Restoration and Restitution of Cultural Heritage, the Case of the Ndebele Monarch: The Post-colonial Dilemma in Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

This article looks at the public debate, mostly in newspaper articles, which followed recent attempts to coronate a king of the Ndebele people in Zimbabwe. The High Court of Zimbabwe declared that it was unconstitutional for the Ndebele royal family to install a king. What ensued was a polarised public debate between those who strongly supported the resuscitation of the pre-colonial monarchy and those who had strong reservations against the move. Pro-monarchists alleged that the cultural rights of the Ndebele people as enshrined in various international human rights protocols as well as the constitution of Zimbabwe were being violated. Whilst those against the revival of the traditional institution claimed that national security was at stake. This case was a litmus test for the post-colonial African nation-state's commitment to upholding cultural rights of its citizens. In this article we look at the issues associated with the restoration of the Ndebele monarch. We also attempt to establish how the various actors in this issue have deployed cultural heritage in the quest for legitimacy as well as to foster counter narratives. We argue that cultural heritage and cultural revivalism should be harnessed for the common good of society and not incite civil or ethnic strife. Emerging issues from this article are of interest to heritage management theory and its general practice on the African continent.

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"We must lose our ethnic identities in order to find our true selves within the context of Zimbabwean identity" (Robert Mugabe quoted by Ucko 1994: 264)

Introduction

There is nostalgia by Africanists who believe that deeply rooted cultural institutions and practices, curtailed by European colonisation, are the ultimate answer to current African problems. Post-colonial nation-states like Zimbabwe are home to people of diverse cultural backgrounds who have been demanding cultural rights that they were deprived of by the colonial administration. In some cases, traditional governance systems have been restored. Traditional leaders are largely viewed as bearers and custodians of cultural values, traditions and customs. Thus, traditional governance systems are deemed critical in the preservation and safeguarding of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage on the African continent (Joffroy 2005; Maradze 2003; Ndoro 2001). Traditional leaders remain critical in the effective management of cultural heritage as custodians and connoisseurs of traditions. Recognising the critical role of traditional leaders in Zimbabwe the *Traditional Leadership Act* [Chapter 29:17] was enacted in 1998. This Act gave traditional leaders the mandate to promote and uphold cultural values in areas under their jurisdiction. According to Katsamudanga (2003) this renewed the powers of traditional leaders to protect their cultural heritage. The Supreme Law in the country, *Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment* [No. 20] *Act* of 2013, further granted traditional leaders the mandate, in Section 282, (b) to take measures to preserve the culture, traditions, history and heritage of their communities, including sacred shrines. This leaves no doubt that the post-colonial Zimbabwean state acknowledges the vital role of traditional leadership institutions in the continued survival of cultural heritage.

Framed within the context of multiculturalism, cultural rights and heritage management, this paper critically discusses recent attempts to coronate Mr Bulelani Collins Lobengula Khumalo (a South African citizen) as the king of the Ndebele people in Zimbabwe. The coronation, which was scheduled for the 3rd of March 2018 at Barbourfields Stadium in the city of Bulawayo, was blocked by the government following the High Court ruling that it was unconstitutional. The issue opened a pandora's box which played out as a public debate in the mainstream media outlets. Some people argued that by blocking the coronation of the king the cultural rights of the Ndebele people were being violated. In a newspaper article that was published by Nqobile Tshili and Mashudu Netsianda in *The Chronicle* entitled "Ndebele king coronation: VP Mohadi steps in", Chief Mathema declared that:

> "On what grounds is the Government declaring the coronation unconstitutional? This coronation is not for political purposes but cultural practices. We're doing so to revive the cultural aspects that are enshrined in the country's Constitution. The Minister is not a cultural expert to declare the coronation illegal" (The Chronicle, 2 March 2018)

On the other hand, some individuals were not comfortable with the timing of the coronation on the eve of the country's 2018 general elections. This group suspected that there was a sinister motive behind this act of cultural revivalism. The attempt to coronate the Ndebele king was viewed as a direct provocation and threat to the sovereignty of the nation-state. Writing against the reinstallation of the Ndebele monarch Ndlovu (2018) argued that, "Chieftainships and kingships have long been overtaken by modern socio-cultural and economic trends". What this simply demonstrates is that cultural heritage issues can become politically charged and emotive (Gathercole & Lowenthal 1994; Harrison 2010; Meskell 1998). Currently cultural rights are frequently framed within the broader human rights discourse (Logan, Langfield & Craith 2009; Meskell 2010; Silverman & Ruggles 2007; Silverman 2011). According to Logan, Langfield & Craith (2009: 3) the *Declaration on the Principles of International Cultural Cooperation* of 1966 by UNESCO makes it clear that: "Each culture has a dignity and value which must be respected and preserved". The nexus between cultural heritage, cultural rights and politics requires candid scholarly debate amongst heritage professionals in Africa.

This paper further interrogates if post-colonial constitutional nation-states can coexist with traditional governance systems. Some of the 'chieftaincies' which were obliterated during the colonial period were recently restored by the post-colonial government in Zimbabwe (Bishi 2015). However, the revival of the Ndebele monarch is rather unique and interesting from several facets. Several questions need to be answered concerning the revival of the Ndebele monarch. These questions include among others: Did the state infringe on the rights of the Ndebele people by blocking the installation of the king? Can monarchs easily co-exist with modern nation-states in post-colonial Africa? What does the revival of this monarch entail for survival and preservation of Ndebele cultural heritage?

The Historical Context

It is crucial to give a detailed historical background of the Ndebele monarch for the reader to fully appreciate the events that shaped the cultural heritage, current revival and restoration efforts. The south western part of modern day Zimbabwe is home to the Ndebele people who arrived on the scene in 1839. Ndebele people trace their humble beginnings to modern day KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. This group left the coastal area of KwaZulu-Natal to trek northwards under Mzilikazi Khumalo during the *Mfecane* period (Beach 1984; Cobbing 1976; Lindgren 2002; Lye 1969). Mzilikazi was a lieutenant under the famous King Shaka Zulu of the Zulu kingdom. Following a disagreement with king Shaka, in the 1820s, it is alleged that Mzilikazi rebelled. Mzilikazi and his people fled northwards across the Dranksberg Escarpment to settle somewhere close to the present day Rustenburg area in South Africa. Mzilikazi subsequently assimilated a sizeable number of the Sotho/Tswana and Pedi people in South Africa. The Khumalo clan became members of the royal ruling elite. Whilst in Rustenburg area in the 1830s Mzilikazi, by now the king of Ndebele people, was blessed with two 'royal' sons namely Nkulumane and Lobengula. One of the succession rules of the Ndebele is that *inkosi izalwa yinkosi* ('a king is sired by a king') (Nyathi 2001; Nyathi 2017). Accordingly, sons born before the king's instalment are not considered 'royal' thus they are disqualified from the succession race.

In the late 1830s it was time for King Mzilikazi and his Ndebele people to move again because of the constant attacks by the large groups of invading Boer Voortrekkers (Lye 1969). As Mzilikazi's people were moving further northwards across the Limpopo River they split into two groups. For close to two years there was no contact from King Mzilikazi's party hence the other group presumed he was dead. During Mzilikazi's indefinite absence the other party installed his eldest 'royal' son, Nkulumane, as the king. However, Mzilikazi unexpectedly resurfaced and the rebels were crushed whilst his son Nkulumane allegedly escaped into exile. On arrival in the south western part of modern day Zimbabwe Mzilikazi overran the Rozvi people to establish what others have preferred to call the 'Mthwakazi kingdom', which will be discussed later on (Nyathi 2006). Mzilikazi subsequently consolidated his authority to assemble a very powerful polity in southern Africa (Beach 1984; Cobbing 1983; Pikirayi 1997). Mzilikazi later died on the 9th of September 1868 and was subsequently interred in a cave at eNtumbane. Following his death there was some hope that Nkulumane, the eldest 'royal' son and rightful heir, would resurface. After Nkulumane failed to turn up his younger 'royal' brother Lobengula was installed as the king after a bloody succession war. The ascent of Lobengula in 1870 was not acceptable to the Nkulumane faction. Nkulumane's faction has kept alive the narrative that Lobengula was illegitimate to this date.

