

# **IN SEARCH OF UNKNOWN STORIES AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ETHNOLOGY IN NAMPULA: MASTER SCULPTORS AND WORKS**

**Alda Costa**

Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, Maputo, Mozambique  
Conceptualisation, data curation, writing – review and editing

**Gianfranco Gandolfo**

Independent researcher, Maputo, Mozambique  
Conceptualisation, investigation, writing – original draft

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## **ABSTRACT**

This article explores the little-known history of the National Museum of Ethnology in Nampula, Mozambique, which was founded in 1956 as a regional museum and part of a colonial project to preserve and study African material culture, particularly the Makonde sculptures collected at the time of its creation. Initially promoted by Adelino Pereira, the museum faced structural, budgetary and staffing constraints. Of particular note is the role of "amateur anthropologists" and the absence of scientific museological criteria in the collection, documentation and preservation of the collection. Focusing on Makonde sculpture, based on the museum's archive and research already carried out, this study seeks to rescue the memory and authorship of master sculptors such as Chibanga Muali, Amisse Chipatela and Matete Mepondala, who are often forgotten or unidentified in the records. This research highlights the different artistic languages of sculpture, as well as themes and styles resulting from both individual creations and commissions, largely made by the colonial authorities. The text also reflects on the changes that took place after Mozambique's independence in 1975, which reconfigured the role of the museum and its collections in the context of the construction of a national identity but have not yet resolved many of the limitations of the past.

## **KEYWORDS**

National Museum of Ethnology, Makonde art, memory, sculptors

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# **À PROCURA DE HISTÓRIAS DESCONHECIDAS NO MUSEU NACIONAL DE ETNOLOGIA EM NAMPULA: MESTRES ESCULTORES E OBRAS**

## **RESUMO**

Este artigo aborda a trajetória pouco explorada do Museu Nacional de Etnologia de Nampula, em Moçambique, criado em 1956 como museu regional e parte de um projeto colonial de preservação e estudo da cultura material africana, em particular a produção escultórica maconde reunida aquando da sua criação. Inicialmente impulsionado por Adelino Pereira, o Museu enfrentou limitações estruturais, orçamentais e de pessoal. Destaca-se o papel de "antropólogos amadores" e a ausência de critérios museológicos científicos na recolha, documentação

e preservação do acervo. Com foco na escultura maconde, a partir do arquivo do Museu e de pesquisa já realizada, este estudo procura resgatar a memória e autoria de mestres escultores como Chibanga Muali, Amisse Chipatela e Matete Mepondala, frequentemente esquecidos ou não identificados nos registos. Esta investigação evidencia as diferentes linguagens artísticas da escultura, bem como temas e estilos resultado quer da criação individual quer das encomendas, em grande parte feitas pelas autoridades coloniais. O texto reflete, ainda, sobre as mudanças ocorridas após a independência de Moçambique em 1975, que reconfiguraram o papel do Museu e das suas coleções, no contexto da construção de uma identidade nacional, mas que ainda não resolveram muitas das limitações do passado.

#### PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Museu Nacional de Etnologia, arte maconde, memória, escultores

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As for us historians, we need to rewrite history, today and always,  
but a history with many voices, written collectively.

—Marc Ferro, *A Colonização Explicada a Todos*  
(Colonisation Explained to Everyone).

#### 1. IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO RETURN TO THE PAST AND REMEMBER WHAT HAS BEEN FORGOTTEN

The National Museum of Ethnology in Nampula, which opened to the public on June 25 1993, was officially established in 1996 but has existed since 1956. Inaugurated on the occasion of the visit to Mozambique by the President of the Portuguese Republic, Francisco Craveiro Lopes, as a regional museum, its history remains little known despite the existence of a few published works on the museum and its collections and despite the availability of various relevant documents as historical sources for this purpose (institutional archives, personal archives, among others). In addition to unknown stories, there are many undocumented stories and value judgments about the collection, which some consider being of little value<sup>1</sup>, about the collection procedures used, visitors, the poor preservation and security of the collection, the management and operation of the museum and its supervision during the colonial period, among other things, as well as many stories about the functioning of the museum in the period following independence (1975).

The origins of this museum also remain largely unknown. However, there is some research on the subject, including from the museum's existing documentation, which is partially available and can be consulted on request. In this regard, we would like to mention, among others, the doctoral research by Tânia Madureira<sup>2</sup> (2020), to which we had access.

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<sup>1</sup> Comment heard during a professional visit by Alda Costa and Paulo Soares to the National Museum of Ethnology in Lisbon in 1986.

<sup>2</sup> Tânia Madureira collected data during her archival research in Maputo and Nampula as part of her PhD project in Anthropology (now completed) at the National Museum of Ethnology in Nampula.

The objectives of this text are to delve deeper into the history of the museum using sources that have not yet been used or are only now accessible, to draw on more in-depth research, either ongoing or already existing, and to value personal knowledge and experiences that have not yet been written down, whether of museum practices, the collection itself or, in particular, Makonde sculpture.

The initiative to create the museum was part of the context of legitimising the occupation and colonial discourse of the time (colonise and civilise) and is thought to have started with the objects collected by Adelino Pereira (Soares de Castro, literary pseudonym), head of the Larde (Moma) post, after a visit by the district governor and the interest he showed in them. Adelino Pereira, who was the museum's first "curator", was part of the commission appointed by the district governor for its creation, most likely in 1953. In the same year, a circular was sent out informing and requesting collaboration for the museum project, a process that continued in the following years while the museum building, designed by architect Mário de Oliveira (1914–2013) and the Gabinete de Urbanização do Ultramar (Overseas Urbanisation Office), was under construction. Despite the policies of legitimisation and celebration in force, the project encountered difficulties of various kinds in coming to fruition due to the lack of cooperation from the administration to which the Niassa Government made requests due to a lack of budget. However, several offers had been made, and perhaps due to some resistance on the part of the colonised (the "Indigenous people"), who were asked to contribute with donations. To the best of current knowledge, the Comissão de Monumentos e Relíquias Históricas de Moçambique (Commission for Historical Monuments and Relics of Mozambique, CMRHM), established in 1943 by Legislative Diploma No. 825 and published in Official Gazette No. 8 of February 20 (Series I), was not involved in the creation of this museum. Among its various functions, the commission was responsible for the establishment of collections and museums — several of which continue to exist today and owe their origins to the CMRHM.

