

COLONIAL CAPITALISM IN ZAMBEZIA 1855-1930

by

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As Marx wrote, the capitalist mode of production presupposes the existence of the free wage worker who sells his labour power to the capitalist. However, the uneven development of capitalism meant that, between the 16th and 20th centuries it had only reached its full stature in Western Europe, North America and Japan. Its growth was retarded in Central and Eastern Europe, while in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America the penetration of capital frequently reconstructed old pre-capitalist modes of production or grafted itself onto these, giving rise to hybrid forms of production within the framework of forced or semi-forced labour. The stagnation and underdevelopment of these forms of production was the very condition for the development of capital, or, as Marx wrote, 'the pivot of bourgeois industry'.

This essay hopes to make a small contribution to the study which we shall call the 'colonial road to capitalism' in Zambezia, during the period 1885/1930. Even though this road has taken many forms, its essence seems to us, nevertheless, common to all the social formations of the so-called Third World, from the moment when, after European mercantile expansion, they were incorporated into the circuit of capital and became additional sources of agricultural raw materials and minerals for European industry.

In the late nineteenth century the Portuguese colonial state attempted to attract productive capital to Mozambique by leasing vast tracts of land to companies and individuals. However, the installation of companies had been preceded by the appearance in Mozambique of Dutch, German and English commercial houses which set up emporia on the coast (Mozambique Island, Quelimane, Inhambane, Lourenço Marques, and in the Zambesi Valley itself¹. The agents of these houses acquired oil seeds in Mozambique, particularly groundnuts and sesame (gergelim), in order to supply European industry with vegetable oils.

This commercial activity was no longer based on the acquisition of products such as gold, ivory and slaves, nor was it even an autonomous commercial activity. The merchants' capital of these houses was already, after the middle of the 19th century, a capital subordinate to European productive capital, and its profits depended on the redistribution of surplus-value at the level of social capital as a whole. In other words, merchants' capital had lost its dominant position in industrial Europe and had also lost its autonomy as a form of capital investment in Africa. On the other hand, this merchants' capital was itself still able to subordinate other sections of merchant capital. This, for example in the Zambesi valley the European trading houses increasingly used Indian traders as intermediaries in their contact with African producers. After more than 180 years of commercial hegemony in the centre of the country, Indian merchants' capital was now reduced to a subordinate position. The principal commodities acquired by the trading houses can be seen in the official trade statistics. Customs returns from Quelimane show that between 1870 and 1890 there were growing exports of sesame seed and groundnuts (which in part substituted the traditional rice trade of the African producers). This is an indication of the spread of commodity production in the Zambezi valley from the river Shire downstream.

The production of oil seeds took place within the framework of family agriculture. However, from 1890 and particularly after 1892 the trade in oil seeds in the form in which it had occurred until then declined rapidly. This can be explained, on the one hand by the growing competition from the colonial markets of West Africa and, on the other hand principally by the legislation of António Enes, who as Portuguese Royal commissioner in Mozambique, had created the conditions in which the new companies could install the plantation system.

1. See our recent work '**Notas para uma periodização da penetração capitalista em Moçambique (1505/1974)**. Maputo: UEM/CEA/DH, 1979.

As a result the trading emporia were gradually absorbed by the new companies in the centre of the country, as the example of the Boror Company demonstrates. This company bought the installations and the retail outlets of a French house established in Macuze. The marketing services of the other trading houses also increasingly began to serve plantation capital. At the same time as the basis for the plantation economy was being laid, the petty commodity producer of the pre-1980s was being transformed, in spite of great resistance, into the forced seller of labour power to the plantations.

The transformation of the petty commodity producer into a forced seller of labour power was brought about through the **mussoco**. This was a form of rent in kind which was widespread throughout the Zambezi valley, and particularly in the areas occupied by the **prazos**². **Mussoco** was collected in agricultural produce and in high value goods (ivory, gold, beeswax). Usually the **prazeiros** used the agricultural produce extracted from the surplus labour of the peasantry to feed the non-productive sectors of **A-Chicunda**, who were the captives of war of the **prazos**.

Once the military occupation of Mozambique was complete, once the power of the 'old' **prazeiros** was broken in a series of military campaigns, and once guarantees had been given which allowed the companies to establish themselves in our country, the **mussoco**, which until 1890 had been a limited 'customary' rent, was restructured into an official and obligatory double ground rent. The peasants were obliged to pay half the **mussoco** in work on the plantations and the other half in money or (later) goods for export. In other words, the fundamental relation of production in the Zambesi valley was not destroyed but maintained and intensified, coming to serve the demands and movements of capital. The combination of the old and the new was studied by Marx in **Capital**: 'But as soon as people, whose production still moves within the lower forms of slave-labour, corvee-labour etc., are drawn into the whirlpool of an international market dominated by the capitalistic mode of production, the sale of their products for export becoming their principal interest, the civilised horrors of over-work are grafted on the barbaric horrors of slavery, serfdom etc.' (Marx, **Capital**, I, p. 226 progress Publishers, Moscow, n.d. ref. not in original).

