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**TOWARDS A DECOLONISED ARCHAEOLOGY COLLECTION: A CASE STUDY OF  
THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NAMIBIA**

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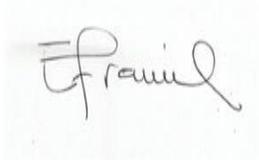
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## Declaration

I, KAARINA SHAGWANEPANDULO EFRAIM, hereby declare that ‘TOWARDS A DECOLONISED ARCHAEOLOGY COLLECTION: A CASE STUDY OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NAMIBIA’ is a true reflection of my own research, and that this work or part thereof, has not been submitted for examination or a degree in any other institution of higher education, and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

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Supervisor's

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## **Dedication**

This piece of research is dedicated to my kind grandmother, Selma Shekupe Shatika, who has always believed and supported each of my endeavours.

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## **Abstract**

There is a need for museums and their collections to stay relevant and be responsive to pressing social issues such as indigenous rights. Museums and their collections are established for a variety of purposes. They are particularly meant to serve as recreational facilities, scholarly venues or educational resources, and promote civic pride or nationalistic endeavour. Museums should aim at engaging with communities, but some of them are lacking in this most important respect thus making them to compromise their significant role. The study aimed at finding course actions to decolonised museum collections specifically the archaeology collection at the National Museum of Namibia by encouraging greater collaboration with indigenous people, reconsidering foundational knowledge, and effective community engagement in museums. The dissertation thus critically discusses and reviews decolonisation with specific regard to museum collections. It further explains and discusses the general value of research done in the archaeological collection of the National Museum of Namibia and reviews the dominant theme(s) in the archaeological collection of the National Museum of Namibia. To address the research question posed for this study, I sent out questionnaires and conducted open-ended interviews with a sample comprising 6 participants: 2 museum curators, 2 former curators and 2 museum officials. The data collected from the interviews were presented in narrative form. The data analysis revealed that the archaeology collections from the museums that were considered were established during colonial times and upheld largely Eurocentric worldviews and not the Afrocentric views.

## **Keywords:**

National Museum of Namibia, Archaeology, Collections, Indigenous Knowledge

## **List of abbreviations**

NMN- National Museum of Namibia

NMB- National Museum of Botswana

UPM- University of Pretoria Museums

SWA- South West Africa

NSS- Namibian Scientific Society

IKS- Indigenous Knowledge Systems

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The National Museum of Namibia is an institution with roots firmly entrenched in colonialism. It has many collections which date to the archaeological period. Like many other similar institutions in the world, the National Museum of Namibia (NMN) has been struggling to come out of the colonial shell within which it was established. As any country in the African continent, the archaeology of Namibia is deeply rooted in the history of the colonialism (Trigger (1984, 1989). Kinahan (1995) argued that history of research shows there is a thread of ideological continuity which persists despite fundamental political change and a shift in approaches used in studying Namibia's past. This is so, even though there has been significant progress in the archaeological research conducted in Namibia. As it was under German and South African colonialism, a large proportion of research is still carried out by visiting scientists from these countries. In addition, the archaeological infrastructure of Namibia remains poorly developed. Rock art and related studies are the traditional focus of interest with the German contribution being the largest by far (cf. Harke 1995). It is against this background that one can conclude that Namibian archaeology is still colonially dominated. This is a significant concern for an independent country struggling to shed its colonial skin. Therefore, there is a need for the decolonisation of Namibian archaeology. It is within this historical context that I conducted my research project focused on the archaeological collection curated by the National Museums of Namibia.

My research project advocated for an archaeological collection that is decolonised and of relevance to local Indigenous people. There have been various approaches applied with the aim to decolonise archaeology through countering the dominance of colonial ideologies and thus improving the narrative of Indigenous people (Bruchac 2014). Archaeological interpretations have historically been shaped by western beliefs. This is not surprising, because the discipline of archaeology has deep colonial roots (Holl 1990; Bruchac 2014). According to Hicks (2020), the disciplines of anthropology and archaeology were historically linked to colonial authorities that provided those in power with insights about Indigenous people. Such insights were then used to leverage some form of control over African communities who had become colonised. Such a history of these two disciplines has meant that they have been dominated by western scientists, with indigenous people largely used as informants. This means that there is bias in terms of how we have come to understand certain cultures. Colonialism cannot therefore be separated from how archaeological

collections were created. Equally, how archaeological collections are curated and applied in studies aimed at providing insights about the past cannot be divorced from colonialism. The misinterpretation of the ‘white lady of the Brandberg’, which was at the time thought to be indicative of the foreign origins of southern African rock art (Breuil 1948, 1949; Jacobson 1980), is a case in point. Such misinterpretation was not only limited to rock art but continued within museum settings where archaeological collections were used to entrench Eurocentric views that were not representative of an African voice in presenting the history of the so-called dark African continent. It is a reality of history that inaccuracies are subsequently passed down over time and are eventually taken to be truthful representation of the archaeological record in a particular geographical setting. We must thus always be conscious about the context of any archaeological collection. Failure to do so means that artefacts are studied out of context and are thus continuously misunderstood. I argue that as the benefit of decolonisation, it is important to ‘break away’ from the colonial system that has brought about the misrepresentation of Africans in the archaeological collections curated at various museums. Decolonising the archaeological collection, I argue, will positively impact on attempts to make the discipline of archaeology more representative of, and attentive to, local concerns.

This chapter provides an overview of what my research study was about. My research project was framed within a decolonising paradigm aimed at challenging the still dominant colonial nature of archaeology in the continent. In addition, my study was principally concerned about the yet to be decolonised archaeological collections housed at various museum institutions in southern Africa. The study was conducted at three museums in southern Africa. The first case study was the NMN, with the Mapungubwe Museum in Pretoria, and the National Museum of Botswana being the two other case studies. I begin by providing a background to the study before presenting the research questions and related aims as well as the significance of the project.

## **1.1 Background and description of the study area**

The research study was about the curation of archaeological collection at the National Museum of Namibia (NMN). The National Museum of Namibia aims to “preserve, understand and explain the material heritage of our country for present and future generations, that they may study, enjoy, take pride in and learn from these assets” (National Museum of Namibia 2003: 1). The institution,

which collects and displays artefacts and information deemed significant to Namibia and the Namibian people, is located in the central part of Namibia. Windhoek, the home of the NMN, is the capital city of the country.

Founded in 1907, the NMN museum was first known as the Landesmuseum (National Museum of Namibia 2003). The name was changed in 1925 and the museum became known as the South West Africa (SWA) Museum. This happened when the management of the museum was temporarily transferred to the South West Africa Scientific Society that was commonly known as the Namibian Scientific Society (NSS). The NSS is a non-profit and non-governmental organisation that was established in 1925.

Yet again, in 1957, the management of the museum was later transferred from the NSS back to the South African administration. It was at this juncture that the institution was yet again renamed, and it became the State Museum. During this period, the museum faced extreme difficulties, such as the lack of funding, professional staff, and storage challenges. Despite these challenges, many donations were made to the museum, some of which are still part of the museum collections today (National Museum of Namibia 2003). Therefore, it is evident that there are many people who have contributed to the shaping of the museum from its inauguration in 1907. Amongst these have been farmers, scientists, and enthusiasts with a keen interest in the past (National Museum of Namibia 2003). Most of the museum collections, however, have not been studied to any significant extent. Therefore, it is vital to critically reflect on the history of these collections to understand how it was created. Studying the history of the NMN collection is the foundation to decolonising the NMN collection.

The third change of the museum's name occurred in 1995, five years after political independence. It then became known as the National Museum of Namibia (National Museum of Namibia 2003). The NMN entity was originally housed in the old Germany Fort. Since 1980, Arte Feste became the physical home of the museum. Due to construction activities, the Arte Feste is currently closed for renovations. As a result, the museum is temporarily situated on three campuses hosting various departments of the entity: (i) staff offices, administration, study collections, and the library personnel are based at the Museum ACRE, (ii) the display centres are based at the Owela Museum, and (iii) the third campus of the museum is the Independence Memorial Museum.

Administratively, the NMN is an agency of the Directorate of National Heritage and Cultural Programmes within the Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture. The institution is divided into two units, the Social Sciences and the Natural Sciences. These two units have various subsections under them. My research project addressed the management of archaeological collections, which is the responsibility of the Archaeology Subsection placed under the Social Sciences Unit. The Archaeology Subsection is the legal repository for archaeological collections within Namibia and presently houses more than 400 000 heritage objects. In addition, the institution has documentation on more than 3 500 archaeological sites (National Museum of Namibia 2005). This Namibian Museum is a product of western modernity which deployed Eurocentric approaches in the production of knowledge. Such colonial intellectual tradition is complemented by bias in museum representation and exclusion of the knowledge systems of the local population from which most museum collections and interpretations derived. These traditions continued even in the post independent Namibia era. I argue that this can be seen as a direct response to the previous exclusion of the community. Hence, it is time Africa, particularly Namibia, decolonises colonial traditions to fit into the African context of what a museum is.

Apart from the NMN which was my main case study, I also looked at two other museums within southern Africa. These were the National Museum of Botswana (NMB) and University of Pretoria Museums. The NMB is in Gaborone, the capital city of Botswana. This museum has a mandate to protect, preserve, and promote Botswana's cultural and natural heritage for sustainable utilisation. The institution collects, conducts research, conserves, and exhibits various artefacts for public education and appreciation (Michler 2004). The government of Botswana aspires to avail information relating to Botswana customs, Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS), ensuring that important values are handed over to Botswana's future citizens. These ideals are anchored on the hope that information and artefacts collected within the country would retell the story of Botswana to learners and the public (Rammapudi 2010).

The NMB was established in 1967, with the institution officially opening its doors to the public in 1968 as a private museum (Michler 2004). The birth of the NMB was a result of an alliance that was established between Mr Alec Campbell and Kgosi (Chief) Bathoen II. The two had specific responsibilities among them. The duty of Kgosi Bathoen II was to mobilise the collections, while Campbell took charge of being inaugural director of the museum (Rammapudi 2010). Since its

formation in 1967, the museum has changed from being a privately-run institution to a government institution. Such transformation occurred in 1976 (Rammapudi 2010). The NMB has sought to place itself in the context of the country's development, and to be the symbol of national unity and identity.

The NMB possesses major collections which include, among others, archaeology, natural history, art, and ethnology. The 2007 NMB annual report indicated that the archaeology section holds over 20,000 artefacts covering the period from the Early Stone Age through to the Late Iron Age. The range of collections includes stone tools, potsherds, ostrich eggshells, and beads. This rich list of artefacts is testimony to the rich time, depth, and variety of Botswana's archaeological records (Botswana National Museum 2007).

The third museum institution I focused on was the University of Pretoria Museums, which are well known for the curation of the Mapungubwe archaeological collection. This valuable collection was excavated by researchers from the University of Pretoria from the early 1930s (Steenkamp 2006; Tiley-Nel 2018). The collection was assembled in the course of over 80 years of excavations by the University of Pretoria. I must indicate, however, that the Mapungubwe archaeological collection extends beyond the University of Pretoria. This is because other academic institutions, among them the University of the Witwatersrand, have also conducted archaeological studies at the site. As a result, there are other portions of the Mapungubwe archaeological collections that are curated by several other institutions throughout South Africa. That noted, the archaeological collection under the guidance of the University of Pretoria Museums consists of ceramics, metals, trade glass beads, indigenous beads, clay figurines, bone and ivory artefacts. It also includes many potsherds, faunal remains, as well as other fragmentary materials (Huffman 2005).

The Mapungubwe archaeological collection is perhaps best known for the gold artefacts that were discovered on Mapungubwe Hill in 1932. The famous of these gold artefacts is the golden rhino. According to Tiley-Nel (2011), these gold artefacts have served as a catalyst for detailed academic research as early as 1933 after the University of Pretoria had successfully secured research rights from the government. Over decades, these excavations and scientific findings made were largely held within academia and rarely accessed by the general public. It could be argued, therefore, that the University of Pretoria was addressing this limitation when it established a permanent exhibition

in June 2000, thereby making the Mapungubwe archaeological collection to be more accessible to members of the public. The Mapungubwe Collection is on public display at both the University of Pretoria Museums as well as the Mapungubwe Gold Collection within the Javett-UP Arts Centre.

## **1.2 Contextualisation of the study**

As I argued earlier in this chapter, the colonial shell within which the NMN archaeology collection was established is still hardened, making it difficult for the seeds of decolonisation to grow. It is important to have an archaeological collection that is decolonised and is seen as having relevance to Indigenous people. However, it cannot be disputed that archaeology was a colonial discipline that aided efforts to undermine local Indigenous people. This history of the discipline tarnishes its image because of the western scientists whose ideologies were largely entrenched in colonialism. The major challenge to decolonisation is the continued dominance of colonial ideologies which have historically been shaped by western beliefs that defined the input made by scholars from beyond the shores of the African continent (Breuil 1948, 1949; Jacobson 1980; Holl 1990; Bruchac *et al.* 2010; Bruchac 2014). When most of the artefacts, if not all, were found and analysed, they were easily misinterpreted and taken out of context because of the Eurocentric approach. The voice of the African population was largely ignored. Therefore, prejudice against Indigenous people was the order of the day in how researchers conducted their studies, indicating the highly politicised context within which the archaeological collection was created. The emergence of archaeology in Africa was thus a political act with deep colonial roots (Bruchac *et al.* 2010). Decolonisation must thus be anchored on the need to give a greater voice to Indigenous people as well as being attentive to their concerns about how they were previously misrepresented by western scholars who viewed them as living on the land with no history. Some of the decolonisation efforts could potentially include the idea of establishing community museums or readjusting museum collections by being inclusive of those who were previously excluded because of racialisation. A community museum as a decolonial strategy acknowledges that objects cannot be disconnected from the past but rather are enduring symbols that connect the past with the present and future (McCarthy *et al.* 2019).

Misinterpretation of archaeological collections was thus widespread, and museums housing these records are equally tainted with colonial ideologies. It was in these museums that archaeological collections were put on display to continuously misrepresent the history of the continent. There is

a need to decolonise the knowledge we produce from the rich museum collections. This is a critical aspect to consider in debates about decolonisation. Such discussions must always be informed by the political context within which museums acquired, interpreted, and displayed the archaeological collections they hold in their records. This is the politicised context within which I conducted my study on the three southern African museums.

### **1.3 Research questions and aims**

My research study was guided by the following four research questions:

1. How were the archaeological collections created?
2. What processes were followed in decolonising collections in Namibian Museums?
3. What was the general value of research conducted on these archaeological collections?
4. What was the dominant theme in the archaeological displays of the National Museum of Namibia?

Informed by these four research questions, there were four main aims of my research study:

1. To understand the history of the archaeology collection to determine the extent to which their findings were accurate.
2. To assess decolonisation efforts at the National Museum of Namibia in comparison with selected museums from southern Africa.
3. To identify the themes of research that had generally been undertaken using the museum's archaeological collections.

### **1.4 Significance of the study**

Investigating the processes that defined the formation of archaeological collections at the three chosen museums in southern Africa was important to develop an informed understanding in terms of how such records came to exist as well as how Indigenous people had been portrayed. Findings from my research study thus added to the pool of knowledge that could form the strong

foundational basis for museum managers in their efforts to decolonise museum collections. The major benefit of my study, therefore, is to provide insight into what initiatives can be undertaken to decolonise museum collections.

Bringing such knowledge to light was vital also for policy makers to formulate policies that can aid in facilitating the decolonisation of archaeological collections. My research findings also have the potential of inspiring Indigenous people to participate in the decolonisation process, thus taking a keen interest in the discipline of archaeology. This is vital to ensuring that going forward, research is no longer dominated by foreigners. My research study, especially the concise historical analyses of how these archaeological collections came about, will provide a good source for other projects. As I indicated earlier, there is scarce literature on the detailed history of archaeological collections in Namibia as well as understanding what decolonisation efforts may have been undertaken in the country.

## **1.5 Chapter summary**

My focus in this chapter was to provide an overview of archaeological collections in Namibia and to highlight the importance of decolonisation effort in museums. I discussed, briefly, the historical and background of the NMN, NMB, and University of Pretoria Museums. I further presented the context within which most archaeological collections were accumulated, to understand the role of politics in such processes. It was important to provide the context within which any decolonial initiatives may be done. We cannot, I argue, divorce colonialism from the overall management and use of archaeological collections in southern Africa. It is suggested that the study is vital because it can be used by the museum collections in Africa to decolonise their museum collections. My research questions and aims were directly informed by the existing limitations in our knowledge. The following chapter deals with the comprehensive literature review of the subject matter.

## **1.6 Chapter outline**

This dissertation consists of five chapters. Chapter one introduces the purpose of my study, to give an orientation to what informed the project. I did so by first narrating a brief background, giving a description of the study area and listing the eight research questions and aims. In addition, I presented the significance of my study to researchers, museums, and African citizens in general.

