

Editorial

The Journal of Cultural Heritage and Development – Volume 1, Issue 2 Culture, Heritage, and Development: Reclaiming Roots, Shaping Futures — Indigenous Knowledge, Heritage, and Decolonial Praxis in Zimbabwe’s Development Discourse

As we unveil this second issue of Volume 1 of the *Journal of Cultural Heritage and Development*, we are reminded that heritage is not static, nor is it a relic of the past that belongs to the dustbins of history and dark and dim memories. It is a living, often contested, but profoundly generative institution and pillar of humanity. The nine contributions that are featured in this issue collectively illuminate a central truth: sustainable development in postcolonial contexts like Zimbabwe cannot proceed without a profound reckoning with how knowledge is produced, whose knowledge counts, and how heritage is valued and safeguarded. These articles cut across diverse domains such as climate resilience, mental well-being, digital culture, education, linguistic identity, and archaeological governance. What features prominently is that these articles converge on a common and resonant theme: that Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKSs), cultural practices, and decolonial epistemologies are not vestiges of the past but are vital resources for navigating contemporary and future challenges.

From the Hwesa of Nyanga in Zimbabwe, whose time-tested agro-ecological and meteorological knowledge continues to bolster community resilience despite centuries of epistemic marginalisation (Article 1), to the Karanga’s *nzveura*, a culturally embedded psychosocial ritual that embodies the Ubuntu principle “I am because we are” in times of grief (Article 2), we see the livingness of heritage functioning not as ornamentation but as intangible infrastructure for survival and meaning-making. These practices challenge dominant Western biomedical or technocratic paradigms, asserting instead the efficacy of communal, embodied, and spiritually attuned responses to crises.

At the same time, the articles in this issue do not romanticise tradition. There is critical engagement with tension: the masculinist logics structuring digital gaming spaces (Article 3) and the systemic gaps in Archaeological Impact Assessments that privilege development over dialogue with local custodians (Article 4). There are also competing claims on heritage sites in Masvingo that reveal divergent valuations that range from sacred memory to subsistence farming to mineral extraction (Article 5). These tensions underscore that heritage is always social, economic, political, and in the end, always negotiated.

Significantly, some of the contributions sound counsel about epistemic erosion and decay. The supremacy of English, as argued in Article 6, does more than displace Shona linguistically, it perpetuates and sustains culturecidies through the corrosion of the philosophical bedrock of *Unhu/Ubuntu*, reshaping moral imagination and social relations. Similarly, Articles 7 and 9 compellingly advocate for the decolonisation of education, not as a symbolic gesture, but as an epistemic reorientation rooted in *Gade*’s “narratives of return” and the *Sankofa* principle: learning from the past to forge contextually grounded, innovative, and self-determined futures.

Even toponymy, as demonstrated in the study of *Mulungushi* in Zambia (Article 8), emerges as a strategic site of history, memory and aspiration. It presents situations where naming becomes nation-building, where landscape inscribes ideology, and where the past is actively mobilised to inspire present-day economic and cultural regeneration.

This issue, thus, invites scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to take an odyssey beyond the false dichotomy of “tradition versus modernity” or “heritage versus development.” Instead, we propose a third way: heritage-informed development, one that centres Indigenous agency, embraces epistemic pluralism, and recognises cultural continuity as a pillar of universal and plural sustainability.

In this issue we therefore entrench and sustain our vision and mission: the *Journal of Cultural Heritage and Development* remains committed to amplifying African voices, theories, and praxes. In doing so, we underwrite not only the local discourse, but also global conversations on justice, resilience, and what it means to build futures that are not only prosperous but deeply meaningful and beneficial to humanity and the broader environment.

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