The penetration of the companies led to the elimination of small Portuguese and Indian merchant capital in Quelimane and Tete. The most important companies were the Companhia da Zambézia, the Companhia do Boror, the Empresa Agrícola do Lugela, the

2. Prazos were originally estates leased for three generations to Portuguese settlers. Started in the 17th century, they were intended to foster the development of new forms of agricultural production. Instead they acted as trade bases. The 'achikunda' were captives taken in war with neighbouring prazos or kingdoms... ho constituted a slave army on the estate.

Companhia do Luabo, the Société du Madal, Sena Sugar Estates (particularly in Quelimane). Outside Quelimane and Tete two chartered companies which enjoyed sovereign rights in the areas they occupied, were established: the Companhia de Moçambique between the river Zambesi and river Save, and the Companhia do Niassa which occupied the districts of Cabo Delgado and Niassa.

Thus capitalism in Zambezia did not emerge either as a result of a struggle between an ascendant bourgeoisie and feudal classes, nor as a result of a process of differentiation in which small entrepreneurs emerged as a section of capital. Rather it was the result of the stifling of small (Indian and Portuguese) merchants' capital by the Portuguese colonial state even though this benefitted less the metropolitan bourgeoisie in Portugal than the bourgeoisie of the other great European capitalist powers.

Nevertheless, the investment of productive capital in the Zambesi valley involved a risk for the companies, for the military 'pacification' campaigns continued during the first two decades of the 20th century. Peasants violently resisted the 'civilised horrors of overwork'. It is for this reason that the **mussoco** was an alternative throughout almost the whole valley to the investments of productive capital which remained sparse almost until the second world war (with the exception perhaps of the sugar plantations). The 'refeudalisation'³ of the **mussoco** furnished the companies and individuals who leased the **prazos** with relatively stable sources of revenue. We shall see later in more detail how this mechanism functioned on the plantations.

MUSSOCO: DOUBLE GROUND RENT

In order to draw the producer partly away from the natural economy and subordinate him to the needs of capital, the Portuguese state in 1890 through its Royal Commissioner António Enes, promulgated labour legislation which provided that all the **colonos** (residents) of the **prazos** were obliged on paying the **mussoco** of 0\$80 (\$ for Escudo) per person per year to pay half in labour and half in money. Only the local pre-capitalist aristocracy, children under 14 years of age, old people over 60, the incapacitated and prazo police were exempted. A later regulation stipulated that the leaseholders were obliged to receive from the **colonos** half of the **mussoco** in cash or in export goods, whichever best suited the tax-payer. Ivory, rubber, coffee, copra, groundnuts, sesame seed etc. were considered as export goods.

3. It is not our intention in this work to discuss rigorously whether feudalism existed or not in the Zambesi Valley. The term is only used here as a working definition.

A document published in 1890 ruled that 'all natives of the overseas provinces are subject to the legal and moral obligation to acquire through work the means that they lack to overcome and improve their present social situation. They have every right to choose the manner in which they will fulfil this obligation but if they fail to fulfill it the authorities will ensure that they fulfill it'. The right to collect the **mussoco** on the **prazos** (with the exception of those 'threatened with invasion' especially in Tete) was leased for 25 years in public auction. The bidding revolved around the annual rate of the rent. The minimum rate was the product of half the head tax of 0\$80 multiplied by the number of **colonos** on the **prazo**.

In 1913, Rober Lyne wrote that Quelimane district (Zambezia) comprised approximately 9 million hectares of land of which 5,400,000 were administered by the leaseholders of the **prazos** and 3,600,000 was directly under the control of the state. According to him only 0.5% of the occupied area was cultivated. Eleven years later, an agricultural investigation verified that of the surface area of Zambezia 392,000 hectares (approximately 4%) were under cultivation. Of these the plantations accounted for 62,000 (0.7%) and traditional agriculture for the remaining 3.3% (330,000 hectares). The principal plantation crops were coconut and sugar cane, followed by sisal and in fourth place, cotton. In the areas of traditional peasant production cassava, sorghum, rice and vegetables were the four principal crops.

