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## Provenance, identification, restitution and management of the liberation struggle heritage in the ESARBICA region

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### Abstract

*The liberation struggle was an important epoch in contemporary history and the documentation so created remains a nation's cultural capital which is a treasured national asset to be bequeathed to future generations. It is therefore incumbent upon archivists to preserve the legacy of the liberation struggle that is contained in those few records that were created. Consequently, this calls upon archivists to implement sound archival management practices and principles in establishing the provenance of these records and ensuring that they are located in their rightful place. This paper assessed the extent to which archival institutions entrusted with custody of liberation archives within ESARBICA had executed this task. Between 2006 and 2009, the author undertook a regional assessment of the liberation struggle heritage within the East and Southern Africa Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (ESARBICA). The assessment was part of a dissertation project for a PhD degree in Information Studies at the University of KwaZulu – Natal, South Africa. With the data gathered from a survey, interviews and observations it is gratifying to note that much of the liberation heritage had been identified, repatriated and the requisite documentation put in place. However, most of the organizations failed to quantify the volume of records pertaining to national liberation movements. This means that most organisations cannot adequately articulate their needs in terms of equipment, staff and space for the storage of documents. The implication could be that the records in their custody are not being professionally managed. It was evident from this present research that the bulk of liberation struggle archives are in image form and considering that this type of record is susceptible to damage compared to paper; the need for its sound management cannot be overstated.*

**Keywords:** Liberation struggle heritage, liberation archives, migrated archives, provenance, ESARBICA

### 1 Introduction

The struggle to liberate the southern African region was an important epoch in contemporary history and as such this history needs to be documented accurately in whatever form for the benefit of posterity. The struggle for liberation that led to the attainment of national independence and the birth of new nations was a result of a protracted struggle by different movements that had the one common objective of dismantling settler colonialism. Southall (2003:30) could not have put it better when he remarked that these struggles took numerous forms, yet they were all characterised by the rejection of racism and imperialism and the demands of previously nationally oppressed peoples for sovereign equity with the colonial powers. During the struggle, records of archival value were created by the liberation movements. Dominy (2004) acutely observed that “Liberation Struggle” Archives are of

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differing types and status, reflecting the diverse nature of the struggle itself. As a result, records were created from within and outside Africa to document this historic epoch from the 1950s to the 1990s and these records have to be made available to the public for research, scholarship and general interest. These records are a treasured national asset.

Many African states hosted freedom fighters from Algeria in the north to Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana, closest to the then apartheid South Africa. Many organisations supported the struggle, both within Africa and across the world and these points to the fact that records of these liberation movements were scattered globally. Moodley (1993:606), Namihla (2004:226-227) and Johnstone (1987) cited in Mazarire (2002:40) correctly noted that African heritage resources have not only been marginalised but are scattered all over the world.

Dominy (2004:1) observed that the United Nations spearheaded this struggle against colonialism internationally, but then there were other organizations in Europe, Asia, Australasia and the Americas that campaigned actively against apartheid and colonialism in Africa. The Fabian Colonial Bureau is one example of an organisation that supported initiatives against colonialism in Africa. The papers of the Fabian Colonial Bureau are currently held at Rhodes House Library in Oxford (University of Oxford 2008). As a result, records were created although it can be argued that due to the nature and secrecy of the war, few records could have been created, for instance, reports of encounters pertaining to battles, casualties and meetings on the execution of the struggle.

Commenting on the Namibian liberation struggle (1966-1990), Sturges, Katjihingua and Mchombu (2005:735) remarked that South West African People's Organization (SWAPO), South Africa and its Namibian military structures used covert intelligence gatherings, secret communication, propaganda and disinformation accompanied by censorship and the suppression of critical comment by force to further their political/military aims. Hatang (2005:72) concurred with the aforesaid and commented that it is interesting to note that South Africa has a history of secrecy where the opposing sides in the struggle – the apartheid government and the liberation movements were forced to keep their activities underground to ensure their respective survival. It is possible that many records were not created as a result of the ethos of secrecy.

Consequently, it is incumbent upon archivists to preserve the legacy of the liberation struggle that is contained in those few records that were created. The Tchiweka Documentation Centre Project (2006) in Angola for instance submitted that due to the scarcity of documents to have survived the turbulent process of the anti-colonial struggle and subsequent conflicts, largely explains why researchers and many institutions are increasingly concerned about the need to protect and conserve written and oral sources of information on the liberation struggle in Southern Africa.

