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Decolonization of Zimbabwean Museums: The Movement Toward Practices Informed by Indigineous Cultures

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Abstract

Since Zimbabwe won its independence from the United Kingdom in 1980, the country has sought to embrace and reinterpret its own cultural history. Influences of the colonial era linger in museums, especially in the areas of architecture, interpretation, administration, and community relations. How can Zimbabwean museums systematically identify the colonial influences affecting them, deconstruct those influences, and form new models that reaffirm indigenous cultures and stimulate growth for cultural institutions? The sources cited within this document discuss Zimbabwean history, colonial history, and cultural heritage. The BaTonga Community Museum, the first museum to serve a minority ethnic group, is an important case study by which to analyze the decolonization process, the promotion of indigenous cultures, and relationship-building with communities. The results of my research will demonstrate the importance of decolonization, the challenges of doing so, and the positive effect it can have on both communities and the museums that serve them. Recommendations will also be made for how Zimbabwean museums can most effectively apply reforming principles and improve institutional sustainability.

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Introduction

The country now known as Zimbabwe was colonized by the United Kingdom from 1890 to 1980. After gaining independence, the country had to adjust to a postcolonial era, creating new administrative structures. Museums and historic sites were among the institutions that had to be reevaluated. Colonial influences still linger in their practices, administration, and community relations. For my thesis, I am researching the question, "How can Zimbabwean museums systematically identify the colonial influences affecting them, deconstruct those influences, and form new models that reaffirm indigenous cultures and stimulate growth for cultural institutions?" Reformed museum practices that are informed by indigenous cultures empower the public with identity and agency. For the purposes of my research, I define practices to include curation, exhibition, interpretation, education, architectural design, and administration. Ideologies, or systems of belief, are conveyed through the valuation of art, selection of subject matter, judgement of what is appropriate to be preserved or accessioned, what should be displayed and how, and other topics. The ideologies of a museum inform its practices, and the standardization of practices can further endorse those ideologies.

The themes explored within my research are European imperialism, decolonization, and cultural tension. I focus on one case study, the BaTonga Community Museum (BCM) in Zimbabwe, which is part of the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ) – a government-based national museum organization. The NMMZ and the BCM are undertaking efforts to promote Zimbabwean cultures, rather than maintain the practices and ideologies that are entrenched from the period of colonization. The BCM is also significant because it was the first community museum established as part of the Cultural Equity program, and the first museum to serve a minority group, the Tonga people. In this capacity, the BCM represents the

government's efforts to address past wrongs, reform the museum system, and change negative perspectives about museums.

Literature Review

The literature that I have reviewed focuses primarily on issues of Zimbabwean history, cultural heritage, and museum practices. Most of the sources were published in the 21st century, with the exception being one paper, which was published in 1996. There was only one monograph about the BCM – Munyaradzi Mawere's *Heritage Practices for Sustainability: Ethnographic Insights from the BaTonga Community Museum in Zimbabwe*. The rest of the information contained within this document was collected from various sources and synthesized. The sources covered a range of topics, including Zimbabwean and Tonga history and cultures, the history and current state of Zimbabwean museums, and the impact of colonialism on Zimbabwean museums and art. Despite the lack of monographic literature on this topic, I aim to contribute to the discourse and literature surrounding Zimbabwean community museums by reporting on their efforts, evaluating their effectiveness, and recommending programs and plans that will promote their missions. A few themes recurred throughout the literature, and I have broken them down into the sections below. These themes relate to cultural heritage, challenges, and innovation, all of which are necessary to consider when running a cultural institution. Zimbabwean museums wrestle with these issues in order to maintain relevance and sustainability.

Cultures Threatened/Cultures Revitalized

Many of the sources address the topic of cultural preservation and promotion. These discussions are often framed in the context of national history, colonial oppression, and the marginalization of minority groups. Zimbabwe, formerly called Rhodesia, was under British colonial rule from 1890 to 1980. By 1902, Rhodesia had one museum, the Rhodesia Museum,

which housed primarily natural history and geological collections. Two more museums were founded between 1936 and 1976. The British used museums and historic monuments as economic resources and made sure African people had no power in their operation. Colonial culture was valued over African culture, and the colonizers even denied the importance of African tribes in the written histories of the monument sites. Museums and monuments ultimately became tools to enforce the power of the colonial state, which complicated the institutions' relationship with the public after the Africans won independence in 1980.[1]

The ethnic group which the BCM serves is called the Tonga. The Tonga live in Northern Zimbabwe, as well as the Southern Province of Zambia, which borders Zimbabwe on the north.[2] The roots of the Tonga ethnic group can be traced back to approximately the 12th century, based on research of ceramic traditions in Zambia and Zimbabwe. Some of the Kangila ethnic group from northern Zambia migrated down to the Victoria Falls region in northwestern Zimbabwe, where the language developed into Chitonga, the language of Tonga people. Chitonga is part of the Bantu language family of Sub-Saharan Africa. It is therefore unrelated to other, non-Bantu Zimbabwean languages. It has more in common with Bantu languages of northern Zambia and of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and is unrelated to other Zimbabwean languages. The Tonga people settled in the valley of the Zambezi River, where they took advantage of the fertile land for farming. During the colonial period, they were able to avoid the government-sanctioned

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[1] Karen M. Lee, "The Historical Development of Zimbabwe's Museums and Monuments" (MA diss., University of St. Andrews, 1996), vi, https://ezproxy.rit.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1825301436?accountid=108.

[2] Lisa Cliggett and Virginia Bond, eds., *Tonga Timeline: Appraising Sixty Years of Multidisciplinary Research in Zambia and Zimbabwe* (Oxford: The Lembani Trust, 2013), Introduction, doc. xiii, ProQuest Ebook Central.

evictions that occurred between 1890 and the 1960s because the colonists did not want to settle in an area at risk from tsetse flies.[3]

Their ways of life were forever altered, however, in the 1950s, when the government decided to build the Kariba Dam on the Zambezi River. Between 1956 and 1958, more than 23,000 Tonga people were forced to resettle because the dam would flood the valley. The project created Lake Kariba, but the Tonga people remained in the region. Not only did they lose their traditional farmlands, but they also lost the sacred graves of their ancestors, where they used to worship.[4] They have suffered losses to their ways of life and their cultural practices.

The language of the Tonga has historically been marginalized in favor of dominant languages.[5] English, the official language, is promoted more than any indigenous languages, even Shona and Ndebele, which are the two "national languages." There are over thirteen minority languages in Zimbabwe, one of which is Chitonga.[6] Many museums display objects from a diverse range of cultures, but most of the narratives in the museums focus on the Shona

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[3] Lloyd Sachikonye, *Zimbabwe's Lost Decade: Politics, Development and Society* (Harare: Weaver Press, 2012), 108, ProQuest Ebook Central; Pathisa Nyathi, *Zimbabwe's Cultural Heritage* (Bulawayo: Ama Books, 2005), 63-64, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[4] Nyathi, *Zimbabwe's Cultural*, 63-64.

[5] Cowen Dziva and Brian Dube, "Promoting and Protecting Minority Languages in Zimbabwe: Use of the 1992 UN Minorities Declaration," *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 21, no. 3 (August 2014): 395, https://doi.org/10.1163/15718115-02103004.

[6] Tendai Fortune Muringa, "The Representation of Minority Languages and Indigenous Cultures in Zimbabwean Museums," *The International Journal of the Inclusive Museum* 5, no. 1 (2013): 1, ir.msu.ac.zw:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11408/2813/Tendai%20Fortune%20Muringa%20international%20conference%20at%20west%20idies%20university%20from%202-5%20august%202012.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

and Ndebele.[7] The dominant languages used are English or Shona.[8] The only museum that solely highlights a minority language group is the BCM.[9]

In fact, the BCM was the first community museum established by the NMMZ.[10] To counteract institutional mistrust and rebuild relationships with rural communities, the NMMZ established the community museum program in 2000. In this program, which is part of a larger Cultural Equity program, small museums are built in communities and cater to their cultural and historical interests. These community museums are intended to promote local culture and language through the interpretation of local history and culture, and the patronage of local crafts, dance, and art. In addition, community museums deconstruct traditional museum power structures by collaborating with community members and making them active participants in the operation of the museum.[11]

The BCM's administration created a BaTonga Museum Local Committee (BMLC) to serve as the community liaisons with the museum. The BMLC consists of local leaders, including chiefs and chiefs' assistants. Through this system, the museum demonstrates that it belongs to the public and is acting on its mission to empower them. This system also helps the

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[7] Muringa, "Representation of Minority Languages," 3.