In 1923 a census of the African population estimated that there were 853,395 individuals (a figure which merits little confidence) distributed in the following way:

— state land	285,339
— land under the prazos regime	563,258
— towns of Quelimane and Chinde	4,798

All the **colonos** of the **prazos** who did not have a 'fixed address' were defined by a regulation of 1899 as vagrants. In 1909 a new ruling set aside certain areas exclusively for Africans, although within them they had no property rights at all. Africans could only occupy areas outside the reserves provisionally. All those who, with their families, were absent for a year and who ceased to cultivate the land would lose the right to reoccupy it, such land thereafter being available for occupation by others. The intention of such legislation is clear: it was intended to tie the producer to the land in order to facilitate the collection of the **mussoco**.

In 1899 the **mussoco** was raised to 1\$20 of which $\frac{1}{3}$ was to be paid in labour service, equivalent to one week's paid labour at the rate of 0\$40 per adult. The amount of the **mussoco** rose over the years. In 1913 it was raised to 1\$60, in 1921 to 2\$50 (of which 1\$30 was collected by the state for rent) and, two years later to 10\$00 of which 8\$80 reverted to the state.

The increase in the **mussoco** signified that the producer started to spend less time in peasant production and more either in forced labour or in the production of export crops. It was normally the men who sold their labour power and the women who cultivated the export crops.

The increase in the **mussoco** was accompanied by an increase in the proportion paid by the leaseholders to the state. This provoked a wave of protests from the largest concessionaries in Zambezia and their class organisations: Companhia da Zambézia, Empresa Agrícola de Lugela, Sociedade do Modal, Sena Sugar Estates, Grémio dos Proprietários e Agricultores da Zambézia e Associação de Classe dos Interessados da Zambézia.

LABOUR: EMIGRATION AND RECRUITMENT

The massive emigration of the producers from the **prazos** was, among others, one of the immediate consequences of the application of the **mussoco**. The movement was directed both to other **prazos** where the rent was flexibly interpreted and outside Mozambique.

The resistance of the peasants expressed in the flight from the **prazos** (which must be regarded as an indirect form of class struggle) was used by the leaseholders and by the colonial state itself to create an important source of revenue through the institutionalisation of the export of labour.

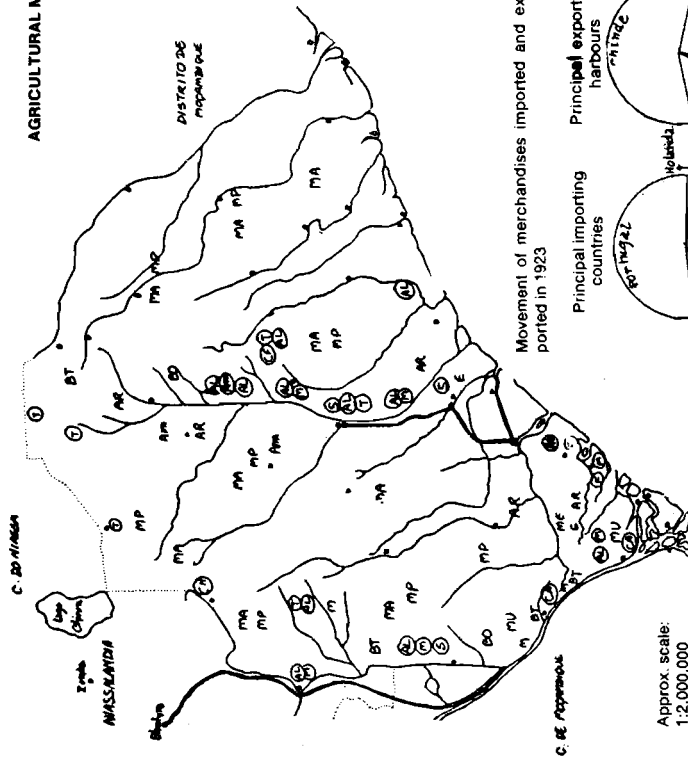
In 1905 one of the largest property owners in the Zambesi valley, the Companhia da Zambézia, rented **prazos** Lugela, Milange and Lómuè to the Empresa Agrícola do Lugela for 10 years. In spite of the legal commitment undertaken by the firm to use the recently 'pacified' population of the area for agricultural work or to supply the sugar plantations, it is clear that the Empresa Agrícola do Lugela specialised above all in supplying labour to the external market, namely S. Tomé and the Transvaal. Indeed, the Zambezia company itself exported workers to Southern Rhodesia. In the north of Mozambique the Niassa Company dedicated itself to the lucrative

