

Cooking history: food recipes and heritage in Mozambique

Project report to Toyota Foundation

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The project

The reasoning leading to this project is twofold. On the one hand, we have realised that the transmission of the history of the country, as well as stories from diverse communities and sociolinguistic groups, is done either through formal education or storytelling at these communities and groups. Such methods transmit two distinct types of knowledge, which do not always speak to each other. Our goal was to bring together both kinds of knowledge in creative ways. By focusing on the diversity of Mozambican cuisine, we aimed to create a cookbook co-produced with children through workshops in Maputo. Primary school pupils attended the workshops with the presence of researchers, a nutritionist, a storyteller, a photographer and local cuisine cooks – in these specific case two women with knowledge of cooking techniques, ingredients and dishes from the diverse regions of Mozambique. In the workshops, the local cooks presented and described the ingredients, cooked and taught different dishes to young children. While the cooking was happening, the researchers of the project presented and discussed historical, ethnographic and nutritional facts about the ingredients and dishes being prepared with the primary school children participating in the workshop. During the process and after the meals in the workshop, children were invited to record their experiences and suggestions.

On the other hand, our objective is to contribute to the growing debate on food as a symbol of both an individual and a collective sense of identity and heritage in Africa and specifically in Mozambique (Cristovão 2005, Meneses 2009, Roletta 2004). Rather than focusing on the role of food in the processes of creation of nationhood through modernisation, we aim at apprehending the diversity of the cultural manifestations through food and its meaning to peoples' own experiences, sense of belonging and identity. Hence, our interest is to include in the cookbook a summary of the context, rituals and social dynamics associated with the selected dishes of Mozambican cuisine. Ultimately, this book will be a contribution to a better understanding of Mozambican living heritage by highlighting the place of food in different moments and dimensions of everyday life. In this, children played a paramount role as learners and co-producers of the cookbook.

The project took place in Maputo city though it aimed at bringing together local stories and cuisine from different regions from the whole country. Maputo, the capital city of Mozambique, is home to Mozambicans coming from all regions of the country. For example, certain neighbourhoods concentrate migrants from specific social-linguistic origins: such as *Mafalala*, that has a strong northern, mostly from Nampula province Makua community; *Zona Militar* with a Makonde heritage from northern Cabo Delgado province, *Chamanculo*, with the local people from Maputo Ronga people. For this research we capitalised on such neighbourhoods to meet some of the local

cuisine cooks and storytellers as well as to perform research that will share cultural and gastronomic knowledge of their respective areas of origin.

In order to explore local cuisines and produce a cookbook that teaches children elements of Mozambican heritage through food recipes, the project applied qualitative research methods to collect information. Through archival research, interviews and workshops the local cuisine cooks, researchers and children co-produced the cookbook.

This project combined diverse disciplinary backgrounds and experiences that which constituted an added value for the implementation of the research and production of results. The team had two anthropologists, a demographer and an archaeologist. All members are experienced in conducting research in Mozambique. The group came together with the expectation of combining expertise, ideas and efforts. The anthropologists are experienced in leading qualitative data gathering on social practices and cultural dynamics. The combination of their work with the archaeologist with training in archival work and culinary will guarantee that the information gathered is grounded in the historical context of the different regions of the country. The demographer who has research interests in a similar topic will ensure that population dynamics during the socialist period and Mozambican regional cultural traits are considered when sampling the groups for data collection and that the final product reflects historical and regional diversity in the country.

Description of Activities

The project's activities started in April 2017. By then the team defined the criteria to select the primary schools participating in the project. Thus, the team began by contacting the schools and the Ministry of Education in order to be granted authorisation to undertake activities at the schools. This liaison with the Ministry of Education was lengthy. As a consequence, grant to initiate activities with the schools was effective in late August.

The envisioned plan was to include one privileged private school and one public school from a working-class setting. Thus, the first two workshops would be individual to each of the schools while the third would bring together both schools to allow for interaction between children from different social and economic backgrounds.

