

# Reconstructing Changamire's family roots: New evidence from the Valoyi oral history

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## *Abstract*

The Munhumutapa (or Monomotapa) empire became a major political entity in Southern Africa from around 1420 AD. Founded and ruled by the Nembire family, its territory covered areas in the present-day Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Its rulers used the title 'Munhumutapa', derived from the founder's nickname, which was later adopted by the empire itself. All the rulers during the first century of the empire's existence are known, and so are the relationships with each other, except with the fifth ruler, Changamire, whose relationship with the other rulers has been debated for years. There are two schools of thought: One that identifies him with the Nembire; and another linking him with the Torwa, a ruling lineage of the empire's Mbire province. Consequently, Changamire's history is confused and his contribution to the ancient history of Southern Africa is under-researched. This has affected studies on the various roles he played in his lifetime: As ruler of the empire's Guruuswa province; as fourth Munhumutapa's chief justice and army commander; as the fifth Munhumutapa ruler; and later, his association with Butua state (centred in the Mbire and Guruuswa provinces). In this article some views are exchanged and compared with new information from the Valoyi oral history.

**Keywords:** Changamire; Torwa; Nembire; Munhumutapa; Valoyi; Kalanga; Lozwi; Butua.

## **Introduction**

The currently-published history of Changamire is largely based on the Shona oral accounts, early Portuguese records and a few archaeological reports. These sources have so far proved to be insufficient in reconstructing the history of this ancient African emperor, leaving gaps and affecting a significant portion of African history. This deficiency has impacted not only the ancient history itself, but also the studies regarding the peoples with historic links to Changamire that are currently scattered across various countries in Southern Africa. The studies conducted on Changamire have also missed the opportunity of tapping into the oral accounts of the peoples with historic links to Changamire that are currently found outside the Shona group. Therefore, overdependence on

Shona oral accounts and early Portuguese records has limited the pool of information available in other sources.

One of the groups that possess oral history, which could enhance studies on Changamire, is the Valoyi, whose traditions relate strong political and genealogical links with Changamire's Butua state, the Munhumutapa empire and their ruling lineages.<sup>1</sup> The group is currently found among the Tsonga people of Southern Africa, and has ruling lineages in Mozambique,<sup>2</sup> Swaziland<sup>3</sup> and South Africa.<sup>4</sup> Its oral history suggests the tribe originates from the Kalanga<sup>5</sup> (also Karanga),<sup>6</sup> and uses "Mukalanga (singular) and "Vakalanga" (plural) as reference for the people and "Vukalanga" for the country of their origin.<sup>7</sup> The Valoyi oral accounts suggest that Changamire, the fifth Munhumutapa (1490-1494)<sup>8</sup> and the man who gave rise to the Changamire dynasty,<sup>9</sup> is one of the tribe's earlier ancestors.<sup>10</sup> Due to this claim in particular, the interest in the study of the Valoyi oral history has become necessary in an attempt to use it to close the gaps in the histories of the Changamire and the Munhumutapa.

The Valoyi are currently found within the triangle constituted by the Mabalane, Chokwe and Mapulanguene towns in Mozambique, where they have close to 30 ruling lineages.<sup>11</sup> They also have a ruling lineage in the

