

Traditional Management Systems and the Conservation of Cultural and Natural Heritage: Multiple Case Studies in Zimbabwe

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Abstract : Traditional management systems (TMS) are a vital source of knowledge for conserving cultural and natural heritage. TMS's are renowned for their ability to preserve both tangible and intangible manifestations of heritage. They are a construct of the intricate relationship that exists between heritage and host communities, where communities are recognized as owners of heritage and so, set up management mechanisms to ensure its adequate conservation. Multiple heritage condition surveys were conducted to assess the effectiveness of using TMS in the conservation of both natural and cultural heritage. Surveys were done at Nharira Hills, Mahwemasimike, Dzimbahwe, Manjowe Rock art sites and Norumedzo forest which are heritage places in Zimbabwe. It assessed the state of conservation of the five case studies and assessed the role that host communities play in the management of these heritage places. It was revealed that TMS's are effective in the conservation of natural heritage, however in relation to heritage forms with cultural manifestations, there are major disparities. These range from differences in appreciation and perception of value within communities leading to vandalism, over emphasis in the conservation of the intangible element as opposed to the tangible. This leaves the tangible element at risk. Despite these issues, TMS are a reliable knowledge base which enables more holistic conservation approaches for cultural and natural heritage.

Keywords : communities, cultural intangible, tangible heritage, traditional management systems, natural

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