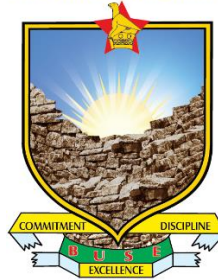


BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE AND HERITAGE STUDIES

Bindura University
of Science Education



**CULTURAL INTEGRITY IN RECONSTRUCTION AND RESTORATION:
EVALUATION OF THE IMPLICATION OF THE VENICE AND BURRA CHARTERS
IN THE RECONSTRUCTION AND RESTORATION OF GREAT ZIMBABWE.**

BY

SHALOM RUSEMO (B210989B)

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE AND
HERITAGE STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE BACHELOR OF SCIENCE HONOURS IN CULTURE AND HERITAGE STUDIES
DEGREE.**

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Approval form

I confirm that I have supervised Shalom Rusemo for this research titled: Cultural Integrity in Reconstruction and Reconstruction: Evaluation of the Implications of the Venice charter and Burra Charter in the Reconstruction and Restoration of Great Zimbabwe. This research fulfils part of the requirements for the Bachelor of Science Honors Degree in Culture and Heritage Studies, and I recommend it for examination.

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Department approval

The department board of examiners has received this dissertation and confirms that it meets the necessary examination standards. Accordingly, we recommend that Bindura University of Science Education accept the research project titled: Cultural Integrity in Reconstruction and Reconstruction: Evaluation of the Implications of the Venice Charter and Burra Charter in the Reconstruction and Restoration of Great Zimbabwe, submitted in partial requirements for the Bachelor science honours degree in culture and heritage studies.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation critically examines the concept of cultural integrity in the context of heritage reconstruction and restoration, using Great Zimbabwe as a focal case study. It explores the theoretical and practical implications of the Venice Charter (1964) and the Burra Charter (1979, revised) in guiding conservation efforts at this iconic archaeological site. Great Zimbabwe, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, holds profound historical, cultural, and symbolic significance for Zimbabwe and the broader African continent. Yet, attempts to reconstruct and restore the site raise questions about authenticity, cultural continuity, and community engagement. Through a comparative analysis of the two charters, the study evaluates how international and regional conservation principles align or conflict with local values, indigenous knowledge systems, and postcolonial identity formation. The research reveals tensions between universal heritage standards and localized cultural imperatives by employing a qualitative methodology, including document analysis, expert interviews, and case studies of past restoration initiatives. The findings underscore the need for context-sensitive approaches that prioritize cultural integrity while balancing the ethical, historical, and technical dimensions of heritage conservation. The study finds that while both charters offer valuable guidance, neither fully captures the unique cultural context of Great Zimbabwe. It argues for a more flexible and inclusive approach, one that blends global best practices with the knowledge, values, and voices of the local communities connected to the site. In doing so, it aims to support more respectful and meaningful restoration efforts, not only at Great Zimbabwe but at heritage sites around the world, offering recommendations for future policy and practice in the stewardship of Great Zimbabwe and similar heritage sites.

DECLARATION FORM

I, Shalom Rusemo, studying for a Bachelor of Science Honours degree in Culture and Heritage, recognise the fact that plagiarism is a serious academic offense and that falsifying information is a breach of ethics in Culture and Heritage Studies research, and truthfully declare that:

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DEDICATION

This research project is dedicated to my family. Thank you for your love, encouragement, and constant belief in me. To my parents, Mr and Mrs Rusemo, for your sacrifices and unwavering faith. To my siblings Tatenda, Patience, Delight and Joshua, for being my lifelong companions, my sounding boards, and my greatest cheerleaders. Your support has carried me.

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CHAPTER 1

1.0 Introduction

According to ICOMOS (2005), cultural integrity means respect for the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the community. The Venice Charter of 1964 defines reconstruction as the reinstatement of the essential elements of a monument using traditional materials and techniques wherever feasible. Restoration, however, is described as the operation of restoring the existing material of a site to a determined previous state by the removal of later additions or by the reassembly of existing parts, without inserting new material (ICOMOS, 1964). The Burra Charter contends that conservation is a constituent of the management of culturally significant sites and a continuing obligation. Great Zimbabwe is a World and Cultural Heritage Site that holds the history of human civilization condensed within it, encapsulating past civilizations' values, traditions, and accomplishments. Its restoration is no trivial task. The Burra Charter promotes a conservative approach to change: it recommends making only those changes necessary to preserve the site and render it more usable. Where changes are unavoidable, they should be minimized as far as possible in order to retain their cultural heritage.

The study intends to examine the implementation of the Venice and Burra Charters within the restoration practices at Great Zimbabwe, a site recognized as a World Heritage Site. The objective is to evaluate the effects of these international conservation standards on the cultural integrity of the reconstruction and restoration activities undertaken at the site. Situated in Masvingo, Zimbabwe, Great Zimbabwe is an ancient urban complex and one of the premier cultural heritage sites in Southern Africa. It has been subject to numerous restoration and reconstruction interventions.

This study aims to assess the impact of these interventions on the cultural integrity of the site. By analyzing the principles outlined in the Venice and Burra Charters, the research will explore how closely the restoration practices at Great Zimbabwe align with international conservation ideals and whether these efforts have preserved or altered the site's authenticity.

The Venice and Burra Charters are two significant international documents that provide guidelines on the conservation and management of cultural heritage sites. These charters emphasize the overarching importance of maintaining the cultural meaning and authenticity of heritage places. The Venice Charter introduced essential principles of heritage conservation, including maintaining the original environment of a monument, respecting the legitimate contributions of all historical periods, replacing missing elements in an integrated yet distinguishable manner from the original fabric, employing a wide range of expert techniques, respecting archaeological values, introducing interpretation, and strictly documenting all conservation work. In contrast, the Burra Charter takes a broader approach that includes the social and spiritual dimensions of cultural heritage and encourages active community involvement in decision-making. This study will adopt a qualitative method approach using in-depth interviews with stakeholders, Great Zimbabwe staff, and community members. These insights will help evaluate how the application of these charters influences conservation outcomes, and to what extent they uphold the site's cultural integrity, Context, and meaning within the local community.

1.1 Background of the study

1.1.1 Great Zimbabwe World Heritage Site

Great Zimbabwe earned UNESCO World Heritage site status in 1986, recognizing its cultural significance and historical importance. It is Africa's largest and most imposing early dry-stone monument. Great Zimbabwe is located in the south eastern hills of Zimbabwe near Masvingo. It thrived from the 11th to 15th century as the capital of the Kingdom of Zimbabwe, a Shona trading empire. Great Zimbabwe's economy was built on a strong foundation of agriculture, cattle husbandry, mineral wealth, and trade. Great Zimbabwe is divided into three main areas which include the Hill Complex, the Great Enclosure, and the Valley Ruins. The first two areas feature remarkable mortarless stonework, alongside remnants of daga (earthen) structures that may have once matched the grandeur of the stone buildings. The Hill Complex, previously referred to as the Acropolis, is thought to have served as the city's spiritual and religious hub, possibly hosting rituals like rainmaking ceremonies. South of this lies the Great Enclosure, the biggest ancient structure in sub-Saharan Africa. Some theories suggest these complexes were built by successive rulers. The Valley Ruins, situated between the other two sections, likely served as the residential

and commercial heart of the settlement, housing the majority of the population. The entire site reflects a sophisticated urban planning system and architectural ingenuity. As noted by Minister Chadzamira, Great Zimbabwe symbolizes the deep cultural heritage of the Zimbabwean people, and its conservation is vital for future generations as a testament to the nation's rich history and traditions.

1.1.2 The Venice charter

The Venice charter, also known as the International Charter for the conservation and restoration of monuments and sites, was adopted in 1964 by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). The charter provides guidelines for the conservation and restoration of cultural heritage sites, emphasizing the importance of preserving the authenticity and integrity of these sites. The Venice charter has become a cornerstone of international conservation principles, influencing restoration practices worldwide.

1.1.3 The Burra Charter

Burra Charter, officially titled the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance was established in 1979 by Australia ICOMOS. It serves as a guideline for preserving culturally significant heritage sites, stressing the need to recognize and honour their historical and cultural value. Over time, the Burra Charter has gained international recognition as a key benchmark for heritage conservation practices.

