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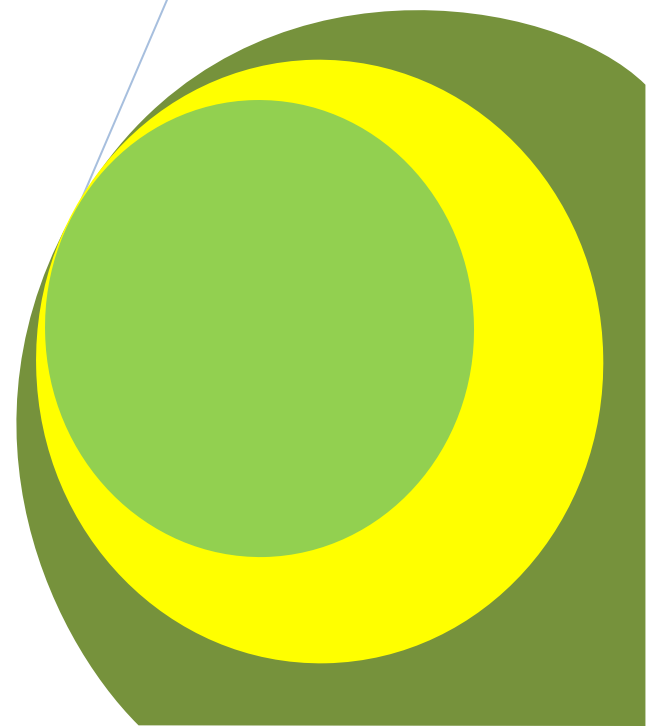
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Conservation conversations and community participation in the management of heritage sites in Zimbabwe

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Research Article

Conservation conversations and community participation in the management of heritage sites in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

In many African countries, heritage sites have since colonial period been rocked by multiple problems that demand effective conservation and sustainable management approaches if the sites are to continue thriving while benefitting the present and future generations. In Zimbabwe, National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ), the organization in charge of heritage sites scattered throughout the country, has after a series of problems realized that adopting a 'solo-approach' that excludes local communities in heritage conservation and management is counterproductive and potentially destructive as the locals feel excluded and denied the right to exploit what is rightfully theirs. As such, community participation in some cases has been adopted in conserving and managing heritage sites in the country yet with some limitations. This has been so chiefly because although community participation has recently become popular in the global heritage management discourse, its involvement has in many cases been considered problematic. This paper examines conservational management and networks around some heritage sites in Zimbabwe. As its case study, the paper adopts Chibvumani national monument, a heritage site whose custodianship has been given to a nearest primary school, Mamutse. It argues that positioning local traditional leadership at the periphery while the 'official' custodianship of heritage site is given to a primary school remains a stumbling block towards the success of conservation and sustainable management of the heritage site. In this light, the paper lobs for full recognition and active participation of all local communities around Chibvumani national monument to ensure successful conservation and sustainable management of the site.

Key words: Zimbabwe, adopt-a-site programme, heritage sites, Chibvumani, conservation, community participation, management

Introduction

In Zimbabwe and by extension Africa, heritage sites have since the advent of colonialism been rocked by multiple problems that demand effective conservation and sustainable management approaches. Most of these problems were largely a result of management conflicts between scientific conservation techniques of the heritage sites which appear to differ from traditional conservation strategies employed by locals since time immemorial. While some scholars argued for scientific conservation and management strategies, others argued that many heritage sites in Zimbabwe as in many other parts of Africa were revered and effectively managed through traditional strategies such as the deployment of taboos and traditional restrictions, among many others (see Ranger 1999; Fontein 2006; Ndoro 2001; and Jopela 2011). With this observation, some scholars like Ndoro (2001: 12) have argued that "colonization ushered into sub-Saharan Africa the 'Western - style' of heritage conservation. Much of that style was developed in Zimbabwe at Great Zimbabwe site in particular". As suggested by Masey (1911): "The Western style strategy at Great Zimbabwe might have been caused by the size of this premier monument and its multiple values that attracted attention of researchers, mostly amateur archaeologists, treasure hunters and tourists or pseudo- tourists who brought diverse kinds of conservation problems to the site. (p. 37)" These problems have been compounded by the debate on how heritage sites can be sustainably managed in order to benefit the present and future generations,

especially in this age of globalization. The two seemingly irreconcilable approaches, that is, the informal and formal management systems, continue to pose serious problems on conservation and management of heritage sites in the continent as either approach claim to manage the sites better than the other.

