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## **In pursuit of heritage-based philosophies: African oral literature in nationalism and politics in Zimbabwe**

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### **Abstract**

Since time immemorial, indigenous communities have always perceived their philosophies as a complex web of survival. These communities have always relied on the indigenous knowledge systems through proverbs, folk stories and songs to instill life affirming values and caution people. They have played a pivotal role in the understanding of nationalism and politics on the African continent. The philosophies of life that are valued by the indigenous people are embedded in these art forms. Thus, they have continued to be vehicles through which all the values that concern African people are communicated and transmitted. The study, therefore, sought to investigate and demonstrate the role of heritage-based philosophies in the understanding of nationalism and politics in Zimbabwe. The research was a qualitative enquiry where purposive sampling of 40 elderly and 40 youths from Mashonaland Central and Matabeleland North provinces were conducted. The researcher sought ethical clearance to conduct the research and it was reviewed and granted by Africa Social Work and Development Network (ASWDNet) committee under number EA0238. Guided by the Ubuntu philosophy, the article comes to conclusion that oral literature emphasizes the African way of life of the people and it has contributed to the practice and handling of nationalism and politics in Zimbabwe. It further points out that these philosophies are significant agents of change capable of directing, provoking, overturning and recasting perceptions of social reality.

**Keywords:** Nationalism; Politics; Heritage-based philosophies; Oral literature; Zimbabwe

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## Introduction

The concept of oral literature is an unfamiliar one to most people brought up in cultures like those of contemporary Europe. This paper defines African oral literature from an African cultural domination as a form of literature with striking characteristics in its verbal variability with existence of audience directly involved in the actualisation and creation of the piece of oral literature, face to face confrontation with audience as in story telling situation where it is common for the narrator to open with a formula which explicitly arouses the audience's attention and sometimes expected to participate, clarification and challenge from members of the audience is gathered and it is owned by the community, does not possess an author and it covers all life sectors such as political, social and economic. Examples of these art forms include, taboos, proverbs, riddles, songs and performances, folktales, poems and idioms. Shitemi (2009) then proposes that oral literature is art form that has withstood the weather and storms of time and the ravages of the convergence and divergence of cultures, languages, lifestyle and environmental dynamism. This is so because oral literature aptly adapts to changes and challenges. Thus, the study was expected to inform the communities on the importance of heritage-based philosophies in appreciating the dynamics of nationalism and politics in Zimbabwe as the country has been and is still in need of these forms especially in the face of political instability, human migration and poverty. Oral narratives are neither fossilized in time nor static. Instead, they are very dynamic owing to internal and external knowledge influencing adaptation needs and the constant quest to resolve pressing community problems (Shizha, 2013, Keane, Khupe & Seehawer 2017). Oral narratives are holistic because they acknowledge the interconnectedness of all living things, which range from person to person, humanity to nature, 'other beings' or the spirit world and the broader universe (Mawere, 2015, Semall & Asino, 2013). Furthermore, indigenous knowledge naturally promotes intergenerational thinking, ethics and values that keep the entire community fully engaged in understanding their politics and nationalism as their extension of their identities (Cameron, Courchene, Ijaz & Mauro 2019).

In African societies in general and Zimbabwe in particular, the transmission of oral literature from one generation to another lies at the "heart of culture and memory" in that; one is expected to showcase Ubuntu which is African theory of social practice and one is to keep full memory of all the forms of the oral literature and assigned to pass the knowledge to the future generation. A person is a person through other people. No one comes into the world fully formed. One would not know how to think, or walk, or speak, or behave as a human being unless through coexisting with other human beings. We need other human beings in order to be human (Tutu, 2004:25). Nationalism and politics are guided by Ubuntu, where the concept of Ubuntu is outcasted by societies and its leadership in nationalism and politics then challenges such as political violence, corruption, economic dilapidation, unemployment and poverty affects the majority. Oral tradition is a vehicle for transmission of unique form of cultural orientation knowledge of nationalism and politics. Among African societies nationalism and politics is a key central element of Zimbabwe's cultural hegemony. In African societies oral tradition is the first encounter one engages with after birth thus, Ubuntu is an immunisation jab one must undertake and it is then nurtured by cultural values of the society through oral tradition.

