

Managing Natural Resources and Wildlife in Contemporary Society: Tapping into the Traditional Karanga Culture

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Abstract: Zimbabwe is experiencing an alarming environmental crisis whose origins can be traced back to the colonial era. The pre-colonial Karanga communities had knowledge systems which kept in check environmental degradation. Both colonial and post-colonial governments have tended to relegate the role of Karanga culture in environmental management to the background. The collapse of the Karanga environmental management system, poverty, overcrowding, lack of ownership of natural resources, lack of empowerment of the Karanga community and role conflict between government officers and traditional leaders have resulted in the deterioration of the environmental crisis. The environmental crisis facing the Zimbabwean nation requires a multifaceted approach which takes into account the country's political, economic, social values and the world views of the Karanga people. This article examines the role Karanga culture can play in the management of wildlife and natural resources. The paper argues and demonstrates that Karanga knowledge systems, if skillfully tapped into, can complement input from western scientific approaches to environmental protection.

Keywords: environmental crisis, Karanga, poverty, overcrowding, wildlife, natural resources, deforestation.

INTRODUCTION

Long before colonization in 1890 and the advent of Christian missionaries in the sixteenth century, traditional Zimbabwean communities were aware of the importance of environmental protection [1-4]. An analysis of traditional Zimbabwean beliefs and practices indicates that the traditional Zimbabweans had their own approach to environmental management. However, these traditional Zimbabwean environmental management techniques were overwhelmed by political, economic and social developments which resulted in Zimbabwe's environmental dilemma [5]. Colonial land policies such as the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 and the 1951 Land Husbandry Act had the effect of causing Africans to view conservation measures "as a tool of oppression when their effects were to deny access to land, wildlife and trees and to restrict movement of cattle." [5]. The assault by Christianity on African culture saw a neglect of traditional culture by conservation policy makers and the abandonment by the Shona of their cultural approaches to environmental management. Even in the post colonial period, the tendency has been to ignore the potential role traditional culture can play in natural resource management and sustainable development despite the fact that literature abounds which indicate that traditional Africans knew about management of natural resources and wildlife before westernization. As a result various attempts to

contain the environmental crisis have not been successful. Environmental degradation is now rampant in the communal farming areas and is evidenced by wide spread soil erosion, river siltation and loss of genetic diversity [6]. Over exploitation of natural resources have been worsened by increasing population pressure, fluvial gold panning, fuel wood vending and poaching. Even the post colonial policy of resettlement and farm invasions since 2000 in some cases seem to have worsened the environmental crises as people continue to wantonly exploit the available natural resources for short term benefits. The rate of deforestation in Zimbabwe is well above 350 000 hectares per year [6]. In addition, the post colonial economic hardships and failure by the new government to revive or strengthen some traditional African cultural practices to combat the environmental degradation made the situation worse. Hence the traditional Zimbabwean relationship with nature has changed from one which is sustainable and constructive to one which is exploitative and destructive. Under the new political dispensation, traditional community leaders had some of their political powers usurped by office bearers of new political institutions. This in turn weakened their role in the management of natural resources and wildlife.

This paper explores how traditional Karanga culture can make a contribution to stem the increasing environmental degradation. Experience in Ghana has shown that it is possible and important to tap from traditional culture in order to manage the environmental crisis (MINE). We subscribe to the view that a multi-faceted approach to environmental management is essential to successful environmental management. In other words, traditional Karanga culture and the western approach can play complementary roles in achieving the goal of environmental management. Most studies in Zimbabwe seem to be interested in proving that traditional Zimbabweans new about environmental management before westernization. What seems to be lacking in these studies is how the traditional indigenous knowledge systems in managing the environmental crisis can be adapted to the modern situation. To our knowledge, no study has been done among the Karanga to find out how contemporary society can tap from the traditional Karanga culture in order to come up with solutions to the current environmental crisis. The paper investigate the ways in which the Karanga culture protected the environment and assesses whether the traditional approach to environmental management is still of any relevance to contemporary society. The thrust of this study is that the modern Karanga can contextualize their traditional beliefs and practices in order to manage natural resources and wildlife. Contemporary society has lessons to learn from the Karanga past.

