

**CHANGES AND CONTINUITIES OVER TIME IN THE CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF
THE NYAMINYAMI WATER SPIRIT AMONG THE BATONGA PEOPLE OF
NORTHWESTERN ZIMBABWE**

A THESIS SUBMITTED

BY

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to the founders of the Gwembe Tonga Research Project (GTRP) Professor Thayer Scudder and the late professor Elizabeth Florence Colson. Elizabeth Colson passed on in August 2016 at the age of 99. They founded the GTRP in 1956. The two dedicated their lives to the studying of the BaTonga religion and history for over 60 years. The thesis builds on the foundation laid by the Gwembe Tonga Research Project.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis has not been submitted for a degree in any other university and that it is my original work.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized capital 'D' followed by a cursive 'a' and a period.

Abstract.

Research attests that beliefs in water spirits are an integral part of cultures of many indigenous communities across the globe. These water spirits play significant political, religious and socio-economic roles for the people concerned. However, the functions of water spirits are not constant, but change over time, especially when the people believing in water spirits undergo drastic socio- economic processes of change. It is in this context that this thesis traces the cultural significance over time, of the Nyaminyami water spirit, among some BaTonga people, living in the immediate vicinity of the Kariba gorge area, in north-western Zimbabwe. While previous studies document the existence of beliefs in Nyaminyami, none of these has systematically traced the historical significance of Nyaminyami, in terms of changes and continuities over time. Thus, this thesis makes a valuable contribution to knowledge with regards to the history and religion of the BaTonga people. The thesis argues that Nyaminyami's cultural significance or functions evolved over time, due to numerous socio- economic and political processes of change. The major changes that significantly influenced the practices relating to Nyaminyami include colonialism, Kariba dam construction and resettlement, the migration after resettlement in the 1960s and 1970s, the independence of Zimbabwe, and the alienation of the Kariba waterscape from the BaTonga. To be able to arrive at specific findings and conclusions, the thesis is underpinned by theories about resettlement, approaches to water divinities, and theories of religion and social change. The thesis has five ethnographic chapters that focus on specific time periods, illustrating the major socio- economic changes of each epoch, and showing how these changes impacted upon practices and beliefs relating to Nyaminyami. The thesis also documents how Nyaminyami beliefs are variedly distributed along different social variables that include gender, age, income and geographical location. In order to achieve the findings presented, the thesis utilized ethnographic evidence obtained from semi- structured interviews, participant observation, anthropology of extraordinary experience, document review and archival research.

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List of Abbreviations

AAE	Anthropology of Extraordinary Experience
AD	Anno Domini
AENP	Addo Elephant National Park
AIDs	Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome
ANC	African National Congress
ATR	African Traditional Religion
BRD	Binga Rural District
BSAC	British South Africa Company
CAMPFIRE	Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources
CIO	Central Intelligence Officer
DA	District Administrator
DAO	District Administration Office
DC	District Commissioner
DIDR	Dam- Induced Displacement and Resettlement
DNPWLM	Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FDG	Focus Group Discussion
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
FGR(s)	First Generation Resettlers
FSF	Four Stage Framework
FLAT	Four Level Analysis Theory
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GTDC	Gwembe Tonga District Council
GTRP	Gwembe Tonga Research Project
HRD	Hurungwe District Council
IKS	Indigenous Knowledge Systems
KPA	Kariba Publicity Association
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change

NADA	Native Affairs Department Annual
NAZ	National Archives of Zimbabwe
NRANC	Northern Rhodesian African National Congress
NRD	Nyaminyami Rural District
NRDC	Nyaminyami Rural District Council
PO	Participant Observation
PSC	Psycho- Socio Cultural
RLI	Rhodes Livingstone Institute
SGR(s)	Second Generation Resettlers
TGR(s)	Third Generation Resettlers
TOAN	Tribes of All Nations
TTL	Tribal Trust Lands
UMCOR	United Methodist Committee on Relief
ZANLA	Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Unity- Patriotic Front
ZAOGA	Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Association
ZIPRA	Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army
ZRA	Zambezi River Authority

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction.

Water spirits occur in many cultures across the world and sometimes display remarkable similarities (Van Stipriaan 2002b: 87). The water spirits usually manifest themselves in the forms of the snake and the mermaid, who reside in or beyond the water, and who interact with humans in a variety of ways (Bernard 2001; Peterson 2006). Water spirits, of various kinds, play numerous and varied religious, socio-economic and political roles among humans who reside near the water bodies they inhabit. These include diviner calling, provision of wisdom and knowledge (Bernard 2001; 2003; 2007; 2010; 2013; Vastrik 1999); they can also influence fertility and human wellbeing (Adams 2007). In some instances, water spirits grant humans power for good hunting, for commercial success, for good livelihood (Peterson 2006) and can provide good rains (Fontein 2016). Moreover, other cases across the globe indicate that water spirits sometimes influence ‘national’ politics, (Fontein 2016) or even war (Fry 2007; Onkwuosa 2017). In other cases, water spirit cults and female possession trance serve to emancipate women, and readjust power imbalances between the sexes (Gluckman 1954; Plancke 2011). Thus, water spirits have significant influence in the social, economic, political and religious organisations of humans. They are an intrinsic component of many cultural beliefs across the globe. The rivers, wetlands, and the sea, are the dwelling places of such water spirits (Bernard 2001; 2010; 2013).¹

However, when various water-based development projects, such as dam constructions and irrigations schemes, intervene or disturb the natural regimes or flow of these dwelling places, not only does the water spirit’s survival or occurrence seem to be affected, but the intimate socio-cultural relationship between water spirits and people is also altered. These development projects affect the water spirits’ survival through the transformation of ‘living’ water bodies into man- made reservoirs. ² In most cases these development projects necessitate the displacement of riverine peoples, thereby disconnecting them from their water spirits, and thereby resulting in changes in the ways in which water spirit beliefs and practices

¹The discussion in this paragraph has presented the main characteristics for water spirits, but it did not give a precise definition of the term ‘water spirit’ as this happens to be absent in the literature reviewed. I shall come back to the issue of the definition of the term ‘water spirit’ more broadly in Chapter 4 where I will show the reasons why the term ‘water spirit’ is difficult to define. I will also provide a working definition for the term ‘water spirit.’

²Living water is defined by Penny Bernard (2013) as natural waters (and not man- made lakes, dams and reservoirs). Living waters are dwelling places of water spirits, these living waters include deep pools, boiling pots, waterfalls and natural rivers.

prevail in societies. It is in this context that this thesis seeks to understand the cultural significance of Nyaminyami (river god) over time among some of the BaTonga people in relation to the Kariba Dam construction of 1958, which subsequently necessitated the displacement of 57 000 BaTonga and Shangwe people living along the Zambezi (Colson 1960; 1971; Scudder 1962; 2005a; b; 2009; Scudder and Colson 1982). Built as a single purpose hydro-electricity project, Kariba's construction drastically altered, and regularized, the Zambezi's (Nyaminyami spirit's sacred area) natural regime (Scudder 2005b: 1). Thus, the year 1958 stands out as an important demarcation of this study. It is inevitable that pre- dam interactions between some BaTonga people and Nyaminyami are completely different to post-dam interactions. The understanding is that since 'human existence is irrevocably situated in time and space', to use Basso's (1996: 53) words, their religions and cultures are bound to change over time. The thesis argues that cultures are not static, but they transform over time, due to numerous social, economic and political circumstances. Therefore, it places the beliefs and practices relating to Nyaminyami on timelines of change and continuity.

1.2. The context of the research

This thesis investigates the contention that Nyaminyami was/is not a fictitious being, through a rigorous and thorough assessment of 'his' cultural significance over time among the BaTonga living in the immediate vicinity of the Kariba gorge, Northwest Zimbabwe.³ The study probes the people's experiences with and interpretations of Nyaminyami, over time. The assumption is that experiences, interpretations, rituals and transmission associated with water spirit ideas transform over time. The thesis seeks to make an anthropological contribution from a historical point of view through shedding light on the fluidity and flexibility of culture, particularly water spirit beliefs. The thesis argues that culture is not static, but that it changes over time and space, due to numerous environmental, social, economic and political changes. Before the history of the cultural significance of Nyaminyami is unpacked in the ethnographic chapters, some BaTonga people's narratives and scholarly findings about the origins of Nyaminyami are assessed. These narratives are the foundation on which the assessment of the cultural roles of Nyaminyami over time among some BaTonga people is to be predicated on.

³The contention that Nyaminyami was not a fictitious being is documented in Clements (1959) and Ncube (2004). It was also repeated by many of my informants. This contention is a counter argument to scholars like Howarth (1960) who doubts the existence of Nyaminyami.

The chieftaincies of focus are Musampakaruma⁴, Mola and Sinakatenge. Whilst Mola and Sinakatenge are predominantly BaTonga chieftaincies, Musampakaruma is demographically dominated by Shangwe⁵ people, and has a handful of BaTonga people. However, as a result of the social reasons such as intermarriages to be explored in Chapter 5, some Shangwe people identify themselves as BaTonga people. It is important to highlight from the onset that Nyaminyami related beliefs prevail to a varied degree among these chieftaincies. They are differently distributed among the BaTonga people. The beliefs are widely followed in Mola and Musampakaruma (and not observed in Sinakatenge).⁶ The study critically examines the religious, social and potential economic significance of Nyaminyami among the BaTonga (of both Mola and Sampakaruma) people before and after 1958. The cultural importance over time of Nyaminyami and changes that occurred to the beliefs and practices relating to Nyaminyami are presented in a chronological order. Oral traditions among the BaTonga of both Mola and Sampakaruma firmly testify that Nyaminyami was significant in the livelihoods of the people in various ways. Nyaminyami is a BaTonga river god, who is widely portrayed as male. Nyaminyami is believed to have a head of a tiger fish and a snake's torso (Sitambuli 2016). He is currently believed to inhabit the Kariba Dam. Before damming in 1958, Nyaminyami occupied and ruled the mighty Zambezi River. However, Nyaminyami 'did not only rule the Zambezi (giant river) but has also been at the service of the BaTonga in terms of protection as well as helping the BaTonga in times of need such as drought' (Saidi 2016: 125).⁷

Furthermore, this thesis also examines the cultural significance of Nyaminyami with reference to social variables such as age, gender, education, income, geographical location (relocation experience in the area, proximity to Kariba Dam, proximity to churches, roads, etc.). The assumption is that Nyaminyami beliefs were or are variedly distributed along these social variables. Hence, the need to investigate the factors that perpetuate these variations. In so doing the thesis diverts from the generalisations (that dominated previous accounts about Nyaminyami) to the level of specificity. The thesis further analyzes the beliefs and importance of Nyaminyami in relation to other figures in the BaTonga religious constellation,

⁴ The word Sampakaruma is used interchangeably with the term Musampakaruma- in fact before the move in 1958 the term Sampakaruma was mostly used and after the move the term Musampakaruma is now mainly used.

⁵ The Shangwe people are a sub- Shona group. The majority of them regard themselves as BaTonga people because they have long stayed with the BaTonga.

⁶ It was discovered during research that the people of Sinakatenge did not believe in a river god. I will fully explore the reasons behind these differences in these chieftaincies in Chapter 5.

⁷ Saidi (2016) generalized that all the BaTonga people of northwest Zimbabwe believed in Nyaminyami, as it shall be indicated below this is the major weakness of the previous literature that has commented on Nyaminyami.

such as *Leza* (God), ⁸ *Mizimu* (ancestral spirits), *Masabe* (alien spirits), *Basimuzimu* or *Basimalende* (spirit mediums), as well as beliefs in *bulozu* (witchcraft). In addition, the thesis also analyzes the cultural importance of and beliefs in Nyaminyami, in relation to the Christian figures of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. By analyzing Nyaminyami's cultural significance in relation to these aforementioned figures, the factors perpetuating the persistence of the beliefs and practices relating to Nyaminyami, are unearthed. The study inquires why the idea of Nyaminyami has persisted overtime assuming various dimensions and variedly interpreted in the face of the significant socio- economic changes that the BaTonga people underwent over time.

The study assesses the BaTonga resettlement of 1958 that paved way for the Kariba Dam construction and investigates its possible long-term impacts on the Nyaminyami belief systems. It is from this juncture that the study examines the impact of the on- going processes of change and inherent complexities of resettlement which exposed the people to contact with Christianity, migration to towns and the Zimbabwean liberation war of independence, that further influenced the people's observation of Nyaminyami belief systems. This move of 1958 is also regarded as a basis for policy suggestions in this thesis, as I will indicate the need to consider the riverine people's cultural practices that are water related before they are dislocated, so as to mitigate the harm that might be inflicted on them as a result of resettlement and Dam constructions.

The study also examines the cultural importance of Nyaminyami in relation to the more recent and critical discourses of 'politics of the landscape', as well as 'landscape and belonging'. Ethnographic findings for this research discovered the BaTonga's usage of Nyaminyami beliefs for politics of the landscape debates, especially in relation to claims of ownership and divine entitlement to the Lake Kariba, which Nyaminyami is currently believed to be inhabiting. In addition to that, Tombindo (2016) identified the utilization of Nyaminyami in the 'landscape and belonging' debates, where the BaTonga 'vividly' trace roots to the Zambezi Valley, and firmly claim entitlement to the Lake (born by damming the Zambezi) and its resources, such as water, fish, tourism revenues, and so on. The origins and development of Nyaminyami beliefs are also unearthed as they stand as foundation upon which the understanding of Nyaminyami's cultural importance among the BaTonga can be assessed. In addition, an understanding of the origins and development of Nyaminyami among the BaTonga is important to further observe why belief and practices relating to

⁸Leza is a BaTonga pre-colonial conceptualization of what Europeans/westerners call "God", i.e. that Leza is NOT a BaTonga translation of the European idea of God.

Nyaminyami were not as prevalent among all the BaTonga societies. The study probes the factors surrounding the persistence of Nyaminyami. It seeks to understand why some people still need it even though there were changes that occurred to its occurrence after the resettlement of 1958.

The study is also concerned with how and to what extent does Nyaminyami beliefs, as an integral part of the people's indigenous knowledge systems (IKS), prevail in the context of the spread of globalization, modernity and scientific knowledge in Africa, that tend to overlook IKS. Numerous scholars study IKS and changes that have occurred to it due to the preference for science by the African governments and environmental management authorities (Bernard 2001, 2007; Mawere 2013). This thesis sheds light on how contestations between tradition and science prevail at Kariba in the Nyaminyami context.

1.3. Definition of the key terms of the thesis (BaTonga, Nyaminyami, Zambezi River and Valley, Lake Kariba and Kariba Gorge).

1.3.1. BaTonga

The term "BaTonga" is generally applied to a clan system 'without a recognized paramount Chief. It implies the people who judge themselves' (Posselt 1934: 80). According to Tremmel (1994) initially the BaTonga people had no cultural name, they only identified themselves as the 'people of the river' (*Baswilwizi*) because they had settled along the Zambezi River for centuries. They were referred to as "BaTonga" by the Shona groups because they were a Chiefless society. The Shona term '*kuzvitonga*' where the word '*Tonga*' is derived from means to rule or judge yourself. The BaTonga people were/are matrilineal, thus children assume the maternal totem and the sons inherit from the estate of their maternal uncle (Nicolle 1959). Zimbabwe has three districts that are inhabited by the BaTonga speaking people located in the northwest parts of Zimbabwe: Binga, Northern Gokwe and Kariba (Nyaminyami Rural District) (Marowa 2010: 173). The BaTonga have no common myth of origin, and a few tell of originating outside the valley (Colson 1960; Scudder 1962; Sitambuli 2016). Before the move, near the Kariba gorge area, the BaTonga lived together with the Shona people (Colson 1962; Scudder 1962). These Shona people were of the Shangwe dialect. However, the BaTonga were the earliest settlers of this section of the river valley, and the Shona were late comers (Colson 1960; Scudder 1962), I shall indicate the history of their settlement in the Valley in Chapter 5. In 1958, they were removed from the margins of the Zambezi, preparing

the way for the Kariba dam construction (Colson 1971; Howarth 1960; McGregor 2009; Scudder 2005b).

1.3.2. Nyaminyami

Nyaminyami as a water spirit (or river god) with a head of a tiger fish and snake's torso, was/is portrayed as male (Sitambuli 2016). Nyaminyami was a supernatural power embodying the river's force and strength, as well as having a serpentine form (Jarosz 1992: 110). To some BaTonga he was one of the most powerful spirits in their cosmology (Kaoma 2017). The rock beneath rapids which the locals referred to as '*Kariva*' (now Kariba) near the 'Kariba gorge' area was/is regarded as its homage or sacred area (Clement 1959; Hughes 2006; Kaoma 2017; Saidi 2015).

1.3.3. Zambezi River

Contained within the southern portion of the African rift valley system, the Zambezi River is the dominant feature, with the Valley itself lying several thousand feet below the adjacent north and south bank plateaus (Scudder 2005b: 2). Scudder and Colson⁹ divided the middle Zambezi Valley- river section into three sections: Upper River, Middle River and Lower River. The upper river extends from around Victoria Falls area to around Chete gorge area; the middle river extends from around Chete gorge area to around Semwa tributary area; the lower river extends from around Semwa tributary to where the Kafue River enters the Zambezi (confluence-zone). The Zambezi had many tributaries. The tributaries were named by those who lived along those tributaries (Kelgwin 1935). Initially, the Zambezi itself had no name, it was referred to as the 'Great River' (*Lwizi*)¹⁰ by those who occupied its margins (McGregor 2003; 2009).

Through access to a combination of its fertile soils and permanent water-supply, the bulk of the population (BaTonga) lived along the Zambezi; some villages were placed on the banks just above the reach of abnormal floods, while others were several miles inland, very often on or near a stream that flows into the Zambezi, and from which water is obtained for most of the year (Kelgwin 1935). The nearness to the Zambezi illustrated the dominating

⁹ Professor Thayer Scudder and Professor Elizabeth Florence Colson conducted long-term ethnographic research in the Zambezi/Gwembe Valley, since 1956, in relation to the Impact of the Kariba hydro-electric project on the livelihoods of the BaTonga. They also initiated the establishment of the Gwembe Tonga Research Project (GTRP) in 1956. The GTRP was, in the 1990s, joined by Sam Clark, Lisa Cliggett, Jonathan Habarad and Rhonda Gillett-Netting, and lately by Allison Hannish and Emma Sitambuli. I shall be referring to the GTRP more often as the thesis progresses.

¹⁰Lwizi is a Chitonga word for a big river.

influence of the river on the local people's life. In addition to sheltering Nyaminyami, it provided a plentiful supply of fish for survival. It was also central to all areas of life (McGregor 2003b). Furthermore, the size and perennial flow of the Zambezi distinguished it from other rivers, giving it exceptional importance, which could imply permanence as well as movement. The exceptional importance of the Zambezi is perhaps reflected by the fact that it had no name (McGregor 2009). The Zambezi river has dictated and shaped history, contact, communications and livelihoods, and remains intrinsic to Tonga identity (Cliggett and Bond 2013; Chikozho et al 2015; Saidi 2016).

1.3.4. Zambezi Valley

The margins or the banks of the Zambezi, referred to as the Zambezi Valley/ Gwembe¹¹ Valley is 'an area that lies along the Zambezi River after it plunges over the Victoria Falls, and emerges from a series of steep gorges (see Map on Fig 1). The right (south) bank belongs to Zimbabwe, but the left (north) bank is within what is now Zambia' (Colson 2001: 50). Similarly, Lancaster defines the middle Zambezi/ Gwembe Valley as extending from the upstream gorges below Victoria Falls, some eighty-five miles below the Falls, to the point where the Kafue River joins the Zambezi, an additional 230 miles (368kms) downstream (Lancaster 1974: 707-30). Ironically, the Valley on the south bank was very large in area, but inhabited by a few BaTonga, whereas the north bank was small in area but overpopulated (Colson 1960). Numerous environmental, political, social and economic conditions resulted in this ironic population distribution. The people on both sides of the valley were related; this was because the Zambezi River was a link, and strong connections were maintained between opposite banks, whereas connections up and downstream were much weaker (McGregor, 2003b). The Zambezi was not regarded as a boundary.

1.3.5. Kariba Gorge

Kariba is a white man's corruption of the Shona term 'Kariva'. *Kariva* was a local name given to a stone lying alongside the gorge, 350 miles downstream from Victoria Falls. The surrounding area became to be known as Kariba, and the gorge was referred to as the Kariba gorge (Hughes 2006; 2010). The Kariba Gorge lies at approximately longitude 28°45', and latitude 16°39', and is formed by the passage of the river for 17 miles through a part of the Lomagundi system which protrudes into softer rocks of the Karroo system... The gorge may be said to begin where the Sanyati rivers enters the Zambezi...' (Kelgwin 1935: 254). Near

¹¹Gwembe was a local name of the Valley, the term Zambezi was introduced by white settlers on both sides of the river.

the Kariba gorge area, the Zambezi River was regarded as sacred by those who inhabited that section. The Kariba gorge area was/is in the Lower river section of the Zambezi. The Kariba gorge area was too remote, to an extent that David Livingstone described it as ‘a country too rough for culture’... Rapids broke the smooth course of the Zambezi. ‘Some rocks in the water... dislocated, bent, and even twisted to a remarkable degree, at once attest some tremendous upheaving and convulsive action of nature... We have probably nothing equal to it in the present quiet operations of nature’ (Livingstone 1866: 80). Before the Kariba Dam was built, the area around Kariba was home to the Tonga, Shangwe, Ma- Korekore (the last two are also known as Goba people) ethnicities (see Posselt 1929).

1.3.6. Lake Kariba (Kariba Dam).

This is a large impoundment created by damming the Zambezi at the Kariba Gorge area. The Kariba Dam, completed during the second half of the 1950s, was the first mainstream dam to be built on the Zambezi River (Scudder 2005b). ‘The Kariba Dam was a by-product of power deficits that confronted Northern and Southern Rhodesia in the immediate post-World War Two era’ (Mashingaidze 2012: 48). According to the Zambezi River Authority, the Kariba Dam has a surface area of some 5 580 square kilometres, a length of 280 kilometres and average width of 18 kilometres; Kariba dam is located approximately halfway down the Zambezi (ZRA n.d: 07). The lake is studded with islands and fringed by mountains (KPA n.d: 05), and most of these landscape features - near Kariba gorge area - were regarded as sacred, and some were associated with Nyaminyami. Currently, some people still claim ownership and belonging, in terms of, those sacred sites.

1.3.7. The definition of the term ‘Water Spirit.’

There is no one single ‘universal’ definition of the term ‘water-spirit’; it can mean anything to just about anyone. Writers on water spirits only put forward their own working definitions that relate to their own studies. Professor Henry John Drewal¹² advised me to ‘define the term as I understand it and that my definition was supposed to be predicated on the BaTonga understanding of such a spirit (Nyaminyami)’ (H, J. Drewal, personal communication, 04 February 2018). There is no one definition for water spirits because, firstly, they manifest differently among different peoples. Even regional water spirits such as *Mami Wata*, believed in in many parts of west- central Africa, have multiple manifestations and appearances

¹² Professor Henry John Drewal is a world authority on water spirits and art in Africa. He is the senior writer of the much-celebrated book on water spirits: *MAMI WATA: ARTS FOR WATER SPIRITS AND THE DIASPORA*. He is professor of Art History at the University of Wisconsin- Madison.

ascribed or accorded to them (see studies by Drewal et al 2008; Jell- Bahlsten 2014; Jewsiewicki 2008; Masquelier 2006; Onkwusa 2017; Peterson 2006). Precisely, Krishman argues that ‘Mami wata is a general name used for the hybridized river and sea goddesses popularized across Africa and assimilated in various guises in the diverse localities in which she is seen’ (Krishman 2012: 1). Secondly, they inhabit different types or forms of water bodies in different locations. Thirdly, their duties and functions are also largely different to one another across regions. Fourthly, their physical and spiritual appearances, characteristics and features, as told by those who believe in them, may be significantly different to one another, but sometimes remarkable similarities can be noted across regions (Van Stripiaan 2002b). For example, the descriptions of mermaids among the Shona/ Karanga in Zimbabwe and the Xhosa in South Africa, have similar characteristics and physical appearance (Bernard 2010), with both groups describing these mermaids as ‘half-fish, half-human beings’ (Bernard, 2003: 40). Lastly, not all fabulous creatures dwelling in water bodies have noble relations with people, as expected of a water spirit. For example, at Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe, the Dombé- Leya people believed in a fabulous creature called *Simwaba* or *Simusinsi*, which was not regarded as a river god. Its relations with people were very rough and non- benevolent. These and other possible factors are impediments to the successful definition of the term ‘water spirit.’ However, I want to propose a working or provisional definition of the term ‘water spirit’. Water spirits can be defined as supernatural beings, taking varied forms, abode of particular water bodies and which have various repertoires of relations with human beings. These relations can be benevolent and non- benevolent and can partly be interpreted by diviners.

Furthermore, there also exists some interchangeable use of various terms or phrases among writers, when referring to water spirits. Some writers use the words ‘water- spirit’, ‘river- spirit’, ‘water- divinity’, ‘water- deity’, ‘river- gods’, and ‘river- goddesses’ interchangeably. Even when one same water spiritual being is in question, this interchangeability still occurs. For example, in her publications of the early 2000s, Bernard referred to mermaids and snakes as ‘water spirits’ (Bernard 2003) and in her 2010 PhD thesis she made use of the term ‘water divinity’ referring to the same beings, and at one point in time she referred to them as ‘river people’. of west central Africa in some cases is referred to as a ‘river goddess’ (Frank 1995; Krishman 2012) and in others as a ‘water spirit’ (Drewal 2008; Kasfir 1982; Peterson 2006; Stokes 2010). Even for Nyaminyami himself, this interchangeability of terms is also common; for instance, Saidi (2015; 2017) considers it a

‘river spirit’; Sitambuli uses ‘river god’ and ‘water spirit’ at the same time, she writes that ‘Nyaminyami was a (Ba)Tonga river god or water spirit’ (2016: 199); Clements (1959) and McGregor (2009) used the term ‘river god’. This study also regards the terms ‘water spirits’ and ‘river gods’ as synonymous. Thus, I shall refer to Nyaminyami, using the terms ‘water spirit’ and ‘river god’ interchangeably, as in previous literature.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The early writers about Kariba who wrote on Nyaminyami, such as Clements (1959) and Robert and Legge (1959) are guilty of generalizations, as they failed to provide us with the specific locations along the Zambezi where beliefs in Nyaminyami were widely followed. The same wrong perception and idea that Nyaminyami was culturally significant among all the BaTonga, is also repeated in the tourism literature and journalistic coverage, yet Nyaminyami was not known along most of the river (McGregor 2009) -especially above Semwa River (i.e. the middle and upper river sections). Sinakatenge is one of the chiefdoms that were/ are above Semwa River. Even the more recent studies by Chikozho et al (2015a), Ncube (2004) and Saidi (2016; 2017) that have commented on Nyaminyami beliefs, are guilty of the same fault. However, this study seeks to provide the specific sites, along the Zambezi, in which Nyaminyami was important in the everyday socio-economic and religious aspects of the people. Furthermore, this thesis also outlines and places the Nyaminaymi beliefs on the timelines of change and continuity.

Moreover, background studies on Nyaminyami have written about him in the context of many accidents that occurred during the dam construction, which are believed to have been caused by Nyaminyami who was angry that his homage, previously a river, was about to be dammed (Clements 1959; Siwila 2015). No study, so far, has attempted to trace the beliefs and practices relating to Nyaminyami over time, and little is known about the dynamic and complex socio-economic and religious significance of Nyaminyami, across generations. The failure to fully understand the complexities of the beliefs in Nyaminyami in terms of his cultural significance has led some thinkers to claim that beliefs in Nyaminyami were present in all the BaTonga communities, yet this was/is not what was/is found on the ground. The beliefs in Nyaminyami are an important BaTonga cultural practice but are understudied. This present study seeks to cover that gap.

Furthermore, by virtue of probing the complexities surrounding the beliefs in Nyaminyami among some of the BaTonga, this study contributes additional themes to the

understandings of the beliefs in water spirit complexities in Africa. Such themes as his involvement in the politics of the landscape, landscape and belonging and tourism debates are unearthed and can be used in understanding water spirit beliefs elsewhere. Besides contributing to the religious history of the BaTonga people only, the study also contributes partly to the religious history of the entire northwestern Zimbabwean, which has been neglected for a longtime. Writing about the Nevana (rain shrine) cult in Gokwe district which is immediately adjacent to Nyaminyami Rural District in 1998, Alexander and Ranger bemoaned that ‘nothing has been published on the northwestern fifth of the country- either on mission history, or on independent churches, or on mediums or rain shrines’ (Alexander and Ranger 1998: 4).

This research also informs environmental management agencies and water resources authorities, both near Kariba dam and elsewhere in Zimbabwe, on the need to allow indigenous people’s access to resources inhabited by their water spirits. Denying indigenous people’s access to water resources inhabited by the spirits, is rather pernicious to them, as otherwise, the interrelationship between the water spirits and people can completely disappear, and the people can suffer serious consequences of such disassociation with the water spirits. Machoko has highlighted how traditional natural resource management has been overlooked in favour of an approach from western modernity (Machoko 2013), and this has marginalized and denied indigenous people’s access to natural resources. These modern forces have also all contributed to the disenchantment of the landscape whereby the respect for the spirits of the land is rapidly disappearing and therewith, a powerful mechanism for limiting negative human behaviour (Bernard 2001). However, this research substantiates Machoko’s (2013: 285) advocacy for the integration of both traditional and modern approaches into a new and sound environmental conservation paradigm.

In the context of Dam- Induced Displacement and Resettlement (DIDR), the study informs the resettlement planners and consultant on the need to better understand the beliefs in water spirits among the victims who occupy the margins of rivers about to be dammed, so as to properly put in place measures and policies that can at least safeguard these beliefs, without inflicting more damage.

1.5. Theoretical and Conceptual Grounding

This section introduces the reader to the main theories underpinning this study. The study is guided and stimulated by various theoretical approaches to: i) the water divinity complexities

and phenomena; ii) resettlement; and iii) religion and social change. These theories will be elaborated in Chapter 2.

The theoretical approaches to understanding the water divinity phenomena are the diffusionist theory proposed by Bryant (1949); the sociological (structural functionalist) approach put forward by Gluckman (1954); and the four 'level analysis' proposed by P.S. Bernard (2010), as well as the water *as an index of power* concept (Fontein 2015). Moreover, an engagement with the wider aspects and themes on water spirits and river gods in Africa, particularly in southern Africa, is necessary. Such literature on water spirits and river gods in southern Africa (Zimbabwe included) by Aschwanden (1989), Bernard (2001; 2003; 2007; 2010; 2013), Fontein (2006; 2016a; b) and Taringa (2006: 14) amongst others; as well as Africa in general such as Adams (2007), Drewal (2008), Peterson (2006), Renne (1991) and Frank (1995) is to be rigorously reviewed. Such themes as the habitation of water spirits, the wishes of the water spirits etc., inherent in water spirits studies in Africa as noted in the aforementioned literature and presented in Chapter 4, significantly informs this study. However, not all the themes raised are relevant to the Nyaminyami case. There are major differences and minor similarities, because Nyaminyami as a water spirit was in some ways different from all other water spirits.

An understanding of how Nyaminyami beliefs were affected by the move of 1958 is underpinned by theories of resettlement. The study thus utilizes three resettlement theories, which are the Four Stage Framework proposed by Scudder (2009), the Imposed Socio-Spatial Change theory proposed by De Wet (2015), and the Psycho-Socio-Cultural theory proposed by Downing and Garcia-Downing (2009). The understanding is that when people are resettled to new emplacements, they encounter and experience numerous on-going processes of change that can impact on their religion and culture. Usually, the absence of national legal and policy frameworks, and inadequate pre-displacement surveys that inform the movement of people living along rivers and whose religion is hinged on the reverence of river gods or water spirits, render such beliefs dissonant in new emplacements. Where pre-displacement surveys happen, sometimes they overlook the issues relating to river gods. The on-going processes of change must also be understood by engaging with theories of religion and social change. This thesis utilises the theory of religion and social change employed by Sabet. (1996).

1.6. The objectives of the research.

The main aim of the study is to assess the cultural significance of Nyaminyami over time among some of the BaTonga people occupying some parts of north-west Zimbabwe. The principal research question is: What are the changes and continuities in the cultural significance of Nyaminyami among the BaTonga living along certain sections of the Zambezi?

1.6.7. Sub-goals of the research are to:

1) Document current perceptions about:

- a) the origins and development of beliefs and practices relating to Nyaminyami.
- b) the cultural significance of Nyaminyami before the Kariba dam construction and the subsequent resettlement of the BaTonga people from the Zambezi Valley.
- c) BaTonga people's perceptions of Nyaminyami in relation to other figures in the Tonga religious constellation, e.g. Leza (God); the Mizimo (ancestral spirits); the Basangu (Wild spirits).

2) Document how:

- i) Kariba Dam construction negatively affected the beliefs and practices relating to Nyaminyami.
- ii) on- going processes of change in the post- resettlement contexts such as Christianity, resettlement after migration and the Zimbabwean War of Liberation of 1976- 1980, the introduction of western education and scientific knowledge impacted upon beliefs and practices relating to Nyaminyami.

3) Document current beliefs, cultural significance and practices relating to Nyaminyami, in terms of:

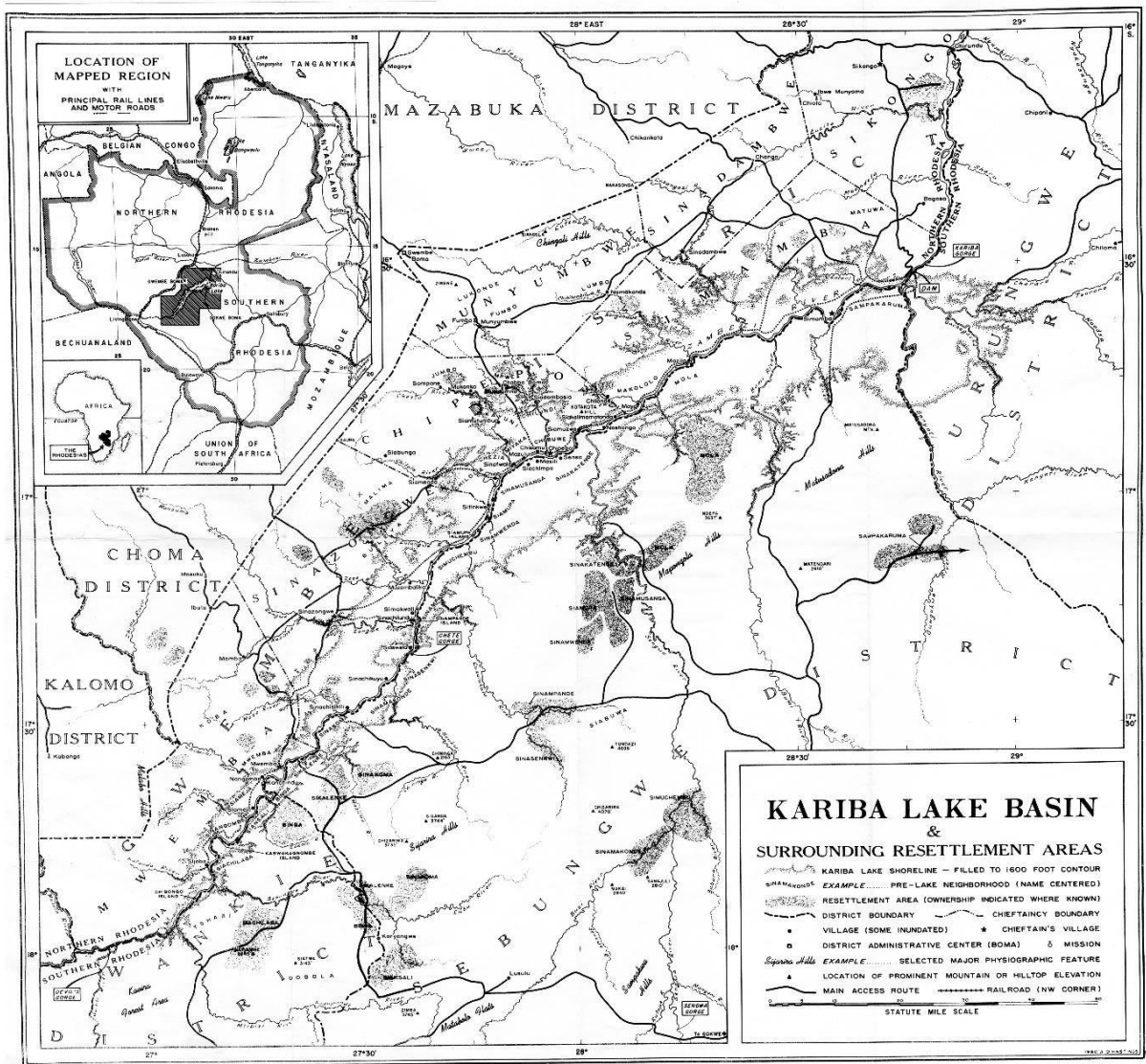
- a) how people see Nyaminyami in relation to:
 - i) Figures in the Christian religious constellation, e.g. God (Father), Jesus, Holy Spirit, and Devil
 - ii) possible representations of BaTonga, or wider Zimbabwean or African, identity
- b) climatic events occurring in the Lake Kariba and its littoral. This will engage with different interpretations of these climatic events asserted by different regimes of authority and stakeholders
- c) whether people in the area do/do not still acknowledge the existence of Nyaminyami, and whether Nyaminyami does/does not still feature in their religious/ritual practices.

As mentioned earlier on, all the above factors will be assessed in terms of difference of responses from respondents, in terms of social variables such as age, gender, education, income, geographical location (relocation experience in the area, proximity to Kariba Dam, proximity to churches, roads).

1.7. Location of the research sites.

The ethnographic research for this thesis was conducted in the three chieftaincies of Sampakaruma, Mola and Sinakatenge. Nyaminyami-related beliefs are strongest in Sampakaruma and Mola, and not in Sinakatenge. However, Sinakatenge was selected because of the quest to understand the reasons why Nyaminyami was unknown/less known along some parts of the river and better known along other parts. A clear description of the location of these chiefdoms both before and after the move is very important, as it orients the reader to the population distribution along the river before 1958 and along the Lake after 1958, and how this distribution influenced/ influences the spread and prevalence of beliefs and practices relating to the Nyaminyami spirit.

Fig 1: Map showing the location of Chieftaincies before and after resettlement (adapted from Scudder 1962).



1.8. Location of the chieftaincies before 1958.

Before the move, all the three chiefdoms were adjacent to each other. They were located in the northeast part of the then Sebungwe District (Ncube 1986; Scudder 1982; 1985), formed by the British South Africa Company in the late 1890s (Ncube 1986). They were located in the immediate vicinity of the Zambezi River. The BaTonga speaking people had closer interaction with people across the river than they did with people upstream or downstream, because of the rugged terrain (Colson 1960), and the non-navigability of the Zambezi. Sampakaruma was the first BaTonga Chieftaincy from the Kariba gorge moving upstream; it was between Sanyati and Ume Rivers. It had a majority of Shona speakers, and some

BaTonga people. Some Shona- speaking people in this chiefdom considered themselves as BaTonga when dealing with outsiders (Lancaster 1974). On the north bank they were related to the people (i.e. BaTonga and Shona) from Simamba chieftaincy. The next chieftaincy to Sampakaruma was Mola; it was between Ume and Semwa rivers. It was again occupied by some Shona people, who were absorbed into the BaTonga culture and they did not form spatially separate homesteads (Colson 1960). On the north bank they were related to the BaTonga in both Simamba and Chipepo chieftaincies. The Kariba gorge area (or lower river region), on the southern shore, was highly tsetse fly infested as compared to other regions along the Zambezi (Kelgwin 1935). The relations between Sampakaruma and Mola chieftaincies were more established. Scudder believes the two had more similarities than differences (Scudder, personal communication, June 2017). Finally, beyond the Semwa river was Sinakatenge chiefdom. The people from Sinakatenge had limited and insignificant contact with the Shangwe people. Sinakatenge had a very small population (Weinrich 1977). One reason why Sinakatenge had a low population as compared to Sampakaruma and Mola, is because it received no Shona immigrants to swell their population. Life in Sinakatenge was far different from that of Mola and Sampakaruma, and this is evidenced by the variations in the Tonga language and material culture between the two regions. On the north bank, they had a closer relationship with the people in Chipepo.

1.9. Location of the chieftaincies after 1958.

The location of these chieftaincies after the move is illustrated in the same map above. Once neighbors, these chiefdoms, were disconnected from each other in 1958, this gave rise to further variations in culture among people who once had broadly similar cultural traits, especially in Sampakaruma and Mola; and these variations also involve the perceptions and interpretations of Nyaminyami across the two chieftaincies. All these three chiefdoms remain marginalized in Zimbabwe; however, Sampakaruma is less marginalized as compared to the other two, as it is closer to the towns of Karoi and Gokwe. These chieftaincies are located at the periphery of north western Zimbabwe- (with Musampakaruma and Mola located in Nyaminyami Rural District and Sinakatenge located in Binga Rural District)- and have historically suffered marginalization, firstly by the colonial government that forcibly relocated them from the Zambezi River and Valley, and secondly by the current Zimbabwean government's continued neglect of the BaTonga in the economic and social developments that characterize the Zambezi area, (Marowa 2010; Saidi 2017). All the research areas are characterized by low agricultural potential and are located in agro-ecological zones IV and V.

For Mola and Musampakaruma, researchers have found that there is a seasonal rainfall pattern that is highly variable, and barely amounting to 650mm per year, with maximum temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius, and rarely falling below 17 degrees Celsius (Jeke, 2014; Mubaya and Mafongoya 2017). In addition, there are poor soils, which consistently result in poor yields for locals. However, people in Sinakatenge carry out intensive riverine cultivation along Semwa River throughout the year, which is a privilege unavailable for those in Mola and Musampakaruma.

1.9.1. Sampakaruma (Musampakaruma)

After the move, Sampakaruma became known as Musampakaruma; however, the terms are interchangeably used by both the locals and others. It is under the jurisdiction of Nyaminyami Rural District. It ceased to be the immediate neighbour of Mola, though located in the same district. Various physical geographical landscape aspects separate it from its neighbors. To the south, the Sanyati River demarcates it from Hurungwe District. To the east, the Matusadonha National Park demarcates it from Lake Kariba. To the north, a dusty road demarcates it from Nebiri. To the west three features, which are a road from Karoi, the Hwadze River and a mountain range adjacent to the Mahubu villages demarcate it from Gokwe. It is of great significance to note that the borders of Sampakaruma with Gokwe and Nebiri are porous, thereby promoting increased everyday contact between Sampakaruma and its neighbours. While before the move the chieftaincy was inhabited by BaTonga and Shangwe (a sub-Shona group) people, after the move the chieftaincy became a host to Karanga people, who were resettled from the Tribal Trust Lands (TTL) of Bikita, Gutu and Buhera in the southern parts of Zimbabwe, (Mudzimu 2016: 52); it is now a multi-ethnic chieftaincy. These immigrants (the Karanga people) first settled in Gokwe in the 1950s and were later ‘formally’ accommodated into the Nyaminyami Rural District under chief Sampakaruma and Newbery’s chieftaincy areas in the early 1980s, but a few had entered Nyaminyami District through marriages.

1.9.2. Mola

Mola is located in the Nyaminyami Rural District. As mentioned, above the chieftaincy is highly marginalized; this is evidenced by ‘the absence of development opportunities in the area’ (Scudder 1982: 2). Tombindo, citing Alexander (2004), described the location of Mola as the ‘forgotten orphans’ of the empire, (Tombindo 2016: 55). They were moved in 1956 from the Valley to their present area (Kaschula 1976; Weinrich, 1977). Mola is a

predominantly BaTonga community. However, the people of Mola claim to be unrelated to other BaTonga (Weinrich 1977: 17), and for as long as the tribal elders can remember, they had resided along the Zambezi, between Ume and Semwa rivers (Kaschula 1976: 285-88). Even the BaTonga in Binga, particularly in Sinakatenge, also say that the BaTonga people in Mola are not BaTonga, due to their close association with the Shona. Their claim of being unrelated to the other BaTonga, is hinged upon the premise that they have a different culture from other BaTonga living in Sinakatenge, Binga and around Victoria Falls. They claim to be related to the BaTonga and Shangwe people living in Musampakaruma, with whom they shared many cultural beliefs, inclusive of beliefs in Nyaminyami. Even though the people of Mola predominantly speak the ciTonga language, almost entirely everyone in the chieftom across generations is able to speak ChiShona/ ChiShangwe because they have more intimate relations with the Shona.

1.9.3. Sinakatenge

Upon the move, Chief Sinakatenge and his people were moved further inland near the Zambezi tributary- the Semwa River, where they continued carrying out riverine cultivation along the Semwa. They plough throughout the year, and this is a major difference between Sinakatenge and its former neighbours of the Nyaminyami Rural District: Mola and Sampakaruma. Muzingili (2014) found that Sinakatenge is marginalized in Binga Rural District. Their being part of Binga, where a majority of BaTonga lived, speaks volumes on why they are dissimilar in culture to the minority BaTonga of Nyaminyami district. Their neighbors are people who live under Chief Siamupa and Chief Sinamusanga. But, to the east they neighbour with chieftaincies from Nyaminyami rural district, which are Mola and Negande, and the Semwa River stands as the boundary. Sinakatenge is small, both in population and area, as compared to Mola and Musampakaruma, and this has been the case before the move.

1.10. Organization of the thesis

Chapter 1 is an introduction to the whole thesis. It introduces the reader to the context of the research, i.e. the Kariba context, the significance of the study, its theoretical grounding, research objectives and the research site. Chapter 2 is an in-depth account of the theories underpinning and stimulating the study. The juxtaposition of the main tenets of the theories is revealed in the chapter. Chapter 3 presents the methodology and research techniques employed by the researcher during fieldwork (in all the three chieftaincies). It describes the

data gathering techniques employed, including the research design, sample and sampling procedures, research tools, ethical considerations and fieldwork challenges. Chapter 4 analyses important aspects of water spirits in Africa and Zimbabwe. It examines themes that have been identified by previous writers that also inform this study. Chapter 5 describes the development of the beliefs and practices relating to Nyaminyami, and Nyaminyami's cultural roles before 1958. Chapter 6 examines the impact of the Kariba resettlement on the Nyaminyami beliefs. Chapter 7 examines the beliefs and practices relating to Nyaminyami in post resettlement areas up to 1980 i.e. before independence. Chapter 8 takes over from previous chapters in understanding the practices relating to Nyaminyami beliefs in the post-independence contexts up to 2015. Chapter 9 examines the narratives surrounding Nyaminyami in the contemporary context. It is based mainly on information gathered during the period of the research in 2017, and the researcher's personal observations and extraordinary experiences. Chapter 10 outlines the conclusions reached in the thesis. It documents the main contributions of the thesis to the understanding of the history of Nyaminyami, and water spirits more generally. It also makes policy suggestions which development planners must take into consideration when implementing development projects that affect riverine peoples.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Introduction

The theoretical approaches underpinning this thesis are: approaches to the water divinity complex, theories of resettlement, as well as theories about religion and social change. The study assumes that social changes such as resettlement have detrimental effects to traditional religious beliefs that are inextricably hinged on physical landscapes particularly beliefs in water divinities across Africa. This study has adopted several kinds of theoretical perspectives, because of the complexity of the problem statement, and of the topic itself. Here, Nyaminyami's significance is being examined in numerous important historical epochs and across generations; hence one single kind of theoretical perspectives is inadequate to guide or inform the study. This chapter sets out the main tenets of these theories, and further elaborates the application and relevance of each theory to the present study. It justifies the usage of the resettlement theories in great detail. The chapter will link theories utilized in each category i.e. resettlement theories and water divinity complexity approaches and show how they interlink with each other in explaining the resettlement phenomena and water divinity phenomena respectively. This linkage is necessary because the Nyaminyami occurrences and resettlement processes discussed in the empirical chapters, i.e. Chapter 5 to Chapter 9, are complex so much so that a combination of the theories best explains these occurrences and resettlement processes.

2.2. Theoretical approaches to the water divinity phenomenon.

There are numerous conceptual approaches to the phenomenon of water divinities, ranging from psychological, diffusionist and sociological approaches. However, these theories do not satisfactorily explain the complex whole of the occurrence of water divinities. In 2010, Bernard emphasized that of those scholars who have attempted to incorporate theory into their analyses of the water divinities, the majority have only utilized fragments or certain aspects of the water divinity complex to support the particular theoretical perspective they advance. The actual complex in its entirety has not been explained (Bernard 2010: 125). Based on Bernard's judgement, even the *water as an index of power* concept proposed by Fontein (2015) does not explain the complex whole of the prevalence of water divinities. Fontein's theory has a bias towards political processes influenced by the water spirits. In a bid to cover this gap in theoretical approach, Bernard (2010) proposed the four- level analysis

theory. Henceforth, this study will utilize the four-level analysis theory, *water as an index of power* concept, diffusionist theory and sociological approaches in underpinning the development and prevalence of Nyaminyami belief systems among some of the BaTonga people. It is worth mentioning that these theories are used from a historical perspective. Each theory is applied in different epochs in this study. Thus, the usage, application and relevance of each theory in different eras may provide different perspectives at different times to understanding water divinity belief systems, as shall be clearly indicated in the thesis.

The study does not incorporate the psychological approaches to water divinities because the main tenets of those approaches are not applicable to the understanding of Nyaminyami beliefs. According to Bernard (2010: 126- 127) the psychological approaches to water divinity belief systems have found their clearest statement in the studies by Laubscher (1937), Buhrmannn (1986) and Hirst (1990). The rationalized explanations of the psychological approaches tend to portray the processes of becoming a diviner as either cleverly contrived strategies to achieve certain ends, as reflections of deeper unconscious processes of the mind, or even as a psychopathology (Bernard 2010). These approaches seek to understand and explain the cognitive experiences and results of being called to be a diviner and subsequently being taken under water. In the narratives relating to Nyaminyami, no one was taken underwater, nor was anyone possessed by Nyaminyami spirits, at least for the purposes of diviner training and granting of healing knowledge, and such evidence makes it impossible to apply psychological theories in the Nyaminyami case. But, Nyaminyami could expose himself to the people, and currently there are no people who had first- hand experiences with him, which further makes the use of psychological approaches irrelevant to this study.

2.2.1 Diffusionist approach

It must be clearly stated from the onset that diffusion is here regarded as cultural borrowing, and not appropriation. Cultural borrowing implies the adoption of other people's traditional beliefs and the incorporation of them into your own traditional beliefs for spiritual and religious reasons. Yet appropriation is exploiting other people's cultures for economic and political reasons by the more powerful members. Cultural appropriation is exploitative (Arewa 2018). The diffusionist approaches to water divinities underpinning this study were those effectively used by Bryant (1949). He sought to explain the development and origins of spirit beliefs in societies especially in southern Africa, and his main argument is that most spirit beliefs prevalent in many Bantu societies diffused from North African societies (e.g.

Egypt). In his publication *The Zulu people: as they were before the Whiteman came*, Bryant adopted a diffusionist argument to explain the striking similarity between Zulu ideas and rituals performed for *iNkosazana* with similar ideas and rituals held for the Mother-Virgin Daughter goddesses, Demeter and Persephone, of ancient Greece. His argument is that the source of ideas held by the ancient Greeks probably emanated from Africa, in particular from Egypt (Bryant 1949: 669-76). He claims that this knowledge spread not only north to Mediterranean littoral civilizations, but also spread south to southern Africa. *Inkosazana* (or *Nomkhubulwana*, as the terms are interchangeably used in literature), though associated with the sky and early anthropologists overlooked her mermaid form (Gluckman 1952), was also held to have manifested in the form of mermaids and snakes (Bernard 2010: 229). Bernard confirms that 'according to my Zulu informants, *Inkosazana* (*Nomkhubulwana*) resides in the water and can manifest as a mermaid, a snake, the rain or a rainbow, an animal and even a tree' (ibid: 120, footnote 1). Therefore, this diffusionist theory is regarded as a theoretical approach to water divinities. The theory also correlates with Bernard's level four of water divinity ideas transmission to be explained below (Bernard 2010), and for that reason the two theories will be used as interconnected.

Central to the diffusionist theory is human agency, in transmitting the water spirit ideas. In each society it is emigrants and refugees, who are victims of various historical crises and displacements, who are accredited with bringing the water spirit ideas into the refugee societies or host regions. The diffusionist argument has underpinned many previous anthropological and religious studies that I have read. For example, Adams (2007) concluded that the beliefs in *Cymbee* water spirits in South Carolina, were introduced by the African slaves. Researchers on the African diaspora (Brown; Thompson, cited in Adams 2007) have linked this belief to an area in west-central Africa from where a significant number of Africans was imported. The term *Cymbee* is a corruption of the term *simbi*, from the Bantu cluster of languages, which refers to a water spirit believed in, in Kongo, west-central Africa (Adams 2007).

In further reinforcing the diffusionist approach, Van Stipriaan (2002: 87) notes that 'it is possible that the original West African images of water goddesses were influenced by European images of mermaids and similar figures as early as the 16th century.' He writes stories surrounding the emergence of beliefs in an elusive water-goddess-- popular in west-central African countries, such as Liberia, Niger, DRC, Congo Brazzaville, Ghana, Cameroon and Nigeria that validate the contention that the idea came from Europe. Thus, for Van Stripiaan both the idea and images were exotic to Africa.

Central in these stories, is the role of traders in spreading the *Mami- wata* idea. It has also been demonstrated in some societies of west- central Africa that the name *Mami- wata* itself is a Pidgin English term for Mummy Water or Mother water (Wendl 1991 cited in Van Stipriaan 200). Hence, it may be argued that was borrowed from Europe. But this school of thought has been questioned by scholars such as Masquelier (2008), who dispute the European provenance of, stressing the African roots of the water deity by pointing to her embeddedness in local religious forms and contexts.

However, to me the diffusionist perspective seems to be more convincing because the contemporary images resemble European water deities of the medieval ages (see images in Drewal 2008 edited book on: *Arts for Water Spirits*). Moreover, Bernard (2010: 117) acknowledges the potential validity of some diffusionist explanations when she presents commonly shared core features of water divinity manifestations among the San, Xhosa, Zulu and Shona peoples. The existence of such similarities among these four groups of people speaks volumes in relation to the diffusion of ideas.

22.1.1. Scudder and Colson: Their use of a diffusionist approach to Nyaminyami beliefs

In the case of Nyaminyami, the diffusionist stance has also been adopted by Colson and Scudder, who hold that the beliefs relating to Nyaminyami were probably introduced to some of the BaTonga people, living in the Kariba gorge section of the Zambezi Valley, by the Shona emigrants, who moved into the Valley at some unknown time, with Sampakaruma being the first chieftaincy to be influenced.¹³ In agreement with Colson and Scudder, the ethnographic findings for this present study, among some of the BaTonga living near the Kariba gorge, happens to correlate, to some degree, with the argument put forward by Colson and Scudder, as it shall be highlighted in the empirical chapters of this thesis. Though, I will present the diffusion argument to the origins of Nyaminyami beliefs, I will also- using the materialities concept (Fontein 2015)- examine other possible ways through which the ‘Kariva- rock’ landscape would have generated the emergence of a snake that provided people with meat, and which may presumably have been influenced by the Shangwe over time. This is largely because relying solely on the diffusion explanations is rather pernicious

¹³ Elizabeth Colson and Thayer Scudder did not publish their theory, but they have verbally transmitted it to the 21st century generation of scholars on the BaTonga. Good examples of these scholars are Professor JoAnn McGregor (2003a: p34) and Emma Sitambuli (2016:pp 199-200) who communicated with Colson. Kaoma (2014) communicated with Thayer Scudder and I have also had the privilege to personally discuss with Thayer Scudder (via emails) pertaining to their theory of explaining the development and occurrence (or prevalence) of Nyaminyami beliefs among the BaTonga people of the Zambezi Valley.

to the BaTonga present generations as it disempowers them given that their elders had long-standing claims of connection with 'Kariva'.

However, the diffusionist approach has its own shortcomings. The explanatory power of diffusionism was soon questioned, mainly on the basis that it was difficult to scientifically prove and amounted to "little more than speculation" (Howard & Dunaif-Hattis, 1992: 364, cited in Bernard 2010: 29). And tracing the specifics of occurrences of diffusion for over hundreds of years back, is very difficult. Only the developments since the 19th century can be traced with greater certainty (Van Stipriaan 2002). This approach is problematic and confusing, in that it does not give us the main or initial centre where these beliefs originated in the world. It creates more questions than answers. Every researcher has his or her own diffusionist conclusions pertaining their own water divinity of study. Those who have studied European water spirits, have said they came from Africa; those who have studied African water divinities, argue that they came from Europe; some point to various African centres of origin amongst other conclusions. However, attempting to find the main centre today is a quest for an illusion.

Bernard (2010) argues that the diffusionist arguments are as difficult to prove as they are to disprove. But, she agrees that it is undeniable that the diffusion of knowledge, practice, as well as artefacts, does occur, not only between contiguous groups, but also between those that are more distant. In agreement with Bernard, this study also bolsters the diffusionist arguments, since in the many cases they have been applied to, they have proved to be more relevant and authentic. Intermarriages, trade and migrations occurred frequently in ancient times, as well as in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in African societies, perpetuating the exchange of ideas, and it is in this regard that water spirit ideas circulated across different societies (Bernard 2010).

Despite its identified shortcomings, linguistic evidence in many instances has justified the transmission of water spirit ideas from one society to the other, for example the emergence of the *Cymbee* and *Mami-wata* water spirits in South Carolina and West Africa respectively, mentioned earlier on. Archival research in some areas also unearths the diffusion of water spirit ideas. For instance, in his conclusion that the Papa people introduced ideas of water goddesses known as 'Watramama' in Suriname, Van Stipriaan (2002) cites records of the year 1775 by Jean Nepveu, a perceptive observer and later governor of Suriname, who notes that 'the Papa..., have introduced certain diabolical practices in their

romps and dances, which they have transferred to all the other slaves, (...) which is generally known as Water mama' (Van Stipriaan 2002: 88).

2.2.2. Sociological (structural-functionalism) approach to religion

Structural functionalism, by definition, emphasizes the manner in which belief, and particularly ritual, reinforce the traditional social ties between individuals; it stresses the way in which the social structure of a group is strengthened and perpetuated through the ritualistic symbolization of the underlying social values upon which it rests. In short, it insists that religion plays its most important role in the creation and maintenance of group and society, rather than in the comfort of the individual (Radcliffe- Brown 1965: 154). The sociological theory has been adopted in explaining the prevalence of water divinity beliefs in society. Bernard writes that the only substantial sociological argument relating to water divinity phenomena, was Gluckman's (1954) use of the Zulu *Nomkhubulwana* rituals to support his rituals of rebellion hypothesis (Bernard 2010: 133). Very briefly, this argument proposed that the rituals dedicated to the Zulu heavenly princess, *Nomkhubulwana*, served to reinforce the gendered power relations and patriarchal control of the Zulu-agnatic clan system (ibid). The Zulu say that *Nomukhubulwana* moves with the mist, as on one side as a human being, and on the other side, as a river (Bryant cited in Gluckman, 1954: 4).

Within a fertility rite which was related to *Nomukhubulwana*, what was required was a series of transgressions of gender boundaries by women and girls. The girls wore men's clothes, and herded and milked the cattle, which was an exclusively male activity and strictly taboo for females. At various stages of the ritual women and girls went naked, and sang obscene songs, while men and boys hid in their homes (Gluckman 1952: 5; see also Bryant 1949: 665). They humiliated men, and acted in lewd and provocative manner. While breaking the fundamental taboos of society, they thus revealed the tensions between men and women, and released these tensions. According to Gluckman, this is the deeper meaning of the ceremonies, insofar as the ritual served as a means of integrating centrifugal powers in society (Gluckman 1954). Thus, this water divinity rite functioned to empower women, as during the rite they adopted the dominant role, behaved as if they were their brothers, who stayed at home as if they were women. Apart from this function, the ceremony assured the society of good crops and yields, and for this reason "the men did not abstain from participation in the ceremonial, and regard it as a women's affair, instead men were convinced that the ceremony would help produce good crops..." (ibid: 6)

Building upon the earlier arguments of the sociological approach to the water divinity occurrence, this study also assesses the significance (or functions) of Nyaminyami rituals and beliefs, as entailed in the broad topic of the thesis, to the creation and maintenance of some parts of the BaTonga society. But, this study goes beyond the static arguments of the sociological approach, which did not sufficiently take into consideration the issue of social change. Schroter (2002: 45) lambasted the sociological theory of Gluckman ‘as too static’. Schroter argument is plausible because a question maybe asked that: Are the rituals dedicated to *Nomkhubulwana* still gendered at the same level as they were before? Research has shown that social change affects religion either positively or negatively (Nyang 2010; Sabet 1996). The move of 1958, and the subsequent exposure to Christianity and new technologies, impacted upon BaTonga religious beliefs, Nyaminyami included. Thus, the study unearths the changes and continuities in the structural and functional implications of Nyaminyami beliefs and rituals in the Batonga society. Nyaminyami rituals and beliefs served changing functions across generations and overtime, and thus were not static.

Geertz criticized the structural functionalist approach as ahistorical and too static in its elaborations of the role of religion and rituals in society. He argues that, where the functional approach has been least impressive, is in dealing with social change. Geertz argues that the emphasis on systems in balance, on social homeostasis, and on timeless structural pictures, leads to a bias in favour of “well-integrated” societies in a stable equilibrium and to a tendency to emphasize the functional aspects of a people’s social usages and customs, rather than their dysfunctional implications. In analyses of religion, this kind of static, ahistorical approach has led to a somewhat over-conservative view of the role of ritual and belief in social life (Geertz 1957: 32). Another criticism of the functionalist perspective is that it romanticized the issue of reinforcement of culture and society through ritual, yet sometimes rituals can demolish societies (Schroter 2002). Despite its weaknesses, the sociological approach is useful in informing the understanding of the potential role of Nyaminyami beliefs in the maintenance of the BaTonga society over time.

2.2.3. Four-level analysis model.

This model was proposed by Penelope Bernard (2010) as she sought to understand the complexities of water divinities in southern Africa, which initial water divinity theorists had overlooked. These levels of analysis are four in number: experience, structure, praxis and transmission. In its hallmarks, the model cuts across other earlier sociological and diffusionist

theories on the water divinity phenomenon. Certain levels of analysis in this model, address issues in other earlier theories, and some of these theories are more useful and relevant at certain levels (or phases) rather than others (ibid: 240). Bernard believes that the prevalence of water spirits or river gods in any society can be understood through the four levels of analysis, that each water divinity belief should be studied alongside the main tenets of each level of analysis and if this is achieved, the complex whole of water spirits can be known. The hallmarks of Bernard's arguments are summarized in the following quotation:

Firstly there is the experience itself (with a water spirit); secondly there are the beliefs, notions or 'modes of thought' regarding the experience (what people say about the water spirit), and these may be drawn from both a personal or wider cultural 'stock of knowledge', about the experience; thirdly there is the level of action, or 'modes of action'-(what people do about the experience), how they use it or act upon it (i.e. through ritual, politics etc.). At a fourth level, we can ask how, to what extent, and in which direction, knowledge regarding these experiences (with the water spirit) is transmitted within and between groups, and the processes by which it may be transformed (Bernard 2010: 28).¹⁴

Table. 1. Adaptation of Bernard's FLA model (2010: 31): showing levels of analysis, and the main tenets of each level of analysis.

Level of analysis	Main tenets
Level 1. Experience	Going underwater, dreams and their realization, animal visitation/s and mermaid and/or snake encounters
Level 2. Interpretation	At individual level, and at societal level (These relate to 'modes of thought' e.g. conceptions and normative rules)
Level 3. Praxis	Activity as influenced by agency acting on normative rules and structure e.g.: 1. Codes of conduct 2. Taboos and Avoidances 3. Ritual action
Level 4. Transmission	How the knowledge is transmitted and modified.

¹⁴The bracketed words in this Bernard's transcribed text were added by the author for clarification.

Penetrating these four levels of analysis, is the issue of agency, or the capacity of individuals or groups to act and transform social reality, which may serve to benefit the agents involved (Bernard 2010). Agency 'might account for the variations that are found across regions' (Bernard 2010: 242). This is largely because the capacity of individuals or groups to act and transform social reality differs from society to society. It is important to emphasize that each level is not discreet and maintains a complex dialectic with the other levels, and omitting one level may give us a somewhat skewed understanding of the phenomenon (ibid).

'Experience' guides this study in elaborating some BaTonga people's familiarities with Nyaminyami. Understanding the experiences of people with water spirits is crucial, as it is in this that we can be able to rigorously unearth the cultural significance of water spirits over space and time, to those people. By virtue of examining the Nyaminyami's visitation to some of the BaTonga communities and some BaTonga's interactions with him, the cultural importance of him (Nyaminyami) can be clearly understood. Furthermore, the past and contemporary climatic events occurring along the Zambezi and the subsequent Lake Kariba are also considered in this thesis as important experiences with Nyaminyami, as these climatic changes are differently interpreted by some BaTonga people. It is in what people say, in their 'modes of thought' (interpretation), about their experiences with Nyaminyami, that the meaning of their experiences with Nyaminyami is assigned, and may be known to anthropologists. Experience and interpretation within Nyaminyami contexts are to be assessed from a historical perspective. My main argument is that the ways in which Nyaminyami was experienced and interpreted transformed over time. As people interpreted the occurrence of Nyaminyami over time, they were remaking it. I will also demonstrate the complex and diverse repertoires of interpretations of the Nyaminyami occurrences that exist amongst the BaTonga themselves. The interpretations are not monolithic or rigid among people of different ages etc. but they are fluid. There is no interpretation about any water spirit existence that is absolute truth, interpretation is validated within a system of authority. Furthermore, journalists have also interpreted Nyaminyami in very different ways from those of the BaTonga. Thus, experiences and interpretations with water spirits cannot be romanticized and simplified as being monolithic and coherent in each particular society, as old school anthropology would want us to believe, because there are different repertoires of interpreting water spirit experiences.

Furthermore, the third level, i.e. ‘praxis’, is about mode of action, how people act out their experiences. In this context, this third level of analysis guides this study in examining the ritual and political engagements associated with Nyaminyami belief systems, as there is much to document about them. But, praxis associated with Nyaminyami also changed over time because there were times people held ceremonies along the Zambezi River and after the resettlement of 1958 and the Kariba dam construction they ended up propitiating in a Lake and not a river as before. At a fourth level, which is ‘transmission,’ this study traces the ways by which Nyaminyami beliefs were spread among neighbouring BaTonga people. This fourth level assists us comprehend the diffusion of the Nyaminyami idea from the Shangwe people to the specific BaTonga people who had contacts with the Shangwe people. Bernard (2010: 30) has argued that this factor of transmission must not be neglected if we are to understand the distribution of ideas and practices regarding the water divinities across the southern African region.

