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MACUPULANE REVISITED: CERAMIC PRODUCTION FIFTY YEARS  
AFTER MARGOT DIAS

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**ABSTRACT:** Ethnographic projects, produced in the context of colonial ethnography and anthropology and presenting communities as unchangeable and living in an eternal present; these ethnographies have been used in the creation of archaeological interpretative models. This article reexamines Margot Dias’s research in Macupulane (district of Manjacaze, province of Gaza) and addresses the need for historically informed ethnographic and ethnoarchaeological research. The aim of this article is to discuss the need to account for change when formulating ethnoarchaeological investigation by reviewing the changes that have occurred in Macupulane’s ceramic production since 1959. While in the past potting was an activity practiced exclusively by women, today it is dominated by men who use the wheel to produce vessels in large quantities, aiming to supply regional markets. Historically situated factors and events, such as Portuguese colonialism and the Mozambican civil war, deeply transformed local social relations of production. By combining a diachronic (historic) perspective and short term ethnographic observation we can more readily contribute to long-term archaeological research. Historically informed ethnoarchaeology addresses change, rather than focusing on synchronic models that continue to present non-western populations as living in an eternal present.

**SUMÁRIO:** Em 1959, Margot Dias levou a cabo um pequeno projecto etnográfico em Macupulane (distrito de Manjacaze, província de Gaza) no sul de Moçambique, sobre “aspectos técnicos da olaria dos Chopes” (Dias, 1960). Projectos semelhantes de etnografia e antropologia, realizados em contextos coloniais, apresentam sociedades sob domínio colonial como vivendo num eterno presente, sem que as suas vidas sofressem

o impacto de acontecimentos históricos. Investigação semelhante à de M. Dias tem sido utilizada para a criação de modelos interpretativos de material arqueológico. O objectivo deste artigo é discutir a necessidade de trabalho etnográfico que tenha em atenção o contexto histórico em que as actividades tenham tido lugar e as mudanças ocorridas no passado recente. O projecto sobre produção cerâmica em Macupulane mostra como factores históricos (por exemplo, as consequências do colonialismo português e da guerra civil) tiveram um impacto profundo no sistema de produção cerâmica desde 1959. De actividade exclusivamente feminina passou, com a introdução da roda de oleiro, a ser dominada por homens que fabricam recipientes em quantidade com vista a fornecer mercados regionais. A combinação de uma perspectiva diacrónica (histórica) e da observação etnográfica efectuada num tempo curto contribui mais eficazmente para a investigação arqueológica do que a realizada somente num tempo longo. Uma etnoarqueologia enformada por uma perspectiva histórica investiga questões de mudança não se baseando em modelos sincrónicos que continuam a apresentar populações não-ocidentais como vivendo num eterno presente.

# MACUPULANE REVISITED: CERAMIC PRODUCTION FIFTY YEARS AFTER MARGOT DIAS

## Introduction

In 1959, Margot Dias visited Macupulane, a village located in Southern Mozambique. The visit resulted in the publication of the article *Aspectos técnicos e sociais da olaria dos Chopes* (Dias, 1960), addressing technical and socio-economic aspects of local production of ceramic vessels. In 2005, I visited the same village, and had the opportunity to assess social and technical changes that have occurred in ceramic production since 1959. It soon became evident that production and distribution strategies had changed dramatically in the last 47 years, affected by colonial policies and the civil war. Instead of being a women's craft, ceramic production is now dominated by men who manufacture an array of vessels using the potter's wheel, and monopolize the means of production, namely through the construction of kilns, thereby transforming a household women's activity into a small enterprise.

This article explores the need for historically informed ethnoarchaeological studies of ceramic production seeking to contribute to the interpretation of archaeological evidence. A focus on a diachronic, ethnoarchaeological study of ceramic technology and organization of production provides the opportunity to address the dialectic relationship between past and present, and to explore the socio-political factors that influenced local potters and their response to supra-regional factors and events. This historically-informed study of Macupulane ceramics warns against simplistic comparisons between ethnographic information and archaeological data, based only on short-term synchronic studies. Despite the relevance of ethnographic research to the interpretation of archaeological data, it requires careful analysis and questioning of eth-



noarchaeological analogy and simple generalizations that do not take into account change in production systems, as well as change in the historic context in which production is located.

