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Landscape transformations and socio-ecological management in Limpopo National Park, Mozambique

The research project uses archaeology, anthropology and paleoecology to analyse the long-term socio-natural dynamics in Limpopo National Park (PNL), Mozambique.

PNL was proclaimed in 2001 as part of the Greater Limpopo Transfrontier Park and inhabitants are presently being resettled. PNL is an area constituted by a very high vulnerability to climatic variability but with a long and continuous occupation by farmers, pastoralists and hunter and gatherers.

The project asks

- How have past and current resource management practices contributed to shape the PNL landscape over time and
- How have these practices contributed to shape social and biological resilience and vulnerability?
- How can landscape history contribute to improving equity and sustainability in conservation management?

The strength of this project lies in its interdisciplinary methodology including archaeological surveys, vegetation and land use history reconstructions, interviews on past and present day changes, local history and mapping and documentation of the place names, landscape markers and historic remains.

Our aim is to inform and improve conservation and heritage decision-making in PNL. Landscape history may provide the possibility to mediate between different value systems. We will also be able develop methodologies for assessing and improving conservation management, of importance not only for PNL and Mozambique, but also internationally.

Participants: Dr Michel Notelid, Department of Archaeology and Ancient History; Dr Rebecca Witter, Institute for Resources, Environment, and Sustainability, University of British Columbia; Limpopo National Park. Funded by Swedish Research Council (2012-2015).

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DOCUMENTING VILLAGE HISTORY

As part of our project we have combined semi-structured interviews, group discussions and visits to ancestral places in the villages Bingo, Chimangue, Mashamba and Mapai to document village history (Ekblom et al 2017). We will focus here on the lineage histories of village leaders, that is a negotiated form of formal village history, often relating to the founder of the village. Interviews were carried in Portuguese-Shangaan with that assistance of local translators or game rangers from Limpopo National Park. For readability, we will relate the information we have pieced together from interviews on a number of occasions as a single narrative. The genealogies represented here are represented with the permission of our informants.

Baloi

Descendants of Baloi can be found in many parts of the park, particularly to the south but also along the Limpopo River. The Balois are a big lineage group and consist of several sub lineages living in different areas of the park. Today, as was also related by Junod (1927), Baloi historians count descendency from the *Vanyanhi* (e.g. the Venda). Here we present Baloi lineage history as residents of Bingo presented it to us. The narrative was given by Jeremias Nkwanyeni Baloi the traditional leader of Bingo and successor and descendent of

the founding fathers. Interviews were carried on several occasions with many village elders present: 19/11 2013; 11/7 2014; 23/7 2014; and the story presented here was also related back to Jeremias Baloi in Shangaan 7/6 2015). The narrative is organized around the 12 generations of ancestors starting with the ancestral father, Vawaloi and progressing to the present as follows:

The early ancestors *Vawaloi* and *Wanxuloane* and *Wamitsitsi Ekulo* (Table 1), Ekulo meaning “big hair” lived in Zimbabwe and these founding ancestors are all buried in Zimbabwe. *Matsenga* who was the son of *Wamitsitsi Ekulo* was the first of the Baloi ancestors who came to Mozambique. The date when Matsenga came to Mozambique is uncertain but it was perhaps in the days of *Umzila* (e.g. Ngungunhane father and predecessor). Baloi were probably driven away from the Venda country on account that Matsenga married his niece, which was illegal amongst the Vanhai. Jeremias is not himself sure of this story but it was confirmed by Rodrigues Maluleke (29/7 2015) that claims that the Baloi ancestor were driven away because he married his *sister* and that it is from this event that the lineage got its name, *Loi* meaning bad omen-bad luck. Thus *Matsenga* and his wife moved to Mozambique and started their own lineage. The Bingo Baloi branch first settled in Mabalane (southeast of Bingo, east of the Limpopo River), many Balois are still living here today. The ancestors *Matsenga*, *Xangamela*, *Macovane*, *Umkwaxi* and *Matumbane* are all buried in Mabalane. *Bingo*, son of *Matumbane* was born in Mabalane. As his father *Matumbane*, *Bingo* was renowned as a good elephant hunter on account of his use of poisoned arrows. In the lands he lived there were never any troubles with elephants. Bingo therefore was asked by the Mbombis to come and aid them with the elephants. The Mbombi then only ate meat, they were not cultivators, they only sometimes grew seeds and they did not cook the meat they ate it raw. Bingo stayed in the Mbombi area for some years with his wife. After a few years he wanted to return to Mabalane but the Mbombis refused to let him go. Bingo then demanded of the Mbombi that if they forced him to stay they must make him the chief. Mbombi refused and there was a fight that *Bingo* won and he founded then founded the village Bingo. Bingo was followed by *Tindava*. *Tindava*, like *Bingo*, was a great elephant hunter and he as his ancestors also sold ivory. *Tindava* was a great chief and when there was a problem in the village, he gave a council: he used to be seated on a lion skin and he had an iron hoe and an elephant tusk in his hands. When he put them down in front of him it meant the problem was solved

Some of the Bingo village elders present during the interviews told us that in the days of Ungunghuane the ancestors used to pay tax to Ungunghuane. For instance, if they killed a cow, they had to give a part of the cow to Unhunghane. Some of the elders still have holes in their ears since the days of Ungunghuane. The hole in the ear meant that they were the subjects to Ngungunhane and they had to work for him.

