

## **Totem, Taboos and sacred places: An analysis of Karanga people's environmental conservation and management practices.**

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**ABSTRACT :** *The Karanga people who occupy parts of Masvingo and Midlands provinces since time immemorial had mechanisms to preserve and manage their local environment. Their beliefs and practices are environmentally friendly. In their day to day life encounters, the Karanga people try to conserve and manage the environment. The Karanga people believe that environmental protection and management is sanctioned by the creator God and the ancestors of the land. Their religion is centred on relationships with living people, spirits of the dead, animals, land and plant life. Their relation to land, animals, plant life and water bodies has been and is still environmentally conservative in nature. It is in light of this background that this paper seeks to examine some of the beliefs and practices of the Karanga people which lead to the conservation and management of the natural environment. Interviews, personal observations and documentary analysis shall be used to glean data for this paper*

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### **I. Introduction**

The Karanga are a group of Shona speaking people who occupy parts of Masvingo and Midlands provinces in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe is a country which is land locked between Zambia to the north, Malawi to the northeast, Botswana to the west, South Africa to the south and Mozambique to the east. Masvingo is a Province in Zimbabwe found in the south-eastern section of the landlocked country. It borders Mozambique on its eastern border and the provinces of Matabeleland South to the south Midlands to the north and west and Manicaland to the north east. The province is largely populated by members of the Karanga tribe, who are the most populous tribe in Zimbabwe. Masvingo is divided into seven administrative districts, which are Bikita, Chivi, Zaka and Masvingo in the center of the province, Gutu in the north, and Mwenezi, and Chiredzi in the south and east respectively. All these seven districts are inhabited by the Karanga people. This paper gives a special focus on the karanga people in Masvingo province necessarily because it where the researchers of this paper were born. Apart from this most parts of the province are remote and inaccessible that little meaningful research has been done in the area. The karanga have a strong belief in Mwari their god who is approached through the intermediaries known as *Vadzimu* (spirit mediums). For them, Mwari is the owner of the land and everything in it. The environment belongs to the spirits. The land is sacred because it belongs to the ancestors. In their belief systems the karanga attitude to the environment are primarily about the power and relation with spirits. For them, there is a causal relationship between the moral condition of the community and its physical environment. Land is sanctified by its possession by the ancestral spirits whose remains are buried in it. The spirits thus, look after their property, the land. So, the romantic view of the karanga people's attitude to the environment implies that the karanga are intrinsically in harmony with nature. The karanga people's strong beliefs in ancestral spirits, taboos, totems and sacred places bear witness to the contention that their practices are meant to conserve and manage the environment. Their attitude to the environment is based on fear or respect of ancestors. This being the case therefore, karanga religion is a strong environmental force in the global village. The view of this paper is that, the Karanga's perception to land, animals, and plant life and water bodies is that they contain life which needs to be preserved. The paper will argue that for the karanga life is sacred. The article will argue that among the karanga, environmental protection and management is sanctioned by the creator god Mwari and the ancestors of the land. Rather, the article will argue that Karanga people's beliefs and practices are environmentally friendly. In their day to day life encounters, the Karanga people try to conserve and manage the environment. Their religion is centred on relationships with living people, spirits of the dead, animals, land and plant life. Their relation to land, animals, and plant life and water bodies has been and is still environmentally conservative in nature. It is in light of this background that this paper seeks to examine some of the beliefs and practices of the Karanga people which lead to the conservation and management of the natural environment. Interviews, personal observations and documentary analysis were used to glean data for this paper.

