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**A historical Analysis of Politics of Self Inscription and Struggle for National Identity
among the BaTonga of middle Zambezi Valley, Binga in Zimbabwe in the 21st Century**

BY

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to the baTonga tribe of Binga district displaced from their productive ancestral land along Zambezi Valley by the colonial regime without compensation.

Acknowledgement

I wish to submit my acknowledgement to my supervisor Dr Godfrey Tabona Ncube who was consistently patient during the course of my research. Not forgetting fellow students who were by side my research through guidance and financial help.

To my father Mr Rodias Muzamba and my brother Piety Muzamba your steadfast love and support is greatly appreciated hence this gift for you.

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Abstract

This research attempts to unearth the dynamics of the struggles of the BaTonga tribe of Binga in the quest for national identity. The research grapples with competing forces which hinders the minority groups in attainment of their autonomous identity without contradicting national question of identity formation project. What has emerged in post-colonial state is conflation of minority tribes into two major competing which are Shona and generalisation of identity of these groups. The research also attempts to trace the historical background of the marginalisation of the BaTonga tribe of Binga district from the pre displacement era of 1959. It also exposes the general attempt by the pre and post-colonial regime in denying the Tonga in regaining the attempt. As if that is not enough, the research also attempts to expose the strategies employed by the BaTonga in regaining their identity. The research also evaluates the impact of those attempts in regaining their autonomous identity in the 21st century.

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

1.1 Introduction

The minority groups in Zimbabwe have been battling to be accommodated in the socio-political and economic affairs of the state. The exclusion of these groups had serious implications on their national identity which has seen minority groups employing different strategies to claim their identity. Their identity has been shadowed by both Shona and Ndebele which has exposed them to economic, social and political exclusion. They have been either identified as Ndebele or Shona thereby losing their identity. The Tonga of middle Zambezi Valley –Binga district in Zimbabwe stands as a testimony of such historical sin which has condemned them to marginalisation in all facets and has been playing marginal position in ethno class relations in Zimbabwe since colonial times ¹. Since their forced displacement from the rich alluvial soils of Zambezi valley in 1950s by the federal regime of Southern Rhodesia which had negative implications on their socio-political and economic texture of the ethnic group. The Tonga settled for the years along Zambezi valley where they enjoyed autonomy with highly durable national identity which subscribed to their chi Tonga language, culture, political institutions which were highly democratic and decentralised.² Due to the nature of colonial and post-colonial ethno politics of Rhodesia and Zimbabwe respectively ,the Tonga have been forced to adapt alien –Ndebele and Shona surnames, language ,excluded in the political affairs while they were relegated to second class citizens by ignoring their unique identity ,hence forcing them to adapt Ndebele and Shona cultures.

Therefore in an attempt to regain their national identity which is crystallised around their history with economic umbilical code attached to Zambezi Valley, long history of marginalisation in terms of language and culture and political relations in the Zimbabwe nation state, the Tonga since have been clamouring for inclusion in the Zimbabwe nation state. The context of the Tonga standing as a community sharing common characteristics, which leads to the subjective belief that its ancestors are ancestrally related.³ This distinguishes them from other groups in Zimbabwe It further subscribes to the view that common traits among members such sharing history, culture, symbols, kinship, language, religion and memories of the

nation when it was still independent⁴At the turn of 21st century the Tonga launched the Politics of self-inscription which is used to describe the activism embarked by the Tonga between 2000-2013 for inclusion and integration into the Zimbabwean nation state. The argument will bring arrays of factors, which persuaded Tonga of Binga District to embark on the project of reconstruction and remodelling of their national identity. The formation of MDC piled pressure on the state formation project, which it argued was in piles hence needed remodelling through a 'New Zimbabwe' which subscribed to new principles of democracy , the constitutional reforms fronted by NCA. Civic education also enlightened the masses in Binga District about civil rights chief among them the exclusion of minority languages in the national political and socio discourse, the international and national advocacy on indigenous people's rights and inclusion in the nation state played in the hands of energetic Tonga activism for reconstruction and restoration of their identity.⁵ The study will show the methods employed by the Tonga in redefining their identity. Factors such a marginalization, socio -political and economic exclusion in persuading the Tonga in their national identity quest will be highlighted ³.The role of grand narrative and problems encountered by the Tonga in their quest for national identity as they are labelled as unpatriotic due to their struggle for national identity

1.2 Statement of the problem

A study of the dynamics of the struggles of marginalised or minority groups in Zimbabwe have received little academic attention and the concept of politics of self-inscription among the Tonga have been addressed with modern political connotations, destitutions, bias and old versions which presents the Tonga of Zambezi Valley as poor, backward, uncivilised, un educated and marginalised embedded with myths of the past and present.⁶As result of this development ,the real struggle for national identity among the BaTonga and the achievement have been ignored and remain untouched. In addition, the history of marginalisation of the BaTonga of Binga district have been diluted as it is pointed at ZANU PF as the main driver of exclusionist agenda while the opposition have grabbed this opportunity to project themselves as the main drivers of 21st century crusade of creating an inclusive nation state project which accommodates all nationalities with differing histories. In fact, the Tonga of Binga district has been described as poor whose culture is backward

and superstitious who are even legalised to smoke *mbanje* in other narratives and other academic circles. The research therefore is destined to unpack objectively without curse of bias the historical dynamics which persuaded the baTonga to adapt strategies to seek accommodation in the Zimbabwe nation state where their language and culture, resource distribution and political arena which includes them. The Tonga stands as a case study for minority who have been battling for inclusion in the nation state making project thereby seeking to retrieve their national identity in the 21st century.

1.3 Justification of the study

The significance of the study lies in its approach to the Batonga past and present in persuading the Batonga to redefine their national identity through politics of self-inscription. The study also assembles different mediators that are brought together in explaining their 21st century politics of identity. It also navigates beyond the 'history of lamentation' and 'funeral dirge' which dreams of the return of the Batonga to their prestigious Zambezi Valley or reunification of the Batonga dynasty which was disrupted through displacement of 1950s with the northerners-the Tonga in Zambia . The research is destined to define national identity in the 21st century, underlie the strategies used by the minority groups the case of the Tonga to claim their inclusion in Zimbabwe and highlight the miles covered by the baTonga in their attempt to claim their language and culture inclusion, gain access to the resources in Binga district and have a voice in the ethno class political affairs of Zimbabwe which was hitherto bias to the Shona and Ndebele ethnic groups while excluding other groups who were slumped into the two major groups⁷. This deliberated the case where the Tonga was Ndebelecized.

The timeframe 21st century carries significance in the sense that, it is a period when the debate of national identity in Zimbabwe between ethnic groups became loud and open which opened the debate over the reality of Zimbabwe nation state. In fact the second major minority group in the ethno class tug –the Ndebele where challenging the Shona over marginalisation of Matabeleland while Ndebele particularism was now being aired while the minority groups were also seeking for inclusion in Zimbabwe as result of the liberal reforms which saw the attempting of instituting a new constitution in 2000 with civil education through NCA, the

formation of MDC which moved the need for democratic which accommodated all groups in Zimbabwe ,hence enlighten different groups of their identity. The study therefore is intended to bring to the fore how the BaTonga of Zambezi valley have mobilised themselves through formation of advocacy and civic organisations such as Basilwizi, Silveira House, ZILPA, TOLACCO, other methods which were employed different avenues such as public platforms by Tonga politicians and voting for opposition as strategies to retrieve their identity which fell into play of Zimbabwe ethnic politics which consumed the national identity of the minority groups. Hence, the Tonga's resistance to language imperialism is show cased as a case study of the modern form of identity reconstruction in the midst of state sponsored national identity threats.⁸

1.4 Research questions

- What factors persuaded the Batonga of Zambezi Valley to claim their ethnic identity?
- How and what ways are being employed by the Batonga to define their politics of self-inscription and struggle for national identity?
- To what extent did the internal contradictions and grand narrative politics of Zimbabwe hinder the BaTonga's struggle for national identity?
- How successful are the batonga in their quest for national identity through politics of self-inscription.?

1.5 Objectives of the study

- ❖ To analyze and explore the historical background of marginalization the Batonga people from pre – colonial to post-colonial Zimbabwe and how the how period between 2000 and 2013 became possible for the baTonga to claim for inclusion in the nation state
- ❖ To discuss in-depth the persuasions, which convinced the Batonga of Binga, district to claim their ethnic identity
- ❖ To unpack the strategies used by the Tonga to for their language, culture and claim for politics of recognition in Zimbabwe.

- ❖ To explain how the struggle for national identity faced internal contradictions and how grand narrative politics of marginalization of Matabeleland creates problems for the politics of inclusion of the baTonga.
- ❖ To show complex ethnic identity among different groups in Zimbabwe specifically the Shona, Tonga and Ndebele.
- ❖ To analyze the success of the BaTonga in their activism for inclusion in the nation building project.

1.6 Historical background

The Tonga ethnic group in Binga District which speaks Tonga language settled along Zambezi valley for thousands years until they were interrupted by the colonial regime in 1950s. Before the displacement, the Tonga enjoyed language, economic, political and social autonomy which enabled them to maintain their identity through culture, language, economic practices and political culture for so many years. This allowed the Tonga to remain as semi-independent from colonial rule with their social, economic and political life remaining untouched along Zambezi valley. The River Tonga have described their life near the river as a time of "splendid isolation" even during official colonization of Zimbabwe in 1890.⁹ This view shows how the Tonga lived as independent entity while their social and economic life remained pure until this nightmare of late 1950s when the colonial Southern Rhodesian government displaced the minority Tonga people from the ecologically rich Zambezi River plains due to the construction of the World Bank funded hydroelectric power generating Kariba dam.¹⁰ This displacement was conducted without approval of local leadership, instead District Commissioner Cockcroft locally known as *Sikhanyana* used deceiver methods and force to relocate the Tonga from their motherlands. Martha Mwiinde in an interview argued that when Cockcroft the then District Commissioner of Binga came to the river, he was under accompany of the heavily armed police to scare away any resistance.¹¹ The Tonga termed this process as *kulonzegwa* which translates to being moved by force.¹²

The process of dislocation was highly resisted by the Batonga due to its attempt to destroy their identity. The Tonga nationals did not know any place other than the Zambezi valley. The case of the arguments presented

by people at Manjolo to the parliamentary secretary H J Quinton led by chief Sikalenge and headmen Siyakalunge Mudenda cited the *malende* shrines and ancestral spirits which they feared would be submerged under the lake¹³ A number of Tonga chiefdoms; Siansali, Siachilaba, Dobola and chief Pashu all resisted and cited the destruction of their ethno symbolism as the main cause of resistance.¹⁴ In this context it is can be argued that the displacement of 1950s from the rich alluvial soils of the Zambezi valley altered the identity of the Tonga nationals. This loss of the Tonga sacred graves where the lineage spirits had been worshiped and propitiated was the most serious loss and most difficult to compensate because its value could not be measured in material terms¹⁵. The Tonga were disconnected from the privileges of being associated with ancestors, not to mention *Nyaminyami* stood as a Tonga god thereby acting as a mediator between the living and dead who provided advises and guidance. The Tonga were dumped on the uplands of Binga district where lineages were destroyed as people were randomly relocated to different parts of the district there by disconnecting their social fabric which defined their social identity along Zambezi valley .

The colonial regime besides displacing the Tonga without any compensation did not carry out environmental, social and economic impact assessments before the hasty relocations to the dry, infertile and tsetse fly infested but wildlife rich adjoining upland plateaus of Binga District.¹⁶ All these inhuman conditions were to haunt the Tonga for the centuries to come as the colonial and post-colonial regimes ignored their unique plight which defined their identity. The Tonga themselves identified these sparsely populated upland areas as *lusaka*.¹⁷ This means bushy, waterless and tsetse infested lands. Some parts of the *lusaka* had sandy and rocky soils and for many years preceding the Dam the Tonga had avoided the livelihood threatening *Lusaka* by concentrating their settlements along the fertile and well-watered Zambezi plains.¹⁸ The Tonga nationals were now required to adjust to the new lands and adapt to new farming methods contrary to the methods practiced along Zambezi valley. The majority especially those settled in Siachilaba, Lubu and Siabuwa were settled in hills where they were allocated land which would normally be subjected to shifting cultivation only .¹⁹ They were now exposed to drought as they settled on drought arid places. Instead the federal government overlooked the needs of the Tonga people.

Politically, Tonga chiefs were rendered powerless while their administrative duties were clipped. Latham observed in 1966 that in their new settlement areas on the escarpment, the Tonga chiefs had no or with little powers and were attempting to adjust to altered functional demands.²⁰ This methods disconnected these chiefs from their subjects for instance Chief Sinakoma and Sinamagonde, the adjustment was too severe a test and they had deteriorated into confused, often discontented and had resorted to alcohol as escapement from the realities of their lives'. Siachilaba also experienced revolt in 1970s due to the belief that, they deviated from Tonga customs. ²¹ The public discourse of illusion which occupied both Southern Rhodesia governments was that, resettlement was a necessity which introduced the Tonga into the modern world and threw them into the competition of modern development. Chieftaincies were now vulnerable to accusations of distorted tradition as they were forced to either follow Shona or Ndebele customs and traditions by the colonial administration.

To persuade the Tonga into submission, the colonial administration presented catalogues of false promises. It promised the Tonga that water would follow them, meaning they would construct boreholes and water sources to ensure perennial source of water which will match if not surpass Zambezi valley.²² Contrary to that, the Tonga were now living in squalor as there was no attempt of compensating them. The displacement and relocation from the Zambezi valley in a vain to pave way for the construction of million dollar hydroelectric project did not yield results or bring development to them. *Sikhanyana report* to his superiors confirmed the inhuman conditions which the Tonga were subjected in the resettled areas. One the disturbing problem was nutritional problems measles, TB and dysentery²³. There was also acute shortage of water supply where drilled boreholes produced hard water or was getting dry during sometimes. The Tonga nationals were economically disconnected from Zambezi as they did not benefit electricity and wildlife them while they were no longer allowed to hunt animals. They were now required to have permits to be able to fish and hunt animals thereby hindering their access to resources²⁴.

.The brunt of colonisation and attempt to create a state sponsored identity heavily affected the Tonga of Zambezi valley. Contrary to Cockcroft's view of throwing the Tonga into the modern world of scientific development, instead his project meant abandoning their cultures through adapting either Shona or Ndebele

identity²⁵. Southern Rhodesia was believed to be a country of two African tribes thereby labelling the Tonga as primitive, backward and uncivilised, this stigmatization had great impact on their identity as it was now a subject to scrutiny. Temmel shows how colonial regime created and gave birth to discontent among the baTonga of Zambezi Valley. In terms of development the federal government neglected Binga district in terms of development. The electricity of Zambezi valley did not benefit the Tonga who was docked in Binga district²⁶.

