

Established 2000

Midlands State University



FACULTY OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

THE SURVIVAL OF THE VAREMBA CULTURAL PRACTICES IN
ZVISHAVANE DISTRICT-ZIMBABWE (1890-2016)

By

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**BEING A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULLFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR BACHELOR OF ARTS IN HISTORY
HONOURS DEGREE**

JUNE 2016

APPROVAL FORM

The undersigned certify that they have read and recommend to the Midlands State University for acceptance of a dissertation on; *The survival of the Varemba cultural practices in Zvishavane district – ZIMBABWE(1890-12016)* submitted by Henry K Shumba in partial fulfillment of the Bachelor of Arts Honours Degree in History.

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DECLARATION

I, Shumba Henry Kudakwashe (R123956F), certify that this dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Bachelor of Arts in History Honours degree at Midlands State University has not been submitted for a degree at any other University, and that it is entirely my work.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the Almighty God for the wisdom he imparted in me and the guidance he gave me to accomplish this work. My gratitude is extended to my supervisor Mr. I. Mazambani for his assistance and encouragement, because he was always there to provide help when needed, my classmates Abishai Simari and Albert Chipwanyira, my friends Brighton Mafunga, Tendai Simbabure and Wisemen Matsapa for the support I love you guys. I would also like to thank the Zvishavane Rural District Officers who allowed me to carry out my research and also the ZRP Mutambi, MO Education guys and all the Staff, Farai Chabata for sacrificing his time and not forgetting my uncles D. Mangena and S. Mangena who provided the most needed information.

DEDICATIONS

The work is dedicated to J. Shumba, L. Shumba and N. Mandisodza for the financial support, to my spouse Juliet and family members who gave me moral support. I would like to thank my friends for standing with me through thick and thin to accomplish my study.

ABSTRACT

The study's main aim is to demonstrate how the Varembe people preserved their cultural activities and to unpack the reasons behind the survival of the Varembe cultural practices in Zvishavane district. The Varembe ethnic group is a distinct group in Zvishavane, this is due to their unique way of life, their cultural practices includes Komba initiation rite, Murundu, virginity testing, testing for fertility, Female genital Mutilation (FGM), Child marriages, and inheritance. Komba is an initiation school for girls and Murundu is a school for boys and the Varembe people always attends these initiations and they serve to pass their tradition from one generation to the other, thus the survival of the Varembe cultural practices in Zvishavane district. Varembe culture survives due to the fact that it had been hidden in secrecy; therefore it has not been pervaded. There are various reasons for the survival of Varembe cultural practices and these include formation of alliances with emergent powers, acquiring higher post in their communities for instance becoming the Members of Parliament in the Varembe ethnic group and creation of their dynasties such as the Mposi dynasty. Many tribes' cultural practices were washed away by colonialism but for the Varembe this was not the case due to various factors such as geographical location, the observance of strict endogamous way of life and the nature of the Varembe cultural practices. The Varembe ethnic groups make use of their medical knowledge to earn respect from other tribes and they managed to influence other groups to adopt their own religious practices and this preserved the Varembe cultural practices. There is lot of criticisms which were put forward by many local and international organizations concerning the Varembe cultural practices but it did not whip away their cultural practices. Thus, the survival of the Varembe cultural activities due to the fact that all the police which were introduced was not efficient.

ACRONMYS

IKS Indigenous Knowledge systems

AIDS.....Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

FGMFemale Genital Mutilation

HIV..... Human Immune Virus

STIs..... Sexually Transmitted Disease

WHOWorld Health Organization

VMMC.....Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision

ZRPZimbabwe Republic Police

UNCRC.....United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children

ACRWC.....African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children

INTRODUCTION

The study focuses on the Varembe cultural practices and how they survived since many cultures were diluted and neutralized by the coming in of scientific era, in Zvishavane district. The major purpose of this study is to unpack the secrets behind the survival of the Varembe cultural practices up to date. The Varembe ethnic group in Zvishavane is unique due to the fact that they managed to stick to their customs and values. They are various Varembe cultural practices which were preserved by the Lemba people and these include: virginity testing, appeasement of avenging spirits, Komba initiation rite, Ngoma (male circumcision), inheritance, fertility testing, and female genital mutilation. It will be demonstrated that there are various factors responsible for the survival of the Varembe cultural practices. Religion can be changed or moved but not an identity¹, the fact that Lemba is an identity not religion helped in preserving the Varembe cultural practices. Religion can be easily diluted or infiltrated and this was the reason behind the washing away of many cultural practices among groups in Zvishavane except for the Lemba group which is distinct since they are guided by their norms and values.² Colonialism washed away various cultural practices amongst tribes in Zimbabwe, due to the fact that culture is dynamic it changes overtime so as to suit modernity³. This was not the case for the Lemba, because they regard themselves as elephants, meaning that they are superior to any other group since they are of the Zhou totem. Another secret behind the survival of the Varembe cultural practices is that they strongly believe that Africans had their own science before the advent of whites and their science. Thus, they strongly believe in indigenous knowledge systems, this is evidenced by one of their cultural practices which is fertility testing, which they regard as effective and efficient.

All these cultural practices survived colonialism due to the fact that the Lemba people put forward strategies such as being endogamous, and indulging themselves in socialization or

initiation process. In this initiation school children will be enlightened and made to accept their roles. This is evidenced by the fact that during initiation process children will be equipped through learning fundamental norms, values, morality and expectations⁴.

The study targets the Varemba in Zvishavane under chief Mazvihwa because they are a distinct group and they are comfortable in par-taking their practices even though many people regard their culture as evil and inhuman. Many groups in this area shun their cultural practices and imitates the white settlers, thus this gives the research the zeal and eager to study the Varemba cultural practices in order to unpack the secrets behind its survival. The Varemba people have a tendency of influencing other tribes and this played a significant role in preserving their cultural practices. For instance, the Varemba managed to convince the Europeans to adopt their own religious practice which is circumcision, thus the survival of the Varemba cultural practices is upon their influence over that tribes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a lot of literature on the cultural practices of the Varemba people however; there is little literature on how the Varemba people preserved their and the reasons for the survival of the Varemba cultural practices. The Varemba people' practices have been not explored how they managed to survive and the rites of passage are very common in Zimbabwe amongst the Varemba people. Toubia is one of the scholars who wrote about Komba as a practice of the Varemba people but mainly concentrated on Komba initiation rite which serves to commence the graduation of young girls into women hood¹. Girls are considered to be ripe when they

start their menstrual cycle and this means that when girls start their periods they are regarded as ripe or kuibva.

Scholars ignored the ways which were put forward to preserve the Varembe cultural practices and factors which led to the survival of the Varembe cultural practices. This paper will add and unpack some gaps which were ignored by scholars. On initiation schools which are known as Komba initiation rite and Ngoma. Komba initiation school is attended by girls who are ten years and above, whereas Ngoma is attended by young boys at the age of seven young. The parents and guardians decide for their children thus the preservation of the Varembe cultural practices, since children has no power over themselves. Amongst the Varembe ethnic group it is a crime to refuse to send your child to the initiation school thus one will be labeled an outcast and it is believed that if one member opposes the Varembe culture wrath will fell upon him thus the survival of the Varembe cultural practices². Usually those who refuse to meet the demands of the Varembe are caught by surprise during the night all small boys will be forced to go into the forest and practice the prolonged event amongst the Varembe tribe, thus the survival of the Varembe cultural practices in Zvishavane.

Female Genital Mutilation is one of the Varembe cultural practices which raise a lot of criticism but scholars did not pay much particular attention to address how the Varembe people managed to preserve it to date. P. Hoskens is one the scholars who largely focuses on Female Genital Mutilation and he notes that partaking in the FGM qualifies one to be a woman since amongst the Varembe the procedure is a necessity for marriage³. To the Varembe people Female Genital Mutilation is a rite of passage which marks a girls 'transition to womanhood and her readiness to marry. When the Varembe are practicing FGM they usually apply herbs and this is most prevalent in Africa, the researcher did not focus on how

it managed to survive thus this will be addressed in this paper. For centuries the Varemba people have been practicing the elongation of the girls' clitoris and girls will be asked to apply herbs on their private parts in a bid to make the clitoris long. It is believed that the practice results in short term and long term health problems and complications. In spite of all this the cultural practices survived up to date this is due to the role which is played by religious leaders and elders. WHO realized that FGM is one of the major practices which cause diseases, since it is said the practice entails severe pain.

