Greener Journal of Social Sciences

ISSN: 2276-7800

ICV: 5.99

Submission Date: 15/07/2015

Accepted: 20/07/2015

Published: 30/07/2015

Subject Area: Religion and feminism

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.15580/GJSS.2015.3.071515097>

‘Bondswomen of Culture’: A gender critique of Bota reshupa and Kuhaza among the Ndau people of Chipinge, Zimbabwe

By

Muyambo Tenson

Research Article (DOI <http://doi.org/10.15580/GJSS.2015.3.071515097>)

‘Bondswomen of Culture’: A gender critique of *Bota reshupa*¹ and *Kuhaza*² among the Ndaou people of Chipinge, Zimbabwe

Muyambo Tenson

Faculty of Arts, Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University
E-mail: tmabhuyamuyambo@ gmail. com

ABSTRACT

Debates on Indigenous Knowledge Systems (hereafter IKS) are plenty and most scholarly works on IKS are couched from an Afro-centric perspective. The paper explores the significance of IKS or lack of it from a gender perspective. The general assumption that seems to be coming from academic works is that IKS are the panacea for world challenges, particularly in Africa. There is a tendency to *romanticise* IKS and gloss over some of their life-denying tenets. The question at hand is: To what extent are IKS sensitive to gender? The dearth of literature on this perspective calls for research and it is this gap that the paper fills in. The paper argues that not all IKS are worth the salt. There is need for what we may call ‘IKS hermeneutics’³ before IKS are embraced as both liberative and life affirming to humanity. Cultural hermeneutics informs the direction the study takes. The ‘deadly weapon of culture’ (Dube, 2003) as part of IKS views women as the ‘significant others’. The oppressive nature of such IKS are interrogated through critical discourse analysis of existing literature and in-depth interviews. It is prudent to admit that not all IKS are ‘safe space’ for most of African women and men alike. This, therefore, calls for the theory of ‘feminist cultural hermeneutics’.

Key words: Feminist cultural hermeneutics, indigenous knowledge, gender, masculinity, Ndaou, woman, Zimbabwe.

INTRODUCTION

Indigenous knowledge system debates abound. Environmentalists, ethicists, religionists and social scientists have made tremendous contributions towards the resurgence of IKS worldwide. This is so because humanity is shrouded in uncertainties and doubts. What abounds in scholars’ works is a clarion call for ‘going back to the basics’. For most of these scholars, the answers to the many questions raised by people are in IKS. The tendency therefore is to gloss over these IKS as the panacea for all challenges. It is this romanticisation of IKS that the study interrogates using gender lens. The basic question is: Are IKS safe spaces for both men and women? The study critiques *bota reshupa* as a health asset that exposes women to oppression through its attendant concept of *kuhaza*. While gender studies are skewed towards women, the study argues that *bota reshupa* not only endangers women’s lives but also puts men’s lives at risk. It is only that men, in their comfort zones, are too blinded to realise that they too are victims of the same IKS that ‘empowers’ them and disempower women, Ndaou women in particular.

Research Methodology

Theoretically, the study gains from the insightful contributions on feminist cultural hermeneutics (Kanyoro, 2002, Oduyoye, 1992, 1995, Dube, 2003). The underpinning argument here is that culture entraps and makes women vulnerable yet it is mostly misunderstood as the lynchpin of a people’s (women included) dignity and integrity.

¹ This is porridge prepared using a mixture of traditional herbs soaked in water. The water, which is sweet, is used in preparing porridge. The porridge has an additive value of ensuring good health where individuals who partake of it are said to be ‘immune’ to a number of diseases. *Shupa* used to take the place of the modern day BCG immunisation programmes to children under the age of five. In addition it is said to enhance men’s virility. The watery mixture is kept in a calabash, *dumbu* which is simply referred to as *shupa*. Elders, both men and women can drink the mixture and keeps them healthy.