Nationalism and politics therefore, are key components of all African societies and its survival is underpinned by Ubuntu. This paper continues to inform the present generation and reminding political leadership that; oral literature remains a vehicle through which all the values that concern African people are communicated and transmitted. The Zimbabwean political rhetoric of vision 2030 on nation building confirms this as it is underlined by the Shona philosophy; "*Nyika inovakwa nevene vayo*" (A country is developed by its citizens), *unodya chawauraya* (you eat what you kill) meaning all Zimbabweans either living inside or outside is responsible in nation building and shall not expect other countries especially the western to do it for them. Hence, Ubuntu philosophy for nationalism and politics entails that every individual is entitled to participate in nation building as signified by the African proverb; *hapana inofurira ivete* (No one will work for someone else). Thus, it is the mandate of this paper to bring out heritage-based philosophy of oral art forms in handling nationalism and politics for the betterment of the people.

## Background: Contextualising nationalism and politics

Nationalism from an African perspective is a subjective feeling of kinship or affinity shared by people of African descent. It is a feeling based on shared cultural norms, traditional institutions, racial heritage and a common historical experience.



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Hayes (1960:2) defines nationalism as a fusion of patriotism with consciousness of nationality. In a similar way Snyder (1964:2) defines nationalism as a condition of mind, feeling, or sentiment of a group of people living in a well-defined geographical area, speaking a common language, professing a literature in which the aspirations of the nation have been expressed, being attached to the common traditions, and, in some cases, having a common origin. Nationalism is not only consciousness or a feeling of belonging to a certain nation; it is also, according to the definition by experts of the Royal Institute of International Affairs (1939:16), "a desire to forward the strength, liberty, or prosperity of a nation, whether one's own or another." That being the case, the heritage-based philosophies entail the passing on of life affirming values to generations which is in line with the Institute's observation that the desire to push forward the nation's freedom and affluence is core.

Furthermore, nationalism used to be recognized as an ideology of national independence, an ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of self-government. Plamenatz (1975:23-4) states that nationalism emerges when national identity is threatened or felt to be inadequate. "Nationalism is the desire to preserve or enhance a people's national or cultural identity when that identity is threatened, or the desire to transform or even create it when it is felt to be inadequate or lacking." Nationalism, however, comprises also "the dogma that the individual lives exclusively for the nation with the corollary that the nation is an end in itself, and the doctrine, too, that the nation (the nationalist's own) is or should be dominant if not supreme among other nations and should take aggressive action to this end" (Shafer, 1995:6).

Politics on the other hand involves making decision for a particular group of people. Politics are actions and policies used to gain and hold power to influence a government (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2008). People within a community or a society are conciliated by giving them a share in power in proportion, where welfare and survival is the central aim. Politics is linked to the governance of the country. Heywood notes that in politics people preserve, amend and make rules, which they follow. Politics is about power relations. In its broadest terms, politics:

is the activity through which people make, preserve and amend the general rules under which they live. Politics is thus inextricably linked to the phenomenon of conflict and cooperation, on the one hand, the existence of rival opinions, different wants, competing needs and opposing interests guaranteeing about the rules under which people live (Heywood 2013:2).

Thus, nationalism and politics work hand in glove in the sense that the decisions that are made in a country to protect the nation's interests emphasize the relationship. It is against this background that the oral art forms that are shaped by Ubuntu are going to be discussed as they shaped nationalism and politics from time immemorial.