For environmental education management to be effective and beneficial, it must take cognizance of the culture of the traditional Karanga. Inclusion of aspects of Karanga culture in environmental awareness campaigns will help the traditional Karanga perceive the programme as serving their cultural interests and hence they will give maximum cooperation. This helps in avoiding the old top-down or paternalistic approach to policy making and implementation. Any environmental awareness campaign which fails to take cognizance of the culture of affected communities is not likely to achieve the desired result [3]. Thus, a revival and strengthening of traditional Karanga environmental management techniques and fusion with modern techniques might assist in the maintenance of essential ecological processes, preservation of genetic diversity and sustainable utilization of species and ecosystems.

Who are the Karanga?

The Karanga are a subdivision of the Shona people who speak a Shona dialect known as Karanga. The Karanga dialect is made up of minor dialects, namely, Duma, Jena, Mhari, Govera, Gova, Ngowa and Nyubi [7]. They are the largest Shona dialect group. They occupy an area between Gweru in the northwest, Bikita in the northeast, Chiredzi in the southeast and West Nicholson in the southwest [7]. However, some

Karanga have since settled in other parts of the country due to the government policy of resettlement.

Traditional Karanga holistic philosophy and the environment

The Karanga, like other traditional Africans, are guided by a holistic philosophy [8]. They see an interconnectedness between them and their environment. They regard themselves as part of the environment. Therefore, they have respect for the environment and everything in it. The Karanga holistic philosophy is instrumental in environmental protection. It helps to maintain harmony between people and the environment. The Karanga holistic philosophy contrasts sharply with the individualism introduced through colonization and christianisation. Some Karanga now see themselves as separate from the environment. The individualistic Western philosophy has created among the Karanga an attitude towards the environment which is exploitative and destructive rather than sustainable and constructive. Perhaps there is need to emphasise the Karanga holistic philosophy during environmental awareness campaigns. This could possibly assist in showing the Karanga how living organisms in their environment are interconnected; how they are part of the web of life.

Karanga religious worldview and environmental management

The way a people view their environment is determined by their worldview. The Karanga world view, like that of other Africans, is basically religious [9]. Hence the Karanga have a deep sense of the sacred. Educational campaigns on environmental awareness among the Karanga should not neglect the Karanga sense of the sacred. The Karanga need to be assisted to see how the protection of the environment, even using the western scientific approaches, helps to safeguard their religious beliefs and practices. At the same time it should be made clear to them how their religious beliefs can enhance development through environmental protection.

Management of water and water sources

Water was treated as an important resource by the traditional Karanga which had to be preserved and conserved. When drought threatens, an elaborate ritual (*mutoro/mukwerera*) is conducted by the Karanga to avert it. The Karanga ensured that water sources are well protected [10] and that water from certain sources is sustainably utilized. Water for consumption was sourced mainly from springs (*zvitubu, zvisipiti*) or wells (*matsime*). In most cases, wells were well protected using stones or logs)

Many springs found in Karanga land are believed to be sacred. They are believed to be the abode of certain spirits and are hedged around by taboos. It is strictly prohibited to fetch water from a scared spring

using a container with soot or dirt, metal cups and metal jars as the spring might dry up or the forbidden items might disappear or the culprit might be snatched by the water spirits. Water from such springs is fetched using a gourd (*mukombe*) a broken gourd (*demhe*), a wooden or clay pot. Women in their menses or those who have just given birth are not allowed anywhere near a sacred spring. Such women are regarded as ritually unclean and are believed to cause the well to dry up.