UNESCO (2015) emphasizes that cultural heritage sites are an integral part of human history, reflecting the values and traditions, however, these sites are often vulnerable to destruction, damage, and degradation due to various factors such as natural disasters or human activities. According to Chirikure et al (2017), Great Zimbabwe, a world heritage site, is one such cultural heritage site that has faced numerous challenges, including colonial era excavations and environmental degradation. The site's reconstruction has been ongoing since the 1980s, with various stakeholders, including the Zimbabwean government, UNESCO, and local communities, involved in the process. The Venice charter (1964) and the burra charter (1979) are two influential international charters that provide guidelines for the conservation and management of cultural heritage sites, the Venice charter emphasizes the importance of preserving the authenticity and integrity of cultural heritage sites while the Burra charter provides a framework for the

conservation and management of cultural heritage places. Despite the existence of these charters, the reconstruction of cultural heritage sites remains a contentious issue with debates surrounding the balance between preservation and development, cultural sensitivity and economic viability, and community involvement and expert knowledge. The purpose of the study is to examine the effectiveness of the Venice and Burra charters in ensuring cultural integrity during the reconstruction and restoration of cultural heritage sites, using Great Zimbabwe as a case study. The study also seeks to analyse the role of cultural integrity in reconstruction and restoration efforts.

The main objectives of the study are to evaluate the historical significance of Great Zimbabwe and its cultural heritage, providing a foundation for understanding the importance of its restoration. To analyse principles of the Venice and burra charters, focusing on their relevance to authenticity, integrity, and community involvement in the reconstruction of cultural heritage sites. Another objective is to assess past restoration efforts: critically assess previous restoration efforts at great Zimbabwe. And the last objective is to identify stakeholders' perspectives: explore the perspective of various stakeholders involved in the reconstruction process, including the local community, heritage professionals.

1.1.4 purpose of the study

This study aims to contribute to the evaluation of the impact of the Venice charter and the Burra charter on the reconstruction and restoration of Great Zimbabwe with a focus on cultural integrity. The study will examine the historical context of the site's reconstruction, the application of the charters, and the outcomes of these efforts.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The reconstruction of Great Zimbabwe presents a critical challenge in balancing cultural integrity with modern restoration practices. Despite the existence of international charters such as the Venice and Burra charters, which provide guidelines for the conservation and management of cultural heritage sites, there is a lack of clarity on how these guidelines are effectively implemented in local contexted. According to Ndoro (2005) the primary challenge lies in reconciling universal

conservation principles with cultural integrity and indigenous values embedded in Great Zimbabwe's architectural and historical legacy. This inadequacy can result in a compromise of cultural integrity, authenticity. This raises concerns about the preservation of cultural identity and heritage, as reconstruction efforts may favor prioritize aesthetic or structural integrity over authentic representation of the historical site and the spirituality Fontein (2006). Therefore, it is essential to investigate the extent to which these charters influence the approach to reconstruction at Great Zimbabwe.

1.3 Research objectives

- To evaluate the historical significance of Great Zimbabwe and its cultural heritage, while providing a foundation for understanding the importance of its restoration.
- To analyse principles of the Venice and Burra charters focusing on their relevance to authenticity, integrity and community involvement in the reconstruction of heritage sites.
- To assess past restoration at Great Zimbabwe.
- To identify stakeholder's perspectives in restoration and reconstruction process, including local community and heritage professionals

1.4 Research questions

- What historical and cultural significance does Great Zimbabwe hold, and how has this influenced contemporary reconstruction efforts?
- How do the principles outlined in the Venice charter address the preservation of cultural integrity during reconstruction projects.
- How do the guidelines of the Venice charter compare to those of the Burra Charter in terms of promoting cultural integrity in reconstruction practices?
- How can lessons learned from the reconstruction of Great Zimbabwe inform future policy regarding cultural integrity?

1.5 Assumption of the study

The study assumes that the concept of cultural integrity is a critical factor in the reconstruction and restoration of cultural heritage sites and that the stakeholders involved in the reconstruction and restoration of Great Zimbabwe share a common understanding of its importance. The gathered data is presumed that it will be reliable and accurate.

1.6 Significance of the study

This study is significant because it contributes to the understanding of the impact of international charters on cultural heritage sites reconstruction and restoration. The findings of the study will provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of Venice and Burra charters in ensuring cultural integrity during the reconstruction and restoration of Great Zimbabwe. The study will focus on cultural integrity will highlight the importance of community involvement and participation in cultural heritage reconstruction, promoting a more inclusive and sustainable approach to heritage management. The study will contribute to heritage conservation theory by evaluating how these charters apply to heritage sites thereby enriching debates on specific approach on heritage management. From a practical point of view the research offers valuable insights for conservation through assessing past and present restoration efforts at great Zimbabwe by identifying the strengths and short comes in applying these charters

1.7 Limitations of the study

This study has several limitations. Firstly, the study's focus is on Great Zimbabwe as a case study, and this may limit the generalizability of the findings to other cultural heritage sites in Zimbabwe and Africa. The study also relies on documentary analysis and stakeholders' interviews, which may not provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex issues surrounding cultural heritage reconstruction and restoration. The study's timeframe may not allow an in-depth examination of the long-term impacts of the Venice and Burra charters on cultural heritage restoration. Finally, the study's reliance is on existing data and may limit the ability to gather primary data, which could provide more insights into the research.

1.8 Delimitations

This study is delimited to the reconstruction and restoration of Great Zimbabwe, a UNESCO World Heritage site in Zimbabwe. The study focuses on Great Zimbabwe, which excludes other heritage sites in Zimbabwe. The study focuses specifically on the impact of the Venice and Burra charters on cultural heritage management and does not examine other international charters like Nara document and UNESCO conventions. Additionally, the study is limited to a qualitative research approach using documentary analysis and stakeholders and stone masons to collect data. The research relies on archival records, existing scholarly work and researches and not new fieldwork.

1.9 Definitions of terms

cultural integrity

According to ICOMOS (2005), cultural integrity is the respect for the cultural heritage of the community, including its tangible and intangible aspects.

Reconstruction

According to the 1964 Venice charter, reconstruction is defined as the reassembly of the constituent parts of a monument using traditional techniques and materials wherever possible. According to Jokilehto (2002), reconstruction refers to the process of rebuilding a cultural heritage site that has been damaged, destroyed, or degraded over time.

Restoration

The Venice Charter (ICOMOS, 1964) defines restoration as the process of reverting a structure's existing fabric to a documented earlier state. This involves either removing later additions or reassembling original components, strictly without incorporating new materials, thereby preserving the monument's historical authenticity.

Cultural heritage

According to Smith (2006), cultural heritage refers to the tangible and intangible assets such as monuments, artifacts, languages, and traditions that are inherited from the past and are considered valuable and worth preserving.

Charters

“Charters refer to agreements or conventions adopted by international organizations such as UNESCO, that provide guidelines and principles for the conservation and management of cultural heritage sites” (UNESCO 1972).

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter was to review the available related literature to trace the implications of these charters for cultural integrity in reconstruction and restoration practice at Great Zimbabwe. The restoration and reconstruction of cultural heritage sites are complex processes that pose challenges in balancing preservation and maintaining cultural integrity. Great Zimbabwe, a UNESCO World Heritage site’s reconstruction effort must navigate the cultural, historical, and ethical implications embedded in both local traditions and global restoration principles. The aim is to critically evaluate the implications of the Venice charter on the restoration practice at Great Zimbabwe. The Venice charter, established in 1964, emphasizes the importance of preserving the authenticity and integrity of cultural heritage, advocating for the use of original material. The Burra Charter, adopted in 1981, emphasizes the significance of community involvement and the cultural context in heritage management. By analyzing existing literature on these charters, the review aims to highlight the challenges and opportunities that arise when integrating international standards

with cultural values. Ultimately, the examination will contribute to a deeper understanding of how restoration practices can honor the cultural significance of Great Zimbabwe.

Theoretical Framework

2.1 The Venice charter

The Charter (1964), developed by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), serves as a foundational document guiding global conservation practices. As Rojas (2014) notes, its preamble highlights the profound cultural significance of historic monuments as "living witnesses" of humanity's shared heritage, emphasizing their universal value. The Charter calls upon architects and conservation specialists to preserve these monuments authentically for future generations.

Reflecting the intellectual currents of its time, the Charter emerged as a response to the overly romanticized and often invasive restoration approaches of the 19th and early 20th centuries. It advocates for a scientifically informed, minimally invasive methodology, as seen in Article 2, which stresses the integration of multidisciplinary knowledge in conservation. Article 9 reinforces this principle, stating that interventions should be limited, respectful of original materials, and distinguishable from the historic fabric.

