TONGA LIVELIHOODS IN RURAL ZIMBABWE

Edited by
Kirk Helliker and Joshua Matanzima

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Based on extensive original fieldwork, this book examines the complex and diverse livelihoods of Zimbabwe's Tonga people as they have developed over time, including in the wake of the country's post-2000 political and economic crises.

Despite being endowed with natural resources, the northwest region of Zimbabwe inhabited by the Tonga people is one of the most marginalised and underdeveloped parts of the country, neglected by both colonial and postcolonial governments. The Tonga-speaking people are a minority ethnic group that settled on either side of the Zambezi River around 1,100 AD and remain deeply dependent on the river for their socio-economic livelihoods. This book reflects on the challenges faced by the Tonga people, from poor infrastructure, health and education facilities, to the issues caused by soil infertility and extremely low rainfall, which have been exacerbated by climate change. Many Tonga people were displaced by the construction of the Kariba Dam in the 1950s, and their access to the region's natural resources has been restricted by successive governments. Showcasing the research of Zimbabwean scholars in particular, this book not only reflects on the vulnerabilities faced by the Tonga, but it also looks beyond these, to the livelihood practices that are thriving despite these challenges, and the ways in which livelihoods intertwine with Tonga culture and society more broadly.

Overall, this book highlights the resilience of the Tonga people in the face of years of politico-economic crisis and will be an important contribution to research on livelihoods, ethnic minorities and rural development in Africa.

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Edited by Kirk Helliker and Joshua Matanzima

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2023
by Routledge
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-032-24432-7 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-032-24435-8 (pbk)
ISBN: 978-1-003-27858-0 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003278580

Typeset in Bembo
by Newgen Publishing UK

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is the sixth in an ongoing series of books published under the auspices of the Unit of Zimbabwean Studies, Department of Sociology at Rhodes University (South Africa). The first book published was titled *The Political Economy of Livelihoods in Contemporary Zimbabwe* (2018). Two others appeared in 2021: *Fast Track Land Occupations in Zimbabwe – In the Context of the Zvimurenga* and *Everyday Crisis-Living in Contemporary Zimbabwe.* The latest two volumes were published in 2022: *Capital Penetration and the Peasantry in Southern and Eastern Africa: Neoliberal Restructuring* and *Livelihoods of Ethnic Minorities in Rural Zimbabwe*.

The Unit was formed in 2015 and seeks to contribute to the development of emerging, early-career and mid-career Zimbabwean (and other) scholars.

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CONTEXTUALISING TONGA LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS IN ZIMBABWE

Joshua Matanzima and Kirk Helliker

Introduction

This book examines the lives and livelihoods of Tonga people in north-western Zimbabwe. Tonga people are found on both sides of the Zambezi River, to the north in Zambia and to the south in Zimbabwe. As mainly riverine people historically, they were forcefully displaced and resettled away from the Zambezi because of the construction of the Kariba Dam project in the late 1950s. Currently, Tonga people in Zimbabwe are found in the dry and arid districts of Binga, Nyaminyami and Gokwe. Binga has the largest concentration of Tonga-speaking people, with about 70% of the Tonga population residing there. As an ethnic minority in post-colonial Zimbabwe, the Tonga have experienced significant marginalisation which has only served to exacerbate the many livelihood challenges they once faced under colonialism subsequent to their forced removal from the Zambezi.

Broadly speaking, there is a dearth of scholarly literature on the Tonga of Zimbabwe, certainly in comparison to the prevailing literature on the Tonga in Zambia. This book contributes to countering this imbalance in the literature by highlighting the fieldwork-based case studies of the Tonga being undertaken currently by a number of Zimbabwean scholars. Indeed, this book represents the first collection of case studies about the Tonga in Zimbabwe specifically. The volume seeks to show the diversity and heterogeneity of Tonga livelihoods in both past and present Zimbabwe.

In this first chapter, we first offer a historical narrative of the Tonga and specifically the Tonga in Zimbabwe, starting with the pre-colonial times and ending with the post-colonial period. We then offer a thematic overview of the prevailing literature on the Tonga of Zimbabwe and demonstrate the importance of this volume to the scholarly literature, before closing off with an overview of each of the ensuing 11 chapters.

