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THE STATE OF LITERATURE ON ZIMBABWE'S GASTRONOMY AS INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE ELEMENTS.

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Abstract

This paper reviews the state of literature on Zimbabwe's gastronomy (culinary) elements as intangible cultural heritage (ICH). It does an analysis of previous researches which have been carried out with a view of ascertaining if anything has been done in safeguarding some gastronomic elements as intangible heritage. Since this is a review paper, data was collected by searching local libraries and online for publications, reports and articles that are on Zimbabwean culinary elements. This search was informed by the fact that the UNESCO Regional Office for Southern Africa (UNESCO-ROSA) is currently resident in Zimbabwe overseeing the implementation of various UNESCO conventions, including the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The office has facilitated the establishment of the Southern African Intangible Cultural Heritage (SAICH) Platform, which is currently hosted by Chinhoyi University of Technology (CUT). In this platform, seven countries, namely, Malawi, Eswatini, Botswana, Namibia, Lesotho, Zambia and Zimbabwe upload various ICH elements from their territories. It is therefore likely that any work on ICH elements, be they gastronomic, may be done across borders involving any of the seven countries. It is for this reason that this paper used a methodology that incorporates literature that may be from any of these countries. The research is qualitative in nature and it also relied on content analysis of the concerned literature. The paper established that while there has been some significant work on food science, and limited research on Zimbabwean traditional foods, there is almost no literature at all which looks at Zimbabwean gastronomic elements as living heritage. Sporadic references are made by some scholars on food as being a part of a historical legacy of a community but there is still a dearth of literature which analyses food products as ICH.

Keywords: Intangible cultural heritage, gastronomy elements, gastronomy tourism, traditional food.

1.0 Introduction

This paper assesses previous researches that have been done on Zimbabwean culinary



elements. It is necessitated by the observation that very little attention has been given to Zimbabwean indigenous culinary dishes as forms of intangible cultural heritage elements. The paper is inspired by the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). Zimbabwe, having ratified this convention in 2006, is obliged to take deliberate steps towards its implementation. However, as it has been highlighted elsewhere (Ndlovu, 2018), the implementation of the 2003 ICH Convention in Zimbabwe and other surrounding countries has not been happening at an accelerated pace. This review of the state of literature on the subject in question is being done incorporating what other countries within the region have done as well. This is so firstly, because the 2003 Convention actually requires that if a country is to submit a nomination file of an element to be included in the representative list, and that element is also found in another country of community, the submission can be done jointly. Secondly, Zimbabwe is a name given to a country which is marked by colonial borders. When Europeans partitioned Africa, they did not respect ethnic boundaries. As a result, a community that may be found in Zimbabwe today, may also be found in a neighbouring country such as South Africa and Botswana. Thirdly, UNESCO has a regional office that is currently housed in Zimbabwe which is responsible for overseeing the implementation of its projects in nine countries in Southern Africa (seven for the SAICH Platform project). Given these three reasons, it therefore makes sense for a research such as this one to be conducted within a framework that does not look at Zimbabwe in isolation, but as a member of this seven-member sub-regional block.

2.0 Methodology

The research was qualitative in nature, and relied on content analysis. It was not the intention of this study to establish the number of researches that have been done on the subject, but to review what has been done so far in studying Zimbabwean foods as a form of intangible cultural heritage. The review of literature is important for the following five reasons: (a) identifying what has been written on a subject or topic; (b) determining the extent to which a specific research area reveals any interpretable trends or patterns; (c) aggregating empirical findings related to a narrow research question to support evidence-based practice; (d) generating new frameworks and theories; and (e) identifying topics or questions requiring more investigation (Paré, Trudel, Jaana, & Kitsiou, 2015). This paper was done with a view of addressing all of these concerns. The researchers identified scholarly work that has been written on Zimbabwe's culinary elements as a form of intangible cultural heritage. This was searched for on all scholarly platforms that the researchers were exposed and had access to. Attention was given to work that had been done on Zimbabwe and the region. Regional papers were considered because some of them make reference to Zimbabwe. Content analysis was then done on each of the papers in order to establish its depth in dealing with Zimbabwe's indigenous culinary elements. The intention was however not to establish new frameworks and theories but to bring out the gap, if any, in the concerned area. Therefore, in terms of methodology, this research is a desk research.



