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A HISTORY OF THE GWEMBE VALLEY TONGA SINCE THE CONSTRUCTION
OF KARIBA DAM, 1958-1998

BY

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DECLARATION

I, Leonard Chiinda, hereby declare that this dissertation represents my own work, and that it has not previously been submitted for a degree at this or another university.

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APPROVAL

This dissertation of Leonard Chiinda is approved as fulfilling part of the requirements of the award of the degree of Master of Arts in History at the University of Zambia.

Examiners

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DEDICATION

For Elizabeth Mutinta Chiinda, my mother.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the major trends in the way of life of the Gwembe Tonga from the time of their relocation in 1958 to 1998. Basically, the study analyses the process of resettlement and adaptation of the valley people, highlighting in particular the concomitant hardships of a critical shortage of land, over-crowding and poor food supply in the resettlement areas. Ultimately, the Kariba Project became an instrument by which the local people's interests were marginalised and subordinated to those of a larger national community which benefitted from the dam more than the local inhabitants.

Chapter one outlines the objectives and the basic themes of the dissertation. It discusses the theoretical approach and the methodology of the study as well as the literature review. Chapter two is the historical background of the study. It examines both the origin of the decision to construct the Kariba dam and the reaction of not only the local inhabitants but the Northern Rhodesia territorial government itself. Chapter three discusses the process of construction of the dam, resettlement of the displaced people as well as the rehabilitation programmes in the Gwembe valley. Chapter four discusses the issue of conflicts over resources between the local people and outside investors. The chapter contends that these conflicts were an expression of the process of adaptation as well as dissatisfaction by the local people for the enormous sacrifice they made for the Kariba project.

The concluding chapter asserts that government policy in the Gwembe since the construction of Lake Kariba worsened the balance between the people and their environment. The source of Gwembe poverty shifted from the traditional shortage of rainfall to shortage of land and natural resources. The post-colonial rural and agricultural development policies aggravated the situation through their emphasis on production of maize for sale.

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GLOSSARY OF TONGA TERMS USED IN THE DISSERTATION

TONGA	ENGLISH
Inyoka	A colonial name given to the indigenous brand of Tobacco grown by the local Gwembe Tonga.
Kuti	Annually inundated flood plain gardens cultivated during both the rainy and dry seasons.
Temwa	Rain gardens cultivated on Karroo sediments further removed from the river system.
Ulanyika	Custodian of land, equivalent of a chief.
Unda	Rain gardens cultivated on rarely inundated Zambezi and tributary alluvia or on adjacent Karroo sediments.
Sikatongo	Rain cult priest.
Zilili	Zambezi bank gardens cultivated primarily during the dry seasons.

ABBREVIATIONS

A.F.C.....	Agricultural Finance Company
A.N.C:.....	African National Congress
B.S.A.Co:.....	British South Africa Company
CAPCO.....	Central African Power Corporation
cm:.....	Centimetre
C.S.B.....	Cold Storage Board Corporation
F.P.B.....	Federal Power Board
G.R.Z.....	Government of the Republic of Zambia
G.S.F.....	Gwembe Special Fund
GTZ.....	German Technical aid to Zambia
H.E.P.....	Hydro Electrical Power
LINTCO.....	Lint Company of Zambia
Kg.....	Kilogram
Km:.....	Kilometre
M:.....	Metre
NAMBOARD.....	National Agricultural Marketing Board
NAZ.....	National Archives of Zambia
NGOs.....	Non-Governmental Organisations
N.R.G.....	Northern Rhodesia Government
O.A.U.	Organisation of African Unity
P.W.D.....	Public Works Department
S.R.G.....	Southern Rhodesia Government

UNIP.....	United National Independence Party
UNZA.....	University of Zambia
W.V.I.....	World Vision International
U.D.I.....	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
ZAPU.....	Zimbabwe African People's Union
ZESCO.....	Zambia Electricity Supply Corporation

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The decision to undertake a study of the Gwembe Tonga society emanated from the desire to provide an appraisal of the major developments in the way of life of the valley people since their displacement by Lake Kariba. It should be noted, however, that even though the Gwembe Tonga living on the Zimbabwean side of the Zambezi river were also resettled under the Kariba Project, only the experiences of the Zambian Gwembe Tonga are considered in this dissertation. In general however, the gloomy picture painted by anthropological writings about the future of the Gwembe Tonga on the eve of the move, further stimulated the need to institute a follow-up study in order to update the information about the conditions of life in the valley over the last forty years. In recent years, the plight of the Gwembe has received renewed attention both at national and international levels.

Locally, the Rural Electrification Programme was responsible for the extension of electrical power to Munyumbwe and Sinazongwe District centres. At the time of field research for this study in 1999, the electrical power line at Munyumbwe was yet to be extended to Chipepo harbour and Chipepo Secondary School. In 1997 the World Bank sponsored a field research of the Gwembe valley entitled "Development Strategies and Rehabilitation Programmes for the Peoples Affected by the Construction of the Kariba Dam."¹ This was followed by the formation of the Gwembe Valley Tonga Development Project administered by the Zambia Electricity Supply Corporation (ZESCO) with funds coming from the World Bank. The organisation is non-profit making but is concerned

with fostering development programmes intended to ameliorate poverty in the Gwembe valley.²

This study discusses the major trends in the post-Kariba resettlement of the Gwembe Tonga society and examines the factors which led to the current status of the Gwembe valley as a famine disaster area. Furthermore, it should be noted that, our study is limited to the aspects of Gwembe Tonga history which relate to the construction of Kariba dam in 1958 and the period up to 1998. The study argues that the conditions for the underdevelopment of the Gwembe valley were laid in the colonial period. The political and economic policies of the colonial state were so unfavourable that they could not foster any meaningful development in the area. Prominent among these colonial policies were labour migration, tax payment and the *Inyoka* tobacco levy, all of which gravely undermined the agriculturally based economy of the Gwembe Tonga society. Indeed, food shortages and famine were also as a result of the adverse climatic conditions of inadequate and irregular rainfall, storms and floods, extreme heat and droughts. But the people had so adapted that sufficient coping mechanisms were available such as hunting, gathering and fishing to avert hunger brought about by natural causes. This kind of famine was also temporary or localised in nature, lasting only as long as it took the climate to stabilise again. However, the negative effects of labour migration and the damming of Kariba Gorge on the agricultural and food supply systems of the Gwembe people were more destructive and permanent. Labour migration in the post-Kariba resettlement period was no longer for purpose of earning cash to pay tax but was part of 'adaptation' to the new hardships of life in the valley; namely, a critical shortage of land, over population and irreversible famine conditions.

Rehabilitation programmes under the Gwembe Special Fund, as regards the fishing industry and tsetse control, yielded positive results among the local people. The loans and training in fishing helped the local people to raise enough capital with which they expanded their investments in livestock husbandry following the eradication of tsetse fly. Similarly, the post colonial policies for rural and agricultural development encouraged villagers to enter crop production for the cash market, especially in maize and cotton. Given the limited amount of arable and grazing land in the resettlement areas, these agricultural activities only led to the worsening of the already bad ecological conditions in the valley. In general, the study argues that the first three decades of Kariba resettlement saw a boom in agricultural performance among the valley people in livestock and cotton production. However, because the national staple, maize, could not perform well, the Gwembe valley continued to be described as a famine disaster area. The potential of livestock and cotton production did not receive similar attention and encouragement by the state. Livestock rearing, nonetheless, remained the most important buffer security against food shortages while cotton production plummeted in the 1990s following the demise of Lint Company of Zambia and due to the high input costs, under the London-Rhodesia Company (LONRHO), the successor organisation handling cotton production in the country.

Finally, the study argues that the indigenous agricultural systems have largely survived and could be used as a basis for a concerted effort to restore diversity in crop production in the area. The persistence and survival of the traditional farming practices and crops (sorghum and bulrush millet) amidst the intervention of modern ones, underscored the principle that any genuine rural and agricultural development programme

could only succeed if the majority of the rural producers were involved in the process of producing what they already cultivated and producing crops which were adapted to the local environment. The approach by some Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) currently operating in the Gwembe valley of encouraging community-based development programmes is a step in the right direction. For instance, the World Vision International (W.V.I.) and the German Technical Aid to Zambia (GTZ) have, since the early 1990s, been conducting workshops and seminars among the local people on the improvement of the subsistence farming methods using drought resistant varieties of maize, sorghum and bulrush millet. The GTZ was involved in the reorganisation of the fishing communities of Lake Kariba into zones and camps to facilitate the provision of social facilities like schools, clinics, roads and markets. Better techniques for mending boats, nets as well as locally made kilns for drying fish with a minimum of firewood were introduced to the fishermen.

ECOLOGY OF THE GWEMBE VALLEY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE LIFE OF THE LOCAL PEOPLE

The central argument of the study is that the Kariba Project brought about an environmental crisis which was responsible for the future degradation of conditions of human life in the Gwembe valley. This section, therefore, explains not only the nature of the ecology of the Gwembe valley but also the influence it had on the pattern of life of the local people prior to the construction of Kariba dam.

The Gwembe valley, before Kariba dam was built, comprised the generally flat flood plain of the middle Zambezi river with a gradual rise in height to the foot hills of the escarpment zone. As water supply was a perennial problem, save during the rainy

season, the importance of the Zambezi river to the valley dwellers, including animals, could not be doubted. Most of the tributaries dried up completely during the dry season and there was no reliable alternative source of water supply. In addition to water supply, the fertility of the soils helped to determine settlement patterns. As most of the foot hill country was infertile and dominated by the *mopane* vegetation (*colophospermum*), considered by the Valley Tonga to be uncultivable, only the alluvial deposits along the Zambezi and its tributaries attracted a dense settlement. Furthermore, the prevalence of the tsetse fly and marauding animals rendered certain fertile lands unsuitable for settlement and cultivation.³

Nevertheless the valley was able to support a large and growing population of agriculturists. The average density of the population of the Gwembe district was 3 per square kilometre but on the alluvial belt along the Zambezi the average density was 9 per square kilometre. In other more favourable locations the figure rose to as much as 115 per square kilometre. The total population for the Gwembe district on the eve of resettlement rose from 48,753 in 1956, 57,964 in 1959 to 69,000 in 1963.⁴

The valley Tonga were traditionally sedentary with a relatively advanced system of semi-permanent cultivation. This made the Gwembe Tonga agriculture system different from that of the plateau cultivators who, by virtue of the poorer plateau soils, followed a system of shifting cultivation. The cultivation by the Valley Tonga was concentrated on the rich alluvial soils along the Zambezi, and the annual flooding of the river and the consequent sedimentation enabled the land to be planted every year and obviated the need for fallowing or manuring.⁵ The cultivation of more than one staple crop (millet, sorghum and maize) made it unlikely that all would fail in any one season.

Furthermore, each of these crops had different soil and water requirements thereby allowing cultivation on a variety of soil types.

Prior to resettlement there were 2,230 hectares of river bank gardens, 13,000 hectares of flood plain and alluvium gardens (all submerged by the lake) and 11,300 hectares of gardens in the higher parts of the valley.⁶ After the formation of Lake Kariba the Gwembe valley floor between the lake and the escarpment was made up of this higher region. It was in this area that many of the river people were resettled. However, the planners and administrators of the resettlement programme did not expect that cultivation and herding would any longer form the basis of life in the Gwembe. Instead they had envisaged that commercial fishing would provide the foundation for the future prosperity of the valley. In this way, therefore, resettlement was bound to destroy the basis of the age-old Gwembe Tonga traditions of kinship ties, lineage ties, land rights, privileges and so on.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As indicated in the literature review, the Gwembe valley is one of the extensively studied regions in Zambia. In spite of this however, little or no research at all exists on the nature and extent of the contribution of Lake Kariba to the recent history of the Gwembe Tonga. This study, therefore, attempts to fill this gap.

OBJECTIVES

The study begins with an examination of the way of life of the Gwembe Valley Tonga before the construction of Kariba dam. Further, the study makes an assessment of

the contribution of Lake Kariba to the welfare of the Gwembe Tonga in general and, the effectiveness of the Post Kariba-Project rehabilitation programme in particular.

Finally, the study addresses the issue of whether the resilience of traditional agricultural practices and continued labour migration were a cause of or solution to the problem of food shortages and underdevelopment in the Gwembe Valley. This is followed up by an investigation in the issue of conflicts over resources between the local people and outside investors.

RATIONALE

The study hopes to add and build upon the existing body of knowledge about the recent history of the Gwembe Tonga. It will further make a contribution to the controversial debate that man-made lakes bring prosperity to the local community.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a considerable body of literature on the Kariba dam project. However, none of this literature deals with the long-term impact of the Kariba dam on the Gwembe Tonga. The available literature is in form of case studies on some particular aspects of the Gwembe Tonga society. The other literature is anthropological, concentrating on the internal social structures or the culture of the Gwembe Tonga.

Godfrey N. Haantobolo's 'Ecology, Agriculture and Proletarianisation: A study of the Sinazongwe Area in the Gwembe Valley of Southern Province of Zambia, 1900-1989. focusses on the impact of the policies of the colonial and post-colonial state on the environment and the land-use systems of the Gwembe Tonga in Sinazongwe Chieftaincy.

He states that land alienation and the establishment of commercial agriculture as well as coal mining impacted negatively on the local people's land-use and food supply systems. The shortage of land and poor food supply led to the process of proletarianisation as the people left their villages to look for wage employment on the local farms and mines as well as in towns along the line of rail. While Haantobolo limited his findings to chief Sinazongwe's area only, this study demonstrates that the same observations were actually true for the rest of the Gwembe valley. The problems of land shortage and poor food supply worsened in the post-Kariba resettlement period, forcing more and more local people to migrate to towns and commercial farms on the plateau for wage employment.

Bennet S. Siamwiza's 'Hunger in the Gwembe Valley: A case study of Mweemba chieftaincy, 1905-1992'⁸ documents the incidence of famine in the Mweemba chieftaincy in both the colonial and post-colonial periods. The study shows that famine in the Gwembe valley has been endemic owing largely to its unique geographical and climatic conditions. Siamwiza's work provided our study with an important background insight with regards to the issue of famine in the Gwembe Valley. Our study, however, argues that, in addition to the characteristic geographical and climatic factors, famine in the Gwembe valley was worsened by the loss of the traditional agricultural lands due to the lake. Other causes of poor harvests and starvation included over crowding of people and livestock on restricted or exhausted strips of land in the resettlement areas. In the post colonial era, Government emphasis on production of maize for the cash market also resulted in further damage to the agricultural ecology of the valley as it was not suitable for cultivation of maize.

Elizabeth Colson's *Social Organisation of the Gwembe Tonga*⁹ discusses the internal social structures of the Gwembe Tonga before their resettlement. She highlights the networking of the various social relationships among the people to promote harmony and equity in the distribution of communal wealth or resources. This knowledge about the social and cultural organisation of the Gwembe Tonga prior to their relocation helped our study to appreciate the nature of the Gwembe Tonga grievances and hardships after resettlement. For instance, in the resettlement areas the Gwembe Tonga had to learn shifting farming practices as opposed to sedentary farming which they practised under the riverine conditions of the Zambezi river. Furthermore, resettlement caused a disruption to the kinship relationships, an all important social network, which guaranteed the provision of resources and services among the Tonga on communal basis. On the other hand Colson's *The Social Consequences of Resettlement*¹⁰ outlines the major short-term disruptions caused to the Gwembe society by the Kariba project. She expressed the view that adaptation in the new resettlement areas would be hard and that the Gwembe Tonga might never recover the lost prosperity of their pre-Kariba resettlement society. This work served as a stepping stone in our investigations for the worse and long term effects of Lake Kariba on the valley Tonga. Indeed, the failure by Government to fulfill some of the promises made to the relocatees was itself an indication of how less committed the administration was to provide for the plight of the victims of Kariba Project.

