THE NAMING OF ZAMBIA'S WATERFALLS: A TEST CASE IN CRITICAL TOPONYMY

Richard West, *west46@btinternet.com*
University of Manchester, UK (retired)/

ABSTRACT

It has been claimed that the indigenous names of waterfalls were frequently replaced by European names. This critical toponymic claim is challenged in a test case investigating the names of Zambian waterfalls. The research was undertaken in three parts. Firstly, a quantitative study showed that 97 per cent of 150 named waterfalls have indigenous rather than colonial names. Secondly, the colonial practices and policies that ensured that Zambian waterfalls retained their indigenous names were traced through contemporary documents. Lastly, the naming motives of ninety-nine waterfalls were examined through a toponymic typology to reveal how the indigenous names reflect aspects of indigenous culture that are in danger of being marginalised or lost. The results refute the critical hypothesis of toponymic silencing and establish an evidence-based narrative of a colonial policy that ensured that the indigenous names of waterfalls were retained. European names were adopted only if an indigenous name could not be identified.

Keywords: Critical toponymy, toponymic silencing, indigenous names, waterfalls, Zambia, place names

Introduction

Despite the political debate over the renaming of Victoria Falls (Magudu, Muguti and Mutami, 2014; Masakure and Nkoma 2023), there has been little academic discussion of the naming of Zambia's many waterfalls. The debate over the naming of Victoria Falls largely weighs the political versus the economic arguments, while the only extended academic paper dedicated to the issue (Hang'ombe and Mamvura, 2019) examines the claims of various indigenous names for the falls rather than the imposition of a 'colonial' name. Nevertheless, Hang'ombe and Mamvura (2019) adopt an approach avowedly derived from critical toponymy: 'The study uses critical toponymic theory, which interrogates the power relations that are dramatised and play out in place names and place naming' (2019, p. 19). In this study, the validity of critical toponymy in relation to the naming of waterfalls in Zambia will be scrutinised through three research questions:

1 What proportions of names are indigenous and European?
2 What practices and policies lay behind the naming of waterfalls in Zambia?
3 What are the meanings and 'motives' behind the naming of waterfalls in Zambia?

Literature Review

The Origins of Toponymic Typology and Critical Toponymy

In 1919, H.L. Mencken published his classic *The American Language*, which included a chapter on geographical names. This chapter set out one of the first toponymic typologies, with eight classes of American place names: (*a*) those embodying personal names, chiefly the surnames of pioneers or of national heroes; (*b*) those transferred from other and older places, either in the eastern states or in Europe; (*c*) Indian names; (*d*) Dutch, Spanish and French names; (*e*) Biblical and mythological names; (*f*) names descriptive of localities; (*g*) names suggested by the local flora, fauna or geology; (*h*) purely fanciful names (1919, p. 287). Although rarely acknowledged, Mencken's typology was extremely influential and many of his eight classes have been used in more recent classifications.

The seeds of critical toponymy were also sown by Mencken, who noted that early colonists and settlers either replaced or distorted native-American names:

> There was an effort, at one time, to get rid of these Indian names…. The law of Hobson-Jobson made changes in other Indian names, sometimes complete and sometimes only partial (Mencken, 1919, p. 289).[1]

Mencken illustrated the latter practice in his only reference to waterfalls: 'Most of these Indian names… suffered somewhat severe simplifications… Unéaukara became Niagara'.

This theme of colonial naming was revived at the turn of the century as 'critical toponymy', 'which emphasises the spatial politics of naming and the social production of place' (Rose-Redwood, 2011, p. 41; see also Rose-Redwood, Alderman and Azaryahu, 2010, pp. 456-458 for a 'genealogical' survey of critical toponymy). Critical toponymy adds a political dimension to place naming by focusing on the process by which a dominant power group imposes names on a place regardless of the established names or the wishes of groups lacking political power.

Although the early work in critical toponymy made little reference to African place names, the theory has been vigorously adopted by some African scholars:

> Given the central role toponyms play in indigenous cartography, therefore, any significant distortion of the indigenous geographical names is tantamount to a mutilation of the unique indigenous cartography of the affected local people. The destruction or deformation of local place-names is a spatial and cartographic injustice; it amounts to tampering with the geographic knowledge and cartographic heritage of the indigenous people (Uluocha, 2016, pp. 183-184).

Other work in this field by African scholars has also taken a critical approach, notably the collection edited by Beyer *et al.* (2017). However, none of these works has made more than a passing reference to either Zambia or waterfalls.

1 It should be noted that Bryson (1995, p. 123) gives a contradictory account: '… the colonists showed an extraordinary willingness not only to use Indian names but to record them with some fidelity'.

