

**CRACKING THE NONVERBAL CODE: ANALYSING CULTURAL
ARTEFACTS OF THE BATONGA IN ZIMBABWE.**

BY

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for

Saidi ‘CheKáSande’ Sande (13 November 1945-22 June 1998)

Chisusulumbe –kuchiona ndisoka, you did not live longer enough to see your dream come true.

Luciano Bolpagni (31 January 1936-8 April 2006),

per la tua bisogno d’io avere dottore.

DECLARATION

Student Number: R0225007

I, Umali Saidi, declare that **Cracking the nonverbal code: Analysing Cultural Artefacts of the BaTonga in Zimbabwe** is my work and that sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signature

Date:

JUNE 2016

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ABSTRACT

This thesis cracks open three BaTonga artefacts, the *ncelwa* (smoking pipe), *buntibe* (orchestral drum) and Nyaminyami Walking Stick (wooden sculpture) as the key nonverbal visual codes in the visual cultural communication of BaTonga in Zimbabwe. Using artefactual ethnisemiotics, the study shows how visual cultural communication is played out and is used by the BaTonga in negotiating for socio-cultural space in Zimbabwe. BaTonga historical experiences show characterisation of displacement and a continued struggle to uphold their identity and culture. Their experiences along the Zambezi valley as well as redefinition of their livelihoods in the new arid terrain far removed from the Zambezi, given the construction of the Kariba hydroelectric power project, has for long contributed among other forces to their marginalisation. To assert their visibility, the BaTonga have subtly used various visual means to negotiate for space in the country. This thesis, thus, critiques three BaTonga cultural artefacts showing how significant they are in the communicative cultural life of the BaTonga in Zimbabwe. In making this analysis and exploration, the study makes a reflection of how BaTonga represent themselves visually in their culture and even outside their own cultural boundaries. To critique the Tongan cultural communication is also a process of generating an understanding of how the BaTonga project their identity and de-marginalisation. Cultural survival of these people, against other ethnic groups in Zimbabwe is crucial for them and for Zimbabwe in that, as the study demonstrates, the barometer of population which has also been used to justify continued dominance of the BaTonga by the Shona or Ndebele in the country is but null and void. The study advances artefactual ethnisemiotics as an alternative approach to artefacts and visual communication; areas which have also received little attention in the country and even in the region. Through artefactual ethnisemiotics, the study shows that everyday objects are important visual ethnisemiotic pieces that embody a great deal of meanings from which construction of cultural messages are made possible by users. Focus on everyday objects in use brings in new approaches to the study of visual cultural communication, heritage and broadly cultural studies in that, before archaeologists or anthropologists can wait to dig the pieces and characterise them as ossified pieces of history, artefactual ethnisemiotics allows resuscitation, appreciation as well as documentation of a living culture performed in visual communicative ways.

KEY TERMS

Artefacts, artefactual ethnisemiotics, visual cultural communication, heritagisation, de-heritagisation, cultural determinism, *ncelwa*, *buntibe*, Nyaminyami, cultural space, ethniartefacts, culturalisation

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3. Saidi, U. (2013b) The past in them: Celebrating BaTonga artefacts and visual cultural communication in Zimbabwe *Madirativhange: Journal of African Indigenous Languages and Literature* Vol.1 No. 1, Africa Institute for Culture, Peace, Dialogue and Tolerance Studies pp.59-69

Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Introduction

This thesis analyses cultural artefacts as visual codes that can be used for cultural communication. The study critiques Tonga cultural artefacts showing how significant they are in the communicative cultural life of the BaTonga in Zimbabwe. In making this analysis, the study discloses how BaTonga represent themselves visually in their culture. To critique the Tongan cultural communication is also a process of generating an understanding of how the BaTonga project their identity and de-marginalisation. Cultural survival of these people, against other ethnic groups in Zimbabwe is crucial for them and for Zimbabwe.

This chapter introduces the study and first background to the study is presented as well as specification of the area of study. Aim and objectives of the study follow together with justification of the study. The chapter introduces methodology, the theoretical framework and ends by presenting definition of key terms.

1.1 Background

BaTonga in Zimbabwe are a marginalised community in the country and scholarship has generally neglected research and documentation of their culture and language. Tonga people are largely overlooked because they are considered one of the so-called ‘minority’ groups meriting little or no attention. Linguists such as Zivenge (2009), Ndlovu (2013) are joining hands with scholars Monda (2011), Mano (2012) and other stakeholders (e.g. Basilwizi 2005) to revive and preserve the culture of the Tonga people. This study analyses as well as interprets three BaTonga cultural artefacts, the *ncelwa* (women’s smoking pipe), Nyaminyami Walking Stick and the *buntibe* (orchestral drum). The *ncelwa* was chosen because it brings, among other reasons discussed in detail in chapter 5, BaTonga women, into the discourses; reveals their visibility given also that BaTonga follow matrilineal patterns in their culture. The *Buntibe* was also chosen

for its communal usage, its ability to bring community participation among other reasons detailed in chapter 5 of the study. The Nyaminyami Walking Stick was selected largely due to motifs on it which are key identity BaTonga cultural aspects anyone can use to properly identify them. While it is a wooden sculpture, it summarises much of who BaTonga are, the places they live; the social, economic aspects, religious belief systems as symbolized by the varying motifs on the stick

Focus, however, is on the communicative aspects of these artefacts and how the Tonga visually manipulate them to negotiate for cultural space in Zimbabwe. The study is also a pragmatic scholarly move in the documentation and appreciation of one of the most important communities in Zimbabwe which has been ignored in the past. The study also offers a new approach to communication studies, specifically visual cultural communication.

Two key objectives are achieved by this study. First, it contributes to the building up of a corpus of knowledge on Tonga language and culture. This is part of a wider effort to de-marginalise the Tonga and other marginalised communities in Zimbabwe. Secondly, it builds upon the work of Zivenge (2009), Ndlovu (2013), Ncube (2004), McGregor (2009), Colson (1971), Hughes (2010) and others who have taken this direction to preserve Tonga heritage.

Tonga culture is rich in artefacts that are a form of expression. Besides their daily use they also communicate the essence of Tonga existence in all its aspects and this is an area that currently has little research. This study not only does it contributes knowledge on the BaTonga but also develops the concept of or sub-disciplines of visual communication which can be applied to all cultures given that all visual artefacts send messages. In other words, artefacts are communicative in nature and they create a body of visual language. Through this study, we appreciate how the non-literate in the Tonga community as well as the non-Tonga are incorporated in cultural communication under circumstances where they would have otherwise been excluded.

1.2 Area of Investigation

Research in cultural artefacts of BaTonga people is not yet visible enough in Zimbabwe especially viewing it from an applied linguistic point. BaTonga artefacts have received little attention in the mainstream Zimbabwean culture as visual codes within the Tonga culture. These visual codes continue to be used by the Tonga in cultural communication and negotiation for cultural space in Zimbabwe. The study of artefacts as sign systems is located within the broad discipline of semiotics from which we can study, document; understand the Tonga people and their culture. Against this background, we can locate BaTonga artefacts as semiotic signs within the discourse of visual communication. As such, interest in this study is analysis of sign systems in the form of material cultural pieces and how as visual codes they make up the body of Tonga visual communication.

1.3 Aim and Objectives

The study aims to;

- ‘Crack open’ three BaTonga cultural artefacts significant in the visual communicative cultural life of the BaTonga in Zimbabwe.

Shaped by the above aim, this study is guided by the following objectives which are to;

- Explore the artefactual ethnisemiotic nature of the BaTonga visual cultural communication.
- Examine how BaTonga negotiate for space and visibility in the country.
- Examine the visual codes that make visual cultural communication systems in the BaTonga cosmos.

- Analyse how artefacts as material objects qualify as the fundamental nonverbal cues within the matrix of visual communication.
- Examine how visual cultural communication can be a strategy in the negotiation for space by marginalised groups.
- Analyse the use of artefacts when cultures communicate.
- Draw conclusions on the extent to which artefactual ethnosemiotics can be applied to the study of visual cultural communication.

1.4 Research Questions

The study is guided by the following questions.

- How is Tonga culture identified and sustained through its (or in) cultural artefacts?
- How do BaTonga in Zimbabwe negotiate for cultural spaces using visual means?
- How can we separate without prejudice group-cultural meanings in a Zimbabwean cultural context where spaces are contested?
- What (if any) elements within BaTonga cultural artefacts anchor Tonga language, history and heritage?
- How are identities and cultural meanings created as well as consumed in the BaTonga cultural sphere?

1.5 Justification of study

The study contributes to a wider national effort to de-marginalise the VETOKA (Venda, Tonga and Kalanga). Already, studies focusing on the Tonga so far have taken various approaches. The study hopes to contribute to the wider national effort to document and preserve Zimbabwe cultures and heritage. In this effort, the once marginalised cultures, partly due to neglect, ought to be brought forward and scholarship in the form of this study is but a milestone in this direction. Ncube's (2004) work offers a crucial missing link in the history of Zimbabwe as he looks at the people residing in the North-western area of Zimbabwe. Besides some historical interest, Tonga visual communication through cultural pieces has received little attention in research and there is no attention especially its analysis, interpretation and significance to the Tonga as well as Zimbabwe at large. This research therefore fills up this gap.

Zivenge's (2009) study did not consider the role of artefacts in his linguistic description and documentation of the Tonga language. Monda (2011) on the other hand does not reveal the communicative aspect of artefacts warranting preservation of the Tonga tangible heritage. And Ndlovu (2013) merely critiques language management of marginalised groups, Tonga included, such as use in education in the country without showing the role of artefacts in the matrix of language issues. This study, seeks to augment this body of research by showing the visual cultural communicative nature of BaTonga artefacts in their endeavor to mark their cultural presence in Zimbabwe.

This study contributes knowledge within the wide disciplines that study visual culture and communication. A study of visual communication among BaTonga enhances knowledge of the Tonga people, their language, history and culture while it also contributes to the various disciplines. The study sheds rays of knowledge about the Tonga and rightfully placing their socio-cultural life within the Zimbabwean cultural lingual scape despite being small in their population.

1.6 Scope of Study

Research is confined within the Tonga who reside in Binga, Kariba and Gokwe areas in Zimbabwe. These areas are the traditional home for the BaTonga mostly along the Zambezi valley. While the BaTonga are found in other parts of the country, preliminary research has shown that the domination of Shona and Ndebele ethnic groups overshadow the BaTonga communities in different parts of the country. However, the above mentioned geographical areas offer a more visible BaTonga community, especially Binga and surrounding areas, from which focus of study is directed. Some of these areas, such as Kariba are also close to the BaTonga ancestral lands. There are Tonga people along the Zambezi valley on the other side of the river in Zambia (Nchito 2010, McGregor 2009, Hughes, 2010, Colson 1971). These have not been considered as focus of this study is the Zimbabwean Tonga.

The Tonga cultural artefacts chosen for study are the *ncelwa* (smoking pipe), Nyaminyami Walking Stick and the *buntibe* (orchestral drum). The *ncelwa* has been chosen due to its uniqueness and common within the Tonga culture. Due to the fact that it is used by women, its choice for study also allows an inclusion of Tonga women and their position in this community. The Nyaminyami Walking Stick has been chosen due to its ability to bring together the key icons of Tonga culture while the *buntibe* drum symbolises a link of the BaTonga people; their everyday world, spiritual, surroundings and the material cultural representations.

1.7 Methodology and Theoretical Framework

1.7.1 Methodology

The study is an ethnographic case study of the Tongan people's visual communication through cultural artefacts. As such, it is placed within the qualitative research paradigm where ethnographic research techniques are employed in gathering representational data. The study uses qualitative research methods in collection and analysis of the chosen artefacts which are the *ncelwa* (smoking pipe), Nyaminyami Walking Stick and the *buntibe* drum. These three cultural pieces have been chosen as they are among the top key artefacts within the BaTonga culture and

the study is anchored on them for analysing Tonga visual communication. Chapter 4 gives a detailed discussion of the methodology informing this study.

1.7.2 Theoretical Framework

The semiotic theory chosen for this study is based on Saussure's (1966) linguistic semiotics. Saussure's discussion of the relationship between semiotics and linguistics envisaged semiotics as a wider field with tools to subsume linguistics. The study also chose semiotics as derived from Pierce (1960). The two traditional semiotic formulations offer key tenets whose contradictory aspect allowed amalgamation by Eco (1981) and Sebeok (2001) who ultimately submitted a need for modelling and institutionalisation in semiotic inquiry. Based on Eco (1981) and Sebeok (2001), the study ushers in artefactual ethnosemiotics, which is an institutionalised form of semiotics that can address ethnic constructed artefacts. The suggested approach to semiotics theorises artefacts observed and used by the BaTonga in visual cultural communication from which negotiation of space by the BaTonga in the country is observed.

The semiotic theory used in this study is read within the larger realm of visual cultural communication. Semiotics is used to analyse visual cultural communication from which notions of symbolism, signification, representation, misrepresentation are more pronounced as well as according better ways of commenting on visual cultural communication and how it is observable in the negotiation of space by the Tonga within the existing cultural spaces in the country. Chapter 3 discusses in detail the theoretical framework of this study.

1.8 Definitions of Terms

The following is a list of key terms used in this study and their respective definitions as used in the study.

Artefacts

Objects or material pieces in a culture. These usually are or were tools or utensils used by a people in a community.

Code

A conventional enigma; 'a group or set of signs and rules for their use' (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2001:54).

Culture

The cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings; spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving. 'A culture is a durable material expression of an adaptation to an environment, human as well as physiographical, that enable the society to survive and develop' (Childe 1951:16 in Hodder 2009:4).

Cultural communication

The interactions, sharing, sending and receiving of meanings that are culturally significant for socialisation, identification and cultural survival.

Cultural space

The cosmos or cultural universe of a people

De-marginalisation

The process realised in cultural studies in Zimbabwe to uplift a once marginalised group mostly its image, identity, culture, language and history.

Material culture

The corporeal, tangible object constructed by humans (O'Toole and Were, 2008:617). All things people make from the physical world such as tools, ceramics, houses, furniture etc.

Semiotic

Anything dealing with sign systems

Sign

A sign is viewed as or ‘often taken as something that stands for something to someone in some respect or capacity’ (Merrel 2001:34). In modern views of the sign Sebeok (2001:33) builds up his understanding of the sign from Peirce (1960) as well as Morris (1971) whom define sign as ‘a generic concept, of which they are a very large number of species, multiplying from a trichotomous base of icon, index, and symbol, each defined according to that sign category’s relation to its object in a particular context.’

BaTonga/Tonga

An ethnic group of people found along the Zambezi Valley in Zimbabwe who speak a language called Tonga. In the study the two terms are used interchangeably to refer to the people as well as language and anything connected with them.

Visual

Physical and optical feature or object

VETOKA

An acronym standing in for three uniquely marginalised groups found in Zimbabwe which are Venda, Tonga and Kalanga. However, the term is exclusionary as it leaves out the Nambya and Chewa groups which face a more or less similar marginalisation treatment in the country.

Visual discourse

The use of signs to communicate visually. In verbal discourse the linguistic sound system and signs are used whereas in nonverbal discourse nonverbal signs are used to which artefacts make up much of the visual discourse.

1.9 Organisation of Study

Chapter 2 reviews literature whereas Chapter 3 discusses the theoretical framework informing this study. Chapter 4 discusses the methodology of the study with Chapter 5 presenting the three artefacts under study, the *ncelwa*, the Nyaminyami Walking Stick and the *buntibe* drum.

Description and explanations of the artefacts is critically done in the chapter leading to Chapter 6 where weaving of literature, methodology and theory are brought together to provide a discussion that cracks open the nonverbal code in visual cultural communication. Chapter 7, concludes by summarising the study and comes up with various recommendations of the study.

1.10 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the study by giving background to the study and expounding on the area of investigation. Objectives, justification of study have also been presented and the structure of the study is given last. The chapter is a foundation on which this study is hinged showing how forthcoming chapters are formulated and shape the study. Chapter 2 reviews literature relevant to the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2. Introduction

In this chapter, relevant literature is reviewed beginning with literature on material culture and its use in cultural communication. The nature and scope of this study draws much from studies in linguistics, archaeology, anthropology and communication with the aim of building an understanding of visual communication. Because interest lies in critiquing how material culture as visual codes make up visual communication, it is vital that we review literature on material culture and how various studies put them to use as well as literature on visual communication.

The chapter also discusses Tonga scholarship and its various points of departure, the aim being to see which research has been done on the Tonga and how far this type of research has worked towards de-marginalisation of the Tonga. First, the chapter introduces material culture given that this study is formulated around material pieces or objects collectively taken as material culture. This leads to discussion of how material culture is linked to cultural communication. The chapter moves on to look at literature on the BaTonga; how the literature critically identifies BaTonga and their space in Zimbabwe.

2.1 Material culture

Material culture is understood in this study as physical or tangible objects that are used, displayed or merely experienced. Following O'Toole and Were (2008:617) material culture is 'the corporeal, tangible objects constructed by humans' and capable of interacting with human beings. These include tools, ceramics, houses, roads, cities and the list is endless. What is crucial, however, is the fact that material culture has communicative potential and power. The communicative potential and power of material culture is vested in its physical materiality as well as the visual decoding of such by humans for their cultural communication experiences. O'Toole and Were (2008:617) summarise material culture and communication as how,

Human beings interact with material culture as a normal part of their daily lives. Because of this interaction, material culture and human living is strongly influenced by each other, and thus studying material culture gives us important clues about the way human live and have lived in the past.

Interaction with material culture entails visual decoding, use and identification with material objects for cultural survival and assertiveness. This is the core of this study, particularly as it explores the Tonga material culture in the form of artefacts they identify with but more importantly artefacts they use in negotiating for cultural space in Zimbabwe.

Schlereth (1982) observed that a study of material culture allows entry into the belief systems –that is, their values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions of a particular community or society. O’Toole and Were (2008:618) also agree by observing that the material world is ‘a catalyst for the group’s cultural formation.’ Hence, for a community, like that of the Tonga, struggling to assert itself as well as advocating for de-marginalisation, a study of a communicative potential of its material culture is vital.

2.2 Material culture and cultural communication

Studies in material culture and their various social roles are imbedded largely in disciplines such as history, archaeology (Jones 2007, Hodder 2009) and anthropology (Oestigaard 2004). Material objects in the form of artefacts have received considerable attention in these disciplines to a point where lip service is played when it comes to observing artefacts as material culture as well as visual codes in cultural communication. The study addresses this missing link especially with regard to the Zimbabwean visual communication and cultural landscape.

Oestigaard (2004) tries to clear the grey area between anthropology and ethno-archaeology. In his study, he observes material culture and materiality as hovering in the definitions of the two. He shows how these disciplines are anchored on material culture leading to conclusions that scholars like Miller (1985, 1987) have actually advocated for which is a need for an independent discipline of material culture. Against this background, Oestigaard (2004) says the study of material culture as an independent discipline focuses on and concerns itself with the relationship

between the material and the social. The challenge is that we do not have a mode of separation because material culture is part of history, linguistics and communication. We cannot fully appreciate, for instance, applied linguistics as approached in this study, without material culture or material culture without history. This could explain why Miller's (1985) independent discipline call failed to have any takers. As such Oestigaard advances a specific view of artefacts as, following Miller (1994:397 in Fahlander and Oestigaard, 2004:29), 'the means by which we give form to, and come to an understanding of, ourselves, others or abstractions, such as the nation or the modern.'

Oestigaard's research is relevant for this study for its focus and interest in material culture especially its attempt to define material culture. However, his handling of material culture is pegged within anthropology from which he advocates and treats material objects in the form of artefacts as objects for study by anthropologists. How these artefacts mean and how they are used by their creators is deliberately ignored. It is as if he has distanced the creators from their creations at the same time giving centre stage to academics and archaeologists. These are portrayed as active players in the discourse of material culture. One reads an instance of death of the author deeming material culture handling paternalistic as well as subject to scrutiny with a potential to misrepresent the concerned people. This study, handles BaTonga material culture as visual codes actively authored by the Tonga, representational and useful in as far as visual cultural communication is concerned in Zimbabwe.

The idea of culture enacting spaces is possibly resolved by Hodder (2009) who introduces culture from a materialist perspective. Hodder discusses culture and traces the definitions from European archaeological studies. He follows the works of Sturms (1950), Childe (1951) and Bergamann (1968) as well as Clarke (1968) (Hodder, 2009:2-3). In his study Hodder notes the relationship between material culture and people from which he observes how for instance Childe rejected the European racial, linguistic and political interpretation of cultures. However, he retains the notion that culture largely represented people. Hodder uses Childe's definition that 'a culture is a durable material expression of an adaptation to an environment, human as well as physiographical, that enable the society to survive and develop' (Childe 1951:16 in Hodder 2009:4). Against this view, buildings, tools, weapons, ornaments as well as other surviving

constituents are bound up in a cultural functioning whole and are treated as identifying that which is cultural.

The idea and emphasis that ‘cultures and types as mental templates in the mind of the original makers and users of the artefacts’ (Hodder, 2009:5) features strongly in Hodder’s study. He identifies artefacts as entities realised in representational way, for he says,

The artefact types which make up cultures were seen as being inventions that had been socially successful. The inventions became a ‘type’ by being accepted as a norm of behaviour for the members of a group. Types make up models which present accepted and successful ways of doing things and which can be passed from generation to generation. Types thus represent collective and tested wisdom and groups of types distinguishing peoples (Hodder, 2009:3).

This is how Hodder (2009) places artefacts in the realm of culture and how these are crucial in the definition not only of a group of people but of wisdom, practices as well as the being of a people. This is also how spaces are mapped and further contested. As such, for Hodder culture is a construction which comes about when there has been a manifestation of wisdom and experiences communicated; accepted by all members of a group through features that cause behaviour or performances that become accepted and passed on from one generation to the next. Hodder concludes by saying that a ‘people’ producing a ‘culture’ are best identified and defined by ‘the material culture itself’ (Hodder, 2009:3).

Hodder (2009) took an archaeological view of culture from which he sees material culture at the centre of defining what culture is. He places the discussion of African culture through material culture of the Baringo people of Kenya. Hodder’s study is purely descriptive and offers a record of the Baringo people, their cultural life and value in Kenya. Hodder does so by looking at these people from the stand point of the European versus the African. This study explores BaTonga’s material culture and how they are communicatively used to negotiate for cultural space in Zimbabwe. The stand point of this study while conscious of colonial impulses is one of an African versus African. Hodder (2009) study is significant in as far as it locates artefacts in the realm of material culture.

Carey (1989) studied space and human existence. In doing so, he observes material culture and their place in human existence. Carey (1989:22) declares that space can be mapped with ‘various symbols for communication purposes’. He says,

Space can be mapped... in different modes –utilising lines on a page, sounds in the air, movements in a dance. All these are symbolic forms; though the symbols differ; visual, oral and kinaesthetic (Carey, 1989:22)

Carey’s study proves useful for this study as it clears the way for a better appreciation of how material culture is communicative and an icon physical in nature that can be used for cultural mapping from which cultural negotiation is realised. Artefacts produced by the Tonga people are read as icons, symbols or codes used to map their cultural and historical space. To live with the purview of different maps is to live with different realities and this is what we shall discover in the preceding chapters regarding the Tonga people in Zimbabwe. This is evidenced by the available diverse artefacts that represent, stand for the culture, heritage and history of a community. The BaTonga do map their various cultural spaces using their artefacts to communicate their past, present as well as their existence.

Carey’s (1989) ‘mapping concept’ seem to have informed Randviir and Cobley’s (2010 in Cobley ed. 2010:123) conception that to understand a culture means that one has to describe them as systems of knowledge, intersemiotic sign systems and reflective systems. Goodenough (1981) concluded as well that cultures are in fact sets of decision standards, intellectual forms, perception models, models of relating and organizational patterns (Randviir and Cobley 2010 in Cobley ed. 2010:123). While this study acknowledges benefits from describing cultures through mapping of semiotic cultural systems. This study goes beyond a mere description of BaTonga culture through semiotic cultural artefacts identified above. The study highlights how the Tonga use a unique system or systems of knowledge loaded with intersemiotic sign systems which are reflective of the character of the BaTonga, negotiate for cultural space in Zimbabwe.

Jones (2007) studied material culture and how they are critical in aiding cognitive recollection against the fragility as well as the finite character of human memory. Against this background material pieces or artefacts offer ‘an increasing capacity for the storage of memory’ (Jones,

2007:1). He acknowledges the usefulness of material culture in human development and cultural survival. Material culture is observed as a symbolic as well as external storage where artefacts 'act as an external means of knitting societies together' (Jones, 2007:6).

Berliner (2007) offers an example of this external memory storage concept when he studied the artefacts of the Banga coastal people of Guinea. Among the collections singled out are masks and ritual objects. Berliner (2007) further says while the contemporary approach to the Banga artefacts is nostalgically done, willingness to reconnect with artefacts is to accord the Banga people tangible and fundamental connections with their once worldview, significant in cultural as well as historical terms. This then becomes the very point Jones (2007) advances that material culture through tangible objects is fundamental in human development, cultural communication and social survival. We draw similar notions with regard to the BaTonga that in visual cultural communication, as discussed in chapter 5 of this study, not only are the BaTonga expressing their cultural being, they are also seeking connections with fundamental aspects of ethnic survival and development.

Jones (2007) further argues that material objects while treated as symbolic media, their materiality impinge on people's 'sensuality and physically at a fundamental level' (Jones, 2007:19). Here material objects are handled as physical traces of past events and experiences amiable to the process of 'reading' he talks about. Against this notion, artefacts aid remembrance while physically embodying memory. Jones (2007) also explores issues of perception and appearance where for example artefacts are treated as indices of agency given how they are positioned in time and space thereby agreeing with scholarship that handles material culture as indices of human agency and intentions.

Studying material culture from this perspective allows us to gain some insight into human cognitive development for it hinders towards seeing phases involved in the development of systems of memory storage and retrieval external to the human being. Jones' (2007) observation is no mere accident. There are elements drawn by Jones (2007) from cultural semioticians such as Kluckhohn (1961), Lucid (1977), and Geertz (1993) which inform Jones (2007) assertions.

The former three cultural semioticians handle the object as material culture interpreted from a cultural semiotics perspective.

Kluckhohn (1961), Lucid (1977), and Geertz (1993) have the same feeling that the object exists in a culture where it combines with other objects to create sign systems which ultimately conceive cognitive social systems. This is important in explaining the process of cultural communication as this study shows in the preceding chapters. Culture from this perspective, together with its materials, is thus defined as a set of ‘artefacts organised according to cultural patterns’ (Randviir and Copley 2010:122). Cultures are viewed as abstractions existing at the level of the cultural material object.

When Jones (2007) discusses how the objects trigger memory recollection, he is merely showing one dimension of the function of material objects in reflecting the culture of a people. For instance, the BaTonga dug-out canoes, fishing nets or even, the *ncelwa*, Nyaminyami Walking Stick as cultural objects can be interpreted as cognitive social systems which Jones (2007) is quick to say aid cognitive recollection. For the BaTonga, recollection of their past and experiences along the Zambezi valley before and after the 1950s Kariba dam construction is triggered by these cultural objects. These instances of memories of the past and their recollection help create an ethnic identity crucial in negotiating for cultural spaces in contemporary Zimbabwe.

Eves (2009) however warns us that an approach to material objects should not steer attention to manipulating and viewing artefacts outside themselves. The view that artefacts are mere vessels of meanings takes away attention to the materiality of the pieces thereby neglecting the importance of artefacts. This makes it possible that artefacts are approached with naiveté without quickly assuming what they signify. In this study therefore, this warning is adhered to and part of the descriptions of the artefacts in chapter 5 is an attempt to appreciate the materiality of the objects without pre-assumed notions which may otherwise make them mere vessels of meanings.

Regarding Jones (2007) therefore, where he differs from the trio above (Kluckhohn 1961, Lucid 1977, Geertz 1993) is his acknowledgement that there are challenges of viewing material

pieces as aids to memory –which is tantamount to separating the cognitive sphere as an isolated entity; while the material (external world) becomes ‘simply components of the environment’ –a stagnant sphere awaiting analysis ‘by the thinking subject’ (Jones, 2007:7). This is perhaps the same thinking Eves (2009) advances. This study does not pursue further discussion of the problems of externality and storage as interest is in the notion of how material pieces are at the core of Jones’ interesting view as aiding memory.

Human nature according to Jones (2007:12) is centred on mute material ‘things’ which are made meaningfully ‘only once they have received the impress of intentional human minds.’ This means that material pieces which make up the material culture of a people are only meaningful within the context in which they are employed as a means of external symbolic storage. Hence, the material world gives us an assumption that artefacts make up a body of a system of signs to be read. Which means, artefacts do not in outlook possess fixed boundaries on which meaning is ‘banked’ or a fixed storehouse of past knowledge or culture for future retrieval. Artefacts in fact carry a dual character, a symbolic one through which ‘reading’ is necessary as well as a component composed of physical matter.

In his study, Jones (2007) is convinced that material culture needs to be read. This stand point ignites Barthes’ (1999) concept of death of the author and acclaims ‘reading culture’ in all notions of discourse. Barthes as well as Jones (2007) agree, at least in the concept of reading culture, but differ on the visual codes that can bring this concept about. Barthes (1999) is biased towards photography or the image while Jones (2007) eyes the actual physical object. This study readily identifies with Jones (2007) due to its interest in material objects as the *buntibe* drum, the *ncelwa* and the Nyaminyami Walking Stick are all artefacts as such qualify as material objects in the Tonga culture. Jones’ (2007) conviction further lies in the understanding that the world of objects is a significant system or a sign system analogous to language. This is important especially with regard to the Tonga context as we also handle language beyond descriptive linguistics. Jones’ study allows us to appreciate the fact that material culture made up of artefacts make up a visual system which with an open mind can be equated to a ‘language’, that is, a system with its own independent rules.

Downplaying Saussure's (1966) theoretical 'arbitrary' impulse instead favouring Peirce's (1960) foundations, Jones (2007) argues that artefacts are constructed to codify information. For archaeologists, he says, this conception allows them to see artefacts as reconstructing cultural meanings or at least aiding reconstruction of cultural meanings. Jones (2007:15) warns us however, that the 'reading of objects is not a trivial matter of information retrieval' since material objects convey meaning in a multiplicity of ways. He sees objects as communicating meaning hence showing that material culture visually characterise the matrix of human existence given that 'people *and* objects are engaged in the process of remembering' (Jones, 2007:22). What is striking is his conclusion that there is 'need to understand the role of objects in social practices to understand the meanings associated with objects' (Jones, 2007:32).

Jones (2007) rightly handles material pieces as having three important aspects. First they have a life of their own; secondly they make up a complete significant system which we can call a 'visual language'. This aspect of systems borrows from Randviir and Cobley's (2010 in Cobley ed. 2010) triad systems –knowledge, intersemiotic and reflective systems. Thirdly, Jones (2007) places material pieces as physical objects that embody memory and aid remembrance.

These three key observations add value to this study for two reasons. First, they are founded on semiotics and secondly they shade light on our understanding of material pieces as active objects in human life. However, Jones (2007) is heavily influenced by Pierce's (1960) semiotic theory and his ideas are deliberately laid to answer archaeological problems. He over-emphasises the need to handle artefacts as physical aids to remembrance and memory thereby justifying a need to reconstruct the past and this study is not interested in reconstructing BaTonga past, but to show how the Tonga culturally negotiate for space in Zimbabwe from a marginalised position.

Jones' (2007) approach is also passive, universal in outlook and using it to handle material culture as symbols of visual cultural communication does us little in so far as we seek to empower our African cultures and languages. Jones does not even locate his material culture philosophy within any given cultural people leaving his ideas vague and half-done with respect to an analysis of an endangered culture like that of the Tonga in Zimbabwe. This study takes an ethnographic appreciation of the Tongan material pieces. For Carey (1989), while material

artefacts embody memories and aiding remembrances the question that needs answering will be how do BaTonga use them to map their culture within Zimbabwean cultural boundaries from which cultural negotiation is realised for cultural survival?

Toth and Schick (1994) studied early stone technologies, from the Oldowan assemblies (simple) characterised by forms such as battered precursors or hammer stones to Acheulean (sophisticated); that were used to create various stone tools which today we regard as cultural pieces. For them, the challenge is first ‘to identify what patterns of material culture in the prehistoric have implications for intelligence and language...’ (Toth and Schick, 1994:346). They observe that ‘technology was of the cultural catalysts which accelerated the pace of brain expansion and cognitive development’ (ibid). They also find the level of technological advancement directly proportional to the level of intelligence and language reached or already passed while looking at prehistoric material culture ‘as a potential source of information about the cognitive and communicative levels’ (Toth and Schick, 1994:347) of humans in their past.

In summary, Toth and Schick (1994) trace technological tools from evolution linking these technologies to the development of cultural communication systems and their basic existence as mere proof of the level of intellect as well as language development aiding further developments in these tools. The cognitive dimension Jones (2007) talks about finds itself in Toth and Schick (1994) conception. However, while the tools are both artefacts whose purpose was to produce other artefacts they are wholly immersed in the Stone Age tradition.

The concept of technology or cultural technology and the understanding of the level of intellect and language nature Toth and Schick (1994) bring about is welcome in this study. It allows us to pose and reflect upon the Tonga’s cultural technologies used to produce the *ncelwa*, *buntibe* drum and the Nyaminyami Walking Stick. While we should be aware of the cultural technologies involved in the production of material culture, this study is not interested in the Tonga cultural technologies, instead, it is interested in the visual identification, use of cultural pieces in the broad realm of cultural communication and negotiation for space in Zimbabwe.

Parkin (1999) studied material cultural pieces in the context of human space and movement as if drinking from the same cup with Carey (1989). He differs from Carey (1989) in that Parkin (1999) sees material objects as having given rise to a phenomenological field of understanding human social space as well as socio-geographical movement. He observes that ‘objects are conventionally located in predictable contexts of use’ (Parkin, 1999:304). His handling of material objects is inclined in evoking the role of cultural objects, their value and cultural meaning to the users/owners.

The social place of material pieces is quite visible and social for any human being. However, Parkin (1999) looks at the role of these pieces and their place to a displaced people. What he seeks to show is that in a natural and ancestral geographical context, material objects have predictable notions of use. Once the users are forced to move or displaced, within the totality inventory of cultural material objects, humans hurriedly take material objects for possible use in new unknown contexts and objects assume different roles in new realities becoming less of use but more of ‘selective remembering, forgetting and envisioning’ (ibid).

Parkin (1999), giving only one context in which artefacts can play such a role he agrees with Jones’ (2007) submissions of cultural artefacts aiding memory or cognitive recollection. However, Parkin is not highly interested in cultural material pieces as we are handling them in this study. He looks at basic everyday tools such as spoons, soup bowls and so on which become more of mementoes that help safeguard the existential fibre of a people. While we note efforts to show the communicative potential of material objects to a given people, especially in so far as existentialism is concerned, Parkin does not stretch his argument to show how these mementoes could actually be used in the negotiation for space in as much as the people now find themselves in a new socio-geographical context.

This study welcomes the idea of material objects as observed to a people who have suffered displacement. The BaTonga are akin to displacement from their ancestral lands to the arid new areas. But this study goes a gear up in demonstrating how the carried material objects by the Tonga are not mere mementoes, but visual codes that continue to be used as they were used in their historical ancestral contexts and are further realised in the visual communicative effort to

negotiate for space in a country where dominant groups such as the Shona, Ndebele and other groups pose a great threat to the extinction of their culture and basic existence.

Craig (2011) envisions artefacts as vessels *of* meaning rather than vessels *for* meaning. Craig advances that material objects help create social dynamics as opposed to merely reflecting central tenets of a people's culture or society. Craig studies the materiality of chapbooks – 'mass-produced, cheaply made booklets sold hand-to-hand by travelling salesmen, or chapmen, in Western Europe and North America' as objects central in cultural production (Craig, 2011:50). The chapbook was created as an art object to circulate within poetry communities or among peers. Their value was based on the fact of being few rather than being many largely due to their nature of production. Craig draws our attention to the idea of an unlimited spectrum of material culture.

Addressing a community with a long history of print traditions, we observe how chapbooks, their production as well as content, speak volumes about European and North American cultural practices and cultural maintenances. This study is not interested in the art-objects at the verge of extinctions within the Western world. The study explores artefacts within the African community largely characterised by orature from which material objects of a varying degree such as the *buntibe* drum, are 'players' in Tonga identity, expression and community sustenance.

Craig's (2011) approach to artefacts allow Neiger, Meyers and Zandberg (2011) to extend the boundaries of material culture from mere physical objects to metaphoric or symbolic artefacts as created by popular songs in the case of Neiger, Meyers and Zandberg's case. The artists they investigate are studied as 'a materialized expression of the complex interactions between memory, ideology and media practice, between cultural production...and between national rituals and (sacred) mnemonic artefacts and objects' (Neiger, Meyers and Zandberg, 2011:972)

Stretching the scope of material culture Neiger, Meyers and Zandberg (2011) investigate songs played in Israel during the Memorial Day for the Holocaust and the Heroism (MDHH). While their investigation is of popular music, the context being Israel, constituting playlists 'investigated as materialised expression of the complex interaction between memory,

ideology...cultural production and between national rituals and (sacred) mnemonic artefacts and objects' (Neiger, Meyers and Zandberg, 2011:972). The trio are commended for highlighting the unlimited views to material culture. The investigation allows us to see the unlimited boundaries of material culture.

Popular music is significant in that it helps invoke memories, hinging on Parkins (2009) and Jones (2007) notions of cognitive recollection; and is at the centre of cultural production. Neiger, Meyers and Zandberg (2011) are of the opinion that the organic units that bundle the music together is linked to the identity of the lyricists, composers and performers. This then gives their songs authority to become cultural objects and carriers of meaning. The concept behind Neiger, Meyers and Zandberg (2011) is welcome but it is placed within Saussure's (1966) structuralist handling of language as communicative. This study addresses the language of artefacts or material culture as visually coded from which visual communication is realised.

Hodder and Hutson (2003) attempt a process of reading the past through material culture. They sound exactly like Barthes (1972) who advanced the notion of reading culture. We shall briefly look at Barthes (1972) semiotics below to show the colours of this concept which one sees as a hinge to Hodder and Hutson's (2003). Hodder and Hutson (2003) view material culture as a 'language' drawing comparisons with 'language' as we know it and handled by linguists. Hodder and Hutson respect material culture observing its primary function as not to 'represent' but 'to help accomplish physical tasks ...and thus varies according to functional variations' (Hodder and Hutson, 2003:167). The central point in their contributions is the characterisation of material culture which they see as ambiguous in different ways, scarce and experienced in semi-conscious or unconscious ways.

These scholars come close at appreciating material culture as language, although preferring to see it as largely 'actions and practices in the world' (Hodder and Hutson, 2003:168). Material culture as language is attributed to the advantage of being intact, 'durable and restricting flexibility' (ibid). They even view it as a text which can be read and observing that 'we are on better footing when reading material culture partly because material culture is not as abstract or complex as text' (ibid). Material culture as language, they say, allows the collapsing of

boundaries a fact we side with in this study. For example, even non-Tonga speaking individuals can decipher meanings from Tonga material pieces.

In other words, researchers interested in material culture ‘come to know other people, other cultures and other times in the same way that we find our footing in everyday world’ (Hodder and Hutson, 2003:169). The text of material culture is realised in its broadest sense which is the ‘contexts in which we find ourselves...’ (ibid) as human actors. What Hodder and Hutson (2003) have done is to recognise material objects as compiling or making up a language of their own. Material culture is primarily physical which can also result from processes of production and action hence enabling reading as signs since they can signify concepts apart from their face physical values.

The problem with Hodder and Hutson (2003) is that, while they struggle to address the limited view of language, its character and its usage; drawing parallels with the conventional verbal language and showing that material culture makes up a language that is different or uses a different model of signs. This is welcome, but Hodder and Hutson (2003) make the same mistake that they found in Saussure’s (1966) semiology which promotes view of language as hovering merely between the sign and signifier (two key semiotic dichotomies in Saussure’s linguistics which are discussed further in **Section 2.5**). They say the object is not catered for by Saussure’s linguistics hence their coming in. They too, fail to address the problem effectively as their interest is simply to build a corpus of knowledge and ideas or perhaps theorise on viewing material culture as a language we can use to read the past or to investigate the past for our good.

This study is not interested in merely ‘reading’ the past as Hodder and Hutson (2003) would want us do. While understanding the past of a people through their material culture is welcome, the study situates material culture as a physical unique visual communicative code to discourses or situated communications among the BaTonga. The other difference lies in that for Hodder and Hutson (2003) the material objects they are interested in seem to be the ones buried in the sites where a people used to live and in need of being excavated, or pieces preserved in archives and museums in other words fossil material pieces. These seem to be passive as they stand to be studied or have come to the end of their times in terms of everyday usage.

Gozo (1984) comes closer to appreciating cultural artefacts in the spirit of cultural negotiation in Zimbabwe. He discusses what he calls the material culture of Zimbabwe. In his study, the cultural artefacts, from golden artefacts, ornaments, houses, wooden craftwork, weapons, tools, pipes and smoking largely of the Shona and Ndebele ethnic groups are given centre stage. He even uses Shona and Ndebele names for identification and provides various illustrations of the same. However, BaTonga are partially represented especially under sections on smoking pipes, musical instruments, weapons and tools. But what is painful to note is that we see the Tonga culture, their cultural richness as a shadow of the Shona and Ndebele groups. Gozo (1984) is silent on various comments he makes regarding the cultural richness and significance of the artefacts he presents as representing the Zimbabwean material culture.

Gozo's (1984) views are a clear reflection of Hodder and Hutson (2003) Barthes (1972) reading of material culture. Gozo (1984) is reading what he hopes is the Zimbabwean culture. He differs from Hodder and Hutson in that Gozo (1984) gives a context just like what Neiger, Meyers and Zandberg (2011) did with songs played in Israel during the Memorial Day for the Holocaust and the Heroism (MDHH). There is no doubt that Craig's (2011) view of material pieces as vessels of meaning takes centre stage in Gozo (1984) reading of material pieces found in Zimbabwe mostly of Shona and Ndebele ethnic groups.

One concludes that Gozo's (1984) effort is a mere record of cultural artefacts found in Zimbabwe; and how they were used in the past by the respective groups for purposes of historical recollection in the spirit of Jones (2007). The Barthes (1972) notion of death of the author is hindered here but the death concept by Gozo (1984) seem to lie in the pieces themselves. Gozo (1984) seems to be suggesting that in the contemporary times these pieces have only a cultural historical significance. Yet among the BaTonga the *ncelwa* for example, is still being used by Tonga elderly women as chapter 5 shall show. He does not attempt to demonstrate how various groups used the same to negotiate for cultural space in the country. Gozo (1984) further handles the material culture as mere archaeological or historical pieces from which we can gain an identity about the Shona and Ndebele people in Zimbabwe.

This study explores material pieces which have one leg into the past in which they were created and were initially socialised then secondly having an everyday pivotal role of usage in almost a similar fashion as was used in the past, however, negotiating contemporary cultural spaces. The next section reviews visual communication where the researcher shows how scholarship in visual communication seems to be silent or limited to the print image and limitedly recognising material objects. Yet, the material objects are in fact components of visual communication too.

2.3 Visual Communication

This study handles cultural artefacts first and foremost as visual objects. Their existence in a specific cultural context reveals their communicative potential and as such qualifies as visual codes active in the processes of communication. Studies by Stanton (1996) and Fiske (2006) have shown how language is a medium of communication in an oral or written set up and how various codes are identifiable in such mediums of communication. Both theoretical and applied linguistics theories (Chomsky 1965, Hymes 1975, Halliday 1994) have made inroads into communicative aspects of language. Studies by Kress (2002), van Leeuwen (2000), Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), Berger (2012) have attempted to draw attention to the visual in communication. The visual, however, has been biased towards sign systems in the form of diagrams, photographs, cartoons and or paintings (Krauss 1982, Watney 1986, 1999, Bourdieu 1990, Barthes 1972, Barthes 1988).

