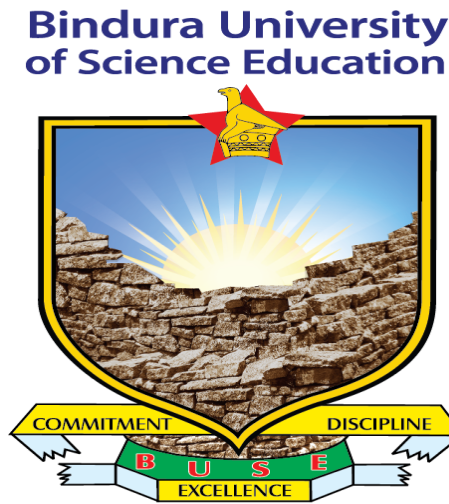


BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE AND HERITAGE STUDIES



**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE INFLUENCE OF SACRED PLACES ON NYANGA
COMMUNITIES: EVALUATING CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

By

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**A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Culture and Heritage Studies in partial
fulfillment for the requirements for the Bachelor of Science Honors in Culture and
Heritage Studies Degree**

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ABSTRACT

The research study explores the challenges and opportunities associated with sacred places in Nyanga communities. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study investigates the cultural significance, management practices, and community perceptions of sacred places in Nyanga. The findings reveal challenges related to conservation, tourism, and cultural erosion, as well as opportunities for community empowerment, cultural revitalization, and sustainable development. The study contributes to our understanding of sacred places in African contexts and informs strategies for preserving cultural heritage and promoting community well-being.

DECLARATION

I, Panashe T Zaba, studying for a Bachelor of Science Honors Degree in Culture and Heritage Studies hereby declare that this dissertation, titled "AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE INFLUENCE OF SACRED PLACES ON NYANGA COMMUNITIES: EVALUATING CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES", is my original work and has not been submitted elsewhere for examination or award. I acknowledge that I have received guidance and support from my supervisor, Doctor M Mavesera, and other individuals and organizations, as acknowledged in this dissertation. I declare that I have adhered to the ethical guidelines and principles of research integrity, and that the research reported in this dissertation has been conducted in a fair, honest, and transparent manner. I am responsible for the accuracy and authenticity of the research and its findings, and I acknowledge that any errors or omissions are my own.

Approval Form

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Chairperson T.H. ZIMUCHA - STAFF Signature [Signature] Date 09/10/24

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my mentor, Dr M Mavesera, whose guidance, wisdom, and unwavering support have been instrumental in my academic journey. Your impact extends far beyond this research, and I am forever grateful. My alma mater, Bindura University of Science Education, which has provided me with a nurturing environment, resources, and opportunities to explore my academic interests. I am proud to be part of this community. My family, whose love, encouragement, and sacrifices have been my driving force. Your unwavering belief in me has kept me going, even in the most challenging moments. I would want to thank the Almighty God for making it happen, I could not do anything without Him, His presence, His love for me, I would not be here to dedicate. This achievement is as much yours as it is mine. Thank you for being my pillars of strength.

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List of abbreviations and acronyms

BUSE: Bindura University of Social Sciences

CHS: Culture and Heritage Studies

GIS: Geographic and Information System

ICOM: International Council of Museums

NMMZ: National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

ABSTRACT	i
DECLARATION.....	ii
Approval form.....	iii
DEDICATION	iv
Acknowledgements:	v
List of abbreviations and acronyms.....	vi
CHAPTER ONE	1
1.0 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Purpose of the study	4
1.3 Statement problem	4
1.4 Research objectives	5
1.5 Questions	5
1.6 Assumptions of the study.....	6
1.7 Significance of the study	6
1.8 Delimitations of the study.....	7
1.9 Limitations.....	7
1.10 Ethical considerations	7
1.11 Definition of terms	8
1.12 Dissertation outline.....	9

CHAPTER TWO	10
LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	10
2.1 Introduction.....	10
2.2 Reviewing International Scholarly Views on sacred places	10
2.3 Reviewing African Scholarly Views on the sacred places	13
2.4 Reviewing Zimbabwean Scholarly Views on Sacred places	14
2.5 Conceptual Framework.....	17
2.6 Summary	20
CHAPTER THREE	21
3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	21
3.1 Introduction.....	21
3.2 Research Design.....	21
3.3 Research Methodology	22
3.4 Data Collection Tools	22
3.4.1 Interviews	23
3.4.2 Focus Group Discussion.....	23
3.4.3 Observation technique	24
3.5 Sampling	24
3.6 Data Validity and Reliability.....	25
3.7 Data presentation and analysis	25
3.8 Ethical considerations	26

3.8.1 Confidentiality and privacy	26
3.8.2 Interview ethics	27
3.9 Chapter Summary	27
CHAPTER FOUR	28
4.0 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	28
4.1 Introduction	28
4.2 Presentation of Focus Group Discussions	29
4.3 1. What is your understanding of sacred places?	29
4.4 2. Do you have sacred places here in Nyanga?	31
4.5 What makes this place sacred for you and your community	33
4.6 Are there any challenges you may face from tourist visits?	35
4.7 Are there any stories or legends associated with the sacred place? Can you share them with me?36	
4.8 How do you feel about the protection of the sacred places?	38
4.9 Are there challenges you face in protecting the sacred places	39
4.10 Do you have any suggestions for improving the protection of the sacred places?	40
4.11 Chapter Summary	42
CHAPTER FIVE	43
RESEARCH	43
5.1 Introduction	43
5.2 Summary	43
5.3 Conclusions	44

5.4 Recommendations	46
5.5 Direction for Future Research	48
REFERENCE.....	49
APPENDICES	52

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND AREAS FOR FURTHER

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

Mountains, waterfalls, and caves hold profound sacred significance within the Nyanga community in eastern Zimbabwe. These spiritual sites are considered as gateways to the divine, and their preservation is crucial for safeguarding Nyanga culture and traditions, as they are intricately intertwined with the history of the people who have inhabited them for centuries. Studying the meaning of these revered places provides insights into understanding the Nyanga community and their enduring legacy. This chapter presents an introduction of the research which seeks to explore the impact of sacred places on Nyanga community. The problem statement follows the backdrop of the study, and subsequently, the study's objectives and research topics are discussed. The significance of the study is emphasized, followed by an overview of the study's limitations, methodology, and delimitations. Furthermore, the organization of the study is outlined, and the definitions of terminology used in the research are provided.

1.1 Background of the study

Sacred places hold immense cultural, spiritual, and historical significance within indigenous communities worldwide. The Nyanga community, located in the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe, is no exception. According to Sithole (2012) sacred places in the Nyanga community are deeply intertwined with their cultural heritage and belief systems. These places serve as physical manifestations of their spiritual connection with the land, ancestors, and natural elements. They are regarded as sacred due to their association with significant historical events, mythical narratives, and rituals passed down through generations. The Nyanga people consider these places as sacred sites, embodying the collective memory, wisdom, and traditional practices of their community.

The Nyanga people have inhabited the region for centuries, maintaining a strong connection to the land and its spiritual dimensions. These sacred sites have witnessed important ceremonies, social gatherings, and spiritual practices, playing

a vital role in shaping the Nyanga community's identity (Mabweazara, 2009). In the Nyanga community, sacred places are not merely physical locations but are considered cultural landscapes. The Nyanga people perceive these landscapes as living entities, imbued with the presence of their ancestors and spirits. They engage in practices that maintain the balance and harmony between the human and spiritual realms, ensuring the continued vitality of these sacred places (Kanengoni, 2015).

According to Nyamwanza (2018) the preservation of sacred places is of utmost importance to the Nyanga community. They recognize the need to safeguard these sites from environmental degradation, encroachment, and exploitation. In recent years, there have been concerted efforts by the community, local organizations, and governmental bodies to protect and conserve these sacred places. Initiatives include establishing legal protections, engaging in community-led conservation. These sites are imbued with historical narratives, traditional knowledge, and ancestral wisdom. They act as living museums, preserving the customs, rituals, and beliefs of the Nyanga people. Through the continued use and reverence of these sacred places, cultural practices are perpetuated, ensuring the transmission of cultural heritage from one generation to the next. The preservation of cultural identity is strengthened as individuals connect with their roots and engage in practices that have been passed down for centuries (Kanengoni, 2015).

Mabweazara (2009) maintains that sacred places play a pivotal role in fostering community cohesion and social integration within Nyanga communities. The sites serve as gathering spaces for social and cultural events, such as festivals, initiations, and communal celebrations. They provide opportunities for community members to come together, strengthen social bonds, and reinforce a shared sense of identity. The collective engagement with sacred places creates a sense of belonging, solidarity, and mutual support. Furthermore, these sites often involve communal responsibilities and shared decision-making, promoting cooperation and unity among community members. The impact of these sacred places on spiritual practices is profound, fostering a sense of spiritual fulfillment, inner

peace, and a deep connection to the divine (Sithole, 2012). Sacred places in Nyanga communities have a profound impact on individual well-being and healing. These sites are believed to possess spiritual energies and healing properties. Individuals often visit sacred places for meditation, reflection, and seeking solace during challenging times. The tranquil environment and connection to nature found in these sites contribute to stress reduction, emotional rejuvenation, and a sense of inner balance. The spiritual practices and rituals conducted in sacred places provide a framework for personal growth, self-discovery, and healing from physical, emotional, and spiritual ailments (Kanengoni, 2015).