In accordance with the Ndebele traditions when Lobengula became the new king he went on to establish his own royal capital at koBulawayo (Old Bulawayo) (Makuvaza & Burrett 2011: 193; Nyathi 2001: 64; Pikirayi 1997: 156). After settling at koBulawayo King Lobengula moved his royal capital once again in 1881 to GuBuluwayo. Lobengula instructed his generals to set ablaze koBulawayo before leaving for the new site. GuBuluwayo was established at the current site of the State House, the official residence of the President of Zimbabwe, in the city of Bulawayo. King Lobengula was involved in events that shaped the course of the history of modern day Zimbabwe. With his rise to prominence Europeans started to meddle in the affairs of the kingdom and ended up deceiving the king. He was duped to sign the Rudd Concession which was subsequently used by Cecil John Rhodes' British South African Company or Pioneer Column to invade the landscape that we now call Zimbabwe in the 1890s. Following the occupation of 'Mashonaland', the Pioneer Column soon turned its attention to 'Matabeleland' through the Anglo-Ndebele war which was executed in 1893 (Ndlovu-Gathseni 2008). The Ndebele warriors were no match to the superior fire power of the Maxims guns that were used by the Pioneer Column. After realising that defeat was imminent the king left GuBuluwayo with his wives and a sizeable number of followers. As Lobengula was leaving, the royal quarters at GuBuluwayo were set on fire upon his orders. Allan Wilson and his patrol were in hot pursuit to catch up with the now fugitive king who was heading northwards. Allan Wilson's patrol was exterminated after being ambushed by the Ndebele at the battle of Pupu on the 4th of December in 1893.

The fate of King Lobengula after the outbreak of the Anglo-Ndebele war in 1893 remains an issue of contest. Some claim that the fugitive king died of fever or small pox whilst others claim that he took poison to avoid capture in 1894 (Cooke 1970; Roberts 2004). Others claim that King Lobengula actually crossed the Zambezi River into a safe haven in modern day northern Zambia (Lindgren 2002: 57; Nyathi

2001: 67; Roberts 2004). His final resting place remains a closely guarded secret. It is, however, indisputable that a burial that was later discovered at Malindi in Chief Pashu's area, in north western Zimbabwe, had personal possessions of King Lobengula (Cooke 1970; Roberts 2004). Cooke (1970) who carried out the scientific examination of the grave at Malindi concluded that the burial goods belonged to King Lobengula. However he was unable to conclusively designate the grave as the final resting place of the king. Nonetheless, the presumed grave of King Lobengula was declared a national monument to prevent further desecration by treasure hunters in 1943.

After the conquest and occupation of 'Matabeleland' by the European settlers the Ndebele monarch, kingdom and its military regiments were disbanded. The Ndebele people were simply not allowed to install a supreme leader again during the colonial era (Lindgren 2002: 58). Potential heirs to King Lobengula's throne who included his 'royal' sons Njube, Mphezeni, Nguboyenja and Sidojiwa were whisked away by the colonial administration in 1894 to the then Cape Colony (Ndlovu 2019: 84; Nyathi 2001: 68; Roberts 2005). However, Sidojiwa who was too young was soon returned to 'Matabeleland'. It was feared that if the 'royal' sons had stayed behind they would be the rallying point for the Ndebele people. In the Cape Colony the Ndebele royals were given Western education to inculcate European ideals and wean them off from traditionalist and royalist ambitions under the watchful eye of Cecil John Rhodes (Roberts 2005: 5). Some claim that based on the principle of 'a king is sired by a king' individuals like Nyamande and Tshakilisha who were presumably born before Lobengula's ascent to the throne were not supposed to harbour any ambitions to succeed their father (Roberts 2005). Njube was largely seen as Lobengula's eldest 'royal' son and apparent heir. Unfortunately, Lobengula's exiled 'royal' sons had little interaction with the Ndebele people. Their offsprings as well had very limited contact with Ndebele. For example two of Njube's sons, Albert and Rhodes, were allowed to settle in Matabeleland in 1926 but were gagged not to assert their royal claims. Albert and Rhodes were subsequently sent back into exile in South Africa by the colonial administration in 1933 and 1936 respectively. It is important to note that the colonial administration succeeded to systematically and effectively alienate King Lobengula's prospective heirs from the Ndebele people (Roberts 2005). Prince Bulelani Colin Lobengula Khumalo who recently surfaced to reclaim the throne that was left by King Lobengula is a descendent of Njube, one of King Lobengula's sons. Bulelani Colin Lobengula Khumalo who was born and bred in the Eastern Cape is a South African citizen. Commentators and rivalries dismissed him as a 'foreigner' who could not be installed as the king of the Ndebele people in Zimbabwe (Ndlovu, Tshuma & Ngwenya 2019: 88). Others welcomed him as a hero who was coming back from 'forced exile'. Sibling rivalry since time immemorial has been an enemy of monolithic family unity. Zwide Kalanga Khumalo (self-proclaimed King Lobengula Nyamande II) claims that his grandfather Nyamande was actually born in 1873 three years after the coronation of King Lobengula. Zwide Kalanga Khumalo thus claims that Nyamande the eldest 'royal' son and apparent heir of King Lobengula. Peter Zwide Khumalo challenged the coronation of his rivalry Bulelani Colin Lobengula Khumalo in the courts of law. Then there is Stanley Raphael Khumalo (self-proclaimed King Mzilikazi II) who claims that his grandfather was Khulumba Khumalo who ran away from King Lobengula who was trying to kill him during the succession skirmishes

after the death of Mzilikazi. As a result, there are three claimants of the Ndebele throne who have been making headlines in the newspapers for various antics. The project to restore the Ndebele monarch has become a struggle within a struggle at 'family' level. According to Makuvaza and Burrett (2011: 206) the Khumalo family is large and fractured due to competing interests which results in them undermining each other.

After the conquest, Europeans officially named the western part of their newly found colony 'Matabeleland' whilst the territory to the east became 'Mashonaland'. European conquest and subsequent colonial rule (1890-1980) disrupted social, political and economic institutions of indigenous Africans. For example, racist land tenure laws like the *Land Apportionment Act* of 1930 and *Land Tenure Act* of 1959 resulted in the forced eviction of Africans from their ancestral homeland to make way for commercial farms, wild life conservancies, monuments and mines. According Pwiti & Ndoro (1999) indigenous African people did not only lose their land but they lost access to their cultural heritage sites. The institution of traditional leadership was severely distorted during the colonial era (Weinrich 1971). Firstly, the forced relocations of people during the colonial period meant that some "chieftaincies" and "kingdoms" were abolished. Bishi (2015: 32) notes that boundaries of pre-colonial polities were severely altered or reconfigured as the colonial government was appropriating land. Secondly, prior to European colonisation traditional leaders were appointed and installed by their clan members and ancestral spirits. However, after colonisation the European settlers started to meddle in the selection and appointment of traditional leaders. Up to this day, the state has the final say in the succession and instalment of traditional leaders. Thirdly, Christianity was used to destroy African traditional institutions and ways of life. Some African cultural practices were labelled "pagan practices" and were subsequently outlawed. Spirit mediums that played a crucial role in the selection and appointment of traditional leaders were severely undermined. The *Witchcraft Suppression Act* of 1899 that was passed in the colony also criminalised some indigenous African cultural practises (Chavhunduka 1980).

Following years of armed conflict, Second Umvukela/Chimurenga (1965-1979), Zimbabwe was granted independence by Britain on the 18th of April 1980. European colonisation had seriously violated the dignity and rights of the Africans thus there were high hopes that the post-colonial government would prioritise the restoration of African traditional institutions like the Ndebele monarch. Africans saw an opportunity to reclaim their cultural heritage after close to a century of cultural erosion. Expectations were high that the post-colonial government would redress perceived colonial injustices and restore people's dignity. Unfortunately, the post-colonial constitutional authorities were highly suspicious of powerful traditional authorities that could be an ingredient for the fragmentation of the newly independent states along ethnic lines. Initially, the post-colonial Government in Zimbabwe did not show its willingness to incorporate traditional leaders in the governance structures (Bishi 2015). It was only in the post-2000 era, in the face of waning support, that the Government gave traditional leaders more powers and packages to secure votes in the rural areas (Bishi 2015: 1). However, the same interest was not given to the revival of the Ndebele monarch (Lindgren 2002; Ndlovu, Tshuma & Ngwenya 2019). Events that took place soon after independence between 1982 and 1986 (*Gukurahundi* period) which

saw the state using "coercive assimilation" in the Ndebele dominated parts possibly explains this reluctance (Mhlanga 2013; Ngwenya 2010). Memories of these atrocities have had a far reaching effect in the national building project (Lindgren 2002: 48). Historic injustice against the Ndebele people during the '*Gukurahundi*' period derailed the nation building project and continues to haunt the post-colonial state. There is bitterness because the violence that was perpetrated against the people of Matabeleland just after the independence. Owing to these unresolved grievances 'Matabeleland' remains a politically volatile region in the country. It is against this background that the recent interests in the restoration of the Ndebele monarch, after more than hundred years of lassitude, have been viewed with suspicion by the state. The next section grapples with the issues of terminology as a way of further contextualising the Ndebele monarch saga.