Much of this visual communication literature appears to have iconography bias. Literature handling actual objects or material objects as visual objects playing a relatively similar role as the cartoons, images, drawings and so on seems to be sketchy. If we are to side with archaeological views on material culture as according the present generations a look into the past (Hodder and Hutson 2003, Jones 2007) we clearly see how material objects communicate visually. To merely place material objects as according passage into the past is to limit ourselves and Berger (2012:1) rightly observed that we ‘live in a world of things seen, a world that is visual, and we expend much of our physical and emotional energy on the act of seeing’. Berger (2012) gives a crucial analogy that humans are like fish swimming in a sea of images, images

that help shape our perceptions of the world. This is in agreement with Carey's (1989) mapping concept.

What we note in this form of approach to visuals and visual communication is a deliberate attention to print visuals which are handled as secondary to the oral word. Below is a body of literature that has this bias for purposes of marking a clear boundary and according a possibility of unmasking possible views of visuals away from the print to the actual material object and possibly crack open the nonverbal code to explain cultural interaction.

Barthes (1972) discusses visual communication based on its triad possible realisation. Barthes sees the relationship between the linguistic message and iconic message both working in complementation and ironically when separated there remains a degree of communication due to the presence of the object. He says,

If all these signs are removed from the image, we are still left with a certain informational matter, deprived of all knowledge. I continue to 'read' the image to 'understand' that it assembles in a common space a number of identifiable (nameable) objects, not merely shapes and colours. The signifieds of this third message are constituted by the real objects in the scene (Barthes 1972 in Evans and Hall eds., 1999:35)

Barthes attempts to explain two things, the idea of materiality and material objects as pertinent to visual communication. He shows how the image is problematic in visual communication as the process of its making involves a certain arrangement of the scene or object itself through framing, reduction, flattening which Barthes is quick to say '...this transition is not a *transformation* ...and we are brought up against the paradox...of a *message without a code*' (Barthes 1972 in Evans and Hall 1999:35).

Barthes (1985) image emphasis leads him to expand his views (as in Barthes 1972) to demonstrate iconographic centralisation in explaining meaning making and interpretation of images in general. Barthes (1985) and Barthes (1988) distinguishes three levels of meaning, the informational level allowing understanding of the object and its surrounding environment, secondly, there is the symbolic level which basically points towards signification. The third level is what he calls the *signifiance* which has much to do with meanings revealed by the

communicative aspects of both the first and second levels. This third level, the *signifiante*-semantic as it may be, has two broad semantic realisations named as the *obvious* meanings on one hand which appears quite naturally and the *obtuse* meaning on the other. Obtuse meaning, Barthes (1985) says, goes beyond the boundaries of culture, knowledge or information and appeals to the infinity of language or the infinity of expressiveness

Barthes contributions attracted the attention of Dant and Gilloch (2002) who romanticise Barthes (1999) as well as Barthes (1985) views of the visual photographic images and how they ‘communicate within a cultural space’ (Dant and Gilloch, 2002:6). More importantly however, Dant and Gilloch (2002) interpret Barthes interest as showing how photographic images communicate the history of people as such for them photographic images are,

...a medium that allows...to explore ideas of history central to the cultural critique...bringing back the past in a routine and repeatable way, accessible to almost anyone with eyes to see (Dant and Gilloch, 2002:7).

Dant and Gilloch (2002) dismiss material objects in the form of artefacts, side-lining them to the archaeologist while finding superiority in photographic images although observing that ‘The object of the photograph does not stand for its function and then for its culture as does an ancient too or artefact...’ (Dant and Gilloch 2002:7). Dant and Gilloch (2002) fail to acknowledge that our knowledge and meanings we attach to the visual lie in the knowledge we have for the material objects ‘a matter of an almost anthropological knowledge’ (Barthes in Evans and Hall 1999:36).

Barthes (1972) assumes that the photographic image is a unique kind of message in a communicative discursive context which bears an analogous (rather than arbitrary) relationship to its object. This is where Barthes differs from Saussure’s (1966) linguistic sign general conception, that, a semiotic sign exists arbitrary to its signifier (Chapter 3 details Saussurean 1966 semiotic sign conception). For Barthes, the reason is that, ‘there is no need to set up a code between object and image’ (Barthes, 1972:74).

Interestingly, the photographic image is ‘functional as a visual code in communication where it serves as an ideological function, working to neutralise the culturally coded connotations for which it acts as a support.’ In other words, the image has power to signify and the concept of reading culture comes about because of the desire for meaning in the images. This perhaps explains why Gozo (1984) as well as Hodder and Hutson (2003) had to read culture in their studies however using material pieces. Hodder (2009) is no exception especially in as far as he wants us to gain knowledge of the Tugen, Njemps and Pokot people of the Baringo district in Kenya.

To explain Barthes’s (1988) visual communication ideas, two levels of meaning, - communication and signification, are observed. The first level is ‘informational’ where descriptions of the image are observed –setting, characteristics as well as relationships to the environment. This might be referred to as the semiotic of the message. The second level requires a mode of analysis to deal with symbolic, referential and historical references demanding an expanded repertoire approaches. This observation makes one think twice in as far as material physical objects are concerned. The photographic image itself qualifies as one yet Barthes (1972) and his followers such as Dant and Gilloch (2002) do not seem moved along this direction. Hence, this study demonstrates through studying Tonga selected cultural artefacts, that, there is need to study the material object’s communicative power in a bid to create new directions in understanding visual communication.

Sontag (1999) submits debates between the image-world and the real. Sontag was writing (in 1978) at a time when the camera became a defining tool in photographic imaging. As such the discourse of how to handle the image was immersed between two dichotomies of the real versus the so called ‘copy’. Sontag took the side of and demonstrates how the image is an object in its own right but what brings it to its meaningful existence is the dimensions of what it contains and Sontag concludes by saying,

...the importance of photographic images as the medium through which more and more events enter our experience is, finally, only a by-product of their effectiveness in furnishing knowledge dissociated from and independent of experience (Sontag in Evans and Hall eds. 1999:81).

Sontag (1999) centralises her discussion between objects and objects representing reality even concluding that photographs ‘are a way of imprisoning reality’ (Sontag in Evans and Hall eds. 1999:85). She goes on to show the politics of the camera and responses by society to the productions of photographs. What is clear is her interest in the iconic images and their respective messages they serve in a communicative process. This study in contrast focuses on the material objects which have also been subjected to the scrutiny of the camera lenses and how these are codes which create a medium of communication especially with regard to cultural, historical and identity issues about a people. We can therefore easily qualify Parkin (1999) and Jones (2007) when they advance material objects as agents to cognitive recollection.

Watney (1986) battles to theorise institutions of photography noting that we urgently need ‘to understand the many means by which photography punctuates the look of the world into a series of discontinuous signs –photographs –which are none-the-less endlessly offered as images of totality into ‘moments’’ (Watney 1986 in Evans and Hall eds. 1999:144). He addresses those institutions which he finds as facilitating the production of photography as well as those bodies of ideology which inform and organise the outlook of photographs and their respective social meanings (Watney, 1986). Central to his theorisation are the sociology of photography as well as the institutions of photography. Interestingly, while finding faults with Freund (1980), Watney identifies an important gap in the theorisation of visual artefacts mainly in the handling of material objects in the discourse of photography when he says,

...the cultural artefacts is cut off and abstracted as an object of consideration, and is then submitted to an *a priori* distinction between form and content, with social and economic relations understood as external determining forces on both’ (Watney 1986 in Evans and Hall eds. 1999:147)

Watney (1986) never takes the matter further, proving how research in visual communication has merely played lip service to cultural artefacts thus affecting the general handling of cultural artefacts as communicative hence requiring attention from and by communication scholars. The same can be said of Bourdieu (1990) who merely attempts a social definition of photography and generally advancing photography as an art. His view sees photographs –images –as merely products of artistic efforts. And when Barthes (1999) is celebrated as a cultural critic, close links are established from Bourdieu’s (1990) social definition. Polan (2001) even categorises Barthes

(1972) as a sociology critique in as far as his semiology is concerned. Polan (2001:456) says ‘Barthesian semiology was inevitably and invariably a sociology.’

From photography, there has been interest in cartoons, described by Barlett (2012:215) as ‘a ubiquitous form of visual communication.’ This is relevant because photography is at the heart of much of the existing visual communication. In other words, photography is at the centre of visual discourse as such cartoons are also photographic in nature and have their feet in the same visual discourses.

For Barlett (2012) his interest is to show the possibilities of using cartoons in disseminating research findings for both academic and non-academic audiences because he believes cartoons are a form of transmission where ‘a cartoon image can usefully represent cultural norms’ (Barlett, 2012:214). El Refaie (2003) studied cartoons as pictorial metaphors drawing equivalences with verbal metaphors. This is echoed by Ginman and von Ungern-Sternberg (2003) who studied the communicative potential of cartoons appreciating their ‘most complex and sophisticated areas of drawn communication’ (Ginman and von Ungern-Sternberg, 2003:70). Wekesa (2012) analyses the places of such images and how powerful they have become in influencing attitudes and beliefs in our contemporary societies.

In chapter 2 of his book *Visual Communication: More Than Meets the Eye*, Harry (2007) ushers in a multimodal approach to perception and representation in visual communication. His approach is semiotic, specifically the Pierce (1960) semiotics, in that, it recognises the sign as the central aspect whose working is hugely immersed in logic and arbitrariness. Harry (2007) tries to establish the connections of semiotics or the workings of semiotics in visual communication. He says, in communication there is coding and this coding is observed under two levels which are the neurological (which explains his adherence theoretically to Pierce 1960) and the cultural level.

The cultural level is ‘the act of translating a percept into a form of representation... an act of invention’ (Harry 2007:29). He gives an example of how a painting becomes a resultant of the movements from perception to a coded form of representation. It is this shift or the movement

from perception to representation which 'leads to the emergence of conventions' (Harry, 2007:30). It is the successful inventions which transform perceptions into cultural forms. Harry (2007) goes on to observe that the processes of creating cultural forms from inventions through representations also bring in elements of styling and he concludes that 'this is the beginning of the grammar which is established not only in painting but also in other forms of media, such as photography and film' (Harry 2007:30).

In his chapter, Harry (2007:30) claims that the above is the base for cultural codes which are the signs and sign systems employed in human endeavours as 'mediating devices in human communication, with special reference to the visual.' What we are further told is that social human life is pillared with 'receptor systems' as well as 'effector systems' and in between there exist an important player described as the 'third link' known as a 'symbolic man'. It is this new acquisition which transforms human life and making it a universe of symbols in that,

...man lives not merely in a broader reality; he lives, so to speak, in a new dimension of reality...no longer in a merely physical universe, man lives in a symbolic universe...no longer can man conform reality immediately; he cannot see it, as it were, face to face...between the natural order and the mental order, the sign...the symbol, interposes itself as an artificial made manifest in linguistic forms in, artistic images, and in mythical symbols (Harry, 2007:30).

Harry (2007) submits important insights of the relations that exist within visual communication. His views are over biased towards the iconographic image which creates the sign. His contribution is merely to offer the base for literary or artistic criticism from the standpoint of viewing paintings as artistic pieces as well as cultural forms from which meanings are deconstructed based on their status as symbols representing human cultural forms arbitrarily related to the work itself. In other words, it is a clear following of his predecessor Barthes (1972) whose view of the image lays foundations on how, for instance, paintings as art can be appreciated. This then entails a similar employment or application to poetry, prose and even plays, in fact, the whole body of literature if we are to assume that the artist in these three cases is equated to a painter who has created the art form.

However, Harry (2007) attempts to reflect on the material objects which this study is particularly interested in by noting that ‘Admittedly, it is a fact that a material sign has presence’ (Harry, 2007:31) but he is quick to overshadow his idea with iconographic orientalism by stating in the same breath that ‘but its status as a sign relies upon its potential to point away from itself to other ideas or objects, to be a sign it must negate itself’ (Ibid).

We applaud Harry (2007) for attempting to bring in semiotics to the study of image-art in the form of paintings in his study. His attempt however, exposes his lineage to the iconographic tradition at the same time it exposes limitations of the Saussure (1966) as well as Pierce (1960) semiotics whose niche of universal application fails Harry (2007) as experimentation with universalised semiotics provides strong limitations to both the theory and the experiment; and obviously have dire effects on the results. Such a case explains why this researcher proposed artefactual ethnisemiotics (**Section 3.5**) as an alternative especially considering that visual cultural communication utilises cultural forms in the form of artefacts conventionally created by the community to map their space and perform their various social acts which at the end of the day collectively informs their identity as well as survival.

One can therefore suggest that, scholarship in visual communication has been of iconographical orientation. For example, Berger (2012) in exploring visual communication submits quite positively the intrinsic and structure as well as notions of visual images; their social aspect and how they function at a very personal or individual levels as a reflector of human identity. But how does this bring us to the overall nexus of visual communication? We have seen how Barthes (1964), Barthes (1985), Barthes (1972), Sontag (1999), Watney (1986) and Bourdieu (1990) have mere iconic interest in messages that are iconographic in nature.

Harry’s (2007) iconographic bias cannot be over stated and at the same time one sees the expansion of Barthes (1964) image rhetoric. At the same time Harry (2007) naively identifies with archaeological views of viewing material objects as vessels for meanings. This is why he claims that material objects have to negate themselves before they can qualify as signs. Jones (2007) submits this kind of view where the materiality of the objects is downplayed in the sign-systems formation. This study considers the materiality of the objects and at the same time

alludes to the material objects as cultural forms knitted systematically together within the artefactual ethnosemiotics. Surprisingly, Harry (2007) notes that

The transmission of cultural values is full of vagaries. In the first place they are bound to contexts which exercise an influence upon the way they are understood. Furthermore, when the contextual background is changed they themselves may undergo a change in meaning. To this extent they carry the same burden of context as is found in nonverbal communication in its wider manifestations (Harry, 2007:31).

If artefacts as signs ‘offer infinite possibilities for coding and recording, particularly in the field of visual images which are less syntactically formalised than in verbal language’ (Harry, 2007:31), it follows that these infinite possibilities need to be pursued critically to establish how artefacts create sign systems from which the coding and recording is given impetus in human visual cultural communication or performance.

The visual theorisation, institutionalisation and definitions attempts of photography have put the image at the core of studies in visual communication meriting little attention to the material objects themselves. In this study, focus has been shifted to appreciate material cultural objects as visual objects that have visual communicative power; ones we can use to advance an Afrocentric understanding of the history, culture and heritage of the African people as they negotiate for cultural space within their physical territories we find them today.

Some scholars like Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) studied visual semiotics. While they deny that their submissions are far from this conclusion, it is by way of technicality that one falls into their theoretical foundations. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:33) claim that the place of visual communication in any given society ‘can only be understood in the context of, on the one hand, the range of forms or modes of public communication available in the society, and on the other hand, their uses and valuations.’ They refer to the context as the ‘semiotic landscape’ (Ibid) and reiterate that certain modes of communication such as the BaTonga artefacts of this study, should be seen in their primary context or environment, the environment within which other modes of communication surround them.

They further observe that the visual mode differs from one context to another, from one social group to the next. The social and cultural factors bring out imputes to the visual mode. Their discussion reveal how modes are representational in their specific contexts. Thus, the observed modes become modes of representation each mode inherently having different representational potential all connected to semantic realisations hence the conclusion that ‘each mode of representation has a continuously evolving history, in which its semantic reach can contract or expand or move into different areas as a result of the uses to which it is put’ (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006:40). Thus, as modes of representation are made and remade it is from this that they make and remake human societies.

For El Refaie (2003), Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and Wekesa (2012), have concentrated on what can be called a complementary of ‘words’ rather than an equivalent of ‘words’. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:1) for example establish what they term ‘visual grammar’ described as a combination of iconographical and iconological elements in images, places and abstract things combined into meaningful visual statements. They draw parallels between verbal and nonverbal communication. They (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006, Wekesa 2012, Barlett 2012) believe that visual communication is becoming more crucial in the domains of public communication and possible sacrifices may be observed for visual literacy.

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) confine themselves within western cultures when they say ‘...visual text-objects from western cultures and assumed that this generalisation has some validity as it points to a communication situation with a long history that has evolved over the past five centuries or so alongside writing’ (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006:3-4). In this study, visual communication within the domain of material culture is assumed to have taken centre stage in fully describing the experiences of the African. We do not merely want to express or describe the African. We hope to visually appreciate the African in his contemporary situation noting the connections to his heritage and how he negotiates cultural contemporary spaces.

Interestingly, however, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) also talk about visual space and this is important as visual space is a determiner of visual communication. They claim that their theory applies to ‘all forms of visual communication’ (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006:4) and this study

would want to test this through the artefacts of the Tonga. This study argues that visual communication stands out side by side with language.

Mainstream language sees verbal and nonverbal standing side by side in a complementary relationship of 40-60% basis (Stanton 1996). Visual communication stands out on its own and is a full language and a means of communication. Visual communication can thus be viewed as visual ‘language’. Hence, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:19) rightly observe that ‘language and visual communication can both be used to realise the *same* fundamental systems of meaning that constitute our cultures, but that each does so by means of its own specific forms, does so differently, and independently.’

Following Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) most scholars have therefore come to study more of verbal and visual representation as if deliberately driving us to literate traditions and what has been happening in those cultures. Because a great deal of literature has hovered over verbal representation –the purported illiterate cultures or communities; understanding of visual communication has thus been limited to the iconographical orientation. It is as if visual communication is defined within the parameters of iconography which is an understatement. Even the idea of putting side by side (Fruend 1980, Kraus 1982, Kress and van Leeuwen 2006) the verbal and the visual; the attempt appears to be limited in that while one appreciates the missing gap in the aspects of communication, modes mostly those that are visual have been limited to print.

O’Neil (2010) came closer to appreciating material artefacts as communicative in his study of Maya stone sculptures. He demonstrates how the Maya ‘used sculptures to interact with their past and its personae, stories and material remains’ (O’Neil, 2010:317). He further pays homage ‘to the materiality and physicality of images and the objects on which they were carved, with pictorial content inherently intertwined with and inseparable from the material and experiential aspect of these monumental sculptures’ (ibid). In the same breadth O’Neil (2010:318) sees archaeological excavations as inevitably revealing ‘layers of images and objects that provide a different register for analysing history and histographic traditions.’ Thereby showing how the Maya stone sculptures ‘became historical objects –not only about the past but also from the past,

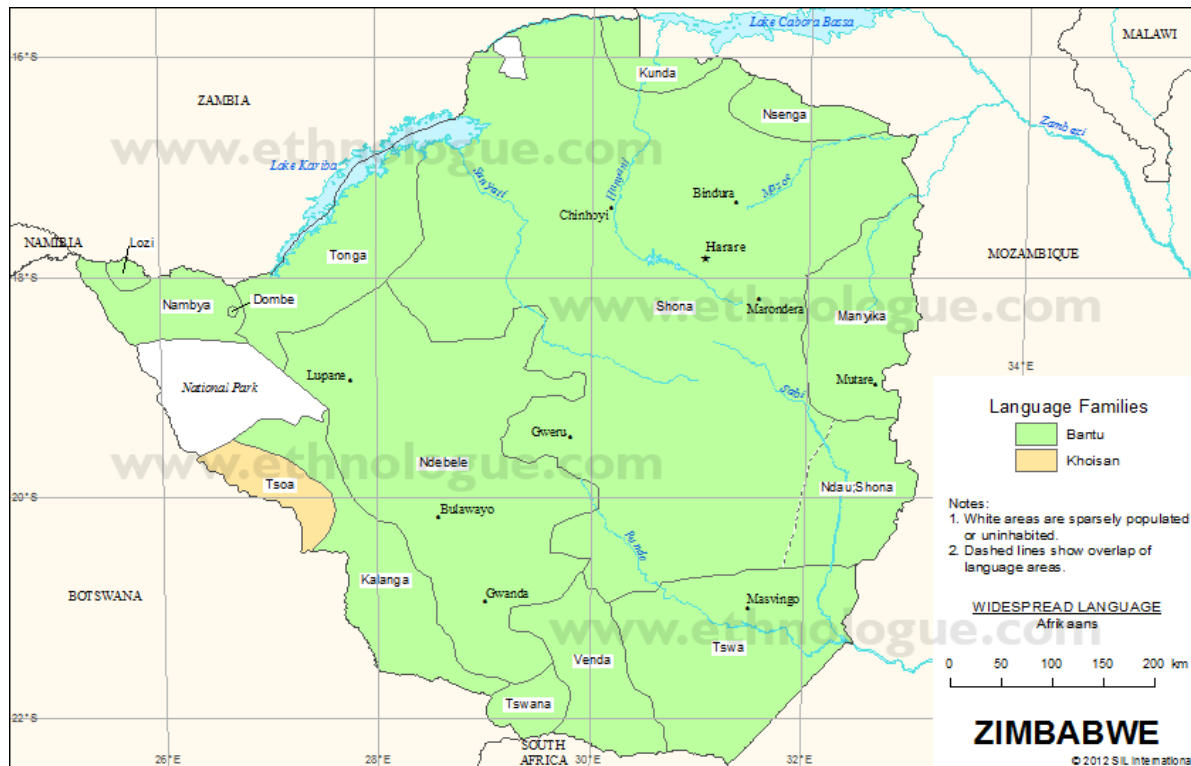
their antiquity carrying meaning beyond what their pictorial or textual narration conveyed' (O'Neil 2010:320).

The diversion is however noted in his preoccupation with images inscribed on the stone sculptures. O'Neil aims at showing the importance of images to the ancient Maya and their cultural value in contemporary times and noting that 'images were a crucial arena of representation, embodiment, and engagement of humans with other humans, with the divine, and with objects...' (O'Neil, 2010:316). O'Neil's (2010) study shows the possibilities of studying sculptures or material artefacts as communicative of a people's experiences over time.

While O'Neil (2010) overemphasises the pictorial or images inscribed on the sculptures, these are mere designs in pictorial form which give the ultimate materiality and substance to the object. The sculpture is thus incomplete without its inscriptions of pictorial nature. In this study a similar approach to discover how designs on the *ncelwa* or *buntibe* drum help shape the artefact. The difference however lies in that O'Neil (2010) gives primary importance to the pictorial designs on the sculptures while this study gives primary attention to the object itself and plays secondary consideration to the inscriptions.

2.4 BaTonga, scholarship and their space

It is pertinent to review literature on the context within which this study is pegged. There has been scholarship done over the years focusing on the Tonga. This section looks at how this scholarship views the Tonga and what exactly has been addressed by this research with the Tonga as the subject of research. Below is however a linguistic map locating BaTonga and their geographical location in Zimbabwe.



Linguistic Map showing distribution of languages across Zimbabwe: Source: Lewis, M. Paul, Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig (eds.) 2013. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World, Seventeenth edition*. Dallas, Texas: SIL International. Online version: <http://www.ethnologue.com> Accessed 5 November 2013.

Zivenge (2009) studied phonological and morphological nativisation of English loans in the Tonga language which is a milestone in as far as developing Tonga language is concerned. His approach agrees to some extent with this study as it is located within applied linguistics. He shows and demonstrates the observable aspects that have occurred over the years within BaTonga community due to their contact with other linguistic groups as reflected in the Tonga language.

Apart from the Tonga language assuming new terms, Zivenge (2009) also reveals how the English loans have come to Tonga through other indigenous languages like Ndebele, Venda and Shangani. Indirectly, Zivenge (2009) shows how the English language has contributed to the development of Tonga vocabulary, thus, showing the continued sustainability of the Tonga language in Zimbabwe. His approach however is merely descriptive of the language

developments worth recording and for future usage by future Tonga dictionary makers for instance. This study is analytic of the cultural communicative systems visible in BaTonga culture.

Ndlovu (2013) study is closer to the desires of this study as he operated within applied linguistics by focusing on language policy and planning issues. For Ndlovu (2013) study concentrates on finding out language policy and planning issues within the VETOKA matrix, thus discusses the use of Venda, Tonga and Kalanga languages and how they have come to be used in the education system in Zimbabwe. In his conclusions, he finds Tonga language as having outpaced the other two given efforts and investments done by the BaTonga to preserve their language.

This study critiques the cultural communication of the BaTonga as the context from which much of the success Ndlovu (2013) speaks of emanates from. The other difference between this study from that of Zivenge (2009) and Ndlovu (2013) are that, they focused on the verbal systems whereas this study focuses on the nonverbal systems within Tonga. The bias of this study, therefore, is to show how the Tonga people of Zimbabwe negotiate for space in the country through manipulation of visual cultural communication. This is perhaps in line with Zivenge (2009) and Ndlovu (2013) studies whose interest is in the Tonga communicative as well as expressive culture.

As the above linguistic map shows, BaTonga occupy the greatest geographical space along the Zambezi in Zimbabwe as compared to other ethnic groups in the country. However, there are also Tonga people of Zambia (Colson 1971, Panos 2005, McGregor 2009, Hughes 2010) and while the two share common histories and ancestry the Tonga in Zimbabwe seem to have over the years become 'different' from their kin in Zambia by virtue of their neglect in historical and cultural spheres.

Nchito (2010) studied the migratory patterns of the Tonga people and speaks of them as having a 'weak tribal structure' (Nchito, 2010:92) which could not withstand the modern pressure of the colonial settlers. Nchito (2010) closely looks at the Tonga people on the other side of the Zambezi River in Zambia, although revealing notions observable in the Tonga people in

Zimbabwe. This study addresses the Tonga people in Zimbabwe from the stand point of those residing in Binga and surrounding rural areas given that Binga, parts of Gokwe and Kariba; of these geographical locations, Binga is the hub of Tonga people in Zimbabwe (Monda, 2011).

Munikwa (2011) Christian-evangelically studied the Tonga people from Binga. First, he traces the origins of BaTonga geographically identifying them as a people who for many years 'have lived in the north-western part of Zimbabwe bordering Zambia, along the Zambezi River' (Munikwa, 2011:453). Munikwa (2011) discusses the presentation of Christianity in the world mostly to the people of different cultures as being a continuous challenge for the Church given the dynamic nature of communities. The Reformed Church of Zimbabwe (RCZ) is identified as flawed because it is a 'one-culture, Shona speaking church' (Ibid). This critical observation is seen as a challenge to the church as it aims to evangelise and proclaim the gospel to non-Shona ethnic groups and here, the Tonga in Binga. Munikwa confesses having had misconceptions about the Tonga while he was growing up and retaliates that most people misunderstand and look down upon the Tonga people in Zimbabwe (Munikwa, 2011:454).

In tracing the history of the Tonga, he also traces the history of RCZ in Binga observing that the RCZ youth fellowship at University of Zimbabwe (UZ) is credited for starting an evangelising ministry to reach out to the un-evangelised areas in 1995. Supported by the RCZ church, the move led to the establishment of a new congregation in 2008 and Munikwa himself interestingly played a pivotal role in the growth of the RCZ in Binga (Munikwa, 2011:454).

The 'failure' to evangelise in Binga by the RCZ is attributed to the traditional [colonial] missionary models of evangelism which are inadequate in becoming 'human with the Tonga community' (Munikwa, 2011:454). The traditional model is found to be cross-cultural justifying the translation of liturgy, RCZ songs and hymns into Tonga but not allowing Tonga members to develop a liturgy relevant and appropriate to the Tonga and their cultural context. The cross cultural approach excludes the Tonga and allows them to play passive roles in their evangelisation of their people; the church even excludes the Tonga in preparing plans and other buildings of the Church. The Tonga are excluded from active participation and in the growth of

the new faith within their cultural context thus creating a paternalistic relationship between the church and the Tonga people.

For Munikwa (2011) failure by RCZ to transform and reform makes the RCZ mission irrelevant to the Tonga. He says 'If the RCZ fails in analytically evaluating and transforming herself in a communal and contextual way, she will be irrelevant and not transform the lives of the Tonga people' (Munikwa, 2011:453) hence theological and interpretive practices need reorganisation for purposes of communicating the message more effectively to the people. He proposes a shift from cross-cultural perspective to an intercultural perspective which he finds as assuming no superiority over the evangelised. 'It witnesses the Gospel of Jesus Christ with love, boldness and humanity to people who differ culturally. Intercultural is deeply rooted in communities and people's contextual realities with active communal dialogue, reciprocity and transformation...'

(Munikwa, 2011:455).

He goes on to show how RCZ 'intercultural' mission approach is reflective of the Christian faith and how the Christian faith communicated becomes critical for 'the art of communicating must recite to the message communicated' (Munikwa, 2011:456). Intercultural mission for him must be rooted in culture and in the way in which religion is interpreted and experienced in the Tonga people's daily lives. He ends by saying the purpose is to communicate the Gospel message faithfully and effectively in a way that makes sense to the Tonga people. Munikwa (2011) observes in his study that BaTonga in Zimbabwe are a marginalised community. The same sentiments are echoed by Gambahaya and Muhwati (2010) that even in scholarship the Tonga people are largely overlooked by virtue of the fact that they are considered one of the so-called 'minority' groups meriting little or no attention.

One thing that has emerged in Munikwa's (2011) study is an attempt to redeem the Tonga people discursively. For Munikwa, his study is a systemic attempt aimed at further deflowering BaTonga through evangelism in which Christianity specifically through the Reformed Church is presented as the only means through which the Tonga people can be empowered and recognised.

Rodney (1983) has shown how Europe underdeveloped Africa to which Christianity is found to be a twin sister with colonial education systematically implemented to decolonise the African. Ngugi (1986) also discusses how the African culture as well as the African people suffered cultural alienation and identity crisis and how Christianity was used by the colonialist to achieve colonial goals largely meant to create an inferiority complex in the Africans.

These are the same notions Munikwa (2011) seems to be rekindling in the Tonga people which are, to this researcher, aimed at creating cultural assassination to the Tonga culture. Siamonga (2012) and Ncube (2004) did show that BaTonga had their own religious practices and we find that the now Victoria Falls was a place where important religious practices were performed. To justify and perfect a new religion for the Tonga people is to advance BaTonga's further religious [and being] into spiritual turmoil. This study seeks to empower BaTonga in their rightful cultural spaces; regardless of their population, origins and history they remain a legitimate cultural group within the Zimbabwean society.

Gambahaya and Muhwati (2010) studied oral literature of the Tonga people. Their significant contribution in their study is focus on the history and culture of the Tonga as captured by the orature of the Tonga people. They reveal how the Tonga people protest and write their past as well as experiences through their oral literature and themes like dislocation from the Zambezi River and how the Zambezi River was central in defining the livelihood of the Tonga people. But Gambahaya and Muhwati (2010:322) deliberately place the Tonga against the European coloniser. For instance, they point out that,

In the conceptualisation of the nexus between Tonga orature and history, this article is restorative and corrective... in so doing ...illustrates the potential of African orature to capture reality from the vantage point of authentic selfhood, thereby bestowing and extending subject position of the Tonga people, *victims of Eurocentric manoeuvres*, (emphasis mine) who otherwise could easily be seen through the nullifying and bigoted discourse of otherness.

The fellow African who further pushed the Tonga deep into the valley and who has not done much to raise the Tonga from their minority position even in notions of infrastructure and development issues (Dzingirayi 2003) is not brought in the picture. Study seems to be

legitimising the position of the so-called dominant Shona and Ndebele groups. How then can a study of this nature be ‘restorative and corrective’ (Gambahaya and Muhwati, 2010:322) when it is silent on the nature of dominant ethnic groups which undermine the Tonga?

Dzingirayi (2003) demonstrates how the Communal Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) a colonial wildlife policy, being spearheaded by the Zimbabwean government, for instance is further disfranchising and marginalising the Tonga economically and socially. This study handles the *ncelwa*, the *buntibe* drum and the Nyaminyami Walking Stick the BaTonga use in negotiating for the available cultural spaces as they find themselves caught between a history of dislocation and a contemporary life without restoration and correction.

BaTonga are a community whose history is marred with geographical dislocation, betrayals and forgotten by the state (Dzingirayi 2003, Gambahaya and Muhwati, 2010). BaTonga continued survival, while confined in the deep remote valley ‘a factor which partly contributes to their political invisibility’ (Dzingirayi, 2003:248) as well as cultural invisibility; and recognition, lies largely in research of this nature aimed at revealing the artefacts which stand visible from which BaTonga continue to negotiate for cultural space or otherwise in Zimbabwe.

Hughes (2010) study reveals the discursive developments of the Zambezi Valley. He begins by giving the history of the BaTonga and their battle with displacement to make way for the construction of the Kariba dam. His views are in agreement with Colson’s (1971) analysis of the displacements. Central in Hughes’ (2010:52) study is the notion that,

...the Zambezi Valley presented writers with even better material with which to reconcile the two visions of landscape. Europeans had considered it wilderness. Then, in the late 1950s, engineers thrust their technology into the recesses of Kariba gorge.

He qualifies this notion by adding that,

Beginning in the 1970s, writers described the valley as empty land, implying a right of discovery. Indeed, in this period, some authors acted upon the related right of naming. To name places, as Paul Carter argues in a discussion of Captain Cook and Australian history, is “to invent them, to bring them into cultural

circulation” (Carter 1987:27–28). Enlarged substantially by the tourism industry, the littoral’s new vocabulary invented Kariba as a white space. The Tonga, already physically removed from the southern shore, lost their place in its history.

What follows is an analysis of the discourses of the Kariba landscape mostly driven by European responses to the ecology where for instance he says in the 1980s and 1990s, Africans along the shore were portrayed as abusers of the fish and the ecology of the Zambezi. In the discourses Hughes (2010) notes that they mostly became rhetorics of exploration, practices of naming where the language of “the Hunt” metaphorically marginalized Africans from the lakeshore.

From his conclusions, Hughes (2010) says writers suggested that BaTonga ‘did not know the impounded Zambezi valley’ (Hughes, 2010:54). Hughes thus observes that Europeans in their scholarship underwent a systematic process of naming the shores and places along the Zambezi. They hoped, Hughes (2010:58) says, new names would bring history into being, thus

A colonial name replaced and effaced its native analog. Or—better still from the settler’s perspective—the new name recategorized the topography, breaking it into units and features that made earlier meanings unrecognizable. Kariba presented writers and other whites with an ideal opportunity to employ such linguistic technology.

Through discourses and language, we note how Africans were displaced at the same time allowing Europeans to occupy the indigenous position. Commenting on the Nyaminyami for example Hughes (2010:61) says,

They turned Nyaminyami into a label. From the outset, whites had popularized the Tonga river god. In the late 1950s, as engineers battled against unprecedented floods, Nyaminyami signified wild Africa—fighting for her freedom—only to be subdued by white civilization.

McGregor (2009:165) is in agreement with Hughes (2010) and explains in fact that

Nyaminyami, in other words, served as a literary ornament. The river god also served as a literal ornament: curio makers carved coiled snakes as fast as gullible visitors could buy them up. In the 1980s, three Tonga chiefs sued the sculptor Rainos Tawonameso for copyright infringement. They lost the case, and, by 2000,

white and black entrepreneurs imprinted river gods on shirts, shorts, and jewellery, doing particularly brisk business around Victoria Falls.

Hughes (2010) shows that European discourses have had varying approaches to the Kariba Dam. Soon after its construction, the Zambezi shore was depicted more as a natural wilderness Africa. And with commercialisation it assumed a new identity; it became the European heaven, warranting the likes of Rainos Tawonameso to travel from Bikita to Kariba to create a wooden sculpture based on the Nyaminyami and the BaTonga lives.

Hunting and recreation facilities designed for the Europeans along the shore as well as game parks were also created in part by Operation Noah. Magadza (2006) estimates that about 5274 animals were captured in this rescue operation of which 4129 were saved and land was set aside for them in national parks nearby. Matusadonha and Chete Safari Area were designated by the colonial state as areas to relocate the wildlife. According to Magadza (2006:276) ‘compared to the funds allocated for ‘African resettlement’, the relative expenditures were about £968 per animal versus £50 per person.’

To advance these causes, the BaTonga were discursively erased totally from the Zambezi shores and reduced to mere workers in the new establishments. Hence European ‘triumphalist narratives of progress render[ed] the Tonga people who lived near the river invisible’ (Hughes, 2006:824). Thus, the European ‘monopolistic corollary suggested that the Tonga and other black residents of the mid-Zambezi Valley did not belong there’ (Hughes, 2010:68).

Hughes (2010) study is useful in as far as it shows how Europeans from the colonial period and post independent Zimbabwe struggled to belong in Africa. He shows how the European sponsored technological-ecological drive of modernisation resulted in human as well as environmental disasters that crippled the area –floods, loss of lives –animal and humans, dislocation to mention a few. Europeans responded in their studies by documenting instead, their feelings and sense of belonging to Africa. Europeans produced literature to curb their belonging to the Kariba and surrounding areas. Hughes (2010) bemoans the silence given to the presents of the BaTonga as history unfolded.

Hughes' (2010) problem is that he reflects mostly the ecological, economic and environmental problems BaTonga faced during and after the construction of the dam. While he provides BaTonga narratives in a bid to give them voice and attempt to place them in time and history along the valley, his voice is that of a European undressing his kinsmen. There is much about the environment and Europeans yet we learn much less of the BaTonga especially in as far as how BaTonga negotiated their space through their material objects. This study utilises Hughes (2010) study in seeking to connect some of the BaTonga narratives to their visual cultural communication in Zimbabwe.

Colson (1971) also takes a more or less similar approach like that of Hughes (2010) save that she emphasises effects of environmental changes on human life. Colson's anthropological work on the Gwembe Tonga across the Zambezi helps demonstrate how the world at the time did not care about the welfare of the displaced BaTonga thus confirming conclusions by Hughes (2010) that the discourses on the BaTonga was more of European discourses to define European supremacy, space and dominance in the country. According to Colson (1971) after the Kariba dam project few bothered about the implications for Gwembe people such that,

...if they thought of the people of the region it seems to have been with the happy expectation that they would adjust, while their loss would be offset by the gain to those who would build the dam, use its power, or perhaps find a vacation home upon its lake (Colson, 1971:54).

McGregor's (2009) study identifies BaTonga within their geographical as well as historical spaces along the Zambezi River. While drawing comparisons with the Tonga of Zambia as well as drawing links between the Tonga of Zimbabwe and the Leya people of Zambia, McGregor (2009) attempts to show the visibility of the Tonga in Zimbabwe. Throughout the study McGregor (2009:25) identifies the Tonga as 'the river people' who 'clustered along the river [and] lived in often sizable villages and depended on the Zambezi both for its fertilizing floods, and its strategic potential.' The political, geographical, historical and the culture of the Tonga people are given prominence. McGregor overemphasises the geographical nexus of the Tonga people visibly identifying them along the Zambezi River. The culture and history as well as the daily experiences of the Tonga are thus used as the oil lubricating the geographical narrative of the people of the river and the politics of the frontier that shaped their identity and existence.

McGregor (2009) gives narratives about the Tonga, their management of the Zambezi River and how they negotiated the Zambezi spaces from as far back as pre-colonial times.

In McGregor's (2009) study, we note BaTonga experiences as they encountered threats from other groups such as the Ndebele in historical times and various raiders and how they managed to use the river to their defence as well as how they seemingly would use three names Tonga, Leya and Dombe as a defence mechanism. The narratives tell of the violence on the frontier. McGregor says,

Oral histories today tell of interminable fights with neighbours and of obscure local politics, in which some groups were more successful than others, and making ...lineage grow –particularly through the accumulation of women and slaves –was the ultimate aim and mark of achievement. Such accumulation was possible by hunting elephant, exchanging ivory for slaves, and by raiding others to obtain slaves directly (McGregor, 2009:30).

McGregor (2009) demonstrates how to a greater extent European discourse on the Tonga was influenced by local discourses especially the views on the Tonga given the Kololo general views of the Tonga. David Livingstone for example, had acquainted himself with the Kololo people and McGregor says,

Livingstone's party clearly reproduced Kololo ideological hierarchies among themselves, distinguishing between the superior Kololo and the rest, and singling out the Tonga as the worst of the lot (McGregor 2009:46).

The Tonga are quite visible in McGregor's (2009) study in so far as they relate to the Nambya and Ndebele along the Zambezi frontier. The study gives the cultural, historical and geographical significance of the Tonga possibly filling up the gap that exists today on the marginality of the Tonga against a past in which they actively participated in. McGregor gives patronage to the Tonga as victims and goes on to look at the coming in of the European explorers, missionaries – notably David Livingstone as well as imperialists and various Portuguese traders. McGregor (2009) systematically highlights the European discourses about the river and the people along the banks.

McGregor's (2009) study is significant in so far as it allows us to identify the Tonga along the Zambezi River. But the problem we note is the voice of the European coming in to tell the Tonga story. The Tonga are viewed as victims thereby justifying possibly the 'hand-outs' given the economic, social, political and geographical marginality that McGregor (2009) sees as characterising the Tonga. In this study, while it draws much from McGregor's active treatment of the Tonga focus is to penetrate the cultural as well as historical communicative systems that reveal in a broader way how the Tonga, in the past and in the present negotiate for mainstream cultural and social spaces in Zimbabwe as a whole not only as confined along the Zambezi River.

Ncube (2004) presents the history of the Tonga alongside that of the Nambya and the Shangwe people. These three tribes are studied in the manner in which Hodder (2009) did to the Tugen, Njemps and Pokot of the Baringo district in Kenya. The difference is that Ncube takes a historical view however utilising archaeological evidence in the process and Hodder takes an archaeological approach. Ncube (2004) also does not study a mere district but he collectively identified Zimbabwe's North-western societies which Bhebhe (in Ncube, 2004: vi) says is 'an area of Zimbabwean history, which has hardly been given scholarly attention....' Ncube's study, Bhebhe says, is 'a pioneering effort to redress the many years of scholarly neglect of an important area of Zimbabwe' (ibid). Ncube (2004:2) begins by pointing out that '...the reconstruction of the early history of North-western Zimbabwe is largely reliant on the oral traditions of the Tonga and Nambya societies'. He then traces the Tonga, Nambya and Shangwe origins and early histories, traditional beliefs and rituals, economies, their life under colonial rule, environmental change and population movements.

Regarding BaTonga, who are of interest in this study and whom Ncube accords more attention, Ncube (2004:3) says they 'knew of no other homeland than the Zambezi Valley' meaning that their origins are within the Zambezi valley. Using archaeological evidence Ncube traces BaTonga as having spread from the western stream Kangila traditions from the northern areas of the Batoka plateau between AD1000 and 1100 (Ncube, 2004:3). Within the Zambezi Valley, the Tonga are seen as residing on both sides of the valley, that is, in Zambia and Zimbabwe forming

‘a social unit with no significant differences between them’ and ‘The Zambezi was not considered as a frontier and several Tonga rulers had polities whose domains lay on either sides of the river...’ where dug-out canoes were used as a means of communication (Ncube 2004:5).

The BaTonga according to Ncube had no large political unit under paramount rulers (McGregor 2009, Ncube 2004) as compared to their ethnic counterparts such as the Ndebele whose paramount leaders Mzilikazi and Lobengula are observed. Rather they are said to have been ‘organised into a large number of scattered independent political units, each with its own ruler or *mwami*’ who had no political authority over other neighbourhood communities or *cisi* (Ncube, 2004:5). Each *mwami* marked the boundaries of his *cisi* and in some areas boundaries were marked through crude carvings on trees.

The tree markings symbolised the beginning or end of a *cisi*’s geographical or physical spaces. Regardless of the absence of a paramount leader or ruler, Ncube observes that ‘Tonga society was nevertheless a well-integrated entity held together by kinship ties that spread from *cisi* to *cisi*’ (Ncube, 2004:7). The term ‘Tonga’ is also seen to have been foreign to the Tonga people as Ncube finds it as having been bestowed on the people of Gwembe valley by their neighbours whose interpretation means a ‘chiefless’ people or those who do not follow a paramount ruler (Ncube, 2004:7).

The Zambezi River had a spiritual significance to a people who resided along its valley and for the Tonga a ‘deep religious respect was accorded’ (Ncube, 2004:24) to the Zambezi river. Because of this strong bondage to the river even in spiritual respects, various spots along the Zambezi River were used by the Tonga as places of worship. Ncube gives examples of the David Livingstone’s recorded spots at the Victoria Falls which were used by Tonga chiefs namely Sekute, Mukuni and Liswaani as places of worship of their gods and ancestors. One specifically described is an island above the falls appropriated as a shrine called *malende* belonging to chief Sekuti’s clan which was completely fenced by elephant tusks.

