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7. Perspectives of Local Indigenous Communities

Introduction

Chapter 1 explains why the category of world heritage cultural landscapes was adopted by the World Heritage Committee in 1992. It also discusses that, subsequent to the acceptance, several archaeologists and heritage managers began to contend that several world heritage management documents ignore other social and existing values that may be important within these areas. As indicated, these scholars went on to argue that local indigenous communities should be involved in the management of cultural landscapes and that some of their traditional conservation practices should be considered in the management ethos of these areas. Questions that arise from these proposals include: Is it possible to bring traditional conservation practices back into the management of world heritage cultural landscapes, and especially in the Matobo Hills where it has been evidenced that they were disregarded during the colonial period and further ignored during the post colonial period when the government began to impose its own management approaches as well? Can local indigenous communities be successfully involved in the management of cultural landscapes such as the Matobo Hills in which there are other actors who conceivably have competing interests in the cultural landscape? Is it possible to bring traditional conservation practices back into a cultural landscape where social and other values are always shifting and where there are official laws which already govern the area?

The above questions were answered using data collected in the field and by presenting the opinions and experiences of the local indigenous communities in the Matobo Hills. The previous chapter demonstrated that traditional conservation practices are the defining elements of the local indigenous communities’ ethos and world view in the world heritage cultural landscape. It is, therefore, prudent in this chapter to present their views and experiences on the suggestion that traditional conservation practices should be considered in the management of the world heritage cultural landscape and that they should be involved in its management as local indigenous communities. In my view, this is important because it is the local indigenous peoples themselves who can judge whether or not the idea could work as they understand the practices and the cultural landscape that require protection and management. In addition, it is also the local indigenous communities who put into practice the traditional conservation approaches of managing the Matobo Hills.

As will be discussed in the chapter, the views of the local indigenous communities are based on their experiences, knowledge, dilemmas, and wishes of living in the Matobo Hills and of managing their part in it. In many ways, the chapter also reflects on the socio-politics and religious ideologies of the area which is interwoven in a setting of conflicting meanings, ownership, interests, and administration of the cultural landscape. As will be discussed further in the chapter, the question of bringing traditional conservation practices back into the Matobo Hills remains inseparable from the welfare, socio-politics, and religious faiths of the local indigenous communities in the cultural landscape. The following information will explore each of the several thematic categories evidenced during the data analysis of interviews and discussions with the local descent people of the Matobo Hills.

Employment, Tourism and the Renaissance of Traditional Conservation Practices

When asked whether or not it is possible to return to some of their traditional conservation practices and involve them in the management of the Matobo Hills World Heritage Cultural Landscape, the reaction by informants was mixed. Several considered that the idea is likely to be embraced in the communal areas where traditional conservation practices are
commonly understood and valued while others believed that the idea may not work in the national park and in private commercial areas which are managed through formal state laws and by modern conservation approaches. Others, however, queried the ability of the practices to conserve the cultural landscape while some argued that it is no longer possible to bring back or maintain traditional conservation practices in the Hills as they are losing value and meaning due to a range of reasons, some of which will be explored in detail later in the chapter.

Tha Lunga, an employee at Amagugu International Heritage Center, stated that not all traditional conservation practices may need to be considered in the Hills. Lunga said that there are certain traditional conservation practices that are still surviving in the cultural landscape today, therefore, do not need to be revived. According to Lunga, only conservation practices that are declining and are believed to be in danger are the ones that may need to be considered, especially in the communal areas since that is where they are most relevant and where the majority of people who understand them are living. In places such as the national park and private commercial farms, as Lunga further argued, reintroduction of traditional conservation practices may be difficult as these areas are currently being managed or owned by people who do not understand the deep rooted methods of caring for the Matobo Hills (T. Lunga, pers. comm., April 7, 2014).

Fili Tshimba Ncube, a souvenir maker at Amagugu, like Lunga, viewed the return of traditional conservation practices in the national park and in private commercial farms as something that may be very difficult to achieve. He concurred with Lunga that the idea could probably work better in the communal areas where the majority of the indigenous people are living than in protected areas where the residents are not completely original to the Hills. He thus viewed the idea of reintroducing traditional conservation practices in the protected areas as a futile exercise since, according to him, employees in these areas are not necessarily engaged from the neighbouring communal areas, therefore, would not possess intimate traditional knowledge of protecting the cultural landscape. According to Ncube, workers in the national park and safari lodges as well as on private commercial farms will never respect or understand the traditional conservation practices of the Matobo Hills even if the practices would be returned to these protected areas. As Ncube argued, it may be a waste of time and energy to discuss such an exercise in these areas. The majority of workers, as he further argued, are not from the Matobo Hills, and they may not appreciate the genuine motive behind bringing back the traditional conservation practices in the sections of the Hills in which they work or involving them in their management (T. Ncube, pers. comm., April 7, 2014).

To bring about traditional conservation practices in the Matobo Hills, Sipho Dube, a villager from near Tshapo Business Center suggested that the ZPWMA, the NMMZ, and the private sector could employ some of their workers from the adjoining communal areas and encourage them to promote traditional practices of conservation. Dube went on to explain that this would keep the traditional conservation practices alive and commonly practiced and learned within the local indigenous communities and between generations since employees from the contiguous communal areas are familiar with and understand the local values of the Hills. According to Dube, employment can provide the local indigenous people with a sense of ownership of the Matobo Hills which they lost during the colonial period. For this reason, they could enthusiastically support the idea of being involved in the management of the Hills when they know that they will somehow benefit from their management (S. Dube, pers. comm., April 7, 2014). However, Gilbert Pwiti, a Professor of archaeology at the University of Zimbabwe, indicated that, although he agrees with the idea of employing site custodians from neighbouring communities, there is no policy that compels the ZPWMA or other public and private organisations to employ workers from communities that are adjacent to national parks in the country. Pwiti went on to make an important observation that this position differs from that of the NMMZ which has an unwritten understanding to employ site custodians from neighbouring communities in cases where some cultural heritage sites are located in the communal areas (G. Pwiti, pers. comm., August 6, 2014). Administratively, this idea works
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well for the NMMZ as the employees can work from their rural homes, and this gives them a sense of ownership of the cultural heritage sites which they will be caring for. Although this arrangement can be successfully implemented at some cultural heritage sites such as Great Zimbabwe where a number of the workers are employed from the adjoining local indigenous communities, the same cannot be applied in the whole of the Matobo Hills due to its size and the number of cultural heritage sites that may require traditional custodianship.

Considering this situation, a villager from Mazhayimbe commented that, as local indigenous communities, it will always be difficult for them to become employed in the national park and lodges or in the private commercial farms and push for their cultural practices in these portions of the Hills. The villager concluded that some parts of the Hills, especially the national park and private commercial farms, will never be theirs as they are owned by the government and certain individuals with power and money. Another villager from the same area remarked that the sections of the Hills that they feel to be truly theirs and where they have the autonomy to use traditional ways of conservation are only the communal lands.

Regarding the relationship between the national park, private commercial farms, hoteliers, and the local indigenous communities, Pathisa Nyathi said that the majority of people in the communal areas no longer have a sense of ownership of several sections of the Matobo Hills, especially the protected areas as they feel that they have continued to be disregarded by both the colonial and post colonial management systems. Nyathi argued that the idea of employing some of the workers from the surrounding communities so that they could promote traditional conservation practices in the Hills is certainly not going to change the long held view by the ZPWMA authorities that the local indigenous communities are trespassers and poachers. As Nyathi further argued, since the proclamation of the Hills as a World Heritage Site in 2003, the ZPWMA has continued to administer its own affairs independently from the communal areas and the commercial farms. According to Nyathi, contrary to the local indigenous communities’ expectations that the proclamation of the Hills as a World Heritage Site would bring the park, private commercial farms, and the communal areas together and promote tourism in the area, this has not happened (P. Nyathi, pers. comm., March 10, 2014).

Concurring with Nyathi, a villager selling souvenirs at the foothills of Silozwane Mountain said that tourism begins and ends in the national park. According to the villager, there is no tourism evidenced in the communal areas of the Matobo Hills. A member of the Cecil John Rhodes Campfire Community Cultural Village attributed the failure of their project to low tourism arrivals in the Lushumbe communal area. She said that few tourists would choose to spend much of their recreational time in the national park instead of in the communal areas. The member also explained that since few tourists venture into the communal areas, the development of the project that they had hoped to expand through revenue generated from tourism has also been affected. The villager further stated that they had hoped to promote tourism in their communal area by opening to tourists a few rock art sites that are close to the cultural village but this did not help them much. As a way of promoting tourism in the communal areas, the Amagugu International Heritage Center has actually opened a rock art site that is less than one kilometer from Tshapo Township (Fig. 7.1). A female informant selling souvenirs at EJikweni complained that their engagement in the tourism business has always been that of mere souvenir sellers, and they do not make much money by selling their objects of art to tourists.