Thayer Scudder's *The Ecology of the Gwembe Tonga*¹¹ documents the physical features and land-use systems of the Gwembe Tonga country before resettlement. He demonstrated how well the Gwembe Tonga's land-use and agricultural systems were adapted to the local environment, particularly the riverine garden system. Scudder's

work served as a reference point in our argument that conditions of life in the Gwembe valley before Kariba dam was built, were more favourable than those obtaining in the post-Kariba resettlement period.

The other relevant literature consulted in the dissertation include Terence O. Ranger's *The Agricultural History of Zambia*.¹² Ranger's work provided our study with another conceptual dimension by stating that the political history of the traditional African societies was inseparable from the history of their agricultural systems. Consequently, our dissertation has shown that the post-Kariba resettlement Gwembe society was politically weak and unstable, characterised by migrations, weakened chieftainships and distrust of government. This was because the people lacked economic empowerment as their agricultural system continued to deteriorate. Gear M. Kajoba's 'Land Tenure, Land Usage and the Historical Development of Agrarian Capitalism in Zambia: The Experience of the Periphery'¹³ provides useful information on how the national emphasis on maize production negatively affected the agricultural ecologies of the peripheral regions of the country which were traditionally not suited to maize production. In our study area this policy resulted in a vicious circle whereby increased agricultural activity particularly maize cultivation led to further damage of the ecology and reduced yields.

Leroy Vail's 'Ecology and History: The Example of Eastern Zambia'¹⁴ and C.S. Lombard and A.H.L. Tweedie's *Agriculture in Zambia Since Independence*¹⁵ discuss the general effects of land alienation and resettlement programmes. Vail argues that the policy of land alienation dislocated the age-old African system of land-use and food production leading to ecological impoverishment and, thus making it impossible to grow

enough food to feed themselves. As Vail demonstrated for Eastern Zambia, our study also argues that land alienation, under Kariba Project, in the Gwembe valley was responsible for the dislocation of the age-old Gwembe Tonga system of land-use and food production. This situation became almost irreversible as new other factors developed such as over-population and over-grazing. Lombard and Tweedie emphasise the need for government control in any resettlement programme involving the movement of people from one area to another. They argue that official administrative supervision is necessary not only of the movement itself but also of the activities of the relocatees in the new areas on a planned basis, the object being to raise their living standards. As Lombard and Tweedie emphasise on the aspects of human welfare in any resettlement of a large population of people, our study benefitted by applying the same concept to determine the extent to which the administration of Kariba resettlement cared for the welfare of the people. On the contrary, Kariba-resettlement was characterised by haste official administrative supervision and as a result it could not guarantee properly co-ordinated long term welfare plans. The change of government, for instance, from colonial to independence, meant the end of rehabilitation programmes in the resettlement areas as all of them were funded by the defunct Federal Government.

K.P. Vickery's *Black and White in Southern Zambia*¹⁶ presents the other side of the coin of colonial economic policy in Northern Rhodesia. While the core objective was to ensure a regular movement of Africans (including Gwembe Tonga) from their rural villages to work on the settler farms and mines in Southern Rhodesia, Katanga and Copperbelt, the same could not be said of the Plateau Tonga. By the 1930s migration rate among the Plateau Tonga was one of the lowest in the sub-region. Their indigenous

economy experienced a transformation from subsistence to commodity production of maize for sale. The adoption of ox-plough, proximity to the rail line and the growth of the Copperbelt market for maize and meat facilitated this transformation. The state tolerated this development as the local European farmers' production was not enough to satisfy the maize and beef needs of the Copperbelt.

For the purpose of our study, Vickery's work demonstrates the crucial role the environment plays to human innovation. While the concentration of the African populations into Native Reserves on the plateau would only gradually lead to environmental degradation, the impact of the flooding of the Gwembe valley on the environment was immediate and fundamental. The drastically changed environment in the Gwembe became a retarding factor to any attempts to increase agricultural productivity even with state intervention.

METHODOLOGY

The research for this dissertation lasted from June, 1999 to April, 2000. Between June and September 1999 we consulted published and unpublished sources found in the University of Zambia Library. The period between October 1999 and January 2000 was spent on field work in the study area while the remainder of the research concentrated on the primary sources found in the National Archives of Zambia, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries and the Central Statistical Office.

Field work consisted of unscheduled interviews with respondents drawn from among villagers, fishermen, traditional rulers, retired Government workers, serving Government workers, former members of parliament and Councillors. Some businessmen in the area were also consulted. The interviews were organised in a random

fashion in order to enhance originality of information given and to easily counter check information given by people in positions of responsibility with that from commoners.

ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

This dissertation is divided into five chapters, beginning with chapter one which is the introduction. Chapter two provides the background information about the study topic. It gives a brief outline of the origins and internal organisation of the Gwembe Tonga society before resettlement. It also highlights the colonial policies of labour migration, tax payment and *Inyoka* tobacco levy regarding their impact on the agricultural system of the valley inhabitants. The chapter concludes that before the construction of Kariba dam the colonial state had no intention or plans for the development of the Gwembe valley. Chapter three discusses the factors leading to the construction of the Kariba H.E.P Scheme. It highlights the difficulties that the relocated people experienced in the new resettlement areas. In addition to land shortage, overcrowding and chronic food shortage, the resettlement areas lacked adequate water supply. The initial water supply installations could not be maintained after the expiry of the Gwembe Special Fund in 1965. The chapter also examines the participation of the Gwembe Tonga in the new economic opportunities provided under the rehabilitation programme of the district. In particular, the Gwembe Tonga benefitted from the fishing industry which enabled them to raise enough capital with which they increased their herds of livestock following the eradication of tsetse fly. The post colonial policies for rural and agricultural development also provided favourable conditions for the Gwembe Tonga to participate in the production of crops for the cash market, especially maize and

cotton. The chapter concludes that the increased agricultural activities however caused pressure on the limited arable and grazing land. Hence the vicious circle of famine and worsening ecological conditions.

Chapter four discusses the incidence of conflicts between the local people and outside investors over resources in the resettlement areas. Foremost, the Gwembe people were dissatisfied with the enormous sacrifices they made for the Kariba Project whose only human justification lay in the long-term good of a larger national community which would benefit from the dam, and this community was not one with which they identified themselves. The chapter also views these conflicts as part of adaptation by the local people to the new conditions of life after relocation. The desire by the local people to maximise their economic opportunities inevitably caused stiff competition as the limited land resources dwindled. Chapter five is the conclusion of the study. It provides a recapitulation of the main theme of the dissertation that the unfavourable policies of land expropriation to facilitate the Kariba Project set the precedent for the future underdevelopment of the Gwembe. The post colonial policies of rural development also aggravated the problem of ecological imbalance, as did over-grazing, through the promotion of increased crop production in maize and cotton for the cash market. The study, nonetheless, argues that all is not lost in that the traditional agricultural systems based on the production of sorghum and bulrush millet have largely survived and could be used as a basis to diversify food crop production and restore food security.

NOTES

- ¹ J. Kamwanga and C.A. Njobvu, "Development Strategies and Rehabilitation Programmes for the Peoples Affected by the Construction of the Kariba Dam," *Final Composite Report*, Institute for Economic and Social Research, University of Zambia, (1997).
- ² Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation Radio Programme, Tonga Section, presented on Tuesday at 07.30 hours by Chrispin Nchobezyi, Public Relations Manager, Gwembe Valley Tonga Development Project, 2000.
- ³ W. Allan, *The African Husbandman* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1965), p.148.
- ⁴ J.A. Hellen, *Rural Economic Development in Zambia, 1890-1964* (Munich: Welt forum Verlag, 1968), p. 72.
- ⁵ C.G. Trapnell and J.N. Clothier, *The Soils, Vegetation and Agricultural Systems of North-Western Rhodesia* (Lusaka: Government printers, 1957), p.44.
- ⁶ D.S. Johnson, 'the Human Geography of the Region' *Zambia Geographical Association Magazine*, 25 (1974), p. 6.
- ⁷ Godfrey N. Haantobolo, 'Ecology, Agriculture and Proletarianisation: A Study of the Sinazongwe Area in the Gwembe Valley of Southern Province of Zambia, 1900-1989', M.A. Dissertation, UNZA (1990).
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- ⁹ Elizabeth Colson, *Social Organisation of the Gwembe Tonga* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1960).
- ¹⁰ Elizabeth Colson, *The Social Consequences of Resettlement* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971).
- ¹¹ Thayer Scudder, *The Ecology of the Gwembe Tonga* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1962).
- ¹² T.O. Ranger, *The Agricultural History of Zambia* (Lusaka: NECZAM, Historical Association of Zambia, 1971).
- ¹³ Gear M. Kajoba, 'Land Tenure, Land Usage and the Historical Development of Agrarian Capitalism in Zambia: The Experience of the Periphery', M. Phil Thesis, University of Sussex (1988).

¹⁴ L. Vail, 'Ecology and History: The Example of Eastern Zambia' *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 3,2 (1977), 129-155.

¹⁵ C.S. Lombard and A.H.L. Tweedie, *Agriculture in Zambia Since Independence* (Lusaka: NECZA, 1973).

¹⁶ K.P. Vickery, *Black and White in Southern Zambia: The Tonga Plateau Economy and British Imperialism, 1890-1939* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986).

CHAPTER TWO

THE GWEMBE TONGA BEFORE THE CONSTRUCTION OF KARIBA DAM: THEIR ORIGIN AND INTERNAL ORGANISATION.

In this chapter we investigate and discuss the way of life of the Gwembe Tonga from the earliest known period of their history to the early 1950s. The discussion divides the history of the Valley Tonga between the periods before and during colonial rule. The chapter contends that, although the Gwembe Tonga suffered from the effects of unfavourable climatic conditions, chronic famine and negligence by the colonial state, they nevertheless lived a relatively self-sustaining and prosperous life. Unlike the situation after Kariba resettlement where land and other resources greatly became scarce, in the period before and during colonial rule the Gwembe Tonga developed many different coping mechanisms by which they averted the hardships arising from the changes in the climate and state policies.

The existing oral traditions and written primary sources indicate that the ancestors of the contemporary Gwembe Tonga who had inhabited the middle portion of the Zambezi river, commonly known as the Gwembe Valley, were among the earliest Bantu immigrants to arrive in Zambia.¹ They were part of the larger linguistic cluster called the Bantu Botatwe comprising the plateau Tonga, Lenje and Ila with whom they shared a number of common characteristics. They were collectively thought to have migrated from the East Coast of Africa,² and followed the Zambezi before finally settling down in the grassland region to the south of the Kafue river. Archaeological data, based on crop and animal husbandry, indicate that Tonga settlement in this area could have taken place in the first millennium A.D.³

Consequent to their East African background and or contact, the ancestors of the Bantu Botatwe brought with them the culture of domesticating livestock, large and small. This was combined with an agricultural system based on shifting cultivation of such staples as sorghum, millet and various vegetable relishes. Probably as a result of the semi- permanent agricultural activities of pastoralism and shifting cultivation, the Bantu Botatwe lived in acephalous societies. The highest political organisation being a loose neighbourhood comprising a few villages under the charge of a more or less voluntary senior headman.⁴ The authority of the Sikatongo and Ulanyika, which were the political equivalent of a chief and king among the highly centralised Luba-Lunda Speakers, were more ritual and religious than political. This social and economic organisation had remained basic, with only minor local modifications, among all the group members of the Bantu Botatwe despite the north-west ward dispersion into the upper Kafue regions by some of them like the Ila and Lenje.

The geographical and climatic conditions of the areas they came to occupy also had profound influence in the way of life of these early immigrants into Zambia, both in the short and long terms. For instance, the Tonga section of this group came to be named as Valley or Plateau Tonga in relation to the two major landscape features of the areas which they came to occupy. Furthermore, the Gwembe Valley, standing at 457.2m to 609.6m above sea level, is in the rain shadow always receiving less rainfall than the adjacent plateau, standing at between 1036.32m (Mazabuka) and 1249.68m (Kalomo).⁵ Precipitation range as at early 1930s in the Valley was between 45.72cm and 76.2cm annually while that of the plateau was slightly above 81.28cm for Choma and about 83.82cm at Mazabuka.⁶ The rugged nature of the Valley landscape, high temperatures

and a general shortage of arable land and frequent droughts forced valley dwellers to concentrate their settlement near or along the banks of the Zambezi river and its tributaries to utilise the annually inundated riverine alluvium lands for agriculture. Consequently, the Gwembe Tonga developed an elaborate riverine garden agriculture system which permitted a bi-annual cropping cycle, one during the normal rainy season (November to April) and another in Winter (June to September) as the flood waters recede⁷. The four major garden types were as follows:

1. *Jejele*: Zambezi river bank gardens cultivated mainly during the dry season. Important for green vegetables and maize during hot season. These plots were in great demand and therefore often sub-divided into small pieces of land of a quarter acre or less.
2. *Kuti*: Flood plain gardens cultivated during the rainy season as well as during the dry season, preferably with maize under planted with cucurbits and sometimes with tobacco as a cash crop.
3. *Unda*: Rainy season gardens on rarely flooded alluvia or karroo sediments cultivated mainly with sorghum and bulrush millet.
4. *Temwa*: Bush gardens depending entirely on rains and often situated at considerable distance from the village with bulrush millet as the main crop.

In short however, both the Valley and Plateau Tonga remained hoe cultivators producing to supply their food needs. Both also supplemented their food supply by hunting, gathering, exchange (trade) and fishing.

Social differentiation was based more on gender rather than on accumulation and individual ownership of property. Men carried more respect than women in decision making but this did not translate into the wielding of personal power by men. The materilineal system which gave a nephew the right to inherit his uncle's property made Gwembe Tonga men to play the role of being custodians only over the resources of their community. Under this system, children in a family belonged to their mother or their maternal uncle. On the death of a man, his sister or his sister's children inherited the dead man's property and or status. The system gave greater social security to a woman as a mother who, in turn, provided for all her children's needs. On the contrary, the patrilineal system promoted the dominance of men over women. On the death of a man his property and or status was inherited by his male children or his brother. The female members of a family were always at the mercy of their male counterparts. Economic appropriation and exploitation of the majority by a few individuals in society was therefore, more likely to take place in the latter than the former system.

