of each unit.

Each study unit consists of one week's work and should take you about three hours to complete. It included specific objectives, guidance for study, reading materials, self-assessment exercises, and tutor-marked assignments. All these are to assist you achieve the stated learning objectives of the individual study units of the course.

Unit	Title of the Study Unit	Week's Activity	Assignment	
	Course Guide	1	Course Guide Form	
Module I:	Module 1: General Introduction to African Traditional Religion and Culture			
	Unit 1	Meaning of African Traditional Religion and Culture	2	Assignment
	Unit 2	Errors of terminologies of African Traditional Religion	3	Assignment
	Unit 3	The study of African Traditional Religion and Culture	4	Assignment
	Unit 4	Characteristics of African Traditional Religion	5	Assignment
	Unit 5	Sources of African Traditional Religion and the Problems confronting its study	6	TMA to be Submitted
Module II	God and Man in African Traditional Religion and Culture			
	Unit 1	Concept of God in African Traditional Religious Beliefs	7	Assignment
	Unit 2	God and the World in African Traditional Religion and Culture	8	Assignment
	Unit 3	Revelation in African Traditional Religion	9	Assignment
	Unit 4	Ancestral Veneration in African Traditional Religion	10	Assignment
Module III	Relationship between African Traditional Religion and Culture			
	Unit 1	Relationship between Religion and Culture	13	Assignment
	Unit 2	God and the World in African Traditional Religion	14	Assignment
	Unit 3	Justification for the study of African Traditional Religion and Culture	15	Assignment
	Unit 4	Totems and Taboos in African traditional Religion and Culture	16	Assignment
	Unit 5	Symbols in African Traditional Religion and Culture	17	TMA to be Submitted

How to Get the Most from this Course

In distance learning, the study units replace the university lectures. You are therefore expected to read through the course on your own and at your own time. Another aspect of this is that you do not read at the prompting

of your tutor. You read when you decide to do so. Since there is no lecturer for you in this course, the study unit tells you what to do at each point. It will benefit you immensely if you obey its instructions.

The units are arranged in a common format. The first item of every unit is an introduction to the subject matter of the unit, and how a particular unit is integrated with the other units and the course as a whole. What follows next is a set of learning objectives. These objectives, as already stated, let you know what you should be able to do by the time you have completed the unit. These learning objectives are meant to guide your study. You are advised to go back to the stated objectives at the end of every unit, to know whether you have achieved them in the course of your learning.

The self-assessment exercises at the end of the units are to help you to assess your understanding of the units. Do not neglect them as the way you answer them provides you with a mirror to gauge your performance in learning the course.

Tutors and Tutorials

Your tutor will provide a human guide for you in the course of this work. However, you are to have only sixteen hours of contact with him in the course of your study of this course. Pay close attention to your tutor. If you have any question to ask as regards the course it is your tutor that will provide the answer. He will also mark your tutor-marked assignments. You should try as much as possible to attend all the tutorials. Doing so will be of benefit to you.

Summary

It is the thinking of the designer/writer of this course that at the end of the course you should have been equipped with basic knowledge African Traditional Religion and Culture, and some of the common shared values, especially in matters of African theology, beliefs, and the inextricable relationship between the religion and the culture of Africans. The course therefore equips you with the necessary *theoretical*, *theological* and *practical* knowledge to critically evaluate, appreciate the traditional religion of Africans and their culture in all ramifications.

Good luck, and God bless you!

Module 1: General Introduction to African Traditional Religion and Culture

Unit 1: Definition of African Tradition Religion and culture

Unit Structure

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning outcome
- 1.3 Definition of Religion
- 1.4 The term African Traditional Religion
- 1.5 Theories of the Origin of Religion
- 1.6 Definition of the term culture
- 1.7 Components of culture
- 4.0 Summary
- 5.0 Reference/Further Readings/Web Resources
- 6.0 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)
- 7.0 Glossary

1.1 Introduction

Hello my dear students. I am welcoming you in a very special way to this foremost discussion on CRS491: African Traditional Religion and Culture. The unit marks the first discussion of the entire course. We will be discussing the importance of Religion, culture and the basic components of culture. Before we proceed, let's examine the learning outcome.

1.2 Learning Outcome

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Definition of Religion
- Understand the definitions of African Traditional Religion.
- State the theories of the origin of Religion
- Know the components of culture
- Definitions of Religion from Anthropological perspective.

1.3 Definition of Religion

It is a belief in spiritual beings. Religion is a system of symbols which act to establish powerful pervasion and long-lasting moods and motivations inn men by formulating concepts of a general order of existence, and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.

Definition of religion from sociological perspective can be defined as a unified system of beliefs and practices which are related to sacred things, things set apart and forbidden beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a church all those who adhere to them. Religion is man's response to breaking points at which he experiences ultimate and sacred power. Out of this experience, religious organizations, ritual practices, beliefs and values evolve.

Self-Assessment Exercise (SAE) 1

1. Define religion?

Definitions of Religion from a Philosophical Perspective

The attitude or active relationship and actions growing out of that attitude or relationship, towards whatever or whoever an individual ad/or group of persons take to be of greater value and reality. The recognition of all duties as divine commands.

1.4 The term African Traditional Religion

The term African Traditional Religion is called African due to the fact that it is indigenous, aboriginal, foundational or handed down from generation to generation. Religion is part and parcel of African life. It is only practiced by the Africans. The term Traditional in African Traditional Religion is said to be traditional due to many factors. It is a religion and culture that is based on the life of the Africans. This pattern of life has been handed on from their fore-fathers from generation to generation. It made of worship, articles of faith, materials used for worship in temples, shrine and holy places are all from the African local environment.

Activity I

Distinguish between traditional and indigenous

Self-Assessment Exercise (SAE) 2

Explain the term African Traditional Religion

1.5 Theories of Origin of Religion

There are several theories of the origin of religion, they are;

- **Theological theory of the origin of religion-** Theology is a study of God. It is divided into six broad areas Doctrine of God. The doctrine of man. The person of Christ. The work of Christ. The

doctrine of the church and the doctrine of the lost things known in theological language as eschatology.

- **Speculative Theory of the origin of religion-** This theory is based on critical and reflective thinking.
- **Mythological theory of the origin of religion-** The origin of religion was linked with the gods and goddesses. Religion came as a result of the handiwork of their respective gods, that means a divine being created the world, human beings and all the things in the universe and as such, the followers of this belief start building temples and shrines for the gods, sacrifices were also made to the gods for protection and blessings.
- **Psychological Theory of the Origin of Religion-** Religion evolved from Man's need to find solutions to the uncertainties of this world. The projection theory, an aspect of psychological theory says that Religion was the projection of man's highest aspirations. Anthropological theory of the origin of Religion Animism, one of the earliest known theories of religion. The theory explains the origin of religion as belief in spiritual beings. The primitive man's first experience of the idea of spirit was his sleep, dreams, breath and death and his spirit in an invisible being that could animate as a soul even in natural objects and the celestial bodies.
- **Sociological Theories of the Origin of religion-** Religion is an acknowledgement of man's dependence on powers which enables one to be in the right relationship to this power and may still receive rewards and punishment from this power. Religion started with animism to polytheism to monotheism.

Self-Assessment Exercise (SAE) 3

State the theories of origin of religion

1.6 Definition of the term Culture

Culture is a whole body of knowledge, beliefs, art, law, norms, morals and all other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society. Culture is the totality of a people's way of life. Human culture includes insignificant and mundane behaviour traits of everyday life, such as dietary, habits, dressing, language as well as refined art of a society. It entails the patterned ways and repetitive actions of people in society.

Activity 2

Distinguish between nature and nurture

1.7 Components of Culture

There are two basic components.

Material: These consists of all objects, physical traits, instruments and tools which are made and used by a people to various aspects of their community life.

Non-material: It refers to the non-physical phenomena processes and weas which are abstract and non-visible but are part of the people’s way of life.

Self-Assessment Exercise (SAE) 4

Discuss the components of culture

Self-Assessment Exercise (SAE) 1

1. Mention and explain the problems associated with the study of religion (2 mins)

1.8 Summary

Recall that religion is part of Ayman society. We have also seen the various theories of the origin of religion. Finally, we have defined culture and have equally seen the component of culture.

1.9 Reference

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1.10 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise (SAEs)

Answer to SAE 1

1. Define Religion

- It is a belief in spiritual beings. It can be seen from a sociological and philosophical perspective.

Answer to SAE 1

2. The term African Traditional Religion

- It is indigenous, aboriginal, foundational or handed down from generation to generation.
- It is based on the life of the Africans handed on from their fore-fathers from generation to generation.

Answer to SAE 1

3. Theories of Origin of Religion

- Theological theory of the origin of religion
- Speculative theory of the origin of religion
- Mythological theory of the origin of religion
- Psychological theory of the origin of religion
- Sociological theory of the origin of religion

Answer to SAE 1

4. The Components of culture

- Material
- Non-material

1.10 Glossary

Animism- A belief that objects, places, and creatures all possess a distinct spiritual essence. Simply it holds that all objects and living things possess a soul or spirit.

Eschatology- It concerns expectations of the end of the present age, human history or of the world itself.

Monotheism- The belief that there is only one deity, an all-supreme being that is universally referred to as God. It is the doctrine that there is only one God.

Polytheism- It is the religious belief in several different gods or divine beings grouped in pantheons or directly in nature. It is a belief in multiple deities.