## **2 The liberation struggle heritage defined**

The content of the liberation struggle heritage is varied. It ranges from written, oral to audio-visual material. According to Dearstyne (1993:1), a record means any type of recorded information, regardless of physical form or characteristics, created, received, or maintained by a person, institution, or organisation. The broad definition of records encompasses correspondence, reports, diaries, journals, ledgers, minutes, photographs, maps, drawings, blueprints, agreements, memoranda, deeds, case files and other material. In the context of this article, liberation struggle heritage refers to an assortment of material that was produced in exile by participants pertaining to the prosecution of the armed struggle and that continues to

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be generated by surviving participants with regard to their reminiscences. Examples include printed material like manuscripts, posters, brochures, bulletins, photographs, documents, interview transcripts and material in aural form like tapes, video recordings etc

### **3 Background and contextual setting of the study**

The East and Southern Africa Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (ESARBICA) was established in 1969, in Kenya and is the regional arm of the International Council on Archives (ICA). It brings together individuals and institutions concerned with the creation, use, preservation and management of recorded information in Eastern and Southern Africa. It is made up of fourteen member states namely; Angola, Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zanzibar and Zimbabwe (ESARBICA 2004). The mission of ESARBICA is the advancement of archives through regional co-operation.

ESARBICA has realised that liberation struggles records have been neglected and hence the need to preserve them as they are a national asset and part of Africa's heritage (ESARBICA 2003). ESARBICA (2003, through its Cape Town Declaration on Archives in Africa, 20-21 October 2003, highlighted the fact that the archival heritage of Africa, in all aspects – oral and written – was ignored, marginalised and plundered during the colonial era. The Declaration further stated that the archival heritage of Africa be it in written, oral or electronic form, remains a precious resource that must be carefully preserved, well managed and made accessible to all, in this and forthcoming generations. Durrani (2007:64) shared similar sentiments and noted that material from the liberation struggle in oral and written form generated during the long history of African struggle against colonialism needs to be collected, documented and made available.

It should be reiterated that issues pertaining to migrated and liberation archives have been a subject of discussion during ESARBICA General Conferences over several years. For instance the East and Central Archives Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (ECARBICA) now known as ESARBICA after 1984, adopted resolutions, numbers ECARBICA 1969/7, ECARBICA 1972/7, ECARBICA 1976/1, ESARBICA 91/1, ESARBICA 2001/9, ESARBICA 2003/7&8 and ESARBICA 2005/9 in which the need for restitution of migrated archives and the identification, collection, organization and preservation of records of liberation movements, both oral and written had to be given priority (Mnjama 2007).

In mind here are records of movements such as the ANC of South Africa and other bodies in the Southern African region. Locating these records has often proved difficult as their offices at times were raided or destroyed during the independence struggle. In some cases, records remained in countries where freedom fighters sought refuge and the actual acquisition of copies of these records held in European cities has been very slow. In the absence of manuscript registers, it can be very difficult to establish their whereabouts (Mnjama 2002:34). This view was also shared by Namihla (2004:226-227; see also Johnstone 1987 cited in Mazarire 2002:40) who remarked that a considerable proportion of Namibia's population went into exile where most of them lived not as mere refugees but were actively involved in the liberation struggle. These exiles left a world-wide documentary trail across countries ranging from Australia to Canada, from Cuba to China, from Algeria to Zimbabwe. Millions of records of high relevance to Namibian history were created abroad, and are now found scattered all over the world.

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#### **4 Research methodology**

Between 2006 and 2009, the author undertook a regional assessment of the liberation struggle heritage within the East and Southern Africa Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (ESARBICA). The assessment was part of a dissertation project for a PhD degree in Information Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The aims of the study were multifarious and one of these centred on establishing the location, custody, volume, composition, condition and management of liberation struggle archives and suggesting recommendations as to what could be done to improve the management of this record within ESARBICA. Within the context of this study, the set of specifications were the twelve national archives repositories within the east and southern African region and archival repositories housing the records of former national liberation movements within east and southern Africa and the focus here was on the ANC struggle records and archives (seven in all), as well as on the Liberation Front of Mozambique (FRELIMO), Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), South West African People's Organization (SWAPO), Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF), the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) and the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC) archives. As for the former, the countries were as follows: Angola, Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In total, twenty four institutions were identified and the census approach was thus found appropriate.

The study adopted an eclectic approach as quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques were employed through use of the triangulation method, the mix and match approach as Ngulube (2003:197) puts it. Denzin (1997:318) defined triangulation as the application and combination of several research methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon. The process is used in an endeavour to overcome the weaknesses or biases of a single method and the combinations so employed related in some specified way to the theoretical constructs that were under examination. In consequence, a questionnaire, an interview schedule and an observation checklist were employed as data collection instruments.

#### **5 Findings of the study**

##### *5.1 Records identification, quantity and cataloguing*

As noted earlier on, the objective of the study was to establish the location, custody, volume, composition, condition and management of liberation struggle archives and the data is exhibited under the following sub-headings:

Identification, quantity, dates and format of national liberation movement records in custody;

- Arrangement of records by qualified personnel;
- Finding aids in use to facilitate retrieval;
- Existence of published guides; and
- Register of accessions.

