

Azande

also known as “Zande”

Data source: eHRAF

Secondary source

Entered by Emily Pitek, Human Relations Area Files

** Data Source entry, prepared based on data sourced from an external project.*

** Secondary Source entry, prepared from a literature review by a Ph.D. RA*

Entry tags: Azande Religions, African Religions, Religious Group

The Azande are a people who have historically inhabited Central Africa, covering parts of what is now South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Central African Republic. The Azande are composed of distinct ethnic groups united by language, culture, and political systems (Gilles, 1999). Sociopolitical organization historically centered around various kingdoms, each led by members of the noble (Avongara) clan. This entry focuses on the Yambio chiefdom (located in Yambio, South Sudan) around the time of 1905. This entry primarily utilizes information documented by Edward Evans Evans-Pritchard (the principal ethnographic authority), who conducted fieldwork in Sudan from 1926-1930. Although the Azande had come under colonial rule at this time, Evans-Pritchard (1937) documented traditional Azande customs and beliefs that had not been subject to significant English and Arabic influences. Each household held a shrine to ancestral spirits, which received offerings and prayers. Ancestor worship was largely a household matter with no associated formal priesthood. After death, human spirits would travel to caverns at the source of streams to reside with Mbori, the omnipotent but remote supreme high god. Mbori was not associated with a specific priesthood, shrines/temples, or set of rituals, but would be invoked occasionally. Mbori did not communicate directly with humans, but would instead communicate through ghosts. A belief in witchcraft played a prominent role in many aspects of life. Evans-Pritchard (1937:9) described witchcraft as a “psychic [non-physical] emanation from witchcraft-substance which is believed to cause injury to health and property.” Witch-doctors are those who possess the specialized knowledge and supernatural ability to diagnose and counteract witchcraft. Various types of oracles were also present and played an important role in Azande life. Oracles were consulted for a variety of matters, which they addressed through specialized knowledge, techniques, and supernatural ability. Azande magico-religious beliefs and practices permeate almost all aspects of life; consequently, this entry considers the religious group to be coterminous with society itself.

Date Range: 1900 CE - 1935 CE

Region: Yambio area, South Sudan

Region tags: Africa, Eastern Africa, South Sudan

Yambio chiefdom ca. 1905 (Presently: Yambio, South Sudan)

Status of Participants:

✓ Elite ✓ Religious Specialists ✓ Non-elite (common people, general populace)

Sources

Print sources for understanding this subject:

– Source 1: Divale, W. (2004). Codebook of Variables for the Standard Cross-Cultural Sample. World

Cultures: The Journal of Cross-Cultural and Comparative Research.

- Source 2: Murdock, G.P. (1967). *Ethnographic Atlas*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Source 3: Murdock, G.P. & Wilson, S.F. (Jul., 1972). Settlement patterns and community organization: Cross-Cultural Codes 3. *Ethnology*, 11(3), 254-295.

Online sources for understanding this subject:

- Source 1 URL: <https://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=fo07-006>
- Source 1 Description: Evans-Pritchard, E. E. (Edward E. (1928). The dance. In *Africa: Vol. Vol. 1* (pp. 446–462 [incomplete]). Oxford University Press.
- Source 2 URL: <https://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=fo07-071>
- Source 2 Description: Evans-Pritchard, E. E. (Edward E. (1937). *Witchcraft, oracles and magic among the Azande*. Clarendon Press.
- Source 3 URL: <https://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=fo07-000>
- Source 3 Description: Gillies, E. (1999). Culture summary: Azande. HRAF.
- Source 1 URL: <https://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=fo07-056>
- Source 1 Description: Baxter, P. T. W., & Butt, A. (1953). The Azande, and related peoples of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and Belgian Congo. In *ethnographic survey of africa, east central africa* (pp. x, 152). International African Institute.
- Source 2 URL: <https://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=fo07-005>
- Source 2 Description: Evans-Pritchard, E. E. (Edward E. (1936). Zande theology. In *Sudan notes and records: Vol. Vol. 19* (pp. 5–46 [incomplete]). [s.n.].
- Source 3 URL: <https://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=fo07-035>
- Source 3 Description: Evans-Pritchard, E. E. (Edward E. (1932). Heredity and gestation, as the Azande see them. In *Sociologus: Vol. Vol. 8* (pp. 400–414 [incomplete]). C. L. Hirschfeld.

