

Angoche: An important link of the Zambezian gold trade

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‘Of the Moors of Angoya, they are as they were: they ruin the whole trade of Sofala.’
Excerpt from a letter from Duarte de Lemos to the King of Portugal, dated the 30th of
September, 1508 (Theal 1964, Vol. I, p. 73).

Introduction

During the last decade or so a significant amount of archaeological research has been devoted to the study of early urbanism along the east African coast. In much, this recent work has depended quite clearly upon the ground-breaking fieldwork conducted by James Kirkman and Neville Chittick in Kenya and Tanzania during the 1950’s and 1960’s. Notwithstanding the inevitable and, at times, fairly apparent shortcomings of their work and their basic theoretical explanatory frameworks, it has provided a platform for further detailed studies and rendered a wide flora of approaches to the interpretation of the source materials in recent studies. In Mozambique, however, recent archaeological research has not benefited from such a relatively strong national tradition of research attention. The numerous early coastal settlements lining the maritime boundaries of the nation have, in a very limited number, been the target of specialized archaeological fieldwork and analysis only for two decades. The most important consequence has been that research directed towards thematically formulated archaeological questions has had to await the gathering of basic information through field surveys and recording of existing sites as well as the construction and perpetual analysis and refinement of basic chronostratigraphic sequences. Furthermore, the lack of funding, equipment and personnel – coupled with the geographical preferentials of those actually active – has resulted in a yet quite fragmented archaeological database of early urbanism in the country. The most detailed work as yet has been carried out at Chibuene, Inhambane Province, in the south of the country (Sinclair 1982; Sinclair 1987), while a number of other important sites are known, particularly in the area north of Ilha de Mozambique, in Nampula and Cabo Delgado Provinces (Duarte 1993).

It has thus become quite clear that there is a strong need for further studies filling the geographical gaps in our knowledge of the prehistoric and early historic cultural landscape of

the coast. Furthermore, the employment of a variety of approaches, that satisfies the need of an archaeological site heritage record with a coverage building up from the district level to the provincial and national levels in one end, as well as ties in with current topical issues discussed in the scientific community of the region at large in the other, would be an ideal step to take in the near future.

During the last few years, an increasing amount of high-quality archaeological research has been conducted in northeastern Zimbabwe (e.g. Pikirayi 1993; Pwiti 1996), supplementing and advancing on previous historical work on the development of states and transregional trade in the area (e.g. Beach 1980; Mudenge 1988). The product has been quite a detailed map of stratigraphically known sites, their political landscape, the resources at hand and the subsistence strategies employed, while the element of production and trade in gold has attracted particular attention (Swan 1994). Unfortunately, the coastal link of the transregional trade in gold has often been discussed in a rather careless fashion where either Sofala in the south or Ilha de Mozambique in the north have habitually been laid down as ports of shipment. However, there are indeed exceptions as trade routes and the nature of trade has been studied by a few researchers (e.g. Barradas 1967; Balsan 1970; Sinclair 1985a; Duarte 1993). Yet, as we now have gained a more detailed picture of the trade at the production end and further formulated specific research interests there, it has become increasingly relevant to study other areas affected by the handling of gold products in more detail and identify further centres of action in the social, economical and political landscape of that context.

The significance of Angoche in transregional trade: the historical evidence

The development of trade in the fifteenth and sixteenth century

In a number of publications, the historian M. Newitt has observed the importance of Angoche in the economical and political arenas of the southeast African coast during the sixteenth century (Newitt 1972; Newitt 1978; Newitt 1995).

According to historical traditions recorded at the turn of the century, Angoche was founded by a group of noblemen seeking refuge from the sultan of Kilwa in the middle of the fifteenth century (Lupi 1907). However, the foundation of the town could not just have been the result of factional strife within the ruling classes of Kilwa. I find it pretty hard to believe that the nobelities of Kilwa settled in an uninhabited area, but that they rather fled to an existing settlement, probably already of a quite a significant nature. There is thus reason to believe that Angoche is of a greater (but as yet unknown) antiquity than generally thought. May I therefore suggest that the supposed date of the genealogical association with Kilwa marks a time when the settlement started to play a substantial role in regional politics and economics. The links to Kilwa were, nevertheless, strong. At the end of the fifteenth century, 'the Moors of Sofala, and Zuama [the Zambezi river], and Angoux, and Mozambique, were all under obedience to the King of Quiloa, who was a great king amongst them' (Barbosa 1995, p. 11).