'The colonial government didn't want to recognize us, but We expected more at independence, we argued no, Zimbabwe cannot be a country of two ethnics -Shona and Ndebele are a fiction. There are more Tonga in Zimbabwe than Ndebele; if you look more closely, most Ndebele are Kalanga or other origins'²⁷

After independence the BaTonga continued to suffer from ethnicized political dynamics which underlined resource distribution and political arena which continued to be dominated by the Shona and Ndebele ethnic groups. The Tonga continued to play marginal position which defined their identity and continued to be victims of manufactured myths associated with derogatory terms such backward, two toes and uncivilized²⁸. In three facets which defined the Tonga's identity were triumphed upon through enforced identity which on accommodated only two ethnic groups. Despite having abundant natural in wildlife, Zambezi River – fisheries and Matemba ligs, not to mention tourism the Tonga have continued to lag behind economically. In 1990s the Tonga formed organizations such as BIDA, Kunzwana Trust with help of CCJP which advocated for human rights, while campaigning for recognition of Tonga language in schools around Binga district and recognition of the culture with no avail. The 1990s decade marked a new era in the political dynamics of Zimbabwe. Tarugarira and Ziso argued that, this was a third era of democratization which saw attempts by Civic organizations such as NCA and formation of labor party MDC in 1999 whose message was premised on 'New Zimbabwe' and 'New beginning' which was becoming a hope for minority to claim their identity³⁰. The Ndebele were also demanding their identity by threatening secession from Zimbabwe due to marginalization of the Matabeleland region which witnessed the birth of Ndebele particularistic groups such as Mthwakazi Liberation front and the revival of ZAPU in 1999 in an attempt to reclaim their national identity³¹. With this development, the Tonga took advantage of Zimbabwe grand narrative politics to claim

their identity through formation of Basilwizi –people of Great River, Silveira House and online particularistic groups such as Tonga online which connected the Tonga in Zimbabwe and those in Zambia while sharing Tonga history and culture, with Tonga intellectuals calling for the inclusion of the Tonga in the nation state and benefits to the resources in Binga district, recognition of their language and appointment of the Tonga in public offices such as District Administrators, registration and repudiation of their surnames which were being replaced by either Shona and Ndebele. The research is destined to expose the strategies deployed by the Batonga to claim their identity, the difficulties they faced as represented by the complex grand narrative politics of Zimbabwe as underlined by the complex inter-ethnic relations in Zimbabwe and how successful were their efforts in the 21st century Zimbabwe

1.7 Literature review

Among the scholars who attempted to review the Batonga of Zambezi Valley are :G.T Ncube History of Northwest Zimbabwe,1850-1960,J McGregor ,Crossing the Zambezi ;Politics of the landscape on the central Africa frontier, A K H Weinrich ,The Tonga people on the South shore of the lack Kariba ,E Colson ,Social organization of the Gwembe valley, T.I Mathews ,’’the historical tradition of the people of the Gwembe valley and his works about ‘an outline of pre-colonial history of the Tonga people of Zimbabwe and Zambia with special emphasis on production and class formation .

The works of G.T Ncube highlighted the culture, economic and political organization of the pre displacement and post displacement history of the Tonga of Zambezi valley. Issues, which occupied central themes in his works, are religious aspects of the Tonga during their stay at Zambezi valley. Actually, the ethno symbolism of the Tonga which defined their pre displacement identity was evaluated. The relationship between the river and the Tonga was highlighted³². He submitted that, the river had a spiritual significance and deep religious respect accorded to the river by the baTonga while Tonga ritual ceremonies and the significance of their religious shrines were discussed. However, the theme of these religious rituals such as *malende* and *ngomabuntibe* remained though they were highlighted as important practices among the Tonga

untouched despite indicating that the Tonga were forced to resettle in the uplands of Zambezi valley .In this sense alteration of their identity was not touched³³.

Apart from the above, the significance and strength of the religious symbols of the batonga remained untouched .G.T submitted that the Tonga, Nambya and Shangwe believed in the existence of the spirits of the deceased ancestors and practiced ancestor who ship ³⁴.The deceased were eulogized as the protectors of the living while were assured of eternal rest after death. The Tonga believed *that kufwankoon*a which means dying is resting. In this sense, his submission insinuated that there was a direct contact between the living and the dead. While attempt was made to indicate the significance of the ancestors among the batonga but the concept of how this solid religious, crystal was disrupted after involuntary displacement due to this divorce with their ancestors was not connected to how the BaTonga faced the identity crises³⁵.The identity crises stemmed from the policies of the colonial and post-colonial regimes which attempted to forge a collective identity. The Tonga was now compelled to adapt two identities of recognised groups Shona and Ndebele. This had serious consequences as it created imagined identities which relegated the Tonga's surnames, names and cultures as alternatives or nonexistence. The fact that public servants deployed in Binga public offices such as registration offices changed Tonga surnames into either Ndebele or Shona because they could not spell Tonga names or surnames. Mwindes were changed to Nyathi, Muzamba to Sibelo, Mweembe to Nyoni. This practice continued even after independence until early 2000 when the Tonga intellectuals began to challenge the identity crises in Binga district.

The shrines occupied a central point of religion and political strategic point. The shrines acted sacred places for traditional religious ceremonies/ritual practice. He further argued that even the area around the shrines carried much respected that cutting of grass; no one was supposed to misbehave while any attempt to do anything beyond ritual laws and taboos was labelled as defiant behavior³⁶. In these context physical features such as baobab trees, hot springs, mountains and hills or they could be graves of the ancestors known as malende, which was constructed at the malende area. At this area, each ancestor had his small heart representing him/her T Ncube showed in-depth the intact and significance of ethno symbolism in the formation of national identity. In this sense he alluded how national shrines kept the state together in the

context of their indigenous knowledge system³⁷. The stripping of his work is failure to show how these symbols used as tools of resistance from relocation and subsequent formation of national identity, which was crystallized around their national symbols.

Another scholar who investigated the history of the Tonga and other large groups affected by displacement is T. Scudder. He reviewed the impact of resettlement upon large groups of people, especially in Africa, because of the construction of commercial dams and relocation of the large populations. His investigations includes the Tonga who were resettled due to construction of Kariba Dam in Zambia and Zimbabwe, with at least 57,000 Tonga people relocated from the rich alluvial soils of Zambezi valley; Volta Dam in Ghana, 70,000 relocated; Kainji Dam in Nigeria, 42,000, and the Aswan Dam in Egypt and Sudan 100,000. The scholars paid acute to the effect of resettlement and its decisive impacts³⁸. This resettlements gives birth to group solidarity which continues to form bases of national identity formation due to collective history, oppression and memories of pre displacement era. The concept of resettlement and oppression on resettled areas forms the bases of identity formation as result of such resettlement and the impact also creates a memorial library, which gives birth to kinship and common identity among the victims. Their works paid acute to social effects of resettlement.

In recognizing a pattern that has emerged in the construction of most large dams, Scudder points out that much attention is given to the technical construction of major dams while the resettlement programmes for the people are initiated without ample consideration and research³⁹. The engineers, geologists and economists concentrate their energies on the power considerations and the construction of the hydroelectric dams. Concerning the Kariba Dam construction, resettlement became a tension ridden, crash programme to move the people before the river water flooded the people's homes in the valley⁴⁰. As a result, people were moved before the resettlement areas can support them. He maintains that compulsory and fast resettlement forces its victims to undergo extreme psychological and social-cultural stress, as well as inadequate food. The works of Scudder concentrated on evaluating and assessing effects of construction of technical dams and their effects on the resettled population. The aspect of destruction of their symbols as a systematic attempt to destroy their symbols and national identity remained unexamined.

J McGregor in *Crossing the Zambezi; Politics of the landscape on the central Africa frontier* attempted to expose how the Zambezi valley acted as a source of identity formation. She argues that, the Tonga's dislocation from the Zambezi valley became source of mobilization for national identity. The effects of displacement were explored⁴¹. Disconnection of their cultural, religious and economic life due to dislocation exposed the Tonga to external influence which affected their identity. The Tonga sought international audience to redefine their national identity. She argued that these claims were framed in terms of indigeneity and rights. Hence bears the imprint of not only contemporary politics of belonging but of conflicts and claims of the past. It is also argued that, many of the "*river people*" also lost access to the Zambezi when they were displaced to preserve wildlife and forestry resources in this region. These displacements and other grievances fuelled ethnic consciousness and local resistance, which leaders of African nationalist movements utilized to mobilize anti colonial struggles on both sides of the river⁴². McGregor argues in chapters 8 and 9 that the displaced people's self-identification as river people has formed the basis for identity reformation and mobilization around minority rights in the Zambezi borderlands in postcolonial Zambia and Zimbabwe⁴⁴. The works failed to depict that the need for recognition continued in the 21st century. Actually, the formation of the then united MDC instead she argues that, due to state repression and attempt by the state to create collective identity as represented by patriotic history the Tonga shelved their mobilisation. The history of marginalisation of the Tonga of Binga district continue to form bases of identity formation in the 21st century. Instead the loss of privilege associated with Zambezi Valley continues to be bases of identity and used as a tool of resistance against culture imperialism and forged state sponsored identity.

1.8 Sources and methodology

This section is deployed to discuss the methods that I used to collect data while the sources consulted will be also explored.

Qualitative method was employed in order to ensure that the research become objective and gives the best outcome. This encompass the empirical data collection which includes interviewing people who are part and

parcel of those struggling to claim the BaTonga identity, government of officials such as former and current DAs, traditional leaders, leaders of Civic organisations, youths, ordinary people in Binga and political leaders from both MDC and ZANU PF and Tonga intellectuals in Binga District who have been contributing to the debate on Tonga national identity. On the other hand my research was also spiced by visiting the archives of Zimbabwe to collect primary sources which can be useful in my research. This method requires me to visit all two constituencies of Binga District which are Binga South and Binga North with the respective wards.

On qualitative method of research Miles and Huberman submitted that

Qualitative data is more likely to lead serendipitous findings and to new integrations to revise conceptual frameworks....the findings from the qualitative study have quality of undeniability. Words specially organised into incidents or stories have concrete, vivid, meaningful flavour that often proves far more convincing for a reader, another researcher, a policy maker, a practitioner, than pages of summarised numbers⁴³

Therefore employing qualitative method brings to fore proven information pregnant with evidence as the interviewee may be the person or individual who participated in the events at hand. It also helps in spicing the research which may also give access to letters, memos and other primary sources which may have dates, time and place of events which may authenticate the research. This also included formal, open ended interviews with individuals. In this context I conducted one on one interview where I was able to ask and interpret English questions into Tonga for interviewee to clearly understand. All this helped them to appreciate and understand the background of the research; they became confident in sharing relevant information.

As if the above is not enough, the Community Development Group Discussions (CDGD) were also employed in assembling data. These meetings were conducted by, Basilwizi trust and other civic organisations, traditional leaders, politicians, Churches and SDC meetings which were aimed at retrieving Tonga identity. CDGD were beneficial to the research in the sense that, the research had time to empirically grasp the nature of conscious and general feeling among the Tonga nationals about their identity language, culture, marginalisation and myths formed around Tonga identity. In this context participatory method and

discussion based structure was employed where the interviewer asked questions during question session while getting information. It was an interactive method

Beside the above, another method which was deployed was broad canvassing sources which include written sources such as newspaper articles, academic journals, speeches and books relating to the struggle for inclusion and national identity among the Tonga of Zambezi valley. The above documents were significant in the sense that, they provided documents backed with dates, place and names of the proponents of Tonga identity and general feeling of the ordinary people in Binga about their identity. The sources also helped in identifying the missing links from different scholars and provided theoretical frameworks on debate about the minority groups and their identity in Zimbabwe. By complementing these different sources with oral and written sources, primary and secondary sources helped in producing a subjectivity free and objectively written research which explains the struggle for inclusion in the Zimbabwe state, dynamics of national identity in Zimbabwe in the 21st century and contributes constructively to contemporary debates on the course of national identity and ethno class relations among different groups in Zimbabwe.

The assembled data was systematically evaluated to produce unbiased answers to questions through thorough evaluation and interpretation of data. The best concepts and principles of analytic process include assembling, selecting the right data, and sampling which gives birth to choosing the appropriate source which links to the question at hand by summarizing and communication the gathered data.

1.9 Description of the area of study

Binga district lies on the middle of Zambezi valley in the administrative province of Matabeleland north. The District has two constituencies which are Binga North on the extreme fringe of Zambezi River on the North West which shares border with Zambia and the southern part which is Binga south. Binga district is a semi-arid district which falls under region five which is bounded in the North by Lake Kariba, to the east is Gokwe North and to the South is Lupane and to the west is Hwange. The district is persistently affected by drought due to low rainfall. The district is predominantly occupied by the Tonga tribe who were resettled in 1950s by the federal government to pave way for the construction of the world sponsored kariba Dam. It is

also an interesting case study of the struggle for inclusion in the mainstream narrative of Zimbabwe nation state making project. The Tonga tribe have been marginalised by the successive regimes which have cultivated the ground for battle to be accommodated in the modern state.

1.10 Dissertation layout

The research is presented chronologically in four chapters which are deployed as follows;

Chapter 1: The History of marginalisation of the Batonga of Binga district

The history of the Batonga people along Zambezi Valley, post displacement and post independent Zimbabwe. Early attempt of reclaiming their national identity will be exposed in this chapter. It will also locate the socio-political and economic history of the Tonga and their attempts to claim national identity .The pre -displacement era, their position in uplands of Binga and the position of the Tonga during post-colonial period and subsequent turn of the 21st century. The nature of their beliefs and their relationship with Zambezi Valley created their identity. The chapter will also located early attempts by the Tonga of Binga to claim their national identity. The significance of this chapter is to unveil the factors, which persuaded Tonga of Binga district to claim their identity.

Chapter 2: The strategies employed by the Batonga of Binga District to claim their identity

The second chapter will be devoted in unpacking the methods used by the Batonga in claiming their identity. The chapter will dwell in deeper mode on the internal mechanism employed by the Batonga in their attempt to redefine their national identity. It will accept that, identity mobilization took a political dimension where voting for opposition became a reflection of how it became a base of MDC mobilization. Other internal dynamics includes civic mobilization, constitutional struggle, and advocacy through organisations such as TOLACCO, ZILPA, and Basilwizi. It will also highlight the broad narrative politics in Matabeleland and internal dynamics of national identity among the Tonga where migrants in Binga District were being disqualified as the non-Tonga. Those in places like Southern part of the District –Lusulu were blended as

non-Tonga because they did not have history with Zambezi Valley as this created internal complexity of the claimer for national identity.

