



Article

Negotiating identity and heritage through authorised vernacular history, Limpopo National Park

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Abstract

In this paper, we assess vernacular history, traditional authority and the use of heritage places as mediums for negotiating ancestry, identity, territory and belonging based on conversations, interviews and visitations to heritage places together with residents in Limpopo National Park. We explore how particular vernacular histories become dominant village history through the authorisation of traditional leaders and their lineage histories and how traditional leaders use heritage places to mediate narratives. Authorised vernacular histories are narratives about mobility and identity, but they are also localised narratives about 'home' in terms of access to resources and heritage places. We discuss how lineage histories and traditional authority are mobilised or questioned in the context of the ongoing displacement of local residents through

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resettlement programmes and make comparisons with the historical experiences of evictions in the neighbouring Kruger and Gonarezhou National Parks. We emphasise the need for residents to remain connected to and in control of heritage places; otherwise, the linkages between these places, ancestral authority, and present-day authority risk being severed.

Keywords

Heritage, vernacular history, traditional authority, resettlement, conservation, Limpopo National Park, Mozambique

Introduction

Local discourses on historical and ongoing resettlements of communities in Limpopo National Park (LNP) relate to questions about heritage, traditional authority, identity, territory and belonging (Lunstrum, 2010; Milgroom, 2012; Witter, 2010). Many LNP residents root their claims to control over land and other resources in lineage histories (Witter, 2010). Vernacular histories, our focus here, are, on the one hand, narratives about mobility and movement, and on the other hand, histories about 'home' in a very territorial sense, bound up in the materiality and physicality of heritage places. Vernacular histories can unfold as linear narratives of power and territory, but they can also unfurl as sites of negotiation, contested identifications and fleeting boundaries (Bender, 2001; Escobar, 2001; Meskell, 2009; Tilley, 2006).

In this paper, we assess vernacular history, traditional authority and heritage places as mediums for negotiating ancestry, identity, territory and belonging. When we started research on vernacular history, we approached the matter differently: Ekblom and Notelid as archaeologists with an interest in long-term historical ecology (Ekblom et al., 2011, 2015) and Witter (2010, 2013; Witter and Satterfield, 2014) as an environmental anthropologist interested in predominantly 20th century negotiations of territory and belonging. Over a period of several years (from 2003 to 2016), we carried out interviews on village history and visited heritage places in several villages affected by a resettlement programme, as part of the establishment of LNP. We explore the ways particular vernacular histories become dominant, as village and community history, through the authorisation of traditional leaders and their and lineage histories. Finally, we will reflect upon how lineage histories and traditional authority are mobilised or questioned to justify claims to space and resources in the context of historical and ongoing losses of territory and authority due to displacement in Limpopo National Park and the neighbouring Kruger and Gonarezhou National Parks (KNP/GNP).

We use the term vernacular history here as a broader and more inclusive term than 'oral tradition' (e.g., Vansina, 1985, 1990). In addition to oral tradition (e.g., the repetitive naming of male lineage authorities), vernacular history may include other narratives and memorialisations (e.g., ceremonies and visitations to heritage

places and written accounts). As shown by scholars of African vernacular history, legends and traditions lay social and political claims over place, space and people, and mobilise resistance and action (Cohen et al., 2001; Feierman, 1990, 1993; Fortmann, 1995; Moore, 1998; Tonkin, 1992). The vernacular history we relay here focuses primarily on the lineage descent of ‘traditional leaders’ (defined below) as told to us primarily, though not exclusively, by traditional leaders. In such narratives, a leader’s references to ‘tradition’ (in terms of the ancestral leaders who preceded him and those from other lineages his ancestors replaced) provides narrator and narrative discursive power and legitimacy (see Howard, 2013). Yet the legitimacy of traditional leaders is potent also for those whose interest traditional leaders potentially protect. In other words, traditional leaders are enabled in relation to the degree to which they are authorised by village inhabitants (and people from outside). As we show, traditional leaders are authorised as part of continuous and ongoing discussions about history, lineage, identity and territory – this is a discursive practice, but it is also deeply material, enacted through ceremonies and visits to burial sites.