AGRICULTURAL MAP OF ZAMBEZIA IN 1924

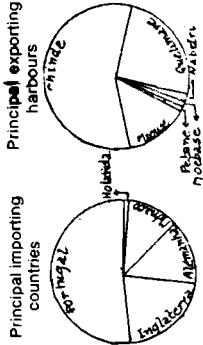
Legenda:

- Peanut's = Am
- Cotton = AL
- Rice = AR
- Sweet potato = BT
- Pigeon pea = BO
- Coffee = CF
- Tea = CH
- Sugarcane = CA
- Pea = E
- Cowpea = F
- Sesame = G
- Cassava = MA
- Sorghum = MP
- Millet = ME
- Maize = M
- Finger Millet = MV
- Sisal = S
- Tobacco = T

Plants: culture
Cultures of plants =



Movement of merchandises imported and exported in 1923



Source: GRILLO, op.cit.

Approx. scale: 1:2,000,000

trade of exporting labour to South Africa, becoming practically a subsidiary of WENELA.

Thus one of the clauses of the legislation published in 1890 and applied in 1892, which had obliged the leaseholders to use the peasants under their control for local agricultural work, was flagrantly broken. It is probable that this inversion of the labour policy elaborated by António Enes, which lasted until at least 1913, was aimed to bring about the more rapid accumulation of capital necessary to establish the infrastructure needed for plantation production, which was to be financed through local accumulation and by sacrificing scarce 'imported' capital.

The sale of labour power, making use of the 'natural outflow' following from the producers' resistance which took the form of emigration would have been more profitable, at least in the first phase, than collecting the **mussoco** from people who violently opposed the colonial yoke.

In the first decade of this century, Carl Wiese, one of the largest estate-holders in Tete wrote that 'in the last twelve years' 50 thousand individuals had emigrated from Milange, Massingire and from the **prazos** of Tete. According to Wiese there were several reasons for the emigration: (a) the difference between taxes collected in Mozambique and outside Mozambique, (b) the obligation to take up wage work after the tax had been paid, (c) unpaid service for the state sanctioned by the **prazos** legislation, (d) abuses in the recruitment of volunteer labour.

The migration was directed principally to Southern Rhodesia and Nyassaland, although there was also an important flow to South Africa.

Between Cachomba and Zumbo, wrote Wiese 'where in the past there were hundreds of settlements along the road, today the visitor rarely encounters places where he can buy the things he requires to sustain him on his journey. The natives, tired of continual demands, have disappeared'.

Referring to Tete, the colonial governor, Jorge Camacho, observed that emigration to South Africa was still a 'recent phenomenon' whereas emigration to Southern Rhodesia had already become the 'torment of WENELA recruiters'. According to him the natives felt 'at home' in Southern Rhodesia.

A Portuguese lieutenant also referring to Tete, emphasised that discontent was growing among the African population and was expressed 'in constant flights which, in the last years has reached the sum of 80,000 **colonos**'.

In 1906, the emigration from Zambezia and Tete was calculated at 22,034 individuals (a figure which is certainly underestimated). Of these, 1954 left Quelimane and Tete for the Transvaal, 500 went to work on the Swaziland railway and 20,000 fled from the district of Zambezia. Between 1910 and 1912 a total of 1,700 individuals emigrated from Zambezia to the Transvaal.

In Tete, there was an established pattern of migration to Southern Rhodesia from Zumbo, to Northern Rhodesia from Maravia and to Nyassaland from Macanga and Angonia. In the then district of Zambezia, there was emigration especially from Milange and Lomwe, to Nyassaland as well as labour recruitment for S. Tomé and the Transvaal.

The zone to the north of Tete and the area to the west bordering on the Chire river were thus the two main centres from which labour left Mozambique. Over time the farms and mines of Southern Rhodesia came to absorb the greatest portion of the immigrants, thus creating in the centre of the country a dependence identical to that which was created in southern Mozambique in relation to the South African mines.

In the meantime the Portuguese colonial state, which had literally transformed the south into a reservoir of cheap labour to be used outside Mozambique and especially in South Africa had gradually conquered the position of labour supplier to the north of the Zambezi. The areas of Maganja da Costa, Alto Molócuè, Baixo Molócuè, Moebaze in Zambezia and the old district of Mozambique acquired that status of labour reserves in the first phase for South Africa and Southern Rhodesia and in a second phase for the plantations run by the companies. Recruitment was undertaken with the help of the local pre-capitalist dominant classes to whom the state paid 0\$10 for each worker recruited. From a certain date recruitment for the South African and Rhodesian mines was forbidden on the **prazos** and only authorised in the colonial state's reserves. In these, according to Lyne, about 7,000 individuals were recruited to work outside Mozambique in 1910 while the sugar estates struggled with a shortage of about 3,000 workers.

