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4. Profile of the Matobo Hills Local Indigenous Communities and the History of Settlement

INTRODUCTION

Although there is an abundance of literature that discusses the settlement history in the Matobo Hills by different local descent communities, the amount of detail that is available is sometimes conflicting as it converges and diverges in several ways. The cultural identity of the area, therefore, is difficult to simplify as it has been inhabited by mixed populations, some of which are closely related to each other though they are intimately attached to the Hills in many different ways. This chapter discusses the original inhabitants of the Matobo Hills who were the Late Stone Age hunter-gatherer communities and whose existence in this cultural landscape is evidenced by rock art and other cultural material. This chapter will also demonstrate and contend that, while the successors of these hunter-gatherer communities can no longer be ascertained, the Matobo Hills were also inhabited by several farming communities and later by Europeans, some of whose descendants are still surviving in parts of this world heritage cultural landscape today. In exploring the history of settlement in Matobo, it will be shown that the arrivals and departures as well as contacts of different communities has, in many ways, influenced and contributed to the shaping of cultural traditions and management practices that may be currently surviving in the Hills.

THE LATE STONE AGE HUNTER-GATHERER INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES IN THE MATOBO HILLS

Existing archaeological evidence in southern Africa indicates that much of the region was originally inhabited by the Stone Age communities and later by several farming communities (Klein 1983). As will be demonstrated below, many descendants of the farming communities are still found in the Matobo Hills today.

The Stone Age is a broad prehistoric period during which stone was used extensively to produce a range of basic stone tools. Archaeologists have divided the Stone Age into the Early Stone Age, Middle Stone Age, and Late Stone Age based on the anatomical development of humans and the degree of complexity in the styling and use of tools as well as other considerations (Summers 1955; Cooke, Summers and Robinson 1966). The identity of the hominids associated with the Early and Middle Stone Age in southern Africa, however, has become more clearer as there has been extensive research on this topic (see, for example, Phillipson 2005; Wadley 1993, 2015). As elaborated in chapter 2, the Late Stone Age has been identified with modern humans who, in this case, were the hunter-gatherer indigenous communities. These hunter-gatherers had gradually evolved from the early members of the genus homo who employed simpler stone tools during the Early Stone Age. Although this is now known to have been the case, the chronology of the Stone Age lacks accuracy in all the regions of the world. In southern Africa, the Early Stone Age is estimated to have existed from 2 500 000 to 150 000 years ago; the Middle Stone Age from 150 000 to 30 000 years ago; and the Late Stone Age from 30 000 to 2000 years ago (Bousman 1998; Wadley 2015).

This thesis, however, will not delve deeper into archaeological time depths of the Stone Age period in the Matobo Hills or in southern Africa. In Zimbabwe, this work has already been completed by a number of researchers beginning at the turn of the last century when archaeological studies were initiated (see, for example, Armstrong 1931; Robinson and Cooke 1950; Cooke 1963; Walker 1980, 1983, 1995). The results of their research have contributed to the basic outline of the cultural sequence of the Stone Age in the country and in much of southern Africa. Instead, this chapter will concentrate on examining the settlement history of the Matobo Hills commencing from the beginning of the Late Stone Age when the hunter-gatherer communities are evidenced as...
having been the first indigenous people to inhabit this world heritage cultural landscape (see Walker 1980, 1995, 1996). In this aspect, it is certainly during the Late Stone Age that the hunter-gatherer communities began to develop complex social structures and cultural practices which perhaps established the foundation of traditional conservation practices in the Matobo Hills.