Background

Historically, the lower Limpopo Valley region consisted of a mosaic of identities, ethnicities and languages that – combined with high rates of geographic mobility – presented ethnic and territorial ambiguities that frustrated late 19th and early 20th century explorers and missionaries. Swiss missionary Henri Junod, among others, envisioned and attempted to inscribe territorialised ‘tribal’ ethnicities, unified by language, descent, social and cultural cohesion (Harries, 2007: 155–164; Schmidt, 2001). Junod identified *Tsonga/Shangaan* peoples as one such tribal (and language) group (Junod, 1927: vol I, 18). In the 19th century, the Nguni Gaza state (established in the 1840s by Shoshongane) held nominal overrule of Tsonga/Shangaan peoples in southern Mozambique (Elton, 1873; Junod, 1927: vol I, 15). Meanwhile, Venda polities ruled the area along the Limpopo until Pafuri (Wessman, 1908). North of Limpopo was the *Kalanga* (also referred to as southern *Shona*) (Bannerman, 1978; Randles, 1979: 21). These constructed ethnic boundaries permeated the division of the Limpopo Valley into three separate colonial countries, South Africa, Mozambique and Rhodesia (later Zimbabwe). Resident communities across the borders (and also in Transvaal) were, however loosely, referred to as Tsonga/Shangaan (Bannerman, 1978; Harries, 1987).

The creation of the KNP in South Africa (1926), the Gonarezhou National Park in Zimbabwe (1934) and of tribal homelands in both countries resulted in evictions and resettlements that undercut and transformed regimes of traditional authority throughout the Limpopo Valley region. Among other examples, with the 1957 evictions of Gonarezhou residents, the authority of traditional leader, Chitsa, was diminished when he and his constituents were placed under the authority of Tshovani instead (Bannerman, 1978; Mombeshora and Le Bel, 2009). In the KNP context, the latest forced evictions took place in conjunction with the 1969 removal

and relocation of 3000 residents from the Pafuri Triangle to the Gazankulo Tribal homeland. This move undermined the authority of those who held power in the place of origin (i.e., the Makuleke tribal authority) while bolstering the authority of those who held power in the destination location (i.e., Mhinga tribal authority) (Carruthers, 1995; Harries, 1987; Meskell, 2005, 2011). The Pafuri Triangle was, however, later restituted to the Makuleke Communal Property Association under the 1994 Land Rights Act (Steenkamp and Uhr, 2000; Robins and van der Waal, 2008).

These momentous historical transformations in settlement, power and authority had direct implications for families living in what became the LNP. Despite the establishments of KNP and GNP, families have lived and moved across this border region throughout the 20th century (Connors, 2003; Wolmer, 2003). Mozambiquan nationals routinely negotiated the regulations of KNP to obtain work permits in exchange for labour in KNP (Rogers, 2009). When Makulekes on the South African side were evicted from the Pafuri Triangle, many residents preferred to move to relatives either in Zimbabwe or Mozambique (see also Witter, 2010). Similar movements across the border have also taken place in many other lineages now dominant in the LNP. Moreover, during the 17-year Mozambique civil war (1977–1994), many families from Mozambique also fled to the tribal Gazankulo homeland in South Africa or to families in Zimbabwe (Connors, 2003; Lunstrum, 2009; Rogers, 2009).

The role of traditional authority in relationship to the state and local democracy is a very contentious issue in Mozambique. During the colonial period, particular traditional leaders were appointed as administrative chiefs, or *régulos*. Thereafter, the post-Independence Frelimo government attempted to dismantle traditional authority by appointing party and/or village secretaries (Buur and Kyed, 2005; Gonçalves, 2006; Meneses and de Sousa Santos, 2009) while the opposition party, Renamo, used traditional authority to mobilise resistance against Frelimo (*idem.*). More recently, in 2002, Decree 15/2000 legally recognised traditional authority and, by extension, traditional leaders as local governance (Buur and Kyed, 2005; Gonçalves, 2006). The aim of Decree 15/2000 was to decentralise governance, yet there is still little actual mobilisation of local participation in planning and governance (see discussion in Buur and Kyed, 2005; Meneses et al., 2006; Meneses and de Sousa Santos, 2009).