The Charter's enduring relevance lies in its flexibility, avoiding rigid prescriptions in favor of context-sensitive solutions. Article 9 underscores that restoration must be a meticulous, research-driven process supported by archaeological and historical study to preserve a monument's aesthetic and historical integrity. Article 10 permits modern conservation techniques when traditional methods are insufficient, provided they are scientifically validated. Additionally, Article 12 mandates that any reconstructions of missing elements must harmonize with the original structure without distorting its historical or artistic authenticity.

The Charter also stresses the importance of documentation. Article 16 requires all conservation work to be thoroughly recorded and archived, ensuring transparency and accountability for future research and monitoring. This provision strengthens long-term management and encourages knowledge sharing among conservation professionals. By balancing respect for authenticity with practical adaptability and scientific rigor, the Venice Charter remains a cornerstone of ethical

heritage conservation, promoting sustainable and informed approaches tailored to the cultural context of each unique monument

2.2The Burra Charter

The Burra Charter, established in 1979 by Australia ICOMOS, serves as a guideline for conserving culturally significant sites. Unlike the Venice Charter, it applies universally to all places of cultural value, advocating a careful and minimal-intervention approach implementing only necessary changes to ensure usability while preserving cultural significance. According to ICOMOS, cultural significance encompasses aesthetic, historical, and social value for past, present, and future generations.

A key strength of the Burra Charter lies in its systematic and adaptable methodology, providing a structured framework for assessing and conserving cultural sites. Article 1 defines conservation as safeguarding a site to maintain its cultural significance, which may involve maintenance, preservation, restoration, reconstruction, or adaptation often combining multiple approaches. Restoration under the same article, refers to returning a structure to a known earlier state by removing later additions or reassembling original components without introducing new materials. Reconstruction, meanwhile, involves recreating a site's earlier form using a mix of old and new materials.

Article 3 emphasizes that conservation should prioritize respect for existing structures, minimizing physical alterations. Article 14 stipulates that restoration must be grounded in tangible evidence (physical, documentary, etc.) and must cease where speculation begins. Finally, Article 19 clarifies that reconstruction should only replicate physical elements and must be distinguishable as modern work upon close examination. Together, these principles ensure that conservation efforts balance preservation with authenticity, avoiding unnecessary alterations to heritage site

2.3 Justification for the use of the Venice and Burra charters

The Venice Charter is critical because it established the modern international standards for restoration and conservation. It emphasizes scientific methods, authenticity, and minimum intervention principles highly relevant to evaluating how Great Zimbabwe's restorations seek to maintain historical accuracy and physical integrity. Furthermore, since Great Zimbabwe is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and UNESCO derives much of its conservation philosophy from the Venice Charter, its inclusion ensures the study connects with the global discourse on cultural heritage management (ICOMOS, 1964). The Charter promotes detailed research, the use of traditional materials and techniques where possible, and a commitment to distinguish new work from the original fabric to maintain authenticity—principles essential to assessing the integrity of interventions at Great Zimbabwe.

However, while the Venice Charter provides a foundation, it has been critiqued for its Eurocentric assumptions and limited attention to living cultural traditions and indigenous practices. Therefore, the Burra Charter complements and expands upon the Venice Charter by introducing a values-based approach to conservation. It recognizes the cultural significance of sites not just as physical monuments but also as living heritage, including social, spiritual, and historical values. The Burra Charter's emphasis on community engagement, respect for indigenous knowledge systems, and minimal change resonates strongly with the context of Great Zimbabwe, where local communities maintain profound ancestral ties to the site (Australia ICOMOS, 2013).

By using both the Venice and Burra Charters, this study benefits from a dual perspective: it evaluates the technical and scientific integrity of restoration efforts (Venice Charter) while also critically considering the cultural and community dimensions of heritage conservation (Burra Charter). This combination is necessary to provide a holistic understanding of cultural integrity in the restoration of Great Zimbabwe. It ensures that both the physical preservation and the intangible cultural connections are respected and sustained.

Literature Review

2.4 Conservation of dry-stone walls

According to Gutu (2016), dry-stonewalling is an integral part of the built archaeological heritage in Zimbabwe. Conservation of dry-stone walls requires an understanding of failure mechanisms and the cause of distress in developing an efficient intervention method. He also states that maintenance techniques of the dry-stonewalls currently in use in the UK have consisted of replacement or strengthening techniques that fundamentally alter the authenticity, integrity, and general outlook of the walls. These techniques do not follow the international guidelines set by the Venice Charter of 1964 and the International Congress of Architects in Madrid of 1904. For example, the conservation of dry-stone walls requires a deep understanding of their structure. In the 1990s, Zimbabwe focused on the overall condition of these walls, using methods like soil-nailing, which can alter the wall's structure. Such techniques often conflict with the principles of preserving built heritage outlined in important documents like the 1994 Document on Authenticity and the Burra Charter of 1999, which emphasize the need for authenticity in materials and craftsmanship for long-term conservation. Ndoro (1995) notes that in 1986, a structural monitoring system was implemented at Great Zimbabwe to detect and measure vulnerable sections of the dry-stone walls at risk of collapse. This monitoring initiative served as a key component of a broader site assessment strategy aimed at evaluating the overall structural condition of the monument.

Petzet (1994) has noted that restorations go beyond the mere conservation of a monument to reveal the aesthetic and historic values or to accentuate values of a monument that are hidden, disfigured, or impaired. According to Mukwende (2011), Conservation attempts to stabilize individual restoration concerned with the overall appearance of the monument or structure as a piece of area technically and to eliminate sources of danger that directly threaten the fabric, whilst preserving historical and artistic evidence. This can result in the addition of new elements without necessarily reducing the original fabric.

2.5 The preservation of Great Zimbabwe

In Southern Africa, conservation efforts have predominantly focused on preserving prominent madzimbabwe (stone-walled structures), including Thulamela in South Africa and Great Zimbabwe in Zimbabwe (Ndoro, 1994). However, Ndoro (2005) suggests that many preservation and presentation initiatives in the region suffer from a fundamental issue: a lack of comprehensive

understanding of the cultural significance of these heritage sites. The conservation strategies applied at Great Zimbabwe are examined within the broader framework of archaeological heritage management in Southern Africa. Heritage management encompasses not only the protection of physical remains but also addresses related developmental concerns. Additionally, it considers the broader cultural landscape incorporating both tangible and intangible heritage and requires a commitment to respecting all values attributed to the site by stakeholders (Grundberg, 2000).

Preservation generally entails measures aimed at halting or slowing deterioration, encompassing restoration and reconstruction as long as they employ original materials and designs to maintain the monument's historical essence. Globally, the primary goal of preserving ruined monuments has been to impede decay (Feilden, 1982). However, preservation itself underscores the illusion of permanence; the more we conserve, the more evident it becomes that heritage is subject to continuous change and reinterpretation. What is preserved much like collective memory never fully replicates past reality (Lowenthal, 1985).

Great Zimbabwe remains relatively well-preserved and sufficiently expansive to accommodate the diverse cultural, functional, and social needs of both traditional and urban communities in an evolving context. Although it is an archaeological site no longer in active use, it retains sacred significance for contemporary communities who continue to engage with it for spiritual purposes. The restoration and reconstruction of heritage sites like Great Zimbabwe entail intricate decision-making processes that must carefully balance preservation, conservation, and the maintenance of cultural authenticity.

2.6 Restoration of the great Zimbabwe national monument

Restoration and reconstruction at Great Zimbabwe primarily focus on preserving the ancient stone structures of the site, including the great enclosure and hill complex, through projects that repair damaged walls, stabilize crumbling sections, and improve visitors' infrastructure while aiming to raise awareness about the cultural significance of the site among local communities. The key aspects of restoration involve carefully replacing damaged stones in the dry-stone walls using traditional techniques to maintain the integrity of the original construction. Restoration and reconstruction efforts are guided by archaeological research to understand the original building techniques and ensure accurate reconstruction where necessary.

Local communities are often engaged in restoration projects, providing skilled labor and contributing to the preservation of their cultural heritage. From 2002 – 2003, Great Zimbabwe went through reconstruction and restoration of walls 71 and 72 situated in the hill complex. Local communities were involved in the reconstruction process. The project was funded by the US Ambassador's fund. Traditional materials were sourced around the site to maintain integrity and authenticity. In 2010, the Great Zimbabwe went through the restoration of the great enclosure, that is, wall 10. It had no funding; it was conducted by the National Museum and Monuments of Zimbabwe and the Great Zimbabwe staff masons. As a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Great Zimbabwe receives international support for conservation and restoration efforts. In 2016, the Great Zimbabwe went through restoration and reconstruction after the site was partially destroyed and gutted by fire in 2015. The objective of the project was to restore some areas of Great Zimbabwe and get youth involved in the preservation of the site. According to Masunda (2016), they refurbish the houses by building stone walls using clay as cement. In October 2024, the researcher participated in a restoration project at Great Zimbabwe focusing on terrace wall 31. The project involved dismantling the collapsing terrace wall and reconstructing it using traditional material sourced from the site. The restoration approach prioritized authenticity using only material found on site to minimize external influence. This experience created valuable hands-on knowledge, complementing the study's literature review and the researchers' understanding of the great Zimbabwe cultural integrity.