The norms governing the supply appear to have been altered from 1913 and the bulk of the recruited men seem to have been channelled by the colonial state to the plantations. Nevertheless the state still supplied labour to other employers. For example in 1913, the circumscription of Maganja da Costa was supplying workers to the railway from Namacurra to the public works department of the

town council as well as to the plantations. The dimensions of this traffic were such that the governor of Quelimane wrote that 'the region is today practically transformed into a transport agency and a supplier of people for all kinds of work'. 'Transport' here refers to the human muscle power of the Africans on whose backs everything was carried from baggage to men.

Labour recruitment for South Africa north of parallel 22° was prohibited in 1913. The official justification given was that to the north of parallel 22° Africans were more prone to illness. However, it is more probable that the parallel was not so much a geographical division between areas containing persons with different levels of physical strength than a battle line between two capitals struggling for the cheap labour supply: in the south, South African mining capital acting through WENELA and in the north, plantation capital, even though, paradoxically, some companies, namely the Companhia da Zambézia and the Empresa Agrícola de Lugela exported labour for some time.

RUPTURE OF THE PRODUCTIVE CYCLE OF THE PEASANTRY

The companies and individual leaseholders did everything possible to avoid antagonising the labourers available on their concessions. The peasants provided the companies with an important accumulation fund, obtained from the **mussoco** paid either in the form of money or in the form of export goods. They therefore sought to ensure that the agricultural work on the plantations was undertaken by workers coming from other areas. In this respect the governor's Report of the District of Quelimane for 1914-15 states that 'everywhere the shortage of native labour is proclaimed ... the labour which it is claimed is not available is intimately linked to the **mussoco**; if the people of a **prazo** are made to work continually the population of the **prazo** does not increase; but if, on the contrary, people are brought from outside to work on the **prazo** leaving the population of the **prazo** itself undisturbed, the number of natives increases and so too does the leaseholder's profit, for each **colono** represents 1:200 per year'. The actions of the Boror company provide a good example of this approach. In 1912, according to the census undertaken by the company it had 18635 **colonos**; two years later it had 38825. On the company's plantations there was a lot of different kinds of work and the treatment the workers received was not better

than that meted out on other plantations. The explanation for such an extraordinary growth in the number of inhabitants lies in the fact that the company recruited seasonal workers in Maganja for agricultural work and only demanded that the local population pay the tax, either in money or export goods.

The colonial state tried to end this situation in 1919 by prohibiting the companies and individual leaseholders from recruiting more workers from areas outside their **prazos**. This was a measure which had little success. At the same time the payment of half the **mussoco** in kind was forbidden, apparently in an attempt firstly, to simplify collection, secondly to increase state revenue and thirdly to create a uniform pattern of payment. The move did not have much success, however, since there was little money in circulation in the region. Cloth continued to be, as in the past the real unit of account.

The abuses that accompanied the collection of the **mussoco** produced over time a constant exodus of producers to Southern Rhodesia and Nyassaland as well as periodic migrations within Zambezia itself. These migrations contributed to the partial break down of the productive cycle of the natural peasant economy. Furthermore, the payment of the **mussoco** in money introduced new needs and probably also increased the sexual division of labour: women undertaking most of the household and field work while men complemented the domestic economy with the wage. Old crafts were undermined: for example in Morrumbala, in the Zambezia Company's area, the company started to sell hoes to the peasants at 1\$00 each which led immediately to iron foundries being abandoned and to decline in the activity of the ironsmiths. Even today it is possible to see traces of these foundries in the piles of rusty filings and other remains.

Another example of the partial breakdown of the natural peasant economy is found in the way the **nomue or goerro** societies were transformed. These were associations common in the lower Zambezi region where adolescents of both sexes lived in mixed dormitories. In exchange for remuneration they offered among other things to undertake agricultural work and to build and repair houses. In some of the Zambezia Company and Empresa Agrícola de Lugela's **prazos**, these associations were moved next to the **luanes** of the **prazos**, lodged there in zinc sheds and then given the most varied agricultural work to do. This example shows how a productive pre-capitalist institution was preserved and restructured to meet the needs of capital.

The transformation which took place in the natural peasant economy (which were exacerbated by frequent natural disasters in Zambezia) meant that the defences of the producers became increasingly fragile. In 1906 for example, even according to the colonial statistics, about thirty thousand people died of hunger in Zambezia. On **prazos** Andone and Ancuaze alone which were leased to the Zambezia Company 8,534 died while 4,619 fled. Three years later, a colonial governor stressed that 'the intensive development of the plantations has fatally turned the native away from his own crops'.