Before the workshop, the team visited the schools selected to coordinate the visit. The specific items negotiated included: time availability of the selected class to participate at the workshop; selection of a class on between the 5th and 7th grade (as they have

already been exposed to most Mozambican History contents thought the national education system); transport management and a game with the selected class to identify recipes and dishes that they consider Mozambican, how many times they consume such dishes and their likes and dislikes. Most schools demonstrated concerns about working with students from 5th and 7th grade as these are exams classes and school management would prefer for such grade pupils to fully engage in school activities.

The information given by the students played a role in the selection of the specific recipes and dishes for each workshop. Other factors included: regional diversity; the historical and local meaning of the dishes; the need to incorporate dishes that are not so common in Maputo but reflect the Mozambican cuisine; capacity of the cooks to cook the meals. Mainly the dishes selected were those considered a main course and dessert.

The team of researchers from Kaleidoscopio also performed research on the social, historical and nutritional characteristics of the dish to promote the debate with the school children during the workshop.

Initially, the team had set to find the cooks for the workshop at the neighbourhoods in Maputo. However, that proved to be difficult due to the availability of the ones recognised as good cooks. Thus, the team has contacted a cook that regularly participated with a Mozambican food stall at the monthly food flea-market at *Feima Garden* in the city. The cook was available and ready to join with her team in the selected dates for the workshop. The advantage of such cook was, firstly, the fact that she was knowledgeable of dishes from different parts of Mozambique and open to learning new recipes through the research the team would perform. Secondly, she was experienced and had a team ready to help in the preparation and provision of the food. Finally, most team members had tasted her food previously in the flea-market. The nutritionist was selected through a review of the literature. She had published two books on the nutritional value of Mozambican dishes and explored possibilities to improve the nutrition of such recipes.

The workshops took place at the garden of Kaleidoscopio's office and lasted for five hours each. All researchers in the project as well as a story-teller, the nutritionist and a professional photographer participated at all three workshop sessions. We have also invited for the different workshops researchers relevant for the themes explored in each specific workshop.

The first workshop

In September 2017 the team organised the first workshop. Nyoxani was invited to the workshop. Nyoxani is a private school that includes kindergarten activities and primary school teaching. It is an inclusive school open to children with special education needs.

The Nyoxani school participated with ten children ranging from the 5th to the 7th grade. They were accompanied by two of their teachers. The session started with an introduction to the different ingredients to be used by the cooks to cook the dishes. Students had a chance to touch, cut and taste some of the ingredients. A significant number of students had an opportunity to see ingredients like baobab and masala fruit for the first time.

The cooks demonstrated how to cook two of the six dishes prepared. However, ingredients in the raw form were displayed. All the students took part in the cooking process and promoted an interactive discussion as well as questions and answer session with the cooks and researchers.

The dishes prepared at this workshop reflected flavours from coastal Mozambique on curries and stews based in coconut cream as well as the drying techniques from the hinterland such as the dried tilapia with a tomato sauce and fried okra.

After the cooking demonstration, the pupils were asked to draw or write a small essay on their experience at the workshop. A selection of these materials will be used in the final version of the book. Additionally, the storyteller, with a northern Mozambican heritage transported the pupils to her younger years in Nampula talking about the division of labour in the household and the chores she and other girls were required to perform including cooking and how such experiences defined her notions of femininity. At the end of her storytelling, she invited the pupils to dance Tufo.

The experience with this school showed how inner-city children experience limited contact with scenarios where they can get access to wild fruits and vegetables. While they all have heard of or tasted the ingredients used in the workshop, a significant number of them have not seen them before. In regards to ethnographic and historical knowledge, the topics most highlighted by students as new include the acknowledgement of the conservation technique of drying foodstuffs; the new knowledge about why the provinces of Inhambane and Zambezia have large coconut plantations of coconut and how the plant shapes the life of the communities in those regions. Additionally, the pupils were happy to learn about the nutritional and health properties of the baobab fruit.