[8] Gibson Ncube and Gugulethu Siziba, "Compelled to Perform in the 'Oppressor's' Language? Ndebele Performing Artists and Zimbabwe's Shona-Centric Habitus," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 43, no. 4 (August 2017): 827-830, doi:10.1080/03057070.2017.1313609.

[9] Muringa, "Representation of Minority Languages," 3.

[10] Munyaradzi Mawere, *Heritage Practices for Sustainability: Ethnographic Insights from the BaTonga Community Museum in Zimbabwe* (Mankon, Bamenda: Langaa RPCIG, 2016), 55-66.

[11] "Community Museums," National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe, accessed October 23, 2019, http://www.nmmz.co.zw/monuments-wh-sites/community-museums.

museum be sustainable because the community is actively invested in it, and therefore, more likely to support it for the foreseeable future.[12]

In addition to the museum building, there is also a Crafts and Art Centre and a library.[13] The BCM collection consists of objects from Tonga culture, including "fishing boats, drums, domestic utensils, furnished cultural village, [sculpture of the] Nyaminyami River god, among others…" The goal of the museum is to "showcase the traditions, [science], beliefs and ingenuity of the BaTonga people…"[14] It empowers the community by promoting their culture and language.[15] Portrayal of indigenous culture by indigenous people is important because, traditionally, Euro-centric museums have romanticized non-European objects as primitive and historical.[16] Community museums like the BCM are fighting back against this paternalistic view and limited ethnic branding by giving communities authoritative power and providing them with the platform with which to demonstrate that they are still relevant in society and that their cultures are not dead artifacts of the past.

On the topic of architecture, there has been debate in Zimbabwe about the potential threat that modernist architecture poses to the cultural and historical heritage of the African population. Architecture is somewhat of a sore cultural topic because sites, such as Great Zimbabwe, were

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[12] Innocent Pikirayi, "The Kingdom, the Power and Forevermore: Zimbabwe Culture in Contemporary Art and Architecture," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 32, no. 4 (December 2006): 755-59, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25065149.

[13] Mawere, *Heritage Practices for Sustainability*, 40.

[14] Mawere, *Heritage Practices for Sustainability*, 47-48.

[15] "Community Museums."

[16] Caroline Ford, "Museums after Empire in Metropolitan and Overseas France," *The Journal of Modern History* 82, no. 3 (2010): 641.

co-opted by the colonizers in order to justify their rule. Great Zimbabwe is a world cultural heritage site, and was the capital of a powerful ancient civilization that existed from 1325 to 1450.[17] The British conducted pseudo-archeological digs to prove that the structures were not made by Africans. In opposition to this white-washing of their history, African nationalists in the 1960s embraced Great Zimbabwe as a symbol of national pride and pre-colonial glory. After World War II, a new wave of modernist architecture swept through the country, and criticisms followed. Some believed that European modernism erased African architectural forms, promoted urbanization – and the social and economic problems that often accompany it – and deepened the divide between urban and rural communities.

In the 1990s, the postmodernist movement began in Zimbabwe, in which architects drew inspiration from ancient designs and incorporated them into new buildings.[18] Postmodernist architecture is defined by the Royal Institute of British Architects as a movement born in the 1970s that "[rediscovered] the various meanings contained within the mainly classical architecture of the past and [applied] them to modern structures."[19] The Zimbabwean postmodernist movement can be seen as a response to the criticism of Euro-centric modernism. It instead shifts the focus to African heritage and celebrates Zimbabwean accomplishments. Whether a Zimbabwean museum has a modernist or a post-modernist African style can be telling of the ideology of the institution. The BCM resembles the traditional Tonga architecture of

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[17] Brian Raftopoulos and Alois Mlambo, eds., *Becoming Zimbabwe: A History from the Pre-Colonial Period to 2008* (Harare: Weaver Press, 2008), x, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[18] Pikirayi, "The Kingdom, the Power and Forevermore," 755-59.

[19] "Postmodernism," RIBA, The Royal Institute of British Architects, accessed December 2, 2019, https://www.architecture.com/explore-architecture/postmodernism.

Ngazi, which are circular wooden houses on stilts with thatched roofs.[20] The BCM also has a grass-thatched roof, although it is on the ground level and is rectangular. The fact that its design draws from Tonga culture demonstrates its role in representing and serving the Tonga people.

Considering all the hurt and cultural loss that certain members of the public have experienced during and since the colonial period, some Zimbabwean museum professionals have proposed the founding of a "museum of shame" that would address the injustices and human rights abuses that have occurred in Africa.[21] Issues such as these are an uncomfortable historical fact for many Europeans, but they are a painful reality of life for formerly colonized people who are still facing the socio-economic and cultural fallout of colonialism and imperialism. By addressing these painful topics in their history, Zimbabwean museums can facilitate a healing and reconciliation process.

Challenges Faced by Zimbabwean Museums

Museums in developing countries often face lack of funding because of economic issues. In Zimbabwe, when central governments run out of funding for museums, they are left with tiny budgets that impede their ability to properly serve the community. The Nambya Community Museum, which opened in 2008 and houses artifacts connected to the culture and history of the Nambya, or BaNambya, ethnic group, was in desperate need of repairs as of 2013. The roof was rotting due to torrential rains and the walls and windows were boarded up. The museum was able to receive help from the NMMZ to apply roofing, but there is still a lot of work that needs to be

[20] Mawere, *Heritage Practices for Sustainability*, 38.

[21] Simiyu Wandibba, "Museums in Africa," in *Media and Identity in Africa*, ed. Kimani Njogu and John Middleton (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 256.

done.[22] In the independence era, museums need to innovate and pursue other means of funding, including community donations or potentially partnering with the private sector.[23]

By staying relevant to the community, museums can help ensure their longevity. They can garner more financial support through relationship marketing and social media.[24] Museums should attempt to connect with the public, better understand their wants and needs, advertise, and build relationships.[25] Community outreach, whether through social media or traditional marketing, not only improves visitation and community engagement, it also promotes donations and membership.[26] The NMMZ should also pay attention to the needs of community museums and offer them support in the form of funding or by assisting them with networking and helping them connect with sources of income.

Need for Innovation and Constant Change

The sources emphasize the need for adaptation and new ways of interpreting and operating museums. Visitors have expectations, especially with regards to the use and display of

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[22] Rutendo Mapfumo, "Cry Our Beloved Nambya Museum," January 24, 2013, http://bi.gale.com/essentials/article/GALE|A316122446/7812c759dadb7d66b2b87763f08cf23b?u=nysl_ro_rrlib

[23] Munyaradzi Mawere and Tapuwa R. Mubaya "'A Shadow that Refuses to Leave': The Enduring Legacy of Colonialism in Zimbabwean Museum Governance," in *African Museums in the Making: Reflections on the Politics of Material and Public Culture in Zimbabwe*, ed. Munyaradzi Mawere, et al. (Mankon, Bamenda: Langaa RPCIG, 2015), 148.

[24] Munyaradzi Mawere and Genius Tevera, "Zimbabwean Museums in the Digital Age: A Quest to Increase Museum Visibility in Public Space through Social Media," in *African Museums in the Making*, 249.

[25] Mawere and Tevera, "Zimbabwean Museums in the Digital Age," 255-59.

[26] Mawere and Tevera, "Zimbabwean Museums in the Digital Age," 253.

their cultural patrimony. Museums should have policies that allow them to identify and implement changes to meet the needs of constituents. When a museum does not adapt to accommodate the needs of the local public, it can lead to mistrust and avoidance of the museum. This situation has occurred in Zimbabwe at conventional museums. The working-class public and people from marginalized ethnicities see museums as elitist institutions that have maintained the ideologies of the imperialists.[27]

In addition, Zimbabwe, like some other countries, has resorted to the commodification of ethnicity as a means to capitalize off of tourists.[28] Commodification of ethnicity means that elements of a culture are marketed for profit., such as art, dances, clothes, etc. Sometimes, a version of the culture is presented as the true culture so that tourists or buyers in the market will purchase supposedly authentic cultural items. The economic potential of commodification has led some communities to see museums as powerful institutions that do not really serve the needs of the people, and instead, exist for the benefit of the privileged and/or tourists. The Tonga people have a limited ability to benefit from the tourism industry because they do not have the financial resources to invest, nor do they have the power to make their perspectives included or to influence the development of the industry.[29] NMMZ is using community museums to change these power dynamics by giving some economic self-determination back to the community. The BCM showcases the crafts and artistic work of the local community through exhibits and

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[27] Mawere and Mubaya, "'A Shadow that Refuses to Leave,'" 141-145.