DOI: 10.4324/9781003278580-1

History of the Tonga

The Tonga comprise the third largest African language-ethnicity grouping in Zimbabwe (after the Shona and Ndebele), and yet they are little known to their fellow Zimbabweans, in part because they have always lived far from the main centres of population in the inhospitable north-western part of the country (Matthews 2007). The word "Tonga" derives from the Shona term *KuTonga* and was first used, it is believed, when they had their initial contact with the Shona in the Zambezi Valley at some unknown time. It refers to the Valley Tonga because they had no paramount Chief (Matanzima 2018). *KuTonga* means "to rule", with the Tonga regarded as people who rule themselves.

The identity and culture of the Tonga people in Zimbabwe is fluid, with this fluidity shaped by complex and diverse socio-political and economic circumstances over space and time. Over an extended period, Tonga people have experienced colonialism, involuntary resettlements, anti-colonial war and post-colonial restructuring, all of which have had implications for Tonga identity formation and experiences of belonging. Because of this, any notion of "being Tonga" should not be interpreted as entailing a static condition nor a homogeneous status, given the dynamic and variegated character of Tonga lives in colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe.

Though the Tonga people are found generally in the north-western part of Zimbabwe, it is hence important to underscore that they have different histories and identities. Differences are at times contingent on spatial location, both past and present: some Tonga are located near towns, while others are in deep rural spaces; some are close to the Zambezi River, while others reside away from the River; and some live close to either Ndebele or Shona communities, while others do not. Currently, in the case of Binga District, where the Tonga ethnicity predominates, Ndebele people reside in some parts of it. In Nyaminyami and Gokwe districts, the Tonga people live together with Shona-speaking people of the Shangwe dialect. Furthermore, though they speak the *CiTonga* language, many Tonga also speak the language of their neighbours and intermarriages have occurred with the Shona and the Ndebele. The Tonga people of Gokwe and Nyaminyami speak *ChiShona* and those in some areas of Binga speak *IsiNdebele*.

Tonga interactions with these other ethnicities have historically and significantly configured their identity and language, with *CiTonga* incorporating Shona and Ndebele words in some instances. As well, historically and today, they have often been dominated by their Ndebele and Shona neighbours. As well, amongst white settlers and the Shona and Ndebele ethnicities, the Tonga became the subject of crude animalistic stereotypes including being depicted as "people with tails", "two-toed people", "witches" and "picturesque" as if part of nature. This fed into a long-term process of dehumanisation and marginalisation of the Tonga as backward and uncivilised, in both colonial and post-colonial times (Manyena 2013; Tischler 2013; Matanzima 2018; Matanzima 2022b; McGregor 2009).

Language, Origins and Pre-Colonial History

The origins of the Tonga remain unclear, though scholars generally believe that they originated from outside the Zambezi Valley (Colson 1960). Historically, they were a matrilineal society (Colson 1960; Scudder 1962; McGregor 2009), but recent research suggests that Tonga society is gradually transforming from matrilineal to patrilineal (Reynolds 2019). In this respect, some families no longer give the property of a deceased man to his sister's son as per matrilineal arrangements of the past; rather, sons and daughters of a deceased man now inherit their father's property. The Tonga's increased contact with patrilineal ethnicities (such as Ndebele and Shona) could be one of the factors bringing about this change.

The Tonga people of Zimbabwe were and are related to the Tonga people of Zambia, with the latter often referred to as the Gwembe Tonga (as the Zambezi Valley is sometimes called the Gwembe Valley). Before colonialism, the Zambezi Valley (on both sides of the Zambezi River) seems to have formed a single social-cultural unit. Although differences did exist, there were no major divergences between Tonga people on either side of the river. Hence, "historically it makes little sense to consider the … Tonga of Zimbabwe apart from their Zambia brethren, with whom they have shared much precolonial experience" (Matthews 2007: 14). Based on these claims of historical similarity, it is not uncommon for Zimbabwean scholars of Tonga history to draw extensively upon the work by Colson and Scudder of the Tonga people of Zambia (Colson 1960, 1971; Scudder 1960, 1962, 2005; Scudder and Colson 2002).

Before colonialism, the Tonga people were a stateless society (Colson 1960; Matthews 2007). Certainly, there is no evidence of a large Tonga state or empire ever existing, although there are signs that certain Tonga groups adapted to the exigencies of trade and defence in the 19th century (and in some places earlier) by strengthening and secularising leadership positions (Matthews 2007). In this context, people were often referred to in a way consistent with their leaders' names. The concept and practice of chiefdoms in the Zambezi Valley was only introduced later by the colonialists. Particular geographical features (such as Zambezi River tributaries and local mountains) were used to demarcate chiefdoms. The Zambezi itself of course also became a boundary between two colonies, now Zimbabwe and Zambia.

