

Towards preservation and safeguarding cultural heritage for socio-economic development: A case of Pupu battlefield monument in Zimbabwe

Nkosilathi Sibanda

Chinhoyi University of Technology, Chinhoyi, Zimbabwe. (Corresponding author: Email address, sibandankosij@gmail.com)

Abstract

Cultural heritage plays a critical role in shaping national identity and fostering community cohesion. The research seeks to examine how preservation of the Pupu battlefield monument can contribute to fostering a sense of local identity, social cohesion, and national pride among the people of Zimbabwe. It also seeks to explore effective preservation and maintenance strategies for safeguarding the Pupu battlefield monument and its surrounding environment. The research examines the potential economic benefits that can be derived from the monument and also how specific tourism products can be developed. The research will also attempt to establish how the battlefield monument's interpretation of liberation heritage contributes to broader national dialogues on nation-building and historical justice in post-colonial Zimbabwe. The paper adopts a qualitative research approach, which ensures understanding community perspectives and social values. A case study research design was used to focus specifically on the Pupu battlefield monument allowing for in-depth, contextual understanding of the preservation efforts and their local impacts. Semi-structured interviews with a diverse range of stake holders was used. Findings indicate that the preservation of the battlefield monument can contribute to restoring cultural pride and national identity especially in a post-colonial context if managed inclusively. Preservation efforts could also create local employment opportunities and stimulate economic activities. The research found that preservation and safeguarding of the Pupu battlefield monument, a significant site of liberation heritage in Zimbabwe, is critical for both social cohesion and economic development.

Keywords: Cultural heritage, Socio-economic development, Preservation, Safeguarding

Introduction

The Pupu Battlefield Memorial Monument is situated 52 km east of Lupane town, Matabeleland North province of Zimbabwe. The battlefield monument site is of national and cultural significance to Zimbabwe. It is a symbol of African resistance to colonialism, a cornerstone of the nation's contemporary efforts to reclaim and preserve its multiple historical narratives. The site serves as a profound reminder of the bravery and sacrifice of the Ndebele warriors and their leaders in their resistance to colonialism. The battlefield monument stands at the site of the Anglo-Ndebele War of 3 December 1893. The battle, together with the Mbembesi battle, popularly known as the Gadade battle, was a major turning point in the Ndebele resistance to British colonial occupation. The Ndebele people

view the battle as a significant moment of Ndebele resistance and victory, and it is part of their cultural heritage and identity. The battle led to the end of King Lobhengula's rule as he fled and sought refuge in Barotseland (Zambia) under Chief Mpezeni (Nyathi, 2023). Before his escape during the battle, the King's last resting place was the ironwood tree (*Umtswili*). It is under this tree that the King was last seen on 4 December 1893 under the guard of the Babambeni regiment commanded by Chief Dakamela. The shrine and the tree are significant historical and cultural heritage sites of memory that give value and pride to the surrounding communities and the Ndebele at large. This pride that the Ndebele have about this heritage highlights that patrimony, both tangible and intangible, is vital for the socio-economic development of communities because it fosters social cohesion, promotes the preservation of traditional skills and knowledge, and cultural tourism.

Literature review

Cultural heritage is widely understood as encompassing both material and non-material elements passed down from previous generations, such as monuments, customs, and historical environments (Stephenson, 2023; Kafadar, 2021). Safeguarding this heritage entails conserving these resources for current and future use while preserving their original significance and integrity (Mteti, Mpambije & Manyerere, 2025). Within African settings, the preservation of heritage is closely linked to processes of identity reformation and sustenance.

Historically, many cultural heritage sites in Zimbabwe were managed through traditional knowledge systems and community norms, but the colonial governments introduced legislative frameworks for the preservation of these heritage sites, which did not involve local people. In support of this argument, Rukara (2025) asserts that official heritage management systems have frequently been ineffective in safeguarding archaeological sites across many regions of Africa. Communities residing near these heritage locations have played a crucial role in preserving culturally significant sites through their traditional custodianship practices. However, these local systems often get limited acknowledgement by state heritage management authorities. As noted by Rukara (2025), although local communities played a leading role in preservation efforts, the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ) Act 25: 11 does not formally recognise or guarantee their central involvement in the preservation of heritage resources. This has serious consequences since the heritage sites are exposed to vandalism. At the same time, this has the effect of weakening traditional knowledge systems. However, one issue with engaging local communities is that a sense of ownership may lead them to believe they have the authority to bypass established heritage regulations (Zihove, 2025). This may lead to conflict between state-led preservation organisations and the locals.