##### *5.2 Identification, quantity, dates and format of national liberation movement records in custody*

According to O'Toole (1990:63), identification is the first activity designed specifically to save and acquire records. This activity establishes an initial level of intellectual and physical control over the records and it does so by applying several fundamental questions to archival materials as evidenced by the research objectives. Against this background, Mnjama

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(2005:467) rightly observed that archivists need to take practical steps in ensuring that records relating to African liberation movements are identified, listed and where possible proper arrangements made for their housing.

The identification and subsequent acquisition of archives is part of archives management. This is a complicated process in the context of African national liberation archives, as is now outlined. A visit to one archival institution revealed that primary material relating to the ANC of South Africa's organizational history and activities in exile had been removed and repatriated to the country of origin. What remained was printed material like bulletins, resolutions, journals and reports. Upon being interviewed on the fate of these records, one respondent stated that the institution housing these records had plans to establish its own archive. Meanwhile, interview sessions with directors of national archival institutions in Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Swaziland and Zanzibar at the 20th ESARBICA conference in Windhoek, Namibia from 1-3 July 2009 confirmed the nonexistence of liberation struggle archives in these countries. The Director of Kenyan national archives for instance is quoted as having stated that:

the National Archives does not have records of former liberation movements in its custody but houses the papers of the late Joseph Murumbi who was one of those involved in the struggle for independence, and who later served as the Vice President under the late President Jomo Kenyatta. This is particularly so because no records were or have been acquired from the Mau Mau movement per se. What we have are the British colonial records detailing how the latter dealt with the uprising.

This situation contrasted markedly with sentiments echoed by directors of archives of frontline states in Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe who acknowledged the existence of liberation struggle archives.

The Director of Mozambique national archives for instance mentioned that: liberation struggle archives represent an important chapter in Southern African history. This historical record is unique and there is need to ensure its adequate documentation for the benefit of posterity. Measures need to be taken to ensure that this record remains accessible in order to stimulate research and debates on the history of the Southern African liberation struggles.

It is thus discernible from the foregoing that liberation struggle archives are geographically dispersed evidently pointing to the dynamics of colonial history. The presence of the apartheid state in Southern Africa for instance had far reaching ramifications on the prosecution of the armed struggle as organizations fighting for their emancipation were forced into exile. This in turn affected the archival records of those organizations. Nonetheless, all respondents were asked to give in linear metres the quantity of their holdings of liberation struggle archives as opposed to their total holdings. There was a disappointing response to this part of the questionnaire in that six of the institutions did not respond and follow-ups during site visits were not productive as respondents were unable to supply figures because these were unavailable.

For the three institutions that responded, the percentage of holdings oscillated from 0.15% to 2.4%. Holdings were overwhelmingly of Twentieth Century materials as reported by six (66.7%) of the surveyed institutions. Two institutions had manuscripts dating as far back as 1893. The records in custody varied in nature which serves to confirm that the media used to capture the record existed in a variety of forms. There have been many debates on the definition of a record, and on how records differ from information and knowledge. According to Dearstyne (1993:1), a record means any type of recorded information, regardless of



physical form or characteristics, created, received, or maintained by a person, institution, or organisation. The broad definition of records encompasses correspondence, reports, diaries, journals, ledgers, minutes, photographs, maps, drawings, blueprints, agreements, memoranda, deeds, case files and other material. In the current study, the first seven items sought to identify the media that was used to capture the record. The definition offered by Dearstyne (1993) is thus both comprehensive and fits well with the data extracted from the survey. Table 1 presents the type of recording media reported by participants.

**Table 1:** Types of records held in archival repositories in east and southern Africa

Types of records	N (9)	Percent of Cases
Paper	8	88.9%
Photographs	9	100.0%
Magnetic tapes	3	33.3%
Electronic records	3	33.3%
Video tapes	6	66.7%
Microforms	4	44.4%
Maps	5	55.6%
Audiotapes	5	55.6%
Slides	2	22.2%

