

# A PERSPECTIVE ON ARCHAEOLOGY IN MOZAMBIQUE

— Paul Sinclair

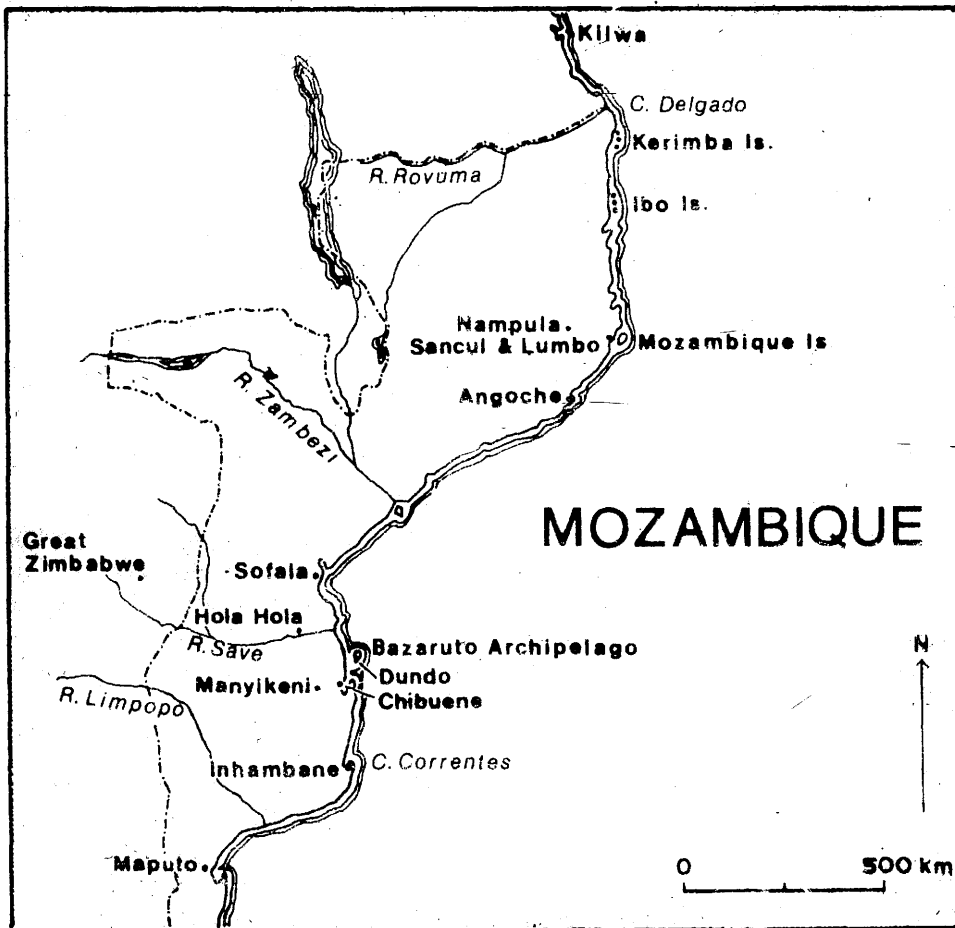


Fig. 1

The establishment in 1980 of the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology at Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo marked the consolidation of efforts in the two fields since independence in 1975 and in the preceding period (SARQ 1980). It parallels the National Museums and Antiquities services which has extended its involvement in teaching, recording and cultural development work on a national scale. These latter activities, however, fall outside the scope of the present paper.

At the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, broad ranging discussions have covered, albeit inadequately, not only issues concerned with compilation and explanation (cf. Gardin 1980) but also the role of archaeology as a discipline in Mozambican society. In order to provide a basis for the study

of archaeology, a collection efforts has been made to interrogate the historical roots of a conception of material culture in Mozambique (SARQ 1980). Beginning in the colonial period with isolated references to rock paintings, the various phases of archaeological and anthropological studies have been outlined.

These include notable 20th century physical and social anthropological contributions by among others Junod, Boas, Santos Junior, Earthy, Weisschoff, as well as a number of pioneering archaeological works (Morais 1976; SARQ 1980).

