

**CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF LANDSCAPE AND BELONGING IN MOLA,  
NYAMINYAMI DISTRICT, ZIMBABWE**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED**

**BY**

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## **Abstract**

Land and inanimate resources constitute the most dominant theme in the history of Zimbabwe. Questions around land, the environment and natural resources in Zimbabwe have recently focused on the contentious Fast Track Land Reform Programme of the year 2000. Yet Zimbabwe's land questions are not limited to this contentious land reform programme. Among Zimbabwe's contentious land questions are those of the Tonga people, displaced in the 1950s to pave way for the construction of the Kariba dam. These people have faced further displacement through conservation-induced restrictions on land and environmental resource use, particularly in the Zambezi Valley and specifically in areas where they were relocated after the dam-induced displacement.

This thesis examines the ways in which the Tonga people of Mola in NyamiNyami District have framed their present environment to place imprints in Mola from their Zambezi landscape and to convert Mola into a landscape of home and belonging. It looks at how the Tonga in Mola use these narratives of home and belonging to claim and contest access to environmental resources in the face of an unfettered regime of displacement and restricted environmental resource use. These narratives of home are located within the context of memories of the history of Kariba dam-induced displacement and present-day environmental conservation regime practices. The thesis frames the case study of the Tonga in Mola analytically through the use of mainly a social constructionist theory of landscape and, less so, with reference to the Bourdieusian concept of habitus. It uses qualitative research methods in doing so.

The thesis reveals that, for the Tonga of Mola, the environment is a complex mix of physical space (natural environment) and non-physical entities that include ancestors. Because of this, the Mola Tongan environment is multifaceted and this entails landscape as lived reality and a sacred space. The ancestors, referred to locally as banalyo gundu (meaning 'owners of the land'), constitute a key way in which the Tonga claim belonging to Mola, Lake Kariba and the Zambezi Valley escarpment. The thesis also identifies and highlights the phenomenon of a dual belonging (attachment to two places), namely Mola and the place from which they were displaced. This exists despite the many years since their displacement for the construction of Kariba. Based on their understandings of landscape, the Tonga of Mola construct notions of belonging and entitlement to Mola and Lake Kariba that exclude and include others at the local and national levels. Overall, belonging in Mola is presented and practised as a discursive, socially constructed phenomenon that exists at local and national levels.



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## **Chapter One: Introduction and Methodology**

### **1.1 Introduction**

The Zambezi River was dammed in the 1950s to construct the biggest synthetic lake in Africa at the time. This was a significant historical event that cemented colonial authority over land and Africans, as white settlers fostered their Euro-centred visions for development. Subsequent to constructing the dam, colonialists partitioned the littoral into a host of protected areas, including a recreational park, safari areas and a national park on the Zimbabwean side. Amidst this colonial partitioning of land and modification of the Zambezi River, the host Tonga population had to withstand being subjected to a number of alienating regulations concerning the management of the natural environment, land and natural resources in the Zambezi Valley. These regulations, whose genesis is firmly rooted in the colonial period, have largely continued in the postcolonial era.

In this context, this thesis entails an emic-oriented approach to understanding the Zimbabwean Tonga people's perspectives of the natural environment in relation to the Kariba dam displacement and more contemporary environment regulations in Mola, Omay Communal Lands, NyamiNyami district. It unpacks and analyses how the Tonga people of Mola socially construct and interpret the physical environment of the Zambezi to form claims to belonging to Mola and the Zambezi Valley. The thesis focuses on the Kariba displacement to trace how the Tonga people use the history of displacement to make sense of their present Mola environment and, in the process, emplace imprints from their Zambezi landscape to convert Mola into a 'landscape of home'. 'Landscape of home' in this regard denotes claims of attachment, entitlement and belonging to Mola as a home place. In pursuing this, the thesis seeks to reveal the complexities of the land-landscape-belonging nexus which are discursively constituted in narratives that exclude and include others from Mola as a home place.

This introductory chapter first outlines the problem statement, which is followed by the thesis objectives. A section on the theoretical framing for the Mola case study follows, and then the research methodology is discussed including the research challenges.



## 1.2 Problem Statement

On May 14, 2015, a Zimbabwean weekly newspaper, *The Financial Gazette*<sup>1</sup>, carried a story with the following headline, “Tonga Community Rejects Conservancy”. This was specifically the Mola community whose members had signed a petition to object to the involvement of their Member of Parliament in aiding the local NyamiNyami Rural District Council (hereafter NRDC) to set up a wildlife conservancy in their area. This conservancy would, it was claimed, prejudice the community in terms of access to natural resources, which the community argued they had managed and depended upon for their livelihoods under the Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE). Most of the people of Mola are Tonga descendants of the Kariba dam-induced displacement evictees from decades earlier and thus they (and the living evictees) are no strangers to the question of restricted access to natural resources. The recent contestation around the conservancy brought to the fore, once again, deeply-rooted and contrasting ways of ‘seeing’ land, environment, nature and landscape, with the Tonga people in Mola articulating a way of seeing which goes against colonial and post-colonial state renderings.

A number of studies have focused on the Tonga people of Zimbabwe. One of the seminal works on the Zimbabwean Tonga people is Weinrich’s (1977) ethnographic study, which was specifically on the effects of dam displacement and the subsequent settlement of the Tonga in certain districts where they now reside. The ongoing adverse effects of dam displacement on the Tonga (see for instance Tremel, 1994; Weinrich, 1977; Magadza, 1994; Scudder, 2005, 2012, Colson, 1971) have been well documented over time and seem to have outlived their relevance to attract further intellectual intrigue and inquiry. Much recent scholarly inquiry has been on CAMPFIRE and human-wildlife conflicts (see for instance Dzingirai, 1998, 2003; Sibanda, 2001; Mubaya, 2008; Musona, 2011) in Tonga communities. Scudder (1975) did look at the ecology of the Gwembe Tonga, but this was not in the sense of the appropriation of the history of displacement by the Tonga for purposes of claiming belonging to place and contesting access to resources. There have also been studies on landscape, for instance McGregor’s (2009) *Crossing the Zambezi* and Hughes’ (2006, 2010) works on the construction of the Kariba dam and the making of white identity at Kariba. Hughes’ work is from the perspective of white settlers and how they Europeanised African landscape.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.financialgazette.co.zw/tonga-community-rejects-conservancy/>.



Within these cited works, less focus has been on how the history of Kariba-induced displacement and subsequent conservation-induced displacement or restrictions on environmental resource use have affected Tonga understandings of the natural environment. This thesis complements these earlier studies by looking at how the Tonga people of Mola use their understandings of the environment, in light of the history of Kariba dam displacement, to convert Mola into a landscape of home and belonging.

### **1.3 Thesis Objectives**

The main objective of the thesis is *to understand and analyse landscape and belonging amongst the Tonga people of Mola in NyamiNyami district in the context of their Kariba-induced history of displacement*. The four main secondary objectives are as follows –

- a) To understand the use of landscape memory by the Tonga people of Mola in interpreting the environment for claiming belonging to Mola.
- b) To examine the landscape perceptions of the Tonga people of Mola.
- c) To analyse the perceptions of the Tonga people of Mola regarding access to natural resources at Lake Kariba and in the protected areas of Mola.
- d) To examine the ways in which the Tonga people of Mola articulate narratives of belonging to place.

### **1.4 Theoretical Grounding**

The key notions underpinning this thesis theoretically are landscape and belonging, along with Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus. In particular, I adopt a social constructionist understanding of landscape which is able to capture the multifaceted and fluid ways through which different groups and interpret the natural environment to produce landscapes and form feelings of belonging, entitlement and attachment to place. Greider and Garkovich (1994:1) thus define landscapes as “the symbolic environments created by the human acts of conferring meaning to nature and the environment, of giving the environment a definition and from a particular angle of vision through a special filter of values and beliefs”. Theorists sensitive to the social construction of landscapes highlight the temporality of landscape and the ways in which it is rooted historically and culturally in memories of the past (Ingold, 1993; Bender, 2002). As such, landscape as socially constructed through discourses consists of a mingling of the present and the past; and this helps in understanding how people, in the context of a history of displacement and alienating contemporary environmental management regimes, construct notions of place and belonging.

Landscape as a socially constructed reality also provides a basis for understanding the existence of diverse and competing interpretations of the natural environment, and of how power differentials become embedded in this. The landscape narratives of dominant groups (including states and corporate interests) are infused with – and backed up by – power and this leads to these narratives being imposed on other groups whose landscape narratives are excluded or even erased (Greider and Garkovich, 1994:17). In this respect, the notion of habitus complements constructivist perspectives of the natural environment. Habitus denotes “a set of dispositions ... [and] manners of being, seeing, and acting, or a system of long lasting (rather than permanent) schemes or schemata or structures of perception, conception and action” (Bourdieu, 2005:43). This notion assists in understanding how the people of Mola through socialisation, culture and history have developed a lens (or landscape habitus) through which they define the landscape and form notions of belonging and entitlement in the process.

## **1.5 Methodology**

This section details the research methodology that was used for the study. It discusses the following themes: the research design, research methods and data analysis, ethical considerations and research challenges.

### **1.5.1 Research Design**

A micro-ethnographic research design, purely qualitative in nature and with narrative interviews, participant observation and informal interviews, informed this study (see the appendices for more details pertaining to how the fieldwork process took place). Full-scale ethnography traditionally takes long periods in the field as part of an organisation, community or a group (Bryman, 2012:433). It was not possible to conduct such a full-scale ethnographic study due to the limits of time. Wolcott (1990) notes though that it is possible to conduct a micro-ethnographic study that lasts for several weeks or months. Based on this, this study opted for a two-month micro-ethnographic study. The research took place from early October to late November in 2015. The initial research design was for three months of fieldwork, which would have included interviews with the people of Mola as well as some employees of NyamiNyami Rural District Council. However, as I detail in the later part of this chapter, interviewing employees of NyamiNyami District was not possible due to challenges that I encountered.

A research design is often considered as an “architectural blueprint” (Bickman, Rock and Hendrick, 1998; Mouton and Marais, 1990 cited in Durrheim, 2007:35) that details the progressive sequence of events followed in the research process. This study opted for a purely

qualitative research methodology instead of a quantitative approach, and this involved an in-depth inquiry into the narratives of the people under study. A qualitative approach, such as through open-ended interviews, has the ability to probe subjective, intangible phenomena including perceptions and lived experiences of people. A qualitative approach is not entirely antithetical to a quantitative one (Marvasti, 2004) but it is the appropriateness of the methodology in relation to the objectives of a particular study that determines the choice of methodology in a study (O'Connor, 2011). A study of a particular people's understandings of the natural environment through landscape discourses and their narratives about place and belonging leans more towards the suitability of a qualitative research design.

Qualitative research resonates well with the epistemological tenets of the constructionist/interpretive sociological paradigm, which places emphasis on the subjectivity of (social) reality as well as the ways in which it is situation-dependent; it also shows sensitivity to the existence of multiple realities. In other words, "[a] social constructionist approach is concerned with identifying various ways of constructing social reality that are available in a culture, to explore the conditions of their use, and to trace the implications for human experience and social practice" (Willig, 2001:7). In contrast to this, "modelling social research after the natural sciences (characteristic of the positivist paradigm) means treating the topic being studied as something whose meaning is independent of human cognition, time and place (Marvasti, 2004:4). Clearly, then, a qualitative approach is crucial for this thesis as the latter considers intersubjective socially constructed realities about landscape and belonging amongst the Tonga people of Mola.

Although a research design is conceived of as a blueprint that is planned beforehand, it is imperative to note that a qualitative research design is bound to be open ended and flexible to accommodate changes that may be necessitated in the field. This is because qualitative research focuses on subjective lived experiences and attempts to understand practices and institutions by getting to know persons involved and their beliefs, values and emotions (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996). In-the-field encounters and experiences may lead to change or adaptations though only minor ones to suit the situation. For instance, the selection process of the participants for my study, which I had initially hoped to be based upon non-random purposive sampling, was adjusted to include snowball sampling. In the midst of some of the interviews, I was referred to other people for further elaboration on themes raised during a particular interview. More importantly, the initial research design intended to incorporate some respondents from NyamiNyami Rural District Council but this did not materialise due to challenges that were encountered (see section on research challenges).

Observing the imponderables surrounding everyday life in Mola (human-environmental relationships) was made possible through the interviewing of people in a language that they understand. The community of Mola is predominantly Tonga speaking but a majority of them also speak Shona. I am a Shona speaker. To make it possible for the interviewing of respondents who chose to respond in Tonga, I made use of Thomas, my research assistant, who is fluent in both Shona and Tonga. For this reason, the interview schedule consisting of generative questions was explained beforehand to Thomas so that he would be in a position to carry on with the interview process if a respondent chose Tonga as their responding language.

The study focused on specific categories of research participants and these included five who witnessed displacement from Kariba and six who did not witness displacement. This takes the number of participants who were formally interviewed to twelve. To gain access to these respondents, non-random (purposive) sampling was used. Hague et. al. (1996) note that, in non-random sampling, people in the sample are deliberately chosen by the researcher instead of using techniques of random sampling. According to Patton (2002), the power of purposive sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for in-depth understanding and analysis related to the central issues being studied. The study comprised of twelve narrative interviews, which on average lasted two days each (see Appendix 1). The first category of participants (totalling five people), comprising those who witnessed displacement, was particularly important in understanding how landscape ideas from the Zambezi were brought to Mola, thus converting it into a landscape of home. Of these five, two were men and three were women (Laura, Maria, chief Mola, Moses, Pierre's Uncle). The remaining category comprised of four men and three women (Thomas, Dickson, George, Lydia, Gladys, Sphiwe, Godfrey). Mola is subdivided into two wards, that is, ward 3 and ward 4. From ward 4, I interviewed four people; this is where the conservancy was imposed. From ward 3, I interviewed six people.

Besides the participants who were formally interviewed, some informal conversations were used to gather data as part of participant observation. These informal conversations were carried out with a range of people that include my research assistant, people from the community of Mola, and others who are not from Mola but work with the community of Mola. To avoid loss of data, field notes from observations were taken as the observations took place. After every narrative interview, Thomas, my research assistant, translated the interviews that were carried out in Tonga in the evening of the same day the interview had taken place and I took notes as he translated.



### 1.5.2 Research Methods and Analysis

The study adopted narrative interviews as the main data collection instrument. These, through generative questions, enabled the study to enter into the lived and historical experiences of respondents that inform their perceptions on landscape and belonging. Taking after Clifford Geertz (1973:5-6) the study repeatedly interviewed respondents to obtain detailed information for providing thick descriptions of the phenomena under study. Narrative interviews through generative questions and narrative probing were relevant to understanding phenomena such as landscape and belonging heavily laden with subjective and intersubjective meanings (Flick, 2009:177; Coulter and Smith, 2009; Spector-Mersel, 2010).

A generative or narrative question is one that is prepared before entering the field and it must “generate a story, stimulate the subject to speak” (Scârneci-Domnişoru, 2013:23). Narrative interviews are regarded as “unstructured tools, in-depth with specific features which emerge from the life stories of ... the respondent” but are cross-examined with reference to the respondent’s social context (Muylaert et al, 2014:184). They stimulate the informant to tell the interviewer about some important event in his or her life (Muylaert et al 2014:184). Narratives on landscape and belonging – which derive from the lived experiences of the Tonga people of Mola – were comprehensively and fully studied through narrative interviews and probing. On average, each of the narrative interviews, as indicated, lasted two days. In between, there were days when we could not conduct interviews as Thomas<sup>2</sup> was tied up at work. Short life histories emerged out of the narrative inquiries, and these allowed for the identification and understanding of multiple discourses, narratives and subjective meanings (Squire et al., 2013; Webster and Mertova, 2007; Spector-Mersel, 2010) even amongst one group, namely, multiple narratives around land and landscapes amongst the Mola Tonga.

Participant observation (see Appendix 2) was also an integral part of data gathering for this thesis. A number of definitions of participant observation in ethnography point to the immersion of the researcher in a group or community “for an extended period of time, observing behaviour, listening to what is said in conversations both between others and with the field worker, and asking questions” (Bryman, 2012: 432). Participant observation also denotes the active participation of the researcher in the daily life of the people under study either directly as a researcher or implicitly by observing things that happen, listening to what is said and questioning people over a long period of time (Becker and Geer, 1957:28). My study

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<sup>2</sup> At the time of the study, Thomas was a teacher at Mola primary school. Most of the interviews were conducted in the afternoons after he came back from work.

employed participant observation in both forms, at times even taking part in acts of resisting the conservancy – as discussed in the study of Mola – while at times just observing what was taking place. An integral part of the process of observing was the writing down of notes as the observation took place or writing as soon as each observation day ended. This was done to avoid losing data by recording while it was as fresh as possible in my mind.

Informal interviews were carried out with participants as well as people who were not part of the original research design. An informal interview is one that occurs as part of ongoing participant observation fieldwork (Gall et al, 1996:23; Turner, 2010:2). The use of informal interviews in this study was necessitated by a number of observations before the narrative interviews commenced. Turner (2010:2) highlights that informal conversations do not have a specific set of questions; rather, they are “in the moment incidences” as a means for further understanding of what one is witnessing at the moment. The initial research design had only intended to understand Tongan narratives through narrative interviews. However, before I even arrived in Mola, my encounter with people at Siakobvu growth point led to the use of participant observation and informal conversations as complementary research methods to the narrative interviews. While in Mola, further happenings that required informal conversations were encountered that made informal interviews of some importance. The informal interviews were conducted with the following: United Methodist Committee on Relief employee, my research assistant on various occasions, a colleague who introduced me to Mola, and a Mola resident at Siakobvu growth point.

To analyse the data, a thematic content analysis was used. Data analysis involves the arranging of collected data and analysing it to allow for some form of interpretation of the people and situations being investigated (Blanche et al., 2006: 321). The first step was to transcribe the interviews, including translating them from Tonga/Shona into English. This, as highlighted above, was done (through the assistance of Thomas in the case of Tonga interviews) after the field trips. Thematic content analysis descriptively presents and categorises qualitative data in a way that does not distort the inherent meaning (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006:80) also claim though that a thematic analysis involves an active role by the researcher in deciphering important themes that can be reported from the data collected. This was done by drawing out the salient and prominent issues that speak to landscape and belonging in Mola. The main theme and sub-themes were checked to make sure that they speak to the main and subsidiary objectives of the study, and the content of the empirical chapters in the thesis reflect my thematic coding and analysis.

### **1.5.3 Ethical Considerations**

Research ethics are professional issues including fundamental principles such as honesty, fairness and respect for persons, only to mention but a few (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 2000). Informed consent was of paramount importance in this study, as in all other studies, since it helped respondents to understand why they were participating in the research and in the process respected the right of participants to exercise freedom to decide whether or not to take part in the research.

Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996) assert that participants should know that their involvement is voluntary at all times, and they should receive a thorough explanation beforehand of the benefits, rights, risks and dangers involved with their participation in the research project. In this study, participants were told fully about the exact nature of the study (an academic study) and no form of deceit was used to entice them into taking part. Lies or deceit to motivate people to participate would have violated the respondents' right to freedom in choosing to participate or not. The study also observed voluntarism. Respondents were not coerced into participating in the research. Only those who agreed to participate in the study were considered. The study also observed aspects of anonymity and privacy. Scupin and Decorse (2009) note that, when cultural anthropologists engage in participant observation, they usually become familiar with information that might, if made public, become harmful to the community or individuals in the community. Hence use was made of pseudonyms to separate information and data from the respective respondents. All the names that appear in the empirical section of the thesis – and later in this chapter – do not reflect the actual names of the participants.

I also sought the compliance of gate keepers like the Chief and the police who were domiciled in Mola and they granted me permission to conduct the study. Interviewing people at the NyamiNyami Rural District Council – NRDC – required the permission from the Mashonaland West Province Minister of State and I made sure that I followed all steps required of me to obtain a letter of approval from the Minister of State's office. However, as I will detail in the next section on research challenges, the chief executive officer at NRDC denied me permission to conduct interviews despite my being in possession of a letter from the Minister of State and from the District Administrator's office.

### **1.5.4 Research Challenges**

One particular challenge is singled out for discussion in detail, in the sub-section which follows. I should not here though that, in line with the participant observation method, there

were a number of sites in Mola that required pictorial representation. These included the grave where there were six baobab trees, the *malende* shrine, the conservancy in Munego, Sibilobilo fishing camp, Moses' hut and many others; and these would have been better represented through the use of some photographs from the field. Unfortunately, I was not in possession of a camera during the fieldwork period and thus this was not possible.

#### **1.5.4.1 'Academic Inertia' in Mola: An Arrested Space for Social Research**

Mola is in large part an *arrested space* that suffers from what I refer to as *academic inertia*<sup>3</sup>. It is surprising that, for a country known for its high literacy levels in sub-Saharan Africa, Zimbabwe comprises of arrested spaces that result in academic inertia. In this sub-section, and as a way of introducing the site of Mola to the reader, I discuss this in detail.

First of all, an arrested space refers to constraints, real or imagined, which makes research subjects and relevant gatekeepers (in this case, government officials at the district level) to feel uncomfortable in collaborating in a research project most notably because of (but not limited to) fear especially of personal security and freedom. Secondly, academic inertia denotes the tendency of respective institutional authorities – the gatekeepers – to decline permission to conduct academic research for various but mainly political reasons. This leads to academic research being regarded not as a welcome ingredient for informing policy. This in fact is the character of most Zimbabwean spaces almost everywhere you go: people are afraid of giving information, any kind of information, let alone being researched upon. An arrested space such as Mola also goes on to affect the researcher as s/he is constantly reminded of the precarious nature of his/her safety in the area.

The way in which the Mola area interacts with the broader government structures has transformed it into an arrested space, which makes its residents question or suspect strangers or people who come from outside the area. These governmental structures, particularly NyamiNyami Rural District Council and the ruling party ZANU PF party, have transformed the area into an arrested space that makes perceived sensitive research an arduous undertaking. Perhaps this is understandable given the authoritarian nature of the state as witnessed during the implementation of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme from the turn of the millennium. In a general sense, social studies, especially those that touch on the tumultuous

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<sup>3</sup> I use this term in a somewhat different manner from the usual ways in which other scholars have discussed the phrase. Elsewhere, the term is deployed in relation to curriculum adjustment and innovation in higher education and the tendency of institutions to resist proposed changes. See for instance Boughey (2013), Hammer Jr (1983) and Weise (2014).



question of land in Zimbabwe, are the most affected. In a more context-specific sense, studies focusing on displacement and land reform in Mola are examples of sensitive research.

A thin line exists between academic inertia and arrested spaces. In a sense, they are dialectical. On the one hand, arrested spaces inhibit academic work and slows it down or even stops it. On the other hand, the reluctance of gatekeepers to, for instance, approve of a study may emanate from academic inertia in the sense of a non-recognition of the significance of academic work such that intellectual inquiry and insights are viewed as irrelevant (or at least do not override political considerations in refusing a study). I seek to illustrate this with reference to my fieldwork.

Two field trips comprise the fieldwork for this thesis. The first was a trip to Mola area, which resulted in fieldwork interviews with residents of Mola and this was by far the most successful one. A few observations during this trip however contained elements that characterised Mola as an arrested space. The second trip, a failed one, was one, which was aimed at interviewing employees at NRDC. Below I narrate these two trips and the challenges faced thereof, all of which have a bearing on an understanding of the lived experiences of Mola residents in relation to land (including wildlife and related natural resources), landscape and belonging.

The choice of Mola as the site for the study was in large part influenced by a heated conflict over an attempted imposition of a conservancy by NRDC and other government figures in a top-down manner without prior consultation with the community. Reminiscent of the traditional top-down modernisation approaches to community development, I had only read about this in books like *Putting the Last First* by Robert Chambers (1983). I thought that such a practical experience in Mola would be an interesting closer-to-home case study of such development approaches. An easier alternative though would have seen me go to Negande where I spent the year 2013 as a secondary school teacher. Negande presented an atmosphere of a 'home away from home' because a number of my colleagues were still working there. Concisely, Negande had the advantages of conducting research at home or, to borrow from sociology's related discipline, 'doing anthropology at home'. Before deciding on my final site for fieldwork, I spent three days at Siakobvu growth point where NRDC offices are situated. I was staying with a colleague (Peter<sup>4</sup>) who teaches at Siakobvu primary school. While at Siakobvu, Peter introduced me to his workmate (John) who hails from Mola. After explaining to him my intention to conduct my study in Mola, John advised me thus:

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<sup>4</sup> This, and the following names, as well as those in the empirical chapters, are all pseudonyms.

*Kundau yaMola kwakazyalilwa nemba* [A leopard just gave birth in Mola: meaning Mola is a dangerous place to be] ... *especially for someone like you – not of Tonga origins and not from Mola. The place is characterised by political violence and surveillance because of its popular support for the opposition party. With the ongoing hot issue of the wire [conservancy], the leading activists against the wire will not receive you well; they will kill you. You told me from the beginning that you once worked in Negande ... just go there and do your study there; it is a much safer area than Mola* (Conversation at Siakobvu growth point on October 8, 2015).

John's advice convinced me to shift my focus to Negande where I met Pierre, my former workmate, who also hails from Mola. Pierre concurred with John's sentiments regarding the safety of Mola area for 'strangers' but he had a very different view regarding the feasibility of my carrying out a study in his home area. He was convinced that, through proper introductions to the chief and the village heads of Mola by someone whom they know, I could safely conduct my study there. He also convinced me by agreeing to accompany me to Mola to introduce me and taking me through the first three days of my stay there. As such on, October 10 (2015), we left Negande for Siakobvu from where we proceeded to Mola in the evening.

It was very early in the morning at approximately six o'clock, when Pierre and I woke up (on October 11), first to look for his colleague (Thomas) at whose homestead I would spend close to two months of my fieldwork. Thomas had travelled to Kariba town and, as such, we had to make an urgent alternative plan for my accommodation as Pierre had just an additional two days to stay in Mola before he returned to Negande where he is a secondary school teacher. Pierre opted for his aunt's homestead as an immediate alternative and we headed for auntie Lizzy's homestead. From auntie Lizzy's homestead, we embarked on a journey to Chief Rare Mola's homestead, to notify him of my presence in his territory but mainly to seek his permission for me to conduct my study. At the chief's homestead, we met the chief in the midst of laying the foundation of a new toilet he was building together with his son and two friends.

The chief was a welcoming and humorous man, a big surprise to me, given the nature of his office. The work he was doing points to the penetration of modernity – a chief constructing a Blair toilet. The pervasion of modernity was further revealed during the interview with him but mostly throughout my stay in Mola and the interviews with other participants in the study. Approximately five minutes after our arrival, he attended to us. Pierre did not waste time in introducing me and relaying the request for permission for me to conduct my study in Mola. The chief's response was in the affirmative but, at the same time, indicative

of the political volatility in his area. The response was full of words aimed at absolving himself from politics or *zyabutongi bwanyika* (partisan politics). He asserted:

*We like people who want to understand our history, the history of the Tonga people of Mola... bakazwa kumulonga [those who came from the river]. I will grant you permission to search for the information you are looking for. Your friend Pierre will help you identify some of the elderly people who came from the Zambezi. After you feel that you are done, pass through here, I also want to give you the information that I have as chief to correct the lies that chief Nebiri tells about Mola territory. However, you have to know and abide by two things ... this territory is ours ... yet it is a shared territory. There is a police base nearby; Pierre will take you there to inform them about your mission. You will have to do the same when you are leaving. The police officers are here in our area for poachers. The second is a demand from the chief... I welcome people who come for a good cause ...but not those whose who come for political reasons ... alaza uchiita zyabutongi bwanyika alatipalalanisha [one who comes for political motives is not welcome, as s/he is a cause for disunity and is not welcome here] (Chat with Chief Mola, October, 12, 2015).<sup>5</sup>*

After notifying the police, the fieldwork started the very same day. An overarching element that characterised the atmosphere of my stay in Mola though was that of being suspected of being a member of the ruling party's Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO). After having the first interview session with Moses (one of the five witnesses of the process of displacement who participated in this study), we met Thomas who had just arrived that very time from Kariba town. Thomas reinforced my hidden fears by suggesting that we had to take my bags to his homestead which, as he suggested, was a relatively safer place compared to auntie Lizzy's place. His cited concerns were that auntie Lizzy spent most of her time away from home attending to her flea market and, as a relatively elderly person, she would not be able to accompany me around the community for my interviews. Thomas was also eager to make me known in the community to allay any fears that community members might have of me. As such, we left for Thomas' homestead the very same day I had arrived at auntie Lizzy's place. As if to confirm Thomas' fears, the day I had first interview session with the chief I became a victim of the suspicion that Mola residents have of 'strangers' in their area. Just as I left Chief Mola's homestead, a man followed me signalling for me to stop. He did not take time

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<sup>5</sup> In his response here the chief mentions Chief Nebiri. Present day Mola area was once under the jurisdiction of the Nebiri clan who are of Shangwe origins. More details on this appear in the thesis.

to convey his reasons for following me. Quizzing the nature of the ‘business’ I had with the chief as well as my place of origin, he asked multiple questions at one go:

*How is the chief doing? Where do you come from? Do you have the license to do your said study? You may wonder why I am asking all these questions. We have to know the objective of people who come from outside Mola... we would not want to risk having a case where soon after you leave, we will see the police coming to arraign the chief* (Conversation with a Mola resident November 25, 2015).

These incidences, together with other incidences such as the reaction of the fishermen during my visit to Sibilobilo fishing camp (see chapter 6), confirm Mola as an arrested space not particularly free and easy for researchers. When we arrived at Sibilobilo fishing camp, a number of fishermen using illegal nets rushed into their respective huts to hide away their illegal nets because they suspected the intruder/stranger (me) was a policeman. Only after assurances from my research assistant Thomas, did the fishermen agree to accommodate me and my research. Thus serious problems potentially arise, especially for researchers outside of Mola whom most residents in the area suspect to be CIO operatives assigned by ZANU PF for surveillance of the area.

If the experiences of the first trip and stay in Mola provide substance for the claim that it is an arrested space for social research, then the second trip and the meeting at NRDC substantiates this more fully. For me to interview NRDC employees, I needed to be in possession of a letter from the District Administrator. The process of acquiring official permission to conduct research in Zimbabwe is an arduous and time-consuming process that commences at the provincial level in the office of the Minister of State. I submitted my application for the letter before I commenced my first fieldwork trip to Mola and it was issued out on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November. The process of acquiring the letter, together with making follow ups on the progress contribute further to the evidence of Mola as an arrested space for social research. Instead of academic research being a welcome and invaluable asset for community development, it is viewed on the contrary with suspicion by government departments. The process of getting the letter from the office of the Minister of State took a month but, other than that delay, there were no further problems at provincial level in terms of research access. From the province, that letter was posted to the District level and that is where problems began.

The District Administrator (DA), as will be seen in the empirical chapters, has a very strained relationship with the Mola community, and he was determined to decline my permission to conduct a study in Mola (in any other area, he was comfortable). Social capital (connections to some people with whom he works) proved to be key, as I ended up using a



colleague – a daughter to his friend – to manoeuvre my way to convince the DA to grant me permission to carry out my study in Mola. When I phoned the DA to confirm the date on which I was supposed to go to Kariba to collect the letter, he acknowledged that my use of social capital was invaluable for him to approve of my study:

*Mola is full of people who want to cause problems for no reason... havanzwisise, vakaoma musoro [they do not understand, they are hard nuts to crack]. Your chosen site for your study ... Mola is not conducive for both for your own safety and for the safety of my office. Dai usina kuunza musikana uyo Lynette ndaidai ndisina kutombotarisa tsamba yako, ndaingotora ndokandira kure [had you not assigned that girl Lynette to come and talk to me concerning your proposed study, I would not have given attention to your letter, I would have simply thrown it away]. You can come and have the letter from the Assistant DA; tomorrow I will be out of the office but I will instruct him to assist you.*  
(Telephone conversation with the DA of Kariba, November 18, 2015).

“For my own safety”, as the DA had said, turned out to be a sucker punch that was meant to convince me that Mola was a no-go area. As the interviews from Mola residents had revealed, Mola as a no-go area was more to do with his own safety rather than mine. An understanding of the actions of the DA substantiates the position that gatekeepers transform research sites into arrested spaces that thwart or threaten the fruitfulness of academic research.

With the letter from the DA’s office, I proceeded to NRDC at Siakobvu. I had to wait almost a week to see the NRDC as the NRDC’s Chief Executive Officer (CEO) was away. During that wait, I tried to get assistance from the acting CEO but the Social Services officer declined citing that my kind of study had to wait for the CEO herself, lest they approve of a study that would put them in trouble. On December 3, a day after the CEO came back, a meeting with the council officials was set for 2 o’clock in the afternoon. The meeting included the CEO, the Social Services officer, the Human Resources officer (who acts as the CEO in her absence), a representative of the safari operators and a member of the finance department. With the Social Services officer chairing, all formal introductions were quickly made. The first question was one that suggested substantive evidence of academic inertia. It came from the CEO who, surprisingly, was only seeing my two letters (one from Rhodes University and the other from the DA’s office concerning my research) for the first time, at the meeting:

*I can see that you want to go and study the people of Mola, yet you are studying with an institution outside of Zimbabwean borders. How is Zimbabwe going to benefit from your study? Why must we trust you with permission to go and do this study? The other question is why Mola... someone from Masvingo, studying in South Africa coming to one of the*

*most remote areas – Mola - for what reasons? You mentioned that you once worked in Negande, why do not you go there* (Meeting with NRDC officials December 3, 2015).

To the above questions, I explained the reasons why Mola stood out of all the possibilities of research sites in NyamiNyami District, which were the very same reasons I gave earlier pertaining to the first fieldwork trip. Additionally, I highlighted how coming from Masvingo (my home area in Zimbabwe) was not in any way a justification for only conducting research in Masvingo. With regard to how Zimbabwe would benefit from a study carried out by someone studying outside the country, I also highlighted that literature on Zimbabwe is not exclusively that of scholars studying within Zimbabwean borders. I also hinted that I would supply a copy of my completed study to NRDC for policy or related purposes.

The obvious question that I had expected NRDC to ask first was one concerning the main objective of my study. This I expected given the surveillance and suspicion that the Zimbabwean state has with regard to researchers. This question indeed came, from the CEO. To this, I indicated that this was an academic study and it would help me acquire my academic qualification. Second, and equally important to the first reason, was that the study would help in an ethnographic examination of the Tonga people's understanding of the environment within the context of the Kariba dam displacement and the conservation measures currently prevailing in Mola. The CEO responded with further questions that showed her reluctance to approve of my study:

*I know you have this letter from the DA [District Adminstartor] 's office, but if anything goes wrong regarding your study, it is us who will be in trouble for letting you go ahead. I also see that the assistant DA signed this letter and not the DA...this gives me second thoughts...I might have to refer your letter back to the district. Did you see the Minister of State at Chinhoyi? Did he interview you in light of your study? I can see that someone did not do their work at the provincial level. Get me right here... I am not saying do not go and do your research. I just want to safeguard NRDC from possible problems that may emanate from your proposed study. We had a recent case from the very same area, which got NRDC and the DA 's office in trouble* (Meeting with NRDC officials December 3, 2015).

After this response, the CEO gave the floor to her co-workers who, up to this time, had been silent. The representative from the finance department simply concurred with my obligation to give a copy of any research report to NRDC upon completion of my study. A rather fascinating point, though a hindrance to my study, was a contribution that came from a representative of the safari operators. He posed questions that gave a picture of Mola as an area

in which residents are not supposed to touch anything from their surrounding natural environment.

In light of the questions he asked, I take the reader away slightly from the meeting to understand how these questions link to both Mola as an arrested space and contested landscapes; in this case, landscape as contested (in terms of rights and access to natural resources) between NRDC and the residents of Mola. The safari operator's contribution links well with the existence of oppressed social agents who accept the status quo simply because there is no one who has conscientised them about oppressive structures in their society.