The second workshop

A month after the first workshop the team prepared and organised the second one. In October, the team invited students from a 5th-grade class from the public-school *Escola Primária Completa Unidade 22* (Complete Primary School Unit 22) from Mafalala barrio. Following the same organisational concept of the first workshop, the pupils were exposed to the ingredients of the different dishes being prepared. The main topic explored was ethnographic as the researchers reflected on the specific social moments in which the community that generally follow a vegetarian diet, consume meat. Some examples of such special moments include the *lobola* (bride-wealth) ceremony, marriage and funerals.

Pupils were asked to share their experiences and their knowledge from different sites in Mozambique. The school is located in Mafalafa, a neighbourhood that historically hosted residents from diverse origins in the country. During the colonial time the neighbourhood, due to its proximity to the city inhabited by the white colonialists, was a hub for students and workers coming to explore possibilities in education and work in the then capital Lourenço Marques. Thus, there were pupils whose families were originally from Nampula, Inhambane and Gaza provinces as well as those in which the mother would come from one province and father from a different one.

The dishes prepared in the second workshop reflected the cooking for special occasions amongst cattle herder communities in Southern Mozambique: Peanut curry with meat accompanied with *mbila* (a sour maize porridge) and *tiove* (a porridge made out of beans peanuts and pounded fresh corn maize). There was also the masala (*strychnus spinosa*) mousse, a contemporary dish that emerged from the classic mousse (a sweet dish made as a smooth, light mass in which the main ingredient is whipped with cream and egg white) made out of the wild masala fruit. Other dishes included the curry made out of coconut milk and dried shrimp (tepwé) typical of the coastal areas of Sofala province as well as rice and coconut cakes.

The level of pupils' participation in conversations and debated at this workshop was very low. As researcher,s we witnessed first-hand the difference in the quality of exposure and openness between the students coming from the two different schools. Students from *Escola Primária Completa Unidade 22* would keep silent at most questions and provocations posed and would not interact much other than amongst themselves. It was generally difficult to grasp the pupils' experiences and views thus to lack of openness and communication. As a consequence, the team has decided to change the concept of the third workshop. Therefore, rather than having a joint workshop between the two schools, the team opted to invite a third school for the last workshop.

The third workshop

The last workshop took place in November 2017 with students from various 6th-grade classes from public school *Escola Primária Completa Unidade 18* (Complete Primary School Unit 18) from Airport neighbourhood. The central theme of this session focused on the influences from Asia in the Mozambican cuisine, specifically in the coastal regions of the country.

Mozambique has a long history of links with the India Ocean World that included trading with the ports of the Red Sea, the Hadramaut, the Gulf and India as well as the nearby Comoro Islands and northern Madagascar (Newitt 2017). The products exchanged included gold, exotic skins, turtle shell, ivory, mangrove poles and slaves. In such exchanges, flavours were also traded which left a visible mark in the cuisine of the country.

The goat curry accompanied by roti (a round flatbread native to the Indian subcontinent made from stoneground wholemeal flour, traditionally known as *atta*, and water that is combined into a dough) is an example of the influences of India in the local cuisine. The roti, called *apa* in Mozambican Portuguese resembles the local Indian name *atta*. In this workshop we explored diverse Asian influences in the local cuisine including the prevalence of coconut in the coastal cuisine, the spiced curries and rice. The influences did not stop in the past but continue to present day with the significant presence of Islamic populations in Mozambique and pockets of Hindu, Chinese and other Asian groups.

Other dishes prepared were smoked duck, grilled crab with coconut, coconut rice and *matapa*, a dish made with pounded cassava leaves. The workshop was lively with interested and participative pupils that shared their experiences and expressed their views about the workshop through drawing, writings and songs.

