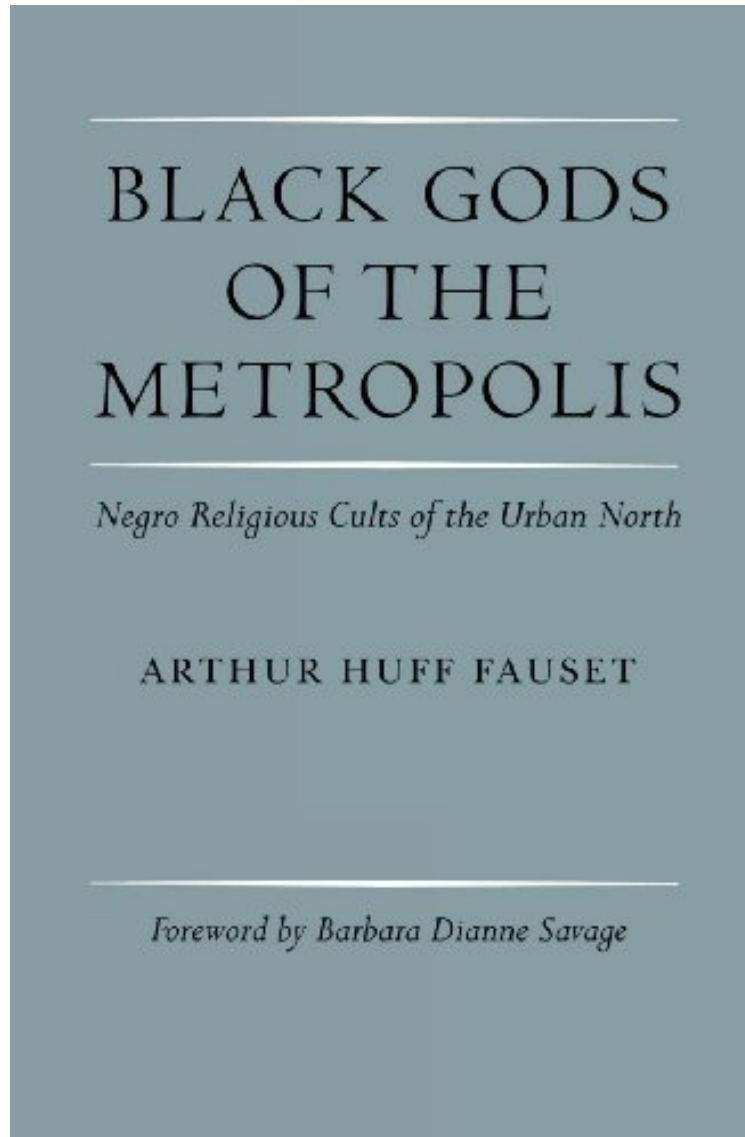


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Black Gods of the Metropolis: Negro Religious Cults of the Urban North

Arthur Huff Fauset

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Arthur Huff Fauset : Black Gods of the Metropolis: Negro Religious Cults of the Urban North before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Black Gods of the Metropolis: Negro Religious Cults of the Urban North:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A GROUNDBREAKING, FASCINATING EARLY "ANTHROPOLOGICAL" STUDY OF FIVE BLACK GROUPSBy Steven H ProppArthur Huff Fauset (1899-1983)