Although, Bernard has thoroughly documented the various climatic events and water ‘signs’ embroiled in the water divinity complexities in her publications, (Bernard 2010; 2013), in the making of the theory ‘signs’ of water spirit presence either in the ‘water bodies’ or on the ‘water banks’ represented by the occurrence of extraordinary climatic events are not explicitly highlighted, but they would form part of experience (level 1). These ‘signs’ can be in the form of extraordinary climatic events, like thunder, tornadoes and waves, that are attributed to either the anger or forms of communication of the water spirits. It has emerged from my research on Nyaminyami and water spirits in general, that signs of water spirit presence such as the changing of water’s colour and form, increasing in its current, and other extraordinary climatic events, occurring nearer to where water spirits are believed to reside, are important and meaningful experiences that must not be downplayed as they influence ‘interpretation’ and ‘praxis’ of the water divinities. People can perform rituals in response to particular climatic events. These climatic events do not only imply or communicate negative messages, but they also imply and communicate positive messages to the people. Therefore, they can be included in the making of the Four Level Analysis model, especially in the level 1 of ‘experience’.

2.2.4. Water (inhabited by *njuzu*, water spirits) as an *Index of power* concept.

Water is understood in its various manifestations (such as rain, run off, rivers, pools, dams and in its diverse material qualities (as a volume or a line, its fluidity, pooling, erosiveness,

cruciality for life). Although water is a threat (it kills and destroys in various ways), it is largely necessary for life. Bernard postulates that water in itself is regarded among many African religious functionaries as a living force, a powerful symbol and medium for purification and healing, and as such water sources are regarded as essential parts of the landscape for conducting rituals to aid communication with the spirits. The spirit world is regarded as the ultimate source of such life- sustaining resources (Bernard 2001; 2003; 2013).

Fontein focused particularly on the significance of rainmaking ceremonies, encounters with *njuzu*, and national biras (ancestral possession ceremonies) in 2005/2006, in arguing that water often acts as an index of power - of entangled, contested play of legitimacy and sovereignty- across many different registers of meaning and regimes of rule in which it is saturated. However, this thesis is concerned with the encounters with *njuzu* as this informs the study. Fontein examines how the presence and encounters with *njuzu* in Lake Mutirikwi (Masvingo, south-eastern Zimbabwe) and *njuzu's* associations with rain capacitated the waterscape with exceptional importance or centrality to 'both demonstrative, performative and sometimes coercive assertions of sovereignty, autonomy and capacity on the one hand, and to those productive, disciplining, governmental dimensions of power that circulate around appeals to legitimacy, moral authority and consent on the other hand' (Fontein 2015: 83). Exploring the political salience of water's materialities offers an opportunity to consider the relationship between a 'semiotics of waters' and the political materiality of signs (*Ibid*). Fontein gives an illustration of how the drownings of two cattle and a school boy by *njuzu* in an almost dried up riverbed near Lake Mutirikwi in March 2005, were inexorably connected and understood as the material manifestations of the anger of *njuzu* (and Chief Chikwanda's illegitimacy). The villagers interpreted these drownings as a result of the anger of water (and *njuzu*), and they narrated that *Mvura yakatsamwa, ivhu rakatsamwa nokuti madzishe haasi kuwirirana* (the anger of the soils because Chiefs are quarrelling).

The villagers of Chikwanda including spirit mediums, war veterans and ZANU PF committee members disputed the authority and legitimacy of Chief Chikwanda, citing the severe droughts of 2004/ 2005 caused by *njuzu's* anger as an indication of his failures. Since some members of the chieftdom consider *njuzu* as providers of water and associate *njuzu* with *Mari* who provides rain due to their habitation of sacred pools, river and springs (Fontein 2016: 55), *njuzu*, drought and Chikwanda's illegitimacy were connected. Thus, the beliefs in *njuzu* are entangled in the wider territorial politics of the area.

In the same vein this thesis will examine how Nyaminyami belief systems are now embroiled in the politics of the Lake Kariba waterscape, and how drownings and decrease in

water volumes attributed to Nyaminyami further influence politics both locally and nationally. These political realms involve the BaTonga elders' claims of entitlement and ownership of Lake Kariba. As Fontein (2006) notes 'traditionalists and especially spirit mediums, can articulate political, social and moral commentary, as well as asserting their own particular claims, through speaking and performing particular languages of water and land which appeal to the spiritual ownership of land and the provision of rain' (2006: 224).

The entanglement between *njuzu*, rain, drought and politics is an indication that the materialities of water and land are active and affective. In as far as they influence legitimacy and autochthony, they also shape claims to ownership and entitlement to water resources. Instead of only understanding legitimacy from a human agency perspective, the idea shows how water (and rain) itself can influence the articulations of legitimacy. 'It is good rains, at the right time, in sufficient quantities, and not destructive of crops or houses, that can signify the legitimacy of chiefs, clans, mediums, and the moral wellbeing of community, government, or even the state at large. Bad rains, or no rain at all, question such claims to legitimacy', (Fontein 2015: 83). Thus, materialities of waterscapes can shape politics and legitimacies in numerous ways. Similarly, the provision of rain at Kariba nowadays, and the increase in water levels due to the benevolence of water spirits (Nyaminyami included) elevated the legitimacy of the ownership of the Lake of BaTonga people who occasionally conducted ceremonies in the Lake.

2.2. 5. Linking the water divinity approaches.

As has already been mentioned, the main purpose of linking the theories is that in certain sections of the thesis they are used in an interconnected way for the purposes of argument construction. The possibility that Nyaminyami's occurrences could be multiple and complex at each given epoch, justifies the interconnections of the theories. Bernard's four level analysis model, though broader in its explanations than earlier approaches, it does not rule out the usefulness or relevance of the existing theoretical approaches. Some levels of her theory correlate with the main tenets of other theoretical approaches. Bernard herself has clearly shown the linkage between her approach to the diffusionist and sociological theoretical approaches. But she did not link it with the 'water as an index of power' concept because this was proposed five years after she had proposed her own theory. According to Bernard, the sociological analysis is more applicable at the level of interpretation of the experience and the praxis that results. While the diffusionist approach attends to transmission of the knowledge

and practice, the sociological analysis may also be usefully applied at this level (Bernard 2010).

The water (or *njuzu*) as an Index of power concept can be clearly linked with the level of interpretation (or structure) since the idea of water as an index of power is mainly concerned with the ‘registers of meaning’ and ‘regimes of rule’ associated with water and the manifestation of *njuzu* (Fontein 2015; 2016). Furthermore, the ‘water as an index of power’ concept can also be usefully accommodated into the overall model, especially in that Bernard points out that ‘agency’ (power) permeates all four levels of analysis. The concept can further be interlinked with the sociological perspectives as it is about the function that the water, inhabited by water spirits, plays in the understandings of the politics of water.

2.3. Theories of resettlement

Theories of resettlement are of relevance because the study is demarcated into two epochs i.e. before and after 1958 (the resettlement year). As it has already been mentioned, the BaTonga ‘were subject in 1958 to a massive uprooting and resettlement when a large hydro-electric dam was built across the Zambezi at Kariba Gorge’ (Colson 1971: 1). Henceforth, this study examines Nyaminyami’s significance and prevalence both before and after the move. Furthermore, some elders say that the removal of the BaTonga along the Zambezi River, which was believed to be the habitat of Nyaminyami, seriously affected Nyaminyami-related belief systems. This move was far from voluntary (Weinrich 1977: 23), especially on the south bank, where it was forceful and hasty, to an extent that the local people’s religion was unavoidably altered (Colson 1971; McGregor 2003a; 2009) - as shall be indicated in the empirical chapters. The resettlement of 1958 significantly affected the ways by which Nyaminyami beliefs were observed. It exposed the BaTonga people to Christianity and new technologies prevalent in new resettlement areas that influenced Nyaminyami belief systems. Before 1958, Christianity and new technologies had not penetrated the Valley.¹⁵ The Valley had been marginal to colonial socio- economic and political development, and lacked roads, clinics, missions and schools (Colson 1971; McGregor 2003a). The resuscitation of beliefs and practices relating to Nyaminyami after the Kariba resettlement required total revision, as they had been altered beyond recognition, by the resettlement itself. This study aside, the theories of resettlement could usefully guide every study focusing mainly on water development projects requiring the removal of riverine peoples believing in water spirits, or

¹⁵I shall fully explore how the Zambezi Valley was isolated from the main centres of colonial administration to an extent that it was less affected by Christianity and new technologies.

who hold beliefs regarding water across the globe. Below, I show the applicability of each theory to the Nyaminyami context.

2.3.1. Psycho-Socio-Cultural (PSC) Theory

Downing and Garcia-Downing (2009) are the founders of the Psycho- Socio-Cultural theory. This theory assumes that involuntary displacement (ID) affects pre- displacement ‘routine culture’ and renders it meaningless or problematic (in a post displacement ‘dissonant culture’) and further that, in post- displacement areas, people can restore a ‘new routine culture’. Downing and Garcia- Downing caution us that what they are proposing, is not a stage model, but a cycle. ‘Because the shift from routine, to dissonance, to a new routine culture, may begin and end at different times, our R> D>N R model is not a stage model’ (2009: 225). The PSC theory is a testimony to the idea that culture is not static and is bound to change, especially when it undergoes numerous social transformations such as involuntary resettlement. This is diametrically opposite to the sociological approaches to water divinities that had observed culture (particularly beliefs in water spirits) as static - yet these are bound to change over time, and in this case, Nyaminyami beliefs were seriously altered by the Kariba resettlement. The cycle is as follows: **Routine culture > Dissonance culture > New Routine Culture.**

Downing and Garcia- Downing are interested in the Psycho-Socio- Cultural (rather than the Economic) risks of involuntary displacement because these risks have been the most neglected, the most difficult to study, and the least likely to be mitigated (Scudder 2005a cited in Downing and Garcia- Downing 2009: 225). They argue that ‘mitigation of the economic damages has focused on restoring losses, recovering livelihoods, and -in rare instances - sharing project benefits with those displaced.’ In contrast, mitigation of PSC damages has proven much more problematic. Few infrastructure projects consider or attempt to mitigate these risks. Beliefs in water divinities fall under the PSC category and in many resettlement cases they are overlooked. These PSC arguments are to be referred to in informing policy suggestions to be adopted when resettling riverine peoples, to be suggested in Chapter 10. Although irreversible, there are ways to mitigate PSC impoverishment. Relative success is determined by how well the post-displacement routine culture is able to address fundamental questions of the displaced, compared with the pre-displacement culture (Ibid). An understanding of what happens when people are involuntarily displaced, begins with culture. Culture is a set of constructs and rules for constructing the world, interpreting it, and adapting to it. The constructs and rules answer what the authors call “primary questions”,

such as ‘Who are we? Where are we? Where are we coming from? Where are we going? Why do people live and die? What are our responsibilities to others and to ourselves?’ (Ibid: 228). The BaTonga, when they were removed from the Zambezi, had their answers to these questions significantly altered, as shall be shown in Chapter 6.

Downing and Garcia- Downing note that the routine culture is transformed by involuntary displacement into what they termed ‘dissonant culture’, which then transforms into ‘new’ routine culture. In the PSC realm, routine culture is defined as humdrum, every day, mundane, tedious and taken for granted culture. Involuntary displacement drastically destabilizes routine culture, by threatening it or rendering it meaningless. Then social life becomes chaotic, uncertain, and unpredictable (Ibid: 230). These impacts on PSC are some of the characteristics of the ‘dissonant’ culture. Dissonant culture is a problematic and temporary reordering of space, time, relationships, norms, and the psycho-socio-cultural realm; dissonance usually appears long before physical displacement (see also Scudder 2005a). New routine culture comes when displacees attempt to restore or re-establish their pre-displacement routine culture. As displacees attempt to re-establish a new routine, Scudder (2005a) reports that they favour incremental change over transformational change. They build on their familiar routines. De Wet argues that the emergence of what we are calling a new routine culture is not well understood and depends on the degree of disruption (De Wet 2006 cited in Downing and Garcia- Downing 2009).

While in economics, it is possible to recover lost income or property, in the PSC realm, it is highly unlikely. Humpty-Dumpty, they argued, cannot be put back together again. In the PSC realm, it is highly improbable that a pre- displacement routine culture will be recovered, let alone restored (Downing and Garcia Downing 2009: 225). In as far as this thesis is concerned, the cultural practices relating to Nyaminyami water spirits (in their entirety) passed through the routine culture> dissonance culture> new routine culture cycle. Empirical findings from the field discovered that there are now significant changes and continuities in the Nyaminyami belief systems. There are differences and some continuities between the pre- displacement situation and the post- resettlement situation, and some BaTonga people attribute these changes to the resettlement of 1958. This section is concerned with the both differences and continuities.

However, new social articulations, the onset of a new routine culture, may also begin and end at different times within a population. People may re-establish a new routine for their children’s education, but remain in dissonance in their livelihoods strategies. Some families or communities within the same involuntary displacement may develop a new routine; others

may be slower in doing so. Similarly, the reinstatement of Nyaminyami beliefs varied widely among those communities who believed in him. Ongoing processes of change in either Musampakaruma or Mola chieftaincies help us understand variations in the occurrence of Nyaminyami belief systems and stories. These differences can also be understood in the context of differences in the distribution of Nyaminyami beliefs along varied social variables of age, gender, income etc. which shall be clearly indicated in Chapter 9. In some cases, furthermore, a new routine culture can revert back to dissonance and this would be **R>D>NR>D** until a new, more lasting routine culture takes hold (Downing and Garcia-Downing 2009: 235). Routine culture usually reverts back to dissonance if it fails to answer the pre- displacement primary (cultural) questions (ibid). Similarly, the outwitting of Chiefs Mola and Musampakaruma in matters of propitiating in the Lake Kariba, to be fully explored in Chapter 8 and 9, has led to the reverting of the new routine culture to dissonance for these chieftaincies. Many socio- economic and political factors influence the failure of the new-routine culture to answer the pre- displacement questions.

2.3.2. Imposed Socio- Spatial Change Theory

This theory of understanding resettlement in socio-spatial ways was proposed by Chris de Wet (2006; 2015). De Wet's social-spatial change theory cuts across other earlier frameworks by directing attention to the base of Development Induced Displacement and Resettlement (DIDR) i.e. imposed spatial change, the need to localize resettlement and the on-going specific local changes it brings about (Sitambuli 2016: 48-9). Through this theory, De Wet has characterized DIDR related phenomena by drawing attention to basic elements, through a i) spatially oriented ii) processual iii) risk-oriented approach, to the phenomenon of DIDR, which iv) takes into account its inherent complexities and which v) contextualizes it within the on-going processes of change and the wider historical and political-economic setting within which it takes place. But this study pays more attention to the spatially oriented and the ongoing processes of change aspects.

De Wet used the idea of 'emplacement' to portray an association and identification that a person or a family has with an area - which is recognised by others in a similar position. Emplacement thus involves a kind of membership or local citizenship, which provides members with the right to derive sustenance, society and significance from the place they hold in common. Emplacement thus is socio-spatially constituted (see de Wet 2008 for a fuller discussion). At base, DIDR involves people having to move from one or more area/s, in which they have been living, to one or more other area/s. With DIDR, people are plucked out

of their old physical and social settings, environmental and institutional resource bases, and relationship networks – out of their emplacement - and have to reconstitute themselves socially and economically in a new environment. Such spatial change amounts to *socio-spatial change* (De Wet 2015). The argument being advanced here is that the kind and extent of the socio-spatial change involved in any particular case of DIDR will exercise a significant influence upon the way the resettlement process plays itself out, and upon its consequences. Some resettlements involve movement over a much greater distance, and a much greater change of terrain - and therefore a much greater effort at adaptation - than others.

On the same note, the removal of those who lived along the Zambezi River caused immense socio- spatial changes. The resettlement scheme saw some occupying far away areas as compared to others. Musampakaruma was moved to a place nearly 200 kilometres away from their previous homesteads and Mola only moved some 15 kilometres from Lake Kariba. These differences mean a lot in as far as adaptation to resettlement processes is concerned. The people of Mola are still nearer to the Lake that is believed to be sheltering Nyaminyami, whereas those in Musampakaruma are far from it, and this speaks volumes about variations in Nyaminyami belief systems between the two chiefdoms. The differences in space and place can influence a people's experiences with water divinities, which can then further influence the structure, praxis and transmission levels of analysis in understanding water divinity phenomenon proposed by Bernard (2010). Furthermore, Musampakaruma is now nearer to towns such as Karoi and Gokwe as compared to Mola, and hence the former chiefdom is more affected by new technologies and Christianity- that further influence Nyaminyami beliefs- as compared to the latter.

Moreover, since the Kariba resettlement of 1958 was hasty, haphazard, and forceful, especially on the south bank where it was achieved in a short period of only 18 months, (McGregor 2009), other displacees found themselves in chiefdoms they had not belonged to before the move. Ethnographic findings of this research show that some who had occupied areas where Nyaminyami beliefs were widely followed before the move, found themselves occupying areas in which Nyaminyami was unknown, such as those from Mola who settled in Sinakatenge- Binga. Some who occupied areas where Nyaminyami was unknown found themselves in areas where he is known, i.e. moving from Sinakatenge to either Mola or Musampakaruma. Or even the movement of people within the chieftaincies in which Nyaminyami was strong, also impacts one's adherence to Nyaminyami, as levels of

religiosity varied from chiefdom to chiefdom as well as from individual to individual. These socio- spatial changes inflicted upon the people by the move better explain the prevalence of complex levels of both personal and societal religiosity, in as far as beliefs in Nyaminyami are concerned. Today we have people who live in Musampakaruma and Mola areas, in which Nyaminyami beliefs are strong, but do not share these beliefs.

2.3.3. Four Stage Resettlement Framework (FSF)

The FSF was put forward by Scudder (2009), and it was developed using the Kariba case (mainly on the north bank or Zambian side), which is also the case of this present study, (but this study is centred on the south bank). Emphasis in the four- stage framework is on how the majority of resettlers can be expected to behave during a successful resettlement process, which must be completed through the second generation if resettlement outcomes are to be considered successful (Scudder 2009: 29). A majority of resettlers either maintain or improve their living standards into the second generation. Analysis of the resettlement process tend to stop at that point because it becomes increasingly difficult to isolate and analyze resettlement impacts in a community's ongoing history (Scudder 2017). Success is simply defined as development that is environmentally, economically, institutionally and culturally sustainable into the second generation (Scudder 2005b: 32).

The first two stages of Scudder's framework which involve planning and the actual move, and the period soon thereafter, are associated with increased stress, accordingly I refer to these stages as the 'stress stages'. Scudder postulates that "involuntary resettlement is now generally accepted as stressful, especially during the first two stages of the resettlement process, during which physiological, psychological, and sociocultural stresses are synergistically interrelated" (2009: 29). In these two stages, resettlers will be risk- averse. However, with the commencement of stage 3, resettlers transform to risk- takers. These last two stages are characterized by community re-formation and economic development, and handing over of scheme administration to the resettlers, and thus I refer to these stages as 'development stages.'

If the majority reach only stage 2, or slip back from stage 3 and 4, they will be unable even to restore, let alone improve, their pre- project livelihoods (Scudder 2009: 29). Resettlers on the north- bank reached the fourth stage, but those on the south bank - according to this research - did not reach stage 3 and 4 as desired, but they only reached stage 1 and 2. This does not mean, however, that relocates remain indefinitely in a kind of suspended transitional or crisis mode, with a continuous inward- turning, risk- avoiding

orientation. It means people do- for want of a word that does not imply too much of the positive assumptions of self-sustenance and sustainability that Scudder's latter stages may seem to do- 'settle down' (De Wet 2015). Where people have not achieved economic development, but are able to maintain themselves at a fairly constant level in their new situation, it may be more appropriate to talk of 'economic maintaining', even if this is a slow-downward spiral (De Wet 2015).

There is a plethora of factors that minimized the possibilities of the resettlers, on the south bank, to realize the final stages, and these include the persistence of colonialism (the Rhodesian Declaration of Independence), the Zimbabwe Liberation War of Independence, absence of development opportunities, poor water supply in resettlement areas, poor road networks, poor health facilities, unavailability of electricity, limited access of resettlers to Lake Kariba and its resources, and so on.

The ways by which some resettlers negotiate the four stages determine the ways in which they can restore their pre- resettlement religious beliefs, practices and rituals. In support of this view, De Wet (2015) notes that changes in emplacements due to displacement can alter a people's ritual processes. It is clear that the three stresses mentioned in the first two stages destabilized BaTonga traditional religion, Nyaminyami beliefs included (especially to those who held such beliefs). Some rituals and beliefs were torn apart and some were abandoned due to increased stress and ultimate changes in emplacements. The failure for the BaTonga to satisfactorily reach stages 3 and 4 has made them engage in politics of the landscape activities, where they contest for accessing the Lake Kariba and its resources so that they can use these resources to develop their own respective chieftaincies. While the presence of Nyaminyami in the Lake is utilized in Mola and Musampakaruma for justification of accessing the Lake, the idea of Nyaminyami is not used in Sinakatenge. Rather in Sinakatenge, other religious issues, such as the presence of the ancestors and sacred places in the lake, take centre stage. Before 1958, Nyaminyami was not used in the politics debates, this only started after resettlement. Therefore, we see that the Nyaminyami idea was appropriated after resettlement by some BaTonga people for various socio-economic and political agendas.

Stage 1: Recruitment and Planning

This stage deals with the protracted pre- displacement period, when government policymakers decide that people in a specific area are going to be moved, including the identification of relocation areas, and plans on how the move will be implemented. Usually,

those to be moved are not consulted, they can only know of the impending project through rumour and gossip. Scudder tells us that during this stage the resettlers experience considerable stress, disorientation and trauma, intensified by insufficient information about the impending project that they neither understand, nor believe what they are being told (Scudder 2009; 2017). This stage normally occurs before the physical move itself. The BaTonga 'had had no part in ... the decision to build the dam' (Colson 1971: 5). While on the north bank the BaTonga through the Gwembe (Ba)Tonga District Council (GTDC) were somewhat involved in the resettlement planning (Scudder 2005b: 31), on the southern bank no one was involved in planning for resettlement. This shows that stress was more increased on the south bank as compared to the north bank. Colson (1960: 1-2) found that prior to the move in 1956-57, 'the Valley (Ba)Tonga of both sides of the river were deeply perturbed at the thought that they must leave their homes and worried about the future. They were afraid that the physical resources of the resettlement areas would be insufficient for their needs, that the soil would be poor, that the water would be in short supply, that tsetse fly might attack livestock. They resented the burden of clearing new fields and building new villages forced upon them by the move. They foresaw that the move would in many cases separate them from kinsmen and former neighbours to whom they were bound by a multitude of ties...' According to Kaoma (2013) and Siwila (2015), some BaTonga people of both sides of the river were worried that they would be separated from their river god, Nyaminyami. It was these and many other uncertainties that caused increased stress among the BaTonga. Ritual enactment and the observance of some religious beliefs- (inclusive of Nyaminyami beliefs for those who believed in him) - deteriorated at this time. Though, the society was still functioning, it was deeply concerned with an impending project (Colson 1960). The thought of the impending project weakened a people's enthusiasm and willingness to carry out their religion.

Scudder argues that sometimes, contrary political propaganda run by different interest groups on why they are being relocated or where they will relocate to, further worsens the stress and uncertainties about relocatees future (Scudder 2009). Similarly, for the BaTonga on both sides, in the midsummer of 1955, Harry Nkumbula and his ANC (African National Congress) caused uncertainties in the Valley with the propaganda (of discrediting the white

man) they were spreading and the magical papers they were selling on 'Nyaminyami's' behalf. They lied that, for the BaTonga, the magical papers would protect them from being removed from the Valley (Clements 1959). These magical tickets were even sold in areas in which Nyaminyami was unknown – which does not mean that everyone who bought the tickets believed in Nyaminyami. The cost to a child was 1/9d, to a woman 2/6d, to a man 3/6d, to a village-headmen 10/-, and to a chief £3. There were a few who did not buy (Clements 1959). The documents issued to the chiefs were found to be copies of a petition which Nkumbula had sent to the Queen, asking that Kariba be abandoned and not as stated (Clements 1959). Robins and Legge (1959) argue that the 'magical tickets' were only sold to swell the funds of the congress. The poor desperate BaTonga were now vulnerable to numerous manipulations, and they only bought the tickets which they thought would cause them not to move, as they were endowed with Nyaminyami's powers. "The dam will never be built", the Tonga were told (ibid: 18). The fact that the Colonists had said one thing and the African National Congress was saying another different thing, highly confused people, and increased stress, thereby disturbing the people's enactment of their cultural and religious life.

Stage 2: Adjusting and Coping

Adjusting and coping can take from one to a few years for the majority of the resettlers, as it involves the physical move and typically, the first few years thereafter. However, Scudder (2005a: 34) found evidence where in some cases this stage went up to ten years or more, and in some cases, for many elderly people, this stage would end only with their death. Similarly, the majority of resettlers in the chiefdoms I studied can be regarded to be still in this stage. The people say they are still impoverished as they were after the actual move in 1958. During this second phase, the behavior of the majority tends to be risk averse and their living standards can be expected to drop (Scudder 2005a: 32). Consistently, there is evidence that shows that the majority of those displaced in 1958, on the south bank, are still impoverished, (Mashingaidze 2013; McGregor 2009; Saidi and Pophiwa 2017), and many died due to impoverishment. Scudder notes that this is the most stressful of the four stages. It is initiated during the process of physical removal and is likely to overlap Stage 1 planning to a certain extent (Scudder 2009). Physical removal on the south bank was achieved in a short space of only eighteen months (McGregor 2009). Thus, the removal period was inadequate, so much so that people hardly restored their pre-resettlement beliefs. The colonial officials on the

south bank used policemen to enforce resettlement, and this increased people's fears (Thompson et al 2005), Colson argues that 'religious practices associated with community life come in question at a time when people are most vulnerable to fears and insecurity' (1971: 2). The physical removal and its aftermath, at least among the south bank chieftaincies, was stressful. Physiological stress was reflected by 'greater population densities and inadequate water supplies that led to higher morbidity and mortality rates' (Scudder 2009: 39). Sociocultural stress was reflected by the loss of cultural inventory, and also ritual leaders within neighbourhoods, at least initially, were unable to rebuild shrines in host areas.

Those who believed in Nyaminyami and other religio-cultural figures associated with the river and the valley itself, underwent sociocultural stress because their beliefs could not be easily reinstated in new emplacements. Those in Sampakaruma were relocated to areas, over 200 kilometres from the river, thereby disconnecting them from Nyaminyami and other ancestors. Although Mola is still nearer to Kariba dam, the people there no longer see Nyaminyami and the graves of their fore fathers that were submerged by the Lake Kariba waters. In Sinakatenge, where Nyaminyami was not known, people had their specific religious beliefs seriously affected by the physical removal. In Musampakaruma and Mola, psychological stress was reflected by the persistence of nostalgic feelings for the past. People grieved losses of their ancestral homes, and also of Nyaminyami homage- the river. Stress and fear among those displaced were heightened by the Chisamu shootings that occurred on the north bank in Chipeco chiefdom, where people were resisting the move and police opened fire, killing 8 people and injuring 34 others (Colson 1971). Even though the shooting happened on the north bank, the news of the deaths reached the south bank, and people were frightened.

Stage 3: Community Formation and Economic Development

Community formation and economic development is expressed by increased innovative activities being undertaken by the majority of resettlers. At its commencement, people's behaviour changes from a risk-averse stance to a risk-taking stance that eventually characterizes the majority (Scudder 2005a: 36). The dramatic changes associated with stage 3 are only possible under two sets of conditions. The first requires resettlers to change their behavior radically. The second requires development opportunities into which settler initiative can be channelled and the provision of appropriate infrastructure, such as feeder roads and service and marketing centres (ibid: 37). Sadly, this stage was not satisfactorily

achieved on the south bank. The factors which made the people in Zambia achieve stage 3- such as tsetse control, cash compensation, education programmes and well- planned gillnet fisheries (Scudder 2009: 41) - were not presented to those displaced in Zimbabwe. Scudder (1985) reports that in Zimbabwe, the middle Zambezi Valley (northwest Zimbabwe) continues to be the least developed portion of the country. Scudder (2005b) shows that the Zambian BaTonga reached stage 4 in the early 1970s, at which time some Zimbabwean BaTonga were still struggling to progress out of their stage 2 shells. Although Mola and Sinakatenge did not reach stage 3 satisfactorily, this research found evidence of some prevalence of stage 3 characteristics in Musampakaruma, which developed a better economic base, as compared to those of the other two. In Musampakaruma, cash cropping of such crops as cotton began in the 1980s and later, in the 21st century, tobacco was also introduced, which made people partially experience the features of stage 3. Cash cropping among the BaTonga (Shangwe) of Musampakaruma was introduced by the Karanga, who came to settle among them around 1980. In Mola and Sinakatenge there is no cash crop farming, and people remain practising subsistence farming.

Furthermore, unlike in Zambia, where independence was acquired immediately after the move in 1964, in Zimbabwe colonialism continued till 1980, and this further perpetuated poverty among those displaced, as welfare of the whites was favoured at the expense of the Africans. In southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) the immediate aftermath of the removal from the river was characterized by famine in 1958, outbreaks of diseases, loss of livestock and a deep questioning of religious practices (McGregor, 2009: 137). The colonial government did not construct boreholes, clinics, schools and roads in the north-western part of Zimbabwe, which compromised people's realization of stage 3. Scudder (1982: 7) reported that there was lack of opportunity for the BaTonga in Zimbabwe '...within northern Sebungwe (northwest Zimbabwe) only a minority of the stores are locally owned, many traders within the area are outsiders simply because the local people do not have either the capital or the skills to enter non- agricultural enterprises.' The people in the above three chiefdoms have long been denied access to Lake Kariba and its resources (Mashingaidze 2013; McGregor 2009; Saidi 2016) - resources they might have utilized for their own economic development. Thus, they have not yet improved economically as intended in stage 3, and this lack of development opportunities has worsened impoverishment in these communities. However, there is an on- going contest over access to the Lake Kariba between the state and the BaTonga. Various issues have been raised by the BaTonga as justification of their entitlement to the Lake. Among these issues is

the need to appease in the Lake where Nyaminyami resides, especially by those who hold Nyaminyami beliefs.

Stage 4: Handing over and Incorporation

This stage, 'which may be taken to signify the successfulness relocation of a community' (De Wet 1995: 7), involves the handing over of local production systems and community leadership to second generation resettlers, and their integration into wider territorial, political and economic networks (Scudder 2005; 2009). Indeed, as I observed, second generation resettlers had leadership positions handed over to them, as some are now Headmen and Village Heads, but no meaningful production systems have been handed over. Scudder admits that handing over can be a difficult and complicated process (2005a: 40). Since impoverishment characterized stage 3 for the first generation resettlers, there was very little to hand over to them, - in fact it was impoverishment that was handed over to them. In Mola and Sinakatenge, there is no cash cropping, even subsistence farming itself remains poor, but in Sampakaruma the farming system has somewhat improved, thereby assuring food security in the chieftdom. Roads are poor in the three chieftaincies, for example the 35kms from Siakobvu (Nyaminyami Rural District Growth Point) to Mola is travelled in a space of 2 hours.

Poor health facilities and provision still persist; for instance, in Sampakaruma there is only one clinic, which can hardly serve all the 21 villages in the chieftdom, as they are significantly spread out. High levels of unemployment are also prevalent in these chieftdoms, as the fishery industry is dominated by whites, Ndebele and Shona people (Saidi 2017). There is still poor water supply in the three chieftdoms. There are boreholes, but they are so spread out, that some villagers have to rely on unprotected wells along water streams. In Chitenge village in Mola, for instance, there is one borehole near the main road which is only used by households in a 1 km radius and others fetch water from local rivers, such as Nabole. Cases of disease outbreak caused by unsafe water are not uncommon. In Sinakatenge, for example, I was told that about 30 people died of cholera in the early 2000s, and that this was a result of drinking of contaminated water. Moreover, the BaTonga are not even benefiting from the CAMPFIRE programme introduced in 1989, of managing natural resources, as stated in the terms of the programme, (Dzingirai 1996; 2003; Jeke 2014), thereby exacerbating impoverishment.

All these problems are a testimony that Scudder's four stages were not as realized in Zimbabwe as compared to Zambia. Both the colonial state and the ZANU PF government did

not improve the living standards of those displaced (Mashingaidze 2013). The second generation resettlers who did not eyewitness resettlement now engage in politics of the landscape debates and claim belonging to the Zambezi, in order to access the Lake's resources. In these debates we find the presence of Nyaminyami in the Lake and memories of past interactions with Nyaminyami present in folklore, being used by some BaTonga people, living along certain sections of the Lake Kariba, to justify claims of belonging and ownership of the Zambezi (or Lake Kariba). This observation is further strengthened by McGregor (2003a: 88) who discovered that among the BaTonga, 'memories of past interactions with the river and of being 'river people' retain significance today for some...'. These memories are used in on-going conflicts over access to resources, particularly in conjunction with demands for greater fishing rights and privileged access to river resources for locals. In the areas where McGregor researched (i.e. Binga, Victoria Falls and Hwange), people did/ do not need the idea of Nyaminyami for claiming ownership of the Lake because they did/ do not believe it. This discussion of how marginalized minorities have invoked a relationship to landscape in their claims to resources and other rights shows how memories of past ways of life and past interactions with the environment can have a persistent relevance even when day- to- day life has changed profoundly (McGregor 2003a: 105).

The failure of people to reach stage 3 and 4 (or to economically develop) has altered the expression of the people's levels of interpretation and praxis (i.e. levels 2 and 4 respectively of the Four Level Analyses approach), surrounding Nyaminyami beliefs. Thus, as Bernard suggested, different political-economic and socio- cultural interests may explain the differences that occur in the expression of the water divinity complex across various groups in southern Africa (Bernard 2010). The appropriation of Nyaminyami for political and economic agendas can be linked with the 'water as an index of power' concept (Fontein 2015), which emphasizes and focuses mainly on the political roles of water inhabited by river gods in the people's everyday life.

2.3.4. Linking the resettlement theories

A linkage of the various resettlement theories is necessary, because in some sections of the empirical chapters, these theories will be used as complimenting each other. Only particular aspects of the resettlement theories that are connected have been linked to each other. Dissonant culture would seem to have similar characteristics to those aspects described by Scudder for the Adjusting and Coping Stage, in terms of the expression of, and dealing with stress (De Wet 2015). Increased stress experienced in especially stage two when people are

being physically removed, inevitably renders cultures dissonant and unavoidably causes previous cultures to become what, Downing and Garcia- Downing, termed ‘humpty-dumpty’ (Downing and Garcia- Downing 2009: 225).

As with Scudder’s stage 3 of community formation and economic development, the emergence of new routine culture is not a simple matter. Displaced persons begin to articulate their new routine culture when they are able to make cumulative decisions to redefine and control their new environment to the point that they can answer, once more, primary questions and reorganize their socio-economic life (De Wet, 2015). If people fail to reach stage three in a sustainable manner, it is clear that certain new socio-cultural articulations may not be sustainable. A new routine culture may surface and then revert back to dissonant culture (Downing and Garcia- Downing 2009). Therefore, there is a connection between stages 3 and 4, and the re/construction of the new routine culture.

There are also some connections between the PSC theory and the Imposed Socio-Spatial Change theory. The establishment of a new routine depends on the space/emplacements in which the resettlers find themselves after resettlement. Some spaces may not be compatible enough for some routine cultures to be re-established. In some cases when the new routine cultures are re-established they will be way different from the previous routine cultures.

2.3.5. Religion and Social Change Theoretical Approach

The theoretical assumptions about religion and social change postulated by A. Sabet (1996) are adopted. This theory was proposed as a framework within which the nature of the conflictive relationship between religious and modern regimes in religiously mediated societies may be analyzed (Ibid: 241). Sabet seems to rather use a more ‘simplistic’ and ‘ethnocentric’ social revolutionary perspective of “modernization”, and view religion as “anti- modernization”.¹⁷Sabet's theory is mainly centred on understanding how social change or transformation in the context of post- colonial dimensions influenced religion and culture in independent nations. In contemporary political jargon, 'social change' has conventionally come to mean the natural evolution of all members of the global village towards a modern

¹⁷Not all religious societies are anti-modern, there are numerous African religions that have become ‘modern’, for instance, the African Pentecostal and Prosperity churches, which are very oriented to achieving the material benefits of modernization. Sabet was referring to former colonies such as African countries that had traditional beliefs that were affected colonialism. Colonialism which came with modernity. Modernity in the sense of practices that oppose African traditional beliefs such as science, western education and numerous western technologies.

state of existence. Modernity was both ontologically and teleologically subsumed in this process of change as the inevitable goal (Ibid). Sabet argues that modernity became the banner of secular salvation in countries with recent colonial experiences, especially during the 1950s and through the 1970s, having achieved their independence from the colonial powers, the leaders of those newly- emerging nations made it their paramount objective to undergo a rapid process of modernization in order to improve their peoples and nation's material wellbeing (Ibid).

In many cases, however, and despite the best of intentions, the modernisation process produced less than the expected results. Attempts at modernisation brought with them new kinds of problems and raised new issues which had not previously been perceived or encountered. In most cases these countries had to deal with the destructive as well as the constructive dimensions of this complex process. Old traditions and institutions were broken down, family ties of kinship had to be loosened, and by extension religious institutions were also loosened or torn apart. These profound changes had serious effects on the social relations and structures of the societies undergoing the modernisation experience (Ibid).

The area under study, where Nyaminyami was/ is believed (Musampakaruma and Mola), is located in Northwest Zimbabwe: Zimbabwe, a nation which acquired independence in 1980 from the British who had ruled the country for a century. In Zimbabwe, the ZANU PF government engaged in a social transformation involving construction of roads in remote and inaccessible areas, introduction of free primary education, amongst other developments. It must be emphasized that other regions of the country were paid better attention than the northwest, in terms of development (McGregor 2009; Scudder 1985). However, those few developments undertaken in the northwest impacted upon the BaTonga's religious beliefs (Nyaminyami belief systems included); as the above theory notes, modernity had a major impact upon people's religious and social structures. In the empirical chapters of the thesis, I shall demonstrate how independence in 1980 somewhat shaped the enactment of rituals in the respective chieftaincies mentioned above. For example, it was after 1980, that the people of Musampakaruma partially reached stages 3 and 4 proposed by Scudder (2009), which influenced the observance of traditional religion in the numerous villages of the chiefdom.

It was also in 1980 that the BaTonga acquired 'somewhat' increased access to Lake Kariba, which Nyaminyami is currently believed to inhabit. Before independence, 'enlarged substantially by the tourism industry, the littoral's new vocabulary invented Kariba as a white space. The (Ba) Tonga, already physically removed from the southern shore, lost their place in its history' (Hughes 2010: 52). However, after 1980, whites lost their administrative power

(of Lake Kariba) almost completely, thereby facilitating the black majority's access to the Lake. Rituals dedicated to Nyaminyami started to frequently occur in the Lake Kariba, an exercise which had proven difficult to occur under colonialism. Unfortunately, as shall be indicated in Chapter 8 and 9, the BaTonga's privilege to propitiate in the Lake has since 2016 been limited, as the privilege has been handed over to Chief Nyamhunga, because of the politics of the landscape prevailing at Kariba. These landscape processes of becoming have shaped the prevalence of BaTonga's religious beliefs over time.

2.4. Conclusion

This chapter has presented the theoretical approaches underpinning and guiding this thesis. The thesis has drawn on and synthesized theories from three different disciplines i.e. water divinity complexities, resettlement theory, and religion and social change. Each theory's relevance to the study has been elaborated. Water divinity theoretical approaches used are diffusionist, structural functionalist, water as an *index of power* concept and the four level analysis. The resettlement theories utilized are the Four Stage Framework, Psycho- Socio Cultural theory and the Imposed Socio- Spatial Change theory. Lastly, religion and social change ideas of Sabet (1996) were brought in. The water divinity and resettlement theories have been synthesized and linked to each other in their respective categories, because in some sections of the empirical chapters the theories will be used as complimenting each other. It is the complexity of the study that requires the synthesis of these theories. Each dimension of the complex whole requires to be elaborated, leaning on a particular applicable theory. Sometimes weaknesses and loopholes of one theory may be covered by the strength of the others.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction.

This chapter presents the methods, procedures and techniques of data collection used by the researcher. Since I conducted research in three different chieftaincies, my ways of entry into the communities were somewhat different in each community. I will highlight cases in which differences occurred, but the methods used for data collection were similar. The chapter firstly presents the ontological and epistemological assumptions upon which the research methodology rests. It further describes the research design, sampling techniques, and ethnographic data gathering tools, research ethics, research challenges and the data analysis techniques employed by the researcher.

3.2. The ontological and epistemological assumptions of the study

All scientific research rests on assumptions and principles from these two areas (Neumann 2014). Ontology and epistemology are philosophical areas of inquiry and concern that, to a large extent, shape the researcher's selection of the research design, methodologies and techniques to undertake for a particular study so that all the objectives of the research are achieved and the broader research questions are answered. Neuman writes that research methodology rests on a foundation of ontological and epistemological assumptions. Ontology concerns the issue of what exists, or the fundamental nature of reality, (Neumann, 2014). Crotty (2003:10) also defines it as 'the study of being'. It is concerned with 'what kind of world we are investigating, with the nature of existence, with the structure of reality as such'. Guba and Lincoln (1989:83) state that ontological assumptions are those that respond to the question: 'what is there that can be known?' or 'what is the nature of reality?'

There are two basic propositions or approaches within ontology, which are realist and nominalist. A realist assumes the world exists independent from humans and their interpretation of it, whereas a nominalist sees the world through the lens or schema of inner subjectivity or personal interpretation (Neuman 2014). This study makes the assumption that, since the BaTonga people had resided along the Zambezi River for centuries, they held beliefs in water spirits. The ontological assumption that this study adopts, is thus the nominalist point of view in understanding the existence of Nyaminyami (water spirit/ river god) in northwest Zimbabwe. The BaTonga people, particularly those living near the Kariba gorge area, considered/ consider Nyaminyami as an important part of their perceived cosmology. Therefore, I opted to know Nyaminyami through some BaTonga people's

subjective interpretations of ‘him’, which I combined with my own interpretations. The personal interpretations of Nyaminyami, as a water spirit, correlates with ‘interpretation’ in Bernard’s Four Level Analysis theory mentioned in Chapter 2 (Bernard 2010). Thus, at both theoretical and ontological level, the study was focused on the interpretation of water divinity occurrence. These particular BaTonga people’s cosmology also involves other spiritual figures such as *Leza* (God), *Basangu* (wild spirits), *Mizimu* (ancestors) and *Masabe* (alien spirits), but this study mainly focuses on Nyaminyami.

Epistemology is ‘a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know’ (Crotty, 2003: p 3). H. R. Bernard says it means ‘a way of knowing’ (Bernard, 2006:3). It is about how we can understand what we know exists in society; how we can study the social reality which is in the kind of world we are investigating. How we can learn about or know the world is rooted in our ontological assumptions (Neuman, 2014: 95). If we adopt a realist position, we can produce and learn about reality by making a careful observation of it. But a nominalist position knows and learns about reality through interpretation, as it is impossible to separate an objective “out there” reality from interpretations or effects of the time/ place in which it occurs (Ibid). Similarly, for this research it was impossible to separate the existence of Nyaminyami from BaTonga people’s historical interpretations of him. Furthermore, H. R. Bernard (2006) postulates that the realist position subscribes to empiricist methods of data collection, but nominalists favor a competing method, often called interpretivism (ibid). Geertz (1973) has championed the need to utilize interpretivism methods when approaching cultures. He argues that ‘the concept of culture is (...) essentially a semiotic one’ (ibid: 5). The analysis of culture is therefore not an ‘experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning’ (Ibid: 6). Hence ethnographers must interpret the cultural issues that they are studying. Thus, he propagated what is now known as ‘interpretive ethnography’. This study examines the cultural significance of a water spirit, and has adopted the interpretive ethnography methodological approach of knowing or studying beliefs regarding the occurrence of Nyaminyami among the BaTonga people who believe in Nyaminyami. My ethnographic interpretations will be based on the BaTonga people’s interpretations of Nyaminyami

3.3. Research design

The interpretive ethnography approach of this study was principally concerned with obtaining qualitative information. Qualitative data gathering is associated primarily with research

methods such as semi- structured interviews, documents and personal observation. Qualitative data largely takes the form of words (spoken or written) and visual images (observed or creatively produced) (Denscombe, 2010). Neuman further elaborates the latter point by arguing that we gather qualitative data by documenting real events, recording what actual people say (with words, gestures, and tone), observing specific behaviors, examining written documents, and studying visual images (Neuman, 2014). As such the key data collection instruments for this study were semi- structured interviews, informal-conversational interviews, participant observation, document analysis, visual (i.e. images and videos) sources and archival research. The implementation of these data collection methods was done taking cognizant of social science research ethics.

The fieldwork for this study was conducted in 2017. The duration of the fieldwork was six months. I devoted two months to each of the three chiefdoms. I visited these chieftaincies in a planned and coherent way, starting with the one nearest to the Kariba gorge area, then moving further up Lake Kariba. I started with Musampakaruma (from March to May), followed by Mola (from June to July) and lastly Sinakatenge (from September to October). After fieldwork in each chiefdom, I discussed my findings with my supervisor, through telephonic (or WhatsApp) and emails communication. I could send him my draft findings and we discussed them, which further helped me in my subsequent field trips. During my fieldwork I was accommodated in homesteads in the primary villages in which research was conducted. In Musampakaruma, I lived in two villages: namely Chikwasha and Mahubu villages. This was because the villages and homesteads are significantly spaced. Hence, by changing my living sites, I managed to reach out to the local people easily and in a short space of time. In Mola and Sinakatenge, where homesteads and villages are closely located, I lived in one homestead in each of the chiefdoms. In Mola, I lived in the homestead of the former Chief. In Sinakatenge I lived in the homestead of a Village Head.¹⁸ Living in the royal houses was advantageous as these people are custodians of local cultures, and they provided me with important information about their cultures.

¹⁸My living with the elite in the fieldwork increased and speeded up my gaining rapport in the field, since in all the homesteads I went to conduct interviews or in all the local gatherings I participated in I was in company of one member of the host families. People were free to interact with me because I was being accommodated in their leader's houses- the leaders whom they so much trust. However, that is not to say that staying with elites have no problems. In rare cases I was labelled a Central Intelligence Office (CIO) member on a certain policing mission as I shall fully indicate in the research challenges section, but this was not a significant problem to effectively deter my data gathering.

3.4. Research ethics

Researchers must have a moral and professional obligation to be ethical, even when research participants are unaware of or unconcerned about research ethics. The ethical issues are the concerns, dilemmas, and conflicts that arise over the proper way to conduct research. Ethics defines what it is or is not legitimate to do and what “moral” research procedure involves (Neumann 2014: 145). Moral research procedures involve seeking permission from the gatekeepers and consent from informants before interview sessions start. Ethics application in research is a process that must be applied before, during and after conducting a study (Neumann 2014). In addition to the Rhodes University Ethical Standards Committee (2014) guide, I was also guided by various ethical considerations as presented in the social science research literature (see for example, Morreira 2012). Before the commencement of fieldwork, chiefly permission was sought in the three respective chiefdoms. I would thoroughly explain my topic, and the objectives or purpose of my research, and the duration of the research to the gatekeepers in each chieftaincy, i.e. Chiefs, Headmen and Village Heads, in either *CiTonga* or *ChiShona*. Before an interview session, I would first seek the informant’s consent for his or her participation in the study. I would explain the topic and the main objectives of the research, and the duration of the study to my informants. Walliman argues that ‘the topic, purpose, objectives and duration of the research must be clearly and easily understood by research participants so that they are able to make a fair assessment of the project to give an informed consent. Participants are then able to decide whether to take part, based on the information they receive about the research’ (Walliman 2011: 47). Consent can be in written or verbal form, but in my case verbal consent was obtained. I explained my topic about Nyaminyami and my objectives as they are stated in Chapter 1 to my informants as I sought their consent of participation in the research. I also highlighted the flexibility of the interview session, and that they were free to withdraw from participation at any time if they so choose.

During my stay in the field I also made sure that I familiarized myself with the rules and norms of conduct in the villages. During my participation in the culture and various events I “abided to the rules and norms as much as possible” (Walliman 2011: 46). The thesis does not mention the actual names of the informants interviewed. Thus, it ensures their protection against potential harm, such as loss of dignity, self-esteem, privacy, or democratic freedoms. All names used are pseudonyms. Confidentiality and privacy of participants was protected and guaranteed so as not to create future problems for them.

3.5. Sample and sampling techniques

Barreiro and Albandoz (2001) define sampling as the process of selecting units (populations) from a population of interest i.e. in the primary villages or chieftaincies under study. This study purposively selected informants in the field. The assumption was that ‘the data obtained from purposive sampling was representative (or typical) of all the rest’ (Walliman 2011: 93). A total number of 180 informants (i.e. 60 per each chiefdom) were interviewed. Per each chiefdom I interviewed 10 aged people (who experienced resettlement), 25 elders (who did not experience resettlement) and 25 youths (i.e. those born after 1980). As will be shown later, I categorized these informants into First Generation Resettlers, Second Generation Resettlers and Third Generation Resettlers (youths) respectively. The people interviewed in each chiefdom were selected from different villages in that chiefdom. In Musampakaruma, I interviewed people from Dhondoro, Siachazangwa, Zhambo and Bayachenene Villages. In Mola, I interviewed people from Chitenge, Chiweshe and Nabhole Villages. In Sinakatenge, I interviewed people from Sinakatenge and Simolo Villages. However, I did also conduct informal discussions with people from other villages and with other people who are not locals, who may be working in the chiefdom as Teachers, Nurses, Rural District Council workers etc.

3.6. Semi- structured interviews.

With semi- structured interviews, the interviewer is prepared to be flexible in terms of the order in which the topics are considered, and, perhaps more significantly, to let the interviewee develop ideas and speak more widely on the key issues raised by the researcher. The answers are open- ended, and there is more emphasis on the interviewee elaborating points of interests (Denscombe 2010). It was for these reasons that this type of interview was chosen as an important data gathering tool for this research. I categorized my informants (as I have already mentioned above) in the three respective chieftaincies of Musampakaruma, Mola and Sinakatenge into three categories i.e. First Generation Resettlers (FGR), Second Generation Resettlers (SGR) and Third Generation Resettlers (Youths). FGRs are those who had first-hand experience of the resettlement activities of 1958; SGRs are those borne by those displaced;¹⁹ and the Youths are those borne by the SGRs. Both females and males were selected for each category. Each of the categories had its own separate interview questions somewhat different from the others, but all pointing towards answering my overall research

¹⁹ This categorization was first used by Colson and Scudder in their much- celebrated theory of resettlement in 1982.

question (see Appendix 1). The FGRs were a valuable source of information in as far as obtaining information of the pre- 1958 situation was concerned. So, the FGR interview guide involved questions about both before and after 1958. Since these people also passed through various processes of ongoing socio- spatial change as compared to the other categories, they had more detailed information of the changes that have been happening to their religion (Nyaminyami included) throughout the resettlement as 'on going processes of imposed socio-spatial change' (De Wet, 2015:1).

Although, the SGRs did not live along the river and had no first-hand experience with the move of 1958, I included a few questions of the pre- 1958 situation as well as after 1958 in their interview guides. Having not been born in a certain era, does not mean you do not have valuable information about that era, which can inform research. This information might have been passed to them and further down to the youths by the FGRs. In actual fact, some of the information about pre- resettlement came from the SGRs; they narrated to me what they were told by either the now deceased, or the living aged people. Furthermore, interviewing both the FGRs and SGRs helped this research to analyze the application of Scudder's Four Stage Framework, which cuts across the years and experiences of both categories as shown in Chapter 2. The FSF assessment ends with SGRs, and not youths.

Apart from interviewing BaTonga people only, the research also included Shona (Shangwe or Goba) informants, especially in Musampakaruma, where they are numerically dominant. This study needed to interview the Shona/Shangwe people in order to cross check the Colson-Scudder hypothesis that Nyaminyami beliefs were introduced among the BaTonga by the Shona people. Most of the Shona interviewed were the elderly living in Musampakaruma chiefdom, who experienced the resettlement of 1958. The other reason for interviewing Shona people, was for getting to understand how interactions with other tribes like the Shona have influenced the BaTonga religion in general. The NRDC workers, DNPWLM officials, local school teachers and church leaders/ converts were also interviewed. The purpose of interviewing these people was to understand their perceptions of the local traditions in relation to their socio-economic duties in these respective chiefdoms. The researcher conducted some interview sessions with the BaTonga and Shona people who also live in Kariba town, who hold beliefs in Nyaminyami, as well as other Zambezi River Authority officials. The interview guides²⁰ for all these people were different from each other

²⁰ All of my interview guides were written before the commencement of the research. Thanks goes to Anthropologists Dr Emma Sitambuli, Professor Thayer Scudder and my supervisor, for critically reviewing my interview guides/ questions before the commencement of the research. After having been reviewed, all the

(see Appendix 1). My interviews with these people sometimes took the form of conversational and informal discussions. As I shall indicate below, informal discussions were an important data gathering tool that I implemented in all the chiefdoms in question. I also interviewed some academic experts in their fields of expertise. These include professor Thayer Scudder and Dr Julia Tischler, who write on the BaTonga people; Henry John Drewal and Joost Fontein, who have written on water spirits in Africa, with the former writing on *Mami Wata* and the latter on *njuzu*.

3.6.1. Key informants and in-depth interview sessions

Key informants are people who know a lot about their culture (or put precisely, they know specific topics one is studying) and are, for reasons of their own, willing to share their knowledge with you (Bernard 2011). Key informants are the researcher's sponsor in the setting and primary sources of information (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998:54). I conducted in-depth interview sessions with my key informants. Some of these informants were willing to air out their life histories and from these histories I got to learn more about the entire community. Most of my key informants had lived in the Valley before 1958 and thus their life histories covered a wider and longer spectrum. They narrated both life in the Valley, during resettlement and after resettlement. However, I also had Key informants from SGRs and youth as indicated below.

My key informants in all the chiefdoms were 24, and they are part of the above sampled population. There are many factors that determined the selection of my key informants. In Musampakaruma and Mola I had to be referred to some by the Chiefs. Chiefs directed me to those that they thought had the best information about Nyaminyami and life before 1958. I personally selected those who were free and were willing to be interviewed many times. In Musampakaruma: the Chief, Village Heads Dhondoro and Zhambo, one SGR politician (from Siachazangwa Village) and two FGR women from Chikwasha Village were my Key informants. So in total the key informants from Musampakaruma were 6, in number. In Mola, the Chief, three young politicians and two FGR women from Chitenge Village were my Key informants, and in total the number of key informants in Mola were 6.

However, in Sinakatenge the majority of the Key informants were women, among the FGRs and SGRs. This was because I did most of my interview sessions in *Mabbonzye*, riverine gardens, at which women were the majority of the cultivators. These women were

guides were translated into the Shona and Tonga languages, i.e. the languages that the researcher used to interview different informants.

willing to provide me with information and appeared to have been knowledgeable about their both past and present life; (however, this is not to suggest that women are more knowledgeable than men). 4 FGRs and 4 SGRs women were selected as key informants. In addition, 4 males were also selected as key informants; these males were the secretary of Simolo Village, Simolo Village Head, the secretary for Sinakatenge village and the Sinakatenge Village Head. So, all in all my Key informants in Sinakatenge were 12.

3.6.2. Informal Interviews (or discussions)

Informal Interviews (or discussions): these are unforeseen and unintended research related conversations that emerge between the researcher and any participant during fieldwork. Their main advantage is that they are very flexible for both the interviewer and the interviewee in that there are no set of questions or interview guides the researcher refers to. Bernard (1995) defines informal interviewing as being characterized by:

A total lack of structure or control. The researcher just tries to remember conversations heard during the course of a day “in the field”. This requires constant jotting and daily sessions in which you sit as a type writer, unburden your memory and develop your fieldnotes, (cited in De Walt and De Walt 2002: 47).

In informal interviewing the researcher follows the leads of the participants but asks occasional questions to focus the topic or to clarify points that she/he does not understand (Spradley, 1979). De Walt and De Walt (2002) argue that informal interviewing is the type of interviewing most suitable for participant observation (PO). Since this study also involved PO as a research tool, informal interviewing was opted for as a means of understanding cultural behaviors and events, explained as they occurred in their natural setting, by the persons involved. Furthermore, as I interacted with many people at various occasions, I conducted many important research-related discussions with people. Informal interviews were informative to me because sometimes people could explain aspects of particular landscapes as we passed through them, which gave the discussions power and liveliness. For example, on the 12 April 2017, in Musampakaruma Chieftdom, I went with some youths to a dip- tank, when we passed the Hwadze River. They told me that, that river and other rivers in the chieftaincy were not sacred, and neither were they associated with water spirits. Information from these informal discussions could be jotted down as field notes at night by the researcher.

3.7. Focus Group Discussions (FGD) sessions

Wilkinson writes that FGD is a method of collecting qualitative data, which - essentially- involves engaging a small number of people in an informal group discussion (or discussions), ‘focused’ around a particular topic or set of issues (Wilkinson 2004: 177). In this approach, interviewers bring together groups of people to talk about their perspectives and experiences in open- ended discussions. In group interviewing, as opposed to one- to- one interviewing, the researcher must act as a group facilitator and moderator, managing interactions between members of the group- for example, keeping people from interrupting or arguing with each other, dealing with overly talkative people who would monopolize the conversation, encouraging shy people to contribute, and so on (Taylor and Bogdan 1998:113). In all the three chieftaincies I had one focus group discussions with each category of the FGRs, SGRs and Youths. Thus, I conducted 9 FGDs in total. Both males and females were incorporated in the FGDs. Focus Groups are designed to use group dynamics to yield insights that might not be accessible without the kind of interaction found in a group (Morgan 1988 in Taylor and Bogdan 1998: 114). Sometimes informants are likely to remember some information in a group as they pick up from what other informants have said.

Consistently, Wilkinson (2004) argues that FGDs are a flexible method of research. This is seen in the sense that people are more likely to remember what happened in the past when they are interviewed in a group setting, because the words or statements of the next person in a group can stimulate other people’s memory. However, group discussions can also lead to a superficial consensus in which some members defer to those who are most outspoken.

3.8. Participant observation

Participant observation ‘is the foundation of cultural anthropology’ (Bernard 2006: 342). ‘It is the method in which the observer participates in the daily life of the people under study, either openly in the role of researcher or covertly in some disguised role, observing things that happen, listening to what is said, and questioning people, over some length of time’ (Becker and Beer 1957 in Descombe 2010: 206). It involves getting close to people and making them feel comfortable enough with your presence so that you can observe and record information about their lives (Bernard 2006: 342), but more than that, anthropologists go to live *like* the peoples they study (Eller 2009). Preserving the *naturalness of the setting* is the key priority of participant observation. The principal concern is to minimize disruptions so as

to be able to see things as they normally occur- unaffected by any awareness that research is happening (Descombe: *ibid*). To maintain the *naturalness of the setting*, one must first establish rapport with the local people. I established the required rapport as an anthropologist in the field through the ability to speak the local languages, having been born in north-western part of Zimbabwe and being accompanied by my hosts (who were from the well respected and trusted authorities in each chiefdom) to various events in the respective villages and/or chiefdoms. Being accompanied by influential local people guaranteed and strengthened my rapport. However, being accompanied by leaders may well have the effect of estranging a researcher for the powerless local people; if this happened it was unnoticed by the researcher. The main advantage of participant observation is that it discloses things through the researcher's experience of participating in the culture or event. In this study, the researcher actively participated in BaTonga people's daily lives. I was not only a participant in religious matters, but also in other socio- economic issues. Even if I was studying religion, an understanding of the social and economic processes of each chiefdom was necessary in as far as learning about their potential influence on religion was concerned.

Descombe (2010) points out that it is only by experiencing things from the insider's point of view that the researcher becomes aware of the crucial factors explaining the culture or event. I arrived at some of my judgements and conclusions in the study through participating in the daily and routine economic and social activities of the people. However, it must be emphasized that, religiously and economically, life in the three chieftaincies is somewhat different, and thus my experience in each chiefdom could not on the whole be the same in all three cases. Whilst I was observing the events occurring in each particular chieftaincy I took notes in the form of written records. Descombe emphasizes that 'the researcher doing fieldwork needs to develop a strategy for writing up field notes as soon as possible after the observation' (2010: 208).

3.8.1. Participant observation in Musampakaruma

In Musampakaruma I conducted research in March and May, the time at which people were harvesting. Thus, much of my participant observation was mainly in assisting families to harvest. There were no significant community religious ceremonies occurring at that time, because people were busy harvesting. I also followed the course of the most famous rivers in Musampakaruma, which are the Hwadze, Gunguwe, Mahubu, Mangura and Sanyati rivers, with the purpose of understanding how these small rivers were utilized by the locals for social and economic purposes. My aim was also to investigate whether these rivers were used

for religious purposes, and if they were by any chance connected to water spirits. The rivers are not perennial, but the time I went there, was the rainy season, and they were still at their average capacity. In many cases I encountered women doing gardening along the river, and fetching water in the rivers.

3.8.2. Participant observation in Mola

My host in Mola, Marshal, took me to a dam in Chitenge Village, which was constructed by the government to ease water shortages in the chiefdom. There are also other two dams in Munego village constructed by UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief). I visited a sports gala that occurred from the 9th to the 10th of June at the Mola shopping center. During the gala I had many informal discussions with people from various social backgrounds including teachers, nurses and Nyaminyami Rural District Council workers. At household level, I could eat with people from the same bowls; the BaTonga do this as a sign of showing and maintaining solidarity among themselves. I visited various homesteads in which traditional beer was brewed and sold. In such gatherings I had informal discussions about Nyaminyami with people from various age groups. In some cases, these discussions would culminate in heated debates, because old men held different opinions from young men about the prevalence and existence of Nyaminyami himself. I also visited sacred places, *malende*, marked by the presence of baobab trees and graves of former Chiefs. However, I was told that people no longer respect these sacred places, and that they no longer clean them, as shown in the photo below.



Fig 2. Photo by author: *Malende* shrine

3.8.3. Participant Observation in Sinakatenge

In Sinakatenge, I and Jolif (my host) followed the channels of two prominent rivers, the Semwa and Tyunga Rivers. We encountered women, doing dry season cultivation along the river banks. It was in September/ October, but people were harvesting and replanting. They also fetched water for domestic purposes in these rivers. I attended *masabe* (alien spirit) possession ceremonies. One might wonder why observation of economic activities of the people can be of importance in a study of Nyaminyami. It must be understood that Nyaminyami beliefs are existing in a world with people and other social institutions, and not in a vacuum. The understanding is that the socio- economic processes of change and the people's passage of the four stages of the resettlement process, influenced BaTonga religion (Nyaminyami beliefs included), as noted in the previous chapter. However, participant observation has its own weaknesses that I bore in mind when I conducted my research. During an event people can act in abnormal ways, especially when they know that they are being studied, and thus mislead researchers. In support of this point Bernard cites Margaret LeCompte who 'when she told children at a school that she was writing a book about them, they started acting out in "ways they felt would make good copy" by mimicking characters on popular TV programs' (LeCompte et al. 1993 cited in Bernard 2006: 355). Thus, it is advised that researchers bear in mind such weaknesses when engaging in participant observation.

3.9. Anthropology of Extraordinary Experiences (AEE): witnessing Lake Kariba waters turning black.

Anthropology of extraordinary experiences is an epistemological turn in the discipline of anthropology that welcomes the potential contribution of the anthropologist's unusual ethnographic experiences in the field to the understanding of a particular cosmological order they are studying. AEE, unlike interviews and participant observation, provides more tangible evidence to the researcher about the occurrence of a certain cosmological order under study. These experiences involve, but are not limited to, the encounter with 'spiritual beings', of a particular society under study. The AEE discourse has found its clearest statement in the studies by Young and Goulet (1994), Goulet and Miller (2007) and Bernard (2010). Some anthropologists have recorded their extraordinary experiences encountered in numerous African communities. For example, Edith Turner writes about an encounter with a spirit in Zambia (E. Turner 1994). Goulet documents a dream he had in the Guajiro community in South America, which was interpreted by the community members and how it came to pass

(Goulet 2007). JoostFontein has had unusual dreams in the field and he also narrates that he saw a ghost at a funeral in southern Zimbabwe (Fontein personal comms, 9 October 2018). These experiences are extraordinary in the sense that ‘conventional’ fieldwork wisdom would dismiss or be unduly pessimistic about them (Coffey 1999; Goulet 2007; E. Turner 1994).

Some anthropologists had extraordinary experiences with water divinities, and it is these that I am more interested in, and from these I have obtained much inspiration; for example, in 1998, Penny Bernard was called by *iNkosazana*, the Zulu mermaid, in a dream, the experience which subsequently saw her becoming a traditional healer (Bernard 2010). In 1998, Shankar Aswani was hit by a ‘water spirit’ called *Paro* (or *Kesoko*) on his left limb, in the Solomon Islands, and it almost took him underwater (Aswani, personal communication, 13 June, 2018). Anthropologist and Art Historian Henry John Drewal received a call from in 1975, and he built an altar in his bedroom in honour of her; this altar, which is still in existence, has numerous images of *Mami Wata* on it (Drewal personal communication, 17 June 2018).²¹

Despite the verity that these experiences are difficult to prove and disprove, I am using the concept of extraordinary experiences in the elaboration of my own experiences. I encountered the Lake Kariba water ‘turning black’ in 2016, when I was in a vessel journeying to Mola before my actual fieldwork. It was fearsome. The crew and other people on board witnessed this. Suddenly the water turned into serious waves and channeled the boat into an opposite direction. This delayed the journey. The vessel wandered the whole night and the early morning till 8 am in the wrong direction. The distance that was supposed to take us 6 hours, took us 17 hours. In 2017, when I went (this time by bus) to Mola for the fieldwork, I explained this experience to some elders, who linked this extraordinary experience to the presence of Nyaminyami in the Lake. They said the sudden climatic events were Nyaminyami’s signal that he rules the Lake. I will use this experience in Chapters 7 and 8, where I assess the other experiences people are encountering at Kariba that are linked to Nyaminyami. My experience adds to the other extraordinary experiences people encounter at Kariba, and enhances the understanding of the connection between climatic events and water spirits in general. All this points to the connection between Tonga traditional religion and the environment and climate. I value these climatic changes associated with water divinities because in cases where the water spirits are invisible, these climatic changes stand as

²¹ For a fuller description of Drewal’s experiences, read his 2008 published book *Mami Wata: Arts for Africa water spirits and the African Diaspora*.

important experiences which are interpreted in different important ways by the people. Hence, my suggestion that they must be fully addressed in the Four Level Analysis theory.