General Variables

Membership/Group Interactions

Are other religious groups in cultural contact with target religion:

– Yes

Notes: "Zandeland was finally brought under Anglo-Egyptian rule in 1905, when King Gbudwe was killed by government forces. There has been very little diffusion of European ideas, customs, and artifacts among them, though their culture has undergone change as a result of new conditions. It has been especially affected by the undermining of the power of the royal class and of the authority of men over women...The customs and beliefs described in this book are African customs and beliefs which have so far escaped both English and Arabic influences, for these are restricted to administrative posts and mission stations" (Evans-Pritchard, 1937:18). "According to one informant (Kuagbiaru) 'In the past all Azande used to think about Mbori [high god] as dwelling mainly at the heads of streams rather than in other places. They also thought about Mbori as being under the earth because when a man dies they bury him in the earth where Mbori is...But now a good number listen to the teaching of the missionaries and think that in fact Mbori is on high because the missionaries

always tell them that this is so. But the people who do not live near the Government station still retain the ideas of their fathers" (Evans-Pritchard, 1936:23-24).

↳ Is there violent conflict (within sample region):

– Yes

Notes: SCCS Variable 1649, Frequency of Internal Warfare (resolved rating), has an original code of 17, indicating "internal warfare seems to occur almost constantly and at any time of the year." Source of information: Ember and Ember, 1992; Retrieved from Divale, 2004.

↳ Is there violent conflict (with groups outside the sample region):

– Yes

Notes: SCCS Variable 1650, Frequency of External Warfare (resolved rating), has an original code of 17, indicating "external warfare seems to occur almost constantly and at any time of the year." Source of information: Ember and Ember, 1992; Retrieved from Divale, 2004.

Does the religious group actively proselytize and recruit new members:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating the Azande would actively proselytize and recruit new members.

Does the religion have official political support

– Yes

Notes: "No important venture is undertaken without authorization of the poison oracle. In important collective undertakings, in all crises of life, in all serious legal disputes, in all matters strongly affecting individual welfare, in short, on all occasions regarded by Azande as dangerous or socially important, the activity is preceded by consultation of the poison oracle" (Evans-Pritchard, 1937:261).

↳ Polity legal code is roughly coterminous with religious code:

– Yes

Notes: "To understand Zande legal procedure one must know exactly how the poison oracle is operated, because in the old days it was in itself the greater part of what we know as rules of evidence, judge, jury, and witnesses" (Evans-Pritchard, 1937:267).

Is there a conception of apostasy in the religious group:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicates a conception of apostasy is present.

Size and Structure

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (estimated population, numerical):

– I don't know

Are there recognized leaders in the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: Practitioners include witch-doctors and oracles/diviners. "A Zande witch-doctor is essentially a man who knows what plants and trees compose the medicines which, if eaten, will give him power to see witchcraft with his own eyes, to know where it resides, and to drive it away from its intended victims. The Zande witch-doctor exercises supernatural powers solely because he knows the right medicines and has eaten them in the right manner. His prophecies are derived from the magic inside him. His inspiration does not spring from the Supreme Being nor from the ghosts of the dead" (Evans-Pritchard, 1937:156). "ORACLES: techniques which are supposed to reveal what cannot be discovered at all, or cannot be discovered for certain, by experiment and logical inferences therefrom" (Evans-Pritchard, 1937:9). The author subsequently describes the principal types of oracles (benge, poison oracle; iwa, rubbing-board oracle; dakpa, termite oracle; mapingo, three sticks oracle) which are differentiated by the techniques they implement.