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- 1 GJ Liesegang "Beiträge zur Geschichte des Reiches der Gaza Nguni im südlichen Moçambique 1820-1895" (Doktorgrad, Universität zu Köln, 1967), pp. 24, 62, 154.
  - 2 HA Junod, *The life of a South African tribe*, 1 (London, McMillan & Co, 1927), p. 22; GJ Liesegang "Beiträge zur Geschichte des Reiches der Gaza Nguni ...", pp. 24, 62, 154; AA Jaques *Swivongo swa Machangana (Vatsonga)* (Braamfontein, Sasavona Publishers, 1938), pp. 63, 77, 78, 125-129.
  - 3 M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, M Tsabetse (Member: Matsebula royal family, Nhlanguano)/M Mathebula (researcher, UL, School of Social Sciences), 12 June 2011.
  - 4 AA Jaques *Swivongo swa Machangana...*, pp. 63, 125-129.
  - 5 HA Junod *The life of a South African tribe...*, p. 22; AA Jaques *Swivongo swa Machangana ...*, pp. 63, 127.
  - 6 TH Henriksen *Mozambique: A history* (Cape Town, D Phillip, 1978), pp. 6-7.
  - 7 AA Jaques *Swivongo swa Machangana ...*, pp. 63, 126.
  - 8 M Newitt *A history of Mozambique* (London, Hurst & Company, 1995), pp. 37-38; SIG Mudenge *A political history of Munhumutapa (c100-1902)* (Harare, Zimbabwe Publishers, 1988), pp. 47-49; TO Ranger (ed) *Aspects of central African history* (London, Heinemann, 1968), pp. 11-16; AH Mtetwa *A history of Uteve under Mwene Mutapa rulers, 1480-1834: A re-evaluation* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 17, 31, 43, 51; The Regnal Chronologies, "The Monomotapa empire" (available at [www.archive.org/stream/3751433-regnalchronology](http://www.archive.org/stream/3751433-regnalchronology), as accessed on 18 May 2012).
  - 9 M Newitt *A history of Mozambique ...*, pp. 37-8; TO Ranger (ed) *Aspects of central African history ...*, pp. 11-16; JH Bannerman, "Hlengweni: A history of the Hlengwe of lower Save and Lundi rivers, from the late eighteenth to mid-twentieth century", *Zimbabwe history*, XII, 1981, pp. 1-45; WGL Randles *L'empire du Monomotapa du XVIe au XIXe siecle* (Paris, Mouton et Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sociales, 1979), p. 7; SIG Mudenge *A political history of Munhumutapa ...*, p. 47.
  - 10 AA Jaques *Swivongo swa Machangana ...*, pp. 126-7; GJ Liesegang, "New light on Venda traditions: Mahumane's account of 1730", *History in Africa*, 4, 1977, pp. 167, 171.
  - 11 HA Junod *The life of a South African tribe...*, p. 22; AA Jaques *Swivongo swa Machangana ...*, p. 127; MD Mathebula "Genealogy and migration of the va ka Valoyi people of Limpopo province, South Africa" (Ph.D, University of Limpopo, 2018), pp. iv, 96-105.

Nhlangano district in Swaziland and 20 other ruling lineages in Limpopo Province, in South Africa.<sup>12</sup> The founder of the tribe is Gwambe, whose other name was Gutse.<sup>13</sup> He is said to have had two siblings: a brother called Xirimbi and a sister whose name is not known.<sup>14</sup> Gwambe and his siblings, according to the Valoyi oral history, were the direct descendants of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century Changamire and were also genealogically linked with the Torwa and the Munhumutapa.<sup>15</sup>

The Valoyi oral history possesses some information on the paternal and maternal families of Changamire that appears to provide new evidence, which answers a number of questions that remain unanswered by the available literature. Such information is generally missing in the oral accounts of the Shona and the Portuguese records of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

**Table 1: Munhumutapa rulers during the first century of its existence**

Nyatsimba Mutota	1420-1450
Matope Nyanhehwe Nebeza	1450-1480
Mavura Muobwe	1480
Mukombero Nyahuma	1480-1490
Changamire (Changa)	1490-1494 (Focus of this article)
Kakuyo Komunyaka (Chikuyo or Chisamarengu)	1494-1530

Source: Regional Chronologies, 2015.

## Views about Changamire's family background

There currently exist two sets of views about the family background of Changamire: The Torwa perspective argues that Changamire was a member of the Torwa ruling family<sup>16</sup> or was friends with the ruler of Torwa.<sup>17</sup> Some of the proponents of this perspective even suggest Torwa may have been Changamire's other name.<sup>18</sup> The Nembire perspective raises two major arguments: That

12 MD Mathebula "Genealogy and migration...", pp. iv, 16-18; 96-105.

13 AA Jaques *Swivongo swa Machangana* ..., pp. 127-128.

14 AA Jaques *Swivongo swa Machangana* ..., p. 128.

15 HA Junod *The life of a South African tribe* ..., p. 5; AA Jaques *Swivongo swa Machangana* ..., p. 127-128; MD Mathebula "Genealogy and migration ...", pp. 71-74.

16 M Newitt *A history of Mozambique* ..., p. 37-8; SIG Mudenge *A political history of Munhumutapa* ..., pp. 47-49; AH Mterwa *A history of Uteve under Mwene Mutapa rulers* ..., pp. 17, 31, 50-52; MR Lipschutz & RK Rasmussen *Dictionary of African historical biography* (London, University of California Press, 1980), p. 46.