3.1 The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

After making several treaties and conventions aimed at preserving heritage in different parts of the world, the United Nations, through one of its arms, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) came up with a pact which is specifically aimed at safeguarding that part of heritage which is intangible in nature. It was at the 32nd session of the UNESCO General Conference that was held in Paris from 29 September to 17 October 2003 that the treaty now known as The Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage of 2003 was drafted and declared. According to Kurin (2004), 120 member states who were at this meeting voted for the convention. Only a few countries, amongst them, Australia, Canada, the United States of America and Switzerland abstained from voting. It was created after the realisation that other declarations and conventions that were already in existence did not fully champion the need for the protection or safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. These include the United Nations Universal Declaration for Human Rights of 1948 (UNESCO, 1948), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966 (UNESCO, 1966), the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (UNESCO, 1972) and the UNESCO Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore of 1989 (UNESCO, 1989). All these declarations and others not mentioned acted as forerunners to the 2003 ICH Convention. A closer look at all of these previous declarations shows that

they have articles and sections which to some extent address issues that have to do with the protection and safeguarding of intangible heritage. However, this important aspect somehow seemed to be overshadowed by other mandates that each of them have. It was also observed that despite the existence of these conventions, with some of them such as the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights having been in place from as far back as 1948, intangible cultural heritage continued to disappear. This was being further worsened by the risks coming from globalisation and social transformation, as observed by (Severo & Venturini, 2016).

Kurin states that ‘the Convention commits nations to develop inventories of their intangible cultural heritage and to work with local communities, groups and individual practitioners on various, appropriate means of ‘safeguarding’ those traditions’ (Kurin, 2004, p. 71). This creation of inventory lists is a rational way of identifying and itemizing intangible cultural heritage as a prelude to management – just as is done for other cultural ‘property’ like monuments and archaeological sites. That way it would become easier to locate, identify and safeguard the ICH. As it is, before the 2003 Convention, the protection of the ICH was accidental. In Southern Africa, UNESCO established a Regional Office of Southern Africa (ROSA), which amongst other duties, drives the implementation of the convention in those Southern African countries that have ratified the convention. So far, the office is working with seven countries in the SAICH Platform project and these are Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. It is these countries that this paper will also look at in terms of literature that focuses on what has been done in as far as the inclusion of culinary or



gastronomy elements on any of the inventory lists that the 2003 Convention says each member country must have.

3.2 Culinary or Gastronomy Elements and ICH

According to de-Miguel-Molina, de-Miguel-Molina, Santamarina Campos, and del Val Segarra-Oña, (2016, p. 293), 'intangible heritage is a relatively new concept and one that has undergone significant development over the past half-century'. This view is also supported by Kurin (2004) who states that most people do not know what ICH is. This lack of knowledge partly rests on the fact that the notion of intangible heritage is itself a new one. It is therefore not surprising that most people in most African communities are not able to link their gastronomy elements to ICH. Probably this is the reason why there is a dearth of literature in the area. It is probably important at this stage to define the key terms that this paper is based on. These are heritage, intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and gastronomy (culinary). The term heritage has been defined differently by diverse scholars to an extent that it has become a bit ambiguous. However, in this paper, we use the definition by Welch which simply puts heritage as 'anything valued by people today that was also valued by previous generations. Heritage is what we have accepted as gifts from those who came before us' (Welch, 2014, p. 1). This definition is in line with what Harvey (2001) had earlier said when he defined heritage as a cultural process, a concept that evolves over time to create a form of identity, power, and authority throughout society. We are not going to dwell much on the ambiguities that surround the term but we will only state here that heritage is in two forms. These are the tangible heritage and the intangible heritage. Tangible heritage, as the term suggests, refers

to that form of heritage which is concrete and visible in nature. This is the form of legacy that quickly comes into people's minds when the term is mentioned. This is probably due to the fact that the world has for a long time concentrated on this form of inheritance, at the expense of giving a similar emphasis to that other form. Our major focus in this paper is on intangible cultural heritage, which is defined by the 2003 Convention as:

the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity (UNESCO, 2003).