Sacred places in Nyanga communities hold immense potential as cultural tourism destinations. These sites attract visitors who seek to learn about the rich cultural heritage and spiritual practices of the community. By developing sustainable tourism initiatives, such as guided tours, cultural performances, and handicraft exhibitions, the community can generate income and promote economic empowerment. By involving local community members as guides, artisans, and service providers, tourism activities can create job opportunities and stimulate the local economy (Muzondidya, 2020). Sacred places are repositories of ancestral wisdom, traditional knowledge, and cultural practices. They offer opportunities for intergenerational knowledge transmission, where elders can pass down their wisdom, rituals, and stories to younger generations. By encouraging the involvement of youth in the preservation and management of sacred places, the community can ensure the continuity of cultural practices and strengthen the sense of identity among younger members. (Kanengoni, 2015). Sacred places in Nyanga communities provide opportunities for cultural exchange and education. They can serve as platforms for intercultural dialogue, where visitors from different backgrounds can engage with the community, learn about their customs, beliefs, and practices, and foster mutual understanding. Educational programs centered around sacred places can be developed to raise awareness about indigenous cultures, promote cultural diversity, and foster respect for different belief systems (Mabweazara, 2009).

One of the primary challenges facing sacred places in Nyanga communities is land encroachment and urbanization. As the population grows and urban areas expand, there is an increasing demand for land, which often leads to encroachment upon sacred sites (Nyamwanza 2018). The extraction of resources not only alters the physical landscape but also disrupts the ecological balance and sacredness associated with these places. Environmental degradation compromises the spiritual and cultural practices tied to the natural elements within these sacred sites (Mabweazara, 2009). Another challenge faced by sacred places in Nyanga communities is the lack of recognition and legal protection. Despite their cultural and spiritual significance, many of these sites are not officially recognized or protected by national or local authorities. This lack of recognition leaves them vulnerable to neglect, unauthorized access, and inappropriate use. The absence of legal protection undermines efforts to safeguard these sacred places and perpetuates the risk of irreversible damage or destruction (Sithole, 2012). Climate change poses an additional challenge to sacred places in Nyanga communities. The effects of climate change, such as increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, including floods, droughts, and landslides, can have a detrimental impact on these sites. Climate change-induced shifts in rainfall patterns and temperature can further disrupt the ecological balance and spiritual significance associated with these sites (Nyamwanza 2018).

1.2 Purpose of the study

The study of sacred places it helps us to understand the religious beliefs and gain a better understanding of the region and its people, which can promote cross-cultural understanding and appreciation.

1.3 Statement problem

Despite the historical and cultural significance of sacred places in Nyanga communities, there is a lack of comprehensive understanding regarding their impact, challenges, and opportunities. This knowledge gap hinders the effective preservation and management of these sacred sites and limits the potential benefits

they can bring to the local communities. Additionally, the increasing pressures of modernization, tourism, and development pose significant threats to the integrity and sustainability of these sacred places. Therefore, there is an urgent need to explore and uncover the multipronged dimensions of sacred sites in Nyanga communities, in order to address the challenges, they face and leverage the opportunities they offer for community development, cultural preservation, and sustainable practices.

1.4 Research objectives

- i). Investigate the historical and cultural significance of sacred places in Nyanga Communities.
- ii). Examine the social, economic, and environmental impact of sacred sites on local communities in Nyanga.
- iii). Identify the challenges faced by Nyanga communities in preserving and maintaining sacred places.
- iv) Analyze the opportunities and potential benefits that sacred sites offer for community development and tourism.
- v). Explore the role of sacred places in promoting cultural identity, spirituality, and well-being within Nyanga communities.

1.5 Questions

- i). What is the significance of sacred places in Nyanga Communities?
- ii). List down the impact of social, economic, and environmental of sacred places?
- iii). What are the challenges faced by communities in Nyanga when preserving and maintaining sacred places?

iv). Give example of the opportunities and benefits that sacred places offer to the community?

v) What are the roles played by sacred places in promoting cultural identity, spirituality and well-being within Nyanga communities?

1.6 Assumptions of the study

The study assumes that the sacred places in Nyanga are sites of spiritual and cultural significance. These places are believed to be connected to the ancestors and to the spiritual realm. They are often associated with the practice of traditional rituals and ceremonies, and they are often considered to be sacred spaces where people can connect with the divine. Some of these places are thought to have healing powers, while others are associated with particular deities or ancestors.

1.7 Significance of the study

There are several reasons why it's important to study the sacred places of Nyanga. Firstly, it provides us with a better understanding of the history and culture of the region. Secondly, it can help us to preserve these places for future generations. And thirdly, it can give us insight into the spiritual beliefs and practices of the people who live in the area. By understanding the significance of these places, we can gain a deeper appreciation for the role they play in the lives of the people who visit the sites. One way to look at the significance of the sacred places of Nyanga is to consider them as part of a broader cultural landscape. This means that they are not just isolated sites, but are connected to the wider environment and the communities that live in it. The landscape itself is seen as sacred, and the people living there have a strong connection to the land and the spirits that inhabit it. The landscape is therefore not only important in terms of its physical features, but also in terms of its spiritual and cultural significance.

1.8 Delimitations of the study

The delimitation of studying sacred places has a number of limitations. Firstly, it's difficult to fully understand and document the spiritual beliefs and practices of a community. Secondly, there is a risk of misrepresenting or oversimplifying these beliefs and practices. Thirdly, it can be difficult to get access to all the relevant information, as some of it may be considered sacred or secret. And finally, it's important to be aware of the potential for cultural appropriation and exploitation when studying sacred places. In terms of delimitation, it's important to note that the sacred places of Nyanga are not just limited to a specific geographical area. While the main focus is on the region of the Eastern Highlands, the spiritual beliefs and practices associated with these places extend beyond this region. The sacred places are connected to a shared belief system that is not limited to a specific location. It's a way of understanding the world that is deeply rooted in the history and culture of the people who live in the area.

1.9 Limitations

One of the limitations of studying sacred places is that it's often difficult to get a complete picture of the beliefs and practices of the people involved. There may be taboos around sharing certain information, or there may be a lack of written records or oral histories. This can make it difficult to get a full understanding of the spiritual significance of a place. Additionally, it can be hard to avoid imposing an outsider's perspective on the study, which can lead to misunderstandings or a lack of respect for the beliefs and practices of the people involved.

1.10 Ethical considerations

It's important to gain informed consent from the people involved in the study. This means making sure that they understand the purpose of the study and what it will involve. Secondly, there is a need to be sensitive to the religious and cultural beliefs of the community, and to avoid causing any offense or disrespect. Thirdly,

it's important to ensure that the findings of the study are shared in a way that is respectful and beneficial to the community. One of the key ethical considerations in this type of study is the need to avoid cultural appropriation. This means using or adapting cultural beliefs or practices without proper understanding or respect. It's important to ensure that the community is not being exploited for the sake of academic research. Additionally, it's important to consider the potential risks and benefits of the study, and to weigh these against each other. This includes considering any potential negative impacts on the community, such as the loss of traditional knowledge or practices. It's also important to consider how the findings of the study can be used to benefit the community.

1.11 Definition of terms

Heritage: According to Hughes (19920) heritage refers to the full range of inherited traditions, monuments.

Sacred places : According to Thomas (1996) defined sacred as places built to symbolize the meanings and accommodate the rituals of the particular belief system of its time .In other words , it is limited to structures intended for communal religious uses .

Cultural beliefs : refer to the shared ideas ,values ,customs ,traditional and assumptions that are held by a particular group of people within society .These beliefs are often deeply ingrained and influence the way individuals within that culture perceive the world , behave , and interact with others .

Urbanisation : According to Gatehouse (1960) is a process whereby populations move from rural to urban areas ,enabling cities and towns to grow .

Community: According to Robert (1953) defined community as a group of people who share a common sense of identity, purpose, and solidarity.

1.12 Dissertation outline

The first chapter discussed the main aspects of the study. It highlighted a brief background of the study, statement of the problem, the research objectives, research questions, and assumptions, delimitations, limitations of the study among other major components. Chapter two reviewed literature from various scholars of European, African, Asian and Zimbabwean origin in relation to sacred places. In doing so different scholarly journal, articles, book chapters, and researchers were reviewed. The third chapter is the research methodology. It comprises of a research design and methodologies used by the researcher. Ethical considerations for the study are also discussed in this chapter. The chapter also presents sampling strategies that we utilized in this study. Chapter four is a presentation, analysis and discussions of the findings. Chapter five summarizes and concludes the study. It also proffers recommendations to the entire rehear.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter we introduced the research. This chapter shall discuss the literature in relation to the effects of sacred places on cultural heritage site. The chapter elude theoretical framework on which the research study is informed. Furthermore, the chapter discussed the interaction between communities and sacred places in various contexts such as a global perspective on sacred places development and preservation.

2.2 Reviewing International Scholarly Views on sacred places

Eliade (1959) studied about sacred places and revealed that the sacred places hold immense cultural, religious, and historical significance for communities across the globe. Hence these sites are often revered as manifestations of the divine, serving as centers of worship, pilgrimage, and contemplation. Eliade has extensively explored the multifaceted nature of sacred places, shedding light on their sociocultural, environmental, and spiritual dimensions. The study aims to review international scholarly views on sacred places, examining the diverse perspectives and highlighting key themes that emerge from this body of research.

