

**MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY**



**FACULTY OF ARTS**

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**TOPIC**

**A HISTORY OF THE TONGA PEOPLE'S RELOCATIONS FROM BINGA TO  
SETTLEMENT IN KANA VALLEY.**

**By**

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Honours Degree in History and International Studies**

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## Approval Form

The undersigned do agree and certify that they supervised **Tendai Manika's** dissertation entitled: A History of Tong relocation from Binga and settlement in Kana valley, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Bachelor of Arts honours in History and international studies History Department at Midlands State University.

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## **Declaration**

I do hereby declare that “**A history of Tonga relocation from Binga to settlement in kana valley**”, is my individual work .I therefore solemnly swear that it has not been submitted at any other institution or University thereof .I also declare that the sources and quotes has been acknowledged as compete references .I therefore do hereby authorise the Midlands State University to lend the dissertation to other institutions ,individuals or organisations for purposes of Study or research only.

## **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this work to my late father and my Mom. To my two brothers for their unwavering and undying support .To Yvette for being there for me during the most difficult moments.

## **Acknowledgements**

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## List of Acronyms

CCJP	Catholic Commission for Justice and peace.
DA	District Administrator
PA	Provincial Administrator

## **Abstract**

*The research examines the History of Tonga relocation from Binga, it pays particular attention to the reasons behind their movement, the various settlements they established and the reasons behind the abandonment of the settlements. The study will focus on Tonga settlement in Kana valley and highlight on the social, cultural and economic activities of the group. The study will also highlight on the arrival of the Karanga into Kana valley and the reasons behind their evictions from Rhodesdale, then take a swipe at the relations between the two groups. The researcher intends to highlight how the autochthones were forced to abandon their lifestyle and conform to Karanga practices .Colonial policies and their biases towards the Karanga will also be highlighted together with the positive and negative effects of Karanga resettlement in the area. Tonga reactions to the new practices and ideas are going to be discussed. The study concludes by focusing on the impacts of Karanga resettlement into the area and shows how the autochthones lost their identity, legacy and heritage. Both primary and secondary sources were used during the study and they made the study a complete product.*

## **Introduction**

The study examines the history of Tonga relocation from Binga to final settlement in Kana valley. The researcher will showcase the various settlements occupied by the Tonga and the reasons behind the abandonment of these settlements. It will show how the autochthones were reduced from being masters of their own destiny to being servants to the new arrivals. The research is broken into four chapters. The first chapter focuses on the general history of the Tonga of Mkoka .It traces the origins of the group and their relations with other groups in Binga. The chapter also analyses how both ecological and climatic conditions impacted negatively on the group thereby compelling it to relocate. The chapter takes a swipe at the reasons behind the relocation and final settlement in Kana valley. The various practices of the autochthones before Karanga encroachment into the area will be examined. The relations between the Tonga and Nevana will be unpacked revealing how the respect of both the Nevana and spirit mediums ensured the fertility of the land, animals and was also a remedy against calamities.

Chapter 2 focuses on Karanga encroachment into Kana Valley. It examines the reasons behind Karanga evictions from Rhodesdale to resettlement in Kana. The chapter brings out how the Karanga masquerading as pillars of success, beams of enlightenment, development and progress masterminded the social, cultural, economic and religious collapse of the autochthones. The arrival of the Karanga marked the beginning of the disintegration and capitulation of Tonga identity. The collapse of Tonga social, economic and cultural fabric could also be attributed to colonial policies and practices. The collapse was three fold. During registration the

officials forced the Tonga to change their names into Shona; those who converted to Christianity were given new Shona and bible names, those who went to school were forced to change their names to Shona and to learn Shona. The chapter also focuses on both the negative and positive effects of Karanga resettlement into Kana. It concludes by unpacking and chronicling how the autochthones reacted to the alien practices.

Chapter 3 examines and explains the reasons behind the loss of Tonga Chieftainship to the Karanga. The chapter chronicles the rule of Seduluka and the factors behind the rise of Machongo into the corridors of power. The chapter also reveals various factors that prompted Machongo's ascendancy to chieftainship. Amongst the major reasons behind the rise of Machongo includes the failure of Seduluka to groom a successor, Machongo's stamina, will power, charisma, his experience as a messenger of court and the ability to utilise opportunities as they presented themselves to his own advantage. The chapter concludes by analysing and reflecting on the difficulties and obstacles being encountered by the autochthones in trying to reclaim the chieftainship back.

Chapter 4 highlights the rise and politics of chieftainship repossession by the Tonga. The chapter focuses on the sudden surge in the revival of their cultural practices, the maintenance of their traditional heroes, the revival of the honour and respect of spirit mediums and most importantly the visit to Nevana and the writing of a detailed genealogy and its submission to the District Administrator's office. The chapter takes a swipe at the visit of the Tonga to the National Archives in May 2013. It then concludes by exploring the failure of the officials to implement the Traditional

Leaders Act in addressing the plight of the Tonga and also reflects on the biases of the officials towards the Shona.

### **Statement of the problem**

The study intends to highlight that the first inhabitants of Mkoka were the Tonga rather than the Shona. The study seeks to reveal that the problem being experienced in Mkoka can be traced back to the colonial period. The research also intends to break the deafening silence and show how the autochthones lost their pride, prestige and heritage upon the arrival of the domineering Karanga. The research aims to bring out how the colonial administrators provided the ballistics that was used by the Karanga to bombard Tonga traditions into rubble. The study seeks to highlight that the ongoing chieftainship crisis and the major problems rocking the area are a result of decades of ineptitude and poor administration of the plight of the Tonga. The research seeks to invoke, incite and ignite a spirit of enquiry amongst historians, development practitioners and the responsible authorities to address the plight of the Tonga. The study seeks justice and the rehabilitation of the honour of the wronged tribe. Lastly the study intends to encourage the authorities to make Tonga compulsory in both primary and secondary schools in predominant Tonga areas .This will help revive Tonga customs, social values, cultural beliefs and economic practices.

### **Research Objectives**

This study seeks to:

1. Unpack the social, economic and political impacts of Karanga encroachment and settlement into the Tonga area of Kana valley.
2. Establish the factors behind the loss of Tonga chieftainship to the Karanga
3. Highlight that the Tonga were the first inhabitants in the area.
4. Identify the problems and obstacles being encountered by the Tonga in reclaiming their chieftainship.

### **Research questions**

1. What problems were encountered by the Tonga after the arrival of the Karanga into the area?
2. To what extent did the Shona impact on the social, cultural, economic and traditional norms and values of the Tonga?
3. How did the Tonga react to these challenges? How successful were they?
4. What challenges or obstacles are they facing in trying to reclaim the chieftainship back?

### **Significance of the study**

The research intends to bring out how minority and weaker groups have usually suffered in history at the hands of powerful groups .It also intends to highlight that the ongoing chieftainship crisis is a colonial legacy that has been unresolved up to this day by the responsible authorities thereby perpetuating the continual marginalisation of the Tonga. The research seeks to inspire anthropologists, historians and the

government to address the colonial wrongs and also promote the learning of Tonga in predominant Tonga areas.

## **Limitations**

I faced great difficulties during the data collection period. The Tonga was suspicious and curious so they were reluctant to release information. My research coincided with the time when the Tonga was busy moving from office to office challenging the loss of their chieftainship. The Tonga viewed me as a spy sent by the shona to gain a clear cut and deeper understanding of their history so that it might be used to counter their claims. The Karanga chief also threatened to expel me from the area if I continued with my research. He feared that the research would reveal the truth and jeopardise his position. Besides these constraints I also faced financial problems. I had to travel long distances to cut short the expenses. The research process was time consuming and straining. The District Administrators' office was reluctant in releasing information. The DA even asked why I had decided to research about Mkoka yet there were other topics to deal with. People at the DA's office feared that maybe I was sent by powerful people in the government to carry out the research so they were not at liberty to disclose the information. Some members of the Tonga were outraged when they heard that I had been given information, they quickly summoned me, and asked me why I had decided to carry out such a research on their history. I had a hard time in trying to convince the Tonga that the research was not meant to jeopardise their plans of reclaiming their chieftainship back. They then asked me to attend one of their ceremonies so that they would inquire from the ancestors about my intentions. They promised that if the Tonga ancestors denied me access it meant that I would

have to surrender all the information I had been given by some members of the Tonga. During the ceremony the Tonga inquired from their ancestors and they were told that my research meant no harm so they then began cooperating. I was given permission to visit their traditional grave site and take pictures. They also gave me the documents they had brought from the National Archives. Language was another barrier .Most of the elderly Tonga spoke in Tonga so I had to seek for a translator.

## **Delimitation**

The research was strictly limited to the area under the jurisdiction of chief Mkoka that is from Gavave to West boundary .I mainly focused in areas where the Tonga were predominant. Respondents were drawn from this area.