While the above definition does not make a specific reference to food or gastronomy or food, these are inferred, especially in the first sentence of the definition. Terms such as practices, knowledge and skills can be expanded and be put into perspective to imply food practices, knowledge of preparing food and skills of preparing food. These practices, knowledge and skills, as the definition goes on to say, will be recognized



by communities as part of their cultural heritage. While practices, expressions, knowledge and skills are purely intangible, it is interesting to note that the definition includes elements that seem to be tangible. Instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces are all tangible and even visible forms of heritage. The question therefore may be how do these tangible forms of heritage qualify as intangible cultural heritage? The response to such a question is that they are a manifestation of the intangible aspect that is behind each of them. The knowledge and skills of making and playing or using a certain instrument is intangible in nature. The knowledge and skills of designing and making a certain object or artefact is also in itself intangible in nature. While cultural spaces are physically visible places, the practices that are performed in those places are intangible in nature. A good example is a study of Ntaba zika Mambo that was done by Munjeri (2009) where a debacle ensued between the government and the locals who wanted to continue performing their rituals on the site. So, the site itself is tangible, but what is done there is intangible, which is where the link between the two is. Therefore what is coming out here is that intangible and tangible heritage are two sides of the same coin.

Gastronomy is defined by Vanhonacker et al., (2010, p. 453) as:

A traditional food product is a product frequently consumed or associated to specific celebrations and/or seasons, transmitted from one generation to another, made in a specific way according to gastronomic heritage, naturally processed, and distinguished and known

because of its sensory properties and associated to a certain local area, region or country.

This definition is interesting in the sense that it mentions the word 'traditional'. That is key especially to this paper because the 2003 Convention places emphasis on intangible heritage elements that are local. In fact, what is coming out is a striking similarity in the definition of ICH above and that of gastronomy. The phrases; transmitted from generation to generation, consistently recreated by communities, made in a specific way according to gastronomic; which are evident or implied in both definitions show that the two, gastronomy and ICH are interwoven and in fact gastronomy is a part of ICH. So, according to the definition, the food must be made in a specific way and according to gastronomic heritage and this include seven the utensils used. Further to that, it must be naturally processed and distinguished in a way that will associate it with a certain local area, region or country. So, if the same food product is processed and prepared by foreigners in that community in a different way it loses some elements which qualify it to be a traditional gastronomy. If western methods are used in the preparation of that food product it means certain sensory properties will be lost thereby losing its traditional nature. This is interesting because there are a lot of counterfeit food products, especially in restaurants that have heavily commercialized the production of most of these culinary items. While commercialization itself is not bad, it must be coupled with an equally matching level of quality assurance. Processes of quality assurance that are inherent in traditional specific ways of preparing these traditional dishes are lacking in commercialized



products, thereby leading to a mass production of counterfeit products.

The above definition of traditional gastronomy by Vanhonacker is also supported by Matviyiv (2014, p. 314) who adds that gastronomy incorporates ‘the national dishes of all countries should cook using local ingredients of country cuisine.’ So these will be dishes that are prepared using locally found ingredients and nothing imported. Barrère, Bonnard and Chossat (2012) add an interesting dimension to gastronomic heritage. They argue that gastronomy heritage also includes the manner of drinking and eating. What is coming out here is that it does not end with what goes into the preparation of the food itself, but it goes further to include the way in which the finished product is presented and consumed. The Kalanga, for example, have as their treasured traditional cuisine pearl millet *hadza*. This food product is consumed with bare hands, and not spoons or forks and knives. This means that the way in which the product is consumed also has a bearing on whether one is going to enjoy it or not. It may have been prepared following every step but the person consuming it may miss it in the manner in which he is supposed to consume it.

4.0 Discussion

Data for this paper was gathered through desk research. A content analysis of the retrieved articles was therefore done in order to ascertain how much has been done in researching gastronomy elements as ICH. On a global scale, de-Miguel-Molina et al. (2016, p. 299) discovered that

‘while intangible heritage studies have increased in frequency in recent years, the study of gastronomy as intangible heritage is an area that academic literature has yet to explore, with

interdisciplinary research in this area being of special interest for the future.’