Eliade (1959) asserts that sacred places serve as repositories of cultural heritage, embodying the shared beliefs, values, and practices of a community. In his seminal work, Eliade argues that sacred sites represent the axis mundi, the symbolic center of the world, connecting the earthly realm to the transcendent. Such sites often become focal points for rituals, ceremonies, and festivals, facilitating community cohesion and identity formation. For instance, the Mecca in Islam, the Western Wall in Judaism, and the Varanasi in Hinduism are all revered as sacred spaces that foster a sense of belonging and communal solidarity.

Inskeep (1991) explored the environmental perspectives on sacred places. He further emphasizes that these sites often possess unique ecological features and are considered sacred due to their association with natural phenomena or the presence of rare species. Therefore, the study argues that sacred places can play a crucial role in conservation efforts, as they inspire reverence and

encourage sustainable practices. For example, the Maasai community in Kenya considers certain areas of their land as sacred, leading to the preservation of wildlife and the protection of biodiversity.

McGuire (2008) reveals that sacred places are tourism destinations, therefore the tourism industry has recognized the economic potential of sacred places, leading to an increase in religious and spiritual tourism. This phenomenon has sparked debates among scholars regarding the commodification and commercialization of sacred sites. The study argues that tourism can lead to the degradation of the spiritual atmosphere and the loss of authenticity, he further emphasizes the economic benefits and potential for intercultural dialogue that tourism can bring. Therefore, balancing the preservation of sacredness with sustainable tourism practices remains a critical challenge.

Joy (2014) studies the conflict and contestation over sacred places. Joy (2014) clearly explained that sacred places often become contested spaces, subject to conflicts arising from religious, cultural, or political differences. The researchers have examined numerous instances of conflicts surrounding sacred sites, such as the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, Ayodhya in India, and Uluru in Australia. These conflicts highlight the complex interplay between religion, identity politics, and territorial claims. Understanding the dynamics of such conflicts is crucial for promoting interfaith dialogue, cultural understanding, and peaceful resolutions.

Chidester (1997) reviews religious significance of sacred places in Nyanga. Nyanga is known for its religious significance, attracting scholars interested in the intersection of faith and sacred spaces. Chidester (1997) examines the religious symbolism associated with the Dombo Ritual Stone Circle. This sacred site, comprising stone circles arranged in a complex pattern, plays a central role in the spiritual practices of the local shona community. Therefore; the study argues that the circles design and alignment reflect spiritual beliefs and connecting them to the ancestral realm.

Garlake (1973) reveals the significance of rock paintings such as the Kairezi rock painting. Through Garlake (1973)'s research and documentation reveal the deeper understanding of cultural heritage, religious beliefs, and ecological importance associated with these sacred places.

Therefore, it is crucial to recognize and respect sanctity of these sites, promoting their conservation and sustainable management for the benefit of present and future generations.

Smith (1992) reveals the intricate connections between culture, spirituality, environment, and human behavior. These sites hold profound meaning for individuals and communities, shaping identities, fostering connections and inspiring conservation efforts. Hence, the increasing popularity of sacred places as tourism destinations and the conflict that arise around them pose challenges that demand careful consideration. The present study research continues to delve into these complex dynamics, promoting a nuanced understanding of sacred places and their significance in a rapidly changing world.

Brumfield (2010) conducted extensive research on pilgrimage sites in both old and new worlds. Brumfield looks on how pilgrimage sites have been constructed and used over time, and how they have shaped the cultures and beliefs of the people who visit them. She has also written about the religious traditions and rituals associated with these sites, and how they have evolved over time.

African scholars have extensively explored the significance of sacred sites in indigenous belief systems, highlighting their role as repositories of cultural memory, ancestral connections, and cosmological understanding. These studies have shed light on the practices, rituals, and ceremonies associated with sacred places, demonstrating their importance in African cultures. The research has also emphasized the historical significance, cultural and communal identity, ancestral connections, spirituality, and environmental conservation associated with sacred places. Furthermore, the challenges and threats facing these sites have been acknowledged, underscoring the need for increased awareness, policy interventions, and community involvement to safeguard them for future generations. By recognizing and respecting the importance of sacred places, African societies can preserve their heritage, foster a sense of pride, and ensure the continued vitality of these sites. Ultimately, the study of sacred places in Africa offers a profound understanding of the continent's rich cultural and religious heritage, highlighting the significance of these sites in shaping the identity and spirituality of African communities.

2.3 Reviewing African Scholarly Views on the sacred places

African scholar's explore the significance of sacred sites in indigenous belief system ,system, examining how these places serve as repositories of cultural memory , ancestral connections , and cosmological understanding .The study of sacred places in Africa also highlights the practices , rituals , and ceremonies associated with these sites , shedding light on the ways in which communities interact with the divine , the natural world , and each other.

Mkhizes (2017) focuses on the role of women in use and understanding of sacred places in Sourthen Africa. She argues that women have traditionally had a greater role in these places than often recognized, and that this role as caretakers and custodians of knowledge within their communities. The study highlights the ways in which women's relationships to scared places have been affected by colonialism. In addition, Mkhize focuses on the ways in which sacred places are used and understood by different groups in African societies. He explores the connection between sacred places and other aspects of African culture, such as language, music, and art. One of the key arguments is that sacred places are not just physical locations, but are also sites of memory and identity. This completely shows that these places are used by communities to remember and to make sense of their histories.

Gondola (2017) opines historical significance of sacred places, emphasized the historical importance of sacred places in shaping the continent's cultural and religious heritage. These sites often hold the remnants of ancient civilizations and act as living testimonies to the region's rich past. For instance, the Great Pyramids of Egypt symbolize the awe-inspiring engineering prowess of ancient Egyptians and their spiritual beliefs associated with the afterlife. Therefore, this review has highlighted the historical significance associated with sacred places.

Abungu (2008) studies the cultural and communal identity of sacred places. Sacred places play a crucial role in the formation and preservation of cultural and communal identity in Africa. They serve as focal points for rituals, ceremonies, and communal gatherings, fostering a sense of belonging and shared heritage. Abungu (2008) examined how sacred places contribute to the continuity of cultural practices and traditions, such as the annual Durbar festival in Northern Nigeria, where the Emir's palace becomes a sacred space for community celebration and cultural

display. Hence, the study recognizing the importance of studying cultural and community identity foster a sense of preserving the heritage.

Insoll (2004) studies ancestral connection and spirituality of sacred places. The researcher explores the intricate relationship between sacred places, ancestral connections, and spirituality. These sites are often believed to be imbued with the presence of ancestors and spiritual forces. For example, the rock art sites in Tassili n'Ajjer, Algeria, are considered sacred by the indigenous Tuareg people, who believe they are portals to the spiritual realm and serve as a means of communication with their ancestors.

Neumann (2016) studies environment conservation and sacred ecology. In recent years, Neumann (2016) has increasingly focused on the intersection of sacred places and environmental conservation. Many sacred sites are located in ecologically significant areas, fostering a deep connection between communities and their natural surroundings. Neumann explored the concept of "sacred ecology," which recognizes the role of sacred places in promoting sustainable practices and environmental stewardship, such as the sacred groves in Nigeria, where the protection of these sites ensures the preservation of biodiversity.

Uchendu (1975) studies the challenges and threats of sacred places. Uchendu highlighted the challenges and threats facing sacred places across the continent. Rapid urbanization, encroachment, and lack of recognition and protection by authorities pose significant risks to the integrity and survival of these sites. Therefore, the relation that binds researcher study and Uchendu has called for increased awareness, policy interventions, and community involvement to safeguard sacred places for future generations. By recognizing and respecting the importance of these sites, African societies can foster a sense of pride, preserve their heritage, and ensure the continued vitality of sacred places for generations to come.

2.4 Reviewing Zimbabwean Scholarly Views on Sacred places.

Sacred places hold profound significance within societies, serving as repositories of cultural, religious, and spiritual heritage. Zimbabwe, a country renowned for its rich cultural diversity and spiritual practices, is home to numerous sacred sites that are revered by its people.

Gelfand (1981) explored the role of sacred places in Shona culture, which is the dominant ethnic group in Zimbabwe. He found that sacred places often had spiritual and religious significance, and were associated with ancestral spirits, rainmaking, and fertility rituals. Gelfand also noted that many of these places had been appropriated by Christian missionaries, who attempted to replace traditional beliefs with their own religious teachings. However, he found that many Shona people regard these places as sacred, even if they also incorporated aspects of Christianity into their practices. One interesting observation that Gelfand made was that the sacred places in Shona culture were often located in natural world was seen as a place where the spiritual world intersected. In addition, he noted that these sacred places were often located at boundaries between communities, which may have been a way to foster cooperation and communication between different groups.

Nyamende (1996) focuses on the religious and ritual practices of the Shona people, and he has written extensively about sacred sites such as Mount Nyangani and Matobo hills. Nyamende also explores the relationships between people and the spirit world, and the ways in which these relationships are reflected in use of sacred spaces. One of the main ideas in Nyamende's work is that sacred places are not just physical locations, but are also spaces of memory and meaning. He argues that these places are imbued with cultural and historical significance, and they play a role in shaping the identities of the people who live in their vicinity. He also explores how sacred places can be contested sites, where different groups have different understandings and uses for them.

Gwanzura (2007) focused on sacred places in the southern and central parts of Zimbabwe. He has written about the cultural significance of places like the Matobo Matopo Hills and the Khami ruins, and he has explored the connections between sacred places and the political and economic landscape of the region. He discusses the conflicts that have arisen around places like the Matopos Hills. These hills have been claimed as both a national heritage site and sacred landscape by different groups of people. Gwanzura (2007) also explores the relationship between sacred places and political power in the region. In his view, sacred places can be used to legitimize the power of those who control them.

