

**Indigenous Knowledge Systems and the Conservation of Natural Resources in the  
*Shangwe* Community in *Gokwe* District, Zimbabwe.**

Ngara, R. & Mangizvo, R.V.

Great Zimbabwe University, Faculty of Culture and Heritage, Department of Performing  
Arts, Masvingo, Zimbabwe

**Abstract**

The dwindling of wild animal species and vegetation is a common feature in the African continent let alone in the world at large. The paper investigated the *Shangwe* religious and cultural practices which are meant save the extinction of vegetation and particular animals in the then *Gokwe* District in the Midlands Province in Zimbabwe. Most importantly, these practices were linked to *Nevana*, the *Shangwe* rain making god. It emerged from the study that snakes symbolised the ancestral beings. Consequently, it was taboo for the *Shangwe* to kill them. The belief in these symbolic snakes was a favourable factor which necessitated their annual increase in numbers. The study established that certain sacred hills were places of abode for gods and spirits. Also, echoes of music and dance used to be heard on the following day after *Mukwerera* rainmaking performances. Furthermore, it was found out that the community members were culturally not allowed to fell trees from these sanctified hills and they [hills] grew into thick forests. Thus the *Shangwe* indigenous knowledge system was utilised not only to protect wild animals and deforestation; it was a tool that intensively combated soil erosion as well.

**Keywords:** *Nevana*, indigenous knowledge system, culture, taboo

2013, International Journal of Asian Social Science.