

# Gramsol Family & Religious Studies Form 3

*World Religions*  
**African  
Traditional  
Religion**  
Third Edition



Series Editors:  
Jonathan O'Brien and  
Martin Palmer

**THE HOLY  
QUR'AN**

Translation and commentary  
by

**Melania Mancuveni  
Brian Maregedze**

Islamic Propagation Centre  
International

## 'O' LEVEL

GRAMSOL SERIES  
MY STUDY GUIDE  
MY EXAM PRACTICE



## 'A' LEVEL

MASTERING SERIES  
MY STUDY GUIDE  
MY EXAM PRACTICE



### WHY YOU SHOULD USE GRAMSOL RESOURCES

- Our resources put **QUALITY** first.
- They contain activities that are suitable for **CALA**.
- Plenty of **exercises** and **revision** opportunities.
- **Approved** by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education.
- **Strong Binding** and Good **Quality Printing**.
- Good use of images and other visuals.
- **User friendly** and **Engaging design** to facilitate learner centered approach.
- **Full coverage** of syllabus including objectives, methodology and activities.

# Gramsol

## Family and Religious Studies

### Form 3

Brian Maregedze  
Melania Mancuveni







## Family and Religious Studies Form 3

Published by  
Gramsol Publishing  
46 Kwame Nkrumah Avenue,  
Harare. 2022  
www.gramsol.com  
Tel. 0864 420 9124

© Gramsol Books  
The moral rights of the authors have been asserted.  
Publisher: Sandura Tafadzwa  
Managing Editor: Mbono Njabulo  
Development editor: Kwenda Martina  
Commissioning Editor: Madenga Tatenda Lisa  
Typeset by Ndlovu Courtney  
Cover by Chikanga Francis  
Printed by Gramsol Publishing

ISBN: 978-1-77929-790 -7

### Legal Notice

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission from the Gramsol Books.

You must not circulate this book in any other binding or cover and you must impose this same condition on any inquirer.

### Acknowledgements

The publisher and authors would like to acknowledge and thank the following for photographs and copyright material:

Pexels / Pixabay / Unsplash / Pics4learning / Getty Images / flickriver.com / www.winemag.com / eggs.ca / niddk.nih.gov / fsis.usda.gov / vegsoc.org / uptodate.com / www.gln.org / pinterest.com / afktravel.com / onthegas.org / lexico.com / nap.edu / beaumont.org / gmanetwork.com / health.harvard.edu / kefalosfood.com / pastemagazine.com / sielearning.tafensw.edu.au / meatandeducation.com / dreamstime.com / .quora.com / specialtyfoodingredients.eu / theculinarypro.com / cookinglight.com / biscuitstobrownies.com / ledfordspetcontrol.com / japansenoodles.nl / www.mythirtyspot.com / maximumsurvival.net / perfectlysealed.com / alibaba.com / latourangelle.com / princessstafadzwa.com / cancertrust.wordpress.com / thespruceeats.com / mccormick.com / chowhound.com / thespruceeats.com / princessstafadzwa.com / foodal.com / cookinglight.com / webstaurantstore.com / walmart.com / www.aliexpress.com / amazon.co.uk / www.williams-sonoma.com / sweetandsavory.co / food-hacks.wonderhowto.com / www.foodsafety.com.au / northamericanpharmacal.com / blogs.ext.vt.edu / tupperware4sale.com / news.com.au / app.croneri.co.uk / subpng.com / zimbabweyp.com / niwa.co.nz / researchgate.net / humanillnesses.com / cedars-sinai.org / cdc.gov /

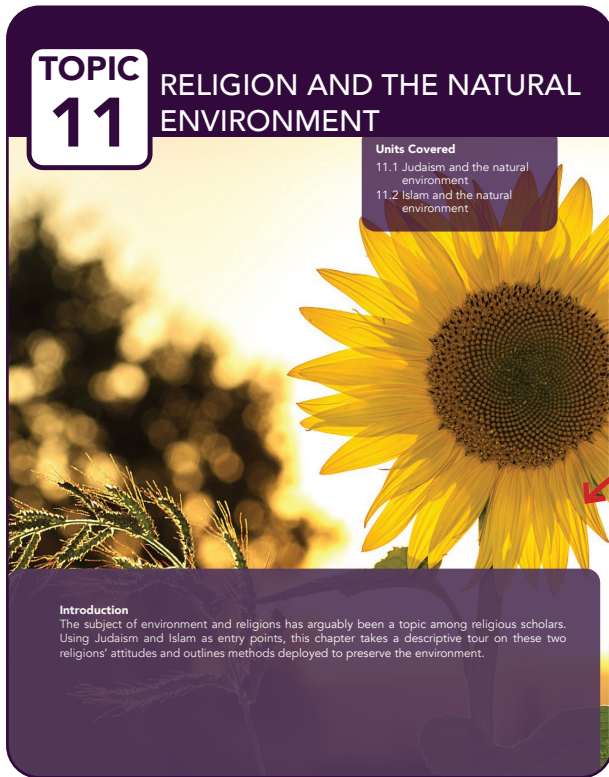
Although we have tried to trace and contact all copyright holders before publication, this has not been possible in all cases. If notified the publisher will rectify any errors or omissions at the earliest opportunity.

## Contents

<b>TOPIC 1: CONCEPT OF RELIGION</b>	<b>1</b>
UNIT 1.1: National Distribution of Religions in Zimbabwe	2
<b>TOPIC 2: INDIGENOUS RELIGION</b>	<b>9</b>
UNIT 2.1: Rites and Rituals	10
UNIT 2.2: Religious Practitioners	20
UNIT 2.3: Sacred Places	25
<b>TOPIC 3: JUDAISM</b>	<b>32</b>
UNIT 3.1 Rituals	33
UNIT 3.2 Religious Practitioners	37
UNIT 3.3 Sacred Places	41
<b>TOPIC 4 CHRISTIANITY</b>	<b>49</b>
UNIT 4.1 Rituals	50
UNIT 4.2 Religious Practitioners	56
UNIT 4.3 Sacred Places	59
<b>TOPIC 5 ISLAM</b>	<b>64</b>
UNIT 5.1 Rituals in Islam	65
UNIT 5.2 Religious practitioners in Islam	70
UNIT 5.3 Sacred places	74
<b>TOPIC 6 RELIGION, FAMILY AND IDENTITY</b>	<b>80</b>
UNIT 6.1 Inter-dependency of Families	81
UNIT 6.2 IR and Zimbabwean Identity	84
<b>TOPIC 7 RELIGION AND EDUCATION</b>	<b>91</b>
UNIT 7.1 Religion in Formal Education	92
UNIT 7.2 Religion and The Liberation Struggle In Zimbabwe	96
<b>TOPIC 8 RELIGION AND GENDER ROLES</b>	<b>101</b>
UNIT 8.1 Gender Roles in Various Religions	102
UNIT 8.2 Religion and Women Empowerment	106

<b>TOPIC 9: RELIGION, ETHICS, HEALTH AND SEXUALITY</b>	<b>113</b>
UNIT 9.1 IR and Unhu/Ubuntu/ Vumunhu, Values and Sexuality	114
UNIT 9.2 Religious Beliefs, Sexuality and Behaviour Change	119
UNIT 9.3 Religious Beliefs and Chronic Conditions	123
<b>TOPIC 10: RELIGION AND DISABILITY</b>	<b>129</b>
UNIT 10.1 Religion and Perceptions About Disability	130
UNIT 10.2 Religion and Marginalisation of Persons living with Disability	142
<b>TOPIC 11: RELIGION AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT</b>	<b>153</b>
UNIT 11.1 Judaism and The Natural Environment	154
UNIT 11.2 Islam and The Natural Environment	159
<b>TOPIC 12: RELIGION, RIGHTS AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY</b>	<b>167</b>
UNIT 12.1 Rights of The Elderly	168
UNIT 12.2 Rights of Persons with Disabilities	172
UNIT 12.3 Rights of Freedom of Worship	178
<b>TOPIC 13 RELIGION AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>183</b>
UNIT 13.1 Levels of Conflict	184
UNIT 13.2 Religious Causes of Conflict	189
UNIT 13.3 Role of Religion in Conflict Management	193
UNIT 13.4 Impact of conflict	197
<b>TOPIC 14 RELIGION AND ENTERPRISE</b>	<b>202</b>
UNIT 14.1 Religion and Enterprise	203
<b>TOPIC 15 RELIGION AND THE LIBERATION STRUGGLE</b>	<b>209</b>
UNIT 15.1 Religion in Formal Education	210
UNIT 15.2 Religion and The Liberation Struggle In Zimbabwe	216
<b>SPACEMAN PAPER 1</b>	<b>223</b>
<b>SPACEMAN PAPER 2</b>	<b>226</b>
<b>GLOSSARY</b>	<b>227</b>
<b>INDEX</b>	<b>233</b>

# Book Features



Catchy opening images captivate the learner

Vibrant images throughout the book



Fig 3.9 Rachel's Tomb

## Rachel's Tomb

Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem is the third holiest site in the Jewish faith after the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron. For the past 3,000 years, Jews have prayed at Rachel's Tomb whenever the Jewish people faced sorrows due to the belief that her prayers to God have special powers. Since she herself was childless for many years, many Jewish women with fertility issues pray to have children by her grave. According to the Jewish tradition, the matriarch Rachel has always cried for her people whenever the Jewish people needed her. Jacob reportedly buried Rachel in Bethlehem instead of in the Tomb of Patriarchs in Hebron because he foresaw that his descendants would need her prayers en route to exile in Babylonia.

