Cultural Heritage Management in Africa: Unravelling Historical Narratives and Tackling Contemporary Challenges

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Abstract

This paper delves deeply into the complex and nuanced aspects of managing cultural heritage in Africa. It offers an in-depth exploration of the various tangible and intangible forms of heritage that are present within African societies, ranging from historical artefacts and monuments to traditional knowledge and practices. The paper challenges the dominant Eurocentric perspective that heritage preservation is solely attributed to European influences, instead highlighting the rich and longstanding heritage preservation practices that have been intentionally cultivated within African communities. The paper seeks to bring to light the challenges that are inherent in managing African cultural heritage and puts forward practical strategies for its preservation and management on the continent. To achieve this, the paper re-examines historical narratives and offers a fresh perspective on how African cultural heritage can be better protected and celebrated.

Keywords: Cultural heritage management, Museology, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Historical narrative, Africa

Introduction

The African continent is known for its diverse and vibrant cultures, with various cultural heritages scattered within different nations, tribes, and ethnic groups (UNESCO, 2023). These heritages represent the cultural expression of past African societies and their connection to the present, created from a lifelong history of peaceful coexistence in their rich natural and ecological environment (Ezenagu, 2020; Nomishan, 2023; Nomishan *et al.,* 2023). Cultural heritage is manifested in two forms in Africa: tangible form, which includes physical cultural entities such as monuments, shrines, spiritual landscapes, and sacred groves, among others; while intangible form, which encompasses abstract aspects like folklores, festivals, ritual rites, songs, and belief systems, representing the bulk of African heritage resources (Ezenagu, 2020; Nomishan, 2023).

The complexity of cultural attributes in Africa is evident in the plurality of its languages, value systems, and traditions (African Union, 2021; Nomishan, 2023). Despite seeming similarities in cultural practices and social organisation among African groups, it is almost impossible to generalise about their heritage and what appropriate management of it entails on the continent (Boswell & O'Kane, 2011). The peculiarities of historical trajectories, natural environment, and socio-cultural experiences dictate the relevant management approach to cultural heritage, explaining the failure of some early European efforts to preserve cultural heritage in Africa.

Cultural Heritage Management (CHM) in Africa is often viewed as a consequence of European expansion into the continent. However, questions arise about the Europeans' role in preserving rich cultural heritage intact in various aspects of Africans' daily lives before European arrival (Ndoro & Pwiti, 2001). Did Africans start creating cultural heritage upon the arrival of Europeans, or did these cultural entities exist long before European contact? The overarching context of the Eurocentric acclaimed discovery of the world prompts such questions.

For example, after exploring the upper Niger River around 1796, Mungo Park, a Scottish explorer of West Africa, wrote a popular and influential travel book titled "Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa" in which he claimed to have discovered the Niger River, disregarding its spiritual and cosmological significance for ancient West African societies that had existed in the region long before Park's exploration. This is similar to the discovery of the Americas by Christopher Columbus, despite the presence of native American populations for hundreds of thousands of years in the territory before Europeans arrived. This perception has masked the extensive history of intentional community and family-based cultural heritage preservation in Africa, generations before the first Europeans set foot on the continent.

Unfortunately, the African population has been whitewashed to adopt the narrative that natural and cultural features with a long history of existence are a product of European influences on the continent. Such a misconception is embedded in the historical records of many African countries. For instance, the authors grew up learning from elementary history texts in Nigeria about how a great British man discovered the River Niger on July 20, 1796. This narrative persists in most African countries, with the younger generation constantly fed with stories of brave foreigners discovering natural entities that captured their childhood curiosity without acknowledging the significant roles African ancestors played in ensuring the sustained preservation of these natural cum cultural entities encountered centuries later by the Europeans. These history texts, however, did not include the fact that Park was saved by native fishermen when he drowned in the River Niger and was almost dying.

By examining historical narratives and questioning the Eurocentric perspectives as explained above, this paper sheds light on the complexities that dictate the challenges of managing cultural heritage in Africa, proposing strategies for effective cultural heritage management on the continent.