In the same vain, BaTonga believed that there was a river spirit in the Zambezi River called Nyaminyami believed to be the controller of the life of the giant river and as it were, anyone

tampering with the flow of the river would be punished. This explains the myths and explanations given to the fate that the Kariba Dam faced once the construction of the dam wall at Kariba began. Following Ncube (2004:25), the record floods of 1957 and 1958 'leading to the collapse of the part of the dam wall during construction and the deaths of several workers' as well as the successive devastating floods that followed for two successive years could only be explained as the infuriation of the Nyaminyami and the final strike on the dam wall was expected by the Tonga people and Ncube reports that it nearly came in 1958 when floods exceeded those of previous years and it was the appeasement intervention by the Tonga elders which saved the dam and placated the river spirit.

Ncube (2004) goes on to explore the shrines and various ritual practices of the Tonga. He sees BaTonga's belief systems aligned to the life after death as such shrines occupied central places in the religion of the Tonga. Shrines thus were seen to be sacred places which either could be natural physical features such as baobab trees, pools, hot springs, mountains, hills or simply ancestral graves –*malende*.

Ncube (2004) narrates the decorations of graves and shrines using elephant tusks, and their connection to the living Tonga especially in rainmaking ceremonies. Hot springs and pools are given centre stage and myths were also established and all these point towards creating an identity and history of the Tonga people. Most of the hot springs as shrines Ncube (2004) locates some of them in Binga. These narratives are also endorsed by McGregor (2009) as well as Hughes (2010).

Ncube (2004) is commended for tracing the origins of the Tonga. He is more specific on the Tonga than McGregor (2009) especially on matters of cultural, social and historical everyday experiences. We are able to identify the Tonga and the region we find them in Zimbabwe. The significance of the Zambezi valley and river are reported and are of significance to this study. Ncube (2004) also provides information on the religious systems of the Tonga and various experiences they went through before and during colonialism.

The shift or change in the nature of the Tonga life, religiously, socially and economically is further bestowed on the Portuguese and colonial infiltration. The rise in value of ivory for example is shown to have diverted the use of the elephant tusks from religious purposes to which the graves and shrines were decorated with fine ivory to having the same ivory being traded to the Portuguese. The establishment of the Wankie Colliery and introduction of the hut tax at the beginning of the 19th Century; the construction of the Kariba Dam in the late 1950s all played a role in destabilising and changing the life styles of the Tonga people.

Like Hodder (2009) and McGregor (2009), Ncube (2004) simply describes the origins of the Tonga and he does so alongside other neighbouring ethnic groups, the Nambya and Shangwe both of which are part of the current wave of de-marginalisation in Zimbabwe. The period of description lies between 1850 to 1960 and Ncube does not stretch to the contemporary state quo to which one easily reads a visible identity of the Tonga from the years he ascribes gradually depleting due to foreign invasions either by the Ndebele, later with the colonial establishments. The fellow African Nationalist who spearheaded nationalist stance from as early as the 1950s to the 1960s liberation war leading to the 1980 independence remains overshadowed while the invisibility of the Tonga themselves took became more pronounced.

One commends the recording of an otherwise lack of recording as shown by Ncube who states that he had to over rely on oral tradition for information in order to record the experiences, mostly the origins of the Tonga and the other two groups. If we are to take Hodder's positive submissions on how material culture in the form of artefacts can best identify and explain the culture of a people.

The elephant tusks that decorate the graves of the ancestral Tonga graves and shrines are in themselves nonverbal cues worth focusing on in critically understanding how BaTonga negotiated cultural spaces during that time in the religious nature. During the Kariba resettlements we are told by Ncube that Msampakaruma, chief of the Tonga-related Goba of Zambezi, dug up the remains of his ancestor, Kasengeri, and reburied him in the newly resettled area (Ncube, 2004:33) as leaving behind the ancestral grave was tantamount to neglect which would probably enrage the ancestral spirit with dire consequences. One sees the grave here as a

physical feature not simply symbolic but something rather real from which the living Tonga would negotiate their spiritual spaces as well as establish connection with their ancestors.

What Ncube (2004) fails to do is to show how in the communicative sense, are the various cultural artefacts he identifies are part of the Tonga people. One also feels that Ncube undid himself by bringing in three tribes as if they share the same experiences based on geographical location. Perhaps this also explains McGregor's (2009) problem as it is clear in his, Ncube's historical narration, that the origins of the Tonga, Nambya and Shangwe share different origins but geographically found themselves in the same region. This mere inclusion of the other two groups, Nambya and Shangwe seems to suggest that the Tonga cannot be studied on their own as a group or the Nambya or Shangwe. In this study, the Tonga will be given their due attention based on the fact that geographical location or population size is not a factor to which we may be called to group the marginalised groups and discuss them as one regionally unique group.

Ncube's (2004) work in fact is biased towards the Tonga as the other groups seem to be further overshadowed and brought in the discussion as a way of comparing them to the Tonga. McGregor (2009) also did the same although she tends to look at the Tonga as making distinct groups identified either as the Leya or Dombe depending with situation and geographical peonage along the Zambezi River. This has been a misfire for most researchers who have studied the Tonga in Zimbabwe as if they cannot be studied on their own.

Panos Southern Africa (henceforth Panos) (2005) carried out a project dubbed the Panos Institute's Oral Testimony Programme (OTP) aimed at giving voice to the Tonga people of Zimbabwe and Zambia. The project is an attempt to place BaTonga at the centre of the Tongan discourse. The project centres on the recollection of resettlement and its aftermath challenges that is, experiences, lifestyle and traditions. Both the Zambian and Zimbabwean Tonga are involved in the project. For those interviewed 'they speak of the deep sense of loss they felt leaving behind the shrines and graves of their ancestors' (Panos, 2005: ii).

The project reveals how the Tonga responded emotionally to the historical experiences mostly their dislocation from their ancestral lands and seeking reconnection with their ancestors hence

the conclusion ‘Our gods never helped us again...’ (Panos, 2005:1). Through the project we learn of the Rhodesian authorities as having ‘paid attention to the rescue of wild animals from the Zambezi valley than to the welfare and development of the resettled Tonga’ (Panos, 2005:3) and McGregor (2009) captures similar sentiments as well.

The project gives voice to the Tonga but it is marred by oral narratives of only historical significance. It seems the project compares the experiences of the Tonga in Zambia as well as in Zimbabwe highlighting that the Tonga in Zambia seem to be a better lot than their kin in Zimbabwe who even lament for underuse of Tonga language for example as a medium of instruction. However, we get to know much of the common Tonga experiences mostly from the 1950s to present.

For the Tonga in Zimbabwe the Kariba Dam experience is viewed by those interviewed as marking the downfall as well as marginalisation of the Tonga people explaining their current economic and social status in the country. This study on the other hand uses these historical experiences to explain how the Tonga through their cultural artefacts narrate their past and everyday experiences and ultimately showing how they use them to communicatively negotiate for cultural space in the country.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has shown how scholarship handles material culture and its position or use in cultural communication. Much of the research presented here proves that there seem to be a general agreement about material objects –as culture, to be used by current generations to read the history of communities. The way material culture or cultural objects are handled in the studies highlighted above seem to suggest that material objects do not have a place for possible study under communication studies and this study demonstrates otherwise.

Literature on visual communication too has been seen to be biased towards the print image in as much as it has a seemingly firm place within communication studies hence the inscriptions ‘visual communication’ (Stanton 1996) and even ‘visual grammar’ (Kress and Van Leeuwen

2006). The chapter has also shown what has been done on the Tonga and its points of departure especially in as far as it seeks to show the existence of the Tonga; record and peg the presence of BaTonga within Zimbabwean cultural discourses especially given the threat of cultural extinction faced by the Tonga community.

The next Chapter (Chapter 3), discusses in detail semiotics, as the theoretical framework on which this study is framed. The attempt, however, in this study is to tailor make a conceptual framework which best accounts for the African, and specifically Tonga problems. Prominent studies (Colson 1971, McGregor 2009) on BaTonga have tended to use western approaches to interpret, explain and document African problems. These approaches have to some extent marginalised the very same people they seek to de-marginalise.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

3. Introduction

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework employed in this study. Artefactual ethnisemiotics, informed by the institutionalisation and modelling of semiotics, is introduced to analyse the artefacts under study. The major area of concern in the chapter is the approach which the chapter introduces. The chapter discusses the matrixes of semiotics ushering in artefactual ethnisemiotics which is used in Chapter 6 of the study to crack open the nonverbal codes at hand in the BaTonga visual cultural communication.

Communication Theory could have been used as an alternative theory for this study but due to its weaknesses it could not adequately provide space for application or to analyse data presented in this study. Communication Theory attempts to describe and explain communication. Its purpose is 'to, first, convey an understanding of communication process and, second, to suggest improvement in the handling of information' (Gabor, 1952:4). Communication Theory is part of classical communication theories such as those advanced by Shannon and Weaver (1949), McQuail (1984) which are basically limited in their basic schema which sees a mere interest in a sender transmitting a message about something towards a receiver by means of a defined channel. Based on the schema as Porcar (2011) observed, it has tended to make all communication types of communication based on it, yet communication especially visual cultural communication as a type exert different characteristics which the schema does not properly account for.

Further, the above approach would not have accorded a better understanding of the cultural artefacts of the Tonga and how these are culturally put to use in the negotiation of cultural spaces in Zimbabwe; negotiation which however is done through communication. Constructivism as a research paradigm, mostly employed within Communication Theory, on the other hand rejects the existence of objective reality instead asserts that 'realities are social constructions...and that

there exist such many constructions as there are individuals' (Guba and Lincoln, 1989:43 in Mills, Bonner and Francis, 2006:2). While cultural artefacts are social constructions the paradigm fails to effectively help us explain and link Tonga visual codes to the realm of visual cultural communication.

In seeking a research theory which provides an ontological and epistemological fit to the nature of this study, the researcher explored semiotics. Semiotics is a theory of sign systems and this study looks at artefacts as signs or communicative codes. Nazarova (1996:19) says 'For decades it has been assumed that every sign system in nature, society and cognition belongs to the domain of semiotics.'

The semiotic paradigm allows a holistic handling of the cultural artefacts themselves either as found in nature, society or cognitively conceived. The theory however is also open in the sense that it does allow the inclusion of other theories to which discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis, communication theories as well as constructivism, to mention a few, are blended to semiotics for purposes of enriching and redefining the theory so as to be applicable among the Tonga in Zimbabwe.

3.1 Where to begin?

When dealing with material objects, there exist a calling to read them. Material objects, in their existence, knit various meanings which bring about the character of human existence. Any study of the said 'meanings' directs us to the language which offers us tangible (in a theoretical sense) elements which we can put on a socio-cultural microscope for study. It is here where we begin to conceive artefacts in general as signs –socio-cultural as well as historical signs which this study addresses.

The Tonga cultural pieces being reported in this study are conceived as semiotic pieces or signs signifying as well as acting as important codes of cultural, historical and social value in the cultural communication by the Tonga in their existence in Zimbabwe as shall be seen later. Our general view of signs directs us to interrogate the whole notion of signs and how we can study

them. This section presents the theory of signs within a broad spectrum of semiotics informing this study.

3.2 The concept of signs

Any semiotic study or discussion always begins first by defining a 'sign' because this is a crucial element of semiotics. This theoretical framework section begins by focusing on the sign. Houser (2010:92) gives a very broad definition of a sign. He says 'Signs are a medium for thought.' This definition sounds philosophic and acts as if shutting off non-philosophic views of signs. It is the concept behind the definition which is useful to this study and its explanation of it is best understood within a study that handles signs. We shall reconcile this definition when we look at semiotics as the study of signs below.

Merrel (2001) offers a more technical definition of a sign. He says a 'sign' is anything that has ability to play sign functions. He gives an array of examples of what qualifies as a sign and concludes by saying that there is a sign transformation in daily life as they are 'common place in all walks of life' (Merrel, 2001:35). Merrel (2001) takes a Peircean (1960) conception of the sign, in that 'anything can be a sign if it manifests sign functions.' Reading the sign from Peirce (1960) (to which we shall return below) a sign is viewed as or 'often taken as something that stands for something to someone in some respect or capacity' (Merrel 2001:34).

Moore (2011:104) concurs with Merrel (2001) when he summarises the sign as that which stands out 'for something to someone thereby acting in mediation between the object it represents and the idea in the perceiving mind of the one who interprets it.' Morris (1971:103) gives a behaviourist sign definition by saying a sign is any preparatory-stimulus which produces a disposition in the interpreter of the sign to respond to something which is not at the moment a stimulus.

Morris (1971), Merrel (2001) and Moore (2011) all agree in their definitions on the character of the sign when they demonstrate how signs are volatile as well as how signs govern the very core of human nature. Morris (1971) for instance sees signs as stimuli for patters of human behaviour. The trio do not, however, clearly qualify what they observe as a sign apart from advancing what

appears to be the Peircean concept of sign. Merrel's (2001) positive contribution is perhaps the observation that signs further transform themselves into new signs and that there is a process of transformation in the life of signs. As such Merrel merely succeeds in giving an alternative phraseology to the Peircean definition of the sign; he says,

I would rephrase the customary Peircean definition of the sign as: anything that interdependently interrelates with its interpretant in such a manner that interpretant interdependently interrelates with its semiotic object in the same way that the semiotic object interdependently interrelates with it, such correlations serving to engender another sign from the interpretant, and subsequently the process is reiterated (Merrel, 2001:37).

The re-phrased definition is confusing though making one retort to the original Peircean (1960) definition instead or at least resting with that of Morris (1971). But Morris' has its limitation as well for it is behaviourist in outlook. In modern views of the sign Sebeok (2001:33) also builds up his understanding of the sign from Peirce (1960) as well as Morris (1971) whom he says defined sign as 'a generic concept, of which there are a very large number of species, multiplying from a trichotomous base of icon, index, and symbol, each defined according to that sign category's relation to its object in a particular context.' Sebeok (2001) hopes to capture a wide species territory from which signs can be observed and there is a reason for this wide application as shall be seen below, that, Sebeok brought in every species as characterised by signs. Thus Sebeok (2001:3) conceives a sign as,

...any physical form that has been imagined or made externally (through some physical medium) to stand for an object, event, feeling, etc., known as a referent, or for a class of similar (or related) objects, events, feelings, etc., known as a referential domain (*emphasis original*).

Sebeok (2001) observes that a sign has an infinite functional application to human life and or existence. This infinite functional application is however not equated to Morris' (1971) analysis of the role of the sign when he showed that signs studied under a unified semiotic science is a mere demonstration of how signs or semiotics in general can be used to analyse language as a social system.

For Sebeok (2001) however, signs have the ability to allow humans to recognise patterns in things, act as guides or plans for taking actions what Morris (1971) sees as human behaviour. Interestingly, he observes that signs are not however limited to humans, for all living species recognise signs –from simple to advanced, for their fabric of existence. Importantly, species use signs to signal their existence as well as to communicate to each other and to the natural world at large.

Both Merrel (2001) and Sebeok (2001) follow Peirce (1960) in their points of departure in introducing the sign. Peirce (in Fisch et al eds. 1982:100-101) sees the sign as standing out ‘to someone for something thereby acting in mediation between the object it represents and the idea in the perceiving mind of the one who interprets it.’ Most views on the sign have been hinged on this submission although ultimate semiotic views differed over time. This study proceeds from the same conception of the sign as later advanced by Sebeok (2001).

3.3 The theory of signs

In this study ‘Semiotics’ is conceived as an umbrella term used to name the theory which studies signs. Terminological warfare is of less interest in this study which most semioticians as well as linguists alike deal with at great length mostly on what to name the study of signs. Eco (1981), Sebeok (2001), Copley (ed.) (2010), van Leeuwen (2005) are examples of few scholars who have dedicated considerable space in their studies to suggest a proper term for the study. The term ‘semiotics’ has remained popular in semiotic scholarly inquiry and for this reason this study is no exception in its conception.

Saussure (1966) is found in semiotics circles as one of the first ancient semiotician and we are to review what the researcher is going to call Saussure’s semiotics. Saussure’s (1966) semiotics came about mostly from his posthumous publication of his linguistic ideas. He found language as a system of signs that expresses ideas and was comparable to a system of writing, the alphabet of the deaf-mute, symbolic rites, military signals to mention a few (Saussure, 1966:66-67).

The sign is given centre stage in Saussure's semiotics in that the 'linguistic sign unites not a thing and a name but a concept and a sound image' (Saussure, 1966:67). Hence this inseparable combination of the sound and image is what is being regarded as the sign which Saussure (1966) further divides into two components or branches which he calls the *signifier* and *signified*. This Saussurean dichotomy of the sign defines Saussure's (1966) semiotics. The sign is, thus, realised in a triangular realisation as shown in **Figure. 1.** below,

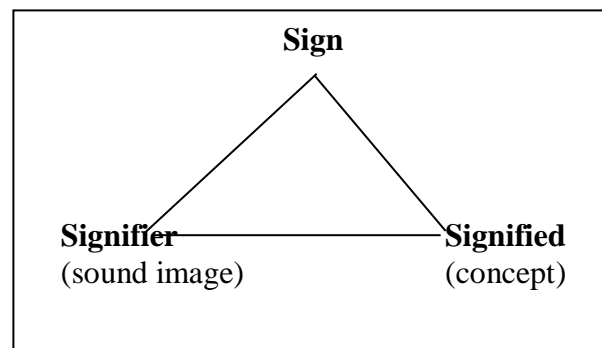


Figure. 1: Summary of the Saussure's semiotic triad

From the diagrammatic summary above Saussure's (1966) key semiotic components form a relationship which he sees as arbitrary in nature. In other words, there is no direct link between the sign and the objects it represents. Giving linguistic signs as examples, the word 'tree' (linguistic sign) has nothing in its composition or structure which directly links it to the object it signifies. It thus becomes a matter of social convention to bring about the sound image (tree) to the concept. Culler (1994:26) observed that Saussure's (1966) semiotics is thus centred on the above triad formulation and is propelled by Saussure's proposition that the sign is arbitrary, conventional and social.

Holdcroft (1991:159-160) has major reasons for distancing himself from Saussure's semiotics. He says,

Saussure never establishes that signs are radically arbitrary in the sense of being totally unmotivated; ... the conception of a sign that Saussure employs is not plausible candidate for one of signs in general.

Holdcroft (1991) has no problems with the idea of the sign but Saussure's conception of it. His view exposes Saussure's conception of sign as arbitrary in his semiotics. As if anticipating huge criticism on the notion of arbitrariness Saussure directs us to two further concepts; the *syntagm* and *paradigm*. To explain the concepts, a sentence, which is a collection or combination of linguistic signs, can be a *syntagm* and the different linguistic signs –words, belong to different paradigms such as verbs, nouns, prepositions –generally the parts of speech.

Saussure's (1966) semiotics recognises the negotiation of meaning where through the semiotic 'concepts' meaning is realised because of the relationships that bind them. These relationships Saussure finds them as basically appositional. In other words, there are differences in linguistic signs where for instance 'rich' is meaningless unless there is 'poor'. Saussure's semiotics is largely biased towards the linguistic sign or the verbal sign. This bias has also characterised his semiotics and its application.

Saussure (1966) has thus been rejected mostly on the above basis since analysing for instance the iconographic sign or an artefact would be merely impossible due to the limiting conception of sign as done by Saussure (1966). But this does not mean that Saussure's (1966) semiotics is invalid. This study develops a conceptual framework from some of Saussure's (1966) central notions of the sign.

Using Saussure's sign triad Henault (2010) concludes that Saussure's semiotic theory is basically a theory of signification. It becomes both a concept and a theory of language at the same time. Commenting on this signification concept Henault (2010) says the signification concept behind Saussure's semiotics handles every aspect of human life as semiotic and that there is a linguistification process to explain such human experiences. She even explains factors determining or guiding what is semiotic and what is not. She says a 'real semiotic constantly evolves under the double and combined influence of time and of society. True semiotics should be able to take into account any signification' (Henault, 2010:114) and Saussure's semiotics is not found wanting following Henault (2010).

Peirce (1960, 1982) working in a different epoch from that of Saussure and coming mainly from philosophy presents his own version of semiotics. Peirce (1982) believes semiotics defines every aspect of human knowledge and this might explain why Houser (2010:92) was quick to conclude that signs ‘are a medium for thought.’ Peirce (1960) finds semiotics as that relationship which exists between a sign, an object and its meaning. Peircean semiotics is developed from a combination of logic and mathematics, a principal distinction between him and Saussure. His semiotics however centralises ‘representation’ more than signification. In his semiotics Peirce (1960: 171) conceives of the sign as,

a vehicle conveying into the mind something from without. That for which it stands is called the object; that which it conveys its meaning; and the idea to which it gives rise, its interpretant. The meaning of a representation can be nothing but a representation. Finally, the interpretant is nothing but another representation and as representation, it has its interpretant again.

This submission explains much on the character of Peirce (1960) semiotics. The sign is realised into three branches which are the *icon*, *index* and *symbol*. *Icon* is ‘a sign that interrelates with its semiotic object by virtue of some resemblance or similarity with it’ for example a map and its territory it maps. The *index* becomes ‘a sign that interrelates with its semiotic object through some actual or physical or imagined casual connection (smoke an index of fire) while the *symbol* is more complicated as its interpretation is a matter of convention. There is no necessary connection to the actual item (Merrel 2001:31).

The said sign branches have three categories or modes and states of being which Peirce termed *Firstness*, *Secondness* and *Thirdness*. It is from these categories do we realise the Peircean semiotic triad. Following Houser (2010) from these three branches and three categories the Peirce (1960) triad theory of representation becomes visible in which each sign ‘is said to be in a triad relation with an object and an interpretant’ (Houser, 2010:91). Thus every sign is in a special kind of triadic relation with the object it represents which Peirce calls its ‘interpretant’ (Houser, 2010:91).

The triad is thus reflected through these three modes and states of being. The *Firstness* is based on possibility which means it does not in real exist but has a potential of existing both in the

physical as an object or in the mind as an exemplification of consciousness. *Secondness* on the other hand in essence exists and it is a particular where the First and Second are generals. The basic idea is that these need to come into some contact to affect each other so that each comes into existence. *Thirdness* following Peirce (1960) is that mode of being that brings all three into existence, that is, *thirdness* mediates *firstness* and *secondness*. Hence the sign is thus found to be a good example of *thirdness*. Semiotics following Peirce (1960) thus becomes a process by which signs become 'signs' or the process of rendering signs meaningful.

Leeds-Hurwitz (2012) possibly offers a more simplistic view of sign. In her discussion she takes the 'sign' and 'symbol' to be synonymous and this study will follow this simplistic non-technical approach. The reason why Leeds-Hurwitz (2012) handles them as such is her understanding of de Saussure (1966) as well as Peirce (1960) combined views on the sign. First, she sees de Saussure's (1966) sign as having two parts the *signifier* and *signified*. The *signifier* Leeds-Hurwitz (2012) says is characterised by being visible, in some way being present and is the explicit aspect of the sign which is present during interaction. The *signified* she says is that which is invisible but referred; the tacit elements of a sign literally or physically absent 'yet functionally present because it has been invoked' (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2012:3).

Secondly, Leeds-Hurwitz (2012) alludes to Peircean trichotomy view of the sign where Peircean *sign* or *representatum* is similar to de Saussure's (1966) *signifier*. The second part of the trichotomy is the *object* which is what the *representatum* refers and thirdly there is the *interpretant* which Leeds-Hurwitz (2012:3) says is the meaning conveyed by the *representatum* about the object. Against this Leeds-Hurwitz (2012:3) says Peirce identified sixty-six potential signs of which three have gained prominence whose focal points are relations created by the *signifier* and the *signified*. These three potential signs are the *icon*, *symbol* and *index*; where the icon establishes a relationship of similarity or resemblance while the index has a relationship of contiguity with symbol establishing relationship with arbitrariness.

Thus, to summarise Leeds-Hurwitz (2012:3),

...any sign displaying a similarity between the present and the absent components is termed an icon; any sign using a part of something to stand for the whole is an index; and any sign using an arbitrary connection between present and absent components is a symbol (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2012:23).

The above lays out the texture of the sign and how it is viewed based on its representations as well as contexts of being. When Jacobson-Widding (1992:11) spoke of 'symbolic language' she is alluding to *system signs* of arbitrary connections between present and absent components used as codes in a visually indented situation. Therefore, icons, indices and symbols not only do they belong to the larger body of signs governing communication, they also carry contextually-determined meanings especially in visual communication

Houser (2010:89) following the Peircean (1960) tradition believes that 'all thought is in signs and that minds should be regarded as systems of signs.' Houser concludes that 'semiotics may provide the best framework for the philosophy of mind, the philosophy of language and communication and for the theory of information processing at all levels' (ibid). For this reason Houser says Peirce was pragmatic in his approach. He says Peirce is a 'thoroughly anti-fundamentalist in his epistemology...a thorough-going evolutionist who emphasised growth and process and who requested absolutism of all sorts' (Houser, 2010:90).

He thus concludes that Peirce's (1960) semiotics is 'a general and formal theory of signs' general because it applies to any kind of sign; formal because 'its subject is sign and sign activity whether in humans, or animals or machines, or anything else' (Houser, 2010:91). Contrasting Peirce and Saussure, Houser says Peirce's (1960) semiotics is normative and not a descriptive science; a critical point of departure from Saussure (1966) mainstream semiology. Characterising Peirce (1960) semiotics, Houser (2010) finds three key aspects of Peirce (1960) semiotics which are that it is general (because the sign applies to all), formal (signs, the subject and sign activities for example belonging to the humans); it is normative rather than descriptive and it has three branches with *three ness* categories.

While Houser (2010) hails Peirce (1960) semiotics and puts an effort to clarify the theory his ultimate view is that minds are sign systems where thought is sign in action, the effect is intellectual experience. Houser declares that anything can be a sign as long as it mediates

between its object and an *interpretant*. This explanation hence explains his earlier definition that signs 'are a medium for thought' (Houser, 2010: 92).

It follows that for Houser (2010) Peirce (1960) semiotics is rather complex hence because there is need to deal with structures, relations and principles that inform semiotics given that 'we live in a complex world intertwined with feelings, facts and signs and to understand each we need to separate these universes' (Houser, 2010:94). As such he suggests 'a complete study of the structures, relations and principles that inform semiotics would require separate studies of each of these interrelated sciences and a consideration of what semiotic incorporates from each one' (Houser, 2010: 94). One way Houser says would be to have phenomenology study of feelings, science to study facts and semiotics to deal with signs separately. Interestingly, Houser (2010) finds Peirce (1960) as a three in one as he is able to deal with all three in his semiotic theory thus explaining the Peirce (1960) semiotic complexity he earlier spoke of.

Henault (2010) gives a comparative view of Peirce (1960) and Saussure's (1966) semiotics whose differences seem to push contemporary studies to classify semiotics as either a theory (Saussure) or a philosophy of language (Peirce). She says 'Peirce elaborates a philosophical system...The abstraction he aims for, and which he attains, belongs to the realism of philosophy' (Henault, 2010:104). In contrasting Saussure (1966) she says 'display a totally rational semantism with no ontology, a formal thinking that is neither nominalist nor realist' (ibid). The value she finds in Saussure's semiotics is that of a stage of the formation of the theory of language.

Responding to the concept of signs Henault (2010) says signs make up a system of signification and says Saussure (1966) 'intends to constitute a theory which would provide foundations for a theory of language, and which would eventually be modelled or formalised in the same way as hard sciences' (Henault, 2010:111). However, she is quick to point out that Saussure's theory is difficult and 'its editing and translation has provided misunderstanding of all sorts' (Henault, 2010:116) thereby making it challenging to ascertain Saussure's (1966) position.

Reading Henault's (2010) semiotic comparative study, we get to learn that semiotics has had sub-branches to it –visual semiotics, auditory, numerical, tactile and gustatory due to the real phenomena and the social of human existence. Henault (2010) seems to accept Houser's (2010) suggestion of viewing semiotics as a phenomena of signs and their function in human existence. Thus the conception of semiotics becomes a phenomenological concept that has over the years created semiotic sub-branches to deal with the various fields of social life. Hence semiotics is at the centre of mediating, according description and reading of human existence given the central position plagued by communication.

Cobley (ed.) (2010:8) observes that Saussure's semiotics has suffered greatly because it has been constrained by its provenance in linguistics. He prefers Peirce (1960) semiotics as he finds it liberating by virtue of its flexibility as well as its conscious application across disciplines. He credits Peirce for coming up with a method by which signs as they manifest themselves might create a world of representation of all reality. He thus concludes that the ultimate view of semiotics should be one in which semiotics 'embraces animate nature and human culture, ...incorporates scientific analysis with cultural analysis; and it surveys the continuity of semiosis within language as well as those outside' (Cobley ed., 2010:9).

Having conceived signs as anything standing for something to someone; and that anything qualifies as a sign for as long as it exhibits properties of signs in a proper context. The science or study of these signs is thus called semiotics (Sebeok 2001). There are therefore three approaches to semiotics namely the evolutionary (historical), structural and functional approaches. For example, Sebeok (2001) addresses all three approaches the evolutionary aspect as well as the structural and functional approaches beginning from ancient medicine.

Eco (1981) sees Sebeok's (2001) approaches as phases of semiotic evolution beginning in the 1960s where focus he says was on paradigms, structures, systems and codes. The 1970s he says witnessed a violent shift from the former to texts 'where texts were considered a syntactico-semantic structures generated by a text-grammar' (Eco, 1981:35). Sebeok (2001) calls this the age with interest in studying the six species of signs and indeed Jacobson (1970), Barthes (1972),

Barthes (1985), Wallis (1973) are cases in point. The late 1970s, Eco (1981) says text theories shifted towards pragmatics focusing on the recognition of the reader's response.

From this end, Eco (1981) submits a need to theorise on the conception of the sign by advancing the notion of context as key in any semiotic theory in that any given sign is only meaningful when realised within a larger context. He makes it clear that semiotic theory is a communication theory and that a communication theory 'is dialectically linked to a theory of signification, and a theory of signification should be first of all a theory of signs' (Eco, 1981:37). While he rightly observes that 'contemporary theories of sign have been dominated by a linguistic model' (Eco, 1981:39), he concentrates more on a theory of semiotics to account for artistic (mainly literary) creation and consumption.

However, Mannetti (2010) properly lays out the evolutionary approach when he observes ancient Greek semiotics where medicinal science of studying physiological symptoms induced by particular diseases or physical states (Sebeok, 2001:4) saw a concentration on signs. Sebeok (2001) as well as Mannetti (2010) recognise the presence of semiotic interest in the philosophical age notably from the Aristotle to Stoics ages and beyond. Mannetti (2010) chronicles the ancient development of semiotics from what he considers to be its scholarly birth. He observes that semiotics has at its birth, had the sign as the central concept. He begins by identifying semiotics in Mesopotamian deviation where the use of signs was grounded within a 'scheme of inferential reasoning that allowed particular conclusions to be drawn from particular facts' (Mannetti 2010:15).

Mesopotamian deviation used the 'omen' or ominous sign which was supposed to be interpreted. One thinks of the owl that was seen at the market place in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and can be seen as the Romans reading from the Mesopotamian traditional oracles. This took Mannetti to the Greek deviation where the sign was used as a central communicative code in the relations between gods and mortals. The sign was thought not to come from the human sphere but from the spheres of the divine. He observed that 'The sign is the instrument of mediation between the total knowledge of the gods and the more limited knowledge of humankind' (Mannetti, 2010:15).

Greek medicine, also, made use of the sign in solving illness and the concept of ‘symptom’ is key here which aided ancient Greek medical practitioners to manoeuvre along time; past, present and future. The philosophic age notably Plato and Aristotle also observed the sign as an object of semiotic inquiry. Mannetti (2010) says Plato saw the sign as a theory of language. Focus was not however on the sign but to describe and explain language and prove that ‘language is not a sufficiently valid tool for attainment of knowledge of reality’ (Mannetti, 2010:17). In the same breadth Mannetti (2010) says Aristotle separated the theory of language from the theory of sign. Mannetti (2010) rightly observes that the Aristotelean tradition still has a lasting hand on modern semiotics; lasting influence as it addresses both the verbal and nonverbal. Mannetti (2010:18) concludes that,

...the theory of nonverbal sign in fact forms part of the theory of syllogism and has both logical epistemological features of interests. The nonverbal sign has at the centre of the problem of how knowledge is acquired, whereas the linguistic symbol is principally connected to the problem of relationships between linguistic expressions conceptual abstractions and states of the world.

What we read from Mannetti’s (2010) reading of the historical development of semiotics is the idea that the sign aims to allude to the visual and that it has two fundamental aspects; first it has an epistemological and ontological interest in that ‘it is an instrument of knowledge which serves to guide the attention of knowing subjects to operate the passage from one fact to another’ (Mannetti, 2010:18), secondly, it has a formal mechanism which regulates its function.

His (Mannetti 2010) analysis of Stoics’ handling of the sign reveals that the Stoics did not differ much from Aristotle but saw the sign as a theory of language. Their submission was establishing relationships between language, thought and reality. Stoics theory of the sign centred on the idea of ‘particular’ (Mannetti, 2010:19) seen as the material object with defined shape, features that are defined as the sufficient and necessary conditions for its existence. It is (Stoics) connected to the theory of perception and offers an example of how images are perceived.

The other philosophical traditions, Mannetti (2010) says, tended to move back and forth on how the sign had to be conceived and realised. Key in the semiotic heritage, Mannetti (2010) observes

the central influence of philosophy as a discipline. What the philosophical age aimed at from Platonic philosophy, Aristotle to Stoics and beyond, was to come up with a theory of language as an attempt to weigh how far language was key in the attainment knowledge of reality? How the sign was visually conceived, key, fundamental on its own and a subject of study?

Mannetti's (2010) view of semiotics is merely historical demonstrating how semiotics as an area of study has evolved from ancient times giving the character to modern semiotics. This is what Eco (1981) refers to as the semiotic phase interested in paradigms and systems. Mannetti does not tell us much about semiotics serve for giving us a synchronic analysis. This study while appreciating the evolutionary semiotics, it seeks to be guided by principles that form the fabric of studying artefacts as cultural signs hence Mannetti's (2010) study does not give us much. Houser (2010) building up from Mannetti (2010) directs us towards structural semiotics.

Houser (2010) centres his discussion on Peirce (1960) submissions to semiotics and finds Peirce as the first scholar to modern semiotics. His view is that modern semiotics is based on Peirce (1960) triad structural view of the sign. However, there is a conflict of 'modern' views especially because Sebeok (2001) is also celebrated as the icon of modern semiotics (van Leeuwen 2005). This researcher is of the view that Peirce is modern in the sense that he is submitting views that seem to address areas overlooked by Saussure. Sebeok (2001) becomes modern in the sense that he advanced Peirce (1960) views by maintaining the structural part while emphasising the functional approach for example the modelling system from which biosemiotics, social semiotics, zoosemiotics, endosemiotics to name but a few have come to be pursued.

Sebeok's (2001) structural and functional semiotics introduces the idea that semiotics has a dual character as it is a science, given its own corpus of findings and theories. On the other hand it is a technique for studying anything that produces signs that are visually perceived either by the physical or mental eye. This is what perhaps makes it modern and accepted by most semiotics scholars today.

Sebeok (2001) fuses Saussure's (1966) semiotics and Peirce (1960) semiotic elements. First, he credits Saussure's (1966) definition of the sign as having given headway to semiotic enquiry.

Following Saussure (1966) the sign was defined as something physical –such as sounds, letters, gestures which he termed the *signifier*; the sign was also found to be made up of an image or concept to which the signifier refers –*signified*; and the relation between the two, signification (Sebeok, 2001:6). He further asserts that the *signifier* following Peirce (1960), was then termed *representatum*. Peirce (1960) referent is object and the meaning that one gets from the sign was termed *interpretant*. These terms characterise Sebeok’s (2001) views.

To identify a sign Sebeok (2001) says first focus has to be to its structural properties. Codes and texts are categories of signs. There are syntagmatic and paradigmatic properties that bring about signs to reality. There are texts and codes and following Sebeok (2001) texts ‘constitutes, in effect, a specific ‘weaving together’ of signs in order to communicate something’ (Sebeok, 2001:7) and the signs that get into the make-up of texts belong to a specific code because they are held together by syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations. As such ‘a text bears no meaning unless the receiver of the message knows the code(s) from which it was constructed’ (Sebeok, 2001:8). Context is also of importance in this aspect and it refers to the environment, physical, psychological as well as social to which signs are realised.

For Sebeok (2001), semiotics is the underlying biological capacity to produce signs and representation becomes the actual usage of those produced signs. This makes Sebeok conclude that the purpose of semiotics, specific to human species, is to understand how humans make and understand signs. As such we are able to interrogate human intellectual as well as social life as these are based on production, use, exchange of signs and representations. Sebeok (2001) observes that human behaviour and existence is based on signs/signification. He says ‘the signs people use on a daily basis constitute a mediating template in the worldview they come to have’ (Sebeok, 2001:8).

Sebeok (2001) identifies six types of signs; symptom, signal (mostly pro-animal species) which of course applies to humans as they either imitate or metaphorically employed in human endeavour. The other three are given by Peirce, icons (a sign that is made to resemble, simulate or reproduce its referent in some way), indexes (a sign that refers to something or someone in terms of its existence or location in time or space, or in relation to something or someone else)

and symbols (a sign that stands for its referent in an arbitrary, conventional way) (Sebeok, 2001:10-11). Symbols are what sets humans apart from the rest of the species. Words for example are symbolic signs. Sebeok identifies name as the sixth type of signs. This he says, is an identifier sign assigned to the member of a species in various ways. For example,

A human name is a sign that identifies the person in terms of such variables as ethnicity and gender. Added names (surnames, nicknames, etc.) further refine the 'identity referent' of the name (Sebeok, 2001:11).

Sebeok (2001) thus concludes that sign action is semiotics. He believes that semiotics does not tell us what the world is, but gives us some idea about what we can know about the same world. Semiotic enquiry can thus be seen as the map to reality. Semiotics is not only the study of signs, that is, how they manifest themselves, but it also involves the study of signification; which is, how the manifested signs are put to meaningful uses in defined physical, psychological and social contexts. The conclusion that Sebeok (2001) makes identifies with this study, in as far as it allows study of the cultural artefacts of Tonga people in Zimbabwe. He says semiotics is classifiable,

...as that pivotal branch of an integrated science of communication to which its character as a methodological inquiry into the nature and constitution of codes provides an indispensable counterpoint (Sebeok, 2001:27-28).

We are able, following this path, to stretch and appreciate what qualifies as a sign among the Tonga and Zimbabwe at large. The doctrine behind anything becoming a sign as conditioned by the environment allows us to stretch and observe how material objects are but a body of signs themselves and how they, following Sebeok's six species of signs qualify as such. We are able to deduce these signs as making up a code and his semiotic bias as directed towards explaining the communication process through its key components helps us view communication by the Tonga using their material culture as well as placed to negotiate for belonging and existence in Zimbabwe.

Sebeok (2001) uses a wide array of examples highlighting specific and introducing the various branches of semiotics based on the simpler building semiotic blocks of such a branch.

Zoosemiotics, biosemiotics and anthroposemiotics stands out visible and the nature of the specific signs used are the ones that distinguish one branch from the other although they all agree on the concept of the sign. It would therefore lead us to view a study of material objects of a specific group of people from a semiotic point of view as ethnosemiotics because we use specific ethnic sign elements to appreciate the group and also because following Eco (1981) we need to consider context. This becomes not merely a concept but a methodological approach to the inquiry of material objects as sign systems making up codes crucial in the cultural communication of a given ethnic group of people such as the Tonga in Zimbabwe.

What is important from Sebeok's (2001) submission is that we do not merely need to describe the structure of the sign but we need to look searchingly into its functions too. This is what this study does for both Sebeok (2001) and his followers, have, in advancing semiotic knowledge, became highly descriptive of the signs. Saussure (1966), Chomsky (1965) and his universal grammarians, Peirce (1960), Langacker (1987), Halliday (1985), Halliday and Hassan (1980) and Morris (1971) have had this descriptive or structuralist input although conscious of actual contextual usage. Barthes (1970) is no exception and their eyes were all directed towards the linguistic sign, vocalised to be precise and not the nonverbal or visual. Even those who followed Barthes (1970) into visual semiotics, it was the visual text (iconographic signs) that received centre stage and one appreciates how the real object has received little attention amid an increasing development of semiotics.

Attention to material objects as has been shown above has been in other disciplines such as anthropology, archaeology where desire to describe ancient societies or the past was the norm. How communication theory has ignored the object as an item of study or components of the very communication codes; remains a huge question contemporary scholarship in communication theory and semiotics in general need to address and this study does exactly that. Interestingly, general linguistics, Sebeok (2001) says, is but a branch of semiotics, making semiotics the starting point for any inquiries on linguistics which draws us to how communication, especially human cultural visual communication operates.

3.4 Semiotic institutionalisation and modelling

Saussure (1966) and Peirce (1960) semiotics can be thought of in this study as the general formulations of semiotics. Randviir and Cobley (in Cobley ed. 2010) suggest that Sebeok (2001) comes with a best way to critique the general but very complex semiotics of the two traditional semioticians. They say ‘Sebeok made it necessary to understand that human affairs are only a small part of what semiotics’ proper object is’ (Randviir and Cobley, in Cobley ed. 2010:121).

Sebeok (2001) encouraged specialisation in semiotics by introducing the idea of modelling. The creation of the modelled or institutionalised sign and its exchange has seen the sign being at the centre of the classical mode of communication. Eco (1999) also distinguished specific semiotics from general semiotics and as such encouraged modelling and institutionalisation. Specific semiotics he finds it as making use of already given objects; whereas in general semiotics anything can qualify as a sign. Eco (1999) believes that semiotics deals with sign systems hence he advocates a view of semiotics as a field of inquiry made up of branches where differences may be observed where they are all bound up by a common object, the semiosis. It is from this kind of thinking where Sebeok (2001) heeds Eco’s (1999) call and introduces the institutionalisation of semiotics or the branching or modelling in semiotics.

We can describe Eco’s (1981) and Eco’s (1999) approach to semiotics as applied, institutionalised or modelled for he manipulates semiotic aspects to appreciate work of art forcing us even to view the artist as a sign producer. While Eco’s (1999) semiotics is a close reading of Peirce (1960) semiotics, it is tailor made for purposes of analysing art. It views art as semiotics of the culturation of matter (signs) or coding of signs and the text is thus viewed as a coded text. The artist occupies centre stage, contrary to Barthes’ (1970) death of the author principle. Eco sees the artist or the author as the key producer of the sign which has a huge bearing to human existence, however in the artistic arena.

Zylko (2001) discusses how Yuri Lotman conceived culture. From Lotman’s definition, culture is information and as such depends on human consciousness. Objects of culture are found to be subjective and conscious in character. Zylko (2001) makes an important observation that ‘the

outside world ‘nature’ provides material for cultural artefacts; and also itself an object of cognition’ (2001:393).

Further advancing views by Yuri Lotman, Zylko (2001) says, culture is inherited information however not transferred genetically. Thus culture provides ‘the fundamental mechanisms, which enable sign systems to come into existence ... [and they] are inborn’ (Zylko, 2001:393). He also traces notions of culturalisation notable in Eco’s semiotics. Zylko observes that the culturalisation of elements of the natural world occurs by means of the ‘language’, where language is read as the most developed universal means of communication. Natural language, scholarship has shown, that it is the centre of mental existence, projection of thinking, means of maintain social bonds, and instrument of social and political activity (Zylko, 2001:395). Art, science, law and religion are all modelled into it. Hence, according to Chandler (2002) any form of semiotic inquiry is basically a study of meanings and how these meanings are constructed in the process of maintenance of social reality.

The modelling concepts as noted by Sebeok (2001) are better explained by the Russian, Zylko (2001) who sees modelling on and by the natural language as primary and the others are termed secondary modelling systems. Both primary and secondary modelling systems create codes for communication systems which provide multiple images of the world. Zylko (2001:395) concludes by saying, ‘Therefore every modelling system has a bounded image of the world as its necessary point of reference.’ But Zylko is looking at how a text, art or literary texts can be appreciated. He says,

The artistic creation is in itself also a sign. It participates in communication between its author and the reader, and enters into relationships with the reader’s world and the reader’s ethical system (Zylko, 2001:396).