↳ Are leaders believed to possess supernatural powers or qualities:

– Yes

Notes: Practitioners (e.g., witch-doctors, diviners, oracles) possess supernatural knowledge and abilities. The means of acquiring this supernatural knowledge/ability varies depending on the type of practitioner (see questions below). Additionally, the principal ethnographic authority, Evans-Pritchard, documented the accounts of three female ghost-diviners describing the various manners in which they became ghost-diviners (1936:26-27(1)).

↳ Powers are acquired by individual deeds carried out in past lives:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicates the presence of a belief in reincarnation.

↳ Powers are culturally transmitted from a supernatural being:

– No

Notes: "A Zande witch-doctor is essentially a man who knows what plants and trees compose the medicines which, if eaten, will give him power to see witchcraft with his own eyes, to know where it resides, and to drive it away from its intended victims. The Zande witch-doctor exercises supernatural powers solely because he knows the right medicines and has eaten them in the right manner. His prophecies are derived from the magic inside him. His inspiration does not spring from the Supreme Being nor from the ghosts of the dead" (Evans-Pritchard, 1937:156).

↳ Are leaders considered fallible:

– I don't know

Scripture

Does the religious group have scriptures:

Scripture is a generic term used to designate revered texts that are considered particularly authoritative and sacred relative to other texts. Strictly speaking, it refers to written texts, but there are also "oral scriptures" (e.g. the Vedas of India).

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicates the presence of scripture.

Architecture, Geography

Is monumental religious architecture present:

– No

Notes: According to Murdock and Wilson (1972; Column 6: Large or impressive structures), "there are no structures in the community that are appreciably larger or more impressive than the usual residential dwellings."

Are there specific sites dedicated to sacred practice or considered sacred:

– Yes

Notes: "When a Zande establishes a new homestead he erects in the centre of it a shrine (tuka) to the spirit (atoro or atolo) of his father" (Baxter and Butt, 1953:94).

Are pilgrimages present:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicates the presence of pilgrimages.

Beliefs

Burial and Afterlife

Is a spirit-body distinction present:

Answer "no" only if personhood (or consciousness) is extinguished with death of the physical body. Answering yes does not necessarily imply the existence of Cartesian mind/body dualism, merely that some element of personhood (or consciousness) survives the death of the body.

– Yes

Notes: "Though the Zande appears generally to think of a person having a single mbisimo [soul] which at death goes to the land of spirits, at the heads of streams, he often puts it forward in discussion that there is a second soul which changes at death into a totem animal of a clan" (Evans-Pritchard, 1932:404-405).

Belief in afterlife:

– Yes

Notes: "Though the Zande appears generally to think of a person having a single mbisimo [soul] which

at death goes to the land of spirits, at the heads of streams, he often puts it forward in discussion that there is a second soul which changes at death into a totem animal of a clan" (Evans-Pritchard, 1932:404-405).

↳ Is the spatial location of the afterlife specified or described by the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: See the questions below for more information.

↳ Afterlife in vaguely defined "above" space:

– No

Notes: "Though the Zande appears generally to think of a person having a single mbisimo [soul] which at death goes to the land of spirits, at the heads of streams, he often puts it forward in discussion that there is a second soul which changes at death into a totem animal of a clan" (Evans-Pritchard, 1932:404-405). "The souls of men become ghosts and the ghosts go to live with Mbori and their personalities merge into his" (Evans-Pritchard, 1936:44).

↳ Afterlife in vaguely defined "below" space:

– No

Notes: "Though the Zande appears generally to think of a person having a single mbisimo [soul] which at death goes to the land of spirits, at the heads of streams, he often puts it forward in discussion that there is a second soul which changes at death into a totem animal of a clan" (Evans-Pritchard, 1932:404-405). "The souls of men become ghosts and the ghosts go to live with Mbori and their personalities merge into his" (Evans-Pritchard, 1936:44).

