



**OXFORD JOURNALS**  
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

## The Royal African Society

---

Class and the Customary: The Ambiguous Legacy of the "Indigenato" in Mozambique

Author(s): Bridget O'Laughlin

Source: *African Affairs*, Vol. 99, No. 394 (Jan., 2000), pp. 5-42

Published by: [Oxford University Press](#) on behalf of [The Royal African Society](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/723545>

Accessed: 21/06/2014 05:05

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at  
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



*Oxford University Press* and *The Royal African Society* are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *African Affairs*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

## CLASS AND THE CUSTOMARY: THE AMBIGUOUS LEGACY OF THE *INDIGENATO* IN MOZAMBIQUE

BRIDGET O'LAUGHLIN

### ABSTRACT

This article looks at the making of the *Indigenato*, the set of institutions that defined the difference between settler citizen and native subject in colonial Mozambique, and considers its legacy for post-colonial politics. It argues that approaches to the democratization of local governance in rural areas today must recognize that the customary authorities were shaped by a colonial state that was bifurcated in conception but imperfectly so in practice. The *Indigenato* imposed new oppositions and reconstructed those of gender and ethnicity, but its dualisms were continually violated by cross-cutting contradictions of class in the world it interpreted and shaped. An enduring part of the legacy of the *Indigenato* is a real but ideologically misleading effect: the dualistic opposition of tradition to modernity. This image compromised Frelimo's attempt to construct a unitary socialist society at independence and recurs in contemporary debate in Mozambique over democratization and local governance.

---

IN 1990, THE MOZAMBIKAN CONSTITUTION adopted under socialism was redrafted to fit the new imagined order of liberal democracy. The most controversial issue was not the definition of the economy as a market economy, but the question of citizenship. Was Mozambican citizenship to be limited to those who were of Mozambican origin (*originários*)? If so, what did it mean to be of Mozambican origin? This was a politically sensitive question in a country whose population, though overwhelmingly of African origin, reflected the long-term mixture wrought by the Indian Ocean trade and Portuguese settlement. Mozambicans of European, Asian and mulatto origin were disproportionately represented in the political elite and among the new capitalists running trade and taking over privatized state assets.

An answer was attempted by Hama Thai, member of parliament and of the political bureau of the ruling Frelimo party, a general, and veteran of the national liberation struggle:

Bridget O'Laughlin is senior lecturer in social anthropology at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague. From 1979 to 1992, she was a lecturer and researcher at Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique. She thanks all the researchers, past and present, at the Centro de Estudos Africanos in Maputo upon whose work she draws here. Thanks also to Jan Kees Van Donge and an anonymous referee for comments on an earlier draft of the article.

If I were to define who is of Mozambican origin, I would put it this way: the original Mozambican is anyone who in the colonial period was known as a native (*indígena*). Of Mozambican origin is anyone who in the colonial period paid the hut tax. Of Mozambican origin is anyone whose ancestors or descendants were deported to São Tomé and Príncipe, to Angola and to other unknown places. And I would say more, of Mozambican origin are all those who did forced labour (*chibalo*), all those who after Gungunhana's<sup>1</sup> defeat in 1895 were deported with him to Fourth Island or Third Island or wherever it was exactly, to die there far away, separated from their wives, never more to father children of Mozambican origin.<sup>2</sup>

Hama Thai proposed to subvert the definition of citizen and subject employed in the colonial period by restricting citizenship to the former subject—the native (*indígena*). His argument thus cast doubt on the options made at independence by Frelimo to abolish the distinction between citizen and subject by integrating all under a unitary non-racial state. Though he did not carry the debate, the issues to which Hama Thai referred are not resolved in Mozambique. The purpose of this article is to locate the debate over citizenship within the history of the *Indigenato*, the set of colonial institutions that defined the difference between citizen and subject by defining what it meant to be 'native'.

*Citizen and subject: the 'native question' and the 'labour question'*

The relationship between customary institutions and citizenship in colonial and post-colonial Africa has been powerfully explored in Mahmood Mamdani's *Citizen and Subject*.<sup>3</sup> Mamdani argues that colonial states in Africa were distinctive in the way in which customary institutions were implicated in local governance. A small number of citizens, governed by the laws and institutions of the colonial power, stood opposed to the mass of 'native' subjects defined as members of tribes, each with its own customary law and local state (the Native Authority) dependent on the armed might of the central state. The colonial state was both dualistic and decentralized.