Van Leeuwen (2005), Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) introduced social semiotics as well as Kress’ (1996) multimodal analysis. These are mere examples of semiotics modelled or institutionalised to answer specific social semiotic problems. In van Leeuwen (2005) institutionalised semiotics, he observes signs as they exist in a specific social context as ‘semiotic resources’ (van Leeuwen, 2005:3) defined as ‘the actions and artefacts we use to

communicate' (ibid) regardless of sources of production. These resources are 'signifiers, observable actions and objects that have been drawn into the domain of social communication' (van Leeuwen, 2005:4).

Further, semiotic resources van Leeuwen (2005) says, have a theoretical semiotic potential brought about by their past usage and were considered relevant by their users on the basis of their needs and interests. This is because humans are always articulating different social and cultural meanings which they manifest through semiotic resources. Chandler (2002) hinders on the same view when he speaks of humans as ever dealing with meanings and how these meanings are constructed in the process of maintenance of social reality. Van Leeuwen (2005:4) calls Chandler's (2002) meanings, 'semiotic potential', where the context plays a crucial role in the matrix of constructing and maintain social reality. Van Leeuwen (2005:5) makes an interesting conclusion that,

Studying the semiotic potential of a given semiotic resource is studying how that resource has been, is, and can be used for purposes of communication. It is drawing up an inventory of past and present and maybe also future resources and their uses.

The matrix of meaning making and culturalisation as advanced here draw us to Harry (2007) claims of language formation. Harry (2007:30) claims that the process of meaning making in semiotic and multimodal perspectives 'is the beginning of the grammar which is established not only in painting but also in other forms of media, such as photography and film.' This speaks to the formation of a language that carries the meanings from the context on which cultural forms are created.

This study advances that artefacts as sign systems create a language which is independent from the language that is made up of sound systems ordinarily referred to as verbal language. Thus, the idea of assuming signs as potential platforms of coding –a process involving identifying signs as codes in a communicative context, assumes precedence when we view BaTonga artefacts from this perspective. Forming a grammar of their own means they eventually form a narrative of their own, contextually, especially if we are to agree with the notion that artefacts carry the burden of their context.

This conclusion further makes us appreciate a few aspects of interest to this study. First, the material objects read from the social semiotic perspective are indeed semiotic resources which however do not only have semiotic potential but cultural semiotic potential. And in studying such semiotic resources we are studying how these pieces have been over time, how they are realised in the contemporary settings and indeed are used by the Tonga for purposes of cultural communication.

The social semiotic concept is as has been shown above, an instance of semiotic institutionalisation. Semiotic knowledge has been tailor made to theorise and account for signs observed in actual human social contextual settings. Van Leeuwen (2005) even coins terms such as ‘semiotic resources’ and ‘semiotic potential’ to effectively address social semiotic demands. However, van Leeuwen (2005) over-emphasises theorisation to address the iconographic or images of pictorial nature as they manifest themselves mostly in adverts drawing parallels with Barthes (1972) or in various images such as the ones Barthes (1985) analysed, between the linguistic sign and the semiotic sign. He also tries to address notions of intertextuality and completely ignores the material object as a sign/resource failing completely to acknowledge that the very adverts he analyses are constructed from the actual material objects.

3.5 Introducing artefactual ethnisemiotics

This study could be dismissed by armchair theorists as an endeavour to advance cultural anthropology. Cultural anthropology as summarised by Randviir and Cobley (2010 in Cobley ed. 2010) studies culture or analyses it based on the sign systems viewed as cognitive social system. Following Randviir and Cobley (2010 in Cobley ed. 2010) at the beginning of the 19th century cultural anthropologists placed emphasis on ‘the description of cultural phenomena...[and] cultural phenomena as the outcome of individually (oral community) articulated social sign systems’ (Randviir and Cobley 2010 in Cobley ed. 2010:122).

Cultures are described by Randviir and Cobley (2010 in Cobley ed. 2010:122) as ‘sets of artefacts organised according to cultural patterns.’ Notable scholars behind this drive are Geertz (1993), Kluckhohn (1961) and Lucid (1977). Cultures are thus seen as abstractions existing at the

level of cultural object. These views of culture have led to culture as having to be analysed as ‘ideational or semiotic systems.’ Semiotic signs and objects or systems were used as a means to understand cultures while absorbing them as ‘systems of knowledge, intersemiotic sign systems and reflective systems’ (Randviir and Cobley, 2010 in Cobley ed. 2010:123) and this study moves away from this approach.

If reality can be viewed as a system of signs (Chandler 2002, Eco 1981) to which this study subscribes to, it follows then that the meanings that are realised in every aspect of social reality is a construction of a complex interplay of codes or conventions. This is not often clearly singled out in cultural anthropology as advanced by Geertz (1993), Kluckhohn (1961) and Lucid (1977). In any given social order, there are processes of deconstructing signs and as signs define realities they are also seen as serving ideological functions. From this end, any study of signs becomes a study into the construction and maintenance of such reality which adheres more to the communicative for it to be realised. This too leads to the construction of a culture and identity.

In the Tonga scenario, by studying the material pieces as cultural signs we are deconstruction these signs, or ‘reading’ them in order to define BaTonga realities –historical, social, cultural and even political. We are able to put side by side Tonga sign systems with those of other so called dominant ethnic groups, Shona, Ndebele which for years have served ‘dominance’ ideological functions to the detriment of the BaTonga existence, culturally, historically, economically and politically culminating into the social nature of the Tonga people in Zimbabwe. As such we are made not to take BaTonga realities for granted. Against this background we therefore need to tailor make a theory that best help us account for the reality in question and this study proposes artefactual ethnisemiotics.

We have seen how Saussure’s (1966) semiotics as well as to some degree Peirce (1960) semiotics were general theoretical formulations. In addition, these two broad semiotic theories were largely based on the sound sign systems making the language of any human make with universal notches. When Chomsky (1965) came up with his universal grammar, he was powered by the Saussure’s view of the semiotic sign in a very broad and general sense. No sooner did Chomsky (1965) and his fellow universal grammarians come under heavy scholarly criticism.

We recall how Chomsky (1965) claimed for example to be addressing a homogenous society which in actual fact does not even exist leading Hymes (1978) and Halliday (1994) to advocate for functional approaches to the sound sign systems as they are realised in actual human communicative situations.

Eco (1981), Eco (1999) and especially Sebeok (2001) introduced the idea of institutionalisation or modelling. Hong, Lurie and Tanaka (1993) commenting on Eco (1981) pragmatism observe that Eco (1981) had appreciated the fact that semiotics from a generalised to a specified view became an 'interdisciplinary network' allowing us to study 'human beings in so far as they produce signs, and not only the verbal ones' (Hong, Lurie and Tanaka, 1993:14). Eco (1993) in an interview with Hong, Lurie and Tanaka (1993:14) says 'when specific systems of signs are studied for specific communicative reasons they assume the terminology 'semiotics of...'' This explains Sebeok's (2001) array of semiotics, zoosemiotics, endosemiotics, cybersemiotics as well as van Leeuwen's (2005) social semiotics.

One could therefore claim that artefactual ethnisemiotics is semiotics of artefacts belonging to a specific ethnic group. This way, we are able to expand the view of signs to material objects, analyse their properties and structure; application and ideological realisation in a specific communicative context. This is against the view that Saussure's (1966) and Pierce (1960) semiotics was based on the sound systems and the two had their own principal points of differences from which Saussure (1966) was pro linguistics and Pierce (1960) was biased towards logic and mathematics. In this study, material objects are the centre of attention and they in their materiality reveal qualities of signs and make up sign systems through coding from which they are functionally observed in cultural communication. Clearly, a sound sign system approach does not adequately come in to accord possibilities of explaining artefactual systems.

We should also be conscious of the fact that the African problem or problems have for a long time been analysed using the so called universal theories. Sebeok (2001), van Leeuwen (2005), Kress (1996) and the host of other cultural as well as social semioticians considered as their context, following Eco (1981), Western contexts. To import the same without re-modelling is detrimental in as far as creating a de-marginalising theory is concerned. Thus, to appreciate

BaTonga communicative context demands that we consider the context as African unique as well as complex in its own way.

The universal theories (Saussure 1966, Peirce 1960, Sebeok 2001) have had a western orientalist tendency to a point where the character and identity of the African have not properly been realised. It will be marginalising to use either Saussure (1966) or Peirce (1960) late alone Sebeok (2001) to appreciate BaTonga social realities when we are making an effort to de-marginalise BaTonga history and cultural significance in Zimbabwe. Munikwa (2011) using Christian evangelism of the Dutch Reformed Church made this crucial error.

We appreciate Peirce (1960) semiotics only because it allows us to see how signs take various forms, such as words, images, sound, odours, flavours, acts or objects because 'Peirce was aware of the enormous variety of signs that we produce and use' (Hong, Lurie and Tanaka, 1993:16). Simplifying Peirce (1960), Chandler (2002) says signs do not have intrinsic meaning, as such anything becomes a sign only when meanings are invested into it. In other words, anything can be a sign as long as someone interprets it as signifying something or referring to something other than itself.

We are not guilty of any scholarly endeavour to interpret BaTonga material objects as ethnisigns (ethnic specific sets of signs) because following Peirce (1960) as well as Chandler (2002) we interpret things as signs largely unconsciously by relating them to familiar systems of conventions. But we have to be more specific in theorising how we view material objects as signs hence the proposal of artefactual ethnisemiotics.

An attempt to propose a new niche of theorisation is not new. Swartz (2012) attempted a similar endeavour in order to explain non-western communicative religious realities. He analyses the role of the sign in rabbinic thought, bringing to life how God made the universe as interpreted from a semiological perspective. He found rabbinic thought at the centre of ancient Jewish religious survival. For him the Jews conceived the creation of signs as according as well as allowing humans and God to communicate. In his study he explores, myths, systems of

interpretation and ritual strategies to reflect the idea that the physical world is embedded with meaning.

3.6 Artefactual ethnisemiotics and communication

Following the proposal made in Section 3.5 above, we now have on one hand artefactual ethnisemiotics and communication on the other. How are the two related and how is artefactual ethnisemiotics realised in a communicative situation? These are two important questions best answered by establishing the link between the two. Thus, there is need to establish the link between artefactual ethnisemiotics and communication.

Leeds-Hurwitz (2012) provides a very good discussion on the link between semiotics and communication. We can subscribe to the same model, however, having artefactual ethnisemiotics as the theory instead. In her study, ‘communication’ (Cronkhite 1986 in Leeds-Hurwitz 2012:3) is ‘the study of human symbolic activity’ or broadly ‘the theoretical area mostly directly identified with the symbolic behaviour’ (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2012:3). Communication becomes much more than exchange of information; it becomes a performative act which is realised when set-ethnisms are grouped together in a symbiotic relationship from which subjects of a given group of people symbolically create and exchange meanings. The continued exchange becomes symbolic behaviour loosely referred to as communication. This reflects much of cultural communication as exchange of cultural meanings is largely determined by the artefactual ethnisemiotic resources used to bring about the symbolic creation and exchanges of meanings.

This study leans heavily on the semiotic concept that Leeds-Hurwitz (2012) develops which is based on social interaction, the resource materials that are used to bring out that interaction and the subsequent results of the later mostly as realised as culture. While she focusses on clothes, food and objects as her semiotic resources it is important that we take note of some of her observations as they are relevant in a positive way in explaining the problems of this study.

First, Leeds-Hurwitz's (2012) aim is to establish the connections between semiotics and communication. She does so by resorting to the building blocks of semiotics which are the signs that have internal relationships which create codes; in turn, the codes relate within cultures thereby making semiotics in general an aid into understanding what happens in social interaction. This study similarly views artefacts as aiding understanding of how ethnic cultures interact with the BaTonga culture for purposes of creating a cultural whole for Zimbabwe as a nation.

Studying communication from this perspective Leeds-Hurwitz (2012: xvii) says is only possible 'through codes of behaviour that are appropriately termed *nonverbal*' hence the very approach of this study to crack open those nonverbal codes. One important point is worth mentioning here which this research strongly agrees with is that;

Traditionally most studies of nonverbal behaviour within communication have stopped at the edges of a physical body, as if such additions as clothing have no bearing on the interaction. One has to consider the effect of removing participants' clothes in a casual interaction to be reminded of their significant role (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2012: xvii).

Interest in looking at BaTonga artefacts as objects qualifying as nonverbal codes cannot therefore be over stated. The study thus moves in the same spirit of going beyond the physical edge observed above. Leeds-Hurwitz's (2012) study on a closer look one can view it as both a semiotic theory and a communication theory where semiotics is handled as the field where tools for analysis are found and communication theory providing the context to which the tools (codes and signs) fit in and operate. Read in this combined sense, Leeds-Hurwitz is applauded for theorising semiotics as a study of how *structure* connects to *process* in, from the perspective of this study, cultural communication. And here structure is,

...the social forms available to people as they participate in events; and process being the ways in which they use those forms for interacting, simultaneously creating a new structure for the future (Leeds-Hurwitz 2012: xx).

Thus, against the above social interaction is understood as,

...a process of negotiating a succession of discrete social act. Each social act is novel in detail but predictable in general outline in overall organisation. Communication thus outlined appears as constant motion, an apparent possibility (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2012: xxiii).

Interestingly, she dedicates some considerable space to define semiotics but in her analysis three key terms appear prominently and these are sign, system and meaning. At the same time, language is merely cited as a model for semiotics. In doing this, she alludes and agrees with Sebeok (2001) when he says that communication involves use of signs, symbols; involves too creation of codes from symbols and ultimately using symbols and codes as a way to socially construct reality while at the same time ordering human interaction.

Against this view, Leeds-Hurwitz (2012) thus sees semiotics holistically as an elementary system of communication. Ultimately notions of culture are drawn in where culture following Schudson (1989) 'hegemonic definition' (Leeds-Hurwitz 2012:6) is 'not a set of ideas imposed but a set of ideas and symbols available for use...a resource for social action more than a structure to limit social action' (Schudson, 1989:155).

Two important aspects also discussed by Leeds-Hurwitz (2012) are *syntagm* and *paradigm* also introduced by Saussure (1966). Leeds-Hurwitz (2012) brings in these to explain 'codes' where codes are 'a group or set of signs and rules for their use' (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2012:54). A *paradigm* is 'a set of signs or units from which social actors choose only one for display' (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2012:54). A *syntagm* becomes that 'new start resulting from the combination of elements drawn from different paradigms' (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2012:55). Paradigms are abstract whereas syntagms are concrete. The view of these two concepts is largely based on Saussure's *langue* (knowledge of language) and *parole* (which is knowledge of using linguistic knowledge). Chomsky (1965) came up with linguistic competence and linguistic performance to allude the same *langue* and *parole* elements.

Porcar (2011) appreciated semiotics showing how communication and studies in communication can benefit directly from it. He claims that semiotics is a 'paradoxical discipline' (Porcar, 2011:22) because of its ever presence in human endeavours but without any specific area of belonging. He says that semiotics 'perceives itself as a place of convergence for other

disciplines...’ assuming an interfacing role between disciplines. He however notes that there are different approaches to it, explaining the institutionalisation and modelling aspects Sebeok (2001) advanced.

Porcar’s (2011) view of semiotics takes us to the realisations that cognition and pragmatic interests make semiotic theory relevant in communication studies as it implies a view of pragmatic dimensions of the sign being ‘both an instrument of acting upon the world’ (Porcar, 2011:23). Thus, communication is understood as a symbolic activity from this perspective where communication itself becomes the platform on which there is a constant exchange and administration of signs from which communication is expected to account for meanings within visual cultural communication situations.

Porcar (2011) emphasised the image and how it is a semiotic resource pertinent in communication as well as characterisation of contemporary society. The obvious bias alludes to Barthes’ (1964) rhetoric of the image and general iconographic interests. The object is ignored thus ignoring the entire contribution of material objects to communication and semiotic studies.

The collective view provided by this study in communicative terms is that, matters of cultural signification are in themselves symbolic activities which by and large accord an opportunity for rebuilding relations where cultural relations have been damaged by orientalist forces, or building cultural relations where they previously did not exist. These cultural relations are visual cultural relations of cultural cohesion in a nation that continues to advance the ideology of oneness. Relations become one of reciprocal inclusion in that, in cultural terms BaTonga continue to be relevant amid dominant groups which appear to be superior in most aspects of being in the country especially given the prominence of other languages such as Shona, Ndebele and English. Thus, to accomplish this view, material objects or material culture should be brought actively into cultural communication studies which is exactly what this study does in relation to BaTonga visual cultural communication.

This study relies on the link between semiotics and communication as advanced by Leeds-Hurwitz (2012) but being driven by the notion of artefactual ethnisemiotics rather than mere

semiotics. While her problem is to focus on nonverbal codes closely linked to the body such as food and clothes making her unable to function without conventional language; as well as adhering to the universalised notion of semiotics, this study appreciates the sign, codes, culture and artefactual ethnisemiotic formulations where these make up a system for interaction.

This researcher explores further the third aspect 'objects' in communication which Leeds-Hurwitz (2012) has looked at in part. This study advances that artefactual ethnisemiotic is an independent system from the linguistic one, a view which Leeds-Hurwitz (2012) does not share with this researcher. Hence areas of focus also differ significantly; this study specifically focuses on visual cultural communication which is part of human interaction whereas Leeds-Hurwitz focuses on social interactions in conversations.

Whereas Leeds-Hurwitz (2012) studied clothing and how communicative it is, Kress (2002) study touched on the communicate nature of colour. Kress (2002) studied colour with the hope of establishing the grammar of colour against the backdrop of problems that arise in terms of differing meanings attached to colour in various cultures and communicative contexts. He argues that colour is vital to visual communication. He makes an effort to link his ideas to those of Kress and van Leeuwen (1996). He rightly notes how colour has come to have universal meanings based on what it is put to signify in communicative situations. Some of the common examples given are colours on maps serving to identify arable land, water, deserts and so on. He observes however that colour partake to the functions to which it is put by humans.

The positive aspect in his study is that Kress (2002) uses semiotics to discuss as well as view colour as a semiotic resource. But the visual bias he takes is largely iconographic in nature rather than material. It comes as no shock that he speaks of universal meanings because his point of departure is basically the universal Saussure (1966) and Pierce (1960) notions of semiotics. This study while appreciating the fluidity of colour in codified systems of communication, it utilises input of the communicative nature of colour to describe, for example, designs that are part of the *buntibe* drum or decorations on the *ncelwa* through beads with a bias towards artefacts as material signs.

Studies in nonverbal communication as can be noted above are not new. While much of nonverbal communication has centred largely within the parameters of the physical body as Leeds-Hurwitz (2012) rightly noted, beyond the body less attention has been offered. Leeds-Hurwitz (2012) therefore studied clothing revealing how without clothing various aspects of communication will be difficult to observe. Other interesting studies on nonverbal communication are those of Beck (2001) and Hamid (1996) whom both studied the *Kanga* dress and how women in East Africa use it to send various messages without stepping on the cultural as well as religious patriarchal formulations of society.

Hamid (1996:103) says the *Kanga* is a 'piece of cloth measuring one and three quarters metres, by one and a quarter metre, is so strong and powerful.' Beck (2001:157) gives a comprehensive view of the *Kanga* and says,

The *kanga* is a printed cotton cloth frequently used as a dress by women all over East Africa. The cloth measures about 110 cm in height and 150 in length. It is defined by a border (*pindo*), a central field (*mji*) and usually contains on the lower third a printed, proverbial inscription (*jina*).

Colours are also a factor in the outlook of the *Kanga* where Hamid (1996) reports that black and red stood for a woman's menstruation thus indicating to her husband that she was in that state. Matters of sexuality were also communicated through the *Kanga* from menstruation, purity of a woman's heart towards her husband to the matters of romance for couples as initiated by the woman. Other social messages were also communicated via the *Kanga*. In the study Hamid (1996) further reports that the *Kanga* was categorised from the *Kanga* for the bedroom use, a pair for prayers and a pair for the kitchen (apron).

Hamid (1996) goes on to give a historical development of the *Kanga* showing how it has developed over the years and from this we learn of written inscriptions on *Kangas*, inscriptions which carry messages that address various social issues. Thus, the wearing of the *Kanga* becomes a medium through which the message is disseminated. Hamid's (1996) study while interested in the nonverbality of the *Kanga*, it rests much on the written, colour and the various designs on the cloth from which Swahili women manipulate in communicating various messages. This study while interested in nonverbal communication, its focus is the visual

communicative notion of objects in use just as the cloth is; itself the material object in use within Swahili societies.

Beck (2001) studying the *Kanga* too, says the *Kanga* is understood as social interaction which constitutes a communicative genre from which the East African society such as in Zanzibar, she says, has come to accept it in solving communicative problems. Beck (2001:158) says the observed communicative genre brings about the idea that,

...communication is not permanently invented *ad hoc*, but is historically set within social processes of negotiations about prevalent ideals and norms of behaviour and specifically the position of individuals within their social networks.

What we read here is the position of the *Kanga* in the expressive communicative matrix of a people with cultural as well as religious formulations that strictly define communicative roles and modes of behaviours that are bound to violate cultural and religious relations should other means of communication be used. Beck (2001) notes that the *Kanga* is a compensation for communication barriers specifically ‘to voice domains of daily life that are subject to speech prohibitions: mainly conflicts, envy, jealousy, discontent, quarrels, but also sexuality and to a certain degree adhortations and advice.’ She declares that it is a code and effectively a semiotic sign critical in the communicative situations to which it is put.

Both Hamid (1996) and Beck (2001) agree that the *Kanga* is a sign coded in communicative systems within Zanzibar people. Their studies advance the importance of manipulation of material pieces in semiotic coding for purposes of constructing, maintenance of social relations and bonds through communication far removed from speech. They look at clothing just like what Leeds-Hurwitz (2012) did proving how the realm of nonverbal communication brings about visual communication in general.

Saidi and Pfukwa (2011) also studied clothing but they focused on the nonverbal communication in a Zimbabwean court of law. From ‘silence’ and its management in a court of law to the regalia as well as its respective colours, Saidi and Pfukwa (2011) show how the courtroom is marred with various messages even before a single word is uttered. They conclude that it is the nonverbal realm which determines much of what and how the ‘legal theatre’ is communicatively

played out and semiotics is their basic approach in their study. This study however moves further by looking at the actual material objects in visual cultural communication. In other words, it is like looking closely at a judge's robe in terms of its materiality and how the robe itself qualifies as a sign from which it acts as a code within a visual communication situation.

Another interesting study of nonverbal communication was done by Jacobson-Widding (1992) who in looking at the Manyika (a Shona dialect) people of Zimbabwe studied pots, pits and snakes and how in the cosmos of the Manyika are symbols in the social interactions of the people. She speaks of a symbolic language of culture which she finds as composed of artefacts making up a symbolic code-system used by the Manyika for cultural communication. She also draws parallels between symbolic language and spoken language when she declares that;

To learn the symbolic language of a culture is a process that may be compared to that of learning a spoken language. If you grow up in the culture concerned, you don't have to reflect upon the structure of its language –nor upon the meanings, syntax or phonology of that language. The *symbolic* (emphasis original) language of a culture is learned the same way (Jacobson-Widding 1992:7).

Using the said 'symbolic language of culture' (Jacobson-Widding 1992:7), Jacobson-Widding goes further to analyse some tools the Manyika use to communicate various messages for example finding most of them as having sexual connotations. A case in point are the tools crucial in food production from foraging, hunting and agriculture to grinding and cooking. It is the shapes, she claims, which mark female and male respectively –where erect stand for male and canonical, round as well as compact shape stand for female.

From the observed tools, Jacobson-Widding (1992) sees a systematic employment and creation of meanings that are culturally centred and crucial in defining social structure, social roles as well as acting as crucial strategies of dealing with communication barriers in a society where taboos (Chigidi 2009, Mashiri et al 2002) are a defining social aspect. Important to note is that one needs to be socialised in the visual cultural systems to be able to effectively anticipate and respond to the engraved meanings carried by the tools and not merely reflected as it may be perceived.

While Jacobson-Widding (1992) takes an anthropological approach this study borrows the idea of material objects as symbolic material creating the codes in information exchange. This study is linguistic in approach hence the idea of symbolic language is better explained in this study given that the tools Jacobson-Widding (1992) handles are in fact artefacts which are everyday tools but are employed in visual cultural communication of the Shona people.

While this study focuses on the BaTonga, there exist similarities in as far as notions of visual communication is concerned thereby cementing the call this study suggests of a systematic need to study material objects as visual communication from a linguistic-communication view in explaining as well as documenting how ethnic groups negotiate for space in the country. The study therefore picks up from the Jacobson-Widding's (1992) line of thinking although from a linguistic as well as semiotic point of view to argue for visual cultural communication and its role in cultural communication in Zimbabwe.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed semiotics as a theory, especially as advanced by Saussure (1966) and Peirce (1960) and was found to be general and inadequate to account for the Tonga cultural artefacts as sign pieces and systems. Sebeok's (2001) institutionalisation and modelling concept has been brought to the general Saussure (1966) and Peirce (1960) semiotics to tailor make artefactual ethnosemiotics which best accounts for the visual cultural pieces as signs and systems peculiar to the BaTonga as a unique ethnic group in Zimbabwe.

The chapter has also noted that revising western semiotic principles with a specific African in mind is not only beneficial but de-marginalising as well especially as the study seeks to de-marginalise BaTonga who have been marginalised especially from between 1957 and 1960 when the Kariba dam was constructed marking the physical dislocation of Tonga people and their subsequent cultural loss of heritage which they seek to restore in contemporary times.

The chapter ended by showing that there have been attempts in studying nonverbal communication from an incorporation of material objects as central codes in visual communication systems. Studies in the *kanga* dress by Beck (2001) and Hamid (1996) are cases

in point and Jacobson-Widding (1992) symbolic language of culture study of the Manyika provides a typical example of efforts in nonverbal or visual cultural communication studies closer to home. While Beck (2001) and Hamid (1996) generally focus on East Africa, Jacobson-Widding (1992) looks at the Zimbabwean case though disabled in that she centres the Shona as her subject group. The next chapter presents methodology informing data collection, presentation and analysis.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4. Introduction

Research as an academic activity incorporates technical approaches for it to be effective. Its conduct rests on the conception of the research philosophy the researcher subscribes to, strategies employed as well as research instruments developed and utilised for purposes of reaching research goals. Discussion of the selected research philosophy against other research philosophies is vital in any given research, therefore, this chapter discusses the research philosophy on which data for this thesis was collected. Ambert et al. (1995:881) find methods and hence methodology as,

...procedures or techniques, epistemologies constitute one's view of the world, one's assumption about how to know the social and how to apprehend its meanings, or what may be called one's philosophical orientation.

Against this background, this chapter presents the methodology of this thesis; research design, population, sampling, data collection or gathering, analysis and organisation. Following Willis (2007:14) the term methodology,

... is generally used to describe several aspects of study, the design, the procedures for data collection, methods for data analysis, selection of subjects and details of the specific treatments, if any.

The above is what this chapter aims to bring out in light of the aim and objects of the study. The chapter begins by discussing the research paradigm which is basically the comprehensive belief system of this study. The chapter then moves on to data gathering techniques employed by the study. A word on de-marginalising methodologies is given noting ethical issues this study was conscious to, ending with a stipulation of how data was analysed and presented.

4.1 Research Paradigm

A research paradigm can be thought of as a comprehensive belief system, worldview or framework that guides research and practice in a field. Guba (1990:17 in Creswell 2007:18) calls it 'a basic set of beliefs that guide action.' Walliman (2011:173) reminds us that what determines choice of particular data collection and analysis methods is the nature of what is to be found out. He advocates for a need to appropriate first on the type of analysis that is 'quantitative' or 'qualitative' required in investigating a research problem. Secondly, he advises on the type of data that needs to be collected in order to make the required analysis pertinent.

Qualitative and quantitative are typological research strategies from which Walliman (2011) implores that we should decide on one of the two for they will determine analysis. Quantitative research methods may be read as positivist (Willis, 2007) while qualitative research approach are anti-positivist and '...a strong distinction is generally made between quantitative and qualitative research' (Walliman, 2011:174). The differences between qualitative and quantitative lie in the nature of the data involved. Quantitative research uses numbers as data thereby putting the results of the research effort under very predictable constraints. Carter and Little (2007:1316) observed that by qualitative, research is social research in which researcher relies on text data. The quantitative or positivist paradigm shows little accountability to human feelings and emotion as it is 'obvious that subjective human feelings and emotions [are] difficult (or impossible) to quantify' (Walliman 2011:174). The positivist position believes that reality is stable hence its observation and description can be done from an objective point of view.

The BaTonga scenario under study, culturally determined nonverbal aspects, demanded that one chooses the qualitative paradigm which was the case. Qualitative research paradigms make use of data which cannot be instrumentally measured such as behaviours, feelings, thoughts, culture and even language. The data is usually humanistic and cannot be measured in a controlled environment determining the unpredictability of results. Creswell (2007:36) adopts Dezin and Lincoln's (2005:3) definition of qualitative research as,

...a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self...qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

Morrison (1989:24) concludes by saying a qualitative approach is basically a descriptive research tradition for data that cannot be instrumentally measured. Thus, when researchers conduct qualitative research, Creswell (2007:16) says they are 'embracing the idea of multiple realities.' The objective in qualitative research is to report these multiple realities as manifested in the people/individual's being studied. Against the foregoing, this thesis assumes a qualitative research paradigm.

Within the qualitative paradigm noted, the nature of 'qualitative' is further brought out and guided by other issues. Creswell (2007) qualifies Morrison's (1989) view by observing that qualitative studies should be largely ethnographic-interpretive. Willis (2007:6) coming from the interpretivist point of view, rejects positivism noting that 'what the world means to the person or group being studied is critically important to good research in the social sciences.' Interpretivists favour qualitative methods such as case studies, interviews or observations because according to Willis (2007), these are better ways of getting at how humans interpret the world around them.

In interpretive approaches, subjects under study are a representation of the otherwise 'underrepresented or marginalised groups' (Creswell, 2007:24) which is the case in point with the BaTonga people of Zimbabwe, who are a marginalised group in the country. The idea here was to choose methodological approaches that did not make the researcher further marginalise the subjects under study but to create a conducive environment to explore and understand as well as reveal specific cultural issues that serve as the epitome of disadvantaging and excluding the BaTonga people from the Zimbabwean heritage through the cultural communication channels available.

4.2 Research Design

Research design is best explained in a more pragmatic and simplistic way by Jakaza (2013:9) who states that;

Research design is an overall plan for a piece of research including four main ideas; the strategy, the theoretical frame work, the questions for who or what will be studied, and the tools used for collecting and analysing materials. Design situates the researcher in the empirical world.

Jakaza's view on some of the dictates of methodology above are well timed and this study is grounded on the same sentiments. It is important to point out that Jakaza's view is located within applied linguistics as he too advanced the above notion to situate his applied linguistic study in a proper applied linguistic situation. This study being an applied linguistics study also borrows this view on the understanding of research design however with some modifications given that this study employed material objects as its data for analysis.

Therefore, from Walliman's (2011) research strategies, in light of one of the four Jakaza's (2013) main ideas of research design, the study uses as its research design the case study strategy as it was deemed effective for this type of research given the nature of the data and research objectives. The BaTonga are viewed as a case which Mabry (in Alasuatari, Bickman and Brannen eds., 2009:214) find as the 'focus of study'. Given the form of research questions that the case study strategy addresses and its focus on contemporary events, it follows that much of what this research addresses regarding the BaTonga in Zimbabwe is best captured by this strategy.

4.2.1 Case Study

To discuss further the case study strategy, we note that 'The entire culture-sharing group in ethnography may be considered a case, but the intent in ethnography is to determine how the culture works rather than to understand an issue or problem using the case as a specific illustration' (Creswell, 2007: 73). Creswell (2007:73) further defines case study as 'research

[involving *sic*] the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (i.e., a setting, a context). Creswell sees a case study as ‘a type of design in qualitative research...an object of study...a product of the inquiry’ (Ibid).

From Walliman’s (2011) research strategies, this study uses the case study strategy as it has been deemed effective for this type of research given the nature of the data and research objectives. Yin (2009) defines case study as ‘an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident’ (Yin 2009:18).

In this study, the case study was used because BaTonga artefacts were explored in their bounded system (a case) from which multiple data collection techniques were employed to support the case study strategy. Observations, interviews, documents and pressure groups reports were used as sources of data for the study, to support the case study strategy. Creswell (2007) submitted that the case study is familiar in areas such as social science from which Sigmund Freud (psychology) is singled out as having favoured the case study. Researchers in medicine, law and political science are also listed as some examples. It should be noted that a number of studies reviewed in this study, for example Hodder (2009), used the case study methodology in archaeology to study the Baringo people of Kenya and O’Neil’s (2010) study of the Maya stone sculpture used the same strategy.

There are procedures which have to be followed for the case study to be successful and a detailed discussion is given below. The BaTonga were considered a case based on cultural, geopolitical as well as linguistic boundaries. The geopolitical and social boundaries managed to mark out the BaTonga as a clear case. Thus, the space along the Zambezi from the Zimbabwean side, that is, from Victoria Falls, Binga and surrounding areas, Hwange, parts of Gokwe to Kariba is the area under study since they are primary areas where the BaTonga reside. However, there were no clean beginnings and ending of boundaries to mark out the untainted socio-cultural space of the BaTonga since the same areas have either the Nambya, Ndebele or Shona people also being part of the people visible in the same areas. To some extent, the researcher can be considered as having marked out these as the boundaries for they adequately surrounded the case, that is, the

BaTonga people. Any BaTonga spaces observable outside these boundaries were considered as secondary spaces and were taken as represented by the primary spaces.

The advantage of considering the case study was that it allowed multiple sources of information to be used, as hindered above, such as interviews, observations and secondary published documents. As recommended by Yin (2003), published and unpublished documents, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observations and physical artefacts were used to as sources data. Through these, the researcher was able to come up with thematic analysis of the case however not for purposes of generalising but to understand the complexity of the visual cultural communication of the BaTonga. Analysis thus became holistic of the entire case. It also allowed presentation of the history of the case.

Case strategies rely on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing coverage in a triangulating fashion (Yin, 2009), hence, the research strategy was employed ethnographically. Frankham and MacRea (2005) found ethnography originating from anthropology. This involved living partially within the BaTonga society mostly in Binga and surrounding areas; parts of Gokwe (Simchembo) and Kariba. Fieldwork involved extended observations and recording of naturally occurring events and usage of artefacts supplemented by interviews helped put together the meanings of the culture being studied. Frankham and MacRea (2005:34) observed that, 'If we wish to understand the 'other' and how they behave, we need to suspend our taken-for-granted understanding and watch and wait for the meanings in what we see to become clear.'

The assumptions ethnography in general takes is that we can only begin to understand why people believe as they do and the stories they tell, if we see these actions and words as entangled in other 'worlds' and words that we cannot see or hear but that we need to gain insight into. Armstrong (2009:54) says in ethnographic study, data is gathered from what people 'say' and 'do' in certain situations in order to illuminate broader comparative questions. Armstrong (2009:55) finds ethnography as 'comparative' and 'should address central questions about the nature of human existence through a specific society and its cultural systems.' The study is thus an ethnographic case study of the BaTonga's visual communication through cultural artefacts. One can therefore say this study assumes a critical ethnographic case study methodology.

4.3 Data Gathering

There are various ways to gather data in any given research study. Chevalky (2001:14) defined data gathering as ‘the different ways through which data is derived from society.’ This then becomes the method by which data is solicited and recorded for purposes of processing or analysing it for reporting in a given study.

Marshall and Rosman (2011) observed that qualitative research relies on four methods for gathering data; these are participating in the setting, observing directly, in-depth interviewing and analysing documents and material culture. These are considered primary data gathering methods to which several secondary methods come in to complement them. This study was primarily observational and involved structured and unstructured interviews with the native BaTonga people mainly from Binga, Gokwe (Simchembo Villages) and Kariba. Though expensive, demanding and involving several trips to Binga, Gokwe and Kariba, it yielded valuable data.

4.3.1 Desktop Research

All research studies demand secondary sources for purposes of forming the background to the study (Walliman, 2011:177). In this research, much of the secondary sources (largely published books, journals, archival records and other written records) with a bias towards the topic were consulted to establish a solid background and point of departure of study as well as making up the body of literature review.

Desktop research involved an intense search and analysis of published material on visual communication, semiotics, BaTonga culture and research. Much of the published material was in the form of books and journals retrieved from various institutional libraries and fellow researchers’ personal libraries. This approach helped in the analysis of the data as well as establish a firm grounding on studies that have been done with interest in BaTonga, visual communication and culture.

Literature produced by pressure groups such as Basilwizi Trust, ZILPA, TOLACO, for instance their strategic plans, was consulted together with a body of literature that discusses material culture, visual communication, BaTonga discourses as well as literature discussing semiotics from which analysis and theorisation for the study was possible. The literature obtained from desktop research together with data gathered from participatory observations catapulted by information from interviews helped in the collection of data as well as its interpretation and analysis.

4.3.2 Observations

According to Marshall and Rossman (2011) observations are a primary research method which ‘entails a systematic noting and recoding of events, behaviours and artefacts (objects) in the social setting chosen for study’ (Marshall and Rossman 2011:98). The method has highly been used in educational research especially in classroom studies (Marshall and Rossman 2011). The method assumes that human ‘behaviour is purposeful and expressive of deeper values and beliefs’ (Marshall and Rossman 2011:98) of a specific community of people like the BaTonga in Zimbabwe.

Munhall (2003) noted that observations as a research method can be used in two distinct ways, which are either structured or unstructured, where structured observations are designed for purposes of recording ‘physical and verbal behaviour’ (Munhall 2003:306). On the other hand, unstructured ‘in the sense that it is unsystematic’ (Munhall 2003:307) observation is used ‘to understand and interpret cultural behaviour’ (Munhall 2003:306). Munhall’s (2003) position points towards the fact that there seem to exist two distinct ways of the same method separated by research paradigm.

Given the nature of this research which aimed to understand and interpret cultural communicative behaviour, specifically artefactual communicative behaviour of the BaTonga people in Zimbabwe, the unstructured observation seemed obvious. Munhall (2003) observed that structured observations fit under positivist paradigms and are greatly favoured by psychologists. The strength of unstructured observation method lies in that it is ethnographic in

outlook as well as allows researchers to enter the setting ‘with no predetermined notions to see the discrete behaviours that they might observe’ (Munhall 2003:307).

The other aspect was that, the researcher became versatile as he played multiple roles in the setting from ‘complete participant,’ for instance in become a complete tourist in Kariba, to ‘complete observer’ (Munhall 2003:307) in Binga and Simchembo (Gokwe). This can be compared to the structured where the researcher for instance was expected to demarcate clear boundaries between himself and the observed. However, it was difficult to follow the clear-cut distinction Munhall (2003) makes. Triangulation had to be done given that the observer was a stranger to the BaTonga community and by virtue of that fact it naturally demarcated the line between the researcher and the observed. Hence, triangulation of the two was necessary to bridge the gap between weaknesses of the two.

Observations were favoured for this study because they allowed use of both the eyes, hands and ears to collect data. Observational data is subject to interpretation by the researcher and creators of the data. The researcher has greater autonomy as compared to interviewing where the respondent determines where questions lead and often the researcher returns to the interviewee for verification of analysis. In this scenario the respondent controls research output. Hence data was captured in more natural circumstances. Munhall (2003:308) noted that observation ‘also captures the whole social setting in which people function...recording the context in which they work.’

Observations also allowed input from the physical environment, that is, the influence of physical environment in human behaviour hence the researcher was able to gain a rich picture of issues under study. All senses were involved in the collection of data, although sight and sound predominated observations in this case and involved interpretation of that sense data. The sound of the *buntibe* drum for example had to be heard, listened to and interpreted. Munhall (2003) was interested in the use of observations in clinical psychology research. While we benefit a great deal from her discussion, not everything was applicable to this study as it is not immersed in clinical psychology neither is it directed towards disciplines and medical professions where observation seems to be a key data gathering method.

Thus, Robert (2004) concludes that the process of studying the day-to-day activities, trends of human beings in real life contexts as well as their behaviour constitute observation. In the same vein Walliman (2011:179) says observations include listening as well as involvement in everyday face-to-face interactions. The researcher depended on both verbal and visual behaviour of the Tonga especially as interacted with in Binga, Gokwe, Kariba and surrounding areas, concentrating more on those situations organised or otherwise, where the three artefacts under study were found to be active.

In naturalistic observation, observers neither manipulate nor stimulate the behaviour of those whom they are observing. The main reason to observe was to gain a rich picture of the Tonga artefactual communication. But the broad observations had to include specific observational aspects such as participant observation.

4.3.3 Participant Observation

Nandhakumar and Jones (2002) say participant observation is an interpretive data-gathering method. This demands involvement in the social world chosen for study. Following Marshall and Rossman (2011:99) ‘immersion in the setting permits the researcher to hear, to see and to experience reality as participants do.’ However, it requires considerable amount of time in the setting. The researcher hence participated in some organised cultural festivals from which he was able to interact with the Tonga at the same time observing social as well as cultural acts pertinent to this study. This also became another way for obtaining data which was recorded in note form for further analysis.

Medical sociologists used participant observations (Rosenhan 1973) when they managed to get admitted to a mental hospital; became part of the field and managed to collect vital information and knowledge about the hospital and what it meant to be an inmate, however a ‘sober’ inmate in a mental hospital. Mars and Nicord (1984) took jobs as waiters to do a restaurant trade research. It was impossible for the researcher to become a Tonga as such rested to become a non-

participant observer where one merely observes and not observe as well as participate as was the case with Rosenhan (1973) as well as Mars and Nicord (1984).

In trying to circumvent shortcomings and challenges posed by interviews participant observations were favoured and used. During interviews informants being observed posed an obstacle on its own. Creating a natural setting became the main objective and aim and thus through participant observation the territoriality of data collection was also expanded. Research Assistants participated actively in activities where the *ncelwa*, *buntibe* drum and the Nyaminyami Walking Stick were used either for cultural, religious or social occasions. The researcher and RAs observed the religious and cultural festivals. One cultural festival observed and participated in was during the cultural week in May 2014 held in Simchembo Village 1 (Gokwe).

Participant observation posed its own problems. What was to be observed linked to the study was rather limited in the available span of time. Data was gathered from festivals, cultural gatherings but these were not as regular as the researcher preferred. Advantages of participant observations were that it accorded the researcher an opportunity to first-hand experience rather than the researcher having to rely on the retrospective accounts by others.

Accounts by others tend to have their biases. Disadvantages were that the environment was in some cases inaccessible. The BaTonga being observed would at times consciously or unconsciously change the way they behaved because they were being observed. There are studies however which have successfully employed the participant observation method effectively. For example, Nandhakumar and Jones (2002) used participant observation to study interpretive management information systems.

4.3.4 Research Assistants (RAs)

The researcher does not belong to the Tonga ethnic group neither does he speak Tonga hence there was need to seek the assistance of volunteer Research Assistants (RAs) who are Tonga and primarily living in Binga, Simchembo (Gokwe) and Kariba to help in data collection and

explanations. Three RAs were identified and they reside in Kariba, Binga and surrounding areas –Binga being the hub of the Tonga people in Zimbabwe. These were tasked to investigate deep seated notions on the Tonga artefacts mostly the *ncelwa*, Nyaminyami Walking Stick and *buntibe* drum. Through RAs the researcher also managed to gain insight into potential informants.

Choice of using the native Tonga as RAs helped bridge the gap between ambushing Tonga cultural life. So much research has been done on the Tonga and not all researchers have been considerate to the Tonga. This has caused a generally defensive stance and suspicion from Tonga who sometimes feel researchers are merely concerned with their research demands rather than the plight of the Tonga themselves. As such informants had knowledge of the people, language, taboos, protocol and other issues related to observances.

The most important criteria were that RAs were to be Tonga natives. This helped in gaining useful explanations mainly from the elderly Tonga men and women, given also that the old people in any society are, following Ngugi (1986), the moving granaries of knowledge. RAs by virtue of being Tonga natives are known by their respective communities and there was generally trust a condition pertinent for the collection of data by the current researcher who is merely a stranger to the Tonga people of Binga, Gokwe and Kariba areas.