Vawaloi
Wanxuloane
Wamitsitsi Ekulo
Waxifumi Ngotsa
Matsenga
Xangamela
Macovane
Umkwaxi
Matumbane
Bingo
Tindava
Tsovamarambo
Jetimane
Jeremiah Namboriti Baloi
Jeremias Baloi

Fig 1. The Bingo Baloi lineage as given by Jeremias Baloi.





Fig 2. Ceremony carried out by the burial places of Jeremiah Namboriti Baloi (upper row) and Jetimane (middle row and lower row). The burial places are situated in the old settlements of Jeremiah and Jetimane and are situated on the western and eastern banks of the Shingwezi River respectively northeast of the present-day Bingo village. Jeremias Baloi, son and grandson of Jeremiah and Jetimane, carried out the ceremonies (Photos taken 23/7 2014 by Michel Notelid).

Maluleke

Maluleke associates themselves with *Nwanati*, a people that according to legend once lived near the Nawanati River near the present day boundary between Inhambane and Gaza province (e.g. Mandlkatze) (the same ancestry was also given by Junod in 1927). The Maluleke lineage can be found in Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe and here we will focus on the Mozambique branch. The geneology and lineage history of the Maluleke lineage is also detailed in Witter (2010), she has done numerous interviews with residents in Makandezulo A and B and elsewhere. Here our main informant is Rodrigue Maluleke, paramount chief of the Mozambique branch of the Maluleke lineage. Interviews were carried out on several occasions by Ekblom and Notelid 11/4 2007; 14/10 2012; 14/11 2012. The narrative presented here was also presented to Rodrigue Maluleke in Shangaan 29/6 2015 and also 5/6 2016 who then made corrections to the story.

The Malulekes in Nwanati were the same clan as Mondlane and Makwakwa but they could not sustain themselves in the land of Nwanati. Therefore *Malenga* took his family and "went away with them in the sunset". *Malenga* brought his people to the Mabalane area and they took their clan name after the long journey, Maluleke meaning "the long walk". *Malenga* died in Mabalane by the lake Pfkwe. After *Malenga's* death, *Maxakatsi* (or *Matshakatsi*), *Malenga's* son, moved along the Limpopo and settled in an area that was named Xikharhi, after one of the ancestors. This place is now named Panhame and is found 10 km south of Mapai on the west side of the Limpopo River. In Xikharhi the Malukes stayed for a long time and *Maxakatsi* is also buried here.

Maxakatsi's son, *Guyu*, grew up while there was still a war between Maluleke and Vanyhai. When *Guyu* became chief he moved the capital to Nyandweni, situated close to the present-day village of Selani, by the confluence of the Limpopo River and Lelawu River in the northern part of PNL. As *Guyu* moved his family from Panhame they met Vanyhai soldiers and fought with them. *Guyu* and his soldiers eventually defeated the Vanyhai soldiers and the divided the land, deciding the territorial boundaries between Maluleke, Vanyhai and other clans and lineages[1]. *Guyu* was killed by an elephant while following after his wife who after a quarrel had went from the capital to one of *Guyus* other kraals[2].



Fig 3. Visitation and ceremony at the Mapai burial site with traditional leader Rodrigue Maluleke, traditional leader of Mapai village and by many regarded as an expert on local history. Rodrigue has had a long interest in history since school and have also collected information on other lineages in the park (Photos Michel Notelid 20/6 2016).

As the Maluleke lineage now was so large it was no longer possible for all of them to stay in the same place. To sustain the population the Malulekes were therefore divided between the sub chiefs and each was given a contingent of the army to defend his territory. The sons of Guyu: *Xihimo*, *Xololo*, *Miymassi* and each founded a separate village in the areas near what is today Mapai, Makandezulo A and Makandezulo B respectively (see also Witter 2010, 67). Other brothers, sons and grandsons of *Guyu* settled in other parts of the country. *Ximambani*, the younger brother of Guyu settled in Giyano in South Africa, this was in order to better defend the Maluleke territory from the Vanyhai. *Ximambani* ruled over the former Vanyhai territories and also *Ximambani* also kept his residence in Mozambique. *Ximambani* himself is said to have died in a place near the Lilau River. After *Ximambani's* death, his son *Mhinga*, was appointed to defend the area between the Levubu and Venda Rivers (see also Witter 2010, 71). Makuleke (brother of Mhinga) established a settlement in Pafuri.