The documentation consulted and compiled by Tânia Madureira is therefore confirmed as an important source for the history of the Regional Museum of the North (Regional Museum of Niassa), the Museum of Nampula, which began with the "need to gather, as far as possible, all objects and utensils manufactured by the indigenous people, as well as manifestations of their artistic genius, which were in danger of being adulterated or even lost" (Costa, 2013, p.161).

The artistic genius of Africans (the "Indigenous people") has been noted and mentioned, at least with some frequency, since the 1930s, when pioneers such as Felisberto Ferreirinha (1896–1953, Ferreirinha, 1938a, 1938b, 1949), drew attention to the art of the Makonde and lamented that it had not yet been collected in museums or prompted more interest. Felisberto Ferreirinha (1938a, 1938b, 1949) would continue in the following years to promote the study, collection and dissemination in Nampula, where he also lived in 1943 and 1944, at Feira Franca, and again in Lourenço Marques in 1949, in particular the art of the Makonde. The Art Centre, according to its statutes, aimed, among other things, to create an art museum that would include a section for indigenous art (Costa, 2013). Some interested parties and even collectors made other initiatives and calls for attention,

but these did not alter the general status of art practised in the colony by Africans. The paradigm of African art as an aesthetic expression of "primitives" and the conceptions and stereotypes about Black people or "Indigenous people" remained dominant.

The museum, which was established in Nampula, gave priority — due to its location and the recognition of the art practised by the Makonde — to the "Indigenous Art" section. It is, therefore, unsurprising that, as early as 1953, a circular was sent to Porto Amélia, then in the Cabo Delgado district, covering, among others, the Makonde area<sup>3</sup>. At the same time, Alexandre Lobato (1915–1985), historian and researcher, considered it necessary to establish an ethnological museum in Mozambique for "the conservation and study of the last manifestations of the black man of Mozambique as a primitive being" (Lobato, carta pessoal, 6 de junho, 1953) and believed that Lourenço Marques, Beira and Nampula (in the south, centre and north), if they did so, would provide "a great service to the culture of the colony"<sup>4</sup>. Despite his interest, Alexandre Lobato must not have had any participation or collaboration in the implementation of the Nampula Museum project in its initial phase, as he was absent from Mozambique. However, we are aware of his interest and collaboration in various CMRHM projects and the various proposals he made to build collections and create museums in Mozambique from 1968 onwards, as a professor at the then University of Lourenço Marques and already associated with the Historical Archive of Mozambique, of which he was director until 1977 and with which he continued to collaborate in the following years.

What is known so far about this museum — its history and collections, specifically in ethnography and art (particularly Makonde) — is that, since its opening and for reasons still not fully understood, it has aimed to be a regional museum with a general profile. Consequently, it includes other sections and collections (history, numismatics, and natural history). The museum owes much to the work of some contemporary researchers, as well as to the interest and efforts of various other individuals at a given historical moment. Firstly, it is important to connect the museum to the ethnographic practices carried out by missionaries, administrators and colonial officials, some of whom were "amateur anthropologists", as Cláudia Castelo and Vera Marques Alves (2019) point out. With regard to António Rita-Ferreira (1922–2014, Casa Comum, 2022) and his correspondence with anthropologist Jorge Dias, they emphasise the contribution made by these "amateur anthropologists" to a more comprehensive and complex view of anthropology in colonial Mozambique. António Rita-Ferreira, who held, among other positions, the post of head of the Popular Culture Services of the Mozambique Information and Tourism Centre, was also interested, among many other subjects and disciplines, in Makonde sculpture, which he sought to support (Centro de Informação e Turismo de Moçambique, 1972). His correspondence is an important source of information and well worth consulting. Adelino Pereira, associated with the museum since at least 1953,

<sup>3</sup> In the 1950s, the northern region of Mozambique was referred to as Niassa and included the districts of Nampula, Lago, and Cabo Delgado. Each district comprised municipalities and subdistricts, with the Makonde subdistrict in the Cabo Delgado district being one of them.

<sup>4</sup> Data were collected from the Historical Archive of Mozambique, particularly correspondence from its director, Alexandre Lobato, held in the author's archive.

although his interest and practice were, as we know, prior to that, and for about 10 years (he was no longer at the museum in early 1963) was, according to existing documentation, another such person. He was fundamental to the establishment of the museum, as well as in its early years of operation, under very difficult conditions and, at times, almost abandoned. An "amateur anthropologist" and, also, through his practice, an "amateur museologist" and "amateur curator", he coordinated the collection of objects, defined the sections and subsections of the museum, prepared instructions for collectors on labelling, filling in the object cataloguing forms (the original forms still exist in the museum, alongside other forms) and recording them in the inventory book (Figure 1). During the pre-opening phase in 1956, he also identified gaps in the collection that had been assembled up to that point. The phase following the opening, which coincided with the expansion of the museum's initial concept from an ethnographic museum to a regional museum, seems to have been even more difficult than the preparation and installation phase. Donations from companies, administrative districts, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (CGF)<sup>5</sup>, and other subsidies and support were unable to make up for the persistent lack of budget, the lack of definition of the museum's responsibilities and the absence of staff, which were a constant feature of the museum.