## **Historical Background**

The Tonga ethnic group is sparsely populated in Zimbabwe .According to J.Melford the group arrived in Zimbabwe around 300AD.<sup>1</sup>Melford says their forefathers favoured the riverine areas along the Zambezi, Tshongokwe, Mzola and Kana Rivers .<sup>2</sup>E.Colson purports that the Tonga had a vibrant, astounding yet unrecorded history.<sup>3</sup> Most of the existing literature on the Tonga focus on those Tonga who were displaced from the Zambezi River. Mike Tremmel however brought a new dimension and stated that, many scholars have concentrated most of their researches on the Tonga north and south of the Zambezi yet there were other Tonga who were never affected by the displacement.<sup>4</sup>Tremmel says these groups were under Pashu, Siabhuwa and Dobola.<sup>5</sup>The same is true of the Nkoka, the group under which the research will mainly focus on .Fr.Florentine Perez postulates that this group was sandwiched



between these powerful groups and due to their proximity they often quarrelled over hunting grounds, water sources and grazing land. The Nkoka were often at loggerheads with Dobola and Sinamagonde. In his study of the Tonga in Binga Tremmel concluded that the area though good haven for wild game, had very high temperatures and was prone to malaria. Due to this, infant mortality rate was very high.<sup>7</sup> Malaria is believed to have had its toll even on the older members so population growth was very low.

Fr. Perez is of the opinion that besides moving due to periodic conflicts with their neighbours, the Nkoka might also have moved due to the disasters mentioned by Tremmel.<sup>8</sup> Ginjimalazu the leader of the group, fearing to be wiped out by diseases and also fearing the loss of freedom, control and supremacy over his group decided to move in search of a more peaceful disease free area. The group took a south easterly route in 1926. Perez says the group traversed the Mzola Tshongokwe area, staying in this area for three seasons. After a heated explosive quarrel with the Ndebele they left the place again.<sup>9</sup> He further says the death of Gwacheka divided the group and after a misunderstanding some members took a different route retracing their footsteps back to Binga and settled in Lusulu. It was while they were in this area that Gwapula was possessed by the spirit of the Tonga ancestors. Fr. Perez purports that, it was Gwapula who told the group that he had been shown a peaceful land by the ancestors which the group was supposed to migrate to.<sup>10</sup>

It should be noted that before final settlement in Kana valley the group rested in Mbungu, then progressed to Kana and arrived in 1934. B. Zimunhu postulates that

due to the strong belief in ancestors and traditions the Tonga held a feast to thank the ancestors for guidance during the arduous journey and for giving them a peaceful land. During the feast Gwapula was warned that before carrying out anything they had to seek the permission of the spirits of Nevana.<sup>11</sup>Ranger refers to the Mhondoro as the lion of Gokwe who had the power over rain in the area.<sup>12</sup>The medium was living among the Shangwe. So the Tonga set off in search of the Mhondoro. When they finally found the medium a feast was held. During the feast the Mhondoro gave the Tonga the rules they were supposed to follow and obey if ever they wanted to have peace in his land. He warned them that a violation of the rules would result in them being plagued by great misfortunes .Fr. Rosendo says if well observed the rules ensured the fertility of the land, protection against diseases and promoted good yields and cattle fertility.<sup>13</sup> P.Nyambara postulates that the Tonga just like the Shangwe subscribed to a traditional life, they depended on their immediate environment for their food.<sup>14</sup>

Fr.G.Rosendo states that prior to the 1950s they practiced hunting ,with men hunting both big and small game while women gathered wild berries, insects and caterpillars to supplement their diet.<sup>15</sup>They also devised different methods of catching fish which were readily available in the mighty Kana River. The autochthones grew millet in the valley. G. Rosendo says the coming of the Karanga in 1953 marked the end of Tonga freedom and bushy life.<sup>16</sup>The autochthones were forced to come out of the valley when it was gazetted grazing area in 1954. This meant that they had to leave the river they adored and regarded as the residents of their ancestors.

Maravanyika says the arrival of the Karanga among the Shangwe communities led to the loss of Shangwe identity .<sup>17</sup>The same could be said of the Tonga, the arrival of the Karanga led to the disintegration of Tonga identity. Violation of conservation laws, traditional beliefs and disrespect of sacred places turned the area into topsturdy leading to the emergency of a plethora of problems which have continued to rock the area to the present day. It is believed that Gwapula the spirit medium *muzimu muphathi*, had warned the people that he had been shown the coming in of a powerful group, whose way of life, dressing, values, religion, and cultural practices and beliefs was completely different from theirs.

B. Zimunhu postulates that the medium had warned the people to stand their ground , defend their culture and preserve their norms, failure of which would result in the ancestors turning their backs against the group.<sup>18</sup>No wonder after the arrival of the Karanga immigrants some elder members of the autochthones denied to conform to the new ideas .So it is behind this background that the researcher intends to reveal how the coming in of the Karanga into the area accelerated the loss of Tonga identity ,legacy and heritage paving way for their supremacy . Above all the researcher intends to show how the loss of chieftainship finally led to the silence of the autochthones.

## **Literature review**

This chapter outlines or gives a review of the literature published on the history of the Tonga with specific emphasis on those under study. It's an eye opener to the researcher and gives insights into what has been or has not been done in the area of

study. Sources written on the autochthones of Gokwe that is the Shangwe and the Tonga is going to be used. The history of the Tonga of Mkoka is silent. Most researches carried out on the Tonga only focused on those evicted from the Zambezi escarpment in the 1950s as the colonial officials wanted to make way for the construction of Kariba dam. E. Colson also wrote a lot about the Tonga but her pioneering study mainly focused on the Zambezi escarpment both north and south. She wrote extensively on the social and economic activities of the Gwembe Tonga. Colson observed that the Tonga had rich untapped history which can be very useful in answering and solving some of the developmental issues today.<sup>19</sup> The researcher built upon this background to try and bring out the social, economic activities and indigenous knowledge systems of the Tonga of Mkoka. The researcher wanted to show that long before the arrival of the Karanga the autochthones had had their own conservation methods which had preserved the land.

Akuffa and Simweemba did pioneering work in the study of the social history of the Tonga and also noted the richness, diversity and brilliance of Tonga Culture.<sup>20</sup> The researcher will build upon that ground to bring out the social history of the Tonga of Mkoka. Mike Tremmel in his study of the Tonga of Binga did reveal that it would be a misrepresentation of facts to say that all the Tonga in Zimbabwe were affected by the Kariba evictions. Tremmel says some of the groups especially those under Pashu, Dobola and Siabhuwa had long moved out of the valley.<sup>21</sup> The researcher will build upon this argument to trace the origins of the group under study. The gap that will be filled is that of Tremmel's failure to account for the existence of the Nkoka and Sinamagonde. The group had occupied the area between Gororo and Chilundu Mountains. Fr. Florentine Perez did try to write about the group but his study failed to

account for the existence of the world of spirits in Africa which he regarded as devilish.<sup>22</sup>Fr.Rosendo also did pioneering work on the Tonga of Mkoka but due to being a missionary the work is subject to bias as most important aspects which dealt with African traditional beliefs were either dismissed as devilish or were just ignored.<sup>23</sup>The research intends to bring out a farfetched analysis that will dismiss and distinguish myth from reality and cover up the disparities and weaknesses of earlier literature.

Despite the shortage of literature on the group the researcher found it reasonable to carry out the research to show that there are some Tonga groups who migrated into the hinterland and ended up being victims of unfair colonial practices just like their counter parts in the Zambezi escarpment.

## **Sources and Methodology**

In the study both primary and secondary sources on the Tonga and the Shangwe was used to depict the impact of the immigrants on both the social, economic practices and traditional beliefs .the researcher conducted interviews .Interviews were mainly used throughout the research. This gave an opportunity to interact with the group under study. The researcher engaged some of the elder Shona to get an insight into what exactly led to their evictions from Rhodesdale.Action Research was used as it is collaborative and helps the participants to move forward by way of engaging them. The qualitative method was used as the study is based on human history which is not static but dynamic.

The researcher conducted extensive interviews. Semi structured questions were asked randomly. Interviews were mainly carried out among the Tonga communities and among the elder Karanga who had been resettled in the area .Government officials like the DA, her secretary, members of the police, Catholic catechists, Roman Catholic priests and field officers from Concern World wide an NGO operating in the area were also engaged.

The researcher used unpublished and published books and works on the Tonga of Mkoka. The books were used as back up sources to the oral interviews .The work that guided the study was that by E.Colson , Akuffa and Simweemba, J.Melford, Articles by Basilwizi Trust, Mike Tremmel Fr.F.Perez, Fr.G Rosendo and articles by B.Zimunhu and T.Mkoka. These books and articles made the research a complete product.

## **Ethical Considerations**

As I was carrying out my research I tried by all means to be impartial .I tried my best to uphold ethics in my research .I avoided posing questions that stirred emotions amongst the participants. I respected the confidentiality of my interviewees .I also tried to observe and respect the cultural, traditional practices and taboos held with esteem by the group I was interviewing .These were safety devices against any inconveniences that might have arisen out of the research thereof.

## **Dissertation Layout.**

### **Chapter One**

In this chapter the researcher discussed the reasons for the relocation of the Tonga from Binga. The study traced and ransacked the various settlements they established and the reasons behind the abandonment of the settlements. The chapter explored the autochthones' various practices before the coming in of the Karanga immigrants. It also discussed the relations between the Tonga and Nevana .It stressed how the Tonga used to pay annual tribute to the Mhondoro as a form of allegiance and a way of showing respect .This ensured good rains every season as the Mhondoro interceded on behalf of the people. The tribute also saved as a protection against natural disasters .The chapter focused on the major activities and practices of the autochthones before Karanga encroachment into the area. It reflected on the social, economic and social activities of the Tonga and how they interacted with their environment.