## **II. Karanga attitudes to nature**

The karanga people have bottomless beliefs in the sacrality of the land. They believe that land is the back (*musana*) of the ancestors on which nature and humanity are carried. Land is sacred since it is the ancestral land. It is sacred because it bears the remains of ancestors particularly in the form of graves of the chiefs. For the karanga, land belongs to the living, the unborn and the dead. Land is sacred that it should not in any circumstance be sold or transferred to another. It is for this reason that among the karanga no one has liberty to gather wild fruits, cut down trees, hunt certain animals or pollute certain water bodies in areas or places regarded as sacred. Basically, karanga religious beliefs play an integral role in determining positive values and attitudes towards the environment and are a crucial component of any efficacious environmental policy among the karanga communities. As is argued in this paper Karanga religious beliefs, taboos, totems and sacred places are a scientific explanation of environmental degradation prevention. The karanga people therefore, have an anthropocentric worldview. Everything is seen in terms of its relation to human beings (Mbiti, 1969:16). This is the reason why among the Karanga communities the highest good is to live in harmony with all the sacred forces or environment. So, human existence for the Karanga remains under the tutelage of the sacred. It is observed, regulated and promoted by the sacred. The view of this paper is that most animals, plants and other biological life are imbued with the power of the Great Spirit or ancestors hence are considered to be sacred. The karanga consider rocks, water bodies and mountains as living beings. This is the reason why before climbing a particular mountain or entering a particular forest one must ritually ask permission. The karanga perceive most aspects of nature as kin, endowed with consciousness. Trees, animals, insects and plant are all to be approached with caution and consideration. The karanga believe that there are spirits in the trees, forests, rivers and so forth. It is all because of these that the Karanga have their own restrictions and taboos towards particular animals, trees or water bodies and all these serve the purpose of preserving the natural environment.

## **III. Karanga taboos as mechanisms to protect the environment**

The karanga people have always looked at the environment as a very important and inseparable part of the human community. For them, the environment is important to the well-being of the individual. Thus, the communitarian nature of karanga society can be understood in the context of the moral relationship that is struck between the individual and the environment through the observance of taboos. Such teachings complement and cement a good moral relationship between the individual person and the environment. The view of this paper is that Mbiti's (1969) maxim that "I am because we are", though anthropocentric as it characterises the relationship between the individual and his society, can also be applicable to the relationship between the human community and the environment. In this context, the society is what it is because of the existence of the environment that provides it with some of its needs and wants. Tatira (2000) rightly notes that "the Shona people realise the importance of preserving the environment as a factor in overall development. This knowledge is manifested in some of the taboos that control child behavior in relation to the environment." Thus, karanga taboos are ethical outfits which foster good human relations as well as promoting good relations between human beings and the natural environment.

Taboos are 'avoidance rules' that forbid members of the human community from performing certain actions, such as eating some kinds of food, walking on or visiting some sites that are regarded as sacred, cruelty to nonhuman animals, and using environmental resources in an unsustainable manner. For the Karanga people, taboos are understood as specific rules that forbid people from performing certain actions. The violators of the moral code as contained in taboos are said to invite misfortunes, for themselves and the community at large in the form of bad luck, disease, drought, and even death.

Taboos (*zviera*) among the karanga people form integral ingredients of the Karanga environmental ethics. Among the karanga people, environmental taboos have a pivotal ethical role toward the ontological wellbeing of the individual person and the environment at large. Prohibitions and restrictions through taboos on unsustainable use of certain plant species, forests, mountains, rivers, pools and nonhuman animals, among other ecological species in the ecosystem, is not a new epistemology among the karanga people, rather it reflects a long standing tradition. At the same time, they are currently very lively and continue to shape karanga environmental ethics. Although the karanga people have felt the impact of the full weight of the domineering influence of colonisation and globalization, they have continued to cling on to some of their enchanting values, including taboos. With regard to the continued relevance of taboos in contemporary karanga communities Gelfand (1973) echoed that karanga possess much that is worth retaining for the prospects that they save a good deal to the succeeding generations. Despite the tide of modernity and cultural imports, contemporary karanga communities have hang about to some of their deep-seated taboos.

For the karanga people, belief in certain avoidance rules (taboos) has moral implications on the human person and his relation to the environment. According to Tatira (2000) Shona people often use *zviera* (taboos) as one of the ways of teaching young members of their society to positively relate to the natural environment. In other words *zviera* (taboos), among other karanga practices, encourage conformity to societal expectations on correct

human behavior towards the environment. So, karanga environmental taboos transcend simple prohibitions on certain sacred sites, plants and nonhuman animal species, pools, and rivers, among others, and enforce a desirable and sustainable use of the environment. In this regard, Gelfand (1979) reiterated that a critical study of avoidance rules entails that correct behavior is being emphasized. Thus taboos were improvised by the karanga people as mechanisms to promote desirable environmental ethics.