Among the Gwembe Tonga the matrilineal system ensured that all eligible members of the community, men and women alike, were allowed access to the productive resources such as arable and grazing land and rights in hunting and fishing. Although the produce belonged to the individual,⁸ it was a common practice for those who had plenty to share with those in need. Strong Kinship ties were always necessary as this served as a food security in bad agricultural periods. In effect these kinship ties produced a kind of economic interdependence between the two ecological zones of the Gwembe Valley and the adjacent plateau involving a wide range of transactions from grain and livestock to luxuries like tobacco, basketry, salt and other forest products. In

periods of drought or pestilence, Valley Tonga leased out their cattle to their plateau kinsmen or vice versa.⁹ In essence these subsistence cultivators used to realise a kind of surplus production in good agricultural years to allow for the above social network. Ordinary agricultural surplus also existed in the form of grain used in the brewing of local beer for the many different social functions like the occasion of child naming or propitiation of ancestral spirits.¹⁰ Egalitarianism rather than individual achievement and competition was the life philosophy of pre-colonial Tonga society of both the Valley and Plateau.

The advent of external and capitalist relations of production in the sub-region of Southern Africa at the turn of the nineteenth century did however initiate many changes in the traditional African economic and political structures. The peak of this transformation was during the period of European colonial rule. The Tonga society of southern Zambia, to which the Gwembe Tonga belong, was not an exception. Beginning as part of the general spread of European imperialism and scramble for Africa, European businesses, first set up along the coast of the continent, expanded the frontiers of their influence deep into the interior of Africa. Mercantile capitalist activities pioneered this expansion. The Gwembe valley was visited by European hunters of ivory, prospectors and other fortune seekers.¹¹ Missionary settlements also aided the introduction of the money economy in the region. The opening up of the mining activities in South Africa and Zimbabwe and the accompanying expansion of the railway and road communications, growth of towns and industries, provided alternative economic opportunities to the African economies. The eventual colonisation or political

incorporation of Zambia was a culmination of these European pioneering activities which started in Southern Africa.

European economic activities were taken advantage of by the Africans in a number of ways even before the imposition of colonial rule. Many Africans hired themselves to the Europeans for different jobs. Some Gwembe men worked as carriers, servants and caravan guides.¹² In the initial stages of contact, production relations between the African and European economic sectors remained loosely defined. Nevertheless, African labour was immensely valuable for the success of the European enterprises. For this reason, during the colonial period the state put up mechanisms to regulate African labour with regards to recruitment and its maintenance on the settler farms, mines and other industries in the towns. The maintenance of this status quo remained one of the major pre-occupations of the colonial state throughout the region.¹³ The African communities on their part responded in many different ways to this European incursion. In general they attempted to adapt their traditional economic systems to the increasing new challenges and opportunities.

The experiences of the Gwembe people in the context of the above scenario were certainly not unique. They had happened to many other African societies in the wake of the encroaching money economy. Years before the imposition of colonial administration over Zambia, Gwembe Tonga men crossed the Zambezi river into Zimbabwe. Taking advantage of their kinsmen living on the opposite banks of the river, it was easy for them to learn of developments taking place in other parts of the region. Seasonal migration to seek wage employment on the mines, settler farms and nascent towns of Zimbabwe became a matter of routine to the valley dwellers.¹⁴ Taste for European articles such as

clothes, iron pots and other simple metals, dated back to the period of travellers and other European itinerant traders who exchanged them for African goods like skins of Lion, Leopard or Cats or services rendered to them. Later these articles began to take on a symbolic value akin to prestige or wealth particularly among young men preparing for their first marriages. A young man who gave out plenty of presents of European origin to his in-laws was highly regarded in society and was a source of pride to his own parents.¹⁵

The Gwembe Tonga also observed that the work places and towns of Zimbabwe were offering business opportunities especially in tobacco which they had always grown for domestic consumption. The trade in *Inyoka* tobacco, as it came to be known, provided an alternative source of cash income especially to the old men who could not afford the long distances and other hardships experienced by labour migrants.¹⁶ The older men had another advantage over the young men in the tobacco trade, much of the fertile alluvium lands where the tobacco crop flourished were controlled by them. Other benefits realised by the Gwembe Tonga accruing from both labour migration and trade in tobacco were that they increased the size of the heads of both small and large stock which they bought from their neighbours, the Plateau Tonga. Tsetse fly which was previously generally distributed throughout Gwembe had receded into remote forest following the wiping out of cattle in 1895 by rinderpest.¹⁷

The colonial state encouraged the idea of earning a cash income among the Africans by the introduction of an annual Hut tax in 1903 for the purpose of raising revenue for its administration. In the initial stages the colonial state under the British South Africa Company (B.S.A. Co.) was less interested in the development of European settler agriculture in the territory. Its interests were directed at promoting the company's

major investments in the mining industries of Zimbabwe and South Africa. The Zambian territory was expected to supply the necessary cheap labour for these mines and those in the Katanga region of the Belgian Congo. The colonial economic policy therefore added another dimension to labour migration by the Gwembe Tonga. Default in tax payment was a criminal offence which carried a jail sentence with hard labour of up to six months or more.¹⁸ Forced labour migration affected the local agricultural calendar of the valley people. In the early colonial era married men remained home to help with the clearance of the fields before planting or opening up of new gardens for expansion purposes.

Worse still, starting from 1908 the state arranged with the mining companies that recruitment be done through the Native Labour Bureau which in turn imposed its own service conditions on its recruited men. For instance, it imposed a quota system of as much as four to six months of service before its men could return to their territories of origin.¹⁹ The alternative means of raising cash income by trading in the *Inyoka* tobacco also suffered under the colonial state. In 1924 an *Inyoka* Tobacco Export Duty Ordinance was passed imposing a levy of three and a half pence ($3\frac{1}{2}^d$) per pound weight on all tobacco delivered to the Zimbabwean markets.²⁰ This ordinance was passed in order to protect European grown virginia tobacco from the obvious competition of the cheaply produced African tobacco. The Plateau Tonga, of course, were the only exception to this general rule. They reduced their dependence on labour migration by exploiting their relative geographical advantage within the colonial economic structure. While the railway provided them easy transport, the incoming settler farmers bought Tonga cattle for their initial stock. In turn, the agricultural technology (plough) which

they copied from the European farmers helped the Plateau Tonga to become peasant farmers by producing maize for sale to the Copperbelt.²¹

No doubt the Colonial State's economic policy impacted negatively on the support base of the African economic system right from the early stages. However, Africans continued to devise coping mechanisms in order to adapt themselves to the ever increasing new challenges. For instance, in order to avoid staying for longer periods at places of work, many Gwembe men began to avoid Company recruitment and instead went away on their own and chose their own employers. In this way they ensured that their agricultural obligations were adequately attended to. The records show that in spite of the difficulties imposed by the state, there was a steady increase in the annual output of marketed *inyoka* tobacco, livestock population and tax revenue collection in the whole period of British South Africa Company rule.²²

Of even greater consequences to the future history of the African village economies, were the land and agricultural policies, introduced under colonial administration regarding land tenure, intended to attach great economic value to land and to increase agricultural productivity. Land now could be sold and bought and be held under different titles of individual land holding like freehold or lease. All the land was surveyed, demarcated and alienated according to its economic value, being either as forest land or agricultural land. The latter, however, became mixed with a racial bias as the alienation of agricultural lands was based on setting aside land for the exclusive occupation and use by either European settlers or Africans. Crown Land was available for European settlement only while Africans were pushed into Native Reserves. Subsequently pressure for more land by Africans in the reserves forced government to

release some of the Crown Land for use by Africans as Native Trust Land in 1947 on the basis of individual occupancy for a period not exceeding 99 years.²³ The Gwembe valley at the time was never directly affected by the above land laws but suffered from the lack of their applicability and thereby experienced a situation ranging from partial official neglect to a wish for the total removal of the inhabitants for resettlement on other lands elsewhere in the colony.

During the economic hardships of the post First World War period, the Gwembe valley suffered from a total absence of any resident official administration. The Gwembe Boma was closed in 1922 and its administrative duties were divided between Mazabuka and Kalomo sub-Districts. The areas which fell under Mazabuka Boma became known as Mazabuka-Gwembe and those under Kalomo as Kalomo-Gwembe. The boundary was the Nakasanga river.²⁴ Between 1922 and 1945, official tours to the Gwembe valley were infrequent because of poor transport system between the valley and Kalomo or Mazabuka. The Gwembe people thus could not benefit from the many innovations taking place in the rest of the country as a result of lack of contact with the various state apparatuses. For instance, the Africans living in the Reserves bordering the Railway Line and other centres of great European economic activity benefitted from the methods and techniques they copied from European farmers. The Famine Relief Commission of 1931-32 observed that the Native Authorities in the area were so ill developed as to effectively implement government policies and programmes such as the management of relief food in the famine of that period.²⁵

The high incidence of famine had been one of the greatest problems of the area frequently begging for state intervention. Food shortages were largely due to irregular

and low levels of rainfall averaging between 45.72cm and 76.2cm across the valley. Furthermore, many villages situated away from the regularly inundated and fertile middle and lower river valleys tended to adhere to few available strips of restricted or exhausted land resulting in declining yields. Records indicate that severe famine conditions took place in 1905, 1908-09, 1911-1918, 1922-23, 1931-32, 1941-42, 1947-48, 1954-55 and 1957-58. The major contributory causes ranged from adverse rainfall conditions to severe droughts resulting in crop failures and wide spread food shortages.²⁶ Up to the late 1930s the only major intervention measures taken by the Government were in form of provision of short term famine relief. Before the reconstitution of the Gwembe Boma in 1945, Government long term policy over the Gwembe revolved around two contradictory measures. On the one hand, way back in 1916, "evacuation of the natives from Gwembe had been suggested as a cure for famine."²⁷ On the other hand the recommendations of the various commissions: the 1913 Commission for establishment of Native Reserves, the 1931-32 Famine Relief Commission and the 1937 Report of the Ecological Survey represented the other opinion which was against evacuation. In 1937, Trapnell and Clothier observed that "the agriculture of the Valley Tonga had been shown to be by no means as backward as commonly supposed."²⁸ It was said that even with considerable increase in population, and with increased energy and improvement in agricultural method the land was entirely adequate for present and future needs for many years to come.²⁹

The latter option prevailed over the former as, indeed, any such removal would have tended to make conditions worse, having to find suitable resettlement land elsewhere in the colony and the great cost of the whole operation. Indeed it was part of

the colonial state's Native Policy that removal of native villages of any scale to better sites would be desirable provided this was done with knowledge of the natives' principles of land selection.³⁰ The majority of the recommendations by the above Reports for the Gwembe supported the view that the area deserved developmental attention similar to any being given to the rest of the native population in the colony. The Native Reserves Fund for instance, needed to be extended to the Valley inhabitants even if this area was outside the Native Reserves. There was need to re-establish a separate Gwembe district to ensure closer attention to schemes of development and co-operation between departmental and administrative officers in the area. The site for the new Boma should be half way along the valley unlike the old one, at Ibwe Munyama, which was far away from where the people lived.

In the early 1940s, the Government encouraged the re-introduction of cassava, as a drought resistant crop, despite the failure of the initial attempt in 1916.³¹ It was observed that although cassava cuttings died at planting due to heat and attack by white ants, negligence on the part of the people also accounted for this failure. Along with the establishment of communal granaries, the cultivation of cassava, if seriously encouraged by the authorities, could be of great importance to prevent famine.³² As regards communal granaries, all chiefs were required by law to levy grain on their villagers to create a local food reserve. Every chieftaincy in the Gwembe stored grain enough to last for at least three years. Bulrush millet was recommended for this purpose as other grains were difficult to store as they were susceptible to weevil attack. Stored grain was distributed only when hunger hit the area and with the authority of the Native Authority and District Commissioner. Non-compliance with the scheme was punishable by

payment of a fine not exceeding £5.00 or imprisonment with hard labour not exceeding three months. An Agricultural Councillor, assisted by a Clerk appointed by the Native Authority, co-ordinated these efforts. The scheme worked well until about 1955 when the Government discontinued it. For instance, during the 1947-48 famine the greater quantity of relief grain came from the communal bins.³³

To meet the economic need, the cotton crop was introduced in the area as was already commenced on the Zimbabwean side of the Valley and in the Luangwa Valley. Experiments in cotton growing were started in 1938 with 33 growers. The results were so impressive, with an initial average yield of 123.4kg per hectare of seed cotton, that the 1939 yield of 181.44kg per hectare led to the erection of a storage at Siatwinda in Mweemba Chieftaincy.³⁴

The official position of the state's advisory bodies, as seen so far was in favour of the preservation of the status quo in the Valley as opposed to any suggestion for a plan to have the people leave their ancestral homes. From the point of view of political organisation at local level, the same Native Authorities structure was in operation just like elsewhere in the country particularly after the reconstitution of Gwembe district in 1945. Operating along the general principle of the Indirect Rule System, Native Authorities assisted the District Commissioners in the administration of local African affairs. For the Gwembe, these were appointed on 4th March 1930.³⁵ They were the recognised or appointed Chiefs or headmen. Prior to the reconstitution of Gwembe district, in the Kalomo portion there was one Superior and five Subordinate Authorities while for the Mazabuka portion there was one Superior Authority and twelve Subordinates, making a total of two Superior and seventeen Subordinate Authorities.

TABLE I: NATIVE AUTHORITIES IN GWEMBE DISTRICT

A. MAZABUKA PORTION:

Superior Authority Area	Chipepo and Council of Chiefs											
Subordinate Authority Area	Gwembe-Zambezi											
	Chipepo	Chiabi	Munyumbwe	Siadombo zia	Sinafwala	Siabumbe ne	Sichulu	Monga	Siachobe	Simamba	Sinachilom ba	Sikoongo
	Gwembe-Zambezi	Chilola	Fumbo	Chilindi	Chezia	Kaindo	Changa	Chimata	Dambwe	Mamba	Chilomba	Namwinga

B. KALOMO PORTION

Superior Authority Area	Mweemba and Council of Chiefs			
Subordinate Authority Area	Mweemba			
	Mweemba	Sinazongwe	Sianyanga	Sinakoba
	Mweemba	Zongwe	Njola	Koba
				Mwenda

Source: Jordan G. Read, *Report on Famine Relief: Gwembe 1931-32* (Livingstone: Government Printer, 1932), p. 29.

The reconstitution of Gwembe District in 1945 and the subsequent establishment of an administrative headquarters in 1948 at Gwembe Boma, did not however translate into an immediate rejuvenation of the state's attitude toward the Gwembe valley and its people. The escarpment hills, the heat and isolation of the valley remained the natural barriers to the introduction of any meaningful development in the area. The new headquarters (Gwembe Boma) itself was built just outside the district boundaries on the plateau margin, 17 km from the rail line.

In conclusion, the foregoing chapter has demonstrated that up to the early 1950s the Gwembe Valley remained least affected by the core political and economic changes taking place under colonial rule in Zambia. The Gwembe Boma, located on the fringes of the plateau and with poor transport and communication links with the Tonga Plateau where Government activity was highly visible, remained ineffectively administered under a highly decentralised Native Administration. The customary land tenure system continued largely unaltered in the absence of any land alienations and significant commercial agriculture. Labour migration remained the major source of cash income for paying tax or investing in cattle and other capital implements like ox-plough. Going by the recommendations of the various colonial Commissions of Inquiry, mentioned in the chapter, which favoured improvement of conditions of life in the valley without altering the existing status quo, this situation would have probably continued had it not been for the establishment of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1953 which sanctioned the construction of the Kariba dam.

