|  |
| --- |
| RELIGIOUS ASPECT OF ANTHROPOLOGY |
| [Type the document subtitle] |
| ABSTRACT: by,NJUMBE BENEDICT NGYIA AIU DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HUMAN STUDIES, MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH Mankind from time immemorial is the descendants of generations whom to actually defined their religious believes is difficult when the contemporary anthropology of religion is taken into account. However, scholars and anthropologists have much to say to that effect and more so, when our todays trend of religious believes the proliferation of churches unlike the Mosques are to be considered when we look at the demography of religious patterns and settlement of churches. |
|  |



**RELIGIOUS ASPECT OF ANTHROPOLOGY**

**ABSTRACT: by,**

NJUMBE BENEDICT NGYIA AIU DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HUMAN STUDIES, MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH

Mankind from time immemorial is the descendants of generations whom to actually defined their religious believes is difficult when the contemporary anthropology of religion is taken into account. However, scholars and anthropologists have much to say to that effect and more so, when our todays trend of religious believes the proliferation of churches unlike the Mosques are to be considered when we look at the demography of religious patterns and settlement of churches.

We have to understand that the believes of peoples and individuals as well as cultural and ethnic groups turn around these cultural values and as such have their choice of belonging or not to whatever religious affiliations of their choices as a result, the religious aspect of the current anthropology we find today around the world leaves much to be desired.

INTRODUCTION:

Creation brought about differences in race color cultural differences believes religion and customs and this is how today people identify themselves with one another. The era of the old testament came to pass having thought us that there was/a supreme being {GOD} and that he is the creator of “heaven and earth”. Children as we were, were taught that God Livet in the heavens and that the heaven we hear of is “beyond the blue” the sky above and that when we live according his doctrine we shall live to see His heavenly kingdom and that not only is god the supreme being but that he owns that which is found on earth and in heaven the winds and the sun as well as the moons and the starts belong to him yet he is the master of all that lives including Satan his opponent. The tale of whom God is goes further and in a more complex mode when we are told according to the doctrine of the Bible as seen in the book of Revelation that,….”before was the word and the ward was God and the ward wars with God”. That glorious past had nothing to do with the era of this Christendom, it was that era during which crimes committed were the determining factor of the punishment per that crime otherwise called “an eye for and eye tooth for ta”. Anthropologists are said to have had much to study how religious believe influence human settlement, believers and the customs that identified them and what power was like according to these different communities of persons. According to the books of Isaiah chapter 12: Religion represents an ideal subject for anthropologists. It is, on the one hand, a human universal—all groups of people develop complexes of symbols, rituals, and beliefs that connect their own experience to the essential nature of the universe.

They do this, however, in a bewildering variety of ways. Religions may involve one god, or no gods, or thousands of gods; they may favor simple family rituals or elaborate state festivals; they may value individual transcendence, community ceremonialism, Dionysian ecstasy, or any number of other conceptions of ultimate good. The anthropology of religion explores how these different forms of religion come to be, how they change, and what they mean for the nature of human experience. Religion has stood at the center of anthropological research since the discipline began in the mid-19th century, and its development has reflected trends in the discipline generally. The early studies of James Frazer, E. B. Tylor, Émile Durkheim, and others tended to focus on classifying religions and developing models of religious evolution. Later studies turned to smaller-scale ethnography, examining the ways that individual religious systems functioned within their particular social environments. More recently, anthropologists have focused on dynamics of power and identity in religion, with particular focus on the ways that religion intersects with conceptions of gender, ethnicity, and nation. They have also looked increasingly at religious change and the influence of modern and postmodern social forms on religious life.

This article outlines the scope of the anthropological literature on religion, drawing both on classic and more-recent studies. We begin with discussions of the nature, origin, and function of religion then turn to four main areas of anthropological work: religious symbolism, including ritual and myth; techniques of managing and manipulating the sacred, including magic, healing, and witchcraft; dynamics of religion, including religious change and secularization; and religion’s connection to personal identity, including gender, ethnicity, and the question of religious conversion. The entries in this section represent the upsurge in strong textbooks in the anthropology of religion since the early 1990s. Lessa and Vogt 1972, once the standard reader in the field, remains a valuable archive of classic articles. Lambek 2008 includes some of the same articles, as well as examples of more-recent scholarship. Hicks 2010 and Moro 2012 offer more-accessible selections of articles and excerpts, organized around themes with useful introductions. Morris 2006, Bowen 2010, and Bowie 2006 take a different approach, each providing a thoughtful synthetic account by a single author. Scupin 2008 organizes its presentation around different religious traditions, rather than topical subjects. Bowen, John R. 2010. Religions in practice: An approach to the anthropology of religion. 5th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