This is a derivative from Paulo Friere's philosophical concepts in development studies of conscientisation and participatory development. The Freirian approach entails a transformative type of participation through conscientisation (Roodt, 1996:315). According to Freire (1972) (in Roodt 2001:472), poor people need to be made aware of the contradictions of their lives. This is linked to what Mohan (2001) refers to as transformative participation (whereby poor people view 'development' as imposed from above as flawed) such that only by valorising other non-hegemonic voices and practices can meaningful social change occur. In a kind of Freirian conscientisation process, the safari operator representative appeared to suggest that my research could trigger a trespassing of the natural resource use boundaries within which NRDC has confined them:

*You said that your research would involve people in Mola narrating their experiences of displacement from the Zambezi River. This is a very sensitive area of study; my question to you though, is (knowing the people of Mola as I do) – will your study not entice Mola people – tivazi kuchari kabangoka michero olo kuvhima zitali amahupe? (Will the people of Mola not end up eating and harvesting fruits or hunting from the forest because of your study?) (Meeting with NRDC officials December 3, 2015).*

Therefore, it appeared that NRDC officials (at least based on the opinion of the safari operator) felt that Mola residents could possibly be conscientised and go against the resource use rules imposed by the state. After I had responded to the question from the safari operator, the CEO quickly posed another question that concurred with the opinion of the safari operator. The question though involved further evidence of NRDC as inimical to substantive and positive community development. Interpreted from a certain perspective, it provided evidence of NRDC as a white elephant not concerned with its mandate to capacitate the rural populace for development, but rather just to protect its own image. She ended the meeting with these remarks, repeating some points made earlier:

*How will you ensure that the information you get will remain private and confidential outside? This is the reason why I am suspicious of you coming to research here. What if you get information that the people in Mola were promised something that they were never fulfilled by the government? What if you find out that someone at NRDC or any other government structure has not done his or her work ... we would not want a situation where someone will be fired because of your study. We had a case previously, which put NRDC and the DA's office under fire ... it emanated from Mola. We would not want to repeat the same mistake. Based on this I cannot give you my nod to go ahead with your proposed study. I hope you will understand my position. Your study is sensitive and may reveal data that someone in the government has not done their work in the district. What will you do with such information? Above all, you are studying outside Zimbabwe; how do we know that you are genuinely here for an academic and not anything else outside that? How will the community in question benefit from your study? ... I mean, what will you bring the community in return for their compliance? I am afraid I cannot give you the go ahead to interview anyone here* (Meeting with NRDC officials December 3, 2015).

So that was that. The fieldwork for the thesis would not involve access to NRDC's library resources let alone interviewing the people in the office.

The comments at the meeting here documented, however, do not tally with the interviews with the villagers. In particular, comments for instance during the telephone conversation with the DA portray Mola residents as people who are uncooperative and hostile. What is hidden in these comments is the horse-rider relationship that NRDC has with the people of Mola as far as environmental resource regulation is concerned. This is quite true in light of relief projects that a number of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) pursue in NyamiNyami. It was also evident in the conflict around the conservancy as well as with reference to restitutive measures taken by the Zambezi River Authority to compensate for the loss of the dam induced displacement. Overall, findings in this study show that the internally displaced people of Mola are caught in a fierce struggle for control of natural resources in which they live, making them development refugees (as is elaborated in the findings chapters).

## **1.6 Thesis Outline**

The thesis has eight chapters. The following chapter (chapter 2) frames the study in terms of theory. Chapter 3 contextually grounds the thesis with reference to the history of land dispossession in Zimbabwe, the displacement of the Tonga people, and discussions about landscape and belonging in the Zimbabwean literature. Chapters 4 to 7 are the empirical



chapters detailing the Tonga-Mola case study. While chapter 4 provides an introduction to the study site, chapters 5 through to 7 address the subsidiary objectives of the thesis. The final chapter, chapter 8, provides an analytical overview of the thesis conclusions.

## **Chapter Two: Landscape and Belonging – A Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1 Introduction**

A combination of a social constructivist perspective of landscape and Bourdieu's notion of habitus constitute the theoretical lens for framing and analysing the case study of Mola. Social constructionists explain landscape as "discursive social spaces" (Greider and Garkovich, 1994:2). Adopting a social constructionist lens is not to deny that land and the natural environment have a material existence independent of human perceptions and existence. It also does not deny the dual character of landscape, that is, landscape involving processes of human agency over the natural environment and, simultaneously, the 'agency' of the natural environment vis-à-vis humans. The key to understanding the construction and reproduction of landscapes for this thesis is through, broadly speaking, a phenomenological approach. A phenomenological approach is one that focuses on the world from the point view of how people experience and interpret the world (Tilley, 1994:11). Adopting this approach, as other scholars have done (Greider and Grakovich, 1994; Tilley, 1994) means describing, understanding and analysing landscape from the point of view of the subjects who, in this thesis, are the people of Mola. Habitus will complement landscape theory in the understanding of Tonga people's landscape perception(s), how they conceive of belonging to the landscape, and notions of a landscape of home.

The thesis focuses on a community that comes from a background of colonial legacy involving land resources enclosure, universalising interventions of technocratic development (specifically the Kariba dam induced displacement) and colonial science (in the form of conservation) all of which are embedded in the rubric of modernisation. Because of this, the theoretical framework will incorporate the notions of power and enclosure in the understanding of landscape.

### **2.2 Landscape as Social Construction**

As an initial step in understanding the complexity of the notion of landscape, it is first necessary to examine the term natural environment (or simply nature). Nature is conceptualised as the non-human world and is seen as existing independently of humans. Referring to the physical non-human world as nature gives it an ontological fixity, immutability and the state of being a given (Barry, 1999:7; 2007: 7) without subjectivity or agency. As a pre-existing and independent entity, humans (as conscious subjects) then live, work and intervene within this

entity (the natural environment). This of course implies a contemporary Western nature-society dualism within which nature and society first both exist and then enter into relationships which vary historically and spatially, and in which nature is a mere object.

This though is problematic in two senses. First, for many non-Western cultures, non-physical elements such as spirits and ancestors (Barry, 2007:13) are embedded in nature. This has implications when groups of people with divergent views about the character and components of nature come into contact, such as what happened during the colonial encounter. The second point is that the nature-society dualism implies that the two dimensions of reality are only externally related. While it is true that nature does have a physical existence independent of human society, what nature is (and is not), and how humans relate to it, depends upon human definitions of 'it' (or discursive renderings of 'it'); and there are bound to be different and competing intersubjective meanings given to 'it'. In the case of both these points, the power and will to define and act upon definitions of nature leads to intense struggles around (and about) nature. The cultural meanings that are used to construct landscape are contested because the process of shaping the meanings of nature are embedded in "powerful moral judgements as to who is right or wrong, good or bad, natural or unnatural" (Setten, 2004:392). As such, power and knowledge politics is at the centre of landscape.

In this context, Greider and Garkovich (1994:1) define landscapes as "the symbolic environments created by the human acts of conferring meaning to nature and the environment, of giving the environment a definition and from a particular angle of vision through a special filter of values and beliefs". Similarly, Hirsch (1996:1) conceives of landscape as the cultural meanings that humans give to their physical surroundings. Landscape(s) are thus a product of people's cultural engagement and understanding of the natural world around them (Bender 2002:103; Descola, 1996:82) and this varies according to culturally and historically determined conditions. Glenna (1996) argues that, as a society, people collectively assign to the environment symbols, creatures and circumstances, and they alter or leave the environment intact according to the symbols they have assigned it. It is from the culturally specific construction and interpretation of the environment/nature that decisions on how a particular physical land (scape) is viewed, valued and used. In being used in particular ways, this also means that landscapes are materially produced, reproduced and transformed.

As such, landscape sociologists interpret space (or landscape for my purposes) in two senses: space as a locality (understood as land that is out there) existing independently from human discourse and agency (Macnaghten and Urry, 1999; Massey, 2009), and space as constructed through human discourses and agency and thus as embedded by necessity in social

relationships. The following quotation unpacks the distinction: “The open field is the same physical thing but it carries multiple symbolic values by which people define themselves” (Greider and Garkovich, 1994: 1). It is the latter sense on which this thesis focuses. Landscape as used in this thesis is thus different from environment (understood as simply ‘out there’) because of its social/cultural element. The interpretive ability of humans gives landscape a phenomenological characteristic, and Wolmer (2007:7) contends that the phenomenological attributes of landscape include human actions and imaginations in a way that environment/nature (or space/landscape understood as locality) does not. Ranger (1997, 1999) links land (or physical environment) and landscape by describing landscape as the process through which land (the physical environment) is, as an imagined reality, converted, annexed and appropriated to people’s history and culture. Overall, the relationship between the environment and society, as encapsulated in landscape, is multifaceted and involves a complex set of relationships including the physical, social, political, moral, cultural, epistemological and philosophical dimensions (Barry, 2007: 10-11). Rather than identifiable, ‘lying out there’ entities, landscapes are subjective (Tilley, 1994; Greider and Garkovich, 1994; Bender, 2002: 103, Cosgrove, 1985; Daniels and Cosgrove, 1989) and this leads to a multiplicity of landscapes.

In this way, landscape(s) are socially-produced constellations of meaning (including aesthetics, values and social relationships) which often take on the appearance of being natural or being naturalised (Trudeau, 2006:421). Discursively constructed landscapes therefore project visions of being in the world by different social groups (Soja, 1989:25; Harvey, 1990; Castree, 2009:31; Flyvbjerg and Richardson, 1998:9; Massey, 2009). Spatial patterns and social relationships become intertwined and are, at the same time, discursively made, in the context of contestation, compromise and conflict around landscapes (Logan, 2011). This will involve struggles around rights of ownership, possession, access and usage of land and nature more broadly. This thesis thus involves an understanding of the cultural practices and discursive strategies that people of Mola use to turn Mola into a landscape of home as well as to contest access to resources found in Mola. Because landscape allows us to decipher the diversified understandings of history by revealing varied interpretations and perceptions of the environment (Marowa, 2015:111), the study of Mola is rooted historically.

In the end, two commonalities are clear in the definition of landscape as the social construction of the environment/nature. First is the agency that humans have to create meanings and interpret the physical environment. Second, culture is the medium through which the physical environment is humanised or turned into landscape. This means that landscape is a

“way of seeing” nature (Wolmer, 2007:23), but also a way of thinking about, experiencing, living-in and acting upon nature. These commonalities give primacy to the agency of the human world over the non-human world. However, human agency and the social construction of landscapes are complemented by the environment’s own agency over humans, what Fontein (2015) refers to as the affective nature of landscape. In other words, in as much as people culturally define and interpret the physical environment, the latter also structures possible ranges of practices when humans interact with it.

### **2.3 Landscape Issues**

The following subsections bring forth more specific issues pertaining to landscape, including power, belonging and identity, and the notion of habitus.

#### **2.3.1 Power**

The question of power, as already indicated, is very central to landscape such that it warrants detailed attention. In this section, I discuss aspects of the exercise of power and its shaping of what eventually become naturalised landscapes. This is done with specific reference to modernising models of development (based on the logic of modernisation theory) that have in the past and present influenced landscape and spatial ordering (Moore, 2005). While there is diversity in the ways in which the environment has been socially constructed into particular landscapes, there is one discursive construction (based on modernisation thinking) which, in being backed by power (such as colonial power), has tended to prevail in the material productions of landscape. Such Western notions of ‘development’ and ‘modernity’ are salient in any analysis that refers to the use of power in the social construction of the environment and the production of landscapes.

For Escobar (2003:157), modernisation is a process that sought (and still seeks) to bring about modernity – “the ensemble of values, institutions, economic systems and social relations that originated in Europe in the seventeenth century, if not before to what until recently was known as the ‘Third World’”. In this line of thinking, common consensus is that society evolves along a linear path from the traditional to the modern stage, such that so-called non-modern forms of knowledge and living are displaced or erased. A central element of this Euro-centred modernity is displacement. Escobar (2003:158) concisely links displacement, modernisation and development as follows:

Displacement is an integral element of Euro-centred modernity and its post-World War II manifestation in Asia, Africa and Latin America, namely, development. Both



modernity and development are spatial-cultural projects that require the continuous conquest of territories and peoples and their ecological and cultural transformation along the lines of an allegedly rational order.

In this way, all components of the environment (including water, forests and forest products, seeds and herbs) become enclosed (privatised or subject to central state controls), rather than remaining as ‘common property’.

Whitehead (2003:4226) argues that displacements arising from dam construction (as a development project) are rooted in particular development landscape narratives and these reproduce tendencies akin to the enclosures of England and involve the same deep processes of primitive accumulation. Technocratic development projects such as dam construction, involving a spatial reordering of the physical landscape, result in the displacement of subaltern populations. In addition, they follow a certain logic of rationality and knowledge which prioritises the landscape interpretations of those with the power to reorganise and reproduce material landscapes. The same can be said of other forms of displacements (or exclusions) including through nature conservation projects (such as protection of wildlife) either under the state’s authority or done and held privately. In this respect, colonialism brought to the fore two competing property regimes or, to put it in Hughes’ (2006) phrasing, conflicting ‘territorial paradigms’ (the private property regime of the colonialists and the indigenous common property regime), with the former regime regularly being victorious. As argued more broadly, material landscapes therefore are a product of “cultural politics and social struggles that present a particular way of seeing” (Trudeau, 2006:421) as all knowing and all-powerful. Power then validates specific social constructions of landscape over others, and determines how the natural environment should be ordered and used.

The fact that landscapes are embedded in power relations leads to the existence of dominant landscape narratives and the imposition of certain landscape patterns. In the process, specific justifications about land use and administration are articulated which lead to practices of inclusion and exclusion, thereby often dislodging marginalised groups from their lived-in landscapes (Greider and Garkovich, 1994). Dominant groups (including states and corporate interests) thus use power-infused narratives to legitimise specific visions of land, which regularly lead to the exclusion of others (Greider and Garkovich, 1994:17). This exclusion (or displacement) takes two forms: subaltern landscape narratives are subordinated and as such excluded from the realm of public discourse, and/or people may be subject to literally physical movement or displacement (normally forced evictions) (Low, 2016). These tend to disrupt the

processes of social metabolism intricately embedded in existing balanced human-environment relationships.

### **2.3.2 Belonging and Identity**

Landscapes also involve multiple discourses about belonging and identity. Thus, the social construction of landscape is intricately linked to how people construct their (group) identity as well as their attachment to a particular locality or place (place-belonging) (Schein, 2009). Because of this, constructions of place-based group identity and senses of belonging to particular places become entangled with specific discourses and justifications about land use entitlement and access to the physical environment (Jenkins, 2008; Mujere, 2011, 2012). Landscape acts as a centre of intersubjective meaning that fosters a sense of belonging to place (Nogue' and Vicente, 2004:113). In this way, landscapes are in part produced through a "territorialised politics of belonging" (Trudeau, 2006:422). Trudeau (2006) highlights the intricate link between landscape and belonging in referring to landscapes as "spatially bounded scenes" that convey a message of what and who belongs and what and who does not. Place-based identity, involving a sense of placement and rootedness within a landscape, is therefore often related to social identities (for example, a particular ethnicity) and the production and reproduction of social identities may lead to processes of symbolic or even material inclusions and exclusions (of 'others') from place-bounded landscapes (Buchecker, 2005; Hunziker, Buchecker and Hartig, 2007).

It is often assumed that belonging is a straightforward and self-explanatory concept but no such common understanding of the term exists (Mee and Wright, 2009:772, Antonsich, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 2006; 2011). Wright (2014:1) notes however that:

Feeling a sense of belonging (or not), being legally, morally, or socially recognised as belonging (or not), truly has the power to change lives, to make communities and collectives, to bring together and to separate in the most intimate, loving, accepting, exclusionary or violent ways.

Belonging, like landscape, is relational (Mujere, 2011) as it speaks to relationships with other humans but also with non-humans or nature more broadly (Wright, 2014). Likewise, identity simultaneously refers to group identity and identification with place, and both senses of identity are intertwined with constructions of landscape. Landscape and belonging-identity are not related to each other in any causal manner – rather, they are mutually constitutive of each other and condition each other in ongoing and fluid social processes.

These processes are invariably marked by power differentials and contestations around landscape, belonging and identity. Yuval-Davis (2011:10) in fact speaks about the politics of belonging, which denotes “specific political projects” which are targeted at “constructing belonging to particular collectivity/ies which are themselves being constructed in specific ways and in specific boundaries”. These boundaries may include physical landed boundaries. Claims about local belonging and identity are not to be interpreted to mean that places and social groups are discretely isolated and remain disconnected from national and global processes. However, with increasing land resource scarcity and contestations over natural resource use and access, claims to being locally embedded are bound to be tense and even reinforced. And even at local level within the same group, there are differentiations along class, gender, age and so forth, and these may lead to heterogeneity in terms of belonging-to-place.

Lovell (1998:1) conceives of belonging as “a way of remembering that is instrumental in the construction of collective memory surrounding a place”. Lovell’s framing of belonging demonstrates that past memories are important in the construction of a sense of belonging to a place. For instance, the history and memories of displacement of a people in relation to a specific locality or place can be central to how and why they identify themselves vis-à-vis that place. Groups of people with different histories are bound to have different memories and, by extension, different memories result in the construction of various discursive strategies and positions (around landscape) in order to claim belonging to that remembered place. In this light, belonging involves deep sentiments and emotions to place, and even a sense of feeling and being at home in a safe, unthreatening and secure place (Yuval-Davis, 2006, 2011:10). This means that embodied in landscape discourses are not only thoughts about place but also deep feelings about place, such that any disruptions to place-belonging has existential implications with reference to group identity.

### **2.3.3 Habitus**

This section deals with how Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of habitus can be used to understand landscape. As indicated, landscape involves collective definitions or understandings of a given people’s position in the world and their relationships with nature through the conferring of historical, cultural and social meanings. It consists of multiple and often times contested interpretations of the natural environment by different groups. Bourdieu’s notion of habitus helps us to understand the basis of collective and multiple constructions of landscape, such that I tentatively propose the idea of ‘landscape habitus’. Bourdieu focused on social space rather than objective, physical space (Gatrell et al, 2003; Patterson, 2008) but a number of scholars



(Casey, 2001a, 2001b; Easthope, 2004; Paasi, 2002; Setten, 2004; Stotten, 2016) see habitus as a substantive basis for the link between people and places.

Bourdieu (2005: 43) defines habitus as “a set of dispositions ... [and] manners of being, seeing, and acting, or a system of long lasting (rather than permanent) schemes or schemata or structures of perception, conception and action”. Habitus, then, is the way in which society becomes ‘deposited’ in groups of people in the form of lasting dispositions, including thinking, feeling and acting in determinant ways (Wacquant, 2005). Because habitus is the result of socialisation, there is a strong link between habitus and history (and memory): it is passed on through families and across generations (Burton, 2012:53; Setten, 2004:406). Given this, it would seem that habitus (as a way of being, seeing and acting in the world) is applicable to ways of relating to environment and nature through landscape discourses. Setten (2004:407) in fact claims that habitus is “a figure between nature and culture”.

The notion of habitus speaks to the way in which landscape perceptions are formed through socialisation (Stotten, 2016:168). The development of dispositions/habitus is directly attributable to a people’s historical background and current position in society. The basics of understanding and reading landscape are therefore developed through ongoing processes of primary and secondary landscape socialisation (Kühne, 2009). Because of this, different groups of people (with different positions in society and different histories) are bound to have different habitus, including ways of interpreting and evaluating landscape. As Stotten (2016:168) puts it, different social groups pass down specific cultural codes to understand landscape and “critical skills to perceive and interpret landscape are internalised”. For any given group of people, for instance farmers, everyday practices as guided by their habitus becomes imprinted materially in the physical landscape. More specifically: “These molded landscapes become incorporated in the local habitus through historical association, thus providing a moral framework that guides and constrains how future practices are performed” (Burton, 2012:54).

Habitus is often understood as mere habitual or routine thinking and practice in which people do not reflect openly and on an ongoing basis on what they are doing daily. In this way, people are not rationalising their practices constantly though they are acting rationally given the circumstances in which they exist: and particular habitus-based practices almost appear therefore as naturalised and inevitable. In this context, people only become reflexive about their way of seeing and being in the world when a crisis arises. When life becomes threatened (including their belonging and identity with and to a place), then, people openly and consciously articulate their understandings of the world around them, including their long-held discursive renderings of landscape. While this view of habitus has validity, Bourdieu does

claim that habitus is open to improvisation and innovation (Setten, 2004:406). It is also possible for a person to have an inappropriate or unsuitable habitus, or to suffer from hysteresis in a sense (Ritzer, 2008). In the case of landscape, this would require the learning of new habits and skills with which to perceive and interpret the environment to suit the new context. As well, the possibility is that, for many social groups, crisis is systemic and long-term so that landscape understandings are continuously articulated and reasoned upon.

Differential positioning of people in society is attributable to their respective possession of capital. Capital comprises various resources (whether economic, social, cultural or symbolic) that agents have at their disposal and which allow them to wield power or influence in an effort to gain or maintain a dominant position in a relationship” (Wacquant and Bourdieu, 1992; Glenna, 1996:24; Romo et-al; 1995 cited in Ritzer, 2008, Gaventa, 2003). Bourdieu goes on to argue about the significance of power differentials and differential access to capitals (such as financial and cultural capital) which means that, when contestations arise, a certain ‘landscape habitus’ can be imposed on others, including leading to displacement from place and locality. Of particular significance is symbolic power, that is., the power to shape understandings of being in the world, and to even “make them seem natural and to obfuscate the power relations that they entail” (Leander, 2009:2). Acts of symbolic power (even violence) are apparent in many cartographic partitioning and spatial ordering practices of both colonial and post-colonial governments in Africa. The interface between African and European landscape discourses, including perceptions for ordering land possession and access, are rooted in differences in both material and symbolic power. The result is that some landscape habitus may be marginalised, obliterated or erased, with dire consequences for belonging and identity as rooted in a lived-in landscape.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

This chapter theoretically frames the thesis. It integrated constructivist perspectives of landscape with the Bourdieusian notion of habitus. It was deciphered that landscape is a subjective phenomenon that is a result of different people’s (cultural) definitions of themselves in relation to the natural environment. Such varied definitions of the environment and the constructed landscape(s) are often contested and contradictory. The chapter also discussed the salience of power in the construction of landscape and how powerful groups impose their own definitions of landscape and suppress those of the less powerful. Because of such contestations, power is of central importance. However, the social construction of landscape does not fully reveal why landscape is contested and differs among different people. As such, the

Bourdieuian concept of habitus was adopted to account for such differences and contestations. In the following chapter, I discuss landscape and belonging in Zimbabwe.

## **Chapter Three: Land, Landscape and Belonging in Zimbabwe**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In all former colonies, including Zimbabwe, it is plausible to argue that the topic of land, landscape and belonging is best understood within the rubric of a protracted historical politics of inclusion, exclusion and displacement (both physical and ideological) from particular territories or spaces. Processes and practices which restrict access to land and natural resources in a manner which does not involve physical dislocation of indigenous populations are generalisable as displacement (Cernea, 2005). These include conservation programmes that alienate local populations from accessing natural resources and displace local forms of human-environmental relationships, as vast tracts of land and the physical environment are fenced off and privatised. I tentatively refer to this as ideological displacement, that is, a form of exclusion and alienation from the physical environment in which people live based on a particular discursive or ideological construction of landscape. It is ideological displacement therefore in the sense that it is propagated by a particular way of perceiving landscape and of environmental resource use management which disregards the worldview of the locals who live in the very environmental space. In the process, local constructions of the landscape and the landscape habitus of local populations are displaced and replaced by those imposed by technocrats, colonialists and (in the present day) the bureaucratic state.

In this chapter, I discuss African landscape in the context of displacement and colonial land dispossession. While there are many references that speak to the Zimbabwean case study more broadly, primacy is given to the Zimbabwean Tonga case study. The chapter also touches on the politics of belonging which have been conditioned by the history of colonial dispossession and displacement in Zimbabwe.

### **3.2 Development-Induced Displacement and Colonial Land Dispossession**

Arturo Escobar, just over ten years ago, exclaimed the following:

A spectre is haunting the world – the spectre of displacement. All the New World Order are joining forces to exorcise it ... it is high time that those displaced should openly, in the face of the whole world, make their experiences and aims known, and meet the self-serving and technocratic tale of the Spectre of Displacement by those in power with a manifesto of their own (Escobar, 2003: 157).



In this section, I consider the ‘spectre of displacement’ in Zimbabwe with specific reference to the Tonga people. This sets the stage for the following empirical chapters which articulate the experiences and dreams of the displaced Tonga people in Mola.

In my final year Social Anthropology class at Great Zimbabwe University, one of my lecturers who took me for two courses - *Anthropological Approaches to Mass Communication* and *Ethnicity, Race and Racism* - always included a component on ‘globalisation’, under which he criticised proponents of the *global village* and the concomitant *homogenisation thesis* that compresses geographical space and gives people across the globe a common form of identity as global citizens. He asked whether the Tonga people of Binga<sup>6</sup> can be blanketed as ‘global citizens’ given their presumed distinct cultural practices and *matende embanje* (big marijuana smoking pipes). His illustrations and analysis reduced the global village concept to a façade that excludes other-ised citizens such as the Zimbabwean Tonga. Only those with requisite cultural capital (Western-dominated lifestyles) could fit into the rhetoric of a global village. The exclusion of the Zimbabwean Tonga from global citizenship has a spatial dimension in terms of belonging to, and claimed ownership of, their locality and its physical environment – the Zambezi Valley landscape. Escobar’s (2003) paraphrasing of the *Communist Manifesto* in the above quotation advocates an activist response to the violent and deleterious effects of development-induced displacement. These deleterious effects of displacement resonate with the case of the Zimbabwean Tonga people in many respects. The construction and existence of the Kariba dam and its impact on the Zimbabwean Tonga people is a substantive reference of the effects of development-induced displacement.

Today, the Zimbabwean Tonga people are largely excluded from the supposed global village and this is a consequence of their forced displacement to pave way for the Kariba dam in the 1950s. Additionally, because of their marginalisation, common stereotypes are ascribed to them, such as ‘primitive’, ‘backward’ and ‘misfits’ (Murphree, 1988; Mashingaidze, 2013; Chikozho et al., 2015; Sibanda, 2001: 39), by relatively affluent social groups such as the Shona and Ndebele. These stereotypes have deep roots in the structural violence (Galtung, 1969) and detrimental effects of a colonial landscape re-zoning<sup>7</sup> project that resulted in the conversion of the Zambezi Valley into a lake and recreational park and which still haunts the displaced Tonga

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<sup>6</sup>This is a common mistake by scholars and Zimbabwean people domiciled in other areas other than the Zambezi Valley in general. Most of them talk of the Zimbabwean Tonga as if they are all domiciled in Binga, yet there are other districts in which the Tonga live. This spatial bias has seen much research on the Zimbabwean Tonga also focusing on Binga as their case study. Areas such as Gokwe South, NyamiNyami district and Hwange are usually overlooked except in the case of a few scholars.

<sup>7</sup> I take this phrase after Hughes (2001) and Dzingirai (2003) although they use it in discussing the re-zoning of landscape under nature conservation.

in Zimbabwe today. The position of the Zimbabwean Tonga is historically linked to the way their homeland was conquered and culturally appropriated into landscape by white settlers. The mid-1950s marked an historic alteration in the lives of the peoples whose ancestral home was the Zambezi valley, a people whose economic, social and political lives were highly, if not wholly, predicated on the ecologically rich Zambezi River and Valley. Activist Dominic Muntanga<sup>8</sup> describes the inequality and terrible effects of the Kariba project – on the mulonga.net website – as follows:

For the Tonga people like me, there is something deeply biblical about the word MULONGA<sup>9</sup>, yet it is a modern story too. One of massive but unshared technology. One of plentiful water but perpetual drought.

Displacement in pursuit of development is a global phenomenon with origins firmly rooted in the rise of the industrial revolution (Chakrabarti and Dhar, 2010:1). However, displacement is ubiquitous throughout all historical epochs and has been manifested in variegated ways in different places over different epochs in the history of humankind. In England, for instance, the rise of capitalism and the enclosure system saw the displacement of peasants or serfs en masse. In all cases, displacement results in the displaced losing their home/territories and access to vital natural resources. Weak social groups are dislocated and denied access to land and natural resources and, by extension, belonging to a particular ‘home place’.

Development-through-displacement projects are thus entangled in “a power differential – outsiders intervene via an infrastructure project and put pressure on people to get out of the way” (de Wet, 2001: 4637). These projects contribute to ongoing “processes of global primitive accumulation” (Whitehead, 2003: 4224); relegating less powerful members of society to the fringes, where they are divorced from independent means of subsistence and well-being. Forced population displacements in the name of development and modernisation projects (Whitehead, 2003) have been immense in the past century, with “10 million people each year, or some 200 million globally during that period” (Cernea, 2000:11). de Wet (2001) lists dam construction, irrigation schemes, water and transport supply systems and energy generation as some of the projects that have resulted in forced displacement in the past. Dam-induced displacement often results as well in the loss of customary rights to land by the host population. The Kariba dam project of the 1950s is one such example of technocratic projects that resulted

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<sup>8</sup> [http://www.mulonga.net/index.php?option=com\\_weblinks&view=categories&Itemid=112](http://www.mulonga.net/index.php?option=com_weblinks&view=categories&Itemid=112)

<sup>9</sup> Mulonga is a Tonga word for river and in this context activist Muntanga uses it with specific reference to the Zambezi River. Thus, it has an attached symbolic meaning usually linked to their displacement.

in massive displacement of indigenous people, in this case from the vicinity of the Zambezi River.

### **3.2.1 Development-Induced Displacement: The Tongan Case**

Life prior to colonisation and displacement for the Tonga depended on the Zambezi River where they practised flood plain agriculture and pursued a host of socio-cultural-economic activities (Tremmel, 1994; Weinrich, 1977; Reynolds and Cousins, 1991, 1993; Musona, 2011; Manyena et al, 2013; Balint and Mashinya, 2008; Sibanda, 2001; Mashingaidze, 2013; McGregor, 2009; Colson, 1971; Scudder, 2005; Chevo, 2013). The Zambezi River is associated with the NyamiNyami which is commonly interpreted as the river god for the Tonga (Jarosz, 1992; Siwila, 2015; Chikozho et al., 2015). This symbolises that, beyond the instrumental functions of land as a productive asset for livelihoods, the Zambezi water/landscape was also imbued with socio-cultural dimensions for the Tonga people.

The history of large dam construction runs parallel to the modernisation development model in the 1950s and 1960s that prescribed rural development projects through a unilinear trajectory without the participation of the affected populations (Mehta and Srinivasan, 2000). Kariba is one of the pioneering projects of these man-made lakes in Africa, the largest at the time (McGregor, 2009; Scudder, 2005). The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (now the World Bank) appraised and funded the construction of the Kariba dam (McGregor, 2009:108; Mashingaidze, 2013:381; Scudder, 2005:1) which resulted in the massive displacement of the Tonga peoples on either side of the Zambezi River. The Tonga peoples lived on either side of the river prior to dam displacement but they subsequently relocated inland, in the process splitting them into the Zimbabwean and Zambian Tonga respectively. Under the guise of development and progress, the Bank invested US\$ 80 million (McGregor, 2009: 108). Banks (Barclays and Standard) and mining companies (the British South Africa Company) also made contributions.

Whole communities on both sides of the Zambezi River (Zambia and Zimbabwe) had to be forcibly relocated and documented sources put the total population at approximately 57,000 (Scudder, 2005:1). This figure combines the number of people displaced on both sides of the Zambezi River, that is, the Zambian and Zimbabwean sides. Of these 57,000, approximately 23,000 were on the Zimbabwean side (McGregor, 2009). The magnitude of the socio-cultural, economic and political erasure was such that the Tonga, who had lived freely on both sides of the Zambezi River before colonial conquest, were separated by colonialists' alien way of seeing, embodying, using and representing the landscape. The colonialists first



made the River a border separating the two countries (born out of British colonial conquest) and later reinforced this by the dam construction. As such, cases of Tonga families and relations who were permanently separated by the imposed colonial cartography abound.

Prior to displacement, and thus even during colonialism prior to the dam, Tonga communities on either side of the river were free to migrate to and fro across the river without major restrictions (McGregor, 2009; Mashingaidze, 2013; Scudder, 2005; Musona, 2011; Weinrich, 1977; Dzingirai, 2003). The River was amorphous and did not represent the rigid border that it was to become after the construction of the Kariba dam. Thus the Zimbabwe-Zambian border, despite any colonial restrictions in terms of movement, was somewhat porous and allowed people to cross relatively easily and at times without immigration documentation.

McGregor (2009) notes that, in the first years of the damming of the River, the Zimbabwean Tonga tried on many occasions to join their kith and kin on the Zambian side. This was because, among other reasons, their counterparts in Zambia received more post resettlement support than them. Their ‘Tonga cousins’<sup>10</sup> (Murphree, 1988) on the northern bank of the Zambezi fared much better as the Northern Rhodesian government was more sympathetic towards the deep stress that relocation caused for the local population. For instance, the Northern Rhodesia government came up with an agricultural development plan while the Southern Rhodesia government considered the venture of surveying resettlement lands too expensive, preferring rather a “slipshod eventual solution” (McGregor, 2009: 111). This lack of commitment on the part of the Southern Rhodesian government in part explains why the Zimbabwean Tonga have fared generally worse than their Zambian counterparts whose Northern Rhodesian government showed commitment (comparatively speaking) to the welfare of the displaced Tonga.

Today, the exact number of Tonga people on the Zimbabwean side cannot be precisely determined due to the still relatively fluid nature of the Zambia-Zimbabwe border (Musona, 2011; Reynolds, 1991:13), which has allowed Tonga people to move back and forth to Zambia. The Zimbabwe Central Statistics in 1998 approximated the Tonga population to be in the region of 120,000 (ZimStats, 1998). On the Zimbabwean side, the Tonga peoples are mostly concentrated in Binga and Omay communal lands under the jurisdiction of Binga and NyamiNyami district councils respectively (Musona, 2011). The remaining few live in the

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<sup>10</sup> Murphree uses the term both figuratively and literally to describe the Gwembe Tonga on the Zambian side. These two groups of the Tonga had prior to colonialism maintained contact on either side, hinting to a different perception of landscape use to that of the colonial masters who used the river to create a border/buffer that in large part separated the two groups.

Midlands province's Gokwe area under Chiefs Nenyunka and Simuchembo.

The 23,000 Tonga displaced on the Zimbabwean side were pushed far away from the Crown Unassigned/Undetermined land on which they resided and this removed any possibility for compensation (McGregor, 2009:110). The lack of political will to compensate the Zimbabwean Tonga was in a sense predetermined as the land on which the Zimbabwean Tonga were living had long been categorised as 'unassigned' under the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 (McGregor, 2009; Malasha, 2002). As such, the Zimbabwean Tonga were not entitled to compensation claims that accrue to displaced peoples as the land they had been dispossessed of was deemed Crown Land (McGregor, 2009:110). Today the Zimbabwean Tonga people constitute and reside in the most impoverished of rural spaces in Zimbabwe (Basilwizi, 2010; Musona, 2011) and mainly in communal areas, with NyamiNyami district classified as the most poverty stricken of Zimbabwe's 55 districts (Save the Children, 2004). This is traceable to the 'politics of resettlement' (McGregor, 2009:110) that informed the displacement and the ideology of progress and civilisation that characterised the damming (of the river) narrative on the part of the colonial masters in Southern Rhodesia.

Currently, the National Parks and Wildlife Authority and the Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) refer to them as poachers (Dzingirai, 1999: 41); while their meagre agricultural produce is annually destroyed by wild animals like elephants, hippos and buffaloes, which are strictly protected by the state (Musona, 2011). Their area of residence is characterised by chronic poverty because of limited social and educational development, isolation from markets, poor soils and erratic rainfall. Mola area under Chief Mola is one of the closest to the Kariba Lake with some areas such as Bumi Hills lying adjacent to the lake. It comprises of wards three and four of Omay communal lands.

The colonial landscape rezoning exercise in the Zambezi Valley was meant primarily to generate electricity (Bourdillon et al., 1985: 10; Dzingirai, 2003a, 2003b; Musona, 2011; Mashingaidze, 2013; Sibanda, 2001; McGregor, 2009; Murphree, 1988). Yet, as Hughes (2006, 2010) highlights, the Kariba project was also a cultural identity cultivation project, as white settlers tried to belong to the country through nature (the Zambezi valley) and simultaneously displaced the Tonga people from their natural habitat. In other words, through the Kariba project, the white settler state sought to convert land and the environment in the Zambezi Valley into some kind of wilderness landscape. The modernising dam project did not distract from this but facilitated it through the creation of for instance a lake for tourist wilderness adventures for white settlers. The results of Europeanising African land into landscape have had a common result, i.e. displacement of indigenous populations. Physical displacement pushed the Tonga

people to the periphery, where they could now hardly access the waters of the Zambezi River.

The Zimbabwean Tonga are not anti-modernisation or anti-science; rather, they decry the lack of access to the benefits of development (McGregor, 2009). They have been cheated twice, first by the colonial project of dam construction and second by wildlife conservation policies both colonial and postcolonial. They were physically displaced from the ecologically rich Zambezi River (Weinrich, 1977; Mashingaidze, 2013; Musona, 2011; Dzingirai, 2003; 1998; Sibanda, 2001). Subsequent to displacement, they have been continuously alienated from accessing the resources that abound in their respective areas of relocation. This has seen a rise in Tonga activists claiming their right to restitution and access to land and natural resources (McGregor, 2009; Mashingaidze, 2013). The Zimbabwean Tonga provide a substantive case of how settler colonialism generated contemporaneous processes of primitive accumulation and land resource enclosure that still haunt Zimbabwe.

An understanding of the unfettered regime of displacement that has characterised the Zambezi Valley and the Tonga people is best understood within the context of the history of colonial land dispossession and spatial ordering in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe. As such, the following section provides an overview of colonial land dispossession in Zimbabwe.