² *Kuhaza* is whereby a man bleeds profusely through the mouth and nose after sexual intercourse with his wife who had been adulterous. If not attended to early it may lead to the man’s death. The man becomes *denhe* (husk) and becomes a weakling physically and sexually.

³ This involves analysis of IKS in order to make them safe spaces for both women and men. This is normally done as people look for life-affirming IKS as part of their heritage worth upholding and deconstructing elements that are harmful and life denying to either women or men or even both. Some IKS treat women as ‘significant others’. It is this ‘Othering’ of women that calls for IKS hermeneutics.

Culture as an essential component of IKS is a 'deadly weapon' (Dube, 2003) that puts women at risk and robs them of dignity and integrity. It is this theoretical grounding that informs the study of the Ndaubelief and practice of *shupa* and *kuhaza* from a gender perspective. IKS are socially constructed, fluid over time in different settings and plural. While the belief and practice of *shupa* is said to be a health asset, it makes both men and women vulnerable through the concept of *kuhaza/ kukotsodzwa*. Data was gathered through in-depth interviews and observations of the belief and practice among the Ndaubelief and practice among the Ndaubelief community in Chipinge. Purposive and snowball sampling were used to sample participants in the study.

Indigenous Knowledge(s): A definition

Indigenous knowledge(s) has been defined from a number of perspectives. Some scholars understand indigenous knowledge as social values, beliefs and practices that informed the African's various institutions (Gudhlanga and Makaudze, 2012). For Odora Hopper (2002) indigenous knowledge is formed by two essential terms. She begins by defining indigenous as 'the root, something natural or innate'. She further argues that it is an integral part of culture. Indigenous knowledge systems, for her, refer to the combination of knowledge systems encompassing technology, social, economic and philosophical learning, or educational, legal and governance systems. This means that IKS are not retrogressive (a eurocentric perception) but progressive, adaptive and dynamic. Mawere (2012) defines IKS as local knowledge(s) that is unique to a given culture or society. Ocholla (2007) cited in Mawere (2012:7) perceives IKS as a complex set of knowledge and technologies existing and developed around specific conditions of populations and communities indigenous to a particular geographical area. The definitions proffered above seem to be pointing at the following points:

- IKS are not homogenous as each locality can have its own set of IKS.
- IKS are fluid and never static as is generally believed.
- IKS are transgenerational in that they are passed from generation to another and cuts across generations.

Having made the above observations, it is prudent to demystify the notion that once IKS are talked about it is an attempt to be 'traditional' in its negative sense. This burgeoning notion has been costly to a people's knowledge. Hopper (2002) believes that the low value attached to IKS has resulted in their erosion. IKS are under serious threat such that Agrawal (2002) bemoans their loss. He, therefore, calls for the creation of databases for IKS as a way of protecting them from being lost and become extinct. Hopper (ibid) concurs when she argues that IKS represent both a national heritage and a national resource that should be protected, promoted, developed and appropriately conserved. Admittedly IKS are an integral part of a people's culture but most of the above scholars seem to romanticise IKS. The following section accepts this reality but would widen this perception by raising fundamental issues that earlier scholars seem to have ignored. The study does that by critically assessing the efficacy of Ndaubelief *shupa* and *kuhaza* as part of the Ndaubelief IKS from a gender perspective.

'A return to the source': A discourse on *shupa* and *kuhaza*

Many arguments have been made regarding IKS's role in society, more so in societies where largely impacted by globalisation and modernisation. Ntuli (2002) takes the argument from a post-colonial theoretical framework when he argues that the colonial mentality took the Africans for granted and viewed them as *tabula rasa* that needed to be filled. This, for him, was like treating the African as a 'perpetual other'. It is this realisation that Ntuli argues from an afro-centric perspective. He becomes emotive as he vehemently asserts that Africa is neither Europe nor America. African problems need African solution and IKS seem to be the panacea. There is no need to look up to Europe or America but Africa must look from within itself to solve African problems. These ideals are more propounded in African Renaissance studies which are beyond the purview of this study.