Waterfalls

Hudson (2013), makes the point that the naming of waterfalls is a relatively recent activity and it is therefore unsurprising that the literature of the field is very limited. Hudson's own survey is the only article that attempts a global picture of the naming of waterfalls, but his examples are taken largely from North America and Europe, mostly from English-speaking countries. This is because his survey is based on a database of 7815 world waterfalls (Swan and Goss, 2012), which is heavily biassed towards North America (7101) and Europe (244), with only 47 African waterfalls listed. The only waterfalls from mainland Africa mentioned by Hudson are Victoria Falls, Uganda's Murchison/Kabalega Falls, and Livingstone Falls in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

African Waterfalls

As the figures for Swan and Goss's database suggest, there is no comprehensive list of the waterfalls of Africa and so the lack of any scholarly examination of their names is perhaps to be expected. Surveys of African place names make little (Uluocha, 2015) or no (Batoma, 2006) mention of waterfalls. Room's dictionary of African place names (2008) gives the origins of the names of only seven of the 104 African waterfalls listed by Swan and Goss in their updated database – less than seven per cent of their total entries.

Zambian Waterfalls

It has been estimated that Zambia may have as many as 400 waterfalls but some 'are not demarcated on any map and many more have no official name' (Allen, Mwanza and Chalcraft, 2005, p. 7). Given the well-documented and much-discussed naming of Victoria Falls by David Livingstone, it would be expected that this and the naming of other waterfalls in Zambia and Zimbabwe would have been given scholarly attention in the academic literature of the field, but this is not the case – references are scattered and the only paper that can be found (Hang'ombe, Chabata and Mamvura, 2019) focuses on whether the preferred indigenous name should be Mosi-oa-Tunya (as Livingstone mentioned) or Syungu Namutitima. However, the naming of Victoria Falls has been used as the basis of a broader assertion about the naming of waterfalls during the colonial era:

> When David Livingstone named Victoria Falls after his queen, he was well aware that the mighty cataract on the Zambezi already had a name. The Scottish explorer recorded in his journal that the African people who lived in the region called the waterfall Mosi-oa-Tunya, translated as "The Smoke That Thunders". No doubt, the falls had long been known by a name, the surrounding area having been occupied by humans since the Palaeolithic era. Like Livingstone, some explorers recorded local names for waterfalls seen on their travels. Sometimes these names were retained…; *more often they were replaced by European names* (Hudson, 2013, p. 85, added emphasis).

Hudson (2013, p. 86), acknowledges the emergence of critical toponymy, when he states that 'recent place name studies have focused less on the name itself, but rather on the cultural politics of *naming*' and he again (2013, p. 90) singles out Victoria Falls for special mention:

> What the names [of waterfalls] usually have in common is the authority to impose on the land names that reflect the power of the countries or organisations to which they belong. Monarchs, saints, and explorers are among the people who are commonly honoured in the way. Victoria Falls and the Falls of St Anthony [in Dakota, USA] are famous examples.

While it has to be admitted that critical toponymy is not the main focus of Hudson's paper, the validity of his assertion that the naming of waterfalls was a reflection of the dominant power has to be tested, especially as it has been taken as a rallying cry for African place name studies (Uluocha, 2015, p. 184).

Research

Question, methods and results (1): indigenous and European languages

The first research question sought to determine whether it is true that the indigenous names of Zambian waterfalls were often or usually replaced by European ones. To establish the quantitative data required to address this question, a thin database of the names of 150 Zambian waterfalls derived from Allen, Mwanza and Chalcraft (2005) was constructed. This mainly gives geographic information such as province, river, and longitude and latitude, but it can also be used to eyeball basic linguistic information, especially whether names are indigenous or foreign. A similar technique has been used to answer rather similar research questions in the region: Geldenhuys (2017) on the naming of mission stations in southern Africa and Hang'ombe, Chabata and Mamvura (2020) on the naming of schools in Zambia. The results of the Zambian waterfalls analysis are given in Table 1 below and, for purposes of comparison, the results of a similar survey of named waterfalls in Uganda[2] are also given:

Table 1: Indigenous and European names for waterfalls

	ZAMBIA		**UGANDA**	
Indigenous names	146 (97%)		19 (86%)	
European names	4 (3%)	Danger Hill Falls Johnston Falls* Victoria Falls Witch Doctor Falls	3 (14%)	Murchison Falls* Owens Falls Ripon Falls
TOTAL	N = 150		N = 22	
Source:	Allen, Mwanza and Chalcraft 2005		Swan and Goss 2012	
* Names no longer used – replaced with indigenous names since Independence				

2 Uganda was selected for comparison as a) it has the largest number of waterfalls on the African continent in the Swan and Goss (2012) database, and b) it has a colonial history which parallels that of Zambia.