Mubuwa classifies Komba initiation as a method which uplift the dominance of men over women, but this did not led to the washing away of the Varemba cultural practices⁴. Mubuwa did not focus on the ways which saved the Varemba cultural practices and thus this paper will try to fill the void. The research diverts his route and concentrates on the factors which preserved the Varemba cultural practices and tries to unpack the secrets behind the survival of the Varemba cultural practices in Zvishavane. The researcher realized that although some scholars and authorities dwell on the effects of the Varemba cultural practices, the government officials and the nongovernmental organizations helped in the preservation of the Varemba cultural practices. For instance WHO and VMCC have worked hand in hand with the Varemba elders to save the nation and by incorporating the Varemba in their programs they were in a way preserving the tradition and cultural practices. The government intervened and tried to eradicate some cultural practices such as child marriages and incest .this did not help since it is a traditional thing which has been practiced for a long period of time and amongst the Varemba tribe its part and parcel of their way of life thus they preserved their culture. They managed to attain the survival of their cultural practices by remaining secretive and isolated from all other tribes. The Varemba people made links with chiefs and through

their alliance systems they avoid the coming in of NGOs in their communities through some regulations and laws hence preserving their cultural practices⁵.

Circumcision is one of the most decorated cultural practices of the Varembe people and a lot have been written about it. This practice draws much attention of the scholars such as E. Chirenje and in his work he notes that Murundu is practiced in during the winter to speed up the healing of the wounds⁶. Male circumcision is when the boy's foreskin of his private part will be removed using a razor .and this will be done by the circumciser who is called Nyamukanga. The process can lead to deaths especially when the parents of the initiates are witches or prostitutes. If the initiates' parents are witches they must confess their sins in order for the boy to heal, if they fail to confess the son will die. The practice reduces witches in the community and it eradicates prostitution thus the preservation of their cultural practices in Zvishavane. Factors which preserved the Varembe cultural practices were ignored by Foto Male. The researcher will demonstrate how the Varembe cultural practices survived by unpacking the various strategies which were introduced. Foto Male went on to say that the processes can even lead to loss of life if performed wrongly and in most parts of Africa boys died due to wrong circumcision⁷.

Virginity testing is one of the cultural practices which were abolished in Africa amongst different people but to the Varembe people manage to safeguard it. Shoko T. and other schools of thought focused on virginity testing and its purported benefits of the exercise and gave a blind eye on the strategies which were put forward to preserve the Varembe cultural practices. Amongst the Varembe people virginity testing an important aspect at Komba schools and the study differ in that Shoko ignored to mention how the cultural practices

survived. When testing for virginity the elders will be inserting their fingers on the girl's private part to confirm if she is still intact⁸. This is a test where one must pass; those who pass will save themselves from the shame of moving around the community with a cloth that has a hole at the top. The girls who will be still intact will be allowed to choose the husband of their own choice and this helps the society in that there will be less rate of HIV since girls will not indulge in early sexual activities.

Von sicard spent a lot of his time studying about the Varembe people and their history but he did not address how the Varembe people managed to preserve their practices. There is another prominent scholar on the history of Lemba Tudor Parfitt focuses much on the origins and Cultural values of the Lemba but he turned a blind eye on the preservation and survival of the Varembe cultural practices⁹. Although he did not mention the factors that preserved the Varembe cultural practices, his study helps much since he talks about the origins and the cultural practices of the Varembe people. More so, he has talked about the journey of the Varembe up to period when they settle in Mberengwa.

1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher made use of different strategies in order to access information of the Varembe ethnic group these include making use of ethical considerations, deception method and informed consent. Varembe is a group who are secretive and aggressive so the research went to the Varembe elders and liaised with them about the purpose of the study. The researcher guarantees the Varembe elders that the confidentiality will be taken and preserved and that this is done for educational purposes. The Varembe elders were made to believe and agree to

give the researcher the opportunity to carry out his research due to the fact that they were promised that privacy will be used in the sense that anonymity was guaranteed. Varemba elders were assured that identifying information will not be made available to anyone who is not directly involved in the study. Various methodologies were used to gather information in Zvishavane district. In conducting the research, the researcher made use of both primary and secondary sources to gather in-depth information about how the Varemba cultural practices survived and how they are preserved. The study relied on many instruments such as interviews, questionnaires, books, journals and others focus group to attain data.

Interviews were used in order to explore the views, experiences, beliefs and secrets by so doing the researcher acquired data that can be analyzed and summarized precisely. In conducting these interviews the researcher made use of deception in that the respondents were asked questions about the collapse of other ethnic group 'culture. When they were giving the factors which led to the collapse of other cultural practices they were actually giving the researcher the necessary information that helped in the study. Deception was necessary because it prevented respondents from behaving in an unnatural way. Interviews were largely used in the obtaining information from the stakeholders of Zvishavane district and some members of the Varemba. Interviews were useful since they provided an opportunity to collect data that is comprehensive and in depth than anticipated as an interview, the interviewee is basically the main focus.

Conversely, the researcher made use of unstructured interviews because significant depth was required since there is little literature on how the Varemba people managed to preserve their cultural practices. This type of interview was useful in that the researcher managed to access adequate information. The researcher started the proceedings by just posing a question what

is needed for culture to survive amongst a group of people? (Chii chinoita kutimararamiro evanhu asaparare?) A lot of factors were raised and they were helpful in answering the questions of the researcher. However this type of interview was time consuming though it helped.

The researcher also made use of open ended questions and this resulted in the revealing of all information in an interviewee's mind, this was major boost in that the researcher got more information. The interviewer was not able to interview a large number of elders since most are illiterate and this was barrier and the disadvantage of interviews. Many did not attend even primary school. This was very unfortunate in that many cannot read nor write and there was issue of subjectivity since it is a taboo to reveal their information to the public.

The researcher also introduces questionnaire which relatively quick and easy to administer so as to collect specific primary and raw data, this was carried out through making use of misrepresenting the purpose of the research. This was a way of acquiring proper crucial information from the Varembe. The questionnaires were distributed to a total number of 36 people, 18males and 18 females of the Varembe tribe with an average of 3men and 3 women per village who have been directly practiced the various Varembe cultural practices and the rest were distributed amongst the Varembe children, boys and girls in Zvishavane district.

Very few individuals responded since many could not read and write few, thus the questionnaires were not that effective since it only produce inadequate information to the researcher and many were not returned back to the researcher. This was so since respondents were asked open ended questions that are often specific; hence they assisted in guiding the

respondents within the context of the study. Questionnaires assisted the researcher to manage time; they acted as a time saving instrument especially on self-administered ones as they were given to respondents separately at the same time. However, questionnaires had their own gaps since it provided information with a lot of biases. The researcher countered the issue of influences from the researcher by introducing self-administered questionnaires and generally there was no influence from other members of the society.

The researcher made use of face-to-face interviews in order to avoid falsification and this made the process easy in that it gave accurate screening. The interviewed was unable to give false since face-to-face capture verbal and non-verbal cues. The researcher benefited tremendously because he could figure it out that the respondent is not comfortable answering the question posed. The level of enthusiasm for the topics being discussed was easily noticed and this helped the interviewer to control the discussion.

The other factor was that the respondents felt comfortable responding to questionnaire especially concerning the issues on how they deal with health and diseases, these issues are not supposed to be described directly since it is a taboo among the Varembe to share with strangers. However, there was a challenge working with the elders since they found it difficult to understand the structured questions. The researcher was forced to go an extra mile to clarify the questions in vernacular language. The interviewer would rapidly ask the same questions differently so as to cover up for the unclear information so that it helps to keep relevant information in the study

Participant observation was another method used, researcher becomes actively involved in the observation and the objective was to understand the problem from within, the points of people from the same experience and this was effective in small group .The identity and

purpose of research was revealed to other groups in order to make sure that the researcher could gather important information.

Lastly, random sampling was another method which was introduced in collecting data. Boys and girls were selected at randomly from a choice of subjects. Few children were chosen in different villages to provide information. This was not effective due to the fact that many were too ignorant to reveal their cultural practices to the common people.

END NOTES

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CHAPTER 1

CULTURAL PRACTICES OF THE VAREMBA PEOPLE.

Introduction

This chapter mainly focuses on the Varembe cultural practices that separates them from other ethnic groups in Zimbabwe. There are various practices of the Varembe people which make them to be a distinct ethnic group and these are Murundu, Komba, early marriages, intermarriages, female genital mutilation and inheritance. These cultural practices bear more benefits and largely the benefits led to the survival of these cultural practices. The Varembe ethnic group is characterized endogamy and they led an endogamous way of life whereby one is not allowed to marry outside their tribe and the strict endogamy helped in preserving the cultural practices of the Varembe people. Varembe people also practices Komba which is meant for the rite of passage of girls into women hood. This helped in the survival of the Varembe culture in that in these Komba schools girls will be reminded and taught how to behave, how to interact with elders in a society. Komba is done annually and in a way this worked as an advantage in the survival of the Varembe culture in that it will be kept alive every year since young girls will acquire information and pass it to the next generation. Thus, it needs to be highlighted that Komba schools plays an important role in as far as the survival of the Varembe cultural practices is concerned.