### **Understanding African oral literature and the Ubuntu philosophy**

Oral literature refers to any form of verbal art which is delivered by the word of mouth. Nandwa and Bukenya (1983:1) define oral literature as "those utterances whether spoken, recited or sung whose composition and performance exhibit to an appreciated degree, the artistic characteristics of accurate observation, vivid imagination and indigenous". Finnegan (1970) defines oral literature as the genetic term to designate the customs, beliefs, traditions, tales, magical practices, sayings, songs, proverbs. From the definitions above, oral literature is dependent on the performer who formulates the art form for a reason or a purpose to solve that would have risen in communities. Oral literature is intertwined with the life of a people and culture. Hence, they shape a people's life. Matiza (2015) has it that oral tradition was there to teach the listener important traditional values and morals pertaining to life. From this observation, one argues that oral tradition is a kind of education which p'Bitek (1986:10) refers to as the people's social philosophy and their worldview. Therefore, African oral literature is a philosophy embedded in the African thought systems and hence, it is used as a mental principle that is followed and it guides the African people in the making of certain decisions when it comes to issues of nationalism and politics.

Oral literature is literature passed through the word of mouth, that is, spoken or recited literature. Finnegan (1970) defines oral literature as the genetic term to designate the customs, beliefs, traditions, tales, magical practices, sayings, songs and proverbs. On the other hand, Sone (2018) defines oral literature as a system of communication in which information and messages are transmitted verbally from one generation to another. According to waThiongo (1972) cited in Matiza (2015),



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oral literature passes from ear to mouth, generation to generation, it consists of songs, poems, drama, proverbs, riddles and sayings and it is the most ancient and richest in the African heritage. Oral literature refers to verbal activities of a particular society or community through which its philosophy and values are transmitted from one generation to another. It is thus, clear that oral art forms are a means of communication and are a carrier of culture from one generation to another.

Having clarified on the denotation of African oral literature, the paper then brings out the concept of Ubuntu that reinforces the discussions in the paper. The theory is designed for all African people and intended to inform Ubuntu philosophies in nationalism and political issues thereby connecting Africa's past to its future. Given the fact that neo colonial mechanisms are alien and continue to occupy central space in African nationalism and politics, thus the need to enlighten the youths with heritage-based philosophies through oral narratives in rebuilding and strengthening nationalism and politics in Zimbabwe. Nyaumwe and Mkabela (2007) contend that Ubuntu is an African concept that refers to humaneness between people within a community. The term Ubuntu/*botho*/*hunhu* is a Zulu/Xhosa/Ndebele/Sesotho/Shona word referring to the moral attribute of a person, who is known in the Bantu languages as *munhu* (among the Shona people of Zimbabwe), *umuntu* (Among the Ndebele of Zimbabwe and the Zulu/Xhosa of South Africa) and *muthu* (among the Tswana people of Botswana) and *omundu* (among the Herero people of Namibia) to name just a few of the Bantu tribal groupings. Though the term has a wider linguistic rendering in almost all the Bantu languages of Southern Africa, it has gained a lot of philosophical attention in Zimbabwe and South Africa, especially in the early twenty-first century for the simple reason that both Zimbabwe and South Africa needed home-grown philosophies to move forward following political disturbances that had been caused by the liberation war and apartheid respectively.

Philosophically, the term Ubuntu emphasises the importance of a group or community and it finds its clear expression in the Nguni/Ndebele phrase: *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* which when translated to Shona means *munhu munhu nevanhu* (a person is a person through other persons). *Hunhu*/Ubuntu is also a key theme in African philosophy as it places an imperative on the importance of group or communal existence as opposed to the West's emphasis on individualism and individual human rights. Thus, *hunhu*/Ubuntu, as an aspect of African philosophy, prides in the idea that the benefits and burdens of the community must be shared in such a way that no one is prejudiced but that everything is done to put the interests of the community ahead of the interests of the individual. The concept augers well with nationalism as it also provides for the nation instead of individual interests. Amongst the scholars who have popularized the concept of Ubuntu, we have Ramose (1999; 2014), who is credited for his definition of Ubuntu as humaneness, Samkange and Samkange (1980) who link *hunhu*/Ubuntu with the idea of humanism and Tutu (1999) who sees Ubuntu as a conflict resolution philosophy. These three are regarded as first-generation scholars of Ubuntu because historically, they are among the first black philosophers hailing from Africa to write about *hunhu*/Ubuntu as a philosophy. They also started writing as early as the 1980s and early 1990s and they regarded Ubuntu inspired by the traditional southern African thought as a human quality or as an attribute of the soul. Undeniably, the philosophies that are embedded in African oral art forms are human and are a product of the indigenous people who formulate them for resolving various conflicts around them.

