

***Cultural Preservation Literacy in Zambia: A Case Study of the Lala People of Serenje District***

by

**Sitwe Benson Mkandawire**

*The University of Zambia*

*School of Education*

*Email: bmsitwe@gmail.com*

and

**Harrison Daka**

*The University of Zambia*

*School of Education*

**Abstract**

*This article was based on a case study under qualitative research design of post-positivism knowledge generation paradigm. The purpose of the study was to establish the strategies that the Lala people were using to preserve their cultures. The research methodology employed was purely qualitative mode of inquiry. Data was collected from 38 respondents in Serenje District including Chief Chitambo's community. The specific strategies used to collect data were interviews, focus group discussions with a traditional council 'Insaka ye Lala' and observation of certain cultural practices. The study revealed that there were several strategies which the Lala people were using to preserve their cultural heritage such as hosting a traditional ceremony annually, conducting dance performances at different functions within the district such as graduation ceremony at Colleges of Education and other public gatherings such as agriculture shows and rallies. The Lala people were also eating traditional*

*foods and most of them encouraged the speaking of Lala language in most contexts. It was also noted that some aspects of the Lala culture were vanishing and getting extinct slowly certain food stuff such as millet (amale) nshima; some marriage processes were literary extinct such as a stage where parents used to find a spouse to marry their children and finally, the traditional dressing of the LALA people was no longer common. It was recommended that the Lala community should continue preserving their culture and restore those important aspects that were extinct or slowly vanishing.*

## **Background**

Culture is said to be a back-bone of all societies worldwide as it is a cornerstone of communities. It is perceived as people's way of life that impinges on every aspect of the human society (Bate, 2009). In Zambia, local cultures are a foundation stone of the Zambian people as they contain the indigenous knowledge systems that people use to address various societal activities. In other words, culture refers to what people do in a society, daily especially those aspects that can be transferred from one generation to another.

Considering that culture is a foundation of a society, it is important that any community find ways of preserving it by all means necessary. The cultural literacy that members of the community demonstrate must be accompanied by cultural preservation knowledge which is key in the sustainability of that culture. As the saying goes, 'a man is nothing without culture.' Similarly, it is logical to argue that a community is worthless without culture.

The context in which the term literacy has been used in this article is in cases where it is considered as 'knowledge and skills

in specific fields'. Taking literacy as knowledge is supported by Barton (2007). This is furthermore reiterated by Mkandawire, Simooya-Mudenda and Monde-Cheelo (2017) who contended that there are two major senses in which the world perceives the concept of literacy. The first one is Conventional Literacy that has to do with reading and writing skills while the second one is a body of knowledge and skills in a field. The term culture as used in this article refers to people's every day or frequent activities in the communities. This is what Bate (2009: 96) meant when he reported that 'Culture is a way of life'. It is associated with a way of doing things in a community because it touches on 'the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another' (Hofstede, 1994: 5). In other words, culture is a complex terminology that may be interpreted differently. Spencer-Oatey (2008: 3) reported that culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member's behaviour and his/her interpretations of the 'meaning' of other people's behaviour. Cultural literacy on the other hand deals with people's knowledge of their culture. Mkandawire (2015: 190) noted that 'cultural literacy is an individual's ability to understand and appreciate the customs, values, beliefs and life style of people in a particular cultural setting'. Cultural preservation literacy is linked to cultural literacy except that it focuses on the knowledge that individuals have on how to preserve culture. In other words, cultural preservation literacy is about knowing the strategies or forms of education that can help in the preservation of culture.

In the recent past in Zambia, there has been much talk about eroding cultural identities of people and the traditional touch that provides a sense of belonging to Zambia. In other words, there are

questions on what constitutes *Zambian culture vis-à-vis* *Zambian cultures*. One would wonder if at all there are differences among universal forms of culture in comparison to *Zambia culture vis-à-vis* *Zambian cultures*.

### **Universal Culture, *Zambian Culture* and *Zambian Cultures***

The three terms *Universal Culture*, *Zambian Culture* and *Zambian Cultures* are related but distinct in some way. The terms are related because they are intertwined at some level. For instance, all cultures of the world are the same in some way as they all help to preserve and serve the moral, spiritual, social and communal amenity, service and social code that attract some form of amercement if compromised in the society. They are also distinct and unique because they carry specific messages unique to those communities where they are practiced.

Universal culture (*Culture Universal*) refers to traits, practices and elements of culture that are common to all cultures of the world (Brown, 1991). These may include marriages, the use of language, art, music, dance, cooking, games, birth and death. In other words, all cultures of the world marry, they use language, they cook, they give birth and die. *Culture universals* differ from *Zambian culture* and *Zambian cultures* in the sense that *Zambian culture* refers to those traits, practices and elements of culture that apply to all *Zambians* or at least most of the people in that country. In other words, *Zambian culture* is a collection of behaviours, practices, values, attitudes, beliefs, laws, morals, procedures and other common ways of doing things as exhibited by *Zambians*, that can be transmitted from one generation to another. These practices are subject to modifications by members of the society with time as culture is never static. Examples of *Zambian culture* include living in an extended family, the marriage process and the type of food that is eaten such as *nshima*, fish and pumpkin leaves (*chiwawa/gadabu/Munkhwanu*). *Zambian cultures* refer

to those traits, practices and elements unique to specific ethnic groups and these are not found in most Zambian communities. Examples of Zambian cultures include the types of food eaten in certain regions such as the eating of a monkey meat among some Bemba fraction and Frogs among some Sengas of Chama of Chief Kambombo. Other specific practices unique to regions include names of some languages and their usage, ceremonies such as the Mukanda ceremony, Kuomboka, Nwala, Kwenje and others that are done by specific communities in Zambia.