As has been mentioned elsewhere for other parts of Africa, the first archaeological emphasis was on paleolithic studies, for instance the work of Barradas, Bettencourt and Dias. Until the 1960's, the later periods did not receive much attention and the

work that had been carried out was generally done by visiting scholars (for instance, Van Riet Lowe and Breuil) who concentrated on coastal shell middens.

There were however a number of other notable scholars who contributed to the archaeology and anthropology of later periods in colonial and immediately post colonial times, for example Rita Ferreirara, Barradas, Oliveira, Senna Martinez, Liesegang, Dickenson, Derricourt and Smolla. A full account of the contributions of these scholars can be found in Morais (1976).

A persistent trait of nearly all such archaeological work done in Mozambique is the emphasis on intersite comparisons using typological studies. A number of attempts have been made to place Mozambican assemblages in relation to the more established sequences of the Republic of South Africa, Zimbabwe and Zambia. This tendency is understandable when both the arbitrariness of colonial boundaries and the relatively small number of archaeological sites known in Mozambique (approximately 160) are considered. This need for comparison has resulted in a conception of material culture which is abstracted from the economic, ideological and political dimensions of the societies which produced it and often from the basic physical environmental context.

Within this limited perspective the theoretical framework was poorly developed. Although considerable efforts were placed on the analysis of typological aspects of material culture, few, if any, attempts were made to conceptualize holistically the inter-relationships between different facets of social structure and social change.

Attempts to offset some of these inadequacies have appeared from a number of directions. Important contributions to the study of the archaeology of later periods occur in the series of papers by Morais, Duarte, Senna Martinex and Cruz e Silva (1976) and these opened up new directions in the study of ceramic distributions and technology.

A substantial contribution to the study of functional interrelationships of economic and environmental variables was provided by the Eduardo Mondlane University project at the Zimbabwe stone wall enclosure of Manyiken 1975-6, in which the British Institute in Eastern Africa participated (Garlake 1976a, 1976b; Barker 1978).

In addition to these developments, J.M. Morais in an important paper "Tentative de definicao de algumas formacoes socio-economicas em Mocambique de 0 a 1500" (Towards defining a model for social and economic formations in Mozambique from 0 to 1500 A.D.) built on previous work by F. Ganhao in FRELIMO's "Historia de Africa".

For the first time in Mozambique, precolonial social entities were conceptualised holistically and an attempt was made to integrate various aspects of material culture into a historical materialist perspective. Extensions of this initiative have entailed both theoretical and empirical work. The former has

already been dealt with in Sinclair (1983) and the latter will be described below.

### A Collection Strategy for Material Assemblages

A range of constraints have limited our possibilities for defining material assemblages for study. Several logistical, financial, and trained manpower limitations and the uncertain situation in areas affected by the Rhodesian conflict restricted the possible focus of fieldwork. These difficulties were in part overcome through generous support from Eduardo Mondlane University, the British Institute in Eastern Africa (1975-76) and more recently from SAREC, and the participation in various projects of the Riksantikvarieambetet (Swedish Antiquities Service).

Support from the latter, in particular, has been orientated towards developing the educative potential of archaeology in Mozambique and providing the necessary infrastructure to enable a broader range of archaeological research to take place.

Professor Karl-Eric Knutsson and P. Stroberg were initially responsible for the SAREC participation and both visited Mozambique. After contacts had been established with Stockholm University, further visits were undertaken by Professor T. Sjøvold and C. Linquist. Prof. Sjøvold and his team from the Osteology Research Laboratory are currently working on the osteological material from Manyiken.

In addition, the present author based at the Department of Cultural Anthropology is working on computer analysis of finds from Manyiken and other sites. The participation of the Riksantikvarieambetet commenced in 1981 with the visit of Dr. G. Trotzig with a view to establishing a programme of cultural resource management in Mozambique.

This was followed by the involvement of a series of professional archaeologists from the organisation (Dr. Dammell, P.-I. Lindquist and Leif Juansson). Full technical and scientific facilities, including an important series of radiocarbon dates, have been made available for the project in Stockholm and Uppsala.