Newitt argues that the main reason for the evolving prominence of Angoche was a major reorientation of the gold trade of southcentral Africa at the end of the fifteenth century (Newitt 1995, p. 10), represented by the shift in political and economical control of the Zimbabwe plateau/Zambezi escarpment area, from the Great Zimbabwe complex to the Mutapa state by Karanga – i.e. Shona– dynasties (Mudenge 1988, pp. 21–2; Pikirayi 1993, pp. 198–190; Newitt 1995, p. 37). During the latter half of the century mining activity had increased and new gold fairs had come into existence in the northern part of the area. Sofala did not provide good access to this region which was more easily reached from centres further north travelling up the Zambezi. As a result, Quelimane grew in importance as the close port with the safest access to the Zambezi. The attractions of Angoche, situated among low-lying mangrove-covered islands to the north, has been more difficult to determine, but Newitt suggests that there may have been an overland route from the Zambezi which had Angoche as its terminus (Newitt 1995, pp. 10–11), as is indicated by an early sixteenth century Portuguese account (Barbosa 1995, p. 9).

The reorientation of the trade from Sofala to Angoche appears not to have been permanent or representing a sudden break but rather a period of competition, for in 1506 Diogo de Alcacova (who was sent to Sofala – he never visited Angoche – by the king of Portugal to find out about the gold trade, to learn how and where the gold was obtained and how it was taken out of the interior) reported that the gold ‘does not go out through any other part, except through Sofala, and something through Angoya, but not much; I was told that through Angoya about fifty thousand meticals of gold came every year’ (Theal 1964, Vol. I, p. 66). That figure is to be contrasted with the more than a million meticais of gold that was reportedly taken out through Sofala at the same time. However, perhaps one should be cautious with accepting de Alcacova’s information at face value. As the Portuguese had the intention to take control of the trade, he may have been given misleading information.

The arrival of the Portuguese to the east African coast coincided with the northward change in direction of the trade, and by 1513 their activity in the Indian Ocean was increasingly marked by the forcible imposition of monopoly and political control. With armed ships as a strong instrument of force, rival centres of international commerce in the east African region were frequently destroyed. However forceful the canons, a general political and economical control was difficult to impose. By 1511, the Portuguese had come to realise that Angoche was the centre of clandestine trade, principally with cloth, and an armed expedition of 1200 men sacked the town. No military garrison was set up though and a year later the clandestine trade was again in effect (Newitt 1972, p. 401; Newitt 1995, pp. 20–2).

The cloth, originating from the Indian sub-continent, seems to have reached Angoche on vessels coming from a variety of places. An isolated source indicate that the goods were not redistributed in centres on the east African coast, but were being brought to Angoche on ships originally sailing from Cambaya (da Silva Rego & Baxter 1963, p. 179). However, most

sources mention Malindi as the port of origin of the vessels (da Silva Rego & Baxter 1963, pp. 326–9, 381), but ships also came from Kilwa, Mombasa, Pate, Lamu, Mogadishu and Brava, where the ships from Cambaya touched every year and where the goods were reloaded on to smaller vessels (Theal 1964, Vol. III, p. 148; Barbosa 1995, p. 9). After reaching Angoche, the goods were principally aimed for trade with merchants of the interior. The trade is described in summaries of letters by António de Saldanha, captain of Sofala and Ilha de Mozambique, sent to the King of Portugal in 1511.

he [António de Saldanha] has learned that all the trade lies in Angoxe and that the merchandise is taken from here to Maena [the Zambezi] and he says that this Maena is a very great river and that they land a good 6 leagues upstream at the house of an honoured Kaffir, king of that land, and there pay his duties and that he gives them almadias [canoes] to take the cloth up-river. And [António de Saldanha has learned] that further up there is a narrow pass through which the almadias go after they have been unloaded by him and then they load again and go another 20 leagues or so, where there is a mountain they call Otonga, and there lies a large village where he says all the Kaffir and Moorish merchants of the land gather together and where they sell and set up their markets. And [António de Saldanha tells] that he will cut of this river and Angoxe otherwise there is no way of establishing trade and that he is working to this purpose as his duty to your service demands. ... he has learned that in the land of Monapotapa there are more than ten thousand Moors. (da Silva Rego & Baxter 1964, pp. 15–17)

Further details – and confusions – of the trade is revealed by an account by Duarte Barbosa.