## **Chapter Two**

The chapter highlighted on Karanga encroachment into Kana, It revealed how colonial officials amplified one cord of the guitar and provided the ballistics and the ammunition that bombarded the autochthones' beliefs and practices into rubble. The chapter gave an insight behind Rhodesdale evictions and how the evictees impacted on the patterns of life of the autochthones. It also unpackaged how the autochthones were forced to conform to the new practices brought by the immigrants. The chapter stressed the positive and negative effects of Karanga encroachment into the area. The chapter also highlighted Tonga resistance and showed how the hot iron finally cooled as the autochthones gave in to the new ideas and practices. It also highlighted how the registration process exacerbated the crumbling of the Tonga super structure. Then lastly it looked at Tonga resistance to the new ideas and discussed the disappearance of the once rich yet unrecorded accounts of one of the country's minority ethnic groups.

## **Chapter Three**

The chapter examines and explains the reasons that led to the loss of Tonga Chieftainship to a Karanga after the death of Seduluka the last Tonga chief .Amongst the reasons discussed was the failure of Seduluka to groom a successor, the killing of some powerful members of the Tonga by the dissidents, the delay by the officials to install a chief. It also stressed Machongo's experience as a messenger and his ability to utilise opportunities as they arose to his own advantage. It then showed how the untimely death of Winnie was a final blow to the pride of the Tonga and showed how



this prompted Machongo's rise to prominence. Lastly it looked at the major challenges being faced by the Tonga in trying to reclaim their chieftainship.

## **Chapter Four**

The chapter highlighted the rise of the Tonga and the in politics of chieftainship repossession. It also highlighted the sudden surge in the revival of their cultural practices, the maintenance of their traditional heroes, the revival of the honour and respect of spirit mediums and most importantly the visit to Nevana and the writing of a detailed genealogy and its submission to the District Administrators'' office. The chapter then focused on the Tonga visit to the National Archives in May 2013. The researcher tried to explore the responses of the officials towards the plight of the Tonga. The study established that some officials are fighting against the returning of the chieftainship back to the Tonga due to the fact that they still view the Tonga as an inferior group incapable of leading and bringing development.

## End Notes

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- .

## **Chapter One**

### **Tonga relocation from Binga to settlement in Kana valley**

#### **Introduction.**

The chapter is going to trace the history of the Tonga of Nkoka .It will highlight their relocation from Binga giving special emphasis to the reasons behind their movement. The various settlements occupied by these people are going to be mentioned so as the reasons behind the abandonment of these settlements. The religious beliefs, social structure, as well as the economic and cultural practices of this group will be looked into. The chapter will show how the name Nkoka was changed to Mkoka, and also outline how the colonial officials supplied the ballistics that bombarded Tonga customs into extinction paving way for Karanga supremacy over the autochthones. Lastly it will tackle the relations between the two groups and show how the autochthones reacted to the alien practices.

#### **A general history of the Tonga**

The Tonga is one of the minority ethnic groups in Zimbabwe. John Melford traces the origins of the Tonga back to central Africa and says the group arrived in Zimbabwe around 300AD<sup>1</sup>. Melford further states that the forefathers of this group favoured the riverine areas along the Zambezi, Kana, Mzola and Tshongokwe rivers in Zimbabwe<sup>2</sup>. Tremmel also says the Tonga loved fishing and had a strong affinity for water hence the name Basilwizi<sup>3</sup>. E Colson says the Tonga had a unique cultural and social history.<sup>4</sup> Colson further states that they loved living in river valleys and river banks

where they practiced various water sports, practiced agriculture and also enjoyed fishing.<sup>5</sup> Today the Tonga are concentrated in Binga, Simuchembo, Mola, Siabhuwa and Kana .It is the Tonga found in Kana that the research will pay special attention.

### **1.1 Origins of the Tonga of Mkoka**

The Tonga of Nkoka are believed to have occupied the area between the Gororo and Chilundu mountains in Binga .Ginjimalezu the founder of this lineage's homestead was situated on the bottom of Gororo mountain which was regarded as sacred. According to Tremmel some Tonga groups led by Pashu, Dobola and Siabhuwa did not live in the valley, when the displacement took place they were already located far from the Zambezi<sup>6</sup>. The same applies to this group. Father Florentine Perez a Roman Catholic Priest said the Nkoka which means to gather were sandwiched between these groups and they often quarrelled with Sinamagonde and Dobola over water sources and hunting grounds<sup>7</sup>.Realising that they would never win the contest against their powerful neighbours Ginjimalezu gathered his group and moved in search for a more hospitable peaceful place. In his study of the Tonga M. Tremmel revealed that the area inhabited by these groups had high temperatures, was prone to malaria and generally infant mortality rate was very high<sup>8</sup>. Florentine Perez argues that these problems might have compelled the Nkoka to move in search of a new area free from diseases and away from their foes.<sup>9</sup>Departing at night, the Nkoka moved from Gororo Mountains taking a south easterly route heading to Mzola. Mwense Mukasa says the group stayed in the Mzola area for three seasons, then after quarrelling with the Ndebele they moved to Tshongokwe<sup>10</sup>. Gwacheka died whilst they were in this area.

Tradition has it that Gwacheka died a painful death; he was killed by the Ndebele since they regarded him as the soul of the group and thought that if they killed him the group would disintegrate. Owing to this insecurity the Tonga were compelled to move in search of a more secure place. Mwemba, a story teller and an expert in Tonga customs says the death of Gwacheka greatly divided the group some members wanted to revenge, but Ginjemalezu was against this idea. He was aware that revenge would complicate the situation and lead to the death of even the whole population.<sup>11</sup>

## **1.2 Movement from Mzola to settlement at Mbungu**

Frustrated by Ginjemalezu arguments some members of the group returned to Binga. This group was led by Siamunyo. The group under Ginjemalezu traversed the Tshongokwe -Shangaan area trying by all means to avoid annoying the Ndebele. Kunkumunamasamu says it was while they were in this area that they took some Ndebele practices.<sup>12</sup> Tradition has it that while they were in this area one of Ginjemalezu elder sons Gwapula got into trance and asked the elders to gather the group together because he had a special message deliver to them. Mwansa Mukasa a traditional leader said, Gwapula told the group that there was a land which was peaceful, so the ancestors wanted them to move to that land.<sup>13</sup>

The Nkoka people set off from this predominantly Ndebele land being directed by the medium now regarded as *muzimu muphathi* meaning great ancestor. Ephraim Zimunhu says the people took a north westerly direction, crossed Kana River and settled at present day Mbungu<sup>11</sup>. Ephraim states that this might have been in

1931.<sup>14</sup> Ginjimalezu and Siampumbu the greatest Nkoka magician died in this area .Magagula became the new leader. After resting for two years Gwapula once again instructed the people that they had to move to the area which he was being shown by the ancestors.

### **1.3 Settlement in Kana valley September 1934: establishment of a permanent settlement**

The Nkoka arrived in Kana valley in September 1934.Mwami Siapoili says “When are forefathers arrived in this area they held a great feast, and Gwapula got into trance and jumped into the mighty Kana river”<sup>15</sup> Tradition has it that when the medium re emerged from underneath the water he was holding a traditional pot *inongo*, a black garment and several beads. The medium then told the people that they had set their feet on the land he had been shown by the ancestors. But before they did anything they were supposed to visit the great Mhondoro of the area Nevana referred to as the lion of Gokwe by T O Ranger.<sup>16</sup> Gwapula warned the people that if they did not get the blessing of the Mhondoro they would always live in perpetual trouble .Rosendo a catholic priest cum historian says this might have been around 1935.<sup>17</sup>Magagula died in 1935 and this was viewed as punishment from the spirits of this new land so the people then hastened to look for Nevana.

### **1.4 The Journey to Nevana 1935**

The Nkoka then set out again to find the Mhondoro. Mungondo says the medium was living amongst the Shangwe in Mafungautsi .This time old woman ,man and children were left in behind in Kana valley .Garres Rosendo says when the Tonga got to

Nevana a great feast was held, in the midst of the feast Gwapula got into trance and he presented his issue to the Mhondoro.<sup>18</sup> Mwendamwimbe said it was after this ordeal that the Tonga got the blessing of the Mhondoro, they had their crops and livestock treated against diseases of the region.<sup>19</sup> It is said they established a strong bond with Nevana and the Shangwe. Even to this day the Tonga and the Shangwe have great respect for each other. The Tonga used to pay tribute to Nevana as a form of showing respect and allegiance.