Chapter two is a review of literature principally focused on archaeological collections and the initiatives to decolonise them. This literature provides a detailed historical and political content that is critical in understanding how archaeological collections accumulated, were curated, and studied over many years to provide what some can paint as biased interpretations that ignored the voice of Africans. Chapter three presents methodologies that I used to gather data for my study by interviewing former curators at the NMN and museum managers of the three institutions I used in my project. Among the methods I applied in my research were qualitative approach and, to a minimal extent, quantitative approaches. I present, analyse, as well as discuss my research data in Chapter four. I sourced such research data from the use of questionnaires sent to museum managers and interviews I held with former curators at the NMN. The focus of chapter five is to summarise the findings made and present conclusions to my study. I further present recommendations for further studies.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

It would not have been possible to narrow down the research problems addressed in this study without linking the chosen research questions with existing knowledge as found in literature. Archaeological collections must be understood within the colonial context in which they were developed. This is the same politicised context that must be well understood for the decolonisation of these collections to appropriately take effect. Such is particularly important, especially when considering that the concept of decolonisation has become widely debated around the world. To adequately provide the context within which my research is based, I extensively reviewed several published and unpublished sources that were derived from numerous disciplines. These sources stretch from history, archaeology, anthropology, sociology, to museum studies. Such an undertaking further helped to provide a broad overview of the scope of archaeological studies that have been conducted in Namibia within the context of my research project. As a result of this extensive review of literature, I was able to source important information with regards to decolonisation in general and specifically its importance within the museum sector. My main interest was on the curation of archaeological collections within the NMN, with a review of two museum institutions in Botswana and South Africa.

This literature review was significantly influenced, among others, by several publications from different authors: (i) Ndlovu (2009) contributed richly on the issue of decolonising the mindset of Africans – particularly those in the discipline of archaeology; (ii) Nyangila (2006) outlined useful explanations on the decolonisation processes; (iii) Bruchac (2014) particularly focused on reconsidering foundational knowledge on decolonisation; and (iv) Schmidt & Pikirayi (2018) brought forth functional clarifications of decolonisation with a greater emphasis on the role of community archaeology. The two publications authored by Nyangila (2006) and the one by Schmidt & Pikirayi (2018) highlighted the concept of decolonisation by arguing for community involvement in the process of gathering research data for exhibitions or information regarding materials kept in museum collections. Alpha Oumar Konare, a former president of Mali and currently serving as a Chairman of the African Union Commission of the African Union, once argued that “it is with the leaders of our villages, of our cultural tradition that we have to work with to find the solution” (Nyangila 2006). This significantly emphasises the potential value of engaging communities to ensure that museums and the collections they hold

are relevant in the areas where they are located. It also resonates with the need to consider the potential role of other stakeholders who have often been side lined in the overall management of archaeological collections within museums.

According to Maree (2007), the aim of reviewing literature is to provide a synopsis of the topic. The purposes of this being to link it with previous research within the scope of the identified research questions. With specific reference to my research project, it is important to note that there has been no critical study conducted to review the history of archaeological collections in Namibia. This means that there is a lack of literature on decolonising museums or museum collections in Namibia. This highlights the significance of my research study in the country like Namibia. My research study was based on the premise that it is through a detailed historical review that a framework for decolonising archaeological collections in the country could be found.

This chapter focusses on four main areas, namely: (i) the subject of decolonisation in general and within the context of museums, (ii) critical review of decolonisation with specific regard to museum collections, (iii) discussions on the general value of research done on the archaeological collections of the National Museum of Namibia, and (iv) review of the dominant theme(s) in the archaeological collection of the National Museum of Namibia.

## **2.2 Decolonisation of museums**

Museums are places that inspire interest and create educational experiences by providing access to collections, thus fostering a range of interpretations. According to Golding & Modest (2013), cited in Nghishiko (2019), museums and their collections are established for a variety of purposes. Amongst others, museums are meant to (i) serve as recreational facilities, (ii) be scholarly venues or educational resources, (iii) attract tourists to a particular region, and (iv) promote civic pride or nationalistic endeavour (see Bennett 1995). Given such a variety of purposes, the NMN, through the archaeological collection, aims “to give the visitor a picture of representative stone tools assemblages from the whole of the Namibian sequences, potteries, large historically important series of rock art copies and other materials” (National Museum of Namibia, 2003).

Although museums and their collections reveal remarkable diversity in systems, content, and even function, most of these institutions date back to the colonial era, including the NMN.

Hence, many museums have historical legacies that are deeply rooted in colonialism. In much of the sub-Saharan African region, heritage management and archaeology as we know them today were instituted by colonial regimes (Chirikure *et al.* 2017). It is against this background that the decolonisation of museums and their collections has become an important need in countries which were colonised. Namibia is one of those countries that experienced colonialism, causing havoc in the stability of the country and its indigenous population. Even after attaining political independence, most formerly colonised countries did not significantly amend their laws governing the management of cultural heritage and the wide variety of collections curated within their museums (Ndlovu 2009a, 2011a, 2011b; Maybury-Lewis 2002). Against this colonial background, I contend that museums and their collections are generally perceived as innocent spaces, when they stem from sometimes violent political projects. Therefore, there is a need for cleansing museums and their collections, thus helping to decolonise these institutions and their overall operations. It is my view that it should become a norm for those tasked with the role of managing museums to engage in critical discussions of decolonisation to make these institutions reflect the diversity of the country and to consider the voices of indigenous people within museum collections. Subsequently, I argue that undertaking such efforts to decolonise museums will make these institutions relevant within their local contexts, laying the foundation for the vital need of decolonisation.

As argued by Oland *et al.* (2012), decolonisation is a widely used concept that is relevant in the process of undoing the effect of colonialism. It is, therefore, a process through which colonial empires disintegrate, thus allowing colonies to achieve independence (Smith 1999, 2008). Decolonisation is thus a process whereby a newly reconstituted nation establishes and maintains its domination on matters of interest. Scholars in developing countries consider decolonisation as a process of struggle for ending colonial rule (Smith & Wobst 2005). From this vantage point, it is thus evident that decolonisation means liberating colonies, whereas in the West such hand-over of power usually means granting some form of political independence without economic justice (Wobst 2005). The substance of decolonisation is the actions of the colonial power, including all the strategies, tactics and measures used during a forced imperial retreat, which were taken with the intention of maintaining its own interest. This has, therefore, led to many situations where such supposed hand-over of political power became meaningless in the broader scheme of things and museums were not exempted from that limitation in terms post-independence changes. As a result, one finds that the major purpose behind the existence

of museums as well as the collections they curate and study have not transformed. As a result, they are still closely linked to the values that led to their establishments in the first place.

To effectively bring about decolonisation, seven key strategies are recommended by Maybury-Lewis (2002). These are: (i) critical analysis of social and political relations, (ii) collaborative consultation and research design, (iii) reclamation of cultural property, (iv) restoration of cultural landscapes and heritage sites, (v) repatriation of human remains, (vi) co-curation of archaeological collections, and (vii) devising more culturally accurate museum representations. I would thus argue that for decolonisation of museums to occur within the post-independence period, there is a need for previously colonised African countries to rebuild appropriate foundations that will facilitate meaningful changes. Not only that, but for the materials that were acquired over time, and for transformed management of archaeological collection to reflect the local setting, strategies need to be revised. This was the framework of my research project which I conducted in the NNM, focusing on the archaeological collections within this specific institution in the country that gained political independence from South Africa as recent as in 1990 (Gretchen 2001).

### ***2.2.1 Decolonisation within the context of archaeology and museums***

As indicated earlier, my principal focus on this project was on the archaeological collections curated within the NMN. The need for decolonising archaeology has been widely emphasised (Ndlovu 2009a, 2009b; Ndlovu & Smith 2019, Bruchac 2014). Decolonisation in archaeology seeks to untangle still dominant colonial influences on the discipline of archaeology by encouraging a much greater collaboration with Indigenous people. These Indigenous people have had their voices omitted for many years from archaeological investigations, even though they were largely used to provide cheap labour during the early days of the discipline (Ndlovu 2009b; Shepherd 2002, 2003). Decolonisation is also about reconsidering foundational knowledge and paying closer attention to the ethics of handling the heritage of the previously colonised countries (Bruchac *et al.* 2010; Bruchac 2014).

Within the museum context, decolonisation is also about giving voice to the Indigenous communities who were previously ‘voiceless’ due to largely exclusionary colonial policies and were thus not adequately considered in the museum collections. Even where some of their heritage artefacts were incorporated into museum collections, their voices were significantly excluded from the narratives explaining Africa’s rich cultural past. As I have mentioned before,

this resulted in the stories of Indigenous people not being told from their own perspectives. I would strongly point out that part of the decolonisation initiatives is driven by the continued dominance of western thinking. Noting the extent to which Indigenous communities have been excluded in the participation and contribution of archaeological knowledge, it can therefore not be disputed that western scientist have overly dominated archaeological projects conducted in Africa. According to Bruchac *et al.* (2010), these scientists have treated the entire African continent as a research site. The same has not changed since the publication of Bruchac *et al.* (2010). It is highly indisputable, I argue, that museum collections have not been spared from such colonial tainting. Hence, there is a need to decolonise these collections curated within African museums. Ndlovu (2009a) has previously argued that the top-down approach applied in most archaeological projects does not provide a conducive environment for decolonisation. To address the evident inequality, there is a need to provide a platform for different voices to devise an appropriate and decolonised museum collection. Unlike in the academia, collection managers who would want to 'eat the young' by preventing the emergence of new ideas and alternative voices either in the form of Indigenous communities/people or the young African researchers, would be derailing the decolonisation project (McIntosh 2009; Schmidt 2009, 2010; Karega-Munene & Schmidt 2010). It is only through such a transformation platform that the management of archaeological collections can arrive at a truly postcolonial practice.

Hence, and noting the westernisation of archaeology, it is significant that museums and their archaeological collections must be reimagined and decolonised, releasing them from the jaws of western mindsets that have defined its existence. By a new mindset, I mean creating our experiences, our archaeological interpretations and changing the narrative of what archaeology currently represents in the Namibian context. This should not only be focused on professionals and how they decide to display objects informed by the ideologies originating from foreign origins but should also ensure that archaeological collections housed in African museums are co-curated together with the Indigenous people. Museum curators must recover materials and the original narratives that were lost or made invisible during the colonial dominations. I believe it is through effective community engagement in museums that decision making processes in Africa will define a museum's role in post-independence society. This with regards to, among others, policy formulation, object collections and excavation, and exhibitions etc.

When it comes to museums, decolonisation may also be characterised by collaborations between researchers from former colonisers and colonies working together in conducting studies on the provenance of curated objects (Smith 1999, 2008). Moreover, it is important that more than collaborating in the interpretation of curated museum collections, researchers must engage in a dialogue concerning the future of these important treasures. According to Andah (1997), the collaborators may further decide where the objects are best placed. In this new mission of curating objects, the task of researchers from the West, specifically in instances where those from the West collaborate with those from previously colonised countries, is two-fold. First, historical research on colonialism must be linked with studying the provenance of colonial objects. Researchers control the tools to source such knowledge and can help those holding important cultural and historical objects to complete the accounts of these heritage resources. The second task is to become more vocal in public discussions and to argue for decolonisation. The extent to which decolonisation has remained unresolved varies, depending on the relationship between the former colony and colonial power. This shows that if the former colony depends on the policies of the colonisers, then topics of decolonisation will remain unresolved. It is thus encouraging that there have been ongoing debates about the need to decolonise, even though one cannot point at meaningful results that have been derived from such initiatives.

### **2.3 Decolonising archaeological collections within museums**

Untangling colonial influences in the archaeological collection housed at the NMN was a very important undertaking. This was especially so for the local Indigenous people who visit the museum and play a significant role in telling the ‘untold’ stories of the collection itself. Their lack of involvement and understanding is largely an indication of the existing inequalities with regards to access and representation in archaeology. Through increased representation, it is my view that we could better profile archaeological research in Africa. This will be beneficial in transforming its image from the one that searches for what was defined as valuable in the eyes of the ‘colonisers’ to a discipline that is concerned about the views of local communities in the interpretation of collections curated by museums. In that way, I argue that archaeology would be more representative of, and relevant to local concerns. After all, undertaking consultations with communities ensures that Indigenous people decide what role an archaeology collection must play. Curators need to decolonise their minds and collaborate with local communities to untangle the colonial influences in their museum collections.

Archaeology needs to focus more on sourcing knowledge that is held by Indigenous people through well-meaning engagements. Doing so helps challenge conventional archaeological theories and practices. The identity of who benefits from the results of archaeological research begs the question of how archaeological knowledge is sourced, shared between practitioners and those communities who constitute the subject of the study, as well as disseminated to the broader stakeholders. Archaeologists in sub-Saharan Africa are increasingly being challenged to demonstrate the capacity of their discipline to engage with Indigenous communities (Ndlovu 2009a, 2016, 2017a, 2017b, 2021; Schmidt 2009; Schmidt & Pikirayi 2018). An even greater challenge is for archaeologists to ensure that they do not only network with these Indigenous communities but doing so goes beyond the ‘working together’ approach. Implementing this will provide for a genuine and an equal collaboration between archaeologists and communities (Ndlovu 2016, 2021). These transformative changes in the discipline of archaeology are critical because even the public has become very sceptical about how archaeologists have generally studied the past, especially where the scientists fail to consider views of Indigenous populations in the specific studies being conducted by them. According to Kaya & Seleti (2013), indigenous knowledge involves participatory perspectives and methods which absorb knowledge and beliefs of indigenous people in the design and management of research projects in their own environment. Thus, Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) are rooted within local community memory and rely on discourses that do not normally find space in the conventional museum. IKS are bodies of knowledge held by indigenous people from specific geographical areas that have survived through different means for many years (Altieri 1995). Hammersmith (2007) defines IKS as local knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society. He further explained that IKS are knowledge forms that have failed to die despite the racial and colonial assault that they have suffered at the hands of Western imperialism.

Incorporating IKS in Africa has played a critical role in helping to transform the practice of archaeology. What I mean here is that IKS has helped Africans in transforming the practice of archaeology in Africa because it may represent in one sense traces from the past. Over the years different approaches, both theoretical and practical, have been applied in understanding how archaeology is practised in African communities. This proves that the use of IKS will generate new ideas that will fit in with contemporary practices in archaeology. IKS can thus help African archaeologists to look at archaeology from an Africa perspective, helping us to move away from the Eurocentric version of archaeology. This is because IKS are forms of knowledge that

the people of the formerly colonised countries, like African countries, survived on before the advent of colonialism (Hammersmith 2007).

It should be clear that IKS are more than just a displaying of the knowledge and belief systems of the formerly colonised. They are one of the forms of responses to the myth of Western superiority. In addition, IKS are a way in which the formerly colonised countries are reclaiming their dignity and humanity that they had been robbed of by colonialism. IKS has thus allowed scholars to have insights into past glories and achievements of the formerly colonised countries in Africa, the architectural successes of the pre-colonial period. Bhebe (2000) pointed out that structures like the Great Zimbabwe monument, that has been declared a World Heritage Site, are a clear indicator of the architectural skills of the pre-colonial Shona who built it. Other archaeological sites that Black Africa takes pride in are Mapungubwe in South Africa, which is also inscribed as a World Heritage Site, and Manekweni in Mozambique (Garlake 1976, 1992). According to Chinn (2007), IKS are one of the crucial aspects that are helpful in our understanding of archaeology practices. Hence, and as I have ably indicated thus far, the value of IKS is important and can play a useful role in the decolonisation process. Its significance is anchored on the local communities taking an active part in archaeological studies. Participation of the local community is very important. In addition, IKS can ensure that we are able to devise proper management systems for the sustainable use of museums and their collections.

The role of IKS in archaeological studies is further emphasised by Pikirayi (2015). According to Pikirayi (2015), the discipline of archaeology needs to focus a lot more on local knowledge in collaboration with Indigenous people as well as other communities. Such an approach challenges conventional archaeological theories and practices because they are not considered to be the 'best' way of interpreting the past. Pikirayi (2015) further explains that it is important to question who benefits from the results of archaeological research as such is highly influenced by the aspect of how archaeological knowledge is disseminated and shared between practitioners and those communities who constitute the subject of study. By failing to share and communicate such knowledge, archaeologists have been in control of the pasts of others, and this is no longer acceptable. This is the political and academic context within which calls have been made for the decolonisation of archaeological collections curated at various museums in Africa. It is within this view that archaeology collections curated at the NMN must be reviewed and decolonised – and this was the subject of my research study. Pikirayi (2015) further added that instead of depending on the interpretation of archaeological record from the

usual theory-production centres, there is a need for archaeologists to open new dialogues. His argument was that doing so will lead to a development of well-defined criteria which will be used as a relatable tool to what archaeology means in an African context. Moreover, Indigenous communities will have a chance to interpret local archaeological practices – addressing the limitations of the past with regards to the discipline of archaeology. In addition, it is more for Africans to explore their own archaeological practices in their local contexts. It is from such an initiative that archaeologists can derive useful information to decolonise their archaeological practices and theories.