Arguing from the same perspective Mawere (2010, 2012) is of the view that colonialism and globalisation account for IKS's 'sad histories of suffering dislocations, de-valorisation, pejorative labels, marginalisation and threats of extinction' (Mawere, 2012:7). The foregoing seems to suggest that the way forward is to 'return to the source'. This means an unprecedented resuscitation therapy to the suffocating IKS. The metaphor of going back to the roots resonates clearly from African scholars on IKS. The questions here are: Is it that easy to go back to the roots? Are IKS user-friendly? The quest for answers to these questions takes us to the aspects of Ndaubelief *shupa* and *kuhaza* as Ndaubelief IKS.

Ndaubelief *shupa* and *kuhaza*: A description

Bota reshupa simply referred to as *shupa* is one of the Ndaubelief knowledge system that has stood the test of time. Despite the onslaught on African beliefs and practices by the western culture, *shupa* as one of the enduring Ndaubelief IKS, is porridge prepared using a number of herbs mixed and soaked in water. The herbs include *mungurahwe*, a sweet herb that sweeten the solution. The water is then used to prepare porridge. The porridge is served to children and even adults as medicine for a number of ailments. It is this health asset dimension of *shupa* that

sustains its practice among the Ndaus. Asked some of the functions of the porridge, one elder said: *Mishonga yekuti vana vagwinye* (they are herbs that make children healthy). Upon further questioning the elder identified

some of the functions the porridge serves. It treats *chipande*, *biripiri* (measles) and *chinyoka*. These are troublesome infant ailments. The foregoing confirms that *shupa* as Ndaus IKS is a health asset just like *mono*, a Budya traditional herb (Mushishi, 2010:165).

Shupa has its masculine and feminine dimensions that doubles it as both a health asset as well as a tool of oppression. The porridge is often mixed with herbs that are said to enhance men's virility. This dimension of *shupa* makes the porridge a source of problems. Once a young boy gets this porridge he brags that he is sexually strong and it creates the 'macho image' in boys. At the same time girl children are also given a different form of *shupa* that only promotes femininity. Once the *shupa* is differentiated certain gender questions arise. If the *shupa* is a health asset why is it that it takes gender overtones? Is it a safe Ndaus IKS for both Ndaus women and men? These questions lead us into *kuhaza* as a closely related aspect of *shupa*.

Kuhaza is excessive bleeding after one's wife has been involved in an extra-marital affair. A man who ate *shupa* is said to be 'protected' and any unfaithfulness by his wife or wives leads to him bleeding (*kuhaza* or *kukotsora*). One informant made it clear that once a Ndaus man, who ate *shupa*, bleeds it means his wife or wives cheated. The matter can be ameliorated if detected early enough for the man to be put under traditional treatment (*kubikirwa*). It is this part of *shupa* that makes a health asset, as discussed earlier, potentially dangerous to Ndaus men as it risks their lives. Once a man has bled, elders among the Ndaus believe that he does not fully recover. He becomes what they call *denhe*, a husk that is becoming sexually weak. The man loses his sexual vitality. As a result of this realisation a married woman among the Ndaus does not *cheat* easily. When she is married, she is strongly warned against infidelity and the consequences of cheating are fully explained to her. What surprises all and sundry is that whilst girls are tutored by aunts on this boys are left scot free and nothing about infidelity is mentioned during socialisation. It is women who must be faithful to their husbands whilst husbands are allowed to be loose by society.

Most of Ndaus women are said to be very faithful to their husbands. One elderly respondent made it clear that he would go to *egoli* (South Africa) for many years not fearing that one of his wives might cheat. He confidently said that infidelity could not happen because the women were aware that the husband ate *shupa*. Any extra-marital affair would become known. This has made, among the Ndaus, cases of women cheating very minimal. This explains why polygamy is an enduring institution among most of Ndaus communities without few cases of adulterous relationships. This belief and practice resonate with what the Korekore term *runyoka* (central locking of wives by husbands such that whoever cheats with the wife gets stuck in the process of sexual intercourse).