## ACTIVITY

Draw a map showing countries in the Middle East labelling the sacred places.



In-text activities keep the learners busy

## The Temple Mount

Also known in Hebrew as *Har Habayit*, it is traditionally said to be the site where Abraham demonstrated his devotion to God by taking his son Isaac to be sacrificed. The mount is also the site of both ancient Jewish temples. The first, built by King Solomon, was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE. The second was built in the sixth century BCE and stood for

# Book Features

**ICT Activity**  
Follow the link <https://zimboriginal.com/2019/05/27/unriddle-your-roots-from-these-amazing-details-on-15-of-zimbabwes-indigenous-trees/> to learn more about indigenous trees and their importance.

**SUMMARY**  
Three important components in IR were dealt with in detail: rites and rituals in IR, religious practitioners in IR, and finally, an outline of sacred places in IR.

**END OF UNIT EXERCISE**

1. What do you understand by sacred places? (2)
2. List at least four sacred places in IR. (4)
3. Outline at least five sacred trees you have studied.
4. What is the role of sacred trees in IR? (3)
5. How are sacred trees preserved in Zimbabwe?
6. Name one sacred water body in Zimbabwe and account for stories surrounding the preservation of water. (6)
7. Name any three trees that are forbidden by chiefs and or headmen to be cut down?
8. Write an account of Nerumedzo Sacred Forest in Bikita-Zimbabwe. (10)
9. Why is Nerumedzo Forest regarded as sacred?
10. Write brief notes on the Chinhoi caves. (10)

**END OF TOPIC EXERCISE**

1. Define the following terms:
  - a. Rites of passage
  - b. Myth
  - c. Indigenous Practitioner

29

Varied exercises at the end of each unit

3. What are folklores? (2)

4. Discuss the role of folklores in informal education. (8)

5. Define the word taboo. (2)

6. List any four taboos you are familiar with. (4)

7. Explain the significance of taboos in informal education. (8)

8. What is a proverb? (2)

9. List any five proverbs you know. (5)

10. Discuss how proverbs act as part of informal education. (5)

**SUMMARY**  
Whenever studying religion in education, it is always vital to observe the positives and negatives associated with each. Among other positives discussed in this chapter include fostering unity, inculcating Ubuntu, collectivism, promoting peace and cultural values that centre on co-existence. On the other hand, challenges related to religion and education point to unaffordable fares especially in some church-based tertiary institutions, cultural clashes and clashes on doctrinal matters, religious ego-centric approaches in interaction. Finally, the chapter demonstrates the roles of IR in informal education covering folklores, proverbs, and taboos.

**END OF TOPIC EXERCISE**


1. Define the term formal education. (2)
2. What do you understand by informal education in religion? (2)
3. Compare and contrast formal and informal education. (4)
4. Outline at least five positive impacts of religion in formal education (5)
5. Identify and explain three negative impacts of religion in formal education. (6)

99

Summaries at the end of each topic

**6.1 INTER-DEPENDENCY OF FAMILIES**

**Objectives**  
By the end of this unit, learners should be able to:  
Illustrate ways in which religion encourages families to depend on each other.



There are a number of activities, practices and or everyday experiences shared among the indigenous people in Zimbabwe which are symptomatic of inter-dependency of families. Some of these activities include traditional as well as contemporary practices such as funerary practices grounded on unity, rhimber/fima, labola/roora practices, 'kunzwana' (mutual understanding), 'kugarisana' (peaceful co-existence), 'kuwadzana' (fellowship), 'ushamwari' (friendship), 'kudydzana' (this word captures the idea of mutual hospitality but is not reducible to it), and 'mushandirapamwe' (co-operation) among others.

**Kinship**  
Kinship occupies a special place as an identity marker, symbolising family collegiality and unity. Clan names are used to signify identity especially the name from the father's side, that is, patrilineal. Patrilineal groups are distinguished using their clan names (mitupo) and it is common to observe that people of the same totem are forbidden from marrying each other, hence, regulating sexual relations. Clan names are in majority of the cases the name of an animal such as a lion, zebra, python, and pangolin among others. With clan names, totems one can tell who their relative is and who is not. Whenever there are conflicts/disputes it

81

Vibrant picture at the start of each unit



# TOPIC 1

## CONCEPT OF RELIGION

### Units Covered

1.1 National distribution of religions in Zimbabwe



### Introduction

Zimbabwe has several religions but the four main religions covered in this book include; Indigenous, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Nonetheless, there are other religions of the world, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Shintoism. More importantly, religion is understood within its plurality rather than a singular definition. The chapter shows the geographical distribution of religions in Zimbabwe and finally discusses the membership of the religions.

# 1.1 NATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF RELIGIONS IN ZIMBABWE

## Objectives

By the end of this unit, learners should be able to:

- show geographical distribution of religions in Zimbabwe.
- discuss membership of religions in Zimbabwe.

## Geographical distribution of religions in Zimbabwe

**Geographical distribution** of religions entails the way religions are located physically in a particular area/s. Zimbabwe has only ten provinces from which the four major religions, Indigenous religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, are the main focus. These provinces include; Manicaland, Mashonaland East, Mashonaland Central, Masvingo, Harare, Mashonaland West, Midlands, Bulawayo, Matebeleland North and Matebeleland South. The Inter-Censal Demographic Survey (ICDS) published in 2017 by ZIMSTATS indicates that 84 per cent of the population aged 15 years and above are Christian while 1 per cent are Muslim. The largest proportion of Christians belong to the Apostolic sect (34 per cent), followed by Pentecostal (20 per cent) and Protestant (16 per cent).

Table 1.1 Distribution of religions in Zimbabwe

Province	Indigenous Religion			Christianity		Islam		Judaism
Roman Catholic	Protestant			Pentecostal		Apostolic Sect		Other Christians
Manicaland	5.0	5.6	20.8	16.6	41.7	4.4	0.5	0.0
Mashonaland Central	9.7	3.7	8.4	11.1	46.5	2.0	0.9	0.0
Mashonaland East	4.4	9.6	15.6	15.7	39.1	2.1	1.1	0.0
Mashonaland West	8.2	6.8	11.3	17.8	35.8	5.6	0.7	0.0
Matabeleland North	8.8	3.8	15.3	20.1	35.8	5.6	0.0	0.0
Matabeleland South	4.1	3.3	17.8	11.9	38.3	10.6	0.0	0.0

Midlands	2.2	13.7	21.2	17.0	30.6	7.0	0.9	0.1
Masvingo	3.6	10.0	12.1	18.3	33.8	15.6	0.3	0.0
Harare	0.8	10.5	16.1	32.0	20.8	8.2	1.3	0.6
Bulawayo	1.0	7.8	21.6	28.9	19.0	10.0	0.2	0.3

Table 1.1 Source: ICDS 2017

## ACTIVITY 1.1 SURVEY



Conduct a class survey among your classmates and find out about their religious backgrounds. Tabulate the religious distribution of members in your class.

## ICT LINK

Refer to the links to learn more about the geographical distribution of religions in Zimbabwe.

[https://www.zimstat.co.zw/sites/default/files/img/ICDS\\_2017.pdf](https://www.zimstat.co.zw/sites/default/files/img/ICDS_2017.pdf)

<https://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Africa/Zimbabwe-RELIGIONS.html>

## Membership of religions in Zimbabwe

The question of membership of religions in Zimbabwe remains complex because some people practice two or more religions. As such, the statistics are ever-changing.