Since the proclamation of LNP, home to 20,000 people, residents now find themselves within a national park. Seven villages (c. 6500 residents) in the designated main wildlife zone along the Shingwedzi River are part of a resettlement scheme (BRL, 2006; Peace Parks Foundation, 2015). Though presented as a voluntary process, following the World Resettlement guidelines, that claim is, at best, questionable (see Bocchino, 2008; Lunstrum, 2008; Milgroom and Spierenburg, 2008; Spierenburg et al., 2006, Witter, 2013). Among other issues, the actual possibilities of staying in the park diminish over time (see Bocchino, 2008; Milgroom, 2012; Milgroom and Spierenburg, 2008). The process of resettlement is now formally under the responsibility and organisation of the Mozambique government.



Figure 1. Map of the Limpopo National Park and villages discussed in the text.

Some villages (Nanguene, Macavene) agreed to resettle in early negotiations. Others maintained reluctance, but either resettled recently (e.g., Mavodze, Massingir Velho) or still await resettlement (e.g., Makandezulo B, Bingo). Still others, as of 2016, declined resettlement (Chimangue, Machamba¹).

With resettlement looming, traditional leaders and other community members have expressed concern that heritage places and the narratives attached to them risk being lost. Therefore, concerned residents and outsiders have called for the documentation and protection of village histories and heritage places (see also, Lunstrum, 2010; Milgroom, 2012: 193). This paper should be seen as part of this endeavour (Figure 1).

Methodology

We combined semi-structured interviews, group discussions and visitations to heritage places. Witter focused specifically on Maluleke lineage history with visits in

2003, 2006–2007 and 2011 to the villages of Makandezulo A and B. Witter carried out oral history, semi-structured and structured interviews and together with local historians documented the lineage histories of Makandezulo residents. Ekblom and Notelid similarly used semi-structured and informal interviews with village leaders, most often with other village members present, and also village elders in Bingo, Chimangue, Machamba and Mapai in 2006, and then on several visits between 2011 and 2016. Interviews were carried out in Portuguese-Shangaan and English-Shangann with the assistance of research assistants, local translators, or field rangers. We combined interviews with visits to burial places (see Figure 2), former homesteads and farms, and other culturally significant sites (see Figure 3),



Figure 2. Top picture: Visit to a probable rainmaking shrine in a rock-shelter near Musamani village on the eastern side of Limpopo River. The rock shelter commands a magnificent view of the Limpopo River floodplain. Bottom left picture: We were guided by Antonio Maluke (far left), Thomas Chauque (left) carried out the ceremony, assisted by Julias Mantome Chauque (right) and also accompanied by Salazar Maluleke. Bottom right picture: The pots in detail, which are said to create a sound like singing (Photos taken 16 July 2014 by Michel Notelid).

a tactic that allowed for more grounded and in-depth conversations, specifically on heritage, identity and authority.

Before we continue, a brief introduction to traditional authority in the LNP context is warranted. The population of LNP villages normally consists of residents stemming from many different lineages; intermarriages between lineages are very common, but ancestry is counted on the paternal line. Individuals tend to identify with a village community based on descent or marriage, but newcomers can also be granted land, and this is relatively common (Witter, 2010: 103–104). Membership in a village ensures individual access and rights to resources and land regulated by



Figure 3. 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 July 2014 by Michel Notelid).

customary rules (see Berry, 1989: 41–42; Guyer, 1981; Shipton and Goheen, 1992). Traditional leaders regard themselves (and are regarded by others) as the ‘owners of the land’ (Witter and Satterfield, 2014), land that has been territorialised by and through lineage ancestors, the former ‘owners of land’. Thus, traditional leaders (and some chiefs) descend from distinct lineages – named according to *xibango* or clan name – that have historically held status and power in the village. As a result, villages tend to be associated with dominant clan names (again, even though residents of several other last names also reside in the villages). In the cases of Bingo, Massingir Velho and Mavadoze, the dominant clan name is *Baloi*; in Makandezulu A and B, it is *Maluleke*; and in Machamba and Chimangue, the dominant lineage name is *Mbombi*.

Local governance in the LNP is divided between politically appointed village leaders and traditional leaders. Traditional leaders have the authority to allocate and safeguard land and other resources; in this sense, traditional leaders are resource authorities (Milgroom, 2012: 174; Witter, 2010: 117). They derive that authority from deceased male lineage authorities, conferring on present-day traditional leaders the ‘status, rights, and responsibilities’ to perform ancestral ceremonies and to make decisions on behalf of other village members (Witter, 2010; Witter and Satterfield, 2014: 5). Of further importance here, traditional leaders also have the authority to represent, curate and communicate the dominant vernacular history. The telling of lineage histories legitimizes the authority of traditional leaders and of the services he performs on behalf of the village community. There can be, therefore, strong individual and collective interest in the lineage history of the traditional leaders.