The hunter-gatherer communities lived in bands and were skilled in the making and use of stone and bone tools. By means of these tools, they exploited wild animals through hunting and also gathered wild fruits and plants as components of their diet (Schrire 1980; Ndagala and Zengu 1989). They were also responsible for rock art paintings that are found in many cultural landscapes in southern Africa and in the Matobo Hills (Woodhouse 1969; Cooke 1963) (Fig. 4.1). However, the subsistence lifestyle of the hunter-gatherer communities ended approximately 2000 years ago when farming communities appeared in southern Africa from further north (Mitchell 1997; Phillipson 2005). Archaeological studies have now established that, on their arrival, the farming communities did not immediately displace the hunter-gatherer communities but began to live and share the cultural landscapes which they both populated (Klein 1984; Walker 1996; Killick 2009). Although many studies have been conducted on the Stone Age of the Matobo Hills, the dates when the hunter-gatherer communities began to arrive in this world heritage cultural landscape are not quite clear. According to Walker (1995, 1996), the hunter-gatherer communities began to seasonally visit the Matobo Hills from about 13 000 years ago as a result of increased food resources and improved climate at the end of the last glacial period. Unlike their ancestors, the hunter-gatherer communities of the Matobo Hills used rock shelters and caves as their homes and lived in groups of around 40 people. According to Walker, these hunter-gatherer communities left the Matobo Hills every year in about May perhaps following
large herds of wild animals which, it is believed, migrated south to the lowveld in winter before migrating into the watershed in spring and summer to take advantage of the seasonal changes in grazing and the availability of water (Walker 1996).

From about 9000 years ago, the hunter-gatherer communities began to permanently live in the Matobo Hills during which time they extensively exploited the local resources such as wild animals and fruits (Walker 1991, 1996). The rampant exploitation of resources was probably a result of the excessive amount of people that were now living in the Hills. Walker estimates that there were, at this time, several hundreds living in the Matobo Hills in fairly large groups of approximately 25 people (Walker 1995, 1996). The extensive exploitation of local resources by the hunter-gatherer communities in the Matobo Hills may have been based on their profound and accurate knowledge of the faunal and floral species of the area and on the close observation of their cyclical behaviour and activity (Hubbard and Mguni 2007). It is during this period that the hunter-gatherer communities began to paint rock shelters and caves which was, at times, a way of mastering nature rather than being subjected to it. Walker further observed that, about 4800 years ago, the social organisation appears to have changed again and the hunter-gatherer communities were then living in larger bands that more regularly required larger animals for food. The size of the group was probably determined by the need to balance social, security, political, and economic needs against environmental constraints and stress in the Matobo Hills (Walker 1995, 1996). The traditional life of the hunter-gatherer communities was most likely disrupted when the farming communities arrived in the Matobo Hills around 1800 or 1700 years ago. Upon arrival, however, the farming communities did not quickly displace the hunter-gatherer communities but, instead, began to trade with them. The diverse nature of hunter-gatherer and farming communities’ material culture at shelter and cave sites such as Bambata, Nswatugi, Tshangula, Kalanyoni, Shashabugwa, Cave of Bees, and Pomongwe in the Matobo Hills indicated that there were varying degrees of hunter-gatherer interaction with the agriculturalists over the last 2000 years (see Robinson 1966; Walker 1980, 1993, 1995). By the sixth century AD, however, the hunter-gatherer communities may have gradually departed the Matobo Hills, and there is no archaeological trace of their survival in this world heritage cultural landscape within the last 1500 years (Walker 1996). The reasons for the disappearance of the hunter-gatherer communities from Matobo are not clear, and the area in which they settled after they left the Hills is also not evident. The disruption of their traditional settlement pattern by the farmers and probably conflict could be some of the reasons why the Later Stone Age communities left the Matobo Hills. Walker (1980, 1996) speculates that part of the population may have settled in the southern lowveld of the country while Simons (1968) suggested that they may have been pushed west into the Kalahari Desert, which is a large semi-arid sandy savannah covering much of Botswana as well as parts of Namibia and South Africa. Some of the hunter-gatherers may also have been assimilated by the farming communities who had permanently settled in the Matobo Hills (Mitchell 1997).

