

Traditional Management Systems at Heritage Sites in Africa



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Moses Wafula Mapesa
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Background of the Research Project

This volume is the result of the research work carried out as part of the implementation of the Second Periodic Report in the Africa Region. The Periodic Reporting is a statutory and participatory exercise to review the implementation of the WH Convention and the State of Conservation of WH properties. The Second Cycle of Periodic Reporting for the Africa region was carried out in 2010-2011 and resulted in a Report and an Action Plan 2012-2017 adopted by the WH Committee in 2011 and 2012 respectively.

The Periodic Report identified four regional priority needs to be addressed in the Africa Region, among them, documentation, recognition and implementation of TMS. While recognising the rich potential and successful initiatives in the Africa region, the report noted that effective management of WH properties has been challenged by the lack of sufficient resources, including legal and technical. It was therefore imperative to co-operate in the research and subsequent production of this volume to ensure that the significance of TMS is realised within the formalised heritage management approach. The research study was carried out during the 2014-2015 period.

Aims and objectives

The foundation of this project was the need to adopt realistic measures that would address the various challenges of managing WH in Africa. There were two broad aims. First, to improve the effectiveness of management systems of WH properties in Africa by assessing the extent to which the existing traditional/custodian management systems could be integrated into the current state-based systems. Second, to provide an effective documentation methodology and to explore ways to use the same in capacity building endeavours and academic curricula.

Informed by these two aims, the research study was anchored on six objectives that were to be achieved in the short and long term.

These were:

- a) *To provide a comprehensive methodology on how to document the existing TMS at African World Heritage properties, both natural and cultural, with an approach based on case studies and comprehensive fieldwork;*
- b) *To analyse, through comparative case studies, present and past TMS in cultural/natural World Heritage properties;*
- c) *To investigate the processes and forms of using TMS within local communities in and around World Heritage properties;*
- d) *To identify the potential sources of tension between TMS, various national (states parties') legal frameworks and World Heritage requirements;*
- e) *To investigate the effectiveness of the traditional/custodian management practices when it comes to conservation and management of selected cultural/natural WH properties; and*
- f) *To reflect on the possible applications of the outcomes, for instance their integration into legal framework and state-based management of World Heritage properties and the development of training and academic curricula.*

Research Methodology

Researching such a subject is complex and multi faceted as there are different practices and different contexts that have to be taken into consideration. The area covered is wide, ranging from Southern Africa, Eastern Africa, North Eastern and the

Horn, Central and West Africa. It is a multi-lingual and multi-cultural space with French and English being the main languages of official communication based on the colonial past. The TMS are however held and practiced in the local languages that are equally diversified. Unfortunately, due to limited time and resources, only a number of case studies could be carried out but it is hoped that they can be considered to be fairly representative of the African continent. Such a vast area has its diversity of heritages, heritage issues, and heritage practices including the application of TMS. Due to the nature of the research that calls for community engagement and institutional collaboration and partnership, the research methodology for the book was informed by a bottom-up approach, whereby the diversified voices of communities are central elements in all phases of the research. Field based ethnographic research that involved community meetings, interviews, observation and discussions was carried out. This approach, together with desktop studies, some of which had previously been carried out by the same authors, was applied to a number of case studies including Kasubi, Konso, Ngorongoro, Otammari land, Mbe and Rwenzori. Presentation of results and discussions to relevant stakeholders/communities particularly the youth is yet to take place. While this was envisaged, it is work in progress that will require time and resources but is recognised to be crucial for the success of the exercise.

Analysis and interpretation of research data collected was done in a rigorous way. A critical review of the work undertaken was held during a workshop in November 2014 in Harare (Zimbabwe) and then in May 2015 in Midrand (South Africa). At these meetings, various researchers and editors discussed the outcomes, a process that further enriched the various chapters of the book.

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THE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANSHIP SYSTEM IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Albino Pereira de Jesus Jopela

Introduction

The identity of present and past societies is often closely associated with specific locations and structures in the landscape (Fowler 2002). These landscapes may become cultural or sacred by virtue of the symbolic interaction between people and such locations over space and time (UNESCO 2011). Like in many parts of the world, various southern African communities consider certain natural locations as places to respect because of their ability to connect them with their ancestors (Van Rensburg and Koltze 2002). Amongst such natural locations could be forests, mountains, rivers, sacred pools, as well as man-made features like rock art and dry-stone structures. Spiritual areas like these are subjected to taboos (Sheridan 2008). These range of rules and regulations determine peoples' behaviour in relation to the sacred space, and imply a set of beliefs often in relation to spirits and ancestors (Carmichael et al. 1994). The use of these heritage assets (cultural or natural) is governed by customary rules that are enforced by traditional custodians (Mumma 2005). Numerous communities across the world still have Traditional Custodianship Systems (TCS/TMS) to ensure protection and survival of sacred sites (Ndoro et al. 2008; Wild and McLeod 2008). Experience shows that whenever places are perceived as powerful oracles for communication with the ancestors or as sources of healing water and medicinal plants, they usually benefit from a remarkable traditional custodianship from local communities (Jopela 2011). Examples of such sites in southern Africa include the Matobo Hills WH Site in Zimbabwe and Mount Mulanje Cultural Landscape (also known as Mulanje Mountain Biosphere Reserve) in Malawi. Traditional Custodianship Systems (TCS), also referred to as Traditional Management Systems (TMS) elsewhere in this book, may be defined as cumulative bodies of knowledge, practice and belief about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment that are generated, preserved and transmitted in a traditional and intergenerational context. As a knowledge-practice-belief complex, TCS include the worldview or religious traditions of a society as well as an unwritten corpus of long-standing customs (Taylor and Kaplen 2005). The use of heritage assets (cultural or natural) in this system is governed by customary rules that are enforced by traditional custodians. These people have the prime responsibility for organising the use and safekeeping of each heritage resource. This includes enforcing social mechanisms (rites and taboos) to maintain respect for places that are culturally significant and sacred for the community (Berkes et al. 2000). TCS, therefore, comprises "all mechanisms and actions guided by customs and belief systems, carried out by local communities, aiming for the continuous use of the place including the preservation of its symbolic and cosmological significance" (Jopela 2011:107). It is widely accepted today that the primary management responsibility of heritage custodians is to conserve and protect the values that make a place significant (The Australian ICOMOS 1999). With regard to the management of intangible values at heritage sites, research now shows that TCS are vital prerequisites for any management strategy in a rural setting and that management systems must arise from the ethos and social environment of the local culture (Ndoro 1996; Pwiti 1996; Jopela 2011). Such an approach places tangible heritage in its wider context, particularly in the case of sacred sites, relating it more closely to communities so as to afford greater weight to spiritual, political and social values (Bouchenaki 2003). When considered

in this light, people associated with heritage sites are the primary stakeholders for stewardship (Mitchell et al. 2009). Thus, the best approach for managing such intangible values is one that gives the 'holders' of the heritage direct responsibility over its use, since survival of such values is contingent upon cultural traditions and contemporary needs of the stakeholders (Katsamudanga 2003). In this way, TCS provide an opportunity for the effective management of both cultural and natural heritage sites because, in many ways, they are community-based in terms of philosophical conservation orientation; have institutional legitimacy (as they derive their legitimacy from local communities); and embody community values (Mumma 2003; Ndoro 2006). Although the great potential of TCS as a decentralised and community-based management system is not contested, it is also argued that multiple threats and the changes in social, political and cosmological relationships, during colonial and postcolonial periods, erode its institutional legitimacy and cultural relevance (Milton 1996). Scholars like Michael Sheridan (2008:13) have warned that, along with the current trend to advocate for the blanket use of traditional custodianship systems for the effective management of heritage sites, there is "much potential for fallacious and erroneous management strategies guided by nostalgic and stereotyped views based on an old fashioned set of assumptions about 'local community', 'tradition' and 'religious belief systems'". Thus, the way forward is not to advocate for the blanket use of TCS in the management of WH properties across southern Africa. Rather, a conviction about the role of TCS in or alongside with the state-based heritage management framework must derive from a close examination of the assertions on the role and efficacy of TCS and the challenges they present.

