

Archaeology & Indigenous Peoples

MEMORY AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPE AT THE KHAMU WORLD HERITAGE SITE, ZIMBABWE

AN UN-INHERITED PAST

Ashton Sinamai



Memory and Cultural Landscape at the Khami World Heritage Site, Zimbabwe

This book focuses on a forgotten place—the Khami World Heritage site in Zimbabwe. It examines how professionally ascribed values and conservation priorities affect the cultural landscape when there is a disjuncture between local community and national interests, and explores the epistemic violence that often accompanied colonial heritage management and archaeology in southern Africa. The central premise is that the history of the modern Zimbabwe nation, in terms of what is officially remembered and celebrated, inevitably determines how that past is managed. It is about how places are experienced and remembered through narratives and how the loss of this heritage memory may mark the un-inheriting of place.

Memory and Cultural Landscape at the Khami World Heritage Site, Zimbabwe is informed by the author's experience of living near and working at Great Zimbabwe and Khami as an archaeologist, and uses archives and traditional narratives to build a biography for this lost cultural landscape. Whereas Great Zimbabwe is a resource for the state's contentious narrative of unity, and a tool for cultural activism among communities whose cultural rights are denied through the nationalisation and globalisation heritage, at Khami, which has lost its historical gravity, there is only silence.

Researchers and students of cultural heritage will find this book a much-needed case study on heritage, identity, community and landscape from an African perspective.

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An Un-inherited Past

Ashton Sinamai

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In loving memory of my father who taught me to seek knowledge;
my mother who taught me how to seek knowledge with humility
and my grandmother who taught me to question all 'knowledge'.



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Acronyms

BSAC	British South Africa Company
EMA	Environmental Management Authority
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
HMC	Historical Monuments Commission (Natural and Historical Monuments Commission)
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
KDF	Khami Development Fund
MESC	Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture
MLF	Mthwakazi Liberation Front
NACZ	National Arts Council of Zimbabwe
NAZ	National Archives of Zimbabwe
NGZ	National Gallery of Zimbabwe
NHCC	National Heritage Conservation Commission (Zambia)
NHM	Natural History Museum, Bulawayo
NMMZ	National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe
NPWLA	National Parks and Wildlife Authority
PSIP	Public Sector Investment Programme
QVM	Queen Victoria Museum
RPGZ	Restoration Programme for Great Zimbabwe
SADC	Southern African Development Community
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WHC	World Heritage Committee
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front)
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union
ZMHS	Zimbabwe Museum of Human Sciences (QVM)
ZTA	Zimbabwe Tourism Authority

Preface

The book focuses on a forgotten place: the archaeologically spectacular Khami World Heritage site in Zimbabwe. It examines what really happens to professionally ascribed values and conservation priorities when there is a disjuncture between local and national interests. It also examines the epistemic violence that often accompanied political change (from the historical to the colonial period) and in what way this shaped how heritage landscapes are remembered in south-western Zimbabwe today. The central premise of the book is that the history of the modern Zimbabwe nation, in terms of what it remembers and celebrates, inevitably determines how the past is managed. It also examines how people remember at a local level and how that affects what is regarded as heritage, and why this process of remembering and forgetting has far-reaching consequences on how heritage places are celebrated and managed.

The process of un-inheriting is not just about how the site is being managed but also how the place is remembered, contested and celebrated. Instead, it is about how a heritage place features in the narratives of the local community, in regional identities, as well as narratives of the nation. How the place is remembered reflects on its sustainability; if that sustainability of a heritage place is also its memorialisation by the community. Narratives that appear as myths and legends at the community level and those developed at a national level are the tools for sustaining place in local and national psyche.

There is a collective social process in telling the story; geographies, events and personalities are remembered through such stories. These narratives can bring out the significance of a place without separating the so-called intangibles from the material culture. When a place loses these stories it also loses the significance that emotionally bonds people to it and it can become un-inherited in the process. It can also lose the ability to inspire new stories in new political settings. Therefore, the material culture can continue to be preserved as a generic site type, but the mental geographies of the place are lost.

