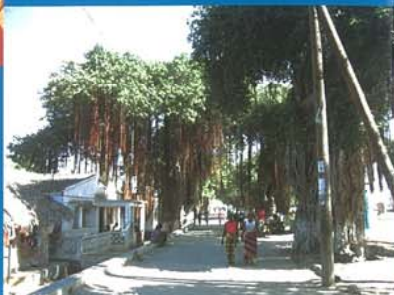




Main mosque



Macuti Town



Text and photographs by: Alvarado Braz Mimoso, Translation: Mick Greer, Design: Luis Coimbra, Images: P...

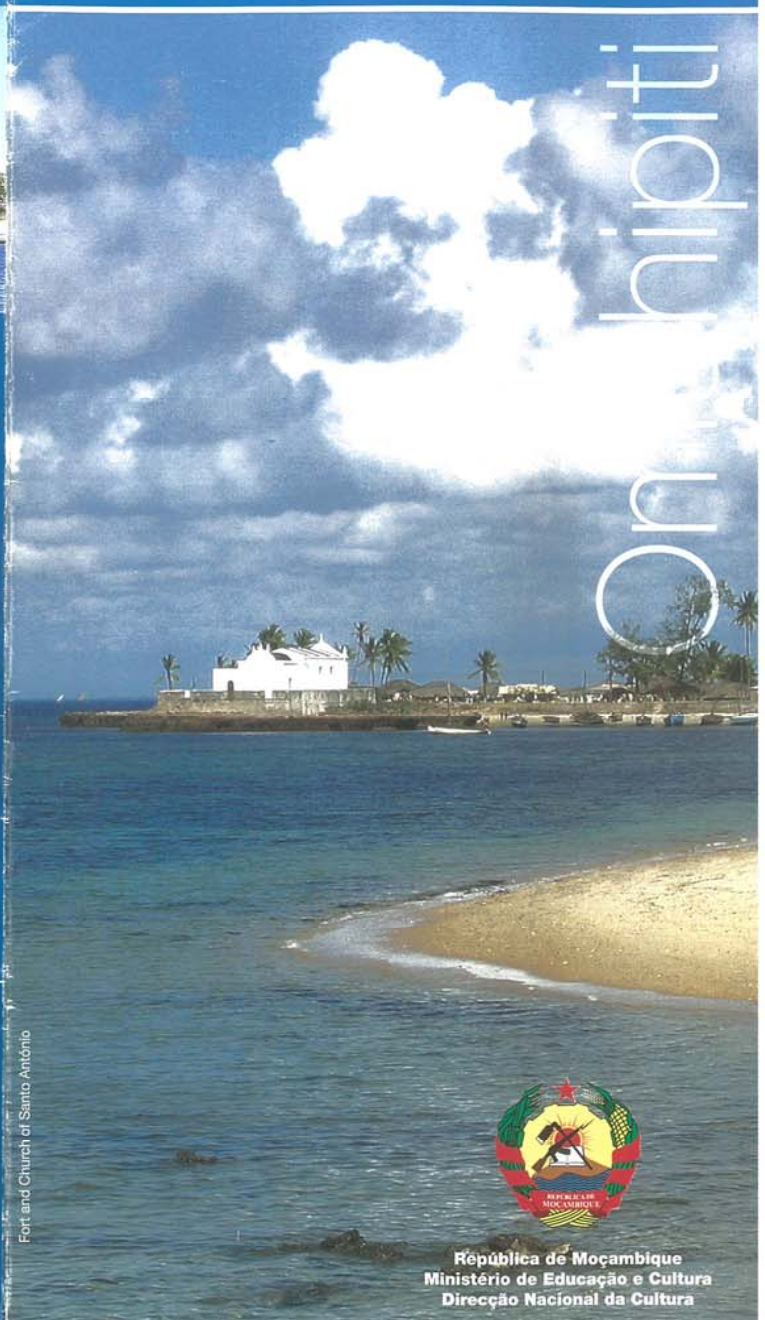
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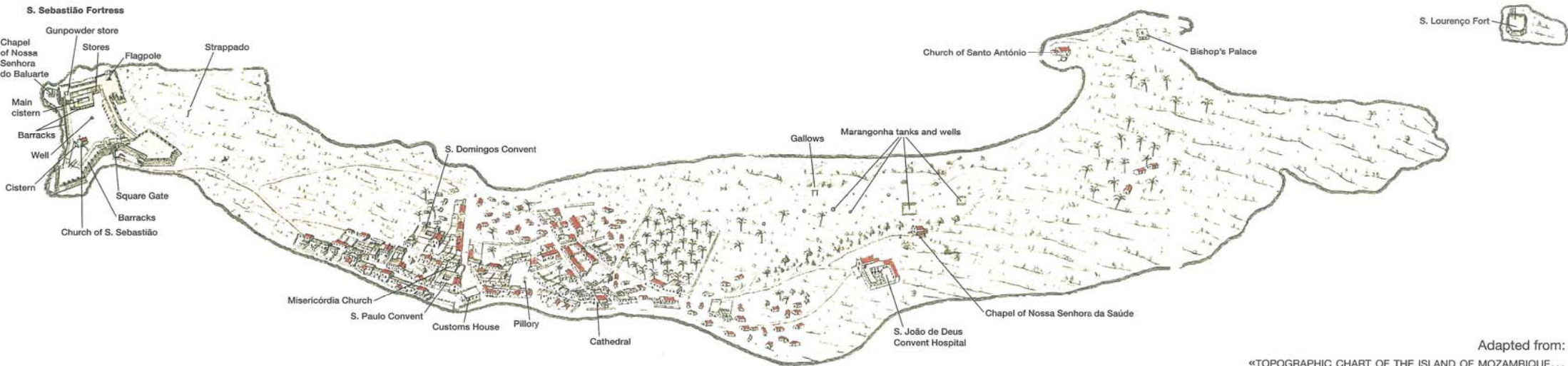