The prohibitions associated with the utensils to be used to fetch water from springs are one Karanga way of promoting sustainable use of water resources. The type of containers to be used is prescribed. These happen to be small containers which allow water from the spring to continue seeping. On the other hand, the containers which are prohibited are mainly big utensils which if used are likely to damage or enlarge the opening of the spring causing siltation of the spring. Furthermore, big containers take large quantities of water at a time thus disturbing water seepage in the spring. One reason for the prohibition against women in their menstrual cycle from fetching water from the sacred springs was hygienic. Women in their menses were regarded as unclean. The prohibition also served the purpose of limiting the number of people utilizing water from a given spring. It was mostly girls before their menses and women beyond childbearing age who had access to such springs. This ensured the conservation of clean water from certain sources.

Besides springs, certain pools along some rivers are believed to be under the control of powerful water spirits (*njuzu*). There are many taboos related to such pools. Karanga villagers know that a breach of taboos related to *njuzu* results in misfortunes such as loss of property or even death. Villagers are barred from using dirty containers, soap or deodorants in such pools. In some cases villager are forbidden from swimming or fishing in such pools. This belief prevents water pollution. It is important to note that some Karanga have the pool (*dziva*) as their totem and their praise name is the Save river. The traditional Karanga song, *Mhondoro dzinomwa muna Save* (Territorial or chiefly spirits drink water from the Save river) indicates that the Karanga value pools and rivers as water sources.

The Karanga ensure that water sources are kept from contamination through prohibitions [11]. It is not allowed to drink water from some springs using one's hands or to use one's mouth to seep water from the spring as this is believed to result in the spring drying up. This rule discourages the habit of drinking water in a manner which is likely to contaminate water and cause waterborne diseases. Children were discouraged from contaminating drinking water through taboos. They were warned that if they urinated in a well they would suffer from bilharzias. In most cases, Karanga wells are well protected using stones or logs.

The Karanga are always aware of the problem of siltation. The Karanga proverb, *Aiva madziva ava mazambuko* (what were once big pools are now fords) shows that the Karanga had observed their environment and had seen the siltation of pools and rivers. The Karanga have a rule prohibiting the cutting of trees in catchment areas. This ensures that river sources are protected from sedimentation. The Karanga practice of burying infants along stream banks discourages stream bank cultivation. This has the effect of preventing river sedimentation.

The traditional Karanga water management system prevents pollution on aquatic ecosystems (waterplants, fish, frogs etc). Aquatic life provides the Karanga with sources of food and plants for making mats and for ritual purposes. Some rituals are also conducted in rivers and streams.

Preventing land pollution and degradation.

In Karanga cosmic vision, the land belonged to the chiefly spirits who were actually the guardians of the land. They get offended if the land is polluted. Thus according to Karanga belief, land pollution causes drought and objects hanging in trees are believed to prevent rain from falling. Exposed human remains have to be buried and animal remains burnt. Objects suspended in trees have to be removed. This traditional Karanga belief helps to keep the environment clean and thus prevents the spread of diseases. One Karanga villager commended that littered condoms can cause drought. It should be noted that all the land in a chiefdom is regarded as sacred.

The Karanga have a day set aside (*chisi*) in honour of the chiefly spirits of a given chiefdom. On that day, all agricultural activities are strictly prohibited. Chiefs are supposed to give permission to settlers and the undertaking of major projects such as dam construction and mining in their chiefdoms. They also determine and protect areas where agricultural activities are prohibited. Thus certain sacred areas were protected from soil erosion through taboos prohibiting the destruction of vegetation.

Protection of flora

The traditional Karanga depend on flora in their environment for economic, artistic medical and religious purposes.

Flora play an important cultural function among the Karanga as they provide space for cultural functions. Big trees such as the *muchakata* tree were the venues for religious functions such as the rain ritual (*mukwerera*).

The Karanga believe certain flora are sacred. Big trees are generally believed to be the abode of

ancestral spirits and are therefore not to be cut down. They are regarded as the resting place or habitat of the ancestral spirits (*midzimu*). In the past, it was common practice that before cutting a big indigenous tree, one had to ask for permission from the spirits of the chiefdom stating the purpose for cutting down the tree. It is important to note that big trees also provide shade for different social gatherings among the Karanga. Even before someone could rest under a big tree while on a long journey, one had to seek permission from spirits of the chiefdom. The Karanga fear of upsetting the spiritual world ensured the protection of big trees. Certain flora was protected by the Karanga because it was important for ritual purposes. Flora play an important role in the religious life of the Karanga. The Karanga community protected flora for its ritual value. Examples of such flora include *muzenze*(*peltophorum africanum*) and *mupandapanda*(*lanchochocarpus capassa*). Such species are not to be used as fuel wood. During the rites of passages, flora is used by the Karanga.