Conceptual and Terminology Issues: Kingdoms, Chiefdoms, Multiculturalism and Nationhood

In order to further contextualise and theorise issues in this paper it is important to briefly unpack concepts like kingdoms, chiefdoms, multiculturalism and nationhood. On the 2nd of March 2018 the High Court of Zimbabwe declared the impending coronation of the 'Ndebele king' unconstitutional based on the technicality that the supreme law of the country did not have provisions for kings or monarchs (Mershon & Shvetsova 2019; ZBC, 2018). The legal frameworks only recognise chiefs, headmen and village heads. The first major bone of contention was the reference to the 'king'. A reader of historical and archaeological texts on pre-colonial Africa will come across terms like empires, states, kingdoms and chiefdoms being used sometimes interchangeably without any critical thought (McIntosh 1999; Pauketal 2007; Pikirayi 2001). In this section we attempt to establish how these concepts have been applied differently in various contexts. The second area of contention was that the Ndebele royal family had not followed due process as prescribed by the law in Zimbabwe. Although the installation of traditional leaders is initiated by the clansmen it is finally sanctioned by the state. These are the loopholes that were used by the High Court of Zimbabwe to block the coronation.

Traditional governance systems in Africa have always been diverse since time immemorial (Connah 1987). The traditional leadership institution has stood the taste of time in the face of a lot of challenges from the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. When early Western travellers encountered pre-colonial African rulers across the continent they indescrimately described them as 'emperors', 'kings' and 'chiefs' (Eldredge 2018: 138). However, following European conquest and colonisation African indigenous rulers played second feeble in the mighty European empires. Within the British colonies of Africa for example the English monarch was presented as almost divine, omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent (Ranger 1993: 230). African indigenous rulers in the British colonies were supposed to tremble in the presence of the mighty English monarch. As a result, the use of the titles 'King' or 'Queen' was reserved for the British monarch (Ranger 1993: 239-240). Ranger (1993) noted that it was deemed inappropriate to compare African rulers with the imperial British monarch. British colonial administrators therefore coined the term 'paramount chief' as a substitute of titles like 'King' or 'Queen'. Post-colonial constitutional authorities also seem not to be comfortable with these titles

because they may create many centres of power or parallel structures of power. Currently at the apex of the traditional leadership institution in Zimbabwe is the chief, followed by the headman and lastly the village heads (Bishi 2015). The selection of traditional leaders as prescribed by the *Traditional Leaders Act* [Chapter 29:17] of 1998 follows the dictates of the different customary succession systems. However, Section 3 of the *Traditional Leaders Act* is explicitly clear that the installation of traditional leaders only happens after the approval and appointment by the President of Zimbabwe. As a result, the coronation of the Ndebele king who was not appointed by the President was deemed unconstitutional.

Our conceptualisation of issues will be incomplete if we do not discuss further the origins and characteristics of modern nation-states. Modern African nation-states are a product of European imagination and colonisation. The territorial boundaries of Zimbabwe were created by European imperial powers at the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 (Herbst 1989: Otunnu 2018: 63). To some scholars' modern nation-states are alien entities or recent fictitious inventions that emerged from the recent colonial past (Amutabi 2018: Anderson 2006). Pikirayi (1997: 143) submits that during the pre-colonial period the Zimbabwe plateau was never a functional geographical, socio-cultural, economic and political unit. The creation of the then Rhodesian frontiers, now Zimbabwe, brought together people from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds under one administration. The modern day borders of Zimbabwe are thus convinient frontiers that were not based on pre-colonial cultural geographical boundaries. Post-colonial African governments simply inherited these colonial boundaries without changes.

African nationalism as an ideology emerged as a reaction to European colonisation and domination from the 1940s and 1950s (Amutabi 2018: 193; Ranger 2004). Resistance against European settler occupation gave birth to nationalist movements whose prime focus was to get African "nations" back. Indigenous Africans, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds, embraced each in the face of external threats and intrusion by the European settler colonialists. The vision of African nationalists was to achieve united post-colonial nations where differences in ethnic origins were downplayed as perfectly captured in the statement by Robert Mugabe at the beginning of this paper. The mantra of African nationalist who fought against European colonisation was that 'for the nation to live, the tribe must die' (Mhlanga 2013: 51; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2008: 168). The African nationalist project required the welding together of diverse ethnic groups into one nation. Nation building required individuals to mask cultural pluralism and to forge a new identity. Policies and legislations promulgated by post-colonial nation-states thus thrived to build a mono-cultural nation. Citizens of the nation-state were supposed to procure national identity cards and constantly pledge their allegiance to the nation-state through the singing of the national anthem and recitation of national pledges. Nationalism as an ideology has cultural homogenising tendencies that demands uniformity and conformity as opposed to cultural pluralism (Eriksen 1991: 263; Wuriga 2012: 208). According to Segobye (2018: 169) the post-colonial state has used rhetoric of national-building to create hegemonic rule often at the detriment of cultural diversity and pluralism within and between African societies. Thus, emphasis on regional, cultural and ethnic identities is seen as fertile ground for cultural revival sentiments that are not in line with the African nationalist project

and vision (Thondhlana 2014). Zimbabwean nationalists presented the country as an ethnically homogenous country as opposed to multicultural nation-state. However, the process of creating new national identities resulted in cultural hegemony by the dominant ethnic groups. Soon the tribal card was pulled out by people who feel short-changed in areas of politics and national development.

Most modern nation-states are best described as polyethnic because they enclose within their borders, diverse ethnic groups. Ethnic diversity and intermingling is now an everyday empirical reality that cannot be wished away. Zimbabwe is a plural and heterogeneous nation-state with people from different cultural backgrounds. The concept of multiculturalism has been proposed as the solution for polyethnic nation-states like Zimbabwe. Multiculturalism is a very loaded term that has been understood in different ways which makes it difficult to fully unpack it in this paper (Rex 1996). Initially the term multiculturalism was used to describe the coexistence of populations within modern nation states. The term was eventually used to describe the way given nation-states and societies were dealing with cultural diversity. Multiculturalism then came to be understood in very simple terms as the policies that are put in place by nation-states to promote cultural diversity. As we have already argued above after independence the founding fathers of Zimbabwe considered emphasis on ethnic distinctiveness as something that was dangerous to the fragile project of national building that was underway. The current *Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment* [No. 20] *Act* of 2013, which was adopted three decades after independence, acknowledges and attempts to accommodate various ethnic groups. Zimbabwe has also ratified some extra-territorial protocols and conventions which seek to promote cultural diversity. It therefore seems that Zimbabwe is now cosy to the idea of 'unity in diversity' as will be further discussed.

It is against this background of constant negotiations between the constitutional and traditional authorities that we must understand the current public debates concerning the attempt to restore the Ndebele monarch (Mershon & Shvetsova 2019). There has always been a battle between nationalist ideologies and ethnic ideologies. Soon after independence African nationalists resented traditional governance systems. African nationalist governments were unwilling to incorporate traditional leaders in the national building projects for several reasons (Bishi 2015: 40). Firstly, this resentment emerged from the uncontested fact that some traditional leaders had colluded with the colonial masters during the liberations struggle period. Secondly, the revival of traditional governance systems posed a great threat to the national building project. However, the negative attitude towards traditional governance systems eventually changed when African nationalists realised that traditional leaders could canvas support for the ruling elites in communities under their jurisdiction (Bishi 2015). It took almost twenty years for the post-colonial government in Zimbabwe to enact the *Traditional Leadership Act* of 1998. Nonetheless the state retained the power to finally appointment traditional leaders in the country. It seems both colonial and post-colonial governments had mechanisms in place to check the powers of potentially influential traditional leaders. The next section looks at the plausible reasons behind the growing calls to resurrect the Ndebele monarch after a century of dormancy.