17 M Newitt *A history of Mozambique* ..., p. 37.

18 AH Mterwa *A history of Uteve under Mwene Mutapa rulers* ..., pp. 50-52; SIG Mudenge *A political history of Munhumutapa* ..., pp. 47-49.

Changamire was the son of Munhumutapa Matope Nyanhehwe Nebeza and therefore a member of the Nembire ruling family;<sup>19</sup> or that he was one of the senior members of the empire<sup>20</sup> and related to the Nembire only through his positions in the empire and his marriage to one of the daughters of the second Munhumutapa ruler.<sup>21</sup>

### The Torwa perspective

The Torwa perspective is largely derived from the earliest literature about Changamire by Diogo De Alcacova in 1506,<sup>22</sup> from the information he obtained from a secondary source.<sup>23</sup> The Torwa name appears in the secondary data as Toloa, Torwa, Thorwa and Togwa.<sup>24</sup> The document is a bit vague and gives the impression that Changamire could have belonged to the Torwa family by suggesting that he could have had “Torwa” as his title. It also gives the impression that Torwa could have been his other name.<sup>25</sup> The same literature has been interpreted by some sources as stating that Changamire and Torwa were friends or political allies and neighbours.<sup>26</sup> Whereas some of the sources simply state that Changamire belonged to the Torwa family or “clan”,<sup>27</sup> others employ a more cautious approach of referring to him only as a relative of Torwa without specifying the kind of relationship.<sup>28</sup> This assumption is based on the fact that De Alcacova only created the impression that Changamire and Torwa could be related, without specifying the relationship.<sup>29</sup>

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19 AH Mtetwa *A history of Uteve under Mwene Mutapa rulers* ..., pp. 50-52; AJ Wills *An introduction of the history of central Africa* ..., p. 22; Britannica Online Encyclopedia, “The Changamire dynasty” (available at, <http://www.encyclopaediabritannicaeb.com>, as accessed on 18 May 2012; M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, SIG Mudenge (Historian, Harare), 10 October 2010.

20 AH Mtetwa *A history of Uteve under Mwene Mutapa rulers* ..., pp. 50-52.

21 AJ Wills *An introduction of the history of central Africa* ..., p. 22.

22 M Newitt *A history of Mozambique* ..., pp. 37-38; AH Mtetwa, *A history of Uteve under Mwene Mutapa rulers* ..., pp. 17,31; SIG Mudenge *A political history of Munhumutapa* ..., pp. 38-39, 47-49.

23 M Newitt *A history of Mozambique* ..., pp. 37-38.

24 DN Beach, Oral history and archaeology in Zimbabwe, *Zimbabwe Prehistory*, 19, 1983, pp. 8-11; SIG Mudenge *A political history of Munhumutapa* ..., pp. 47-48; M Newitt *A history of Mozambique* ..., p. 38.

25 M Newitt *A history of Mozambique* ..., p. 38; SIG Mudenge *A political history of Munhumutapa* ..., pp. 47-49, AH Mtetwa *A history of Uteve under Mwene Mutapa rulers* ..., pp. 50-52, MR Lipschutz & RK Rasmussen *Dictionary of African historical biography* ..., p. 46.

26 M Newitt *A history of Mozambique* ..., p. 38.

27 SIG Mudenge *A political history of Munhumutapa* ..., pp. 38-39, 47-49.

28 AH Mtetwa *A history of Uteve under Mwene Mutapa rulers* ..., pp. 50-52; DN Beach *The Shona & Zimbabwe 900-1850: An outline of Shona history* (New York, Africana Publishing Company, 1980), p. 199, MR Lipschutz & RK Rasmussen *Dictionary of African historical biography* ..., p. 46.