Unit 2: Errors of Terminologies in African Traditional Religion

Unit Structure

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Learning outcome
- 2.3 Introduction to the general errors of terminologies in African Traditional Religion.
- 2.5 Summary
- 2.6 Reference
- 2.7 Glossary

2.1 Introduction

Hello students, in the previous unit, you learnt that African Traditional Religion is only practiced by Africans and it is the product of our ancestors or fore-fathers. It is the formulated religious ideas, beliefs, observed ceremonies and rituals. In this unit, we shall look at the general errors of terminologies in African Traditional Religion. Before that, let us state our learning outcome.

2.2 Learning Outcome

By the end of this unit, it is expected that you will be able to:

- Identify the errors of terminologies in African Traditional Religion
- State the reasons for errors of terminology of ATR

2.3 Introduction to the General Errors of Terminologies in African Traditional Religion

Ignorance of African cultures among early travelers, racial and cultural superiority complex among some European writer's brought about colonial domination. An error of terminology can be explained as when one tries to describe or give a name to that which he does not really understand. European writers and even some Africans have designated African Traditional Religion in a number of wrong and disparaging terms which has been used over the years and have led some African Scholars to use the same terms and hold the same views about their indigenous religion.

2.4 Errors of Terminologies in African Traditional Religion

i) **Primitive:** It has its etymological root in a Latin word 'primus' which means "first in relation to second". From its etymological origin, Primus connotes that from which other things are derived. By extension, primitive means old fashioned, ancient, simple, and original. In fact, Western scholars used this word to describe anything that did not meet up with their set standards or expectations or in describing certain cultural

patterns that did not conform to their accepted behaviour. So, out of ignorance and prejudice, these scholars used this term 'primitive' freely to apply to Africa and her religion.

ii) Animism: The Latin word "anima" which means soul is the root word from where animism is derived. Edward Burnet Tylor, a renown cultural anthropologist defines it as the doctrine of doctrine of souls and other spiritual beings in general. The belief in spiritual beings include two forms:

- The belief that human beings have souls which survive their death.
- The belief that other spiritual beings exist.

Animism manifests itself in different kinds of spirits which include:

- Spirits associated with human beings such as souls of human beings departed, ancestral spirits, malevolent spirits of people who die under unnatural circumstances.
- Spirits of non-human natural objects like water falls, rocks, mountains etc.
- Spirits associated with social groups like gods, demons and angels etc.
- Spirits associated with natural forces like wind, thunder, flood, fire etc.

Animism applies to all religions and African Traditional Religion cannot be described solely as Animistic. Any religion that practices animism, accepts belief in spirits and recognition of spirits as having separate and separable entities from the objects which are their symbols. To say that there are spirits in the world does not mean that people's religion is only about the spirits. Christianity and Islam acknowledge existence of spirits but neither of them is animism. Therefore, the term is erroneous.

iii) Fetishism: It is derived from the Latin word "factitius" which means magical artful. It is the belief that certain objects are inhabited by spirits. In some tribes' objects such as bundles of sticks are treated with special reverence and religious virtue are attached to them. These objects become sacred because they are thought to be dwelling places of the divinities or where they manifest themselves and disappear occasionally.

The three general beliefs concerning the existence of spirits after death as derived from Tylor are:

- Belief that souls metamorphose into another beings
- Belief in a special residence for souls in another world.
- Belief that the souls or spirits continue either to live in the life similar to the earthly life or they are rewarded or punished according to the deeds of their earthly lives.

From the three categories above, we can observe that they fit most religions of the world. Thus, fetishism is a completely inadequate term to describe African Traditional Religion as the early Portuguese traders and travelers describes it because of the charms won by Africans on the West coast of Africa. Material things are not object of religious worship in Africa and charm cannot be a religion in itself.

iv) Totemism: From its originating geography of North America, the word ‘totem’ is variously written as ‘totem’, ‘totam’ or ‘dotam’. It is a system of beliefs and practices embodying a certain idea of mystical or ritual relationship between members of the social group and a species of animals or plants. It implies respect and injunctions such as prohibitions against killing or eating the totem animal or plant, or against interfering with the totem animal or plant. The early European scholar’s and missionaries conceived these totemic symbols as idols and thus label Africans as idol worshippers because of lack of understanding as they see these symbols, images or idols which are emblems of worship to which worshippers bow down and they are shocked and confused. Adherents are worshipping the spiritual beings represented by the symbols, not the symbols.

v) Heathenism: From its German origin, it means “a dweller in the heath”. Heath originally was used to refer to a waste land, outskirts of a city, a dwelling place for vagabonds, brigands, and hooligans. Thus, heathen was considered as one who belong to or has the habit of, or forbidding quality or characteristic of the heath dwellers. Similarly, the term connotes someone who is neither Christian, Jewish nor Muslim. Simply put, it means an unenlightened person.

The Christian missionary’s attitude to African Religion made them to use derogatory terms like heathen because hold that they brought light or the gospel to the “dark continent”, cruel or barbaric practices of African. They believe that the minds of the Africans were plunged into the darkness of ignorance and superstition of which only Christianity could dispel it.

vi) Paganism: From its Latin origin, ‘paganus’ means a village dweller or a country man. Paganism or pagan carries the meaning of someone removed from a civilized community. The term was used by Christian missionaries to describe village settlers who have not yet converted to Christianity. It is one of the oldest terms used to belittle Africans. Yet there are many people in Europe and America who do not follow either of these world religious and are often wholly irreligious but they are never called pagans. Therefore, it is wrong to speak of ATR practitioners as pagans or regard their religion as paganism.

vii) Tribe: The term refers to a group of people in a primitive or barbarous stage of development under the authority of a chief and regarding themselves as having a common ancestor. This is seen as a racial group especially one united by language and customs, living as a community under one or more chiefs. This should not be used to refer to Africans. The term ethnic group has replaced the word tribe as it is more appropriate to describe a people and not just African peoples only.

viii) Native: It means a people's place of birth. African Traditional Religion was born in Africa, hence it is native to the area. The Europeans use the word native to imply that the African people are underdeveloped and backward and as such should not be used to describe African peoples and their religion.

ix) Savage: It is used to describe the uncivilized nature of Africans. In the past, they were looked upon as wild and uncivilized people, no wonder, the Europeans described Africans as 'black monkeys'. This was because some European travelers were only concerned in emphasizing the dark side of the African people. They popularized the bad aspects of the Africans and took to the Western world pictures of nude people sitting with wild animals. Also, some practices carried out by the Africans, such as human sacrifice and the throwing away of twins, attracted the name savage to them. Of late, there is wicked wrestling, wanton shooting, murder and all forms of violence going on in the developed countries but they are not described as savage. Just to show the superiority posture of colonial agents and missionaries from Europe.

x) Idolatry: The word 'eidolon' from Greek language means image or pantheons. It means a conception in the mind, as idea, vision, fancy or imagination. Africans have been called idol worshippers due to misunderstanding by the Europeans. Idols and other images which the Africans venerate are intermediaries between God and man in African religious beliefs.

2.5 Summary

In this unit, we looked at the African beliefs in the Supreme Being, the lesser Gods, deities and spirits. We also saw reasons for errors of terminology of African traditional religion are sheer ignorance of African culture, racial and cultural superiority etc. we have identified some errors of terminology of ATR as a primitive religion as, animism, Fetishism, Totemism etc. we concluded that these derogatory terminologies should be dropped.

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2.6 Glossary

Adherents

Barbaric

Derogatory.

Disparaging

Superstition

Unit 3 Justification for the Study of African Traditional Religion and Culture

Unit Structure

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 learning outcome
- 3.3 The importance of religion in any given society
- 3.4 The role of religion in the society
- 3.5 The role and significance of culture in the African society
- 3.6 justification of the study of religion
- 3.7 The future of African traditional religion
- 3.8 summary
- 3.9 Reference
- 3.10 Glossary

3.1 Introduction

▪ Hello students! In the previous unit, the study reveals that Europeans writers and even some Africans, have designated ATR with some derogatory terms like paganism, animism, primitive among others. We also saw that these terms were used out of sheer ignorance, prejudice or racial bias. In this unit, we shall now consider the importance and role of religion in the society. Before that, let us consider the learning outcome.

3.2 Learning outcome

By the end of this unit, it is expected that you will be able to:

- identify the importance of religion in any given society
- identify the role of religion in the society
- state the future ATR

3.3 The importance of religion in any given society

- Religion permeates culture and mediates in social structures.
- It helps a lot of people to relate harmoniously with one another, and with their creator, God

3.4 The role of religion in the society (positive roles)

As a functional system, religion performs the following functions

- Religion introduces a new life style: a new look, thinking etc. are created, maintained and sustained through religious doctrines.

- New relationships are also established: several friendships levels-women, adult, males and youths are created as an opportunity to interact socially and religiously.
- The introduction of new institutions: Christian missionaries introduced new institutions like hospitals, schools, a new legal system, a new form of marriage (monogamy) etc., similarly Islam introduces Islamic education and the sharia legal system.
- Dissemination of ideas and information: Christian missionaries brought new ideas and information about education, medicine, business, enterprises, agriculture etc. the Islamic religion introduced Islamic education, laws, Arabic language, Arabic writing etc. There were also establishment of communication channels such as newspapers, television, radio, religious literature etc. to enlighten members of the public about their activities, and current thrives in the mass media.
- Religion transforms the society: it introduced new cultural elements such as religious doctrines, dogma, laws, organization, patterns of marriage, training of children etc. Christianity abolished the killing of twins, slavery, female circumcision etc. (Negative roles)
- Religion serves as a source of conflict between individuals and communities.
- Religious intolerance and fanaticism often mass peaceful co-existence among families.
- Communities and nations.

