

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores various ways in which Kalanga ethnic identity has been (re)constructed, negotiated, manipulated and transformed by different interest groups such as missionaries, colonists, Kalanga cultural entrepreneurs, chiefs and ordinary Kalanga people in Bulilimamangwe district. Using a collection of both primary and secondary sources, the thesis posits that among other markers of Kalanga identity, Kalanga language has been central in the Kalanga clamour for their official recognition by the state in colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe. It challenges the conventional interpretations of African identities by arguing that pre-colonial Kalanga society was characterised by fluid and flexible identities which constantly shifted boundaries. The study demonstrates how the colonial government, through the appointment of Ndebele chiefs in Kalanga areas fuelled Kalanga ethnic consciousness which was deployed by Kalanga chiefs and their subordinates during the opposition to the implementation of the Native Land Husbandry Act in Bulilimamangwe district. The study further argues that the Kalanga Cultural Promotion Society (KCPS) played a significant role in contributing to the escalation of Kalanga ethnic consciousness especially in post-independent Zimbabwe where ethnicity became an important feature amongst the marginalised groups. As a result of being alienated from the independent state, there was a resurgence of Kalanga ethnic mobilisation which was led by the KCPS and the Kalanga Language and Cultural Development Association (KLCDA), the Associations that lobbied for the recognition of Kalanga language in the education system and in state/public radio broadcasting. The thesis therefore contributes to the scholarship on ethnic identities by elaborating how Kalanga experiences with various factors such as social, political and physical environment contributed to the shifts and fluidity of Kalanga ethnic identity from 1946 to 2005.