These results clearly show that the vast majority of the names of waterfalls in both Zambia and Uganda are indigenous rather than European, and they thus contradict assertions that European names often or usually were imposed on or replaced indigenous names.

Question, methods and results (2): naming practices and policies

The second research question seeks to discover the practices and policies which account for the findings of the first research question, i.e. that very few waterfalls in Zambia were given European names. To answer this second question, contemporary records written by those who named (or, in some cases, failed to name) the waterfalls were examined. There are few of these documents, but sufficient to detect an emerging colonial policy, and so the accounts are presented in chronological order.

The naming of Victoria Falls by David Livingstone in 1855 is well documented. First, Livingstone recorded several indigenous names of the falls:

> Of these we had often heard since we came into the country; indeed, one of the questions asked by Sebituane [in 1851] was, 'Have you smoke that sounds in your country?' They [the Makalolo] did not go near enough to examine them, but, viewing them with awe at a distance, said, in reference to the vapour and noise, 'Mosi oa tunya' (smoke does sound there). It was previously called Shongwe, the meaning of which I could not ascertain. The word for 'pot' resembles this, and it may mean a seething caldron, but I am not certain of it (Livingstone, 1857).[3]

Livingstone then goes on to explain his decision to name the falls after his queen, noting (correctly) that his usual practice was to record the indigenous name and that this was the only occasion on which he gave a place an English name:

> Being persuaded that Mr Oswell and myself were the very first Europeans who ever visited the Zambesi in the centre of the country, and that this is the connecting link between the known and the unknown portions of that river, I decided to use the same liberty as the Makololo did, and gave the only English name I have affixed to any part of the country (Livingstone, 1857).

It may be noted in passing that Livingstone's choice was not accepted by everyone at the time, as an American reviewer made clear:

> … five distinct columns of vapor rise like pillars of smoke to an enormous height. Hence the Makololo name for the cataract, 'Mosi oa Tunye' – "Smoke sounds there" – for which Livingstone, with questionable taste, proposes to substitute the name of "Victoria Falls" – a change which we trust the world will not sanction. (Harper's New Monthly Magazine, February 1858).

3 For other indigenous names for Victoria Falls, see Mukuni, 2013, p. 88; Hang'ombe, Chabata and Mamvura, 2019.

The next Zambian waterfall to be given a European name was Johnston Falls, which lie on the Luapula River on the border between what are now Zambia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Alfred Sharpe, who was deputy to Sir Harry Johnston, named the falls for the Commissioner for what was then British Central Africa:

> On October 22nd [1892], soon after starting, I heard the sound of rapids, and presently reached the head of navigation of the Luapula in lat. 10°30' 46". The river here rushes through great masses of rock. … I christened the falls, *in the absence of any special native name for them*, "Johnston Falls" (Sharpe, 1893, p. 531, emphasis added).

It is evident that Sharpe felt that he could name the falls after Johnston only because he could not ascertain an indigenous name, and similar sentiments were expressed by Alfred Gibbons, a British explorer who travelled to the source of the Zambezi in the 1890s: 'I think it advisable… that rivers and places should retain their native names as far as possible' (1897, p. 122). In time, such sentiments became official colonial policy.

The next account comes from 1931, when Farquhar Macrae, a colonial civil servant, published an article describing his naming of a previously-unknown waterfall on the Kalomo River:

> The fall in question has no name at all, but, for the purposes of reference, I was in the habit of calling it Chilo Cha Sikampafwa (the sleeping-place of swallows) owing to the large number of swallows frequenting its immediate vicinity. The construction of this name is in accordance with the native name of another waterfall in the neighbour-hood. [Chilo Cha Basokwe (sleeping-place of monkeys)] (Macrae, 1931, p. 53).[4]

By this time, the Passfield Memorandum of 1930 had asserted that colonial policy in Northern Rhodesia was that 'native interests' were paramount over those of European settlers, and Macrae's naming of his newly-found waterfall seems to be an implicit expression of this policy.

This colonial policy as it applied to the naming of waterfalls was explicitly set out in 1949, when a group of British explorers 'discovered' a waterfall in the Kafue Gorge and proposed to name it 'The Wesley Falls' but:

> The Secretary of State for the Colonies refused to agree to this name. Investigations proved that this fall had a native name, Avuma Menda[5], and since the principle is that original names are kept whenever possible this name was retained (Matthews, 1951, p. 9).