Managing heritage in pre and post independent Africa

State-based heritage management, which includes the identification, documentation and promulgation of necessary legislation, was introduced throughout the African continent as part of the European colonisation (Pwiti and Ndoro 1999; Ndoro and Pwiti 2001). Consequently, state-based heritage organisations inherited rigid colonial legislation in the post-independent Africa. As can be expected, colonial legislation did not recognise the importance of traditional ways to protect heritage places (Maradze 2003) and this did not change after independence, a period during which traditional custodianship systems are still largely overlooked (Ndoro and Pwiti 2005). A number of reasons have been brought forward to explain this state of affairs. For instance, it was based on the belief that there had been a complete decline or 'suffocation' of TCS due to factors such as the colonial experience, the hegemony of mainstream religious faiths (e.g., Christianity) and processes of globalisation (Katsamudanga 2003). Due to increasing conflicts with local communities over perceptions of heritage, some archaeologists and heritage practitioners have, since the 1990s, shifted the heritage management paradigm from the 'monumentalist approach' that focused only on the protection of tangible aspects of heritage to a 'holistic' and 'value-based' conservation approach which recognises the need to build a more locally attuned heritage management framework (Deacon 1993; Pwiti 1996; Ndoro 2001). This paradigm shift led to debates on how to manage the cultural significance (values) of heritage places, especially sacred sites. Despite this, state-based heritage managers often criticise the 'damage' done to the sites as a result of the traditional uses (Taruvinga 2007). Example of this 'damage' is the practice of splashing traditional beer onto rock paintings (at Mongomi wa Kolo in Kondo, Tanzania) and the lighting of fires during rituals activities (Domboshava rock art site in Zimbabwe) (Pwiti and Mvenge 1996; Bwasiri 2011). Given the limited resources at their disposal, which negatively impact on the capacities of state-based her-

itage organisations (which still promote western notion of heritage conservation), scholars and heritage practitioners recognise that effective management of immovable heritage or any other place of cultural significance cannot be achieved by state-based heritage organisations on their own (Mumma 2003). Shifting focus to biodiversity, similar trends are evident. Following the failure of many state-led 'fortress conservation' efforts, many biodiversity researchers and policy-makers began adopting 'participatory community-based conservation' approaches for natural resource management (Singh and van Houtum 2002: 256). The same approach is now being discussed for sacred heritage sites. As a result, TCS seem to provide an opportunity for the effective management of both cultural and natural heritage sites. There are three reasons for this. First, they are community-based in terms of philosophical conservation orientation. Second, they have institutional legitimacy. Third, they embody community values (Mumma 2003; Jopela 2011). However, in spite of their potential as an authentically decentralised and community-based management system, TCS are often overlooked in the general scheme of institutionalised heritage management. They are, therefore, not integrated with current management systems and training/academic curricula. In southern Africa, sites such as the Matobo Hills (Zimbabwe), Tsodilo Hills (Botswana), Chongoni Rock Art Area (Malawi) and Kondo Rock Art Sites (Tanzania) were inscribed onto the WH List also under criterion (vi). Sites listed under this criterion must be "directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, of outstanding universal significance" (UNESCO 2013: OG Paragraph 77). These inscriptions were thus confirmations of the strong association of these sites with living communities and traditions. Some of these sites still have active TCS. The problem however remains that TCS is often accorded an inferior status in relation to the state-based systems and thus play a very limited role in the preservation of the cultural significant heritage places (Ndoro et al. 2008). This regressive tendency has also been identified in the Second Cycle of Periodic Reporting concerning World Heritage in the Africa region which was carried out between 2009 and 2011 (UNESCO 2011). Thus, and despite the common assumption that the solution for many problems is contingent on the successful integration of traditional systems into state-base management framework (Sheridan 2008; Jopela et al. 2012), the place of traditional custodianship is yet to be appropriately addressed. This study investigated whether a deeper understanding of TCS by heritage managers can add value to the effective and sustainable management of African World Heritage Sites in the region. Using two case studies, the investigation focused on the current TCS at the Matobo Hills WH Site in Zimbabwe and Mount Mulanje Cultural Landscape (also known as Mulanje Mountain Biosphere Reserve) in Malawi. These sites share a common feature: a strong intangible association between the landscapes and contemporary local communities' traditions. However, the geographical, political, and socio-economic contexts in which they are located present different dynamics in terms of the relationship between TCS and the existing state-based management frameworks. These are discussed in greater detail below.

Brief overview of Traditional Custodianship Systems in Southern Africa

There are currently (as of April 2015) sixteen properties from southern Africa inscribed on the WH List under at least one cultural criterion. Twenty five percent of these properties were inscribed also under criterion (vi) of the UNESCO Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the WH Convention (OG) due to their strong association with living communities and tra-

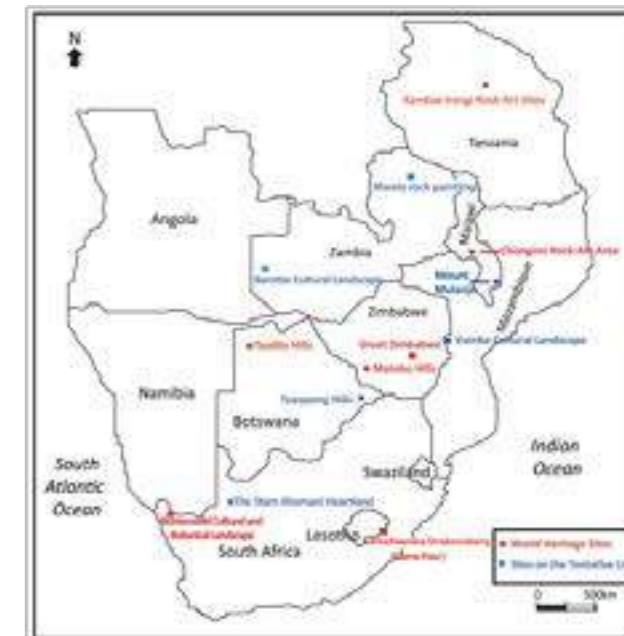


Figure 1. Map showing the location of sites mentioned in the text.

