

# Mozambique

## *Ethnicity in Mozambique*

### *Group selection*

The following groups are politically relevant at the state-level in Mozambique: **Tsonga-Chopi** (28.7%), **Shona-Ndau** (9.8%) and **Makonde-Yao** (6.7%).

### *Power relations*

#### *1975-2014*

The leading FRELIMO movement/party wanted to eradicate the political relevance of ethnicity and to unite the whole population under the same socialist ideology (see e.g. <sup>2940</sup>). Yet, ethnicity did not disappear as an important issue in the country's politics.

<sup>2940</sup> [Shenga Pereira, 2008]

Although the FRELIMO, which should become the leading movement in Mozambique from its independence up to present date, was founded and operated in its beginning in the 1960ies mainly in the North, its leadership was very quickly dominated by elites from the South (see e.g. <sup>2941</sup>). Especially during the liberation struggles, the northern leaders got substituted by southerners, leading to a **Tsonga** dominated movement at the moment of the country's independence. Southern ethnicities (except the **Makonde-Yao**) lost most of their influence (<sup>2942</sup>). The resulting FRELIMO was in charge of the government from 1975 up to now, a fact that has not been changed neither by the civil war from the 1970s to the 1990s nor by the democratic elections 1994, 1999, 2004 and 2009 (see e.g. <sup>2943</sup>, <sup>2944</sup>).

<sup>2941</sup> [Golaszinski, 2005]

<sup>2942</sup> [Shenga Pereira, 2008]

<sup>2943</sup> [Ruigrok, 2005]

<sup>2944</sup> [Shenga Pereira, 2008]

Yet, although dominated by the ethnic groups from the south, mainly the Tsonga, FRELIMO has never been ethnically exclusive. As already stated, the movement/party was founded by people from the north (namely the Makonde-Yao) which continued to have some influence within the movement after the taking-over of power by the Tsonga. Therefore, they can be coded as junior partners to the senior Tsonga. Opposition to FRELIMO came from the RENAMO. Contrary to the attempts of FRELIMO to eradicate ethnicity from national politics, RENAMO strongly played and plays the ethnic card, forging a "non-southerner" identity (see e.g. <sup>2945</sup>, 162). RENAMO's stronghold is mainly among the **Shona-Ndau**, living mainly in the center of the country. Due to FRELIMO political dominance and the resulting exclusion of the RENAMO from access to political power, the Shona-Ndau are coded as politically powerless. It can be

<sup>2945</sup> [Manning, 2001]

seen that the political lines, therefore, are not only between ethnic groups but as well (or perhaps even more) between regions. Authors working on the recent elections (e.g. <sup>2946</sup>, <sup>2947</sup>, <sup>2948</sup>) show that voting patterns are becoming more and more regionally than ethnically shaped, as people whose ethnic background would tie them to a certain political party, nevertheless vote for a different party with which they share no ethnic identity. Yet, the ethnic lines are still more prominent.

The transition from a one-party system to multi-party democracy was certainly a rupture within the country's political history. Yet, in Mozambique, the introduction of democracy and elections did not change considerably ethnic groups' access to political power. FRELIMO and its mainly Tsonga leaders never excluded others due to their ethnic identity. Thus, just one single period is coded since 1975 without any changes of power status of the three relevant ethnic groups. The Tsonga remain "senior partner" with the Makonde-Yao as "junior partner" while the Shona-Ndau are coded as "powerless" throughout since they are represented mainly by the RENAMO opposition within a strongly centralized and binarized political system and therefore with little to no political power.

Group sizes are estimates based on information available from the Joshua Project (<sup>2949</sup>) and the Encyclopedia of Nations (<sup>2950</sup>).

FRELIMO dominates the political arena and is often accused of favouring the south and, by implication, the Tsonga-Chopi group. The northern Makonde-Yao group is represented within FRELIMO. The FRELIMO candidate for the presidential elections (scheduled for 15 October 2014) is a Makonde and could become the first non-southern leader of the country (<sup>2951</sup>, <sup>2952</sup>). After its clear defeat in the 2009 elections, the mainly Shona-Ndau movement RENAMO has not confined its activities to peaceful popular appeals. Instead, RENAMO leader Afonso Dhlakama has revoked the peace accord of 1992 and more than once threatened to wage a war against the FRELIMO dominated state (<sup>2953</sup>). In this sense, the FRELIMO-RENAMO cleavage and the divide between Tsonga-Chopi and Shona-Ndau is still politically relevant.

### *2015-2017*

Mozambique celebrated a general election in October 2014, where the two main contenders were again FRELIMO and RENAMO. The incumbent party won the election with 57% of the votes, and its candidate, Filipe Nyusi, became the fourth President of Mozambique.