'The City of Kings without a King': Growing Calls to Revive the Ndebele Kingship

Bulawayo is the second largest city in Zimbabwe. Bulawayo was named after the royal capital (koBulawayo/Old Bulawayo) that was established by King Lobengula in 1870. The current city of Bulawayo is also situated around GuBuluwayo (1881-1893) which was King Lobengula's last royal residence. The modern day city of Bulawayo is colloquially referred to as the "City of Kings and Queens". In an opinion piece that was published in *The Chronicle* on the 10th of January 2014 entitled: *Putting the 'King' to the City of Kings* Mr Cont Mhlanga, a Ndebele cultural activist, noted with concern the absence of public monumental architecture that celebrates Ndebele kings and queens in Bulawayo.

> "Yet we foolishly call Bulawayo the city of Kings when we cannot even show anyone a statue of a single King", lamented Cont Mhlanga.

Mhlanga further noted that although there were public institutions in Bulawayo that were named after the prominent Khumalo royal family the titles 'King', 'Queen', 'Prince' and 'Princess' were notably missing. Thus, Mhlanga felt institutions like the Mzilikazi Primary School were supposed to be renamed as King Mzilikazi Primary School. He further argues that Lozikeyi Primary School should be properly named Queen Lozikeyi Primary School. This should be juxtaposed by the fact that post-colonial Zimbabwe continues to celebrate the legacy of the British monarch with institutions like Queen Elizabeth High School and Prince Edward High School. After the collapse of the British Empire in Africa it still seems that titles like 'kings' remain a taboo. Dube (2018) also noted with concern that only one street was named after Lobengula in the City of Bulawayo. Residents of Bulawayo were advocating for the addition of the title 'King' the only street that was simply named 'Lobengula Street' (Dube 2018: 53). Recently the Bulawayo City Council (BCC) stripped Leopold Takawira Road (a late national war hero) and renamed it King Mzilikazi Road (Mabuza 2020). Leopold Takawira was probably stripped because the City Fathers did not consider him as one of the Ndebele heroes. Mabuza (2020) further notes that in open defiance to the Government directive the city council also refused to rename the 6th Avenue in Bulawayo after President Emmerson Mnangagwa. In line with these views, it should be noted that Bulawayo is a city that has been yearning for the proper recognition of its own Ndebele monarchs and heroes in the post-colonial era.

The revival of the Ndebele monarch in post-colonial Zimbabwe has thus become a thorny issue because of the deep rooted regional politics. There have been accusations that the Government has been disregarding Ndebele culture and traditions. There was an outcry in the 1990s after the Mugabe-led government approved the installation of Miss Sinqobile Mabhena as a chief to rule over Nswazi area in Matabeleland South (Lindgren 2005). The Ndebele argued that this was against their culture and traditions to have a female chief. As a result of a concoction of factors there has been a drive for quite a while now to restore an autonomous "Ndebele nation" that is separate from Zimbabwe (Ndlovu-Gathseni 2008b). Advocates of secession claim that Matabeleland region has largely been marginalised by the post-colonial Shona dominated government. The general sentiment is that service delivery in Matabeleland has been seriously compromised with massive deindustrialisation in the post-colonial period. In a story by Brenda Nozipo Ncube published in the *uMthwakazi Review* of 30 May 2018, the

author states: "The Ndebele feel side lined and marginalised by the government hence they are pinning their hopes on the installation of a king." In this story she also quoted Greater Sibanda, the spokesperson of the self-proclaimed 'King Mzilikazi II', making the following remarks:

> "In the education sector, teachers deployed to Matabeleland cannot utter a single Ndebele word but they are assigned to teach our Grade Ones who do not know Shona and cannot understand English whilst we have thousands of unemployed qualified teachers in the region. This has contributed to low pass rate in Matabeleland…the Ndebele sovereignty was disrupted by the British South Africa Company when it joined Matabeleland with Mashonaland in 1894. That marked the end of the monarchical system in Zimbabwe and the beginning of suffering of the Ndebele. Our pain, troubles and suffering made us look back into history to trace the root cause of this situation we are in". (uMthwakazi Review, 30 May 2018)

In view of the above, Sibanda clearly believes that an end to suffering of the Ndebele people, will only come when they start addressing past historical injustices, where all their troubles began. The starting point in this regard would be the installation of the Ndebele king. As already indicated, some Ndebele people are quick to mobilise the ethnic card in the face of challenges. Any slight misunderstanding in Matabeleland always seems to end-up in a tribal conflict as signified by the Old Bulawayo cultural village case cited in the next section and most recently, the Bulawayo City Council squabbles. The problem in the Bulawayo City Council initially started when Tinashe Kambarami (a Shona) was elected as Deputy Mayor of the Bulawayo in July 2018. His election victory immediately sparked demonstrations by right-wing Ndebele activists and traditionalists who claimed he was not fit to run such an esteemed office, alleging that he was once accused of theft. Tempers once again flared in July 2019 when Tinashe Kambarami suspended the Bulawayo Town Clerk, Mr Christopher Dube (a Ndebele), on allegations of administrative malpractice and corruption. This triggered yet another tribal storm in the city when the accused Dube chose to defend himself by claiming that Kambarami was driving a tribal agenda against him and the Ndebele community. In no time, this dispute engulfed several Bulawayo activists, politicians and the government at large, although it had initially started as a purely council administrative matter.

The general Ndebele community strongly believes that service delivery in Matabeleland has been seriously compromised following massive de-industrialisation in the post-colonial period (Khumalo 2017). It is acknowledged that there are serious challenges in terms of access to clean water in Bulawayo (Baker 2012; Makwara & Tavuyanago 2012) and that de-industrialisation is slowly turning parts of Bulawayo into a ghost town. However, we feel that de-industrialisation which happened in post-colonial Zimbabwe has not been limited to the Matabeleland (see Kamete 2012). The grievances are now being framed within the cultural rights discourse. By the late 2000s there emerged a virtual community, of Ndebele speaking people in the diaspora, known as the United Mthwakazi Republic (UMR) whose desire is to restore a pre-colonial Ndebele kingdom (Mthwakazi state) in the mould of Swaziland and Lesotho (Ndlovu-Gathseni 2008: 28). Attempts to install the Ndebele king have been perceived by some as a project that is driven by some hidden political agenda. The state thus views the

calls to restore the Ndebele kingship as introverted cultural revivalism. The active involvement of the Mthwakazi Republican Party, a perceived ethnic secessionist movement, in the calls to revive the Ndebele monarch and kingdom has not allayed fears that the revival project is political. Some public debates suggest that cultural rights by the pro-monarchists were being mobilised as a subversion device. This prompted the state to treat the coronation of Mr Bulelani Colin Lobengula Khumalo as a case of subversion. In the subsequent section we explore how the different actors in the Ndebele monarch saga have been interacting with cultural heritage sites.