When the philosophy of Ubuntu is used in the context of African oral art forms in nationalism and politics it resonates well since it is the humanness in people that they create oral forms that guide their conduct in their day to day living. To this effect, Tutu (2004:25) argues that a person is a person through other persons. None of us comes into the world fully formed. We would not know how to think, or walk, or speak, or behave as human beings unless we learned it from other human beings. We need other human beings in order to be human. Accordingly, the study of oral art forms in nationalism and politics entails that people would learn from one generation to the other. This means that Ubuntu can be described as the capacity in an African culture to express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, humanity and mutuality in the interests of building and maintaining communities with justice and mutual caring (Tutu, 1999:34-35). The concept of Ubuntu mobilises the right mindset towards nationalism thus, the Ubuntu philosophy is central in oral literature. Ubuntu's values such as solidarity, compassion, generosity, mutuality and commitment to community can find resonance well in the study of African oral art forms as these forms are community based and, in a bid, to uphold the above philosophies.

An enquiry of heritage-based philosophies through oral chronicles in nationalism and politics is interrogated and blended to Maulana Karenga's Afrocentric principles of *nguzo saba* as they are consonant with the values and ideas of nationalism and politics notably human solidarity, empathy, human relationships and human dignity. The *nguzo saba* principles are



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*umoya* (unity), *kujichagulia* (self-determination), *ujima* (collective work and responsibility), *ujamaa* (cooperative economics), *nia* (purpose), *kuumba* (creativity) and *imani* (faith). Nationalism and politics are guided by Ubuntu, where the concept of Ubuntu is outcasted by societies and its leadership in nationalism and politics then challenges such as political violence, corruption, economic dilapidation, unemployment and poverty affects the majority. Oral tradition is a vehicle for transmission of unique form of cultural orientation knowledge of nationalism and politics. Among African societies nationalism and politics is a key central element of Zimbabwe's cultural hegemony. In African societies, oral tradition is the first encounter one engages with after birth thus, Ubuntu is an immunisation jab one must undertake, and it is then nurtured by cultural values of the society through oral tradition.

## Research methodology

The aim of this research was to interrogate the use and application of African oral art forms in nationalism and politics in Zimbabwe. It needed to find out how the communities are incorporating the use of the se art forms in nationalism and politics. The research employed qualitative research method and hermeneutic phenomenology research design. Qualitative approach allows the collection of lived world experiences and how culture and tradition have shaped people's lives and their understanding of their environment. On the other hand, qualitative research methodology involves collecting non-numerical data to understand opinions or experiences through the use of open-ended questions. The advantage of the approach is that it motivates participants to openly express their thoughts without limitations. The approach permits the collection of lived experiences (Mwita 2022), and encourages the researcher to gather in-depth insights into the application of oral art forms in the understanding of nationalism and politics in Zimbabwe. The study population included 40 youths in tertiary institutions who were purposively selected based on their knowledge of culture and heritage, 4 chiefs (2 from Mashonaland Central – ward 13-18 and 2 from Matabeleland North- ward 1-10), 9 headmen and 27 elderly people in targeted communities. Youths in selected tertiary institutions were selected as a way of passing on life affirming values to the future generation. The selected institutions included Bindura University of Science Education (BUSE) with twenty (20) students and Lupane State University (LSU) (20) twenty as well. The choice of these institutions was based on the understanding that the Matabeleland North and Mashonaland Central provinces are representative of the country's dominant cultures, that the Ndebele in Matabeleland North and Shona in Mashonaland Central. The places also represented students from diverse areas hence some population of youths will be represented well. Chiefs and headmen in these areas, (20) twenty from Matabeleland North and (20) twenty from Mashonaland Central were consulted too as they are the custodians of culture and spoke from a position of their area's cultures. This made the total of (80) eighty participants in the study. Ethical clearance was sought for the research and it was reviewed and granted by African Social Work and Development Network, (ASWDNet) committee under number EA0238. Data instruments included interviews with chiefs, headmen and elderly people then 2 focus group discussions with youths at universities. The researcher facilitated the discussions under topics like, Oral art forms that reflect on nationalism and politics in your cultures. Secondary sources of data in form of literature reviewed on the subject matter was consulted.