↳ Afterlife in vaguely defined horizontal space:

– Yes

Notes: "Though the Zande appears generally to think of a person having a single mbisimo [soul] which at death goes to the land of spirits, at the heads of streams, he often puts it forward in discussion that there is a second soul which changes at death into a totem animal of a clan" (Evans-Pritchard, 1932:404-405). "The souls of men become ghosts and the ghosts go to live with Mbori and their personalities merge into his" (Evans-Pritchard, 1936:44).

Reincarnation in this world:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicates the presence of a belief in reincarnation.

Are there special treatments for adherents' corpses:

– Yes

Notes: "The corpse is interred either on the same day as the death or the day afterwards, usually at

about three or four o'clock in the afternoon. The grave is dug near, but at a little distance from, the homestead" (Baxter and Butt, 1953:77).

↳ Cremation:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicates the presence of cremation.

↳ Mummification:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicates the presence of mummification.

↳ Interment:

– Yes

Notes: "The grave itself is rectangular, oriented north and south, and about 5 to 6 ft. deep. The corpse is placed in a recess—on the east side for a woman, on the west side for a man. A man is laid on his left side, his hands against his left cheek, his legs bent, and his face turned towards the rising sun. A woman is laid on her right side, her hands under her head, her legs bent, and her face turned towards the setting sun. The body is protected from the earth by mats with which the grave is filled, and stakes of the ngunge or bakayakpwa tree" (Baxter and Butt, 1953:77).

↳ Corpse is flexed (legs are bent or body is crouched):

– Yes

Notes: See Baxter and Butt, 1953:77

↳ Corpse is extended (lying flat on front or back):

– No

Notes: See Baxter and Butt, 1953:77

↳ Corpse is upright (where body is interred in standing position):

– No

Notes: See Baxter and Butt, 1953:77

↳ Corpse is interred some other way:

– No

Notes: See Baxter and Butt, 1953:77

↳ Cannibalism:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicates the presence of cannibalism.

↳ Exposure to elements (e.g. air drying):

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicates that corpses were exposed to the elements.

↳ Feeding to animals:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicates that corpses were fed to animals.

↳ Secondary burial:

– No

Notes: According to SCCS Variable 1850, Secondary bone/body treatment: Original Scale, "secondary contact with the body or bones of the deceased does not occur" (Schroeder, 2001; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

↳ Re-treatment of corpse:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicates the presence of re-treatment of corpses.

Are co-sacrifices present in tomb/burial:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating the presence of co-sacrifices in burial.

Are grave goods present:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating the presence of grave goods.

Are formal burials present:

– Yes

Notes: For a description of formal burials see Baxter and Butt (1953:76-78)

↳ In cemetery:

– I don't know

↳ Domestic (individuals interred beneath house, or in areas used for normal domestic activities):

– No

Notes: "The corpse is interred either on the same day as the death or the day afterwards, usually at about three or four o'clock in the afternoon. The grave is dug near, but at a little distance from, the homestead" (Baxter and Butt, 1953:77).

Supernatural Beings

Are supernatural beings present:

– Yes

Notes: A supreme high god and ancestral spirits are present, but the principal ethnographic authority, Evans-Pritchard, notes that the "Azande make no clear conceptual distinction between the Supreme Being and the ghosts and these notions overlap one another" (1936:40-41).

↳ A supreme high god is present:

– Yes

Notes: According to SCCS Variable 238, High Gods, a high god is "present and active in human affairs but not supportive of human morality" (Murdock, 1962-71; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

↳ The supreme high god is a sky deity:

– No

Notes: "According to one informant... 'In the past all Azande used to think about Mbori [supreme high god] as dwelling mainly at the heads of streams rather than in other places. They also thought about Mbori as being under the earth because when a man dies they bury him in the earth where Mbori is" (Evans-Pritchard, 1936:23-24).

↳ The supreme high god is chthonic (of the underworld):

– No

Notes: "In any case, Mbori dwells mainly at the head of streams; he is also under the earth. Now in this part of Africa—as far as my experience goes—Supreme Beings are not chthonic" (Evans-Pritchard, 1937:xxiii).