29 DN Beach *The Shona & Zimbabwe 900-1850: An outline of Shona history* ..., pp. 241-242.

A less developed segment of this view is the one that seems to align with the suggestion by the Valoyi oral history. It suggests that Changamire was a “muzukuru” (grandson) of Dlembeu<sup>30</sup> (or Dyembewu),<sup>31</sup> the ruler of Torwa during the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>32</sup> This is important in that the Shona oral history generally regards Dlembeu as a legendary leader of some people living in the region of present-day Zimbabwe in ancient times. Some literature deduces from these accounts that Dlembeu could have lived in the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century and became prominent around 1450.<sup>33</sup> This would make him a contemporary of the first Munhumutapa, Nyatsimba Mutota. Some of the accounts seem to link the same name with similar names of leaders with Kalanga links. They refer to Chikurawadyembewu in the Shona oral history and Vele-la-mbeu in the Venda oral history (the latter is also said to be a principal ancestor of the present-day Venda group in the Singo genealogy).<sup>34</sup> However, because these accounts seem to suggest that Chikurawadyembewu was also called Chikura,<sup>35</sup> it seems that Chikura and Vele-la-mbeu, who is sometimes called Vele,<sup>36</sup> could be descendants of Dyembewu. The two leaders also seem to have lived more than a hundred years after Dyembewu, if one draws from the Shona,<sup>37</sup> Venda<sup>38</sup> and Valoyi<sup>39</sup> oral accounts. From a linguistic point of view, the “wa” that joins Chikura and Dyembewu in “Chikurawadyembewu” could well refer to “of”, denoting “son of” or “member of the family of” (Dyembewu in this instance).<sup>40</sup> This would also apply to the “la” in Vele-la-mbeu.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, Dyembewu, it seems, could be a variation of Dlembeu and Mbeu.

It is important to note that it is the name “Dyambewu” that appears in the Valoyi oral history, and neither Torwa nor Dlembeu, Dyembewu and Mbeu. As is discussed later, “Dyambewu” seems to be another variation for Dlembeu, Dyembewu and Mbeu.

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30 DN Beach *The Shona & Zimbabwe 900-1850: An outline of Shona history* ..., p. 241.

31 DN Beach *The Shona & Zimbabwe 900-1850: An outline of Shona history* ..., pp. 44, 260.

32 DN Beach *The Shona & Zimbabwe 900-1850: An outline of Shona history* ..., p. 241.

33 K Shillington *Encyclopaedia of African history, 1* (New York, Fitzroy Dearborn Taylor & Francis Group, 2004), p. 1912.

34 DN Beach *The Shona & Zimbabwe 900-1850: An outline of Shona history* ..., pp. 44, 260.

35 DN Beach *The Shona & Zimbabwe 900-1850: An outline of Shona history* ..., p. 230.

36 M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, V Neluvhalani (Commissioner, CRL Commission, Johannesburg), 8 March 2012.

37 DN Beach *The Shona & Zimbabwe 900-1850: An outline of Shona history* ..., pp. 44, 230, 260.

38 GJ Liesegang, “New light on Venda traditions...”, *History in Africa*, 4, 1977, p. 164.

39 M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, M Shilowa (Mahlati Royal Council, Giyani), 30 May 2012.

40 M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, XE Mabaso (Linguist, UNISA, Pretoria), 21 January 2014.

41 M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, V Neluvhalani, 8 March 2012; interview, XE Mabaso, 21 January 2014.

Some sources also add that at some stage, later in the Butua state, some members of the Torwa used to act as regents after the death of a Changamire ruler in order to prevent infighting.<sup>42</sup> No mention, however, is made of the relationship between the Changamire rulers and the Torwa around this time. However, historical sources suggest that during the formation of the Butua state in 1494, the successor to Changamire incorporated the area under the Torwa into his new state.<sup>43</sup> The role of the Torwa in the new state, however, is not clear in these sources, beyond their reign as regents during the mourning periods. However, some sources suggest the Torwa ruling lineage could have remained with some power in the new Butua administration,<sup>44</sup> probably as governors of the western province of Mbire, which they earlier governed under the Munhumutapa.

Therefore, it is the vagueness in the relationship of Changamire and Torwa at political and genealogical level that has left a huge gap in Changamire's identity, especially so because of his proximity to the Torwa in both aspects. Unless this gap were to be filled through new evidence, Changamire's identity would remain unknown. The Valoyi oral history, as shall be seen later, appears to provide new information that could fill this gap.

### **The Nembire perspective**

The Nembire perspective is more developed than the Torwa perspective, suggesting that Changamire was the son of Munhumutapa Matope Nyanhehwe Nebeza (the second Munhumutapa ruler). The Nembire view explains his position in the Nembire ruling family in much finer detail.<sup>45</sup> The perspective identifies Munhumutapa Matope Nyanhehwe Nebeza's sons as follows: Chiware and Kadembo Nyautando from the house of Queen Pfute; and Mavura Muobwe and Mukombero Nyahuma from the second house of Queen Nematikoni. Further, it mentions another son, called Changa, later to be called Changamire, of whom it states that his mother was not a true queen, but a "concubine".<sup>46</sup> Unfortunately, the perspective does not mention the

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42 DN Beach *The Shona & Zimbabwe 900-1850: An outline of Shona history* ..., p. 241.