Occasionally, religion leads its adherents away from attending to their social needs and actions that could have improved their condition in society.

3.5 The role of religion in the society (positive roles)

As a functional system, religion performs the following function

- a) Religion introduces a new life style: a new look, thinking etc. are created, maintained and sustained through religious doctrines.
- b) New relationships are also established: several friendship levels women, adult males and the youth are created as an opportunity to interact socially and religiously.
- c) The introduction of new institution: Christian missionaries introduced new institutions like hospitals, schools, a new legal system, a new form of marriage (monogamy) etc. similarly, Islam introduced Islamic education and the sharia legal system.
- d) Establishment of new social groups: Christian missionaries introduced boys' brigade, girls' brigade, boys scout etc. members in this group learn both religious and social values which helps them to be faithful Christians and patriotic citizens.

- e) Dissemination of ideas and information: Christian missionaries brought new ideas and information about education, medicine, business enterprises, agriculture etc. the Islamic religion introduced Islamic education, laws, Arabic language, Arabic writings etc. there were also establishment of communication channels such as newspapers, television, radio, religious literature etc. to enlighten members of the public about their activities, and current issues in the mass media.
- f) Religious transforms the society: it introduced new cultural elements such as religious doctrines, dogma, laws, organization, patterns of marriage, training of children etc. Christianity abolished the killings of twins, slavery, female circumcision etc.

Negative role

- a) Religion serves as a source of conflict between individuals and communities.
- b) Religious intolerance and fanaticism often mars peaceful co-existence among families.
- c) Communities and nations: occasionally, religion leads its adherents away from attending to their social needs, and actions that could have improved their condition in society

Characteristics of culture

- Culture is socially determined: it has to do with human relationships where they share set goals and values in life.
- Culture is transmissible: it can be transmitted or passed from one generation to another.
- Culture is general: this refers to generally held and shared experiences by a group of people at the same time.
- Culture is obligatory: here, every member of the society is more or less under obligation to accept it. Though, when a few rejects it, society looks at them as having deviant behavior or social maladjustment.
- Culture is variable and dynamic: it is not static. It changes and evolves out of other cultural patterns.

Significant roles of culture

- 1) Culture provides the impetus of peoples thinking, speaking, behaving, hearing, feeling, seeing, evaluating etc.
- 2) Culture spells out conditions for common agreement or consensus for establishing and maintain relationships, interacting and cooperating, contacting and assisting one another.
- 3) Culture helps members of a community in accepting to integrate the individual into groups and consequently enhancing the unity of the group.
- 4) Culture preserves historical and social ideas, knowledge, techniques, methods, beliefs, procedures.

- 5) Culture assists in explain a people's action, conditions and experiences.
- 6) Culture serves to maintain safeguard against attack and extinction of a people's values, norms, beliefs, moral codes etc.

3.6 Justification for the study of African traditional religion – reasons for the study

- a) Cultural reasons
 - The study will led to cultural and religious rejuvenation
 - This study will reveal the glorious aspect of our cultural heritage
 - Re-shaping the African history and culture
 - Separation of virtue from vice
- a) Academic reasons
 - To bring to the knowledge of learners basic information about the indigenous religion of the African.
 - To have fair knowledge of what our fore fathers left behind in order to lend value to it.
 - To begin to document for future records the beliefs and practices of our fore father for the purpose of continuity.
 - To provide the basis for dialogue with other world religions towards identifying points of convergence and divergence.
- b) Psychological reasons
 - To eradicate prejudice or sentiments and errors of terminology.
 - Close psychological and emotional barriers between African and the westerners.
 - Clear understanding of a person's psyche or mindset in order to sell an idea of the person.

3.7 The future of African traditional religion

ATR is a living religion and not likely to become extinct. Most of its adherent still visit Babalawo's or soothsayers, some wear amulets or charms around their waist or ritually prepared finger rings or bangles. This implies that the future of the religion is still very bright. There is renewed interest in the study of African past. Many scholars and students are calling for a return to the basics

3.8 Summary

In this unit, we have dealt with the characteristics of African traditional religion. We have also discussed the importance of the religion in any given society, the role of religion in the society, the importance and significance of culture, basic characteristics of culture. We equally discussed the justification for the study of ATR and the significant roles of culture.

3.9 Reference

3.10 glossary: maladjustment, convergence, divergence, fanaticism

UNIT 4: THE NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF ATR**CONTENTS**

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Learning outcome
- 4.3 The basic element of religion
- 4.4 The nature of ATR
- 4.5 Features of ATR
- 4.6 Beliefs in spirit, ancestors, witchcraft and sorcery
- 4.7 Summary
- 4.8 Reference
- 4.9 Glossary

4.1 Introduction

Hello students! From the previous unit, we saw that before the advent of Islam and Christianity in Africa, ATR regulated the cultural lives of the people. We equally saw that religion needs culture for its illumination and culture needs religion for its purification. In this unit, we shall discuss the basic elements of religion, and nature, and features of ATR. Before that lets state the learning outcome for this discussion.

4.2 Learning Outcome

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Know the basic elements of religion
- Describe the nature of ATR
- Identify its characteristic features

4.3 The basic elements of religion

Sacred people: these are people that God meet and they have intermediaries
 Sacred things: sacred books contain the word of God or words of its founders. Sacred objects found in sacred places.

I'm Sacred commands: almsgiving (zakat) one of the pillars of Islamic faith, salvation, taking vows which make them remove all anti-social behavior like abstaining from sex, not telling lies etc. the ten commandments

4.4 The nature of ATR

As a revealed religion: the religion has no founder. Our fore fathers sought answers to the mysterious surroundings the creation of the universe, they came to realize the presence of a supreme being who ordered, controlled and maintained the whole world. Traditional: it has a lot of connection with the forefathers and it was handled down to us by our forefathers. No written literature: unlike other religions, ATR has no sacred books probably because it is traditional. It is not written in black and white but on people's minds, sacred places and things.

Oral transition: it is handed down to us from generation to generation. Though it was orally transmitted, some facts might be lost, distorted or exaggerated. Nevertheless, there is still enough information to guide its adherents about what happened previously.4.5 features of ATR (read and more points)

Beliefs in God,
Belief in divinities
Beliefs in spirit, ancestors, witchcraft and sorcery

4.6 Summary

Religion is an important feature which hold the society strongly and is responsible for man's self-consciousness. ATR was handled down to us by our forefathers. There are no founders, no sacred books. They are belief systems, belief in ancestors, divinities, spirits

4.7 Reference

4.8 glossary: distorted, sorcery

UNIT 5 SOURCES OF ATR AND PROBLEMS CONFRONTING ITS STUDY

CONTENTS

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Learning outcome
- 5.3 Sources for the study
 - 5.3.1 Material sources
 - 5.3.2 Non material sources
- 5.4 Problems confronting the study of ATR
- 5.5 Summary
- 5.6 Reference
- 5.7 glossary

5.1 Introduction

We saw that ATR is not a religion found in sacred books, no sacred scriptures unlike other world religions. It was handed down to the Africans by their forefathers. The religion was depended on every aspect of his life's endeavor. In this unit, we shall discuss the source of ATR and also examine the learning outcome.

5.2 Learning Outcome

At the end of this unit, you should be able to; List and discuss the source of ATR Examine the problems besetting the study of ATR

5.3 Sources of the Study of ATR

The sources for this study of ATR are basically oral traditions which can be classified into material and non-material.

5.3.1 Material Sources: emblems of worship are always found in places of worship such as temples, shrines and grooves which are good sources for the study of the religion

5.3.2 Non material sources: These include myths, liturgies and recitals. Myths: are stories which explain the important aspects of the origin of religions.

Liturgies: through liturgies people can learn the prescribed forms of rituals, names and attribution of deities and the relationship that should exist between God and man Songs: they convey a lot about the faith of our past adherents

Recitals: contains stories of the chief deities

Music and dance: music gives outlets to the emotional expression of the religious life

Names of people and places

Proverbs, riddles, and wise sayings

Beliefs and customs

Taboos and prohibition

Various taboos

Food taboos

Taboos on death

Sex taboos

5.4 Problems confronting the study of ATR

a) geographical problems

Geographical location: the location of Africa made it difficult as it remained unknown and in the remote area. It's the reasons why the foreigners gave it a derogatory name as "dark continent:".

Problems of communication: they could not cope with many languages that abound.

They faced intense heat which could lead to death of some of them.

Difficulties in tracing the origin of every tribe in Africa because there was no written record for them.

b) Historical reasons

Generation: most authors imbibe the habit of generalizing

The influence of other religion made it difficult to discover the original beliefs of the Africans.

Western education: educated sons and daughters migrated to big towns and cities for jobs, loosing contact with their homes and traditions as well The death of important people like priests and the old men who were custodians of knowledge affected the study of this religion.

The absence of any written records was a major setback to the study of ATR.

The religion is full of mysticism and it is often shrouded in secrecy.

Problem of founders and reformers as the propagate the religion.

5.5 Summary:

In this unit, we examined the source of ATR as well as problems confronting its study. Despite all these, the African man is still a strong practitioner of his religion. It is clear to his heart and is still practiced till date.

5.6 Reference

5.7 glossary: shrouded, liturgies, propagate, mysticism.