What is needed, therefore, is a considerable move from an approach that shuns the application of IKS in the attempt to study Africa's rich past. It is evident that African archaeology needs to decolonise itself completely and that one of the most important ways in which it can achieve this is by rejecting the philosophical inheritance of Western modernity, and the value set of the Enlightenment (Pikirayi 2015). Transforming archaeology is critical because of the value the discipline has around the world (Ndlovu 2009b). Among such values is that archaeology can be the lens through which we travel back into the past, discovering findings that could provide policy makers with useful contexts for future decision-making, thus affecting the lives of people (Sabloff 2008). Museums, especially those established prior to Africa's independence, should commence a systematic interrogation of the available documentation systems related to their archaeological materials. I am not suggesting that museums take this as a step towards replacing existing information with a counter narrative. Rather, I propose that they do this as a way of making their voices heard in the process of transforming how they have operated since their establishment. I would argue that a lot must thus be done in terms of the ownership of archaeological materials and documentation systems. This careful examination is, as Buthelezi (2016) has also argued, an essential part of efforts to bring about decolonisation. Buthelezi (2016) also described decolonisation as necessarily slow and painstaking, thus demanding much patience from those involved in the process. Decolonising a museum collection first requires that we evaluate the available information, reconstruct, and reveal the repressive strategies that define such materials. Thereafter, an epistemological order for constructing knowledge about the marginalised people is required and as well as arranging how these materials are studied and presented in the collections. In addition, and as I have alluded to thus far, decolonising particularly include museum managers involving Indigenous communities in decision making and understanding their narratives (Smith 1999; Buthelezi 2016). It is critical

that collections must incorporate Indigenous methodologies on how to handle and display some materials.

Ideally, museum collections, whether archaeological or not, need to be relevant to those living within their locality. It is thus critical that those curating such collections understand the area within which the institution is found. If they have roots within those communities, like having a representative from the community or collaborations with the community, such a task becomes even easier, to some extent. This is not to say communities are homogenous, sharing the same views among all of them. A strong relationship with communities must, however, be informed not just by a process of ‘ticking a box’ to say we consulted with them, but by highest levels of moral principles of consistency and honesty. According to Nyangila (2006), it is significant to ensure that the traditions of communities are fully respected. Museum managers must also buy into the notion that these traditions can make a valuable contribution to a museum’s existence. Furthermore, museum officials need to always act in good faith and for the common good of all the stakeholders.

Abed el Salam *et al.* (2017) noted that museums had tirelessly developed activities that involved communities, demonstrating the positive role of museums on the issue of culture and heritage development. Rather than simply being confined to a defined museum space, the idea that museum initiatives should involve the community goes beyond the traditional boundary to look at other issues such as the reduction of poverty, conflict resolution, conservation of building heritage, community participation, and tourism. The management of museums cannot be divorced from the challenges ravaging neighbouring communities. These collaborations are all done within the community context. I argue that, similarly, the NMN should be able to replicate such initiatives within the locality in which it exists.

Engaging communities in archaeology and heritage management is part of a more ethically responsive and socially responsible heritage practice (Colwell and Joy 2015). Engaging with communities ensures that management consider local contexts, needs, and dynamics. Some methods attempt to bring communities into conservation efforts to transfer control over heritage to communities through participatory methods and Indigenous archaeologies. In addition, engaging the communities can be used as a tool to empower those who are marginalized by national and official heritage frameworks. Chirikure *et al.* (2017) argued that enabling communities to engage with and manage their own heritage is itself a mode of decolonisation. Such efforts counter colonial legacies of alienation from archaeology and

critically engage with the top-down governing structures inherited from colonialism that still shape heritage management in many African countries.

Nghishiko (2019), highlighting other benefits of museum collections, argued that museums possessed materials and information that could be used in enriching and improving the school curriculum in various disciplines. What is important, therefore, is for those within the education sector to work closely with museum experts to assess how the available educational resources in museums can be integrated into school curriculums. I concur with this viewpoint regarding the high education value of museum collections and would, add further, that it would be helpful in the continuous efforts to decolonise museum collections. Educational visits to the museums have triggered the museum experts to re-evaluate and redevelop their collections. Hence, museum experts have become more creative by incorporating the available educational resources in the museums through permanent and temporary exhibitions and displays. Therefore, I strongly believe that a well-articulated museum educational programme will form a strong component in the overall educational system of any given society.

It should be clear that the strength of a museum collection lies in its ability to respond to the needs of communities within its area, making a positive contribution in solving existing societal problems. Therefore, involving communities ensures that museum collections gain the much-added relevance, with views on their value coming from different voices (Nyangila 2006). The reality on the ground, however, is that the relationship between communities and the museum institutions, together with the collections they curate, is asymmetrical. This is a clear indication that decolonisation efforts have not yet brought about equality. As a result, there is still no adequate relationship between the museums and communities in most localities, especially the communities who might have direct relationship with those who produced the collections curated within these institutions.

Many museums in Europe, especially those in Greece around the 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> century were temples that became a meeting place where different issues were discussed. Not only that, but new breakthroughs in political crafting as well as domestic and industrial crafts were invented, tested, and put into practice (Andah 1997, cited in Nghishiko 2019). Museums are more than collection hubs, they are institutions that aim to protect, exhibit and conserve cultural and cultural heritage. In addition, decolonising a museum involves decoding collections held within it, including archaeological collections, from the colonial meanings in which they have been interpreted. This further emphasises the role that can be played by considering the voices of

the Indigenous populations that were historically excluded from the management of collections housed at museums.

Other than excluding the Indigenous voices from the interpretation of archaeological collections curated at museums around the world, another reality to contend with is that archaeological collections housed in museums were ‘stolen’ from their owners (Gerstenblith 2016, Nilsson 2013, Schoeman & Pikirayi 2011). This has often led to resistance by communities, as they associate archaeology with theft and destruction of cultural material, and the desecration of cultural heritage including sacred places. Communities are also increasingly sceptical about the knowledge claims of a discipline that is framed within a context of Western system of values and whose relevance is not apparent (Chirikure 2017). It is therefore evident that African archaeologists are not yet operating in a fully post-colonial context as colonial traditions have continued to define the discipline.

Different reasons have been used to account for this concerning act of stolen materials which are today curated at many museums around the world (Mitchell 1998; Mitchell *et al.* 2002). One of the reasons given is that they were taken in the name of conducting scientific studies. For instance, archaeological collections and ‘human remains’ of the Herero and Nama people were stolen from Namibia and exported to Europe during the early days of colonial rule. The stolen materials are housed in museums of various European countries. There have been several politically inspired heritage projects aimed at the repatriation and restitution of these materials to their home countries in Africa. Moreover, Namibia has been participating in a few of these projects aimed at the repatriation and restitution of these materials. Among these projects is the Genocide Project which is about returning the ‘human remains’ of Namibians and paying reparations for the victims (Melber 2014; Shigwedha 2016; Forster 2020). This project has led to the on-going debates about the repatriation of the ‘human remains’ in Namibia. The genocide issue is one of the good examples that links politics and archaeology in the country. The link between politics and archaeology is defined in terms of the social clash between the directly affected communities, with the Herero and the Nama pitted on one side and Namibia as an impacted country on the other (Adhikari 2008; Hamrick 2013; Bomholt Nielsen 2017; Brock 2019). Therefore, it is concerning that affected communities and Namibian authorities have not found a common ground as to how the process of repatriation and reparations should take place. This has resulted in these communities not having the much-needed support from the Namibian

government in terms of negotiations as they present their demands to the former colonisers for compensations or reparation.

African critiques of Western-style museums and heritage structures have argued that a new, decolonised model for archaeology and heritage management can and should be found to bring about meaningful decolonisation (Chirikure 2021; Schmidt & Pikirayi 2016). Furthermore, it should be noted that some African scholars have particularly noted that it is critical to develop African modes of responding to heritage challenges, rather than adopting present-day Western models of management (Ndlovu 2009a, 2011a, 2011b). For example, Jopela (2011) argued for a revitalisation of African traditional custodianship based on customary rules and laws while holistically integrating nature and culture (see Abungu *et al.* 2016; Laotan-Brown *et al.* 2020).

The birth of national museums in Africa matched with the continued spread of colonialism and imperialism. As a direct result, this concept of museum institutions became part of a system that validated and justified oppression, dispossession, and racial prejudice against indigenous people. In addition, colonialism and imperialism determined what is collected and what is documented from the local cultures which is a way of exerting power and control over locals (Dubow 2006; Lord 2006; Mignolo 2011; Chipangura & Marufu 2019). For this reason, Mignolo (2011) argued that national museums can be decolonised through epistemic and aesthetic disobedience through undoing earlier ways of knowledge production in collection practices and exhibitions. This means national museums, especially those in Africa, must do away with the colonial approach of knowledge production and use their own African narratives in collection practices and exhibition development. Mignolo (2011) further asserted that most national museums, particularly in Africa, continue to reproduce colonial forms of knowledge, resulting in Africans being oblivious to colonial domination in knowledge production and the role this dominance plays. When it comes to research, such an approach is alarming because it means that African archaeologists may simply be holding a perception that what they are doing is just 'science'. Such an approach will result in these African archaeologists being more focused on conducting various investigations about the past, with no bearing on the present. A good example is Stone Age archaeology, where although considerable research is in progress, this period of archaeological research remains largely unaffected by contemporary politics giving its practitioners a comfort zone. In addition, this gives a sense of moral or ethical victory over Iron Age archaeologists, who must confront the current political environment (Pikirayi 2015). It is further interesting to note that Stone Age archaeology is dominated by White

archaeologists while Iron Age is largely composed of African scholars. There are indications, despite efforts towards adopting a transformative agenda, that there is considerable resistance by archaeologists. As I have ably argued, archaeology has colonial origins, and it is this colonial burden that archaeologists seek to rid themselves off through decolonisation efforts. This is achieved by identifying characteristics associated with a post-modern discipline which makes it difficult for archaeologist to adapt to the transformation (Ndlovu 2009a, 2010, Ndlovu & Smith 2019).

Kaya *at al.* (2013) and Nyangila (2006) have argued that in the process of helping to decolonise archaeological collections, the long history of classification, categorisation, and interpretation was based on the cultures of that colonial period. This can either be looked at as curiosities or as intellectual subjects that created a situation where national museums located in Africa must constantly struggle for relevance. Such struggle for relevance is also extended to the same Indigenous population whose heritage was stolen and curated at various museums around the world.

Beyond aiming for a representative voice within the museum set-up, the text and language used in museum exhibitions also need to be considered as part of the decolonisation process (Shoennberger 2019). Languages are among the most precious forms of cultural heritage which I believe play a huge role when it comes to exhibitions. How museums engage with visitors who speak different languages through exhibition and displays matters. In general terms, text in exhibitions is often perceived to be neutral and authoritative narratives of objects displayed (Shoenberger 2020). Moreover, the choice of language for text is also a political act. What language is used in the text will also create barriers or tear them down depending on how it is used. Some museums around the world are beginning to provide text in other languages than the dominant one within those localities. Hence this helped to address issues of connectivity, inclusivity and empowering the locality or the uneducated class that are not familiar with the dominant language. For instance, the Philadelphia Museum of Art had Spanish language text in their 2016 exhibition about Mexican muralists to better connect with Spanish-speaking museum goers (Shoenberger 2020).

This is contrary to Africans in southern Africa, as they seem to generally prefer the use of English as they seem to gain status from doing so. In African countries like South Africa and Namibia, the educated elite almost speak no African language or native language in their houses. Similarly, they have children that cannot speak nor even write in their own African

languages. Thus, Africans are entrenching colonialisation, instead of seeking to undo the impact of colonialism on archaeology. Therefore, a passion for local cultures also needs to kindle so that locals will begin to take pride in what the local archaeological collections represent about their ethnicity and material collections. Otherwise, the huge gap between educated elites and the uneducated class will continue to widen which will make decolonisation difficult to realise at museums.

All in all, the decolonising project in Africa will have starts and stops unless each museum, cultural worker, and audiences have difficult conversations and reflections about the meaning of museums and who these institutions are intended to serve. Moreover, Africans should approach archaeology from their own narrative and move away from the Western approach.

What I have highlighted thus far is that the role of Indigenous people and the significance of conducting research on the archaeological collections curated at museums, noting their highly questionable origins, cannot be understated. Doing so is part of the decolonisation process. Most scholars have generally agreed that decolonising a museum collection means focusing on most, if not all areas, that contribute to the growth and the study of such materials.

## **2.4 Value of research done in the archaeology collections of the National Museum of Namibia**

African societies have complex histories of migration and settlement, which is intertwined with memory, history, and landscape (Abd el Salam 2017). The documentation, provenance, and mapping of ‘cultures of orality’ demand approaches that are particular to the continent. African history is imagined differently in African contexts, and this should influence how we conduct our research and write about the past. Memory is part of African history, part of the African historical experience and landscape, and is African history-making. According to Schmidt and Patterson (1995), the written word is inseparable from the spoken one. Although both are valid sources, oral texts provide a more authoritative context and are a medium valued by those who preserve them. We have afforded printed texts a privileged position at the expense of the oral and this has shaped history-writing and the production of certain historical pasts. How we deal with inherent biases in the production of narratives on the African past is something Schmidt and Patterson (1995) define as how archaeology should be undertaken in non-Western contexts. Pikirayi (2015) explains that invoking memory in African history-making is also about how African indigenous knowledge systems affect and transform their pasts. It is about recognising

that knowledge is a universal resource because of its varied and diverse forms, which need to be preserved. Therefore, it is important for Africans, including Namibians, to write their own history and play a role in the interpretation of their own archaeology. This is important because the research conducted on their archaeological collections is not their own interpretation. That means the value attached is not fully worth it.

The emergence of archaeological research in Namibia can be described as having been the result of a web of connections between non-Namibian professional academic archaeologists and local amateur archaeologists (Gwasira 2020). Before independence in 1990, archaeological research in Namibia principally focused on the classification of Palaeolithic artefacts through the documentation work of the Cologne archaeological project in the Brandberg Mountain (Gwasira 2020). It was noted that the Cologne archaeological project in Namibia began after the Second World War. This period could be, therefore, viewed as the beginning of professional archaeology in Namibia (Gwasira 2020).

According to Kuper, referenced in Gwasira (2020), the attitude of Germans after the Second World War was not to have a permanent presence in its former colonies. Germany had lost its territories, including Namibia, and hence had no direct control of activities that could be established in the country. South Africa took over from the German colonial rule at that time, under a mandate and therefore, institutions of heritage management were controlled by South Africa thereafter.

At that time, the Cologne archaeological project had continued operating even during the South African colonial rule. I should mention here that the Cologne archaeological project did not develop out of an interest in cultural studies. Rather, it was Gustav Schwantes's fascination with succulent plants that brought the inspiration. Gustav Schwantes was a prehistory professor at the University of Cologne (Gwasira 2020). He had been introduced to the prehistory of then South West Africa by local farmers when he visited Namibia in search of succulent plants. The Cologne archaeology project was more interested in recording and dating the rock art rather than understanding the meaning of rock art (Gwasira 2020). This means the project was biased towards rock art archaeology.

According to Gwasira (2020), two important characteristics of the Cologne archaeological research project in Namibia were noted. Firstly, it emerged as a multidisciplinary approach as a project. Secondly, its nature as a project meant that it was a temporary intervention which viewed Namibia as a field of extraction and not a site of expertise that is worthy of long-term investment in physical infrastructure for the development of the discipline. Based on this

characteristic, one can conclude that Namibia was not viewed as a centre of knowledge production where local human resources could be developed. In addition, it also meant that archaeological sites in Namibia were not perceived as centres of knowledge engagement. Therefore, and as I have continuously articulated thus far, other forms of knowledge production that were based in local communities were excluded. It is thus evident that archaeological interpretations done during this time were entirely Eurocentric because local communities were excluded. This is a foundation for decolonisation.

As time went by, material that was deposited in the collections grew, especially after research mainly by postgraduate students from Europe and South Africa who treated Namibia as a research site and not a centre for knowledge production (Gwasira 2020). Even in Recent years the research projects that are going on are mostly academic research of postgraduates mainly by non-Namibians. These research projects are mostly on rock arts and stone implements. Over the years different foreign institutions became depended to the NMN archaeology collection. For foreign institutions, the NMN archaeology collection remained a site for field research for external researchers, and as a result, the collection did not develop into a centre for knowledge production. It was rather a resource from which raw data and artefactual evidence were ‘mined’ and processed outside Namibia (Gwasira 2020). An exception, however, was made between 1979 and 1997. This was the period during which knowledge production became a big part of the museum’s archaeology. Academic papers in archaeology were published in the museum’s peer reviewed journal, *Cimbebasia*.