THE INDIGENOUS FARMING COMMUNITIES OF THE MATOBO HILLS

As has been shown above, in southern Africa, the farming communities period extends over the last 2000 years and, as a cultural term, it refers to groups of people known in archaeology as farming communities who used iron for various functions, made clay pots, practised agriculture, and reared domesticated animals (Huffman 1982; Klein 1984; Pwiti 1991; Pikirayi 2001). It is a term that is, in fact, used to describe and delimit a period during which the farming communities are presumed to have been distinctively different from those of the Late Stone Age communities (Sinclair, Thurstan and Bassey 1993).

The farming communities were basically composed of subsistence farmers who cultivated crops such as sorghum and millet and also domesticated animals such as sheep, goats, and cattle (Phillipson 2005). Hunting was also important and contributed to their diet although it subsequently declined (Pwiti 1991). Mining activities were limited to the production of
iron ore for the manufacturing of agricultural and hunting implements as well as jewellery (Killick 2009).

As previously indicated, it is not precisely evident when the first farming communities settled in the Matobo Hills. This is mainly because there has been no research conducted concerning the farming communities of this world heritage cultural landscape. Although the farmers may possibly have arrived in the Matobo Hills approximately 1800 or 1700 years ago, the research by Walker and others has not been able to establish which farming communities in particular were the first to inhabit the area.

Available historical manuscripts depict that the first farmers to settle in the Hills were probably the Kalanga people followed by the abeNyubi or Nyubi communities. Nobbs (1924, 32) believes that the Late Stone Age hunter-gatherer communities were probably succeeded by the Kalanga people whose descendants are still existing in some parts of the Hills today. This view is also maintained by Walker (1995) and by Ranger (1999). According to Ndzmunumi (2012), the origins of the Kalanga people can be traced back to a people that originated in northeast Africa and settled in the Zimbabwean plateau at the turn of the Christian era. However, according to Walker, it is only after about 1600 AD that the Nyubi people began living in the Matobo Hills (Walker 1995, 19). To authenticate this chronology, Terence Ranger, who has extensively researched the history of the Matobo Hills, has contended that some of the hills were simultaneously identified with their original Kalanga names and later Ndebele and European ascribed names. According to Ranger, Igambinga Hill, for example, was renamed Ingwena while Fumugwe became Ntabakayikhonjwa (Fig. 4.2). Fumugwe was later renamed Mt. Francis by the

Fig. 4.2 Fumugwe Mountain, which was renamed Mount Francis (Photo by Author).
Europeans (Ranger 1999, 18). As a result of renaming the Hills, many of the original names may have lost any meaning that they may have had (Cooke 1963). Indeed, as already stated in the previous chapter, the name Matobo itself is Kalanga. In my opinion, however, the Nyubi were probably a minor farming community group whose presence in the Matobo Hills has largely remained unclear. However, if this chronology is correct, then the farming communities of the Matobo Hills were probably part of the western stream of the three separate farming community migrants into southern Africa from the north (Fig. 4.3). The eastern stream was from Kenya, Tanzania through Mozambique into eastern South Africa; the central stream was from the southern part of Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, and into Zimbabwe and the western stream was from Angola, the western parts of Botswana, and western Zimbabwe and eventually congregated in eastern South Africa (see Huffman 2007). The major problem with these streams is that they do not explain how some of the farming communities arrived in Namibia, the eastern half of Botswana, and South Africa as Huffman does not indicate how the groups may have migrated into these areas. Nevertheless, the early farming community period gradually ended around the 12th century AD when large scale political states began to emerge in much of southern Africa (Huffman 1974; Pwiti 1991).