In the mouth of this river [the Zambezi] there is a town of the Moors, which has a king, and it is called Mongalo. Much gold comes from Benamatapa to this town of the Moors, by this river, which makes another branch which falls at Angos, where the Moors make use of boats (*almadias*), which are boats hollowed out from a single trunk, to bring the cloths and other merchandise from Angos, and to transport much gold and ivory. (Barbosa 1995, pp. 8–9)

There is no river between Angoche and the Zambezi. Barbosa seems to have made a mix up of information about Angoche and Quelimane. However, the information may indicate that there did exist an overland route between the Zambezi and Angoche as mentioned above. At any rate, the importance of Angoche for the trade stands out clear.

The nature of the gold trade concentrated commercial activity at a small number of places. Gold was obtained in very small quantities and had first to be brought from many different points of production for sale at the inland fairs. From these it was brought, still in small quantities, to one or two coastal ports frequented by international merchants (Newitt 1995, p. 25). Some time after 1500, however, the trade in ivory, that did not seem to be of

major interest to Moslem traders but yet could largely utilize the same trade routs along the Zambezi as previously, seems to have gained in importance on the coast, and a Portuguese factor was for this purpose temporarily placed at Angoche. Furthermore, the Portuguese interest in ivory seems to have encouraged foundations of new settlements in the vicinity of Angoche: Moma to the south and Sangage and Mogincual close to the north (Newitt 1995, pp. 25–7, 185).

The town of Angoche during the sixteenth century

Angoche was situated on one of the islands in the estuary of the Mluli river, about 16° south and 40° east. The island has in modern times alternatively been referred to as Ilha de Coti, Ilha de Quilua and Ilha de Angoche and covers approximately 120 km². Today, the area is situated in the Angoche District of Nampula Province.

The northern Mozambican coast south of Ilha de Mozambique is largely characterized by its numerous rivers. Through the heavy rains, the rivers deposit silt from the highlands in the marshy estuaries, while stagnant lagoons lie behind the immediate shoreline. The heavy volume of fresh water discharge kills the coral – so abundant north of Ilha de Mozambique – but helps the formation of sandbars which are drawn out by the strong currents into spits and low sandy islands that are frequently covered with mangrove thickets (Newitt 1995, p. 10). In effect, the lack of coral stone material meant that building was done in pole and *dhaka* with roofs of thatch. Another important effect was that the waters close to the shoreline were difficult to navigate with deep sailing vessels. Plentyful are the reports in sixteenth century Portuguese records of ships being wrecked on the shoals. In 1512, a dramatic episode is retold

The nao Santa Antonio, captain Francisco Nogueira, was lost on the shoals of Angoche, where nearly all the crew died, and he, not knowing how to swim, stayed with his two sons on what was left of the nao and, on the ebb tide, the waters subsided so that he walked dry foot to one of the islands of Angoche where the Moors took him prisoner. (da Silva Rego & Baxter 1964, p. 179)

However, a Portuguese captain with the experience of the local conditions would be able to circumnavigate the shoals and find safe anchorage by the island (Theal 1964, Vol. II, p. 426). Thus, the natural features of the coast at Angoche offered an anchorage protected from the sea that also gave some shelter from unwarranted visitors. For the smaller and more shallow vessels of the coast, the shoals would cause no significant problem.

Any clear and detailed historical account of the physical outline and polity of the town at Angoche during the period of early European contact does not exist. Several brief descriptions, however, may form a provisional outline and a basis for further studies. In 1508, Duarte de Lemos lay anchor by ‘an island that lies at the mouth of the river Angoche’. He ordered out some men in the longboat in order to refill the fresh water supplies. ‘They went to the first village at the mouth of the river’, where they were greeted a kind reception by the

people (da Silva Rego & Baxter 1963, p. 285). Thus, there were several settlements on the island. In 1511, during the military hostilities between the Portuguese and Angoche, the Sultan of Angoche commanded '12 000 men who made up their minds to destroy all the land of the district and which they did to such purpose that there is not a bale of maize to be had on the mainland (da Silva Rego & Baxter 1964, p. 11). Newitt has dismissed the figure as a grotesque exaggeration of the population of the town, but further argues that it nevertheless reflects the fact that Angoche was one of the most thriving of all the settlements in east Africa (Newitt 1972, p. 402). The figure may very well be an exaggeration, but is not an estimation of the population of the town, but rather of the number of men in the town *and* in the polities and settlements of the mainland that were in alliance with the sultanate that could be mobilized for military purposes. The strategy employed was apparently the one of the burned field, obviously aiming at withholding supplies from the Portuguese.