It is evident that before independence, and even way after independence, there was less value or no value at all attached to the research done in the archaeology collection. For the Namibians especially, it was rather the foreign institutions that benefitted. Therefore, there is a need to decolonise the collection from the roots. However, archaeology itself needed to be decolonised first. What I have been trying to point out here thus far is that the archaeology at the NNM is entirely rooted in colonialism. To decolonise the collection, efforts are needed from all areas of significance including research.

## **2.5. The dominant theme(s) in the archaeological collection of the National Museum of Namibia.**

Archaeology was introduced in Namibia through a web of professional and academic networks that had connections to the metropolises that colonised the territory (Gwasira 2020). According

to Kinahan (2002), Namibian archaeology developed in a political setting that was aimed at sustaining the view of the primeval. This is an approach that arrested development of the culture of African Indigenous people (see Kinahan 2005; Wallace & Kinahan 2011; Sandelowsky 2011; Wallace 2014).

The archaeology collection at the NMN was one of the first that the museum acquired when it was formed. It grew from a few stone implements to a collection of different artefacts. The archaeology collection at the NMN is the legal repository for archaeological collection in Namibia. As I mentioned in Chapter one, the NMN presently houses over 400 000 different artifacts and it managed to document or record more than 3500 archaeological sites (National Museum of Namibia 2005). The archaeological collection represents a complete sequence of archaeology in Namibia. It comprises material from the three Stone Age periods, namely, the Early Stone Age, Middle Stone Age, and the Late Stone Age. Furthermore, Iron Age, pastoral archaeology, rock art, maritime archaeology, and historical archaeology are also represented in the collection (Gwasira 2020). The archaeology collection also includes ‘human remains’ that were collected from research based archaeological excavations while some were deposited by the police after they had been found to be of no forensic value. Unlike in the case of South Africa (Morris 1987), no ‘human remains’ collected from unethical contexts were observed in the archaeology accession book (Gwasira 2020). In addition, faunal, botanical, and soil samples from archaeological excavations are also part of artifacts in the archaeology collection.

The archaeology collection of the NMN reflects the consecutive colonial periods that Namibia experienced. As I briefly indicated in Chapter one, the collection was acquired through various ways, with the earliest artefacts being donated by private individuals (Gwasira 2020). Most of these donations were stone implements. These Archaeological collections were brought to the museum without supporting information except the name of the place where they were found, which was usually a farm name. Gwasira (2020) further explained that some of the earliest artefacts in the collection were donated by the Namibia Scientific Society. This happened when the administration of the museum was returned to the government in 1957 after a thirty-year period of being managed by the Namibia Scientific Society. All in all, archaeological artefacts that were collected before independence were either collected by non-Namibian archaeologists who had research projects in Namibia or donated artefacts. Following the end of the colonial rule, archaeological collections largely accumulated from field expeditions still directly linked to colonialists, due to the dominant role being played by

archaeologists from Germany and South Africa. The National Museum archaeology collection thus presented a narrative of Namibia as a territory that was colonised (Gwasira 2020).

What is further evident from the accession book, therefore, is that the dominant theme in the archaeological collection appears to be stone implements dating back to the Stone Age periods. However, most of the archaeological publications address the theme of pastoralism, with John Kinahan being the leading scholar in such research findings. Furthermore, there appears to be bias towards the collection of the Middle Stone Age by the researchers. According to the records in the accession book, these Middle Stone Age (MSA) collections were collected from South of the Namibian Red line, by different scholars or researchers. These mainly were collected by Germans. Such is not surprising, considering that Namibia was a German colony between 1884 and 1915 following the end of the First World War. Among these German scholars are Wolfgang Wendt and Peter Vogelsang who carried out archaeological studies at the Apollo 11 cave (Wendt 1974; Vogelsang 2008; Rifkin *et al.* 2015) as well as Peter Breunig who conducted archaeological studies at Amis Gorge in the Brandberg (see Pager & Breunig 1989).

What I have presented in this chapter can be captured in two critical points. First, that NMN archaeological collections are still largely reflective of colonialism, whether in terms of the artefacts that accumulated over the years or in terms of the scholars who conduct research in the country and donations made to the entity. Second, that the role of Africans in archaeological studies has historically been ignored. As such, we have not adequately benefitted from IKS. These are the two points, among others, upon which the need for decolonisation becomes more pronounced. It is then against this background, therefore, that I argue that there is a strong need to decolonise the archaeology collection at the National Museum of Namibia to dig out the roots of colonialism that have been attached to the collection even after the country gained its independence. At this point in time, decolonisation effort is the only answer to moving towards a decolonised collection.

## **2.6 Chapter summary**

With a specific interest to review literature addressing the content related to my study, I have presented various analyses of archaeological collections at NMN and arguments that have been made, in Namibia and elsewhere, as to the need for decolonisation. It is indisputable that we need decolonisation.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 3.1 Introduction

My decision to have a project focused on the archaeological collections curated at the NMN was particularly informed by two factors. First, that I am an employee of the museum and am specifically tasked with curating the archaeological collections. Second, due to my role within the institution, I have unhindered access to these collections. It was thus convenient to use the museum as the main case study for my research project on the decolonisation of archaeological collections. To provide a general comparative context, I also sourced research data from two other museums in southern Africa. These were the University of Pretoria Museums in Pretoria and the National Museum of Botswana in Gaborone. Due to logistical challenges, I decided to no longer have two museums from Zimbabwe: (i) Zimbabwe Museum of Human Sciences in Harare and (ii) Mutare Museum in Zimbabwe. It became difficult to maintain regular contact with the relevant museum officials, and this may have been largely because of the COVID-19 pandemic that resulted in most people working away from their offices where the situation allowed. The major purpose for considering the two museum institutions in South Africa and Botswana was to provide comparative analyses to understand how other museum entities within southern Africa have been dealing with decolonisation, if at all, and to extrapolate useful information that could be highly valuable for the NMN.

Mouton (2012) defines research methodology as the study of methods by which knowledge is gained (see Karakas 2008). According to Blanche *et al.* (2006), research methodology specifies how researchers may go about practically studying whatever they believe can be known in a specific research project. Meaning, the procedures by which researchers conduct their specified research projects using clearly defined set of methods of data gathering and analysing data. Methodology encompasses concepts such as qualitative and quantitative techniques that are applied in specific studies.

This chapter provides an insight into the administrative procedures I followed from the early phase of my studies and strategies I used to source the data I have analysed for my research project. This is important in ensuring that a critical assessment of my research findings can be made. I address nine aspects in this chapter. These are: (i) research approach, (ii) research

paradigm, (iii) research design, (iv) sampling, (v) data collection, (vi) data analyses, (vii) ethical considerations, (viii) reliability and validity, and (ix) theoretical framework.

### **3.2 Research approach**

When it comes to undertaking scientific research, there are scientific processes that every researcher uses to solve their research problem. These approaches, as set out in Neuman (2014), include exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory studies.. In exploratory research, the researcher scrutinises a new aspect of a topic for future in-depth study, whereas in descriptive study, the scholar seeks to address in depth a phenomenon being studied. Explanatory research builds on the exploratory and descriptive studies by dealing with answering the ‘why’ questions, wherein causes are discovered and documented (Neuman 2014). For my research project, I selected the descriptive approach as I deemed it suitable. This was because, through my research, I aimed to understand the politics of archaeology and to paint a picture of the decolonisation efforts, if any, done at NMN and other selected museums in Southern Africa.

Using the exploratory approach as a method to achieve objectivity in understanding the politics of archaeology and paint a picture of decolonialisation efforts at the NMN would have been difficult. This is because the area being researched on is not new, research on it already exists. In addition, my research was not necessarily intended to explore the themes of colonisation. Descriptive approach was the most suitable method as it seeks to shed more light into existing knowledge on the politics of archaeology. The explanatory method would not have yielded the desired results either, as the study did not seek to explain why there are traces of engagement between politics, colonisation, and archaeology.

### **3.3 Research paradigm**

This research project was largely focused on reviewing the archaeological collection of the National Museum of Namibia (NMN), which is the legal repository of all the archaeological research in Namibia. The collection consists of a long legacy of material culture from both pre- and post-colonial times.

The paradigm that underpinned my research study was the interpretivism paradigm. As argued by Goldkuhl (2012), interpretivism paradigm is mainly used in qualitative methods to help gain insight or in-depth understanding, contextualising information in social science research. In this methodological approach, the scholar seeks to describe and interpret data with the aim of

making sense of the collected data to explain the phenomena under study. Scholars that make use of this paradigm assume that access to reality, given or socially constructed, is only through social constructions such as language, consciousness, shared meaning, and positivism of social sciences. This philosophy emphasises the benefit of qualitative over quantitative analysis. Furthermore, interpretivist paradigm is based on the naturalistic approach of data collection such as interviews and observation.

### **3.4 Research design**

Research design is a set of methods and procedures used in collecting data and analysing measures of the variables in the research problem (Karakas 2008). It allows researchers to hone in on research methods that are suitable for the subject matter and set their studies up for success. The design of a research project directly explains the type of research, whether it is experimental, survey, correlational, semi-experimental, and review as well as its sub-type (that is, experimental design, research problem, and descriptive case-study).

I applied a mixed methodology approach in conducting my study, thus making use of both qualitative and quantitative methods. However, I applied greater emphasis on qualitative methodologies. This decision was largely informed by the fact that my research sought firstly to explore a phenomenon with a wide focus being the decolonisation of archaeology in southern Africa. I used a case study approach to help me in identifying patterns if any, to understand how curated archaeological collections were created in the three southern African museums I assessed in my study. Qualitative methodologies are perfect for explorative research (Pope & Mays 2000). *In addition, I used qualitative methodologies because of my interest in quantifying the extent to which there had been efforts to decolonise southern African museum institutions.* One advantage of qualitative methods in exploratory research is that it used open-ended questions and probing which gives participants the opportunity to respond in their own words, rather than forcing them to choose from fixed responses (Pope & Mays 2000). Therefore, I decided to allow my informants to have a voice throughout the dissertation, by quoting them verbatim in some of the instances. This approach was suitable for my research as it afforded me the opportunity for detailed reporting as the participants gave detailed and unlimited information without any restrictions which is what is required in order to address my research objectives, and this is consistent with what qualitative research seeks to do.

Qualitative research is broadly defined as any kind of research that produces findings not

arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification (Saldana 2009).

This is because researchers gain much more insightful understanding into the reasons behind how things have happened in the past because of the probing approach of qualitative methods. Qualitative methods are thus important because they are descriptive and best suited for social sciences. With specific reference to the qualitative methods, I principally used archival sources held at the National Museum of Namibia, the National Archive of Namibia, and the Namibia Scientific Society. The Namibia Scientific Society provides a platform for exchange and supplies information to local and foreign scientists and scientifically interested.

In addition, I used qualitative methodologies because of my interest in quantifying the extent to which there had been efforts to decolonise southern African museum institutions. I also used quantitative methods to group the six study participants. I did so through using a table form consisting of specific categories, that is, the institutions they are from and the methods used to get the information from them, such as interviews and questionnaires. Not only did quantitative methods help me to discover cause and effect, but they helped clarify conclusions that were drawn from findings, and results could be generalised.

Theoretical perspectives from literature were integrated in the research, such as addressing the aim to determine the themes that have defined archaeological studies and the impact they have had on museums.

### **3.5 Sampling**

The selection of which case study to review, who to interview and who to send questionnaires to was made using purposive sampling. In this type of sampling, the researcher uses their judgement to determine which cases to use (Neuman 2014). My decision in this regard was based on which cases will most likely provide me with more relevant information with regards to the politics of archaeology and any efforts, if at all, to decolonise archaeological collections within the NMN and other similar institutions in southern Africa. In addition, I saw purposive sampling fit for this research as it helps select members of the population with the right kind of data that this research sought to attain. Namely, the relevant long serving current and former employees at the three selected museums whose job description involves cataloguing and curating materials and employees who are trained in the field of archaeology.

It was through purposive sampling that I decided who to hold interviews with and who to send questionnaires to. This is even though Neuman (2014) argued that purposive sampling is not ideal when representation is required. In contrast to Neuman (2014), I argue that since the

selection of case studies is already limited to southern African countries, that already provided sufficient illustration of the decolonisation efforts that may have been initiated in the region. I decided that convenience sampling is not a suitable method because units of analysis need to be able to reveal data concerning history of archaeological collections, decolonisation efforts and research themes guiding studies at selected museums. To obtain the kind and quantity of data that addresses these objectives requires selecting units of investigation that will serve that purpose not what is convenient. Reasons being that the goal is not to obtain a representation, but rather to reveal information (Aprameya 2016).

Quota sampling, another methodological approach I could have used, was not a perfect fit for my research because results can be unreliable at times. This means that they can be bias and a skewed sample, making it non-representative of the entire population. In contrast, random sample makes it possible for everyone in the sample to have an equal chance of being chosen (Aprameya 2016). This is because the number of cases are not significant as representation is not the main goal, but rather, obtaining new theoretical insights and enhancing understanding on how materials are being curated, and information such as decolonisation efforts was one of the goals of this investigation. Neither is snowball sampling, because with this strategy of data gathering, referrals are not always accurate in obtaining the information required in the research study to answer specific research questions driving any specific study (Coyne 1997).

### **3.6 Data collection methods**

The choice of data collection methods is largely informed by the chosen research design. Considering that my research project applied both qualitative and quantitative approaches, the data collection tools applied to gather data were also mixed. The qualitative tool used was the review of two case studies. Yin (1994) defines a case study as an empirical inquiry that helps investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. Case studies as a research method or strategy have, however, traditionally been viewed as lacking rigour and objectivity when compared with other social research methods. This is because the insight derived on a contemporary phenomenon is within the boundaries of a real-life context, making it difficult to remain neutral. But because case studies use multiple sources of evidence, such as archival and interviews to generate more information on a single subject, they were of great value to my research study. The use of case studies was also important for my research project because findings from them could enable me to make generalisation with regards to the management of archaeological collections across Southern Africa countries. Furthermore, case studies are

widely used because they are likely to offer insights that might not be achieved with using other approaches (Yin 1994). This is because case studies provide answers to multiple questions to enable understanding of the subject in sufficient detail. Such benefit of using case studies thus served the aim of my research project which was to have in-depth insight into the politics of archaeology and establishing what decolonisation efforts have previously been undertaken at the NMN and the two other museums in Botswana and South Africa.

The qualitative technique of gathering data I used in my research was reviewing published and unpublished articles as well as responses attained using semi-structured interviews as well as questionnaires. I only applied quantitative methods in grouping the number of respondents to assess their responses. The main reason for me not significantly making use of quantitative methods was that my research data was not easily quantifiable. The type of data gathered from the different sources did not necessitate the need to numerically assess the information. I only found quantitative methods to be beneficial in condensing large volumes of information from articles and responses provided by interviewees and respondents. Doing so thus enabled me to obtain an indication on how often a certain theme of research defined archaeological studies at a certain museum. This was to obtain a general view on the degree of progress that might have been made in decolonising materials at the three selected museums. Furthermore, findings from the questionnaires and archival records revealed patterns of decolonisation efforts commonly used in the three museums that were investigated. So, in all respects, a large aspect of my four research questions could only be addressed with qualitative research tools.

The other data collection method I considered as potentially having great value in helping me address the aims of my research study was analysing site records, accession book, loan forms, and archaeology permits issued by the NMN institution. This was to extrapolate information that had been previously gathered by other researchers with relevance to my research project. Doing so enabled for the findings to be objective, since not all data was initially collected and presented by myself.

With regards to qualitative methods, I applied semi-structured interviews to collect further data as informed by my chosen research questions. Semi-structured interviews, as a qualitative data collection strategy, enables the researcher to ask informants a series of predetermined but open-ended questions (Dingwall *et al.* 1998). Open-ended questions are phrased as a statement which requires a longer response, thus not limiting the respondent. These kinds of questions are not answerable with just a simple yes or no. Semi-structured interviews were most suitable for my

research study as they allowed me the flexibility to draw out the respondents' wisdom with a set of follow-up questions. In addition, these questions allowed me to have control over the direction of the conversation by having pre-arranged questions. This is so that the respondents do not shift the focus of the conversation into a direction that is irrelevant to the research or evade answering questions that this research sought to answer. The balance is therefore maintained, which is not possible with unstructured interviews (see Gregar 1994; Cresswell 2014; Cypress 2018; Ahlin 2019).