NOTES

¹ David Livingstone and Charles Livingstone, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambezi and its Tributaries* (London: J. Murraray, 1865), p. 317.

² Jordan Gordon Read, *Report on Famine Relief: Gwembe 1931-32* (Livingstone: Government Printer, 1932), p. 6.

³ Brian M. Fagan. "Early Farmers and Iron Workers (100 B.C. to A.D. 1500)" in B.M. Fagan (ed.), *A Short History of Zambia* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 92-93.

⁴ E. Colson, *Social Organisation of the Gwembe Tonga* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1960), p. 28.

⁵ Read, *Report on Famine Relief*, p. 1.

⁶ Read, *Report on Famine Relief*, p. 7.

⁷ C.G. Trapnell and J.N. Clothier, *Report of the Ecological Survey: The Soils, Vegetation and Agricultural Systems of North-Western Rhodesia* (Lusaka: Government Printers, 1937), p. 54.

⁸ Read, *Report on Famine Relief*, p. 37.

⁹ NAZ. KTE 3/1/1; L.S. MacNamara, *Gwembe District Tour Report*, 1908.

¹⁰ Thayer Scudder, *Gathering Among Woodland Savannah Cultivators: A Case Study: The Gwembe Tonga* (Institute for African Studies, Zambia Papers, 1971), pp. 26-27.

¹¹ Frederick C. Selous, *Travel and Adventure in South-East Africa* (London: R. Ward, 1893), pp. 203-208.

¹² Selous, *Travel and Adventure*, p. 205.

¹³ Charles Van Onselen, *Chibaro: African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia 1900-1933* (London: Pluto Press, 1976), chapters 3 and 4.

¹⁴ A.W.M.S. Griffin, Tom Chicken and G. Howe, "Memories of abandoned Boma No.13: Ibwe Munyama" *The Northern Rhodesia Journal*, 3 (1958), p. 414.

¹⁵ Colson, *The Social Organisation of the Gwembe Tonga*, p. 32.

- ¹⁶ NAZ, KTE 3/1/1, L.S. MacNamara, *Gwembe District Tour Report*, 1910.
- ¹⁷ NAZ, KTE 3/2/1, *Gwembe District Tour Report*, 1913.
- ¹⁸ NAZ, KTE 3/2/1, L.S. MacNamara, *Gwembe District Tour Report 1909*.
- ¹⁹ NAZ, KTE 3/2/1, L.S. MacNamara, *Gwembe District Tour Report 1909*.
- ²⁰ NAZ, BI/41/I *Inyoka Tobacco Export Duty Ordinance, 1st August 1924*, pp. 3-5.
- ²¹ K.P. Vickery, *Black and White in Southern Zambia* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), p. 6.
- ²² NAZ, KTE 2/1, *Gwembe District Note Book*, pp. 210-215.
- ²³ *Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into the Financial and Economic Position of Northern Rhodesia, Colonial No. 145* (Pim Report), (London: 1938), P. 63.
- ²⁴ Read, *Report on Famine Relief*, p. 9
- ²⁵ Read, *Report on Famine Relief*, p. 10.
- ²⁶ Bennet S. Siamwiza, 'Hunger in the Gwembe Valley: A case study of Mweemba Chieftaincy, 1905-1992', M.A. Dissertation UNZA (1993), chapter one.
- ²⁷ Read, *Report on Famine Relief*, p. 14.
- ²⁸ Trapnell and Clothier, *Report of the Ecological Survey*, p. 58.
- ²⁹ Read, *Report on Famine Relief*, p. 14.
- ³⁰ Trapnell and Clothier, *Report of the Ecological Survey*, p. 58.
- ³¹ Read, *Report on Famine Relief*, p. 41.
- ³² Read, *Report on Famine Relief*, P. 40.
- ³³ Siamwiza, 'Hunger in the Gwembe Valley', p. 41.
- ³⁴ NAZ, KTE 2/1, *Gwembe District Note Book*, p. 250.
- ³⁵ Read, *Report on Famine Relief*, p.29.

CHAPTER THREE

THE IMPACT OF LAKE KARIBA ON THE GWEMBE TONGA

K.P. Vickery demonstrated how imperialism and colonialism shaped the history of the Plateau Tonga from the 1890s to the 1930s. He, in particular, examined how the mature colonial state played the interventionist role in order to channel the local sub-economic sectors (e.g. agricultural production by the Plateau Tonga) to supply the colony's key sector of Copper mining.¹ In this chapter, I explore how similar regional and global forces shaped the history of Zambia, paying particular attention to the workings of these forces in the Gwembe, a remote and marginalized part of the country.

The widely accepted assessment of the consequences of the Kariba Project is that it created the conditions for the underdevelopment of the Gwembe Tonga. The assumption of the Federal Government was that the long-term economic benefits of the lake would compensate for effects of the loss of land and other resources by the local people. It, therefore, planned the Kariba Resettlement Programme to include a variety of rehabilitation projects intended to provide a new basis of the Gwembe Tonga society. These projects ranged from the provision of water supply, tsetse eradication, creation of fishing grounds, training of local fishermen to formation of peasant farms. The assessment of the extent to which this rehabilitation scheme succeeded or failed, in the last forty years, forms the core of this chapter.

The Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland came into being in 1953 and, in 1955, the new Federal Government sanctioned the decision to build the Kariba dam. Briefly stated, the idea for closer union of the two northern territories of Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia with Southern Rhodesia was the brain child of the two governments of Britain

and Southern Rhodesia. Britain in 1950 was dependent upon its colonies for its dollar earning capacity because of the destruction of the Second World War.² British colonies – notably Malaya (tin and rubber), West Africa (coffee and palm oil) and Central Africa (copper and tobacco) were the chief suppliers of foreign exchange. Britain therefore could not afford Central Africa's dollar earning capability to fall into the hands of Afrikaner ruled South Africa.³ On the other hand Zambia's economic potential provided an enviable source of funds for cash strapped Zimbabwe.⁴ Zambia experienced a boom in the copper industry and growth in its revenue particularly after its 1949 agreement with the B.S.A.Co. whereby Northern Rhodesia acquired 20% of the annual net profits of the copper industry.⁵ The revenue of the Zambian Government increased from £309,795 in 1924 to £26,064,540 in 1952.⁶ By contrast Zimbabwe was heavily and rapidly falling into greater debt. From 1946 to 1954 the public debt of Zimbabwe rose from £27 million to £137 million.⁷ Other reasons, of course, were that the three territories were interdependent. For instance, road and rail links connected Zambia and Zimbabwe and provided Zambia with a route to the sea. Coal mined in Zimbabwe was needed on the Copperbelt and Zambian and Malawian labour was needed in Zimbabwe.⁸ But this in itself was not enough rationale for establishing a federation because these features would remain with or without a federation. Instead, it would be more correct to argue that the economic benefits of the dam to the federation were generally more important than any consideration of the adverse effects on the people.

The period of the Federation was therefore an era in which the northern territories' interests were subdued and all power became concentrated in the region's industrial base, Zimbabwe. The construction of the Kariba Dam on the middle Zambezi valley was a

case in point. Basically two major developments were associated with the construction of Kariba Dam. One was the increase in the manufacturing industries in Zimbabwe between 1920 and 1945. The other was the development of the Zambian Copper Mining Industry.⁹ These activities necessitated the development of an effective and reliable source of cheap hydro-electric power. Feasibility studies on the development of the Kariba Gorge into a power-generating source were sponsored by the Southern Rhodesian Government from 1945 continuing through to 1950.¹⁰ On the other hand, the Northern Rhodesian Government had opted for the Kafue Gorge Hydro-Electric Scheme, objecting to the Kariba Scheme for the fear that the lake would not only inundate the much valuable land along the Zambezi river (the riverine gardens) but also that the scheme would result in the uprooting of thousands of people mainly those living on the Northern Rhodesian side of the river.¹¹ The Kafue Scheme did not require any movement of people.

The arguments against the construction of a hydro-electric dam at Kariba Gorge were overlooked. The Federal Government insisted on locating the scheme at the gorge. The economic reason for the option was very basic, emphasising on the creation of the interdependence of the two neighbouring countries founded on the scheme as a joint venture. The Kafue Gorge Scheme was therefore abandoned and construction work on the Kariba Gorge commenced in 1955. The project was largely funded by the World Bank and was constructed at a total cost of £74,571,429. The construction work was finally completed in 1958 and immediately the Central African Power Corporation (CAPCO) began generating power.¹²

The Kariba Project ushered in an unprecedented phase of the Colonial State's involvement in the District. The surveying, clearing and engineering works did not only increase the population of people from outside the district in the area but marked the beginning of the process by which the Gwembe Tonga gave up their age-old homes and gardens in the valley to the forming lake. The maximum dam height and, therefore, lake water level, was 489.20m above sea level.¹³ This meant that only the upland and escarpment regions were the available alternative for human occupation within the district. But these were condemned lands comprising agriculturally poor and heavily erodable *mopane* soils and laden with a heavy tsetse fly infestation.¹⁴ This prospect of a human catastrophe led to a comprehensive government resettlement programme for the victims of the Kariba Project. As not enough arable land was available within the hinterland of the lake, a large number of local inhabitants had to be resettled elsewhere in the district or in selected areas of other districts like Kalomo, Choma or even Mumbwa.¹⁵ In the whole district there lived some 47,000 Africans. About 34,000 of these, with 9,000 head of cattle and 15,000 small stock lived in the area which was to be flooded by the waters of Lake Kariba.¹⁶ In Mweemba Chieftaincy the relocatees totalled 9,100, in Sinazongwe Chieftaincy 8,967, in Chihepo Chieftaincy 8,676 and 2,196 in Simamba Chieftaincy. Except for Chief Sinazongwe's area where sufficient land existed to resettle all the local relocatees, in Chief Chihepo's area only a small population of about 4,000 were settled on agricultural land within the chief's boundaries.¹⁷ Most of them were resettled in the Lusitu area of Chief Sikoongo between the Kariba Gorge and Chirundu, which was the only available empty large area. In the case of Chief Mweemba's people the land situation was so desperate that resettlement was only possible in selected areas of

Kalomo, Choma and Mumbwa Districts. However, only sites in adjoining districts were reluctantly accepted by a few relocatees and none opted to be settled in Mumbwa.¹⁸

To facilitate these large scale movements of people and in order to render the new resettlement sites habitable, a whole range of facilities and services were put in place. Communications were the first to be attended to right from the beginning of the core Kariba Project activities in 1955. Thus, roads were improved and new ones were built. The Choma-Sinazongwe road was made accessible throughout the year. The Chisekesi-Gwembe-Munyumbwe-Chipepo road was graded and remained in good condition. The new Munyumbwe-Changa road was completed in 1957. The Mapangazya-Changa road was greatly improved and regular maintenance was done by the Public Works Department (P.W.D.). The Sinazongwe-Siatwinda road, which gave access to the Mweemba area, was in a good condition, including a number of minor roads linking the various resettlement villages.¹⁹ Water supply installations in the form of dams, weirs, wells and boreholes were constructed throughout the resettlement sites. Game and tsetse control involved extensive clearing and cutting operations of bush in all fly-infested areas. Marauding animals were physically hunted and killed. During the first quarter of 1957, 29 elephants, 345 baboons and 175 monkeys were killed. In short, the colonial government, in preparation for the resettlement programme, put in place Game and Tsetse, Water Development, Agricultural, Public Works and Veterinary Departments all of which either sent men to work in the resettlement areas or stationed them nearby to supervise such works.²⁰

The outlay and planning of the resettlement sites had, as a long term policy, the intention of establishing Village Service Centres, which would be the lowest level of

urban settlement containing a minimum of essential and inextensive services like primary schools, dispensary, police, shop, post agency and reliable piped water supply for human consumption.²¹ As regards education, it had been agreed from the beginning of resettlement that the Federal Power Board was responsible for replacing schools in the inundated area so as to maintain continuity of education. "The success of the agricultural and fishing schemes" included in the rehabilitation programme of the economy of the Gwembe District, "depended" in the long term, to a great extent, "on the ability of Gwembe Africans to provide leadership and trained men of all kinds from within their ranks."²² The considerable increase in government upper primary schools and the construction of Chipepo Secondary School in the early 1960s was part of the programme to provide the type of personnel required to meet the demands of the fishing industry and the problems of drastically changing the agricultural system. To achieve these renovations the Northern Rhodesian Government undertook negotiations with the Federal Government and the Federal Power Board on the provision of funds for the rehabilitation of the Gwembe District, maintenance of water supplies and tribal compensation. Consequently, a specific fund called the Gwembe Special Fund was established in 1959 financed solely by the Federal Power Board.²³ The fund financed all the rehabilitation programmes in the district. Indeed, in the past there had been no justification for the spending of large sums on providing all-weather access roads through the extremely difficult escarpment country of the valley. The three tracks that existed then were fit for motor traffic in the dry season only. But because of the part they had to play in resettlement and in the future, these tracks and new ones were built up to a standard to enable heavy vehicles to use them throughout the year. Throughout the

period of the Fund (1959-1965) the maintenance of roads and improvement of river crossings and other difficult sections done by the P.W.D. were all paid for by the Gwembe Special Fund.

The Northern Rhodesian Government's claim on the Federal Power Board covered by the Gwembe Special Fund referred to a wide range of issues. With regard to agriculture the claim referred to the severe shortage of land in the resettlement areas, worsened conditions under which agriculture was now to be practiced and the incidence of tsetse fly. The Government proposed that in order to make agriculture provide a stable livelihood to the valley dwellers, the available land could be used to establish about 770 peasant farms which were to support approximately 4,000 people, spaced over a period of twenty years. Other measures suggested included the establishment of irrigation schemes in Chiefs Sinazongwe's and Chipepo's areas and construction of contour ridges for soil conservation. The claim also included issues of tsetse control, veterinary services, game control, forestry, fisheries development and training, maintenance of water supplies and tribal compensation and loan funds.²⁴ For further details of the Northern Rhodesian Government's claim on the Federal Power Board covered by the Gwembe Special Fund, see appendix A.

The administration and disbursement of the Gwembe Special Fund was governed by the Northern Rhodesia (Gwembe District) Order in Council passed in 1959. His Excellency, the Governor, appointed Trustees to administer the Fund. Grants and loans were made to Africans whether as individuals or joined together in societies or associations of any kind, who were registered and resident in the Gwembe District, for agricultural, commercial or business purposes.²⁵ However, although the Gwembe Special

Fund came to assume a great role in the rehabilitation programme, the purposes for which it was established were only complementary to and not in substitution for the government's developmental and administrative programmes for the Gwembe District.