## Findings

The findings of these study were analysed through the themes that came out of the data provided. Some examples were extracted from the information given during data gathering process. Table 1 and 2 show the findings from both Matabeleland North and Mashonaland Central.



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*Table 1: Findings from Matabeleland North*

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Oral art forms</b>	<b>Example</b>	<b>Translation</b>
<b>Chiefs and other elderly</b>	Proverbs that show decentralization of power.	1. <i>Inthibi yabashe igota.</i> 2. <i>Injobo enhle.</i> <i>ithungelwa ebandla.</i> 3. <i>Inyathi ibuzwa kwabaphambili.</i>	1. A king's power is in his councilors. 2. Good leadership is supported by others 3. You ask others who have been there before you.
<b>Chiefs and elderly</b>	Proverbs that call for unity of purpose.	1. <i>Chinyala chimwempela achitopwanya inda.</i> 2. <i>Isongo elilodwa alikhencezi.</i>	1. One finger does not crush a louse. 2. One bangle does not make any noise.
<b>University youths</b>	Song	<i>Nkosi sikelel' iAfrika.</i> <i>Maluphakanyisw'udumo lwayo.</i> <i>Yizwa imithandazo yethu.</i> <i>Nkosi sikelele tina usapo lwayo...</i>	God bless Africa. Raise its name high Hear our prayers God bless us the African family).
<b>University youths</b>	Proverbs that show promotion of cooperative economics.	1. <i>Akunyoni yndiza ingahlali phansi.</i> 2. <i>Igwayi liyatshiyelwana.</i> 3. <i>Bushe ifolya bunosiylwanwa.</i>	1. No bird flies without landing on the ground. 2. Tobacco is left for others to enjoy. 3. Kingship is like tobacco; you leave it to the next.





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*Table 1: Findings from Mashonaland Central*

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Oral narrative</b>	<b>Example</b>	<b>Translation</b>
<b>Chief and elderly</b>	Proverbs that show community participation.	1. <i>Ishe makurukota.</i> 2. <i>Munhu kubata ushe makurukota.</i>	1. A king rules with his councilors. 2. Kingship depends on Councilors.
<b>University youths</b>	Songs	1. <i>Vanhu vese vemuno muAfrica ngatibatanei.</i> 2. <i>Kubatana kwenyika dzeMozambique neZimbabwe.</i>	1. All people of African descent, let us unite. 2. The unity of Zimbabwe and Mozambique.
<b>University students</b>	Legends	Mbuya Nehanda	
<b>University youths</b>	Proverbs that show cooperative economics and equitable of wealthy.	1. <i>Chawawana idya nehama mutorwa ane hanganwa.</i> 2. <i>Kandiro kanoenda kunobva kamwe.</i>	1. When you have accumulated wealth, share with your own, they will not forget you unlike others. 2. You may not get any assistance from others if you do not assist others in times of need. (One good turn deserves another).
<b>Chiefs and elderly</b>	Proverbs that call for unity of purpose.	1. <i>Rume rimwe harikombi churu.</i> 2. <i>Chara chimwe hachitswanyi inda.</i>	1. One man cannot cover the anthill. 2. One finger cannot kill a louse.