During the first decades of the century, lower Zambezia was badly affected by great droughts. They were the result of the felling of millions of trees on both sides of the Zambesi (in the Zambezia company's area and the Mozambique company's area) which were not replanted. The felling took place to provide the steamers which ploughed the Zambesi between its mouth and the Chire transporting merchandise to and from Nyassaland. The pattern of rainfall had been gravely affected by this indiscriminate deforestation.



WORKERS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

At the end of the period (1885/1930) the area given over to plantations covered four zones in Zambezia. The most important encompassed the coastal strip from the mouth of the Zambesi to the mouth of the river Raragra with further small areas in Bajone and Moebaze. A second zone covered small areas along the river Licungo, while a third included the area of Mopeia and Luabo. Finally the fourth zone included small sections next to the River shire. In these areas the most important crops were coconut, cotton, sugar cane and cotton respectively. To each of these corresponded one or two predominant food crops: on the coast, rice, along the Licungo, maize, along the Zambesi, maize and sweet potatoe, and along the Shire, maize.

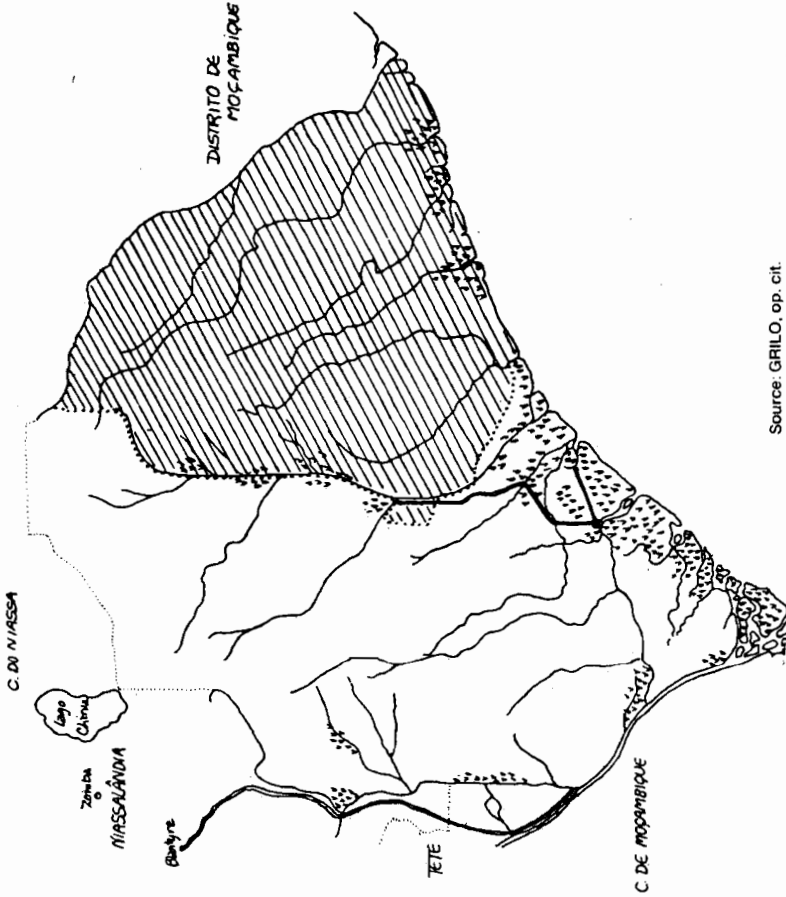
The cultivation of food crops on the plantation signified that the peasant produced on the insistence of the leaseholder the means of reproduction of his own labour power. In other words part of family production was 'transported' from the village to the plantation. A part of the pre-capitalist peasant economy thus reproduced itself in the pores of capitalist plantation, which allowed the employer to keep wages low.

In order to have an idea of the numbers of workers employed on the plantations we shall refer to a report written in 1907. This shows

Legenda.