43 TO Ranger (ed.) *Aspects of central African history* ..., pp. 11-16.

44 M Newitt *A history of Mozambique* ..., pp. 37-38.

45 The Regnal Chronologies, "The Monomotapa empire" (available at [www.archive.org/stream/3751433-regnalchronology](http://www.archive.org/stream/3751433-regnalchronology), as accessed on 18 May 2012); AH Mtetwa *A history of Uteve under Mwene Mutapa rulers* ..., pp. 50-52; AJ Wills *An introduction of the history of central Africa: Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe*, 4 (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1985), p. 22; Britannica Online Encyclopedia, "The Changamire dynasty" (available at <http://www.encyclopaediabritanicaeb.com>, as accessed on 18 May 2012).

46 AH Mtetwa *A history of Uteve under Mwene Mutapa rulers* ..., pp. 50-52.

name of Changamire's mother, like it does in the case of his brothers, which could have been influenced by her status in the Nembire ruling family. Apart from referring to her as a "concubine", the perspective also describes her as "a slave wife"<sup>47</sup> and as "the lowly wife". Consequently, the perspective refers to Changamire as "a younger son"<sup>48</sup> (of Munhumutapa Matope Nyanhehwe Nebeza). Therefore, the perspective positions Changamire within the house of Munhumutapa Matope Nyanhehwe Nebeza and therefore within the Nembire family.

There is also another perspective within this view, which, while linking Changamire with the Nembire, reduces him into being the Nembire's son-in-law. The perspective states that he had been given Matope Nyanhehwe Nebeza's eldest daughter as his wife, and land and chiefs to rule over<sup>49</sup> (probably referring to his rise as governor of Guruuswa province). The name of Matope Nyanhehwe Nebeza's eldest daughter, however, is not mentioned. Other sources, though not mentioning his marriage to Matope Nyanhehwe Nebeza's eldest daughter, do mention his appointment in a similar manner.<sup>50</sup> This segment of the perspective, it seems, seeks to link Changamire's political rise within the Munhumutapa administration to his supposed marriage to Matope Nyanhehwe Nebeza's daughter. As pointed out later in this article, it could be the chronology of the events that is more problematic than the truth behind the perspective.

## **The Valoyi oral history and the two perspectives**

### ***On the Torwa perspective***

One of the most important aspects of the Valoyi oral history is its claim that one of their earlier ancestors was a man called "Changameri"<sup>51</sup> (or Cangameri).<sup>52</sup> It should be stated, though, that it is not the similarity or closeness of the name to Changamire that is important, but what the oral history says about the name and the person attached to it. For obvious reasons, though, these accounts do not date the period in which he lived. Neither do

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47 AJ Wills *An introduction of the history of central Africa ...*, p. 22.

48 Britannica Online Encyclopedia, "The Changamire dynasty" (available at <http://www.encyclopaediabritanicaeb.com>, as accessed on 18 May 2012).

49 WGL Randles, *L'empire du Monomotapa du XVe au XIXe siecle* (Paris, Mouton et Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sociales, 1979), p.6.

50 AH Mtetwa *A history of Uteve under Mwene Mutapa rulers ...*, p. 41.

51 M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, F Makhuva (Member, Mathevula royal family, Lulekani), 28 August 2009.

52 M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, J Malwandla (Member, Mukansi royal family, Nkuzana), 11 May 2011.

they give coherent information about his family background; hence, the need to look at their accounts together with information from other sources.

Unfortunately, it is in the less developed segment of the Torwa perspective, where the Valoyi and the Shona histories seem to converge. While very few of the Shona accounts refer to Changamire as a “muzukuru” of Dyembewu or Dlembeu,<sup>53</sup> some of the Valoyi oral history, though in very isolated accounts, suggest that Changamire was a “ntukulu” (grandchild or specifically grandson) of Dyambewu<sup>54</sup> (as in Dlembeu or Dyembewu).<sup>55</sup> These accounts identify Dyambewu as “un’wana wa tihosi ta Vukalanga” (one of the Kalanga rulers).<sup>56</sup> The accounts refer to Changamire as “n’wana wo tswariwa hi n’wana wa nhwanyana wa Dyambewu” (child born of Dyambewu’s daughter).<sup>57</sup> The accounts seem to agree with the notion that Changamire was an illegitimate child, by stating that Changamire’s mother disappointed her father by engaging in an extramarital relationship with a Munhumutapa<sup>58</sup> – some say she was involved with the son of a Munhumutapa<sup>59</sup> (Shona accounts mention Matope Nyanhehwe Nebeza as the son of Munhumutapa Nyatsimba Mutota, who later became a Munhumutapa himself).<sup>60</sup>