In Zimbabwe like in many other African countries, the national government has after independence adopted the scientific conservation and management strategies from the colonial government. It was however, not long before the government through its National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ), realizes that adopting a 'solo-approach' that excludes local communities as well as traditional conservation and management strategies in heritage conservation and management is counterproductive as it leads to unsustainable use of heritage sites in the country. Community participation, though with its own limitation, has been thought to be the best solution to manage and conserve heritage sites in the country; yet the problem has been how the community can be involved. In fact, although community participation has recently become popular in the global heritage management discourse, its involvement has in many cases been considered problematic, especially if not carefully planned. This paper adopts Chibvumani national monument in southeastern Zimbabwe, a heritage site whose custodianship has been given to a nearest primary school, Mamutse. This move, though was put in place by the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe to ensure successful conservation and management of the heritage site, has failed to yield positive results. For this reason, among others, the present paper argues that positioning local traditional leadership at the periphery whilst the 'official' custodianship of a heritage site is given to a primary school remains a stumbling block hindering the success of conservation and sustainable management of the heritage site. The paper thus lobs for full recognition, participation of all local community members around Chibvumani national monument, and to open up a generative dialogue between all stakeholders involved in the conservation and management of the heritage site.

Understanding heritage sites

The concept of 'heritage site' has been notoriously understood and defined for practical and philosophical reasons. As such, the concept has been defined differently depending on one's background and orientation. The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Convention of 1972, for instance, defined heritage sites as "a place, our legacy from the past, what we live with today and what we pass on to future generations", (UNESCO 1997). The International Council on Monuments and Sites (1990) noted that heritage sites comprises of all vestiges of human existence and consists of places relating to human action, abandoned structures and remains of all kinds. This research identifies with Matenga (2011) who defines heritage site as "that which human beings inherit and transmit from generation to generation ranging from tangible forms such as sites, objects, memorials and intangible forms such as cultural tradition, oral history ritual" (p. 6, emphasis added). This definition has the strength that it includes all the range of 'things' that can be found at heritage sites, including both the tangible and intangible properties. The immovable heritage properties of the dry - stone architecture are the most common heritage typology throughout Southern Africa. Zimbabwe is one such country in Southern Africa that is endowed with diverse kinds of heritage sites that ranges from natural to cultural sites. These sites are scattered around the nation albeit concentrated in communal lands, game parks and other rural areas. This is confirmed by Karim (2012) who observes that: "Pre-colonial stone walled structures are some of the most visible and accessible archaeological remains in Southern Africa, Great Zimbabwe being the best known, though there are many tens or even a few thousands of such sites scattered throughout the sub-continent" (p.257).

Dry - stone structures built without any binding substance synonymous in sub-Saharan region have been broadly defined into two traditions or cultures, which are: the Great Zimbabwe tradition and the Khami phase, (Pwiti, 1996; Ndoro, 2005). The major difference between the two is that the former had many of the free standing walls constructed with outer faces of regular coursed stone blocks and core material consisting of less regular stacked blocks that generally created enclosures while the latter has large concentration of retaining walls that formulates platforms on hill slopes (see Pwiti, 1996).

In Zimbabwe like elsewhere, heritage sites are outstanding landmarks in the cultural evolution of the country that were abandoned by their technocrats due to various factors such as exhaustion of resources, succession disputes and search for greener pastures. The demise of Great Zimbabwe is believed to be premised on the inavailability and inadequacy of resources. However, it is worth noting that most of these ancient 'African cities' were never totally abandoned as the 'indigenous' people always had some spiritual values attached to them which made them continue using the sites for religious purposes even some time after their vacation. Ndoro (2005: 9) gave an example of the site of Manyikeni (Mozambique) that remained under the traditional custodianship until in 1975 when it was handed over to the University of Eduardo Mondlane whilst he also cited the case in Botswana where a site of the Khami phase of Majojo is still being used today for ritual purposes. Other heritage sites like Great Zimbabwe were 'invaded' by whites during the colonial period. This is confirmed by Ndoro (2005: 12) who notes that "Carl Much's 'discovery' of Great Zimbabwe and more importantly the discovery of gold objects at some sites sustained