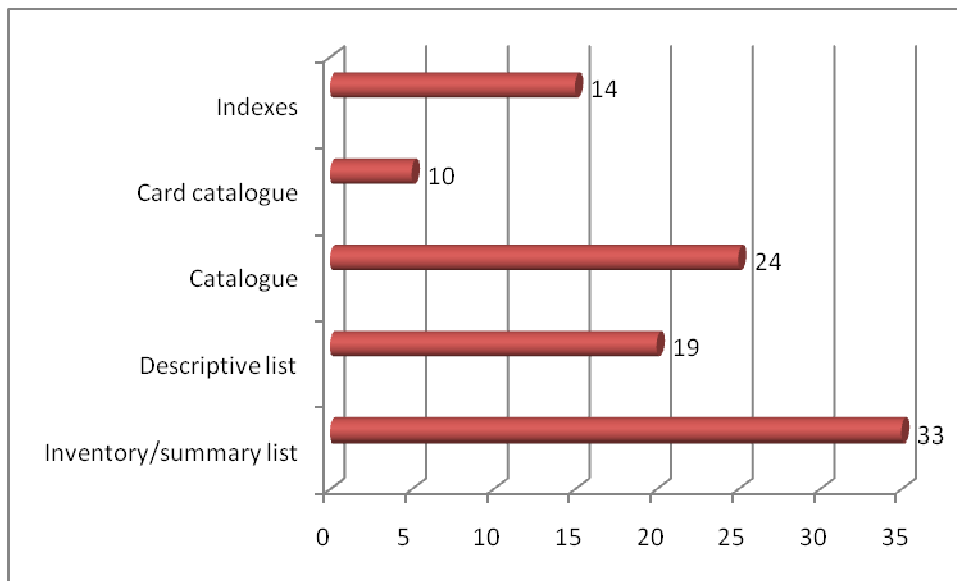
Notable from Table 1 is the fact that the media in use is varied and reflects the weight of importance attached to paper (88.9%) and photographs (100%) from a recording perspective. Marvasti (2008:603) noted that pictures like written texts are seen as constructive of the realities they represent and “the image speaks in silence”. Electronic records were ranked low as the medium was not in popular use until recently.

### *5.3 Arrangement of records by qualified personnel*

Miller (1990:7) posited that archival arrangement involves processing and managing historical records by identifying sets of records derived from the same provenance and identifying relationships among such sets of records. The arrangement of records by a qualified archivist is thus fundamental when it comes to the issue of provenance and original order as this ensures that the integrity of the records in question is not compromised. On the issue of whether archives in their institutions were arranged by a qualified archivist, seven (77.8%) of the answers were in the affirmative. However, two institutions reported that the work was being done by manuscript librarians and one institution noted that the execution of the task at hand depended on the degree of difficulty implying that a non-qualified person could carry out the task. It was also noted that of the nine institutions responding to the questionnaire, six (66.7%) recorded provenance, size and subject matter of the accession compared to two (22.2%) who did not.

### *5.4 Finding aids in use to facilitate retrieval*

Finding aids are sign posts that lead researchers to the information they are seeking from or about archives. A combination of nearly all the types of finding aids listed was prevalent in the surveyed institutions. Inventories or summary lists were the most popular as summarised in Figure 1.

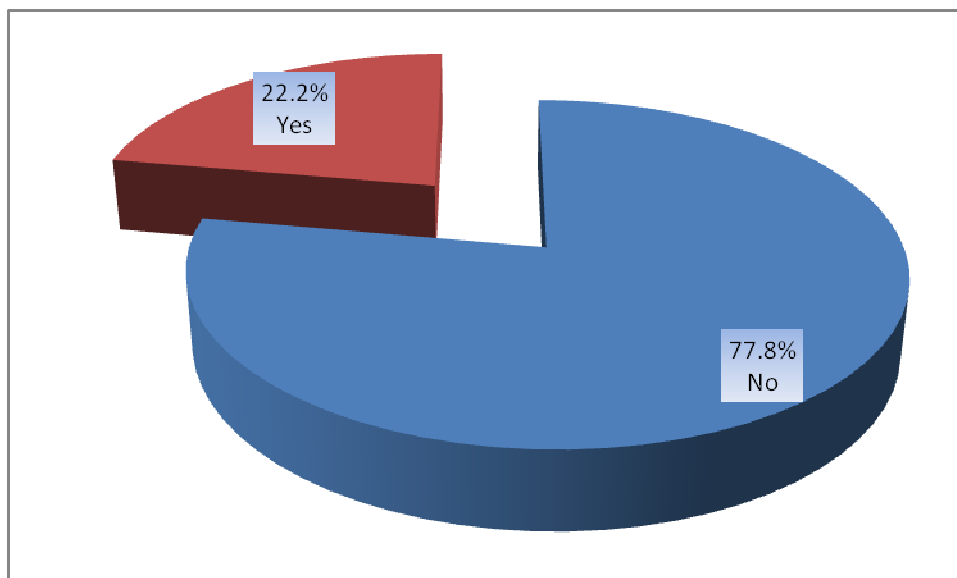


**Figure 1: Finding aids in use N=9**

From Figure 1, the least used form of finding aid was the card catalogue which perhaps points to the influence of ICTs: one repository (10%) was still producing them. Catalogues are usually associated with libraries and this may be the reason for the low ranking.

#### 5.5 Existence of published guides

Allied to finding aids was the issue of published guides to facilitate access in terms of retrieval. Figure 2 shows the distribution patterns of published guides in the surveyed institutions.



**Figure 2: Existence of published guides N=9**

From Figure 2, it is observable that seven (77.8%) of institutions did not have any published guides as compared to two (22.2%) who had them. Of the 22.2%, one institution had these in published format whilst for the other institution they were yet to be published. For the

institution with published guides, these were posted on the web and were corroborated by observation and interviewing schedules upon visitations to the institutions.