Chapter 3: The influence of internal contradictions and Grand narrative politics of Zimbabwe and the struggle for national identity among the BaTonga of Binga District

The third chapter will explore the grand narrative politics of marginalisation of Matabeleland, the relations between three ethnic groups in Zimbabwe: Tonga, Ndebele and the Shona. This will unveil the dynamics and shifting of identities in Zimbabwe which is hierarchical while counter accusations and collaboration among different groups will be explored. This grand narrative politics of Matabeleland posed as a threat to the identity formation among the BaTonga of Binga district.

Chapter 4: successes of the Batonga of Zambezi Valley in claiming their national identity

The last chapter is destined to examine the success of the struggle for national identity. It will discuss in-depth on the achievements of the struggle, whether the concerns of the Batonga were, addressed .It will expose the reasons why the struggle gained prominence. The constitutional reforms, language being examined and officially recognized as one of official languages will be highlighted. The construction of the Batonga museum in Binga, which documents the history of the Batonga and revival of Tonga cultural festivals all, represents the fruits of the struggle for national identity.

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CHAPTER 1

THE HISTORY OF MARGINALISATION OF THE BATONGA FROM COLONIAL RULE TO THE 21ST CENTURY POLITICS

2.1.1. The pre-displacement of 1950s and the context of the identity of the Batonga along middle Zambezi valley.

The identity of the Tonga is unique as compared to other Zimbabwean pre-colonial nationals Shona and the Ndebele, the Tonga who were tucked along the Zambezi valley until their displacement does not record any external migration. Actually, there are no oral traditions which out spells the Tonga to have migrated from other area beside Zambezi valley the area they viewed as their homeland. These Tonga nationals of Zambezi valley viewed themselves as brothers and sisters, fathers, mothers and relatives as they had a lot in common. The Tonga of middle Zambezi valley formed one society; spoke the same language –*Chi Tonga*. There are distinctive features which defined the uniqueness of the pre -displacement Tonga identity. According to oral traditions, the Tonga did not build a single dynasty like the Rozvi or the Mutapa Empire. Instead their political system was highly decentralised where they were scattered into independent political units with each governed by *basimwami*. The matrilineal society believed and subscribed to notions of democracy and human rights where chiefs did not have overall control over his subjects. The political power was largely decentralised in the hands of matrilleneages¹.

The people of the great river had a very good and harmonious relationship with the river and showed great knowledge of the river. It was called *kasambabezi* meaning only those who knows can cross as it had dangerous animals such as crocodiles and drowning. This also underlined the symbolic importance of knowledge of the river².It should also be underlined that their socio-economic and political life highly depended on the mercy of the river. They had unlimited access to fishing *baswii or nswi*-fish. As if the above is not enough their religious life was also connected to the river where their ancestral graves *or malende* were closely located to the river. Zambezi Valley was also a source of live hoods. The alluvial soils played a major role in staving up famine among the Batonga .They practiced fixed agriculture based on

permanent alluvial fields whose soil required no fallowing, rotation or application of manure for the maintenance of its fertility³. In this context the Tonga would cultivate crops such as *nchelela*, tobacco and millet which was used to brew traditional beer –*bukande* and food. They also domesticated cattle, goats and sheep and breeding cattle became a symbol of wealth to men. It is believed that Zambezi valley with its alluvial soils provided and has continued to provide good grazing lands for their animals. Women and children were mainly responsible for agriculture production; G Ncube is of the view that the staple crops of these societies were usually bulrush millet *nzembwe*, sorghum *maila* and maize⁴.

These alluvial soils were restricted in supply in the case that family lineages and chiefdoms were maintained. Latham argued that, this system of restricted supply of land gave birth to maintenance rights hence their identity was kept intact with that policy⁵. The Tonga had unlimited access to wild animals where they could hunt without restrictions from any authority. Even python skin was used for treatment. Animals such as elephant's meat acted also feed the community. Ivory or even rhinoceros tusk were thrown away since people did not know their use⁷.

The pre-displaced Tonga's social life was closely connected to their religious beliefs. The *Ngomabuntibe* and *malende* had a central role in their social life. On top of the hierarchy was *simwami* who played as a religious leader. He presided over religious ceremonies such *malende* or *mpande* –cleansing ceremony. *Mpande* was a person possessed by the spirit of the ancestor. To interpret the message of the dead a religious ceremony would be held by the elders. Thus also family shrines *dumba* was in home yards or river gardens, and graves –*tubanda* were located along the river⁸. Neighbourhood shrines *Malende* could be also along the river marked by baobab, small huts and sometimes also a pool. The river itself was paid much respect and some of its pools were regarded as sacred places associated with magical phenomenon and distant communities of ancestors which defined their cultural heritage⁹. These shrines were regarded as places of power rather than shrines of the land¹⁰. This ethno cultural life distinguished and defined the Tonga public identity as opposed to other cultures of pre-colonial African societies. *Malende* also played a central role among the Tonga nationals; actually it had multiple purposes, serving both as rain shrines and as a place where clan descendants propitiated the spirit of their ancestors¹¹. It is clear that those living along the river thus had a

primary engagement with the ancestral spirits *mizimu* in religious practice. Away from AmbuyaNehanda and SekuruKaguvi, the Tonga had their own spirit mediums *Malila and Muchelele*. The regional spirit mediums occupied a central role in day to day social life of the state. one of the prominent Tonga spirit medium *Malila* would attract visits from a number of different chiefs was closely associated with Binga hot springs into which he would immerse himself. He had special relationship with Zambezi: 'he would sit on the boiling water of Binga hot springs'¹².

The spirit of the dead was appeased through *kubukulula* where they would play *buntibe* drums and spill beer with *lufulu*. If the man was married to cast the spirit and grant peace the niece would enter the *dumbaw* where they could conduct sex with closer supervision of elders. This process was called *kwiinzya*. Tonga traditions has it that this was done to avoid bad omen such *chaando*. The deceased man would interfere with the life of his living wife, hence this process was granted to solve all such problems. On the other palm, it was done to surrender the wife for inheritance. All was done for the safe keeping of the children and the wife. Actually, the faithfulness of the partners made it impossible for them to be affected by sexually transmitted disease. The right person who could inherit the wife was the *mujwa* from the elder sister. In addition the Tonga defined their identities using clan names/ surnames *mitupo* has shown that clan names, totems and castes have a significant symbolism in tracing the origins and relationship of societies. Among the Tonga's the leading surnames were Mwiinde, Mumpande, Mutale, and Mnkombwe, Muzambas and Mweembe¹³. The new born kid would adapt the surname of his/her mother especially the maternal grandparent who stood as *bakuluzubo*. This system maintained kinsmen and closely attached the umbilical code as the house with chieftainship would allow the newly heir to maintain his relevance¹⁴. The man was highly connected to his matrilineal family *kulibaluzubo*. The man's uncles played a major role in the family as they could solve family or domestic disputes. The first born child of the sister was regarded as the heir prince. He would be highly respected by the wives of the uncles; hence inheritance of the wives if the uncle dies was automatic heir

Another creature which occupied the central role to the Batonga was *Nyaminyami*. It is believed to be a big fish. One of the respondents argued that *Nyaminyami* was more like a spirit medium of the batonga and

survivor. Every month it would share its body for food or chunks of meat¹⁶. It is argued that, *Nyaminyami* was believed to be *simwaba wabaTonga* who would protect them in the bad omen. In times of crisis *Nyaminyami* would help them. For instance *Nyaminyami* is credited to have instituted spirit of resistance during 1950s displacement. This predicament resulted to multiple deaths of workers due to floods of 1957 and 1958. This resulted to collapse of the dam wall during the construction which resulted to death of workers and livestock destruction¹⁷. The Tonga nationals argued all this was as result of disapproval of *Nyaminyami* over the Tonga displacement showing the relationship of *Nyaminyami* and the Tonga. Tonga elders also presents *Nyaminyami* as the Tonga river god which can be compared to mythical creature of Loch Ness monster¹⁸. This defined the Tonga identity as there was closer connection between *Nyaminyami* and the ancestral spirits. People would communicate while pledging allegiance through performance ceremonial dances¹⁹.

2.1.2 The historical displacements of 1950s from the Zambezi plains in the context of the batonga identity of the Tonga.

The displacement of 1950s by the colonial regime had serious implications on the baTonga identity. The River Tonga have described their life near the river as a time of *splendidi solation* during colonization of Zimbabwe before displacement of 1950s²⁰. This view shows how the Tonga lived as independent entity with their social and economic life remained pure until this nightmare of late 1950s when the colonial Southern Rhodesian government displaced the minority Tonga people from the ecologically rich Zambezi River plains due to the construction of the World Bank funded hydroelectric power generating Kariba dam²¹. This displacement was conducted without approval of local leadership, instead District Commissioner Cockcroft locally known as *Sikhanyana* used deceiver methods and force to relocate the Tonga from their motherlands. Martha Mwiinde argued that when Cockcroft the then District Commissioner of Binga came to the river, he was under accompany of the heavily armed police to scare way any resistance²². The Tonga termed this process as *kulonzegwa* which translates to being moved by force. This displacement disrupted their social, political and political narrative of the Tonga. This process of forced displacement created a legacy of destruction of Tonga historical identity. Among the story of displacement is more serious than the liberation

struggle which gave birth to modern day Zimbabwe. The story of compensation from their ancestral lands, loss of economic privileges, abrupt destruction of political institutions and forced inclusion into the nation state project continue to form the bases of identity formation among the Tonga.

The process of dislocation was highly resisted by the Batonga due to its attempt to destroy their identity. The history of identity destruction was connected to their forced divorce with Zambezi Valley which was the Tonga's symbol of a nation, hence calling them *bamuDonga* or *Basilwizi* people of Great River. The Tonga nationals did not know any place other than the Zambezi valley. The case of the arguments presented by people at Manjolo to the parliamentary secretary H J Quinton led by chief Sikalenge and headmen Siakalunge Mudenda cited the *malende* shrines and ancestral spirits which they feared would be submerged under the lake²³. A number of Tonga chiefdoms; Siansali, Siachilaba, Dobola and chief Pashu all resisted and cited the destruction of their ethno symbolism as the main cause of resistance. In this context it can be argued that the displacement of 1950s from the rich alluvial soils of the Zambezi valley altered the identity of the Tonga nationals. This loss of the Tonga sacred graves where the lineage spirits had been worshiped and propitiated was the most serious loss and most difficult to compensate because its value could not be measured in material terms²⁴. The Tonga were disconnected from the privileges of being associated with ancestors, not to mention *Nyaminyami* who provided advises and guidance. The Tonga who were dumped on the uplands of Binga district where lineages were destroyed as people were randomly relocated.

The colonial regime besides displacing the Tonga without any compensation did not carry out environmental, social and economic impact assessments before the hasty relocations to the dry, infertile and tsetse fly infested but wildlife rich adjoining upland plateaus of Binga District²⁵. All these inhuman conditions were to haunt the Tonga for the centuries. The Tonga themselves identified these sparsely populated upland areas as *lusaka*. This means bushy, waterless and tsetse infested lands. Some parts of the *lusaka* had sandy and sodicgusu soils and for many years preceding the Dam the Tonga had avoided the livelihood threatening *lusaka* by concentrating their settlements along the fertile and well watered Zambezi plains²⁶. The Tonga nationals were now required to adjust to the new lands and adapt to new farming methods contrary to the methods practiced along Zambezi valley. The majority especially those settled in

Siachilaba, Lubu and Siabuwa were settled in hills where they were allocated land which would normally be subjected to shifting cultivation only. They were now exposed to drought as they settled on drought arid places of Binga District which received little attention from the colonial regime. The colonial regime failed to create support mechanism to serve the BaTonga.

Politically, the story of displacement altered the Tonga identity which continued to suffer even as they were now compelled to adapt state sponsored identities where succession of chiefs, powers and execution of duties fell in the hands of colonial administration. Tonga chiefs were rendered powerless while their administrative duties were clipped. Latham observed in 1966 that Tonga chiefs in their new settlement areas on the escarpment, the Tonga chiefs had no or with little powers and were attempting to adjust to altered functional demands²⁷. This methods disconnected these chiefs from their subjects for instance Chief Sinakoma and Sinamagonde, the adjustment was too severe a test and they had deteriorated into confused, often discontented and had resorted to alcohol as escapement from the realities of their lives'. Siachilaba also experienced revolt in 1970s due to the belief that, they deviated from Tonga customs. The public discourse of illusion which occupied both Southern Rhodesia governments was that; resettlement was a necessity which introduced the Tonga into the modern world and threw them into the competition of modern development. Chieftaincies were now vulnerable to accusations of distorted tradition as they were forced to either follow Shona or Ndebele customs and traditions by the colonial administration²⁸. Their way of life was now viewed as alternative to both Shona and Ndebele.

To persuade the Tonga into submission, the colonial administration presented catalogues of false promises. It promised the Tonga that water would follow them, meaning they would construct boreholes and water sources to ensure perennial source of water which will match if not surpass Zambezi valley³⁰. This disapproval by the Tonga leaders indicated how they sensed their identity was affected by the displacements. Tonga were now living in squalor as there was no attempt of compensating them as they tried to adjust in new areas. The displacement and relocation from the Zambezi valley in a vain to pave way for the construction of million dollar hydroelectric project did not yield results or bring development to them. *Sikhanyana report* to his superiors confirmed the inhuman conditions which the Tonga were subjected in the

resettled areas. One the disturbing problem was nutritional problems measles, TB and dysentery³¹. There was also acute shortage of water supply where drilled boreholes produced hard water or was getting dry during sometimes³². The Tonga nationals were economically disconnected from Zambezi as they did not benefit from electricity and wildlife which benefitted the colonial officials while they were no longer allowed to hunt animals. They were now required to have permits to be able to fish and hunt animals thereby hindering their access to resources. This created discontent from the Tonga .This forced displacement affected the Tonga in many ways. In broad concept Tonga's way of living was altered, their economic umbilical code which includes fishing, access to wildlife, their cultural practices such as marriage ceremonies ,funeral ceremonies ,language and culture and their political institutions were submerged with this displacement. In actual sense the colonial government condemned Tonga practices as a reflection of backwardness while they became subject of myths which were designed to legitimise the uncompensated displacement as a necessity which was overdue.

2.1.3 The colonial administration policies in the context of the national identity of the Batonga people 1960s-1979.

In 1960s the Tonga in newly resettled areas of Binga district suffered from the policies of colonial administration. These policies had serious implications on the survival of their identity. The brunt of colonisation and its attempt to create a state sponsored identity heavily affected the Tonga of Zambezi valley. The District commissioner who was instrumental in the displacement of the baTonga justified the displacement as a model of throwing the Tonga into the modern world of scientific development; instead his project meant abandoning their cultures through adapting either Shona or Ndebele identity. This justification of the Tonga meant the abandoning of their so called backward cultures which had serious implications on their identity. The colonial regime ignored other identities hence imagining that Southern Rhodesia was a country of two African tribes thereby labelling the Tonga as primitive, backward and uncivilised, this stigmatization had great impact on their identity as it was now a subject to scrutiny. Temmel shows how colonial regime created and gave birth to discontent among the baTonga of Zambezi Valley³². In terms of development the federal government neglected Binga district in terms of development. The electricity of

Zambezi valley did not benefit them in any way while the fishing industry was now benefiting the state. In 1960s Binga was struggling to have proper schools while the nearest secondary school was about 150 km away in Hwange³³.