### **Overview of the Lala People of Serenje**

The Lala people are among the seventy-two plus ethnic groups found in Zambia. They are found in Serenje District of Central Province of Zambia. Their primary language is Lala locally known as Ilala which is mutually intelligible or closely related to Bisa and Bemba language of Northern, Copperbelt and Luapula provinces of Zambia.

The Lala people like most ethnic groups in Zambia are said to have descended from the Luba Lunda kingdom in present day Democratic Republic of Congo. Most of them settled in Zambia's Central Province under chief Chitambo in Serenje District. Beside Chitambo, there are many more chiefdoms that govern the Lala people including Muchinda, Chisomo, Serenje, Kabamba, Mailo and Chibale. The detailed description of the cultural and political organisation is discussed under findings of this article.

In a nutshell, the Lala culture is an example of Zambian cultures because they are an ethnic group found in Zambia. While some practices may apply to the whole country, they have some unique traits specific to them. This does not mean that every culture practiced or found in Zambia is part of Zambian cultures. In this context, the focus is on cultural practices that are found

in Zambia and has a specific community of Zambian origin that practices it.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to establish the culture of the Lala people and ascertain ways of preserving the Lala culture of Zambia.

### **Research Objectives**

This study aimed at addressing the following objectives:

- (a) To ascertain what constituted the LALA Culture of Zambia;
- (b) To determine the factors that were a threat to LALA and Zambian cultures;
- (c) To establish ways of preserving the LALA and Zambian culture;
- (d) To determine forms of culture that were vulnerable for extinction among the LALA people; and
- (e) To explore the Zambian institutions or fractions involved in the preservation of culture.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This research study was guided by the cultural conservation theory and the conservation-restoration of cultural heritage which collectively focuses on protection and care of tangible cultural heritage, including artworks, architecture, archaeology, and museum collections (*Walston, 1978*). In addition Waltson reported that the conservation of cultural heritage involves protection and restoration using any methods that prove effective in keeping that property in as close to its original condition as possible for as long as possible.

The study was further informed by the conservation of Cultural Values of Heritage Buildings (CVHB) based on the Facilities Management (FM) theory as reported by Hasbollah (2014:6). The study was also guided by UNESCOs (2015) World Heritage Convention Operational Guidelines, which can be paraphrased as follows: to represent a masterpiece of human creative genius, to exhibit an important interchange of human values, to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition, to be an outstanding example of a type of building, to be an outstanding example of traditional human settlement, to be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, to contain superlative natural phenomena, to be outstanding examples representing major stages of Earth's history; and to be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes and to contain the most important and significant natural habitats.

All these constitute the theoretical framework for this research study. The emphasis of the theories and guidelines above is to preserve important aspects of culture that are associated with target communities which in this case, the Lala people of Central Province of Zambia.

## **Research Methodology**

This study employed the constructivist paradigm of the post-positivism philosophy and principles of knowledge generation. According to Piaget (1971), Constructivism as a philosophical viewpoint about the nature of knowledge purports that reality is a social construct that is constructed by humans that are members of certain societies. Philosophically, reality can only be known imperfectly and probabilistically because it is based on human construction. In this study, it is understood that culture is socially

constructed by members of certain communities and that it is subject to change with time. The changes in cultures can be studied at different levels to establish cause and effect. This research was one among others on dynamism of social culture.

### **Research Design**

Sim and Wright (2000) define a research design as an overall plan and structure of a piece of research. This study used qualitative research approach particularly, a case study design. It was a case study because it focused on one ethnic group in Zambia. Denzin and Lincoln (2000:3) indicated that ‘qualitative research involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach: This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them’. They further indicated that it involves mainly interactive techniques such as interviews, observation and discussions.

### **Population**

Best and Kahn (2006:13) defined population as ‘any group of individuals that has one or more characteristics in common and that are of interest to the researcher’. These researchers suggested that a target population is a specific group of entities necessary for a project. In this study, the target population was all the residents of Serenje that are associated with the Lala people of Chief Chitambo.

### **Sample Size**

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:100) noted that ‘a sample size of 30 is held by many to be a minimum number of cases especially if researchers plan to use some form of statistical



analysis on their data ....’ In this study, no statistics were used, and data was collected from 38 respondents comprising 1 chief, 7 traditional council (Insaka ye Lala) members, 1 councillor and 29 randomly selected citizens especially adults. The justification for having such a sample size was that firstly, it is scientifically supported by scholars such as (Cohen et al ibid) to be enough for statistical analysis. Second, the sample was representative enough for the target community because in qualitative studies, numbers do not matter much but quality and depth of the information collected.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Field data was collected in a space of three months using interviews, focus group discussion and observation.

Coolican (2009:150) indicated that ‘the interview method involves asking people direct questions’. This study conducted face to face interviews with the chief, elders, and some citizens in the target population where the researchers asked specific questions to the respondents about the study.

