HISTORY, CARTOGRAPHY AND SCIENCE:
THE PRESENT DAY IMPORTANCE OF THE MAPPING OF
MOZAMBIQUE IN THE 19th CENTURY

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MOZAMBIQUE 16th - 19th centuries

LATE 19th CENTURY
Systematic surveys in order to map the coastal situation and all the territory proclaimed under Portuguese sovereignty.

16th - 19th CENTURIES
Punctual surveys to respond to the Portuguese need to back-up the "Carreira da Índia" and to the pretension of a better overview on some areas considered of prior importance.
Although carefully reproducing the areas under surveillance, maps were lack of accuracy and hardly ever showed either a correct representation of the regions considered or the existent areas under Portuguese political control.

PORTUGUESE TRAVELS IN THE HINTERLAND:
1798 - Lacerda e Almeida
1802/11 - J.P.Baptista and Amaro José

ATTEMPTS TO CROSS THE COUNTRY COAST TO COAST:
1877 - Serpa Pinto
1877 and 1884/85 Hermenegildo Capelo and Roberto Ivens

PORTUGUESE REMAINED ON THE COASTAL SETTLEMENTS and though their commercial influence extended to the back country, no one could say that they really knew and dominated the hinterland before the early 20th century.
MAIN PURPOSES:
- To know the extension of what was intended to be Portuguese African territories
- To recognize land, people, resources and potentialities

PRIORITY:
- Compiling the previous information and re-mapping the territory

OBJECTIVE:
- Maps would prove the Portuguese had reliable information on the territory, being this knowledge the guaranty to support their pretension of sovereignty over it.

FIG Working Week 2011
Bridging the Gap between Cultures
Marrakech, Morocco, 18-22 May 2011
MOZAMBIQUE - PORTUGUESE COMMISSION OF CARTOGRAPHY (1883-1936)

The Portuguese Commission of Cartography was created in 1883 in order to elaborate and publish a collection of maps of all the Portuguese African territories as well as to develop the necessary geographic studies to support them. It worked for more than 50 years and its production still the basis for all the cartographic work done in recent years.

COOPERATION WITH THE NAVY AND THE ARMY

COLLABORATION WITH EXPERTS IN GEOGRAPHY AND GEODESY

PARTICIPATION IN THE COMMISSIONS FOR THE DEMARKATION AND DEMARCAITON OF THE MOZAMBIQUE BOUNDARIES

SHARING OF KNOWLEDGE, INFORMATION, EXPERIENCE AND EQUIPMENT

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Pinheiro Chagas Expedition (1884-86)
1st Scientific expedition of the Portuguese Commission of Cartography

Recognition of the territories of Northern Mozambique between the Quirimbas Islands and the Nyassa Lake

Led by
Serpa Pinto and Augusto Cordoso

This expedition realized the need for the systematic exploitation of precise geographic spaces and advocated its occupation based on effective presence and knowledge of those territories.

FIRST RESULTS
Plan of the harbour and entrance of the Inhamissango River (1886) and Plan of the Estuary of the Pungul River (1886).

By the end of 1899, 23 maps covering the most significant areas of the North Central coast of Mozambique.

The outcome of these works provided the effects of the use of new scientific methods and more appropriated technology and equipment and showed the close cooperation between the PCC and the Navy as well as the knowledge of the territory.
Knowledge of the territory was a condition and a result of the Commission work on the Commissions for the delimitation and demarcation of the borders of Lourenço Marques District with the Transvaal, the Swaziland and the Maputaland, as well as of the borders areas of Mârica, Barue, Nyassa, Chire and Rovuma.

The work in the Borders’ Commissions did not imply the abandonment of the cartographic surveys but only forced a slight deviation from the coast to the inland areas given rise, for example, in the late 19th century, to the recognition of the main river basins of Southern Mozambique.
Forced the Navy to permanent surveys
These surveys were of great help for the work of
the Portuguese Commission of Cartography

Changes happened so fast in the Zambezi River Delta
that two years were more than enough to
make islands and river streams disappear, to
show up new sandbanks and to change
drastically the structure of the entire Delta

The British maps of 1858 and the Portuguese ones
of 1861 were completely inaccurate as the ones
he was making would be in a couple of years

Augusto Castilho's conclusion on the
Zambezi River Delta in 1869
I went upstream the Kongo and I got stuck where a whirlpool was marked on the map: as it was full filled with riverbed quicksand. I went upstream the Bunu, deep and narrow. Surrounded by the mangrove roots and at the end it turned into a mouth. I found the river laden, tortuous and twisted, jammed by sandbanks and hampered by tidal currents. I saw the only possible site for a settlement: a very small area constantly threatened by being swallowed by the sea during the equatorial tides.
“Instructions:
It is important to preserve the marks near the breaking of the waves, and to follow the second alignment (tree near the military compound...) as the Notable tree of the island of Janga has disappeared and to the Eastern part, the vegetation starts to show up...”

Bar and Port of Angoche, 1886-87

DIFFERENT TREE CROWN SHAPES
MAPS INFORM ON:
- Geographical, hydrographical and physical characteristics of the coast
- Specific marks and standard signs for the recognition of the different areas
- Natural obstacles to the navigation and the precise conditions to sail safe
- Coastal areas affected by marine erosion and/or the sitting up processes or the vegetation and coastal ecosystems and of the inland areas.
- landscape, fauna and flora
- itineraries of the military expeditions
- recognition of the territory
- the border lines and on all the different stages of the border definition process of demarcation and delimitation
- on roads and railroad railways and how they progressively extend in the country
- the population and the identification of the local ethnic political units,
- the division of property
- the regional distribution of the cultivated areas with the specific indication of what was produced
- the forest products and other natural resources.

MOZAMBIQUE COAST IS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF THE SCIENTIFIC EXPEDITIONS AND WORKS TESTIFYING THE USE OF MODERN TECHNOLOGIES AND INSTRUMENTS TO PRODUCE A SCIENTIFIC CARTOGRAPHY OF THE TERRITORY THAT, IN MOST CASES, HAVE SUPPORTED THE PRODUCTION OF THE MORE RECENT CARTOGRAPHIC WORKS.

These maps can be analyzed as historical written documents and, consequently, the answers we expect to find depend ultimately on the way we read them and on our purposes according to the present day problems we want to understand in a historical perspective.

Every map of this collection is a small but important piece of the History of Mozambique and of the South East African Coast.