As if the above is not enough, the colonial administration continued with its stereotype of viewing the Tonga as backward and primitive. The state never supported community based development to that effect. The social and economic hardship were becoming a reality each second in Binga district, hence these newly resettled areas were becoming unbearable. Tonga language was also neglected and Tonga culture was under attack. The Tonga names and clans were not allowed to appear in identity cards. Instead they were forced to adapt either Shona or Ndebele surnames³⁴. It was argued that, they were forced to sacrifice their surnames for instance Mwiinde was changed to Nyathi, Muzamba to Sibelo, Mweembe to Nyoni, Munsaka to Ndlovu, Mudenda to Dube. An interview with James Ndlovu, he revealed that colonial administrators were deliberately changing their surnames and names from Tonga to Ndebele.

In 1970s when I went to collect an ID, Ndebele workers at registration offices would ask my surname where I responded by saying I'm Munsaka. Then he asked his friend who had experience in Binga district that Munsaka is what in Ndebele? The response of his friend was like Munsaka is Ndlovu then he wrote you are Ndlovu which I was not able even to pronounce but had no option. Then I went to Bulawayo in search of employment, I did not struggle to get employment in Bulawayo at council. My family now is Ndlovus but we are Tongas.³⁶

As if the above is not enough in industries, council or public administration Tonga were treated with impunity while struggled to get employment, hence they were forced to secure Ndebele surnames or simply change the existing one to secure jobs. In actual sense many Tonga nationals were shy to adapt to their Tonga clan names and surnames as they were ignored by the colonial administration which had implications on their identity.

Furthermore, the colonial administration distorted people's identity as it classified Africans into distinct groups while the Rhodesian colonial state divided the country into ethnicized administrative units: Mashonaland for Zezuru-speaking Shona's; Matabeleland for Ndebele-speaking groups; Fort Victoria-Masvingo for Karanga-speaking groups; and Manicaland for Manyikas³⁶. Many groups, especially those speaking minority languages, were lumped into these ethnicized administrative units and their alternative identities ignored³⁷. This approach by the colonial administration forced the Tonga groups either to adapt

Shona or Ndebele cultures as alternative identities were rendered as non-existent. Ethnic citizenship among the Tonga was enforced through the National Identity Card or Pass Law system which compelled them to carry passes when seeking employment in towns, used to classify Africans in terms of their village and district of origin in towns. Binga district was now viewed as the district of the BaTonga. On the other hand this system also failed to produce a unified state as these numerical codes distinguished different groups which were a self-contradictory practice which armed the Tonga to view themselves as an autonomous group which is distinct from other groups.

It was suffice that the code of the Tonga or in Binga District was 06 which was now creating an imagination that Binga was for the Tonga thereby creating an imagined identity attached to a certain territory and remote past of dislocation from Zambezi valley. This code 06 was for Binga district, instead this system created ethnic conscious where the Tonga of Binga district became aware of their ethnic identity where 06 represented the Tonga of Binga district. This system remained unchanged in post-independence Zimbabwe. every 'Native District' in the country was represented by a specific numerical code and every adult Native was issued a national identity card *chitupa/ stupa*, with details indicating one's rural chief, village and district of ancestral origin where these districts in Binga district and chiefs were Tonga only ³⁸. Most Tonga nationals argue that most workers in Binga registration office were either Shona or Ndebele. In the process, they either deliberately distorted or changed their surnames /names. During colonial rule, the Tonga's identity was also trampled upon through colonial policy, which compelled African people's access to resources according to ethnic of origins. Especially communal land in rural areas could only be attained through one's ethnicity. In the rural sphere, the Tonga had to adopt or assert their identities to Ndebele in order to access important resources like land and occupy strategic positions in the political economic affairs. In apparent terms, the colonial administration ignored their existence.

Tonga language was also being relegated in both public and private administration which was a blow to the Tonga identity. Language and culture remains rich resource which forms the bases of one's identity. The ministry of internal affairs abolished the teaching of Tonga and other minority languages in Binga in 1974 after closure of Zambian border where the Tonga accessed text books which forced the Tonga to learn

Ndebele language in schools³⁹. This was designed for the broader standardization of the primary school curriculum which relegated other identities thereby destroying the identities of the Tonga. It also emphasised that, the broader context of seven years of primary education was for fluency in communication in English and any two of African recognised languages –Ndebele and Shona thereby relegating Tonga language and culture.⁴⁰ The proposal ignored other languages such as Tonga. It provoked new consciousness of marginality and exclusion among the BaTonga. Tonga elders responded by protesting through withdrawal of their kids from schools and evades paying of taxes citing assassination of their identity. There was a growing belief of the fact that, they were being swallowed up while they deserved inclusion in the nation state project⁴¹

Apart from that, economic privileges associated with Zambezi valley such as fishing wildlife, tourism and electricity did not benefit the Tonga. In 1970s this economic exclusion became source of resentment among the Tonga. This economic exclusion gave birth to the identity of the Tonga formed due to exclusion by the colonial regime. Unlimited access to the resources before displacement coupled with destruction of their *malende* shrines, submerging of the graves of the ancestors while they continued to watch the whites enjoying the privileges which they accessed reconnected the memories with Zambezi valley which continued to create identity among the Tonga. This prompted the Tonga to launch institutions of resistance against colonial rule.

2.1.5 The post-colonial administration policies in the context of the Tonga national identity

'The government didn't want to recognize us, but We expected more at independence, we argued no, Zimbabwe cannot be a country of two ethnics -Shona and Ndebele colonial are a fiction. There is more Tonga in Zimbabwe than Ndebele; if you look more closely, most Ndebele are Kalanga or other origins'⁴²

The post-colonial government which was born out Lancaster house negotiations failed to answer to long held questions by the baTonga which included among others: culture inclusion, language, economic, administrative and of course compensation package for the displacement of 1950s which remained unanswered. The Tonga continued to occupy the backseat of development even after independence hence, playing marginal influence in power relations politics of Zimbabwe. The Lancaster house constitution continued to present the Tonga as

‘minority’ while only Ndebele and Shona were recognized as official languages. The new nation state making project failed to accommodate the Tonga in the Zimbabwean nation.

After Independence the public media and court of public opinion continued to depict the Tonga as primitive, underdeveloped and uncivilized. This view was not discarded after independence; instead it continued being propagated in the new independent state. In 1981 when Binga was affected by malnutrition and successive drought, the *Herald* revisited the old archive of labelling Binga as backwardness which caused drought ahead of war, history of displacement and neglect by colonialists. Primitive farming methods were singled out as the chief cause of malnutrition⁴⁴. The public media continued to reproduce old and Eurocentric of Binga’s Tonga public identity as two toed, were in darkness that they haven’t heard of independence in 1981⁴⁵.

As if the above is not enough, after independence Binga continued to lag behind in terms of development, notwithstanding of the frantic efforts by the ZANU PF government after independence to uplift the social lives of people. Binga’s plight was captured in ‘*Lusumpuko Plan*’ of 1981.

It is an established fact that of the 55 districts in Zimbabwe, Binga has been neglected by past colonial administrations .In nearly every sphere of development, Binga has been overlooked and unfortunate enough to be placed at the tail and receiving line where priorities are concerned .As result of this, it is drastically lacking in all essential public services such as health, education, communication and agricultural development .Due to lack of progress ,Binga has been forced to rely entirely on aid from various charitable institutions ,which is appreciated but far sufficient to fulfill her development requirements. As ofrecently, sizeable financial amounts has been solicited on Binga’s behalf ,which is much publicized in mass media ,but in fact never riches Binga....⁴⁶

The Tonga continued to be victims of neglect even after independence. In the economic facets privileges associated with the river continued to pass through the baTonga villages. Fishing permits, matembaligs and continued arrests on Tonga fishermen continued to act as flesh wound on the post-colonial Tonga. With the attainment of the country’s independence in 1980 well-connected Ndebele and Shona peoples gradually substituted Europeans as the major beneficiaries in the exploitation of Zambezi Valley’s natural wealth⁴⁷. Revival of Tonga cultures such as *buntibe*, *chilimba* and *malende* shrines also became source of focus. There was general feeling among the baTonga that their culture and Tonga religious institutions were overlooked by the post-colonial government. All this was as result of continuity of neglect. Even in education through education

act of 1987, all primary schools were compelled to teach in all three different languages at once⁴⁸. This policy was viewed as identity genocide as it had dangers of tramping upon other identities. This created general discontent among Tonga politicians as they feared it created dangers of swallowing them up as what happened to the kalanga who were assimilated by the Ndebele. The Tonga wanted their kids to learn and understand their culture.

The government of ZANU PF wanted to appease the Ndebele through unity accord of 1987 by deploying Ndebele officials in the public administration of Binga. The office bearers in schools and most important registration offices are non-Tonga speakers. Among the officials who were appointed is Sithole District Administrator, Mathe registration offices. These Ndebele officials continued to overturn some decisions which acted along their demands. During Sithole reign emigrants from Kezi, Gwanda, Lupane and Bulawayo continued to flow in Binga⁴⁹. Majority settled in Lusulu, Pashu and Lubimbi where there was favorable land for agriculture. Some went as far as claiming chieftainship which was vehemently resisted by the Tonga activists. On the political fronts the Tonga continued to play marginal position and peripheral role. In almost all political parties Tonga continued to play marginal position. In such context the Tonga plays marginal position in state resource distribution. Despite to have contributed to the cause and execution of the liberation struggle Sikajaya Muntanga, Francis Munkombwe, Cephas Siangoma, Samuel Mugande and Paul Siachimbo never rose to national positions even at national level after independence. Such marginal ethno power relations keeps the Tonga at peripheral position in terms of resource distribution.

In 1990s the government proposed the Zambezi Water Project (ZWP) this created friction among the government among the Tonga. Tonga intellectuals like Dominic Muntanga argued that the GOZ cannot appease the Ndebele through ZWP when the Tonga had no water which was in their backyard. These post-colonial policies gave birth to discontent among the Tonga who argued that, the post-colonial regime overlooked their needs. This discontent gave birth to the struggle for national identity where in early 2000 the state making project faced resistance as the Ndebele also argued that, the government was marginalizing them while the liberal reforms and formation of MDC whose management banked on the rights of citizens resulted to the formation of Tonga particularistic

organizations such as Tonga online, Basilwizi Trust, TOLACCO and voting for the opposition in a bid to push for inclusion in the nation state of Zimbabwe.

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CHAPTER 2

THE STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY THE BATONGA OF BINGA DISTRICT TO CLAIM THEIR IDENTITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Introduction

This chapter is devoted in unpacking and exposing the institutionalised efforts employed by the Tonga nationals in claiming their identity. The young Tonga energetic activists at the turn of 21st century challenged the realities of marginalisation and uneven resource distribution. At the core of their demands were economic development, language and inclusion in the Zimbabwe nation state project. They appropriately deployed emerging national and global ideas of heritage and identity as well as the liberal parlance of rights, development and citizenship in framing their struggles for the improvement. The chapter will also dwell in deeper mode on the internal mechanism employed by the Batonga in their attempt to redefine their national identity. It will accept that, identity mobilization took a political dimension where voting for opposition became a reflection of how it became a base of mobilization. Other internal dynamics includes civic mobilization, constitutional struggle, media such Tonga online and advocacy while the chapter will also explore in-depth on how this struggle translated into political dynamic where public speeches, parliamentary sessions

3.1.1 Civil society mobilization and advocacy in promoting Tonga's national identity in the 21st century

At the turn of the millennium, the civil society gained prominence in terms of poverty alleviation, advocacy and upliftment of the minority groups due to among others complementing the government in achieving the MDGs. The MDGs targeted among others poverty alleviation and promotion of rights of the previously neglected groups¹. failure of early home grown policies and organizations such as *lusumpuko plan* of 1981, BIDA 1989-1997 and Kunzwana Trust prompted to the formation of newly home grown organizations such as Basilwizi Trust, Zubo, Ntengwe for community development and TOLACO .The 1990s demand for compensation were dying while new forms of arguments emerged. The issue of language inclusion in

education and constitutional amendments occupied the central theme of the new Tonga activists' demands. The new demands by Tonga activists was now centered on language, inclusion in the Zimbabwe nation state and end to long history of neglect and marginalization by the central government. After failure of early organisations which were vocal on Tonga particularistic identity and development in early 2000 new organisations were formed. These new organisations were inspired by worldwide debate on minority groups and call for compensation on their ancestral lands

The Tonga in Binga district became so vocal on their identity which included language, access to resources such electricity and wildlife and political inclusion in the Zimbabwe nation state². After death of Joshua Nkomo in 1999 the debate of exclusion of Matabeleland became visible in the Zimbabwe fractured nation state. This prompted the revival of ZAPU in 1999, emergence of particularistic groups in Matabeleland, debate on constitutional reforms and strength of the Civic organisations as witnessed by the formation of MDC born from civil society –ZCTU ,the Tonga formed organisations such as 'Basilwizi' –people of the river with its offices in Bulawayo later the offices were opened in Binga³ The organisation began to advocate for the restoration of Tonga identity through culture, language, poverty alleviation while the organisation became vocal on the appointment of civil servants in Binga such as education and local governments. Basilwizi trust began to advocate for the recognition of Tonga in schools while it began to engage traditional leaders on the revival of Tonga culture.

Basilwizi, Silveira house, TOLACO and ZILPA began to advocate for the recognition of Tonga in schools. Engaging relevant ministries like education for curriculum review. In 2005 Basilwizi conducted a survey on the plight of the Tonga and tried to reconnect them with their roots of Zambezi valley⁴. The argument was that the Tonga risked losing their identity. The organisations became vocal. In 2010 the organisation released a five years plan which stretched from 2010-2015 among the target was the teaching of teaching of Tonga language from Grade 1 to form 6 ,with further ambition which anticipated local colleges and universities to include Shona like in Zambia where Tonga is taught to PHD level⁵. Frank Mudimba in an interview submitted that they also fascinated the enrolling of Tonga teachers with UCE a Bulawayo based college. Basically, they would receive applications from prospects applicants and submit to UCE, The

argument behind was to promote Tonga qualified in Binga district to promote teaching of Tonga⁶. This effort was designed to promote Tonga identity through language and language. End to Tonga marginalisation, inclusion in the administrative affairs of the state were the targets of these groups which were formed to advance Tonga identity.