Given that we had little, or in some cases no idea of the archaeological record in much of Mozambique, and that two foci of interest for later periods had already been established in Maputo and Inhambane Provinces, the sphere of activities were enlarged to include Nampula in the Northern Region. The array of possible paradigmatic approaches to archaeological research (e.g. anthropological, geographical, ecological) had been severely limited by the lack of infrastructural development.

In the absence of osteological, botanical, cartographical and environmental collections and compilations, it was decided that securely-dated representative samples of ceramics would provide useful entry-points for exploring the different levels of variability in the archaeological record of Mozambique and an initial chronological framework in three widely separated areas of the country.

Previous research was extended by a survey of the Save

valley and of Vilanculos Bay (Sinclair *et al.* 1977; Sinclair and Stephen 1978). Two brief surveys of Nampula province (Sinclair and Cruz e Silva) were carried out in 1978 and in 1979. In addition it was decided to extend the Department project at Manyikeni which had been initiated in 1975 by Morais, Garlake and Barker to provide a data-base which would allow the testing of new ideas in spatial and behavioural archaeology (Morais and Sinclair 1980) and provide detailed material for educational purposes.

## Nampula and Cabo Delgado Provinces

Initial archaeological surveys of northern Mozambique were undertaken in 1976 and 1977 by R. and M. Duarte of the National Museums service and later work was considerably facilitated by their contributions. Surveys of the River Lurio and Ibo Island in Cabo, Delgado province, and Mozambique Island and parts of the coast and interior of Nampula province were carried out in 1978 and 1979 (Sinclair and Cruz e Silva).

Test excavations in front of the church in Ibo Island recovered two stratified ceramic assemblages. A 10% stratified-random-sample of archaeological finds from the west beach was also taken. This involved collecting and recording all pottery and small finds from the low-water mark to the edge of the beach in randomly-selected 2-metre strips for each 20-metre length of the beach.

A similar sample was collected from the south-coast beach on Mozambique Island and complete surface samples of ceramic from a series of middens at Sancul on the mainland in front of the island. In addition, test trenches were excavated at two sites previously located by R. Duarte at Lumbo.

In the Murupula district of Nampula province and in the vicinity of Nampula itself, surface surveys were carried out and some information on ceramic manufacture and iron smelting was obtained. Test excavations were undertaken at *Murekane* 5 km. south of Nampula. First indications from analysis of the ceramics from this site suggest an Early Iron Age configuration showing mixture between attributes of "Kwale" and "Nkope" derivation. Similar material has been found below the talus slope of *Nhacuaho Cave*, 60 km. east of Nampula.

Work has begun with processing the pottery for computer analysis. This should allow the testing of preliminary indications of similarity between the *Ibo Upper*, *Sancul*, and *Lumbo I* material from the coast. Excavations in Mombasa harbour on the late 17th century Portuguese ship *St. Antonio de Tanna* (Sassoon 1981) have provided material almost identical with that from the *Sancul middens*. In addition, c. Sassoon and J. Kirkman (pers. comm.) have identified imported ceramics from *Ibo Upper*, dating from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The other grouping apparent from the test excavations and surveys comprises *Ibo Lower* and the *Nhacuaho* and *Nambula* later Iron Age site. Some superficial resemblances have been noted between this material and that from Kilwa period III

(Chittick 1974). These initial findings have been amplified recently by test excavations in *Nhacuaho* cave by Adamowicz and Lindqvist.

Per Inge Lindqvist working with Leonard Adamowicz (UEM) has participated in Iron and Stone Age surveys in northern Mozambique from 1982-83. In addition, he has initiated the first post-colonial underwater survey of the Mozambique coast and mapped the situation of about 20 wrecks of Portuguese and other European nationalities.

## South-Central Mozambique

A survey of the River Save from the Zimbabwe boarder on the seas was undertaken in 1977 by Sinclair, Cruz e Silva and Lo Forte. Owing to the war situation, the time which could be spent in any one place in the interior was limited but nevertheless three important environmental zones were sampled: dry colophospermum mopane; acacia-miombo mosaic; and the littoral zone. More than 20 stone age sites were found. In addition, it was possible to check some of the results from Dickenson's work (1975) with test excavations at *Maringare Bay* in the Mambone region.