Results

We have documented village histories in six different villages each related to the Baloi, Maluleke and Mbombi lineages. The full accounts of these narratives are presented elsewhere.² Here, we will summarise particular themes in these accounts and how they relate to the construction of community identity, territory and mobility. But first, we will give a very brief summary of the lineage histories.

Authorised lineage histories

The Baloi recognises ancestry from the *Vhanyai*; the narrative is organised around 12 generations of ancestors. According to the Baloi vernacular history, the early ancestors as *Vawaloi* and *Wanxuloane* and *Wamitsitsi Ekulo* are all buried in Zimbabwe. *Matsenga* was the first of the Baloi ancestors who came to Mozambique (date unknown). One version of the story is that Baloi were driven away from the Vhanyai country because Matsenga had married his niece, or alternatively his sister, which was forbidden amongst the Vhanyai.³ The Vhanyai are recognised in all vernacular histories as those who preceded the arrival of other

groups and clans to this region; they are, therefore, the original ‘owners of the land’.

Maluleke historians, both local historians in the LNP and Junod, associate the Maluleke clan with the *Nwanati* people, who once lived near the Nawanati River near the present-day boundary between Inhambane and Gaza province (e.g., Mandlakatze) (see also Junod, 1927: vol I: 22).⁴ *Malenga* brought his people first to the Mabalane area, and they took their name Maluleke (i.e., ‘long walk’) after that journey. *Malenga*’s son moved to Panhame, where he stayed for many years fighting the *Vhanyai*. *Malenga*’s grandson, *Guyu*, eventually defeated the *Vanyhai* and then divided the territory between his brothers and sons. Importantly for understanding Maluleke claims to having territorialised much of the Limpopo Valley region, one brother was sent to Transvaal and to Pafuri, to protect the land and animals there; this ancestor became the founding fathers of the South African branches of *Mhinga* and *Makuleke*.⁵ Meanwhile, *Mapai* (the founder of *Mapai* village) was appointed as *régulo* by the Portuguese colonial administration. Other male lineage authorities settled the territory now claimed by present-day residents of *Makandezulo A* and *Makandezulo B*.

The *Mbombi* stress that they were a small group, and that when the *Mbombi* ancestors came to the region, the *Vhanyai* still held overrule. The lineage and oldest layers of the vernacular history are not well known, but it appears that the *Mbombi* were officers/soldiers of the Gaza state (most likely, *Umsila*). The *Mbombi* were fighting against the *Vhanyai* for the Gaza state, but eventually they decided to settle. 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.⁶ According to the *Mbombi*, they were friends with *Malulekes*⁷ but fought with the *Bingo* ancestors (and stories of these fights are also given in the *Bingo* vernacular history).

Narratives of ancestry and identity

The authorised vernacular histories of male lineage authorities are also narratives of ‘power by might’ where lineages and polities variously established (and variously lost) rule over others. Such narratives are also key to understanding the ancestry of identity in the LNP region. *Baloi* ancestry serves as an illustrative example, because the authorised lineage history consists of several overlapping layers of identification and re-identification.

According to our informants (both from *Baloi* and from other lines), the *Baloi* claim descendency from *Vhanyai* ancestry, equated by most of our informants with *Venda*. However, the lineage name, *Baloi*, is mentioned in written sources as early as 1722 as separate and distinguishable from contemporary larger *Vhanyai*/*Karanga* polities (Liesegang, 1977). Later, *Vhanyai* polities became amalgamated into a common *Venda* identity (Blacking, 1998). As a result, by the early mid-20th century, very few communities south of Limpopo would admit to having ancestry other than *Venda* (see Eloff and der Vaal, 1965; Mudau, 1940).⁸ The most recent

layer of identification is the adoption of a Tsonga/Shangaan identity, in the course of the 20th century (Bannerman, 1978; Harries, 2007: 155–164; Liesegang, 2014).