4 Allen, Mwanza and Chalcraft (2005, p. 143) note 'nothing known'. See also Rashleigh, 1935, p. 172.

5 No further record can be found of Avuma Menda Falls. Not listed by Allen, Mwanza and Chalcraft, 2005.

Here, then, is a clear statement of colonial policy – European names could not be adopted if a pre-existing indigenous name could be identified. However, if no pre-existing indigenous name could be found, it was deemed acceptable to give a European name. This aspect of the policy was exemplified in an article by W V Brelsford of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute:

> **The Buckenham Falls**
>
> The discovery of these falls at the upper end of the Kafue Gorge in 1949 by the two missionaries, Matthews and Temple. … The Secretary of State agreed to the wish of the discoverers that the falls should be named after one of the pioneer missionaries of Northern Rhodesia, [Henry] Buckenham… Before the Secretary of State would agree to the naming of the Buckenham Falls, it had to be ascertained that there was no customary native name attached to them.
>
> **Gwenllian Falls**
>
> A District Assistant, J. Hallsworth… came across some falls on the Funswe River, a tributary to the left bank of the Kafue in the gorge, about a mile up from its confluence. He was the first to discover them and the Secretary of State agreed that they could be named after his wife (Brelsford, 1952, p. 46).[6]

However, in 1964 Northern Rhodesia became independent as the Republic of Zambia. All colonial polices were superseded and broad guidelines on the renaming of places with 'colonial' names were issued:

> … Government policy now is that no streets should be given the names of living persons, resident in Zambia. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also indicated that the use of foreign nationals is also not in accordance with present policy. The government, it is learned, is in favour of completely uncontroversial names such as those of natural features, rivers, hills, etc, or animals (Carlin, 1964).

The Zambian government almost immediately renamed Johnston Falls as Mambilima ('the jumping of the waters') Falls but Victoria Falls were not officially renamed. However, it seems that the guidelines that places should be given 'uncontroversial names' were soon ignored or forgotten as airports, bridges and sporting venues have been renamed after living persons, mostly politicians or leaders (Chilala and Hang'ombe, 2020). A recently-discovered waterfall has also been named after a living person:

> So yesterday I discovered a falls in Kawambwa. We call it Kasoma Bangweulu Falls in honor of my Chief Kasoma Bangweulu of Samfya. I know the people of Kawambwa who have lived here for years don't know about this falls (Mwenge, 2020).[7]

---

6 No further record can be found of either of these waterfalls. Not listed by Allen, Mwanza and Chalcraft, 2005.

7 It cannot be confirmed that this name has been officially adopted.

It is evident that many of the waterfalls of Zambia remain poorly- or even un-documented, and that new falls remain to be discovered and named. It also seems that waterfalls which have been discovered in the past have disappeared from any record (Allen, Mwanza and Chalcraft, 2005, p. 7). However, it is clear that the naming practices and policies of the colonial period ensured the 'paramountcy' of indigenous names and account for the fact that the overwhelming majority of waterfalls in Zambia had and still have indigenous names.

Question, methods & results (3): The meanings and motives of the names of waterfalls in Zambia

It has been established that most Zambian waterfalls have indigenous names (research question 1) and that the naming practices and policies of the colonialists actually ensured that few European names were imposed during the colonial period (research question 2). Research question 3 seeks to establish the underlying meanings or motivations of the names given by indigenous societies. To answer this question, a thick database was constructed consisting of the meanings or derivations of the names of nearly 100 Zambian waterfalls (based on West, forthcoming) and each item was then examined and assigned to a semantic category. This was not straightforward as the origins of names are often uncertain: documentation is usually limited, meanings differ between indigenous languages, and names may have become distorted over time, especially as they were recorded by early explorers and cartographers, so that etymologies are often tentative.

Various classifications for place names have been suggested (see Tent and Blair, 2011 for a survey) and Hudson (2013) seeks to apply Stewart's 1954 classification to the names of waterfalls. However, all of these classifications are essentially Anglocentric and make no reference to the African context or indeed to waterfalls. One later typology (Jenkins, 2018) was specifically devised for the South African context, but this too has limitations in its application to indigenous names and, again, makes no reference to waterfalls. For these reasons, a new classification was developed for the indigenous names of Zambian waterfalls, although reference was made to earlier, more general typologies. The ten categories that were used are listed, explained and exemplified in rank order in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Typology of names of Zambian waterfalls