For the karanga, human beings do not live in a moral vacuum; rather, they live, and ought to live, in harmony with the environment. Therefore, taboos among the karanga, just like those of any other social grouping, must be understood as moral rules that regulate human behavior, especially as it impacts negatively on the environment. In this regard, taboos are meant to make the individual adjust his interests so that they conform to those of the society and the environment at large. It can be proposed that the 'I' in Mbiti's declaration "I am because we are" should take on board the interests of the individual human persons, while the 'we' becomes a broader term referring to the human community and the environment. Such a conception of the relationship between the human society and the environment foster sound environmental ethics that does not only take into account the well-being of the individual and his community, but also that of the environment. The environment should be construed as an end in itself in a similar way that human beings are perceived, rather than viewing it as a mere means to some human ends. Thus, taboos have an esoteric role towards nature if considered in terms of their embedded environmental role that they play.

Besides being a source of environmental ethics, karanga taboos also cultivate a concept of wholeness between the human community and the environment. By and large, observance of the karanga environmental taboos brings about a sustainable use of the environment and takes into account its wholeness. Thus, Ramose (1999) notes that: The principle of wholeness applies also with regard to the relation between human beings and the physical or objective nature. To care for one another, therefore, implies caring for the physical nature as well. Without such care, the interdependence between human beings and the physical nature would be undermined.

The idea of wholeness of the human being in relation to the environment as enshrined in karanga taboos is important in fostering a sustainable use and preservation of the various natural resources, such as water sources, natural vegetation, wildlife, and endangered non-human species.

It is a taboo among the karanga for a person to urinate into water. If one urinates into the water one would contract bilharzia. This taboo was and is meant to prevent pollution of a water source that could potentially pose a health threat to human and nonhuman users of this water sources. Water among the karanga is very important in so far as it is used for domestic purposes, such as drinking, cooking, washing, bathing, and irrigation. Water contributes significantly towards sustaining the lives of other living things, such as nonhuman animals and plants. The karanga have the dictum which reads '*mvura upenyu*' (water is life). This implies that water is vital in their day to day life and it needs to be conserved and managed properly. Through these environmental taboos, the karanga have managed, throughout history, to ensure sustainable conservation and management of water resources like rivers, wells, springs and water sheds.

The other environmental taboo that tries to protect water bodies is the prohibition to fetch water with a dirty clay port. The karanga have the maxim that '*Ukachera mvura nechirongo chitema, tsime rinopwa*', which means "if you fetch water with a sooty black pot, the well will dry up". For this reason people feel obliged to avoid using sooty black pots to fetch water. It is important to note that this taboo discourages people from using pots that are blackened by soot from the fireplace. Thus, *zvinoera kuchera mvura mutsime nechirongo chitema* which means "it is taboo to fetch water with a pot that has been blackened with soot from the fireplace". This taboo covers other water sources such as rivers, dams, and pools. As Aschwanden (1989) sees it, "Pools, springs and swamps sustain the life of the rivers and they give the vital water. Therefore, such places are regarded as an origin of the fertility of nature. Also, they safeguard human life and are thus to be especially respected as sacred places."

Among karanga traditional communities, the well (*tsime*) is the most common source of drinking water that deserves high levels of reverence. So, because of that, the well is a very important place that symbolizes household cleanliness. Such a high standard of cleanliness is a virtue that every individual craves for and ought to exhibit in one's various daily chores. So, taboos are vital among the karanga people for they help in transmitting values on issues pertaining to hygiene.

### **Totems as environmental preservation models among the karanga people**

A totem is an animal, plant, or natural object (or representation of an object) that serves as the emblem of a clan or family among a tribal or traditional people. A totem represents a mystical or ritual bond of unity within the group. In prehistoric societies, totems were key symbols of religion and social cohesion; they were also important tools for cultural and educational transmission. Totems were often the basis for laws and regulations. In karanga societies, it is a violation of cultural and spiritual life to hunt, kill or hurt an animal or plant totem. This attitude has been and is the basis of environmental laws and regulations that existed in karanga societies. Totems are as sacred as the traditional karanga societies that use them.