the fantasy that Zimbabwe could have been the source of the biblical King Solomon's gold ophir". Ndoro (2005) further noted that prospectors travelled the countryside swapping blankets and beads, among other items, for information about the location of ancient workings and hence the Rhodesian Ancient Ruins Ltd was established with mining of stone 'ruins' as the core business. It is curious to note that there was gold found at Chibvumani heritage site (which is the case study for this paper) as Gertrude Caton – Thompson who examined the site in 1929 discovered "four small gold beads and a nugget the size of a pea" (Caton-Thompson, 1931: 156) in one of the excavation trenches she sank at the monument. It is also interesting to note that it is probably during this period that many heritage sites in Zimbabwe were extensively excavated some unsystematically triggering a series of conservation challenges that still haunt many of such places today; hence the need to examine conservation of heritage sites.

Conservation of heritage sites at international, national and local levels

Conservation in relation to heritage sites has been defined as "all the processes of looking after a place so as to retain its significance, caring not only for the cultural heritage values of the site but also the surrounding environment" (Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, 1999: 2). Conservation thus, is a broad term that includes other intervention methods such as restoration, reconstruction and preservation. As noted by Hardy (2008), the history of conservation of heritage sites is generally drawn from European principles with issues of restoration beginning with Greek monuments which were being restored by the Roman Empire. Yet, conservation of heritage sites around the world is centered on two main schools of thought that can be summarized on the basis of the views they represent that are:

- a) To preserve a heritage site one has to carry out restoration, and
- b) Restoration should not be done on sites.

As such, the issue of conservation has largely been a debate between those who seek to restore destroyed or tampered with monuments and others who do not. Amidst this conservation debate are a number of international organizations that have come up with guidelines for the conservation and management of places of cultural significance. Some of these intuitions include; The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), International Center for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), only to mention but a few. It can be argued that much of conservation strategies being used in Africa come from the Venice Charter of 1964. This can be exemplified by the extract below from the charter which forms the umbilical code of conservation as an integral part of management of heritage sites and also being an on-going shared common responsibility:

"Imbued with a message from the past, the historic monuments of generations of people remain to the present day as living witness of their age – old traditions. People are becoming more and more conscious of the unity of human values and regard ancient monuments as a common heritage. The common responsibility to safeguard them for future generations is recognized. It is our duty to hand them on in the full richness of their authenticity" (Venice Charter 1964: 4)

This, however, should not be misunderstood to mean that conservation of heritage sites is a new phenomenon brought to Africa by the Europeans. Europeans found many sites scattered throughout Africa undestroyed, well conserved and in good shape. Human actions such as farming and vandalism which have been the major threats to the conservation and preservation of heritage sites in Africa, and in particular Zimbabwe, is arguably a result of western influence that has increasingly made locals to disrespect and lose sense of the value of the sites. This in no doubt has compromised conservation and management of heritage sites throughout the country. Such a threat has resulted in Zimbabwe (as other many African countries) to come up with an organization that protects heritage sites in the country known as Zimbabwe National Museums and Monuments Zimbabwe (NMMZ). Legal instruments (legislations) have also been designed to safeguard places of cultural significance. This take-over from local communities of the heritage sites by the government has however created more problems than solved. As a result, the state-based heritage organization, NMMZ, has met with serious problems leading some scholars and heritage practitioners to argue that "formal heritage management systems on their own are incapable of ensuring the effective and sustainable management of immovable heritage or any other place of cultural significance without active participation of local communities" (Jopela, 2011: 3). In fact, with NMMZ at the helm of heritage sites conservation, many communities living near the sites have vandalized the sites as they feel they are being denied access to benefits that are rightfully theirs. Such is the case with Chibvumani National Monument, a heritage site this study has adopted as a case study and where adopt-a-site-programme is being experimented by the NMMZ.