3.1.2 The baTonga and Indigenous knowledge systems as a strategy to protect their identity

In this plot, the discussion is devoted to show how Indigenous Knowledge or indigenous knowing was used as a strategy to counter identity imperialism in post 2000 era ,how it manifested and how was used by the Tonga for identity restitution. It deals with how it was used to counter economic problems after 2000 and how they survived with their environment in the uplands of Binga. Indigenous knowledge systems in this case it includes traditional beliefs systems, Religion, cultures and taboos. It should be further demonstrated how the same indigenous knowing helped to shape the national identity of the Batonga and adaptation to the new environment.

T.O. Ranger presented Indigenous knowledge systems as a body, bodies, forms, local and traditional knowledge of the indigenous people of a particular geographical area that they have survived on and preserved even under the yoke of colonialism⁷. The Tonga suffered multiple influences which tried to suffocate their national features and symbols such as cultures, language and economic connections. In that vein it must be noted that African or ethnic groups in a state varies from one society to another, so were/is their belief, cultures, values and norms act as a distinction features or identity indicators of a given nation. Therefore these nationals exploit their environment for survival. The Tonga after their just like other African societies were/are traditionalists who strongly believed in their African Traditional religion with the worship of ancestors, spirit mediums, shrines, taboos, totemic beliefs, folklores and rituals. They accorded respect, valued, honoured sacred places such as the hills, mountains, rivers, shrines and forests; these had and continued to have some spiritual significance⁸.

The Tonga nationals were forced to use either Shona or Ndebele in schools while English stood as the main language. In this context the survival of their language is the most surprising thing as notwithstanding of the

external threats, the Tonga has withstood test of its time. One of the most consistent and reliable factor which has kept the Tonga identity alive is day to day use of *Chi Tonga* and cultural practices in their day lives⁹. The durability of the modern Tonga culture lies in their music and traditional dances such as *Buntibe*, *chilimba and mapyayila*. These traditional dances and music denotes different meanings for instance buntibe drums carried the significance of cultural traits. *Ngomabuntibe* was played during funeral services *dilwe*, *chilimbawas* executed to celebrate bumper harvest and *Siampukutumpukutu* is a courtship dances which encouraged good behaviour among youth. Chinowaita observed how the Tonga of Zimbabwe have managed to keep their language and culture intact through music though there are factors that threatened to dispel this culture clan. It should be also noted that, *Ngomabuntibe* has been of latest been played during government or public functions, welcoming dignitaries hence it signifies the Tonga trademark. Manyena posited that,

Ngoma buntibe remains the most precious and unique dance of the Tonga. It is an integral part of Tonga institution. Because the dance brings people together, it can be a useful tool for mobilizing people. Ngomabuntibe was the main ingredient that Andrew Muntanga, the first Tonga hero to be buried at the Heroes' Acre in Harare, used to mobilize and raise political awareness among the Tonga in Bulawayo in the 1970s.¹¹

The Tonga anthem which defines their identity has also been used to resist identity imperialism .The song posits unique Tonga identity through *CigambyoCipati* "The Most Surprising Thing", which became popular at the turn of 21st century. The anthem brings different aspects, among other things the song celebrates Zambezi River as the life sustaining river, besides identifying the Zambezi as a life-sustaining river for the Tonga, the anthem constructs the Kariba Dam as a font of historical memory and a symbol of communal dislocation and repressed cultural potency. Because of the Dam, the Tonga lost ancestral graves, sacred caves, pools and shrines, *malende*, all submerged under the waters. This anthem is both a dirge about displacement and a declaration of the ownership of a "lost" birth right, connecting the present-day Tonga with the lands inundated by Lake Kariba, by noting that their ancestors were born, lived and died along the Zambezi River. To elaborate on this painful sense of disconnection between the dead and the living the anthem makes allusions to the "voices of the ancestors" heard "wailing across the Zambezi River"¹².The song is accompanied with a poem which clearly outlines the catalogues of Tonga grievances while clearly elaborating

their identity. The '*cigambyocipati*' song is sang during public functions for instance Kujatana half marathon which was executed by Dr Nkululelo Sibanda which was graced by Chombo¹³.

Proverbs *Tusimpi* and taboos also has been used to sustain Tonga identity in the 21st century. Tonga proverbs has been used to instil lessons to the youth and elderly alike .Isaac Mumpande compiled the book of *Tusimpi* which carries moral lessons with wide arrays of themes. The Tonga *tusimpi* or proverbs exposes the social potency of the Tonga way of life. The Tonga represents a modern society whose indigenous knowledge system provides a continuity of identity which has been receiving consistent and effective threats since 1950s when the nation was displaced from their traditional homeland of Zambezi valley. *Caalacoomwetacijayinjina* single hand cannot crush lice. This represents how the Tonga believed in communalism while celebrating their unique way of life which defines their modern identity¹⁴.

In agriculture and traditional food has played a central role to define their identity. The proverbs or *tusimpi* has been persistently defining the Tonga modern identity. Zimbabwe has been rocked by crisis which manifested itself through economic, social and political problems at the turn of the 21st century. The Tonga in Binga district revoked to their traditional food such *muntontwe; buvobe* and *masabayu*. In 2003, 2008 and 2010 there was drought which rocked Zimbabwe. This traditional food helped in sustaining the life of the Tonga who was hard hit due to poor rains.

3.1.3 Political dimension of national identity in Binga District and how it became a source of political Mobilisation in post 2000 era

Tonga people have not drunk from the cup of the prosperity of independence

We have the Kariba dam, but the Tongas have no clean water and no electricity.

Zimbabwe has rejected the Tonga people and the Tonga language, 29 July 2011¹⁵

The Tonga intellectuals and officials have not spared public gatherings and parliaments to register their frustration over the post colonial's government continuity suffocating Tonga identity. During the burial of the Tonga's first national hero to be buried at the national shrine –heroes acre Sikajaya Andrew Muntanga on 29 July 2011, the speech of his son and family spokesperson Dominic Muntanga reminded the post-colonial government of ZANU PF continuity onslaught on Tonga language, culture and above all neglect in all facets

of socio political economy of the post-colonial state of Zimbabwe. This gave birth to the support of the opposition MDC which they believed had inclusive policies which can help reconstruct the Tonga identity¹⁶. MDC took advantage of this vacuum, pledging to consider Tonga perennial grievances among them language, culture and inclusion in the socio political affairs of the state.

It is an open secret that ZANU PF had been treating people of Binga as second class citizens.

When I came from Harare was convinced that will find people with two toes, half animals but I'm shocked to find health people with resilience but continue to suffer under ZANU PF misrule. Since 1980 Mugabe has done nothing for the people of Binga. The new government of MDC will Ensure all citizens enjoy their resources where they live fully as equal citizens¹⁷.

Tsvangirai and the MDC administration pledged to reverse the long history of neglect and pledged to restore and install a non-discriminatory regime which will be built on a firm foundation. Actually, the first MDC Member of Parliament Joel Guabuza one of the BIDA disgruntled member did not labour to mobilise from scratch, instead he reminded the Batonga that their suffering was as result of their side-lining in the national affairs. In this context in the 2000 parliamentary elections Binga District was the only rural area in the country in which the Movement for Democratic Change MDC outpolled ZANU PF; Guabuza Joel an MDC candidate got 19,894 votes ahead of Joshua Muzamba who harvested 2,678 votes. In the 2002 presidential poll Morgan Tsvangirai of the MDC got 26,880 votes against the incumbent President Robert Mugabe's 5,300 votes¹⁸. What is systematically clear is that the Tonga's struggle for inclusion in the Zimbabwe nation state project took a political dimension. Any political grouping with promise and pledge of reconstructing Tonga identity was assured of the BaTonga votes.

The need for inclusion of the Tonga nationals and end to history of neglect by the post-colonial regime reflected itself through votes which are punctuated with frustration and belief that a new government will embrace the grievances of the minority groups. The Tonga have systematically and legitimately taken this struggle for inclusion through electoral process. In all plebiscites, the Tonga have been consistently voting for the opposition to register their anger. This struggle for national identity has proved how this public anger can be used as a source of mobilisation for the opposition political parties in Africa where the suppression of the minority can translate to political mobilisation. The ZANU PF policies of land reform programme which

compelled the distribution of land majority did little for the Tonga as there were no farms to talk about¹⁹. Recently, the indigenisation policy also proved to be unpractical as the major resources in the form of Matemba lig, jobs in public and private administration continue to be occupied by outsiders. The well connected Shona and Ndebele officials continue to benefit from the local resources²⁰. In this sense, the need for inclusion in Zimbabwean state nation project has been proved to be missing the Tonga tucked in Binga district.

The Tonga at times expressed this self-positioning rhetoric at national platforms such as the Zimbabwean Parliament. For example, in a debate on the need for the teaching and official use of minority languages in the country, Binga District's Member of Parliament questioned the labelling of the Tonga as a minority group because they were Zimbabwe's 'original people':

The concept of minority languages is something that I would not agree to. The fact that you are going to say the Tonga speaking people are the minority when history, has it that originally this country was occupied by the Tonga people ... if you trace your history, you will discover that the Tonga never migrated from any other place and yet we know quite clearly and historically that the Shona moved from some places outside Zimbabwe and today they are called the majority. The same can be said with the Ndebeles who moved from South Africa into Zimbabwe during uMfecane and Difecane and these people are referred to as the majority today and yet the original people who lived in this country are referred to as the minority. So, this concept of others being the majority and others being the minority is not correct²¹.

Besides voting for the opposition in national elections, Tonga politicians have ventured into the struggle for language inclusion and end to long history of marginalisation by rejecting the label of minority arguing that, the term minority and majority is unjustified. Actually, it's an oppressive word designed to label others as inferior than others, hence justifying the uneven distribution of resources as the majority deserves more than the minority. FinxNdhlovu argues that Shona and Ndebele languages are the hegemonic languages which have resulted in the exclusion and marginalisation of minority languages from the mainstream domains of social life which include administration, law, media, business and education²². The Tonga challenged this identity hegemony, that was becoming clear in post 2000 era which was characterised by desperation from these two hegemonic languages as control for economic and socio-political arena in Zimbabwe favoured the majority. In this context national desperation to create a single identity or attempt to assimilate the minority groups for

political influence in Zimbabwe was taking its toll. Actually, the Ndebele wanted influence in the national affairs as they complained that, the Shona from Harare marginalised them. In this attempt, a single Matabeleland identity was the only counter strategy²⁴

The rejection and amendments to constitution was one of the major Tonga desire. Notwithstanding of the government efforts in altering the constitution implementation remained a challenge. The new Constitution of Zimbabwe gives all the former minority languages of Zimbabwe formal status²⁵. After the adaption of the constitution, the Tonga have pushed for the practical steps in implementing the constitution through opening of radio stations, education and public administration. The Tonga and the other former minority languages after being afforded official language status Basiwizi have been pushing for them to be accorded the economic and instrumental value normally associated with official languages. Therefore Basiwizi and other Tonga activists has been pushing for the match between language policies and practice²⁶. The Tonga have been accusing the government of being reluctant to promote Tonga which has been attributed to African governments' lack of commitment to multilingualism which they view as posing difficulties in the construction of national identities for Africa²⁷. These attempts by the Tonga for the language inclusion resulted to the inclusion of Tonga language with National FM including the Tonga in their broadcasting programs in promoting Tonga language.

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CHAPTER 3

THE GRAND NARRATIVE POLITICS OF MARGINALISATION OF MATABELELAND IN ZIMBABWE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Introduction

This section will unveil and explore how the grand narrative politics of marginalization in Zimbabwe at the start of 21st century of Zimbabwe and the propagation of ‘patriotic history’ and popularization of collective identity changed the Tonga’s struggle for their identity. The chapter will expatriate the view that the Tonga were viewed as unpatriotic due to their long and self-sustaining struggle for national identity. The BaTonga also laid down qualifications for one to qualify as a Tonga including excluding whom they believed were not Tonga’s, as they did not have history with Zambezi valley. Those in areas such as Lusulu, Lubimbi resisted to be identified with the Tonga arguing that their kids will not learn Tonga language instead will learn Ndebele in schools.

4.1.1 The majority versus minority in Zimbabwe: The case of Shona-Ndebele-Tonga relations in the 21st Century in Zimbabwe.

This section is deployed to review the relations or inter-ethnic relations between the three groups in Zimbabwe. This will review in the context of socio-economic political relations. How this relation reflects itself in context of resource distribution, language, Media, political influence and social mobility. Traditionally, the vitality of groups is influenced by three factors namely status, demography and institutional support. In this context status encompass economic, socio-political and historical status. This means the group with high economic status has chances of acting as a collective entity thereby creating a single identity¹. The status of group language has impact on vitality, demography is on the numerical where Shona is the mother language of 80%, and Ndebele comprise of 14% and Tonga 6%. Therefore this has created a hierarchical ethno class relations where the Shona stands majority when compared to the Ndebele, while the stands as minority when compared to the Shona while the Tonga are believed to be minority when

compared to the two². Therefore the plot will unveil the complex intergroup relations in terms of resource distribution and socio-economic strata of the nations.

In a bid to counter Shona dominance the Ndebele has forged an imagined identity which conflated and homogenized identities such as Kalanga, Nyubi, Venda, Tonga, Tswana, Sotho, Birwa and Birwa³. On the other hand due to their economic and political influence the Shona also identified them as a single entity where the Karanga, Zezuru, Korekore, Manyika, ndau and shangwe forms an ethnic subtle alliance to give birth to Shona identity. This attempt of creating a homogenous identity has created serious crises to Zimbabwe at the turn of 21st century as it battles to create a collective identity. The relations between the Tonga, the Shona and the Ndebele has been dynamic and fluid since 2000 which creates serious crises on giving birth to Tonga identity. This case has been pushed by both national, regional and ethnic based identity. At the turn of 2000 the state has been pushing for a collective identity through patriotic history where national symbols, institutions and having a single history where AmbuyaNehanda, SekuruKaguvi, Great Zimbabwe and Mutapa state have been pronounced as foundations of the modern Zimbabwe. This has serious consequences on the struggle for national identity among different groups in Zimbabwe. This approach risked relegation of respective heroes of nationals like Malila, Nyaminyami the spirit mediums of the Tonga and Ndebele spirit mediums. The reality is that, the experiences of the people known as Zimbabweans do not sustain patriotic history. It was actually born out of different historical, cultural and complex political dimensions whose collective lives cannot be sustained in a single narrative⁵.