Indeed, an archaeological site may be very well preserved and accorded global significance (like Khami), but what matters is not how well it is

preserved but how it is remembered and celebrated by communities connected to it. Empathy for place is drawn from how the place is remembered and this can determine how a place is preserved or commodified for tourism. The process of un-inheriting is not at one level; it is a multi-layered refusal to remember the heritage place and a denial of memory by powerful entities within the communities and nation. This is not influenced by a single agent but by a variety of agents, some intentional, while others are unintentional. These processes range from what Stoler (2008) calls 'imperial residue', where the 'debris' of earlier powers still influences how nations remember heritage, to the commodification of that heritage to an extent where it ceases to be culturally recognisable to those who want to remember it (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009). I do not intend to condemn these agents of un-inheriting, instead, I aim to analyse them with the intention of building up a biography of Khami and attempt to understand the processes of remembering and forgetting in a postcolonial situation.

In debating postcoloniality the book engages with Stoler's questions on 'imperial debris' by examining Khami not only as debris of a European colony but also from indigenous imperial formations that existed before colonisation (Torwa, 1450–1691; Rozvi Empires, 1691–1835; Ndebele state, 1835–1894) which also left their mark on the Khami cultural landscape. This, it is hoped, will remove the linear narratives that are usually associated with studies of heritage and postcoloniality. It is thus not just about exposing European colonial 'debris' but it also examines 'imperial debris' caused by these past dominant entities (ancient and historical states) in producing a historical critique of how memory is erased through each of these raptures. That way 'rapture' and 'debris' are not limited to experiences under European entities that dominated Africa. This requires engaging with sources on postcoloniality in order to eliminate the risk of binary reading of the story of Khami (Stoler, 2008; Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009; Dlamini, 2009; Meskell, 2011; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013).

For the author, narratives, like myth and legends, mark the presence of interests (religious or otherwise) in a place (the inheriting) (Sinamai, 2015). These narratives may be local and ancient and passed on from generation to generation through established memory practice. They can also be new local narratives of the region or state (local/regional/national identity) and can also include narratives of commodification. The presence of these ancient and modern narratives, combined with the efforts to preserve, mark the inheriting of the place. Conversely, their absence at heritage places like Khami is what makes the cultural landscape un-inherited.

This, however, does not in any way mean the place is not recognised. Khami has the same legal status as Great Zimbabwe as a national monument and a World Heritage Site. The comparison is not, therefore, not to show that Khami has been abandoned but to bring out the different layers of Khami's biography from the time of its abandonment in the 1690s to the present, and show how each of these layers has contributed to the silence

that pervades it today. Indeed, the purpose of the book is to bring out the process of 'ruination' rather than just recreating the lost cultural landscape. Ruination is not only associated with the deterioration of the material heritage but the loss of the immaterial in the minds of descendant and other communities. Chapter 6, which discusses the recovery of the Khami landscape, is meant to make this information usable for practitioners rather than just producing a book that limits my contribution to theory. Though this sounds pedestrian, the issue of many books published by academics being hardly useful for policy makers and practitioners in the field has been highlighted (see Smith, G.S., 2006). The book will avoid taking a positivist and activist approach and focus on theorising issues around the biography of place and practices that contributed to Khami's un-inheriting. Though this may produce a re-mapping of the landscape, the intention is to historicise ruination of Khami through time.

Khami World Heritage Site is one of five World Heritage properties in Zimbabwe but, despite its undeniable historical and archaeological importance, it is forgotten in local and national narratives. This book will be a much needed addition to the literature about the site; there is only one major publication on Khami (Robinson, 1959), and that is more than 50 years old. Existing in the shadow of Great Zimbabwe, Khami has experienced chronic under-funding resulting in serious conservation and management problems. This, accompanied by recent population movements in the region, shifting identities, land ownership disputes and colonial and postcolonial incongruities has left the site un-inherited by both the state and the local communities. Rather than a commemoration of Khami the result is a resounding silence in the national and local narratives, which I refer to as the un-inheriting of the landscape. Commemoration is a ritual of remembering based on experience, performance and long-term memory, and if it is absent the place is un-inherited. Contrasted to these rituals of commemoration are the rituals of commodification which play to the enjoyment of the landscape and short-term memories of the visitors.