Ndebele Cultural Heritage Sites and Cultural Renaissance

Cultural heritage sites always play a critical role in the sustenance, revival and invention of traditions. It is now a well-established practice that royal residences and burial places of former great rulers can form the foundation of the matrix of power. Cultural heritage sites have been very crucial in the construction of national and regional identities (Landers 2010; Sinamai 2006). Cultural heritage sites are often deployed as places for rituals as well as territorial markers. In a bid to legitimise different claims, it is common for special interest groups to establish shrines and places of pilgrimage. For example, the site of Manyanga, in south-western Zimbabwe, has always been crucial in attempts to revive the precolonial Rozvi kingdom. The *Mambo MuRozvi Society* which was formed to lobby the colonial government to revive the Rozvi kingdom in the 1950s turned to Manyanga and other sites in the vicinity to legitimise their claims (Sinamai 2006: 35). The Moyo clans who claim direct descent from the last Rozvi king turned to several sites in the vicinity of Manyanga for rituals as well as to define their territories. With the rise of African nationalism in the 1950s nationalists turned to cultural heritage sites like Great Zimbabwe for inspiration and symbolism (Ndoro 2001: 45). It is not surprising that indigenous African political outfits that include Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), which emerged during that time, were named after Great Zimbabwe. At independence in 1980 the former British colony of Rhodesia was rechristened Zimbabwe whilst Great Zimbabwe became the anchor of the deep historical roots of the post-colonial state (Stutz 2013:184). National symbols were derived from Great Zimbabwe which by now was designated a World Heritage Site. As Great Zimbabwe dominated the national symbols some ethnic groups started to perceive the post-colonial national building project as celebrating 'Shona' civilisations only (Lindgren 2002: 48). Various ethnic groups around Zimbabwe have targeted cultural heritage sites as symbols of unity at community and regional level (see McGregor 2005; Sinamai 2006; Sinamai 2019; Sagiya 2020). This phenomenon is not unique to post-colonial Zimbabwe since there are many other examples that can be cited in neighbouring countries. According to Sinamai (2006: 38) when the Venda of South Africa started to lobby for the installation of a King for the Venda nation the site of Dzata featured prominently in the politics of selecting the king. The Venda of South Africa also went to the extent of inventing the Dzata Day Celebrations. In Botswana the Mukani Action Group of the Kalanga people also targeted Domboshaba, a Zimbabwe Culture site, as a focal point for the unity of the Kalanga community (Sinamai 2006: 38). Annual cultural festivals were initiated at Domboshaba as the site was becoming an important identity symbol for the Kalanga. It is interesting to establish how the different contenders to the Ndebele throne

exploited cultural heritage sites in the politics of succession. Did the renewed interest in the restoration of the Ndebele monarch benefit cultural heritage sites? It is also interesting to establish how the post-colonial state has handled the cultural heritage sites associated with the Ndebele monarch.

There are several cultural heritage sites that are associated with the precolonial Ndebele state in south-western Zimbabwe. These cultural heritage sites include former citadels, battle fields and burial places. Noteworthy is the fact that these sites were declared national monuments during the colonial period (Table 1). According to Sinamai (2019: 108) the Ndebele have invented rituals, celebrations and created subaltern heritage that challenges the 'authorised heritage discourse' of the postcolonial Zimbabwean state. It is therefore critical to establish how different factions are using these sites to create new rituals that legitimise their claims in the succession race. We have already noted that there are three contenders to the throne of the Ndebele king. The group aligned to the self proclaimed King Mzilikazi II, which questions the legitimacy of Lobengula, naturally does not attach any importance to sites like koBulawayo and Lobengula's grave (interview: Curator of Monuments - NMMZ). This group only recognises the cultural heritage sites that are associated with Mzilikazi which include Mzilikazi's Memorial (Mhlahlandlela) and Mzilikazi's grave. During the 1950s there was an emphasis on Mzilikazi, who was considered a more inclusive symbol and founding figure, rather than Lobengula (Roberts 2005: 24). The other two contenders trace their descendent directly to King Lobengula. This group is thus more interested in cultural heritage sites that are linked to King Lobengula but also pays homage to King Mzilikazi. The state has been accused for exploiting fissures in the Khumalo family to promote certain factions (Makuvaza & Burrett 2011: 199). For some this is regarded as interfering in internal family matters.

The capitals and final resting places of King Mzilikazi and King Lobengula are important in establishing the link between cultural heritage sites and cultural revivalism. Kalusa (2017: 1139) notes that "…corpses, especially those of rulers, possess potential life long after they have been interred". This indeed is true if we look at the case of the place of entombment of King Mzilikazi at eNtumbane. Mzilikazi's grave was turned into a place of pilgrimage after 1945 when the *Matabeleland Home Society* organised a conference that was followed by the 'Pilgrimage to Ntumbane' (Ranger 1989: 238). Ranger further notes that from that point onwards King Mzilikazi's grave became the focal point for Ndebele cultural nationalism. Traditionally it has been observed that Ndebele people do not attach any spiritual significance to graves especially after the bringing home ceremony (umbuyisa) (Nyathi and Chief Ndiweni 2005: 58). Clearly the veneration of Mzilikazi's grave was an invention of tradition which did not originate from the culture of the Ndebele. According to Nyathi and Chief Ndiweni (2005: 63) the grave of the founder of the Ndebele state is now perceived as a source of political power and a place to communicate with the departed ruler. In 2000 Peter Zwide Khumalo (King Lobengula Nyamande II) initiated the *King Mzilikazi Day* which takes place every year on the 5th of September. The annual commemorations are done to commemorate the life of the late Ndebele king. The commemorations of *King Mzilikazi Day* usually take place at Mzilikazi's Memorial (Mhlahlandlela) and end with a pilgrimage to his grave at eNtumbane. However, unlike the *21st February Movement*, an annual event set aside to

celebrate the birthday of the now late Robert G. Mugabe the founding father of Zimbabwe, the *King Mzilikazi Day* is not a public holiday in Zimbabwe.

There are cultural heritage sites that are directly linked to King Lobengula which were also declared national monuments. Lobengula's first royal capital koBulawayo/Old Bulawayo (1870 and 1881) and his presumed grave in north western Zimbabwe were both declared national monuments. We have already noted that when the king left koBulawayo he instructed his generals to blaze it down. Unlike the royal capitals associated with the Rozvi people the Ndebele architecture was based on non-durable materials like grass and wood that were easily reclaimed by the environment. Only King Lobengula's palace at koBulawayo included fired clay bricks, an obvious influence of Western architectural styles, partially endured the taste of time. In the 1990s the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ) initiated the reconstruction of Old Bulawayo as a theme park in consultation with the royal Khumalo family (Chirikure and Pwiti 2008; Makuvaza and Burrett 2011; Muringaniza 1998). For NMMZ the reconstruction of Old Bulawayo as a theme park was largely meant to boost revenue whilst on the other hand the royal Khumalo family was supposed to use the platform for cultural revival. According to Makuvaza & Burrett (2011: 206) the project was meant to give the Khumalo family the opportunity to define themselves in terms of their history and culture. The reconstruction of Old Bulawayo led to the emergence of cultural events and ceremonies that were attended by popular traditional monarchs from South Africa. Prominent politicians, historians and traditional leaders in Matabeleland also supported the reconstruction process of Old Bulawayo. Although a representative of the royal Khumalo family was engaged as the site custodian Old Bulawayo became a site of contestation (Makuvaza and Burrett 2011; Samwanda 2013: 113-134). Makuvaza & Burrett (2011: 208) observed that the Old Bulawayo project was mired in politics and games of regionalism and tribalism. Unfortunately, Old Bulawayo was gutted by a veld fire again in 2010 yet ten years on the theme park has not been reconstructed. The destruction of Old Bulawayo in 2010 sealed the fate the cultural village that was already destined to fail (Makuvaza & Burrett 2010). Noteworthy is the fact that the Government of Zimbabwe which had earlier on supported the reconstruction of the Old Bulawayo did not entertain the idea of the restoration of the Ndebele monarch.

Besides Old Bulawayo there are two other cultural heritage places that have been declared national monuments that are associated with King Lobengula. These two national monuments are the grave of Lobengula and the battle site of Pupu-Shangani. Lobengula's alleged grave site was declared a national monument during the colonial era. Although burials of former rulers have often been the rallying point of supporters the same cannot be said with regards to the supposed final resting place of King Lobengula. Given the remote location of the presumed grave and speculations surrounding his death and burial place the significance of this grave has been elusive among the Ndebele and the Khumalo royal family. Roberts (2004: 49) noted that the desecration of the presumed grave between 1912 and 1915 did not provoke any reaction from the royal family. Unlike Mzilikazi who is largely celebrated through the *King Mzilikazi Day* there is no day that is set aside to celebrate King Lobengula. We were unable to establish if the alleged grave of King Lobengula has been a place of pilgrimage for his

supporters. However, in 2018 Peter Zwide Khumalo (King Lobengula Nyamande II) led a pilgrimage march on the 23rd of June 2018 to Pupu-Shangani (Khumalo 2018). Pupu-Shangani is the place where Allan Wilson's patrol that was pursuing king Lobengula was wiped out on the 4th of December 1893. The Pupu-Shangani battle represents the heroic victory of the Lobengula family line against the invading colonisers. The pilgrimage march, which was the first of its kind, was dubbed the "Pupu-Shangani Carnival". Plans were also at an advanced stage to construct the Lobengula Royal hut to commemorate the Shangani battle with the help of NMMZ.