The Zimbabwean context identity dynamics has given birth to complex and multiple identity. At the national level the Tonga carries an Ndebele identity as they share grievances of marginalization, uneven resource distribution, political exclusion and socio-economic competition with Shona in Matabeleland. The Tonga celebrates like footballers Peter Ndlovu, Adam Ndlovu and Madinda Ndlovu has been identified as successful Ndebeleanationals⁶. Peter Ndlovu even went on to attain Ndebele titles such as 'nsukuzonke', even politicians like Jacob Mudenda the speaker of parliament, Joel Guabuza and Dubeko Prince Sibanda when articulating regional issues are identified with the Ndebele identity. As if the above is not enough, the Tonga has also

been identified with Ndebele identity in football circles where they take Highlanders as their club thereby creating a complex identity⁷. This case of one person having multiple identities and processing hierarchy of identities where at national level is viewed as an Ndebele, but in Matabeleland while in Binga is viewed as a Tonga. This creates a situation where identities end up contradicting each other⁸.

This has been also reflecting itself in political affairs where both parties in Zimbabwe MDC T and ZANU PF where the Ndebele and Tonga has been collaborating and celebrating on appointment of fellows on key posts. This solidarity has revolved around key developmental issues and complains over of western regions legging behind in both economy and politics by dominant Shona groups⁹. Tonga and Ndebele have been also been vocal on the distribution of resources such remits in Victoria Falls, Wildlife like Hwange National park and Binga water springs where there is feeling that, the Shona in Harare has been benefiting at the expense of the locals. Instead, the Ndebele has abandoned the particular identity of Ndebele to adapt an inclusive one which is Mthwakazi which includes the Tonga and other minority groups in Matabeleland. An interview with Phathisa Nyathi revealed that,

The Matabeleland question of marginalization and common problem of exclusion and dominance of the Shona groups creates a complex Matabeleland question. The reason why I call all groups in Matabeleland as Mthwakazi, it's because of common experiences and historical bond. The Tonga who were settled along Zambezi valley, the reason why they supported ZAPU PF it's because they are Ndebele. The foundation which was laid by Mzilikazi creates a common identity¹⁰.

Indeed there is general feeling that both provinces of Matabeleland are marginalized which has given birth to formation of secession groups calling for a federal state in the provinces to retain greater political and economic autonomy¹¹. The two groups has been formed, the Mthwakazi organizations Mthwakazi Action group and Mthwakazi liberation front. These groups had been vocal of latest continuous marginalization of Matabeleland region, playing of subtle positions in political affairs of the country, language exclusion and influence of the Shona majority in all facets of the country¹². The argument was that, the solution for the secession of Matabeleland regions from Zimbabwe. These common experiences creates a complex identity to the Tonga who view themselves as an autonomous group with own identity. The issue of economic

development and marginalization of Binga has been receiving backing from Ndebele intellectuals and politicians'. For instance; Rejoice Ngwenya and Phathisa Nyathi have attempted to deconstruct the difference between the Tonga and the Ndebele calling them the Mthwakazi. Phathisa Nyathi even connected the disappearance of king Lobengula and the baTonga of Zambezi valley¹³. This attempt has been designed to create a collective identity when lobbying for natural resources and political influence.

The Tonga has been projecting themselves as Ndebele at national platforms while collectively raising concern over marginalization of their language on national platforms such as television news bulletins and parliament. This collective projection has given birth to success of Ndebele identity. The marginalization of minority groups languages in education and other national policies particularly becomes a sore point of mobilization on these groups has occurred. On many occasions Matabeleland leaders have complained against what they perceive as Shona dominance while the Tonga nationals also have complained over what they view as Ndebele dominance. The Ndebele in Bulawayo has been complaining that the Shona has been occupying most jobs such as education, health, banks and other government offices while the Tonga in Binga district have been complaining of the dominance of the Ndebele in Matabeleland. The argument is that, not all groups in Matabeleland are Ndebele. In 2012 parents and traditional leaders banned Ndebele in schools in Binga. Ndebele intellectuals argued that the approach of the Tonga was as a result of outside forces planting division among Mthwakazi groups. This creates difficulties in identity formation of the Tonga¹⁴.

The government policies such as ZWP also reflected the complex relations between three ethnic groups. The Ndebele have been accusing the Shona of stalling the Zambezi Water project which is a sign of marginalization. The Tonga on the other hand accused the Ndebele and government for marginalizing them. The government actually chose to appease Ndebele politicians at the expense of the Tonga. This has resulted in the Tonga intellectual Dominic Muntanga to argue that,

It was unjust for the government to provide electricity generated in our background at the Kariba hydro plant to other people while we live in darkness by the dam....we are also worried about how the Ndebele will have water and a green belt along the Matabeleland –Zambezi Water Project whereas here there is not even a single vegetable garden thriving from the Zambezi waters after all the anguish of relocation process....¹⁵

This context brings complex relations between the Shona, the Ndebele and the Tonga. The Ndebele who are minority to Shona complain of Shona dominance and deliberate marginalization in socio-political and economic deliberations of the state. Therefore, this brings multiple identities to the Tonga as at national level they are viewed as the Ndebele. At provincial level, the Tonga complain of Ndebele marginalization and dominance in education vacancies where parents complain of the Ndebele occupying their vacancies while imposing Ndebele ahead of chi Tonga in schools. Some Shona such as chief Charumbira sympathized with Tonga on the recognition of their language arguing that, failure to recognize their language was tantamount to genocide. The grand Matabeleland question and marginalization gives birth to difficulties in identity formation among the BaTonga. The question of marginalization overshadows the struggle for national identity among the Tonga.

4.1.2 Complex of political dimensions of the Ndebele particularism versus Tonga identity autonomous struggle in Matabeleland.



Map of *Mthwakazi state*. The Tonga are included as part of Mthwakazi state.

‘the history of Matabeleland is one of a restless frontiers where identities such of ethnicity and nationality shifted and got different meanings in different context, it is not simple a Ndebele history but a complicated history of many ethnic groups that have never attracted the scholarly attention of research who simply work under the illusions that Matabeleland is Ndebele-land’¹⁶

As eluded above, the identity of Matabeleland is one of the classical examples of identity crises which failed to find a proper definition in a troubled post-colonial nation state making project. The post-colonial government alike has simplified the definition where anyone residing in Matabeleland or Mashonaland has been identified as either Shona or Ndebele, thereby failing to acknowledge the different historical dimensions which gave birth to these ethnic groups. The fact the Tonga stands as a distinct group born out of Zambezi Valley displacement, the Nambyas alike not forgetting the Nyubi's in Matopos, Kalangas and Venda's in Beitbridge. These complex historical realities has been ignored in the post-colonial nation state project. What has been clear from the turn of the century is a frontier characterised by complex identity formation.

The Matabeleland identity is built on complex and diverse identities with different cultures unlike the successful Shona sub ethnic alliance. The Shona have built a successful modern identity which have proved to be bonded despite tiny fault lines political identity manifestations unlike the Ndebele or Mthwakazi identity which has shown multiple fault lines where different ethnic identities are demanding autonomous identity as they identify themselves as different from the mother group¹⁷. The nambya in northwest Zimbabwe, the Tonga on the north and borderlands with Zambia, the Venda in the South, the Chewa and kalanga all threatening autonomous identity through recognition of their respective language in education, media, law, economic ,culture and political inclusion in the Zimbabwe nation state project. For

Our part, for our present generation, this Zimbabwe, and any attempts to maintain it in any guise in future as a state that includes uMthwakazi, is as false as it is silly. It is only part of the grand illusion of the whole Zimbabwe project created in 1980... What we have is their Zimbabwe, of Shona, and a fledging state for uMthwakazi which we have called UMR¹⁸.

The challenges of national state building in Zimbabwe has been exposed at the turn of 21st century as result of economic meltdown ,political crises and long history of marginalisation of Matabeleland and Midlands regions. This has given birth to Ndebele particularism, as these problems are blamed not to governance issues but to sabotage, marginalisation and general exclusion of the Ndebele in Zimbabwe nation state. Sabelo Gatsheni noted that, Ndebele particularism refers to redention of separate Ndebele history, which differs from the Shona experiences, the attempts to revive Ndebele kinship and the continual formation of Ndebele particularistic organisations such as Mthwakazi Liberation Front¹⁹ .This general feeling has conceived the idea of call for the birth of the United Mthwakazi Republic by the radical Mthwakazi groups and politicians in Matabeleland²⁰. This is premised on the emphases of the Ndebele identity.

At the turn of 2000, the complex of Matabeleland politics was incentivised by the emergence of particularistic groups such as Vukani Mahlabezulu, Imbovane Yamahlabezulu, ZAPU 2000, as well as Mthwakazi Action Group on Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in Matabeleland and Midlands and Mthwakazi People's Congress MPC. These groups became vocal on the restoration of the Independent Matabeleland known as the United Mthwakazi Republic. Chief among the grievances was the exclusion of the Ndebele in the Zimbabwean state, marginalisation, and continuous violation of their rights, oppression and siphoning of their resources by the dominant Shona groups²¹. These groups were premised on the virtue that Matabeleland was a single nation with a single identity. This was born out of the view that, the basic feature of Ndebele identity: was that it was built on multiple origins that were ordered in a hierarchy of belonging. A Ndebele may be a Nguni, Sotho, Tswana, Khalanga, Venda, Tonga or Shona origin. This historical illusion has given birth to the historical imagination that any tribe residing in Matabeleland is a Ndebele²². This has posed a challenge to the Ndebele particularism and identity formation in Matabeleland in general.

One of the main celebrated facts was the virtue that, the Ndebele existed as single entity before colonialism with its glory having been destroyed by the disappearance of their king in 1893, they had a separate history with a distinct culture while colonial and post-colonial state continued to propagate the exclusion of Ndebele into the Zimbabwean state project. In 2000 the Tonga also formed basilwizi trust, the 'people of Great River' which called for the inclusion of the Tonga into the Zimbabwean nation project. This was a contradiction to the formation of the Mthwakazi state. Buligwamanu in an interview argued that, the Tonga bases their history on their life along Zambezi valley, displacement of 1950s and how they were treated by the post-colonial regime which failed to recognise the Tonga language and culture²³. The formation of basilwizi Trust posed a challenge to Ndebele particularism thereby brings a challenge to the formation of Matabeleland identity.

After 2000 the Tonga had now narrowed their demands which included the inclusion of their language, culture and political inclusion which resulted to the formation Tonga particularistic which became active on internet one of them was Tonga online. This group was active on internet and enlisted the services of Tonga intellectuals like Dominic Muntanga who were now voicing about the injustices they suffered during the

uncompensated displacements of 1950s and disapproved the 1990s government projects such as Zambezi Water Project to Bulawayo. Among their grievances was the loss of their identity through assimilation of their language, culture and economic marginalisation²⁴. The project was also aimed at connecting the Tonga with their relatives abroad in Zambia. The Tonga were now viewing themselves as an independent entity, they became vocal on the issue of language, political representation and benefit from their resources such as wildlife, fisheries and compensation from the displacement. As if the above is not enough, the Tonga also pushed for the founding of the baTonga Museum to document the history of the Tonga and displacement this was augmented on protection of Tonga culture and identity. This was followed by formation of clubs in schools; one of them was the *Chipego* theatre production at Manjolo secondary school in 2004. The club played Tonga traditional dances like *chilimba* while it was popular during public ceremonies or when welcoming dignitaries²⁵.

On a broad spectrum, the Tonga was becoming particularistic about their identity. Even successful Tonga business people, politicians, intellectuals and activists were becoming proud of their Tonga identity hence were now renouncing and reverting to their previous Tonga identity. In 2005 a Tonga business man Dr Nkululeko Sibanda based in Harare based in Harare launched an ambitious project which was doubled ‘*Kujatana Nkubotu*’ half marathon .This programme was to be held every year, every September at Binga centre. It was held under the auspices of the sponsorship of *Twalumba Holdings*. During the events successful Tonga personnel like Peter Ndlovu were invited to inspire the Tonga budding sports individuals²⁶. This was a clear promotion of the Tonga identity as it was also a demythologizing the widely held view that Peter Ndlovu or Ndlovu brothers were Ndebele. Not only did such events proclaim Tonga identity. The history of the Tonga and their displacement was actually proclaimed with accompanying Tonga identity where traditional leaders converged

baTonga and encouraged the Tonga to fight for their space in the Zimbabwe nation state project²⁷You would confuse weather it was a memorial services for the ancestors whose graves were submerged along Zambezi valley. The event included Tonga cultural dances such as Buntibe, school kids could be inciting poems which were both a funeral dirge while celebrated the durability of Tonga culture and identity which failed to die despite several negative forces. In 2011 the situation was worsened by the inclusion of traditional leaders who proclaimed the history of the

As if the above is not enough, the Tonga had a general feeling that, they were suppressed by both the Ndebele and the Shona. Hence, their contacts were rekindled in 2008 when there was economic crises and political crises which was accompanied by drought. The identity of the Tonga differed with that of the Ndebele, that they were closely connected with Zambians while the Ndebele were attached to the South Africans. The Tonga instead went to Zambia for green pastures in Zambia, while the Ndebele went to countries like South Africa where they had close connections. They would receive hospital reception there even without asking for documents like passport. Actually the 2007 economic crises made the Tonga to be aware of their identity which they felt was different from the rest of Zimbabwe. Mathias Muzamba argued that, his relatives are in Zambia. Despite the government stringent conditions there is still ongoing visits with his relatives in Zambia.

In 2007 and 2009 when there were economic crises I envied my relatives who were peacefully staying in Zambia. Contrary to what had been said in Zimbabwean media that we lost contacts with our relatives in Zambia as result of the 1950s displacement. We are still connected, when there is a funeral, to avert conflict and settling of family issues such as inheritance I would go without a passport. In actual sense the border of Zambia stretches as far as Lupane. Lupane is a Tonga place. Even the names of the places are Tonga but because of grand narrative politics of Zimbabwe and lack of influence we are losing everything which is ours.....²⁸

Politically, when Mr Joel Guabubuza in 2009 was chosen to head a Ministry in the inclusive government under MDC T, there was excitement in Binga praising Morgan Tsvangirai as an inclusive leader who catered for the Tonga needs²⁹. Mr Joel Guabubuza even attained senior position within a party to appease the Tonga nationals, he was the deputy spokesperson of MDC T. This was contrary to ZANU PF which failed to uplift the Tonga among its ranks. Chief Sikalenge submitted that, since 1980 ZANU PF have never appointed a Tonga minister, the only step closer to that was appointment of Jacob Mudenda in 2013 as a speaker of parliament while being a governor in 1980s cannot be counted because he was still part of the Ndebele. He was Dube then he changed to Mudenda³⁰. This has provoked arguments that ZANU PF probably believes that the Tongas are Ndebele or it's a deliberate move to bolster a single Ndebele identity. Even the Ndebele public service workers in Binga and Matabeleland continued to counter strategies of autonomous identity. The provincial education officer Mrs Bulelo Mguni refused to endorse the phrasing

out of Ndebele in Binga while constant efforts has been employed to derail the efforts by the Tonga to attain an autonomous identity³¹.