The karanga concept of totems was and is also meant to conserve and manage the environment. For example, if a person belongs to the patrilineal clan of the Shumba (Lion) totem then he or she is prohibited from eating any animal from the cat family. It becomes part of that person's ethos to avoid enchanting any animal from the cat family as a source of meat. The karanga people hold that if one eats the totem that one will either fall sick or the offender will lose all the teeth. Basically, totemism is crucial in extending some moral consideration to nonhuman animals. Violation of taboos is feared because of the nasty consequences that the offender would face. The observance of taboos promotes a virtuous life that fosters a desirable environmental ethic, while the breaking of taboos leads the moral agent to a vicious life that disregards not only the moral standing of the environment, but also its sustainable use. Within the ecosystem, there are certain rare animal species that are facing merciless annihilation, such as pythons, pangolins, fish, and rhinoceros. In this regard, the karanga people have devised strategies of curbing unsustainable use of such animal species by way of totems. Totems prohibit unsustainable use and cruelty to creatures which one uses as a totem. According to Nemaushu the headman in Chivi district said '*ukadya mutupo wako, unobva mazino ose muromo ukasara wava hwashu*' which means if you eat your totem animal, you will lose all your teeth. It is taboo, among the Shona, for one to eat one's totem animal (Bourdillon, 1976). Otherwise, one risks losing one's teeth for violating this taboo.

So, the karanga concept of totemism is a strategy that helps to conserve and manage the use of various animal species and ensure that communities have adequate natural resources for the benefit of both present and future generations. For Gelfand (1973), these conservation strategies are based on "...the principle of exogamy" where one group or family among the Shona communities, depending on patrilineal identity, is prohibited from eating certain animals, birds, and fish species as a way of regulating the human usage of such animals. Duri & Mapara (2007) noted that taboos concerning totems "...were institutional wildlife conservation measures meant to preserve various animal species so that they could be saved from extinction due to unchecked hunting."

Apart from the preservation of animals through totemism there are also other prohibitions which are meant to protect other animal species. For example, Pomerai reiterated in an interview *ukauraya shato, mvura haizonayi* which means "if you kill a python, rain will not fall." As a rare, blameless, symbolic reptile, the python is protected by the karanga environmental degradation prohibitions society.

Singer (1985) stated "when we, humans, change the environment in which we live, we often harm ourselves." Thus, the wanton destruction of endangered species has adverse effects on, not only such species per se, but also on human beings at large. Hence, the Shona environmental prohibitions teach people to be mindful of various animal species and the natural environment. In addition, these taboos teach people to desist from being cruel to defenceless and harmless creatures within the environment.

Generally, the whole concepts of totemism among the karanga people help conserve and manage the environment. This is the reason why each clan in the karanga communities has its own animal as a totem. The fact that people are not to eat any animal in the family of the totem animal would mean that there is reduced pressure towards the hunting of each animal species depending on the clan's totem. Consequences that are said to befall anyone who eats the totem were safeguarding measures to ensure that the prohibitions are perfectly observed.

#### **IV. The sacred as environmental conservation mechanisms**

The sacred refers to that which is the object of veneration and awe. It refers to restricted or set off sites, objects, animals and plants. Among the Karanga, a person may be designated as sacred and so can an object or place which is regarded as extraordinary or unique. The karanga people share with most Shona beliefs in the sacred. There are different objects, sites, birds, animals and plants that the Karanga regard as sacred. Land itself is believed to be sacred. It is sacred in so far as it belongs and bears the remains of the ancestors in the form of graves. Land is also sacred because it is where the people's umbilical code is buried. In the karanga environmental perspective, land belongs to the living, the unborn and the dead. Land is not supposed to be sold or transferred from one tribe to other.

Forests are also sacred among the Karanga. It is for this reason that chiefs, headmen and Kraal heads authorise through rituals the gathering of fruits in forests regarded as sacred. Chiefs prohibit the cutting down of certain trees like *muhacha (mobola plum)*, *muonde (fig tree)*, *mushozhowa (psudalachnostylis maprounifolia)* and other big trees. The sacred sites include certain mountains that members of the karanga communities are discouraged from visiting, cutting down trees, and hunting wildlife in them. For example, it is believed that the one who visits or defiles a sacred mountain risks getting temporarily lost or disappearing forever, and, in some cases, becoming insane. For instance, in Mwenezi district, there is a myth of members of the Zion church who disappeared after they had visited and tried to conduct a church service at the summit of Hariyeumba Mountain, which is believed to be sacred. It is perceptible to note that such myths help in ensuring a harmonious relationship between human societies and the whole of nature. More importantly, there is some ethical import in the taboos that discourages misuse of the nature's resources. Such taboos implicitly inform human beings to treat and see natural vegetation and wildlife as ends in themselves, rather than assuming the once dominant western, traditional, homocentric view of ethics, where only the welfare of human beings have intrinsic moral

worth (Velasquez & Rostankowski, 1985). In this regard, taboos protecting natural vegetation and wildlife foster an environmental ethic that is not anthropocentric.