ditions. It is interesting to note that forty four percent of these sixteen properties, including those not inscribed under criterion (vi), are imbued with sacred values and currently used for rituals by the living local communities. Furthermore, twenty four percent of the twenty nine properties inscribed on the State-Parties Tentative Lists, have strong association with living communities. The role of local communities in the active custodianship of heritage through living traditions has been observed in many places across the region. For instance, Mongomi wa Kolo, a hunter-gatherer rock art site in Kondo Rock-Art WH Site in northern Tanzania, is a focal point for regular ritual practices among the Bantu language speaking Warangi and Wasi/Waragwa communities in Kondo (Loubser 2006). Traditional healers visit Mongomi wa Kolo with goats, sheep or chickens to sacrifice in healing rituals. Rainmakers from a nearby village practice various rituals at Mongomi wa Kolo while individuals also go to the site for divination. Oral traditions indicate that Mongomi wa Kolo is a land spirit and it is considered more powerful than other ritual places in Kondo (Chalcraft 2008; Bwasiri 2011). Similar to Mongomi wa Kolo, the communities of Hambukushu (Bantu speakers) and the! Kung (Khoisan speakers) have strong traditional beliefs attached to Tsodilo Hills, a WH Site in north-west Botswana, as a place of worship and ancestral spirits. Local shamans, guides and herbalists point to specific areas within the site, which are testimony to the marks of the first animals, the first people, first sex spot as well as the first and eternal water spring in the Tsodilo landscape. These examples clearly illustrate that present living communities still have a strong bond with the natural and cultural elements in their surrounding landscape. In fact, "the ritual significance of archaeological sites suggests that communities in these landscapes draw on the past material cultures [Stone Age sites] to negotiate and reconstruct their present identities and their ritualised world-views" (Pwiti et al. 2007:103). As pointed out by Ndoro and Pwiti (2001) and others (see e.g., Munjeri 2005; Nyathi and Ndiwini 2005), post-independence heritage legislation is silent on TCS. Various conflicts have been witnessed between local communities and state-based heritage management institutions across the region as a result of the exclusion of TCS from heritage legislation. The famous case of Domboshava rock art shelter in Zimbabwe is a clear example of this situation. For local people, Domboshava was a rainmaking shrine under traditional systems, which provided an important setting for traditional ceremonies. However, for the

National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ), the most important heritage asset at the site was the rock art. Since Domboshava was declared as National Monument in 1938, traditional ceremonies were seen as detrimental to the preservation of the rock art, thus leading to the ban of the practices by NMMZ. Despite this ban, people continued to secretly hold the ceremonies, leading to the souring of relationship between NMMZ and the community. Subsequently, local community members destroyed the NMMZ curio shop at Domboshava in 1995 and the dialogue initiated with local traditional leaders in 1994 failed. The greatest damage that occurred on the site was the application of a brown oil paint on the rock art panels in 1998 (Pwiti and Mvenge 1996; Taruvinga and Ndoro 2003). Perhaps incidents such as these would not have occurred if a TCS that took cognisance of the community's relationship to the site was recognised by the state-based heritage institution (i.e. NMMZ).

Traditional Custodianship Systems in

Southern Africa: Some case studies

Traditional Custodianship Systems are firmly anchored in the intangible heritage (ethical values, social customs and belief systems) of communities and largely informed by local cosmologies (Jopela 2011). Such cosmologies are dependent on local social mechanisms, political systems and religious conventions that regulate the use and management of natural resources. Therefore, the discussion on TCS at the Matobo Hills World Heritage Site and Mount Mulanje Cultural Landscape will focus on the analysis of three major aspects of these systems: the local communities' worldview and the use of places of cultural significance; the role of the traditional authority in the management of heritage resources; and the challenges facing TCS including the requirements under the World Heritage Convention.

Matobo Hills World Heritage Site, Zimbabwe

Location and description of the site

The Matobo Hills area, also known locally as Matopos or Matonjeni, lies some 35 km south of Zimbabwe's second largest city of Bulawayo in Matabeleland South Province. The area is approximately 3100 km² (Makhuvaza and Makhuvaza 2012). The most distinctive landforms are the inselbergs, whalebacks, and castellated hills (commonly known as kopjes). These geological formations and landforms, which resulted from geomorphological processes, have given rise to a wide diversity of niches supporting a variety of fauna and flora. The large granite boulders have also provided abundant natural shelters and have been associated with human occupation from the Early Stone Age (ESA) right through to the early historical period, and intermittently since (NMMZ 2004; Makhuvaza and Makhuvaza 2012). According to the Nomination Dossier produced by the National Monuments and Museums of Zimbabwe (NMMZ 2002), communities constitute the major stakeholder in the Matobo Hills area. This is because they have permanent residences and derive their subsistence from the resources within the World Heritage area. Communities living nearby are the Matobo, Gulati, Kumalo (Matobo District Council), Urnzinyathini and Nswazi (Urnzinyathini District Council). In addition, the Nomination Dossier stated that the Matobo Hills World Heritage Site are characterised by rock paintings; Stone and Iron Age archaeological sites; historical sites from pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. Amongst these post-colonial historical sites are the burial sites of King Mzilikazi, founder of the Ndebele nation and Cecil John Rhodes, after whom the country came to be known as Rhodesia. It was later renamed Zimbabwe after it attained independence in 1980.

What gives Matobo its continuing relevance to local communities today is the strong persistence of indigenous beliefs and practices associated with Matobo as a sacred place or the seat of God, (Mwari/Mlimo), the home of ancestral spirits, and the focus for rituals. As a result, the area has been linked to rain-making and harvest ceremonies as well as other ritual activities. Chiefs, headmen and spirit mediums all play an important role in coordinating such traditional activities and mobilising the people. Within the Matobo Hills, certain places have become known as shrines. Njelele, specifically associated with agricultural rituals, is one of the most important rituals and attracts people from as far as South Africa, Namibia, Botswana and Lesotho (NMMZ 2002; ICOMOS 2003). Besides heritage resources, the area is also rich in natural heritage (i.e. rock forms, high biodiversity, rare species) and a living intangible culture associated with the rock forms. The NMMZ, manages all cultural resources found in the Matobo Hills area irrespective of boundaries and ownership. This is in accordance with the NMMZ Act (Chapter 25:11). However, the situation on the ground demands that the management be done in conjunction with other stakeholders such as the Rural District Councils' Conservation Committees, National Parks officials, Chiefs and shrine custodians (NMMZ 2004). According to the last Management Plan (2004-2009), the conservation of Matobo Hills World Heritage Site is coordinated by a Management Committee comprising representatives from the traditional leadership (Chiefs and custodians of shrines), NMMZ, Department of National Parks and Wild Life Management (DNPWLM), Matobo and Utizingwane Rural District Councils and Natural Resources Board. This is said to be a committee of decision makers. However, the day-to-day conservation activities are carried out by a team of technocrats appointed by the Management Committee with the assistance of various non-governmental organizations (NMMZ 2004). Since the implementation time frame from the Management Plan came to an end in 2009, no Management Committee has been appointed. This is because of the contestations between communities, National Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (NPWMA) and NMMZ. The former made three accusations: they accused the Management Committee of failing to arrange regular meetings to check on the progress of implementing the site management plan. In addition, they criticised the NPWMA for renegeing on the relaxing of stringent state policies, which prevent the local people from benefiting from the park's resources. Furthermore, they accused NMMZ of being interested only in the revenue generated without investing this into the conservation and maintenance of roads leading to cultural sites managed by NMMZ which became inaccessible to the community. What all of these contestations meant was that the proclamation of the hills as a World Heritage Site had not helped to have state laws relaxed as was purported during the nomination time (Makhuvaza and Makhuvaza 2012: 26). Besides all these challenges, NMMZ officials are in the process of finalising a new five year Management Plan.