1.1 Origins

There are many scholars who traced the origins and identity of the Varembe people and most of them concurs that the Varembe ethnic group has Islamic origins. These prominent scholars include Mativha, Tudor Parfit, Mandivenga, Chigwedere, Von Sicard and Le Roux, all these

regards the Varemba as known as Balemba, Basoni, Vamwenye, Balepa and Lemba. The Remba considers themselves to be Israelites who migrated to Africa after Babylonian exile¹. For Le roux, the Varemba are probably of African ancestry as shown by the religious practices such as endogamy, circumcision rites, ritual slaughter, food taboos and animal sacrifices. Mandivenga posits that the now identified as Muslims, due to Islamic characteristics, which were shown by the people in the Zambezi region². . The Varemba people in their practices make use of names which are not pure Shona and this name includes Hasane, Sadiki, Haji, Hamisy and Seremani. The issue of names which are not pure and their food taboos proves to be the features of Islamic culture.³

The Varemba are said to be one of the descendants of the twelve tribes of Israel and they regard themselves as black Jews, The Lemba observes and adhere to the food rituals which are found in Leviticus 11. The Varemba are well known through their formula which is making use of kosher style of eating meat which is slaughtered by a Lemba. On the other hand, Le roux and Tooke concurs that the Varemba are probably of African origin, this is because in the 19th and 20th century the Lemba were greatly esteemed by surrounding tribes in Zoutpansberry region of South Africa for mining and metal skills. The Varemba and their medical knowledge earned them respect among tribes in South Africa⁴. However, this was disputed by other scholars who suggest that the Varemba ancestry is of Islamic origin and that they latter moved into Africa, in search of trading places and routes. Mandivenga argues that: in South Africa the Varemba are described as Islamic Kaffirs as a way of distinguishing them from Hottentots and Coloureds⁵.

Ethnographers suggest that various groups of the Varembe people originally consisted of one group that suddenly dispersed in different directions of Africa⁶. The dispersed groups were identified differently depending with the place for instance in the then Southern Rhodesia they were named Varembe or Vamwenye, whereas in Southern Nyasaland were known as Amwenye and in the Transvaal South Africa were referred to as Balemba, Malepa or Lemba⁷. It was discovered that the Lemba circumcise their sons⁸. Bleed meat animals and prohibit the consumption of blood of pigs. The Lemba are partly endogamous in most cases and the Varembe people give different accounts of their origin. Most scholars argue that the Lemba people are of this Semitic culture originally came from Sena in Egypt. According to Mabuwa, they moved down south along with their traditions and customs, they are believed to have travelled through Zanzibar, Uganda, Malawi, South Africa and finally Zimbabwe⁹. Rambowani and their descendants is a distinct group which is believed to have settled in South Africa. The group finally settled in Mberengwa district at Mupondashango in Zimbabwe. It was discovered that the Varembe group's totem is Ndou, same as Zhou in Karanga.

One group of the Varembe people that is in Zvishavane district under chief Mazvihwa claim to have the same origins with those who are in Mberengwa who settle under chief Mposi. They suggest that they fled to Chishawasha near Harare but eventually moved down and settle in present-day Zvishavane. Karanga is the dominant language of the Varembe who went and settle with Vasutu. The Varembe were also found in Masvingo and they are said to have built great Zimbabwe. It is believed that modernity influences and change culture in order to suit it, this happened among many groups in Zimbabwe in that they ended on despising their cultural practices¹⁰ however, this was not the case to the Varembe people. The Varembe of Zvishavane district said that they come up with various strategies which

preserved their cultural practices and this includes, alliance systems, creation of dynasties and making use of Komba schools. Thus the survival of the Varembe cultural practices in Zvishavane district at the expense of all other cultures who were washed away by the invention of science.

1.2 The Varembe and Komba initiation

The Varembe ethnic group are well known for their initiation process which is regarded as Komba School. In Komba schools character building will be the other of the day this is evidenced by the fact that girls will be trained to be custodian of provisions as well as playing with children. The major purpose of this Komba School is that it equips boys and girls with fundamental customs, morality, human life skills and values¹¹. For Damen, culture encompasses teachings which entails boys and girls to respect their elders and with culture unity is attained and the future is prepared¹². Thus, culture and its definition according to Damen is fulfilled by the Varembe ethnic group since girls and boys will be exposed to the norms and values of the Varembe culture. The Varembe ethnic group during Komba initiation ceremonies teaches girls how to cook, brew beer, to be hygienic during menstruation and the eradication of prostitution by maintaining high levels of morality¹³. This is the reasons which led to the survival of the Varembe cultural practices in Zvishavane district.

One of the most significant and valuable teaching amongst the Varembe is that of understanding menstrual cycle. To the Varembe menstruation is sensitive thus during this period a girl is considered unclean and this is the belief which is well known in many cultures¹⁴. During this era she must not partake in cooking and brewing beer for ritual

purposes. Komba initiation is practiced by girls when they are graduating from being girls to become women. This is normally done by girls who want to get married to a Lemba and even if one is non-Lemba (Shenji) she must participate in the Komba process¹⁴. Generally girls attend the initiation process when they start their menstrual cycle. To the Lemba girls who start menstrual cycle as ripe (kuibva). Harman notes that Komba is the same as kuibva among the Lemba.¹⁵ When a girl reaches twelve years, she is believed to be mature that she can go on and get married. Every girl in the camp chooses her Nyanye, an elder woman who will guide and teach the girl during the rite of passage. She will present a bundle of firewood and a cloth to her Nyanye and she will be automatically recruited to be part of the family.

Initiation is meant to equip the girl with cultural norms and values of the Varembe and it is put forward in order to understand the menstrual cycle process, and how to satisfy a man in bed. For instance the women will recite the totem of her husband in order to entice him, so that he will be sexual active¹⁶. This is one of the education girls acquire in the Komba schools and it's also a factor which led to the survival of the Varembe cultural practices in that to the world, they won't hear a case of divorce amongst the Varembe people. Mbuya Nyanye would teach girls how to make use of herbs and by so doing they will be preparing girls to take care of their family. During the initiation process girls are taught how to keep their houses and to be strong this will be put into practice when girls are encouraged to go into the field. All these education helps in preservation of the Varembe culture and makes them a unique group.

The Varembe girls are taught to be submissive and how to make use of herbs to their private parts, to them they are certain herbs that appetites men for sex which leads to satisfaction in

bed¹⁷. The Lemba has their criteria of testing if one is virgin or not, they are dipped into water into a river. To them virgin girls do not catch colds, hence those who will be shivering will be regarded not virgin¹⁸. Anyone who tempers with breaking the Varembe rules will suffer from the consequences of being beaten by the elders. Thus, girls will thrive to remain intact and tries her level best not to shame his parents and this in a way is a positive impact of the Varembe culture.

1.3 Virginitly testing

Virginitly testing is one of the important aspects in Komba schools and among the Varembe ethnic group girls are oriented by their uncles if they are still full. Shoko notes that young girls are said to be pure virgin and innocent¹⁹, this is proved to correct because many Varembe girls when tested are found still intact. The girls would lie down with her knees up, and then Nyanye will put her two fingers inside the vagina checking if the hymen is still intact, if it is found intact the girl will be regarded virgin. The Varembe also applies a criteria of gazing at the girl's face into her eyes and if one has innocent eyes she will be regarded virgin and this led to a lot of criticism but the Varembe are still practicing it. Varembe people when testing for virginitly they just observe the appearance of the breast as a way of detecting if one is virgin. This is the method that has been used by the Varembe they did not adopt the western means thus the survival of the Varembe cultural practices.

Virginitly testing among the Varembe ethnic group is an examination which every girl must exercise and make sure that one passes it. During pass out ceremonies the non-virgin will suffer in that they will be deprived of choosing their own boys but rather given to married man, they will also move around with their head tied with a red cloth with a hole at the

Centre while virgins are tied with white cloths²⁰. The ones who are virgin will enjoy the benefits in that their husbands will pay little lobola.

1.5 Testing for fertility

Fertility testing is one of the cultural practices which were preserved by the Varemba people and they practice it because they are well versed with medical knowledge. Amongst the Varemba it is rare to find Ngomwa (those who is infertile) the Varemba always make sure that there are not facing similar problems with the Vashenji. Their herbal medical knowledge helps tremendously and it earned them respect from other tribes. Both girls and boys will be tested for fertility and they usually give their children an herb called Masunungure which frees them from all evil spirits.

This is done by Varemba and it distinguishes them from all other groups, in that they have their own science which is different from the science which was brought about by the whites. Their science is indigenous knowledge systems and making use of herbal medicine is their order of the day. Amongst the Varemba, usually boys at puberty stage are checked if they are fertile. Elders take the boys to the river and inform them to partake into masturbation until they produce semen²¹. This is done especially in stagnant water; if the semen sinks it means that one is fertile but if the semen floats on top of water that is a sign of being infertile. It is the duty of the elders to take care of those who are sterile, thus they give them some herbs to activate their reproductive systems. The process of testing for fertility is also done to girls but it is different in that girls are given uncooked egg to drink if one vomit that is a sign of being sterile and Mbuya Nyanye will prepare a porridge which is mixed with herbs in order to activate their reproductive systems.