The Karanga community protect certain flora because it is important for herbal pharmacopeia. Medicines which required stripping the bark of given tree species were governed by certain rituals. This required that bark be stripped from two sides of the tree, normally the western and eastern side. This ensured that the bark of the tree was not completely removed hence the tree species would continue to survive. If the roots of the tree or shrub were dug for medical purposes, then the remaining roots were to be properly covered with soil. Children were discouraged from over stripping the bark of a tree through taboos. They were warned that overstripping the bark of a tree would lead to their mother disappearing into a calabash. The Karanga therefore harvested their flora sustainably.

Protection of fauna

The traditional Karanga are observant of fauna in their environment hence they have a rich vocabulary describing fauna in their area. Not only do they understand fauna, they respect fauna and strive to maintain harmony with it. To the traditional Karanga, fauna played a crucial role in their social, economic health and political life.

The traditional Karanga respect and admiration for fauna is evident in their belief in totemism. A number of Karanga totems make reference to fauna such as *shoko* (monkey) *shumba* (lion), *shiri* (birds) *zhou* (elephant) and *nungu* (porcupine). The qualities of such an animal will be associated with the group. The totem animal reflects the values of the clan as represented by the animal. The totem animal was tabooed. It was strictly forbidden for anyone to eat his or her totem. Breach of this taboo is believed to result in dental problems for the member concerned as well as other members of the clan. One effect of the totemic food taboo was to promote the conservation of fauna. It

limited the number of people consuming the meat of certain fauna. An area largely inhabited by members of one totemic group is likely to give the totemic animal a chance to multiply in that area.

The totemic animal played a very important social role of maintaining group cohesion among the Karanga. Group cohesion is of paramount importance among the Karanga as it ensures the survival of the group.

The Karanga viewed certain fauna as sacred. Such creatures were associated with spirits. These could be nature spirits or ancestral spirits and were therefore respected. It was strictly prohibited to pass negative comments about certain creatures in some sacred forests. In some cases, animals such as baboons were given an honorific title, *sekuru* (grandfather). This was an important title among the Karanga which showed reverence. A bird such as *chapungu* (baterleur eagle) is not to be killed because it is regarded as the bird of the ancestors (*shiri yavadzimu*). Snakes such as python (*shato*) and file snake (*ndara*) are seen as sacred and are not to be killed. Fauna provide an important element of food security. Bush meat, honey, fish and insects supplement the traditional Karanga diet. In the past, hunting was one of the Karanga economic activities. Some Karanga also practice bee farming. In some big trees you find beehives (*mikoko*). Fishing (*kuredza*) is also done to supplement food. Insects such as *harurwa*(*delegorguei*), *zvikumbe*, *majenya*, *makurwe*(*large edible sand crickets*) form a part of the Karanga diet. Worms or caterpillars (*masondyia*, *magandari* and *harati*) are gathered by the Karanga to supplement food requirements. It is disturbing to note that caterpillars have decreased in abundance largely due to overharvesting and the disturbance of their habitat.

In the past the harvest of fauna was done sustainably by the Karanga. The one harvesting the caterpillars would shake the tree or branch in which the caterpillars were found. In some rare case, harvesting of the caterpillars would involve cutting the branch of the tree in which the caterpillars were. The habitat of the caterpillars was not disturbed. The harvesting of the caterpillar was done when they had fully matured. Even the harvesting of *harurwa* is strictly controlled by the chiefs of the areas in which they are found. *Harurwa* are believed to be controlled by the spirits of the chiefdoms and are therefore sacred. It is taboo to start harvesting *harurwa* before a ritual has been conducted by the chiefs of vaDuma. It is believed if the taboo is broken, *harurwa* will completely abandon the chiefdoms. The chiefs ensured that the insects were harvested at the right time and that no harvesting took place in certain pockets of the insects' habitat. This allows the insects to breed with minimum human

interference and thereby conserve the valuable food resource.