↳ The supreme high god is fused with the monarch (king=high god):

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicates the supreme high god is equivalent to the monarch

↳ The supreme high god is unquestionably good:

– I don't know

↳ The supreme high god has deliberate causal efficacy in the world:

– No

Notes: "As in all else Mbori is far-off, little-intruding, and seldom-thought-of, but is

nevertheless, according to Zande notions, the final cause of conception, gestation and birth" (Evans-Pritchard, 1932:402).

↳ The supreme high god has indirect causal efficacy in the world:

– Yes

Notes: "Congenital disease, madness and other inexplicable conditions are attributed to Mbori, the Supreme Being" (Baxter and Butt, 1953:86). "Mbori is a big king of ghosts ('All Azande say that the ghosts are subject to Mbori') but he can also assist people in this world although his sphere of influence is more directly among the ghosts who join him at the heads of streams, and if a man prays to the ghosts who join him at the heads of streams, and if a man prays to the ghosts of his fathers they will ask Mbori to grant his request" (Evans-Pritchard, 1936:38-39(1)).

↳ The supreme high god communicates with the living:

– Yes

Notes: See questions below for more information regarding communication with the supreme high god.

↳ Only through monarch

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicates that Mbori would only communicate through the monarch.

↳ Other form of communication with living:

– Yes [specify]: Indirectly, through ancestral spirits (human ghosts)

Notes: "Mbori is a big king of ghosts ('All Azande say that the ghosts are subject to Mbori') but he can also assist people in this world although his sphere of influence is more directly among the ghosts who join him at the heads of streams, and if a man prays to the ghosts who join him at the heads of streams, and if a man prays to the ghosts of his fathers they will ask Mbori to grant his request" (Evans-Pritchard, 1936:38-39(1)).

↳ Previously human spirits are present:

– Yes

Notes: "...I [author] have on one or two occasions been told that when witches die they become evil ghosts (agirisa). Atoro, the ordinary ghosts, are benevolent beings, at least as benevolent as a Zande father of a family, and their occasional participation in the world they have left behind them is on the whole orderly and conducive to the welfare of their children. The agirisa, on the other hand, show a venomous hatred of humanity" (Evans-Pritchard, 1937:39).

↳ Human spirits can be seen:

– I don't know

↳ Human spirits have deliberate causal efficacy in the world:

– I don't know

↳ Human spirits have indirect causal efficacy in the world:

– Yes

Notes: "A selection of first fruits and the liver of the first animal killed by the homestead head are usually placed in the basket [on top of a household shrine the spirit of the household head's father], but otherwise offerings are not made regularly, except perhaps in times of dearth or adversity, or when disease is attributed to the anger of the spirits" (Baxter and Butt, 1953:94).

↳ Human spirits exhibit positive emotion:

– Yes

Notes: "...I [author] have on one or two occasions been told that when witches die they become evil ghosts (agirisa). Atoro, the ordinary ghosts, are benevolent beings, at least as benevolent as a Zande father of a family, and their occasional participation in the world they have left behind them is on the whole orderly and conducive to the welfare of their children. The agirisa, on the other hand, show a venomous hatred of humanity" (Evans-Pritchard, 1937:39).

↳ Human spirits exhibit negative emotion:

– Yes

Notes: "...I [author] have on one or two occasions been told that when witches die they become evil ghosts (agirisa). Atoro, the ordinary ghosts, are benevolent beings, at least as benevolent as a Zande father of a family, and their occasional participation in the world they have left behind them is on the whole orderly and conducive to the welfare of their children. The agirisa, on the other hand, show a venomous hatred of humanity" (Evans-Pritchard, 1937:39).