William A., and Evon Z. Vogt, eds. 1972. Reader in comparative religion: An anthropological approach. 3d ed. New York: Harper & Row. Long a standard textbook in the anthropology of religion, first published in 1958 (Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson), this collection of articles and excerpts can seem rather dated and stiff to current students. As a resource for classic theory in the field, however, it still has no equal. This is the latest edition of a very popular collection of readings on the anthropology of religion. The selection is excellent, and the chosen articles are both readable and interesting. Previous editions were compiled by Moro and James E. Myers. Morris, Brian. 2006. Religion and anthropology: A critical introduction. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press. A readable and masterful review of non-Western religious traditions, from an anthropological perspective, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, shamanism, African and Afro-Caribbean religions, and the New Age. Religious systems have stories, or sacred narratives. Some stories may be more sacred than others, e.g., in Christianity the story of Christ’s resurrection is more sacred then the story of Him turning water into wine at a wedding celebration. Stories may be about many things, but there are some common themes: origins of earth and humans, what happens when we die, deeds of important people, and disasters. Anthropologists can study these stories, or myths, to learn more about the people.

Myth in anthropology should not be interpreted as a falsehood. In anthropology, a myth is a truism for the people following that belief system. Candida Moss does not work for, co nsult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond their academic appointment.

Isaiah is one of the most important Old Testament prophets, who predicted the birth of Jesus Christ. He also appears to have been an important court official, worthy of carrying his own seal. In her article, Mazar argues that the inscription on the seal should be translated as “belonging to the prophet Isaiah”. In other words, this small clay nugget preserves what might be called the “signature” of the biblical prophet. Mazar’s translation is complicated by the fact that the seal is partially damaged: the second part of the inscription that contains the word for “prophet” is missing its final letter and is thus incomplete. Some, like noted paleographer Christopher Rollston, have pointed to the possibility that these letters are just a surname. Anticipating this objection, Mazar offers some persuasive arguments about why we should translate the inscription as belonging to “Isaiah the prophet”. But because the seal is damaged, the question of how to read the seal will never be fully resolved. These translation issues aside, there is the larger question of what the discovery of an authentic Isaiah seal actually means.

Isaiah the man.In the first place, the seal confirms something scholars never doubted: Isaiah was an historical figure who lived and worked in Jerusalem in the eighth century BC. According to the beginning of the book of Isaiah, he enjoyed a lengthy career that spanned the reigns of the kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. In addition to writing some of the most eloquent, theologically significant, and historically influential poetry in the Hebrew Bible, Isaiah was an important man in his own day. The composite biblical portrait of Isaiah portrays him as an authority figure in ancient Jerusalem. He was important enough to be called upon by King Hezekiah – one of the Bible’s few “good” kings – for advice and seemed to have unencumbered access to the monarch (2 Kings 19:20; 20).

Isaiah as portrayed on an 18th-century Russian icon. Iconostasis of Transfiguration church, Kizhi monastery, Karelia, Russia. If the seal truly belongs to Isaiah, then it cements the scholarly view that Isaiah was – in contrast to itinerant outsider prophets such as Amos or John the Baptist – a professional religious worker who enjoyed the privileged status that accompanied being an adviser of the king. In short: it adds texture to our impression of ancient Israelite religion-political affairs.

For Christians, documenting evidence of the life of Isaiah holds particular importance. Christian tradition interprets Isaiah’s words as prophecies about the Virgin Birth, the nature of being a messiah and the universal relevance of Jesus’ messianic identity to both gentiles and Jews. Indeed, in some circles, he is known as “The Fifth Evangelist”, a title that implicitly places him on a par with the writers of the New Testament gospels.Politicising history.The danger with an exciting find like this one is that the growing excitement over the discovery will move away from its particular historical relevance. In the past, artefacts that overlap with biblical records have taken on a talismanic quality in which a new find is used to support broader religious, political, and ideological claims.To name but two examples: the reference to the Israelite people in the Victory Stele of the Egyptian Pharaoh Merneptah (1207BC), which is the earliest reference to Israel outside the Bible, and the mention of the House of David in the Tel Dan inscription, from the 9th-century BC, are often cited as evidence that the biblical narrative is true.The Ophel in Jerusalem: the Kidron Valley and Mount of Olives are in the background. Joe Freeman via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY. In October 2017, the American evangelical politician Michelle Bachman remarked that “every archaeology (sic) find that has ever come forward has only proved the authenticity of the Bible”. Looking past the deeply problematic omission of the many discoveries that conflict with biblical historical narratives, Bachman is leveraging historical artefacts about the past to make grand sweeping statements about the accuracy of the Bible.