### **3.3 Colonial Land Dispossession in Zimbabwe**

In the African/Zimbabwean case, colonial dispossession of indigenous Africans of their land and natural resources led to a skewed agrarian structure and racially discriminatory land tenure (Moyana, 2002; Palmer, 1977; Moyo, 1995, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2008, 2011, Moyo and Chambati, 2013). Land policies and reforms in Southern Rhodesia kept African peasants in a state of serfdom through land concentration in the hands of the white minority (Moyana, 1984, 2002). White settlers introduced agrarian capitalism and accumulated capital by dispossessing (Harvey, 2004) Africans of land (Moyo and Chambati, 2013:3) and, in the process, began to erase common property forms of livelihood sustenance. By forcibly dispossessing indigenous peoples of their land, colonialism fostered race-based spatial inequality as white settlers took the best arable land (Phimister, 1974: 217; Astrow, 1983:6-7; Masaka, 2011:331; Alexander, 2006; Lebert, 2003; Moore, 2005; Moyo and Yeros, 2007; Moyo et al, 2007; Moyo and Chambati, 2013). This created a huge property-less class of citizens that relied on selling their cheap labour to a small propertied class or the landed bourgeoisie (Amin, 1972; Arrighi, 1973). Southern Rhodesia was integrated in a subordinate fashion into the world capitalist system through a settler mode of political rule and social reproduction based on unequal land distribution and agrarian relations (Moyo and Chambati, 2013:3). Colonialism took away the

political as well as the economic independence of native Africans as whites attempted to create ‘neo-Europes’ (Hughes, 2010), including through the establishment of what became the white commercial farming sector.

Most of the appropriated land lay unutilised and was sometimes used for land speculation purposes (Arrighi, 1966; Moyana, 1984). Besides generating African resentment in light of the new land legislation and practices, these enclosure processes also contributed to the underdevelopment of Southern Rhodesia by disallowing a large part of the country’s populace to participate in its economy (Moyana, 1984). It also meant that African socio-cultural attachments to land were significantly disrupted as Africans were displaced on a large scale. Settlers introduced a forced semi-proletarianisation process which included, among other negative sanctions, the imposition of taxes (Yeros, 2002). An “Africa of the labour reserves economy” (Moyo and Mine, 2016:15) emerged as settlers established a monopolistic control of land while peasants were displaced. Ultimately, settler capitalist agriculture thrived on the subordination of African peasant commodity production, which made migrant labour readily available for exploitation (Sachikonye, 2004:3; Moyo and Chambati, 2013). Doris Lessing describes the fate of Africans in the face of colonial land dispossession and proletarianisation thus:

Soon they found they had indeed lost everything. It was no use retreating into the bush, for they were pursued and forced to work as servants and labourers, and when they refused, something called a Poll Tax was imposed, and when they did not pay up – and they could not, since money was not something they used – then soldiers and policemen came with guns and told them they must earn the money to pay the tax. They also had to listen to lectures on the dignity of labour. This tax, a small sum of money from the white point of view, was the most powerful cause of change in the old tribal societies (1993:4)

In 1923 settlers established the responsible government, independent from the British South Africa Company’s rule (Moyana, 1984; Phimister, 1974; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009; Yudelman, 1964). One of the immediate pertinent problems to be addressed by the responsible government was the ‘Native Question’, i.e., “where are Africans to live and farm?” (Hughes, 2006a:4). To address this question, the whites created spaces officially called ‘native reserves’ (now called communal areas) (Moyana, 1984, 2002; Hughes, 2006; Alexander, 2006; Palmer, 1977). Hughes (2006a:4) refers to reserves as the black lowlands. One can easily decipher a politics of including and excluding people from inhabiting certain lands and places through this racialised cartographical mapping that was brought through colonial conquest.



The 1925 Morris Carter Land Commission was put to task to solve the native question and this resulted in the Land Apportionment Act (LAA) of 1930. The LAA is Zimbabwe's prime reference for massive African displacement through colonial land dispossession. This led to 51.0% of the land being categorised as European areas, 22.0% as Native Reserves and the remainder included forest, native and unassigned areas (Moyana, 2002). The existence of 'undetermined/unassigned area' was to be crucial, in a negative sense, for the Tonga for reasons mentioned earlier. As indicated, when the Zimbabwean Tonga people were displaced from the vicinity of the Zambezi River, they were not substantially compensated because the lands they were occupying were deemed as undetermined/unassigned and as thus belonging to the British Crown (Malasha, 2002). The Tonga had not been displaced from their land but from the British Crown's land (McGregor, 2009). As such, the settlers of Rhodesia did not feel the displaced had the prerogative to be compensated for loss of their homeland.

### **3.3.1 Landscape and Colonialism**

In the above discussion, I elaborated on colonial land dispossession and the formation of large tracts of land specifically for whites, and how the Tonga people were displaced (without compensation) because of the Kariba dam as part of a modernising colonial project. Colonial science and conservation were also at the centre of how white settlers conquered African land and converted it into a particular kind of landscape. For instance, environmental and wildlife conservation were part of colonial land dispossession through the reservation of significant areas of land for the preservation of wilderness and pristine nature. I now discuss on how African landscape coped in the face of colonial displacement and concomitant Europeanisation of African lands. In doing so, I touch on contested land rights and questions of belonging that arose due to displacement.

After conquering African lands, white settlers subsequently turned them into landscapes, that is, they submitted land to "their imagination; appropriated it to their culture and annexed it to their history" (Ranger, 1997: 59) in a manner akin to how they had conquered North America. In Zimbabwe, just as in the rest of former European colonies, white settlers sought to emplace and identify themselves with the environment instead of with the surrounding African communities (Hughes, 2006, 2010). In the United States, settlers had established political, economic and demographic dominance thus creating a 'neo-Europe' (Crosby, 1982:2 cited in Hughes, 2006: 269). Hughes (2006, 2010) observes that white commercial farmers in Zimbabwe also acted as conservationists who modified the landscape to create their sense of belonging to it. This emplacement of whites, and by whites, further



contributed to displacing Africans and not only restricted the latter's access to vital natural resources but also in many respects displaced African ways of relating with the environment.

To fully understand how colonial (and more contemporary) environment conservation practice intertwines with questions of landscape, displacement and belonging, it is imperative to briefly engage with the philosophical understandings that white settlers had of landscape and nature in Africa. European settlers' view of Africa originated from enlightenment thinkers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and explorers like David Livingstone as well as the media (Adams and McShane, 1996: xvii; Sibanda, 2001:6). In the process, they created "a mythical Africa" (Adams and McShane, 1996: xii; Hughes, 2006; 2010) which claimed a privileged place in Western imagination. This mythical Africa revolved around European explorers who projected the view of Africa as a "virgin land" or "exotic jungle" (Adams and McShane, 1996; Sibanda, 2001: 6), unspoiled by humans.

In the early years of colonialism, settlers found themselves in unfamiliar environments and they had to find ways of creating a sense of rootedness to establish themselves as uncontested leaders of the native African inhabitants. Beyond conquering Zimbabwe with guns, settlers endeavoured to create a sense of entitlement and a sense of belonging to the conquered territory. This sense was built through carving out landscapes that epitomised those of Europe. In this respect, Hughes (2006, 2010) presents Euro-Zimbabweans' landscape habitus as an ambiguous assemblage of instrumental and materialistic visions of land linked to enlightenment and modern rationality ideals, as well as of their lived experiences related to the glacier landscapes of Europe:

Since at least the Enlightenment, they had treated their surrounds as purely material. Modern rationality disenchanted forest and mountain alike, reducing land to the status of a useful object .... That utilitarian stance equipped Europeans quite well for travel: long-distance movement only implied a change of practical context – exchanging one agrarian system for another – not a reorganisation of self or values. ...But, on the other hand, learned ideas could not altogether overrule the accumulated weight of lived experience. Residence in Europe had imprinted Europeans with an affinity for European landscapes. And, fortuitously, those landscapes differed markedly from much of the rest of the world: glaciers had scoured and moulded them, a past that northern Eurasia shared only with the swathe of the Americas. Such topography did not determine white attitudes or actions. An intertwinement with this environmental history did, however, equip whites' rather better for staying at home than for traveling, especially to the tropics (2006: 5).

Mingling with the instrumental views of nature in material terms were settler motifs of making the alien lands their home; they imposed land policies, laws and practices, and sometimes science and engineering, to carve up a landscape in distant lands reminiscent of Euro-like landscapes.

Part of the European landscape habitus revolved around a dual way of seeing African lands as wilderness (Adams and McShane, 1995; Wolmer, 2005, 2007). Wolmer (2005, 2007:13) argues that Europeans promulgated a particular imagery or way of seeing landscape as wilderness, initially in Zimbabwe's Lowveld and then later largely applicable for the rest of the country. The wilderness vision was in two senses. The first was a view of African environments as inhabitable spaces that had to be tamed (Adams and McShane, 1996; Wolmer, 2007). The second vision of wilderness viewed African environments as spaces to be preserved for their pristine attributes. It has roots in "nineteenth century romanticism and primitivism... associated with the writing of Wordsworth and Rousseau ... that reacted pejoratively to the idea of progress and the worship of economic growth and connected creativity, happiness and fulfilment with proximity to unmodified nature" (Beinart and Coates, 1995 cited in Wolmer, 2007:13). This second wilderness vision is evident in Zimbabwe and the rest of the continent through the creation of national parks where nature was to be 'preserved'.

In both cases, the consequences were that Africans were written-out of the environment as the land was either turned into protected areas or private estates for whites. In both processes of 'manufacturing' wilderness, unnatural elements (which included first and foremost Africans in terms of their rights to land) simply disappeared from the landscape (Wolmer, 2007; Hughes, 2006, 2010). The colonial government in Southern Rhodesia effected a series of Order-in-Councils for instance in 1898 and 1914 (Moyana, 1984, 2002; Mlambo, 2010; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009) some of which led to the formation of massive ranches. For example, the British South Africa Company (BSAC) created the Matibi ranch in southeastern Zimbabwe, which led to the subsequent creation of the 2.5 million acre Nuanetsi ranch (Sachikonye, 2004:4).

African environments and lands were expropriated, including in courts by a judiciary that justified (as did the colonial state more broadly) its decisions on the basis that the lands were an empty frontier or *territorium nullius* when Europeans settled on them (Magaisa, 2013:199; Hughes, 2006:7). Stories of whites claiming to have discovered Africa in general (and Zimbabwe in particular) as a wilderness, and as an empty, vast interior, abound. In this way, most of the practices which Europeans engaged in to foster substantive emplacement (and thereby make Zimbabwe their home) completely, disregarded local Africans' readings of

landscape. For instance, Schmidt (1995:351) contends that, in conquering African lands, Europeans evoked narratives of “penetrating wilderness” to open access to resources such as minerals, living space and fertile lands. The ideology behind all this was that of “no man’s land” and the “sexualisation of landscape” through the metaphor of penetration (Schmidt, 1995: 351).

Settler land policy was premised on discursive claims which denied that natives had ownership or even possession of any land and thereby “made land rights white” (Rukuni, 2006:334; Mangena, 2014:83; Moore, 2005: x; Masaka, 2011; Sadomba, 2013; Mlambo, 2010). This entailed the application of English law whose focal point was an upholding of the sanctity of individual liberties and private property. Yet this vision of Africa was a fallacy, because millions of Africans “have been an integral part of the African landscape or environment” (Adams and McShane, 1996: xviii; Sibanda, 2001:6). For Europeans, the presence of native people who lived in Africa was not of great concern; what was important was the existence of wilderness as landscape. In this context, Europeans created a notion of an empty, ‘unpeopled’ African environment.

For white settlers, wilderness lies ‘out there’ separate from daily life and is easily identifiable and distinguishable from human activity (Wolmer, 2005; Adams and McShane, 1996: xvi- xvii) This was maladapted to the African context because “man and animals have evolved together in the continent’s diverse ecosystems” (Adams and McShane, 1996: xvii). For instance, conservation methods applied to nature as introduced by Europeans in Maasai communities broke up the latter’s communities and also led to the decline of their social structures and a system of values that had sustained the ecosystems. In the end, Europeans transferred natural resources to the state which in turn denied local people access to them (Sibanda, 2001:5).

This inevitably generated contrasting and contested ways of seeing the landscape. African views about conservation and wildlife protection are often at variance with notions of the West. For example, for Africans, nature and society are not easily distinguishable. Though nature is valued for its usefulness in African communities (Sibanda, 2001:6), there is a deep spiritual connection to the land. Europeans, in their wilderness landscape discourse, speak of the aesthetic or sentimental qualities of land but, of course, they have gone on to treat nature as natural resources subject to commodification and exchange-value. This resulted in starkly different ways of reading the landscape between Europeans and Africans including with regard to two tea estates in Honde Valley in the Eastern Highlands (Schmidt, 1995). For Africans, the rainforest there was meant to be preserved (now converted into the two tea estates) for its

sacredness and rainmaking purposes while Europeans saw the same rainforest as suited for conversion into a tea estate (Schmidt, 1995).

Colonialism imposed alien and problematic (mis)readings of African environments/landscape (Fairhead and Leach, 1996). Misreading of landscape was and is detrimental to local people (Wolmer, 2005) such as smallholder farmers whose land-use priorities stand in contrast to those of powerful local elites and state authorities. Wolmer (2005: 260) gives an example of the Zimbabwean lowveld<sup>11</sup>, which the colonial government saw as a sanctuary for “pristine and glorious pieces of national heritage”. Colonialism thus led to a politics of competing property regimes (customary vis-à-vis private<sup>12</sup>) regarding land access and ownership. The process is akin to ongoing contemporary modernist approaches to development that displace alternative local forms of life and existence. In the case of colonial Zimbabwe, it displaced customary forms of tenure and whatever prior cultural, political and economic arrangements that hitherto existed. In this context, colonialism exuded symbolic violence as white settlers totally disregarded African forms of land and environmental resource use.

This does not however suggest that African landscapes were obliterated but rather they were suppressed and they continue to be suppressed today. Colonial encroachments greatly compromised livelihoods as well as the other socio-political-cultural functions of land and the environment for locals. While this process of displacing Africans away from spaces in which they once lived is all pervasive, the creation of national parks in rare cases was propagated by Africans themselves, as was the case with a certain community in Botswana (McGregor, 2005). Overall, though, the way settlers reordered and governed nature was in direct contrast to African culture-nature values. In forcibly displacing large numbers of African indigenous peoples (Hughes, 1999; Singh, 2001; Peluso, 1993), colonial-style conservation sought to make African landscapes ‘legible’ and manageable, at the same time enabling whites to control prime productive and resource areas (Singh and van Houtum, 2002). Although they established lasting colonies, Europeans never fully controlled the continent to create a neo-Europe like the American case (Adams and McShane, 1996: 5). African landscapes were significantly altered but they were never destroyed as such (Fontein, 2009, 2015).

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<sup>11</sup> The lowveld refers to a region in Zimbabwe below 600m and this includes much of the Zambezi Valley but generally the term is to refer to the south east of the country.

<sup>12</sup> The fixation on customary tenure and rights in notions of African landscape is contested and has been dismissed by a significant number of scholars. I discuss this in detail in the section on African landscape.



In their quest to foster white identity and place making, whites in Zimbabwe therefore ‘made nature’ at Kariba (Hughes, 2006, 2010) including by damming the Zambezi river to create an environment akin to European landscapes and aesthetics. Hughes (2006, 2010) explains how, due to their European background, white settlers found African physical landscapes as a monotony especially in light of the absence of waterscapes. Hughes (2006:823) observes that the 1958 Kariba engineering project displaced 57,000 Tonga farmers with the reservoir flooding 5,580 square kilometres. This hydrological project, enmeshed in an insatiable desire to import white “hydrological heritage” (Hughes, 2006:823) was later to be praised as ‘nature’ and still is as such, in total disregard of Tonga people’s ways of seeing their lived-in landscapes. In the process of displacing the local Tonga, McGregor (2009:2) notes that this colonial infrastructural project altered the local symbolic and material functions of the Zambezi River. White claims to this particular landscape were in direct contrast to those of the Tonga because they justified foreign modes of authority, which led to racialised dispossession (McGregor, 2009:2). The Zambezi River and now Lake Kariba became an epicentre for myths behind the creation of white settler identity as whites sought to belong to the African environment, a process which Hughes (2006 and 2010) has termed as ‘how Euro-Africans made nature at Kariba dam’. In such a process, African landscapes were suppressed and subordinated.

Landscape of course changes across space and time but during the first two decades of independence (until the year 2000); the Zimbabwean state uncritically supported the received European wisdom of “game as more economically and ecologically appropriate narrative that underpinned the pristine wilderness way of seeing” (Wolmer, 2005:272). This in part was challenged during fast track land reform during which an understanding of landscape focusing on land equity and food security came to the fore (Wolmer, 2005) though the positive implications of this landscape reading for the lives and livelihoods of Tonga people are not apparent. Even on fast track farms, the Europeanisation of African landscapes is still visible with imprints of this existing in the form of names and other artefacts (Fontein, 2009, 2015). Moore (2005: x) recognises the continuities of the colonial landscape and speaks of a “critical genealogy of modes of power that produced landscapes of dispossession” which are “still haunting Zimbabwe today”. Most remarkable perhaps is the ongoing visibility of white settler landscapes in the form of the ideology of conservation, as I detail briefly now.

Colonial science and conservation established restricted areas such as protected areas and recreational parks. Protected areas and recreational parks such as the Lake Kariba shore are part of the brainchild of present-day Community Based Natural Resources Management



programmes (CBNRM), particularly Zimbabwe's Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE). CBNRMs are seen as a decentralised participatory community development approach which arose after the realisation that wildlife conservation is doomed for failure if it does not incorporate host communities that live adjacent to parks and conservancies (Murombedzi, 1992; Mubaya, 2008; Sibanda 2001; Dzingirai, 2003b; 2010; Logan et al., 2002). They represent a process of decentralisation and shift away from the top-down, centralised Natural Resource Management Systems (NRMS) that characterised the colonial and early independence periods (Murphree, 1991; Nemarundwe, 2003; Mubaya, 2008:1). For most host communities, people-wildlife conflict is a common phenomenon as the animals usually destroy the crops upon which their livelihoods are predicated (Mombeshora and Le Bel, 2009; Dzingirai, 2003a; Manyena et al., 2013).

In principle, CBNRM systems profess to give local communities the power to manage wildlife resources by allowing them to participate in the process. Zimbabwe's own CBNRM (CAMPFIRE) is embedded in loaded terms such as 'empowerment', 'participation' and 'community'. A major stated goal of CAMPFIRE is to capacitate communities to "participate and contribute to decision-making on access to and use of natural resources as opposed to 'fortress' or 'coercive conservation' in the pre-existing regimes" (Murombedzi, 1992; Adams and Murphree, 2001 cited in Mubaya, 2008:1-2). As with all participatory development mantra, CAMPFIRE is predicated on ideals of democracy and accountability (Brock and Harrison, 2006). Hughes (2001:741) notes that while CAMPFIRE advocates the promotion of co-management of natural resources and a departure from colonial "fortress conservation", which used to expel and exclude people from forests. As such, CBNRM processes are principally seen as empowering grassroots 'communities', hence helping them to appreciate and understand that conservation (of wildlife and other resources) is for their own good.

In practice, however, the CBNRM system tends to perpetuate the natural resource enclosures established by colonial land and environmental policies or what Murombedzi (1992), (in the case of the CAMPFIRE programme in Omay, NyamiNyami district) referred to as a recentralisation of resources. Kelly (2011) in fact argues that contemporary community based natural resources management is akin to primitive accumulation processes that restrict access (and displace customary rights) to land. There are limits regarding how contemporary environmental conservation discourse and practice is a simple euphemism for (Marxian) primitive accumulation, but there are more indicators that validate this claim (Kelly 2011: 683). Kelly (2011:683) singles out some of these indicators, among which are "acts of enclosure, dispossession, dissolution of the commons and accumulation". Protected areas, at least those

undertaken by the state (such as CAMPFIRE), do not involve primitive accumulation based on a private property regime, but they do mark a continuity with the colonial state's control over local land and resources. Based on economic and ecological arguments, CAMPFIRE redefines black (African) entitlement to land and natural resources as merely a claim competing with those of other stakeholders (Hughes, 2001a:575).

Conservation practices and technologies in both the colonial and post-colonial eras have wrought imaginings of nature and identity (Singh and van Houtum, 2002: 253). The settler colony's conservation policies (such as those linked to Kariba) as well as the post-colonial CAMPFIRE programme resonate with Marks' (1994: 120) assertion that "since most of us live in a hierarchical society, any discourse about wildlife tends to be about social relationships. Whom can we exclude from our Garden of Eden, and how can we keep others from trespassing on valuables that help sustain our life and livelihoods, if not our identities". CBNRM programmes often result in, and produce 'cadastral politics' or struggles over the control of resources and boundaries as Hughes (2001b) notes of CAMPFIRE in the Zimbabwe – Mozambique transboundary natural resource management case. Often time, these struggles over the natural resource control and boundaries involve clashes with the state and at the local level, may involve exclusionary strategies based on the politics difference among community members. Such politics of difference often times include the use of ethnicity. Dzingirai (2003) details the politics of exclusion of Ndebele migrants by the Tonga people in Binga under the CAMPFIRE programme. As such, access to land, wildlife and nature are embedded in a politics of inclusion and exclusion, and of landscape belongings. And, in this regard, ongoing colonisation of Tonga spaces took place long after the original colonial encounter, and even on into the post-colonial period.

The displacement of the Tonga people fell within the broader context of colonial land dispossession. When the Kariba dam was constructed, the littoral on the Zimbabwean side was rezoned into protected areas: Matusadonha National Park, two safari areas and forest areas, and a big recreational park which included a large portion of the Lake itself (Malasha, 2002a:1; Hughes, 2006:826). The recreational park is legally controlled by the state through the National Parks and Wildlife Authority (NPWA) (Malasha, 2002a:1). The end result was that, in addition to land tenure laws, the Zambezi Valley and the indigenous populations domiciled there (the majority of whom are the Tonga people) were subjected to a number of restrictive game laws (just as other places endowed with wildlife resources). As part of these game laws were regulations around fishing and access to Lake Kariba. This was because fish were categorised as another form of animal and fishing hence was categorised as hunting (Malasha, 2002b:4).

As such, Malasha (2002) notes that the restrictive game laws were applied to fishing, particularly to regulate local artisanal fishers. These artisanal fishers comprise in large part of the local Tonga people who have resorted to fishing to generate livelihoods and gain some additional income (Malasha, 2002).

The management of Lake Kariba Recreational Park is arranged in a manner that is analogous to CAMPFIRE (Pomeroy and Berkes, 1997:472; Malasha, 2002b). This is through the arrangement of a co-management of Lake Kariba's inshore fishery and involves the state and local displaced artisanal fishers (Bourdillon et al, 1985; Malasha, 2002a, b; Pomeroy and Berkes, 1997) who in the case of NyamiNyami district are predominantly Tonga people. Just as the management of wildlife under CAMPFIRE, the co-management of Lake Kariba's inshore fishery preserves the interests of the elite or the state and does not take into consideration those of the locals. Malasha (2002a; b) therefore notes that the management of the inshore fishery at Lake Kariba on the Zimbabwean side has been characterised by conflicts between the state and the locals. It is a result of conflicting interests, which can be attributed to the interpretation of landscape in contrasting ways as discussed above that leads to such conflicts.

### **3.4 African Landscape**

Talking of African landscape cosmology, and understanding why this cosmology differed to that the white settlers in Zimbabwe, involves an invocation of the precolonial property/land rights regime. However, very little is known of this land rights regime because it was significantly obliterated by the colonial land rights regime (Murombedzi, 2003). The colonial appropriation of land from Africans thus undoubtedly undercut traditional forms of tenure that obtained in the country prior to colonial incursion.

Landscape is also culturally-embedded and this makes it difficult to talk of African landscape in an all-encompassing and generalised sense of the notion. A number of scholars (Sadomba, 2014; Mangena, 2014; Moyana, 1984, 2002) continue to discuss postcolonial African landscape readings in a static sense that does not highlight the significant changes that colonialism brought about with regard to adulterating African landscapes. Highlighting the precolonial era as the source of knowledge for African landscape does not entail a rejection of the existence of continuities and survivals of African landscape readings from this early period into the postcolonial era. It is quite likely that even present day African landscape is far too complex to be generalised under the banner of African landscape that transcends all spaces across Africa.

Murombedzi (2003) posts a warning that, with regard to writings on precolonial African land and conservation practices, much of it paints a romanticised picture based on nostalgia. Without underplaying the importance of this point, there does seem to be unanimity among many scholars that precolonial African land and landscape cosmology posited an intimate relationship between nature and society that transcended the nature-society dualism (Wolmer, 2007:44; Taringa and Mangena, 2015: 43). Precolonial land management and use in Zimbabwe was more or less communitarian (Moyana, 1984; Mangena, 2014, 2015; Sadomba, 2014). For Africans, the land user did not have rights of ownership transferred to them but only the manifestations of land were transferred, that is, crops and other produce (Mafeje, 2003:2; Owomoyela, 2002:40; Moyana, 1984, 2002; Sadomba, 2014:356). To draw from sociologist Emile Durkheim's analogy, African readings of landscape were characterised by mechanical solidarity with huge investments in lineage and kin relationships because individualism was largely thwarted or limited.

It is generally agreed that group rights of access to land were the order of the day and Africans regarded land as a public good and valued its use value as opposed to the exchange value that it is given in present day capitalist society. It was "a lived in" (Wolmer, 2007:43) social, economic and political space. This is in direct contrast to what settler capitalism prescribed: "Africans cherished land but not as discrete parcels of bounded property; while frontiersmen (whites) defined territory and placed a premium upon its control" (Hughes (2006:7-8). Moyana succinctly summed up the African view of land and natural resources as follows:

In African cosmology, such an important natural endowment as land does not have a marketable value. Prior to the advent of colonial rule in the country now known as Zimbabwe, the prevailing African land tenure system vested land rights in a corporate group, which had overriding rights over those of the individual. The king or chief served as a trustee who allocated land to new comers and ensured that its use was in harmony with the traditional land tenure formula (1984:1).

In the Zimbabwean context, land/nature has a physical dimension yet, at the same time, it is an integral part of society inseparable from human culture (Ranger, 1999:25; Sadomba, 2014: 355). Writing of African philosophy in Zimbabwe, Sadomba (2014:355) propounds the idea of a three-dimensional understanding of land in the African context, quite different from a limited vision of it as solely a "physical solum" (Mafeje, 2003:2); land combines the material, spiritual and social aspects of human life. Shona-environment relations, for example, are embedded in an "onto-triadic deep ecology" involving "the living, the living timeless and the



Creator” (Mangena, 2015:12). Deep ecology refers to the “deeper questioning about human life, society and nature which goes beyond the so-called factual scientific level to the level of self and earth wisdom” (Næss, 1973 in Mackinnon, 1998: 358). Mangena’s (2015) assertions resonate with Ranger’s (1999) study of the Matopos Hills in which his respondents used ‘fontanelle’ (or soft spot) as a metaphorical reference to the intimate relationship between people and their environment which goes beyond the Hills as a geographical entity to a social space in which religion is encapsulated.

The land-culture interface made authoritative figures like chiefs merely trustees and/or custodians without absolute control over it, as suggested by Moyana (1984) above (see also Bourdillon, 1987, 1993; Owomoyela, 2002:40). The centrality of culture, particularly religion in African cosmology, kept society-land relations in a state of equilibrium. Through everyday interaction with their environment, African people in the land between the Limpopo and Zambezi Rivers are generally believed to have had an intact system that balanced the interdependent processes vital for social metabolism. In Durkheimian terms, religion existed *sui generis* (i.e., over and above the individual) and this can be seen in common African beliefs regarding land use in Zimbabwe. For example, in Zimbabwe’s Honde Valley, resources like trees and forests were protected by means of mystical taboo-related restrictions associated with them (Schmidt, 1995). Failure to observe these restrictions could result in one disappearing in the forest or mountain in question or being subject to severe natural disasters like droughts (Schmidt, 1995).

Chiefs in pre-colonial Zimbabwe were religious figures and their position was a hereditary one. Among other functions, they were responsible for rain to make the land fertile through rainmaking *biras* (festivals) in honour of the owners of the land, the ancestors (Bourdillon, 1993:59; Owomoyela, 2002:40). As well, in relation to nature, various clans constructed their respective identities. These were manifested largely through totems. For instance, through taboos and totems, some animals, mountains, and various plant species were revered as sacred and not to be consumed or killed by a particular clan. Mangena (2013, 2015) cites the use of totems as evidence of the intrinsic value that Shona people placed on nature prior to colonial land alienation.

All of this tends to validate Wolmer’s (2007:43) notion of African landscape as an integrated whole comprising of ‘lived in’, ‘socialised’ and ‘sacred’ spaces. As such, dispossessing Africans of their land, as happened during colonialism (and through ongoing processes of colonisation in the case of the Tonga), meant not only robbing them of their source of livelihood but their personhood in its totality. Ancestral burial sites particularly those of the



ruling clans were revered as sacred *mapa* (Fontein, 2006, 2009, 2015; Owomoyela, 2002:40). *Mapa* is a word from Karanga (a dialect of Shona) related to ‘giving’ and provides evidence of the close relationship which existed between the living, the dead and nature. It is not surprising therefore that the displacement of Africans from their ancestral lands was a cause of deep resentment. During the land occupations in the year 2000, occupiers at times claimed a reunion with the lands and *mapa* (Fontein, 2015). With the coming of colonialism, this landscape of ancestors had been subject to dispossession and was converted into for example a ‘landscape of wilderness’ (McGregor, 2005; Wolmer, 2005, 2007; Hughes, 2006, 2010).

In the end, it is important in the case of Zimbabwe not to homogenise the African landscape views of a number of different ethnic groups in Zimbabwe, among the them the Shona and Ndebele but also the Shangaan and the Tonga. Even within particular ethnic groups, there are likely to be variations. For instance, Wolmer (2007:49) warns against a universalised Shangaan landscape, which is understood by all uniformly, “even though the lowveld landscape invokes shared experiences and social memories in it Shangaan inhabitants”. The heterogeneity of African landscape discourses is succinctly presented by Mazarire’s (2003) work on a locality in one of Masvingo’s rural spaces called Chishanga. Mazarire (2003) observed that Chishanga’s landscape is made up of complex histories which bring to the fore supposedly shared yet imprecise and differentiated experiences.

Most of what is termed as African readings of landscape in Zimbabwe in fact constitutes a hybrid of old and new traditions arising in the context of colonial incursions and interventions. At times, what is presented as tradition is in fact recent and (in the African case) colonially invented traditions (Hobsbawm, 2012 and Ranger, 2012). Traditional land tenure in Africa and Zimbabwe in particular, often valorised as African communal tenure is, in fact, a ‘mythogenesis’ that has evolved over time especially under the influence of colonialism (Angela Cheater, 1990; Drinkwater, 1991; Alexander, 1994; Benjaminsen and Lund, 2002; Bruce et al, 1993; Palmer, 2003). In the process of changing the spatial settlements that they came across, white settlers, for instance in the case of Chishanga communal area, changed the political and social landscapes of chiefdoms (Mazarire, 2003). In addition, it is often such social groups, namely, ‘traditional’ authorities (such as chiefs), which may articulate pristine precolonial memories if only to claim authenticity of their land claims and belonging.

### **3.5 Land, Ethnicity and Politics of Belonging/Identity in Zimbabwe**

Alexander argues, at least in the case of Zimbabwe, that “[I]and is about identity...; it is about aesthetic values and spiritual meaning” (Alexander, 2007:185). One could also add that ‘land

is about belonging'. Mamdani (1996) posits that colonialism in Africa created the 'Citizen'/whites and the 'Subject'/native Africans, the rulers and the ruled respectively (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009:59). Mamdani's thesis is in large part analogous to colonial land history in Zimbabwe. Similar to Mamdani's analysis, Moore (2005: 14), in particular reference to the Zimbabwean case, argues that "the Rhodesian project of governing subjects relied on an ethnic spatial fix, administering Africans in mutually exclusive, ethnically discrete spaces". Africans were categorised as belonging to Native Reserves and Tribal Trust Lands and governed under 'customary law' (Moore, 2005; Alexander, 2006; Hammar, 2002a; 2002b:215). This indicates a calculated white colonial project of selective, exclusionary belonging that subordinated Africans from gaining equal citizenship status with the whites. Africans were confined to spatially restricted areas and they were dominated on racial and ethnic bases. Thus, Rhodesian spatial planning/settling of white farmers and black rural peasants existed through skewed land distribution, in which the former enjoyed exclusive rights, restricting Africans to the so-called reserves.

In the process of colonial land dispossession, blacks' sense of belonging to particular places was ruptured, restructured and largely denied. This land appropriation did not go unopposed. For instance, it led to cadastral politics/contestation over land as blacks sought space or territory to pursue livelihoods embedded in narratives about belonging and identity, which had been disrupted by land alienation (Mangena, 2014; Hughes, 2010; Mhizha et al, 2014:316; Mlambo, 2005:3). Nevertheless, race as a social position was used to fixate people in certain places and to exclude them from other places. In addition to race, there are issues of ethnicity and other social categorisations such as gender. There is evidence to suggest that certain ethnicities are colonial constructions such as Shona. Nevertheless, in the case of Zimbabwe, Shona and Ndebele are considered as the main ethnic groups amongst the indigenous population.

Muzondidya (2007) though posits the existence of 'invisible subject minorities' as a concept to categorise the existence of minority ethnic groups in Zimbabwe and the difficulties they face in accessing land and, by extension, the modalities of exclusion to which they have been subjected historically, including exclusions through narratives of landscape. The Rhodesian colonial state had effectively polarised spatial poles for belonging through land (either blacks or whites) such that struggles for power and land became articulated in terms of these two poles (Seirlis, 2004:408; Muzondidya, 2007). In the process, this blurred and undercut the existence (and therefore identity) of minority ethnic groups such as the Tonga, as if their history, culture, memories and notions of landscape and belonging could be easily and

readily subsumed under an undifferentiated blackness. In this way, analyses of claims to land and belonging are often limited to whites and blacks, thereby undermining vital questions about minority ethnic identities such as the Tonga communities that were displaced by the construction of the Kariba dam.

Since independence, and particularly since the fast track land reform programme from the year 2000, race remains the central signifier of land in Zimbabwe and continues to be the critical factor in the country's land and belonging questions. One of the reasons for this was the reluctance of white farmers to contribute towards equity in land access as they tended to 'live off' Zimbabwe (Alexander, 2004) and associated themselves more with the country's natural environment than with its peoples as a basis for their Zimbabwean belonging (Hughes, 2006; 2010; Alexander, 2004; Pulosof, 2012). Under fast track land reform, whites were disposed of the large farms they used to possess, in the name of correcting historical racial injustices.

For the Tonga people, the ethnic spatial fix continues as does their marginalisation and claims to landscape and belonging. In her study, which focused on predominantly Tonga inhabiting the Vumba area, Hammar (2002:219) asserts that Vumba is perpetually represented as an "'empty wilderness' space as opposed to the tamed (peopled) environments of cities or cultivated countryside, be these in Zimbabwe or elsewhere." These images of wild, pristine, unpeopled landscapes, with their multiple masking effects, are central not only to the promotion of tourism both in Zimbabwe in general and to Vumba in particular but also to wider, global conservationist interests (Hammar, 2002:220). More generally in relation to Zimbabwe as a whole, but one which continues to resonate in the case of the contemporary experiences of the Tonga, Wolmer (2005; 2007) asserts that the wilderness way of seeing was a vision of landscape as an untamed chaotic space which needed to be tamed and/or ordered. In this wilderness way of seeing, 'unnatural elements' such as Africans were written out of the landscape through a 'sexualisation' of African landscapes encapsulated in narratives of 'penetration'.

Because of this, there is no single, static land question narrative which can encapsulate questions of landscape, belonging and identity for Tonga people, and certainly fast track did not in any sense resolve these questions for the Tonga. These questions, involving localised histories and memories, continue to exist primarily in their silence. In this context, at a national level, land, belonging and the question of a common nationality with unquestioned 'equal' rights of access to land and landscape is a mere fallacy for the Tonga.

Overall, then, beyond the (white and black) binary discussions of land, race and belonging in Zimbabwe, there is a “complex mosaic of histories and memories” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009:20) which are not captured by this binary. The country’s minority ethnic groups like the Tonga are obscured in nationalist narratives about sons and daughters of the soils as propagated by the ruling party. To complicate matters for the Tonga, in terms of claims of restitution, their ancestral lands and graves were erased through the Kariba dam construction. Thus the history around land and belonging cannot be reduced to the race factor, and the invisibility of the Tonga as Zimbabwean citizens (and of the Tonga as an ethnic identity) with regard to land rights and belonging, so deeply rooted in the colonial era, has continued in the post-colonial era.