Traditional Custodianship System at the Matobo Hills

Local community's worldview and sacred places

Traditionally, the Matobo Hills is home of shrines of the Mwari/Mlimo cult believed to play spiritual roles in the lives of the Shona, Kalanga and Ndebele, both in the past and amongst the present communities (Ranger 1999). For the local communities, the Matobo Hills are Malindadzimu, 'a burial place', and hence a sacred place. From historical times, they buried their relatives in different parts of the hills. One Ndebele king, Mzilikazi, was also buried in Matopo. This is the reason why Rhodes demanded that

he too be buried at Malindadzimu. Many families in and around the Matobo Hills have specific places or sites where they carry out family or clan rituals such as appeasing spirits, praying for the sick, praying to territorial spirits in times of disasters or the outbreak of diseases, and performing other traditional ceremonies which are important in their day-to-day lives. Another important activity is the continued extraction of traditional medicines by local herbalists to treat the sick in the community (NMMZ 2004).

Prominent in the landscape are a number of religious shrines such as Njelele, Dula, Zhilo, Wirirani and Manyanga. Amongst these shrines, Njelele is the most important. It is often referred to as Dombolotshipoteleka: the shifting or turning rock. Njelele is a rock outcrop situated on a hill southwest of Rhodes Matopos National Park in the Khumalo communal area. Access to the site is through a sacred forest that stretches for more than 500 metres (NMMZ 2004). It is believed that the voice of Mwari/Mlimo is heard from the stone at Njelele and must not be tampered with in any way (Ranger 1999). There are regular visits by priests and messengers from various chiefs throughout the country to appease Mwari/Mlimo by sacrificing and presenting him with cattle and beer. The cult could also be consulted and Mwari/Mlimo invoked in times of illness and death, domesticated animal diseases, during agricultural seasons of sowing and reaping, succession disputes, natural phenomena such as rainfall failure, and even in times of politics and war (Makhuvaza 2008:166). Although Njelele remains the centre of rain-control ceremonies as well as other religious activities in this cultural landscape, several other places are regarded as sacred as well. For instance, local people regard the rock art site, Nswatugi, as the place where Mwari/Mlimo passed enroute to the Njelele shrine, where he now resides (Pwiti et al. 2007). Silozwane is another Later Stone Age (LSA) rock art site within a sacred forest in Matobo Hills valued by the local people as a rain-control shrine (Ndoro 2003). These powerful oracles link local communities to the Matobo Hills – where the ancestral spirits live in sacred forests, mountains, caves, hollow trees, pools and rock art sites. The Matobo Hills have become "objects of spiritual significance from where local people derive inspiration, fertility and health and contact their ancestral spirits" (NMMZ 2002:9). The TCS at Matobo Hills is characterized by the active use of shrines and sacred places closely linked to traditional, social and economic activities (ICOMOS 2003). The respect accorded to these sacred areas and their environs lies partly in a series of customary usage and access laws to these places (taboos relating to sacred site etiquette). To illustrate this respect, people attach great reverence for the environment because they argue, by desecrating it they deprive their God and their ancestors of a place to live. Thus, a traditionally appointed custodian resides at the Njelele shrine to manage it. The shrine custodian, guided by traditional rules which everybody must observe, leads all pilgrims from within Zimbabwe and neighbouring countries in all ceremonies performed at the site (NMMZ 2002). Amongst the site etiquettes that must be observed within the sacred cultural and environmental landscape of Matobo Hills are that (i) individuals or groups of people must visit a sacred place or its environs only in the presence of the official priest or priestess or his/her appointee; (ii) songs of praise to the ancestors precede an approach to the shrine and a spiritual custodian leads all visitors; (iii) it is taboo to cut down a tree in a sacred place since trees constitute the dwelling place of the ancestral spirits and removing them is tantamount to exposing Mwari and the spirits; (iv) the traditional custodian must obtain ancestral spirits' consent before a tree is cut down within the sacred forest; (v) when visiting sacred places in the Matobo Hills, the acceptable behaviour is to remove shoes, wristwatches, and money before entering the area; (vi) all the shrines are accessible throughout the week except on Wednesdays because on this day known as 'Chisi' or 'Zilo', all people are expected to rest.

Failure to observe these norms is believed to result in punishment by the spirits of individuals, or their families, or the entire community (NMMZ 2002, 2004; Makhuvaza 2008). It is apparent that traditional custodianship was, and still is to a large extent in place to manage activities within Matobo and that it is primarily related to religious shrines such as Njelele.

Traditional authorities and the management of heritage resources

The pre-colonial Ndebele State was characterised by an association between the people of the Matopo Hills area and their natural environment. The co-operation between the religious and political authorities served to generate taboos that ensured environmentally friendly economic and social practices. The King appointed and installed all Chiefs with the help of izinyanga and izangoma (medicine men and spirit mediums). The role of the Chiefs, as custodians of the land, was to rule under the guidance of spirit mediums and council elders. The Chief led religious/spiritual ceremonies in their areas, while national ceremonies like inxwala (the first fruits ceremony) were presided over by the King. The Chiefs also played judicial roles to maintain law and order (Ndlovu and Dube 2012). The annexation of Matabeleland by the British Pioneer Column in 1893 took away the nationhood of amaNdebele. The country was then divided into the Mashonaland and Matabeleland Provinces. Chiefs were under a Chief Native Commissioner. Below him was a Native Commissioner (NC) stationed in each district who was assisted in his administrative duties by African functionaries including Chiefs, kraal heads and messengers. Chiefs were transformed from leaders to minor colonial civil servants (Ndlovu and Dube 2012:57). From then on, chieftainship and other positions depended not only on inheritance laws but also on governmental approval. This also eroded the role of the spirit mediums in nominating and installing traditional leaders (Makahamadze et al. 2009). When Zimbabwe attained its independence in 1980, the post-colonial ZANU-PF government adopted socialist policies that excluded the roles of traditional leaders. Powers were shifted from traditional authorities to the state under the District Councils Act (1980), Communal Areas Act (1982), Prime Minister's Directive on Decentralisation (1982), and the Rural District Councils Act of 1988. For instance, the District Councils Act (1980) removed the power to allocate land from the traditional Chiefs and headmen to District Councils, while the Prime Minister's Directive on Decentralization (1982) resulted in the establishment of local institutions known as the Village Development Committees (VIDCOs) and Ward Development Committees (WADCOS). The latter formed a parallel institution to the traditional authority in place at village level, creating friction between elected leaders and the traditional leaders at community level (Makahamadze et al. 2009). After eighteen years of independence, the ZANU-PF government made a sudden shift regarding the way it related to the traditional institutions. The government returned some powers to local chiefs and other traditional leaders with the enactment of the Traditional Leaders Act of 1998 and via amendments made to the Act in 1999, 2001 and 2003 (Makahamadze et al. 2009). The Act governs the conduct and duties of traditional leaders mandated with the task of reviving traditional value systems. The reinstatement of traditional systems in the management of cultural heritage coincided with the land redistribution programme in the late 1990s and early 2000s whereby the government promised to redress the distortions created by colonialism and to return ancestral lands to their traditional owners. This ushered in a new era in which local communities invaded commercial farms and other areas previously owned by white people in order to reclaim their ancestral lands. This was accompanied by a major drive to revive traditional ceremonies such as rainmaking rituals and rites to appease the

