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*Netherlands Consul in Malawi*  
Prof. dr. R.M.A. Bedaux  
*Former curator of the National  
Museum of Ethnology*

Prof. dr. R. van der Ploeg  
*Member of the UNESCO World  
Heritage Committee*

#### Ongoing Projects

Tisunge! Lower Shire Heritage Centre  
*Founding and continued support*  
Book and web publications  
Heritage conservation measures

## Newsletter Mlambe Foundation Vol. 2 Nos. 1&2 – March 2007

It has been a little over four months since our last Newsletter and so one is due. It is our aim to publish this newsletter on a quarterly basis from now on. In the last four months Malawi has seen a lot of rain and some flooding, particularly in the Lower Shire Valley. Thanks to the rain the maize has grown tall although some crop has also been washed away by the floods. During this rainy season the Foundation and her partners have managed to continue work on Tisunge! and to lay the groundwork for other projects that we want to start in 2007.

#### Generous donations in kind

On 12<sup>th</sup> January 2007 a second container was shipped to Malawi and it arrived in Beira, Mozambique on the first of March and should arrive in Blantyre any day now. This time the container carries computers, printers, faxes, office supplies, phones etc. all donated by Agens to the Catholic University of Malawi. This will enable the university to, *inter alia*, set up a computer lab for the students. Tjaco Mast of the University of Leiden has done a tremendous amount of work in respect of all this equipment. With student assistance, he collected it from all over the Netherlands. The computers were all cleaned and tested. Once the Catholic University of Malawi receives its accreditation Microsoft has agreed to donate the necessary licenses for Windows and Office.

The container also carries many books donated by students and lecturers of the Radboud University in Nijmegen and the Faculty of Archaeology of the University of Leiden. We hereby express our gratitude to all generous donors and volunteers.

#### The G.T. Nurse Book Collection

Prof. dr. G.T. Nurse, who during many years lived and worked in Malawi, has a vast collection of books in the field of Anthropology and on Malawi in particular. Having heard about Mlambe Foundation and its goals, prof. dr. Nurse decided to bequeath his wonderful collection of books to the Foundation on the condition that these books will be made available in Malawi. The Foundation has already received that part of the collection which was on loan to the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. The Foundation has decided to place some of these books at the Catholic University of Malawi and some at Tisunge!.

#### Publicity

Last year the director of Mlambe Foundation – Menno Welling – has been interviewed by the Malawian Broadcasting Company both on radio and television. In those interviews he introduces the Foundation and Tisunge! and talks about the importance of cultural heritage.

On Tuesday 27 February Menno Welling held a presentation for the Society of Malawi about his archaeological findings in the Lower Shire Valley regarding the Lundu Kingdom and the Mbona rain cult. In concluding his presentation he introduced Tisunge!. The turn out was very good and the presentation a success. The audience had several questions about the research findings and Tisunge!. The Society of Malawi has requested the presentation to be put on paper for publication in their journal.



**Mlambe Foundation**

Malawi Heritage Conservation through Education



## Projects – Tisunge!

### *Construction*

The construction of the Lower Shire Heritage Centre – Tisunge! at the gate of Lengwe National Park is still going very well. Slowly but surely the buildings are in the final stages of construction (see pictures below).



### *Reintroduction of traditional spinning and weaving*

The weaving at Tomali, Singano, Ndakwera and Kanzimbi is going extremely well. A lot of beautiful cloth has been woven. The arts & craft shop already has a wonderful stock of placemats, table runners, chief chair seats and bags. The spinning is currently on hold as the cotton has been sold and we are awaiting the new harvest. Mr. Katesa of MACOHA is preparing spinning wheels and will come back to teach as soon as the cotton is available. Meanwhile Mr. Pelekamoyo has taught the people of the named villages how to make different patterns. This is still a learning process but some results can already be seen in the woven cloth that we have been able to buy from the respective CBO's.



### *Object collection in the surrounding villages*

The director, together with the continuing support of Mr. Mbaya of National Parks and Wildlife, Mr. Kayira of the Department of Antiquities and our volunteer Rianka Nap and board member Kim Spijker, has collected many wonderful objects that can be displayed in the museum. There are still many areas, due to the rains and flooding, we have not been able to reach. In April or May, Mr. Kayira will come back to the Lower Shire to assist us, together with our new volunteers Justin (archaeologist) and Dax (zoologist), again in the collection process.