The findings of the study suggest that both youths from Bindura University and Lupane University are familiar with how oral narratives like proverbs, songs, folktales were used since time immemorial in politics and nationalism of the indigenous people. The same applies to the elderly people who include chiefs and headmen.



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## Discussion

### *Heritage-based philosophies in nationalism and politics*

African oral art forms played a pivotal role in sustaining nationalism and politics of the indigenous people through use of these *Ubuntu* based philosophies since time immemorial. In that regard, from the traditional leadership in Matabeleland North, it emerged that the African traditional political structures necessitated a dialogical flow of power. This means that the king was not a dictator, but he would listen from the elders of the community. The king was powerful but not to an extent of becoming an absolute monarch with all power concentrated in his hands (Matiza, 2017). He would be guided by his colleagues and the society would also contribute. This is evidenced by the proverb *Inthibi yabashe igota* (A king's power is in his councilors), *Ishe makurukota* (A king rules with his councilors). These proverbs signify the decentralization of power, the backbone of good political governance and nationalism, where even the king or head chief was able to accommodate the views of other people in the community. The proverbs show the dialogical nature of knowledge and the value of consultation. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2008) highlights that in theory, the Ndebele king was the head of state, head of government, religious chief, and commander-in-chief of the armed forces and the supreme judge of all criminal cases. However, state policies were subjected to serious debate and meetings were considered important in deciding the future of the state. The inner circle played a role in determining state policy. This means that these policies were the ones that would be followed by the people to achieve and display the oneness that is required in a country.

Plamenatz (1975:23-4) states that nationalism emerges when national identity is threatened or felt to be inadequate. Nationalism is the desire to preserve or enhance a people's national or cultural identity when that identity is threatened, or the desire to transform or even create it when it is felt to be inadequate or lacking. Thus, in Shona society, for instance, the idea of knowledge is expressed through listening to elders telling stories of their experiences as youths and how such experiences can be relevant to the lives of the youths of today. Sometimes, they use proverbs to express their epistemology. The proverb: *Rega zvipore akabva mukutsva* (Experience is the best teacher) is a case in point. One comes to know that promiscuity is bad when he or she was once involved in it and got a Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) and other bad consequences. No doubt, this person will be able to tell others that promiscuity is bad because of his or her experiences. The point is that *hunhu/ubuntu* epistemology is a function of experience. In Shona, they also say: *Takabva noko kumhunga hakuna ipwa* (We passed through the millet field, and we know that there are no sweet reeds there). The point is that one gets to know that there are no sweet reeds in a millet field because he or she passed through the millet field. One has to use the senses to discern knowledge. This means that even the art forms that are used and were used in nationalism and politics of the African people have long been tested and found to be useful in as far as promoting Ubuntu among people.

Oral art forms particularly songs have been harnessed to impart the philosophy of nationalism that is the love for one's country. But what is pertinent to understand is that nationalism is a European construct which was brought to Africa. The scramble for Africa by the colonizers created the boundaries of what we call modern day nations or states. A European construct has managed to find its way in the African discourse. As such nationalism is heightened or talked about after post-independence for example in Chinx Chingaira's *Vanhu Vose ve muAfrica ngatibatanei* (All people of African descent, let us unite). As has been given through focus group discussion in Bindura the students reiterate that, in this song Chinx speaks to the issue of the spilt blood of the children of Africa which set Africa free from colonial bondage and this blood should unite Africa and be proud to be Africans. Thomas Mapfumo's *Kubatana kweMozambique neZimbabwe* (the unity of Zimbabwe and Mozambique) also speaks of the need to unite as African countries as we are brothers and sisters. The two countries even assisted each other during the liberation struggle.

