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Honorary Chairman

Prof. dr. J.M. Schoffeleers s.m.m.

Committee of Recommendation

- Prof. dr, R.M.A. Bedaux
Former curator of the National Museum of Ethnology
- Dr. E. Gomani
Director for Culture, Malawi Government
- Dr. I.L. Pfeijffer
Graecus, writer and literary criticist
- Mrs M. Sacranie
Netherlands Consul in Malawi
- Prof. dr. R. van der Ploeg
Member of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee

Ongoing Projects

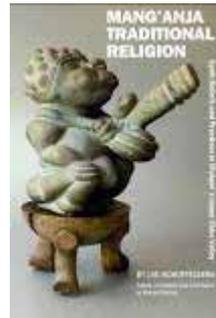
- Tisunge! Lower Shire Heritage Centre
Founding and continued support
- Book and web publications
- Heritage conservation measures

Newsletter Mlambe Foundation Vol. 3 No. 2 – October 2008

Our previous newsletter came at the end of the rainy season. This second newsletter of 2008 comes after the so-called cold season and in the middle of the warm (some would call it hot) dry season.

The 80th birthday of our Honorary Chairman – Prof. Schoffeleers

On the 31st of August 2008, our Honorary Chairman, Prof. Schoffeleers, celebrated his 80th birthday with family and close friends. It also happened to be the 40th anniversary of his Oxford doctorate on Mang'anja traditional religion. As a birthday present and as a hugely valuable addition to Anthropological literature on Malawi, the Foundation has now published this impressive work. Prof. Schoffeleers took the opportunity of this grand occasion to do some fundraising for the projects of the Foundation. Through the sale of the traditionally woven materials and generous donations the Foundation collected more than 1300 Euro. The Foundation congratulates its Honorary Chairman and wishes him good health for many years to come.



The Board

The first meeting of the board in its new composition was held on the 19th of April 2008, just before one of the board members, Kim Spijker, left the Netherlands to come and live in Malawi. The Board agreed that Kim would remain a board member and would work for the Foundation from Malawi to assist the Director, Menno Welling, and the former Treasurer, Lilian Steffens, in running the projects, with administrative work and keeping the website updated. Kim has been in Malawi since May 2008 and has proved a valuable addition to the Foundation's team in Malawi. In the most recent board meeting, held on the 28th of May 2008, Lilian Steffens was appointed (legal) advisor of the Foundation. Her last deed as Treasurer was the presentation of the 2007 Annual Accounts which were approved by the board. An electronic copy of the annual accounts can be obtained through info@mlambefoundation.org.

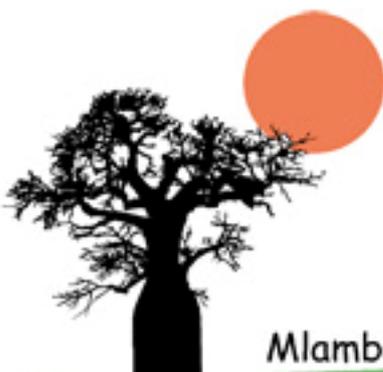
Projects – Tisunge!

Construction

We are now making pressed bricks of cement and sand. Trial and error has resulted in just the right mix and the bricks are now strong and durable. Thanks to the efforts of Max Del Bufalo and the resulting generous donation by Illovo, Tisunge! is now the proud owner of an old, but operational, cement mixer. Although the cement mixer is currently still operated by hand, it has speeded up the process of mixing the cement and sand – and thus the pressing of the bricks – enormously and we are now producing some 105 large bricks a day. Max is in search of a second hand electric motor to speed up the process even more and make life for all our hard workers a bit easier.



The roof of the meeting area that collapsed during the rains last December has been repaired and is stronger than ever.



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The repairs however did exhaust our supply of thatching grass. As it is late in the season all the good thatching grass to be found in Lengwe National Park has been burnt and so we have had to obtain grass from elsewhere at a higher cost to thatch the roofs of the staff house and the weaving area. The foundations of the weaving area and staff house are ready. The poles to support the roof of the weaving area are up and the roof has been made, which means the thatcher can start his work. We will hopefully start on the construction of the house for the maize mill soon. As the small 50kVA transformer has been repaired and the mill is ready to go, all the required equipment is there, all we need is to fill the gap of EUR 2,500 to in the budget. Once that has been achieved we will have fulfilled Impulsis (ICCO)'s conditions for their second generous donation towards Tisunge!.

From May through to October Jakob Reefhuis and Martin van Harten, together with Kim Spijker (who of course is a constant at Tisunge! these days), were our dynamite supervisors at the construction site.