This study had two focus group discussions with traditional council members and some citizens. Wimmer and Dominic (1987: 151) explained that:

Focus groups or group interviewing is a research strategy for understanding audience/consumer attitudes and behaviour. From six to twelve people are interviewed simultaneously with the moderator leading the respondents in a relatively free discussion about the focal topic.

Ader (2008: 333) described research data analysis as ‘a process of inspecting, cleaning, transforming, and modelling data with the

goal of highlighting useful information, suggesting conclusions, and supporting decision-making'. These views were further supported by Lewis and Michael (1995) who observed that data analysis is done in a variety of ways depending on the instruments used to collect data and how the researcher wants the information to be presented. In this study, data was analysed using thematic analysis where similar themes were discussed under similar headings with respect to the questions.

## **Findings and Discussion**

The findings and discussion of the study have been presented with respect to research objectives. Some themes that emanated from data analysis have also been utilised. It is also important to note that the research objectives and questions have been framed as themes for purposes of data presentation in this section.

This research study sought to address the following research objectives: to ascertain what constituted the Lala Culture of Zambia, to determine the factors that were a threat to Lala and Zambian cultures, to establish ways of preserving the Lala and Zambian culture to determine forms of culture that were vulnerable for extinction among the Lala people and to explore the Zambian institutions or fractions that were involved in the preservation of culture.

### **The Lala Culture of Serenje District of Zambia**

The first objective sought to establish what constituted the Lala culture of Serenje District of Zambia. Data from focus group discussions with the traditional council (Insaka ye Lala) and interviews with the chief and senior elders of the Lala revealed that the Lala people have a unique culture. Among the traits and

elements that constituted the Lala culture included the political and governance structure, agriculture and foods eaten, dressing, social events and celebration, and general life style.

### *Political and Governance Structure*

Apart from the national political and governance system in Zambia where the head of State and members of parliament are elected by the citizens, the Lala people are traditional governed by chiefs. The organisation and governance structure of the Lala people starts with the most senior chief (Chief Muchinda) who oversees the welfare of the Lala people in all chiefdoms. Some respondents indicated that:

Senior Chief Muchinda (kankomba welala) is helped by other chiefs who are at the same level in terms of hierarchy which include Chief Chitambo, Chief Muchinka, Chief Mailo, Chieftainess Serenje, Chief Kabamba, Chief Chifomo and Chief Chibale among others. Each chief rules or presides over a certain chiefdom with boundaries marked.

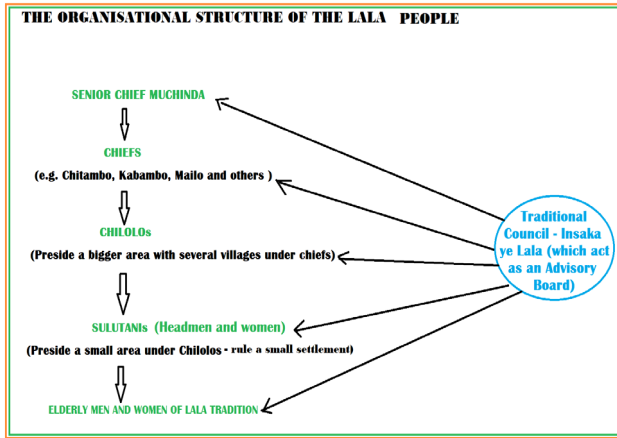
This finding is further supported by Buckle (1976: 2) who reported that ‘Serenje District is divided into eight chieftainships namely Chibale, Chisomo, Kabamba, Kafinda, Mailo, Muchinka, Muchinda and Serenje. The Senior Chief has the title ‘Kankomba-we-Lala’ and the royal family of the Lala is called ‘Bena Nyendwa’.

The third level were the Chilolos (these played roles similar to Members of Parliament at national level) who presided over a bigger area with several villages and headmen within the chiefdom. The Chilolos were followed by Sulutani (village

headmen and women) who presided a small area and these were helped or followed by elderly village men and women who uphold the Lala tradition. Apart from this structure, there is also a traditional council called *Insaka ye Lala*. Among the roles of the council is to advise the chiefs and other Lala fractions on various matters affecting the chiefdoms and the people. The traditional council is an independent institution constituted to be the advisor to chiefs and other Lala community groupings. *Insaka ye Lala* was involved in conflict resolution between and among chiefdoms. For instance, if there was conflict between two chiefs within the Lala community, *Insaka ye Lala* comes in to advise in settling disputes. The presence of chiefs and headmen among the Lala people (Ilala people) has also been supported and acknowledged by Buckle (1976:17) who reported that:

When David Livingstone died, the Chief wanted his body to be buried there in *Chitambo*. In order to show great respect for the doctor's death, he called all the local headmen, common men and women along with all the chief's wives. These people brought drums and weapons and there was devilish and fanatical mourning dance in which men, women and children promiscuously mingled.

The organisational structure of the Lala people can be summarised as indicated in the figure below.