Duarte Barbosa, in his major work of the Indian Ocean region, probably completed shortly before 1516, describes Angoche and its inhabitants:

After passing the river Zuama, at xl leagues from it, there is a town of the Moors on the sea coast, which is called Angoy, and has a king, and the Moors who live there are all merchants, and deal in gold, ivory, silk, and cotton stuffs, and beads of Cambay, the same as do those of Sofala. And the Moors bring these goods from Quiloa, and Monbaza, and Melynde, in small vessels hidden from the Portuguese ships; and they carry from there a great quantity of ivory, and much gold. And in this town of Angos there are plenty of provisions of millet, rice, and some kinds of meat. These men are very brown and copper coloured; they go naked from the waist upwards, and from thence downwards, they wrap themselves with cloths of cotton and silk, and wear other cloths folded after the fashion of cloaks, and some wear caps and others hoods, worked with stuffs and silks; and they speak the language belonging to the country, which is that of the Pagans, and some of them speak Arabic. ... These [the people of Ilha de Mozambique] are of the language and customs of the Moors of Anguox. (Barbosa 1995, pp. 9–10)

Thus, the majority of the inhabitants were of local origin, a fact from which a few working hypotheses could be developed. Some of the inhabitants were certainly descendants of the founders of the settlement, others had moved in from the surrounding mainlands attracted by the possibilities of the metropol and the developing commerce. Yet others may have been taken to the town unvoluntarily as slaves, composing a work force for the upper classes. There would have been an increasing pressure on the natural resources through a demand of the agricultural systems to provide produce for a non-productive economic class of people. Hence, the partial breaking up of subsistence systems and social relations of the settlement systems of hamlets and villages and a reorganisation of primary production would have, in the long term, been a consequence of the contraction of people that demographically constituted the town.

Exploitation of resources in the sixteenth century

A number of suggestions of resources utilized for primary subsistence in the Angoche area during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are to be found in Portuguese documents. Duarte Barbosa mentions the availability of provisions in the form of millet, rice and meat at Angoche (Barbosa 1995, p. 9). Duarte de Lemos reports in 1508 that 'the king of Angoche sent a nephew of his to me in a sambuk and by him some bales of maize and chickens and yams' (da Silva Rego & Baxter 1963, p. 285). Father Monclaro, who in November 1572 set out on a journey southwards from Ilha de Moçambique, writes that 'there is a great abundance of cocoa-nut fibre, from the large number of palm-trees' on the islands of Angoche. He further notes that the coast was 'well provided with hens and capons, which are the best meat they have in these parts', there being 'no cows except on the coast of Melinde' (Theal 1964, Vol. III, p. 216). The expedition sailed further and into the river Quizimungo, between Angoche and Quelimane. 'The people came to our boats with fish, figs, and other produce', the ordinary food of the inhabitants being 'millet, rice, and many seeds of wild fruits, because on account of the climate they cannot cultivate from seeds of ripe fruit'. Father Monclaro writes that, 'though there are animals in the country which serve for food, such as hens, goats, sheep, different kinds of game, and many tame fowls and wild birds, they make more use of fish' (Theal 1964, Vol. III, p. 218).

There are thus a few named and unnamed crops and eatable plants mentioned, from the Angoche area as well as a little beyond, in these sources: millet, rice, figs, wild fruits and coconut. The reference to the coconut is rather to the fibre and straw, from which mats and hats were made, than to eatable parts, although these were certainly used. The report of maize and yams in the early letter of 1508 must be met with a fair amount of scepticism as these crops are unlikely to have been grown on the east African coast at this timeperiod. Yams is a typically west African cereal (Andah 1993, p. 243) and is not known to be or have been cultivated in eastern and southern Africa, although it is, at least in theory, possible that this is due to the bad conditions of preservation for prehistoric yams (Eggert 1993, p. 323). The archaeological evidence for early cultivation of yams is in fact non-existent everywhere (Phillipson 1993, p. 144). It is likely that de Lemos had encountered yams at one of the Portuguese factories on the west African coast and then, later, mistaken some of the food gifts in Angoche for it. The mentioning of maize is a bit awkward to explain. Though it was introduced to Africa from the Americas by the Portuguese, maize is at this early point in time even more unlikely to have been cultivated than yams. It is my contention that de Lemos, who seems to have been a quite an ignorant man, was not very interested in the gifts he received and consequently called them something, anything. He gave exotic gifts exotic names. However, it cannot be fully ruled out that the error is in the transformation from the original letter to the final English translation. In another mention of the episode, the word maize has been exchanged for millet (Axelson 1973, p. 66).