Chibvumani National Monument: Geographical location

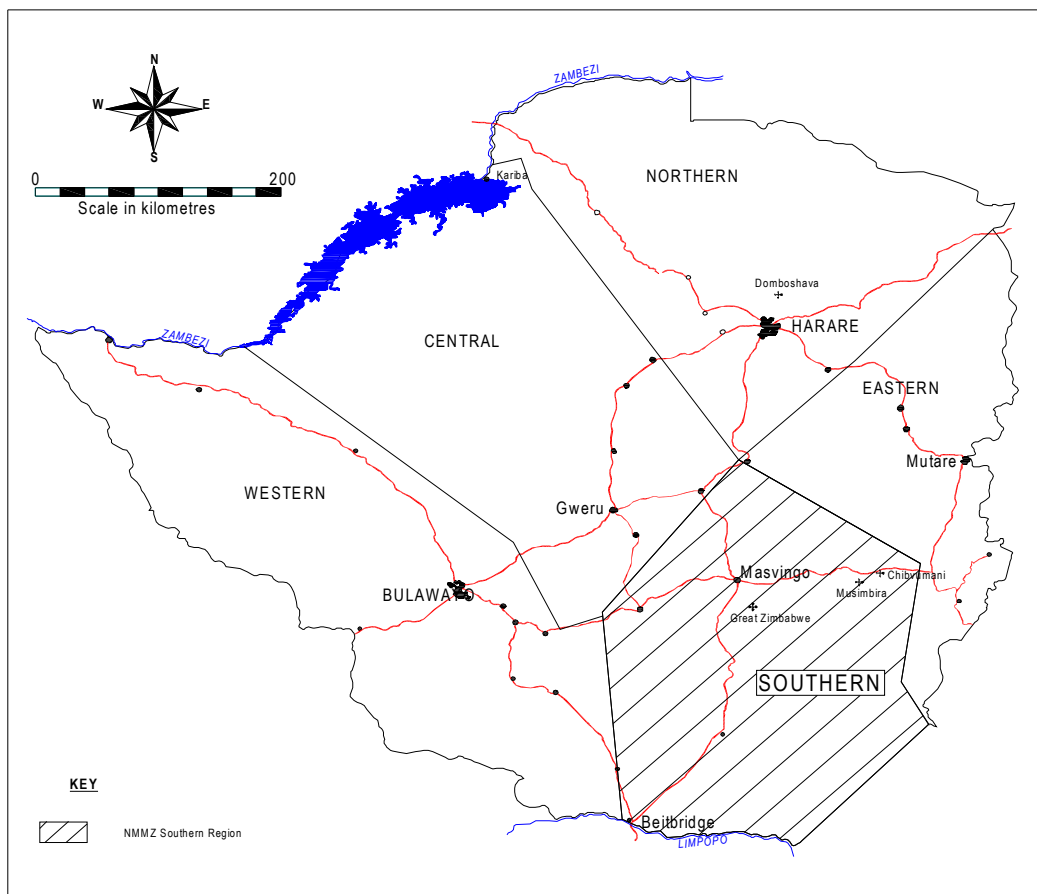
Chibvumani is a dry stone wall national monument that was largely constructed from biotite granite blocks quarried from the surrounding bedrocks outcrops with wall varying in height between 1m to 3m. It is arguably second to Great Zimbabwe national monument in the southern region of the country. See photo below which shows part of the Chibvumani granite-wall:



Photo showing Chibvumani dry granite-wall (taken by Sagiya, 2012)

The monument is located in the south east of Zimbabwe in Bikita District of Masvingo Province, about 600m to the south of the 128km peg along the Masvingo – Mutare highway. As described by Caton-Thompson (1931: 151), “the ruins crown a low fairly high kopje and command an excellent view up the surrounding valleys which converge towards it from between the higher granite masses of neighboring hills”.

Chibvumani heritage site was proclaimed a national monument number 115 in 1966 and it appears on the map sheet 1931 DD of the 1: 50 000 map sheet series (see Caton-Thompson, 1931). It worth noting that “categorization of heritage resources into national monuments or ancient monuments (relics) is the highest designation or rank at national level and this is not only common in Zimbabwe but other nations within the southern African region” (Ndoro, 2005:10) such as Botswana, Mozambique, Zambia and Malawi. Chibvumani national monument falls under headman Bikita who is also within the traditional jurisdiction of Chief Budzi. The heritage site can be accessed from the 128km peg along the Masvingo – Birchenough highway into the old tarred road and drive for 1km to the sign post. From here one gets into a dust road for the final 500m to the bottom of the hill. See the map below showing the geographical location of Chibvumani heritage site:



Map of Zimbabwe showing Chibvumani and other heritage sites and NMMZ administrative museological regions. (Map produced by Magadzike, J 29/06/2012).