In the middle Shashe-Limpopo valley, Mapungubwe (AD 1050-1200) developed into a political and cultural center founded by communities identified with the archaeological sites of Zhizo and Leopard’s

Fig. 4.3 Migration streams illustrating how farming communities moved into southern Africa (after Huffman 2007).
The growth of Mapungubwe was partly based on agriculture, cattle rearing and long distance trade with the east African coast (Huffman 2000). The Mapungubwe state collapsed during the early part of the 13th century. There are suggestions by archaeologists that the collapse of Mapungubwe could have been caused by various factors that includes climate change and the shift of long distance trade to Great Zimbabwe which had developed in the north from about AD 1250 to 1450 (Huffman 1996a; Pikirayi 2006). When Mapungubwe was eventually abandoned, the centre of regional power shifted from the Shashe-Limpopo valley to Great Zimbabwe in south central Zimbabwe. Like at Mapungubwe, the control of long distance trade and the accumulation of wealth in the form of cattle and grain contributed to the rise of Great Zimbabwe (Matenga 2011). Several centuries of intensive cropping and cattle herding would have eventually put pressure on the agricultural resources of Great Zimbabwe. Great Zimbabwe could also have been affected by the gradual shift of long distance trade to the north (Pwiti and Ndoro 2014). By the middle of the 15th century, Great Zimbabwe had declined in both political and economic importance. The collapse of Great Zimbabwe is suggested to have resulted in the rise of the Mutapa state (AD 1450-1900) in the north and the Torwa state (AD 1450-1830) in the south west (Pikirayi 1993, 2001). According to Ellert (1993, 143), the Portuguese referred to this region as Abatua or Butua, which means “Mother of Gold” as they had inadvertently believed that the region was rich in gold and cattle. This expanse is characterised by grassland and a small number of acacia trees, and it stretches from the Gweru area to Bulawayo in Zimbabwe and merges with the Kalahari Desert margins, which was once dominated by the Toutswemogala chiefdom in north eastern Botswana (Pikirayi 1997; 2001).

The capital of the Torwa state was centred at Khami, which is located about 22 kilometres west of the modern city of Bulawayo. The stone building architecture at Khami represents an expansion of the culture that was once based at Great Zimbabwe. The distinct development of the Khami state was a modified style of the dry-stone wall architecture inherited from the free-standing walls at Great Zimbabwe. The Khami structures are terrace or retaining walls that are constructed around and over granite hill tops. The top surfaces of the hill tops were levelled to create platforms on

STATE FORMATION IN WESTERN ZIMBABWE AND LOCAL INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES IN THE MATOBO HILLS

From the late 15th to the early 19th centuries, three powerful successive states emerged in south western Zimbabwe comprising the Torwa, Rozvi, and the Ndebele states. Much of the information for these states is derived from historical sources as their establishment somewhat coincides with the historical period in Zimbabwe. The historical period refers to the period following the introduction of education in Zimbabwe by the Europeans in around the 19th century. For this era, prehistoric archaeology now intermingles with historical archaeology, oral history, historical documents, ethnography, and cultural anthropology as sources to understand the African past (Pwiti and Ndoro 2014).

Immediately north of the Matobo Hills, the Torwa state emerged in the Guruuswa area in the south western edge of the country following the decline of Great Zimbabwe at the turn of the 15th century (Robinson 1959; Beach 1980, 1983; Huffman 1996b; Pikirayi 1997, 2001). According to Ellert (1993, 143), the Portuguese referred to this region as Abatua or Butua, which means “Mother of Gold” as they had inadvertently believed that the region was rich in gold and cattle. This expanse is characterised by grassland and a small number of acacia trees, and it stretches from the Gweru area to Bulawayo in Zimbabwe and merges with the Kalahari Desert margins, which was once dominated by the Toutswemogala chiefdom in north eastern Botswana (Pikirayi 1997; 2001).
which residential round clay houses were built. The platforms are also characterised by passages usually dividing the retaining walls towards the hill summit (Makuvaza and Makuvaza 2013). Southern African archaeologists have now named the dry stone sites that have a similar style of walls and construction as Khami type-sites or Khami-phase sites. The Torwa state was later conquered in approximately 1680 by Changamire Dumbo of the Rozvi dynasty, who is thought to have emerged from the northeast and migrated to the southwest of the country. By about the middle of the 17th century, Khami was completely abandoned following a civil war in which the Portuguese were involved. From about the 1560s, the Portuguese from Mozambique had established themselves in the Mutapa state in the north eastern part of Zimbabwe with the aim of controlling gold trade in the interior of southern Africa (Newitt 1995).