This dearth of literature on a global scale is what is cascaded down to Zimbabwe on a local scale. While the concept of ICH is itself a new phenomenon, with the convention having declared in 2003, Lupton (2008) observes that it was not until 2008 that UNESCO shifted towards new categories of heritage and, specifically, towards a consideration of gastronomy and its symbolic role in societies. So originally, gastronomy elements were not thought of as being a part of ICH. This explains why ICH literature on gastronomy elements only seems to date back as far as 2010, seven years later, after the convention had been put in place. This was after Mexico had submitted to the Intergovernmental Committee on Intangible Cultural Heritage a nomination file entitled *Traditional Mexican Cuisine – Ancestral, Ongoing Community Culture, the Michoacán Paradigm* for inclusion onto the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This list consists of those intangible heritage elements that help demonstrate the diversity of this heritage and raise awareness about its importance. This was one of the three proposals that were submitted to the committee for inclusion into the list. The other two were *The Gastronomic Meal of the French* which was submitted by France and *The Mediterranean Diet* which was jointly submitted by Morocco, Italy, Spain and Greece. These three were accepted and were put on the list (de-Miguel-Molina, de-Miguel-Molina, Santamarina-Campos, & Segarra-Oña, 2016).

In view this late entry of gastronomic elements onto the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, it was therefore not surprising to discover that



all literature on Zimbabwean cuisine that was found during the study did not link it to ICH. Amongst the scholars that we encountered during the research was Oktay and Sadıkoğlu (2018). They assessed how the former colonial gastronomic cultures have had an impact on the African cuisine. They sampled four African countries, namely, South Africa, Nigeria, Morocco and Zimbabwe. They discovered that when European settlers came to Africa, they brought their own culinary culture. In South Africa, these settlers were the Dutch, the British, the French and the Germans. The scholars assert that the Germans are the ones who introduced South Africans to the sausage which is locally called *boerewors*. *Boerewors*, is a kind of traditional sausage which is commonly consumed in the whole country. The British coupled their coming with bringing slaves from their other colonies such as India. The Indians brought with them a wide variety of herbs and spices. These spices are a part of every meal in South Africa, including the *boerewors*. The French introduced the inclusion of cream and mutton. This means that the South African culinary culture was affected by gastronomic elements from these foreign nations. This is an observation which is also made by Anyango, de Kock, and Taylor (2011). These scholars observed that these elements mixed well with the local foods, producing a rich and unique form of a hybrid cuisine. It is not clear whether South Africa ratified the 2003 Convention, but what is clear is that it recognises the existence and need to safeguard the ICH. South Africa has not yet ratified the 2003 Convention according to the UNESCO list of 178 member states that have either ratified or accepted it. The prerequisite, according to the South African legal procedures for the ratification of such international standard setting instruments, is to have a national

policy for the concerned domain or issue. South Africa developed a national policy on living heritage several years ago (Damir 2019). The draft policy fully recognizes the provisions of the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage and as such the two are complementing each other. South Africa's delay in the ratification of the 2003 Convention is due to the processes of adopting the national policy first before the Cabinet may consider the ratification of the Convention. Manetsi (2011) gives a detailed critique of this national policy on living heritage.

Concerning Zimbabwe, Oktay and Sadıkoğlu (2018) claim that the original traditional food for Zimbabwe was cassava. There was a shift later on to the present dominant cuisine of *isitshwala/ sadza/ hadza*. *Isitshwala* was also traditionally prepared from flour that came from pearl millet and finger millet, and this varied from region to region. Later on, the Portuguese traders introduced maize to the Zimbabweans. Oktay and Sadıkoğlu's claim is not true because, like maize, cassava was introduced into Africa by Portuguese traders from Brazil in the 16th century (Okubo, 1980; FAO and IFAD, 2005). This is further cemented by the fact that, currently there is no part of Zimbabwe that has cassava as its traditional food. In fact, most Zimbabweans do not know what cassava is, let alone how it is prepared into food. Those that know it are those who have had an opportunity to travel to countries further North towards Central and West Africa where there are communities who still have cassava as their staple food. The scholars agree though that both cassava and maize were introduced to the locals by European traders. They do not say what the people who are called Zimbabweans today used to eat and consider



as their staple food. Again, due to the nature of their research, which looks at how European dishes affected local ones, they could not relate the preparation of these foods to ICH or at least use ICH terminology. This is despite the fact that their study was carried out 15 years after the adoption of the convention and 8 years after the first set of nomination files with gastronomic elements was accepted by the Intergovernmental Committee on Intangible Cultural Heritage and included in the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of humanity. For reasons stated above, we only focus on their discussion on Zimbabwean culinary dishes and for those of surrounding countries.