Togarasei (2007) studied the role of sacred places in the construction of national identity in Zimbabwe. He has argued that sacred places have played a central role in defining what it means

to be ‘Zimbabwean.’ In his view, this is particularly evident in the case of Great Zimbabwe, which has been presented as a “cradle of civilization’ and a symbol of national pride. This type of history has emphasized its distinctiveness from other African nations. Tongarasei (2007) makes one key point that the nationalization of Great Zimbabwe has led to a marginalization of other sacred places sites, such as Nyanga and Domboshava. These places have their own histories and traditional that are not necessarily tied to the information of the formation of the nation of Zimbabwe.

Epstein (1992) explores the history of medium ship in Zimbabwe and how it was impacted by colonialism. Medium ship, in this context, refers to the ability to act as a vessel for a spirit or ancestor. This practice played an important role in shona culture and Epstein’s work provides valuable insight into its development and evolution. Epstein review that in shona society, they were believed to receive guidance and messages from them. They also had significant political influence, and influence and were sometimes involved in resistance movements against colonial rule. In addition to this, the mediums were often associated with sacred spaces, such as caves, forests, and mountains. One of the most interesting aspects of shona spirit medium ship was of gender. Mediumship was seen as a primarily.

Chennells (2018) studies cultural significance of sacred places. Chennells emphasizes the cultural significance of sacred places as embodiments of ancestral wisdom, historical narratives, and communal identity. These sites serve as tangible representations of the cultural heritage of various ethnic groups in Zimbabwe, including the Shona, Ndebele, and Tonga. The Great Zimbabwe, ruins, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, stands as a testament to the architectural and engineering prowess of the Shona people, symbolizing their ancestral homeland and historical achievements (Chennells, 2018). Therefore, these sites serve as repositories of ancestral wisdom and cultural heritage, fostering a sense of communal identity

Kamba (2019) studies religious practices associated with sacred places. He highlights the close interconnection between sacred places and religious practices. Traditional religious systems, such as the Mwari and Nehanda spiritual traditions, attribute great significance to specific sacred sites. Among the Shona people, followers of the Mwari religion consider the Matopo Hills as a sacred place where Mwari, the Supreme Being, communicates with humanity. Rituals, ceremonies, and pilgrimages are conducted at these sacred places to seek spiritual guidance, healing, and blessings

(Kamba, 2019). Hence, religious rituals and practices conducted at these sacred places connect individuals with their spiritual beliefs and seek divine guidance.

Chennells (2018) explored the impact of globalization on sacred places. The advent of globalization has brought new challenges and dynamics to the preservation and management of these sites. The rise in tourism, commercialization, and urbanization has placed significant pressure on sacred places, potentially compromising their sanctity and integrity. Kamba (2019) argues for the implementation of effective measures to strike a balance between promoting tourism and safeguarding the spiritual and cultural values associated with these sites. Therefore, globalization presents both opportunities and threats, necessitating careful management to ensure the preservation of the sanctity and cultural values of these revered sites.

The sacred places in Zimbabwe hold profound cultural, religious, and spiritual significance, serving as repositories of ancestral wisdom, historical narratives, and communal identity. The studies by Gelfand (1981), Nyamende (1996), Gwanzura (2007), Togarasei (2007), Epstein (1992), Chennells (2018), and Kamba (2019) highlight the importance of these sites in Shona culture and their role in shaping national identity, religious practices, and community heritage. However, the impact of globalization and commercialization poses challenges to the preservation and management of these sites, necessitating a balanced approach to promote tourism while safeguarding their spiritual and cultural values. The findings of these studies underscore the need for community involvement, effective management, and preservation of sacred places to ensure their continued significance and relevance in Zimbabwean society. Ultimately, the sacred places in Zimbabwe serve as a testament to the country's rich cultural heritage and its people's deep connection to their ancestors, land, and traditions.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

Sacred places hold profound significance for communities across cultures and have played a crucial role in shaping social, cultural, and religious practices throughout history. This academic conceptual framework aims to explore and conceptualize the impact of sacred places on communities. By examining various case studies and drawing upon interdisciplinary research, this paper highlights the multifaceted ways in which sacred sites strengthen community bonds,

foster identity formation, promote formation, promote social cohesion, and contribute to overall well-being of communities. Sacred places, such as temples, churches, mosques, shrines, and pilgrimage sites, have long been recognized as central to community life. They serve as physical manifestations of communal beliefs, values, and aspirations and provide spaces for religious and cultural practices.

Smith (2008) studies historical significance of sacred places. Those sacred places often possess historical and mythological associations that contribute to the collective memory of a community. They serve as repositories of cultural heritage, preserving traditions, rituals, and narratives that connect present generations with their past. For example, the Pyramids of Egypt, the Angkor Wat in Cambodia, and the Acropolis in Greece are not only architectural marvels but also symbols of national and cultural identity, attracting both local and international communities.

From a cultural standpoint, sacred places are embedded in a web of traditions, myths, and narratives that weave together past, present and future generations. They embody a sense of continuity, belonging, and heritage, nurturing a collective memory and a shared sense of identity. Through the lens of religion, sacred places are perceived as portals to the divine, manifestations of the sacred in the material world, and sites of pilgrimage and devotion that foster spiritual growth and enlightenment.

Eade (1991) depicted that sacred places act as focal points for social interaction, bringing community members together for religious ceremonies, festivals, and gatherings. These shared experiences foster a sense of belonging and social cohesion, strengthening the fabric of the community. The Mecca pilgrimage, Kumbh Mela in India, and the Western Wall in Jerusalem exemplify how sacred places serve as catalysts for collective rituals and communal solidarity, transcending social and cultural boundaries.

McKercher (2002) studies identity formation and spiritual nourishment. Sacred places often play a pivotal role in shaping individual and communal identities. They provide spaces for introspection, spiritual reflection, and religious education, allowing individuals to deepen their understanding of their faith and cultural heritage. For instance, the Vatican City in Rome is not only a religious site but also a center of religious authority and a source of inspiration for millions of Catholics worldwide.

Socially, sacred places function as nodes of social interaction, cohesion and fostering solidarity, mutual support, and a sense of community among their visitors and custodians. These sites often serve as platforms for social, political, and cultural expression, enabling individuals to negotiate power dynamics, assert their values, and cultivate social cohesion.

Sallnow (1991) sacred places often attract visitors from near and far, contributing to local economies and tourism industries. The influx of pilgrims and tourists generates employment opportunities, stimulates local businesses, and supports infrastructure development. The economic benefits derived from sacred places can enhance the overall well-being of communities, leading to improved standards of living and social development.

UNESCO (2017) highlighted the significance of sacred places to communities; their preservation and sustainable management are of utmost importance. Community involvement, collaboration with relevant stakeholders, and the implementation of appropriate conservation strategies are vital to ensure the long-term existence and positive impact of these sacred sites. Balancing the needs of visitors, preservation of cultural heritage, and the well-being of local communities is essential for sustainable development.

Sacred places have profound impact on communities, shaping places their cultural, social, and religion fabric. Through historical significance, social bonding, identity formation, and economic implications, these sites contribute to the overall well-being and cohesion of communities.

Sacred places are cornerstones of community life, fostering social cohesion, identity formation, and spiritual growth. They serve as repositories of cultural heritage, preserving traditions and narratives that connect generations. Through their historical significance, religious importance, and economic impact, sacred places contribute to the overall well-being and cohesion of communities. However, their preservation and sustainable management are crucial to ensure their continued positive impact. By recognizing the multifaceted significance of sacred places, communities can work together to protect and nurture these invaluable cultural assets, ensuring their benefits are enjoyed by future generations. Ultimately, sacred places are a testament to the power of community and the human spirit, reminding us of our shared values, beliefs, and

aspirations. By embracing and preserving these sacred sites, we can build stronger, more resilient communities that thrive on our collective heritage.

2.6 Summary

The chapter reviewed existing literature related to the sacred places. The review focused on literature related to Zimbabwe and also African and global literature. The chapter utilized a funnel approach whereby it commenced with reviewing literature from international scholars, followed by African scholars and lastly Zimbabwean scholars. Eventually, the chapter unraveled the conceptual framework that has been utilized in this study. The next chapter discusses the research design and methodology that the research is hinged on.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided a comprehensive overview of the existing research on sacred places, drawing from a range of sources and perspectives from around the world. This is important, as it can help researchers build upon previous work and provide a more complete understanding of the phenomenon of sacred places. By including sources from Europe, America, Africa, and Zimbabwe, the literature review likely offered a diverse range of insights into the cultural, historical, and religious significance of sacred places. The purpose of this research is to gain a deeper understanding of the role that these places play in society and culture. Studying these places can help to uncover the beliefs and values of the people who consider them sacred. Additionally, it can provide insight into how sacred places are used and experienced by individuals and communities. This chapter presents a research design and a methodology which the study adopted in finding out how the influence of the sacred places in Nyanga communities. Detailed in this chapter, are aspects such as research design, data collection procedures, sampled population, research instruments or tools, and ethical considerations among others. Justification is also given for each and every method or strategy employed in this study. The next sub-section focuses its attention to the research design utilized in this study.