The name of Changamire’s mother is not mentioned in the Valoyi oral accounts and such is the trend of these accounts – they generally do not mention names of the female folk in their history. However, there are those who attempt to justify the non-mentioning of the name of Changamire’s mother, especially when pressed for the reason. They suggest that this is because “u nyumise tata wa kwe” (she embarrassed her father)<sup>61</sup> or “u poyile ndyangu wa tata wa kwe” (she disgraced her father’s family).<sup>62</sup> As a result of this transgression, suggest these accounts, her father ordered that “vito ra kwe ri rivariwa” (her name be forgotten).<sup>63</sup> Some even go further to say “vito ra

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53 DN Beach *The Shona & Zimbabwe 900-1850: An outline of Shona history ...*, p. 241.

54 M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, F Makhuva, 28 August 2009.

55 DN Beach *The Shona & Zimbabwe 900-1850: An outline of Shona history ...*, p. 241.

56 M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, F Makhuva, 28 August 2009.

57 M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, NC Mathevu (Chief, Mathevu Community, Giyani), 11 August 2012.

58 M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, X Baloi (Chief, Ntshokati Community, Mozambique), 9 August 2012.

59 M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, H Baloi (Member, Xikungulu royal family, Mozambique), 1 October 2011.

60 AH Mterwa *A history of Uteve under Mwene Mutapa rulers ...*, pp. 50-52; The Regnal Chronologies, “The Monomotapa empire” (available at [www.archive.org/stream/3751433-regnalchronology](http://www.archive.org/stream/3751433-regnalchronology), as accessed on 18 May 2012).

61 M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, S Baloi (Headman, Xibotani and Madingani Communities, Mozambique), 10 August 2012.

62 M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, XZ Baloi (Chief, Magezi Community, Mozambique), 10 August 2012.

63 M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, S Baloi, 10 August 2012.

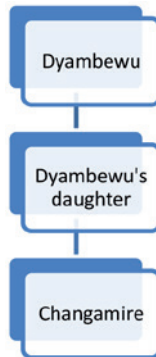


yena ri yirisiwile” (her name was banned – from use).<sup>64</sup> This, according to the accounts, led to her name being completely forgotten.<sup>65</sup> Although this appears to be guess work rather than actual memory, such a reason cannot be ruled out completely.

However, the Valoyi accounts are opposed to the notion that Changamire was a Torwa or that he belonged to the “Dyambewu” family, apparently based on their current cultural belief system. They argue that he was only associated with the Torwa because he was brought up by the Torwa. They claim that “u kurise hi vakokwana” (he was brought up by his maternal grandparents).<sup>66</sup> They also argue that Changamire himself could have been known by this “clan” name as opposed to the Nembire one because there was no formal marriage between his parents.<sup>67</sup> They also seem to base this on their current belief system that suggests that “n’wana i xuma”<sup>68</sup> (an expression used among the Tsonga people to state that a child belongs to his father’s family only, if his father has paid his dues).

Therefore, the solution to knowledge gaps in the relationship between Changamire and Torwa may lie in the information from the oral history of the Valoyi; especially, if this is juxtaposed with the information that is available in the published oral history of the Shona and the one sourced from early Portuguese records.

Image 1: Maternal genealogy of Changamire according to Valoyi oral accounts



Source: Authors’ own compilation.

<sup>64</sup> M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, X Baloi, 9 August 2012.

<sup>65</sup> M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, NC Mathevula, 11 August 2012.

<sup>66</sup> M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, H Baloi, 1 October 2011.

<sup>67</sup> M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, M Baloi (Chief, Pfikwe Community, Mozambique), 9 August 2012.

<sup>68</sup> M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, R Mahonisi (Chief, Mahonisi Community, Malamulele), 16 December 2012.