No.	%	Category	Examples
34	34%	**River/stream** The waterfall is named after the river on which it lies	Izi Falls ('falls on the Izi River') Lwitikila Falls ('falls on the Lwitikila River') Zambezi Falls ('falls on the Zambezi River')
13	13%	**Descriptive** Named after its shape, colour, etc	Mosila-wa-Ndimba ('like the striped tail of the wildcat') Mambilima ('the jumping of the waters') Falls Chibonga Falls ('in the shape of a warclub') Lombelombe Falls ('white as the faces of traditional dancers')
11	11%	**Animals** or other creatures found near the falls	Chilambwe Falls ('falls where there are many frogs') Chinkwazi Falls ('falls where fish eagles are found') Nyangombe Falls ('falls of the buffalo calf')
10	10%	**Onomatopoeia** The waterfall is named after the sound it makes	Sioma Falls ('falls that sound like a symbolic drum') Ichidi Falls ('falls that sound like a car engine') Kundalila Falls ('falls where one hears cooing doves') Lufubu Falls ('falls that sound like groaning hippos')
9	9%	**Topographical** The waterfall is named after a nearby physical feature, e.g. a hill (excludes **rivers**)	Chipulwe Falls ('falls in the desert') Chiyababi Falls ('falls of the palm groves') Chisanga Falls ('falls of the forest or wilderness')
7	6%	**Incident** The waterfall is linked to a significant historical event or legend	Chipinda cha Nyanga Falls ('falls where an ivory boat capsized') Kalambo Falls ('falls where a woman sacrificed herself') Katima Mulilo Rapids ('where the spray puts out the fires') Kwatakila Falls ('falls where the porters ran away')
6	6%	**Religio-spiritual** The waterfall is a sacred, religious or spiritual place linked to spirits and gods	Chinsonkolo Falls ('falls of the snake spirit') Mbwilo Falls ('falls of the river spirit') Namukale Falls ('falls of the ancestral water spirit')
4	4%	**Subsistence** The waterfall is linked to a natural resource in the area: plants, building materials, etc	Kachekabwe Rapids ('grindstone, whetstone') Mulombwa Falls ('African teak tree') Samfwa Rapids ('rapids where samfwa fruit grows')
3	3%	**Emotive** The waterfall inspires a feeling of awe, fear, etc	Kundabwika Falls ('to be surprised') Lupupa Falls ('most cherished' waterfalls) Ngonye Falls ('don't come close to these falls')
2	2%	**People** The waterfall is named after a person or a people	Kasoma Bangweulu Falls ('falls of Chief Kasoma Bangweulu') Ngambwe Rapids ('rapids of the Ngambwe people')
N= 99	**100**		

These categories are briefly discussed below.

Rivers

Stewart (1954, p. 9), adapted the term *shift names* from Mencken's names 'transferred from other and older places', and the term has been retained by other scholars. However, one-third of all the waterfalls on the database are named after rivers or streams, and have no designation of their own, and this high proportion is felt to justify a separate category. This finding lends support to Hudson's suggestion that 'most waterfalls, often hidden in remote and inaccessible ravines, were not regarded as sufficiently important to be given specific names' (2013, p. 88). Where the etymology is known, it is clear that the name of the fall was derived from that of the river rather than vice versa. The West Lunga Falls, for example, are named after the Lunga River, and Lunga means 'joyous place' because the river provided a source of fish for food, water for irrigation and reeds for building materials.

Descriptive

Mencken (1919) coined the term *descriptive names* and Stewart (1954) defines these as those which 'perpetuate a quality of the place that can be appreciated by one of the senses, most commonly sight. Hearing, smell, and other senses may serve'. This category accounts for 13 per cent of all Zambian waterfall database entries. The indigenous name for Victoria Falls – Mosi-oa-Tunya – captures both the appearance (smoke) and the sound (thunders) of the great fall, and other Zambian waterfalls capture similar concepts: Ntumbacushi Falls ('mountain of mist or smoke') and Fwaka Falls ('smoke'). The idea of thunder overlaps with the onomatopoeia category - Mumbotuta Falls ('the water that thunders'), for example. The names of other falls capture the colour - Tchena ('white') – or shape of the falls – Cheswa Falls are said to be shaped like a broom as the falling water is squeezed between the rocks.

Animals and other creatures contribute 11 per cent of names. Mencken (1919) lists 'names suggested by the local flora, fauna or geology' and Stewart (1954, p. 4) specifically mentions animal names, but he includes them under incident names as 'they do not mean that the animal was unusually plentiful at that spot or especially characteristic of it, but merely record a particular occasion upon which the animal was encountered'. However, in most cases the Zambian waterfalls with animal names derive their names from creatures that are plentiful at the site of the falls rather than a particular incident – Katete ('wagtail') and Moemba ('ground hornbill') Falls, for example.