[28] Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, "Ethnicity, Inc.: On the Affective Economy of Belonging," in *Corporations and Citizenship*, ed. Greg Urban (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 250.

[29] Mawere, *Heritage Practices for Sustainability*, 58-59.

performances. This draws attention to the work of local craftspeople and artists, who can sell their works at market. By empowering communities, the community museum initiative is helping to undo the belief that museums are only for tourists.[30]

Returning to the topic of marketing, the NMMZ began to utilize social media with a Facebook page, although it could be used more effectively for public outreach and relationship marketing.[31] The BCM, for instance, does not have a Facebook page or its own website. More research needs to be done on the NMMZ's future social media and online presence initiatives in order to determine how they can effectively improve their outreach.

Conclusion

Overall, the literature acknowledges that indigenous museums are important for the public to develop a sense of self-identity after colonialism and curate their own cultural experiences. At the same time, they recognize the difficulties that the country and these institutions are facing, including community disinterest, lack of funding, and administrative problems. While many of the sources discuss the origins of the issues, there are not many detailed guidelines for how to practically pursue the ideals of community inclusion and cultural promotion for this case study. In my thesis, I will attempt to provide recommendations, or guidelines, through analysis of the BCM.

Recommendations will include topics such as applying lessons in community engagement, reorganizing authority structures, pursuing varied sources of funding, and

[30] "Community Museums."

[31] Mawere and Tevera, "Zimbabwean Museums in the Digital Age," 247-268.

expanding public outreach programs. Detailed, applicable plans and positive examples will give institutions a better idea of how exactly these ideas can be effectively put into practice.

Tonga History

Tonga people, also known as BaTonga, are a minority ethnic group within Zimbabwe. There are many minority language groups in the country, but I am focusing on the Tonga ethnic group because they are the community served by my case study, the BaTonga Community Museum (BCM). Tonga people are identified by their language, known as Chitonga. As of 2016, there were around 500,000 Tonga people living in Zimbabwe, which makes up 2% of the population.[32] Zimbabwe's estimated total population for 2020 is 14.86 million. The largest ethnic group in Zimbabwe is Shona, who comprise 70% of the population. The second-largest group are the Ndebele, who constitute 20% of the population. There are sixteen officially recognized languages, one of which is Chitonga.[33]

The highest concentrations of Tonga people live in southern Zambia and northwestern Zimbabwe, in the Binga District of Matabeleland Province (Fig. 1). According to some anecdotes, some Tonga people live in urban areas.[34] Their ancestors originated in central Africa and migrated to the area now known as Zimbabwe in 300 AD.[35] Their history is still somewhat unknown, but scholars believe that over the centuries, they absorbed various smaller ethnic groups, including Shona-speaking groups, and Goba or Gova refugees in the 1600s.[36] Tonga

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[32] Mawere, *Heritage Practices for Sustainability*, 40.

[33] "Zimbabwe Population 2020," World Population Review, last modified August 27, 2019, http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/zimbabwe-population/.

[34] "Tonga People (Zambia and Zimbabwe)," Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, last modified November 8, 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tonga_people_(Zambia_and_Zimbabwe)#cite_ref-1.

[35] Mawere, *Heritage Practices for Sustainability*, 40.

[36] Raftopoulos and Mlambo, *Becoming Zimbabwe*, chap. 1, doc. 10-11.

people lived in the fertile valley of the Zambezi River, which they traditionally called the Kasambezi, which means "those who know how to bath in a crocodile infested river." The Zambezi River, the fourth-largest river in Africa, is 2,650 kilometers long and passes through several south-central African countries before emptying into the Indian Ocean. Tonga people maintained an agricultural society, taking advantage of the fertile river valley soil. The farming was so good at times that they were able to harvest twice a year. They also fished, hunted forest animals, and gathered wild fruits and vegetables. They worshipped a serpent-like river god named Nyaminyami, who they believed controlled the waters and would kill travelers who wandered too close to the dangerous Kariba Gorge (Fig. 2-4).[37] The river was at the center of their way of life.

When the British consolidated their power in the 1890s and claimed "Rhodesia" as a colony, the Tonga community was divided between two countries: Northern Rhodesia and Southern Rhodesia – modern-day Zambia and Zimbabwe, respectively.[38] Europeans colonizers drew country borders without regard for the existing territories of ethnic groups. They did not see Africans as equals, with the same dignity or deserving of the same rights and agency as themselves.[39] Europeans saw themselves as civilized because they considered their governments, societies, and cultures to be superior. In a microcosm of this, the British did not use the Chitonga name for the river. "Zambezi" does not mean anything in that language. As Dr. Munyaradzi Mawere, scholar of Zimbabwean culture and heritage says, this reflects the way in which Tonga

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[37] Mawere, *Heritage Practices for Sustainability*, 40-44.

[38] Raftopoulos and Mlambo, *Becoming Zimbabwe*, chap. 2, doc. 39.

[39] Raftopoulos and Mlambo, *Becoming Zimbabwe*, chap. 2, doc. 41.

people were "depersonified," and their culture, names, and religious traditions were "distorted." Despite the colonial border, people on either side of the river were still able to cross in order to visit their families and friends on the other side.[40] In some ways, life was able to continue as it had before.

Aside from having their territory split between two countries, Tonga people managed to escape the interference of the colonial government for most of the 19th century.[41] During this era, the government was conducting land displacements so that they could co-opt it. The Zambezi River valley, however, contained tsetse flies, and the British feared disease. In the late 1950s, the Tonga community's way of life was changed forever. The British federation that controlled Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia, and Nyasaland – now known as Malawi – conceived of a dam to harness hydro-electric power from the river. Before the government could start construction on the Kariba Dam, it had to move the residents.[42] They were forced to leave the valley. While some migrated to urban areas, many remained in the region. Between 1956 and 1958, more than 23,000 people were displaced.[43] The British relocated most people to the Northern Rhodesia side of the border. As a result, many families were separated. Some would never see each other again. After the dam was completed, people could no longer cross the river.[44]

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[40] Mawere, *Heritage Practices for Sustainability*, 42-43.

[41] Mawere, *Heritage Practices for Sustainability*, 41.

[42] Mawere, *Heritage Practices for Sustainability*, 42.

[43] Nyathi, *Zimbabwe's Cultural Heritage*, 63-64.

[44] Mawere, *Heritage Practices for Sustainability*, 43.

On the Zimbabwean side of the border, the area where people moved was more arid, which prevented them from farming with the success that they had previously enjoyed. In addition, large sections of the forests were cut down, which harmed the wildlife.[45] With access to the river cut off, they could no longer visit their ancestors' graves and pay respects. Nor could they properly worship Nyaminyami. They feared that the god would be angered and make the river boil and flood in order to destroy the dam. As they predicted, two extreme floods occurred during dam construction, which began in 1956. Access roads, equipment, and the dam wall itself were damaged or destroyed in 1957 and 1958. The second flood was so severe that researchers predicted that a flood of its kind would only happen once every ten thousand years. The Kariba Dam was, however, eventually opened in 1960.[46]

Legacies of Colonialism

The majority of the uprooted people did not leave the river region because of their connection to the land. They feared that abandoning their home would further anger Nyaminyami. The trauma of the displacement, combined with the fact that they had previously been partially insulated from British influence, created conditions under which they became very resistant to colonial cultural heritage, including religion and knowledge, and material culture, such as technology.[47] In his book, *Heritage Practices for Sustainability: Ethnographic Insights from the BaTonga Community Museum in Zimbabwe,* Mawere states that, "Unfortunately, this

[45] Mawere, *Heritage Practices for Sustainability*, 42.

[46] Mawere, *Heritage Practices for Sustainability*, 44.