Objectives of the Study

This paper presents new insights into understanding the challenges of African cultural heritage management. Africa constitutes one of the most culturally diverse continents globally. Despite such unparalleled ethnic and cultural diversity, the continent lacks public interest and intentionality in cultural heritage preservation. Several decades of literature on African heritage have emphasised the limited financial resources on the continent as the cause of this negligence. However, the long-standing, effective traditional cultural heritage management practices, which are still limited today, warrant an effort to identify CHM's fundamental problems. To understand this, we conducted an in-depth literature review of African cultural heritage practices from the precolonial to the postcolonial period. The aim was to highlight historical events that contributed to CHM's current state in Africa and propose practical solutions to these problems.

Methodology

This literature review seeks new insights into challenges in African cultural heritage management. The methodology entails an exhaustive review of academic journals, books, and reports on CHM subjects spanning Africa's pre-colonial and post-colonial periods. Studies included were limited to those published in the last five decades (1973-2023), focusing on cultural heritage management in the African continent. This time frame was chosen to capture significant developments in cultural heritage discourse. A systematic search was conducted using databases such as Google Scholar and Connected Papers. Keywords, including cultural, heritage, indigenous, management, traditional, custodian, museum, colonial, pre-colonial, and period, were employed to identify relevant literature addressing the history of cultural heritage management in Africa and associated challenges.

Key information extracted from the selected literature included details on indigenous heritage management practices, colonial history, challenges of African cultural heritage management, and post-colonial heritage challenges. This comprehensive extraction aimed to capture the multifaceted aspects of CHM in Africa. The gathered information underwent thematic analysis, identifying common challenges and recurring themes in the literature. This involved categorising information related to historical periods, management practices, and challenges faced. Consistency in theme identification was ensured through iterative reviews. Throughout this methodology, examples from notable studies in the field were referenced, illustrating the approach taken and providing contextual support for the review process. Examples included studies that contributed significantly to understanding the historical and contemporary landscape of cultural heritage management in Africa.

Local Knowledge and Indigenous Cultural Heritage Management

The history of cultural heritage management in Africa has three phases: Pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial (Onyima, 2016). Preservation of cultural heritage in Africa before colonialism was facilitated by indigenous belief systems and practices. Sacred sites and historical structures, like the Osun-Osogbo Grove in Nigeria (later designated a UNESCO World Heritage site), rainmaking shrines such as Khami, Great Zimbabwe, Domboshava, and Siloszwane in southern Africa (Ndoro & Pwiti, 2001), and ancestral sites connecting past generations to the present, such as Oke-Iluku in southwestern Nigeria, enjoyed continued preservation due to their sacredness.

In pre-colonial African societies, the traditional custodianship system managed the preservation of intangible cultural resources. Esteemed individuals, including kings, family heads, priests, and elders, held the responsibility of safeguarding various intangible heritage elements such as folklores, parables, and songs (Fasuyi, 1973). This setup indicated that only qualified individuals were authorised to disseminate history, folklore, and other forms of intangible heritage to the

public, thereby ensuring the safekeeping of these heritage elements and their selective sharing on significant occasions.

However, the arrival of Europeans in Africa disrupted these well-established indigenous mechanisms of cultural heritage preservation. Driven first by the conversion of Africans to Christianity and later by the imposition of formal Europe-oriented methods of heritage management, several European-based legal frameworks failed to integrate the existing community-legal systems, ultimately leading to widespread conflicts between the two approaches to heritage preservation. This comprehensive investigation sets the stage for a more profound understanding of the challenges confronted by Cultural Heritage Management in Africa, particularly in the wake of European colonisation.

Unveiling Colonial Trauma: Impacts on African Cultural Heritage Management

Despite the tremendously rich African cultural heritage, there is a general indifference about the preservation of these heritage sites on a continent-wide scale in post-colonial Africa. While the main reason for this remains seemingly elusive, most local and international Cultural Heritage Resource scholars working in Africa attribute it to the continent's dwarfed economic status, frequently emphasising poverty as the primary cause (Mabulla, 2002). Contrary to this popular notion, certain cultural heritages with family or personal attachments are still being preserved by a minority population in Africa, who are not necessarily financially buoyant.

A good example of such heritage is the Masquerades (*Egúngún*) tradition in West Africa. Before the European arrival in Africa, West Africa was characterised by a multiplicity of religious beliefs primarily based on the worship of ancestral spirits believed to have transcended into the afterlife but still played key roles in the everyday experiences of living societies (Akubor, 2016). The *Egúngún* is a significant example of such ancestral connections in various African societies. While some early European observers defined masquerades as coverings, disguises, or devices used by

individuals to represent spirits (Akubor, 2016), the masquerade represents the link between the extant and the ancestor of the Yoruba people of Nigeria.