Onomatopoeia (10 per cent). Although previous toponymic scholars refer to sound and hearing, the use of onomatopoeia does not seem to have been identified in the literature. Many Zambian waterfalls are named from the sound that they make, for example Chipoma Falls, derived from a Bemba word conveying the reverberating rush of falling water, which can be heard long before the falls come into sight. Similarly, Ichidi Falls are so-named because the falling water sounds like the noise of a car engine, while Kundalila Falls take their name from a Bemba word meaning the cooing or crying of the doves heard in the locality.

Topographical (9 per cent) names are associated with a nearby natural feature or the surrounding area, typically a hill, a forest, a desert or open countryside. This

category is listed in various typologies (see Tent and Blair, 2011) and refers to 'the physical geography of the territory, e.g. forest, open country, rivers, lakes, waterfalls, etc.' (Jones, 2016, p. 4). Ibwe Munyama Falls, for instance, take their name from a nearby mountain of the same name. The name means 'rocks of the animals' and the rocks referred to are Ibwe Mbishi ('zebra rock', because of its black and white stripes) and the long, flat, pointed Ibwe Lutali ('crocodile rock').

Incident (6 per cent) Stewart (1954, p. 4) defined incident names as those that 'identify the place by means of some incident which occurred at or near it'. The category also applies to a relatively small number of Zambian waterfalls, although the line between a historical incident and a myth may be uncertain, as the following example of three waterfalls illustrates:

> Mutumuna got married, got very drunk and insulted his father-in-law, Chishimba, who was so upset that he committed suicide by throwing himself over the Chishimba Falls. On hearing the news, Mutumuna committed suicide by leaping over the Mutumuna Falls. Chishimba's wife, Kaela, learning of her husband's death, threw herself over the Kaela Rapids (West, forthcoming).

It might be argued that these falls are named after people and should be classified as eponyms. However, waterfalls with eponymic names are usually named in honour of a leader rather than to commemorate those who were involved in an incident. The two Zambian waterfalls named after people during the colonial period illustrate this point: Victoria Falls and Johnston Falls (now Mambilima Falls) were both given names of colonial leaders (the British queen and the Commissioner of the British Central Africa Protectorate, now Malawi), neither of whom actually visited the waterfalls named after them.

Religio-spiritual (6 per cent) Stewart (1954, p. 4) follows Mencken (1919) with *mythological names* as a sub-category of *possessive names* but the term *religio-spiritual* (Jones, 2016, p. 4) is preferred as being more accommodating of indigenous belief systems than those of Mencken (1919), Stewart (1954) and Jenkins (2018, p. 28):

> These are place-names which mark out sacred, religious, and ritual space. They acknowledge the presence of spirits and gods in the landscape past and present. They also offer frameworks for communicating cosmological ideas and wider understandings of the world (Jones, 2016, p. 4).

Zulu and Koudakossi (2023) describe the spiritual dimension of Victoria Falls/ Mosi-oa-Tunya: 'not just a natural geological feature but a place to encounter and access the supernatural'. In a similar vein, Siegel shows that 'water spirits were common throughout Zambia' (2008, p. 1) and such water spirits are commemorated in Chinsonkolo Falls, named for a legendary snake spirit which would block the river if displeased with the people, and Lumangwe Falls, which take their name from a snake spirit which is said to stretch itself between Lumangwe Falls and Kabwelume Falls, a distance of roughly five kilometres.

Subsistence (3 per cent). Jones (2016), introduces a category for *subsistence names*, which 'map the key natural resources within the territory: animals, plants, building materials, hunting, fishing, etc' (Jones, 2016, p. 4). As was seen with the category of animal names, waterfalls are rarely associated with food or drink, but the meaning of Kachekabwe Falls is 'sharpening stone', indicating the importance of grinding stones for forming and sharpening the tools and weapons of the early iron age era.

Emotive (3 per cent). Jenkins (2018, p. 27), introduces this category to cover a subjective feeling at the time of naming which may or may not be a direct reaction to the feature. This category includes a small number of Zambian waterfalls. Since the reaction is subjective, it can clearly vary from person to person. For example, Ngonye Falls were visited by David Livingstone in 1853 (i.e. before he saw Victoria Falls) and at that time he described them as 'the loveliest I had seen'. However, to others they clearly inspired fear because the name in the local Totela language is a warning meaning 'Don't come close or that will be your death!'. Another, rather different reaction to the falls is captured by the name given by the Lozi people, who named the falls Sioma after the royal drum of their paramount chief, perhaps an onomatopoetic name because of the roar of the falls.