### **1.5 Return to Kana valley**

According to Zimunhu when they were retiring to their land, they were given a tail for warding off disaster, a stool to be used as a pillow by the chief. Mungondo an elder son to the last Tonga chief said, they were given a traditional hat decorated with the feathers of a vulture and a leather pouch made from the skin of an eland filled with lion, hyena and pangolin fat.<sup>21</sup> They were given a wooden box filled with traditional snuff. The Mhondoro gave them strict instructions on the storage of the items. The Mhondoro advised them to construct a special hut for the storage of the items. The hut was to be built of pole and thatch. Even the floor was supposed to be thatched. Siathenda was given jurisdiction after getting the approval of both the spirit of Nevana and Tonga spirits. They also got a gun called *ntoboloby* the Tonga. Tradition has it that they were also given a pangolin. After performing all the ordeals the chief had to sleep with the goods together with the pangolin let it go the following morning. Mungondo said the pangolin used to pay seasonal visits to the area and it was a sign that things were normal.<sup>22</sup> The hut in which these items were kept was called *ntondoma yasimwami*. Young girls and very old woman were responsible for keeping the hut in order.



## **1.6 Social practices**

The Nkoka people just like any other group had their own unique social structure and cultural beliefs. The chief was helped by a chosen inner circle preferably those noted for their wisdom and expertise in traditional customs. In her study of the Gwembe Tonga E. Colson came to the conclusion that the Tonga had a rich, amazing, and astounding, untapped and unrecorded history<sup>22</sup>. The same can be said of this Tonga group. It had a rich astounding yet unrecorded history. Oral sources say spirit mediums usually led by *muchembele muphathi* played a pivotal role in the society. There was a special council which worked with the chief in resolving issues and bringing about fairness and order in the society. Tremmel says witchcraft and sorcery were part of Tonga's traditional beliefs<sup>23</sup>. The same is applicable to the Nkoka people. There are stories of the use of goblins and lightning against their enemies. Many Nkoka men possessed lightning or goblins in one way or the other. The chief had five magicians at his royal homestead to protect him. The group also had its chief herbalist. Cattle were treated against diseases and cows were also treated with powerful herbs to produce good quality milk.

## **1.7 Rainmaking ceremonies.**

The Tonga held rainmaking ceremonies during the month of September (*ivwivwi*) in Tonga. They performed the ceremonies in kana valley and after that they repaired the shades at the traditional graves. Florentine Perez says they did not brew beer but instead just played drums and whistles made from the horn of a duiker which they called *nyele*.<sup>24</sup> At noon they would then move to the royal graves where they would sit in a circle chanting and singing traditional songs. Spirit mediums would then

present *muperera* to the people, this was a traditional brew made from raw millet mealie meal and cold water. After the ceremony *muzimu muphathi* the leader of the spirit mediums would then give people treatment for both their seeds and animals. After this the people would retire to their living courters .As they left the royal graveyards rain usually fell .Dhabula a senior Tonga says ,this was a sign that the ancestors had accepted the people's petitions.<sup>25</sup>

### **1.8 Annual first fruit festival**

B .Zimunhu said during the month of February the Nkoka people performed the annual first fruit festival they called it *chirumo*.They did not brew beer but they just gathered at the royal homestead and danced the whole night<sup>26</sup> .During the morning young boys and girls went into the fields and gathered different crops ,which was then cooked upon their return . The chief was the first one to eat followed by the spirit mediums, then after that the rest of the people would have the food. Some of the crops was taken to the royal graves were it was presented to the ancestors .Mwami said once that was done the fields were protected from wild animals and the menace of the birds of the air.<sup>27</sup> Even during the time of harvesting the Tonga performed harvest festivals. Dhabula says the abandonment of these cultural practices angered Tonga ancestors and made them turn their backs against them that's why they are now facing unending problems.<sup>28</sup>

### **1.9 Bringing Back ceremonies appeasement of the dead**

According to M.Tremmel as far as the Tonga tribe is concerned funerals received far greater honours than do births and marriages.<sup>29</sup>

The Tonga people just like the Shangwe offered libations to their dead. Benedict Zimunhu says the Tonga had a belief that when a person died he would sit in a tree waiting for his people to call him back.<sup>30</sup> In returning the spirit of the dead back the Tonga greatly differed from other groups that is the Karanga and the Shangwe. They constructed a hut of pole and thatch. The wife of the deceased would then enter into the hut and have sex with a close relative of the deceased. After finishing the ordeal, the man would light a fire and the old woman who would have been sleeping around the hut ululated signalling the beginning of the ceremony. After the ceremony the wife of the deceased and her children moved to the house of her husband's next of kin. The one with whom she would have had intercourse with.

### **1.10 Cultural practices**

The Nkoka were polygamous. Usually the man had more than three wives and had several children. Nkoka women just like the rest of Tonga women smoked and drank. Garres Rosendo says they smoked using calabashes *ndombonda* in which they filled with dagga, millet and water.<sup>31</sup> The smoke passed through the water trapping tar. Just like in the Shangwe communities as highlighted by Maravanyika there were tales of defaulters being lost for days if ever they did not respect the values and traditions of the group. The defaulters would only come back when certain ordeals and ceremonies were carried out.<sup>32</sup>

Pregnant women were not allowed to get in kraals, when they disobeyed they usually suffered miscarriages. E. Colson in her study of the Gwembe Tonga came to the conclusion that the Tonga groomed their young for adulthood at an earlier age.

Girls were taught house hold chores and were usually groomed for marriage.<sup>33</sup> This also applies to the Nkoka. It should be noted that these practices were slowly pushed into oblivion when the Karanga arrived. As the Tonga began to grasp to modernity all their beliefs and practices were pushed to the dustbins, leading to their silence.

### **1.11 Economic practices**

The Tonga grew millet *nzembwe* and sorghum *mapira*. They grew their crops in Kana valley. They also grew pumpkins, women and young girls usually cultivated crops. Hunting was an important activity as the area was a good haven of wild game, it supplemented their diet. They kept large herds of cattle but they were not for farming purposes. .Benedict Zimunhu articulates that Nkoka women collected wild berries, fruits and roots .Man carved beautiful figurines out of wood and also made beautiful stools.<sup>34</sup>They lived largely by fishing from Kana River and they had several methods for catching fish. The Tonga were forced to abandon their traditional way of life and engage into competitive economic practices by the coming in of the Karanga .It should be noted that Karanga economic practices negated the very core of Tonga economic livelihood.

### **Conclusion**

The chapter highlighted the movement of the Nkoka Tonga people from Binga, the reasons for relocation and the various settlements they occupied before they reached Kana valley. From Binga the people settled in Mzola for a brief period then moved to Tshongokwe where they quarrelled with The Ndebele. They moved again from this place now under the leadership of the spirit medium Gwapula. It also stressed the

brief settlement at Mbungu and the journey to Kana valley in present day Mkoka. The study highlighted how these people related with Shangwe and the spirit of Nevana. The chapter stressed the cultural, economic and religious practices of the Tonga before the arrival of Karanga immigrants. It stressed the type of food and the various ceremonies performed by the Tonga. Besides highlighting the items given the Tonga by Nevana it also specified the instructions given these people by the Mhondoro and gave an outline on the importance of Nevana in this area.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Karanga encroachment into Kana valley 1953- 1954**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter will focus on the activities of the autochthones before Karanga encroachment into the area .The chapter will also analyse the relations between the Tonga and the Shona. It will highlight the reasons behind Karanga resettlement into this predominantly Tonga area. The study will also focus on how the colonial officials amplified one cord of the guitar through the promotion of Shona customs at the expense of the autochthones'. It will point out both the negative and positive effects of Karanga penetration into the area. Lastly it will highlight Tonga reaction towards the alien practices.

#### **2.1 Tonga lifestyle 1935-1954**

The Tonga autochthones just like the Shangwe in Mafungautsi lived a sedentary life.. Nyambara highlighted that prior to the 1950'sGokwe had been largely regarded as an isolated region infested with malaria ,tsetse fly and wild animals , so owing to this the local inhabitants had had limited contact with the outside world.<sup>35</sup>Nyambara says the people had not yet been exposed to European clothing ,schools ,churches and Morden farming methods.<sup>36</sup>Maravanyika adds that the Shangwe were labelled by colonial officials as “primitive ,backward ,uncivilised and resistant to change”.<sup>37</sup>The same description can be accorded the Tonga of Nkoka. Just like the Shangwe they were a forest community living in kana valley .Like their counterparts they had not come to

terms with modernity, they lived mainly by hunting and gathering .They used pole and thatch in making their shelter. Their clothes were made from the skins of animals and the barks of the *umkhaya* and *gangatshatrees*. They had never had contact with the Europeans hence had never been exposed to Morden clothing.

According to Maravanyika, the Shangwe subscribed to the traditional religion, the spirits of the land were given great respect and honour and all important activities and ceremonies were bestowed to the ancestors through the spirit mediums.<sup>38</sup>The same could be said of the Tonga. They performed various ceremonies. Benedict Zimunhu says the Tonga were traditionalists who believed in ancestral spirits and no other deity, due respect was given to the ancestors who were regarded as the owners of the land and everything on it.<sup>39</sup>The ancestors were believed to live in Kana river so children were not allowed to utter or say anything that seemed to belittle the river since it was viewed as an insult to the ancestors who were believed to have permanent residence in the river.

