A DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF THE CEREMONIAL TRANSIT TO MANHOOD: LESSONS FROM VATSONGA RITES OF PASSAGES

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Abstract - From time immemorial, the cultural practice of male circumcision among many African communities was pivotal as a way of transiting young men to manhood. This paper looks at the ceremonial transit to manhood through circumcision as a rite of passage in Vatsonga communities. It seeks to find out how this practice as a cultural act is performed and its relevance in this new dispensation where medical circumcision encourages the Christian faith to dominate in many African societies. The aim of this paper is to find ways of maintaining this cultural practice since it has a role to play in the health of the people. Data was collected from 31 May to 30 August 2016 using qualitative techniques, namely observation and interviews. The study found that male circumcision as a way of transiting to manhood is mainly performed in clinic and hospital settings while the cultural practice is fading away with time. The study further reveal that the majority of the Vatsonga are very negative to this cultural practice and they discourage people to attend. Data was analysed by using the thematic content analysis method. The study is important as it provide insights into the traditional practice of male circumcision among Vatsonga. The significance of this traditional practice is that it helps in the prevention of many sexual transmitted diseases such as HIV and the AIDS pandemic.

Keywords - Male circumcision, Culture, Ritual, Religion