MN 54 K4/956/56 023

MUSEU REGIONAL DE NAMPULA			
Ordem Alfabética do Arquivo <u>A</u>		N.º da Ordem <u>102</u>	
FICHA N.º <u>102</u>			
Nome genérico do objecto		Dialecto	
<u>ESCULTURAS MACONDES</u>			
Unidade <u>"VANO VABINBITA"</u>			
(TOCADORES DE MARIMBA)			
Nome <u>AMISSE CHIPATELA</u>		Profissão	
Tribo <u>MACONDE</u>		Cib. <u>UA CHILONDA</u>	
Povoação		Socio <u>UA NA CHONI</u>	
Regedoria		Posto	
Circunscrição <u>MACONDES</u>		Distrito <u>CABO DELGADO</u>	
Colector		Morada	
Data da recolha <u>1. 956</u>			

Figure 1. Record from the Nampula Regional Museum relating to the sculptural group Marimba Players, 1956.

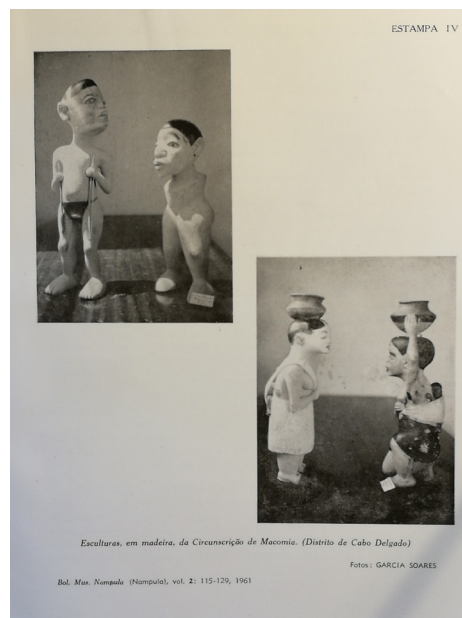
Credits. Gianfranco Gandolfo.

From the documentation already mentioned, it was possible to recover some information about the staff who, in addition to Adelino Pereira, worked or collaborated at the museum, either voluntarily or under duress, in exchange for a subsidy or food. For example, the name of the taxidermist who worked at the museum for a short period (three years) during his spare time: Manuel Martins Duarte, a Treasury employee who had trained at the Dr. Álvaro de Castro Museum — now the Museum of Natural History — and had studied the subject by correspondence, the names of his "indigenous" assistants (the convicts Miranda and Ernesto), the name of the guard (Mantacassa),

<sup>5</sup> In the chronology compiled by Tânia Madureira (2020), there are references between 1957 and 1959 to subsidies granted by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation to the museum to support its construction and installation. In 1960 and 1961, there are references to other subsidies, one for the Makonde village in the outdoor space and another for the publication of the newsletter that the Instituto de Investigação Científica de Moçambique (Mozambique Institute for Scientific Research) was subsidising. During the 1960s, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation supported other sectors in Mozambique, namely the arts (grants for artists, facilities and the running of the Art Centre).

who belonged to the Police Commissariat, and the name of the doorman (Lourenço Eugénio). In 1959, there were six convicted "indigenous" people working at the museum in the cleaning and gardening areas. One of them, Azaria Magena, spoke Portuguese and was able to assist and guide visitors. This situation continued in the following years. A document in the museum dated November 22, 1967, refers to four "men on duty" at the museum between 1962 and 1967 and the regencies to which Tomás Cipriano Cuacheque, Miguel Mucureta, Martinho Malico and Bartolomeu Assane belonged. Keeping the museum running must have been very difficult, especially given the lack of clear oversight and chronic lack of funding. The fact that some of the staff were convicts meant that the museum, with virtually no budget, had to cover their expenses.

Setting up and organising the Municipal Library in 1958 on the museum's premises and starting an art gallery were additional tasks that were no less complicated. Some research was carried out a few years ago on this initiative and the artistic movement (participants, exhibitions, etc.) in that part of the country (Costa, 2006). The relationship that began with the Mozambique Institute for Scientific Research (Instituto de Investigação Científica de Moçambique, IICM, created in 1955 in Lourenço Marques by Decree No. 40 078 of the Directorate General for Education) made it possible, a few years later and despite its limited resources, to publish the *Boletins do Museu de Nampula* (George & Pereira, 1960, 1961), which had a considerable impact on the dissemination of studies and research already carried out in northern Mozambique, but did not lead to significant developments in the museum. Adelino Pereira and Manuel de Avellar George, administrator, were essential to this publication (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** *Sculptures (light-coloured, polychrome wood) from Macomia, Cabo Delgado.*

*Source.* Bol. Mus. Nampula (Nampula), vol. 2, 115–129, 1961, with photographs by Garcia Soares

*Credits.* Gianfranco Gandolfo.

Another museum, the Dr. Álvaro de Castro Museum, was created in 1913 by Decree No. 1 095–A, published in the Official Gazette of Mozambique No. 32, of August 9 1913,



as a provincial museum and has been, since 1959, subordinate to the IICM, which at the time was considering the creation of a centre to coordinate the activities of natural history museums and ethnography museums. The subordination of the Nampula Museum (Museu Comandante Ferreira de Almeida) was also considered. However, it never came to fruition, as the Institute felt it did not have the financial resources to maintain it (Instituto de Investigação Científica de Moçambique, 1963). Despite the difficulties it faced, the IICM published 12 volumes of memoirs between 1959 and 1975, the result of the work of various researchers and collaborators, the "amateur anthropologists" mentioned above.