Module 2 God and man in African traditional religion and culture

Unit 1: The concept of God in African traditional religion beliefs

Contents

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning outcome
- 1.3 Definition of the concept God in ATR
- 1.4 Names of God across Africa
 - 1.4.1 names of God in west Africa
 - 1.4.2 names of God in south African groups
- 1.5 God and the deities
- 1.6 God and morality
- 1.7 the basis of African morality in relation to God
- 1.8 God, life and worship
- 1.9 God and the afterlife
- 1.10 Summary
- 1.11 Reference
- 1.12 Glossary

1.1 Introduction

Hello! In the unit, we will study the meaning of the concept God in African traditional beliefs with a view of knowing who is God as conceived by African peoples. We shall also reveal the names of God among the various African groups, and attributes of God and the deities, Gods morality, God, life and worship and lastly, God and the afterlife here in the learning outcome for the discussion.

1.2 Learning Outcome

At the end of this study, you should be able to;

- explain the concept of God in ATR
- mention the names of God among across Africa
- describe the attribute of God in ATR
- show how God is worshipped among African people

1.3 Definition of God in ATR

This simply means the ideas or notion that convey the nature of God. Many African tribal groups have personal names and praise names for the supreme being- God that are carved or weaved from images drawn from the environment.

- The concept of God is also expressed in proverbs, prayers, songs and daily speeches of many African people.
- Some have mental images of God as one in human shape or form who is capable of doing all things.
- Concerning his Nature, they believe he is helpful, merciful and kind and he is also limitless
- He is everywhere, never changes, and self-existent, have ears, eyes, can hear and see, at all times, and is omnipotent and immortal.

1.4 Names of God in Africa

Every African people have meaningful and special names which express their idea of the uniqueness of God and reflect the attributes they give to him. God is thought of as the Supreme Being, the one who is Pre-eminent in all things and this names varies from society to society.

1.4.1 Names of God in west Africa

- The Akan of Ghana call God 'Onyame': the supreme Being, God the creator of all things, the deity
- the Ene of Ghana call God Mawu: God
- the Mendel of Sierra Leone call God 'Mahawa': great
- the Yoruba call God 'Olorun': owner of loro of heaven
- The Bini, 'Osaobua': creator of the world, sky and earth and the life and death
- The Igbo 'Chineke': God who creates
- The Tiv 'Aondo': God the creator and the sustainer of all things
- The Idoma 'Owoicho': the supreme God
- The Etolo 'Mgbasho': the supreme being
- The Urhobo: 'Uku': the Great one
- The Hausa 'Ubangiji': God the creator

1.4.2 Names of God in central and eastern Africa

- in Congo tribes, the Ngombe call Akongo: the creator of the universe
- the Bagenda call him Katonda: the creator, protector and helper
- The Kikugu of Kenya call him Murungu: the Supreme Being who is believed to live on four sacred mountains.
- In Malawi he is called Mulungu: the creator, the God of storms and rain
- In Zambia and Tanzania he is called Leza: the cherished one
- In Tonga he is called Leza: creator of all
- The Basuto call God Molimo: light, protector and father.

1.4.3 Names of God in south African groups

The Zulu of South Africa call God, Unkulu: great, great one

The Ngoni call God Umkulungango: the great deviser

There are thousands of other names for God in Africa. From the above names, there is a clear picture of God as conceived by the African people and it also shows clearly that Africans are very familiar with the belief in God and how they formulated certain ideas about God.

1.4.4 Attributes of God in ATR beliefs

- God the creator: it means creation out of nothing

Two important corollaries of this idea

- i. It entails an absolute distinction between God and the creation
 - ii. The created realm is absolutely dependent upon God as its master and as the source of its continued existence
- God is immortal: he can never die and will continue to live forever
 - God is omnipotent: He is almighty, the all powerful
 - God is transcendent: No limit can be put to his power and excellence by any human imagination
 - God is omnipresent: God is everywhere
 - God is omniscient: he knows all things.

1.5 God and the deities

God created the world and infinitely transcends it. He created the deities and far above them in power and excellence. Yet, the deities have divine attributes and receive worship which shows recognition of their divine nature.

- The Ashanti of Ghana, believe in Supreme Being Onyankopon: who created all things, manifests his power through a pantheon of deities, also derive their powers from the Supreme Being, and they come from him and are part of him.
- The Nuer, Kwoth Nhial, the Supreme spirit, is the creator and mover of all things. Under God, there are lesser spirits which are classified into two groups
 - i. Kuth Whial”: the spirit of the sky or of above
 - ii. Kuth Piny: spirit of the earth who are the most powerful of all lesser spirits and are the children of God
- The Yoruba Supreme being, Olodumare, is the creator, Lord and father of the dieties, orisa is regarded as his deputies and messenger.
- For Igbos, Chukwu (God) is not a jealous God, in line with their ideas about kingship and mobility, the number and power of the subordinate deities enhances the importance and supremacy of Chukwu, so the Igbos affirm the unity and supremacy of God.

1.6 God and morality

- The origin of evil in the world has given us a clue to the relationship that exist between God and morality as seen in most folktales that have moralistic theme and values.
- God is not responsible for the presence of evil in the world. He is given credit for the good and the presence of evil is blamed on the responsible behavior of the creature and this brought death into the world.
- The existence of moral consciousness which illustrates conscience, moral values and the moral code in African traditions.
- The African moral code, though not written down but it is preserved in oral traditions and forms part of the education given to its members by the traditional society.

1.7 The basis of African morality in relation to God

- Africans believe that order and harmony in the world are under the control of God and are ruled by fixed laws.
- They equally believe that good deeds bring order and attract peace, happiness and prosperity.
- Evil creates disorder and brings suffering, misfortune and death.
- Traditional African morality emphasizes that the spiritual takes precedence over both social and personal dimensions of morality.

1.8 God, life and worship

- The types of worship given to God vary in different African societies and groups. Every African society has some form of worship of God, be it direct or indirect, private or public.
- Some have highly ancestral cult, others have elaborate pantheons and very organized cults of different dieties...
- In societies where only indirect public worship exist, individuals do approach God directly in their private devotion.
- African awareness in the presence and role of God in their lives as seen in greetings, exclamation, naming of children, oaths and invocation of is name; these are forms of worship.
- Many societies have organized public direct worship of God.
- Sacrificial offerings in traditional religion and directed towards the restoration of the ontological order.

1.9 God and afterlife

- African rational beliefs in the survival of the human person after death, in ancestors as the “living dead” and in reincarnation suggest their strong belief in the afterlife.
- There is no “this life”, “next life”, “eternal life” in African system as these terms are borrowed from Euro-Christian philosophy.

- African believe that life in one continuous stretch of existence that does not split up into “this life” and “the next life”.
- The concept of time is cyclic, not lineal, what happens after death is not the terminal, definitive stage of man’s life but a phase in continuing round of existence.
- There is no “heaven” or “hell” as a place of reward or punishment but the spirit land is not a place of eternal repose and happiness, it is rather a transit camp for those awaiting reincarnation to continue the life cycle.
- One’s ability to reincarnate depends entirely on the creator and one’s conduct during his earthly life.

4.0 Summary

You have studied the names of God across Africa and observed that there are thousands of names given by Africans to God to demonstrate their understanding and conception about him. He is believed to possess attributes which distinguish Him from other gods or dieties. God is also viewed by Africans as a vital force in the moral consciousness of man in the world, not just in Africa alone. The type of worship given to God differs in different African society and groups. We have established that as far as Africans are concerned, there is an afterlife, that what happens after death is not terminal, definitive stage of man’s life but only a phase in the continuing round of existence in the next world.

5.0 Reference

Glossary: reincarnate, pantheon, precedence.

Unit 2: God and the world in African traditional religion and culture

Contents

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Learning outcome
- 2.3 God and the world
- 2.4 Gods control and maintenance of the world
- 2.5 God and peace in the world in the world and in Nigeria
- 2.6 God and the problem of evil
- 2.7 God and dignity of labour
- 2.8 Importance of labour
- 2.9 God and social change
- 2.10 Agents of change
- 2.11 Summary
- 2.12 Reference
- 2.13 glossary

2.1 Introduction

Welcome student! In the last unit, we examined God and man in African traditional religion beliefs. We saw the different names and attributes of God among africans, the relationship that exist between God and dirties, God and morality, God and morality, God, life and worship and lastly, God and the afterlife. In this unit, you will study God and the world, Gods control and maintenance of the world so that peace will prevail. We will equally examine God and the problem of evil in ATR beliefs, God and dignity of labour, importance of labour and lastly, God and social change and angent of change. The learning outcome for the unit are;

2.2 Learning Outcome

- Know how God controls and maintains the world.
- Explain how God created the world
- Describe the social changes that have taken place in the world
- Explain why there is evil in the world

2.3 God and the world

God is the creator of all things

A subordinate being is involved in the process of creation, the divinities

2.4 Gods control and maintenance of the world

God is believed to be the creator, controller and the maintenance of the world. He is in charge of the affairs of the world. He also sustains, keeps and upholds the things He has created.

God is the ultimate fountain, head of all power and authority, of all sanctions for orderly relations between man.

He is the giver and the sustainer of life

The control and maintenance of the world of God is also expressed in proverbs, myths, songs, and names of God in African societies

2.5 God and peace in the world and in Nigeria

The three religious practices in Nigeria are God-centered and non-sonit behoves on all of us to believe and see God as our creator and sustainer, irrespective of different names He is known for/as the giver of love to us all His creature, so we should come together as one towards the achievement of peace and unity and killings in the name of religion as if God is different.