This is because the Yoruba viewed death not as it is portrayed in the meaning of the term but as a rite of passage into the ancestral world, explaining why graves are adorned with the personal belongings of the deceased. These masquerades are not mere disguise materials as portrayed by the Europeans but are protectors of families and communities from external aggression (Akubor, 2016). The ownership of the *Egúngún* is family-based, and each family is responsible for its protection to remain connected to their ancestors. This explains why masquerades and other related entities continue to be preserved by the few African traditional religious practitioners in different parts of the continent today.

Having understood this effective indigenous preservation mechanism in Africa, the question remains as to why most Africans show little or no interest in their cultural heritage today. While many Scholars argue that the lack of financial resources is the cause, this paper, however, argues that Africans are as proud and protective about their cultural heritage as any similar groups in developing and industrial countries worldwide but rather the trauma from colonial experience vis-à-vis the central government and powerful economic interests initiated and persistently influenced the general lack of interest in cultural heritage management among the African populace (Altschul, 2018).

Although the bulk of Africa's problems are self-created in terms of bad governance, corruption, economic mismanagement, and political ills, most challenges facing cultural heritage management are ingrained in historical experiences and government attitudes towards heritage management (Pwiti & Ndoro, 1996), especially in the way Africans are estranged from their valuable cultural heritage. Africans were forced to abandon their age-old religious beliefs through colonial strategies

that instilled great detestation for everything they held in high esteem before their arrival (Pwiti & Ndoro, 1996).

For instance, the introduction of Christianity led to the institutionalisation of novel religious values after Africans had developed a great hatred for their former cultural and religious values, considering all that mattered to them as fetishes. They became exposed to 'the truth and the way,' neglecting their old ways. This successful substitution of the African belief system for the European beliefs, values, and worldview has far-reaching effects on African societies and most cultural heritage connected to linked with belief systems.

Numerous European policies in African societies fueled the nonchalant attitude towards heritage preservation throughout the continent. A representative example can be seen in Zimbabwe. In 1890, when a British South African mining company in Zimbabwe failed in its dream of generating economic prosperity through gold mining, it turned to the development of agriculture. This led to the colonial government formulating several land-related legislations, resulting in the division of land into European and African areas and the forceful displacement of people from their ancestral homes to areas with which they had no connection (Pwiti & Ndoro, 1996). European legislation like this contributed greatly to the lack of interest in heritage management because the landscape is an integral part of the African belief system. Cultural heritage in Africa is a holistic whole where places are tightly connected to the contemporary societies' experience with strong emotional attachment (World Bank SAWS4, 2022).

Therefore, the permanent removal of Africans from a place where they can have constant interaction with their home landscape is synonymous with taking away their existential values. Such land alienation processes are also experienced in Kenya, with people being thrown out of their ancestral homes to create the 'White highland,' a white-only settlement (Pwiti & Ndoro, 1996). While certain landscapes are avoided by Africans due to their sacredness, the British

colonial masters viewed any uninhabited areas as 'no man's land,' available for occupation (Wambua *et al*., 2021). Misconceptions of this kind define the colonial interactions with the indigenous communities of Africa, leading to the desecration of sacred lands and shrines. The trauma from experiencing the Europeans indiscriminately devaluing all that mattered to them haunts African people up to today, explaining why little or no attention is paid to intentional heritage preservation on a community or individual basis.

African Museums as Representations of Colonial Legacy

According to ICOM (2022), a museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of the societies that researches collects, conserves in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets, and exhibits tangible and intangible. Open to the public, accessible, and inclusive, the museum fosters diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally, and with community participation, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection, and knowledge sharing". This definition of a museum by ICOM informs us of the multifarious roles of the museum, with the public being the ultimate beneficiary of its existence. However, the museum has failed to perform the duties highlighted above in Africa.