Also meat was largely utilized for subsistence: domestic animals such as goats, sheep and fowls were kept and various kinds of game were hunted. The lack, according to Father Monclaro, of cattle indicates that the area was infested by the tsetse fly *Glossina* carrying trypanosomiasis, a disease fatal to cattle, during the sixteenth century. Presently, the disease does not occur in Angoche (Morais 1988, p. 31), although cattle is indeed extremely rare in the area.

Currently, the fishery and gathering of marine resources is of great importance locally. Sea-shrimps have also been industrially fished in the waters outside Angoche. There is, of course, reason to believe that fishing and collecting of marine resources have been an important source of subsistence for as long as people have occupied the coastal lands, as is indicated by the statement of Father Monclaro. No shell middens have as yet been investigated on this part of the coast and other organic marine assemblages are rare along the entire coastline (but see Horton & Mudida 1993). We do however know that molluscs have been collected on the east African coast for several millennia (e.g. Hall 1981; Mitchell 1996).

Decline of Angochean trade: the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

At the middle of the century, Quelimane had developed as the main port of access to the markets of the interior and Angoche declined in importance, though it continued to enjoy a modest trade in ivory (Newitt 1995, p. 187). During the 1570's several Portuguese expeditions, under the command of Francisco Barreto, were sent up the Zambezi to conquer the mines of Mutapa. Although failing to fulfill the original aims, the massacres of merchants at the inland fairs destroyed the independent Moslem trading community on the Zambezi and with it the last vestige of Angoche's independent role in the Indian Ocean trade (Newitt 1995, pp. 56–9). João dos Santos remarked that the islands of Angoche at the end of the sixteenth century were 'peopled by poor and low class Moors' (Theal 1964, Vol. VII, p. 347), indicating that the decline in trade had had a direct influence on the prosperity of the people of Angoche. In 1634 the population numbered about 1 500 inhabitants (Theal 1964, Vol. II, p. 424), and though further indicating the decline in trade, there were still a significant number of people. In 1635, Felipe de Mascarenhas, captain of Ilha de Moçambique – whose office more and more had turned into a private business enterprise – purchased the trade at Angoche, now principally in ivory, from the Portuguese crown for 7 000 *cruzados* (Newitt 1995, p. 114). Yet, it seems that even if the control of the trade were by and large lost, urban life and urban culture continued independently at Angoche, as it had before the arrival of the Portuguese and which it did until the nineteenth century (Newitt 1995, p. 129). At that time, however, colonial control evolved during a time-span of little more than half a century.

In the eighteenth century, the trade at Angoche was mostly in foodstuffs which were sent to Ilha de Moçambique, and in mats, 'of very fine straw, white or of many beautiful colours' (Theal 1964, Vol. VII, p. 347), that had been famous since the sixteenth century. However, dhows from Angoche also visited some of the coastal settlements further south,

where they traded in amber and ivory. In general, however, Portuguese influence was so strong that Angoche did not play any independent role in the ivory and slave trade of the eighteenth century (Newitt 1995, pp. 187–89).

In 1752, a Portuguese judge, Francisco Moraes Pereira, visited Angoche at a time when the town had recently been rebuilt on a fresh site after disputes with the Macua of the mainland had led to the abandonment of the old town:

The new settlement is a short distance from the beach towards the east where it is sandy. The houses are made of wood and straw but are suitable for living in as they are properly partitioned, though they have no windows looking out on the street as is usual with all houses built by the moors. The houses of the king are large and are distinct from the majority in their fabric and size, in the large fence which surrounds them and in the garden adjoining which has many citrus trees, palms and shrubs which are used as remedy for all the complaints which they suffer.

(Newitt 1995, p. 187)

Pereira also noted that there was a Koranic school in the town and that Arabic now was widely spoken by the population (Newitt 1995, p. 188).