### Colonial ethnography and archaeology

Archaeologists often use ethnographic information to interpret remains of past societies. Increasingly archaeologists conduct their own ethnoarchaeological research; however, ethnographic information, collected throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, still has its appeal in constructing analogical models. African ethnographic information has been used (and abused) for archaeological interpretation. Archaeologists have often failed to question how anthropologists, and particularly colonial ethnographers, conceptualized the societies they studied (e.g., Huffman, 1996).

Colonial ethnographies and ethnographers perceived societies within an evolutionary model that chronologically removed non-western communities from the present in the process of transforming them into an “exotic other.” M. Dias’s work, developed in a colonial context in which detailed knowledge of dominated communities would facilitate colonial administration (Stocking, 1991: 4), stressed “traditional, native cultures,” often termed “primitive,” (e.g., Dias, 1964; Schofield, 1948). The perception of “primitive otherness” carries with it concepts of dominant power and the justification for subjugation of “primitive cultures” to representatives of the European “civilization” (Stocking, 1991; Asad, 1973, 1991). Dias’s 1959 research, integrated into the *Missão de Estudos das Minorias Étnicas do Ultramar Português* (Mission for the Study of Ethnic Minorities in the Portuguese Colonies), led by her husband, J. Dias, and with the participation of M. Viegas Guerreiro (Dias, Guerreiro, Dias, 1960), was informed by the colonial need to classify and describe people in cultural and physical terms. The lack of historical depth denotes her timeless approach to the production of material culture (e.g., basket making and ceramic production in Gaza [Dias, 1960, 1968]) and it carried the message that these primitive populations would certainly be improved by their subjugation to colonial powers.

The “living primitives,” with timeless lives and assuming a cultural continuity between past and present, have provided a plethora of

analogues for past European/ Western societies' lifeways. Critiques of colonial anthropological frameworks and practices (e.g., Asad, 1973, 1991: 316; Marcus and Fisher, 1986) have questioned the continuity between past and present and thus affected the use of simplistic analogies and generalizations by archaeologists. The need for a diachronic dialogue within ethnography and an archaeologically oriented ethnography resulted in a re-evaluation of old ethnographies, positioning "peoples without history" (Wolf, 1982) within historical time and space. New theoretical approaches and interpretative strategies question the assumed cultural continuities between past and present African societies, and emphasize the historically and contextually specific nature of ethnoarchaeological studies. As a consequence, colonial-era ethnographic research, if it is to be of use to archaeological research, needs to be contextualized and given an historic dimension.

A challenge for archaeology is the development of theoretical models and methodological practices that present a holistic perspective, by using multiple lines of evidence and considering the historic context (mainly how circumstances of production may have changed in the recent past). Ethnographic analogy has been mostly an illustrative device to animate archaeological remains, or to develop uniformitarian models of human behavior, regardless of the geographic and chronological distance between the ethnographic and the archaeological data (Stahl, 2001: 19-40). Ethnographic studies tell us about today's production, trade and use of ceramics in the Philippines (Longacre and Skibo, 1994; Skibo, 1992), the Andes (Arnold, 1985, 1993) or India (Kramer, 1997), and how similar ecological constraints affected production and distribution of material culture in the past. Yet these studies omit change (for example due to historical events) and how it may have affected the specific context of ceramic production. A well-known case study is the project by Longacre and his team in the Philippines. While their ethnoarchaeological research is geared towards an understanding of ceramic production and distribution they fail to contextualize it in the historic occurrences, namely political upheaval in the Philippines that had a profound impact on how populations make, sell and transport ceramics. Does this mean that ethnoarchaeological research is condemned to the present and recent past, and cannot be used to understand archaeological material? Does it mean archaeologists cannot use technologically-oriented ethnographic research, such as M. Dias's investigations in Mozambique? Is this type of ethnography and ethnoarchaeology useful only to clarify

techniques used by past populations? Or is it only useful as a cautionary tale against the pitfalls of generalizations and simple analogies?

Among the questions that have been addressed by ethnoarchaeology (Costin, 2000: 378), means of production and technology have played a major role in ceramic studies. Archaeologists have predominantly focused on the variability in choice of raw materials, technology, access to tools and labor organization in order to make inferences about ceramic production in past contexts. Although archaeologists tend to develop their own ethnoarchaeological projects, articles such as the one by M. Dias have often been used as baselines for archaeological comparison. The stress on the ethnographic present, or on the recent past often treated as present, disregards historic change in the production of material culture. Macupulane's case study illustrates how recent political-economic factors promoted change in the local system of ceramic production. The re-evaluation of M. Dias's work draws attention to the need for historically informed ethnoarchaeology documenting changes in the social context of ceramic production, consumption and distribution. Revisiting colonial ethnographies in a post-colonial context draws attention to ideological attitudes informing seemingly innocuous technological studies, and brings to the discussion the need to recover an historic dimension for old ethnographies.