[47] Mawere, *Heritage Practices for Sustainability*, 44-45.

resilience and love of their culture has generally been misconstrued by some quarters to mean underdevelopment, backwardness, naivety, simplicity, among a lot of other negative descriptions and pejorative labels." Finding that they could not force the Tonga community to accept British culture, the colonizers fostered negative stereotypes and encouraged hatred of them. These stereotypes were still prevalent after Zimbabwe won its independence in 1980.[48] European colonizers did not only want to exploit African resources, but some also thought that imposing their culture and values would be beneficial to the indigenous peoples of Africa.[49] To colonizers, Christianity and European arts, architecture, and cultures represented the greatest and most enlightened civilizations in the world. In comparison, they saw the cultural heritage and values of Africans as less beautiful and primitive.[50]

These unjust practices struck blows to the cultural history of the Tonga. They could no longer practice their religion or honor their ancestors as they had before. Their fertile land was gone, leaving them without the cradle of their livelihood and the tangible connection to their community's past. They still sought to maintain their customs and culture, however, the colonial era damaged their cultural heritage. In addition, it harmed their reputation among other Zimbabweans and even people outside the country due to the negative stereotypes created by the British.[51] The stereotypes portrayed them and other minority inhabitants of the river valley as "'marginalised', 'isolated', 'poor', 'backward'…'primitive', 'dangerous', and 'two-toed

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[48] Mawere, *Heritage Practices for Sustainability*, 44-45.

[49] Raftopoulos and Mlambo, *Becoming Zimbabwe*, chap. 2, doc. 41-44.

[50] Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach, "The Universal Survey Museum," *Art History* 3, no. 4 (Dec 1980): 449-452, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8365.1980.tb00089.x.

[51] Mawere, *Heritage Practices for Sustainability*, 45.

people'."[52] People outside the community did not understand their culture. Being a rural farming community, they lacked the resources to communicate their dignity and complexity to outsiders.

One of the reasons why the Binga District has been marginalized in the independence era is the fact that Tonga people have traditionally been allied with Ndebele, who lived south of them in Matabeleland Province. Ndebele people have been in conflict with Shona, who now dominate the national government, since before colonization and in the early years of independence. After Zimbabwean armies won the war for liberation, the Shona-dominated Zimbabwean African National Union [Patriotic Front] (ZANU-PF) party took credit for the independence movement and minimized the military contributions of the Ndebele-led Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU). They won the election for power and began to establish a narrative that to be Shona was to be Zimbabwean. Shona culture has become hegemonic and default, while other cultural groups are considered foreign. The height of anti-Ndebele sentiment resulted in a period known as Gukurahundi between 1982 and 1986, in which government-led forces committed massacres in Matabeleland and the Midlands.[53] As allies of Ndebele and as a non-Shona group themselves, the Tonga community of Binga has suffered under the ZANU-PF government.[54] The government leveraged its political power to make rural Tonga people's lives

[52] "Basilwizi Trust Vision, Objectives and Governance," Basilwizi.org, Basilwizi Trust, accessed February 13, 2020, http://www.basilwizi.org/basilwizi/about-us/basilwizi-trust-vision-objectives-and-governance.

[53] Gibson Ncube and Gugulethu Siziba, "Compelled to Perform in the 'Oppressor's' Language? Ndebele Performing Artists and Zimbabwe's Shona-Centric Habitus," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 43, no. 4 (August 2017): 827-830, doi:10.1080/03057070.2017.1313609.

[54] Mawere, *Heritage Practices for Sustainability*, 23-24.

more difficult. As a result, Tonga people have lacked political influence, and outside groups generally lack awareness of them.

Case Study: The BaTonga Community Museum

The injustices and misunderstanding that affect Tonga people led to the post-colonial government establishing a museum in service of their community. In 2000, the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ) – the organization that runs the country's museums and historical and cultural sites – began the community museum program. The NMMZ itself is a government-controlled body established in 1972 through the passage of The National Museums and Monuments of Rhodesia Act. Its purpose is to "provide for the establishment and administration of museums' [*sic*] and to provide for the preservation of ancient, historical and natural monuments, relics and other objects of historical or scientific value or interest[.]"[55] The community museum program, which is part of the larger Cultural Equity program, shines light upon diversity and promotes the cultures and languages of minority groups who have been overlooked by the larger society.[56] Since the NMMZ is a part of the national government, the Cultural Equity program can be seen as an attempt to make amends to, or redress the concerns of, ethnic groups who were historically wronged and/or misunderstood.

In the case of the Tonga, the need to redress wrongs is particularly acute because of the injustices they faced, not only at the hands of the British, but also at the hands of other Zimbabweans. Museums, as respected cultural institutions, have an authoritative influence. The collection objects and, subsequently, the cultures from which they come, are lent legitimacy and importance by virtue of being chosen to be exhibited. Additionally, powerful groups are usually the ones with the influence to decide what should be exhibited and how.[57] Shona and Ndebele

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[55] "What Is NMMZ?" National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe, accessed February 20, 2020, http://www.nmmz.co.zw/about-us/what-nmmz.

[56] "Community Museums."

[57] Duncan and Wallach, "The Universal Survey Museum," 448-49.

are the largest ethnic groups in Zimbabwe, so most narratives in museums are focused around them.[58] By promoting Tonga culture and language through a museum, the NMMZ is communicating to the community, and to the rest of the country, that Tonga ways of life are legitimate and worthy of respect; not something negative to be judged or looked down upon. In addition, a local museum that encourages community participation and feedback aims to allow Tonga people to tell their own narratives, without those of a dominant ethnic group overshadowing them in the exhibits. This could be perceived as the NMMZ relegating Tonga narratives to a small rural museum so its larger urban museums can focus on other topics, but the BCM is not an entirely obscure location, given the tourist traffic in the area due to the Victoria Falls.

Communities that suffer cultural erasure benefit from having their cultures bolstered, through means such as usage of indigenous language, practice of crafts, or awareness of ethnic identity. The NMMZ was trying to achieve these ends when it opened the BCM in September of 2004. The BCM is located on the shores of Lake Kariba, the man-made lake created by the dam. Although it opened in 2004, the museum was established four years earlier. The construction was overseen by a Danish organization Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke-Zimbabwe (MS-Zimbabwe).[59] According to the Natural History Museum of Zimbabwe, the BCM "seeks to promote and empower the local communities and the Tonga culture."[60]

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[58] Muringa, "The Representation of Minority Languages," 3.

[59] Mawere, *Heritage Practices for Sustainability*, 46.

[60] "BaTonga Museum," Natural History Museum of Zimbabwe, accessed Nov 7, 2019, http://naturalhistorymuseumzimbabwe.com/batonga/.

A large label hanging on the wall of the museum provides the BCM's lengthy mission statement:

> The Tonga were displaced from the shores of the Zambezi River in 1958 when the Lake Kariba was created. This meant disruptions in the cultural and socio-economic environment of the Tonga. In addition, the lack of promotion of the Tonga culture has meant that misconceptions and stereotypes about Tonga culture has developed, labelling Tonga culture as backward and stagnant. To combat these [misconceptions], the BaTonga Museum seeks to promote Tonga culture and history locally, nationally, and internationally. The objectives of the BaTonga Museum are to: Create awareness about Tonga culture and history…Build confidence[,] self esteem[,] and dignity of the BaTonga…Preserve and protect Tonga cultural material[.][61]

The BCM is intended to serve as a safeguard against cultural loss. It preserves Tonga traditions, language, art, history, and beliefs, honoring their culture and preserving it for future generations. Even though they cannot get their ancestral land back, they can still use the museum as a place to remember their history and look forward to the future of their community.

Looking forward can mean learning new skills or using old traditions in ways that benefit the community. According to the NMMZ, the community museums' goals are to "empower local artists, provoke inert talents, carry out community exhibitions, develop dying skills, promote community arts, engage in exchange programs etc." Community museums like the BCM facilitate events and promote artists and heritage that otherwise might be overlooked at a large museum or in the national art scene. Hosting local community exhibitions can also inspire local people to explore their own heritage or take up the study of art or history. This promotes curiosity, creativity, learning, and continued engagement with cultural heritage. "This new–concept of 'Museums with community relevance' has…assisted the communities in enhancing

[61] 263Chat (@263Chat), "On location: BaTonga Museum in Binga #BingaZW," Twitter photo, March 18, 2015, https://twitter.com/263chat/status/578204750673498112.

their livelihoods through workshops, sale of exhibition products and direct crafts."[62] Due to the district's proximity to the Victoria Falls, a global tourist destination, artists can take advantage of the tourism industry to sell their creations at the Binga Crafts and Art Centre. The BCM also helps attract tourists, both Zimbabwean and foreign.[63] These activities have the potential to provide an economic boost to community members. In this way, community museums can give back to communities by teaching skills and providing a route by which local artists and craftspeople can promote themselves and their work. This ideal outcome has faltered since a 2008 economic crisis created inflation, leading to lower prices and the arrival of middle-men.[64] The Victoria Falls continue to bring tourists to the area, so the potential for economic conditions to improve also remains.