<i>Table 1.2: Per cent Distribution of Population Age 15+ by Religion and Sex, Zimbabwe.</i>	Male	Female	Total	Number
Religion				
Tradition	71.1	28.9	100.0	366 069
Roman Catholic	45.1	54.9	100.0	646 590
Protestant	43.1	56.9	100.0	1 278 559
Pentecostal	40.2	59.8	100.0	1 572 028
Apostolic Sect	39.6	60.4	100.0	2 734 274
Other Christian	43.1	56.9	100.0	560 312
Muslim	52.8	47.2	100.0	56 982
Other	43.8	56.2	100.0	37 669
None	77.7	22.3	100.0	819 695
<b>Total</b>	<b>46.4</b>	<b>53.6</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>8 072 178</b>

Table 1.2 Source: ICDS 2017

## Indigenous Religions

Indigenous religions (IRs) predate all religions in Zimbabwe and Africa. IR is home to wherever it is practised by Zimbabweans worldwide. Since there are no converts, one is born into indigenous religion/s. Unfortunately, there is no vernacular name for indigenous religion. The ICDS 2017 survey indicates that among those who are 15 years and above, males constitute 71.1% adherents whilst females constitute 28.9%. However, it is undisputed that rural dwellers remain the seat upon which Indigenous Religions (IRs) are practised.

The everyday observations with urbanites flocking to rural areas during public holidays in Zimbabwe- even when the economy is unstable indicating the extent to which IRs are observed across the country.

The ritual in honour of the family ancestors (*bira*) is usually conducted in the rural areas. This is also true of enquiries into the cause of death (*kubvunzira*) and rituals to bring the deceased's spirit home (*kurova guva*). In marriage negotiations (*marooro*), those working in town, figuratively called *musango* (forest), believe that participating in the outstanding rituals ensures the stability of their families.

The Zimbabwe National Traditional Healers Association (ZINATHA), is officially recognised by the government and has a constitution along with departments of education and research. Members who pay annual subscriptions are believed to be approximately 55,000. ZINATHA officials arguably note that 80 per cent of the population consult traditional healers during the year.

## Judaism

The Jewish community in Zimbabwe is found in various areas around the country, namely, Harare, Bulawayo, Gweru, Kadoma, Gutu, Zvishavane and Kwekwe. As early as 1849, Jews from Western and Eastern Europe settled in parts of present-day Zimbabwe. The historian Hugh MacMillan observes that these Jews "were both economic migrants and refugees, escaping from the kind of religious and political persecution in the Russian Empire. Economic migrants were also looking for a place where they could make a better living." The story of the Jewish community in Zimbabwe cannot be fully told without the role of Albeit Beit, a German immigrant in the colonisation of Zimbabwe. Albeit Beit, was confidant to Cecil John Rhodes, the British imperialist who was instrumental in financing the colonisation of Zimbabwe. At the University of Zimbabwe, there is a building named after him-Beit Hall. Above that, educational scholarships under Beit Trust form another common feature associated with Albeit Beit. In 1894, twenty Jews settled in Zimbabwe - Bulawayo believed to be home to the early synagogue in the form of a tent. Four years later, in 1898, a chapter of the Zionist organisation Chovevei Zion was set up. From 1900 onwards, more Jews continued to pour into the country. By 1961 after the Second World War, about 7,000 Jews were found in the region.

Also notable among the migration accounts surrounding Jews in Zimbabwe relates to those who came from the Greek Island of Rhodes in Greece. The Jews from Rhodes spoke Ladino and their background can be traced as far as 1492 from Spain. Italian fascism under Benito Mussolini around the 1930s compelled Jews to flee Italy and settle in the Rhodesia-now Zimbabwe. This saw the flocking in of more refugees, establishing the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation in 1931 located in Harare, Zimbabwe's capital city. Due to their economic city initiatives, the Sephardi were engaged in various economic activities with evidence from Sam Levy's Village and Avondale Shopping Centre both situated in Harare. The Ashkenazi, a Jewish community, is also found in Harare whilst the Orthodoxy Sephardi are found in Harare and Bulawayo.

The Jewish community also had a considerable population coming from South Africa. However, the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965 was central in the emigration of some Jews out of the country. The independence of Zambia and shifts in centres of political power in independent Zimbabwe also contributed to the migration of Jews to South Africa and other countries. Jews in the country are also identified within two categories: Orthodoxy and Reformers. Based on their expressions in synagogues, Orthodoxy is conservative/traditional and use Hebrew whilst the Reformers are liberals who rely on the usage of English. The observance of the Sabbath and dietary laws are key to Jewish practices, although differences are common on strictness and emphasis on ethical matters.



Figure 1.1 Synagogue in Harare

There is, however, a significant population identified as the black Jews in Zimbabwe. The black Jews are associated with Elder Hosea *Risinamhodzi*, based mainly in Rusape but also having a branch tabernacle in Warren Park, Harare, the Church of God and Saints of Christ which demonstrates striking parallels with Judaism, as portrayed in the Old Testament. Besides that, the Jews are also talked about in relation to the Lemba in Zimbabwe. These are also explained more in cultural affinity and are found in places such as Mberengwa, Zvishavane in the Midlands province and Gutu-Masvingo province in Zimbabwe. Those who strictly adhere to Judaism are believed to be around 120-130, the majority being the elderly well above 65 years of age.



## ACTIVITY 1.2 ICT



Follow the link <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8550614.stm> to find out more about the Black Jews in Zimbabwe.

### Islam

Islam literally means 'submission', 'surrender' or 'peace.' **Monotheistic** religion which was born in the seventh century Muhammad is seen as a historical figure pivotal in the birth of Islam. The story of Islam in Zimbabwe dates back from the precolonial era. Muslim Arabs came from the East African Coast prior to 1500 A.D. Their main agenda was to trade with the interior leading to intermarriages taking place. The spreading of Islam was made possible in Eastern and Central Africa as a result of intermarriages. The Monomotapa Empire had good relations with the Muslim traders, which were partly disturbed by Portuguese Christian missionaries' coming. It is around 1561 that Father Goncalo da Silveira was murdered with the Portuguese. Drawing from D.N Beach's work, the Shona and Zimbabwe 900-1850, the gradual absorption of the Muslims into the Shona world was started then.

Traces of (re)introduction of Islam in present-day Zimbabwe are collected from written records as well oral traditions among local groups such as the Lemba (*Vamwenye*) from the Zoutpansberg who had come to the area south of then Belingwe (now Mberengwa) prior to the fall of the Changamire. Also, in Buhera district-Manicaland province around 1961 and 1974, some of the people in Gutu were Islamised respectively, during the construction of Victoria Falls Bridge among others. Some people who remained after finishing the construction of the bridge were of Asiatic origins. This resulted in some Asians settling in the country, particularly in Masvingo province of Zimbabwe. Notably, people of Malawian descent significantly contributed to the Islamic boom in Zimbabwe.

It is believed that:

*Islam was brought to Zimbabwe for the most part from the North by Malawians who came to work and to settle in the country from 1900 onwards. Most of these Muslim Malawians are Yao, Lomwe or Chewa from Nkhota-Kota, Machinga, Mangochi and Cholo districts, where Islam is still very strong today (Mandivenga 1991: 76).*

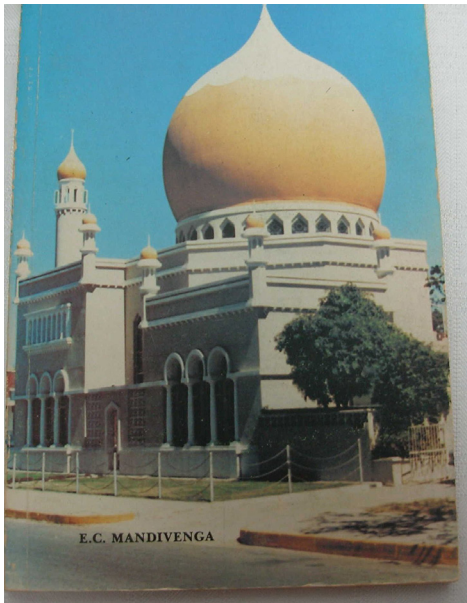


Fig. 1.2, Book 'Islam in Zimbabwe'.

Source: <https://humanitiesspecialists.wordpress.com/2020/05/12/islam-in-zimbabwe/>

In terms of the demography of the Muslim population in Zimbabwe, refer to **Table 1.2** The *Quran* is the sacred scripture in Islam. Two groups are known to exist in Zimbabwe, namely, the *Sunni* and the *Shia*. Shaibu Asali (2019) observes that there are over twenty Mosques in Harare and about eight Mosques in Bulawayo. This indicates the presence of Islam in the country since some of the Mosques are dotted around the country, particularly in farms and mines.