My further preference for using semi-structured interviews was also because they ensured that responses are objective. This is because only the respondents reveal their feelings, without me correcting any of their factual errors. I interviewed two curators who previously managed the archaeological collections at the NMN – which is now my current responsibility within the institution – and two museum managers. Due to locational restrictions, only those interviewees based in Windhoek, Namibia were interviewed in person, as I had easy access to them, even with the COVID-19 restrictions that were being implemented in the country. I argue that this limitation of not being able to interview informants based in Botswana and South Africa did not negatively affect the conclusions drawn from my research project. I was still able to gather enough detail even using questionnaires that I sent to the two museum managers in Botswana and South Africa. Therefore, questionnaires emailed to the two museum managers in Botswana and South Africa contributed to the conclusions drawn. It was my view that questionnaires were the next suitable method of data collection to make up for the inability to use semi-structured interviews with these two museum managers. Furthermore, the research study benefitted from the use of various methods in an effort to gain in-depth insight into the subject and not to be limited by one method of data collection only. I could have made use of telephonic interviews, but I considered these to be impersonal and thus preferred to use questionnaires (see Block & Erskine 2014; Vogl 2013; Patten 2016).

Questionnaires, while they were convenient under the circumstances introduced by COVID-19 travel restrictions, do not allow for discussion nor do they make provision for one to ask follow-up questions on answers given (see Kader 1994). At a much later stage, sometime after the informant could have given a specific response, only then could a follow up question be asked. This becomes a significant limitation with the use of questionnaires, as the respondent may no longer have the full details that informed their answer to a specific question. It is evident, therefore, that questionnaires do not allow for discussion because they do not make provision for the researcher to ask follow-up questions on answers where more details are

considered useful compared to interviews. Broadly speaking, there was similarity between the questionnaires and the list of questions I used for the semi-structured interviews. I argue that using a variety of methods to gather data allowed me greater variety in terms of the information I was able to gather. I thus gained an in-depth insight into the subject.

As per ethical principles, I took specific precautions during my data collection period. First, all responses given by my informants were used only for academic purposes as specified in the letter of consent each of them had to review and sign (see Appendix E). All interviewees were formally briefed and informed that they could withdraw from the study at any period if they so desired to do so for whatever reason, without any information they provided being used in the study. Each interviewee was asked to sign a letter of consent, and a guarantee was given that none of the study participants would be identified by name. Instead, I coded all names of the informants with consecutive numbers. Second, information derived from these data collection methods was treated with utmost confidentiality. Other than their analyses in my dissertation, the information concerned shall not be publicly accessible other than to myself beyond the competition of the research project I conducted. The same principles were applied in my use of questionnaires.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

Data analysis is a process of inspecting, cleaning, transforming, and modelling data gathered during the research phase with the goal of highlighting useful information, thus suggesting conclusions and supporting decision making (Tabachnick & Fidell 2007). It consists of examining, categorising, tabulating, or otherwise recombining the evidence to help address the initial propositions of the study (Ader & Mellenbergh 1999). An analytical tool I significantly used in assessing my data was content analysis, Krippendorff (2013: 24, referenced in Drisko & Maschi 2016), defines content analysis generally as “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the context of their use.” Reviewing content is described by Neuman (2014) as examining information and recording findings using a system. Essentially, data is manipulated to describe what the data reflects in relation to the aspect of the topic being studied. This technique was useful in my research study because it helped to identify and randomly sample content related to decolonisation of archaeology collection for reviewing. In using content analysis, I was able to track down, record, and interpret the appearance of concepts, and theme from different literature. Not only in literature, but also in content communicated through the interviews and

questionnaires as they helped probe into the opinions of curators and managers on decolonisation efforts that may have been initiated at selected museums within southern Africa.

The content of these resources were recorded, taking note of similarities and differences and then interpreted in order to highlight what they mean with regards to the research objectives. Qualitative approach was appealing as this research used tools such as case studies to enable explanation building. Interviews and questionnaires were used to understand the frequency of opinions relating to the decolonisation of archaeological material and to allow conclusions to be made on the Namibian's decolonisation of collections as well as the method of scrutinising historical archival to highlight patterns.

### **3.8 Research ethics**

Being ethical in any research study is highly important. It is thus critical that researchers are honest and respectful to all individuals who are affected by their studies or the outcomes from such projects (Gravetter & Forzano 2009). To ensure that I conduct my work in the most ethical manner, I secured ethical clearance from the University of Pretoria's Faculty of Humanities Ethics Committee (see Appendix A). I achieved that by addressing all the necessary measures aimed at ensuring that I conduct myself appropriately when I source and analyse data and that all my research informants are always given much respect. Therefore, I had to ensure that they had given consent before their participation in my research study, guaranteeing them that they had a right to end their involvement at any time should they consider it appropriate to do so. In addition, I promised them that their identity shall not be revealed in my presentation of data for confidentiality purposes, confirming to my informants that there shall be no likelihood of harm caused by their participation in my research study. This reflects how honest and fair I was in how I dealt with my informants throughout my research study, as well as respecting individual's autonomy.

Besides the ethical clearance secured from the University of Pretoria; I further received the necessary approvals from three other institutions. These were the National Museum of Namibia where the archaeological collections forming a major component of my study are curated, University of Pretoria Museums and the National Museum of Botswana (see Appendices B, C, and D). These approvals allowed me access to undertake my research project within these above-mentioned institutions. Most importantly, I did not embark on any fieldwork until I had been offered the necessary approvals.

### **3.9 Reliability and validity**

Gravetter & Forzano (2009) describe reliability as the stability or the consistency of the measurement. Reliability can mean whether or not you get the same answer by using an instrument to measure something more than once. Research reliability is the degree to which methods produce stable and consistent results. Validity refers to the credibility of believability of the research. In other words, validity refers to how well a test measures what it is purported to measure (Gravetter & Forzano 2009).

As I mentioned earlier, my research project was case study based on the archaeology collection curated by the NMN, NMB, and the University of Pretoria Museums. Despite the advantages of the case study method, its reliability and validity remain doubtful. To enhance the validity and trustworthiness of the findings presented in my dissertation, I used construct validity because the study is based on existing theories and knowledge. Construct validity indicates the extent to which a measurement method accurately represents a construct (Gravetter & Forzano 2009; Yin 1994). Furthermore, construct validity refers to the degree to which inferences can legitimately be made from the operationalisations in a specific research study to the theoretical constructs on which those operationalisations were based (Miles & Huberman 1994). What this means is that interpretation of the findings was done in such a way that they align to a large extent with theories and knowledge that already exist. This was done to ensure that all aspects of the concept under study were covered in the investigations, interpretations, and presentation of findings.

### **3.10 Theoretical framework**

Theory is a term used to refer to a description of a certain social phenomena, by identifying several factors to pass a counterfactual test for casual relevance and whose interaction effects should be taken into consideration (Abend 2005). Theories are thus useful in shaping, directing, and providing focus to a study. Although they are just concepts, they have significant impacts in any research study. As I articulated in Chapter 2, independent countries in Africa, which were formally colonised, are still reeling from the effects of colonialism. Even in countries such as Namibia, most of the theoretical frameworks that dominate archaeology have origins from colonial masters. As a result, Germany dominates because she colonised the country. Preference of foreign-derived theoretical concepts resulted in disadvantages such as the misrepresentation of the Indigenous people's interpretation of the material remains found by

archaeologists. This preference also led to the exclusion of the local people in the process of accumulating archaeological collections and their subsequent preservation. It was through such practices that Indigenous people felt alienated. It is, therefore, within this politically charged historical context that decolonisation has become highly favoured to address the ills of the past.

My research study was informed by Anthony Giddens's theory of structuration. This theory attempts to understand human social behaviour by resolving the competing views of structure-agency. Such appears to be useful in establishing a strong basis for the interpretation of material remains in archaeology – and such could be any objects that people created, modified, or used. For developing his theory, Giddens (1979) revised social interpretation terms and concepts to formulate his framework of studying the past. He particularly disagreed with structuralism and functionalism, which give priority to the object over the subject. This actively demonstrate that the subject, in this case the Indigenous people, should equally be given a voice rather than the archaeological artefact being left alone to tell the story of its existence. Giddens (1979) argued that the notions of structure and action presuppose one another with a dialectical relation between them. A fundamental theme of Giddens's thinking is that “social theory must acknowledge, as it has not done previously, time-space interactions as essentially involved in all social existence (Giddens 1979).

There is a dominant ideology in archaeology and heritage production that is contested by scholars. Writers such as Rassool (2000) challenge the representation of people in museums and postcolonial monuments. Hence, my research study aimed to understand the politics of archaeology and to assess the decolonisation efforts that may have been initiated already at the NMN while establishing the extent to which such efforts have also been initiated at selected museums within southern Africa. I argued from a viewpoint based on the principle that decolonising a museum collection gives a voice to Indigenous communities. I recommend that museum collections be decolonised through the public participation process, one in which all interested and affected parties are involved in determining what should be collected, stored, preserved, and conserved, not only within the NMN archaeology collection, but beyond the country too. Such a truly representative approach will ensure that records and collections reflect the history of Namibians, which is not the case at the moment. This is because collections were largely gathered by non-Namibians during the colonial era and the community or indigenous people are not even aware that their materials are at different museums. There is a need to incorporate the sub-altern voices of those who have been previously excluded. By this I mean giving a voice to the Indigenous communities who were previously voiceless or giving them

the platform to exist and allowing for their voice to be incorporated, thus helping to devise an appropriate and decolonised museum collection. Through such a platform, it is my considered view that the management of archaeological collections can arrive at a truly postcolonial practice. The importance of incorporating the sub-altern voices is to give equal chance; there should not, like in the academia, be collection managers who would want to ‘eat the young’ by preventing emerging and alternative voices either in the form of local indigenous communities or the young African researchers.

### **3.11 Chapter summary**

This chapter dealt with the methodology that I applied in my research study. I was able to then present various methodological aspects that influenced the outcome. The various methods used in the study were explained in detail, with supporting reasons given for their preference. I then further presented analytical tools that were used to understand the data I gathered. I also gave an insight into the theoretical frameworks that defined my research study. This is the window through which my findings must be understood.

## **CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

### **4.1. Introduction**

Reflecting on the main framework of the research project, my study focused on decolonising archaeological collection curated at the National Museum of Namibia (NMN) by getting an overview of how the collection was created and assessing decolonisation efforts that may have been initiated. I further wanted to identify themes of research that had generally defined the studies undertaken using the archaeological collections at the NMN. I did so in comparison with two selected museums from southern Africa. Informed by such focus of my research study, this chapter principally reviews the responses received from the former museum curators who previously worked with the archaeological collection at the National Museum of Namibia (NMN), museum managers within NMN, and managers from the other two museums in Botswana and South Africa. The two museum managers I engaged with were the Head of the University of Pretoria Museums (UPM), who is also tasked with the curation of the Mapungubwe Collection and Archive and the Head of the Department of Archaeology at the National Museum of Botswana (NMB). In addition, I made a significant use of archival documents from the NMN and the National Archives of Namibia to critically reconstruct how the archaeology collections were assembled through time. Data from the curators and museum managers was mainly sourced using the semi-structured interviews and the questionnaires.

My research study was thus informed by data gathered through questionnaires, interviews, and archival evidence. This had a direct bearing in terms of how I have organised the content of this chapter, using specific themes as informed by my research project: (i) establishment of the archaeological collection, (ii) decolonising museum collection, and (iii) the general value of research conducted on the archaeology collections. Responses from the informants is presented verbatim, to ensure that their voices are captured accordingly without misrepresenting them in any way. Recommendations made by correspondents are then coded according to their relevance to the subject matter and were used to create a framework useful for decolonising the archaeological collections.

### **4.2. Participants of the study**

To respect the ethical code, I had subscribed to during the data collection process, I am not going to identify any of the informants by their names. Instead, I applied specific codes to help

make a distinction between what they said during my interview or sourcing of the data using the questionnaires. Therefore, data presented and analysed in this chapter was gathered from six participants composed of two museum managers from the NMN – the Director and the Chief Curator for natural sciences, two former NMN museum curators who worked with the archaeological collections, as well as two managers from the UPM and the NMB. The six participants who provided valuable data in my study are not identified by name or the title of their position in the text. Rather, they are identified by codes I allocated to each of them. The museum managers from the NMN are coded as A1 and A2, the two former NMN curators are B1 and B2, while the NMB and UPM study participants are referred to as C1 and D1.

Altogether, I had access to six informants (4 through interviews and 2 through questionnaires). Those I interviewed were easily accessible to me, even under COVID-19 restrictions, as they are all based in Namibia. The two informants I sent questionnaires to via email are based outside Namibia, in Botswana and South Africa – countries I could not travel to due to the devastating spread of the COVID-19 virus resulting in countries instituting stringent lockdown regulations. Table 4.1 shows the number of respondents interviewed and those who responded via questionnaires, subdivided by various categories.

Table 4.1: Six informants who provided data analysed in my research study.

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Questionnaires</b>	<b>Total</b>
NMN officials	A1 and A2		<b>2</b>
Past NMN Curators	B1 and B2		<b>2</b>
NMB		C1	<b>1</b>
UPM		D1	<b>1</b>
<b>Total count</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>

### **4.3 Establishment of the archaeological collection**

Understanding the history of archaeological collections requires an extensive analysis of the past, to explore how the archaeological collection was created. Such a historiography further provides insights into what the general themes that define the archaeological collection are. It is expected that the general theme is also determined by those who were behind building the

collection. What I am also focusing on in this section is the extent to which communities are engaged using policies that may have been introduced. Such policies further determine the extent to which archaeological collection is or is not accessible to the public. The last major aspect I shall focus on under this section is the discussion of whether there are any challenges experienced by those in charge to manage their archaeological collections.

### ***How long ago was your archaeological collection created?***

The first major theme of my research was to find out the historical origins of the archaeological collections curated at the museums that formed part of the study. It became evidently clear, as articulated by all six participants, that archaeological collections of the three museums had roots to a period well before the political independence of their respective countries. This was not an unanticipated discovery, as I had already presented the general history of archaeology in Chapter 2. Namibia became independent only in 1990, and thus became the last country in southern African to attain freedom after the withdrawal of the South African government which had managed the country from the end of the First World War (Townsend 1921; Crowe 1942; Smith 1974; Katzenellenbogen 1996; Chamberlain 2014; Craven 2015). As seen from the records, the earliest archaeological materials that were collected in Namibia date back to 1914 when the country was still under the German authority. In the case of South Africa, it was not until 1933 when excavations began at Mapungubwe, that archaeological collections from the site began to be curated at the University of Pretoria (Huffman 2005; Tiley-Nel 2011). This was before the formalisation of Apartheid in 1948. According to respondent C1 from the NMB, Botswana began accumulating archaeological collections well before their political independence which was attained in 1966.

As articulated by Respondent ‘A2’ from NNM, who is currently serving as one of the museum officials at the institution, *“The Museum collection was developed during the colonial times, from 1884 when German occupied South West Africa.”* The interviewee also added that *“The collection further developed during the British and South African colonial empires. The collection was first a private collection before the collection was handed over to the State as the custodian for national collection. After the independence of the Republic of Namibia, the State Museum was renamed to the National Museum of Namibia.”* Respondent ‘A2’ further stated that early collection was donated to the State from private ownership. What this indicates is that there is a much greater likelihood that such collection is interpreted in such a way that greater control over interpretation rests with the colonial voices. To corroborate this viewpoint

from Respondent 'A2', I also observed in the Accession Book, colloquially called 'B' book, that some of the archaeological materials recorded date back to 1914 when Namibia was still a German colony before being handed over to South Africa by the League of Nations at the end of the First World War (Townsend 1921; Crowe 1942; Smith 1974; Katzenellenbogen 1996; Chamberlain 2014; Craven 2015). The Accession Book came to be known as the 'B' book because archaeological materials were accessioned with a letter B. This date of 1914 entered in the Accession Book for some of the archaeological collections was long before the country made transition to independence in 1990. Respondents 'B1 and B2', who are both former NMN curators, further emphasised that indeed, the collection was established during the colonial era. Respondent 'B1' a previous curator at the NMN remarked that *"the archaeology collection was one of the collections that was established during the pre-independent Namibia during the German colonial rule."* While Respondent 'B2', another previous curator at NMN, stated that *"the collection was created before Namibia gain its independence."* This clearly shows that the former NMN curators are in support of the view I confirmed from the 'B' book that the archaeology collection curated at the NMN is colonial originated collection.