## On the Nembire perspective

As pointed out earlier, the Valoyi oral history is straightforward and to a large extent specific in Changamire's paternal relationship. For example, there are expressions referring to Changamire as "jaha ra ka Nembire" (the son of the Nembire)<sup>69</sup> and "n'wana wa Munhumutapa" (son of Munhumutapa) or "n'wana wa ka Munhumutapa" (son of the Munhumutapa).<sup>70</sup> Although the accounts sometimes use Nembire and Munhumutapa interchangeably, there are some that specifically state that Munhumutapa was a "xidlodlo" (royal title), while Nembire was a "xivongo" (family name), which they also claim as their own family name in ancient times.<sup>71</sup> Every member of the Valoyi calls himself "Mulozwi"<sup>72</sup> or "Khalanga"<sup>73</sup> and associates Changamire with the Lozwi and the Kalanga.<sup>74</sup> However, the Valoyi do not differentiate between the Lozwi (which some Shona oral accounts refer to as a ruling lineage of the Kalanga until the early 15<sup>th</sup> Century and probably alternative name of the nation, too)<sup>75</sup> and Kalanga (which both the Valoyi and Shona refer to as a state or nation in which the Lozwi ruled).<sup>76</sup>

As already pointed out, the Valoyi oral history states that "Changameri ari wa ka Munhumutapa" (Changamire belonged to the Munhumutapa),<sup>77</sup> and often refers to his father as "Nembire".<sup>78</sup> These accounts hardly mention the exact name of Changamire's father, and where they do, they use names that are identical to the one officially recorded. For example, the N'wankoti and Maxavele lineages refer to Changamire's father as Matopi,<sup>79</sup> while the Xivodze refer to him as Mtopi,<sup>80</sup> an apparent corruption of the name Matope (as in Matope Nyanhehwe Nebeza). Most of the accounts also state that "Changameri ari wa le vuhosini" (Changamire belonged to the royal family).<sup>81</sup>

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69 M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, M Shilowa, 30 May 2012.

70 M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, F Makhuva, 28 August 2009.

71 M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, M Shilowa, 30 May 2012; interview, F Makhuva/M Mathebula, 28 August 2009.

72 M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, A Baloyi (Member, Maxavele royal family, Giyani), 30 November 2009.

73 HA Junod *The life of a South African tribe*, 1 ...p. 22; AA Jaques *Swivongo swa Machangana ...*, pp. 63.

74 M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, A Baloyi, 30 November 2009.

75 TH Henriksen *Mozambique: A history ...*, pp. 6-7.

76 TH Henriksen *Mozambique: A history ...*, pp. 6-7; M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, A Baloyi, 30 November 2009.

77 M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, F Makhuva, 28 August 2009.

78 M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, M Shilowa, 30 May 2012.

79 M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, A Baloyi, 30 November 2009; interview, T Baloyi (Member, N'wankoti lineage, Chiawelo), 16 June 2010.

80 M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, L Mkansi (Mother, Hosi Ben Mkansi, Mozambique), 31 August 2013.

81 M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, F Makhuva, 28 August 2009; interview, K Baloi (Mother, Hosi Matlharini Xidakwa Baloi of N'wamahunyani Community, Mozambique), 10 August 2012.

One of these sources specifically argues that:<sup>82</sup>

Loko ari wa ka Dyambewu (Torwa), a ta tivitana hi vito ra ka Dyambewu (Torwa). U tivitane Munhumutapa hikuva a ri wa ka Munhumutapa (If he was a Dyambewu [Torwa], he would have called himself by the Dyambewu title. He [therefore] called himself a Munhumutapa because he belonged to the Munhumutapa family).

The Lowani lineage also refers to Nembire as “Tata wa hina Nembire” (our father Nembire)<sup>83</sup> and also use the expression; “Changamiri i n'wana wa Munhumutapa” (Changamire is the son of Munhumutapa).<sup>84</sup>

Therefore, all these views could be brought about to constitute one story, when and if other accounts about the Munhumutapa are taken into consideration. The suggestion that Changamire married the eldest daughter of Munhumutapa Matope Nyanhehwe Nebeza<sup>85</sup> must not be dismissed in order to accept the one that says he was the son of Matope Nyanhehwe Nebeza.<sup>86</sup> In fact, it would be incorrect to suggest that if one of the two indeed happened, the other could not have happened. Oral accounts of the Valoyi, especially those of the Lowani, Xivodze and Ntamele state that Changamire “a teke makwavo kuri a tswala mudyandzhaka” (he had married his sister in order to beget an heir).<sup>87</sup> These accounts, however, do not state that she was the eldest. Some of the Valoyi accounts have a strange way of justifying this kind of marriage, stating that it could have been made in order to formalise the informal marriage of Changamire's parents.<sup>88</sup> Therefore, he may not necessarily have married the eldest daughter of Matope Nyanhehwe Nebeza, but it is possible that he married one of them. This practice seems to have been common in the Munhumutapa or among the Kalanga. There are sources among the Shona that suggest that Matope Nyanhehwe Nebeza himself had married his sister named Nyamita Nehanda, with full approval of their father Nyatsimba Mutota and other members of the family.<sup>89</sup> Oral accounts of the Valoyi suggest this could have happened with other members

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82 M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, R Mbhombhi (Headman, Makhwaxani Community, Mozambique), 2 October 2011.