### Geographic and historic context

Macupulane is located in the Manjacaze district (Southern region of the Gaza Province), c. 30 km from the coast (Lat. 24.° 48'31" S, 33.° 59'10" E; Est. I). The region is characterized by rolling wooded hills (112m of elevation) with sandy soils, and sporadic lowland marshes and flood plains along the tributaries of the Limpopo River. The climate in the interior tends towards dryness with average annual precipitation between 600 and 700 millimeters.

Following Mozambique's independence in 1975, the violent civil war, particularly the period between 1983 and 1992, resulted in population movements. After the war most people returned to their villages and *machambas*,<sup>1</sup> but the area is still sparsely populated. The cores of villages and towns are more densely populated, comprising stores and

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<sup>1</sup> Plots of land for household agricultural production.

administrative buildings, but in general the “villages” are characterized by family compounds (*munti* [sing., XiTsonga]) located hundreds of meters from each other (Fot. 1). Each *munti* is composed of several huts – their number depending on how large the family is, especially how many wives and sons a man has.<sup>2</sup> Both the Portuguese colonial administration and the post-independence government attempted to concentrate populations in villages; however, most people still live dispersed in compounds, surrounded by *machambas*. Land is state property and individuals can only acquire usage rights. Under recent legislation<sup>3</sup> local communities can claim community title to the land through long-term occupancy based on the oral traditions of community members. The economy in the Manjacaze district is based on rainfed crop farming for household consumption (e.g., cassava and maize), cash crops (primarily cashew nuts), livestock breeding, fishing, petty trade, craftwork and migrant labor to neighboring South Africa.

The population in Macupulane is both Shangaan and Chopi and speaks XiTsonga (Shangaan) and Tschopi. Dias’s article presents the population as exclusively Chopi, without reference to the intermix of ethnic groups in the area, already in place when she did her fieldwork. Although it is possible that due to the civil war, the populations’ displacement resulted in a more mixed population than in the past, it appears from ethnographic research (Cruz, 2006) that Dias overlooked the region’s ethnic complexity in 1959. Her approach was in line with colonial ethnographic research (Lane, 2005; Kuper, 1983), in which colonized populations were neatly organized into categories and located in well-bounded regions (see for example Murdock, 1959). However, the African ethnic reality is very different and populations with different ethnic affiliations often share villages, such as in Macupulane, administrative units and productive activities (Cruz, 2003; Stahl, 2001).

Manjacaze and its surroundings had a central role in the history of Mozambique at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. “Manjacaze” (or Mandhlakaze) was the name given to the Gaza empire capitals, and the “Manjacaze” (town-center of the district with the same name referred to in this study) was Ngungunyane’s capital. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, socio-economic and political changes in neighboring Southern African regions had led to the emergence of the Zulu kingdom and to the *Mfecane/Difa-*

<sup>2</sup> In the past, when a son married he would build a hut in his father’s *munti*.

<sup>3</sup> (Law n.º 19/97; Chilundo, Cau n.d.: 5).

*qane* (i.e., 19<sup>th</sup> century wars and population movements [Hamilton 1995]) that resulted in the emergence of centralized and militaristic states controlling vast regions. In Southern Mozambique, the Gaza Nguni immigrants threatened the tenuous Portuguese hold on Delagoa Bay (today's Maputo) before moving north to conquer smaller chiefdoms and forge a powerful, centralized state (Isaacman and Isaacman, 1983: 18).

The Gaza state provided stability for populations to settle and the revival of trade in ivory and imported goods. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, European attempts to dominate and control central Africa led to the expansion of the Portuguese colonial frontiers, incompatible with the existence of the imposing Gaza state, the only independent African monarchy in Southern Africa after 1893 (Newitt, 1995: 375). In 1895, the Portuguese troops defeated the Gaza armies at Coolela, burned Manjacaze and Mouzinho de Albuquerque captured Ngungunyane in Chaimite, who was sent into exile to Azores. It was the beginning of the disintegration of the Gaza state which ceased to exist in 1897 after the death of Maguiguane (Newitt, 1995: 378).