↳ Human spirits communicate with the living:

– Yes

Notes: According to an informant [describing a ceremony], "the ghost-diviners descend right into the chasm at the stream head. While they are there the boy beats the drum up above on the bank. They wait there for a long time and then suddenly emerge and tell the people that the ghosts praise their offerings and that their rain will fall on their millet. The ghost-diviners say that when they are in the chasm the ghosts speak to them" (Evans-Pritchard, 1936:24-25(2)).

↳ In waking, everyday life:

– I don't know

↳ Through divination processes:

– Yes

Notes: According to an informant [describing a ceremony], "the ghost-diviners descend right into the chasm at the stream head. While they are there the boy beats the drum up above on the bank. They wait there for a long time and then suddenly emerge and tell the people that the ghosts praise their offerings and that their rain will fall on their millet. The ghost-diviners say that when they are in the chasm the ghosts speak to them" (Evans-Pritchard, 1936:24-25(2)).

↳ Only through monarch:

– No

Notes: See questions above--human spirits can communicate through individuals known as ghost diviners.

↳ Non-human supernatural beings are present:

– I don't know

↳ Mixed human-divine beings are present:

– I don't know

↳ Does the religious group possess a variety of supernatural beings:

– Yes

Notes: A supreme high god and ancestral spirits are present, but the principal ethnographic authority, Evans-Pritchard, notes that the "Azande make no clear conceptual distinction between the Supreme Being and the ghosts and these notions overlap one another" (1936:40-41).

Supernatural Monitoring

Is supernatural monitoring present:

This refers to surveillance by supernatural beings of humans' behaviour and/or thought particularly as it relates to social norms or potential norm violations.

– I don't know

Notes: It appears that supernatural beings do not directly engage in supernatural monitoring. Rather, supernatural beings appear to be the explanation for certain negative events. "Mbori [supreme high god] being a sort of generalised ghost is associated with sanctions of conduct which concern the whole community. I have never heard Mbori's wishes quoted by a Zande as a reason for doing anything or refraining from any action. Morals and the notion of a Supreme Being are not directly associated in Zande culture. It is not Mbori but magic that punishes evil-doers and Mbori's part is to furnish an explanation for the magic and its actions. As a rule conduct rests upon quite other than religious foundations and even when Mbori participates in sanctions his participation is of a distant and secondary nature" (Evans-Pritchard, 1936:43-44).

Do supernatural beings mete out punishment:

– No

Notes: It appears that supernatural beings do not directly mete out punishment. Rather, supernatural beings appear to be the explanation for certain negative events. "Azande do not think that Mbori directly avenges crime but he furnishes them with a justification and comprehension of vengeance" (Evans-Pritchard, 1936:44). "A selection of first fruits and the liver of the first animal killed by the homestead head are usually placed in the basket [on top of a household shrine the spirit of the household head's father], but otherwise offerings are not made regularly, except perhaps in times of dearth or adversity, or when disease is attributed to the anger of the spirits" (Baxter and Butt, 1953:94).

Do supernatural beings bestow rewards:

– I don't know

Messianism/Eschatology

Are messianic beliefs present:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicates the presence of messianic beliefs.

Is an eschatology present:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicates the presence of a belief in eschatology.

Practices

Membership Costs and Practices

Does membership in this religious group require celibacy (full sexual abstinence):

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicates the presence of required celibacy.

Does membership in this religious group require constraints on sexual activity (partial sexual abstinence):

– No

Notes: Based on the following information, it is evident that monogamy is not required for males: "The older men had a monopoly of wives..." (Evans-Pritchard, 1937:16).

Does membership in this religious group require castration:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicates the presence of required castration.

Does membership in this religious group require fasting:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicates the presence of required fasting.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of adults:

"Adults" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition of a human who is 18-years-old or older and who is legally responsible for his/her actions, then please specify that difference in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicates human sacrifice was practiced.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of children:

"Children" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition, please specify that different in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicates human sacrifice was practiced.

Does membership in this religious group require self-sacrifice (suicide):

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicates human sacrifice was practiced.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of time (e.g., attendance at meetings or services, regular prayer, etc.):

– No

Notes: "...though Azande often perform ritual it takes up very little of their time in comparison with more mundane occupations" (Evans-Pritchard, 1937:20).