### 5.6 Register of accessions

Having an official record of items received by an archival repository is the hallmark of sound archival administration. Miller (1990:31) correctly pointed out that accessioning comprises all the steps that repositories take to gain initial physical, administrative, legal and intellectual control over newly acquired material. One question asked respondents whether they maintained a register of accessions for records pertaining to liberation movements. Six (66.7%) confirmed they had an accession register as compared to two (22.2%) who did not have one. Respondents were further asked to indicate the items contained in their respective registers and the findings are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Items contained in accessions register**

Register of accessions	N (9)	Percent of Cases
Date of accession	6	85.7%
Gift, purchase loan or transfer	6	85.7%
Provenance	6	85.7%
Restrictions on archives	3	42.9%
Copyright on archives	4	57.1%
Size of accession	4	57.1%
Brief description of contents	5	71.4%
Physical state of accession	4	57.1%

Table 2 indicates that the entries in the accessions register most popular were the date of accession, whether the accession item was obtained as a gift, purchase, or loan and the item's provenance. These entries were used by six (85.7%) of institutions. Three (42.9%) indicated the need to place restrictions on their archives from a policy point of view.

## 6 Discussion of findings

Bradsher (1988:11) observed that because the first objective of archivists is to establish and maintain control over records of enduring value, identifying and selecting such records is the first step in the archival process. In consequence, considering that the bulk of the records pertaining to the liberation struggle were generated in exile, it is imperative that these migrated archives are identified and acquired by archival institutions within the ESARBICA region. Records created by liberation movements whose members were forced into exile constitute one genre of removed archives, archival claims or migrated archives. Pearce-Moses (2005) defined migrated archives as those records of a country that have been removed from the country where they were originally accumulated. Mnjama (2002:32-34) observed that in some cases, records remained in countries where freedom fighters sought refuge. Reference is made to the Southern African region for example which shows that virtually all states in the region are affected by problems related to this phenomenon. Commenting then on the role of the Namibian National Archives and its relationship with private archives in Namibia, Lau and Hillebrecht (1993:106) noted then that important



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archival resources for the history of Namibia are stored outside Namibia, in particular in mission archives in Germany and Finland, government archives of the colonising countries Germany and South Africa, the UN archives and the archives of foreign NGOs involved in the struggle for independence.

The foregoing view was confirmed by Wilcox (2001) who, in her introductory remarks to a guide on Namibian liberation struggle archives, acknowledged that the aim of the catalogue was to compile a guide to archival resources and special collections in the Western Cape, South Africa that housed materials pertaining to the national liberation movement in Namibia. The catalogue is specifically focused on materials by and about SWAPO, dating from 1960 to 1991.

Mnjama (2005:473) pointed out that Namibian records were satisfactorily repatriated back to Namibia, something that had not happened before in the region. Although South Africa was keen to repatriate the Namibian records, it insisted on retaining microfilm copies of the same which demonstrates how problematic the issue of archival claims is. In addition, not all records belonging to Namibia's struggle for independence have been repatriated to the mother country as mentioned by Wilcox (2001) above.

The fact that the issue of records relating to African liberation movements and other migrated archives has been discussed at various times in ESARBICA General Conferences (ECARBICA 1969, ECARBICA 1972, ECARBICA 1976, ESARBICA 1991, ESARBICA 2001, ESARBICA 2003 and ESARBICA 2005) indicates the prevalent concern about the need for their identification and housing (Mnjama 2007). Mnjama (2005:8) noted that there was a moral obligation on the part of the present custodians of such records to have them repatriated back to the various countries of origin of the freedom fighters. Fittingly, this situation was observed in Tanzania which removed and repatriated the primary material concerning the South African ANC's organizational history and activities in exile, to their country of origin. What remained in Tanzania was printed material like bulletins, resolutions, journals and reports.

Dick (2005:11) and Morrow and Wotshela (2005:328-329) stated that the ANC records of the exile settlements in Tanzania (Dakawa and Mazimbu) were transferred to the Fort Hare University Archives in September 1992. The University of Fort Hare has been designated as the official repository of the ANC Archives. Currently, the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College (SOMAFCO), the ANC's school in Tanzania represents the largest and arguably the richest collection in the ANC archives (Moodley 1993:608; Stapleton & Maamoe 1998:413; Ramdhani 1998:67-68; Morrow, Maaba & Pulumani 2004:vii). This repatriation of strays (displaced archives) is a remarkable and laudable development within ESARBICA as it is the duty of archivists to identify, list and ensure these archives' proper arrangement with regard to location.

In short, archives in exile must be returned home. Nsibandze (1996:84) commented that archives in exile are archives unjustly transferred (removed) from one country to another. Whether one employs the term "fugitive archival material", or 'missing documents', 'migrated archives', or 'removed or displaced archives', the common factor is that they are not where they are supposed to be, in their rightful place of custody. Notwithstanding, archival claims have not only been restricted to those liberation struggle records held within ESARBICA member states but go beyond Africa's borders. Namihla (2004:226-227) observed that the documentary trail pertaining to liberation struggle archives is found scattered over the world.