Portuguese colonial domination in Mozambique was broadly characterized by: the recruitment of labor for agricultural production (e.g., sugar plantations), to the South African mines, to Rhodesia and to São Tomé (Nascimento, 2002; Penvenne, 1995; Serra, 2000); by forced plantation of specific crops (e.g., cotton; Isaacman 1996); and taxation in the form of labor, currency and goods. Economic and social policies, which evolved throughout the period of colonial administration, had a profound impact in the daily lives of local populations, particularly as a result of labor recruitment in rural districts and its consequent movement of populations both to urban areas and to South Africa.

### **Ceramic Production in Macupulane: a diachronic perspective**

In 1959, only women were potters in Macupulane. They made a variety of vessels used for cooking, storing and carrying water, grinding and washing (Dias, 1960: 783). In her article, Margot Dias (Dias, 1960, 1964) describes in detail how vessels were manufactured. A pot's base was molded inside an old vessel with upward movements to thin a clay ball. Once the base was molded, the potters built the body by adding coils of clay in a spiral that were then thinned out to make the walls.

The vessels, walls were thinned and smoothed using a corn cob and the outside shell of the fruit of the *ndonzo* tree (Dias, 1960: 781). Since Macupulane was the only ceramic producing center within a radius of c. 50 km, the pots were sold locally, or head loaded and carried by women to towns as far away as Xai-Xai (Dias, 1960: 780).

Today, Macupulane is still a village with dispersed *munti* with thatch-roofed huts made of reed and clay. In the village center, located along the dirt road connecting Chidenguele and the N1 road to Manjacaze, a few cement houses with porches and tiled or zinc roofs are witnesses of colonial times. From the road, travelers can often see kilns built on the outskirts of family compounds and men working at the wheel under a *mafureira* or a *tembeira*<sup>4</sup> (Fot. 2). Unlike in 1959, today men dominate ceramic production and monopolize the means of production (potter's wheel and kilns, as well as cars to transport the clay and wares). Men make most vessel forms and dominate the production of *alguidares* (the wide diameter basin used to wash and grind corn (Fot. 3). The only exception is the *mpanda*<sup>5</sup> – a large vessel used mostly to make cashew and *massala* hard liquor (*tontonto*) – which is still handmade by women in the compound courtyard. In Macupulane there are three distinct groups of people involved in ceramic production: 1. small-scale, male entrepreneurs who invest substantial amounts of money in acquiring means of production, and who do not necessarily know how to make the pots; 2) male potters, usually employed by entrepreneurs, and who use the wheel; and 3) female potters who make the large vessels by hand. Female potters tend to work independently, making large pots for themselves or, on commission, for entrepreneurs. Women are often capable of mobilizing other women's labor to help in the manufacture of *mpanda*, and they own the pots they make or have made (see below). But unlike male entrepreneurs, woman do not invest who invest large sums of money in acquiring wheels and kilns.

The wheel and the kiln were first introduced into the area in 1967 by Lucindo Alves de Sousa, a Portuguese *cantineiro* (shop owner). He brought a wheel to Macupulane, hired men to learn how to use it and started producing vessel forms that until then were the province of women. While in the past women fired their ceramics on an open fire (Dias, 1960: 782), today the ceramics are fired in kilns. A woman may

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<sup>4</sup> *Mafureira* and *tembeira* are two types of trees.

<sup>5</sup> *Mpanda* (sing..., XiTsonga) or *chungwa* (sing., Tschopi).

fire large pots in an open fire if she is not related to someone who owns a kiln,<sup>6</sup> or if she does not have enough pots to fill the kiln.

The compound where I observed ceramic manufacture had a wheel, a kiln and a reed hut to store vessels while they were drying and waiting to be fired. All belong to a young man who worked for 12 years in the South African mines and invested part of his savings in a small potting enterprise. The potting workshop is located in his mother's compound in Macupulane<sup>7</sup> and he employs an old man to operate the wheel and to manufacture diverse types of vessels in large quantities. The entrepreneur's mother makes large pots (*mpanda*) for him, on commission; she also makes them for herself, to sell locally as a complement to her farming activities. In addition to pots, this entrepreneur produces clay bricks, which, due to rural economic difficulties, are not in demand.

As in the past, today's potters obtain their clay from the flood plain northeast of Macupulane. Those who dig clay on a regular basis have to pay a tax to local authorities for permission to dig in the plains. The clay is dug from large pits and brought to the village by entrepreneurs who own cars. They supply their own workshops as well as the women who make the large pots, particularly if they are relatives. Potters and entrepreneurs' employees can dig the clay and headload it to the compounds; this transportation method is not favored since the clay pits are located some kilometers from the village. The clay is then stored in the compound until it is needed.