Table 1: List of cultural heritage sites associated with Kings Mzilikazi and Lobengula that were declared national monuments

Monument No.	Site Name	Date of Gazette	Statement of significance
13	Shangani Battle Field (Battle of Pupu-Shangani)	16/07/1937	The place where Allan Wilson's patrol was ambushed and killed by Lobengula's warriors on the 4th of December 1893
39	Mzilikazi Memorial (Mhlahlandlela)	09/01/1942	This was last the royal capital of King Mzilikazi in south-western Zimbabwe
41	Mzilikazi's Grave	18/091942	The burial place of the founder of the Ndebele kingdom
48	Lobengula's Grave	12/11/1943	The alleged burial place of King Lobengula
90	Lobengula's Indaba Tree	21/021958	The meeting place under a 'royal tree' in whose shade courts were held
105	Umvutcha Village	06/10/1961	The place where the Rudd Concession was signed by King Lobengula on the 30th of October 1888
116	Old Bulawayo (koBulawayo)	21/09/1966	The first royal capital of king Lobengula (1870-1881)

Prospects and Challenges of Restoring Ancient 'Cultural Kingdoms' in Zimbabwe and Beyond

Cultural heritage issues are sometimes difficult to separate from the prevailing political climate. Many scholars have warned about the use and abuse of heritage for political expediency (Gathercole & Lowenthal 1994; Harrison 2010; Meskell 1998; Smith 2006; Silverman 2011). With these cautioned warnings several issues need to be ironed out before the revival of the Ndebele monarch. Firstly, on the

legal front pro-monarchists should convince the state to amend the constitution and associated legal frameworks. Currently there are no legal provisions for the establishment of a monarch, absolute or constitutional, in Zimbabwe (Mershow & Shvetsova 2019). Previously, the Ndebele king, in an absolutist system, occupied the highest political office as the military commander, religious leader and judicial authority (Nyathi 2001: xiii, 58). The role and functions of the monarch should be clearly captured in the legislative frameworks in order to avoid possible problems. It is not very easy to integrate African customary law and Western derived legal systems. While the notion of revitalizing the Ndebele monarch can be accommodated as part of cultural revival, it is too dangerous if those championing the revival are motivated by anger, frustration and deep-seated bitterness. Some might want to revive the monarchy as a strategy to eventually advocate for regional sovereignty. If they are driven by mere nostalgia for past and traditional customs, there would be nothing amiss. In this respect, even national legislation may be easily amended to recognise "monarchs" whose role and power should remain synonymous with other ordinary traditional chiefs in the country. The role of hereditary leaders is now largely apolitical and ceremonial with very limited powers.

Closely linked to the issue of the role and functions of the king is the issue of the territorial extent of the Ndebele kingdom. Issues of territorial boundaries have often been highly contested and are frequently accompanied by violent conquest (Kymlicka 2004). Territorial boundaries of various pre-colonial polities were not fixed they were very fluid and elusive (see Mazarire 2013). Some argue that boundaries of ancient polities, which were presumably thinly populated, were defined by centres whilst borders were porous and indistinct (Anderson 2006; Mazarire 2013). Herbst (1989: 679) eloquently argues that political authority in pre-colonial Africa was not exercised over land but over people. The Chief Executive Officer of the *Royal Crown Trust* Mr Effie Ncube, which was organising the coronation of Bulelani Collins Lobengula Khumalo, argued that:

> "We're not reviving the kingdom, but kingship because a kingdom refers to a specific area where he would be governing. We're resuscitating the kingship, the one in which the people who identify with a particular culture will be united around" (The Chronicle, 1 March 2018)

From the above arguments it seems the modern conceptual framework of territorial boundaries might not necessarily fit pre-colonial notions of boundaries. Anderson (2006: 19) argues that boundaries of pre-colonial polities, if ever present, were constantly defined and redefined through coercion, voluntary submission, assimilation or "sexual politics". There is no doubt that prior to European colonisation Bulawayo had become the heartland of the Ndebele people (Roberts 2005). Some argue that the territorial extent of the Ndebele polity was exaggerated by the early colonial settlers (Ndakaripa 2014). As the British colonial project was unfolding the colonial government invented a country with the two 'provinces' of Matabeleland and Mashonaland (Roberts 2005: 26). Attempts to draw boundaries of the Ndebele kingdom will be an invention of tradition which will certainly be a source of conflict and civil strife. The British colony of Rhodesia was constructed, framed and perceived as consisting the Shona and Ndebele. It was a misnomer to use the terms 'Matabeleland' and 'Mashonaland'. The process of

'ethnocartography' or 'ethnic mapping' which was done by the European colonial administrators with the help of missionaries further resulted in the invention of rigid ethnic boundaries. Ethnocartography enabled European colonisers to affix ethnic names to discrete territories which resulted in the creation of ethnospaces (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2008a: 173). Terms like Manicaland, Mashonaland and Matabeleland were invented by the European colonial administrators. During the process of ethno-cartography other ethnic groups in the then Rhodesia were erased. It is unfortunate that when the post-colonial Zimbabwean state was renaming cities and the nation-state after independence it did not abolish ethno specific terms such as Mashonaland, Matabeleland and Manicaland (Figure 1). We are also of the idea that ethno-geographic terms should have been abolished soon after independence in 1980. These terms have contributed to the ongoing contestations and growing calls for autonomy. Cain Mathema (currently the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education), whose Nguni ancestors came together with King Mzilikazi, in his book *'Zimbabwe Diverse, But One'* published in 2013 had this to say:

> "What we all know is that Ndebeles, like all our tribes [sic], are all over the country, they are in every province and in every district of the country. Therefore, the whole country is Matabeleland, in as much as it is Mashonaland, Tongaland, Khalangaland, Suthuland, Sanland, Tswanaland, Vendaland and Nambyaland. It is therefore very insulting to the other tribes [sic] in what is called Matabeleland today for Matabeleland not to be named after their tribes, especially so when the Ndebeles were the last Africans to enter the country, only in 1839! Have the Tongas, Khalangas, Shonas, Sans, Suthus, Nambyans and Vendas in Matabeleland accepted that they want their provinces not to be named after their nationalities?" (Mathema 2013: 55).