Unfortunately however, state planning, as outlined above, was one thing while the implementation of the programme was another. Many reasons accounted for the failure or partial fulfillment of the rehabilitation programmes in the Gwembe valley. Among other factors, the rehabilitation programme was inevitably bound to fail because it was too ambitious and too technical for the relocatees to be meaningfully involved in. It was done in haste, characterised by a considerable amount of resistance as opposed to co-operation by many local people. The culture of open resistance against unpopular government programmes had long been adopted by the Gwembe Tonga. This was a factor which the African nationalist movements readily exploited. In 1953, for instance, the African National Congress (ANC) in its campaign against the imposition of the Federation, influenced the Gwembe people to defy the government order to grow cassava as a famine crop. Some villagers refused to plant cassava and attacked the officers who ordered them to do so.²⁶ The protest against Kariba Dam and resettlement by some valley dwellers in 1958 also smacked of nationalist influence although the African National Congress had been officially banned in the District. In June 1958 Headman Sianzembwe and his people refused to move to Lusitu. In another confrontation at Chisamu village of Chief Chipepo's area the police opened fire and killed 8 villagers and wounded 32 others. The United National Independence Party's (UNIP) campaign promises for rapid change attracted many followers among the Gwembe people between 1962 and 1963. Membership to a political party gave the Gwembe people a feeling that

they were actively involved in the independence struggle and that party leaders represented their views and interests.²⁷

All these factors undermined the effectiveness of rehabilitation programmes. Perhaps had the Federal Government stayed longer, the situation would have taken a different course. But as it happened the rehabilitation programme was capital intensive and once Federal Government funds ended with the demise of the Federation itself, most of the maintenance operations of the mechanical installations particularly of the water supply system could only be done with great difficulty. The closing stage of the Gwembe Special Fund in 1965 also coincided with a change of government. The transition from Colonial to Independence government placed a natural hiatus, brought about by hand-overs, re-organisation of ministries and government departments to suit the new government's priorities. For instance, the former Ministry of Native Affairs was replaced by the Ministry of Local Government and Housing which also took over the running of the former Native Authorities now renamed District Rural Councils. Under the new government system, the provision and maintenance of public works, roads, and water supply were the responsibility of the District Councils. Under the terms of the winding up of the Gwembe Special Fund, Government had agreed to fund in perpetuity the Gwembe Rural Council a special sum for the exclusive maintenance of the water supply in the resettlement areas. But this became an extra burden as the national revenue began to dwindle.²⁸ Consequently, only the installations which were conveniently placed in sites like the sub-bomas (Sinazongwe and Siavonga) could be maintained through normal grants to the council while the rest of the areas were neglected.²⁹

The Zimbabwean war of liberation which intensified and spilled over the border areas since the mid-1970s also contributed to the rapid deterioration of the conditions of life in the Gwembe Valley. Senior Chief Mweemba in 1983 observed that:

Unless K12 million was raised soon for the rehabilitation of roads and bridges damaged by land mines at the height of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle, famine stricken villages in the Gwembe District face starvation.³⁰

Two events in Zimbabwe led the African nationalists to adopt armed confrontation as an instrument of national liberation. The first one was the banning of the Zimbabwean African Peoples Union (ZAPU) in 1962 by the minority white government of Ian Smith. The second event took place on 11th November 1965 when the white government unilaterally declared their independence from Britain (U.D.I.). This act removed all the possibility of a constitutional transition to African majority rule as had happened to other British African colonies in the region. The Zimbabwean African nationalists received support and funding from independent African countries and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). Military training facilities for their guerrilla warfare were also provided by the Front Line States which included Zambia. This explains why the Zambian border areas (including guerrilla camps in the country) experienced constant military raids between 1970 and 1979.³¹ The war disrupted normal life, cut off the supply lines of certain parts of the valley, and left behind undisclosed amount of land mines which have remained a great menace to human life up today.³²

As regards agricultural development, the basic problem which affected crop yields and food supply was the shortage of land and the usual droughts of the valley. The land shortage was itself a direct consequence of the displacement of the people in the wake of the Kariba Project. The upland and escarpment soils in the resettlement areas

were not only poor but were also liable to rapid deterioration under uncontrolled bush clearing, continuous cultivation and gully erosion. Great pressure on restricted land resulted also from natural population increase as well as from the rapidly increasing livestock population. In chief Mweemba's area the situation was aggravated by the return of most of the relocatees who initially settled in areas of the Choma and Kalomo Districts.³³ Some relocatees who settled in chief Singani's area in Choma returned to their old homes in Mweemba's area after a mysterious outbreak which attacked both livestock and human beings in the early 1960s. Chief Mweemba himself also encouraged the return of his subjects from Choma and Kalomo in consideration of his personal emolument as this was based on the size of the population.³⁴

The non-ecological reason for the endemic famine condition in the valley was the government legacy of the insistence on the adoption of a 'national' food crop, maize, as opposed to the ecologically adapted crops of sorghum, millet or even cassava.³⁵ The independence government inherited this legacy through its various rural development schemes like the Lima Programme, Rural Reconstruction Centres, Producer Co-operatives, Intensive Development Zones, and other agricultural schemes which emphasised self-sufficiency in food production at national level rather than on promoting productivity of arable and pastoral products according to the different ecologies of the country.³⁶ Uniform national agricultural policies were set up as regards crop selection, farming methods, marketing, pricing, extension and credit facilities irrespective of regional variations.³⁷ Naturally, such mechanisms favoured those regions with suitable ecological conditions and disadvantaged the ecologically peripheral zones.

It was typical of state agricultural agencies to shun agriculturally peripheral zones. For instance, one would have thought that the Cold Storage Board Corporation should have been greatly encouraged by the excellent livestock husbandry in the valley. But it was not uncommon for farmers to return with their cattle and goats from the sales yards (points) just because the C.S.B. did not turn up for buying.³⁸ The above, inter alia, explains largely why the agricultural rehabilitation programmes failed in the Gwembe Valley. The syllabuses of the Peasant Farms and Irrigation Schemes, for instance, were all likewise oriented, emphasising the promotion of ecologically alien crops such as wheat, rice, potatoes, and maize which were alien to the ecology of the Gwembe.³⁹ The unsuitability of the maize crop vis-à-vis sorghum or millet in the Gwembe Valley despite the state's encouragement through high producer prices and use of fertiliser, is demonstrated in table II below.

Table II: Crop Production in the Gwembe Valley During the Agricultural Years; 1985-1995

Crop	Estimated Production (90Kg bags)			Actual Sales (90Kg bags)		
	1985/86	1990/91	1994/95	1985/86	1990/91	1994/95
Maize	112,330	111,415	2,659	9,586	16,577	-
Sorghum	48,093	33,953	1,141	65	401	-
Millet	14,629	25,043	3,078	437	300	-
Cotton	9,723,211	4,154,472	48,960	9,723,211	4,140,036	48,960

Source: Central Statistical Office, Agricultural and Postoral Production, 1985-1995.

The table above shows that expectations for increased maize production were always higher than for other grain crops. But the actual maize output was always below expected estimates. In turn this maize and even cotton bias affected the production of sorghum and millet which did not receive similar encouragement in terms of favourable producer prices and the use of improved seed and fertilizer.

The irrigation schemes started in 1970 at Siatwinda in Chief Mweemba's area and at Buleya-Malima in Chief Sinazongwe's area collapsed immediately after the pilot stage not because the intended peasant farmers failed their lessons but largely because they were failed by the government agencies which were expected to run the units in joint venture with the farmers. Apart from the unfavourable policies, agricultural performance in the Gwembe valley in the 1970s was affected by the Zimbabwean liberation war. The land mine blasts damaged not only roads and bridges but also caused fear in the residents. The Kafwambila Irrigation Scheme in Chief Mweemba's area was forced to close down in 1975 due to insecurity. The first half of the 1980s was also a bad period for subsistence agriculture in the valley. A prolonged drought lasting from 1982 to 1985 caused widespread famine. The government allocated K512,000 and 93,000 x 90 Kg bags of maize in 1982 to the valley.⁴⁰ In 1985 a total of 2,520 x 90 Kg bags were set aside as relief food for the Gwembe people.⁴¹ Siatwinda Irrigation Scheme was temporarily closed in 1985 due to the low level of water in Lake Kariba.

The demise of the National Agricultural Marketing Board (NAMBOARD), the Agricultural Finance Company (A.F.C.), Producer Co-operatives and the Lint Company of Zambia (LINTCO) left the local peasants unable to run the heavy capital irrigation and ginnery units some of which still lie in the idle schemes' warehouses.⁴² The dry land or rain-fed agriculture, mostly for cotton growing, equally collapsed from the lack of cash in-put or credit following the collapse of LINTCO and Lima Bank. LONRHO or the London-Rhodesia Company, the successor cotton institution in the country, has not been popular among the small-scale producers due to high interest charges on inputs and spraying equipment or chemicals thereby reducing the farmers' net returns per yield.⁴³

Together with the unfavourable liberalised agricultural policy under the Third Republic, LONRHO has been responsible for the declining cotton yields in the valley as shown in table II above.

The half-hearted government measures towards modernising agriculture in the valley explain the persistence of the traditional agricultural practices, labour migration,⁴⁴ and low level of development. Table III shows the wide spread use of recycled or local seed mostly for the food staples, sorghum, maize and millet.

TABLE III: Holders Reporting on the use of Improved, Recycled and Local Seed, 1990/91

Crop	Number Of Holders Using Seed:		
	Improved	Recycled	Local
Maize	2,788	1,113	3,380
Sorghum	348	2,143	4,678
Seed Cotton	2,438	0	62

Source: Central Statistical Office, Agricultural and Pastoral Production, 1985-1995.

Except for cotton, the use of local seed surpassed that of improved seed in the food crops including maize. This trend worsened following the collapse of the agricultural lending institutions e.g. Lima Bank and Producer Co-operatives, under the liberalisation policy of the Third Republic, as most villagers could not afford to buy seed or fertiliser at market prices.

The old generation villagers remember the early resettlement years as having been better and that things under colonial government were generally far better organised than under the independence government.⁴⁵ This statement included the poor performance of the fishing industry by the local people in the area. This is true because all the highly technical and heavy capital infrastructure set up during resettlement period and

maintained or expanded by the G.S.F., ceased to function following the change of government. Much has been said about the Gwembe Tonga being poor at fishing or that fishing has been taken as a part-time activity. One researcher in 1960 stated that they "were never a race of fishermen".⁴⁶ This is far from the truth. During the resettlement period and after the establishment of the Fisheries Institute at Sinazongwe in 1961, a large number of local Tonga undertook fishing and fishing trade courses and even tours of major fishing regions like the Luapula Province. The whole range of fishing gear, boats, nets, including marketing arrangements were made available to the graduates of the Institute on loan basis. By early 1963 approximately 2,500 Tonga fishermen were on the lake earning an average income of £40 per annum from sales made through government-controlled markets. This was more than ten fold the average cash income realised from village farming at that time.⁴⁷ Non-Tonga fishermen were banned from commercial fishing on the lake as part of general compensation until the end of 1963.⁴⁸

However, similar problems of the change of government caused hardships on the fishing industry. Lake Kariba fish also faced competition on the Zambian market from the fish coming from the established fishing areas of the country since it was still relatively a new source. The run down of the public works and access roads connecting the harbours, as this responsibility passed on to the cash strapped Gwembe Rural Council, also contributed to the low traffic of the fish trade. Refrigeration facilities were not available for small scale fishermen. Fish buyers from the towns carried blocks of ice if they wished to trade in fresh fish. The only exception to this was Siavonga shore line which possessed not only electricity but also a modern road. Chipepo harbour was inaccessible by road for most part of the year. Chief Sinazongwe's and Mweemba's

areas lie parallel to the tarred road connecting Maamba Coal mine. Access roads to the shore line however suffered from lack of repair.⁴⁹ Sinazongwe Boma was connected to electricity in 1996 while in Chief Mweemba's area only Siansowa harbour, run by Zongwe Farm Enterprises dealing in Kapenta fishing and Crocodile farming, has electricity. Once commercial fishing collapsed the Gwembe Tonga, particularly the young men, had no option but to work for the Kapenta fishing companies. As David Gordon argues for the Luapula fishery, Lake Kariba ushered in a process for the steady movement of rural resources (fish) to urban areas.⁵⁰

The Lake, itself being part of the border, was further made unsafe for fishing by the Zimbabwean civil war. Furthermore, the fishing industry suffered in the wake of the series of droughts of the mid 1980s and early 1990s as the water levels in the lake drastically receded pushing the fish into very deep water levels where ordinary fishing methods were rendered ineffective. Up till 1994, the fishing industry had even lost the initial organisation of fish camps, with fishermen, particularly those from outside the district, scattered throughout the lake and its islands. Under the German Technical Assistance to Zambia from 1994, the fishing industry was once more reorganized with fishing camps re-established for the purpose of easy provision of facilities and services like schools, clinics, markets and roads.⁵¹

In addition however, the Valley Tonga seemed to have invested much of their income from the fish trade into cattle industry. Thus once the loans or provision of fishing equipment ceased at the Institute, the originating (fishing) industry suffered. Cattle was more valuable for its role in ploughing as well as a "savings account" to be drawn on during needy times. Cattle also remained a symbol of wealth and status and a

medium of exchange in traditional transactions like bride wealth, funeral parties and other social obligations. The last factor encouraged increasing investment in and quantity of cattle herds. Ultimately livestock rearing in the valley as a whole became a very important activity. The tsetse control and veterinary services put in place since the period of rehabilitation greatly enhanced the animal husbandry. The Gwembe Valley, though not a typical grassland country, cattle and small stock nevertheless found ample feed by browsing a wide variety of trees and scrubs. The *mopane* leaves have a high food value and, together with many pods and fruits, were relished by the animals thus stretching the feed supply well into the dry season.⁵² The table below gives a relative position of the livestock industry in the Gwembe valley against that for the Southern Province and for Zambia as a whole in 1972.⁵³ For Livestock statistics for the most recent years, see table V below.

Table IV: Livestock population in 1972 for Gwembe District, Southern Province and for Zambia

	Cattle	Sheep and Goats	Pigs
Gwembe District	51,914	107,688	2,041
Southern Province	616, 232	137,550	13,726
All Zambia	1,489,332	279,876	80,812

Source: NAZ, SPI/1/21: Gwembe South Development Project. Planning Paper II: History of Cattle Development in Gwembe South, 1975.

In percentage terms however, figures seem insignificant, except for goats and sheep whose population in the Gwembe formed 78% of all goats and sheep in Southern Province and nearly 40% of the all Zambia figure. The table however indicates the

unprecedented potential of the livestock industry in the Gwembe valley whose total population at the time of resettlement was only 9,000 head of cattle and 15,000 smallstock. Cattle alone increased more than five-fold between 1958 and 1972.

Table V: Number Of Livestock Held During The Agricultural Years, 1985-1995

Years	Total Held			
	Cattle	Pigs	Goats	Sheep
1985/86	139,965	455	88,778	2,660
1990/91	92,713	2,630	61,554	993
1994/95	3,987	533	3,994	32

Source: Central Statistical Office, Agricultural and Pastoral Production, 1985-1995.

Cattle population more than doubled in the period between 1972 and 1985. Thereafter, the number greatly reduced largely due to the deterioration in the pastures in the wake of overgrazing and prolonged droughts of the early 1990s. The Gwembe Valley cattle never suffered from the Foot and Mouth Disease which killed most of the cattle on the plateau region of the Southern Province since the early 1980s.⁵⁴

From the above discussion it can be suggested that while it is true that the Gwembe Tonga had difficulties following their displacement by the Kariba Project, the famine which was endemic to the area did not always mean a total failure of their subsistence economy. Substantial wealth in livestock characterised the post-resettlement Tonga society. The potential of the traditional staples, sorghum and millet, was undermined by the national emphasis on maize as well as the long-term adverse effect on the soil of its cultivation in the valley. The failure of the ill-advised rural development and agricultural policies of the government also worsened the status of the Gwembe

valley by entrenching further the phenomenon of "famine relief" instead of its eradication. S.P. Bourne, Resident Secretary for Southern Province, in 1964 summed up this vicious circle as follows:

It is significant that one of the accredited meanings of *inzala* (famine) in Valley Tonga is shortage of land and not merely hunger or shortage of food.⁵⁵

True, inadequate good land obscured the appreciation of certain important activities, as stated above, which actually sustained life in the Gwembe valley despite its harsh environment.