Women's production of large vessels is a household activity and a complement to farming income. One of my informants learned how to make pots as an adult in 1982, while another informant learned as a young woman. Both learned from female relatives (grandmother and older sisters) and with friends; they recounted that they had learned "*para fazer face às dificuldades da vida*."<sup>8</sup> The large pots made by women can belong to the potter herself or to a woman who is able to mobilize potters. The manufacturing process I observed took place at

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<sup>6</sup> It was difficult to obtain information about monetary payments for services (e.g., help to make pots and firing); yet there seemed to be the implication that some women may have to pay non-relatives to fire the pots.

<sup>7</sup> The explanation given for the workshop being located at the mother's compound instead of in his own was because his house was not in Macupulane and this is the village where people make pots.

<sup>8</sup> To help overcome life's hardships.



the compound belonging to a woman who knows how to make pots, but who “was not strong enough to make them.” She mobilized two potters, who worked for her on different days, and a young girl who prepared the clay. The women who make the pots usually have obligations towards the owners of the pots.<sup>9</sup> The young girl (c. 14 years old), an orphan, did not live in the compound, but worked as an apprentice in exchange for food.

The pots are made in the compound courtyard, under a shed built for the occasion. The shed protects the women from the sun during the vessels’ manufacture; in addition, it protects the vessels from the intense heat, preventing shrinkage and fissures. Women’s manufacture does not occur in the workshop space where the male potter works with the wheel. Instead, the women use a space closer to the living huts. The clay is pounded and mixed with water; wasters and broken pots are finely ground, sieved into the clay and used as temper. The grog is mixed with the wet clay, well kneaded and formed into large balls before being shaped into thick coils.

The potter places the first lump of clay inside an old *alguidar* half filled with sand covered with a cloth. The *alguidar* functions as the mold for the new vessel’s base and the cloth allows easy transportation after the vessel is finished. The potter sits on the floor and starts pinching and punching a large lump of clay; she draws the clay up and occasionally turns the mold slowly to work equally in all the sides of the base (Fot. 4). Once the base and the lower body (c. 1/5 to 1/4 of the vessel) is formed, the potter changes the manufacturing technique and starts making coils that she adds in a spiral while walking around the vessel. The coils are thick and usually shorter than the circumference of the pot’s segment she is working on. Coils are applied one at a time, drawn up and thinned using a corn cob. The potter holds the vessel wall with her hand inside the pot while shaping and smoothing it on the outside (Fot. 5). Once the segment she is working on has acquired the desired shape, another coil is added. The process is repeated until the potter reaches the shoulder level. During the manufacture of the body and when the pot is tall enough, the potter ties a cloth closer to the base

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<sup>9</sup> Once again was difficult to obtain information whether the potters could be paid in currency. My informant (the owner of the pots) told me that women help each other; however, the conversation seemed to imply that at times payment in currency may be involved.



to prevent the heavy and wet clay from collapsing (Fot. 8, pot in the background). The shoulder and rim are shaped using coils and the corn cob; the lip is smoothed with a wet cloth or a leaf (Fot. 6). The exterior of the pot is finished by scraping and smoothing it with a corn cob, a half fruit pod and a wet cloth. No decoration, paint or slip is applied. Once the vessel is finished it is carried from the mold using the cloth that was lining the *alguidar* (Fot. 8), lain in a cavity dug into the sand, and let dry on the shade, wrapped in a cloth, for a few hours before being moved to a storage hut. The hole in the sand is deeper than the mold to support the vessel's lower body.

A large pot takes about 45 minutes to manufacture, and a potter can make four or five during one morning. Potters start working early in the morning; they do not work in the afternoon to avoid the heat that can dry the pots rapidly and create cracks on the walls. After four or five pots are made and partially dried, they are transported to a dark and cool storage hut where they are left to dry for about 6 days, before being brought out to finish the base. Although molded inside a half hemispheric *alguidar*, the base is not regular and needs to be thinned and rounded. The base is finished by turning the pot upside down and the base is then scraped with a knife. This operation is done when the pot is dry enough to stand on its rim, but the clay is still malleable to permit cutting and scrapping. A thin layer of fresh clay is added to make the base smooth, and a final touch is given by the old man who operates the wheel by using a thin wire or thin saw blade to make the base completely round. After the base is finished, the pots, once again, are left to dry in the shade for 5-6 weeks, or longer, before firing.