2.1 Intermarriages

The Varembe are characterized with endogamous way of life, they despise intermarriages and to them the non-Lemba is called Vashenji (meaning commoners). This was supported by Mandivenga when he notes that an endogamous society is one which restricts people of a particular group to marry into or be married in another group²². One who wants to be married into the Varembe tribe must partake in the Varembe religion, customs and dietary rules. This qualifies one to be a member of the Lemba tribe, for women they are taken to the river and built a shelter made of grass, one is required to enter in the shelter and then it will be set on fire, then she will be thrown in the river by so doing one will be cleansed from being a Mushenji and becoming a Lemba. It is important to note that the girl is not allowed to bring any cooking equipment from her house and asked to shave her hair as a sign of starting a new life as a Lemba²³. The newly Lemba will be equipped with various rules concerning sexual behavior and every women must be well versed with making use of herbs and expected to take care of children and husband. The non-Varembe are referred to as Basetse in Sotho and in Shona Vashenji, and their characteristics and cultural practices are similar to that of the Arabs²⁴. The Varembe are discouraged to marry non-Varembe and this is common amongst the Jews since they are not supposed to marry non-Jews thus the link between the Varembe and the Jews. The Varembe ethnic group justifies that there are Black-Jews in that they don't marry from outside their tribe. No one can become a Lemba through circumcision and by adhering to their customs and beliefs.

2.2 Male circumcision

According to the Varemba customs every man is supposed to pass through circumcision process for him to be called a man²⁵. Murundu is done between the months of June and July (winter) for both boys and girls but separately. Young boys' starts attending camps from grade 2, 3 and 7, normally boys will be circumcised at the age of 10. Ngoma takes place in mountain Dumbwi which is in Mberengwa. Boys will be in camp for two months, they are circumcised using a sharp object by the Nyamukanga. The Nyamukanga will use Munzwawenjenje to make life easy for him to circumcise many boys²⁶. The elder will apply herbs so as to catalyze the healing process of the wound. When boys are circumcised they are discouraged to eat food with salt since it rises the rate of erection, which is not necessary because it can cause pain on the circumcised part. The boys are told to smoke herbs and drink beer so as to avoid feeling the pain. The elders soon after circumcision take boys to a place where they commence a ritual process, they place a clay pot with mixed herbs underground, and then boys are asked to stand on top. If one fell down this is a sign that his parents are involved in witch craft thus parents will be called to confess, if not the wound of the boy will not heal. If the mother of the circumcised boy is a witch or a prostitute the wound will not heal if she refuses to confess or even die.

Circumcision process is done before sunrise and after that boys will be taken to the river in order to ease pain in cold water. During healing time boys are taught cultural practices, traditional history and how to become fathers²⁷. Women play a major role during Ngoma rites, in that they brew traditional beer at the age of 13 and they usually spend two months cooking and fetching firewood for their male counterparts. At the initiation process girls are not allowed to mix with boys, they sing a song when communicating with boys especially when they bring food. They leave the food and run away, this also applies to boys in that they sing a song by so doing they will be alerting the girls that they received the food. If the girls

take much of the time in vacating the dispatched food point they will be beaten or used as sexual instrument which is the same as rape.

2.3 Inheritance

Inheritance is one of the cultural practices which were carried out by many tribes in Africa but many tribes were polluted and their practice was washed away. This was not the case for the Varembe, since boys and girls will be trained at a tender age to take care of a family. Girls will be taught how to satisfy a man whereas boys will be trained to face the realities of life thus everyone among the Varembe boys and girls will be prepared to fill the void hence the survival of inheritance amongst the Varembe.

The Varembe maintained their cultural practices in spite of many changes that take place and inheritance is an important aspect to the Varembe tribe²⁸. It is all about replacing the deceased. If the brother dies the younger one will take the position of the deceased, thus taking care of wife and children. This is regarded as Kugaranhaka, if the women refuse to marry the younger brother she will be sent back to her family. Girls are to replace sister and aunt when she is barren or dead. This is put forward in order to maintain good relationship between the husband and wife's parents. The relationship of the in laws is not supposed to die and amongst the Varembe solves it by practicing inheritance. If the son in-law impresses the father of his wife in paying lobola he will be given a younger wife to marry as a way of appreciation.

2.4 Sexual socialization

Young girls are subjected to sexual orientation, this is usually carried out by elderly men and sexual socialization is accommodated by the African Traditional culture²⁹. For the Varembe this process involves fondling of the girls tiny breast, buttocks and touching of private parts. In the Varembe ethnic group this is known as Chiramu and its aim is to socialize children through touching the girl's private part. It is undertaken by uncles, the husband of the sister and it does not involve sexual intercourse. It is aimed at caressing the girl's private parts thus it is considered a socialization aspect.

Sexual socialization is an important practice in the Varembe culture in that girls will be getting to know the realities of the world and it will help develop them to become sexually active. This does not necessarily mean they will indulge into sexual intercourse. This helps especially if the sister dies it won't be a problem for them to inherit since they will be used to their uncles.

2.5 Female genital mutilation

The Varembe people practice the elongation of the clitoris and it is a rite of passage, which marks a girl's transition to womanhood and her readiness to marry. This is motivated by beliefs about behaviors and virginity chastity³⁰. The Varembe believes that FGM reduces a woman's libido and therefore it is believed to help her resist illicit. Usually this is done when girls reaches puberty and the Varembe suggests that FGM is used to cleanse a girl, in belief that it is more hygienic and will stop unpleasant secretions and odors' as the child develop maturity.

2.6 Child marriages

The Varemba people practice child marriages and they suggest that they have been practicing since ancient times. A Child marriage is a process whereby a child is married voluntarily or not voluntary below the age of 18. The Varemba believes that marriage has nothing to do with age but what matters is the influence and decision of the parents. When a parent feels that the girl has reached sexual maturity they would hand their children in marriage. Child marriages are increased by many reasons such as family debts among the Varemba people. Some are married in exchange of food and in most cases when the sister is barren and her husband is rich and needs children, the in-laws would give their child so as to maintain relations with the rich in-laws. Girls who are found out that they are no longer virgins after the initiation school they will be offered to elders so as to punish them hence child marriages. Early marriage is used as a way of protecting the male guardianship to daughters, protecting them from sexual assault, avoiding pregnancy out of marriage, extending their childbearing years.

2.7 Observance of the Ngoma Lungundu

Drums are symbolic objects and these are used to identify and separate people in a society and amongst the tribes in Zimbabwe the Varemba were identified using their drum called Ngoma Lungundu³¹. Varemba people believe that the Ngoma Lungundu is the source of their supernatural powers and that they must protect and respect it. Ngoma Lungundu is a drum which is holy and that it cannot be touched or grounded by non-priests. They also believed it emitted a fire of God that killed their enemies and much of the credit towards the survival of the Varemba cultural practices. The drum was used to store ritual objects and it was carried by poles inserted into rings. The Varemba people believe that the Ark was similar to the biblical Ark of the Covenant of the Israelites.



Fig1. Shows the Ngoma Lungundu which is known as the lost Ark of the Covenant which was found in Harare at a forgotten shelf at Harare.

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CHAPTER 2

LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL CRITICISM OF VAREMBA CULTURAL

PRACTICES.

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the local and international criticism of Varembe cultural practices which were forwarded by many scholars. Varembe ethnic group practices Female Genital Mutilation, early marriages, circumcision, inheritance, virginity testing, fertility testing and sexual socialization. These practices face criticism in that they are regarded as inhuman outdated practices which violate human rights. These cultural practices have been practiced worldwide for centuries as a result the Varembe ethnic group uses it as passport to continue practicing them. The Varembe people justify their evil acts in that they say our culture and religion requires us to practice these cultural practices and that their culture is distinct in that they must adhere to their custom. A lot of positives of the Varembe cultural practices have been revealed while negatives were not considered like for instance, the effects of male circumcision are ignored. The negatives of Varembe cultural practices will be demonstrated in this chapter, local and abroad criticism will also be discussed.

1.1 Varembe people and criticism of female genital mutilation

Female Genital Mutilation is one of the cultural practices which were practiced worldwide but in many countries it was later banished due to education enlightenment. Amongst the Varembe ethnic group “FGM is a practice guided by the ideology that sex for women should not be about pleasure, but about procreation”. Although many strategies were put forward it remained an important cultural practice amongst tribes. The Varembe ethnic group talks

about the positives of the practices and they encourage the adherence to the custom, thus the preserved the cultural practice. FGM is a tribal traditional practice which is performed as a superstitious belief practiced for the preservation of chastity and purification. It is also done in order to protect the girl child from promiscuity thus, the protection of virginity. One of the Lemba members suggest that “our custom is a good tradition and has to be protected”.¹In most parts of Africa the FGM has received a good reception and it also survived amongst the Varembe ethnic group.