Ancestors of the land or *mizimu yanyika* were given great respect .So every year they offered sacrifices to their ancestors as a form of allegiance. Gwapula *muzimu muphathi* usually officiated and had a say over the day to day activities of the area. It was Gwapula who came with the idea that ,when a chief dies the one taking over even if it was a son of the deceased had to inherit the chieftainship together with the last wife of the deceased chief. Tradition has it that when Siathenda became chief he inherited the last wife of his father, this was done to strengthen the position of the new chief .Siampongo, says the Tonga had their traditional grave yard were they

buried their chiefs. Siampongo adds that every year during the month of September *ivwivwi*, the Tonga swept and fenced the traditional grave yard ,after this they would perform a rain making ceremony.<sup>40</sup>It is said that they did not brew beer but instead they drank *muperera* made of millet mealie- meal and cold water.

From the graveyard they would go to pay their respects to Nevana seated around the baobab tree which they had brought from Nevana when they had paid him a visit. Siampongo says upon finishing these ordeals rains would pour down ferociously .<sup>41</sup>The ceremonies ensured both the fertility of the land and protection from external problems and misfortunes.

Tonga women ground mealie-meal daily using large grinding stones .Dhabula says the *nsima* was usually served with okra, meat or fish. Okra was readily available in the valley and they took it almost every day with *nsima yanzembwe*, that is millet mealie –meal.<sup>42</sup> The autochthones say this dish prevented them from minor illnesses, they believed that it boosted their immune system, and the Tonga’s immune system is said to have been resistant to various illnesses .They also ate raw herbs everyday and practiced various activities that strengthened both their characters and their bodies.

## **2.2 Karanga encroachment into the area !953-1954**

The Karanga had been farming as tenants’ farmers in Rhodes dale a vast ranch owned by the British multinational National corporation Lonrho.Nyambara says they were about 12000 squatters who resided in this ranch ,which covered Gwelo (Gweru) ,Queque (Kwekwe) ,Hartley( Chegutu ) .Enkeldoorn (Chivhu) ,Umvuma (Mvuma)



,Lalapanzi and Gutu.<sup>43</sup>Nyandoro says the people were nicknamed Madheruka by the Shangwe ,after the sound of Thames trader and Bedford trucks that had ferried these people into Gokwe.<sup>44</sup>Nyandoro says the Karanga were evicted from this area to make way for the European ex serviceman and to accommodate the increased number of European immigrants.<sup>45</sup>N Bhebe also postulate that the Karanga were forcibly removed from this area to Gokwe ,their buildings were demolished by bulldozers .<sup>46</sup>

### **2.3 Reasons behind Karanga resettlement into the area.**

According to Maravanyika, as postulated by C.Latham a delineation officer at Gokwe the resettlement of the Karanga into The area had five fold benefits to the area. In his 1963 report C .Latham stated that, firstly it would solve the problem of local backwardness by bringing in a more Morden group of Africans, this would inevitably result in aspects of Karanga culture rubbing onto the backward autochthons and place them on the road to modernization, Secondly the lives of the locals had to change and they were supposed to abandon their primitive mode of production.<sup>47</sup> Maravanyika staunchly advocates that the colonial government wished to introduce cotton farming into the area and help the people divorce and depart from their primitive forest life.<sup>48</sup>

The third reason put forward by Maravanyika is that the government wanted to open up Gokwe to the forces of the capitalist world ,the resettlement would accrue for the Karanga's insatiable demand for land ,so the relocation was regarded s a win –win policy for the state ,and to Gokwe the area would be transformed from being haven of tsetse fly and wild animals into an agrarian zone .<sup>49</sup>Maravanyika says the last reason for the resettlement of Karanga into Gokwe was for opening up the area for

commerce which would bring investment into the area .He says a lot of capital would be planted into the area ,especially in production and other infrastructural developments such as roads ,storage depots ,new retail shops ,new schools ,clinics ,and extension services.<sup>50</sup>

It should be noted that the tenants had been residing on the property under the land ordinance act of 1908.The fortunes of the tenants were reversed by the Land Husbandry Act of 1951. In 1953 the people were moved. Nyambara says among those evicted from Rhodesdale were 1000 families under two headmen Muyambi and Chirima, they were dumped in Gokwe special native area.<sup>51</sup>This is the group which was resettled directly under the auspices and jurisdiction of the Tonga of Nkoka they however maintained their statuses of headman ship, These two headman were a law unto themselves since they defied the orders of the Tonga chief.

#### **2.4 The chameleon is forced to change its colour 1955 to early 1970**

The arrival of the Karanga in this predominantly Tonga land had great consequences and it marked a new departure in the history of the area .Upon the arrival of the Karanga the Tonga were forced to move out of the valley as it was now a gazetted grazing area so the law no longer allowed them to grow crops in the valley. This was a great devastating blow to the Tonga who regarded the valley and the river as their lifeline. The command was a bitter pill to swallow to the Tonga who had lived in harmony in the valley and enjoyed unlimited freedom, soon found themselves prisoners .Seduluka, who was the Tonga chief by this time was compelled to accept the new arrivals. He had no option other than accommodating the new arrivals who

had swept like locust across the land and were beginning to peg for themselves large chunks of land without the consent of the owners of the land.

Garres Rosendo says the arrival of the Karanga marked the beginning of the loss of Tonga culture, history and identity. The arrivals were so cunning and finding the locals dressed in animal skins and living in houses made of pole and dagga, they began to mock the locals calling them by derogatory names.<sup>52</sup> The colonial officials provided the ballistics and machinations to the Karanga which they used to bombard, the history of the autochthones into rubble thereby paving way for their supremacy and jurisdiction over the locals.

The Tonga were forced to abandon hunting as they were introduced into the cash economy, they were also forced to abandon their traditional grasses that is millet and sorghum. Garres Rosendo says the Tonga had to take up new agricultural methods and practices. They had to abandon the traditional hoe and adopt the ox drawn plough, and treated seeds.<sup>53</sup> The Tonga began to grow new crops like groundnuts and round nuts brought into the area by the Shona generally relegating their own crops to the rear. Mungondo a traditional Tonga leader and son to the last Tonga chief postulates that the coming in of the Shona into the area brought new dimensions and changed the facets of Tonga lives. It ushered in and opened up the floodgates of a plethora of diverse ideas and practices which were alien to the Tonga.<sup>54</sup> Tradition has it that Tonga traditional practices could not contend with those of the Karanga, and definitely the Tonga cultural heritage was bound to collapse under the mighty currents of Karanga traditions.

Tonga traditions were bound for the abyss; the Karanga could be likened to a great tornado that roared so ferociously destroying, uprooting and sweeping everything in its part. The Karanga who came into the area masquerading as beams of enlightenment, progress and development are generally seen as the surgeons who gave wrong prescriptions which in turn reacted catastrophically leading to the suffocation of Tonga traditions. Mwense Musamu traditional healer had this to say, everything Tonga was relegated to the historical cemeteries, the casket being so tightly locked, never allowed to be opened, resulting in the ugly face of Shona domination in all aspects of life.<sup>55</sup> Mwense Musamu mentions the coming of Christianity as another aspect that relegated the belief, respect and honour of the ancestors as demonic, the establishment of a mission in this area symbolised the acceleration of the tempo of events to a Grande finale.<sup>56</sup> Shona catechists cycled daily into the villages preaching the gospel despising the worship of ancestors as an evil and blasphemous act. Magabathela says Spanish Catholic priests offered clothing to the Tonga especially those who would have been baptised, in this way they won many converts.<sup>57</sup> Women were amongst the first to join since they wanted liberation and freedom from some of the practices which adversely affected them.

## **2.5 Identity cards and schools enhancing Karanga dominance over the autochthones**

During the process of collecting identity cards the autochthones were forced to change their names into Shona names, even after baptism the converts had to be given new names that were meant to wean them from their primitive beliefs. This had great consequences since it generally led to the loss of Tonga identity. According to Benedict Zimunhu a former teacher at Mkoka primary school, young Tonga children

were forced to learn shona and their Tonga names were changed into shona .During shona lessons they were forced to recite shona folktales, proverbs and play games in shona this was plainly meant to destroy the Tonga language today.<sup>58</sup> Even the teachers who were teaching in these areas were shona so the education system promoted shona over Tonga .This negatively impacted on the history of the area since the youngsters were made to hate their tribe and language and view it with scorn and contempt.Siamulandabala ,a, cousin to the last Tonga chief bemoaned the disappearance of their culture like due during the rise of the morning sun and greatly blamed the colonial officials for conspiring with the Shona to rob them of their rightful place in the history of this area .<sup>59</sup>

## **2.6 Positive effects of Karanga encroachment into the area**

Though the Karanga are blamed for the loss of Tonga history and identity their presence in the area ushered in a new era that was marked with rapid modernisation. It moved from the vestiges of backwardness to the doorsteps of modernity.Treated seeds fared well than local seeds, the ox drawn plough made work easier and it also increased acreage and area under cultivation .Garres Rosendo says the people moved from primitive ways of dressing. The coming in of grinding mills made life easier for the women. Cotton production and farming though being regarded as labour intensive made some Tonga prosperous.Some began constructing Morden decent houses. The Shona ushered in a modest living in the area. Their coming opened up new avenues ,the area also got more than 100 boreholes which meant people had access to clean water .Infrastructural development began to take shape.<sup>60</sup>

That era saw the construction of Madheruka road which passed through Nyaradza to Mbungu. The area witnessed the coming of the first two buses Mutsvanzva and Tinzweiwo thereby easing transport problems. Dip tanks were constructed and retail shops were found hence the growing of Manoti as a prominent business centre. The area saw the construction of hospitals, hence the easing of malarial infections which had had its toll on the Tonga. The Marketing boards were constructed. These developments however were regarded as meaningless by the Tonga elders who bemoaned the loss of freedom and criticised the taxes. They also despised the dominance of Karanga over their language. The Tonga also bemoaned the loss of respect to their culture and ancestors, the forcible change of their names into shona. To the Tonga elders this was a clear reflection that their identity was slowly denigrating into oblivion.