The neglect of heritage sites is not unique to the Pupu Battlefield monument only, but there are some heritage sites, like the Gadade Battlefield, which have no signage to direct

visitors. The National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ), which is responsible for managing these sites, is struggling with limited funding and an inherited colonial style of managing heritage sites, which has prevented communities from owning and using them (Pwiti & Ndoro, 1999). The colonial administration formulated legislation that disconnected the indigenous communities from their heritage, which was believed to be the source of their identity and pride. Some of the heritage sites were declared world heritage sites without considering the spiritual values accorded to them by the host indigenous communities (Mawere, Mubaya & Sagiya, 2013). The government's limited budget allocation to the NMMZ has resulted in inadequate resources for maintenance and preservation of cultural heritage sites (Makuvaza & Makuvaza, 2013). The preservation of cultural heritage sites in Zimbabwe has challenges involving historical legacies and economic dynamics, which include a lack of funding.

The preservation of cultural heritage is now widely acknowledged as an important driver for socio-economic progress, especially in post-colonial contexts where societies aim to restore identity, foster tourism growth, and empower local communities. Brooks (2011) argues that heritage forms a central pillar of tourism, and it is crucial for the tourism industry to actively engage in promoting preservation efforts whenever possible. There is a need to ensure the safeguarding, preservation, and effective management of the diverse range of heritage sites and cultural practices. The preservation of cultural heritage will enable the reconstruction of broken social communities, rediscover their identities, and connect the past with the present and the future.

The literature review underscores the shift in academic thinking towards a more inclusive, community-centred management paradigm. Successful preservation and safeguarding efforts, therefore, depend on reconciling so-called scientific preservation methods with local community interests and ensuring that heritage benefits the people living in the nearby host communities.

Theoretical framework

The research is informed by decolonial theoretical framework, which is critical for understanding the preservation of cultural heritage sites. The framework challenges the dominant Western epistemologies and centers on indigenous perspectives and knowledges in heritage preservation (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). The decolonial theory informs preservation strategies that empower local communities to take control of the monument's preservation, prioritize local perspectives and narratives in interpreting the Pupu Battlefield site's history. The colonial narrative treats African resistance fighters as rebellious subjects, but the decolonial theory places them at the centre of history. The local memory practices become legitimate sources compared to written colonial archives. The theory re-contextualizes Africans as strategists and thinkers who resisted colonialism in diverse ways, from armed struggle to cultural preservation. The theory challenges colonialism's influence on culture and advocates for reclaiming African narratives (Ngugi,

1986). Decoloniality objects to the imposition of Western heritage management practices that often focus solely on the physical aspect of a site (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). Western heritage management systems ignore the spiritual aspects of these sites. It is relevant to this research since it also challenges colonial narratives around the Pupu battle that honor only the fallen British soldiers and praise them as heroes when they actually were invaders.

Methodology

The research employed a qualitative design approach to explore the cultural heritage preservation and socio-economic development in Pupu. According to Chivanga and Monyai (2021), a qualitative approach enables the researcher to obtain a deeper understanding of the phenomena under research. A case study research design was adopted, which is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 2003). The research design provided an in-depth enquiry into the preservation of cultural heritage for the socio-economic development of the Pupu community.

The research used purposive sampling to select participants for interviews from the community. A sample is a smaller group that is used to conclude a larger population (Hossan, Mansor & Jaharuddin, 2023). Purposive sampling enables the deliberate selection of participants who will give information that answers the research questions. The research targeted 20 participants with varying roles in the Pupu community. The participants were selected on the basis of their responsibility in the community, and these included community elders who include women, some youths, and community leaders, like village heads.

The data was collected using in-depth interviews. An in-depth interview is a face-to-face interaction between the researcher and the respondent, which seeks to get the respondent's views on life experiences (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2016). The in-depth interview allowed for the possibility of new questions emerging during the interview. Open-ended questions were used, and they enabled the respondents to provide in-depth responses about their experiences and perspectives on the Pupu monument. The open-ended questions facilitated probing so that clarity was given on the responses. The respondents were asked to give their opinions about the preservation of the Pupu monument and also the *Umtswili* tree that is at the site. They were also asked to give their views on the socio-economic role that the monument could play in the development context of the local area.

Data Analysis procedure

It involves examination and interpretation of non-numerical data. The process is important since it enables better decision-making and the discovery of meaningful insights. Data collected through in-depth and open-ended interviews was analyzed using a descriptive qualitative analysis method. The goal of this process was clearly defined through the formulation of specific research questions. The data collection method used was reliable, and the collected data were relevant to the defined objectives. The collected data from interviews was compiled, and then the researcher read the notes several times so as to gain familiarity with the content. The research employed thematic qualitative analysis, which involves searching for themes from the views and experiences of the people as supported by Dawadi (2020). The collected data was cleaned by removing duplicate records, correcting errors, and inconsistencies. Clean data ensures the integrity and accuracy of results.