However, the practice faces stiff criticism in that it is one of the causes of gender inequality in that girls are ill-treated while boys won't suffer from it. It is recognized as fundamental violation of human rights of girls and women and it reflects deep-rooted inequality amongst both sexes. “The Varembe children face torture, cruelty, degrading treatment and deprivation of their right to live when the procedure results in death”², thus the Varembe cultural practice affects the community since people who would have bring development dies before the actual time. WHO and ACRW criticizes the cultural practice of Varembe since it is performed when girls are at a tender age, thus infringing the human rights of children because the children will be forced to do something which outside their will.

The Gambian President Jammeh is one of the critiques of the Varembe cultural practice (FGM) when he suggests that “FGM is an obsolete practice that is not required by Islam”⁴. It is believed that FGM can lead to serious infections, bleeding, infertility, maternal complications and even deaths in some cases. Hence, it was necessary to ban it in Gambia because many nations are trying their levels best to avoid gender inequality. This practice is despised due to the fact that in Northern Sudan 20-25% of cases of sterility are linked to infibulation and this is the major reason why the Gambian President calls for the halt of FGM. The practice affects the future development of the nation in that many children face

complications when giving birth, in some instances it results in death due to continuous bleeding and this is the reason why the Gambian President abolished the practice.

FGM is one of the fundamental violations of human rights, it is carried out when girls are two months in Eritrea, 6 years in Mali and almost 10 years in Egypt and it is generally performed by a traditional birth attendant. This practice abuses children in that the will of the children is not considered and this raises the alarms for criticism from organizations such as UNICEF and WHO and NGOs who want to make sure that children's voices are heard. FGM has no health benefits for girls and women but rather adverse consequences such as shock from pain.

FGM is one of the harmful practices, since the amputation of the clitoris and other sensitive tissue reduces the women's ability to enjoy sex. The infibulated women's marriage is painful due to the fact that the small vaginal opening and lack of elasticity in the scar tissue that forms it. Infibulation makes intercourse unpleasant and unsatisfying for both men and women. Under such conditions marriage becomes sour thus, leading to polygamy. FGM makes the marital dissolution especially if a woman's fertility is affected. "In Sudan it was discovered that infibulated women are almost twice as likely to have lower fertility than those who did not go through FGM and more than twice as likely to be divorced"⁵. Thus, a practice that is justified as making girls' marriageable and safeguarding fertility is actually increasing the risk of marital dissolution and subfertility.

In spite of all these negative results the Varembe continues to practice FGM because they suggest that their children must respect elders and follow the customs. The Varembe cultural practice managed to survive up to today because the elders and religious leaders decide for their children thus, violating children's rights. It needs to be demonstrated that FGM is one of the major causes of diseases and NGOs criticize the Varembe cultural practices because many children are vulnerable to diseases and these are bilharzia, cancer and STIs. Thus, it is valid

to claim that the Varembe cultural practices need to be revised due to the criticism which arose.

1.2 Early marriages and its criticism

It can be defined as a formal marriage or informal union before the age of 18 and it is a reality between both girls and boys. Early marriage is one of the prominent activities amongst the Varembe ethnic group and it is practiced worldwide for different reasons. "Girls can be handed in marriage without her consent for various reasons and these include a situation whereby her sister or aunty is infertile, as a way of settling debts, when appeasing spirits when one is cleansed and poverty"⁶. The Varembe ethnic group violates the girl's rights in that she will be dehumanized and used as a commodity in that they will be used as a compensatory payment in interfamily conflicts. Girls and boys will become victims of circumstance in that they are handed in marriage at a tender age whilst their wish is not heard thus; this led to criticisms of the cultural practice of Varembe.

It was discovered that early marriages is the major reason why most women are dependent and it is true that most women are vulnerable amongst the Varembe ethnic group. To the Varembe tribe early marriage helps them in preserving their cultural practices and in a way they will be violating girls' rights. "Feminists criticize the Varembe cultural practices in that they promote a patriarchal society in which man are superior to women,"⁷ this is because girls remains a subordinate group to man. The Varembe teaches girls to be submissive and this practice deprives women their right to be independent. Girls will be taught at a tender age to be gender bias and this is an act is a setback in as far as reaching a point where everyone is equal, thus the Varembe cultural is dehumanizing women and it is prone to criticism.

Varemba ethnic group has no respect on girls in that they are trained to be child bearers and they are deprived of their right to education. The girls who marry before the age of 18 suffer domestic violence and they often abandon formal education and became pregnant. UNICEF state of the world's children 2009, "states that girls at the age of 15-19 are affected by child birth and pregnancy worldwide accounting for 7000 deaths each year⁸". Girls in the whole world suffer from the fact that they are not educated since some were handed in marriage before they were born. Moreover, another problem of early marriage is that amongst the Varemba tribe marriage arrangements are undertaken by parents without the knowledge of the girl and this is the greatest crime in as far as human rights is concerned. Girls have no freedom of choosing their own life partners and this is the clear indication that Varemba cultural practices are harmful to well-being of a girl child, thus the inevitability of local and international criticisms.

The fact that women are the ones which are used to please avenging spirits shows that the girl child is regarded as inferior to a boy child and girls face a lot of ill-treatment and this paved way for local and international criticism towards the Varemba cultural practices. The practice is evil in that the girl child's decision is not important and the girl child is regarded to be a second class citizen in most cases. "Varemba people during wars and droughts they now value their girl child, she will be handed to a rich family not considering the status of a rich muremba"⁹. This led to serious hardships to the newly married girl because she will be facing stiff competition from elderly wives. The girl child will be asked to carry out all the duties which are supposed to be done by a grown up women, thus girls are burdened by their parents hence, the effects early marriage as a cultural practice.

1.3 Komba initiation and its criticisms

The Varemba ethnic group practices Komba this serves to transform girls into women hood, it is a necessity amongst this tribe. Girls' graduates and it is believed that after this process women will be ready to go and start their families due to the wisdom and skills imparted to them during Komba. "Komba is characterized by intimidation amongst the Varemba ethnic group and if one fails she is regarded as deviant, to that she will suffer from misfortune thus, the practice is involuntary young people are forced¹⁰". Hence violation of children rights since their voices are ignored. During Komba schools initiates will be equipped with survival skills and how to use herbs and they character becomes positive. However, Komba faces criticism from the Christianity which viewed it as paganism and not acceptable to its faith.

Komba initiates are taught how important the Komba initiation rite at the expense of formal education, their initiation process takes place during learning sessions and they will miss formal education for up to two months. Varemba children abscond school lessons during Komba initiation schools and this infuriates school authorities in that students miss two months of the term. The Varemba children's behavior will change due to the harsh conditions they face at camp and girls will starts to act and perform awkwardly. Thus children rights are not respected by the Lemba, this is evidenced by the fact that in some instances girls will forced not to go to school in fear of their customs and beliefs. Girls attends the initiation process at their first menstrual cycle in these schools they learn about how to handle a man in bed this will be too strong for someone who is 9 years old. Thus corrupting children's mind to an extent that she will not concentrate in her school education and the NGOs are vocally opposing this. UNCRC opposes the fact that girls are taught how to satisfy a man in bed whilst they are at a tender age and it suggests that children are not supposed to learn anything which has something to do with sex.¹¹

1.4 Virginitv testing criticism

The Varemha ethnic group practice one of the most harmful cultural practice, this is called virginitv testing. To the Lemba it protects women from promiscuity and it is carried out as a way of preventing the spread of HIV and AIDS. This cultural practice is practiced worldwide and it promotes gender inequality in that only girls and women are the targets boys and men are safe. In the Varemha tribe it is believed that girls must go through a sexual orientation, a situation whereby they are checked if they are still intact. The criteria which is generally used in Africa is that of checking hymen by putting two fingers in a girl's vagina and in some cases elders just look at the eyes, breast and body structure concentrating on the innocence¹².

Virginitv testing serves to oppress women and dehumanizing girls and women who fail the test. The ways on which virginitv testing is conducted have been questioned and criticized by doctors. Doctors note that the method of checking if the hymen is still intact is not reliable evidence of sexual intercourse. This is because virginitv can be lost when one is riding a bicycle thus; the practice is unfair in that the process is involuntary. Girls are forced without their concern, by so doing parents will be violating human rights and this led to the formation of organizations which protects and empower women. The organizations criticize virginitv testing by saying that "it serves to degrade and stigmatize girls who fails the test in that this will be announced publicly"¹³. The girls will be labeled as prostitutes, faces humiliation from all circles in the community and their parents will hand them in marriage will people who are already married. Girls are deprived of their right to choose their own spouses and this proves that virginitv testing as a practice stigmatizes girls and violates their rights. The Varemha people justify themselves by saying that the act is implemented in order to prevent diseases but it is not true because they sometimes hand their daughters in marriage with elders who are already affected by HIV and AIDS.