The major argument to highlight here, therefore, is that archaeological collections at NNM in Namibia, NMB in Botswana, and the UPM in South Africa, date to the colonial period. This is further confirmed by the review of the Accession Book ('B' Book). Some scholars have argued that mainstream archaeological practices have historically been shaped by western ideologies (Holl 1990; Bruchac 2014; Hicks 2020). Colonial traits have, therefore, significantly defined the archaeological collections in southern Africa. Even the legislation laws that came to determine the curation of these archaeological collections were derived from ideologies originating from outside the African continent (Ndlovu 2011a, 2011b). According to Lilley & Soderland (2015), any archaeologists working with these archaeological collections, regardless of their nationality or geographic focus, have to manouver through the politicised history of how they were created. As it can be expected, the footprint of colonial government is still present in the archaeological collections. This is a further illustration of the colonial roots which are evident in archaeology, a discipline with roots from beyond the African continent. What the history of archaeology indicates, therefore, is that western scientists have always exerted control over archaeological findings. The fact that colonisers were the people determining the history of past civilisations does not only reveal that bias exists in how we understand certain cultures. It further provides insights into how archaeological collections were created within the colonial domination, confirming the colonial roots of the discipline of archaeology. For

many people, therefore, archaeology is associated with the colonial era while also being a discipline that is defined by Eurocentric approaches. These were the people determining the interpretation and presentation of archaeological collections, revealing the bias they would have brought to their work.

***What are the general themes (i.e., time period, area of origin, etc.) that define your archaeological collection?***

In addition to assessing the periodical origins of the archaeological collections housed at the three museums of Namibia, Botswana, and South Africa, the collections came to life with materials sourced from donations and collections by both archaeologist, amateur archaeologist and non-archaeologist which were mostly not Africans. I further had specific questions asked to the informants to understand the themes that characterise the respective collections. As per the four respondents with previous ('B1', 'B2') as well as current ('A1', 'A2') links to NMN, the themes that define the archaeological collection at the museum are largely stone tools dating back to the Middle Stone Age (MSA). I confirmed the same from the Accession Book, noting that it is archaeological materials dating back to the Stone Age that are predominant in the collection, with the MSA materials most represented. According to Responded 'B1', the reason behind the dominance of the MSA materials was because amateur archaeologists, who were not trained in the discipline but were enthusiasts with a keen interest in the past, had a bias to stone implements that were collected as artifacts. It might be that the MSA stone tools had a greater appeal, for whatever reasons, to these amateur archaeologists.

Respondent 'D1' from UPM in South Africa indicated that the main theme that defines their archaeological collections is Iron Age period, between AD 1 000 and AD 13 000. This bias can be explained by the fact that the archaeological collections and the accompanying archive at UPM is from Mapungubwe, a well-known Iron Age site in Limpopo Province which is the locality where social complexity began in Africa (Gardner 1962; Huffman 2000; Chirikure *et al.* 2015; Tiley-Nel 2018). The Mapungubwe cultural landscape, as it is now known, was the forerunner of the famous town of Great Zimbabwe (Huffman 2005). Unlike the archaeological collections from the NMN or those from the UPM, in which a single theme defined their artefacts, the NMB collection is characterised by a combination of different themes. According to Respondent ('C1'), it is mainly the Early Stone Age, Middle Stone Age, and Iron Age periods that are well represented in the materials curated by the institution. The reason behind

this might be based on the interest in archaeology having begun in very early periods in Botswana.

***Is there a community engagement policy that governs the process through which all the archaeology collections are managed?***

From knowing the general period from which the archaeological collections date to, and the general themes that define the said collection, I further intended to establish the extent to which the three museums have policies that allow for community engagement. As critically discussed in Chapter 2, the role of Indigenous people has historically been missing in the archaeological discipline. As a result, there have been growing calls for such colonially defined approaches to be discarded (Ndlovu 2009a, 2016, 2017a, 2017b, 2021; Schmidt 2009; Schmidt & Pikirayi 2018).

Respondents ‘A1’ and ‘A2’ from NMN mentioned that that there is no community engagement policy that governs the process through which all the curated archaeology collections are being managed. In explaining the reasons for the NMN not having a defined community engagement policy, the two respondents further articulated that this is because policies should not be viewed as the only instruments through which heritage resources of Namibia can be safeguarded. Even though there are no policies that facilitate the involvement of the community in the managing of archaeological collections, there is an act, namely, the National Heritage Act No. 27 of 2004 which guides activities in relation to protected objects. This legislation was promulgated after independence in 2004, which shows that the post-colonial government acknowledges the necessity of an act to guide in safeguarding the heritage resources of Namibia. Noting the absence of a community engagement policy, Respondents ‘A2’ further alluded that the NMN institution always engages with communities *“in obtaining information from them...[thus accessing] the community’s point of view.”* Both respondents further explained that the NMN does not have a particular policy addressing community engagement because policy instruments are not the only tools to achieve and impact heritage protection and safeguarding in Namibia. While that is the case, they state that the NMN does recognise the vital role that community engagements play in sustainable development, efforts to build social cohesion, and overall inclusivity in decision-making processes. In practical terms, community engagement at the NMN is mainly determined by consultation with these stakeholders during research field trips and open days at the museum. These are now called National Heritage Week. While these two respondents from the NMN highlight the significance of community involvement, there is

no convincing evidence that communities are given any or much power or are they involved in the final decision-making processes regarding archaeological collections. One cannot argue that there has been transformation that is aimed at increasing the role of Indigenous people in the management of archaeological collections within the NMN.

Respondent ‘D1’ from UPM indicated that as part of their effort to pay special attention to the matters of cooperation, the University of Pretoria (UP) entered into an agreement with the South African National Parks (SANParks). This cooperation between the two organisations is governed through the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the purpose of managing the Mapungubwe collections and archives. SANParks has a community engagement forum that is largely active at the Mapungubwe National Park under its jurisdiction. I argue, however, that it is not enough for the UPM to indirectly refer to its MOU with SANParks because the latter does not curate the Mapungubwe collections and archive unless some of the materials are temporarily on loan at the Mapungubwe Interpretation Centre. While UPM does not directly have the community engagement policy or a specific engagement forum for such, I would argue that some of the archaeological collections are put on display at the museum, thus accessible to a broader public. It is important to note, however, that access to the university does not necessarily make the museum easily accessible.

Like Respondent ‘D1’ from UPM, Respondent ‘C1’ from NMB remarked that the institution does not necessarily have a real community engagement policy. He argued that *“the Anthropological Research Act of 1968 addresses respect to the dignity of the communities where research is carried out.”* This means that while there is no community engagement policy, there is legislation and guidelines that addresses and give an outline as to how researchers should interact with the communities. This is the same experience I discovered with the responses I gathered from Namibian informants. Even Smith (2005) argued that researchers do not necessarily have the right to control the past that belongs to others – and must thus take note of what their local counterparts share with them. As a result, one could argue that when having indigenous people promulgating their legislation, they are in fact taking back the right to control how their past is studied, presented, and preserved.

What can be noted from the feedback provided by the informants is that all the three museums have no direct policies for community engagement. Yet, the respondents do accord significance to the role of communities and say communities are somehow involved without giving much definitive details on such. In reality, there seems to be contradiction between what happens in

reality, administratively speaking, and what is being expected in a post-colonial era in terms of managing archaeological collections. Such a contradiction thus begs the questions: (i) how are communities then adequately involved if there is no framework within which such engagement happens?, (ii) what real authority do these communities actually have in instances where they have been approached for comments?, (iii) do they also participate in the decision making processes or are they just consulted with no further voice in the final agreement reached by the museum institution?, and (iv) are communities consulted without any framework whatsoever just to tick a box and say this particular process was undertaken for political reasons?

There is no doubt that managing anything of national importance will require setting up a national guideline structure; especially so in archaeology, where ownership over most material is split between colonial authorities and authorities established after independence presiding over the present. This means that there is division between former colonisers and their former colonies on who the rightful owner of archaeological material is. According to Soderland & Lilley (2015), some countries face ongoing clashes over the rightful ownership of archaeological materials that were once, but are no longer, within their jurisdiction. It is therefore common practice for Indigenous people to claim back their material whether through decolonisation efforts such as Indigenous rights to involvement. Several authors argue that policies help to govern the process of managing archaeological collections or any other collection in general. Desired results are only achievable through legislation that will help to regulate the management of archaeological collections to avoid disputes. According to Gasior (2019), policies are an essential part of any organisation. Policies provide a roadmap for day-to-day operations thus giving guidance for decision-making. Help ensures that there is compliance with the applicable laws and regulations and streamlining internal processes. It should thus be concerning that all the three museum institutions I focused on in my research study do not have policies through which engagement with communities is defined to achieve the necessary benefits. I would argue that this limitation indicates that there has been little effort made to ensure that more voices are added in the overall management of archaeological collections. Such should not only be concerning, but also considered as a weakness that must be addressed as part of the coordinated efforts to help decolonise archaeological collections. According to Muryard (2017), having these rights is necessary especially in a case where outright oppression of the Indigenous people's rights by the mainstream society was due to their political struggle. This was, to a large extent, the case in the three museums that formed part of this research. The impact is that communities grow sceptical about the role of

archaeology in representing their past. As a direct result of the lack of efforts to adequately involve communities, it then rightly raises doubt on the accuracy of Indigenous representation (Bruchac 2014).

Evidently, and in contrast to the growing calls for the consideration of local knowledge, it does seem that the archaeological collections from the three museums are actively managed without the involvement of those who have interest or cultural links to the materials. According to Kaya & Seleti (2013), indigenous knowledge involves participatory perspectives and approaches which captivate knowledge and beliefs of Indigenous people in the design and management of research projects in their own environment. Thus, it has often been argued that Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) are deeply rooted within existing memories found in communities and tend to not fit the discourse that is often promoted in the conventional museum. Therefore, community engagement policy becomes essential in managing archaeological collections that are curated museums. I thus argue that the failure to actively consider local knowledge, through a well formulated policy, means that the conventional and Western archaeological theories and practices continue to prevail to the extent that they are not challenged by any Indigenous voices. What we need, therefore, is that any form of networking with communities goes beyond the ‘working together’ approach, towards genuine and equal collaboration between the parties involved.

***To what extent has the collection been accessible to the public?***

In giving insights into this question, Respondent ‘B1’, a curator who previously worked with the archaeological collection at the NMN, referring to the period while they were still employed by the institution, “... *the collection was accessible to a certain extent. Bona fide researchers had more access to the collection because they follow the stated procedures to gain approval for their proposed studies. Similarly, university students and school learners had access to the materials based on request while the general public mainly access the materials through them being put on display in exhibitions.*” Respondent ‘A2’ from the NMN remarked, in support of Respondent ‘B1’, that “*the collection is well accessible by either physically visiting it, sending a request to study the objects from the collection, or requesting the Museum to borrow the objects in order to conduct research from the objects.*”

According to Respondent ‘D1’ from UPM, “*The collections have been accessible to a larger extent especially after 2000 because it went from being a temporally exhibition to a permeant exhibition. The Mapungubwe Collection was temporarily curated and exhibited for 60 years*

*by the former Transvaal Museum (today Ditsong Museums of Natural History), as they served as the repository of the Mapungubwe Collection until the 1970s. Sporadic exhibitions were held, however. The Mapungubwe Collection was permanently exhibited at what is today the University of Pretoria Museums since June 2000.”*

Assessing the extent to which collections may or may not be accessible to communities has clearly indicated that more needs to be done. Having these collections accessible beyond just researchers and other related stakeholders will help expand the operational base of the museums. As a result, collections will become more relevant to the community. It is, therefore, critical that museums make their collections to be easily accessible. Nyangila (2006) recommended that museum curators and managers should have a good understanding of and a relationship with the community living within their precinct. This will ensure that the institutions they lead have deep roots within the population of the surrounding area. A relationship with communities must be defined by strong adherence to the moral principles of consistency and honesty.

***What challenges, if any, are there in the management of archaeological collections?***

Management of archaeological collections is characterised by many various challenges several researchers have discussed (see Ndlovu 2011; Voss 2012; Jervis 2014; Jamieson 2015; Benden & Taft 2019). These challenges include poor systematic access due to a lack of agreed-upon guidelines, inadequate facilities, inadequate storage facilities, loss and deterioration of collections, lack of archaeological knowledge held by professionals tasked with managing the collections, and inaccessibility to collections (Bawaya 2007; Kersel 2015; Bauer-Clapp & Kirakosian 2017).

According to Respondent ‘C1’ from the NMB and Respondent ‘B1’, one of the previous NMN curators I had interviewed, there are a number of challenges that have characterised the daily management of archaeological collections at their institutions. Among these difficulties are the lack of storage, safety from risks like fire, interest of researchers for more of already collected material were the pressing challenges. Fire is a big hazard, particularly considering that most of the artifacts are curated in boxes which can easily be burnt, thus destroying the materials. Respondent ‘A1’ from the NMN could not answer this question regarding challenges linked with managing archaeological collections. The respondent indicated that this question can be best answered by Respondent ‘A2’. The view of Respondent ‘A1’ was that her job description only entails running the institution and is therefore not able to articulately describe challenges

faced by the museum in managing the collections. As mentioned by Respondent 'A2' from NMN, the institution faces several challenges. These range from (i) lack of laboratory facilities and specialised research tools and equipment, (ii) financial limitations, (iii) lack of trained staff to manage and conduct scientific research, (iv) limited career growth within the heritage sector, to (iv) mismatch between international, national, entities and individuals over the value of heritage.

First, lack of storage facilities has meant that some materials kept in inappropriate boxes are at risk of loss because of fire. In other instances, archaeological collections from the same site are curated at different locations even if they are held by the same institution. This makes it difficult to appropriately access these for research purposes, and it is worse if the collection from the same site is kept at more than one museum. According to Respondent 'D1', there are portions of the Mapungubwe collections and archives that are held by other institutions, like those at the University of the Witwatersrand and other departments within the University of Pretoria. It would be evident, therefore, that such a geographical spread of the Mapungubwe collection and the related archive makes it difficult to conveniently study these materials at one location. It is probably financial difficulties that result in lack of storage facilities. With regards to the NMB, I discovered that majority researchers were largely interested in existing archaeological collections. This may be enforced by lack of funding to gather more materials. In addition, it is concerning that even long after political independence, a large proportion of research is still carried out by visiting scientists from non-African countries. They have good source of funding which allows them to dominate over their counterparts in the different countries where they conduct their studies.

Similarly, when specific employers have financial difficulties, they are unable to provide any incentives for personnel to deliver improved performance in curating collections. In addition, they are unable to employ personnel with the expertise needed to cover all job requirements. As a direct outcome, we end up finding instances whereby people end up being expected to deliver beyond their expertise and official mandate. Such individual's scope of work gets extended so that they end up managing collections from fields beyond their expertise. This impedes the quality of services delivered due to the multitasking of employees and may lead to poor documentation impeding the management of archaeological collections.

Third, employing inadequately trained personnel directly results in the difficulties with the overall acquisition, management, and presentation of archaeological collections being prone to

limitations. Among such challenges is the inability to consider the context where the collections come from. Historical challenges linked to the 85-year-old backlog of collections management, long-term poor documentation and conservation needs were identified by Respondent 'D1' as the main reasons why there are limitations in the management of collections at the UPM.

This limitation further impacts the ability of the museum to adequately engage with and form a great relationship with communities. Nyangila (2006) has emphasised the need to have a good relationship between curators and community members. If collections cannot be adequately managed and presented to the public, such a partnership becomes difficult to attain. It is vital that community members are involved in providing accurate representation and are afforded the opportunity of taking a keen interest in the ownership of their heritage.

Fourth, limited career growth within the heritage sector is a challenge by itself in that it negatively impacts staff morale within the museum. It is equally a problem caused by limited budget. This situation leads to museums not having the financial capacity to employ all the skillset needed to deliver on all the mandates of the institution. The lack of laboratory facilities and limited specialised tools and equipment is concerning, in the sense that such are required to uncover more insightful details about the past. Among such tools in short supply include trowels and scanning electron microscopes due to strict budgets. Without these tools, the work of collecting, interpreting, and managing archaeological materials is limited.

Fifth, the varying significance placed on archaeology at international, national, regional, and local levels is an obstruction to the efforts made by the different stakeholders in ensuring that funding, personnel, equipment, and laws required to manage archaeological collections in an efficient manner are available. The order of archaeology as a priority differs at different levels as a result the input into ensuring that materials are well managed and interpreted slows down the process of decolonisation.

What I have derived from the three case studies is that there is general poor management of the archaeological collection. This is evident in the challenges experienced by the managers tasked with the curation at these museums. The continued existence of these challenges will impede the decolonisation process.

#### **4.4 Decolonising Museum collection**

One of the aims of my study was to assess the decolonisation efforts, if any, being undertaken at the NMN in comparison with selected museums from southern Africa. I am particularly keen to understand what has happened since independence. Of the three countries that were part of my research project, Botswana was the first nation to gain political independence when Britain relinquished its colonial power in 1966. Namibia followed in 1990 while South Africa attained freedom for the African majority only in 1994. I have noted that even after making transition to political independence, relatively nothing changed in those countries with regards to their museums and the collections held within them. This is evident from the challenges being experienced at these museums as discussed in the previous sections.