3.10. Document analysis

Documents form a field of research in their own right (Prior 2003; Descombe 2010), but they can be complemented with other sources of data such as interviews and participant observation. This study consulted a wide array of documents. Documents read were those with both primary and secondary information about BaTonga history. Primary documents are sources with first- hand information which is not interpreted including letters, diaries etc., whereas secondary sources are published and interpreted accounts. Primary sources tend to be less biased as compared to secondary sources because they contain first- hand data (Prior 2003). Primary documents for this study were mainly obtained in the National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ) and these involved newspapers; diaries written by colonialists, explorers and missionaries; Native Commissioners and District Commissioner's reports and letters starting from the late 19th century (when colonialism penetrated the region) up to 1980 (the year in which colonialism ended). I visited the National Archives of Zimbabwe in August 2017 during a break in my field research. Archival documents at the Cory Library collection at Rhodes University were also consulted.

Secondary documents, such as published books and journal articles from accredited journals and unpublished Masters and Doctoral theses, available on Rhodes University Library website, as well as published documents in the Rhodes University main library with topics related to water divinity complexities, Nyaminyami beliefs and the resettlement history of the BaTonga, were consulted. Theories underpinning the study assessed in the preceding Chapter were also obtained in the Rhodes University main library. In reading the water spirit literature I did not restrict myself to southern Africa literature only (such as Aschwanden 1989; Bernard 2001; 2003; 2008; 2010; 2013; Bernard and Kumalo 2004; Fontein 2015; Latham 198), but also read a wide array of literature about water spirits in Africa in general (such as Drewal et al 2008; Peterson 2006). I also read books that had information about the BaTonga history, especially the period before 1958, such as Cligget (2005), Colson (1960; 1971), Scudder (1962), McGregor (2003a; 2009) and Ncube (1986; 2004) etc. who recorded in detail the pre-removal life and ecology of the BaTonga people. Landscape and belonging debates literature (e.g Cohen and Odhiambo 1989; Fontein 2015; Trudeau 2006) was also

read and was used in Chapter 9 as the basis for evaluating the use of Nyaminyami in these debates

However, documentary research has its own weaknesses, that I was cautious and careful about when I read the literature. The main weakness is the *credibility of the source*. Researchers need to be discerning about the information they use. Researchers need to evaluate the authority of the source and the procedures used to produce the original data, to gauge the credibility of the documents (Descombe 2010). Another weakness relates to biases *and social constructions*. Researchers must bear in mind that documents can owe more to the interpretations of those who produce them than to an objective picture of reality. Burgess (1984), Platt (1981a) and Scott (1990) have emphasized that matters of authenticity (of the documents) and distortion should be considered. Since my study relied on colonist and missionary diaries of the 19th century and early 20th century, the reliability and validity of these sources was cross checked with what is prevalent in the people's narratives and stories about their history and life along the river. McGregor (2009) has assessed the reliability of some of the colonists' writings about the BaTonga present in the NAZ. Therefore, this study also partly relied on McGregor's evaluation of these sources. McGregor even went to the extent of evaluating the ways by which the story about Nyaminyami (the river god) was being misrepresented in the white tourist literature and journalistic coverage. I also did assess the reliability of these sources. Another review of past documents that mentions Nyaminyami that was relied on was Kaoma (2017). Furthermore, information in the colonists' documents, e.g. reports, diaries and letters, was also cross- checked with the information in the more scientific, well researched and personal observation grounded books about life before 1958 in the Valley by Colson and Scudder. I am not dismissing colonists' documents as a source of information, but rather I used them after having tested their validity. In addition, not all colonist's documents were/are biased.

3.11. Videos and Images

Images and videos were valuable sources of data. Visual images in the form of photographs, films, sculpture, buildings, etc., have all come to be regarded as 'texts' and worth analyzing as cultural artefacts that can be 'read' (Ali, 2004). Images of Nyaminyami sculptures were observed in the chieftaincies²² under study. I also observed the usages of the Nyaminyami

²²Even though I saw some artefacts of Nyaminyami in Sinakatenge (or Binga), I want to make it clear that it does not mean that Nyaminyami was believed in there, but people just buy or craft the items to beautify their

sculptures, necklaces and walking sticks in these communities. Sometimes informants narrated about him whilst showing me the artefacts; this gave the interviews and discussions life. Pictures of Nyaminyami were also seen on the internet in E-magazines. In my analysis I compared the images seen in the chieftaincies and those marketed in tourist magazines. The differences are widely explored and assessed in Chapter 8. I also observed images of water bodies (with various characteristics) in which water spirits are said to reside, in such sources as Bernard 2008. Images on page 53 and 54 of Bernard's (2008) book chapter, (showing dense forests surrounding a pool, in the *Pholela* river, where *Inkosazana* is believed to reside), carry a resemblance to the characteristic vegetation near the Kariba gorge area, where Nyaminyami is/was believed to be. The BaTonga tend to explain their culture through their artefacts. Apart from Nyaminyami artefacts, I was shown other artefacts like the smoking pipe (*mfuko*) and so on.

Fig 3. Researcher in the center shown smoking pipe by two FGR women.



I watched videos on the Kariba dam construction and the floods that occurred, which some BaTonga people attribute to Nyaminyami's anger, as well as videos on Rhodes University E-resources on water spirits ceremonies that occur in various societies, for example, *Dumineia: A festival for the water spirits*, directed by R. Horton (1966). As an interpretive ethnographer, I had my own interpretations of the videos that may be different from that of other viewers. This shows that the same visual stimuli may have different interpretations when observed in different contexts or by different observers (Zabulic and Orphanoudaki (2001). While critiques of visual anthropological ethnographies suggest that films inevitably record a partial version of the truth (Ali, 2004), with what I observed, I obtained a better and general

homes. Nyaminyami artefacts are found throughout Zimbabwe, in Harare and also in museums worldwide; but that does not mean people there believe in it. I shall elaborate more fully about this in Chapter 7.

understanding of what occurred or is occurring, and further cross checked the authenticity of the image or video with other written and oral sources pertaining to the same image or video.

3.12. Research challenges

I encountered numerous challenges during fieldwork. Since I had sustained communication with my supervisor during fieldwork, I discussed these challenges with him, and we could seek possible solutions to overcome them and proceed with the research. The challenges were different from chiefdom to chiefdom. But, the main problem that I encountered for all the chiefdoms, was difficulties in access to the geographical locations of the chieftaincies. The chiefdoms are in the northwest part of Zimbabwe. The region is highly marginalized, and there are poor road and communication networks, (Manyena, 2013; Sibanda 2004; Tombindo 2018). In Nyaminyami Rural District (NRD) where Mola and Musampakaruma are located, there is only one bus that goes from Karoi to Siakobvu. So, from Karoi it passes through Musampakaruma and then reaches Siakobvu. From Siakobvu one must look for private cars (that are very limited and costly) that go to Mola. One might spend days in Siakobvu without having obtained transport, meaning that the journey is prolonged. While it took me a day to reach Musampakaruma, it took two days to get to Mola. Moreover, for me to reach Sinakatenge (which is in Binga District) it took me close to three days because I had to go via the Harare- Gokwe route and then connect with cars that take people to Siabuwa, and then to Sinakatenge. The distance was more than 1000 kilometers. The journey was tiresome. Even though Mola and Sinakatenge are close to the Lake, there are no reliable boats that transport people from these chiefdoms to Kariba town (where I was coming from).

Furthermore, whilst I easily gained rapport because I was hosted by the most trusted and influential people in all three chiefdoms, a few people were afraid of me as they thought I was a Central Intelligence Officer (CIO).²³ With the political instability at the time and the use of CIO members by former president Robert Mugabe for electoral intimidation as people were heading towards 2018 general elections, people were afraid of meeting and talking to ‘strangers’. ²⁴ Saying negative things about Robert Mugabe - whether intentionally or unintentionally - would result in incarceration. For example, at one time in Mola chiefdom, I and Marshal, my host, went to buy sugar at a nearby shopping center in *Chiweshe* Village.

²³It is worth noting that my association with the elites could have impacted negatively on my access to subalterns’ opinions and experiences, especially in light of the oppressive political climate in Zimbabwe. This may be also the reason why women lacked more input with regards to my survey specifically, as I will indicate in chapter 9, as they could also defer to men in a politically sensitive and patriarchal society.

²⁴Robert Mugabe was removed from power through a coup before the election in November 2018.

When we got there, Marshal was called by some men behind the shopping center. When he came back to me he told me that they were asking him about me, whether I was a CIO or not? In Musampakaruma, one Village Head requested my Identity Card and my phone number, so that he could track me if something goes wrong in the future related to the information they would have given me. He only agreed to be interviewed after I had emphasized that I was not a CIO, that I had come through the Chief, and that I was accommodated by an influential family in the society. My research topic and objectives, about a water spirit, being less political, also made him want to share information with me.

In Musampakaruma, my major challenge was of accessing the sample villages. The homesteads and villages are significantly spread out, so much so that it took me time to reach out to informants. This caused me to stay in two spaced villages as mentioned above to have easy access to my informants. Furthermore, my research period was harvesting time in Musampakaruma, and sometimes I could not find people in their homesteads. I ended up interviewing people as they were harvesting, whilst helping them, and this could take the form of informal interviews. But, when I communicated with my supervisor about this challenge on the 7th April, he advised me to change times of conducting interviews and proposed the early evenings as a better time. I also decided to conduct interviews during *cisi* (sacred days when people are barred from working in their fields). *Cisi* was on every Thursdays and Sundays. These two solutions made my research successful.

In Mola, I created a problem for myself, when I went to a beer drinking gathering in Nabhole village, where I conducted a Focus Group Interview session. After the interview, one man I know very well, who was part of the group of people I was interviewed, asked me to buy him beer. I gave him US\$1. When others saw me giving him money they confronted me. One of them said: *'...but why did you pay him, I thought we were just offering you information for free, as you said you were not going to pay us, see now other people here are angry of what you have just done...'*. To calm them down, I then gave those complaining another US\$2 for them to buy beer. They were very happy when I gave them the money. If I had not given one person the money, they would have not complained. In my future interviews at beer gatherings I did not buy anyone beer, to avoid repetition of the same problem with informants. Beer gatherings are unusual places where one can conduct an interview session. I conducted this particular interview session on this particular day at a beer gathering because my host had motivated me to do so, as there were many elderly people there, some of whom who claimed to have had first- hand experience with Nyaminyami. I saw it as an opportunity to interview the aged people (FGRs and SGRs) together, thereby

reducing the number of days of mobilizing people for an FGD session. Some of these people farm throughout the year along rivers and are busy throughout the year, so much so that mobilizing for an FGD can be difficult and can take a long time. Many of the FGDs I conducted also took several days for me to mobilize people, though I managed to conduct several of them as mentioned above. In Sinakatenge, except for my difficulties in accessing the chieftdom, I had no other serious challenges.

3.13. Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis is the classification and interpretation of linguistic (or visual) material to make statements about implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of meaning-making in the material and what is represented in it. Meaning-making can refer to subjective or social meanings. Qualitative data analysis also is applied to discover and describe issues in the field, or structures and processes in routines and practices (Flick 2013: 5). Data analysis tools must be selected with the readers in mind. It is the writers' responsibility to make sure that the kind of data obtained suits the data analysis method selected so that the readers can easily follow the argument. There are numerous qualitative data analysis methods ranging from thematic content analysis, grounded theory, discourse analysis, conversation analysis and narrative analysis (Descombe 2010), but this study utilized thematic content analysis because it was considered as appropriate for the kind of interpretations and conclusions the study proposed to make. The information collected from the field was transcribed. Transcribed texts were then analysed for emerging patterns of themes. The identified themes were used to generate codes used for data categorization. Each and every kind of data was categorized under a relevant and appropriate theme.

3.13.1. Thematic content analysis

Thematic Analysis is a type of qualitative analysis. It is descriptive in nature. It is used to analyse classifications and present themes (patterns) that relate to the data. It illustrates the data in great detail and deals with diverse subjects via interpretations (Boyatzis 1998 cited in Ibrahim 2012: 44). Thematic Analysis is considered the most appropriate for any study that seeks to discover knowledge using interpretations. It provides a systematic element to data analysis. It allows the researcher to associate an analysis of the frequency of a theme with one of the whole content. This will confer accuracy and intricacy and enhance the research's whole meaning. A satisfactory thematic content analysis portrays the thematic content of

interview transcripts (or other texts) by identifying common themes provided for analysis, (Anderson, 2007). As such, data gathered in this research was coded into different themes for easy interpretation. The researcher divided the study into three eras i.e. before 1958 (resettlement), during 1958 (i.e. the resettlement period) and after 1958 (i.e. post-resettlement period). The researcher further identified specific roles of Nyaminyami in each era and used those as themes in which all collected qualitative data was classified, interpreted and analysed under its appropriate theme. Thereby, making it easier for the readers to follow the main argument of the thesis.

3.14. Conclusion

This chapter described the philosophical assumptions underpinning the research, data gathering methods, procedures and techniques I employed during field research. It first described the ontological and epistemological assumptions upon which the research design for the study rest. It further presented the research design, research ethics, samples and sampling procedures, data gathering tools, research challenges and the data analysis technique employed. The qualitative data gathering tools utilized are those used in interpretive ethnographic research which are documentary analysis, semi- structured interviews, informal- conversational interviews, images, videos, archival research and participant observation. Thematic content analysis was selected as the most appropriate data analysis method.

CHAPTER 4: ASPECTS OF WATER SPIRITS IN AFRICA, AND PREVIOUS RECORDS ON NYAMINYAMI: A LITERATURE REVIEW.

4.1. Introduction.

Among many African indigenous people there exists a set of complex beliefs regarding water, river systems, and riparian zones. Integral to such beliefs are various zoomorphic spirit manifestations, primarily the snake and the mermaid; they reside in or beyond the water and they interact with humans in a variety of ways (Bernard 2003). Water spirits have played, and may still play, a prominent role in local people's lives and livelihoods (Van Stripiaan 2009). These water spirit beliefs are an integral part of the complex traditional religious belief constellations in Africa. Onkwusa et al (2017) write that in some cases water spirits are believed to have been created by God(s).²⁵ Many of these religions in Africa involve the cults and worshipping of water deities or river gods. In some instances, they are connected to the origins of humanity (Bernard 2010: 237). In addition, Taringa (2006; 2014) argues, at 'theoretical level', that the beliefs in *njuzu*, mermaids, among the Shona signifies how environmental is Shona Traditional Religion.²⁶ Scholars such as Mukamuri (1995), Ranger (1995) and Taringa (2014) discovered that water from sources inhabited by *njuzu* are used for rituals purposes such as *mutoro* (rainmaking ceremonies). The Shona also believe that it has healing powers, can be used by traditional healers to initiate spirit possession and to cool avenging spirits (Mukamuri 1995). Thus, numerous African Traditional Religions (ATR)s²⁷ and water bodies (which are the abode of *njuzu*) are inextricably entangled, thereby substantiating the idea that ATRs are environmentally friendly, to use Taringa's (2006) words.

This chapter examines various themes surrounding the acts, beliefs, observances and practices relating to water spirits (or river gods) among many indigenous peoples in sub-Saharan Africa. This study is predicated upon these themes in many ways. The numerous water spirit belief themes prevalent in different African cultures inform this study, in one way or the other, and in turn this study contributes to the understanding of water spirits beliefs in Africa.

²⁵ God here refers to the idea of the highest God as portrayed in African Traditional Religion and not the Christian God.

²⁶ *Njuzu* are water spirits in the form of the mermaids believed by the majority of the Shona people.

²⁷ The abbreviation ATR implies that there is only one African Traditional Religion which is not the case on the ground. Because various groups in Africa have different traditional religious beliefs, I have added "s" to the abbreviation, to refer to varied ATRs.

Much has been written on the water spirit phenomenon in Africa (Bernard 2001; 2003; 2008; 2010; 2013; Bernard and Kumalo 2004; Drewal 2008; Evans- Pritchard 1956), and in some cases remarkable similarities among water divinities across cultures are noted (Van Stripiaan 2002). Bernard (2010) argues that the ideas found throughout southern Africa pertaining to the key ‘symbols’, such as snakes and mermaids, share some remarkable correlations and consistencies, as well as some significant differences of emphasis. Themes presented in this chapter are centred on the definition of the word ‘water spirit’, the naming processes of water spirits, the habitations of water spirits, the significance of water spirits, the issues of water divinity manifestation and sacrifices, water spirits and artefacts, as well as water spirits and water development projects. I do not intend to exhaust every aspect surrounding water divinities in Africa, but I am highlighting some of them to show how water spirit occurrences can be similar and can be different across regions. I am aware that some of the literature referred to may be regarded as old, but it is essential to refer to these anthropological writings because they are seminal texts and are relevant to this study. The earlier literature helps us to understand the historical development of certain water spirit themes. Thus, themes raised in those earlier sources cannot just be left out because the sources are not current, as those themes inform both this study, as well as future studies on water spirits.

These common themes concerning the complexities of water spirit are not all prevalent in the Nyaminyami case; Nyaminyami has other issues surrounding his manifestation that are not shared with other water divinities prevailing in other African cultures. Therefore, in the empirical chapters, the different themes found in the Nyaminyami case are analysed and such an analysis makes a valuable contribution to the understanding of water spirits in Africa. Themes in the Nyaminyami case that have not been widely explored in the literature on water spirits include his involvement in the cultural appropriation, tourism, landscape and belonging discourses, and the politics of the landscape debates. Therefore, the study contributes to the limited literature that connects water spirits with the aforementioned dimensions. While many of the water spirits (such as *Mami wata*, *Njuzu* and *Inkosazana yasezulwini*) occurring in Africa have been widely studied (see Bernard 2001; 2003; 2005; 2010; 2013; Drewal 2008; Peterson 2006), Nyaminyami has been understudied, and thus this thesis makes a valuable contribution to the understanding of the occurrence of water spirit beliefs in Zimbabwe and the southern African region at large. It introduces Nyaminyami more broadly into the already published literature on water spirits and water divinity debates in Africa, to be discussed below. The dearth of literature that has

commented on Nyaminyami will be reviewed in this chapter, so that the specific gaps in literature surrounding the occurrence of Nyaminyami will be unearthed, and hence these will be covered in my empirical chapters. The other purpose of the literature reviewed was to juxtapose the occurrence of Nyaminyami and the prevalence of other water spirits in Africa. This juxtaposition is necessary because it is the basis upon which comparisons and contrasts in certain sections of the empirical chapters will be built. Much of the data presented in this chapter is from an insider perspective in which I present the findings of other researchers on what their specific informants narrate about the water spirits that they believe in. But, in my empirical chapters I will write from both an insider and outsider perspective.

4.2. The Ambiguities of water spirits.

There seem to be discrepancies between the various geographical areas as to whether the water spirits are regarded as ‘shades’ (recently deceased relatives) of either paternal or maternal origin, or belong to a generalized amalgam of nonspecific or very old ancestors (Bernard 2003; 2010). In some societies they are not even regarded as ancestors, thereby making the understanding of their cosmological status rather difficult and ambiguous. Ambiguities arise because indigenous peoples have different repertoires of knowledge and ways of applying sense to water spirit belief systems (Fontein, personal comm, 9 October 2018), which are influenced by a collection of factors. In KwaZulu- Natal (among the Zulu), the water spirits, in the form of the snake, are referred to as the ‘*amakhosi*’ (the great ancestors). The Zulu people have explicitly stated that the snake is the metamorphosed amalgam of one’s ancestors who live under the water (Bernard, 2003). Similarly, it also emerged in the study by Ngara and Mangizvo (2013) about the Shangwe people of Gokwe in Zimbabwe, that ‘rain’ snakes symbolise the ancestral beings. Consequently, it was taboo for the Shangwe to kill them. If such snakes are seen in the homestead, it is alleged by the elders, that ‘the ancestors have visited us’. However, in other societies, there are controversies concerning whether water spirits are ancestors or not. For instance, Fontein (2015) discovered that *njuzu*, mermaids, are ambivalent and ambiguous, as it is not clear what authority or sovereignty do they embody. Fontein points out that:

The proliferation of *njuzu* across Zimbabwe’s rivers, pools and dams, and across its divergent often highly localized cults, makes them rather hard to interpret. Establishing exactly how *njuzu* feature in this complex cultural nexus- as powerful water creatures, perhaps half human/ half animal, perhaps spirits, associated with healing and water, believed to live below ground and jealously guard specific pools, rivers, and springs in the

landscape- and what their link is to the ancestors who own the land and Mwari who provides the rain, is not straight forward, (2015: 88)

However, Aschwanden (1989) was told among some Karanga people that *njuzu*, mermaids, represented alien spirits, thereby further heightening the confusion about *njuzu*. Such ambiguities also exist in the Eastern Cape. For example, one Mpondomise (sub- Xhosa group) man ruled out that the *aBantu bomlambo*, mermaids, ‘... are definitely not ancestors’ (cited in Hammond- Tooke 1975: 20), although some informants, in some Xhosa groups, equate the River people with ancestors (Dold and Cocks 2012; Hunter 1936 cited in Ibid). For instance, Nosipho from Grahamstown noted that ‘*aBantu bomlambo* are our ancestors, we do not know their names but we know them. They live in the river and in the sea...’ (cited in Dold and Cocks 2012: 88). Therefore, the connection of water spirits with other spiritual forces such as ancestors and alien spirits, varies from community to community, water spirit to water spirit, and informant to informant. People have different ways of making sense of the water spirit’s occurrence. The different levels, connections that people express between water spirits and other spiritual beings, forms part of ‘interpretation’ in Bernard’ FLA theory. These different interpretations relating to the connection between water spirits and ancestors signifies that ‘interpretation’ is a complex and problematic process. It also signifies the unknowability of the spirit world. If the spirit world was fully known, there would be less (or no) ambiguities. Given that there are only limited things about the spirit world that we can know, there are other hidden things in the spiritual realms that humans can hardly comprehend.

4.3. The naming of water spirits

Water spirits in Africa have numerous names. Most of them have specific local names and distinctive personalities (Drewal 2008). The naming of water spirits is done by people’s who believe in those spirits. The naming of a water spirit is influenced by numerous conditions, ranging from its duties, perceived gender and physical appearance. For instance, the name *Mami wata*, which is Pidgin English for *Mummy Water*, was accorded to a water goddess in west- central Africa because of its widely ascribed motherly duties to the local people, of protecting them like a mother (Van Stripiaan 2002). The Papa people of Suriname named their river goddess *Watramama*, which is also Pidgin English meaning *Water Mummy*, because ‘the water goddess is described as an extremely attractive, immeasurably wealthy mermaid- like woman with long, generally smooth hair and a relatively light skin...’ (Ibid: 83). However, in some regions, one water being that is described physically in the same way,

can have various names that can only be interpreted by those naming it, in terms of their own local language. For instance, mermaids ('half fish and half human' beings) appear in many cultures in southern Africa, but have different 'local' names that can mean different things. In Shona/ Karanga they are called *njuzu* (Bernard 2010; Fontein 2015; Latham 1986; Taringa 2006; 2014) and in Xhosa they are known as *abantu bomlambo*. Among the Zulu the mermaid as a singular entity, however, is revered and addressed as *Inkosazana*, the daughter of the Lord of the Sky, *iNkosi yaphezulu* (Bernard 2003: 43). Even among the same people, a water spirit can be referred to in many ways. It is possible that one water spirit can have many names. I shall give an example of the prevalence of this scenario when I will show in Chapter 5 how Nyaminyami had various names among people living along certain sections of the Zambezi River.

4.4. The habitats of water spirits

Literature has shown that all the various water spirits across cultures in Africa occupy a range of water bodies, such as rivers, dams, streams, pools, boiling pots²⁸ and fountains (Bernard 2003; 2010; Clements 1959; Douglas 1963; Drewal 2008; Fontein, 2015; Middleton 1965; Latham 1986; Evans- Pritchard 1956). The term 'water spirits' on its own speaks volumes with regards to their habitation; they are called 'water' spirits because they dwell in water bodies. Although these beings are all identified with 'water', they are diversely defined in different societies as mentioned above. Water is central to the water divinity phenomenon. Drewal argues that 'from the earliest images on the continent and throughout the millennia, diverse African cultures have stressed the value and power of water, not only as a source of sustenance, but also as a focus of spiritual and artistic expression. Many early depictions of spiritual entities assumed the form of hybrid creatures, part-human, part-aquatic' (2008: 63). For many Africans, water connects: this world with the other world, this life with the afterlife (ibid). Thus, it connects humans with underworld creatures that manifest as mermaids or snakes. It is both its religious (Bernard 2010; 2013) and political (Fontein 2015) power that makes this connection feasible. I will demonstrate how water as an 'index of power' (Fontein 2015), shaped life along the Zambezi River, and Lake Kariba more broadly, in the ethnographic chapters.

The following are specific cases where certain spirits inhabit particular water bodies: Among the Nuer, the Anuak descent group believed in a river spirit that inhabited the

²⁸Boiling pots are specific areas in the river where hot water is found, they are common in many central African rivers such as the Zambezi River.

Nyading river (Evans- Pritchard 1956: 74); The *Adroa* water spirit believed in by the Lugbara people of Uganda favoured streams (Middleton 1965: 63); Among the Shona people, Latham tells us that the *njuzu* lived in perennial pools (*dziva*), but many also inhabit wells (*tsime*), there are certain pools that are famous for their *njuzu* and others which attract only casual attention from them (Latham, 1986:75); Among the Idoma of Nigeria, the River Benue is regarded to be the main abode of *Anjenu spirits* (Kasfir 1982); and lastly, in Kongo (now Congo- Brazzaville), *bisimbi* water spirits inhabit streams and pools (Adams 2007). Furthermore, people living along these places can establish strong relations with these water divinities and construct a sense of belonging to those landscapes or waterscapes inhabited by their water deities. These peoples can even set principles that can govern the accessing of these waterscapes to preserve these water bodies that are dwelling places for their spirits that help them in their daily lives. For instance, among the Nuer, the Juak lineage group of western Nuerland, 'respect all rivers and streams, and when a man of the lineage intends to cross a river he throws a bead into the water calling on his 'grandfather' (the river spirit) to accept the offering and bring him into safety. A woman of the lineage will not take off her skirt when crossing a river, as other women do, and unmarried girls, who are naked, place a few wisps of grass round their loins before entering the water' (Evans-Pritchard 1956: 73). However, some other water divinities can also have other secondary dwelling places, in addition to water bodies. They can be connected to other landscapes and spaces. For example, Inkosazana, among the Zulu, though sometime manifested as a mermaid from the local rivers of the KwaZulu- Natal province, also occupied the mists and trees (Bernard 2010: 229).

Although water spirits are generally known as occupying water bodies, it must be clarified that sometimes they occupy 'specific' areas in those water bodies. For example, if rivers are the abode of water spirits, they cannot dwell in the large expanse of the river, but favour particular places in that river. Bernard emphasizes this point when she writes that 'certain places are more favoured by the river spirits than others' (Bernard 2003: 149). She further argues that 'seen as cosmic generators of life, fertility and water/rain, these divinities are believed to reside in certain sites of "living water," which are characterized by certain physical features' (Bernard 2013: 138). These sites are identified as 'places of power' (Colson 1997), mainly because of their sacredness and association with different structures of spiritual authority. For example, Peterson (2006) was told that in Kongo *Mami Wata* spirits seem to prefer places where water is acting up, flowing from here to there, places like AngaWene near the Village of Boyangana in the Northwest of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). More generally, they are also believed to live in deep pools of certain rivers,

often below waterfalls, in fast moving “living” water, or in the sea (Bernard, 2003). Such sites could be classified as sacred in that they are hedged about with taboos and rules of behaviour, which if breached, are believed to lead to catastrophic events, e.g. droughts, floods or tornadoes (Bernard 2013).

Moreover, the specific areas in water bodies in which water spirits reside, must be approached with respect, and through following the required steps, in religious terms, of accessing those areas, as they are believed to be sacred (Bernard 2013; Taringa 2006; 2014). These approaches to accessing sacred water bodies differ from water deity to water deity, and water body to water body. Among the Shona, there are elaborate practices that must be followed when visiting *njuzu* sites (see Aschwanden 1989; Fontein 2015; Latham 1986; Taringa 2006; 2014). But to cite a specific illustration, I shall quote certain steps which Penelope Bernard²⁹ was instructed to follow on approaching a pool for *Inkosazana*, after she had received her calling as a diviner from *Inkosazana* in a dream in 1997. She writes that:

‘This is for real!’, I thought to myself as I knelt on the wet rock by the edge of a deep turbulent pool base of a small waterfall, which then flowed over a precipitous drop to another pool below..., I had washed my arms and face in the water as instructed, and near where I knelt two yellow candles glowed and a bunch of dried *imphepho* (*Helychrysum odoratissimum*) smouldered, giving off a strong aromatic smoke. Zanele³⁰ stood behind me urging me to pray to the ancestors and *Inkosazana*: ‘Pray, Penny. Tell *Inkosazana* that you have come to the place she has shown you in a dream’. ‘Zanele, Baba³¹ and three others were standing a few metres behind me. They told me that they could not come too close as they did not want to scare *Inkosazana* or she would not manifest. She only appears to those who she has called and will not reveal herself if anyone present has a ‘bad heart’ (Bernard 2008:49-50).

From this quotation we learn that for one to approach *Inkosazana*’s pool, one was supposed to kneel, wash one’s arms and face, and pray. We also learn that the person called must go to the pool of great turbulence alone, for if she is accompanied by someone not called or with a ‘bad heart’, *Inkosazana* does not manifest. Thus, Zanele, Baba and three others were standing a few metres away from the pool where Bernard was. Failure to comply with these traditional rules result in water deities choosing not to manifest themselves, as they feel that they are disrespected. Consequently, they abandon their cultural significances of offering medicines, rain etc., and if this occurs, the involved communities suffer from diseases and drought.

²⁹ Penelope Bernard holds a PhD in Anthropology from Rhodes University. She is a diviner both by calling and by profession (see Bernard 2008: page 49), and she was called in 1997. Her calling influenced her writings and she has written a number of book chapters and journal articles on water divinity complexities, in which some of her experiences as a called and trained diviner are written about; see also her 2010 PhD thesis, which is a comparative exploration of the water divinities in southern Africa, and their role in the calling of diviner healers through dreams and going underwater experiences.

³⁰ Zanele is Penelope Bernard’s friend who is also a Healer based in the KwaZulu- Natal Province, South Africa.

³¹ Baba was the diviner under whom Bernard was training.

4.5. The functions (cultural significance) of water spirits

Research has shown that there are wide ranging functions (or roles) of water spirits. It has also indicated that there are a myriad of social, economic and political functions of rituals associated with, or dedicated to water spirits.³² Arguing from a sociological perspective, in many instances the functions of water spirits and rituals dedicated to them make a contribution to maintenance of the fabric of the society. Their contribution in this regard must be understood alongside the decisive contributions of ancestral spirits. The functions of water spirits and rituals dedicated to them are revealed through the ‘interpretations’ of the people who engage with those particular water spirits. There are interlinkages between the functions and manifestations of the water spirits. For example, when *Inkosazana* manifests through rainfall, within that manifestation there is the function of the provision of rain for crops (Bernard 2010). Nonetheless, it must be emphasized that the functions of the water spirits differ from society to society, because different water spirits manifest in a range of ways to different people. There are notable similarities and differences between the functions of Nyaminyami and other water spirits, as illustrated below. Henceforth, by assessing Nyaminyami’s cultural significance, this study is adding new insights to the already existing literature on water spirits in Africa. Moreover, Nyaminyami assumed changing roles over time, his duties were not static, his roles during the 19th and 20th century, and those externally appropriated or imposed on him by people in the 21st century, are somewhat different from one another, as is indicated in the ethnographic chapters. This is an important dimension which can contribute to studies on water spirits in Africa. It sets out a historical perspective and foundation on which future studies of water divinity complexities can be predicated on. Systematically tracing the changes and continuities in the roles of river gods to the riverine peoples is crucial because the assumption is that water spirits functions and narratives change over time.

Some water spirits, such as *Simbi*, which is believed in in Kongo (Adams 2007), and *aBantu bomlambo* (mermaids) among the isiXhosa speakers (Bernard 2010), influence the fertility and wellbeing of those living in their local areas. Water spirits can also serve as rain providers to the people, after some rainmaking rituals are enacted near their dwelling places, during which offerings are made to them: for example *Inkosazana* provided rain after some ritual enactment by Zulu women and girls (Bernard 2010; Bryant 1949; Gluckman 1952) and *njuzu* (mermaids) among the Shona/ Karanga have been associated with Mwari (God), who

³²I am interchangeably using the words functions and roles to refer to the duties of the water spirits.

provides rain (Aschwanden 1989; Fontein 2015). Aschwanden gives a statement by an elderly Karanga person, which testifies to the connection between njuzu, rain and God; the statement reads:

A rain- priest can go near a cave in the mountains where there is water. Such a place is sacred because, according to the Karanga, there is a connection between njuzu with the ancestors and God there (mountains are also burial grounds of great ancestors). The rain- priest prays to the ancestors and God in such a place, but not to the water creatures. In reply to the prayer one occasionally hears a noise coming from the cave, which is made by the njuzu, (Aschwanden 1989: 189).

However, some statements collected among the Shona, counter the contention that people go to *njuzu* to ask for rain (Fontein 2015: 89). Thus, it can be learnt from the *njuzu* illustration that in some cases the duties of water spirits can be differently narrated among the same people, and there are various socio- economic or religious reasons to explain this scenario. Sometimes, differences in the explanations of the duties of water spirits come from the literature itself. For example, writing about *Inkosazana* in the mid-20th century, Glickman (1952; 1954) and Bryant (1949) largely overlooked the connection of *Inkosazana* with diviners and healing, and her residence in rivers and pools. They only focused predominantly on her fertility and rain- providing aspects (Bernard 2008: 56). Yet, Bernard's informants from the same communities emphasized that *Inkosazana* also manifested as a mermaid and snakes that granted healing powers to the people. But, blame must not be always given to writers but to the specific informants of a particular time. Maybe at the time of Gluckman and Bryant, *Inkosazana* was not perceived as a mermaid, or informants, for reasons only known to them, chose not to tell them about the connection between *Inkosazana* with healing powers and water bodies. Presumably, at the time of Bernard the people interviewed by Gluckman and Bryant had died, and Bernard interviewed different people at a different time, when perceptions of *Inkosazana* may have been revised. People reframe the occurrence of spiritual beings over time. These differences in literature and among informants about the significance of water gods also occurs in the case of Nyaminyami, as I shall elaborate in Chapters 5 and 6, and demonstrates the ambiguities associated with water spirit beings.

Thus, I turn to the mermaid's and snake's role of granting people healing knowledge and skills. Latham writes that 'if they do entice one into their pool or well, one may stay there for several years- or forever. In many cases, however, after sojourning with them for a lengthy period, people are released to go and practise as *svikiro* (spirit mediums or diviners) or *n'anga* (diviner healers)' (Latham 1986: 76). In support of this observation, Bernard also notes that (among the Shona, Zulu and Xhosa) 'the return of an individual taken underwater by these deities sees him/ her granted great skills of healing and prophecy (i.e. divination)'

(Bernard, 2010: 1). It is also shown in the literature that relatives are not allowed to display any grief at the disappearance of one who has gone under the water, or he/she may never be returned to the living (Aschwanden 1989; Bernard 2003; Fontein 2016; Hirst 2005; Latham 1986). Anyone who enters these water sources without the calling of the ancestors will disappear, never to return (Bernard 2003: 149). The relatives of the person taken underwater must perform rituals to make sure that the person returns alive. In many cases when these rituals are enacted, serious climatic events occur in the water, through which the water spirits communicate about their desires. These climatic events are often interpreted by the people concerned. For example, Wolmer gives an illustration of a woman, Mrs Mahlakete, from the Lowveld in Zimbabwe, who stayed underwater for three months. When the rituals for her return were enacted 'the water started moving sideways and made waves which frightened people. The more they sang the more waves there were. This was a sign that the possessed woman wanted to come out of the water' (Wolmer 2007: 61). This strengthens my argument that extraordinary climatic events on their own are important; in as far as understanding the water divinity complexity is concerned. With reference to the literature, we see that underwater experiences and the duration of being underwater, varies from water spirit to water spirit, and from region to region. For example, 'Baba' a diviner among the Zulu, was taken underwater, by a snake, for only three hours (Bernard 2008); in contrast, Ambuya Juliana, a diviner among the Shona, stayed underwater, with mermaids, for four years (Bernard and Kumalo 2004; Mawere and Wilson 1995). However, what seems missing in the literature are investigations concerning whether the differences in period of being underwater influence diviners and healers' authority and legitimacy, in the sense that the longer the duration of being underwater, the greater the legitimacy.

Research has shown that it is possible for a water spirit believed in by one ethnic group to possess or call members from other different ethnic and racial groups. In post-apartheid South Africa, for example, some white south Africans have become *iZangoma*, traditional African healers, and perform rituals in black townships (Teppo 2011: 225).³³ Bernard's call as a diviner and healer, mentioned above, is a case in point. Even though local media in Cape Town tends to discuss white *iZangoma* with skepticism and sarcasm (Teppo 2011), the number of them is increasing. There is also evidence that shows that people from Zimbabwe sometimes go to South Africa to visit water sacred spaces and *iZangoma* there, or vice versa (Bernard 2010).

³³*Isangoma/ Izangoma* are African Traditional healers, diviners, parapsychologists, and priests who claim to draw powers from ancestors (or water spirits) (see Teppo 2011, page 225-6).

Moreover, water divinities can also grant men or women riches, if men or women act in accordance with their desires. *Watramama* (goddess) used to appear in men's dreams (among the Papa people), and if the man obeys and keeps their meeting secret, and if he promises to be her faithful lover, she would make him rich (Van Stipriaan 2002: 87). Furthermore, if one pays *Mami wata* meeting fee³⁴ and obtains her address, a meeting is arranged. 'During the meeting... a sum is required by the *Mami wata* spirit in exchange for special medicines, power (nkisi) and or natural wealth she can bestow' (Peterson 2006: 109-125). To supply another example, the southern Igbo river god, *Imo miri*, offered the Igbo people increased wealth after they performed communal rites. The rites are enacted in honour of the river god. The rite was held during the annual flood of the Imo River, which occurred between May and July (Uchendu 1965: 97). The fact that the rites were performed during an annual 'flood' vividly indicates the interconnections between climatic events and/ or natural disasters and rites related to water spirits (or the occurrence of water spirits in general). If water spirits want to grant humans medicine, healing knowledge, riches amongst other things, it is said that they sometimes communicate through dreams. Dreams are central to the understanding of the manifestations of water spirits. Dreams are key features of diviner training, and it is believed that dreams may serve to warn individuals of a potential underwater calling (Bernard 2010).³⁵

Furthermore, water spirits in some regions of Africa offer food sustenance to the people in times of hunger and acute famine. These water spirits provided food in specific form in specific contexts, and this function marks one of the important manifestations of water spirits in Africa. *Njuzu*, among the Shona (Fontein 2015); *iNkosazana* among the Zulu (Bernard 2010); and Ekine among the Ijebu-Yoruba people (De la Burde 1973), sustain people through provision of rain for crop germination. However, *Dumineia*, a water spirit believed in by the Somu Village people in the Niger delta, provides people with fish (Horton, F1, 1966). Among the BaTonga, the local elders in Musampakaruma and Mola also say that Nyaminyami was food provider to them during the times of hunger. Peterson (2006) notes that sometimes *Mami wata* provides men with powers for good hunting, and thus they obtain more meat in the end. From these cases, we note that water spirits provide food in different ways in specific settings.

In terms of gender, the water goddesses (or female water spirits) can choose to appear to women only, and to emancipate them socio-economically. The water goddesses such as

³⁴The fee in form of coins is thrown into the particular waterscape in which the water spirit is believed to reside.

³⁵I shall fully elaborate below the importance of dreams in the water divinity complex.

Mami wata of some of the west- central African countries, *Tingoi/ Njaloi* of Sierra Leone, and *Inkosazana yaphezulu* of the Zulu people, are good examples. This role of water spirits correlates with the sociological/ structural functionalist theoretical approach to the water divinity phenomenon (see Chapter 2), where Gluckman (1954) utilized the *Inkosazana* rituals (which are women dominated) among the Zulu, to validate his theory about ‘rituals of rebellion’. Indeed, ‘acting out the identity of spirits while in a possession trance, offers women an acceptable way of expressing thoughts and feelings that are forbidden in situations of social subordination’ (Bourguignon 2004, cited in Plancke 2011). *Mami wata*, just like *Inkosazana yaphezulu* who used to make women behave like men (Bernard 2010; Gluckman 1954), ‘also provides a spiritual and professional avenue for women to become powerful priestesses and healers of both psycho-spiritual and physical ailments and to assert female agency in generally male dominated societies’ (Drewal et al 2008:63). *Mami wata* is also believed, among the Oguta Igbo, to give barren women children after they agreed to serve her (Jell- Bahlsen 2014, cited in Okwuosa et al 2017: 2) and sometimes gave women wealth (Okwuosa 2017). Furthermore, a primordial water goddess known as *Tingoi/ Njaloi* presides over female initiation rites among various peoples in Sierra Leone and Liberia, including the Mende, Temme, Bullom, Vai, Gola, Dei, Krim, Kissi, and Bassa (Phillips 1999, cited in Drewal, ibid: 64). Ranger (1995) also discovered that many women, such as Ambuya Juliana, in southern Zimbabwe are possessed by *njuzu* spirits, who are believed to bring the power to cure fertility. Among the Punu of west central Africa, Plancke found that ‘the *bayisi* (water spirit) cult is itself a celebration of female regenerative capacities in their potential to assume social and cosmic revitalization, hence sustaining women’s social position in relation to men in their ideological basis of gender complementarity’ (Plancke 2011: 369).

However, water spirits are not always benevolent creatures. They might be familiarly known for executing noble roles in societies but sometimes can be non-benevolent, especially when they are angered, or when their dwelling places are disrespected. For instance, among the Shona in Zimbabwe, Fontein was told that ‘the use of soap and ash, and the washing of dirty pots or linen is prohibited at pools, springs and rivers associated with *njuzu* (mermaids), and the defilement of such places can have grave consequences’ (Fontein 2015: 90). These grave consequences can be drownings, death, illness or bearing of handicapped babies etc. - depending upon the water spirit in question, because punishments differ from water deity to water deity. Among the Igbo, for example:

People may swear their innocence before an *Imo miri* shrine. Those who swear falsely before it are said to be liable to drown in the river or to suffer

from water- logging disease. People who die in this way are denied ground burial. Those who die by drowning (either by suicide or otherwise) are buried on the bank of the river. They are believed to be taken away by *Imo miri* during her annual floods (Uchendu 1965: 97).

However, the anger of the water divinities can be rectified or placated through offerings and ritual enactment. If these appeasement rituals are enacted, the grave consequences of disrespecting water divinities, are reduced. The placation rituals involve the making of offerings to them. Nevertheless, the non- benevolent acts of water spirits are perceived by other scholars as representing the ambiguity of the water divinity phenomenon. For example, Hammond- Tooke (1975) writes that the river people (water spirits) as well as the misfortune they cause has about it an element of fortuitousness, the uncalculated, the morally neutral and ambivalent.

4.6. Dreams and dreaming

Dreams are central to the interactions between humans and the spirit world. They connect the human world and the spiritual world. Sometimes the spirit figures choose to visit the people in dreams, although they sometimes visit them in trance. Dreams are a mode of communication between humans, the dead and the spiritual beings. In further validating this point Hirst argues that ‘dreams are conceived to be communications emanating directly from the ancestors’ (Hirst 2005:11). Commenting on the centrality of dreams in African traditional religion, Bernard postulates that:

For diviners, however, the dream world is the way through which humans can communicate with other realities and dimensions, gaining an understanding of truth that lies behind deceptions in the lived reality, and these dreams are regarded as being of great value in guiding action. Dreams collapse time and space, allowing one to know in advance what may arise or who may visit. They are the means by which the ancestors can visit in their anthropomorphic or animal form. They can advise diviners on various plants that can help with training or healing, sites of ancestral power that should be visited, where and when rituals should be performed, and even the sacrificial beasts that should be chosen as an offering. Dreams can give advice, warnings, and instructions or reveal great symbolic truths and meaning. They can be direct verbal messages, metaphoric, and can be highly detailed and visually vivid (Bernard 2007: 117).

Dreams are also central in the relationships between humans and water spirits. Research attests to many instances across Africa in which dreams seem to be mediums of communication between people and river gods (Bernard 2010; Drewal 2008; Hirst 2005; Peterson 2006). It is through dreams that some humans are called by the water spirits for them to become diviners and healers (Bernard 2010; Hirst 1990; 2005). Hirst (2005) documents numerous informants among the Xhosa who were called to be diviners through

dreams. For example one of his informants narrated a dream in which he stayed with water spirits in the following words: 'I dreamed of the river and in the dream I stayed with the River People (mermaids). There is a whole world in the river - people, cattle, fowls and everything. I saw a river fowl (*inkuku yomlambo*) on the water shaking its body and tail feathers up and down' (Hirst 1990: 181). Van Stipriaan (2002) documents the centrality of dreams in the water spirit beliefs among the Papa people, in which men make appointments with mermaids through dreams. Some of these dreams can also be understood in the context of the anthropologists' extraordinary experiences. For example, Bernard had several dream calls from *Inkosazana* in 1998 that she has documented in a diary (see Bernard 2007; 2010). Henry Drewal received a call from *Mami wata* in a dream in 1975 (Henry Drewal personal communication, 28 February 2018; see also Drewal 2008). But, as mentioned in Chapter 2 and 5, the issue of dreams is irrelevant in the Nyaminyami context. Among the people I interviewed noone connected Nyaminyami with dream experiences.

However, Bernard on 6th of November 1998 dreamt a dream that happens to have striking similarities with the ways Nyaminyami interacted with people in the Zambezi Valley. And this dream signifies the dreaming- cross culturally ideology mentioned in Bernard (2010: 309) in which *iZangoma* in some regions can dream of water divinity occurrences in the other regions. In this dream Bernard was walking with children, and she reports that:

'...we descended to a large pool which had a very distinctive wide curving rock face, which, looked like it overhung the pool and had a deep cave under it. As we descended the pool I could see the shape of a very large snake whose body stretched right across the pool... The children were clearly happy to see the snake which they laughed and spoke with... The snake had now lifted half of its body out of the water as it communed with the children... After what I felt like a very short period I 'awoke' in my dream to find myself still sitting on the edge of the pool. However, the children and the snake had gone. I saw a package in front of me on the rock and was aware that it had been left for me by the snake' (Bernard 2010: 339).

I am not implying that this snake dreamt by Bernard was Nyaminyami neither did Bernard make this comparison, but I am interested in how the dream correlates with the BaTonga's experiences with Nyaminyami as it shall be elaborated in Chapter 5. Firstly, the descriptions in the dream of 'the wide curving rock face... with a curve under it' are similar to the BaTonga's description of *Kariva* the curved rock that sheltered Nyaminyami. Secondly, the portrayal in the dream that 'the snake had now lifted half of its body out of the water...' correlates with the idea that Nyaminyami exposed only part of his body to the BaTonga people. Lastly, the last part of the dream in which Bernard 'saw a package in front of her on the rock and was aware it had been left for her', is consistent with the idea that Nyaminyami offered people strips of meat whenever he appeared to the people. Thus, they may be

possibilities that *iZangoma* in some societies can be shown of the existence of water spirits in other different societies. Nevertheless, the ways this dream was interpreted by Zanele and Baba (Ibid) is way different from the above juxtaposition I have made between the dream and Nyaminyami.

4.7. Water spirits, climatic events and natural disasters.

Climatic changes or events (such as experiencing hot temperatures in winter or vice versa) and natural disasters (such as droughts leading to drying up of rivers, tornadoes, storms and floods) are important ways through which the water divinity complexity can also be understood through. These are important nowadays when both the physical encounter with water divinities and going under- water experiences are now rare. Hirst (1990) raises an important argument that correlates with my argument in this section. He notes that ‘diviners have at their disposal a complex array or repertoire of signs and symbols that express and define in memorable terms images of self and society at large’ (Ibid: 166). According to him, these elements, signs and symbols consist, among others, of the ancestral spirits, sacred animals, medicinal plants and, more abstractly, wind, homestead, forest, grassland and river. He mentions wind as part of these signs and symbols representing the spirit world, and by extension I want to argue that other extraordinary climatic events and natural disasters can arguably be conceptualized as signs and symbols of the water spirit world that are at the disposal of diviners. Diviners in numerous societies interpret these signs as modes of communication for water spirits that are directed to either the individuals or to society at large.

Climatic events must not only be harsh for people to recognize that water spirits are communicating. Both good and harsh climatic conditions are communicative. They form part of the experiences with water divinities in their own right. Like dreams, climatic events and natural disasters are a means through which water divinities communicate with humans. For instance, ‘female *Tsungani* spirits, mermaids, who live on mud and fish, communicate with humans only when warning of either flood or drought occurs...’ (Ranger 1995:230), thereby signifying the entanglement between natural disasters and water spirits’ communication. Bryant (1949) notes that among the Zulu, the presence of ‘mist’ communicates the presence of *Nomkhubulwana* as she is believed to move in the mist. Consistently, Berglund’s all Zulu informants ‘agreed that *Nomkhubulwana* appears in the morning mists’ (Berglund 1976: 65). The entanglement between water spirits and weather changes is not as clear to humans

because it occurs in the spiritual realms. It is also not clear how the interconnections of the two originate, as these develop in the spiritual and unseen realms. These unclarified dimensions indicate the kind of loopholes that may exist within the water divinity complexities in terms of their linkage with the cosmological processes.

These extraordinary climatic events may potentially be experienced in a dream, or in trance, or physical. For example, one elderly informant in Musampakaruma narrated to me that when they resided along the Zambezi near the gorge area when he was still a young boy, he saw the Zambezi River becoming turbulent in its flow due to extraordinary winds that occurred at the time and he concluded that it was Nyaminyami who was communicating something. He told me that he quickly moved away from the river as it was dangerous and might have represented that a misfortune was about to occur (Interview 3 April 2017). They may communicate callings, rage and wishes of the water spirits. The experience of weird climatic changes and natural disasters itself sometimes reaffirms the beliefs and provides the generating force for further ritual action. For instance, the appearance of this mist generated action/ praxis among the Zulu girls. Berglund discovered among his informants that *uNomdede* (beer brewed for *Nomkhubulwana*) was brewed when the first mist in spring is noticed on the local 'S' mountain, "indicating that now our friend, *Inkosazana*, has come down from the sky onto the mountain" (informant cited by Berglund 1976: 65).

The verity that in many cultural societies there is a particular season when rituals dedicated to water spirits must occur speaks volumes about the interconnection between cosmos and particular water spirits. Important is human interpretations in assigning meaning to these natural disasters that connects them with water spirits. Extraordinary climatic events and natural disasters are sometimes encapsulated in dreams. So often these climatic changes are seen in dreams by people being called by water spirits, and come to pass as these people visit the water bodies. In some instances people dream of water changing its current to heavy waves or becoming dirty these are changes that only occur when there are climatic changes generated by water spirits. For instance, Hammond- Tooke (1975: 21) writes that 'to dream of dirty water means that the river people are angry.' When offerings to *abantu bomlambo*, mermaids, are left on the river or pool banks the water rises or floods and takes the offerings underwater (Hammond- Tooke 1975: 22). It is the water spirits that generate the winds and storms that engender the water to rise and flood.

In relation to anger, water spirits such as *Inkosazana* shows her displeasure in general to the transgressions of the living, especially towards those of the earth by causing tornadoes and droughts (Bernard 2007: 114). Among the Khoesan of Namibia, killing of the messenger

snakes led to the drying up of fountains, waterholes and springs that were abode of River Snake's (see stories documented in Sullivan and Low 2014: 223). Nyaminyami, himself, when angered had a reputation of manipulating the Zambezi River's current so that it comes rough and inundates canoes, as we shall see in Chapter 5. Water spirits have the power to rejuvenate dried rivers and springs if they are placated. For instance, Ambuya Juliana instituted a set of harsh taboos that the community had to observe should they wish to break the drought and to facilitate the return of the *njuzu*, who would bring rain and rejuvenate springs and rivers (Mawere and Wilson 1995). However, the interpretation of such climatic events is contested between scientists and indigenous peoples. Scientists may have scientific and geographical explanations and indigenous peoples have religious explanations. I shall indicate these contests in the Nyaminyami context in Chapter 8. Sometimes people capitalize on these changes to legitimize various regimes of authority through the ways they interpret them. In terms of wishes, like the messenger animals (such as python and crocodiles) climate events are messengers in their own right. They can be a warning signal.

4.8. Offerings, Rituals and Manifestations of the Water Spirits

According to the literature, rituals dedicated to water spirits are conducted in or near water bodies (see Bernard 2003; 2008; 2010; 2013; Frank 1995; Kasfir 1982; Renne 1991). Bernard argues that water sources are essential parts of the landscape for conducting rituals, to aid communication with the spirit world. Water is regarded among many African religious functionaries as a living force, which has the power to transform us from one state to another, at a spiritual or physical level. It has the power to purify and protect one from evil, or to heal and bring one from illness to health. It is thus a vital element in the performance of many religious and healing rituals (Bernard 2003). As Fontein (2015) mentioned, water is an 'index of power.' Many rituals dedicated to water spirits thus occur in or near water bodies. Water spirit shrines, especially in West Africa, are characterized by the decorations of cultural and material objects such as pottery, mermaid figures representing *Mami wata*, sometimes surrounded by Christian (such as the depiction of Jesus on the cross) and Muslim figures (Drewal 2008). The presence of Christian and Muslim figures on the shrines indicates the inter-religious dialogue between traditional beliefs and Christianity as well as the dialogue between traditional beliefs and Islam respectively, in west- Africa. However, some of the shrines dedicated to *Mami wata* are not along the rivers, but can be found in the homesteads of priests (ibid). *Mami wata* shrines do not have to be close to water bodies for them to be

effective, though these seem to be numerous among people who live near water bodies. Altars can be either in a house or outside - both are effective (Henry Drewal, pers comm 14 October 2018). However, the degree of effectiveness may depend on the river god in question.

The nature and purpose of the rituals dedicated to the water spirits may differ across a region, and these appear to depend on historical processes, modes of production and systems of governance (Bernard 2013). These rituals can be performed at both individual and societal level. At individual level among the Nuer, for example, any member of the Juak lineage, whether male or female, must throw a bead into the water, calling on his/her 'grandfather' (the river spirit) to accept the offering and bring him/her into safety (Evans- Pritchard 1956). At societal level, those possessed by the spirit, or diviner healers, are central in leading ritual processes. Rituals, among various communities, are usually enacted for the purposes of requesting rain and fertility from the water spirits (Aschwanden 1989, Latham 1986; Fontein 2006; 2015). However, it has been observed that across various regions, the rituals address not only ecological interests, such as rainfall and fertility of the land, but also issues of political- economic interest (Bernard 2010).

Usually, ritual enactment involves some gift offering to the water spirits. Central to the appeasement is the concept of exchange and reciprocity. People usually offer gifts, expecting something in return from the water spirits. In many African cultures, the goat seems to be the offering most favoured by the spirits, and it is used among the Zulu for *Inkosazana* (Bernard 2008), in Kongo for *Mami wata* (Peterson 2006), among the Gaatiek fishermen (a Nuer clan) for the Nile spirit (Evans- Pritchard, 1956). In other societies the cow is central, particularly for its milk. The Gaatiek clan among the Nuer dedicate black cows to the Nile spirit, and they sometimes pour a libation of milk from the cows into the rivers (Evans-Pritchard 1956: 73). Bernard also found the importance of cattle in South Africa (Bernard 2010). Some water spirits, such as *Mami wata*, want money; this price in cold cash is given over to her at the arranged meeting, or at times simply thrown out in the water (Peterson 2006). The water goddess, *Watra mama*, of the black (i.e. Pacific) Atlantic, is worshipped with all kinds of ritual offerings, often consumer goods, but she is best consulted through a specialist, and communicates to her adherents by taking possession of them during trance dances (Van Stipriaan, 2002: 88). However, water spirits are not only just given gifts for purposes of worship and requests of rain, fertility and protection from them, but can also be offered gifts in order to placate them. Latham (1986) gives an illustration of the njuzu which need to be offered gifts in order to bring back a person from the underwater world.

In addition, sometimes water spirits can demand human beings as an offering. But, it is not necessarily the case that *njuzu* consume human flesh, but those people sacrificed can join *njuzu* ranks under the water. Among the Shona during persistent aridity one used to make a human sacrifice to the *njuzu*. One used to leave a child and its sling by a pool or in a cave with water. If the *njuzu* took the child, this meant rain. This child itself becomes a *njuzu*, and it is to ask the ancestors and God for the life- saving rain (Aschwanden 1989). Furthermore, sometimes ‘white’ cloth is also offered. Renne in his studies in Bunu- Yoruba, discovered that white cloth was also offered to water spirits that come from the water, because of its white colour (Renne1991). The white colour is pure and its purity connects with the purity of the water.

The enactment of the rituals stimulates the manifestation of water spirits. Water spirits across Africa manifest in different ways to the people who believe in them. Some spirits might expose themselves to people, especially to diviners; for example, during Bernard’s prayer along the *Inkosazana* pool in Natal, Zanele (Bernard’s escort) standing a few metres away from the pool where Bernard was, saw *Inkosazana* and shouted ‘There she is. I can see her head coming out of the water..., I can smell fish. It is her, Baba!’ (Bernard 2008: 50). However, Bernard did not see *Inkosazana*, nor was she taken underwater. She wrote that: ‘...alas, even though I lit the candles and *imphepho* and knelt near the pool praying and holding on to the white goat, I was not taken under water, nor did I see her’ (ibid: 55). Thus, sometimes water spirits can choose who they want, and do not want, to see them. Moreover, some water spirits might choose to answer the prayers of the people without exposing themselves to people. With some of these water spirits, if they are seen, the person(s) who sees them, might die. For instance, *Adroa*-, a water spirit among the Lugbara- if seen ‘will kill and eat the person who glimpses it’ (Middleton 1965: 63).

4.9. Artefacts, Tourism and Water divinities.

Water deities have formed part of many cultural artefacts in different societies in Africa. ‘African art’ is the label usually given to the visual and plastic arts of the peoples south of the Sahara, especially those of west and central Africa (Vansina 1984). This artistic expressions are also not uncommon in southern Africa. For example, the Khoesan in the past even went beyond artefacts to rock-painting their River Bull and Snake they believed in (Challis, Hollmann and McGranaghan 2013; Watts 2016), and these are still present to date in such places as Sehonghong near Senqu River (Sullivan and Low 2014). Much of the water deity

artefacts, especially of west-central Africa, have featured in Drewal's (2008) book *Mami Wata: Arts for water spirits in Africa and its Diaspora* and some have been published in the *African Arts* academic journal. Drewal's book explores the visual cultures and histories of African and African Atlantic water deities, revealing the power and potency of images and ideas to shape the lives of people, communities, and societies. It has a series of case studies that demonstrate specific cultural, historical and artistic forces that have shaped water spirit imagery in different places on the African continent. This book has had an impact in the study of fine arts in colleges and universities worldwide. For example, at Rhodes University students from the Fine Arts Department told me that it is a must-read book for their degree. However, the book focused mainly on water spirits art in west- central Africa; north, east and southern Africa are not represented. We cannot amputate half of Africa, and then call a portion of what remains 'African art'. Thus, other water spirits related art in other parts of Africa has received scant attention (Vansina 1984; Mukova and Chikovore 2013). Arguing specifically for the BaTonga, Mukova and Chikovore bemoaned the fact that BaTonga arts in Zimbabwe remain understudied and that little is understood about them (Mukova and Chikovore 2013). The path breaking PhD thesis and other publications by Umali Saidi must be applauded for unearthing the semantic meanings of a few BaTonga artefacts, which include the *buntibe* (drum), *mfuko* (smoking pipe) and Nyaminyami (water spirit) walking stick (Saidi 2013; 2016; 2017). However, his approach to the understanding of these artefacts is ahistorical and general. This validates the past observation by Vansina (1984: 1) that the 'historical development of the art forms, even the sculptural forms, has not been a subject of sustained research and, furthermore, that other kinds of arts have received scant attention.'

In contrast to the approach of Saidi, this thesis will examine the cultural significance of the Nyaminyami walking stick over time because the form and meaning of the various Nyaminyami artefacts have not remained static over time. It is not just Nyaminyami artefacts that have contested and changing histories, but this scenario can be found across cultures in Africa. Drewal (2008), for example, has shown how the *Mami wata* artefacts have changed over time and how they have been influenced by various European ideas and depictions of the mermaid. Around the 15th century European (i.e. Christian, Greek and Roman) ideas of the mermaid penetrated West Africa with a significant impact, through the sailors, merchants and explorers. These images assumed different forms within the material culture. For example, one sculptor in Sierra Leone borrowed the image of a mermaid, and flanked it with two crocodile tails; Drewal writes that:

An African sculptor, a member of the Sapi peoples living on Sherbro Island off the coast of Sierra Leone, was carving the image of one on an ivory saltcellar, commissioned by a visiting Portuguese explorer or merchant. As his model, the artist used an image supplied to him by his Portuguese client. Though the mermaid was copied from a European model, the Sapi sculptor immediately “Africanized” her, for she is flanked by two crocodiles, ancient African symbols for water spirits and a central image associated with water spirits among the Sapi’s descendants, the Bullom and Temne. As their familiarity with European mermaid lore increased, Africans interpreted, adapted, and transformed the image of a European mermaid (and, later, other images) into a representation of an African deity—Mami Wata—evolving elaborate systems of belief and sacred visual and performance arts in the process (2008: 65).

Another version of the mermaid, one with a double tail, was probably introduced by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century. This image has had a major impact on the West African coast, in the Benin Kingdom and among the neighbouring Owo- and Ijebu-Yoruba. Around the 1940s and 1950s, with the increased contact with Indians after their independence, the west central African sculptors borrowed Indian images and depictions of the mermaid. Indian material culture in the form of images in books, pamphlets, films, and popular devotional chromolithographs (Bae 2003 in Drewal 2008), as well as the votive practices of Indian traders in Africa, came to have a profound impact on Mami Wata worshippers, their icons, and their ritual actions. One of Indian depictions had a three headed and multi armed mermaid, drawn from *Dattatreya* a Hindu goddess (ibid).

Moreover, artefacts are semiotic. Archaeologists use them as prime determining factors of culture (Vansina 1984). They are loaded with multiplicities of meanings, and these cultural meanings can only be unearthed through interpretive ethnology: i.e. having the believers narrate to you the cultural meanings of artefacts, artwork and paints prevalent in their culture. In the Ivory Coast, Ivorians use the water deity artworks for dances, shrines and divination sessions (Holas 1969 cited in Drewal 2008). They act as important cultural symbols, symbolizing the presence of the spirits of the below/ underwater during rituals, and in their absence, no ritual can be conducted.

Water deity artefacts are also important tourism items, as they are important cultural items. In many societies, they have created employment and brought in foreign currency. People, in many societies, craft varied artefacts of their own gods to aestheticize them, thereby making them more attractive to both local and international clients. Although in all the literature I have read, I have not encountered situations where river gods have been angered by this, I am not suggesting that river gods cannot be angered by the commercialization of arts representative of them beyond their borders through artefacts and paint. But, it is a problem that these artefacts are also crafted, even in areas where those river

gods are not believed in. This makes the majority of beneficiaries of the commercialization of the artefacts to be other people or communities than the specific people who believe in those gods. Usually, believers in river gods inhabit marginalized and insulated areas with poor market, transport and communication networks, and thus their artefacts are capitalized upon by those in resort towns and cities with better market, transport and communication networks. The craftsmen in towns sometimes exaggerate the appearance of deities by adding more stylistic designs when competing for clients. Christopher Columbus, for example, in 1493 wrote that he encountered three mermaids in the African Atlantic Ocean and that 'they came quite high out of the water, but were not so beautiful as painted, though to some extent they have the form of a human face' (Cited in Drewal *ibid*: 65). Thus, what we have in art might not actually be representative of the deity itself, and hence clients are misled. It is advisable that clients buy artefacts in marginalized communities where the beliefs originated rather than in stores in towns, if they want to purchase the true representations of river deities.

4.10. Water spirits and water development projects.

According to Thayer Scudder (personal communication, June 2018) 'riverine development projects like dam constructions are not cost-effective because of the alterations they bring to the socio- cultural lifestyles and beliefs of the riverine peoples.'³⁶ Many water development projects along local rivers in many rural communities of Africa often disturb the interrelationship between water spirits and local people. Dams are a threat to the existence of water spirit belief systems. As Scudder (2017) has argued, dams are ecologically and environmentally destructive. Consistent with Scudder's position, Peterson (2006) argues that many organizations' work pertaining to water resources most directly intersects with the world of water spirits. These water development projects include irrigation and dam construction. Damming or channelling water from rivers can upset the river snake (Bernard 2003). Dam construction affects water spirit beliefs in two ways, by transforming the habitation of water spirits, and by displacing the people residing along the rivers being dammed, who are the believers and worshippers of the water spirits. Water spirits can be angered by these projects, and they can respond in a variety of destructive ways. For instance, in Lesotho a river god/snake responded through causing an earthquake on the dam site. Hitchcock, reporting on the river snake's (believed) causation of the earthquake, wrote that:

³⁶Thayer Scudder has been a consultant in relation to the construction of dams throughout the world for many years, and has published intensively on the impact of dams on riverine peoples; see Scudder (2005; 2010;2017; in press).

One of the unintended consequences of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project was an earthquake that occurred in November 1995 that caused damage in 7 villages around the Katse Reservoir and destroyed 11 homes and, according to local people, caused a crack in the earth at the village of Mapaleng. This earthquake may have been a consequence of reservoir-induced seismicity (RIS) caused by the weight of the water in the Katse Reservoir which had begun to fill in October 1995. Some local people blamed the project for the earthquake and subsequent seismic activity, while others placed the blame on a large ‘river snake’ that they said had been disturbed by the construction activity in the Katse area (Hitchcock 2015: 530).