### *Dredging of the river Nkhomedzi*

In our last Newsletter we reported that in a joint effort of Nyala Lodge, the Foundation and WESM the river Nkhomedzi had been dredged. Although there has been some flooding, the dredging has really prevented a lot of damage to the surrounding villages and the park. The Nkhomedzi will most probably have to be dredged again in the future and we hope that we will again be successful in raising the necessary funds.





### Tree planting



Last month a meeting was organised with the football and netball clubs in the villages bordering on the Nkhomedzi River, to discuss the planting of the trees, in order to reinforce its banks – this would greatly reduce the need for dredging in the future. The meeting was organised by Mr. Sichali and Mr. Mbaya from National Parks and Wildlife. During the months before the meeting the Foundation (with the assistance of Jambo Africa and World Wildlife Fund (Netherlands)) managed to grow resp. acquire, 7000 seedlings of indigenous trees. At the meeting it turned out that 19 clubs would be willing to each plant around 350 trees along the riverbanks. It was agreed that the clubs would have ownership of the trees and would, under the supervision of National Parks, be responsible for their growth. As a token of our appreciation each club receives a ball for the planting of the trees. During the next three months National Parks will keep a close eye on the growth of the trees and if the trees are well taken care of by the clubs they will receive shorts/skirts and jerseys. At that time the Tisunge! league will start in which all clubs will participate.

### The Lower Shire Heritage Trust

The Lower Shire Heritage Trust, a charitable trust established under the laws of Malawi, is currently in the process of being registered with the Registrar. The Board of Governors is formed by the following *ex-officio* members: the Managing Director of Jambo Africa; the Managing Director of African Parks – Majete; the Director of Culture in the Ministry responsible for Culture; the Director of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife; Paramount Chief Lundu; the Chairperson of the Lower Shire Natural Resources Association; and the Director of Mlambe Foundation. The Trust shall upon its registration own and manage Tisunge! – Lower Shire Heritage Centre and all its projects related thereto. On Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> February the Board of Trustees and the Board of Governors of the Lower Shire Heritage Trust held their second meeting in which important steps were taken concerning the cooperation between the partners and the contribution of each to the realisation of sustainability for Tisunge!.

### Projects – Fathers House in Nguludi

In 2007 we hope to be able to start with the renovation of the old Fathers House in Nguludi. The Archdiocese of Blantyre, who is the legal owner, has agreed to delegate the management of the Fathers House to the Catholic University of Malawi. Together with the Catholic University, the Department of Antiquities and volunteers, we are now preparing a budget and hope to start renovation work later this year. Students of the Hogeschool Drenthe have kindly adopted this project as one of the beneficiaries of their fundraising efforts for Malawi. Once renovated the Fathers House will serve as an information and resource centre for local archaeology, history, and culture, and address social concerns ranging from HIV/Aids to poverty and deforestation. It will furthermore serve as a place where students and researches of the Catholic University can present their research projects. The Fathers House will remain to serve the Catholic community at Nguludi. To attend to the more down to earth needs of the visitors of the Fathers House there are also plans for a coffee shop.

### Projects - Publications

Alas we are still behind schedule on our publications. Due to a stolen laptop the final edited version of *Land of Fire*, by Profs. Schoffeleers and Roscoe, was lost and all the work has to be done again. We are confident that *Land of Fire* and the dissertation of Prof. Schoffeleers, *Mang'anja Traditional Religion. Spirit beliefs and practices in Malawi's Lower Shire Valley*, will be published this year. Another publication we are planning to take in reprint this year is *Religion and the Dramatisation of Life. Spirits Beliefs and Rituals in Southern Central Malawi* by J.M. Schoffeleers.

### A new Salima for Mbona

The age-old cult of Mbona, the 'guardian spirit' of the Mang'anja is going through a revival as on 30<sup>th</sup> December an elderly woman was installed at the Khulubvi shrine to act as Mbona's ritual wife. In March a follow-up ritual took place. It is the people's hope that Mbona, pleased with his new wife –the first in some 50 years-, will now put an end to the recurrent drought and flooding.



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