This is because the people the museum aims to serve are less interested in visiting it. While the general problem of cultural resource management in Africa has been linked to poverty, it is noteworthy that the lack of interest in museums across Africa is far from being connected to financial constraints. This is because most museums' entrance fees are very affordable. For example, the entrance fee into Nigeria's National Museum in the heart of Lagos, Nigeria, ranges from #200 for local visitors to #300 for international visitors (Momaa, 2023), which amounts to 2 and 3 cents US dollars, respectively. Despite the abject poverty in Africa, an average person can afford this amount, indicating that museum avoidance is much more than monetary constraint. So, what could the reason be?

To get to the root of this problem, we need to consider the history of African museums. Although the idea originated in Egypt (Lee, 1997), the European colonisers institutionalised the contemporary African museums (Fogelman, 2008), with many collections being assembled by foreigners. The National Museum of Ghana is an excellent example of colonial masters assembling materials for African museum exhibitions. Thurstan Shaw, a British archaeologist, gathered over 9000 artefacts unearthed during the construction of the Achimota College, an experimental educational centre in the Ghana capital, in 1924 (Fogelman, 2008). In 1927, Shaw opened a small museum where the materials were exhibited, constituting the first museum in West Africa.

This project's success encouraged other colonialists, primarily missionaries, business people, academics, and adventurers, to send cultural objects in their passion, including some African widows who also sent in their late husbands' belongings (Fogelman, 2008). Many of these objects arrived without information about their cultural affiliation, making them almost irrelevant (Agbodeka, 1977). Many of the items sent to the museum only reflected the aesthetic taste of the sender, as they were acquired based on their artistic values without considering their significance in their primary cultural context. These objects were mainly sacred materials removed from where they were invigorated by constant application of substances such as Palm oil, before being confiscated, kept, and sent to the museum to be exhibited in airtight glass stands, where they were only relevant to the foreign visitors.

This kind of centralised accumulation of materials is totally against the African idea of cultural resource management in traditional African society. Objects exhibited in museums no longer serve an active connection with the people. Therefore, they lose their essence of existence, making them useless and not worthy of keeping (Fogelman, 2008). While Europeans may contend that preserving cultural artefacts is more advantageous than letting them fade away, it holds limited significance in the indigenous African philosophy. This kind of indigenous philosophy is highly unfathomable to Europeans. It has been proven that the European definition of cultural resource

preservation differs from the indigenous societies' perspective everywhere. A good example is the Zuni tribe of New Mexico, United States of America, where the *Ahayu: da* (War God) are kept in secured houses with open roofs to allow them to decay naturally (Colwell, 2017).

According to the Zuni people's epistemology, the war God is best preserved by allowing it to decay naturally; therefore, relocating such materials from their primary location into a museum where they are kept in glass stands is synonymous with losing their existential value, making it unlikely that any Zuni person will pay to see them in the museum. This scenario defines the Africans' perceptions of the museum, highlighting the need to set up an African-oriented museum.

However, the question persists: What steps have Africans taken to reshape the narrative since the wave of independence swept across Africa in the 20th century? Some Africans have recognised the necessity for African-modelled museums. Alpha Konare, a former president of Mali and president of the International Council at the ICOM meeting, advocated for the elimination of Western-modelled museums in Africa, emphasising the importance of creating new museums where objects maintain active interaction with the people (ICOM, 1992).

Unfortunately, the realisation of this call has yet to materialise. While the independence of African countries led to the replacement of European curators with Africans, many simply became custodians of colonial museum heritage, making few new collections reflective of the African museum model (Adedze, 1995). This is largely due to a lack of intentional efforts in African-styled heritage management by post-colonial African governments, which prioritise infrastructural development over heritage management.

The tradition of establishing museums in megacities has undeniably contributed to a general lack of interest in cultural resource management in Africa. Contrastingly, placing museums near the areas where materials are collected or finding ways to bring the local population closer to the collected objects has proven to heighten Africans' interest in museums. For example, the Desert

Zebra outreach program by the National Museum of Botswana, which 'takes' the museum to rural communities (Abungu, 2005). Such innovative approaches can enhance Africans' (especially rural settlers) participation in cultural resource management.