Ethical considerations

Research ethics are principles that guide researchers when carrying out research. Ethics in research refer to the norms and values that give directions regarding data collection and analysis (Mirza, Bellalem & Mirza, 2023). The purpose and objectives of the research were discussed and explained to each participant. Confidentiality and anonymity of participants were ensured, and only information relevant to the study was requested. The researcher ensured that the participants were not exposed to physical and psychological harm during the time of the research. The respondents were fairly treated before, during, and after they participated in the research, and their views were equally respected.

Findings and discussion

The findings of this research support the view that the preservation of cultural heritage is key to social and economic development.

Identity and resistance

The Pupu Battlefield monument enhances social cohesion, identity, and a sense of belonging for the local communities. It does this through the preservation of cultural heritage sites, historical and cultural continuity, and fostering social cohesion and identity (Ekwelem, Okafor & Ukwoma, 2011). Pupu connects local communities to their past and fosters collective community identity, rooted in the past, and continuing into the present and the foreseeable future. Just like the Battle of Isandlwana in 1879, which is deeply rooted in traditional Zulu history (Murray, 2012), the Pupu battle is also rooted in the history of the Ndebele people, serving as a source of pride and community heritage. The battlefield gives a sense of continuity, enduring legacy, and belonging. It offers communities the opportunity to share cultural experiences, connecting the past to the present and future generations as people from different backgrounds interact during annual cultural activities at the site.

The significance of the Pupu Battlefield is that it is a symbol of resistance to British imperialism and is thus a commemoration of a decisive Ndebele victory against a technologically superior British South Africa Company (BSAC) force in the Anglo-Ndebele war of 1893. This led to the complete annihilation of Major Allan Wilson's Patrol by the Ndebele army under Mtshane Khumalo, though some oral history sources dispute this. From the interviews, it emerged that the army was commanded by Fusi Khanye. The battle demonstrated a fierce determination to resist colonial encroachment, sending a powerful message that the indigenous people would fight for their land and sovereignty at all costs. This battle is comparable to the Battle of Isandlwana (1879) in South Africa, where the British army was embarrassingly defeated by the Zulu army (Williamson, 2019; Murray, 2012). The battles of Isandlwana and Pupu stand as a testament to the fierce resistance of African kingdoms against colonialism. The battles also highlight the devastating consequences of colonialism, including the loss of life and culture, because they highpoint the devastating effects of colonialism that led to mass movements in southern Africa. The Pupu Battlefield is also significant because it symbolizes the bravery, sacrifice, and resilience of those who fought in the war and provides a platform for reflection, remembrance, and commemoration, allowing people to pay their respects to those who fought and died in defense of freedom from colonial rule. The site serves as a testament to the country's continuous struggle for independence, linking the war of 1893 to the eventual liberation of the country in 1980.

Indigenous people have spiritual values attached to heritage sites (Mawere, Sagiya & Mubaya, 2012). The communities around the Pupu Battlefield monument are spiritually attached to it, as evidenced by traditional ceremonies conducted there, where people go and do rituals at the *Umtswili* tree whenever there is a catastrophe in the area. The tree plays a significant part in the history of the country since it provides evidence of the fierce intensity of the battle by bullet pockmarks on the tree and others in the vicinity. Also of significance is the road from Emthanyelweni next to the Tshangani (Shangani) River, which passes through the battlefield right up to the *Umtswili* tree where the King was last seen. The route has been preserved by pulling tree branches during some traditional ceremonies so that it remains visible to this day. It is important to take note that construction of homes and farming on the battlefield grounds is prohibited since graves of the Ndebele warriors are scattered all over the area, because in African Ubuntu culture it is a taboo to tamper with graves.

The battlefield is a testimony to the composition of the Ndebele state which constituted other ethnic groups like the Rozvi, during the 19th century. The song *Kudala Kwakunganje Kwakubusa uMambo lo Mzilikazi*, sung during ceremonies at Pupu memorials, depicts the nature of the Ndebele state under King Mzilikazi. The song nullifies the narrative which has been propagated regarding Ndebele-Shona relations during the precolonial era. According to Nyathi (2023), the regiments that participated in the

Pupu/Tshangani battle were not comprised of purely Ndebele men but also men from other neighboring chiefdoms like Chief Bere and Nhema, among others.

The Pupu Battlefield historical site is a national shrine that embodies the national spirit of resistance, resilience, and the ongoing quest for historical truth in Zimbabwe. Its significance lies in its power to unite the nation, educate the public about its heritage, and provide a lasting memory of the brave ancestors who stood against imperialism. The battlefield historical site serves as an essential tangible link to the past, ensuring the sacrifices of the Ndebele warriors are remembered and celebrated for generations to come.

One of the respondents said, “*Indawo le ilakho ukuthuthukisa umnotho wesigaba ngokwethekelelwa yizivakatshi lokubukisa*” (The monument has the potential to drive economic growth through cultural heritage tourism). This view is supported by Nkwanyana (2018), who alludes that cultural tourism can empower local communities economically. Women and youths may get income opportunities through selling hand crafts, traditional clothing, and food products. One of the village leaders emphasized the need to have the monument transformed into a tourist attraction where cultural activities are showcased.

