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978-0-521-36926-8 - Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West: Essays on Magic, Religion and Science

Robin Horton

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Robin Horton is a thinker whose ideas have influenced not only many of his fellow anthropologists but also philosophers and others interested in the study of religions and world-views. These ideas, however, are to be found in scattered articles rather than in book form. In this selection of some of his major theoretical essays, produced over a thirty-year period, with specially written introduction and postscript, readers will for the first time be able to get an overall view of his approach to the comparative study of human thought-systems.

The essays take off from an attempt to understand African religious thought. But they also deal with broader issues in the history and sociology of thought, such as secularization and intellectual modernization. Essays in the first part of the book undertake critical assessments of two established interpretative approaches, the Symbolist and the Theological. Those in the second part propose an alternative, 'Intellectualist' approach, which emphasizes the similarities of structure and process between religious and scientific thinking. The postscript appraises the Intellectualist approach in the light of recent theorizing about religions and world-views.

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Essays on magic, religion and science

Robin Horton

University of Port Harcourt

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Nigeria



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For Sokari and Winnie

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Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>page</i> x
Introduction	1
BEGINNINGS	
1. A definition of religion, and its uses	19
MAINLY CRITICAL	
2. Neo-Tylorianism: sound sense or sinister prejudice?	53
3. Lévy-Bruhl, Durkheim and the Scientific Revolution	63
4. Back to Frazer?	105
5. Professor Winch on safari	138
6. Judaeo-Christian spectacles: boon or bane to the study of African religions?	161
MAINLY CONSTRUCTIVE	
7. African traditional thought and Western science	197
8. Paradox and explanation: a reply to Mr Skorupski	259
9. Tradition and modernity revisited	301
Postscript	347
<i>Notes</i>	388
<i>Bibliography</i>	447
<i>Index</i>	465

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[More information](#)

Acknowledgements

xi

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Paper 4 is a revised and expanded version of the 1987 Frazer Lecture.