Fort and Church of Santo António

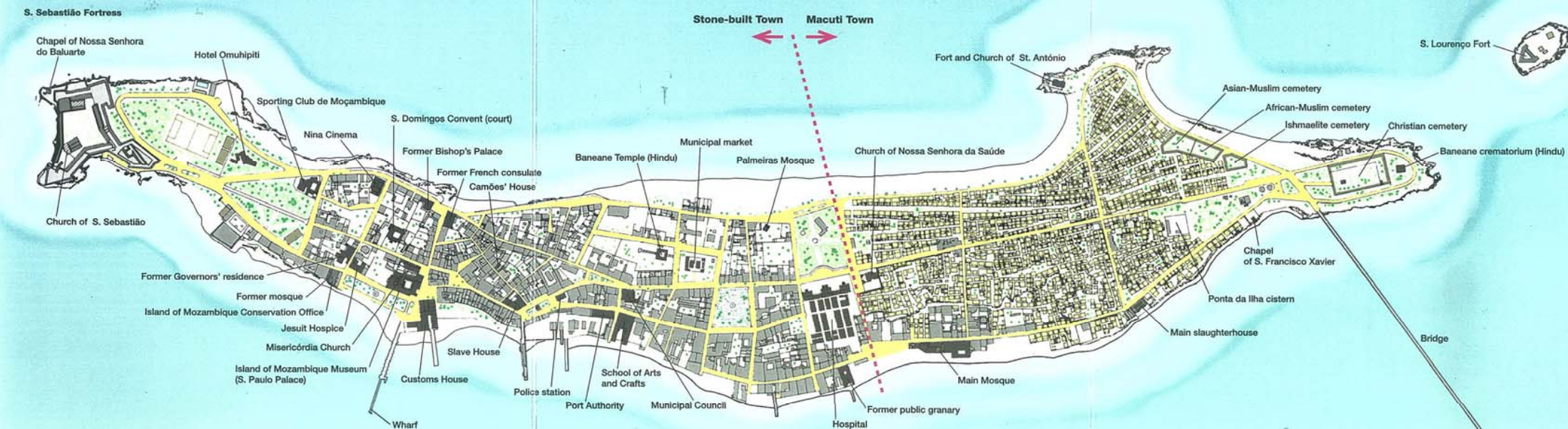


Omuhipiti





Adapted from:
 «TOPOGRAPHIC CHART OF THE ISLAND OF MOZAMBIQUE...
 BY THE INFANTRY CAPTAIN... IN THE YEAR OF 1754»
 Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisboa



The Muslim world and Arab trading routes in the 15th century



Territories, towns and trading routes controlled by the Portuguese in the 16th century



The Island of Mozambique, inhabited by the Makhuwa people, lies 2 000 km north of Maputo, at the entrance to Mossuril Bay. About 3.5 km long by 350 to 500 m wide, its average annual temperature is 26° C. The Island is divided in distinct parts, each represented by a town: the European style Cidade de Pedra e Cal (the Stone-built town), and Cidade de Macuti (the Macuti town), with its traditional African buildings, adapted to the climate. Coconut trees, Indian fig trees, casuarinas, red acacias from Madagascar and wild fig trees, with their aerial roots, are to be seen everywhere.

The Island of Mozambique was initially occupied by the local population. Its development is intimately connected with its advantageous location, linking Africa and Asia. The first phase of the great voyages in the Indian Ocean began with Arab sailors in the 8th century, and continued up until the 15th, making that ocean the centre of intercontinental trade and the bridge between Europe and the Orient. It was a meeting place for Persians and Turks, Indians, Indonesians and Chinese, but it was the Arabs who held the monopoly on transporting merchandise, promoting and strengthening relations between these different peoples and cultures. The Islamic influence, in addition to creating the Sultanate of Delhi and advancing into the Indonesian archipelago, stretched along the African coast, from the Red Sea to the River Save.

It was along this coast, on its shores and above all on its islands, that a new civilization, the Swahili, sprang up. This grew from the intermarrying of the African population, of Bantu origin, with the Muslim traders coming from four areas: the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea, from north-west India and Indonesia. Insularity was its prime characteristic.

Factories, trading posts, sultanates and sheikhdoms



There being no major land routes in East Africa, communication was guaranteed by the Swahili people, who dominated navigation on the rivers and the coast. Trading posts and warehouses sprang up along the coast, some being fortified, whether sultanates or sheikhdoms, such as Mogadishu, Lamu, Melinde, Mombassa, Pemba, Zanzibar and, especially, Quiloa, which controlled the gold, ivory and slave trade. Further south, there were the sheikhdoms of Mozambique, Angoche, Quelimane and Sofala.

The Island of Mozambique sheikhdom was founded by Hassani and Moussa M'Biki (which is possibly where "Mozambique" comes from), around the 11th century. Up until 1500, it had both a fixed and fluctuating population; the two being mainly made up of Arab merchants and mariners, with a very sparse African presence.

The second phase of the great Indian voyages began in 1498, with the arrival of the Portuguese sailor, Vasco da Gama, who established, with the help of an Arab pilot, the direct connection between East Africa and India. On this first voyage he called at Cabaceira Pequena, in sight of the Island of Mozambique.

The 16th and the first half of the 17th century was the period of Portuguese domination. Various strategic sites controlled the Indian Ocean, such as the fortresses of Mozambique (1507) and Mombassa (1505), those of Ormuz (1515) and Diu (1533) and that of Goa (1510); since 1530, the capital of the Portuguese State of India, governed by a Viceroy, and of Malacca (1511).

The choice of the Island as the main Portuguese base was made in 1507 with the importance of its port being decisive. If the ships leaving Lisbon were late, they would miss the summer monsoon winds, which meant they could not reach India and would have to winter in Mossuril Bay (defended by the Island) for long months, until the approach of summer and the winds changed.