The establishment of cultural villages has the potential to boost tourism as visitors from different parts of the world may have an urge to have a firsthand experience with significant traces of history. In KoMpisi cultural village in Victoria Falls, for instance, villagers provide entertainment, supply food products, and they have been able to exhibit their cultural handicrafts, thereby economically benefiting themselves (Runyowa, 2017). The Murewa cultural village in Murewa, Mashonaland East Province, has yokes, pottery, and other artifacts displayed, providing tourists with information that helps them to understand the way of life of the Murewa people. The village has a library, which is essential for the transmission of cultural heritage and at the same time promotes and sustains a reading culture (Chigwada & Chiparausha, 2015). It is important to note that apart from equipping local people with knowledge, cultural villages promote the preservation of cultural resources. Moswete, Saarinen, and Monare (2015) allude that the concept of cultural villages fosters a sense of pride in individuals and communities about their culture. However, as noted by Chigwada and Chiparausha (2015), cultural villages have challenges which are threatening their survival. The lack of financial resources affects maintenance and development of facilities and marketing efforts. Another major challenge is conflict over cultural practices caused by religious differences. Conflict between religious groups like Christianity, Islam, and African indigenous religions may lead to selective representation of culture and this affects the performances of some traditional practices.

Cultural tourism may present employment opportunities for people in communities around the Pupu Battlefield site by selling cultural products and services to the travelers, thereby

generating income. Local communities should turn cultural heritage resources into marketable and profitable products and these include lifestyles, values, traditions of people and local craft products. (Nkwanyana, 2018). These can be showcased through activities such as festivals, traditional dances, rituals, theatre, and traditional music. Local people can be employed as tour guides because of their knowledge about the locality and traditions of the local people. Revenue generated through travellers' spending empowers communities economically (Mteti, Mpambije & Manyerere, 2025). Apart from improving the lives of people in local communities, cultural heritage tourism helps in the revival of disappearing cultural items and also the development of infrastructure in rural areas (Monkgogi, Mbaiwa & Chanda, 2015). There is also a need to revive the traditional dishes, which may strengthen and promote the local food industry and minimise reliance on foreign non-indigenous culinary products. However, cultural heritage tourism affects the authenticity of cultural heritage as it leads to the commercialization of some cultural practices for example indigenous dances and songs performed at Great Zimbabwe. According to Gweverende (2022), visitors to Great Zimbabwe do not encounter the authentic reality of the culture directly, but instead engage with staged versions of indigenous dances. These performances are separated from their original communal and cultural settings, giving tourists the chance to observe dance and musical displays that have been removed from their traditional context.

Local communities may be displaced to pave way for cultural tourism (Mteti, Mpambije & Manyerere, 2025). This may lead to local people losing access to spaces that were once central to their lives and cultural practices thereby displacing them socially and culturally. Some traditional practices, artifacts, and sacred sites may be sold to tourists. The turning of elements of cultural heritage or spiritual practices into services for profit in the context of tourism leads to conflict between indigenous communities and those seeking economic opportunities. This push for commercialization or commodification of cultural heritage can lead to land dispossession. This involves compulsory acquisition of land by the government for tourism infrastructure, and communities may be relocated to less desirable areas.

The desire to develop the Pupu Battlefield monument as a tourist destination is a form of commodification that may lead to clashes with the local community's view of the site as a sacred shrine requiring specific cultural reverence rather than market-based development. The government's engagement in constructing the monument focuses on the liberation heritage narrative. Critics argue that this aligns with the government's patriotic history agenda to foster a common national identity and downplay serious issues like Gukurahundi and accusations of political violence by the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (Andersson, 2025; CITE, 2024; Ranger, 2004). As noted by Bitusikova (2021), the promotion of heritage sites by the government plays a significant role in advancing political agendas. Using heritage for political reasons may be presumed as marginalizing specific expressions, history, and spirituality (Fontein, 2010, Mapara,

2026). This leads to a contested heritage where state ideology takes precedence over local cultural aspirations.

Despite controversies associated with government involvement, students from institutions of learning may be poised to benefit greatly by getting more historical information through visits to this place than by learning from textbooks. Schools will be encouraged to embark on tours to the Pupu Battlefield monument, which may present students with a deep understanding of history by having firsthand experience or information about the past that they cannot get from the classroom. Marcus, Levine, and Greneir (2012) concur with this as they assert that students get first-hand history, which will influence their thinking. Information about their local community will be available to them, and touring will help generate more interest in the background of their place. Visits by students to places like the Pupu Battlefield monument may help in building the Zimbabwean identity (Stolare, Ludvigsson & Trenter, 2021). The monument may serve as an illustration that the community has a past that is associated with the liberation war narrative, which they read about in books, and also understand that it took brave men and women who sacrificed their lives. It is not only students from local communities that may benefit from touring Pupu, but other learners from around the country and beyond. Tours may present students with firsthand information about early resistance to colonial occupation, and this may help correct the revisionist historical narrative that the first resistance was in 1896-97, while in fact it was in 1893. The visit to the monument may generate a lot of enthusiasm since it is the site where early resistance to colonial occupation began. These tours may enable the students to appreciate the significance of cultural heritage preservation and also foster a sense of pride, ownership, and belonging.

