

Shaka zulu essay



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Shaka Zulu There are many different tribes that spark the interest of many people. The Zulu tribe is one of the largest groups in Africa. They fought hard to maintain all of the customs of their vast heritage. Though many people wanted to change the way they lived, the Zulu people still raise animals and vegetables as their main source of subsistence. Many aspects of the Zulu culture that are in place today allow for them to continue in their normal customs. The invasion by the British brought about many changes for the Zulu people who are known for their beadwork and basketry.

The AmaZulu believe that they are the direct descendants of the patriarch Zulu, who was born to a Nguni chief in the Congo Basin area. In the 16th century the Zulu migrated southward to their present location, incorporating many of the customs of the San, including the well-known linguistic clicking sounds of the region. During the reign of King Shaka (1816-1828), the Zulu became the mightiest military force in southern Africa, increasing their land holdings from 100 square miles to 11, 500. Shaka was followed by Dingaan, who tentatively entered into treaties with English colonizers.

Mpande was the next King. He allowed the British extensive control over his peoples. By the time he died in 1872, the Zulu had had enough of the English invasion. Cetewayo, Mpande's replacement, tried vainly for six years to avoid a confrontation with the British, yet in 1879 war erupted. Although the Zulu initially experienced some success, the British army eventually prevailed. In less than six months, Cetewayo was exiled to England, and the Zulu kingdom was divided to the British advantage. The last Zulu uprising against European domination was lead by Chief Bombatha in 1906.

In recent times, Chief Gashu Buthelezi has doubled as the political leader of the Zulu, and the head of the Inkatha Freedom Party, leading the fight against Apartheid and the ANC, demanding a voice for his people who are more than three million strong. (Harries, 1993) In spite of all the changes that have taken place the Zulu people use different techniques to ensure that their pastoralist ways are used, there is a political voice of the people, and an unchanged belief system that allows them to maintain the traditions that were passed down.

The Zulu people have undergone more changes than any of the other tribes in Africa. They are highly looked upon by many other tribes and cultures for their stability during the changing phases of their society. The people in the rural areas still raise cattle and different vegetables as their main source of subsistence. The women do the majority of the planting and harvesting while the men and boys care for the livestock. The women own the houses; therefore, it gives them a lot of clout in the community.

The women also take care of the children. More often than not, the children are in the fields with their mothers. The most attractive material inducement for Africans to settle in the Ungoye was the loan of Dunn's numerous cattle to his clients for their use and benefit. In the same manner as the Zulu king and royal princes, Dunn, in theory and reality, held in trust most of the cattle in his district. He loaned out cattle to the various kraals scattered over the Ungoye where they were tended and cared for by the kraal's inhabitants.

In exchange for their services as hunters, pastoralists and agriculturalists Dunn allowed his wards to consume all the milk obtained from his cattle and

to eat cattle that died. On occasion Dunn would reward his indunas and favourite retainers with gifts of cattle. Livestock as a ritual and institutional commodity were immensely important, for Dunn gave oxen to young men to enable them to pay the required lobola upon marriage. Through his ownership and control of vital material resources such as land and cattle Dunn was able to demand and extract loyalty and service from African clients economically dependent on his largesse. Ballard, 1980) The zulu people learned how to maintain subsistence for their families by working out these accommodations and continuing to live a pastoralist lifestyle as well which allowed them to pass their customs down to their children. There are many politics that are involved with making deals so the zulu people rely on a chief to be their voice in these matters. The chief is chosen based on his genealogy. The most influential chief of this culture was Shaka Zulu. This is a favorite theme in which a romanticized precolonial Zululand is divorced from the materialism and competitive individualism associated with Europeans.

Hence, “ unlike Whites, who conquered to dominate, who con- quered to subjugate, who conquered to exploit and who conquered to dehu- manise, King Shaka conquered to unite. “ I’ Shaka remains the primary symbol of Zulu culture and unity: “ We are immensely proud to be Zulus, descendants of our great King Shaka who conquered to incorporate; who conquered to establish Zulu justice and Zulu social order, who longed to produce stability and equality of all people before their king. “” This imagery presents the picture of an egalitarian early Zulu kingdom.

By portraying themselves as the heirs to the precolonial monarchs, the KwaZulu leaders link this sovereign nineteenth-century kingdom with their

bantustan. (Harries, 1993) The chief tried to protect his people from all of the complications that come along with negotiations. He allowed his people to be concerned with the daily concerns of the tribal community while he worked on the politics. He tried to ensure that the concerns of his people were heard at all times. While making decisions that deal with the welfare of the entire tribe, the chief often consulted a higher power to make sure that the decision the he was making was pleasing.

The zulu religious beliefs have maintained through all of the attempts from outside religions to change the way they believe. Zulu religion includes belief in a creator god (Nkulunkulu), who is above interacting in day-to-day human affairs. It is possible to appeal to the spirit world only by invoking the ancestors (AmaDlozi) through divination processes. As such, the diviner, who is almost always a woman, plays an important part in the daily lives of the Zulu. It is believed that all bad things, including death, are the result of evil sorcery or offended spirits. No misfortune is ever seen as the result of natural causes.

Another important aspect of Zulu religion is cleanliness. Separate utensils and plates were used for different foods, and bathing often occurred up to three times a day. Christianity had difficulty gaining a foothold among the Zulu, and when it did it was in a syncretic fashion. Isaiah Shambe, considered the Zulu messiah, presented a form of Christianity which incorporated traditional customs. (Dinnerstein, 1976) Many of the religious customs of the zulu were considered as heathen by the different religious groups who came in to change the way the people believed.

They never took into consideration all of the cultural traditions that were involved in the vast rituals and ceremonies. A structural and psychological sense of superiority thus developed which made it difficult for the Americans to perceive Africans as capable of handling their own affairs. Such an attitude might have delayed the growth of independence among the converts if it had been allowed to flourish unhampered. But four factors militated against the complete domination of the missionaries: (1) the policies of the home office in Boston, (2) the Africans' growing independence fostered by their own initiatives, (3) the missionaries' own, often unwitting, policies, and (4) the Africans' protected status on the reserves. (Dinnerstein, 1976) The Zulu people adopted some of the missionaries' ways, but the customs of the Zulu people became an issue for the missionaries. The Zulu formed their own group of believers who rebelled against what the missionaries had taught them. They were independent enough to handle their religious beliefs. Some of the older missionaries became empathic and took up for them. Eventually the Zulu continued and still to this day practice the religious beliefs and values of their forefathers.

The traditional head of a Zulu clan is the Inkosi. Who is regarded by his people as a father figure and the source of their wealth and well being, the spiritual symbol of their tribe, and the man who determines the fate of his people. The Zulu traditions and culture are as much a way of life as they are a tourist attraction. The Zulu, which means people of heaven, are a proud nation that treasure their heritage, are friendly and always hospitable; displaying an unyielding loyalty to their inkosi(traditional leader).

The Zulu language is rich and expressive, very often punctuated with distinctive click sounds. The size of the Zulu culture has allowed it to maintain the heritage and values that were passed down through the ancestors. This tribe uses the land to provide for every individual, and also have a voice to speak out for them during important governmental situations. The belief system remains intact while there are many who are trying to persuade them to change how they believe. The Zulu culture will remain a dominant factor in the rural areas of their country for many years to come.