Today, pots can still be fired on an open fire, but more often they are fired in a kiln belonging to a local entrepreneur who may be related to the pots' owner. A kiln can accommodate about 10 handmade pots. Smaller numbers of large pots (from one to four) can be fired on an open fire. The pots, fired in an updraft kiln<sup>10</sup> with oxidizing environment (Fot. 7), are bright orange and present an homogeneous color, while pots fired on an open fire are reddish with grey patches. M. Dias

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<sup>10</sup> The kiln is rectangular and has a lower chamber (firebox) with an opening to the exterior through which the kiln is fed. The firing chamber sets on an arch and has a series of small openings between the firebox and the firing chamber to allow the heat to circulate. The heat and gases escape through a chimney covered with an *alguidar* to prevent rain water from entering.

states that in 1959 pots used to store water were finished with a red slip made with soil obtained near Inhambane. Today, the red slip is not used, yet the pots still have the same reddish coloring desired by the population.

The manufacture of large pots is still a household activity, though it involves cooperation across households and, within the household, between the compound owner and her son's employee. Ceramic production in Macupulane is now an entrepreneurial activity: men who had migrated to the South African mines, use their savings to start small business in ceramic production, investing in a wheel, building a kiln and hiring one or two men to operate the wheel and manufacture the vessels. In addition to pots (mostly *alguidares* [basins], *panelas* [small cooking pots] and flower pots), they make *tijolos* (clay bricks). The use of the wheel has simplified ceramic production and increased the quantity of vessels produced since an *alguidar* takes less than 10 minutes to make with the wheel. As in many other villages throughout the African continent (Cruz, 2003), metal containers have replaced the clay containers used to cook, and plastic basins and buckets replaced those used to wash. Nevertheless, the demand for *alguidares* is high as they are widely used to grind. In order to increase appeal and expand to new markets, producers started manufacturing new vessel types (for example, decorative flower pots consumed mainly by urban populations) and also started experimenting with new forms. One of my informants was experimenting in emulating glass and china forms, such as pitchers and tea cups in the hope that local populations would buy them as an alternative to industrial goods available in local markets. The men who work with the wheel are also decorating their pots with new techniques and motifs (e.g., combed waving lines on the exterior of *alguidares* and incisions on small pots).

Although the firing time is longer with a kiln (about 24 hours or more from starting the fire until the opening and unloading of the kiln) than with the open fire, the kiln decreases the amount of work needed to fire a large number of vessels. One kiln can fire about 70 *alguidares* at once and with the wheel it has ensued a large increase in production. The kiln is built with bricks which are easily made with local raw materials and which do not require specialized skills. Nevertheless, its construction represents a considerable cash investment not available to all.

The pots made in Macupulane are sold locally, in markets, or in the village by the side of the road and in the *Cooperativa*. Whenever possi-

ble they are sent to regional markets in Inhambane, Xai-Xai and Maputo. The lack of motorized transport is seen as the main hindrance to the expansion and profitability of the potting business. Public transportation (*chapa* [mini-vans] and the *machibombo* [old buses]) is used primarily for people and their belongings, and not to transport large quantities of wares. Local entrepreneurs may have their own old, small pick-up trucks, frequently brought from South Africa<sup>11</sup> and often found parked in the yard, in need of major repairs. Difficulty in obtaining car parts and their high cost make it almost impossible for people in rural areas to keep functioning vehicles. According to the entrepreneurs, absence of regular transportation greatly affects production because: 1) it is difficult to obtain clay in quantity needed for the production of vessels in large numbers and geared towards regional and supra-regional markets; 2) it is almost impossible to obtain the salt required to glaze some wares<sup>12</sup>; and 3) entrepreneurs cannot sell the pots to the larger markets (such as Maputo), where they would be able to sell them for higher prices, thus increasing their profits. Lack of adequate transportation is understood as the major constraint to any increase in ceramic production, keeping it as a small-scale enterprise mostly for local markets where prices are lower and the consumers fewer.