In the early 1960s, only the first (main) wing of the museum's architectural project had been built, with three more planned and a Makonde village designed to house artists and a workshop, with a view to "preserving their sculpture intact, promoting it and placing it on consumer markets at fixed prices" (Madureira, 2020, p.19). The intention likely was to establish sculptors in Nampula, as had been done in Dar-es-Salaam and other urban centres, and to promote not so-called "modern Makonde sculpture" but rather "ancient" sculpture.

Adelino Pereira's departure from the museum, the historical context, what happened in the following years with the development of the war of liberation, the inability to find resources and a "better solution" for the museum's operation (the City Council, the IICM, the Government) and some attempts to halt the increasing deterioration did not allow the museum's situation to change for the better. There were several calls for attention to the challenges the museum was facing in newspapers and periodicals (Pena, 1971).

Despite this situation, it was understood that the museum was valuable for its ethnography section and continued to attract people who were interested in its collection and continued to study it. It is worth mentioning the study carried out by António Tavares Simões Capão (1970), a local high school teacher, scholar, researcher and museum lover<sup>6</sup>. In his careful description, which is almost a guide to the museum, the two figures (a man and a woman) in relief on the portico of the façade, sculpted by the master sculptor Chibanga Muari (Muali), are particularly noteworthy. Malundi is also another nickname for the sculptor who died in 1995. It is interesting to note the reference made by the author of this study to this sculptor in a context in which sculptors, although socially recognised even by the colonial administration, were not generally identified or signed their works. In the 1950s, there were 65 sculptors registered in the Makonde district (Gandolfo, 2007), but there were many others who had emigrated to Tanzania (Dias, 1973; Wembah-Rashid, 1998).

The museum's ethnographic collection continued to attract some interest. However, the natural history section, which had serious conservation problems, seemed impossible to recover or maintain and was eventually closed. Not even the intervention of the CMRHM, which was also responsible for the constitution of collections and museums and which worked in Mozambique and in the museums created (1969–1972) during those years, had any impact on this museum, despite the fact that, according to the documentation consulted, there had been some contacts and expressions of interest.

<sup>6</sup> In 1971, at the request of its author, this study received a preface written by Father Alexandre Valente de Matos from the Escola de Habilitação de Professores de Marrere, Nampula.

In 1971, Alexandre Lobato proposed (letter to the provincial secretary of education, August 24, 1971) for the museum to be converted into the Ethnographic Museum of the North. However, none of the proposals materialised in the final years of colonialism in Mozambique. Work was even carried out on the building, the Junta de Investigações do Ultramar (Overseas Research Board) was asked to help catalogue and exhibit the ethnographic collection, and there were plans to expand the museum, install a taxidermy laboratory, an ethnographic restoration workshop, and offices, among other improvements. The same happened with the proposal to install a war museum on the first floor, also mentioned in Lobato's letter, for which the Museum of Military History, located in the Fortress in Lourenço Marques, already had a considerable collection that it wished to transfer to a specialised museum. With the end of the war and independence in 1975, this and many other museum projects initiated by the CMRHM were terminated or interrupted.

## **2. DIALOGUES BETWEEN THE PAST AND THE PRESENT AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ETHNOLOGY IN NAMPULA**

In colonial Mozambique, museums and other cultural institutions did not always get off the ground. Those who did always encountered many difficulties in getting established and functioning, going through numerous crises, as we have just shown. A few projects, the result of many years of work and various collaborations, including those through the CGF, came to fruition. However, they also faced, like the rest, a lack of qualified personnel and chronic budget shortages. As Alexandre Lobato stated in 1972, "in truth, closed, unknown, inaccessible libraries serve no one. Cultural institutions that do not enrich or progress immediately give an impression of their underdevelopment or that of those who run and govern them" (Sopa, 1990, p.6).

Despite this situation, of which this museum is an example, the inherited heritage and many of the objects that bear witness to the colonial narrative were appropriated and "reinvested" with a new symbolism of resistance to colonial occupation in the policies that followed independence, as part of a collective identity under construction, even though there were, and continue to be, multiple assessments of the colonial heritage and frequent tensions and disputes. In an independent Mozambique, the importance of museums and existing museums, numbering 11 at the time, was recognised, as was the need to expand the network, the lack of professionals, the inadequacy of infrastructure, and the lack of resources and budgets. However, during this period, some museums were also closed, such as the Museum of Military History, which was housed in the Fortress. Exhibits were remodelled, and new museums were opened (Costa, 2021).

The National Museum Service/National Museum and Antiquities Service began this new cycle in 1977. Taking into account the report of the commission responsible for studying the sector, several proposals were made to change the situation and ensure popular participation in the preservation of historical and cultural heritage. In this process, the implementation of a Campaign for Cultural Preservation and Enhancement played a central role. Nevertheless, to what extent were the radical political change that constituted independence in 1975 and the new political discourse capable of producing



changes in this specific social context, which was so diverse and complex and where changes would encounter acceptance, resistance, new conflicts and continuities?