4.3.5 Interviews

Face-to-face interviews with selected respondents deemed custodians of BaTonga culture and active members of Tonga society were conducted. Among the respondents were officials from pressure groups such as Basilwizi, BAC, Kulima Mbobumi Trust, ORAP and Silvera House as well as officials from government departments such as (Parks and Wildlife, Binga Museum, and District councils). The Tonga general public, (old and young, men and women) from existing residential areas and villages were randomly picked for interviews especially during gatherings or Tonga festivals such during the culture week in May 2014 in Simchembo Village 1.

Structured and unstructured interviews were used mainly to fill in gaps to the situations observed. O’Leary (2005:162) defines an interview as ‘a method of data collection that involves researchers asking respondents basically open ended questions.’ Miller (2003:11) on the other hand says interviews are ‘processes where researchers collect data through asking questions related to the field of study.’ Thus, interviews were favoured as a data gathering method where the asking of questions relevant to the study by the researcher to Tonga chosen respondents was done.

In conducting interviews, the researcher had to be systemic and operate within a scientific-driven system of interviewing. Both structured and unstructured interviews were used. These were distinguished based on the questions asked to which in structured interviews, structured questions defined the interviews while in unstructured interviews unstructured questions were also used. Maxwell (2004:161) says structured questions are the ones that ‘use pre-established questions, asked in predetermined order, using standard mode of delivery’; used in defined circumstances and if respondents were very busy. Unstructured interviews were rather open and had no predetermined responses. While they tended to produce a rather dense notion of information, they were useful in that they allowed respondents to discuss a wide array of BaTonga experiences and the researcher established some bonding with respondents. It also helped prepare the groundwork as well as selection of respondents for structured interviews.

In this research, open ended questions were favoured more as compared to pre-planned and standardised because using planned and standardised questions tended to create confinement of respondents and possibly reduce them to objects of study resulting in the study being biased and controlled by the researcher. Open ended questions allowed use of general questions to get the interview going and moving where ‘specific questions then emerge as the interview unfolds and the wording of those questions will depend upon the directions the interview takes’ (Punch, 2005:170).

Structured and unstructured interviews were thus used interchangeably. This was to strike a balance as structured interviews were found to be restrictive, rigid and created a tense conversational atmosphere. The subjects had to operate in a naturalistic environment as far as

possible although for the purpose of this research the environment had to be controlled somewhat to elicit vital information regarding the objects under study. Topics ranged from history, culture, social and religious issues unique to the BaTonga. However, political undertones would surface during discussions and information with no bearing to visual cultural communication was recorded during sessions but was less considered in the analysis.

Challenges faced with this technique was on its time consuming and difficulties of arranging formal meetings with selected respondents as sometimes they were busy and were not available as per appointments. Some elderly women were for example observed either going about their errands, carrying or smoking *ncelwa* and protocols had to be observed before gaining opportunities to interview them; in some cases, potential respondents would slip by due to barriers of language as well as a need to observe community and cultural protocols. The choice to interview was informed by Jones (1985) who observed that,

In order to understand other persons' constructions of reality, we would do well to ask them...and to ask them in such a way that they can tell us in their terms (rather than those imposed rigidly and *a priori* by ourselves) and in a depth which addresses the rich context that is the substance of their meanings (Jones 1985:46 in Punch 2005:168-9)

Interviews were necessary for gaining personal knowledge behind BaTonga experiences with artefactual objects and cultural communication. Face-to-face interviews were far more personal and the interviewer had to work directly with respondents although at times volunteer Research Assistants had to help explain or interpret some of the aspects provided. These interviews had to be face-to-face rather than telephone. There was need to read the physical environment, the nonverbal cues and this could not have been possible on the phone.

4.3.6 Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions would have created the most natural setting possible for elicitation of data. The presence of the researcher as the only outsider was to be easily overcome and informants were to play a leading role in soliciting data. A cumulative approach would make informants natural in conducting interviews to minimise suspicion. RAs played a big role in

organising the discussions especially in Hwange where a group of traditional leaders officially operating from the town were hoped to present valuable data on the Tonga but group discussions failed to materialise as the traditional leaders or RAs failed to meet the appointments or cancelled them last minute citing pressing commitments elsewhere.

4.3.7 Ethical considerations

In dealing with any group of people ethical considerations hold key to any credible study. The researcher had to be mindful of ethical issues in conducting the study. Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden (2001:93) rightfully observe that ethical issues ‘are present in any kind of research.’ The main reason for considering ethical issues is that,

The research process creates tension between the aims of research to make generalisations for the good of others and the rights of participants to maintain privacy (Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden 2001:93)

Thus ethics entail the need to do good and avoiding doing harm. To avoid or reduce harm certain ethical principles need to be practised. These ethical principles serve the purpose of protecting the human subjects and their material possessions and this is imperative. Bibber (2005) as well as Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden (2001) bemoan instances of unethical principles used in the name of scientific research citing Caplan’s (1992 in Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden 2001:93) observations on public outrage following the syphilis studies of between 1932 and 1972 to which African American syphilis patients were deliberately left untreated in order to study the illness.

Another study involved the 1950-1952 experiment involving about one thousand pregnant women who were subjected to a drug to prevent miscarriage, resulting in high rates of cancer and other abnormalities twenty years later to the siblings whose mothers had participated in the experiment (Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden, 2001:93). While these are American and medically oriented research unethical outcomes, they clearly show how damaging the research process can be to the participants of a given research.

Thus, Bibber (2005:86) reminds us that the moral integrity of the researcher is ‘a critically important aspect of insuring that the research process and a researcher’s findings are ‘trustworthy’ and ‘valid.’ In this research given its paradigm, there was personal engagement with research subjects hence ‘raising undue power, influence, and authority being welded in the research process’ (Bibber 2005:90).

When dealing with qualitative research, ethical issues are thus imperative. The researcher had to deal with possible ethical issues from various levels; from accessing the group to the effects one has on the participants. The participants were informed of their rights. This was to accord freedom realising that the desire to participate in the research depended upon the participant’s willingness to share their experiences.

Access to the setting and participants was also negotiated and this facilitated access to information for without such negotiated access, access to information was bound to be challenging. Participants were also assured that their information was for research purposes only and confidentiality was to be observed. Hence key ethical principles regarded informed consent mostly the respect of people being studied through observing their right to be informed of the study, the right to decide to freely participate and the right to withdraw anytime without penalty.

Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden (2001) say consent is a negotiation of trust, and it requires continuous renegotiation. Other ethical principles heeded were confidentiality (where pseudo names were used in reporting vital data even in recording notes), participant relationships, reporting of outcomes as well as explaining to participants the benefits and risks of participating in the study. The researcher was guided by the understanding that he was listening and observing the voice of the Tonga, as such they were being observed from their natural setting and as such participants were autonomous and were sharing information willingly. The researcher had to establish a balanced relationship to encourage acceptance and hence disclosure, trust and awareness of further ethical issues.

There was a great chance for the researcher triggering painful memories of a lost past especially memories as well as effects of the 1950s displacements. The story often told about displacement

of the Tonga is one of their physical removal and resettlement in the Zambezi to pave way for the construction of the Kariba dam (Colson 1971). During the time of displacement and resettlement the colonial state cared less about the welfare of the Tonga people on both sides of the border; instead they prioritised the flora and fauna which was affected by the devastating effects of damming processes (Colson 1971, Hughes 2010).

The BaTonga 1950s displacement also meant dislocation of livelihoods which had adapted to the Zambezi valley environment they once lived in. Prior to the displacement the Tonga had mastered optimal agricultural methods that ensured a number of options for securing food needs in the valley. But with inundation of the valley, they were translocated to semiarid lands which had high risks of crop failure—a situation which led them to become a “food-deficit people” (Magadza 2006:276) explaining the early famines during the time. Tonga ancestral graves were covered by water, various materials left behind and lives were lost either succumbing to famine or killed as they attempted to resist relocation. According to Colson (1971) the colonial regime hoped the Tonga would adjust, while their loss would be offset by the gain to those who would build the dam, use its power, or perhaps find a vacation home upon its lake.

Thus, the researcher had to be careful less he triggers sad painful memories of the past. Loss of culture and lack of recognition was like inflicting physical violence on the Tonga as such experiences and discussions of issues that would otherwise allude to the experiences had to be handled with extreme caution also given that the researcher is non-Tonga.

4.4 De-marginalisation

In studying ethnic groups which are otherwise marginalised, it requires methods or a methodological philosophy which is de-marginalising as well. Beeman-Cadwallaler et al (2011) explain and advocate for the use of decolonising methodology. They found this as a philosophy of data gathering methods and techniques which are mindful of the decolonisation processes and contexts. In this instance, we speak of de-marginalisation such as data capturing methods which are mindful of the de-marginalisation process.

4.5 Methods of Data Analysis and Presentation

When data has been collected during a research, its analysis is expected to follow systematic and well-chosen guidelines for the data to be meaningful. Following Abdul (ed.) (1999:10) ‘certain guidelines and patterns have to be framed to inform decisions’ in order to avoid a randomised analysis of data. The researcher was guided by semiotics as the model from which semiotic tenets were blended to analyse data which is largely visual.

Invocation of published literature on smoking pipes, drums, sculptors as well as material objects and culture was used to analyse data. Iconographic figures were used to show data gathered for further analysis and discussion. It was important to establish a body of material pieces in order to link the same in cultural communication processes specifically as observed in the visual cultural matrix of the BaTonga in Zimbabwe.

4.6 Conclusion

The methodological approach taken by this study was a critical-interpretive-ethnographic case study. It involved much of triangulation of paradigms and data collection techniques. While research was largely biased towards qualitative, quantification was inevitable since artefacts under study were quantified for purposes of establishing a manageable scope which covered a relatively wide area in cultural communication of the BaTonga people in Zimbabwe. A number of tools were used to solicit data such as face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions and observations. All these were designed with high ethical considerations in mind. The chapter thus has discussed the methodology which informs this research, the next chapter presents and analyses data.

Chapter 5: Data Presentation & Analysis

5. Introduction

The BaTonga like any other community have semiotic pieces which make up the nexus of their livelihood. This study discovered that there are so many of these pieces and they may require independent research to receive due attention. However, this study reports on three artefactual ethnisemiotical pieces which are the *ncelwa*, *buntibe* and Nyaminyami Walking Stick.

This chapter presents data on the three BaTonga cultural pieces viewed in this study as cultural communication codes. These are the *ncelwa*, *buntibe* and the Nyaminyami Walking Stick. The chapter presents each artefactual piece, describing its features, texture and general existence. The chapter highlights meanings assigned to them by the BaTonga under specific cultural communicative contexts. It is within these contexts do we observe how the BaTonga negotiate for cultural space in Zimbabwe's mainstream cultural sphere. The chapter begins by looking at the *ncelwa*, then moves on to the *buntibe* drum and ends by looking at the Nyaminyami Walking Stick.

5.1 *ncelwa*, the BaTonga smoking pipe

Smoking as a social activity is not a new phenomenon among the African people. Scholars have drawn interest in smoking especially archaeologists and ethnographers who in trying to understand the history of the African people have used archaeological evidence of smoking pipes to determine the African position on smoking. Popular scholarly views such as claims by Clark (1998) place smoking in Africa as having introduced by the Portuguese. While these claims could be substantiated in some parts of Africa especially the smoking of tobacco, van der Merwe (2005:147) commenting on the South African context, disputes these claims by observing that 'Khoisan peoples smoked a variety of aromatic materials before European contact....' Phillips

(1983:308) presenting Shaw's 1938 archaeological findings advances the idea that 'tobacco was ordinarily snuffed or chewed among southern Africans.'

Landau (2010) studying the history of the Tswana, however focusing on rainmaking, finds smoking as central to the ceremonies but also to the social fabric of the Tswana people. He says among the Tswana, smoking tobacco was associated with powerfulness or sharpness, and 'the head rush of inhalation, and the mini-orgasm of the sneeze, and so with "life force" or "breath" (*moya*)' (Landau 2010:82). He also notes that ethnic groups would also define themselves or be defined by others through the practice of smoking. The other declaration made by Landau (2010) is that smoking has other social roles such as its associations with fertility. He says,

In the 1950s, pouches of tobacco (*segwana*) were carried back and forth from the Tswapong Hills to the Blauwberg on the Mogalakwena River to bring rain and better the crops, marking chiefs' alliances that might prove critical during droughts. Old women even today pinch the scrotums of little boys – called *segwana*, tobacco pouch – and pantomime a huge *gogasnort* of their fingers, and exclaim "Strong!" or "He's going to be a man!". Rain and inhaling tobacco were linked in chains of signification because they entailed related activities. Tobacco was therefore one node around which power was "harmonize[d] with experience" ...in the rain-making activities of the chief. It was not the only one, of course. The idea of pula or rain attached among highveld people not only to smoking and snorting (Landau, 2010:82).

We note how smoking had a special place within the Tswana social and cultural set up. Landau (2010) does not mention what type of instrument they used, if any was involved. Earlier however, Phillips (1983) had concluded that the San people of the Southern African were thought to be the authors of tube smoking pipes attached to water chambers although scholars like Du Toit (1975) feel the San African invented nothing and feels the Arabs did invent the piece. Philips proclaims,

the San people (or 'Bushmen') of Southern Africa found that they could cool the smoke from their pipes, and thus invented the peculiar 'dagga [cannabis] pipe' of Southern Africa (Phillips, 1983:316).

Its usage in this conclusion is hence obviously connected to cannabis smoking. A key conclusion one can make at this point is that Africans, especially the Southern Bantu, had smoking as part of their culture. BaTonga elders confirm that smoking has always been part of their socio-cultural

being and the *ncelwa* is evidence of a long cultural and historical practice which continues even to this day. BaTonga elderly women interviewed say *polya* or tobacco is what they smoke using the *ncelwa*. In an interview with Viola Mwembe at Binga Cultural Centre, she indicated that what the elderly women smoked using *ncelwa* was (Greenleaf) common tobacco. Mapfumo (2013) also retorted that,

Smoking is essential in the life of BaTonga women. Most women enjoy the *ndombondo* or *nchelwa* smoke as they believe that the smoking boosts the immune system. They also see it as a unique way to relax and recharge themselves. Some of the BaTonga women say it helps them to have an open mind and see things differently and innovatively. Some cultural experts say the *nchelwa* smoking tradition has helped them to restore their pride and dignity in the wake of powerful Western cultural onslaught (Mapfumo, *The Herald* Saturday 25 May 2013).

What we observe is that smoking is part of BaTonga culture. The *ncelwa* is but a smoking instrument and a material object occupying an important domestic space within the BaTonga sphere.

5.1.1 What is *ncelwa*?

The *ncelwa* is a women smoking pipe for the BaTonga. It is sometimes called the *ndombondo* or *mfuko* in other BaTonga varieties. This is a smoking pipe which BaTonga women use for smoking tobacco. Men have their own smoking pipe which is smaller than the *ncelwa* called the *chete* mentioned here for comparison but not subject for discussion as it will require an independent research in future. **Figure 2** below shows the shape of the *ncelwa* and **Figure 3** shows a picture of the actual type of a version of the *ncelwa*.

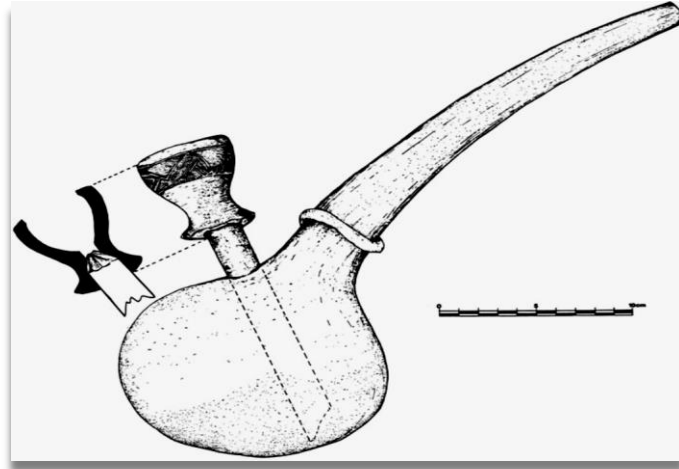


Figure 2: The *ncelwa* sketch
Source: van der Merwe, 2005:147



Figure 3a: The BaTonga *Ncelwa*
Photo by Saidi U 2013



Figure 3b: The *ncelwa* in use
Photo: By Saidi U. 2014

As **Figures 3a** and **3b** above show, the BaTonga *ncelwa* is a long handled gourd water-container through which smoke is inhaled. The gourd has a hole on one end where a male clay stem is fixed to hold embers and *polya*. The calabash-gourd to which the clay male stem is attached, acts

as a water chamber while the long second gourd-stem is then used to inhale the smoke from the gradually burning *polya*, placed inside the clay male stem but not directly on top of the embers. The *polya* is burnt slowly by conduction, conditioned by sorghum; and the smoke bubbles through water to give the women who smoke it an extended filtered smoking pleasure. **Figure 4** below shows the *ncelwa* clay *polya*-embers holding cup.



Figure 4: *ncelwa* clay *polya*-embers holding cup

Photo by Saidi U 2014.

From **Figure 4** above, the clay holding cup or bowl is the *polya* furnace in which *polya* is placed first in the holding cup, sorghum comes second and lastly the embers are placed right at the top. What is visible in **Figure 4** are embers, whitish in colour showing their state of liveliness at the time of photographing.

The *ncelwa*, given that it is women's smoking pipe, is also found to have decorations on it. Most of the decorations are done using beads. Mweembe (2014) indicated that the BaTonga women extensively used beads historically for their clothing and jewellery. Women who smoke the *ncelwa* are the owners of the smoking pipe and hence design it with women-oriented elements such as beads for personalisation or for asserting gender connoted messages. **Figures 3a, 3b** and **4** show layers of coloured beads neatly hung around the neck of the *ncelwa*. Observations made at a cultural festival in Simchembo village on 22 May 2014, did show that most if not all pieces of *ncelwa* had decorations of beads hung neatly and magnificently around the necks of the smoking pipes.

5.1.2 Who manufactures the *ncelwa*?

The *ncelwa* is made by BaTonga women themselves using readily available material. The material includes squashes, reeds, clay and scrap metal. The squash is a plant, dried and has seeds removed from a small hole drilled on the bulb-squash area. Clay from the Zambezi flood-prone areas is used to make the 'cup' or bowl which makes the 'head' of the male stem. Beads of various colours are sewn together or coloured cloth is knitted together and hung around the neck of the *ncelwa*.

While the material used to make the pipe is cheap and simple, the created material piece is far from being simple. It is a sophisticated artefactual semiotic piece that reflects a great degree of ingenuity as it reflects sophistication mostly as created by a people, women in particular, who are considered 'backward' and 'unschooled'. It is this sophistication and ingenuity that attracts, in

part, tourists to areas like Binga. This same sophistication gives the *ncelwa* its unique place within the BaTonga cultural artefactual semiosphere.

5.1.3 Who should smoke the *ncelwa* among the BaTonga women?

The *ncelwa* traditionally is first used by women from a tender adolescence age. Msaka (2014) confirms this point but asked on what exact age or how young; it is not certain at what age exactly would BaTonga women start using *ncelwa* in their social and cultural being. Young BaTonga women like Viola Mweembe and Lambiwe Mweembe hinted on 18 years of age. The obvious ‘18 years’ mark could be influenced by the modern legal notion age of majority. Msaka, an elderly BaTonga woman, reported that she started smoking when she was still young during her puberty stage.

The Binga Museum houses two unique photographs (not reproduced here given the policy around them) taken in the 1940s where two young girls were photographed happily clinging to their *ncelwas*. The way the *ncelwa* is held by the two young female adults reflects how they seem to have just been initiated into the ‘new fashion’ (of smoking *ncelwa*). The two also show a similar attachment and association with other aspects (dress, the piercing of the nose) around them as they appear very happy as shown by their natural smiles with front teeth knocked out as per the BaTonga identity requirements of the time.

Against the above and reports by elderly women interviewed in Simchembo, traditionally too, the researcher discovered that smoking *ncelwa* was like ‘fashion’ among the BaTonga and a young woman or a young adult BaTonga woman who was found unable or not using the *ncelwa* (not smoking), was considered as one who was not moving with times. Hence, the *ncelwa* one can retort by saying it probably became a mark of graduating young BaTonga girls into adulthood. They would then smoke the *ncelwa* from that time (or age) until their time of death. Probed on the *ncelwa* Andison Mumpande commented that the *ncelwa* was always central to the life of a BaTonga woman and that even today mostly the elderly women continue the practice.

Sadly, however, the young BaTonga seem to be shunning away from the tradition. Anderson Mumpande said ‘Christianity is responsible for the decay of the *ncelwa* smoking tradition.’

5.1.4 *Ncelwa* and *mbanje* (marijuana/cannabis) connection

Phillips (1983), in reviewing literature on smoking pipes in Africa, observes the early efforts by the Western scholars to establish smoking pipes and mainly tobacco and its link to Africa. While he mainly focuses on West Africa, he reflects that early western scholars observed mainly the water smoking pipes as linked to the smoking of marijuana, cannabis and the smoking of tobacco as begun with the coming of the Portuguese traders in Africa. Van der Merwe (2005:147) however thinks the water pipe has Arab origins and he says ‘The Arab water pipe (*hookah*), of possible Persian origin, is equally widespread in East, Central and South Africa.’ This Arab link also coincides with the introduction of cannabis which according to van der Merwe (2005) became what he calls the widespread smoking material, later mixed with tobacco when it was ‘introduced’ to Africa by Portuguese.

Furthering his argument van der Merwe (2005) using Sebanzi findings in Zambia advances the idea that in Sebanzi area, archaeologists found a tradition of pottery where clay was used as a raw material for making material objects. This then demonstrated that clay pipes of non-Arab design were used in Zambia as early as *ca.* A.D. 1200, apparently by ancestral Tonga people (van der Merwe, 2005:148). Phillipson (1965) advances the argument that given that tobacco could not have made its way to Zambia at this time the earlier pipes (see *Figure 5* below) were used for smoking cannabis.

There was ‘no technology to test evidence of cannabis residues at the time of the archaeological excavations and the pipes have not in recent years received analysis’ (van der Merwe 2005:148) meaning that there still remains no direct evidence for cannabis smoking at Sebanzi (in Zambia) although van der Merwe (2005) maintains that it still remains the ‘most reasonable explanation’ (van der Merwe (2005:148).

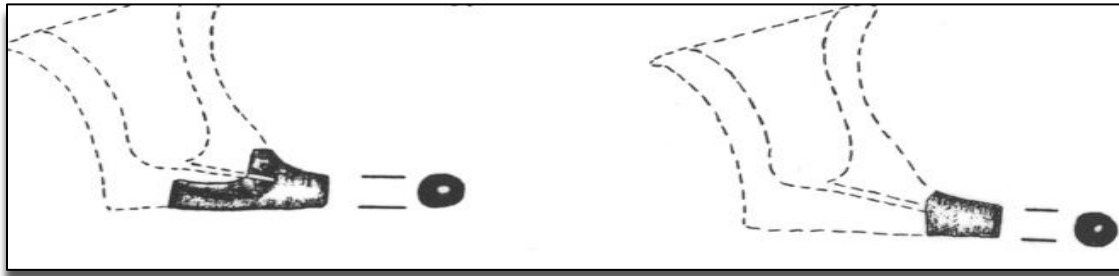


Figure 5: Sebanzi clay smoking pipe

Source: van der Merwe, 2005:148

Elaborating on the above smoking pipe (**Figure 5**), scholars like van der Merwe (2005) conclude that such pipes ‘represent an indigenous African design’ implying that cannabis smoking had been smoked in the African interior for a long time before *ca.* A.D. 1200 as well as stimulating the development of local, non-Arab pipe designs. The Arab water pipes and the local pipes are both linked to cannabis smoking in Africa. If we are to consider the limiting archaeological evidence presented by the likes of van der Merwe (2005) one concludes that the water pipe has been adapted in many forms by African users an example which we observe among the BaTonga in the form of *ncelwa*; named, used and fitted within the BaTonga cultural map.

The BaTonga popular smoking pipe has also been at the centre of controversy especially in terms of its functional use and interpretation by outsiders. The stereotyping of cannabis smoking has not been given grounding even in the contemporary times. This stereotyping can be traced back to the early western scholar-popularised-literature on smoking and smoking pipes. Phillips (1983:302) observed that African smoking pipes are of two general types:

...those with an angle between the bowl and the stem (or stem socket), also called elbow-bend pipes; and those with no such angle, also called barrel-pipes or tube pipes. The former type is found all over the continent and is ethnographically associated with tobacco smoking. The latter type is found in the eastern, southern and central areas of the continent where it is ordinarily attached to a chamber to form a water pipe. These water pipes are commonly associated with the smoking of cannabis in Africa.

From the taxonomic view Phillips brings in we observe the *ncelwa* falls within the second category of barrel-pipes or tube pipes where an extra water chamber makes it a water smoking-

pipe. The water chamber is perhaps what makes scholars like Phillips conclude that its use in smoking is closely associated with ‘the smoking of cannabis in Africa’ (Phillips, 1983:302). While this might be true in other unspecified parts of Africa, with regard to the BaTonga *ncelwa*, there was no evidence found to substantiate this claim.

Elderly women interviewed in Binga area disputed the cannabis claim and this was also supported by the fact that the smoking was openly done, (given legal issues and state positions on cannabis in the country). The smoking was openly done, and women along the Binga-Kamativi road were even seen carrying and smoking *polya* through the *ncelwa*. In Simchembo, BaTonga women attending a festival gathered (see for example *Appendix I*), before, during and after the official parade.

During the greater part of this social and cultural gathering, BaTonga women smoked openly and the researcher manipulating olfactory searched for traces of cannabis smell and there was none. The aroma of burning embers perfumed the atmosphere and not even the smell of *polya* (tobacco) could be picked up. Therefore, one can make a reasonable conclusion that the *ncelwa-mbanje* is but a myth advanced by scholars and contemporary Zimbabwean citizens to misrepresent and denigrate the BaTonga by associating them with cannabis smoking in a manner that makes them appear as weed smokers.

It was indicated that *polya* was smoked and there is evidence to this effect and not cannabis which was not substantiated. Nyathi (2005) also confirms that BaTonga women smoke *polya* and disputes cannabis smoking. Mpande and elderly Msaka denied the smoking of *mbanje* but the tobacco which Msaka even said the tobacco itself was actually and even today is still, farmed by her and her other elderly colleagues.

Mbanje smoking was observed to have been a cultural practice in the BaTonga culture. The representation of the flora-motif on the Nyaminyami attests to this. Moina in Kariba submitted that BaTonga in their traditional historical pre-colonial times smoked *mbanje* this is why it was represented on the Nyaminyami stick as a motif. She could not clarify however whether women smoked *mbanje* or whether the *ncelwa* was a tool for smoking *mbanje*.

Another twist to the *mbanje* claim is centred on how the Nyaminyami Walking Stick has come to have the *mbanje* motif. When we take a comparative analysis on contemporary Sticks with the original piece which is housed in Binga museum; on the original Stick, the *mbanje* motif is missing yet contemporary copy-pieces the *mbanje* weed is represented. One can conclude that contemporary sculptors most of whom are Shona (mostly Korekore in Kariba), have come to add some aspects about BaTonga which Tawonameso could have left out. This could have had a bearing on the interpretations on the connections of *mbanje* smoking to the *ncelwa*.

5.1.5 *Ncelwa* modified *hookah*?

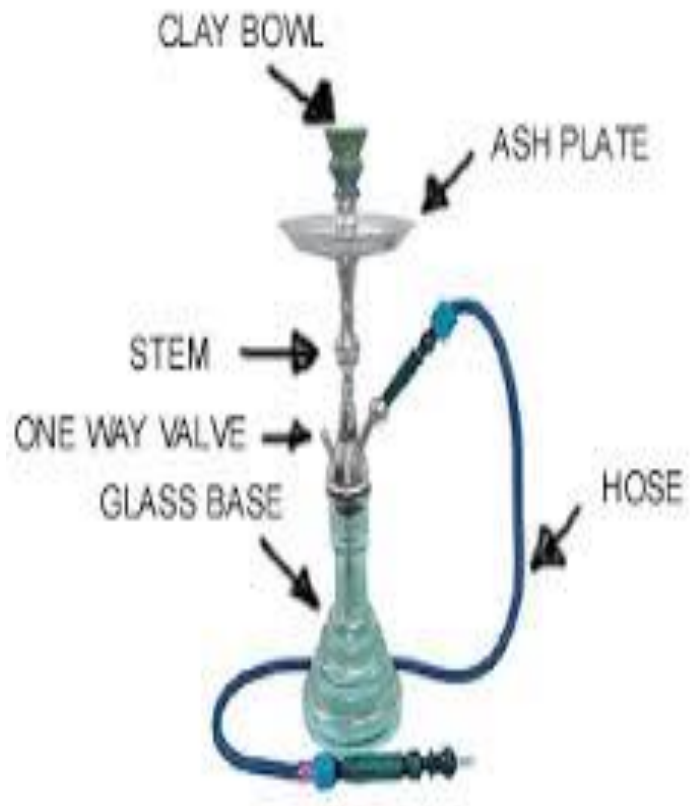
The BaTonga *ncelwa* is a material piece and its analysis makes us learn that it is a water pipe which could be classified under the same class of water smoking pipes of the world like the Arab *hookah* pipe. It has three key elements which are the fired-clay bowl, an aperture at the bottom made and lastly a water container through which the smoke is cooled. The vertical stem, usually a hollow reed, connects the bowl and the water container. The latter is a squash with a long neck, through which the smoke is drawn into the mouth.

The Arab *hookah* pipe is credited to be generally of Arab origin and commonly named based on the material of the bowl base. For example, in present day Iran it is referred traditionally as the ‘Narghile’ which is derived from the Iranian word ‘nārgil’ or ‘coconut’ by virtue of the fact that the base bowl was made out of coconut shells. ‘Shisha’ is from the Persian (Iranian) word *shishe*, or ‘glass’. ‘Hashishe’ is also an Arabic word for grass, which may have been another way it is claimed of saying tobacco. On the other hand, *Hookah* may stem from Arabic ‘*uqqa*’, meaning small box, pot, or jar. Both names refer to the original methods of constructing the smoke/water chamber part of the *Hookah*. The Arab water pipe took its name largely based on the material which was used to make the bowl base. In all cases the smoking pipe was also designed for smoking tobacco and figures below show the Hookah Shisha.



Figure 6a: The Hookah Shisha Pipes

Source: <http://www.shishainfo.com/hookah-shisha-history.htm>



Source: <http://www.cigarette-store.biz>

Figure 6b: Features of the Hookah Shisha pipe



Source: <http://www.9channel.com>

Figure 6c: The Hookah-*ncelwa* connection

As **Figures 6a, 6b** and **6c** show, the Arab *hookah* is a tobacco smoking pipe and **Figure 6c** resembles or is resembled by the *ncelwa*. This is not however to suggest that the *ncelwa* informed the creation of the *hookah* or vice versa; and against the limits of this study, evidence of such could not be established. What the study established however is that both pipes are smoking water pipes with the *hookah* aligned mostly to male smokers while the *ncelwa* is purely used by BaTonga women. The two smoking pipes are defined by a seemingly similar technological concept of creating a healthy way of smoking.

Regarding the Arab *hookah*, it is claimed that it has now in modern times come to be accepted as a tobacco smoking tool and the technology has seen various improvements and further designs. The usage is also reported to have been extended, especially by Westerners, to the smoking of what are regarded as illegal drugs such as marijuana (*mbanje*) because of its ability to filter considered toxic substances from the drugs.

What therefore came out of the study was that *mbanje* smoking was a BaTonga practice but it was not the substance that was smoked using *ncelwa*. Mpande claimed that BaTonga men were the ones who used to smoke *mbanje* using a different smoking pipe from the *ncelwa*. This traditional practice was probably another reason why conclusions made on the *ncelwa* quickly pointed towards *mbanje* smoking by BaTonga women.

Thus, two seemingly different views could be thought of as having necessitated the *ncelwa-mbanje* smoking myth. First, the shape and technology of the *ncelwa* archeologically interpreted by being linked to the Arab *hookah* (an artefact used to smoke *marijuana*) has seen the myth transformed into a seemingly reality that has succeeded in the stereotyping of the BaTonga women as *mbanje* heavy smokers. There is however no archaeological evidence directly linking the *ncelwa* to *mbanje*-smoking.

The second view regards the practice of *mbanje* smoking among the BaTonga. Like any other community in the world that has been connected to *mbanje* smoking as cultural practices, health or social practices, the BaTonga are not an exception. While this study merely focused on the *ncelwa* and the substance smoked, the marijuana smoking was not the focus of study. The study established that marijuana smoking in BaTonga like in any other smoking community was also a practice but given the focus of this study, the researcher did not pursue an in-depth search for *mbanje* smoking as this may be the subject of future researches.

5.2 *Buntibe* drum

Drums occupy a very important place in the matrix of African life. Africans treasure drums and they spiritually connect the African to the environment, the community and the spiritual world.

In that sense, they address pertinent identity issues for the African. In other words, drums provide a sense of belonging with the environment, the community and the spiritual world. The drum in an African community provides even notions of togetherness and communion.

Owusu-Frempong (2005) says of the Akan people of Ghana that the drum and the drummer play a pivotal in the rendition and facilitation of the enactment of communication during the festivals where for instance the drummer performs also a pedagogic role of an artist. He observes that to 'peoples of African descent, music is not only used to entertain. Music is also a source of energy and strength' (Owusu-Frempong, 2005:738). The BaTonga as Africans are found confirming the use of drums for various ritual festivals in the above said spirit. Their drum or drums are popularly known as *buntibe*. They define BaTonga as a cultural group given their shape and size as well as the cultural functions to which they are put.

One therefore notes that apart from being a mere musical instrument and an artefactual semiotic piece of connecting the community to broad aspects of culture, the BaTonga drum holds much of spiritual nexus with the ancestral world. In that sense drums in Africa hold profound, symbolic, historical and cultural meanings worth pursuing mostly from the drum itself and its visual semiotic existence.

In most African traditions, music and drums are at the centre of ceremonial activities and or celebrations as has already been highlighted. Any performance or celebration requiring rituals such as rainmaking, funerals and various religious commemorations calls forth drums and music to aid the rituals. Garabha and Matandangoma in Mungoshi's (1975) *Waiting for the Rain* are taken into a different spiritual world from which their behaviour emerge differently as may be observed in the world of the living, mostly when they start beating the drum. Chirere (2006:112) says Garabha is actually 'intriguing as he is central to the events and the ultimate meaning of this novel.' This is also backed by the author himself when he narrates that,

When one day I went to my local beerhall...and there I watched that jerusarema drum expert (now the national news signal) and the people –his group and the sense, the feeling of being family, and all of them each with his unifying drum and how the drum has been inherited from the past and how these long-gone ones are present now with us in the drum and it was like a prayer joining people past and present...no time

to dither seemed to be the message of that drum...I had meant the chapter in which Garabha plays the drum to open *Waiting for the Rain* but felt it would like pre-emptying the story (Mungoshi, 2002:31-32).

We get to see how in an African setting the drum, drumming and rituals are unified to knit as well as defined the wellbeing of the village or family. The drum-function discourse is further taken up by Schudder (2005:3-4) who observed that,

Possession dances (*masabe*) were especially important for women under stress in a male-dominated society. Their illnesses were apt to be diagnosed as due to possession by one of a number of dangerous or unfamiliar entities. Cure would require ritualized drumming and dancing paid for by kin, or an erring husband, that allowed the one possessed to be treated while being the centre of community attention.

One can therefore conclude that there is no musical instrument in Africa which is as widespread as the drum. It comes in various shapes and sizes as designed in ethnic oriented ways. Most African drums are made from wood the reason being its readily availability of the cheap material. African people have been associated with living near, around or in areas that are forest in nature and the readily available trees have been put to use by various African societies to make drums and other tools.

The drums are either round, small or tall; wide or short and mostly defined by each ethnic grouping which has its own characteristic type. Emberly and Davison (2011) speak of a pot drum called *thungwa* used by the Venda when performing *Tshigombela*. **Figure 7** below shows how the *thungwa* looks like:



Figure 7: Thungwa drum with mallet: *Source Emberly and Davison (2011:270)*

The various occasions to which they are put by a specific ethnic grouping also differ given the various ethnic demands. For instance, the *thungwa* drum with its supporting *mirumba* drums (see **Figure 8**) are used, mostly played by women and children, in Venda musical orchestra during Venda rituals such as healing rituals *mulombo* (Emberly and Davison, 2011:270).



Figure 8: Mirumba drums:

Source Emberly and Davison (2011:270)

5.2.1 The *buntibe*, drum or dance?

Identification of drums is popularly made with reference to the dance. We should, however, be mindful of the fact that drums onomastically do have their own specific names. For the *buntibe*, the same notion characterise the drum. While this is a musical instrument, some insight into the instrument is worthwhile pursuing. Below is a photograph showing a typical *buntibe* drum during a BaTonga festival.



Figure 9: The *Buntibe* drum: Photo by Saidi U. 2014

The drum is one of the five to seven conical-shaped drums. It is the giant drum requiring one or two people to support it in addition to the principal player. It can be played individually or in an assemblage or orchestra. In Ghana the Akan drums are considered ‘talking drums’ (Owusu-Frempong, 2005:735) because of their orchestra nature like the *buntibe*. Owusu-Frempong (2005) observed that the Akan assemblage drums are called *Antumpan* in which there is a set of female and a set of male drums. The distinction made, as can be noted is along gender lines.

The *buntibe* drum, however, falls within a class of membranophones given that the sound device is a membrane made out of animal skin. For the *buntibe*, historically goats and elephant skin were used to make the drum-membrane. A *buntibe* drummer in Simchembo pointed out that cowhide is now being used for large drums and goats’ skin for smaller drums. The hunting of animals, such as elephants, is no longer in the hands of the BaTonga communities and the animals are now protected by the Zimbabwean government through the department of Wildlife

and Conservation. Hunting elephants by the BaTonga community may be considered poaching. This explains a shift in the use of elephant skin for the large *buntibe* drum to use of cowhide given the domestic nature of the animal.

The stem of the drum is made out of wood from the Mahogany tree readily available in the BaTonga forest areas. Villagers in Binga and surrounding areas (mostly those into carpentry) could not ascertain whether the tree used was mahogany or Mopani but generally pointed out that mahogany was used for making the drum. The Mopani tree on the other hand is widespread in the area and the researcher concluded that there seem perhaps to be little knowledge between the distinctions between the two types of trees where mahogany and Mopani were used to refer to the same tree, the Mopani.

BaTonga chose elephant skin especially from the ear of the elephant and now cowhide for its durability due to thickness. The type of tree chosen also falls within the class of hardwood trees. A combination of hardwood for the wooden drum stem and a durable membrane guarantee durability and assurance that the drum will not burst or the stem cracks during performances. The chosen wood reflects Nthala's (2009:60) observations that '...drums frames from any other tree leads to premature cracking of the drum frame or general deformation of the drum.' BaTonga *buntibe* drummers echoed the same sentiments adding that the modern drums made of old 200 litre metal barrels would erode the *buntibe* practice and the *buntibe* sound will be impossible to produce from such a drum.

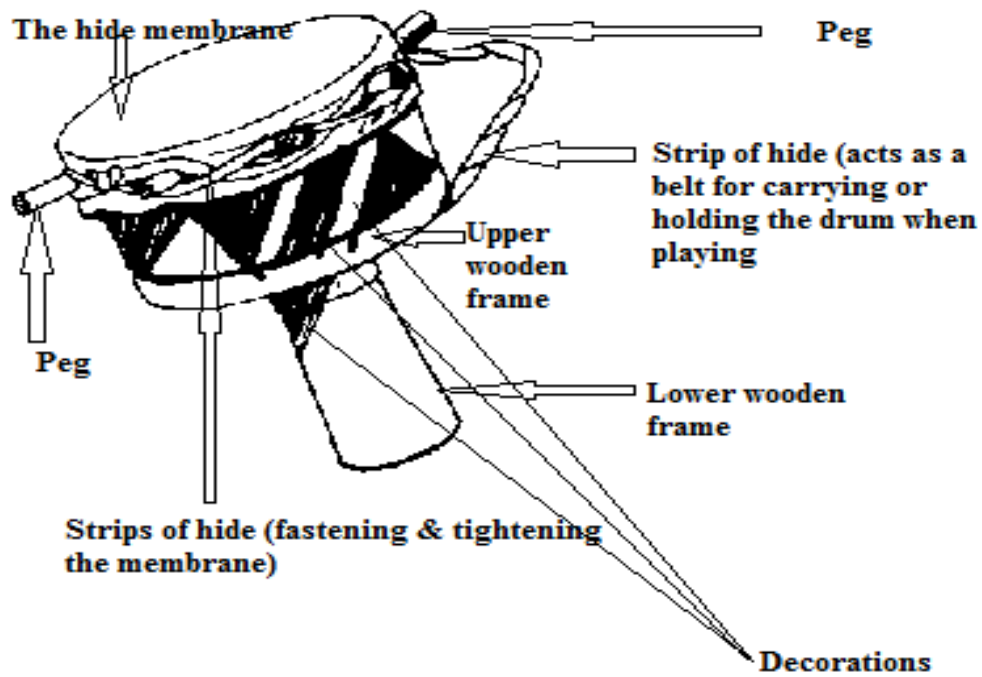
Siakavuba (1989) speaking of the BaTonga of Zambia and commenting on the *buntibe* says,

Buntibe, also called Ngoma (Drums), is a funeral dance performance during funerals of adults. However, it is only performed during mapwaila (second stage) of a female adult's funeral, while it occurs during both stages of burial and mapwaila of a male adult's funeral (Siakavuba, 1989:5).

He goes on to point out that the dance is organised on team basis, each team comprised of men, women and children from a *cisi*. Group members have various roles to play; men beat drums and blow *nyeele*, while women sing and dance. Among the BaTonga in Zimbabwe a similar arrangement was observed. However, while the major roles played by men are to play the drum

and blow *nyeele*, BaTonga women could also beat the drum, especially the smaller drums using a mallet. Within the orchestra, there are between five to seven drums played. The first one is called *Gogogo*, followed by *Mulindini*, *Mutantanda* and the *Mutundu*. The *Mpininga* is the drum that produces the highest pitch and the bass drum which is of considerable interest in this study is called *Mpondi*.

The *buntibe* drum has three basic parts: the wooden frame, the skin hide and the pegs or cords. The hide skin-membrane is fastened or fixed tightly around the mouth of the drum with pegs forming the head of the drum. The pegs are primarily to tighten the skin. Strips of hide are also used to create belts for carrying the drum or for holding when playing. The stem itself has two sections, the hollow upper part and the nose-like pipe at the bottom part of the drum. The bowl-like upper part and the nose-pipe below give the *buntibe* its uniqueness, making it different from other common cylindrical Zimbabwean drums. *Figure 10* below shows the sketch of the drum.



Sketch by Saidi U. 2014

Figure 10: Sketch showing the key features of the *buntibe* drum

The *buntibe* drum looks like an inverted bottle with a large bowel and a thin neck. The upper section of the stem has various designs where *msila*, a special paint, is used to decorate the drum.

Figure 11a below shows the upper part of the drum.



Figure 11a: The *buntibe* with decorations (Binga Museum) (Photo by U. Saidi)

The wooden pegs while they hold the membrane cowhide are also used as handles for carrying the drum during the playing. It should be noted that when the drum is being played the ensemble or orchestra is characterised by movements that is, the drummers and the dancers move from one place to another. *Buntibe* requires space as opposed to say the Chewa gulewamkulu *nyau* of Malawi (Nthala, 2009) for example where the drums have fixed positions from which players can operate from. Given that the drum is heavy and that the drum has to be played while in motion most of the time, it is thus designed to allow carrying from one position to another within the defined arena. An extra cowhide ‘belt’ may also be fastened to the drum for purposes of carrying.

The decorations on the drum also differ and may also speak of their artists. In *Figure 11a* above, the diamond patterning is the dominant design but wildlife drawings may also be observed on the *buntibe* for example *Figure 11b* below,



Figure 11b: The decorated drum (Photo by U. Saidi)

5.2.2 The place of *buntibe* in the BaTonga cultural matrix

Traditionally, BaTonga elders say the *buntibe* was primarily played during funerals or spiritual rituals. Manyena, Fordham and Collins (2008:308) say the *buntibe* had functional roles when ‘performing religious ceremonies, such as appeasing the ancestral spirits (*kupiila*) or rainmaking

(kupundula)...’ They also took stage during entertainment which has become its focal point in contemporary times especially during any BaTonga gathering involving BaTonga rituals, cultural expression and performances.