To understand how Khami has been un-inherited, I use archives and traditional narratives to build a biography for Khami which I then use to build the lost cultural landscape at Khami. This book is informed by my experience of living near Great Zimbabwe as part of the local community and later as an archaeologist, before moving to Khami as a Project Manager to supervise a new management plan. Working at Great Zimbabwe, one felt being between a rock and a hard place, with a government that saw it as a resource for its contentious narrative of unity, and communities that felt that their cultural rights were being denied through nationalising and globalising of their local heritage.

Unlike Great Zimbabwe, Khami has lost its 'historical gravity' (Mrozowski, 2016: 192); that emotional attraction and attachment that pervades every situation a community or state experiences. Great Zimbabwe looms large in Zimbabwe, having given the country its name. It weighs heavily on the

Zimbabwean psyche and many national events are entangled with its history and physical presence. Independence of Zimbabwe naturally confirms the independent existence and achievements of ancestors who created this ancient state. Development requires the unity displayed by the same ancestors when they designed and constructed this ancient city. The political and economic collapse of the 2000s becomes the 'Zimbabwe Ruins'; a symbol for the mismanagement of the economy that leads to the worst inflation any country has ever experienced. It is the focus of research and the place where archaeological careers are launched by both local and international archaeologists. Its monumental architecture inspires architecture of hotels, airports, office buildings, as well as private residences. At a local level, however – one that is overlooked by governments – Great Zimbabwe is the centre of the cosmological world, controlling nature, lives and futures. Khami, though just as monumental as Great Zimbabwe, is silent and forgotten in such local and national narratives.

My arguments are not to place importance on the monumentality of these heritage places, but on the immaterial things that are experienced and remembered. This book is about how places are remembered through narratives (ancient and modern) that are told about them and how the loss of these narratives may mark the un-inheriting of place. When a heritage place ceases to represent or inspire narratives, both local and national, or shape the behaviour or opinions of people that are supposed to connect to it, it becomes un-inherited. The process of un-inheriting that brings the loss of heritage memory is central to this book.

Though forgetting is a part of remembering, as Graham et al (2004: 104) suggests, 'the reminisced disinherits the forsaken other', this is not a binary process where something forgotten is lost forever. Memory, with its connection to identity, always creates a hierarchy of remembering, and this hierarchy is reflected in what is remembered locally, regionally and nationally. Remembering is not only signposted by materiality but is supported by immaterial things (stories, performances, folk music) that the discipline of archaeology often ignores. In this hierarchy of remembering in Zimbabwe, Khami World Heritage is the 'forsaken other', although celebrated by archaeologists, it is confined to the periphery of the cultural experience and forgotten in the narratives of community or nation. This un-inheriting of Khami is a result of the confluence of circumstances, contexts and time, and it is this conundrum that this book aims to unravel through understanding how people remember their past through time.

Khami is silent (regionally and nationally) with no narratives, no rituals, no implicit politics, conflicts or memorialisation. It is this state in which the past myths of the landscape are forgotten and no new narratives are inspired by it. Khami is an un-inherited place, with a local community that has forgotten it and a nation that is not inspired by its story and has narratives based elsewhere. This silence at and around Khami reinforces the ideas I had already developed at Great Zimbabwe (Sinamai, 1998) that attempts

to define and commemorate a collective past that was always contested by other local pasts and local identities, and that the celebration of a heritage place depends on factors connected to identity, territory, and international, national and local politics. An analysis of Khami demonstrates how the act of forgetting is significant to the process of remembering. Unlike Great Zimbabwe, Khami is neither a sacred landscape nor an *ersatz* marker, and its World Heritage status does not guarantee funding from the government for conservation, nor does it inspire the community to be vocal about its impoverished state of conservation. This book critically analyses the creation of local and national memory in Zimbabwe and examines how the current national collective memory and politics influences what is valued, managed and preserved and what is forgotten. Using Khami as an illustrative and powerful case study, this book will contribute to literature on forgotten places elsewhere.