For Mamdani the political reforms of the post-colonial period deracialized, but neither unified nor democratized the state and society:

What we have before us is a bifurcated world, no longer simply racially organised, but a world in which the dividing line between those human and the rest less human is a line between those who labour on the land and those who do not. This divided world is inhabited by subjects on one side and citizens on the other; their life is regulated by customary law on one side and modern law on the other; their beliefs are dismissed as pagan on this side but bear the status of

1. The last ruler of the Gaza empire in southern Mozambique.

2. Cited in 'Quem é moçambicano e quem não é?', *Notícias*, 10 October 1990 (author's translation).

3. Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, and James Currey, Oxford, 1996).

religion on the other; the stylized moments in their day-to-day lives are considered ritual on this side and culture on the other; their creative activity is considered crafts on this side and glorified as the arts on the other; their verbal communication is demeaned as vernacular chatter on this side but elevated as linguistic discourse on the other; in sum, the world of the 'savages' barricaded, in deed as in word, from the world of the 'civilised'.<sup>4</sup>

Two central tensions in post-colonial African politics—the rural/urban divide and the inter-ethnic—are thus for Mamdani the result of these historically constructed divisions, not the expression of some distinctively African primordial tribalism.

Mamdani is critical of both post-colonial regimes that simply maintained customary chiefs and the radical regimes, like that of Frelimo in Mozambique, that attempted to bridge the divisions of the bifurcated state through the imposition of unified systems from above: a single party, a single trade union, a single co-operative movement, a single women's movement and a single body of substantive law.<sup>5</sup> The result was, according to Mamdani, an ever-widening gulf between the legal and the real. Frelimo carried forward the colonial tradition of fused power and administrative justice and imposed a top-down development programme. Faced with peasant resistance, persuasion and politics degenerated into extra-economic coercion, and the radical party-state moved towards centralized despotism.<sup>6</sup>

Mamdani's analysis draws on contemporary consensus on the lack of democratic content in the Mozambican revolution, the antithetical relationship between the peasantry and the Frelimo state, and the contribution of Frelimo's approach to customary institutions to the development of the civil war.<sup>7</sup> His work also reflects a growing concern with citizenship, cultural identity and democratization in the literature on post-colonial Africa. Mamdani sees himself correcting a tendency towards economic reductionism in earlier work on African history. He argues that too much importance has been given to the 'labour question' to the detriment of the 'native question': i.e. '... how can a tiny and foreign minority rule over an indigenous majority?'<sup>8</sup>

... I came to realize that the form of the state that had evolved over the colonial period was not specific to any particular agrarian system. Its specificity was, rather, political; more than anything else, the form of the state was shaped by the African colonial experience. More than the labor question, it was the native question that illuminated this experience. My point is not to set up a false

4. Ibid., p. 61.

5. Ibid., p. 135.

6. Ibid., p. 108.

7. Christian Geffray, 'Fragments d'un discours du pouvoir (1975–1985)', *Politique Africaine* 29 (1988), pp. 71–85; Christian Geffray, *La cause des armes au Mozambique* (Karthala, Paris, 1990); Gervase Clarence-Smith, 'The Roots of the Mozambican counter-revolution', *Southern African Review of Books* (April/May, 1989), pp. 7–10; Margaret Hall and Tom Young, *Confronting Leviathan: Mozambique since independence* (Hurst, London, 1997), p. 188.

8. Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, p. 16.

opposition between the two, but I do maintain that political analysis cannot extrapolate the nature of power from an analysis of political economy. More than the labor question, the organisation and reorganisation of power turned on the imperative of a centralised and centralising despotism, each regime claimed to be reforming the negative features of its predecessor.<sup>9</sup>

Mamdani makes sense out of a broad range of African experience, draws much needed analytical attention to the sharp political and ideological divisions drawn by colonial categories of citizen and subject, and shows the critical importance of transforming systems of local governance for democratization in post-colonial Africa. He challenges post-modernist Afro-pessimism by finding historical explanations for forms of contemporary political violence. There are, however, for me four problems in Mamdani's analysis of the Mozambican experience, with more general relevance for the interpretation of contemporary African politics.

(i) The priority Mamdani gives to the native question over the labour question is strained in the Mozambican case, where labour issues and particularly the regime of exploitation to be followed were central in the construction of the *Indigenato*.

(ii) The institutions of local governance were certainly dualistic in conception, yet in practice the boundaries of political spheres were overlapping and fuzzy, and the world they defined never as bifurcated as Mamdani suggests.

(iii) Mamdani's analysis of the political failure of Frelimo's revolution underestimates the democratic content of its reforms. Democratic construction in the post-colonial context must inevitably be a protracted process that changes those who have been governed as well as those who govern, a process not well captured by the top-down bottom-up opposition.

(iv) Mamdani's critique of Frelimo focuses on the exercise of power but he does not seriously explore why there was opposition to the *content* of Frelimo's political programme. Like many critics, he stresses the evident abuses and excesses of its Marxist-Leninist model, but in fact much of what Frelimo tried to do, and some of what it accomplished, seemed at the time to be an innovative and reasonable approach to reshaping the bifurcated world Mamdani describes.