Another well-known example of this interaction between the water spirits and dams, was the resistance given by some valley (Ba)Tonga when Kariba Dam was constructed. Their main fears were that the great water spirit Nyaminyami would be angered. The many disasters that beset the project were largely attributed to Nyaminyami’s distress from being separated from its mate downstream from the wall (Bernard 2003).³⁷ Clements (1959) devotes his whole book, *Kariba: The Struggle with the River God*, to the accidents that occurred on the dam wall in which he argues that the BaTonga people solely attributed to Nyaminyami. This incident is also widely written about in the tourist literature and journalistic coverage of that time and of the present day. However, this specific study will go beyond the destruction of the dam of 1957 and 1958, as these episodes are well known; it further unravels the subsequent accidents attributed to Nyaminyami, occurring both in Lake Kariba and at the dam wall site, that are not mentioned in the literature.

Another case in point is the responses of *njuzu* when Lake Mutirikwi was constructed. Many people around Mutirikwi remember drownings and accidents attributed to disturbed *njuzu* when the dam was being built in 1959–1961, and how future accidents were prevented by rituals held by local chiefs as the ‘autochthonous’ guardians of the land being inundated (Fontein 2015; 2016). Fontein has managed to give a historical account of accidents attributed to *njuzu* in South-eastern Zimbabwe, with the latest being those of 2005 (Fontein 2015). Thus, his study mirrors my own intention to trace historical incidents at Kariba that are attributed to Nyaminyami. Moreover, around west-central Africa, similar water related accidents regarded as caused by *Mami wata* are also not uncommon (see Peterson 2007).

More recently, in the Umnga municipal area of the Eastern Cape, a local chief endorsed a private development proposal to establish a hydro power plant at a waterfall that has great spiritual significance for the diviners in the region. None of them was consulted about the proposed development. Bernard and Kumalo interviewed the diviners there, and

³⁷I will, in great detail, elaborate how Nyaminyami knocked down the Kariba dam wall in Chapter 6 and how this was interpreted by the BaTonga people

they revealed that ‘the hydro power plant will not only disturb the tranquility of the surroundings preferred by the *abantu bamlambo* (mermaids), but the electricity being generated will drive them away from the pools. This could lead to serious droughts, electrical storms or floods. Furthermore, the healers will no longer be able to access the pools to perform their rituals since the whole area will be fenced off for their ‘safety’ (2004: 123).

4.11. Water spirits and environmental conservation practices.

The existence of water spirits beliefs in different kinds of societies contribute immensely to environmental conservation. Entangled in those beliefs are the ‘codes of conduct’ in relation to accessing water bodies and resources. These rules can even go beyond governing water bodies, to the accessing and utility of other natural resources such as land, forests, animals etc. *Inkosi* (python) and *Inkosazana* (mermaid) have great influence over resource management, in that they represent the Great Spirit deities of an ‘African earth region’ (Schoffeleers 1978), and act as powerful constraints to the misuse of resources. Among the Zulu, *Inkosazana* has ruled that no one must work in their fields on taboo days, which are Saturday and Monday and requested that, on those days, the rivers were to be respected and left in peace (Bernard and Kumalo 2004); and among the Shona, *njuzu* have advised people to institute the days of rest, which are Sundays and Wednesdays (Fontein 2015; 2016). On such days no one ploughs, hunts or harvests; by so doing, the spirit world is limiting people’s access to natural resources, thereby mitigating their exhaustion. If one breaks these rules there are various grave consequences of that, and these differ from society to society.

However, indigenous or traditional methods of conserving nature, were in many societies, replaced by modern scientific methods, during colonialism (Cocks 2006; Mawere 2013; 2015). Machoko (2013) expressed regret that this replacement in conservation practices led to the abandonment of water spirit beliefs by certain people. For him, the disdain for and rejection of water spirits, contributed to environmental failure. Arguing specifically for Zimbabwe, he notes that Zimbabwean attitudes towards water spirits and the natural environment gradually moved from one of intimate relationship and contact, to one of alienation and disengagement, because of the use of a rationalistic modernity style approach, which appeared to have little room for the respect of water spirits. He further advocates for the integration of traditional and modernist approaches to natural environmental conservation. This would be a new conservation paradigm. Such an integration would help restore to the Zimbabwe psyche a reverence of water spirits and a respect for the sacredness

of the natural environment (Machoko, 2013: 285). I will discuss issues of conservation surrounding Nyaminyami in Chapter 8, in terms of this section.

4.12. Previous records on Nyaminyami

Earlier writings of the mid-19th century by explorers and missionaries were the first to popularise the idea about the existence of a river god that resided in the Kariba gorge area (Gibbons 1907; Livingstone 1865). These travellers' stories of their river journeys commonly involved the personification of the river, and invested it with supernatural force, represented by the presence of a river god' (McGregor 2009: 06). Their writings took the form of scrappy notes, and as Schapera (1960 cited in McGregor 2009: 43) notes Livingstone's ethnography was 'brief and sketchy', much of which were based on hearsay. Thus they do not provide greater detail about the prevalence of the river god. Neither did they document the everyday importance of Nyaminyami to the people.

Furthermore, some literature of the mid- 20th to early 21st centuries also acknowledges the existence of a belief in a river god known as Nyaminyami, (Clements 1959; Ncube 2004; Robert and Legge 1959; Saidi 2017). These studies agree that Nyaminyami had a head of tiger- fish and a snake's torso, and have generalized that Nyaminyami was believed in, in all the BaTonga societies. However, McGregor (2003a; b and 2009) has debunked the idea that the BaTonga (also identified as Dombe or Leya) living near Victoria Falls and Binga believed in a river god. My findings happen to correlate with McGregor's findings and I will fully explore this correlation in Chapter 5.

Clements (1959) and Robert and Legge (1959) document the many accidents that occurred on the Kariba dam wall site, and how these accidents were attributed to Nyaminyami's anger, by both the BaTonga and the dam constructors. Specifically, Clements describes the dam construction in terms of a battle of confrontation between the river god and the god-like forces of technology, in which Nyaminyami was defeated, though he is believed by the BaTonga people to have knocked down the dam wall twice. He writes that the dam wall triumphed against the opposition of a great river god in 1957 and 1958. He writes that: '... the whole might of modern technology was nearly caught by the primeval, savage forces of Africa,' (Clements 1959: 19). This negative discourse of the Zambezi deity conquered and subdued by western technology featured in many journalistic literature and tourism magazines of the time, such as Time and Royal Geographical Society. The *Time* magazine, for example, published that 'the great Snake (Nyaminyami) of the Zambezi clearly failed the

BaTonga' (Time, 1959: 26). The struggle between the forces of western technology and capital, and the Zambezi River, took on epic proportions in these media accounts (Jarosz 1992: 111). Similarly, McGregor argues that in the southern Rhodesian press, Nyaminyami was part of a derogatory and cruel caricature of the BaTonga developed during the move that made them a laughing stock (McGregor 2009: 121). Thus, a vast literature on Nyaminyami of that time, mainly mocked the BaTonga, in terms of the failure of their river god to halt the erection of the dam.³⁸

Ncube (2004) and Saidi (2016), for example, conducted research among the varied BaTonga people of Nyaminyami and Binga districts, creating the impression that Nyaminyami is known in both districts. Yet, that is not the situation on the ground. Their mentioning of the existence of the beliefs in Nyaminyami Rural District is relevant, but their involvement of the people of Binga in these beliefs is inaccurate, because Nyaminyami was and is still unknown there. McGregor argues that the now famous term 'Nyaminyami' was unknown along most of the river, and appeared to have only been used near the Kariba gorge area (McGregor 2009). Her findings thus appear to dismiss the prevalence of Nyaminyami in Binga and anywhere else rather than near Kariba, the area in which Sampakaruma and Mola are located. Apart from having incorrectly generalized the occurrence of Nyaminyami, these studies did not trace the historicity surrounding Nyaminyami's occurrence among the BaTonga people.

There are also studies that were mainly centred with chieftaincies near Kariba gorge area that do mention of the existence of Nyaminyami, such as De Garine and De Garine (1999), Tombindo (2016) and Sibanda (2004). However, these writers only write a few sentences about Nyaminyami. Tombindo (2016) wrote about how Nyaminyami beliefs systems have been used for landscape and belonging ideas by the BaTonga - who cite the existence of Nyaminyami (their river god) in the Lake Kariba in their claims of belonging, access and entitlement to the Lake. De Garine and De Garine (1999) and Sibanda (2004) were only interested in Nyaminyami's role of providing meat to the BaTonga people before the move, and they mention this role in a few sentences. However, in addition to that role, this study will assess the cultural significance of Nyaminyami over time. There is insufficient information in the literature pertaining to the role of Nyaminyami among the BaTonga over a period of time. Therefore, this study makes a valuable contribution to our knowledge of the Nyaminyami belief systems, and to our knowledge of the occurrence of water spirits in general.

³⁸On how tourism literature offers presentations on Nyaminyami, see also Hughes (2006; 2010).

Sitambuli (2016) and Kaoma (2017) must be appreciated for discovering that, even on the north bank of the Zambezi, Nyaminyami was not believed in, in every BaTonga society. Sitambuli, in particular, used the idea of the belief in Nyaminyami in Simamba chieftainship (which is located near the Kariba gorge) to show how the Lower River people were different from the Middle and Upper River people, in terms of religion. However, these scholars did not study the historical issues surrounding Nyaminyami belief systems. This systematic study of the cultural significance of Nyaminyami beliefs is lacking in the literature.

4.13. Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the literature on water spirits, thereby unearthing various themes currently present in the understandings of water divinity complexities in Africa. The main themes that have been discussed include the definition of the term water spirit, the naming of water spirits, the manifestations of water spirits, dreams and dreaming, water spirits and conservation, as well as water spirits and development projects. It was discovered from the literature review that the involvement of water spirits in the landscape and belonging as well as politics of the landscape debates and tourism, is understudied. Therefore, this study will show how these issues can be understood through the Nyaminyami lens. The study has also reviewed literature pertaining to the Nyaminyami beliefs, and identified the most significant gaps existing in the literature regarding Nyaminyami. It emerged from the literature review that there is insufficient information regarding the historicity of Nyaminyami belief systems.

CHAPTER 5: THE DEVELOPMENT OF NYAMINYAMI BELIEF SYSTEMS AND THE CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF NYAMINYAMI BEFORE THE MOVE.

5.1. Introduction.

This chapter critically assesses the origins and the development of Nyaminyami belief system(s) among the BaTonga people living in the immediate vicinity of the Kariba gorge area. It argues that among these specific BaTonga people, the Nyaminyami beliefs were a borrowed phenomenon. In advancing this position, the chapter bases itself on arguments in the diffusionist approach to water divinity complexities, and in the level 4 of ‘transmission’ in Bernard’s FLA theory, outlined in Chapter 2. The chapter unearths possible ways by which the idea of Nyaminyami might have been introduced and spread in some parts of the Valley, and the specific locations in the Valley in which Nyaminyami was known. It further examines the cultural significance of Nyaminyami before the move, only in areas where such beliefs were held. This Chapter is interconnected with the next Chapter (6) in that it examines Nyaminyami beliefs before the move, and the following Chapter (6) investigate the occurrence of the move and how it negatively influenced Nyaminyami belief systems. I shall argue that though Nyaminyami was important, he was not central to the BaTonga traditional religion, as people had a primary engagement with ancestral spirits (*mizimu*) in religious practice. The chapter also examines current narratives among these BaTonga about how colonialism affected the ways in which Nyaminyami was perceived, particularly the development of the term ‘Nyaminyami’. This chapter has relied mainly on oral narratives, archival sources, written documents with information on BaTonga history of the pre-1958 era, such as Colson, Scudder, Ncube and McGregor’s books, and sustained correspondence with Professor Thayer Scudder.

5.2. The origins and development of Nyaminyami beliefs among the BaTonga.

My aim in discussing the origins and development of beliefs in Nyaminyami, is partly to counter the contention that Nyaminyami was believed in by all the BaTonga societies, which is a major weakness of earlier studies on Nyaminyami beliefs. Nicolle (1959:14), for example, generally writes that ‘the (BaTonga) ‘tribal’ spirit is located in a serpent (i.e. Nyaminyami) in the sacred pool in the nearby river’, yet Nyaminyami was unknown in many BaTonga chiefdoms. The fact that beliefs in Nyaminyami were not widespread in all BaTonga societies is also ignored by those who argue that people did ‘not’ believe in a river

god. These writers exclusively rely on information they gathered in the BaTonga communities where Nyaminyami was unknown, hence they concluded that people did not believe in Nyaminyami. Howarth (1961:72-73), for example, documents that ‘the contention, in the southern Rhodesian press, that people believed in a river god was not true’. Yet, his book was not an account of the entire Middle Zambezi Valley. He only wrote about Chipepo Chieftaincy, based mainly on what was told to him by his white interlocutors, such as the District Commissioner of Chipepo (Alex Smith), the District Officer (Sir Sugg), a BaTonga man (Hezekiah Habanyama)³⁹ and his readings of Elizabeth Colson and Thayer Scudder’s field notes.⁴⁰ These white interlocutors, and Colson and Scudder had little (or no) information about life in the lower river section where Nyaminyami was known. Scudder makes it clear that: ‘because of lack of time, we have insufficient data on the less densely populated Lower River Region (Kariba Gorge area)... accordingly, we believe that our data is adequate for the Middle and Upper regions,’ (Scudder 1962: xix). Thus, one can observe that Howarth’s conclusions about Nyaminyami beliefs are baseless. In actual fact there is oral and archival compelling evidence attesting to the reality of Nyaminyami. Numerous missionaries and travellers of the 19th century documented the existence of a ‘river god’ in the Kariba gorge area. Hughes argues that ‘Livingstone and later explorers treated this animism as quaint, focusing on its navigational correlates’ (Hughes 2006: 828).

5.2.1. The BaTongas’ position regarding the origins of Nyaminyami

Currently, there is no memory nor any legend that exists, among these particular BaTonga people of the Lower River region, which accounts for the origins of Nyaminyami belief systems. The people only say that Nyaminyami was the great manifestation of the river in terms of sustaining its people, without actually demonstrating how they came to believe in Nyaminyami. A few ‘doubtfully’ connect its manifestation with the blessings from ancestors. For example, one politician in Siachazangwa village in Musampakaruma said that: “*Nyaminyami was the great ancestor of the BaTonga people, but you hear people saying different things about him*”, (Interviewed, 07 April, 2017). These conflicting narratives do not indicate the origins of Nyaminyami, but they indicate the existing ambiguities pertaining to what rank did Nyaminyami belong in the BaTonga spiritual hierarchy. Asking the people in

³⁹ The idea that the floods occurring were attributed to the anger of a river god might have caused these white men involved in the move not to share the idea because they did not want to show Queen Elizabeth, based in London, that there were really problems during the dam construction, problems that were linked to the local spirits.

⁴⁰ Howarth acknowledges in his book that he read Colson and Scudder field notes.

the local villages of Mola and Musampakaruma today about the origins of Nyaminyami is a quest for a chimera, as they are hidden in obscurity. The absence of the common legend surrounding Nyaminyami beliefs is ‘perhaps’ because of loss of memory. This seems characteristically BaTonga. Having found no common stories surrounding the emergence of rain shrines among them, Colson (1962: 98) concluded that ‘they are not an historical people in every aspect of life, and never more so than when they deal with the symbols of their ephemeral communities’. As mentioned in Chapter 1, they even lack a common myth of origin (Scudder 1962), unlike other Bantu groups. Latham (1970: 101) reported that in countless interviews and discussions he conducted among BaTonga people, he found only ‘a vague memory of the past’.

Currently, the people of Musampakaruma and Mola only narrate Nyaminyami’s cultural functions⁴¹, and generally agree that the rock near the Kariba gorge in the Zambezi River sheltered Nyaminyami. This is also confirmed in the literature (see Clements 1959; Saidi 2016). Clements specifically wrote that ‘in many legends this rock was regarded as the headquarters of the “great river god” Nyaminyami’ (Clements 1959: 18). ‘The entrance hole in the bottom of the rock, and up into the dry- hollow chambers, was quite round, and big enough for the largest river snake to curl up in’ (Rayner 1980: 33). This rock is sometimes perceived or regarded as *malende*⁴², as a sacred shrine, for Nyaminyami (Kaoma 2010; 2013; 2017). The first generation resettlers remember that the Kariba gorge area where that rock lies was not navigable by boat, in terms of linking the west with the east. They believe that it was the presence of Nyaminyami in the area that inhibited navigation. Though much less wide at the gorge, the river flowed with such a force through the narrow gorge and rapids, that crossing in unstable dugout canoes for those who lived there, was an equally skilled affair.

Indeed, the Kariba gorge was difficult to navigate, and many who tried to sail it, had their boats capsized. In 1934, some anthropologists were unable to study the BaTonga above the gorge; because they failed to pass through it, due to its strong currents and rapids, and they opted to study communities below the gorge (Kelgwin 1935). Similarly, ‘in 1898, five British explorers came up the river in a steamboat. Their boat, which was called *Constance*, could not make any headway against the current at Kariba, so they decided to ‘take her into

⁴¹I will fully explore the noted cultural functions of Nyaminyami below.

⁴²Malende is a BaTonga local name for sacred shrines, especially those on land that humans created, but Kaoma only equates it with the rock, because of its sacredness, not that the people themselves referred to it as a shrine, as *malende*.

pieces, and carry the pieces up the gorge and put her together again' (Howarth 1961: 23). 'It was indeed a gloomy place of ill omen' (Essex- Campell 1944: 39). Therefore, it can be seen that 'materialities of the landscape are affective and active', as put by Fontein (2015); the materialities (or material objects or qualities) of the Kariba gorge area such as the current of the river, the rapids and the presence of the sacred rock (*Kariwa*), shaped the human approaches to the river, and local and outsider narratives and discourse about the gorge. In that regard, the lower river section, in which the Kariba gorge is/ was regarded as sacred or a 'place of power', to use Colson's (1997) terminology.⁴³ Nowadays with regards to the origins and habitation of Nyaminyami, the BaTonga only narrate the presence of Nyaminyami at *Kariva* and the sacredness of the Zambezi, as stated above.

5.2.2. The 'Kariva' rock as the possible key to the origins of Nyaminyami beliefs among some BaTonga groups.

Although the BaTonga people may lack a particular narrative regarding the origins of Nyaminyami, there is a likelihood that the key to the understanding of the origins of Nyaminyami among some BaTonga people was/ is 'Kariva'. This view would subscribe to the 'materialities' of the landscape concept as it is explained by Fontein (2015). Though Fontein (2015; 2016) acknowledges the social constructionist perspectives of landscapes to the understanding of the imbrications between "human and non- human world" (Greider and Garkovich 1994), he argues that he is still interested in what 'stuff' (landscape/ objects) does, allows, enables and constraints. Landscapes in the form of sacred rocks, rivers, mountains, graves ruins and many others on their own have power to influence a people's cultural beliefs and claims of belonging, identity and attachments to such landscapes (Basso 1996). Utilizing the communities near Mutirikwi as a case study, Fontein (2011) further argues that the affective presence of graves and ruins, which materialize past and present occupations and engagements with/ in the landscape, are entangled in complex, localized contests over autochthony and belonging. Fontein believes that the materialities of land and water are key to both history and historiography (Fontein 2015). Thus, in historical constructions there is need to recognize the affordances of landscapes⁴⁴ and/ or what objects (such as rocks, river,

⁴³This is in clear contradiction to the findings by McGregor (2009) and Colson (1971) in the parts of the Zambezi Valley that they worked in, where the Zambezi River was not considered as sacred, even though it had sacred places in it. McGregor, in particular, writes that many important shrines or sacred places are/ or were close to the river simply because people lived there, not because proximity to the river was *per se* important. The Kariba gorge area was also not navigable as wrongly presented by David Livingstone, (see McGregor 2009 on Livingstone's dream of the Zambezi as a God- given highway into the interior).

⁴⁴Affordances of the landscape is what the environment offers an individual (or humans)

trees and mountains) enables and constraints. Leaning on this argument, with the emphasis of ‘Kariva’ landscape in the BaTonga narratives of Nyaminyami, there is need to consider this landscape as a probable avenue through which the ‘Serpentine- River god’ that provided people with meat emerged. Landscape sites such as the ‘Kariva- rock’ were/ are not simply passive and inert ‘criteria’ for assertions of belonging (given BaTonga long- standing assertions of attachment to it), but ‘have a more ‘active’ and affective’ presence’ (Fontein 2011: 713). It is in this vein that this Kariva- rock may presumably have been imbued and endowed with the natural powers that engendered the emergence of Nyaminyami. It is thus logical that the belief, experiential claims, and practices associated with Nyaminyami, be found mainly amongst those groups in the lower river region that had more direct contact with the gorge (and not the Shona per se as indicated in the diffusionist perspective to be assessed below).

Furthermore, using the ‘water as an index of power’ concept (Fontein 2015), and linking it with the argument that the Zambezi river was sacred and endowed with ‘places of power’ such as ‘Kariva’ and other extraordinary ‘beings’ in the Kariba gorge area, there is a high likelihood that such a waterscape in the lower river section would engender the emergence of a ‘serpent’ that would provide meat to the autochthons of the region during the times of hunger. Bernard (2013) supports this perspective by arguing that water in itself has got sacred powers, and those sacred powers on their own effectively explain the occurrence or emergence of water spirits in many water bodies. It is worth mentioning that in some societies in Africa, beliefs in river gods have been linked to the affordances of landscapes (and such perspectives have served to downplay diffusionist arguments). In Liberia, for example, the emergence of *Mami wata* beliefs are rooted and based in what landscapes condition, enables and constrain, which suggests that ‘maybe ... one of the supernatural powers associated with a) animate objects: ancestors, animals, birds, fish and reptiles; and b) inanimate objects: rivers, Valley, mountains, and forests’, (Wintrob 1984: 150) brought about the existence of *Mami wata*.

5.2.3. Colson/ Scudder diffusionist hypothesis regarding the origins of Nyaminyami.

Though the origins of Nyaminyami may be significantly rooted in the unique landscape of the Kariba gorge, it is also worth mentioning Colson and Scudder’s diffusionist argument to the origins of Nyaminyami and how it is elaborated. The diffusionist perspective has been heavily criticized since it is difficult to prove (Bernard 2010), and cannot be expected to bring

about fundamental cultural change in influenced societies. It is associated with serious limitations as is stated in Chapter 2. Therefore, diffusion of ideas as a theory must be utilized with great caution. It is more plausible to acknowledge the ‘Kariva’ landscape as a key to the emergence of Nyaminyami among some BaTonga people, as solely relying on diffusionist argument may have a disempowering effect on the BaTonga people’s long- standing claims of connection and experiences with Nyaminyami. Colson and Scudder assume that the BaTonga people may have borrowed the idea of Nyaminyami from the Shona people of the Shangwe or Goba⁴⁵ dialect, who immigrated into the Valley at some unknown time (Scudder, personal communication, August 2015). However, Saidi (2016:125) is very skeptical about the diffusionist argument, and he dismisses the connections between Nyaminyami and the Shona people as ‘erroneous’. But, his skepticism consists of merely two sentences, unsupported with empirical evidence.

Colson and Scudder’s argument correlates with the diffusionist theory of explaining the origins and development of water divinities in societies which was championed by Bryant (1949) that explains the existence of water divinity beliefs in certain societies as a result of the diffusion of ideas. Such diffusionist ideas further correlate with the processes of ‘transmission’, which is level 4 of Bernard’s FLA theoretical approach (Bernard 2010). Before colonialism in Africa, diffusion of ideas took place, not only in the water divinity complexities, but also in other cultural practices, among different cultural groups. The extent at which this diffusion occurred may be regarded as cultural borrowing, and not cultural appropriation.⁴⁶ Bernard, citing Newman (1995), argues that historical records reveal that many of the groups in the southern African region that existed prior to European colonization, traversed vast areas of the sub-continent either due to wars, in search of grazing and vacant land, lineage segmentation, or due to various environmental factors such as drought and natural disasters (Bernard 2010: 248). Across much of Africa, ‘slave- raiding and tribute raiding caused large populations to take flight and closed off areas to settlement. Likewise, desiccations, epidemics, and infestations engendered large scale migrations. Migrations, large or small, transformed the locational geography of Africa, building concentrations of population here, leaving empty corridors there’ (Cohen 1985 in Cohen and Odhiambo 1989: 12). Bernard further argues that ‘as a result of the long periods of migration

⁴⁵There were two different groups of the Shona who settled in the Valley; they spoke different dialects of the ChiShona language. The groups that settled above the gorge and had closer contact, were the Shangwe, whereas the other group that settled below the gorge, was the Korekore. While both of Shona origins, there were linguistic and historical differences between these groupings. .

⁴⁶I distinguished between cultural borrowing and cultural appropriation in Chapter 2.

and movement, marriage and assimilation, knowledge is shared and becomes incorporated, and to some extent modified into the local corpus of knowledge' (Bernard 2010: 249). Similarly, Cohen and Odhiambo (1989) argue that migration in Africa is the principal means by which cultural practices and institutions have been transferred across the continent.

The diffusionist approach is predicated on the assumption that when the BaTonga first settled in the Valley, they supposedly held no beliefs in a river god, thus the beliefs are assumed to have commenced when the BaTonga (living near the Kariba gorge) first had contact with the Shona speaking peoples, at some unknown time. However, it is possible that the Shangwe may have influenced interpretation of the experience of a river serpent that provided people with meat (in terms of naming it as they also had such experiences with the serpent), but these experiences could well have occurred way before their arrival.

Indeed, the BaTonga were the earliest Bantu speaking occupants of the middle-Zambezi Valley; they occupied both margins of the Zambezi River (Colson 1960; 1971; Scudder 1962). Archaeological evidence dates their settlement in the Valley around the Early Iron Age (1100 AD) period, and that they even interacted with the people of the Stone Age (Mathews 2007, cited in Sitambuli 2016). The Shona speaking people were late comers into the Valley, and evidence shows that various Shona groups emigrated into the Valley at various time intervals beginning in the 15th century, up to the mid-19th century (see Lancaster 1974).

Oral traditions in Mola and Musampakaruma also confirm that the BaTonga settled first along the Zambezi, before the Shona speaking peoples came. For instance, Chief Mola said that '...we grew up being told that our forefathers settled in the Valley first. All the other cultural groups joined them later. Even today we tell our children that. Our forefathers settled to the left bank of Sanyati River, and when the Shangwe came they settled to the right bank of Sanyati River because our forefathers had already settled this side'⁴⁷ (Interviewed 12 June 2017). One Shona elder also stated that 'when their great ancestor Mamvura settled near the Kariba gorge, he did not extend above Sanyati because above Sanyati the BaTonga had already settled there. The spirit of our great ancestor Mamvura is at the right side of Sanyati' (Interview 1 August 2017). Lancaster (1974) notes that the Shona-speaking ancestors may have arrived in the Middle Zambezi Valley as early as the 15th century, and Colson (1960) and Scudder (1962) found that the most recent Shona immigrants came into the Valley in the 19th century. If the Shangwe brought with them the Nyaminyami beliefs, it is not clear for

⁴⁷Sanyati is a tributary of the Zambezi which is immediately above the Kariba gorge. See map in Chapter 1.

Scudder when exactly the beliefs relating to Nyaminyami were introduced to some BaTonga people (Scudder, personal communication, June 2016). Therefore, if it is authentic that the beliefs were introduced by the Shona immigrants, they may have been introduced between the 15th and 19th centuries. From the above assessment, we see a correlation of archaeological evidence, oral traditions, documents and archival sources in providing evidence that the BaTonga settled first in the Valley before the Shona. So the BaTonga as autochthons of this region may have longer- standing connections with the ‘Kariva’ rock- than the Shona- the rock which may be the key the emergence of Nyaminyami in this region.

The diffusionist position also hinges upon the reasoning that, in the middle and upper river chieftaincies, of both sides of the river, where the majority of BaTonga speakers lived, Nyaminyami was unknown. Scudder argues that the fact that Nyaminyami was only believed in by relatively few BaTonga living near the Kariba gorge area who had close and intimate contact with Shona speaking peoples, speaks volumes about the diffusion of the Nyaminyami ideas from the Shona to the BaTonga (pers comms June 2018). But, taking the landscape-related hypothesis into account, it may be probable that the majority of the BaTonga lived far from the ‘Kariva’, which is supposedly the Key to understanding Nyaminyami beliefs, and thus they had less attachment to Nyaminyami. In furthering their diffusionist perspective, Scudder also notes that:

‘In Mwemba, Sinazongwe, and Chipepo chieftaincies (where the majority of Zambian BaTonga resettlers had lived) BaTonga did not believe in Nyaminyami. Nor is the word Nyaminyami included in the 1,237 page 2011 *ChiTonga-English Dictionary* whose authors note in their introduction that “individual chieftaincies may be inclined to reject vocabulary from other (Ba)Tonga regions, believing that their own dialect is correct and the original one”’, (Scudder, personal communication, 24 August 2015).

These chiefdoms on the north bank were adjacent to chiefdoms on the south bank in the present day Binga and Victoria Falls (where also the majority of the BaTonga resided on the south bank),⁴⁸ where McGregor conducted her fieldwork, and found no evidence of a belief in Nyaminyami, nor even a river god. In her 2009 book McGregor argued that:

My aim in discussing sacred places along the river is partly to counter the idea that people believed in a river god, which has become one of the standard stories of tourism in the Valley, and is also repeated in the BaTonga museum in Binga (McGregor 2009:31).

⁴⁸Being of the same section of the river was more important than being of the same bank. Because of the various escarpments and the difficulties in navigability of the river, people could not have easy contact with people downstream or upstream on the same bank. People interrelated more with those across the river in the same section because crossing the river was easier than navigating it. Thus, people enjoyed more vertical relations than horizontal, in as far as the direction of the river was concerned. People of the same sections of the river shared religion and culture despite staying on opposite banks. Religion and culture in the lower river was different to that of the upper river.

Scudder's and McGregor's observations were also confirmed by some of my informants. One BaTonga informant, an intellectual who is interested in BaTonga history named Gibson, originally from Binga, said that: *'Nyaminyami beliefs are not there in Binga. That snake is mainly known in Mola and Musampakaruma. If you hear people in Binga telling you that they believed in Nyaminyami, they will be lying to you..., those beliefs are not there. People just talk about it but that does not mean they believed it and there is no one there who claims to have seen...'*. In addition, I also conducted research in Binga, particularly in Sinakatenge, and the BaTonga elders there said that Nyaminyami was believed in Mola and Sampakaruma. The majority of those I interviewed mainly used the Tonga word, *takoope*, meaning 'there is nobody' to emphasize the absence of such beliefs in their chieftaincies. Furthermore, McGregor (2003: 91 footnote 34) also cites Colson who noted that 'Nyaminyami was a foreign idea among the BaTonga she worked with, but was talked about in the 1990s by those returning from the south bank, and was incorporated into *masabe* possession cults'. In the upper and middle river sections, at least on the south bank, McGregor found that 'stories about God and river spirits convey ideas that are very different from the 'pagan' river god imagined by successive generations of Europeans' (McGregor 2009: 32).

Even narratives of a river god I encountered and carefully read about in some of the 19th century books, mention that a river god inhabited the Kariba gorge, and not any other part of the River (i.e. middle and upper river section) (see Gibbons 1907; Livingstone 1866).⁴⁹ The distance between the Kariba gorge and Upper river section and the verity that the river was not navigable in terms of linking the west and east regions minimized possibilities of the transmission of the river god beliefs to Upper river sections, where the majority of BaTonga lived. Howarth (1961) writes that probably the people occupying the chieftaincies such as Mwemba that were farthest up the Valley had never heard of the Kariba gorge. If they had no knowledge about the Kariba gorge, at which Nyaminyami resided, one can even doubt whether they had heard about Nyaminyami, let alone believed in him. Nineteenth century writers, when they went down- stream from the Victoria Falls, only made mention, in their narratives, about a river god when they reached Kariba gorge. This aptly shows that Nyaminyami was limited to the Kariba gorge area only, and not in all parts of the Valley as generalized by numerous writers. For instance, David and Charles Livingstone reported that:

⁴⁹Narrative about the existence of a river god near the Kariba gorge are frequent in most of the European travellers and hunters, but here in this thesis a few are referred to.

Having slept opposite the Rivulet Bume, which comes from the south, we passed the island of Nkansato, and went down the rapids of the same name on the 17th, and came on the morning of the 19th to the more serious ones of Nakabele, at the entrance to the Kariba gorge. A native called to us from the left bank, and said that a man on his side knew how to pray to the Kariba god, and advised us to hire him to pray for our safety while we were going down the rapids, or we should certainly all be drowned,... the Priest who knows how to pray to the god that rules the rapids followed us with several of his friends, and they were surprised to see us pass down in safety, without the aid of his intercession (Livingstone, 1866: 341).

Consistently, Gibbons (1907), reporting on his late 19th century expeditions in the Zambezi area, also found that the gorge was associated with the presence of a river god, and he documented that:

‘... Once more under way we passed up a narrow, picturesque gorge with scarcely any perceptible stream. The gorge is about half a mile in length, and for no perceptible reason a strong current suddenly disappears at the upper entrance only to make an equally sudden reappearance at the further extremity. Near the upper entrance a wall of rock rises abruptly from the dull..., the boys assured me to be the headquarters of the great river god; and although many boats have gone down within these sacred precincts, neither boat, nor goods nor bodies have ever been recovered. The Portuguese ... always throw in wine and calico to propitiate the deity. (Gibbons 1907:45–46)

These two quotations do not only justify the contention that Nyaminyami was restricted to Kariba gorge area, but by implication, also reinforce the idea that people believed in a river god. The fact that both Livingstone and Gibbons wrote that it was the ‘local boys’ who told them about the existence of a river god; and that Livingstone, in particular, faced with navigating problems at the gorge, was referred to a ‘witchdoctor’ who knew how to pray to the river god, vividly indicates that people strongly believed in a river god, and that navigating the gorge depended on the goodwill of Nyaminyami. Gibbons pushed up the river three decades after Livingstone; this also means that they learnt about the belief from different local successive generations, thus the river god was known and believed in by successive generations of the locals. Furthermore, the documentation of a belief in a river god by different missionaries (and travellers) at different times, indicates that the idea of Nyaminyami was not fabricated by any one of the early writers about Nyaminyami, as all learnt of the beliefs from the local inhabitants of the Kariba gorge area, thereby minimizing possibilities of one having influenced the writings of the other.

I found that currently there are Shona speaking peoples of the Shangwe dialect living in Musampakaruma, as well as BaTonga people (of both Mola and Musampakaruma) who confirm that the beliefs in Nyaminyami exist, and that stories about him are embroiled in folklore. The fact that currently there are Shona speakers who believe in Nyaminyami validates the contention that Shona speakers also believed in a river god, and may have been

involved in reframing BaTonga interpretations relating to Nyaminyami over space and time. Nyaminyami was not exclusively a BaTonga river spirit, but there were also Shona speaking people who believed in him. In support of this contention, Chikozho et al (2015a) argue that Nyaminyami had a wider influence beyond the realm of BaTonga cultural life. Successive generations of Europeans before 1958 exclusively associated Nyaminyami with the BaTonga only, presumably because they were the majority ethnic group in the Valley. Yet, beliefs and practices relating to Nyaminyami were more of a territorial cult involving different ethnic groups, and not the BaTonga only.

The diffusionist argument also speculates that before the coming of the Shona/Shangwe speakers, all the BaTonga people of the lower, middle and upper river sections held beliefs in *Leza*, *Basangu*, *Mizimu* and *Bulozi*, (Colson 1960; 2006; Luig, 1999; Scudder 1962). Therefore, if the assumption that the BaTonga borrowed Nyaminyami beliefs is authentic then only those who had contacts with the Shona may be the ones who borrowed the idea because Nyaminyami is only found among the BaTonga who were related to the Shona. But, again this line of thinking has been challenged with the centrality of ‘Kariva’, at which only those who had contact with it believed in a river god rather than those who lived further upstream. It is likely that the proximity to the ‘Kariva’ (rather than proximity to the Shona) determined who believed or did not believe in Nyaminyami. Sitambuli (2016) argues that the beliefs in Nyaminyami among the BaTonga in the lower river area distinguished them from those of the middle and upper river sections, though other spiritual figures were/are similar. Thus, the idea of Nyaminyami was one of the aspects that distinguished those living near the gorge from the other BaTonga.

According to the diffusionist argument, the Shona people (of the Shangwe dialect) who settled in the Valley above Kariba were firstly accommodated in area that was later to become Musampakaruma chiefdom, which was immediately above the Kariba gorge. They came in groups and at various time intervals, as refugees running away from the attacks of the Nguni groups that were coming from the far south during the Mfecane (Scudder 1962). Unlike the middle and upper river sections of the river, that were highly volatile and politically unstable due to the presence of the more centralised polities of the Ndebele on the south bank and the Lozi/ Kololo on the north bank, who constantly attacked each other (Colson 1950; McGregor, 2003; 2009), the lower river section where Kariba gorge area was/is located was relatively peaceful enough to attract refugees. Scudder believes that ‘it was its isolation that made it a refugee camp’ (Scudder, personal communication, 19 February 2018). Where the Shangwe came from before they settled in the Valley, there is

evidence that they held beliefs in supernatural ‘rain’ snakes. They had established ‘local mutolo⁵⁰ rain-shrines and venerated “rain-snakes” living in particular trees’ (Alexander and Ranger 1998: 5). More recently, Ngara and Mangizvo (2013) have discovered that the Shangwe people saw snakes as symbolically important. It emerged from their study that these snakes symbolized the ancestral beings. Consequently, it was a taboo for the Shangwe to kill them. The belief in these snakes was a favourable factor which necessitated their annual increase in numbers. Presumably, when the Shangwe migrated, they carried with them their ideas about snakes, as the snakes were important as far as their religion was concerned. And thus, when they settled in the Valley, they may have linked their ‘snake’ beliefs with the already believed Nyaminyami, thereby furthering the ways in which Nyaminyami was interpreted.

The Shona immigrants did not make up spatially separated homes to those of the BaTonga, but were absorbed into the BaTonga neighbourhoods above the gorge i.e. in the Mola and Sampakaruma territories (Colson 1960). Local narratives today attest that the Shona/Shangwe and BaTonga people were neighbours and lived together in this region. Chief Mola said that: *The BaTonga people of Mola and the Shangwe people of Musampakaruma are related. Our forefathers lived side by side along the Zambezi before they were removed from the river to where we are today. Even when the dam wall was sealed it was chief Mola and Chief Sampakaruma who were called to bless the proceedings in which Queen Elizabeth was present because the two chiefs had lived together peacefully near the Kariba gorge area* (Interview with Chief Mola, 12 June 2017). This quotation demonstrates the bond between the forefathers and the past leaders of the two cultural groups. Oral testimonies indicate that there were intermarriages and cultural borrowings between the two groups. Even in Musampakaruma, one SGR of the Shangwe clan, who teaches at a local school echoed the same sentiments as those of Chief Mola, that pointed to the closeness of the Shangwe to the BaTonga. He said that: ‘Shamwari rega ndikuudze isu maShangwe nemaTonga tirivanhu vamwe chete, haugone kupatsanura mandudzi maviri aya’ (My friend let me tell you one thing, the Shangwe speaking people and the BaTonga speaking people especially those currently living in Musampakaruma are ‘inseparable’)... *This is because they have long lived together, they started living together way before the move. But, the BaTonga people were the first to inhabit the Valley and the Shangwe later joined them, and today they engage in religious practices*

⁵⁰On the fuller description of the Mutolo rain shrines see also an article by J. Alexander and J. McGregor (1997) entitled *Modernity and Ethnicity in frontier society: understanding difference in North-western Zimbabwe*.

together. We have the same ancestral spirits and same malende(sacred places) (interviewed on 3 April 2017)

The Shangwe or Goba were assimilated into BaTonga culture and some spoke the *ChiTonga* language (Colson, 1960); some Shona speaking people even regarded or identified themselves as BaTonga when dealing with outsiders (Lancaster 1974). Kaoma (2013) found that some BaTonga of the Kariba gorge area/ Lower River have a Shona ancestry. It can be argued that this assimilation facilitated and perpetuated the exchange of ideas between the two groups. It is presumably from this exchange of ideas, that the BaTonga borrowed some aspects of the Shangwe approach to Nyaminyami especially relating to interpretation. For transmission to take place as argued by Bernard (2010) in the FLA theory, there must be factors that facilitate it. In addition to the aforementioned assimilation factors, transmission was also permitted by the political organization of the BaTonga. The BaTonga had no paramount Chief, and lived in small political units of neighbourhoods (*cisi*) (Colson 1960; Posselt 1929; Scudder 1962). Thus, there were no gate keepers the Shona needed to consult for them to be incorporated into the BaTonga community, and there was no authority to constrain the exchange of ideas between the two ethnic groups. McGregor (2009) adds that riverine society was not tightly bounded: the BaTonga shared broader identities with the Shona communities. BaTonga societies were fluid and flexible, so much so that the transmission of ideas or even praxis as proposed by Bernard (2010) easily occurred. They never seem to have been a fighting people, but to have lived at peace among themselves, and on good terms with their neighbours (Livingstone 1861: 32).

There are also suggestions that the BaTonga borrowed the belief in the Nevana Cult, which was based in Gokwe, the area where the Shona people (Shangwe/ Goba) had migrated from (Mudzimu 2016). Although the Shangwe/ Goba were now based in the Valley, they retained adherence to the Nevana cult which was far from the Valley. The Nevana cult was a territorial rain shrine that attracted pilgrims from many cultural groups occupying the north-western parts of Zimbabwe including Shangwe, Nyai, Rozwi and later the Ndebele and some BaTonga (Alexander and McGregor 1997; Mudzimu, 2016). Mudzimu argues that ‘the visits to Nevana⁵¹ were timetabled and his jurisdiction went beyond the Shangwe geographical space’ (Mudzimu 2016: 26). However, the shrine was originally for the Shangwe, and due to its effectiveness in rain provision, it attracted the allegiance of other groups over time. Thus, it is undeniable that the Shangwe were religiously influential in north-western Zimbabwe as a

⁵¹For a fuller and detailed description of the duties of Nevana read Alexander and Ranger (1998), Alexander and McGregor (1997) and Mudzimu (2016).

whole. Interestingly, for the BaTonga, only those who had close associations with the Shangwe held allegiance to Nevana, making it similar to the prevalence of Nyaminyami who is only believed in by the specific BaTonga people who lived close to (or with) the Shangwe. Thus, although the Shangwe did not bring Nyaminyami with them in the Valley, they may well have influenced the interpretations and praxis relating to Nyaminyami. Their beliefs about water snakes may have subsequently fed into and modified the existing BaTonga beliefs and practices in water spirits. Although the BaTonga of the Kariba gorge paid tribute to the Nevana cult, they had their own important local shrines.

Although, the diffusionist theory is difficult to prove as it is to disprove, (Bernard 2010), many scholars have utilized the approach in understanding the origin of water spirits in many societies (cf Adams 2007; Kasfir 1982; Van Stipriaan 2002). Kasfir (1982) in particular, discovered the diffusion of *Mami wata* (a foreign water spirit) ideas from neighbouring societies in West Africa (who had first borrowed the idea from Europe) into Idoma culture, in Nigeria, and that they became mixed with ideas concerning *anjenu* (a local water spirit). Water spirits aside, even with other religious figures diffusion occurred/ occurs. For instance, in Zimbabwe, the Ndebele borrowed the idea of the *Mwari* cult from the Shona in the 19th century. Bhebhe (1979: 287) argues that ‘one of the manifestations of Ndebele-Shona cultural fusion was the Ndebele adoption of *Mwari*. There were a number of factors facilitating this Shona penetration of their conquerors. Such factors include the fact that the Ndebele did not completely displace the Shona, there were intermarriages between the two groups and so on’; all these factors facilitated diffusion of the *Mwari* cult from the Shona to the Ndebele. Ideas can be shared across ethnicities or races as people interact over time. In South Africa, where blacks and whites have lived together for over two centuries, whites have been possessed by African spirits. Some whites have even become *iZangoma*, traditional African healers, performing rituals in black townships, creating heteroptic reversals of Cape Town urban spaces (Teppo 2011). Penelope Bernard is one of such whites who is a diviner healer (Bernard 2010).

In other societies, however, the very widespread diffusionist theory has been criticized. In Liberia, for instance, beliefs in *Mami Wata* suggest two sources. While one approach is diffusionist, the other is an indigenous perspective argument, which suggests that ‘maybe ... one of the supernatural powers associated with a) animate objects: ancestors, animals, birds, fish and reptiles; and b) inanimate objects: rivers, Valley, mountains, and forests’, (Wintrob 1984: 150) brought about the existence of *Mami wata*. Bernard (2013) supports this perspective by arguing that water in itself has got sacred powers, and those

sacred powers on their own better explain the occurrence or emergency of water spirits in many water bodies.

5.3. Nyaminyami: a snake or a fish?

In chapter 1, I defined Nyaminyami, citing scholars (such as Saidi 2016; Sitambuli 2016) who wrote that he is believed to be a 'snake' like creature with a head of a tiger fish and a snake's torso. The same description also forms part of the description in the accounts of the majority of my informants from Mola and Musampakaruma. These descriptions of the fish's head and the snake's torso are mere imaginings, because no one saw Nyaminyami in his full display. But, it is worth mentioning that a few said that Nyaminyami was a very big 'fish'. Maybe this stems from the idea that he had a head of a tiger fish. The portrayal of Nyaminyami as a fish is also recurrent in some tourism magazines and brochures in the Valley. These different contrasting descriptions of Nyaminyami signify the ambiguities characterizing the Nyaminyami belief complexity. Similarly, Tombindo (2016: 80) in his fieldwork in Mola also discovered 'doubts appearing about its (Nyaminyami) form and character'. These ambiguities are also prevalent in other cultures. For example, among the Zulu, Bernard (2010) indicates that one of *iNkosazana's* manifestation forms was a mermaid, yet earlier writers, like Gluckman (1952; 1954), did not define or describe her as a mermaid. Another case in point is that of *Mami wata*, the dominant water spirit of west- central Africa which is believed in, in many societies, and each society has its own descriptions of it (or even local sub-names of it; to some it is a snake with two tails, and to the others it has one tail) (see Drewal 2008; Peterson 2007 etc.).



Fig 4: Photo showing Nyaminyami artefact as a snake located at Kariba dam wall site.

The above image is more representative of a snake than a fish. The portrayal of Nyaminyami in the above picture is the only representation that exists so far- in the artefacts of Nyaminyami in the BaTonga communities, and is recurrent in tourist literature- and there is none that is representative of a fish. Even those who claim to have had first- hand experience with him in the past informed the 19th century travellers that it was a serpent. Furthermore, Thayer Scudder told Kaoma (2013) that the reason why early Kariba writers wrote about Nyaminyami, is because there was a boiling pot in Simamba (near the Kariba gorge) that people associated with a 'snake'⁵². So the word 'snake' features in many accounts relating to Nyaminyami. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that Nyaminyami was a snake and not a fish. Even though Schoffeleers (1979) argues that snake deity identities do not always remain constant and that they may be anthropomorphized and merge with other identities, that did not obtain for Nyaminyami.

Presumably, those who interpret it as a fish were influenced by the tourist literature that they read. The tourism industry exaggerates the story of Nyaminyami in order to attract more revenue through the sale of tourism magazines. Thus, one can observe that pre-resettlement interpretations concerning Nyaminyami are sometimes influenced by the present- day socio- economic factors. Some of the people who reshape the history of Nyaminyami are not even BaTonga themselves, but other players from various ethnic backgrounds, who dominate the tourism industry. In further reinforcing this point, Bernard (2010) suggested that environmental and historical socio- political and economic factors account for the variations and differences in the ways in which water divinity complexities are narrated over space and time.

5.4. Nyaminyami and the other sacred animals in the Kariba gorge area.

The Kariba gorge area was also characterized by the presence of 'extraordinary' and 'supernatural' creatures that people invariably connected with Nyaminyami. However, there is no clear elaborative account surrounding this connectivity. These terrifying fabulous creatures were frequently encountered by those who occupied the Zambezi margins. These creatures included a huge baboon that "reigned as King thereabouts, and held court on the

⁵² I have already indicated that Thayer Scudder did not write about Nyaminyami because in his area of study it was not known, but he has knowledge about Nyaminyami stories as he interacted with those who interacted with those who interacted with Nyaminyami in the 19th century.

craggy basalt” in the river; if mocked or insulted, the baboon would get angry and capsized boats that ventured near the gorge (Essex- Campell 1944: 39). Stories are also recorded (and confirmed by the people) of a large black turtle (Gucheche) of about 3 feet “6” inches in height that dwelt in Katungwa rapids near the gorge. Like Nyaminyami it caused many deaths by overturning dugouts (Deare and Walker 1976). The canoes were capsized if people attempted to sail the Kariba gorge as it was a sacred area and these creatures would become angry if their sacred area was being disrespected. Another feared creature was a white crocodile (*Kapongashiri*) that lived close to where the Sanyati River entered the Zambezi (2 miles upstream from the gorge). It was as huge as an elephant, and seeing it was regarded as bad luck which would lead to death. It had also the reputation of overturning boats that entered the gorge (Ibid). Currently, there is no account to testify that these fabulous creatures were Nyaminyami’s messengers or not, but their capsizing of boats was something that these creatures had in common with Nyaminyami; and their presence in the river signified the sacredness of the Zambezi itself.

There is a common belief in many African societies that insects, birds, snakes or other animals can be messengers of water deities. Their appearance or “unnatural behaviour” (such as entering houses) signifies the communication of water deities (Bernard 2013: 141). Sometimes water spirits can appear in the form of these messengers, for example, *Eka Abassi* (water spirit)⁵³ among the Annag Ibibio could assume the appearance of a crocodile and was sometimes escorted by leopards, pythons, or huge fish (Talboit cited in Salmons 2008). However, I would not want to believe that the above mentioned fabulous creatures that occupied the Kariba gorge were Nyaminyami’s messengers because these fabulous creatures’ manifestations were more extraordinary and supernatural- for instance, the fact that the white crocodile used to catch birds flying low over the river and capsized boats- distinguished these creatures from other ordinary, natural creatures of the same kind, thereby making them more supernatural than being mere messengers of Nyaminyami. These creatures had more power as compared to the other water divinity messengers noted in the literature.⁵⁴ Furthermore, these fabulous creatures were not regarded as river gods.

5.5. The naming of the river god (Nyaminyami).

⁵³Eka Abbasi is also referred to as Mami wata in some contexts.

⁵⁴ Vast literature on water divinities in most parts of Africa speaks of the birds, snakes and animals as messengers of water spirits, see Drewal (2008), Bernard (2010; 2013) etc.

As I have indicated in Chapter 4, various factors influence the naming of water spirits in Africa. In the literature reviewed, it appears many water spirits were named either in terms of their perceived sex and gender, or in terms of their recognized duties (see Drewal 2008; Van Stipriaan 2002). Nyaminyami was named after his roles, especially that of meat provision. The majority of the elders in Musampakaruma maintain that he was called '*jekawacheka*' (which is a Shona term) and in Mola elders refer to him as *Jamakutendwa* (which is a ChiTonga term). When both terms (i.e. *Jekawacheka* and *Jamakutendwa*) are translated to English, they mean 'come and cut' meat. Even on the north bank, in the same section of the river where Nyaminyami was also believed in, Sitambuli (2016) found out that he was called '*zanimutendi*' which also means 'come and cut' meat. The people were invited to come and cut meat from the Nyaminyami's back. Although, these three names had the same meaning, the different spellings and pronunciations of these names signify that one water spirit can be referred to in different ways by the same people, as argued in Chapter 4.

The naming of Nyaminyami is a characteristic of Bernard's theoretical level 2, which is 'interpretation' (Bernard 2010). The experiences with water spirits determine the people's interpretations and the subsequent naming of them. Thus, the BaTonga had an experience of obtaining meat from Nyaminyami, and that influenced their interpretations, and subsequently, their naming, of him. However, ethnographic findings for this research have found that the most used term was *jekawacheka* which is Shona, in both Musampakaruma and Mola (where the majority are BaTonga speakers). *Jamakutendwa* appears only to have been a translation of the term *jekawacheka* into *ChiTonga*, as some BaTonga had borrowed the idea. The fact that a Shona term was widely used to refer to Nyaminyami may be used as evidence to support the theory that Nyaminyami was introduced to some BaTonga people by the Shona people.

Some First Generation Resettlers told me that the river god was also referred to as *Manyama -nyama*. Which means 'lots of meat', again because of its function of providing meat to the people? In an African context, it is largely possible for river gods to have numerous names in one community within a one cultural group, as illustrated in chapter 4, drawing from different cases in west- central Africa. One elder from Nabhole village in Mola explained that:

Our forefathers who used to cut meat from him, referred to him as *jamakutendwa*, so we grew up knowing that name. We did not know Nyaminyami. The word Nyaminyami came with the whites. Our parents also referred to him as *manyama-nyama*, which means lots of meat, because he gave villagers along the river lots of meat especially during the times of hunger... the white people corrupted the term to Nyaminyami (Interviewed in Mola on 12 June 2017)

The white man corrupted the term *Manyana-nyama* to *Nyaminyami*. The now famous term *Nyaminyami* was not known before the white men came. Thus, colonialism affected *Nyaminyami* related beliefs by altering his name and by further exclusively linking it with the BaTonga people only, yet there were also Shona people who held such beliefs. His influence was/is not strictly confined to the BaTonga people (Chikozho et al 2015a). Nevertheless, there is no actual date when the term *Nyaminyami* began to be used, but certainly it was under colonialism “which penetrated the Valley in 1890 under the British South Africa Company (BSAC) which ruled till 1923 and later the responsible government which took over from 1923 to 1980” (Colson 2006: 3). The use of the term *Nyaminyami* was further intensified by the literature on the resettlement episode, and journalistic coverage. Currently, the word ‘*Nyaminyami*’ is now the most used in Zimbabwe, the local terms (*Jekawacheka*, *Jamakutendwa* and *Zani mutendi*) for the river spirit, are less known.

However, Chikozho et al (2015a) reported completely different findings about the origins of the word ‘*Nyaminyami*’. They documented that ‘according to a research carried out by the BaTonga Community Museum in both Binga and *Nyaminyami* Rural Districts, there is general unanimity that the original name for *Nyaminyami* is ‘*Simwaba*’ which literally means ‘a provider or one who shares with others’. They went on to say ‘oral traditions argue that the word *Simwaba* was corrupted to *Nyaminyami*’ (Chikozho et al 2015a: 253). Nonetheless, one can be skeptical about their findings because semantically speaking, the term ‘*Simwaba*’ has a very different sound to the term ‘*Nyaminyami*’, so to suggest the word *Nyaminyami* is a corruption of the term *Simwaba* is improbable. Secondly, as I shall indicate below, it seems *Nyaminyami* and *Simwaba* were two different beings living in the Zambezi, with the former being regarded as a river god and the latter regarded as a ‘dragon’. According to McGregor (2003a; 2003b; 2009) *Simwaba* was a river monster that occupied a boiling pot near Victoria Falls, and was not regarded as a river god, and its existence cannot be mirrored with the Four Level Analysis Framework of water divinity complexities proposed by Bernard (2010). Whereas, *Nyaminyami* occupied the Kariba gorge area which is located far from Victoria Falls, and his existence is directly mirrored by the Four Level Analysis (which includes experience, interpretation, praxis and transmission). Lastly, they also claim to have conducted research in Binga where my research, together with that of McGregor (2009), discovered that

people in Binga do not observe Nyaminyami beliefs, hence Chikozho *et al* were possibly misled by informants who do not have a sound understanding of Nyaminyami.⁵⁵

5.6. The position of Nyaminyami in the BaTonga Religious Constellation.

This segment challenges the assertion advanced by other ethnic groups⁵⁶ in Zimbabwe that Nyaminyami was the BaTonga's 'ultimate sacred reality' (or highest God) upon whom life depended on in the Valley, and which is also repeated in tourism literature and journalistic coverage. The Zambezi Travel magazine, for example, wrote that Nyaminyami is the "BaTonga's God" (Zambezi Travel 2016: 19). Consistently, Chikozho *et al* (2015a: 256) also found that 'there is a misconception in some quarters to think that the BaTonga believed in Nyaminyami as their final God'. Other ethnic groups use this wrong perception to mock the BaTonga, whereas tourists use the idea for marketing. As indicated above, before the introduction of Nyaminyami, people had well established traditional beliefs documented by Colson (1960; 1971; 2006), which involved figures such as: *Leza*, *Mizimu*, *Basangu*,⁵⁷ and *Basikatongo*.⁵⁸ Nyaminyami spirit might have been linked with ancestors in the stories about him, as is the case with *juju* who is linked to *Mari* (God) and *vadzimu* (ancestors) among the Shona (see Aschwanden, 1989; Fontein, 2015), but he had his own separate roles and cultic rituals accorded to him. The connection of water spirits and ancestors is not without its own problems, as I have mentioned in Chapter 4. Among the Cape Nguni, Hammond- Tooke (1975), found divisions among his informants, where some said water spirits are ancestors whereas others said they are not ancestors. I have also shown other ethnographic examples in chapter 4, where water spirits are linked with ancestors (see also Aschwanden 1989; Latham 1986). Bernard (2003) notes that there remains disagreement as to whether water spirits are ancestors or not. Given such discrepancies and contestations, it is important to try and understand water spirits through their own specific functions that they perform as opposed to those of the ancestors, because in the case of Nyaminyami, his functions were significantly different from those of ancestors.

⁵⁵Binga Rural District is inhabited by the majority BaTonga speakers of northwest Zimbabwe. So people have a generalized mentality that every history of the BaTonga can be found there, yet some issues were or are completely different between the people of Nyaminyami district, Binga and Victoria falls. Aside from Nyaminyami there are many other things in which these various BaTonga are different.

⁵⁶By other ethnic groups I refer the so called 'majority' groups of Zimbabwe, i.e. the Shona and the Ndebele speaking people who often look down on the BaTonga people. I personally heard some mentioning that Nyaminyami is the BaTonga final God. I grew up among the Shona people and Nyaminyami stories were told as if Nyaminyami is the BaTonga's High God, which is not the case on the ground.

⁵⁷ Basangu were wild spirits but sometimes are seen as ancestors and the terms basangu and mizimu are sometimes interchangeably used.

⁵⁸See above for the English translations of the spirits.

Sometimes water spirits can be linked with High Gods, but that does not imply that they are High Gods. For example, *Inkosazana* who was linked with the sky among the Zulu people, '*Inkosazana yasezulwini*' (Sky), was not the most High God of the Zulu. She only had functions relating to fertility and to the calling of diviners (Bernard 2008; 2010; Berglund 1976). 'There is consensus that although she resides in heaven with the heavenly father (described by Berglund [1976: 53] as the Lord of the sky-*iNkosiyezulu*), she regularly comes to earth to bring people her bountiful blessings of rain and fertility' (Bernard 2008: 59).

Nyaminyami is not linked with the sky (nor even with the rainbow) among the BaTonga people of Nyaminyami Rural District. It was and continues to be the spirit of the river. This is contrary to the argument by Kangwa that the rainbow that appears above the Victoria Falls represents the presence of Nyaminyami in the river. Kangwa (2014), citing Colson (2006) and Scudder (1962), argues that:

'The (Ba) Tonga people refer to the water falls as musio-tunyan (thundering water or rising water) and it is associated with the River Goddess⁵⁹ (Nyaminyami) who appears to the people in the form of a rainbow or a huge serpent. The rainbow is associated with God's covenant to protect life on earth. In the same manner, the rainbow is associated with River Goddess (Nyaminyami) among the BaTonga people...' (Kangwa 2014: 194).

Yet, in the books that Kangwa refers to, Colson (2006) and Scudder (1962) never argued that. I have read these two books and I did not find the word 'Nyaminyami' in them. Scudder has distanced himself from such claims (Scudder, personal communication February 2018). Others writers have even connected the Waterfalls themselves with Nyaminyami, yet the areas where Nyaminyami resided were further downstream from the Waterfalls. Robins and Legg (1959: 18), for instance, argued that 'Nyaminyami's whiskers were the leaping, silvery spray of the Victoria Falls'. However, around the Victoria Falls, McGregor (2009) did not find evidence of a belief in a river god. In her (McGregor) article entitled: *The Victoria Falls 1900- 1940: Landscape, Tourism and the Geographical Imagination*, in which she analysed European and African conceptions of the waterfalls, nobody (among the Africans she interviewed) connected the waterfalls to a river goddess (or to a masculine river god) (McGregor, 2003b). McGregor only tells us that the rainbow above the falls influenced the naming of the falls in the local language. The word '*syuungwe*' in the term "*Syuungwe Na mutitima*", which is the local name for the waterfalls, implies rainbow, or a place of rainbows (ibid: 721). If it was really connected with Nyaminyami, she would have written about it, as that is a crucial way in which landscapes can be understood and cannot be easily omitted. In

⁵⁹The idea that Nyaminyami was a river goddess mentioned in this quote is one of the weaknesses of the account of Nyaminyami as it is presented by Kangwa because in societies where Nyaminyami was known people portray Nyaminyami as male and not female.

addition, the name Nyaminyami was not known around the Victoria Falls area. She further mentions about a boiling pot below the waterfalls that people believed to have sheltered a ‘monster’ known as *Simwaba*. However, McGregor argued (2003b: 722) that this was not considered as a river god (as imagined by Europeans). Stories about it - such as the claim that nobody saw it and that it was non-benevolent, and could never be benevolent (McGregor, 2009)- are contrary to what is expected of a river god and very different from the themes surrounding the understandings of river gods in Africa, as they are presented in Chapter 4. McGregor (2009: 37) acknowledges that sometimes *Simwaba* was connected with rainbows, which are said to calm strong winds, and which are sometimes said to reach the ground in deep pools in the river where the monster lived. Be that as it may, McGregor has concluded that it was not a river god. Thus, not all beings that reside in the water bodies are river gods.

Stories about Nyaminyami do not suggest that he was their most High God, or that he was above the ancestors. On the contrary, Chikozho et al (2015a), again relying mainly on their problematic methodology,⁶⁰ concluded that Nyaminyami was above the ancestors, arguing that ‘a river-deity in the African cosmos is essentially an ancestral spirit, however higher than human ancestral spirits’ (Ibid: 256). They also perceive Nyaminyami as a ‘spirit medium’ (Chikozho et al 2015a: 259), that mediated between God (*Leza*) and the BaTonga. Yet, previous research shows that spirit mediums (*BaSikatongo*) were humans, and not river gods (see Colson 2006; Scudder 2005b; Sitambuli 2016). To some BaTonga, Nyaminyami was a river spirit that controlled the life in the river. On matters concerning the Zambezi, these BaTonga people consulted Nyaminyami (Kaschula 1976; Saidi 2016). Beyond the sphere of the river, Nyaminyami was less observed. This occurs in many societies where water divinities are believed in. They have their own position and significance that is often different from other spiritual figures, though sometimes these duties overlap with the duties and manifestations of other spiritual figures. In further elaborating this view, Brian argues that, although not universal, African religious conceptions invariably entail, as with those of the Greeks, a belief in a variety of divinities or spirits associated with specific natural phenomena, and often with clearly defined functions. These divinities are often contacted through spirit mediums and may be the focus of elaborate cult rituals (Brian 2006). However, in their everyday lives people appear to have needed the ancestors more than a river god. They held a more intimate and closer relationship with ancestors. Ancestors were

⁶⁰Their methodology is problematic in the sense that they interviewed people living in areas where Nyaminyami was not known. They sometimes claim to have interviewed people from Nyaminyami District, but they do not mention the specific chieftaincies because not everyone in Nyaminyami Rural District believed or believes in a river god.

the ‘primary instruments of social control’ (Scudder 2005b: 2). However, this is not to suggest that Nyaminyami was not important, nor is it to disconnect him from other spiritual figures, but simply to show that people needed the ancestors more than Nyaminyami. In fact, some elders say that Nyaminyami was a gift from the ancestors and God (Leza). Thus, it is safe to conclude that Nyaminyami was below *Leza* and *mizimu* in the BaTonga spiritual hierarchy. Actually, Nyaminyami “was a creature of Leza...” (Kaoma 2010: 51).

Furthermore, sacred shrines, *malende*, marked by the presence of Baobab trees, throughout the middle Zambezi Valley, were for ancestors and not for a river god, nor for Leza. One ritual wife⁶¹ in Mola who is currently in her early 90s, told me that *‘there were no sacred places, on the land, that were dedicated to Nyaminyami. All sacred places were dedicated to ancestors. Nyaminyami’s sacred place was the rock which was in the river, and his presence in the river controlled people’s behaviour, especially when approaching the river. He caused anyone who ventured near the rock to drown in the river and never to be found again...The rock was his homage as well as the river’*, (Interviewed, 14 June, 2017). The BaTonga elders mention that Nyaminyami rituals occurred along the river and not further inland. Thus, the river was considered as a place of power and not a shrine. Colson (1997) distinguishes places of power from shrines of the land. She argues that places of power are permanent features of the landscape (such as trees, pools, waterfalls and rocks) regarded as inherently sacred or as the loci of spiritual power. Land shrines, unlike places of power, are built by humans and the spirits commonly associated with them are the spirits of those reputed to have first settled the locality or to have subsequently conquered and ruled it. Basikatongo ⁶² (spirit mediums) presided over all the rituals (including the alien spirit, *Masabe* ceremonies) that occurred in the Valley.

However, the beliefs relating to a river god significantly show the interconnection that existed/ exists between the BaTonga religion and the environment. It shows that BaTonga traditional religion is ‘environmentally friendly’ (Taringa 2006: 191). The beliefs in the Nyaminyami spirit were involved in the personification or humanization of the river, which gave the river an exceptional importance in as far as BaTonga traditional religion was concerned, and also showed how the spirit world and the human world were entangled. Furthermore, since the BaTonga people referred to themselves as the ‘River People’,

⁶¹ Ritual wives are the wives of the former chiefs and these have the prerogative to appease in the *malende* shrines because the society held that, by virtue of being former chiefs’ wives, they are sacred practitioners as they regard chiefs as sacred practitioners.

⁶² As I shall indicate below, the Basikatongo did not preside over rituals, because they were called by Nyaminyami.

Basilwizi, their everyday contact with the river meant everyday contact with their ‘river spirits’. Though such spirits as Nyaminyami were not encountered every day, the knowledge of their presence in the Valley gave life to the BaTonga religion.

5.7. BaTonga religion (including Nyaminyami beliefs), Christianity, colonisation and the isolation of the Zambezi Valley in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the establishment of the Christian gospel by missionaries was at its peak in southern Africa. The missionaries established missions, preached the gospel and printed out bibles in local languages, amongst other efforts to convert Africans to Christianity, and thereby ‘civilize the uncivilized’. ‘From their vantage, the gulf between the saved and fallen was epitomized by the contrast between the civil and the savage. Consequently, conversion required not only that would- be Christians accept the gospel, but that they discard all marks of degeneracy and primitivism. Heathens had to be made to acknowledge their base sinfulness, so that they might be given the means of recovering themselves’ (Comaroff and Comaroff 1997: 64). Indeed, during colonialism the concept of territorial cults (and African Traditional Religion in general) came to be challenged at its very roots, and a breakdown of an ideational and organizational complex which had sustained African societies for many centuries was initiated (Schoffeleers 1979).