People (2 per cent). Mencken's first and most numerous category was 'embodying personal names' (1919) and nearly all classifications retain a category for places named after people, often divided into several sub-categories. Eponymous place names are also common in Zambia: the 'names of most of the key national places/ features in Zambia are eponymous' (Chilala and Hang'ombe, 2020, p. 89). While this may be true of many villages and towns, it does not apply to Zambia's water features – rivers, lakes and waterfalls. Eponymous names form the smallest category in this study: Only two Zambian waterfalls with indigenous names are named after people, and only three waterfalls in all have eponymous names if we include Victoria Falls. One of these - Kasoma Bangweulu Falls - was only recently named and takes its name from an individual, but the other - Ngambwe Rapids – already had their name by the time David Livingstone saw them in the 1850s, although he spelled them Nambue and Nambwe. Ngambwe Falls fall into a sub-category that Stewart (1954, p. 4) called *ethnic names* as they take the name of a group of people rather than an individual. Ngambwe Falls are named after the Ngambwe people of eastern Angola, some of whom settled along the Zambezi in south-west Zambia.

These categories illustrate the motivation or significance of Zambian waterfalls as revealed by their indigenous names. The allocation of each name to one of the categories was not always straightforward, for two main reasons. First, several waterfalls have different names in different languages or even at different seasons. Second, a name may have several layers of meaning, with a literal meaning as well as a symbolic or metaphorical meaning. It was also apparent that these names would not always fit easily into the categories of established typologies, and it was for this reason that a new classification had to be devised, although an effort

has been made to relate the categories to those of earlier toponymists. Some of the earlier typologies were attempts to devise universal categories, but the current research shows the difficulties of fitting names from vastly different cultures into frameworks that are essentially Anglocentric.

Conclusion

The results of research question 1 show quite conclusively that the overwhelming majority of Zambia's waterfalls have names derived from indigenous languages. With one exception (Mambilima Falls < Johnston Falls) these names have not replaced colonial names since Independence in 1964, but are mostly names that were bestowed before the colonial period. Research question 2 traced the emergence of the colonial naming policy which ensured that a colonial name could only be accepted if no indigenous name could be found. Research question 3 fitted the indigenous meanings and derivations of nearly 100 Zambian waterfalls into a typology which had to be adapted and developed from earlier classifications to accommodate the cultural outlook of the indigenous people.

These results may not fit well with the current conventional wisdom of critical toponymy that European names replaced indigenous names during the colonial era, but they are based on quantitative data and a clear narrative of a deliberate colonial policy. However, critical toponymy has not only sought to set out a narrative of colonial name imposition which cannot be supported, but in doing so it has neglected to identify or document the indigenous names that had supposedly been replaced. These indigenous names are in danger of being marginalised or silenced altogether, contributing to the broader neglect or even denial of African history (Trevor-Roper, 1965, p. 9).

REFERENCES

Allen, Q., Mwanza, I. and Chalcraft, H. (2005) *Guide to Little-Known Waterfalls of Zambia*, Lusaka: Ilse Mwanza.

Batoma, A. (2006) African ethnonyms and toponyms: an annotated bibliography, *Electronic Journal of Africana Bibliography*, 10(6), pp. 1-41. Available at: http://ir.uiowa.edu/ejab/vol10/iss1/1.

Beyer, H., Brenzinger M., du Plessis T. and Raper P E (Eds). (2017) *Critical Toponymy,* Bloemfontein: Sun Media.

Brelsford W. V. (1952) A further note on European place names, *Northern Rhodesia Journal*, 1(6), pp. 41-48.

Bryson, B. (1995) *Made in America*, London: Minerva.

Carlin, J. (1964) A new name for Abercorn town, *Abercornucopia*, 14, pp. 4-5.

Chilala C., and Hang'ombe K. (2020) Eponymic place names in Zambia: a critical toponymies perspective, *Journal of Law and Social Sciences,* 3(1), pp. 81-92. Available at: https://doi: 10.53974/unza.jlss.3.1.442.

Geldenhuys, C. (2017) *The influence of missionary societies on place names in South Africa*, in Beyer *et al* (Eds), pp. 50-64.

Gibbons, A. (1897) A journey in the Marotse and Mashikolumbwe countries, *The Geographical Journal*, IX(2), pp. 121-143. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/1773499.

Hang'ombe K., Chabata E. and Mamvura Z. (2019) *Syungu Namutitima* or Victoria Falls? Contest for place and place naming, *Nomina Africana*, 33(1), pp. 19-31. Available at: https://doi: 10.2989/NA.2019.33.1.3.1333.

Hang'ombe K., Chabata E. and Mamvura Z. (2020) School names in selected districts in Southern Province of Zambia: a Critical Toponymies Perspective, *International Journal of Language and Linguistics,* 8(3), pp. 88-99. Available at: http://doi: 10.11648/j.ijill.20200803.11.