Owusu-Frempong (2005) observed the place of rituals and their conduction in the cultural expressive life of the African people. He says,

African festivals are a tool of community gathering and unity and place us at the centre of our culture and social environment. They are also a medium of cultural education and intergenerational communication and play an important role in the preservation of our cultural heritage, transmitting knowledge and our experiences as a people to future generations (Owusu-Frempong, 2005:730).

Owusu-Frempong’s (2005) conclusion is relevant to the BaTonga. Given their geographical and historical terrain much of their cultural practices are still observed such as the smoking of *ncelwa* and various other cultural festivals although they face erosion from forces such as Christianity. Historically, BaTonga elders spoke of hunting and fishing, victory or coronation festivals. This was in line with what Owusu-Frempong (2005:733) found that ‘In the life of the community, there are planting festivals, hunting and fishing festivals, victory, coronation festivals, and many others.’ What is important to observe however is the fact that the festivals or rituals are tied admirably to the community by the drum and for the BaTonga, the *buntibe* does exactly that.

5.3 The Nyaminyami Walking Stick

The Nyaminyami Walking Stick is a depiction of the BaTonga people through the river spirit, the Nyaminyami. The Walking Stick is an immortalisation of people of the river, *basilwizi*, and their religious spirit which is well respected by the BaTonga. The walking stick depicts a creature created from human perception showing a head of a fish and a snake-like torso. There is, however, more to the walking stick than the spiritual representation. The walking stick has on it motifs that mark key socio-cultural and communicative being of the BaTonga.

5.3.1 The BaTonga Nyaminyami

The Nyaminyami is the BaTonga life-giving spirit living in the Zambezi River. Over the years BaTonga have built their deeper and more compelling religious beliefs around the Nyaminyami as well as in also creating a more binding social structure for themselves as a community. Nyaminyami is believed to be the BaTonga spirit that has not only ruled the giant river but has also been at the service of the BaTonga in terms of protection as well as helping BaTonga in times of need such as drought.

BaTonga elders interviewed in Kariba, Gokwe, Binga and surrounding areas reflected allegiance to the Nyaminyami spirit as far as they seek connection with the river. While much on the Nyaminyami has become more of myths mostly as interpreted from modernist perspectives as well as from western oriented ways, there is a great deal that BaTonga elders still recount of what they partake of the Nyaminyami. First, that Nyaminyami is BaTonga spirit who sometimes is erroneously presented as a Shona spirit by western tourist scholars.

There are two key factors that link BaTonga to the Nyaminyami; the Zambezi River and the legendary story that has emerged especially during the construction of the Kariba Dam wall. It was observed that the Nyaminyami Stick is the common marker of BaTonga presence in Kariba as compared to say the *ncelwa* and even the *buntibe*. Part of the reason one respondent said was that Kariba has become peri-urban and as such BaTonga in the area shy away from continuing to practice their various cultural expressiveness such as smoking *ncelwa*.

BaTonga elders say that allegiance to the Nyaminyami was paid through performing ceremonial dances where even the *buntibe* drum would play a part. BaTonga believed that Nyaminyami is the ruler of the water and people would feed from his own meat during such times of need such as hunger. There remains elusive hard evidence of locals who have actually seen it. Elders in Binga proclaimed having not seen it but directed that their kinsmen in Kariba areas must have knowledge of those who have seen it to explain or give details especially its size.

The myth surrounding the ‘fate’ Nyaminyami faced regards the completion of the dam wall. It is claimed from the myths that Nyaminyami had visited his kin and people downstream and left his wife behind at Kariva (from which the name Kariba emerged) where he was believed to be residing (Pfukwa and Saidi, 2014). Upon his return, he found the wall cutting him off from his wife. There are reports and claims of occasional earth tremors in and around Kariba thought to be caused by him (see also Hughes 2010), looking for his wife and BaTonga believe that one day Nyaminyami will be reunited with his wife. Thus, the Nyaminyami myth has also developed into a love and family story or folktale (Pearce, 1993).

5.3.2 The Nyaminyami Walking Stick & its motifs

Rainos Tawonameso a sculptor from the Shona people is credited for having immortalised the Nyaminyami Walking Stick but this has not gone without controversy. The creation by Rainos was purely for economic reasons as well as for tourist attraction purposes. As a sculptor he created a walking stick from Mopani tree depicting as an artist his surroundings and by then he had relocated from his home area in Bikita to Kariba. Given the prominence of the Nyaminyami legend in Kariba and surrounding areas, Rainos immortalised a great deal of what he saw around him as a representation of the BaTonga which was quickly bought by the tourist west from which they claimed that it represented the Shona culture.

Considering some historical underpinnings of sculpturing in Zimbabwe Pearce (1993) made important observations. Firstly, she notes that the commercial success of Shona sculpture is wrongly credited to its so called ‘authenticity and autonomy’ (Pearce, 1993:85). She says the best explanation to the success of the Shona sculpture is the ‘modernist tastes of white expatriates during the 1950s and 1960s’ (Pearce, 1993:85). She rejects the idea that sculptures have ‘rooted connections with African modes of thought and in its African aesthetic’ (ibid). However, the sensibilities of an Englishman, Frank McEwen and the Director of the Rhodesian National Gallery between periods 1957-1973 (Pearce, 1993:86) influenced a great deal to development and thematic reflections of the sculptures in the country.

Frank McEwen appreciated and promoted African art; established centres to promote sculpturing consequently establishing overseas higher market for the art. Notable schools established were Workshop School art (Shona sculpture) and the same spirit gave rise to centres such as Tengenenge established in 1966 by Tom Bloomfield and earlier in 1940 Canon Paterson had established the Cyrene centre outside Bulawayo and Father Groeber had one in Serima. Pearce (1993) says Paterson encouraged his students to draw themes from observations and from daily experiences, McEwen on the other hand encouraged religious, folklore reflections given his belief in the primitive uneducated nature of the Africans as the key ingredient to art for they were close to nature as compare to the trained artists. Hence ‘sculptures were encouraged to deal with African religious and folklore beliefs and domestic subjects; with metamorphosis, trance spirit focus and folk-tales’ (Pearce, 1993:97).

While the material used became largely stone, we learn that Africans who signed up for sculpturing engaged in a trade largely controlled, influenced and at some point censored by the Europeans. As the industry grew to the times of Rainos Tawonameso, ‘The artists are therefore compelled by market forces to remain with the known taste of overseas buyers and are constrained to produce “high” art with noble but mysterious themes’ (Pearce, 1993:96).

An analysis of the Nyaminyami Walking Stick can be read against the above brief sculpturing background. *Figure 12a* below shows the purported original Rainos Tawonameso piece as housed in the Binga Museum today.



Figure 12a: Photo of the Nyaminyami Walking Stick
Photo by U Saidi courtesy of the Binga Museum May 2014

Mweembe indicated that the Nyaminyami Walking Stick that the Binga Museum houses is the original piece. This means that all the walking sticks of a similar kind sold in tourist centres such as in Victoria Falls are copies of this piece. Sculptors who make and sell them, for instance Hillary, exhibit only thematic explanations which are commercially influenced and lack belief and adherence to what the artefact represents.

The artefact reflects much of what Pearce (1993) observed. Rainos Tawonameso was ‘compelled by market forces to remain with the known taste of overseas buyers and are constrained to produce “high” art with noble but mysterious themes’ (Pearce, 1993:96). The walking stick reflects much of the thematic reflections of religion as noted by the Nyaminyami, mostly the representation of its supposedly head. This becomes the head of the stick and the stick bears its name from the Nyaminyami who is religiously is the BaTonga spirit and protector of life.

The other motifs, of BaTonga life is presented within the body of the stick (a detailed explanation is given below). Thematically speaking, we note how the religious as represented by the Nyaminyami and the name itself playing roles and reflect the mystic or spiritual nature of the African through BaTonga. The other motifs within the body of the stick are purely domestic. The myths that surround the Nyaminyami make a story of their own and come in when explanations are given to appreciate the head of the stick. Within the thematic reflections of the Englishmen, this falls as part of folk-tale where the Nyaminyami representation is a mere trance spirit.

5.3.2.1 Motifs of the Nyaminyami Walking Stick

In contrast with most celebrated sculptures in Zimbabwe which are made from stone, the Nyaminyami Walking Stick is made from wood. There are features on the stick, first is the handle or head representing the Nyaminyami whom BaTonga believe in as their spirit god. The legend of the Nyaminyami is explained from various points of departures. What is key however is how Nyaminyami would expose his back in the waters during times of hunger and BaTonga would use their dugout canoes along certain spots into the river and cut out meat from his body. Mweembe noted that this was one of the most common told legendary and act of spiritual guardianship done by the Nyaminyami.

The other common tales of the Nyaminyami regards the floods and destruction of part of the dam wall during 1957 and 1958 rainy seasons. In 1957 the floods are said to have risen claiming even the lives of the workers. A calf was sacrificed for the Nyaminyami and the bodies of white workers which had disappeared for three days re-emerged at a spot where the calf was thrown as a sacrifice into the river by the BaTonga elders. Nyaminyami was thus seen by the BaTonga

elders as strongly opposed to the tampering of the river by the Europeans and in 1958 BaTonga elders were called again to assist the contractors to mediate and see through the completion of the dam wall. Mweembe recounted these Nyaminyami legends confirming the narratives by BaTonga elders and Laiton Mkandawire (2012) retells the same while McGregor (2009) and Hughes (2010) captured the same narratives in their studies. *Figure 12b* below shows a diagrammatic summary of the Nyaminyami Walking Stick motifs.

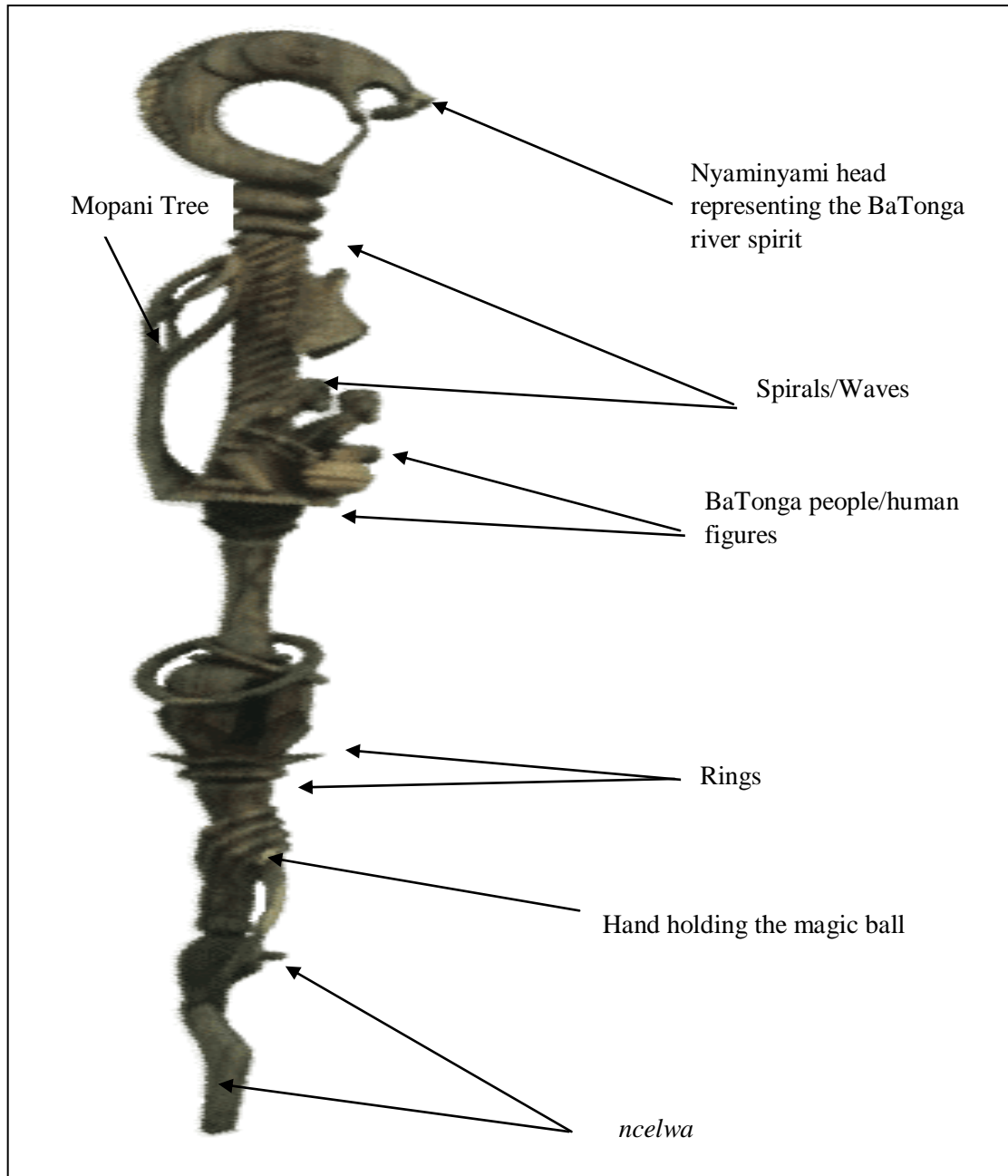


Figure 12b: The Nyaminyami Walking Stick motifs

Source: U. Saidi 2015

The Stick is made from Mopani tree which is vast and found in the Zambezi valley hence the tree is also a key feature. The Stick has spirals which may be mistaken to be the coiled body of the Nyaminyami but following Mweembe from the Binga Museum she notes that the spirals are in fact a representation of the Zambezi River mostly the waves of the waters on the river.

The Stick has also fish inscribed on to it and this represents the staple food of the BaTonga people. Panos (2005) reports that fishing was done in pools along the shores of the Zambezi River. Given the fast flowing of the river, it was difficult for the BaTonga to catch fish at the middle of the river hence specific pools were identified and fishing was done. In the 1950s women would use *mazubo* a fishing tool to catch fish for food.

There are also human figures basically pointing towards *basilwizi*, people of the river, during ceremonial festivals. The figures represent the BaTonga people. Both men and women are represented. For Mweembe, these figures are key in defining the people of the Valley as well as reflect their world view given their association with other motifs on the stick. There are also wooden rings representing the bangles worn by BaTonga women during ceremonial performances as well as the sign of the hand representing the holding of the 'Magical Ball' a BaTonga fortune teller's apparatus used by such in guarding BaTonga against evil spirits. Lastly, there is the *nelwa* the common BaTonga women smoking pipe which has received detailed discussion in this study.

5.4. Cultural imperialism & the Nyaminyami Walking Stick

There has been a systematic cultural imperialism especially in as far as the Nyaminyami Walking Stick is concerned. First, there are questions regarding its making and the author who apparently is Shona from Bikita. The BaTonga interviewed on this case either avoided the question or merely rumbled citing cultural disadvantage in this regard. The fact that the Rainos Nyaminyami Walking Stick is housed by the Binga Museum which has become an important institution in the drive towards cultural restoration and preservation makes one conclude that the BaTonga seem to have accepted the piece possibly on the grounds that it has become so popular and appears as key in spearheading the identity and being of the BaTonga.

There has been a huge price to pay however, as supported by Mpande, and BaTonga elders in the Binga area. The Nyaminyami spirituality has been desecrated by European and Shona cultures. Its representation and handling has blasphemously been propagated to advance the economic ends of these groups. Mkandawire (2012) bemoans how even the name Nyaminyami has fallen

from its highest levels of sacred BaTonga heritage to the deepest levels of cultural bastardisation of the BaTonga belief system as well as heritage and people.

A BaTonga district around Kariba has been named after the spirit, the Nyaminyami Rural District Council, but beyond that there have been businesses, musical groups –Nyaminyami sounds, and Mkandawire (2012) angrily reacts to the name of the catering company in Kariba which calls itself ‘Nyaminyummy’ and hence the ‘Nyaminyami that’ ‘Nyaminyami this’ syndrome has tended to bastardise the BaTonga spirit. The same god has also erroneously been called Shona god or spirit or the Zimbabwe god especially in European discourses raising questions as to why the spirit of Nyaminyami has no equal mythical or spiritual national presence as those of the Mbuya Nehanda and Sekuru Kaguvi.

The Zimbabwean discourse claims Nyaminyami legendary to advance its national discourse without regard to the BaTonga. Rainos in the 1980s was taken to court by the BaTonga elders over copyright infringement (McGregor 2009:165), however they lost the case, demanding subsidy from those using as well as stopping abusing the BaTonga spirit as demanded by Mkandawire (2012).

5.5 *ncelwa, buntibe* viz Nyaminyami Walking Stick

The *ncelwa* and *buntibe* are both cultural artefactual pieces located in the traditions of the BaTonga and continue at the same time to be used either every day or during important cultural festivals. The Nyaminyami Walking Stick however is a recent creation borrowing much from the BaTonga walking stick concept. These were found to be important BaTonga pieces which they use or are used as codes in historical and cultural communication. The next chapter discusses how these three pieces are artefactual semiotic pieces and how they qualify in the matrix of cultural communication to advance BaTonga causes especially that of negotiating for cultural space in Zimbabwe.

We observe that the *ncelwa* and *buntibe* are designed colourfully and the colour further help describe features of the semiotic pieces of cultural significance. Following Kress (2002) colours

on the *buntibe* (see *Figures 10a* and *10b*) or the colourful beads decorating the *ncelwa* (*Figure 3*) make colour part of the object where meanings of colour in this regard contribute to the texture and form of the cultural pieces. The pieces therefore are what they are because of a combined implementation of visual coding to give a semiotic whole piece whose function has no doubt but are communicative in essence.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented data on the *ncelwa* which is the BaTonga women smoking pipe. It has shown how the *ncelwa* is made and functions. Myths on dagga smoking have also been established mostly their roots and Europeans conclusions given its shape. Through the *ncelwa* we also view women as vital and active forces within the BaTonga community.

The chapter has also presented data on the *buntibe* which bears in contemporary times its name from the ceremony that sees an assemblage or orchestra of drums. The chapter was able to distinguish it from other common and popular Zimbabwean drums, the *buntibe* having its own unique shape. Lastly, the Nyaminyami Walking Stick was also seen as an important piece for the BaTonga. While it acts as a mere sculpture, it qualifies as an artefactual semiotic piece much to its unique curving. It bears its name from the Nyaminyami who is the BaTonga god and carries with it various motifs key in the definition and identity creation of the BaTonga people. The next chapter discusses these three pieces first regarding how they qualify or are read from the artefactual semiotics and how as symbolic, icons, metaphors and indices bring cultural communication to life in the visual sense.

Chapter 6: Discussion

6. Introduction

Chapter 1 highlighted how BaTonga culture and communicative systems from the 1950s were systematically subjected to erosive forces much of which had to do with colonial desires to dominate Africans. Not even Christianity took interest of the African expressive dilemmas as Munikwa (2011) in chapter 2 of this study has shown. We saw how the Kariba dam project speeded a systematic discursive endeavour to ‘delete’ BaTonga from the Zambezi shores as Hughes (2010) rightly noted in chapter 2 when he narrated the nature of the Zambezi discourses on the history of the Zambezi River in Zimbabwe. However, chapter 5 did demonstrate that there remained along the Zambezi and for the BaTonga, a great deal of visual cultural material pieces embodying cultural, social, spiritual and historical knowledge.

Whereas chapter 1 introduced the study showing background of study, aim and objectives; the aim being to crack open three BaTonga cultural artefacts to observe their significance in cultural communicative and expressive life of the BaTonga in Zimbabwe (**Section 1.3**). Much of the literature informing and shaping this study was thus presented in Chapter 2. This literature established the link between material culture and cultural communication (**Section 2.1**). Jones (2007), Hodder (2009) Oestigaard (2004), Carey (1989), Toth and Schick (1994), Parkin (1999), Craig (2011), Hodder and Hutson (2003) among others, are the prominent voices establishing this link. Complementary literature (**Section 2.2**) focused largely on visual communication and we heard scholars like, among others, Barthes (1999), Dant and Gilloch (2002) and Sontag (1999).

Section 2.4 went further to contextualise BaTonga space and scholarship in Zimbabwe and much of this scholarship was dominated by Western scholars like McGregor (2009), Hughes (2010) and Colson (1971) although African voices (Gambahaya and Muhwati 2011, Ncube 2004, Dzingirayi 2003) also explored BaTonga spaces in various ways. Chapter 3 saw artefactual ethniseiotics as a theoretical framework being submitted an alternative approach to the Saussurean (1966) or Piercean (1960) semiotics. From Saussure (1966), Pierce (1960) to Eco

(1981). From Sebeok (2001), Copley (2010) to van Leeuwen's (2005) semiotic modelling concepts; artefactual semiotics (**Section 3.5**) was established as a focused semiotic framework for this study.

Chapter 4 merely discussed methodology of the study noting data gathering techniques and its interpretation. This resulted in chapter 5 identifying, presenting and exploring artefactual ethnosemiotic pieces unique as well as important to the BaTonga; namely the *ncelwa* (**Section 5.1**), *buntibe* (**Section 5.2**) and the Nyaminyami Walking Stick (**Section 5.3.1**). The Nyaminyami Walking Stick came to prominence after the Kariba Dam construction as tourism along the shore developed. The Stick through its key motifs (**Section 5.3.2.1**), embody cultural and historical character and pieces significant in cultural communication and identity for the BaTonga.

This chapter, therefore, discusses the three semiotic pieces (the *ncelwa*, *buntibe* and Nyaminyami Walking Stick) showing the nature of visual communication at play among the BaTonga and how cultural communication is realised and used in the negotiation for cultural space within the mainstream Zimbabwean cultural cosmology. It will demonstrate that visual communication reflects cultural communication especially when marginalised groups are the point of focus.

Hughes (2010), McGregor (2009), Panos (2005) and Ncube (2004) have shown how historically BaTonga life has to a greater extent been characterised by physical dislocation. Saidi and Popiwa (unpublished) further discussed the varying spatial dislocations unique to the BaTonga with intriguing results. Interestingly, loss of their ancestral lands has not totally erased the culture and its expression for the BaTonga who despite their neglect, continue to negotiate for space in Zimbabwe. Cracking open or deconstructing material objects BaTonga reconstructed in the new terrain and new places we find them today allows us to read where they have come from, where they are, what knowledge they have and where they are going as well as how expressive in visual terms they are – a visual language they have used to safeguard their survival.

6.1 Artefacts and spatial 'mapping'

This study has taken material culture as physical objects such as the *ncelwa*, *buntibe* and Nyaminyami Walking Stick (henceforth The Stick). O'Toole and Were (2008:617) say material culture is 'the corporeal, tangible objects constructed by humans' and these are 'capable of interacting with human beings.' The advanced idea is that BaTonga material cultural objects made from various materials easily accessed around the areas they reside, make up a body of material culture which in essence has communicative potential and power.

When material objects communicate they do so nonverbally. The nonverbality of material pieces is complex and highly rich; and cannot be equated to the nonverbality of the oral communication system where the former seem to play a secondary complementary role especially in as far as cultural communication is concerned. In this case, material objects make up a complete system for nonverbal or visual communication and their deconstruction allows us to gain meanings key to the cultural communication experiences of the BaTonga people.

Jacobson-Widding's (1992) study offers crucial insights and is a model example of how the nonverbality of material pieces make a complete system for nonverbal communication and deconstruction made her gain some insights about the Manyika people. She was able to retell at the end of the day the cultural communication experiences of the Manyika people. Following Jacobson-Widding (1992) what we realise is how material pieces play out what she calls the 'symbolic metaphors' specifically sexual symbolic metaphors where,

The pot is not a symbol of the womb, or of the woman. It is the other way round. Instead, the woman's womb is like a pot, and that makes quite a difference. It means that the pot and the ladle are not simple sexual metaphors, or icons, even if we might feel that their shapes would suggest that. Rather, it is the woman and the man that is *the human beings*, who are subjected to the same processes as those that are at work in the material world of artifacts. What is happening to the artifacts will thus happen to the human beings too

Clearly, we note how artefacts make a nonverbal system independent from a verbal system. In the case of the Manyika, following Jacobson-Widding (1992), sexuality and sexual-cultural

mapping is evident through everyday material objects such as kitchen huts, cooking pots and so on. It is the artefactual semiotic concept, therefore, that matters at this point which qualifies BaTonga everyday tools as key material pieces that form the realm of symbolic language as well as symbolic metaphors from which various meanings are discerned.

O'Toole and Were (2008:617) therefore, could not help but conclude that material cultural communication help us see how human beings in general '...interact with material culture as a normal part of their daily lives.' Saidi (2013a) gave an example of how this functions in the workings of monuments or statues erected in public spaces. Humans interact with and use material culture in the form of monuments or statues to offer their attention, participate in instances of collective memory at the same time gaining knowledge 'on the history of the nation' (Saidi 2013a:53). Ultimately, we find how for the BaTonga and their material culture influence each other in Zimbabwe.

The process of interacting with material objects allows visual decoding, use and identification with the created visual codes; visual cultural survival and assertiveness. One identifies with O'Toole and Were (2008:618) when they say that the material world is 'a catalyst for the group's cultural formation.' Hence for the BaTonga a study of the communicative potential of its material culture was vital as, according to Schlereth (1982), material culture invites one into the belief systems of the people who conventionally create the pieces. Thus, the values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions of a particular community or society are established and this is achieved through artefactual communication.

It, therefore means that, material cultural pieces and other surviving constituents are, in accordance with Hodder (2009), bound up in a cultural functioning whole identifying that which is cultural. When Carey (1989) spoke of human space and existence, the artefacts identified above are an instance of space mapping, in other words, they are used to map BaTonga cultural space. BaTonga through the *ncelwa* have directly mapped women's social space within the BaTonga community and within the larger space of Zimbabwean realm of women's social space. The *ncelwa* as has been noted in **Section 5.1.1** is made and used by women. Let us remember

that the identity of women in any society is crucial and necessary for any society that cares for its continuity.

BaTonga culturally follow matrilineal patterns and to identify them is by looking at those aspects that map their space. Interestingly, the *ncelwa* is an individual tool; women do not physically share the *ncelwa* only upon death does the deceased's close sister inherits her smoking gear. The *ncelwa* is shared socially and culturally. Communicatively we find the *ncelwa* continuing to send visual cultural messages that have a bearing on the BaTonga women. Not only do we identify women through conical shaped kitchen huts or pots as advanced by Jacobson-Widding (1992) with regards to the Manyika, but we appreciate the unlimited women cultural space in which their cultural relevance is given centre stage by visual cultural communication constituencies.

The *ncelwa* is hence a key visual symbol. Following Saussure (1966), we can say that the *ncelwa* symbolises and signifies BaTonga women's ingenuity, and identity. The *ncelwa* also represents BaTonga women's presence in the country where cultural mapping (Carey 1989) is quite visible. This is but just one type of a 'map'. Gozo's (1984) study is an example given in chapter 2 of how the collection of cultural pieces and explanations about their owners (users), creators and meanings is an instance of cultural mapping. Gozo's study as discussed in Chapter 2 sadly did show a biased collection of material objects of mostly Shona people. Winter-Iving (2004) came up with her *Pieces of Time* where again a collection of Shona stone sculptures by Zimbabwean sculptors is discussed. From these two examples, the place of Shona people is socially, economically and religiously reflected.

We saw however, in chapter 4 of this study how the *ncelwa*, *buntibe* and The Stick are material objects active in the cultural matrix of BaTonga people; and in the case of the *ncelwa* Saidi (2013b) observation was confirmed that the piece was more than just a smoking pipe. Two dimensions were also established, that the *ncelwa* and *buntibe* are active 'tools' as in, they continue to be used on a daily basis. The *ncelwa* is most visible in its daily usage as a smoking pipe by BaTonga women. The *buntibe* on the other hand is most visible during BaTonga festivals such as funerals or cultural festivals or social gatherings where even the *ncelwa* also has a role to play.

The second dimension is that the Nyaminyami Walking Stick, while sculptured by a Shona artist from Bikita, has been accepted by BaTonga as a BaTonga sculpture given its artistic representations of and in BaTonga expressive as well as discursive systems. Its significance as presented in chapter 4 lies in that as a semiotic piece, it summarises or unifies as well as reflects BaTonga identity along the Zambezi valley. The *ncelwa* and *buntibe* are even represented as motifs in the Nyaminyami Walking Stick further reflecting not only the physical presence of BaTonga along the Zambezi but reflecting their spiritual, social and cultural being as well.

Archaeologists, historians and ethnographers (Hodder 2009, Ncube 2004) fossilise or have proved to be working with fossilised material objects. In contrast the *ncelwa* for instance has been proved in **Section 5.1.1** not to be a dormant piece. In fact, it is a living material piece which together with other material pieces, creates a narrative of cultural identity and signification. Scholarship (Hodder 2009, Ncube 2004, Hodder and Hutson 2003) has tended to ossify artefacts and in this study we have attempted to resuscitate this deliberate and disciplinary specific ossification of artefacts for ends that make one erroneously view the culture in question as conclusively dormant.

The above in part explains the Western orientalist thoughts which concluded that Africa had no history or past worth speaking of –because they could not identify (or chose not to appreciate) a signifying system upholding history and African identity. Western orientalist conclusions one could say were arrived at based on archaeological, historical and ethnographic evidence that centralised artefacts in their dormant nature; subsequently the culture in question was erroneously found as dormant too. Lack of knowledge on the workings of cultural communication and basic attention to it allowed advancements of dormancy discourses.

To further the above view, fossilised materials offer or characterise a society just like what the so called dead languages like Latin do (Cook 1982). For Latin language for instance, such languages are now reserved and only used by a specialised professional mostly the Clergy (Christian) but very much dead given lack of an identifiable speech community. What we have therefore is a discourse community that uses it for its professional reasons. This is one illustrative disadvantage with linguistic fossilised communicative systems.

The other factor to note is that interpretations from fossilised items are easily contested giving room to a wide array of possible positions. In chapter 5 when we explored the connections between the *ncelwa* to *mbanje* smoking, researchers (van der Merwe 2005, Clark 1998, Landau 2010, Du Toit 1975) dealt much on archaeological evidence leading to the debate as to whether the dugout pieces were for smoking dagga or simple tobacco. Much of this archaeological evidence pointed towards dagga smoking and yet there was no evidence of residue tested for *mbanje* to support the *mbanje* claim. Hence, archaeological evidence reveals an implied social act of *mbanje* smoking. This has had dire implications on the BaTonga who have later been identified by others through smoking in erroneous ways.

In this study, what we have are not fossil materials. The artefactual semiotic perspective used has in visual terms resuscitated the artefacts thereby evading contestations of identity and cultural nature. Instead one appreciates, against the artefactual semiotic perspective and findings of the study (Chapter 5), that the historical development of the semiotic pieces allows direct access to current visual cultural knowledge which itself is both a reflection of the past as well as directly linked to the present.

It should be remembered that any contestations no matter how small or few have a bearing to the identity of the BaTonga. Archaeological evidence in **Section 5.1.4** for instance stereotyped BaTonga into a dagga smoking community. Read from cultural communication this stereotyping emanates from visual fossilised communicative systems eventually leading to misrepresentations. Pierce (1960) noted that signs or specifically the *representatum* has the main function to represent. What Pierce (1960) however did not talk about was misrepresentation which also didactically causes problems to community survival and is active in any communicative systems.

What is also of interest is that knowledge of visual performance or in other words visual communicative competence, is used in tandem with linguistic performance. This not only does it make us appreciate the magnitude of human intelligence but it expresses how vast communication paradigms are. Visual communication becomes a *syntagm* of language and

communication; and users move back and forth between the two independent systems with ease.

Against this background, two important aspects come to prominence. First, we have before us cultural re-invention enacted by the BaTonga themselves, played out in new terrains and new times serving new purposes. While historically the *ncelwa* as noted in **Section 5.1.3** was initially a fashionable women endeavour, in contemporary times it has become an expressive marker of BaTonga identity and its visual significance signifies a rich cultural and historical life. It also maps and marks the place of the BaTonga women in Tongaland making their other cultural aspects significant. As such BaTonga women identity is commodified and visualised through the *ncelwa* marking both the domestic as well as the national space for the BaTonga.

BaTonga have negotiated for their presence in the country. Interestingly, their created artefacts such as the *ncelwa*, find their way among the many semiotic pieces of Zimbabwe (Gozo 1984) although sadly less emphasis is given to the BaTonga given the dense and deliberate overshadowing tendency cultural discourses are in the country. This is why some (for example Gozo 1984) have tended to conclude that some BaTonga pieces are Shona cultural pieces.

Another instance is on the Nyaminyami spirit, which tourist discourses identified and characterised as a Shona legend and spirit (Hughes 2010), thus, subsequently, having the same effect on the Nyaminyami Walking Stick. Through the Stick, as presented in **Section 5.3.2**, we also read a systematic cultural economisation or part of cultural economics. This is in its own right a code in cultural communication which tourism and tourist discourses have taken advantage of in characterising the terrain and people along the Zambezi shores.

The *buntibe*, *ncelwa* and Nyaminyami Walking Stick weave into each other in a dialogical ordering, making them living symbols of a culture ‘immersed’ by the dam. When taken together with other material pieces in the abovementioned dialogic ordering, BaTonga artefacts form a cultural paradigm. Within this set up, the *ncelwa* becomes a *syntagm* of the same cultural paradigm especially when read from the Stick or its place during a festival or social gathering when the *buntibe* is more visible. A combination of these icons makes us see how BaTonga live with a purview of different maps as such different realities (Carey 1989).

This mapping concept viewed as operative in any communication process means that we have a culture that can be described as made up of systems of knowledge, inter-semiotic sign systems and reflective systems (Randviir and Copley, 2010:123). Goodenough (1981) noted how cultures are in fact sets of decision standards, intellectual forms, perception models, models of relating and organizational patterns (Randviir and Copley 2010 in Copley ed. 2010:123). These are not unique or far from the objectives of communication as advanced by other communication theories such as Leeds-Hurwitz (2012) or Fiske (2006).

Any communicative endeavour is thus a creation and construction of reality. Communication theories explain how reality is constructed, used and repaired. This understanding should be read against the notion that language is at the centre of human life. As such, every reality is shaped by language because people converse and in doing so they produce and reproduce culture. Whorf (1956) as well as Sapir and Whorf (1951 in Kay and Kempton 1984:65-66) were quick to conclude that the real world was meaningfully built upon the language habitants of a group. While the language in question is verbal and its related systems used in communication, we contend with the notion that reality is placed, maintained and repaired.

Communication is also conversational and thus any language-action is dialogic. One way to keep a language (and therefore a culture) alive is to use it or invest in it. This explains a desired need to have languages recognised, developing languages in their various states, planning, use in education, production of literature, art and performative expression; use in the media and by law. Ndlovu (2013) has shown how investment in linguistic terms has greater values especially with regard to the BaTonga against their counterparts, the Venda and Kalanga. Ndlovu (2013) study shows that the success of the Tonga expressive system and usage especially in education is credited to the BaTonga continued adherence to usage, that is, investment without shame in their cultural expressive systems.

All these are instances of ways that reflect and determine the existence of people. Artefacts in Tonga are in use which makes them (artefacts) an investment into the rich visual cultural and expressive sphere. For the BaTonga we observe through this investment cultural communication

or cultural dialogue from the domestic to the national level reflecting continued survival, repairing and maintenance of BaTonga cultural identity. It becomes a plus for a speech community to develop various modes of communication, written and spoken against a well rich body of visual cultural sphere on which the written and the verbal can rest as Ndlovu (2013) has rightly shown.

The fact that communication is conversational as highlighted above means that the artefacts BaTonga consciously created or produced are part of socio-cultural conversations within their domestic space and without those spaces. We see similar dimensions of knowledge with verbal language where on one hand we have what Saussure (1960) called *langue* and on the other hand expression of that knowledge what Saussure (1960) called *parole*. We can further draw similarities from the Chomskyian (1965) linguistic competence and linguistic performance as well as Hymes (1974) communicative competence and communicative performance. It is Hymes (1974) communicative notions that have very close links with the visual conversational expressive performances being advanced in this study.

Zylko (2001) concludes that culture is intended information and not genetically transferred interaction. Jacobson-Widding (1992:7) retells how cultural competence or dimensions of visual cultural knowledge comes about expressing what Zylko (2001) means by culture as intended information. She says;

Inheriting a culturally shared symbolic language does not imply that people think as automatons. Rather, just as with the verbal language, the culturally inherited symbolic language provides the means for sharing and expressing the personal experiences of individual human beings...To the foreigner, the learning of a culturally institutionalized, symbolic language is a more difficult task. You cannot look up the "words", that is, the metaphors, in any known dictionary...You have got to learn it like a child, who is interacting face-to-face with its teachers. This means that you have to sit down, right in the centre of the social life, in that same, small world where a child learns his culture.

It is the visual cultural innate knowledge visually exchanged from one generation to the next which becomes the centre of visual cultural communicative participation from which cultural interactions are realised. Young BaTonga girls historically grew up seeing their mothers smoke

the *ncelwa* and they also performed during the *buntibe* festivals thereby synchronising their being as well as developing their visual cultural competence from which they too utilised in actively participating in socio-cultural endeavours.

Krippendoff (2009) rightly notes that when we co-ordinate visual features of cultural discourses in the form of artefacts, speech communities benefit immensely in outstanding ways. First, we observe visual codification more like orthography of a language, (more like Kress and van Leeuwen 1996 visual grammar) and at that level we are able to talk of visual language coding. Secondly, and based on the visual code, description of artefacts is facilitated where their structural and physical features, usage and how they fit into BaTonga's community life are highlighted. After these aspects, documentation or the creation of a cultural visual inventory of the BaTonga is established which is key in de-marginalisation.

As noted in chapter 2, that BaTonga are akin to displacement; the historical realities that befell BaTonga have shaped their culture, language, expressive visual systems and as such shaped their identity. However, the expressive communicative codes used are signifiers reflecting these historical as well as contemporary realities. Contemporary BaTonga artefactual possessions as presented in chapter 5 demonstrate that BaTonga carried with them knowledge of their existence to the new lands.

To demonstrate the above point, Pfukwa and Saidi (2014) advancing onomastic renditions noted that BaTonga place names marking BaTonga terrain in contemporary Zimbabwe such as *Muchesa* (from Tonga *Muchesoo* which means a stream or, *Tinde* meaning type of grass found in wet lands) reflect much of BaTonga connections with the Zambezi River and their livelihoods there in historical times but continue in contemporary times to sing that connection even in the arid terrain located very far away from the Zambezi shores.

In the same vein, within these places *Muchesa* and *Tinde* to mention only two, we find artefacts that help fill up the material visual character of BaTonga and most of these have been created in contemporary times yet the knowledge was gained in historical times. Chapter 5 for instance shows that the *ncelwa* now has metal pieces used on it to cover the ambers from wind, metal

which has become rather cheap and easily available as compared to the past when metal was not as cheap and easily available as today.

6.2 Belief systems, human space and movement

In Zimbabwe, it is therefore found that BaTonga negotiate for their space using their material objects. How they have been communicating using their material pieces over the years has regrettably been ignored, yet has had crucial input to the Zimbabwean cultural character. The tourism industry has been drawn along the Zambezi River where the Nyaminyami and the Nyaminyami legend have been used to advance tourism along the Zambezi. The Nyaminyami Walking Stick has to a greater extent become an important BaTonga mark along the Zambezi even within a dominant tourist discourse. Such codified systems of cultural communication have drawn tourists along the shores and part of the Zimbabwean character is reflected.

Hodder (2009) has shown the importance and ways of studying cultural spaces, although his point of departure was archaeology. Because of Hodder's (2009) archaeological emphasis cultural spaces have been merely described. This study by critiquing cultural visual communication, describes and shows that semiotic artefacts embody the totality of a people's identity. Taking artefacts as semiotic resources we were able to touch, feel, see and hear the culture as well as sensibilities of the BaTonga who are basically the authors and primary users of such. The advantage noted is the ability to handle and see an untainted and uncorrupted cultural construction from which we engaged BaTonga for interpretations and meanings thus positioning the BaTonga within the Zimbabwe's linguistic and cultural landscape.

There are a number of notable things that BaTonga reveal in cultural communication. By demonstrating and reflecting knowledge and participation with material visual objects, BaTonga reveal their sense of dignity and awareness with their surroundings. BaTonga are also able to socially and culturally map their spaces. This study has addressed a number of aspects in this direction. Some of these are exposure of artefacts themselves in their materiality and physicality and how visually they fit into the realm of visual language which Jones (2007) talks about. At the same time BaTonga people are subjects rather than objects of their discourses through relating to

their artefacts and Zimbabwe at large. From literature reviewed in chapter 2 one sees how Saussure's (1966) triad concept is established and each triad end establishes nodes which create ability for semantic analysis.

In Chapter 4, it was noted that the physical environment had an effect in the data collected for this study. In Kariba for example, it was observed that the Nyaminyami Walking Stick is the prominent marker of BaTonga identity. While there are other sculptures mostly in stone depicting game, the Nyaminyami Stick is unique as it has a direct bearing on the BaTonga.

Given BaTonga proximity they are to the Zambezi River in Kariba, the dam wall and the geographical nexus where the Nyaminyami legend is connected to human interventions which 'tamed' the river all give visual cultural value to the Stick. This also explains how young sculptors and elderly alike have put efforts in producing copies of the Stick with varying creativity. In some cases, only the head of the Stick depicting the Nyaminyami is curved without the other motifs as originally designed by Rainos Tawonameso.

Using artefactual semiotics therefore, we observe that the Nyaminyami Walking Stick as a semiotic resource is significant in as far as it constantly reminds the dwellers and visitors of the terrain of the reign of the Nyaminyami. In cultural and even religious underpinnings of the BaTonga this then becomes the visual religious and cultural message communicating the ever presence of the BaTonga close to the Zambezi. In contemporary times, we observe cultural economics at play in the area and like any culture sold to the world, BaTonga through the Stick find their culture beyond their own cultural borders.

The only danger lies in the misrepresentations of BaTonga culture when used outside its original context. A case in point is the manner in which the Stick was used in an American soap *CSI Criminal Investigations Season 9 Episode 19* (Aired on Sonny Multichoice Channel 127) in which a Christian cult used it as his preaching gear and also gets murdered with the same artefact. Clearly, while producers of the soap aimed at showing and creating the costume for the character representing the religious cult, there is clear misrepresentation of the BaTonga.

Rambamuchero noted that BaTonga in Kariba are, in contemporary times, overshadowed by the Shona, Ndebele and other groups and as such, Kariba being a peri-urban centre, reflections of cultural being by the BaTonga was not that visible. He claimed that BaTonga were no longer expressing themselves through their cultural practices. This was observed as true to some extent as no BaTonga woman or no woman was observed carrying the common BaTonga woman smoking pipe, the *ncelwa* as compared to scenery in Binga and surrounding areas as well as Simchembo areas in Gokwe. The given reason was that modernity made the existing BaTonga shy away from their practices and even expressiveness through Tonga language unless if they had met as both Tonga.

But, the presence of the Nyaminyami and sculpturing centres as well as individual sculptors curving the Nyaminyami Stick continue to artistically communicate the ever presence of the Nyaminyami. Thus semiotically, the object remains a symbol of BaTonga being and a symbol of BaTonga connections to the river. It symbolises and represents BaTonga as the custodians of the aquaculture even as other groups have come in to manipulate the Nyaminyami legend, the river; the walking stick piece to advance their own economic desires as well as fulfilments along the shores and at times misrepresenting the BaTonga in the process.

It remains therefore an important aspect to claim that, visual cultural communication remains standing even if the people it represents appear to have been subdued by dominant groups. One therefore can claim that BaTonga are not invisible in Kariba as Rambamuchero would claim, but that visually they are the most visible group in the area given the visibility of the Nyaminyami and how the community has embraced and has centred even their economic survival on the Nyaminyami legend where the creation of the Stick is but just one way towards this direction.