Despite the many difficulties that arose, the Nampula Museum and other museums and monuments on the island of Mozambique deserved priority in the cultural policy pursued in this new context. The past and the present interacted in many ways. When it reopened on June 25 1977, the Nampula Museum was headed by two history graduates (Maria da Luz Prata Dias and Ricardo Teixeira Duarte), among the few at the time<sup>7</sup>, who were joined shortly afterwards by Paulo Ribeiro Soares and several other collaborators. Aligning the museum's operations with the objectives of the Campaign for Cultural Preservation and Enhancement meant organising the museum for this purpose and creating implementation and coordination departments<sup>8</sup>. The teaching of history, historical, archaeological and anthropological research, and interest in historical and cultural heritage were the focus of the activities carried out at the time. Some of the former assistants, who had been hired in the 1960s, were formally admitted to the museum and sought to integrate themselves, not without conflict, into the new context. Several Makonde sculptors also set up in the museum around the time of independence, showcasing the new styles of sculpture they practised and for which they had become known. The Makonde village conceived in the 1960s was returning in a new form. In the post-independence period, Makonde sculpture occupied a prominent place in the arts and the organisation of sculptors into cooperatives was encouraged. During this period, the museum developed its collection of Makonde art, had funds for acquisitions, and the sculptors' cooperatives experienced good and bad times. A mini-zoo was created, perhaps as a reminder of the past, of the natural history section, or influenced by other African museums that were then a reference. The desire to breathe new life into the ethnographic collection, to study it, to organise exhibitions and to train new people to work in museums remained. In 1978, the report presented at the "1st National Meeting of Museums and Antiques" mentioned the holding of several temporary exhibitions and a permanent exhibition on Mozambican art, which opened in June 1977. From then on, there was little progress and considerable setbacks. In 1980, a temporary exhibition on the evolution of Makonde sculpture was mounted from the museum's collection. There is no record or catalogue of the exhibition, but those who conceived and organised it wrote about Makonde sculpture in the following years (Duarte, 1987; Soares, 1989).

In 1981, as part of the restructuring of the state cultural body, the museum, which had been unable to establish a minimum staff, closed to the public in July while continuing to carry out activities related to the ethnographic collection and the maintenance of the infrastructure. A 1983 report by the Secretary of State for Culture refers to the existence of 2,748 objects, of which only 810 were identified (Madureira, 2020). A new policy aimed at strengthening and upgrading existing cultural institutions, including

<sup>7</sup> They were also responsible for museums and the conservation and restoration of historical monuments on the island of Mozambique.

<sup>8</sup> In 1977, the National Museum Service/National Museum and Antiquities Service produced a document entitled *Organização dos Museus de Maputo e Nampula* (Organisation of the Museums of Maputo and Nampula) to implement the Campaign for the Preservation of the Historical and Cultural Heritage (Serviço Nacional de Museus e Antiguidades, 1978).

museums, was gradually implemented. In the case of the Nampula Museum, the idea of establishing a national museum of ethnology (a project that will not be discussed here) became clearer, as did that of a Makonde art project that would inventory existing collections in public museums, private collections and collections outside Mozambique, and carry out research and dissemination and communication. A project for a Makonde art museum was even sketched out. It did not materialise, but several exhibitions were held in the country and abroad, one of them — "Makonde Art: Tradition and Modernity" — in Paris in 1989<sup>9</sup>. Despite the interest and various initiatives undertaken, there remained a great deal of ignorance about the museum's collection of Makonde art and the stories related to it.

### 3. WHO ARE SOME OF THE MASTER SCULPTORS, AND WHAT ARE THEIR WORKS?

The museum, which was closed to the public, underwent a period of reorganisation in the 1980s, during which the spaces necessary for the functions of a museum were defined and adapted, support was sought, people interested in working in museums were identified and trained, and a small team was set up to ensure that the ethnographic collection was better stored and to gather the existing documentation on it. The museum only reopened in 1993 as the National Museum of Ethnology. During the museum's creation phase, Adelino Pereira was responsible for preparing instructions for collectors from the various administrative districts to fill in and register labels, files and inventory books. The objects were identified by small cardboard labels attached to each object with a string. Several years later, given the difficulties reported, there were dozens of labels in the museum, stored in various containers, separated from the objects to which they referred. No inventory book has been found to date. The files existed, but no number or code was linking them to the object or label, and none of the objects were marked. How could the objects in the museum's ethnographic collection be identified and related to the existing files? Everything would have been much easier if each file had contained information such as the dimensions of the object, details of the materials and, above all, photographs of each object or even drawings, but this was not the case. Some of the objects had new files, and there were a few photographs resulting from the initial training and work carried out in previous years by the National Museum Service/National Museum and Antiquities Service, but this had not been completed. The first almost complete and individualised photographic documentation of the sculptures and masks in the museum dates back to this period. Together with the same type of documentation carried out on the Makonde art and culture collections of the Natural History Museum (Maputo) and the National Art Museum (Maputo), this made it possible to prepare and organise the exhibition in Paris in 1989.

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<sup>9</sup> This exhibition was organised and financed jointly by the French and Mozambican Ministries of Culture and Foreign Affairs within the framework of existing cooperation agreements. It involved several museums in Mozambique that had collections of Makonde art, the Museum of African and Oceanic Arts, which hosted the exhibition, and other European museums and collectors who loaned pieces from their collections, including museums in Portugal. A catalogue referenced in this text (Madureira, 2020) was produced.