Adherents of different religious groups in the world should use religion as a means of strengthening understanding and bringing about perfect peace in our large society and thus establishing Gods kingdom here on earth.

All religions must provide a stable, universal foundation of values upon which government can build time peace and harmony and that all religious leaders and scholars must accept to play the role of bringing about peace.

2.6 God and the problem of evil in African religious beliefs

God did not create what is evil nor does he do them (any evil whatsoever). God is always in the right and cannot be charged with an offence, cannot be accused and cannot be questioned. God created the knowledge of good and evil. This, a kind of evil in every person and allowed him to choose his way without forcing or forbidden his will on him.

God does not and cannot commit evil against his creation. There is an evil divinity, which God created good but later on turned against him and began to do evil. This, a kind of duel exist between good and evil forces of the world.

The evil is not necessarily caused but through man himself at from his fellow men in the society as in the case of occultic-practicing people who could bring evil to man by changing envious attitude of such a man through the misbehavior of such a man to them. Or,

It is an indisputable fact that God is the ultimate being behind everything that occurs in the world, as nothing can take place without his knowledge. Despite this, God does not command nor wish human being to cause evil to themselves. Both good and evil are created by God.

2.7 God and dignity of labour

The principle of labour is the nature of africans to work for his goodness and the society at large and africans abhorred laziness. God himself instituted labour or work at creation. He cherished work and yardwork. He as the creator is continually at work due to His vast responsibility of caring for his creatures as he is the giver and man perpetually depends on how giving.

Dignity of labour connotes practical evidence of abundant life through labour or work in animals, children and wealth in crops.

2.8 Importance of labour

Labour creates fellowship through co-operation on the job through sharing the result of labour. It makes possible the joy of rest and relaxation, recreation and festivity. This can be seen in communal labour in African villages which expresses the spirit of partnership.

Through labour, we serve others. There will be a vaccine if there is no work, hence the services attached to such work will be missing from the community.

Labour also develops man's capabilities. He practices charity by serving his fellow men, this in a sense participates in the creative work of God.

Labour is a key source of identity. Self respect and social status. It provides security, predictable and increasing rewards for efforts.

It is also the mark of civilization and culture which is the end product of development.

2.9 God and social change

Within any giving society, there is usually an alteration of direction, implementation of plans, complexity, roles and functions, to a limited or greater extent. It is referred to as development, progress, social change or evolutions.

2.10 Agents of change (positive effects)

The influence of colonial masters seriously affected the whole of the african culture, leading gradually to adaptation and change; this the white man is an agent of change in Africa.

In educational sector: more tertiary institution are being established to cater for the teeming applicants and education provides the citizens the basic background to understand government policies and it's social changes.

In the health sector: this has brought social change that has benefited the people in towns, cities and also in villages.

In transportation sector: people can now travel faster and easier using aeroplanes, buses, lorries etc. And now farmers can carry their produce to markets easily using heavy machines like truck, wheel barrows etc.

In communication sector: the introduction and use of mobile phones, the internet system, radios and television.

Negative effects

As seen in politics, economic and even religious realm. Changes such as corruption, abuse of power, cultism, bad governance, immoral dressing, human trafficking etc. Are found among Africans people this, have reduced the high position God had in the lives of the Africans.

2.11 Summary

God is the creator, moulder, maker, excavator of the universe. He involved the devinities who helped him to complete the process of creation. African society recognizes God and worships him and God is seen as the source of peace in the world. Both goodness and evil are created by God. God does not and cannot commit evil against his creation. On dignity of labour, we have stablished that God instituted labour or work at creation and this spurs africans to abhor laziness. Lastly, we discussed both positive and negative social changes on the african continent as a result of the coming of the white man which include education, health, communication, bad governance, immoral dressing.

2.12 Reference

2.13 glossary: abhorred, behoves, spurs.

Unit 3: Revelation in ATR

Contents

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Learning outcome
- 3.3 The concept of revelation
- 3.4 Agency of revelation
- 3.5 The idea of revelation in human history
- 3.6 God, the spirit and traditional african medicine
 - 3.6.1 God and healing in ATR
- 3.7 Summary
- 3.8 Reference
- 3.9 glossary

3.1 Introduction

Hello wonderful student, you are welcome to this unit. In unit 2, you have studied that God is the creator of the whole universe, how he delegates his authority to his divinities and how he instituted labour at creation. In this unit, you will learn what revelation is/means, the origin and agency of revelation. We will also examine the idea of revelation in human history.

3.2 Learning Outcome

By the end of this unit, you are expected to

- Explain the meaning of revelation
- Identify the media of revelation
- Give some examples of revelation among your own people.

3.3 The concept of revelation

Revelation is an act of God and through the condition in the environment, divine messages can be received.

Africans believe that their religion is a revealed religion which came to existence as a result of man's experience within his physical environment. It appeared to our forefathers as they sought answers to the mysteries surrounding the creation of the universe. They came to a conclusion that they must be a supreme power i.e creator, a living being who ordered, constructed and manifested the universe. Also, the traditional religion under went changes because of people's educational and spiritual growth.

3.4 The Agencies of Revelation

Nature: God revealed himself through the works of nature ie through hills, valleys etc.

Created order: God manifests Himself through the created order. Man becomes aware of the sacred because it manifests itself shows itself, as something wholly profane. The experience of rain, sun, light, and darkness indicates manifestation of God.

The course of human history: God manifests Himself in the course of human history, man has had encounter with God through dreams and visions. They have experienced protection and deliverance in the tribal or racial wars which has been attributed to divine province.

Man's inner links with God God created man and he put essence of life in him which makes human a living being.

3.5 The idea of revelation in human history

Africans believe that God is the creator, he created and revealed himself to man, which means that there is a God that reveals himself and there is a mind that receives the revelation - God's self discourse. The idea of revelation in human history is The creator: the experience of the African people about the works and nature, the sun, light, moon, darkness, mountains, rocks, the rainy season, the dry seasons gives the people the consciousness of an order which is superior and divine in nature. Also, the awareness of the divine providence, good harvest, plenty of food, for human beings and animals, procreation, growth and development arouse in man. The awareness of a superior and unique power manifested in the universe.

Man's inner link with God: God created man and put in him the essence of life which makes him a living being. Therefore, the spirit of man is in communion with God. God requires a human mind to communicate, without it, revelation of God to man would not be complete and would become meaningless.

The course of human history: historic evens reveal the purpose of God for man but it is left for man to interpret the will of God. In the course of human history, man had encounter with God through dreams and visions. People have claimed to have communion with the supreme being and received instructions to do one thing or the other.

3.6.1 God and the healing in ATR

The practice and role of God and other dirties have been repositioned in traditional medicine and healing. The great unprecedented widespread

praise of healing in ATT is closely tied to certain indigenous cosmological underpinnings. The spiritual healers calls on their supreme deity who operates through tutelary divinity or spirits in traditional medicine and healing.

3.6 God, the spirit world and traditional African medicine

African traditional medicine is the medicine of the indigenous people. The African medicine is an acceptable medicine among the people because there are some ailments that have their cure in the hands of the practitioners of African traditional medicine alone. The success is attributed to the roles played by God and the spirit realm without which African indigenous medicine will become inefficacious.

3.7 Summary

Africans believe that God is the creator, he created and revealed himself to man through dreams and visions which means that there is a God that reveals himself and there is a mind that receives the revelation. We also discussed that African medicine has some supernatural qualities, these supernatural qualities are only traceable to the spiritual realm.

3.8 Reference

3.9 glossary: cosmological, underpinnings, unprecedented, tutelary, inefficacious.

Unit 4: Ancestral veneration in ATR

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- 4.1 Introduction
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- 4.3 Concept of ancestral veneration
- 4.4 Do Africans worship or venerate their ancestors?
- 4.5 Qualifications to be venerated as an ancestor
- 4.6 Ways by which Africans venerate ancestors
- 4.7 Roles of ancestors among the African people
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- 4.10 Reference
- 4.11 Glossary

4.1 Introduction

Hello student! In this unit, we will be examining the concept, ancestral veneration. You will also examine whether Africans do worship or venerate their ancestors. We shall examine the qualifications to be venerated as an ancestor. Ways by which Africans venerate ancestors. The role of ancestors among the African people and lastly a case study of ancestral veneration among the Benue people of Nigeria.

4.2 Learning Outcome

At the end of this unit, you shall be able to:

- Explain the concept of veneration and ancestral veneration
- List qualities of veneration for ancestors
- Ways of venerating ancestors in ATR
- Explain how ancestors can be venerated in any african community

4.3 Concept of Ancestral Veneration

Ancestral veneration is a kind of respect given to e ancestor in African religion. This religious beliefs is what others call "cut off the ancestors" and the form of worship as "ancestor worship" or "veneration". In ATR, ancestral worship does not express the ancestral rites and so suggestions were made to use communication with ancestors as it induces instruments between God and man and elderly members of the family who are venerated and not worshipped.

4.4 Do Africans worship or venerate their ancestors

Ancestors are intermediaries between God and man and elderly members of the family and are venerated as such not worshipped.

Africans offer libations to the ancestors before eating any food or sometimes libation are offered at the tomb of the ancestors or at a certain sacred place for blessing.

Prayers, sacrifices and libations are offered if there is any misfortune or evil, or punishment from the ancestors as means of atonement to the ancestors.