Virginity testing is opposed by doctors and physicians who suggest that “the practice is ineffective, unhygienic and violation of human rights”¹³. Thus is true in that girls will go through orientation on their private parts, this is usually done by elder man or women. Hence the girl child’s privacy life will be interfered. The sexual offences act rightfully criminalizes all forms of forced sexual penetration and this includes digital penetration, such as finger. The Varembe people make use of their finger to check if the girl is still intact and this is a criminal offence. Children’s Act forwarded some laws that protect a girl child who is under 18, by saying she must not be subjected to virginity testing, in South Africa.

Moreover, in South Africa the government opposes all cultural practices which violate human rights. Girls are checked and oriented without their will thus violation of their freedom. “The South Africa constitution chapter 12(a) and 12(b) makes it clear that everyone is entitled to his right over his body and psychological integrity”¹⁴. This includes the right to make your own choice concerning reproduction and to security and control over his body. This is a clear indication that the Varembe cultural practices violate human rights, thus paving way for its criticism.

Varembe promotes gender inequality through their cultural practices such as virginity testing; this is so because women and girls are the victims. Boys do not go through the test, thus the equality Act criticizes the practice. Boys are regarded as superior and that they can take care of themselves thus, there is no need to check if they are still intact. Varembe are of the view that women and girls are weak thus the need for them to be checked if they are still virgin. This violates the freedom of girls and women. Amongst the Varembe tribe it is a shame not to be virgin but this only applies to women. Boys can sleep around and no one can question him but girls will wait until the Komba initiation. Thus boys have the freedom to do whatever they want at the expense of women.

1.5 Circumcision and its criticism

Circumcision is a common practice amongst the Varembe ethnic group it is practiced for hygienic purposes and as a way of curing diseases. This cultural practice is carried out worldwide for different reasons and a lot of positives are discussed but they the negative effects are ignored. Circumcision causes shock, trauma, cancer, rotting of penises and in some cases results in deaths. In spite of these effects the Varembe people continue to practice it as if they don't know the consequences, to them they only see the positives of it.

The Varembe cultural practices are viewed as harmful by the Human Rights Activists this is due to the fact that they violate children rights. Many women were complaining that they are no longer enjoying having sex with their husbands, they went on to say that we are now feeling like unappreciated, distanced, disinterested when their man were circumcised. This criticism was put forward by a medical journal survey they claim that “when their husbands were genital intact they used to enjoy sex, feeling intimacy with their husbands, relaxed, warmth, mutual satisfaction being complete as women, and the greater sexual satisfaction.”¹⁵

Women are the one who complains since circumcision affects their relationships and they suggest that their husbands are having premature ejaculation. Male circumcision affects women especially those who once had sex with those who are not circumcised.

Many organizations criticize the Varembe ethnic group in that they use the traditional methods and are undertaken by people without or with little knowledge of medical. Many Varembe children suffer a lot in that they became victims of circumstances in the sense that “if one of the initiates' parents is a witch or a prostitute the wound of a circumcised boy will not heal”¹⁶. Some will even die if parents refuse to confess their sins. This is unfair because children will be affected or burdened due to the fact their parents' issues will affect them thus making the practice to be unfamiliar. WHO criticizes the Varembe cultural practices in that

when the process is done incorrectly the penis of a boy will rot and it will not function properly for life. For instance, in Mpumalanga South Africa 33 men died due to wrong circumcision and this shows that the Voremba cultural practices violate human rights.

1.6 Inheritance and its criticisms

Inheritance is one of the most criticized cultural practices of the Voremba tribe this is because it has tremendous effects up on children. Children rights are given a closed eye this evidenced by the fact that young boys and girls will be forced to fill the void when their brothers and aunts die. The voremba are of the view that age does not count because in our initiation schools they equip their children with enough skills. The Voremba people practice Kugaranhaka which is known as wife inheritance. Girls are affected especially if they are sisters or niece of the deceased wife. Children will always be losers because they don't have a say in the cultural practice thus they are deprived of their freedom. According to a 2014 report by WHO children who are forced to inherit their brother's wife or sister's husband are at great risk of experiencing complications in pregnancy and of being affected by HIV/AIDS.

Although a lot of critics rose they failed to disturb the Voremba ethnic group in that they are still actively involved in their cultural practices. This is the reason behind the uniqueness of the Voremba group ethnic group. They introduce a lot of strategies or survival skills which led to the dominance of the Voremba cultural practices. Voremba people enjoyed more benefits at the expense of other tribes due to the fact other tribes respect them because of their outstanding medical knowledge.

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CHAPTER 3

SECRETS BEHIND THE SURVIVAL OF THE VAREMBA CULTURAL PRACTICES IN ZIMBABWE

INTRODUCTION

It is important to note that the Varembe culture has been hidden in secrecy; therefore it has not been pervaded. The Varembe culture has not been opened to the pervasion of tourist amusement and this played a major role in the survival of the Varembe cultural practices in Zvishavane. Even the Ngoma Lungundu only found its way into public domain through research interests of an academic specifically Tudor Parfitt when he published his controversial book in 2008 on the Lost Ark of The Covenant, hence the Varembe culture was one of the secretive cultural practices in Africa. There are various factors which led to the survival of the Varembe cultural practices in Zimbabwe and these includes the geographical location, origins of the Varembe, the alliance systems which the Varembe made with the authorities, chieftaincy, the authorization of their practices by Zimbabwe Republic Police and their outstanding dominance in medical knowledge. Alliance systems paved a way for the survival of the Varembe cultural practices, the Varembe people used their famed magic to get links from the chiefs and this was a major boost in that the Varembe group had some chiefs and representatives in the community and that they have influence over other tribes, thus the survival of their cultural practices. Elders and religious leaders were opposing the commands of the government and they despises formal education and they value their own Komba and Murundu schools and this led to the survival of the Varembe cultural practices.

ORIGINS

The origins of the Varemba people has more in it as far as the survival of the Varemba cultural practices, this is because ancestors are predicting their future by reminding them the consequences one would face if he breaks the Varemba cultural norms. The Varemba are group of people whose culture is linked to the Mediterranean or to the black Jews of Ethiopia. Most of Varemba traces their ancestry to itinerant Muslim traders who at some point dominant in the Mutapa¹. The Jews have a great influence in the Varemba culture and it is believed that the dead are still living, since J.Mbiti is of the assertion that ancestors are the living dead². The ancestors would not want to see their culture dying and they determines what those who are still alive must do and the ancestors strongly protects their culture, thus the survival of the Varemba cultural practices. Moreover, the Varemba people are proud of their identity and culture so they always pass the knowledge from one generation to the other. This is usually done when they are in their Komba initiation schools, where they will be taught customs and values.

Moreover, the Varemba cultural activities are still in existence due to the fact that they have been a very secretive group of people, because they view themselves as special people. As far as their cultural activities' survival is concerned credit must be given to the importance of their cultural activities such as Komba rite. Komba rite has been viewed as a way of offering education to young people and this is a benefit and it encouraged parents of the Varemba to stick to their cultural practice. "This ritual provides education and introduces the youths to adulthood and enables them to face the realities of life"³. Thus it is of paramount importance to note that the nature of the Varemba cultural activities played a significant role in preserving their cultural practices. It is believed that through Komba ritual the youths are

made acceptable to the community⁴. Thus the inevitability of the existence of the Varemba cultural activities, due to what the cultural activities offers.

Furthermore, the Varemba preserved their cultural activities through the quality they offer in their cultural activities, this is because in Komba schools the youths receive sex education which equips them and helps them to stabilize their families. Hence in every community it is encouraged to live in harmony and many families will tend to admire the good works of the Varemba family. As a result there are few cases of divorce in communities that practice the Komba rite. This was purported by Mahoso when he notes that “adultery is rare and prostitution only crept in as a recent occurrence”⁵. This clearly shows that the Varemba cultural practices are of greater importance since it offers more good than harm to Zimbabwean communities.

The role played by Komba initiation schools in fostering security in the survival of the Varemba cultural practices

In these Komba schools character building also took center stage in that girls will be trained to become a custodian of provisions as well as playing with children. Thus girls will be equipped for future in as far as socialization of children is concerned. Moreover, girls will be taught how to take care of their husbands and how to interact with elders in a society thus benefiting the nation as whole. Respect of elders and manners to superiors is one of the advantages of the Komba initiation which assisted in the preservation of the Varemba cultural practices in Zimbabwe. During Komba rite girls will be tested for virginity and this helps the community in that girls would not indulge in sex before initiation since they fear the consequences such as humiliation in front of their parents. This reduces the spread of

HIV/AIDS in a society thus another positive which is found from the Varembe cultural practices, hence the preservation of their own culture.

Another aspect which preserved the Varembe cultural practices is that in their schools (Komba and Murundu) they are taught about their values and customs. These schools serve to pass on tradition from one generation to the next. Komba also expresses a people's culture and so it preserves the people's tradition⁶. As a social event the Komba rite can be compared to the biblical Old Testament circumcision rite. According to Genesis God entered into a contractual relationship with Israel and circumcision was to be the mark of this bond. In that way Komba ritual is used to express the Varembe religious beliefs, thus the preservation of the Varembe cultural practices. During Murundu process Nyamukanga will give the initiates a knife to use when they will be hunting; they will be given herbs which strengthens them to behave like animals (elephants) since they are of the Zhou totem.