Differences key to understanding identity are expressed not only in terms of ancestral lines but also in terms of livelihoods and traditions. For example, both Baloi and Mbombi authorised vernacular histories inform us not only that the Baloi ancestors were farmers while the Mbombi ancestors were hunters but also that this distinction was an important reason why, in the past, they were enemies. Moreover, the vernacular histories of both the Mbombi and Maluleke suggest that hunting was more than a livelihood decision; it formed an important part of their lineage identities. In the current conservation context, there is a total ban on hunting within the national park and wildlife scarcity outside the park. Thus, it is not surprising that Mbombi and Maluleke people have a strong aversion, in some contexts, to speaking about hunting. In other contexts, though, they emphasize that their ancestors were great hunters, a narrative that contributes to larger discourse of resistance both to the park and to resettlement.

Lineage ancestry is dominated by blood lines on the paternal side; but maternal bloodlines remain important. Most lineages and households in the present-day LNP are related in one way or another and through several ties – ties that more closely resemble a rhizome than a lineage tree. Even though authorised lineage histories claim different ancestral roots, we are repeatedly told by many LNP residents, ‘we are the same; we speak the same language and we are all related’. In other words, ancestral claims of difference (i.e., different ethnicities and lineage identities) do not necessarily conflict with other claims of likeness. In this sense, authorised lineage histories are narratives about both independence and belonging in a context where fluency of identity has long been a strategy of preserving autonomy given the imposition and re-imposition of various regimes of power (i.e., other Africa polities, colonial authorities and post-independence states) (see also Harries, 2007).

Material territory and social belonging

The vernacular histories of Baloi, Maluleke and Mbombi narrate claims to land, resource authority and identity against backdrops of mobility and displacement. (Note that all ancestors came from someplace else and moved to the area during time of war and uncertainty). On one hand, these are stories of mobile lineages – ancestors who established, lost and re-established rule as they moved across the landscape. On the other hand, they are highly localised stories about the making of territory and ‘home’. The narratives also define the boundaries of the political power through claims that are grounded spatially and materially.

Local historians associate most places with material culture (e.g., ceramics and metal) that is older than what can be remembered or recognised from tradition, with the Vhanyai (Figure 3) interpreted either as residential or ceremonial places. Thus, local narratives tend to consider the Vhanyai as the oldest chronological political

layer; older archaeological sites, for instance lithic sites, are not claimed or incorporated in authorised lineage histories. Through overrule by particular lineages such as the Malulekes, territorial authority has been re-negotiated. Older ancestral places belonging to lineages that previously had overrule are still respected and treated ceremoniously: at visitation some item (a coin or another gift) must be left at the place or there must be a ceremony to appease the ancestors. In some cases, old heritage places are also associated with particular, almost supernatural powers. For instance, ceremonies in some Vhanyai places take place in times of more extreme events such as storms or extreme weather events (Figure 2).⁹ However, the 'old' heritage places are different from the burial sites of the ancestors of ruling traditional leaders as they do not legitimise traditional authority in the same way as ancestral burial sites of traditional leaders.

Traditional leaders regularly perform and enact their ancestrally derived authority through visitations to the burial sites of lineage forefathers. The materialities and physicality of heritage places are important, as the presence of ancestral remains enables traditional leaders to invoke their own power and authority. At these sites, leaders evoke their ancestors to call for rains, protection and blessings for the community (see also Jopela and Ditlef Fredriksen, 2015; Witter, 2013; Witter and Sattfield, 2014). Yet, physically these burial sites can be difficult to locate; they are often situated in the former dwelling places of the deceased where there, to an outsider, may be little evidence of occupation other than vegetation structure and scattered discarded household goods. The burial place itself (a dug down flat inhumation grave) is usually marked by a tree or a tree stem, or where the stem has withered, merely a substituting branch. Sometimes (but not always), loved ones add personal items to the burial place – things that either belonged to the deceased or that have been found and collected in the area: old ceramic pots, beer jars, a teapot, a spear head, a tin coffee mug or piece of old elephant ivory (Figure 3).