The proposed construction of a leisure center by Lupane State University at Bubi-Lupane Dam should also position the institution as a significant stakeholder in the tourism industry. The leisure and recreation center should offer services such as tour guiding so that heritage sites like the Pupu monument are regarded as the destination of choice in the district.

Kusile Rural District Council may benefit from the monument by constructing lodges near the memorial, which may offer tour guiding services. Tour guiding will provide tourists with directions to different sections of the site, giving insights into the battlefield's past and helping visitors appreciate its cultural and historical significance. Lodges that may be constructed near this battlefield may significantly boost tourism as vacationers may be prompted to stay for a long time, thereby increasing their spending. These lodges should be designed in a way that reflects local architectural styles and use local materials. To protect the monument from potential destruction by human traffic, there should be clear and well-designed pathways and viewing platforms, which will help in controlling the wandering of people.

Community agency

It was also noted that heritage sites such as the Pupu Battlefield monument are interconnected with the identities and cultures of the local communities, such that preservation efforts require their participation. Community engagement may lead to an increased sense of ownership of their cultural heritage, and they may feel responsible for its preservation (Chirikure & Pwiti, 2008). Active community involvement came out in discussions as the key to long-term preservation since initiatives such as local festivals and art projects can bring residents together. This fosters a sense of community and pride (Ndoro, 2001; Mawere, 2014). This has a likelihood of increasing the successful implementation of preservation projects. Communities should be involved in their heritage management through activities like being tour guides and curio vendors. They should also be allowed to conduct their rituals at the protected sites for their spiritual and economic benefits (Chirikure & Pwiti, 2008). This has been the case with Great Zimbabwe, where descendants of the Mugabe clan use their knowledge of stone masonry to restore the collapsed walls and perform traditional ceremonies on the site. The efforts to engage communities in the conservation of cultural heritage sites have largely been impeded by a colonial hangover, which discourages the recognition of indigenous cultural practices, which are very important for cultural tourism and sustainable community development (Mteti, Mpambije & Manyerere, 2025). Access to heritage sites by the local communities helps in restoring damaged confidence (Ndoro, 2001). When communities can access, engage with, and interpret their own heritage sites, they re-establish links with their past and cultural practices. This process strengthens a renewed sense of identity that may have been distorted by colonial representations.

Education and awareness are key in preserving the rich legacy of the Pupu Battlefield by educating young people about the importance of this historical site. This can be done by involving local communities in preservation efforts, and making it possible for the site to be accessible for future generations. Like in other memorial sites, for instance, the Trep Tower Park in Berlin, Germany, the site is free to the members of the public (Alexander, 2020). As alluded to by Stone (2004), people who know about their heritage would understand the need to protect it. Community members should be made aware of the significance of this historical site as a repository of their collective memory and identity, a sense of continuity linking the past to the present, and a tourist attraction. Students will be made to understand local culture and how it is different from other cultures around the world.

The digitization of the Pupu Battlefield historical site is necessary since it may preserve the location for those who are far and for future generations. Platforms such as websites and Google search will make the battlefield accessible online to a global audience (Koiki-Owoyel, Alabi & Egbunu, 2020). This will help in preserving the Pupu monument and prevent the loss of its value through disasters such as severe climate change and a lot of

human traffic. This, therefore, implies that for digitization to successfully preserve and safeguard the Pupu historical site, there is a need to include the contribution of local cultural heritage custodians when designing preservation frameworks. Digitization as a complementary strategy in heritage preservation has the potential to provide documentation solutions and ensure that battlefield cultural heritage or historical sites withstand any unpleasant situations for future generations.

Museums, just like other preservation strategies, serve as repositories of culture and historical narratives, hence the relevance of setting up a museum at the Pupu Battlefield. The establishment of a museum at Pupu may help in providing a connection to history that books cannot provide. Museums should involve local communities and other heritage stakeholders in the organization of exhibitions (Baba & Ghouati, 2025). The museum should clearly explain the background of the conflict commemorated and also include weapons, regalia of warriors, and archaeological remains found near or at the site. This idea may help in making the Pupu community to be actively involved in the preservation of the battlefield's historical significance, since this may make them feel that they are part of the battlefield and its co-owners.