## Christianity

Christianity is an offshoot of Judaism. It is one of the dominant religions in Zimbabwe. The sacred book among Christians, is the Bible. Missionaries played a pivotal role in the planting of Christianity in present-day Zimbabwe which can be traced from the early encounters with the Mutapa Empire around the 1500s A.D. Christian denominations in Zimbabwe are include the following:

- African Indigenous Churches (AICs)
- Anglican Church
- Baptist Churches
- Evangelical Churches
- Lutheran Church
- Methodist Churches
- Orthodox Church
- Pentecostal and African Initiated Churches
- Reformed Churches
- Roman Catholic Church

For demographic representation, refer to table 1.2.

## SUMMARY



Overall, the chapter fully demonstrates the geographical distribution of religions in Zimbabwe, paying particular attention to Indigenous Religions, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. Finally, a discussion on membership in various religions was achieved, relying on statistical evidence from the Zimbabwe Statistical Records archives.

## END OF TOPIC EXERCISE

1. Identify the main religions in Zimbabwe. (4)
2. Define the term religion. (2)
3. Discuss membership of:
  - a. Indigenous Religion
  - b. Judaism
  - c. Christianity
  - d. Islam (12)
4. Describe the geographical distribution of the religions you have studied in Zimbabwe. (9)
5. Draw a map of Zimbabwe demonstrating the geographical distribution of religions in Zimbabwe. (10)
6. How many provinces do we have in Zimbabwe? (1)
7. Name all the provinces in Zimbabwe. (10)
8. What is monotheism? (2)
9. What do you understand by Islam? (2).
10. Account for the origin of Islam in Zimbabwe. (8)



# TOPIC 2

## INDIGENOUS RELIGION

### Units Covered

- 2.1 Rites and rituals
- 2.2 Religious practitioners
- 2.3 Sacred places



### Introduction

The chapter focuses on Indigenous Religion, paying attention to a detailed descriptive approach on rites and rituals, religious practitioners, and the various sacred places found in Zimbabwe.

## 2.1 RITES AND RITUALS

### Objectives

By the end of this unit, learners should be able to:

- describe rituals in IR.
- explain various myths in IR.

### Introduction

The term **ritual** is defined by Schmidt (1988:96) as those specific repeatable actions that religious groups have found effective and appropriate responses to the sacred. Mbiti (1992:132) also concurs with the above definition when he defined a ritual as a set form of carrying out a religious action or ceremony. It is a means of communicating something of religious significance through word, symbol and action. In Indigenous Religion, there are many rites of passage. **Rites of passage** relates to various stages in the life of a human being such that transitional stages are well noted. Rites of passage are sometimes called **Life Cycle rituals** as they encompass every component in the existence of a human being. The celebratory and or transitional stages in the life cycle of a human being are identified as birth rites, puberty rites, marriage rites and death rites. These are significant as they are stages/points of celebration in the life of a human being/s in indigenous religion. The preceding section describes in detail the various rites of passage as they are known in IR.

### Birth Rites

The birth of a new child in IR is a special process. During pregnancy, the mother follows particular patterns of behaviour, ethics and is also very conscious about eating habits. However, prior to birth and after birth, there are also important rituals classified as pre-natal and naming rituals. Pre-natal basically includes providing safety and care to the mother for safe delivery of the child. Naming rites deals with the centrality of names since meanings are attached to the birth and life of the child. Some names mark the occasion of the child's birth. For example, if the birth occurs during the rainy season, the child would be given a name which means "Rain" or water; if the mother is on a journey at the time, the child might be called "Traveler", "Road" or "Wanderer." In Zimbabwe, the father is believed to be the first to name the child, although variations exist on naming practices. The following extract captures the Ndebele birth ritual.

### Ndebele Birth Ritual

A typical birth ritual among the Ndebele-speaking people of Zimbabwe begins with the woman leaving her husband during her ninth month of pregnancy to go to her own parents'



home. This constitutes the separation phase, which involves women preparing the room by polishing the floor with cow dung. After the room is cleaned thoroughly, no one is allowed into it until the mother is nearing the time for the delivery. When the time approaches for the birth, the liminal phase of the ritual begins. The pregnant woman is accompanied into the room by her mother and grandmother and any other women assisting in the childbirth. It is forbidden for any man to enter the room when a woman is giving birth, even her own husband. Before touching the pregnant woman, the woman acting as midwife, usually the grandmother, washes her hands in water that contains herbs prescribed by a traditional healer. When the baby comes out of the mother's womb, the midwife is the first to touch the baby by cleaning the blood off with the medicated water. The baby's umbilical cord is then cut, but some of it is left hanging to its navel and tied with a string. The midwife then washes the baby again in the medicated water. While the baby is sleeping, a fire is prepared in the room before the baby is allowed to feed from its mother. Specially selected herbs are put onto the fire, which is allowed to reduce to burning coals. The baby is then awakened and its head placed in the smoke from the fire containing the herbs. The baby may be held over the fire for over an hour before being allowed to suck from the mother. The next day, the same process of putting the baby in the smoke from the medicated fire is repeated and is continued until the umbilical cord falls off, which may take up to a week. After the umbilical cord falls off, the liminal phase ends when the baby is recognised as a person and given a name. As a sign that the mother and baby have been incorporated into the community, people outside the room are called in to celebrate the birth by bringing gifts. However they can only join after the father of the baby allowed to see his child. To complete the ritual, the father is given the piece of the umbilical cord, which he takes to a place near the homestead and buries, offering thanks to the ancestors and asking them to protect the new baby. After these events, the father, mother, and baby return to the father's home, fully reincorporated into society in their new status as parents with a child (Cox, 1998).

**Source:** Encyclopedia.com

## ACTIVITY 2.1



In pairs or a group, discuss the birth rituals found in your community or society.

## Puberty Rites

**Puberty Rites** encompass the transitional stage in the growth of a young person. The transition from childhood to puberty occurs when one becomes recognised as a young adult. Mbiti (1992:98) notes that, "Initiation is a gateway to marriage. It gives the opportunity to the young to prepare for marriage; the period of seclusion is an occasion of learning and for being initiated into new roles." Therefore, puberty rites function to socialise sex and direct it into a socially acceptable expression.

In some communities in Zimbabwe, circumcision may be done for the boys and clitoridectomy.

Clitoridectomy involves cutting some portion of the girls/female organ for girls. At any rate, the operation is always deliberately intensely painful. Magesa (1997:97) has noted that this ritual is a celebration of courage that is the purpose behind inflicting the pain. The initiation operation also establishes the young person's identity as a member of a certain ethnic group and especially unites him or her with the group's ancestors.

Among the Varembe in Zvishavane-Midlands province in Zimbabwe, a number of rituals are still carried out. The Varembe under Chief Mazvihwa are specifically known to preserve their cultural practices. The Varembe ethnic group is well-known for its initiation process, regarded as Komba School. It is practised by the VaRembe people of the Shona-Karanga ethnic group in Zimbabwe. The major purpose of this Komba School is that, it equips boys and girls with fundamental customs, morality, human life skills and values. The "Komba rite" is intended to move a mature girl (*mhandara*) from girlhood to womanhood. It is also meant to initiate *vashenji* (uncircumcised non-VaRembe) women who marry Varembe men into their female traditions and customs.

During Komba initiation ceremonies, girls are taught how to cook, brew beer, be hygienic during menstruation, and eradicate prostitution by maintaining high levels of morality at puberty. Girls attend the initiation process when they start their menstrual cycle to the Lemba girls who start the menstrual cycle are regarded as ripe (*kuibva*). Harman notes that Komba is the same as ripe (*kuibva*) among the Lemba. When a girl reaches twelve years, she is believed to be mature, meaning she can go ahead and get married. Every girl in the camp chooses her *Nyanye*, an elder woman who will guide and teach her 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.

**Fertility testing** is one of the cultural practices which the Varembe people preserved and they practice it because they are well versed with medical knowledge. Amongst the Varembe, it is rare to find *Ngomwa* (those who are infertile). The Varembe always make sure that they 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 the Varembe usually give their children a herb called *Masunungure* which frees them from all evil spirits. This is done by Varembe and it distinguishes them from all other groups because they have their own science which is different from the science which was brought by the whites. Their science is based on indigenous knowledge systems that make use of herbal medicine.

Amongst the Varembe, boys at puberty are usually checked if they are fertile. Elders take the boys to the river and inform them to partake in masturbation until they produce semen. 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 the 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 an uncooked egg to drink if one vomits, 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.