The government of Zimbabwe and its influence towards the survival of the Varembe cultural practices

The Varembe cultural activities are authorized in Zimbabwe, and this is a major factor which preserved the Varembe cultural practices. In Zimbabwe there is freedom of religion and culture this makes it easy for Varembe to exercise their practices without fear. In schools the Varembe are encouraged to adhere to their customs and values and in a way this preserved their cultural activities. In boarding schools in Zimbabwe, it is made sure that Varembe students are served food prepared in the proper Varembe way. Among the Varembe it is prohibited to eat or drink anything served in a non-Varembe home, and it is only advised to eat meat slaughtered by a circumcised remba⁷. The government authorities accepts the Varembe cultural practices this is evidenced by allowing that in schools the Varembe

students are given their own food which have been prepared the Varembe way. Thus the above explanation clearly shows how the Varembe cultural practices survived.

The Varembe cultural practices are of greater importance and in present day Zimbabwe many ethnic group are adopting some of their cultural activities since it offers many benefits. The fact that their activities entails many benefits, paved a way for the preservation of their cultural practices. For instance, circumcision is one of the Varembe cultural practices which attract many ethnic groups and the ministers of health are in fond of it. Circumcision is a mark that shows that one has fully graduated from boyhood to manhood⁸. After the initiation ceremonies, the boys will be able to start families because we would have imparted to them necessary wisdom and skills needed to run a family, this was put forward by fortune Mahoso. During Murundu initiation boys will be taught how to handle their families and all deep secrets of their culture will be revealed⁹. Thus the Zimbabwean communities benefits tremendously from the Varembe' cultural practices since it brought about good husbands and this made the preservation of their cultural practices easy.

Nature of the Varembe cultural practices and the benefits which forced the survival of the Varembe culture

It is believed that the Varembe cultural practices bears fruits which paved way for its preservation in Zimbabwe like for instance Murundu initiation helps the nation in that it produces and provides educated professional (vanhu vane hunhu). This only shows that the Varembe cultural are rich with the customs that helps the nation. The purpose of Murundu rite is to prevent sexually transmitted diseases to the Varembe boys and to make sure that the boys are accepted in the community. It is believed that if one is circumcised they are lessor chances for him to be contaminated by sexually transmitted diseases, thus protecting the

community from the HIV and AIDS. The practice has been hailed by authorities, and that it is compulsory for every boy in the community to be circumcised¹⁰. Moreover, during the Murundu initiation boys are trained to breadwinners and they are taught to fend for their families. Boys are imparted confidence to face life challenges of adolescence as they are enlightened on how their bodies' works and they are taught about responsible sexual behavior. Furthermore, the youths are taught about sexual health and conception which is an aided advantage thus the inevitability of the survival of their cultural practices since it helps the country.

Endogamy and how it served the Varembe cultural practices

There was no existence of genetic absorption of one population by another amongst the Varembe and this was one of the major factors which preserved the Varembe cultural activities in Zimbabwe¹¹. This was carried out through discouraging intermarriage traditionally; the Varembe did not give their daughters in marriage to everyone except for their own people. Women are considered lost to the community when they marry a non-lembe¹². Van Warmelo explicates the reason for the Varembe' endogamous life. In as far as the preservation of their culture the Varembe applied the strict endogamy and this is regarded as the secret of survival as distinct people¹³. The Varembe based their argument on the dogma of being "dirty" of the Vashenji (non-Varembe) and they refer the non-Varembe as unclean and commoners. Varembe are taught not to eat pork, certain other animals and the flesh of cattle no kosher-killed according to their laws. This endogamy has allowed the Varembe to remain biologically distinct from all other groups and it helped in the survival of their cultural practices¹⁴.

Varemba managed to preserve their cultural practices because they believe in their cultural practices and they are proud of themselves. Through despising of intermarriages the Varemba avoided dilution of their culture. The Varemba are believed to be of an endogamous society and this was asserted by Mandivenga when he notes that an endogamous society is one which restricts people of a distinct group to intermarry with a commoner's group. Their adherence to the Jewish laws and customs also preserved their cultural practices and one of the most ancient Jewish customs was the forbidding of intermarriages. The Varemba are still practicing this and they prevented pollution of their practices. When one wants to be married in the Varemba tribe, she must first of all partake in the Varemba religion, customs and dietary laws. A woman who joins the Varemba tribe through marriage, are not allowed to bring any cooking equipment from her house and she is asked to shave her hair as a sign of starting a new way of life¹⁵. The women will undergo some lessons so that she will raise her children the Varemba way of life and this proves that the Varemba had their own way of preserving their cultural practices since its preservation lies on the strictness of observing endogamy. Thus the survival of the Varemba cultural practices in Zvishavane district and many scholars agrees with me in suggesting that endogamy played a major role in the survival of the Varemba cultural practices.

Indigenous Knowledge systems as a factor which led to the survival of the Varemba culture

The Varemba are commonly known through their outstanding observance of indigenous knowledge systems. In their day to day life they make use of herbal medicines and their medical knowledge earned them respect among tribes¹⁶, thus preserving their cultural activities in Zimbabwe. Many tribes in Zimbabwe regard the Varemba ethnic group as a distinct group due to their superiority in medical knowledge. Mazarire notes that most Varemba ventured into areas that were being populated by the Karanga by making use of

their outstanding famed magic-knowledge of medicines, or “chiremba”¹⁷. This clearly shows that their medical knowledge played a party in as far as the preservation of their culture is concerned. Varembe have their own way of doing things thus they have their own science, thus the do their things traditionally.

The Varembe ethnic group dominates in Zvishavane in curing and preventing diseases traditionally, and this played a significant role in preserving their cultural practices. The Varembe had been known for possessing spiritual powers and many of them are priest and prophets of olden times¹⁸. The known words for priest and prophet are N’anga and ndlozi and these two Shona words are familiar in the communities where Varembe stay. The Varembe can cure Manyoka (diarrhea), Nhova (fontanel), Siki (gonorrhoea) and Ungomwa (infertility) and they don’t go to hospital and clinics. Thus they strongly believe in themselves and this helped in preserving their own cultural practices. Varembe believes that their Mwari is the one who gives them the knowledge of these herbal medicines. The Varembe people also eradicates all diseases through their herbs Hazvieri, Punyukavamupete and Mabope, thus they demonstrate their superiority, hence the survival of their cultural practices in Zvishavane district.

Geographical location and its role in serving the Varembe cultural practices

Geographical location is another factor which preserved the Varembe cultural practices, most Varembe lives in the most remote parts of Zimbabwe where even radio links are not available. Failure to access important information is one of the most influential factors that preserved the Varembe cultural practices¹⁹. The communities where Varembe stays are conservative such that information which is well known knowledge to everyone is unknown to the Varembe thus their culture didn’t suffer from the dynamics of culture which changes in

order to suit modernity. Thus when boys and girls are taught they only keep in mind the basis of their culture and in a way they will be preserving their culture, hence the surviving of the Varembe cultural practices. More so the fact that police station is far away from where Varembe stays is another factor which preserved the Varembe cultural practices in that they cannot move door to door checking if the Varembe are still practicing their cultural practices.

The Varembe cultural practices survived in Zvishavane because the district is a remote area and that children of the Varembe are not exposed to the essential information such as the one which the child line offers. Most people reports their cases and get a lot of information which is important but the children of the Varembe do not have cell phones to access the information that can convince them to shun their cultural practices. This is due to the fact that in Zvishavane there is limited means of communication, their cultural practices survived due to the fact that children at a tender age are told the effects of exposing their secrets. “Anyone who reveals the Varembe cultural secrets will face wrath” many children will be afraid to expose the information, thus the survival of the Varembe cultural practices.

More so, the Varembe believes that they are special and that they cannot be equal to other tribes, this is evidenced by their view that they were guided by Mwari to specific places and they therefore want to stay together so as to preserve their culture. The Varembe always want to isolate themselves from other people, thus advocating for their own homeland. The Varembe suggest that” they are allowed to do certain things because God commanded it.....it is our religion..... It is part of the covenant of God”. The Varembe people give much credit to their relationship with the Jewish ancestry and Mwari of the Israelites whom they believe to

be the one who lead the all the way to Mberengwa. The Varembe did not adopt other culture and they stick to their beliefs thus this explains the survival of the Varembe cultural practices.

The Varembe elders are taken to Judah for a tour since the Jews want to familiarize with the Varembe culture and the Jews are giving aid to the Varembe. The Varembe created links with Jews and this makes it easy for their cultural practices to survive. Modreck Maeresera suggests that “the Jews are willing to support us with aid so that we can build our own synagogue”. The building of Lemba synagogue also led to the survival of the Varembe cultural practices. Many Remba converted to Islam and Christianity due to the fact the Varembe hides their Jewish connection for much history. The links between the Varembe and Jews led to a situation where by in every Lemba area there is a mosque. This is one of the prominent reasons why the Varembe cultural practices survived in Zvishavane district.