The establishment of a cultural village on the periphery of the monument may preserve the Pupu historical site since it will reflect local culture and relevance to the battlefield. The village will showcase traditional structures, handicrafts, music, cultural practices, and dance, hence they are constructed to preserve and promote the heritage of a community (Surata, Sumartana & Utama, 2024). This can be described as a structure resembling a rural area that reflects social culture, customs, lifestyles, and traditional architecture of an indigenous community (Dewi, Astawa, Siwantara & Mataram, 2017). Cultural products, which include traditional cuisine, cultural activities, and education on local community traditions and customs, may be provided in these villages.

Climate Vulnerability

Another observation was that the Pupu Battlefield site is facing a new threat, which is climate change. Climate change poses threats to the preservation of the Pupu Battlefield site, especially the *Mtswili* tree. Heavy rainfall and flooding have caused gully erosion and damage near the tree, threatening its existence. According to some respondents, comprehensive preservation strategies must be adopted with a view to controlling water flow. They pointed out that the construction of diversion ditches will divert runoff water away from the gully, which is fast approaching the tree, and this will reduce the amount and speed of water entering the gully. As noted by Lakew and Belayneh (2012), the diversion of surface runoff will direct water away from the gully head. Apart from diversion ditches, erosion can be minimized by constructing a check dam across the gully channel using locally available, low-cost materials. Cost-effective check dams can be constructed using sandbags, brushwood, and stones (Hailu, Belayneh, Muuz & Baye, 2015). The

check dam will trap sediment and facilitate the establishment of permanent vegetation cover behind the wall of the check dam.

Gully filling can also be used to halt the extension of the gully towards the *Umtswili* tree and the surrounding vegetation. This strategy involves depositing soil into the gully using bulldozers. Lakew and Belayneh (2012) recommend the use of a compactor or roller for compaction. After filling the gully with soil, grasses like vetiver, and other plant species can be planted to promote sediment deposition, thereby fostering vegetation growth and keeping the soil intact and discouraging water flow.

Conclusion

The study has noted that the preservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage in Zimbabwe is a critical engine for sustainable socio-economic development. The proposed preservation strategies at the Pupu Battlefield monument are aimed at building national identity, restoring cultural pride, promoting social cohesion, and ensuring a historical narrative is never forgotten. Preserving the Pupu monument requires a collective effort from all stakeholders. Implementing preservation efforts such as engaging local communities, promoting sustainable tourism, promoting education, and raising awareness may guarantee the long-term preservation of this significant historical site. It is important to protect and preserve this cultural heritage site for future generations, and the battlefield is a significant part of Zimbabwe's rich history and identity.

Recommendations

- The government should establish visitor and resident contribution schemes for visitors to donate an additional amount to preservation and community development initiatives.
- National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe should create local membership of heritage schemes that will allow residents to contribute financially and volunteer their time.
- The government through the Ministry of Home Affairs and Cultural Heritage should update heritage legislation so that it aligns with the constitution of Zimbabwe and international frameworks to provide an enabling legal basis for community engagement and empowerment in heritage management.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs and Cultural Heritage should ensure that heritage preservation projects should be aligned with the National Development Strategy 2 (NDS 2) so that they get national funding.
- The National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe should adopt integrated approaches to find solutions to climate-induced threats like gully erosion, which is threatening the *Umtswili* tree at the Pupu Battlefield site. Some indigenous

methods like planting drought-resistant grasses, stone, and brushwood, which will slow water flow, trap sediment, and encourage natural regeneration, should be considered and adopted in the preservation of the heritage site.

- The National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe should ensure that the voices of the local people are the starting point for any sustainable development strategy and that the traditional knowledge systems are respected and integrated into preservation plans. They should not be taken as cheap human capital but as equal partners. This will help in minimizing theft, vandalism, and other acts that may defile the sites.

References

- Alexander, C. (2020). Ideology, Narratives, and Adaptation: A Case Study of the Soviet-war Memorial in Berlin. *Internationalist*, 5(1), 39-49. <https://doi.org/10.17615/m4yz-zj19>
- Andersson, A. (2024). Great Zimbabwe in the Shadow of Robert Mugabe and the ZANU-PF: An Analysis of the Political On-site Use of Great Zimbabwe during the Period 2000–2025. *Public Archaeology*, 23(1-4), 50-69. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14655187.2025.2475622>
- Baba, M., & Ghouati, S. (2025). The Role of Museums in Preserving Intangible Cultural Heritage: Between Transmission and Innovation. *International Journal of Humanities and Educational Research*, 7(2), 100-110. doi: [10.47832/2757-5403.31.7](https://doi.org/10.47832/2757-5403.31.7)
- Bitusikova, A. (2021). Cultural Heritage as a Means of Heritage Tourism Development. *Muzeologia a Kulturne dedictvo*, 9(1), 81-95. doi: [10.46284/mkd.2021.9.1.5](https://doi.org/10.46284/mkd.2021.9.1.5)
- Brooks, G. (2011). Heritage as a Driver for Development: Its Contribution to Sustainable Tourism in Contemporary Society. *ICOMOS*, 3(1), 496- 505.
- Chigwada, J. & Chiparausha, B. (2015). The Role of Culture Houses and Culture Centers in the Acquisition, Preservation and Dissemination of Indigenous Knowledge in Zimbabwe in the Digital Era. *5th Annual Conference of the Faculty of Communication and Information Science, National University of Science and Technology*, Bulawayo, 24-28 August 2015.
- Chirikure, S. & Pwiti, G. (2008). Community Involvement in Archaeology and Cultural Heritage Management: An Assessment from Case Studies in Southern Africa and Elsewhere. *Current Anthropology*, 49(3), 467-485. doi: [10.1086/588496](https://doi.org/10.1086/588496)