In this article I argue that an important part of what went wrong in Frelimo's programme was a tendency, shared by Mamdani and other Frelimo critics, to overestimate the dualism of colonial and post-colonial society—the division between the rural and the urban, the traditional and the modern, the semi-feudal and the colonial-capitalist. The bifurcated world that Mamdani describes is an ideological construction shaped by the

9. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

systems of governance, capturing part of reality and yet constantly contradicted by it. Mamdani is right to insist on the importance of the *Indigenato* for post-colonial politics in Mozambique, but in subordinating the labour question to the native question, and thus exploitation to domination, he fetishizes dualism. The forms that local governance took in Mozambique were rooted in the labour question; the *Indigenato* was an incomplete, imperfect and shifting response to it. Just as apartheid was a normatively prescribed separation of worlds that were in reality linked by the exploitation of African labour, so also were the worlds of citizen and the indigenous subject never separate in Mozambique.

The first of the following sections looks at the construction and impact of the *Indigenato* under Portuguese colonialism. It traces the development of the *Indigenato*, showing that the formalization of the native/citizen divide was a piecemeal response to the problem of exploitation (the 'labour question'), not a coherent model of domination. It examines the workings of local governance under the *Indigenato*, showing the centrality of class contradictions in its concerns. Finally it considers the dualism of colonial society in the period just before independence in 1975. The second section turns to Frelimo's view of the legacy of the *Indigenato*, its project for the transformation of rural local governance, and the reasons for its troubled history in the first years of independence.

*The construction of dualism: the Indigenato in colonial society*<sup>10</sup>

Recognition of customary local authorities began not as a lasting design for domination, but as a necessary condition for marginal influence and trade. The subjection of the people of Mozambique to the Portuguese was a prolonged and uneven process involving long periods of living together without dominance.<sup>11</sup> The first extended effective occupation of Mozambique, in the south, was facilitated by the previous Nguni conquest. By defeating and exiling Gungunhana, ruler of the Gaza empire (hence the emotive significance of the reference made by Hama Thai in the quotation above), the Portuguese were able to take over and rework an existing system of vassalage and alliance. Even after occupation, the autonomy of Portuguese rule in Mozambique was contingent, continually renegotiated within a broader southern African region dominated by British colonialism. Yet, despite the contingency of Portuguese

10. Malyn Newitt, *A History of Mozambique* (Hurst & Co., London, 1995), and Aurélio Rocha *et al.*, *História de Moçambique; Moçambique no auge do colonialismo* (Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, Departamento de História, Maputo, 1993), provide a carefully detailed history of the political economy of colonial Mozambique. Marc Wuyts, 'Economia política do colonialismo em Moçambique', *Estudos Moçambicanos* 1 (1980), pp. 9–22, gives a synthetic analytical account.

11. A reality reflected in later emphasis on the supposed assimilationist openness of Portuguese colonialism.

rule, the twentieth century was a period of radical change in the organization of everyday life for all Mozambicans, both in the formalities of power and in where, how, and for whom they worked.

The varying forms of colonial domination and resistance across regions and time followed regimes of exploitation depending on both forced and free labour. The centres of capital accumulation in the region were coastal and riverine plantations and the booming mines of the interior—gold, diamonds and copper in South Africa and the Rhodesias—that generated demand for workers, food and port facilities. Direct control was first won in the south, making it possible to obtain a cut on the lucrative recruitment of migrant labour for South African mines and plantations and to establish settler commercial farming in irrigable valleys. In the rest of Mozambique, occupation and administration were initially left to concessionary companies that invested in plantation production of export crops—sugar, sisal and copra—in the Zambezi valley, recruited labour for export, and extracted tribute in marketable produce. The fascist ‘New State’, established after the military coup in 1926, extended direct economic and political control to northern Mozambique and provided greater protection for Portuguese capital throughout the country. The independent power of the concessionary companies over the labour of colonial subjects was sharply curtailed, state assistance increased for Portuguese settlement in both urban and rural areas, and, under direct state administration, forced cropping of cotton was introduced in northern Mozambique in support of the development of the Portuguese textile industry.<sup>12</sup>

Post-war social and economic changes were played out against major political contradictions in a region where stubborn colonial regimes confronted a decolonizing world. Revenues from traditional export crops were stagnant;<sup>13</sup> Portugal was pursuing greater political legitimacy and economic integration within Europe. Throughout southern Africa, nationalist groups were becoming armed national liberation movements. In Mozambique, FRELIMO, the national liberation front formed in 1961, used bases in Tanzania to begin armed struggle in 1964. Portugal tried to maintain Mozambique within the framework of empire by modernizing the economy. It promoted import-substituting industry, diversification of international trade, urbanization, improvements in infrastructure and transport, investment in agricultural research and extension, and higher education. It also responded politically, expanding and strengthening Portuguese settlement and adopting political

12. CEA (Centro de Estudos Africanos), *Cotton Production in Mozambique* (Eduardo Mondlane University, Maputo, 1980).

13. Mozambican cotton was, for example, becoming more expensive than that available on the world market (CEA, *Cotton Production*).

reforms—including abrogation of the *Indigenato*. It was hoped that the combination of economic development and political reform would be sufficient to develop a substantial Mozambican elite identifying itself with a larger Portuguese community.