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The UN and UNESCO have developed guidelines for the settlements of disputes as evidenced by the Vienna Convention on the Law of Succession in respect of State Property, Archives and Debts. The problem with this particular instrument is that while the G77 approved and ratified the Convention, it was not ratified by Western powers that are holding most of the migrated and liberation archives. Auer (1998) correctly asserted that despite all UN, UNESCO and ICA resolutions and recommendations on the subject, there has been no agreement on guidelines for dealing with disputed archival claims and the potential restitution of the archives. What has exacerbated matters is that this issue of disputed archival claims is a problem involving political interest and national pride – a sense of belonging and oneness whereby one takes pride in one's country achievements and cultures with that desire to preserve its character. Peltola (2009) rightly noted that a strong national identity is a very important asset for any nation as all nations are based on a common understanding of their past.

It is also for this reason – the involvement of political interest and national pride - that international action is very often viewed with some distrust and seen as interference with national sovereignty. Due to this problematic issue, Auer (1998) opined that the settlement of claims should be left exclusively to bilateral and, in some cases, multilateral agreements between states. Kukubo (1990:11) observed that the success of the restitution of archives is dictated by both the political and diplomatic relations existing between the countries concerned. The success of the transfer of records from South Africa to Namibia as earlier noted, was due to bilateral negotiations, a situation which was completely consonant both with archival principles as recommended by UNESCO and ICA and with political interests. This was equally true with regard to the ANC records of the exile settlements in Tanzania (Dakawa and Mazimbu) which were transferred to the Fort Hare University Archives in September 1992. Morrow, Maaba and Pulumani (2004:179-180) summed up the transfer and importance of this documentary record, and are quoted profusely:

the archives and other artefacts that are now deposited at the library of the University of Fort Hare are an outstanding legacy of SOMAFCO. Archival sources are seldom as readily or rapidly available to historians and others as those of SOMAFCO. Anyone present will remember the scene in Freedom Square, Fort Hare, on 21 September 1992. A lorry from the port of Durban deposited a large container in the square. A knot of university dignitaries and others gathered around while a workman broke the seal with a crowbar. The doors swung open, there was a scatter of applause and there was a pile of apparently unorganized papers and objects ... . These were the records of SOMAFCO, raw from Mazimbu and these papers form the backbone of this book.

The transfer of these records signified an important chapter within ESARBICA with regard to the restitution of liberation struggle archives. This event went a long way in fulfilling the aims of repatriation of such records, as were later to be encapsulated in the 2003 ESARBICA declaration on migrated archives (ESARBICA 2003). These records have been accessioned and the requisite documentation put in place to ensure their long-term survival (Morrow & Wotshela 2004:328; Ramdhani 1998:66-68).

A closer examination of the volume of the records pertaining to the various national liberation movements in east and southern Africa will now be undertaken. The quantity of these liberation struggle records is very small as compared to the complete holdings of national archival institutions, with the maximum percentage of holdings pegged at 2.4% of all the surveyed institutions' total collections. This figure applied to the nine surveyed institutions which responded and this suggests the figure could have been different, had all

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the twenty four institutions responded. Despite this, the fact remains that the existing records in question are relatively few in number which points to their generation in a time of conflict.

In addition, holdings were overwhelmingly of twentieth century materials and for the two institutions that cited their holdings dating back to 1893, this was due to a question of misrepresentation on the cut-off point as to what constituted liberation struggle archives. The media cited by respondents varied, with photographs, paper, electronic records and audio-visual material being predominant. The varied media existing dovetails with Dearstyne's (1993) definition that a record means any type of recorded information, regardless of physical form or characteristics, created, received, or maintained by a person, institution, or organization. Liberation struggle archives are a unique type of record with enduring value and which are a treasured national asset. The 2.4% might appear insignificant but constitutes a unique collection on the history of the liberation struggle, the reconstruction of which would be amiss without this record. Kukubo (1990:9) correctly pointed out that the preservation of a country's history depends on how its cultural property has been organized and preserved.

The records of the surveyed institutions were predominantly photograph-based which showed the importance that was attached to photo-documentation during the emancipation crusade. Photo-documentation of events as they happen, as noted by Durrani (2000:15; Carruthers 2000:27), gives an instant authenticity to events. From the figures in Table 1 presented earlier on, it is discernible that the holdings of most archival institutions in this study were predominantly photograph-based but other record formats like paper, video tapes, maps and audiotapes also constituted significant collections. One informant noted that photographic collections were an embodiment of the struggle and remained a prized possession that was revered.