Conservation problems at Chibvumani National Monument

In a bid to understand the conservation status of Chibvumani national monument to which NMMZ is using the adopt-a-site programme as a strategy for community involvement in the management of the site, a research was carried out between June and July 2012 using a randomly selected sample of 8 people from selected stakeholders. These stakeholders represented the local traditional leadership, local people permanently residing near the site, Mamutse Primary School, and NMMZ which were considered as primary interested parties in the conservation and management of the site. Oral interviews and discussions were conducted with selected participants during the study. Questions asked were meant to capture the perceptions and views of the selected individuals representing different stakeholders. The researchers also consulted the unpublished reports and memorandums of Chibvumani national monument that are kept at Great Zimbabwe Conservation and Research Center.

The desk top survey conducted for this paper proved beyond doubt that the concept of community participation has dominated the current heritage management and/or conservation discourses on heritage conservation in Zimbabwe (Muringaniza 1998; Ndoro and Pwiti 2001; Munjeri 2002; Taruvinga and Ndoro 2003; Chipunza 2005; and Fontein 2006). It is important to highlight that from the colonial period until recent years, "heritage managers used to view local communities as reservoirs of cheap labour for fieldwork rather than consumers of knowledge of the past" (Chirikure and Pwiti, 2008: 466). Such a misplaced thinking has witnessed cases where communities vandalized heritage sites or conduct acts of sabotage to cultural properties within their localities. A case in point is that of Domboshava national monument which in the early 1990s had a curio shop burnt down by the locals who went on to splash oil paint on the most impressive rock paintings at the site in protest of their exclusion in the conservation and management of the heritage site (see Chirikure and Pwiti, 2008). Such is the case of Chibvumani heritage site. There is 'partial' community participation in the conservation and management of the heritage site, of course, "community participation takes various forms that are context-dependent, including public outreach, involvement of schools, groups and local communities in archaeological excavations, site management and conservation" (Chirikure and Pwiti, 2008: 467). As a result, there are some problems haunting NMMZ with regard to conservation and

management Chibvumani heritage site after its management and conservation was handed over to the nearest school, Mamutse primary, in the 1990s by NMMZ southern region through its adopt-a-site programme. The idea of handing the site through the adopt-a-site programme to a nearby School by NMMZ could be a result of the belief that "heritage organisations have a tendency of viewing local communities as trouble makers and regarding their claims as not genuine" (Chirikure and Pwiti, 2008:469). The idea of adopt-a-site programme entails that the general public engages in active participation rather than passivity in the day to day management of heritage sites. In this case, the school was given the task to clean the site and report to the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe of any problem or acts of vandalism to the site (Memo Ref D/ 2, (b)/wcm, E4 File). NMMZ was to provide slashes and machetes for the exercise. On the other hand, the Mamutse School was given the mandate to use the site as an educational resource. Teachers would take classes to the site to enhance classroom work and in this way it was argued that the site would be preserved and presented by the school on behalf of the community. As part of the deal, NMMZ promised to provide the school with an opportunity to visit Great Zimbabwe monument at least once a month. Besides, the organization would provide transport to ferry pupils from the school to the site and back. NMMZ had obliged to assist to train guides from the school to take tours of Chibvumani monument. This was meant to ensure that information about the site would be made available to the school and in turn used for public consumption.

Since the inception of the adopt-a-site programme at Chibvumani, the school has managed to carry out its part of the contract for some time. The site was periodically cleared of vegetation overgrowth. On the other hand, NMMZ managed to ferry students from the school to Great Zimbabwe once and also donated some exercise books to the school during the early phases of the programme. Tools to work on the site were also provided. The idea to carry pupils from the school to the Great Zimbabwe National Monument experienced transportation problems. 'New' transport regulations could not allow pupils to be carried in an open lorry like that of NMMZ. Training of guides for Chibvumani could not take place due to financial problems. Heritage education department could not regularly visit the school. Chibvumani heritage site is not the only site that was affected in the region as there are other schools which were given the responsibility to look after heritage sites in their respective areas such as Majiri and Kubiku. To date the schools have stopped to function as the custodians of these heritage sites due to interwoven problems within the programme. Though Mamutse Primary School has remained partially active some problems have often rocked the heritage management and conservation of the site. The conservation of the physical fabric of Chibvumani heritage site was, for instance, threatened in 2009 when the site was vandalized by an allegedly mentally disturbed member of the local community named Donald Chirochangu. According to a report filed by Mamutse Primary School authorities to the Regional Director of NMMZ based at Great Zimbabwe World Heritage Site, the culprit claimed that he was conducting the [unsystematic] reconstruction of the heritage site because he was interested in reviving them after realizing that nobody was concerned with their conservation (26 June 2009 NMMZ file E4). The act of vandalism to the site and its magnitude is a clear testimony that the conservation and management approach (adopt-a-site) that is currently being used at the site is prone to manipulation and abuse. Thus, though Chibvumani heritage site has been singled out as the best case of the success of the adopt-a-site programme in the country (Nemerai pers.com 2012), there are a number of issues within the programme that has affected what had seemed to be an excellent initiative of public participation in the management and conservation of heritage sites. See part of the vandalized wall of Chibvumani below