Visitation, which usually includes prominent elders and lineage relatives, begins with a collective clean-up of the place. Elders clear vegetation around the tree or stem and gather the personal items that may have shifted over time. Participants sit down by the tree or stem and the traditional leader greets his father or grandfather while pouring wine and placing other gifts (e.g., tobacco, gin, bread). Often, the ceremony is preceded by some debate as to the right procedure and different communities may have very distinct practices relating to the ceremony; for example, the colour of the cloth to be used for the ceremony, or which particular types of drinks or offerings to use, or how and if to leave other gifts (money or other items). Once the ceremony begins, all participants are involved: typically the traditional leader narrates the genealogy of his ancestors, while participants greet each person as he is named. Through the process of repetition, the names of participants are (re) inducted into the lineage and its linked narratives, and younger participants are also taught the rules of the ceremony for the coming generation (Figure 3).

The geographical location of heritage places (including burial sites, settlement sites and 'old' heritage places) marks the territories of past ancestors and of

traditional leaders, as well as the continued protection from ancestors. Heritage places are also vital for the maintenance of the authority of traditional leaders as resource authorities. Both the Baloi and Maluleke have numerous ancestral places across the LNP landscape, and these places also create potential ground for claiming rights to land and resources. For instance, when the Makandezulo B village 'consented' to resettlement (see Witter, 2013), they chose the area of Selani, the former seat Maluleke ancestral father, Guyu. These important ancestral links mean that the traditional leadership of the Makandezulo villages can maintain some degree of authority and traditional roles when they resettle to Selani. In other words, it is better to move to Maluleke land than land dominated by a different xibango or clan name. On the other hand, in Selani, resettled Makandezulo residents will be under the authority of *other* Maluleke leadership. Thus, and as with the aforementioned cases of Gonarezhou and the KNP (see below), many LNP residents anticipate a dramatic shift in traditional leadership as they relocate from place of origin to resettlement destination. Makandezulo residents in particular anticipate substantive losses in power and resource authority in Selani (see Witter, 2010; Witter and Satterfield, 2014). Similarly, Baloi has many ancestral places across and beyond the LNP landscape where they can potentially claim, however contested, authority. The case is different, however, for the Mbombi lineage, which is smaller and has a shorter lineage history. Because the Mbombi ancestral territory is confined present-day settlement, it is more difficult for the Mbombi to negotiate rights to land and resources outside of the park. This may be one of many possible reasons why the Mbombi-dominated villages (Machamba, Chimangue), until now, have declined resettlement.

Presently, heritage places have also become places for lamenting past and future displacements, and for debating the effects of displacement or the conditions of living in a national park (see also Lunstrum, 2010; Witter, 2013). Among other examples, in Makandezulo B, traditional leaders raised the issue of problem elephants during a heritage place ceremony (Witter, 2013). Moreover, in the aforementioned ceremony carried out in Bingo (23 July 2014), Jeremias Baloi informed the ancestors of the villages' impending resettlement, and Baloi and others raised concerns about the problem of future visitations and memorialisation of the ancestors (Figure 3).

Indeed, among the many anticipated losses resulting from resettlement, residents are particularly concerned about the potential and the real loss of access to burial places (see also Witter and Satterfield, 2014). According to park officials, continued access to gravesites after resettlement will be facilitated. In practice, however, burial sites can be remote and difficult to visit. There is limited transportation available to residents who want to return to their home villages. Further, as the physical landscape changes, they can also be difficult to find. In response, the Bingo residents have expressed to the park that they want their ancestral burial places to be marked. Other villages, such as Massingir Velho (resettled from 2014), have opted to make a ceremony to induce the spirits of the ancestors to come with them to the new location. It is questionable, however, whether such responses will

compensate for the costs endured. Fundamentally, the loss of access to burial places is a painful dispossession, not only from these sacred sites and remains but also from the practices, stories and memories that connect the living and the deceased and through which many village leaders derive their power and authority (see also discussion in Witter and Satterfield, 2014).

Discussion: Heritage, traditional authority and displacement

Customary norms hold that the resettled communities have to identify with and submit to the traditional leader where they will be resettled (Witter, 2010). As a result, residents worry that they will lose access to suitable agricultural land, grazing or forest resources and that their children will not be allocated land (Lunstrum, 2010; Milgroom, 2012: 170; Witter and Satterfield, 2014).