Through the workshops we have compiled 12 recipes and have performed a nutritional evaluation of each of the recipes that includes suggestions on how to prepare the recipes in ways that respond to more adequate nutritional needs. We have also compiled photographs of all the dishes cooked and from the interactions in the workshops. Thus we invested in gathering both visual data as well as information from the narrated stories.

Archival research and fieldwork

In addition to being a site of cooking the recipes for the book, the workshops were also a site for data collection through the participation of pupils, cooks, nutritionist and storytellers. Moreover, the researchers performed archival research and fieldwork in Maputo as this is a qualitative research. Our choice derives from the acknowledgement that it is the most useful tool for understanding "how individuals perceive, organise, give meaning to and express their understandings of themselves, their experiences and their worlds" (Mishler in Macun and Posel 1998: 118).

To generate data we combined a variety of methods: a literature review in the archives and general libraries, interviews and focus group discussions. The archival work happened in the National Archives, the Archive of Cultural Heritage (ARPAC) and local libraries. The primary data collected at the archives and libraries referred to the historical background on the three main themes of the book: (i) The coast and the maritime commerce in the Indian Ocean; (ii) The cooking dynamics of the hinterland; (iii) food management and consumption in times of crises and prosperity; (iv) food conservation and culinary techniques. Thus, the research went back to the XV century. The literature review also provided insights for the ethnographic research performed.

A summary of the historical literature review.d

A summary of the primary data found indicates that the maritime commerce with Bantu people and Asian traders is as remote as the VI century as evidenced by archaeological traces in Mabveni on the slopes of the Limpopo river in Southern Mozambique, Makuru and Gokomere. However, the Asian presence in Mozambique was confirmed in the VIII century with the presence of glass, porcelain and beads in the litoral of Vilanculos in Southern Mozambique (Rita Ferreira 1982, ICM 1979). The main products exchanged included gold, ivory, iron, animal skin and slaves from the Mozambican side and cotton fabric, prepared foodstuffs (rice, flour, etc.) seeds (lemon, sugar-cane, orange, mango, etc.), beads, tobacco, bicycles, glass objects, lanterns, porcelain and *capulana* (a colourful kind of sarong worn primarily in Mozambique but also in other areas of south-eastern Africa).

The main traders would come from India, Indonesia, Persian Gulf, Arabia and China. The exchanges happened mostly in the coastal areas at the commercial centres established to that end but, also at the interior close to the mines (Rita Ferreira 1982). Of note is the prominent role of women in such commerce. They had purchasing power through income from agriculture and firewood transport to long distances, to buy fabrics, adornments and *capulanas* (Moura 2015).

The coconut, common in the coastal regions of Mozambique, is original of South East Asia (Loiola 2014). Though there has been an extended interaction with Asia, data points to the introduction of coconut in Mozambique in the 1850s by the Portuguese colony, imported from Asia through the maritime route. Data suggests that the large coconut plantations in Inhambane province were done by Asians that had a strong presence in the regions which were later expelled by the Portuguese.

The coconut plantations in Zambezia province have a politico-economic explanation. At the time of the introduction of coconut in Mozambique (1850) Portugal did not have the capacity to occupy Mozambique effectively. However, one of the decisions of the Berlin Conference was the need for such an effective occupation. In order to guarantee the possession of Mozambique as a colony, Portugal rented Mozambican land through the instauration of companies which were managed by its renters (French, British, German, amongst others). The Zambezia and Madal company had greater agricultural development and, the Madal one, had introduced a large number of coconut plantations.

In the hinterland, especially in Southern Mozambique cattle has been abundant and has contributed to a change from a matrilineal system to a patrilineal with matrimonial compensation. Such change granted a new status to cattle associated with marriage in Southern Mozambique (Murdock in Rita Ferreira 1982: 43). Cattle, from the XIX century, was perceived as a symbol of richness, prestige, access to women and offspring and food security and connection with ancestors (Junod 1996). Thus, it is recurrent that families with small and large quantities of cattle do not eat it regularly. The main reason for such fact is the association of consumption of cattle meat to special occasions as it is perceived as a form of accumulation of richness and social capital. Additionally, (i) a head of cattle has a large quantity of meat for a single domestic unit; thus, there are difficulties for its conservation; (ii) cattle head tends to be slaughtered for special occasions such as family rituals, public festivities, marriage and lobola.