A study which has been generally regarded as pioneering work on indigenous and traditional foods is that by Gomez (1988). He came up with a resource inventory of indigenous and traditional foods in Zimbabwe. Gomez's work sought to cover the whole of Zimbabwe which therefore made his work to be shallow in terms of how he discussed each food product. He noted that due to a number of factors, modern rural communities have shifted from the broad diversified traditional food resources base. This has been a major cause of food shortages especially in Southern Africa. Gomez goes on to state that a more serious problem is on the abstract side. This is 'the loss of a vast and ancient legacy of knowledge in identifying and recognizing these resources and of the often elaborate traditional technologies for their utilization' (Gomez, 1988, p. 53). The ancient legacy of knowledge that is being referred to here is what has come to be known as intangible cultural heritage. At the time Gomez did his study the term intangible cultural heritage had not yet been developed, but intangible heritage was already there. This ancient legacy of knowledge was often

coupled with traditional technologies, which Gomez says were elaborate in nature. Traditional technologies are also a part of the ICH. So as early as 1988, some researchers such as Gomez had already noted with concern that the loss of ICH was more serious than that of physical heritage. The loss of physical heritage was itself a manifestation of a bigger underlying problem, which is the loss of ICH. Gomez's inventory of traditional foods may easily act as a starting point for Zimbabwe as a State Party to the UNESCO 2003 Convention in beefing up its Representative List of ICH elements as required by the convention.

Mahachi-Chatibura and Saayman (2015) tackle the challenges that hinder the promotion of the local Setswana cuisine in Botswana. They identify several factors which act as challenges that suppress the uptake of local cuisines in hotel restaurants. In this review we will focus on two of the challenges that they discovered. The first challenge has to do with suppressed supply. Most indigenous people do not produce indigenous foods at a commercial scale but for subsistence. This means that demand for local gastronomy elements easily exceeds supply such that hotel restaurants end up not producing enough food. The supply chain is simply not reliable and it will be a great risk for the restaurants to base on it. There is therefore a need for some players to take the production of indigenous gastronomic elements such as indigenous free-range chickens, to a commercial scale. Further to supply irregularities, the scholars also established that the quality of the supplies was also inconsistent. Quality is a major concern for everyone when it comes to food. Restaurants have a reputation to protect, so as to keep clients. They therefore cannot afford



to be sloppy on that by allowing standards to go down.

One way of dealing with the problem of supply is to adopt a model of serving 'vegetables in season' on certain days. This model will be based on the fact that indigenous communities have different vegetables in different seasons. If there is a need to have a constant supply of certain indigenous vegetables throughout the year, then the process of drying these vegetables should be done at a large scale. Southern Africa has discrete highly predictable seasons in terms of how they follow each other. That on its own makes it possible for Africans to plan for seasons when certain types of vegetables will not be season. One such way of planning is drying the vegetables. Fresh or dried vegetables can still be served together with other delicacies that come our way throughout the year.

The other challenge that Mahachi-Chatibura and Saayman discovered in their research is that of lack of knowledge. A Botswana Tourism Organisation representative is quoted by the two scholars stating that there is limited knowledge on traditional food preparation. This shows that the knowledge and skills of preparing local cuisines is no longer shared by everyone. This is of particular interest to this paper because the knowledge and skills that is being referred to make up the ICH that we are so concerned about in our endeavour to safeguard intangible cultural heritage. Our western oriented form of education also worsens the situation by concentrating on teaching students how to prepare European and Asian foods. Africans spend a lot of energy learning how to prepare such foods at the expense of mastering how to prepare their local cuisines which is a part of their heritage. What this means is that firstly, the sustainability of this

ICH element is under threat. It is no longer passed on from one generation to the next at a scale that is commensurate with the demand for it. Secondly, the employment policy of the restaurants has no provisions for chefs with special skills in the preparation of local cuisines. What is coming out here is that there is a high probability that the training of their chefs is biased towards western recipes, with little or no training at all on recipes for indigenous dishes. However, the two scholars do not use the term intangible cultural heritage in their study. The limited and irregular supplies of the indigenous produce they refer to may be a symptom of limited knowledge in the ICH of making that produce. The fact that they do not use the term intangible heritage means they may not be aware that what they are referring to is intangible heritage. This is in line with an observation that was made by Kurin (2004) that most people do not know what intangible cultural heritage is.