The BCM also communicates its commitment to serving Tonga culture by reflecting the architectural style of the community. The Tonga's traditional houses, called Ngazi, are circular wooden houses built on stilts with roofs thatched with dry grass (Fig. 5).[65] Although the Tonga people no longer live in the river valley, which was prone to flooding, some people still follow the tradition of building on stilts. Taking inspiration from the Ngazi model, the BCM has a grass-thatched roof, although it is more rectangular in shape, but with curved corners, and does not rest on stilts (Fig. 6). The effort to incorporate Tonga architectural styles demonstrates an attempt by the museum to fit into the community. Conforming to local architectural norms conveys that the

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[62] "Community Museums."

[63] Mawere, *Heritage Practices for Sustainability*, 3.

[64] Bjørn Førde, "Will the Binga Craft Centre Survive the Crisis?" f4dialogue, Førde for Dialogue, March 29, 2018, https://f4dialogue.dk/2018/04/01/zimbabwe-25-years-later-13/.

[65] Mawere, *Heritage Practices for Sustainability*, 38.

museum is not merely an institution that takes up space there. Instead, it is a part of their community and portrays that through the familiarity of the design. In Africa, choosing an indigenous design style over a European one is significant because it is part of the decolonization movement. In Zimbabwe, traditional architectural styles convey national and ethnic pride, and appreciation for Zimbabwean history and heritage.[66] The BCM is a part of the movement to embrace indigenous culture that was undervalued or hated in the colonial era. Tonga people are proud of their heritage, and the museum's style reflects that.

Community leaders can take part in the organization and management of the BCM, although the extent of their ownership and sway is contested. At the highest level of administrative oversight is the national government, followed by the Ministry of Rural Development, Preservation of National Cultural Heritage. Next is the NMMZ, which has a board of trustees. The BCM has a Chief Curator and Site Manager, Dr. Joshua Chikozho, as well as a Heritage Education Officer, and a Tour Guide.[67] The tour guide, as of spring 2018, is Lambiwe Munkuli, a Tonga woman.[68] Community members believe that chief ownership of the museum lies with them, but the way in which the bureaucratic operation runs at times, makes them feel as though they do not have as much agency as they would like. Dr. Chikozho claims that the BCM belongs to both the government and the community because the government established it and pays for its operation. Ambivalence about ownership and management at local levels are common due to the complex organizational hierarchy created by the Constitution of Zimbabwe.

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[66] Pikirayi, "The Kingdom, the Power and Forevermore," 755-59.

[67] Mawere, *Heritage Practices for Sustainability*, 48-53.

[68] Bjørn Førde, "Museum in Binga Telling the Story of The Tonga People," f4dialogue, Førde for Dialogue, March 28, 2018, https://f4dialogue.dk/2018/04/01/zimbabwe-25-years-later-13/.

There are two systems of government that operate simultaneously: Customary, or traditional, and statutory, or modern/bureaucratic. The duality of these systems creates confusion for both local leaders and state officials.[69] Dr. Munyaradzi Mawere, who conducted field research in the Tonga community and at the BCM, created a table to demonstrate these complex structures (Fig. 7). These systems are not conducive to clear delineations about who is responsible for certain tasks and decisions, and under what circumstances. Friction over leadership and decision-making may also be exacerbated by majority/minority dynamics between community leaders and government officials, since the government is dominated by Shona people. It is possible that the bureaucratic branch is prejudiced or trying to dominate Tonga leaders based on a sense of paternalism. The ethnic identities of officials are unknown to me, but it is an important possibility to keep in mind.

Another issue is the limitations of community consultation. There is a Local Community Management Committee (LCMC) consisting of community members, and they are called to the BCM to meet with staff, but some members have stated that they are usually only called to provide the staff with information. Some staff members have claimed that locals are mostly involved in cultural matters, while community members say that they are regularly informed about the museum's issues and activities. There have also been situations where only BCM administrative staff were allowed to deal with certain issues. The community does not have a legal basis to lay claim to the site, despite the fact that they are involved in its management on a regular basis.[70] If the BCM is relegating community members to the role of cultural consultants, then it is not living up to its goals of community empowerment. The fact that the tour guide is

[69] Mawere, *Heritage Practices for Sustainability*, 48-53.

[70] Mawere, *Heritage Practices for Sustainability*, 52-53.

Tonga may indicate that the BCM tries to include Tonga people in running the museum, but that would depend on how much input Munkuli has in the operation and interpretation decisions of the museum.

It is also important to note whether or not the BCM allows the community to portray its diversity, or if it tries to create a narrative of a traditional, hegemonic group. African artists often face pressure to replicate traditional forms of art instead of experimenting with new styles, especially because of the nature of the African art market in Europe and the United States. Buyers value traditional styles because they fetishize the idea of ancient Africa. To make a living, artists often conform to the desires of the market, which limits their ability to pursue contemporary or experimental forms.[71] Replication of tradition is also used by some as a way to promote national identity. During a national liberation movement, there is often a push to formulate a national pride. Artists in these climates often create traditional forms to connect to their roots and imbue vigor into the drive for independence.[72] This is a way to reject the colonial belief in African inferiority, replacing shame with a strong identity rooted in cultures that colonialism tried to subdue. Latching too hard onto tradition can have a negative effect, however. Contemporary issues still exist, and artists that only look to the past miss out on representing the reality of their nation. They need to show the current truths, as well, in order to move forward.[73] Culture is not limited to the past. It is constantly evolving over time. While cultures are rooted in tradition, they also change with society and world events.

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[71] *In and Out of Africa*, produced by Ilisa Barbash and Lucien Taylor (1992; Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Media, 1993), DVD.

[72] Frantz Fanon, "On National Culture," in *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), 42.

[73] Fanon, "On National Culture," 42.

Efforts to create one national identity can also serve the purpose of unifying diverse groups after gaining independence. The national identity, however, does not always emerge prominent over ethnic identities. Attempts to cast large populations as similar are not accurate because different groups of people have different histories and concerns.[74] Cultural differences must be acknowledged. In fact, a hegemony of one national culture can actually serve to make diversity invisible. Minority groups are especially susceptible to this. Ethnic groups that do not distinguish themselves risk becoming "extinct" as they fade into obscurity or assimilate into the larger majority culture. This risk leads some ethnic groups to commoditize their identity and culture in order to reap economic benefits from tourism or art markets.[75]

Tonga residents of Binga have the opportunity to build an ethnic brand, if they do not already have one. The fact that local artists exhibit their work at the BCM and at the Crafts and Art Centre and can sell them to tourists may indicate if some degree of ethnic commodification is taking place. An important distinction to draw, however, is whether the Tonga people are building their own brand or if the BCM or NMMZ are forcing them to perform a certain version of their ethnicity for tourists.

The risk with the BCM is that, in a misguided attempt to represent Tonga culture, the museum may only show the traditional aspects of the culture, and not the modern aspects of the community or diverse ideals. The BCM offers artistic workshops and promotes local artists and craftspeople, but are they only promoting traditional art? Are they displaying contemporary art? Are they portraying the Tonga community as hegemonic or diverse, with different perspectives

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[74] Fanon, "On National Culture," 40.

[75] Comaroff and Comaroff, "Ethnicity, Inc," 250-52.

and ways of expression? These are all important questions that I explore through my research. The answers will help me determine how effectively the BCM is following its mission to empower and accurately represent the Tonga community. One of the reasons for the BCM's founding was to counteract the negative stereotypes and ignorance perpetuated toward Tonga people. While the BCM is fighting negative stereotypes, if it is only representing traditional aspects of Tonga culture, then it is contributing to the generalization of Tonga people.