Fig. 2.1 Male Circumcision camp shelters in Zimbabwe @2018 Joseph Hove

The *Varemba* 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 behaviours and virginity chastity. The *Varemba* believe that Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) reduces a woman's libido and therefore, it is believed to help her resist illicit inclinations. Usually, this is done when girls reach puberty. The *Varemba* suggests that FGM is used to cleanse a girl, believing that it is more hygienic and will stop unpleasant secretions and odours as the girl develops into a mature young adult.

## ICT LINK

<https://www.herald.co.zw/female-circumcision-bingas-best-kept-secret/> find out more about female circumcision in Binga.

## Marriage Rites

Marriage rites are central in the life of Indigenous people in Zimbabwe. This unites not only marriage partners but families as well. However, the procedures for marriage rites also differ from place to place among indigenous people in Zimbabwe. Payment of the bride price called *lobola/roora* is central to uniting the families together.

However, the *Varemba* are characterised by an **endogamous** way of life, they despise intermarriages and to them, the non-Lemba are called *Vashenji* (meaning commoners). This was supported by *Mandivenga* when he notes that an endogamous society restricts people of a particular group to marry into or to be married in another group. One who wants to be married into the *Varemba* tribe must partake in the *Varemba* religion, customs and dietary rules. This qualifies one to be a member of the Lemba tribe. Women, are taken to the river and build 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 is asked to shave her hair as a sign of starting a new life as a Lemba. The newly initiated Lemba will be equipped with various rules concerning sexual behaviour and every woman must be well-versed in using herbs and expected to take care of the children and her husband. The non-Varemba are referred to as Basetse in Sotho and in Shona *Vashenji*, and their characteristics and cultural practices are similar to those of the Arabs.

## Death Rites

Death is interpreted as that which marks a transition of the human soul from the human world to the sacred realm (Mbiti, 1992:119). There are also other rituals associated with death carried out in the hut-kitchen, namely, burial ceremony and bringing back ceremony. Besides that, a marriage ceremony can also be held in this space. Family-level ancestors (*Vadzimu*) are propitiated at the clan/household level where prayers are said over the pot-shelf (*chikuva*) (*kupira vadzimu*, see also Shoko 2007: 58) prior to *mukwerera*.

*Chikuva* is generally translated from *Zezuru* (Shona dialect) to mean pot shelf or clay pot shelf in English. However, the term *chikuva* is variously explained as it goes beyond just a clay pot shelf. It is also interpreted as a sanctuary or sacred place found behind almost every hut in the Shona speaking world. It has to be noted that *chikuva* or *bhimbili* is explained in the context of the sacredness of the hut-kitchen. The grave (*guva*), a cognate of *chikuva*, is the name given to the side chamber of the grave. The sanctity of *chikuva* or *bhimbili* emanates from the belief that it is an abode of the ancestors implying the dialogue with the ancestors which takes place in the kitchen. As such, it is a ritual space-place.

Some interesting questions that have to be answered are who is suitable to pass through *chikuva* on burial? What age, condition or gender is placed at *chikuva*? Based on a study by Kamwendo and Manyeruke, not all corpses are placed on *chikuva*. It is basically the body of the husband and wife of the house whilst the bodies of children and others are only housed there.





Fig 2.2 Prayers over potshelf

Drinking water is placed on the *chikuva* to symbolise the everlasting flow of protection and life of the ancestors for the family. When rituals and ceremonies are performed, beer calabashes are placed at the same *chikuva* and any communication with the ancestors is done facing the *chikuva*. These patterns are not uniform, and it is critical to observe since, like any house, designs may differ but with common/similar structures.

Although indigenous people in Zimbabwe had colonial encounters particularly with Christianity, the tradition of *chikuva* seems to have survived. In a study among the Budya people in Manicaland province of Zimbabwe, they associate the centrality of *chikuva* to communication with ancestors. An academic historian, Aldrin Magaya in an interview with Peter Gamunorwa in 2017, noted the following reflections from the informant;

*Remember in the 1950s when I decided to go and look for work my father called me to his house. He told me it was the tradition of our family to inform our ancestors and ask them for help with anything that we wanted. So, he kneeled down in front of the chikuwa [clay pot shelf] and started clapping bubububuqa [the sound of clapping]. He said, 'look after your child as he goes into the forests [unknown territory]. Make sure he will be able to kill animals during his hunt so that he can feed his family [meaning – help him secure employment so that he can take care of his family]. I then left for Mutare. After receiving my first salary, I bought a blanket for my father. It was customary at that time to buy a blanket for your father with your first salary. So I went back home. My father took the*



*blanket and knelt in front of the chikuva and thanked the ancestors for looking after me. Although it was his blanket, it also belonged to the ancestors who had helped me. It was the custom. It is a custom that I also taught my children to adhere to, and I hope they will even pass it down to their children.*

Also, on narratives surrounding *chikuva* is the clay pots which are used. The Saunyama dynasty in Northeast Zimbabwe is known to pass through *chikuva* when petitioning for the rains under a ritual ceremony called *mukwerera* carried out in October. The Saunyama are indigenous people who live among the Manyika and the Maungwe under what archaeologists call the Nyanga archaeological complex. Their name 'Saunyama' is derived from the word 'Vanyama' which means meat hunters, and they are referred to as the *Mheta-chifambanedumbu* (python) by totem. Their territory is centrally located within the complex bordered by the Nyangombe River and the town of Nyanga.

### **Affliction/Crisis/Impromptu Rituals**

As their names indicate, these rituals have the main motive of rectifying misfortunes in life such as drought, barrenness, illness, deaths, wars and many others. Sometimes, illness may also prompt such rituals to be carried out. Rainmaking ceremony, a barren couple, those afflicted by evil spirits fall under these rituals. Religious practitioners in IR play an important role in leading proceedings whenever an Affliction/Crisis/Impromptu ritual is carried out.

### **Calendrical Rituals**

These are seasonal or periodic rituals, which occur at various times in the year and often relate to people's need for subsistence (Cox, 1992:80). Appealing for rain forms another typical example of calendrical rituals.

### **Myths in Indigenous Religion**

The word **myth** basically entails falsehoods meant to be known/interpreted as truths. However, in the study of religion, the word relates to a form of symbolic language that expresses the truths of human existence in a way that rational language cannot (Magesa, 1997). Eliade (1959:14) also says that for believers, myths are sacred narratives that reveal ultimate truth and realities. Concurrently, Schmidt (1988:184) notes that a myth refers to a speech about the holy or sacred and its implication for human beings. As such, every religion is founded on particular myths. Indigenous religion has various myths of origin, categorised as; *Kurumbi/Gwambe, Guruuswa and Ngomalungundu*. Myths of origin are sometimes called genesis myths. Myths associated with fostering societal norms and values are referred to as socio-moral myths. Myths are usually transmitted through oral traditions and this also offers room for misinterpretations and misrepresentations. Oral traditions are verbal messages which are reported statements from the past beyond the present generations (Vansina, 1985).

## **Kurumbi/Gwambe**

This narrative emerged from a reed that developed from a marshy area. It is believed that when the reed split, it is out of the reed that the person *Kurumbi/Gwambe* came out of. *Kurumbi* was accompanied by a woman named *Dzavana*, of which these two are believed to be the earliest of ancestors among the Karanga. is basically known as it was explained by Aschwad en (1987). The narrative is known to exist among the Karanga.

## **Guruuswa (Long Grass)**

Guruuswa is the place of origin of the Shona people (the term 'Shona' is controversial because of its colonial connotations, located to the north of the Zambezi River. Chirevo Kwenda locates Guruuswa in the grasslands of the African Great Lakes region (East-Central Africa), while James L. Cox writes of an oral tradition that places it in Tanganyika (Tanzania). Guruuswa means 'long grass' or 'tall grass' since it was believed to be an area of grassy plains and expansive grassland. It is the place where most present-day Shona people originate from and came into being as people, their 'historical' birthplace. According to A. Chigwedere, the Shona were known as the Mbire during that time, named after their earliest remembered ancestor Mambiri. Mambiri was the father of Tovera/Thobela whose son was Murenga Sororenzou, who is believed to be the founding ancestor of the *Shona-Mbire*. Chigwedere states that it was the Mbire group that gave the name Tanganyika to the country now known as Tanzania and to Lake Tanganyika, with Tanganyika meaning 'our first country.'