Source: Created by Authors

### *Agriculture Activities and Foods Eaten by the Lala People*

Traditionally, the Lala people were small scale farmers, hunters and fishermen. Their staple foods included cassava, finger millet, groundnuts and maize. Some of the respondents during the interview had this to say:

In the past, the main food eaten was *nshima ya maho*, *Mulimwa* (nshima with beans). The nshima could come from mealie meal of Amale (millet), Kalundwe or Tute (cassava), *Masanka* (Sorghum). In the recent past, maize mealie meal also came in and has almost taken over because so many people eat maize meal actively. Other traditional foodstuff includes *kandolo* (sweet potatoes), *ifipushi* (pumpkin) *imyungu*, *umumbu* (cassava like), *ichinyeka* (African polony), *ifinkubala*, and others.

The crops stated above were in the past grown or cultivated using the *Chitemene* system where trees were cut to provide some

form of fertiliser for growing such crops. Due to environmental concerns, they stopped practicing this kind of cultivation and opted for shifting kind of cultivation where they could go and cultivate far away from their homes and return later after harvest. Some respondents said '*when time comes to harvest the crops, we hold a ceremony known as chibwelamushi (coming back to the village) to celebrate our harvest*'. This partly explains why the Lala people celebrate their traditional ceremony after or during the harvest season.

The Lala people also thrived on fishing and hunting. Some the respondents reported that:

In the past, when there were so many animals, our ancestor literary survived by feasting on them. They could hunt in different ways and styles ranging from setting traps, using spears and a bow and an arrow. Fishing was also common. Women and men at different times and days could go to the river to get some fish but today, things have changed. There are no animals and there is little fish left.

With the coming of modernisation, more modern and universal foodstuffs have been introduced among the Lala people. Additional food crops introduced include rice, irish potatoes, different types of sweet potatoes, different types of beans, maize and other crops (Mkandawire, 2015).

### *Dress Code of the Lala People*

The Lala people dress in a similar manner that most ethnic groups in Zambia do under normal circumstances. Reporting on dressing, some respondents during the interview reported that:

A long time ago, the Lala tribe used akamphangolishishi - a material which they used to make shirts and other forms of clothing alongside with chilundu (type of a

tree). Elderly women used to use *impande* from the water to make *ubulungu* (bids) to symbolise an elderly person who is pure Lala. However, these days, very few traditional Lalas wear such materials such as *ubulungu* (bids).

This traditional dressing was unique among the Lala people and was more prominent during the ceremony known as the *Chibwela mushi* where almost all elderly women would have *ubulungu* in their wrists, necks and arms while men would equally camouflage themselves in some attire described above. Furthermore, another set of respondents indicated that:

In the past, as Lala people, we had a unique way of dressing. We used to wear *Chilundu* and fibres of a certain tree designed in a certain way. The elders used to wear the *Imphande* which is usually found along the river and they used to sow this *Imphande* and made the beads which they wore around their necks.

With the coming of modernity, it was reported that most Lala people opted to adjust their dressing style to include the wearing of *chitenge*, dress and head linen (Duku/ichitambala) by women and pairs of trousers, shorts, *chitenge* tops for men and any other common forms of dressing that are associated with Zambians and the world at large. Much of the dressing described above is also universal as one can find this kind of dressing anywhere in the world (*Walston, 1978*). In terms of fashion, *Chitenge* materials are typical Zambian outfits especially for women as these materials can be designed in different forms. Long dresses and skirts are expected to cover the whole body on the part of women.

### *Leisure and Entertainment*

The findings on this theme were that the Lala (Ilala) people had unique forms of art and entertainment. Like most Zambian societies, the Lala people sang traditional songs, narratives such as folktale, fables, short stories narrated around fire in the evening, dances of different kinds such as Kalele are performed, poetry and drama are highly common in most Lala communities and families. Other forms of celebrations were reported to take place during weddings, traditional ceremonies (Chiwelamushi), death ceremonies, initiation of girls and others. In the case of girls, when they reach a certain age, they were secluded into a certain house for one week of their menstrual cycle. When coming out, there are different lessons given to them coupled with dances and their explanations on how they are used in real life.

#### **(c) *The Marriage Process***

When respondents were asked to comment on the marriage process among the Lala people, most of them reported that there were three ways of marrying among the Lala people:

*The first one is where parents arrange marriage for their children. In this case, parents to man and a woman used to agree that their children should marry without knowledge of the children who were just informed later about this decision and then marriage later took place. The second one is where a boy and a girl find each other by themselves and later ask for parents consent and facilitation of the marriage and the last one is where, a boy impregnates a girl, and the parents compel the boys' family to marry the girl.*



The respondents further indicated that *'after finding a woman to marry, the man's family only takes a Sembe (hoe), (ubulangeti) (Blanket) and Chitenge to the woman's family as part of dowry. In the past, they never charged any money'*. However, this may not be the case in the present day especially in towns where more cultures are mixed, and people copy from each other. It was cheaper to marry Lala women because they believed that children were for the woman not for the man and this explains why, in the event that there was divorce, the woman would get the children.

The Lala people valued children more than money or material. Respondents said that women were the most important in terms of marriage arrangement in that the Lala, the women were the ones who knew the real father of the child and so even a coin is enough to pay for bride price.

