


Chapter 19

Safeguarding Swazi Way of Life: Swazi Culture in Swazi Oral Literature

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ABSTRACT

The prime aim of this study is to give evidence that Swazi oral literature (narratives, poetry, drama, proverbs and idioms, and riddles) has been used to preserve and promote the culture of the Swazi people. Nowadays, Swazi oral literature has been written in a drive to safe-guard the culture of the people of the Swazi society. The traditional life of the emaSwati just like their oral literature has been passed through the generations orally. The study focuses mainly on Swazi oral literature that has traces of traditional life of the Swazi people. The genres of oral literature explored in this study are: prose, drama and poetry. Proverbs and idioms, and riddles with bits of Swazi culture are also discussed in this chapter. The chapter concludes by giving recommendations about other possible ways in which could be done to preserve and promote the culture of the Swazi people.

INTRODUCTION

Nie (2021) defines oral literature as the literature that is delivered by the word of mouth. Taking a step back, literature is lamely defined as work of art that is either written or spoken. It is expressed in a very delicate way as one voices out one's thoughts, concepts and ideas. Literature can be subdivided into two, oral literature and modern literature. In this chapter, focus is on the former. Kamera (2001) refers to oral literature as fictional texts which are composed, kept alive and passed on from generation-to-generation by word of mouth. With the changing times, oral literature has been put down to paper

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for preservation and its promotion. In contemporary setting oral literature covers any volume of written and printed text, which also keeps the kind of literature (Okpewho,1992)

Vilakati and Sibanda (1997) concur with the above assertion that oral literature is also written, unlike before where people relied on transmitting it (oral literature) by the word of mouth. They define oral literature as:

Lolu luhlobo lwemibhalo lengakabhalwa phansi kepha yendluliselwa etitukulwaneni iye kuletinye iye kuletinye ngenlomo. Kululuhlobo lwemibhalo kukhulunywa ngetintfo betenteka kadzeni, kungaba yimilandvo nato tonkhe tinkhulumo tebuciko letingakabhalwa phansi. Kodvwa kuletikhatsi tanamuhla temdzabu setiyabhalwa phansi, loko kwentelwa kutsi titogcineka kahle netitukulwane letitako tifundze kutsi kadzeni kwakuphilwa njani nangempilo nje yesintfu.

This is the kind of writings that are not written down but have been passed through generations through the word of mouth. In this kind of writing mentioning is on what was happening in the past such as history and speeches that were expertly said. However, in the present times oral literature has been written, and this is done to preserve it for future generations so they learn how people in the past lived, and about the traditional life too.

This shows that oral literature can also be termed traditional literature in the society of emaSwati since it reflects on the traditional life of emaSwati. This kind of literature contains the history of the society which the people find pride in it. The life of the people was shared verbally through the generations then in the present times some have been put to paper so it (oral literature) is conserved. After all, Finnegan (1998) observes that Africa possesses both written and unwritten traditions. In other spheres, it is also referred to as folklore. Sone (2018) states that this kind of literature is delivered by the word of mouth and is aimed at the ear to move the whole body. It is also noted that oral literature (Africa's) has principles that however differ from one society to the other. This is because of the different cultures of the different societies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining culture

Pato (2018) defines culture as a way in which a certain group lives their lives. This is all about the practises in their way of life. The shared patterns of behaviours are learned by socialisation. Ekwelen et.al (2007) defines culture as an extremely valuable heritage which has been descended down from generation to generation, and they further state that culture appears in all aspects of life which are emotional culture, exchange culture, business culture, oral culture etc. culture can be referred as public rules that we draw upon when we think and act(Patterson, 2014; Cerulo et al, 2021)This depicts that within a society there are many aspects involved, after all culture is shared behaviour of a group of people living together as a society. The treasured aspects of culture attained from a society's fore-fathers are kept within the generations.

The Swazi society is known for its richness in culture. Many societies are losing their way of living because of different aspects. Eswatini, on the contrary, still has aspects of culture that have been preserved. With the changing times, it is evident that the culture of emaSwati has changed. Some elements of the different traditions, customs, norms and beliefs are lost even though the culture itself would still have its traces. A quick example would be that of *umgcwabo* (funeral). In the ancient times, it was conducted

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