### **3.6 Autochthony/Indigeneity and Claims to Ancestral Lands**

The land-belonging nexus in Zimbabwe and beyond raises issues that are related to notions of autochthony and rootedness (Mujere, 2011; 2012; Geschiere, 2009). Autochthony implies a special link to the soil (Geschiere, 2009, Geschiere and Nyamjoh, 2000) and more specifically to a particular place or locale based on historical and cultural connections, with these connections implying rights of possession and access to the locale. In this way, belonging and identity are deeply embedded in local landscapes based on ancestral claims. Emphasis in studies around belonging has often been placed on migration and translocality but locally-situated belongings (Hammar, 2002; Geschiere, 2009; Mujere, 2011; Boas and Dunn, 2013) based on autochthony, indigeneity, spiritually and land ownership are of particular significance to the Tonga.

A common trend in Zimbabwean studies with regard to landscape is in fact to focus on the varied ways of validating entitlement to land and belonging within a physically-defined place, with claims of nativity and autochthony often being of particular significance. In certain ways, such claims go contrary to the land reform programme in Zimbabwe including fast track. Fast track was based on a modality of redistribution based on historical alienation of land, with people being resettled on land to which they did not have any long-term attachment.

Admittedly, as Fontein (2015) highlights in his study of landscape around Mutirikwi, ancestral claims to particular pieces of land (lost ancestral lands) were quite important at times to the localised land occupations which took place in the year 2000 and prior to fast track. And, in this sense, people sought to reconnect with their past (and to re-establish a belonging to place) which had been disrupted by the colonial encounter and even by the postcolony. But, in



large part, fast track was not based on a modality of restitution involving ancestral rights to specific places.

Geertz (1996: 20) argues that such ancestral claims are made by people who often have a certain ‘we belong here intimacy’ with the place in question. A critical ‘resource’ to belonging to a particular locality relates to being unquestioned owners of the land because of historical rootedness (Geschiere, 2009:1; Fontein, 2009; 2015; Mujere, 2011; 2012). And these claims are validated by old ancestral graves, ruins and shrines. Any claim to autochthony (implicit or otherwise) points to legitimate rights over land and nature, and is couched within a particular landscape narrative permeated with cultural and spiritual dimensions. In the words of Geschiere (2009:2), “autochthony represents the most authentic form of belonging: born from the earth itself – how could one belong more? To its protagonists, autochthony – the special link with the soil – seems to have some sort of primordial quality”. This is key, given the fact that claims of being autochthonous often take place in the context of intense and ongoing struggles around access to the locality in question, and it links therefore to questions of power and authority to act within and on that locale (Hammar, 2002).

At different junctures of Zimbabwe’s history, an ideology of ‘nation’ which uncritically refers to all ‘indigenous’ blacks in Zimbabweans as sons and daughters of the soil has been reinforced particularly by the ruling party and arguably for political reasons. But, as indicated, claims of autochthony run much deeper than this, as the soil is locally-bound and in-place. Autochthonous claims to belonging also encapsulate discursive claims around the notion of first comers. Lentz (2005) highlights that claims to being first comers to an area is a popular practice for legitimization of land rights across Africa. In Gokwe, in northwestern Zimbabwe, Tonga people used the claim of being first comers as a ‘resource’ for claiming belonging in the context of government-sanctioned evictions in creating space for conservation programmes (Hammar, 2002). New comers, who happened to be non-Tongas (Shonas and Ndebeles) were excluded based on being late comers. Thus, belonging to landscape sometimes involves the invocation of past personal experiences and affective memories of the past (Fontein, 2015:59).

### **3.7 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed land, landscape and belonging in Zimbabwe. The point of departure was displacement and development induced displacement. These within the context of the displacement of the Tonga people and colonial land dispossession. The chapter also touched on African landscape and the colonial encounter and demonstrated how a mythical construction of Africa by white settlers displaced African landscapes and African ways of seeing and



experiencing the landscape. The chapter concluded by discussing the relationships between land, landscape and belonging and how these have been fused in a politics of belonging in the African and Zimbabwean historical context. Of particular note is the way belonging is asserted through claims to autochthony and the use of ethnicity. The next chapter is the first empirical chapter of the thesis and it gives a historical background to the study area.

## **Chapter Four: Mola and NyamiNyami District**

### **4.1 Introduction**

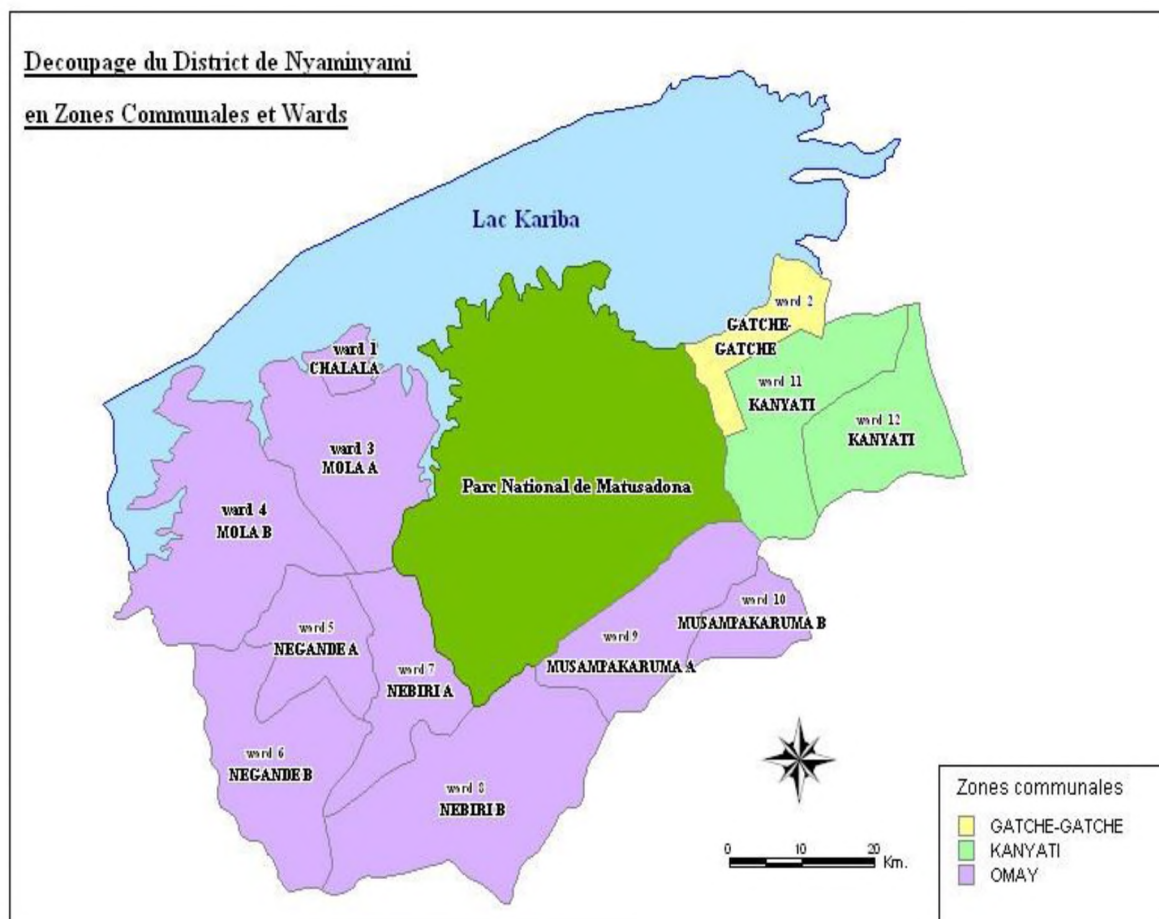
The present chapter gives the reader a background to Mola, NyamiNyami district and the Zambezi Valley more broadly through a mixture of excerpts from primary data interviews, informal interviews, observations and secondary data sources. It also briefly touches on how the history of displacement has affected the social and economic context in NyamiNyami district and the generality of the Zambezi Valley.

### **4.2 Geographic Location**

NyamiNyami district is divided into three communal lands, namely, Omay, Kanyati (now Makande), and Gatshe-Gatshe (Sibanda, 2001: 38; Mubaya, 2008). Omay Communal Land, under which Mola falls, has nine wards. The nine wards, broadly speaking and in terms of contemporary state structures instituted by the colonial state, fall under the jurisdiction of NyamiNyami Rural District Council (NRDC). In Mola and NyamiNyami district more generally, the Tonga people constitute the majority ethnic group. Tonga people constitute the “traditional population of NyamiNyami district” (Mashinya, 2007: 14). Of the four chiefs in Omay communal lands, chiefs Mola and Negande are Tonga. Chiefs Msampakaruma and Nebiri are of Shangwe origin. The Shangwe ethnic group constitutes the second dominant ethnic group. There are other ethnic groups (including the Shona) but they are in the minority. Ethnicity is a vital issue for claiming access to resources in, and belonging to, places like NyamiNyami.

The geographical location of Mola in relation to major cities and towns indicates that Mola residents are forgotten ‘orphans of the empire’ (Alexander, 2004). Alexander (2004:194) uses the phrase ‘orphans of the empire’ to describe the identity of white Zimbabweans who chose to “live off Zimbabwe, rather than live in it”. In the case of the Tonga of Mola, the Zimbabwean state has in large part not been committed to curbing the marginalisation that the Zimbabwean Tonga were subjected to during colonialism; hence the added adjective ‘forgotten’ in my view of the position of Tonga people in Zimbabwe. Theirs is not a choice, but a situation in which they find themselves as orphans of the empire displaced by the Kariba dam and further alienated through wildlife conservation policies. Dusty roads make travelling to Mola very difficult during the rainy season through floods. During my stay in Mola, residents in the area claimed that a portion of the national budget for the construction of tarred roads in

Omay in particular and NyamiNyami district in general was allocated back in the early years of independence and that, on the official map of the country, the roads appeared as tarred. The local authorities, they claim, misappropriated the funds.<sup>13</sup>



**Map 4:1: NyamiNyami District showing wards of Omay Communal Lands in which Mola wards 3 and 4 are located** (Source: Mubaya, 2008).

The nearest town (Karoï) to the study area is approximately two hundred and fifty kilometres away and a rugged un-tarred road links it to Mola. There is a marked difficulty for Mola residents who cannot afford the exorbitant transport costs (see later). They have to travel on foot an estimated forty-kilometre journey to reach Siakobvu growth point from where they can board transport to either Karoï about 210 kilometres away or to Gokwe Centre, which is much less than the distance to Karoï. For Mola residents, however, free transport is available for

<sup>13</sup> These are unofficial claims difficult to substantiate but everyone who gets to live in Omay communal lands will hear people of this area talking about it. I first heard these claims when I was teaching in Negande in the year 2013. During my fieldwork in Mola, people of Mola were making the same claims again. What is evident in these claims, however, is a sense of estrangement from the rest of the relatively developed districts in the country in terms of road networks.

those travelling to Kariba urban by boats provided through the services of the Bumi Hills Hotel. These services have been waning since the year 2000 with reasons cited by respondents linked to the authoritarian politics of the ruling party and the victimisation of Mola area as an opposition party stronghold.

The four chiefs of Omay communal lands have two wards each under their jurisdiction (Mubaya, 2008:8). Chief Mola has wards 3 and 4 under his jurisdiction (see Map 4.1). Data provided by the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR<sup>14</sup>) and the Zimbabwe Census Preliminary Report of 2012 indicate that Mola area has a combined number of 2 892 households. The same sources put the number of households in ward 3 at 1 484 and those in ward four at 1 408. According to Mubaya (2008: 4), ward one (named Chalala) falls under the jurisdiction of NRDC after it was upgraded to the status of peri-urban. Mubaya (2008) notes that prior to this conversion, Chalala was under the jurisdiction of chief Mola.

The conversion of ward one from under the jurisdiction of chief Mola provides an invaluable point of entry into the tenuous power play that governs space and resource control in present day Mola. This is particularly so for two reasons. One, because Chalala is an economic hub<sup>15</sup>, with one of the most vibrant fishing camps in Mola, a fact which undoubtedly led to its growth. The question that boggles the mind then is; does the vibrancy of economic activities at Chalala make it out of reach for chief Mola to have it under his jurisdiction? Second, during fieldwork, interviewees including the chief described Chalala and all the other fishing camps as falling under the jurisdiction of chief Mola. In fact, Chalala was one of the reasons why the people of Mola resisted the imposition of a conservancy in their territory. They cited discontentment at their being alienated from the resources harboured in their territory. Thus, ward one formally falls under the NRDC's jurisdiction while at the local level it customarily falls under the control of chief Mola, at least in the eyes of Mola residents and their chief.

Mola is characterised by a largely dry physical environment. Nevertheless, Mola is one of the communities closest to the lake. The map (Map 4.1) from Mubaya (2008) shows the exact location of Mola; bordered by the Matusadonha National Park and by Negande and Nebiri under chiefs Negande and Nebiri respectively. Research participants claim that Mola

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<sup>14</sup> A Non-Governmental Organisation that was engaging in relief projects in the area during the time of this study.

<sup>15</sup> Chalala has one of the most successful fishing camps as a source of livelihoods through largely but not limited to kapenta fishing and trading. Fish traders come from different parts of the country to buy and sell mainly kapenta at Chalala. It is a buzzing space with a horde of other informal economic activities that revolve around trading in fish. (Observation during my stay in Negande in the year 2013). Further discussion of this contestation appears in the chapter on fishing camps.

area was formerly a part of chief Nebiri's chiefdom/territory but, due to the sparse population that occupied the Zambezi Valley in previous times, the area now known as Mola was largely 'empty' with few households under Nebiri living there. The people of chief Mola were dislocated further inland and the government asked chief Nebiri to pave way for these dam evictees. In the next section, an overview of the Zambezi Valley and the Tonga people prior to displacement is given.

### **4.3 The Zambezi Valley and the Tonga People**

The population estimate for the Gwembe Valley prior to the construction of the dam was approximately 85 000 and over 90% were Gwembe Tonga (Scudder, 2005: 2). This figure combines the population on either side of the then Zambezi River. Scudder (2005: 1) describes the Zambezi Valley prior to Kariba's construction as having been a harsh environment for the Gwembe Tonga farmers. The Gwembe Valley is a term that describes the middle Zambezi Valley in which the Gwembe Tonga are the dominant ethnic group (Scudder, 2005: 2). Consequently, the term Gwembe Tonga refers to people who used to live in this Valley especially in studies carried out on the Zambian side. The Valley was characteristically hot and dry due to low and irregular rainfall; it is semi-arid, with annual average temperatures hovering around 90 degrees Celsius. Rainfall was marginal and very irregular from one region to another but flooding was very common. The average annual precipitation is between 400-800 square millimetres (Sibanda, 1995:71). This made (and makes) cultivation of crops such as maize, sorghum and bulrush millet difficult due to periodic droughts.

Prior to the damming of the Zambezi, the Tonga engaged in multiple economic and survival strategies most of which were predicated on the river (Musona, 2011:4): the major activities were fishing and stream bank cultivation. The people relied on a rich natural resource base, which also included the harvesting of wild grasses, foraging and hunting (Scudder, 2005; McGregor, 2009; Musona, 2011; Sibanda, 2001; Colson, 1971). There was a concentration of arable alluvial soils along the Zambezi River and its tributaries and this determined the distribution and density of the Gwembe Tonga (Scudder, 2005; Sibanda, 2001). Two thirds of the surface area were on the south bank (the Zimbabwean side) but only one third of the human population lived there because of smaller alluvial deposits (Scudder, 2005: 1). The Tonga could cultivate twice annually on younger alluvia (Musona, 2011; Scudder, 2005; Sibanda, 2001; McGregor, 2009). They also cultivated once on rarely flooded older alluvial soils during the rainy season (Scudder, 2005). They cultivated three types of riverine gardens (Weinrich, 1977: 19). Crop failure due to marginal rainfall and excessive and premature floods was common



(Scudder, 2005). This resulted in repeated famine years that escalated death rates during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to Scudder (2005:2), the developing economies of the two Rhodesias after the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century provided the Tonga people with a range of options for survival. These included government-led famine relief and wage labour in both countries.

An ethnographic study by Weinrich (1977:19) among the Zimbabwean Tonga revealed the Tonga referred to the pre-displacement era as a golden age. They recalled life in the Valley as better than it is today (Weinrich, 1977: 19) and the Tonga cherished their past life, claiming that they always had plenty of food and were never hungry. In addition to reliance on the Zambezi and its tributaries' alluvial soils for survival, the Tonga had a strong religious identity (Scudder, 2005). This included a form of ancestor worship where the welfare of individuals and kin groups depended on the "goodwill and protection of recently deceased kin" (Scudder, 2005:2). Data gathered by Colson in 1956-57 on divinations attributed major cause of illness, death or other misfortune to ancestral displeasure (Scudder, 2005: 2). These religious beliefs and practices, as will be shown in subsequent chapters, have a direct bearing on how the Tonga to date associate themselves with their environment. The Tonga were/are a matrilineal society (Dzingirai, 2003; Colson, 1971; Weinrich, 1977).

Conventionally, wherever there is involuntary displacement, affected communities are entitled to compensation at least to cater for the inevitable scathing livelihoods disturbance and loss of access to basic amenities such as food relief and housing, in order to make adaptation into the new environment easier for the new inhabitants. As indicated, this did not take place. However, as became clear from interaction with Mola residents, there are some repercussions of displacement that cannot be corrected through redistributive justice measures. These include old homes and ancestral shrines that were flooded by the lake.

Participants who claimed that they witnessed displacement also lamented limited support that came in the form of lorries ferrying people from the vicinity of the river valley to their new area of settlement that was unsuitable for agriculture. One of the four respondents who witnessed the displacement narrated the process with elements of irony and sarcasm that relayed the still prevailing pains and grievances:

*Relocation was at short notice. We did not have ample time to prepare for it. Many people lost their valuables: livestock, food stocked from the previous harvest and in many instances, lives were lost. The Sikhanyana [district administrator] promised us support especially food, which never came.... Perhaps it came but it was blown by the wind*

*before it reached us. They [colonial government] left us to starve and die* (Narrative interview 1, with Moses; 12/10/2015).

In the next section, the economic and social context of Mola and NyamiNyami district is presented.

#### **4.4 Economic and Social Context**

NyamiNyami district is one of the least developed and unconnected communities in Zimbabwe (Basilwizi, 2010; Musona, 2011). NyamiNyami district lies in Zimbabwe's natural region 5 (which is semi-arid) and this explains the susceptibility of the area to persistent droughts. A report by UNDP in 2003 ranked NyamiNyami as the poorest of Zimbabwe's 55 districts (Save the Children, 2004). The different areas to which the displaced Zimbabwean Tonga people settled have ubiquitous indicators of economic and social marginalisation as well as restricted access to natural resources. Subsequent to damming, the Tonga were relocated onto dry land to pave way for forestry and wild animals through the creation of national parks (Musona, 2011:4), the Matusadonha National Park being an example.

Forced relocation for the Tonga people on the Zimbabwean side was accompanied by no compensation for their disturbed livelihoods, thus turning them into one of the most impoverished; least developed and disconnected communities in Zimbabwe (Basilwizi, 2010; Musona, 2011). As noted in chapter three, white settlers strategically appropriated the Zambezi River to construct Lake Kariba and rezone much of the surrounding lands into a recreational park that is today legally owned by the state through the National Parks and Wildlife Authority (Malasha, 2002:1).

The impact of the displacements and erasure were immense such that, to date, the Tonga people are still to come to terms with them (Tremmel, 1994:13). Sixty years after development-induced displacement, new generations have been born who do not know first-hand the old homes that "their parents and elders continue to talk about" (Scudder, 2005:2). The lack of first-hand information (and experience) of displacement, however, does not belittle the appropriation of the history of displacement to contest access to land resources and belonging by these new generations. Following chapters will indeed show that the history of displacement is a very vital resource that the people of Mola use to construct a sense of belonging and gain access to environmental resources both in Mola and at the lake.

Survival for the Tonga has been on the margins, with poaching as a survival strategy to circumvent incessant yearly droughts that characterise the Zambezi Valley (Musona, 2011; Mashingaidze, 2013; Dzingirai, 2003). As such, the Tonga have been subjected to regular

clashes and conflict with the state and safari operators who see the valley as a lucrative wilderness and hunting zone (Reynolds, 1991:28). Reminiscent of the classical development of capitalism, NyamiNyami is an example of a ‘neo-enclosure’ of productive assets from the poor peasants, with the colonial and postcolonial administrations effecting natural resource management regimes that prevent the Tonga from accessing natural resource endowments in their area such as wildlife. Natural resource management institutions<sup>16</sup> refer to them as poachers (Dzingirai, 1999: 41); while their meagre agricultural produce is annually destroyed by wild animals like elephants, hippos and buffaloes, which are strictly protected by the state (Musona, 2011; Dzingirai, 2003a, 2003b; Mashingaidze, 2013; Sibanda, 2001). The area is characterised by chronic poverty because of limited social and educational development opportunities, isolation from markets, poor soils and erratic rainfall.

The Tonga of NyamiNyami district appear to be invisible, not only in terms of socio-economic development and the general integration into Zimbabwe as a nation but also to academics who often refer to Binga as the area in which the Tonga people live. Mashingaidze (2013) made an invaluable observation – the invisibility of the Tonga people on the Zimbabwean side in academic work. Overall, Tonga studies tend to have a Zambian bias (2013), with renowned scholars of the Gwembe Tonga (for instance Scudder and Colson, 1982, Clark et al, 1995; Colson, 1971; Scudder, 1973, 1991, 1993, 2005) devoting their work to long-term longitudinal research on the Zambian side. Mashingaidze (2013), however, falls into a trap when it comes to studies on the Zimbabwean side, a trap perhaps not recognised by most Zimbabwean scholars. Most of these scholars (such as Dzingirai, 2003a, 2003b, 1998) give more attention to Binga as the home of the Zimbabwean Tonga and other areas such as NyamiNyami are less recognised and at times not even mentioned at all. A few scholars (notably Hammar, 2002; Sibanda, 2001; Mubaya, 2008; Musona, 2011) are an exception as they write of the Tonga in areas other than Binga.

Mola is located in the northeastern part of the Zambezi valley in Mashonaland West province. Presumably, it is because of the location of Mola and the rest of NyamiNyami district that they lie invisible from most studies that focus on the Tonga people and the Kariba dam. With the introduction of the CAMPFIRE programme in 1989, and because NyamiNyami district is one of the first areas in which the programme was introduced, NyamiNyami and

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<sup>16</sup>This refers in particular to the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Authority and CAMPFIRE arrangement. The NyamiNyami Rural District Council controls the latter. All these institutions vest ownership of land and natural resources in the hands of the state and curtail rural livelihoods options by restricting natural resource use and access by rural communities in NyamiNyami.

Omay communal land in particular have received considerable attention from studies that focus on the successes, failures and conflicts around CAMPFIRE (Sibanda, 1995, 2001; Balint and Mashinya, 2006, 2008; Mubaya, 2008; Musona, 2011).

NyamiNyami is a site of countless relief projects (Metcalf, 1994; Mashinya, 2007:114). Such relief projects, though helpful, do not enable the people to be self-sufficient, as they tend to tackle the ‘symptoms of the problem’ (starvation and hunger) rather than capacitating the people to stand on their own by tackling the roots of the problem. Commenting on the devastating effects and irony of relief projects for development evictees, Partridge (1989: 374) quotes Martin Luther King thus: “Don’t give in charity what belongs to people in justice”. The relief projects in Mola, as elsewhere, are often seasonal and are an exacerbation of injustice to a people who deserve restitution<sup>17</sup>.

Despite noting reservations by Michael Cernea (1990) on the notion of development project oustees, Thayer Scudder (1993)<sup>18</sup> insists that dam projects produce refugees. Partridge (1989:374) concurs with Scudder (1993) that development-induced relocation turns evictees into development refugees as safety nets such as fishing or hunting grounds, lands, pastures, houses and forests are appropriated by the state for development. This study argues that the people of Mola are development refugees, and remain so to date. Credence to this proposition is provided in the following descriptive account of the first fieldwork trip to Mola for this study on the 11<sup>th</sup> of October 2015.

It is a short distance of approximately forty kilometres from the growth point, Siakobvu. Yet the journey to Mola is an arduous one, lasting the whole day waiting for transport that becomes available only around twelve o’clock midnight. The transport is in the form of open trucks or small lorries that ferry fish traders from Chitekete in Gokwe to various fishing camps situated in Mola but mainly Chalala fishing camp. Although these traders include Tonga people, most of them are Shona speaking peoples whose visit to Mola is mainly for trading and taking part in the thriving business of buying and selling fish.

The transport providers are mostly non-Tonga and they charge exorbitant fares for the forty kilometre journey (not less than \$US 7). On this particular day, on our way to Mola, a journey that takes more two hours because of the dilapidated nature of the untarred roads, a dispute with the owner of the lorry erupts. It is over the currency one of the passengers uses as

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<sup>17</sup> This of course is difficult in the Tongan case notably because Zimbabwe does not have a restitution policy and while restitution would normally involve reclamation of old homes, most of the old homes were flooded by the lake.

<sup>18</sup> Here, Thayer Scudder explains that he started using the phrase ‘development refugees’ in the 1950s when his long-term studies with Elizabeth Colson on the Gwembe Tonga started.



his fare – the South African rand. The driver and his assistant immediately threaten the passenger to pay in United States dollars or else they will drop him in the midst of the forest, the Matusadonha National Park. One of the passengers intervenes in support of the affected passenger in captivating words indicative of the bitter experiences of the Tonga people in Mola:

*Why do you people come with your vehicles here? Do you think we cannot survive on our own without you? This is Tongaland, ruled by Tonga people - we are free people, we have lived in isolation for decades and we are comfortable with it. After all, you overcharge us. Why do you not do business in your area of origin? You want to come here and dictate to us how we must live. Forget about that, no one is going to disembark before his or her destination* (Observation and field notes 11/10/2015 – 12/10/2015).

A close analysis of the passenger's words reveals the experiences of a bitter person due to the long history of the marginalisation of the area and its remoteness. More significantly, though, as the lives detailed in this study will also reveal, is a substantiation of an assertion by Raftopoulos and Mlambo (2009) that Zimbabwe is a condition still in a process of 'becoming', far from being a nation yet. This is particularly so given the particularity of the phrase 'Tongaland' above and related utterances from the passenger that advocates an idea of Mola as a somewhat secluded place cut away from the rest of the country.

Finally, I briefly note the politics of Mola. Of Mola's two wards, ward 3 is volatile politically, mostly due to its publicised support for the opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). In one of the many conversations I had with Thomas, he claimed that their support for the opposition was because the present ruling party had failed them in almost every aspect of what a government must do to cater for the welfare of its citizens. For him, if the MDC gets into power and fails to deliver on its promises, local people would simply look for another opposition party to support. Respondents in this study attributed the political volatility of ward 3 to the higher numbers of educated individuals who reside in ward 3. Of the two well-established and relatively well-resourced schools in Mola (Mola Primary and High Schools), both are found in ward 3. There are other schools in Mola (both ward 3 and 4) but these are under resourced and less developed (as well, unlike Mola High, the secondary school in ward 4 ends at Ordinary level.) Ward 4 residents find it difficult to continue with their education due to, among other challenges, the long distance they have to walk to attend school in ward 3.



#### **4.5 Conclusion**

The chapter provided a descriptive overview to Mola, NyamiNyami district and the Zambezi Valley. It gave the reader a background to the geographic location of Mola and elaborated briefly on the economic and social context of the area. All these have consequences for the way the Tonga people of Mola understand their environment, landscape and belonging. The following chapter looks at the way the people Mola use memory of displacement to construct narratives on landscape and belonging in Mola and the Zambezi Valley.

## **Chapter Five: Recollections of the Past – Landscape among the Tonga of Mola**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses narratives on Tonga understandings of the environment, entitlement to place and natural resources, and the process of emplacement in Mola after they were displaced from the Zambezi River. It reveals the ways in which the Tonga of Mola use memory and history of displacement to interpret the environment and to claim access to environmental resources as well as claim belonging to Mola. Among other discursive interpretations, the chapter shows interpretations of landscape as sacred space and unique discursive claims to belonging to two places, that is, to Mola and to Lake Kariba. At the centre of these claims are questions of access to resources at the Lake as well as attachment to place. The chapter ends with a section that shows that landscape is contested even among members of the same community.

### **5.2 Emplacement in the Dry Physical Landscapes of Mola**

It is in the afternoon, of October 13 2015. Moses is sitting in the shade of his innovative storey hut – a pole and dagga hut built on stilts (called *busanza* in Tonga). The hut has in many respects indications of arduous adaptive strategies to the adverse ecological conditions of Mola, a process of emplacement in a physical environment that is characterised by excessive heat as well as dangerous wild animals. Huts like these are a common sight in Mola. However, Pierre claimed that the number of such huts was on the decline because of the dwindling wild animals, the major purpose for which they were built. They also allow lots of free air circulation in response to the scorching sun and heat of the Zambezi Valley. They have a deep history linked to the life of the Tonga people from the vicinity of the Zambezi River and the subsequent emplacement after displacement in present day Mola. This deep historical connection with the displacement process does not however imply that the huts only came into existence after displacement. Nevertheless, displacement indeed has a much more significant role to play in the symbolism exuded today by these huts. Indeed, they symbolise continuity and the ability to cope with life in adverse environmental conditions.

Although the huts near the Zambezi River prior to displacement had precisely the exact function as those found in Mola today, huts like Moses' now have an added symbolism. They also come with deep memories of forced removals and alienation from the people's formerly reliable life source, the Zambezi River. It has been three days since Moses and I came to know

each other after Pierre introduced me to him. However, we have become more than just friends already, as we have soon become like teacher and student, with him as the former. As we arrive at his compound on this particular day, he instructs me to sit down. To an outsider, one would wonder how the people still continued to live in these adverse conditions but Moses, one of the eyewitnesses to displacement, explains how the Tonga of Mola and the rest of ‘Tonga-land’ managed to traverse the challenges. Immediately after formal greetings, Moses carries on with his story. Moses begins the conversation from where we had left off the previous day and he begins with two Tonga proverbs: *Manyika manyika julu ndimwi* [the earth might be big as it is but the sky is one]; and *Kunkombonkombo nkukwanu* [you may travel to very faraway lands but your place of birth is your permanent home]<sup>19</sup>. In relation to the two proverbs, he elaborates:

*You may face problems in life and see the next household as faring better but that is life; you have to learn to face challenges and be contented with what you have. This is Mola, our homeland, and with it, we have learned a great deal of life’s challenges. If we were to contemplate on a relocation or migration to other regions, and find even greater challenges what would be the next step? Should we relocate again? ... That is the reason why I gave you the second proverb at the beginning ... There is only one place you will ever get to call home and indeed feel at home ... your birthplace. Our homeland has taken us through many tough but helpful lessons... You ask about the structure of my house? It is one of those helpful lessons... We also remember where we came from through these type of huts. Our forefathers left us this tradition...life at the Zambezi was always that of getting over any adversary...our nyika<sup>20</sup> [territory] on its own is the engineer of this... It was a nyika that did not allow those who cannot think of overcoming challenges like heat and wild animals. When I am sleeping up there, I see the course of our people’s lives, back in the past when we would sleep up in the hut and watch and see the amazing waters of the Zambezi safe from wild animals...protected from the strong heat. (12/10/2015)*

A few days after this particular encounter with Moses, Maria, one of the respondents, was to explain the utility of huts like that of Moses’ in the following way:

<sup>19</sup>Moses would throw Tonga proverbs at the beginning of our conversations. Since he learnt of the main objective of my study, he vowed to teach me about the Tonga way of life and ‘authentic’ tradition which he claimed was quickly being lost through the penetration of modernity. One way he tried to do this was to begin every chat with one or two Tonga proverbs.

<sup>20</sup> The Tonga of Mola use these terms, ‘nyika’ and ‘boma’ interchangeably to refer to territory or country at large. The former term, however, has much affinity to Shona terminology for territory or country. Its use among the Tonga could presumably be linked to their intermingling with the Shona in Mashonaland West in which NyamiNyami Distinct is located.

*We came up with survival mechanisms, we built houses high up to avoid being attacked by wild animals especially during the night. For protection of crops, we built busanzas<sup>21</sup> [huts on stilts] where we guarded our produce but we lost many people as well in attempts to chase away the pesky animals. The huts also lessen the effects of excessive heat that characterises this area. But still, many of our relatives were killed by wild animals especially elephants, buffaloes and lions. Even to date, elephants and buffaloes are a menace to our survival though the extent is reduced as compared to the early years of settlement. This year alone, elephants killed four people (22/10/2015).*

Through lived experience, the people of Mola have come to accept the challenges posed by the aridity of their homeland. This was evident in some Tongan proverbs used by Moses in narrating how they value Mola as their home. Despite numerous challenges of displacement, Mola represents to them a permanent second home after their old homes at the Zambezi River were destroyed.

As Moses continues with his narrative, he emphasises that the history of habitation in the Zambezi Valley has always been that of protracted struggles of ingenuity to tame the landscapes, mostly through protective measures. In the Zambezi Valley, the huts built on stilts served to protect people from predatory animals such as crocodiles and snakes. Subsequent to displacement and, in the absence of the cooling waters of the Zambezi, the huts today symbolise one of the reliable bases to contend with the many adverse contingencies in the everyday lives of people in Mola. The severe headaches from heat and the marauding wild animals are some of the contingencies with which people in Mola have had to deal since they were displaced. Prior to displacement, the Tonga had always lived in harmony with wild animals, relatively far away from them. However, with displacement, they invaded the forests where the animals lived in their numbers and so they had to build huts like these to protect themselves.

Apart from the huts, Moses dug deep into his memory to narrate how the largely dry physical landscapes were transformed into positive factors of production through harnessing the perennial Zambezi River prior to displacement. Mixing both hard work and spirituality (as will be seen in subsequent sections of this chapter as well as throughout the rest of the empirical chapters, spirituality especially beliefs in the existence of ancestors help the Tonga in claiming belonging to both Mola and the Zambezi Valley at large), the Zambezi Valley landscapes were turned into a home such that even present-day evictees still regard themselves as *bakulwizi* or *bakazwa kumulonga*, that is, ‘people of the river’ or ‘people who came from the river’. In this

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<sup>21</sup> This is a plural form. Singular form (one hut) is *busanza*

respect, evidence from this study concurs with McGregor's (2009:3) observation that, although people were displaced and lost access to the river, their claims were not silenced. These identity marking phrases have similar connotations to those noted from previous studies on the Tonga along the Zambezi Valley. McGregor's (2009) *Crossing the Zambezi* recalls a conversation with a Tonga fisherman who refers to himself and the Tonga at large as people of the great river or river people.

Like McGregor's (2009) chat with the fisherman, however, these notions present a somewhat static and mystical relationship of the Tonga with the river – that is, an unchanging identity and tradition linked to questions of Tonga belonging and identity, even amongst the Tonga of Mola. With such assertions of belonging comes the question of entitlement or rights over the resources of the Zambezi Valley particularly the river itself (now the Lake). In his narrative, Moses vividly recalls how, due to familiarity with the Valley, the people rarely went hungry despite the adverse ecological conditions. In the process, he reminds me of the second proverb mentioned earlier and substantiates its essence:

*We had to make use of what we had at our disposal. Despite the aridity of most parts of our homeland in the Valley, we had the Zambezi River as a special gift from Leza [God]. The river enabled us to practise farming throughout the year...we planted a variety of crops – such as tobacco, sweet potatoes, rapoko along the wet stream banks for a period of three months and that allowed us to farm four times a year. The river was our major source of livelihood. A variety of edible wild fruits and vegetables were also available in abundance. Particularly during droughts, we gathered fruits and vegetables such as utsiga, maddi, lukonka, inchenje and debelebe, found near streams.<sup>22</sup> There was no restriction regarding what a household could gather and there were no foreign laws as we have today. They make it illegal for us to use the natural resources. Then, there was hunting as well without any restrictions over when and which animals to hunt. We had traditional means of regulating natural resources...no one would take more than they required for subsistence but today they tell us that we are not capable of taking care of our resources. For these few days you have been here, I am sure you have come across safari operators who guard against poachers; us the owners of the animals have turned*

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<sup>22</sup> These are Tonga names. Utsiga refers to a wild fruit that the Tonga mix with ashes to make porridge in times of livelihood stress. Moses explained all of these to me and save for inchenje and debelebe, all of them were new to me. Inchenje, translated to Shona as shumha, is a wild fruit with a botanical name of *Diospyros mespiliformis*. Debelebe (derere/ gusha in Shona) refers to okra. Lukonka are wild potatoes found in the forests. Maddi are plant roots used as relish. Chamuddonga/chamboja are edible plant leaves also found in the forests.