By helping overthrow the Torwa state at Khami, the Portuguese had wanted to seize an opportunity to monopolise gold trade in the Abatua region which they believed had a lot of gold. A new state was established at Dhlodhlo, which is also known as Danang’ombe, located about 100 kilometres to the east where the overpowered Torwa and triumphant Rozvi jointly continued to rule (Huffman 1996b; Pikirayi 2001). However, the authority of Khami is now also known to have spread into eastern Botswana and into northern South Africa.

It appears, however, that the supremacy of the Rozvi state had also spread into the Matobo Hills and beyond into the Venda and Tswana region in the south and southwest (see Manyanga 2007; Pikirayi 2011). In the Matobo Hills, the Nyubi and the Kalanga were also subdued by the Rozvi people although this seems to have been short lived. It is also thought that it was during the reign of the Rozvi when Njelele and other shrines such as Dula, Manyenyegweni, and Wirirani were established in the Matobo Hills (Daneel 1970; Beach 1986; Makuvaza 2008). According to Beach, the Rozvi remained in control in the Matobo Hills until about the 1830s, however, some of them were linguistically absorbed by the Kalanga people over time (Beach 1986).

Rozvi hegemony in north-western Zimbabwe was eventually weakened during the Mfecane instabilities of 1815 to 1840 which triggered the various Nguni splinter groups from KwaZulu Natal in South Africa to many parts north of the country and to central Africa (see Omer-Cooper 1966; Eldredge 1992). Mfecane was a revolution initiated by the northern Nguni people and was popularised by the military and socio-political activities of Tshaka who was the Zulu king. Although it began in South Africa, the Mfecane had social and political ramifications as far afield as modern Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Zambia and as far north as southern Tanzania in east Africa (Ajayi 1998). These militarily powerful Nguni émigrés conquered and subdued many states and communities that they encountered as they migrated into many parts of south and central Africa (see Omer-Cooper 1966; Eldredge 1992).

After the supremacy of the Rozvi was weakened by the Nguni people, they began to disperse across the entire country. In the northeast, they settled at Mafungabutsi plateau under the Chireya dynasty and became part of the Shangwe people while others settled in the northwest among the Nambya and the Tonga people. Some settled in the southeast and became part of the Ndebele people while others settled among the Venda and identified themselves as the Singo people (Beach 1980; see also Manyanga 2007). The Rozvi were thus probably a mixed and dynamic group of people with different cultures, totems, and traditional practices (Machiridza 2008). In the Matobo Hills, the Kalanga, Nyubi, and the remnants of the Rozvi people were also briefly subdued by the Nguni communities that were migrating north away from Tshaka’s rule (Bhebe 1979). Though the Mfecane caused social transformation and upheaval among many ethnic indigenous groups, there was no complete dislodgment of the local indigenous communities in the Matobo Hills (Bhebe 1979; Beach 1986). This is undoubtedly evidenced by the continued presence of the Nyubi and the Kalanga people who are currently primarily settled in the western part of this world heritage cultural landscape. These indigenous communities, therefore, must have continued to practice and venerate their traditional religion while perhaps managing the Matobo Hills through traditional conservation practices until the Ndebele people arrived in the region.
It was during the Mfecane period that one of Tshaka’s trusted lieutenants King Mzilikazi deserted him and later founded the Ndebele state in Zimbabwe. Subsequent to a series of protracted wars with Europeans and several indigenous communities on his way to the north, King Mzilikazi and his retinue eventually arrived in western Zimbabwe in about 1838 or 1840 (Ransford 1968; Rasmussen 1978). Having overpowered many indigenous groups such as the Birwa, Kalanga, Nyubi, Venda, Rozvi (or Lozwi), Suthu, and the Tonga, King Mzilikazi reorganised the new Ndebele order and first settled at Inyathi, and then Mahlokohloko, and later at Mhlahlandlela, which is located in the northern fringes of the Matobo Hills in the Sauersdale Farm (Omer-Cooper 1966; Lindgren 2002). As can be determined, the Ndebele did not begin by populating the Matobo Hills when they arrived in this part of the country (see also Ranger 1999). They only first settled in the Hills when they fled the European invasion of their state in 1893. More Ndebele people also entered and settled in the Matobo Hills and used them for hiding during the 1896-7 war when they fought against the Europeans’ administration of the area (Beach 1986; Ranger 1999). As is indicated later in the next chapter, it was the war of conquest of 1896-7 which saw the dominance of the European perspective over the management of the Matobo Hills and which established the foundations of the non-indigenous control of this world heritage cultural landscape. The cultures and traditional conservation practices of protecting the Hills which had earlier been established by the Kalanga, Nyubi, and perhaps by the Rozvi, were probably not disregarded much by the Mfecane disturbances, the arrival of the Ndebele under King Mzilikazi, or the 1893 and 1896-7 wars. Later, when King Mzilikazi died in 1868, his son Lobengula who assumed authority and established a new capital in 1870 at Old Bulawayo is believed to have valued and consulted the traditional shrines in the Matobo Hills to obtain guidance on how to govern his state (Bhebe 1979; Ranger 1999). After they settled in western Zimbabwe, the Ndebele began to spread their influence among the other ethnic groups that had already populated the Matobo Hills and beyond (Becker 1962; Hachipola 1998).

CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN LOCAL INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES IN THE MATOBO HILLS

The Matobo Hills are currently populated by various cultural groups, the dominant ones being the Kalanga and the Ndebele. Culturally, these two groups appear to have wielded significant influence on other ethnic groups as their languages are widely spoken within the Matobo Hills and beyond. Further south of the Hills, other ethnic groups that may be spiritually attached to the cultural landscape include the Venda who populate the low lying valleys of the Limpopo and Shashe Rivers. In the 19th century, traditional priests for Njelele and other shrines were drawn from Venda and Kalanga families who were said to have been deeply entrenched in the Mwari/Mwali cult (Nobbs 1924; Ranger 1999; Makuvaza 2008). It is also indicated that similar traditional institutions may have also existed in the south beyond the Matobo Hills amongst the Venda and Tswana people (Nobbs 1924; Cockerof 1972).

South of the Hills among the Venda are also the Sotho, Hlengwe (Changani/Shangane), and the Remba/Lemba or Rembetu (Ruwitah 1997; Manyanga 2007). The Ndebele appeared to have also exerted their influence on many of these groups (Omer-Cooper 1966; Rasmussen 1978), and their authority also extended as far as the Zambezi River in the north (Beach 1980; McGregor 2003). To the southwest and west of the Hills, the authority of the Ndebele stretched as far as the Botswana-Zimbabwe frontier areas where the Kalanga, Sotho, Tsonga, and Tswana occupied the low lying areas of the Shashe River. To the east, their supremacy also seemed to have extended almost as far as the Mozambique frontier area (Omer-Cooper, 1966).

As will be discussed in the next chapter, the dispersal of several of these indigenous communities within this large geographical expanse was also due to their later removal from the Matobo Hills when the Europeans began to settle and appropriate land around this world heritage cultural landscape and also when part of the area was turned into a national park. The Ndebele people were so dominant over
other indigenous communities that it was decided that the western part of the country was to be officially named Matabeleland and was annexed with Mashonaland in 1901 with the latter being mainly dominated by the Shona speaking people (Northolt 2008). The territory, largely inhabited by the Ndebele and Shona peoples, was named Rhodesia after Cecil John Rhodes.