Fig. 7.1 A rock art site near Tshapo Business Center opened to encourage tourism in the communal areas of the Matobo Hills (Photo by Author).
Other informant souvenir sellers at EJikweni, however, attributed this to diminished tourism in the Matobo Hills in recent years. They indicated that, in the past, they had many tourists coming to the Hills. They also said that there are few international tourists who visit the Matobo Hills and that most of the tourists they receive are local, and these tourists do not purchase very many of their works of art.

A study of visitor trends in the Matobo Hills shows that tourists from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region and beyond began to decline from about 2004 and reached the lowest levels between 2005 and 2009 (Fig. 7.2). Low tourism in the Matobo Hills during this period could be attributed to the unfavorable publicity of the country following the imposition of sanctions and the subsequent collapse of the economy. However, tourism began to improve again from about 2009, perhaps in part as a result of the formation of a Zimbabwean Unity Government after the disputed elections of 2008 between ZANU PF and the opposition parties.

In the Lushumbe area, informants were also concerned that, over the years, tourists who visit the communal areas are those that want to avoid paying park entry fees. The informants, however, blamed tour operators who they contend organise “cultural tours” and divert tourists from the park to communal areas where entry fees are not charged (see also Chronicle, 6 September 1999). One informant from the area believed that Tour Operators who organise cultural tours in their communal areas make money. The informant also said that the Tour Operators never offer anyone money or help promote traditional conservation practices even though their business is thriving on the conservation of the cultural landscape. The activities of tour operators were also condemned by Gavin Stephens, Chairman of the Matobo Conservation Society and a Bulawayo conservationist, during a course on the Conservation and Management of Rock Art Sites in Southern Africa (COMRASA) which was held in the Hills from July to August 1999 (cf. Deacon 2006). According to Stephens, the uncontrolled visits by tour operators in the communal areas damage important archaeological deposits and rock paintings in the caves (Chronicle, 6 September 1999).

A female informant selling souvenirs at Silozwane Cave, which is one of the archaeological sites visited most often by tourists outside the park, explained that, as local indigenous communities in the Matobo Hills, they have no authority to stop tour operators from bringing tourists to the cave or to care for it with their traditional conservation practices since, by law, the cave does not belong to them (Fig. 7.3). The informant also stated that they have no authority to charge entrance fees at the site even though the cave is located in their village. The informant further said that their interest is only to sell souvenirs to tourists who visit the site and not look after the cave using traditional conservation practices even though they are aware that it was once used by their elders as a rain making shrine. A full moon ceremony at the cave is indicated to have been last witnessed in approximately 1942, and it continued to be used as a shrine until about 1950 (Murray 2013; see also Ranger 1999, 20).

**REVENUE GENERATION, DEVELOPMENT OF THE MATOBO DISTRICT AND THE SUPPORT OF TOURISM**

In the late 1990s, a local member of parliament, Ananias Nyathi, began to campaign that the Matobo Rural District Council should receive a percentage of the annual earnings from the park and from the Rhodes Matopos estates in order to fund development projects in the district. Lobbying for
the returns, Ananias Nyathi argued that revenue generated from these parts of the Hills should benefit the local indigenous communities as compensation for their loss of ancestral lands and shrines during the colonial period (Sunday News, 13 September 1998). Following the campaign, the Chief Executive Officer of the Matobo Rural District Council instructed Silozwe villagers to charge entrance fees at the Silozwane rock art site so that they could raise funds for developing their district. The directive was, however, immediately opposed by the Executive Director of the NMMZ who responded through a local newspaper and warned that revenue collection from tourists visiting the archaeological site was unlawful. The Executive Director also cautioned that charging entrance fees at the cave by the villagers was a violation of the NMMZ Act which is the only organisation authorised to collect entrance fees at such sites. For fear of being arrested, the villagers halted charging entrance fees at Silozwane Cave, but they continued to sell souvenirs to tourists who visited the site. Knowing that their attempts to benefit from the cave had failed, several local indigenous communities began to contest the threats of the removal of Rhodes’ grave from World’s View Hill contending that this would economically disadvantage them as the tourists who buy their souvenirs would stop coming to the park (Sunday News, 6 September 1998).

During the late 1990s, a Harare based pressure group called Sangano Munhumutapa and led by Lawrence Chakaredza had threatened to exhume Rhodes’ remains and throw them in the Zambezi River if the British would not come and take them away (Muringaniza 2002). During the crusade to dig up the grave, Chakaredza argued that the presence of Rhodes’ remains in Matobo Hills was disrespectful to ancestors who were stripped of their political, economic, and social dignity during the colonial period (Sunday News, 13 December 1998). He also argued that, by removing the grave, he was seeking to restore the Hill to its former glory as a traditional shrine for the local indigenous people of the
Matobo Hills. To achieve his objective, Lawrence Chakaredza even sought the support of ZANU PF politicians to remove Rhodes’ grave from the Matobo Hills (Maylam 2005). The attempt by Chakaredza to remove Rhodes’ grave from Malindidzimu Hill, which is believed to have been sacred, was ironically contested by villagers mostly from Silozwane and Gulati whose cultural practices he wanted to defend. Mloyiswa Moyo from Silozwane, who vividly recalled the 1951 land evictions, used a combination of economic and weather explanations to contest the removal of Rhodes’ grave from the Matobo Hills. He argued that the Matobo Hills area is arid and rainfall is erratic, therefore, there is little opportunity to benefit from the Hills. Moyo further argued that they depend on selling sculptures, baskets, mats, and wall hangings to tourists who visit the grave. Moyo also went on to explain that his family had survived on tourism through selling souvenirs in the park for nearly 30 years (Sunday News, 6 September 1998). Keli Ndlovu from Gulati also felt that, as local indigenous communities of the area, they should be consulted first on such matters since they depend on the grave for their survival in the Hills (Sunday News, 6 September 1998). Aware that local indigenous communities benefit from tourists who visit the grave, the Governor of Matabeleland South Province, Stephen Nkomo, also objected to its removal, arguing that Chakaredza should not fight a war which is not his and that he should concentrate on the politics of Mashonaland where he comes from. The Executive Director of the NMMZ further warned that, if Chakaredza did go ahead and remove Rhodes’ grave from the Matobo Hills, he would be arrested as it is fully protected by the law (Sunday News, 6 September 1998; Maylam 2005).

The struggle by Chakaredza to exhume Rhodes’ bones from the Matobo Hills appears to have ended when President Robert Mugabe publicly supported its preservation during the 14th General Assembly and Scientific Symposium of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in Victoria Falls in 2003. During his keynote address, President Mugabe encouraged European foreign delegates to take the opportunity of the conference and travel to the Matobo Hills to see how the country is caring for the grave. “But of course you have to pay in order to see it,” said President Mugabe, “…and that way, he [Rhodes] would be paying for the sins he committed to this country” (see also Ranger 2004).

It would seem, however, that the call to remove Rhodes’ grave from the Matobo Hills did not end with Chakaredza. The Zimbabwean liberation war veterans also continued to push for the removal of the grave, blaming it for the lack of rain in the cultural landscape. Demands to remove Rhodes’ grave from the Matobo Hills appears to have also been recently rekindled following the insistence by Cape Town University students in South Africa to remove Rhodes’ statue from the Company’s Garden, the heritage site where it was erected in 1908. On a recent visit to South Africa, President Mugabe also appeared to be against the idea to remove Rhodes’ grave when he scornfully but diplomatically told the South Africans that “We are looking after the corpse. You have the statue of him,” Mugabe said. “I don’t know what you think we should do-dig him up? Perhaps his spirit might rise again.” Although Rhodes’ grave has survived in the Matobo Hills in Zimbabwe, in South Africa, the University of Cape Town eventually relented to student demands and removed the memorial of the prominent British imperialist.

Several local indigenous communities were also concerned that they have never benefited from the CAMPFIRE project in the Matobo Hills. They argued that they never had the opportunity to manage wildlife resources in the Hills as was originally planned. A villager remarked that the project has never quite been realised in the Matobo Hills because there is not much wildlife in the park when compared to Hwange or Zambezi national park. The failure of the CAMPFIRE project in the Matobo Hills was also caused by several other factors. The economic collapse in Zimbabwe and the withdrawal of the donor funds following the land reform programme since 2000 has greatly affected the effectiveness of CAMPFIRE projects in the country including the once successful Mahenye CAMPFIRE project in south eastern Zimbabwe along the border with Mozambique (see Balint and Mashinya 2006; Gandiwa, et al. 2013). Local governance failure also contributed to the collapse of the CAMPFIRE project in the Matobo Hills.
SHARING OF FINANCIAL BENEFITS

Mark Ncube, a former archivist in Bulawayo and also a former member of the Matobo Conservation Society, suggested that, if local indigenous communities cannot directly benefit from cultural heritage sites and if benefiting from them could positively influence the return of traditional conservation practices, there may be a need to introduce a Community Share Ownership Trust (CSOT) in the Matobo Hills (M. Ncube, pers. comm., March 13, 2014). The CSOT suggested by Mark Ncube is a concept that was introduced by the Zimbabwean Government in 2011 through the Ministry of Youth, Indigenisation, and Economic Empowerment. The idea behind the introduction of the CSOT is that the communities must have a share of the commercial exploitation of natural resources, including minerals, that occurs in their ancestral lands. The CSOT was introduced in addition to the Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act which now compels foreign owned companies, especially mining companies operating in Zimbabwe, to relinquish a 51 percent stake to locals with at least 10 percent spared for the local indigenous communities in which the companies operate. Money accruing to the scheme from the mining companies is then expected to be used for the provision of social and economic infrastructure in accordance with the priorities of the local indigenous communities concerned (Matsa and Masimbiti 2014).