While in the Zimbabwean plateau many missions had been established by 1900, in the Zambezi Valley not one was established, let alone in the Lower River Region, which ‘was the most isolated⁶³ section of the River’ (Sitambuli 2016: 122). The Valley was isolated so much so that by 1958, some BaTonga people had not seen a white person (Magadza 2006). The lower river section was unfamiliar to outsiders because of its scorching environment and harsh climatic conditions. Even men of God dared not attempt to spread the word in this region (Siamwiza 2009:2). During the first fifty years of their existence in Zambia (north bank), the Society of Jesus missionaries feared to establish themselves and evangelise in the Valley because of its perceived harsh climate (ibid). Largely due to harsh climatic conditions, ‘in 1880, two Jesuit missionaries tried to establish a European settlement in the Valley, but after a fortnight, one of them left the Valley, and within three weeks the second of them was dead’ (Howarth 1961: 23). The first generation resettlers say they never saw anyone

⁶³The isolation of the river implied here is very different from the discourses of primitiveness of the Valley which is a major theme in the 19th century traveller’s texts and in Howarth (1961). Howarth casts the isolation of the Valley Tonga as speaking volumes about their primitiveness and uncivilization. I choose not to believe that, because the people in the Valley were developing at their own pace.

preaching the gospel in the Valley. It was only their traditional beliefs that occurred in the Valley. “The Valley had a bad reputation for malaria, heat, and hunger and few outsiders ever visited it. The one mission station opened in 1901, on the north bank, had been closed in the 1930s” (Colson 2001: 50), without having exerted much influence among the BaTonga. Some whites who attempted to venture into the lower river section died. In a NADA⁶⁴ article entitled: *They Did Not Leave the Valley*, Cockcroft gave a list of 33 white men who died in the Valley. One of these was Keat Brown “who died in 1927 in the lower river or Kariba gorge area and was buried on an island at the junction of the Sanyati River and the Zambezi, the island is now submerged by the Lake Kariba” (Cockcroft 1969: 50). ‘... Keat Brown left his diary which in its last crumpled pages told of the onset of the fatal attack of black water fever (the disease he caught in the Valley), and of his longing for the comfort of a cup of tea as death approached’ (Clements 1959: 29).

A few BaTonga men might have heard about Christianity because some of them had been out of the Valley from time to time (Colson 1960; Colson and Scudder 1988; Howarth, 1961; Scudder 1962). In the 20th century they had to go and work in towns so that they could meet the tax demands of the District Commissioners. However, no record shows that they influenced people back home, in the Valley. The BaTonga women hardly moved out of the Valley. ‘They had no idea what the world was like beyond the horizon of the hills. The Valley was all their world; and none of them suspected it was doomed’ (Howarth 1960: 18).

The fact that the BaTonga had little contact with the outside world, especially with ‘the men of God’, and lived in what Tremmel (1994) referred to as ‘splendid isolation’, suggests that their traditional beliefs remained undisturbed by Christianity. The people of the lower river section remained attached to their spiritual hierarchy of Leza, Basangu, Mizimu, Masabe and Nyaminyami. They had their own styles in dress, music, and dance, and chiefly wanted the outside world to leave them alone (Colson 2001). It was only after resettlement from the Valley that the BaTonga encountered increased contact with the ‘men of God’, where some were converted into various Christian denominations and completely abandoned their religion, whereas some came to believe in both Christianity and traditional religious practices. Even modernity and new technologies did not penetrate the Valley. Colonial officials administered the area from stations on the plateau and went on tour periodically to collect tax and hear what was going on. In 1949, to reach villages along the Zambezi meant a three to four day walk over rough trails. There were no roads (Colson 2001; Colson and

⁶⁴ NADA its abbreviation for Native Affairs Department Annual, in which colonists published their articles on African culture.

Scudder 1988). McGregor mentions that the Zambezi Valley was marginal to colonial economic and political development, and lacked roads, missions and schools (McGregor 2003: 98). One first generation female resettled from Chikwasha Village in Musampakaruma said that: *‘We had no clinics in the Valley. If one of us gets sick we could use our traditional methods of healing... There were no roads and men used to go to Karoi⁶⁵ on foot to look for jobs, they could spend many days in the bush walking to towns to look for jobs’* (Interviewed, 7 April 2017).

5.8. The cultural significance of Nyaminyami before the move

The data presented here relates to the occurrence of beliefs and practices relating to Nyaminyami in Mola and Musampakaruma and not Sinakatenge, because people in Sinakatenge hold no beliefs in Nyaminyami. The existence of some local narratives pertaining to the duties of Nyaminyami, (to those who lived along the river), substantiates the contention that ‘Nyaminyami was not a mere fictitious being like the dragon in a folktale, but there was much more to him than that’ (Clements 1959: 89). The majority of the BaTonga say Nyaminyami was not a fabricated being (Ncube 2004). If people make claims about their lives, anthropologists must not dismiss or refute those claims, but rather try to understand those claims and document them. We, as anthropologists, must try to understand how those beliefs occurred, their significance and the impact of social change on such beliefs. Although there is no one nowadays who claims to have seen Nyaminyami, currently there are people who claim to have eaten dried meat from his back. Nevertheless, there are claims that those who lived in the 19th and early 20th century had first-hand experiences with ‘it’. Deare and Walker (1976) in 1958 interviewed the then Chief Sampakaruma who was 80 years old at the time, meaning he had been born in 1878. They wrote that

‘At the inundated ‘Nil’ (or the rock near the Kariba gorge) chief Sampakaruma reported that he twice saw the monster ‘Nyaminyami’. He stated that he first saw Nyaminyami when he was a very young boy and then again as a young man. He described Nyaminyami as a very large serpent-like animal about 10 feet in diameter and of unknown length, as his whole body was never seen,” (p276).

Currently, among the BaTonga, there is compelling evidence that shows that Nyaminyami was not believed to be fictitious. People still narrate stories that make it clear that Nyaminyami was very important in their livelihoods. For instance, One First Generation Resettler, who is currently a Village Head in Mola, told me that:

⁶⁵Karoi is the nearest town to the Valley where many people were employed in white farms.

Nyaminyami really existed, but I did not see it. It was a very huge snake that lived underwater. It was the spirit of the underworld. No one living today saw it. My father had kept its skin..., but I do not have the skin now. It looked like that of the Muramba (cat fish) type of fish. Its dried skin or meat would last for many years, (interviewed 12 June, 2017).

The fact that his father kept its skin is tangible evidence pointing to the existence of Nyaminyami as well as his significance to the people. The skin was used for medicinal purposes, as will be elaborated below. The current Chief Mola even claims to have eaten meat from Nyaminyami's back⁶⁶. When I asked him whether the people in this chiefdom believed/ believe in Nyaminyami, he quickly responded, saying

‘...yes, Nyaminyami is our river god, the BaTonga people. I even ate meat from Nyaminyami...It tasted like Muramba (cat fish) type of fish. If the meat fell on sandy soil it could not get dirty because it was supernatural’.

The excerpts from one FGR and Chief Mola mentioned above are somewhat similar in their content, especially the idea that the meat tasted like cat fish, which makes it evident that the people's understanding and narratives of the river god can be similar, though sometimes ambiguities exist. Even on the north bank in Simamba village, Sitambuli encountered ‘a very old first generation male resettler in Nabutezi neighbourhood who claimed to have eaten meat from the body of Nyaminyami’ (Sitambuli 2016: 200). According to tradition, the meat could be dried and it could last longer. Perhaps this explains why people who did not have first-hand experience with Nyaminyami claim to have eaten its meat. Some born before the move might have eaten it when they were children, and were thus told by their parents that they ate meat from him.

The BaTonga people who live near the Kariba gorge tell many stories about Nyaminyami, which shows that he was an important part of their religion and society. Stories must not be downplayed because they are an important source of information. To some people, these stories are proof of BaTonga ‘backwardness’. Luise White, writing about stories of bloodsuckers in Kenya, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Zambia, championed these (bloodsucker) stories ‘as they might be used as a primary source with which to write, and sometimes rewrite, the history of colonial East and Central Africa’ (White 2000: 3). In the same vein, Nyaminyami stories, as similar as they are among many BaTonga of Musampakaruma and Mola, are an important historical source, not only for Nyaminyami belief systems, but even for BaTonga history in general. This section unearths his socio-economic and potential religious significance.

It must be emphasized that before the move, for the BaTonga people, Nyaminyami's roles were more socio-economic and less ‘clear cut religious’, thereby lessening the

⁶⁶I will indicate more fully on this role below.

probability that he might have been central to life in the Valley. He only performed those duties delegated to him by nature (or probably the ancestors). The current Nyaminyami narratives are more centred on him as being a sustainer of the people and helping people to cross over the river, and not on more 'clear cut' religious issues such as spirit possession, dreams, witchcraft and diviner calling. Research has found that the snake and the mermaid are specifically associated with the calling of healers, providers of wisdom, knowledge and medicine among many southern African indigenous peoples (Aschwanden 1989; Bernard 2003; 2010; 2013; Fontein 2015; Latham 1986).

However, nobody among the Batonga of both Mola and Sampakaruma areas narrates the role of Nyaminyami in such ways. In as far as historical narratives and stories are concerned; nobody was called and taken under water by Nyaminyami. Drownings in the literature attributed to Nyaminyami are far from the idea of 'being called and taken under water' present in other literature on water spirits of both western and southern Africa. In other narratives, these drownings were engendered by the fabulous creatures mentioned above, crocodiles and hippos. Stories of magical crossings of the river occurring mainly in the Upper and Middle river sections are not in any way linked to Nyaminyami (see McGregor 2003a; Colson 1960). Capsizing of canoes and drowning of humans in the river were seen as a form of punishment (and not a calling) for venturing near *Kariva* (the rock that sheltered Nyaminyami that was above the gorge) (Clements 1959). In 1958 Chief Sampakaruma told Deare and Walker (1976) that

“Nyaminyami caused a number of deaths by overturning dugouts and they (people living along the Zambezi) were very frightened of him”. He also stated that “a young friend of his named Munokoni was drowned when his dug-out was overturned by Nyaminyami” (p276).

According to Gibbons (1904) neither boats, goods nor bodies, sunk or drowned by the river god, have ever been recovered. There is no account among the BaTonga today about where these boats and humans were taken to by the river god. Going underwater near the Kariba gorge was a misfortune, and not a calling. The fact that Nyaminyami as a water spirit could be benevolent (through the provision of meat) and sometimes be non- benevolent (through the drownings of people and boat capsizing) can be mirrored through the labelling of water spirits as morally 'ambiguous', as suggested by scholars like Bernard (2010), Connor (2014), Fontein (2015), and Hammond- Tooke (1975). Connor (2014) argues that water spirits are not considered to be malicious entities, but rather as signifying ambiguity. Similarly, Hammond- Tooke (1975: 32) writes that the river people (water spirits) as well as the misfortune they cause 'have about it an element of fortuitousness, the uncalculated, the

morally neutral and ambivalent'. Bernard talks of the 'garden of the good and evil' in chapter 7 (volume 2) of her PhD thesis, in which she argued that even though stories of water spirits are presented in more positive ways, sometimes they are presented in more negative ways, 'particularly with regards to the 'symbols' of the snake and the mermaid' (Bernard 2010: 367). The main roles of Nyaminyami that the elders in Mola and Musampakaruma note are food provision, guardian of the land and protector of the people, as well as the utility of its skin for medicinal purposes, which symbolized his benevolence.

5.8.1. Nyaminyami as food provider.

The significant role of Nyaminyami as the provider of food/meat to the communities along the river is well known, even in areas where the idea about a "river god" did not originate. Cases in which river gods or water spirits variedly sustain people through the provision of food are common in southern Africa, as I have already mentioned in the previous chapter (see also Aschwanden 1989; Fontein 2015; Gluckman 1952; Peterson 2006). Writing specifically about *iNkosazana*, Bernard (2010) found out that women and girls enacted rituals where they requested rain from *iNkosazana* so that they can obtain better yields that season. Almost all of my key informants in Sampakaruma and Mola told me that Nyaminyami used to occasionally expose himself to the people, lie on the river banks and allow people to cut strips of meat from his back during the times of hunger (*nzala*). De Garine and De Garine (1999) were told in Chitenge village in Mola that Nyaminyami used to appear only once a year, especially around August to September. Consistently, I was told the same by Second Generation Resettlers at an FGD session in Nabhole village. One First Generation Resettler in Dondoro village, in Musampakaruma, told me that:

He was told by his father that Nyaminyami appeared once a year and he could come from the eastern side of the Kariba gorge moving westwards, going village by village (on both sides of the river) providing meat; we do not know where it could stop providing meat, nor where it went after that. When Nyaminyami was moving people could hear strange sounds coming out of the water. It could become very windy.

This was the most significance experience the people are believed to have had with Nyaminyami. Bernard identifies various characteristics of experience, and those that inform this case are the 'animal's visitation' and 'snake or mermaid encounters' (Bernard 2010). It is through the narratives surrounding his visitation that his economic significance to the people can be known. Thus, there is a connection between the level of experience and the socio-economic significance of water spirits.

Oral tradition has it that Nyaminyami could not submerge himself before all the families obtained meat. But, one was allowed only to cut as much as one could carry without

assistance. Sibanda writes that it was believed that if one cut more than he could carry, the meat would go bad before the person got home (Sibanda 2004: 252). During the cutting exercise, Nyaminyami could not be exhausted, hurt nor bleed, and he could quickly recover from the cuts. Sibanda (2004) says that if you harvested (or cut) as much as you needed, the resource (i.e. Nyaminyami) would not be exhausted. According to legend, Nyaminyami was able to regenerate the flesh that had been cut, and the people had this perpetual supply of meat. The legend of flesh regeneration illustrates a sustainable resource use philosophy among the BaTonga (ibid). It is because of those benevolent acts of providing food, that some Valley people still cherish and consider him as important to their lives, and that he is worth venerating annually (Sitambuli 2016), though he is now invisible.

Apart from obtaining meat from Nyaminyami, the Valley people also had the privilege of obtaining food miraculously, in the form of *nsima* (sadza) from their ancestors. The stories about people discovering sadza below baobab trees, *malende*, along the river in times of droughts and acute famine, are interwoven in the Nyaminyami legends or stories. They do not necessarily say that Nyaminyami provided them with sadza, but these are narratives that are brought about when they explain miraculous ways in which they obtained food through Nyaminyami. In 2015, Tombindo (2016: 81) was informed by Chief Mola that *“its (Nyaminyami) appearance to people is similar to what Christians teach about manna from heaven, we had our own manna at the Zambezi..., forced relocation angered Nyaminyami and the manna disappeared completely”* (interviewed by Tombindo, 26/11/2015).

Nyaminyami was believed to be a reliable solution to hunger. Hunger was experienced when drought occurred. Indeed droughts occurred in the Valley. Despite the fact that there was abundant food along the river obtained from riverine cultivation, fishing and gathering of fruits, there were several famines, which the riverine gardens failed to prevent, suggesting the BaTonga could have been victims of hunger, although to a lesser extent compared to the post-resettlement period (Mudimba 2015; Ncube 2004). In some years, floods were unpredictable and could not be controlled, such that there were frequently years of famine, when floodwaters were insufficient or badly timed, and years of disastrously excessive flooding, when gardens were washed away in ranging torrents (Scudder 1962; 1985). Research has shown that there were ten severe famines between 1822 and 1947, with the negative impact of the 1822-3 famine being one of the most extreme, which reduced women to ‘eating their skin aprons and many hundreds died’ (Ncube 2004:96). Scudder has found that 1860-1931 was probably the period when annual food shortages caused the most

suffering in the Valley's history (Scudder 1985). It is in this epoch - 1860 to the 1930s- that many travellers and missionaries who visited the Valley, documented the importance of Nyaminyami to the BaTonga people. Famine caused serious deaths, especially in the early decades of the 20th century. It was during such famine and drought periods that the Valley people appealed to Nyaminyami for rescue from dying of hunger. One FGR explained that: *"our elders who had first-hand experience with Nyaminyami could go down the river during famine periods and say..., 'if you are there, Great Spirit of the river, come out and help us... After they throw libations in the river it could then come out and save its people from dying of hunger'"* (interviewed 12 April, 2017). By virtue of providing food, Nyaminyami can be considered to have met one of humanity's needs: food. It was also an important function that was directed towards maintaining the fabric of the society, by providing meat to the people in groups at the same time.

Apart from appealing to Nyaminyami for meat, to some extent, the Valley people had other means of dealing with hunger during acute famines; since most families kept livestock such as goats, they could use them for food and could trade them for grain in times of hunger with other people from the plateau or further upstream or downstream. Elizabeth Colson argues that the river had dictated both a degree of isolation and a degree of contact; it has connected the Tonga to the East and to the West and in some places connected North and South (Colson 1960). This connection was very important for trade, especially during periods of hunger. In the early 20th century period some Tonga young men had started to engage in labour migration, where they obtained wages to buy food stuffs and come back to the valley to feed their families (Sitambuli 2016; Scudder 1985). The Valley people also relied on exporting tobacco to the plateau (Scudder 1985). Thus, Nyaminyami was not the only rescue from hunger they believe that they had. However, Nyaminyami became seen as the most important means, because it was a supernatural way of acquiring food for the Valley people, and because these people were identified through the river, they saw it as important, as it was coming out of that same river that they identify themselves with. Some say that, despite connections with other people further afield, Nyaminyami would provide enough meat for every family, so that they would not die, thereby according Nyaminyami exceptional importance as compared to other survival strategies.

Moreover, it must be mentioned that the BaTonga believe that with the increased visitations of whites into the Valley in the first half of the 20th century as well as the construction of the Kariba dam, Nyaminyami stopped exposing himself. Increased visitation by whites in the valley occurred in first half of the 20th century, (although they had penetrated

Zimbabwe in the 19th century), when they were surveying the potential of the Zambezi with regards to the construction of a dam along it (Colson 1971). When Nyaminyami became invisible, however, one elder in Musampakaruma said “only the signs of Nyaminyami’s presence were visible, and when these occurred people would move far from the river.” However, he did not make it clear why people would move far from the river, but presumably it was because sometimes Nyaminyami drowned people who tampered with the river, and someone who feels he/she has tampered with the river would move away. He said at one time in an evening he had heard some sound coming out of the river and had seen water moving at one place in a circular manner, near the Kariba gorge area, and that ‘definitely was Nyaminyami’. Similarly, another First Generation Resettler in Mola said that:

I was born in the Zambezi Valley but I did not see Nyaminyami. Those born during my time, also, did not see (it) because it had stopped exposing itself to the people. But some people of my age ate Nyaminyami dried meat and some saw its skins that were kept by their elders. What people were seeing were only signs of its presence such as water turning red or black, and heavy flooding that inhibited crossing for a while. It was the whites with their diesel that they brought into the Valley that made him to abandon his children (BaTonga). Nyaminyami did not want to see those things. But, our elders had seen (it) before as they used to obtain divine meat (its back). (Interviewed on 19 June 2017),

One can see that the invisibility of Nyaminyami is inevitably connected to the coming of the whites. This is similar to the narratives about the silence of the voices at Great Zimbabwe ruins, in southern Zimbabwe, that could be heard early in the morning, or in the evening. Some described the voices as the voice of *Mwari* (God). The silence of Great Zimbabwe is frequently stated to have begun with the arrival of Europeans at the end of the 19th century, due to the destruction they caused by digging for gold and relics, or for the source of the mysterious sounds and voices (Fontein 2006b). It can accordingly be observed that the coming of the whites disrupted the operation of the spirit world in Africa. There is no actual date when Nyaminyami became invisible. By the eve of the dam in 1958 Nyaminyami had already become invisible, and thus anyone born around that time did not have first-hand experience with him, though some ate his meat as implied in the above excerpt. What these people experienced were signs of its presence. These signs were differently interpreted, and sometimes evoked deeper spiritual meanings at each particular time.

5.8. 1.1. Nyaminyami rituals

It is not clear how often the rituals dedicated to Nyaminyami were enacted, but it is very clear that during the periods when people claim that they used to cut meat from Nyaminyami, there was singing, dancing and drumming. Bernard’s level 3, of her FLA theory, i.e. ‘praxis’, guides this section on rituals (Bernard 2010). I am also using praxis in connection with the

sociological theory by Gluckman (1952; 1954). Second generation resettlers in Mola told me that when people saw Nyaminyami they would sing and play drums (*Buntibe*), whilst others were cutting meat. These rituals occurred on the river banks. Conducting these ceremonies near the river were influenced by the fact that Nyaminyami lived and exposed himself in the river. Thus, proximity to the river was per se important in the enactment of these rituals. Ethnographic evidence by other writers also show that indeed there were festivals that occurred along the river that were dedicated to Nyaminyami (Saidi 2016; Sitambuli 2016; Tombindo 2016). Sitambuli (2016) notes that during periods of hunger, *nzala*, and severe hardships, tribesmen would pray and call upon the river spirits to assist them with food. BaTonga elders say that allegiance to Nyaminyami was paid through performing ceremonial dances where even the *buntibe* drum would play a part (Saidi 2016). These rituals, however, were communitarian. They were enacted collectively by members of the societies. Therefore, the functionalist sociological assumptions made Gluckman (1952; 1954) that rituals dedicated to water spirits served certain functions, can also be used in understanding how Nyaminyami rituals promoted harmony and collectiveness in BaTonga (and maybe also Shona) societies. It is my belief that the idea of enacting rituals at social level was another avenue that facilitated the introduction of Nyaminyami to the BaTonga by the Shona. The fact that people conducted beliefs as a community, with the community being multi- ethnic at the Kariba gorge area, shows that one ethnic group could easily transmit ideas about the river god to another.

No one visited the river to obtain meat from Nyaminyami as an individual, nor did people perform rituals to Nyaminyami at individual level, as is the case in some other African cultures where people can enact rituals for water spirits, at an individual level. For example, in the Sundays River Valley, one Xhosa woman went to the Sundays River with a boy who had been punished by the *abantu bomlambo* for playing in the river, to perform a ritual and placate the angry mermaid. The boy had developed red rash all over his body and was walking lame. So the woman went back to the pool, where she spoke to the mermaid, apologized and scooped up some mud, which she then smeared all over the boy. The next day he was better and could walk, and he eventually recovered from his ordeal (Connor, 2014:149). Bernard also narrates how she conducted a ritual to a mermaid that lived in the *Doring River*:

... We walked someway down the river from the road- Bridge to a large pool surrounded with reeds, which I felt had all the right properties favoured by the water divinities. I did a small ritual offering at water's edge (I lit candles, imphepho and offered white beads and silver coins to the water) to thank my

ancestors for showing me the place in my dream, and to let them know I had found it (Bernard, 2010: 372).

The above two cases show that in other cultures, it is possible for an individual to appease the water spirits. This issue of individuals having the privilege to appease water spirits is also common in West Africa, as I have indicated in the literature review Chapter 4. But for Nyaminyami, that situation did not prevail. Thus, not all themes in African understandings of water spirits occurred in the Nyaminyami case. In fact, it was considered dangerous to embark on a river journey alone, because if one tampers with the river, one would be drowned by the river spirits, and thus his/ her kinsmen would not know his/ her whereabouts. Embarking on a river journey alone was taking a risk. But, in other cultures a water spirit can request a visit from an individual, and would not allow the one called to come near the river with company.

5.8.2. Nyaminyami as Guardian of the River (or land).

Saidi (2016) mentions that Nyaminyami was the ruler of the Zambezi. His presence in the river controlled people's ways of approaching it (the river). Furthermore, Sibanda (2004) was told by Mapfunde (a Musampakaruma villager) that Nyaminyami was believed to control the flow of the Zambezi. Thus, he was the guardian of the river (and land). This function of Nyaminyami is, of course, mirrored in the wider understandings of territorial cults as 'guardians of the land' (and its resources), as propounded by numerous essays on territorial cults in Schoffeleers (1979). These varying essays reinforce the idea that the spirit world has 'a direct ecological influence' (Ibid: 4). Embroiled in this role of Nyaminyami are also the issues of environmental conservation and protection of the people.

The guardianship of Nyaminyami over the river was an important part of the responses of my Key Informants in both Mola and Musampakaruma chieftaincies; particularly those who were displaced who emphasize that Nyaminyami never wanted nature 'immediately' next to and in the river to be tamed. This is evidenced by his opposition to the dam construction, where 'Euro-Africans altered and made new nature on the Zambezi landscape', to borrow Hughes' (2006) wording. Nyaminyami, in Schoffeleer's terms, 'also issued and enforced directives with regard to a community's use of its environment' (Schoffeleers 1979: 2). Currently, some still believe he controlled the current of the Zambezi waters, and thus permitted the valley people's interaction with the river and provided them with retreating floods and alluvial soils that made riverine agriculture viable. The understanding of the role of Nyaminyami in environmental conservation can also be

understood in the context of the broader issues of water spirits as guardians of the land, as argued by Machoko (2013). Nyaminyami ‘acted as a powerful constraint to the misuse of resources’ (Bernard and Kumalo 2004: 123).

Successful river crossings for either social or economic reasons were attributed to Nyaminyami’s benevolence and guardianship; this is because the river was dangerous and many died in it, and crossing it required divine guidance from river spirits (Nyaminyami included), as well as specialized skills of canoeing and swimming. The BaTonga people used to cross the Zambezi on a daily basis for both social and economic reasons. Writing from first-hand experience, Thayer Scudder notes that:

‘In the Zambian (north bank) village where I lived people had actually come from Zimbabwe (south bank), especially from chiefdoms of Sinakatenge, Mola and Simunchembu. Some of those who came from Sinakatenge still cultivated gardens there, poling across the Zambezi daily. I went with them, and found life little different in Sinakatenge’s area from that in Chihepo’ (Scudder 1982:2).

McGregor (2009) writes that the presence of crocodiles and hippos, the strong currents, and flow of the river, which was frequently interrupted by falls and rapids, were dangers that the river presented to those wanting to cross it. One of the ritual wives in Mola remembers going/crossing to the north bank in Sinazongwe, in a dugout, to attend funerals of her sister and niece who were attacked by crocodiles at different occasions (Interviewed, 12 June 2017). She told me that if one successfully crossed or came back from fishing without being harmed by crocodiles or hippos, one would appreciate the river spirits, of which the Nyaminyami spirit was part. This appreciation was through word of mouth and not ritual engagement. This role of Nyaminyami is typical of all other spirits in Southern Africa which are guardians of the land or rivers (Bernard 2001; 2010). The interpretations surrounding Nyaminyami concerning this role connects him with the everyday social and economic life of the people living along the river. Thus, during this time, people talked about him in relation to everyday life.

5.8.3. Nyaminyami’s skin as medicine.

The use of Nyaminyami skin for medicinal purposes by some BaTonga people was another role of Nyaminyami; in that regard Nyaminyami may be understood and studied from a healing perspective. But this did not involve people being taken underwater for healer training, as is the case in other Bantu societies. However, this Nyaminyami role can be mirrored with the primordial KhoeSan use of Rain Snake’s skin as charms, though there are somewhat dissimilarities within the two cases. Research has indicated that in the primordial times the KhoeSan used to burn ‘snake’s skin’ powder and sprinkle it with a potent plant

substance (water buchu) to assist both entrance into a snake associated trance state, and re-emerge into an everyday state of consciousness (see Challis, Hollmann and McGranaghan 2013; Sullivan and Low 2014; Watts 2016). Only one informant from Mola, who was born in the Valley- who is in her early 90s - told me that some people used Nyaminyami's skin for medicinal purposes, and there were particular diseases the skin was used for as medicine. She said it in passing. I had decided not to involve this role because it had only been mentioned by one informant. But, when I encountered this role being emphasized in the archival documents, I then decided to include it. For example, Deare (1976) was informed by the Chief Sampakaruma that

Sometimes Nyaminyami came out of the water, and when there was no current in the river one could be sure that he had left the river. When this happened skilled witchdoctors⁶⁷, tracked it down and scraped pieces of skin from it that they used as medicine to heal the sick. This skin was also mixed with kaffir corn seed and ensured a good harvest. As a result of this operation grain bins could be guaranteed to last for three years. (p276)

This chief Sampakaruma alleged that 'he had personal experience of the effectiveness of the medicine obtained from Nyaminyami' (ibid). In addition, I cited an informant above who mentioned that his father has kept the Nyaminyami skin. This informant's words indicate the significance of the skin, though he did not mention that the father had needed it for medicinal purposes. However, it must be made clear that in these narratives the 'witchdoctors' who used Nyaminyami skin are not talked about as having been taken under water for training. They could have been using healing skills they obtained from ancestors or *masabe* (alien) spirits (and not from a river god). If diviners' healing knowledge was/is granted by ancestors to use Nyaminyami skin as medicine, then this implies that there was/is an unidentified interconnection between ancestors and Nyaminyami that is missing in these narratives.

5.8.4. Nyaminyami's skin and good harvests

The concluding two sentences of the informant's excerpt quoted in the previous section demonstrates the centrality of Nyaminyami's skin in guaranteeing good harvests. The skin was central, especially when droughts occurred. I have indicated above that droughts occasionally hit the Valley. This was another supernatural way through which people obtained food in the Valley. Thus Nyaminyami's role was more economic, and less religious. This ambiguous link between water spirits and good harvests is a common theme throughout southern Africa. *Inkosazana*, the Zulu heavenly princess, as bringer of soft- soaking rains, is

⁶⁷ I have used the word 'witchdoctor' because it is part of the quotation. The word was a derogatory term used by whites to refer to African Traditional Healers.

responsible for agricultural fertility (Bernard 2003; see also Chapter 4 for numerous cases). The burnt snake powder was also associated with trance- dances linked to the rainmaking activities among the KhoeSan (see Sullivan and Low 2014: 230).

5.9. Conclusion

This chapter has examined the issues surrounding the origins and development of Nyaminyami belief systems in the Valley. It has illustrated that Nyaminyami was believed in, particularly in the immediate vicinity of the Kariba gorge. The chapter has argued that Nyaminyami beliefs were introduced by the Shona people of the Shangwe or Goba dialect to the BaTonga people. Nyaminyami beliefs have been examined in the pre-colonial and colonial historical contexts, indicating how colonialism impacted on Nyaminyami beliefs. The chapter also examined the physical appearance and position of Nyaminyami in relation to the wider BaTonga religious constellation. It has been argued that Nyaminyami was not as important as the ancestors to the people who believed in him. The cultural significance of Nyaminyami before the move involved him in his role as a key food provider, guardian of the river (land), his medicinal importance, and guarantor of good harvests and protector of the people. This chapter is inextricably connected with the following Chapter in that this Chapter has presented the situation relating to Nyaminyami before the dam, and the following Chapter critically assesses the impact of the dam construction and the subsequent resettlement on the Nyaminyami belief systems.

CHAPTER 6: NYAMINYAMI, KARIBA DAM CONSTRUCTION AND BATONGA RESETTLEMENT (KULONZEGWA)⁶⁸

Massive technological development hurts. This is a fact largely ignored by economic planners, technicians and political leaders. In planning drastic alterations in environment that uproot populations or make old adjustment impossible, they count the engineering costs but not the social costs. After all, they do not think of themselves as paying the latter. (Colson 1971: 1).

For those who are displaced, these development projects (such as the construction of dams, irrigation schemes, urban renewal, and housing schemes, water or transport supply systems, energy generation projects, and open cast mining) usually have overwhelming negative consequences, resulting in social and psychological disruption, and often long- term economic impoverishment, (De Wet 2001: 4637).

6.1. Introduction.

The purpose of this chapter is to assess the significance of Nyaminyami in connection with the Kariba dam construction, and the BaTonga resettlement of 1958. This is because some BaTonga of Mola and Musampakaruma strongly believe that epistemological and religious understandings of Nyaminyami belief systems were affected by the dam construction and their subsequent removal from the Valley. Indeed, as the above quotations by Colson and De Wet make clear, when large scale development projects are implemented, vast numbers of people are forced to relocate, and their religio-cultural values are significantly disrupted. Scudder (2017) postulates that to date, outcomes of the resettlement process in connection with small number of large dams that have been adequately studied, has consistently left the majority worse off socio- culturally. Based on the narratives of the people, I want to argue that practices related to Nyaminyami collapsed or became ‘humpty- dumpty’, to use Downing and Garcia-Downing’s terminology, as a result of the resettlement (Downing and Garcia- Downing 2009: 475).

The above argument by Colson perceives development projects as resulting in social and psychological disruptions, and often long-term economic impoverishment, such as those mentioned in De Wet’s quotation. Scudder (2005; 2009) also observed that the BaTonga people were affected socio-economically, politically and religiously by the building of the Kariba dam and the subsequent relocation. This chapter is interconnected with the following chapter, largely because the next chapter examines the prevalence of Nyaminyami in the post-resettlement era. Thus, this resettlement chapter lays the foundation upon which the arguments of the following chapter are predicated on.

⁶⁸ ‘Kulonzegwa’ is the ChiTonga term for eviction; it is from the verb ‘kulonga’, to move, and conveys the idea of being moved by force.

Displaced BaTonga indicated to me that, during the construction of the dam, Nyaminyami fought hard to protect his people. They made evident the many accidents and incessant floods that occurred during the dam construction, and they narrated that these were the ways through which Nyaminyami protected them. The occurrence of these incessant floods can be related to concept of the water as an ‘index of power’, as outlined in Chapter 2 (see Fontein 2015). The floods had the power to destroy the concrete, and brought an impending massive development project to a halt for months. These floods’ power also transformed the people’s epistemological understandings and interpretations of Nyaminyami. The floods engendered the evocation of complex repertoires of interpretations of Nyaminyami occurrences. I shall argue that the connection of these floods and accidents with Nyaminyami’s anger shows how some BaTonga connected their spiritual world and the natural world. It shows that the BaTonga traditional religion, to use Taringa’s words, is ‘environmentally friendly’ (Taringa 2006). The ways by which the story of Nyaminyami was narrated by my informants was rooted in their interpretations of the resettlement events of 1958 necessitated by the dam construction. I want to argue that the reinforcement of the idea of Nyaminyami as the ‘protector of the people’ during this time is evidence to show that Nyaminyami’s roles to the people evolved and assumed wider dimensions over time. Nyaminyami was seen as a protector before the dam, but this role was strengthened and assumed new complex magnitudes during the dam construction episodes.

At that time, some journalists argued the BaTonga did not believe in a river god, while others were busy generalizing that all the BaTonga believed in Nyaminyami. Both arguments were entirely erroneous and were used, not for understanding BaTonga communities, but for the furthering of economic or political agendas, as I shall indicate below when examining the ways through which the story of Nyaminyami was told in the press and magazines by successive generations of Europeans. The focus of this work is partly to detail the genesis of these inauthentic stories and judgements about Nyaminyami, as well as documenting the function of Nyaminyami as the ‘protector of the people’ during the resettlement episode. I shall engage with the popular accounts and writings about the Kariba Dam, Nyaminyami and the transformed landscape, especially with regards to how these writings ‘promoted a set of meanings to white publics in the Rhodesias, Britain, and America, which worked to validate the developmental role of Europeans and international finance in central Africa, to further interests in African scenery and wildlife, and to reinforce racist stereotypes of Africans through caricatures of innocent primitive tribes and wily, untrustworthy educated nationalists’ (McGregor 2009:123).

This chapter is informed by the resettlement theories introduced in Chapter 2. It weaves together a variety of sources. Archival documents from NAZ (National Archives of Zimbabwe); secondary sources on Kariba resettlement such as Howarth (1961), Colson (1971), Scudder (1962; 2005; 2009; 2017), Tischler (2013; 2014), Mashingaidze (2013) and McGregor (2009); the film/ video/ footage of the Kariba dam construction; and local narratives of the First Generation Resettlers (compiled through field work I conducted)

6.2. The decision to construct the dam and the Kariba- Kafue debate

The Kariba dam was a flagship project of the complex political entity of the federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (the Central African Federation), which was set up by the British government in 1953 with the support of the majority of the white settlers in the two Rhodesias, in disregard of African opposition. The dam was a monumental intervention that transformed the Zambezi Valley beyond recognition, providing the energy necessary for post-Second World War industrialization, creating the largest man-made lake in the world at the time and displacing those who had lived along what had been a socio-economically marginalized part of the Valley (McGregor 2009: 105). Indeed, African industrialization was at its peak in the post-war period but it had started some decades before then. Writing in the 1960s, Howarth points out that “for the past two or three decades, while time in the Zambezi Valley had almost been standing still, the highlands a couple of hundred miles to the north and south, steadily industrialized” (Howarth 1961); and the copper mining industry could enjoy only limited growth at the Copperbelt in Northern Rhodesia⁶⁹. Therefore more power sources were needed to meet the growing industry. The only power supply in the country was from coal, which was mined in Southern Rhodesia, and hauled enormous distances by rail. When estimates of the future expansion were made, it looked as though the coal-mines and railways would be loaded to their limits by 1960. Atomic power was still too far away, so hydro-electric power was the only alternative (Howarth 1961: 35).

However, before the decision to build Kariba was reached in 1955, there were highly contentious debates concerning on which site the dam was supposed to be built, and these debates almost brought the just created Federation to the brink of collapse. The potential of two dam sites stood out- Kariba and Kafue- backed respectively by enthusiastic lobbies of Southern and Northern Rhodesian settlers (McGregor 2009). This culminated into what Mavhunga (1995) has coined the ‘Kariba- Kafue debate’, which threatened the very existence

⁶⁹ F106/12/1, M. P Barrow. ‘The Federation’s power potentialities’. An article for South Africa. Causeway. 5 March 1955. National Archives of Zimbabwe.

of the federation. While Kariba was in the channel of the Zambezi River itself, Kafue was a ‘tributary of the Zambezi that joins it about 25 miles downstream of the Kariba gorge’ (Mavhunga 1995: 10). Kariba was adjacent to both territories but Kafue was enclosed in the northern territory.

The issue at first appeared settled in favour of Kafue, as the two governments had signed an inter-territorial agreement to proceed before the Federation had been inaugurated, on the grounds that it was cheaper, smaller and would meet the pressing needs of the Copperbelt mines more quickly; that decision had been endorsed by the Federal parliament in early 1954⁷⁰ (McGregor 2009:107). However, ‘construction on Kafue did not begin, this was largely because Federal Prime Minister Sir Godfrey Huggins (later Lord Malvern) was in favour of Kariba rather than Kafue, and used ‘the authority of a PM as dictator’ to reverse the decision’⁷¹. Instead of starting work on Kafue, he redefined Kafue as a ‘territorial’ rather than ‘federal’ project, (Mavhunga 1995; McGregor 2009; Tischler 2013), (which blocked international finance), and re- opened the debate by setting up a new Federal working committee and commissioning a team of independent international consultants to review the decision, led by the famous French engineer Andre Coyne. The French consultants and new Federal working committee reported in favour of Kariba and the PM (now Lord Malvern) used their view to announce his decision that the federation would proceed with Kariba, based on ‘the best independent and up to date technical advice’.⁷² This decision met bitter criticism from Northern Rhodesians, whose scheme on the Kafue River had been chosen before Kariba, in 1954, (Mavhunga 1995). Despite all the verbal opposition from the Northern Rhodesians, the dam was built on the Kariba gorge.

6.3. Gwembe Tonga Research Project (GTRP), Kariba dam construction and the understudied Nyaminyami.

Despite the extensive and intensive research conducted by the GTRP, the Nyaminyami belief systems remained understudied, and therefore this segment examines the reasons why the beliefs remained understudied. The detailed definition and the history of the formation of the GTRP is given below.

⁷⁰ McGregor (2009) further hints that although an inter-territorial HEP commission reported in favour of Kariba in 1951, the two governments agreed to go ahead with Kafue on 4 September 1953. HEP had started its surveys of the potential of building a dam at Kariba gorge in 1941, (F143/7, Report On Kariba Gorge And Kafue River: Hydro- Electric Projects by the HEP commission, 1951). I also personally read the file in the National Archives of Zimbabwe.

⁷¹ ORAL FL 1. Sir Patrick Fletcher, then Minister of Native Affairs in Southern Rhodesia, National Archives of Zimbabwe, (cited in McGregor 2009: p 107).

⁷² Federal newsletter, 22 March 1955, National Archives of Zimbabwe.

When the decision was made to build a dam at Kariba and for the resulting relocation of the BaTonga, calls were made (on both sides of the river) for studying the life of those to be displaced before the dam destroyed every aspect of their culture. While on the South bank, Southern Rhodesian authorities rejected preparatory research into the new areas and the culture of a people before resettlement as an unnecessary expense (Tischler 2013); on the North bank, ‘the then Rhodes Livingstone Institute (RLI) Director Henry Fosbrooke had tried to present the case for resettlement plans to be based on an accurate understanding of the ways of life of those to be moved, since their social order was intimately linked to the ecological niches they had so long occupied’ and thought ‘a unique way of life ought to be recorded before it was destroyed’ (Colson 1971: 7, as cited in McGregor 2009: 123). He then commissioned Elizabeth Colson and Thayer Scudder to conduct the benchmark research (Scudder and Colson 2002; Scudder 2005b). Their benchmark studies on the move gave birth to what they termed the Gwembe Tonga Research Project in 1956.⁷³

The GTRP recruited a second generation of scholars such as Lisa Cliggett. The GTRP is one of the oldest and most comprehensive anthropological studies carried out in the African continent (Cliggett 2002; Clark et al 1995). The GTRP conducted research in the Middle and Upper river sections of the Zambezi Valley, and thus communities in the Lower river section (on both sides of the river), who believed in Nyaminyami, were not studied. Even the greater part of the Valley on the South bank, in all the three sections, was not comprehensively studied. Colson admitted that ‘... we had detailed data on the people of seven villages in five neighbourhoods⁷⁴. They do not represent all environmental and cultural differences we know to have characterized Gwembe (Zambezi) both before and after the move ..., we regret the inability to carry out studies in Lower River..., we also regret having been able to pay only brief visits to villages in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe/ south bank)...’ (Colson 1971: 8-9). But just because life in the Valley was to some extent similar on both side of the river, many writers on the BaTonga of the south bank relied mainly on the GTRP data, in order to understand life before the move. So when Howarth (1961) concluded that the people did not believe in a river god, he had relied on data produced by Scudder and Colson, who had little information about the lower river section, in which, as my findings indicate, Nyaminyami beliefs were very strong. Howarth (1961) appears not to have understood or

⁷³The GTRP is still on-going. Elizabeth Colson died on 4 August 2016, but Thayer Scudder is still writing about the BaTonga. The second generation of scholars recruited is still doing research on the BaTonga with Lisa Cliggett and some USA graduate students having come in June 2018 to collect data among the BaTonga people of Zambia.

⁷⁴All these villages were in the Upper and Middle river sections.

fully made use of Colson and Scudder's field notes that he claims to have read. Even David Hughes (2006:829) lambasted him for describing the BaTonga as 'primitive', even though he claims to have read Colson and Scudder's manuscripts that did not cast the BaTonga as primitive. Therefore, his conclusions regarding the BaTonga and the river god are prone to criticism and very much questionable.

The fact that Nyaminyami beliefs were not recorded in the well detailed history and life of the BaTonga in Scudder/ Colson texts does not mean that the BaTonga did not believe in a river god. Scudder and Colson never dismissed the fact that people believed in a river god because they had not studied the lower river section (Kariba gorge area) (see Colson 1960; Scudder 1962; personal comms 2015). While Scudder and Colson cite inadequate time as the reason for not studying the lower river section, Sitambuli (2016) writes that the section was understudied because of its harsh climatic conditions, prevalence of tsetse fly, as well as its isolation (there were no roads that could connect it with other parts of the world)⁷⁵ that barred foreigners from visiting it. I have explored the climatic conditions of the Valley in the previous chapter. I strongly agree with the aforementioned reasons provided by Scudder and Colson, as well as Sitambuli.

6.4. The struggle with the river god: Kariba dam construction and the Kariba Floods.

This section is about the various accidents and floods that occurred at the dam wall site, which the BaTonga (and to some extent the dam constructors) attributed to the river god, Nyaminyami. Incidents of water spirits reacting against the implementation of water development projects, particularly dam constructions, are common in Africa. In chapter 4, I indicated a case of an angry river snake in Lesotho that is believed to have caused an earthquake when Katse dam was constructed (Hitchcock 2015; Scudder personal communication, August, 2015). Another case in point is that recorded by Peterson (2006) where one man named Tata Fulani built a micro-hydroelectric project in a river in Boyangana in Northwest Congo, the result of which was the death of his own father, which was attributed to the anger of *Mami wata*. Thus, water spirits can react differently to different projects that they feel threatened by. Although, the latter case sounds impractical as one man cannot build even a micro- hydroelectric plant alone, but I have cited it as narrated by Peterson (2006). In Ghana, in the 2000s, when the Bui dam was under construction, the river spirit *Maame water* (or Nana Adre) was believed to be behind the mysterious destruction of

⁷⁵ Haworth (1961: 36) writes that '..., the Kariba gorge area was still 50 miles away from the nearest road and 200 miles from the nearest industrial town.'

the bridge built across the dam (Abrampah 2017), and rumour has it that the Chinese engineers and spiritualists employed from China had to capture and cage it for work to progress (Ghana Web 2012).⁷⁶

To both the BaTonga and the engineers, Nyaminyami was playing the function of a protector of his own people. However, the cultural significance of Nyaminyami came to be understood and narrated in different ways to those upheld by the BaTonga in the pre-dam context. Nyaminyami might have been regarded as the protector of the people before the dam, but this role was reinforced and modified during the resettlement episode. At the time, it was not only the BaTonga who interpreted Nyaminyami in such ways, but that ‘protection’ discourse was also widely circulating in white spheres. The white engineers’ interpretations were predicated on the local BaTonga discourse, although they exaggerated it. Before the dam Nyaminyami protected people when crossing the river, now he was protecting the people from being forcibly moved, though he later failed in that regard. Therefore, we see that the cultural significance of Nyaminyami, as interpreted by the people, was not static, but rather, that it changed over time. Nyaminyami was capitalized upon to suit the religio- political interests of particular times. Using Bernard’s (2010) level of ‘interpretation’, I argue that interpretation of the water divinity complexities, both at individual or societal level, is very flexible, and evolves over time and space. Sometimes the interpretation is reinforced or strengthened, and sometimes it transforms completely.

When the work at the dam wall site commenced in 1955, the BaTonga, learning for the first time about their pending removal from the Valley due to the flooding of the river, asked themselves: “How can there be a lake as wide as the sky?”. “Nyaminyami will protect us,” they confidently assured each other and took comfort’ (Robins and Legge 1959: 18). “For no man on earth could pit his strength and skill against the River God, Nyaminyami, the water serpent whose coils caused the yearly floods of the Zambezi...” (ibid). ‘It is well known,’ ran one of their arguments, ‘that Nyaminyami is the all-powerful god of the river. He will never allow the white men to control him. With one flick of his tail he will destroy all the work in the gorge’ (Clements 1959: 88).⁷⁷ The people strongly believed and they had ‘full- assurance’ that Nyaminyami would not allow the dam to be constructed on his sacred area (the Kariba gorge area) and thus at first they took courage and were very confident that they would not move. One Headman at the time, told Mola elders at a court meeting when the issues of the

⁷⁶This incident has many interpretations surrounding it between the locals and the engineers, I shall explore these more fully in Chapter 8 when I examine the contests between science and religion.

⁷⁷These writers are journalists who might have not actually done ethnography, but I have used excerpts from their writings because they carry the same version of story as that of my informants.

dam and their subsequent move were discussed, that ‘if they stop our river, Nyaminyami will destroy the dam wall’⁷⁸. There were possibilities that the plans for the dam would fail. Exploring these possibilities, Robins and Legge wrote that:

Move for a while the BaTonga might, in deference to the white man’s power and his belief in a crazy dream, but the lake would never be! Nyaminyami- through the medium of the muttering, whirling witchdoctor, scattering voodoo dice of baboon bones- had spoken. And the people went about their daily tasks philosophically. They carried out their normal activities (Robins and Legge 1959: 18).

At that time (1956- 1957), ‘people did not seem particularly preoccupied by the threat of removal; many proceeded on the assumption that it would not occur. Even headmen who had been taken to the dam site built new homesteads at the old site in 1957, though they had been told that the move would take place within the year. We now recognize that they were adopting a strategy of denial, a common response to threat’ (Scudder and Colson 2002: 216-17). They were pretty much confident that ‘Nyaminyami would bring down the forces from under the earth, and from the air, to thwart the evil intent which crawls from men’s heart into their mind’ (Rayner 1980: 34), particularly in connection with dam construction. However, not all the BaTonga thought in this way, as it was/is portrayed in tourist literature and journalistic coverage; those who did not believe in Nyaminyami, did not look unto him for protection.⁷⁹

The workers at the dam wall were recruited mainly from Nyasaland.⁸⁰ These Africans were the handymen of white engineers of Impresit, an Italian firm that had (controversially) won the tender to construct the Kariba dam (McGregor 2009; Tischler 2013). By February 1957, construction work was developing well (Clements 1959). At that time, when work at the dam site seemed to have been going well, Nyaminyami rose to disturb the progression of the work at the site in March 1957. This was a fulfilment of the prophecies and philosophies of the people who had cautioned that Nyaminyami would destroy the dam. Currently, BaTonga elders narrate that Nyaminyami answered his people through causing unprecedented floods in the Zambezi that knocked down the dam wall twice. ‘The river swelled to a turbulent flow and roared through the Kariba gorge at 290, 000 cubic feet a second. Its waters climbed rapidly to a height never before experienced during 50 years of measurement. The coffer- dam on the north bank had been designed to withstand normal high water with some to spare, but it proved not to be tall enough. The waves clambered up its

⁷⁸Film directed by Blacke Dairymple (n.d), Kariba Dam Construction. Urban Material: Central African Film Unit. Produced by Denis Butt for Shell Company of Rhodes Limited.

⁷⁹I shall indicate below how the tourists and journalists distorted and exaggerated the ideas about Nyaminyami.

⁸⁰Nyasaland is the present day Malawi.

outside wall like warriors storming a castle battlements, and the dam was lipped, poured over and inundated...' (Lagus 1959: 53). In one night several villages were swept away and there were casualties recorded. But, the 15 drownings recorded at the dam wall site were known to be only a part of the total casualty (Clements 1959). Those displaced maintain that the flood was highly devastating and very rough, with the roughness of the flood signifying that it was endowed with supernatural powers. Nyaminyami had stood to protect his own people who were about to be moved, as well as protecting his sacred area. Nyaminyami had spoken. 'Work was held up for five and half weeks' (Lagus 1959: 53). The surges had imperilled men and machinery at the dam wall site, and threw the entire project into doubt (Hughes 2006: 829). It was then that Nyaminyami was remembered. A year earlier, his priests had warned that if the white man ever seriously attempted to put a wall across the gorge, the river god would send down unprecedented floods to destroy his enemies (Clement 1959).⁸¹

However, within a few months the job was back on schedule, and engineers heaved a sigh of relief in the confident expectation that the Zambezi had done its worst. Once again they were wrong (Lagus 1959). In late 1957 there had been ample warning of the gathering flood that would come. In 1958 the Zambezi bore down on the gorge with overwhelming and sudden ferocity. On February 7th the road bridge⁸², which had been so narrowly saved a year before, was struck a mortal blow. One of its supporting piers collapsed and was washed away within seconds. The Sanyati⁸³River flooded the air strip and all air traffic was cancelled (Clements 1959). 'The 30- year cycle of sunspot activity was at its peak: a period of phenomenal flooding was ascribed to it, for the main seasonal rainfall on the Angola Highlands, where the Zambezi rises, came a month early. These waters coincided with heavy rains in Barotseland and the catchment area immediately up-river from Kariba. The effect on the river was terrifying. The giant Zambezi struggled to its knees, to its feet, and on February 24th climbed over the upstream wall of the circular coffer dam. The water was now rocketing by at 470, 000 cubic feet a second' (Lagus 1959: 53-54).

This 10 000⁸⁴ year flood was attributed to the anger of Nyaminyami by both the BaTonga, as well as the dam constructors and engineers who now believed that the Zambezi

⁸¹These priests that Clements refer to as Nyaminyami's priests were not taken under water for training by Nyaminyami, they are mere local spirits mediums called by ancestors, and not by water spirits.

⁸²The road bridge had been put immediately nearer to the gorge for people to cross through when visiting either banks.

⁸³Sanyati River was a tributary of the Zambezi that was immediately above the gorge on the south bank that demarcated Sampakaruma and another Shona speaking Chiefdom below the gorge, known as Nyamhunga.

⁸⁴It was termed 1000 year flood because it was only expected to occur after 1000 years, but Nyaminyami had quickened it so as to disturb the building of the dam, that he considered detrimental to nature.

was ‘alive’ (Clements 1959; Lagos 1959). “Ian Colvin, the Daily Telegrapher correspondent on the spot, asked one of the engineers what he thought of the African superstition that the river is a living being. The engineer answered with another question, “Male or Female?” (Lagos 1959: 54). Indeed the Zambezi was a living being because it was inhabited by an important spirit Nyaminyami. The Zambezi was personified, and thus ‘it could not die so easily’ (Hughes 2006: 829). This flood had set back the program of work by 3 months. The result was a decision by Impresit to speed up the schedules before the next rainy season of 1959. In April 1958, the workers poured 50, 000 cubic yards of concrete into the main dam wall (ibid). So hurriedly to beat Nyaminyami in the battle. So, finally, the dam was completed, but after a very long and serious struggle with a river god. Using Fontein’s water as an ‘index of power’ concept (Fontein 2015), one can note that these floods were endowed with power. These floods had the power to kill the people, destroy villages upstream from Kariba, to halt the engineering processes for months at the dam wall site and transform the people’s interpretations of the serpent deity as it formed part of their spirituality. These floods were extraordinary and they were personified.

During this flood about 86 people, including 15 white men, ‘involved in the construction, drowned in the Zambezi River, and their bodies could not be retrieved for a number of days. Some of the village headmen stated that Nyaminyami the river god was behind their disappearance. The argument of the local people was that the construction of the dam disturbed Nyaminyami’s residing place which is the Zambezi River (and it also separated him from his wife)⁸⁵. The local people assured the investors that this could only be resolved through a ritual that involved slaughtering a white goat, and letting it float in the Zambezi River. An agreement was reached and the ritual was performed. The following day the bodies of the drowned men were found floating on the river, and the body of the goat had disappeared’ (Siwila 2015: 139-140). People today believe that the goat was taken by Nyaminyami, who in this case had accepted the propitiations of the people. As noted in the literature reviewed in Chapter 4, the ‘white’ goat happens to be the most sacrificed domestic animal for the propitiation of water spirits. But, the reasons for goat sacrifice to water spirits, are different from society to society. There is no clear account in Mola and Musampakaruma as to why a goat, ‘white’ in colour, was specifically used. It is possible that a ‘white’ goat was sacrificed because ‘white’ is the colour of the water; this strengthened the connection between the white goat and the water in which Nyaminyami resided. Consistently, Cape

⁸⁵ I shall later fully discuss the idea of the wife of Nyaminyami, which I wish to argue, was only created during the move, presumably by White people, and that it was borrowed by the BaTonga people.

Nguni argue that the goat must be white, because white symbolizes purity, and related positive matters (Hirst 1990; De Wet-field notes 2008).

Looking at this situation, Siwila (2015: 140) argues that ‘one is able to see the value that local people attached to their religious beliefs. While a developmental perspective will look at the incident of the drowning of these men as a technical issue or natural cause, the local people associated it with religious mischiefs. Their perception of the incident can be alluded to the fact that in most African worldviews, cause and effect of a phenomenon are always associated with the spiritual world’. The death of constructors also shows that Nyaminyami would kill for the fate of his own people and his homage, the Zambezi River. Natural disasters (such as floods and droughts), extraordinary climatic changes and signs of a water spirit’s presence in different societies, such as water turning red or black, must be involved in the understandings of experiences with water spirits. I suggest that these climatic events must be incorporated and clearly spelt out in the level of ‘experience’ in Bernard’s Four Level Analysis theory. By Bernard’s own admission, ‘experience’ can ‘help us explain the widespread distribution of water divinity beliefs, to understand the phenomena and why it evokes such profound responses on societies’ (Bernard 2010: 32). But, if climatic events and natural disasters are not adequately described as forms of experience, then the water divinity phenomenon is far from being understood as a complete whole. Bernard did not adequately incorporate them in her theory but they are very important. These factors need an in- depth analysis as they may be signs for healer and diviner callings in various societies. Fontein (2015) has indicated how natural disasters and climatic events occurring near Lake Mutirikwi are variously linked to *njuzu*, mermaids, and how they are politically interpreted by the Karanga people.

However, some journalists are sceptical about the dominant discourse of Nyaminyami’s causation of the floods. Wannenburgh (1978), for instance, insinuates that Nyaminyami accepted the idea of the concrete from the beginning, and that thus he could not have sent the floods to disrupt work and kill construction workers at the dam wall site. The assumption is that ‘if Nyaminyami symbolises the will of African nature, then on a good day, Nature appreciates the full package of concrete, reservoir and *Panicum*’ (Hughes 2006: 835). But, this view is somewhat exaggerated and ill-conceived because it was not based on ethnographic research. None of my informants confirmed this viewpoint, and it comes across as a pre-conceived discourse that is found in magazines and newspapers. It may be observed as another way through which the story of Nyaminyami was distorted and exaggerated so that the author (Wannenburgh) makes good copy out of it, and thus attracts tourists. Oral

traditions boldly make it clear that Nyaminyami was angered by the construction of the dam because it destroyed his homage, the Zambezi River -which is largely contrary to Wannenburgh's perceptions.

Fig 5:Photo by author: showing the Kariba gorge area, dam wall and Nyaminyami



statue.

6.5. Nyaminyami and the popular writings during the dam construction episode.

This section examines the various Nyaminyami discourses employed by Eurocentric journalists, in casting the Zambezi Valley as a Dark space and the BaTonga as 'primitive'. It is inspired by the writings on 'reinventing Africa' by Mazrui (1967) and Mudimbe (1963; 1994).⁸⁶ Mazrui and Mudimbe are concerned mainly with the ways in which the story of Africa was historically told by successive generations of colonialists, through their construction of the metaphor of the Dark Continent. Mudimbe specifically discovered that 'since the 15th century, the idea of Africa has mingled together new scientific and ideological interpretations with the semantic fields of concepts such as "primitivism" and "savagery"' (Mudimbe, 1994: p xi). Many colonial writers, travellers and hunters in Africa regarded Africa as a dark continent and made use of numerous African beliefs to justify this discourse. They wrote that Africa had no history, and that there was effectively only the history of Europeans in Africa. For example, Conrad's account of the Congo, entitled *Heart of Darkness*, cast Africa as a décor of gradual decay and literally a world's end (Conrad 1899).⁸⁷ The metaphor of Africa as the 'Dark Continent' identified and incorporated an entire continent as 'Other' in a way that reaffirms Western dominance and reveals hostile and racist

⁸⁶ The works of these scholars has been reviewed by numerous other scholars. I have read many of the contemporary reviews of Mudimbe by scholars such as Ndlovu- Gatsheni (2013) and of Mazrui by scholars such as Adem (2015).

⁸⁷The heart of Darkness was a novel.

evaluations of Africa and Africans (Jarosz 1992). As Jarosz indicated, the story of the Kariba dam and Nyaminyami also took on epic proportions in the constructions of Africa as 'backward'. In the same manner, McGregor argued that 'both the wildlife- focused texts and other popular stories about the building of the Kariba dam evoked a common body of self-justifying stereotypes of the white man in Africa, and of the superiority of European science and technology. At the centre of most stories were the roles of the various European men involved - the engineers and building contractors, zoologists, Native Affairs officials, Game Department rangers and volunteers - who are cast as dedicated, courageous, humble, and self-sacrificing' (2009: 120). Some white journalists 'used metaphors of domestication, depicting engineers and workers as taming the savage Zambezi River in particular and Africa in general' (Hughes 2006: 827). As readers in Central Africa and in Great Britain were told in newspapers, government brochures, and novels, Kariba dam introduced 'civilization' into one of Africa's darkest corners (Tischler 2013: 60) marked by the presence of the 'primitive' belief in a river serpent, Nyaminyami. Aside from Nyaminyami belief systems, other markers of backwardness among the BaTonga were 'beads and cowries shells', 'goatskin aprons', 'bare breasts', 'hubble- bubble pipes' and 'g- strings', cultural materials that formed who they were (Loc. Cit). However, this section focuses mainly on Nyaminyami representations in the media, as they were more widely discussed during this episode, than any other cultural belief or material.

The varied representations of Nyaminyami in more crude ways during this period – which were different from representations of him during the 19th century - authenticate my argument that stories about beliefs in Nyaminyami evolved over time, with each genre of the accounts being stimulated by different socio-economic and political factors at a given episode. Leaning on Bernard's Level 2 of interpretation, I want to argue that interpretations of water divinity phenomena are not exclusive to the believers of water spirits only, but that water divinity occurrences can also be interpreted by outsiders or foreigners, as was the case with Nyaminyami.⁸⁸ Bernard focuses mainly on the interpretations of the believers either at individual or societal level, whereas this section speaks of outsider interpretations. In some cases, interpretations by foreigners can influence believers' interpretations.

The story of the triumph of the white man's concrete over the opposition of a 'river god', *Nyaminyami*, was widely publicized in the Southern Rhodesian press, in order to elevate the 'Dark Continent' genre. When the floods occurred, the negative idea portrayed was that

⁸⁸By foreigners and outsiders, I mean journalists and tourism magazine writers.

Darkness (i.e. Nyaminyami and other forces of primitive nature) was fighting against ‘light’ (in the form of electricity that was to be generated at Kariba). Therefore, primitiveness never wanted to be brought to light and civilization. The 1959- 1963 published accounts personify the river- or deify it- suggesting that Nyaminyami was fighting for his freedom. Geology was portrayed as battling against history, deep time against shallow time (Hughes 2006). For example, as McGregor comments on writings by Frank Clements, she writes that:

Clements tells the story of Kariba as that of the white man’s triumph over a series of obstacles (the quest for international finance and expertise, European cooperation, misguided Northern Rhodesian settlers, unscrupulous African nationalists agitators, disruptive strikes, biblical floods etc.), encapsulated in an overall rhetorical device of a military conquest against a river god representing the primitive world and nature..., his chapter headings make the most of the military metaphor- ‘The Great Argument; Nyaminyami bound; A Split in the Ranks, and so on, before finally, ‘The Valley at Peace’ (McGregor 2009: 122).

Here Clements appropriates the belief in Nyaminyami from the BaTonga cosmology and then negatively employs it within a western ideological framework expressing the relationship between nature and civilizing technology. Collins Black’s book, *The Lands and Peoples of Rhodesia and Nyasaland*, also describes the Kariba dam construction project in a chapter titled ‘The Capture of a River’, in which the BaTonga ‘serpent deity’ was conquered and subdued by Western technology (Black 1961: 104). According to Jarosz (1992: 111), at the time of the construction of the dam ‘the struggle between the forces of Western technology and capital, and the Zambezi river god, took on epic proportions in these media accounts. The ‘journalistic accounts of the project (Kariba Dam) reveal an aggressive, ambivalent attitude towards the people and the Valley finding its expression in the conquest of the river god’ (*Loc cit*).

Some of these writers also pitied the BaTonga whose river god, Nyaminyami, had failed to protect them from being removed from the Valley. The writer John Gordon Davis, for instance, complained that:

‘Africa, my Africa, is dying, like that Zambezi Valley down there, that mighty, magnificent violent Valley... it’s going to be drowned by Progress. By partnership ... There is going to be no more sunset silhouettes as the animals come down to the mighty river to drink ... There is going to be the screams of the animals dying. There’s going to be no more river god for them (the BaTonga), no more Nyaminyami ... There will be no more Batonka. They will just become bewildered Rhodesians. That’s why it’s sad, why Progress is sad. That’s why Africa is dying, because the same sort of thing is going to happen everywhere’ (Davis 1967:30- 32).

During the Kariba dam construction episode, McGregor (2009) argues that white writers needed Nyaminyami more than those who were actually displaced. There was competition

among journalists and tourist magazine writers, with regards to the now interesting fresh story of a river god that battled with concrete and surrendered. The story about Nyaminyami was greatly exaggerated, as every writer about the episode was portraying it in ways that would make a good copy, so as to attract the market (or tourists). Some tourist and journalistic accounts exaggerated that Nyaminyami was a fish, yet he was believed to be a snake; some were saying that Nyaminyami had a 'wife'; while some were busy generalizing that Nyaminyami was believed in, in all BaTonga societies. These writers commercialized the story of Nyaminyami, and significantly earned from it, yet the originators (or holders) of the belief, did not earn anything from it.

Furthermore, some writers were mocking the BaTonga about the failure of their river serpent to protect them from being moved. For example, 'when *Time* magazine reported that the dam construction was moving as scheduled despite the Gwembe (BaTonga) belief that Nyaminyami would vent his wrath upon the Europeans, the writer's observation was that: 'The great Snake of the Zambezi had clearly failed them' (*Time*, 1958: 26, cited in Jarosz, 1992: 111). Lagus (1959: 52) also joked that 'the roaring, battering monster of a river' was defeated by the final few feet of concrete, gradually he grumbled back to his old level and his ravaging could be inspected...' Journalists Robins and Legge were happy to cite one BaTonga man who said: "Your (whites) people have wrestled with the 'serpent' and won" (Robins and Legge 1959: 27). In the Southern Rhodesian press, Nyaminyami was part of a derogatory and cruel caricature of the BaTonga developed during the move, that made them a 'laughing stock' (McGregor 2009: 121). Some journalists claimed that Nyaminyami was only created during the move, as some BaTonga appealed to divine guidance for them not to be moved. Yet oral traditions and archival evidence illustrates the existence of a river god centuries back before the move itself. The attention Nyaminyami received in the tourist and journalistic literature was disproportionate to that among the BaTonga themselves, who were psychologically, physiologically and sociologically stressed by the move (Scudder and Colson 1982). During the resettlement episode, the BaTonga were an appendix, or perhaps a mere footnote to history, in the sections of the meagre writings in which they were somewhat involved. 'Much of the tourist literature simply ignored the BaTonga..., where they were included, they were a picturesque part of the scenery and relic of an ancient pre-history...who did not know that it was sex that produced babies' (McGregor 2009: 123). The GTRP's more scientific and objective accounts about the BaTonga were belatedly published in the 1960s (Colson 1960, 1971; Scudder 1960, 1962), when journalists had already begun misrepresenting the name and history of the BaTonga in the late 1950s.

