



Environmental Consciousness, Women and Masabe Ritual Ceremonies Among the Tonga People of the Middle-Zambezi, Binga Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Traditional practices such as Masabe of the Tonga community along the Zambezi valley date back to pre-colonial African times. This paper examines the interconnectedness of Indigenous African spirituality and environmental stewardship. Data for the paper were gathered from oral interviews, archives, secondary sources, and ethnography in Manjolo and Siachihlaba in Binga district. This study summarizes the Tonga community archive of cultural heritage, environmental epistemologies, community values, and social stability. Masabe is a genre of performance popular among the BaTonga in Binga involving dancing, singing, and material culture. It is a healing ceremony that focuses primarily on fostering a deep sense of health and well-being among community members, which also premised on positive interactions with the environment. The chapter draws attention to the ecological aspects of the ceremonies and analyses the import of the human-processed materials underpinning the conduct of this ceremony. It addresses explicitly social explanations about material culture and how the Tonga community's Indigenous spiritual practices inform their approaches to environmental stewardship and resilience in the face of global environmental changes. The chapter demonstrates that these enduring ceremonies have survived the challenges posed by modernity, colonial rule and the current Pentecostal Christianity. It concludes that there is a need to challenge established or dominant chambers of knowledge and promote local scientific Indigenous voices through traditional practises.

Keywords: ecology, masabe ritual, environmental stewardship, zimbabwe.