Throughout each phase of the colonial occupation, political domination and economic exploitation (the ‘native question’ and the ‘labour question’) were intertwined. There was no general unilinear movement from forced to free labour. Initially coercion and taxation were used to force peasants to re-orient their production away from their own patterns of use, though in some areas labour migration preceded Portuguese occupation.<sup>14</sup> As the organization of rural livelihoods changed, however, the issue was no longer being in or out of markets, but rather when, who, at what price and in what conditions rural people did wage-labour or sold agricultural surpluses. For capitalist enterprises as well, there was no sharp division between those that used forced labour and those that did not. Forced and free labour, like forced cropping and crop marketing, came to function in interdependence. The mechanism for this integration was the *Indigenato*, but it was embedded within an overarching system of domination and national oppression that is still being painfully deconstructed today.

#### *Negotiating exploitation: the shaping of the Indigenato system*

The *Indigenato* was, as Mamdani emphasizes, a political system that subordinated Mozambicans to chiefs in communities defined as tribes with a common culture and language. This was necessarily a somewhat fictitious exercise, given the rapidly shifting boundaries of political, cultural and linguistic boundaries in nineteenth-century Mozambique.<sup>15</sup> The construction of the customary was part of the process of subjection and

14. Scholars of Mozambique have debated the relationship between forced labour and proletarianization. Marvin Harris, ‘Labour emigration among the Mozambican Thonga: culture and political factors’, *Africa* 29 (1959), pp. 50–66, argued that in southern Mozambique tens of thousands of young men went to the mines of South Africa to avoid forced labour. A. Rita Ferreira, ‘Labour emigration among the Moçambique Thonga: comments on a study by Marvin Harris’, *Africa* 30 (1960), p. 143, responded by pointing out that migration to the South African mines began under the Gaza Empire before the onset of forced labour; he argued that obligations such as payment of bridewealth were more important than coercion in prompting migration. More detailed historical work by L. Covane, ‘Considerações sobre o impacto da penetração capitalista no sul de Moçambique, 1850–1876’, *Cadernos de História* 7 (2), pp. 91–106, and P. Harries, *Work, Culture & Identity: Migrant labourers in Mozambique and South Africa, c. 1860–1910* (James Currey, London and Heinemann, Portsmouth, NH, 1994) confirms that migration to Natal, Kimberley and the Rand in the nineteenth century first followed tramping routes traced by porters on long-distance trading expeditions organized by the chiefs of Gaza. The scale of migration to the mines was much greater and wages kept lower after inter-state accords backed by forced labour controlled labour flows, Ruth First, *Black Gold: The Mozambican miner, proletarian and peasant* (Harvester Press, Brighton, 1983).

15. Newitt, *A History*; D. Webster, ‘Migrant labour, social formations and the proletarianization of the Chopi of southern Mozambique’, in Wim M. J. van Binsbergen and Henk A. Meilink (eds), *Migration and the Transformation of Modern African society* (African Perspectives, Leiden, 1978), pp. 157–74.



domination—the making of the colonial state. Nonetheless, historically the peculiar elaboration of the opposition between citizen and subject in the *Indigenato* was also a response to the problem of exploitation. The laws, statutes and policies that opposed citizen to native arose from the labour question and contradictions of class. They defined colonial citizens as those who could move freely, contract their labour and acquire property by deciding who could not—the native.

The code of the *Indigenato* was adopted only in 1928, but it systematized a prior series of statutes that defined citizenship in relation to forced labour. Penvenne points out that the *Indigenato* was woven from nineteenth-century criminal codes and employed their sanctions—fines, beatings, deportation, forced labour, imprisonment, repatriation, wage reductions and wage caps.<sup>16</sup> The legal distinction between citizen and subject, native and non-native, was first clearly articulated in the Labour Law of 1899.<sup>17</sup> The law provided that all native men and women aged between 14 and 60 years had a moral obligation to work that could be fulfilled by owning capital, practising a profession, farming or producing goods for export; otherwise the obligation could be fulfilled only by doing wage labour.<sup>18</sup> Local authorities were to determine who fulfilled these conditions, to recruit by force those who did not seek work themselves, and to impose correctional labour on those breaking the law. In practice, this law was gendered; women's agricultural and domestic labour was taken to fulfill the obligation to work.

After adoption of the 1899 Labour Law, there were formally two classes of people living in the colonies: the *indígena* (native) and the *não-indígena* (*non-native*) or *civilizado*. The non-native would have full Portuguese citizenship rights and live under metropolitan civil law; the native would live under African law and the particular laws of the individual colonies. Thus ended the debate in Portugal over how colonies were to be developed and how labour was to be organized in a colonial context after the abolition of slavery.<sup>19</sup> The law recognized the existing forms of labour exploitation in capitalist enterprises and thus protected the sources of colonial revenue;

16. Jeanne Penvenne, *African Workers and Colonial Racism: Mozambican strategies & struggles in Lourenço Marques, 1877–1962* (James Currey, London and Heinemann, Portsmouth, NH, 1995).

