

71597  
WORKSHOP IN POLITICAL THEORY  
AND POLICY ANALYSIS  
510 NORTH PARK  
INDIANA UNIVERSITY  
BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA 47403-8186

**THE MANAGEMENT OF THE LAND AND RESOURCES OF THE MASOKA COMMUNITY  
OF DANDE COMMUNAL LANDS, ZIMBABWE**

Presentation prepared by the Masoka Community for "Voices from  
the Commons" the 5th Annual Conference of the International  
Association for the Study of Common Property (IASCP), University  
of California, Berkeley, USA, 5 - 8 June, 1996.

### Introduction

Masoka refers to the people, land, and other resources located in the Guruve District Council area of the Zambezi Valley of Zimbabwe. The name Masoka originated from the name of the spirit medium, nyaMasoka. Before the current inhabitants, this place used to be occupied by the Mbara people. The Mbara were defeated by the Rozvi who, as victors, adopted the Korekore totem of the defeated Mbara people, "Nzou Samanyanga". The leader of the victorious Rozvi was the spirit medium nyaMasoka, who remains the chief spirit medium of Masoka to this day.

According to the Masoka elders, this area belongs to the ancestors. Current inhabitants thus can only claim rights to the land and its resources through the ancestors. This process differs depending on the origins of the individual. Descendants of the Masoka, with the Nzou Samanyanga totem have automatic and guaranteed rights to the land and all its resources, while immigrants and others can only secure these rights through the spirit medium, who notifies the ancestors of the awarding of rights to the land to a foreigner. This ensures that these people get the approval and protection of the ancestors in using these resources.

However, the perception of the younger people of Masoka is that the Government is the owner of the land and all its resources. The people of Masoka, as the users of these resources, are the proprietors and custodians of the resources. This proprietorship originates in the history of occupation of the area, including the Masoka Chieftainship. The natural resources of Masoka include the land, trees and grass, water (including rivers and pools), wildlife and the people. These resources are owned by the Government, but bona fide residents of Masoka have exclusive rights to use these resources.

### Pre-Colonial Natural Resources Management

The land itself was largely used for subsistence agriculture. Access to agricultural land was kinship based, although settlers (vatorwa) could also be accommodated. Because of the nature of the local economy, the use of other resources such as wildlife, fish, trees, and so on was very important for the local people. Although these resources were abundant and there were few people it was necessary to regulate the use of these resources, especially to cater for times of shortage such as during droughts or other natural disasters. Thus various regulations were developed that were designed to protect certain species of animals and trees and certain water sources.

During the pre-colonial area, resources were managed largely through the operation of various regulations and taboos. These regulations and taboos were handed down from the ancestors through the spirit mediums and chiefs. Such regulations typically applied to hunting, the use of certain pools in rivers, tree cutting and

burning of the veld. Thus, for instance, with regard to hunting, it was prohibited to kill certain species of animals such as the pangolin, eland, lion and python.

Misfortune would befall any hunter (including other members of his/her extended family) who broke this law. These regulations were largely respected because they came from the ancestors, the owners of the resources, and also because of the taboos that accompanied the regulations. The taboos were particularly effective because they did not only affect transgressor, but other members of his/her family, and in some cases the whole community. Thus there were collective pressures on individuals to conform to the regulations, and these were very effective.

#### The Colonial Era

The people of Masoka first came into contact with colonialism in 1914 when they were forcibly conscripted into the Southern Rhodesian army to fight in the First World War. After the war, they were largely left alone, perhaps because of the remoteness of the area and because of tsetse fly infestation, until about 1960 when Mana Pools National Park was created. The National Park was created without any consultation with the local community and, at this time, the Masoka community was evicted from its original settlement, which had become part of the new National Park, to the present location (about 10 km away).

The boundaries of Masoka and other neighbouring communities were redrawn. The people now had less land than before. In addition, a game fence was erected to control wild animal movements as part of the tsetse eradication programme. This game fence further delineated the extent of the people's land.

The people also lost access to many resources at this time. In addition, at this time new laws concerning hunting were introduced and enforced by the Government. People were now being arrested for hunting animals that used to belong to them, and that they used to freely hunt before the introduction of these laws. The old laws of the people were no longer recognized. Sacred places were not recognized, and animals that used to be protected, such as the lion, were now hunted by the white hunters. White hunters also hunted many other animals for trophies which they took away with them. The people of Masoka did not receive anything from these activities.

The few people to benefit from these new laws were the African hunters employed under the tsetse fly eradication programme. The programme was based on the eradication of wild animals and this resulted in some African hunters (magoche) being given guns and allowed to hunt certain animals like wild pigs, baboons, kudu etc. In return, these hunters were allowed to keep the meat and hides of these animals.