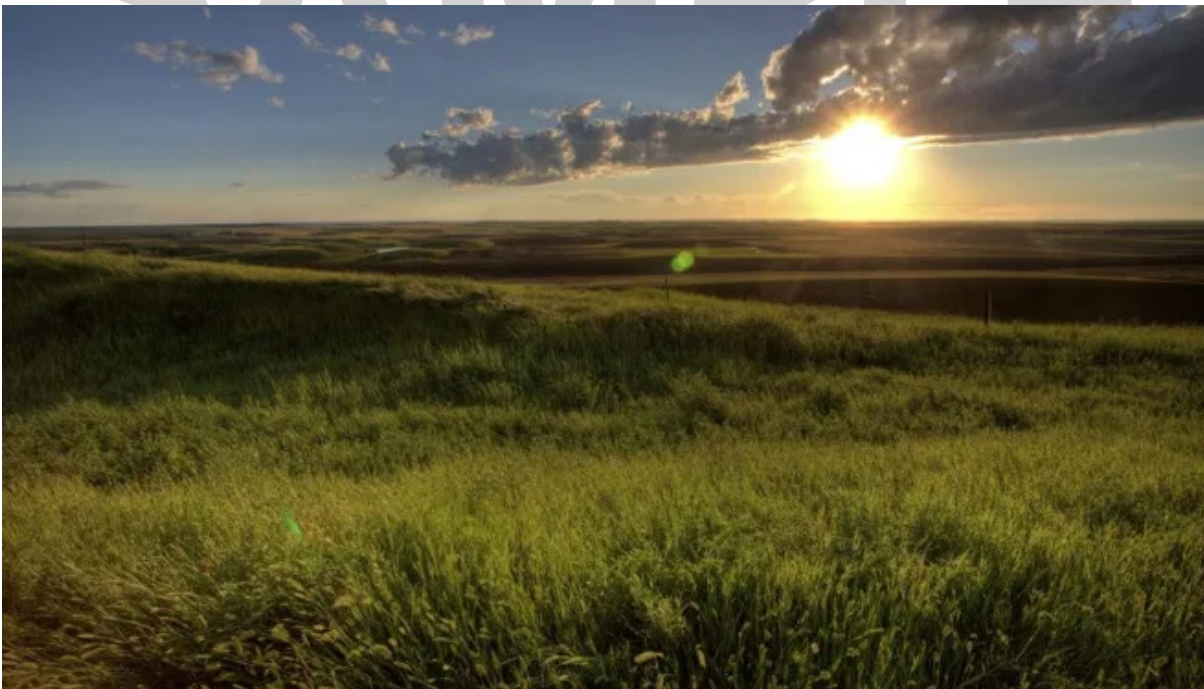


Fig. 2.3 Guruuswa/Long Grass

Guruuswa has many attached meanings such that the above representation must be understood as simplistic. metaphorical meaning is sometimes attached to the same name Guruuswa. Therefore, any attempt to locate Guruuswa as a physical space or place is problematic. What can be easily deduced is that the origins of people in the present-day

Zimbabwe are founded in this narrative myths, however always attract ambiguities and controversy due to their varying narratives born out of Oral traditions. In the lands between Ruya and Mazoe rivers, Guruuswa is said to lie in the west, in Mount Darwin and Sipolilo (7 kilometres from Guruve). Notably, the people of Mapfungautsi and Mupfure-Munyati confluence place it to the east (Bourdillon 1972:15).

On the other hand, the Guruuswa myth is given symbolic credence along the human process of birth (Lan 1985). Lan further notes that the tall grass could suggest the symbolic pubic hair and the watery place indicating the female reproductive organ-the vagina. Hence, this interpretation dismisses Guruuswa interpretation as a geographical space or location.

## **Socio-Moral Myth**

### **Forbidden sex myth**

The forbidden sexual intercourse myth among the Shona is part of the tradition. It is usually represented by a hyena-men.

The man who could change into a hyena had a wife and two children. In Oral traditions among the Shona, it is said that no rain had fallen, and people were starving to death. For that reason, the man decided to eat the son, but the wife told him to go hunting. The wife opted to go to her parent's home to meet her relatives once her husband had disappeared into the forest. In her basket were calabashes filled to the brim with flies. One of the children was still too young to walk the long distance and she decided to carry it on her back. The woman heard the hyena howl because it wanted the son as food as it was hungry. In response, the woman emptied one of the calabashes that were full of flies for the hyena. After eating, the hyena had a brief sleep after which it rose again, hungrier and angrier. On this occasion, the hyena remarked that 'if I eat this child (the one on the woman's back), it is not yours but mine, so I eat myself.' The woman emptied another calabash and she arrived on the sixth day, tired and with the hyena in hot pursuit. She recounted the whole story to her people and the relatives decided to kill the hyena-man. Before killing the hyena, the people decided first to put him in a room where he was happy with his wife's younger sisters (*varamu*). A goat and a sheep were slaughtered and the son-in-law was given the sheep's tail. People broke into song and dance and suddenly, hair filled the man's body and he quickly changed into a hyena. The girls cried for help, and people came to kill the hyena.

The story above informs about the moral duty of the husband is to control his sexual appetite soon after the birth of a child who will need pure milk from the mother after birth. As such, sexual intercourse is believed to be a taboo, thus the husband in this story is interpreted as a hyena. To evade the sexually restless husband, the woman becomes tactful by going to her parent's home. The woman is viewed as a responsible person who knows the risks associated with the husband's advances as they pose a danger to the child's survival. Lack of self-control from the husband equates to an irresponsible parent who ends up with the potential to eat his own child(ren).

## CLASS ACTIVITIES



Find out and present about the following myths in your class.

- Ngomalungundu myth
- Bull myth
- Wetbird (dreams) myth
- Mwedzi myth

## Hero cultural myth

This entails praising those individuals associated with outstanding abilities such as Nehanda Nyakasikana, Sekuru Kaguvi, Chaminuka, Siginyamatshe, Mlugulu among others.

### ACTIVITY 2.1



Research and write a newspaper report on how Chaminuka has been portrayed in various stories (be it written or verbal stories). Explain in detail the problems posed by such stories especially surrounding his death in conflict resolution in Zimbabwe. (Length, 350-450 words)

## END OF UNIT EXERCISE

1. Define what you understand by rites of passage. (2)
2. Describe the following rituals;
  - a. Birth
  - b. Puberty
  - c. Death
  - d. Marriage (20)
3. What is the difference between crisis rituals and calendrical rituals? (4)
4. Account for the forbidden sex myth. (8)
5. Describe the way chikuva/bhimbili/potbelly is perceived in indigenous religion. (8)
6. What is fertility testing? (2)
7. What are the reasons for fertility testing? (2)
8. Discuss arguments raised against fertility testing in Zimbabwe? (3)
9. Account for stories surrounding the location of Guruuswa. (8)
10. Outline the relevance of myths among followers of IR. (4)

## 2.2 RELIGIOUS PRACTITIONERS

### Objectives

By the end of this unit, learners should be able to:

- identify religious practitioners in IR.
- state the roles of religious practitioners.

### Sacred Practitioners in IR

A **sacred practitioner** is one who holds a role for the religious community and connects the community with what it regards to be unrestricted value (Cox, 1992). However, sacred practitioners in IR have been victims of name-calling by both colonialists and (formerly) colonised over the years. Some of the derogatory terms used against sacred practitioners include satanists, witch doctors, evil doctors, and *n`angas*. In spite of such name-calling, their resilience is found in the way people consult them nicodemously whenever calamity strikes. Given that background, Sacred Practitioners are in fact the wellsprings of traditional reproductive systems, **indigenous knowledge systems (IKS)**, foundations of traditional parenting systems, the watchmen of afro-cultural philosophies and protagonists of ethnomedicine. Indigenous knowledge systems are characterised by local people's experiences, and practices tested over the centuries and adapted to the local culture and environment. They are dynamic and changing and also expressed in the local language.

### Roles of Religious Practitioners in IR

#### Indigenous Medical Practitioners

Indigenous Medical Practitioners (IMPs) are also called African Traditional Medical Practitioners (AMPS). There are different types of ATMPs in Zimbabwe that primarily include: herbalists (*magodobori*), diviners (*varovi vehakata/vashoperi*), spirit mediums (*masvikiro*), traditional birth attendants/midwives (*nyamukuta*) and faith healers (FHs) (*maporofita*). Some indigenous medical practitioners are specialists on issues related to post-humous enquiries: *gata*. They interpret the causes of the death of the deceased. During their **prognostics**, they become incarnates of the dead and his/her intercessors. They provide information on how the deceased wants the estate distributed and how related rituals must be enacted. Instructions about *doro rehonye* and *kurova guva* rituals came from this specialist. The specialist has the power to invite: (*kuhaka*) the spirit of the deceased to dialogue with the living using lots: *hakata*. The Shona people honorifies this specialist as *muuvuki/mashopeshope*.