ancestors. Some of these ceremonies were even funded by the government (Jopela et al. 2012). Despite the political manipulation, many traditional leaders still remain influential in contemporary Zimbabwe, especially in rural local government. Conflicts over the recognition of priesthood and custodianship of Njelele have been witnessed (Ranger 1999). A case in point is the contests among traditional custodians (i.e. Sitwanyana Ncube, David Ndlovu, and Ngcathu Ncube) on the one hand, and the politicians on the other, over the control of Njelele. From the mid-1980s, all three contestants (Sitwanyana, Ndlovu and Ngcathu) claimed to have been legally installed as custodians and each also claimed strong traditional spiritual connections to the shrine (Ranger 1999; Makhuvaza 2008). Before this contestation over custodianship, the colonial government had tried sometime before the 1960s to declare Njelele a national monument under the Monuments and Relics Act of 1936. Having failed to declare the site a national monument due to strong resistance of local communities on religious grounds, the National Parks Board, decided in 1961 to completely separate the local people and Njelele from Matobo National Parks by moving the park boundary further north to where it is today (Makhuvaza 2008). The issue of proclaiming Njelele a national monument resurfaced again in 1998. Gathering in a public meeting, the then ZANU-PF Minister of Home Affairs, Dumiso Dabengwa, intended to convince the gathering that if Njelele was not going to be proclaimed a national monument, the Matobo hills might not be proclaimed a World Heritage Area. However, the invited public refused to have Njelele proclaimed a national monument, arguing that the shrine would be opened up for tourism opportunities if the proclamation was to go through. Their objection against tourism development was that this will only benefit the NMMZ (Makhuvaza 2008). The site was eventually inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 2003. Various conflicts over Matopo Hills have continued over the years. In two separate incidents, ex-ZANLA (Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army) combatants, apparently in the company of 10 traditional leaders from Mashonaland, repeatedly visited the Matobo shrine to conduct their cleansing ceremony without consulting local traditional leaders. In another incident, over 500 former ZANLA combatants visiting the ZIPRA's (Zimbabwe Peoples' Revolutionary Army) Nampundu and Freedom camps in Zambia collected soil and stones from graves of their cadres who were killed during the liberation war and took them to Matobo Hills in August to conduct rituals (NewsDay, October 9, 2012). In another incident a year later, a group of war veterans wrote a letter to chiefs in Matabeleland South informing them of their intended visit to the Njelele shrine to conduct their rituals at the place of pilgrimage, while also celebrating ZANU-PF's victory in the July. Traditional Chiefs immediately condemned the intended visits, resolving that the police should stop the group from visiting the shrine. Chief Masuku's later added that "after realising government could not protect their shrines, cultural leaders and villagers took it upon themselves to do so" (Financial Gazette, October 3, 2013). A year earlier, the intended visits were described by Chief Malaki Masuku as showing "lack of respect for Ndebele chiefs" (NewsDay, August 10, 2012). A similar concern was raised by the shrine's custodian, uKhulu Tobheka Sifelano Ncube (Radio Dialogue, August 16, 2012). Besides all these challenges, traditional custodians are still exercising control over the access and use of places of cultural significance in the Matobo cultural landscape.

Challenges facing Traditional Custodianship Systems

'Local' socio-cultural and political dynamics
The ICOMOS Evaluation Mission noted in 2003 concerns by elders that younger people were no longer showing much in-

terest in learning and carrying on the traditions in the Matobo area (ICOMOS 2003). According to Makhuvaza and Makhuvaza (2012:29), the recognition and restoration of traditional laws in managing the hills is also made difficult by some in the local communities who had begun embracing Christian values, thus abandoning their traditional beliefs. What this illustrates is that the traditional values that had protected the hills, especially their intangible elements, could now be perceived and regarded as ungodly. As a result, they are challenged by those who hold Christian morals. This led to uKhulu Ncube, the custodian of the Njelele shrine, suggesting that people have turned their backs on traditional rituals, values and beliefs. He urged government to revisit the issue of sacred places and enact laws to protect these shrines and elevate them to national heritage status. According to him, the situation has been worsened by the fact that some traditional chiefs have converted to Christianity and now despise traditional values as backward (The Herald 2014). As a result, some Chiefs no longer pioneer traditional Ndebele shrines as the answer to social, economic or even political problems. For instance, Headman Moyo, who is under Chief Masuku in the Khumalo communal lands, is Christian and no longer appreciates traditional beliefs and customs that sustained his forefathers (Ndlovu and Dube 2012:60). Despite the fact that the conservation ideology imposed by the rain-shrines has helped to preserve the environment, such an empowered conservation ideology is lacking because the traditional custodianship systems have been tampered with by colonisation and the post-independence politics. Consequently, there is rampant cutting of the grey mukwa tree due to demand for curios. The taboos that would have once restricted the cutting of these trees are no longer enforced or respected, nor do they hold sway amongst the population, whose ultimate concern is monetary gain. Today, even though it is recognized that traditional custodianship are still effective in parts of the Matobo Hills, this management system is limited to areas outside the park, as State laws still prohibit locals from performing activities that are deemed to threaten its environment and wildlife (Makhuvaza and Makhuvaza 2012). While this has been the case, the new conservation ethic (the western approach) has not been embraced by local communities (Nyathi and Ndiwini 2005). Another challenge to the traditional custodianship systems is the perception by local communities that local government institutions are extensions of the ruling party, ZANU-PF. The Traditional Leadership Act provides that chiefs are not allowed to be partisan. However, due to political interference in succession and installation, and thanks to the monetary gains available to them by the government, chiefs end up submitting to politics. They become civil servants on the government payroll. The politicisation of tradition leadership had given birth to a mistrust and disrespect of traditional leaders (Ndlovu and Dube 2012). For instance, with regards to the current under-development in the Matobo district, some community members point fingers at the traditional leadership system. Chief Malaki Masuku and his traditional leadership are often accused of failing to represent the interests of the people due to his political affiliation with ZANU-PF. The Chief's relocation to a farmhouse 90 km away from community has created a widening gulf between himself and the community members, as he is not easily accessible (Ndlovu and Dube 2012:60).