Nationalism is linked on self-determination. In fact, it was Africans' sense of shared historical heritage and identity that informed their resistance against European intruders who wanted to undermine their socio-cultural and political heritage. During colonial period many African states come together and form the nationalist movements which was based on the ideas of Marcus Garvey. They came together to fight the Europeans so that they protect their cultural heritage and identity as Africans. This was even revealed during focus group discussions with youths at Lupane University where they pointed out that in a song which was sung by many African states. The Methodist hymn: *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* (God bless Africa), was as a political song in meetings of the African Nations Congress and other political contexts (Rhodes 1962). Most of





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the African states sung the song in solidarity. Before independence the song was sung for uniting people of Africa as a whole. The song shows that African states came together to be independent to define themselves, name themselves and speak for themselves. According to Hoffman and Graham (2009:264) nationalism arouses strong feelings for some, it is tantamount to racism, but for others nationalist sentiment creates solidarity and stability, which are preconditions for freedom. African states felt that they were a group of people who are bound together by ties of history, culture and common ancestry hence they felt obliged to unite and fight the common enemy.

Nationalism is about sharing the same beliefs, history, heroes and legends. Guibernau (1996) argues that nationalism connotes the sentiment of belonging to a community whose members identify with a set of symbols, beliefs and ways of life and have the will to decide upon their common political destiny. This means that political leaders have to use some symbols or beliefs to unite their nations. For example, youths at Bindura University during focus group discussion point out that in Zimbabwe political leaders used the legend of Mbuya Nehanda to relay political ideas during the liberation struggle. People were motivated by her spirit to fight aggressively. This legendary story of Mbuya Nehanda carry some political ideas as well as nationalism in the sense that freedom fighters were encouraged by the spirit to fight back the enemy there by making common decisions for a group on behalf of the country. However, Shafer (1995) notes that nationalism comprises also the dogma that the individual lives exclusively for the nation with the outcome that the nation is an end, and the doctrine, too, that the nation (the nationalist's own) is or should be dominant if not supreme among other nations and should take aggressive action to this end. So, even though Mbuya Nehanda was associated with the Shona people or spirit behind the ZANLA forces, the spirit of nationalism takes precedence.

Politics and nationalism go hand in hand. If a political leader does something which is not in line with what the ruling party wants, he/she is chased away. In various parts of Africa, politics has been run in such a way that leaders must rely on the backing of their own ethnic group, and if one branches out too far, he or she will be replaced by someone who will better represent interests of the specific ethnic group. To this, the chiefs in Bindura and Lupane all cited the example of the late President of Zimbabwe Robert Mugabe that he was going out of the expectations of his 'kinsmen' thus, the coup was inevitable in a bid to show him the '*ushe vanhu/ ubunkosi ngabantu* (you can rule with the support of the people.) In the same vein, it was emphasised that in politics power should be shared meaning leaders should learn to relinquish power for the good of the nations. Those people who want to rule forever their downfall is so embarrassing. Oral literature is used to warn such people as in the proverb *Akunyoni yndiza ingahlali phansi* (No bird flies without landing on the ground)

It also came out that the heritage-based philosophies of nationalism and politics involves promotion of cooperative economics. The Shona proverb *mazano marairanwa* (knowledge/advice is shared) is clearly indicating that cooperative economics is fundamental in African nationalism and politics. This is supported by the formulation of African organisation such as SADC and AU underpinned by African governance provisions of respect, dignity, caring and sharing and these are considered critical values that build African communities. The above-mentioned Shona proverb underlines the fundamentals of sharing in nationalism and politics. The Ubuntu philosophy implies that one can only increase one's good fortune by sharing with other members of the society and thereby enhancing their status within the local communities. This is signified by the Shona practice of *nhimbe in Zunde raMambo* (collective work in community fields governed by traditional chiefs/Headmen) the *nhimbe* was associated with songs such as *kurima musana vandirwadza pakudya ndomera manhenga* (when ploughing it is painful but when eating we are happy). Such songs promote cooperative economics and hardworking while the yields from the fields were shared amongst the need and vulnerable households with the communities. The *nhimbe* and its songs indicates cooperative economics in nationalism where everyone is supposed to contribute his or her effort to support the vulnerable households in the community. Broodryk (2005:175) enumerates cases that show the human value behaviour of the Ubuntu philosophy in cooperative economics including visiting sick people who are not necessarily one's own relatives, sending condolences to a bereaved family adopting an orphan as one's own child, providing food for needy people in the communities, assisting the elderly in many different ways, and greeting others in a loving, friendly and compassionate way. Wealth gathering from African Shona oral literature is a cooperative economics and an equitable allocation and sharing of wealth is very African as emphasised in the Shona proverb, *chawawana idya nehama mutorwa ane hanganwa* (when you have accumulated wealth, share with your own, they will not forget you unlike others). Based on Zimbabwe is open for business mantra. Encouraging Zimbabwean nationalists to come back and invest in their country, the concept is on the heritage-based philosophy to promote nationalism and politics.