To adequately assess decolonisation efforts as indicated by the three case studies, this section of my dissertation critically reviews three points. First, to assess the extent to which each of the three museums has been challenged to decolonise their archaeological collections. Second, to establish whether there has been any political pressure to decolonise archaeological collections. It would be expected that these museums would have been challenged by voices from the liberation heroes and heroines to move away from the colonial forces that dominated the interpretation of the past. Third, to explore what the dominant themes in the archaeological displays at the three museums are. Such an understanding is directly embedded in the political narrative that dictates what and how it is displayed.

To adequately bring about decolonisation, there are several key strategies recommended by Maybury-Lewis (2002). These are: (i) re-examining initial knowledge, (ii) collaborating with the Indigenous people in the curation of materials, (iii) making the recovery of archaeological collections & information a teamwork, (v) formulating museums that accurately convey the cultures of the local people amongst others. What Maybury-Lewis (2002) recommended should provide a good foundation upon which decolonisation should be built. As it would be seen in the next paragraph, these exact decolonisation methods were not employed in the museums that formed part of the study, however different decolonisation efforts were used.

*To what extent has your museum been challenged to decolonise the archaeological collections curated by the institution?*

My intention here was to establish if ever any of the three museums that formed part of my study had initiated any process to decolonise their collections. Furthermore, I wanted to know,

in instances where decolonisation efforts have been undertaken, what specific initiatives were implemented. According to Respondent 'D1' from the UPM, "*The Mapungubwe Collection is one of the most contested archaeological collections for more than eight decades. The first attempt at decolonisation challenge goes back to [June] 2000 by the UP to ensure access and public exhibition of the Mapungubwe Collection as a means of various layering of decolonisation.*" Having the Mapungubwe collection more accessible could potentially spark interest in other stakeholders venturing into sponsoring research, providing research facilities, or having a school curriculum that covers the aspect of curating archaeological collections. By providing wider access, better governance of the collection is enhanced, promoting multi-disciplinary research, and moving the Mapungubwe collection and archive beyond the confines of archaeology. In addition, there has been active restorative justice to directly address issues such as the polyphonic narrative of the history of Mapungubwe. These efforts should be seen within the context of decolonisation, in the sense that researchers responded positively to the political pressure to return the 'human remains' that had been stolen from Mapungubwe in the name of research without the involvement of the descendants. As a direct result of such efforts, 'human remains' previously excavated at Mapungubwe were repatriated back to the area and reburied in November 2008 (Nienaber *et al.* 2008; Keough 2008; Schoeman & Pikirayi 2011; Morris 2014; Manyanga & Chirikure 2019; Masiteng 2020).

As articulated by Respondent 'C1' from NMB, there have been "*No deliberate effort*" to help decolonise the collection. However, some of the management interventions made in the general management of heritage sites have clearly been politically transformed over time. For example, Respondent 'C1' mentioned that the Management Plan of Tsodilo compiled in 1994 by the late Alec Campbell, a former Director of National Museum in Gaborone, Botswana, "*promoted a pristine environment with no developments and infrastructure around the site, including denying the communities of Tsodilo better roads, to limit influx and preserve the rock art.*" On the contrary, the 2005 Integrated Management Plan as well as the 2009 Management Plan for Tsodilo (Segadika & Taruvinga 2009) "*is post-colonial in its people first, landscape approach to the heritage site development schedule.*" Rather than focus on the pristine environment where no infrastructural development is allowed, without meaningful benefits to those living nearby heritage sites, there have been changes that may be characterised as decolonisation efforts by the museum officials in Botswana.

Highlighting that decolonisation is, after all, a highly political initiative, Respondent 'A2' felt the need to explain the context within which she was responding to the question regarding the

extent to which NMN has been decolonizing archaeological collections. She mentioned that “*I am responding to the question from the point of view that understand that it is not easy to describe what colonialism actually is, even though there have been numerous attempts to define it that differ according to the geographic or political position and agenda of those defining it and the epoch in which they undertook those definitions. This is not surprising, since it subsumes phenomena that date back up to six hundred years, evolved and changed during that period and affected the interaction of people from very different societies and ‘cultures’*”.

What is evident from this point made by Respondent ‘A2’ is that there have been efforts to decolonise the archaeological collections at the NMN. However, these efforts have not been fruitful in generating much and impactful results. As a result, there is no evidence to show that the decolonisation process is a work in progress. I would argue, therefore that there is a need for staff members responsible for the curation of archaeological collections to critically assess their decolonisation efforts. Considering that it has been 31 years, from 1990, since Namibia gained attained political independence, one would have expected to see much greater progress in the decolonisation process.

***What is the dominant theme(s) in the archaeological displays at your museum?***

Respondent ‘C1’ from NMB mentioned that their museum displays were informed by the linear thinking in terms of the archaeological period. As a result, “*didactic display from ESA to the Iron Age, the Lineal Theme ‘man and the environment’*” inform the general narrative presented in the displays. Respondent ‘C1’ considered this to be a fitting approach. Respondent D1 from UPM remarked that “*The Mapungubwe Collection is one of 56 other collections curated by the UP Museums. There remains a dedicated Mapungubwe Gallery, the theme alternates every 3 years. Currently, the theme is ceramics and there is a permanent exhibition of the Mapungubwe Gold Collection, National Treasures at the new Javett-UP Art Centre. A new exhibition in planning is dedicated to the Mapungubwe bead collection. The choice of themes is not only curatorially determined but also by public interest and current interests of the community- which is both the research community, immediate university student community and an exhibition at Mapungubwe National Park in the Interpretative Centre since 2011.*”

Both Respondents ‘B1’ and ‘B2’, previous curators from the NMN, indicated that the dominant theme(s) in the archaeological displays at the museum during our time is rock art. This could be because Namibia is well known for this type of archaeology. Respondent ‘B1’ remarks that “*The dominant theme is rock arts because Namibia known for its rock paintings and rock*

*engravings.*” Respondent ‘B2’ stated that “*Rock arts is the dominant theme in the Namibian archaeology because it receives a lot of attentions from many foreign researchers.*” What their expression tells us here is that the type of archaeology or the theme that receives more attention from foreigners, which are more likely to come from the countries that colonised the African countries, are more likely to become the dominant theme in the displays. I will, therefore, argue that African archaeologists take matters in their hands with the help of the IKS to change the narratives that were created by non-African archaeologists for decolonisation to take place.

***Has there been political pressure, especially after the formal end of colonialism and Apartheid, to decolonise the archaeological collections of the museums?***

All six participants of my research study, with previous or existing links to the three museum institutions I focused on mentioned that they have experienced political pressure to decolonise the archaeological collections of their entities. As argued by Respondent ‘D1’ from UPM, political pressure has been “*...both directly and indirectly...Mapungubwe as a national and global interest remains under political pressure since its scientific discovery in 1933.*” There have also been contestations among different groups who all claim to be the direct descendants of Mapungubwe (Schoeman & Pikirayi 2011; Sebola 2017). As a result, Mapungubwe remains perpetually contested by all forms of pressures.

Respondent ‘C1’ from NMB also indicated that “*in Botswana the museum was a post-colonial if post-independence construct. The pressure was therefore to do a new museum. Perhaps a closer study of that process and the persons involved (a former wildlife warden, an amateur archaeologist and white English man became first Director. Therefore, the influence of colonial perception and views of what a museum is cannot be excluded).*” From this response it can be deduced that the demand for a new museum is an indication of potential mistrust that the museum accurately presents the history of the people. This is not unreasonable, considering that people involved in the curation of archaeological collections and general operations of the museum are not well qualified. I am inclined to argue that a wildlife warden and an amateur archaeologist and a director with a western background are not reliable sources for handling archaeological evidence of an African museum. Even though the timing to develop a museum after independence is good, the sources of information and the leadership may to a large extent replicate colonial concepts into a post-independence museum.

Like in the Botswana case, the Namibian government also desires to move away from colonial influences. Respondent ‘A1’ from the NMN remarked that “*there have been political pressure*

*to a certain extent.*” Respondent ‘A2’, also from NMN, attested to that desire by stating that *“the Namibian Government like any other African countries which were colonised wishes to decolonise their heritage. For example, decolonise from the political colonisers, second is from the commercial colonisers, third is from the cognitive/metaphysical colonisers. One could argue that for Namibia to fully appreciate their full independence, “the archaeology collection and associated material with pattern of historical account of the Namibian history should be decolonised to reflect the modern settlement and provide information on the community voices and oral history of the communities written by the Namibians for the Namibians first before the international communities impose their history on the Namibians.”* What their articulation here tells us is that for decolonisation to take place, the impact of the colonial rule must first be acknowledged (Trigger 1984, 1989; Kinahan 1995; Harke 1995). It is my view that it is through such acknowledgement that the seed for decolonising archaeological collections was first laid. What has been the challenge is the practical implementation of this desire.

#### **4.5 General value of research done in the archaeological collections**

This section presents and analyses data on the value of research undertaken using the collection managed by the three museums. It is vital to understand the general value of research conducted on these archaeological collections so that curators can enhance the importance of the rich heritage resources they have a responsibility over. According to Sabloff (2008), archaeological research can inform us, in general, about lessons to be acquired from the successes and failures of past cultures. Research can further provide policy makers with useful contexts for future decision-making by shedding light in what will or will not work based on previous examples. Such will positively aid by providing a guide in making policies that positively affect the lives of the local people. I principally discuss three issues in this sub-section. First, to establish the extent to which archaeological collections have been researched. Second, to establish whether there were any specific portions of the archaeological collections that had attracted more attention from researchers and to find out what could be the reason why specific portions of the archaeological collections attracted researchers than others. Third, understanding what research value has been conducted on archaeological collections at any of the three museums.

##### ***To what extent has your archaeological collection been researched?***

As articulated by Respondent ‘A2’ from the NMN, the archaeological collection is not researched to a large extent. The NMN encourages staff members and other researchers to

undertake research in pursuit of generating new knowledge to strengthen Namibian history. Using archaeological collections enables researchers to provide evidence-based findings giving much insight into the past. Within the context of decolonisation, such studies must be informed by the application of traditional knowledge and intangible cultural heritage of the community within specific localities. I argue that this is currently not being achieved. As observed in the researcher permission book, most of the research in Namibia has focused on stone implements and on rock art. According to Sandelowsky (1983), Namibia has a systematic archaeological research areas such as the climate conditions, Stone Age, and Iron Age that have either not been adequately studied or only limited research has been conducted. This means that there are a variety of research areas that attract a much greater interest than other spheres either by Namibians or non-Namibians. In addition, there are a variety of ways of interpreting the past, and the western approach to archaeology is not the only way.

This corresponds with what the NMN respondents implied, that not much of their collections have been researched. I observed from the researcher permission book that dominant studies have been done on stone implements and on human remains. About 65% of such research is a product of academic research mainly done by non-Namibians. These foreign researchers may have the knowledge based on observations and discussion, but they do not have an experiential understanding of the lives of Namibians. They are also not able to provide original information about the precolonial history of Namibia as well as its heterogeneous population. These are aspects that help to reveal why not much progress has been made in Namibia in decolonising material because much of the research is dominated by foreigners.

Respondents 'C1' from NMB remarked that *“to a certain extent, perhaps 40% is product of academic research while the other 60 % is knowledge generated from Archaeological Impact Assessments.”* Academic archaeological research is defined as a systematic investigation into a problem or situation. The intention in this study is to identify facts or opinions that will assist in solving a problem or dealing with the situation in the academic world. On the other hand, rescue archaeological research, sometimes called commercial archaeology, is archaeological survey and excavation endorsed by the state for a profit in advance of construction or other land development (Ndlovu 2014, 2017, 2021; Thebe 2021).

Respondent 'D1' from UPM in South Africa expressed that *“To a large extent, from the moment of Mapungubwe’s scientific discovery of gold to the world in 1933, the collection has been researched. In more recent decades, research has been transdisciplinary in nature, from*

*historical perspectives, environmental sciences, physics, architecture, etc. Dominant research has been on the ceramic materials mostly, trade beads, human skeletal remains and faunal remains, there remains however major gaps of research in the collection.*” Research is indeed being undertaken in the case of South Africa, unlike in the Namibian situation. Moreover, a collaborative approach has been employed here in South Africa, which aided in creating a more holistic understanding of the history of the country. But Respondent ‘D1’ did highlight that there are major gaps that still exist in the research of Mapungubwe archaeological collection. These gaps, however, should not outweigh the amount of research that has already been done for decolonisation of materials to generate lasting impact.

Archaeological research in Africa has been unevenly conducted. I argue so based on the reality that some areas in specific countries are more researched than others. For example, the central and southern areas in Namibia are more researched than the northern part of the country. The archaeological collections curated by the NMN demonstrate gaps in the geographical coverage of archaeology in Namibia. The reason for such geographical gaps could have been that such northern regions were the war zone of Namibia (Gwasira 2020). Travelling to the regions and other former Bantu Homelands was controlled by the colonial regime. As I have argued earlier, some archaeological research has also been influenced by the search for ancient evidence of human origins (Bruchac *et al.* 2010). Such research has largely been conducted by western scientists (Bruchac *et al.* 2010). These inequities of access and representation of materials or objects defined the collections that exist today within African museums. What this indicates is the colonial nature of the roots that led to the emergence of archaeology in Africa.

There is a need, therefore, to ‘break away’ from this colonial system that has brought about misrepresentation of Africans in the archaeological collections curated at various museums. This can be achieved if Africans start owning their own history and their archaeology. They should come up with their own archaeological approaches that suit them instead of practising western archaeological approaches. Africans should invest in archaeological research and not only rely on foreign projects giving the needed funding to carry out archaeological research in their own countries. In addition, Africans should value Indigenous knowledge and ensure that it is put into practice. Such a move can best be defined by attempts to decolonise the knowledge we have of museum collections. Decolonisation efforts will positively impact on attempts to make archaeology more representative of, and attentive to, local concerns.

***Is there any specific portions of the collection that has attracted much more attention from researchers? What could be the reason behind such?***

In any archaeological collections in the world, there are parts that might be of more interest to some than others. Respondent 'D1' from UPM indicated that *"The chronology of Mapungubwe has dominated research on ceramic typology. Ceramic typology has attracted research and of course the study of human remains.* In addition, Respondent 'C1' from NMB noted that *"most research is mostly Stone Age and Iron Age periods.* Respondents 'B1' and 'B2', who previously served as NMN curators, indicated that *"most of the researcher were on the stone implements, especially from the Middle Stone Age. Most of these researchers were foreign students specialising in stone implements."* Clearly, all respondents from the three museums have indicated that there is part of the collection that has attracted much more attention from researchers for different reasons. In the case of Namibia, the respondents indicated that the reason was that there was a greater interest in stone implements. From this it can be observed that the researcher's field of study or area of expertise is what determined which portion of a collection one will focus on. And since most researchers came from foreign countries, their interest most likely will not be similar to that of the Indigenous people. As a result, researchers have tended to focus more on their field of interest even if it meant that the interest of the Indigenous must be pushed to the margins to achieve that.

***What has been the general value of research conducted on the archaeological collections at your museum?***

African history is imagined differently in African contexts, and this should influence how we conduct our research and write about the past. According to Schmidt and Patterson (1995), the written word is inseparable from the spoken one. Although both are valid sources, oral texts provide a more authoritative context and are a medium valued by those who preserve them. We have afforded printed texts a privileged position at the expense of the oral and this has shaped history-writing and the production of certain historical pasts. How we deal with inherent biases in the production of narratives on the African past is something Schmidt and Patterson (1995) define as how archaeology should be undertaken in non-Western contexts.

Respondents 'A1' outlined that *"It is part of the museum policy in the permit that says outcomes should be deposited back to the museum and some researchers do report back on what they have research on. Research alone helps us improve our collections, for example, it*

*gives opportunity for sponsorship as well as improve our activities and line of research though the recommendations made.*” Based on this response, there appears to be no great significance that is derived from research conducted on the NMN archaeological collections. Surely, archaeological collections could offer more than that. Among potential benefits are the enhancement of interpretations at the museums, helping to increase the volume and accuracy of Indigenous data as well as drawing inspiration for solutions to current problems. Moyer (2006), stated that there is a huge gap between obtaining archaeological material and using them. According to Moyer (2006), processing materials is normally considered the final step, however, this should just be done for the purpose of using them in the future. The post-independence era is the future for which, excavation material was collected, to enable the construction of a holistic understanding of the Indigenous people’s history.

Respondent ‘D1’ from UPM argued that *“The University of Pretoria has generated a majority of the research data on the Mapungubwe Collection, more particularly the value of research translated into other narratives for society to understand the significance and importance of Mapungubwe as a site, not just an archaeological site of the past, but a very significant natural and cultural landscape in contemporary society today.”* Unlike in the NMN, it is evident from the UPM respondent that research has the potential to generate narratives that are based on indigenous data. In settings where research generates narratives based on Indigenous data, the concerns of indigenous people are more likely to be accurately reflected because they are the ones in charge of providing information and teaching researchers and can form better collaborations with the locals.