The establishment of the CSOT in the mining sector was based on the historical observation that mineral resources had not benefited the local indigenous people in the communal areas wherein foreign companies operate. Launching the Mhondoro-Ngezi, Chegutu-Zvimba Trust in central north-west Zimbabwe, President Mugabe lamented the exploitation of resources by foreign mining companies with little benefits accruing to the communities (Guvamatanga 2014). “Zimbabwe is well endowed with natural resources that are of a finite nature, particularly in the mining sector. These natural resources have, over the years, been exploited largely for the benefit of multinational corporations and other foreign business entities,” said President Mugabe. He went on to argue that there is no meaningful revenue accrued by the local authorities responsible in these areas, let alone the vast majority who fall under the traditional leadership in the communal and resettlement areas.

Mark Ncube’s idea to introduce a CSOT in the Matobo Hills is, in fact, based on the long observation that revenue generated in the park, and particularly from archaeological sites, has never really made its way back to the local indigenous communities to compensate them for the loss of their ancestral lands and shrines during the land evictions of the 1950s and 1960s. Consequently, several informants that I interviewed accepted it as true that revenue generated in the park merely benefits the ZPWMA, the NMMZ, and the private sector companies that mostly manage lodges and conduct tour guides in the cultural landscape.

However, the question to answer is that, if part of the money generated by these organisations does not benefit the local indigenous communities of the Matobo Hills, where does it go? An informant in the ZPWMA stated that their organisation no longer depends on government funds for conservation in all of its national parks throughout the country. This followed the reorganisation of the ZPWMA in 2004 from a department to an authority, therefore, it operates on a profit making basis and fund its own operations. Originally, the ZPWMA was the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management and all of its operations were largely funded by the government. The establishment of the authority was a response by the government to the negative macro economic growth, high inflation, high unemployment, massive foreign exchange shortages, and other economic ills that were afflicting the economy subsequent to the sanctions that were imposed on the country by the European Union countries and the United States of America. The sanctions were imposed on the country as a punitive method of forcing the Zimbabwean Government to stop what they regarded as an unwarranted land reform programme and human rights abuses during elections. The sanctions, however, strained the funding for agriculture, health, education, archaeological resources, tourism, and other sectors of the economy (Murimbika and Moyo 2008; Makuva and Makuva 2013; Makuva 2014).
As a result of sanctions, the Zimbabwean government was required to critically re-examine the performance of some of its state owned enterprises, and it established that several of them were experiencing losses and were heavily draining the fiscus. It was thus decided as one of the turn around strategies to reorganise some parastatals and convert them to authorities so that they would operate on a profit making basis. Following this exercise, the ZPWMA is now retaining revenue and funding operations such as the maintenance of roads, construction of lodges, and supplies for rangers who patrol the parks. According to the informant, this leaves the park with very little money that can be given to the local indigenous communities as CSOT.

An NMMZ informant indicated that they collect an average of US$4500.00 per month in the Matobo Hills which they remit together with revenue they collect at the Natural History Museum to their head office in Harare. The staff informant also stated that they retain only 40% of the total amount they submit to their head office for conservation and other administrative requirements. The NMMZ, like the ZPWMA, is also no longer supported by the government for its operations and conservation obligations. However, the informant further said that, as a result of the current difficult economic times, there is very little that can be spared for local indigenous communities as contribution to the idea of the CSOT.

Apart from the ZPWMA and the NMMZ, there are also a number of private players in the Matobo Hills that could contribute to the idea of the CSOT and these include lodges, tour operators, and commercial farmers. According to Ranger (1999, 271), a number of lodges that were originally non-indigineous owned farms and previously thriving as agricultural or grazing units are now blossoming forth as safari lodges. As Ranger further argued, although the private sector arranges “cultural village trips” and even though the farms were originally intended for exploitation rather than the preservation of the environment, they now, by and large, represent the Matobo Hills as a natural landscape and exploit this value for profit making.

Well known private players include the Matobo Conservation Society which was founded in 1993 and whose objective is to foster all natural and cultural aspects of conservation in the Matobo Hills and the Dambari Wildlife Trust established in 1997 whose objective is to conduct research, outreach, and conservation programmes for three primary groups of animals, specifically: small African antelopes and carnivores-primarily cheetahs, and the rhinoceros. Membership of these associations is open to any person with an interest in the conservation of the Matobo Hills. Other associations with branches in Bulawayo include Birdlife Zimbabwe, Wildlife and Environment Zimbabwe, and the Aloe, Cactus and Succulent Society of Zimbabwe.

Although the general objectives of the private sector, and specifically conservation associations, is to support the conservation of both the natural and cultural attributes of the Matobo Hills, the discussions that I had with informants indicate that their activities are not supportive of traditional conservation practices. First, I observed during fieldwork that the majority of local indigenous people in the Matobo Hills are not aware of the existence of these associations and, secondly, that there are no representatives of local indigenous people in the associations. For instance, since it was established, the membership of the Matobo Conservation Society has largely remained comprised of non-indigenous people mostly from the city of Bulawayo.

When I interviewed Mark Neube about his opinion regarding the membership of the Matobo Conservation Society, he strongly criticised it for remaining primarily non-indigenous in its composition of members. He argued that the broad objective of the Matobo Conservation Society and of other associations cannot be realised if they continue to ignore the local indigenous communities whose ancestral lands they want to conserve. He also asked how the Society can seek to take care of the communal areas and the park without involving the local descent communities of the area (M. Neube, pers. comm., March 13, 2014).

An informant who is also a member of the Matobo Conservation Society, however, viewed the issue
differently when he said that he does not see any problem with the composition of the Society whereby membership is largely non-indigenous. He argued that, if there are local indigenous people in the communal areas who are interested in joining the Society, they should look for it and join since its membership is open to anyone with an interest in the conservation of the cultural landscape. However, perhaps it is the Society that should introduce itself to the local indigenous people so that they could confidently join it. This makes sense considering that it is the Society that has volunteered to help the communal areas conserve the natural and cultural values of the Matobo Hills and not the other way around.

Gavin Stephens acknowledged the unrepresented local indigenous ideas of conservation in the Matobo Conservation Society. He attributed this problem to the lack of resources to popularise the Society in the communal areas of the Matobo Hills. He also pointed out that, in as much as he would like communal people to join the Society, it is difficult to convince them since there are no tangible benefits that are associated with membership. Stephens however, went on to argue that local indigenous people are welcome if they want to join, however, they should not join with the idea of monetary benefits in mind as the Society does not have money (G. Stephens, pers. comm., August 8, 2014).

Although the Matobo Conservation Society has taken major strides to promote the Matobo Hills as a world heritage cultural landscape by erecting world heritage sign posts, other conservation associations have generally tended to limit and confine their activities to research in the national park. However, organisations such as hoteliers consider that, since they pay fees to operate in the Matobo Hills, it is the duty of the government through the ZPWMA and the NMMZ to retain a portion of the revenue generated by these groups in the park to support the idea of CSOT.

In 1995, the deputy minister of Environment and Tourism, Chindori Chininga, under which the ZPWMA belonged at that time, complained that his ministry did not have information about the operations of the independent conservation societies and trusts which source funds in the name of conservation in the Matobo Hills but ultimately use the money for other purposes. However, he further encouraged private players to be transparent with regards to funds which they raise for conservation in the cultural landscape (Chronicle, 11 November 1995). Peter Mundy, a Professor of Forest Resources and Wildlife Management at the University of Science and Technology and former Principal Ecologist in the Matobo National Park, argued that it is in the interest of the private sectors that operate within the Matobo Hills to support the idea of bringing back traditional conservation practices and of involving local indigenous communities in their management as their business largely thrives on these values (P. Mundy, pers. comm., June 6, 2014).

RECLAIMING OF ANCESTRAL LANDS

Given the above struggles to control and benefit from cultural heritage sites, several informants wondered how it could be possible to return to traditional conservation practices in the Hills and be involved in their management when attempting to retain their ancestral lands had failed. The informants stated that local indigenous people had expected that, upon independence, they would return to their ancestral lands where they would continue to look after the Hills with their traditional conservation practices. The informants also said that one of the main reasons why the local indigenous people supported the liberation struggle in the Matobo Hills was to reclaim their ancestral lands that were taken away from them during the colonial period. The informants further indicated that, when they received independence, they were betrayed by their own leaders who denied them a chance to return to their ancestral lands and to manage them through their traditional conservation practices.