was a civil rights activist, anthropologist, folklorist, and educator. He writes in the first chapter of this book (originally published in 1944), "In this study we shall observe some of the practices prevailing among several representative groups of cult worshippers. It will be our purpose to probe beneath the merely superficial aspects of these practices in order to arrive at a deeper understanding of what is and has been taking place for many years among these Negroes in the development of their religious concepts and practices, under the modifying influences of new experiences in an American environment, especially in our great northern cities." Fauset covers the Mt. Sinai Holy Church of America; United House of Prayer for All People; Church of God (Black Jews); Moorish Science Temple of America; and the Father Divine Peace Mission movement. He also concludes with chapters such as, "Why the Cults Attract," "The Cult as a Functional Institution," "The Negro and His Religion," and "Summary of Findings." 11 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Important study in sociology/anthropology of Black Church By Kimille's Mommy This book is extremely important in that it gives a full perception of "newer," or less traditional African American bodies which made a significant impact on the black religious experience. Arthur Huff Fauset (1899 - 1983?) was a novelist and anthropologist whose interest in the Black Church may have stemmed from the fact that his father was an A.M.E. minister, even though he died when Fauset was an infant. His mother was white and a Christian convert of Jewish heritage (Fauset, 1971, 127). He was a member of a literary family: his older sister, Jessie Redmond Fauset (1884-1961), was a novelist and poet, and was considered "the most prolific of the Renaissance writers of the genteel school" by *Calvacade* magazine. Arthur Huff Fauset's 1944 book, *Black Gods of the Metropolis: Negro Religious Cults in the Urban North*, provides a glimpse of five black religious bodies: the Mount Sinai Holy Church of America, Inc.; the United House of Prayer for All People; Church of God (Black Jews); the Moorish Science Temple of America; and the Father Divine Peace Mission Movement. These were chosen because they were "among the most important and best-known cults of their respective types, and hence among the most representative" (Fauset, 1971, 10). Using participant observation, he presents their origin, a portrait of their respective leader and/or founder, their organizational forms, and an explanation of their practices and rituals. He was a fellow of the American Anthropological Association and was further prepared by studying folklore "extant among Blacks in Philadelphia, British West Indies, Nova Scotia and in the South" in 1931. His master's thesis, "Folklore From Nova Scotia," was the first collection of black folklore in Canada (Fauset 1971, 127). Other books included accounts of Sojourner Truth and a biographical account of the American Negro. He was a contributor of many essays, short stories, articles and book reviews to *Crisis* and *Opportunity*. He also wrote several novels, including *African Lament on Shaka, King of the Zulus*. According to the biographical account, Fauset was involved in "militant civil rights activism." His friends included Alain Locke, W. E. B. DuBois, Adam Clayton Powell, Paul Robeson, and A. Philip Randolph. This led to work as the editor of the Philadelphia edition of Powell's newspaper, *The People's Voice*. He was also honorably discharged from the Army just before being commissioned during World War II due to his prior civil rights activities (Fauset 1971, 128). In the introduction to the 1971 edition of the book, John Szwed states that Fauset's book is important because it gives a heretofore unavailable description of the practices and beliefs of blacks in the United States: The beginning point for understanding any religious institution is at least elementary knowledge of its practices and beliefs. But it is a sad fact that we have better descriptions -- incomplete as they are -- of religious beliefs and practices in West Africa, Brazil, and the Caribbean than we have of those of black people in the United States. And it is in this respect that *Black Gods of the Metropolis* is a singularly important book. Fauset, in writing one of the first books of urban American ethnography, took very seriously the culture of the Negroes of North America. (Fauset, 1971, v) Fauset (1971, 107-108) concluded that African Americans' "over-emphasis ... in the religious sphere" was related to the comparatively meager participation of blacks in other institutional forms of American culture, the result of racial discrimination which forbade black participation in mainstream society. Thus, the one institution with which blacks are closely identified was a form of cultural, spiritual, physical and leadership expression. He maintained that blacks were attracted to cults because they offered both spiritual nurture and freedom to control their own destinies through businesses, politics, social reform and social expression. He also surmised that the personal charisma of the leader was an important factor in attracting members, that the cults had rigid taboos "over certain features of the private lives of its members, frequently reaching into the most intimate details of their lives." Sexual inhibitions were of ultimate importance in most of the cults he studied. He also found that the literal adherence to the Bible as a guide lessened as the programs of the cult became focused upon social, economic and political uplift. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. excellent reading! By Mikal R. Very interesting history, excellent reading!

Stemming from his anthropological field work among black religious groups in Philadelphia in the early 1940s, Arthur Huff Fauset believed it was possible to determine the likely direction that mainstream black religious leadership would take in the future, a direction that later indeed manifested itself in the civil rights movement. The American black church, according to Fauset and other contemporary researchers, provided the one place where blacks could experiment without hindrance in activities such as business, politics, social reform, and social expression. With detailed primary accounts of these early spiritual movements and their beliefs and practices, *Black Gods of the Metropolis* reveals the fascinating origins of such significant modern African American religious groups as the Nation

of Islam as well as the role of lesser known and even forgotten churches in the history of the black community. In her new foreword, historian Barbara Dianne Savage discusses the relationship between black intellectuals and black religion, in particular the relationship between black social scientists and black religious practices during Fauset's time. She then explores the complexities of that relationship and its impact on the intellectual and political history of African American religion in general.

"A pioneering work in the sociology of African-American religion." *Utopian Studies* "A foundational text in fields as diverse as religion and urban studies, Black studies and anthropology a must read!" Lee D. Baker, author of *From Savage to Negro* "Fauset's falls into the select group that includes works of Ralph Ellison, LeRoi Jones, and Albert Murray, that is, the writings of those who have best recognized the distinctiveness and power of Afro-American culture, and given it its proper place in the world." John F. Szwed, Yale University
About the Author Arthur Huff Fauset (1899-1983) was a civil rights activist, educator, folklorist, and author of several works, including *Sojourner Truth*, a biography. Barbara Dianne Savage is Associate Professor of History at the University of Pennsylvania. She is author of *Broadcasting Freedom: Radio, War, and the Politics of Race, 1938-1948*.