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It was also unanimously agreed through the results of this study that the heritage-based philosophies in nationalism and politics promotes unity. Oral literature is key in promoting of unity. From time immemorial unity (Umoja) is the main pillar of African culture. The underlying foundation of nationalism and politics is unity. Several Shona proverbs were created to build the spirit of unity amongst different tribes in Zimbabwe. Proverbs such as *Kandiro kanoenda kunobva kamwe* meaning you may not get any assistance from others if you do not assist others in times of need. During the first liberation struggle the Ndebele and the Shona united to fight colonial rule. Despite being defeated the two tribes' leadership unite and even joined hands with other African nationals in Zambia, Mozambique and establish military training bases to fight the colonial rule in the second chimurenga *umvukela*. It is upon this nationalistic unity which brings in independence in Zimbabwe and other African countries. This proverb is supported by other Shona proverbs like; *Rume rimwe harikombi churu*, *Chara chimwe hachitswanyika inda*. Individualism in African nationalism and politics is vehemently denied in African Ubuntu philosophy as described by the Shona proverb *Zano ndega akasiya jira mumasese*. The interpretation of the above proverbs is expressed by Rwelamika, Talukhaba and Ngowi, (1999:335), that the Ubuntu application is pervasive in almost all parts of the African continent. Hence, Ubuntu philosophy is integrated into all aspects of day-to-day life throughout Africa and is a concept shared by all tribes in Southern, Central, West and East Africa.

### ***Implications***

Inspired by the Ubuntu philosophy, the research has qualitatively analysed the heritage-based philosophies that are embedded in the oral art forms in handling nationalism and political issues of the indigenous people. The result of the research implies that with the knowledge of the African heritage-based philosophies that are known by the youths and adults, proper transmission of these into the various sectors of social life will improve people's wellbeing. If the African politics, the education system from an early stage could be shaped by these philosophies then Ubuntu will be shared amongst all and to the future generations. Utilizing the African philosophy of Ubuntu as the guiding principle, the researcher envisages a situation whereby even the ideologies of politics should be rooted in the transmission of the heritage-based philosophies for better appreciation of the concept of nationalism by citizens despite their political affiliations

### ***Conclusion***

It is of significance to note that oral narratives are the backbone of heritage-based philosophies in nationalism and politics in Zimbabwe and beyond. African people had their way of life that is shaped by the concept of Ubuntu which despite the digital age that people find themselves in, shape their way of living. The intensity and power of oral literature in nationalism and politics is not to be underestimated as it successfully drove the winds of change, progress and unity across the continent of Africa and Zimbabwe in particular. The purpose of oral literature is to point out the fact that it is an expression of cultural, linguistic and historical solidarity. As conveyed in oral literature, nationalism and politics is not an aggressive assertion of given people's need to establish and claim territorial entities that reflected the sense of oneness build over centuries of sharing common language, culture, history and worldview. The research has managed to bring out how nationalism and politics can be managed through the application of a people's heritage-based philosophies.



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