3.2 Research Design

Research design refers to the overall plan for conducting a research project. It includes the research question, the methods used to collect and analyze data, the ethical considerations, and the plan for presenting and publishing the findings. The definition of a research design is also given by Heppner et al. (2016) is “a collection of strategies that both enable the researcher to collect data about individual variables of interest and reduce error. Individual variables of interest are the specific characteristics, behaviors, or beliefs that the researcher is interested in studying. For example, in a study on sacred places in Nyanga Communities, the variables of interest might include the cultural significance of the place, the community's rituals and ceremonies, and the challenges they face in protecting the place. Data validity and reliability help to minimize errors in the data collection and analysis process, ensuring that the researcher is accurately measuring

the variables of interest. Creswell (2014) defines quantitative research as a technique for assessing objective hypotheses since it examines the relationship between variables. Case study designs, casual designs, cross-sectional designs, experimental designs, and descriptive research designs are some examples mentioned in researches. A case study was used to focus on the analysis and observations of the Nyanga community under investigation. A case study, according to Yin (2003), is an observational investigation that examines a specific current event in the context of real-world experience.

3.3 Research Methodology

The researcher employed a qualitative research methodology in Nyanga Communities at sacred places to systematically collect and analyze data. The research study utilized interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and observation to gather comprehensive data on the community's experiences and perceptions regarding the sacred places. The researcher analyzed the data using a phenomenological approach to identify patterns and themes that revealed the meaning and significance of these places from the community's perspective. This approach enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of the community's beliefs, values, and relationships with the sacred places, and to provide evidence-based recommendations for their sustainable management. By using this qualitative research methodology, I was able to capture the richness and complexity of the community's experiences and perceptions, and to provide a nuanced understanding of the significance of sacred places in Nyanga Communities. Creswell (2014:32) defines qualitative research as a method for examining and comprehending the significance that individuals or groups assigned to a social or human issue. Qualitative research, according to Denzin (2005), is “a situated activity which locates the observer in the world.” According to Burns (2003:19), qualitative research methods are “systematic subjective approaches used to describe life experience and situations in order to give them meaning

3.4 Data Collection Tools

The research study utilized various data collection tools while in the field to gather data about sacred places in Nyanga Communities. The research study conducted semi-structured and unstructured interviews with community members to gather in-depth information about their

experiences and beliefs related to the sacred places. The researcher also facilitated Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to obtain a variety of perspectives and facilitate dialogue and interaction among community members. Additionally, the researcher conducted observations at the sacred places to gather data about the community's interactions and norms related to these sites. Through interviews, the researcher gained a better understanding of the community's beliefs, values, and rituals associated with the sacred places, which may not have been apparent from observation or other data collection methods. The FGDs allowed community members to share their experiences and beliefs in a group setting, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of the sacred places. Observations enabled me to gather unique insights into the community's interactions with the sacred places, including informal behaviors and cultural norms, without directly asking participants. By using these data collection tools, I was able to gather rich and nuanced data about sacred places in Nyanga Communities.

3.4.1 Interviews

Interviews refer to a data collection technique whereby the interviewer orally questions the respondents, either individually or as a group, (Jairos Gonye, 2012). The researcher employed in depth interview technique and posed questions that were unstructured. The questions were open ended questions design for further probing and each interview lasted for 20 minutes. There are various interview formats, including in-person and phone interviews, claims Creswell (2014). Open-ended questions are frequently used in interviews to encourage conversation. Interviewing managers, rangers, and local people can provide a comprehensive view of the sacred places in Nyanga Communities.

3.4.2 Focus Group Discussion

The researcher conducted Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with managers, rangers, and local community members in Nyanga Communities to gather a rich and multi-dimensional understanding of the sacred places. The research study facilitated FGDs with managers to explore their experiences with management practices, challenges, and opportunities for sustainable management of the sacred places. Similarly, I conducted FGDs with rangers to delve into their experiences with community interactions, challenges in protecting the sacred places, and potential solutions. Following Holloway and Wheeler's (2002) approach, I brought together participants

with similar traits and experiences to elicit their ideas, opinions, and views on themes related to the sacred places, thereby gaining a deeper understanding of the issues and concerns surrounding these sites. By conducting these FGDs, the research study was able to collect valuable data that provided a nuanced understanding of the sacred places in Nyanga Communities.

3.4.3 Observation technique

The research study employed observation techniques to gather valuable insights into the community's use and interactions with the sacred places in Nyanga Communities. The research participated in community activities, such as rituals and ceremonies, to gain first-hand experience and a deeper understanding of the community's beliefs and practices. The researcher also observed community members' activities at the sacred places from a distance, without disrupting their activities, to gain insights into their behavior and interactions. Following Creswell's (2014) definition, the research study made field notes about the actions and behaviors of people at the research site, employing my personal experiences and visual observations to gather data. While observation provides first-hand knowledge and is an effective method for gathering data, it can be time-consuming and may raise concerns about invasiveness and privacy, particularly when observing sensitive or private information. Nevertheless, the research study used extensive time observing how sacred places impacted communities in Nyanga, gaining valuable insights that informed my research findings.

3.5 Sampling

In order to gather representative data from the population, the researcher employed sampling techniques on sacred places in Nyanga Communities. The used purposive sampling to select community members who were knowledgeable about the sacred places, such as elders or leaders, to gain in-depth insights into the community's relationship with these sites. The research study also employed quota sampling to ensure that the sample was representative of the entire community, setting quotas for different demographic groups such as gender, age, and occupation. Additionally, the researcher used random sampling and stratified sampling techniques to further ensure the sample's representativeness. The researcher selected a sample of 12 participants, using the data saturation approach to determine the sample size. The researcher continued gathering data until no new information about sacred places in Nyanga emerged, indicating that saturation

had been reached. This sampling approach allowed me to collect rich and diverse data that represented the perspectives and experiences of the community.

3.6 Data Validity and Reliability

To ensure the collection of high-quality data about sacred places in Nyanga, the researcher prioritized validity and reliability. The research study achieved construct validity by crafting research questions and measures that accurately captured the community's relationship with the sacred places, using relevant interview questions, for instance. The researcher established inter-rater reliability by ensuring that multiple researchers involved in data collection agreed on data interpretation and categorization. By doing so, I ensured that the data accurately reflected the phenomenon being studied (data validity) and was consistent over time and across different data collection methods (data reliability). As Punch (2009) notes, validity and reliability are essential psychometric characteristics of research instruments, with reliability referring to consistency and validity centered on methodological reflexivity, as emphasized by Patton (2002). By establishing validity and reliability, the researcher ensured that my research findings were accurate, meaningful, and empirically grounded.

3.7 Data presentation and analysis

The transformation of raw data into meaningful insights about sacred places in Nyanga Communities was achieved through rigorous data presentation and analysis. The research study employed qualitative analysis techniques, such as analyzing interview and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) transcripts, to identify patterns and themes related to the sacred places, including beliefs, practices, and management challenges. Additionally, the researcher utilized quantitative analysis techniques, such as statistical methods, to examine the relationships between variables, like the impact of human activity on the sacred places. To facilitate data analysis, I organized and displayed the data in a clear and concise manner, using charts, graphs, and tables. During the data gathering process, the researcher simultaneously analyzed the collected data to ensure its usefulness for making informed references. To make sense of the information and prepare the data for analysis, the researcher coded each question, transcribed interviews, typed field notes, and categorized the data into different categories based on the information type. By

following this rigorous data presentation and analysis process, the researcher was able to extract valuable insights from the data and draw meaningful conclusions about sacred places in Nyanga Communities.

3.8 Ethical considerations

The researcher recognized the importance of ethical considerations when conducting research in sacred places in the Nyanga community. To ensure a respectful and responsible approach, the researcher obtained informed consent from all participants, ensuring they understood the purpose and potential risks and benefits of the study. The researcher also took measures to protect participants' confidentiality, keeping their identities and sensitive information shared during the research private. Additionally, the researcher endeavored to respect the cultural beliefs and practices of the Nyanga community, approaching the research with sensitivity towards the sacred nature of the places being studied. By prioritizing these ethical considerations, the researcher aimed to build trust, foster meaningful relationships, and produce research that benefits both the academic community and the Nyanga people.

3.8.1 Confidentiality and privacy

The researcher recognized the importance of confidentiality and privacy in research, particularly when conducting interviews. To uphold these ethical principles, the researcher ensured that participants' personal information and responses remained confidential and private. The research study used the collected data for research purposes, as intended. In accordance with Preece's (2004) emphasis on confidentiality as a critical requirement for reliable research, the researcher took the following measures: I obtained informed consent from participants, utilized secure methods for data collection and storage, and implemented robust safeguards to protect participants' identities and sensitive information. By prioritizing confidentiality and privacy, the researcher maintained the trust and integrity of the research process.

3.8.2 Interview ethics

The researcher approached the interviews with members of the Nyanga community about sacred places with a deep sense of respect and reverence. The research study recognized the unique cultural and spiritual significance of these sites and was mindful of the need to conduct the interviews in a way that did not disrupt the sacred nature of the site or the people involved. The research study took avoided taking pictures or videos without permission, and refrained from bringing any non-native objects into the area. The researcher also crafted questions to be sensitive to the beliefs and traditions of the community, seeking to understand and learn from their perspectives without imposing my own assumptions or biases. By doing so, it was aimed to create a safe and respectful space for dialogue, honoring the sacredness of the sites and the cultural heritage of the Nyanga people.

3.9 Chapter Summary

The chapter outlined the research design and methods that the principal investigator employed to carry out the research. The research tools, sample strategies, validity and reliability, data presentation and analysis, and ethical considerations have been outlined in this chapter. Data presentation, analysis, and discussion are what this research shift to in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the study's research methodology. This chapter shifts its focus on presenting, analyzing and discussing data gathered through focus group discussions, interviews, and observations. Managers, Rangers and local people view about the sacred places around Nyanga are the major focus of this chapter. .