Hunting was also controlled. Hunters were not allowed to kill more than they needed[4]. It was prohibited for hunters to kill an animal which had just given birth (*chemera*) as this would lead to a poor hunt. Chiefs were in control of the hunting of big game in their chiefdoms since it was believed the ancestors of the chief were the owners and guardians of the land. Any hunter who killed big game such as eland (*mhofu*) and elephant (*zhou*) gave the chief the heart and the ribs lying on the chief's land. This practice ensured that hunting of big game did not result in the overexploitation of the natural resource. However, the hunting rules might also have served the function of asserting the authority of the chief and the ancestors. There were also sacred forests and mountains where hunting was prohibited. No hunter was allowed to pursue an animal which had taken refuge in such sacred places.

Belief in water spirits (*njuzu*) served to protect fauna. There are certain pools where fishing is not allowed because the pools are believed to be the abode of water spirits. *Njuzu* is believed to manifest itself in different forms. It is said it can appear in human form or in the form of aquatic creatures such as fish, snakes or crocodiles. People fear *njuzu* so much that they would dare not temper with aquatic creatures they believe to be associated with *njuzu*. Thus pools believed to be controlled by *njuzu* provide a safe habitat for aquatic creatures.

Through taboos, young children are prevented from wantonly killing fauna. Harmless creatures such as a hammer bird, a chameleon, a frog and praying mantis are not to be killed as that will result in misfortunes. This ensures that children do not unnecessarily disturb the ecosystem.

It was prohibited to wantonly burn grass. Such an act would attract a fine paid to the chief. The traditional Karanga must have realized the importance of grass for livestock and wildlife. Fires would lead to the suffering and deaths of land creatures such as chameleons, tortoises, snails especially those which are slow in their movement. Ground fires also put at risk the lives of ground nesting birds. Flowering vegetation will also be disturbed by ground fires. It should also be noted that fires were a threat to Karanga sacred places.

Flora is also protected because it is an important source of supplementary foods. In the Karanga community, it is strictly prohibited to cut wild fruit trees such as *mutamba*, *muonde*(figtree), *muchakata*(*mobula plum*), *mutohwe*(*snot apple tree*), *muuyu*(*baobab tree*), *mushuku*(*loquat tree*), *muroro*(*wild custard apple tree*) and *mupfura*(*marula*

tree). Breach of this taboo is believed to result in misfortunes. These trees were protected because they were a source of edible fruits which were a source of food supply in time of need. During the 2008 economic meltdown, some Karanga villagers survived on the fruit of the *muchakata* tree. It is quite common to find wild fruit trees in the middle of a Karanga field. Even the harvesting of fruits is done sustainably.

Among the traditional Karanga medical plants are not harvested by uprooting the whole plant but by removing a small fraction of the roots, barks or leaves so as to let a plant survive for further use in the community.

OBSTACLES TO TAPPING FROM TRADITIONAL CULTURE

We are cognizant of the fact that the root causes of the Zimbabwean environmental crisis are to be found in the country's social, political and economic background. We therefore fully subscribe to the idea of a multi faceted approach to solving the problem of environmental degradation. Political, social and economic factors before and after independence dealt a blow to stable environmental conditions based on suitable utilization of natural resources and wild life. Political and economic and social policies had the effect of creating pressure on the communal lands. The result was competition for the ever dwindling natural resources and wildlife.

When Zimbabwe attained independence in 1980, new rural administrative structures were created. The structures were the Village Development Committees (VIDCOs), Ward Development Committees (WADCOs), District Development Committees (DDCs) and Provincial Development Committees (PDCs) [4]. The new structures were empowered to control development activities and this considerably weakened the Karanga traditional structures' ability to manage wildlife and natural resources. The War Veterans led farm invasions from 2000 further weakened the traditional Karanga political and religious structures. War Veterans virtually took over power to allocate land to land hungry peasants.

