

The Preservation of Xitsonga Culture through Rainmaking Ritual: An Interpretative Approach

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ABSTRACT In South Africa the significance of indigenous rituals has diminished following the encounter with European culture. African rituals are fading away with time. Rituals are traditional sacraments that are performed in a socio-religious setting and the term can be used interchangeably with rites. Rituals of various kinds are a feature of almost all known human societies with each community having rituals that can be prescribed by the tradition of that community. This paper deals with *nkelekele* (rainmaking rituals) among the Xitsonga speakers of South Africa. The study shows that Vatsonga have unique ways of managing drought which differ from other South African kingdoms and language groups. It seeks to find out how rainmaking ceremonies are practiced among Vatsonga. Rainmaking ceremonies have always been practised among Vatsonga as a way of managing drought. The aim of this paper is to explain both the cultural and religious customs involved in rainmaking and how they should be preserved for future generations. Methodologically, a qualitative research approach is used for this study. Data collection techniques included interviews and observations. A sample of ten participants who were knowledgeable about rainmaking ritual practices was used. The study is important as it provides insight information on rainmaking rituals among Vatsonga. The study found that rainmaking ceremonies differ when performed by specific people, at different places and, time and for different purposes.