

Boundaries and Belief

The Structure of a Sotho Worldview

W.D. HAMMOND-TOOKE

The Sotho-speaking peoples of southern Africa form an important part of the indigenous population but hitherto little has been written of their traditional religious and cosmological systems, partly due to the extensive missionary endeavour which has transformed their cultures. The Sotho of the Lowveld, however, situated in their secluded woodland below the Escarpment, have retained much of their traditional belief systems. This book attempts to understand, and where possible, explain, the worldview of one of these peoples, the Kgaga, as a cognitive patterning of concepts. After a brief survey of Kgaga social structure there follows a detailed account of initiation into adulthood, followed by an examination of the ancestor cult, witchcraft and the complex system of pollution beliefs. The nature of ethnozoological and colour classification is also discussed. A concluding chapter seeks to apply current theories of interpretation to the symbolism in an effort to discern logical consistency in the patterning.

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By the same author

Patrolling the Herms: Social Structure, Cosmology and Pollution Concepts in Southern Africa

"Without boundaries there is chaos, not only linguistic but social. A major tenet of my argument will be that rituals, especially those related to pollution beliefs, can best be understood as elements within a general communication system, and that one of their essential functions is to make statements about boundaries."

— the author

Raymond Dart Lecture 18
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