Chapter 21
Coverage of Cultural Heritage in Mass Media Publications in Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

This chapter evaluates the pattern and trend of mass media coverage of Zimbabwe's cultural heritage, with a focus on the newspaper publications produced between the years 2010 and 2015. The working hypothesis is that the level and nature of mass media coverage of cultural heritage is directly proportional to the nature of public opinion and attitude towards their own cultural heritage. As such, in order for cultural heritage to make a meaningful contribution to socio-economic and political developmental in Zimbabwe, there is a need for cultural heritage to be visible in all mass media productions. Using document analysis, questionnaires, and interviews, the research identified that the coverage of cultural heritage in mass media in Zimbabwe is alarmingly low. That jeopardizes the regard of cultural heritage as a driver for socio-economic and political development amongst the public. However, through reprioritization of media agenda-setting, media policy, and fostering of a closer collaboration between heritage managers and media professionals, the situation can be salvaged in Zimbabwe.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter was inspired by the proceedings of the 2015 Biennial Conference of the Association of Southern African Professional Archaeologists (ASAPA) hosted by Zimbabwe which challenged researchers to find new avenues through which they could disseminate information on the role of cultural heritage in human development. A similar call had earlier on been made during the adoption of the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance in Khartoum in 2006. Given the wide range of disciplines that underline archaeology and its related disciplines, it literally translates to an infinite number of stakeholders whose

development is at stake. With the resurgent drive towards concepts such as African Renaissance (see Louw, 2000), Ubuntu and Human Development, the role of cultural heritage in human development becomes ever more apparent. Cultural heritage inspires identity and pride in people such that societies' perception on its own heritage directly influences how it develops. For Africa, this notion has been clearly articulated in the African Union's Charter for African Cultural Renaissance (2006). It is this invaluable link between indigenous African communities and their cultural way of life that had been the target of imperialist policies. With cultural alienation, cultural invasion and cultural disorientation, imperialism had significantly threatened African cultural systems. However, the attainment of sovereignty in almost all African countries today creates an opportunity for resuscitation of cultural heritage awareness. However, all this is feasible only under strict conditions where all stakeholders work effortlessly towards a single goal rather than against each other.

Colonialism brought with it a new way of perceiving human development as conceptualized by dependence upon the rate of adoption of new ways of life by a society. The faster a community embraced new concepts, the faster it development. For colonialism, this made sense but for post-colonial Africa, this manner of approaching development is myopic. The Charter for African Cultural Renaissance (2006) goes on to outline that media has a role to play towards the realization of the goal that cultural heritage is an avenue for human development. This is because media shapes the human mind and perception of the world.

Cultural heritage, regardless of its types and categories, ought to be recognized as important in human development. From the 2015 ASAPA conference, what became clear was the fact that identification, preservation and promotion of cultural heritage needs to incorporate all stakeholders for cultural sustainability and human development. As defined by the United Nations Development Programme (2016) human development is not about the creation or amount of economic wealth within a society. Rather, it is more about the richness of human life largely achieved through enhancing opportunities and choices of individuals and their societies. By defining human development concepts such as Ubuntu, African Renaissance and even the targeted goals of Zimbabwe's blueprint for socio-economic and political development (ZIMASSET) become relevant. It is therefore crucial to understand the position of mass media in such a bold drive. This particular focus on mass media follows the opinion of Hesselink (2004) who argues that media has power to stimulate human development. Through content analysis, the chapter identifies the nature and influence that mass media has within Zimbabwe. The working assumption was that, 'news' reflects what is regarded as very important for decision making by a society. Since there is liberalization of the media in Zimbabwe, through understanding their concerted efforts, it should be clear as to how the coverage of cultural heritage relates to development in the country.

The objectives of this chapter should allow the reader to:

- Understand the socio-economic and political context that has shaped the media agenda and setting within Zimbabwe over the past 20 years.
- Understand the trends of visibility of cultural heritage in public and private newspaper publications that have been made accessible to Zimbabweans between 2010 and 2015.
- Appreciate the correlation between visibility of cultural heritage in newspapers and public awareness of the potential of cultural heritage in human development.

The organization of this chapter follows the following outline. The first section contextualizes Zimbabwean media as a product of the past 20 year history of socio-economic and political challenges. This

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