Despite being a health asset, *shupa* does not only put men's lives at risk. It becomes a tool of oppression for women. Surprisingly when a Ndaus man cheats the wife does not bleed. The question is why when the same *shupa* was served to the wife at youth. One informant argued that the type of *shupa* that is given to men is different from the one given to women. This means that there is more to *shupa* than it being a health asset. What is coming out is that there is the feminization and masculinization of *shupa*. It is out of these discoveries that the study argues against a wholesale embracing of IKS just for the sake of 'returning to the source'. IKS are important as suggested by a number of scholars (Agrawal, 1995, 2002, Hopper, 2002, Ntuli, 2002, Mawere, 2010, 2012, Mapara, 2009) but there is need for IKS hermeneutics to make them safe spaces for the practitioners of such IKS. Having made such an insight the study moves into the next section. The following section explores the gains and pains that Ndaus women experience under the *shupa* and *kuhaza* concepts of Ndaus IKS.

'Bondswomen of culture': The gains and pains of Ndaus women?

Sibanda and Maposa (2013), arguing about women's role in United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe (UCCZ), believe that Ndaus patriarchy places women in a *cul-de-sac* situation. What surprises all and sundry is that the women accept the status quo. For Sibanda and Maposa (ibid) women have limited alternatives when it concerns their culture. It is against this backdrop that the study explores how Ndaus women stand to benefit or lose from Ndaus IKS such as *shupa* and *kuhaza*. This exploration is anchored by a gender analysis of the *shupa* and *kuhaza* among Ndaus people.

It is clear that *shupa* is one such indigenous knowledge that stand to benefit both women and men. Most of the informants indicated that *shupa* is used to boost the immune system of an individual. Maposa-Ranga (2014) admits that *shupa* is medicinal when he says, '*Asina kudya shupa unokasika kurwara kunyanya kudarika akadya* (one who did not eat *shupa* falls sick easier than one who did). *Shupa* prevents people from ailments such as persistent headaches, diarrhoea, measles and many other diseases especially the infants. From the foregoing it is clear that women are also beneficiaries of such an invaluable IKS of *shupa*. One informant argued that *shupa* is hereditary. Once the grandparents ate it, it flows into the blood stream of their kin and kith. He actually argued that these days families may or may not give their children *shupa* but it remains a fact that if the family elders ate *shupa* the male children can still bleed profusely if their wives are adulterous. What this means for Ndaus men is that the hereditary nature of *shupa* still makes them practise it by proxy. This makes the practice inherent and deep-seated such that it has become the ethos of a Ndaus community. Given the efficacy of such a

belief and practice it suffices at this point in time to interrogate *shupa* and *kuhaza* as metaphors of masculinity and femininity.

***Shupa* and *kuhaza*: Metaphors of Ndau masculinity and femininity**

The belief and practice of *shupa* and *kuhaza* among the Ndau is sustaining despite the risks involved. The practitioners of this form of IKS seem to hold tenaciously at the belief and practice as most of them argue that it is the ethos of their well-being. For them it is part of their cultural heritage inherited from past generations. Observation has made it clear that it is Ndau men who are vocal about the practice's significance while women, especially *masungukati* (senior and elderly women) promote the practice as they ensure that junior women are chastised against being adulterous. Men go unpunished as they seem to have unbridled sexual power that can be satisfied elsewhere by some 'other' women. The question that boggles the mind here is: If *shupa* is a health asset that is served to both men and women why is it that when men cheat their wives do not bleed (*kukotsora/kuhaza*)? This question leads us into Ndau masculinity.