17. Newitt, *A History*, p. 383.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 384.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 383. The Portuguese architects of the *Indigenato* resembled their French and British counterparts, trapped in unresolvable contradictions between the pervasive reality of forced labour upon which the working of their empires depended and their own view of themselves and their world as described by F. Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The labor question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996), p. 17. How much coercion could a 'civilized' government use? Positing a primitive indigenous Africa, governed by tribal norms different from those of the civilized world, resolved these conundrums, though in historically unstable ways.

despite liberal ideology, the basis of exploitation was and was to remain coercion.<sup>20</sup>

After the 1899 Labour Law, the institutions that regulated the evolving relationship between free and forced labour further elaborated and refined the opposition between subject and citizen. The Office for Native Affairs and Emigration, for example, was created in 1903 to co-ordinate the relationship between forced labour and migrant mine labour; the intention was to dismantle private recruitment networks, giving the state better control over the labour flow and the revenue from it.<sup>21</sup> A 1914 statute declared that those recruited by force should work under supervised contracts like voluntary labourers, and that penal labour only be used on state or municipal projects.<sup>22</sup> The labour code of 1928 abolished direct impressment of workers by the state for private companies and provided that forced labour for the state should be paid. Wage-labour could thus be forced labour; there was a labour market, but it was not free.

The divide between native and non-native was sharpened in 1917 by the definition of the exception, the 'assimilated' person not subject to forced labour. This regulation legalized the position of Mozambican artisans, traders, skilled workers, and long-term urban residents. As citizens, though of inferior status, the assimilated, like those of Asian or mixed racial background, carried identity cards distinguishing them from the broad mass of the population who were issued temporary passes.

Under the fascist New State, the 1928 code extended forced labour from wage-labour to cash-cropping, and hence to regulation of women's everyday work. The duty to 'work' could be satisfied by obligatory cultivation of certain crops—cotton throughout Mozambique and rice in certain areas. These schemes depended on the involvement of local authorities to control and sanction the choice of fields, the scheduling of tasks, the diligence of work. In 1942, local chiefs were given power to decide how much area had to be cultivated to be considered fully employed and thus exempt from contracting for forced labour.<sup>23</sup>

20. There is some debate among historians of Mozambique as to the importance of free labour and commodity production in central Mozambique after the abolition of slavery and before the introduction of the *Indigenato*. Carlos Serra, *Como a penetração estrangeira transformou o modo de produção dos camponeses moçambicanos—O exemplo da Zambezi (± 1200/1964)* (Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, Maputo, 1986) and Shubi Ishemo, 'Forced labour, mussoco (taxation), famine and migration in Lower Zambézia, Mozambique, 1870–1914', in Abebe Zegeye and Shubi Ishemo (eds), *Forced Labour and Migration: Patterns of movement within Africa* (Hans Zell, London, 1989), pp. 109–58, recognize the importance of increased peasant commodity production in Zambézia from the late 1870s to 1890, but criticize L. Vail and L. White, *Capitalism and Colonialism in Mozambique: A study of Quelimane District* (Heinemann, London, 1980) for over-emphasizing peasant prosperity in this period. They draw attention to the continuing heavy exactions of taxation and forced labour.

21. Jeanne Penvenne, 'Chibalo e classe operária: Lourenço Marques 1870–1962', *Estudos Moçambicanos* 2 (1981), p. 11.

22. Newitt, *A History*, p. 411.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 471.

Documents were used in gendered ways to ensure that ‘natives’ could not move freely. A long series of regulations alternately tightened and loosened labour mobility for men, while women and children were much more tightly restricted to rural communities.<sup>24</sup> In 1914, the regulation on native labour specified that a system of native passes or identity cards should be put into place. In 1917, it was decided that for any change of residence a native had to have written authorization from the administrative authorities. In 1918 all natives were forbidden, under pain of penal labour, to appear in Maputo without a pass. In 1919, all native men over the age of 14 were required to carry an identity card, but they still required travel passes and had to register if they came to the city. In 1926, the native identity card became a passbook. In 1942 it was declared that the passbook gave the native man free movement only within the district where he was taxed; to move outside he needed an authorization that indicated where he was going, why he was going there and how long he would stay. Thus the system of passes used to control clandestine migration was extended to keep a check on peasants’ work records.<sup>25</sup> In 1946, identity cards were introduced for women living in urban areas. To travel women had to apply for a special pass, and were required to have the consent of their parents, husbands, guardians and customary authorities. In 1960, the last identity document of the *Indigenato* period, an identity card similar to that which non-natives had, was issued. It gave those whose behaviour indicated that they were in transition towards ‘citizenship’ rights free movement within all of Mozambique.<sup>26</sup>

Class issues—relations of property and the conditions of exploitation of African labour—were implicit in the distinction between native and non-native in colonial legislation on land. The Land Law of 1918 divided all land into three classes—state land, land under private tenure, and native reserves. Land in native reserves was under the control of the chiefs: it could be held for use but not for sale. As Brouwer points out, under the *Indigenato* the political sovereignty that some chiefs had over particular territories was reinterpreted as a form of ownership of land.<sup>27</sup> Outside of the reserves, African farmers were allowed to purchase up to 2 hectares, but to do so they had to demonstrate financial capacity and pay for demarcation and survey.<sup>28</sup> Restrictions on the scale of private holdings blocked the development of an African commercial farming class that would

24. A. Rita Ferreira, ‘Os africanos de Lourenço Marques’, *Memórias do Instituto de Investigação Científica de Moçambique* 9 (Série C, Ciências Humanas), p. 154.