83 M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, M Shilowa, 30 May 2012.

84 M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, F Makhuva, 28 August 2009.

85 Da Silva (WGL Randles *L'empire du Monomotapa* ..., p. 6).

86 AH Mtetwa *A history of Uteve under Mwene Mutapa rulers* ..., pp. 50-52; AJ Wills *An introduction of the history of central Africa* ..., p. 22; Britannica Online Encyclopedia [s.a.]; Mudenge 2011.

87 M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, L Mkansi, 31 August 2013.

88 M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, K Baloi, 10 August 2012.

89 AH Mtetwa *A history of Uteve under Mwene Mutapa rulers* ..., pp. 16, 50.

of the ruling lineage as well<sup>90</sup> and that it could have been done to ensure that “ngati ya vuhosi a yi lungwi” (the royal blood is not diluted).<sup>91</sup>

Image 2: Paternal genealogy of Changamire



Source: Authors' own compilation.

## **Conclusion**

The Valoyi oral history offers the best opportunity in recent years to deal with the deficiencies in the history of Changamire and, to a certain extent, the history of the Munhumutapa and the Torwa. In a broad sense, the Valoyi oral accounts unbundle the mysteries regarding the possible family relationship between the Torwa and the Munhumutapa, which, if properly studied, could enhance the body of knowledge on the two ancient dynasties. When analysed together with the available literature, the Valoyi oral history suggests a relationship between the two ruling families that could have spilled into the political sphere. This relationship specifically involves the families of the ruler of Torwa, Dyambewu (or Dyembewu/Dlembeu/Mbeu) and Munhumutapa Nyatsimba Mutota, the emperor who appears to be the contemporary of Dyambewu. Children of the two rulers appear to have been involved in an unofficial intimate relationship that produced a son. The name of Dyambewu's daughter is not remembered, but that of Nyatsimba Mutota's son is known and it is Matope Nyanhehwe Nebeza, who later succeeded Nyatsimba Mutota

<sup>90</sup> M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, L Mkansi, 31 August 2013.

<sup>91</sup> M Mathebula (Personal Collection), interview, K Baloi, 10 August 2012; interview, L Mkansi, 31 August 2013.

as a Munhumutapa. The combined evidence suggests he and Dyambewu's daughter had a son, Changa, who later became known as Changamire.

“Changameri” in the Valoyi oral history is certainly the 15<sup>th</sup> Century emperor Changamire in the Munhmutapa, Changamire and Torwa oral history and the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Portuguese records. Whereas it has been difficult to locate him within a specific family without contradiction, the available sources at least link him with the two families he is associated with, albeit with uncertainty. The Valoyi oral history seems to put the uncertainty to rest by suggesting that the Torwa and the Nembire are his maternal and paternal families, respectively. Unfortunately, only the name of his father is remembered, whereas that of his mother has been completely forgotten. However, at least her father is known and so are her lineage and political entity.

Drawing from the Valoyi accounts and available literature, Changamire could indeed be regarded as a “muzukuru” (Shona) or “ntukulu” (Tsonga) of the Torwa through Dyambewu's daughter and a Nembire prince through Matope Nyanhehwe Nebeza. Because the relationship between Matope Nyanhehwe Nebeza and Dyambewu's daughter did not develop into a formal marriage, Changamire could have been brought up by the Torwa and may have spent most of his early years being regarded as a Torwa. His association with the Nembire could have come later and could have been brief. Because his relationship with the two families and the political entities they ruled over could not be comprehended before, it has been difficult to reconstruct the history of Changamire in general. Exploiting sources outside the Shona and Portuguese records, therefore, seems to be making the breakthrough in this regard. The Valoyi oral accounts provide a new dimension that going forward, may help close gaps in the Changamire history, which have for far too long been difficult to fill.