Sibanda. / *Journal of Cultural Heritage and Development*, Volume 02, Issue 01, 2026. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63726/jchd.v2i1.282>

Chivanga, Y. S. & Monyai, B. P. (2021). Back to Basics: Qualitative Research Methodology for Beginners. *Journal of Critical Reviews*, 8(2), 11-17.

Dawadi, S. (2020). Thematic Analysis Approach: A Step-by-Step Guide for ELT Research Practitioners. *Journal of NELTA*, 25(1-2), 62-71. <https://doi.org/10.3126/nelta.v25i1-2.49731>

Dewi, N. I. K., Astawa, I. P., Siwantara, I. W., & Mantaram, I. G. A. B. (2017). Exploring the Potential of Cultural Villages as a Model of Community-Based Tourism. The 2nd International Joint Conference on Science and Technology. *Journal of Physics*, 953. 1-8. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1088/1742-6596/953/1/012072>

Ekwelem, V. O., Okafor, V. N., & Ukwoma, S. C. (2011). Preservation of Cultural Heritage: The Strategic Role of the Library and Information Science Professionals in South East Nigeria. *Library Philosophy and Practice* (e-journal), 562, 1-15. <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/562>

Fontein, J. (2010). Between Tortured Bodies and Resurfacing Bones. The Politics of the Dead in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Material Culture*, 15(4), 423-448. doi: [10.1177/1359183510383105](https://doi.org/10.1177/1359183510383105)

Gweverende, S. (2022). Theorizing the gaze in cultural Tourism: The Commodification of Indigenous Dance Practices in the Shona Village at Great Zimbabwe Monument. *Journal of African Cultural Heritage Studies*, 3(1), 96-117. doi: [10.22599/jachs.88](https://doi.org/10.22599/jachs.88)

Hailu, K. A., Belayneh, A., Muuz, G., & Baye, A. (2015). Gully Morphology and Rehabilitation Measures in Different Agro-Ecological Environments of North Western Ethiopia. *Applied and Environmental Soil Science*, 2025 (1), 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2015/789479>

Hossan, D., Mansor, Z. D. & Jaharuddin, N. S. (2023). Research, Population, and Sampling in Qualitative Study. *International Journal of Business and Technoprenureship*, 13(3), 202-222.

Kafadar, T. (2021). Cultural Heritage in Social Studies Curriculum and Cultural Heritage Awareness of Middle School Studies. *International Journal of Progressive Education*, 17(2), 260-274. doi: 10.29329/ijpe.2020.332.16

Koiki-Owayele, A. E., Alabi, A. O., & Egbunu, A.J. (2020). Safeguarding Africa's Cultural Heritage through Digital Preservation. *Journal of Applied Information Science and Technology*, 13, 76-86.

Lakew, D., & Belayneh, A. (2012). *A field guide on gully prevention and control*. ENWM Project. Addis Ababa.