Digging up the past

The tendency to use archaeological artefacts in this way is hardly unique to the archaeology of the Iron Age Levant. The same phenomenon is at work in efforts to identify and claim national ownership of the earliest human remains. Evolutionary theories about the geographical origins of the human race are closely tied to nationalism and politics. As anthropologist Jon Marks argued, those who claim to own the earliest example of human remains get to play a pivotal role in the story of human evolution. All attempts to tell history are also weighed down by our current commitments: whether scholars choose to write about military heroes, women, slaves or animals reveals a great deal about what is valuable to us. And yet, there is something especially problematic about biblical archaeology, which, from its inception, self-consciously defined itself as the pursuit of material evidence that would lend tangible support to theological and textual claims.The stakes are much higher when the finds take place in the politically charged environs of the Temple Mount. Frequently, representatives on both sides of the Israel/Palestinian divide interpret the discovery of remnants of the past in light of competing claims to ownership of the land. Too often the fetishisation of archaeological finds turns historical artefacts into ideological relics.

In the case of the Isaiah seal, the disputes about the way the text is translated might provide the basis for politically motivated disputes about its authenticity. And the mere potential for ideologically (as opposed to intellectually) based disagreement will make it difficult to have thoughtful conversations about its significance.The Isaiah seal offers important evidence about religious life during the Judahite monarchy. But the seal does not authenticate broader religious or political claims about the authenticity and historical accuracy of what Christians call the Old Testament.The Javett-UP is pleased to invite you to the retrospective exhibition WILLEM BOSHOFF WORD WOES — Pretoria, Gauteng. HUMA Interdisciplinary Seminar Session #3 | Can Artificial Intelligence Be Decolonised? | Rachel Adams Thursday 25 March | 17h00 — Cape Town, Western Cape. Free MOOC: The right to privacy in the digital age in Africa — Pretoria, Gauten.The State We’re In: Democracy’s Fractures, Fixes and Futures - Deadline for the call for papers 15 June 2021 — Gqeberha, Eastern Cape

Pan-African Parliament Civil Society Forum — Pretoria, Gauteng

**Chapter 12: Supernatural Belief Systems**

Religion changes across the globe. Different parts of the world have different beliefs and rules that maintain their religion. Not all religions follow the same practices but there are some similarities between most, if not all, religions. Religions have their own rituals attached to their beliefs. Some rituals across religions (like fasting) are specific to one religion while others are practiced throughout. Religions incorporate myths into how they practice, and why they practice by conveying messages about the supernatural through stories or metaphors. They are used to help express ideas and concepts as well as help the followers achieve spirituality. Religion can help people find peace of mind, give them hope, turn their life around, and change their point of view. Religion can be used to justify things and to motivate others. Rituals and ceremonies are practiced to show dedication and faith to a religion.

**12.1: Introduction to Religion**

This section is not meant to provide an in-depth exploration of religion, but simply to introduce students to the anthropological approach to the study of religion.

**12.2: Definitions of Religions**

There are various ways to define religion. One, the analytic definition stresses how religion manifests itself within a culture and identifies six dimensions of religion.

**12.3: The Function of Religion**

**12.4: Aspects of Religion**

Religious systems have stories, or sacred narratives. Stories may be about many things, but there are some common themes: origins of earth and humans, what happens when we die, deeds of important people, and disasters. Anthropologists can study these stories, or myths, to learn more about the people. Myth in anthropology should not be interpreted as a falsehood. In anthropology, a myth is a truism for the people following that belief system.

**12.5: Patterns of Belief**

Patterns of belief focused on one or more god of extrahuman origin is called a theism. The pattern may be a reflection of social organization, e.g., the more centralized and stratified the society, the fewer gods.

**12.6: Religious Practitioners**

There are several types of religious practitioners or people who specialize in religious behaviors. These are individuals who specialize in the use of spiritual power to influence others. Examples include shamen, priests, sorcerers, witches and mediums.

Anthropologist Anthony F.C. Wallace proposed four categories of religion, each subsequent category subsuming the previous. These are, however, synthetic categories and do not necessarily encompass all religions.