One respondent admitted that herbs put into male *shupa* has some additives that are masculine by nature. For this respondent *shupa* is well-intentioned but there are some unscrupulous members of society who use it for their selfish agendas such as enhancing manhood. For him such men are sexually insatiate and normally abuse women. Women are simply taken as sex machines who have to make themselves available any time for the husband's sexual gratification. The porridge is a means to ensure good health and well-being. The respondent was very clear that *shupa* remains one of the practices of the Ndau people that demonstrates that contrary to western bio-medicine that assumed superiority, Africans had their own indigenous ways of preventing and healing various ailments. In the majority of cases the traditional medication proved useful and effective.

Many Ndau men boast of having eaten *shupa* (*ndakarya shupa inil*). One traditional healer confidently bragged about having had *shupa*. He said he was sexually fit and had a number of wives whom he said were all happy under his roof. It is such bragging that blinds Ndau men from the feelings of Ndau women. Barber and Ricardo (2005) succinctly make it clear that such kinds of bragging results in the macho image. Sexual prowess is then seen as a mark for being 'ideal men'. Sexual power purported to be enhanced by *shupa* puts men under pressure to demonstrate to peers that they ate *shupa* and therefore are real men. As they demonstrate this they risk their lives and the lives of their wives especially in the context of HIV and AIDS.

While men brag about having had *shupa*, Ndau women seem to be content with the status quo. Senior women even subject junior ones to unwittingly accept the beliefs and practices that sacrifice their rights and lives at the altar of the unholy trinity of religion, culture and gender (Maluleke and Nadar cited in Chitando, 2009:98). Women are silenced by culture and accept harmful practices (Dube, 2003, Siwila, 2011, Mapuranga, 2010) such as *shupa* and *kuhaza* as culturally given. The next section discusses the implications of *kuhaza* for both women and men.

***Kuhaza*: Implications for both women and men**

IKS is a value-laden phenomena which can be harnessed by communities to address twenty-first challenges ranging from climate change, chronic ailments such as HIV and AIDS and many others. But simply embracing IKS wholesale without hermeneutically exploring IKS is not only violation of human rights but dangerous to life itself. The element of *kuhaza* as a package of the whole concept of Ndau *shupa* risks human life. It does not only oppress women but even puts men's lives at risk.

Once a man who ate *shupa* bleeds excessively after having been intimate with his wife (who had been involved in an extra-marital intimacy) the man becomes *denhe* (a husk) even if treated. This means he is no longer physically and sexually strong as he used to be. He becomes a *ndonda* (weakling) always coughing (*kukotsora-kotsora*). This jeopardises how other Ndau men relate to him. He is caricatured and in most cases this has a negative effect on his manhood. One informant sarcastically referred to an incident where this happened and the man is no longer regarded as an ideal man. He is often ridiculed at the kraal head's *dare* whenever he makes a contribution. Apart from having psychological effects, the ridiculing leaves lasting impressions of inferiority on the man in that even his own children begin to belittle him as not a model father. In some cases if the affected man who bleeds is not expeditiously attended to he may die. One traditional healer confirmed this when he argued:

Vanhu vakanonoka kumurapisa anofa. Panoda kuti zvaitika vanhu vokurumidza kumhanya-mhanya muna anasekuru naanambuya okurungirwa zvibota. Akanonoka kutaura zvaitika anogona kufa. Takazviona makawanda zveitika muno medu munharaunda (If the affected man is not taken to traditional healers for treatment on time he dies. This has been happening in the community) (Maposa Ranga, 2014).

The above submission is an indication that men, too, are vulnerable to the belief and practice of *shupa* and *kuhaza*. The question that remains unanswered is: Why is this practice sustaining if it puts life at risk? Gender studies are often skewed towards women but what is obtaining in this study is the realisation that men, too, need protection by voicing religio-cultural beliefs and practices that does not only put women's lives at risk but men's also.