*into thieves of our own resources... There was nothing of that sort prior to our forced removal from the Zambezi. (12/10/2015)*

At this point, there was need for redirecting the flow of the conversation because Moses was now diverting away from the core question of the day – a narrative of the pre-displacement landscape and the imponderables surrounding everyday life under adverse environmental landscapes of Mola. He immediately stops but shaking his head emotionally. Redirecting his narrative of the Zambezi Valley as a *lived-in* landscape, Moses explained the strict regulations regarding livelihood construction that was guided by the *banalyo gundu* (which literally means ‘owners of the land or territory’).

### **5.3 Memory, Land and Environmental Resource Rights**

Moving ahead a further five days after this conversation with Moses, the second respondent was Maria, also one of the acclaimed eyewitnesses of the displacement. Maria’s story had little or no variance with Moses’ narrative regarding Tongan landscapes prior to displacement. The first question she addressed was that of gender, i.e., the gendered nature of Tongan landscapes. These related to but were not limited to women’s land rights and access to land and the natural resource base. She began by appraising the significance of women in Tongan matrilineal communities of the pre-displacement epoch. Her emphasis was much more on the importance of (a more or less) ‘egalitarian’ set up whereby women’s land rights were not necessarily limited to usufruct rights acquired through marriage. Though noting the abundance of land and other resources during that period, she also traced how the custodians of land – chiefs – are even to this day traced through matriarchy rather than patriarchy. She said:

*Our days kumulonga [at the river] were days of unending harvests. Harvests of so many essential elements for survival. Land was in abundance and there was not a huge demarcation between men and women regarding access to land and natural resources. Chiefs, the intermediaries between the owners of the land and the people, came from the lineage of women. Yes, even chief Rare, our present chief is from a matrilineal pattern. This is the brief history of the mbwaami bwamuli Zambezi [the chieftainship during the days at Zambezi Valley]: Syanjeme– Syaamakwebo – Jairos [acting chief] – Nankombola – Dumbula – and the present one, Rare. At one time before we came to Mola, we had a female chief – Nakombola. It all depends on what the land and its owners tell us to do. We do not have a strict reserve of the throne for men only and, if the chief is a man, the lineage is from the women’s side. (18/10/2015)*

There is an interesting observation in the three previous quotations from the interviewees above. This pertains to the question of land rights and land ownership. Their narratives here point to group ownership of land. They also point to the use value of land as opposed to an instrumentalist value of land and related resources for the people of Mola, specifically the Tonga. In this way, the findings concur with other scholarship (such as Sadomba, 2014; Mafeje, 2003; Mangena, 2014; Hughes, 2006; Moyana, 1984, 2002) on the idea of an African landscape which does not view land as a discrete parcel that can be bought and sold. References by respondents to *banalyo gundu* also point to the triumvirate of the supernatural, the living and the environment. These work hand-in-hand to constitute what Mangena (2015) refers to as an onto-triadic Shona deep ecology. In this way, Tonga ecology prior to displacement resonates well with Shona deep ecology.

Despite the matrilineal nature of Mola community and most Tonga communities generally, there was evidence of what is reminiscent of a “sexualised and gendered reading” (Schimdt, 1995:369) African reading of landscape which restricts some members of the community from accessing certain dimensions of the land. This pertained mainly to women. Maria pointed this out, albeit in an affirmative mode which highlighted that ordinary people did not put restrictions on members of the community from accessing certain physical or social spaces, such as mountains and royal graves. Rather, this was supernaturally ordained. In the words of Maria:

*Certain mountains are a no go area for women and in some cases for men. It depends on the place in question. For women the Lake is the most restricted area. You cannot just get there without being in the company of a man. The malende [grave/shrine] for the royal family is also a no go area except for a few selected men and women. If you go against this, you will suffer consequences that range from death, failure to give birth for the rest of your life, or just vanishing in the forests/mountain (18/10/2015)*

Regarding such cultural mores that acted almost like mechanisms of surveillance for people at the Zambezi, Maria also pointed to taboos and the practice of totemism during the pre-displacement days. She gave an account of seemingly Gramscian-type organic intellectuals in Mola who, through everyday experiences, had come to understand landscape as ‘lived-in reality’ and who put up systems that sustained the natural environment. These involved taboos and identity constructs embedded in the environment like the use of totems. These, Maria said, had the significance of preventing over-exploitation of specific species of trees and animals, in a way revealing the efficacy of indigenous ways of nature conservation.

Such a narrative tally with the contention that indigenous knowledge and practices have a salient role in environmental/nature conservation. This is contrary to the Western-centric environmental degradation narratives that portray African societies as inherently destructive of the natural environment. Simultaneously, these organic intellectuals' way of seeing nature have been silenced by the domineering Western-centric worldview not only articulated by the colonial government but also perpetuated by the current Zimbabwean government and state. Maria thus lamented that the utility of such cultural mores was now being undermined by the penetration of Christian and Western values, which have monetised Mola:

*White people viewed us as people who do not care well for the environment and surrounding natural resources in our territory. This is not true; we have always had some ways to take care of our resources without finishing them. From our days at the Zambezi, we had areas that were restricted for ordinary people to enter for harvesting fruits and other natural resources. There were areas reserved for chiefs and members of the royal clan. There was also the use of totems...these were usually in the form of animals. No one would kill or harm their totemic animal... this allowed space for animals to reproduce and multiply, as not all people would kill the same animal. This practice is still prevalent today but, because of money, people are now killing even their totem animals... Totemism has decayed. You can find someone who is of the elephant totem but yes, that person will not eat an elephant but may kill the elephant for purposes of trading in ivory...s/he will not eat the elephant but will take the skin and sell them.... Such a person will not have violated the forbidden act of eating their totem.... Then there is Christianity...so many of our children today do not hold tradition in esteem... Most disregard totems, and areas that used to be sacred are now so ordinary for them... There is no longer a smooth flow of traditional Tonga cultural beliefs in Mola due to the influence of modernity particularly Christianity (18/10/2015)*

Besides being a physical landscape lying out there (and merely external to them), people of Mola in a sense observed the dictates of the landscape for effective livelihoods construction. In this way, landscape among the Tonga was also found to exist in the form of a 'structuring structure' (to use Bourdieu's conception) existing over and above individual behaviour in relation to natural resource use. From what Moses was saying, the whole landscape among the Tonga people (apart from specific sacred sites and shrines) is an asset of the "living timeless" (Mangena, 2015) and this guided how the people harnessed resources. As an asset of the living timeless, environmental resources belong or are owned by supernatural forces, who in the case of the Tonga of Mola are metaphorically referred to as the *banalyo*

*gundu*. This substantiates classical sociologist Durkheim's assertion on religion, that it exists *sui generis*, i.e. over and above the individual. Moses cited a number of taboos – social facts or mores – *that* govern human-natural environment interactions and some of these are still being observed today, particularly but not limited to fishing camps. However, such practices are no longer being observed by the younger generation due to the penetration of Western Knowledge Systems (WKS) and Christianity.

Giving an illustration of what was, and was not, expected for fruitful crop cultivation, Moses elaborated as follows:

*As I have already told you, the land is our heritage from banalyo gundu; ... they passed to us strict rules to abide by when cultivating crops and tending domestic animals. You are staying at Thomas's home and you definitely will abide by the rules and regulations of his house. The same applies to us the Tonga when we were staying in the Valley; we had to observe certain traditions even for crop production lest we would risk harvesting nothing. For instance, we were not allowed to transplant seedlings after mating with your wife or anyone else; ... failure to abide by this, all seedlings would wilt or suffer stunted growth. So, for the better part of the planting season mating was prohibited. (13/10/2015)*

Memories of what life was like at the Zambezi Valley have lingered on in the minds of the people of Mola to such an extent that they use these memories to claim belonging and entitlement to the lake and its resources. This gave rise to a phenomenon during the course of this study that I interpreted as dual belonging. It is to the discussion of this phenomenon that the next section now turns.

#### **5.4 Landscape as Sacred Space: *Banalyo Gundu*, Rainmaking, and Belonging to Two Places**

In his 2015 doctoral thesis on forced removals and social memories in North West Zimbabwe, Ivan Marowa distinguishes between two kinds of memories, i.e. displaced and nostalgic. On the one hand, displaced memories are a source of information regarding the past and they help social actors to make sense of past human-environment relationships (Marowa, 2015). On the other hand, nostalgic memories, which is the literal meaning of nostalgia, involve a longing for the past. Nostalgic memories are used to interpret the present through a remembering what the past was, and in a process that leads to a construction of belonging to the landscape. They carry with them fragments from the past and are used to criticise present social, political and economic challenges (Marowa, 2015).



Marowa's (2015) observation reflects an almost exact situation in Omay Communal Lands' Mola territory. The Tonga people in Mola have recollections of what life used to be like in their then un-trampled-upon homeland in the Zambezi. These memories of displacement, notwithstanding the multiplicity of years since the people's forced resettlement to Mola, are transmitted by those who experienced the coerced displacement to younger generations who were born in Mola. Just as Marowa (2015) recognises the function of displaced memories as a source of information about the past, memories about the Kariba displacement are used by the Tonga of Mola as a source of evidence about the past. In turn, and analysing the present situation in Mola, these displaced memories form the basis for narratives about, and claims to, social belonging to the Zambezi past (or nostalgic memories) for the people of Mola. Participants expressed nostalgic memories through an appraising of how life was comparatively better at the river than in present-day Mola.

Social actors in Mola thus exude both displaced and nostalgic memories of their former homeland along the Zambezi River through which they construct notions of landscape and belonging. Nostalgic memories have also been evident in activist strategies by the Tonga to claim ownership and access as well as compensation and development through what McGregor (2009:129-30) quoting Nora (1989) refers to as "sites of memory". Displacement and unfulfilled promises of development, which were made when they were relocated, constitute the primary Tongan site of memory used to refer to life back at the river and assert ownership to the Lake and claim state resources (McGregor, 2009). In these social memories are narratives of a sense of belonging to two places. People traditionally have a yearning to belong or to be attached to something ranging from a place/territory/land, religion, group or institution, something that would make them secure and comfortable (Boas and Dunn, 2013:1). In the Mola case, this has a dual dimension.

Claims to belonging to two places give substance to the fact that the people of Mola find themselves entangled in an ongoing process of coming to terms with the event and process of displacement that paved the way for the construction of Kariba dam. Dual belonging here implies discursive narratives as well as social action (mainly rituals such as rainmaking and the enthronement of chiefs) that place Mola people as belonging to Mola (their present locality) as well as to their old homes from where they were displaced. Old homes, as revealed by the narratives in this study, are sacrosanct and, as such, give credence to entitlement claims to the lake and related cultural waterscapes.

In concurrence with Maria and Moses' narratives was Laura, who commented on the abundance of pathways that always presented themselves to the people in the face of the



adverse conditions which made them susceptible to recurrent livelihoods failure. Laura emphasised the character and function of nature and natural resources as public goods with use values, as opposed to private goods that have primarily an exchange value nowadays. She also shed light on the uncontested nature of land rights back then (at the river) due to the abundance of land and less people. This however does not mean the land did not have owners, as is the common narrative that was (and is still being) used by some; especially by white former colonial masters to justify colonisation on the basis that they occupied and penetrated empty landscapes (Schimdt, 1995:359) that belonged to no one. In the face of droughts, for instance, Laura narrated that there was always something (a safety net) which made the people survive against all odds. She particularly appraised the extra farming season that the people practiced, saying:

*Kumulonga [at the river] we used to farm throughout the year on the banks, not very large portions but that was sufficient for our survival. We did this for a number of times throughout the year. After the rainy season, we engaged in nchelela [riverbank cultivation]. Land rights and ownership were matrilineal.... Before displacement we were surrounded by a big forest where each family/household could settle where it wanted. Nchelela [stream bank cultivation] was mainly done by women and children as men went hunting and looked after cattle and other domestic animals. The land did not belong to a single family/household as is the case nowadays...it belonged to the owners of the land, the ancestors. Land and other natural resource use at the river was for subsistence, not for profit. There was barter trade but even this was also for the immediate consumption needs of respective households and not for accumulating profit. The chief's role in land distribution issues was minimal; rather chiefs were mainly needed for maintaining order among the people as well as intervening during crisis periods like droughts through rainmaking and pleading with the owners of the land (17/10/2015).*

Laura went on to highlight and explain about how the waters at the Zambezi River were not just for immediate livelihoods construction but also for livelihoods resilience in the long run during times of livelihood stress like droughts.

These waters, and even to date, are believed to be the residence of the *banalyo gundu* (owners of the land), namely, the ancestors. The Lake Kariba waters are perceived as the home of the infamous NyamiNyami (elaborated on later). The importance and power of *banalyo gundu* was often manifested in rainmaking practices and ceremonies which, even to date, are still being practised in Mola. Laura's narrative connected past rainmaking ceremonies with the

practice of rainmaking in present day Mola. She narrated in a way which shed light on elements of a sense of belonging to two places at the same time – i.e. the Tonga of Mola belong to Mola their present territory while at the same time they belong to the dam wall where they go for rainmaking and other pertinent rituals. In these rituals, she explains an onto-triadic deep ecology (Mangena, 2015) that exists between the living, the ancestors and nature that characterises most African societies. From Laura's narrative, the process of rainmaking becomes encapsulated in an intertwined complex which addresses the social ills between the living and the dead (*banalyo gundu*) among the Tonga of Mola. She explained the process and ritual thus:

*During droughts, the chief summoned the elders, spirit mediums and they went to a specific place at the river kuhambwida mizimu [to shout at the ancestors] so that they address the problem(s) at hand. This is done with the aid of beer, which is brewed by territorial wives, a black blanket provided by the chief and a black bead also provided by the chief. The choice of the black blanket is among other things the norm for items that have to do with ancestors. After the rainmaking ceremony, elders endowed with gifts of seeing beyond the ordinary will receive a sign through visions or dreams in acknowledgement of receipt of the offering. The extent of the problem at hand determines where the ceremony is conducted. Even nowadays, when there are problems haunting the community, elders and the chief go to the dam whenever there are larger problems especially droughts like this year which has seen the levels of the water in the dam declining. This month, there is going to be a collaboration whereby our relatives from Zambia will come with their chief and all the other surrounding communities including Negande and Msampakaruma and will gather here to address this problem of drought...to try and see where we have gone wrong. Each community and their chief will come with their drums, blankets, and beads (19/10/2015).*

Under the same theme of landscape as sacred space, and in light of rainmaking and related rituals, Moses pointed out the importance of sites for the rituals in relation to the gravity of the matter at stake.

However, there is now a duplication of sites for rituals and this resonates with dual belonging. Prior to displacement this was not the case, as the people had not been relocated to Mola. With displacement, the people established new sacred spaces in Mola where they perform specific rituals and ceremonies but these are not for major social problems. In Mola, then, certain dimensions of the physical landscape have been transformed into sacred social spaces; but rituals in these spaces are specifically undertaken by those endowed with the task

of doing so by the *banalyo gundu*. The presence of these sacred spaces in Mola transforms landscape into a distinct non-human world that affects human behaviour as not everyone is allowed to go there.

With the construction of the dam, some sites at the river were drowned but people in Mola are adamant as to their continued importance to date. Moses narrated the organisation of these social spaces in Mola and at the Lake as follows:

*We have always understood ourselves as people who are incomplete without the River [now Lake Kariba]. In times of big social problems, we go to the dam wall to shout at the banalyo gundu but when we are faced with slightly small problems, we go to local sites. Here in Mola we have a ceremony we call lwiindi in which we thank the ancestors for their taking care of us giving us good harvests, and at this ceremony we also pour out our petitions on problems that may be haunting us. In the past few years there was a lion called Mwayusa Biyeni [Good Afternoon], which was haunting us and the elders had to go and plead with the banalyo gundu. After kuupila mizimu, [prayers to the ancestors that are associated with beer brewing that is offered to the ancestors] at the malende [grave shrine], we realised that some members of our community had angered the banalyo gundu. Kuupila mizimu and lwiindi happen at the malende, where no ordinary person is allowed to set foot except the elders, royalty and the spirit mediums. Setting foot on the malende when you are not eligible to do so will cause undesirable consequences on the perpetrator. If you are a young man and you set foot on the malende you will never have the privilege of siring children again in your life. It is a sacred place. If people visit malende for rain making purposes and banalyo gundu are pleased with the offering, people must hear some thunder beneath the baobab tree before they leave. That is a sign that banalyo gundu have accepted the offering. With bigger problems, we always have to go to the dam wall because that is our original, bigger home where our ancestors live. The sites and shrines at the wall were flooded so elders go there through boats. (4/10/2015).*

The quote from Moses above has interesting points about latent and manifest functions. Moses here gives a narrative of the *malende* similar to that given by Laura, i.e. it is a sacred site for important ceremonies like *lwiindi* and rainmaking. The narratives of these two respondents reveal the restrictions placed on the sites for the rest of the community save for a few assigned individuals when it is time for the concerned rituals. The interesting points I bring home here on the question of latent and manifest functions embedded in this interpretation of landscape. For the community of Mola, the manifest function is undoubtedly an observance and obedience

to cultural mores imposed by *banalyo gundu*. They do not do this in the sense of conserving the environment but as a way of obeying the dictates of tradition. However, a latent function comes about as not sacred spaces like *malende* are subject to material utilisation. This means that not all of the Tonga environment is degraded or cultivated. Because of this, cultural landscapes play a role in conservation if only implicitly.

On the last day of his interview, Chief Rare elaborated on the notion of Mola residents as possessing a dual sense of belonging. Sacred spaces have ensured the people of Mola exude a dual sense of belonging, entitlement and place attachment. In the chief's narrative of belonging to the river Zambezi and the lake, the affective nature of graves and the presence of *banalyo gundu* is of crucial importance. This is where the agency of things and the agency of non-human material in structuring human behaviour (Fontein, 2015) becomes crucially important. In Mola, graves and shrines, though long flooded by the lake, still carry venerable potency such that the Tonga of Mola construct belonging and entitlement to the lake mainly on the basis of the graves and the *banalyo gundu* flooded and domiciled in the lake.

Hence, rather than seeing it as a source of income and electricity as the colonial architectures of the dam did, for Mola residents this is a home for their forefathers. Rather than limiting themselves only to a history of claims (McGregor, 2009), the people of Mola cling to the non-human world (graves and *banalyo gundu*) to assert belonging to the lake many decades after they relocation from the Zambezi. For the people of Mola, therefore, Lake Kariba is their authentic home place due to the affective presence of these non-human materials that govern their everyday lives. The relocation of the people from the vicinity of the lake where they had lived for a considerable number of years made them to immerse deep roots there, by which they believe they are the autochthonous owners of the lake.

On this particular day, the chief, still busy with the building of a toilet, had his wives preparing for the welcoming of visitors from Zambia as well as from the nearby communities that were also displaced to pave way for the construction of the dam. According to chief Rare, the lake is a national asset yet it authentically belongs to the displaced peoples, Mola residents included. It is the prerogative of the Zambezi River Authority (ZRA) to oversee the management of the lake as well as restitution projects for the displaced peoples. However, authentic ownership of the lake and the surrounding landscape, the chief narrated, rests with the Tonga people. As such, the addressing of dangers such as droughts, the cracking of the dam wall, and the decline of water levels (interpreted by Mola residents as intricately linked to the *banalyo gundu*'s anger) is the responsibility of the displaced peoples who have to host a *lwiindi* ceremony to address these problems. In this narrative, the implication is that the people of Mola



and other displaced peoples in the Zambezi Valley rightfully own and belong to the land and the Lake. Chief Rare gave his narrative in this way:

*Since relocating to Mola, respective families go back to where they used to communicate with their ancestors. The government says the lake is theirs... but we say it is ours ... we see it as our home...we have lived in this state of servitude where men and women came to camp in our home and took away the heritage we were given by our fathers [banalyo gundu] to make it theirs for profit making. It is difficult to locate these shrines because the Lake's waters flooded them long ago. At first, families had to use bwaato [canoes] to visit the sites where they used to communicate with their ancestors. Now, boats are available and they use these... You ask me whether it is possible for the families to know where their shrines were exactly situated, and I will answer you like this: can a father leave his children getting lost in the forest? No. Banalyo gundu guide everyone willing to go to the flooded sites to pay homage to them. However, this is changing with some families having converted to Christianity... but we have not completely lost track of how banalyo gundu want us to live in their land. You looked surprised when I said that we have two homes...but yes that is how it is, not because we chose to have two homes but the white government put us in this situation. In Tonga, we say where the grand banalyo gundu lay resting is where the living people have a permanent home and source of life...so yes... our home is at the Lake where they flooded our homes (26/11/2015).*

Upon further probing, chief Rare explained that there were two types of *banalyo gundu* differentiated based on lineage and clan. On the one hand, there are those for families who pay homage (as a lineage) at localised *lwiindi* ceremonies and related sites or shrines and usually these are not related to the whole community's formal *lwiindi* ceremonies. They do, however, lead to an understanding of the Tonga's sense of place and belonging in the sense that they all translate to landscape as sacred space. On the other hand, the clan-based *banalyo gundu* are connected to the whole community of Mola. These clan *banalyo gundu* make strong the claims about Mola people belonging to the lake. In addition, as the chief further explained, whenever there are problems around Lake Kariba, ZRA consults the Chiefs including Rare to come for *kuhambwida mizimu* (shouting at the ancestors). This differentiation between lineage and clan *banalyo gundu* is elaborated upon further in narratives on graves and belonging in Mola in chapter 7.

When asked about whom the 'grand' *banalyo gundu* referred to (in the above quotation), the chief delved into two stories; the first was a narrative of the NyamiNyami still believed to reside in the Lake and the major bases of entitlement and belonging claims to the



Lake. It is to narratives of NyamiNyami that the following sub-section turns. In it, an important observation is that with the passage of time, oral tradition tends to present social researchers with more unanswered questions and contradictions. Added to the NyamiNyami story is the second story of Ume relating to present day Bumi Hills where Bumi Hotel is situated. In this narrative, again, we see evidence of an onto-triadic deep ecology encapsulating the intertwined participation of the living, the living timeless and the creator (God) in the world of the Tonga. Mangena (2015), in his review of literature on Shona environment, came to the conclusion that Shona environment interpreted cosmology and ecology from a communitarian vantage point. In these stories of NyamiNyami, Mangena's conclusion is succinctly substantiated also with reference to the Tonga.

### **5.5 Onto-Triadic Tonga Deep Ecology: Stories of NyamiNyami and Bumi**

A ubiquitous phenomenon worldwide is that as people come to live in a place, they develop specific mundane as well as religious interpretations of the world they live in. These interpretations of the world determine the way people 'live-off' and 'live-in' the specific place they call home. These subjective interpretations of the world for people in specific places become social facts and any failure to abide by these is usually accompanied by negative sanctions instituted either by the natural world itself or by the custodians of tradition. The Zambezi Valley for the Tonga people of Mola represented a home where they, despite the severe hot conditions, managed to live self-sufficiently for many years prior to colonialism.

#### **5.5.1 NyamiNyami**

In the NyamiNyami story, there was evidence of a belief among the Tonga that nature is not something to be conquered but a part of human society and something to be revered. An overarching theme in the interviews was the dominant narrative of harmony with the surrounding natural world as well as the omnipotence of the NyamiNyami (the manifestation of the 'grand' *banalyo gundu*) who, respondents claimed, would turn into a reliable provider of food in times of natural disasters like droughts. McGregor (2009) counters the contention that the Tonga believed in a river god. Whatever the case, however, the idea here is that the Zambezi River represented more than a physical landscape out there. It was culturally appropriated to form a landscape of Tonga social identity in as much as it was a source of reliable livelihoods through agriculture and fish resources. In the words of chief Rare:

*NyamiNyami represents a grant parent with major roles being provision of food and protection of all the inhabitants of the Valley; it makes us who we are. The NyamiNyami*

*gives Tonga people their roots in the Zambezi Valley. When we grew up, we were not told of any movement by our forefathers having come from other places to invade the Zambezi...we were and are from the Zambezi. That is why even so many years after the white government stole our heritage [the river] for their own benefits I can safely say I belong to the Zambezi, we belong to the Zambezi...bakulwiizi [those from the river] and the ZRA knows this...that is why they always consult us when there are problems at the Lake (26/11/2015).*

What exactly is/was this NyamiNyami upon which the chief was overemphasising the Tonga's origins and entitlement to the Lake? The insertion of 'is/was' in the question projects a picture of uncertainty that surrounds the stories of the NyamiNyami among the people of Mola. Participants in this study, particularly those who did not witness displacement while claiming the authenticity of NyamiNyami, appeared not sure of the present existence and functions of NyamiNyami. Doubts appeared pertaining to its form and character as well. However, the chief and the other four participants who witnessed displacement stressed the significance of the NyamiNyami even in present day Mola. The chief asserted that:

*Much has been said about the NyamiNyami, some of which is not true. Some have said it is a snake, while some say it is a fish. None of this is true. Most talk of it as if it is one yet there is a female and a male one. NyamiNyami are representatives of Leza [God] on earth, so they are well respected. They used to guide our way of life and they still guide our lives today...not exactly in the same way that they did before we were forcibly removed from the River. Before we came to Mola, NyamiNyami would appear in a number of villages or territories, appearing not to everyone but to those who were privileged to see it. Those who saw it would cut off chunks of meat which would serve households in times of hardships. This is where the name of NyamiNyami came from, Nyama Nenga [cut chunks of meat] because of its big size. All this was before construction of the dam when people used to get a livelihood from it. It just appeared from the ancestors. From one village it would appear in another village for the same purposes. You see the reason why it was a parent that offered us protection...not only this but we were also taught to live a familial life... to share proceeds from nature. That is why we did not have strict rules that restricted anyone from accessing the resources surrounding us. But since the dam was constructed, NyamiNyami is believed to cause mild earth movements because of its anger because the dam wall separated the male from its female counterpart. The earth movements are attempts from the male one to reunite with the female one. (26/11/2015)*

The chief went on to explain that the NyamiNyami was selfless and appeared to everyone to symbolise that the land and its resources were for everyone who resided in the valley. In this way, his narrative coincides with most scholars' assertion that land tenure and ownership among Africans is communitarian as opposed to private tenure and ownership (Sadomba, 2014; Moyana, 1984; 2002; Hughes, 2006). The only difference between what some of these scholars' position (Sadomba, 2014; Moyana, 1984) were saying and from what the chief was saying is that the chief was narrating what *ideally* characterised the system of resource and land ownership before displacement (while the scholars give a static notion of land ownership among Africans). For the chief, the construction of the dam disturbed and angered the NyamiNyami such that they did not see it appearing again, but they still believe that it acts and guides them from the background. He said:

*The NyamiNyami did not belong to an individual; it was a gift from Leza and the ancestors for our survival during difficult times as well as to guide us through the struggles of life. Its appearance to people is similar to what Christians teach about manna from heaven, we had our own manna at the Zambezi. Construction of the dam disturbed the NyamiNyami; we could have several by now but the dam separated the two. Forced relocation angered the NyamiNyami and the manna disappeared completely.*  
(26/11/2015)

Apart from its communitarian role, though, the chief was quick to highlight how those who violated the ethics and dictates of the cultural landscape would be severely punished by the NyamiNyami. This related to issues particularly in light of conduct in the forests and in the river. The NyamiNyami is believed to be responsible for most conservation practices by the Tonga of Mola even up to now. Because the great *banalyo gundu* manifested itself in the form of the NyamiNyami, a number of taboos keep Tongan physical landscapes clean particularly at the fishing camps. Because of the modernised system of resource conservation introduced by the colonial government and persistent to date, the current sphere of influence for the NyamiNyami in the forests and other physical landscapes such as mountains is minimal because the residents of Mola are restricted from harnessing these natural endowments. George echoed the chief's sentiments saying:

*Today we are seen as destroyers banyika [of the territory/country]. They call us poachers and people who are unable to take care of their territory. Yet it is they, the government, who destroyed our way of life, which was full of human care for resources and the environment... Had we been as dangerous to the environment and its natural resources, would you have seen the elephants, impalas and kudus that you say you saw on your way*

*to the Bumi hills? We have always been people guided by rules of caring for the world around us, yet today we are deprived of the very resources. NyamiNyami defined the Tonga people of Mola. He was a guardian, provider during times of difficulties...yet also a very strict father. At the river, people always had to obey rules and today they still have to obey these rules at the fishing camps. Those who have disobeyed the rules before can tell the story of their punishment. From here, Thomas can take you to Mr John's homestead. His son can better narrate the ordeal he suffered for disobedience at Sibilobilo fishing camp. (05/11/2015)*

From what George was saying, there were grey areas for further probing and clarification. For instance, the chief had said there were two forms of the NyamiNyami, yet George referred to the NyamiNyami as father. Was this not a sexualisation of the landscape and male chauvinism on his part? After all, gerontocracy and the gendered nature of landscape in Mola had been evident through the interview with Moses and Laura who revealed that women were barred from setting foot in certain spaces like mountains. George tended to emphasise on restrictions on women and the wayward behaviour of women. He explained that violation of such cultural mores accumulates negative sanctions from the NyamiNyami, including reducing fishing yields and in extreme cases, death:

*I thought I was talking with a grown up man (laughing at me) ...Father, yes because the NyamiNyami performed and performs the duties of a father. There is a male and female yes but we refer to them as one – NyamiNyami. ...Regarding the rules that we have to obey [to avoid overfishing], you can go to the fishing camps and ask the fishermen there. ... At the fishing camps, matting is not allowed and women are not allowed to enter into the boats for fishing purposes either. At Sibilobilo fishing camp, there is a snake island full of snakes that bite those who go against these rules. Snake island is the name that the place was given by whites but in Tonga we originally called it kalundu kaSiamavu [Siamavu's little mountain]. The NyamiNyami watches over all that happens at the fishing camp; he also watches over the behaviour of the fishermen's wives if they are married. If a fisherman's wife commits adultery whilst she is in the Lake, the husband will drown and die.*

George did highlight the existence of the male and female NyamiNyami but he claimed that the male dominated all the protective mandates for the people.



### 5.5.2 Bumi: Changing Interpretations of Landscape over Time

Besides the sphere of influence of the NyamiNyami on the lake, there was the story of Bumi (locally pronounced ‘ume’ and meaning ‘life’) and its relationship to *banalyo gundu*. In fact, the particular story of the NyamiNyami by the chief interwove into other narratives including from prior interviews particularly Moses, Thomas, Maria and Laura. The second day of the interview with chief Rare took place a day after Thomas and I had visited Bumi Hotel for him to have question papers of Mola Primary end of year examinations photocopied. This is one of the restorative justice agreements and claims to belonging by Mola residents encapsulated in an agreement by Bumi Hills management and the people of Mola. When the chief has an important function that requires huge quantities of meat or some money, as Thomas indicated, the Bumi Hotel management makes sure all needs are met especially in terms of financial support and game meat. They can slaughter an elephant for the chief. The Bumi management provides free transport by boats to Kariba urban. This agreement is regarded by the people as some way of compensating them for displacement from the river life source.

However, it is the narrative of Ume prior to displacement that was quite illuminating regarding Tongan landscapes in this context. Ume means life and it is the role of the hills and the river that made it to be called life. Ume symbolises the value of the hills and the river Ume that used to make life viable for the people of Mola and other Tonga communities prior to displacement. The naming of Ume River with a term epitomising life reveals the relationship of the people with the natural environment during the period prior to forced removal. Bumi is a name that came from the colonial government in its attempt to find it easy to pronounce. The transformation of the name also encapsulated a process of appropriating these life-landscapes into Europeanised landscapes of servitude and enclosures that squeezed out the metaphor of life largely. This was a process of Europeanising the landscapes synonymous with the Marxian framework of ‘metabolic rift’ as, through the violence associated with primitive accumulation, the locals were completely separated from their source of life.

Chief Rare narrated the story of Ume thus:

*As I said from the beginning, the land and natural resources are from banalyo gundu. They make these provisions for us their children. Their role is even more important in this our area which experiences many challenges for survival. The biggest challenge is to have food every day throughout the year. I told you about the NyamiNyami but NyamiNyami was mostly known for the Zambezi River, residing in the water. Not only was there river Zambezi, there was also the river Ume. It was a tributary to the Zambezi but it supported the people’s life. Ume means life and our elders named it as such because*



*from it the people got life...water from the river and other resources like fish. There were rules that restricted making the river dirty [pollution] and this would attract punishment from banalyo gundu... punishment could be through death of vital water resources like fish and edible plants that grow on the river banks. These are the provisions of banalyo gundu. Very close to Ume River were the Bumi hills where we got abundant resources like firewood and fruits before the coming of white people to our land. (26/11/2015)*

Maria echoed a view that was similar to chief Rare's. However, she added that the landscapes of life epitomised through the lifesaving functions of the Bumi hills and Bumi river had since ceased due to the prohibitive colonist environmental and territorial governance that locked away the resources of these two sites from being easily accessed by the generality of the people of Mola. Instead, Bumi hills is nowadays largely remembered for the torture from the Rhodesian armed forces and police of any people caught outside the law. Maria said:

*Bumi hills and Ume River used to help the people to survive through a number of resources that we could find there. With the coming of the whites, however, we could not freely go there. During times of war, people caught as criminals would be taken to the Bumi hills and once you were taken there, it would be bad news ... you would be beaten up by the soldiers. Therefore, from being a place where we used to get life, the hills became a place where no one wished to go anymore. Crimes varied but usually these would be in line with hunting without permission or gathering fruits in places that were prohibited. (19/10/2015)*

For third generation residents, however, this pre-displacement view of landscape as a life source is still evident today through the opportunities presented by the Bumi hotel. This different interpretation of the hills, though still framed within the lens of 'life', gives credence to the idea that landscape is not static but rather always a work in progress as people adapt and experience the world differently across space and time. It also shows that landscape can be experienced and interpreted differently within the same community. These third generation Mola residents do not refer to the landscapes of violence and torture mentioned by those who witnessed displacement and colonialism because they did not encounter this. Thomas, as we journeyed from that trip to Bumi hotel, narrated his experience and view of the Bumi hills in the following way:

*I still regard Bumi hills as a life source. Look, here we have just had our end of year examination papers photocopied free of charge. Because of the hotel, many tourists also come and buy crafts from the community. Our elders say they got life from the hills because they were at the centre and near the river... yes but even today, we are still*

*getting life from the hills through the hotel. For me, this life is an even way better now after the coming of whites because we have learnt a great deal of survival skills.*  
(07/11/2015)

If these somewhat differing perceptions of landscape in light of the changing functions of the Bumi landscape are indicative of the astatic manifestations of landscape, then the following section shows this further. It reveals the threatened nature of Tongan landscapes and environment in Mola in the context of modernity and the interference of the government in the enthronement of chiefs. For the people of Mola, most of their everyday experience of how landscape should be organised and experienced is under threat through the influence of their chief, who they accuse of modifying tradition and in the process making Mola territory 'dirty'.

### **5.6 Boma Lilisiidde Nkambo Talisalazidwe ('The Territory is Dirty; It Was Not Cleaned Up')**

Mola consists of traditional leaders in the form of village heads. According to Mubaya (2008), though, Omay Communal Lands does not have headmen as stipulated by the Traditional Leaders Act. There are, however, some village heads in Mola who assist the chief with the traditional or customary administration of villages. Information provided by chief Mola put the number of village heads in ward 3 at fourteen and eleven for ward 4. Of these village heads, two are from families formerly under chief Nebiri but who chose to remain in Mola when the Tonga people were relocated to Mola area.

Besides village heads, there are elders (men and women) who are privileged to set foot in sacred sites/places for the performance of rituals such as rainmaking. These elders are called the *Basimalende*<sup>23</sup> and in collaboration with the chief are responsible for decision making concerning the territory; mostly on issues that concern the supernatural world and the coronation of the chief(s). Though not formally authorities like the usually known figures in other places (such as headmen and village heads), the *Basimalende* thus hold symbolic power in terms of their office which allows them to perform unique duties that include the coronation of a chief. These elders also deliberate on issues that concern Mola territory, including natural disasters such as droughts or when there are problems haunting the community that are perceived to be a result of the erring of community members. They also mediate on ensuring stable relationships between the people and the natural environment<sup>24</sup>. Male *Basimalende* work

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<sup>23</sup> Elsewhere, they have been solely referred to as rainmakers (see for instance Munikwa 2011). However, from the interviews conducted in this study, their duties are not limited to rainmaking only.

<sup>24</sup> Field notes 13/10/2015.

in close relationship with territorial wives, who are the remaining wives of the previous chiefs.

At the time of this study, Chief Mola asserted that there are five *Basimalende* and three territorial wives. Of the three territorial wives, two are former wives of late chiefs and they are eyewitness evictees from the Zambezi. The third one is one of chief Mola's wives. Chief Mola claimed that it is the custom in Mola for the chief to have a territorial wife and build a hut for her (besides those of the other wives of the chief). Indeed, chief Mola had a hut for his acclaimed territorial wife though, during the course of the study, respondents attributed this to be one of the sources of social and environmental problems in Mola (Interview with chief Mola, 25/11/2015).