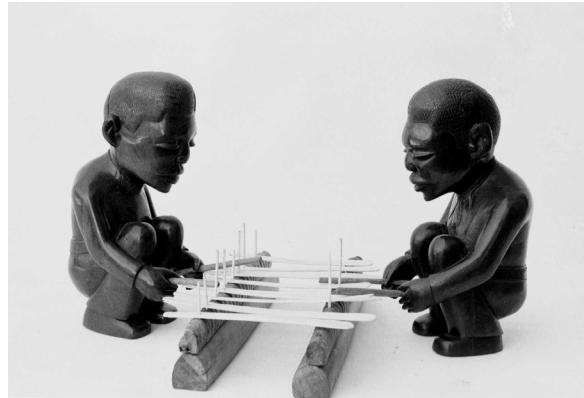
The objectives, approaches, and research methodologies adopted to gain a clearer understanding of the initial process of forming the museum's collection and its documentation are mentioned. Reconstructing *a posteriori*, a process carried out at a given moment in history by a group of people who deserve respect and recognition but who do not have specific skills in museology presents considerable difficulties. Previous studies and, more recently, the work of Tânia Madureira and Alda Costa have contributed to reconstructing the context in which the museum was created and how its heterogeneous collections were assembled. Our specific interest leads us to focus our attention on the collection of sculptures produced by Makonde sculptors. Despite various limitations and gaps in information, it seems possible to rescue from anonymity and oblivion the authors of some of the sculptures in the museum and their stories. In the political contexts, both before and after independence, although different and due to the museum practices followed, this sculptural production, its authors and their stories have not, until now, received the attention and recognition they deserve, remaining as inert testimonies of the past. It is believed that the results of the research can also be considered a contribution to the history of art in Mozambique. The research that began in the late 1980s, with a view to the exhibition "Makonde Art: Tradition and Modernity" in Paris, continued a decade later with the *Makonde Art Project*. The initiatives carried out showed the need to develop a study on the different schools of sculpture, artistic languages and most prominent artists in the Makonde art scene (Figure 3, Figure 4 and Figure 5). This need, identified several years ago, remains valid today. Even in the broader context of Mozambican art, the leading artists of Makonde origin do not receive the recognition they deserve. The starting point has been the documentation available at the National Museum of Ethnology in Nampula, consisting mainly of files, considered to be the initial files in the process of registering and cataloguing the collection, and three lists of objects proposed for acquisition, sent and then received by the museum, originating from the Makonde district. Given the lack of photographs of the objects in the existing files, we have resorted to other images that can be associated with the museum's initial collection, that is, the set of objects gathered for its inauguration on August 23 1956.



Figure 3. *Woman (wood with patina, partially dyed)*, 1956.

Authorship. Chibanga Muali Malundi.

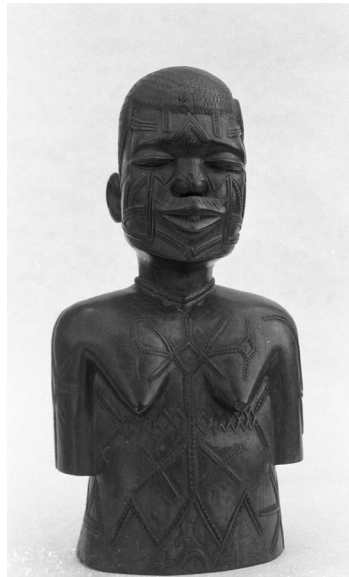
Credits. Gianfranco Gandolfo.



**Figure 4.** *Sculptural group Marimba Players, 1956.*

*Authorship.* Amisse Chipatela.

*Credits.* Gianfranco Gandolfo.



**Figure 5.** *Bust of a woman (wood/black wood with relief scarifications).*

*Authorship.* Chibanga Muali Malundi.

*Credits.* Gianfranco Gandolfo.

### 3.1. THE ORIGINAL RECORD CARDS (1954/1956)

Each record card has a registration number based on an alphabetical order in the archive and a numerical order. The letters of the alphabet do not seem to refer to a classification of the collections, and each letter of the alphabet does not seem to contain the same number of record cards. With some approximation, the following results can be obtained: A (1–699), B (700–1499), C (1500–2099), D (2100–2999), E (3000–3521?). In 1983, according to the report by the Secretary of State for Culture, 2,748 objects were registered, of which 810 were documented. On each card, in the field dedicated to the name of the object and the dialect, there is a very limited description of the object, with no information on its dimensions, material or technique and, above all, no photographs of the object. This is followed by fairly detailed information about the owner of the object,

the collector, the date of collection and references to the place of collection. The file is sometimes completed with handwritten notes on how the object was acquired (Figure 6).

NR 2

**MUSEU REGIONAL DE NAMPULA**

Ordem Alfabética do Arquivo C N.º da Ordem 1645

FICHA N.º 1645

Nome gentílico do objecto LICHINAMO Dialecto MACONDE

Tradução em Português DANÇARINO DO "MAPICO"

Utilização \_\_\_\_\_

Identificação e Morada do doador { Nome MATETE MBONDALA Profissão ESCUITOR  
 Tribo MACONDETA Cia MULANDA  
 Povoação NHAHAGALA Chefado BACAR  
 Regedoria RICAMA Posto NANGADE  
 Circunscrição PALMA Distrito CABO DELGADO

Colector \_\_\_\_\_ Morada \_\_\_\_\_

Data da recolha 21 / 3 / 56

in - Arquivo - 68/8-R

Figure 6. Record card from the Nampula Regional Museum of the Mapico dancer sculpture and mask (part of a sculptural group), 1956.

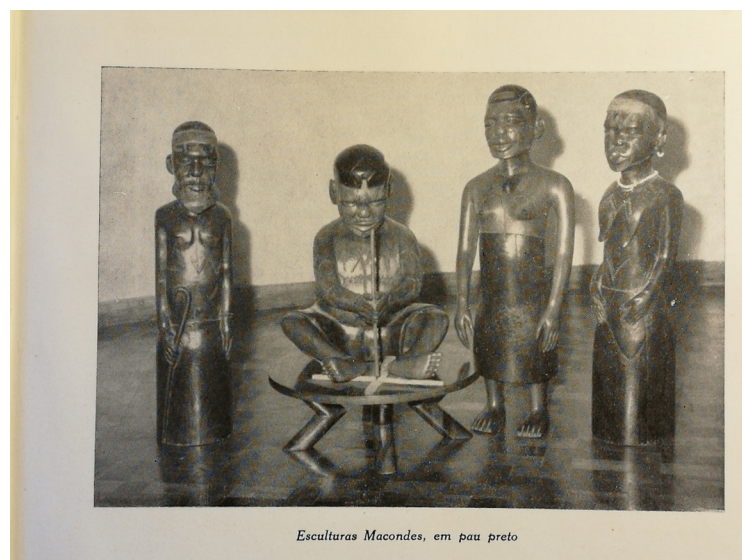
Credits. Gianfranco Gandolfo.