The issue of the revival of Ndebele monarch has often been convulated with the Mthwakazi Free State/United Mthwakazi Republic. The Ndebele identity has come to be perceived as a multi-ethnic nation, with precolonial roots, as opposed to a single ethnic group (Hadebe 2007; Kaarsholm 1997; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2008a; 2008b; 2009a; 2009b). Advocates of this 'multi-ethnic nation' often argue that the precolonial Ndebele kingdom was merger of Nguni, Sotho/Tswana, Kalanga, Lozwi, Nambya, Shona, Tonga, Venda, Xhosa and Zulu ethnic groups. Some advocates of the 'multi-ethnic nation' school of thought have preferred to use the term Mthwakazi instead of Ndebele (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2008a: 175). It has been argued that since the arrival of King Mzilikazi and his people in south-western Zimbabwe legends, myths and invented traditions have been deployed (Ndakaripa 2014: 11). Currently there seems to be no consensus regarding the origins and meaning of the term Mthwakazi. Some claim that the term Mthwakazi was actually invented by King Mzilikazi himself. This school of thought is based on the idea that the term "Muthwa" was originally used to refer to non-Nguni or non-Sotho subjects of King Mzilikazi (Mathema 2013: 46). It is argued that upon realising that his Muthwa subjects had outnumbered the original Nguni descendants Mzilikazi decided to rename his kingdom Umthwakazi (Mathema 2013: 53).
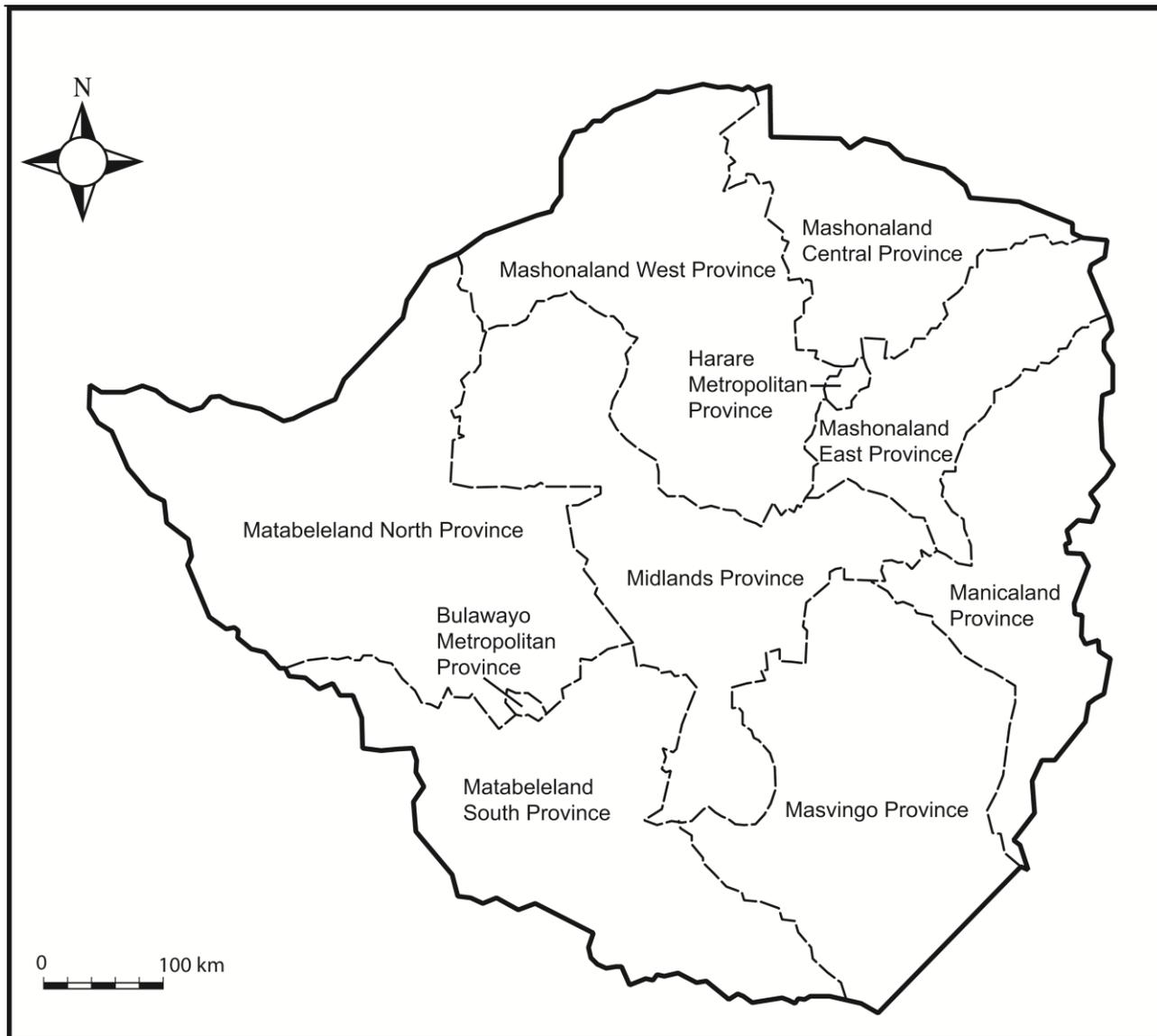
Figure 1: Continued ethno-cartographic representations of administrative provinces in post-colonial Zimbabwe

The other version links the origin of the term Mthwakazi to the legendary historical novel entitled Umthwakazi that was published by Peter Mahlangu in 1957 (Ndakaripa 2014: 19). According to Ndakaripa (2014: 19) Umthwakazi literary means "The Owner of the State" as opposed to the idea of "The Country of the Muthwa" discussed above. Peter Mahlangu's Umthwakazi, though fictional, is based on the migration of Mzilikazi and his people from present day South Africa up to the establishment of the Ndebele state in present day south-western Zimbabwe. Through creative literary works like Umthwakazi Ndebele writers have kept alive the oral history and legends of the Ndebele people (Hadebe 2007). According to Hadebe (2007) historical fiction writers have contributed a lot in shaping the aspirations and ideals of the Ndebele speaking people. Advocates of the Mthwakazi Free State/United Mthwakazi Republic might have been inspired by some of these creative writings. Since 2010 the Mthwakazi Liberation Front (MLF) has been advocating for autonomy from the Shona

dominated Republic of Zimbabwe (Figure 2) (Ndakaripa 2014: 46; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2008a; Sinamai 2019: 27). There is great fear that the Ndebele cultural revival project will be hijacked by secession movements.

Figure 2: The treacherous map of Zimbabwe that is inspired by the idea of secession (Modified after pro-Mthwakazi online sites)

Counter narratives against the Ndebele identity as a deeply rooted 'multi-ethnic nation' are also growing louder. Linguistically, it is acknowledged that Ndebele is now the dominant language in 'Matabeleland'. However, this must be understood within the context of colonial and post-colonial language policies (Ndhlovu 2009; Nyota 2013). 'Matabeleland' is home to the Kalanga, Leya, Khoisan, Venda, Sotho, Nambya, Sotho and Tonga people (Figure 3) (McGregor 2009; Msindo 2012; Ndlovu 2018). These groups predate the coming of the Ndebele people to south-western Zimbabwe in the 1840s. These autochthonous groups are also challenging the hegemonic tendencies of both the Shona and Ndebele in post-colonial Zimbabwe (Makoni, Makoni & Nyika 2008; Sagiya 2020). Both Shona and Ndebele, as the dominant groups, are equally accused of cultural and linguistic hegemony. Some individuals in

Matabeleland are now conscious of their non-Ndebele identity. It is a historical fact that Ndebele language and culture were appropriated but sometimes imposed since the precolonial times until very recently. Shona, Ndebele and English, as official languages, have remained the prominent languages in schools and mass media outlets in Zimbabwe. As a result of colonial and post-colonial language policies Ndebele language was perceived as a prestige language in 'Matabeleland' at the expense of other indigenous languages. According to Sinamai (2019: 30) it should also be appreciated that the Ndebele identity was promoted by both the colonial and post-colonial events and policies. Groups whose languages have been disenfranchised have suffered culturally because language is the vehicle through which culture is safeguarded. Until very recently the Venda, Nambya, Kalanga, Sotho/Tswana, Khoisan, Tonga people of 'Matabeleland' were compelled to learn Ndebele language and by extension culture at school. As Ndebele was becoming the *lingua franca* of the three Matabeleland provinces it became prestigious for the other ethnic groups to speak Ndebele (Sinamai 2019: 68). However, other ethnic groups in 'Matabeleland' are now asserting their linguistic and cultural pride. These other groups are now questioning the bundling up of everyone in 'Matabeleland' into the Ndebele identity (Moyo 2012: 8). The Kalanga people of 'Matabeleland' of late have been agitating for the rebirth and renaissance of Bukalanga (Moyo 2012; Msindo 2012). Kalanga people have invented the *Luswingo Kalanga Cultural Festival* which takes place annually at Luswingo national monument. Luswingo is now profiled as the citadel of Chibundule the progenitor of the Kalanga people (Dube, 2015: 89). Tonga chiefs and headmen of Matabeleland North Province started to resist the use of Ndebele in schools around 'Tongaland' during the colonial period (Makoni, Makoni & Nyika 2008: 425). The Nambya people of Matabeleland North Province are currently actively promoting their own language heritage (Sagiya 2020). The Kalanga and Nambya have invented ceremonies and rituals that pronounce their uniqueness from the dominant Shona and Ndebele ethnic groups (Sinamai 2019: 107).

Language activists have also successfully lobbied for the promotion and development of 'minority' languages to counter hegemonising effects of Shona and Ndebele in Zimbabwe (Makoni 2008: 413; Manyena 2013). The struggle for recognition by other ethnic groups in 'Matabeleland' has largely manifested in the struggle for official language status. Notable revivalist groups in 'Matabeleland' include Nambya Cultural Association, Tonga Language and Cultural Association, Dombe Cultural Association and Kalanga Language and Cultural Development Association. These pressure groups have forged inter-ethnic alliances to relentlessly push for the equity of various ethnic groups in 'Matabeleland'. At one time a coalition of language activists from the Venda, Tonga and Kalanga was established to develop the VETOKA publishing company (Manyena 2013). Following the collapse of VETOKA language activists drawn from the Tonga, Kalanga, Sotho, Nambya, Shangani and Venda created the Zimbabwe Indigenous Language Peoples Association (ZILPA) (Manyena 2013; Nyota 2013). It was this alliance that successfully advocated for the recognition of sixteen official languages from three officially recognised languages in the current Constitution of Zimbabwe that was adopted in 2013.