Slave trade and colonialism: the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

By the 1830's, Angoche had again begun to experience importance and prosperity. From the middle of the eighteenth century, a rise in demand of slaves from French colonies, Brazil, Cuba and the United States had propelled slave trading on the southeast African coast. Regulated Portuguese economic policies extorted traders to avoid Portuguese ports and meet at minor towns outside direct Portuguese control. In Angoche, even Portuguese and Afro-Portuguese traders established themselves and the town became the most important port conducting clandestine trade in contravention of official Portuguese trading policies, just as it had in the sixteenth century. In November 1847, a joint Portuguese-British expedition of gunboats bombarded Angoche, but no permanent occupation by military forces followed (Newitt 1995, pp. 245–51, 274). In the 1850's, the ruling élite of Angoche, as Newitt puts it 'for so long content with their role in seaborne trade and localised urban politics' (Newitt 1995, p. 275), made serious moves in the direction of expansionist policies towards the hinterland. Slave armies were recruited and intervention were practised actively in the politics of the interior. Through a series of campaigns and raiding parties, the Macua of the region were brought to recognise the overrule of Angoche. The rapid expansion brought Angoche into further conflict with Afro-Portugues slavers of Zambezia and in 1861, Angoche fell to a Zambezian slave army commanded by João Bonifácio Alves da Silva.

In the same year, a Portuguese military post was established at the Naija settlement, but was a little later moved to Muchulele, simultaneous with the establishment of the District of the Angocheans. In 1865, the Capitania-mor with its seat at Parapato was created. The seat of

the district was also moved from Muchulele, on the island, to Parapato on the mainland, making it the centre of Portuguese attempts of colonial control in the area. Parapato was occupied by Portuguese troops in 1871 but was abandoned shortly afterwards, only to be reoccupied in the following year. Portuguese rule in the area was at this point in time very unsecure and it was not until the 1920's that colonial control was in effect. In 1893, the settlement changed name to António Ennes (Prata 1983, pp. 107–8), while Parapato came to designate the western neighbourhoods, which it retained until after independence when it gained its present name, Cidade de Angoche. It is, then, important to remember that the location of modern Cidade de Angoche is not the same as the Angoche of the fifteenth to nineteenth and earlier centuries.

The archaeological evidence

Previous and related archaeological research

Angoche is more or less archaeologically unknown territory, no detailed archaeological survey or excavation has taken place there, save for a minor test excavation in Angoche harbour in the middle of the 1980's by a team from the Eduardo Mondlane University, Maputo. The excavation yielded some glass beads (L. Adamowicz, *pers. comm.*), but no excavation report has been published. Additionally, in 1975 a brief survey of Ilha de Angoche was conducted by a team from the (then) University of Rhodesia (Dickinson 1976; Sinclair 1987, p. 27). P. Vérin has very briefly outlined the history of the Sultanate of Angoche and concluded that archaeological research may uncover links between the east African coast and northwestern Madagascar. He did, though, never visit the site (Vérin 1970, pp. 187–9).

Some related archaeological research has been performed on the coast of Nampula Province, principally during the last decade and a half. Specifically coast-oriented fieldwork include the work of R. Duarte, T. Cruz e Silva and P. Sinclair in the late 1970's (Sinclair 1985b) but has increased from the beginning of the 1980's (Duarte 1993). Late in 1982 and in 1983 the marine archaeological potential of the region around Ilha de Moçambique as well as the northern areas of Nacala District, Nampula Province, and Pemba and Ibo in Cabo Delgado Province were investigated for the first time. Besides providing new information on iron-using farming communities, it suggested that further research would contribute greatly to the knowledge of pre-Portuguese trade in the Indian Ocean. In addition, the high concentration of wrecks off Ilha de Moçambique would provide an additional interesting research foci (Lindqvist 1984, pp. 13–19; Morais 1984, pp. 122–3). However, the identification of the latter research area has not yet resulted in further fieldwork at Ilha de Moçambique.

In 1983, a pronounced research and study programme focusing on the Swahili civilization of the northern Mozambican coast was implemented (Loforte et al 1988, p. 104). Through the programme, R. Duarte has conducted detailed fieldwork at a number of stonebuilt sites on the coast, including Somana, Gomene, Quisiva and Pangane, as well as surveyed and

identified numerous other sites, among them Foz de Lurio, in the large area between the Rovuma river and Ilha de Moçambique. The main objective of the fieldwork was to determine the archaeological potential of the coastal region of northernmost Mozambique. At the more important sites, test excavations and surface collections were carried out (Duarte 1993, pp. 53–4). The research on the coast has produced two ceramical traditions of the early and middle present millennium, the Lumbo and Sancul traditions (Sinclair 1991a, pp. 189–90; Duarte 1993, pp. 80–2). In and near Cabo Delgado, G. Liesegang has carried out surveying and excavations of a number of sites, including Tungi, Quiwia, Mbwesi and Ilha de Vamisi (Duarte 1993, pp. 77–8).