One example of the BCM allowing community members to freely express themselves and address contemporary issues through art is the youth street art workshop that it hosted and co-sponsored in August 2019 (Fig. 8-10). The workshop, which lasted from July 29 to August 2, invited twelve young Binga residents – six men and six women – to practice graffiti and express their experiences and aspirations.[76] The BCM and the Basilwizi Trust partnered to develop and facilitate the workshop. The Basilwizi Trust is a non-governmental organization that supports community development for communities of the Zambezi River Valley, who are primarily Tonga and Korekore.[77] It is unclear which organization conceived the idea for the workshop. The blog, *Changing the Story*, which reports on the workshop and explains its goals mentions that a Dr. Melis Cin of Lancaster University documented the project. It is possible that Dr. Cin or Lancaster University collaborated with the BCM and the Basilwizi Trust, but that is also unclear. According to the blog, the goals of the project were to:

> Provide a platform for Tonga youth to voice their aspirations and to address the social powerlessness they hold…Identify how youth and CSOs [Community Service

[76] Willard Muntanga, "A Reflection on the Graffiti Training Workshop Held at BaTonga Museum, Binga," Changing the Story, University of Leeds, September 12, 2019, https://changingthestory.leeds.ac.uk/2019/09/12/a-reflection-on-the-graffiti-training-workshop-held-at-batonga-museum-binga/.

[77] Basilwizi Trust, "Basilwizi Trust Vision, Objectives and Governance."

> Organizations] can work together to address social cohesion and epistemic injustices…Bring the issues of marginalised youth to the attention of the policy-makers, local stakeholders, [and] discuss the role of participatory arts as an intercultural learning tool for deconstructing the bias against such groups.[78]

The page also describes the project's goals and methodology:

> The project seeks to document these through participatory street art with the aim of encouraging social cohesion, making their experiences and knowledge visible, and contributing to epistemic justice. Epistemic injustice means a person is in a disadvantaged position to influence public discourse and is marginalised due to unfair treatment about knowledge, participation in communicative practices or representation (Fricker, 2015). This project generates a democratic space by giving Tonga youth an opportunity to tell the stories about the lives they value and doing research with Tonga youth rather than on them to promote social awareness[.][79]

In the quote above, a revealing statement is that the project is meant to do research with the youth instead of on them. This shows a collaborative prerogative of the BCM to respect their constituents and treat them as individuals with opinions rather than a hegemonic group to which the museum pays lip service. The participants in the workshop were not simply ethnographic specimens to be placed under a magnifying glass for the museum staff. Instead, they were asked to share their perspectives through their own art, thereby being empowered to express their opinions on the issues affecting them.

One of the participants, Willard Muntanga, shared on the project blog why he believed that the workshop was relevant to young people living in Binga. According to Muntanga, older men and women traditionally hold the power to make decisions, and young people are marginalized. With relation to issues of cultural activities and preservation, traditional power structures do not allow young people to get involved. At the same time, young people face many

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[78] "Street Art to Promote Representation and Epistemic Justice among Marginalized Rural Zimbabwean Youth," Changing the Story, University of Leeds, accessed February 13, 2020, https://changingthestory.leeds.ac.uk/street_art_zimbabwe/.

[79] "Street Art to Promote Representation and Epistemic Justice."

challenges, including poverty, early marriages, "cultural decay," and lack of employment opportunities. Muntanga believed that:

> The training workshop came at the right time to the right people at the right place to revamp the culture of Tonga people in Binga…I believe, through the advent of graffiti artwork this will be erased and (it will) ensure that the youth become part of the groups who preserve the Tonga culture in Binga… The active participation of the participants affixed with their curiosity and interest to know more about the graffiti, had invigorated and empowered the facilitators to extend their skills. This created a platform or dimension where the youth were able to share their heroic history, experiences, achievements and the global challenges of Binga through image (pictorial) presentations on the billboards.[80]

According to Muntanga, young people were in need of an outlet, as well as mentors to teach them about their own agency. Graffiti can give young people a medium through which to make their voices heard and contribute to the cultural landscape in a way that traditional routes have not typically permitted. They can revamp their culture by exploring new mediums and expressing new ideas through art. A political impact is also reflected in Muntanga's assessment:

> [T]he workshop has transformed and changed the chapter of living for the youth in Binga as they gained new and amplified skills in art works for the good of their communities. It will make them vigilant enough to speak up to issues which affect them (advocacy) in their realms of life through street or visual arts (talking using art work). The onus is upon the participants…to champion the project so that they cannot lose the skills which they gained…The fact that the workshop brought other dimensions of advocacy or ladder of engagements, it prompted Basilwizi Trust in Binga and BaTonga museum to wish that such workshop [*sic*] should prevail in order to equip the youth with the skills and techniques to address the host of challenges faced by young people in the District…I commend that the workshop was convivial and it acted as an eye opener. Over and above, I developed skills in graffiti art work which I didn't have before. These skills will make me to be relevant in our rural communities as I will be able to produce various art products for public consumption. There is more to the (meaning of) the words graffiti art.[81]

Tonga art encompasses many things, and even when the workshop is done, it can inspire young people to continue making art and motivate them to care about cultural preservation and

[80] Muntanga, "A Reflection on the Graffiti Training Workshop."

[81] Muntanga, "A Reflection on the Graffiti Training Workshop."

have a more active role in cultural and public topics now and as they grow older. Through this workshop, the BCM not only provided young stakeholders with a workshop geared toward their age demographic at which they could learn art skills; it also taught them life lessons about their own agency and the importance of their voices and what they can contribute to their communities. The convivial nature of the workshop also helped foster bonds among participants and enforced positive associations about art, community, and cultural heritage. Muntanga looked forward to using his new skills to make art for public consumption. It is unclear if he meant for sale or for public exhibition, but it is at least apparent that he is excited about making art and wants to share his creations with people.

The fact that the workshop utilized the medium of graffiti also contributes to evidence that the BCM is not trying to lock Tonga people into traditional representations or restricting them to only being portrayed as rural people. Graffiti is one of the most iconic forms of contemporary art, and it is commonly associated with urban environments. This shifts the narrative from one that stereotypes Tonga people as solely rural or, even, backward. Graffiti art is a way for young people to express themselves through a modern perspective. This connects to the arguments of Fanon, who called for artists to embrace national realities and contemporary issues, rather than be stuck in the past. The idea of dealing with modern narratives and issues seems to be especially poignant since it was young people who were invited to participate in this project. Young people often have different experiences and bring different perspectives to issues than older generations do. The modern art form of graffiti seems to deliberately have been chosen to connect to the modern viewpoints that young people may have. Perhaps, the organizers thought young people could express their ideas and feelings more accurately with a form of art that is not tied closely to tradition. The choice of medium may also imply that young Binga

residents are more concerned with urban issues than older generation because they are more likely to move to cities.

The exhibits inside the museum appear to show traditional Tonga culture and crafts. In Figures 2 and 4, traditional craft representations of Nyaminyami are displayed in glass cases. In the background of Figure 2, there appears to be a canoe on the left and a drum on the right. The wall behind the canoe is painted to look like the visitor is standing on the banks of a river, presumably the Zambezi River. Figure 14 offers a closer look at this mural. This part of the museum appears to be dedicated to showing the fishing tools that Tonga people used when they lived by the river. The display is naturalistic, including rocky dirt and tree branches scattered about. Aside from the canoe, there is a fishing basket and two fishing poles propped up against the wall. I do not see any labelling in the picture that indicates whether the objects are recreations of traditional objects, or if they are original. There are no artist names associated with the objects.

A model of a Ngazi house with stilts stands inside the museum, which is accompanied by a figure of a Tonga woman sitting by it (Fig. 11). Underneath the house is a model of a fire with a pot over it (Fig. 12). Sticks and other pottery objects surround the house, as well as what looks like a device for grinding or churning food. This life group is intended to show the way Tonga people lived in the past. The pictures do not offer a close enough view of the labels to tell exactly which time period is being depicted. The BCM also discusses traditional Tonga practices. There is a display dedicated to “Health Delivery Systems,” which includes label copy that describes traditional Tonga healing practices and ancestor worship. Inside the case is a figure of a healer dressed in traditional garb and demonstrating a healing practice (Fig. 13).

Recommendations

It is hard to determine the extent of the programs the BCM has done, given that there is limited information about them available online and in scholarly works, however, I would like to make recommendations about steps that they could take to continue to decolonize their institution and improve community involvement. It should be understood that I do not presume that the recommendations will be applicable in all circumstances, or that they will necessarily be effective for their mission, but my hope is that they will be helpful to museum administrators in the BCM, NMMZ leaders, or Zimbabwean scholars. This may also be helpful to government officials who are involved in the operation of the NMMZ and may find recommendations useful for funding or oversight purposes.