We also argue that cultural heritage issues should not be framed as static but rather as dynamic. The desire to restore African cultural heritage is largely nativist rhetoric. We acknowledge that the European

colonial project derailed the African developmental trajectory that was deeply anchored on culture. It is high time that Africanists realise that some of the cultural institutions and practices will cause more problems in the post-colonial context. In the case of the Ndebele monarchy (not monarch) others argue that 'a kingdom lost cannot be regained'. Africa has numerous examples of polities that lost their functional and territorial integrity during the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial period. Backward-looking policies to vanished or forgotten polities will obviously pose problems if restitution is entertained in post-colonial Africa. It is a well-known fact that prior to the arrival of King Mzilikazi the south-western parts of Zimbabwe were home to the Rozvi people (Machiridza 2014; Machiridza 2018; Ndlovu-Gathseni 2008). It has already been mentioned that there was a *Mambo MuRozvi Society* which was formed to lobby the colonial government to revive the Rozvi kingdom in the 1950s. Following recent attempts to revive the Ndebele monarch the *Mambo Dynasty Trust* emerged to resuscitate the 'Rozvi/Lozwi kingdom' which was overrun by Mzilikazi (Bulawayo Correspondent 2018; Nkala 2015). Mike Moyo, of the *Mambo Dynasty Trust*, claims that more than 90% of people in Matabeleland belong to the "Rozvi/Lozwi kingdom" (Bulawayo Correspondent 2018). Aware of these complexities post-colonial land reform policies in Zimbabwe do not accommodate restitution of land to people who were displaced during the pre-colonial and colonial era.

Currently Africa has three sovereign states that are headed by monarchs; these are Eswatini, Lesotho and Morocco (Bonner 1982; Eldredge 2007; Gillis 1999, Machobane 1990). However, there are monarchs and other traditional hereditary forms of leadership that have survived within modern nation-states albeit with some challenges (Johannesessen 2006; Karlström 1999; Wrigley 1996). Uganda is hereby given as one of the countries with kingdoms that seem subservient to the nation-state. In Uganda the institution of kingship was abolished in the 1960s after Kabaka the 'King of the Buganda' had become too powerful for the Milton Obote led government. The palace of the Kabaka was subsequently attacked by the army of Uganda which forced the Kabaka to go into exile (Kigongo & Reid 2007). Following changes in the political order the kingship institution was restored in 1993 after pro-monarchists had argued that the king was the foundation of the Ganda culture (Karlström 1999: 305).

They argued that the kinship institution was crucial in the religious and cultural wellbeing of the Buganda people. According to Karlström (1999: 306) the right to restore the kingship was analogous to the freedom of worship and freedom to pursue a cultural way of life by the Buganda people. The Buganda kingdom was, however, reinstated based on the condition that it would be a non-partisan, non-political and purely cultural institution. Hence, in the constitution of Uganda traditional leaders are not supposed to take part in partisan politics and stand for election to a political office (Johannesessen 2006). As a result of the reinstatement of the kingdom the Buganda heritage and cultural heritage sites, like the tombs of Buganda Kings at Kasubi, have regained their cultural capital. The Buganda people now regularly conduct their cultural ceremonies, consultations, festivals and rituals at the Kasubi Tombs World Heritage Site (Kigongo & Reid, 2007). Ironically the Kasubi Tombs just like Old Bulawayo were also gutted by fire in 2010 and efforts to reconstruct the sites have been ongoing.

Figure 3: Map of Zimbabwe showing cultural diversity in Matabeleland

Much closer home Zambia, the northern neighbour of Zimbabwe, has been grappling with the 'Barotseland' problem for quite some time now (Hogan 2014; Mwansa 2017). According to Mwansa (2017: 333) the 'Barotseland' issue is largely premised on the feelings of nationhood that are inspired by nostalgia for historical ethnic unity. This has resulted in the emergence of session movements in 'Barotseland' which have been advocating for independent statehood from the Republic of Zambia. Like 'Matabeleland' issue discussed in this paper the 'Barotseland' is a polyethnic region in Zambia. 'Barotseland' is made up of 38 ethnic groups that once paid homage to the Litunga (supreme leader) of the Lozi in the precolonial period (Mwansa 2017). The 'Barotseland' question is premised on the

Barotseland Agreement, pre-independence treaty, of 1964 which was entered into between Northern Rhodesia and Barotseland (Mwansa 2017). Barotseland was considered a separate entity from Northern Rhodesia under British colonial rule. Northern Rhodesia and Barotseland were granted independence as the Republic of Zambia in 1964 following the signing of the Barotseland Agreement. However, in 1969 the then President of Zambia, Dr Kenneth Kaunda, announced that 'Barotseland' had been renamed the 'Western Province' of Zambia (Mwansa 2017: 319). The authority of the Litunga was subsequently affected by various policies. The Barotseland question is slightly different from the Matebeleland case because of the different historical circumstances in which these issues emerged and developed. The Litunga, paramount chief, of the Lozi of 'Barotseland' has been trying to revive the precolonial Barotse kingdom that is independent from Zambia. However, the constitution of Zambia, just like the constitution of Zimbabwe, does not have provisions for 'Kings'.

Beyond the African continent issues to do with cultural heritage revivalism coupled with secession inspirations have been unfolding in Europe. For many decades Catalonia has been pursuing independence from the central government of Spain (Johannes 2018; Landers 2010; Vargas 2015). Catalonians perceive themselves as separate from Spaniards because of their unique cultural heritage, linguistic heritage and regional identity. Researchers have noted that expressions of the Catalan identity significantly increase whenever there is friction with the central Spanish government (Johannes 2018). Catalonians have used their history and heritage resources to score political mileage. In Barcelona the capital of the Catalan region there are days that are set aside every year to demonstrate and celebrate Catalonian heritage and culture. Festivals and heritage sites have been deployed to create pride in Catalonian culture and heritage. Newly established annual cultural festivals, synonymous with the invention of traditions, have emerged to celebrate Catalan identity (Johannes 2018). It is important at this juncture to highlight that pro-Mthwakazi movements have also invented the *Mthwakazi Cultural Festival*. To date this festival has only been held in neighbouring countries of Botswana and South Africa.

Conclusion

African cultures have been resilient in the face of the onslaught from the colonial period to date. The survival of Ndebele culture and heritage is intricately linked to the Ndebele monarch (Bozongwana 1983; Nyathi 2001; Nyathi 2017). The current Zimbabwean constitution gives citizens the right to enjoy their culture and customs. However, these cultural rights should not threaten the integrity and peace of the nation-state. Stutz (2013) warns us against the dangers of introverted cultural revivalism. The revival of the Ndebele monarch is a veritable minefield were parties involved should tread with care. The process of cultural revival should be understood within the geopolitics and historical contexts. Though the state might be sincere about respecting fundamental human rights including cultural rights it sometimes faces a dilemma. The state will never allow the promotion of traditional institutions and practices that might undermine its authority. Most post-colonial governments are aware that cultural revivalism projects can be hijacked by political players that thrive on disunity. Defending cultural uniqueness can be a rallying point for some groups (Stamatopoulou 2007). Nation-states continue to face many challenges as a result

of ethnicity revolving around separatism and secessionist movements. The Ndebele monarch project should not fragment the Zimbabwean nation-state along ethnic lines. However, the state should address the genuine concerns of the Ndebele people which continue to fuel the secession movements. Relations of regional inequality and injustice are the fuel of secession movements. Both colonial and post-colonial injustices against the Ndebele monarch and people of Matabeleland should be acknowledged and possibly resolved. There is no doubt that the Ndebele monarch revival programme can offer some positive outcomes when it comes to cultural heritage preservation and promotion. By and large, cultural revival projects can be harnessed for the good of nations.

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