Another issue which exposed the general feeling about the Tonga identity was through the constitution making process in 2013 when they threatened to withdraw their kids from schools when the constitution fails to include their language as an official language. There was unanimous agreement between MDC and ZANU PF Binga politicians that Tonga should be recognized as an official language in Zimbabwe and should be examined in schools. Villagers in Binga threatened to withdraw their children from school if the proposed constitution does not recognize and enforce the teaching of minority languages in schools.

We will not accept any document which fails to recognize that the Tonga are not the Ndebele. While the Ndebele are not the Tongas. Our history is so different it's more like mixing water and oil. Our identity is directly linked to Zambezi valley, displacement and currently by this public neglect where we are not considered by this government. Surprisingly the Ndebele had been crying foul over failure by the government to complete the Zambezi Water Project .It was an unacceptable self-fantasizing project.Malila, Nyaminyami and our ancestors rejected it, thus why it failed to be completed...³²

The Tonga have attributed the failure of the Zambezi Water project as a response by the ancestors to Tonga marginalization .They also argued that, their language risked extinction if the government fails to honor their language. Basilwizi actually launched the advocacy and collaborated with traditional leaders to push for the inclusion of the Tonga as an official language in the new constitution. Tonga ZANU PF Binga politicians like Cephas Siangoma-Mudenda, Joshua Muzamba and Sianzoka backed the inclusion of Tonga and other minority language for political mileage³². On the other hand surprisingly the Ndebele politicians also supported the Tonga arguing that, it was part of the 1979 grand plan by the Shona to derail the multicultural Mthwakazi State

4.1.3 The difficulties of creating Tonga identity and politics of internal dynamics of national identity among the Tonga: The label of 'ousiders'and difficulties of identity formation.

This section is dedicated in reviewing the identity of the Tonga based on the history with Zambezi valley and subsequent resettlement by the colonial settlers in 1950s. In that sense, it deconstructs the view that everyone residing in Binga is a Tonga. It further show how those without history with Zambezi valley were

labelled as outsiders where derogatory names are used as *'manyamasaka'*, *'mazwakule'*. Most of those labelled as outsiders are settled in Southern part of Bingain Lusulu as some of them are migrants from Tsholotsho, Lupane, Kezi, Gokwe in search of Agricultural land while others migrated during 1982-87 disturbances of Gukuruundi a civil war which engulfed Zimbabwe after independence by the government of ZANU PF against the minority Ndebele group against the Shona³⁴. Hence, some of them claimed chieftainship to create their own chiefs and headmen which was resisted by the locals. The teaching of Tonga language also received resistance in areas around Lusulu as Ndebele emigrants connived with headmasters of Ndebele origin for the schools not to teach in Tonga, instead both languages Tonga and Ndebele at the same time while some schools completely resisted to be identified with Tonga, hence Tonga language was not taught completely. All these posed a threat in reconstruction of Tonga identity formation.

The history of displacement has remained a foundational event defining Tonga public identity in Zimbabwe, hence those without history of Zambezi valley and displacement had been struggling to fortify their identity. The migrants who settled in areas such as Lusulu, Lubimbi and far end Siabuwa have been labelled as outsiders or *'mazwakule'* which means the foreigners. This created identity crisis, even places like Chipale in Lusulu had been refused to be identified with the Tonga. The headmaster of Chipale primary Mumpande even changed his surname to Sibanda.....

It's very difficult here, unlike in northern part of Binga. Parents here hates Tonga temporal teachers. If you are not an Ndebele they would cook allegations and forward to the District administrator who will expel you or fail to renew your contract. To worsen the matter is the fact that Masungu, the District education officer would not investigate anything. He buys anything which comes on his way. Even among teachers, Mr Dube F and Nsingo E the deputy Head and the TIC would be very strict to the 'outsiders' those from the northern part of Binga. We would only be served by Mr S Nyoni a Tonga who would reverse some of the unfair decisions imposed on us.³⁵

In 2012 a dozen of temporal teachers at Chipale Primary and Chipale Secondary school failed to secure their contracts on allegations that they were dating community girls, students at a nearby Secondary school- Chipale Secondary School the annex of Lusulu High. This in reality was a reflection of internal contradictions of identity formation among the baTonga. The majority of affected teachers were Tongas and Shonas from Gokwe. Markson Siachisamu one of the affected teacher argues that, parents in areas of Lusulu

are discriminatory, they have a negative attitude towards Tonga teachers and Tonga parents also have an attitude towards Ndebele and Shona teachers. They are accused to be contributing to the failure of their kids.

They would basically encourage their kids to disobey teachers and refuse to be taught by a Tonga. Some of the Ndebele headmen would publicly blast teachers during the School development Committee meeting especially those from the other tribe. Even during time of crises like Second term when water dries up, people would be seen bringing water to teachers of their tribe. Tonga parents would also show gratitude to the Tonga teachers. They would say maybe our kids would pass³⁶.

This situation was exacerbated by the official recognition of Tonga language at grade 7 where it was to be officially examined in 2011. The fault lines were exposed that the internal contradictions were visible. Parents who had Ndebele and Shona backgrounds were arguing that their kids could not learn Tonga, instead there should be options or they learn five subjects at grade 7. Mudimba Frank in an interview argued that, Binga belongs to the Tonga though areas like Lusulu teaching of Tonga in schools has been facing resistance from parents who believed that, they were of Ndebele origins³⁷. They connived with Ndebele headmasters to deny students their constitutional right to learn in their language. In 2012 schools such as Musazi Primary schools, Lusulu Primary School and Chipale Primary school parents refused to cooperate to the directive of teaching Tonga language on the grounds that their children were not Tongas.

As if the above is not enough, frictions over chieftainship in Lusulu exposed deep-seated internal contradictions of identity formation in Binga district. Migrants in Southern part of Binga have claimed chieftainship. These Ndebele have been refusing to be subjected under Tonga chiefs. In 2000, 2005 and 2011 attempts were made in Chief Sinamagonde-Lusulu southern part of Binga district where they wanted to install Jubane Masambane a migrant from Kezi as a chief. This was blocked by the then DA of Binga district Cephass Mutale who called for a meeting to discuss the issue³⁸. On the 25 July 2006 the chiefs in Binga resolved that, no one without history with Zambezi is granted the authority to establish chieftainship in Binga district. The Sambane chieftainship wrangle shows how internal dimension of Tonga identity are complex. This provoked conflict with Tonga leaders to raise the matter with court, even though an Ndebele District Administrator endorsed the chieftainship, it was dismissed by the courts and the proponents were arrested and charged under chief act³⁹. After realising they continued to project themselves as chiefs, they have even won the title of being chief they call him Nduna in Lusulu. All this complicates identity formation in

Binga as the Tonga efforts of creating a Tonga public identity faces internal contradiction. The original inhabitants of the area predominantly those who faced land shortage for farming in Kariangwe. They migrated to Lusulu where they settled in Chizarira National park in areas such as Champongo, Gwatagwata, Musazi and Chitongo. Group conflicts also erupted among these different groups as the outsiders were corruptly acquiring land from Chief Sinamagonde through bribery and corruption. They would bribe him and attain land thereby creating conflicts among the groups. These new migrants settled in Chizarira national parks where they could establish their headmen and still subjected to their chief Siansali in Kariangwe⁴⁰. This internal dynamics and political equations complicates Tonga identity.

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CHAPTER 4

SUCSESSES OF THE BATONGA OF ZAMBEZI VALLEY IN CLAIMING THEIR NATIONAL IDENTITY

The chapter will avail the successes scored by the baTonga in claiming their identity in the Zimbabwe state. These achievements will be classified into three blocs: language and culture recognition, political acceptance in the main stream politics of Zimbabwe in the 21st Century and economic aspect as confirmed by them being classified as a separate entity. To that sense the chapter will explore, the inclusion of the Tonga language in the main stream narratives such media, constitution and in education where Tonga language along with other minority languages has been examined, the Tonga culture which has been featuring at HITF in recent years, radio .It will further expose the Tonga have of latest occupied influential posts in the respective political parties in Zimbabwe such as MDC T, MDC and ZANU PF not to mention the government. Therefore, the chapter will be highlighted in the three sub themes.

5.1.1 The end to Tonga language exclusion and Recognition of Tonga language and culture in Zimbabwe

The Tonga language and culture forms the bases of their ethnic identity. The formation of the subsequent organisations such as Basilwizi, Silveria and efforts by the organisations such CCJP and Kunzwana pushed for official recognition of Tonga in the mainstream narratives of Zimbabwe were pushing for recognition of Tonga language in education, media and mainstream Zimbabwe narratives .The Tonga language was unrecognised in Zimbabwe during the time of colonial rule while the Lancaster house constitution also recognised two African official languages Ndebele and Shona alongside English. Therefore, these two languages were the only ones examined in schools from colonial period to post independent Zimbabwe¹. Kids who lived in these ethicised provinces of Matabeleland, Mashonaland, Manicaland and Masvingo were forced to abandon their languages and learn isiNdebele in Matabeleland regions while those in Mashonaland were forced to adapt Shona. The chi Tonga language was surpassed by IsiNdebele in Binga where kids were compelled to learn in isiNdebele even the national anthem was sang in isiNdebele during national gatherings, schools and other places .The baTonga took advantage of the constitutional debates which

stemmed in late 1990s through civic organisations such as NCA, CCJP and the MDC immediately after formation challenged the old constitution and pledged to institute new reforms which recognised all languages as equal. This pledge for reforms was used as source for electoral mobilisation in Binga by MDC in both parliamentary and presidential elections held in 2000 and 2002 respectively where MDC won against ZANU PF due to language and exclusion. McGregor posited that MDC did not mobilise from scratch instead occupied the vacuum created by both colonial regimes and post-colonial regimes in neglecting Tonga language and culture². MDC's message was based on the view that, All the sixteen languages in Zimbabwe should be accorded equal status. As a follow up the debate for recognition of Tonga took centre stage, Tonga activists began to translate the national anthem into Tonga where schools in Binga District were compelled to use Tonga as a national anthem.

Joel Guabuza the first MDC national member of Binga became vocal on the issue of Tonga and culture. During the parliamentary debates in early 2000 Joel Guabuza voiced his disapproval of the neglect of Tonga language. To advance that, he even became critical to the employment of teachers in Binga schools³. Even ZANU PF officials working at Gender and ministry of youth in Binga became critical. Among them Vwelenga, CephasSiangoma, Sianzoka and Mugande took advantage of the political environment where they threatened Ndebele and Shona teachers in schools to win elections and campaign for the locals. For instance in 2002 teachers at Lubu secondary were threatened by Vwelenga and the group to win elections from the locals. The Tonga educationist Duncan Sinampande who qualified as a teacher in 1974 became the District education officer for Binga in 2002, he used his influence to recruit Tonga teachers in Binga schools. These teachers were patriotic and were fresh from secondary schools. They began teaching in Tonga from grade 1 to grade 6 using books sponsored by Save the Children. Children were now learning two languages Tonga and Ndebele where Tonga was dropped towards writing last grade 7 paper. Mailos Mugande the Teacher at Manjolo primary school, Pinos Buligwamanu, Isaac Mupandea University of Zimbabwe graduate and Bernard Manyena began to write Tonga books which were printed by Save the Children and the government of Zimbabwe⁴. This did not only give a voice to the Tonga language, it also helped children to appreciate their language ahead of Ndebele and Shona which were recognised.

The government of Zimbabwe began to loosen its policy on the minority languages and culture which forms their national identity. In 2006 Education Act of 1987, amended 2006 Part XII, 62:2 gave powers to the Minister to recommend the teaching of Tonga if he so wishes⁵. This was as result of pressure from Non-Government such as Basilwizi, Save the Children, NCA and the MDC Members of parliament who became vocal on minority rights such as language. Minister AeniusSokoChigwedere was the minister of Education, sports, Arts and Culture. When he visited Manjolo in August 2006 during the Ever sharp 15M celebration at Manjolo Secondary School challenged local leaders, Headmasters and parents to stimulate efforts in fast tracking the teaching of Tonga in schools especially in Binga where the majority of occupants are the Tonga. This support from the Minister resulted to positive developments in recognition of Tonga language and culture⁶. In 2007 the Batonga Museum opened clubs in schools which were destined to show case the Tonga culture, language, history and collect Tonga cultural materials. This approach allowed students to understand their identity that they had a distinct culture which differed from Ndebele and Shona the cultures which were taught in schools ahead of their mother language.

The push for constitutional amendments and changes through the parliament which started from 1999 continued through pressure by MDC parliamentarians from .Binga the rural area in Zimbabwe which consistently voted for opposition since 2000 pushed for language recognition. This cause received support from both ZANU PF and MDC MPs who were sympathetic to the Tonga cause. On the other hand Basilwizi also became vocal on Tonga language recognition with support from Basilwizi, traditional leaders and NCA which was pushing for a new constitution which recognised all languages in Zimbabwe. This struggle for language inclusion also included the formation of organisations AAI Zimbabwe partner in the Zambezi Valley, Basilwizi Trust, in conjunction with the TOLACCO, traditional chiefs, councils and Save the Children UK purchased Tonga text books, Rural District Councils and DA officers have since 2008 been working together in lobbying the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture to have the language officially recognized. Basilwizi has since 2008 supported TOLACCO with advocacy training⁷. A total of 211 men and 205 women have benefitted from Basilwizi advocacy trainings in Binga and *Nyaminyami*. TOLACCO has facilitated the formation of a task force comprising traditional chiefs, local and district councils, school

development committees, fishing cooperatives to have one on one meetings with Ministry at local, district, provincial and national levels⁸

The perspective of the media on Tonga public identity was slowly changing as the Tonga online in collaboration with Basilwizi and Batonga Museum promoted the process of demythologizing Tonga public identity⁹. In media circles in pre-colonial and post-colonial times the stereotypes of the baTonga narratives did not change. They depicted as backward, two toed, *Mbanje* smokers who whose awkward behaviour is uncontrollable and still dark in terms of modern world. These organisations challenged such myths. Basilwizi Trust began to promote Tonga identity in schools and communities¹⁰. The *Ndombonda* –the Tonga smoking pipe, *chilimb* dances and Buntibe was exhibited at the Gallery of Zimbabwe. The chronicle newspaper began to present the Tonga as a strong group with durable identity. This perception of the Tonga identity began to slowly change. Tonga intellectuals like Dominic Muntanga and the DA of Binga Cephas Mutale began to be critical on the government policies which deprived the Tonga of their language and culture.