Those writing about Nyaminyami during that period, were so zealously pre-occupied with the story itself, that they could not make it clear to their readers, as to who did, or who did not, believe in Nyaminyami among the BaTonga. In their writings, they just generalized that Nyaminyami was the BaTonga river god, and this generalized discourse had a domino effect. This caused the public to have an impression that all the BaTonga believed in a river god. Even some of the BaTonga, especially second generation resettlers, from other parts of the Valley (other than the Kariba gorge area, i.e. the only area where Nyaminyami was initially known about), who read these texts after the move, started to speak of Nyaminyami as their river god. Even though there were no such beliefs in their chiefdoms. Perhaps these people were influenced by tourist literature, and may have borrowed the idea for other unknown socio- political reasons. The fact that some BaTonga now need and appropriate the idea of Nyaminyami, presumably because they perceived it as a million-dollar story (i.e. an income earning opportunity), shows that ‘societies are flexible organizations that are always forming and reforming because they are composed of thinking men and women who are bound by neither primordial institutions nor by primordial identities. They can change and become something else. People can make opportunistic choices which they try to justify’ (Colson and Scudder 1988: 2). As Bernard writes, transmission of water spirit ideas from one cultural group to another ‘take place to ‘fit’ with existing ideas and social principles or interests’ (Bernard 2010: 249). When transmission is stimulated by exploitative motives or interests, as presented in the above scenario, then it can be regarded as cultural appropriation and not cultural borrowing.

Moreover, it was also as a result of these generalized and confused ways in which the story of Nyaminyami was told, that scholars of the 21st century (such as Ncube 2004; Saidi 2015) who write about Nyaminyami, also think that Nyaminyami was known in all parts of the Valley. Of course, if one goes into Binga chieftaincies (Sinakatenge included), the people there can tell stories about Nyaminyami just like in any other parts of Zimbabwe, but that is not an indication that it is/was part of their religion. Telling a story about something does not mean you believe it. It was also the journalists of the resettlement episode that popularized the idea that Nyaminyami had a wife, which some BaTonga in Sampakaruma and Mola chiefdoms repeat (because of tourist influence), yet Nyaminyami was talked about as single before the resettlement episode. For example, in *Rhodesian Legacy*, Wannenburgh, depending on hearsay (as Hughes critiques him), reports with a markedly journalistic tone that: “some (Ba)Tonga say there are two Nyaminyamis- one for the deep water and one for the shallows... when the waters are blue and unruffled... they say that Nyaminyami is

contented in his situation” (Wannenburgh 1978 cited in Hughes 2006:835). This exaggerated perception is also repeated in the more recent tourist literature, again in an exaggerated way, seemingly to make good copy that can attract tourists. The Zambezi Traveller, for example, features a story written by John Cockburn in June 2011, entitled *Beware the spirits of the Valley*, in which he writes that:

Legend has it that Nyaminyami’s ‘wife’ had gone downstream of the Kariva (the rock near the gorge), now known as Kariba gorge, to answer the prayers of her people and bless them. When it was time for her to return to her husband, she could not cross because of the dam wall and this angered Nyaminyami. He consequently ordered the river to rise and destroy the white man’s bridge... (*Zambezi Traveller* 2011: 30).

One elder (FGR) that I interviewed in Musampakaruma told me that the idea of two Nyaminyami’s might have been a white man’s creation. Therefore, one can conclude that the idea only gathered momentum in white circles, as another explanation of the floods, or an explanation for the earthquakes occurring in the immediate vicinity of the gorge immediately after the dam construction. The whites did not believe in Nyaminyami as their river god, but they just brought the idea into the public arena for the aforementioned reasons.⁸⁹

6.6. The resettlement (*kulonzegwa*) and the entanglement between BaTonga resistance and Nyaminyami beliefs.

My main aim in this section is to argue that there was an entanglement between the resettlement, BaTonga resistance to the move, and beliefs in Nyaminyami. It is clear that the BaTonga people of the Kariba gorge area resisted the move partly because they did not want to be separated from the river that sheltered their river spirit, Nyaminyami. The Nyaminyami idea was used as justification for some BaTonga people’s resistance to the move. In some BaTonga accounts the Nyaminyami-induced floods that occurred at Kariba are connected with these people’s forms of resistance. These floods confirmed the people’s resistance.

Despite a series of floods exclusively attributed to by the BaTonga to Nyaminyami, that proved to be a stumbling block for the completion of the dam, the dam was completed, and sadly, the BaTonga were involuntarily resettled. Of course, the resettlement was not an overnight process, but it was processual and gradual, with some chieftaincies on the southern bank like Sampakaruma and Mola having moved earlier than others in 1956- 7, as they were located immediately upstream from the gorge. Even if Kariba Dam was a federal project, the work of moving the BaTonga out of the way of it fell on the governments of Northern and Southern Rhodesia (Clements 1959; Colson 1971; Howarth 1961; McGregor 2009; Scudder 2005b; Sitambuli 2016; Tischler 2013). Consequently, ‘the resettlement was handled in very

⁸⁹I shall return to the idea of two Nyaminyamis, and discuss it more broadly in the next Chapter.

different ways in the two countries, revealing a stark disjuncture in cultures of state power, particularly regarding the issue of state coercion, which also shaped patterns of resistance and compliance among those to be moved on either side of the border' (McGregor 2009: 110).

Howarth, exploring the reasons for differences in the implementation of the resettlement by two territories, noted that in southern Rhodesia, Africans could be compelled to move by law, but in Northern Rhodesia they could not. Although the countries were united in Federation, there were many differences in law between them, all stemming from the fact that Southern Rhodesia had far more European settlers and had been independent of the British colonial office since 1923. In the south, tribes had been moved before, in the process of dividing the land between Africans and European farmers, and it was only necessary for the Governor to make a proclamation giving them twelve months warning. But in the north, only six percent of the land was either Crown property or was worked by Europeans. All the rest of the country was Native Reserve Land, over which no European had any right at all. The whole of the Gwembe Valley on the northern Rhodesian side, was either Native Reserve or Native Trust, and the government had no power to forcibly move the BaTonga out of it (Howarth 1961), hence they resorted to negotiation. While Northern Rhodesian resettlement policy advocated indirect rule through customary or appointed leaders and local councils, direct rule was the policy in Southern Rhodesia (Scudder 2005b). The move on the north bank involved negotiation, but on the south bank it was forceful, inhumane and hasty, to the extent that southern Rhodesian officials were condemned by their north- bank counterparts for 'inhumanity in executing the move in an extraordinarily short period of 18 months and without compensation'.⁹⁰ People portray the preparatory work of building roads as 'chibharo'⁹¹ or 'slavery', 'perhaps because the roads were designed for an unwanted purpose (the resettlement)' (McGregor 2009: 113). It was the BaTonga who were against this unwanted purpose of the road construction as it aimed to remove them, and not to develop the Valley. Describing the move in Southern Rhodesia, Colson reports that:

The southern Rhodesian government magistrate assembled headmen and elders to inform them that the dam would be built and they should be ready on a given date to move to sites which they might help select. Lorry transport and some building material would be provided. Taxes would be remitted for two years and grain would be issued free of charge until they were once more able to harvest a crop. They could expect nothing else. The Rhodesian government did not intend to pay any monetary compensation to those who moved, and it intended that commercial fishing and other enterprises along its shores of the Lake would be largely in European hands (Colson 1971: 20).

⁹⁰ ORAL F11, National Archives of Zimbabwe.

⁹¹ The term 'chibharo' can also mean abuse.

Even though people were compelled to move on the south bank, it is worth mentioning that they somewhat resisted against the move. For some BaTonga, the resistance was entangled with the Nyaminyami belief systems, as indicated below. Many scholars have shown that the decision to construct a dam created enormous conflicts between the local people and the federal government (Colson 2006; Kaoma 2013 as cited in Siwila 2015: 141). Although public reports on the move and press coverage (that were white dominated) ignored all forms of resistance, presenting the move as a swift and efficient operation, and people as in general ‘happy to go’, the district records make it clear that there were problems (Mr Hunt’s Diary 1957, cited in McGregor 2009: 112). For example, Parliamentary Secretary H. J. Quinton recalled sitting in Parliament when ‘a note was put in front of me which said that the BaTonga had refused to move and that there was a lack of discipline, and could disciplinary measures be taken, and if necessary one or two be shot, and I said “No”. I appealed to the Speaker to adjourn the debate and said to the PM “I’m going to Binga tonight, I’ll report to you when I come back”. ‘He described going to Manjolo⁹² and addressing a crowd of one thousand resisters led by the chief and headmen, who refused to move because of the *malende* shrines and trees associated with ancestral spirits, which would be submerged under the Lake’⁹³. People did not want to be separated from their religious sacred sites and places of power as they depended on these for protection in their everyday life.

But the heartland of resistance was undoubtedly in areas where both NRANC (Northern Rhodesian African National Congress) ⁹⁴ and Nyaminyami had influence. The NRANC had major influence in many of the areas where Nyaminyami was known, and less in areas where he was unknown. The combination of the two (i.e. NRANC and Nyaminyami beliefs) stimulated the people’s resistance in many ways, as shall elaborated below. The Congress had mobilized quickly in the rainy season of 1955-56, when much of the Valley was inaccessible to Southern Rhodesian officials based in Gokwe. Resistance was strongest in those parts of the Valley that were better connected to Northern Rhodesian political centres, regardless of the river and border. Thus the strongest resisters and most ardent local nationalists were in relatively well- connected Chipeco District (on the north bank) and in the

⁹²Manjolo was a chieftdom above Semwa River in the Upper river section where Nyaminyami was not believed in, but it is used here to show that the move was not accepted with happiness among the BaTonga of all the sections of the river on the south bank. People only moved because they were afraid of the police and guns.

⁹³ ANC Hanson, Annual Report, Sebungwe, 1956, S2827/2/2/4 Vol 1, National Archives of Zimbabwe.

⁹⁴ This was a nationalist movement in Northern Rhodesia that was fighting for the decolonization of the country. Its offices were based in Lusaka but it had managed to enter into the Valley and recruited more card carrying members on both sides of the river because the BaTonga did not consider the Zambezi River as a boundary. It capitalized on the resentment of the people because of the move, to recruit people.

same portion of the Valley across the river, in the areas of Chief Mola, Sampakaruma and Sinakatege' (McGregor 2009: 113).

The people of Sinakatenge did not believe in a river god and thus their resistance was less connected to Nyaminyami. But those of Musampakaruma and Mola were the strongest believers in Nyaminyami. In these chiefdoms people linked their hostility to Nyaminyami's disillusionment with the dam. Clements (1959) wrote that Nyaminyami's actions of March 1957 and February 1958 only confirmed the resistance of the people. One BaTonga priest from 'kraals' near the gorge identified as Sianjika 'remained behind in the Valley to guard with his life the spirit of the serpent Nyaminyami' (Robins and Legge 1959: 25). Sianjika was later forcibly removed, and within a week was sick and thin. The doctors examined him when he continued to lose weight, and daily grew weaker. They could find nothing organically wrong with him. His fellow tribesmen were convinced that Nyaminyami had put a death spell upon him (Ibid). This story is still in the memory of those removed. Therefore, for them there was a connection between nature (i.e. flooding), the spirit (i.e. Nyaminyami) and humanity (i.e. the BaTonga). It is clear that people did not want to move from their river, partly because it sheltered their river spirits (Nyaminyami included), provided fish, provided them with floods that caused the development of alluvial soils; and they did not want to leave their sacred places behind. They were afraid that if they left their ancestral lands, their ancestors would become angry, and would forsake them forever (Howarth 1961). Siwila (2015:141 citing Kaoma 2013) argues that they also did not want to leave the graves of their ancestors, and finally they wanted to be close to Nyaminyami, their famous god of the river Zambezi.

Moreover, as I have indicated in Chapter 2, the Congress also manipulated the BaTonga to buy their Congress tickets, claiming that they were endowed with Nyaminyami's power (these tickets were even sold in areas where Nyaminyami was unknown; so not everyone who bought the tickets believed in Nyaminyami), it was later found out that these tickets were only meant to swell the funds of the Congress, and not related to Nyaminyami, as claimed (Robert and Legg, 1959). The tickets were sold in areas where Congress had influence. Given this information, one can observe that Nyaminyami was capitalized upon by outsiders for profit and political reasons. It can also be concluded that there was an interconnection between Nyaminyami and the resistance of some people. The fact that some people needed the Nyaminyami idea as justification of their resistance and some did not, means that the forms of resistance were different along different sections of the river.

6.7. The impact of the Kariba dam construction and the subsequent resettlement.

Resettlement scholars generally agree that involuntary resettlement has detrimental consequences on the majority of its victims (Colson 1971; De Wet 1995; 2006; 2015; Downing and Garcia- Downing 2009; McCully 1996; Scudder 1975; 2005; 2009; Terminski 2013; Wilmsen 2016b; 2018). Thus, large numbers of those displaced and resettled are ‘left poor or worse off than they were prior to displacement’ (Bessey and Tay 2015: 170). De Wet further reinforces this argument by postulating that ‘those subjected to forced resettlement have overwhelmingly experienced serious, and often permanent, socio-economic and cultural suffering and impoverishment as a direct result’ (De Wet 2009: 77). Therefore, using the Four Stages Framework (Scudder 2009), Imposed Socio-Spatial Change Theory (De Wet 2015) and the Psycho- Socio-Cultural Theory (Downing and Garcia- Downing 2009), this section presents a summary of the socio-economic detrimental consequences of the Kariba resettlement, as well as its immediate impact on Nyaminyami beliefs. I am going to fully examine Nyaminyami beliefs in the post-resettlement period in relation to these resettlement theories in the next Chapter.

6.7.1. The immediate impact of the dam on Nyaminyami.

People’s narratives about the consequences of the move also involve the disappearance and anger of Nyaminyami as one of the significant immediate impacts of the dam construction. People narrate in nostalgic ways how the resettlement disconnected them from the ancestral graves and Nyaminyami. For instance, one first generation resettler in Mola told me that: “... when the dam was sealed at Kariba gorge, Nyaminyami got angry and abandoned his people...” Similarly, Chief Mola told Tombindo (2016: 80) that: “Nyaminyami no longer guides us the same way he guided us before we were forcibly removed from River..., the construction of the dam disturbed Nyaminyami... forced relocation angered Nyaminyami and the ‘manna’⁹⁵ disappeared completely”. One ritual wife narrated to me that:

No one sees Nyaminyami today because we are no longer living near the Zambezi. Even the blessings people used to obtain from Nyaminyami like his skin for medicine and the meat, we no longer obtain that. He was angry when the Zambezi was blocked by a dam. What we know is that he is still in the Lake Kariba, but nobody knows where exactly in the Lake he is. (Interviewed on 20 June, 2017)

The people are aware that Nyaminyami became invisible before the dam construction, because of the increased white presence in the Valley, with connection to the dam construction. But they believe that, if the dam had not been built (leaving the Zambezi’s

⁹⁵People today equate the meat obtained from Nyaminyami with manna from heaven, as it was so miraculous.

natural flow prevailing) and they had not been resettled, Nyaminyami was ‘one’ day going to be visible because I indicated in Chapter 5 that in the eve of the dam Nyaminyami had become invisible. They subsequently connect the dam construction with the anger of Nyaminyami, and his invisibility. The people narrate that Nyaminyami’s manifestation was stimulated by flowing water (i.e. a river) and not stagnant waters (i.e. a dam). Using De Wet’s (2015) argument that changes in emplacement are potentially detrimental to people, this detrimental impact can also be extended to Nyaminyami, who was seriously affected by the ecological changes and landscape transformations at Kariba. It is clear that massive technological development hurts (Colson 1971) especially to those who live near rivers and believe in water divinities, because the transformation of the waterscapes can cause water divinities to abandon their people. The dam also removed people from the river where their river god resided, hence disconnecting the people from their river god. The impact of dam construction on water spirits and beliefs associated with them is common in Africa. There are many cases in which Nyaminyami can be mirrored with. For example, more recently, when the Bui dam was constructed in Ghana in 2011 the river deity, known as Nana Adre ‘became inaccessible and irrelevant to the people for ritual purposes’, because of the presence of the Lake (Abrampah 2017).

However, there were also other socio-economic impacts of the Kariba resettlement, which I am summarising below, as they can also help us understand the occurrence of Nyaminyami beliefs in post- resettlement contexts. Of course, this is not a thesis on the socio-economic impacts of the Kariba resettlement, but an understanding of them is important for this study. Where relevant, I shall connect these socio-economic impacts with the Nyaminyami-related impacts.

6.7.2. Economic impacts

The impacts of ‘land acquisition, displacement and resettlement on livelihoods are typically adverse’ (Wilmsen 2018: 171). As such, the Kariba resettlement impacted adversely on the livelihoods of the BaTonga people. The major blow the Kariba dam and the subsequent resettlement had was on the destruction of the riverine agriculture that had sustained the BaTonga for over five centuries (Cliggett 2005; Colson 1971; Marowa 2010; Scudder 2005a; 2005b). ‘Before the building of the dam, the Zambezi River flowed through the lowest points of the Valley and offered valuable bottomland for river basin agriculture, on which the BaTonga relied for their primary subsistence’ (Cliggett 2005:58). As indicated in the World Commission on Dams (WCD) report, ‘large dams are perhaps unique among other many

development projects in that they can have widespread and far- ranging ecosystem impacts due simply to the blocking of a river. The result is terrestrial, aquatic and riparian impacts that not only affect ecosystems and biodiversity, but also have serious consequences for people who live both near and far from the dam site' (WCD 2000: 102). Overnight the BaTonga found themselves struggling to farm the new dry lands they were moved to, because the soils there had low- agriculture potential. Furthermore, as De Wet elaborates in his Imposed Socio-Spatial Change theory, that when people are removed from particular emplacements, they may find it difficult to cope in resettlement areas (De Wet, 2015), although they might try to build on old routines (Downing and Garcia- Downing 2009). The people's traditional methods of farming proved incompatible to the new 'emplacements' that they found themselves in after the move, as the land was so dry, rocky and infertile (characterized by Karoo sandstones and, less frequently, by colluvial soils), as well as unreliable rainfall (Scudder 1968).

Some BaTonga of Sinakatenge and Musampakaruma tried to revitalize their old ways of farming along local rivers; this usually occurs when people seek to establish a new routine culture as proposed by Downing and Garcia- Downing (2009). As Scudder (2009) notes, when people re-establish new routines, they seek to do so, based on earlier familiar routines. However, these rivers were small and not suitable for meaningful riverine cultivation. Furthermore, the hunting and fishing economic activities people were used to in the Valley, both ended drastically. Hunting was made illegal in their new emplacements (McGregor 2008). Fishing became constrained by the distance between new emplacements and the newly created Lake, and by the fact that people also lacked resources to purchase the permits for fishing in the new lake. These on-going processes of socio-economic change further worsened the impoverishment of the BaTonga. Faced with increased impoverishment, the Batonga, evidently observed in less detail (or even abandoned) some of their religious practices, as they had to first address food shortages characterizing their new emplacements. Scudder (1968) notes that *BaSikatongo* (spirit mediums) lost significance in some resettled BaTonga communities. Similarly, the BaTonga of Mola and Sampakaruma also point to the socio-economic changes in the new areas as having made people observe Nyaminyami to a lesser degree. For people to enact their religion effectively, there must be food security. If there is no food security, people's religion and other social institutions may be affected, as people constantly migrate in search of food, and have limited time to dedicate to religion. There are many people who migrated to Kariba town working in various industries, particularly tourism. In the next Chapter, I will examine how a significant increase in rural to

urban migration has seriously affected the people's observation of their traditional religious beliefs.

6.7.3. Socio- cultural impacts.

The resettlement significantly disconnected kinship ties between the people living on the north bank and on the south bank of the Zambezi River (Colson 1960; 1971). Today, many people interviewed refer to their relatives that live in Zambia that they have never met since the move. For example, Village Head Simolo said that:

He came from the Valley when he was still very young. His father had two wives at the time of resettlement. His father's first wife resided in Chipeco and the Second wife (his mother) resided in Sinakatenge. He said his father used to cross the Zambezi after every two days to visit his family on either of the banks. When the dam was constructed, his father was in Chipeco. He said his father and his other children on the left bank were moved to Lusitu, where his father later died. He said he has brothers there, one of his brothers in Zambia died recently, and his spirit came upon him, as advised by a local diviner (Interviewed, 12 September 2017).

Influential religious figures (such as the Basikatongo) who had commanded influence upon the people on both sides of the river, have lost influence as people were displaced. Elizabeth Colson described how political and religious figures were discredited in the aftermath of the move, and how mediums of ancestral spirits closely connected to the now submerged land of the Valley, suffered a particularly severe blow in this regard (Colson 1971).

Drawing from the first two stages of Scudder's Four Stages Framework (which involves 'planning for resettlement' and 'physical removal'), (Scudder 2005a; 2009), it can be argued that the Kariba resettlement brought about the prevalence of multidimensional stress among those displaced. Scudder and Colson (1982) identified the three resettlement - related stresses (i.e. psychological, physiological and socio-cultural), which the BaTonga people experienced before, during and immediately after resettlement. These stresses (coupled with hunger and malnutrition) relate to the high mortality and morbidity rates recorded after resettlement (Scudder 2005b). Stress was caused by many factors, such as the feeling of leaving their ancestral graves, as well as their sacred places, behind. Colson (1971) argues that any attempts to carry with them some soils from *malende* (sacred shrines) to new resettlement areas, was ineffective. The familiar landscape of the river Valley and its islands, on which graves and sacred places were located, was replaced by the new Lake shore and the waterless, tsetse- and animal- infested resettlement lands (McGregor 2003a). During this prolonged period of stress, a number of behavioral and religious patterns (including Nyaminyami beliefs, for those who believed in him) were temporarily or permanently stopped (Scudder 1968). They became 'dissonant- culture', to use Downing and Garcia- Downing's words (Downing and Garcia- Downing 2009).

6.8. Conclusion

This chapter has ended where it began, with a summary of the negative consequences of the Kariba resettlement, in which I had indicated through the first two quotations of the chapter, by Colson (1971) and De Wet (2002), that resettlement hurts. The chapter has examined the politics surrounding the Kariba dam construction between the two Rhodesias. It has also shown how the floods that occurred during the dam construction were attributed to Nyaminyami by both BaTonga and those involved in the building of the dam- albeit for different reasons. Since some of the BaTonga believe that the dam affected Nyaminyami, by examining the issues of the dam construction and Kariba resettlement, the chapter has provided the background for the examination of the long-term impacts of the dam construction on Nyaminyami and beliefs associated with him in the post resettlement era, which is the main objective of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7: NYAMINYAMI BELIEFS IN THE POST-DAM PERIOD

7.1. Introduction

This chapter is predicated on the previous chapter, in that the previous chapter documented the Kariba resettlement processes of the 1950s, while this chapter documents the events occurring after resettlement. It probes the Nyaminyami beliefs and situation in the post- dam/ post-resettlement context, up to Zimbabwean Independence (i.e. 1959- 1980). The period between 1959 and 1980 was characterized by enormous social changes, including the habitation of people in new resettlement areas, the Zimbabwe liberation war, which spanned the period from the mid-1970s to 1980, culminating in the declaration of independence of the state of Zimbabwe in 1980, and changes in the governance of the now newly created Lake Kariba. This chapter argues that these changes significantly altered the livelihoods and religion of the people occupying the marginalized (or peripheral) communities, and that the prevalence of Nyaminyami beliefs among some BaTonga gradually declined, as people were now living far from the Lake that they believed sheltered Nyaminyami. This gradual decline is one of the long-term resettlement legacies. The above mentioned factors contributing to the gradual decline of Nyaminyami beliefs facilitated the dispossession of Lake Kariba (which the Tonga people regard as theirs) by white conservationists and tourists, and the migration of many displacees to towns for wage labour. But, the dispossession of the Lake was a decisive factor when compared to other factors, as I shall demonstrate in the discussion below. As Bernard and Kumalo (2004: 498) notes, ‘once a community is removed from, or denied access to, its resources, it is likely to lose its respect for them, as well as its knowledge of their ecology.’

The chapter further interrogates the different conflicting versions of the story of Nyaminyami, as it was portrayed in journalism and tourist magazines. Whilst on the ground, Nyaminyami beliefs were collapsing, in the tourist and journalistic literature, Nyaminyami was being elevated as an icon, giving the impression that the beliefs in Nyaminyami were still widely followed. Since the displacement resulting from the Dam, nobody has tended to talk about Nyaminyami in relation to everyday life. After the involuntary resettlement, Nyaminyami assumed other socio-economic and political roles that people constantly attributed to him - e.g. involving him being the explanation of tremors and boats capsizing in Lake Kariba, and so on - in their quest to legitimize various regimes of power and authority, which will be more fully discussed later. It is during this period (immediately after the move) that the now controversial idea of two Nyaminyamis emerged in the context of earth tremors

frequently occurring in the immediate vicinity of Lake Kariba, thereby influencing immensely the way the story of Nyaminyami was told in both tourism magazines, and among some BaTonga people. I shall refer to illustrations on water spirit occurrences (especially those that exist as single water spirits) across the globe, in the construction of the argument that the BaTonga have always believed that there was only ‘one’ Nyaminyami. In this chapter I refer mainly to the BaTonga of Mola and Musampakaruma chieftaincies, who hold beliefs in Nyaminyami.

The Chapter is predicated on a wide array of sources. It has relied on oral histories of the situation immediately after the move from mainly the First Generation Resettlers (FGRs) and some SGRs. Documents in the form of tourism magazines and journalistic newspaper articles were consulted to understand the way the story of Nyaminyami was told and continue to be told in the press, thereby enabling some comparison between the press and oral traditions. Scholarly accounts of life immediately after the move were also relied on (e.g. Hughes 2010; Mashingaidze 2013; McGregor 2009).

7.2. The development of the idea of ‘two’ Nyaminyamis

There are contestations in different academic and tourism quarters concerning whether there was one or two Nyaminyamis. These conflicting narratives are also recurrent among some BaTonga.⁹⁶ With the evidence I have, I suggest that the development of the idea of ‘two’ Nyaminyamis may have been created by white settler interpretations, motivated by commercial concerns to market indigenous belief systems for the tourist trade. These Europeans did not believe in, nor were they devotees of, Nyaminyami, but managed to manipulate the Nyaminyami idea to their own advantage. There is compelling evidence attesting that it is the Europeans who may have popularized this idea in their post- dam tourist writings for numerous economic and political agendas, and that, however, some BaTonga then borrowed this idea. This idea is also repeated in the BaTonga museum. This museum is located in Binga, where Nyaminyami was/is unknown in the surrounding BaTonga communities (see McGregor 2009: 32). The Europeans imagined that Nyaminyami was now fighting to reunite with his wife, whom they say had gone downstream to answer the people’s prayers when the dam was sealed. One of the tourist brochures documents that:

For many years Nyaminyami and his wife stayed safely at Kariba, the spot which was their home and near that spot, that's where it all began. One season when Nyaminyami's wife had gone down the mighty Kariba Gorge to

⁹⁶ The different conflicting narratives the BaTonga hold have been indicated in the previous chapter from the quotation by David Hughes (2006). Felix Tombindo (2016) also quotes informants who told him there were either one or two Nyaminyami/s.

other people of the Valley to answer their prayers and bless her people, the white man came to build a wall..., it is also believed that the occasional earth tremors felt in the lake surroundings is caused by this spirit..., But Shame! Nyaminyami was separated from his wife. When the wall was completed she was downstream, and now cannot get back upstream. Legend has it that he will only reappear to his people one he meets with wife again, (Touch AfricaSafaris,<http://www.safari africa.co.za/touristattractions/nyaminyami.htm>)

However, one is bound to wonder how the alleged Nyaminyami's 'wife' could have gone down the river to bless the people in the lower river sections, when I have demonstrated in Chapter 5 and 6 that during the dam construction episode (the period which the whites suggest Nyaminyami's wife had gone to answer the people's prayers) nobody was obtaining blessings (or meat) from Nyaminyami anymore. The narrative about two Nyaminyamis was also a strategy to elevate the story of Nyaminyami, so as to attract more buyers of the magazines by portraying a fascinating picture that 'primitiveness was still fighting with civilization'- once again repeating the 'Nyaminyami never surrender' discourse,⁹⁷ as it was known in the white's circles during the Kariba dam construction, as presented in Chapter 6. Thus, Europeans manipulated the Nyaminyami idea for their own socio-economic and political gains.

Indeed, as we have noted in Chapter 5, in the pre-colonial era, Nyaminyami narratives point to the existence of only one male river god. As I have argued in the previous chapter, outsider interpretations of river gods can influence believers' perspectives and interpretations. Some SGR BaTonga have been influenced by reading the tourist literature because they did not live along the river, where beliefs in a single Nyaminyami were strong. One SGR indicated to me that '... Nyaminyami was an animal that lived in the water, in the Zambezi, with its wife. It lived deep down underwater. In magazines it is written that when the dam was sealed in 1958, the wife remained on the eastern side of the dam wall. Nyaminyami still needs to reunite with his wife, whenever he wants to go to the other side of the dam wall he causes tremors at the dam wall site because he cannot cross' (Interviewed 31 June 2017). But some First Generation Resettlers still hold that there was one Nyaminyami. For example, the current Village Head Dhondoro of Musampakaruma told me that:

I used to know and to be told that there was only one Nyaminyami in the past, but sometimes you hear people saying there were two Nyaminyamis. These are narratives brought about by people who do not know our past well, who need to be taught. Some say there is a male one, and others say there is also a wife that lives on the eastern side of the Dam wall. I think it is the white people who introduced that

⁹⁷The white journalists at the time were portraying the picture that Nyaminyami will never surrender though the engineers had completed the dam wall and he will one day rise again to destroy the dam. This validated their discourse of the war between 'primitiveness' and 'civilization' as mentioned in the previous Chapter.

idea because of the tremors that occur at the dam wall site... (Interviewed 2 April 2017).

These different narratives between FGRs and SGRs indicate the existing contests and different interpretations of water spirit occurrences within the same people, which are facilitated by numerous factors, as indicated in Chapter 4. Even in areas such as Sinakatenge (or Binga), where Nyaminyami was unknown, people were/ are also talking about these tremors and the existence of two Nyaminyamis; but talking about the story of Nyaminyami that they probably heard from other people, and presumably read in magazines, does not mean that they themselves (the BaTonga of Binga) believed in him, or that he was part of their religion.

Oral accounts pertaining to water spirits are susceptible to distortions and exaggerations over space and time. The weaknesses of oral traditions, the spread of colonialism and Christianity are generally blamed for these distortions and exaggerations. Many African Traditional beliefs are said to have been affected by these colonial systems (see Eneji 2012; Igboin 2011; Masaka 2016). There are many cases of water spirit beings which were believed to exist (or originated) as single in many pre-colonial communities, and later became to be narrated as existing in pairs (or as families) in the 20th and 21st centuries. The case in point, which carries a resemblance to Nyaminyami, is the existence of *Kesoko* a 'marine spirit' believed in in Roviana, Solomon Islands, which Professor Shankar Aswani claims almost took him under the ocean (Interview 18 June, 2018). While much of the 21st century literature points to the existence of two *Kesokos*, i.e. the husband and wife, (see Nagaoka 2000; Richards, 2001) the 18th to the early 20th centuries records show that *Kesoko* was a 'one' male spirit (see Somerville 1897; Hocart 1937). Hocart, specifically, argued that 'I found no indication that there was more than one *Kesoko*' (1937: 38).

I am not dismissing the fact that river gods in general can exist in pairs or as families, because ethnographic evidence in some societies demonstrates this. For example, Jell-Bahlsen (1995) discovered that in Oguta village, south-eastern Nigeria, the water goddess *Uhamiri* or *Ogbuide* (sometimes referred to as *Mammy water*) has a husband, who is the river god, and is called *Urashi*. Another case in point is the *Abantu bomlambo*, the River People, believed in by the Cape Nguni who, according to Elliot (1992) believe that 'there are men, women and children, and they have families and babies' (cited in Bernard 2010: 211). However, that was not the case with Nyaminyami. This white man's idea of a female Nyaminyami also influenced academic scholars of the 21st century such as Saidi (2015) who also subscribe to that idea. The Nyaminyami artefacts that exist up to the present, is that

which is representative of the male god, and there is no artefact for the female goddess. Therefore, the idea of two Nyaminyamis is a site of contestation, and speaks to the disruption of indigenous spirituality in the region by the construction of the dam, and subsequent appropriation by the tourist industry. The other school of thought, documented by Chikozho et al (2015: 258), that Nyaminyami and his wife had children and survived as a family, was also not confirmed by my informants. Chikozho et al's conclusions were based on secondary evidence from tourism magazines and some BaTonga people of Binga, that they interviewed, who do not evidently believe in Nyaminyami. This might have had an impact on their findings.

7.3. Nyaminyami beliefs before independence: an explanation of the earth tremors

After the resettlement of 1958, Nyaminyami assumed the role of being an explanation for earth tremors that started to occur at the dam wall site and areas in the immediate vicinity of the Kariba gorge (which includes the current locations of Mola and Musampakaruma). There were 20 earthquakes that occurred from 1963 to 1983 that exceeded 5, 0 on the Richter Scale, with 6 (including the largest) occurring in 1963, the year the Lake filled (Victoria Falls. com 2014; see also Magadza 2006:206). Both the whites and the BaTonga needed this idea, but it appears the whites needed it more than the BaTonga people; this is evidenced by their introduction of different tales to explain the prevalence of the tremors, including the idea that Nyaminyami 'is fighting to reunite with his wife.' These whites were also interested in generating a powerful neo- Nyaminyami story for tourist trade. During this time beliefs in Nyaminyami and other traditional religious beliefs among the BaTonga had been affected by the dam and the move; and there was not much occurring in terms of revering Nyaminyami, and as the following paragraphs attest, many factors caused this situation.

After the move people had limited access to and no control of the Lake Kariba, which they believed sheltered Nyaminyami (Mashingaidze 2012; McGregor 2009), as much of the waterscape and its littoral came to be regarded as a white man's space, restricted to white conservationist and tourist industries (Hughes 2006; 2010; McGregor 2008). The BaTonga people who had borne the cost of the dam's creation 'lost their place in its history' (Hughes 2010: 52). They suffered 'continued injustice of dispossession' to use Cock's words (Cock 2018: 127). People recall draconian punishment imposed by the colonists for dealing with the waterscape trespassers. As Hughes (2010) notes, the whites employed a 'shoot to kill' policy against all waterscape trespassers, which instilled fear in people, that made them avoid breaking the laws. This limited contact with the Lake meant limited contact with

Nyaminyami and ancestral spirits whom they believed inhabited the Lake. Even the performance of rituals in the Lake were halted during this period. Thus, the inaccessibility of the Lake disrupted Nyaminyami beliefs and knowledge regarding him, though the tourism discourse of the time elevated the widespread beliefs of Nyaminyami in the Valley. Similarly, Fontein (2015; 2016) examines how the Karanga were disconnected from *njuzu* (mermaids) when Lake Mutirikwi was created. Just like Lake Kariba, ‘the construction of Kyle dam (Lake Mutirikwi) involved not only the physical appropriation of land which was submerged under the rising waters of Lake Mutirikwi, but also the alienation of the landscape around it, which became a recreational game reserve’ (2006: 223-4). This alienation further disconnected people from *njuzu*. As Bernard (2001: 33) argues, ‘ensuring indigenous people access to these sites (water bodies inhabited by water gods) is essential since such features are integral aspects of the nature, formation and transmission of knowledge’; if access is not ensured, then indigenous knowledge systems are torn apart.

Throughout the world, over the last 200 years, many indigenous communities have become increasingly marginalized and have been denied access to such resources, with resultant threat to their knowledge systems (Bernard 2001). This marginalization has not been an overnight process, but it has been continued in Africa. McGregor (2009) and Cock (2018) in their historical studies they trace over 150 year’s history of the dispossession of riverine resources on the Zambezi and Kowie Rivers respectively. Sometimes the people are resettled from their landscapes that they believe are dwelt in by their water divinities. ‘Many who were uprooted from their natural landscapes have lost their knowledge and traditions, or have repudiated them in favour of monotheism, capitalism and globalization’ (Bernard 2001: 33). Correspondingly, for the BaTonga, the spaces they found themselves in after the move of 1958 lacked perennial water bodies where they could resuscitate beliefs in water spirits (Nyaminyami). In Mola, I observed that such rivers as Sibilobilo and Nabhole and in Musampakaruma, such rivers as Marova, Hwadze and Gunguwe, are not perennial; and as one Shangwe women commented ‘these river are not sacred, I have never heard of a local river here in Musampakaruma that is sacred. People cross these rivers every day and fetch water in there all the time’. While knowledge of Nyaminyami beliefs continued to exist in some form, nothing was occurring in terms of engagement and ritual performance to ensure a living connection with the cosmological landscape.

During this period (after the move) people believed Nyaminyami would one day destroy the dam through earthquakes that were occurring, and they would return to their homes. As Clements (1959: 110-11) puts it ‘although the river has been blocked and the great

bastion at Kariba stands as a monument to the white man's genius, there are few in Africa who would claim that Nyaminyami has been defeated, and there are many who believe he will yet have his revenge...'. These narratives assisted in maintaining the Nyaminyami idea at a time when nothing seems to have been occurring in terms of ritual engagement in the Zambezi River. But youths are sceptical of this belief and possibility. For example, one youth commented that 'our elders have always been claiming that Nyaminyami will one day destroy the dam for us to go back and live along the Zambezi where they were living over 60 years ago, but I have doubts that this will happen because it is now long since they started to attribute these tremors to Nyaminyami and the dam wall still stands, even Nyaminyami the snake itself, no one even knows where it is today' (Informal conversation July 2017). The BaTonga elders' earthquake discourse did not involve the idea of Nyaminyami fighting to reunite with his wife, as portrayed by the white journalists. But, this discourse overlaps with the white men's discourse of earthquakes. This overlap had serious repercussions on the way the story of Nyaminyami was told because it brought about two different interpretations of the same earth tremors both attributed to Nyaminyami but in different ways, even in some BaTonga societies.

However, the earthquake narratives were mainly recurrent among those who had first-hand experience with the move, and those suffering from nostalgia for a lost home and spiritual landscape. Now Nyaminyami was playing the role of 'comforting' people, assuring them with hope that one day they would return to their ancestral lands. This is evidence to substantiate the argument that Nyaminyami assumed changing roles and interpretations over time and space. The fact that only those who were actually displaced talked about Nyaminyami in this way and youth were and are sceptical about these narratives, vividly indicates the variances in the distribution of Nyaminyami beliefs and ideas across different social variables of age and gender.

Another occasion worth noting that transpired after the move, was the sinking of a German boat in the Lake Kariba at an area called 5-5 (Five- Five) that also strengthened the people's optimism about returning to their former homes in the Zambezi Valley. The boat was loaded with building equipment, and was voyaging from Kariba to Binga. Since it sunk, the boat has never been found, nor even the materials and people on board. The area at which it sank is now a whirlpool which may signify the causation of Nyaminyami of the sinking. The majority of the Kariba residents (interviewed in Kariba urban in December 2017) and the elders of Mola strongly believed the boat was sank by Nyaminyami (Focus Group Interview with FGRs in Mola, 12 June 2017) hence the transformation of the waterscape into a

whirlpool. The connection of the whirlpool and the tremors as experiences with Nyaminyami, is very significant. It shows the connections between people's cosmologies and climatic events, thereby strengthening the argument by Taringa (2006), stated in Chapter 4, that African traditional religious beliefs are inextricably intertwined with the environment. Such climatic processes and changes, with which experiences with river gods are embroiled are very important, and they also occur in other communities. For example, diviners among the Karanga such as Ambuya VaZarira, interpret severe droughts as having been caused by angry mermaids (Fontein 2015).

7.4. Labour Migration Patterns and BaTonga Religion

The migration patterns of the BaTonga people of Nyaminyami Rural District to urban areas immediately after the move have not been documented, let alone the impact of migration on religion. But, the BaTonga's migration patterns in Zambia have been widely studied by Lisa Cliggett (2000; 2003) and Crooks, Cliggett and Gillet-Netting (2008), their findings carry a resemblance to the migration patterns I discovered in Mola and Musampakaruma. Evidence from my own research shows that the BaTonga people migrated to white commercial farms and urban areas, principally in search of jobs. As Cliggett (2000:125) postulates 'people move to places where they can earn more money or grow more food, and they leave places that have poor wage- earning and farming opportunities.' In March 1981, Scudder discovered that Mola and Sinakatenge Chiefdoms were heavily neglected in terms of development and their soils had low agricultural potential (Scudder 1982). The Kariba dam Scheme cemented 'uneven development' in central Africa because the revenue accrued from tourist industries surrounding the dam and the electricity it generated benefitted urban dwellers. The imbalances that characterized the colonial state of development planning, most notably its 'urban 'bias' engendered the under- development of the BaTonga resettlement areas (Tischler 2014: 1047). Though I present cases of economic causation of migration, there were also other social and political reasons for migration. As Cliggett postulated some economic decisions to migrate are generated by deep rooted power struggles and social conflicts in societies (Cliggett 2000). I do not intend to present an in-depth history of migration in this section, but rather to briefly show how it has significantly shaped some BaTonga people's understandings and interpretations of their religion (Nyaminyami belief systems included). Thus, to a lesser extent, this section contributes to the understandings of migration on the south bank.

Due to the underdevelopment of their region mentioned above, the people migrated to towns and farms, where they could not continue practising their religion (Nyaminyami beliefs included) and other cultural related practices. Consistently, research has shown that underdevelopment in rural areas characterised by lack of infrastructure, limited access to educational and health services and limited economic opportunities engender rural- urban migration (Mlambo 2018). Because of the ‘southern Rhodesian government’s failure to develop infrastructure such as access roads, schools, clinics and shops in northwestern Zimbabwe’ (Mashingaidze 2012: 226), where the locals would be employed, the people further migrated from resettlement areas into towns like Karoi, Kariba, Chinhoyi, Kwekwe and Mhangura, where they were employed on white commercial farms and some worked in industries. These under- development characteristics sheds light on the failure of the people to adequately reach the Four stages of the FSF theory stated in Chapter 2. This migration was also necessitated by the dispossession of the waterscape from the BaTonga, which was their livelihood strategy. Thus, migration was a secondary consequence to the dispossession of the Lake. Although, rural- urban migration can contribute significantly towards the development of their rural communities through monetary remittances and the involvement of the rural-urban migrants in community development projects (Byerlee 1974; Ajaero and Onokala 2013), this had a converse impact in this region because people were employed in white owned farms where low wages and payment of taxes demotivated the people’s desires to remmit. Thus, people continued migrating in the 1970s despite the fact that their other kins had migrated before in the 1960s.

One woman in Musampakaruma remembered having worked at farm “number 6” in Karoi, where she and her husband migrated to after the move, in search of employment. This woman even told me that she did not know what Nyaminyami was (Interviewed 27 March, 2017). Similarly, another male first generation resettler also remembered that ‘... *when the dam was closed we came here in Mola and there were no clinics, schools and jobs here, so the majority of the men were walking on foot to towns in search of jobs. We used to spend more than five days travelling on foot to Karoi. We were walking to towns on foot because there were no roads. This road that you see was constructed when I had my sixth child*’ (Interviewed 9 June, 2017). Another old man in Kariba told me ‘he has completely abandoned his religion because he is now a pastor in an apostolic church, in which the beliefs in ancestors are disregarded’ (Interviewed 12 December 2017). As a result of these labour migration patterns, the observances of their religion declined as they now occupied towns where they were now far from the places and spaces where their religion was enacted. The

above excerpts are from returnees from urban areas who do not actually observe their traditional religion, despite having first-hand experience of residing along the Zambezi. Longer stays in urban areas detached them from their religion, as they were exposed to other philosophies. However, apart from economic and environmental factors, the Zimbabwean war of liberation (which is to be explored below) also necessitated a measure of migration patterns.

Migration exposed these emigrants to Christianity that they had never known in the Valley, and many who migrated to urban areas were converted. Follow-up research I conducted in Kariba urban area attest to this position. For instance, I interviewed one older woman, who is originally from Mola, who migrated to Kariba during this time, and was converted to *End Time Message* church, and who now perceives Nyaminyami as a ‘demon’ and as part of the ‘devilish’ spirits (Interviewed in Kariba, 2 November, 2017). Indeed, as Bernard notes, Christianity is one example of the forces that affect belief in water spirits; in some instances, Christianity has demonized the water divinities, whereas in other instances, it has embraced and accommodated them (Bernard 2010). However, according to the ethnographic findings of this study, there was no reference of the link between Nyaminyami and Christianity, but rather the BaTonga in towns regard them as two opposing sides. This marks one of the differences between the occurrence of Nyaminyami and other water divinities among the Cape Nguni that were and are somewhat linked to Christianity (Dold and Cocks 2012: 88), I shall return to this scenario in Chapter 8. The migration of people to towns led to the changing of livelihoods of people, with many becoming incorporated into the cash economy, speaking English, Shona and Ndebele⁹⁸ languages and accessing education, thereby further diminishing the transmission of cultural and religious practices to the next generations. As Bernard and Kumalo (2004) argued, it cannot be denied that the impacts of western education, religion, politics and economics have led to the erosion of much of the spiritual ecology (and by extension the traditional religious practices) among large sections of the populations in Africa.

7.5. The Zimbabwean War of Liberation period and the BaTonga religion

Apart from migration, there are also other factors that negatively influenced the observation of traditional BaTonga religious practices; these include the Zimbabwean war of liberation,

⁹⁸ These are the languages mainly spoken in major towns of Zimbabwe. The BaTonga were shy of speaking their own language, as their language was associated with backwardness.

and the construction of administrative sub-offices in both Mola and Musampakaruma from 1976 to 1980. These are the on-going socio-economic processes of change encountered in new emplacements that further adversely affected the BaTonga. Indeed, as De Wet (2015) notes, the ongoing processes of change alter ritual and religious processes in various ways. The war transformed the Kariba area into an unstable landscape in which much harm on the BaTonga culture emanated from (Clark et al 1995; Tischler 2014). Furthermore, narratives about sub-offices in both Musampakaruma and Mola indicate how life in general was disrupted by the colonial state's security presence, and the confinement of people in these administrative centres. Confinement of people was a result of the colonial government's need to discourage peasant opposition and the spreading of guerrilla recruitment in rural areas during the Liberation War of 1976. It was also related to curbing the guerrillas crossing Lake Kariba, through an area called 'paradise' in Mola, when visiting bases in Zambia.⁹⁹ These guerrillas were being assisted to cross by disillusioned BaTonga, who considered their actions as retribution against the colonial state and its broken promises of better life after the move.

The BaTonga elders claim that the confinement as a result of this war had detrimental effects on the enactment of their local religious practices (inclusive of Nyaminyami belief systems). Although, there was no direct confrontation between Rhodesian Security Forces and the guerrillas in Musampakaruma and Mola, the elders report that there were high levels of general insecurity in the chiefdoms, as guerrillas passed through their chieftaincies going to Lake Kariba, where they crossed over to their bases in Zambia. Although there is no clear-cut narrative connecting Nyaminyami with guerrillas' crossings of the Lake, in this era the Lake was notable for its decisive role of being a conduit for guerrillas.¹⁰⁰ With that, accessing the Lake for usual routine business, and even for ancestral and water spirits veneration, proved difficult for the BaTonga. Literature has shown that the peasants or civilians

⁹⁹ This area called 'paradise' in Mola is adjacent to the Lake, and there are numerous war narratives surrounding this place.

¹⁰⁰ Neither were spirit mediums in the Mola and Musampakaruma chieftaincies entangled in the war narratives, like it was the case in other parts of Southern Rhodesia. Zipra did not approve of working with spirit mediums on the whole- that was very much a ZANLA strategy (J. Alexander, personal communication, 2 September, 2018). However, in some parts of Zimbabwe both spirit mediums (Alexander et al. 2000; Fontein 2006; Lan 1985) and water spirits, *njuzu*, were somehow embroiled in the understandings of the occurrence of the war. Further down south near Salisbury (present day Harare) in Chiota chieftaincy, Peter Fry (1976) notes David/*Kafudze*, a spirit medium possessed by *njuzu* spirit. He communicated to the guerrillas the wishes of the spirits. *Kafudze*, the name given to the medium, was another term for *njuzu* in the local language. In Nigeria, according to oral tradition, the goddess (*mami wata*) protected the town during the Nigeria-Biafra war in 1968 by capsizing all the enemy's gunboats that ventured into the lake to attack the people. The goddess was protecting her people of Oguta who were part of Biafra (Onkwusa et al. 2017).

occupying the margins or borderlands were forcibly recruited to participate in the war in numerous ways by the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) and Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) guerrilla forces (see Lan 1985 and Nyachega 2017). McGregor has shown how this coercion occurred along the Lake Kariba, although not in the region of this study (McGregor 2003a; 2009). She notes that:

As the liberation war intensified..., local people with knowledge of how to cross the river were crucially important to the guerrillas. As a result, the state controls over crossing were harsh..., in 1972 the security forces moved along the river banks destroying canoes, not only making it more difficult for local people to cross, but also preventing access to some sorts of fish and undercutting other trades (McGregor 2003a: 101).

However, the differences in the shape of the waterscape influenced the people's war experiences. Security forces were harsher in the upper river where the river was narrow, allowing easy crossing of guerrillas, and they happen to have been relatively benign in the lower river, where the reservoir was a significant barrier and made it difficult for guerrillas to cross. Thus, the experiences of the BaTonga of Nyaminyami Rural District (where the Lake is wider) and Binga Rural District (where the river is somewhat narrow) of the war, were somewhat different. Political instability and war along the littoral were other factors, secondary to the state's waterscape appropriation policies, constraining the people's access of the Lake for ritual purposes.

There were a number of disturbing incidents that heightened the BaTonga's general insecurities during the wartime. For example, in the villages of Musampakaruma, such as Dondoro, stories are told of people's homesteads and religious material being burnt down by the frustrated Rhodesian Security Forces (RSF), which led many BaTonga and Shangwe people to vacate and abandon their homes and their religious material in form of religious shrines and artefacts. Some of the people found refuge in Gokwe District (Focus Group Interview, 14 April 2017). There are talks of the murder of the then Chief Musampakaruma by the Rhodesian Security Forces because of his support of guerrillas. But some say he was killed because he was ruthless to his own people, for example he used to claim '2 pounds' from every villager who visited his homestead; a tendency that led to him becoming nicknamed as 'Pondombiri', the local pronunciation for '2 pounds'. One politician also narrated that there were landmines discovered soon after independence in Musampakaruma Chiefdom, at a place called 'Pasamere'. I have noted that during this period Nyaminyami beliefs had been disrupted by the resettlement, but the war prolonged or worsened the chances of them being revived, due to the general insecurity it posed to the people that psychologically and socially practiced them. In the context of Scudder's FSF theory, Stage 2,

the war exacerbated increased stress to the people that had been brought about by resettlement in 1958.

7.6. Conclusion

This chapter critically examined the different narratives and practices relating to Nyaminyami in the post- resettlement contexts. These narratives (such as the idea that there were two Nyaminyamis) are controversial in their dimensions, as they happen to portray new pictures about Nyaminyami, which are somewhat different from the past. These changing narratives and different conflicting versions of the story of Nyaminyami attest to the argument that the understanding and interpretation of the occurrence of water spirits changes over time, due to social changes that impact differently on the same ethnic group. With regards to the idea of two Nyaminyamis, I have argued that it was created by the whites in their quest to elevate the Nyaminyami story in their tourism magazines, but later some BaTonga also borrowed the idea, as the best explanation for the tremors. However, some BaTonga elders at the time found comfort in these tremors as they interpreted them as being caused by Nyaminyami, who wanted to destroy the dam so that they can return to the Zambezi Valley. The chapter has also indicated how the BaTonga's inability to access Lake Kariba, their habitation of new emplacements, and their subsequent migrant labour patterns, as well as the war of independence, negatively influenced the BaTonga religion and the people's epistemological understandings of Nyaminyami. But, of all these factors the inaccessibility of the Lake due to the colonial government restrictive policies was a decisive factor.

CHAPTER 8: NYAMINYAMI IN POST-INDEPENDENCE CONTEXTS.

8.1. Introduction

This chapter documents some of the narratives and practices relating to Nyaminyami in post-colonial contexts, from 1980 to 2015. As Askew argues, ‘the waves of independence that swept across Africa beginning in the 1950s left in their wake a desire to recapture African culture and history- the culture and history that had been mutilated and reinvented by colonial interests’ (Askew 2002: 130). Consistently, in the post-independence period, the BaTonga (of Mola and Musampakaruma) tried to resuscitate their Nyaminyami beliefs in numerous ways. First, by naming many local organisations after the river god (Nyaminyami), and further by reintroducing the appeasement of Nyaminyami and other spirits in the Lake at *Kariva* (i.e. the rock that lies near the Kariba dam wall). As Downing and Garcia-Downing (2009) pointed out in their Psycho- Socio- Cultural theory, in their quest to resuscitate their lost culture, people build on familiar, earlier routines. They favour incremental change, rather than transformational change (Scudder 2005a). I shall indicate how people built on pre-resettlement routine in their renewal process of the new- routine Nyaminyami ‘festivals’ in the post- independence period. In so doing, the chapter extends from where the previous chapter ended. The main argument of this Chapter is that, although the post- independence period brought about with it the people’s attempts to resuscitate the Nyaminyami beliefs, according to my assessment these were not revived satisfactorily because of other limiting factors.

In the post independence episode, the story of Nyaminyami was given fresh life with some BaTonga glorifying it, and some ethnic and racial groups in the tourism and journalism industries giving it an offhand treatment. Although the newspapers and magazines were largely biased, to some degrees their reports correlated with the local discourse. Despite all these efforts to revitalize the story and beliefs in Nyaminyami, this revival cannot be equated with that of the pre-resettlement era. The involvement of Nyaminyami in all these socio-economic and political dimensions indicate that his influence extended beyond the horizons of religion after the move. Just like before the move, ideas concerning Nyaminyami are also more socio-economic and political, and not only religious. This chapter will show how Nyaminyami beliefs and ritual practices are used in a variety of contexts to justify regimes of power and to access economic benefits. I shall also indicate how the beliefs about the current habitation of Nyaminyami and other spirits in Lake Kariba influence various ‘registers of meaning’ evoked by different stakeholders at Kariba. These involve the numerous and

conflicting interpretations of the cracks occurring at the dam wall site, and the decline of water levels in the Lake Kariba. I shall argue that in terms of interpreting these incidents occurring in the Lake, the indigenous interpretations are overlooked and the scientific interpretations are favoured by the Lake's authorities.

In this chapter I shall also describe issues surrounding the introduction of the Nyaminyami artefacts. Even though such artefacts are also found in Binga and Victoria Falls, that does not imply cultural 'diffusion', but it implies what Saidi (2015) coined 'cultural imperialism', where people only borrow ideas for profit making, and not religious engagement. This system of borrowing other people's cultures is widely known as 'cultural appropriation' (Arewa 2018). The people of Binga and Victoria Falls (just like elsewhere in Zimbabwe) capitalized upon the artefact for gain, rather than religion. This borrowing cannot be regarded as diffusion in a literal or cultural sense, because they did not engage in the religious practices associated with Nyaminyami that had been re-introduced in Nyaminyami Rural District. To use Arewa's words, it was 'cultural exploitation' (Arewa 2018). In Binga, Nyaminyami is needed for business, and not as a 'river god'.

The chapter begins by showing how the term Nyaminyami was used in the naming processes in north-western Zimbabwe; this is followed by an examination of the revival of Nyaminyami rituals, and how the BaTonga are excluded in the commercialization of the Nyaminyami artefacts. It further examines the contests between the local indigenous knowledge and outside scientific knowledge systems, in terms of explaining various incidents occurring in Lake Kariba. In this chapter different primary and secondary sources were used and weaved together. It made use of semi-structured interviews with the local villagers (i.e. FGRs and SGRs), NRDC employees and Kariba residents (from different cultural backgrounds), and Nyaminyami crafters. Tourism and journalistic literature are also used. Numerous studies on various themes addressed in this Chapter are also referred to.

8.2. The naming processes

This section shows varied organizations named after Nyaminyami by different social and racial groups, for different social and economic agendas. For tourism companies, the name is used for business and for attracting clients since the 'legend' of Nyaminyami is interesting. But, for the majority of BaTonga elders, the name Nyaminyami connects them with their past. Thus, it can be argued that the naming of things after historical figures, legends and

religious icons signifies the interconnections between history, cultural landscapes and memory.

8.2.1. The naming of Nyaminyami Rural District and Nyaminyami Rural District Council (NRDC)

The first attempt to resuscitate Nyaminyami related beliefs was the naming of the rural district in which Mola and Musampakaruma are located, after the river god, and subsequently the district came to be known as *Nyaminyami Rural District*. According to one second generation resettler currently living in Musampakaruma (who was part of the council when it was formed) ‘the council was established in 1982 with offices based at Katete harbour on the southern shores of Lake Kariba. It was then relocated to its present headquarters at Siakobvu Growth Point on the 2nd of September 1983’ (Interviewed 12 April 2017). The district had been formally under Sebungwe District, which incorporated all the chieftaincies removed from the Zambezi in 1958 (Scudder 1982), and were lying along the Lake in northwest Zimbabwe during colonialism. BaTonga elders’ naming of the district after Nyaminyami was a means of evocation and honouring of the iconic river god whom they used to identify themselves with (Saidi 2016). However, not every chiefdom in the Nyaminyami Rural District had held beliefs in Nyaminyami. Negande and Nebiri chiefdoms, which are also part of the district, had not lived along the river, and their forefathers had no first-hand experience with Nyaminyami. The fact that the BaTonga speaking peoples with roots in the Zambezi Valley and belief in Nyaminyami were the majority in the district administration at the time of its formation, speaks volumes as to why the district was named after Nyaminyami. Later, when the first Nyaminyami artefact was designed, the district adopted the artefact as its own ‘logo’. Below is the current picture of the NRDC emblem.

Fig 6.Photo: Nyaminyami Rural District logo (courtesy of Nyaminyami Rural District)



8.2.2. Other institutions named after Nyaminyami

Apart from the rural district, there were many other organizations named after Nyaminyami. Some of the people who needed the name Nyaminyami were not the BaTonga people of the gorge area themselves, but other interested players in the tourism industry. Hughes (2010) discovered that in the 1980s ‘Nyaminyami Corporation’, a Kariba- based partnership that held the logo’s patent, was formed. Over time, a bar was named after Nyaminyami, i.e. ‘Nyaminyami Bar’, in the Zambezi Valley Hotel, with the Nyaminyami artefact stationed at its entrance.¹⁰¹ In Kariba town, I was informed of another catering company run by a white woman called *Nyummy Nyummy*, which is a pidgin version of the word *Nyaminyami*. It is clear that people named many organisations and institutions after the river god because it was a widely known tourist icon that could attract tourists and clients, but for some BaTonga the naming process indicated honour and respect for their river god. Henceforth, the use of the iconic image and name was influenced by different socio- economic agendas and backgrounds. Some BaTonga elders consider this as debasing their river spirit/ god. This opposition shall be explored fully when I discuss an incident where the some BaTonga Chiefs sued one Shona sculptor for copyright infringement.

More recently, in 2015, two Kariba community radio stations that broadcast mainly in the *ChiTonga* language, were named after the term ‘Nyaminyami’. One is called *Patsaka: Nyaminyami Community Radio Station*, and the other is called *Nyaminyami FM*. The radio stations have also employed some BaTonga youths from Mola and Musampakaruma, although these youths lack a fuller understanding of Nyaminyami beliefs, as these are more widely followed by their elders. These radio stations were named after Nyaminyami, in a way to honour the local spirit, or presumably because the term Nyaminyami is widely known in various circles for the fascinating stories surrounding it, and hence attracts a wider audience and listenership. The naming of these radio stations after Nyaminyami and their broadcasting primarily in the *ChiTonga* language, emerged in the context of the progress of BaTonga elders’ calls for the recognition of their language as a medium of instruction in their schools and public spaces. The BaTonga’s agency and progress regarding their language debates has received much attention in the literature (see Gambahaya and Muwati 2010; Manyena 2013; Makoni et al. 2008; McGregor 2009). However, this section contributes to this discourse by

¹⁰¹ I personally visited the Zambezi Valley Hotel and the Nyaminyami Bar in Kariba and saw the Nyaminyami carving stationed at its main entrance.

showing how BaTonga ‘organizations’ chiefly using *ChiTonga* language also strengthens their legitimacy by naming themselves after their historical icon.

8.3. Revival of Nyaminyami Rituals

This section critically examines the rituals enacted in the Lake. It probes how these rituals were used by local politicians and leaders to legitimize various regimes of rule. Though these rituals were short-lived as I will indicate at the end of the Chapter, they managed to determine politics at Kariba at the time. The ‘praxis’ level of Bernard’s Four Level Analysis theory significantly underpins this segment. Praxis entails activity as influenced by human agency interacting with normative rules and structure (Bernard 2010). As shown above, colonialism disrupted the observances and enactment of water divinity rituals in numerous ways. However, many post- colonial societies are now reviving their once abandoned ritual practices. For example, Kendall gave detailed descriptions of various rituals and ceremonies performed for the *Inkosazana* mermaid, and notes that, although these may have been in decline, there had been sporadic revivals in many areas (Kendall 1997, cited in Bernard 2010). More specifically, Bernard (2001) and Bernard and Kumalo (2004) note the revival of these ceremonies in response to a healer who claimed *Inkosazana* had appeared to her and asked her to re- instate the annual propitiation rituals. Similarly, after Zimbabwe’s independence in 1980, with whites having lost power almost completely over Lake Kariba (Hughes 2010), the previously dislocated BaTonga people’s access to the Lake somewhat increased. This is evidenced by the increased number of fishing camps and cooperatives opened for Africans opened by the ZANU PF government.

The BaTonga of Mola and Musampakaruma resumed appeasing in the Lake near *Kariva*, where they believed Nyaminyami still resided. These rituals were referred to as ‘*Nyaminyami Festivals*’ in much of the tourist literature headings of the time. It is important to note that the people who revived these rituals are a third generation tracing descent from those who presumably had first-hand experience with Nyaminyami, and who had performed the rituals in the Valley. This shows that the third generation was putting efforts into the sustenance and preservation of their forefathers’ indigenous knowledge systems.

The rituals were revived, building on familiar, earlier routines. As it is suggested in the PSC theory, when resettlers establish their ‘new routine’, they build on their former routines (Downing and Garcia- Downing 2009). Their understandings and memories of revering their water spirits (Nyaminyami included) were not effaced by colonialism and the Lake’s inaccessibility; instead they re-emerged with great tenacity in the post- independence

epoch. Before the move people conducted ceremonial dances for Nyaminyami in the Zambezi near *Kariva* (see Saidi 2016; Sitambuli 2016); now in post resettlement contexts they conducted the ceremonies on the same spot, although it was now a Lake and no longer a river. However, the significant change in the conducting of rituals, is that previously they were enacted in the immediate vicinity of ‘living water’ (i.e. a running river), to use Bernard’s terminology (Bernard 2013), but upon revival they were conducted in ‘stagnant water’ (i.e. the dam). People did the drumming and dancing on land and then sailed to *Kariva* to throw traditional beer, beads and white and black cloth in the Lake, as the ritual process is locally narrated (see also the excerpt from the informant cited below). Using the Four Level Analysis theory’s Level 3 i.e. praxis (Bernard 2010), I want to argue that praxis, or rituals associated with water spirits in general, change over time due to numerous socio- economic, ecological and political circumstances. In this case praxis changed due to changes in space i.e. from a river to a Lake. It further indicates that spiritual beliefs and practices, far from disappearing following cases of physical dislocation, remain in dynamic conversation with shifting social and physical contexts. This shows that they are responsive to social change in ways which speak to the resilience of indigenous knowledge, and also speak to how indigenous knowledge can be revived and appropriated to serve a variety of economic and political interests.

Most of the elders who engaged in these rituals maintain that they obtained financial and material support from the Nyaminyami Rural District Council (NRDC). As Alexander (2011) notes, in order to perform a ritual before an audience, actors need access to the mundane material things that allow symbolic projections to be made. They need objects that can serve as iconic representations to help them dramatize and make vivid the invisible motives and morals they are trying to represent. Such materials range from clothing, to every other sort of standardized expressive equipment. The NRDC provided transport, food, beer brewing ingredients, and black and white cloth, and so on, to the people, for the smooth execution of the rituals. The Chiefs say the NRDC provided support as part of their corporate social responsibility. Apart from propitiating Nyaminyami, the BaTonga also appeased their ancestral spirits (in the form of graves) inundated by the Lake. Thus, the propitiation of Nyaminyami was embroiled in the propitiation for ancestral spirits. Thereby incorporating Nyaminyami in the broader understandings of their ancestral shades. In further elaborating on the enactment of these rituals, one elder in Musampakaruma said that

“... People went to the Kariba town, which is close to Kariva. They brewed beer, sang and danced throughout the night. In the next morning the people sailed by a boat provided by DDF (District Development Fund) into the Lake

where they poured beer, cloth and coins in the water..., and in return our spirits gave us rain and protected us from being attacked by wild animals. These ceremonies used to occur towards the end of the year in September-October...” (Interviewed 12 April 2017).

From this quotation it can be seen that ‘central to understanding the postulated relationship that exists between various people/s and the water divinities, is the concept of exchange and reciprocity’ (Bernard 2010: 250). The BaTonga elders maintain that while people gave Nyaminyami beer, he (and ancestors) in return provided rain. To some BaTonga this largely indicated some interaction and cooperation between Nyaminyami and ancestors in terms of sustaining the people. However, before the move, rituals dedicated to Nyaminyami were mainly for food provision through meat, and at this time, it had shifted to rain provision. Henceforth, people can adapt to altered circumstances and manipulate the occurrence or presence of water spirits to suit their particular interests at specific times. Bernard (2001) supports this observation by arguing that the purposes for conducting rituals vary from time to time and from group to group.

