

## CHAPTER 6

**The Archaeology of Massingir, Gaza Province,  
Southern Mozambique**

*Solange Macamo and Jan Risberg*

This chapter presents the results of recent archaeological work in the Massingir district of the Gaza province in Mozambique. The discussion is based on a cluster of sites that were newly registered near the Elephant River, a tributary of Limpopo River. The analysis of pottery traditions suggests that pastoral activities in Massingir might have started between AD 700 – 1400, during the period of the transition from the early to the later farming communities in southern Africa.

*Esta comunicação pretende actualizar as discussões anteriores sobre a investigação arqueológica realizada nos anos 70, em Massingir, um distrito da província de Gaza, em Moçambique. A interpretação é baseada no núcleo de estações, que foram recentemente localizadas no Rio dos Elefantes, um afluente do Rio Limpopo. A análise das tradições cerâmicas sugere que a actividade pastoril, em Massingir, pode ter começado durante o período da transição das primeiras às segundas comunidades de agricultores e pastores, entre AD 700-1400.*

**Introduction**

The village of Massingir (22°53'S, 32°08'E) is located c.240 km NNW of Maputo in the Gaza province (Fig. 1). It is located on the edge of the Elephant River, a tributary of the Limpopo River, c. 60 km from the Mozambique/South Africa border. Today cattle play a key role in the economic and social life of the population of Massingir. The origins of cattle herding in the Limpopo region have been discussed in relation to changes in settlement patterns during the transition from the early to later farming communities. Scholars suggested the use of the term “livestock revolution” to show its great significance for the accumulation of wealth that enabled community leaders to build the first Zimbabwe culture capital at Mapungubwe, south of the Limpopo River, in the 11<sup>th</sup> century AD (Hall 1987; Huffman 2000).

Based on an environmental assessment of the Massingir dam area undertaken between January and June 2006, we were able to define two different zones associated with two differentiate types of archaeological sites. The western area seems to have been suitable for hunting and gathering activities combined with cattle herding, while the eastern zone was more favorable for both cattle herding and agriculture. This probably contributed to the development of two specialized economic activities, throughout the history of the human occupation of the area.

However, this division should not be viewed as static, since humans continually interact with their environments in changing ways through time. As noted by Sinclair (1987:45), such relationships should be considered within... “...a dynamic view of