Of particular interest is the site of *Hola Hola* situated on a hill on the north bank of the River Save, 60 km. inland from the coast. Remains of 43 concentrations of limestone rock fragments were mapped. Judging from a 4% excavated samples of the area of one of these, they are probably remains of structures. Burnt bone from one trench has been dated to the late 9th century A.D. The remarkable preservations of this site should allow considerable scope for spatial analysis.

The pottery from *Hola Hola* suggest an immediate affinity with the Gokomere/Ziwa tradition, given the decorative motifs on the independent restricted vessels. However, in view of our lack of detailed knowledge of recent finds and the variability of ceramics from the Transvaal Low Veld, this identification can only be seen in terms of a crude "cultural snap shot". Another site with very similar pottery but which has with attributes characteristic of latter Iron Age wares was discovered on *Bazaruto* Island.

The site of *Ponta Dundo* on the southern tip of the island is a surface scatter of pottery and shell uncovered by the wind-blown sands. Five fragments of glazed pottery (9th-10th Century Sassanian Islamic Ware) were found. Both exposures were statistically point-sampled and then reworked for collection of easily-visible materials.

In addition to *Ponta Dundo*, other sites were located in Vilanculos Bay (Sinclair 1982). The most important of these is undoubtedly *Chibuene*, double occupation site 5 km. south of Vilanculos. Judging from the imported Persian ceramics from

the 1981 season, the lower occupation of the site is thought to be not later than the tenth century (Chittick, Kirkman, Horton pers. comm.).

Excavations from 1981 carried out by Sinclair, Adamowicz and Lindqvist have exposed more occupation areas near the beach and have also confirmed the tenth century deposits slightly more than 100 m. inland from the beach areas.

## Manyikeni 1977-1980

Excavations at *Manyikeni* provide the possibility of testing the categories implicit in our conception of social formation against empirical evidence. This work extends our range of consideration of spatial interaction of variables on the semi-micro (within-site) level of Clarke (1977: 11-16). In it, the limitations of the functionalist approach are encountered and we attempt to provide an approach which integrates material culture into the economic, ideological and political categories of behaviour.

Building on the substantial contribution of the 1975 and 1976 programme (Garlake 1976 a, b; Barker 1978), two further seasons of excavations were carried out. The first of these was reported at the 8th Pan African Congress (Morais and Sinclair 1978). Briefly, a 1% stratified sample using 1 x 1 m squares was excavated from outside the stone wall enclosure composing c. 25% of the total living area.

In 1978, this sampling programme was followed up with more extensive excavation of house floors and other features. In addition, seven middens were sondaged with 2 x 2 m trenches to provide a complement to the random sample and allow comparisons of the results from the two approaches to excavation. It should be possible to contribute something to the discussion initiated by Ammerman *et al.* (1978) on reliability of sampling techniques. Finds from all trenches excavated since 1975 have been recorded on 80-column data sheets. So far the pottery and small finds are ready for statistical analysis and it is hoped also to include the osteological sample analysed by Sjobold, During and Sigbellius (Stockholm University).

An important problem to be faced in the *Manyikeni* analysis is the correlation of the finds from the middens with the two superimposed units recognized from the random sample area and then these two with the stratigraphic units from the enclosure excavations (Garlake 1976a, 1976b). These questions which are preliminary to a multivariate analysis of different areas of the site, will probably be assessed on the basis of a detailed analysis of variability of stylistic attributes of ceramics from the random sample area.

First attempts in exploring this variability have consisted of simple two and three-way cross-tabulations and computer mapping of selected attributes. These allow a gross impression to be gained of variation in shape, decoration (motif, structure

and technique) and placement of decoration throughout the sample area. A more refined approach is provided by Sinclair (this volume).

## Southern Mozambique

In the Maputo and Gaza provinces of southern Mozambique, increasing efforts have been devoted to extending previous work on the coastal midden sites. The ceramic assemblages available from the work of Senna Martinez (1976), Smolla (1976), Liesegang (1972) and Duarte (1976) have been reassessed (Sinclair, 1981). Current work of the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, UEM (by Marais and Jonsson), is focused on this zone. In addition, the important classical ethnological studies of Junod (1927) and Earthy (1937) provide a very valuable source of information for the detailed and long term projects necessary to assess recent advances in ethnoarchaeological studies.