The karanga recognises the interconnectedness and coexistence between people and natural vegetation and wildlife. According to the karanga belief systems, sacred sites, such as mountains, have symbolic importance. For instance, it is believed that these sacred mountains developed some natural fires as a way of informing people of the advent of the rainy season. At times, some unusual sounds are heard in some mountains and the sounds are believed to be sending important messages to the communities at large. For instance, people in Chivi South believe that Matanha Mountain in Runesu village gives the warning of the coming of the new season with a loud unusual sound which sounds like one pulling a metal object. Kuduva one of the villagers reiterated that the sound will be heard at the coming of every season and this will be heard for two to three days. As the rain season approaches, Kuduva said, some unusual noise of cows and calves as well as the whistling of people are heard in the same mountain. The villagers would then start to get prepared for the rain season as soon as they hear these unusual sounds. As a result people are not allowed to climb the mountain at will and no tree or animal in it should be killed Kuduva said. Hunting is strictly prohibited in Matanha Mountain. Those who have tried to hunt in the mountain have mysteriously lost their dogs or have seen strange phenomena such as a big snake with human head and at times it is said, they see a big lion. So, because of this belief, it is assumed that if such sacred areas are tampered with, traditional messages and warnings would be hindered, thereby adversely affecting the communities. All in all the karanga through these stories have managed to conserve a balance in nature. Sacred forests and mountains are reserved for certain karanga traditional ceremonies and relevant taboos help in preserving them. Such taboos discourage people from visiting these sites thereby aiding the cause for a harmonious living between human beings and the whole of nature. This has helped to maintain the naturalness of sacred places compared to other areas deemed non-sacred, because people have respected and feared these areas. This is because sacred places are believed to be the domain of spiritual forces and, therefore, deserving utmost reverence.

These sacred sites prohibitions function somewhat as nature conservation areas or as nature buffer zones. Consequently, this contributes to a general respect for nature.

The wanton destruction of forests has far reaching negative consequences on the work of Shona traditional healers (n'anga), nonhuman animal welfare, wildlife habitats, grazing areas, and climatic conditions. In essence, a heightened destruction of natural vegetation leads to deforestation that eventually threatens fauna and flora through soil erosion and global warming. In this regard, sacred sites taboos are important in curtailing environmental problems that are human induced.

The karanga people also perform some rituals under *muhacha* (mobola plum), *muonde* (fig tree), *mumvee* (sausage tree) and *mushozhowa* (*psudalchnostylis maproanifolia*) trees. Important to note is the notion that rituals have served as environmental conservation devices. Generally tall trees are regarded as sacred because they are thought to be inhabitants of the spiritual bodies and for this reason trees like *muhacha* (mobola plum), *muonde* (fig tree), *mumvee* (sausage tree), *mukamba* and *mishuku* (mahobohobo tree) are seen standing tall in the fields in the karanga communities. *Mukute* (Waterberry) trees also receive sacred reverence among the karanga people. *Mukute* (Waterberry) tree is regarded as a source of water. If mukute trees are cut the water source would dry up. If one fell a *Mukute* (Waterberry) tree, he or she will automatically die or a close relative of the offender will die. Mkange in an interview said “*ukatema mukute unopenga pakarepo nekuti unenge wamhura midzimu yenzvimbo*” this literary means that “if you fell down a Waterberry tree you will automatically become insane”

The Karanga also regard certain animals as sacred. They disregard the hunting of certain animals like pangolin, baboons, monkeys, pythons and other defenceless animals in their surroundings. These animals are seen as personifications of spiritual beings. Among the karanga communities in Zaka and Chivi districts the appearance of a baboon has many implications. Chikukwa in an interview clearly stated that the appearance of a baboon which normally moves alone is a warning to the community. In his own words he said “*Gudo rinonzi mugarandongwa harifanirwi kuurawa nokuti ndimo munogara midzimu yedu. Ukariona riri mumunda unofanira kuridzinga zvakanaka kwete kuriuraya.*” This means that one should not under any circumstance kill a baboon which moves not in a group even when you find it in your own field because it symbolises the appearance of the ancestors. In Chivi district monkeys are not killed at random because they are associated with the territorial spirits. This is because chief Makovere is of the Shoko totem so by killing a monkey one would have disrespected the chieftainship of the area. Birds such as *hungwe* (eagle), *chapungu* and *hwaya* (rain bird) are perceived as conventional messengers from ancestors. People are refrained from killing them.

