

Zulu people



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The People of the Zulu Culture: Past, Present and Future The Zulu Culture is one filled with rich traditions and achievements can be found throughout centuries, even in contemporary society. The people have fascinating stories and folklores that they embrace and that influence many of their current values and beliefs. The people are known for their great works in art and the impact that it has on current society. Their culture and beliefs that although are different than the cultures found in other areas make them a unique society.

Their trials throughout history make the Zulu people a fascinating group to explore in order to better understand their belief systems. The Zulu culture's beliefs and values, gender relations and family, economy, and political systems make them truly a distinct group. The origins of the Zulu culture can be traced back through thousands of years of history. Uli Von Kapff describes the Zulu culture as "hundreds of small clans" that lived in "the northern regions of kwaZulu-Natal on the eastern seaboard of South Africa" in the 18th century (2011).

Therefore, the Zulu nation is a diverse group of different people that all came together to form one nation. The area is a fertile area due to its geographic area. This made it easier for the Zulu people to make a living for their families. The people of the Zulu Culture can mainly be described as emerging agriculturalist since their main source of industry comes from farming and cattle herding (Van Den Berghe, 2012). So, growing fruits and vegetables and migrating animals as needed were the main sources of income for this group.

This means that the Zulu people were not as technologically advanced as societies that were using industrialism, but farming was a popular way of life for that particular area. This particular way of life was also very common in the century that the Zulu people lived in, so it was not considered underdeveloped or futile in any way. ? A History of Controversy Like many cultures and groups that settle in particular areas that may be believed popular for economic gain etc. , there was controversy among the Zulu people as well as with outsiders in the area and from afar.

For example, the Zulu people were led under a King Shaka for many years. During this time, articles describe the Zulu as a powerful military force that eventually fell hands to the English, who would eventually control the people for a great deal of time (1998). The Zulu people may have endured several years of tyranny during this time. The people however still endured these difficult times throughout many years. Some of the famous battles that have been cited throughout history include the Battle of Isandlwana in 1879, the massacre of Voortrekker in 1838, and the Battle at Ndongakusuka in 1856 (Uli Von Kapff, 2012).

In the Battle of Isandlwana, the Zulu people defeated over 1500 British troops and were considered one of the greatest battles for the Zulu people at that time. In the massacre of Voortrekker Piet Retief, over 3, 000 people lost their lives under the direction of King Dingane. In the battle of Ndongakusuka Cetshwayo killed his brother, gaining control of the Zulu people. In this battle it is estimated that over 20, 000 died and considered one of the worse battles in Zulu history. As with all war, many lose lives.

The Zulu people were no exception as they struggled and fought for the things that they believed were significant such as land, freedom, honor, etc. Among the Zulu people, conflicts were handled many by engaging in stick fighting between Zulu males (Uli Von Kapff, 2012). In stick fighting, an official oversees the fighters in a public arena. The officials allow each man to have a club, stick, and shield. Once blood is seen, the man that made the damaging blow helps the victim and they make peace. These rituals help the Zulu people settle their disputes without resorting to killing or war between them.

The practice is a good way to end conflict and promote peace among the Zulu people. Zulu Values and Beliefs The Zulu people have a very interesting value and belief system. For example, the Zulu people believe that their ancestors live in a world known as “ unkulunkulu” meaning “ greatest of the great” and live in a world between those living on earth and those living in their spiritual worlds (Uli Von Kapff, 2012). The people believe that if their ancestors are not remembered properly and revered, then bad things will happen to their loved ones throughout the generations.

The people therefore often make special offerings to their ancestors. The Zulu people believe in witchcraft, sangoma, and Iyanga (Uli Von Kapff, 2012). The people blame witches when things go wrong in their society. The witches are generally killed for their practices and their possessions given away. The sangoma is generally used to understand why bad events happen in the Zulu culture and to identify people that may cause problems among the Zulu people. The Iyanga are believed to be what contemporary societies would associate with healthcare providers in the community.

The Zulu Inyanga's mainly use wildlife and vegetation to perform many of their rituals. Many people of the Zulu continue to use these healers in present day societies and still believe in the powers that they have to cure illness and disease. The Zulu people also have very interesting beliefs concerning lightning, a ritual known as the Isiviane, and people known as Tokoloshe's (Uli Von Kapff, 2012). Lightning, the people belief, is a very bad thing and whenever something is struck, the people will refuse to go near that thing. The people fear that whatever the lightning struck is cursed.

The ritual known as the Isiviane is performed for the Zulu people gods. They ritual is performed with stones in a large pile in different areas along Zulu land. Tokoloshe's are considered very bad people among the Zulu's. They are considered the most feared people and many people won't even answer their doors after a certain time for fear of these bad spirits. Zulu Gender Relations and Family Structure The Zulu family consists of the father as the head of the household, mothers, sons and daughters each given a particular role to fulfill (Uli Von Kapff, 2012).