Massala, a common wild fruit in Mozambique is employed with different uses. Its medicinal properties include detoxifying for poisoning or ingestion of toxic products (like petrol); a cure for stomach-ache (used while still green) and canker sores. Additionally, in Southern Mozambique, the cattle herders use it to eat while in the fields, use the small green masala to play marbles and also use it to make music instruments *Nhampende*, *Vondondo* and *Xigovia* which is also used to guide and disperse the cattle and to entertain during the grazing.

Fieldwork

Our fieldwork happened in three neighbourhoods of Maputo city: Mafalala, Aeroporto and FPLM. There, we performed both individual and group interviews to get data on the diversity of the Mozambican cultural heritage. The interviews were semi-structured with very open questions in order to allow the respondents to expand upon the topic and give their views and interpretations.

Focus group discussions allowed the achievement of an “insight into the personal experience, beliefs, attitudes and feelings that underlie behaviour” (Frith 2000: 276). It would also “afford a less hierarchical, more enabling and supportive forum for discussions than in the case of individual interviews” (Macun and Posel 1998: 116). In comparison with the one-on-one interviews, the focus group discussions presented a wide range of advantages: they created a space for the debaten among the members to flow more freely with less direction and prompting from me; they allowed access to the language and vocabulary, which participants commonly use, and they invited participants to introduce their themes and concerns. I avoided question-and-answer sessions in which the respondents would feel intimidated, uncertain or alienated (Macun and Posel 1998). Additionally, we performed an informal conversation.

The main group of informants were members of these communities. The themes explored referred to the:

- (i) different techniques used to preserve and cook food;
- (ii) gendered meaning of consumption and prohibition of consumption of specific ingredients and dishes;
- (iii) the kinds of food eaten in the various regions and ethnic-linguistic groups;
- (iv) age division of labour in cooking and food prohibitions for children;
- (v) myths associated with food;
- (vi) food practices in times of crises and bonanza;
- (vii) changes in food, consumption and cooking practices and habits in contemporary Mozambique.

The data collected analysed and incorporated in the elaboration of the book in the sections that reflect about specific aspects related to the recipes presented.

Photographs of food in Maputo and Beira

In addition to the pictures captured during each workshop, the team has decided to hire the photographer to take photos of sites, and ways in which food is displayed, sold, and consumed in Maputo and Beira cities in Mozambique while also capturing iconic locations of the cities. Initially, the team had envisioned requesting

permission to use archival pictures but were overwhelming with the costs of copyright.

The pictures will be included in the book with captions to reflect the various themes and help give a sense of the places being described.

The structure of the book

The book is organised in according to four themes:

(i) *The coast and the maritime commerce in the Indian Ocean*

In this section the main ingredients under analysis are the coconut and maize. Historically, the text will travel back to the maritime commerce with Asia and subsequent Portuguese colonisation. All the dishes based in these two ingredients will be featured in the section and its specific stories highlighted.

(ii) *The cooking dynamics of the hinterland*

This section reflects on how the change of climate - from the humid coast to the dry inner regions of Mozambique - has an impact on food consumption, ingredients and availability of ingredients. Here the text will focus on food conservation techniques; the availability of specific ingredients like baobab fruit and; the cattle traditions and its logic to meat consumption as well as the cattle herder's use of the wild fruit masala.