The foregoing chapter's major observations include that the Kariba-Project right from the start represented the interests of the British and Southern Rhodesian Governments. The people of the Gwembe valley were only expected to benefit indirectly by becoming either fishermen or labourers in the enterprises of the lake or outside the district. On the one hand, the hydro-electricity generated from Kariba Dam boosted the copper mining industry in Northern Rhodesia whose proceeds helped Britain to raise the funds she needed for her reconstruction after the destruction of the Second World War. On the other hand, the construction of the H.E.P. plant at Kariba Gorge and not at Kafue Gorge explained the dominance of the Southern Rhodesian interests over those of the other members of the Federation. Of course, Southern Rhodesia led both Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland in terms of European settler population and industrial development.

True, the Federal Government took measures to promote the welfare of the displaced inhabitants of the Zambezi valley. But these fell far too short of the desired results largely because some of the projects did not run full course while others became

too expensive to maintain. For instance, the proposed peasant farm schemes were scheduled to take at least twenty years, starting from 1959. The mechanical water supply installations were maintained by a special fund from the Federal Power Board. Both these projects could not continue after the dissolution of the Federation in 1963 and, under the limited Council grants of the new Republic of Zambia.

However, within the limits of their abilities, the Gwembe Tonga made the best of the difficult circumstances of resettlement life. They engaged in commercial fishing as well as in arable and pastoral farming. They benefitted from the fisheries Training Institute at Sinazongwe, the tsetse control services and farming loans to maximise returns. Evidence shows that the initial returns from commercial fishing enabled the Gwembe Tonga to increase investment in livestock industry, which proved to be more viable than fishing itself. Indeed the latter became difficult in the absence of loans from government. The war of liberation in Zimbabwe also made the lake unsafe for fishing due to cross-border raids. Commercial farming in cotton and, to some extent, maize increased after the establishment of Irrigation Schemes especially in Chief Sinazongwe's area.

But because these agricultural activities were done on restricted ecology or land which was generally of a vulnerable nature, their negative impact soon eroded the prosperity enjoyed in the past generation. Prominent among them were overgrazing, deforestation, soil exhaustion, gully erosion, worsened droughts, poor water supply, declining yields and chronic famine. In the last two decades, the major means of survival were subsistence cultivation of the traditional staples of sorghum and millet. Cattle and small stock were also sold to traders from the towns in order to raise money to buy grain.

during the periods of normal shortages, ranging from the start of the rainy season to the next harvest. Migrations for employment in urban areas or for resettlement in other districts, particularly in Kalomo and the Central Province, were also common.

NOTES

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²⁵ NAZ, MLI/10/2: M.O. Wray, *Directions to the Trustees of the Gwembe Special Fund Made under Section 9 (3) and 9 (4), Gwembe District Order in Council 1959*.

²⁶ NAZ, MLI/10/2: *Northern Rhodesian Governor's Telegram to the Secretary of State, London: Gwembe Resettlement*, 22nd November, 1957. Also K. Kaunda, *Zambia Shall Be Free*, (London: Heinemann, 1962), pp. 186-96.

²⁷ E. Colson, *The Social Consequences of Resettlement* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971), pp. 40-41, 208.

²⁸ NAZ, SPI/3/63: Heidi Clemens, *Siatwinda Pilot Project Report for 1972*.

²⁹ NAZ, MLI/17/90: *Gwembe Special Fund- (Winding up of Fund)*, 1965.

³⁰ *Zambia Daily Mail*, April 15, 1983, p. 1.

³¹ W.W. Nyangoni, *African Nationalism in Zimbabwe* (Brandeis University: University Press of America, 1978).

³² Mr. L. Siamayuwa, Acting Senior Chief Mweemba, revealed that in 1999 a white man, a member of the World Bank Rehabilitation Team for the Gwembe Valley, was killed in a Land Mine blast in Senior Chief Mweemba's area.

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³⁴ NAZ. MLI/10/2: W.H.S. Oliver, for/Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, 1966.

³⁵ Gear M. Kajoba, "Land Tenure, Land Usage and the Historical Development of Agrarian Capitalism in Zambia: The Experience of the Periphery" *M.Ph. Thesis*, University of Sussex (1988), p.2.

³⁶ Kajoba, "Land Tenure, Land Usage and the Historical Development of Agrarian Capitalism in Zambia: The Experience of the Periphery", p. 61.

³⁷ P.D. Ncube (ed.) *Agricultural Baseline Data for Planning* (Lusaka: National Commission for Development Planning and the University of Zambia, 1983), p. 33.

³⁸ NAZ. SPI/1/21: A. F. Bruns, *Planning for Gwembe South Cattle Development: Planning Paper II, Part vi: Outline Plan for Future Development*, 21st February, 1975.

³⁹ NAZ. SPI/6/11: M.X. Mufwaya, *Ministry of Rural Development, Projects Division: Correspondence to Buleya-Malima Scheme*, 16th June, 1975.

⁴⁰ R.M. Mukwena, 'Relief Management in Rural Development: The case of the Gwembe Valley 1982-1985', M.A. Dissertation, UNZA (1985), p. 25.

⁴¹ *Zambia Daily Mail*, January 12, 1985.

⁴² An observation made during field work in 1999 at Siatwinda Multi-Purpose Irrigation Scheme (Chief Mweemba's area) and at Buchi Cotton Ginnery Plant (Chief Sinazongwe's area).

⁴³ This was the opinion of Mrs. D.H. Siamayuwa, Mr. W. Siamuvumbe, Mr. J. Siantimba, Mr. C. Siakaaswe and Mr. A. Daka in the interviews during field work in 1999.

⁴⁴ E. Colson and T. Scudder, "New economic relationships between the Gwembe Valley and the line of rail" in D. Parkin (ed.), *Town and Country in Central and Eastern Africa* (London: International African Institute, 1975), p. 210.

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⁴⁶ W.H. Reeve, 'Progress and Geographical Significance of the Kariba Dam', *Geographical Journal*, Vol. 126, (1960), pp. 140-146.

⁴⁷ T. Scudder and E. Colson, *Secondary Education and the formation of an Elite: The Impact of Education on Gwembe District, Zambia* (New York: Academic Press, 1980), p. 79.

⁴⁸ Colson. *The Social Consequences of Resettlement* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971), p. 146.

⁴⁹ Kamwanga and Njovu, 'Development strategies and Rehabilitation Programmes for the Peoples Affected by the Construction of the Kariba Dam', p. xv.

⁵⁰ D. Gordon, 'The making of a Hinterland, Environment and Politics in Mweru-Luapula, from the 1880s to the 1990s, Ph.D. Thesis, Princeton University, (2000). p. 10.

⁵¹ Patrick Chipungu and Hasan Moinuddin. *Management of the Lake Kariba Inshore Fisheries (Zambia). A Proposal: Project Report 32* (Zambia-Zimbabwe SADC Fisheries Project. Department of Fisheries. Chilanga, 1994).

⁵² NAZ, SPI/1/21: A.F. Bruns, *Planning for Gwembe South Cattle Development, Planning Paper II: Historical Cattle Development in Gwembe South*, 21st February, 1975.

⁵³ NAZ, SPI/1/21: A.F. Bruns, *Planning for Gwembe South Cattle Development, Planning Paper II: Historical Cattle Development in Gwembe South*, 21st February, 1975.

⁵⁴ Opinion by Dr. N. Mabuku, District Veterinary Officer, Sinazongwe District, November, 1999.

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE INCIDENCE OF CONFLICTS IN THE GWEMBE VALLEY OVER RESOURCES BETWEEN THE LOCAL PEOPLE AND OUTSIDE INVESTORS

The construction of Lake Kariba did not only rob the local people of their ancestral lands and homes but also made them vulnerable to external influences. Being a project of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Lake Kariba was an international enterprise bound to attract many people from within and outside the regional boundaries. Among the major activities introduced by the newcomers which directly affected the local people's way of life included commercial fishing, tourism, irrigation farming and game ranching. Fishing companies are blamed for not only underpaying the local workforce but also for not helping in community work. The establishment of irrigation farms and game ranches on the other hand, reduced the amount of agricultural and grazing land available to the local people. The study argues that the influx of these business enterprises along the shores of the lake increased the incidence of disputes with the local people over resources. This chapter therefore investigates such conflicts with a view to determining what kind of impact they had on the welfare of the local people from the time the lake was constructed in 1958 to 1998.

As discussed in chapter 3, the worsening conditions of life in the resettlement areas due largely to a critical shortage of land, an increase in human and livestock population and poor harvests meant generally that there was a stiff competition for the available meagre resources. Some scholars however have referred to the nineteenth century ravages of the Chikunda, Ndebele, Kololo or Lozi raids and the previous 'untamed and harsh' Zambezi valley environment as having been responsible for making

the Valley Tonga less accommodating or receptive to change and foreigners.¹ Whichever the case might be, it is just natural that any society would be averse to intrusion and would equally be keen at protecting itself. For purpose of this discussion, 'conflict' will refer to any issue in the post-Kariba resettlement era in which the use of some natural resource by aliens was challenged by the local people.

The most common source of discontent in the Gwembe valley was land. The resettlement programme robbed the valley inhabitants of their ancestral right to make the important decisions about land-use and settlement. The power and influence of the ancestral shrines (or *Sikatongo*) were rendered moribund, as local authority now shifted more and more from serving local interests to those of the government through the Native Authority. John Hellen wrote that:

Wherever European influence is established, the power of the native chief becomes absolutely nominal, and in many cases his people scatter about the country in small communities of one or more families recognising in a small degree their tribal obligations.²

Consequently, the interests of the Native Authorities in the Gwembe conflicted with those of the people. The planning and designing of the various development or agricultural schemes in the district often generated fear and suspicion among the people. The implementation of these schemes was made without the prior consent of the local people and their chiefs. Small wonder that most of the externally sponsored development projects in the Gwembe collapsed because they lacked genuine local support.³

Evidence abounds about the reluctance of the local people to accept the introduction of development projects which entailed a further loss of land or worse still, further resettlement. A report of the Buleya-Malima Irrigation Project of December 1971 noted, in part that:

When the (Government) survey team arrived at Buleya-Malima and was introduced to the Headmen, it was apparent that they were openly hostile towards the men from the Government.⁴

Although the people eventually gave in to the extension of the Irrigation Project, this was at the expense of their losing approximately 200 acres of land presently under pasture and gardens. Chief Sinazongwe himself did not even attend the meeting but only assured the officials, through a representative, of his agreement to the project as long as the Headmen were prepared to accept the extension of the scheme onto their land.⁵ The local people's dislike of intrusion into their land was extended to the employees of such companies operating in the valley as most of the jobs required skill and training and therefore were beyond the reach of the villagers who lacked the necessary education. The Manager's report for Buleya-Malima Irrigation Scheme for August 1971 noted that the local people were not friendly to 'foreigners' or non local people.⁶

Cases of total removal of the local people to give way to the opening up of some industry also took place. After the loss of coal supplies from Zimbabwe due to the closure of the border between Zambia and Zimbabwe in 1965, the Zambian government decided to mine the Gwembe coal deposits which were an extension of the Wankie coal belt running north-east and north across the Zambezi river. Hence the opening up of the Nkandabwe coalmine in 1966 in chief Sinazongwe's area. The mine covered about 30 km² and affected about 2000 people who were resettled to allow for mining operations.⁷ When Nkandabwe mine was abandoned in 1969 due to poor geological formations another one was opened at Maamba in 1970 in Senior Chief Mweemba's area about 10 km from the first one. It covered an area of 58.7 km² and again, some farm land was lost with about 2,500 people being resettled. Since there was no planned resettlement of the

affected villagers, many migrated into the hilly areas where they continued to eke out their subsistence on marginal land⁸

The other development project which caused discontent among the local people was the Gwembe Valley Development Company formed in 1985. The mooted of this Company was part of the Government's policy of promoting self sufficiency in food production through the adoption of alternative methods of agriculture such as irrigation farming under joint ventures between local and foreign companies in drought areas. The company was established in Chief Sinazongwe's area. It opened up a farm extending 2,500 hectares and grew wheat and cotton. About 1,600 people lost fields and villages to the company. These migrated to the plateau on the western fringes of Sinazongwe District. They came to form villages known today as Muziyo and Munzuma.⁹

A further effect of these projects on the local people included chemical pollution from the mine waste, herbicides and insecticides used in spraying cotton and wheat which contaminated rivers, plants and local people's crops and livestock.¹⁰

In recent history of land disputes in the Gwembe Valley the majority of cases involved some prominent individuals resident within the valley. Often this was the sort of land where an individual had right to it under customary law. But a rich and influential person could acquire a title deed for it thereby legally excluding all other socially weak claimants. Chiefs tended to encourage this in the belief that people with money could help bring development in their areas. However, receipt of a petty gift by the chief for such arrangements was also possible. In Senior Chief Mweemba's area some former members of parliament and government fenced off tracts of communal land for themselves. Neighbouring villagers complained of being severely punished for

straying into these paddocks or on suspicion of having stolen or killed cattle. Villagers interviewed said that suspects were charged up to 5 herds of cattle against one loss.¹¹ Meanwhile, in 1987 about 280 hectares of land were sold allegedly by the local chief to a local businessman who intended to turn it into a game ranch.¹² In 1999 during field work a number of villagers were evicted from a piece of land, next to Zongwe Farming Enterprises, belonging to Mr. J. Jordan, in Headman Siansowa's area, apparently because a prominent local resident sold it to him. The local people however suspected that these arrangements were being made behind local chiefs for monetary gain at the expense of their subjects.¹³ This corrupt tendency by the Chiefs weakened their traditional role as custodians of land for the good of all subjects.

In the Lusitu (Siavonga District) and Chipepo (Gwembe Central) areas the prevalent cases of conflict between the local people and outside investors were over wild game. During the initial resettlement programme some areas on the Lake shore were reserved for the equally displaced wild animals by Lake Kariba. The Government policy was that game reserves were to provide not only for tourist purposes but also to provide, in an area short of agricultural land, game for cropping in the interest of the local population.¹⁴ Later however, these 'game parks' were leased to commercial developers who in turn proceeded to erect other structures with a view to turning these areas into tourist resorts. One such project was started at Kotakota peninsula, north-east of Chipepo harbour where a whiteman by the name of Masimo in 1985 put up some lodges, a road and airstrip, as well as a fence to enclose the wild animals. The problem was two fold. Firstly, garden raiding animals: elephants, hippos, wild pigs and monkeys terrorised the villagers, crop fields, sometimes even stored grain. Human beings risked being attacked

in the course of guarding their fields as the population of the protected animals increased. On the other hand, the new management of the game ranch introduced strict measures against poaching or herding cattle around the ranch. In the process, serious acts of harassment were committed by Mr. Masimo against villagers thereby imposing a permanent scare on the local people. Mr. Masimo was reported to have beaten, tortured, drowned and killed his victims sometimes with the support of the Zambia para-military police. Fishermen venturing near 'his islands' were not spared either.¹⁵ The Wild Life Office based at Chipepo harbour however put the blame squarely on the villagers for their intransigence to change their old ways of life of poaching.¹⁶

In 1992, after one villager was killed, the Village Management Committee for zone 3, Chipepo fishing area, petitioned the higher authorities against the behaviour of Mr. Masimo as follows:

In Gwembe district there is a white man who was given land at Kotakota by Government in Chief Chipepo's area. This white man by the name of Masimo has a fence of animals he keeps, and near him are people of Chipepo. He got those who were resettled from the old place that place where he decided to keep animals.