25. Newitt, *A History*, p. 471.

26. Ferreira, ‘Os africanos’, pp. 156–7.

27. Roland Brouwer, ‘A invenção da tradição errada. A nova lei de terras e os riscos de tentar repetir a história’. Draft paper delivered at Afro-Luso-Brasileiro Social Science Conference, Maputo, 1–5 September 1998.

28. John W. Bruce, *Options for State Farm Divestiture and the Creation of Secure Land Tenure: A report to USAID/Mozambique* (Land Tenure Center, Madison, WI, 1989), p. 2.

compete with plantations, settler farms and mines for labour, while access to land in the reserves prevented the development of a landless proletariat.<sup>29</sup>

The *Indigenato* thus grew in a piecemeal way from regulations that responded to questions of class: who would own the means of production; how would Mozambican workers be exploited? Yet it was also an overarching institutionalized system of national oppression supported by a pervasive ideology of racism and institutionalized racial discrimination in all social spheres. Under the New State, for example, education in Mozambique was reorganized to accentuate the separation between children called native and those called civilized.<sup>30</sup> Native children were to attend 'rudimentary' schools with a curriculum emphasizing Portuguese language, history and customs, and manual arts that prepared them for the work they were supposed to do, and barred them from secondary education. As Penvenne rightly argues, 'colonial labour legislation and relations were certainly about productivity, time, wages, and benefits, but they were also about authority, respect and dignity'.<sup>31</sup>

Marvin Harris powerfully described what it meant to be classified as 'native' when he did research in Mozambique in 1957–8, shortly before the legal abolition of the *Indigenato*.<sup>32</sup> Legally without citizenship and effectively without civil rights, Africans were frozen in menial professions with minimum wages, relegated to separate and inferior schools, and subject to arbitrary beatings, life-long banishment in penal colonies, and forced labour on plantations, roads, railroads and docks. The authorization of colonial officials was required to travel outside one's district, establish urban residence, slaughter cattle, sell crops, buy machinery, withdraw money from a bank account and approve legacies. Africans were expected to remain standing in the presence of whites and were never addressed as *senhor* or *senhora*. They were barred from modern residential areas and white hotels and restaurants, assigned separate sections at public stadiums and confined to special cinemas showing censored films.

This was, as Mamdani observes, a bifurcated world, which explains why Hama Thai was so convinced that it would be simple to decide who a Mozambican citizen really is. In ascribing political identity to Africans through native authorities, Portuguese colonialism, as elsewhere in Africa, bequeathed ethnic, regional and racial oppositions to post-colonial politics

29. The legal framework of the system was thus much like that established at about the same time by the 1913 Land Law in South Africa, although much less arable land was appropriated for settler farming in Mozambique.

30. D. Hedges and A. Rocha, 'Moçambique face à crise económica mundial e o reforço do colonialismo português, 1930–1937', *Cadernos de História* 4 (1986), p. 10.

31. Penvenne, *African Workers*, pp. 3–4.

32. Marvin Harris, 'Race, conflict and reform in Mozambique', in Stanley Diamond and F. G. Burke (eds), *The Transformation of East Africa: Studies in political anthropology* (Basic Books, New York and London, 1966), pp. 158–9.

in Mozambique and set the city against the countryside. The *Indigenato* legalized the minority of women, restricted their mobility and defined their productive work as different from that of men, thus sharpening gender oppositions in everyday experience. Yet these dualisms were always partial and contingent. Colonial society was not and could not be as bifurcated as the *Indigenato* declared. Those subject to forced labour also did voluntary labour under contract. The same people, often women, who were forced to grow cotton also voluntarily grew other crops for the market. Peasants restricted to rural areas were also workers living in urban areas. The livelihoods of rural and urban residents, men and women, and different ethnic groups were interdependent. The survival of the settler depended on the labour of the subject. And if we turn to the organization of local governance, we can see that the 'customary' was not habitual, nor traditional, nor organizationally autonomous.

*Bifurcation in subordination: local governance and its tasks under the Indigenato*

The *Indigenato* was a system of interlocking political institutions strikingly similar, as Mamdani observes, to what existed elsewhere in Africa: it was a dualistic system of local government under which Mozambican subjects were governed by chiefs and Portuguese citizens by administrators; a correspondingly dualistic legal system under which Mozambicans were subject to customary law and citizens to Portuguese civil codes; a dualistic system of land tenure under which Mozambicans had rights to land in the native reserves under communal tenure while citizens held land as private property; and a dualistic system of labour regulation which restricted the movement of Mozambicans and allowed for their conscription as forced labour, while the citizen was both free and free to engage forced labour. In everyday functioning at the local level, however, separation was continually violated by hierarchy.