As if the above is not enough, in 2008 the chief senate Chief Sikalenge told villagers at Sikalenge growth point that, slowly the government considering the most need of the Tonga which is language. This was confirmed by the cultural festival which brought different *buntibe* groups from different places.¹¹ These buntibe groups invited Zambian Buntibe groups. The DA of Binga District Cephas Mutale, government officials from Bulawayo also were in attendance. Chief Sikalenge argued that, it was more like the revival and official inauguration of the Tonga's cultural identity which faced different threats for the past years. Buligwamanu submitted that,

Almost five buntibe groups from Zambia converged at Chief Sikalenge, this was a clear confirmation that Tonga identity, language and culture was being retrieved. The campaigns which have been on going in Binga by Baislwizi, Silveira house, ZILPA and traditional leaders about revival of Tonga festivals where they played Buntibe drums and *nsimpukuto* was played. The life along the river was presented as a perfect life of an egalitarian society. Women were dressed in traditional clothes with their *ndombonda-nchelwa* in their hands. What has been clear of latest is that despite external onslaught on Tonga traditional practices, it is clear that these has been practiced in Binga.¹²

Coupled with different efforts employed by the baTonga, the government under the leadership of ZANU PF was slowly giving in to the demands of the Batonga to their language to be recognised in education. Curiously, there was unanimous agreement though pulling on different angles between ZANU PF and MDC officials in Binga .In 2005 during the parliamentary elections the MDC parliamentary candidate Joel Guabuza his manifesto hinged on the push of language recognition in schools while ZANU PF candidate used the same campaigning model¹³. His sidekicks like Adam Mudenda, Vwelenga and CephasSiangoma Mudenda pushed for the employment of the Tonga teachers in Binga. Though Tonga language was being used as a tool for mobilisation .Most teachers were Tongas which boosted the pass rate in schools chief among the schools was Kariangwe High School, Binga High School, Manjolo Secondary School, Lusulu High school and Siabuwa High school. These schools were now producing energetic and patriotic products. After doing their 'A' Level while others went as far as Universities in different parts of Zimbabwe came back and uplifted the vision of Binga. Even when abroad they continued with their support to their former schools.

After years of advocacy by Basilwizi, ZILPA, TOLACO and traditional leaders in Binga District, Tonga language was officially examined at Grade 7¹⁵.This was after years of struggle for recognition of Tonga language. The Lancaster house constitution which ushered an independent Zimbabwe only recognized Ndebele and Shona as official languages alongside English. Pupils in Binga District like other former minority groups were either forced to write Shona or Ndebele in schools.Chief Sinakoma argued that teaching of Tonga language in Binga helped restore their cultural rights, pride and dignity as equal citizens in Zimbabwe¹⁶. The struggle for inclusion was taking shape. This effort was supplemented with purchasing of thousands of books from Zambia by basilwizitrust. The official examinations of Tonga language At least 77% of pupils from 130 primary schools in Binga were tested for "Chi Tonga" in 2011. A total of 20969 male and 20230 female pupils from Grade 1 to 7 primary schools in Binga were taking "Chi Tonga" lessons in 2011¹⁷. A considerable number of girls have benefitted although there are more boys due to school enrolment status in the area. This boosted the pass rate which stood at 74% at Kariangwe and Binga Primary school

Teaching of Tonga language and getting it examined at Grade 7 is like a dream come true for us the Tonga people after a long struggle that dates back to 1976 when the effort to get Tonga language taught in school began. Every Tonga person is happy about this achievement¹⁸

Tonga language was also recognised through the COPAC constitution, it was no longer an alien language. The Tonga viewed this recognition of their language fruits out of years of advocacy and struggle for their inclusion. The recognition of Tonga through the new constitution did not only restore their national identity which was under threat and risked extinction but it also retrieved their culture which was distorted through fusion and attempt of assimilation. Tonga along other minority groups was now official language in Zimbabwe which was the first step towards reclaiming their national identity. The Section 6 (1) of the COPAC Constitution also recognised Tonga and other minority groups. Formerly minority languages, namely Chewa, Chibarwe, English, Kalanga, Koisan, Nambya, Ndau, Ndebele, Shangani, Shona, sign language, Sotho, Tonga, Tswana, Venda and Xhosa, are the officially recognised languages of Zimbabwe¹⁹. National FM the radio station which started operating in 2011 promoted these languages where their language and culture were being advanced; hence their respective identities were becoming visible.

5.1.2 The Tonga gains an economic voice and the control of their resources in Binga

Not only did the Tonga people of Zambezi valley pushed for the recognition of their language in the mainstream narratives of Zimbabwe. In the front, their efforts was now being rewarded as they clambered for the space in the economic resources in Binga such as tourism, wildlife, fisheries and farming lands in the areas such as Lusulu. Since 2000 the Tonga have been pushing for the advancement of their economic status. While the ZANU PF government achieved in the first decade of independence in uplifting the lives of the citizens through infrastructure development and social services such as schools, roads, hospitals and housing. The Tonga formed fishing cooperatives such as Twiite and Tonga cooperatives which championed for the accession of the fishing and kapenta along Zambezi valley. The traditional leaders were also awarded with fishing permits to establish Fishing ligs along Zambezi valley. Zubo and Basilwizi also championed for the Tonga projects such Bbindawuko cooperatives for women to access the resources²⁰.

Another aspect is wildlife, through CAMPFIRE which falls under Binga Rural District council the wards in Binga had been benefiting from wildlife. After displacement of 1950s, the Tonga lost access to wild animals while the colonial and post-colonial regimes employed restrictive measures to protect the wild animals. In the first 10 years of CAMPFIRE operations in Binga at least 50 primary school blocs were built. The Tonga were engaged in community projects with help traditional leaders and politicians²¹. During 2009 Annex schools were built in Simatelele of Manjolo Secondary school, Nsenga Satellite of Manjolo while in Lusulu satellite schools were build which boosted the accessibility of education and created employment to the local Tonga who were taking temporary teaching after school. The majority after temporary teaching enrolled in tertiary institutions such as UCE in Bulawayo with facilitation of Basilwizi, ZOU, MSU, UZ and others benefitted through presidential scholarship. Chief Binga during the interview argued that...

The Tonga are now learning contrary to the public view that we are un educated and poor. For the past years we have made tremendous strides in education. People here are slowly realising the significance of education here. These days you hardly pass *amunzihomestead* without a college graduate in Binga. The Tonga are no longer hiding their identity these days because it is no longer embarrassing to be a Tonga like previous days. In 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012 Binga schools have been producing quality results. Surely our identity has been retrieved.²²

5.1.3 Political Institutions among the BaTonga and how they helped retain their national identity amidst political crises of 2008-2013

In the context of Zimbabwe political crises which saw different groups in Zimbabwe voicing their concern of the politics of exclusion in Zimbabwe. The Tonga employed their unique political institutions to return their identity and inclusion in the political arena in Zimbabwe. The Tonga in Binga have been voting for the opposition MDC since 2000, 2005, 2008 and 2013 elections. The Tonga have been using the political crises in Zimbabwe to claim their identity. In March harmonised elections Binga delivered highest votes for MDC against all rural areas in Zimbabwe²². Binga chiefs have refused to be used as tools of violence instead they penned and justified their grievances against the ZANU PF regime. Actually in 27 June run off chiefs in Binga has been using their home steads to accommodate their residence. The chiefs in Binga did not agree to be used to mobilise the electorates. After the disputed June run off ZANU PF and MDC went for the GNU which resulted to the appointment of the first Tonga Minister Joel Guabubuza under MDC²³.

In a desperate attempt to win the BaTonga ,ZANU PF declared Sikajaya Muntanga as the first Tonga national hero in 2011²⁴.This approach was becoming clear that, the Tonga were now being included in the nation state project or it was included as part of Zimbabwe. In a surprising incident even Joel Guabbuza supported the move as a positive towards achievements of the Tonga identity. The old people in Binga were excited as they viewed Muntanga as a father figure who participated in the liberation struggle and ZANU PF in Binga like Vwelenga, MonicaSibanda, SamuelMugande and Joshua Muzamba argued that, ZANU was the only party which regarded the Tonga as equal citizens of Zimbabwe²⁵. It should be highlighted that, in 2013 ZANU PF after the elections also appointed Jacob Mudenda as speaker of parliament to prove that, it is an inclusive party. Therefore, it can be argued that the Tonga are slowly gained recognition in the nation state making proj

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CONCLUSION

The long history of marginalisation and subsequent exclusion of the Tonga and other minority groups in Zimbabwe by the colonial and post-colonial regimes has bequeathed identity crises. The Tonga nationals in Binga district were displaced by the colonial regime in 1950s to pave way for the construction of the World Bank sponsored project Kariba Dam for Hydroelectric power. This displacement had negative consequences among them, destruction their ancestral bondage, economic structure and political institutions. The history of displacement and how it resulted to destruction of their identity as the policies of ethnic citizenship affected the Tonga culture, language while they gained little benefits from Zambezi valley. The constitution of the colonial regime only recognised two African language-Shona and Ndebele

In chapter 1 the research traced the history of marginalisation of the Tonga after displacement. The identity of the Tonga which includes language, culture, political institutions and economic connection with Zambezi valley was evaluated. How the history of displacement provoked ethnic conscious among the Tonga. As they were now deprived of the privileges they enjoyed along Zambezi valley. Tonga surnames and Names were also being translated to other language while their Tonga language was excluded which posed danger to their identity. The chapter highlighted the history of marginalisation from colonial to post-colonial in late 1990s until the Tonga employed different methods for their inclusion in the nation state making project in the 21st Century while demanding for language inclusion, economic benefits and political stake in the country.

In the second chapter clearly demonstrated that the Tonga at the turn of the century were influenced by the liberal reforms ,constitutional debates, formation of MDC and debate of the fate of minority groups. This prompted the Tonga to form home grown organisations such as Basilwizi Trust, Silvera House which were premised at driving Tonga language, culture and economic benefits from their ancestral lands like Zambezi, tourism in Binga and wildlife. On the other hand, they also roped in political mobilisation thereby voting for the opposition, adapting of indigenous knowledge systems as strategies to protect their identity. These

strategies were aimed at promoting the inclusion of Tonga language in education, promotion of Tonga culture, educational development and political inclusion in the nation state making project.

The third chapter evaluated the grand Matabeleland politics of marginalisation and how it overshadowed Tonga's struggle for national identity. The ethnic relations became complex as the Ndebele were also complaining of marginalisation by the Shona. This gave birth to birth of Ndebele particularistic groups which were premised at promoting an Mthwakazi Independent state. This scenario has resulted to the complex Tonga identity as at national level the Tonga project themselves as the Ndebele where they address Matabeleland grievances, at regional level the Tonga also complain of Ndebele influence which includes language where Ndebele is taught in schools ahead of Tonga, economic influence in education, offices and economic resources such as wildlife, tourism and fishing ligs which are dominated by the two major ethnic groups. Tonga identity also suffers from internal contradiction where migrants in Binga refuse to be identified with the Tonga. Therefore, this section was evaluating the problems faced by the Tonga in their struggle for inclusion and national identity

The research in chapter 4 demonstrated how the Tongas in Binga district succeeded in their activism for their identity. In recent years Tonga myths of backwardness and uncivilisation is evaporating. Advocacy of Basilwizi, ZILPA, TOLACCO and politicians from Binga resulted to recognition of Tonga language, Tonga co-operatives aimed at Matemba ligs while the education in Binga have been of latest improving with pass rate rising in schools. Joel Guabbuza was appointed as a minister during the inclusive government 2008-2013, Sikajaya Andrew Muntanga was the first Tonga to be buried at heroes acre while Jacob Mudenda was voted as the speaker of parliament in 2013 .The research therefore demonstrated that, Tonga struggle for inclusion in the nation state making project is making strides in the 21st century.

In summation the struggle for inclusion should not be taken lightly by the African regimes if the 21st century nation state making project is to be achieved. African regimes like in Zimbabwe should not take such struggles as wishfulendeavours. Forged identities which compels minor groups to be slumped into major groups in a bid create state sponsored identity have proved to be toxic if not dangerous as these groups

proves to be a threat to nation state building project. As if that is not enough, it has also has proved that it an agent of political instability in Africa. In Zimbabwe this resulted to formation of ethnic based particularistic groups such as 'Basilwizi', Tonga online and BaTonga museum which pushes for the rights and advocates for the Tonga to be integrated in all sectors of the state like all other citizens of the state. Demands also includes their rights as equal citizens whose language, culture, economic benefits and political inclusion as baseline. In this context, it also shows how previously marginalised groups can mobilise to claim for their identity. The Ndebele have also formed particularistic groups such as Mthwakazi Group, Mthwakazi Liberation Front and revival of ZAPU in 2000 exposes the fragile state as it opened gates for struggle for recognition and promotion of identities of different groups within a state. Therefore the state should create a unifying balloon which includes equitable distribution of resources, recognition of all languages and culture, political inclusion of all groups irrespective of the ethnic background while the state has to oil the social cohesion which does not starve identities of different groups.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A

Interview guide with Tonga leaders in binga

My name is Melusi Mwinde. I am an undergraduate student at Midlands State University reading for a Bachelor of Arts in History Honours degree. I am doing an academic research focusing on the *Historical Analysis of the Politics of Self –inscription and Struggles for National Identity Among the BaTonga of Middle Zambezi Valley, Binga District, Zimbabwe in the 21st Century*. I humbly appeal for your honesty response for the questions that will be asked shortly. The data will be used solely for academic purposes and treated with the strictest of confidence.

1. Does the Tonga in Binga understand the history of their marginalization if yes who do they blame?
2. Which major problems do the BaTonga people in Binga face in the 21st century?
3. Do the ordinary people in Binga understand who they are, if yes who is a Tonga in the 21st century?
4. Which cultural practices have been lost due to the influence of external identities?
5. Which socio-political and economic practices in Binga have been excluding the Tonga?
6. Which strategies have been employed by the Tonga to retrieve the practices lost due to external influence?
7. What is the relationship between the Tonga and the Ndebele in Binga?
8. How does the Tonga view the Shona in Binga?
9. Which surnames has been converted to other languages among the BaTonga?
10. Does the Tonga know their history and how symbolic is Zambezi Valley to the youth?
11. Are the BaTonga successful in claiming for space in the socio-political and economic arena in Zimbabwe?

Appendix B

Interview guide with Tonga civilians

1. Who is the Tonga?
2. How would you describe the general attitude of people towards being a Tonga?
3. Do people in Binga understand what is being done by basilwizi, Tonga online, zubo and other organizations in uplifting the plight of the Tonga?
4. What is the negative impact of the Tonga being forced to adapt other languages at school and other institutions in Binga district?
5. Are you benefiting from the resources such as wildlife, tourism, electricity and fisheries in Binga?
6. Why do most people vote for the opposition during elections in Binga?
7. Which indigenous knowledge systems in Binga keep Tonga identity alive?
8. What is the attitude of the Binga community towards non -Tonga controlling their resources?
9. What is the relationship between the Tonga and other tribes in Matabeleland?
10. What do you and the community at large understand by Mthwakazi?