Requirements under the World Heritage Convention

Regardless of the challenges facing TCS, it is undeniable that traditions and values associated with specific places in the Matobo Hills cultural landscape are still living and valued by modern-day peoples of Zimbabwe. They still invoke and consult the shrine in times of crisis such as drought, illness and death, domestic and animal disease, and during agricultural seasons of sowing and reaping, among other things (Makhuvaza 2008; Makhuvaza and

Makhuvaza 2012). Despite the political interference, the case of Matobo Hills also illustrates that the traditional custodians and the traditional leadership remains a very important actor in the safeguarding of places of cultural significance such as Njelele. It is also important to realise that elements of TCS have been integrated into the state-based management of the site. In fact, according to the Matobo Hills World Heritage Site Management Plan 2004-2009 (March 2004) a number of principles and rules are in place to safeguard sacred areas and sites. For instance, (i) no gardens or homesteads are supposed to be erected close to the sites; (ii) water should not be collected using a pot with soot or a pot that is used for cooking; (iii) the wells should not be any physical intervention, that is, no cement should be used to construct well covers and no metal pipes are allowed to be fitted on the sites; (iv) no tourists and young people who are sexually active are allowed during the rain making ceremonies; (v) tree around the wells should not be cut down; (vi) custodians of the sites should always inform people of the 'dos' and 'don'ts' at those sites; (vii) only very old women who neither engage in sexual activities nor have menstrual periods are allowed to clean sacred wells (NMMZ 2004:51).

Mount Mulanje Cultural Landscape, Malawi

Location and description of the site

Mount Mulanje is the highest mountain in south-central Africa, located in Mulanje and Phalombe Districts of south-eastern Malawi. The highest point at MMCL is Sapitwa at 3,002 m above sea level (MTC 2013). The Mountain itself and the area immediately around it (with villages, small-scale cultivation, and tea estates), makes up the Mount Mulanje Cultural Landscape (MMCL). This property is proposed for inscription on the World Heritage List and is in the Tentative List of the State Party of Malawi. The core zone of the MMCL consists of the Mulanje Mountain Forest Reserve (MMFR), with an area of 642.5 km² and the buffer zone, consisting of 851 km² of land. The MMCL is well known for its endemism, complex biotic evolutionary history and biodiversity, containing the unique Mulanje cedar and other endemic plants and animal species. The property also contains two architectural sites, one of which is registered as a national monument (Fort Lister) and a former military post created to suppress the Indian Ocean trade of enslaved people and colonial mansions. Besides these two architectural sites, the MMCL also has several archaeological sites related to the Late Stone and Iron Age (MTC 2013). Mount Mulanje is a living associative cultural landscape linked to the Mang'anja (Nyanja), Yao and Lhomwe people. The mountain features act not only as a symbol, but also as the centre of associated belief systems. While stories, ritual and spiritual associations are linked to the entire mountain, few places are ascribed special significance. Specific ceremonies, songs and prayers are undertaken before and during journeys to the mountain. Mount Mulanje is ascribed the ability to cause rain and fertility, to heal diseases, to withhold visitors for limited or unlimited time and to move the earth and to cause hazard and death. These beliefs, and the associated rituals, transcend the younger religions of Christianity and Islam that were established in the region and hold together all communities residing around Mount Mulanje (ICOMOS 2014). The main ethnic groups in Mulanje are the Lomwe, Yao and Mang'anja, who traditionally follow a matrilineal system of descent and kinship. The local population within 7 km distance of the mountain is estimated to be around 400,000 and are distributed in 139 villages (Wisborg and Jumbe 2010). Many of these locals practice subsistence farming and those living near the MMFR boundaries also harvest and sell forest products such as honey, fruits, wild vegetables, medicinal plants, mushrooms and some wildlife. In addition, they also gather firewood, tim-

ber, and grass for thatch and broom making. A small number of people run ecotourism ventures and collect wood for carving. The MMFR is in accordance with the Forestry Act of 1997 managed by the mandated authority, the Department of Forestry. The Department of Forestry has the mandate to conserve biodiversity and protect watersheds, through the co-management of forest reserves (MTC 2013). Another important stakeholder is the Mulanje Mountain Conservation Trust (MMCT). This independent, non-governmental endowment trust was established in 2001 and funded through the World Bank. Its aim is to provide long-term, reliable support for the management of MMFR and the MMCL, and to provide a stream of funds and assistance to local communities to demonstrate tangible benefits from conservation of the resource base. The conservation of Malawi's cultural heritage is within the mandate of the Department of Culture. Conservation of monuments is the mandate of the subsidiary Department of Antiquities, while the Department of Arts and Crafts and Museums of Malawi focuses on moveable and intangible heritage. The Departments of Culture has managed the Fort Lister monument and initiated their commitment to other responsibilities at Mulanje (MTC 2013). The creation of MMCT was rooted in a strong perception that the government, through the Department of Forestry, lacked adequate resources, both financial, human and institutional, to cope with the challenges of sustainable resource management on Mulanje Mountain. It is no surprise that the MMCT appears to be the most active of the main partners and has taken a clear lead and initiator role in management processes. However, while MMCT is driving the planning, the implementation remains the duty of the Department of Forestry. This has led the MMCT to encroach upon the public authority of the Department of Forestry by engaging in 'law enforcement' (Wisborg & Jumbe 2010). In fact, while the work of the MMCT is important (e.g. awareness-raising and outreach programmes to the local population), the Trust neither have the expertise nor mandate to manage the cultural heritage resources of the property (ICOMOS 2014:64). Thus, the relationship between the Department of Forestry and the MMCT is fraught with tension and needs to be improved in several respects.

Traditional Custodianship System at Mount Mulanje

Local communities' worldview and sacred places

The TCS at Mulanje is based on knowledge transmitted predominantly by elders or specifically designated teachers of the ritual practice and spiritual associations. The teachings by these people include conservation messages concerning the protection of forests (MTC 2013). These messages are passed in different forms. The belief systems attached to Mulanje have strong associations with the ancestors of all of the different cultural groups living around the Mountain as well as with their predecessors, the Abatwa. Each cultural group has its own traditions around how they came to live in the shadow of Mount Mulanje including when that happened (MTC 2013). Amongst the cultural ceremonies attached to Mulanje are those of birth and initiation. For instance, and as in other forests across neighbouring districts, forest medicine from Mulanje plays a strong role for mothers and their new-born babies. The importance of forests for initiation ceremonies varies. According to the study by Concern Universal (2014:26), this was said to be greatest for the Chewa, Lomwe and Yao people and still very significant across the Mulanje district. Besides the birth and initiation ceremonies, there are graveyards located inside the forests. These belief systems have created a sacred landscape that demands, of users of the Mountain, a strict code of behaviour.

Such behaviour is designed to protect them when visiting the site, and to protect and sustain the resources of the Mountain (ICOMOS 2014). Besides the taboos associated with Mount Mulanje, there are ceremonies that are associated with a journey to the mountain. To ensure that such taboos are always adhered to, amongst others, it is claimed there is a spirit snake, Napolo, which captures people who look up at the Mountain. It is described in some legends as a human-like one-eyed, one legged, one-armed creature that floats slowly in the air, and waits to capture (MTC 2013). Generally speaking, the mountain is a powerful rainmaker and is turned to during times of drought, being a place for rainmaking ceremonies. In this regard the Dziwelankhalamba pool at the foot of the Mountain is particularly significant. It is linked to the Abatwa. The fact that Chiefs are only ex-officio members of the Assemblies, and often restricted to being simply advisors to their local development committees, also diminished their powers (Cammarack et al. 2009). As a result, Chiefs frequently complain that freedom and democracy have undermined people's respect for them since the transition to democracy (Concern Universal 2014). On the other hand Chiefs have been able to regain some ground at sub-national level. Recent studies in Mulanje show that traditional leaders, especially at VDC level, play roles beyond the advisory role to, often times include assent, veto and even overruling powers regarding VDC and VNRMC decisions (Jana 2009; Concern Universal 2014). In addition, the State has relied on the traditional leaders to champion its development agenda by using them as agents of change. Finally, the ability of Chiefs to mobilise votes means that they have gained significance in the multiparty era (Cammarack et al. 2009).

