

Archives As Extended Memory of Communities: The Case of Dandawa Chiefdom in Hurungwe District, Zimbabwe

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Introduction

- Memory – link with recalling & remembering
- Process of storing information
- Remembering – practice of telling memory
- Telling occurs at two levels: oral & written
- Bastian asks: Without historical documents can communities build reliable & durable memory? (Bastian, 2003)

- Memory is complicated – encompasses divided, shared/collective and social memories
- Archives contain written or recorded memory
- Archives serve two functions:
 - 1) houses & keeps documents for posterity
 - 2) assists the community to remember & to own its memory

Contextualising Memory

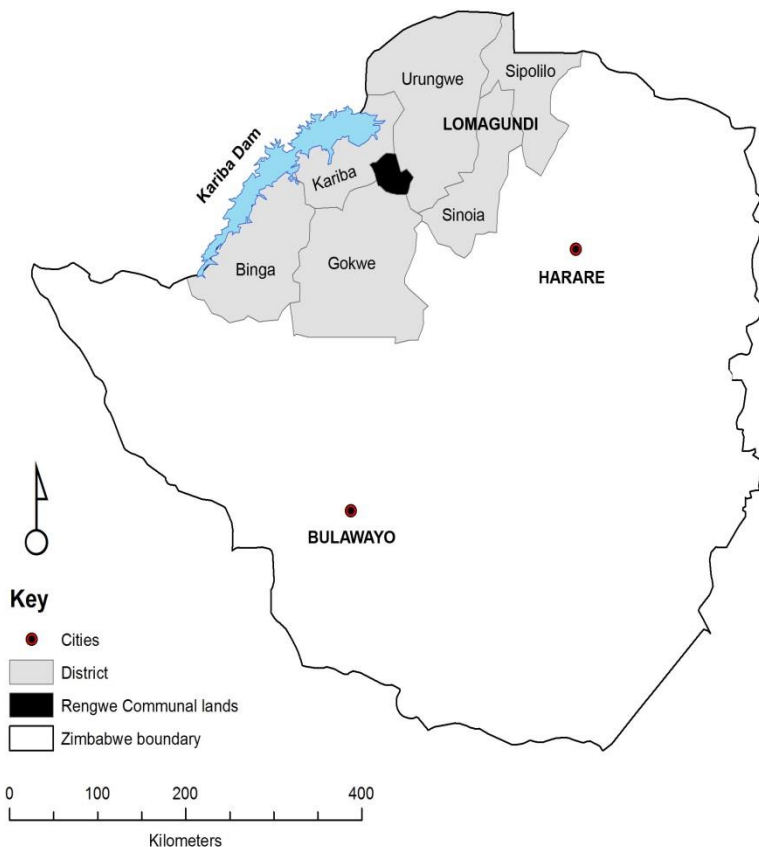
- Operates at two levels: memory as action & memory as representation – it is work
- Ideas & experiences put memory at work
- These ideas are networked & represented to others through remembering & telling
- Memory is social or collective when it deals with social identities
- Individual or personal memory when the experience pertains the person recalling

- Memory is a battle field – contested terrain
- It produces divided memories
- Contestation emerges in the terrain of truth & in matters of legitimacy
- Memory is about politics & hierarchy of power in societies
- The past is not recalled for its own sake but to legitimize the present social order
- Thus archives become very important in 2 ways