From the early 1980s to the late 1990s, the local indigenous communities in the Matobo Hills attempted to return to some sections of the national park and commercial farms where they had hoped to continue with their traditional ways of living. According to Ranger (1999), they began by initiating different combinations of official and unofficial ways of repossessing their lost ancestral lands. Ranger
writes that, soon after independence, village heads (known as kraal heads during the colonial period) in Gulati sent a memorandum to the warden of the park explaining that a large area of the park east of the Mtshelele River was their ancestral land and should be returned to them. This request was made based on the knowledge that, previously, additional local indigenous people’s ancestral land was granted to the park. Ranger also writes that, informally, the local indigenous communities began to cut timber indiscriminately, poach and snare animals, and graze their livestock in the peripheral sections of non-indigenous commercial farms and the park.

Despite efforts by local indigenous communities to reclaim their ancestral lands, the position of the new Zimbabwean government was that no resettlement would be allowed in the park or on the commercial farms. As Ranger further writes, the political tensions between ZAPU and ZANU which were fueled by the South African agents (see Scarnecchia 2011), the fighting between ex-ZIPRA and ex-ZANLA soldiers, the emergence of armed dissidents in Matabeleland and the huge deployment of state forces to quell dissidents, and the attacks on local indigenous people by the Fifth Brigade army, the CIO, and police resulted in no development in the Matobo Hills between 1982 and 1988. During this period, a number of non-indigenous farmers who had retained farms in the Hills after independence were killed. For security reasons, however, others abandoned their farms south of the Hills, and the farms were subsequently taken over by the government. Fearing for their own safety also ended any hopes that the local descent communities had of reclaiming their ancestral lands and of restoring traditional conservation practices in the cultural landscape (Ranger 1999).

Muzi Khumalo vividly remembered that, as local descent people, they feared attempting to reclaim their ancestral lands in the Matobo Hills (M. Khumalo, pers. comm., August 15, 2014). The dissidents would either harass or kill villagers who would not support them, therefore, no one wanted to live on farms that were close to the national park and risk the fury of either the dissidents or of the government security agents who had interpreted local demands for ancestral lands as subversive (Alexander 1991). It was safer to continue living in the communal lands together with other villagers. Even after independence, some local indigenous people did not wish to move back to their ancestral lands in the park and on commercial farms as they were now war weary. They wanted to remain where they had settled during the colonial period (M. Khumalo, pers. comm., August 15, 2014).

Surprisingly, even though the local indigenous communities in the Matobo Hills were reclaiming their ancestral lands, they were not interested in the resettlement programme, which was introduced in the country by the government in the early 1980s. The resettlement programme was a post colonial plan and an organised movement of rural people to state-acquired former commercial lands that were previously reserved for non-indigeneous farmers (Kinsey 1983; Geza 1986). The programme was focused on ensuring a more equitable racial distribution of land and extending the livelihood opportunities for the poorest communities, including the landless and those who were displaced during the colonial period. It was also aimed at reducing population pressure in the communal lands (Elliott, Kinsey and Kwesha 2006). The British had agreed at the Lancaster House Conference in 1979 to fund the land reform on a willing seller/willing buyer principle where non-indigeneous farmers who were unwilling to stay in the country could be bought out by funds provided by the British government through the Zimbabwe Government. The conference was organised to discuss how to reach an agreement on how to end the war of liberation in Zimbabwe as well as to craft a new constitution for the country.

The resettlement programme comprised Models, A, B, C and D. Model A involved intensive village settlements with individual allocations of arable land of five hectares per family and communal grazing areas allocated on the basis of a variable number of livestock units depending upon agro-ecological zone (Kinsey 1983). Model B involved the formation of enterprises to manage farms on a cooperative basis. Model C was based on the nucleus of a commercial estate while households had their own individual plots but acted as out-growers. Model D was intended for low rainfall areas in natural regions IV and V and
involved the use of ranches for grazing of the herds owned by communal people (Mudege 2008). Being in region IV, the Matobo Hills, therefore, was more suited for the Model D resettlement programme. Families settled in one of these models were required to renounce any land claim elsewhere in Zimbabwe. They were not given ownership of the land on which they were settled but were instead given permits covering residential and farm plots. In theory, these permits could be withdrawn if beneficiaries failed to follow the guidance of government appointed resettlement officers, who were teaching farmers how to farm, and adjudicated in cases of conflict between or among resettled people (Elliot, Kinsey and Kwesha 2006).

Due to the nature of its implementation, the resettlement programme did not address the plight of the Matobo Hills' local indigenous people who wanted to reclaim their original ancestral lands without any conditions attached so they could return to their traditional ways of living. Although a number of farms between the Matobo Hills and the southern communal areas had become available for resettlement, none of the resettlement models were successfully implemented in the Matobo Hills. As an alternative, it was decided that the land should be leased from the non-indigenous owners for five years at an annual rate of six per cent of an agreed valuation with an option for the government to buy it at the end of the five year period. Until that time, the land was to be managed by the Agricultural and Rural Development Authority (ARDA) (Ranger 1999, 252).

The conditions that were established for the resettlement were not popular among the local indigenous people of the Matobo Hills as they did not support the people being involved in the management of the cultural landscape and the return of traditional conservation practices in the Hills. The issue with the resettlement programme was that it discouraged unstructured settlements and attempts to revert to old practices of managing the Hills as was the case in communal areas (M. Moyo, pers. comm., August 15, 2014). Moyo also explained that the conditions of the resettlement programme were such that the resettlement areas were to be managed by leaders who were selected through democratic procedures. As Moyo further argued, the idea to return to traditional conservation practices, therefore, could not have succeeded since the popularly elected leaders did not have traditional knowledge of managing the resettlement areas. In addition, the composition of resettled people which incorporated people from ex-communal areas, ex-farm labourers, ex-urban workers, inter-provincial migrants, returning refugees from neighbouring countries, and others (see Geza 1986) meant that, with the influx of new inhabitants, the remaining traditional conservation practices in the Matobo Hills were also going to be adulterated.

In 1987, a unity accord that ended political tensions between ZANU and ZAPU was signed, and this once again brought peace to the Matobo Hills and the rest of the Matabeleland region. Soon after the unity accord, the local indigenous people began to make fresh demands to reclaim some of their ancestral lands. In reclaiming their ancestral lands, they also began to argue that the social use of the park should be negotiated and that the government should buy farms which they should give to the indigenous people without any conditions attached. Earlier, the failure of the resettlement programme in the Matobo Hills was also a result of the appropriation of 22 ARDA farms by top government officials and business people which also denied the local indigenous people a chance to reclaim their ancestral lands and to return to their traditional ways of managing the area (Chikuhwa 2006).

This led, in 1995, to a protest by more than 900 members of a pressure group called Inqama who moved on to the Honeydale and Matopo Vale estates which had been purchased by top government officials. The group demanded that the estates be given to them as the ancestral land was, in actual fact, their heritage. The land lay adjacent to the Matobo Research Station and to the Gulati communal lands. The farms had been sold to top government officials by the Chennells family. The Chennells family had lived at Three Sisters farm for free, producing crops such as oats, lucerne, potatoes and beans. The family was also involved in dairy farming (Nobbs 1924). The Inqama people, which claimed 4000 members at
that time and was led by Jonathan Moyo, a Bulawayo accountant, were arrested and fined ZS30 each for demanding their ancestral land back (Ranger 1999). In October 1996, another group of 200 local indigenous people who had lost confidence in the government sponsored resettlement programme decided to resettle on the idle Lucydale farm which is adjacent to the Matobo Research Station. Some families were, as a result, eventually allowed to reside in the south western section of the farm. Following the occupation of Lucydale farm, Chikuhwa (2006, 12) remarked that the anger of the local indigenous communities was no longer only targeted at addressing the colonial injustice of land appropriation but was also now targeted at senior government officials who had begun to seize farms acquired by the state for resettlement purposes.

Two years later, in 1998, more than 100 Inqama people led by Faniya Masuku also unsuccessfully attempted to occupy a section of Sauersdale farm where the Mzilikazi Memorial and Grave and Old Bulawayo cultural heritage sites are located, arguing that it is their ancestral land (Fig. 7.4). Before the 1896/7 war, the Inqama regiment had lived along the northern edges of the Matobo Hills, and this area had come to be known as Inqama (Ranger 1999). “We have come back to our ancestral homes where our forefathers were unfairly evicted by the white people. We have old people among us who can still pin-point where their homesteads were located, which proves wrong all assertions that there was never any settlement of people here,” announced Faniya Masuku. The Inqama people also said that, by settling in the Sauersdale block, they would take on the responsibility of reviving local customs of managing the area (Sunday News, 18 July 1998). The majority of people who had come to settle in the section of Sauersdale farm were non-local descent communities from Tsholotsho and Nkayi while others were local descent communities from the communal areas of the Matobo Hills themselves. After three months, approximately 25 local indigenous people who had remained in the farm were removed by Stephen Nkomo who told them to go back to their respective districts and wait for the government to properly allocate them land. To remove the Inqama people from Sauersdale, the Governor was accompanied by officials from the ZPWMA, the Matopos Research Station, the police, and the Matobo District Administrator, Stanley Bhebhe (Chronicle, 15 October 1998).