Acknowledgements

Much of this book is a result of research carried out when I was an Endeavour International Postgraduate Research Scholar at Deakin University in Australia. It therefore gained initial input from my supervisors, Colin Long, Andrea Witcomb and especially Bill Logan who was my supervisor for much of my time at Deakin. My examiners Lynn Meskell, John Schofield and Webber Ndoro also provided insightful critiques that I used in turning a thesis into a book. Subsequent research used in the book was carried out while I was a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Experienced Fellow at the University of York, United Kingdom, where John Schofield, Jamie Hampson and others continued to provide editorial guidance. Without this guidance and the support of the EU's Horizon 2020 Programme (Project No. 661210, METAPHOR) this book would not have been written.

The staff of the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ) were also supportive to my research. Dr. Godfrey Mahachi (Executive Director of NMMZ) allowed me to interview employees of the NMMZ and gave me an insight into the intricacies of heritage management in Zimbabwe. I am also grateful to NMMZ regional directors and staff in the Southern, Western and Northern Regions who gave me access to archival materials under their care and also participated in interviews I carried out in these regions: Mr. Joseph Muringaniza and staff at the Archaeological Survey, Mr. Lonke Nyoni (Site Manager at Khami and acting Director at the Western Region at the time) and staff in the Archaeology Department at the Natural History Museum. Mr. Mandima and his staff at Great Zimbabwe were also of great assistance during my fieldwork in Zimbabwe. Dr Ezekia Mtetwa gave me access to records in the Archaeology Department and updated my knowledge of heritage issues at Great Zimbabwe. My gratitude is also extended to staff of the National Archives in Bulawayo and Harare for assistance in locating crucial archival material for my book.

I cut my teeth in the discipline of Archaeology with the NMMZ and many colleagues within the organisation have contributed to my development through the debates I have had with them over many years: Onesimo Nehowa, the late Geoffrey Chikwanda, Lonke Nyoni, Dr Edward Matenga, Dr. Webber Ndoro and Joseph Chikumbirike come to mind. 'Sekuru' Leonard

Mugabe and his team of traditional stonemasons taught me most of what I know about dry stone walling and gave me an insight into how communities perceive those heritage places. In Australia, my sounding board was Dr. Herman Kiriama and colleagues in the EB Building, Deakin University with whom I had many lively discussions on memory and collective memory and who also gave me encouraging anecdotes from their own experiences as doctoral students at Deakin University.

I am also indebted to my family, who, in various ways, contributed to the book. The elders of my family fed my mind by passing on traditions that I have struggled to reconcile with the archaeological theories that I later learnt. Others gave me moral and sometimes financial support throughout the duration of this research project, especially during my fieldwork in Zimbabwe. Their contributions have equally made this book possible and I therefore dedicate it to all of them.