Traditional authorities and the management of heritage resources

The framework for Local Communities participation in Natural Resource Management in Malawi is defined under the Decentralisation Policy of 1998 and the Local Government Act of 1998. Accordingly, Mulanje District follows the local government structures where the District Assembly is set up as a statutory body. Below the District Assembly are, Area Development Committees (ADC) that oversee development activities in several villages that fall under a Traditional Authority (Chief). The TA seats as an ex-officio member of the ADC (Jana 2009). MMFR falls under the jurisdiction of three Traditional Authorities, Nkanda, Laston Njema and Mabuka (Concern Universal 2014). At the base of the districts' governance systems there are Village Development Committees (VDC). There are seventy nine VDCs (546 villages in total) in Mulanje, each having an average of seven villages (Taulo et al. 2008). The relationship between the state and the institution of traditional leadership has been adversarial and cordial depending on the prevailing circumstances. In many instances, Malawi's traditional Chiefs have suffered serious blows to their powers since 1994. The introduction of local councillors challenged the Chiefs' position as representatives and gatekeepers to the local population. Nonetheless, Wisborg and Jumbe (2010:29) suggests that "while giving de jure authority and resource rights to communities with one hand, state agencies recentralized de facto authority and disempowered many communities with the other through rigid procedural and technical hurdles to community eligibility". For instance, two Group Villages (Nakhonyo and Mangombo) in Mulanje area, where the co-management agreements between the Department of Forestry is operational, the Lomwe community had reportedly reduced the length of their initiation ceremonies from 30 to 7 days in part as a result of the scarcity of well covered forest areas, and they were not permitted to conduct their ceremonies inside the MMFR (Concern Universal 2014). In fact, the co-management agreements currently in place (e.g. in Mulanje and Kasungu) do not include cultural provisions despite the fact

that it has been noticed that initiation ceremonies are scarcer and shorter in many areas around Mulanje owing, at least in part, to a lack of tree cover outside the neighbouring forest reserve. Another difficulty in the relationship between the State agencies and Traditional Authorities lies in the fact that there is still a lack of genuine effort from State agencies and NGOs to learn from communities, embrace or negotiate with their perceptions of the 'values' of the mountain, which are sometimes taken-for-granted (Wisborg and Jumbe 2010:35). In fact, little consideration is given to the development of management plans and the involvement of forest-dependent communities in the management of the local forest resources. Negotiated management plans are potentially a tool for equalising and integrating local/traditional and the Western scientific knowledge and interests. Yet the implicit need for formal scientific validity of this tool creates a barrier to equality in negotiations (Zulu 2012). As a result, institutions such as the MMCT tend to take for granted 'lack of knowledge' or 'lack of interest' from the local community in the environment as the cause for environmental degradation around Mount Mulanje area.

Challenges facing Traditional Custodianship Systems

There is no doubt that the cultural traditions of the Mang'anja, Yao and Lhomwe people underpin the spiritual value and ritual practice associated with Mount Mulanje. As recently noted by ICOMOS (2014), specific cultural values, fears and taboos act as traditional protection mechanisms at Mount Mulanje. In other words, the traditional custodianship systems are still effective. However, it should be noted, as Wisborg and Jumbe (2010:29) rightfully put it, that "it is not the 'unique value' of the mountain [and its traditional custodianship system] that will save it, but rather the agency of individuals and groups based on the real opportunities they have in using the mountain and on their ability to learn and take their insight into action". It is, therefore, important to nurture people's sense that they do have knowledge and that they play a role in sustainable resource use. The State agencies (Department of Forestry) and NGOs (MMCT) need to acknowledge the fact that communities operating within traditional custodianship systems can manage their heritage on behalf of the State. However, there are various elements that have been identified as posing threat to traditional custodianship systems. First, there is a widespread feeling among villagers in Mulanje that previously, it was possible for the Chief and Village Headmen to set and enforce by-laws on the management of the riverbanks, springs and streams. People feel that since the new political dispensation which has brought 'many freedoms', enforcement of these rules and regulation has been made difficult (Concern Universal 2014:28). Second, because the rules and regulation under traditional custodianship are not written down, enforcement is dependent on the charisma and strength of the local leaders. Thus, if the local leader is weak, villagers do not fear/respect him or her (Kafakoma and Silungwe 2003). Third, there has been decline in the value attached to the forest by locals. Fourth, population growth and poverty were causing a severe threat to the trees and forest areas (Concern Universal 2014). Fifth, and as noted in a recent ICOMOS Report (2014), the current management plan does not address the cultural aspects in particular the spiritual and traditional custodianship systems. The lack of reference to and interaction with traditional custodianship practices in the management plan and current official management system increases difficulties in terms of community involvement.

Lessons from the case studies

From the on-going analysis of the nature of TCS in the cultural landscapes of Matobo Hills and Mount Mulanje, several points of significance emerge. First, the analysis clearly illustrates that

the use and management of natural and cultural resources is sustained by a wider frame of religious beliefs that define the codes, roles, obligations and behavioural patterns of the community towards the space and the resources. Control of access and the use of such sacred places, is vested in specific members of the community, the traditional custodians. Notwithstanding the potential of traditional custodianship for managing heritage places that are imbued with sacred values, these systems can lose their effectiveness, or be weakened at best, in a context of overwhelming socio-political stress. Four points that are a significant threat to TCS should be highlighted here: (i) in the case of Matobo Hills, the 2004-2009 Management Plan indicates that graffiti, usually in the form of charcoal, is a problem at some sites with rock art, with those grossly affected being in communal areas such as Silozwane; (ii) the violation of taboos and access restrictions to sites by both the local people and visitors has led to the desecration of some heritage places; (iii) due to high population, uncontrolled burning, and the absence of alternative sources of fuel for domestic use, deforestation has become a pronounced problem in communal areas; and (iv) the high demand for curios has contributed to uncontrolled logging of selected wood species. Such practices have severely degraded parts of the WH Site (NMMZ 2004). These situations clearly show that traditional systems are currently under strain and their effectiveness in protecting places of cultural significance in and around Matobo Hills has been reduced. Second, sacred sites are contested landscapes. Likewise, the custodianship and management of such heritage places is often inseparable from issues of power and, ultimately, from local and national politics. The disputes among traditional custodians and between these and politicians for the control of sacred places have been witnessed, as per the Matobo case study discussed above. Sites like Njelele in the Matobo and other places of cultural significance are manifestations of power and all who need power, either to control a small community (village) or the whole chieftaincy (district), turn to them for legitimisation. The power dynamics associated with the current control over heritage resources are clearly part of the local politics that are also shaped by power relations amongst members of the community. Third, the custodianship system is largely dependent on local social mechanisms and social institutions that regulate the use of resources. These institutions follow the shifting of the social organisation of societies and the flux of historical change. In fact, apart from the local power dynamics, current traditional custodianship systems have undergone and will certainly continue to undergo dynamics and evolutionary changes as factors such as migrations, civil-war, and globalization constantly incorporate new value systems into people's understanding of the spiritual, social and physical environment (Katsamudanga 2003). However, if traditional custodianship has survived thus far (or appears to have) and continues to play a key role in the management of heritage, we can assume that it will continue, despite the impact of factors such as globalisation or modernity. As I have argued above, traditional custodianship is a value-based system that is prone to change according to dynamics in the socio-cultural and political-economic atmospheres of the community in which it operates. Currently, the general consensus is that culture needs to be recognized as dynamic and having the ability to adapt under change (Cocks 2006). Therefore traditional custodianship systems, as derived from specific cultural settings, must be understood as operating within the dynamic processes of social, political, ideological, economic and cultural exchange with the constant re-articulation of tradition resulting in a persistence of certain cultural practices among the local communities. Lastly, traditional leaders (custodians), both living and those who have passed on, play a key role in ensuring that the uses of heritage assets are governed by customary rules and government laws (Sætersdal 2004; Jopela 2010a, 2010b). And traditional institutions (traditional custodians) are hybrid in nature;