4.5 Qualifications to be venerated as an ancestor

An ancestor is one who has attained the highest spiritual status regarded by African traditional religion through some requisite qualifications. In the general African belief, An ancestor is; one who lived to a good ripe old age before death. One who does a good death (usually death not linked with suicide, disease like smallpox, leprosy, epilepsy, accident, drowning, HIV/AIDS or sticker by thunder and lightening) etc. One who receives proper burial and burial rites.

4.6 Ways by which Africans venerate ancestors

Offering libation to the ancestors before eating food and even drinking of palm wine or any other alcoholic drink.

Sometimes libation are offered at the tomb or at certain sacred places for blessings.

At death the supreme being will judge the character of the dead if it is a good one, he will be among the ancestral spirit.

It is the African belief that such veneration is important because if there is any breakage in the relationship, there would be trouble for everyone

4.7 The roles of ancestors among the African people

Africans function as the guardians of the family traditions and life. They are believed to be the guardian angels who show love and protect their people from danger.

They show love and interest in the members of the family. Hence they are consulted when major family or societal discussion is to be taken.

They are called upon when the community is afflicted with calamity and epidemic. In this case, sacrifices are made and rites are performed to them to put an end to the disaster that has befallen the people. They are approached through divination when there is crop failure or poor harvest.

When progress is not being made or when people feel that they have bad luck in life, the ancestors are contacted. In this case sacrifices could be prescribed for the affected person to go and venerate his ancestors.

Ancestors can show displeasure thereby bringing calamity on people.

This makes people to venerate them and offer sacrifices to them in order to please and appease them.

In one of war and other emergencies, African people look on to their ancestors to deliver them from the enemy and to fight for them and recover the land or property.

The ancestral spirit may also serve as intermediaries between man and the supreme being.

As elders, the ancestors serve as the owners of the land, fertilizing the earth and cursing the food to grow.

The living -dead communicate with the living by revelation, dreams, calamity, ecstasy and trance, possession prophecy and divination.

4.8 A case study of ancestral veneration among Benue people

4.9 Summary

Africans generally venerate their ancestors. They are intermediaries between man and the supreme being. Those who die a good death (attain old age without disease or plague) will be admitted into the spiritual world as ancestors. Ancestors play vital roles for the families. They are guardians of tradition and life and libation are offered as well.

4.10 Reference

4.11 glossary: libation, requisite, ecstasy.

Module 3

Unit 1: The relationship between ATR and culture

Contents

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning outcome
- 1.3 Definition of culture
- 1.4 Components of culture
- 1.5 Definition of ATR
- 1.6 The relationship between religion and culture
- 1.7 The role of culture in national development
- 1.8 Culture and moral value
- 1.9 Culture and the rights of women in ATR
- 1.10 The impact of western culture on ATR and culture
- 1.11 Summary
- 1.12 Reference
- 1.13 Glossary

1.1 Introduction

Welcome student to this great and exciting unit. We will be studying on culture and religion, its definition, components, relationship between religion and culture etc. Can we still remember what culture is from our previous unit? Yes you can! Culture is simply the way a group of people live. It points to where a person is from and explains why he behaves the way he does. Culture evolves as a people develop from one stage to another. Religion pays attention on issues about the meaning, importance and purpose of the supernatural. Culture and religion are related and religion itself evolves from people's culture. This explains why Christianity owes its origin to the culture of western Europe. Islam from Arabian culture and ATR from African culture. Let's examine our learning outcome in this unit.

1.2 Learning Outcome:

At the end of the unit, you are expected to;

- Define the concept of culture and ATR
- Establish the relationship between religion and culture

1.3 Definition of culture

Culture refers to the total way of life of a group of people which includes their values, their norms, skills and beliefs systems.

Culture is also part of environment created by man as man uses his idea, innovation, invention and creativeness through hardwork to make achievement in life.

1.4 Components of Culture

Can be classified into material and non material culture.

Material culture: includes all object, physical qualities in ones personality, working tools or implements which have been variously designed by people for their use in the day today running of their community life. Eg hoes, drums, charms, calabashes etc.

Non material culture: they are not physical but are abstract and not visible which form part of a people's way of life. Non material ls are grouped into;

Normative aspect or dimension consist of the standard or the accepted way of doing things in the community.

Cognitive aspect involves the conviction of things that are true such as beliefs, knowledge, ideas, values, attitudes that are commonly found among a particular group of people.

1.5 Definition of ATR

This is a religion of the African people which had been in existence before Islam and Christianity. ATR is known as African religion. It is simply a set of beliefs and worship patterns practiced by various African societies as a response to the supreme being as manifested in their environment and experience. It's purpose is to be in harmony with the supreme being, the deities, the spirits, the ancestors and the environment. Their constant interaction creates harmonious relationship that facilitates peace and happiness in their existence.

1.6 The relationship religion and culture

Religion is not just essential or important to culture but it is necessary or forms on integral part and parcel of culture because it performs the function of bringing about completeness as is seen through oath taking as a means of settling disputes.

Culture may not be complete without religion because it does not only keep alive cultural values to continue in existence but also serves as an agent by providing orders and declaring officially what the community

forbids as a helping measure in the maintenance of social relations of members of particular community.

Religion and culture are related hence religion is the core element in culture as seen in Islam whose origin is Arabia and is built on the culture of the Arabians, Christianity built on the culture of the western Europe and African religion is embedded and enshrined in the culture of the Africans.

1.7 The role of culture in national development

It evaluates man's improvement or advancement in technology and in ideas that are abstract and non visible.

Discipline which encourages orderliness by adherence to set regulations promotes productivity that gingers development.

As faithfulness enhances transparency and accountability, it promotes religious use of a nation resources which fastens the pace of development of the society.

Respect- discipline entails respect to God, laws of the land, and constituted authorities result in total promotion of social order that transforms the economy and encourages political unity for a steady development.

Culture brings order among members in the community and makes people to stick together for a common goal without which national development cannot be actualized.

1.8 Culture and moral values

In ATR, moral values are seen in its ethical standards which guard the way people behave in society. This moral sense in Africa has over the years produced customs, traditions, taboos, laws that are practices and believed to have come from God in the beginning of the world. Unchallenging authority of the morals is supported by the living dead and spirits who keep watch to make sure people observe the laws by rewarding the obedient ones and punishing the offenders. The laws were God given and therefore form the basis of cultural values. People run away from sin because of the fear of being punished by God himself or a deity. Therefore, stealing, adultery or incest were abhorred but common ones are greeting of elders, honesty, faithfulness and a pursuit of good name on family and tribal level.

1.9 Culture and the rights of women in ATR

A girl child born on African soil suffers cultural inhibitions that touch her life until death. In some societies, a girl or woman is only seen not heard. Some infringement upon her life include

Education: girls are deprived education (formal) because some traditions in Africa regard them as visitors who have no share of inheritance in their father's house.

Ray forced marriage are prepared by parents who give their daughters to the rich and influential men.

Inheritance: a girl child in most African societies has no share in the father's properties both as a spinster or as married woman.

Taboos: in some culture, girls are not allowed to see in the grave of even a man they were in courtship with talk more of a brother or sister as that could offend the Sivende, a deity (a blood related illness) which will prevent her effective delivery when pregnant.

They do not contribute to the upkeep of the family in the home regardless of their age.

Sexual discipline: women are expected to be obedient and submissive to men in sexual and other matters, while men have right to extra marital affairs.

Male child syndrome: this is the preference of male children to female. Lack of male children have displaced women in families and some are ready to do anything to have a male child.

The plight of widows: widows in Africa undergo several humiliation and bad treatment after the death of their husbands. They are made to sit on the floor mourning for many days, denied sleep etc.

1.10 The impact of western culture on ATR and culture

Politically, the traditional political institutions that existed were either suppressed or destroyed by their colonial masters.

Culturally: the african tradition had a background which they operated freely that are changed at the detriment of it's values eg traditional regulations and taboos are no longer seriously observed.

Western medicine and technology also comes through the activities of the missionaries.

Introduction of new laws and economic systems.

Urbanization which succeed rural dwelling.

In the religious realm, Christianity and Islam in varied ATR have no common ties. a division now exist between the religious and the secular which was never found in traditional life.

1.11 Summary

You have learnt that religion evolves out of a culture and it is the core element in culture - as opposed to the claim by some scholars that they are not related. Towards national development, we emphasis that cultural and religious values encourages orderliness by strict adherence to regulations and laws that promote productivity which is an instrument of national development. The fundamentals of culture, economy, religion, politics and value system is being distorted or replaced by western value systems and structures.

1.12 reference

1.13 glossary: embedded, infringement.

Unit 2: Rites of passage in ATR

Contents

- 2.1 Introduction
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- 2.3 Definition of rites
- 2.4 Definition of rituals
- 2.5 The significance of rites of passage in ATR
- 2.6 Some rites of passage in ATR and culture
 - 2.6.1 Pregnancy rites
 - 2.6.2 Birth rites
 - 2.6.3 Naming ceremonies
 - 2.6.4 Puberty rites
 - 2.6.5 Marriage rites
 - 2.6.6 Purification rites
 - 2.6.7 Initiation rites
 - 2.6.8 Girls puberty rites
 - 2.6.9 Funeral rites
- 2.7 summary
- 2.8 reference
- 2.9 glossary

2.1 Introduction

In this unit, we shall be discussing the rites of passage in ATR. In Africa, man is understood in relation to the group which he belongs. His biological growth exposes him to changes in his physical appearance and social responsibilities. The movement from one state of being to the other is celebrated with a set of rituals known as rites of passage. Some of this rites include pregnancy, birth, puberty, naming ceremony etc.