These concerns are more than loose fears; they constitute a social memory of lived experience. Many residents have already been forcibly relocated, first due to the building of the Massingor Dam, then by cause of villagisation programmes and, lastly, many residents were forced to live as refugees during the war (Lunstrum, 2010; Witter, 2010). In addition, many residents have family members or know families that were relocated from KNP and/or Gonarezhou. In both cases, some families opted to cross the border to LNP. The memory and long-lasting effects of the relocations are recounted in several forms. Among these, in 1984, Harries documented popular songs in the Gazankulo tribal homelands that expressed both longing for and a feeling of loss of home. Similar to the concerns raised by residents facing resettlement from the LNP (see Witter and Satterfield, 2014), several songs lament to lack of wild fruit trees, fish and resources in this 'wilderness' where they had been placed.

The erosion of traditional authority also forms a part of social memory, but so does the desire to restore it. In 1969, when 'Makulekes people' (of several lineages) were moved to the Gazankulo tribal homeland, the authority of their traditional leader was eroded, not just through the imposition of Mhingas authority, but also because of a lack of trust from amongst community members (see Harries, 1987). In the Makuleke case, the role of traditional authority was again brought to the fore in the Makuleke Communal Property Association court case against the 2004 Communal Land Rights Act (Fey, 2012).¹⁰ In Gonarezhou, the traditional authority Chitsa has argued for restoration of his chieftaincy to ensure regular access to burial sites for rainmaking (Mombeshora and Le Bel, 2009). As has been discussed by Mombeshora and Le Bel (2009), for Chitsa, and followers advocating him as their leader, the re-occupation of the park is motivated by a strong desire for autonomy and the wish to return 'home', but to achieve this they feel that restoration of traditional authority is necessary. In the case of LNP, Milgroom (in Milgroom, 2012: 163–169, 174), who followed the process of resettlement over time, relates how both Nanguene residents and hosts were worried about how ceremonies were to be carried out and how/if resettled communities would integrate with existing authority. The relocation of the Nanguene village also resulted

in contestation of authority both in the case of the Nanguene traditional leader and the leader of the village to which they were resettled, Chinhangane. Thus, as has been argued by Milgroom (2012: 174), as the Nanguene leader lost his role as a resource authority, he also lost legitimacy and the result was a break-up of the village community.

The examples and discussions here stress that traditional leaders do have an important social role in the community; however, there will always be tensions between principles of inclusivity and consensus, on the one hand, and hierarchy on the other; this dilemma also lies at the core of discussions on the role of traditional authority in relationship to democracy and public participation. The debate could fill up a number of papers on its own, and there is no space here to explore this issue more than in passing: In Mozambique, also in LNP, local governance is a heterogeneous political landscape where traditional authority, colonial régulos and politically appointed village secretaries crossed each other in various roles and functions; though state formalisation of authority may bring accountability, state formalisation may also stifle heterogeneity and reduce the actual possibilities of public participation (see also Buur and Kyed, 2005, 2006; Meneses and de Sousa Santos, 2009).

In the case of LNP, customary systems of authority, while recognised as a legal authority and as socially important, should not be used as a shortcut to what should be an equitable process of decision making and ownership of land or resources (see Ribot, 2002: 2). In the LNP case, resettlement has been negotiated mostly on community level (e.g. through traditional and village leaders) assuming that there is a community cohesion and that consensus is possible. Traditional leaders are very important in facilitating this process in terms of mobilising discussions. Still, building decision making processes on and around traditional authority will always be precarious as traditional authority is constantly subject to re-negotiation. Resistance against relocation and resettlement have historically been rallied around the traditional leaders, and this capacity is important as a counterweight to external pressures. There is currently an enormous pressure put on traditional leaders to facilitate a process where they risk eroding their very capacity as facilitators and mediators, or as a real spokesperson for the community. Traditional leaders and village leaders are as much hostage to the situation as other residents, but are expected, from all sides, to shape or change a process where they have small practical possibilities to do so.

Conclusion

The authorised vernacular histories discussed here are stories of mobility of lineages that have moved across the landscape, at the same time as they are localised. This ambiguity between mobility and territoriality has been difficult to grapple with for both colonial and post-independence authorities and remains so for authorities today: there appears to be difficulties conceptualising that the narratives about migrations (not just of ancestors but also during the war) are also narratives

of rootedness. For community members, traditional authority and authorised vernacular history is a way to negotiate place and belonging as *both* territory and community; as non-separable and interdependent and as transient and negotiable. The relationship between particular ancestral lineages, heritage places and territory is a social relationship, but importantly it is also material, linked to the biophysical properties of the landscape and other non-human organisms. These interlinkages between the social and material stand in contrast to the 'stand alone' value given to biological organisms and material properties in the context of nature conservation (see also Witter and Satterfield, 2014).