2.7 Khami ruins restoration

Khami Ruins is the second largest complex of stone walls in Zimbabwe after Great Zimbabwe. They were originally constructed between 1450 and 1650 as the capital of the Torwa Dynasty, which ruled their kingdom after the collapse of Great Zimbabwe. The style of dry-stone walling is somewhat similar to that of Great Zimbabwe but without large free-standing walls and other constructions. The site is a National Monument and was declared a World Heritage site by UNESCO in 1986. In 2006, an International Youth Volunteer Camp helped to restore some of the larger ruins.

In 2016, UNESCO and WHV partnered to restore the archaeological ruins of Khami monuments, which had suffered from degradation over the last several decades due to natural causes. The purpose of the restoration was to restore collapsed walls and improve pathways around the site.

2.8 Restoration of Naletale monument

Gurira et al. (2017) argue that restoration is a valid conservation approach aimed at preserving the historical and cultural values of monuments, provided it adheres to the original builders' design principles. However, past restoration efforts at Naletale National Monument have, in some cases, undermined the site's authenticity and structural integrity, particularly due to the inappropriate use of modern materials such as cement mortar, cement plaster, and steel reinforcements during the 1930s. These interventions deviated from the traditional dry-stone construction techniques characteristic of southern Africa. Although post-independence restoration projects have aligned with international conservation standards in terms of physical reconstruction, they have often neglected the intangible aspects of heritage, which hold significant cultural importance for local communities (Gutu, 2016).

The monument has experienced multiple structural failures, diminished its aesthetic value and prompted early but misguided restoration attempts. For instance, in 1982, a collapse on the eastern side necessitated repairs conducted by the National Museum and Monuments with assistance from Chaplain High School students. Further deterioration was observed in 1991, including bulges, voids, and another collapse on the southeastern side, prompting monitoring using glass wires and vernier callipers. The western wall, renowned for its intricate decorations, also showed signs of decay, with a noticeable bulge beneath the sixth monolith. Additional collapses occurred in 1994, including a 1.9-meter section of the girdle wall, leading to restoration work on one of the radial walls by the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ). Subsequent interventions included repairs to the eastern entrance in 2003, the southwestern side of wall 5 in 2004 (damaged by baboons), and a 16.2-meter stretch of the northern perimeter wall in 2012. Further restoration in 2014 targeted remaining collapsed sections of the perimeter and radial walls, as well as the northwestern entrances.

Notably, the 1937 restoration by Kirstein and Stevenson introduced cement and steel reinforcements to walls 1 and 5, significantly altering their original dry-stone construction. Wall 1 was even coated with Dhaka to mask the cement, while sections of wall 5 were similarly bonded with cement. These modifications, though stabilizing the structures, compromised the site's authenticity, as traditional dry-stone walls were built without mortar, relying instead on interlocking stones and core materials (Pikirayi, 2013). The use of cement and steel reinforcements

in these early restorations reflects a lack of adherence to contemporary conservation standards, which were not yet established at the time. Present-day restoration practices in Zimbabwe, however, follow internationally recognized guidelines such as the Venice Charter (1964) and the Burra Charter (1999), ensuring greater alignment with best practices in heritage conservation (Gurira, 2017).

2.9 Restoration of St. Mark's Basilica

According to Basilica San Marco (2025), the mosaics of St. Mark's Basilica have undergone many restoration works over the centuries since the end of the 13th century. The tremors, the structural deformations, and the aggressive atmosphere are the main risk factors for the preservation of the mosaic heritage. In restoration carried out before the end of the 13th century, the original character and concept were always respected, whereas the retouching of the gold backgrounds and the redoing of individual parts in subsequent epochs show through. Some of the most evident restorations date to the Renaissance period, when restorers could not resist expressing their stylistic consistency. From the 16th century to the end of the 17th century, restoration took the form of renovation of ruined surfaces, taking advantage of even modest damage to renew large areas and pictures. The influence of the greatest painters of the day prevailed over mosaic artists, who were thus reduced to becoming executors of the great canvases of the most important cartoonists, chief among whom were Titian, Tintoretto, Veronese, and Jacopo il Palma the younger.

Restoration efforts evolved over time becoming more refined and focused on preservation. Techniques improved including “lievo” (surface removal) and restoration behind (dismantling and rebuilding masonry). In the 19th century a large-scale consolidation program was implemented for, mosaics under Pietro Saccardo's direction, restoration work prioritized historical accuracy, modifying criticized interventions and developing new techniques. This period saw significant restoration work covering over 3000 meters, marked a new era in preservation. The restoration efforts in 19th and 20th century were comparable to the original creation in the 12th and 13th centuries and revitalizing the deteriorated structures.

2.10 Restoration of the Sufi Mausoleums in Timbuktu, Mali

According to UNESCO (2008) Timbuktu was designated a world heritage site in 1988 for its exceptional cultural significance reflecting its role as a major intellectual and spiritual hub in Africa during the 15th and 16th centuries. The city's historic mosques, including Djingareyber,

Sankore and Sidi Yahia are testaments to its glorious past and were key factors in its recognition in criteria (ii) (iv) and (v). Although continuously restored, these monuments are today under threat from desertification, management issues, especially concerning the involvement of the local communities, and a lack of resources for site management and maintenance. The site was inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger between 1990 and 2005, and once again in 2012, when the site was occupied by armed groups. The 2019 State of Conservation Report highlighted that the property is affected by deliberate destruction of heritage, lack of functioning management systems, and war (UNESCO). The 2012 conflict in Timbuktu resulted in the destruction of 14 out of 16 mausoleums, which are part of the city's World Heritage site as well as the Al Farouk monument. Additionally, an estimated 4,203 manuscripts from the institute of higher Islamic studies and research. In 2016 Ahmad Al Faqi Mahdi was convicted by the international crime court for directing these attacks on the city's cultural heritage. Following the destruction the UNESCO collaborated with the Malian government to develop a comprehensive plan for reconstruction of Timbuktu damaged cultural heritage and preserving its ancient manuscripts.

A team of local and international experts from UNESCO worked closely with community leaders, national authorities to implement the rehabilitation plan. The reconstruction efforts were led by local traditional masons under supervision of the cultural mission and other authorities. This project not only highlighted the significance of cultural heritage in promoting peace but demonstrated the role played by local artisans and traditional masons in preserving cultural heritage. The successful reconstruction of Timbuktu's earthen architectural heritage serves as a testament to the potential of cultural heritage as a tool of peace building.

2.11 Restoration and reconstruction: International Charters vs. Local Practices vs material authenticity

The Venice Charter (1964) and Burra Charter (1999) prioritize material authenticity but often neglect intangible heritage. At Great Zimbabwe, post projects (e.g., 2002–2003 wall reconstructions) used traditional techniques but faced criticism for top-down decision-making, excluding Shona spiritual values tied to the site. In contrast, Naletale's 1930s cement interventions starkly violated dry-stone traditions, revealing the dangers of Eurocentric methods. Recent efforts, such as the 2023 U.S.-funded project, have sought to balance these tensions by integrating

electronic monitoring systems and local masonry training, though challenges remain in fully centring Indigenous knowledge.