There were two kinds of territorial units under colonial rule: *conselhos* and *circumscrições*. In *conselhos*, usually urban centres, 'citizens' were governed by civil authorities, franchised and subject to civil law. In rural areas, the basic units of rural administration were *circumscrições* (districts) where Portuguese administrators governed natives (*indigenas*). If geographically extensive, they were subdivided into smaller units (posts) with officials subordinated to the district administrator. The administrators had a small regular staff and locally recruited police, the *sipaïos*, who dealt directly with the local Mozambican population. *Circumscrições* were broken down into territorial units, *regadorias*, also a unit of local governance in Portugal. As in Portugal, the *regadoria* was headed by an appointed official, the *régulo*, who was closely supervised by higher-level officials. In the African colonies, however, the position of *régulo* was hereditary and often vested in a lineage of pre-colonial political

eminence. Large *regadorias* were sub-divided and authority within them delegated to a *cabo* or sub-chief. The *regadoria* was not an exclusively rural unit. When Mozambicans moved into urban areas, they were governed by a local *régulo* without particular regard to their ethnic origin; the boundaries of semi-urban *regadorias* were adjusted with the growth of the cities.

Some effort was made to give legitimacy to the new system of local governance by drawing in existing political structures. Thus the names and titles given to the various positions differed according to the language and historical traditions of a particular part of the country, such as *muene*, *mambo*, *samusoa* or *induna*. When convenient, the Portuguese attended to local rules of succession in the appointment of *régulos*, and let local legal traditions govern the arbitration of disputes. Where small kingdoms controlled large areas, however, they were broken down and the successor of the king became one *régulo* among others. The Portuguese also established new dynasties or successions, replacing a title-holder with someone considered more pliant. In one area of Gaza, for example, a colonial translator from one place was appointed *régulo* in another.<sup>33</sup> Pre-colonial hereditary titles, often with religious meaning, continued to exist, but their political importance diminished if not articulated with the *regulado*.

Despite continuities, there was little that was 'traditional' in this system of administration. *Régulos* and *cabos* were paid by the colonial state through commissions on tax collection, labour recruitment and cash-crop sales within their areas. They collected a fixed tax on each household—the hut tax referred to by Hama Thai. They had a series of tasks quite different from those of their Portuguese equivalents. Within their areas of jurisdiction, they controlled the distribution of land classed as indigenous reserves, heard cases under evolving but restricted versions of local customary law, organized recruitment of forced labour, and enforced forced cropping.

The powers of the *régulo* over land depended on the negotiation of boundaries with colonial officials. Large areas classed as vacant state-land were in fact used by the peasantry for cultivation, grazing and hunting; no authorization from the *régulo* was required for the expulsion of peasants from this land. Boundaries between reserves and commercial land were flexible, with settler and peasant farms interspersed in many areas. The *régulo* could grant unused reserve land to new claimants, adjudicate disputes over land use that could not be resolved within or among lineages, and, in non-customary ways, expand his own personal commercial

33. Anna J. da Silva, 'Diferenciação camponesa e agricultura colonial: o caso do Baixo Limpopo, Distrito de Xai-Xai, 1950-74' (Trabalho de Diploma, Instituto Superior Pedagógico, Maputo, 1992).

holdings. When peasants were expelled from irrigable river-front land in Hon'wini, Inhambane, for example, customary chiefs held on to plots adjacent to those of the settlers, whereas others ended up with dry sandy land.<sup>34</sup>

Forced labour was routinely recruited under the six-months duty to work provisions of the *Indigenato* for agricultural labour by both plantations and settler farms. Extra labour was recruited in times of shortfall. Requests for *chibalo* workers were supposed to go first to the administrators, who apportioned recruitment quotas to the various *régulos* under their jurisdiction. These in turn negotiated with lineage heads to conscript men from among those who had not yet done their yearly six months of forced labour.<sup>35</sup> Despite legal limitations on direct recruitment, settler farmers, with the connivance of the local administrator, went directly to the *régulo* when they were short of labour.<sup>36</sup> Forced labour was also used as punishment for shorter periods for offences such as non-payment of tax, desertion, clandestine migration, or late planting of cotton.

In areas where there was forced cropping, local governance also focused on control of labour; surveillance and where necessary coercion were used at every step of the production and marketing process.<sup>37</sup> The cotton company posted a delegate at the level of the district to co-ordinate the cotton campaign with the local colonial administrator. Under the delegate were a hierarchy of cotton agents with some technical training and then a force of local 'foremen' (*capatazes*) charged with supervising cotton cultivation and reporting any breaches of discipline in date of planting, quality of clearing, number of weedings, timing of picking, uprooting of the old plants. Any violations of company norms were reported by the foremen to local headmen or lineage heads. If not resolved, the offenders were bound and marched off to the local *régulo* for punishment.