### **2.7 Resistance to the new ideas 1956-1969.**

From the period 1956 to 1966 the Tonga vigorously challenged the new ideas with such vigour and undying strength. Some of the more radical Tonga denied to send their children to school objecting to the change of their name Nkoka to Mkoka, and also denied to abandon their agricultural practices especially the planting of millet and sorghum. They did not trust the new treated seeds which they said belonged to the shona, their adversaries. Some of the local people despised the new goods brought by the shona, they despised soap, sugar, the grinding mills and even threatened to kill the extension and conservation officers. Rosendo Garres says the Tonga used to throw the seeds into the river, or they gave the seeds to shona, they denied to use ox drawn ploughs, they denied to use the medicines and various drugs to cure various ailments

preferring their local herbs ,they clashed with officials when they denied both their animals and children vaccinations.<sup>61</sup>

Mungondo and Ndingindawo says some of their members compelled the chief to let them fight the *manyabu'enda* ,destroy the dip tanks and deny them access to their water .They said the shona should use their boreholes and leave them use the water from their river ,they also threatened to destroy the classrooms to counter this the colonial officials quickly erected a police camp in the area to quell disorder and enforce the rule of law.<sup>62</sup>The battle was soon lost when women and the young quickly fell prey to the new practices which were a complete departure from their primitive methods. The 1970;s witnessed a sudden surge in Tonga acceptance of the new ideas. The officials had however seen that the Tonga people were hard to deal with. They were deciding to take over the chieftainship from them and install a shona to rule the area. So upon learning of this development the Tonga began complying to the demands of the officials, the chief this time who had taken over Seduluka renounced his Tonga name and took to a Shona name Chidhakwa. The colonial administrators had successfully accomplished their dream. Shona practices had finally triumphed and almost three quarters of the Tonga took to shona names and shona traditions.

## **Conclusion**

The chapter highlighted on Karanga encroachment into Kana, it revealed how colonial policies amplified one cord of the guitar, and how they provided the ballistics and the ammunition that bombarded the autochthones' beliefs and practices into rubble. The chapter gave a glimpse to the reasons behind Rhodes dale evictions and the impact of

those evicted on the patterns of life of the Nkoka people. It traced how the Tonga were affected by the immigrants, and how they were forced to conform to the new capitalist economy. The chapter stressed Tonga resistance and showed how the hot iron finally cooled resulting in them falling prey to the new ideas and practices. The whole chapter can be summed up in Lobengula's words when he was referring to British influence in his kingdom. In this context the Karanga were the chameleon and the fly the Tonga. The first gently step of the Karanga chameleon were when they looked scornfully and contemptuously giving little attention to the traditions and taboos of the area. The second gently aimed step was the introduction of Christianity, new ideas and alien practices into the area curtailing in the condemnation of everything Tonga. The dart of the tongue came through the introduction schools in the area where Shona was the only vernacular language used in schools in this predominantly Tonga speaking area. The fly then disappeared when the Tonga were forced to conform to the arrivals' demands resulting in them abandoning their Tonga names including even the chiefs. This marked the disappearance of one of the once rich yet unrecorded accounts of one of the country's indigenous groups. The next chapter will focus on the dynamics of Mkoka chieftain ship and usurpation of power by the Machongo lineage



## **Chapter Three**

### **The usurpation of Mkoka Chieftainship 1989**

#### **Introduction**

The chapter will focus on the usurpation of Mkoka chieftainship .It will reveal how power was usurped by a Karanga family in 1989 and how this was given official recognition by the ministry of local governance in 1989 they installed Machongo as the new chief leaving the Tonga astounded. Machongo the new chief was Shona and formerly a messenger of court during the rule of the last Tonga chief Seduluka. After the death of Seduluka there followed a period of confusion as no immediate successor was chosen. Langwani acted as regent but his influence was overshadowed by the talismanic Machongo. The chapter will also highlight how the issue has been politicised over the years and how the ministry of local government through the District Administrator's office have perpetuated the suppression of the Tonga claims to their lost legacy and chieftainship.

#### **3.1 The death of Seduluka Kanubu and the usurpation of chieftainship by Machongo**

Seduluka died on the 12<sup>th</sup> of April 1982. There was no immediate successor from amongst his kinsmen. It seems as though the Tonga were divided. Langwani became regent as the Tonga were waiting to chose a candidate He was just a senior Tonga but not related to the Ruling Tonga lineage. The divisions in Tonga families led to the rise of Machongo.

### **3.2 Factors that prompted Machongo to prevail as chief over the autochthones.1989**

There are quite a number of factors that prompted Machongo to prevail over the autochthones. The first reason is the failure of Seduluka to groom a successor during his tenure in office. Magabathela says instead of training his own kinsman Seduluka preferred to delegate all the duties to Machongo. So when he died the only person with the expertise and knowledge of governing was Machongo.<sup>64</sup> The lack of unity, foresight, wisdom and willpower by the Tonga made Machongo gain easy ascendancy to power. Instead of choosing a regent from amongst the royal family the Tonga chose Langwani a distant relative who lacked the will power of preserving the chieftainship. Rosendo purports that the untimely departure of Langwani left the Tonga exposed without anyone to represent them.<sup>65</sup>

Another factor that also prompted Machongo to usurp power was the untimely death of Bennon Winnie the heir apparent. Benedict Zimunhu argues that the death of Bennon Winnie was a catastrophic blow since it deprived the Tonga a brilliant spokesman who had decided to quit driving and come to lead his people. Winnie mysteriously collapsed at Muyambi's court. Tradition has it that he was actually bewitched to clear him out of the chieftainship contest. The Tonga accorded him a special place in their history by burying him alongside his grand fathers at the royal heroes.

Another weapon used by Machongo to win the post was his charisma, stamina, wisdom and willpower. Machongo was able to grab opportunities as they

arose. His popularity at the DA's offices also gave him a great advantage over the autochthones. So by the time he became regent it was easy for him to gain easy ascendancy to power. Some sources mention the killing of Zauma and Siachinene by the dissidents as a set back. When these two Tonga were killed in 1984 the group was left divided and torn apart without a leader. Machongo grabbed this opportunity to his own advantage and in 1989 he had become the supreme chief of Mkola. The area had gone for a long time without a chief. This had been caused partly by the Tonga's failure to choose a successor on time and partly by the reluctance of the officials who seemed to be unwilling to continue working with the Tonga whom they still regarded as primitive and backward. At last the Shona were at the behest asserting their supremacy over the autochthones. It should be noted that Machongo was able to rise to power due to the officials' bias towards the Shona. Those working at the District Administrator's office were Shona so they also paved way for a Shona into office.

### **3.3 The death of Machongo; 2001 continuation of his lineage.**

Machongo officially ruled from 1990 up to the time of his death in July 2001. Machongo had arranged that after his death his son Wilson would become chief. During his hey days the Tonga lost their freedom. They had to seek the permission of the Chief in whatever ceremony they wished to carry out. The paying of tribute to Nevana was banned so as rain making ceremonies. Machongo faced staunch opposition from Msala a Tonga headman who despised Machongo's policies which he viewed as a total violation and an insult to Tonga cultural and religious practices.

Ngwenya says when Machongo became chief genealogies were re written and this relegated the Tonga out of the chieftainship contest.<sup>66</sup> So soon after his death his son Wilson took over .That was in October 2003.The autochthones went to the District Administrator's offices to plead their case just after the installation of Wilson unfortunately they were told to wait for the sun to set first then come back to plead their case.Wilson ruled from 2001 up to May 2011 when he also passed away .A lot has been said concerning the deaths of these two leaders. Some sources cite witchcraft and sorcery,while others postulate that it might be Winnie's spirit haunting the family yet a third dimension mention the anger of Tonga ancestors as a major cause of the deaths .When Machongo and his Son Wilson died they were not buried at the royal graves a reflection that they are not related to the Tonga and do not fall in the chieftainship lineage.

At Wilson's burial the then minister of defence Emerson Mnangagwa plainly stated that the chieftainship would not move out of Wilson's family and vowed to use any means possible to make sure that his word stood .The statement by Mnangagwa explains how in the first place the chieftainship went to the Shona. Doubt Wilson's 25 year old son was then declared regentHe was to rule for two years to finish his father's tenure and after that a new chief would be appointed .The two years lapsed in 2013 but up to now the ministry of local governance has not yet announced the date for the appointment of a new chief. The plight of the Tonga is still unresolved to this day. The Tonga went to the offices and they were told to go back and wait for the coming of the officials.