Somana deserves to be mentioned in more detail, being the most important Swahili site so far located in northern Mozambique. Somana is situated about 100 km north of Ilha de Moçambique. Architectural stone constructions are to be found on a small island and on the mainland a wall and pottery scatters cover 2–3 hectares. All of the constructions are made from coral stone with lime and sand mortar, and some of the walls show evidence of being covered by plaster. On the basis of Lumbo pottery and architecture, the site has been dated to between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries (Duarte 1993, pp. 68–70).

As the primary archaeological sources of organic material is extremely sparse in the whole of Mozambique, indeed in the whole region, the archaeological evidence for cultivation in Angoche may at best be regarded as circumstantial. Nevertheless, there do exist some regional archaeological and ethnohistorical indications of which types of crops and terrestrial and marine resources – in addition to the ones mentioned in early Portuguese historical sources – that possibly may have been cultivated also in the Angoche area during the time-period in mind: cocoyams, bananas, citrus fruits, pomegranates, sugarcane and vegetables are known from ethnohistorical sources in other parts of the east African coast from the end of the fifteenth century and onwards (Connah 1987, pp. 156, 170), while sorghum, cowpeas and ground beans were cultivated in the Zimbabwe state during the *c.* eleventh to sixteenth centuries (Sinclair, Pikirayi, Pwiti & Soper 1993, pp. 711–15). A find of sorghum has been recovered at Xakota, near Nampula, and dated to around the seventh century (Sinclair, Morais, Adamowicz & Duarte 1993, p. 421). In the south of Mozambique and in Zimbabwe, cattle, fowls and chickens has been found at sites dated to the late first and early second millennium A.D. (Barker 1978, pp. 73–4, 87; Sinclair 1987, p. 145; Sinclair 1991b, pp. 47–8; MacDonald 1992, pp. 305–6). The first faunal reports from foraging communities in northern Mozambique reveal some archaeological evidence of sheep or goats (Sinclair, Morais, Adamowicz & Duarte 1993, p. 416).

Some notes on recent archaeological fieldwork in the immediate Angoche hinterland

During 1994, an archaeological reconnaissance was carried out by the present author in the mainland area north of Ilha de Angoche, producing the identification and registration of three

sites, a couple of which deserve to be mentioned, and the suggestive evidence of several others.

On a hilltop just north of Cidade de Angoche, the site of Estação de Meteorologia (1639Bb1) was identified. The hill constitutes the southernmost point of a ridge running parallel to the coastline at a distance of about 5 km to the sea towards Sangage river in the north. It is the highest point on the northern mainland at the mouth of the Mluli river, c. 56 metres above sea level. There is a meteorological station on the hill, from which the site earned its name. The area is c. 400 metres at its widest and the site is ultimately defined c. 700 metres to the north, where contemporary occupation extends, and where the ridge slightly levels out. The vegetation is grassy, supplemented on the northern half of the hill by cashew trees. The areal extension of the site as identified through pottery sherds is difficult to estimate as sherds could be seen primarily on eroded surface or in earthpiles and dugged holes, but seems to extend over most of the hilltop. A 1 by 1 m test pit was sunk at the site, but gave the impression of a very mixed and eroded stratigraphy. The finds consisted mainly of very fragmented pottery pieces and seashells. Only sherds with decoration were collected and has been identified as late Lumbo pottery and preliminary dated to the fourteenth century (R. Duarte, *pers. comm.*). Lumbo tradition pottery shows a high proportion of bowls, significant percentages of which are decorated immediately below the rim, mainly with a band of areal stamped motifs. Lumbo pottery has previously been found at sites along the coast, from Ilha de Moçambique to the mouth of the Rovuma, and the characteristics show some affinity with pottery of the interior of Nampula Province. It has been dated from the eleventh to the fifteenth or sixteenth century (Sinclair 1985; Sinclair 1991a, p. 215; Duarte 1993, pp. 60–81).

The site at Estação de Meteorologia is interesting perhaps primarily as it is located quite distinctly on a hilltop overlooking the northwestern sea route to Ilha de Angoche and the Mluli river. Though the finds were in a very small quantity, the preliminary dating of pottery to the fourteenth century indicates that some sort of settlement existed during that time. The ridge area is an intermediary between primarily coast-oriented subsistence areas and agriculturally based subsistence areas, thus providing a wide range of subsistence opportunities. There is a need for further basic and detailed fieldwork that may establish the chronological intra-site nature of the site and its inter-site relations in the area.