#### *When the Chief Died*

When a chief died among the Lala people, they embalmed his body with Nyangu or a type of beans soup and placed the corpse in a small house for some time in preparation for burial. The day of burial of the chief's body, no member of the public or family knows but only a few chiefs process it at night to a place unknown by the public. Some respondents reported that:

*During his funeral, there are usually several celebrations inform of cultural dances and ritualistic practices so that he is buried safely and stay there in peace. When the chief dies, or when he is very ill, no one in the public will be informed immediately until after some days or a week. When announcing his death, traditional rituals and practices are done to notify the public about his death such as poetic enchanting, beating*

*of a unique ritualistic rhythm of drum and some form of songs are sung. Chief's death is a huge feasting time for the community. Lala chiefs are usually buried around a place called Chitimbo but the exact location of each burial grave is not known to the public.*

### **Factors that are a Threat to the Lala and Zambian Cultures**

The second research objective wanted to establish the factors that were a threat to the Lala culture. Findings revealed that there were two groups of factors that were categorised to be threats to Lala and Zambian cultures. These were internal factors and external factors. Internal factors are those rooted within the Lala culture due to people's attitude or negligence while external factors are those where the Lala community may not have much control over. Among the internal factors that were reported by respondents include:

*avoiding the use of local language Cilala where some people wanted to use English or IChibemba or iCinyanja as means of communication. Some of our Lala people do not want to eat nshima from cassava, millet and sorghum which is the traditional food for people, and this is not good for our culture.*

Respondents also spotted external factors as part of the threats to the Lala and Zambian cultures which included modernisation, globalisation, and people's copying behaviour where, whenever they see something new, they want to copy it. Some respondents on this theme had the following to say:

*More and more, we found on a dilemma. We see something new and we hold on the old one.*

*Which one do we go for. You find that some people change to copy new ways of dressing one by one, new ways of marrying off their children and new ways of everything. In the end, you realise that the whole community copy this practice. This practice can kill our own culture.*

Some threats for some of the internal and external factors stated above can physically be measured while others are very hard to measure and once lost, can never be replaced. This view is also reported by Burke (2016:1) who contended that:

*Some forms of threat to culture can well be measured physically: for example, the wear-and-tear damage of tourist pressures on the stones of the Pyramids of Egypt or India's Taj Mahal, or the damage wrought by military action in Croatia. These can be accurately documented, assessed, costed and repaired with varying degrees of authenticity. But the effects on heritage places, monuments and sites of the loss of an indigenous language, and the traditional values, skills and knowledge that language embodies are more difficult to assess. The loss of understanding of the spiritual, intangible and cultural values of places is as difficult to document, as it is irreplaceable.*

Furthermore, among the factors that were considered a threat to the Lala people and probably Zambia's cultural heritage are discussed below.

## **Neglect and Negative Attitude of Local People Towards Local Culture**

It was reported that some people among the Lala community did not want to be associated with the old way of doing things such as eating nshima made from millet, cassava and sorghum. Instead, they preferred modern foodstuffs such as maize meals, Irish potatoes, popcorn maize, wheat and others. It was noted that the practice of leaving out local foodstuff for modern ones was a deliberate neglect and abandonment of local culture for modernization. Some respondents reported by quoting some members of the community saying *'I cannot eat millet nshima or cassava as it is too hard and sticky for my tommy. I prefer Irish potatoes as they are easy to digest in the stomach'*.

While some aspects of culture may be considered neglect and abandonment of culture such as changes in dressing style from wearing fibers of a tree to modern cloths, some changes are for technological advancement and betterment of society as culture is never static. In most cases, some of the changes in culture are done by people unconsciously and/or ignorantly. When asked whether the local people valued the culture of the Lala people, respondents noted that:

*Some people are just ignorant. They think that English Language is better and English manners and their cultures are far much better than ours. They forget that locally, the community here use local languages to communicate and practice the local culture. I think these people are not just happy with what they have. They want something that is not theirs...*

### *Lack of Laws to Protect and Defend the Lala and Zambia's Cultural Heritage*

Without proper legislation or laws that can defend, protect and safeguard the cultures of Zambia, it is difficult for the cultures to sustain themselves. Nothing can sustain itself without proper mechanisms for management. The law must categorically state the position of local cultures if they were to survive as was the case with the Lala culture in question. Having a law on local culture is one thing and setting conservation standards is another. With specific laws, conservation standards can further be put in place specifying what needs to be done in order to preserve culture. In setting standards, deliberate policies are put in place itemising what needs to be done at a time.

### *Globalisation Tendencies*

Globalisation tendencies with universal forms of culture can be a serious threat to local cultures. Some respondents noted that some Lala people opted to go for modern lifestyle leaving the Lala culture behind. This practice was considered a threat to local culture. Much as globalisation is there, local cultures are unique in their own way. According to Albrow and King (1990), globalisation is the process of international integration arising from the interchange of world views, products, ideas, and other aspects of culture. While globalisation has its own advantages to the world, it is a threat to local cultures because through globalisation, people tend to go for presumably cheaper, yet expensive and easy lifestyle than the prescribed traditional culture in their respective communities. In this case, globalisation is replacing those life styles which people are expected to have hence, a threat to local cultures. Take for instance, everyone in cities and town would love to dress in a certain universal way if one decided to dress in a traditional way, the people say all sort of words that they can imagine.

### *Technological Advancements*

Changes in technologies is a threat to local cultures. For instance, in the past, the communication from one place to another was done using messengers but these days, they can use cellphones among the Lala people. Similarly, in the field of transportation for instance where, bicycles, motorbike, and cars are used for transportation as opposed to walking, is a serious change in cultural practice. Some chiefs drive to conduct ceremonies which to some extent losses touch and vigour. The use of social media and internet, have been major factors in globalisation which in turn has changed the life style of people immensely (Guyford, 1972). This entails that technological advancements has made people to stop using traditional ways of doing things. While this is making their lives better, it is a threat to their cultures.