- Makuvaza, S., & Makuvaza, V. (2013). The Challenges of Managing an Archaeological Heritage Site in a Declining Economy: The Case of Khami World Heritage Site in Zimbabwe. *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites*, 15(3–4), 281–297. <https://doi.org/10.1179/1350503314Z.00000000061>
- Mapara, J. (2026). Memory in Song: Whose Memory and to what End? In Gwerevende, S., Matsilele, T. & Maguraushe, W. (Eds.), *Musicking and Dancing Politics in Africa: Power, Activism, and Elections*, (27-47). New York, London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Marcus, A. S., Levine, T. H., & Grenier, R. S. (2012). How Secondary History Teachers Use and Think about Museums: Current Practices and Untapped Promise for Promoting Historical Understanding. *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 40(1), 66-97. doi: [10.1080/00933104.2012.649466](https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.2012.649466)
- Mawere, M., Sagiya, M. E., & Mubaya, T. R. (2012). Conservation Conversations and Community Participation in the Management of Heritage Sites in Zimbabwe. *Greener Journal of Environment Management and Public Safety*, 2(3), 7-16. doi: [10.15580/GJEMPS.2012.1.102012123](https://doi.org/10.15580/GJEMPS.2012.1.102012123)
- Mawere, M., Mubaya, T. R., & Sagiya, M. E. (2013). Challenges, Dilemmas and Potentialities for Poverty Relief by Heritage Sites in Zimbabwe. Voices from Chibvumani Heritage Site Stakeholders. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 15(1), 186-189.
- Mirza, H., Bellalem, M., & Mirza, C. (2023). Ethical Considerations in Qualitative Research: Summary Guidelines for Novice Social Science Researchers. *Social Studies and Research Journal*, 11(1), 441-449.
- Monkgogi, L., Mbaiwa, J. E., & Chanda, R. (2015). Impacts of Cultural Tourism on the Domestic Utility of Traditional Baskets: Case of Gumere and Etsha 6 Villages in the Okavango Delta, Botswana. *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 24(3-4), 301-318.
- Moswete, N., Saarinon, J., & Monare, M. J. (2015). Perspectives on Cultural Tourism: A Case Study of Bahurutse Cultural Village for Tourism in Botswana. *Nordic Journal of Africana Studies*, 24(3-4), 279- 300.
- Mteti, S. H., Mpambije, C. J., & Manyerere, D. J. (2025). Unlocking Cultural Tourism: Local Community Awareness and Perceptions of Cultural Heritage Resources in Katuvi Region in Southern Circuit of Tanzania. *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities. Open*. 11(3), 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2025.101295>
- Murray, J. (2012). An African Thermopylae? The Battles of the Anglo-Zulu War 1879. *Akroterion*, 54, 51-68. doi: [10.7445/54-0-27](https://doi.org/10.7445/54-0-27)

- Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. (2018). *Epistemic Freedom in Africa: Deprovincialization and Decolonization*. Routledge. Taylor and Frances. New York.
- Ndoro, W. (2001). Heritage Management in Africa. *The Getty Conservation Institute Newsletter*, 16(3), 20-25.
- Nkwanyana, S.M. (2018). Conserving Cultural Heritage and the Usage of Indigenous Knowledge: A Case Study of Zululand District Municipality, KwaZulu-Natal. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 7(2), 1-12.
- Nyathi, P. (2023). *The Battle of Pupu and Beyond*. Amagugu Publishers.
- Pwiti, G. & Ndoro, W. (1999). The Legacy of Colonialization: Perceptions of the Cultural Heritage in Southern Africa with Special Reference in Zimbabwe. *African Archaeological Review*, 16(3), 143-153.
- Ranger, T. (2004). Nationalist Historiography, Patriotic History and the History of the Nation: the Struggle over the past in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 30(2), 215-234. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4133833>
- Stephenson, L. (2023). Cultural Heritage: Its Significance and Preserving. *Anthropology*, 11(3), 1-2. doi: 10.35248/2332-0915.23.11.321
- Stolare, M., Ludvigsson, D., and Trenter, C. (2021). The Educational Power of Heritage Sites. *History Education Research Journal*, 18(2), 264-279.
- Stone, P. (2004). Introduction: Education and the Historic Environment into the 21st century. In Henson, D., Stone, P., & Corbishley, M. (Eds). *Education and Historic Environment*. 1-10. New York. Routledge.
- Surata, I. K., Sumrtana, I. M., & Utama, I. G. B. R. (2024). The Impact of Cultural Tourism on Local Traditions. *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Indonesia*, 10(4), 672- 683. doi: [10.29210/020244780](https://doi.org/10.29210/020244780)
- Rukara, M. M. R. (2025). Bridging the Divide: Western and Indigenous Systems of Heritage Management in African Context. *Journal of Cultural Heritage and Development*, 1(1) 45-69.
- Runyowa, D. (2017). Community Based Tourism Development in Victoria Falls, KoMpi Cultural Village: An entrepreneur's Model. *African Journal of Hospitality Tourism and Leisure*, 6(2) 1-7.
- Taylor, S.J., Bogdan, R., and DeVault, M.L. (2016). *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods*. 4th ed New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons.
- Wa Thiong'o, N. (1986). *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. James Curry.

Sibanda. / *Journal of Cultural Heritage and Development*, Volume 02, Issue 01, 2026. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63726/jchd.v2i1.282>

Williamson, J. W. (2019). The Western Way of War: The Battle of Isandlwana. *Marine Corps Gazette, Web edition*, 1-3.

Yin, R.K. (2003). *Applications of Case Study Research*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, Sage.

Zihove, T. (2025). Conflicting Values and the Preservation of Heritage Sites: Case Studies from Masvingo, Zimbabwe. *Journal of Cultural Heritage and Development*, 1(2) 207-226. doi: [10.63726/jchd.v1i2.508](https://doi.org/10.63726/jchd.v1i2.508)