Does membership in this religious group require participation in large-scale rituals:

i.e. involving two or more households; includes large-scale "ceremonies" and "festivals."

– Yes

Notes: Although not explicitly described as required, large-scale ceremonies are present. A series of funerary ceremonies occur after the death of an individual; some of these ceremonies are large affairs attended by hundreds. "The Zande beer dance takes place at feasts in honour of the spirits of the dead. It is a sacred obligation on the part of the relatives of a dead person to erect a monument of a heap of stones over his or her grave. This may take place from a year to five years after burial" (Evans-Pritchard, 1928:460-462(1)). "Witch-doctors are useful as sleuths for seeking out the many affairs of a group of homesteads, and their chief value is that they generally clear the atmosphere of witchcraft. On this account they are often asked to dance before a big hunt because this is a joint undertaking, many persons are involved, and the interests of a district are at stake" (Evans-Pritchard, 1937:258).



On average, for large-scale rituals how many participants gather in one location:

– Number of participants: 550

Notes: "On this last occasion [of funeral ceremonies] the dance is a very big affair and may be attended by some hundreds of persons. I have seen quite five or six hundred persons attending one of these dances and was told by the [Azande] that often there were many more. This feast dance closes the cycle and there are no more dances in the homestead" (Evans-Pritchard, 1928:460-462(2)).

Society and Institutions

Levels of Social Complexity

The society to which the religious group belongs is best characterized as (please choose one):

– A chiefdom

Notes: According to SCCS Variable 237 (Jurisdictional Hierarchy Beyond Local Community), The Azande have two levels of jurisdictional hierarchy beyond the local community, which is indicative of a larger chiefdom (Murdock, 1962-71; Retrieved from Divale, 2004). Note: SCCS Variable 237 is equivalent to Ethnographic Atlas (Murdock, 1967) column 32. "Bonds of communal life are to be found in the Zande political system rather than in their clan organization. For, though they possess exogamous groups with common descent and association with totemic beliefs, these have no territorial basis and their members do not share economic or ceremonial undertakings...Each king rules over what we may designate a tribe, a population living under one administration which maintains peace within its borders and initiates military expeditions and organizes defence along its boundaries. Each kingdom is separated from the next by a wide fringe of unpopulated bush. The king is invariably a member of the ruling Vongara aristocracy who form an exclusive caste into which no commoner can gain admittance" (Evans-Pritchard, 1937:15).

Education

Does the religious group provide formal education to its adherents:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicates the presence of a formal education system.

Public Works

Does the religious group in question provide public food storage:

– No

Notes: SCCS Variable 20, Food Storage, indicates that food is stored in individual households (Murdock and Morrow, 1970; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

Is public food storage provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– No

Notes: SCCS Variable 20, Food Storage, indicates that food is stored in individual households (Murdock and Morrow, 1970; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

Written Language

Does the religious group in question possess its own distinct written language:

– No

Notes: SCCS Variable 149, Scale 1 (of cultural complexity) - Writing and Records, indicates mnemonic devices were used (Murdock and Provost, 1971; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

Food Production

Does the religious group in question provide food for themselves:

– Yes

Notes: The Azande rely primarily on extensive or shifting agriculture for subsistence. Gathering, fishing, and hunting supplement the diet. Source of information: Ethnographic Atlas (Murdock, 1962-1971), retrieved from Divale, 2004; Variables 203-207, 232.



Please characterize the forms/level of food production [choose all that apply]:

– Gathering

– Hunting (including marine animals)

– Fishing

– Small-scale agriculture / horticultural gardens or orchards

Notes: The Azande rely primarily on extensive or shifting agriculture for subsistence. Gathering, fishing, and hunting supplement the diet. Source of information: Ethnographic Atlas (Murdock, 1962-1971), retrieved from Divale, 2004; Variables 203-207, 232.