Approximately 3.5 km north of Estação de Meteorologia, following the stretch of the ridge, is the site of Malapane I (1639Bb2) on the eastern slope. The site is identified by extensive scatters of ceramics visible in eroded cuts of the soil caused by rainfall. A few hundred metres north of the limited area hitherto identified as a site, is a dried up riverbed of the minor stream of Malapane river. The riverbed cuts through most of the ridge in a northwest to southeast direction. The vegetation is grassy and the land planted with cashew. Below the site, in the lowlands to the east towards the sea, there are small cultivated fields being watered from the marshy lands and minor seasonal and tidal streams of water.

As at Estação de Meteorologia, it is difficult to detect ceramics in the grass cover. However, where the vegetation is cleared due to erosion, exposed pottery sherds are easily spotted. The extension of the site has not been possible to determine, but judging by the fairly large quantity of finely decorated sherds of some variety in one eroded open area, it may be quite extensive. The location of the sherds found was approximately one third down the slope. A settlement may have been primarily situated on the platform above, but no ceramics could be found there. The site thus needs further investigation in order to determine answers to basic questions. Some of the decorated sherds could however be identified as early Lumbo pottery and tentatively dated to the twelfth century (R. Duarte, *pers. comm.*).

The site at Malapane I is, as Estação de Meteorologia, situated in an intermediary zone between coast-oriented and agricultural-based economies, and thus was an ideal situation with its broad base of possible environmental resources. Easily accessible fresh water and the occurrence of seasonally flooded areas constitute additional opportunities. The tentative dating of the site, earlier than at Estação de Meteorologia, does enforce questions of a diachronic nature regarding settlement location in a local pre-urban context. Further research at the site is necessary.

It is clearly necessary to continue research in the area as a whole, to perform complete survey programmes and to conduct extensive fieldwork at selected sites.

Conclusion

The historical sources to the early history of Angoche outline a fairly clear picture of the economic developments, although in very broad strokes. Historical research has shown that the proto-historic and early historic period of Angoche, c. 1450–1525, was one in which economic developments was intimately linked to the gold production of the northern Zimbabwe plateau in the interior. An economic dependency situation was thus at work between the Mutapa State on the one hand, and the Sultanate of Angoche on the other. However, there are a number of important issues in which archaeologically induced research could extract further information and thus offer, to bring more holistic interpretations of the Angoche area.

The first of these concern the actual timescale of the origins of urbanism in Angoche and the actual instruments at work causing growth of settlement. Archaeological research would be needed to establish the mere size and physical outline of the town at various ‘windows’ in time. It should be remembered that the lack of coral stone in the area has determined a building tradition of mud and thatch architecture. This fundamental condition of available natural resources could thus not be used for interpretations in terms of relative wealth.

The coast–hinterland relationship has evolved as a fundamental research issue in east African coastal archaeology over the last few years (e.g. Abungu & Mutoro 1993). In the case of Angoche, such studies may focus on various sub-issues through the employment of different

approaches. Economic exploitation of the hinterland and political relations between polities in different settings, would be themes concerned with the study of synchronic and diachronic dynamics in settlement patterning, employing extensive survey programmes, analyses and refinement of chronostratigraphic frameworks, intra- and inter-site analyses, and further studies of available natural resources forming the primary basis of any social formation. Social relations may be studied, for instance through employing a sociological research approach to the construction, maintenance and dynamics of urban and rural identities in a historical perspective.

However, economic, political and social relations need not only to be studied in a local coast–interior context, but also in a sub-regional urban centre^A–urban centre^B context. This would obviously incorporate Ilha de Moçambique and Quelimane. We have also seen that, according to historical studies, several centres emerged as a result of the growing trade in ivory in the vicinity of Angoche during the fifteenth century (Mogincual, Moma and Sangage). Furthermore, the relationship between Somana and Angoche is as yet unknown. A closer look at these centres, at different levels of inter-site relations, may tell us more about the dynamics of this part of the coast.

Expanding the analytical perspective further, the relations of the Indian Ocean trade network – that can be seen as a cultural corridor working in several directions – is, of course, an important object of study, forming a major semi-global dynamic systemic framework of the region. In this context, the islamisation of Angoche could be singled out as an important issue for further analysis.

There are thus a significant number of issues, showing significant gaps in our knowledge of the economic, social and political developments in Angoche, that could be studied in detail. Archaeology could fill several of those gaps, paving the way for holistic interpretations of the dynamics of the east African coast.

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