-  Recruitment area for labour force
-  Plantation area

Approx. scale:
1:2,000,000



Source: GRILLO, op. cit.

that the Zambezia Company employed 2,000 people each day. It possessed 149,260 coconut trees, 72,140 coffee plants, 330,000 sisal plants, 3,400 coconut palms, 20 hectares of experimental coffee and a small cocoa sector. It also had 57 kilometres of drained valleys, two steamboats and 80 small boats for river transport. For land transport it had 28 kilometres of railway line between Quelimane and Maquival and on all the company's **prazos** there were ox wagons for transport. It also had two rice threshing mills, a cair factory in Quelimane, a brick factory and cattle herds. The Companhia de Açúcar de Moçambique employed between 1,200 and 2,500 workers for the harvest of 1,200 hectares of sugar cane. It had a sugar factory and still in Mopeia, and a steam cereal mill. The Boror Company daily employed on its plantations about 2,500 individuals and in the industrial and transport sector an average of 600. It had coconut, rubber, rice and cotton and sugar cane plantations. The fourth and final example we have is that of the Madal Society, whose labour force worked a total of 142,500 labour days per year in its industrial sector. The Company had built 1,500 metres of railway line.

In this 1907-9 report the colonial Governor of Qualimane wrote that agriculture in Zambezia had 2 major needs: low wages and abundant hands. This was because 'in many areas there is no way at the moment of substituting them by machines'. He added that workers from Nyassaland were being recruited and contracted in their thousands to work on various **prazos** in Zambezia. On the **prazos** of the Companhia do Luabo, for example, migrant workers from Nyassaland earned 2\$50 per month and were entitled to receive food.

The infrastructure designed to serve the plantations was largely inadequate. At the end of the 1920s, the network of roads composed small stretches not one of which measured over 100 kilometres. The network was designed to link the headquarters of administrative divisions to the different administrative posts and did not follow the economic lines of the region.

As regards the rails, there was a line which started from Quelimane and went north, reaching the confluence of the Lugela with the Liciengo river (Mocuba). Initially it was planned that the line should go from Quelimane to the Shire River to benefit from the transit trade from Nyassaland. The line to Mocuba was useful however for the companies, for it cancelled coconuts, food surpluses and cash crops such as groundnuts and sesame seed from Lomue producers to the coast. The former were destined to cheapen the

costs of reproduction of the work force and the latter were for export. In addition this railway line also brought workers to the coast. Another railway line, 28 kilometres long, linked Quelimane and Maquival an was principally used to transport copra.

The many water courses which descended from the high lands of the interior to the coast did not constitute alternative 'roads' because they either dried up or became puddles outside the rainy season. There remained the Zambesi which, because it allowed the movement of launches of 100-200 tons, served above all for the transport of commodities between Nyassaland and the coast. The use of animal traction (oxen) was restricted to only a few areas because of Tsetse fly.

THE PRINCIPAL EXPORT CROPS

In the last part of the period which we have studied (1885/1930) the principal export crops from Zambezia were coconut and sugar cane, with 25,532 and 8,651 hectares under cultivation respectively.

The most important commercial derivative from the coconut was copra and its principal market was France. Copra was also exported to Holland, England, Germany, Portugal and South Africa. In 1910 exports were 3,256,771 kilos, in 1919 7,126,623 kilos and in 1924 12,925,253 kilos. Copra was prepared by rudimentary processes and a large part of the total exported was marketed by small Zambebian producers. In 1924 alone, of almost 14 tonnes produced, 5 (sale included) came from African owners of coconut palms. An interesting point to note in this respect is that a report at the end of the 1920s showed that many traders, particularly Indians were involved in appropriating the trees of insolvent producers.

Another interesting phenomenon concerns the crops grown among the palms. Increasingly cassava was sown. It is possible that the use of cassava, a plant which does not demand much labour time was due to the prolonging of the working day on the plantations.

Sugar cane was the second most important plantation crop in terms of value of production. Sugar was produced in the Zambesi valley, in Mopeia and in Lantomba. Although these zones were relatively free of the tsetse fly, the herds of cattle were nevertheless infected. As a result the leaseholders substituted men for cattle in the hoeing and weeding.

The Mopeia factory as well as producing white sugar for sale in Mozambique, also produced brown sugar for refining in Europe, principally in Portugal. Production was irregular and low until 1920, at which point it started to rise. In 1920 it was 7,449,603 kilos, in 1921 8,870,708, in 1922 1,664,862, in 1923 10,257,136 and in 1924 10,259,781.

EKWETHE: ZAMBEZIAN EQUIVALENT OF CHIBALO

If the producer before 1919 worked between two weeks and two months per year, thereafter he was obliged to work for six months, in **ensacas** which were work groups directed by a foreman.

From June 1923 the wage of forced labour rose in Zambezia from 0\$10 to 0\$25 per week while the **mussoco** went up to 10\$00 for single people and 20\$00 for married men.

It was the time of **ekwethe** (literally 'carried off bound with one's arms behind one's back') in which thousands of workers were compulsorily taken to the plantations especially the sugar plantations and, after the 1930s, to the tea estates in the north of Zambezia.