The country has not fully recovered from the 2008 economic meltdown and this has negatively impacted on the management of wildlife and natural resources. The weak economy has made the country's capacity to generate electricity deficient. Electricity load-shedding and power outages have as a result increased in frequency. This has had the effect of increasing the demand for fuel wood by the urban populace further increasing the rate of deforestation and environmental degradation. The major cause of deforestation in Zimbabwe is the demand for fuelwood by rural households and farms with firewood accounting for the country's 50 per cent of the

country's total energy consumption[6]. This increased demand for firewood and the unavailability of affordable and sustainable sources of power for both urban and rural communities makes it difficult for traditional leaders to effectively manage natural resources.

Christianity also worsened the situation by launching a frontal attack on African traditional culture. As Chinyowa [12] observed:

The most concerted attack on African orality and ritual came from the proselytizing endeavours of European Christian missionaries. Early missionaries associated indigenous religious ritual practices and beliefs with paganism and sin. Many African traditions were seen as the work of the devil which had to be fought before the bible could hold sway in the heart of the natives.

Traditional belief systems were discredited by European missionaries. African traditional religion was not even included in the Religious and Moral Education syllabi and text books. Thus European attitude had the effect of creating a negative attitude towards traditional culture among the Karanga people. Western cultural imperialism had the effect of alienating the Karanga from their culture and was also aimed at silencing the Shona mode of cultural expression[12]. Traditional leaders, the custodians of culture who were playing a central role in the management of natural resources and wildlife found themselves demonized and disempowered. The Karanga world view began to crumble in the face of the rising tide of westernization and secularization. Karanga sacred phenomena lost its sacredness. This had a negative impact on the Karanga ideology of environmental management and environmental ethics. Unfortunately, Christian missionaries did not stress the importance of managing the natural environment in their sermons even though the Christian Bible teaches that God made man the custodian of natural resources.

HOW TO TAP FROM TRADITIONAL KARANGA KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

There is a wealth of traditional Karanga knowledge which can be tapped into in order to conserve and preserve natural resources and wildlife. There is need to revisit the Karanga traditional religion so as to recover the African spiritual wisdom. Through culture, the message of environmentalism can be spread. Education can help by reviving, renewing and reinterpreting traditional Karanga approaches to natural resources management to make them relevant to contemporary society. African traditional education is important in the preservation of natural resources and wildlife because it focuses on the sacredness of life and whatever enhances it. An attempt should be made to

intergrate Karanga traditional education in contemporary environmental studies. Christians should be encouraged to emphasise the value of respecting nature and conservation of wildlife and natural resources in their sermons. In other words Christians should complement the traditional Karanga effort to manage natural resources.

The traditional approaches to management of water and water sources could be used as a point of departure for discussions on water pollution and siltation. The Karanga perspective of water pollutants could be broadened to include modern day pollutants such as plastic and metal containers, chemicals and oils. Water-borne diseases which result from water pollution could also be included. The Karanga view of effects of water pollution should be expanded to focus on its effects on aquatic ecosystems, that is water plants, fish, frogs and so on. The Karanga could then be encouraged to protect the existing water sources and where possible harness flowing water for purpose of fish farming and other economic activities. The Karanga practice of burying prematurely born babies in the river bed could be discouraged as it pollutes water.

The Karanga rules preventing land pollution and degradation could be revived and strengthened. The list of what the Karanga believe to be land pollutants could be increased to include plastics, metals and chemicals. These pollutants might end up in their water sources. The Karanga rule prohibiting the burning of grass could be interpreted to bring out the additional danger of soil erosion. Soil erosion will lead to siltation of water sources. This will mean the Karanga will lose their water sources and sacred pools.