It is surprising that local indigenous communities in the Matobo Hills did not attempt to reclaim their ancestral land during the so called “fast track” land reform programme in Zimbabwe. Beginning in early 2000, the Zimbabwean government embarked on a compulsory fast track acquisition of non-indigenous owned farms and redistributed them to “landless” Zimbabweans. The fast track land reform programme was most likely a direct response to the British government which had reneged on funding the earlier resettlement programme as was agreed at the Lancaster house conference (Welz 2013). However, this land reform initiative could have been a populist move that was designed to strengthen the support of ZANU PF among the poor rural people (Balint and Mashinya 2006).

Just as with the organised resettlement programme before it, the fast track land reform programme purported to redress and complete the settler-colonial land dispossession and the agrarian inequalities that the minority government had created during the colonial era (Moyo 2013). The reasons why the local indigenous communities in the Matobo Hills did not take the opportunity to reclaim their ancestral lands were very difficult to obtain during the fieldwork as informants were not willing to discuss the subject. However, it could have been that they did not want to be part of the controversial land reform programme.
which they believed was being used by the ZANU PF government to garner support during the 2002 and 2008 elections. Chief Masuku stated that only four families, including his, moved from Natisa and settled in the south east portion of Westacre Creek farm (Chief Masuku, pers. comm., March 7, 2015). Chief Masuku settled between the Matopos Dam and Mthwakazi Township on a farm that was previously owned by Charles Chenole, a non-indigineous dairy farmer. The chief’s move from Natisa to the farm, however, was criticised by some of the informants that I interviewed who indicated that he ran away from leading his people and from his duties of protecting the Hills using traditional conservation ways. They also said that he had transformed himself into a city chief by moving close to Bulawayo.

It is interesting to note that, prior to the fast track land reform programme, the local indigenous communities who were organising themselves to reclaim their ancestral lands did so without much support from their traditional chiefs. The non-involvement of traditional chiefs in reclaiming ancestral lands in the Matobo Hills was cited by many informants during the interviews as one of several factors that make the idea to reintroduce traditional conservation practices and their involvement in the management of the cultural landscape problematic. The informants largely attributed this problem to the loss of authority by some traditional leaders in the Matobo Hills. In Zimbabwe, as in much of southern Africa, the traditional structure of leadership had the head chief as the leader of the entire communal area and a headman (sub-chief) followed by the village head. The headman would control a clan or lineage with different clans making up an ethnic group while the village head controlled an extended family or a village comprising close blood related people (Mukamuri, Campbell and Kowero 2003). He would also assist the chief to carry out his duties and had identical powers in many respects which he exercised within the ethnic group. Similarly, village heads assisted the headmen and chiefs. With the advent of colonialism, the organisation of traditional chiefs began to be intensely interfered with, and this affected the protection of cultural landscapes with traditional conservation practices. In the Matobo Hills, the breakdown of traditional authority began during the colonial period as a result of political interference on the way chiefs were selected. Native Commissioners began to assume the duty of selecting and appointing traditional chiefs who supported the colonial system of administration. They also began to remunerate them so that they continue to pay allegiance to the colonial government. The selected chiefs, however, were not customarily appropriate for the new positions that they were now holding. This has, according to the informants I interviewed, resulted in the loss of legitimacy of several traditional leaders in the cultural landscape (Bhebe 1989).

Following the 1896-7 war, the colonial authorities feared that another war might break out in the Matobo Hills if the traditional chiefs were permitted to reorganise their military regiments and followers. To avert this threat, the Native Commissioners began to take it upon themselves to select and appoint...
traditional leaders and particularly chiefs. The colonial administrators also began to split Ndebele regimental units so that the Matobo Hills area could be more governable. They did this by substituting the pre-colonial chiefs with new ones who could hold both civil and criminal courts and who could collect court fees from their subjects.

According to Ranger, four Ngameni influential men from the Wenlock ranch, specifically Dhliso Mathema, Nkonkobela Khumalo, Mtuwani Dlodlo, and Hluganiso, were all appointed as new chiefs in March 1897. During the reign of Lobengula, all of the four men had played important roles. Dhliso was active in the northern part of the Hills during the 1896-7 fighting while Hluganiso was active in the eastern part. Nkonkobela was a successful military commander while Mtuwani was believed to possess a special association with the shrines. To pacify them, upon their appointment as chiefs, Hluganiso, Nkonkobela, and Mtuwani began to be paid a monthly subsidy of £2 while Dhliso’s salary was designated at £5 as he was promoted to the position of the head chief for the entire Matobo Hills district. However, Dhliso’s remuneration was later reduced to £3 as he did not want to be involved in the collection of taxes, sending his people out to European farms and to mines as labourers, nor to disarm them after the 1896-7 war (Ranger 1999).

Msindo (2012, 72-73) who examined the Kalanga chieftaincy in the western precincts of the Matobo Hills writes that there were several other Ndebele chiefs who were promoted in lieu of Kalanga chiefs. According to Msindo, these chiefs include Gampu of Igabha, Mpini Ndiweni of Usaba (Zimnyama), and Sindisa Mpofu of the Mpande regiment. As a result of their elevation, the Kalanga chiefs began to be marginalised and were now required to report to the government through the Ndebele chiefs. Msindo also writes that Gampu Sithole, who collaborated with the BSACo in the 1896-97 war, was immediately promoted to become head chief of the Bulilima Mangwe district and began to be paid a subsidy of £5 per month. According to Msindo, the colonial authorities began to install more Ndebele chiefs such as Ngazi (Wasi), Mbanbeleli, Mahlathini, and Mazwi whose area later became part of the Bulawayo district. Loyal Kalanga chiefs such as Tategulu, Nkolomana (Nyiga), Magama, Malaba, Luswina (Tjingababili) Mate, and Sangulube were also recognised. Msindo further argued that several customarily important pre-colonial Kalanga chiefs, some of which even had more followers and villages than their appointed counterparts, were never officially recognised. These chiefs include Mengwe, Nswazwi, Matundume, Bango, Gonde Tshuma, Mninigau (Hikwa), Mlevu, Soluswe (Solusi), Sinete, Nkaki, Langabi (Langapi), and Sitshungulwana of Mahlabatini.

The colonial authorities however, began to introduce administrative structures and legislative laws that reduced the position of traditional chiefs to that of state officials. For instance, after the power to allocate land was usurped by the Europeans during the early years of colonialism, this authority was only returned to selected chiefs through the enactment of the Tribal Trust Lands Act of 1967. Powers to try some cases were also returned to the selected chiefs through the Tribal Courts Act of 1969 while they were also granted executive and administrative powers through the African Councils Act (Amended) of 1973 (Weinrich 1973; Chatiza 2010).

The selection and installation of chiefs by the colonial authorities created a host of problems for other local indigenous communities in the Matobo Hills area, especially for the Nyubi and the Kalanga people who were already identified with and paying allegiance to their own customarily selected traditional chiefs. The first issue was that this created an impression that the Ndebele chiefs were the rightful rulers of the entire Matobo area, and the Kalanga, Nyubi, and other local indigenous communities were subordinates who should recognise their authority (Msindo 2010, 2012). The second problem was that the appointed Ndebele chiefs began to promote a broad Ndebele identity which was sustained by deliberately balancing the forces of tradition and modernity in the cultural landscape (Ranger 1999). Nonetheless, in a cultural landscape where chieftainship was being redefined and the local indigenous people were being forced to move from the park into newly established communal areas, the popularity of the appointed chiefs, as Msindo (2012) argued, would have significantly depended on the extent to which
they protected their people against a repressive government that had begun to effect management changes in the entire Matobo Hills cultural landscape. Jeffrey Ndlovu, a Kalanga informant, argued that the imposition of Ndebele chiefs by the colonial government in the Matobo Hills has led to the misplacement of traditional conservation practices in the area. He further argued that the appointed chiefs, and especially the Ndebele chiefs, had no understanding of the cultural traditions of the Hills since they were only recent immigrants to the area (J. Ndlovu, pers. comm., August 20, 2014). A Nyubi informant also said that the selection of traditional chiefs and the loss of their authority in the Matobo Hills meant that they had become victims of colonial injustice. The informant further stated that they began to doubt the legitimacy of the Ndebele chiefs to lead them and to conserve the Matobo Hills as they were now acting as government agencies to manage the ancestral lands.