BIO DATA

Gender

MALE	10
FEMALE	6

Fig 1.1

Age

30- 40 YEARS	4
40-50 YEARS	4
50-60 YEARS	4
60 YEARS+	4
Total	16

4.2 Presentation of Focus Group Discussions

The thrust of this section is on the presentation of data gathered through focus group discussions. A total of 16 participants were involved in the research, with representation from key stakeholder groups in the community. The sample included managers, Rangers, and local people, who provided unique perspectives on the sacred sites based on their respective occupations and experiences. This heterogeneous group of participants offered a rich and nuanced understanding of the issues at hand. The researcher conducted a series of Focus Group Discussions with 8 local people, 2 managers, and 6 Rangers from the Nyanga communities.

4.3 1. What is your understanding of sacred places?

The research study found a number of participants asserting the meaning of sacred places. A sacred place is a location that holds spiritual, historical, or cultural significance to a group of people. Nyanga is home to a rich array of sacred places that hold deep cultural and spiritual significance for many African communities. The Table below shows the responses that were given by participants on the meaning of sacred place.

Respondent	Views
Managers	<p>A sacred place as culturally or religiously significant sites that hold special meaning for the communities that hold them sacred.</p> <p>These places are typically considered to have a spiritual or supernatural power, and are often revered by local communities as important sites for religious rituals, ceremonies, or traditions.</p> <p>Sacred places can take many forms, such as natural features like mountains or forests, or man-made structures like temples or shrines. These places are often protected and respected by local communities as part of their cultural heritage. It's important for managers to respect and</p>

	recognize the significance of sacred places in order to avoid inadvertently causing offense or damage to local communities.
Rangers	A sacred place as a location within their protected area that has special cultural or spiritual significance for local communities. Understand the significance of sacred places in order to effectively protect them and maintain good relations with local communities.
Stakeholders	<p>A sacred place is often a location that holds deep cultural, spiritual, and historical significance.</p> <p>These places can be imbued with powerful meaning and are often associated with important stories, traditions, and beliefs that are passed down from generation to generation.</p> <p>A sacred place as important sites for worship, prayer, and religious ceremonies, or as places where ancestral spirits or deities reside.</p> <p>Sacred places are often seen as powerful symbols of cultural identity and are deeply valued by local communities as part of their heritage.</p>

The research study discovered that there are many sacred places in the Nyanga area, it's no surprise that the local people have a deep understanding and connection to the spiritual significance of these sites. Sacred places often serve as important markers of history, culture, and identity for local communities, and are often associated with powerful spiritual stories and traditions. These sites may hold significance for different communities in different ways, and may be important for different religious or cultural practices. By understanding and respecting the sacredness of these sites, the researcher can gain important insights into the history, culture, and

spirituality of local communities, and work with these communities to protect and preserve these important sites.

4.4 2. Do you have sacred places here in Nyanga?

The research study discovered that there are many sacred places in Nyanga for examples Mount Nyangani the highest peak in Zimbabwe, is considered a sacred site by the Ndaou people and is believed to be home to ancestral spirits, Nyanga National contains many sacred sites for local communities, including waterfalls and rock formations with spiritual significance, Rhodes Inyanga Hotel historic hotel was once a retreat for colonial settlers, but is also considered a sacred site by the local Ndaou people due to the ancestral spirits believed to reside there and Nyamuziwa Falls are considered sacred by the local people and are associated with powerful spiritual energies. The Table below shows the views of participants on name of sacred places that are located in Nyanga.

Respondent	Views
Managers	Nyanga is a region with many sacred places that hold deep meaning and significance for local communities. From the majestic peaks of Mount Nyangani to the rushing waters of the Nyamuziwa Falls, the spiritual power and cultural importance of these sites are deeply rooted in the history and traditions of the region. As you continue your exploration of Nyanga and its sacred places, remember to respect and honor the beliefs and customs of the local communities, and to appreciate the unique beauty and wonder of these sacred sites.
Rangers	Nyanga with sacred places there are many other sacred sites in Nyanga that are worth exploring, including the Garahwa Mountain Range: This range of mountains is considered sacred by the local people and is believed to be a place where ancestral spirits reside. The Nyakasikana Sacred Forest: This forest is believed to be

	<p>home to powerful spirits and is considered a sacred site by local communities.</p> <p>The Pungwe River: This river is considered sacred by many local communities and is believed to have healing properties.</p>
	<p>“I’ve often seen some tourist throwing out litter in the grounds and polluting the environment. All we can do as security is to educate them and not arrest them. Such people should be arrested”.</p>
Stakeholders	<p>Nyanga is a region rich in sacred places and sites that hold great meaning for local communities. From mountains and forests to rivers and waterfalls, these sacred places are part of the fabric of the region's cultural and spiritual landscape. By exploring and understanding these sites, you can gain a deeper appreciation for the local culture and history, and learn more about the spiritual beliefs and traditions that have shaped the region. “Whether you're visiting Nyanga for tourism or research, it's important to remember the significance of these sacred places and to respect and protect them for future generations”.</p>

The views presented on Table above shows It's clear that the view of sacred places in Nyanga offers a glimpse into the rich cultural and spiritual history of the region. From the majestic peaks of Mount Nyangani to the cascading waters of the Nyamuziwa Falls, these sacred sites reflect the deep spiritual connections that local communities have with the natural world. Whether you're exploring the Garahwa Mountain Range or visiting the Nyakasikana Sacred Forest, these places offer a unique opportunity to connect with the spiritual essence of Nyanga and gain a deeper understanding of its history and traditions.

4.5 What makes this place sacred for you and your community

For local communities, sacred places are often imbued with spiritual significance and meaning that is deeply rooted in their cultural traditions and beliefs. The research study discovered that the reasons why these places are be considered sacred it's because of many sacred places are believed to be home to ancestral spirits or deities that protect the community and ensure its well-being, some sacred sites are believed to have healing properties, and are visited by people seeking relief from illness or injury and lastly some sacred places may be associated with important historical or cultural events, or may be connected to traditional stories or myths. Furthermore, in an interview session the following comments were made:

Respondent	Views
Managers	<p>A place may be sacred because of its connection to important cultural or historical events, or because of its role in local traditions or folklore.</p> <p>Many sacred places are considered sacred because of their association with spiritual beliefs or deities. These places may be seen as portals to the spiritual world or as sources of supernatural power.</p> <p>Some sacred places may be considered sacred because of their importance to the local environment or ecosystem.</p>
Rangers	<p>It holds special meaning in local spiritual beliefs, such as being a place where ancestors or gods reside.</p> <p>It is associated with significant historical events or cultural practices.</p> <p>It is seen as a place of spiritual healing, where people can connect with nature and find peace and renewal.</p> <p>It is viewed as a site of ecological significance, where the</p>

	<p>community values the protection of biodiversity and the natural environment.</p> <p>It serves as a symbol of identity and community pride, inspiring connection and unity among local people.</p>
Stakeholders	<p>The place may have been the site of an important historical event or cultural practice, such as a battle, coronation, or pilgrimage.</p> <p>The place believed to have spiritual or supernatural qualities, such as being a site of healing or a portal to the spirit world.</p> <p>The place considered sacred because of its role in the local economy, such as a sacred market or a place where local crafts or food are produced.</p> <p>The place considered sacred because of its natural beauty or significance to the local ecology, such as a sacred mountain or forest.</p> <p>The place may have political or national importance, such as being the site of a historic battle or the birthplace of a national leader.</p>

Based on the information gathered above the table, it is clear that sacred places hold deep significance for local communities in a variety of ways. These places can serve as markers of history, culture, spirituality, ecology, and social identity, making them important sites for community life and well-being. Managers, Rangers, and other stakeholders should approach these places with respect and understanding in order to preserve their unique value and ensure their sustainability for future generations.

4.6 Are there any challenges you may face from tourist visits?

The impacts of tourism on sacred places are often complex and multifaceted. The research studies have uncovered that tourism can provide economic benefits for local communities through increased employment and revenue, can facilitate cultural exchange and understanding between local communities and visitors, and may provide opportunities for local communities to share their traditions and stories and can also lead to environmental degradation, cultural homogenization, and displacement of local communities. The Table below shows the responses that were given by participants

Respondent	Views
Managers	<p>Tourism can lead to conflict over access to sacred sites, with local communities feeling that their access to the sites is limited or restricted.</p> <p>Increased tourism can lead to commercialization and commodification of sacred places, undermining their spiritual significance.</p> <p>Some tour operators may exploit sacred knowledge for financial gain, leading to cultural appropriation or exploitation.</p>
Rangers	<p>Tourism can lead to the destruction of habitats and loss of biodiversity, especially if sacred sites are located in ecologically sensitive areas.</p> <p>Local communities may abandon traditional practices and rituals in favor of more commercialized activities that cater to tourists.</p> <p>Tourism development can lead to disputes over land rights, with local communities feeling that their land is being taken from them.</p>

Stakeholders	<p>Tourism can lead to cultural clashes between local communities and visitors, with different attitudes and behaviors potentially leading to conflict.</p> <p>Tourist activities can sometimes dilute the authenticity and meaning of sacred sites, leading to a loss of their unique cultural significance.</p> <p>Sacred sites may have religious symbols or artifacts that are important to local communities but may be misunderstood or disrespected by visitors.</p>
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Overall, the view of sacred places and tourism is complex and multifaceted. On the one hand, tourism can provide economic and social benefits to local communities. On the other hand, tourism can also lead to conflicts and negative impacts that threaten the integrity and significance of these sacred sites. It is important to approach tourism at sacred places with care and sensitivity in order to preserve the unique value of these sites while also fostering positive relationships between local communities and visitors.