Small local entrepreneurs have unsuccessfully tried producing bricks as another economic venue. Though everybody aspires to a house made of bricks and cement, only a few can afford to build one. Bricks are made with clay collected in ant hills (thus obtained closer to the village than the clay to make pots), and are expeditiously produced with a small wooden mold that can be re-used right after each brick is formed. The bricks can be fired in a kiln, but usually they are air-dried in the sun. Although bricks are easily manufactured and not too expensive, cement has to be brought from the city, which makes it rare and expensive. Thus

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<sup>11</sup> Almost all the cars, vans and small pick up trucks circulating in the Manjacaze district have South African licence plates. They are very old models, often stolen in South Africa and smuggled to Mozambique.

<sup>12</sup> When I was in Macupulane salt was not available at all and I did not see glazed wares. My informants explained that consumers like glazed vessels (small pots, flower pots and even some *alguidares*). One of the kilns visited yielded a large quantity of vitrified sherds from broken pots and from the kiln's interior. The salt is thrown inside the kiln when the pots are fired and still very hot. The result is a bluish-green thick and irregular glaze.

populations are still using mainly reed, obtained at the lower lands near the rivers, for the walls and thatch for the roof. Cement houses are rare and reminiscent of colonial times or a sign that the owner has worked on the Rand.

Potters and consumers of ceramic vessels in Macupulane and in the Manjacaze district are social actors, interacting with ongoing cultural and historical processes. When analyzing material culture we cannot look at technology as a discrete aspect or a different social dimension of artifacts. To do so would be to miss the social and historic context of manufacture, trade and use of commodities. Production, consumption and use of any type of material culture are an extended series of inter-related actions (operational choices, to use a more dynamic term; Dietler and Herbich, 1998: 238) taking place within an historical context. To be able to understand the interface of processes, happening at different scales of time and space and affecting mundane activities, such as ceramic production, we have to view the manufacture and consumption of material culture as the result of a range of population responses to broader phenomena. By approaching ceramic studies from a diachronic, historical context we can understand change and its impact on activities so often perceived as timeless. Considering the changes that have occurred in ceramic production in Macupulane during the period between Margot Dias's research and my own (i.e., circa 50 years), we need to ask how much change would have occurred prior to Dias's investigation. A main outcome of historically informed ethnoarchaeological research and of the re-evaluation of colonial ethnographies is to bring to the forefront the centrality of change. Furthermore, we need to support, with well-researched evidence, the occurrence of continuities instead of assuming them.

## Conclusion

Ethnoarchaeology has been a methodological tool to ascertain technological aspects of material culture manufacture. Studies framed by 1960s and 1970s evolutionary assumptions try to assess past behavior without taking into account recent historic changes that affected the patterns being studied. Studies have seldom questioned the notion that "traditional" societies are timeless and their lifestyles are immutable; thus our mapping-on of the ethnographic present into the past may be a

risky extrapolation of facts. In recent years, archaeologists have become more sensitive to historic change, even among “traditional” groups. As a result, ethnoarchaeological studies have been critically analyzed (Cruz, 2003; Stahl, 1991, 1994, 2001; Wylie, 1985, 1988) and new theoretical and methodological contexts have been suggested.

Production and consumption of material goods has been a major theme addressed by ethnoarchaeological studies. Technological and environmental issues affecting production have been addressed by archaeologists who, for example, study ceramic production, distribution and use. The choice of “pristine,” unchangeable communities has been a major concern for those interested in how ceramics are manufactured. Archaeologists are now paying attention to changes due to shifts in consumption, access to new products and how models based on a changing ethnographic present may affect the conclusions about the past (cf. Barros, 2001; Miller, 1998). Nevertheless, static and synchronic ethnographic studies have been valuable from a technological perspective: we learned how people make pots and stone tools, how hunters divide meat, and the evidence we should look for when trying to understand how pots were used in the past or how meat was butchered. But how can we assess change in taste and consumption patterns using the conjunction of ethnohistoric and ethnoarchaeological evidence?

The recent changes in ceramic production observed in Macupulane can be attributed to the introduction of the kiln and the potting wheel by colonial administrators and settlers. Yet change is not only a consequence of colonial contact. Populations in Macupulane have been producing ceramics for a long time and seemingly production has been affected by local and supra-regional events, as well as by changes in taste, consumption patterns and access to new goods before the contact period. Colonial ethnographic research, such as the study by M. Dias, provides us with a window in time; however, this research needs to be considered within the context of colonial production of knowledge and it has to be presented from a diachronic (historically informed) perspective. The ethnographic and ethnoarchaeological research on ceramic production in Macupulane needs to be complemented with historic research (e.g., earlier colonial documents may give insights into local economy), as well as archaeological investigation that can tell us about changes within the community. The question remains: what were the changes in production prior to 1959? Was ceramic production taking place locally in earlier periods? What could have been the consequen-

ces of political instability? And how did consumers taste affect production? Observations drawn from ethnography to understand archaeological material and to create interpretative models will always be used. We have to accept that archaeological interpretation is based on analogical reasoning. Yet questions such as those asked above take ethnoarchaeological research beyond the simple issue of linking present and past, particularly it takes us beyond assuming their continuity. Some continuities and similarities between present and past may exist, but they need to be investigated instead of simply assumed.