they operate at both traditional and modern levels, appearing as African custodians of local tradition and heritage, and also as modern cosmopolitans. The case studies also illustrate the 'false' dichotomy that exists between 'traditional' and 'modernity'. For instance, Christianity has been singled out as one of the causes for the decline of traditional custodianship systems. However, it is important to note that this may not always be the case. For instance, the late traditional custodian of Chinhamapere rock art site in the Vumba Cultural Landscape (Manica, central Mozambique) used to attend mass every Sunday. However, she also spoke with her grandmother's ancestral spirit by walking up the slope to Chinhamapere rock art site. Similarly, the supreme traditional leader of Manica district, mambo Chirara, is a devout Christian, and is very often visited for bible study. Thus, although the traditional authority and the local community frequently refer to community behaviour and practices as 'traditions', often with nostalgia (expressing the feeling that something 'traditional' has been lost), they also embrace what we might consider symbols of modernity (e.g. Christianity) that become part of their contemporary way of living (Fairweather 2003). In the Matobo area, despite one's religious orientation, annual contributions of money and grain towards the Njelele Shrine pilgrimage are required in Hobodo community in Mangwe. Every year towards the beginning of the rainy season, Chief Hobodo, as the custodian of Kalanga religion and customs, sends a delegation of amawosana (people with rain-making spirits) to the Njelele Shrine to go and ask for rains from Ngwali on behalf of the community. Before the departure of the high-powered delegation comprising amawosana, senior village elders and heads, each family contributes money for the trip and grain to feed delegates during the normally week-long pilgrimage. Notwithstanding the Njelele pilgrimage and other traditional religious rites the Kalanga people are involved in, almost ninety percent of villagers are members of different Christian churches such as the Roman Catholic Church, Zion Christian Church, Holy Apostolic Church of Zion, Twelve Disciples, Twelve Apostles and other apostolic sects. Some villagers have actually complained that cohabitating of Hobodo villagers with both Christianity and African traditional religion has created a religious crisis as there are now Christened inyangas (Tshuma 2012). Such dynamics are also illustrative of the fact that cultural heritage resources are constantly appropriated, re-constructed and re-used by living communities to suit their present needs, such as their use for tourism or ritual activities. In fact, traditional institutions operate at both the traditional and the modern level. They act as African custodians of local tradition and heritage, (traditional ceremonies, sacred places, etc.) and also as modern cosmopolitans who engage with other cultures (Appiah 2006). They do these by dressing in African, European and Asian clothes, interacting with neighbours through labour migration across southern Africa region and in religious belief, within the geographic space of Matobo. This hybrid nature of traditional custodians is an important element for developing an improved system for the effective management of sacred sites.

The way forward: should traditional custodianship be integrated into the state-based management framework?

From the community point of view, the objective of traditional custodianship systems is to ensure the continuous use of cultural and natural resources, while safeguarding the site and its associated values. This view is consonant with the current accepted values-based management approach, wherein "conservation of heritage sites comprises all the processes of looking after a place so as to retain its cultural significance"

(The Australian ICOMOS 1999:2; Lennon 2002; Pearson and Sullivan 1995). Seen from this perspective, traditional custodianship systems may offer sustainability in terms of conservation (as defined above) of the values that make sacred sites significant to communities. This would be the role of traditional custodianship systems within an integrated management framework. Traditional custodianship represents a value-based model of natural and cultural heritage stewardship. For instance, traditional custodianship would guide the preservation of the values associated with sacred places that are continuously used for local traditional practices (e.g. Njelele). Drawing on Sheridan (2008:29-30), and in light of the challenges outline above, I believe that traditional custodianship systems are unlikely to be integrated into state-based systems without disrupting the social relationships and cultural conservation mechanisms of traditional systems. Thus, it is crucial to question, not only how to incorporate traditional custodianship systems into state-based management frameworks, but also, how to re-orientate heritage management in Africa through engaging with social institutions of TCS (Jopela and Fredriksen 2015). The adoption of a legal framework that preserves and facilitates the dynamism manifested in cultural landscapes as well as the interaction between different management systems is perhaps one of the crucial steps towards a more integrated management system. Therefore, I believe that the concept of legal pluralism in heritage legislation, as defined by Mumma (2002), would be best suited for a more integrated and meaningful management system. The legal pluralism concept is premised on the idea that the "legal protection of cultural landscapes is best provided by a protective system, which incorporates the various normative systems that, in practice, operate in the African communities concerned, i.e. the state law regime and the customary/traditional law regime. Both regimes would be placed in a symbiotic and complementary, rather than in an antagonistic, relationship" (Mumma 2002:156). In such a framework, the State agencies will act more as a regulatory authority (e.g. setting broad standards or benchmarks to be adhered to in the management of heritage places) rather than as the 'owner' of heritage. It will also provide expertise, where necessary, on how heritage should be managed (Nodoro and Kiriama 2008:62). This would leave the day-to-day management of heritage to the local communities, through their traditional custodianship systems. This would all take place within a management framework with clearly defined roles, responsibilities and incentives for all role players. The suggested heritage framework has the potential to ensure the rights of local communities to access cultural heritage. For places like Njelele, traditional custodianship would allow for the continuous use of the site and the preservation of values within a framework of social, cultural, political and natural environment that is dynamic. At the same time, through the formalisation process, traditional custodianship would also be given charge of protecting other elements of natural and cultural sites (tangible heritage) that are currently protected under the formal heritage legislation (e.g. the Mulanje Cedar in MMCL), but that are presently unimportant elements for the local communities. While the TCS, would manage the continuity, or change, of the spiritual values associated with the sites, the formal heritage system would be in charge of guiding the TCS to protect the broad range of values that are not currently protected under TCS. Hence, the adoption and implementation of an integrated management system for World Heritage in southern Africa will require much more than just reforming legislation (e.g. thereby making traditional custodianship systems 'formal') and putting in place implementation arrangements. The process transcends the purely legal, to the attitudinal, and calls for the political willingness of the formal heritage institutions to move from a state-centred management system to a more integrated one.

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