The predominance of photographs over the written document lends weight to the fact that it was difficult to sit down and write information in view of the war situation and more importantly, it would have compromised security operations. Sturges (2004:437; Sturges, Katjihingua & Mchombu 2005:735) drew attention to the notion of covert and overt aspects in liberation movements' information and communication activities. Liberation movements tended not to generate paperwork in the same way that governments and bureaucracies do. The fear of capture and interception of communication was a major contributory factor which discouraged written documentation.

Consequently, it is therefore not surprising that the bulk of national liberation movement records are in image form. Hendriks (1984) observed that while paper has been the predominant document material throughout the centuries, it is steadily supplemented – and sometimes replaced by photographic materials. In the surveyed archival institutions, photographs are viewed as an embodiment of the struggle and in view of the legislation in force; they fall firmly within the ambit of archival items. Thus, archival materials have been defined to include papers, documents, registers, printed materials, maps, plans, drawings, microfilm, photographs and sound recordings of any kind whatsoever.

Savumthararaj (1995:4) and Hendriks (1984) posited that historical photographs in archival institutions offer unique possibilities for use as historical source materials in research, publication and exhibitions. This is not surprising considering that still photographic images form an integral part of a country's visual heritage. A definition of what constitutes a photograph will suffice. According to Pearce-Moses (2005; Savumthararaj 1995:7), a photograph is an image mechanically rendered through the aid of a camera. It constitutes the objective representation of reality as seen through the view-finder,

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and by anyone else who may have been present at the time the photograph was taken. The picture making process is based on selection and there are five issues of selection by the photographer that become inherent elements of a photographic image (Savumthararaj 1995:7):

1. the subject;
2. the detail;
3. the frame;
4. the time; and
5. the vantage point.

The subject the camera records remains the most important characteristic of photographs. Each photograph portrays the scene of subject only in the moment of time in which it was made. Though the subject is usually paramount, generally speaking most of the photographs in archival collections have one or all of the above five elements.

The acquisition of historical photographs is an important function of archival institutions and the acquired photographs will have certain values that fit well with the institution's acquisition policy. Roberts (1993:427) stated that the principal values of photographs tend to be informational. With regard to the surveyed institutions, the photographs in the collections lent weight to the value that was attached to the liberation struggle. The collection drive was oriented towards individuals and families of prominent people whose reminiscences epitomized the liberation struggle.

The Namibian Archives of Anti-Colonial Resistance and the Liberation Struggle (AACRLS) Project under the auspices of the National Archives of Namibia is also striving to capture these reminiscences. The SWAPO Party Archives (SPARC) in Namibia has in custody a photographic dossier on the struggle for liberation in that country with much of the focus on the deification of individuals who were the architects of the struggle. The dossier, Sam Mujoma: the liberation years published by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and others (2005) is a good example of this. Similarly, the National Archives of Zimbabwe in conjunction with the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe and the University of Zimbabwe have jointly embarked upon a project in which they are documenting reminiscences pertaining to Zimbabwe's struggle for emancipation.

## **7 Conclusions and recommendations**

The identification and establishment of the requisite documentation of the liberation struggle heritage has been done as evidenced by the repatriation of archives within the ESARBICA region and beyond. The restitution of archives is, however, on-going and is problematic. The overall picture is that the liberation struggle was a global event as records are scattered in different parts of the world. The records so created are of varied nature as the media used to capture the record exists in a variety of forms with the majority of these being photographs. Despite this, in terms of volume of output, most of the organizations failed to quantify the volume of records pertaining to national liberation movements. This means that most organisations cannot adequately articulate their needs in terms of equipment, staff and space for the storage of documents. The implication could be that the records in their custody are not being professionally managed. The arrangement of records was being done by both archivists and manuscripts librarians which are linked to the "heritage web" concept whereby archives', museums' and libraries' identities are all rolled into one so as to uniquely match each institution's functions to the needs of various communities of users. Various finding aids were being employed but inventories remain the most popular and a record of materials

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acquired by archival institutions was in existence as evidenced by the presence of an accessions register.

Records relating to liberation archives had been identified and commendable efforts were currently underway to professionally manage these records despite several teething challenges. As a result of the ethos of secrecy, few records were created by the national liberation movements during their struggles for independence, making it more mandatory for archivists to preserve the legacy of the liberation struggle that is contained in those few records that were indeed created. In addition, efforts need to be intensified to ensure that strays (records that have for various reasons ended up outside the country of origin) or archival resources not belonging to an authorised archival institution are repatriated to the original country. As has been noted already, this is a contentious matter and despite all United Nations (UN), United Nations Educational and Scientific Organization (UNESCO) and the International Council on Archives (ICA) resolutions there have been no agreement on guidelines for dealing with disputed archival claims and the potential restitution of the archives. Bilateral and, in some cases, multilateral agreements between states may assist – and in fact have done so in a number of instances - in dealing with these problems.