In the mid-19th century, these "river-people" were part of the unstable, raided and tribute-paying frontier of two major state systems. To the north was the heartland of Kololo rule and subsequently the Lozi state, centred on the wide, open flood plains of the Zambezi. To the south was the Ndebele state centred on Bulawayo, which had replaced the authority of older Rozvi states in the early decades of the 19th century (McGregor 2009). These centralised polities often attacked each other along the Zambezi River, which made the Valley a conflict-ridden and turbulent region. The centralised polities also constantly raided the Tonga and seized their livestock, women and young men (Colson 1950), with the latter incorporated

into the army regiments of these centralised societies. Because of this, some Tonga people became subsumed under the Ndebele or Lozi-Kololo at the time.

Under Colonialism before Kariba Dam

Before the creation of Lake Kariba in the 1950s, the Tonga's home was "the almost inaccessible middle Zambezi Valley between the rugged Batoka Gorge below Victoria Falls and the confluence of the Umniati (Sanyati) and Zambezi, some 200 miles downstream" (Matthews 2007: 13). The Zambezi Valley was bounded by the plateaus of Northern and Southern Rhodesia (i.e. Zambia and Zimbabwe, respectively). The Zambezi River was the boundary between the two territories, but it was a political boundary rather than a geographical or ecological barrier (Colson 1960) as people crossed it for different everyday socio-economic and religio-political reasons. As a result, even with the growing colonial influence, "[p]hysical conditions on either side of the river were much the same, and the people on either bank shared the same culture and were closely related" (Colson 1960: 5).

The Zambezi Valley was wider on the south bank than on the north bank. However, the Tonga population became more highly concentrated on the north bank when compared to the south bank (see below). The total population of the Zambezi Valley, as estimated for the mid-1950s, was 86,000, comprising about 55,000 on the northern side and 31,000 on the southern side (Reynolds 2019). The settlement and the distribution of homesteads of the Tonga in the Valley were heavily determined by the geography of the Valley itself. Elizabeth Colson thus gives an in-depth eyewitness description of the Tonga settlement in the Valley in the following words:

> The Zambezi plain was densely though unevenly populated. The villages lied within a mile or two of the river, for beyond this range the shortage of water throughout the dry season restricted settlement. Where the hills reached the Zambezi or where alluviums were restricted for some reason, a few small scattered villages may occupy a considerable stretch and constitute a neighbourhood. Where good soil is abundant, a series of large villages were found, frequently set so closely together that no discernible boundary separates one from another. This too, constituted a neighbourhood community which usually centres on the mouth of a tributary.
>
> *Colson 1960:* 7

Importantly, there were also Tonga people residing on the plateaus adjacent to the Zambezi Valley on both the south and north banks of the River. Those residing in these Uplands settled wherever fertile soil and permanent water was found, but these areas carried only sparse populations. Usually, upland Tonga communities were separated from one another by spurs of hills and some kilometres of bush (Colson 1960). Nevertheless, much of what we know today is about the Tonga people who lived along or close to the Zambezi River. These gained much

attention in both Zambian and Zimbabwean scholarship because of their unique riverine lifestyle and their displacement from the Zambezi Valley in the late 1950s. When people hear about the Tonga, they assume that all Tonga lived in the Valley and were displaced, yet that is not the case for those long-established on the plateaus.

The Tonga people who resided along the River regarded themselves as a "River-People" (Saidi and Matanzima 2021; Matanzima and Saidi 2020; McGregor 2009). They identified themselves with the River as they had lived along it for likely over 500 years. The "River-People" marker distinguished them from the Tonga people of the Uplands or Hills, "though they [the former] often shared language and cultural traits with Tonga and Leya communities stretching up onto the plateaux both north and south" (McGregor 2009: 25).

The Zambezi Valley in which most Tonga people lived had a notoriously hot climate and the presence of tsetse fly which discouraged indigenous outsiders from migrating into the Valley (Matthews 2007). White colonial administrators also did not establish administration centres in the Valley because of its weather conditions, and reputation for malaria and sleeping sickness. Many white men who attempted settling in the Valley died. Even missionaries never established missions in the Valley on the south bank (Matanzima 2018). However, the Tonga River-People had become immune to the various diseases in the Valley because of their long-term habitation there.