It should be noted that the administrative division does not coincide with the ethnolinguistic definition of the population, creating situations in which, for example, works by Makonde sculptors who lived outside the Makonde district were not identified as such. There are also other situations to consider, such as the one mentioned below. The sculptor Amisse Chipatela, who, together with Chibanga Muali Malundi, is recognised as a master of Makonde sculpture, according to the information written on a photograph of him in the museum, was the son of a Macua father and a Makonde mother. The existing file also raises some doubts about the identity of the owner. In fact, only a few files have the word "artist" written above the word "owner", leaving doubt as to whether the designation "owner" also means the author of the sculpture. It was decided that all the names mentioned in the files should be recognised as owners and authors. Considering the date of the museum's inauguration, only the files relating to the years 1954, 1955 and 1956 were analysed, as they concerned Makonde sculptors, in order to compare and link them to the images we have from the corresponding period and to the documents relating to the shipment and receipt of pieces from the Makonde district (09/04/1956 and 18/04/1956) that are in the museum. In the first quantitative approach, it can be seen that there are 100 pieces identified as Makonde, nine from 1954, 38 from 1955 and 53 from 1956. Considering the documents relating to the shipment and receipt of sculptures from the Makonde district to the Nampula Museum on April 9 1956, and April 18 1956, respectively, which largely coincide, there is a summary description of 33 objects in one document and 27 objects in another. The sequence of letters A/B/C/D/E and the numbering of the record cards do not correspond to the collection dates shown at the bottom of each card, confirming that the collection date, the museum entry date and the object registration are not aligned. It seems correct to assume that the objects referred to in the two documents, collected in the Makonde district and received by the museum in the number 27, are part of the 53 registered in the 1956 files. The 26 missing objects were probably collected in Palma, Mocímboa da Praia, Macomia, Quissanga and Porto Amélia.



### 3.2. THE IMAGES (1957/1963)

The first images available from the museum's collection are not included in the original registration files but appear in various sources that, in terms of time, correspond to the period in question. We refer to a photo album donated to the CGF in 1957, which financially supported the creation of the Museum, the Nampula Museum Bulletins (George & Pereira, 1960, 1961) and a photo album produced by the IICM in 1963 (Instituto de Investigação Científica de Moçambique, 1963), on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Dr. Álvaro de Castro Museum. The album donated to the CGF includes photographs of some of the museum's pieces and photographs of the exhibition display cases. Bulletin Number 1 has photographs of small groups of pieces, such as masks, life-size sculptures related to the mapico dance, and light wood and black wood sculptures — the latter being religious sculptures. Bulletin Number 2 contains photographs of a group of masks, a photograph of several sculptures together and several sculptures photographed individually and in greater detail (Figure 7). The album *Esculturas do Povo Maconde* (Sculptures of the Makonde People) consists of individual photographs of pieces belonging to different entities (Dr. Álvaro de Castro Museum, Nampula Museum and perhaps private collections), which can be recognised on the basis of the documentation currently in our possession. However, the album does not contain any reference to the origin of the pieces. We have not yet had access to the set of photographs compiled by Margot Dias (1973) relating to the period in question, but we hope that they will be available soon. A comparative study of this visual documentation, focusing exclusively on Makonde sculpture and excluding masks and sculptures from other ethnolinguistic groups, allows us to identify with certainty 37 sculptures belonging to the museum's original collection. Some of these objects do not appear to be in the museum's current collections, requiring further research and documentation.



**Figure 7.** Group of sculptures (wood/black wood/rosewood with patina, partially dyed and with relief scarifications. Sculptures by Chibanga Muali Malundi can be recognised in the centre).

Source. Bol. Mus. Nampula (Nampula), vol. 2, 115- 129, 1961, with photographs by Garcia Soares.

Credits. Gianfranco Gandolfo.

### 3.3. THE SCULPTORS

Based on the available images and information contained in the captions of the two museum bulletins, the collection of sculptures can be divided into two groups: (a) sculptures from the coastal area (Palma, Mocímboa da Praia, Macomia, Quissanga and Porto Amélia) and (b) sculptures from the Makonde plateau. In general, the sculptures from the coast are made from light, soft, artificially coloured woods. The materials used and the sculpting techniques are very similar to those used to make masks. As for the sculptors, in Palma, there are references to the names of Namba Magoma, Iohane, Miteda Valaviango, Chibuana, Balide Tamulungo, Cacime Muena and Matete Mepondala, the latter two being the authors of a set of figures, most of them life-size, practising the mapico ritual (Figure 8 and Figure 9). Most of the sculptures from Macomia were donated by the Macomia administration and are considered to be by unknown artists. Among them are figures such as the administrator, the secretary, and the sepoy, the representatives of power at the time. The sculptures, which represent these figures realistically, reveal irony. The museum guide, which appears in Bulletin Number 1, describes how some of the pieces of wild teak and ceiba wood, by sculptors from Macomia and Mocímboa da Praia, represented Europeans with physical deformities for critical purposes, also denouncing artists, but from a different school to that of the Makondes (George & Pereira, 1960). Américo Pires de Lima (1943), in *Explorações em Moçambique* (Explorations in Mozambique), refers to materials of ethnographic interest collected during his medical-military service in the expeditionary forces along the Niassa coast in 1917. After analysing and describing the four "porters" acquired in Mocímboa da Praia and now preserved at the Institute of Anthropology of the University of Porto, he reports that he was informed that the Makondes also carve caricatures of white people (Lima, 1943). The sculptures from the Makonde district were collected in Bomela (Bichali, Nancodia, Simão), Capoca (Chomali, Malane), Chilave (Chata) and Bauala (Elangape, Chauaca, Vicente, Jaguavila, Chaba). Among all of them, in terms of quality and quantity (in a set of approximately 20 sculptures recorded in the files), two sculptors are still recognised today by other Makonde sculptors as masters: Chibanga Muali and Amissé Chipatela (Figure 10 and Figure 11). Although the files do not have uniform and scientific criteria for completion, they refer to them as "artists" in the identification of the owner. The two are from the Makonde region, but there are no references to the chiefdom or the village. This may suggest that the two produced most of the sculptures during a prolonged stay in Nampula in the early stages of the museum's creation, and their importance seems to be confirmed by the existence of photographs of Chipatela in the museum's bulletin and of Chibanga himself in the museum's documentation. Considering that of all the files analysed and completed in the years mentioned, less than half have the name of the author and that, among these, about half refer to Amissé Chipatela, Chibanga Muali and Matete Mepondala, a considerable number of sculpture files do not include the name of the author. The three sculptors mentioned could be mentioned and valued not only on the basis of this limited study but also because, during research carried out over the last few decades, they have been indicated by various sculptors as masters, particularly the first two. The sculptors Chibanga and Chipatela