Photo showing vandalised Chibvumani wall (Photo taken by Sagiya M.E 2011)

Adopt-a-site programme in the context of Chibvumani heritage site: A critique

As elaborated in the previous section of this paper, the idea of adopt-a-site programme entails that the general public engages in active participation rather than passivity in the day to day management of heritage sites. While the programme appears to be noble given that it seeks to positively involve all stakeholders especially the local communities of areas where a heritage site is located, it can be argued to have been aborted and doomed at its inception given it was never formulated into an organization's policy to this date. NMMZ researchers and professionals in charge of Chibvumani heritage sites, and many others in the region, therefore are experimenting on an idea that has not yet been implemented into an organization policy. As such, they have nowhere to fall back at in terms of theory, principles and policy documents in the event that problems arise or the idea fails (as it is allegedly showing at Chibvumani). In view of this, one can argue that when adopted the 'programme' or rather idea of adopt-a-site for Chibvumani heritage site, NMMZ officials seem to have been fascinated by a programme that from the very beginning lacked firm base as a strategy for effective management and conservation of heritage sites.

In view of the Chibvumani heritage site, another important factor that one can argue to be crippling the adopt-a-site programme is its failure to take into serious consideration the spiritual values attached to Chibvumani heritage site. This failure was (and still is) expressed by NMMZ itself when on launching the programme handed over the site to Mamutse Primary School instead of the whole community, that is traditional leadership and surrounding communities including the aforementioned school. It is no doubt the school, though can help in conserving and managing the site, forging it at the helm of the custodianship of a heritage site with spiritual values meant more harm than good. This is because conservation and management of *genius loci* can best be done when traditional leadership is directly involved. This argument has been aptly captured by Headman Bikita's utterance that: Today, people no longer revered Chibvumani as they use to do and there is no doubt that the adopt-a-site programme has played a part to this lost of respect to once a local area spiritual super house (Interview with headman Bikita 21/06/12 at Chibvumani).

Thus, though the school authorities may be aware of the oral traditions, spiritual value and legends attached to Chibvumani national monument, they are not the technocrats when it comes to the conservation and management of the intangible heritage of the place. This type of heritage (intangible cultural heritage) requires what Fontein (2006: 47) referred as "traditional connoisseurs," meaning those people who are considered in rural communities of Zimbabwe to be knowledgeable about a clan's past and the tradition. These people include; chiefs and their aides, village heads, and other respected elders, as well as spirit mediums and traditional healers. Yet with the institution of the adopt-a-site programme, the aforementioned people have been sidelined to the back seat position and are rarely consulted in many of the conservational management issues. This has the fatal consequence that the respect of Chibvumani heritage site as a habitant place of ancestral spirits continues to be eroded as long as the site lacks the traditional custodianship. Jopela (2011: 6) defines traditional custodianship as all mechanism and actions guided by customs and belief systems that are carried out by local communities as a way to promote the sustainable use of both cultural and natural resources.