The 2016 post-fire restoration and 2024 Wall 31 project exemplify progress in participatory conservation. Local masons and students from Great Zimbabwe University collaborated, blending academic research with traditional skills to dismantle and reconstruct walls using only on-site materials. This mirrors Timbuktu's community-led model where traditional builders restored mausoleums post-2012 destruction, highlighting heritage as a tool for peacebuilding. However, Chirikure critiques the lingering colonial legacy in archaeology, noting that even post-independence, local communities were often excluded from interpreting their own heritage. St. Mark's Basilica reveal how Renaissance-era restorers prioritized stylistic renewal over authenticity, a cautionary tale for balancing tradition and intervention. St. Mark's Basilica Its mosaic restorations evolved from stylistic reinterpretation (Renaissance) to strict preservation (19th century), offering lessons in balancing innovation and authenticity. Timbuktu (Mali) Post-conflict reconstruction highlighted heritage as a peace-building tool emphasizing local artisans

Summary

This chapter explored existing literature and theoretical frameworks relevant to the reconstruction and restoration of heritage sites. It examined global practices of restoration, highlighting key challenges such as maintaining authenticity, cultural integrity, and balancing modern conservation methods with traditional knowledge. The chapter also presented the Venice Charter and the Burra Charter as the primary theoretical frameworks guiding this study. The Venice Charter emphasizes the importance of scientific restoration methods and material authenticity, while the Burra Charter advocates for a values-based, community-centered approach that recognizes the social and spiritual significance of heritage sites. Together, these frameworks provide a comprehensive lens through which the restoration practices at Great Zimbabwe can be critically evaluated. By reviewing international restoration practices and theoretical principles, this chapter lays the foundation for understanding the complexities involved in heritage management and informs the research approach taken in the subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER 3

3.0 Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the aim was to review available literature on the restoration and reconstruction of cultural sites worldwide and to trace whether the Venice and Burra charters' guidelines were implemented. In this chapter, the discussion focused on the research methodology. Sreekumar (2023) state that research methodology outlines the specific techniques and procedures used to collect, identify and analyse data related to a particular research topic, research methodology describes the techniques and procedures used to identify and analyse information regarding a specific research topic. This chapter provides a deep understanding of how the research was conducted, which includes the use of research designs. This research utilized a dual approach in combining both survey methods, questionnaires, and interviews with an in-depth case study of restoration projects at Great Zimbabwe.

The aim was to use research methods to gather information on whether the Venice and Burra charters' guidelines and principles were implemented during restoration and reconstruction projects in order to preserve the cultural integrity of Great Zimbabwe. Qualitative research aimed to explore participants' perspectives, experiences, and insights. This approach employed non-numerical data collection methods such as interviews, observations, and questionnaires. After collecting data, it was analysed to review the information gathered to draw a conclusion. This involved observing the field and examining feedback.

3.2 Research Design

Singh (2020) defines research design as the arrangement of conditions for data collection and analysis in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure. Bryman and Bell (2007) stressed that research design should provide the overall structure and orientation of an investigation as well as a framework within which data can be collected and analyzed. In this study, a qualitative case study design was employed to allow for an in-depth and contextual analysis of the restoration and conservation practices at Great Zimbabwe. The use of a case study was suitable as it facilitated an intensive examination of a specific, bounded phenomenon namely, the implementation of the Venice and Burra Charters in the preservation of Great Zimbabwe. This method enabled the study to establish meaningful connections between the reviewed literature, the observed practices at the site, and participants lived experiences and insights.

The use of interviews and questionnaires allowed for the collection of rich, detailed information from various stakeholders, including heritage professionals, site staff, and community members. These tools supported triangulation by validating data across sources. The structured format of the questionnaires and interviews ensured that only relevant and targeted data were collected, thereby enhancing the study's focus and coherence. Moreover, interviews offered flexibility to explore deeper issues and clarify responses, enriching the overall understanding of cultural integrity and conservation practices.

3.3 Research Methodology

According to Mishra and Alok (2019), research methodology is the approach in which research problems are solved thoroughly, encompassing the systematic plan for conducting research. Heale and Twycross (2017) define a case study as a thorough and detailed examination of a specific individual or group, where the researcher investigates multiple variables to gain a deeper understanding of the subject in its real-life context. This method is particularly effective for heritage studies, as it allows the researcher to explore complex interactions between physical structures, conservation practices, and cultural meanings.

According to Bhandari (2020), qualitative research focuses on gathering and analyzing non-numerical data such as text, images, or audio to gain deeper insights into participants' thoughts, feelings, and experiences. This aligns with the aims of this study, which sought to explore the cultural integrity of Great Zimbabwe through the lens of restoration and reconstruction efforts. A qualitative research approach was employed, utilizing in-depth interviews and structured questionnaires to collect data from various stakeholders, including site managers, heritage professionals, and community members.

The case study design supported a contextual analysis of Great Zimbabwe, enabling the researcher to link theoretical frameworks with practical realities on the ground. This approach provided a nuanced understanding of how international conservation standards interact with local cultural values, enhancing the credibility and relevance of the findings.

3.4 Population of the study

Krieger (2012) defines population as the entire group of individuals or units that a sample is selected from. In this study, the researcher selected a group of four key informants for data collection, representing a purposive sample chosen for their relevance to the research objectives. The selection included one community member to provide insights into local cultural perspectives and ancestral ties to Great Zimbabwe, and two stone masons, selected for their practical knowledge of traditional building techniques and materials used in restoration. Additionally, one curator was included to contribute professional expertise in heritage management, along with a UNESCO representative to offer an international conservation perspective.

These participants were chosen deliberately to reflect a diverse range of viewpoints, ensuring a well-rounded understanding of the site's restoration efforts. The community member helped to contextualize the cultural and spiritual importance of the site, while the stone masons offered detailed information on methods and challenges associated with dry-stone walling techniques. The curator provided institutional knowledge about the site's conservation history, and the UNESCO representative contributed global heritage perspectives and policy alignment. This carefully selected population enabled the study to assess how restoration at Great Zimbabwe aligns with

both international charters and indigenous cultural values, thus supporting a comprehensive analysis of cultural integrity.

3.5 Sample

According to Bhardwaj (2019), sampling is a procedure to select a sample from an individual or a larger group of population for a certain kind of research purpose. In this study, purposive sampling was chosen for its distinct advantages. It is a non-probability method that selects participants based on specific research objectives, offering advantages like targeted selection, efficiency, group access, and flexibility (Campbell et al., 2020). This method offers a time-efficient approach, eliminating the need for random selection from a larger population. By selectively recruiting participants with relevant experience, it ensured data collected is of high quality.

Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to focus on individuals directly involved in or knowledgeable about the restoration of Great Zimbabwe. These included stone masons with hands-on experience in traditional building techniques, a curator with academic and practical knowledge of heritage preservation, and a UNESCO representative offering insights on global conservation standards. This strategic approach ensured that the information gathered was both rich in content and directly applicable to the study's objectives. Moreover, it enabled the researcher to explore complex aspects of cultural integrity in a focused manner, capturing nuanced perspectives that might not emerge through random sampling techniques.

3.6 Sampling Techniques

According to Van Haute (2021), a sampling technique involves the procedures and strategies used to choose a representative subset of individuals from a larger population. The choice of sampling technique plays a critical role in shaping the reliability, depth, and relevance of research outcomes, particularly in qualitative studies where the focus is on exploring detailed experiences and perspectives. In this study, the sampling technique was guided by the need to obtain specific, in-depth insights from individuals who have been directly involved in or impacted by the restoration of Great Zimbabwe. Given the site's cultural and historical complexity, it was essential to engage participants who possess firsthand knowledge and experience relevant to the study's objectives.

To achieve this, the researcher employed purposive sampling—a method that allows for the deliberate selection of participants based on their expertise, roles, or direct connection to the restoration efforts. The chosen individuals included traditional stone masons, a site curator, a UNESCO representative, and a community member. This targeted sampling technique ensured that the perspectives gathered were rich in content and deeply informed by practical and cultural realities. By focusing on a specific group, the study was able to collect meaningful data that directly addressed the research questions related to cultural integrity and conservation practices

3.6.1 Purposive Sampling

According to Kelly (2010) researchers use purposive sampling to deliberately select participants who are knowledgeable or experienced in the area being studied. According to Kassiani Nikolopoulou (2022), purposive sampling can also be called judgmental sampling. This study used purposive sampling to select participants who have experience relevant to the research. Purposive sampling as a non-random method where participants are selected based on specific characteristics or qualities relevant to the research topic, it's used when the researcher wants to deliberately target a population that is most likely to provide rich, relevant, and diverse data (Guest, G., Buco, A and Johnson L, 2006). Hence, the researcher selected four participants with experience and knowledge of the restoration and reconstruction of walls.

3.6 Data collection methods

Data collection is the process of obtaining data required in the research to enable the researcher to analyze comprehensively (Kothari, 2004). In this study, data were collected through three main methods: interviews, a questionnaire, and field inspection. Interviews were conducted with selected key informants to gain in-depth qualitative insights into the restoration practices at Great Zimbabwe. The questionnaire provided structured responses that supported data triangulation and consistency across participants. Field inspection allowed the researcher to observe restoration techniques and the physical condition of the site firsthand. These combined methods ensured a holistic understanding of both technical and cultural aspects of conservation.