Hudson, B. J. (2013) The naming of waterfalls, *Geographical Research,* 51(1), pp. 85-93. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-5871.2012.00780.x

Jenkins, E. (2018) A toponymic typology applied to South Africa, *Nomina Africana*, 32(1), pp. 23–35. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2989/NA.2018.32.1.3.1322

Jones, R. L. C. (2016) Responding to modern flooding: Old English place names as a repository of traditional ecological knowledge, *Journal of Ecological Anthropology*, 18(1), article 9. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.5038/2162-4593.18.1.9.

Livingstone, D. (1857) *Missionary Travels and Researches in Southern Africa,* London: John Murray.

Macrae, F. B. (1930) Unrecorded waterfalls in the Livingstone district of Northern Rhodesia, *The Geographical Journal,* 76(1), pp.59-63. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/1784682.

Macrae, F. B. (1931) More unrecorded waterfalls in the Livingstone district of Northern Rhodesia, *The Geographical Journal,* 78(1), pp. 53-55. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/1784996.

Magudu, S., Muguti T. and Mutami N. (2014) Deconstructing the colonial legacy through the naming process in independent Zimbabwe, *Journal of Studies in Social Sciences*, 6(1), pp. 71–85.

Masakure, C and Nkomo, L. (2023) Purging the lingering shadow of colonialism? *Journal of Black Studies*, 54(3), pp. 187-214. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/00219347231154627.

Matthews, J. L. (1951) First exploration of the Kafue Gorge, *The Northern Rhodesia Journal*, I(4), pp. 3-15.

Mencken, H. L. (1919) *The American Language: A Preliminary Inquiry into the Development of English in the United States*, New York: Alfred A Knopf.

Mukuni, K. (2013) *The Mukuni Royal Dynasty's Short History,* Livingstone: published privately. Available at: https://www.calameo.com.

Mwenge, F. (2020) Available at: https://twitter.com/fmwenge/status/1307598528659820544.

Piesold, D. D. A. and LePage, W. (1965) Some waterfalls in the Northern and Luapula Provinces, *The Northern Rhodesia Journal,* VI(1), pp. 17-27.

Rashleigh, E. C. (1935) *Among the Waterfalls of the World,* London: Jarrolds Publishers.

Room, A. (1994/2008) *African Placenames,* Jefferson NC: McFarland.

Rose-Redwood, R. (2011) Rethinking the agenda of political toponymy, *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 10(1), pp. 34-41. Available at: https://acme-journal.org/index.php/acme/article/view/884.

Rose-Redwood, R., Alderman D., and Azaryahu, M. (2010) Geographies of toponymic inscription: new directions in critical place-name studies, *Progress in Human Geography*, 34(4), pp. 453-470. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132509351042.

Sharpe, A. (1893) A journey from the Shire River to Lake Mweru and the upper Luapula, *The Geographical Journal,* 1(6), pp. 524-533. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/1773965.

Siegel, B. (2008) Water spirits and mammals: the Copperbelt *Chitapo*, *Anthropology Publications*, Paper 2. Available at: http://scholarexchange.furman.edu/ant-publications/2.

Stewart, G. R. (1954) A classification of place names, *Names* 2: pp. 1–13.

Stewart, G. R. (1975) *Names of the Globe*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Stone, J. C. (1962) Some waterfalls in the vicinity of the Kalomo River, *The Northern Rhodesia Journal,* V(2), pp. 186-90, 287.

Swan, B. and Goss, D. (2012) *World Waterfall Database.* Available at: https://worldwaterfalldatabase.com. (Accessed 10/04/2024).

Tent, J. and Blair D. (2011) Motivations for naming: The development of a toponymic typology for Australian placenames, *Names A Journal of Onomastics*, 59(2), pp. 67-89. Available at: https://doi: 10.1179/002777311X12976826704000.

Trevor-Roper, H. (1965) *The Rise of Christian Europe*, London: Thames and Hudson.

Uluocha, N. O. (2015) Decolonizing place-names: strategic imperative for preserving indigenous cartography in post-colonial Africa, *Journal of African History and Culture*, 7(9), pp. 180-192. Available at: https://doi.org/10.5897/AJHC2015.0279.

West, R. I. (forthcoming) *Zambian Place Names – their origins and the stories behind them,* Lusaka: Gadsden Publishing.

Zulu, J. and Koudakossi, H. (2023) The intangible in world heritage in Africa, in Abungu, G. and Ndoro. W (Eds), *Cultural Heritage Management in Africa*, Abingdon: Routledge. Available at: https://doi: 10.4324/9781003199144-13.