### The Post-Independence Era

At independence in 1980, Government had virtually lost all control over resource use in Masoka. People started hunting and poisoning fish and using other natural resources indiscriminately as a result of this loss of government control. At the same time, local leaders had already lost their control to the colonial Government, and thus could not control the people. The people were using resources in the spirit of madiro, which meant doing what they liked with the resources since this is what they had fought for in the liberation war.

The most important natural resource in the Masoka area, for the Government, was the wildlife. This was being hunted by white hunters and safari operators, who were also paying fees to the Government. Thus all these parties were benefitting from the wildlife resources of Masoka. As the people of Masoka continued with their madiro exploitation of wildlife and other natural resources, the department of National Parks introduced game rangers to police local use of wildlife. This resulted in many people being arrested for poaching. However, this did not stop people from poaching.

It was only in 1986 that the Government started a programme aimed at returning to rural people their full rights regarding the use and management of their natural resources. The people of Masoka were informed of this programme, called CAMPFIRE, through Professor Murphree of the Centre for Applied Social Sciences, University of Zimbabwe, who told them of how they could benefit from the new programme by managing their wildlife resources properly. Initially people had many questions about this programme. They wanted to know how people could benefit from wild animals, how they could manage wild animals, what they would do about the destruction of their crops by wild animals, and so on.

After protracted discussion and consultations with many people, the community accepted this programme. This was largely because they were convinced that they would get benefits like money, meat, crop protection and so on by participating in the programme. The community leaders, particularly the Masoka spirit medium (mhondoro) and chief Masoka were also in support of a programme to manage natural resources for the benefit of the community.

Today, all communally owned resources of Masoka are managed according to the principles of CAMPFIRE. These include all resources that have not been allocated to individuals for present or future use - such as arable land and land set aside for other developments - or those that have been created or enhanced through individual labour - such as planted trees and domestic stock. Such individually owned resources are managed by the individual owner with due respect to regulations and taboos that may affect the use of these resources.

The communal resources are those resources that have not been subdivided and allocated for individual use, and whose existence is not due to any individual's efforts. Moreover, individuals expend less effort in the management of such resources. Such resources can be used by all members of the community. Members of the Masoka community include the leaders such as the chief and his lieutenants and their families, as well as all members of the Masoka clan. Immigrants are also accepted and become community members if they follow the correct settlement procedures and abide by local environmental rules and regulations. Immigrants are still welcome in Masoka because the original population is very small and a larger population is required to attract and support some essential developments such as a regular bus service, a secondary school and so on. For instance we have been able to expand our primary school as a result of the CAMPFIRE programme. However, we still do not have a secondary school because the population of Masoka is still too small to support one.

#### The Masoka CAMPFIRE Programme

Since 1989, the Masoka community has reorganized itself to manage its natural resources as a result of the implementation of the CAMPFIRE programme. In order to manage the wildlife of Masoka, the community recognized that the most important activity would be to manage the wildlife habitat itself and to regulate the use of wildlife, particularly to control the illegal use of wildlife through poaching. To carry out these activities, the community was assisted to create and develop appropriate management structures. This included the creation of a wildlife management committee made up of members of the community. The committee makes all policy decisions regarding the use of wildlife revenues, the use of wildlife, and also consults the community on regulations and their implementation.

The wildlife management committee has also employed several members of the community to carry out specific tasks. These include anti poaching activities, monitoring of the electric fence, and monitoring of the hunting activities of the safari operation.

In order to carry out these management activities, the Masoka community had to develop new rules and regulations and ways of enforcing them. These included making new by laws and creating the local capacity to enforce them. An example of this is the creation and enforcement of the rule that anyone convicted of a poaching offence would not be handed over to the state for a custodial sentence as is the normal practice. Rather, such a person is punished in two ways. Firstly, he or she is made to work on a variety of community development projects such as brick making, construction, fence mending or anti-poaching patrols. Secondly, the person is also not given a dividend from the wildlife revenues of the year in which the offence takes place. Such regulations are designed not only to punish people but also make them realize the

importance of natural resources to the community as a whole. Attempts have also been made to integrate these new regulations with the old traditional regulations. This is achieved by involving all the important traditional institutions including the spirit medium, chief and headman in the decision-making processes. These institutions also continue to be important in their own right as safeguards of culture and tradition, and thus continue to enjoy legitimacy within Masoka.

Thus CAMPFIRE has led to the development of new and novel ways of managing communal resources. We continue to receive a lot of assistance from other organizations, especially CASS and Zimbabwe Trust, in these new developments.