Chronology

1040	A Complex state system (Mapungubwe) develops in northern parts of South Africa on the border with Zimbabwe.
1250	Development of the Great Zimbabwe Culture begins with the building of monumental walls at Great Zimbabwe.
1450	Great Zimbabwe is abandoned and two states, Mutapa in northern Zimbabwe and Torwa state in the southeast, with capital at Khami, are developed.
1512	The Portuguese make contact with the Mutapa State.
1690	Khami, the capital of the Torwa state, is destroyed by another Shona dynasty, the Rozvi, who take over as the royal dynasty and move the capital to Danamombe.
1693–95	The Portuguese are expelled from the Zimbabwe plateau by the Rozvi.
1835	The Ndebele, a Nguni group from Zululand (South Africa), arrive on the Zimbabwe plateau and set up a state in the south-western parts of Zimbabwe, taking over from the Rozvi dynasty.
1890	The British, through a Charter company (British South Africa Company) colonise Zimbabwe.
1893	Ndebele revolt against British rule results in the deposing and disappearance of the Ndebele king.
1896	The Shona and Ndebele rebellion against British rule (First <i>Chimurenga</i>).
1902	Ancient Monuments Protection Ordinance and the National Museum Act enacted.
1923	White settlers vote for responsible government.
1936	Natural and Historical Monuments Act enacted, National Museums Act amended and revised.
1948	First archaeologist Keith Radcliffe Robinson appointed to manage Khami.
1953	Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (also known as the Central African Federation) is formed between Northern

- Rhodesia (Zambia), Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and Nyasaland (Malawi).
- 1961 Zimbabwe African People's Union (nationalist party) is formed.
- 1963 The Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland collapses with the independence of Zambia and Malawi. ZAPU splits results in the formation of ZANU (later called ZANUPF).
- 1965 European settlers declare a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) from the United Kingdom. The liberation war begins (*Second Chimurenga*).
- 1972 The Natural and Historical Monuments Commission and the National Museums are combined through an Act of Parliament (National Museums and Monuments of Rhodesia Act) to form the National Museums and Monuments of Rhodesia.
- 1980 Zimbabwe gains independence from the British Crown.
- 1982 Zimbabwe ratifies the World Heritage Convention.
- 1986 Inscription of Khami and Great Zimbabwe on the World Heritage List.
- 1987 ZANU PF and ZAPU merge to form new ZANU PF at the end of a civil war, which had lasted four years.
- 1996 Khami is added to the World Monuments Watch's World Heritage in Danger List.
- 1999 The Khami World Heritage Site Management Plan is developed.
- 2000–2009 Zimbabwe plunges into political and economic meltdown that results in the second highest inflation ever experienced in the world.
- 2008 The Mthwakazi Liberation Front is formed to lobby for the independence of Matabeleland Provinces from Zimbabwe.
- 2009–2013 Political parties form a unity government to revive the economic and political prospects of the country.



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1 Khami

An un-inherited past

Introduction

It is no secret that we human beings misremember the past. We forget the moments that make us uncomfortable, commemorate those that validate us, and make up everything in between. There are thus times when we need to unlearn some of what we think about our recent history in order to discover the interesting things that happened there.

(J. Steinberg, Sunday Times (South Africa), 16 December 2012)

In 1999, I transferred from Great Zimbabwe to the Khami World Heritage Site in Zimbabwe to lead the conservation and development programme at the archaeological site. I had worked at the Great Zimbabwe World Heritage Site for five years, gaining specialised skills in the conservation of dry stone walls and the management of World Heritage properties. After a very successful conservation programme at Great Zimbabwe, many conservation reports on Khami recommended the transfer of skills to the site to arrest the deterioration that it was experiencing (Joffroy, 1998; NMMZ, 1999). A senior traditional stonemason and I were moved to Khami as part of that skills transfer to create a similar conservation programme. The move was triggered by the inclusion of Khami on the World Monuments Watch's 100 Most Endangered Sites List of 1996. The listing came with a grant for the development of a conservation, research and development plan for the site.

Khami is the second largest Zimbabwe Culture site after Great Zimbabwe and marked the spread of complex state systems on the Zimbabwe plateau. It is, indeed, one of the three Zimbabwe Culture sites (with Great Zimbabwe and Mapungubwe, South Africa) that have been inscribed on the World Heritage List. Its architecture, composed mainly of dry stone platforms is a departure from Great Zimbabwe's architecture which features mainly free-standing walls (see Figure 1.1).

The Zimbabwe Culture is an archaeological culture that marks the development of complex state systems in southern Africa. It is identified mainly