On the other hand women are also at the receiving of IKS such as *shupa* and *kuhaza*. To illustrate how *kuhaza* is oppressive to Ndaou women, the writer vividly remembers an incident where a close relative's wife was dehumanised by the practice that culture upholds. A close relative married from another tribe and stayed with his wife at his work place. Little did he know that he was given *shupa* when he was still young. Unknowingly the wife (who belongs to a tribe that does not practise *shupa*) got into an extra-marital affair. Upon sexual contact with the husband, the husband bled (*kuhaza/ kukotsora*). When the husband's elders got that he was sick and he had bled, they quickly took him to traditional healers. Fortunately he recuperated. When this happened the wife was called before the council of elders of the community. She was interrogated and later confessed in public. This was a humiliating scene as the husband's sisters scolded her, calling her names. She became the laughing stock for the whole community. Even children would point fingers at her as she carried her chores in the community. She was regarded as the loose one. This nearly cost her marriage had it not been the involvement of the elders who pleaded on her behalf since she was a 'foreigner'. The husband went on to marry a second wife as some sort of 'revenge'. Up to this day the wife has lost the community's respect.

The story demonstrates that adulterous women are not taken lightly among the Ndaou people. One informant concurred when he said that when a husband bleeds (*kuhaza*) daggers are drawn against the woman. The situation is even worse in polygamous homesteads. When a husband bleeds, *kuhaza* or *kukotsodzwa* in the local dialect, the wives are exposed to dehumanising circumstances. Since no one would accept the blame of infidelity, means to identify the culprit are sought. Some of these means are not only dehumanising but put the wives' lives at risk. In cases of a wife who cheats in a polygamous marriage, traditional healers are consulted in order to identify the culprit. Machuwaire (2015) argues that in a polygamy traditional healers are consulted to find one responsible for the husband's *kukutsora* (bleeding). He said:

Kana pamusha pane vakadzi vakawanda vakuru vaihamba nevakadzi ava kuti vaone akakotsodza murume. Vose vakadzi vaienda uye madzibereki avo aiudzwa kuti ndizvo zvirikuitika (If in a polygamous marriage all the husband's wives were taken to a traditional healer to find out the one responsible. Wives' relatives are informed of the case of suspected infidelity, Machuwaire, 2015).

This can involve consulting not only one traditional healer but more. The culprit does not easily accept so there is need to consult more than one traditional healer to cast lot. In some cases unscrupulous traditional healers such as *tsikamutandas* are consulted. They prescribe painful incisions as a way of wading off the demons that would have driven the wife into adultery. After the culprit is caught she is ridiculed by co-wives. This scenario becomes a grudge-scoring platform. They shout all sorts of scorn at her. She may be regarded as a witch. She is isolated and moves back home alone. Some wives end up taking up their lives as they cannot withstand their co-wives' criticisms let alone meeting the council of elders back at the village. If she braves the co-wives' venomous talk, she is further brought before the council of elders at the kraal head's *dare* (court) where all the humiliating circumstances are made public including disclosing the man who slept with her. The man is either set free or made to pay heavily for that but it is the woman who is humiliated most. The accused man feels no remorse and moves in the community bragging. Signs of 'real men' are demonstrated by having extra-marital affairs. Already it is the woman who is at the receiving end of societal reprimands and rebukes. This does not only make her lose dignity but even her clan's integrity and sense of *Ubuntu*. Suffice to say women do not seem to benefit from IKS that are not interrogated as demonstrated from the above illustrations.