3.7.1 Structured interviews

According to Taherdoost (2022), an interview is defined as the method of asking questions to gain both qualitative and quantitative data. It is a flexible tool that enables researchers to explore complex issues in greater depth. In this study, the researcher used structured interviews to collect in-depth responses from selected participants. Structured interviews ensured consistency across interviews, allowing each participant to respond to the same set of questions while still enabling elaboration where necessary. This method allowed the researcher to clarify questions, probe further when responses were unclear, and gather detailed information that may not emerge from written responses alone. The interviews provided rich qualitative insights into participants' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes, which were crucial for addressing the study's objectives. Additionally, the face-to-face interaction fostered rapport and encouraged open communication, resulting in more authentic and comprehensive data that strengthened the overall quality of the research findings.

3.7.2 Questionnaire

This study also used questionnaires to collect data. According to Sreejesh (2014). A questionnaire is a systematic set of questions designed for respondents, typically featuring clear instructions on how to navigate the sequence and select appropriate responses. The structured format enabled the researcher to collect data in a consistent and organized manner. A questionnaire was chosen as the primary data collection tool due to its ability to gather standardized, quantifiable data from a broad sample efficiently and cost-effectively. It enabled the collection of open-ended responses for qualitative insights. The format also allowed participants to respond anonymously, which increased the likelihood of honest and accurate answers, especially for sensitive topics.

3.7.3 Participatory observation

Participatory observation involved the researcher engaging directly with the site and its activities to collect firsthand data through careful observation and examination. This method enabled the researcher to gain an immersive understanding of the restoration processes, traditional building techniques, and the daily interactions between stakeholders involved in the conservation of Great

Zimbabwe. By being present on-site, the researcher could verify information gathered from interviews and questionnaires, providing a richer, more nuanced perspective. This approach helped identify practical challenges and cultural practices that might not have been fully captured through verbal responses alone, thereby strengthening the overall validity and depth of the study's findings.

3.8 Ethical consideration

Research ethics involves determining what is morally right and wrong guiding researchers on their responsibilities (Bos 2020). It is essential to conduct studies with respect for participants, regardless of difference in age, sex and religion and lifestyles. This consideration ensures that research is carried out in a way that values and protects all individuals. This study was done in a way that respects people's independence to make choices. The researcher made sure to protect the integrity and authenticity of heritage, as well as the rights of the individuals and the environment. The researcher made sure to get permission from everyone involved to write their personal information on the questionnaires and communicated the purpose of the research and how the contributions would be utilized. Recognizing the cultural significance of Great Zimbabwe, the researcher approached the local community with sensitivity and also worked with local experts and communities to ensure the study was correct. This included respecting the cultural heritage and traditions of local people and being mindful.

3.9 Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments

According to Bond (2003), validity can be seen as the core of any form of assessment that is trustworthy and accurate. The purpose of validity is to make particular issues clear, ensuring that the research measures what it is intended to measure. In this study, the interviews and questionnaires were carefully crafted to align with the study's objectives and research questions. This alignment helped to ensure that the instruments collected relevant and meaningful data. The questions were developed after a thorough literature review and consultation with experts in the field to enhance content validity. Pilot testing of the tools further refined their clarity and effectiveness.

According to Creswell (2014), reliability refers to the consistency of a score, indicating the degree to which results can be replicated under similar conditions. The study employed a qualitative

approach, engaging a small, purposively selected group of participants to ensure depth of information. This targeted selection minimized the risk of bias and supported the collection of rich, reliable data. Prior to data collection, the study's goals and ethical considerations were clearly explained to all participants. This transparency fostered trust, encouraging participants to respond candidly and consistently, thereby enhancing the reliability of the findings.

3.10 Data Presentation and Analysis Procedures

According to Babajide (2022), data is the basis of information, reasoning, or calculation, and it is analyzed to obtain meaningful information. He further defines data analysis as the systematic process of inspecting, cleansing, transforming, and modeling data with the primary aim of discovering useful insights, drawing conclusions, or supporting theories to facilitate informed decision-making. In this study, data analysis was conducted to transform the raw data collected from various sources into clear, coherent information that could be easily interpreted and understood. This process was crucial in organizing the data in a way that highlighted key themes and patterns relevant to the restoration and cultural integrity of Great Zimbabwe.

The data collected through interviews, questionnaires, and written materials were carefully examined and synthesized to present the research findings comprehensively. Field surveys provided direct observational data, while desktop research and internet sources offered additional context and background information. These diverse data sets were subjected to content analysis, which involved identifying, coding, and categorizing significant information to uncover relationships and connections within the data. The analysis was iterative, ensuring that the information was cross-checked and validated for accuracy and relevance. Ultimately, this thorough and structured approach to data analysis enabled the researcher to interpret all collected information clearly and meaningfully, supporting the study's conclusions on the conservation practices at Great Zimbabwe.

Summary

This chapter focused on the research methodology, outlining the various tools and designs used to collect data for a comprehensive and reliable investigation. The researcher adopted a qualitative

approach, which allowed for an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, beliefs, and perspectives. A multi-faceted strategy was employed, incorporating a field survey, semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and participatory observation within a case study framework. These tools ensured that both the technical and cultural aspects of restoration practices at Great Zimbabwe were captured. The methodological choices made in this chapter lay a strong foundation for the detailed presentation and analysis of the findings in the subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER 4 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.1 Introduction

This section presents detailed information gathered during fieldwork, encompassing interviews, questionnaires, personal observations, and photographic documentation of the restored and reconstructed walls at Great Zimbabwe. By integrating these diverse data sources, the analysis offers a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted challenges and opportunities encountered in preserving cultural integrity throughout the site's reconstruction efforts. The findings highlight the complexities of balancing traditional techniques with modern conservation standards, as well as the critical role of community involvement. Ultimately, this chapter aims to contribute meaningfully to the ongoing discourse on heritage conservation, providing well-informed recommendations to guide future restoration practices at Great Zimbabwe and similar cultural heritage sites.

4.2 Participants' Demographics and Response Rate

This study engaged five participants representing a range of stakeholders involved in the restoration and conservation of Great Zimbabwe. These included a stone mason, a curator assistant, a UNESCO representative, a local community member, and the researcher (self). In the first four categories, two individuals were identified per group, but only one was interviewed in each. The researcher was a single participant, contributing data through direct observation and participation. This resulted in a total of five interviews out of nine identified participants, giving a response rate of approximately 55.6%.

TABLE 1 Participants overview

Stakeholder group	identified	interviewed	gender	Age range	Location	Questionnaire completed
Stone Mason	2	1	Male	20-45	Great Zimbabwe	Yes
Curator Assistant	2	1	male	20-45	Great Zimbabwe	Yes
UNESCO Representative	2	1	male	20-45	Harare	Yes
Local Community Member	2	1	male	20-45	Great Zimbabwe	No
Researcher	1		female	20-45	Bindura	No
Total	9	4	4 males, 1 female	20-45		N/A

4.2.1 Language and Communication

Interviews were conducted in both English and Shona to accommodate participants' linguistic preferences. The use of Shona, especially for engaging the local community members, helped to ensure respectful and culturally appropriate communication. Translation support was used where necessary to preserve accuracy.

4.2.2 Questionnaire Participation

Three out of the five participants completed questionnaires: the stone mason, curator assistant, and UNESCO representative, yielding a questionnaire completion rate of 60%. These structured responses provided additional insight to complement the qualitative interviews.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION ON FINDINGS

4.3 Views from a stone mason

From the discussion that was carried out with the stone mason respondent at Great Zimbabwe and upon being asked how they ensure their work matches the original style of Great Zimbabwe, the respondent stated that they go through observations of the existing techniques and material used, and also have a thorough study of documented photographs. The participant also urged that they use the same stone blocks and avoid new materials; Moreover, the wall should be built without mortar, and ensure the core blocks are well stacked, and also no hammering marks are needed on stones because they will look as new. The interviewer asked the participant about the challenges in restoring Great Zimbabwe structures, and they stressed that some walls are not properly documented, which makes it difficult to find the exact blocks used. Another challenge is that some walls are buried in the ground, so a lot of manpower is required.

4.3.1 Analysis

The stone mason participant demonstrated a strong understanding on use of traditional building methods, aligning with principle of authenticity and the Venice charter's emphasis on original material. However, the challenge of undocumented walls raises questions on historical accuracy and informed intervention of restoration as required by the charters that a clear understanding of cultural significance before any intervention. Suggesting that strengthening documentation practices could further support traditional knowledge.