The colonial state’s policy of exercising direct control over traditional leaders, however, continued into the post-colonial era even though the new Zimbabwean Government had initially relegated them. On attainment of independence, the government had to rapidly construct a different system of rural government aimed at fostering development at the local level. As a result, the government began to disregard the institution of traditional authority and especially that of chieftainship because the traditional leaders were perceived as having colluded with the government during the colonial era (Chatiza 2010; Makumbe 2010). For this reason, most of the powers that the traditional chiefs had prior to independence were divested through the enactment of the Chiefs and Headmen Act [Chapter 29:01] of 1982, which, in general, excluded them from rural governance (Chakaipa 2010). The powers of the chiefs were further reduced in 1984 through the Prime Minister’s directive which introduced the concept of Village Development Committees (VIDCOs) and Ward Development Committees (WADCOs). This instruction was meant to address the problems of the colonial administration which was highly centralised, deeply authoritarian, and which had ensured that basic public services were not accessible to indigenous people who were the majority in the country. During the colonial era, the rural areas were administered by Rural Councils which were exclusively meant to serve the European communities and by the African Councils that were responsible for the Tribal Trust Lands and African Purchase Areas (Mangiza 1986). The position of chiefs, in particular, was consolidated in 1957 through the enactment of the African Councils Act. This Act enabled the chiefs to be appointed as vice-presidents and the District Commissioners as presidents of the African Councils. The empowering of the African Councils was intended to counteract the emerging threat of nationalism which was becoming established in the country (Chakaipa 2010). This arrangement of managing rural areas was racial and discriminatory and did not involve the local indigenous communities in the planning and development of their areas. The Prime Minister’s directive, therefore, was intended to involve the rural communities in the development of their areas through the decentralisation process. The decentralisation reform in Zimbabwe was a decision taken by the government in the early 1980s to transfer responsibilities, resources, and power from the higher to the lower levels of government. The rationale behind decentralisation was based on the belief that the implementation of projects would be improved through better coordination by the decentralised government structures (Halaar and Olthof 1994; Manhokwe 2010).

The VIDCO, which is the lowest development-planning unit in the district, was designed to represent one hundred households while the WADCO was planned to represent six villages. A number of wards then form a district. Each district is headed by a District Administrator who is appointed by the Public Service Commission. However, representation on the VIDCO and WADCO was based on the “democratic” voting system (Mukamuri, Campbell and Kowero 2003). The VIDCO is represented by a chairperson while the WADCO is represented by an elected ward councilor who also becomes its chairperson. The WADCO consists of all of the secretaries and chairpersons of all of the VIDCOs in the ward. After consultation between the villagers and the VIDCO regarding developments, the VIDCO is supposed to submit development plans annually to the WADCO. The WADCO then coordinates the
proposed plans from all of the VIDCOs and submits them to the District Development Committee (DDC) which would then incorporate ward plans together with government departments’ plans into an integrated district plan for approval by the District Council. The plans would further be submitted to the Provincial Development Committee (PDC) and to the Provincial Council (PC) (Fig. 7.5) who would then submit to the ministry of Local Government Urban and Rural Development. The Rural District Council comprises the elected ward councilors and the District Administrator and is headed by a Chief Executive Officer. The management of local government falls directly under the ministry of Local Government, Urban and Rural Development (Halaar and Olthof 1994; Manhokwe 2010).

In 1999, the then minister of local government, John Landa Nkomo, announced plans to bring back the authority of chiefs in communal areas. President Mugabe then followed and publicly apologised for ignoring chiefs since independence (Ranger 2001). Following efforts to recognise the institution of chieftaincy in the country, the Traditional Leader’s Act was enacted in 2000, and their powers were eventually “returned”. Chiefs were given powers to lead development programmes in their areas of jurisdiction including the distribution of land to their subjects. They were also tasked with the role of promoting cultural values and norms within their communities (Makahamadze, Grand and Tavuyanago 2009). The institution of traditional leadership is now provided for in the country’s constitution. Chiefs are appointed by the President in accordance with Chapter 15 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe and Section 3 of the Chiefs and Headmen Act. The president also has the power to remove a chief from office. Additionally, the appointed chiefs are now legally paid an allowance or salary by the state that is decided by the government through an act of parliament. The constitution also states that the traditional leaders must uphold cultural values and, in particular, promote sound family values. In addition, they must also, in accordance with the constitution, take measures to preserve the culture, traditions, history, and heritage of their communities including sacred shrines. The constitution further states that, except as provided by an act of parliament, traditional leaders have authority, jurisdiction, and control over communal land or other areas for which they have been appointed and over persons within those communal lands or areas.

Several informants that I have interviewed, however, did not discern any difference between traditional chiefs of the colonial era and those that were appointed after the independence of the country. The informants said that, like the chiefs that were appointed during the colonial period, post independence chiefs have no authority over their land and people. They argued that they are political figures whose interest is only money and not the conservation of their ancestral lands.

Chief Mathe admitted that, as chiefs, they have lost their traditional authority because of government interference in the selection of chiefs. However, he denied that he is manipulated by politics or money to consider the return of traditional conservation practices in the Matobo Hills and the involvement of his subjects into the management of the world heritage cultural landscape. Instead, he blamed human rights laws for making it difficult to keep traditional conservation practices in the Matobo Hills when he stated that, in theory, they have power but, in practice, they do not. Chief Mathe also explained that, in the past, they could inflict corporal punishment on anyone who would have violated traditional conservation practices in the Hills, especially toward children. Currently, any attempts to use corporal punishment can be interpreted as child abuse, and they can be arrested and tried even if they are traditional chiefs (Chief Mathe, pers. comm., August 16, 2014).

Headman Zibuyeni Ncube who assists Chief Tshitshi Mpofu and lives near Empandeni Mission, admitted that, although they still have authority, their powers are not sufficient enough to enforce the return of traditional conservation practices in the Matobo Hills. The headman also argued that, although the Traditional Leaders’ Act grants them powers to promote cultural values within their communities, it does not specify what cultural values should be promoted. He also argued that the understanding of the Traditional Leaders’ Act and how it should
be implemented is understood differently from one chief to another throughout the whole of the Matobo Hills and the rest of the country. Headman Ncube also went on to assert that the involvement of the local indigenous people in the management of the Hills as a World Heritage Site requires negotiation as this is not enshrined in the Traditional Leaders’ Act (Z. Ncube, pers. comm., August 20, 2014).

Chief Malaki Masuku, however, attributed the difficulty of integrating traditional conservation practices in the management of the Matobo Hills to the local indigenous communities who have disregarded their traditional cultural practices. Chief Masuku argued that the local indigenous people in the Matobo Hills have since disregarded their cultural practices and are now following other people’s cultures (Chief Masuku, pers. comm., March, 2015).

Several informants also blamed traditional chiefs and their headmen for contributing to the failure of reintroducing traditional conservation practices in the Matobo Hills as they gave land to people who do not originally come from the area. The informants argued that the population is increasing in the Hills as result of these people who are being given this land. Some swampy areas and watercourses around the Silozwane area have dried up as a result of demand of land for farming and grazing due to population increase (S. Ndlovu, pers. comm., June 26, 2014).

Micah Moyo argued that the increase of population in the Matobo Hills is also fashioning a new cultural landscape with people who have different identities and beliefs. According to Moyo, these people are perceived as not supporting the original cultural practices in the Matobo Hills. The majority of them, as Moyo further explained, bring or end up going to churches which place unfamiliar values in the communal areas. As Micah Moyo further asserted, the increase in population has tremendously contributed to the erosion of cultural practices in the Matobo Hills (M. Moyo, pers. comm., June 26, 2014).

All of the informants including the traditional leaders also largely blamed church organisations for seriously contributing to the breakdown of traditional conservation practices in the Matobo Hills. The chiefs argued that, even though they are quite aware that church organisations are destroying their cultural practices in the Matobo Hills, they cannot prevent their establishment in the cultural landscape as they respect the freedom of worship for their subjects. To understand how church organisations have contributed or are contributing to the destruction of traditional conservation practices and the involvement of local indigenous people in the management of the Matobo Hills, the activities of Christian churches in the Matobo Hills will be elucidated.

**CHRISTIANITY AND THE BREAKDOWN OF TRADITIONAL CONSERVATION PRACTICES**

Chapter 4 states that Christianity was introduced in the Matobo Hills by European missionaries beginning in the mid 19th century onwards. However, while European missionary churches eventually made their way into the Hills, the African Initiated Churches also began to gain considerable prominence in the lives of the local indigenous communities in the cultural landscape. These African Initiated Churches, which are also known as African Instituted Churches, African Independent Churches or Pentecostal Churches, are Christian Churches which were established by the Africans without the assistance of European missionaries (da Silva 1993; Oduro 2006). Several critics argue
that these churches were created as a result of racial bias, politics, and theological dominance of early Missionary Churches. These critics also argue that these churches were established to address the needs of the local indigenous communities’ socio-cultural needs and theological interpretive disparities in the religious spiritual world (see, for example, Chitando 2006; Oduro 2006).