IKS: Critical reflections

While IKS are a burgeoning and enduring subject in post-colonial and African renaissance studies, they remain a major source of debates across scholarship. It should be made clear that while some scholars would blame colonisation and globalisation for the extinction of some of the IKS (Mawere, 2012) others would want to confine IKS to Africa. IKS are not only unique to Africa but each community has its own unique IKS. IKS are fluid and ever changing as communities change. Scholars writing from an African renaissance perspective tend to be driven by the desire to counteract the euro-centric description of Africa as ahistorical and irreligious. The derogatory categorisation of Africa and its people as 'savages', 'primitive' (Idowu, 1973) have made African scholars reactionary rather being proactive as they want to prove the western perceptions about Africa wrong. This is pointed out by Chirevo Kwenda as cited by Masondo in [file:///C:/Users/tenson/Downloads/Sibusiso%20MasondoAfrican%20Traditional%20Religion%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/tenson/Downloads/Sibusiso%20MasondoAfrican%20Traditional%20Religion%20(1).pdf) as he bemoans the fact that African intellectuals, in their attempt to define what it means to be African, were too much preoccupied with trying to correct outsiders, thereby ending up being too emotional to western practices. Ntuli (2002:53) falls into this temptation and views African IKS as home-grown solutions for African challenges. This is a negation of reality that the world is becoming a global village. Such emotive understanding of IKS becomes faulty in that IKS are glossed over as the only way out of the social, economic, political and cultural malaise

Africans find themselves in. IKS for Africa are not homogenous but change from community to community. This therefore calls for proper contextualisation of IKS in order to be holistic in our understanding of IKS.

Findings among the Ndau have revealed that IKS are like a double-edged sword. *Shupa* doubles as a health asset and as an oppressive tool to women. It perpetuates skewed power relations between men and women. Men seem to celebrate *shupa*'s efficacy in sexual matters. It 'energises' them as it were while women are preyed upon. *Kuhaza* or *kukotsodzwa* as an associate of *shupa* puts the lives of both men and women at risk.

Gender studies tend to look at one gender, women as sufferers. But in this study it has become clear that though women are vulnerable to *kuhaza*, men, too, are at risk, especially in cases where the men are not aware that they have had *shupa* through hereditary means, inherited through blood. When the man bleeds he may not be aware and seek medication in hospitals. This delays traditional treatment which further puts his life at risk. He may die because of IKS that communities maintain without interrogating them.

CONCLUSION

The above insights demonstrate that IKS must be understood holistically. If they are not screened they can be dangerous not only to women but to men as well. *Shupa* and *kuhaza* are gender issues that demonstrate that IKS are both life-affirming but can be life-denying at the same time. The paper seems to be arguing from a euro-centric perspective couched in theories that are anti-African. The truth of the matter is that the world is becoming a 'global' village such that Africa cannot isolate itself and remain at limbo while the rest of continents are moving forward. Though we are not talking of homogenising humanity in its totality, the point remains that IKS are fluid, time specific and renew themselves generation after generation. Time has dawned that we begin to realise the importance of men and women alike in a globalised world. Oduyoye (1996), arguing for the position of women in church, point to the fact women are the financiers of church activities but do not get to the top of the leadership echelons of the church hierarchy simply because of the patriarchal nature of the church. This has the net effect that women remain at the fringes of society yet when engaged can benefit the church.

Similarly, IKS that are not user-friendly, as has been demonstrated by *shupa* and *kuhaza*, should be deconstructed and reconstructed. In other words IKS that are not gender sensitive must be redefined and renegotiated for them to be relevant in contemporary society. The tendency to regard IKS as the panacea for challenges facing humankind in a globalising world (Mawere, 2012, Gudhlanga and Makaudze 2012, Ntuli 2002, Agrawal 1995, 2002) can be self-defeating in that certain beliefs and practices are simply embraced without interrogating them. Yet the beliefs and practices can be harmful to humankind. Dube (2003) and Kanyoro (2002) are spot on as they are suspicious of certain cultural practices that are held just for the sake of upholding culture. These cultural practices, for them, such as widow inheritance, for example, are dangerous to humankind in the context of epidemics such as HIV and AIDS. There is need for self-inspection of our cultural beliefs, practices and values in contemporary times so as to make them user-friendly and IKS are no exception in this twenty-first century context.