The approach to visual cultural communication set out in this study therefore entails that cultural interaction and exchange is a very complex phenomenon of communication with serious implications for the society under study. And to understand and appreciate the complex phenomenon problems of coding, meanings and signification are important to accord the possibility of documenting, relating as well as appreciating the communicative expressiveness of humans regardless of their population, location and origins.

We buy into Porcar (2011) observation that Peirce (1960) semiotics especially his *firstness*, *secondness* and *thirdness* principle reflects that the act of thinking provides ability for interpretive processes to be realised within the BaTonga communicative cultural context. In turn this thereby offers a pragmatic perspective in the manner in which BaTonga negotiate for space in Zimbabwe. It comes as no surprise therefore that much of the *buntibe* performance for example, involves movement from one point to another. Regardless of the weight of the *buntibe* drum, it is subjected to constant movements to fulfil its role.

Viewed this way, we can read a clear narrative of the BaTonga narrating their displacement experiences from the Zambezi to make way for the construction of the dam wall. Movement also becomes a key symbol of BaTonga representation in history which in this case is centred on the *buntibe* drum and subsequently the movements or performance assumes the name of the drum itself. In artefactual ethnisemiotic terms therefore, visual cultural communication becomes one that is performed. Intergenerational cultural communication too is thus realised as both the older generation, the young; men and women all participate as a community to reflect their cultural competence.

Because artefacts offer infinite possibilities for coding, it explains even the multi-interpretations or reflections of the Nyaminyami Walking Stick as an instance. There is substantial evidence that can make one claim that the BaTonga appropriated the Nyaminyami Walking Stick into their representational cultural being regardless of the author of the piece being non-BaTonga largely because of the cultural advantage the artefactual ethnisemiotic piece brought to the BaTonga. The Nyaminyami Walking Stick alongside the *ncelwa* and other cultural pieces have helped reflect BaTonga place within the Zambezi shore especially in tourism and tourist discourses. This also shows how visual cultural communication allows different ethnic groups to appropriate and accept contributions from other groups from which the benefiting ethnic group rises to claim the contribution as its own.

Therefore, to use various objects to communicate or interact with each other and the outside world is to employ pragmatic discursive techniques aimed at preserving notions of identity, the

message and the meanings that are pertinent to the survival of the community. A good case has been provided by Jacobson-Widding (1992) although hers was an anthropological study of the Manyika people as well as Saidi (forthcoming) who both report on the communicative aspects of everyday cooking tools by Shona women in identity formulation as well as in maintaining the *unhu/ubuntu* concept that define most African cultural set-ups.

Jacobson-Widding (1992) best captures the sentiments of the female-male relations that are brought about by what she calls the ‘symbolic language’ in Shona culture. She says

The high/low distinction between male and female was not only expressed in those spatial relationships that are concerned with the social order. It was also present in the shapes of male and female artifacts - the former being erect, the latter being round and compact. This applies especially to those tools that are crucial in food production, all the way from foraging, hunting and agriculture to grinding and cooking. Every single artifact used in these productive processes appears to be imbued with sexual meanings (Jacobson-Widding, 1992:10).

From this view, we realise an array of sexual metaphors employed through artefacts whose features are used to construct meanings shared and used in various specific communicative situations. To further interpret these sexual metaphors as observed in the symbolic language of use Jacobson-Widding (1992:12) reports that,

The pot is not a symbol of the womb, or of the woman. It is the other way round. Instead, the woman's womb is like a pot, and that makes quite a difference. It means that the pot and the ladle are not simple sexual metaphors, or icons, even if we might feel that their shapes would suggest that. Rather, it is the woman and the man that is *the human beings*, who are subjected to the same processes as those that are at work in the material world of artifacts. What is happening to the artifacts will thus happen to the human beings too.

This clearly tells us how Manyika women use various visual strategies of constructing messages from artefacts of use in their daily social lives to create symbolic systems of communicating messages. Jacobson-Widding (1992:13) gave an interesting analogy on virginity-testing messages communicated using the clay pot on which she reports that among the Manyika (one of the Shona dialect), after a young woman is virginity-tested by her aunt she fills a clay pot with

water to the brim and it is given to her paternal aunt. If she is 'spoiled' then some water from the pot is poured to the ground meaning 'she is not full'. The analysis given here is that exchange of information is necessitated by everyday tools from which society is able to mend itself as well as deal with societal issues that are likely to damage face in cultural terms.

To add on, only competent members of the society are able to interact with the same in discerning meanings crucial in up-taking social behavioural acts that could otherwise have broken cultural standards should the verbal means had been used as the only means of expression. This is perhaps the 'bargaining concept' (Kandiyoti, 1988) in cultural communication which defines not only relations among members of the society but which also reveal the active acceptance of societal roles by respective members of the society for the common good.

If this is the case with the Manyika as Jacobson-Widding (1992) reports; that the Manyika use visual communication as strategic communication of subject matters that are deemed 'secretive' or ones that cannot be openly stated because the *tsika* (respect) and *unhu/ubuntu* culturally demands a metaphoric as well as symbolic expressiveness. It follows that the BaTonga as a *Bantu* group of people are also conscious of the *unhu/ubuntu* and they too as a people employ strategic visual means to maintain their being as they relate to themselves as well as others outside their cultural formation.

The smoking of the *ncelwa* by women becomes a clear social and domestic act; playing as well as participating in the *buntibe* drumming too becomes a community social performative act. When we analyse the *buntibe* narrative created during the performance, we note in some respects how BaTonga re-enact their displacement from the Zambezi shores to make way for the hydroelectric project. From the traditional enacting or visiting of the deceased homestead and places of his frequency during his life time, the *buntibe* has come to be culturally purposeful in communicating in visual ways the history and experiences of displacement and communicating BaTonga identity.

When Ndlovu (2013) reported that the Tonga were the most successful ethnic group in terms of developing, managing as well as lobbying for the use of their language in schools especially in the territory they dwell as compared to the Kalanga and Venda (VETOKA all which are considered marginalised ethnic groups in Zimbabwe). Ndlovu (2013) attributes, among other reasons, the collective social reflection as well as expressiveness by the BaTonga among themselves as well as in relation to other ethnic groups in the country. Within this expressiveness character, much of visual performative acts such as the smoking of *ncelwa*, the *buntibe* and the legendary of the Nyaminyami cannot be ignored.

Therefore, visual cultural communication not only does it reflect the identity of the group, but it also reflects the *unhu/ubuntu* philosophy to which most African groups subscribe to. Symbolic language is at the centre of revealing the various belief systems which are not only subscribed to in subtle ways but are performed on a daily basis or most frequently to accord the idea of ever present of those beliefs in the survival of the society, internally as an ethnic group as well as externally as BaTonga relate to other ethnic groups in the country.

We can therefore claim that BaTonga women smoke the *ncelwa* as an everyday social activity to mark their social space as well as reflecting their cultural beliefs. They are also conscious of the presence of as well as conscious to the possible cultural threats from other groups. The smoking thus becomes a constant reminder to the outsider that they are BaTonga women who are proud of their cultural social acts and performances.

6.3 Communication, language and space

Chapters 2 and 5 read together reveal a set of material artefacts (Chapter 5) and theoretical underpinnings (Chapter 2) from which in semantic terms we realise the urgency of human space. The *ncelwa* reveals a great deal of the matrix of domestic space and how socially it is managed. The *ncelwa* ethnosemiotically speaking, is a social agent within the realm of women space. It hinders on management of domestic space both in the past and in the present. Interestingly, our knowledge or interpretations of the goings on of that domestic space is through visual language (Jones 2007) appealing at most to all the five senses. For instance, the aroma smell of burning

charcoal in the *ncelwa* appeals to smell, the heat of the ambers warms and heats up the atmosphere while the rumbling boiling water in the *ncelwa* water-holding chamber cascades the ear –all offering messages otherwise difficult if not impossible to communicate and decode verbally about the smoking affair.

The act of smoking in this case becomes a domestic affair in that tobacco is smoked everyday while at the same time it becomes a community affair given that during festivals for instance women gather to share experiences while smoking. What we read in this case is a cultural and social narrative one that can be investigated, interpreted, observed, and participated in –a clear refection of cultural competence. The visual in this instance creates a *systems* language at the centre because every item within the domestic map is a sign signifying, among others, cultural norms and values. This is the concept Landau (2010) was particularly highlighting especially on how it leads to notions of cultural identity.

The *ncelwa* thus signifies visual language, domestic, community and national space. Within that larger realm we observe belonging, togetherness, ingenuity and identity (Landau 2010). Against this therefore, cultural artefacts create a brand as well as a narrative which can be shared and interpreted; a narrative of BaTonga which can only be a comprehensive narrative powered by a lively signification system which is itself analogous to language.

Because the visual sign systems that make up this narrative are alive (Jones 2007), it goes without saying the benefits accrued are narrative as well. The two systems (verbal –linguistic and nonverbal –the visual) however are rich in their own right. The visual is far richer in that even the linguistic system depends on it. When Ngugi (1986) said language carries culture he meant that the linguistic system expresses or is mapped by the visual and it provides the base for signification as well as representation.

Against the above notion, the concept of cognitive recollection becomes imminent. This concept was hindered by Parkin (1999) in **Section 2.1** of this study. Parkin (1999) emphasised cognitive recollection against daily material tools such as spoons, soup bowls and so on. This concept exposes Parkin (1999) as having introduced an important visual linguistic mark. The material

world enshrines meanings as we have seen in Chapter 5 regarding precision and deliberate approaches to the making of the tool.

At what point do we have cognitive recollection? At what point and where in the new terrain or new era did BaTonga fall on their cognition to construct their relevance against forces they could not control? These are important questions this study answers in that the visual linguistic possession by the BaTonga never deleted BaTonga connections to their worldviews and expressiveness. To accord purpose to their livelihoods, recreation of the past and its performance would only be possible within the medium of visual cultural communication.

The reason why colonial governments embarked on abolishing indigenous languages (Magwa 2010, Makuni et al 2006) in their colonies in place advancing their own languages such as English, Portuguese and French was to conceal as well as control the colonised. But scholars in language planning and policy (Makuni et al 2006), Magwa 2010, Ndlovu 2013) failed to realise that Africans had to hide behind their own expressive systems to cushion themselves from total expressive extinction and relevance to their environment and each other.

In visual terms therefore, BaTonga, faced by both colonial and post independent betrayals, relevantly stood by their *ncelwa*, *buntibe* and Nyaminyami Walking Stick to cushion themselves from the harsh realities of cultural expression. Thus, cognitive recollection helped create the artefacts but also helped maintain the visual cultural communicative systems that define the BaTonga systems today.

6.3.1 Community consciousness and expression

BaTonga community has for years been largely an oral community. The artefacts (signs) offer input as information in reflecting BaTonga consciousness. When Zylko (2001) gave his view of culture in Chapter 2 of this study, he emphasised that information depends upon human consciousness. Artefacts become objects of culture which are subjective and conscious in character. These, Zylko says, enable sign systems to come into existence. Against this view, Eco's (1981) culturalisation notion in Chapter 3 is more pronounced. Eco (1999) noted that there

is a continued culturalisation of elements in the natural world. In our case this may appeal to the Nyaminyami Walking Stick.

To stretch this notion further, culturalisation of elements allow expression of human consciousness and therefore survival. For instance, the *ncelwa* allows daily social survival while the *buntibe* offers rites of passage and for artistic and performative expression we have the *buntibe* and Nyaminyami Walking Stick. All these occur following Eco (1981) by means of a 'language' which in our case is visual language (Jones 2007). If natural language is at the centre of mental existence, projection of thinking, means of maintaining social bonds; and an instrument of social and political activity. It also follows that visual language is a reflection, representation and interpretation of this mental existence, projection of thought, maintenance of social bonds and instrumentalisation of social, political activity and order (Zylko 2001:395).

Of significant to note too is the triad relationship that is established between the artefacts, artefactual semiotics and the BaTonga community. Semiotics in its broadest sense opens up a great deal of interest in studies bound by language and communication. This study viewed artefacts away from fossilised archaeological perceptive giving precedence to artefactual ethniseiotics. This leads up to what Mats (2009:1) saw as 'communication and community'.

What this study has done in part, is unpack and crack open the whole idea of communication and community by looking at one specific type of communication –cultural communication and the semiotic systems that make up that communication. It also looked at this type of communication against a given BaTonga community from which we observe the artefacts or material pieces are in themselves significant signs signifying and representing the tangible visual heritage that characterise, is used and should be used by any community especially the marginalised ones in negotiating for space within the mainstream cultures.

By concentrating on this abovementioned triad, we are exposing how studies have marginally viewed artefacts in communication making cultural communication in general appear to be a marginal topic with interest either in universal semiology (Pierce 1960, Saussure 1966) or communication (Leeds-Hurwitz 2012). Indeed, we have brought pragmatism (Eco 1999) into

explaining an otherwise marginally dealt with topic on visual cultural communication whose codified systems are as linguistic as the sound systems of verbal communication.

6.4 Visual cultural paradigms and external storage systems

Fairclough (2003:18) observed that culture in general is ‘a signifying system’. This means that culture is realised through a conventionalised articulation of representations which in themselves carry values and identities. The point Fairclough (2003) advances is that any culture exists as a discourse thereby allowing the embodiments of such a culture to reflect a form of consciousness. This makes sense especially if we recall Zylko’s (2001) reminder that culture was transferred information and not genetically transferred. Which means, the production of material pieces, their use among the BaTonga and not merely at an individual level but communally, reveals that the signifying systems give a character to BaTonga making them very much operational in their socio-cultural life ‘in a particular networking of social practice’ (Fairclough, 2003:19).

What we have in the artefacts under discussion is a symbolic system of cognition. This is why Carey (1989) concluded that thought is predominantly public and social. Material pieces act as external memory storage systems or banks when internal systems of memory as driven by the brain become fragile. This then tells us that verbal language can be seen to be fragile and finite. Chomsky (1962) claimed that a human being has a special device in his brain, the Language Acquisition Device (LAD), where rules of grammar are hardwired and allow a human being to produce a finite set of sentences. This is clearly the base of current views of verbalised language and how it is used in everyday communication. Meanings are thus played out between minds through the verbal language.

When we consider material objects on this basis, they then become external storage systems (ESS) (external to the mind) and according to Jones (2007:1) an increased ‘capacity for the storage of memory’ is enhanced for human function and meanings are thus protected from the shortcomings of internal memory, Chomsky’s (1965) LAD or meaning systems as engineered by the human brain. Hodder and Hutson (2003) attempted a process of reading the past through material culture and this was a clear advancement of Barthes (1999) notion of reading culture.

For Hodder and Hutson (2003:167) material culture as a ‘language’ draws us to view material culture as primarily functioning to ‘represent’ and ‘help accomplish physical.’ Because material culture is language, Fairclough’s (2003) culture as discourse becomes easily identifiable and the visual cultural artefactual semiotic discourse has a bearing in the ‘actions and practices in the world’ (Hodder and Hutson, 2003:168).

The above view, however, should not make us rest on the conception that material pieces are vessels of meanings given the idea of external storage mechanism. The conception should in fact be seen as an extra advantage humans have in relating to their material objects. In other words, the constant attachment of BaTonga to their material objects and the materiality of objects themselves all act in making material objects a suitable arena on which constructed meanings are stored on behalf of human beings as well as for communication purposes. When Barthes (1988) advanced the reading concept, one finds it as having been enshrined in handling material objects as vessels of meanings rather than as storage systems and themselves as part of the meanings.

The *ncelwa*, *buntibe* and Nyaminyami Walking Stick are all ESSs of BaTonga culture and history. In a vastly oral community, the material pieces embody much of the memory. Literacy is thus but one form of ways of recording the culture and history of a group. But in the materials, we find them carrying the knowledge handed down to the present BaTonga from their predecessors. The materials are further subjected to new interpretations and continue to play new roles in a new order. For instance, Mukova and Chokovore (2013) observed that the BaTonga decorated drums have been incorporated into the Christian and African initiated Christian churches. This clearly demonstrates how the *buntibe* has come to assume new roles in contemporary times from merely being used at funeral rites to Christian religious performances. Thus, it would be almost impossible to erase BaTonga completely from the cultural map as the ethnosemiotic pieces remain within the society as memory banks.

6.5 The language of material culture

How best can we explain belief systems from a visual perspective? Ngugi (1986) reflected that language is a carrier of culture although his approach was a loose linguistic approach to language

because it was marred by literary discursive shadows. By looking at visual language as done in chapter 5 against artefactual ethnisemiotics (Chapter 3); it is an effort to categorise the type of language at hand and how that language can be a carrier of any culture, that is, how does it carry BaTonga culture in Ngugi's (1986) spirit? How does language communicate culture?

Analysis of the *ncelwa*, *buntibe* and the Nyaminyami Walking Stick reflect a variety of BaTonga belief systems. Through the *ncelwa* we learn that women have their own social expressive ways which are tangible and visual. On the other hand, the *buntibe* offers rites of passage while at the same time reflecting BaTonga spirituality. We saw in chapter 5 a drummer unable to describe the emotional state he experiences when playing the drum. This further help explain spiritual connections between a human being to a material object such as the *buntibe* drum within the larger realm of cultural, religious as well as social partaking in visual cultural performances.

Material culture as language has an advantage of being intact, that is, it has 'durable and restricting flexibility' (Hodder and Hutson, 2003:168). The totality of artefactual pieces for instance those of BaTonga at a festival where the *buntibe*, *ncelwa* and *nyeele* are in a symbiotic or dialogical ordering relationship, reveal how all of them become a visual text which one can 'read' (Barthes 1988). Hodder and Hutson (2003:168) noted that 'we are on better footing when reading material culture partly because material culture is not as abstract or complex...text.' Hence, cultural communicative boundaries are collapsed making even non-BaTonga able to decipher meanings from BaTonga material pieces. The only danger lies in that non-BaTonga can sometimes misrepresent the BaTonga which is a deliberate strategy to dominate the BaTonga in obvious power relations situations. This has been the case with the *ncelwa* when it was connected to *mbanje* smoking (Nyathi 2005).

Material culture (Jones 2007) is primarily physical. Against this, the processes of production and action are able to be read as signs since they can signify concepts apart from meanings drawn at face value. This study situates material culture as a physical, unique, visual communicative code to discourses or situated communications among BaTonga. These material objects are not the ones buried in the sites BaTonga used to live or merely preserved in archives and museums.

Much of their ancestral lands along the Zambezi shore have now long been buried by water (Panos 2005) anyway so how can one exhume any pieces for study in such a case?

A mere look at the *ncelwa* and its simplicity gives us an array of messages about BaTonga women's ingenuity and their cognitive development as well as cosmology. Scholarship has shown how BaTonga are regarded as 'backward' and lacking education. Most BaTonga, especially, the elderly women who smoke the *ncelwa* have not had the opportunity to acquire formal education. Given the period of the *ncelwa* making, formal education had even not advanced to Zimbabwe the way it has done today.

Against this background, the question Saidi (2013b) raises that; how was it possible that women would create a very sophisticated smoking pipe which has been deemed by Siamonga (2012) as well as Nyathi (2005) as the healthiest way of smoking is drawn towards an answer. When Toth and Schick (1994) traced technological tools from evolution and linking the technologies to the development of visual cultural communication systems, they also sought to prove the level of intellect as well as cultural development. We thus have a cognitive dimension Jones (2007) talks about.

We also pose and reflect on BaTonga cultural technologies that help produce pieces such as the *ncelwa* and *buntibe* as visual material pieces whose broad realm of existence is realised contemporary as pieces of use in negotiating for socio-cultural space in Zimbabwe. One can thus claim that BaTonga were literate in visual semiotic language making production of semiotic pieces a form of literacy to which a section of the population in the country and the world are illiterate to.

The role of ethnisemiotic artefacts in cultural communication is not merely for archaeological, historical or anthropological significance. They are important communicative signals in visual communication and this explains why archaeologists, historians and anthropologists have drawn conclusions from them in some cases misrepresenting the society being studied. As visual signals the *ncelwa*, *buntibe* and Nyaminyami Stick, one has to first view them in their primary state as symbolic media from which their materiality impinge on BaTonga's cultural sensibilities as well

as appealing to them and outsiders ‘physically at a fundamental level’ (Jones, 2007:19). As BaTonga use them, remembrance about their past, identity and being is aided and physically they embody their memory as a people with a rightful claim to their environment. Thus, perception as well as appearance become indices of human agency and intentions given how they are positioned in time and space making Jones’ (2007) conviction relevant when he observed that the world of material objects is a significant sign system analogous to language.

Jones (2007:15) gave examples of archaeologists who reconstruct culture and the past by ‘reading’, material objects but this ‘reading of objects is not a trivial matter of information retrieval’ because material objects convey meaning in a multiplicity of ways. Again, this proves that material pieces are not mere vessels of meanings in which cultural meanings are deposited for retrieval. The *ncelwa*, *buntibe* and the Stick were constructed to be used but also to codify information. As such there is an interplay of communication of meanings of cultural significance showing that material culture visually characterise the matrix of human existence given that ‘people *and* objects are engaged in the process of remembering’ (Jones, 2007:22) and information exchange.

For Jones (2007) what is even striking is his conclusion that there is ‘need to understand the role of objects in social practices to understand the meanings associated with objects’ (Jones, 2007:32). These social practices have their major grounding in and are played out through communication. This is important especially with regard to the BaTonga context as the expressive language is now one that is being handled both within and outside theoretical linguistics. Jones’s study allowed us to appreciate the fact that material culture made up of artefacts make up a visual system which with an open mind can be equated to a ‘language’, that is, a system which has its own independent rules. Parkin (1999:304) noted that ‘objects are conventionally located in predictable contexts of use.’ The *buntibe* can be located during funeral rites or festivals. And there is a phenomenological niche as analysis of the *buntibe* within its context helps us understand BaTonga social and spiritual space.

6.6 Sources of meanings

Craig (2011) envisions artefacts as vessels of meanings. He sees material objects creating social dynamics as opposed to merely reflect central tenets of a people's culture or society. BaTonga community has been greatly oral, and it becomes an African community characterised by orature from which material objects of a varying degree such as the *buntibe* drum, are 'players' in BaTonga identity and community sustenance. Meanings are observed at two levels where usage of pieces is a reflection of pieces communicating for purposes of signifying. The other becomes informational allowing a description of the pieces, their characteristics and relationships within the actual context of culture and context of situation. Viewed this way, *ncelwa* and *buntibe* as well as the Stick become artefactual semiotic messages. These artefactual semiotic messages allow realisations and analysis of symbolic, referential and expanded repertoire of spatial mappings.

6.7 Visual Communication

According to Harry (2007:11) the world 'presents itself in manifold ways to the sense vision.' Based on these, the world communicates its existence or it makes its appearance felt, heard, smelt and known. The world in other words is made up of fragments of symbolism. Following Harry (2007:11), 'we can begin to discern the essential power of visual communication, the power to operate along a continuous ranging from the near concrete to the abstract.' From this submission, we observe for example, The Stick, beginning to have dual roles. First, it can be found as a work of art especially as interpreted from sculpturing discursive perspectives and it represents the totality of BaTonga way of life. However, we also realise the conception of perception by the BaTonga and how they perceive their world as reflected visually through and from the cultural messages distilled from the *ncelwa* and *buntibe*.

Harry (2007:13) defined perception as 'the interface where the individual makes contact with the world via the senses.' From this simple definition, we note that BaTonga individual spatial existence, socio-culturally make individual BaTonga come into contact with the BaTonga communal or societal whole where their sense of taste, touch, smell and hearing as well as

feeling are all addressed when the *buntibe* plays or when *ncelwa* is smoked or when we hold the Nyaminyami Walking Stick. When we see the Nyaminyami Walking Stick, especially the motifs on the Stick, one cannot deny that a spiritual connection via feeling is established triggering memories of their past and reminding them of who they are. While Harry (2007) concludes that an attendant to the sensory world and its immediacy gives visual communication its special mantle; where material pieces are involved mean that there is continued involvement, connection of the individual BaTonga to his immediate space both physically and socially.

When the *buntibe* is playing, the feeling of involvement is almost indescribable. From the interviews done at Simchembo, John, a *buntibe* drummer, was unable to describe the feeling or the emotional state when playing or at the climax of the sound. Therefore, one assumes that there is a psychological transformation that occurs which only can be understood by fellow BaTonga participating in the performance. Such connections between drummers, *nyeele* players and singers within a psychologically transformed world allow BaTonga to remain in constant spiritual communication with each other as well as with their spiritual space or cosmos. This is a similar reflection Garabha in Mungoshi's (1975) *Waiting for the Rain* experiences. As such Kress' (1996) idea of multimodality comes in handy as the totality of the artefacts meanings is hugely arrived at by considering other aspects which may be deemed independent of the three artefacts focused in this study.

When using BaTonga pieces to look at their space, there is no rearrangement of their context. We observe the pieces in their primary settings among the BaTonga women in the case of *ncelwa*, and among the BaTonga festivals in the case of the *buntibe*. As such one agrees with Dant and Gilloch (2002:7) who support the idea that pieces are codes which make up '...a medium that allows...to explore ideas of history central to the cultural critique...bringing back the past in a routine and repeatable way, accessible to almost anyone with eyes to see.'

Beyond their physical materiality, artefacts are subjected to further iconographic production where they create new discourses within iconographic discourses that Barthes (1999) advances. The matrix of interpretation of the new visual iconographic piece is however subject to the reader's interpretation. Working with actual artefactual pieces of the BaTonga, we are able to

view them as visual communication codes serving ideological functions. Hence we cannot neutralise culturally coded messages where neutralisation normally happens with iconographic images.

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) studied visual semiotics in the spirit of visual aspects as complementary to 'words'. The same has also been done by El Refaie (2003), Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), Wekesa (2012) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:1) even advanced 'visual grammar' which they find as a combination of iconographical and iconological elements in images, places and abstract things combined into meaningful visual statements. From their submissions, we learn that visual space is a determiner of visual communication. Codified semiotic pieces create BaTonga visual space from which the fundamental systems of meanings become far and wide especially in constituting BaTonga culture although systems in their apt realisations have specific forms; existing independently and their different ways advancing different sets of messages.

6.8 Artefactual ethnisemiotic codified visual communication

Artefactual ethnisemiotic theory advanced in this study, does so much more than allow an interpretation of artefacts. It allows us to view artefacts as important codes and symbols that make up a visual system of cultural communication value. The developed system is then further used to decode meanings which have a bearing to the understanding of BaTonga cultural communication. Artefactual semiotics helped unpack and determine the intrinsic sign systems that determine pieces of a whole visual cultural communicative system.

It is unfortunate that artefacts have been left for more concentrated study by other disciplines such as in archaeology (Hodder 2009, Hodder and Hutson 2003) or anthropology (McGregor 2009, Miller 1994) where scholars have used their disciplinary authority to interpret the past of societies studied. This has had problems especially in as far as they represent the totality of such groups. The other thing is that artefacts have been defined outside their everyday use —as day-to-day tools, but as objects that have served their time. They have sometimes subjected to laboratories for study and conclusions have been based on the scholar's interpretations.

Omissions by the respective scholar may be an important omission of a cultural people's identity.

The *ncelwa* for example, continues to be used as an everyday tool. There are other pieces such as dugout canoes (See *Appendix 2*) or hunting nets which either due to new technologies or state laws have become obsolete tools. Even as the archaeologists interpret and reach their conclusions Barthes' (1979) concept of 'reading a text' is quite visible. But very few within applied linguistics at least have dared ask what language the archaeologists are using to communicate with the artefact. This should not be confused with how archaeologists communicate their findings to the public and to their colleagues. This is where artefactual ethnisemiotics comes handy because the idea is, we can systematically explain how such archaeological conclusions are arrived at and how, if they are any, omissions are also arrived at.

An aside is also worth making at this point that symbols, as used by Leeds-Hurwitz (2012) in **Section 3.6** of this study; to infer a social interactive context like the Zimbabwean visual cultural interaction between ethnic groups, are components of power struggle. One can read this as a critical discourse analytic view (van Dijk 1993, Fairclough 2003), especially realising that artefacts are an open text and a paradigm that creates a syntagmatic visual cultural discourse. In national cultural discourses, where symbols or signs such as the *ncelwa*, *buntibe* and Stick are most realised, it follows, therefore, that they become components of power struggles over 'whose ideas, whose constructions of reality, whose interpretations will come to be accepted' (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2012:34) as a national cultural norm. Carey (1989:87) interestingly brings another dimension when he says,

Reality is, above all a scarce resource. Like any scarce resource it is there to be struggled over, allocated to various purposes and projects, endowed with given meanings and potentials, spent and conserved, rationalised and distributed. The fundamental form of power to define, allocate and display this resource. Once the blank canvas of the world is portrayed and featured, it is also pre-empted and restricted. Therefore, the site where artists paint, writers write, speakers speak, filmmakers film, broadcasters broadcast is simultaneously the site of social conflict over the real. It is not the conflict over technology. It's not a conflict over social relations. It is a conflict over the simultaneous codetermination of ideas, technique, and social relations. It is above all a conflict not over the effects of communication but of the acts and practices that are themselves the effects.

This is a strong claim, one that alludes to the power and role of semiotic resources in not only the negotiation of visual cultural space, as the study has been saying, but one that makes a claim to ‘reality’ as a cultural necessity but scarcely available resource in any culturally defined space. Sebeok (2001) made a similar submission that signs/symbols are a map to reality. From viewing symbolic interactional acts and practices to construct a valid ethnic reality we are also driven by the understanding that,

People construct identities out of specific configurations of semiotic resources, and, consequently, just as linguistic and semiotic repertoires and conditioned by dynamics of access, identity repertoires will likewise be conditioned by unequal forms of access to particular identity building resources (Blommaert, 2005:207).

In looking at the potential of cultural communicative messages carried by the BaTonga symbols, there is first and foremost contestation of reality, especially at the national level however in a very subtle way. Vambe (2013) for example, made a similar point when he made a stern provocation on the dialects that make up Shona, bemoaning artistry laziness in using Karanga or Manyika as languages of expression (to mention but two) from which dictionary making can benefit from in the making of Shona language.

The point being advanced is that, symbols like the *ncelwa*, *buntibe* and the Stick as has been seen in Chapter 4, were developed for their value on shared meanings. At national level therefore, as ethnic cultures interact, how then and whose meanings are we to accept and repeat? Saidi (2013a) demonstrated the dilemmas emanating from struggles of identity, acceptance and participation when he attempted to answer such a question by analysing the Joshua Nkomo and David Livingstone statutes concealing BaTonga visibility in public spaces.

We should realise that symbols serve as markers of identity. Hence Ngugi’s (1986) language as a carrier of culture concept and Vambe’s (2013) provocation because in these two aspects, language as a system is read as a symbol therefore marking identity. Thus, displaying symbols in various stipulated ways is but one way of conveying a particular identity of affiliating with a particular group. Smoking the *ncelwa* is observed in Zimbabwe as done by BaTonga women and

playing as well as participating in the *buntibe* reign are both ways of BaTonga signalling their affiliation to the BaTonga group.

From these symbols, we find them defining the group boundaries, spaces; who the BaTonga are and are not. Furthermore, BaTonga identity is easily investigated in the context of globalisation because the identity is performed through the artefacts by the BaTonga as actors and naturally their identity in the country becoming a ‘form of socially meaningful practice’ (Blommaert, 2005:208).

6.8.1 Artefactual intra-semiotic realisations

We have semiotic interplay representations of relative importance to note. In other words, there exists two sub-concepts realised from the codification process of artefacts. These are intra-semiotic and inter-semiotic realisations key in two processes of semantic production, storage and usage; these are semantic *determinism* as well as *heritagisation* (the two concepts and processes are further discussed below). Intra-semiotic realisations of pieces regard their existence directly against the intentions of use as defined by their creators and users. The second is inter-semiotic realisations existing along the same lines however appealing to a wider spatial cosmology and used by those who come into contact with the pieces for their own ends.

To unpack the concepts, intra-semiotic realisations, put simply, are the knowledge that we obtain about the BaTonga among themselves, how they see their past and how they visually communicatively operate within their cultural sphere before we begin to speak of changes brought about by any form(s) of contact to the creation and usage of the artefacts. Against the concept, we thus realise that the *ncelwa* for the BaTonga women, is a social artefactual piece that brings women together as well as one that marks the social responsibilities and roles of women.

The *ncelwa* also marks the specific BaTonga women tool without question and it becomes her possession from adolescence to death. We have seen how the BaTonga have reported that in the past, smoking the *ncelwa* was like fashion; which means any female adolescent who reached the marked age was expected to adhere to the cultural call. Cultural-communication speaking, this

shows that there is an intergenerational exchange of values non-verbally coordinated. And through subsequent behaviour, we are able to explain how the practice has survived from generation to generation.

It does not surprise us that given the way BaTonga were dislocated from their ancestral lands and given even the manner in which some were moved at times violently (Ncube 2004, Panos 2005), knowledge of the *ncelwa*, *buntibe* and affiliation to the Nyaminyami were not left behind yet ancestral graves were left behind. Saidi (2013b) demonstrates this quite vividly with regards to the *ncelwa*. This means, the role of the *ncelwa* for example becomes intrinsic in that we never get to understand using ordinary systems of interpretations that which has made BaTonga women survive emotional pain connected to the scourge of poverty, pain of land-loss and marginalisation. Against degrading phenomena, the *ncelwa* played a significant role of pacifying BaTonga women at a very personal or domestic level.

At the same time, the *buntibe* offered spiritual, social and emotional soothing as they, in participating in *buntibe* related festivals, were ushered into some other spiritual reality which only them could understand, participate and make sense of. The *buntibe* is quite heavy and one may argue that given the conditions surrounding dislocation of the BaTonga, who dared carry the drum? One assumes that some drums were buried in the waters as BaTonga carried with them immediate survival tools such as cooking pots.

But the technical know-how of making the drum and playing; and the performance responses to it, that is, the knowledge that BaTonga had when brought to associate or relate to the drum remained and this is worth celebrating (Saidi, 2013b). This means BaTonga carried with them to the new arid lands the key cultural finite rules and values which they further used to recreate a finite set of cultural expressions to recall their past, explain their present, chant their future as well as define the centre of their visual cultural communication.

During festivals when the drum is played, the able bodied dance and relate to the command of the drum; elderly women support by carrying with them and smoking the *ncelwa*. What we see is a symbiotic relationship between the drum and the *ncelwa*, –two different pieces but both

advancing an important message of cultural, identity, value and significance. The *buntibe* is further represented on the Nyaminyami Walking Stick as a motif showing how key semiotic signs knit together the communicative practices of the BaTonga.

We can invoke Sebeok (2001) at this point, in order to appreciate therefore, that human behaviour and existence are both based on signification. Sebeok (2001:8) says ‘the signs people use on a daily basis constitute a mediating template in the worldview they come to have.’ We have witnessed in the study (Chapter 2 and Chapter 5) how BaTonga material objects qualified as codes in visual cultural communication. Leeds-Hurwitz (2012) provided an example of how this works and in Section 3.6 we were able to see how communication works beyond the physical edge of the body and independent of linguistic sound code-systems. Sebeok (2001) on the other hand, noted that a sign or symbol has in its structural materiality an infinite functional application to human life and or existence. From this end, visual cultural communication is created as a semiotic social action.

6.8.2 Artefactual inter-semiotic realisations

When pieces are brought into the existing national space where BaTonga are in an undeniable relationship with other groups, their pieces have to mark their presence in what Sebeok (2001) referred to as the marking of reality. BaTonga either show their pride or showcase what they know about themselves through the *ncelwa* and the *buntibe* drum or Nyaminyami Walking Stick. They do so with pride and when they dance to the drum, one clearly sees them as if they have metaphorically been plucked out of their immediate physical space into some spiritual space from which after the performance they cannot explain the experience linguistically. The pieces thus assume various and new roles, manipulating that which is beneficial to them for example the smoking of tobacco, which means the tobacco itself is from an outside source yet the mechanism that is used to smoke it is their own making. The *buntibe* itself has now found a place in the new Christian churches (Mukova and Chikovore, 2013).

From these inter-semiotic realisations we hence have processes of heritagisation coming into play. Heritagisation can be understood as a systematic, deliberate way of selecting and

preserving specific cultural forms to create a national cultural identity. Heritagisation creates important communicative cultural discourses as theories that inform it define what qualifies and what does not and with what meaning for what purposes? Furthermore, notions for whom should they be preserved and used to represent say BaTonga also become prominent. This means, we have a set of sign systems that should be taken together and speak with one voice, one message.

We should recall that heritagisation in most cases is a defining livelihood aspect as most people 'rely on these heritage elements for various socio-political, economic and developmental agendas' (Chong, 2012:4) and should we fail to analyse each piece artefactual-ethnisemiotically, then, we are likely to miss how certain pieces contribute important aspects to the character of the message that we read from heritage as a whole.

In the end, when we are to speak of the Zimbabwean heritage, it becomes a national discursive endeavour which should reflect the pluralistic nature of the country and its people thereby offering all groups space for cultural expression not only on selected national dates or special occasions but on everyday national cultural expressive endeavours. Zimbabwean identity is now being re-defined to be in tandem with the modern constructions. Geographically, the space was marked by colonialism and the current state is a modern construct which, regardless of geographical spatial politics, the modern demands cultural constructions too.

In the recent SADC 2014 summit in Victoria Falls, the opening cultural intervention was a display by a cultural group far removed from the Victoria Falls or Zambezi cultural space. Where was the *buntibe*? This becomes not only an omission but the consequences of failing to appreciate how inter-semiotic realisations that define heritagisation, which nationally when called in to reflect or showcase the national cultural expression, thus, the message becomes half backed.

We can also talk about de-heritagisation –a process of systematically overshadowing cultural forms once prominent in the determining national identity and character. The call to destroy Rhodes' grave in Matopos as well as that of David Livingstone's statue in Zimbabwe (Saidi, 2013a) is an example of de-heritagisation. Ironically, Zambia offered to have the David

Livingstone statue should Zimbabwe succeed in pulling it down. We note here Zambia heritagising while Zimbabwe de-heritagising. The following is a diagrammatic summary of the process of heritagisation from which we can link it to semiotic resources as they function in social as well as visual cultural communication processes. *Figure 13* below summarises the connections between cultural forms, heritagisation, identity and national heritage notions as discussed in this section.

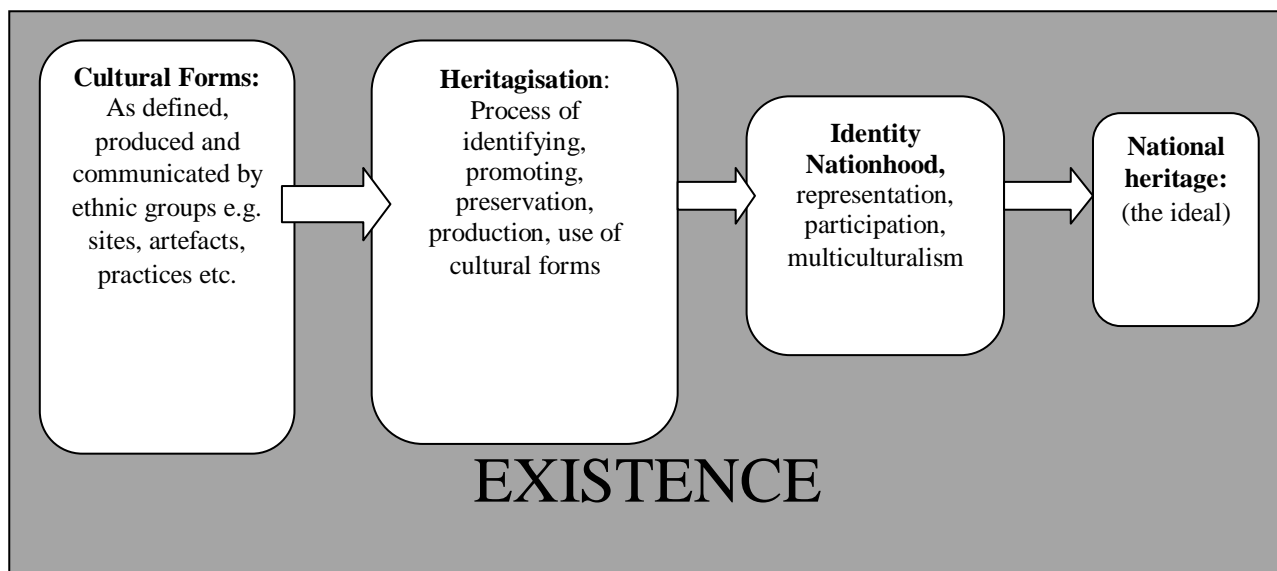


Figure 13: The process of heritagisation

Source: U. Saidi, 2015.

6.8.3 Discursive determinism

There is usually a wave of signals that seem to stand out superior to others in any communicative process. These ‘superior’ signs determine the signifying aspects of discourses leading to the determination of the character and identity of those represented by the discourses. In our case heritagisation depends much on discursive determinism. Archaeologists for example, say they work more with probabilities (Machiridza 2012) and because they rely on sites previously occupied by man as well as with the remains from the tools they obtain, they cannot certainly claim of the nature or changes that might have occurred. But the structural features, materiality as well as symbolic interpretations of the sites and pieces determine the shape of the discourses

that affects heritagisation. It is through the process of heritagisation as well as de-heritagisation that cultural communication is observed; we clearly begin to speak of how cultural spaces are negotiated especially in an inter-semiotic cultural context and situation.

We should put in mind that when calls for cultural rights, land and indigenous demands for autonomy become a real block central governments have to face, heritagisation and discursive determinism play important roles in placing where heritage struggles may emerge ‘as well as the artefacts around which they emerge, as social, semantic and physical spaces of ontological multiplicity’ (Lazzari and Korstanje, 2013:394).

When BaTonga use their pieces, either through smoking as we have seen with the *ncelwa* or BaTonga partaking to the command of the *buntibe*, they are marking their domestic cultural space and this makes them able to reclaim their cultural agency. Cultural appropriation in any given society is determined by the cultural systems that maintain the communicative connections of the society. In cultural communication, we begin to identify instances of cultural redeployment where cultural semiotic pieces are placed within a larger cultural continuum. In our case the BaTonga pieces are placed within the Zimbabwean cultural continuum where they are re-interpreted or are supposed to be re-interpreted from their materiality and symbolic texture. The traditional usage and form remains rather unchanged. In other words, ethniartefacts undergo national heritagisation.

When the *buntibe* is being played, its form and function together with the sound produced and the various roles community members play; is tantamount to making us see the *buntibe* as a physical ethniartefact transforming participants into the world of imagination. The *buntibe* becomes a metaphor in the imagining of the BaTonga cultural spaces in Zimbabwe –that alone is loaded with socially, culturally and historically as well as symbolic meanings advanced by BaTonga. These are meanings of spatial inscriptions signifying alongside the conventional language BaTonga cultural contents. It should be noted that the *buntibe* performance requires movement and domestic space; immediacy and agency are all tied to a triad relationship where the drum, the community and space are brought into a visual cultural semiotic trichotomy.

BaTonga are not only negotiating for space, they are simultaneously negotiating for ethnic and cultural identity. And this is reflected in their pieces which have created a narrative of cultural significance. Fabian (1999) observed that the visual element is a determiner to recognition. Existence and heritage are thus connected by the concept of recognition. Thus, heritage does not therefore merely mean anything that connects people to their past. It becomes their everyday possessions; something which has been authored in the past remaining active and significant in the present although in the African context facing erasure against forces of modernisation. For the *ncelwa* we heard from a BaTonga elder saying ‘*Bunakilisto mbubo bulokudyomyeka kufepwa kwancelwa mucintu*’ (Christianity is responsible for the decaying of *ncelwa* smoking tradition/practice) (Interview with a BaTonga Elder, 2014).

The pieces are visual icons as well as signifiers which occupy an important position within the contested Zimbabwean cultural spaces. And on behalf of the BaTonga they embody cultural and historical meanings, defining and objectifying the entire space. To illustrate this, let us reflect on Becker’s (2011) study of the Namibian Heroes Acre and Eenhana Shrine as memorial sites. His conclusions were that sites were visual as well as iconic signifiers allowing a ‘deeper understanding of the underlying discursive practices and the contestations surrounding them’ (Becker, 2011:521).