Independence and autonomy are part and parcel of the authorised lineage histories: in LNP the fluency of identification has long been a strategy for preserving autonomy, as discussed above. Vernacular histories are therefore narrations of autonomy and belonging maintained alongside memories of imposition of over-rule, forced relocations, segregation and oppression. The negative effects of lost traditional authority (e.g., inability to gain protection from the ancestors, which many LNP residents regard as vital to their everyday) are both a social memory and lived experience. Traditional leaders and community members have, over time, invented and reinvented customary practices according to their interpretations of what it means to live in a modern-globalised world.

Park authorities need to pay attention to this, not only in the process of resettlement but also with respect to compensation (Witter and Satterfield, 2014). Residents are, at best, apprehensive about maintaining access to ancestral places, and other heritage places will be restricted. Though park authorities ensure to facilitate access to ancestral places, it will be increasingly difficult for community members to reach them. Nonetheless, it is important that residents continue to feel ownership of these places; otherwise, the linkages between ancestral and present-day authority risk being severed. This is certainly what took place in both in the KNP and Gonarezhou as relocated communities no longer had the right to enter the parks or to perform ceremonies. Until today, despite ambitions of the KNP to redeem the past, access to old ancestral places has not been facilitated to the degree as it was hoped (Meskell, 2005, 2011: 82, 163–164). Restitution of the Pafuri Triangle to the Makuleke Agricultural Association rests not only on the redefinition of ownership (the area is still concessioned out to KNP) but also on the potential that links with the ancestors can be restored. Similarly, the claims of chief Chitsa in Gonarezhou are not just about territorial control and ownership: they are also about the continuation of authority so that the power of both ancestors and descendants can be restored and ensured.

In LNP, the strong interest in documenting vernacular history, shown by traditional leaders and other residents, should perhaps be seen in this light. Thus, regardless of the process behind (forced relocations in the past or impending resettlements in the present), there is also a gradation in the understanding of heritage from something that is exclusive (to particular lineage descendants) and even secret, to something that is communal and shared. It remains to be seen how

heritage, authority and identity will continue to be renegotiated in the resettlement context, and if and how communities will be able to maintain their ties with heritage places. What is clear, however, is that the LNP residents now being induced to move are making a tremendous sacrifice, and it is a process that is painful and contentious for all involved. There are no simple solutions and no way to fully compensate for heritage losses, social and material.

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Notes

1. Here, we use the spellings as provided on official LNP maps.
2. See <http://www.arkeologi.uu.se/Forskning/Projekt/landscape-transformations/> and Witter, 2010.
3. Interview with Jeremias Baloi 19 November 2013; 11 July 2014; 23 July 2014, and the story presented here was also related back to Jeremias Baloi in Shangaan 7 June 2015; this story was also related by Rodrigues Maluleke 29 July 2015.
4. Interview with Rodriguez Mapai Maluleke 11 April 2007. According to the informants of Junod (1927: vol I: 22), the Nwanati people split into two clans: the Makwakwa clan remained in the south while the Maluleke clan headed north and west along the Limpopo River. See also full interviews with a number of Makandezulu residents in Witter (2010).
5. Makuleke is the spelling of the South Africa branch of the Maluleke lineage, and we will therefore keep this spelling here.
6. Interview with Fernando João Mbombi 26 November 2011.
7. Though Maluleke historians claim they were sent to the Makandezulu area precisely to defend the land from the Mbombi in Chimangue (Witter, 2010).
8. See also Freddie Mukosi Munzhelele (2004), interviewed as part of the Thulamela project (Meskell, 2005).

9. Interview Rodrigues Maluleke 29 June 2015.
10. In the latter proceedings, the traditional leader of Makuleke, stressed that he was a democratically elected chairman of the Makuleke Communal Property Association and that his authority in court was based on the fact that he was an elected spokesperson (under the constitution), not on the basis of his role as a traditional chief (Fey, 2012).

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