The revival of the rituals arguably restored, to some degree, the people’s sense of belonging and attachment to the Zambezi River that colonialism had disrupted, through prohibiting the people from accessing the Lake as documented in the previous chapter. People’s memories of past interactions with the Zambezi River (which was blocked to build the Lake Kariba) stimulated/ stimulate their claims of belonging to Lake Kariba (McGregor 2003a; Tombindo 2018). The Nyaminyami rituals themselves were imbued with historical memories that reinforce people’s claims of autochthony and belonging to the Lake. The people’s identity was also revived when religious access to the Lake was somewhat increased since BaTonga people identify with the inundated graves of their ancestors. As Chief Mola remarked ‘the Zambezi and the Lake Kariba makes us who we are...’ (Interviewed 12 June 2017). This stems from the idea that these people refer to themselves as *Basilwizi*, the river people, and that they identify with its spiritual significance. Thus, the waterscape served (and still serves) to ‘inform them about who they are... and shapes individual’s self-definitions’ (Clayton and Opotow 2003: 9). In so doing, they were building on the practices of their former elders, who ascribed identity to natural forces and objects, especially the Zambezi River itself (Colson 1960; McGregor 2009; Saidi 2017). Using the PSC theory, it is clear that the enactment of the rituals in the Lake restored people’s identification with the waterscape, as was the case before the move.

The performance of these rituals was also for political reasons, with regards to ownership and entitlement to Lake Kariba.¹⁰² A vast literature on ritual performances documents that ritual performance is interconnected with politics and power (Alexander 2011; Askew 2002; Gluckman 1952; McAllister 2002; Rosaldo 1993). By engaging in Nyaminyami rituals, people reinforced their claims of autochthony and ownership of Lake Kariba, because they believe Nyaminyami (their river spirit) continues to reside in this Lake. Thus, as Askew (2002) puts it, power and politics are embedded in ritual performance. 'Ritual' performance is actively employed in the negotiation of power relations. The engagement of the rituals dedicated to Nyaminyami were communicative. They communicate claims of control of Lake Kariba. As Bauman (1977: 11) noted, performance 'is a mode of language use, a way of speaking'. These rituals communicated 'rebellion'. They can be regarded as 'rituals of rebellion', as was the case with rituals dedicated to *Inkosazana* in KwaZulu Natal (Gluckman, 1954). However, the dimension and content of rebellion implied here is somehow different from that proposed by Gluckman (1952; 1954). For the *Inkosazana* rituals, women rebelled against men and gender disparities in the society, but for Nyaminyami rituals it is some BaTonga (mostly men) rebelling against the Lake Kariba authorities by reinforcing their entitlement to the Lake through the ritual performance. The Lake's authorities put forward measures of governance that control and constrain the people's access to the Lake. However, both the rituals were aimed at redressing socio-economic disparities. From another perspective, these rituals can be seen as more of political gatherings than religious gatherings. As Rosaldo (1993:176) commented, 'rituals do not always encapsulate deep cultural wisdom. They serve as vehicles for numerous political processes that occur both before and after the period of their performance.' The motive behind Nyaminyami festivals were more about redressing the social order, and less about revering ancestors. Thereby showing the fluidity of ritual, and the levels and extent to which it can be manipulated.

Furthermore, if it rains after the ceremony, the chiefs and spirit mediums gain legitimacy. As Alexander (2011: 28) notes: 'successful performance depends on the ability to convince others that one's performance is true'; similarly, the rainfall may have authenticated the ritual performances of the BaTonga in the eyes of the Lake's authorities. Fontein (2015) also maintains that it is good rains, at the right time, in sufficient quantities, and not

¹⁰² It is important to note that while the rituals stimulated the people's claims of ownership and belonging to the Zambezi, this has been strengthened in the contemporary situation, as the next chapter shall argue. Plus, the basis at which belonging was premised at this time is completely different from which it is premised in the contemporary situation.

destructive of crops or houses, that can signify the legitimacy of chiefs, clans, mediums and the moral wellbeing of the community. Since Nyaminyami was now connected with rain provision, just like *njuzu*, which is also associated with rain (Fontein 2015), it can be seen that the connection of water spirits and rain (water) reinforces the concept of water as an *index of power* (Fontein 2015; 2016). During this time, the Nyaminyami rituals began to be marketed in the tourist literature, galleries, museums, hotels and lodges locally and internationally, so as to attract many visitors. The rituals became a tourist attraction as it was publicized in the tourist literature, though their enactment was somewhat exaggerated in the tourist literature.

Just like the quoted informant above, my other informants (in Mola and Musampakaruma) also mentioned that since their revival, Nyaminyami rituals were occurring in September- October. This is also recurrent in some tourist literature. I have two interpretations of the timing of these rituals. Firstly, utilizing Downing and Garcia-Downing (2009)'s PSC theory, people were building on old routines by conducting the ceremonies during the same time of the year when Nyaminyami used to expose himself, as described in Chapter 5. Secondly, since Nyaminyami was now unconsciously entangled in rain provision issues, together with ancestral spirits, the rituals had to be engaged in during spring, immediately before the rainy season, as is the case among other African indigenous communities, as indicated in Chapter 4. For example, 'among some Nguni groups propitiation rituals are still made prior to planting in spring' (Bernard 2001: 43).

Nonetheless, there were also some years in which these rituals were not enacted, and this was largely as a result of the socio-economic instability in Zimbabwe. For example, in 2008, people did not conduct the rituals because of the lack of resources resulting from the Zimbabwean cash and commodity crises. Mr Mhlanga (DA) said 'chiefs have not been able to regularly conduct the rain-making rites owing to lack of financial resources to feed the people', (Bulawayo24: 2015). Thus, one can observe that socio-economic changes seriously affect micro-level religious rituals in many ways. However, since 2015, the District Administration Office (DAO) and Zambezi River Authority (ZRA) now fund the ceremonies. Occasional failures to enact these rituals are sometimes regarded as factors promoting drought in some ways, because it is believed that the spirits residing in the water (ancestors and Nyaminyami) would be very angry that they are not revered as they deserve. As noted by one informant, 'failure to give our ancestral spirits residing in the water beer and coins can results in them holding back their rains' (Interviewed in Kariba, on 1 November 2017). Lack of resources also explains why not all members of the community participated in these rituals. It is usually the elite, chiefs, village heads, spirit mediums, royal family women, and

politicians (the majority of whom are men) that attended the rituals. Thus, general subjects did not engage in the rituals. This caused Nyaminyami to become a god for a seemingly handful of people -thereby exacerbating the decline in the beliefs concerning Nyaminyami.

There is also convincing evidence that in the 1990s, the BaTonga people of Zambia who hold beliefs in Nyaminyami, incorporated the Nyaminyami idea into their *masabe* (alien spirits)¹⁰³ possession cults (see McGregor 2003a: 94, footnote 34). Although, I did not do research in Zambia, or make a follow up of these developments, they are a vivid indication of the efforts made to restore Nyaminyami beliefs in Zambia. However, in Zimbabwe, Nyaminyami was/ is not included in the *masabe* possession cults. One diviner in Bayachenene Village in Musampakaruma explained that ‘... of all the seven spirit possessed mediums in this village there is no one who is possessed by Nyaminyami spirits. Many people are possessed by baboon spirits, dancing spirits amongst other spirits. We have never heard of anyone possessed by Nyaminyami masabe spirits...’ Therefore, there are differences in the restoration of Nyaminyami beliefs in both Zimbabwe and Zambia. Furthermore, these different Nyaminyami developments after the move have not received the attention they deserve in the existing literature. These differences can be clearly elaborated by the use of the Imposed Socio- Spatial Change theory by De Wet (2015), which perceives the ways people restore their ritual practices after resettlement as resulting from numerous on-going socio-economic processes of change in specific emplacements. These processes of change have been significantly different in both nations.¹⁰⁴

8.4. Nyaminyami artefacts and sculpture

This section and the following one focus mainly on the ways through which Nyaminyami artefacts are appropriated by different groups and races, both locally and internationally. It examines the extent at which the BaTonga Nyaminyami artefacts are capitalized for gained by other African groups and tourist players and how the BaTonga have been marginalized or secluded in all these processes. As has been noted in Chapter 5, nobody had first-hand experience of the entire body structure of Nyaminyami. The people only believed that Nyaminyami had a head of a tiger fish and a snake’s torso. However, narratives surrounding how that belief developed, are missing in both Mola and Musampakaruma, as well as in the

¹⁰³ Elizabeth Colson (2006) defines *Masabe* as an invading power or force that makes its victim ill until mollified by the performance of a drama in which the victim acts out the wishes of the invading spirit and comes to terms with it and is thereby cured. The term is cognate with the Shona term *mashave*. See also Gelfand (1962) and Luig (1999).

¹⁰⁴ See chapter 2 on the FSF theory proposed by Thayer Scudder, where I have described how the processes of resettlement occurred in both nations.

literature. Building on the narratives that Nyaminyami had a head of a tiger fish and a snake's torso, one white man, Matthews Gidian, carved Nyaminyami artefacts with a 'wider' snake's torso in the 1970s; however, this version of the artefact did not thrive (see image in Kaschula 1976: 273). The one that thrived, both locally and internationally, was carved by a Shona sculptor from Bikita in 1986. But his version of the icon had a 'slender' torso (see image below). He designed the Nyaminyami artefact currently stationed at Kariba, and this has subsequently influenced the making of artefacts such as necklaces, stools, and bracelets etc. that are now widespread and are commercialized throughout the Valley (north-west Zimbabwe). Given the complexities surrounding the emergence of these artefacts, Mkandawire argues that the Nyaminyami artefacts are not a Tonga creation, but an artistic impression created by an extremely talented carver named Rainos Tawonameso, who does not even belong to the Tonga ethnic group, but is originally from Bikita District of Masvingo Province (Mkandawire 2015, cited in Saidi 2015). It is alleged that Rainos Tawonameso greatly profited from these Nyaminyami designs. In the late 1980s, three BaTonga Chiefs (Mola, Musampakaruma and Nebiri)¹⁰⁵ sued the sculptor Rainos Tawonameso for copyright infringement; however, they lost the case (Hughes 2010: 62). The result of which was the adoption of his design by the tourist players and other sculptors in the Valley. This signified that the BaTonga themselves had lost control of suggesting who is and who is not to market their own river god icon. By 2000, both white and black entrepreneurs imprinted river gods on shirts, shorts, and jewellery, doing particularly brisk business around Victoria Falls (McGregor 2009: 165- 166), as well as in the Kariba urban area. In 2014, some white tourists even went to the extreme of inserting Nyaminyami tattoos on their skin.

¹⁰⁵ Chief Nebiri did not occupy the margins of the Zambezi, but is part of the Nyaminyami Rural District. I did not follow up on why he was involved in this case as his people had not believed in a river god before.

Fig 7. Photo showing a white woman (tourist) with a Nyaminyami tattoo inserted on her back (courtesy of <https://za.pinterest.com/zimady/nyaminyami/?lp=true>)



Furthermore, Nyaminyami artefacts are now being transported and marketed in international galleries and museums across the globe. Saidi (2015) and Chikozho et al (2015b) mention this externalization of Nyaminyami artefacts, though they do not provide specific locations where these are marketed. Similarly, many African water spirits artefacts, *Mami Wata* in particular, are displayed in many international galleries and museums. For example, reporting in 2010 on the pace at which Mami Wata artefacts are externalized, Deborah Stokes notes ‘curated by Henry Drewal and opened at the UCLA Fowler Museum in 2008, “Mami Wata” travelled to Chazen Museum at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and has made a third stop at the National Museum of Africa Art in Washington DC’ (2010:8). Despite all these drawbacks, some BaTonga of Mola and Musampakaruma carve these artefacts for themselves. For some BaTonga people, ‘Nyaminyami carvings represent the preservation of the BaTonga heritage’ (CGTN, 30 April, 2018). Saidi (2013) regards the BaTonga’s carvings as rewriting their own history destroyed by the Lake Kariba. He postulates that ‘one site amongst several from which BaTonga culture can be recuperated is through observing the role of cultural material’ (ibid: 60).

8.4.1. Nyaminyami walking stick

The Nyaminyami walking stick is a depiction of the BaTonga people through the river spirit, the Nyaminyami (Saidi 2015). ‘In a world in which Nyaminyami is remote and whose power has also been greatly subdued, the Nyaminyami walking stick stands out as the most immediate artistic expression of the unmistakable devotional spirituality of the Tonga. It is the embodiment and epitome of the quintessence of Tonga life; no wonder it is deliberately

designed to reflect on all the pillars of Tonga culture and is a highly priced cultural object' (Chikozho et al 2015b: 260). I discovered that the walking stick has identity overtones, as each part of the walking stick conveys various cultural beliefs and practices of the BaTonga.¹⁰⁶ As Strang notes 'cultures create narratives of who they are not only through language, oral history and written media, but also through a range of visual media', (Strang 2009: 145). Thus, the walking stick is crucial in restoring the BaTonga identity that had been eroded by resettlement and colonialism. However, many writers (such as Saidi 2015) who write about this walking stick generalize that the walking is significant in all the BaTonga societies, yet not all BaTonga societies believed in Nyaminyami. Presumably, these generalizations are premised on the fact that the walking stick is now marketed in other BaTonga chieftaincies, in which the belief in a 'river god' did not originate.

Furthermore, other than in BaTonga societies, the walking stick is also marketed in other parts of Zimbabwe and the world. These traders use various designs and styles for it to be aesthetic, and distort its original outlook. In many countries across the globe people earn foreign currency from marketing the walking stick. For instance, in the African Crafts Market (based in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa), a 75-90 cm iron wood 'African Nyaminyami Cane' costs US\$125-00, (<http://www.africancraftsmarket.com/products/african-canes/nyami-nyami-cane.html>). These are huge amounts of money that are not benefiting the communities in which the river god is believed in, but are benefiting other ethnic groups of southern Africa. Many of the sculptors and marketers of the walking stick in the tourist industry do not believe in the river god. Thus, other people are capitalizing and benefiting on the BaTonga's 'river god', to earn profits. Sculptors who craft and market the walking sticks in Victoria Falls, for instance Hillary, exhibit thematic explanations which are commercially influenced, and lack belief and adherence to what the artefact represents.¹⁰⁷ The walking stick is also part of the artefacts in the Binga 'BaTonga museum,' and no money accrued from the tourist is channelled to the development of Nyaminyami Rural District, where the devotees of Nyaminyami reside. McGregor (2003a; 2009) bemoaned the fact that the Nyaminyami tourist icon is now on sale throughout the Zambezi Valley, and is part of the Binga artefacts in an area in which the river god did not originate. Even in Kariba urban area, I interviewed women marketing cloth with Nyaminyami designs, and other artefacts like the walking sticks and necklace, and they lacked in-depth understanding of the history and cultural importance of Nyaminyami.

¹⁰⁶ See the Nyaminyami artefact below, with descriptions of each part of the walking stick.

¹⁰⁷ Hillary was one of the informants cited by Umali Saidi (2015).

Fig 8: Image of the Nyaminyami sculpture with the descriptions of each part; (courtesy of the Binga community museum)



The importance of the walking stick has also received very significant emphasis in the tourist literature and magazines, and none of these magazines are owned and published in Nyaminyami Rural District. Thus, the Nyaminyami story and artefacts are contributing to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Saidi 2015). Even though the BaTonga of Mola and Musampakaruma significantly contribute to the cultural industry of Zimbabwe (with their river spirit), in many ways 'their contribution remains largely unrecognized and in fact underestimated at national level' (Chikozho et al. 2015b: 329). No part of this revenue is channelled towards the development of their underdeveloped and marginalized communities.

Fig 9: Photo of a white man with a Nyaminyami tatoo (courtesy of <https://za.pinterest.com/zimady/nyaminyami/?lp=true>)



Despite all this 'cultural appropriation', some BaTonga also carved Nyaminyami walking stick, for their own use. For many, the walking stick is endowed with their history and life along the Zambezi. As Saidi (2015: 124) argues 'the walking stick is an immortalization of people of the river, *basilwizi*, and their religious spirit which is well respected by (some) BaTonga'. As Hackett (1994) notes, there is an interrelationship between artefacts and religion. However, the existence of these artefacts in either the above chieftaincies or in museums (both local and international) has not assisted the restoration of the Nyaminyami beliefs satisfactorily i.e. by restoring them to the same level of occurrence as in the past. This is largely because nobody now talks about Nyaminyami in relation to everyday life, as was the case before the resettlement of 1958.

8.5. Nyaminyami beliefs and Christianity

The revival of Nyaminyami rituals, Nyaminyami crafts, after independence and Nyaminyami naming processes did not go without criticism from local churches and preachers. Similarly, Drewal (2008) has found that, since the 1970s and 1980s, however, the rapid expansion of Pentecostal churches in Igboland and elsewhere has created a more difficult religious terrain for *Mami wata* followers, who are now under virulent attack, accused of being “in league with the devil” through their ‘seductive’ water spirit. While before the move of 1958 Nyaminyami beliefs existed unchallenged by Christianity and globalisation due to the isolation of the Valley, as indicated in Chapter 5, in the post-resettlement contexts these two institutions have seriously affected BaTonga religion (Nyaminyami belief included) from varied angles. It is important to note that the way Christianity impacted on the belief in Nyaminyami after independence is different from the way it did before independence. Before independence it was mainly migrants being converted to Christianity in towns, but now after independence, God had penetrated the Valley and churches have proliferated within the chieftaincies, both regarding Nyaminyami as a demon. Christianity is, by Chief Mola’s own admission, adversely impacting on Nyaminyami beliefs. Cited below is his comment on Christianity, which indicates the main groups of people according to age and gender, who are mainly influenced by Christianity:

... Yes there are people who follow Nyaminyami beliefs in this Chieftdom..., but many young people do not believe in Nyaminyami. They are being influenced by the local churches. Many young men no longer follow our traditional beliefs. Churches teach people different things from our traditional beliefs. Even some women and their children no longer follow traditional religions. If you go into the apostolic churches you will see more women and children.

However, Christianity’s impact is more severe in Musampakaruma than Mola, because there are many more church centres dotted across Musampakaruma than Mola. Specifically, while in one Mahubu village in Musampakaruma there are Methodist, ZAOGA, Roman Catholic and numerous Apostolic churches, in the entire Mola chieftaincy there are a few Apostolic sects, ZAOGA and Seventh Day Adventist churches (which are poorly attended), located at the local shopping centre and thereabouts.¹⁰⁸ Since Mola is more remote and not easily accessible, as compared to Musampakaruma,¹⁰⁹ many churches have been established in the latter, where transport and communication are more convenient for the men of god, whose

¹⁰⁸ Shopping centres are sometimes referred to as chieftdom centres.

¹⁰⁹ I have shown how remote Mola is in the methodology chapter.

main centres are in Karoi.¹¹⁰ However, some members of both communities engage in both traditional religion and Christianity. I attended a church service in Musampakaruma where one member of the Methodist church, known as Banya, told me in an informal conversation that ‘he was going to Mola to attend some family traditional religious ceremonies with other family members who lived there. ‘My brother died two months back, so I also need to participate in the ceremony of bringing his spirit into his homestead’ (Informal conversation April 2017).

In other areas such as Karoi and Kariba, Nyaminyami himself is heavily rebuked. Nyaminyami is rebuked though he is invisible. I was born in Kariba and grew up, in the 1990s, hearing Nyaminyami being castigated as a ‘demon’ and ‘devil’; and these beliefs were perceived and regarded as Satanism in various quarters. One preacher used to refer to all sinners as the ‘children’ of Nyaminyami, because he regarded Nyaminyami as an agent of the devil that occupied the Kariba dam. In the early 2000s, Hughes (2010: 62) notes that ‘the objections against Nyaminyami beliefs of devout Christians caused more concern.’ For instance, in the Tribes of all Nations Ministries (TOAN) church evangelists take turns in castigating Nyaminyami. At one church service I attended, one apostle leading a prayer session said;

“Now let us face in the direction of Lake Kariba. We want to tell Nyaminyami that we have authority over you and that you have no power. We want to cause confusion to all the underwater meetings held by Satanists in Lake Kariba. Where they meet with Nyaminyami organizing to shed blood so that they obtain more money. We want to destroy all the spirits of the water. All the Nyaminyami demonic spirits must die today. Prayer...” (TOAN Ministries church service, November, 2017).

In this quotation Nyaminyami is interpreted in more negative ways. In the same way as *Mami wata* in West Africa (Drewal 2008; Salmon 2008) and *uMamlambo* in Eastern Cape (Bernard 2010; Dold and Cocks 2013), Nyaminyami is also entangled in the ‘occult economic’ issues (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999) of granting people ‘illicit’ wealth, but this is not confirmed in the local villages of Mola and Musampakaruma. It is just an imaginary construction of Christians, which is stimulated by their desire to demonize Nyaminyami. As Bernard writes, throughout southern Africa, the snake and the mermaid have been interpreted differently, in more negative terms, and these negative interpretations of the snake are mainly found within Christianity (Bernard 2010). However, in some parts of South Africa, a diviner’s calling to the water has been accommodated/reconciled with the prophet’s calling in the Zulu Zionist indigenous churches (Bernard 2010), and also among other indigenous

¹¹⁰Karoi is the immediate town in Nyaminyami Rural District, of which Mola and Musampakaruma are part.

churches in the Eastern Cape (Dold and Cocks 2013; Dold, personal comm 9 May 2018). In some Cape Nguni societies, Bernard (2010) found that water spirits are often linked to 'Jesus'. Likewise, among the Igbo (south eastern- Nigeria), Drewal found that:

In several mbari (ritual places), is placed near European or Christian images..., for example, a mask which embodies spiritual forces in the Igbo cosmos, similarly depicts with 3 Christian images: Jesus on the cross, a robed priest or saint, and a Madonna like figure, (2008: 109).

Apart from Christianity, west- African 'water deities' beliefs are also now embroiled within Muslim beliefs. Ethnographic evidence has found that Mami wata and her fellow water divinities join a host of other spirits that are the focus of faiths called Thron and Atingali. Thron is a power that combines revered figures from and aspects of Muslim and Christian beliefs, (*Ibid*: 91). Evidence elsewhere also shows that even the rituals dedicated to water spirits integrate dances and songs from Christianity and Islam. In Haiti, for instance, Voduo (water deities) seasonal rituals combine symbols and tropes of Afro- Italian religion with the plots and personae of the Christian narrative and rehash them in local ritual dramas (McAlister 2002). Thus, though Christianity castigates water deities in some regions, in some cases it integrates and negotiates with them.

8.6. The impact of western education on BaTonga religion and Nyaminyami beliefs

This segment probes the impact of western education on the BaTonga religion in the post-independence period when schools were constructed in Nyaminyami Rural District. The segment is underpinned by the theory of religious and social change proposed by Sabet (1996) presented in Chapter 2. The theory is mainly concerned with the rate at which post-colonial governments redressed colonial uneven development by infrastructure projects, and how that rapid development affected indigenous religions. Sabet argues that 'having achieved their independence from the colonial powers, the leaders of those newly-emerging nations made it their paramount objective to undergo a rapid process of modernisation in order to improve their peoples' and nations' material well-being' (1996: 241). In this process, schools were built and western education continued to be taught as Africans had not yet developed their own curriculum. According to Smith and Wishie, the introduction of formal education eroded the rich cultural values and religious diversities of Africans, and also changed their beliefs and worship systems (cited in Eneji 2012). But, this view must not be taken dogmatically, because sometimes Africans are not mere recipients of outside influences, as their traditions may be resilient to change. There are some BaTonga cultural practices that have survived the threat posed by westernization.

The schools constructed in Nyaminyami Rural District are poorly resourced and structured.¹¹¹ However, this limited penetration of western education in Mola and Musampakaruma has had a significant impact. Schools in Mola and Musampakaruma began to be constructed after independence, and a handful of villagers had chances to obtain university degrees. The main schools, i.e. Mola and Musampakaruma High Schools (both located in the centres of the respective chieftaincies or thereabouts) were established in the early 1980s; however, over time the number of schools has increased, and there are now many satellite schools.¹¹² In my Focus Group Interviews with school children, I realized that many do not attach themselves to their local traditional religious practices, let alone Nyaminyami beliefs. They now consider their own BaTonga religion as backward. The common and initial question I asked them in interview questions was: *Are there any narratives about Nyaminyami that were passed on to you by your elders?* Many appeared to know more about the ‘interesting’ fact that he gave people strips of meat, and that the Kariba dam separated him from his so-called ‘wife’. They do not even narrate these stories in detail. Little is known about Nyaminyami among the youths today, and neither were/ are they involved in ritual engagements associated with Nyaminyami since the revival of these beliefs after independence.

8.7. Nyaminyami reappears, disappears: a snake that floated in the Lake for hours

This segment documents the interpretations of weird beings so often encountered in the Lake, which some people sometimes entangle with the Nyaminyami beliefs. In substantiating the argument by Kaoma (2017) that Nyaminyami has often been appearing in the Lake since the dam was built, many newspapers in 2007 and again in 2012, were headed “*Nyaminyami reappears, disappears*”, after many signs observed at *kariva* by Mahombekombe suburb residents of Kariba town. On 12 January 2007, The Herald reported that “as the mid-morning sun moved imperceptibly on December 30, 2006, Nyaminyami, the sacred river god that oversees the Lake Kariba, coughed and spat a spiralling intense columnar vortex that formed a funnel- shaped cloud over the Lake. The deep blue water of the giant lake suddenly looked fierce and smelt of death as it became covered by a force of dark cloud forcing several

¹¹¹ These are signs that indicate that after resettlement the people of Mola and Musampkaruma did not adequately reach the stages 3 and 4, as conceptualised by Thayer Scudder in his model of successful resettlement. They did not developed as desired by the FSF theory for resettlement processes to be regarded as successful. Therefore, the resettlement process in these two chieftaincies was not that successful.

¹¹² Satellite schools are small dotted schools affiliating with bigger schools. Satellite schools are created to cater for pupils coming from distant communities from the main schools

revellers on boats to change their course and retreat to the banks...”¹¹³ Given such a report, one is bound to perceive this as an indication that Nyaminyami controls climate changes occurring at Kariba. Furthermore, Tendai Chara, a Sunday Mail reporter, on 23 December 2012, reported that ‘Nyaminyami reappeared and disappeared in the *Kariva* area.’ It is reported that a sizeable number of Mahombekombe residents witnessed a huge snake that floated for several hours near the rock *Kariva*. Some estimated that it was 100 metres long (Shearwaters Victoria Falls, 2013). It appears feasible from the local people’s perspective to link the appearance of this snake with the exposure of Nyaminyami in the past, when people obtained meat from him. These Mahombekombe residents were jesting that ‘presumably, it was Nyaminyami who needed his people to cut strips of meat and sadly, he did not find his people and nobody dared to go and cut meat from it.’

Of course, these are journalistic accounts that are associated with the weaknesses of subjectivity and exaggerations aimed at making good copy for sale. But, some members from Mahombekombe today attest to the occurrence of these events. However, this information is absent in the respective chiefdoms of Mola and Musampakaruma. This is largely because these people were relocated far from the Lake. If they know about it, it would be second-hand information for many. Some climatic events such as noted above, may have nothing to do with Nyaminyami, but journalists attribute them to Nyaminyami, for them to be able to write interesting newspaper articles, strengthening their articles with some spiritual and supernatural aspects in the Tonga cosmologies. However, sometimes some BaTonga connect these ecological changes they hear about, with Nyaminyami. For example, my experience of witnessing water turning black (fully explained in Chapter 3), was interpreted by spirit mediums in Mola as Nyaminyami’s signal that he rules the Zambezi.¹¹⁴ The understanding is that Nyaminyami has power over the Lake and, thus when confirming this, he is able to give rise to a range of climatic conditions. Thus, it can be argued that there is an inextricable connection between climatic conditions and water divinity occurrences that are reflected in the interpretations offered by spirit mediums.

8.8. Nyaminyami: an explanation of the Kariba dam wall cracks

Since early in the 21st century, there have been cracks noted on the Kariba dam wall, most of which have been attributed to the anger of Nyaminyami by the BaTonga people. During my childhood, in the 21st century, I consistently heard elderly people who were visiting the

¹¹³The Herald is the mouthpiece of the ZANU PF government.

¹¹⁴ I have fully explained my own experiences in Chapter 3. These experiences subscribe to the concept of the Anthropology of Extraordinary Experience.

Kariba dam wall at that time discussing the occurrence of these cracks. Even in 2014, on 30th May, the Aljazeera reporter Tania reported that:

‘...there were fears that the Kariba dam had a crack on the walls which was likely to cause massive destruction once the dam opened up. Government officials from Zimbabwe and Zambia assured the people living along the banks of the dam that everything was under control and that there was no need to panic...’(cited in Siwila 2015:139).

Scudder (2017) also documents that, as rumours began to circulate in 2014 that a possible collapse might be imminent, Zambia and Zimbabwe’s Zambezi River Authority requested immediate assistance from international financial institutions and national governments. However, engineers explain the occurrence of these cracks in scientific terms. Some of the scientific and geological challenges noted involve, but were not limited to, seismic activity, with records showing that there were 1700 seismic activity events between 1958 and 1999, as well as concrete swelling, which was discovered back in the 1980s (Zambezi Society 2014; Magadza 2006). Concrete swelling generally results when concrete is stored continuously in water during hydration, and the concrete expands due to absorption of water by the cement paste. But, these factors are interpreted by some BaTonga people as being generated by disillusioned Nyaminyami. The Aljazeera reporter further quoted one chief living near the Kariba dam as saying, ‘the crack is as a result of the anger of Nyaminyami the river god, who was disturbed during the construction of the dam’(Siwila 2015: 139). Thus, there are contradictions between ‘science’ and ‘religion’ in as far as interpretation of these cracks is concerned. It appears scientific explanations have an upper hand in relation to the government of the dam, because of the failure to recognise the indigenous knowledge systems by the dam authorities. Such disregard of indigenous knowledge systems possibly stems from post-colonial African governments’ lack of an independent development framework and their over reliance on western epistemologies and practices to confront and address African ecological problems (Cocks, Vetter and Wiersum 2017; Mawere and Awuah-Nyamekye 2015). At Kariba, science is prioritized, rather than indigenous knowledge systems.

If indigenous knowledge systems are not recognized, then environmental problems will persist (Bernard 2001; 2007; Bernard and Kumalo 2004; Mawere 2013; Mawere and Awuah-Nyamekye 2015). Maffi and Woodley (2010) argue that the progressive erosion of the diversity of traditional knowledge and value systems also represents a global loss: a depletion of the pool of adaptive solutions developed by humans worldwide in addressing social and environmental problems- and thus a diminished potential for future adaptations. Similarly, as some BaTonga note, these cracks are precipitated by a limited

acknowledgement of Nyaminyami (and ancestral spirits) present in the Lake, on the part of Zambezi River Authority. As Chief Mola stated “... the spirits residing in the Lake are angry - no wonder why people are being attacked by animals such as crocodiles and hippos at a higher rate nowadays than before. Even lions are now visiting our homesteads because the spirits are angry...” (Interviewed 12 June 2017). The BaTonga believe that for such problems to end there is need to recognize indigenous knowledge systems and propitiation of the local spirits at Kariba. Because the application of western science is problematic and difficult, in that it is applied in different territories with very different needs from European territories where it was created (Tilley 2013).

Another possible solution would be the integration of scientific methods and the indigenous knowledge systems (i.e. Nyaminyami appeasement), as Machoko (2013) advises. He advocates that the traditional (e.g. water spirit beliefs in *njuzu*) and modern approaches to natural environmental conservation could be integrated into a new conservation paradigm (Ibid). This integrated approach has been proposed by many researchers (Maffi and Woodley 2010; Papayannis and Pritchard 2010); in some societies such as Ramsar in Iran, it proved to be successful (Papayannis and Pritchard 2010). The combination of these conservation methods is because sometimes the practices employed in pre-colonial times in managing the environment may work less well in the new conditions of the post-colonial times, such as demographic pressure, distribution of power and market expansion (Anderson and Grove, 1987). Whatever the case, my argument still stands that, in whatever methods used to govern or solutions to mitigate problems faced in the Lake, the Zambezi spirits and local indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) must also be consulted.

Even the conservation and management of Lake Kariba must also involve the indigenous knowledge systems of the spirits in the water, as opposed to the exclusive scientific and modern management that are currently employed by the state through the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management (DNPWLM). Historical taboos linked to Nyaminyami and the Zambezi must be incorporated in the conservation practices at Kariba. As Posey argued, taboos and totems are significant ways by which Africans conserve their environments (Posey 2009). This argument subscribes to the biodiversity perspective that reinforces the need to acknowledge the cultural values and practices of local communities with respect to living with nature and biodiversity when environmental management policies are drafted (Cocks 2006; Cocks, Vetter and Wiersum 2017). The inclusion of a biocultural diversity perspective forms a good basis for developing such an approach to heritage and landscape management. This can assist in understanding the nature

of cultural landscapes as being the product of the interaction between nature and society, where socio-cultural and political processes have shaped the landscape, and where the landscape itself has shaped these processes (Prosper 2004).

Finally, the development of these cracks in the dam can also be mirrored through Fontein's concept of *Between Bodies and Resurfacing Bones*, in which he discovered that 'spirit mediums and others (in Masvingo, Zimbabwe) often complain that droughts, economic and political crisis, and even the AIDs pandemic, are all the result of the unhappy spirits demanding that their bones be returned to Zimbabwe, and their home areas, to be buried amongst the bones of their ancestors' (2010: 423-48). Similarly, according to some BaTonga, these cracks indicate the rage of Nyaminyami, who is unhappy and is still fighting for his homage disturbed by the dam, and in other 'speculative' explanations, he is also fighting to reunite with his wife.

8.9. Nyaminyami: an explanation for Lake Kariba water level's decrease

The main purpose of this segment is to document the various conflicting repertoires of interpreting the drastic decline of water volumes at Kariba that occurred in 2015. I want to argue, as in the previous section, that the scientific discourse has an upper-hand and is more likely to be believed than the local indigenous knowledge discourse, which encapsulates Nyaminyami beliefs. Since its construction and the period when it reached its full capacity in 1963, the Lake Kariba water volumes have been variable. But, the most serious decrease was that of the 2015-2016 season, which according to statistics 'dropped below 30%' (The Conversation 2015). In January 2016, it was reported that 'levels fell by 5,58 metres (18,3ft), which is just 1,75 metres (5ft) above the minimum operating level for hydropower (Interview with an Official from ZRA, February 2016). Possible 'scientific' reasons for the drop reported include overuse of the water to generate electricity and low rainfall patterns in the Zambezi catchment area, which coincided with El Nino climatic changes (News24 2015; The Conversation 2015). By December 2015, 'Kariba's reduced output had led to power cuts in both nations (Zimbabwe and Zambia), forcing some mines in Zambia to agree to scale back energy consumption' (Moneyweb 2015).

However, these scientific reasons were challenged by a local discourse and belief in a river god, Nyaminyami, which was advanced by traditional chiefs on both sides of the Lake, of chieftaincies near the Kariba dam wall (The Conversation 2015). As I have indicated above, these contradictions are a vivid indication of the conflicts between science and religion in as far as the existence of the Lake Kariba is concerned (and perceived). Indeed, as

we have seen in Chapter 4, water spirits can lead to drought and drying up of water bodies if they are disrespected. This is usually a form of punishment. For example, among the Shona, if the *njuzu* are too much interfered with, water can disappear and leave drought, (Fontein 2015; 2016). Even though the Lake's authorities are biased towards scientific reasons, later they granted the local Chiefs the authority and resources to appease as another solution that could have solved the problem. The water decrease was followed by numerous rituals enacted on both sides of the Lake, such as the one presided over by Chief Musampakaruma held on 31 October 2015 (Bulawayo24 2015). This series of rituals was well documented in different newspapers, and is confirmed locally. Thus, though newspapers and magazines to a large extent reframed and portrayed a false image of Nyaminyami, to some degree the stories they document correlate with the local discourse. The elders requested rains to fill in the Lake, from the spirits currently residing in the Lake. This strengthened the people's entitlement to the Lake. Therefore, utilizing the 'water as an index of power' concept (Fontein, 2015; 2016), it can be argued that the presence of Nyaminyami in the Lake and the waters of the Lake have the power to shape language and practices relating to water at Kariba. The reduction of water volumes led the Lake's authorities to grant the local chiefs the authority to conduct rituals in the Lake, which strengthened their legitimacy to accessing the waterscape, as it shelters their spirits.

8.10. Politics surrounding who should appease in the Lake

The decrease of water volumes in 2015 that stretched to 2016, as mentioned in the previous section, further necessitated the need and claims by other chieftaincies from Hurungwe Rural District (HRD) (such as Nyamhunga, Mudzimu, Dandawa and Nematombo) to propitiate in Lake Kariba. These chieftaincies were also victims of the Kariba resettlement, but evidently they had occupied areas below the Kariba gorge. Thus much- if not all- of their previous land was not inundated by the Lake Kariba (see Marowa 2015a; 2015b). As they were also facing rain challenges they sought to appease in the Lake, claiming that their own spirits were also in the Lake Kariba, but their claims were somewhat stimulated by the need to access the Lake's resources such as fish and revenue accrued via corporate social responsibility from local companies. Elders at an FGD session in Nabhole village (Mola) mentioned to me that Chief Nyamhunga and one spirit medium known as aNzou (who also comes from Nyamhunga chieftaincy) used their ZANU PF political connections with the then DA Muhlenga and outwit Chief Mola and Musampakaruma from appeasing in the

Lake.¹¹⁵ Understanding the development of these changes is crucial, as they shaped the understandings of Nyaminyami beliefs in the contemporary situation, as the following chapter shall explore. These debates over access to the Lake actually enhance our understanding of the politics of waterscapes that has been discovered throughout the globe (see Fontein 2015; Klare 2001 cited in Clayton and Opotow 2003; Molle *et al* 2009; Strang 2004).¹¹⁶ As noted by Veronica Strang, ‘all over the blue planet, even in the most rained-upon nations, people are engaged in conflicts over water. There are debates about who should own it, manage it, have access to it, profit from it, control it or regulate it’ (Strang 2004: 1).

Since 2016 chief Mola and Musampakaruma no longer appease in the Lake, they are now invited to the ceremonies presided over by Chief Nyamhunga.¹¹⁷ Chief Nyamhunga appeases at the *Kariva* (the rock that sheltered Nyaminyami) and claims that the rock did not shelter Nyaminyami, but sheltered their own spirit, called *chitehwe*. According to aNzou, *Chitehwe* was ‘not a water spirit in the form of a mermaid or a snake, but it was an ancestral spirit that provided them with rains’ (Interviewed, 8 August 2017). Thus, there are now contradictions surrounding the *Kariva* landscape. Thereby, giving birth to a ‘politics of the Landscape’ at Kariba. When I asked aNzou whether the people of Nyamhunga believed in Nyaminyami, his reply was that:

“... no, our elders who lived along the Zambezi for centuries, they did not know anything called Nyaminyami. Nyaminyami, you hear it being talked about by the BaTonga and the Shangwe people... us, the Korekore people and the Shangwe people, we speak the similar language but we are not the same people. There are some differences in our language terms” (interviewed 8 August 2017).

However, the claims by the people from Nyamhunga did not go without criticism. The people of Mola interviewed by Tombindo (2016) and those I interviewed at an FGD in Mola narrated their resentment towards these waterscape- ‘alienating’ developments. One second generation resettler I interviewed in Kariba (who is originally from Mola) explained to me, by means of drawings, the chieftaincy distribution along the Zambezi. He said that:

¹¹⁵ ZANU PF has had wider support in these chiefdoms as compared to Nyaminyami Rural District, evidenced by the outcome of the previous elections. The people of Mola and Musampakaruma sometimes vote for MDC (opposition party) because they are discontented with their marginalization in the state as well as their underdevelopment that they consider a legacy of the ZANU PF government’s neglect of their district. They are also discontented by the fact that since the move they have not been given the control over Lake Kariba which they consider as theirs. The District administrator for Kariba who was also in support of the ZANU PF thus allied with the Hurungwe chieftaincies to sideline Nyaminyami chieftaincies.

¹¹⁶ Joost Fontein writes about politics of the Lake Mutirikwi waterscape; Francis Molle *et al* write about contested waterscapes in the Mekong region in Southeast Asia.

¹¹⁷ Nyamhunga is both the name of a Chief and the name of the Chiefdom in which he rules. In some sections of this Chapter, and in the next Chapter, I will use the term Nyamhunga in many times.

“... The people who occupied areas inundated by the Lake were Musampakaruma and Mola. It is us who have the right to appease in the Lake..., Chief Nyamhunga and his people lived below the gorge and their graves were not inundated, making it difficult for them to have spirits in the Lake that they claim to have. Nyamhunga people’s claims are motivated by the need to control resources in the Lake.” (Interviewed, 8 November 2017)

Thus, the likelihood that Chief Nyamhunga is aspiring for the Lake’s resources is narrated in the people of Mola’s own terms. Elders at an FGD in Mola also confirmed that the reason why Nyamhunga and his people are claiming that their spirits are in the Lake is because they want to justify and legitimize their desire to have access to the resources such as fish, water, islands and so on. Since early 2016, the Lake Kariba- just like Lake Mutirikwi in the post-land reform period (Fontein 2015) - has been an index of numerous conflicting ‘registers of meaning’, told by different plaintiffs across diverse ‘regimes of rule’ (Ibid). These developments significantly shape my account of the contemporary beliefs in Nyaminyami that I shall fully explore in the next chapter. The BaTonga people claim the Lake’s resources because they need to develop their underdeveloped state, which is significantly testified by their failure to satisfactorily reach Stages 3 and 4, in terms of Scudder’s FSF framework (Scudder 2009). So, there are ongoing contests, claims and counter-claims relating to the Kariba waterscape. As Opatow and Brook (2003) argued, people in ‘environmental’ competitive conflicts emphasize the positive characteristics of their own group (the in-group) and the negative characteristics of groups with which they are in conflict (the out-group). This is done to outmanoeuvre each other.

8.11. Conclusion

This chapter has examined aspects surrounding belief in Nyaminyami in the post-resettlement period, including people’s attempts to resuscitate Nyaminyami beliefs through the naming processes, crafts and re-introduction of Nyaminyami ‘festivals’. The chapter further illustrated how Nyaminyami beliefs and ritual practices are used in a variety of ways and contexts to justify regimes of power and rule, and to access economic benefits. They are also manipulated, and contested in struggles for power and to have power validated by relationship with the powerful water spirit. I ended this chapter by showing the exclusion of NRDC Chiefs from propitiating their ancestors. This particular ending shapes the argument proposed in the following chapter, because the dispossession of the Lake from the BaTonga is one of the major reasons why Nyaminyami belief systems are declining. The declining of Nyaminyami beliefs is the focus of the next chapter. Chapter 8 and Chapter 9 are therefore coherently connected.

CHAPTER 9: DECLINE AND APPROPRIATION: THE CURRENT SITUATION REGARDING NYAMINYAMI BELIEFS

‘... Many (African) cultural beliefs and practices have been undermined and transformed by changing modes of production, social organization and beliefs brought about by colonialism, capitalism and Christianity’ (Bernard 2013: 139).

9.1. Introduction.

The main purpose of this chapter is to document the current perceptions and practices relating to Nyaminyami, which point to both the appropriation of the Nyaminyami idea and to the gradual declining of the whole essence of Nyaminyami beliefs among some BaTonga people. ‘Appropriation’ here refers to the ‘exploitative’ use of the Nyaminyami idea in particular and changing socio-economic and political processes over time. The chapter is mainly concerned with events occurring from 2016 to 2017, the time at which research for this thesis was conducted, after significant changes had occurred in connection with the disregarding of Nyaminyami Rural District chieftaincies (i.e. Mola and Musampakaruma), in terms of their right to appease in Lake Kariba. I believe the current situation regarding Nyaminyami speaks volumes, as will be shown in the discussion below, to the gradual deterioration of these beliefs, because there are significant differences between the past and the current understandings of the prevalence of Nyaminyami among some BaTonga people. Even if the relationship of the people with Nyaminyami is declining, the idea of Nyaminyami is currently appropriated by some BaTonga for wide ranging socio- economic and political agendas.

The main argument is that the contemporary Nyaminyami situation was shaped by the complex histories - involving contact with colonialism, resettlement, restrictions from accessing the Lake Kariba, and the continued contact with Christianity, and so on - surrounding him, that have been examined in the preceding chapters. The argument is informed by the above excerpt from Bernard (2013) which aptly captures the factors that led to the decline of Nyaminyami beliefs. As elaborated by Bernard (2013), many African cultural beliefs and practices have been undermined by numerous social transformations that they have undergone. Although some Christianity groups continues to demonize Nyaminyami beliefs, I am not going to give an in-depth analysis of this impact for the sake of avoiding repetition as I have already explored this issue in the previous Chapter, and there happen to be the same dimensions of the impact of Christianity in the contemporary context, as in the past.

I argue that nobody nowadays talks about Nyaminyami in relation to everyday life, but stories about him are now embroiled in folktales; and to me, this indicates a decline of

Nyaminyami beliefs, as well as the appropriation of the idea of Nyaminyami. In some respects, he is mentioned in the discussions and debates about the politics of the landscape and belonging held among some BaTonga, especially in relation to their claims of autochthony and ownership of the Zambezi waterscape. Most of these claims take the form of ‘hidden transcripts’, to use Scott’s (1990) terminology, in the sense that people discuss them within their homesteads where they are not seen by the authorities, though sometimes chiefs and politicians raise these claims in the meetings they attend with authorities. There is a rich body of work that has been published on landscape politics and belonging debates (Basso 1996; Fontein 2015; Hughes 2006, 2010; McGregor 2009). The whole idea of politics of the landscape speaks to the claims of land ownership asserted by localized groups. Landscape and belonging speak to the claims people make in proclaiming autochthony and identity in terms of a particular place, or in the words of Basso, landscape and belonging concept speaks to the ‘sense of place’ (Basso 1996: 54). The two debates (i.e. politics of the landscape; and landscape and belonging) are interrelated.

However, I further discovered that Nyaminyami is needed for environmental conservation, mainly by people occupy the fishing camps that are within Mola, rather than in Musampakaruma, due to numerous factors to be elaborated below. I also argue that the use of the Nyaminyami idea for political reasons has now become enhanced, mainly because these particular BaTonga people have been banned from appeasing in Lake Kariba. In the previous chapter, I briefly hinted at these debates, in the context of Nyaminyami rituals, but in this chapter, I fully explore them in the context of the alienation of the Lake and its resources, as this dispossession significantly shapes contemporary everyday politics in these chieftaincies. This is largely because senses of place change, and they are also related to time, because places are continuous states of becoming (Ashworth and Graham 2005; Kahn 1996). The ways in which landscapes are socially, politically, economically and religiously interpreted and constructed, change overtime. The ways in which the Zambezi landscape is now perceived and interpreted, is very different from the ways in which it was interpreted in the past.

The politics of the landscape is here understood and is to be examined below through two different components. The first, and widely studied, strand involves the contests between BaTonga people in general and the Lake’s authorities (see Hughes 2010; Marowa 2010; Mashingaidze 2013; McGregor 2003a; 2009). The other strand, which has not been fully explored in previous research, is inter- chieftdom contests over the Lake.

These contests have also emerged in the context of the resurgence of the wave of the ‘politics of recognition’, that has dominated current minority politics in southern Africa, in which the minority groups claim inclusion in the states in which they feel marginalized and dominated by the majority groups, in relation to resource access (see Carruthers 2003; Lawy 2017; Mujere 2012; Sithole 2018; Wolmer 2007). As Ashworth and Graham (2005:3) postulate, ‘in defining the discourses of inclusion and exclusion that constitute identity, people call upon an affinity with places, or, at least, with representations of places, which, in turn, are used to legitimate their claim to those places.’ In these terms, relevant parallels may be drawn between the Batonga case, and other minority groups’ political situation. These debates have also led to the resurfacing of the frustration of some BaTonga politicians and elders, who were practically excluded in the Zimbabwe Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) of the 2000s, which only benefitted the majority groups i.e. the Shona and Ndebele, and they now turn to the lake as their own land (Marowa 2010).

It is also vital to note that the usage of the Nyaminyami idea for the aforementioned purposes is not identical among all the BaTonga social groupings. The particularities/details of each usage varies along gender, age, class and income lines. For example, the usage of Nyaminyami in the politics of the landscape is mainly prevalent among the elite and traditional leaders; this is because the elites need control of the Lake for economic reasons, whereas traditional leaders need to strengthen their political positions as they fight to safeguard their cultural heritage. As Bernard (2010) notes, the material elements, wealth and security that come with beliefs in water spirits may attract agency that is governed by self-interests and the desire to assert power. While a few people now still believe Nyaminyami causes earthquakes, it is worth mentioning that the understandings of Nyaminyami’s importance through earthquakes, is now minimal. I indicated how Nyaminyami was or is used for this reason in the preceding chapter, and for that reason I am not here going to take the matter any further.

This chapter describes the contemporary situation with regards to the beliefs relating to Nyaminyami in each chieftaincy, which is then followed by a discussion and analysis of current practices relating to Nyaminyami. It is significantly underpinned by the resettlement theories, and the religion and social change framework, clearly stated in Chapter Two. When societies undergo rapid and significant social changes like involuntary resettlement, their religions and cultures (inclusive of water spirit beliefs) are significantly altered. It is clear that the decline of the Nyaminyami beliefs are a long-term legacy of the resettlement of 1958

described in Chapter Six. Where applicable and necessary, the chapter brings in theoretical approaches to water divinity complexities in the discussion and analysis.

9.2. The current situation regarding Nyaminyami in Mola

This section presents the current narratives regarding beliefs in Nyaminyami in Mola. It shows that the Nyaminyami idea is now mainly needed for politics of the landscape and belonging debates. It is needed for these reasons mainly by the traditional leaders and politicians, for their own political, social and economic agendas. This use of the Nyaminyami idea shows how the interpretations of water divinity belief systems are complex and changing over time, and sometimes these can be enhanced and strengthened, depending on the political, social and economic realities at each specific period. While the revival of the enactment of rituals in the Lake, back in the 1980s, had encouraged people's articulations of belonging to the Zambezi, as noted in the previous chapter, it is clear that these claims are now enhanced and strengthened because people have been completely barred from propitiating their ancestors in the Lake. The stimuli for the similar assertions of belonging to a similar landscape are significantly different. Furthermore, in Mola, Nyaminyami is no longer important in everyday life, but people need ancestral spirits more than Nyaminyami. I shall further demonstrate the importance of ancestors in the Discussion section.

9.2.1. Politics of the landscape

Various portions of the Lake Kariba, especially on the south bank, are contested between the BaTonga and the water management authorities. In all these contests, the Kariba gorge area is no exception. People contest over landscapes, citing their past settlement on those landscapes as justification to their claims. Around the Kariba gorge area, controversy over these narrative forms of evoking the past is often implicit in traditional ritual, as the controversy is related to who has the right to conduct traditional ceremonies, what their content is, which songs and dances are performed. In these claims of who has the right to conduct rituals in the Lake, the presence of Nyaminyami in the Lake is mentioned by the BaTonga as one of the reasons they need to propitiate therein. As I have indicated in Chapter 8, their desire to site Nyaminyami and other ancestors in the Lake, was as a result of the fights between them and the people of Nyamhunga over accessing Lake Kariba. As Tombindo noted, the incorporation of chief Nyamhunga in matters pertaining to the traditional rites at the Lake and any revenues or profits that accrue to the displaced peoples (particularly from Zambezi River Authority), is

a cause of resentment among Mola people (Tombindo 2016: 116). They regard this as dispossession of their Lake and its resources. Commenting on this, the Mola Chief said that:

We used to go to the Lake Kariba near Kariba gorge to appease our spirits in the Lake, Nyaminyami included. Since I became Chief in the mid-1990s, I was the one who could clap hands and throw beads, cloths and coins in the Lake, calling out names of the spirits in the water. Among all the spirits in the water, the spirit I could name first was Nyaminyami. Nyaminyami - we do not see it today, but we as leaders believe it is still there in the Lake. The role it played before the move ought to be forever respected... I am shocked to hear some Korekore people who occupied the confluence-zone (that is where Kafue and Zambezi meet) in Chirundu, claiming ownership of the Lake... Nyamhunga is saying that his area and graves of his ancestors were covered by the water in 1958... You hear him saying '... I was facing troubles before 2015 because I was not appeasing in the lake, now that I am appeasing in the lake the troubles are now ending' aaaah (he laughs) how can that be possible?. If we are to go the map before the inundation, you will see that Nyamhunga's spirits were downstream and not in the Lake. The Lake is ours (Mola, Sampakaruma and Sinakatenge). The stone near the gorge known as Kariba sheltered Nyaminyami, but Nyamhunga says the stone sheltered Chitehwe (their great ancestor). The people in Nyamhunga do not believe in Nyaminyami. They say 'let us appease and you (Mola and Sampakaruma) come see what we will be doing; we respect you as Valley Chiefs'...So this year we are not going there. Nowadays there are many accidents occurring in the Lake, cases of canoes capsizing, crocodile and hippo attacks have increased because the water spirits are angry about what is happening. Look these days you even hear that lions are getting into villages attacking livestock: goats and donkeys, and in rare cases people are also attacked; all is because of the anger of the spirits. (15 June 2017).

In the above excerpt we see that the water spirits (Nyaminyami included) are believed to be causing on-land misfortunes. Thus, in the BaTonga's cosmological understandings, there is an inextricable connection between the water and land. In this regard water is an 'index of power' (Fontein 2015: 83), as it shapes life on land. The excerpt also involves the redrawing of pre-displacement boundaries by Chief Mola, aimed at side-lining Nyamhunga, even though his understandings of the boundary have been disputed by the people from Nyamhunga. As Trudeau (2006) and McGregor (2009) agree, there is a connection between boundaries and the politics of landscape and belonging. These boundaries are exclusionary, in the way they are drawn between 'self' and 'other' (McGregor 2009: 155). People fight over boundaries, despite the fact that they no longer live on that landscape, and the boundaries have actually been submerged by the Lake. Henceforth, memories and understandings of past boundaries of landscapes can continue to influence contemporary politics, and these are interwoven with the Nyaminyami occurrences of the past. The BaTonga people also cite the *Kariva*, the Nyaminyami sacred area, which is now claimed by Nyamhunga people, as having been under their jurisdiction.

In a harsh tone, Chief Mola went on to say that there was a time ‘when we were asked to come and support Chief Nyamhunga when he was appeasing in the Lake, the way they do their rituals is not the way they are supposed to be conducted. They bring girls on menstrual cycle to participate in the rituals. At one occasion one girl broke the pottery with beer. This was because the spirits were angry since girls on menstrual cycle must not participate in these ceremonies...’ These words demonstrate that controversies over access to waterscapes can involve opposing parties invalidating each other’s ways of propitiating, and that for the BaTonga people, the water spirits can be disillusioned with the methods used in propitiating them. The same anger of the Chief was also reiterated by SGRs at a Focus Group Interview session. One of them said that:

Both the former DA and the current DA do not know the repercussions of what they are doing. They gave Nyamhunga powers over the lake because they are related. ‘We’ the BaTonga have no one in the higher offices whom we are related to, hence they oppress us. There are rich men born in Nyamhunga chieftom who own Kapenta companies in Kariba town, who bribed the DAs so that they give them powers over their lake. Surprisingly, sometimes it is not Chief Nyamhunga himself who gets into the Lake to appease but a certain Kapenta businessman (identified as Anzou) in Kariba who does that... (14 June 2017).

In such controversies, ‘one important way of legitimating claims to political and religious authority all over Africa, is to establish one’s ancestors as having arrived first’ (McGregor 2005b: 36-37) within a particular landscape. In this case, Chief Mola and the elders also use the idea that their ancestors were the first to inhabit the Kariba gorge area, to legitimize their claims to the Lake. I have documented quotations in Chapter 5, in which people narrate the history of settlement in the Valley. Therefore, according to Chief Mola, Nyamhunga and his people must not claim autochthony, belonging and ownership of the Zambezi landscape and the Lake Kariba because it is not their landscape that was submerged, as they were, or are still, regarded as refugees.

In Mola, I also discovered that many women do not narrate the story of Nyaminyami in the same manner as men do, especially in connection to the politics of the landscape. Women who happen to talk about Nyaminyami, are those from the chieftaincy class, but they do not connect Nyaminyami to politics. For example, I interviewed one ritual wife, who explicitly narrated to me Nyaminyami’s roles in the past, but did not connect them to the landscape and waterscape debates, partly because she is in her 90s, and thus may not be concerned about the current waterscape politics. I have indicated that only a few women attended the rituals at Kariba due to logistical challenges, and this is the reason why interest in Nyaminyami is not so widespread among many women, especially among the non-elite. Therefore, the contemporary understanding of the belief in Nyaminyami is gendered.

However, this is not to say that women are not involved in politics; they are involved from another perspective, especially with regards to the national party politics of ZANU PF (ruling party) and MDC (opposition party) contestations.

9.2.2. Landscape and belonging

Every river is more than just one river. Every rock is more than just one rock
(Greider and Garkovich 1994, p. 1)

The above excerpt vividly entails that every geographical landscape feature has a set of registers of meaning attached to it by humans, that go beyond the natural understanding of the landscape feature itself. In many societies, geographical features are entangled in the narratives of landscape, belonging and identity. Belonging refers to an idea of membership in a polity and its associated territory (Trudeau 2006). The concept of landscape entails the inextricable connection between nature and humans. In support of this definition, Greider and Garkovich (1994: 1) argue that ‘landscapes are the symbolic environments created by human acts of conferring meaning to nature and the environment, of giving the environment definition and form from a particular angle of vision and through a special filter of values and beliefs’. Every landscape is a symbolic environment. These landscapes reflect self-definitions that are grounded in culture’. As McGregor (2008) points out, the BaTonga’s claims of belonging to the Zambezi were not effaced by resettlement processes, as they are described in Chapter 6. The people continue to define themselves as ‘the river people’, those who belong to the Zambezi (or Lake Kariba). Even some SGRs who actually had no first-hand experience of living along the river, also regard themselves as the people of the river. Some BaTonga elders talk about Nyaminyami with regard to their connections to the Zambezi landscape. These are usually the First Generation Resettlers who were removed from the Valley. They sometimes refer to themselves as people of the river, *Basilwizi*, because they regard themselves as autochthonous and belonging to the Zambezi. The following is a quotation adopted from Tombindo (2016) citing Chief Mola. The quotation makes it clear that Nyaminyami is inextricably linked with belonging issues. The chief said that:

Nyaminyami represents a grant parent with major roles being provision of food and protection of all the inhabitants of the Valley; it makes us who we are. The Nyaminyami gives BaTonga people their roots in the Zambezi Valley. When we grew up, we were not told of any movement by our forefathers having come from other places to invade the Zambezi... we were and are from the Zambezi. That is why even so many years after the white government stole our heritage (the river) for their own benefits, I can safely say I belong to the Zambezi, we belong to the Zambezi... bakulwizi (*those*

from the river) and the ZRA knows this... that is why they always consult us when there are problems at the Lake (interviewed by Tombindo 2016: 80).

This quotation is written in the ‘present tense’, giving the impression that Nyaminyami provides meat today, but this is not the case on the ground. Embroiled in the belonging claims, is the perception that they (BaTonga) themselves are the guardians and stewards of the Lake. However, some youths also regard themselves as the ‘people of the Zambezi’, even though they did not live there; this is largely because of numerous political and economic agendas linked to the need to benefit from the Lake’s resources, such as free fishing rights, and employment in companies surrounding the Lake itself. Similarly, McGregor found that in Binga the ‘idea of being a ‘river people’ became more, rather than less important over time, even as a new political generation came to the fore who had no first- hand experience of life along the river or of resettlement’ (McGregor 2009:153).

9.2.3. Folktales/ folklore

I discovered that many children know about Nyaminyami through folklore, but however, they are not learning a lot from folklore because they lack a deeper understanding of the roles of Nyaminyami among their past elders. Nyaminyami is mentioned in passing when elders narrate about their life in the Valley. Many First Generation Resettlers narrate how they used to cross the river, and how Nyaminyami protected people when crossing the river. The majority of the school pupils I interviewed happened to be only interested in issues that include Nyaminyami as having provided people meat, and having been separated from his so called ‘wife’ by the Kariba Dam. School pupils and Youths were not even involved in the Nyaminyami rituals that used to occur at Kariba, partly because they were too young. Chief Mola and other elders narrated that lack of organizational capacity and of funding, were the reasons why only a few elders attended the ceremonies in Kariba town. Some youths do not actually believe the Nyaminyami story, even though they know about it. One youth male from Chitenge Village (who was once employed at a local Safari)¹¹⁸ doubts the whole story of Nyaminyami in the following words:

Hazviko zviyazviya (*There is nothing like that*). I hear many people talking about Nyaminyami, but who saw it? There are just perceptions of what the past might have been like. I do not believe those things. If you read books and magazines it is mentioned that people believe in Nyaminyami. Those stories are in the books and not on the ground. People who write those stories will be looking for money only... (Informal conversation 9, June, 2017).¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Safaris are tourism industries that focuses on game drives.

¹¹⁹I have indicated that this youth is now employed at a local Safari. Most of his time as spent in the safari (bush), and might have influenced his perceptions on Nyaminyami and the entire BaTonga traditional beliefs.

It is worth noting that the presentation above on the role of Nyaminyami idea in folklore in Mola, is also common and similar to that in Musampakaruma. For the sake of avoiding repetition, I shall not rewrite a section on folklore and folktale below, when I give a data presentation of the current situation in Musampakaruma, relating to Nyaminyami belief systems.

9.2.4. Environmental conservation

This is one of the differences that the people of the two chieftaincies have. Chikozho et al (2015) vividly argue that Nyaminyami has a decisive influence in environmental conservation in BaTonga societies. However, they do not give the specific BaTonga societies in which this role is prevalent. ‘According to the Tonga epistemological and metaphysical beliefs, what one may see as just a river or a physical landmark, is not just so in the lives of the (Ba)Tonga, rather the river is a symbol and embodiment of life and sacred home of their river-god’ (Chikozho et al. 2015: 253). As such, Tombindo (2016) was informed by some BaTonga in Mola fishing camps, particularly in Sibilobilo and Makuyu that sometimes fishermen talk about Nyaminyami in terms of environmental conservation, where the contamination of water, and engaging in sex, anger Nyaminyami, and thus must be avoided. Chief Mola also emphasized to me that engagement in sexual intercourse in the Lake Kariba, actually angers the water spirits (Interview 12 June 2018). Some people of Mola hold these perceptions about Lake Kariba, because they are still close to the Lake, unlike those residing in Musampakaruma.

9.3. The current situation regarding Nyaminyami in Musampakaruma

The previous section has documented the use of Nyaminyami in Mola, and this section is about Musampakaruma. Though headings are similar, this should not be regarded as repetition, because the data presented for each chieftaincy, is somewhat different. The fact that these chieftaincies are not in the same geographical space, implies that their current stories about Nyaminyami can be different.

No one nowadays, in Sampakaruma/ Musampakaruma talks about Nyaminyami in relation to everyday life, nor are there religious ceremonies or sites dedicated to Nyaminyami in the Chieftaincy's geographical or ecological landscape. In support of this observation, one second generation resettler said that:

In this chiefdom we have no areas where we assemble and conduct Nyaminyami festivals. Our land (i.e. trees, mountains, rivers, livestock etc.) in this chieftaincy is dedicated to our dead elders. Nyaminyami was venerated along the lake. We used to go together with other Tonga chiefs

(Chiefs Nebiri and Mola) once a year in Kariba town, so that we perform rituals related to this great *mizimu*, before the privilege to appease was given to Nyamhunga. The funds for Nyaminyami festivals were donated by the NRDC or Zambezi River Authority... In this chiefdom we only gather to appease our ancestors only.

Like Mola informants cited above, this informant admits that people no longer appease in the Lake. In the same vein, one spirit- possessed youth that the researcher interviewed, commenting on the absence of tangible sacred places dedicated for Nyaminyami and people possessed by Nyaminyami spirits said:

“I am possessed with lion spirits, in fact there are 7 men possessed with lion spirits, apparently there are no women who are possessed with lion spirits in this ward (9)..., I also have the gift to heal the sick, and I am able to cure people who are bitten by common snakes like Chiva... I have cured many people. Recently I cured a young girl who had been bitten by a snake in their garden. During the times of poor rainfall we are called for so that we do rituals associated with bringing the rains to the community...” (25, April, 2017).

9.3.1. Politics of the Landscape ideas

I have discovered that in Musampakaruma (in the same way as in Mola), the elite and the traditional leaders sometimes refer to Nyaminyami’s existence together with other ancestral spirits in the Lake, in their claims of autochthony and ownership of the Lake, in ways that undermine Chief Nyamhunga, whom they regard as an invader. Again, similarly to Mola, while some elderly women interviewed in Musampakaruma commented on Nyaminyami, particularly citing its common role of meat provision, some women did not want to comment on Nyaminyami, even though they knew what it was or is. The reason may be that people have lost confidence in an invisible Nyaminyami, and that he is no longer that relevant in their lives and women’s silence may tell us about women’s deference to men. One woman said:

... Nyaminyami... Ummm... Ummmmm..., no ways. I am still trying to think what that might have been. Nyaminyami I never saw when I lived in the Valley. But you may ask men... Go to that hut and ask for certain old men who stay there, who might tell you more about Nyaminyami... Ask men of the VaGoba or BaTonga tribes only, you may even ask the chief, who might know something about that (Nyaminyami)... (28 March 2017)

People can lose confidence in their spirits, especially if they do not experience them. The following quotation is from an interview with another woman, who happened to be very ambivalent about the whole issue of Nyaminyami, to the extent of referring me to men if I needed to know more about Nyaminyami. She said that:

I stayed in the Valley but I never saw it (Nyaminyami); we used to hear stories about it from our elders... We could also be shown signs of its presence in the river with water sometimes turning black or rolling at one places like a whirlpool. The Zambezi waters could roll at one place so much so that easy navigation was prohibited. Even today in the lake there are still areas where the water rolls or turns black. I never saw it. Ask men; they

have more knowledge about Nyaminyami. I have little knowledge about it, I may lie to you... (28 March, 2017).

9.3.2. Landscape and belonging

As in Mola, some elders from Musampakaruma narrate the story of Nyaminyami in ways that point to their autochthonous claims to the Zambezi landscape. However, given the fact that the chiefdom is multi-ethnic, as I indicated in Chapter One, some Shona (Karanga speakers) do not hold beliefs in Nyaminyami. These Karanga people do not engage in the politics of landscape of the Zambezi, because they did not come from there. One politician narrated the distribution of beliefs in Nyaminyami in ways that clearly indicate that not all ethnicities in Musampakaruma believe in Nyaminyami. He said that:

‘... Nyaminyami is the great ancestor of us, the BaTonga and Shangwe people. It is the great spirit of the underwater represented by the presence of a snake. But, there are also people from Masvingo who live in here, those ones do not believe in Nyaminyami...’ (Interview 7 April 2017).