Ngoma Lungundu as factor which served the Varembe cultural practices

One of the reasons for the survival of the Varembe cultural is their observance and valuing of the Ngoma Lungundu. Ngoma Lungundu is believed to be a” sacred and powerful ancestral drum and that it gives the Varembe super natural powers”. The Varembe person equates their Ngoma Lungundu with the Biblical Ark of the Covenant which Moses was instructed to construct by God on Mount Sinai when he was leading the Israelites from Egypt. The Varembe claims that their ark is too holy and that it helps them in times of trouble and that they are the ones who bring it to Mberengwa in a mountain called Dumbwi where it was found in the early 1940s.the “Ngoma Lungundu was then went missing because of the reasons I can’t publish to the public said Modreck Maeresera the coordinator of the Lemba cultural association”. The drum is important to our culture because it strengthens us whenever we are doing our own things. Thus the survival of the Varembe cultural practices in

Zvishavane district, since the Ngoma Lungundu was carried by the Varembe when moving from point one to another.

Moreover, Ngoma Lungundu is respected by many people and when it was unveiled in Harare there was a large crowd who attended it. Most government officials respect the Varembe cultural practices and this led to the survival of their culture in Zimbabwe. This is evidenced by the fact “the unveiling of the drum was held in the presence of the late Vice President John Nkomo, several ministers and some members of the Varembe ethnic group”. One of the Varembe leaders suggests that the government of Zimbabwe recognizes them and their cultural practices hence survival of their cultural practices. During the unveiling of the ark the late Vice President of Zimbabwe J. Nkomo “remarked that the discovery of the Ngoma Lungundu had resulted in a lot of excitement and was a testimony to Zimbabwe’s rich spiritual heritage.” Thus this clearly shows that the Varembe culture is appreciated in Zimbabwe and thus the survival of the Varembe cultural practices. The drum was taken by the government officials for tour to some parts of Zimbabwe like Victoria Falls, Bulawayo and Masvingo. This is the clear evidence which shows that the government official respects the Varembe cultural practices.



Fig1 shows a picture of Ngoma Lungundu .this picture was taken at the museum of Harare on the 24/04/16

The secret behind the survival of the Varemba cultural practices lies on the role played by elders and the religious leaders in uplifting the Varemba customs and customs. The Varemba people do not value formal education and they put their initiation schools at the top hence prioritizing their initiation schools at the expense of formal education. Thus the survival of their cultural practices and this is true that the Varemba always value the initiation schools instead of the formal education, especially girls when they come back from their initiation schools many won't continue with education they will get married. Thus it is a crime amongst the Varemba not to attend the initiation schools but it takes place when schools are still on, thus putting more value on their schools at the expense of formal education. This helped in

the survival of the Varemba culture since elders and religious leaders emphasize the importance of the education, they offer at Komba and Murundu initiation.

The chiefs in Zvishavane district play a significant role in the survival of the Varemba cultural practices in the sense that they put forward some regulations which forbade the coming of the NGOs. The chiefs are trying their best to avoid the coming in of the NGOs who questions the cultural activities of many tribes and this helps the survival of the Varemba cultural activities. Moreover, these chiefs also stand firm in preserving their cultural practices, this is so because they would prefers to enter into an agreement with the members of WHO, to respect their cultural activities.

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CONCLUSION

The study focused on various strategies and methods which were put forward so as to preserve the Varembe cultural practices in Zvishavane district. In the first chapter the researcher focused on various Varembe cultural practices which were practiced and these include Komba, Ngoma, intermarriages, child marriages, inheritance and sexual socialization. Geographical location proves to be of greater importance in as far as the survival of the Varembe cultural practices. Zvishavane is in a remote part of Zimbabwe and it is rich in minerals and minerals which allows the Varembe cultural practices. Ngoma prepares boys to become man by so doing it helps the community and this in itself works as a way of preserving the Varembe cultural practices.

This second chapter focuses on the international and local criticisms which were forwarded in order to uplift women, children and boys who are the victims of circumstances. The main aim of this chapter is to show how harmful are the Varembe cultural practices and these include circumcision, Female Genital mutilation, virginity testing, early marriages and Komba initiation. All these cultural practices violate human rights and dehumanize women and children

The last chapter talks about ways that preserved the Varembe cultural practices and the secrets behind the survival of the Varembe cultural practices. There are four factors which preserved the Varembe cultural practices and these are categorized into economic, social, political and geographical. Politically the Varembe cultural practices were preserved by the chiefs who worked tirelessly to avoid the coming in of the NGOs who were advocating for children rights and the eradication of the cultural activities. More so, the government official

supports and includes Varembe people in crucial positions so as to protect the Varembe cultural practices. This is evidenced by the fact that, many members of the parliament in and a district where the Varembe stay are Varembe thus they will protect and preserve their cultural practices.

Economic factors such hunting and mining plays a major role in as far as preserving the Varembe cultural practices. The Varembe people become rich through mining and hunting and this preserve the Varembe cultural practices, many tribes shun their cultural practices due to poverty and hunger starvation but economic activities of the Varembe people whipped away poverty and Varembe then stick to their practices. Trading was one of the most important factors which preserved the Varembe cultural practices. The Varembe through trade formed alliances with emergent powers and this helped the preservation of the Varembe cultural practices.

Socially played a major role in the survival of the Varembe cultural practices, the Varembe made use of strict endogamy. The Varembe people are not allowed to marry outside their tribe and this led to the survival of the Varembe cultural practices. Many tribes lost their cultural practices due to pollution and the Varembe people countered it by avoiding intermarriages. If a woman wants to join the Varembe tribe she will be told to participate in the Komba initiation schools. The women must accept to live the Varembe way and this helped in the survival of the Varembe cultural practices.

Komba is also a social factor which led to the survival of the Varembe cultural practices and the benefits of Komba led to the survival of the Varembe cultural practices. Women will be equipped with all life skills which are needed in a family. The girls will be imparted with the wisdom to satisfy men in bed and the knowledge to use herbs to cure diseases. The girls will be taught to take care of the family and this promotes unity and eradicates prostitution. To the society the benefits of the Varembe cultural practices played a significant role in the survival of the Varembe cultural practices.

Circumcision is another factor which preserved and served the Varembe cultural practices which preserved the Varembe cultural practices. Circumcision is one of the most attractive practices of the Varembe; many tribes are now adopting the practice since it reduces the chances of contaminating HIV. This practice is meant to graduate boys from into man hood and the Varembe managed to influence a lot of people to adopt their religious practice of the Varembe, thus the she survival of the Varembe cultural practices.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire

Questionnaire on how the Varembe cultural practices survived up to date in Zvishavane district.

My name is Henry Kudakwashe Shumba a fourth year student at Midlands State University doing Bachelor of Arts in History Honours degree. I am carrying out my dissertation research focusing on the secrets behind the survival of the Varembe cultural practices and the ways which were put forward to preserve their cultural practices in Zvishavane district. The questionnaire is designed to collect data on the initiates and the elders of the Varembe ethnic group. The information will assist the researcher in understanding and identifying the secrets behind the survival of the Varembe cultural practices.

I am kindly requesting you to complete the questionnaire anonymously in the spaces provided. You may take about 15minutes to complete the questionnaire. Be assured that the data collected from these questionnaires shall be used in absolute confidence and for academic purposes only.

Instructions

1. Tick [] where applicable.
2. Write your answers on the spaces provided below.
3. Do not write any names on the questionnaire.
- 4.

Name

.....

Age

.....

Date.....

.....

Sex 1) Female [] 2) Male []

1) How much do you know about the Varembe cultural practices?

1.A lot	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.Fair	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.Little	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Don't know	
---------------	--

2a) Are you aware of the Varembe cultural practices

Yes	No
[]	[]

2b) in your view what are the factors which are preserving the Varembe cultural practices?

.....

3) What are the challenges in brief?

.....

4a) in your opinion, what do you think is the major factor which preserve the Varembe cultural practices. Tick where applicable.

Geographical location	[]
Economic factors	[]
Social factors	[]
Endogamous	[]
Chiefs	[]
Government	[]
Komba school	[]
Murundu school	[]
Religious leaders	[]
NgomaLungundu	[]

b) Briefly explain the answer you have chosen above

.....

.....
.....

5) How do the cultural practices benefit Zvishavane district?

.....
.....
.....
.....

6) What has the leaders do to preserve their cultural practices?

.....
.....
.....

7) What are the challenges faced by the Varembe leaders in preserving their culture?

.....
.....
.....
.....

8) What were solutions or amendments they put in order to counter critics?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

9) Suggest strategies and factors that led to the survival of the Varembe cultural practices.

.....
.....

Thank you for your time!