The exhibits on display in the museum seem to be mostly traditional arts, so the BCM staff may consider acquiring contemporary artworks made by Tonga artists. Some of the artists may live in Binga, or they may live in other parts of the country. It could be interesting for the BCM to exhibit art by Tonga people living in urban areas because that would show that Tonga people are not only rural. In addition, Binga residents can see Tonga artists who are not from their community. In the spirit of showing diverse Tonga voices, the museum may consider inviting Tonga artists from Zambia to exhibit their work. If there are differences between Zambian Tonga and Zimbabwean Tonga culture and art, the BCM could use programming to show these differences.

The BCM could also invite Tonga artists, both local and from outside the community, to run workshops. This would enable community members to learn from each other and strengthen communal ties. Contemporary artists and traditional artists could practice each others' styles and reflect on how Tonga culture evolves over time and in different contexts. In the spirit of the

graffiti workshop, the BCM may have different target audiences for different workshops. They may have themed days, such as ones for youth, elders, women, different types of art mediums, crafts, or clothes. Forums are a way that community members could discuss aspects of their culture and what it means to them.

Since tourists and school groups sometimes visit the museum, the staff and community leaders could organize discussion groups or plan teaching aids to educate non-Tonga visitors about Tonga history and culture and what the BCM does. After a tour, museum guides might spend a period of time facilitating a discussion with visitors. It might be beneficial to have one or more local craftspeople or artists there to discuss the creative process needed to make some of the objects seen in the exhibits.

There is potential for the BCM to take advantage of digital media to share information and increase the visibility of Tonga people. The popularity of digital media has provided the opportunity for marginalized peoples to access online information and to publish their own content. Traditional mainstream media is often dominated by large ethnic groups. Television and radio programs are produced in dominant languages. In Zimbabwean mainstream media, content rarely discusses minority groups unless it is about a tragedy or conflict.[82] The website mulonga.net is run by Tonga people and discusses Tonga culture, but only four articles on the website feature Chitonga. The rest of the website is written in English. This limits accessibility for people whose primary language is Chitonga. It also limits the exposure of Tonga culture.[83] The BCM could work on a digital project that includes content produced by Tonga people and is

[82] Gwindingwe Gift, Alfandika Last, and Chateuka Nyasha Deity, "The Tonga People of Northern Zimbabwe: An Encounter with Digital Media," *African Journalism Studies* 39 (January 2019): 1-4, https://doi.org/10.1080/23743670.2018.1533487.

[83] Gift, Last, and Deity, "The Tonga People of Northern Zimbabwe," 7.

written in Chitonga. This would increase linguistic accessibility and make Tonga perspectives more visible to a global digital audience. Since the operators of mulonga.net already possess the resources necessary for a digital project, the BCM staff could reach out to them for a collaborative project. The museum could write or sponsor a series of articles about culture or art. A relationship with mulonga.net could help the museum publicize programming and build trust with a larger network.

The BCM and the Binga community members have had tensions about shared authority, as explained in a previous section. In order to clarify the relationship between the administrators and the community, they could hold a forum in which BCM staff and community leaders come together to hash out the responsibilities. It may be open to or involve the general community, if the parties are comfortable with that. Community members should have a role in the operation of the museum, given that it is representing them, is hosted by their community, and interprets their history and culture, which has for so long been misinterpreted. If Lambiwe Munkuli is the only Tonga person on the staff and does not have a voice in the museum's operation, then the BCM could aim to include more Tonga people in the staff in order to increase representation and minimize the chance that the museum will be insensitive to Tonga issues. The more agency the community has in the operation of the museum, the more invested they will be in it. They will feel that they are being valued by the staff, and can therefore trust them as partners in preserving heritage and encouraging communal growth and success.

The NMMZ can provide additional support to small community museums like the BCM by providing funds or administrative support. The BCM has a small staff and limited funds, so a support system would help them manage the museum and expand their programs. Considering that the NMMZ is part of the national government, it might be the case that some government

officials would prefer not to spend money and resources on small rural museums. If the NMMZ is serious about the success of the Cultural Equity program, however, they can invest more into minority cultural institutions.

Further Research

Many questions still remain to be answered regarding the BCM. Due to time constraints and the upheaval of the Novel Coronavirus pandemic, I was not able to address all of the areas of interest revealed throughout my research. I hope that public historians, educators, museum professionals, anthropologists, or other professionals will be motivated to explore and find the answers to the lingering questions.

I found no indication in research that Tonga people advocated for the creation of the museum. It is possible that some community members suggested it, but it is also possible that the NMMZ made the decision. If Tonga people were not part of the decision to establish the BCM, then one may wonder how they felt when it was announced. Were they pleased? Did they have instructions or restrictions on what the NMMZ could do with the museum? How much were they consulted during the designing of the museum, the drafting of the mission statement, the acquisitions process, hiring, exhibit design, and curation planning? This information could be obtained by contacting the NMMZ and/or Binga residents.

It would also be interesting to learn how traditions are passed down among the Tonga residents of Binga. How do they reconcile traditional ways of life from before the displacement with their current environment? Is there some tension within the Tonga community about traditions versus modern cultural developments? If there is tension or differing views about Tonga culture, does the BCM try to engage with those issues or interpret collections through that lens? The museum could serve as a forum in which the public could work through controversial cultural issues.

Further research could find out what kind of objects are sold at the Craft Centre. Depending on what is sold, by whom, and to whom, researchers may discover information about

cultural heritage, ethnic branding, and audience at the museum. If the Craft Centre is mainly frequented by locals, then it could be perceived as regular part of community life in Binga, and a way to circulate money within the local economy. The crafts available there would be things that Binga residents use in their everyday lives or find enjoyment in. If the patrons are mostly tourists, then the goals of the market may differ. It could be possible that the craftspeople there are making crafts that will appeal to a non-Binga or non-Tonga audience. There may be some ethnic branding involved among Tonga craftspeople and artists who change the style in which they would normally produce objects in order to sell them. This would be a way to gain income from tourism and pump it back into the local economy. If there is ethnic branding going on, the BCM may reinforce that by presenting a certain version or aesthetic of Tonga culture that appeals to non-Tonga visitors.

In the future, it will be interesting to see how the relationship between the BCM and the community proceeds. It may remain the same, or the community leaders may have their way and gain more control in the administrative process. On the other hand, the museum staff may take back more authority in the name of running the museum more efficiently. Changes in the BCM could be tracked over time, observing administration, interpretation, and community participation. The public could be asked if they enjoy the museum or find it useful to the community. They could also be asked if they feel that it portrays Tonga people appropriately, and if it could improve its exhibits or programming in any way. Community feedback is important for a museum to stay relevant and accountable to its constituents. BCM staff and NMMZ staff should pay attention to feedback and continually adjust to meet the changing needs of the public. These steps would enable the BCM to more fully represent and serve the Binga community and the general Tonga community.