A critical analysis behind the sacrality of these birds, trees, mountains and animals would indicate that the sole reason was to preserve them. In the critical sense, tall trees which the Karanga regarded as sacred provide shelter to both people and animals. So, to safeguard these trees, prohibitions were enforced. Basically, the karanga belief in the sacrality of the animals serves as a spring board for environmental conservation and management.

So, institutional prohibitions, associated with sacred places, objects, birds and animals were designed to develop positive societal attitudes towards the environment. This also involved restricting the cutting and using of certain types of vegetation. Although, in the karanga cosmology, the natural vegetation and wildlife are used, instrumentally, to fulfil men's ends, they also have a significant value because of their spiritual significance. Certain natural vegetation and wildlife are revered because they are believed to be hosts of some spiritual forces. It is, therefore, taboo to visit or defile sites, objects, birds, forests and mountains that are regarded as sacred.

Among the karanga people, water sources such as pools, rivers, wells, springs and wetlands are regarded as sacred hence, they are approached carefully. Pools like Gonawapotera, Mupwanezi, Rupati, and Chirinda springs and wells like Vadore, Chimusvina and Negari are thought to be inhabited by *Njuzu* (mained) spirits. They are also thought to be embedded with other different spirit forces. Bathing, urinating, plucking grass or defecating in or around these water sources is strictly prohibited. If one defecates in a water source, he or she will be struck by diarrhoea which will only stop when the offender has consulted a traditional healer and payment to appease the ancestors is done. The payment can be in a form of a goat which will be ritually killed and dedicated to the ancestors so as to solicit forgiveness.

An analysis of karanga taboos, totems and sacred places show that deterrence is used as a way of safeguarding and promoting sustainable use of nature's resources. They are mechanisms towards deterring people from engaging in unwarranted and malicious killing of animals and birds as well as unwarranted destruction of the natural vegetation and unhygienic practices that may contaminate water sources. Thus, taboos, totems and sacred places, objects and animals are revered so as to foster environmental awareness thereby protecting nature. Important to note is the contention that environmental awareness among the karanga people takes a spiritual dimension in that ancestral spirits (*midzimu*) are said to be the custodians of nature. This is necessarily because they have a conscious interest in the way the living interacts with the environment. It is in the karanga belief that the environment, including water sources, vegetation and animals should be treated with respect since their misuse may provoke ancestral spirits who may in turn punish the human community with droughts and floods. Infringement of the prohibitions is believed by the karanga to lead to the suffering of the offender, society, and the environment. This understanding of environmental ethics emanates from the African communitarian view of the human person (Menkiti, 2006) where an individual person's action can only be understood within the context of his community.

## V. Conclusion

This paper has established that taboos, totems and sacred places have been used as mechanisms to foster a sustainable use of the environment by the Karanga. It noted that among the karanga people, an unconscious appreciation of certain environmental taboos, totems and sacred places inform an esoteric environmentally based knowledge that is meant at a sustainable use of nature's resources. The karanga have an environmental ethic that takes into account the interests of not only sentient beings, but also nature. Although they do not disapprove of a sustainable use of natural resources, including other living creatures for draught power and food, they are against wanton destruction of fauna and flora without justification. They also take great exception to the cruelty of animals because for them, all animals are sentient and therefore deserve to be given moral consideration. For them, a person who exhibits violent surges through cutting down trees without any need for them and cruelty to other living creatures lacks morality (*unhu*). For the karanga people, the natural environment has certain sacred places that are so indispensable in their religious beliefs, such as mountains, curves, rivers, grave sites, and forests that ought not to be defiled through undue cutting down of trees that grace them and killing of other living creatures for the sake of it. Therefore, the karanga cherish a life of living in harmony with the natural environment and what it holds, as reflected by their tendency to use the environment in a sustainable way. So, the conservation, protection and management of the environment have been the cornerstone of the Karanga ethos, culture and traditions. They have developed and maintained traditional knowledge and practices for the conservation and management of the natural environment. All these were fostered through their religious beliefs.

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