Sekuru Mhere explained that, 'Indigenous sacred practitioners are specialists in socio-medical and socio-political issues' [Interviewed in Gutu on 23/04/1990] as cited in Monyanganise et.al. They preside over chieftainship and governance issues. They are political advisors. The chiefs, village heads and indigenous medical practitioners respect them. They are sacramentals of the guardians of African geopolitics.

**Chiefs** - are custodians of the societal norms and values of a people. They fall under the Ministry of Local Governance in independent Zimbabwe. Chiefs are also political in their everyday operations/activities. They are also involved in settling disputes in their areas, for instance sanctioning those who do not abide by sacred days, regulating sacred forests, animals, and trees among other roles.



Fig 2.4 Chief Oaheng Marupi being installed to be chief

Source: <https://www.chronicle.co.zw/chief-marupi-installed/>

## ACTIVITY 2.2 ROLE PLAY



Find out more about on the Traditional Leaders Act by using this link <https://zimlil.org/zw/legislation/act/1998/25>.

## Spirit Mediums

They are traditionally known for offering ideological grounding/inspiration when confronted with external influences. In times of warfare, Spirit Mediums are popularly known for defending their people and their land. Spirit mediums are also territorial guardians of the land. Above all, mediums also provided the moral campus in the face of crisis. Some of the spirit mediums known in Zimbabwe narratives include Mbuya Nehanda, Sekuru Kaguvi, Mbuya Tangwena, Sekuru Gumboreshumba, and Chaminuka.



Fig 2.5 Mbuya Nehanda and Sekuru Kaguvi

Source: <https://www.sundaymail.co.zw/mbuya-nehanda-the-legacy-lives-on>

## ACTIVITY RESEARCH 2.2



Read at least one of the following books, articles and write a summary of at least two and a half pages in your research book:

1. Guns and Rains: Guerillas and Spiritual Mediums in Zimbabwe, David Lan, (2015)
2. Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896-7 A Study in African Resistance, Terence Ranger, (1967)
3. Re-living the Second Chimurenga: Memories from the Liberation Struggle in Zimbabwe, Fay Chung, (2006)
4. "The Absent Priesthood: Another Look at the Rhodesian Risings of 1896-1897," Julian Cobbing, (1977)
5. "An Innocent Woman, Unjustly Accused? Charwe, Medium of the Nehanda Mhondoro Spirit, and the 1896-97 Central Shona Rising in Zimbabwe," David Beach, History in Africa, Vol. 25 (1998)

## Midwife

Traditional midwives, sometimes called Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs), are primary pregnancy and childbirth providers who usually learn their trade through apprenticeship, although some might be self-taught. Generally an older illiterate woman who might be “community TBAs” or “family TBAs” who has learnt their midwifery skills through apprenticeship and has been a midwives for many years and is highly respected for their midwifery and ritual expertise. A typical example of a midwife who made media headlines in Zimbabwe is Mbuya Ngwena.



*Fig 2.6 Traditional Midwife, Mbuya Ngwena based in Mbare-Harare*

## Rain Messenger

Depending on the area of speciality, some are consulted on weather and climatic predictions and changes biannually. They preside over mikwerera/mitoro: rain-inducing (not rainmaking) ceremonies. Those practising this calling do not stay in the village. Some are also celibates who are committed to a single life. In terms of diet, some feed/fed on sadza rerukweza: rapoko sadza and mutton only.

## The Elderly

These are vital in passing on the memory of a people from one generation to the other. They are in fact living archives useful in the existence and continuation of the memory of a people. Socialisation of the young to responsible adults is only possible due to the existence of the elderly. The transmission of societal norms and values occurs with the elderly safeguarding everything. The yardstick for future generations is planted into the young ones by the elderly.

## END OF UNIT EXERCISE

1. Write any four roles of Sacred Practitioners in IR. (4)
2. List at least three roles of Chiefs in Zimbabwe. (3)
3. Outline the five types of ATMPs in Zimbabwe. (5)
4. What is the difference between myths and rituals? (2)
5. Name at least two female chiefs you know in Zimbabwe. (2)
6. What does ZINATHA stand for?
7. Write a brief biography of Gordon Chavhunduka and Dr Ushewokunze explaining their central role in the establishment of ZINATHA. (12)
8. In which year was ZINATHA formed?
9. What is the other name for a midwife?
10. Name three spirit mediums per each phase in the history of Zimbabwe; (3)
  - a. 1896 Uprisings
  - b. Second Chimurenga
  - c. Third Chimurenga

## 2.3 SACRED PLACES IN IR

### Objectives

By the end of this unit, learners should be able to:

- identify sacred places IR.
- describe the importance of the sacred places in IR.

### What is a Sacred Place?

**Sacred places** are places that are sanctified and which are believed to be of religious and historical importance (Eliade 1957). They are also interpreted as the opposite of that which is viewed as the profane. A sacred place (*nzvimbo inoera*) is also related to a place where spirits are present; it has certain rules of access and behaviours that are not allowed there (taboos). In Shona religion, a place is sacred if a spirit medium says it is because the ancestral spirit possessing the medium knows what is sacred and what is not. As such, places-spaces are regarded as sacred in IR which include hills, mountains, pools, trees, forests and various water bodies, to mention only these among many.

### Njelele Shrine

Njelele shrine is sometimes called *Mabweadziva* or *Matonjeni*. It is a prominent rainmaking shrine located outside the southwestern fringes of the Matobo National Park in the Khumalo communal area approximately 100 kilometres south of Bulawayo. Mwari, as He is known among the Shona speaking people, is believed to have lived at Njelele Shrine. The presence of Mwari at Njelele was indicated by His voice. The Shona people believed that Mwari was the highest and final authority behind their ancestors (*Vadzimu*). The secret behind the respect accorded to sacred areas and their environments lies in the associated taboos. The Shona believed that the spirits reside in forests, mountains, caves, hollow trees and pools, closely linking intangible aspects of heritage with these tangible places. Even during the liberation struggle, the Second Chimurenga, and Njelele shrine is believed to have proffered sanctuary to spirit mediums and liberation war fighters. They also provided them with spiritual guidance. It is no wonder in Joshua Nkomo's autobiography **The Story of My Life**, the shrine is explicitly mentioned along with pilgrimage narratives vital in his life.

The adherents of the traditional Mwari and the ancestral spirits attach great respect to the environment because they argue that they will be depriving Mwari and the spirits of a home to live in by despoiling it. There is no consensus on when the Njelele shrine was first



established in the Matobo Hills. Among the various narratives, Oral traditions emerge as inconsistent. The origins of Njelele dated back to about the 14th century when the Mbire ethnic group is believed to have migrated from around Lake Tanganyika southwards and eventually settled at Great Zimbabwe, a proto-Shona settlement occupied between 1250-1450 AD.

Perhaps, the Mwari **cult** was established at Great Zimbabwe even though some scholars believe that the establishment of the Mwari shrine at Njelele could have been associated or coincided with a shift of the Rozvi administrative power from Great Zimbabwe to the Matobo Hills. The cult has essentially remained a Shona institution although the Ndebele later adopted the Mwari cult, invoked and consulted the oracle when rains failed or when personal advice was needed.

In addition, oral tradition also recalls that King Lobengula housed some of the Mwari cult priests at his 19th-century settlement of Bulawayo so that they could advise him in the face of calamities. The cult's influence also spread as far afield as the country's southern districts of Chivi in Masvingo people came as far as Gutu to consult the oracle at Njelele during periods of drought and other problems.

However, it is also believed that the Njelele shrine could have been established in the hills after the Great Zimbabwe was involved in a religious conflict, during which a splinter group of traditional priests moved away from Great Zimbabwe and finally established the Mwari cult in the Matobo Hills. After establishing Njelele in Matobo, several other cult centres such as Dula and Zhilo were also established in the same locality spreading their influence far and wide while other similar traditional institutions existed in the south-west of Zimbabwe, among the Kalanga and Venda people. In the 19th century, traditional priests were therefore drawn from Venda and Kalanga families, which were said to have been deeply entrenched in the Mwari cult tradition. The shrine is part of the Matobo Hills, which is found in a granite kopje that looks solid and similar to several others in the same area.