In the 1920s a colonial author observed: 'the great source of labour which the agriculture of the district has used and continues to use for the creation of agricultural wealth comes from the native population. Machines and cattle still do not represent, at the present moment, more than a tiny fraction ... thousands of hectares are annually turned over by hand, thousands of tonnes of maize are sheathed and threshed by hand, with a stick or in manual threshing machines whose output is very low. There is not a sheathing-threshing machine for maize and the milling of hundreds of tonnes of this cereal is done by hand in small mills. Almost all the rice produced is threshed in the native fashion ... a good part of the cottons ... the transport within an agricultural enterprise, as in keeping with everything else we have described, is almost exclusively done by men ...'⁴. The level of productive forces was therefore low.

If the number of workers employed on the latifundia of Zambezia was very large their productivity was, however, low. Low productivity and cheap labour in an economy orientated to the external market were thus the two central pivots of the plantation system in the centre of the country.

FORCED LABOUR AND CAPITAL ACCUMULATION

The introduction of forms of capital accumulation linked either to the **mussoco** or to plantation production occurred in Zambezia with the conservation/dissolution of pre-capitalist modes of production. To maintain, albeit in a restructured form, the family production units meant that labour power cost the companies and the individual leaseholders (when it cost at all) only the wage for the strict number of days worked, thereby offloading onto the communities from which the producers came much of the costs of their maintenance and reproduction.

But a mode of production is not conserved, dissolved or introduced through 'natural' processes. A mode of production is not a 'thing' but a form of organisation determined by the social relations which men establish based on what they produce and especially on the way in which they produce.

To obtain labour from a pre-capitalist form of production in order to exploit it for the benefit of capital, the capitalist could not simply ask that labour to work! He could not count on it coming forward willingly to seek work in exchange for a wage. The history of wage labour the whole world over conceals behind it a history of the disintegration of pre-capitalist modes of production.

As far as Zambezia is concerned, the producer was 'in general, the proprietor, having at his disposal more than enough land to provide for the production of his subsistence and that of his family and even produce a surplus ... He had no motive therefore which forced him to hire his labour power thus ceasing to be a proprietor and becoming a wage worker', as a colonial author wrote at the end of the 1920s.

The **mussoco** was one of the mechanisms which colonial-capitalism used to 'produce' the labour needed. The **mussoco** was not a simple fiscal mechanism imposed on the workers: it was an expression of the class struggle, the struggle between the capitalist and the peasant. To continually reproduce the producer, who in general still had access to the fundamental means of production which was land, the leaseholders used the repressive force of **sipalos**. These acted as agents of coercion and were frequently brought in from other areas far away like Mocuba, Ile, Maganja, etc. The **sipalo** as much symbolised the violent compromise between modes of production.

Even when a portion of land was occupied by the leaseholder, the producer stayed on it or near it. However, to stay he had to pay the **mussoco** to the leaseholder. It was in the interest of the capitalist that the peasant family did not break up or move away since it supported the maintenance (periods of non-employment) and the reproduction (children, future workers) of workers. The concessionary was not concerned with the conservation of the peasant family for its own sake but rather as a source of labour: it was capital and not the heart which ordered the maintenance of pre-capitalist productive and reproductive processes, in order to subsidise the accumulation of capital.

When the producer worked between two weeks and two months a year as happened until 1919, the wage labour undertaken was still subordinate to the labour time dedicated to family agriculture and other household tasks. But, from the moment when the producer was contracted for six months of the year by the plantation the reproductive activity of the peasant productive units became increasingly subordinated to wage work. The balance between the two depended, in the long run, on the degree of penetration (and the erosion by) commodity relations, and on the degree to which the producers were being deprived of the fundamental means of production. However, the surplus labour extracted by the companies was no longer just a direct and strict feudal rent, rather it was increasingly an indirect extraction through the appropriation of the surplus product contained in the commodities produced.

It seems to us fundamental in order to understand the specific characteristics of the colonial system in our country (see for example the work of Luis de Brito on the south in this issue) and in particular the plantation agriculture of the centre, to grasp that the exploitation of pre-capitalist forms of production by colonial capitalism took place to benefit the developing capitalist system. Capitalist exploitation could therefore be found before the capitalist mode of production had become the pivot of the system of production and social relations.

Finally, it is necessary to refer to the position of the Portuguese colonial state. The state rented labour to the companies and individual leaseholders from its reserves and received regular taxes and revenue from them. It therefore accumulated without being involved directly in production. We are thus dealing with an essentially parasitic state.

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