Eric Hobsbawm (2012) and Terrence Ranger (2012) observed that most traditional practices thought of as ancient are in fact recent inventions. While the people of Mola (just as the generality of the Tonga people) are popularly renowned for possessing a deep-rooted culture and tradition, the challenges of modernity brought through colonialism are threatening the smooth flow of this tradition in Mola. The Southern Rhodesia government adopted a policy of enthroning chiefs not based on tradition but on loyalty. Chiefs who obeyed the rules of the colonial government were enthroned while those who disobeyed were dethroned. This policy was part of the colonial pacification of Africans (Dzingirai, 2003), which saw them being relegated to marginal lands, and put under colonially accountable leaders - chiefs and village heads (Moyana, 1984; Mamdani, 1996; Cheater, 1990). As such, chiefs were enthroned primarily to fulfil easy governing of the subjects of the colonial empire to the detriment of authentic traditional functioning of chiefs in rural spaces of Zimbabwe.

In the process, the traditional chieftaincy lost its authentic meaning and most genealogies of royal clans were distorted. The post-colonial government has maintained the colonial practice intact as the coronation of chiefs in Zimbabwe today is a prerogative of the government rather than that of tradition. Chiefs have been used as an appendage of ZANU PF to extend its hegemony (Alexander, 2006; Mudege, 2008; Fontein, 2015) over the country particularly in rural areas. Chief Rare himself acknowledged that in the past, they had an imposed chief by the colonial government and this caused problems until the situation was redressed by replacing the imposed chief with an eligible candidate:

*There are cases of the colonial officials who appointed puppet chiefs who suited their objectives of indirect rule in defiance of the traditional Tonga chieftaincy values. Mola chieftaincy is hereditary... again, recently we had a case of someone not from a lineage of the royal family who ascended the throne and that caused a lot of problems for us. After deliberations with the basimalende, it was concluded he had ascended the throne*

*illegally and so he was made to pay sheep and beads... He was told that he had been assisted by the whites to become chief in complete disregard of traditional customs regarding chieftaincy in Mola; but now everything is back to normal as we reverted back to our traditional norms. (26/11/2015)*

Paradoxically, however, Mola residents have a completely different view regarding the current chief. The smooth running of everyday life in Mola, according to Mola residents, was disturbed because the current chief did not go through the prescribed necessary steps for a new chief to take over.

Now, this imposition of chiefs from above against a community's set rules directly affects the landscape and a sense of place and belonging. This is mainly because, for most communities, chiefs are custodians (Moyana, 1984) of nature/land, the living and the dead (Mangena, 2015). As such, narratives on landscape, memory and belonging fit within the rubric of chiefs and chiefly authority as was observed in Mola. Failure to follow tradition is viewed as one of the sources of the many problems that bedevil Mola territory today.

Most participants in this study opined that the abolishment of tradition in terms of the enthronement process of chiefs in Mola has made their territory 'dirty' and left it in dire need of cleansing for life to continue going on well for the people. Metaphors of dirtiness of the land/territory reveal the deep connections between Tonga environment and social life. Chief Rare is seen as an illegitimate chief who did not follow all the requisite ritual procedures for him to become chief and this is interpreted in Mola as a major source of the present day problems faced by people including attacks by wild animals. To solve this, participants advocated that the chief had to correct his wrongs by following the right protocol to his enthronement. Lydia, Pierre's mother, shed her opinion on the matter thus:

*Boma lilisiidde, nkambo talisalazidwe [the territory is dirty; it was not cleaned up]. Things went wrong when the government elected this money chief; he loves money and, for money, he is willing to forgo most of the traditions he is supposed to undergo to make Mola territory clean. He did not follow the required steps to becoming a chief. In Mola you do not just become a chief...you have to be accepted by the territory. (01/11/2015)*

Because of his past employment history in the government, where he worked as a driver for the District Development Fund, Chief Rare Mola is regarded by Mola residents as a puppet of the government who is always willing to compromise tradition for his benefit (and that of the government) at the expense of the rest of the community. They even accuse the chief of seconding the imposition of a conservancy which was only successful in ward 4 of Mola. Said Pierre's uncle:



*The problems that we have now are mainly because of the chief that we have. He does not stand for the interests of the people of Mola. Our main problem is the government who come to choose a chief whom they want. The rightful person to be the chief for Mola was killed through witchcraft by this current chief. Rare knew he would not be successful in his ambition of becoming chief so he resorted to witchcraft. Had he followed the right way, he would be devoured by lions; the deserving candidate that he bewitched had banalyo gundu on his side. Before he died, he warned that after every year a small baobab tree would germinate. He died six years ago and for sure there are six baobab trees which have germinated by his graveyard. (01/11/2015)*

Thomas later accompanied me to the graveside of the said man and, indeed, there were six small baobab trees. Such is the interwoven human-environmental relationships that, in this case, the trees symbolised contestations over chieftaincy in Mola. Probed further on what he meant by the chief being devoured by lions if he had followed the right procedures for his enthronement, Pierre's uncle elaborated on the whole process of enthronement for a chief in Mola. In this process, the environment possesses agency over human beings in that it responds to and senses whether the person intending to become the chief is the right one. Failure to meet the requirements, the result is death. In the following section, the process is described including how chief Mola supposedly overlooked the right procedures.

### **5.6.1 Territorial Wives and Chiefly Authority in Mola**

The process of enthroning a chief in Mola is a seven-day process through which the aspiring candidate undergoes inspection by *banalyo gundu* in a forest. In this way, the territory/environment assumes a 'structuring structure' role through governing social organisation and relations. Additionally, it was revealed that women have a dominant role in Tongan landscapes in relation to royalty. Probably this is because their society has a matrilineal grounding. As such, Tonga environment and landscapes are not only an object of human agency in people's economic pursuits but they also govern human behaviour. Pierre's mother elaborated on the process of enthroning a chief in this way:

*In issues of succession, you are taken without notice when they want to make you the new chief. They ambush and catch you at night and clothe you with a bead; they take you to a forest and leave you there. It is a taboo for you to run away. Elephants, lions and other dangerous animals will be roaming around you. You will be sheltered in a musasa [a makeshift habitat] and it is required of you to spend seven days in the forest. Only one man whom you do not know where he cooks from, prepares nzima [sadza] for you and*



*delivers it to you. After seven days, that is when the rituals for coronation begin, and this includes finding banakazi banyika [territorial wives] and sleeping with them. There are two of them, namely nankondwa and namuloba. Both of them are referred to as bamenyi [singular mumenyi]. You are supposed to build a separate hut for one mumenyi whom you will stay with during your tenure as chief. (01/11/2015)*

Some respondents went as far as to claim that their territory was chief-less and this was dangerous for the wellbeing of the community. What was more interesting was that respondents claimed that the throne is open to everyone as long as they have been accepted by the territory through undergoing the whole seven-day period in the forest. If accepted by *banalyo gundu*, they will not be harmed by wild animals but, if not accepted, they will be devoured by lions and other dangerous wild animals. Because respondents claimed chief Rare did not go through this, they claimed their land was dirty and the throne was vacant. Thomas had this to say:

*The chief's post as we speak is vacant. If I had the courage to go sleep with bamenyi then I would be the eligible chief. The bamenyi would then have to inform male basimalende that I have slept with them and am the new chief. Chief Rare is a coward; he is afraid; ... The land is dirty. Proper procedures for the coronation of the chief were not followed. Under normal circumstances, the chief is responsible for the cleansing of the country through for instance getting rid of natural disasters like mazongororo [millipedes] or other pests as well as stray animals. The chief is also supposed to intercede in consulting the ancestors for adequate and peaceful rains and for good harvests. But this is only possible though the aid of bamenyi of which right now they cannot assist him because he has not fulfilled what he must do first. (21/11/2015)*

Respondents gave unanimous opinions regarding the illegitimacy of chief Rare's enthronement. As a reason to substantiate his illegitimacy, they cited that the previous *lwiindi* ceremony in Mola had signs that everything is wrong. Moses was the most emphatic on this example of the previous *lwiindi* ceremony. He said:

*Last year, when we went for the lwiindi ceremony, elephants approached at the malende shrine and they walked all over the area during the night. The following morning there were footprints all over and this is a sign that there is an anomaly somewhere. Where can we look for to get the source of this anomaly? It is the chief of course! Spirit mediums were consulted but the causes of the elephants walking all over malende were not disclosed to the rest of the community because the chief knows that he is only chief in matters concerning money.... Simwaami oyu oyanda zyacihungu [He is a modern chief who does not follow tradition] ...He is even afraid of the ancestors. (14/10/2015)*

Maria further explained the process and what is required highlighting the inadequacies of chief Rare's route to enthronement. She explained what the *bamenyi* were meant to do. Of importance was the royal bead that every chief has to get from the *bamenyi*. Here however is a controversial question where a later justification by chief Rare sounded plausible. The *bamenyi* in question are wives from years back before displacement. What happens is when a current chief dies, his wife becomes a *mumenyi*. Currently there are three surviving *bamenyi* and they are very old. Now, as Maria explained:

*There is a bead that every chief should wear. It has to be obtained from the mumenyi or bamenyi depending on who is surviving among the banakazi banyika. The current chief is not wearing it because he did not sleep with the bamenyi. The government is also responsible for washing away our traditional rites for electing chiefs because they do not make a follow up on whether the person they are electing is the one that the territory has chosen. As I speak, Rare's young brother is fighting him so that he takes over the chieftainship and rectifies the trouble the chief has brought to our territory... there are elders [basimalende] who also facilitate the whole process. Rare's young brother is negotiating with the basimalende to try and go to sleep with the remaining bamenyi. But he has to pass through the forest first. If he succeeds, Rare will no longer be our chief, because the ancestors will have received his young brother instead. Under normal circumstances, chief Rare must not set foot at the malende (28/10/2015).*

Maria's narrative tallied with Pierre's uncle's. He explained how the very sacred *malende* had been made dirty and this weakened its role as guardian of the people of Mola. He also explained that the chief ought to be put under surveillance and be prevented from going to and presiding over *lwiindi* ceremonies at the *malende* shrine as this would worsen the woes the community of Mola would face. He indicated that the chief was drawing upon some kind of human rights perspective and manipulating this to his benefit. The chief, Moses claimed, thus indicated a refusal to sleep with the *bamenyi* on the basis that they were too old and this would be abusing them. For Pierre's uncle, however, using human rights as an excuse for not following tradition was of little significance because the chief went on to marry someone still in school to make her the new *mumenyi*, something that is – for Pierre's uncle – a violation of human rights. In his words:

*The malende is usually a very sacred place and someone who has gone against tradition like what the chief did would not have been able to set foot there... Nevertheless, because our chief did not respect this, almost everyone can set foot there nowadays without facing any punishment form banalyo gundu. Kumalende kwakafumuka nkaambo simwaami*

*taanaona abankaintu banyika pe [the malende lost its sacredness because the chief has not yet slept with the territorial wives]. He is refusing to sleep with bamenyi saying they are old women. He wanted to be chief so he is supposed to follow everything expected of him. Banalyo gundu are saying chief Rare is disgusted by the required act of sleeping with bamenyi yet they [banalyo gundu] slept with the wives. This is a big betrayal ...I call it trampling on nzima/sadza that one day you would want to eat in order to survive. He is disobeying banalyo gundu yet he wants their protection and he is leaving the people he is supposed to lead vulnerable to their anger (02/11/2015).*

To emphasise the adverse consequences of what the chief did by not following the traditional rituals of becoming the chief, Moses compared the disparities experienced by Mola area in relation to surrounding communities in Omay communal lands with regard to harvests over recent years. This is an interpretation of the Tongan environment as a punishing landscape through the anger of *banalyo gundu*. For Moses, *banalyo gundu* are punishing Mola area because of the chief's misdeeds through meagre rainfall and harvests. He narrated the situation thus:

*Since chief Rare took over, we have experienced a number of calamities... Sometimes you hear that at Siakobvu, Nebiri, Msampa or in Negande they had good harvests yet here in Mola there will be a drought. The nature of manifestation of these problems are the same as when malende are not respected and they are disturbing Mola right now. We blame it not only on the chief but also on the government because had the government not interfered, this young man [chief Rare] would not be chief today. The kind of chief banalyo gundu usually choose are of old age that would not be disgusted at the request for them to sleep with bamenyi. Minister Ignatius Chombo and chief Charumbira were responsible for the coronation of the current chief. The lwiindi ceremony's other purpose was to cleanse the territory but no such ceremony was done for chief Rare (14/10/2015).*

The violation of enthronement ethics was found to be affecting even the very territorial wives who are supposed to be part of the local leadership in addressing social problems confronting the people of Mola. These wives are now also in danger if they attend the sacred spaces to which they have the privilege of leading the proceedings in rituals that have to restore tranquillity in the area. Interestingly, this study was carried out at a time when the Lake's water levels were declining and interviewees attributed this decline in part to the mishaps associated with their dirty territory which needs cleansing. Lydia had this to say:

*Because the chief did not do the right thing, banakazi banyika are not accompanying him to malende whenever he goes there ... yet they are supposed to lead the proceedings there.*

*They are afraid of dying because they are also not clean. The last lwiindi he looked for people to brew beer for the ceremony but these also refused citing fears of death... but he persuaded them by promising to pay them. Unfortunately, it is us who have to pay for all this; you hear that water is diminishing in the lake... How can it not get finished when banalyo gundu have been disobeyed like this? (03/11/2015)*

Later during the interview with the chief, he gave his own account which of course is contrary to what the other interviewees were saying. Unfortunately, it was extremely difficult to probe the chief on what his subjects had said pertaining to his territory being dirty and his rule as illegitimate. He was however asked on *bamenyi* wives and gave a different account. As indicated earlier, he justified looking for the young *mumenyi* because the existing *bamenyi* were too old and sleeping with them would amount to abusing them.

### **5.7 Conclusion**

The chapter gave a synopsis of narratives of pre and post displacement landscape among the residents of Mola. Landscape here manifests in multifaceted forms which include landscape as land use, representation, and physical land out there. In these narratives of Tongan landscapes are struggles of taming dry barren landscapes into habitable homes through for instance building huts on stilts. Tongan landscapes, however, are still alive as research participants linked the past and the present in the framing of cultural landscapes that characterise life in Mola. Characteristic of cultural landscapes more broadly, Tongan landscapes have been interwoven through the past and present in a process that involves the construction and understanding of space and place among the Tonga of Mola. Landscape as sacred space is a dominant theme in Mola and this resonates with narratives of *banalyo gundu* in which are anchored beliefs about nature as an asset that belongs to the people as a gift from the ancestors. Through these narratives of *banalyo gundu* are rooted assertions of belonging and ownership of the lake and the current place in which they are domiciled – Mola. This is however opposed to the status quo, which recognises the lake as a state asset.



## **Chapter Six: Landscape, Displacement and Access to Resources in Mola**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter deals more with the construction of landscape by the people of Mola within the context of CAMPFIRE and the fishing camps that are domiciled in Mola. As was highlighted in chapter three, the littoral on the Zimbabwean side was converted into a number of protected areas, including the Matusadonha National Park and a recreational park. Fishing is subjected to laws similar to game laws. More important are the similarities between CAMPFIRE and a co-management programme that regulates fishing at fishing camps at Lake Kariba. They are all akin to the rhetoric of sustainable utilisation of resources without depleting them. While other game is managed under CAMPFIRE, Lake Kariba Recreational Park's inshore fishery is managed under a similar co-management arrangement (between the government and local communities) that seeks in principle to prevent overfishing.

These resource management programmes, again as highlighted in chapter three, tend to protect the economic interests of the elite. The discussion that follows details the experiences of the Tonga people of Mola with reference to access to resources at the Lake and in the protected areas of Mola. The chapter speaks to localised experiences of access to natural resources and how people, in certain instances, defy regulations to exercise some degree of autonomy over their physical environment even though implicitly. It also shows that the CAMPFIRE programme, through the principle of community ownership and participation, gives people a sense of entitlement over resources and they use this rhetoric of ownership to contest any further alienation from accessing natural resources. The chapter begins with a narrative of the promises of displacement that have largely not materialised.

### **6.2 Displacement and Belonging**

People of Mola, just like other surrounding displaced people in nearby communities, have a horde of grievances against the state, as they are alienated from the natural resources that surround their present home place. They situate these grievances within the historical context of their forefathers' forced relocations from their ancestral homes. An often-cited grievance is the fact that the Tonga people have not been major beneficiaries of the electricity project for which the dam was constructed, despite the dam-induced displacement. A fascinating, yet paradoxical, predicament is that the people of Mola had the Zambezi Valley and River as their home place that had the capacity to enable them to survive through the abundant waters of the



Zambezi. Though not anti-development (and after some persuasion that the benefits of the dam would follow them), the people of Mola were forcibly moved to the present day Mola area, formerly an area under the Shangwe people of chief Nebiri. As such, drawing on Scudder (1993) and his many other studies since the 1950s on the Zambian Gwembe Tonga, this study argues that the Zimbabwean Tonga people of Mola, just like other dam-induced evictees across the world, are development refugees. Their new area of resettlement is largely unsuitable for agriculture but is endowed with rich wildlife resources that should have enabled them to survive. Yet the development model used by the colonial government of the day endeavoured to alienate them from the abundant wildlife resources. To date, they survive at the margins, with the postcolonial government offering minimal support if any at all. A classification of them as part of Zimbabwe's invisible subject minorities (Muzondidya, 2007)<sup>25</sup> is arguably not an overstatement.

Mola as many other surrounding areas in NyamiNyami was subjected to a European-defined landscape or as a way of seeing which interpreted landscape in this case as wilderness (Wolmer, 2007). It was also subjected to a new form of landscape as land use through reserving it for tourist-related business such sport fishing and hunting. In this continued pursuit of a capitalist development model aimed at accumulating capital by dispossessing and immiserating Africans through alienating them from their land resources, the Tonga were forgotten, in the process effectively substantiating their status in Zimbabwe as an invisible subject minority.

Landscape encapsulates the past and the present and it is a continuous process of construction and reconstruction, making and remaking of a people's place, position and being in the world (von Luig and von Oppen, 1997; Bender, 2002; Marowa, 2015). In like manner, the people of Mola reflect on the past and the present in their narratives of landscape and belonging in their present home. These are narratives situated within the context of differentiated ways of seeing the Zambezi Valley and the River, without any concrete demarcation of boundaries articulated by the Tonga people (which is far different from the colonial era and its surveying and classification of land-uses). Their case, though in specific ways, resonates with the rest of Zimbabwe's land question where land was appropriated according to the values and beliefs of the settlers regarding land use and settlement to the detriment of Africans' thoughts about land and landscape. In this regard, the Zambezi Valley,

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<sup>25</sup> The groups whom Muzondidya terms as invisible subject minorities are synonymous to what I referred to as the forgotten children of the empire in chapter four. The country's nation building project and programmes like the land reform programme of 2000 have often overlooked them.

just as the rest of the country, was subjected to a white land-rights trajectory embedded in Lockean labour theory, which says one can rightfully occupy an unoccupied piece of land by applying labour on it.

Especially noteworthy for the Tonga of Mola is the remoteness and undeveloped state of their present home, as they recall the pseudo promises for electricity that came with displacement. This concurs with McGregor's (2009) argument that Tonga people's disgruntlement has much to do with their exclusion from development and modernising projects (particularly focusing on the Lake). In their narratives, respondents pointed out the pains of poverty in the midst of plethoric plenty much in the same way that activist Dominic Muntanga noted (in chapter 3): a story of the Zambezi River as that which depicts drought in the midst of plenty of water. In his recollections of displacement, Pierre's uncle had this to say:

*Before we were chased away from the Zambezi, life was far much better...but they came and persuaded us to move. They made promises...many promises. Our major worry was the river and where we would get a reliable source of water. They assured us that there would be constant supplies of water... takategwani meenda alaa kumutobela [they said to us, "water would follow you"] but today no such thing has ever happened. The water did not follow us neither is the electricity project for which they removed us from the river benefiting us. (03/11/2015)*

There are some continuities in terms of traditional Tonga-environment relationships, though this does not suggest that the people of Mola possess a static framework of cultural landscapes and interaction with the natural world. People in Mola have been remaking their ideas of landscape but the continuities are of equal significance. Broadly speaking, in these memories, the people of Mola construct a sense of social belonging within the context of the problems that confront their current territory and home place. They analyse present conditions and problems in relation to their displacement from the Zambezi River even though most of them were not yet born at the time of displacement in the 1950s. These problems are largely manifested in the dry physical landscapes of Mola and alienation from their ancestral homes. This substantiates the notion of development refugees in the context of dam displacement. People are displaced in the name of development yet they end up facing challenges for survival while the resources in the area from which they are displaced churn out development benefits that go to people from far away regions and places. In light of this, Moses opined on the matter:

*Since they removed us, the Zambezi River ceased to be ours;...yes that is what they say but we know that this is a lie. They say it belongs to ZRA and the government. It is like you coming to take away my mother from me then you claim that she is not my mother*

*anymore. They promised us that not only water would follow us but also that they would generate electricity from the river and we would be the first to benefit from electricity. But tell me, have you ever seen any homestead that has electricity in Mola? No ... yet the river is ours and no one can change that. (12/10/2015)*

Even for those third generation descendants who did not witness displacement first hand, terms that are loaded with meanings of attachment to the lake are used. They identified themselves as *bakulwizi* and *bakazwa kumulonga* (those from the great river/ those who came from the river). These are key words/phrases attached to claims to social belonging and identity for chief Mola's people. It connects them with the history of displacement and gives them an understanding of where they came from. More significantly, however, *bakulwizi* buttresses memories of social, political and economic marginalisation. *Bakulwizi* also informs how the people of Mola and the Zimbabwean Tonga in general exist in relation to their understandings of space and place in Zimbabwe as a country at large. Respondents pointed to the prevalence of conflicting life-worlds between the Europeans who ran the government of the day in Southern Rhodesia and the local Tonga. The local people could not understand the reason why they could be dispossessed of their homeland, even when they had been given a hint of the impending forced removal from their land. Maria recalled and narrated the ordeal of forced displacement:

*There were several visits by land surveyors. They asked us whether all was well... living along the river and cultivating the land there. We thought they were joking with us when they told us that soon all the cultivation of crops and fishing on the river was going to end. How could we have thought that anyone would move us away from of our land? Upon the last visit before displacement, the surveyors came and put pegs around the area and told us that they wanted the people to vacate. When asked why they were doing this, they simply replied that we would see the reasons for the pegs in a very short period....sure, in no long time at all, they forced us off, driving us inland. (25/10/2015)*

In a more or less similar view, chief Rare narrated experiences of displacement in a way that revealed the pains and loss to date. In his narrative, however, he claimed that the *banalyo gundu* (owners of the land) at the *malende* (ancestral graves/shrines), at which the people communicated with the owners of the land/place), offered an affirmative response to the idea of relocation citing fears that armed colonial government officials would harm people. Literally, *banalyo gundu* means owners of the land but it has two interrelated dimensions. First, it speaks to notions of control and ownership of land and environmental resources. Second, it reveals that the environment is more than a 'physical solum' (Mafeje, 2003:2) for the Tonga

of Mola, as it also includes supernatural force(s) that controls it. This validates definitions of land and the environment as more than physical entities and that defy the nature-society dualism that often characterises West centric definitions. West centric definitions, which often constitute accepted officialdom, give ownership and control of land and environmental resources to state structures such as the (current) rural district councils. For the Tonga people, however, land and environmental resources have a different owner – *banalyo gundu*. According to the chief, the *banalyo gundu* at the *malende* foresaw and foretold that the government officials would come with force and armed. Because of this, *banalyo gundu* supported the abandonment of the people's home. Chief Rare said:

*It all started with the sikhanyana [district administrator] who came to tell us that there was going to be a dam constructed on the river and we had to be prepared for relocation. The major reason they told us was for generation of electricity. Takabuzya kumalende nkukutegwa bantu aaba balaa lufu, saka takafwambaana kumvwisisya [We consulted at the graves/ancestral shrine and the response was that these people had come with death, so we quickly complied and agreed to move]. The sikhanyana and his counterparts came armed with guns; it was as if they were going to war. There were cases of shooting at our neighbours... aChishava awo akafwa bantu [at Chishava over there (pointing in the direction where the place is situated) people died] ... about six people were shot dead. It was the most excruciating pain we suffered as a people. Why we had to be dispossessed of our home ... our birthright ... is still an unanswered question that haunts us today. (25/11/2015)*

Such claims on the important role that was played by *banalyo gundu* at the *malende* demonstrate the affective nature of graves in influencing and guiding life among the people of Mola.

However, compared to the chief, a slightly different account about the way the surveyors and the colonial government went about the whole process of pegging the site for the dam came from Moses. Perhaps this signifies the unreliability of oral history over time as social actors have the tendency to forget given the long time it has been since the forced removals. For Moses, the surveyors came and marked trees. When the surveyors asked about what the people were doing at and along the river, they were in disapproval of the people's type of agriculture and did not relay all the information about what they (surveyors) were doing. A hint however about the impending displacement was evident in Moses' narrative:

*The surveyors did not use pegs; they came and marked on trees the site of the dam. We asked what they were doing...they just replied that we would see the outcome... They*



*seemed annoyed by our lifestyle at the Zambezi and they said, “What you are doing here, you will soon see it in your dreams”. The sikhanyana and some of the surveyors were saying we want to create employment for you. They did not recognise our entitlement to the land; instead of asking for permission from the chief, they simply came to remove us by force. (11/10/2015)*

Despite the supposed advice from the shrines, some people resisted relocation and this resulted in a number of deaths as the flooding started and many homes were swept away. A lot of people's crops and belongings were also swept away plunging many families and households into hunger and vulnerability. Desperate measures were taken to save flooding resisters through *bwaato* [canoes]. In the words of chief Rare:

*We were not sure whether the damming was to be to our benefit but we didn't have an option. Some resisted but by 1958 the water started flooding their homes, most escaped through bwaato. That is one of the challenges we faced especially those who resisted moving to pave way for dam construction...some had to follow on foot. But we complied from the beginning and lorries fetched us from the Zambezi to leave us here. (25/11/2015)*

This shows that landscapes are inherently contested and political and, wherever this is the case, the axiomatic use of power is crucial on questions regarding whose reality counts. In this case, the European lifeworld and landscape which valued the waterscapes of the Zambezi for their exchange value (and as a private asset) for profit through electricity generation succeeded in dismantling those of the Tonga that were based on landscape as valued for its use value (a public good for the benefit of commoners). Hughes (2006, 2010) describes this process as “how Europeans made nature” at Lake Kariba. In the process, the locals suffered social, economic and political marginalisation as a result of the loss of autonomy over their territory.

Just as with the other accounts of study participants who witnessed the process of displacement (chief Rare, Moses, Maria and Pierre's Uncle), Laura narrated the status of servitude that emanated due to alienation from the river. She especially bemoaned the loss of domestic animals and the danger posed by wild animals that they hitherto had lived faraway from:

*We lost quite a number of domestic animals especially goats to these wild animals; we were left with very few goats. We settled but a big problem of hunger immediately came to haunt us. We started to have a nostalgic feeling of our previous habitation along the Zambezi River where we heavily relied on the river for reliable water supply for subsistence agriculture. The Zambezi River used to enable us to plant maize, pumpkin*



*plants, sorghum and so forth. Along the Zambezi River there were very few animals, and as such very limited danger from the wild animals. Bakatibwaala mubayama [they threw us into wild animals] ... That is one of the major problems associated with how we were chased away from the Zambezi. (25/10/2015)*

Central to the colonial project was civilisation, including through Western education. Displaced people in Mola were keen to also receive this ‘civilisation’ through education as they saw this as the only way they could enhance their chances of social mobility in an area (Mola) that was structurally constrained in terms of development programmes which could end their economic immiseration. However, the building of schools in their area took a long time and, in fact, Mola remains a rural area lagging far behind in terms of school infrastructure and education. Chief Rare bemoaned this lack of commitment towards the education of their children (including by the post-colonial government), which made life tougher under the semi-arid landscapes of Mola. He also claimed that some areas which did not have a history of displacement were benefiting from incentives that were meant for those who have a history of being displaced. Therefore, in addition to being displaced from their homes, they were made to lag behind in terms of socio-economic development:

*We settled in an area where there was no school, unlike other evictees such as those who settled in Binga. It is only in 1964 that a school was built in Mola. As I speak the learning of Tonga, our mother language, only started less than five years ago. All these years, our children have been learning in Shona and English, languages that are not theirs. The community feels hard done in a number of ways... We were promised that they would electrify our area, but to date we do not have electricity. Our grievance is that the government and ZRA should at least recognise that us, who came from the river, must have electricity. Also, schools meant for the hungry [meaning ‘displaced people’] are being built in better off areas like Msampa while the people who were chased away from the river are being left out... Sometimes you ask whether the government considers us as citizens of Zimbabwe because they neglect us in a number of programmes that they implement in other neighbouring areas. (25/11/2015)*

Despite the alienation from the Zambezi Valley’s natural resources highlighted above, the year 1989 saw some leeway of hope and compensation through the introduction of CAMPFIRE. In a way, the people of Mola saw this as a positive intervention, as they had to be contented especially after all the other promises that were made to them have failed to materialise. It is to the narratives and practices of CAMPFIRE that the next section turns.

### 6.3 CAMPFIRE

The key aspects here are resource control and land rights especially wildlife. The protectionist approach to nature conservation put in place by the colonial government was not challenged even when the Community-Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) was adopted, which is a paradigm which (on paper) aims to take communities as partners in the process of conserving nature. This is where dispossession and the politics of space in Mola come to the fore quite vividly. Whose reality and interests count under this paradigm of CBNRM? Are all actors equal in decision-making and the dividends that accrue from nature conservation? For decades, it has been the norm in Zimbabwe for communities bordering conservancies and/or national parks to be incorporated into CAMPFIRE principally as an affirmative action that incorporates communities into the process of nature conservation and wildlife resources in particular.

This is all part of the ideology of participatory development that is, however, marred by a myriad of flaws just as is its parent idea of development. Mola area, bordered by Matusadonha National Park, a safari area and Lake Kariba Recreational Park, has an ongoing CAMPFIRE programme, which was introduced in 1989. For the people of Mola, this is a lease of life that despite its meagre contributions, is something that they do count as positive on the part of the government and NRDC. CAMPFIRE was noted locally as one of the ways through which the community was surviving. Gladys for example noted that the programme of CAMPFIRE was assisting the residents of Mola in helping to access basic amenities in a context of lack of reliable transport. Through dividends from the CAMPFIRE that they get from NRDC, the community has managed to buy a number of valuable assets that include a lorry and a tractor. In this sense, the environment assumes an exchange value as it is through the sale of environmental resources by way of tourism and related dividends that the community gets the money for the purchase of such assets. Said Gladys:

*Of the few things that we have as Mola area, we can count the contribution of CAMPFIRE dividends that have enabled us to buy a lorry of our own and a tractor. The lorry is handy during crisis periods like situations when there is someone who is sick and they have to be transported to Siakobvu hospital [which is at the growth point, approximately 40 kilometres away from Mola]. The money for fuel also comes from these CAMPFIRE dividends. The tractor is also used for cultivating the fields although there are less rains here and agriculture is not usually profitable. (11/11/2015)*

Sphiwe also commented on the CAMPFIRE programme in Mola in the following way:

*From CAMPFIRE, the community has benefited a lot. Money channelled to us through the CAMPFIRE programme enabled us to build local schools... One of the years back, (during the peak of Zimbabwe's economic crises) we simply took CAMPFIRE money to purchase medical drugs and medication for the community (14/11/2015).*

These benefits of CAMPFIRE were acknowledged in the light of increasing poaching and looting of resources by people (whom respondents claimed) do not come from Mola. Poaching though was viewed in both positive and negative terms. In the first sense, respondents noted that poaching was reducing the numbers of people killed by wild animals including elephants. In the second sense, outside poachers were benefiting at the expense of Mola residents yet it is Mola residents who wildlife authorities (such as safari operators) profoundly ridicule and label as poachers.

Critical of the arrangement and contribution of CAMPFIRE was Moses who questioned a number of irregularities associated with the programme. Like all the other respondents who commented on CAMPFIRE in this study, he started by acknowledging the contribution of dividends from the programme which enabled the community to build two schools in the area. His disgruntlement, while it concurs with previous studies that focus on the implications and effects of CAMPFIRE (for instance Dzingirai, 2003; Mubaya, 2008; Musona, 2011; Balint and Mahsinya), has more to do with belief in local ownership of the wildlife resources from which they are being alienated. Studies on CAMPFIRE and CBNRM (for instance Mubaya, 2008; Dzingirai, 2003; Sibanda, 2001; Musona, 2011) have in the past revealed cries by communities confronting local authorities and national government behind these initiatives to 'come and take back your CAMPFIRE', referring to the state representatives, particularly rural district councils. This call for local control emanates from, among other things, destruction of crops by wildlife and corruption by state authorities, which denied communities access to accruing benefits from the programme.

Moses in fact linked the programme to the early-unfilled promises that were made when the people were originally displaced. He also questioned the arrangement in which the key players such as safari operators had to pay taxes to NRDC instead of directly paying to the community who are the owners of the resources. In his words:

*Money from CAMPFIRE comes through the council [NRDC]...and yes ... from it we managed to build schools, one primary and the other a secondary school. Council, however, benefits more from this programme. ... When they first came to us with the idea of the programme, they said the animals and everything that is in Mola is ours... But we see safari operators paying tax to the rural district council and there are no direct*

*benefits to the people of Mola other than the little money that the council gives to the community depending on how many hunters have come for trophy hunting during that month. Overall, the council, safari operators, and Bumi hotel management benefit more than us, the owners of the animals and the forest resources in Mola. They do not allow us to use these resources directly. I do not know what they expect us to eat...as you can see, this area is drought prone yet we are not allowed to use the gifts we have been given by our creator. (14/10/2015)*

It is only when a worse situation bedevils people that they begin to appreciate what was the status quo at the time. This is true of the people of Mola as they recall the events of 2013, when a white conservationist (only identified by the people of Mola as Wright) was given the nod to privatise the whole safari area that was put under CAMPFIRE in 1994<sup>26</sup>. The proposed privatisation, which was being proposed as an advanced stage of CAMPFIRE (Nyakazeya, 2015) was to close off five of the six fishing camps that are found in Mola. Suddenly in their narratives, when respondents began to talk about the heated issue of this proposed conservancy, they began to appraise CAMPFIRE in positive terms. The narratives were mixed with a more contemporary form of active resistance against the enclosing of the fishing camps that are domiciled in Mola. It to the active resistance that the next section focuses on.

#### **6.4 Fishing Camps**

There are six contested fishing camps in Mola. They are contested because of the competing visions of power over entitlement to the fishing camps in Mola. In discussing the camps, I refer to the work of Mubaya (2008) but with a critical eye. There are some irregularities between what the author (Mubaya) claims and claims by Mola residents regarding the fishing camps and the question of who rightfully oversees the running of these fishing camps. First, the author claims that fishing camps are in Chalala, which is ward 1. This runs contrary to what the residents of Mola state in relation to the distribution of fishing camps in Mola. Mola residents argue that each of the wards in Mola, including ward 1, has two fishing camps. While my study does not dismiss Mubaya's work, it interprets this unclarity to be evidence of the contested nature of landscape (as a source of livelihoods for the people of Mola) and struggles over control of space. It can entail a contested landscape because people try to cling to the little space that they have to access livelihood possibilities from the lake. Pierre, the one who introduced me to Mola, explained the distribution of fishing camps in Mola as follows:

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<sup>26</sup> See <http://www.financialgazette.co.zw/tonga-community-rejects-conservancy/>



*There are two fishing camps in each ward. Ward 1 has Chalala and Maswiakaboola fishing camps. In ward 3, there are Sibilobilo and Msampakaruma fishing camps, while ward 4 has Nyakatanda and Makuyu fishing camps. Ward 4 used to have three fishing camps, including Chatikira fishing camp but this one was closed in August 2007 because NRDC said they wanted to introduce a game reserve. They are still to introduce the game reserve though and people occasionally go on to fish without permits there. (13/10/2013)<sup>27</sup>*

Further, and still in relation to the control of the fishing camps in Mola, Mubaya (2008) claims that Chalala does not fall under chief Mola although it used to. On the contrary, Mola residents, including Chief Mola, claim that all fishing camps fall under the chief's control. This again substantiates the conflict-ridden character of landscape and control over inanimate resources in Mola. Views from Mola residents appeared contrary to the assertions of the council. The council places ownership of the fishing camps in its hands on behalf of the state.