EUROPEAN LOCAL INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES IN THE MATOBO HILLS

Before migrating to the north, the Ndebele had made contacts with Europeans who were establishing themselves in South Africa and the rest of southern Africa. As discussed in chapter 1, many of these Europeans were exploring the interior of southern and central Africa from the middle of the 19th century onwards. The Europeans who first settled in areas around the Matobo Hills were missionaries, miners, travellers, traders, and hunters. These Europeans were visiting the Ndebele state as far back as the early 19th century in South Africa, however, the existing European indigenous communities in the Matobo Hills are only indigenous because of being born there after their ancestors had settled in the area over several generations. Today, some families of these Europeans still own farms and mines around the Matobo Hills while others maintain their attachment to the cultural landscape through pilgrimages to monuments and memorials connected with European colonial settlement of the area. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the interest of Europeans in the Matobo Hills was primarily economic and recreational, and they did not value the African traditional conservation being practiced in the cultural landscape (see Ranger 1999).

Missionaries began to open up mission stations in areas near the Matobo Hills and initiated evangelical and educational work among the local indigenous African communities (Gelfand 1968; Lloyd 1979). The pioneers of missionary work in Matabeleland were the London Missionary Society. They established a mission station at Inyathi in 1859 close to King Mzilikazi’s first capital (King 1959). The London Missionary Society was further granted additional land in 1870 to establish a mission station at Hope Fountain when King Lobengula founded a new state at Old Bulawayo while the Jesuits of the Sacred Heart were also allowed to open up a new mission station at Old Bulawayo (Makuva and Burret 2011). In 1881 when King Lobengula abandoned Old Bulawayo, the Jesuits were permitted to start a new mission station at Empandeni in 1887, which is located in the peripheral end of the Matobo Hills in the southwest (Gelfand 1968; Lloyd 1979; Zvobgo 1996). While searching for souls, missionaries began to proscribe traditional religion and management practices for protecting the Matobo Hills as they believed that the practices were the major hindrance to their evangelical work (Ranger 1999; Makuva and Burret 2008) because missionary work in Matabeleland and particularly in the Matobo Hills was proving to be a complete failure between 1859 and 1892 (Child 1968; Clarke 2010). Later, when Cecil John Rhodes took control of the country, additional grants were provided to the London Missionary Society to open up more mission stations at Dombodema near Plumtree town, west of the Matobo Hills. Rhodes also gave grants to the Brethren in Christ Church to open up the Matopo and Mtshabezi mission stations in 1898 in the Matobo Hills and Wanezi in 1924 in the Filabusi-Insiza area (King 1959). The granting of land to missionaries to establish their settlements in areas around the Matobo Hills and in other parts of the country have been perceived as Rhodes’ plan to garner moral support in order to head off humanitarian and philanthropic suspicion and criticism of his plans to take over the country (Zvobgo 1996). It appeared that, in turn, missionaries also required the support of secular influence as the evangelisation of African indigenous communities in the Matobo Hills and in much of the western part of the country was proving to be a failure (cf. Bhebe 1979).

Inextricably linked to the establishment of mission stations was the pursuit of gold and ivory which also resulted in the establishment of European settlements in lands close to or bordering the Matobo Hills. As indicated in this and in the previous chapters, the pursuit of gold, however, was based on speculation and fabulous stories of mineral wealth north of the Limpopo River. This, as discussed in the last chapter, partially contributed to the mini-gold rush.
at the beginning of the 20th century when hordes of European fortune seekers streamed north from South Africa in search of the second Witwatersrand. Claims were pegged and mines opened at all known gold fields of Zimbabwe but primarily around the Matobo Hills, Bulawayo, Gwanda, Shurugwi, Kwekwe, and other parts of the country (Ellert 1993).

Elephant hunters and traders were also part of the European incursion that settled around the Matobo Hills trading in oxwagons, glass beads, cloth, guns, and ammunition in exchange for gold and elephant tusks believed to have been abundant in Matabeleland. During archaeological excavations at Old Bulawayo between 1995 and 2000, thousands of glass beads, hundreds of rounds of ammunition, and other exotic goods were recovered which had been traded or given to the Ndebele state by the Europeans as gifts (Hughes 1995, 2000; Gaffney, Hughes and Gater 2000).