## SCHOOL TOUR



Visit any sacred place in Zimbabwe strongly associated with Indigenous Religion. Write a report and present your findings to your school/class. Findings may include but not limited to the following:

- Name and location of the sacred place.
- Perceptions of the local people on the named sacred place.
- Agreements and disagreements on the way people perceive the place/space (try to differentiate perceptions based on age differences, that is, youths and the elderly)
- Taboos that are associated with the sacred place.

## ICT ACTIVITY 2.3



To find out more about sacred mountains, follow the links;

<https://www.herald.co.zw/magweto-hurungwes-sacred-mystery-mountain/>

<https://www.newsday.co.zw/2014/01/mountain-swallows-people/>

### Pools/Water Bodies

Water bodies such as pools and rivers are also understood within sacred spaces in IR. Folklores associated with water bodies make it possible for IR believers and adherences to acknowledge the sacredness of such spaces. The mystic stories include those surrounding the existence of mermaids (*njuzu*). Among many other places falling under sacred water bodies, pools in Zimbabwe include Gwehava dam in Gokwe, Save river among others. Maposa and Mhaka (2013:28) argue that the popular traditional Shona song, *Mhondoro dzinomwa muna Save* (Territorial or chiefly spirits drink from the Save River), demonstrates that the Shona people value the water sources as the foundation of life.

### Chisurudza

This pool is found among the Ndau of Manzvire village in Chipinge, Manicaland province in Zimbabwe. This pool is said to be sacred. There are taboos and prohibitions that abound on this pool. In a bid to preserve the pool from vandalism by both humans and animals during the 1992 drought, the pool was fenced. As a result, the pool dried up and one of the elders said:

*Vantu vakakwatidzira chidziya ichi ngematanda zvisingatenderwi ngechintu chedu. Chidziya chakaoma, mvura yakapera* (People fenced this pool using poles against tradition and it dried up).

Eventually, the pool dried up due to human interference and failure to adhere to its taboos. Elders are also pessimistic that such water bodies cannot be resuscitated without the hand of traditional leaders. It has to be acknowledged that among the Ndau people in Manzvire village, a sizeable number has the dziva (pool) totem which plays a pivotal role in preserving water and water management.

### Gonawapotera Sacred Pool

The sacred pool location is in Chirumhanzu, Midlands province of Zimbabwe. The name Gonawapotera is translated to English to mean 'if you have done something wrong, go to someone for vindication.' Using the Karanga indigenous justice system, those who committed offences were supposed to admit their guilt for a lighter judgement than to wait until taken they are to the sacred pool from which the Chief would eventually hand a severe judgement. The pool is also claimed to be home to water bodies inhabitants such as the mermaids (*njuzu*).



Fig 2.7 Gonawapotera sacred pool in Shashe river, Chirumhanzu

## ACTIVITY



In your groups, gather and retell stories of sacred water bodies as they are remembered or told in various communities in Zimbabwe.

## Trees

In Indigenous Religion, trees occupy the physical environment and have religious, medicinal, and cultural value. Examples of sacred trees include the baobab, tamarind, fig and *Marula* among others. The cacti for instance, besides its known medicinal purposes, is believed to ward off lightning. The Hissing tree, called in its vernacular *Musasa/mutondo*, provides shade for conducting daily consultations and various other trees associated with community well-being and welfare. The tree is also used to protect homesteads from evil spirits. Chiefs prohibit the cutting down of certain trees like *muhacha* (The hissing tree/*mobola* plum tree), *muonde* (fig tree), *mushozhowa* (*psudalachnostylis maprounifolia*) and other big trees. The Hissing tree is also used on people who have problems in conceiving. It is also used as an immune booster. Sometimes, the roots treat Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs), ears, and python bites. The seeds of this tree are both fruit and medicine. Friday Chisanyu, the President of Zimbabwe National Practitioners Association (ZINPA), argued that faith healers also believe that bad spirits are easily removed under the hissing tree. Above that, the hissing tree is also believed to be associated with good cultural values in the African religion.

It was also believed that ancestral spirits resided within sacred forests. Only the elder guardians of the land could enter these sacred woods to consult with the departed. Hence, people were barred from entering, cutting trees, gathering fuel or causing bush fires and otherwise, destroying or desecrating the sacred forest. Given such regulatory steps, the traditional society could arguably be viewed as environmentally friendly.

## ICT ACTIVITY 2.5



Follow the link <https://zimboriginal.com/2019/05/27/untangle-your-roots-from-these-amazing-details-on-15-of-zimbabwes-indigenous-trees/> to learn more about indigenous trees and their importance.

## SUMMARY



Three important components in IR were dealt with in detail: rites and rituals in IR, religious practitioners in IR, and finally, an outline of sacred places in IR.

## END OF UNIT EXERCISE

1. What do you understand by sacred places? (2)
2. List at least four sacred places in IR. (4)
3. Outline at least five sacred trees you have studied.
4. What is the role of sacred trees in IR? (3)
5. How are sacred trees preserved in Zimbabwe? (2)
6. Name one sacred water body in Zimbabwe and account for stories surrounding the preservation of water. (6)
7. Name any three trees that are forbidden by chiefs and or headsmen to be cut down.
8. Write an account of Nerumedzo Sacred Forest in Bikita-Zimbabwe. (10)
9. Why is Nerumedzo Forest regarded as sacred? (2)
10. Write brief notes on the Chinhoyi caves. (10)

## END OF TOPIC EXERCISE

1. Define the following terms:
  - a. Rites of passage
  - b. Myth
  - c. Indigenous Practitioner

- d. Ritual
- e. Sacred place (10)
- 2. Describe the following rituals: (20)
  - a. Birth
  - b. Puberty
  - c. Death
  - d. Marriage
- 3. Name any four sacred places in Zimbabwe. (4)
- 4. Assess the importance of the above named four sacred places. (12)
- 5. Discuss the roles and purposes of chiefs. (4)
- 6. Name any two female chiefs and two male chiefs in Zimbabwe. (4)
- 7. Describe any two myths in IR. (4)
- 8. Explain the relevance of myths among followers of IR. (4)
- 9. Compare and contrast the crisis rituals and calendrical rituals. (4)
- 10. Outline the difference between myths and rituals. (2)
- 11. Explain the chikuva/bhimbili/potbelly and its significance in Indigenous Religion. (8)
- 12. Discuss the role played by any one female and one male Spirit Medium in Zimbabwe. (8)
- 13. Outline any four roles of Sacred Practitioners in IR. (8)
- 14. Describe the importance of midwives. (4)
- 15. Critic the stories that have emerged surrounding Guruuswa. (10)
- 16. Define fertility testing? (2)
- 17. Discuss two disadvantages of fertility testing and why it has been criticised in Zimbabwe. (8)
- 18. Account for stories surrounding the location of Guruuswa. (8)
- 19. List at least five sacred trees you have studied. (5)
- 20. Explain the role of sacred trees in IR. (2)
- 21. Discuss the ways in which sacred trees are preserved in Zimbabwe. (6)
- 22. Assess the mythical stories surrounding the preservation of water in IR. (6)
- 23. Discuss any one sacred water body that you have studied. (5)
- 24. Describe the roles of Indigenous Medical Practitioners. (6)



## ICT LINK

<https://revisionnotes.co.zw/o-level-notes-frs-indigenous-religion-rites-of-passage-in-indigenous-religion>

<https://revisionnotes.co.zw/o-level-notes-frs-indigenous-religion-rites-of-passage-in-indigenous-religion>

[https://www.ijhssi.org/papers/v4\(11\)/B04011007013.pdf](https://www.ijhssi.org/papers/v4(11)/B04011007013.pdf)

SAMPLE

## 'O' LEVEL

GRAMSOL SERIES  
MY STUDY GUIDE  
MY EXAM PRACTICE



## 'A' LEVEL

MASTERING SERIES  
MY STUDY GUIDE  
MY EXAM PRACTICE



### WHY YOU SHOULD USE GRAMSOL RESOURCES

- Our resources put **QUALITY** first.
- They contain activities that are suitable for **CALA**.
- Plenty of **exercises** and **revision** opportunities.
- **Approved** by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education.
- **Strong Binding** and Good **Quality Printing**.
- Good use of images and other visuals.
- **User friendly** and **Engaging design** to facilitate learner centered approach.
- **Full coverage** of syllabus including objectives, methodology and activities.

### Our Marketing Contact

Bulawayo	+263 775 740 678
Harare	+263 774 340 698
Manicaland	+263 778 582 324
Mashonaland	+263 775 952 511
Mashonaland	+263 775 952 516

Matebeleland North	+263 775 740 678
Matebeleland South	+263 775 740 678
Mashonaland West	+263 775 952 512
Masvingo	+263 782 474 458
Midlands	+263 780 556 125