This elder talked about Nyaminyami in the present tense, giving the impression that the beliefs are still strong, but many informants, and my own participant observation, speak and point to the decline of these beliefs. From the above excerpt, we see that the Karanga people from Masvingo do not hold beliefs in Nyaminyami. In Dondoro Village I was hosted by a Karanga family. Whenever I came back from the field, they would ask me what people were saying about Nyaminyami, in ways which showed their curiosity, as they themselves did not hold beliefs in Nyaminyami. However, to some degree, the local Karanga curiosity may not indicate lack of belief in water spirits, but rather an implicit acknowledgement that they have no prior claims to the local Nyaminyami beliefs. According to Aschwanden (1989) and Fontein (2015) many Karanga people of Masvingo province, Southern Zimbabwe, have deep-seated beliefs in water spirit issues.

9.4. The current situation in Sinakatenge in relation to Nyaminyami beliefs.

The people of Sinakatenge do engage in the politics of the Landscape in the portion of the Lake, under Binga, which is part of their Rural District. McGregor (2003a, b; 2008; 2009) observed that the people of Binga claim ownership of the Lake, and they used their past memories of interaction with the Zambezi to claim entitlement to the Lake, as well as access to its resources. However, she did not discover the prevalence of belief in river gods there, and neither does she mention the use of the existence of a river god in these politics of the landscape debates in that portion of the Lake.

I also did research in Binga, particularly in Sinakatenge, and did not find evidence of the existence of beliefs in a river god. The Chief Sinakatenge himself advised me to go to Mola and Musampakaruma chiefdoms in the Nyaminyami Rural District. He said: ‘... *did you (referring to the researcher) go to Nyaminyami Rural District especially in Mola and Musampakaruma? That is where Nyaminyami is mainly known, and people used to do rituals in his honour and their area is going Nyaminyami Rural District...*’ (Interview 01 September 2017). This indicates that he precisely knows the specific locations in north-western Zimbabwe where belief in Nyaminyami is widely followed.

Some elders I interviewed at a Focus Group Discussion at Sinakatenge Village Head homestead denied the contention that they believed in a river god. One elder said that: ‘... *why do you not go to the Shona and ask them? They might have worshipped Nyaminyami. The Shona are in Musampakaruma...Here in Sinakatenge we have never heard of people who revered Nyaminyami. Even when we were still residing along the Zambezi we did not know of anything called Nyaminyami...*’ What this elder was saying correlates, with my findings I presented in Chapter 5, that today there are Shona people, of the Shangwe dialect, who believe in Nyaminyami, and that they might have introduced the idea of Nyaminyami to the BaTonga people. In Sinakatenge there is no need for Nyaminyami in concerns about landscape and belonging, or in folklore. Some people know about Nyaminyami, presumably from reading in the newspapers and possibly from communicating with other BaTonga people. I have argued in the previous chapter that knowing a story, does not mean that you necessarily believe it.

9.5. Discussion of findings.

The discussion now engages more widely with the use of the Nyaminyami idea for the above-mentioned purposes, showing similarities and differences in both Mola and Musampakaruma chieftaincies. In doing so, the discussion counters the contention in tourism magazines and newspapers that beliefs in Nyaminyami are still widely followed in all the BaTonga societies, although ethnographic evidence for this research has discovered that beliefs in Nyaminyami have deteriorated because nobody nowadays talks about Nyaminyami in relation to everyday life. Many tourism magazines write in the present tense, giving the impression that the people still claim that they obtain meat from Nyaminyami as they did in pre-colonial times, which is not the current situation on the ground. One tourist brochure documents that: ‘the (Ba)Tonga people believe that Nyami-Nyami is responsible for bringing water to their crops and fish for

them to eat' (Livingstone Tourism Association, <http://www.livingstonetourism.com/blog/livingstone-be-here-be-inspired-the-nyami-nyami-le/>). Many of the conclusions about Nyaminyami in these magazines are based on hearsay, and not on ethnographic research. Even the more recent doctoral thesis by Saidi (2015) suggests, in the present tense, that Nyaminyami 'is' the major force for the BaTonga people. Even the relaunching of the Nyaminyami Festival, recently advertised by the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) organization, seems to make an impression that Nyaminyami rituals are being revived (The Herald 20 July 2018). However, the idea and motive behind this festival is to market Kariba dam as a tourist destination, and not to revitalize Nyaminyami beliefs.

Given the above data presentation, it is safe to conclude that Nyaminyami beliefs are declining, as I have not come across anybody who continues to talk about him in relation to everyday life in chiefdoms, let alone in Sinakatenge, where beliefs in a river god had never existed before. I carefully listened to the people's everyday language and reference to their spiritual figures, and realized that the names of *Leza*, *mizimu*, *mhondolo/ Nevana* are always on the tongues of the people, and more frequently used in their different everyday life economic and cultural contexts, than Nyaminyami. During the rainy seasons, for instance, people always mention that it is the ancestors, *mizimu*, that provide them with rain and make their crops germinate. What has remained for Nyaminyami is the reference to him in the politics of environmental conservation, landscape and belonging at Lake Kariba, as well as in folklore. These aforementioned purposes better explain the persistence of Nyaminyami beliefs in the contemporary context, in which Nyaminyami beliefs continue to be manipulated, leading to inconsistencies in their presentation. As Fry (2007: 18) notes 'religious beliefs are variedly manipulated even in concrete situations,' and 'have no set of consistency.'

It is clear that there are more similarities than differences in the understandings of Nyaminyami today between these aforementioned chieftaincies. However, in Mola there is more emphasis on Nyaminyami than in Musampakaruma, presumably because they are located close to Lake Kariba. As De Wet points out, differences in emplacement help explain why displacees respond differently to the prospects and processes of resettlement (De Wet 2015). The people of Musampakaruma are 150 kilometres closer to Karoi town than Mola, which is 250 kilometres far from Karoi. This close proximity to the towns has stimulated many churches to open more centres in Musampakaruma than in Mola. Christianity has

shunned local traditional beliefs, with Nyaminyami being castigated as a demon.¹²⁰ The people of Musampakaruma also hosted some Karanga immigrants from Masvingo in the 1960s to the 1980s, who have been significantly influencing their lifestyle and religion. All these factors and on- going processes of change make the people Musampakaruma adhere to their BaTonga religious beliefs (inclusive of Nyaminyami) less than the people of Mola. Moreover, the people of Mola interlink environmental conservation issues and the water spirit because they are still close to the Lake, and they have more fishing camps geographically located in the chieftom. This linkage clearly shows the importance of indigenous knowledge systems in the conservation of the environment.

I have indicated that there are no people possessed by Nyaminyami spirits in the *masabe* (alien spirits) possession practices. People are possessed with baboon spirits, lion (*mhondolo*) spirits and healing spirits. Nyaminyami is not included in the *masabe* ceremony procession in either Mola and Musampakaruma, because what the whole idea of the *masabe* ceremony implies, is completely unrelated to the whole understanding of Nyaminyami beliefs. I also discovered that there are no sacred places dedicated to Nyaminyami in the geographical landscapes of these chieftaincies. Sacred places, *malende*, marked by the presence of a baobab tree, are exclusively dedicated to ancestral spirits, especially former dead chiefs, and not to Nyaminyami. The local rivers are very small and not perennial, thereby making connections with water spirits impossible. These rivers are not regarded as sacred, and people use their waters for everyday domestic purposes. As Colson and van Binsbergen have argued ‘the importance of rivers in everyday life and their association with movement, flow and crossing, make African ideas about them rather different from ideas about features of the landscape valued as sacred, such as hills, caves, pools and trees,’ (cited in McGregor 2009: 31). Moreover, Nyaminyami as a water spirit, is not understood through dreams, as is the case with many other water spirits. People only communicate with ancestors through dreams and in trance.

The issue of Nyaminyami is used in the belonging debates by some BaTonga people, principally because Nyaminyami and ancestral spirits in the Lake are regarded as very important to BaTonga traditional religion and identity. As Saidi (2015) notes, the BaTonga people identify themselves with Nyaminyami and the Zambezi Valley. Secondly, when their forefathers had settled along the river or in the Valley, they had revered these spirits. These spirits form part of the discourses of tracing roots to the Zambezi Valley. These claims make

¹²⁰ I have demonstrated the impact of Christianity in Chapter Seven. I have decided not to examine it here because it would mere repetition.

the Zambezi, as place, to be of significance in the people's articulations of their social, cultural, economic and political history. As Kahn (1996) postulates, places are complex constructions of social histories, personal and interpersonal experiences, and selective memory. Thus, the present day generations perceive these spirits as part of their cosmology, despite the fact that they had no first-hand experience of residing along the river. The belonging debates are also premised on the idea that these BaTonga identify themselves with the Zambezi/ Lake Kariba, as mentioned in the previous chapter. Belonging and landscape are inseparable entities. As Basso (1996: 53) makes clear, 'attachments to geographical localities contribute fundamentally to the formation of personal and social identities.' 'Belonging also raises the question of access to resources such as land. The land and belonging nexus has thus seen the rise of debates over autochthony-based claims to land and the conflicts that arise from counter claims' (Mujere 2011: 1125). This land and belonging discussion is therefore followed with a discussion on the politics of the landscape, presented below.

People also use the idea of Nyaminyami in the politics of the landscape. The first strand through which the politics of the landscape at Kariba can be understood, is the inter-chieftaincy contestations over traditional ownership of the Lake. These contestations have not received the attention they deserve in the literature, and this is partly because they are a more contemporary issue. Past literature on the politics of the landscape at Kariba has mainly focused on the contests between the BaTonga and the Lake's authorities (see Hughes 2006; 2010; McGregor 2003a; 2008; Marowa 2010 Mashingaidze 2013). Tombindo (2016) hints at the inter-chieftaincy issue in a few sentences, but did not widely explore it, as this study has sought to. Thus, this study seeks to significantly contribute to the understanding of landscape and belonging at Kariba. It engages the inter-chieftaincy contests over the Lake more widely, in the context of the importance of Nyaminyami in these debates. The BaTonga elders narrate that, since early 2016, they have not been propitiating their ancestors in the Lake, as the then District Administrator (DA) handed over the mandate to do so to Hurungwe chiefdoms, and whose mouthpiece is Chief Nyamhunga. This DA authority is worth further deconstruction largely because secular authority in African societies should usually have little say in determining ritual authority, as it could result in negative spiritual (climatic/ environmental) repercussions.

The disregarding of the BaTonga communities to appeasing in the Lake by the DA resulted in the abandonment of the ritual engagements dedicated to Nyaminyami. They legitimize their claims to the Lake through the presence of Nyaminyami, and other water

spirits. As Chief Mola stated, many accidents, such as drowning and attacks by animals, are now occurring in the Lake because their water spirits are very angry. They are angry because they are not propitiated. The comments by Chief Mola can be connected with the ‘water as an *index of power*’ concept proposed by Fontein (2015: 83), in the sense that Lake Kariba waters have power to drown people as they are inhabited by angry spirits who needs propitiation. Hence, these angry spirits are seen as part of the water materialities that are influencing social and political life. Politics is also influenced, because the dwelling of the water spirits in the Lake strengthen the claims by Chief Mola and Musampakaruma of ownership of the Lake, in ways that sideline Chief Nyamhunga. Sometimes claims of who settled first in the landscape are brought about by the people of Mola, in ways that outmanoeuvre Chief Nyamhunga and his people.

The landscape debates between the Korekore of Nyamhunga and these BaTonga people can be mirrored by the contests between the Nemanwa and Mugabe clans over an area known as Game Park, which lies close to Lake Mutirikwi in the Masvingo area (Fontein, 2006). The memories of past social, political and ritual engagements with the landscape continue to have a powerful potency ready for invocation by different actors, in their complex individual and clan struggles over identity, authority and resources. Both Nemanwa and Mugabe elders refer to the Mutirikwi River as one of the boundaries of their land, as they feel it once was, and should be again (Ibid: 229). They can also be mirrored by the Khoisan and Cape Nguni groups’ historical contests over the pool of Gxubuse in South Africa, which is ‘marked with a deep history of displacement, ethnic struggles, and racial conflict over land and resources’ (Bernard 2013: 146). Thus, African landscapes in general are embroiled in the more contentious contests of ownership, autochthony, belonging, and identity; but these take various forms, and are variedly distributed in different societies. The BaTonga people perceive Chief Nyamhunga’s claims over the Lake as greedy, because some of the people from Nyamhunga have benefitted from the fast track land reform programme (FTLRP) of the year 2000, and they occupy lands with fertile soils (more fertile than the BaTonga lands), meaning they are possibly food secure.

However, there is also another strand through which politics of the waterscape at Kariba can be understood. This involves the contests between politicians and elders (of Mola and Musampakaruma) and the Lake Kariba authorities (i.e. ZRA and NRDC) in relation to accessing the Lake. The Chiefs, politicians and elites have had meetings with the Lake’s officials on many occasions, where they raise their rights to the Lake, but their claims are often overlooked. Their voices are not paid attention to by the powerful Shona people in

offices, because they, the BaTonga people, are the minority and powerless. They are under-represented in the administration offices. As Lawy (2017: 193) argues, voice is (un)heard or (mis)recognized on a societal level as well as on a legal or political level, as this relates to relationships of power that exist between speakers and listeners. Whenever there are development projects occurring along the Lake, they approach the developers that there be a quarter of jobs reserved for BaTonga youths, but they are not heard. For example when Sino-Hydro Company commenced extending the electricity turbines at the dam, it hired nearly 1000 employees who signed up for 5 year contracts. However, with the high unemployment rate in Zimbabwe, these contracts were competitive, and sadly a few or none of the BaTonga youths were employed. The majority of those employed were Shona and Ndebele from other parts of Zimbabwe. This strand/issue has received much attention in the literature (see Hughes 2006; McGregor 2009), but those who focused on it did not utilize Mola and Musampakaruma as their cases. They mainly referred to Binga. In Binga, the main driver for the calls to access the Lake has been the Basilwizi Trust, a BaTonga civil society group (Manyena 2013; McGregor 2009; Saidi 2017), which stopped operating in Nyaminyami Rural District in 2010, due to a number of logistical challenges (cf Munyaradzi 2014), leaving the district with no effective lobby group for the BaTonga calls of inclusion. These debates have also emerged in the context of the resurgence of the wave of the ‘politics of recognition’ and ‘inclusion’ that has dominated contemporary minority politics in southern Africa. These BaTonga people use the presence of the Nyaminyami spirit and ancestral spirits (in form of graves inundated by the Lake) to assert claims of belonging and autochthony to the Zambezi, thereby legitimizing their need to control its resources. I have indicated in Chapter 2 that these people live in extreme poverty, as is evidenced by their failure to adequately reach Stages Three and Four of resettlement in terms of Scudder’s FSF theory. Some of the developments expected in Stage Three are not there in these chieftaincies. Currently, the people have constrained access to the Lake; only those few fishing camps allocated to them at independence in 1980, are in existence and no more have been opened to meet the demands of the growing population, and worsening impoverishment. The people blame their present day poor socio-economic conditions on their dispossession of ‘their’ Lake. They also argue that they need to be prioritized when various portions of littoral are leased for tourism and conservationist businesses. The Lake’s authorities have been prioritizing outsiders (immigrants) rather than those residing along the Lake itself, who bore the cost of its creation. As Scudder (2017) notes, resettlers are actually uncompetitive in terms of resource access as compared to immigrants, because they are not politically

connected. Immigrants are also more able to corrupt local leaders in order to acquire prime resettlement areas for their ventures.

In addition, even in the contemporary context, the Lake's authorities employ policies that further alienate the Lake from those who lay claims of ownership to it. For example, in 2015, they proposed to establish a private wildlife conservancy in areas surrounding Mola, in which the people's villages would be fenced off, and thereby separated from the Lake's littoral permanently, to which they are adjacent, and which they regard as theirs. This proposal was vehemently resisted by the BaTonga people (Tombindo, 2018). This project lacked legitimacy, credibility and trust, with the BaTonga people of Mola not seeing any social justification for it. They petitioned the minister of lands at the time, and these conservancy processes were halted. As Barrett et al (2013) note, the alienation of land for conservation purposes has fundamental impacts on the politics of land and land use, and is contested in contemporary nation-states. Such resistance is stimulated by the fact that people do not want to be separated from the Lake that shelters their spirits, and which they identify themselves with. As Neumann puts it, their 'locally lived geography is as much an expression of identity as a declaration of rightful possession' (Neumann 1998: 176, cited in Wolmer 2007: 53). One can see that, for both politics of belonging and landscape, the Nyaminyami spirit retains much significance, even though it is invisible. Thus, as the sociological perspective assumes (Gluckman 1954), Nyaminyami plays a significant role in the people's religious, social and political claims. Apart from Nyaminyami and the ancestral graves inundated by the Lake, people also mention other important landscape materialities such as sacred pools, boiling pots and hills inundated by the Lake, as well as islands like Musampakaruma Island, where chiefs were buried before the move of 1958. These sites still retain significance to those displaced, and some people identify with these landscapes.

In addition, sometimes people refer to the previous habitations of their forefathers in the Zambezi landscape, to assert claims of belonging and autochthony. For example, the current Shangwe and BaTonga people of Mola sometimes refer to themselves as *maGoba*. The word *Goba*, translated into English, means Valley, thus *maGoba* means the people of the Valley. This name is loaded with connotations of autochthony and belonging. Meanings attached to the landscape unfold in language, names, stories, and rituals. These meanings crystallize into shared symbols, and ultimately link people to a sense of common history and to individual identity (Kahn 1996). This is similar to the claims by farmworkers from the Sundays River Valley of the Eastern Cape of South Africa. These workers have referred to certain tracts of land as their 'own', and have argued that their parents and grandfathers have

had legal, documented claims to such land (Connor 2012). The contemporary BaTonga land claims can also be mirrored by Khoisan claims of particular landscapes, such as trees and pools, in the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park. The Khomani San claimed two areas - one outside the national park and one inside it. These San people refer to their forefathers as the first occupiers of the landscape (Carruthers 2003). However, Carruthers has argued that the San's claims were partly successful because they were 'given 25 000ha within the park itself' (Ibid: 263). These latter developments in the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park's land contests, inform the recommendation to be suggested in the next chapter, that the BaTonga must be given access to a preferably larger portion of the Lake, for both religious and economic reasons. These land claims influence their engagement in national politics, 'where since 1999 the BaTonga have delivered their vote and support for the new political opposition to show their disillusionment to the authorities, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)' (McGregor 2008: 862). The disillusioned BaTonga still consider the Lake as 'unfinished business', to borrow McGregor's terminology (Loc. Cit).

We have seen above that Nyaminyami stories are now embroiled in folktales in both Chieftaincies; however, this does not actually imply that the children and youths hold strong beliefs in Nyaminyami, as there are other factors at play that influence them. But, the folktale is important because it is a form of oral history, and 'oral culture', as Thosango (2007) notes. Folktales have been shared in every society to entertain, educate, and preserve culture. As emphasized in UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (cited in Thosango 2007), folktales play an invaluable role, along with other cultural traditions, in bringing people closer together and 'ensuring exchange and understanding among them.' Literature on folklore and folktales alludes to their socio- cultural significance (Agbenyega, et al. 2017; Mbele 2004; Thosango 2007). Agbenyega, et al (2017), particularly, have identified that in Ghana, folk stories have the potential to develop children's reflective thinking about social life, and their conceptual development. In the same vein, the BaTonga folklores carry with them the same socio- cultural significance as in Ghana. For example, when children are told about the way Nyaminyami provided meat from its back, this helps them understand their religious and spiritual history. Furthermore, the fact that Nyaminyami is invisible today helps them to understand how cultural beliefs can change over time due to social change. The indigenous knowledge and wisdom found in folktales keep us connected to our traditions and indeed help shape our culture. Thus, folklore is not just mere stories of the past told to youths, but is loaded with important histories, and helps develop critical

thinking. But, there are also other factors at play that influence the desired impact of folklore on the people in societies.

Moreover, I have shown above that the Nyaminyami idea is used in environmental conservation discourses in Mola, and not in Musampakaruma. This role of Nyaminyami signifies numerous things in as far as the understanding of the BaTonga cosmology is concerned. Firstly, it shows the interconnection between BaTonga religion and the environment. Secondly, using De Wet's Imposed Socio- Spatial Change theory, it also shows that the differences in spaces occupied by the displacees, influence their religious and cultural beliefs, e.g. with regards to the differences in the connections between religion and environment between the people of Mola and Musampakaruma. The discourse on 'environmental conservation' is highly dynamic, and has generated significant controversies in conservation sciences and environmental anthropology (Mawere 2013). As stated in Chapter 8, in Zimbabwe, conservation by the state has tended to favour and privilege western scientific models, at the expense of the indigenous conservation practices of the local people, as informed by their indigenous epistemologies. However, the BaTonga's indigenous understandings of environmental conservation have not been completely obliterated by that, as some BaTonga still uphold their environmental conservation ideologies in the small fishing camps in which they reside. Thus, to a lesser extent, indigenous knowledge systems are applied, though they are not common. It is scientific methods that are very common in the governance of Lake Kariba. Both Machoko (2013) and Mawere (2013; 2015) note that the disregard of indigenous environmental conservation systems leads to environmental crisis, which is precisely the result at Kariba that has led to the decrease in water volumes, and to low fish (and specifically Kapenta) catches, which are sometimes attributed to the fury of the spirits.

9.6. Conclusion.

This chapter has analysed current beliefs about Nyaminyami. It has strongly argued that beliefs in Nyaminyami are deteriorating. There is compelling evidence to attest this claim, which involves Nyaminyami's invisibility, his usage in folklore, politics of the landscape and belonging; these developments are completely different from the understandings of Nyaminyami of the far past (i.e. before the move of 1958). The use of Nyaminyami's presence in the Lake for these aforementioned political purposes is to a great degree similar in both the chieftaincies of Mola and Musampakaruma. However, while in Mola, Nyaminyami is also used for environmental conservation issues, that are not the case with

Musampakaruma. The chief reason for this, is that the people of Mola continue to reside near the Lake Kariba, whereas those of Musampakaruma live very far from the Lake. I indicated above that some people still talk about Nyaminyami in relation to earthquakes at Kariba, but this is now minimal as compared to the past. The chapter has argued that nobody now talks about Nyaminyami in relation to everyday life. I have also argued that the current perceptions about Nyaminyami have been greatly influenced by the on- going processes of change that both the BaTonga and the Zambezi landscape have been and are still undergoing. The chapter has made it apparent that Nyaminyami beliefs, apart from being understood from religious lens they can also be understood through wide ranging economic and socio- political lens.

CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSION AND POLICY INSIGHTS

If natural places are so vital for people to access in order to communicate with, experience or gain knowledge from the divine forces, then we need to reconsider the wisdom of preservationist thinking that promotes the removal of people from ‘pristine’ landscapes. Not only will crucial knowledge be lost if people are removed from these locations but it is very likely that opportunities for moral and spiritual enrichment will decline and social conflict will increase (**Bernard 2007: 124**).

This chapter concludes the entire thesis and outlines the main contributions of the thesis to BaTonga history and religion, as well as the general understandings of water spirits in Africa. The chapter also suggests recommendations to large- scale development planners and policy makers -for dealing with communities living along water bodies, be it rivers, dams, lakes, pools, streams, and boiling pots¹²¹- when implementing water related projects. These people’s religion and culture are inextricably interconnected with such landscapes, and such water related projects as dam construction, irrigation schemes, conservancies and tourism and so on may, significantly alter this connectivity. As the above quotation by Bernard makes clear, if people are removed or denied access to their ‘pristine’ landscapes, their indigenous knowledge systems are significantly altered and/or lost. The chapter summarizes the main argument of the thesis, and presents the main findings and contributions of the thesis to academic knowledge.

This thesis has traced the occurrence and practices relating to Nyaminyami from pre-resettlement, to the post- resettlement era, among some BaTonga people living in the immediate vicinity of the Kariba gorge. These BaTonga people are fused with some Shona people of the Shangwe dialect who, for some reasons mentioned in Chapter 5, historically identified themselves as BaTonga. The word BaTonga has been used to describe all those originally BaTonga and some Shangwe people who were absorbed into the BaTonga culture, and who regarded themselves as BaTonga. The main aim of the thesis has been to trace the occurrence and cultural significance of Nyaminyami over space and time among the BaTonga people. It examines all the changes that occurred with regard to beliefs and practices relating to Nyaminyami, as a result of numerous social transformations the BaTonga society underwent since pre-colonial times up to the present. Of all these social transformations, the Kariba dam construction, and the subsequent resettlement, had a severe impact on BaTonga religion. Previous studies (see Clements 1959; Kaoma 2013; Sitambuli 2016 etc.) that do consider Nyaminyami, documented the role of Nyaminyami in specific/ singular historic

¹²¹ Boiling pots are pools in the Zambezi along numerous sections that had hot waters and these pools were regarded as sacred and this hot water was used for ritual and healing purposes.

epochs, but do so in passing, to justify certain claims they were making, but none has done a systematic study of the beliefs, in the way it has been done in this thesis. The main argument of the thesis is that Nyaminyami's roles transformed over time due to significant processes of social change that the BaTonga people underwent over time. My ethnographic chapters from Chapter five to nine vividly examined changes that occurred to beliefs and practice relating to Nyaminyami during these different periods. Each chapter of the thesis is interconnected to the other chapters in many ways, and so in some chapters I refer to sections in other chapters, for clarity. The thesis is historical in outlook, and hence has sought to present the chapters in a sequence, with each chapter setting the scene for the subsequent chapters.

The findings of this thesis contribute immensely to the theoretical and conceptual understandings of the water divinity phenomenon in southern Africa. In relation to the FLA theory, the thesis indicates how experiences, interpretations, praxis and transmission relating to water divinity are not static, but they either negatively or positively transform as a result of the numerous processes of social change that believers in river gods can be exposed to over space and time. In relation to experience, in the Nyaminyami case, in the precolonial times people actually obtained meat from his back, he protected them from accidents when crossing the river, as well as letting his skin be available for medicinal purposes for the BaTonga. However, such experiences were altered by colonialism and during the resettlement episode onwards to the present day, experience shifted from physical contact with Nyaminyami to the experiences with water 'signs' and climatic changes such as flooding, and decrees on water volumes of Lake Kariba. As for interpretation, the Nyaminyami interpretations were broad and transformed over time. For example, during the resettlement episode in 1958, Nyaminyami was interpreted as the protector of the people, whereas at the same time white journalists cast Nyaminyami as a primitive river god and used it to justify their Africa as Dark Continent discourse. These diverse interpretations of a particular era indicate the variations in insider and outsider interpretations of water spirits as stated in Chapter 5. Thus, interpretations are not limited to the believers of river gods only but are also open to foreigners/ outsiders who may have wrong interpretations regarding water spirits occurrences. Even in the post- colonial times, while the BaTonga had their own broad interpretations of Nyaminyami, the white journalists continued to reframe Nyaminyami and developed their biased interpretations regarding Nyaminyami, as indicated in Chapter 8.

Even Praxis or ritual performance, is bound to change and sometimes the actual procedure of enactment can be seriously affected especially when resettlement occurs leading to changes in emplacements. Nyaminyami rituals which had been for ages performed along the river, overnight they were stopped, only to be resuscitated years after and began to be conducted in the Lake Kariba. Logistical challenges to visit Kariba for ritual purposes, enabled only a few to attend the ceremonies, thereby making Nyaminyami a river god of a few as most people did not attend the rituals, which further affected the interpretations of Nyaminyami locally. Furthermore, people can inconsistently perform rituals due to various socio- economic and political factors, and sometimes when these rituals are resuscitated they can be reframed and be very/ slightly different from their past enactment procedures. This is risky in that certain changes to ritual performance cannot be effective/ compatible enough to maintain the relationship between water spirits and people. Water spirits may be angered by certain ways of conducting the ritual ceremonies dedicated to them. This can arguably result in negative serious climatic (or spiritual) repercussions. Even transmissions of water spirit ideas are seriously affected by processes of social changes. In the Nyaminyami case, during colonialism Nyaminyami was transformed from generation to generation at local/ village level within the communities near the gorge. During colonialism, specifically during the resettlement episode, the Nyaminyami idea was transmitted by whites to the Southern Rhodesian centres and abroad, through the Press, for numerous biased, stereotyping and profit reasons. Given the above assessment and linkages of the FLA model to historical processes of change, future researchers should make use of the theory from a historical perspective. This can help inform future policies aimed at preserving cultural beliefs in water divinities. If we comprehend the wrongs of the past, we are unlikely to repeat them in the future.

With regards to the water divinity sociological/ structural functionalism concepts, these must also be conceptualized from a historical point of view. As we have seen in chapter 2, that the structural functionalist approach is mainly criticized of being too static (Schroter 2002), it is thus essential to see how the structural functional role of water spirits in societies change over time. In the Nyaminyami scenario, for example, Nyaminyami rituals conducted along the river before resettlement were communitarian and served to maintain social harmony and were attended by many members of the community. However, when the rituals were revived in post- colonial contexts they barely promoted social harmony as a few performed these rituals and they were not conducted in their local chieftaincies. Thus, rituals of the same

water being do not always promote social harmony. The functions of water divinity praxis/ rituals are context specific. Furthermore, the ‘water as an index of power’ concept proposed by Fontein (2015) should also be utilized from a historical angle by future researchers. Although water in a Lake can be static, its powers are not static. The changes in the power of water are often observed in the complex ‘signs’ it assumes across space and time. In Lake Kariba numerous ‘signs’, as illustrated in Chapter 7 and 8, occur at various times and are ascribed to the anger of Nyaminyami. Therefore, the findings of this thesis make significant contribution to the understanding of ‘water as an index of power’. To achieve the systematic results of water divinity belief systems among different peoples in different societies, as it has already been mentioned, there is need to interweave both historical and anthropological sources of information. Furthermore, this thesis’historical approach can also be utilized as a guide that informs systematic studies of the water divinity phenomenon in southern Africa and the world over as indicated below. In this historical approach to water divinities, researchers are advised to trace the water beliefs from the pre-colonial times to colonial times and postcolonial eras, indicating how major socio- economic and political development of each stage might have impacted on the experiences, interpretations, rituals and distribution of water divinity belief systems.

The thesis connects with the wider studies of water divinities in Africa and across the globe. In proving these connections, where necessary comparisons and contrasts have been made between the occurrence of Nyaminyami and other water divinities like *Mami Wata*, *iNkosazana* and *njuzu* etc. However, the study has also demonstrated the peculiarities of Nyaminyami. The study ascertains that there is a possibility of studying water divinity prevalence from a historical perspective. Therefore, it advises future researchers on water spirit beliefs elsewhere to conduct systematic studies and to assess the historicity surrounding the prevalence of water spirits. Issues relating to the experiences, interpretations, praxis and transmission of water divinity complexities need to be approached from a historical perspective if their changes and continuities are to be documented and passed to the future generations. These histories are important in terms of revisiting and re-consulting our indigenous knowledge systems in the context of decolonizing the contemporary education systems that shuns away our indigenous knowledge, and favours scientific knowledge. This thesis has also contributed to the understanding of water spirits in general in that it has argued that water spirit beliefs/ complexities, just like many other religious beliefs such as ancestor worship, rituals etc., underwent significant transformations, due to social change. My

suggestion is that future systematic studies on water spirits should make use of both historical and anthropological sources of information. This is a lesson that can be learnt from my own study. I have drawn information from different historical sources (such as oral traditions and archives) and anthropological sources (such as documents, videos, images, participant observation, semi- structured interviews, informal conversations, focus group discussions and anthropology of extra-ordinary experiences) of data in order to achieve my systematic analysis of Nyaminyami belief systems over a stretch of 150 years.

Future studies on water divinity belief systems must fully incorporate the entanglement that exists between water spirits (i.e. mermaids, snakes etc.), diviners, healers, extraordinary climatic events and natural disasters. Water spirits tend to communicate with diviners through natural disasters and numerous extraordinary climatic events. As pointed out in Chapter 4, this assists in assessing the complex whole of water divinity occurrences. It further clarifies some of the ambiguities that form part of the water spirit prevalence. Ambiguities have been previously narrated from one singular perspective, which involves the positive (in terms of their duties to the people) and negative (in terms of the unfortunate results they bring on people who anger them) actions of river gods. But, within the entanglement between natural disasters and water spirits, the ambiguity that exists is that we do not know how the two interlink in the spiritual realms. We also do not know how the water spirits and climatic forces decide on the kind, duration and level of natural disaster to befall the people.

The thesis has also argued that Nyaminyami belief systems were differently distributed among some BaTonga people along gender, age, income, geographical location, etc. These variations also changed over time. For example, with regards to the use of the idea of Nyaminyami in the contemporary land claims and contests, it is mainly the traditional leaders and the elites who need this idea more than the others. In so doing, the thesis has contributed to the understandings of the distributions of Nyaminyami beliefs. It diverted from the generalized accounts that dominate much of the previous scholarships, to specificity.

I have also examined the Nyaminyami beliefs in collaboration with the other figures in the BaTonga religious constellation. These figures include *Leza* (Most High God), *Mizimu* (ancestors), *Basangu* (forest spirits) and *Masabe* (Alien Spirits). The purpose of this collaboration was to demonstrate the position of Nyaminyami in the BaTonga spiritual hierarchy, which had not been clearly indicated in much of the previous literature; a few of the studies that had attempted to do that, had wrongly equated Nyaminyami with ancestors. I

have argued that the BaTonga and Shangwe speakers living close to the gorge shared a central concern for the ancestors, even though they held beliefs in Nyaminyami, the river god. Nyaminyami was not regarded as an ancestor. In actual fact, Nyaminyami was below the ancestors and some informants believed ‘he’ was a gift from the ancestors. In assessing the position of Nyaminyami in the BaTonga spiritual hierarchy, I referred to the scholarly arguments and debates about whether water spirits are ancestors or not, as documented by Bernard (2004) and Fontein (2015). Furthermore, in some sections where the thesis has introduced new information, perspectives and arguments, a review of literature has been done in order to identify the gaps. For example, when I argued that not all the BaTonga believed in Nyaminyami, I first reviewed the literature (such as Clements 1959; Ncube 2004) that generalized the occurrence of these beliefs.

The thesis has critically examined issues regarding the origins and development of Nyaminyami beliefs among the BaTonga. This is one of the significant contributions of the thesis to BaTonga history, because the narratives surrounding the emergence of Nyaminyami had not been documented before. The study has presented two possible assumptions through which the belief in a river god might have emerged around Kariba. Although the BaTonga hold no strong narrative regarding the origins of Nyaminyami I indicated the possibility of the Kariba gorge and Kariva- rock as potential keys through which Nyaminyami emerged. I put more emphasis on the relevance of this landscape- related hypothesis. Although diffusion has its own limitations explained in Chapter 2, the study presented contemporary evidence that somewhat attest to the diffusion of the Nyaminyami idea to the BaTonga people, that correlates with Colson and Scudder’s assumptions. Colson and Scudder did not document their diffusionist perspective about the origins of Nyaminyami, but they have narrated it to various scholars (such as McGregor, Sitambuli, Kaoma etc.) through personal communication. The cultural significance of Nyaminyami before the move of 1958 was investigated in Chapter 5, and the cultural roles of Nyaminyami -which includes food provider, protector of the people (guardian of the Land) and the use of his skin for medicinal purposes- were identified. Based on these roles, I have concluded that Nyaminyami was not as clearly important in religious matters as he was in other socio-economic matters. This makes a clear distinction between the occurrence of Nyaminyami, and the occurrence of other water spirits in both southern and western African communities. Though Nyaminyami’s skin was used for healing, he did not call people under water for divination, as is the case in with other water divinities. Thus, the relationships between water spirits and humans vary from society to society. This is a decisive contribution that the thesis makes to the understandings

of water spirits in Africa in general. Although, remarkable similarities maybe noted across Africa as indicated in Chapter 4, significant differences are also not uncommon.

The study has also shown the particular sections along the river in which Nyaminyami was believed in. Background studies on Nyaminyami such as Clements (1959) and Saidi (2015) generalized that all the BaTonga believed in Nyaminyami, yet evidence from my own research indicates that Nyaminyami was not known in all the BaTonga societies. This generalized perception is also recurrent in the journalistic coverage and tourism literature. The assessment of the emergence of the Nyaminyami beliefs assisted in showing the specific locations along the river in which these beliefs were strong. In so doing, the thesis has significantly contributed to the understanding of Nyaminyami beliefs, by readdressing the generalization weakness that characterizes previous literature on Nyaminyami. These specific locations are also confirmed by some BaTonga people.

The thesis has argued that the isolation of the Valley safeguarded the BaTonga religion, Nyaminyami beliefs included, from the impacts of colonial education and Christianity. In Chapter 5, I highlighted how the BaTonga religious beliefs (inclusive of Nyaminyami belief systems) were not challenged by Christianity and colonial development structures before 1958, as the Zambezi Valley in which people resided was highly isolated from all colonial centres. The Valley was also characterized by the high prevalence of tsetse flies that inhibited and discouraged foreigners from visiting it. Some of the men of God who entered the Valley did not come out of it, as many died of malaria and black water fever. All these factors prevented the BaTonga from having been so much influenced by Christianity, and western education among other colonial developments occurring at the time. However, they were later exposed to western education and Christianity after the move of 1958.

I critically examined the interconnection between the Kariba resettlement, dam construction and Nyaminyami belief systems. This is largely because some BaTonga strongly believe that Nyaminyami beliefs were negatively impacted upon by the dam construction. They also attribute the floods that occurred at the dam wall site to Nyaminyami, who they say was angry that his sacred area, the Zambezi, was about to be dammed. Currently, some BaTonga people strongly assert that Nyaminyami is still angry, and that one day he will rise and destroy the dam, and that they will return to their former homes. The BaTonga were resettled in places far away from the dam, the dam that they still believe shelters Nyaminyami. Many believe that if they had not been removed from along the river, these beliefs would not have disintegrated, and Nyaminyami would be visible. The lesson that can

be learnt from this point, is that dam constructions adversely affect the survival and wellbeing of the water spirits, and can lead to their abandoning their devotees completely.

Therefore, under the guidance of Bernard's (2007) words mentioned in the excerpt above at the beginning of the Chapter, one can recommend that when dams (or other massive technological development projects, such as irrigation) are constructed, the planners must plan with the victims in mind, especially those who reside along the rivers, as they may be holding water spirits beliefs that need to be safeguarded. Those who believe in water spirits are at risk of losing their beliefs completely, but these risks are often overlooked. As Downing and Garcia- Downing mentioned in their PSC theory, socio-cultural risks have been the most neglected, the most difficult to study, and the least likely to be mitigated. These risks must be taken into consideration on a par with economic risks. The impact of dams on water spirit beliefs specifically are worth in-depth descriptions, because in some cases they are not sufficiently or fully described for them to also inform resettlement policy and baseline studies. In many baseline studies of dam projects, water spirit beliefs are a mere footnote. For instance, the river snake that is believed to have caused an earthquake at Katse dam was not included in the baseline studies and in the post- relocation literature (see for example Hitchcock 2015), it is a mere footnote to history. As Bernard (2010: 515) noted '[why have] water spirit beliefs have not gained the same attention or detailed analysis as beliefs and practices regarding the ancestors, witchcraft and sorcery? This could be due to the fact that beliefs and practices regarding the ancestors, and to some extent witchcraft and/or sorcery, are more in the public domain. This is because knowledge of the water divinities tends to be held by specialists (i.e. diviners, chiefs, rain-makers etc.) and diviners tend to not openly discuss the water divinities, or their experiences with them.'

If it happens that people are resettled there must be follow – up or long- term studies to trace the resettlement implications on water spirit beliefs over time, as these can be used to inform policy in future. In addition, people must not be resettled at a great distance from dams or rivers that shelter their river gods, as this disconnects the people from their spirits, and it can further have serious repercussions for the displaced. The water spirits might become angry, and completely abandon the people, who socio-economically and religiously depended on the water spirit/s. Even if people are to be resettled, they must be relocated to the margins of the reservoir created. Scudder has suggested this 'since, to date resettlers preferred, generally speaking, to rebuild their communities as close to former homes' (Scudder 2017: no page number). The displacees must also be given religious access to the water bodies within conservancies and protected areas. Like what has happened in the

Sundays River basin, where local communities, workers and diviners conduct water ceremonies near Darlington Dam within the current Addo Elephant National Park (Connor 2014: 149). This Sundays River basin case can be recommended as a lesson to the Lake Kariba authorities i.e. Zambezi River Authority (ZRA), National Parks authorities and the District Administrators Office (DAO), who often overlook the BaTonga's rights to appease in the Lake.

Recommending from a more radical perspective, that, where and when not necessary, dams must not be built, Scudder (2017; in press) has suggested issues that must first be considered before dams are constructed, without which dam construction must be stopped. His suggestions call for attention to environmental, economic and socio-cultural issues, and for these to be prioritized, in terms of dams being either stopped or implemented. Scudder (in press) believes that the socio- cultural beliefs of riverine peoples must be safeguarded from extinction with which they may be threatened by dam construction. Water spirit beliefs fall within these socio- cultural issues. Furthermore, Scudder (2017) even suggests the decommissioning and removal of dams, as happened with the Glines Canyon and Elwha dams in the United States. Similarly, Jijevala and Vanclay (2018) also give an illustration of a large hydropower- electric power plant that was halted in the Svaneti region of Georgia in 2013 after much social protest. The Svaneti project lacked legitimacy, with the local communities not seeing any social justification for it. Dams have also been taken down in increasing numbers as they have filled with sediment, become unsafe or inefficient, or otherwise outlived their usefulness (O'Connor et al 2015: 496).

Following from Scudder's suggestion of decommissioning and removal of dams, consideration must be taken of removing dams which are not cost- effective, in areas in which they have seriously affected the religion, wellbeing, identity and belonging of certain indigenous peoples. Beard (2015) and O'Connor et al (2015) also recommend the removal of unnecessary and environmentally destructive dams to restore rivers and streams. Rivers are resilient, with many responding quickly to dam removal. Dam removal research has shown that many river soon trend toward their pre-dam states. Most river channels stabilize within months or years, not decades, particularly when dams are removed rapidly (O'Connor et al 2015). If dam removal is achieved in the African contexts, many water spirit belief systems and indigenous knowledge systems that were disrupted by dam constructions may be restored. However, such radical recommendations have their own consequences, such as power shortages and possible lessening of water supply for domestic purposes and irrigation in a number of areas. Scudder (2017: no page number) notes that 'looking to the future, I

suspect that the main problems facing restoration of river systems will be property rights, competition over scarce supplies, and finance'. But in relation to power shortages, an alternative would be the use of solar and gas power systems. Furthermore, the water from free flowing river can also be used for irrigation purposes as a solution if dams are destroyed. I would want to advice that dam removal related research must take into account the water divinity belief systems that may have been affected when dams were constructed. Researchers must inquire from those displaced by specific dams about any water spirit beliefs that were affected before dams are destroyed as these actions may probably need communities to propitiate the water spirits before dam destruction.

Furthermore, given that Nyaminyami belief systems are said to have been negatively influenced by the resettlement, I also documented the narratives and practices relating to Nyaminyami in the post- resettlement contexts. I argued that the declining of Nyaminyami belief systems is one of the long- term consequences of the move. The information I have presented in this regard starts immediately after the move, up to independence in 1980. This epoch was characterized by serious socio-political changes that I have argued disturbed BaTonga religion. Chief among these was the constraint of accessing the Lake caused by the Lake's governing measures enforced by the colonial government. The colonial government declared much of the Lake and its littoral as a white's space (Hughes 2006), where whites only were allowed access to these areas, leaving the BaTonga with limited access. A limited access that was further perpetuated by the occurrence of the Zimbabwean war of liberation in the 1970s, where Lake Kariba was a conduit for guerrillas visiting their bases in Zambia. Thus, during that era, the BaTonga were not propitiating their spirits in the Lake. Hence, my recommendation that people must not be denied access to the water resources that shelter their spirits, but rather there must be free access for religious purposes, though other water endangered species and resources like fish may be protected by the authorities. I recommend that people be given free religious access to the Lake. If these BaTonga people could also obtain economic access to the Lake, that would assist in alleviating their impoverishment resulting from the move of 1958. It would however be appropriate that their economic access to the Lake be controlled by the authorities, to curb problems such as poaching that may arise as a result of free economic access.

It is also during this period that the 'white' journalists and tourism magazine writers appropriated the idea of Nyaminyami, and needed it more than those displaced, especially in explaining the tremors occurring at the Kariba dam wall site as having been caused by Nyaminyami 'who was still fighting to reunite with his so- called wife'. These journalists

were distorting the story of Nyaminyami so as to have good and interesting copy for sale. I have indicated that this exaggerated version of the Nyaminyami story also influenced some BaTonga, who also began to think of Nyaminyami in such ways. Hence, I have argued that the white men's portrayals of Nyaminyami also influenced local perceptions of him. There is need for the readers of these magazines and newspapers to evaluate the sources of information, as sometimes people are misled by journalists who distort people's histories only to attract clients. I would want to advise that communities must document their oral accounts of their religious, social, economic and political histories in their own languages, so that future generations can have access to undistorted histories. Relying on tourism magazine accounts is rather pernicious to the young and future generation's knowledge acquisition. Researchers can also make use of these local documented accounts for their own scholarly purposes. These documented histories may be placed in local primary and secondary schools for easy access for the members of the community.

The thesis also examined practices and stories relating to Nyaminyami in the post-independence contexts. Using Sabet's (1996) theory of religion and social change, I have argued that changes brought about by independence, such as western education, have adversely impacted on the local youths, who now demonize and condemn the local traditional religious belief systems. However, the independence of 1980 had also a short lived positive impact. After independence, people acquired a certain measure of access to the Lake and revitalized the Nyaminyami rituals/ festivals. The tourism literature named these 'Nyaminyami' rituals, but in practice the rituals included the veneration of ancestors as well. In that regard, I have indicated the role of tourism and journalistic literature in distorting and exaggerating the story of Nyaminyami, and its domino effect on the way Nyaminyami was viewed across different epochs. These rituals were not of course attended by everyone, due to logistical factors, as they were held in Kariba town, which is far from the respective chieftaincies. I discovered that the fact that not everyone participated in the rituals better explains why the Nyaminyami beliefs are differently distributed across social variables such as age, gender, class, income and geographical location. In this regard, those who mainly talk about Nyaminyami are the traditional leaders, politicians and some elites. The need for logistics to conduct rituals vividly demonstrates the impact of globalization and the money economy on African Traditional Religious beliefs. I would want to recommend that if these rituals are to be revived again, they must be conducted in the Nyaminyami Rural District which is more accessible, rather than in Kariba where logistical challenges are an impediment. This would increase the number of eligible attendees and participants.

Using the concept of the Anthropology of Extraordinary Experiences, I have shown how numerous ecological and climate changes occurring in the Lake, together with those I experienced, have been religiously interpreted by some BaTonga elders. There is evident that the BaTonga elders attribute these narratives to Nyaminyami's anger in ways that are aimed at threatening the Lake's authorities so as to attract their attention, and be granted access to the Lake Kariba. But, these are opposed to the scientific explanations of the climatic conditions held by local engineers. I observed that scientific explanations are accepted and preferred at Kariba and that the indigenous knowledge systems are now overlooked. I would recommend that both scientific and indigenous knowledge systems be integrated into the governance of the Lake and understandings of climatic conditions, so that the indigenous knowledge systems are not completely lost. The BaTonga people must be given religious access to the Lake in order to protect their water spirit beliefs and practices from extinction. I argued that after the move the Nyaminyami idea was appropriated, and continues to be appropriated, by the whites and other African group such as the Ndebele, for economic and social agendas. The BaTonga do not actually benefit from the revenues that come with this appropriation as they occupy the marginalized communities of Zimbabwe that are secluded from the market centres and the rest of the world. As Arewa (2018) argues, borrowing may become appropriation when it reinforces historically exploitative relationships or deprives African countries of opportunities to control or benefit from their cultural material.

The thesis examined the current practices relating to Nyaminyami in the contemporary times between 2016- 2017, the time at which research for this thesis was conducted. I have argued that Nyaminyami beliefs have been gradually declining in terms of the number of specific beliefs about Nyaminyami and the number of people who believe in Nyaminyami, and that this is a result of numerous factors ranging from the impact of colonialism, the processes and complexities of the resettlement of 1958, increased interaction with Christianity and western scientific education amongst other factors. I have argued that nobody nowadays talks about Nyaminyami in relation to everyday life. But, people talk about Nyaminyami in the politics of the landscape and belonging debates, with regards to claims of ownership and autochthony to Lake Kariba because they were removed from the area currently inundated by the Lake, and because their historical privilege to appease in the Lake has been disregarded by the Lake Kariba authorities. Understanding the ways through which water divinity complexities variedly interpenetrate the politics of the landscapes debates has not been widely addressed in the literature, and in that regard this thesis has actually contributed significantly to the knowledge regarding water spirits in Africa. Thus, it can be

consulted as a basis upon other anthropological studies on water spirits and landscapes can be predicated on. When applying the political contestations over access to the 'Kariva' landscape in the FLA model, it becomes clear that the people's land claims involving the mentioning of the presence of water spirits in those landscapes can be regarded as 'interpretation'. But as we have seen in Chapter 8, the BaTonga claims of 'Kariva' as a sacred area of their river god have been challenged by Chief Nyamhunga and other Hurungwe chieftaincies who regard 'Kariva' as the sacred area for 'Chitehwe' (their own ancestor). Therefore, landscapes believed to have sheltered river gods can be subject to serious contests, claims and counter claims among different groups especially in relation to who has the right to conduct rituals and propitiate in that certain landscape. When such contests occur, secular authority should have little say regarding who should perform rituals in a particular landscape as this may have serious negative climatic results.

As I have advised above, it is crucial that these BaTonga people be given an opportunity to propitiate in the Lake, so they can revitalize their ritual practices connected to the worshipping of their water spirits (Nyaminyami included). Furthermore, the thesis has also indicated that stories about Nyaminyami are also embroiled in folklore, local environmental conservation discourses, and in the narratives of the earthquakes occurring at Kariba gorge area. However, the understandings and usages of Nyaminyami for the aforementioned purposes are variedly distributed among the people in the two chieftaincies, as is clearly shown in Chapter 9 (nine).

As we have seen in Chapter 7, 8 and 9, certain Christianity groupings have demonized Nyaminyami beliefs in various ways. If Nyaminyami is always castigated, this may continue to affect the younger generation's perceptions of their traditional beliefs. Nyaminyami beliefs are at the risk of extinction because of Christians' castigations of them. There is a need to protect these traditional beliefs, and many other BaTonga traditional and spiritual beliefs, from extinction. In that regard, I recommend that there must be an open dialogue between the members of Christianity and BaTonga traditional religion on how the two can co- exist and integrate, without the former dominating the latter.

In a nutshell, this chapter has sought to provide a conclusion for the whole thesis. It has given a summary of the main argument of the thesis. Major findings made and conclusions reached in the thesis have been presented. I have indicated areas in which this research has made new and original contributions to knowledge in connection with Nyaminyami beliefs and African water spirit beliefs in general. Where applicable, I have given some recommendations which water development agencies and policy planners need to

consider before their projects are implemented. Many projects have failed because the Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) of the people living along those regions are often overlooked.

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APPENDIX

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INFORMATION FOR RESPONDENTS

Allow me to introduce myself: I am Joshua Matanzima. I am a permanent resident of Kariba and I am a Zimbabwean. I once lived in Mola during childhood. I speak both ChiTonga and Shona languages (the dominant languages of north central Zimbabwe). I am an MA in Anthropology student, in the department of Anthropology, at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, in the Republic of South Africa. As part of the fulfilment of my postgraduate degree, I am conducting fieldwork on the following topic:

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF NYAMINYAMI SPIRIT OVER TIME AMONG THE BATONGA PEOPLE OF ZIMBABWE.

My main aim in undertaking this topic is to document the cultural significance of the Nyaminyami spirit among the BaTonga people. The study contributes to the already existing literature on the BaTonga religion. Among all the BaTonga religious beliefs, Nyaminyami beliefs are an important but understudied issue. The data to be collected during my stay in this village/ chieftaincy is only for the purpose of informing the above topic i.e. not for any other purposes such as government policies or interventions. Your cooperation throughout this research, especially through responding to various questions I would like to ask, is greatly appreciated. All the questions that will be asked will be for the purpose of informing the above broad topic and will be asked using the local languages (chiTonga and Shona). The research is being guided by the Rhodes University Ethical Standards Manual that ensures "the observation of the participant's rights, anonymity and confidentiality" of the respondents before, during and after the research. You are free to withdraw from the research process at any time and your participation during this research is completely voluntary.

If there is any further information you need you are free to consult my research supervisor Professor Chris de Wet on c.dewet@ru.ac.za, or contact him on +27764597358 or you can contact me on matanzimageorge@gmail.com, or call +263778469110.

FIELDWORK RESEARCH CHECKLIST OR INTERVIEW GUIDES.

The more detailed set of questions below are designed to inform the following four (4) broad questions of the study, which are as follows:

1. Do any people in this homestead, village or chieftaincy believe in Nyaminyami?
2. What role did Nyaminyami play in relation to the cultural everyday life of the BaTonga in the Zambezi Valley/ before resettlement?
3. How did the Kariba dam construction and the subsequent BaTonga resettlement affect traditional Tonga beliefs inclusive of Nyaminyami belief systems?
4. What is the role of Nyaminyami in relation to everyday life and how does he relate to the figures in the Christian religious constellation, i.e. a) God, b) Jesus and c) Holy Spirit?

A. PRIVATE/ INDIVIDUALINTERVIEWGUIDES

Part 1: Research Questionnaire

First Resettler Generations.

Section a) Before Resettlement.

1. Which part of the Zambezi Valley did the BaTonga people of this chieftaincy inhabit, before resettlement?
2. What were the major socio-economic activities practiced in that portion of the river or valley?
3. Which tribe do you come from and did you have any kind of interaction with other tribes inside or outside the valley?
4. Were there any immigrants that occupied the valley that you absorbed in your culture?
5. In terms of social organization, how did BaTonga organize themselves and how were immigrants absorbed in the BaTonga social organization?
6. Are there any intermarriages that occurred between the BaTonga and other ethnic groups in the Valley?
7. Does intermarriages influence the religion of those BaTonga who married the other ethnic groups?
8. What were the figures/characters in the BaTonga religious spiritual hierarchy in the Zambezi Valley?
9. Did you share the same religious Figures/characters with other BaTonga across the Zambezi River and the other neighbouring tribes such as the Shona- Korekore or Goba people?
10. Were there any religious rituals or ceremonies that you co-practised with other BaTonga neighbours or chieftaincies on the south bank? If so, what were they? Were you related to these people?
11. Were there any religious rituals or ceremonies that you co-engaged in with any BaTonga people from the north bank? If so, what were they? Were you related to these people?
12. What were the major differences and similarities in religious practice between your chieftaincy and other neighbouring chieftaincies on both south and north bank?
13. What do you consider to have been the major causes of difference in religious practice?
14. In your opinion what proportion (all, many, few, or none) of adults in your village and chieftaincy believe in Nyaminyami? In the cult of ancestral shades (mizimo)?
15. Do you believe in Nyaminyami? In the cult of ancestral shades (mizimu)?
16. Which position was Nyaminyami accorded in the BaTonga spiritual constellation of Leza, Mizimo, Basangu, Masabe, Sikatongo etc.?
17. Are there any traditions about how the BaTonga ancestors or forefathers began to believe in Nyaminyami?

18. Were all the BaTonga people of the Valley believing in Nyaminyami? If not all BaTonga people in the Valley were believing in Nyaminyami, do we understand why this was the case?
19. Were there any religious ceremonies dedicated to Nyaminyami? If so, what form did they take?
20. How important was Nyaminyami in relation to everyday life to those BaTonga people living along the Zambezi River?
21. What were the socioeconomic and political life experiences in the Valley or along the river that influenced the way the Nyaminyami beliefs were perceived?
22. In what ways was the knowledge about your religion inclusive of Nyaminyami beliefs was passed from generation to generation?

Section b) Resettlement Episode

1. What are the dam construction and resettlement activities do you remember?
2. How did the resettlement approach and activities employed by the authorities (1956-59) responsible for the move affect the BaTonga religion, inclusive of the Nyaminyami belief system?
3. Was there any response to resettlement by BaTonga people? If so, what did it involve?
4. In your beliefs, how did the BaTonga spiritual figures respond to the idea about resettlement and dam construction?

Section c) Post-Resettlement Period

1. How did the resettlement, dam construction and the subsequent inundation of the Zambezi Valley, affect your life, particularly your religion, inclusive of the Nyaminyami belief system?
2. How does your traditional religion persist in areas with Christianity, new technologies and western education?
3. How did the Zimbabwe war of liberation of the 1970s affect your religion?
4. How significant was Independence in 1980 to the resuscitation and preservation of your cultural values?
5. How does globalisation interact with your religion and the idea of Nyaminyami?
6. Did the socioeconomic changes of the post-independence period influence your religion? If so, how?
7. What impact do the post-2000 socioeconomic crises have on your religion inclusive of the Nyaminyami belief system?
8. How is the idea about Nyaminyami used in the politics of the Zambezi and Lake Kariba, how and why do the BaTonga involve the idea about Nyaminyami in their reclaiming the Zambezi and the Lake Kariba?
9. How does Nyaminyami features in current stories about the Kariba dam?
10. What is the current role of Nyaminyami in relation to everyday life and how widespread is the belief in Nyaminyami?

Part 2: Second Generation Resettler Interview Guide.

Section a) Before Resettlement

- 1) What information was passed to you about the religion followed by your elders and did it relate in any ways to the river? If so, how?
- 2) What information was passed to you by your elders in relation to the resettlement episode?
- 3) In their narratives, what are major impacts that your elders see the displacement as having had?
- 4) How was the BaTonga religion affected by the displacement?

Section b) Post Resettlement Period

- 1) Do you happen to have any sacred places (malende) in this village or chieftaincy?
- 2) How often do you engage in your Tonga traditional religious ceremonies?
- 3) Were there any narratives about Nyaminyami passed on to you, if yes, what are those?
- 4) What role did Nyaminyami have among the BaTonga in relation to the other figures in the Traditional religious constellation which are Leza, Mizimo, Basangu, Masabe, Sikatongo etc.?
- 5) How was the story about Nyaminyami told to you by your forefathers?
- 6) Is Nyaminyami still important in relation to your everyday life?
- 7) Are there any rituals or religious ceremonies or malende (sacred places) dedicated to Nyaminyami?
- 8) How do you see the idea about Nyaminyami in relation to the ideas about Jesus, God and Holy Spirit?
- 9) How do you perceive the idea about Nyaminyami in relation to the teachings of the Holy Bible?
- 10) Are there issues of spirit possession among the BaTonga in this chieftaincy?
- 11) Referring to the information passed on to you by earlier generations, what role does Nyaminyami play in relation to everyday life?
- 12) Are there any BaTonga people of your generation who are backsliding from your traditional religious beliefs, especially about Nyaminyami?
- 13) What do those who have backslid comment about the belief in a water spirit like Nyaminyami?
- 14) How often do you interact with the Lake Kariba with regards to your revering your ancestors and water spirit?
- 15) Are there any major challenges that you face in relation to your accessing the Lake?
- 16) Do you have any comments on the reduction in the water levels of the Lake since 2014?
- 17) What are the socioeconomic hardships you have been facing since 2000?
- 18) What are the survival strategies that you have employed in order to deal with the effects of these hardships?
- 19) How do these hardships affect your participation in your religious beliefs?
- 20) What are the major economic activities in your chieftaincy?
- 21) Do your major economic activities reward you enough to cover your cost of living?

Part 3: Questionnaire for other tribes in the Villages of the Chieftaincies I.e. Goba/ Shona/ Korekore

1. When did you start to live among the BaTonga people?
2. What can you say about your day to day interactions with the BaTonga people, both before and after resettlement?
3. What are the natural resources in the chieftaincy and how do you use them or interact with them?

4. How were the families and homesteads organized? Did/ do the Shona have living sites different to those of the BaTonga?
5. Are there any Gobas who are part of the administration team of this village/ chiefdom?
6. Is there any debates and arguments over the claiming of places of power and sacred places such as hills, rivers, trees, and animals between your tribe and the BaTonga? If yes, please tell me what are those?
7. How are the disputes over places of power solved in this chiefdom?
8. How has the idea about Nyaminyami been narrated to you overtime?

Part 4. Local Church Officials interview questions.

- 1) What is the name of your church?
- 2) When was it established in this Village/ chieftaincy?
- 3) How do you perceive the traditional beliefs in this Chieftaincy?
- 4) Can you comment on the rate of conversion, how do people respond to your gospel?
- 5) In terms of the use of space (for example you may use mountains for prayers and locals may want to use the same mountains), how do you interact with those who follow the traditional religious beliefs?
- 6) What are the narratives about Nyaminyami and other local traditional beliefs were passed on to you by the local converts?

Part 5: QUESTIONNAIRE for the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management (DNPWM) OFFICIALS.

1. What is your job title at the DNPWM?
2. When was the authority (DNPWM) established?
3. Do you have offices or permanent officials in this Chieftaincy? If not, please describe the frequency and nature of interaction of officials with the Chieftaincy.
4. What set of regulations do you have that govern human interaction with Lake Kariba and other natural resources?
5. What opportunities do the regulations give the BaTonga to have access to the resources of the region and the lake itself?
6. Are there any major challenges you are facing in trying to implement your regulations in the BaTonga communities? If yes, what are those challenges?
7. Do you have a set of measures you take in order to deal with people who disobey those regulations?
8. Are there any discussions that have happened so far between the authority and the BaTonga elders in relation to the interaction with environment? Please tell me about them.
9. Are the BaTonga elders allowed to visit some islands and other places in the river which are regarded by BaTonga people as places of power or sacred sites?

Part 6: Teacher interview guide

- 1) Which school do you teach at and how long have you taught at that school?
- 2) When was this school established?
- 3) When did you start teaching there?
- 4) What kind of education (western or traditional) is imparted to the pupils in schools?

- 5) Does the kind of education affect the pupils and the communities at large in as far as preserving their religion is concerned?
- 6) Are there any cultural clubs that teach pupils about their indigenous cultural and religious values at your school?
- 7) Are there any modern technologies such as computers etc. that you use in the school?
- 8) How do they affect or influence pupils in relation to their perceptions of their religion?
- 9) Are there any co-curricular activities in the school such as sports?
- 10) Do they divert pupils' or youth's' mind from observing their traditional beliefs?
- 11) In your, opinion what do you think can be done to help pupils not divert or backslide from their traditional religious beliefs?

Part 7: Government/ Nyaminyami Rural District Council Officials Interview Guide.

1. When was the rural district established?
2. What criteria were used to demarcate and name the District?
3. What are the major economic ways or means of survival in the District?
4. What role does the District Council have in promotion of the local religion?
5. Are there any outside players such as Donors and NGOs you work with in promotion of both the culture and the welfare of the people in the district? If so, who are they, and what do they do?
6. Are there any social or political unrests or crises you sometimes experience in the district or at village level that disrupt the way of survival of the people? If so, how do these influence your life and particularly your religion?

Part 8: Youths (16-25) interview questionnaire

1. Do you have any traditional religious figures you acknowledge? If yes, what are those?
2. Are there any narratives about Nyaminyami that were told you? If yes, please share with me?
3. How are or in what ways have the BaTonga traditional beliefs been passed on you by your elders?
4. How do you perceive your traditional beliefs in relation to the figures in the Christian religious constellation, e.g. God, Jesus and Holy Spirit?
5. Are there extra-curricular activities such as sports etc that you perform or practice in your villages?
6. Are there any sport competitions you engage in with the youths from other districts or schools? If yes, how often do you do these?

B. FOCUSGROUPINTERVIEWGUIDES/ CHECKLISTS.

The focus group to be conducted will be of both mixed males and females. The focus groups will be conducted at both household and community level.

Part 1: Youth (ages 16-25) Focus Group Interview Guides.

- 1) What are the figures in your traditional religious entirety/constellation?
- 2) Do you participate attend in your religious activities, such as rainmaking ceremonies, rituals etc.?
- 3) What other youth activities such as sports do you engage in, in your villages?

- 4) Does your engagement in these activities affect your participation in your religious activities? If so, how?
- 5) What information was passed on to you regarding the worship of and beliefs in Nyaminyami?
- 6) What is the importance of Nyaminyami in various aspects of your life such as a. Religious life, b. Social life and c. Economic survival?
- 7) How do you perceive the idea about Nyaminyami in relation to a number of figures in the Christian religious constellation I.e. a. God, b. Jesus and c. Holy Spirit?
- 8) What are the major economic activities in your chieftaincy?
- 9) Do the economic activities promote sustainable livelihoods?
- 10) Does everyone have equitable access to the economic resources?
- 11) How do you see your everyday economic activities in relation to your religion?
- 12) Are there any factors such as political rallies, Non- Governmental Organizations programmes and other foreign traders who visit your villages today that disrupt your religion?

Part 2: First Resettler Generation

Focus Group Interview Guide

- 1) What were the main figures/characters in the BaTonga Religious Constellation before 1958?
- 2) Describe the way in which your religious ceremonies were enacted along the river.
- 3) Of what importance was the enactment of religious ceremonies in the Zambezi Valley?
- 4) How important was the Zambezi River to your religion?
- 5) Were there any religious ceremonies that you co-practised with other Tonga from neighbouring chieftaincies on both the south and the north bank?
- 6) What were the major differences and similarities in religion between your chieftaincy and your neighbours?
- 7) What were the prime causes of the differences in religious practice along the river?
- 8) How important was Nyaminyami in relation to everyday life?
- 9) What part did he play to your religion, social life and economic survival?
- 10) Can you comment on your resettlement from the Valley?
- 11) Did you resist the idea about your resettlement? If so, how?
- 12) Did the displacement affect your religion? If so, how?
- 13) Did you try to restore your religion in new emplacements? If so, how?
- 14) Did the Zimbabwe War of Liberation affect your religion? If so, how?
- 15) Did the Post-Independence socioeconomic and political activities affect your religion, if so how?

Part 3: Second Resettler Generation

Focus Group Interview Guide

- 1) What are the figures in your traditional religious constellation?
- 2) What are your beliefs, practices and ceremonies on Nyaminyami? And kindly explain those to me.

- 3) Are you passing your ancestral traditional religious beliefs to the youths?
- 4) In what ways do you pass the knowledge about your religion to the youths?
- 5) What factors, today, do you consider to be affecting the execution of your religion?
- 6) Describe the way you practice your religious ceremonies?
- 7) Are there any religious ceremonies you co-engage in, in corroboration with other neighbouring BaTonga tribes of both north and the south bank? If yes, kindly explain those to me?
- 8) Are there religious beliefs and practice that you co-engage in with members from other tribes in your chieftaincy? If yes, please tell me what are those?
- 9) How do you use the idea about Nyaminyami and Lake Kariba in the politics of inclusion and claiming the use of the Lake to your own benefit?
- 10) Are there any ways you follow in trying to preserve the persistence of your religion? If yes, please tell what are those?