This man has not respected human beings but has respect for wild animals. I say so because he keeps animals with great care and human beings are being harassed and others killed with their cattle without good evidence of what they are killed for and confiscate their guns. This man has brought unrest to the people of Chipepo like in those days when Zimbabwe was struggling for independence when people could leave their homes and sleep in the bush and caves. We feel we are not protected by our Third Republic (Government) by not taking action against him. One farmer should not make people slaves these days we are free from slavery what would happen if one of the troubled people did harm to him, don't you think the government would act as he is a human being like us being made to suffer and leave our homes because of fear of being beaten to death for no evidence of any thing he accuses the people around his fence.

Mr. Kabbila reported this to the District Party Chairman (Mr. Mugoba) that his family was no longer at Mabula/home due to the evidence that happened at that place and continued to say some of his

children were no where to be seen after they had left their home and this was after they were beaten.

This is the second time Mr. Masimo behaving like this-last year during elections in October 1991 people left their homes in fear of being ill-treated by him who has become God. We say so because no one or government could do anything to God the creator.

There should be something to be done to this man (Mr. Masimo) and should not be left like that. If this man is protected, we should also be protected. In this case it seems Masimo is protected because he orders some members of the defence forces to come and help him here to harass the innocent people in their areas outside his fence.¹⁷

The above case ended up at State House where the aggressive investor was strongly warned and threatened with expulsion from the country if he did not stop the practice. However, the situation seems to have improved as, since the above mentioned event, no further incident was reported.¹⁸

The other form of conflict is in terms of the imbalance in the standards of development and life between the traditional sector and the modern sector (or village and business centres) within the valley. The case in point is the town of Siavonga. Siavonga sub-Boma was built in 1961 and was strategically designed for tourism development. Placed within the precincts of the Kariba dam, Siavonga township development plans comprised the building of a harbour and anchorages, residential plots, club sites, restaurant and bar as well as a shopping centre and fuel station. Sites for building of lodges, running of pleasure cruises were made available for lease to private enterprise. The township was also served with a modern water and electricity reticulation system, and was connected to the Zambia-Zimbabwe highway by a tarred road.¹⁹ In addition to the concentration of a variety of Lake-side tourist facilities like boats for sporting purposes, the Kariba North Bank H.E.P. station gave Siavonga the most important glamour not found elsewhere on the Zambian shore line of the lake. Land and water

transport and communication facilities found at Siavonga were comparable to none in the Gwembe District. At the time of field work in 1999 only Siavonga had a regular passenger service of water transport linking a number of small harbours up to the Chipepo Harbour. Although it took about 15 hours to travel from Siavonga to Chipepo, this service combined with other factors mentioned above to give Siavonga its dominance in commercial activities over the other harbours on the lake.

However, like everywhere in the valley these modern structures did not alleviate the major problem of land shortage and over population among the local population. The expected sale of farm produce to the emergent townships and visiting tourists could not flourish in the absence of reliable water supply in the resettlements.²⁰ The generally low level of education among the local people meant that only a small number of the local population could find jobs in these modern businesses.²¹ Thus in Siavonga, as in other districts of the valley, the modern businesses accruing to Lake Kariba represented an extension of the initial exploitation and subjection of local interests for the benefit of the national or international community. Indeed one would tend to agree with this view given the existing paradox of the ever deepening level of poverty among the local people on one hand and blossoming private businesses on the other.

The other potential source of conflict was the fishing industry. Right from the start, the Government adopted an 'open-door' policy over fishing rights on the lake. H.A. d'Avray, the Kariba Development Officer, in 1961 stated that :

The long-term policy's aim should be to enable the Gwembe people to be ready for the day when open competition will exist, and when the only restriction will normally be non-racial and non-geographical basis.²²

In the 1960s the local chiefs were requested by the Government to allow a limited number of about ten fishermen each from other parts of the country. The idea was for the local people to benefit from the advanced skills or experience of the visitors.²³ However, by the 1970s the number of newcomers began to grow such that they outnumbered the local fishermen. Later on control became difficult since most of the newcomers divided themselves in many isolated and uncoordinated fishing groups. Although there were never any serious differences or hostilities, the local people disputed the use of certain illegal or bad methods of fishing practised by some of the new fishermen. For instance, the method of *Ukutumpula* brought by fishermen from Luapula, scared fish further into deep waters thereby rendering small scale fishing equipment ineffective.²⁴ This is a system of fishing based on the technique of causing noise on the lake by beating on the water with sticks or beating drums or empty containers as a way of scaring the fish to move in the direction where the nets have been laid.

Regarding commercial fishing companies, the major complaint by the local people was in terms of low wages paid to the local workforce. In the Chipepo fishing zone the prominent kapenta fishing companies included Adria Fishing Company, Mesheries Enterprises, Mac Wills Company, Sumbu Crocodiles, Deep Six Limited, Siavonga Kapenta Industry and Island Fishing Industry. Those operating in the Sinazongwe zone were Blue Water, Zimuntu Safari Limited, and Zongwe Fishing Company, to mention only a few. The employees resorted to stealing and selling some of the kapenta to private traders in order to help themselves. The traditional authorities particularly in Chipepo bemoaned the lack of support by the local commercial fishing companies to help with community projects in the area such as maintenance of roads.²⁵

Ultimately, the root cause and nature of the conflicts between the local people and outsiders in the Gwembe valley were more to do with issues of livelihood than with people's psychological or geographical backgrounds.

The Gwembe people adopted a combination of strategies suited to their technological advancement, their understanding of the local environment and other related needs. For instance, although the Gwembe Tonga appeared hostile to outside fishermen, they actually gained from the advanced skills and experience of these outsiders. This was evidenced by the considerable increase in the herds of both small and large stock which the Tonga purchased with their income from the fish trade. The fish industry also financed the purchase of capital implements for farming such as ploughs as well as the education of Gwembe school children.²⁶ The local Tonga's active participation in the fish trade declined in the late 1960s when the government stopped giving loans for boats and other equipment as well as due to the insecurity in the area caused by the Zimbabwean liberation war in the 1970s. A language-group survey of the recently reorganised fish camps indicated that local Tonga fishermen were fairly represented. In the Chipepo fishing zone, for instance, there were ten fishing villages viz.: Kasumba, Kotakota, Kayuni, Namanzuma, Siamatuba, Kole, Kalelezi, Henga, Bhyuyu and Simulilika. Five of these, namely, Kotakota, Kole, Kalelezi, Henga, and Bhyuyu were dominated by native Tonga fishermen.²⁷

Regarding agriculture, as indicated in chapter three, the valley Tonga attempted to take advantage of the new opportunities to enter production for the cash market. Those without enough land continued to migrate for employment in the local mining industry at Maamba or the towns and commercial farms along the line of rail. Others migrated as

whole families to the newly opened farm settlements in Kalomo District and the Central Province.²⁸ The local agricultural activities, in order of importance, included herding, maize and cotton production. Except in the irrigation schemes, these innovations were not based on a corresponding improvement in the techniques and methods of production. Instead, extensive use of the ox-plough and family labour was resorted to in the maize and cotton production while the increasing cattle population also added pressure on the limited land resources.

The above cases of land dispute were but evidence of this struggle to maximise opportunities for increased agricultural returns. Meanwhile, increased agricultural activity only worsened the ecological conditions of the valley in terms of soil exhaustion, deforestation, over grazing, gully erosion and a general decline in crop yields. In the late 1990s crop yields deteriorated to the extent that one hectare of bulrush millet yielded less than 10 x 50 kilogram bags from a possible high of 20 x 50 kilogram while one hectare of sorghum yielded less than 24 x 50 kilogram bags instead of 40 x 50 kilogram bags. One hectare of maize yielded less than 10 x 50 kilogram bags from 50 x 50 kilogram bags and seed cotton yielded less than 250 kilogram per hectare from a possible high of 500 kilogram. Meanwhile a critical shortage of pastures dogged the cattle industry in the wake of the general degradation of the grazing lands.²⁹ Way back in 1964, S.P. Bourne, the Resident Secretary for Southern Province wrote to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, regarding land shortage in Mweemba chieftainancy that 'it could be said that time itself would condition people to the inevitability of an eventual move'.³⁰ This statement referred to two things. One was that within less than ten years of resettlement the shortage of land had reached a critical stage. Secondly, the government

policy towards resolving the problem was to encourage the migration of the surplus population to other districts in the country like Kalomo and Mumbwa.

On the other hand however, government encouraged the setting up of private enterprises on the lake shore to exploit the fishing and tourist potential of the lake basin. As shown above only commercial fishing had minimal impact on the problem of land. Unlike commercial fishing, tourism has been the worst culprit in causing conflicts over land in terms of the creation of game ranches, lodges, road and airstrip infrastructure. During field work in 1999 this situation showed signs of getting worse as plans for the establishment of more ranches were being revealed.³¹

Indeed, conflicts in the Gwembe valley existed and are likely to continue largely because of the ever widening gap between the modern and traditional sectors. The expansion of the modern sector, represented by a host of both marine and land investments, affected the traditional sector in a variety of ways. Firstly, there was appropriation of land during the establishment or expansion stages of enterprises like the irrigation schemes, coal mining and game ranching. Under these projects the local people did not only lose land and farms but were also faced with further relocation into the worst lands of the escarpment country. The employment opportunities offered by these enterprises did not make the situation any better as most of the local people lacked the necessary education and training. Those who took up the unskilled jobs, especially in commercial fishing, complained of poor wages and harrassment by their employers. Marauding animals from Kotakota game ranch and Game Parks across the border in Zimbabwe were a menace not only to crops but also to humans. On the other hand,

villagers who ventured into poaching risked not only losing their hunting tools but also torture and prosecution if arrested.

By and large, however, the disputes in the Gwembe Valley were a reflection of the hardships the local people were facing to earn a livelihood within a background of dwindling resources. The conflicts were part of the adaptation process by the Gwembe Tonga to the open and inclusive society, created after so many different people from outside the district or country began to take up settlement in the valley. Finally, it was also observed during field work that the spill-over effect of the modern sector was negligible. The outside investors needed to participate in community activities and assist in the improvement of the infrastructure and provision of public services such as road maintenance, transport, support to local schools and health centres. This situation was particularly worse off in Chipepo's area of Gwembe Central.

NOTES

¹ See, for instance, F.C. Selous, *Travel and Adventure in South-East Africa* (London: Rowland Ward and Co., 1893), chapter xi.

² John A. Hellen, *Rural Economic Development in Zambia, 1890-1964* (Munich: Welt forum Verlag, 1968), pp. 59-60.

³ See the discussion in chapter three about the failure of irrigation farming and fishing by the local people.

⁴ NAZ. SP1/6/4: G.R. Rudd, *District Planning Officer, Choma, Buleya Malima Irrigation Scheme*, 30th December, 1971.

⁵ NAZ. SP1/6/4: *Buleya Malima Irrigation Scheme Report*, February, 1972.

⁶ NAZ. SP1/6/4: *Buleya Malima Irrigation Scheme Report*, August 1971.

⁷ N.J. Money, *Some Aspects of the Geography and Geology of the Coalfields of Zambia, with special Reference to Maamba Region, Gwembe Valley* (Lusaka: Zambia Geographical Association, July, 1973); p. 10.

⁸ Maamba Coal Board of Zambia, *Geological Report on Siankodobbo and Maamba coalfields* (Lusaka: Sofremines, March, 1968), p. 15:

⁹ G.N. Haantobolo, 'Ecology, Agriculture and Proletarianisation: A study of the Sinazongwe Area in the Gwembe Valley of Southern Province of Zambia, 1900-1989', M.A. Dissertation, UNZA, (1990); p. 55.

¹⁰ Haantobolo, 'Ecology, Agriculture and Proletarianisation, p. xxi

¹¹ Interview with Mr. C. Kwicho, Mr. R. Siamwaba, Mr. D. Siazilo and Mr. J. Siboola villagers of Headman Siansowa, Senior chief Mweemba's area, November, 1999.

¹² Names of the prominent individuals implicated in land hoarding included Mr. Dodson Siatalimi, Mr. Maxwell Beyani and Mr. Jironi Mabbolobolo.

¹³ Opinion expressed by Mr. R. Kambambi, Mr. G. Siamazomba, Mr. H. Siantimba and Mr. N. Njoolo in the interviews in 1999.

¹⁴ NAZ, MLI/10/2: H.A. d'Avray, *Kariba Lake Development Officer*, February, 1961.

¹⁵ Interview with Mr. Amon S. Mugoba, Senior Headman Chipepo, 25th October, 1999.

¹⁶ Interview with Mr. K. Masumba, wild life officer, Chipepo harbour, 21st October, 1999.

¹⁷ Amos Siabbambo, K. Jiwana and Mungaila B. Siachonka, Executive Committee Members, Chipepo Village Management Committee, 1992.

¹⁸ Interview with Mr. Amon S. Mugoba, Senior Headman Chipepo, 25th October, 1999.

¹⁹ NAZ, MLI/10/2: H.A. d'Avray, *Annexure: Kariba Lake Gwembe District Development*, 1961-65.

²⁰ NAZ, MLI/17/90: *Gwembe Special Fund, Winding up of fund*.

²¹ Haantobolo, Ecology, Agriculture and Proletarianisation; p. 71.

²² NAZ, MLI/10/2: d'Avray, *Annexure: Kariba Lake, Gwembe District Development*, 1961-6.

²³ Interview with Mr. S.S. Simasiku, Fisheries Extension and Assistant Management Officer, Sinazongwe District, 17th November, 1999.

²⁴ Interview with Mr R. Singongi and Mr. C. Mwakoi, Namanzuma Fish Camp, Chipepo Harbour, 24th October, 1999.

²⁵ Interview with Mr. Amon S. Mugoba, Senior Headman Chipepo, 25th October, 1999.

²⁶ T. Scudder and E. Colson, *Secondary Education and the Formation of an Elite: The Impact of Education on Gwembe District, Zambia* (New York: Academic Press, 1980).

²⁷ Interview with Mr. Wilson Nchukwa, Gwembe District Council Official, Chipepo Harbour, 23rd October, 1999.

²⁸ Almost all the traditional rulers in the valley complained of having lost subjects who migrated in search of land and employment.

²⁹ Interview with Mr. L. Liswaniso, Block Extension Officer, Chipepo Harbour, 27th October, 1999.