The other sign of discontentment among members of the public and communities around Chibvumani was revealed by Mr. Tamirepi (Village head to which Chibvumani falls under his jurisdiction) who complained of NMMZ officers who just go to the monument without their knowledge and approval, (Interview with Mr. Tamirepi, 20/07/2011). Another strong sign of discontentment was brought to surface in 1998 when the then NMMZ Regional Director was chased away from the site when he decided to pass by on his way to Mutare (third largest city in Zimbabwe located near the border with Mozambique) (Interview with Mr. Chigiya 23/06/12 at Mamutse Primary School). The Director was being accused of economically empowering "little children" whilst the real owners of the monument were and still get nothing. This is a clear indication that some local community members are feeling that they are not benefitting from the site. In view of community members living around cultural heritage sites, Siyahamba (2011) rightly argues that "there have to be tangible benefits to the local communities residing around cultural heritage sites, what the South African National Heritage Council (NHC) refers to as the 'beneficiation concept' (p. 6). Without such benefits, it is has been observed that heritage institutions will increasingly become irrelevant to the very communities they are supposed to serve. This may explain why to date the local people are cutting down trees in Chibvumani hill an act that could not be done when the broader local communities were actively in charge of the heritage place. On the same note, instead of addressing the root causes of such a change of perception among the local people with regards to the conservation of the site, the headmaster was advocating for stiff measures to be taken to the culprits. When he was asked how the environment of the site could be conserved his response was of taking legal action on such people who will be caught cutting down trees within the environs of the heritage site (Chigiya pers.com, 2012). The other sign of discontentment was revealed when in 2009 when one of the community members living near Chibvumani heritage centre destroyed part of the granite walls of the site. Since the vandalism of 2009, NMMZ officials have frequented Chibvumani heritage site in a bid to facelift the monument that is arguably second to Great Zimbabwe national monument in the southern region through condition survey, monument

inspection and restoration activities. It can be argued that the response of NMMZ to the case of vandalism and also appointing a school to represent the community shows that the organisation is still haunted by the colonial heritage management legacy that value the monumentality and aesthetic value of immovable heritage site at the expense of spiritual and other values, (see Ndoro, 2011). Moreso, NMMZ is investing so much towards the restoration of the dry stone walls with insignificant efforts of looking at how the so much talked about sacredness of the monument can be revived and promoted in the management of the site. Mr. Guta, an elderly man in a nearby community narrated two incidents that took place in the late 1980s in which he came across 'the mysterious famous box' with gold at the site. He, however, could not take away the box before some traditional rituals could be performed. Due to increasing influence of western values and disrespect of African tradition, the traditional rituals were never done to date yet it was widely believed by the local people that the gold was provided by the ancestors to economically empower people in the area. (Interview with Mr. Guta, 23/ 06/12, Chibvumani national monument) Thus, due to discontentment by local community members highlighted above, some members are indiscriminately cutting down trees around the area where the Chibvumani site is located. Below is a heap of freshly cut trees we found at the foot of Chibvumani hill during one of our visits.



A heap of wooden poles on the foot of Chibvumani hill (Photo taken by Sagiya M. E 23/06/2012)

Besides, a closer look to the adopt-a-site programme where the school is operating as a custodian to the site reveals that there is lack of necessary conservation empowerment required in looking after the physical fabric of Chibvumani. The school teachers and pupils have no training in stone masonry thereby making it a mammoth task for them to effectively take care of the site of such magnitude on their own. In addition, to expect primary school children to conduct vegetation clearance of the thickest shrubs that seasonally cover some parts of Chibvumani monument is just but to expect too much from these kids. Although Nemerai argued that with the adopt-a-site programme it was agreed that when one or two stone blocks falls down from the wall, school children can put it/them back but when more than that, a report was to be made to the organisation, (Nemerai, interview 02/07/12). Taking into consideration the distance between the school and NMMZ, southern region offices (based at Great Zimbabwe World Heritage Site), coupled by communication challenges mainly before the erection of the recent installed network booster, the arrangement could not sustain effective conservation of the site. Therefore, in theory the adopt-a-site programme was a brilliant initiative between the NMMZ and the Ministry of Education, Arts, Sports and Culture (parent ministry for both primary and secondary schools in Zimbabwe) that its success with regards to the conservation of heritage sites is yet to be realised.

Thinking with all stakeholders: A quest for generative dialogue

In view of the problems around Chibvumani heritage site highlighted above, there is no doubt that there is still a lot desired to be done towards coming up with viable holistic community-oriented systems and mechanisms that will enhance effective conservation and management of site. To address the bulk of the challenges Chibvumani is