We will examine the learning outcome for the unit.

2.2 Learning Outcome

At the end of this unit, you should be able to

- Define the concept rites of passage
- identify the rites of passage in ATR
- State the significance of the rites of passage in ATR

2.3 Definition of rites

A rite is a ceremony carried out by a particular group of persons commonly used to accomplish a religious purpose.

2.4 Definition of rituals

A ritual is a pattern of behavior of an individual or group of individuals. Religiously, rituals are symbolic actions that convey very powerful expression of a religious belief and faith

2.5 Rites of passage in ATR

It is a set forms of performing, religious activities or ceremonies. They are actions that are performed at particular times for particular purposes which are meant to celebrate or prepare one to move from one stage of life to the other.

Ceremonies in this rites can be grouped into

- a) The rites of separation: shows that one no longer belongs to the particular phase in which he or she was. And it is fully expressed in death.
- b) Transition stage: shows that one has left his former group or status but is not yet received into a new one and is between the two.
- c) Incorporation rites: symbolically expresses that one has obtained the status he was aspiring for. Prominently in marriages. However, rites of passage should not be confused with life crises. Life crises rituals celebrate the major turning points in the life of an individual such as birth, puberty etc.

2.6 Some rites of passage in ATR

2.6.1 Pregnancy rites

- Pregnancy in some African societies, is regarded as the seal of any given marriage. It is a symbol of complex integration into the husband's family and kinsmen circle. The pregnant woman for her protect and the unborn baby is to observe a lot of taboos ranging from sexual relationship with the husband, dietary, social, religion prohibitions. In some cultures, she is forbidden from looking into the grave, crossing a dead dog this implies that a violation of traditional norms and values is capable of resulting to disease and miscarriage in women.

2.6.2 Birth rites

The birth of a child is regarded as an important event in the life of the Africans. Barrenness is not entertained as it discontinues the biological or family line by preventing the ancestors from reincarnating and thus causes personal immorality when the victim dies. As a result, women fights it by consulting oracles. The idea and the way birth rites are handled varies from society to society.

2.6.3 Naming ceremony

The naming of a child varies in form as well as the materials for naming from one community to the other. Some community shaves the child as a sign of purification, separation and newness and prayers are made for long life and prosperity. The name is then announced loudly to the gathering, dancing and feasting follows.

2.6.4 Puberty rites

After the ceremonies of the naming rites, comes the puberty rites. Boys are circumcised (cutting of the fore skin from the penis). Boys and girls are exposed in different locations the social responsibilities accruing to each other by the elderly men and women in the society. Puberty therefore, becomes a good ground for training and learning, sex education and personal hygiene as preparatory knowledge into adulthood.

2.6.5 Marriage rites

In most societies, marriage is viewed as a social agreement that seeks to unite a man to a woman and their families. Enquires are made to know the biological relationship of the two families, their moral and health conditions, their social and religious balance. If not satisfied with their findings, the marriage is discounted.

2.6.6 Purification rites

After child birth ceremony starts with seclusion of the mother and the new child for some time. When the period elapses, comes the purification rites accompanied by feasting. In some communities, the purification involves a boy, a girl and the senior sister to the woman that prays for pleasant things to come to the mother and the child and against evil spirit. After the ceremony, the woman is then free to move out to her but freely in the community and the husband is free to buy her ornaments and other gifts as he may wish.

2.6.7 Initiation rites

- Initiation symbolizes entering into a solemn agreement or covenant by shielding of blood.
- Initiation is also an indication that a person is now passing from childhood to adulthood as in the case of cutting of flesh. He is not regarded as an adult and can be given responsibility at home and in the community and he equally enjoys all the privileges of the community.
- Initiation so prepares the young ones for marriage. The period of confinement prepares them and are thought the history of their people, the beliefs, culture or tradition, secrets of marriage and

how to raise and maintain a family, for one cannot marry without being initiated.

- Initiation is a bridge serving youthfulness and adulthood. It identifies him as a member of the group and unites him with the departed members.

2.6.8 Girls puberty rites

The rite announces that the assembled girls will soon join the married group. During this time, they are separated from the rest of the community in a secret place. They teach them their roles as women, they learn dances, songs, other traditional and cultural qualities.

2.6.9 Funeral rites

Africans see death as a passage or transitional movement of an individual into a new stage of life in the spirit world not as an end of life. Burial is accompanied by social rituals that lead them to the ancestral land for those that died a natural and good death there are activities that portray death as a rite of passage.

- i. Announcement/ heralding: a bereaved man or woman confronts shock because of the loss of a dear one. It involves emotion like outburst of crying aloud, wailing and lamenting and these announce the death and bring the surrounding relatives to the spot. But in the case of bad death like entangled with an idol, heinous crime, it is considered a curse and people are not expected to cry aloud.
- ii. Special notification: if a man's wife dies, he sends his brothers or their children to notify the middleman in their marriage who will notify the parents of the deceased. For a husband, the message is sent to the eldest man of the family, his matrilineal home to his in-laws and others.
- iii. Burial: this is putting the corpse into the grave and covering it up with earth
- iv. Funeral ceremony: this ceremony is making the deceased gradually settle down in the ancestral land. The dressing up of the corpse indicates rites of incorporation, while the wailing symbolizes his death and thus his separation, the lying in state and other activities are transitional phases.

Unit 3: Proverbs in African religious beliefs

Contents

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Learning outcome
- 3.3 Definition of proverbs
- 3.4 The role of proverbs in African religion-cultural beliefs
- 3.5 Religious beliefs expressed in proverbs
- 3.6 Some proverbs and their meanings
- 3.7 Summary
- 3.8 References
- 3.9 glossary

3.1 Introduction

Hello students! From the previous unit, we studied the rites of passage in ATR. In this unit you will be discussing on proverbs in African traditional religion as the religion has no written source. Before we go further in this discussion, let us state our learning outcome for this unit.

3.2 Learning Outcome

At the end of this unit, you should be able to

- Explain what proverbs and wise sayings are
- The role of proverbs in ATR and culture
- Mention some proverbs and wise sayings from some African societies.

3.3 Definition of proverbs

In everyday life of the Africans, their utterances contain a lot of proverbs which reveal a lot of their beliefs particularly about God. They are sayings that are not long but are commonly used in everyday life in conveying a statement of fact that is known by many and accepted by God. They are used skillfully at the right time for the right purpose.

3.4 The role of proverbs in African religion and cultural beliefs

- Proverbs provides us with a rich source of African wisdom.
- It is an Expression of the knowledge of God- they reveal God to us, his attributes and works.
- It also indirectly explains the mischievous activities of evil doers as drivers of human misfortune and unhappiness.

3.5 Religious beliefs expressed in proverbs

- In Tiv "Aondo Nookon oo iyol" meaning the tree also bath because of rainfall from God. This means that the Tiv acknowledge Aondo (God) as the source and sustainer of all things

- In Igbo "ifeanyi Chukwu" meaning nothing is impossible to God, it shows the all-powerful nature of God (omnipotent).
- The Akan of Ghana says "if you want to tell it to God tell it to the wind" meaning that God is everywhere omnipresence).
- In Yoruba "an enemy may beat the drum of someone's downfall but God will not let it sound" shows the defense of God for the defenseless.
- Among the Kalabari, if a spirit (idol) becomes too troublesome it will be shown by the tree from which it was carved, meaning if the worship of any spirit is not bringing out or producing good result, it should be abandoned.
- Earthly debts should be paid here on earth" meaning nobody is going unpunished for the evil he has committed.

3.6 Some proverbs and their meanings

- In Igbo "Ngu Chukwu Gbunyeru onye ka oji ekole ife" meaning any man that is successful in an endeavor has been given a hook by God and vice versa
- "Ehin Enweghi odu chi ya na achim ya ejiji" means, God drives away flies for a tailless cow meaning one who is defenseless is solved by God; God cares for those who are powerless and neglected, He is the hope of the hopeless.
- In Tiv "wan ka nana nyia u ambi sha kpa u tende u te kera ga" means when a child defecates on your lap, you do not amputate your leg meaning when one discovers he or she has done something wrong and he is asking for forgiveness.
- Again "mba tombo iyo sha mnyam ma I" meaning, a snake is handled based on its sleep meaning one who is extremely wicked that does not respect or consider others, the reaction of people over such a person demise which could either be the death of his child, mother or any other relative depends very much on how one relates to people and one's character meaning your destiny lies in your hand.

3.7 Summary

ATR has absence of documented sources; however, a vast form of information is presented in oral traditions like myths, legends, norms, songs, symbols, prayers, proverbs and wise sayings. Proverbs and wise sayings express African beliefs in God and they also give a clue to understanding of the significance of such beliefs. They are one of the most reliable forms of oral tradition in which authentic beliefs of people living in preliterate societies are preserved for generation yet unborn.