**12.9: Rite of Passage**

Rite of passage is a celebration of the passage which occurs when an individual leaves one group to enter another. It involves a significant change of status in society. In cultural anthropology the term is the Anglicisation of rite de passage, a French term innovated by the ethnographer Arnold van Gennep in his work Les rites de passage, “The Rites of Passage.” The term is now fully adopted into anthropology as well as into the literature and popular cultures of many modern languages.

**12.10: Vision Quest**

A vision quest is a rite of passage in some Native American cultures. It is usually only undertaken by young males entering adulthood. Individual indigenous cultures have their own names for their rites of passage. “Vision quest” is an English umbrella term, and may not always be accurate or used by the cultures in question.

**12.11: Religious Demographics**

Religious systems have stories, or sacred narratives. Some stories may be more sacred than others, e.g., in Christianity the story of Christ’s resurrection is more sacred then the story of Him turning water into wine at a wedding celebration. Stories may be about many things, but there are some common themes: origins of earth and humans, what happens when we die, deeds of important people, and disasters. Anthropologists can study these stories, or myths, to learn more about the people. Myth in anthropology should not be interpreted as a falsehood. In anthropology, a myth is a truism for the people following that belief system.

An important part of religion is the belief in the supernatural, which includes a variety of beings from angels and demons to ghosts and gods and souls. The supernatural is a realm separate from the physical world inhabited by humans, although the supernatural can influence the human realm either through direct action or by influencing humans. For some peoples the supernatural realm is disconnected from everyday life; for others it is an intricate part of it. The supernatural can also refer to an unseen power that infuses humans, nature and for some belief systems, inanimate objects. Some groups refer to this power as mana, a term that is sometimes used to represent this supernatural power. This belief in a supernatural power is called animatism, while the belief in supernatural beings is animism.

Through rituals, people can influence or call upon the supernatural and supernatural power using symbolic action. Rituals are standardized patterns of behavior; e.g., prayer, congregation, etc. In the realm of religion, rituals are a sacred practice. In some religions, rituals are highly stereotyped and deviation from the ritual results in either no influence on the supernatural or negative consequences. Nature based religions, particularly those led by shamans (see below) are not as wedded to the ritual and employ a degree of creativity when trying to influence the supernatural.

**250px-Candle\_decorations\_for\_Diwali**

**Diwali, Festival of Lights**

Ritual promotes what Victor Turner called communitas, a sense of unity that transcends social distinctions like socioeconomic class. During the period of the ritual, rank and status are forgotten as members think of themselves as a community. This helps cement unity among community members.

Ritual can also be a portrayal influence or a reenactment of myth, e.g., communion or baptism. Portrayal influence invokes magic to manipulate the supernatural. This has nothing to do with David Copperfield type of magic—it is about harnessing supernatural forces. If the magic does not seem to work, there is not a problem with the magic, but with the ritual—the practitioner did something wrong in their performance.Magic uses a couple of principles: imitation (or similarity) and contagion. The principle of imitation (similarity) states that if one acts out what one wants to happen then the likelihood of that occurring increases. Baptism is a good example of this as is the Pueblo Indians ritual of whipping yucca juice into frothy suds, which symbolize rain clouds.

MamaGeek at the English language Wikipedia [GFDL (http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html) or CC-BY

SA-3.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/)], via Wikimedia Commons

Roman Catholic Infant Baptism in the United States.

The principle of contagion states that things that been in contact with the supernatural remain connected to the supernatural. That connection can be used to transfer mana from the one thing to the other. Voodoo dolls are the classic example of the law of contagion, however, some cultures belief that names also have mana, so for anyone outside of the family to know their real name gives them the power to perform black magic against them.

Another form of magic is divination. Divination is the use of ritual to obtain answers to questions from supernatural sources, e.g., oracle bones, tea leaves, way a person falls, date of birth, etc. There are two main categories of divination: those results that can be influenced by diviner and those that cannot. Tarot cards, tea leaves, randomly selecting a Bible verse and interpreting an astrological sign are examples of the former. Casting lots, flipping a coin or checking to see whether something floats on water are examples of the latter. Ritual is infused with symbolic expression. Emile Durkheim suggested that religious systems were a set of practices related to sacred things. The sacred is that which inspires awe, respect and reverence because it is set apart from the secular world or is forbidden. People create symbols to represent aspects of society that inspire these feelings. For instance, the totems of Australian aborigine groups is spiritually related to members of the society. The human soul is a kindred spirit to the sacred plant or animal. Clifford Geertz discussed how symbols expressed feelings of society to maintain stability. This approach helped to broaden early definitions of religion beyond supernatural to incorporate actions of people and helped to account for the deep commitment and behavior of adherents.