Administered by Goa, Mozambique served as a supply and repair port of call for Portuguese ships on the India run, as well as a place for trade (Indian ships traded textiles and spices there for gold and ivory). It was also the base for the fleet which protected the extensive, Portuguese controlled coast. The Island centralised the trade from and to Ibo Island, Quelimane, Sofala, Inhambane, as well as Lourenço Marques (Maputo), founded in 1544 due to the region's wealth in ivory, a highly valued product in India. Portugal, however, had pushed the



Chapel of Nossa Senhora do Baluarte (exterior and interior)



S. Sebastião Fortress



PLAN OF THE ISLAND'S BARRACKS AND FORTRESS... / Carlos José dos Reis e Gama/ Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, 1802/Lisbon

Arab presence back to south of the Island, apart from the Angoche archipelago, and possessed various northern towns, controlling the coast until Melinde and Lamu.

The Portuguese settlement on the Island brought inevitable problems with the inhabitants, and there were disturbances in Mossuril and the Cabaceiras. The sheikhdom therefore was transferred to Sancel and later, in 1515, a new one was created in Quitangonha. In 1508, the main Muslim inhabitants were white Moors, from Aden and Ormuz, and the mixture with the population from the continent, begun by this group, increased through the Portuguese.

The first fortification, the Torre Velha (or 'Old Tower') was built in the middle of the Island, followed by a bulwark at the northern end, where the chapel, N.ª Sr.ª do Baluarte (bulwark) was built in 1522, with manuline vaulting. The developments in Turkish artillery had rendered such means of defence obsolete and led King João III to begin the construction of the large S. Sebastião Fortress, whose cistern could hold 2 000 barrels of water. The project got underway in 1558, designed by Miguel de Arruda, following the suggestions of the Viceroy of India, João de Castro, but the garrison was only received in 1583. Dominating the channel and giving access to the haven in Mossuril Bay, it came to be the key to thwarting future invasion attempts.

In 1570, the Muslim settlement was destroyed and replaced by the Portuguese, who arranged their community around Torre Velha. The Moors then settled on the site of the granary. Each community had its different temple whose very existence says much about the Island's multicultural character. The Europeans were at the top of the hierarchy, followed by the Christian Goans. There were also Indian Muslims who came from British India. Various inhabitants already had gardens and palm groves growing on the continent.

In 1593, the customs house and the charitable organisation, Santa Casa da Misericórdia were founded, the latter serving as Town Hall until 1763. Camões, Portugal's greatest poet, lived here between 1567 and 1569.



Camões or Damoodar's House

Statue of Vasco da Gama

S. Paulo Museum,
former Jesuit convent
and Governors' Palace



Mouzinho de Albuquerque Square

The 17th century saw the return of the Muscat Arabs to the African coast, where they set up an extensive colony, the Sultanate of Zanzibar, which lasted until the 19th century. Below Cape Delgado, Indian trade belonged to the Portuguese; but to the north it came under Arab control in the second half of the century, despite largely going through the hands of the Guzerate merchants, who were a strong presence on the Island of Mozambique. The inland trade with the coast increased, for example, the route of the Yao merchants, from Lake Niassa to Mossuril. The growth of Zambezia, due to gold, reduced the Island's importance, although it did remain a vital port of call during long voyages. In the meantime, in addition to the Arab attacks on the Island from the north, there were attacks from the south, with the Dutch, French and British producing a second wave of European colonization. Of the three Dutch attempts on the Island in 1604, 1607 and 1608, the most serious was the second: the settlement was destroyed; the chapel and fortress of S. Gabriel disappeared, as did the Espírito Santo Church and the Convent of S. Domingos. S. Sebastião Fortress, however, resisted. The town's reconstruction maintained its earlier structure and the buildings were constructed from coral stone and limestone. However, the lack of skilled labour delayed and made the building more difficult, although Baneane stone masons made up for the lack of Portuguese. Some roofs were in macuti, or coconut leaves, but terraces predominated, denoting Diu influence and similarities with the Algarve, to take advantage of the rainfall, which was collected in cisterns. British attempts to take the Island date from 1645 and 1650, and the Omani tried in 1669 and 1704. The Fortress never fell. After an attempt in 1631, Mombasa was taken by the Sultan of Oman in 1698, with the conquest of the Jesus fort.

