

## 1. Description

1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family: Swati(Swazi) Niger-Congo

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): SSW

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): Swaziland' Lesotho, Mozambique, South Africa (1.)

1.4 Brief history: Swazi history dates back to the late sixteenth century, when the first Swazi King, Ngwane II, settled southeast of modernday Swaziland. His grandson Sobhuza I established a permanent capital and drew within a centralized political system the resident Nguni and Sotho people. During the mid-nineteenth century, Sobhuza's heir, Mswati II, from whom the Swazis derive their name, expanded the Swazi nation to an area much larger than modern Swaziland. Mswati established contact with the British. By the late nineteenth century, Mswati's successor, Mbandzeni, granted Europeans land concessions for grazing and prospecting, thus unwittingly giving rise to serious, prolonged conflicts regarding land-usage rights. In 1894 the Boer and British powers granted the South African Boer Republic of the Transvaal control over Swaziland. After the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), Britain made Swaziland a protectorate. The Partitions Proclamation of 1907 confirmed the concessionaires control of two-thirds of the land, which was contested in 1922 by King Sobhuza II. Today the Swazi nation controls about two-thirds of the land area. Swaziland became independent in 1968. (2.)

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: Large influence from Christianity

1.6 Ecology (natural environment): The high veld, averaging 1,219 meters in elevation, with forests and grassy hills; the middle veld, averaging 610 meters in elevation, with hills and palatable grasses suited for livestock and rich soils good for agriculture; the low veld, averaging 274 meters in elevation, with tall grasses suited for grazing but usually not for dry-land agriculture; and the Lubombo mountain range, a narrow plateau averaging about 610 meters in elevation, with a warm, subhumid climate and basaltic soils suited for arable agriculture. Several rivers—the Mbeluzi, Ngwavuma, Great Usutu, Komati, and Lomati—cut through the high veld, middle veld, and Lubombo Mountains. (2.)

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: Population total all countries: 2,034,200. Population Swaziland: 1,018,499. Density: 68.2/km<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): maize, sorghum, beans, groundnuts, and sweet potatoes.

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: maize, sorghum, beans, groundnuts, and sweet potatoes.

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: Knives and various kinds of spears (2.)

2.4 Food storage: Sealed grain pits in cattle byre.

2.5 Sexual division of production: Most men know how to construct house frames and cattle kraals, plow, tend and milk cattle, sew skins, and cut shields. Some men are (or were in the past) particularly accomplished at warfare, animal husbandry, hunting, and governing. Most women know how to hoe, tend small livestock, thatch, plait ropes, weave mats/baskets, grind grain, brew beer, cook foods, and care for children; some women specialize in pot- and mat making. (2.)

2.6 Land tenure: Land-access rights in Swazi areas (as opposed to freehold areas established by the colonial land partition of 1907) are held by the community as a whole, and the king, representing the entire Swazi nation, is responsible for its allotment to chiefs. The chiefs, in their turn, distribute land to homestead heads. Swazi citizens can pledge allegiance to a chief and rulers and thereby obtain rights to land according to four acquisition methods: kukhonta (direct grant by the chief), kubekwa (direct grant by another individual), inheritance, and kuboleka umhlaba (being "lent" land by another individual). (2.)

2.7 Ceramics: Pottery making lies within the domain of women, who, using the coil technique, produce different sizes and shapes of drinking and cooking vessels. (2.)

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

2.9 Food taboos:

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

## 3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

## 4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f):

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): The median age at first birth for all women age 25-49 is 19.2. (3.)

- 4.3 Completed family size (m and f): Currently, women in Swaziland have an average of 3.8 children
- 4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): In Swaziland, the average birth interval is 38 months. (3.)
- 4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): The median age at first marriage is 24.3 for women age 30-49, while men get married even later, at a median age of 27.7. (3.)
- 4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: Divorce is looked down upon.
- 4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:
- 4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: Paternal rights are acquired by the man's family through the transfer to the woman's family of bride-wealth (*lobola*)—valuables such as cattle (and, in modern times, possibly cash). Bride-wealth varies with the rank and education of the bride. (2.)
- 4.9 Inheritance patterns: Upon the death of a homestead head (*umnumzana*), the family council of agnates (including full and half-brothers of the head, his own and brothers' senior sons, etc.) meet to discuss the disposal of his estate. (2.)
- 4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: Fathers assisted sons and daughters lived and followed mothers.
- 4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:
- 4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): In contemporary Swaziland, several forms of marriage are found: traditional marriages—"love" matches, arranged marriages, and marriage by capture, the latter being uncommon and not always involving the exchange of bride-wealth—as well as Christian marriages. More individuals are eloping or remaining single. (2.)
- 4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized?
- 4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows")
- 4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?
- 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape:
- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin).
- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?
- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring.
- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?
- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades:
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?
- 4.24 Joking relationships?
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules:
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? The marriage ceremony, particularly for high-ranking couples, involves numerous and sometimes protracted ritualized exchanges between the families of the man and the woman, including singing, dancing, wailing, gift exchange, and feasting. (2.)
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name? A woman retains her paternal clan name upon marriage, but her children acquire at birth their father's clan name. (2.)
- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?): Prohibited Within paternal clan (2.)
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)? Very uncommon.
- 4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