People living in the West tend to have a clear idea of what religion should look like: it tends to take place in a building set aside for the purpose (a church, synagogue, mosque, temple etc.), revolves around appeals to a higher, all-powerful deity and involves the articulation of beliefs (often set down in texts) to which the general population may or may not subscribe. Anthropologists have studied such religions, but they have also examined contexts where religious practice looks very different. In many cultures and societies, the idea of a single God may not be present, and the notion of reading a sacred book like the Koran or the Bible would seem very strange, not least because writing and reading may not play any part in people's lives. Even the western notion of 'belief' does not make much sense in contexts where ideas about gods and spirits are taken for granted, and are not challenged by other faiths or the conclusions of the natural sciences.

Anthropologists of religion are not concerned with discovering the truth or falsehood of religion. They are more interested in how religious ideas express a people's cosmology, i.e. notions of how the universe is organized and the role of humans within the world. Many study rituals which incorporate symbols, and note how these often help to bring communities together in times of crisis or special points in the calendar. The actions of religious specialists, whether these are priests, prophets, shamans or spirit mediums are also examined. In many societies, such specialists have important political and economic as well as religious roles to play.

Charismatic, street-wise young men, living in Botswana’s capital, command the prophetic domain in Eloyi, their Apostolic faith-healing church, at a time of escalating crisis. Bitter, sinful accusations divide Eloyi’s village-based archbishop and his son, the city based bishop. The church itself, seen to be ‘under destruction’, splits. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, prophets are seen in trance, whirling in ecstasy, praying, running wild in exorcism and feeling patients’ pain in their own bodies. But beyond empathy and avowed compassion, prophets hustle and shock. This film illuminates the creative tension between holiness and hustling by showing how, in this Apostolic church’s time of crisis, city prophets assert themselves powerfully because they are both holy and hustlers. In the early 12th century (973–1048), wrote detailed comparative studies on the anthropology of religions and cultures across the Mediterranean Basin (including the so-called "Middle East") and the Indian subcontinent.[2] He discussed the peoples, customs, and religions of the Indian subcontinent.

In the 19th century cultural anthropology was dominated by an interest in cultural evolution; most anthropologists assumed a simple distinction between "primitive" and "modern" religion and tried to provide accounts of how the former evolved into the latter.[citation needed] In the 20th century most anthropologists rejected this approach. Today the anthropology of religion reflects the influence of, or an engagement with, such theorists as Karl Marx (1818-1883), Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), Émile Durkheim (1858-1917), and Max Weber (1864-1920).[3] Anthropologists of religion are especially concerned with how religious beliefs and practices may reflect political or economic forces; or the social functions of religious beliefs and practices.

In 1912 Émile Durkheim, building on the work of Feuerbach, considered religion "a projection of the social values of society", "a means of making symbolic statements about society", "a symbolic language that makes statements about the social order";[5] in short, "religion is society worshiping itself".

Anthropologists circa 1940 assumed that religion was in complete continuity with magical thinking,[a][8][dubious – discuss] and that it is a cultural product.[b][9] The complete continuity between magic and religion has been a postulate of modern anthropology at least since early 1930s.[c][11] The perspective of modern anthropology towards religion is the projection idea, a methodological approach which assumes that every religion is created by the human community that worships it, that "creative activity ascribed to God is projected from man".[12] In 1841, Ludwig Feuerbach was the first to employ this concept as the basis for a systematic critique of religion.[13] A prominent precursor in the formulation of this projection principle was Giambattista Vico[14] (1668-1744), and an early formulation of it appears in the ancient Greek writer Xenophanes c. 570 – c. 475 BCE), who observed that "the gods of Ethiopians were inevitably black with flat noses while those of the Thracians were blond with blue eyes."[15]

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

1.The Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI

http://www.as.ua.edu/ant/Faculty/murphy/419/419www.htm - a website of links compiled by M.D.Murphy .

2. http://anthro.palomar.edu/religion/default.htm - a tutorial giving an introduction to folk religion and magic by Dr. Dennis O’Neil.

3. http://virtualreligion.net/vri/ - a virtual index with extensive links maintained by Rutgers University’s Religion Department.

4. http://www.archaeolink.com/anthropology\_of\_religion\_religio.htm - a wesbite containing articles and links on anthropology and history of religion.

5. http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/ - BBC’s religions and ethics webpage

Brian Morris (Cambridge University Press, 2005)

American Academy of Religion- the world’s largest association of academics who research or teach on topics related to religion.

Njumbe Benedict Ngyia,

Atlantic International University, Department of Human and Social studies; Maternal and child health care.