4.7 Are there any stories or legends associated with the sacred place? Can you share them with me?

The research study discovered that sacred sites have origin stories that explain how the site came to be and why it is considered sacred. These stories can be deeply rooted in the cultural and spiritual history of the local community. Sacred sites are often associated with creation myths, which explain how the world was created and the role of the sacred site in that process. Many sacred sites are believed to be home to ancestral spirits or deities who are believed to protect the local community and maintain balance in the world. Sacred sites are often associated with transformation, such as the transformation of a natural feature into a sacred site, or the transformation of a human being into a spirit or deity. Sacred sites may also be associated with important historical events, such as battles, coronations, or other significant moments in the community's history. The Table below shows the responses that were given by participants

Respondent	Views
Managers	<p>The Nyamuziwa Falls were formed when a powerful spirit named Nyamuziwa transformed himself into a rock and blocked the path of the river, creating the spectacular waterfalls.</p> <p>The Garahwa Mountain Range is home to a powerful spirit named Garahwa, who protects the local community and ensures their well-being.</p> <p>The Bvumba Mountains were formed by the actions of the supreme deity, Mwari, who is believed to reside on the highest peak of the range.</p>
Rangers	<p>The Pungwe River is home to powerful spirits who provide healing and protection to those who visit the river.</p> <p>The Nyakasikana Sacred Forest is protected by powerful spirits who watch over the forest and protect it from harm.</p>
Stakeholders	<p>The Nyamuziwa Falls were formed when a powerful spirit named Nyamuziwa turned himself into a rock to protect the local community from a devastating flood.</p> <p>The Bvumba Mountains are protected by a powerful spirit named Mbizi, who watches over the mountains and ensures that they remain a source of life and strength for the local community.</p> <p>The Nyangani Mountain is a sacred place where the spirits of ancestors reside and offer guidance and protection to the local community.</p>

The findings above show that from the stories and legends shared by managers, rangers, and stakeholders, it is clear that sacred sites in the region are deeply rooted in the local culture and spirituality. These sites are often seen as places of power and protection, where spirits or deities reside and offer guidance and healing to those who visit them. It is important for managers, rangers, and stakeholders to work together to preserve and protect these sacred sites, so that future generations can continue to experience the spiritual and cultural significance of these places.

4.8 How do you feel about the protection of the sacred places?

Research on the protection of sacred places has uncovered several strategies and approaches that have been implemented to safeguard these places. Here are some of the findings from this research indigenous management (many sacred sites are managed by local indigenous communities, who use traditional practices and beliefs to protect the sites and ensure their continued well-being). Community engagement led initiatives are often effective at protecting sacred sites, as they can help to build local awareness and support for conservation efforts. The Table below shows the responses that were given by participants

Respondent	Views
Managers	<p>Developing management plans</p> <p>Implementing rules and regulations that prohibit activities such as mining, logging, or development in sensitive areas.</p>
Rangers	Connecting with the spiritual and cultural significance
Stakeholders	<p>Feel pride in their role as guardians of sacred places, and see their work as a way of honoring their cultural traditions and protecting the natural environment.</p> <p>Feel frustrated by the challenges of protecting sacred places, such as limited resources, conflicting interests, and political obstacles.</p>

The findings above show the view points on the protection of sacred places can be diverse and multifaceted. Overall, it is clear that sacred places hold great significance for local communities, and that protecting these sites is an important responsibility for managers, rangers, and stakeholders. By working together to preserve and safeguard these places, they can ensure that the cultural and spiritual heritage of these sites is maintained for future generations. In addition to the perspectives we have discussed, there are several other important considerations in the protection of sacred places. These include legal protections (sacred sites may have legal protections under national or international law, such as the UNESCO World Heritage Convention or the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights) .Sacred sites may be promoted as destinations for cultural tourism, which can bring economic benefits to local communities but also pose risks to the integrity of these sites.

4.9 Are there challenges you face in protecting the sacred places

There are several challenges that managers, rangers, and stakeholders face in protecting sacred places. These challenges include limited resources (many protected areas are underfunded, which can make it difficult to implement conservation measures and enforce regulations), political and legal conflicts (sacred places may be located on contested land, which can lead to conflicts between different groups of stakeholders) and changing environmental conditions (sacred sites may be vulnerable to environmental threats such as climate change, deforestation, or habitat fragmentation) .The Table below shows the responses that were given by participants concerning the challenges faced protecting the sacred places

Respondent	Views
Managers	<p>Large numbers of visitors can cause damage to sacred sites, leading to issues such as erosion, pollution, and disruption of wildlife.</p> <p>Enforcement regulations that protect sacred sites, especially if they lack support from local communities or government agencies.</p>

Rangers	<p>Many rangers lack the specialized training and knowledge needed to effectively protect sacred sites, especially if they are not familiar with local customs and traditions.</p> <p>Limited access to equipment such as vehicles, radios, and firearms, which can make it difficult to patrol large areas.</p> <p>Face physical risks such as injury or illness while patrolling remote or dangerous areas.</p>
Stakeholders	<p>Lack of awareness (some stakeholders may not be aware of the significance of sacred sites or their role in protecting them).</p> <p>Competition for resources such as funding, land, or personnel.</p> <p>Different priorities and interests, such as economic development or conservation, which can lead to conflicts over management strategies.</p>

The findings above show the view points on the challenges of protecting sacred sites can vary widely depending on the specific stakeholder group. Overall, there is a need for increased awareness, coordination, and support among managers, rangers, and stakeholders in order to effectively protect these important places. By working together and embracing a holistic approach to conservation, we can preserve the cultural and ecological significance of sacred sites for future generations. In addition to the challenges we have discussed, there are several other factors that may impact the protection of sacred sites. These include development pressures and the lure of tourism revenue can sometimes lead to the degradation or exploitation of sacred sites.

4.10 Do you have any suggestions for improving the protection of the sacred places?

The protection of sacred places is an important aspect of conservation, both for the local communities who value these sites and for the broader conservation community. While there have been significant strides in preserving these sites, there are still challenges and opportunities for improving their protection. This research provides suggestions for enhancing the protection of

sacred places, drawing on the insights of managers, rangers, and stakeholders who are actively working to safeguard these special places. By implementing these suggestions, we can ensure that sacred sites remain vibrant, meaningful, and sustainable for future generations. Furthermore, in the interview session the following comments were made

Respondent	Views
Managers	<p>Develop and implement comprehensive management plans that address issues such as access, development, tourism, and cultural preservation.</p> <p>Build partnerships with local communities, religious leaders, and other stakeholders to ensure that the needs and interests of all parties are considered in the protection of sacred sites.</p>
Rangers	<p>Increase the frequency and effectiveness of patrols to deter illegal activities such as poaching, logging, and development.</p> <p>Work with local communities and traditional leaders to develop conservation strategies that are culturally appropriate and effective.</p> <p>Improve training for rangers in areas such as cultural sensitivity, conflict resolution, and conservation techniques.</p> <p>Leverage technology such as drones, camera traps, and GPS tracking to monitor wildlife and detect illegal activities.</p>
Stakeholders	<p>Build awareness of the cultural and ecological importance of sacred sites through education programs, community events, and media campaigns.</p> <p>Support the development and enforcement of legislation that</p>

	<p>protects sacred sites from development and exploitation.</p> <p>Promote sustainable tourism practices that respect the cultural and ecological significance of sacred sites.</p> <p>Advocate for increased funding from government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and private donors to support conservation efforts.</p>
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The suggestions presented by managers, rangers, and stakeholders provide a range of approaches for enhancing the protection of sacred sites. It is clear that effective conservation of these sites requires a holistic and multi-stakeholder approach that addresses both cultural and ecological factors. The protection of sacred sites is essential not only for the local communities who hold these sites sacred, but also for the broader conservation community that values biodiversity, cultural heritage, and sustainability.

4.11 Chapter Summary

The chapter presented the data that was obtained from data collection exercise from various areas in Nyanga Communities. This data was sorted into different categories pertaining to the research questions which they cover and then analyzed. The chapter also discussed the research findings in relation to what other authors found, which enabled comparison and contrasting of the current research findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter explored the findings gathered through interviews. This chapter synthesizes the findings and discussions presented in the previous four chapters, drawing conclusions and making recommendations based on the data gathered from the sacred places in the Nyanga communities. The analysis of the gathered data has revealed insights into the role of sacred places in community life, as well as the challenges and opportunities associated with heritage management. The chapter summarizes the main points of each chapter, highlighting key insights and trends.

5.2 Summary

In this study, the researcher investigated the influence of sacred places on communities in the Nyanga a region, focusing on the challenges and opportunities that emerge from their management. Drawing on the insights of scholars such as Mire (2011), who highlights the importance of community involvement in heritage management, the researcher explored the role of sacred spaces in shaping community life and their potential for sustainable development.

