

MZ01

Conflict, 'post-conflict', and traditional authorities

Key Points:

- 1** The role of local traditional Chiefs in NRM has changed over time, influenced by conflict
- 2** Throughout these changes, Chiefs have remained important local actors
- 3** Conflict and displacement have led, in particular, to disputes over who is the legitimate Chief
- 4** Challenges to the legitimacy of traditional leaders have provided a space for natural resource degradation.

This Briefing is one of a series produced jointly by the Forum for Social Studies (Ethiopia), Centro de Experimentação Florestal (Mozambique) and the University of Sussex (UK). Each is designed to summarise research findings and encourage feedback. The Briefing is part of the 'Marena' research project, funded by the UK's Department for International Development.

This *Briefing* considers the changing role of traditional leaders in Mozambique over time, focusing on the case study of Pindanganga, in Manica Province. Mozambique has gone through several socio-political phases that have affected traditional authority. However, in every phase the Chief (*mambo*) and other traditional leaders have been important for both the community's social harmony and its sharing and use of natural resources.

The Different Phases

Wars and socio-political changes that have taken place throughout the country, and particularly in Manica province, have led to many changes in the communities and their traditional leadership. Most of these changes have derived from Chiefs striking alliances with, or coming under the influence of formal state power. In turn, to stake out its authority in rural areas, formal power has either allied itself to existing Chiefs or created new Chiefs.

Pindanganga has been no exception in this regard. Here, five main phases can be identified in which the role of Chiefs changed significantly.

i) Pre-colonial phase

According to various sources, Tsokozo Tsocorera was chosen by Ngungunyane¹ as the first Chief because of his courage and spiritual powers. He 'controlled' the areas that today comprise the administrative posts of Amatoingas, Inchope and Gondola town. The Chief changed his name to Sodoeroi (the name of the area he had come from) and had ten group leaders.

This traditional structure assured social, cultural and spiritual harmony within his communities. Its rules were based on the knowledge and dissemination of different generations' cultural values, the importance of natural resources for survival and the belief that leaders served as the link between the people and their ancestors.

ii) Colonial period

When the Portuguese occupied the area, they placed José Netchuara, their ally, in charge of Amatoingas; Sodoeroi had supported Makombe's resistance.² Yet, Sodoeroi kept the role of spiritual leader; and he remained in charge of traditional ceremonies, such as the rain ceremony. The role of spiritual leader was passed on to his descendants, and this was recognised by both the community members, and the traditional leader installed by the Portuguese.

In addition to his previous duties, the colonial authorities also made Chiefs responsible for collecting taxes and mobilising/recruiting labour to build and maintain roads, and to work in the colonial plantations. They became an extension of colonial power over the community. In return, they were paid in proportion to the amount of taxes collected.

iii) Post-independence

After independence in 1975, the Frelimo government regarded Chiefs as agents of collaboration with the colonial authorities.



It thus ceased to recognise them, as well as their institutions. Traditional power was dismantled, and communal villages were created, as were '*grupos dinamisadores*' (literally, dynamising groups), whose main aim was 'mobilising and organising the people.' Tax-collection and recruitment of labour ended, as these activities were seen as 'exploitation.'

iv) Civil war

In Pindanganga, the war started in 1982. The communal villages were destroyed, their secretaries expelled, and some families sought refuge in the towns and other 'safe' places along the Beira corridor.

Renamo occupied the area and re-established traditional authority. A new Chief, Fandarau (descendent of Sodoeroi), was legitimised rather than the previous one, who had been imposed by the Portuguese. Fandarau's appointment, rather than that of Baptista (descendent of the *mambo* Netchuira), might be related to the fact that the latter was residing in Amatongas, which was at the time controlled by Frelimo.

Renamo entered this strategic alliance because it knew that the traditional leaders and a large majority of the community were discontent, and because it needed their support for the war. Thus, the traditional leaders started raising logistical support by mobilising the community. However, Fandarau's influence was limited to Pindanganga, as the remaining area was under government control.

v) Post-civil war

From the end of the war in 1992 until today, Fandarau has been the Chief for the Pindanganga community. For the administrative bodies, however, Baptista is the Chief, 'for he has had the title since colonial times.'

Though both Chiefs claim jurisdiction over the same area, Fandarau's influence is limited to Pindanganga; the leaders of the other communities follow Baptista.

Traditional authority has only just been formally recognised, yet the Chiefs have worked for several years with various governmental and non-governmental organisations in disseminating and promoting programmes. For example, they were involved in mobilising the communities for the census and for health and education programmes. In 1995, they were called by the administrator to start collecting taxes and to resolve community conflicts and problems.

Additionally, though it is the government that theoretically authorises the use of land and other natural resources, in practice it is the Chiefs and their subordinates who allocate plots of land to farming families.

Carrying out this task is made difficult without formal recognition. This has allowed some opportunists to take natural resources with impunity for personal, rather than community, benefit. The war has further complicated the work, not only because it brought in people from other areas, but also because it

disrupted the traditional passing of socio-cultural values from one generation to the other.

Conclusions

Despite significant change in the post-conflict period, the recognition of traditional authority has still to be fully implemented, and the issue continues to be politicised. However, there is no doubt that traditional leaders play a fundamental role. For both the government and Renamo, the Chief and other traditional leaders are essential for promoting development in the communities. There is increasing acceptance of their need to be involved in NRM initiatives but disagreement remains in identifying the legitimate Chiefs, regarding their personal histories and spheres of influence.

¹Ngungunyane was the king of the Gaza Empire (1884-95), and fought against the Portuguese.

²Makombe was a traditional leader and symbol of anti-colonial resistance in the Barue revolt.

MARENA Briefings (Mozambique)

- MZ01 Conflict, 'post-conflict', and traditional authorities
- MZ02 Traditional leaders and CBNRM
- MZ03 Elephants: problem or opportunity?
- MZ04 Charcoal, hunting and fires
- MZ05 Spirits and natural resources
- MZ06 Individuals and innovations
- MZ07 Community representation in CBNRM: the case of Moribane
- MZ08 Community representation in CBNRM: the case of Tsetserra
- MZ09 Implementing CBNRM in M'punga
- MZ10 Conflicting perspectives on the natural resource base

The Briefing team:

Contributors to the Briefings include:

- Richard Black and Elizabeth Harrison, School of African and Asian Studies, University of Sussex
- Yeraswork Admassie, Alula Pankhurst and Tarakegn Yibabie, Forum for Social Studies, Addis Ababa
- Elizabeth Watson, Department of Geography, University of Cambridge
- Patrick Matakala and Antonio Serra, Centro de Experimentação Florestal, Maputo, Mozambique
- Antonio Ribeiro, Department of Politics and Communication Studies, University of Liverpool

We welcome comments and feedback, which should be sent to:

Richard Black (r.black@sussex.ac.uk) or
Elizabeth Harrison (e.a.harrison@sussex.ac.uk)

The views expressed in this Briefing are those of the Briefing team, and do not necessarily represent DFID policy.