Figures

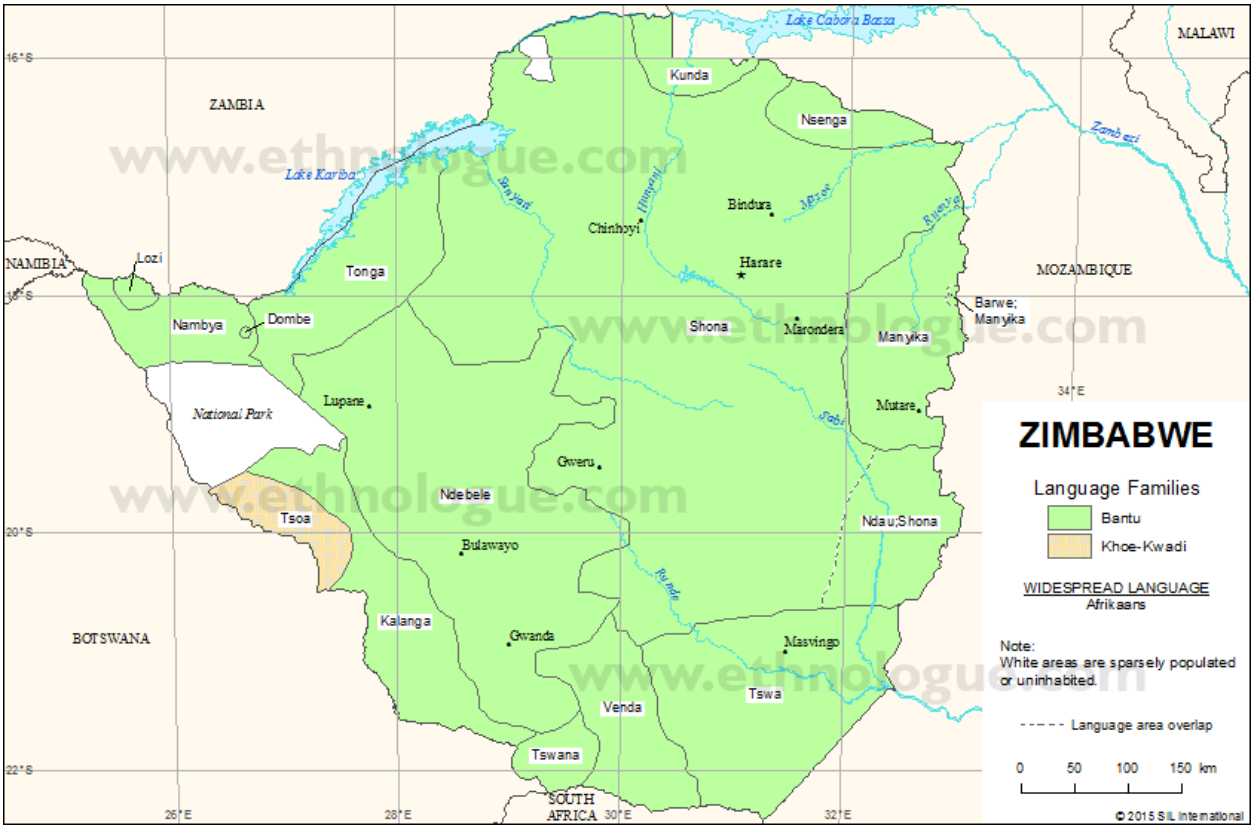

Figure 1. Map showing language families in different regions of Zimbabwe (https://www.ethnologue.com/map/ZW)

Figure 2. Nyaminyami figure on display at the BCM
(http://www.naturepicturesworldwide.com/zimbabwe2017-8.html)

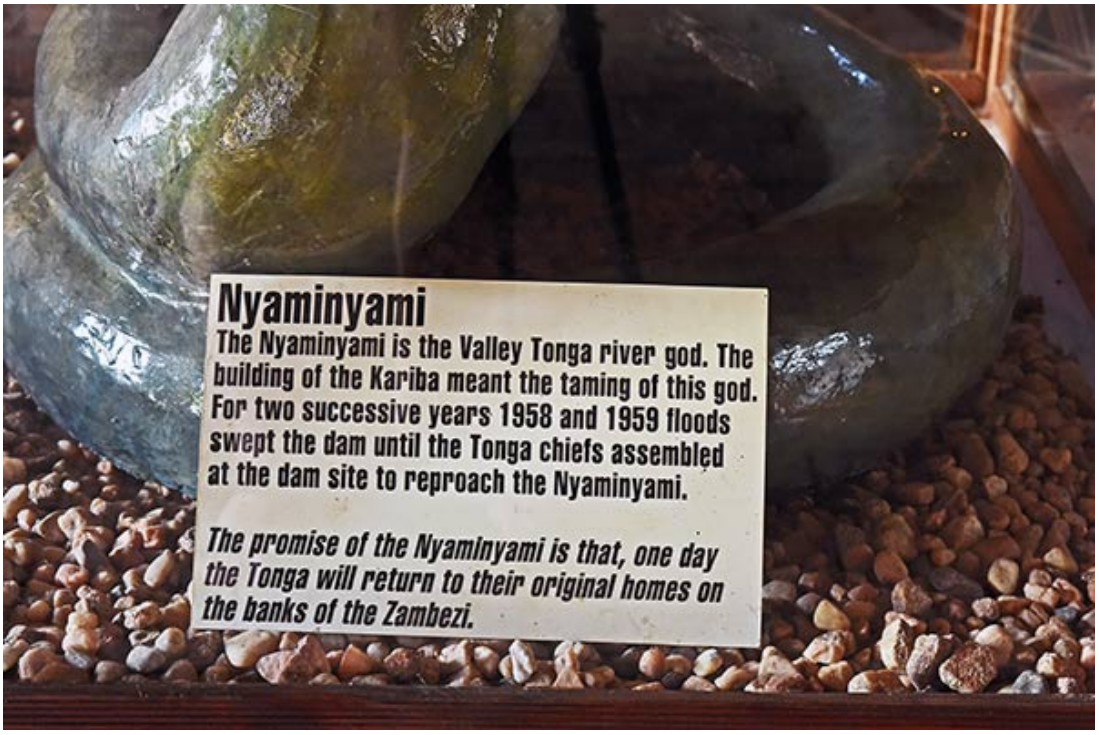

Figure 2. Label copy that describes the significance of Nyaminyami
(http://www.naturepicturesworldwide.com/zimbabwe2017-8.html)

Figure 4. Another sculpture of Nyaminyami on display (https://www.chronicle.co.zw/binga-tourism-sector-ropes-in-schools/)

Figure 5. A Ngazi house on stilts in the foreground, with ground level houses in the background (https://www.thepatriot.co.zw/old_posts/binga-architectural-melting-pot/)

Figure 6. The BCM exterior (Mawere, *Heritage Practices for Sustainability*, 46).

Level	Traditional Leadership Authorities	State/Government Leadership Authorities
National Level	President of Council of Chiefs	President and Cabinet
Provincial Level	Council of Chiefs	Provincial Administrator
District Level	Chiefs[2] (in Binga District)	Member of Parliament (MP) District Administrator Rural District Council Chair Rural District Development Committee (for Binga)
Kaani Ward 11	Chief (*Simwami*) Chief's Advisors (*Inkuta/Gobelo*) Headman (*Sibhuku mupati*) Village Head (*Sibhuku*) Homestead Head (*Mulimunzi/Mwanimunzi*)	Councillor WADCO Ward Committee Village Committee VIDCO Chair VIDCO

Figure 7. Chart showing the dual traditional and bureaucratic authority systems of Binga District (Mawere, *Heritage Practices for Sustainability*, 52.)

Figure 8. Willard Muntanga poses with his artwork at the Street Art workshop (https://changingthestory.leeds.ac.uk/2019/09/12/a-reflection-on-the-graffiti-training-workshop-held-at-batonga-museum-binga/)

Figure 9. A young woman gestures to the artwork she made at the Street Art workshop. The piece depicts a rotten base leading up to a fruit tree labelled “DESTINATION.” The base represents the struggles that a person must face before they can achieve their dreams. (https://changingthestory.leeds.ac.uk/street_art_zimbabwe/)

Figure 10. Another young woman at the workshop talks about her graffiti piece. The Chitonga words translated into English are “achievement,” “interest,” “patience,” and “read.” The piece represents the diligence of Tonga youth who work hard to educate themselves and improve their lives. (https://changingthestory.leeds.ac.uk/street_art_zimbabwe/)

Figure 11. Traditional Ngazi house and figure in the BCM (http://www.naturepicturesworldwide.com/zimbabwe2017-8.html)

Figure 12. Closer look at Ngazi house, model fire, and labels (https://twitter.com/TygaRose_Roses/status/1221562173199126528)

Figure 13. Vitrine "Health Delivery Systems" exhibit, featuring a figure performing health delivery practices. The label copy reads: "Health Delivery Systems. From prehistoric times BaTonga have maintained close links with ancestral spirits. The spirits are guardians and [*sic*] the community. If respected they brought fortune and fertility. If not they caused illness, misfortune and even death. The BaTonga influenced the spirits by dedicating shrines to their ancestors and making ritual offerings (Most of these shrines were drowned in the lake). This system was supervised by spirit mediums. However, nangas and herbalists formed and still form part of the health delivery system."
(https://twitter.com/TygaRose_Roses/status/1221562173199126528)

Figure 14. BCM tour guide Lambiwe Munkuli stands by a pair of drums. Behind her are fishing tools and a mural of a river (https://f4dialogue.dk/2018/04/01/zimbabwe-25-years-later-13/)

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