The men handle all the business affairs and ensure the house runs properly. The men often times show little respect for their woman because of their gender. The woman are primarily responsible for doing household chores such as getting water from local sources, attending to the Zulu children, cooking, and cleaning the home. Sons are often expected to tend to the cattle and prepare to be Soldiers in the Zulu army. Daughters are expected to follow in their mother's footsteps as keepers of the home and all this entails.

The women of the culture are responsible for making the Zulu clothing such as amaShoba, IsiNene, iBeshi and brewing the beer and making food (Uli Von Kapff, 2012). The amaShoba are made from cow hides. The IsiNene covers the male's private parts. iBeshi is used to cover the back of the men. The women wear skirts made of grass and use cloth to cover their intimate part once they are married or engaged. The Zulu family eats together and often partakes in their meals as a single unit. They do not however share certain items which are considered sacred.

Women also make beer. Women are also involved in spiritual aspects of the family such as acting as the Umthanzi or "one who prays for people" (Crawford & Lipsedge, 2004). The women who participate in this practice normally use what people of the United States would consider Christian Scientists. They believe that talking with God will give them answers regarding healing in their physical bodies. This practice is growing more and more among the Zulu women. Males usually serve as herbalists (Crawford & Lipsedge, 2004).

These men use ingredients found in nature to cure physical and mental infirmities among the Zulu people. Both herbalists and Umthanzi people are consulted even in present day society and their medical advice is considered valid. Economy The Zulu economy is primarily made up of agriculture (Zulu Information, 1998). The primary agricultural food is corn and other vegetables. Most of the vegetation care is done by the Zulu woman and still is in contemporary society. They manage farmlands and their husbands do other things.

The Zulu people often associate wealth with the amount of cattle that a man owns (Advameg, 2012). Cattle provided a great deal of substance for the Zulu people. They could use many parts of the animal for whatever they needed in their home lives or in times of war to make weapons. The Zulu people also use beadwork as a source of economic stability. Beads can be used in a variety of ways among the Zulu people. For example, they express love, feelings, family and culture, and even send messages, such as the Isongo Loxcoco, or bracelet of peace (Schoeman, n. d.). The beadwork used to express love is indicated in color. For example the Zulu people believed that the color green means “ I have become thin like the sweet cane in a damp field and green as the first shoots of a tree because of my love for you” (Schoeman, n. d.). These expressions of love can be seen throughout the Zulu people even in contemporary society and are often times given as gifts from male suitors. There are a variety of colors used such as pink, yellow, blue, and black each with its own unique meaning and metaphor. The beads also send messages.

For example, an inverted bead pattern means that a man is single (Schoeman, n. d.). The use a variety of patterns to give off different messages such as triangles and diamonds each representing a particular message. Beads along a string suggest unity and strength (Schoeman, n. d.). Tribes often use these in order to remember the things that are important in their culture and reiterate their beliefs. They wear the beads in a variety of places such as their hair, on clothing, and even on places on their bodies depending on the message they are trying to send to other members of the Zulu tribe.

Political Systems The Zulu people are generally ruled by chiefs, although they fall under the rules of the South African government (Zulu Information, 1998). These chiefs serve many of the same functions as those people that the United States would call members of the Senate or House of Representatives. They help ensure the voices of the Zulu people are heard. The Article entitled Kinship and Sociopolitical organization describes the Zulu culture as a system of patrilineal hierarchy with the king at the top and the umuzi, or village at the lowest level (2012).

This means that males were oftentimes the rulers and rights were passed down through generations. At the lowest levels were the villages. The article also describes headman (2012). These men were usually the head of families that were considered noble in Zulu society. In present day society, there are several major political parties such as the African National Congress, or ANC, the South African Communist Party, National Party, Inkatha Freedom Party, and the Freedom front each representing their own ideas and opinions on society (United States Library of Congress, n. d. . The ANC, one of the major groups, was popular among those of low socioeconomic stature. In more contemporary society: “ South Africa in 1994 underwent the most radical and far-reaching political and constitutional transformation since the racially divisive South Africa Act provided the legal basis for the Union of South Africa in 1910. The latest sweeping transformation officially began with the April 26-29, 1994, national and provincial elections, and with the triumph of the previously banned African National Congress (ANC)” (United States Library of Congress, n. .). This was a significant day for the Zulu people under the South African government. It helped to establish a more organized

form of leadership among the Zulu people. In conclusion, the people of the Zulu culture have a history rich in tradition and values. They have overcome several trials throughout history to make them a society of great people. Their economy is developing. The beliefs and value systems are strong among the people.

The family dynamics remain an essential part of their everyday lives. They are overall a developing nation that is learning year by year how to improve their society. ? References Advameg. (2012). Zulu Economy. Countries and Their Cultures. Retrieved from [http://www. everyculture. com/Africa-Middle-East/Zulu-Economy. html](http://www.everyculture.com/Africa-Middle-East/Zulu-Economy.html). Advameg. (2012). Zulu- Kinship and Sociopolitical Organization. Countries and Their Cultures. Retrieved from [http://www. everycultu](http://www.everycultu)