A case in point is the multilateral agreement between Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries in their efforts to document the history of the liberation struggle in Southern Africa under the Hashim Mbita project. In addition, regional efforts by ESARBICA, whose Cape Town Declaration on liberation struggle archives (2003) was the precursor to the SADC project, are laudable and should continue. It is disheartening though to note that the commitment by governments within ESARBICA towards the success of this project is stalling due to crippling financial problems. The Swazi Observer (2009) quoted King Mswati appealing to member states for funding and pointing out that despite the financial problems, progress on the project had been noted by the Hashim Mbita research unit, as evidenced by the submission of draft chapters on the liberation of Southern Africa to the SADC Secretariat.

It was evident from this present research that the bulk of liberation struggle archives are in image form and considering that this type of record is susceptible to damage compared to paper; the need for its sound management cannot be overstated. Still photographic images form an integral part of a country's visual heritage and it was remarked by one respondent that these photographs were the embodiment of the struggle. In terms of their management, historical photographs are physically and chemically more complex than most archival materials. This fact calls upon information professionals to have a basic understanding of how they were made and how they age in order to maintain proper care (Ritzenthaler 1984a:8). In fact, photographs consist of several dissimilar materials, each of which reacts somewhat differently to the others in response to changes in the environmental conditions. This can result in stress and dimensional instability and the subsequent loss of the image. The overall implication is that archivists must be able to respond to the preservation needs of the entire assemblage in order to assure the preservation of the image (Ritzenthaler 1984b:95; Jenkins 2005:43-51). What this means, as noted by Ritzenthaler (1984b:96), is that when devising preservation systems, the archivist must consider the image, structural materials and artefacts that are integral to a complete understanding of the history of photography. However, the restoration of photographs is a complex field that requires specialised training and knowledge. It is thus recommended that archivists limit their activities to copying, to physical stabilisation and especially to providing a suitable environment and leave actual treatments to qualified personnel (Ritzenthaler 1984b:120).



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It is therefore discernible that conservation expertise is difficult to professionally develop and retain in developing countries and could perhaps explain why digitisation of photographs is popular within the surveyed institutions in an effort to tackle the preservation problem. However, digitisation is not preservation and reliance on preservation as a digitisation strategy could place much material at risk (PADI 2009). It is thus advocated that archival institutions take recognition of hybrid environments whereby digitisation and microfilming are used side by side; with digitisation used for access and microfilm because of its long established history and international reputation used for preservation. Indeed historical photographs are a priceless part of our heritage whose loss is irreplaceable.

The loss is not just in terms of physical deterioration or the mere result of being lost or misplaced. The loss of photographs as archival records could be the result of having lost their usefulness or utility on account of the absence of related documentation or captions. Photographs are, by their very nature, visual and they therefore need to be seen to be understood. Savumthararaj (1995:57) noted that a potentially valuable photograph loses its value if there is nobody available who can describe the events depicted, or even guess who the personalities appearing in the photograph are. Liebenberg-Barkuizen (2005:57) suggested that in the documentation process, a comprehensive recording as possible, of the historical and socio-political context of the photograph, is required to explain the motivation for and conditions under which the photograph was taken. This standard procedure is necessary to adhere to considering that in an archival institution, photographs form evidence of and illustrate events, tell stories and capture activities as they unfolded. Heritage institutions should, as such, give as much importance to their description as the effort it expends in acquiring photographs. In this regard, the innovativeness displayed by SWAPO Party Archives (SPARC) and others with the publication of the dossier on Namibia's liberation struggle history using photographs should be encouraged.

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<sup>1</sup> The seven archival institutions housing ANC archives are:

1. African National Congress Archives
2. Alan Paton Centre and Struggle Archives (University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg)
3. Digital Innovation South Africa (DISA)
4. Gandhi-Luthuli Documentation Centre (University of KwaZulu-Natal, Westville)
5. Liberation Archives - University of Fort Hare
6. Nelson Mandela Foundation
7. UWC-Robben Island Mayibuye Archives

<sup>1</sup> The Southern African Development Co-operation (SADC) through its history project aims at collecting the history of the liberation struggle in the Southern African region. As is well known, the OAU Liberation Committee was wound up in 1994 following South Africa's attainment of independence and SADC has thus taken up the task of documenting that history. The project is operational in Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

In an inspirational address to researchers in 2005, Ambassador Hashim Mbita, the project's patron stressed the need to (The SADC Today 2006):

-----record the inspiration, commitment, determination, sacrifices, means, strategies and experiences gained at different stages. The decolonisation struggle which engulfed the African continent during the last 60 years was basically one, though fought in various parts and against different colonizing powers. History should be reflected in proper perspective through the African eye because many a time it has been written from outside the continent.

The project was approved by the Summit of SADC Heads of State and Government when they met in Botswana in August 2005 to mark the Silver Jubilee of the regional community. The project is funded entirely by SADC governments (The SADC Today 2006).