4.4 Views from the curator assistant

The interviewer asked the participant how they preserve the original character of the site, and the respondent stated that they preserve the original character by restoring and reconstructing the damaged area rather than building and altering the whole structure, and also using the same material and the same type of styles and patterns. The respondent also urged that they usually engage local communities, including traditional leaders and elders, to ensure the restoration process respects and honors cultural heritage. The participant stated that a thorough study, observation is conducted before the staff members, stakeholders decide to restore a wall, it is a decision made to respect Great Zimbabwe and its significance. The participant also mentioned how they take into consideration of all the guidelines techniques on the Venice charter during restorations. The respondent also mentioned that restoration depends on the state of the wall, whether it has fully collapsed or is half-standing. According to the participant, walls do not usually fall at the same time, which makes it easy to reconstruct since they will be following the previous pattern, which is very rare. The participant also stated that they only use the surrounding materials, which are not 50m away from the wall, and he also emphasized that some collapsed walls are not meant to be restored to avoid tampering and compromising the integrity of Great Zimbabwe.

4.4.1 analysis

The view from the curator highlights a balanced approach, blending scientific conservation and cultural sensitivity. The emphasis on partial restoration and not rebuilding intact areas aligns with Burra charter. The decision to leave some ruins untouched highlights an understanding of preservation over reconstruction and avoiding distort historical meanings.

4.5 Views from the UNESCO member

The researcher asked the UNESCO participant about the organization's role in ensuring the cultural integrity of Great Zimbabwe. The participant stated that “UNESCO plays a crucial role in preserving the site's cultural integrity,” they explained, that “We organize expert meetings and workshops, promote indigenous knowledge and participatory management practices, and safeguard intangible cultural heritage. Local communities are actively involved in preservation efforts, ensuring their cultural practices and knowledge are respected. When the researcher

inquired about the influence of UNESCO's guidelines on restoration work, the participant emphasized the importance of maintaining authenticity and integrity. "Our guidelines promote sustainable practices, community involvement, capacity building, and regular monitoring and evaluation," they said. "These guidelines ensure restoration work preserves the site's cultural and historical significance. "Regarding monitoring and evaluation, the participant highlighted the use of advanced technologies like GIS and remote sensing. "We utilize these technologies to monitor restoration work, ensuring authenticity and integrity," they explained. "Local communities also provide valuable feedback and participate in decision-making processes. Upon discussing community involvement, the participant stressed the importance of participatory management. "Local communities are actively involved in restoration decision-making processes," they said. "They provide feedback, raise awareness about preservation efforts, and play a crucial role in ensuring the site's cultural significance is preserved. "When discussing UNESCO's policies on cultural authenticity, the participant mentioned the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage and Operational Guidelines for World Heritage Sites. "These policies emphasize the importance of authenticity and integrity," they explained. Finally, the participant noted the influence of the Venice and Burra Charters on preservation efforts. "The Venice Charter emphasizes authenticity, integrity, and scientific methods," the participant said. "The Burra Charter focuses on understanding and preserving cultural significance, involving local communities, and recognizing historical, social, and spiritual values."

4.5.1 Analysis

UNESCO endorsement of international conventions including the 2003 convention for safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage highlights the change in global heritage discourse towards more inclusive understanding of integrity and authenticity. UNESCO's involvement ensures that international guidelines are applied with local indigenous knowledge and participation from communities ensures equity in decision making. The UNESCO's approach bridges the physical with intangible recognizing restoration goes beyond stones.

4.6 Views from the local community

To ensure effective communication and respect for local cultural practices, interactions with community member were facilitated in their native language. This approach allowed for a more nuanced understanding of their perspective and experience, despite potential language barrier. Upon having a discussion and interviewing the local community member the researcher asked the participants about the number of restorations he participated in and he mentioned about three within the hill complex. The participant stressed out the importance of preserving Great Zimbabwe original heritage and they emphasized that it is their heritage passed down from their ancestors and they feel connected to it. Moreover, they highlighted the financial benefits that come with restoration projects, which provides opportunities for community members to receive financial assistance. Regarding their satisfaction with the restoration work done over the years, the participant expressed agreement with the approach taken by UNESCO and the custodians of site. They appreciated the knowledge sharing and involvement of community members which demonstrate care for the community's heritage. The participant also stated that restorations preserve their heritage and over the years it has helped keep the walls intact although it is not possible to restore the entire monument, conservation efforts are necessary to maintain integrity. The participant emphasized the importance of balancing restoration work with preservation avoiding over intervention to ensure the site remains authenticity.

4.6.1 Analysis

The community member participants highlight both practical benefits and spiritual ties. Their concern on over restoration aligns with Burra charter guidelines to avoid restoration that erases the historical narrative of decay and change, and advocates for preservation over reconstruction when historical evidence is missing.

4.7 Results from field observation

After a tour around the monument, with the stone masons, the researcher observed areas where restoration work had been conducted. The stone mason participant provided valuable insights into problem identified on each wall and the ones which required restoration. Upon from the research also participating in a restoration project, whereby students were being taught about the process of identifying problems of the wall and monitoring the wall determining which areas required

reconstruction or restoration. This hands-on experience provided the researcher with a unique perspective on the technical aspects of restoration work.

4.7.1 analysis

Researcher observed active involvement in wall assessment, damage identification and reconstruction. the researcher noted technical emphasis on monitoring and documenting deterioration before any action is taken to preserve authenticity. Involvement of community members reflected need for transfer of traditional knowledge.



Figure 1: A figure showing excavation being conducted to identify the problem of the wall and to recover buried stones



Figure 2: Figure 2 shows stone masons reconstructing the wall using traditional material around the area to fit on top of the wall



Figure 3: Figure 3 showing the wall after being reconstructed

4.9 Summary

From the restoration project, the researcher gained experience identifying wall problems and determining which ones require reconstruction. The stone mason's participant's guidance and expertise were instrumental in teaching about the process and ensuring that the work was done correctly. Overall, participating in the restoration highlighted the importance of careful planning, technical expertise, as mentioned by the principles' guidelines of the Venice and Burra charters. The experience also underscored the significance of preserving the site's cultural integrity during these conversation processes.

CHAPTER 5

5.0 Summary, Conclusions, Recommendations, And Areas for Further Research

5.1 Summary

Great Zimbabwe is more than just an ancient stone monument it is a symbol of national pride, cultural identity, and deep ancestral significance for many Zimbabweans. As a UNESCO World Heritage Site, it carries historical value and spiritual and social meaning for the communities that live near it. Over the years, various restoration and reconstruction projects have taken place to preserve this iconic site. But with each stone that's moved, a critical question arises: how do we protect the integrity of the place, not just its structure?

The study explored that question by looking at cultural integrity, which means preserving both the physical and cultural essence of a heritage site. The research was built around two important international frameworks that guide how heritage sites around the world should be conserved: the Venice Charter (1964) and the Burra Charter (1979). The Venice Charter focuses on maintaining historical accuracy through scientific and minimal interventions, while the Burra Charter emphasizes understanding the cultural significance of a place and involving local communities in its preservation. Using Great Zimbabwe as a case study, the research examined how these charters influence real-life restoration work and whether they help or hinder the goal of preserving the site's true identity. The aim was not only to assess how well these guidelines are being applied, but also to hear from the people directly involved that including stone masons, heritage professionals, local community members, and UNESCO representatives.

Chapter 1 set the stage for the entire dissertation. It introduced the main question: how can Great Zimbabwe, a site that holds deep historical, cultural, and spiritual meaning, be restored in ways that truly respect its authenticity? The chapter explains the importance of cultural integrity, which is about keeping the spirit and identity of a heritage site intact, not just its physical appearance. It also introduces two important international charters (the Venice and Burra charters), which offer guidelines on how heritage sites should be conserved. The chapter outlines the goals of the study, the research questions, and why this work matters not just for Zimbabwe but for heritage sites around the world.

Chapter 2 explores the existing knowledge and global best practices in heritage restoration, providing a thorough comparison of the two foundational charters guiding conservation efforts. The Venice Charter emphasizes a scientific, preservation-focused approach that aims to keep the original structure as intact as possible, prioritizing authenticity and minimal intervention. In contrast, the Burra Charter introduces a more holistic perspective by highlighting the importance of community involvement, cultural values, and living traditions connected to heritage sites. This chapter also examines how these charters have been applied and sometimes misapplied in Zimbabwe and other global contexts, revealing both successes and challenges. By integrating the principles of both charters, the researcher established a robust theoretical framework for critically assessing the restoration practices at Great Zimbabwe, ensuring the study addresses both technical and cultural dimensions of heritage conservation.