In line with the study's objectives, the researcher found that sacred places in the Nyanga region play a crucial role in community life, serving as sites of cultural heritage, religious and spiritual practices, and community cohesion. However, heritage management practices, largely influenced by Western colonial legacies, often overlook the significance of these spaces, which can lead to their neglect or exploitation. The study recommends the adoption of more inclusive approaches to heritage management that incorporate the perspectives of local communities and traditional leaders. The study identified several challenges and opportunities associated with sacred places and their management in the Nyanga region. By considering the perspectives of scholars such as Schmidt (2009), who emphasize the importance of a postcolonial approach to heritage management in Africa, the researcher explored these issues in detail.

Chapter 1 of the research study introduced the study through examining the background of the research area from a global context to local context through providing an overview of the case study area. Furthermore, the study also discussed the research problem statement which examined the issues from which the research study emanated from. Research objectives and research questions outlined specific aspects which the research study will cover. The significance of the study as well as the dissertation outline were also discussed in the chapter.

Chapter 2 of the study discussed various issues pertaining to the effects of sacred places on cultural heritage site. The chapter allude the theoretical framework on which the search study informed. The chapter also discussed, the interaction between communities and sacred places in various contexts such as a global perspective on sacred places development and preservation of sacred places.

Chapter 3 of the study outlined the research methodology that was applied to analyzing the impact of sacred places on cultural heritage site of Nyanga communities. The chapter also covered the research design, research instruments, Data collection, validity and reliability; data presentation and analysis and ethical consideration.

Chapter 4 of the study presented the data that was obtained from data collection exercise from various areas in Nyanga from Managers, Rangers and local people. This data was sorted into different categories pertaining to the research questions which they cover and then analyzed. The chapter also discussed the research findings in relation to what other authors found, which enabled comparison and contrasting of the current research findings.

5.3 Conclusions

The research study was set to uncover the challenges and opportunities that the Nyanga Communities gain and face, in which it was discovered that there are positive and negative impacts of sacred places. Belden C (2002) argued that sacred places can have both positive effects, such as promoting a sense of community and spiritual connection, and negative effects, like reinforcing social hierarchies and power dynamics. Among the positive side, there was

increase in tourism in which the local people are earning a living through selling their crafts; locally cooked food; and provision of accommodation to tourist. Furthermore, tourism led to creation of job opportunities for the local people through preserving and conserving sacred places from the tourist

Sacred places in Nyanga communities serve as sites for various cultural practices, such as rituals, ceremonies, and traditional festivals. Cunliffe (2010) stated that sacred places, whether natural or constructed, served as sites for rituals and cultural practices that reinforced social hierarchies, religious beliefs, and communal identity. They are essential for maintaining spiritual connections with ancestors, deities, and the natural world. These places also house cultural artifacts, historical narratives, and intangible cultural heritage, reinforcing a sense of identity and belonging among community members.

Sacred places act as focal points for social interactions and gatherings, fostering a sense of community and collective identity. They provide spaces for communal decision-making, conflict resolution, and the transmission of traditional knowledge. These sites also contribute to social cohesion and well-being by promoting shared values and norms.

Many sacred places are associated with unique natural features or ecosystems, such as forests, rivers, or mountains. The preservation of these sites contributes to biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services. Additionally, the cultural practices and taboos associated with sacred places often promote sustainable resource use and environmental stewardship.

Moreover, some of the economic opportunities, such as employment creation; and tourism that urbanization has brought have been noted to actually be improving the standards of living of the local people. Cnaan (2016) highlighted that sacred places support jobs and businesses.

Furthermore, the study developed recommendations that will enhance the preservation and management of cultural heritage sites. It was uncovered that it is important to involve the local people in the management and oversight of the heritage site. Management of the heritage site should incorporate some of a few religious people so as to furthermore keep the some of the heritage places sacred. Furthermore, it was uncovered that the Environmental Management Agency should work hand in hand with the management of the national heritage site so as to curb cutting down of trees and environment al pollution. Furthermore, it is was uncovered that the

Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education should assist Nyanga through a massive spread on information on the importance of education as a way to people to understand the importance of sacred places spreading awareness to the local people for the need to protect and sustainably develop the area. The findings emphasize the multifaceted importance of sacred places in Nyanga communities and underscore the need for their preservation and management to ensure that their cultural, social, and environmental benefits are maintained for future generations.

Sacred places in Nyanga communities hold immense cultural, spiritual, and economic significance. These sites serve as a connection to the ancestors, a symbol of identity, and a hub for community activities. The opportunities presented by these sacred places are vast, including cultural preservation, tourism development, and economic growth. However, challenges persist, such as degradation, neglect, and inadequate management. To address these issues, community engagement, government support, and sustainable practices are essential. By embracing their rich heritage and harnessing the potential of sacred places, Nyanga communities can thrive culturally, economically, and spiritually. It is crucial to recognize the value of these sites and work collaboratively to ensure their preservation and development, ultimately enriching the lives of community members and fostering a vibrant cultural legacy for future generations. Some specific opportunities and challenges faced by the people in Nyanga communities include preservation of cultural heritage and traditions, tourism development and economic growth, community engagement and social cohesion, educational and research opportunities and spiritual and emotional well-being. Challenges degradation and neglect of sacred sites, inadequate management and infrastructure, limited resources and funding, conflicting interests and stakeholders and balancing preservation and development. By acknowledging and addressing these opportunities and challenges, Nyanga communities can harness the full potential of their sacred places, ensuring a vibrant and sustainable future for generations to come.

5.4 Recommendations

The research study uncovered a number of recommendations from the inferences that can be drawn from the research findings. These are as listed below, and can be applied from different levels of stakeholder:

Community Engagement: Encourage active participation of local communities in decision-making processes related to the preservation and management of sacred places. This can be achieved through consultations, workshops, and capacity-building initiatives.

Strengthen the legal framework for the protection of sacred places by recognizing their cultural and environmental importance in national and local policies. This may include the establishment of buffer zones or heritage sites to prevent encroachment from development projects.

Develop programs and initiatives to document and preserve traditional knowledge related to sacred places, ensuring that this valuable information is passed on to future generations.

Foster partnerships among various stakeholders, including local communities, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and research institutions, to share resources, knowledge, and expertise in the preservation and management of sacred places.

Promote the development of sustainable tourism models that respect the cultural and environmental integrity of sacred places, ensuring that local communities benefit from tourism-related income and employment opportunities.

Raise public awareness about the importance of sacred places in Nyanga communities and their role in cultural preservation and environmental conservation.

The management at Nyanga sacred places should contribute to the educating and spreading awareness to the local people for the need to protect and sustainably develop the area.

Acceptable limits of change should be created in and around Nyanga communities as to balance the conservation of heritage site and its sacredness.

Ensure sustainability that is actively protecting, and supporting the environment for long-term benefit to all the stakeholders.

Growing tourism in a way that ensures that the benefits from growth are not short lived and the spirituality of Nyanga sacred places is conserved. By implementing these recommendations, it is possible to safeguard the sacred places of Nyanga communities and ensure that their cultural, social, and environmental significance is preserved for future generations.

5.5 Direction for Future Research

The resources for the current research study were limited and the timeframe to carry out the study was short however; it would have been interesting to carry out an ethno-archaeological study. There are several directions that could be explored in future studies. Further research on community-based heritage management practices could help to identify more sustainable and inclusive approaches that respect the cultural and spiritual significance of sacred places.

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APPENDICES

My name is Panashe Zaba, I am a student at Bindura University of Science Education studying for a Bachelor of Science Honors in Culture and Heritage Studies. As part of the requirements of my studies I am conducting a research which is interested in understanding the sacred places that are important to your community. I am doing a research entitled AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE INFLUENCE OF SACRED PLACES ON NYANGA COMMUNITIES: EVALUATING CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES. I would like to ask you some questions about these places, in order to gain a better understanding of their significance and importance to you. I want to assure you that your responses will be kept confidential and will not be used in any way that will harm you or your community. Your participation in this research is completely voluntary, and you can choose to stop at any time.

SECTION A: BIO DATA

1. What is your gender? (Tick where appropriate)

MALE	
FEMALE	

2. Indicate your age according to your range (tick where appropriate)

30- 40 YEARS	
40-50 YEARS	
50-60 YEARS	
60 YEARS+	

3. Occupation

.....

Section B: Awareness.

1. What is your understanding of sacred places?
2. Do you have sacred places here in Nyanga?
3. What makes this place sacred for you and your community?
4. Are there specific rituals or ceremonies that take place at the sacred place? Can you describe them?
5. Have you ever visited these sacred places? How do you feel when you're at the sacred place? Do you experience a spiritual connection?
6. Are there any stories or legends associated with the sacred place? Can you share them with me?
7. Do you sometimes get visitors in these sacred places? How does visiting the sacred place affect you?
8. Are there any challenges you may face from tourist visits?
9. Do you believe there are socio-economic and cultural opportunities with regards to the sacred place? What do you think is the significance of the sacred place for future generations?

Section C: Protection

10. How do you feel about the protection of the sacred places?
11. Are there challenges you face in protecting the sacred places?

12. What measures do you take to protect the sacred places from human activity and environment damage?

13. Do you have any suggestions for improving the protection of the sacred places?

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BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

Date: 23 April 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: REQUEST TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH PROJECT IN YOUR ORGANISATION

This serves to introduce the bearer, Panashe, Student
Registration Number B200449B, who is a BSc CULTURE AND
HERITAGE STUDIES student at Bindura University of Science Education and is
carrying out a research project in your area/institution.

May you please assist the student to access data relevant to the study, and where
possible, conduct interviews as part of a data collection.

Yours faithfully

DR M. E SAGIYA
CULTURE AND HERITAGE STUDIES CO-ORDINATOR