This is not to suggest that the colonial conquest had no influence at all in the Valley, as certainly there was at least an indirect influence. For instance, the introduction of hut tax under colonialism significantly affected Tonga society, as many young men had to leave the Valley in search of employment in the railways and mines, including in and around Bulawayo (Colson 1960). Women remained in the Valley rearing children and farming along the River. Furthermore, the introduction of taxation reconfigured the distribution of the Tonga on both sides of the River. On the south bank (Southern Rhodesia), tax was higher than on the north bank (Northern Rhodesia), with the two banks under different colonial administrations. This pushed many Tonga people to move to and reside on the north bank (Ncube 1986), which in part explains the higher population density amongst the Tonga on the north bank. Furthermore, the north-bank Tonga owned cattle, while those on the south bank did not, as colonialists on the north bank introduced tsetse fly spraying in the Valley and those on the south bank did not (Scudder 1962).

The British colonialists also introduced political hierarchies in the Zambezi Valley and thereby disrupted a pronounced Tonga egalitarianism that was centuries old. Though the British did not settle and establish administration centres in the Valley, they did embed colonial administration into it by way of introducing chiefs and headmen (Colson 1960). These political structures were unfamiliar to Tonga people, and the latter passively resisted their existence and authority. In fact, despite the presence of colonial political structures, the Tonga continued as much as possible to pursue their own well-established egalitarian arrangements and practices.

At the same time, the colonial intrusion led to the solidification of fixed boundaries across and between villages as well as the introduction of new ways of dealing with criminal cases that were centred around the Chief's court.

In the lower Zambezi region, around what is now known as the Kariba gorge area, the Tonga lived close to the Shangwe and Korekore sub-Shona dialects spoken in the Sampakaruma and Nyamhunga chiefdoms, respectively. The Sampakaruma chiefdom incorporated both Shangwe and Tonga people, while Nyamhunga was a predominantly Korekore chiefdom. These Shona speakers were latecomers to the Zambezi Valley (Saidi and Matanzima 2021), with many of them, no doubt, coming originally as refugees from the Ndebele invasion in the 19th century, though more recent immigrants continued to add to their numbers. Above the Kariba gorge, these Shona immigrants were absorbed into Tonga populations. They thus spoke the *CiTonga* language and did not form separate villages or communities vis-à-vis local Tonga populations (Colson 1960).

Those Tonga who lived along the Zambezi River practised riverine cultivation, and they depended upon the river for its fertilising floods. The river landscape was shaped by the seasonality of rainfall in the Upper Zambezi catchment, such that annual floods brought floodwaters to the mid-Zambezi in the dry season thereby allowing for a second crop harvest (McGregor 2009). They also practised hunting and fishing, with fish forming part of their "everyday diet" (Scudder 1962). Their livelihood activities, mainly fishing and riverbed farming, were entangled in their "riverine" identity. They were often referred to as "riverbed farmers" or "the fishermen of the Zambezi" (Scudder 1960). However, the entangled identities were later disrupted by the Kariba Dam construction.

Kariba Dam and Resettlement Experiences

The construction of the Kariba Dam along the Zambezi River significantly impacted the lives and livelihoods of the Tonga who were directly and heavily reliant upon the Zambezi River landscape (Colson 1971; Cliggett 2005; Matanzima 2022a; Tischler 2014). The forced relocation meant that communities were separated, identities became reconfigured, religio-cultural activities were torn asunder and livelihoods ceased to be River-focused. Overall, Tonga people experienced significant precarity and uncertainty during the Kariba Dam construction, and in the years immediately thereafter.

Though only those residing in the immediate vicinity of the River were displaced, Tonga villagers on the plateau also experienced effects indirectly, either by becoming hosts of the displaced or by experiencing secondary displacements (Matanzima 2022c). For instance, in Nyaminyami District, the Negande chiefdom was pushed further inland to create space for the settlement of the Mola chiefdom, such that the Negande people left behind their homes and ancestral shrines. This history continues to shape relations between the two chieftaincies, with chief Negande reclaiming his former territory and ancestral lands 60 years after displacement.