Chapter 3 detailed the methodology employed in the study, emphasizing a qualitative approach that prioritized understanding people's experiences, perspectives, and narratives related to the restoration of Great Zimbabwe. The researcher conducted interviews with key stakeholders directly involved in the restoration process, including stone masons, site curators, community members, and a UNESCO representative, ensuring a diverse range of insights. In addition to interviews, questionnaires were used to gather structured data, while the researcher's participation in an actual restoration project provided valuable firsthand experience. The chapter also outlines the participant selection criteria, ethical considerations such as informed consent and confidentiality, and the strategies implemented to ensure data reliability and validity, such as

triangulation and careful documentation. This comprehensive approach strengthened the overall credibility of the research findings.

Chapter 4 brought out the authentic voices of the people directly involved. Stone masons stated about using traditional methods, stacking stones without mortar, avoiding modern tools, and using materials found around the site. Curators explained their efforts to only fix what's necessary and involve local elders in the process. The UNESCO representative speaks about supporting community-based approaches and using new technologies to monitor restoration work. Community members express pride in their heritage, a desire to be involved, and the importance of not over-restoring the site. The chapter also reflects on the researcher's own hands-on experience in a restoration project, showing just how delicate and thoughtful the work needs to be. Across all perspectives, one theme is clear: cultural integrity matters, and it must guide every decision.

5.2 Conclusion

The reconstruction and restoration of Great Zimbabwe present a complex but vital task, one that goes beyond the physical preservation of stone walls to include the safeguarding of cultural identity, memory, and meaning. This research set out to explore how international heritage charters, namely the Venice Charter and the Burra Charter, influence restoration practices at this iconic World Heritage Site. Through interviews, fieldwork, and firsthand experience in a restoration project, the research uncovered both the successes and the challenges faced in ensuring cultural integrity during these conservation efforts.

The findings show that the principles of both charters are present in the work being done. The Venice Charter's emphasis on authenticity, minimal intervention, and scientific method has informed the technical approaches used, especially among heritage professionals and stone masons. At the same time, the Burra Charter's call for community involvement, respect for cultural values, and recognition of intangible heritage has shaped the more human-centered aspects of the work, including decision-making and local engagement. What became clear is that preserving Great Zimbabwe is not just a technical project; it is a cultural responsibility. The voices of local

communities, curators, masons, and international bodies all highlighted the need to approach restoration with sensitivity, respect, and a deep understanding of what the site means to the people who live around it and claim it as part of their heritage. Restoration, in this context, must not erase the past or impose modern aesthetics, but rather protect and honor the site's authenticity, both materially and spiritually.

However, the study also revealed gaps and challenges, such as inadequate documentation, funding limitations, and the occasional tension between expert-led and community-driven approaches. These challenges remind us that international guidelines must be flexible enough to adapt to local realities and that ongoing dialogue between all stakeholders is essential. In conclusion, the restoration of Great Zimbabwe should not be seen as a one-time project, but as a continuous process of learning, negotiation, and care. By integrating the strengths of both the Venice and Burra Charters, and by centering the voices of local people, it is possible to conserve this remarkable site in a way that preserves not just its walls, but its soul. This study hopes to contribute to that effort, offering insights that may guide future heritage projects across Africa and beyond.

5.3 Recommendations

In light of the findings from this research, several recommendations are proposed to enhance the restoration and reconstruction of Great Zimbabwe while preserving its cultural integrity. These suggestions aim to address the gaps identified during the study and to promote a more inclusive and sustainable approach to heritage conservation. These recommendations are primarily directed to the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ) and UNESCO, whose work continues to shape the future of the site.

A recurring theme that emerged from both interviews and observations is the vital role of the local community. Those who live around Great Zimbabwe do not see the monument as a distant relic of the past, but as a living heritage that connects them to their ancestors. It is therefore essential that NMMZ and UNESCO deepen community participation, not as a formality but as a meaningful part of the decision-making and restoration process. In particular, engaging traditional leaders and elders ensures that interventions remain culturally grounded and reflective of long-held practices and beliefs. When communities are included in shaping the future of their heritage, the result is

not only a stronger sense of ownership but also more resilient and respectful conservation outcomes.

Another pressing issue is the need for improved documentation. Both masons and heritage professionals pointed out the challenge of reconstructing walls when there are few reliable records of how they originally stood. To address this, it is recommended that NMMZ and UNESCO invest in systematic and accessible documentation practices. This could include detailed photographs, annotated architectural drawings, and the recording of oral histories from those with ancestral ties to the site. In doing so, restoration efforts can be better informed, and future generations can benefit from a clearer record of both the physical and cultural elements of Great Zimbabwe.

Training and capacity building also deserve attention. The skills of local stone masons, passed down through generations, are an irreplaceable asset. Yet, in a world where heritage conservation is increasingly guided by international charters and scientific methods, there is a need to bridge traditional craftsmanship with global best practices. It is recommended that NMMZ and UNESCO work together to develop workshops and collaborative training programs. These would not only strengthen the technical capacity of heritage workers but also ensure that traditional knowledge is honored alongside professional standards like those articulated in the Venice and Burra Charter. Furthermore, while international guidelines provide helpful frameworks, they must be interpreted in context. The Venice and Burra Charters, though widely respected, were developed in different cultural settings. For them to be truly effective at Great Zimbabwe, their principles should be applied with sensitivity to the site's unique historical, spiritual, and social significance. This means allowing space for local traditions, worldviews, and practices to shape how conservation is carried out.

Ultimately, the restoration and preservation of Great Zimbabwe is about a balance between past and present, between science and tradition, and between global standards and local voices. By listening to those who call this heritage their own, and by valuing both tangible and intangible elements, NMMZ and UNESCO can ensure that Great Zimbabwe remains not just a national treasure, but a living symbol of cultural pride and continuity.

5.5 Areas for further research

Further research on the reconstruction and restoration of Great Zimbabwe could explore several critical areas to deepen the understanding of cultural integrity within heritage conservation. One promising direction is a comparative study of how the Venice and Burra Charters have been interpreted and implemented in other African heritage sites, allowing for a broader evaluation of their applicability in post-colonial contexts. Investigating the integration of indigenous knowledge systems and traditional custodianship practices into official conservation efforts could also reveal ways to enhance local ownership and authenticity. Additionally, future studies could investigate how community participation affects restoration outcomes, particularly in preserving intangible cultural heritage. Longitudinal research assessing the long-term effects of past interventions at Great Zimbabwe could uncover patterns that inform future restoration strategies. Technological advancements in digital reconstruction and their implications for authenticity and educational use present another valuable research area. Ultimately, a multidisciplinary approach combining archaeology, history, anthropology, and heritage management would provide a more comprehensive framework for understanding and preserving Great Zimbabwe's cultural integrity.

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Appendices

NAME	
RESIDENCE	
ROLE IN RESTORATION	
CONTACT INFORMATION	

Appendix 1. questionnaire for stone mason

Q1. How do you ensure your work matches the original style of great Zimbabwe?

Q2. How do you ensure the use of traditional building methods and material during restoration?

Q3. What are some of the challenges you face in restoring great Zimbabwe structures?

Q 4. Are there specific techniques that you apply to preserve the cultural integrity when conducting restoration at the Great Zimbabwe site?

APPENDIX 2. Questionnaire for curator

Q1. How do you ensure restoration work respects the outstanding universal value of the Great Zimbabwe cultural integrity and significance?

Q2. Are there any guidelines for preserving cultural integrity during restoration?

Q3. do you involve the local community in restoration decisions? If yes how do you balance expectations for the usability and development?

Q4. Are you familiar with the Venice (1964) and Burra (1988) charters? If yes, how has it been successfully used in the restoration works at great Zimbabwe?

Q5. What policies or guidelines would you like to see strengthened for future restorations?

APPENDIX 3: Questionnaire for UNESCO member

Q1. What role does UNESCO play in ensuring the cultural integrity of great Zimbabwe?

Q2. How do UNESCO'S guidelines and standards influence restoration and reconstruction work at the site?

Q3. What measures does UNESCO take to monitor and evaluate the impact of restoration work?

Q4. How does UNESCO involve local community in restoration decision making processes?

Q5. Are there specific UNESCO policies focused on preserving cultural authenticity?

Q6. How do UNESCO'S guidelines such as those in the Venice and burra charter influence the preservation of great Zimbabwe?

APPENDIX 4: Questionnaire for community member

Q1. How important is it to preserve great Zimbabwe, originality?

Q2. Have you seen any changes in the way great Zimbabwe is restored or rebuilt?

Q3. Have you ever helped with restoration work at great Zimbabwe? If yes kindly tell me how u have been involved.

Q4. How does restoration work affect your community?

Q5. Should traditional building methods be used in restoration work and why

Q6 Do you have any suggestion for improving the restoration of great Zimbabwe cultural heritage and integrity?