REFERENCES

Primary Sources

Maposa- Ranga, Manzvire Village, 12 October, 2014.
Chikwata, Manzvire Village, 23 May 2015.
Chingoda, Manzvire Village, 23 May 2015.
Machuwairi, Manzvire Village, 23 May 2015.
Chishiri, Manzvire Village, 23 May 2015.
Sekuru Manokore Chgidhini, 25 May 2015.
Mbuya Magumo Chigidhini, 25 May 2015.

Secondary Sources

Agrawal, A. 1995. "Dismantling the Divide Between Indigenous and Scientific Knowledge" *Development and Change* vol.26. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
..... 2002. *Indigenous knowledge and the politics of classification*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
Barber, G and Ricardo, C. 2005. "Young men and the construction of masculinity in Sub-Saharan Africa: Implications for HIV/AIDS, Conflict, and violence" *Social Development Papers: Conflict Prevention & Reconstruction*, Paper No.26. Washington: World Bank.
Dube, M.W. 2003. (ed) *HIV/AIDS and the Curriculum: Methods of Integrating HIV/AIDS in Theological Programmes*. Geneva: WCC Publications.

- Gudhlanga, E.S. and Makaudze, G. 2012. "Indigenous knowledge systems: confirming a legacy of civilisation and culture on the African continent" in *Prime Journal of Social Science* vol.1 (4), 72-77.
- Idowu, E.B. 1973. *African Traditional Religion: A definition*. London: SCM Press.
- Kanyoro, A.M. 2002: *Introducing Feministic Cultural Hermeneutics: An African perspective*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press.
- Mapara, J. 2009. "Indigenous knowledge systems in Zimbabwe: Juxtaposing Postcolonial Theory" *Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol.3, no.1. 139-155.
- Mapuranga, T.P. 2010. "A phenomenological investigation into the effects of traditional beliefs and practices on women and HIV & AIDS, with special reference to Chipinge district, Zimbabwe" unpublished PhD Thesis. University of Zimbabwe.
- Masondo, S. "African Traditional Religion in the face of secularism in South Africa" [file:///C:/Users/tenson/Downloads/Sibusiso%20Masondo-African%20Traditional%20Religion%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/tenson/Downloads/Sibusiso%20Masondo-African%20Traditional%20Religion%20(1).pdf) Accessed 13 July 2015.
- Mawere, M. 2010. "Indigenous knowledge systems' (IKSs) potential for establishing a moral, virtuous society: Lessons from selected IKSs in Zimbabwe and Mozambique" in *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa* (volume12, No.7, 2010), 209-221.
- ..... 2012. *Struggle of African Indigenous knowledge systems in an Age of Globalization: A case for Children's Traditional Games in South-Eastern Zimbabwe*. Bamenda: Langaa RPCIG.
- Mushishi, C. 2010. "Aspects of Budya Traditional Religion which promote human rights" An unpublished PhD thesis. University of Cape Town. South Africa.
- Ntuli, P.P 2002. "Indigenous knowledge systems and the African Renaissance: Laying a foundation for the creation of counter-hegemonic discourses" in *Indigenous knowledge and the integration of knowledge systems: Towards a philosophy of articulation*, edited by Catherine A. Odora Hoppers. Claremont: New Africa Books (Pty) Ltd.
- Oduyoye, M.A. 1995. *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Sibanda, F and Maposa, R.S. 2013. "'Beasts of Burden'? Women in HIV and AIDS contexts in the United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe" in Chitando, E and Chirongoma, S. *Justice Not Silence: Churches facing sexual and gender-based violence*. Stellenbosch: Sun Press.
- Siwila, C.L. 2011. "Culture, Gender, and HIV and AIDS: United Church of Zambia's Response to Traditional Marriage Practices" unpublished PhD thesis, University of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa.

Cite this Article: Muyambo T. (2015). Bondswomen of Culture: A gender critique of Bota reshupa and Kuhaza among the Ndau people of Chipinge, Zimbabwe. *Greener Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(3):065-071, <http://doi.org/10.15580/GJSS.2015.3.071515097>.