currently facing, community involvement or what is commonly known as community participation have appeared to be one of the best solutions. Given that not all the community around Chibvumani are fully and practically involved in the management and conservation of the site, community participation in the management of Chibvumani heritage site should be reconsidered. It has been elaborated, for instance, that through adopt-a-site programme, custodianship of the site was given (by NMMZ) to Mamutse Primary School instead of traditional leadership who are indeed the rightful owners of both the School and the heritage site. In addressing pressing problems around Chibvumani, it is therefore advisable that NMMZ make an attempt to fully re-engage those members of the local community (around Chibvumani) such as local leaders and others so that they all feel a sense of full ownership of the site. From both, a logical and African culture's point of view, traditional leadership and 'local' people own both the Chibvumani heritage site and the School which NMMZ mistakenly gave custodianship of the site to. As such, once traditional leadership and the local people are fully engaged, of course, with close partnership with NMMZ which is the formal custodian, then everyone (including the School) feel fully engaged in the conservation and management of Chibvumani heritage site. It is from this understanding of the local people's worldview that one can safely say that management and conservation at Chibvumani has pushed out or excluded some local community members; a situation that certainly frustrates the larger local population. The observation made by the present research augers well with Chief Charumbira's (President of the Zimbabwe Council of Chiefs) famous statement during a workshop convened to discuss and revise the Zimbabwe's culture heritage legislation in 2005. He is quoted to have said on behalf other Chiefs: "We are not stakeholders; we are the owners of this heritage" (Chirikure and Pwiti, 2008: 468). In view of Chibvumani heritage site, such a strong statement clearly shows that excluding traditional leadership and local community or pushing them to the back seat position is potentially dangerous: it can be a time bomb set to explode any time given that the adopt-a-site programme that is being used seem to be silent of this observation.

The trajectory of these contestations and the problems elaborated in the preceding discussion epitomize several common misconceptions underlying heritage conservation projects in the region and beyond. With regard to Chibvumani heritage site, it raises the critical question: 'how do conservation and management of cultural heritage sites challenge heritage conservation by NMMZ? What NMMZ should do to overcome conservation challenges at heritage sites?' Due to limited space, we will not pursue each of these questions in detail except to argue that NMMZ as the formal custodian of cultural heritage sites in the country should enhance holistic community participation through "generative dialogue" (Verran, 2011). Generative dialogue entails a sustainable dialogue that allows different kinds of relationships/relationalities between all forms of knowledge (such as science and traditional knowledge systems) and stakeholders (especially traditional leadership and local community members) should be made the priority in cultural heritage conservation and management. Such an approach will definitely go a long way given that traditional leadership and local community members have a long history of being deeply tied into heritage conservation networks. Traditional leadership and local community members can indeed be resources for heritage conservation because they are already part of local practices and do not require policing/fortress conservation. Also, the deployment of different forms of knowledge (such as science and traditional knowledge systems) in conservation projects for heritage sites such as Chibvumani has the merit that the best out of these knowledge forms will be exploited for the projects if made to complement each other. For example, where scientific expertise fails, traditional knowledge could be instituted. The approach being advocated in this research is therefore an energized version of Stengers' (2005; also see De la Cadena 2010) "cosmopolitics" – "a politics constituted by multiple, divergent worlds whereby indigenous movements may meet scientists and environmentalists of different stripes and where the interrelations between 'humans' and 'non-humans' is seriously considered" (Mawere, forthcoming). Such an approach has the grand merit that it allows the interface of Science with other knowledge forms while at the same time enhancing the interactions/relations between the 'state' or 'institutions', 'humans' and 'non-humans' that are involved in productive conservation and management of heritage sites.

Conclusion

This paper has unraveled cultural heritage sites conservation and management in the southern region of Zimbabwe. Different dimensions that practices in daily life have assumed in heritage conservation and management in Zimbabwe and beyond have been exposed. Having unpacked the merits and demerits of different possible strategies for heritage conservation and management and for purposes of sustainable heritage conservation, the study has argued for the rethinking of strategies being used by NMMZ in the management and conservation of Chibvumani National Monument and others in the southern region of the country.

More importantly, the paper has argued for a sustainable dialogue and mutual understanding, in the name of community participation, of all stakeholders involved in the management and conservation of heritage sites. Using the example of Chibvumani heritage site and other such sites where 'partial' community participation in the name of adopt-a-site programme is being used, the paper has demonstrated the dangers and risks of a 'solo approach' in

heritage conservation. To this end, the paper has argued for serious consideration of all knowledge forms and 'holistic' participation of stakeholders in the management and conservation of cultural heritage sites. Such an approach has been argued for being potentially a powerful tool for replacing the fruitless approaches being used in the management and conservation of heritage sites in the region and beyond.

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