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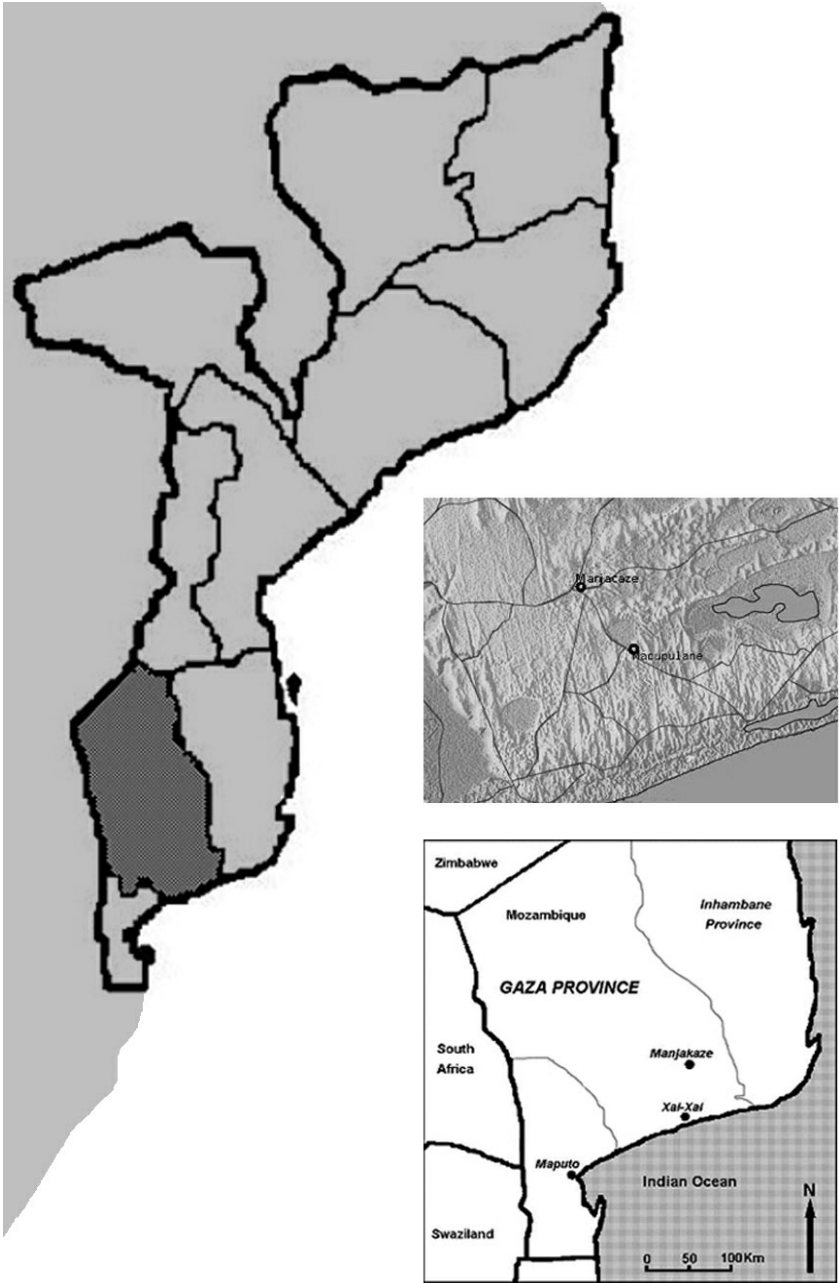
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*Location of Manjakaze and Macupulane*



Foto 1 – Munti (*Macupulane*)





FOTO 2 – Man making an alguidar



FOTO 3 – Women grinding corn in an alguidar



FOTO 4 – Potter working on the base of a large vessel





FOTO 5 – Potter smoothing the body of a vessel



FOTO 6 – Smoothing the lip of a vessel



Foto 7 – Kiln after firing alguidares



Foto 8 – Carrying a finished pot