³⁰ NAZ, MLI/17/49, *Gwembe Special Fund, Southern Province Resettlement*, June, 1964.

³¹ In 1999 Mr. Johann Jordan of Zongwe Farm Enterprises was stocking some islands in Headman Siansowa's area with game animals.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

As stated in the introduction, the study set out to achieve the following. Firstly, we examined the history of the Gwembe Valley Tonga in the period before and during colonial rule up to the early 1950s. Next we investigated the impact of Lake Kariba on the local people, paying particular attention to the effectiveness of the rehabilitation programmes set up by the Government in the resettlement areas. The issues of underdevelopment and conflicts over resources in the valley were also addressed.

From the study it can be argued that Lake Kariba has not brought prosperity to the local people. The legacy of the unfavourable Government policies of the colonial era over the Gwembe Valley continued to impact negatively on the Gwembe Tonga economy which was based on agriculture rather than on fishing . Fishing failed to provide a livelihood to the local people because it lacked a sustained government support. Famine conditions in the Gwembe valley became more permanently entrenched than before as the imbalance between the people and their environment worsened.

In the pre-Lake Kariba era, the unfavourable climatic conditions of the valley, nevertheless, permitted the local inhabitants, through the gradual process of adaptation, a livelihood which gave them their identity from the rest of the world. On the other hand the characteristic adverse environmental conditions of the area tended to over-influence the direction and conclusions of many studies done in the area. Many scholars invariably concluded that the lack of development in the Gwembe valley was a result of its unique geographical conditions. The Gwembe Tonga country was termed a less fortunate, isolated and backward society as it lacked the natural resources necessary to attract

outsiders who, in other places, acted as agents of development. The present study, however, has shown that while climatic conditions were an undisputable factor in determining what kind of development was possible in the area, the state itself, both in the colonial and post-colonial periods, never considered the development of the Gwembe as a priority and therefore lacked the political will to do so.

Prior to the construction of the Kariba dam, the colonial government demonstrated its unwillingness to commit itself to the development of the Gwembe valley by overlooking many of the recommendations passed by commissions of inquiry. The Read's *Famine Relief Report* (1931-32), Trapnell and Clothier's *Ecological Survey* (1937) and the *Pim Report* (1938) all recommended the introduction of developmental projects and agricultural reforms which would take advantage of the existing indigenous agricultural systems. The superiority of the indigenous agricultural systems practised by the valley dwellers were long observed even by earlier European travellers such as David Livingstone and Frederick Selous who described them as highly productive. In the 1860 expedition along the Zambezi, Livingstone observed that at Mweemba in the upper river region, in Tonga country, the riverbanks were intensively cultivated. He wrote that every damp spot was covered with maize, pumpkins, watermelons, tobacco and hemp.¹ Selous also observed that the Tonga sowed their crops, including maize, on ridges and furrows.² Newly broken ground from bush or fallow was traditionally planted with groundnuts and ground beans as rotation crops. Whereas bulrush millet was grown on well-drained sandy loams, sorghum did better on the heavy clay soils. Sometimes bulrush millet and sorghum were interplanted on sandy loams. Maize was mostly planted in lower terrace alluvia which were annually inundated by the Zambezi and tributary floods.

Furthermore, cereals were interplanted with cucurbits and pulses and, because of their fertility, the alluvia soils which were annually inundated were planted indefinitely once or twice a year without fallow rotations.³

The Valley Tonga were indeed wise to rely on three staples: maize, millet and sorghum, which differed not only in their soils and water requirements but also in their planting dates, maturation periods and vulnerability to a wide range of pests. In the indigenous agricultural systems mono-cropping was not only absent but also its dangers were clearly understood and therefore avoided. The Valley Tonga's practice of preparing many different garden types: *Jelele*, *Kuti*, *Unda* and *Temwa*, enabled them to be semi-permanent cultivators and lived in relatively concentrated villages.

Apart from a few missionary groups: the Primitive Methodists at Kanchindu, the Catholics at Fumbo (Chikuni Mission) and the Salvation Army at Chikankata, who settled along the valley, government interest in the area was very limited. After the initial stages of establishing the administrative structures such as village regrouping for the purpose of control, collection of tax and mobilisation of labour, between 1922 and 1945 the government dissolved the Gwembe Boma as a cost saving measure following the economic hardships experienced after the First World War. However, while government commitment to the area was reducing, the effects of the colonial economic policies of labour migration, tax payment and difficulties placed on the tobacco trade (*Inyoka* tobacco duty) were gravely undermining the indigenous agricultural systems. As stated in the study, the government followed a policy which encouraged the development of the urban areas of the Copperbelt and towns along the line of rail while the rural areas were expected to supply cheap foodstuffs and labour. Under such government bias, the

construction of Kariba dam only accelerated the process of underdevelopment of the Gwembe valley.

There was no question of where government's main interests for constructing Kariba dam lay. There were and there would never be, at least in the present circumstances, any industrial establishment in the vicinity of the Gwembe valley which could require the supply of hydro-electricity, the magnitude of Kariba scheme. The Kariba H.E.P. just became the grand finale to the process by which the Gwembe valley was drained of its natural resources, as did labour migration, for the benefit of the copper mines and the towns on the line of rail. The plight of the Gwembe Tonga in the resettlement areas hinged on an unstated policy of government that the inevitable hardship of land shortage and poor harvests would continue to push the people to seek employment elsewhere in the country. The environmental crisis in the Gwembe caused by the Kariba Project further reduced the chances of local development as the area became known more as a "disaster area requiring relief" than long-term structural development. In fact, the Gwembe people never gave up the struggle of ensuring the reproduction of their social systems despite the difficult conditions. They continued to adapt themselves to the changing conditions within the context of their traditional knowledge. For instance, because the Tonga regarded fishing as a part time activity, they transferred most of the cash incomes earned from fishing into cattle industry. Under the traditional method of free range, livestock rearing did not involve any expense to maintain. So it was more handy to society in providing a buffer security against famine as well as for ploughing. The Tonga were, as a result, more at home with cattle rearing than with, say, fishing because of its symbolic value to denote wealth and status. Fishing

on the other hand demanded a cost input in terms of nets and boats and was less sedentary in practise. Government assistance to local fishermen in terms of loans and training ended in 1965 with dissolution of the Gwembe Special Fund. Fishing on Lake Kariba also became vulnerable to the cross border raids of the Zimbabwean war of independence.

The Gwembe people's adaptation to the post-Kariba resettlement conditions was also due to the superiority of their indigenous agricultural systems. The state sponsored rural development programmes and agricultural schemes after independence normally carried the populist rhetoric of the official ideology of Zambian Humanism which itself lacked a consistent development path. The state's emphasis was on self-sufficiency in food production but paid little attention to the specific ecological variations of the different parts of the country. The state also promoted the production of maize on a national basis so that villagers could enter production for the cash market and to make a contribution towards the feeding of the urban population, especially the copper miners. As shown in the study, however, only the Gwembe people's persistent involvement in traditional cultivation methods and producing crops (sorghum and millet) which were adapted to the local environment saved the agricultural ecologies of the valley from total destruction. The state sponsored rural and agricultural development programmes collapsed as they were mostly abandoned before they ran full course. They also failed to reduce rural poverty and rural-urban migration. On the other hand state programmes increased rural socio-economic differentiation as they normally reached only a few people. Some prominent members of the *Buleya-Malima* Irrigation Scheme, for instance, became rich peasants owning vehicles and mechanical farm implements most of which

were obtained through the state. Almost all the former members of parliament in the area accumulated local wealth in the form of ranching and land hoarding by taking advantage of their political positions. Outside investors in tourism, ranching and fishing have also worsened the competition over the limited resources leading to a number of disputes in the valley.

In the study, another most highlighted weakness of the post-Kariba resettlement development programmes and agricultural schemes was the question of the role and degree of involvement of the local community itself in the programmes. As most of the programmes were either too advanced or capital intensive (e.g. the mechanical water supply installations in the rehabilitation period), the local community could not be meaningfully involved. The persistence and survival of the traditional farming practices and crops amidst the intervention of modern ones, underscored the principle that any genuine rural and agricultural development could only take place if the majority of the rural producers were involved in the process of producing what they already cultivated and producing crops which were adapted to the local environment. The field work survey of the Gwembe valley indeed showed that the indigenous agricultural systems had largely survived and could be used as a basis for a concerted effort to restore diversity in crop production.

The work of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and development agencies in the area, like the World Vision International (W.V.I.) and the German Technical Aid to Zambia (GTZ), need to be commended and supported. Their approach to the problems of the valley, since the early 1990s, was not merely to distribute food to relieve people in times of need-a practice which addresses the effects rather than the

causes of the problem. A local community-driven approach was instead adopted and people were made to participate through workshops and seminars to derive community based solutions. These NGOs introduced to the local people improved subsistence farming methods using drought resistant varieties of maize, sorghum and bulrush millet. Improved and locally made granaries to protect grain from weevils were also introduced.

Improved techniques for mending boats, nets as well as better and locally made kilns for drying fish with a minimum of firewood were introduced to the local fishermen. The GTZ was particularly responsible for the reorganisation of the fishing communities of Lake Kariba shore into zones and camps to facilitate the provision of social facilities like clinics, schools, roads and organised markets.

NOTES

¹ T. Scudder, *The Ecology of the Gwembe Tonga* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1962), p. 37.

² F.C. Selous, *Travel and Adventure in South-East Africa* (London: Rowland Ward and Co., 1893), pp. 212-216.

3 Scudder, *The Ecology of the Gwembe Tonga*, p. 30.

APPENDIX A.

NORTHERN RHODESIAN GOVERNMENT'S CLAIM ON THE FEDERAL POWER BOARD COVERED BY THE GWEMBE SPECIAL FUND.

1. **Agriculture and Agricultural Development.** The statement of the claim on the Federal Power Board set out the facts in terms of:

- (i) Severe shortage of land in the resettlement areas,
- (ii) The worsened conditions under which agriculture now had to be practised,
- (iii) The incidence of tsetse fly.

The measures proposed so that agriculture might provide a stable livelihood were as follows:

- (a) The available land could be used to establish 770 peasant farms, which were to support approximately 4,000 people directly; spaced over a period of 20 years.
- (b) Establishment of irrigation schemes particularly in Chief Sinazongwe's and Chief Chipepo's areas where some tracts of level land were identified.
- (c) As a considerable number of Africans were to continue to follow traditional methods of agriculture and as erosion was such a great danger, it was vital to conserve the very limited soil immediately. Essential conservation measures like contour ridging and others beyond the physical capacity and the knowledge of the Valley Tonga needed to be provided.

2. Tsetse Control:

As regards tsetse control, this was initially done as a preliminary measure before resettlement. But now it was necessary to eradicate the last pockets in resettlement areas, to prevent reinfestation and to push back fly so that the agricultural programme could succeed.

3. Veterinary Services:

The essence of the problem of resettling the Gwembe cattle had been the movement of riverside cattle to higher ground where they were meeting tsetse fly and completely new conditions of grazing. The grazing on the higher ground was of poor quality and deteriorated more rapidly than the river grazing. The acclimatisation of these cattle would take many years and they would need to be kept under constant veterinary supervision until such time as the anti-tsetse measures had reduced the risk of infection.

4. Game Control:

A considerable amount of game control was necessary in all settled areas of the Gwembe Valley if the crops and livestock of the settlers were to be protected from the depredation of wild animals.

5. Forestry:

Prior to the Kariba Project the valley Tonga were most densely populated close to the Zambezi. Their agriculture was largely practised on riverine soils which were fertile and annual additions of alluvium allowed the production of crops without a great deal of soil deterioration. Resettlement moved the population to less fertile soils where a form of shifting cultivation was necessary. The new land being close to or in the

escarpment, the uncontrolled removal of bush cover would result in accelerated erosion and the consequent destruction of natural resources. This necessitated forest control measures.

6. Fisheries Development and Training:

The statement of the claim regarding fisheries development referred to the role which the fishing industry was expected to play, and to the danger that if social (including educational) development were not pushed forward to match material progress, the latter would be at least partially frustrated. It was intended to establish a training institute (at Sinazongwe) at which large numbers of local people were to be trained to become fishermen in the true sense, and to teach other skills which were necessary to the fishing industry in all its aspects.

7. Administration:

The statement of the claim further observed that it was impossible to administer the Gwembe Valley with the pre-resettlement staff and organisation of a District Commissioner and District Officer stationed at Gwembe Boma (on the plateau), who toured the valley from that base. It was essential to establish, and maintain for the foreseeable future, two sub-bomas at Sinazongwe and Siavonga, so as to co-ordinate the long and difficult rehabilitation programme which lay ahead.

8. Maintenance of Water Supplies:

Resettlement right from the start required the provision of artificial water supplies to take the place of the Zambezi. The responsibility for the maintenance of these supplies, according to the Northern Rhodesia Government's view, lay with the Federal Power Board.

9. Tribal Compensation and Loan Funds:

The statement of the claim regarding compensation referred to the hardship and inconvenience suffered by the Gwembe people as a whole, and to their loss of traditional amenities. The amount claimed for a loan fund was to enable the Gwembe Native Authority to grant small loans on revolving basis to local people so that they might be able to take advantage of business opportunities offered by the rehabilitation programme.

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NAME	POSITION/PLACE	DATE
A. Daka	Senior Agricultural Officer, Sinazogwe District	17.11.99
R. Kambambi	Court Justice, Siankwazi	10.11.99
C. Kwicho	Headman, Siansowa	10.11.99

L. Liswaniso	Block Extension Officer, Chipepo Harbour	27.10.99
N. Mabuku	District Veterinary Officer, Sinazongwe	17.11.99
K. Masumba	Wild Life Officer, Chipepo Harbour	21.10.99
A.S. Mugoba	Chief Chipepo's Representative, Chipepo	25.10.99
C. Mwakoi	Secretary, Namanzuma Fish Camp	24.10.99
W. Nchukwa	Council Official, Chipepo Harbour	23.10.99
N. Njoolo	Former Messenger, Maamba	02.12.99
D. H. Siamayuwa	Committee Member, Siatwinda Irrigation Scheme	15.11.99
L. Siamayuwa	Acting Senior Chief Mweemba	15.11.99
G. Siamazomba	Retainer, Chief Sinazongwe	17.11.99
T. Siambila	Villager, Chipepo	20.10.99
W. Siamuvumbe	Meteorologist, Chipepo Harbour	21.10.99
R. Siamwaba	Vice Headman, Siansowa	10.11.90
P.C. Siamwinde	Headman, Chipepo	20.10.99
J. Siantimba	Councillor, Chipepo Harbour	23.10.99
H. Siatwinda	Villager, Sinazongwe	17.11.99
D. Siazilo	Branch Chairman, Siansowa	10.11.99
J. Siboola	Secretary, Siansowa Village	10.11.99
C. Siakaaswe	Headman, Siankwazi	10.11.99
S.S. Simasiku	Fisheries Extension Officer, Sinazongwe	17.11.99
L. Simwemba	Villager, Sinazongwe	16.11.99
R. Singongi	Chairman, Namanzuma fish camp	24.10.99
M.B. Syachonka	Villager/Fisherman, Chipepo	20.10.99
J. Zobolo	Villager, Chipepo	20.10.99

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