Kariba dam was constructed between 1955 and 1959 at a gorge on the Zambezi River where it flows between Zimbabwe and Zambia. The dam extends over a length of about 300 kilometres and covers a surface area of 5,500 square kilometres at full supply level. The water storage volume of the Kariba reservoir translates into a mass of 180 billion metric tons (Reynolds 2019). The flooding of Kariba dam necessitated the displacement of the Tonga river-people residing along the Zambezi River. Before the construction of the dam, it was estimated that 29,000 Tonga people would have to be resettled once the land was flooded, but in fact 57,000 lost their homes and fields and were forced to move (Reynolds 2019; Scudder 1962).

The governments of Northern and Southern Rhodesia, then vassal states of the United Kingdom, assumed responsibility for the resettlement of people in their own domains. Approximately 34,000 were resettled from the Northern Rhodesian side of the River, and 23,000 from the Southern Rhodesia riverbank. In effect, some 66% and 74%, respectively, of the Valley Tonga lost their land (Reynolds 2019). The proportion resettled was large because much of the Tonga population was concentrated along the Zambezi River, clustering around the rich soils deposited in the flood plain and in the deltas of the Zambezi's tributaries (Colson 1960).

On the south bank, the resettled Tonga were affected more detrimentally by the move than those on the north bank. On the north bank, baseline studies for the move were conducted by Elizabeth Colson and Thayer Scudder, but these were considered an unnecessary expense on the south bank (Tischler 2013). Colson and Scudder were commissioned by the then Director of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute (RLI), Henry Fosbrooke, to document the lives and livelihoods of the Tonga before they were displaced by Kariba (Colson 1971). McGregor (2009) reports that the move on the south bank was very hasty and under extreme compulsion, so that people were never given adequate time to prepare for the move. In quoting a World Commission on Dams Kariba case study report, Reynolds (2019: 6) highlights that: "It was reported that the people to be resettled were treated like animals or things rounded up and packed in lorries to be moved to the barren hills away from the water".

The immediate post-resettlement conditions of the displaced Tonga in Southern Rhodesia (later Rhodesia) were particularly pitiful. Most of the resettlement land was of poor quality and susceptible to erosion, and the amount of land available was too small for adequate distribution to the number of people dislocated (Reynolds 2019). The area was in agricultural region V and thus received little rainfall throughout the year. As a result, hunger, famine and poverty became the order of the day in the 1960s among the resettled Tonga. Additionally, the networks of kinship and friendship across the river that had existed before the flooding of the land were foreclosed. It became very difficult for the Tonga to visit and see relations across the River due to the presence of the Dam which they could not travel across using their traditional dugout canoes. With the building of the dam, the colonial border was further solidified, and most Tonga lacked (and still lack in many instances) the resources required to acquire formal travel documents. Furthermore, intangible losses were experienced because of the resettlement, including Tonga

people's cultural identity (which had been inextricably connected to the Zambezi), as well as a focused sense of self and belonging. The move altered Tonga identity (i.e. being Tonga) beyond recognition, and for an extended period, to such an extent that reviving their identity in the post-resettlement dispensation required an almost total reconfiguration.

During Zimbabwe's Liberation War

The precariousness of the Tonga people subsequent to Kariba Dam displacement was worsened by Zimbabwe's liberation war which emerged in the late 1960s and intensified dramatically by the late 1970s. During the war, the Tonga lived in fear and their livelihood strategies such as farming were severely disrupted. The role and significance of the territorial border during the war also brought the marginal rural areas inhabited by the Tonga under the scrutiny and surveillance of the Rhodesian state and its security and intelligence apparatus (McGregor 2009).

The operations of both the guerrilla army (ZIPRA) and Rhodesian forces in the region destabilised Tonga lives. ZIPRA guerrillas moved through north-western Zimbabwe on route to and from Zambian bases, across the Zambezi River and Lake Kariba. They sought different forms of assistance from local Tonga people. Tonga villagers showed guerrillas the way to and from the Lake and helped them cross the Zambezi (McGregor 2009); as well, they provided them with food. Some young Tonga men, especially from Binga, were even trained and incorporated into the ZIPRA forces. To garner support from the Tonga, the guerrillas promised them that – after independence – their immense socio-economic problems (including those arising from Kariba Dam displacement) would be addressed (though this was never done). At times, during the war, some Tonga were labelled as "sell-outs" and those identified as sell-outs were harassed by guerrillas. In fact, stories about harassment and intimidation are part of the memories of the war in Tonga villages today. In Musampakaruma (in Nyaminyami District), for example, the first author was informed by elders of men who "disappeared" during the war because they were suspected of "sell-outs" (Matanzima 2017; Matanzima 2020).