### *Climate, Social and Economic Changes*

When there is systematic whether change for a period of time, it might cause serious economic and social changes in a society, and this, in turn, might affect the local cultures. For instance, some respondents indicated that in the past, they used to grow certain crops using *chitemene* system but these days, they no longer have enough trees to provide enough fertiliser for the crops. This has led to changes in the number of crops to grow and has partly impacted on the welfare of the Lala people. Due to climatic and economic changes, there are times whereby, in some Lala communities, there is little food in the community, a situation that never used to be there in the past.

While the Lala people might lament over *chitemene* system, one would think that, it is good that *chitemene* system was abolished as it was detrimental to the society. In the absence of trees, there is no life as, trees are part and parcel of the ecosystem that help sustain the balance of life.

### *People's Migration*

The movement of people from one cultural group to another was considered a threat to local cultures and the Lala culture in particular. For instance, when asked about the types of dances associated with the Lala people, some respondents noted that much of the dances they saw in functions presumably meant for Lala people were not original Lala dances. Most dances noted were brought in by immigrants from other ethnic groups and now most people have accepted them and they are partly becoming Lala dances. In other words, people that move from one region to another carry with them a culture which might be a threat to the local culture. In other ethnic groups or countries, there is even forced migration where the whole community is moved to go and live in another area thereby affecting the culture of both local people and the migrants.

### *Lack of Political Will*

Political will dictates everything the local people do to some extent. The government and politicians must have interest in preserving Zambia's cultural heritage by making deliberate efforts to promote, defend and safeguard the culture. Politicians should encourage and support communities to be the driving force in conserving and preserving cultural heritage. Similarly, if the members of parliaments and regional government officials in specific provinces of Zambia such as Central province and Serenje district in particular, among the Lala community, pick up initiatives of promoting local culture, they would make a positive difference in preserving culture.

### *Discrimination of Other People's Cultures*

Disrespecting of other people's cultures is a danger to that community. In an ideal society, all cultures are equal no matter how small or big it may be. There is need to respect people's cultures at different levels. Some Lala community members lamented that some Bemba speaking people did not respect their language (Cilala) and its respective culture by insisting that they would not learn Lala even if they lived among the Lala people forever. This attitude was considered a danger and a threat to the Lala community. It was noted that if such an attitude among some immigrants continued, it might affect local people's perception of the Lala culture.

### *Lack of Recognition for Simple Vernacular Heritage*

Every heritage regardless of the size must be recognised and well kept. It is small things that makes a huge difference. A neglect of any heritage may be treated on its own, a threat. Therefore, there must be a deliberate effort to support and revive the cultures under threats especially the smaller ones such as the Lala against the bigger ones such as the Bemba Culture.

### *Loss of Traditional Materials and Building Skills*

Loss of touch on key traits or elements that make the Lala culture was considered a threat to the Lala Culture. Some respondents reported that much of the instruments that the Lala people used to use were declining and reducing in numbers. The hunting and fishing tools, farming implements are changing slowly among the Lala communities. The buildings that were being built and others were all changing in style and design. All these aspects were considered a threat to the culture of the Lala people and that of the Zambians. These views were further supported by ecomos



available at <http://www.icomos.org/risk/2001/synthesis.htm>. who noted that any neglect of traditional buildings and other asserts can be considered a threat to that culture.

### **Preservation of the Lala and Zambian Cultures**

The third objective was about preservation of the Lala Culture and Zambian culture. The respondents were asked to explain how the culture was preserved and transmitted from one generation to the other. Findings revealed that the preservation and protection of Lala and the Zambian cultures depended on several factors such as taking a proactive stance by the local people in respecting their local culture. It was further reported that politicians should take deliberate stances in promoting local culture. Some respondents had this to say:

*One way in which we preserve our culture is through the hosting of a traditional ceremony called Chibwelamushi which means returning to the village from the farms. The purpose of Chibwelamushi is to give thanks to the ancestral spirits and gods for providing us with good rains and a good harvest. At this ceremony, different Lala cultural aspects are shown including dances, singing, showcasing foods, drama, traditional dressing and different crafts like drawing, sculpture, a hoe, an axe and others.*

The idea of giving thanks to the ancestral spirits and gods for the previous good harvest and health, and to appease the spirits so as to have more blessings in the coming year was supported by Guru (2010) who contended that, in most African societies, there was a strong belief that each harvest was due to favours from gods and ancestral spirits and, therefore, they needed to be thanked for each harvest.