Fishing camps provide a reliable source of livelihoods not only for the people of Mola but to many others who come from other districts and provinces. The people of Mola bemoaned however, the permit levies that they have to pay in order to be eligible to fish. For them, this is a commodification of nature which goes against their 'traditional' Tonga cosmology. Here is a case of two land rights regimes that do not tally, one that values all land and its inanimate resources as state property and the other, a communitarian one, which places all these resources into the hands of the displaced Tonga communities. Thomas explained the way the fishing camps operate in Mola. All surrounding communities that were displaced have access to at least one of the six fishing camps domiciled in Mola. These communities include Msampakaruma, Negande and Nebiri. Thomas said:

*Mola area hosts six fishing camps all under chief Mola. The fishing camps however consist of residents not only from Mola but those from surrounding chieftaincies particularly those affected by displacement and the damming of the Zambezi. As such, some fishing camps were put in place to specifically cater for the needs of people from neighbouring chieftaincies. For instance, people from chief Nebiri's area were allocated Msampa fishing camp. If one of the neighbouring chiefs visits any of the fishing camps, the benefits that immediately accrue to him are those of fishermen giving him some fish and that ends there... This is an advantage that we have as bakulwizi [those from the river] but there is one problem that we have. To be allowed to fish at any of the fishing*

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<sup>27</sup> Field notes based on a conversation with Pierre after the visit to Munego, ward 4.



*camps we have to pay a monthly amount of US\$20... I do not understand why we have to pay this money when the river belongs to us. Not everyone can afford this money and so we have a situation whereby people from other places not affected by displacement coming to take advantage of this and they pay for permits at the expense of deserving dam evictees. I think the council has to revise this so that more deserving people benefit from the fishing camps. (22/11/2015)*

Thomas' narrative is in contradiction to that of NRDC regarding the issue of entitlement and ownership of land and environmental resources. The payment of permits is a condition that Thomas says they are not comfortable with as they conceive of themselves as *bakulwizi*. However, the fact that NRDC makes people including *bakulwizi* pay for permits indicates a domineering authority that has exclusive right of ownership of the physical environment and inanimate resources in question. This is evidence of multiple and conflicting definitions of landscape between *bakulwizi* and NRDC. This also reveals the salience of power in determining access to resources and in determining whose reality counts in matters concerning landscape as land use.

To assert claims over the fishing camps, local residents referred to memories of displacement. As the rightful 'owners' of the lake, they were being allowed access to the lake and its aquatic resources but not on their terms. I discuss this further below.

#### **6.4.1 Memories of Resistance against Displacement**

The people of Mola single out a case of a man who resisted displacement successfully and, from this case, they derive authenticity of their claims to belonging and entitlement to the Lake and the Zambezi Valley landscape in general. If for James Scott (1965:173) disempowered agents like peasants use subtle forms of "contesting public transcripts" such as feet dragging, the resistance against displacement at Sibilobilo is one such (undocumented) form of resistance in which nature and the supernatural were used by the weak to resist displacement. The man in question remained at his homestead and, instead of the waters flooding his homestead, they circled it. The area is today known as Sibilobilo fishing camp as the council later introduced fishing camps that would serve displaced people.

Respondents who claimed to have witnessed displacement gave a similar account of the resistance at (now) Sibilobilo fishing camp. The man (Takanyu) represents not only a hero who resisted displacement, but his act is vindication and evidence that the waters of the Zambezi River belonged to the Tonga people. Geertz (1996) avers that social actors who make claims to land have a certain 'we belong here' sense of intimacy. This is clear from the

Sibilobilo case as well, as respondents (including Moses) used memories of what happened at Sibilobilo as symbolic and as representing authentic belonging and entitlement to the Lake and its resources. Moses thus described Takanyu's resistance at Sibilobilo as a symbol of authentic rights to place and entitlement to the Zambezi Valley's resources.

Moses mixed his narrative with a number of Tonga proverbs, including the following two: *Malala anengwa nkwaazva* [important resources that you need in life are better accessed from the main source; begging will never satisfy your needs], and *Basokwe bakabaana ziyu* [even if resources are few, people must learn to share as baboons do]. In this context, he said:

*For a Tonga man there are two very important things that you must try not to tamper with...his field(s) and his wife. The [colonial] government officials came and what they wanted was to take away our life...yes our life because our lives depended on the river. This was against what we were taught as we grew up, ... staying in the place where resources are found... In Tonga we say Malala anengwa nkwaazva [which implies that moving from Sibilobilo would have made Takanyu and his family a beggar as we are today]. We also say Basokwe bakabaana ziyu [emphasising the importance of resource sharing amongst the Tonga]....If the government wanted to share the lake with us, we would not have refused but instead they chased us away. Takanyu's successful refusal to move from Sibilobilo was also a result of these two important things. He had to fight for his field along the Zambezi and for the protection of his family. Many households resisted but ... most either drowned or had to be rescued by use of bwaato. Takanyu was also fighting for a way of life that we grew up with. (14/10/2015)*

Maria added to the Sibilobilo resistance story in a way that concurred with the views of three of the participants who witnessed displacement (Moses, Laura and Pierre's uncle). She added that the man at Sibilobilo did not triumph against floods and displacement out of his own making. For her, his successful resistance is a symbol of the presence a powerful force. She therefore perceived it as an act by *banalyo gundu* to prepare for the Tonga a future refuge as they now have a fishing camp that serves them as a livelihood safety net. She argued:

*Out of all the people who tried to resist removal from the Zambezi, it is only this man [Takanyu] whom the colonial government did not manage to remove. It tells you something ...the ancestors were behind him. They first thought the water of the flooding lake would drown his homestead but that did not happen. They tried to move him by force but he resisted. He is the only man together with his family who did not abide by the rules of conservation imposed by the safari operators and game wardens at fishing camps, rearing cattle and donkeys where they are prohibited...Even after independence, he kept*

*cattle at the fishing camp all of which are prohibited by the council [NRDC]. Today, the community of Mola is grateful to this man because he is one of the reasons why we have fishing camps today... Fishing camps were put in place to at least make life easy for us through fishing. What happened at Sibilobilo was the work of our ancestors protecting their children. ... This also tells you who the real owners of the river [now Lake] are. (27/10/2015)*

These memories of resistance at Sibilobilo were used by respondents to claim access to the Lake's resources and by extension to claim their attachment to the Lake.

#### **6.4.2 Sacred Waterscapes at Sibilobilo Fishing Camp**

When I visited Sibilobilo fishing camp, and following the advice from George to further inquire about the do's and don'ts of the waterscapes at Sibilobilo fishing camp, the first step Thomas took was to look for someone with presumed adequate cultural capital/knowledge to narrate to us the link between the NyamiNyami and the compound where the fishers lived, and to detail their everyday interactions at the shores of the lake as they tried to eke out a living. Thomas opted for Godfrey who had a considerable number of years at Sibilobilo fishing camp and in the fishing business. Godfrey provided a vivid account. He spoke of *kalundu kaSiamavu* [Simavu's Little Mountain] as a living example of the existence of the NyamiNyami. For him, the waters of the lake are sacred and, since displacement, the waters have been 'restless'. He said:

*The water and everything in the lake belongs to the NyamiNyami. He is responsible for the rules of operating at the fishing camp and the rest of the lake. Yes, we have safari operators but these also have to abide by the rules of banalyo gundu. We have places that even the safari operators cannot set foot in unless proper rituals have been undertaken. If you think I am lying, ask one safari operator to go and set foot in kalundu kaSiamavu and see if they will have the courage to do so. Kalundu kaSiamavu is sacred, even if the lake is full, the waters will not cover it... If it happens that there is a wave in the lake you cannot take refuge at the snake island, you will die because it is sacrilege.... In Kalundu kaSiamavu there are numerous snakes. These snakes do not just bite anyone... It tells you that there are rules here that everyone who visits the camp has to abide .... No boats can park there, lest the snakes will bite you. Waves also disturb people if they fish in prohibited parts of the lake. If you are a newcomer and you see strange stuff you have to report to the fishing camp leaders. Usually if you are new and you see something strange, it is a sign that you have violated the rules of the fishing camp and*

*the NyamiNyami is angry. These leaders know what to do to make the stay of the new fishers free of trouble and to make them have a chance of catching fish.*

To emphasise the characteristics of the NyamiNyami as both a guardian and punishing counsellor, George singled out another island – Manyundwe – by the lakeshore, which he said is invaluable for families and households' livelihoods. At Manyundwe Island, women go to gather *maddi* for relish. This and other edible wild vegetables are direct provisions from the natural physical landscape but are ultimately from NyamiNyami. Because of this, Manyundwe island is surrounded by cultural mores (established by NyamiNyami) that guide people's conduct there including during the harvesting of resources. Failure to follow these may result in punishment like disappearance of the natural resources. Interpreted in one way, this could be taken as a Tongan way of taking care of the natural environment. George explained thus:

*It is not only the watchful eye of kalundu kaSiamavu that we have here at Sibilobilo. To show that NyamiNyami is caring, we were given Manyundwe island where women can go and gather some edible vegetables like maddi. We always have plenty of fish here as you can see, but we cannot be eating fish every day and thus we were provided with the island that gives us vegetables. Here we are not allowed to have vegetable gardens because safari operators say it is dangerous to the lake. Manyundwe is our natural garden provided by the owners of the lake to their children...the Tonga people. Manyundwe has reeds and maddi... Women take the maddi to cook but there are some restrictions to abide by...You are not allowed to say stuff that shows that you are surprised...This will make the vegetables to rot straightaway or the maddi may vanish from your eyes and you will not find any. Actions like setting fire on the island also attract punishment from the NyamiNyami. Several years back, there was a man who set fire on the island. He died instantly. For quite some time, there were no reeds and maddi because, after reporting this matter to the chief, there was no action taken. It is only recently after the matter was addressed by the elders and the chief that the reeds and maddi reappeared. (05/11/2015)*

For the fishermen with kinship-based relations in and around the Zambezi, the NyamiNyami is also credited with assisting them to crossover to Zambia. For those who do not have relations in Zambia, crossing over is usually for markets for their catch. In crossing, the role of the NyamiNyami is said to enable the fishermen to evade the watchful eyes of the safari operators. Crossing takes place during the night, when crocodiles and hippos lurk about, and the fishermen believe this is made possible and successful by the presence and providence of the NyamiNyami. Dickson, a colleague of Godfrey's at the fishing camp, highlighted that this



is done in defiance of the rules put in place by the safari operators and other law enforcing agents like policemen. He also said that recently there had been a case of a policeman who had fallen sick because he had forcibly taken away a catch from two fishermen who were on their way from Sibilobilo fishing, on the grounds that they had no fishing permits. All this he attributed to the guardianship of the NyamiNyami, saying:

*Life at Sibilobilo camp is not complete without the guidance of the NyamiNyami. It helps us to cross to the Zambian side during the night without being caught. This gives us an opportunity to meet our relatives and to get access to markets for our catch. Safari operators and game scouts are there to protect wild animals but they rather focus on disturbing us from our day to day fishing business at the fishing camp. This is the reason why we cross during the night to the Zambian side... and this is a cheaper means of transport than to go by road. Given the dangers in the lake, we attribute our safety thus far to the NyamiNyami who controls the water of the lake. (05/11/2015)*

This represents practical acts of resistance and assertions of entitlement, as well as ownership of territory and the resources that abound in it.

A dense forest separates Sibilobilo fishing camp from the settled areas and homesteads of both wards 4 and 3. On the fifth of November, Thomas and I embarked on a journey to Sibilobilo fishing camp. The trip was foremost recommended by chief Rare. As already highlighted, Sibilobilo is symbolic in tales of resistance against displacement and its immiserating consequences. The forest had its symbolism related to the experience I had with Pierre on the 13<sup>th</sup> of October when we visited Munego area in ward 4. Setting foot in this forest area meant trespassing on the grounds of the imposed protected area/conservancy as it is part of the area fenced off in ward 4.

On our way, and in the middle of the forest, we met a number of men carrying fish on their way back to the villages of Mola. Nothing showed that they were afraid of being caught for trespassing in this fenced-off area. What intrigued me more were five women who were several metres ahead of us. Chatting jovially in this no 'man's land', were they not aware that they were trespassing as well? I posed this question to Thomas, whose response was very much in the affirmative. These acts of defiance and resistance resembled an observation by Sibanda (2001) that, despite endeavours by outsiders; especially rich nations to manage resources, marginalised rural communities will continue to use their resources. "These women have nothing to fear", so he told me, "for, what must one be afraid of in their home?" he continued.

As soon as one gets out of the forest, the outer shores of the lake appear as dry physical landscapes due to the recently declining water levels. We caught up with the women on the



shores of the lake. They had reached their first destination. They were here to gather a variety of edible plants on the shores of the lake. These were practical acts of resistance against the conservancy, signalling the political and contested nature of landscape in Mola. For the women, this was not trespassing into anyone's land but striving to eke out a living in their land. I found this to be a bold statement, not in fighting with weapons but in acts of livelihoods construction zoned by technocrats for conservation.

We proceeded to Sibilobilo Fishing Camp, leaving the women behind. On our way, Thomas said on a sad note that Takanyu's family had recently been evicted out of the fishing camp a few years ago following Takanyu's death. He is a man who is known for having defied all the environmental regulations and laws on the fishing camp by keeping cattle and donkeys on the camp. Upon arrival at the camp, we encountered subtle forms of resistance (reminiscent of James Scott's) that, had Thomas not been in my company, I would not have detected.

The fishermen who saw us as we arrived rushed into their huts to hide away prohibited fishing nets that they use to catch fish. I did not notice this until Thomas explained to me what was taking place. Again, this is one of the strategies through which the people of Mola circumvent the challenges that confront their interpretation and use of the landscape and space surrounding them. It is only after thorough explanation and assurance from Thomas that Godfrey and Dickson agreed to be interviewed. They suspected that I was a spy or an underground investigator concerning their violation of environmental rules imposed on them. Overall, however, this experience and observations provided practical example of the everyday experiences of a people defying an imposed 'development' initiative.<sup>28</sup>

## **6.5 Conclusion**

The chapter elaborated on narratives of displacement, erasure and the politics of space in present day Mola. It showed that despite prolonged years of marginalisation in terms of socio-economic development and land rights, the Tonga people engage in subtle forms of resistance in order to practice local forms of landscape as land use. From what I later realised during my stay in the area, fishing camps in Mola constitute a rich repository for further social research on landscape on their own.

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<sup>28</sup> Field notes, 5/11/2015

## Chapter Seven: The Politics of Belonging and Resource Access

### 7.1 Introduction

A considerable number of small nchenje trees with golden coloured nchenje fruits covered the whole landscape view of Munego (ward 4) that was before us. Pierre and I sat under the roof of one of his mother's huts shying away from the scorching sun of Tuesday 13 October 2015. We were resting after walking a journey of approximately 12 kilometres from ward 3 to ward 4. As I gazed through the thicket of those fruit trees, I felt an urge to go and feast on the ripened nchenje fruits. Pierre suggested that it would be better for us to go there later in the day after his mother had returned from the dam construction project that was being facilitated by the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). At almost sunset, Pierre's mother arrived and we set on a mission to feast on the nchenje fruits. The fruits were fenced off, which was a recent development and part of an imposed conservancy to protect the 'depleting environmental resources from extinction'. We entered the fence not through a gate but through an opening cut out of the fence by Mola residents.

In so doing, we were also partaking in acts of resistance: defying the restricted use of resources by NRDC in partnership with a private company. We ate the fruits and crossed over a stream, as Pierre wanted to show me the place where Mola residents (including him) speculated that there were pegs that marked off an area endowed with minerals. We saw the place, and what seemed to be pegs in the ground, without though making any definite conclusion about the existence of minerals. We did not take much time at the site and, as we returned, we realised that there was only one way of getting in and getting out – the 'illegal' opening. This is one of the many everyday acts of resistance and struggle for natural resource use and access that people of Mola engage in for survival (13/10/2015)<sup>29</sup>

The above participant observation snapshot gives a glimpse into the contested nature of landscape as land use in Mola, and it points to the politicised forms of landscape and environmental resource use in Mola. Landscape, memory and belonging narratives in Mola, as they do so often elsewhere (Wolmer 2005; 2007), actively turn into a politically volatile question imbued with broader questions of national belonging, entitlement and land rights. People of Mola construct notions of belonging as attachment and entitlement to a place and its resources through their historical association with place and, in so doing, they use the history

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<sup>29</sup>Observation and field notes after visiting Munego, in Mola ward 4, 13/10/2015.

of displacement of their forefathers from the Zambezi River when the Kariba dam was constructed.

‘Belonging’ in this chapter is at multiple levels including belonging to a localised place as well to the ‘nation’. In the first instance, belonging entails narratives of attachment to Mola and specificities about who can be included and excluded from Mola and Lake Kariba. In the latter case, people narrate their perceptions on belonging to the nation at large. Thus belonging relates to localised struggles of inclusion and exclusion (of other surrounding communities) aimed at accessing resources from the lake; and these localised struggles are enshrined in the historical connection and entitlement to the lake and its resources. This has broader ramifications at the national level, as Mola people tend to question the central state with regards to the citizenship status of the displaced Tonga in general.

In what follows, the chapter looks at multiple forms of contesting and asserting belonging. Belonging here is practised at multiple levels. First is belonging to Mola, which includes forms of inclusion and exclusion of local groups in Mola. This belonging is discursively constituted through claims to autochthony and graves. Second are claims to belonging through entitlement to natural resources in Mola. These are assertions by Mola people to contest and resist the conservancy. Finally, in the resistance against the conservancy, participants raised the issue of belonging to the nation.

## **7.2 Autochthonous Claims and Belonging to the Zambezi**

Pseudo-compensation may seem too harsh a term, but that is exactly what describes the situation of Tonga people in Mola. The most excruciating pain for these displaced people is that restitution (in the real sense of reclaiming their ancestral lands and homes back) is impossible as their land was covered by the waters of the lake. Since that is not possible, it would be reasonable (and befitting) to expect that the displaced Mola people would benefit fully from the lake or that the post-displacement territory they reside in would in some way be ceded to them. But even this has not taken place. Their situation as marginalised development refugees go completely contrary to their socially-constructed belonging to place and space in the Zambezi and has led to discursive and practical contestations around territory and resources. Their historical sense of belonging also entails at times claims to autochthony (a sense of rootedness, being indigenous) (Geschiere, 2009; Geschiere, and Nyamnjoh, 2000; Mujere, 2011, 2012) which exclude other local chiefs and their people from being ‘original’ Tongas.

This might appear to be based on selective memory guided by a desire for, and entitlement to, the resources that are at stake at a particular moment in time. The seeming ‘natural’ belonging of the people of Mola to their present territory (based on autochthony) is surprising as they only settled there after chief Nebiri and his Shangwe people ceded part of their territory (which is present day Mola). People of Mola do acknowledge that Nebiri’s people were domiciled there, although the area was not densely populated as was characteristic of most places in the Zambezi Valley prior to the construction of the lake. Chief Rare explained how the people of Mola came to occupy Mola:

*We came here and got a place in Nebiri’s territory. The colonial government instructed Nebiri to share his land with us. Nebiri understood and demarcated part of his territory to give us what is now Mola area. We settled here and found some of Nebiri’s people who were already living here; some of whom were the Machukka and Dhepureni families and they are still here with us. Those who did not want to continue under us relocated to Nebiri’s remaining territory which is near Siakobvu growth point. Mola area was just part of Nebiri’s big territory but most of his people resided near Siakobvu; that place I am sure you have heard about called Nebiri. The Machukka and Dhepureni families opted to continue to live here and so they became part of our people. (26/11/2015)*

Just as the people of Mola came from the Zambezi River to their present territory, to occupy a territory formerly under Nebiri, the people of Mola refer to Chief Nyamhunga and the historical belonging claims that he makes regarding his people and the lake. This has resulted in Mola people constructing ‘othering’ narratives that trace Nyamhunga’s people as not purely Tonga and not belonging to the lake. Chief Rare thus narrated how chief Nyamhunga and his people came to reside near the lake:

*The Sikhanyana pleaded with us to have them settle chief Nyamhunga and his people at the area presently known as Nyamhunga because they were afraid that if the dam wall cracked these people would be swept away by the waters. That place, Nyamhunga, was given to them on a temporary basis. Now today he is complaining, saying he wants to celebrate his lwiindi in the lake... [he laughs] ... placing his malende in the river? He is claiming that he has always been residing along the river Zambezi ... yet this is not true ... The reason why they want to be acknowledged as Tonga people is because they want matemba [kapenta fish] that ZRA occasionally gives to displaced people .... kuita bwami bwabumpenengu na? [Is poaching chieftainship the best way to become a chief in an area that you do not belong to?] (26/11/2015)*

I found what chief Rare was saying to be self-contradictory. If he says chief Nyamhunga and his people do not belong to the lake, simply because he came from another area after the construction of the lake, so how come the people of Mola claim to belong to Mola when they came and found Nebiri's people living in that area? This led him to speak about graves and their significance in making claims to belonging for different social groups, as discussed next.

### 7.2 1 Graves and Belonging in Mola

Probed on the above concerns on my part, the chief introduced the issue of *hoko* (soil plucked out from the corners of the *malende*/graves in the Zambezi). Moses had explained this during his interview as well and it concurred with what the chief was saying. This is how the people of Mola came to cement their entitlement and belonging to Mola. From this soil taken from the graves of their ancestors at the Zambezi, the Tonga of Mola 'carried' their ancestors to Mola. Yet they still cling to notions of belonging to the lake as well. Moses explained the process of carrying these *hoko* from the graves at the Zambezi as follows:

*When it became clear that we would be chased away from the Zambezi, the basimalende went in advance to survey the appropriate places because the hoko cannot be placed on the ground' if you do that then that becomes your permanent place of settlement. They built nsakas [small huts for each and every departed chief where they reside] where moulded images of each of the late chiefs were placed. These nsakas are not just built by ordinary people, only the basimalende are allowed to build them. Banayo gundu chose an area called Chitenge and this is where our malende are in Mola. After they had found the suitable place for relocation of the graves, they told the ancestors 'kuno kwapisa, taakukutakurai munogara nesu pedyo tichikuonai' ['it has become hot here, we are now carrying you to Mola where we will be seeing you']. Graves were dug for each of these departed chiefs and they moulded human figures to stand as representatives for each of them. These human figures were buried at the new malende shrine. (13/10/2015)*

Therefore, when the chief claims that chief Nyamhunga and his people do not belong, he is giving a narrative of graves as significant resources that affirm a people's claims to belonging and entitlement to particular territory. This also reveals that landscape is a cultural activity and process in which humans construct symbolic environments (Glenna, 1996; Bender, 2002; Greider and Garkovich, 1994; Tilley, 1994) that guide and affirm their relationships to place. Based on the new meaning that Mola assumed after the burying of *hoko*, Mola became their home place. In this way, they hand-imprinted their cultural landscape from their old homes into this new area. Chief Mola, in highlighting that chief Nyamhunga and his people do



not belong to the lake, further indicated some ‘negative sanctions’ which he claimed could and would befall any chief who wants to take over a territory that does not belong to them. He explained his position with regard to chief Nyamhunga and his people:

*Nyamhunga and his people's hoko are not in NyamiNyami area; he came as a visitor, yet he now wants to come and become a chief. In our tradition as Tonga people we do not do that. If you do that, you go into the forest forever. That is why you would hear that long ago, chiefs would be devoured by lions; it is because they would have bypassed tradition...yes...you will be eaten by lions or get killed by elephants because the chieftainship would not be befitting you. (26/11/2015)*

Imbued with cultural and historical weight, it appears that *hoko* is powerful ‘stuff’ (Fontein, 2015) that is seeded on ancestors’ graves and, in the case of chiefs, it has the effect of producing a strong sense of belonging, authenticity and entitlement to a particular place. I borrow from Fontein (2015) and his phrase ‘what stuff does’ because from what chief Mola claimed, the soil (which is *hoko*) has the symbolism which gives Mola people the authenticity to claim attachment to Mola as a place despite the fact that they found other people already residing there. Social groups with royal *hoko* are thus automatically entitled to being rulers in (and ‘owning’) the place in question. *Hoko* implies the status of being original, autochthonous, indigenous to a place even if the people migrated from another place. Chief Mola also said that there are cases of those who use connections with those in power to claim entitlement to natural assets especially third generation groups who do not follow tradition anymore. He said this referring particularly to chief Nebiri and his people, who occasionally clash with the people of Mola regarding entitlement to fishing camps and the Mola area, the chief claimed:

*You hear some people nowadays saying this is my piece of land, or that is my territory, that is my stone because this is where I came from. Ah! Where is the hoko that shows that the place or stone belongs to you? In traditional Tonga terms, once you have carried your hoko from one place to another it is no longer allowed for you to come back and claim belonging and authority in your former territory. If you see a chief who does that, that is a sign of lack of leadership qualities (26/11/2015)*

Asked on why the people of Nebiri could not have entitlement or ownership to Mola previously occupied by them, chief Rare cited the absence of their *hoko* and graves in the area now occupied by the Tonga of Mola. That is the reason why Nebiri’s people whom they found residing in the Mola area became subjects of chief Mola, in the case of those who chose to stay:

*Most of the people we found living here followed their chiefs and went for good but a few remained. We have village head Vhiringana, who was under chief Nebiri but he chose to*

*stay. We also have village head Machukka. These people did not have graves here [referring to graves of the royal clan]. They were just ordinary people who chose to join us. Therefore, in periods of crises like attack of crops by pests, they do not have ancestral graves to which they can go for kuhambwida mizimu [shouting at the ancestors] purposes. Nebiri's graves were never here; they were always where he is staying today (26/11/2015).*

Interesting, the chief also used a narrative used by European colonisers to justify colonisation and land alienation. He said the area was just an empty space devoid of human habitation, which chief Nebiri now claims to be his simply because of the benefits that have accrued to the people of Mola particularly from fishing camps:

*This place did not have a lot of people because of the animals and lake of water resources nearby. Nebiri does not feature prominently in the early days of our settlement here. He started to come when fishing camps were introduced, claiming that he was also displaced and so he wanted his people to have access to fishing camps (26/11/2015).*

In terms of belonging to the lake and the Zambezi, the chief justified his people's entitlement in a way which reveals that claims to autochthony and rootedness are socially constructed, contested and at times self-contradictory. The claims are contested in the sense that his claims displace both chief Nyamhunga (whom he appears to see as a threat to the resources given out to displaced people) and chief Nebiri (whose claims to the territory of Mola he disputes if only because they compete and contradict Mola people's claim to entitlement to the resources of the lake). So when asked about how they still have claims to go and celebrate their ceremonies like *lwiindi* at the lake, here is what he said:

*When we relocated, we carried our hoko. We do not say we have other graves at the Zambezi but if we have problems for which we need to go there for kuhambwida mizimu, we go there ... This is our original home where we came from. Out of greed, however, some chiefs ... are claiming that they want to go for kuhambwida mizimu at Kariba ... the likes of chief Nyamhunga. He originally comes from Chirundu, that is where their home is. How can he then communicate with his ancestors at Kariba when he is not originally from the lake? When you transfer your graves through hoko, you bury them in the area in which you are settling. You cannot come and mix them with the ancestors of Mola that are in the lake (26/11/2015).*

To show that chief Mola's claims are contested, chief Nyamhunga was in fact a participant in the rainmaking ceremony that took place in January 2015 in the resort town of Kariba and he was the host. Chief Nyamhunga's territory is in Hurungwe district. He does though seem to

have claims to the lake as can be substantiated by his involvement in the rainmaking ceremony. The ceremony involved the following chiefs: Nebiri, Mudzimu, Matau, Nematombo, Mola, Dandawa and Negande<sup>30</sup>. Of these chiefs, only chiefs Negande and Mola are Tonga. The incorporation of chief Nyamhunga in matters pertaining to the traditional rites at the lake and any remittances that accrue to the displaced peoples (particularly from ZRA) is the cause of resentment among Mola people. To further justify his claims that the lake and Mola area belong to the people of Mola, the chief explained that he, in collaboration with NRDC, ensured that specific fishing camps were allocated to neighbouring communities affected by displacement. In the words of chief Rare:

*We gave all the communities surrounding us access to fishing camps. Negande was given Makuyu, Msampakaruma was also given Msampa fishing camp...We said it is not a problem to have them come and fish in our area. But this whole area belongs to Mola people. If a chief from one of these communities visits one of these fishing camps, his people will have to give him some fish. That is where everything ends. There is nothing more that these chiefs can do at the fishing camps because they do not have graves there*  
(26/11/2015)

The responsibility of addressing specific problems at the fishing camps is the sole prerogative of chief Mola as the camps are situated in his area.

These claims to belonging at the local level in Mola provide an understanding of what strategies the people use to claim belonging and entitlement to place. The following sections turn to how the conservancy was contested and resisted because of local belonging claims, as well as discourses about the place of the displaced Tonga in relation to national belonging and the inclusions and exclusions which characterise these contestations.

### **7.3 The Conservancy: Struggles for Space and Belonging**

Chapter three began by quoting Arturo Escobar's (2003:157) paraphrasing of Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto* as follows: "a spectre is haunting the world today – the spectre of displacement...it is high time that those displaced should openly, in the face of the whole world, make their experiences known, and meet the self-serving and technocratic tale of the Spectre of Displacement by those in power with a manifesto of their own". Escobar's urge for the displaced to rise and face 'the tale of the Spectre of Displacement by those in power'

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<sup>30</sup> <http://patsakacommunityradio.org/2016/02/01/rainmaking-ceremony-bears-fruit/>, see also, <http://www.herald.co.zw/drought-chiefs-hold-bira-to-appease-spirits/>

resembles some of the practical actions taken by the people of Mola, especially those in ward 3 as they came up with their own ‘manifesto’ in a struggle for space and belonging. This involved a particular protracted struggle against conservancy-based arrangements of dispossession and exclusion as social actors claimed their rights to land, land resource use and landscape in one of Omay Communal Lands’ villages, Mola area under Chief Mola. In narratives of resistance against the proposed conservancy, different understandings of nature (by the community as against the NRDC) became clear.

The creation of protected areas (or conservancies) is noble on paper but evidence on the ground reveals that local communities often suffer because they are restricted from using the resources. Geisler (2003) uses the Marxian concepts of enclosure and primitive accumulation to describe what he terms the simultaneous making of nature and unmaking of communities that result from the creation of protected areas. Similarly, Kelly (2011) argues that protected areas produce spatial patterns akin to primitive accumulation by alienating nature and environmental resources from local communities. Following the introduction of the CAMPFIRE programme in NyamiNyami district in 1989, the Mola community stood to benefit in many respects from dividends that came through trophy hunting, sport fishing and licensed fishing at the fishing camps. However, in 2013, NRDC in collaboration with a private conservation company proposed to convert the original programme into a private fenced-off arrangement. The argument was that the environment was deteriorating and thus needed to be controlled through private property and fencing.

This proposal was to be run under one Mr Wright who, according to respondents in this study, owns a private conservation company called African Conservancy. The people of Mola failed to understand why a conservancy was being proposed when, in the first place, CAMPFIRE principally placed ownership of the wild animals and inanimate resources in Mola in their hands. For the people of Mola, the imposition of the conservancy meant that they were being dispossessed once again, just as their forefathers were displaced to pave way for the construction of Lake Kariba. Mola residents thus reflected deeply on this conservancy proposal and linked it to the colonial displacements of the 1950s. In the end, they rejected it vehemently. Thomas, as one of the activists against the conservancy, narrated the beginning of the conservancy conflict in the following manner:

*In 2013, the rural district council came up with idea of erecting a wire [conservancy]. They said they wanted to erect a wire that would separate us from the animals and other natural resources... Takabuzya kuti, nimwakali kwaamba kuti banyama mbubesu tukkazyane ambabo lino nimwakubabikka mulubaya bachili besu na? [We asked them,*



‘you once said these are our animals; now that you are fencing them off from us, are they still ours?’. *They are now taking the animals, the white man who is going to put the wire is going to take them away...how are we going to survive?* (22/11/2015)

Besides the fact that they were going to be alienated from much of the resources vital for their livelihoods, the people of Mola also resented that the idea of the conservancy was conceived within the NRDC without the involvement of the people at the grassroots level. As with many development projects that are top-down, the conservancy was susceptible to contestation and failure as the people of Mola were not even consulted. The conservancy question also reveals the position of NRDC with regards to land rights and access to natural resources (including wildlife), which is that these fall within the domain and prerogative of the state. Yet, as anthropologists and others invaluable note, “property is a set of relations between people that varies across societies” (Whitehead, 2003:4426). In this regard, Mola residents consider themselves as the ‘owners’ of the land and the resources, not only because of their ancestral claims but also as part of the promises that were made to them when the CAMPFIRE idea was introduced to them in the late 1980s. Moses expressed his dismay regarding the conservancy issue:

*I have a friend who lives on the other side of the stream that you cross when you are coming here from Thomas’ place. He is originally from Malawi. Recently he was laughing at me, saying: “You Tonga people are fools... you always accept everything that comes your way. First you were chased away from the Zambezi, now you are being denied access to resources in your territory”. My friend is right. This is how we are treated by the government. They do as they like. They did the same with the issue of the wire [conservancy];... It began as a rumour, and then people began to ask what really this wire was for? And who was its brain child? People were unaware of what was taking place. In 2013, influential people [village heads] were taken from ward four. These were taken by McKenzie [present MP for Kariba constituency who was working at NRDC in 2013 prior to becoming a MP] and his brother Butcher McKenzie. These village heads from ward 4 were not aware that McKenzie and his friends had already sealed deals with the whites who wanted to come and erect the wire. The headmen were tricked after being told about the advantages of the wire and they agreed and endorsed the wire idea by signing the documents whose contents they were not aware of. Subsequent to the agreement, the wire was erected in ward four (14/10/2015).*

The immediate consequences of the conservancy were felt by Mola people in ward 4. These included being alienated from vital resources such as firewood, fruits and other forest



resources in the area that was fenced off. The feasting on the nchenje fruits, as narrated earlier, were acts of defiance against the erasure of people's livelihoods resources. Not only were the people of Mola barred from setting foot in the fenced off area, they were also restricted from entering fishing camps and hence gaining access to the fish and lake. Lydia recounted the immediate effects and implications of the conservancy which caught them unaware in ward 4:

*Immediately after the erection of the wire, there came restrictions for us. These included those pertaining to movement. After six pm, no entrance was allowed in the conservancy. Then people began to ask why the sudden change and restriction? We are used to moving freely any time of the day. Further restrictions came in light of the fishing camps. People at Nyakatanda fishing camp were instructed to move to Makuyu fishing camp to leave Nyakatanda vacant. The council wanted to remove one of the fishing camps, but people resisted and refused to move for whatever reason... We told them, "the fence is yours but it does not concern us, you know the reasons why you erected it but it does not affect us".*  
(02/11/2015)

The resistance against the conservancy by people in ward 4 came only after they had realised that their territory had been fenced off. Their leaders had been tricked in a ploy similar to the way that the history of colonialism of the country refers to how Lobengula, then king of the Ndebele people, was duped into signing the Rudd Concession of 1888. Immediately after erecting the fence for the conservancy in ward 4, the NRDC and African Conservancy moved on to ward 3 to try and dupe the elders there in the same way, but they were not successful.

#### **7.4 Power and Selective Projects in Mola: The Struggle for Space and Place in Mola**

The resistance of Mola residents particularly those of ward three has not gone unpunished. At the time of conducting this study, the NRDC was using its power to oversee and endorse relief projects in the district to impose negative sanctions against the rebels who refused to have part of their area fenced off through the conservancy. The NRDC was doing this through excluding ward 3 from the benefits of these projects. At the time of this study, UMCOR (an NGO) was involved in relief projects in the area, and one of their employees indicated that they had been advised by NRDC not to implement their dam construction project in ward 3. In fact, I noticed only one project and that was in ward 4. In the words of the UMCOR employee:

*Ward 3 three has been blacklisted because the NRDC says that the people there are not cooperative. We were directed not to implement projects in ward 3. Except in rare cases and for food aid, ward 3 is usually bypassed. They are suffering the consequences of exercising rights over their territory. (Chat with an UMCOR employee).*

As confirmation of the use of power and negative sanctions against the people of Mola, the NRDC and ZRA excluded chief Rare from a dialogue meeting that took place at chief Nebiri's homestead. Initially this meeting had been scheduled for chief Mola's homestead but, under unspecified circumstances and for unclear reasons, it was held at chief Nebiri's place. When we arrived at chief Rare's homestead at the beginning of the fieldwork, he had hinted to me that he was going to host special guests from Zambia and the surrounding areas of displaced peoples for the hosting of a *lwiindi* ceremony as well as to deliberate on what was troubling their territory on both sides of the lake especially in the context of the looming drought that was bedevilling the country in 2015. He explained that they were going to share their experiences with regards to what messages each of the communities from both sides of the lake had received from *banalyo gundu* about the looming dangers of drought and hunger. He also said that they were going to deliberate with ZRA on compensation and grievances with reference to displaced peoples. This meeting never took place, at least at his homestead. In reflecting on this, and in the process claiming that ZRA has never been committed to the implementation of compensation projects in Mola area, chief Rare put forward the following:

*I am not surprised with what they did; ...leaving me out of the meeting that took place at chief Nebiri's place. ZRA has always helped people who did not come from the river in the name of helping people who came from the river. The only help we received was many years ago when they brought us a small grinding machine that broke down several years ago. This year ZRA and the council have excluded us from the meeting yet we are part of the people who came from the river. They and the council have stopped helping us with developing our area...look at the roads that we have. We used to be helped by German donors but these were also blocked because the government said we are involved in partisan politics [referring to the popular support from the area for the opposition MDC]. But this is how we have to survive, we have to work for ourselves. (26/11/2015)*

Such are the complexities of the nature of landscape and land use in Mola that the contestations end up entangled in the broader partisan politics. In the face of powerful state (and corporate) actors, who take advantage of the dry physical landscapes of Mola to impose their own visions of how land and other natural resources must be used, the way of seeing and experiencing land and landscape by Mola residents is greatly challenged and often marginalised. The resistance ended up intertwining with the politics of belonging situated within the context of the nation.