Cultural Heritage Management Challenges in Post-colonial Africa Challenges

The colonial era saw diverse groups with distinct cultural, historical, and linguistic backgrounds amalgamated into a single country. While this integration is aimed at enhancing political and economic strength among forming African groups, it poses significant challenges to African cultural heritage management. In 1914, Sir Lord Lugard amalgamated over 300 ethnic groups in Nigeria for ease of administration, and despite gaining independence 63 years ago, Nigeria still retains its colonial identity. Presently, Nigeria is dominated by three majority ethnic groups (Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa), with the remaining ethnic groups categorised as minorities. The dominance in political spheres by the majority ethnic groups influences decisions that impact the entire country, potentially leading to the neglect of cultural heritage deemed insignificant.

The consequences of this domination extend to the preservation of cultural heritage, where instances of neglect or destruction of heritage representing the historical experiences of marginalised groups are observed in some African countries. A notable example is the majority groups' negligence of the Swahili of Lamu and Zanzibar in the coastal area of Kenya. Despite being UNESCO World Heritage sites of international interest and tourist attractions, preservation efforts are hindered by specific individuals and sectors that do not consider the Swahili part of Kenya (Kusimba, 1996). This obstructs reasonable preservation plans for these culturally significant sites.

As observed by Myles (1989), the problems of cultural heritage are similar in most sub-Saharan Africa. While the campaign manifestos in developing countries emphasise ideological policies such as immigration, abortion control, and international relations, the manifestos of an average

African politician are embellished with numerous points on infrastructural development. Year in and year out, the African political campaign process supplies the ordinary African populace with the benefits of infrastructural development, making public objections to construction work that could impact cultural heritage impossible (Wait & Altschul, 2014). Subsequently, the citizens of most African countries measure the success of a political administration based on how much transformation they have caused to the landscape and how many old buildings are replaced with modern architecture.

This kind of attitude, created by African politicians through campaign glorification of infrastructural development and imbibed by the public, views cultural heritage preservation and construction works as opposite sides of a coin (Ndoro, 2021), explaining why archaeological impact assessment and mitigation works are sometimes considered unnecessary and time-consuming activities that delay construction projects. While impact assessment study is not a common activity in Africa, as those done so far are by international mining companies (Reid, 2018), the reluctance of African authorities to adhere to the recommended mitigation measures shows their mentality about what cultural heritage preservation entails.

For instance, during the construction of the Bui Dam on the Black Volta River in Ghana between 2007 and 2011, there was reluctance from the commissioning authority to implement mitigation measures suggested after an Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA).

The authority prioritised addressing electrical power supply shortages and the urgent need for an uninterrupted power supply for the protection of cultural heritage and the built environment, which were threatened by construction activities (Lane, 2021). This decision was made despite recommendations for mitigation work to address the potential adverse impacts of the dam's construction on the environment and local heritage sites. There is a need for the African authority to rethink and begin to make policies that will permit both cultural heritage preservation and

developmental projects to dance on the same dancefloor for the sustainability of the rich African heritage.

It is undeniable that Sub-Saharan Africa is one of the world's poorest regions today. The impact of its current financial and economic situation is felt in heritage management, as financial resources are paramount to practical cultural heritage preservation everywhere in the world. However, contrary to popular notion, corruption is the main devil to wrestle with in African heritage management and other sectors, not necessarily the lack of funds.

Having considered the 2023 national budget of Nigeria - the poverty capital of the world (World Poverty Clock, 2023) - I argue that although the money allocated to infrastructure and economic-related sectors such as the Ministry of Works and Housing (₦534 billion) is larger than what was allocated to the Ministry of Culture (₦8 billion), each museum and cultural institute in the country receives a portion that, if appropriately utilized, could increase the standards of CHM in the country over time (Myles, 1989).

However, the absence of mechanisms to monitor the appropriation of these funds is a common issue in African countries. While I do not condone the misappropriation and embezzlement of public funds, African cultural heritage practitioners often grapple with low and unstable salaries, making them vulnerable to financial irregularities regarding funds designated for advancing cultural heritage management. Addressing these salary issues is crucial, as it reduces the susceptibility of practitioners to mismanagement of allocated funds.

Way Forward and Recommendations for African Heritage Management

For cultural heritage management to thrive in Africa, there is an urgent need for large-scale public awareness targeting not only the ordinary African public but also the ruling class. Historically, cultural heritage awareness efforts have focused on the ordinary African public. According to Reid

(2018), the African public exhibits as much pride and protectiveness toward their cultural heritage as similar groups in developing and industrialised countries worldwide. However, they find themselves in a powerless and perilous position where the central government and powerful economic interests suppress the voice of the local, indigenous, and descendant communities. It is no wonder that little or no tangible attitudinal change toward CHM has been experienced thus far.