### **Warfare/homicide**

- 4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:
- 4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:
- 4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: Conflicts between Swazi clan and lineage members (commonly co-wives and half-brothers) in association with daily interactions and were often attributed to suspected acts of witchcraft and sorcery. In modern-day Swaziland, interpersonal conflicts are influenced by many social and economic changes, including altered sex roles, increased job competition, labor migration, and the growth of an educated elite. (2.)
- 4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): Relations among the Swazi peoples have generally been peaceful. Relations with Europeans historically were strained as a result of land concessions and tension caused by the administrative domination of Great Britain.(2.)

#### 4.18 Cannibalism? No

### **5. Socio-Political organization and interaction**

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): Swaziland's government is a monarchy. Its political organization is characterized by dualism: the parallel political structures consist of a "traditional" and a "modern" (postcolonial) hierarchy. At the apex of the traditional hierarchy is the Swazi monarch, who as a member of the Dlamini clan, holds supreme executive, legislative, and judicial power. He governs with the assistance of his traditional advisers. At the middle level of the traditional hierarchy are chiefs who consult with their council of elders ( bandlancane ), and at the lowest level are homestead heads who consult with their lusendvo (lineage Council). The modern structure, through which the monarch's power is also delegated, consists of modern, statutory bodies, such as a cabinet and a parliament that passes legislation (subject to approval by the king), which is administered in four regions, and less formal governmental structures, consisting of Swazi Courts and forty subregional districts in which the traditional chiefs are grouped. (2.)

5.4 Post marital residence: Marital residence is virilocal; the bride goes to live with her husband and in-laws. (2.)

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

5.8 Village and house organization: Within a complex homestead are households, each household ( indlu ) generally consists of one nuclear family (a man, his wife and their children) whose members share agricultural tasks and eat from one kitchen. When there are several households on the homestead, each consists of a simple polygynous family, an extended agnatic family, or a complex family grouping. (2.)

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses): The principal Swazi social unit is the homestead, a traditional beehive hut thatched with dry grass. In a polygamous homestead, each wife has her own hut and yard surrounded by reed fences. There are three structures for sleeping, cooking, and storage (brewing beer). In larger homesteads there are also structures used as bachelors' quarters and guest accommodation. Central to the traditional homestead is the cattle byre, a circular area enclosed by large logs interspaced with branches. The cattle byre has ritual as well as practical significance as a store of wealth and symbol of prestige. It contains sealed grain pits. Facing the cattle byre is the great hut which is occupied by the mother of the headman. (4.)

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:

5.12 Trade: Swaziland's main export crop is sugar, based on irrigated cane. Several other cash crops, including maize, rice, vegetables, cotton, tobacco, citrus fruits, and pineapples, are traded both within and outside the country. Its mineral wealth, which consists of iron ore, coal, diamonds, and asbestos, is mined for export. Meat and meat products are also exported. The industrial estate at Matsapha produces processed agricultural and forestry products, garments, textiles, and many light manufactures. The main imports are motor vehicles, heavy machinery, fuel and lubricants, foodstuffs, and clothing. (2.)

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? The Swazi hierarchical ranking system came to consist of several units: the polygynous patriarchal family, the hierarchy of clans and lineages, the dual monarchy, the age grades, and the groups of specialists. (2.)

### **6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)**

6.0 Time allocation to RCR:

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): Swazis resort to various medical practitioners, primarily biomedical or traditional practitioners. Swazis differentiate between diseases or conditions regarded as "African" or "Swazi" and those that are foreign, emphasizing that the former, such as madness caused by sorcery, is a Swazi disease best treated by traditional medicine and practitioners, and that the latter, such as cholera, is a foreign disease best treated by Western orthodox medicine and biomedical practitioners. (2.)