Electricity

Tisunge! Lower Shire Heritage Centre and Lengwe National Park is in dire need of a new or second hand 150kVA transformer. We hope that our requests for support will find a benevolent donor so that the supply of electricity will be secure.

The Arts & Craft Shop

The displays in the Arts & Craft Shop have immensely improved thanks to the creative input of our volunteers, especially Catriona Sissons. A sandwich board was designed (see picture), which resulted in more guests stopping to have a look inside.

The woven products now all have a label explaining the background of the product and the display of the products has improved immensely.

A wide selection of our woven materials and our palm baskets is now also being sold in curio and lifestyle shops in Blantyre, Dedza and Lilongwe.

Our own shop now has an even bigger selection of goods for sale; reed floor mats, reed hampers and door mats are new additions. Especially our peanut butter and baobab jam are a huge success. The ladies making the peanut butter have a hard time keeping the shop supplied.

In August we employed Trifonia to run the shop.



Tree projects

The indigenous tree plantation at Singano, for sustainable curio production and revenue in the future, is ongoing. Chigoda, with the excellent assistance of Hellen Zalira, has put in a lot of work to plant the trees and keep them alive, which was a challenge. We were late with planting the trees due to a land dispute which was only solved at the beginning of March and thus at the end of the rainy season; not the best time to plant. The plantation currently has about 3000 trees which are thriving. It is intended that a tree nursery of about 3000 trees be set up at Singano by the members of Chigoda, who have recently been trained by Melvin Banda (another student of the Catholic University of Malawi). Without the tireless efforts of Hellen and Jakob we could not have pulled it off. Hellen has also been instrumental in setting up a nursery of 5000 ebony trees at Tisunge!. The tubes we use in the nurseries have been donated by Carlsberg, for which we are very grateful.



Tree workshop



Tree nursery at Tisunge!

The Tisunge! football league

The Tisunge! football league counts 9 teams and was started at the beginning of June. Although not all of the 9 teams had planted and, more importantly, taken care of 350 trees we felt that we should reward the ones that had and encourage the ones that were getting there. The teams each received a football donated by Carlsberg. At the start of the league Alumenda received 14 pairs of football boots having planted and taken care of more than 500 trees. The first final of the league was played between Mankhokwe and Chayamba and was won by the latter with 2-1.



The Alumenda Team

The Children's Club

One of our volunteers, Hok Lim, has put a lot of energy into the children's club. Almost every day after school a group of 8 to 14 very enthusiastic children would impatiently lounge about the library until they were allowed to come in and learn about the heritage centre, the world in general, make drawings or clay objects, or be read to in English or Chichewa. Hok, together with Mr. Samson Billa from Supuni village (a 45 min. bicycle ride away!) and Moses showed the children that learning can be fun. They were given lessons in reading and writing and even computer skills. In this way Tisunge! wants to attract children to come and in a playful way learn about their heritage.



The library in desperate need of more books



Children ecstatic after a session with Hok and Mr Samson



Mr. Billa with the children

Anthropology Research on Ritual Intercourse

In the Lower Shire Valley, as well as in other parts of the country, there is a custom of (forced) sexual intercourse to mark the end of a period of transition, such as after bereavement or puberty initiation. The ritual intercourse is said to be necessary to prevent a potentially deadly disease called *tsempho*. Many NGOs and urban Malawians tend to dismiss traditional religion as a whole because of this practice of ritual intercourse. Indeed, this practice may contribute to the spread of HIV/Aids. The underlying set of ideas is however also impeding the spread of HIV/Aids as it condemns adultery and promiscuity, which are the main causes of the current Aids pandemic. In May Marjon Gibcus, a Dutch anthropology student, came for a period of three months to do research in Chikwawa and Nsanje in order to get a better understanding of this practice and to look for culturally appropriate alternatives. In the future, Tisunge! hopes to be able to advice NGOs operating in the Lower Shire on cultural sensitivities such as these.

Zikomo Kwambiri

We owe our thanks to Jakob Reefhuis, Catriona Sissons and Hok Lim who all arrived within the space of one week at the beginning of May and Martin van Harten, who took over from Jakob in July. Each had their own tasks, although they all helped where help was required. Jakob and Martin (who had to battle away on his own after the three others left him at the end of July) did the overall supervision of the construction and worked together with National Parks and the football commission that has lead to the start of the Tisunge! League. Hok encouraged the kids to come to Tisunge! to learn and play, worked on the dyes for the woven materials and helped out with the Tisunge! league. Catriona designed the displays of the shop and really made it look inviting.



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