African governments must create policies that separate their heritage preservation methods from colonial concepts of CHM. They should encourage innovative approaches to generate distinct African heritage preservation mechanisms by integrating indigenous preservation practices. This shift will enable Africa to offer unparalleled tourism opportunities unique to the continent, attracting a consistent influx of international tourists.

Since African countries find it challenging to generate revenue internally by producing globally competitive commodities such as vehicles, electronics, and AI technologies, they can consider commodifying Africa's rich cultural and natural heritage for global consumption. Africa is strategically positioned to become the world's leading tourist destination, with the potential for various types of tourism to be established across the continent. While certain countries, like Nigeria, have benefited from religious festival tourism such as the Osun-Osogbo festival occurring annually in August for 12 days with approximately 100,000 local and international participants (Sacred Journey with Bruce Feiler, 2023), and the Lagos Black Heritage Festival (Kukoyi et al., 2015), among others. The numerous small-scale festivals across African countries could be rebranded to meet international standards, attracting tourists from around the world. This will significantly contribute to African economies by increasing GDP and employment.

However, associated challenges must be addressed for Africa to benefit from tourism. African governments need to tackle the pervasive issue of insecurity across the continent. For instance, the states in Nigeria closest to the Sahara desert-potential tourist spots, are the most affected by the

Boko Haram insurgency, which halts any tourism or recreational activities in the area. Moreover, other parts of the countries where there is no insurgency suffer from problems like poor road infrastructure, inadequate housing facilities, and inconsistent supply. All these problems must be solved for African countries to reap the dividends of tourism.

According to Mcintosh (1993), a notable concern in Africa is the need for more adequately trained personnel in CHM, resulting in the field's slow progress within the region. This deficiency is evident in the relatively low popularity of archaeology, notably illustrated by the presence of merely five full-fledged departments of Archaeology (University of Ibadan, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, University of Jos, Federal University Lokoja, and recently Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi), out of about 274 universities in Nigeria (Nomishan et al., 2021; Statista, 2024). Addressing this deficit necessitates a proactive approach, urging African governments, UNESCO, the World Bank, and other international organisations to support African archaeologists.

Enabling opportunities for training and capacity-building, especially in countries with robust expertise in CHM, like the United States, is crucial (McIntosh, 1993). Moreover, prioritising archaeological and social impact assessments in every African country is vital. These assessments serve a dual purpose by mitigating the adverse effects of construction on cultural heritage resources and creating employment opportunities for archaeologists. Emphasising these assessments could also encourage broader participation in CHM initiatives and further the goal of establishing African-modelled museums that authentically represent cultural heritage preservation from an indigenous perspective.

Conclusion

For Africa to truly appreciate the value of its heritage, a collaborative effort is imperative, involving policy reforms, public awareness campaigns, innovative preservation strategies, and

international cooperation. Preserving and embracing Africa's diverse heritage not only drives economic growth but also upholds and honours its rich cultural legacy. Urgently needed is the disentanglement of CHM in Africa from colonial perspectives and the revitalisation of indigenous preservation mechanisms through the modernisation of Africa's local knowledge system within CHM processes.

Intentionally prioritising the involvement of indigenous communities is pivotal for an effective African-oriented preservation system. Local communities possess an intimate understanding of the landscapes, enabling significant contributions to site identification and consequently bolstering the identification of cultural monuments across the continent. This will not only aid in site recognition but also align Africa with counterparts such as the United States, where discussions on data synthesis supersede site identification, marking a shift in heritage preservation strategies (Altschul, 2016).

There is an urgent requirement to reevaluate the legal frameworks governing African cultural heritage. It's crucial to prioritise the incorporation of indigenous knowledge, specifically oral traditions. This prioritisation parallels the approach taken by the National American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in the United States, which emphasised oral tradition within cultural resource management (Echo-Hawk, 2002). Finally, imposing stringent penalties on violators is essential. The fines for offences related to heritage preservation in some African countries have significantly diminished due to the drastic devaluation of many African currencies. All of these are important for a positive transformation of heritage management in Africa.

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