6.2 Stimulants:

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): Swazi mortuary ritual varies with both the status of the

deceased and his or her relationship with different categories of mourners. The more important the deceased, the more elaborate the rites given the corpse.(2.)

6.4 Other rituals: The most important cultural event in Swaziland is the Incwala ceremony. It is held on the fourth day after the full moon nearest the longest day, December 21. Incwala is often translated in English as 'first fruits ceremony', but the King's tasting of the new harvest is only one aspect among many in this long pageant. (4.) Swaziland's most well-known cultural event is the annual Reed Dance. In the eight day ceremony, girls cut reeds and present them to the queen mother and then dance. (There is no formal competition.) It is done in late August or early September. Only childless, unmarried girls can take part. The aims of the ceremony are to preserve girls' chastity, provide tribute labour for the Queen mother, and to encourage solidarity by working together.(4.)

6.5 Myths (Creation): Supreme Being known as Mkhulumqande, who fashioned the earth. (2.)

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): Swazi implements and utensils, such as clay pots and baskets, are unornamented, serving mainly a utilitarian purpose. Wood carvers did not traditionally produce masks or sculptured figures, although in the late twentieth century schools

have encouraged woodcraft for the tourist trade. Musical instruments are crafted to accompany popular singing and dancing activities; among those instruments used either in the past or present are the luvene (hunting horn), impalampala (kudu bull horn), ligubu (calabash attached to a wooden bow), and livege (wind instrument made from a plant). (2.)

6.7 Sex differences in RCR: Swazi men play important roles in Swazi traditional religious life, offering sacrifices for the ancestral spirits, who are ranked, as are humans. Female diviners also communicate with spirits, and the queen mother acts as custodian of rain medicines.(2.)

6.8 Missionary effect: Currently, many Christian sects exist in Swaziland, ranging from the more eclectic Catholics to the more rigid Afrikaner Calvinists. A majority of Swazis are registered as "Christian." Many converts belong to nationalistic Separatist "Zionist" churches, which practice a flexible dogma and great tolerance of custom. Christianity as practiced by Swazis has been influenced by existing traditions, including beliefs in ancestral spirits, and Christianity has influenced traditional religion. (2.)

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: Ancestral spirits, acting as custodians of correct behavior and moral standards, inflict suffering on their descendants only as just punishment, not out of malice. The head of the family appeals to the ancestors and directs offerings to them at specific domestic events such as births, marriages, and deaths and during hut-building activities. (2.)

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.): Adherents of traditional religion believe(d) in an aloof Supreme Being known as Mkhulumqande, who fashioned the earth but who demands no sacrifices and is neither worshiped nor associated with the ancestral spirits. Swazi ancestral spirits take many forms, sometimes possessing people and influencing their welfare, primarily their health. (2.)

## **7. Adornment**

7.1 Body paint:

7.2 Piercings:

7.3 Haircut:

7.4 Scarification: Cut ears

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: Celebrants are adorned in striking clothing, including feathers of special birds and skins of wild animals. (2.)

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

7.8 Missionary effect:

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

## **8. Kinship systems**

8.1 Sibling classification system: At the center of each Swazi homestead is the biological family, extended through classificatory kinship to maternal and paternal groups, the largest of which is the clan. The clan, as the farthest extension of kinship, contains a number of lineages in which direct descent can be

genealogically traced over three to eight generations. The exogamous patrilineal clan ( sibongo ), with members usually residing in the same locality ( sifundza ), is the fundamental unit of Swazi social organization. (2.)

8.2 Sororate, levirate: A widow may be expected to continue her husband's lineage through the levirate ( ngena ), in which she is taken over by a brother of her deceased husband. (2.)

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.): One's father is called ubabe, whereas father's older brother is ubabe lomkhulu, and father's younger brother is ubabe lomncane. One's father's sister is ubabe lomsikati (female father). One's own mother, the other wives of his/her father, and his/her mother's sisters are called umake. One's fat *http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/SR138/SR138.pdf her's brother's wife is also umake, and one's mother's sister's husband is also ubabe. One's mother's brother and his wife are called umalume.* Grandfathers are called ubabemkhulu, and grandmothers ugogo, All grandchildren are umtukulu.

### **9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):**

Cattle are the basis of wealth and status. Swazi have the "cattle complex" typical of many eastern African tribes: cattle provide for individual food and clothing needs as well as serving wider economic and ritual purposes. (2.)

#### Numbered references

1. [http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_language.asp?code=ssw](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=ssw)
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