Being national sites, they reflect and encode selected memories and historical narratives. This is a similar point which Saidi (2013a) also advanced with regard to the BaTonga. We thus note how sites become objectified forms of social memory symbolically enacted into the available national cultural spaces. For the Namibian case (Becker, 2011), the visual cultural communication active in the national discourse of this kind make it possible that self-reflection, definitions of post-colonial features of Namibia be explained.

Becker (2011) says sites or landscapes are objectified to communicate something of national significance or to justify the existence of the post-colonial regime. However, such a landscape always carries imported or created imagined artefacts which help codify or code the landscape to make it ultimately objectified so that it can signify and invoke meanings from the past for the survival and maintenance of the present. The *ncelwa*, *buntibe* and the Stick, are mere everyday

pieces found within the landscape along the Zambezi valley in the Zimbabwean side, playing this cultural communication role Becker (2011) is advancing; that of objectifying the landscape and general space.

Okonkwo (2003) demonstrated how space is important and does matter in social fabrication when he looked at Dangarembga's (1987) *Nervous Conditions* most specifically the exploration of 'female character's plight' which Okonkwo (2003:54) sees as 'codified in various domestic and public spatial structures, ideologies, and experiences that differently impede the women's lives....' DeCook (2012) appreciated narratives as metaphors as well as material artefacts. Thus, Dangarembga's narrative becomes an emblem in spatial negotiation by black women in a colonised patriarchal society. Drawing comparisons with this, we have aspects of materiality which for the narrative words are symbolic and create visual pictures in the mind of the reader. These are metaphoric and stand in for various representations. In the BaTonga scenario, the material pieces made out of wood or squash represent important positions and identities of the BaTonga within their domestic and public spaces.

The cultural pieces semiotically viewed, wear emblems of identity and this is mainly ethnic identity. The artefacts thus have emblematic and symbolic values. Silverstein (2003:532) defined identity as 'a subjective intuition that one belongs to a particular social category of people, with certain potentials and consequences of this belonging' (Ibid). These intuitions retell of participation in ritual occasions as well as 'socializing in certain ways in variously institutionalised forms to make our identity clear to ourselves and to others on a continuing basis.' The artefacts as language become a central vehicle or channel of thought and expression and culture.

As a group BaTonga have to some extent achieved recognition by locality mostly in the physical landscape of their origins; the Zambezi Valley. From these physical places of locality, they continue to express their being as has been noted above and through their expression we find them within the national cultural discourses of Zimbabwe. However, the dominance of cultural expressions during national gatherings far removed from their physical locations is questionable. If we take nationalism loosely to mean an effort to create, participate and define a nation we can

observe a number of elements that happen within the creation of a nation. Following Akudinobi (200:124) in Africa nationalism involves ‘a synthesis of various intellectual histories, protest traditions, specific cultural institutions, and unique lived experiences.’

We note that even heritage in itself becomes a discursive space full of contestations. In the work of nationalism, the popular advancements are those that aim and seek to advance selection and promotional of items that are representational in reflecting that which is of nationhood. BaTonga cultural pieces become cultural parameters within a nation. Through this kind of cultural communication, we realised notions of cultural nationalism which have become quite topical in Zimbabwe today especially as the nation grapples against neo-colonialism, globalisation and so on. Heritagisation (**Section 6.8.2**) comes in as a way of materialising cultural communication in the production of cultural identity which can be used in various spheres for national survival.

6.9 Cracking the nonverbal code

A number of scholars (Viriri 2003, Makoni, Dube and Mashiri 2006; Magwa 2010, Ndlovu 2013), have argued and lamented the absence of a language policy in Zimbabwe. Viriri (2003) even says one hoped at independence the country would have tackled the language policy first. Makoni, Dube and Mashiri (2006) make a comparative analysis of language planning and practices in the colonial era and in post-independent Zimbabwe prompting Magwa (2010) to draw the country’s attention to the language issue during its constitutional making in 2010. This reflects a continued play out of the Doke’s (1933) language omissions and the revival, sustenance and position of so called ‘minority’ languages. Languages such as Tonga become minimal in national discourses and nationalism at large.

Until recently, Tonga was not recognised officially hence was not used in the school system and media although Ndlovu (2013) recently celebrated the Tonga success especially its recognition and use in education in BaTonga territories such as Binga districts. However, what is important is that, regardless of the position of BaTonga verbal language the non-verbal through the artefacts has always been present in the national discourses especially in the discourses of tourism. It was not, sadly, observed as a viable and active language, but it helped preserve the

identity of the BaTonga to a point where the Shona and Ndebele for example even the Europeans had to adopt that which was BaTonga to advance their own causes. At times they had to wrongly credit the visual artefacts to be Shona or Ndebele. This follows the classification of the Nyaminyami Stick as created at the backdrop of the legend of the ‘Shona’ spirit when in actual fact is a BaTonga spirit.

What we learn, therefore, is that verbal language poses dangers as the cultures it defines subsequently defines the speakers and the community. Even the naming of provinces in Zimbabwe has been linguistically based such as *Mashonaland* (Shona), *Matebeleland* (Ndebele) and *Manicaland* (Manyika –a Shona dialect). The assumption is that dominant groups residing in these areas are either Shona or Ndebele speaking; and what of the area where BaTonga reside? In linguistic error it has been named Ndebele. These are the weaknesses and the gaps that allow misrepresentations of groups in a country mostly if solely done against the verbal linguistic nature of the dominant ethnic groups residing there.

The idea of cracking the non-verbal code is to accord us possibilities of understanding and appreciating part of what happens in cultural interactions. Ribeiro (2007) says that there are cases when two linguistic cultures have to come together like the cases in Zimbabwe where ethnic cultures have to come into contact for nation building. Between a Shona and Tonga, there has to be an interpreter unless the BaTonga be forced to abandon his linguistic coding and converse instead in the Shona or Ndebele. However, through cultural artefacts different ethnic groups of different linguistic cultures are brought into a productive relationship. Artefacts help bridge gaps or solve problems likely to be caused by interpretation blunders and groups speak directly to each other.

The only regrettable situations have only been on misrepresentation especially in as far as *ncelwa* is concerned where the smoking of dagga is emphasised. It was shown in the previous chapter that the shape as well as the general mechanics of the *ncelwa* and its similarity to the Arab *hookah* dramatically linked the BaTonga women pipe to dagga smoking. Such interpretations have corrosively become cultural. BaTonga deny the smoking of *mbanje* not because of fear of

persecution but deny dagga smoking on the *ncelwa* as merely not the proper substance smoked hence as not the proper representation of their practices.

Through artefacts, cultural communication is possible as ethnic cultures speak to each other directly. There are key cultural forms that are nearly impossible to conceal or erase even as the dominant groups try to assert themselves. What we get instead is a systematic effort by the dominant groups to include those unavoidable cultural forms into their own cultural spheres to advance their positions and identity. This move however, is less direct as expected by the dominant groups; in the BaTonga case, the national discourses especially in tourism along the Zambezi always have a mark of the BaTonga. There have been attempts to incorporate them into the Shona or Ndebele cultures but even the naming remains BaTonga.

We are able today to recognise BaTonga in their cultural sphere and the promotion of expressive cultural consciousness continues. During a culture week in May 2004; BaTonga gathered in Simchembo Village 1 (Gokwe), to celebrate culture and to express their deep seated cultural position. While it was done within the BaTonga territory, it signifies their existence however, such cultural expressions need to be done and conducted among the all observable cultural groups in the country. This brings an understanding of how artefacts facilitate conversation and not block it. Tonga as a language can further be viewed as a form of life – ‘an overarching form of life can, then, be the means through which those who think and act within a communicative event when they are discontinuities between the smaller forms of life that make that up’ (Ribeiro 2007:565).

Artefacts act as a buffer when a cultural group is under threat from forces that are likely to bring about cultural erasure or cultural shadowing. Heritagisation as a process especially as advanced from a national scale is careful to include those materials of so called minority groups. From this process the artefacts will then act as buffers protecting and communicating the very presence of the BaTonga people.

If we are to view language as that which allows us to communicate and share ideas; and that language itself intrinsically mirrors or reflects culture, especially read from Ribeiro (2007:565)

who says ‘for a language to have meaning, the conventions, customs and value systems underpinning it must either be shared or understood by those who use it’ (Ribeiro *ibid*). Artefacts too as has been seen bring about conventions, customs and value systems as shared by BaTonga through a process of grouping and coding. Recalling as well, BaTonga like any other communicative group use historically and culturally marked systems and styles. They do not only reflect BaTonga culture but embody the historical and cultural underpinnings or practices of the BaTonga. In the grand space of nationhood and in cultural communication they provide a value system that makes them alive and unique.

One element worth expanding on is coding, which Leeds-Hurwitz (2012) has partially attempted to address together with Porcar (2011) especially as it relates to the concept of the channel as related to signs. Following Porcar (2011:25) ‘signs cannot be separated from the codes that confer upon them as a status, nor can these codes be isolated from the channels through which their signs manifest themselves or the context in which they are updated.’ We therefore learn that there exists a symbolic space of communication if we take an artefactual semiotic view of communicative spaces under contestation in Zimbabwe. We appreciate that an artefactual ethnisemiotic approach to communication comes in to question even the classical theories of communication advanced by the likes of Shannon and Weaver (1949), Fiske (1990), McQuail (1984) where, as rightly observed by Porcar (2011:26),

...the process of transmitting information is often presented under the following form: a transmitter sends out a message towards a receiver by means of a channel, a message about something, a message built with the help of a given code. This classical schema has been used with the purpose of describing linguistic communication but was thought to be valid for all types of communication.

But because humans are involved in the matrix of interactive exchanges signification is always a factor (Porcar 2011). Semiotics studies all cultural processes as if they are all communication processes because any cultural process has underlying processes of signification. But these underlying processes of signification have to be very specific and context based hence the idea of artefactual ethnisemiotics to appreciate the exact in BaTonga communication processes and subsequently cultural processes. As such an artefactual ethnisemiotic approach takes semiotics even further, beyond Saussure (1966) and Pierce (1960) semiotics.

6.10 Cultural communication and societal inclusion

Scholte (2008) made an important remark that contemporary democracy or the rule by people has shifted its parameters from the historical understandings of democracy. He loosely views democracy as encompassing the idea of inclusion and recognition by modal representations of community aspects that make up a whole. In Scholte's (2008:306) thinking,

earlier democratic practice was constructed around the interconnection of country, state, and nation, contemporary democracy wants reconstruction around the interconnection of transscalar space, polycentric governance, and plural collective identity.

He finds and suggests, over and above other political tasks, a need to 'nurture positive practices of intercultural recognition, communication and negotiation' (Scholte, 2008:307). While this study does not advance any democratic procedures or principles in the revival of the country's reconstruction process of democracy in the political sense of it, a comment on it is vital as it allows us to appreciate the centrality of cultural communication and its representational manner. In the BaTonga case and Zimbabwe at large, we view cultural communication broadly as a cultural practice that has a bearing in the national discourses of nation and state.

African community set ups are different from the so called Western societies and communities. As such aspects of recognition of communities such as BaTonga are not driven through civic open confrontations with the central government. Instead, the inclusive and available non-confrontational as well as participial ways of engagement have been pursued and found to be effective especially for BaTonga. We observe first the structural oneness of BaTonga, the communal reflection of cultural and historical expression when they partake their everyday social practices. The smoking of the *ncelwa* is a case in point.

The *buntibe* presence as a deciding factor on social gatherings or in the playing out of rites of passage go a long way in defining various points on which even the smallest pieces such as the *ncelwa* have in that passage of that rite. It becomes a connection of an invariably well-defined set of visual cultural systems that work in tandem with the rhythm of life of the BaTonga as well as

with a community's desire to play out its social and cultural bravura. Ultimately spatial permanence and security become more pronounced.

Cultural expressions become communicative acts and BaTonga are able to recognise the visual cultural codes in these cultural practices which by and large reflect their identity and aspirations. One cannot help but appreciate that which still exists although forces of erasure are at play. For instance, the *ncelwa* remains common but among the elderly BaTonga women. In the past BaTonga retell of young girls partaking to smoking the *ncelwa* and should the present generation cross over, the *ncelwa* will remain however not as an everyday tool but might find its way in the mediums or archives where they shall continue communicating the past but this time being read from an archeologically or historically defined parameters.

So, what we also have is communication of existence within social-space and time. The extent to which a country can directly craft a cultural policy aimed at forging its national identity and culture is largely based on this communicative aspect of existence. This further shows how broad cultural communication can appeal to the maintenance as well as the construction of national spaces. It becomes not only communication for existence and recognition, but communication for participation in the cultural as well as social affairs of the nation as a whole.

Communicating through artefacts as cultural forms is communicating culture visually. This form of communication can only be achieved through nonverbal means and it is a dynamic process. Anything that results from the process of visual cultural communication becomes social action (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2012). Austin (1962) argued for words as enacting action in his speech act theory. For him words are observed within the verbal context and we can draw parallels that even in the nonverbal context as it stands out as an independent system allows the enaction of various aspects of social action. Nationalism is an example and the subtle ways of negotiating for space is another; that is to be recognised, represented and to participate in the national spaces as BaTonga do through their artefacts is credited to the communication system in place which does not question or directly confront the supposedly existing dominance, power or any economically prefixed systems.

The other reason for cultural communication is not to create an ideal heritage for ‘access to economic resources’ (Robertson, 2012:1) but to promote in spatial scales and representations adhere ‘firmly on the role of heritage in identity establishment and maintenance at the national level’ (Robertson, 2012:6).

6.11 De-heritagisation

There has been a systematic cultural re-invention in Zimbabwe especially due to the political and economic experiences the country has gone through since the turn of the 21st century. Cultural re-invention has been played out in a bid to save nationalist hegemony. There is clear de-heritagisation in the process. Western cultural forms are systematically underplayed and receive less national recognition and in place heritagisation takes place. At this level cultural communication between the West and Africa is quite visible. For Zimbabwe national cultural communication against the Western culture is viewed as the podium on which contemporary nation building efforts can be based.

The current national drive requires a critical consideration of a continuing interplay of ethno-national identity. In any nationalist drive, ethno-national identity is a building block to nationalism. Cultural communication cements the two together revealing the character of nationhood. What we need to consider is that recognition affects the political economy of cultural forms such as the *ncelwa*, *buntibe* and the Walking stick. Monda (2012) has done some research in this area. The online *Newsday* of 2 September 2014 carried a clip on ‘Tonga lifestyle’, the walking stick is represented in the homemade documentary but clearly it is the non-BaTonga who interpret the experiences of the BaTonga for instance the smoking pipe is emphasised as having been used for smoking dagga several times in the clip. Thus these cultural forms are subjected to the political economy of the nation for the benefaction of agents but how much do they advance BaTonga recognition? How much do they celebrate BaTonga?

The symbolism of the artefacts characterise the culture of the BaTonga as emblematic. Cultural practices are symbolic in that, they allow for the ascription and communication of meaning or ‘intelligibility’ to others, thus, participation in language is but one instance of a primary symbolic

practice. There is no better semiotic cultural communicative conclusion than this. One sees a clear view that makes us conclude that the semiotic nature of human existence and human experience is played out from the cognitive spaces right up to the communicative acts socially interpreted as cultural practices.

6.12 The *buntibe*

The *buntibe* is a communicative performance of significant cultural value. Stone (2008:7) commenting on African performance art noted that ‘Singing, playing instruments, dancing, masquerading, and dramatizing are part of a conceptual package that many Africans think of as one and the same.’ Drumming while it is an expressive act, the drum itself is a visual codifying system that allows this expressive act to be realised. Through the *buntibe* life is created and recreated through it.

What we realise is a social communicative formation in the visual sense. Through the drum, we see a well-developed aural transmission system developed to fulfil practical life forms for the BaTonga. The drumming is also linked to the communicative religious BaTonga acts. Together with music, song, dance, leg and hand rattles; the *buntibe* is played at religious and social situations. Mukova and Chikovore (2013:73) referring to the *buntibe* observe that ‘Tonga, decorated drums were also incorporated into the mainline African Initiated Churches.’ Hence we can conclude against this knowledge that communication is a performative act.

6.13 Nyaminyami Walking Stick

The value of the stick has mostly been of cultural-commercial value. The Nyaminyami Walking Stick came to prominence with the rise of discourses of tourism and hospitality in the country. Its period of creation coincided with the tourist discourse; mapping and marking of the Zambezi shore. Viewing the stick as a cultural semiotic piece as well as a cultural communicative piece allows first an ‘exploration of its nature and depth ultimately demonstrates the logic of Tonga cosmology’ (Mukova and Chikovore, 2013:68).

Apart from this, it reflects the religious phenomenon of the BaTonga. From the motifs, we have the hand and the ball. The ball is used by the fortune teller to connect BaTonga community with the spirituality from which certain explanations are given regarding BaTonga spirituality. The BaTonga spirituality is not thus limited and merely connected to the Nyaminyami spirit; but to the acts of sacred practitioners.

Fortune tellers become mediators between BaTonga and their spiritual space and the fortune teller is human and generally is directly part of the everyday person unlike the Nyaminyami. The fortune teller is thus a religious practitioner following Mukova and Chikovore (2013:69) conception that this is ‘anyone among the Zimbabwean Tonga who mediates to various degrees between the human and the sacred realms.’ This is the same mediation concept we read even in the narratives of the construction of the Kariba dam wall. BaTonga elders are reported to have been consulted when bodies of workers who were working on the dam wall were swept by the floods. The appeasement act done using cattle beasts foresaw the recovery of the bodies after days underwater. The very process of mediation also saw the completion of the construction of the dam wall proving the role played by the BaTonga in the construction of the dam wall.

We hence abide by the conclusion that belief in the sacred is belief in the ‘reality that does not belong to our world’ (Cox 1995:353 in Mukova and Chikovore 2013:69). In all this, we find cultural communicative acts of the BaTonga being ethnisemiotically communicated to the present generations. While the BaTonga reveal sketchy information regarding the practice in fortune telling in present times, what is important is the understanding that the mapping of the spiritual spaces is far reaching.

6.14 *ncelwa*

The *ncelwa* reveals the visible place of the BaTonga women and at the same time signifies the identity of BaTonga women in Zimbabwe. This simplistic but very sophisticated material piece reflects much about the social practice of smoking by BaTonga. Nyathi (2005) says for the BaTonga women it is the healthiest way of smoking. BaTonga too speak of health benefits

specifically fertility issues. Thus BaTonga women not only do they control their sexuality but they reveal their character as well as bring out socialisation as prominent within the BaTonga domestic and community space.

The *ncelwa* faces threats of extinction because young women are shunning the practice of smoking in contemporary times. Munikwa (2011) who advanced an evangelic message could be one among the many culprits influencing the young women from discontinuing *ncelwa* smoking. Scholarship has further misrepresented the BaTonga especially when the *ncelwa* was connected to *mbanje* smoking. Such misrepresentations have a bearing when cultural exchanges lead to heritagisation. Against these however, the material piece remains an important visual code in BaTonga battles for recognition. For BaTonga women, the *ncelwa* is a central symbol of BaTonga and BaTonga women in particular.

It is no accident that on the Nyaminyami Walking Stick the head of the stick is the Nyaminyami and the foot is the *ncelwa*. What this signifies is that BaTonga in their cosmos have two important centres of references. The Nyaminyami speaks of the religious belonging, adherence and homage of the BaTonga to the spirit or the Supreme spirit. The *ncelwa*, given its direct appeal to women shows that women are the guardian of the life of BaTonga. Every other motif that points to the BaTonga is casted between the Nyaminyami and the *ncelwa*. Historically, BaTonga even follow matrilineal family patterns (Ncube 2004) thereby further explaining that women are the pillar of BaTonga community.

6.15 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the matrix of cultural communication noting that the three artefacts under study are semiotic pieces and codes of a signifying cultural system. The chapter has cracked the nonverbal code showing that material objects make up a language of their own with a unique superiority especially over verbal language. Some of the notable advantages are that non-BaTonga for example are able to directly gain access to the BaTonga cultural meanings without interpretations which might work as buffers. The next Chapter concludes the study by summarising the study, stating conclusions of the study and provides recommendations to further

studies; policy formulation and appreciation of BaTonga material objects as, like any other, important communicative codes key in the determinism of cultural communication for negotiation of space in the country.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7. Introduction

This chapter concludes the study by first giving a brief summary of the chapters in the study. Significant aspects of visual cultural communication and artefactual ethnisemiotics as well as how the two concepts weave into each other are discussed. The chapter also touches on the cultural pieces and how they contribute to semiotics and visual communication research as a whole. Major limitations of the research are set out at the same time suggestions for further research are given. The chapter closes with some key points on the significance of the study as well as its contributions to the study of semiotics and visual cultural communication in the country in cultural tolerance and development.

7.1 Summary of the chapters

Chapter 1 introduced the research problem and hypothesis noting that research is an analysis of BaTonga cultural artefacts viewed as visual codes used in cultural interaction. Background of the study was given in the same chapter where BaTonga were identified being treated as a marginalised group in the country against other dominant ethnic groups such as the Shona and Ndebele. Against this background, the chapter noted that scholarship also generally neglected research and documentation of BaTonga cultural realities although a thin body of literature is observed by those scholars who have shown interest in studying Tonga language and culture issues such as Zivenge (2009) and Ndlovu (2013).

The study ‘cracked open’ three BaTonga cultural artefacts significant in the visual communicative cultural life of the BaTonga in Zimbabwe. The artefacts in question were the *ncelwa*, *buntibe* and Nyaminyami Walking Stick at the same time observing their significance in the communicative life of the BaTonga in Zimbabwe. The aim was presented by the chapter at the backdrop of seven key objectives which were to explore the artefactual ethnisemiotic nature of the BaTonga visual cultural communication, examine how BaTonga negotiate for space and

visibility in the country; examine the visual codes that make visual cultural communication systems in the BaTonga cosmos and analyse how artefacts as material objects qualify as the fundamental nonverbal cues within the matrix of visual communication. Some of the objectives were to examine how visual cultural communication can be a strategy in the negotiation for space by marginalised groups, analyse the use of artefacts when cultures communicate and finally draw conclusions on the extent to which artefactual ethnosemiotics can be applied to the study of visual cultural communication.

Chapter 1 also provided research questions which are, how is Tonga culture identified and sustained through its (or in) cultural artefacts? How do BaTonga in Zimbabwe negotiate for cultural spaces using visual means? How can we separate without prejudice group-cultural meanings in a Zimbabwean cultural context where spaces are contested? What (if any) elements within BaTonga cultural artefacts anchor Tonga language, history and heritage? How are identities and cultural meanings created as well as consumed in the BaTonga cultural sphere?

These guided the study in meeting the aim of the study and objectives. The rationale for the study was to contribute to the de-marginalisation of marginalised groups in the country such as the Venda, Tonga and Kalanga, to mention but three, which have come to be identified under a single umbrella term VETOKA. It was also indicated in the chapter that the study contributes knowledge within the wider discipline of visual cultural and communication studies. The study explored BaTonga visual cultural communication, their performative, artistic expressions, history and culture. The idea as indicated was to build a corpus of knowledge on the BaTonga language and culture.

Chapter 2 reviewed literature for the study. The chapter was structured in various sections as well as subsections. Each section dealt with various aspects relevant to the study. First, the chapter reviewed literature on material culture (**Section 2.1**) for purposes of establishing a working definition of material culture. It went on to review literature on material culture and cultural communication (**Section 2.2**) in order to identify material objects and their place in cultural communication. In this section, prominent scholarly voices were those of Jones (2007), Hodder (2009) and Oestigaard (2004).

Notions of material culture are mostly discussed in archaeology and anthropology thus the chapter made choices on studies done by these three as prominent voices because of the obvious archaeological (Jones, 2007, Hodder 2009) as well as anthropological (Oestigaard 2004) bias. **Section 2.2** did show that literature focusing on material culture was not chosen randomly, instead the relationship of the discussions to cultural communication as well as the semiotic reading of material culture were used to measure relevance to the study. This explains the supporting studies from Carey (1989), Toth and Schick (1994), Parkin (1999) and Craig (2011).

The other important section in chapter 2 focused on visual communication. Because the study aimed at critiquing artefacts as visual codes, the broader concept of visual communication had to be explored and studies by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) Barthes (1999), Dant and Gilloch (2002), Sontag (1999) among others such as Watney (1986), Bourdieu (1990) Freund (1980), Barlett (2012) were key in exploring the nature of research in visual communication and its basic points of departure. Much of it was found to be iconographic in nature clearly marking a gap in focus in terms of research that holds material objects as visual communication.

The preceding Sections of the Chapter zeroed in on research focusing on BaTonga and their space. The chapter noted researches done by Colson (1971), Nchito (2010), Panos (2005) and McGregor (2009). These were found to be mostly biased towards the Zambian BaTonga who are in fact a dominant ethnic group in that country. However, research which took interest in the Zimbabwean BaTonga were that of Munikwa (2011) who took an evangelic view, Ncube (2004) who was interested in the history not only of the Tonga but of all groups living in the north-western part of Zimbabwe such as the Nambya and Shangwe. Gambahaya and Muhwati (2010) took interest in the oral literature of the BaTonga while Hughes (2010) focused on the discourses of the Kariba dam which emerged during and after the construction of the lake. The relevancy of Section 2.4 was to place the study within the BaTonga body of research.

Chapter 3 explored the theoretical framework of the study. Because artefacts as objects were handled as signs, the concept of the sign was discussed as advanced by scholars like Morris (1971), Houser (2010), Merrel (2001), Sebeok (2001). Discussion of the concept of sign led to

the discussion of the theory of signs from which Saussure (1966), Pierce (1960), Eco (1981) van Leeuwen (2005), Copley (ed.) (2010) and Sebeok (2001) voices became prominent. Chapter 3 explored semiotics as a theory of signs and both traditional (Saussure 1966, and Pierce 1960) and modern Eco (1981), Sebeok (2001) as well as van Leeuwen (2005) semiotics were handled leading to the submission of artefactual ethnisemiotics used as an alternative theory in the study. Supporting literature from semioticians like Culler (1994), Holdcroft (1991), Houser (2010), Leeds-Hurwitz (2012) as well as Henault (2010), Mannetti (2010) gave a rich picture of semiotic studies in the world.

It is important to note that there is a fusion of views from various parts of the world with Saussure (1966) (Swiss), Pierce (1960), Sebeok (2001) (American), Eco (1981), Mannetti (2010) (Italian) and joining other European voices such as van Leeuwen (2005). Hence, the voice of this researcher comes in as part of an African voice on semiotics largely after the discussions on semiotic institutionalisation and modelling (Copley 2010, Sebeok 2001, Eco 1981, Eco 1999) led to the conception of artefactual ethnisemiotics (**Section 3.5**).

The conceptual framework was further connected in the chapter to communication and how it fits there (Leeds-Hurwitz 2012) and all these exercises were done at the backdrop of Saussure's (1966) and Pierce (1960) traditional concepts, *sign*, *signifier*, *signified*, *representatum*, *syntagm* and *paradigm*. The chapter having introduced artefactual ethnisemiotics as an alternative approach concluded by showing how the suggested alternative approach accorded ability to crack open the nonverbal code of visual cultural communication in BaTonga negotiation for cultural space in the country.

Chapter 3 focused on the descriptions of the methods selected and how data was collected. The chapter opened with establishing how research as an academic activity incorporates technical approaches that inform data collection in any research. The chapter explained how it was modelled into a comprehensive belief system or worldview or framework that guided this research as an academic practice. The chapter explained that the methodology was qualitative utilising as its design the case study employed ethnographically. Hence, data on artefacts themselves was collected from the source and involved numerous visits to Binga, Kariba and

parts of Gokwe among other data collection techniques such as interviews and participant observations. Explanations or various meanings were also sort from the custodians of BaTonga culture for instance the Binga Museum, *ncelwa* smokers and *buntibe* drummers and dancers.

Interviews were carried out to solicit information regarding use of the *ncelwa* at the same time testing assumptions such as *mbanje* smoking as well as for the *buntibe* of what was involved in playing the drum. The Nyaminyami Walking Stick interviews with Museum officials housing the original piece (original sculpture) and sellers of replicate walking sticks in Victoria Falls and Kariba provided valuable information mostly on the motifs. Interviews also carried out to ascertain cultural value accorded to the pieces in question by the BaTonga. Secondary sources were also consulted to provide a rich interpretation of the data.

Challenges in data gathering were highlighted and the following were singled out,

1. Linguistic divide. The researcher was an outsider in the BaTonga community as such faced communication challenges with the BaTonga. In some cases, respondents were unwilling to participate for fear information vital to their cultural survival was to be used for selfish ends to the detriments of the BaTonga.
2. Focus group discussions failed to materialise due to poor attendance by key participants.

Chapter 5 presented data collected where presentation of the *ncelwa*, *buntibe*, and Nyaminyami Walking Stick were done and described. Using analysis informed by secondary sources on the pieces the chapter revealed knowledge about the material pieces in their history and usage. Against these two aspects communicative and cultural value was ascertained stretching between cultural as well as economic.

Chapter 5 did show that because of the cultural value pieces attracted economic value too as the *buntibe*, *ncelwa* and The Stick were also classified under tourist pieces for sell. For the *ncelwa* the chapter explained that it was a women-smoking pipe and the *mbanje* myth was refuted. The *buntibe* was noted as an orchestral drum while the Nyaminyami Walking Stick the chapter

explained that it is a piece authored by a non-Tonga but represents much of the BaTonga culture and has come to be accepted by the BaTonga based on what it represents.

7.2 Summary of Findings

Interviews and participatory observations confirmed that the three BaTonga artefacts exist and are used by the BaTonga within their cultural sphere. The *ncelwa* (women smoking pipe) was observed being smoked by women and no single BaTonga man was seen smoking one. Extensive observation and correlation with published material confirmed that the piece is a women tool. The *buntibe* (orchestral drum) was also observed as being in existence and its shape and decorations confirming the assumptions that it was designed differently from the other cylindrical drums popular in other ethnic groups such as Shona and Ndebele (See, **Figure 9**, **Figure 10** and **Figure 11a**).

It was observed that the Nyaminyami Walking Stick was in fact a sculpture curved by Rainos Tawonameso from Bikita and BaTonga have come to accept the artefact given the physical motifs on the stick which have strong bearings on BaTonga cosmology. This is only the piece whose usage is artistic rather than a tool as one may assume at face value that it is possibly used by the elderly as a cane for support when walking.

Using artefactual ethnisemiotics, the study confirmed that as material culture, all the three artefacts have a visible role, such as asserting identity, socialisation and cultural expressiveness in cultural communication. Given BaTonga historical background which was seen to be characterised by physical displacement, cultural communication has always been important for them in ascertaining their identity and presence in the country. When Ndlovu (2013) celebrates what he calls the Tonga success in language related issues among the other marginalised groups like Venda, and Kalanga, he accorded this success to the unceasing drive of BaTonga adherence to their cultural fabric. This entails that the three pieces have helped embody the culture and have also helped express that culture in various ways. During festivals for instance, this study has confirmed that the *buntibe* is a rite of passage.

7.2.1 The visual cultural communication by the BaTonga

Reading notions of signs and how they function the study was able to confirm that in a context of cultural exchange, these three artefacts play an important role as visual codes for the cultural messages that are conceived, transmitted and finally decoded. The whole visual exchange as the study has shown has numerous advantages as they are all within the nonverbal sphere. They first have fixed meanings, meanings that are embodied but at the same time meanings that appeal to the knowledge of culture and its performance. BaTonga as the study shows, given the weight of the *buntibe* for instance one assumes during displacement carrying the *buntibe* along could have been a challenge, but the knowledge of making the drum and using it for cultural expression was taken to the new terrain from which continued cultural expression is realised.

It is evident therefore, and one can claim that even the *buntibe* drum is decorated with pictorial promulgations about BaTonga surroundings (see *Figure 10b*), for instance some decorations reflect the game BaTonga used to hunt in the past and constantly aligned to. The *ncelwa* the study has confirmed its daily use and one could hear the bubbling sound of boiling water and the aroma smell of burning ambers, and feels the charcoal heat of the ambers. From a semiotic perspective, all these create codes which are further manipulated in sending various cultural messages. We were able to learn of BaTonga literacy in visual communication. We also were able to learn of the ingenuity of the BaTonga women through their *ncelwa* and as Saidi (2013b) rightly notes the piece is more than just a smoking pipe.

7.3 Contributions to semiotics, visual communication and culture

Following views by Leeds-Hurwitz (2012) that semiotics is a key aspect of communication from which codes, identity and culture are established. It follows therefore that communication can be explained by various codes. It is these codes which carry, meanings and embody the meanings thereby ushering in various aspects of symbolism, representations and significations. The study has therefore contributed to the study of both semiotics and communication.

Utilising traditional (Saussure 1966, Pierce 1960) and modern semiotic paradigms (Sebeok 2001, Eco 1981, Leeds-Hurwitz 2012) the study was able to craft an artefactual concept of sign systems one that can apply to the BaTonga cultural situation using material pieces as described and presented in chapter 5. Out of these the study developed an artefactual ethnisemiotic concept in order to resuscitate the dormant identities and characterisations of the BaTonga. The three artefacts were thus analysed based on this concept thus allowing gaining of knowledge of important visual significance for the BaTonga as well as for the country as a whole.

While processes and efforts to infiltrating BaTonga spaces and ‘delete’ BaTonga presence along the Zambezi valley were observed to have been imminent together with the discourses of the Zambezi valley as advanced by Hughes (2010) visual cultural appreciation through identification of the codes, description and their analysis from which symbols emerged, BaTonga representation was observed and notions of misrepresentation were also identified and corrected. This is important in as far as heritagisation processes are concerned as they involve systematic visual cultural exchanges to which prominent pieces emerge as occupiers of spaces important to human identity such that redefinitions of such pieces can be made or done by a group seeking to dominant and occupy the available spaces.

The study also has contributed knowledge in that we get to appreciate how even the outside world helped preserve and define BaTonga culture in the case of the artistic Nyaminyami Walking Stick which Tawonameso crafted and has appealed to the people of the Zambezi Valley in both cultural as well as economic sense.

Contribution to communication has been in that the usual bias and approach of communication studies (Fiske 2006, Stanton 1996) has been to explain how the verbal message is conceived, encoded and decoded by the receiver and ultimately creation of feedback. Discussions of nonverbal communication as Leeds-Hurwitz (2012) rightly observed end where the physical body ends. The study has provided a possibility of studying nonverbal communication outside the body to include even those material objects that are put to use by various users.

It follows therefore that the BaTonga context provides, like any other cultural and human context, a performative and expressive communicative context from which semiotics can be invoked to explain how messages are conceived, encoded, meanings embodied and shared by the group for cultural survival. Not only is the study of semiotics the study of visual communication, it is also the study of human identity, belonging and survival. What we need to appreciate as well is that a set of material culture create a discourse and is a discourse space. As such how such discursive spaces are played out domestically and otherwise is important to any study of communication.

7.4 Limitations

Artefacts studied in this research were only three and their everyday use reflected artefactual ethnisemiotical values and hence within their visual cultural communicative context, the study noted that meanings are fully appreciated where these three artefacts are put to use in a communicative situation in which other artefacts also exist. However, for the BaTonga the meanings are understood as compared to outsiders who sometimes fail to conceptualise the cultural meanings. For example, the *buntibe* works with other drums, the *nyeele* and rattles catapulted by dances from which axes and various dancing gear is realised. Thus, by merely looking at one piece among a whole in a *buntibe* performance did create a gap in appreciating the *buntibe* hoping further research will also be undertaken in future to address a tight visual cultural matrix of the *buntibe* as an instance.

There are also other aspects which the study merely described or explained but was unable to reproduce in the appreciation of some of the pieces. These are texture, weight, smell and even the heat as well as sound of the boiling water in the *ncelwa*. While the sound of the *buntibe* was recorded for the other pieces such as *ncelwa*, reproduction for analysis in the study was a limitation given the nature of these aspects although they were important in fully appreciating the pieces.

The researcher was non-Tonga. He had to rely on volunteer BaTonga officials from mostly Binga for explanations and interpretations. There were other Tonga people consulted in person or

via various publications but their information was contested by fellow BaTonga mostly those residing in Binga. Part of the explanations given were that the Tonga who were writing about their culture far away from the source did not capture some of their explanations properly and this had a challenging effect on the researcher as judging what was acceptable by the BaTonga under a contested situation became also challenging mostly regarding interpretations of some cultural issues. In other words, there existed power struggle between local members and non-resident BaTonga making it challenging in resting on notions shared by the BaTonga without having to appear siding with one intra-group or another any contestations. However, such notions of contestations were interpreted in the study as normal as any group of people always has its own internal debates on issues. Given their limited character and that there were no major divergent views, the study used this as the basis to authenticate the findings of the study.

This thesis therefore, is an extensive study on the topic in the country to date and was able to lay foundations on further research on artefactual ethnosemiotics and visual cultural communication in peace building, tolerance and cultural development in the country, on the Southern African subcontinent and beyond.

7.5 Conclusions

A number of conclusions drawn from this study are laid below that;

- Material objects can indeed be studied within applied linguistics to explain communicative behaviour. In this case, BaTonga artefacts were found to be codes making the visual cultural communication system BaTonga manipulate in their negotiation for space in the country. Because part of the objectives of any form of communication is to establish relationships, maintain as well as assert one's presence, BaTonga viewed from this perspective, were found to be able to forge relations with non-BaTonga cultures although in some cases certain aspects of their culture were misrepresented as noted in the *ncelwa-mbanje* smoking connections as well as the misuse of the Nyaminyami Walking Stick in motion pictures.

- Cultures can communicate and one pragmatic way to promote cultural communication is through visual cultural artefacts. The advantage of having cultures communicate through artefacts is that the degree of misrepresentation is minimised and non-literate individuals as well as groups are incorporated in the communicative and expressive situations without prejudice. Artefacts themselves become external storage systems of a people's culture, heritage, history and general being.
- Given the degree of neglect and marginalisation, the BaTonga have over the years continued to negotiate for their space in Zimbabwe; and using their artefacts, their visibility has been assured in the country. Ndlovu's (2013) findings that the Tonga have been the successful of the other VETOKA groups is alluded to their continued adherence and promotion as well as use of their material objects from which other supporting aspects of their culture such as language have developed to having to currently being used in education and the media.
- The study managed to uncover the way BaTonga of Zimbabwe's culture and history are encoded and communicated in selected material artefacts. Given the challenges of studying visual communication from this perspective, demands to penetrate the nonverbal and visual semiotic codes embedded in material objects were a prerequisite. Catapulted by the unavailability of enough sources, because of the marginalisation of the BaTonga in the cultural landscape of Zimbabwe, a multi-disciplinary approach was undertaken from which the study became an intervention in itself in an effort to de-marginalise the BaTonga of Zimbabwe. This further led to the provision of insights into the approach to multiculturalism, advocated in this study, in terms of procedures of recognition of heritage and identity.
- Against notions of heritagisation, BaTonga have further appropriated various contributions from outside their culture which add value to the development, consumption as well as sharing of their culture. Scholars like Zivenge (2009) have also shown some linguistic benefits Tonga has enjoyed due to its contact with other linguistic cultures such as English and Ndebele as well as Shona. In this study, The Nyaminyami Walking Stick is a case in point created by a Shona from Bikita but due to the motifs on

the Stick reflecting much of the BaTonga heritage, culture and history we now find it as part of the collections in the Binga Museum. The Walking Stick has also contributed to the cultural economics placing the BaTonga on the Zimbabwean cultural map especially as, through tourism, the aquaculture along the Zambezi valley is consumed.

- It is concluded here that western-formulated theories cannot adequately explain African realities. As such there is need to recreate or create African centred theories or approaches in order to interpret African realities. This study suggested artefactual ethnosemiotics to identify BaTonga artefacts as well as interpret them in terms of their construction, usage and application. The study managed to take semiotics beyond Saussure (1966) and Pierce (1960) and even beyond Sebeok (2001), Eco (1981) a move which is hoped to see attention being drawn to the re-looking at the field of visual cultural communication for further scholarly inquiry. Artefacts too were brought to the attention of applied linguists as active objects of study within the discipline than wait for archaeologists to study them as fossil materials from which dangers of misrepresentations are quite high. It is noted that an applied linguistic approach involves the authors of the material than in most cases where archaeologists after excavating fossil materials conclusions are mostly based on probability and final meanings based on the interpretations of the researcher thus inviting Barthes' (1972) death of the author.
- The study created a model for studying visual culture of marginalised groups. The model can be employed in studying the artefacts or visual culture of other groups in Zimbabwe such as Venda, Nambya or Sotho to mention here only three. Even the artefacts of the so called dominant groups such as Shona and Ndebele can also be subjected to the same model for study thereby testing the extent of applicability and other related notions in building corpus knowledge on visual cultural communication in general.

7.6 Suggestions for further Research

While this study has brought some light to visual communication and negotiation for space by the BaTonga much has not been published nor studied especially on BaTonga visual cultural

material pieces. There are gaps that the study identifies requiring further exploration thus this study, therefore recommends that future studies can as their points of departure explore;

1. Identity of BaTonga women through visual representations.
2. Analyse and document BaTonga artistic performances through drumming and dance as well as sculpturing.
3. Studies can also focus on artefactual ethnisemiotics focusing on the people in Zimbabwe along the Zambezi such as the Kore Kore for example, even the very so called dominant groups like the Shona and Ndebele as what currently exists are archaeological approaches and perhaps less in as far as artefactual ethnisemiotic approaches to visual cultural communication is concerned.
4. A similar model of study can also be employed in studying the visual cultural communication of other groups which are part of the VETOKA and these can be the Kalanga and Venda, with Nambya included and any other marginalised group in the country. The assumption here is that, these groups do have cultural tools or material culture unique to them which from an artefactual perspective can be used to appreciate much about their heritage and how they negotiate for space in the country.
5. The advanced model can also be adhered to and employed in the study of marginalised ethnic groups in the region.
6. Studies can also focus on enriching the approach to nonverbal communication and visual language systems which this study has shown to be synonymous with language. Thus studying both verbal language and nonverbal from this perspective accords a rich approach to expressive cultural communication systems to which both verbal and nonverbal seem to have two independent systems that need focus in the enrichment of the culture of the people who are the custodians of the group culture.

7. Studies of a similar nature can also be done in appreciating the male BaTonga smoking pipe as this study merely looked at the female tool for smoking. The same also applies to the study of other musical instruments such as the *nyeele* (a unique BaTonga musical whistle), dancing regalia and so on which have not been analysed by this study.
8. The study can also be used in advancing formulation of a cultural policy document in the country which is itself currently overshadowed by the discourses as well as calls for language policy in Zimbabwe yet language policy is part of a wider and broad expressive, performative aspect of culture.
9. There are aspects of sound, odour, designs and even colour which are part of the studied artefacts but did not receive considerable attention, future studies may have to incorporate these as part of that which is 'artefactual' in order to explain various other aspects that come with these nonverbal cues to complement the current study.
10. The *ncelwa* and *chete* (women and male smoking pipes respectively) can be studied comprehensively to determine which actual substances are smoked using these smoking pipes from which residue from pipes used in the past can be subjected to laboratory analysis for determination in order to have a scientifically provided position on the *mbanje* (*marijuana*) smoking practice among the BaTonga.

7.6 Conclusion

Artefacts are visual communicative codes which make up the visual communicative system and reflects its own resemblance to the verbal linguistic system. Artefacts are cultural and social constructions and as such carry meanings about their creators, about the communicative environment to which they are put and about their users. In other words, they have a double use: first a pragmatic daily and mundane usage and then their use as signs in communication. It was noted that artefacts create a narrative as we have seen BaTonga cultural brands from which cultural discourses emerge in ascertaining their place, space and role of the people in cultural interactions which themselves are key in assigning cultural identity.

To create and use artefacts is to mark and map; to mark and map is to control; to control is to dominate and to dominate society creates new forms of spaces that continue to be contested. Knowledge emerges and is manifested through social action. Thus, smoking *ncelwa*, participating in the *buntibe* as well as appreciation of the Nyaminyami legendary through artistic representations all become valuable social and cultural interactive actions. It is this phenomenon that warranted a study of the body of nonverbal communication far away from the physical human body and this artefactual ethnisemiotic study has shown that artefacts are loaded with meanings far removed from the structural, physical and materiality of the artefacts. It is hoped that future studies on visual cultural communication especially of the marginalised groups be hinged on the findings of this study.

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Appendices