(iii) *Food management and consumption in times of crises and prosperity*

Here, the reflection centres on the creative food combinations made in Mozambique during the socio-economic and climatic crises that led to the absence of foodstuffs that ultimately led to pockets of famine in the 1980s. In this section we will use information from the fieldwork to reflect on how families coped and created dishes to feed themselves. However, this section will also reflect on the recent period of prosperity lived in the country and on the food practice dynamics.

(iv) *Food conservation and culinary techniques.*

The final section will draw on the different conservation and culinary techniques used in the recipes selected: drying of fish and vegetables, smoking fish, seafood and meat, amongst others.

Activities still in progress

While the time set for the implementation of the project has now reached its end, under the project, we still have two activities to finalise. One, we still need to have the book published as it is our main output and, two, at the book launch of the book we will have a fair where we will have on display and to taste a selection of the recipes from the book. We have paid in advance the businesses providing these services while we finalise the book for publication and submit.

By now we have finalised the book concept and design and have sent the book text for revision. The next steps that should happen in the course of the month of February 2019 is the submission of the book for the publisher, and we will await the publisher's time frame to communicate when the book could be finalised. After the book's publication and registration, we will organise the book launch and cooking fair.

The book will be distributed to all participating institutions and individuals as well as key stakeholders in Mozambique and abroad. We will publicise the book through the media and social media.

One question that arises is the already broad interest to have the Cooking History book widely available. The funds that we have available allow us to produce, depending on the final physical format of the book, between 100 and 150 copies. However, that number is small having in mind the current interest in the book. We take this opportunity to inquire if we can sell copies of the book in order to raise funds to increase the number of copies published.

Budget management

The budget requested to implement this project was sufficient to develop all the activities defined. However, changes in emphasis and needs during project implementation have forced some changes in budget lines.

Initially, we have not budgeted for the item travel expense. However, two experiences forced us to request the inclusion of such item. First, the need to transport primary school pupils to and from the workshop venue at workshop days forced us to negotiate with the Toyota Foundation the inclusion of the line on travel for outside individuals. Also, our needs to drive for the different barrios of Maputo city to perform fieldwork as well as the dislocations required to negotiate and prepare the workshops made us include the item on travel expenses for representative and participants.

In the item miscellaneous, we ended up not buying the professional photo camera and lens as we prioritised the book edition and publishing. To reach between 100 and 150 copies of the book, the budget for its production extrapolates what we have initially planned. Thus, we preferred not to acquire the camera and use such money to increase the budget item on fees for commissioned work. The other expense that raised concerned the book launch and fair. We aim at making this a grand event in the city; thus, the costs for the number of people that we seek to invite also surpass our initial budget. In order to guarantee the quality of the event, we used the remaining amount from the categories where we had an outstanding balance to strengthen the book launch and fair.

Finally, the honoraria category also exceeded its total amount as the team included the work of the photographer to take pictures in Maputo and Beira cities. Additionally, the costs for the preparation of the book launch catering has risen due to the rise in the number of invited guests.

Constraints during the implementation of the project

The project's implementation was characterised by some constraints as highlighted when the team requested its extension. First, we faced unexpected bureaucratic challenges to access the school children to participate in the workshops. Due to these challenges, we had to delay the workshops and restructure the plan to initiate archival work and fieldwork. Thus, such difficulties delayed the undertaking of archival and specifically fieldwork work. Concomitantly, the number of team members working on this project has reduced as the two principal researchers, and members (including the Representative) have been awarded academic scholarships and fellowships. These academic programs forced their absence from Mozambique and engagement on other project; thus, unavailability to fully work on the Cooking History project.

Due to such circumstances, fewer members were working in the project. Thus, the archival and ethnographic research was only finalised in late October 2018. The delay on the gathering of archival and ethnographic material also delayed the production of the draft

manuscript of the book which was only completed in December 2018. An immediate consequence is the delay in editing and publishing the book.

In February, the team aims at submitting the book for publishers and wait for their set of date for final publication. After that, the team will organise the book launch and fair and send copies of the book to the Toyota Foundation as our final output.

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