Simultaneously, the Tonga experienced problems from Rhodesian security. As McGregor (2009: 147) argues: "To prevent such [guerrilla] crossing [and interactions between guerrillas and the Tonga], the Rhodesian government built a new road along the river and lakeshore, positioned army camps at key points along it, patrolled regularly, used floodlights and mined the riverbank from Victoria Falls to Binga". In Mola and Musampakaruma, the Rhodesian forces moved and confined the Tonga villagers in "Keeps" (so-called protected villages) to minimise their contact with guerrillas. This had implications for their livelihoods, as people stopped farming and had to survive on food handouts. However, food handouts were inadequate, and absolute hunger became common. Though people were allowed to farm in areas surrounding the "Keeps", the land was insufficient as a basis for providing sufficient food crops.

From Independence

Though the independence era is an extended period, our narrative is relatively short because the ensuing chapters tend to focus on independent Zimbabwe, particularly events over the past few years.

By the end of the colonial era, Tonga communities were in dire straits. For example, a nationwide nutritional survey, funded by donors in 1980, highlighted exceptional levels of distress in Binga District, with half of the district's children malnourished (*The Herald*, 12 October 1980). In many cases, hunger soon reduced Tonga villagers to dependency, reliant on charitable organisations (such as Save the Children – United Kingdom) for food. As a general tendency, Tonga's impoverishment and marginalisation caused by colonial government neglect, forced resettlement and war continued into the post-colonial era starting in 1980. The post-colonial government, just like its colonial predecessor, has largely ignored the plight of the Tonga (Mashingaidze 2013; Matanzima 2021; McGregor 2009).

The ZANU-PF post-colonial government, amounting it seems to a Shona ethnocracy (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012), has tended to exclude and dominate a range of ethnicities in relation to economic development and political inclusion. The fate of Ndebele people (particularly in Matabeleland) from the early 1980s is now well known and is most dramatically and ruthlessly visible with reference to the *Gukurahundi*. Tonga people have also suffered in a multiplicity of ways. After Dam construction, and until 1980, the colonial state never gave Tonga villagers adequate and necessary social, cultural and economic access to the Lake. In a similar way, since 1980, Shona, Ndebele and whites have controlled to varying degrees the fishing, tourism and wildlife industries surrounding the Lake, and Tonga villagers accessed menial work only because of a lack of suitable qualifications.

Some Tonga communities were incorporated into the Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) programme initiated by the Zimbabwean government in the late 1980s. This natural management system was meant to benefit villagers by ensuring that they acquire financial and infrastructural benefits though income generated by safari hunting and tourism on their lands. Through specific CAMPFIRE projects in rural Zimbabwe, villagers used to obtain revenues for spurring local development like the construction of boreholes and roads. These benefits were provided because, in terms of CAMPFIRE, villagers were expected to be involved in the management and preservation of wildlife (Sibanda 2004; Dzingirai 2003; Murphree 1995). As Murphree (1995: 48–49) writes: "In keeping with community-based management practices, the programme proposed the passing of management benefits – in particular, game meat, wildlife-generated revenue and protection from animal crop raids – to the "producer community", i.e. those people who lived alongside wildlife". However, the benefits accruing to Tonga villagers were not meaningful over the long term in relation to local livelihood enhancement. Proceeds from CAMPFIRE are believed to have been embezzled at times by corrupt leaders of the Rural District Councils,

with CAMPFIRE now existing on billboard displays but not in actual practice (Matanzima and Marowa 2022).

In the case of the fast-track land reform programme starting in 2000, Tonga villagers did not gain access to redistributed land (Marowa 2010). To worsen matters, many Tonga households were disadvantaged through fast track because of loss of employment, as they had one or several members working on white farms near the towns of Karoi and Kwekwe prior to the white farmer evictions (Matanzima 2022a). In June 2000, in the context of their long-term poverty and marginalisation, the Tonga in Binga District and elsewhere expressed their deep dissatisfaction with the ruling party by voting for the new opposition, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), in the national parliamentary elections. In fact, Binga District delivered the highest opposition vote for the MDC of any rural constituency in the country. As Helliker et al. (2021: 189) note:

> In this context, ZANU-PF tried to use former ZIPRA guerrillas as proxies against the MDC in this area, including by way of occupations. However, ZANU-PF's discourse on land (and race) did not fully resonate with the memories of local Tonga people, as those in Binga did not lose land to white farmers but to state conservation bodies. Hence, "they did not want to be resettled on former commercial farms but wanted access to state resources and reparations for unsettled grievances relating to the [Kariba] dam and displacement" (McGregor 2009:170) dating back many decades.