Mapjane (=Mapai), which means "great destroyer", was the grandson of Guyu and he was sent to Nampfulu to govern the Mapai area. *Mapjane* founded the Mapai village and the Portuguese later appointed him Régulo. Salomon Madjovolo Maluleke gave more information on the lineage history of the Makandezulo village. Guyu son *Xololo* who founded Makandezulo A and also his successors had to continue to fight against the Vanyanhi. *Myamisse* who was the founder of Makandezulo B and his descendant *Ngatsone* also fought the Vanyanhi, but in addition they also had to fight against the Mbombi ancestors (in Witter 2010, 74-75).

Matximba-Ya-Tihuru
Xinhhalabalabele
Baba-Lama-Tslala
Gunvulu
Malenga
Maxats (= Mxaradzi)
Guyu
Xihimo
Matsowngwane
Mapai
Modanisse
Tanswese
Rodrigues

Fig 4. The Maluleke lineage according to Rodrigues Maluleke. Note that the order of the lineage is presented differently by Makandezulo historians (see Witter 2010).

[1] Rodrigues Maluleke (14/11 2012) dates this to c. 1790 but probably as discussed below this should be dated to the late 19th century.

[2] According to Witter's informants (2010, 72) *Guyu* died during a battle against the Vanyanhi at Nyandweni, but Rodrigues Maluleke (interview 29/6 2015).

Mbombi

The Mbombi lineage is not well documented or remembered as those of the other lineages. Fernando João Mbombi who is the traditional leader of Chimangue (interviewed 26/11 2011) explained to us that the elders who used to know this history well passed away without being able to transmit this knowledge to the younger generation. Here, we have pieced together information from three main informants: the Chimangue traditional leader Fernando João Mbombi (interviewed 26/11 2011; 12/7 2014), Julio Matxukele Mbombi (28/7 2014) resident of Chimangue and Sandro Mongue village leader of Mashamba (1/11 2011). While visiting burial sites we were also given additional information by elders attending the ceremony. The Mbombi lineage history is very incomplete and we have found that informants have been uncomfortable to relate the lineage history as they are concerned that they are unable to relate this correctly. For this reason Julio Matxukele Mbombi (28/7 2014) has suggested to assemble a larger meeting with residents to allow them to agree on the correct story. Unfortunately such a meeting has not yet been organised, though we hope to be able to facilitate this process in the future. Below we relate the lineage story on the basis of the fragmented information we now have:

The Mbombi ancestors came when Vanyanhi still ruled the area. *Tsamwakuluane* was a soldier amongst the Nguni and before him was *Remani* (Julio Matxukele Mbombi 28/7 2014). Thus the Mbombi were officers/soldiers of the Gaza state (probably Umzila). Originally they were fighting against the Vanyanhi for the Gaza state but eventually they decided to settle in this country. They were only a small group of people when they settled in the area. The first ancestor who settled here was *Mbombi* himself and he was succeeded by *Marimi*. At the death of *Marimi* his sons *Magagane* and *Chimangue* each founded two separate villages (Fernando João Mbombi 26/11 2011). But, the Magagane lineage died out and Chimangue therefore became the chief over both villages (Julio Matxukele Mbombi 28/7 2014). The lineage after this is uncertain and there may be a gap here but the next lineage descendants we know about are *Magawe* and *Mahotle*, who probably were brothers and lineage descendants to *Chimangue*. In the days of *Magawe* and *Mahotle*, the Mbombis were divided again. *Mahotle* founded the village Mashamba (meaning field) while *Magawe* and his people remained in Chimangue. In Mashamba *Mahotle* in turn gave some land to *Xikorisses*, for being skilled with his spear and gave him permission to found his own village some distance from the present day Mashamba.

The Mbombi lived peacefully with the Malulekes in the north but they were fighting with Baloi. The Mbombis were known as good hunters but they did not farm (Fernando João Mbombi 26/11 2011). That the Mbombis did not want to farm was confirmed again when we asked Fernando João Mbombi (interviewed 12/7 2014) to comment on the Baloi story of the conflict between Bingo and Mbombi (related above). Fernando João Mbombi explained that the conflict arose first from the fact that Mbombi wanted to be alone.

Another reason was that the Mbombi ancestors did not want to farm – they wanted to live of hunting and fishing rather than to farm. Therefore Fernando explains there was a fight and Bingo settled in the areas where Bingo village is today.



Fig 5. The congregation of the, Mashamba village. Sandro Mongue village leader and preachers who is one of our informants on the Mbombi lineage history stand in the upper left. Photo by Michel Notelid.

References

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