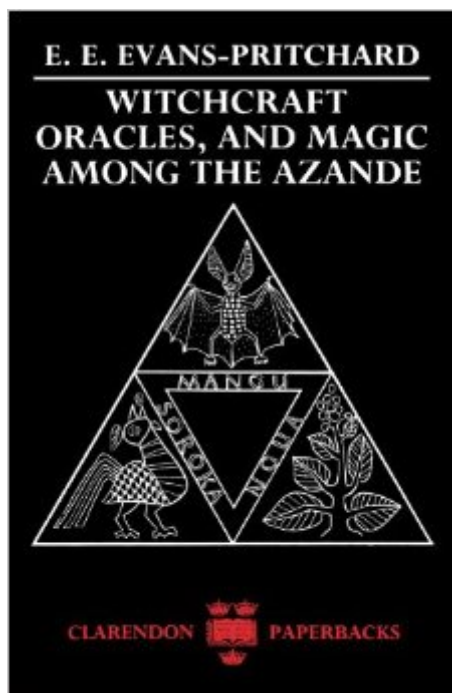


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# Witchcraft, Oracles And Magic Among The Azande



## Synopsis

This acknowledged masterpiece has been abridged to make it more accessible to students. In her introduction, Eva Gillies presents the case for the relevance of the book to modern anthropologists.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Surely no need for commentary on this anthropological classic at this late date, but it remains one of the most wonderfully written and useful texts ever."--Misty L. Bastian, Franklin & Marshall College  
"Classic. Most important book written on the subject. Students love it."--Paige West, Winthrop College  
"Important and classical study."--Larry Nasper, Columbia College, Chicago  
"Timeless classic."--Anne Woodrick, University of Northern Iowa.  
"A detailed and vivid description of witchcraft and the rituals related to it."--Prema Ghimire, Hartwick College

The late Edward E. Evans Pritchard was a Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Oxford.

This is an abridged reprint of a book originally published in 1937. This book by anthropologist Evans-Pritchard is best understood as a reaction against the work of the earlier anthropologist Levy-Bruhl. Levy-Bruhl had argued that "primitive" people have a "pre-logical" mentality, in that they are willing to accept worldviews that include contradictions. Evans-Pritchard disagrees, and uses the case study of the Azande, an African tribe, to make his point. The Azande routinely appealed to "witchcraft" in their daily lives. (I cannot say how accurate Evans-Pritchard's account was of the

Azande during his stay, or how much they have changed since the 30's.) For example, the Azande would explain at least some bad events as the result of witchcraft being practiced against them, and would use a "poison oracle" to determine who the witch was. ("Azande" is the noun, "Zande" is the adjective, like "Britons" vs. "British.") At first glance, this all seems irrational. However, Evans-Pritchard sets out the Azande beliefs in a way that shows that they form a fairly coherent system. He also notes that it was possible for him to live according to these beliefs during his stay with the Azande. This book (and some of Evans-Pritchard's essays) have stimulated an immense amount of secondary literature. Peter Winch (see his articles in Bryan R. Wilson, ed., *Rationality*) argues that Evans-Pritchard did not go far enough, because Evans-Pritchard claims that the Zande beliefs (while not "pre-logical"), are nonetheless unscientific, and mistaken. Winch argues that the test of whether something (e.g., electrons or witchcraft) is real depends on the language and culture within which the judgment is being made. Consequently, it is simply a sort of category mistake to describe the Zande beliefs as unscientific, since "science" is our standard of rationality, not their standard. Charles Taylor (in an essay in the volume of his collected papers on "rationality and the human sciences") argues against Winch that, since the Azande beliefs have empirical consequences (e.g., there should be "witchcraft-substance" in the intestines of actual witches), it must be possible to test the Zande claims. Consequently, the Zande beliefs can fail (or conceivably pass) scientific verification. If you are interested in contemporary anthropological studies of Africa, you should look for a more recent book. However, this is an interesting gateway to some challenging debates over how to think about rationality cross-culturally.

A must-have for anyone interested in African mysticism.

Evans Pritchard is one of the foremost anthropologist in the twentieth century as well as being one of the first to do serious work in Africa. In this book his main focus is the three oracles of the Azande in the Sudan. These being in order of decreasing importance: the poison oracle, the termite oracle, and the rubbing board oracle. He spent extended time researching and was directly feed information from an informant who being taught the secrets of witchdoctors. On the negative side it does have a somewhat condescending tone to African Culture as well as to Africans in general. However, this takes away little from the whole product. the Abridged version is almost as good as the unabridged and is well worth the read.

anthropology classics! a must if you want to understand what was functionalism once as a theory )

one of the most influential books in our field

thank you

Between the condition of the book and the topic it's on, it's one of the most interesting non-fiction pieces I've read.

This is incomprehensible to say the least. All the words are mashed together. It is incredibly difficult to read. I will be expecting a full refund, or a real product.

E. E. Evans-Pritchard is regarded as one of the "founding fathers" of anthropology. *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande* is the result of his first fieldwork experience. Western cultures tend to consider other cultures inferior or primitive in comparison to their own and this unfortunately shows in Evans-Pritchard's writing. There are many points in the book where one must seriously consider the possibility that Evans-Pritchard had misunderstood a part of Azande culture due to the tint of his own cultural lens and misreported it as a result of misunderstanding. Evans-Pritchard discusses many parts of Azande culture as if they are something primitive and inferior. An example of this is a discussion between Evans-Pritchard and a friend of his among the Azande who believed that he had been the victim of a jealous neighbor's witchcraft. The man was a woodcarver of note in the area who's wood had suddenly split during carving. In the man's belief, the sudden split was due to witchcraft. Evans-Pritchard's treatment of the subject had an air of annoyance with the man's inability to consider other possible causes of the split that would have made more sense to a European mind. Despite what might be seen as an occasional and mild sense of cultural superiority over the Azande on part of Evans-Pritchard, the book is well worth the read. As previously stated, Evans-Pritchard is one of the first prominent figures in anthropology and *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande* is considered a classical anthropological text. Aside from the importance of the piece as a record of the evolution and form of such cultural studies, there is quite a bit to learn from the text. Regardless of how the tone that the text may occasionally take one can obviously still learn quite a bit about the Azande, their fears, how they handle social problems, how the social structure of the Azande works, and the effect on Azande culture that the British had. It is quite clear from the text that witchcraft has an effect on how people among the Azande interact with each other. For example, a witch must pay for his or her witchcraft if it has led to the death of another. Payment may mean some sort of compensation or it may mean

the death of the witch. Evans-Pritchard acknowledges that British rule had an effect on the form of payment, compensation became the only payment for witchcraft, and that the relatives of the witch were not obligated to assist in the payment of such compensations at the time that he conducted his field work. It is explained after this statement that a witch's family had, in the past, aided in paying compensations as a duty to their relative (ch. 1, section III). E. E. Evans-Pritchard's *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande* is a classical piece of anthropological literature and would be an essential read for those interested in anthropology. It provides a good snapshot of the field around the time of its formal birth, is an excellent starting place for those who are interested in assessing the evolution of written cultural studies, and can be used in comparison with modern texts to assess how globalization has affected the way that a person's cultural lens colors their view of other peoples.

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