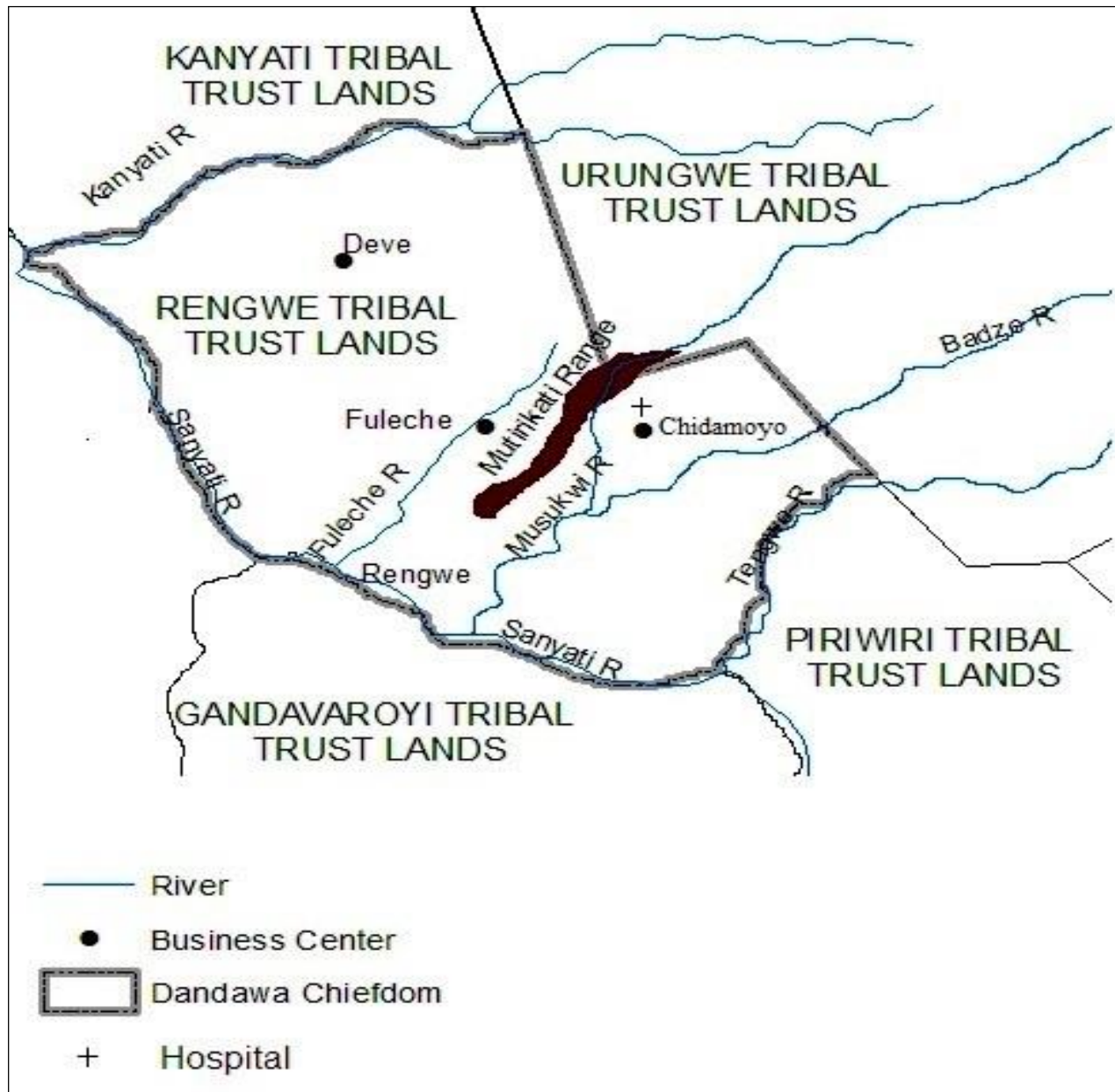
- 1) In sustaining memories of societies
- 2) In acting as extended or collective/social memories of societies
- Archivists are entrusted with keeping for posterity the voices & perceptions of people about the past
- Only traces of the past survive or shine in the present – it shines partly in the archive

Rengwe Communal Lands: Social Memory & Meaning

- Rengwe/Dandawa Chiefdom – 100km southwest of Karoi
- Was sparsely populated
- Claimed by Nematombo
- Oral memory – story of forced removal
- Gowa from the Z. Valley
- Gota from Sipolilo



- Memory of forced removal does not have all answers to questions: why, how, when and what?
- Archival documents come to the rescue
- Archives tell us:
- Rengwe created as SNA for Chief Dandawa
- It earned a political identity and meaning
- Boundaries are spelt out in archival records



- Chief Dandawa referred me to NAZ for his boundaries
- Files on Chiefs & Headmen
- Colonial documents - critical game changers in matters of succession disputes/contestations
- Descendants of forced resettlers use archives to legitimize their traditional authority
- Thus archives are extended memories – they assists communities to “own their history” & to remember it

- Documents were written by individuals – represents personal perceptions
- Are part of divided memories – they are contestable
- Records give us figures – 1298 comprising 344 men, 318 women & 636 children from Gota
- 2412 - 448 men, 687 women & 1277 children from Zambezi Valley (9/48 villages) – trace change

Owning Memory: Identity & Social Belonging

- Memory is socially constructed
- Forced removal led to group formation – forced versus voluntary resettlers
- Removal deepened use of Korekore Identity – refer to delineation report 1968
- Colonial officials' perspectives influenced relations between the evictees themselves
- Created dominant & less dominant narratives

conclusion

- Archives important in accessing the past
- Archival records allow the past to shine in the present
- They are not only information centres but also extended memories of societies
- Custodians of various memories & memories for posterity
- Assist societies to own & remember their history
- Difference: archives do not change – not affected by socio-political conditions
- Oral memory is dynamic & is affected by time/events

- **Vielen Dank**