Tonga villagers' oppositional stance has been ongoing since then. For instance, the first author found that at, one time in 2017, Binga District (with more than 20 wards) had only one ZANU-PF ward councillor (Informal discussions with Tonga politicians, 2017).

Overall, demand for regime change among the Tonga "grew dramatically as the state failed to deliver on promises of material transformation and as anger deepened over politicians prepared to enrich themselves through the poverty of others" (McGregor 2009: 154). Poverty amongst the Tonga continues to be widespread (Mashingaidze 2013, 2020). In a piece titled "*Letting Them Starve*", Dhodho (2022) discusses the experiences of the Tonga during the post-2000 food crises and how their support for the opposition has translated into ruling party withdrawal of food aid. In response to hunger, some Tonga in Binga capitalise on their proximity to the border to cross it illegally into Zambia in desperate searches for food and to carry out illegal activities, such as smuggling, for survival purposes (McGregor 2008).

Social differentiation within Tonga communities does exist though. A limited number of Tonga people (both living in and out of the Zambezi Valley) now have improved lives due to migration and the attainment of education, with migrants, the educated and local politicians using their exposure, access and connections to the outside world to enhance their livelihoods. Some presently own cattle and goats; others run local stores and grinding mills; and some are involved in the fisheries industry (not simply as low-level gillnetters, but as *kapenta* rig owners).

However, these are the exception. As well, as indicated earlier, spatial differentiation is present in part because of the legacy of colonially constructed chieftainships. In Nyaminyami District, Chiefs Mola and Musampakaruma are pursuing a politics of the waterscape in which they question the government's granting to Chief Nyamhunga the right to engage in spiritual appeasement in Lake Kariba, and as they are left out of this arrangement despite being, from their perspective, the "rightful" owners of the Lake (Matanzima 2018; Matanzima 2022a; Tombindo 2016). At the same time, Tonga traditional leaders (and politicians) are also lobbying the state and local Lake Kariba authorities to give Tonga people collectively "adequate" access to Lake Kariba for cultural and livelihood purposes.

Identifying Knowledge Gaps in Tonga Lives

In surveying the literature on the Tonga historically, there are a number of important, path-breaking fieldwork-based studies by Thayer Scudder and Elizabeth Colson about the Tonga people of Zambia exclusively, concentrating on both their pre- and post-resettlement situation (Colson 1960, 1971, 1997; Colson and Scudder 1988; Scudder 1960, 1962, 2009). As anthropologists, Scudder and Colson founded the Gwembe Tonga Research Project (GTRP) in the 1950s, which has been tracing the longitudinal impacts of the Kariba Dam construction among those Tonga displaced on the north bank (Zambia) for over 60 years (Scudder and Colson 2002; Cliggett 2002). From the research of the GTRP, the many negative socio-economic consequences for the Tonga of the involuntary displacement have been thoroughly shown. These include the breakdown of kinship ties that once extended beyond the river and women's pronounced loss of land tenure (Colson 1971; Cliggett 2003, 2005; Scudder 2005).

The GTRP was later joined by other scholars including Lisa Cliggett, Alison Harnish, Sam Clark and Joshua Matanzima (one of the editors of this volume). Matanzima has only carried out archival research in Zambia, though he has carried out extended ethnographic research among the Tonga people of north-western Zimbabwe. As a general tendency, and with the exception of Matanzima, these scholars have published widely on the Tonga in Zambia and not Zimbabwe (see Cliggett 2002, 2003; Clark et al. 1995; Harnish et al. 2019). For instance, Cliggett (2003) examines Tonga people's migration from their original post-Kariba Dam resettlement areas into other parts of Zambia, showing the drivers for migration as well as the importance of migrants in terms of contributing to local economies. Meanwhile, Clark et al. (1995) underscore the nexus of demography and resettlement in the Tonga case, focusing on morbidity and mortality. There are many reports that, after forced resettlement, there was increased morbidity and mortality among the displaced due to psychological, socio-cultural and physiological stresses (Scudder 2005).

Unfortunately, there is no equivalence of such a detailed longitudinal archive for the Tonga people of Zimbabwe. Indeed, many scholars who have studied the history of the Tonga in Zimbabwe have partly depended on the GTRP archive, given