On the broader regional scale, methods of spacial analysis developed by Lundmark in Umea which estimate the relative density of sites distributed across a landscape, have been applied to Zimbabwean Stone and Iron Age distributions (Sinclair and Lundmark 1984). This approach has been particularly useful in distinguishing clusters of stone wall enclosures from the Zimbabwe and Torwa state formations. Work is being extended to include spacial analysis of 19th century and present day settlements distributions in areas in Zimbabwe and Mozambique which have been well researched by historians and anthropologists.

A series of publications of completed research from the project is planned, as well as publications of more popular and educational interest. The intentions of the participants, in addition to producing well founded academic research, are to establish the idea, both in Sweden and in East Africa, that archaeology has a role to play in the various development processes.

## Acknowledgements

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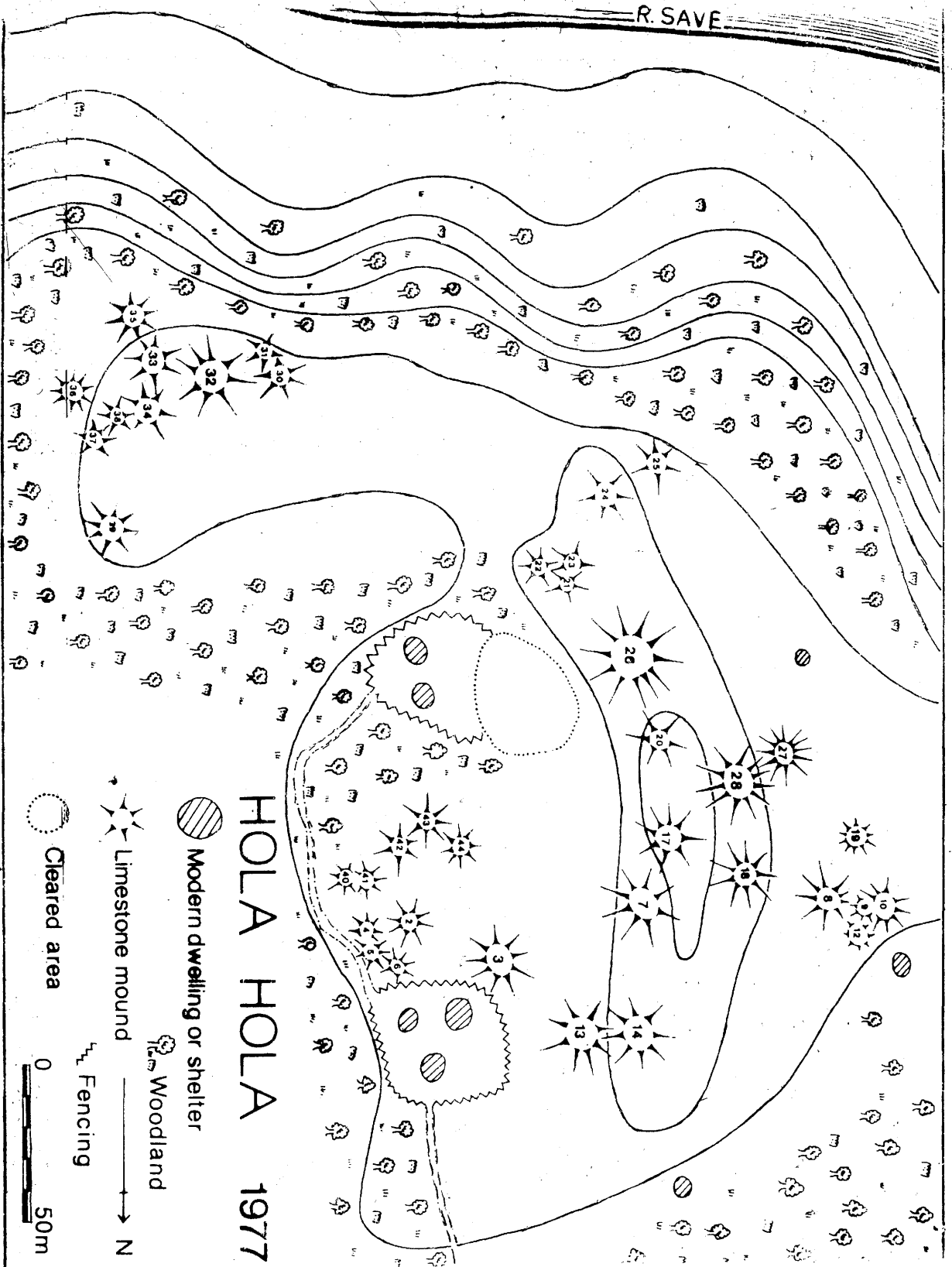


