

Union Branch University: World Religions

Indigenous Religions of Africa

Part 2 of 2: African Traditional Religions

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In order to understand African Traditional Religions (ATR) of today, one must understand African contexts and cultures, and their journey through European colonization. This Bible Study will unpack these realities while exploring the ways in which ATRs interact with Christianity. We will highlight the belief systems of several prominent African people groups on the African continent and throughout the diaspora who authentically carry out their traditional religious practices.

Deity/Absolute Reality

ATRs are monotheistic, belief in one god. There is also an acute belief in spirits which are said to have a status between God and humans. Each people group has a name for God.

<u>People Group</u>	<u>Name for God</u>
Akan	Nyame (or Onyamekopon)
Igbo	Chukwu
Luo	Nyasaye (also Nyasae or Nasaye)
Maasai	Ngai
Zulu	Unkulunkulu

Myth of Origin/Beginnings

There are hundreds of African myths surrounding God's work of creation. God is said to be the creator of all things. This is a universal belief across all ATRs.

Religious Leaders

Medicine men and women	Seers	Rain-Makers
Diviners	Priests	Rulers
Mediums	Ritual Elders	

Ritual Practices

There are numerous rituals which take place amongst various African people groups which may include: phases of life (naming ceremony, coming of age, marriage, death), pouring of libations, circumcision, cicatrization marks, and more.

Sacred Lore

Sacred lore is communicated from one generation to the next by cultural practices, oral history and traditional proverbs.