In Zimbabwe, the largest African Initiated Churches which have penetrated the Matobo Hills are the Apostolic Faith Church (Figs 7.6), the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) and the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA). Other Missionary Churches that have also found their way in the cultural landscape include the Kingdom of Jehovah’s Witness (Fig. 7.7), Seventh Day Adventist (SDA), which is commonly known in the area as Savada/ Sabatha (Sabbath) and the Salvation Army. The detail of how and when these churches penetrated the Matobo Hills is beyond the scope of this study and will not be discussed. However, it is noteworthy that these churches have had a tremendous impact on the lives of the local indigenous communities, and they have nurtured a new brand of Christians which hold disparate views towards the use of traditional conservation practices in the Matobo Hills and involvement in their management. These churches have introduced concepts which are often in sharp contrast with those that are embraced by the traditional institutions of conservation in this world heritage cultural landscape. The Apostolic Faith and the SDA Church, for instance, intermingle African traditional religion and Christianity, and they also promote Old Testament practices. Nkomazana (2006) describes this fusion as syncretism, which is a type of Christianity that blends the gospel with indigenous cultural and religious practices. The faith of these Christian churches is centered on umoya oyingcwele (Holy Spirit) and on Biblical movements which draw their preaching primarily from the Old and New Testaments. Unlike Missionary Churches, African Independent Churches are fundamentally united by their theological thrust which is the preaching of the ilizwi elingcwele (Good News) and the healing and casting out of umoya omubi (demons) using the power of the Holy Spirit. They are also based on the doctrine of being “born again”.

Both the Apostolic Faith and the SDA churches take on a number of symbols and practices of Judaism which forbid eating pork, drinking alcohol, and smoking tobacco, and they dictate Saturday as their Sabatha (Sabbath) day. They also emphasise healing and prophecy, holding their prayers in the wilderness or in open spaces, fasting, and performing all night prayers in hills or mountains. The Zion Churches, like the Apostolic Faith Churches, also take on some symbols and practices of Judaism which forbid eating pork, amacimbi, drinking alcohol, and smoking tobacco. They also conduct their prayers on hills and mountains or in open spaces, and they also prophesy and use water to cast out demons from afflicted people. However, unlike the Apostolic Faith Churches, the Zionists dictate Sunday as their day of prayer.

Charles Ncube, who lives in the Mapani area just south west of Natisa Township, blamed Pentecostal Churches for making it difficult to return to traditional conservation practices in the Matobo Hills. Without referring to a specific Pentecostal Church in the Matobo Hills, Ncube argued that these churches are preaching the gospel of abandoning culture and stopping veneration of ancestors in the Matobo Hills. Ncube went on to explain that these churches also associate the veneration of ancestors with the worshiping of evil spirits. Ncube further stated this is the reason why he does not want to attend church (C. Ncube, pes. comm. April 14, 2014). Zweli Mthunzi was even more concerned with the fact that children now listen much more to church pastors and to prophets than they do to their elders. Mthunzi said they now regard the traditional knowledge of conservation as izinto zabadala (things of the old people) (Z. Mthunzi, pers. comm., August 16, 2014). Ndawana Sibanda, who is a traditional healer and lives in the Ezinyangeni village near Matopo Mission, said that although he is a devoted SDA member, his church regards traditional healers and those who believe in traditional religious practices as amahedeni (hidden) people. Sibanda, however, denied that, although he is a traditional healer, he is not hidden. He stated that he even prays to God before administering his traditional medicines to patients. He further said that he follows this procedure because he believes that the medicines he administers to patients are from God (N. Sibanda,
pers. comm., August 15, 2014). Another informant, Mabuthelela Sibanda, who is also a traditional healer and lives in the same village with Ndawana Sibanda, indicated that the way some local indigenous people believe in church is such that they now regard it as their ancestors. She also said that, in the past, she used to dance for rain in the Hills, however, she has since stopped the practice because some villagers had started labeling her as a witch (umthakhati) (M. Sibanda, pers. comm., August 15, 2014).

Headman Ncube, who lives near to Ntunjambili Cave, also blamed the church for “killing” their cultural practices in the Matobo Hills. He said that some church members, especially those of the SDA, work on Wednesday which is observed as the day of ancestors in the whole of Matobo Hills. During the interview, the Headman mentioned Cleopas Mpofu and Albert Mkandla as some of the SDA members who are violating cultural practices of the Matobo Hills by working on Wednesday. Headman Ncube also said that, although they work with neighbourhood police to ensure that people comply with the cultural norms of the Hills, prosecuting them has proved to be difficult as there is no law that forbids people to work on Wednesday (Headman Ncube, pers. comm., August 15, 2014).

When I asked Cleopas Mpofu why he works on Wednesday, he said that he is a devout SDA and cannot follow cultural traditions he does not believe in. Explaining further, Mpofu went on to quote Exodus 20: verse 8-11 in the Bible, “For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it a holy day.” According to Mpofu, the seventh day on which the Lord rested falls on a Saturday. “Now tell me where it is written in the Bible that people should not work on Wednesday?” asked Mpofu. Mpofu went on to argue that if other villagers want him to stop working on Wednesday, traditional chiefs and their headman have not attempted to refrain them from violating this cultural practice.

Several Pentecostal Church members share Cleopas Mpofu’s views while others like Ndawana Sibanda value both the church and the cultural practices. Timothy Mahlangu confirmed this when he said that he has no issues in observing cultural practices even though he was an ordained pastor in a local SDA church. Mahlangu also argued that this is not strange because Christianity and cultural practices have existed side by side in the Matobo Hills since the arrival of missionaries in the area. He further argued that he easily mixes the two and views them as sources of divine authority and spirituality. He also said that he draws his strength and protection from both sources. Mahlangu further argued that going to church and respecting cultural and religious practices is quite a common practice among the local descent people of the Matobo Hills since the arrival of missionaries in the area. It would appear that, although it is now common practice in the Matobo Hills that local indigenous people would like to have both the church and traditional religious practices, the church has continued to be viewed as the main hindrance to the idea of reintroducing traditional conservation practices and involving people in the management of the world heritage cultural landscape.

Several Pentecostal Church members also thought of Pentecostal Churches as businesses that are designed to enrich their owners (prophets and pastors) who take advantage of the gullibility of their followers by asking them to give to God as a way of asking for blessings. One informant said that, in this business game, followers are instructed to render their cultural practices and sinful ways to Satan (the devil) and to give part of their income to God so that they can receive blessings in return. The informant argued that the idea of reintroducing traditional conservation practices and of involving local indigenous people in the management of the Hills can be interpreted by those who attend Pentecostal Churches as a defeat by the devil. The informant further argued that when interpreted this way, many people are unlikely to support the idea of returning traditional conservation practices and being involved in the management of the cultural landscape.
The disagreement began when the NMMZ proposed to take over the management of the Special Area (404 hectares) at Victoria Falls, a Transboundary World Heritage Site shared between Zambia and Zimbabwe (see Makuvaza 2010, 2012). The dispute has its origins from the late 1980s as part of the government of Zimbabwe’s efforts to stop parastatal organisations from depending entirely on government funding for their operations and salaries. To address this problem, the NMMZ quickly decided to directly engage in commercial operations in the tourism sector, then a growing and perceived profitable part of the country’s economy (Makuvaza and Burret 2011). The NMMZ then approached the ZPWMA and proposed to take over the management of the Special Area, arguing that it is the country’s first national monument, which was declared in 1937 under the existing Commission for the Natural and Historical Monuments and Relics. The Special Area is part of the Victoria Falls National Park and consists of a rainforest, several islands, and the downstream gorges (Makuvaza 2010, 2012).

The NMMZ further asserted that, as is the case with other national monuments that are located in national park lands nationwide, the land category in which the Special Area is located does not affect its national monument status. Based on the definition of a national monument, the NMMZ argued that the Special Area remains its property. The NMMZ also asserted that its responsibility of managing the...
Special Area together with the duty of the ZPWMA of managing the surrounding environments was acknowledged by the World Heritage Committee when the site was proclaimed as a World Heritage Site in 1989. It further argued that, in terms of managing Transboundary World Heritage Sites, the 1972 World Heritage Convention requires that they be administered by the states parties that are concerned: that is, in the case of the Victoria Falls, by Zambia and Zimbabwe. On the basis of this requirement, the NMMZ further contended that the Zambian side of the Victoria Falls is managed by a state agent, i.e., the National Heritage Conservation Commission, a counterpart and sister organisation of the NMMZ. Considering its experience in managing world heritage sites in the country, it is the most appropriate to jointly administer the site with its Zambian counterpart (Makuvaza 2010, 2012).

The ZPWMA refused to surrender the management of the Special Area to the NMMZ, counter-arguing that, as a government organisation, it has managed the area ever since the Victoria Falls National Park was established in 1952. The ZPWMA Act considers any botanical garden, recreational park, safari area, or sanctuary as a park. Its objectives are to make provision for the preservation, conservation, propagation, or control of the wildlife, fish, and plants of Zimbabwe and the protection of the natural landscape and scenery. Based on this definition, the park’s authorities argued that the land in which the Special Area (a natural landscape) is located is part of the national park, therefore, the administration of the site is its legislative responsibility under the Act; hence, the status quo should be accepted as a fait accompli (Makuvaza 2010, 2012).