Fig. 2

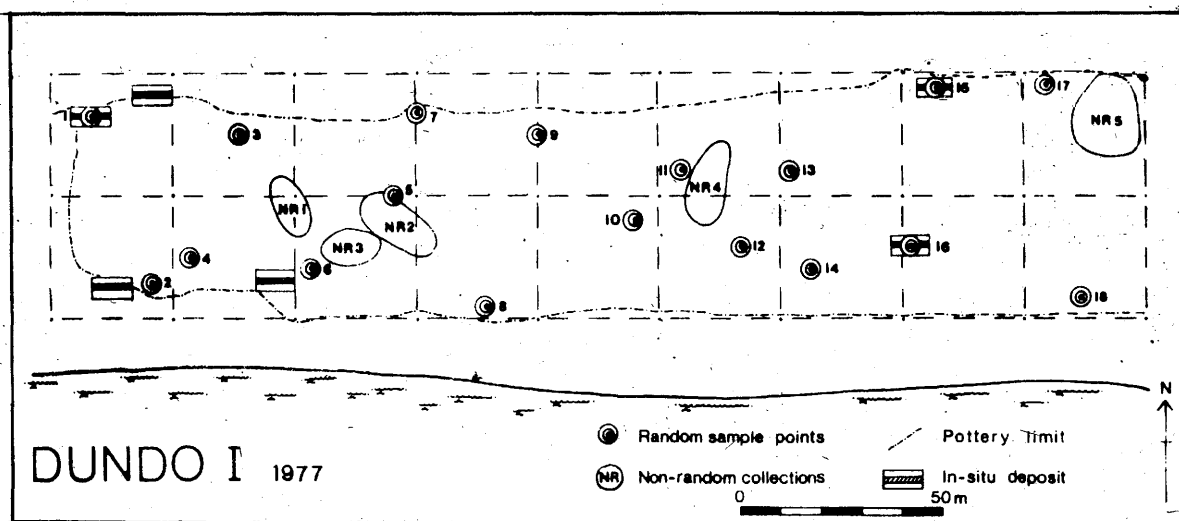


Fig. 3

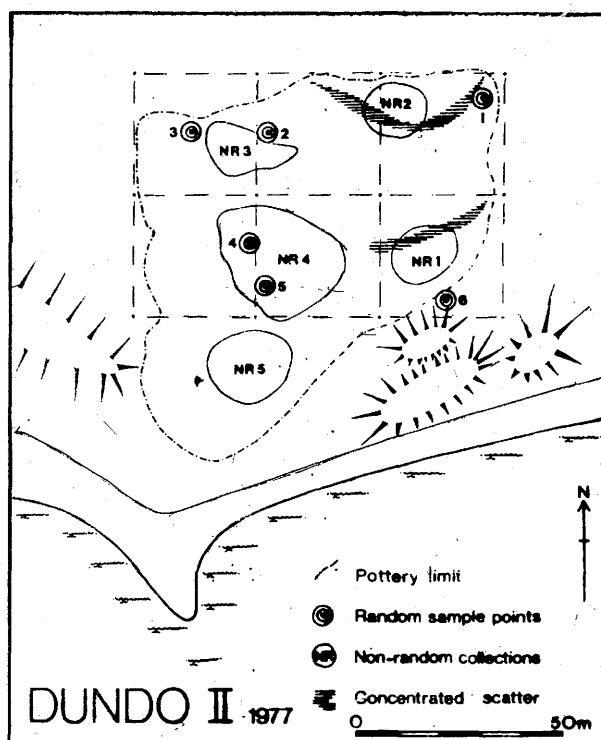


Fig. 4

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