The main difference this election has brought about is that the new President, Nyusi, is part of the Makonde ethnic group. This is a novelty as, even though the Makonde group has shared power with the Tsonga group since FRELIMO was founded, it was the Tsonga that had held the top political positions until now. Possibly, this change responds to the recent discoveries of oil reserves in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, the Makonde homeland. Indeed,

<sup>2946</sup> [Shenga Pereira, 2008]

<sup>2947</sup> [Carbone, 2003]

<sup>2948</sup> [Golaszinski, 2005]

<sup>2949</sup> [Joshua Project]

<sup>2950</sup> [Encyclopedia of Nations]

<sup>2951</sup> [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2010-2014]

<sup>2952</sup> [Africa Report, 2014]

<sup>2953</sup> [Boisbouvier, 2013]

the election campaign was full of references to both these natural resources and the origins of the FRELIMO-led armed struggle in Cabo Delgado (e.g. <sup>2954</sup>, <sup>2955</sup>). More recent accounts suggest that ties between Nyuse and the Makonde group are present in political decisions, and key Makonde actors expect to profit from this new arrangement (<sup>2956</sup>; <sup>2957</sup>).

Because of this, the Makonde have been upgraded to “senior partner” after Nyusi’s victory in the 2014 elections; a status that comes into effect from 2015 onwards, following the 1st of January rule. Because of the long-held dominance of the south-based Tsonga group in FRELIMO, and the importance of southern Mozambique, they are still considered “senior partners”, extending the coding of previous periods. Same applies to the Shona-Ndau, as no evidence of substantive changes was found. Although RENAMO enjoyed an increase in votes, the Mozambique political system ensures that no political power is enjoyed without a majority victory in the elections.

<sup>2954</sup> [Mail Guardian, 2014]

<sup>2955</sup> [The Herald, 2014]

<sup>2956</sup> [Africa Report, 2016]

<sup>2957</sup> [African Intelligence, 2017]

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## Political status of ethnic groups in Mozambique

*From 1975 until 2014*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Tsonga-Chopi	0.287	SENIOR PARTNER
Shona-Ndau	0.098	POWERLESS
Makonde-Yao	0.067	JUNIOR PARTNER

*From 2015 until 2017*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Tsonga-Chopi	0.287	SENIOR PARTNER
Shona-Ndau	0.098	POWERLESS
Makonde-Yao	0.067	SENIOR PARTNER

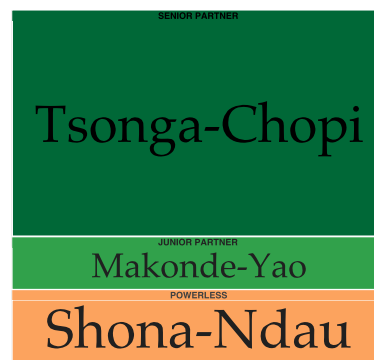


Figure 613: Political status of ethnic groups in Mozambique during 1975-2014.

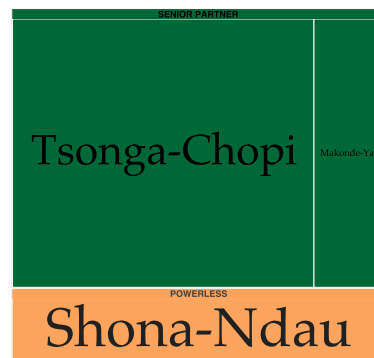


Figure 614: Political status of ethnic groups in Mozambique during 2015-2017.



## *Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Mozambique*

*From 1975 until 2017*

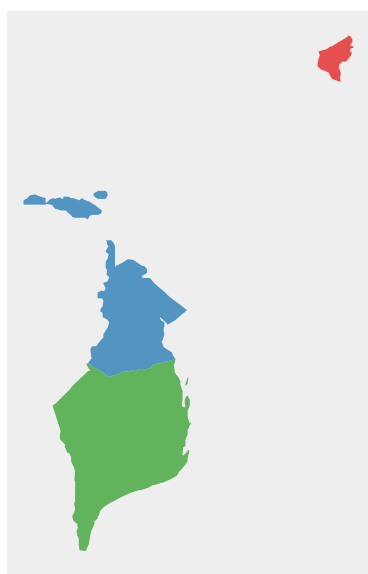


Figure 615: Map of ethnic groups in Mozambique during 1975-2017.

	Group name	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
■	Tsonga-Chopi	166 544	Regionally based
■	Shona-Ndau	91 764	Regionally based
■	Makonde-Yao	10 640	Regionally based

Table 220: List of ethnic groups in Mozambique during 1975-2017.

## *Conflicts in Mozambique*

*Starting on 1964-11-18*

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Portugal	Frelimo		1964-11-18			

*Starting on 1977-12-30*

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Mozambique	Renamo	Shona-Ndau	1977-12-30	No	No	No