The Karanga dependence on flora for economic, artistic medicinal and religious purposes could be promoted. However there is need to educate the Karanga to help them transform the environmentally damaging practices in such a way that biodiversity is sustainably managed. The Karanga should be made aware of other reasons for conserving flora. These include ecological reasons such as climate regulation, gas regulation, watershed protection, erosion control and providing habitats for various fauna. The rules banning the burning of fires could be used to explain that if flora in flower are burnt their seeds fail to develop and hence endangering the propagation of the affected flora species. There is need to strengthen the Karanga economic, artistic, medicinal and religious activities related to certain flora so that the Karanga appreciate the value of flora in their environment. The Karanga should be assisted to see the complexity of forests as ecosystems.

The Karanga reason for valuing fauna can be strengthened, promoted and adapted as a way of conserving fauna. Totemism, which is valued by the

Karanga, could be used to arrest species extinction. The modern day Karanga could be empowered to appreciate the commercial, recreational and authentic value of fauna in their environment.

The Karanga idea of smoke as pollutant can be useful in discussing modern day air pollution. The Karanga prohibited the use of certain trees as firewood as such trees were known to produce a lot of smoke. The Karanga need to know about modern day air pollutants such as smoke from kerosene lamps, paraffin stoves and vehicles.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

It is important that the local Karanga community be involved in the conservation and management of their environment and in community development projects. A top-bottom approach in managing natural resources and wildlife among the Karanga has proved futile. This can only be achieved if there is environmental community awareness of the economic, industrial, educational, cultural, recreational and aesthetic values inherent in their natural resources. It is essential that the Karanga needs are identified and community initiated projects are supported. The community should be provided with advice, given access to inputs and marketing where appropriate. The CAMPFIRE concept should be expanded geographically as a way of giving local Karanga communities direct control of their natural resources and wildlife. Projects could include bee farming, fish farming, marketing of *harurwa*, wild fruits and mushrooms. Villagers would also undertake agro forestry projects as a way of meeting household needs – including nutrition, energy and home construction. Agriforestry can be of benefit to the Karanga community for food, poles, fuel wood and for environmental protection.

INSTITUTIONS AND MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES

In the past, traditional Karanga institutions played an important role in the management of natural resources. As we have already acknowledged, chiefs played an important role in the harvesting of natural resources such as *harurwa* and big game. The colonial and post colonial eras saw the introduction of new institutions which considerably weakened traditional institutions. What is needed is the creation of institutions that combine elements of traditional management practices with modern institutions. This requires the harmonization of traditional and western knowledge systems. Local non-governmental organizations in which chiefs and other traditional leaders could be included could be created in order to manage natural resources and wildlife. Chiefs could still play the role of conducting rain rituals as part of environmental management. The *Zunde raMambo* concept could be revived in modified form. Unlike in

the past where the *Zunde raMambo* concept was meant to mobilize labor to work on the chief's fields, this time it could be broadened to include planting of trees and plugging of gullies. Both traditional and modern natural resources management rules can still be enforced; the former by traditional leaders and the later by modern institutions.

CONCLUSION

The Karanga societies developed their strategies which enabled them to utilize natural resources and wild life sustainably. These cultural elements which are already available can contribute immensely to the management of natural resources and wildlife. The discussion has shown that it is possible to revive, renew and reinterpret Karanga approaches to resource management to make them adaptive to modern conditions. In addition, it is crucial to involve the Karanga communities in environmental management. There is also need to reinforce and encourage Karanga traditional practices that are consistent with environmental management. An informed and empowered Karanga community is likely to play an important role in environmental management. An environmental management approach is likely to be disowned and blamed for lack of understanding of the community values and cultural needs if implemented without the consent and input from the local Karanga community. The Karanga cultural perspectives are thus an important adjunct to scientific approaches to environmental management because the Karanga community understanding and awareness of the environmental crisis to a large extent affect the way they respond to it. What is important from the Karanga cultural heritage should be reclaimed and blended with contemporary ways of environmental management. An attempt should be made to build on the existing Karanga environmental management techniques which have hitherto gone largely unutilized.

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