## **Conclusion.**

The chapter has dealt with the reasons behind the rise of Machongo to prominence in Mkoka area. The major reasons mentioned being the lack of focus and willpower by the Tonga to retain their chieftainship and the failure of Seduluka to groom a successor. The chapter also took a swipe at some of the reasons that gave Machongo precedence over the autochthones. These include Machongo's strength of character, willpower; stamina and charisma. The death of Zauma and Siachinene who might have prevented the whisking away of the chieftainship by Machongo. The chapter stressed various assumptions behind the deaths of Machongo and Wilson. It also highlighted on the fresh impetus by the Tonga in claiming back the chieftainship. The chapter highlighted how various District administrators have failed to resolve the ongoing crisis. Lastly it demonstrated how the issue has been politicised pitting the Tonga against the Ruling party officials who seem to be against the idea of having the chieftainship go back to the Tonga.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Revival politics of chieftainship repossession by the Tonga September 2010 -2014**

#### **Introduction**

The chapter will highlight the rise of the Tonga and the politics of chieftainship repossession, the sudden surge in the revival of their cultural practices, the maintenance of their traditional heroes, the revival of honour and respect of spirit mediums and most importantly the visit to Nevana and the writing of their genealogy and submission of the paper to the District Offices. It will also tackle the visit to the national archives in May 2013 by a Tonga delegation to search their history .Lastly the chapter will focus on how the local authorities have acted frivolously and have not implemented Chapter 27:17 of the Traditional Leaders Act in solving the crisis that have rocked this area for so long.

#### **4.1 Revival politics of chieftainship repossession by the Tonga 2010 -2014**

The death of Wilson Machongo's son ushered in a new wave that was coupled with squabbles within the Machongo family itself on the one side and the Tonga, the original chiefs of the area on the other. Wilson's two brothers, Freedom and Mbodhlela were disgruntled over the handing over of the regency to Doubt Wilson's son in their presence .They raved and fumed, and began clamouring for the reversal of the verdict .They wanted Doubt ,Wilson's son to hand over the power to them. The

autochthones also rose with a great force demanding their chieftainship back. The Tonga were led by Mungondo in their bid to get back their lost legacy.

Traditionally all the Tonga chiefs were buried at the traditional royal graves near Kana River 6, 5 kilometres from the village. The area where Tonga chiefs were buried is flanked by expansive forests. The natural resources in this area were sacred and anyone who tampered around, for instance cutting down trees would get into serious trouble. Dhabula a senior Tonga kinsman says those who indulged into acts of misconduct usually got into trouble. For instance there are stories of offenders being stung by bees, wasps or if very unfortunate one would be bitten by snakes.<sup>67</sup> This protected the vegetation from wanton destruction and to this day the area around the royal graves boasts of a vast expansive forest area. The area was and is still viewed as sacred and the Tonga still regards this area as their emblem. Machongo and Wilson were buried at their homestead a clear reflection that these people are not related. When Mbodhlela one of the contestants to the chieftainship of the Machongo lineage was asked what made Machongo and Wilson not to be buried at the traditional royal graves he simply replied “we don’t belong to the bush”<sup>68</sup> The truth is that the families are not related as witnessed by the different burial sites.

#### **4.2 A visit to Nevana and the revival of cultural practices and rainmaking ceremonies September 2010**

The Tonga paid a courtesy visit to Nevana to seek spiritual counsel and inquire about the measures they had to take in order to retain and restore their chieftainship. Dhabula Mkoka a member of the group that went to Nevana testifies that they were instructed

to revive their cultural practices if ever they were to get back their chieftainship.<sup>69</sup> The Tonga were told that their ancestors were angered by the violation of the cultural practices and beliefs thus they had turned their backs against them so there was a need to reignite the dying embers of Tonga culture which had been forced to falter due to Karanga dominance. In September 2010 the Tonga reignited their old traditions. They revived the worship of spirit mediums and the ancestors. The Tonga fenced the traditional graveyards. They also made sheds to protect the graves from rains and the scorching sun. After this they went to the villages chanting traditional Tonga songs. People stood watching in awe as the Tonga went to gather at Winnie's homestead. The Tonga also fenced the baobab tree honouring the spirits of Nevana. That very day rain fell ferociously; it was accompanied by strong winds, lightning and roaring thunder. Mungondo testifies that it was a reflection of the anger of the ancestors.<sup>70</sup> The houses of the Tonga who refused to take part had their roofs carried away by the strong winds with some of the houses totally collapsing. Some oral sources claim that, what happened this very day was a clear reflection that the ancestors if given respect can do greater things in the peoples' lives. Even the Karanga in the area were puzzled, they also testified that during the 1960s when the Tonga held these rainmaking ceremonies rains usually fell and during the night lions would be heard roaring at the royal graves.

The revival ceremony led to the unfolding of other events. Something very unusual happened at the DAs offices at Gokwe centre. According to Kufa Isaac the gun that had long lain idle in the offices exploded three times, the people at the offices were so afraid and puzzled that they quickly sent for the police.<sup>71</sup> Mudenda a member of the central intelligence department said after enquiring about the gun they learnt that it belonged to the Tonga of Mkoka. They then summoned the reigning chief of



the Machongo lineage; and briefed him on the strange happenings, and then asked him to take the gun. Mudenda said, the chief declined saying it did not belong to his household.<sup>72</sup> The denial is a reflection that the Machongo lineage got the chieftainship through treachery. According to Kufa Isaac, the DA's office was puzzled and they became aware that the Tonga had been robbed of their chieftainship. It was only after they had looked closely at the genealogy submitted by the Tonga that they realised that Winnie was supposed to take over after the death of Seduluka.<sup>73</sup> Kufa Isaac went further to state that from the unfolding events it was crystal clear that the chieftainship belonged to the Tonga but the problem was that the Tonga had taken so long to challenge the loss of their chieftainship.<sup>74</sup> It was Kufa Isaac who gave the Tonga the advice that they had to go to the National Archives and search for their history.

The arrival of the Karanga into the area created a plethora of problems and imbalances now boggling the minds of responsible authorities. Since the people who worked in the offices were Karanga they just jettisoned the most influential positions from the autochthones and ceded power to their kinsman. Benedict Zimunhu said "It is obvious that Machongo entered into the office through the back door, no wonder after his death he was not buried at the traditional heroes, his burial at his homestead together with his predecessor speaks volumes, and it's a clear reflection that his family do not belong to the ruling lineage."<sup>75</sup>

#### **4.3 Steps taken by the Tonga to repossess their chieftainship 2010-2014**

The problem with Mkoka chieftainship dates back to the colonial times. The colonial officials did not record the genealogies so after independence there were no records

bearing Tonga genealogies, this generally led to the passing of the chieftainship to the wrong family.

According to Garres Rosendo, when chiefs lived a long time under colonial rule the result was that details of past history tended to be forgotten.<sup>76</sup> In the case of Mkoka two long reigns of nearly forty years meant that virtually no history was recorded. So for the history of these people one has to piece together the past from genealogies written by the Tonga.

At the DA's offices the Tonga were puzzled to realise that Machongo had regarded himself as Seduluka's brother. So it seemed as though he was the proper candidate for the chieftainship. When they presented their case the DA was surprised. She then asked them to back their claims with a written document which specified their genealogy from the time they established a permanent settlement in Kana valley.

The autochthones then decided to write down their genealogy. Garres Rosendo a Roman Catholic Priest says the Tonga was helped by the members of the CCJP to come up with a detailed genealogy dating back from the time they arrived in Kana valley in 1934.<sup>76</sup> According to the document the Tonga all in all had 8 chiefs. Four died before settlement in the valley. They drew a sketch map showing the royal graveyard and the names of the chiefs and the years they died. The CCJP came to the fore in the sense that they had written some documents during the early 1970s that were kept at Kana Mission library, So Dhabula Mkoka being a member of the Commission asked the permission to retrieve the documents. So the chairman of the

CCJP Magabathela Fangel summoned some of the members and they then helped Dhabula, to craft out the document to be presented to the DA's offices.

**Fig 1: Photo Mkoka Royal Grave Yard Source Author: 10 September 2014.**



**Fig 2: Source author.10 September 2014 .traditional pots *inongo* kept at the site.**



**Fig 3.Photo.Mkoka Traditional graves: Source author.10 September 2014**



**Fig 4: The four graves below: Magagula, Siathenda , Seduluka, Winnie. Author.**

**10 September 2014**



a. Magagula	Kanubu	1935
b.Siathenda	(Mandava)	1962
c.Seduluka	(Chidhakwa)	1982
d.Bennon	Winnie	1990

Shed A is uniquely built as it houses Magagula the elder chief of the area regarded as the ancestor by the autochthones. The grass used as thatch together with the poles used is different from the other three sheds. Magagula died in 1935 and Siathenda took over as chief .Mungondo says, after his death in 1962 there was a succession crisis until Seduluka’s takeover in 1964.<sup>77</sup> Seduluka died on 12 June 1982 .Dhabula Mkoka says Winnie was supposed to take over as chief but unfortunately he died.However as the one in line despite not having been chief he was buried at the royal graveyards in 1990.The Tonga submitted this detailed document to the DA’s office.