Other respondents reported that *'to preserve our cultures, there is need for the whole community to encourage each other to be proud in speaking our language. We should also wear our traditional attire even when going for work and eat our local food'*. These views were further supported by Burke (2016) who stated that the protection of local cultures, heritage monuments, sites and places to provide cultural and economic resources for the benefit of future generations, relies first and foremost on community commitment to the moral and physical objectives of heritage stewardship. Furthermore, the respondents stated the following reasons among others to be considered that would help in the conservation and preservation of the Lala and Zambian culture:

- (i) There was need to influence the government, private and civil society organisations and corporations about the need for legislature and standards to preserve the Lala and Zambian cultures in general.
- (ii) There was need for public awareness raising and professional training about preservation of Lala and Zambian cultures so that the possible risks of losing any cultural aspect or heritage was reduced.
- (iii) There should be a deliberate policy from government wings to allow the working class heroes to be free to wear traditional attires once or twice a week if they so wished. Alternatively, they should just encourage the local people to wear whatever they wanted anytime weather at work or not.
- (iv) The government should introduce and strengthen cultural offices at district and provincial levels to oversee the welfare of cultural matters in Lala land and Zambia as a whole. The already existing systems and structures can further be strengthened.

- (v) In education, much emphasis should also be centered on Zambian cultures in certain topics so that as children grow, they learn much of Zambian history and culture and be proud of it.
- (vi) The government through respective ministries must develop specific strategies, practical tools, skills and provide financial resources to support the conservation of culture ranging from heritage legislation or legal protection of culture, to specific preservative treatments and promotional programmes in Lala land and Zambia as a whole.
- (vii) Since the government of Zambia already has the National Heritage Conservation Commission (NHCC) formally known as the Commission for the Preservation of Natural and Historical Monuments and Relics (National Monuments Commission) enshrined in the constitution, the commission should further be tasked to identify more heritage places, reaching far beyond the current mandate. Professional teams of conservation practitioners working closely with communities from the commission should forge new methods and opportunities for collaboration with other stakeholders to strengthen cultural heritage and preservation processes among the Lala people and Zambian communities.
- (viii) The conservation commission for Zambia must have active maintenance programmes and effective risk management planning for monuments and sites in Serenje and Zambia as a whole. Among the heritage noted in Serenje included; Nkundalila falls, Nsaru curves, David Livingstone Memorial National Monument, Chipota falls, Muliro hot spring and the Nsancha rock. All these needed to be well taken care of and maintained.

## **Aspects of Lala and Zambian Culture that were at Risk or Vulnerable for Extinction**

The fourth objective sought to determine forms of culture that were vulnerable for extinction among the Lala and Zambian cultures. Most respondents indicated that the vernacular language (Icilala) was not actively used by most people within the ethnic group. Only the adults were able to use Icilala language consistently while the others switched to other languages such as Bemba, English and Nyanja.

Another aspect of Lala and Zambian culture that was at risk of getting extinct was the practice of having parents arrange marriages for their children. Some respondents had this to say:

*In the past, parents were responsible for finding marriage partners for their children, for instance, finding a wife partner for their sons in fear of marrying from wrong families with history of violence, talkativeness, prostitution, witchcraft and lack of respect for the in-laws. The parents were careful and selective in selecting families with good backgrounds.*

Furthermore, some respondents noted that *'the Lala people considered marriage as an investment because they were choosing from families who were not lazy but people who were able to work hard that were able to cultivate crops and keep animals'*. The parents practiced this to protect their children and, in many cases, their marriages lasted for years till death. However, with the coming of globalisation and universal culture, the practice of parents arranging marriages for their children is almost extinct everywhere. Children nowadays find their marriage partner for themselves without the consent of the parents. These findings agreed with Mkandawire (2015) who reported that:

*In Zambia and most African countries, there were five ways of marrying. The first one was where parents arranged marriages for their children with or without their children's knowledge or consent. Children were merely informed about their partner and when the wedding would take place. The second one was where parents would find marriage partners and agreed as parents and then led their children to develop interest in the chosen spouse to be, by creating favourable meeting environments for the targets to interact. The target children interact blindly in natural environments with extended family members to lead them. This conspiracy on marriages worked at times. The third way was where a boy impregnated a girl out of play and fun, and later the boy's family was compelled to marry the girl's family with charges and indictment. The fourth one was where a man was caught in a sexual affair with another woman whether married or not. This worked in most cases. The fifth one was where both a boy and a girl met anywhere and agreed to marry out of their interest.*

Some of these marriage processes were still active today in both rural and urban residences in Zambia and parts of the world such as India.

The marriage charges among the Lala people were also eroding from the ideal Lala culture where one would only buy a blanket and a hoe as bride price and dowry and not the current practice of charging huge sums of money. In the past, if a man wanted to marry, he was not expected to pay money. They were only expected to demonstrate abilities to buy, pay or possess an

axe, a hoe and a blanket or such related stuff. This practice has eroded among most Lala families.

Another aspect of Lala and Zambian culture that was at risk of getting extinct as reported by some respondents was the practice of narrating stories in the evenings around the fire and night activities when the moon was shining. These activities were reducing slowly and were at the risk of getting extinct.

Another aspect of Lala culture that was at the age of extinction as reported by some of the respondents was captured in the following quote:

*In the past, almost every girl that reached a certain age and started menstruating for the first time was expected to undergo initiation ceremony such as the seclusion. Parents used to put their girl child in secluded areas and taught them about marriage and how to handle their husbands as they were going to get married soon or later. The girls were also taught hygiene during that period including the idea of taking precautions when getting into future sexual contacts with men, and not to add salt to relish when cooking.*

The seclusion of a girl child was an important phase for the girls for them to be exposed to real issues in their respective communities. However, this practice is no longer very active among the Lala people as there are very few people practicing it. The situation is similar in most Zambian communities.