Negotiations to change the administration of the area from the ZPWMA to the NMMZ resulted in a stalemate, and the dispute quickly amplified to include the Matobo Hills where, as seen in chapter 5, certain cultural heritage sites are located in the national park. However, prior to the dispute in the mid 1990s, the NMMZ had begun to charge admission fees at some of its cultural heritage sites located in the Matobo National Park as a way of raising revenue. The decision created a double ticketing system for tourists entering the park who wished to visit rock art sites. This meant that visitors were now required to pay entrance fees twice, first at the main gates when entering the park and, second, if they wished to view rock art caves and other cultural heritage sites located in the park. As relations between the ZPWMA and the NMMZ were favorable at that time, the NMMZ site custodians were accommodated at the Maleme main camp. The ZPWMA also helped maintain gravel roads that led to rock art sites to make it easier to visit the archaeological sites.

However, with the introduction of the new payment arrangement, many visitors began to complain that they were being double ticketed to enter the same park and being cheated out of their money. The Matobo Conservation Society began to also argue that the dual ticketing system was making the park the most expensive in the country which resulted in fewer tourists visiting the Hills. According to the Society, tour operators were now diverting tourists to rock art sites that are located in the communal areas to avoid the double ticketing system. The Society began to urge the ZPWMA and the NMMZ to find a lasting solution to the problem by coming up with single paying points when entering the park (see Chronicle, 22 August 1995; Chronicle, 31 October 1995).

According to a NMMZ informant, to solve the problem of double ticketing, the ZPWMA and the NMMZ agreed in July 1995 that the NMMZ should be allowed to move to the main entrance gates of the
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With NMMZ once again collecting revenue at its cultural heritage sites, demands were again made to solve the double ticketing system in the park. One suggestion to resolve the problem was that the two contesting organisations should charge a single entry fee into the park and then negotiate sharing the proceeds (see Chronicle, 21 October 1995).

Although this was agreed in principle, the suggestion was never implemented. The two organisations continued to charge tourists two separate fees, one to enter the park and the other to visit rock art paintings and other cultural heritage sites that are located in the park (Chronicle, 18 October 1995; Chronicle, 11 November 1995). The problem of double ticketing visitors has even now remain unsolved.

The rapport between the ZPWMA and the NMMZ appears to have deteriorated when the NMMZ attempted to take over the management of the Special Area at Victoria Falls in 2000 by establishing its physical presence at the site. Although an agreement was later reached that the NMMZ should halt all attempts to take over the Special Area to allow for an amicable solution to the problem, the ZPWMA responded by temporarily ejecting the NMMZ site custodians who were earlier offered accommodation at Maleme, arguing that the houses were required to accommodate the park staff members. The ZPWMA also halted regular maintenance of the roads leading to rock art sites and other cultural heritage sites citing lack of funding and equipment.

A NMMZ informant said that, although they use a portion of the 40% of the money they submit to their Head office to perform conservation work, they have not been able to maintain roads leading to rock art sites in recent years due to the financial problems they are experiencing as an organisation. A ZPWMA informant complained that, as a result of the NMMZ’s failure to maintain roads leading to cultural heritage sites, the park authorities are now being blamed by tourists for failing to maintain them. The informant also argued that the NMMZ should be able to maintain the roads since they are collecting revenue from those archaeological sites.

The ecologist responded that they cannot maintain these roads as there is no budget for that.

The rift between the ZPWMA and the NMMZ later became more apparent when as the main players in the management of the Hills failed to support the renewal of traditional conservation practices and the involvement of local indigenous communities in the management of the World Heritage Site as outlined in the Site Management Plan. The two organisations, however, as seen in chapter 3, ironically chaired the Site Management Committee or Site Steering Group and were to implement the Site Management Plan. The ZPWMA and the NMMZ were expected to also work cohesively with both the traditional and elected leadership and specifically with the local indigenous communities to properly manage the Matobo Hills. The two organisations were thus mandated to promote the preservation of local traditional culture such as rain making ceremonies and dances (Technical Committee 2004, 26-36).

At a meeting on 26 October 2009 to review the Site Management Plan, tempers flared as the representatives of the local indigenous communities
took turns to castigate the Site Management Committee for failing to arrange regular meetings to monitor the progress of implementing the Site Management Plan. The ZPWMA was criticised for reneging on the relaxing of stringent state policies which prevent the local indigenous communities from benefitting from the park’s resources. The NMMZ was also equally criticised for being only interested in the collection of revenue from national monuments located in the park without investing any of it back into conservation and maintenance of the roads leading to rock art sites. The local indigenous communities also argued that the proclamation of the Hills as a World Heritage Site had not helped to relax state laws so that the people could access some of their shrines as was purported during the nomination. In addition, they also complained that there are too many state and international laws in the Matobo Hills that disregard traditional conservation practices and that the consideration of the practices in the management of the cultural landscape will never be a success unless they are fully incorporated into the existing state laws (Makuvaza and Makuvaza 2012).

In response, the site management committee cited a lack of resources as the major reason for not being able to implement the Site Management Plan. The committee argued that the economic hardships that had gripped the country from the time when the Hills were proclaimed as a World Heritage Site prevented them from implementing the plan.

At the end of the meeting, it was suggested that in order to solve the problems, a new Site Management Committee should be selected since the existing one had failed to perform its duties. The local indigenous communities also suggested that the new committee should be autonomous and chaired by a retired judge, minister, or any distinguished individual. It was argued that an independent committee would perform its duties better and without bias. This idea was opposed by both the NMMZ and the ZPWMA arguing that one of their departments should retain the chair of the committee as the two organisations are responsible for the management of World Heritage Sites in the country. The existing committee also rejected the idea and complained that it was being judged unfairly for not performing its duties and should be given another chance to implement the Site Management Plan. It was also agreed that the existing committee should produce a review report of the Site Management Plan with recommendations on the way to move forward (Makuvaza and Makuvaza 2012).

Most informants that I interviewed regarding the conduct of the ZPWMA and the NMMZ over the management of the Matobo Hills felt that the two organisations reneged on their duties soon after the Hills were proclaimed as a World Heritage Site. They also said that the organisations have ignored the desires of the local indigenous communities of promoting traditional conservation practices in the Hills as was stated in the Site Management Plan. The informants further stated that, soon after the proclamation of the Hills as a World Heritage Site, the ZPWMA and the NMMZ began to pursue their own institutional interests and have, during the process, abandoned the local indigenous people and their traditional conservation practices. Consequently, the administration of the Matobo Hills has, in fact, remained almost the same as before the proclamation as a World Heritage Site.

**SUMMARY**

This chapter demonstrates that the perspectives of local indigenous people on the idea to reintroduce traditional conservation practices and involving them in the management of the Matobo Hills vary within the cultural landscape. While personal perspectives diverge, responses by the local indigenous people demonstrate that they are all concerned with the proper management of the Matobo Hills World Heritage Site from which they all depend for their continued existence. However, although their views differ, there is a general agreement that the fabric of the Matobo rural communities are undergoing rapid change, much of which is negatively affecting the idea of reintroducing traditional conservation practices and involving local indigenous people in the management of the World Heritage Site.

It would appear that, in this chapter, for the idea of reintroducing traditional conservation practices in the Matobo Hills to be successful, the local indigenous
communities must be able to benefit from the collective management of the area which they consider to be their ancestral cultural landscape. The benefits cited by the local indigenous communities include employment, sharing of revenue, and involvement in practical tourism ventures. It would also appear that for the idea of reintroducing traditional conservation practices to actually work, the local indigenous communities must be empowered and motivated to make decisions and take responsibility of the decisions as primary guardians of the World Heritage Site. This way, the local indigenous communities would begin to feel that the ownership of the Matobo Hills has been returned to them. However, this is difficult to accomplish as the cultural heritage sites from which they would like to benefit do not, in practice, belong to them.

It has also been shown in this chapter that there are parallel hierarchies of traditional leadership in the Matobo Hills, the local government, and state organisations that are directly responsible for the management of the World Heritage Site. The informants made it clear that these parallel hierarchies have ambiguous and overlapping jurisdictions and mandates in the Matobo Hills such that they often cause institutional conflicts and struggle for power to manage the World Heritage Site. From the discussions, it would appear that the traditional leaders are in a better position to put the reintro-duction of traditional conservation practices in the Matobo Hills into effect given their popularity with and more knowledge of the local indigenous communities. However, it would also appear that their authority is diminishing even though they are currently enjoying the support of the government.

This chapter also revealed that independent churches have dominated the Matobo Hills World Site. Like their traditional religious counterparts, independent churches have developed, expanded, and incorporated new beliefs and practices into the people of the cultural landscape. The focus of these churches is extensively based on their perception of social, economic, and material needs and not on the traditional conservation practices of the Matobo Hills. With the rising power of religious organisations in the Matobo Hills, the traditional conservation practices are gradually losing their legitimacy in the entire cultural landscape.

Lastly, the power struggle between the ZPWMA and the NMMZ over the management of the park and the entire Matobo Hills has and is continuously affecting the idea of reviving traditional conservation practices and involving local indigenous people in the management of the Matobo Hills. As shown in the chapter, the power struggle between the two organisations is grounded on conflicting economic agendas such that they are now being used to fulfil economic ends rather than the consideration of reintroducing traditional conservation practices and involving local indigenous communities in the management of the cultural landscape.