On the other hand, the Respondent ‘B2’ explained that *“Not much or rather no significant at all because most of the research did their research in the collection during my time but never sent report on quit a few reports back on their research findings.”* As evidenced by Respondent ‘B2’'s experience, when there are no clearly defined policies to regulate researchers and protect the interest of the country’s archaeological museums, researchers can choose whether to share or not share their findings with the museum officials as well as misrepresent the past of the country because there are no controls from the government’s side. Even more scary is the possibility of data being interpreted in a manner that is not a true reflection of the past and experiences of the indigenous people. In a case where there is no sharing of data, biases and misrepresentation are highly likely. Whereas on the one hand where knowledge used to formulate the views expressed in the display of archaeological material is accurate, decolonisation is still hampered. The reason being that things are not widely accessible to the

general public, nor is the public involved in the final write up of the information but only act as informants just as it has been in the present generation.

#### **4.6 Concluding remarks**

The main purpose of this chapter was to present, analyse, and discuss data that I generated from my research project. I structured my presentation of data according to the questions and aims of the study. As per my ethical consideration, I decided to give privacy and confidentiality of the participants, thus using codes instead of naming them. The major aspect of my findings is that while there have been some efforts to decolonise archaeological collections, these have not been adequate. There is a need, therefore, for the NMN, NMB, and UPM to critically consider the issue of decolonisation. Doing so will further ensure that IKS is incorporated into the management processes, giving voice to the Africans who had been denied agency for a long time (Pikirayi 2015). It is about recognising that knowledge is a universal resource because of its varied and diverse forms, which needs to be preserved. It is thus important for Africans, including Namibians, to write their own history and interpret their own archaeology because research conducted on their archaeological collections has not, sadly, previously considered their views to any significant extent. As a result, there is no monolithic and dominant narrative of the past. There is a need for the NMN to redefine the community or communities that they serve. Such an identification can then be used to develop a strategy for engagement with the communities.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to summarise the main findings that emanated from the research project I undertook and to discuss the implications of such discoveries. Furthermore, I present recommendations for further studies in terms of how decolonising the archaeological collections at the National Museum of Namibia (NMN) can be better enhanced. As informed by my research project, I have divided the chapter into three sections, (i) major findings from the study, (ii) recommendations and (iii) closing remarks. I arranged the summarised findings in the chronological order as per my presentation of them in the previous chapter.

### **5.2 Major findings from the study**

From the findings, three major discoveries emerged. These speak to how collections were first created, the decolonisation efforts undertaken, and the themes of research that defined the collection of material. My research study had a specific focus on assessing the extent to which the archaeological collection of the NMN could either have been decolonised or in the process of being subjected to such political redress. I compared the Namibian case study with those from two museum entities in Botswana and South Africa. These two were the University of Pretoria Museums (UPM) and the National Museum of Botswana (NMB).

As a major discovery, I found that NMN still operates largely under the influence of colonially defined management approaches. This is because their collection date from the colonial period, when colonisers determined civilisation of that time, as a result that present civilisation formed the past that is now narrated in present day museums and archaeological collections. Another finding that emerged from this research is that little has been done to decolonise materials. This is shown by the fact that the general public, excluding students, only access material on display and not as part of the cataloguing or presentation process. This in my opinion is a poor effort in reaching the aim of decolonising material. This contrasts with the two southern African museums that formed part of my research project. In those institutions, efforts had been made to a certain extent to transform how they have managed to deal with colonial legacy. In the case of NMB, they have an act that guides and addresses how researchers should interact with the communities. In contrast, the UPM has easily accessible material to the public. The museum has migrated from temporary exhibitions to permanent exhibition. This gives

opportunity for relationship building and dialogue on the history of the material between researchers and the local people.

While there are notable distinctions with regards to decolonisation efforts that have been implemented by the three museum institutions, there were commonalities that I discovered. For instance, all these three entities do not have policies for community engagement. Yet, respondents do accord significance to the role of communities. They indicated that communities were generally involved in the operations of the three museums, without giving much definitive details on how such was undertaken. Evidently, and in contrast to the growing calls for the consideration of local knowledge, it does seem that the archaeological collections from the three southern African museums are still particularly managed without the involvement of those who have interest or cultural links to the materials. Museums should symbolise and reinforce the incorporation of the local previously disadvantaged groups because the findings of the research suggest that the previously disadvantaged groups need to be liberated from western imperial settings. To decolonise our museums, we should offer programmes and activities shaped by the voices of the Indigenous people. In addition, there seems to be a contradiction between what happens in reality, when it comes to managing archaeological collections, and what is expected in a post-colonial era in terms of managing archaeological collections.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Based on the major findings of my research study and their potential impact on the management of archaeological collections, I made five recommendations:

As a first recommendation, the three museums should begin a detailed process to interrogate the history of its extensive archaeological collections that has been built up over the years. This interrogation can include finding out how all the items in the collections were acquired. This is the first step towards decolonisation.

Second, museums must enter into partnerships with communities to advocate for informed engagement with these valuable stakeholders. Doing so will help these museums to address the issue of colonial voices being the only dominant door through which we access and present archaeological collections. As part of this recommendation, I suggest that funding bodies dedicate financial resources to compensate Indigenous community members for the time they shall spend giving their input. Their financial compensation must be at the same rate as museum

researchers. By doing so, Indigenous communities will begin to see an economic value rather than having only the museums benefitting from the decolonisation process. They will consider themselves as equal partners in decision and policy making processes. This will help stimulate a greater number of engagements between museum researchers and community members. I further suggest museum researchers should also provide an opportunity for their counterparts to visit the museum facilities.

Third, I recommend that the three southern African museums that were part of my research study consider initiating their own approaches and move away from applying western-informed ways of studying archaeological collections. The NMN must play a dual role. The first in which they act as the custodians of items unethically collected by colonisers and the second is one in which they advocate for the return of items from overseas that were collected by colonisers.

Fourth, museums should start collecting again with a mentality of producing an accurate representation of indigenous experiences and to bring in organic views, in addition to the archaeological collections, they have in their repositories that were collected with colonial mindsets. Museum managers should thus incorporate this responsibility into job descriptions of curators. However, they need to ensure that these curators have both time and resources to initiate and pursue research and dialogue with the local people to get clarity on the stories that the materials tell. This can start with a focus to build relationships with Indigenous communities as partners and co-curators and give them a voice by exercising indigenous knowledge. I believe this recommendation can further benefit from funding agencies.

Fifth, it will be valuable to have a research study focused not only on archaeological collections of the NMN, but the greater variety of materials held by the institution. By doing so, much more can be learned about the general process followed in acquiring all these collections and how they can all be decolonised. This is because museums as social entities can enhance social morals through dialogues. In addition to that, public debates aid in the sharing of knowledge which shifts museums from serving as static houses of artefacts.

## **5.4 Closing remarks**

What I have been able to show in my dissertation is that the roots of colonialism are still firmly entrenched in place. This with regards to the content of the archaeological collection which dates to a period long before independence and the strategies in place to manage these

materials, and the theoretical frameworks that inform our interpretation of them. There is no dispute that decolonisation is needed. I have thus shown that there is still a need for extensive efforts to decolonise the management of archaeological collections in southern Africa, particularly in Namibia. I am making this assertion on the basis that not much seems to have changed in the three countries of Namibia, Botswana, and South Africa following the attainment of political independence. Instead, the museums and the archaeological collections held within them are still managed using colonial approaches (see Maybury-Lewis 2002).

I argue, therefore, that for significant decolonisation to occur during the post-independence era, there is a need for meaningful changes. Museums should strive to distance themselves from the ideology of colonialism and shorten the divisions caused by it. Long-term exhibitions should be devoted to indigenous culture and museums should retain diversity of all indigenous groups. This can be achieved through rejecting western approaches of caring for cultural heritage and bringing in approaches that emerged from the different previously disadvantaged groups. Recommendations made by Maybury-Lewis (2002), as presented earlier in this dissertation, will prove critical in such instances. Meaningful efforts to bring about decolonisation will lay a strong foundation for the Indigenous people to play a more dominant role within museum settings. Having their voices in the management of museums will further ensure that all archaeological studies are Africanised. This state would give us knowledge previously ignored by western researchers.

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## APPENDIX A: Ethical Clearance



Faculty of Humanities  
Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe  
Lefapha la Bomotheo



26 November 2020

Dear Ms KS Efrain

Project Title:

Researcher: Supervisor(s): Department: Reference number: Degree:

TOWARDS A DECOLONISED ARCHAEOLOGY COLLECTION: A STUDY OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NAMIBIA

Ms KS Efrain  
Dr N Ndlovu

Anthropology and Archaeology 20796405 (HUM005/0720) Masters

I have pleasure in informing you that the above application was approved by the Research Ethics Committee on 26 November 2020. Data collection may therefore commence.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. Should the actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

We wish you success with the project. Sincerely,

Prof Innocent Pikirayi  
Deputy Dean: Postgraduate Studies and Research Ethics Faculty of Humanities  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
e-mail: PGHumanities@up.ac.za

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Pikirayi'.

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe  
Lefapha la Bomotheo

Research Ethics Committee Members: Prof I Pikirayi (Deputy Dean); Prof KL Harris; Mr A Bizos; Dr A-M de Beer; Dr A dos Santos; Ms KT Govinder Andrew; Dr P Gutura; Dr E Johnson; Prof D Maree; Mr A Mohamed; Dr I Noomé; Dr C Puttergill; Prof D Reyburn; Prof M Soer; Prof E Taljard; Prof V Thebe; Ms B Tsebe; Ms D Mokalapa

## APPENDIX B: Letter of Permission: National Museum of Namibia



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

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### MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE

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Tel: +264 61 – 276800  
Fax: +264 61- 221916

P.O. Box 1203  
Windhoek

Enquiries: Ms Esther Moombolah-/Goagoses  
E-mail: esthermuseum9@gmail.com

30 June 2020

Ms Kaarina Shagwanepandulo Efraim  
National Museum of Namibia  
Windhoek

Dear Ms Efraim

**Re: Permission letter For Kaarina Shagwanepandulo Efraim to conduct research at the National Museum of Namibia Archaeology collection**

I am pleased to inform you that approval has been granted to you to carry out research for your Master Degree in Archaeology with the University of Pretoria.

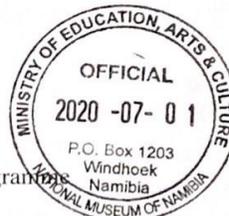
In accordance with research ethics standards the data you will gather at the National Museum of Namibia Archaeology collection should be treated with confidentiality and should solely be used for the purpose of your research entitled:

“TOWARDS A DECOLONISED ARCHEOLOGY COLLECTION: CASE STUDY OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NAMIBIA”.

Let me take this opportunity to wish you all the best in the successful completion of your research project.

Sincerely

Esther Moombolah-/Goagoses  
Director of National Heritage and Culture Program



*All official correspondences must be addressed to the Executive Director*

## APPENDIX C: Letter of Permission: University of Pretoria Museums

Kaarina Efraim  
P. O. Box  
1115Walvis  
Bay Namibia

ATT: Dr S Tiley-Nel, Head of University of Pretoria Museums  
Curator: Mapungubwe Collection  
University of Pretoria Museums  
Old Arts Building room 1-9, Lynnwood Rd, Hatfield  
Pretoria, 0002, Gauteng  
Email: museums@up.ac.za

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN MUSEUMS

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Kaarina Shagwaepandulo Efraim (u20796405), registered for an MA(Archaeology) Degree at the University of Pretoria. My research project, supervised by Dr Ndukuyakhe Ndlovu, is titled "*TOWARDS A DECOLONISED ARCHAEOLOGY COLLECTION: A STUDY OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NAMIBIA*". For ease of reference, I have attached my proposal. My proposal was recently approved, provisionally, by the Ethics Committee in the Faculty of Humanities, pending consent from various museum institutions that shall form part of my study.

Guided by my proposed research questions, my intention is to approach curators at the various museum institutions in Namibia, Botswana, and South Africa. I intend to circulate questionnaires to curators from the identified museums. I am, therefore, hereby seeking your consent to collect data at your respective museum (archaeology collection).

If you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me. I can be reached via email at [kaarinaefraim@gmail.com](mailto:kaarinaefraim@gmail.com) or telephonically using +264 81 8903313. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter. I am looking forward to your favorable response to my request.

Yours,  
Kaarina Efraim  
MA Candidate, University of Pretoria

---

I, **Dr S L Tiley-Nel** (the undersigned) agree to participate in the MA research topic of the student Kaarina Efraim (u20796405) at the University of Pretoria. I have read this letter of request and agree to consent to complete a questionnaire as the Curator of the Mapungubwe Collection and provide access to the University of Pretoria (UP) Museums, pending the final approval that the student formally registers as a researcher with the UP Museums as per requirement and guidelines. The student has to assure that the University of Pretoria Museums are duly acknowledged throughout mention when used in the thesis.

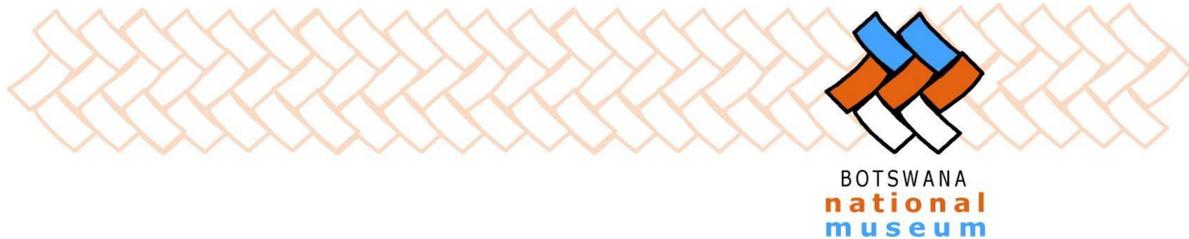
Signed:



Date 04-09-2020

© University of Pretoria

## APPENDIX D: Letter of Permission: National Museum of Botswana



Department of National Museum and Monuments  
331 Independence Avenue Gaborone, Botswana

Private Bag 00114  
Tel: (267) 3610 465

Fax: (267) 3902797 Website: [www.national-museum.gov.bw](http://www.national-museum.gov.bw)

**14<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

Kaarina Efraim P. O. Box 1115

Walvis Bay Namibia

### RESEARCH IN THE BOTSWANA NATIONAL MUSEUM

Your request to undertake a review of the collections of the Botswana National Museum has been noted. Permit is hereby granted for your study. The permission is valid for 9 months and ends in June 2021.

- It is understood that the study is part of your comparative Masters Degree academic study on “TOWARDS A DECOLONISED ARCHAEOLOGY COLLECTION: A STUDY OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NAMIBIA”.
- You will be expected to give at least 1 copy of your thesis to the Botswana Museum Library at completion of our studies.
- For further engagement kindly contact the Acting Director, Mr. Stephen Mogotsi on 3610402 / 71435060 or the Chief Curator of Monuments, Phillip Segadika on 3610442/71529484.

Thank you

Phillip Segadika – Chief Curator For/Acting Director

## APPENDIX E: Letter of Consent



### Faculty of Humanities School of the Arts

#### LETTER OF CONSENT

Dear Participate ,

I, *Kaarina Efrain*, would like you to take part in a research project. This project is for a Masters degree in Archaeology at the University of Pretoria. The study is entitled "TOWARDS A DECOLONISED ARCHAEOLOGY COLLECTION: A STUDY OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NAMIBIA". The aim of the study is to assess the decolonisation efforts at the National Museum of Namibia in comparison with selected museums from southern Africa and to identify the themes of research that has generally been undertaken using the museum's archaeological collections.

The study involves a semi-structured interview to determine your views of the decolonisation efforts at your respective archaeological collection. This should not take more than 20 minutes of your time. The interview will be audio recorded. Your participation in the study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any stage. Your anonymity is ensured. Data collected will be used for academic research purposes only and the information will be safely stored at the University of Pretoria School of the Arts for a period of 15 years, in compliance with the ethical guidelines of the university. No financial benefits will be involved. Your participation in this research will be greatly appreciated and will contribute to a deeper understanding of decolonising a museum collection. Should you agree to take part in the study, please complete the informed consent form attached.

Thanks in advance.

*Kaarina S Efrain*

#### **INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

I hereby agree to participate in the M.A study by....., consisting of a semi-structured interview. I understand that I am free to withdraw should I so choose and understand that there is no reward or other incentive to participate in the study. I have also been informed that my anonymity will be ensured.

\_\_\_\_\_ Signature of participant

\_\_\_\_\_ Date