#### **4.4 Failure of the Officials to implement the Traditional Leaders Act 29:17**

The traditional Leaders Act 29:17 subsection 1 states that when the responsible authorities appoint a chief the following procedures needs to be taken into consideration. The customary principles of succession if any to be fully adhered to, The person being appointed must have been chosen by all the members of the community concerned.<sup>78</sup> This means the person being appointed must be the choice of the group concerned to avoid squabbles and fights. The failure of the officials to implement the Traditional Leaders Act in solving the crisis in Mkoka has sparked controversy and led to the disputes arising thereof from the time the Machongo house

came into the fore through treachery .Benedict Zimunhu says, the lack of transparency in the installation of chiefs has sparked a lot of controversy and led to disputes and disorder in the area.<sup>79</sup>

#### **4.5 Effects of the loss of Tonga chieftainship and violation of cultural practices in Mkoka area**

The coming in of the Machongo lineage as the new leaders of Mkoka ushered in a new era in the history of the area. Critics believe that Machongo was the architect of the major problems rocking the area. In a bid to assert his influence and control over the people he reversed all the various indigenous knowledge systems and conservation methods, and discredited the special treatment accorded to sacred places. These violations impacted negatively on the history of the area. Rains became erratic and the area began recording very low rainfalls leading to perennial droughts. The once perennial Kana River turned into an ephemeral stream. Andrew Rusike a Karanga and a Roman Catholic Catechist in Mkoka since 1973, claims that the problems affecting the area might greatly be attributed to the violation of Tonga customs and the loss of Tonga chieftainship .In a bid to consolidate his power Machongo loosened conservation laws leading to the clearing of sacred forests.<sup>80</sup>Rusike goes further to argue that the rainmaking ceremonies were indeed helpful since they brought rain to the area. From the time they were abandoned in the early rains became erratic and the area began registering low rainfalls ever leading to perennial droughts.<sup>81</sup> Some critics have however attributed the drying of the river to poor farming methods, and stream bank cultivation. However many of the Karanga interviewed testified that the major problems affecting the area are a result of negligence and a violation of traditional knowledge systems.

#### **4.6 The visit to the National Archives by a Tonga delegation. May 2013.**

After submitting their genealogy they then pressed the officials to give them a date when they would come to resolve the crisis. Kufa Isaac said, “When these people came we were overwhelmed by their courage and strength of character that we then decided to let them leave their papers and asked them to provide concrete evidence to back up their claims.”<sup>82</sup> So the Tonga then proceeded to the National Archives. The Tonga delegation comprised of six representatives. At the National Archives they wanted to find a solution to their chieftainship problem.

An interview with Dhabula reveals that at the National Archives they failed to get any leads to get back their chieftainship, the only information they got was that recorded by C Colett and C Latham in 1965 the delineation officers at Gokwe.<sup>83</sup> From the papers they learnt that the area under the jurisdiction of chief Mkoka once stretched from Kana to Sengwa. It was then reduced in the 1970s to cover Kana and Lutope rivers while chief Jiri took the area between Lutope and Sengwa River. They also learnt that they had two headmen Myambi and chirima and three *mlisa* Jaravani, Msala and Sianyenzu. This however did not derail their morale they knew that “a journey of a thousand miles begin with little steps.” They returned from the Archives and again passed through the DA’s offices to narrate their journey to the Archives. Kufa Isaac said the officials at the offices became convinced that these people meant business; they began fearing that maybe they were being backed by powerful individuals.<sup>84</sup> Despite the constraints and setbacks the Tonga have remained focused and determined to fight for the return of their chieftainship.

A lot has been said in trying to answer why it is taking so long for the officials to choose a new chief in the area after the death of Wilson in 2010. Some people argue that the Midlands Province Governor Jason Machaya seems to be biased towards the Machongo lineage. The Governor is believed to have been very close to Wilson Machongo's son so it seems as though he wants to protect the position of his friend's son. He would actually achieve this by barring the Tonga from attaining their goal through using his political muscle. Busy Ngwenya former Member of Parliament for Gokwe -Kana constituency argued that the issue of Mkoka chieftainship had reached a point where it was difficult for the officials to ignore.<sup>85</sup> The issue of Mkoka chieftainship is now a hot potato that has sparked controversy in the history of Mkoka chieftainship. In an interview with the District Administrator, she revealed that, when the time came for the selection of a new chief the protocols stated in the Traditional Leaders Act would be implemented.

Now that the Tonga have risen at last to challenge and fight for the reversal of the verdict, we just wait to see how the responsible authorities are going to address the case of the Tonga.

#### **4.7 A feast for the selection of a candidate 25-26 April 2014.**

After the return from the National archives the autochthones organised a great feast which was supposed to be attended by all Tonga for the selection of a candidate. The people began gathering on the 25th of April 2014 to map out the way forward towards reclaiming their chieftainship.



The elderly Tonga spent the whole night at the royal graves performing rituals .Thompson says at dawn on the 26<sup>th</sup> of April they returned to the village chanting traditional songs and upon arrival they gathered around the baobab tree in honour of Nevana.<sup>86</sup>When they had finished paying their respects to Nevana, there fell torrential down pours .This was a reflection that the ancestors had accepted their petitions. Cobra says they sang the whole night and the next day they chose their candidate after seeking the counsel of the spirit mediums. They chose Mungondo to be their representative, and they then chose his successor.<sup>87</sup>After the ceremony they chose ten men noted for their wisdom and expertise in their customs to preside on the day the officials would have come for the selection of a chief.

So the autochthones are still waiting for the coming of the officials for the selection of a new chief .If they manage to win back their chieftainship they will be one of a few groups to achieved one of the greatest feats in history .Their grievances are a reflection of how minority groups are often marginalised by more powerful groups.

## **Conclusion**

The chapter has highlighted the revival politics of chieftainship repossession by the autochthones. It also highlighted how politicians have militated against Tonga claims to repossess their chieftainship. The chapter also looked at the fractures within the Machongo family and how Doubt the regent has reacted in order to make sure that the chieftainship would not move out of his family line. The chapter dealt with the Tonga's recourse back to their cultural beliefs, the revival of the rainmaking

ceremonies and the sudden surge in the respect of spirit mediums. The chapter chronicled the journey by the Tonga to the National archives, their return and the holding of a general ceremony and gathering from the 25<sup>th</sup> to the 26<sup>th</sup> of April 2014 to choose a candidate. It also highlighted the different assumptions by various people on what exactly has led to the unending problems in Mkoka. The research gave a glimpse of how Machaya the Midlands has also proved to be biased towards the Machongo household. Lastly the research gave a detailed genealogy of the Tonga and provided the names of those buried at the royal graves

## **Conclusion**

The study established that the Tonga rather than the Karanga were the first inhabitants of Kana valley, having arrived in this place around 1934 after their long and arduous journey from Binga. The group lived harmoniously for nearly two decades before the area was inundated by the domineering Karanga. The Tonga just like the Shangwe in the Mafungautsi forest were victims of unfair colonial practices. The study has revealed how the autochthones were robbed of their rightful place in the history of this area. In the study I tried to establish how the Karanga came to dominate and to control influential positions in this region besides being late comers'. The loss of Tonga influence and chieftainship in Kana is an ugly face of colonialism which has been left unresolved to this day. The colonial officials were the architects of the disintegration of Tonga cultures and practices. They were behind the settlement of the Karanga in this region. Throughout history "weak" minority groups have been subject to unfair colonial principles. The principles led to the marginalisation and denigration of the way of life of the minority groups by powerful groups who would have been brought into their areas..From 1935 to early 1954 the autochthones subscribed to a traditional religion. Spirit mediums played a pivotal role in their day to day lives. They carried out several ceremonies amongst the most important were the hunting, planting and first fruit ceremonies. During the rain making and planting ceremonies seeds were treated with traditional medicines, cattle were also treated to ensure fertility and reproduction. The study established that in colonial eyes the autochthones were epitomes of backwardness hence the need to bring in the Karanga who had come to grips with modernity to bring redemption and act as beams of enlightenment. The 1953 Rhodesdale evictions were then viewed as emancipatory projects which would create living space for the Europeans on the crown land and on the other hand bring

modernity to Gokwe through Karanga resettlement. The resettlement would result in the infusion and diffusion of Karanga cultural, economic and social practices thereby placing the autochthones on the road to modernity. The new ideas would compel the Tonga to abandon their primitive forest life .The officials wished to open up the area for commerce and development.

The resettlement ushered in the construction of roads, storage depots, new retail shops, clinics, boreholes and dip tanks. Despite these developments the resettlement of the Karanga into the area did more harm than good to the autochthones .The Tonga lost their economic, social and cultural freedom as the Karanga brought with them new practices which were a complete negation of Tonga livelihood. The Tonga were forced out of the valley as the area was gazetted a grazing area. The introduction of Christianity led to the relegation of Tonga religious practices to the dustbins.Those who joined Christianity had their names changed to English or Shona.

The introduction of schools and registration laws led to the loss of Tonga identity as they were forced to change their Tonga names into shona. To sum up the study revealed the rise and fall of the Tonga. It analysed how the Tonga lost their chieftainship to the Shona and how the government has been reluctant to solve the ongoing chieftainship crisis in Mkoka area. It outlined the measures that have been taken by the Tonga to regain their chieftainship and highlighted on the obstacles militating against their claims. The study also reflected how successive DA's have been reluctant in solving the ongoing chieftainship in Mkoka. The study above all has

also reflected how powerful groups usually come to dominate the destinies of smaller ethnic groups.

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