

Standing at the crossroads: An overview of reflections on paradigms of African women's inclusion and exclusion in the religion and gender relations discourse in Zimbabwe

Gilbert Tarugarira and Annah Moyo

Abstract

Although the traditional image of women in religion portrays them as passive and docile, women have not been mere victims of subordinate religious and gender roles but active agents in the construction of their religious identity and belief. The study explores the historical and psychosocial dimensions of African traditional religious beliefs and practices which have exacerbated the subordination of women. A revelation is made that; while Christianity challenged the hegemony of the local eco-religion- cum-royal ancestor cults, within both traditional and Christian religion, women have fought for and continue to fight for their own free space in which they can develop a sense of solidarity and autonomy.

Keywords: Religious identity, ancestor cults, gender roles, spirit possession, subordination