### 7.5 Situating Belonging within the ‘Nation’

This is a tale of competing claims over land and natural resources, and, as Hammar (2002:137) highlights, “competing claims over landscape especially those marked by displacement and migration have ... to do with cultural politics of identity through which strategies of belonging and exclusion are played out”. For Mola residents, crucial are their rights to land-use and access to other inanimate resources but these are difficult to separate from the cultural politics of identity (and social belonging) as it is through who you are that you gain access to land access and use. Thomas narrated one of the grievances that Mola ward residents had over the imposition of the conservancy by tracing it back to the history of settlement in the Zambezi and linking all this up to the ‘troublesome’ safari operators:

*One thing you must remember is that the river Zambezi used to help people sustain themselves through fishing especially during times of hardships like droughts. But now we face challenges. We have the resources in the area we live but these people do not want us to use them; they say we must keep taking care of the resources such as wildlife and forest resources ... but we are not allowed to touch them. It is like in-laws who give their daughter in marriage and instruct the son-in-law to take care of their daughter but not to touch her... If you go fishing, the safari operators are a surveillance menace curtailing the survival chances available to the people of Mola. They demand some of the catch... up to 5 kg of fish... yet they put laws in place that do not allow overfishing. Now recently the council came up with the idea of a conservancy that was going to further restrict us from using resources in our own area and we said no. We couldn't allow that. (22/11/2015).*

Zimbabwe's tumultuous land question has become deeply racialised to the extent that writers like Hughes (2010) have labelled the land reform exercise from the year 2000 as “equal parts pogrom and land reform”. The pogrom dimension involved, it is argued, an attempt to discursively construct all Euro-Zimbabweans in the country as guilty of land theft and hence unworthy of remaining as landholders. Given this racialised politics of land in Zimbabwe, it was not surprising perhaps for Mola people to view the involvement of Mr Wright in the conservancy in a highly sceptical way. Certainly, those interviewed queried why a white man was coming to their territory in the name of conservation.

Gladys, who hails from ward 4, spoke glowingly of the resistance in ward 3 to the conservancy and highlighted that ward 4 was following in the footsteps of ward 3. Delving into partisan politics, she also questioned why white people were being allowed to come into Mola yet in other areas they were chased away under fast track land reform. In her narrative, she

proposed that the idea of entitlement to land and resources was intricately linked to support for the ruling party, ZANU PF:

*After residents of ward four had realised that they made a mistake by allowing the conservancy to be erected, council made haste to try and convince ward three to accept the conservancy as well. But in ward three the people were clever, they said 'no this is very wrong'. Ward 3 residents asked, 'Why are these people bringing white people here, the same white people whom they evicted from their farms?' Now they are driving the same people here. So what message are they trying to convey to us? Are they saying that this is where white people should reside? Saka kuno uku hakuna Zamuzve kana zvakadaro? [does this mean that ZANU PF does not exist here?]. (12/11/2015)*

On a similar note, Thomas added his opinion on the rejection of the conservancy with a racialised tone that had been promoted by the ruling party since 2000.

It appears that, at least in part, people of Mola rejected the conservancy because white people were being evicted from other parts of the country and hence Mola should also not be considered their place. They simply did not see the rationale of having any dealings with a white-owned company that would alienate them from their resources. For Thomas, the conservancy and subsequent subordination of Mola's lived-in landscapes (which are the basis for the survival of the people of Mola) would only be acceptable if the land reform exercise of 2000 was to be reversed and all evicted whites were allowed back to occupy the country again:

*When Fabian [pseudonym for wildlife manager at NRDC], McKenzie and Jonasi [pseudonym] as well as the District Administrator [DA] came to meet the people as they had been advised by councillor Siabwanda and the chief to do so, they introduced the issue of the conservancy. We started asking them questions. We asked the DA and McKenzie, 'DA, do you have a farm?' And he answered, 'Yes'. 'McKenzie, do you have a farm?'. He also answered, 'Yes'. 'Where did you get these farms?' They all answered, 'Ah we got them from white farmers who were evicted under the Fast Track Land Reform Programme'. We said, 'That is fine...so have you seen it fit that this is the area where whites should live? Unless you are saying all whites who were chased away should come back to Zimbabwe then we will not have any problems accepting Mr Wright and his wire'. (22/11/2015)*

Without addressing the above questions posed by Thomas and Gladys, the proponents of the conservancy were left with no room for any successful resolution of the problems raised by Mola people.



In statements which made clear her reasonable contentment with the present situation in Mola (and given that any hope for betterment of the area by government had vanished), Sphiwe opined that the NRDC and its conservancy partner should simply leave Mola area as it currently exists. Her views linked the present restricted access to natural resources arising from the conservancy with the historical experiences of displacement. She said:

*If the people who want to put a wire in both of our wards got farms from white farmers, let them leave us with our boma [territory]. We also do not want to cede any part of it. We have lived for so many decades without any help from the whites and very minimal help from the current government. We have lived with these wild animals;... now you want to come and put a wire for us. When we came from the Zambezi where they chased away our grandparents, they should have put that wire then, so that we would have known that the fenced area is a no-go area for us. But they realised that we posed no danger to the animals, we were used to them, they left us to live with them. So they must leave us like that, living with our animals, we are very comfortable with that.*  
(15/11/2015)

Nature is ‘a site of struggle’ as environmental sociologist Jacklyn Cock (2007) contends, a struggle that is largely shaped by different conceptions of nature and justice. This reflects the situation in the question of the contested conservancy in Mola. For NRDC and other powerful stakeholders like African Conservancy, the protected areas of Mola (as defended by the ‘wire’) are a public good for the purposes of the sustainability of nature and society. Ultimately, though, such areas involve an enclosure movement which in fact commodifies nature in the pursuit of private gain. For Mola residents, nature should in large part remain decommodified and open to all.

In this respect, the people of Mola claimed to have accessed documents containing the proposition for the erection of the conservancy through one of the employees at NRDC whose rural home is Mola. After going through the contents of those documents, Mola residents rejected the whole idea on the basis primarily that it was going to undo even the meagre benefits that the people were obtaining under the old CAMPFIRE arrangements by reducing the dividends disbursed to the community. This new conservancy was also to infringe on the rights of people to move freely in spaces within the designated ‘wire’ or conservancy. The said conservancy was going to have some rules to which the people of Mola had to abide, and these included restricted movement of people in the area designated as the conservancy at night hours. Thomas further explained the challenges that the community argued would be brought upon them by the proposed conservancy:

*We do not want the wire here. They thought we did not know about their documents on rules and regulations concerning the wire. We already knew the contents of the documents. One, 5% of the proceeds after 5 years is what they wanted to give back to the community, which is nothing if we look at it in terms of the development of the community. Two, whatever was going to happen in the conservancy was going to be private and confidential...keeping us in the dark on what would be happening in our own territory. No one was allowed to ask except NRDC and Mr Wright. So we said 'no, we do not want our resources tampered with'. All resources found in Mola must benefit Mola people, the 5%:95% dividend ratio was theirs and nothing like that would be allowed to happen in Mola today or in the future. (22/11/2015)*

In attempts at pushing through the conservancy, NRDC officials made political threats to remove an independent councillor for ward 3 who – along with his constituency – rejected the conservancy. Sphiwe recalled such threats:

*After the resistance from ward three residents, the likes of Fabian and employees at the rural district council intervened. They made threats to the local people of Mola. They even confronted our councillor, Mr Siabwanda, threatening to oust him from office because they were accusing him of influencing the resistance of the locals against the conservancy. The councillor resisted the threats by urging them to go and meet the people as it is the very people who owned the land and it is the very same people who voted him into office. (15/11/2015)*

The struggle against the conservancy turned into a conflict reminiscent of other similar struggles worldwide by indigenous peoples against encroachment on their lived-in landscape. In particular, police officers who hired by the McKenzie (then Member of Parliament) to intimidate the people of ward 3 into accepting the conservancy proposition. As well, the people of ward 3 were labelled as opposition supporters. Thomas narrated the events as follows:

*After we had rejected their idea of putting a wire in our ward, McKenzie politicised the whole issue labelling Mola residents as MDC supporters and giving this as the reason why we resisted the conservancy. At one point he came with armed police officers trying to intimidate us. We said 'no', we are not going to negotiate about the wire with guns and we boycotted the meeting. From that day we felt that we might lose the case and so we engaged human rights lawyers. The lawyers told us that if people say they do not want a proposed project in their area, they will not be arrested for that, it is their right to say no. So the wire issue was rejected and we told them to go and introduce it in another area, but not in Mola area. (22/11/2015)*

Mola residents had articulated a view which at least implicitly expressed support for fast track land reform. As Thomas argued:

*After a lot of misunderstandings and threats, we ended up telling them that if they wanted the wire so much, they must go to farms that they got from the land reform programme, take Mr Wright with them and have him fence off their farms. After that, we offered them a chance to come to us so that we would sell them elephants, a male and female, buffaloes, a male and female, and all the other animal species that he might want to conserve... then, they would have to take these to the fenced farms and breed them there.*  
(22/11/2015)

But, at the same time, Mola people were being labelled as part of the opposition conspiracy against the ruling party and thus – like all MDC supporters – they were viewed as falling outside of the realm of the Zimbabwean nation. The fact that Mola is a known MDC area served to justify such a label. Of course, Mola people had always felt excluded from the state-driven nation-building project.

As part of the strategies for resisting the conservancy and claiming entitlement to use of the resources in their territory, people of Mola ended up questioning the territorial belonging of the people who were advocating the erection of the conservancy in their territory. In particular, they focused on the people of Negande as some of the workers at NRDC fall under Negande. In this regard, Thomas made the following argument:

*We also gave them a second alternative [besides Mr Wright building his conservancy on fast track farms] ... Two of the most vocal employees who were supporting the wire come from Negande...Jonasi and Fabian... We told them that since their area, Negande, is depleted of animals because of poaching, we could as well sell them these male and female species of the animals they wanted so that they would go and erect the wire there and breed the animals there.* (22/11/2015)

The District Administrator was also at the centre of controversy as he appeared to have given the nod for the conservancy to be placed in the Mola area.

Thus, in taking matters perhaps to the extreme, some respondents questioned the territorial placement of employees who work at the NRDC and the DA's office. They argued that the people of Mola were not being employed in posts in local government yet Mola had candidates suitably qualified for such positions. In fact, Mola people claimed that the only employee who hailed from Mola was the one who had tipped off ward 3 residents to resist the conservancy, after he had revealed the contents of the conservancy documents including the constitution that would govern the conservancy.

In the end, they argued that the NRDC and DA were sabotaging development in the Mola area because these people (of the NRDC and DA) did not originate from Mola and simply wanted to extract resources from the area. In this light, Mola people also attributed the high incidences of poaching in the area to non-Tonga speaking peoples who are not concerned about the welfare of the people who live in Mola. In these narratives, people from Negande who were earlier categorised by Mola people as part of the displaced Tonga, were now labelled as opportunistic Shangwe people who want to take advantage of the resources in Mola. This shows that belonging is a social construct that changes with circumstances, as do processes of inclusion and exclusion which are central to belonging narratives and practices.

Thomas provided a succinct overview of Mola people's thoughts about the conservancy and belonging:

*The people seconding the wire, if you look at them, are not from Mola area. They are being driven by the love of money. The DA is a Karanga who comes from Masvingo. He gave the go ahead for the wire to be put here, because he does not care about our welfare. Because of this, people here in Mola are very angry with him and they do not want to see him. He was instructed by the Provincial Administrator to come and ask for forgiveness from the people after we had resisted but he was warned by the chief that the people would kill him because of what he did...and since then, he has not set foot in Mola. Then there are Jonasi and Fabian the Shangwe people who come from Negande. They lose nothing from having the wire put in Mola. In Negande all the animals are finished; where were these people when the poachers were killing animals in their area? Mola is being sabotaged by NRDC, if you look at their staff members, ¾ are not from Mola. It is really not a matter of who is leading us but we want power and autonomy over our resources... and once you take this power that is when we start looking at where you come from.*  
(22/11/2015)

In the end, residents of both wards are actively resisting the wire that was put in part of ward 4.

## **7.6 Conclusion**

The chapter discussed narratives of belonging to Mola and resistance against an imposed conservancy. It showed that Mola is not a geographically contiguous community. Rather, it is socially heterogeneous and consists of local practices of excluding others from belonging and therefore not eligible to access resources meant for restitution. People can be included or excluded based on ethnicity. It also revealed the symbolic construction of the environment



which in turn produces discursive resources for practicing belonging at a local level. Graves were found to be of crucial importance in such acts of constructing belonging. In this regard, belonging is practiced at multiple levels and resources like autochthony are socially malleable depending on the context in which they are raised and used. The chapter ended with narratives that touched on belonging to the nation and references to the politics of land and belonging that has characterised Zimbabwe since the year 2000.

## **Chapter Eight: Conclusion**

### **8.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides a synthesis of the main themes discussed in the thesis. It centres on the main objective of the study (addressed in chapters four to seven) in the context of the theoretical framing (as outlined in chapter two). The main objective of the thesis was to understand and analyse landscape and belonging amongst the Tonga people of Mola in NyamiNyami District in the context of their Kariba-induced history of displacement.

Overall, the thesis entailed an emic-oriented approach to understanding the Zimbabwean Tonga people's landscape perspectives of the natural environment in relation to memories of the Kariba dam displacement and more contemporary environmental conservation regulations and practices in Mola. It examined the ways in which the Tonga people of Mola understand their present environment in order to put imprints from their Zambezi landscape into Mola and to convert Mola into a landscape of home. In doing so, it showed how the Mola Tonga use narratives of home and belonging to claim and contest access to environmental resources. It became clear that the Tonga people of Mola socially construct and interpret the physical environment of the Zambezi to form claims of belonging to both Mola and the Zambezi Valley. In pursuing all this, the thesis sought to reveal the complexities of the land-landscape-belonging nexus which is discursively constituted in narratives that exclude and include others from Mola as a home place.

### **8.2 Landscape and Belonging**

In the light of the main objective, the Tonga people of Mola interpret their landscape in ways that reflect continuities with their Zambezi landscape prior to the displacement processes. These ways of interpreting landscape facilitated the conversion of Mola into their landscape of home. This continuity is attributable to landscape socialisation that the people experienced prior to displacement, which has survived generations to date. Landscape socialisation denotes internalising the habits, values and behavioural codes (summed up as the *habitus*) with which people perceive landscape (Stotten, 2016). It is the process through which landscape is constituted as a social product (Kühne, 2009; 2013). Landscape socialisation enables the transmission of landscape perceptions from one generation to the other, just as *habitus* is transmitted from one generation to the next through such socialisation processes.

Landscape socialisation is evident throughout all the empirical chapters. For instance, in chapter five, Moses narrates the process of emplacement in Mola as one that involved adaptation measures that included the building of *busanzas* (learned from the Zambezi) to cope with the severe heat of the Valley. The use of Tonga proverbs such as *Manyika manyika julu ndimwi* (the earth might be big as it is but the sky is one) and *Kunkombonkombo nkukwanu* (you may travel to very faraway lands but your place of birth is your permanent home) by Moses in his narrative reinforces the acceptance of Mola as their permanent home; and this is a cultural trait among the Tonga that has been passed on from one generation to the other through landscape socialisation.

Primary landscape socialisation for the Tonga, which leads to the habits, skills and values of perceiving landscape (Stotten, 2016), in fact played a crucial role in fostering a sense of place and attachment to Mola as their home. For instance, in Chapter 7, respondents recalled that, when the people were displaced, they performed rituals that included the carrying of *hoko* (soil) from each of the late chiefs' graves, which was buried at the new *malende* shrine in their new area of resettlement, which is present day Mola. These acts have deep symbolism that translates into how the displaced Tonga 'manipulated' Mola territory into a landscape of home.

These acts demonstrate an active 'social construction of the physical environment' (Greider and Garkovich, 1994; Cosgrove, 1985; Daniels and Cosgrove, 1989; Glenna, 1996, Wolmer, 2007) of Mola into a 'lived in' landscape of home. But the actions also cultivated a sense of rootedness and claims to autochthony similar to that which scholars on belonging (Mujere, 2011; 2012; Geschiere, 2009; Boas and Dunn, 2013) highlight as crucial to cementing belonging to place and claiming entitlement to land and inanimate resources. The burying of *hoko* onto the *malende* shrine in Mola symbolises the appropriation of Mola space into a territory that belongs to the Tonga people as their home. This tallies well with constructivist theorists of landscape (Greider and Garkovich, 1994; Bender, 2002; Duncan, 1995; Glenna, 1996) who argue that landscape is a product of social constructions that results in symbolic environments. Mola is not just a physical environment that lies out there, as it carries multiple meanings for the people of Mola. Among these meanings are those of a landscape of home through the burying of *hoko* from the ancestral graves that were taken from the now Lake Kariba. This means that both landscape and belonging have a sacred dimension to them.

Barry (1999; 2007) noted that the environment for non-Western cultures is not limited to the physical environment only but rather also includes non-physical entities such as ancestors. This is substantiated throughout most of the empirical chapters in this thesis. Terms such as *banalyo gundu* substantiate this in the case for the people of Mola. In relation to the

Tongan ‘onto-triadic deep ecology’ (to borrow from Mangena’s phrase), this is crucial in terms of how the environment regulates the people’s way of life in Mola. The interpretation of the environment as ‘owned’ by the *banalyo gundu* regulates the way people in Mola use local resources. In this regulation of the environment and its use, narratives in this thesis (such as those in chapter five on the stories of Ume and NyamiNyami) involve a communitarian and ‘use value’ valuation of the environment as opposed to a commodified valuation. In this regard, the thesis findings resonate with what scholars on African landscape and cosmology (such as Moyana, 1984, 2002; Hughes, 2006; Sadomba, 2014; Mafeje, 2003) highlight regarding land ownership and management as being communitarian historically. Constant references to the *banalyo gundu* and great *banalyo gundu* are an indication of the continued transferring of a certain set of skills for interpreting the environment from one generation to another.

Some cross-cultural resemblances between Shona and Tonga cosmology can be deciphered. In his 2015 paper, Mangena observed what he termed an onto-triadic Shona deep ecology that exists between the living, the living timeless and the creator. The same was evident among the Tonga of Mola who have the *banalyo gundu*, the creator and themselves. The belief among respondents in this study of the existence of *banalyo gundu* helped create a sense of belonging to Mola. This was revealed in the setting up of spaces such as sacred areas (like the *malende*), and the performance of rituals such as rainmaking in times of drought.

### **8.2.1 Politics of Landscape and Belonging**

As theorists on belonging (Antonsich, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 2006; 2011; Wright, 2014) noted, belonging can be used as a discursive resource for claiming and justifying or resisting exclusion. This equates to a politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2006; 2011; Antonsich, 2010; Wright, 2014) that comes into play when belonging is threatened in a certain way. The thesis findings provide a substantive case of a politics of belonging where respondents justified access to the lake through identifying themselves as ‘*bakulwizi/bakazwa kumulonga*’ in order to assert their entitlement to the lake and its resources particularly fish. They did this by appropriating the history of displacement from the then Zambezi River. Belonging as a political, discursive resource that is used to articulate authenticity of people’s claims to belonging to place is also seen in narratives that justify the people of Mola’s continued use of resources in the fenced off area that was meant for the proposed conservancy.

At the apex of belonging as a political and discursive tool, belonging was found to be practised at the local and national levels. Respondents used narratives of belonging that excluded not only local communities but also those that asserted belonging at a national level.



In the first instance, the labelling of people from Negande who work at NRDC as not originally Tonga concurs with the notion of the politics of belonging. This highlights that markers of identity and belonging are malleable and change depending on the context. In chapter two, it was highlighted that landscape acts as a centre of intersubjective meanings that foster a sense of belonging to place (Nogue' and Vicente, 2004:113) and that landscapes are in part produced through a "territorialised politics of belonging" (Trudeau, 2006:422). Further, the intricate link between landscape and belonging in referring to landscapes as "spatially bounded scenes" (Trudeau, 2006:422) conveys a message of what and who belongs and what and who does not. In like manner, the findings in this thesis confirm the territorialised politics of belonging through narratives of exclusion of others from Mola. The territorialised politics of belonging in Mola illuminate multiple meanings, among them belonging in the sense of citizenship (such as in narratives of resistance against the conservancy) and belonging along ethnic lines. In all this, the thesis demonstrates the contested nature of landscape and various assertions of entitlement to natural resources in Mola. For instance, in chapter seven, people who are not from Mola or those who perceived as not of Tonga origin were singled out as not belonging to Mola and therefore not entitled to access to resources that are found in Mola and the Zambezi Valley.

In chapter four, which is a mixture of secondary and primary data, it was noted how the people of Mola have discursively turned Mola into a landscape of home. Claims by the passenger such as 'this is Tongaland' have such connotations of home and a 'sense of rootedness' (Mujere, 2011; 2012; Geschiere, 2009) that the Tonga people hold of Mola as a home place. This substantiates the argument that land-landscape-belonging nexus is characterised by some groups of people claiming belonging on the basis of, among many other resources, being first comers as a discursive tool to exclude others from belonging to a particular place whenever there are contestations. Further, the claim by the same passenger "why do you not do business in your area of origin" also reveals a conversion Mola into a landscape of home and some sense of political belongingness (attachment to place) particularly for the Tonga.

In this case, we see belonging in the form of attachment to place and also defining or categorising others as strangers. The expression "Tongaland" is attributable to the habitus as a way as of perceiving the home place, shaped by the lived experiences and history of the Tonga people. The altercation and what the passengers says, like referring to history by saying we have lived like this for many years, also demonstrate the intricacies of memories and history in shaping people's narratives on political belonging. This tallies with Lovell (1998:1) who argues

that belonging is a way of remembering that is instrumental in the construction of collective memory surrounding a place. The politics of belonging in Mola reveals that ‘community’ is just a convenient sociological term that conceals the differences that permeate different people or groups of people. Such differences only come to the fore when there is something at stake that people are clamouring to have access. This substantiates Yuval-Davis’ (2006, 2011) position that belonging appears to be naturalized until it appears to be threatened in one way or another.

### **8.2.2 Memory, Temporality and Contestations**

Besides bringing to the fore the politics of landscape and belonging, other key themes which emerged related to memory, temporality and contestations.

In as much as Mola has been turned into a landscape of home, the study reveals that in different circumstances, the people of Mola carefully appropriate the past through memory, specifically their displacement from the Zambezi River, for purposes of access to the lake’s resources, particularly fish. The notion that *banalyo gundu* reside both at the lake and in Mola demonstrates this. This is also attributable to a specific habitus which guides the thinking and symbols that the people of Mola attach to their environment, particularly that of the lake. The interpretation of the lake as a sacred space where the ‘great *banalyo gundu* reside’ also reveals this pervasive habitus that lasted long within the community since displacement. This is merged particularly with identity markers of belonging to the river such as ‘*bakulwiizi*’ and ‘*bakazwa kumulonga*’ to demonstrate this sense of attachment to the lake.

The damming of the Zambezi River necessitated an appropriation of nature, summed up as the ‘Europeanisation of African landscapes’ (Fontein, 2015:1) and/or ‘how Europeans made nature’ (Hughes, 2006; 2010) at Kariba the effects of which (simultaneous appropriation of nature and disruption of locals’ lives) are elaborately evident in Mola. Despite all this socio-cultural re-engineering and alteration, Tongan landscape or human-environment relations are still elaborately evident. Beyond the effects of double displacement (dam and conservation induced), social actors in Mola use and appropriate memories of displacement to assert claims to belonging and access to natural resources in Mola. Fontein (2015:1), with reference to Lake Mutirikwi, reveals evidence of live and affective African landscapes to date. Findings in this study show, however, that what remains of a perceived Tongan landscape in Mola comprises more of a hybrid than an untouched pure African landscape. Belonging in this thesis mainly touched on locality and entitlement to the lake and surrounding natural resources in Mola.

‘African landscape’ defies the more pronounced differences/subjectivities that characterise Zimbabwe as a country. The case of dammed peoples – specifically the Tonga people of Mola – presents an interesting yet complicated case. Despite the unprecedented effects of a Europeanisation of their landscapes, they still engage in protracted struggles to reassert not only their entitlement to ‘territory’ and control of their natural resources but also a maintenance of a distinct cultural heritage and identity in a country where the colonial and postcolonial governments have largely subjugated them to the margins. This is especially true considering the pro-enclosure land and natural resource policies that continue to haunt such a marginal area as Mola transmitted and adopted by the colonial and post-colonial governments respectively. The end product is that colonially invented ways of reading, seeing and managing landscape subordinate and suppress local Tonga interpretations of landscape although they are not obliterated.

With respect to landscape, the thesis reveals that people interpret nature in multiple ways after which they form lasting relationships with it. In particular, the phenomenological interpretation of landscape that advocated by scholars on landscape (Tilley, 1994; Greider and Grakovich, 1994; Cosgrove, 1986; Glenna, 1996) finds authenticity in the way Mola residents relate to nature in Mola and at the lake. The fact that certain spaces such as the *malende* are considered as sacred and a reserve for the Basimalende and members of the royal family reveals that nature is not just a physical space that is out there, it is culturally loaded with values that reveal the history, memory and way of life of the people in question.

The study also reveals the temporality of landscape and the assertion that landscape is a recording as opposed to being a constant record or a sedimentation of history (Ingold, 1993; Bender, 2002). Among many points throughout the empirical chapters, the taking of Mola (which was formerly part of chief Nebiri’s territory) and converting it into their home entails the fact that landscape can change over time. In Mola, *hoko* symbolises the power to convert a territory that previously belonged to chief Nebiri’s people into land that belongs to the Tonga people today.

While the Tonga claim belonging through *hoko*, their claims to belonging are not uncontested. A case in point is that of the Tonga of Mola and the Shangwe of Nebiri. The thesis demonstrates that landscape is contested and different social groups see and claim entitlement to the same physical space using diverse strategies. While *hoko* is a strong ‘tool’ for claiming entitlement and belonging to Mola landscape for the Tonga, the people of Nebiri use the fact that they are first comers to Mola territory. In this case, the notion of autochthony or a sense of rootedness (and therefore a sense of belonging to a particular locality) derives from multiple



sources. 'First comers' is only one strategy (for Nebiri's people) while Mola's people use *hoko* in this regard. Ultimately, *hoko* constitutes a powerful basis through which the Zambezi landscape has been imprinted onto Mola landscapes to convert it into a landscape of home.

### 8.3 Habitus

While habitus was not the central conceptual framing for the thesis, in this section I try to make further sense of the case study by drawing more fully on this concept. In this regard, I conclude by claiming that further empirical research is required in order to demonstrate the relevance of the notion of habitus to landscape and belonging studies.

In fact, the existence of multiple habitus between groups of people with reference to human environment relations is evident in the interviews of this study. Two groups of people, Mola community on the one hand and NRDC on the other hand can be said to have different habitus or dispositions with which they evaluate the way the physical environment in Mola and at the lake has been used or related with. This existence of multiple habitus is attributable to a different way of seeing the environment that is attributable to possession of different forms of "capital". Capital comprises resources which can be economic, social, cultural or symbolic and can be used by one group or individual to maintain or gain a dominant position over another group/individual (Glenna, 1996) and this is important in influencing one's fate in a given context.

In the first instance, employees of NRDC and members of the African Conservancy (specifically Mr Wright) possess some form of 'scientific or cultural capital' (which leans more towards the so-called scientific based environment conservation) which make them agree on imposing a conservancy without getting the consent of the community of Mola. In this way of seeing, the NRDC and the NGO conceive of the environment as an entity that is separate from the community and should be protected from humans to avoid deterioration. For these social actors, the 'protection' of the environment, restricting human access to it is of primary importance than whatever forms of association the people Mola have with the environment. This is an interpretation akin to the way colonial science and the wilderness way of seeing the environment it writes-off humans from protected areas. Embedded in this way of seeing is also a belief that that ownership of all land and natural resources is vested in the state.

In the second instance is the community of Mola which conceives of the environment as a 'lived in landscape' (Wolmer, 2007), a home from which they must not be alienated. The community possesses a different form of cultural capital that they use to contest and resist alienation and forms of enclosure, in this case the imposed conservancy. This reveals that while

landscapes are contrived scenes that represent particular way of seeing (in this case the way of seeing of NRDC), less powerful members (Mola community) contest suppression of their own way of seeing by engaging in subtle ways reminiscent of Scott's (1965) weapons of the weak.

In the face of such multiple habitus and by extension, contested landscapes, power is of central importance in enforcing compliance with the powerful group's way of seeing. This is evidenced in the measures that have been enforced by NRDC such as excluding Mola ward 3 from projects that include food relief and the exclusion of chief Mola from a meeting of chiefs that took place at chief Nebiri's place.

The study also demonstrates changing interpretations of landscape over time and this is tandem with the notion that the habitus influences human behaviour but not in determinate ways. Habitus is defined as long lasting dispositions or schemes that determine human feeling, thinking and action but these are not permanent (Setten, 2004; Bourdieu, 1977; 2005). It means there is room for changing and learning new ways for evaluating the world. It is possible for an individual to possess an inappropriate habitus and experience hysteresis. The appropriation of the Zambezi Valley escarpment led to among other things the construction of Kariba dam and the conversion of the lake shore into a space that serves purposes of tourism (sport fishing and hunting) some of the people of Mola have changed their visions of what the used to stand for. For instance, Bumi, where there is now Bumi hotel, used to be perceived as a life and it was a lived in landscape that was source of livelihood for the Tonga. The appropriation this space meant whatever association the Tonga had had in the past were deemed inappropriate. This has resulted some people of Mola appreciating the landscape through the hotel that brings tourists and dividends that at the end trickle down to the community. Some people like Thomas value Bumi as life in the sense of its contribution to their school through services like photocopying for the school. This means a re-socialisation or learning of new values in relation to the to what the Bumi landscape contributes to the people in question.

While the habitus is perceived as some collective way defining a group's way of perceiving the world in different contexts, it is crucial that Bourdieu recognises the existence of a multitude of habitus. It is also important to take note of the fact that different people can possess different kind of habitus within the same cultural group. This resonates with the people of Mola with regard to the way they perceive the environment and their daily way of life. Claims of "boma lilisiidde" or the territory is dirty, attributed to the chief's failure to follow conventional coronation procedures reveal this. This can be attributed to the chief's newly acquired form of habitus as revealed in respondents who narrated that the chief does not want to sleep with the territorial wives because of human rights questions. Because respondents



attributed the chief's behaviour to his time of working in the government, his concern with human rights and refusing to sleep with the territorial wives can be said to a newly acquired habitus. On the other hand, some of the community of Mola still possess the primary socialisation landscape which sees a violation of the coronation procedure resulting in the territory being dirty and culminating in a number of problems that include droughts.

The habitus is long lasting though there is a room for change over time especially when people are subjected to a different environment that requires a different set of dispositions for perceiving and acting in the world. The long lasting characteristics of the habitus were evident in this study where for instance in at Sibilobilo fishing camp where there are some cultural more that have to be abided with. Though sounding mystical, such understandings of the environment guide behaviour in the long term and are attributable to primary landscape socialization. There are also indications of the environment as a punishing landscape if people fail to abide by these mores. As such, the environment in Mola also assumes some form of agency over the people of Mola.

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## **Appendix 1 Narrative interviews**

The interviews followed this general routine:

The study comprised of twelve narrative interviews which on average lasted two days each. In between, there were some days when I could not conduct interviews because my research assistant, Thomas, would be tied at work. He is formally employed as a teacher at Mola primary school. Mola is subdivided into 2 wards, that is, ward three and ward four. In ward four, I interviewed three people; this is where the conservancy was imposed. In ward 3, I interviewed six people. Please note, the names of the following: Godfrey, George, Moses, Gladys, Maria, Laura, Lydia, Dickson, Pierre's uncle and Sphiwe are all pseudonyms to try to protect the respondents. Chief Mola was the tenth respondent. Thomas, my research assistant, participated in the narrative interviews particularly regarding the resistance against the conservancy but he is categorized in this study mainly as a research assistant and he did all the interpretations of the interviews that were done in Tonga. Altogether, therefore, (adding chief Mola and Thomas, the interviews were twelve) This is the reason why in one of the footnotes Thomas is referred to as a respondent by default. There are also cases where I quote informal conversations (as part of informal interviews) I had with people such as the District Administrator as well as the Mola resident who works at Siakobvu Growth point, and then UMCOR employee but these do not constitute the formal interviews that I conducted.

Thomas and I would arrive at the respondent's homestead. After formal greetings, Thomas explained who I was and my research objectives. He would also ask what language the respondent was comfortable responding in. For this reason, some interview excerpts have quotations have both Shona and Tonga quotations. Thomas was my research assistant except for the first day of the narrative interview with Moses, which was conducted in the company of Pierre who acted as a research assistant in that regard. From some of these research interviews we were directed to our next respondent(s) as was in the case with the interview with George who referred us to go and interview Godfrey at Sibilobilo fishing camp.

Generally, the following generative questions were asked and questions for further narrative probing were asked depending on the individual responses. The ones that touched on displacement were specifically directed at the five respondents who witnessed displacement. However, some of the participants who did not witness displacement were asked such questions in relation to what the environment means to them, as was the case during an informal conversation with Thomas where he gave his different perceptions on the meanings of Bumi:

1. May you please, in brief, explain how you used to live along the Zambezi River.
2. What was the structure of authority like in relation to land and other natural endowments like the Zambezi River?
3. How did the relocation process take place?
4. What were the repercussions of displacement? How were these repercussions mitigated? In what ways did these effects of displacement affect Tonga ideas about landscape, identity and belonging?
5. What is the present day relationship with the river and the people of Mola today?
6. When you arrived in Mola, how did the process of emplacement take place?
7. What happened to (if there were any) earlier inhabitants?
8. For it to be called a 'home', what if any, were the rituals performed for substantive emplacement?
9. With the passage of time, how the 'place-specific' belonging have practices prior to displacement continued or discontinued in relation to your present locality?
10. Questions applicable to all (including those who did not witness displacement)
11. What is the general understanding among the Tonga concerning land, nature and belonging?
12. How are these still upheld to date?
13. What are the roles (if any) of traditional leaders in informing Tonga identity in relation to land and/ or nature?
14. What, if any, are the procedures of excluding or including others (strangers) in Mola?
15. Besides the functions of the natural environment for economic purposes (livelihoods) what are its other functions in your present locality?
16. How do Tonga people interpret and deal with natural disasters like droughts?
17. Along the lines of gender, what, if any, are the specificities in relation to everyday interactions with nature. Are there any taboos or regulations that pertain to women and men's everyday interactions with the land/ or environment?
18. What are some of the meanings that land, the environment and natural resources have for the people of Mola? How and in what ways, if any, have these changed over time?
19. What are the (possibly) changing perceptions about the land and the environment 60 years after their location?
20. When you relocated to Mola, how did you manipulate your present landscape or environment to put imprints from your Zambezi landscape?

21. What are the everyday local practices of asserting belonging and environmental resource entitlement in Mola? Have you turned your present landscape into a landscape of home, and if so, how have they done so?
22. What discursive narratives do the Tonga people have about place and belonging in Mola?
23. In what ways do the Tonga people of Mola construct their identity in relation to human-nature relationships?
24. In what ways, if any, do the people of Mola negotiate environmental resource use in Mola?
25. How do the Tonga people interpret their present relationship with Lake Kariba?
26. How does the environment in Mola shape the way of life of the Tonga people?
27. How did the idea of the conservancy come about and what were its implications for the people of Mola as far as access to natural resources is concerned?
28. What does the conservancy mean in terms of your understanding of Tonga people's relationships with the environment and entitlement to natural resources in Mola?
29. In light of the proposed conservancy, what are your perceptions regarding access to resources by the people of Mola.
30. What does the conservancy mean to you in terms of Mola people's entitlement to natural resources and belonging to Mola?

## **Appendix 2 Participant Observation**

Participant observation snapshots and the recording of informal conversations provided useful insights to the understanding land and landscape in Mola.

This included the following:

1. The trip to Munego with Pierre
2. The trip to Sibilobilo fishing camp, which comprised of questions related to the sacredness of Lake Kariba as well as the conduct that people in the fishing camp are supposed to abide with.
3. A trip to see the grave site where the the claimed late rival to chief Mola's chieftaincy was buried
4. A trip to see the Mola malende shrine.
5. The taking down of field notes during the field trip to Mola