Parawira and Muchuweti (2008) review the trend and status of food science in Zimbabwe over a period of three decades. They note that significant research has been done on fermented milk and sorghum-based foods but there are still gaps on a lot of other traditional cuisines. The two scholars define fermented foods as

'those that are indigenous to a particular area and have been developed by the local people using old-age techniques and locally available raw materials. Traditional recipes are handed down through generations are still used in processing food in Zimbabwe' (Parawira & Muchuweti, 2008, p. 600).

This definition fits very well with that of intangible cultural heritage above. However,



the two scholars seem not to be aware that what they are describing is ICH. This is despite the fact that they did their research three years after Zimbabwe had ratified the 2003 Convention. Their study is informed by western scientific epistemology and focuses on food science, but they do make reference to cultural methods. They however do not refer to those methods as ICH.

Mahati and Bourdillon (2001) assess the role of women in processing millet in Nyamadzawo Village, Chimanimani District in Zimbabwe. The scholars established that pearl millet undergoes a number of processes that are arduous and time-consuming prior to milling. These processes are mainly performed by women and they involve threshing, winnowing, dehulling, baking, grinding and cooking. In the case studies that the two scholars did, they established that women in Nyamadzawo village still prefer processing millet using their traditional methods, despite the invention of dehulling machines such as the hammer mills. Although the traditional method of dehulling is time consuming, arduous and labour intensive, the women still believe that the finished food product is better than that which will have been processed using the hammer mill. Such confidence is encouraging and is necessary for the sustainability of the living heritage because the definition of heritage that is given above mentions the importance of 'a specific way' of doing something. The women in Nyamadzawo appreciate and see the value of preserving that specific way. The fact that the two scholars are concerned that the traditional methods take too much of the Nyamadzawo women's time, shows that they do not realise the importance of ICH. But on the same note, it could have been such an attitude that pushed UNESCO into realizing

that existing instruments then were not doing enough in the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage.

In Malawi, which is one of the seven countries which are under ROSA, *nsima*, was inscribed on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2017. This was the first gastronomy element from Southern Africa to achieve such a status. That on its own is evidence that research and work on safeguarding gastronomy elements as ICH in Southern Africa is still at its infancy. *Nsima* is what is called *isitshwala* (Ndebele), *sadza* (Shona) and *hadza* (Kalanga) in Zimbabwe. There are variations though in the processes that are employed in the preparation of *nsima* from community to community. These range from the type of grain which produces the flour to the way in which the final food product is consumed. In Zimbabwe, efforts are currently underway to prepare a nomination file for pearl millet *hadza* amongst the Kalanga, which will be submitted for consideration to be inscribed on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. It is a cause for concern that an element which is a staple food for most communities in Southern Africa had its variant submitted only 14 years after the convention was voted for. This shows that other Southern African culinary elements, which are special, are in extreme danger. If it has taken such a long time for an element which is a form of staple food, it will even take longer for food products that are not frequently prepared.

5.0 Conclusion

It was generally observed during the research that while there has been some significant research on food science and technology in



Zimbabwe, very little has been done in terms of research on the ICH part of those food products. Most researches have been done on the nutritional value and content of Zimbabwean foods. There is still a gap on the traditional methods of making such foods. These methods and skills of making local cuisines and processing gastronomic elements are what make the ICH of Zimbabwean dishes. There is therefore need for clear recipes and cooking methods because such knowledge is intangible heritage. The lapse in the documentation and preservation of such skills and knowledge has also affected quality assurance mechanisms for traditional dishes. The little literature that the research managed to retrieve does make some reference to traditional food, but does not brand it as a form of ICH. Proper branding and packaging using the correct terminology will assist in ICH awareness raising efforts. There is now an influx of inadequately trained cooks, who produce counterfeit dishes which fall far below the standard of what local cuisines should be. This problem is exacerbated by factors such as lack of literature or scholarly work in the area. There is some significant work on food science mainly because there are food science departments at tertiary institutions in Zimbabwe and other countries, but this is not replicated on the ICH part. It is therefore recommended in this paper that equal attention should be given to the ICH aspect of the local traditional foods because they are a part of our heritage and most importantly, their continued practice may contribute towards alleviating food shortages.

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