Another aspect of culture that the Lala people used to practice was the idea of making shrines in villages. When asked aspects of culture that were vanishing or getting extinct among the Lala people, some respondents had this to say:

*In the past, the Lala people used to make shrines in villages where chiefs and other old people used to go and pray to their ancestral spirit and evoked spirits and gods. The chief was the one who prayed in local language but now it is no longer practiced. I have never heard any one mentioning or doing this in the recent years.*

The respondent further indicated that the coming of missionaries and Christianity has greatly affected people's beliefs in the power of ancestral gods and shrines. Christians described the practice of praying to gods in shrines as evil, barbaric and demonic. This is the reason that made the Lala people to depart from this practice.

Another aspect of the Lala people that is getting extinct is the idea of using finger millet to welcome a new person to settle among the Lala people. In the past, Lala people believed that for a person to settle in a Lala village, that person had to leave *amale meal* (finger millet) on a plate at the place where that person wants to settle. The plate of finger millet was expected to spend a night there guarded or tempered by the spirits. The following day, if the finger millet was reduced in quantity, then that person was not welcomed in that village by the spirits. If the quantity of millet was found to be the same, that person could settle in that village by the ancestral spirits. This practice no longer exists among the Lala people due to modernisation.

### **Death and Extinction of Aspects of Lala Culture**

The death and extinction of any culture is done only when the last person practising that culture dies. This means that any cultural aspect of the Lala people is still there if there is one person or more practising it. A mere reduction in the number of people practicing

a culture as stated by most respondents in this article does not warrant death or extinction of that culture. Similarly, one can only say that a language is dead when the last speaker dies. This means that for any cultural aspect to die, it takes time and a long process. To avoid death of any cultural aspect, there is need to preserve the Lala cultures and having more and more people practice it actively.

### **Zambian Institutions Created to Help Preserve Cultural Heritage**

The fifth research objective sought to establish factions or institutions that were created to help preserve Zambian Cultures. The findings revealed that there were a few institutions in Zambia created to help preserve Zambian culture. These institutions include the following:

- (i) The National Heritage and Conservation Commission (NHCC) which was tasked among others to document Zambia's cultural and historical sites. The National Heritage Conservation Commission is an Institution mandated by Cap 173 of the Laws of Zambia to manage and Conserve Zambia's outstanding Cultural and Natural Heritage resources. The NHCC reported over 3000 heritage sites in Zambia falling in separate categories at (<http://www.icomos.org/risk/2001/zamb2001.htm>). In Serenje, they have already identified about five heritage sites including Nkundalila Falls and David Livingstone's Memorial Site in Chipulu.
- (ii) National and Private museums. A museum is an institution that conserves a collection of artefacts and other objects of artistic, cultural, historical, or scientific value both physically and electronically. Most public museums in Zambia such as Lusaka Museum, Livingstone and others make cultural heritage materials available for public viewing through exhibits that may be permanent or temporary. One



of the focus of museums is to serve and preserve important and notable aspects of the country's history and culture is one of them.

- (iii) Cultural villages which were established to promote the expression of artistic talents in Zambia. A cultural village is a place designated to conserve cultural related materials in temporal spaces while others have permanent spaces. In Zambia, there are a few cultural villages and one of them is Kabwata Cultural Village which also helps in the preservation of Zambian culture by showcasing crafts of various forms and other cultural aspects. Among the artworks shown are figurines of humans, bird and animals; walking sticks, drums, spears, textiles and fabrics and bead.
- (iv) Government Ministries particularly, the Ministry of Tourism and Arts, the Ministry of Guidance and Religious Affairs and The Ministry of Chiefs and Traditional Affairs are well vested with authority to facilitate the conservation and preservation of local cultures. These ministries have offices in every province that try to help preserve national heritage. The government policies on culture are supported at various levels, such as the Zambian National Cultural Policy (2003) and UNESCO's drive of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014). The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Culture, Information and Sport (2001) has set itself an objective of ensuring that culture plays a significant role in the development of the Region and evaluation of all SADC Projects and programmes for their cultural impact. The same Protocol expects Member states to organise and cause to organise arts and cultural festivals to pursue the ideals of regional integration.

- (v) National Arts Council is another wing established to help preserve Zambian culture through Arts, film and Music. This has so far been well done in terms of representing cultural aspects especially on the use of local languages in Zambian music.

## **Conclusion**

The article presented and discussed the findings stated in the research objectives on various themes. It was stated that the Lala culture was made of different aspects which included unique foods, dressing, dances and ceremonies. It was also reported that there were several factors that were a threat to Lala and Zambian cultures. These included negative attitudes of people towards their local cultures and the effects brought forth by globalisation and modernisation. It was also stated that, while modernisation and globalisation might be a threat to local cultures, their contributions in bettering societies worldwide are immense. Some ill or unworthy cultural practices can be abolished for the good of the society while good practices can be upheld. The article further stated different ways that the local people and the government can take to help preserve the Lala and Zambian cultures. The forms of culture that were vulnerable for extinction among the Lala people were also presented and discussed. These included the practice where parents used to arrange marriages for their children, worshiping gods at the shrines and the eating of some traditional foods such as nshima from millet. The article also explored the Zambian institutions or fractions that were involved in the preservation of culture such as the National Heritage and Conservation Commission.

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