were originally from the Mueda plateau, and the sculptor Mepondala was from the lowlands of the Cabo Delgado coast.



**Figure 8.** *Mapico dancer and mask (part of a sculptural group), 1956.*

*Authorship.* Matete Mepondala.

*Credits.* Gianfranco Gandolfo.



**Figure 9.** *Woman participating in the Mapico dance (part of a sculptural group), 1956.*

*Authorship.* Matete Mepondala.

*Credits.* Gianfranco Gandolfo.



Figure 10. Photograph of sculptor Chibanga Muali Malundi at work, Maputo, 1988.

Credits. Gianfranco Gandolfo



Figure 11. Photograph of sculptor Amisse Chipatela, most likely taken by photographer Sérgio Martins, 1956.

Credits. Gianfranco Gandolfo.

#### 4. FINAL REMARKS

In conclusion, it seems possible to draw some reflections from the information available on the geographical origin of the pieces, the relationships between the sculptors and the colonial authorities, the woods used, the types and themes of the sculptures, and the commissions, among other aspects. Much has already been written about the originality of the sculptures and the influences of the context in which the sculptors lived. In this case, it suffices to refer to Maria Leonor Correia de Matos (1979) and Margot Dias (1973) with regard to the collections of the Museum of Natural History (Maputo) and the National Museum of Ethnology (Nampula). It is difficult to imagine that artists could



remain "pure" and independent from the colonial authorities, missionaries, travellers and traders interested in their artistic productions. The mere fact of being recognised as an artist and sculptor prevented them from being subjected to forced labour. The same was true if one belonged to the Catholic Church community (Cazzaniga, 1994). Considering the initial collection of Makonde sculptures at the Museum of Ethnology in Nampula and comparing them with the list that appears in Bulletin Number 1 (George & Pereira, 1960), it is possible to conclude that most of the sculptures were produced to order, at the request of those involved in the creation and organisation of the museum to illustrate and integrate the various thematic sections (hunting, fishing, agriculture, rites of passage, folk dances, music, games, scenes from domestic life, among others).

The same bulletin includes a section entitled "Estatuária" (Statuary), which may indicate that the other sculptures produced were not considered to be of the same value. The sculptures by Chibanga Muali, Amisse Chipatela and Matete Mepondala, which stand out for their sculptural quality, do not attract attention, for the most part, for their thematic originality. A small number of sculptures, probably acquired from the artist himself without having been commissioned, stand out in this collection for their style, language and theme. However, there is little information about them, and even the name of the sculptor is unknown. Is this a coincidence, or is there some reason we are unaware of? Were more people involved in this selection or acquisition process? The museum's collection should remain accessible to all those interested in better understanding the history of each object. More voices are needed.

Other sources, such as written documents, correspondence, and photographs, among others, are important to continue producing knowledge about the collection. New hypotheses can be outlined to continue studying this important artistic production, as well as its authors and master sculptors. The people whom the museum serves deserve to be able to enjoy these resources and their cultural heritage, learning more about their history more transparently (Figure 12).



**Figure 12.** National Museum of Ethnology, Nampula. School visit, 2021. Flanking the entrance door are the bas-reliefs by Chibanga Muali Malundi, 1956.

*Credits.* Alda Costa.

**Machine Translation Post-Editing: Anabela Delgado**



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## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Alda Costa, from Mozambique, is a museologist, art historian (field in which she obtained her PhD from the University of Lisbon in 2005) and assistant professor (retired) at Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM), Mozambique. Her professional experience includes teaching, curriculum planning, museology, heritage and cultural management, having served as director of the Culture Department at UEM (2010–2021). She is the author of textbooks, articles, book chapters and catalogues, and books such as *Arte em Moçambique* (*Art in Mozambique*, 2013).

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4725-9063>

Email: [alda.costa@uem.mz](mailto:alda.costa@uem.mz)

Address: Av. Julius Nyerere, 3453, Maputo, Moçambique

Gianfranco Gandolfo (1947-2024), Italian-Mozambican architect, researcher and art collector. Since the mid-1980s, he has collaborated with the Ministries of Education and Culture in Mozambique and the National Museums of Art and Ethnology in Maputo and Nampula. He coordinated projects for the documentation, digitalisation and dissemination of Mozambican art. Curator and organiser of several exhibitions in Mozambique and abroad, he has numerous publications and editorial experience in the field of art and material culture.

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