3.8 Reference

3.9 Glossary: preliterate, utterances.

Unit 4: Totems and Taboos in African Traditional Religion and culture

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcome
- 1.3 Definition of the term totem
- 1.4 Definition of Taboo
- 1.5 The relationship between totems and taboos in African Traditional beliefs
- 1.6 Classification of Taboos
 - 1.6.1 Religious taboos
 - 1.6.2 Cultural taboos
 - 1.6.3 Sex taboos
 - 1.6.4 Death taboos
 - 1.6.5 Food taboos
 - 1.6.6 Royal taboos
 - 1.6.7 Taboos for pregnant women
 - 1.6.8 Taboos for mothers
- 1.7 The role of taboos in African religion and culture
- 1.8 Taboos as moral laws
- 1.9 Significance of taboos in African religion and culture
- 1.10 The impact of change on totems and taboos in African religion and culture
- 1.11 Summary
- 1.12 Reference
- 1.13 Glossary

4.1 Introduction

In the previous unit, you learnt about proverbs in Africa religious beliefs. It is through those proverbs and wise sayings that Africans belief in God are expressed. In this unit, you will be studying totems and taboos as they relate to ATR and culture. Before we move further, let us state our learning outcome for this unit

4.2 Learning Outcome

By the end of this unit, you should be able to;

- Define totem and taboo
- Explain the relationship between totems and taboos in African traditional religious beliefs.
- Discuss the classification of taboos
- Explain the role of taboos in African religion and culture
- Understand the significance of taboos in African religion and culture

- Discuss the impact of change on totems and taboos

4.3 Definition of Totem

Totem is a physical object having ritual significance of a symbolic representation of such an object, especially a type of animal plant or natural structure representing a clan in certain cultures such as those of North American Indians.

4.4 Definition of Taboos

Taboos are cultural and religious phenomena which help in maintaining order, cohesion and integration in Traditional African religion. They are obeyed because apart from being sanctioned by God and the deities, they are guarded by the society as well.

4.5 Relationship between totems and taboos in African traditional religious beliefs

Totemism involves the mystical and ritual relationship between clan of species of animals or plants and a social group. Such relationship includes taboos, projected kinship and so on.

Taboo is one of the instruments of social control in the society, for maintaining shared values moral standards and moral beliefs which from the collective conscience in Traditional societies. taboos are an aspect of Totemism which brings social order, social control, social solidarity or cooperation in a society/clan.

Each class had a totem, usually an animal or plant. The totem is a sacred symbol.

4.6 Classification of Taboos

Since the deities are the custodians of morality in Traditional societies, taboos are obeyed. Some of the taboos are as follows:

4.6.1 Religious Taboos

Palm kernel oil is a taboo to Esu, in Yoruba. It must not be taken near his shrine to avoid the wrath of Esu - Iaalu.

No worshipper of Oya, in Yoruba, on finer divinity must eat yam meat to avoid death.

4.6.2 Cultural Taboo

Cultural taboos emanate from particular peoples' world view which through a divinity or deity imposes prohibition to regulate life according to the peoples' beliefs and world view. Some of these taboos regulate how

we eat, what pregnant women should not do, prohibition about sex and so on.

4.6.3 Sex Taboos in Tiv. It is a taboo to;

1. Have sex with a menstruating woman
2. Have sex with a close relative (incest)
3. In Yoruba sexual intercourse immediately before worship is a taboo for both priest and worshippers.
4. It is a taboo for a pregnant woman to have sex with another man apart from her husband, the child will be born dumb until the woman confesses her sins and proper cleansing rituals takes place.

4.6.4 Death taboos among the Tiv

1. A woman cannot see a grave while it is being prepared until the person is buried
2. A woman is not to see a corpse on its way to burial
3. Among the Igbo; it is prohibited
4. To bury a woman with an unborn child in her womb
5. To mourn those who die of infectious diseases especially small pox, leprosy or elephantiasis of the scrotum.

4.6.5 Food Taboos

These are prohibitions that regulates our eating and eating habits.
 To eat horses: certain part of the internal chest organs may cause madness
 To eat "edu" (civet cats) among the Nri people and Ewi (bush rat) among the Nnewi people. Other Igbo towns have their own animal prohibited.

4.6.6 Royal Taboos

These are prohibitions that surround the conduct of social etiquette of the royalty, that is, the long or queen, prince or princess and the likes.
 Kings in your land must not eat publicly because they are second in command to the 'orisas'
 It is a taboo for a king to see or touch a corpse, such a king becomes defiled until cleaning is ritually done.

4.6.7 Taboos for Pregnant Women

A pregnant woman is forbidden to walk in the hot sun or at night to avoid having her baby exchanged with an evil spirit.
 It is a taboo for pregnant women to eat snails to avoid giving birth to children who spit all the time.

4.6.8 Taboos for mother's

1. It is a taboo for a mother to curse her child touching her breast and or private part because such a curse is irrevocable even by the mother herself.
2. It is a taboo to abuse, ridicule or beat one's mother, the child can never prosper.

4.7 The role of taboos in ATR and culture

1. They are religious and cultural tools for social conscience
2. Taboos strengthen the values and moral beliefs which form the basis of human life
3. They have the greater power to direct human actions and sayings.
4. They help in maintaining law and order in Traditional African societies

4.8 Taboos as moral laws

Taboos helping maintaining law and order in Traditional African societies. It is a societal law in Traditional African society because they perform the function of the constitution in today's society. Any violation of the divine laws would automatically affect the society as a whole and the wrath of God will befall the whole society.

A system of taboos and sanctions held in honor of the ancestors, divinities and spirits is used in the African societies to enforce morality because they are agents of morality in African traditional societies and it lays a great emphasis on social conduct.

4.9 Significance of taboos in ATR and Culture

Taboos serve as not laws to guide the steps of man. It has been handed down from generation, in different African societies orally and through practice.

4.10 The impact of change on totems and taboos in ATR and culture

At present, taboos and totems do not have a strong hold in African societies due to the;

Advent/belief in Christianity
Impact of western civilization
Education
Modernity and
Urbanization

4.11 Summary

Totems are animals which are seen as sacred in ATR and taboos are moral laws which regulate the behavior of people in Traditional african societies. You can equally identify some taboos in your community

4.12 Reference

4.13 Possible answers to self-assessment exercises

4.13 Glossary:

Emanate

Clan

Elephantiasis

Unit 5: Symbols in African Traditional Religion and Culture

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 - 5.5.2 Ritual symbols
 - 5.5.3 Number symbolism
 - 5.5.4 Royal symbols
 - 5.5.5 Ancestral symbols
 - 5.5.6 Cultural symbols
- 5.6 The role of symbols in African Traditional Religion and Culture
- 5.7 Significance of symbols in African Religious Beliefs
- 5.8 Summary
- 5.9 Reference
- 5.10 Glossary

5.1 Introduction

Hello student! In this unit, you will learn the definition of symbols, the differences between signs and symbols, the role and significance of symbols in ATR and culture. Let us examine the learning outcome for this course

5.2 Learning outcome

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- define symbols in ATR and culture
- Distinguish between symbols and signs in ATR and culture
- Discuss the type of symbols in ATR and culture
- Discuss the role of symbols in ATR and culture
- Discuss the significance of symbols in ATR

5.3 Definition of symbols

A symbol is something, an idea, a sign, a ritual or a behavioral pattern that stands an outer representation of an inner essence or experience of the unconscious

5.4 Distinction between symbols and signs

1. Symbols direct our manner of thinking about an object, while signs merely points to something.

2. Symbols is not created arbitrary in the way that a sign can be.
3. Symbolic language attempts to reach out to grasp that what ch is not immediately known, whereae, sign language expresses man's understanding of the nature of things.
4. Symbols attempt to get beyond the emperical meaning and value, whereas, signs are concerned in dealing with the observable and measurable aspect of human experience.
5. Symbols is an abbreviation of something that is relatively unknown, the sign is an abbreviation of that which is relatively known.

5.5 Types of symbols in ATR and culture

5.5.1 Animal symbolism

1. The Langi and They consider buffalo and lion to symbolize God's manifestation in His immanent aspect.
2. The Hindu also respect and venerate cows.
3. The Vugusu and Sidamo consider snake to symbolize immorality while some societies associate snake with the living-dead.
4. Among the Akan and Ashanti, the spider symbolizes wisdom

5.5.2 Ritual symbols

Ritual symbols result from the spiritual expenence of an emotion and it is used to express the experience or a concept that is associated with it. Ritualistic symbols are the most valuable means for passing on the culture of a people from one generation to the other. Rituals involves mystical exercises such as divination, symbols and the devotee in deep meditation and concentration.

5.5.3 Number symbolism

It is the use of number to express religious facts and beliefs. It is also known as numerology. In some societies, number symbolism differs as what is sacred here maybe a taboo to some others. In some, even numbers symbolizes good life or peace, and odd numbers symbolizes death.

5.5.4 Royal symbols

These are symbols used in connection with the ruler or king or chief of a community or society. Some of the symbols include keeping of a sacred fore in the palace which symbolizes the nctum's health

5.5.5 Ancestral symbols

Respect of elders is often exploited and used a s a symbol of representatives and authority. In most traditional African societies, the

elders of a community are regarded as the representative of the ancestors and are acknowledged as spirit guardians of the community.

5.5.6 Cultural symbols

Is something which expresses or stands for people's belief, identities, traits, moral values, ethical ideals, virtues, religion, signs, sacrifices and so on. Different cultural symbols can have the same meaning and they aren't people's identity or emblems to several divinities.

5.6 The role of symbols in ATR and culture

1. To maintain order and coherence
2. For communication
3. Preserving knowledge historical and religious occurrences to be transferred from one generation to the other.

5.7 Significance of symbols in African religious beliefs

Religious symbols are used to convey concepts concerned with man's relationship with the sacred and also his social and material world.

Man can only communicate through symbols

5.8 Summary

We have discussed symbols in ATR and culture and have seen that African symbols and sources of insights into Africa orientations to life. They are often found where art is found.

5.9 Reference

5.10 glossary: exploited, coherence, emblems.