Problems in Diu led the Portuguese authorities, in 1687, to authorise the installation of Companhia dos Manzanes or Banenanes on the Island, created a year previously, which had the monopoly on trade

with Diu. The monopoly was a significant factor in the decline of the Island's economy, and this period continued until the first half of the 18th century.

A new mercantile cycle began, especially as regards slaves. 1721 saw the start of regular trade with the French islands in the Indian Ocean and, in 1728, with Brazil. Nevertheless, the Island's difficult situation continued and, in 1752, the Marquês de Pombal, the Portuguese Prime Minister, decided to institute a Mozambican government, replacing direct rule from Goa, although the measure met with strong Goan resistance. The General Port Authority of the State of Mozambique was then created. Different departments of the new administration were set up, a new customs house with a wharf was built early in that year, and trade was liberalized in 1755, ending the monopolies. With the new laws of citizenship in 1762, which opened the Island to all Christians, Goans or mixed race, the Island of Mozambique recovered its prosperity and became a town in 1763. The free trade for the Portuguese ships (1761) and the enormous increase in the slave trade, which was bigger than that of gold or ivory, especially to Brazil, created the Mozambique-Lisbon-S. Salvador da Baía triangle.

In the second half of the 18th century, the island traffic was exceeded by Sofala, Quelimane and Ibo, the "slave ports". The destinations of the slaves were the Mascarene islands, Madagascar, Zanzibar, the Persian Gulf, Brazil and Cuba. Slave traffic increased after the liberalization, in 1787, of arms sales on the continent. During the final years of the century, there was an increasingly intimate relationship with Brazil, whose ship owner and merchant bourgeoisie had settled on the Island and in India.

From the end of the 18th to the early 19th century, there was tremendous growth, with the settlement developing significantly. The town received city status in 1818. This was where the Portuguese, the Indian Christians and Guzerate Muslims lived, whilst the Luso-Africans and Indo-Portuguese lived in Mussoril and the Cabaceiras. There was a clear expansionist policy for the factories on the continent, with more territory being won for the Crown.



Hospital



Stone-built Town
(street from the second half
of the 18th century)

Sporting Club of Mozambique



Two views
of Macuti Town



Instability returned in the 19th century, and a new decline was brought about by the independence of Brazil in 1822. The last slave ship with Brazil as destination set off in 1831. Cotton and coffee plantations, however, were now more important activities on the continent.

New, profound alteration came shortly after, with the triumph of liberalism in Portugal in 1834: slavery was abolished in 1837, and the traffic did slow down after 1840. This finally opened the Island up to the black population.

The island was divided by a line that remains today: to the north of the Convent and Hospital of S. João de Deus, the European Stone-built Town and, to the south, the African Macuti Town. This line also restricted practices: quarries, corals, slaughterhouses, limestone ovens and wood or coal deposits were only allowed in the south. The Convent of S. João de Deus, however, was demolished in 1877 to make way for the new hospital, the largest building in town.

In the second half of the 19th century, as was the case with other colonial powers, Portugal advanced more deeply into the African continent, and had to deal with local uprisings. The capital was moved to Lourenço Marques, in 1898, and so the most southerly part of the colony became the most important, to the detriment of the northern/central area. A railway was built from Lourenço Marques, in step with the great development process of the Transvaal.

In the 20th century, Mossuril Bay ceased to be a modern port and the provincial capital was transferred from the Island to Nampula, 190 km inland. The railway from Lake Niassa (Malawi) until Lumbo, in Mossuril Bay, acquired a branchline to Nacala, whose deep water port was inaugurated in 1951 and expanded in 1964. It also meant the end of the Island's importance in the region, despite the construction, in 1966, of the bridge that connected it to the mainland. After the departure of some of the inhabitants, following independence in 1975, civil war brought the arrival of refugees some ten years later, leading to a significant rise in population and a solid settlement in Macuti.

Peace finally came to Mozambique in 1992; a year after, the Island was declared a World Heritage site by UNESCO.