The influx of Europeans in Matabeleland soon created rivalry and clash of interests amongst themselves. This resulted in the signing of a series of dubious treaties between the Ndebele state and different European agents including the British South Africa Company (BSACo), which was chartered in Britain in 1889. The infamous treaty, which led to the invasion of the Ndebele state, was the concession that was negotiated and signed in 1888 by Charles Rudd who was Rhodes’ envoy. The signing of the concession was an element of Rhodes’ pursuit of the exclusive mining rights in Matabeleland, Mashonaland, and the rest of the country, and it was also motivated by his wish to annex these lands into the British empire as part of his imperial ambition for a Cape to Cairo railway and a telegraph line (Fripp and Hiller 1949; Stocker 1979). A detailed discussion of the Rudd Concession, however, is beyond the scope of this study; it suffices to say that its signing paved the way for Europeans to occupy the country. However, it was after Mashonaland was initially conquered by a European volunteer force known as the Pioneer Column organised by Rhodes in South Africa when the dominant Ndebele state was fought and defeated in 1893 that the colonisation of the country was completed (Ransford 1968; Child 1968; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009a, 2009b). For the services rendered, each pioneer was promised 3 000 acres (12 km²) of land and 15 mining claims. Empowered by the Rudd Concession, which gave Rhodes rights to mining and administration, the Europeans began to parcel out land to each other around the Matobo Hills and the rest of the country. The appropriation of land in the Matobo Hills was partially based on the power of the promises made to the Pioneers by Rhodes and also on dubious concessions signed between the Ndebele state and the Europeans (Fisher 2010). By 1900, most of the land around the Matobo Hills had been allocated, although some of it was never occupied (Ranger 1996). The narrative in the next chapter will show how the Europeans then enjoyed unfettered rights to introduce new management practices in the Matobo Hills which were based on western concepts of administration and conservation of landscapes.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, it is clear that the reconstruction of the cultural identity of the Matobo Hills is not an easy task. This is because the Hills have been continuously inhabited by various indigenous communities beginning in the Late Stone Age right to the present. This is further complicated by the fact that the relations of the indigenous communities that are linked to the Matobo Hills go beyond the World Heritage Site, the state, and other administrative boundaries. As a result of the intricate and long history of settlement, movement, and influx of different communities in the Matobo Hills and the region in which they are located, it is difficult to differentiate between indigenous and non-indigenous communities that may or may not be associated with this world heritage cultural landscape. This means that the traditional conservation practices that may have existed or that still survive in the Matobo Hills may not have been created by a single indigenous community but were a product of the different communities that have inhabited the cultural landscape at different times in the past.

As shown in this chapter, the communities of Matobo are all indigenous to the area despite their different dates of arrival or inhabitant of the Hills. Except for the hunter-gatherer communities whose departure from the Matobo Hills has remained a mystery, all
of the existing indigenous communities have the right to claim indigeneity and ownership of the cultural landscape. However, the main reasons for the absence of ownership claims of the Matobo Hills by the hunter-gatherer communities is that there are currently no known existing descendants that are historically associated with the Matobo Hills. In addition, the contemporary groups who are believed to have been the descendants of the Late Stone Age hunter-gatherers are a very marginal ethno-social group in Zimbabwe and in other southern African countries. They cannot effectively articulate claims and entitlements to the Matobo area either as a cultural heritagescape and a homeland. Although this is the case, the beliefs and practices of all of the indigenous communities that are associated with the Matobo Hills are likely to have changed over the millennia following the contact of the communities in the area. Given the existence of various local indigenous communities that have an attachment with the Hills, the management of this world heritage cultural landscape, therefore, must be understood through multiple voices, meanings, and practices.