Until the end of the 1940s, choice and measuring of plots were supervised by the cotton agent with the *régulo*, but general tenure rights were respected. In the 1950s, the system of '*picada*' or cotton tracks was introduced. Adjacent cotton fields were opened along new roads which the community cleared and maintained. Prior usufructory rights were not necessarily respected. Household groups were assumed to be patri-local,

34. A. Manghezi, 'Ku Thekela: estratégia de sobrevivência contra a fome no sul de Moçambique', *Estudos Moçambicanos* 4 (1983), p. 25.

35. Recruitment did not always follow this rule. In CEA research, we interviewed many men who had been obliged to work for successive six-month periods.

36. da Silva, *Diferenciação camponesa*, pp. 22ff.

37. Nelson Saraiva Bravo, *A cultura algodoeira na economia do norte de Moçambique* (Lisbon, 1963); Allen Isaacman and Arlindo Chilundo, 'Peasants at work: forced cotton cultivation in Northern Mozambique 1938-1961', in Allen Isaacman and Richard Roberts (eds), *Cotton, Colonialism, & Social History in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Social History of Africa series (James Currey, London, and Heinemann, Portsmouth, NH, 1995), pp. 147-79.

so that sons were assigned plots with their fathers. Systems of land tenure and household organization were thus radically altered in the cotton-growing areas of the north where lineage groups are matrilineally defined and where marriage had been uxorilocal.<sup>38</sup>

The interdependence of local authorities—both ‘native’ and ‘civil’—with the cotton companies is underlined in this account of forced cotton growing under the *picada* system, recounted during a meeting of cotton producers in Nampula with a CEA research team after independence.

On the *picada* we worked from five in the morning until five in the evening, first in our cotton field and then in the food fields. We worked under the constant supervision of our headmen and *régulos*, of the cotton agents and their foremen, of the *sipaio*s and police from the administrative post in Netia. They didn’t let us rest, watching us always to keep us from leaving the *picada*. Who really controlled everything on the *picadas*, though, was the administrator of Netia and the head of the cotton company in Namialo.<sup>39</sup>

Throughout Mozambique ‘customary’ title-holders thus spent much of their time on distinctly non-customary tasks: negotiating with administrators, labour recruiters, settler farmers, and cotton company officials; inspecting fields and the quality of crops; punishing workers who fled their jobs and those with poorly weeded cotton fields. Many *régulos* also taxed beyond their official mandate. A letter to the national magazine *Tempo* written during the period of transitional government in 1974 denounced the *régulo* of Macuacua in Gaza province for annually taking two pails of cashew nuts from every resident and for charging herbalists an annual fee of 200 *escudos*, brewers a monthly fee of 150 *escudos* and returning miners 200 *escudos*.<sup>40</sup> The letter also claimed that someone caught with marijuana would not be formally charged if five oxen were paid to the *régulo*.

Although the *régulos* had their own small police force, their functioning depended on collaboration with headmen and clan or lineage elders who had no paid position within the colonial hierarchy but who negotiated the demands of the colonial administration with people of their communities. The *Indigenato* was grounded on a system of social identity that made birth or association with a particular lineage group the basis of

38. Christian Geffray, ‘Transformations historiques de l’organisation familiale Ma-Khuwa 1940–1975 (Erati)’, (Rapport no. 4, Paris, 1985); Allen F. Isaacman, *Cotton is the Mother of Poverty: Peasants, work and rural struggle in colonial Mozambique, 1938–1961* (James Currey, Oxford and Heinemann, Portsmouth, NH, 1996).

39. K. Habermeier, ‘Algodão: das concentrações à produção colectiva’, *Estudos Moçambicanos* 2 (1981), pp. 37–58.

40. Letter from Filipe Cuna, *Tempo* 204 (10 August 1974), p. 49.



rights to residential and cultivable land within a wider political community,<sup>41</sup> although it did not necessarily respect pre-colonial clan boundaries and alliances.<sup>42</sup>

The authority of a pre-colonial charter and good relations with lineage elders were not necessarily sufficient to maintain the legitimacy of a *régulo* under these conditions. Communal conflicts, as well as gender and generational conflicts within lineage systems, were exacerbated by the role of the *régulos* in recruitment and policing of labour.<sup>43</sup> West observes that in Cabo Delgado the customary authorities disputed each other's competence and legitimacy throughout the colonial period.<sup>44</sup> Nor did the mediating role of the *régulos*, headmen and lineage heads invariably tamp direct confrontation between Portuguese administrators and those they governed, or disguise the real chain of power. Frelimo launched its armed struggle in Cabo Delgado to commemorate the massacre in Mueda where the colonial administrator ordered soldiers to open fire on a peasant demonstration. In 1961, police fired on a group of workers demonstrating for a pay increase at a tea plantation in Zambezia and killed fifteen.<sup>45</sup>

The *régulo* was not necessarily a lackey of the colonial administrator. Well into the 1950s entire populations, with their *régulo*, fled across borders to neighbouring countries.<sup>46</sup> The *régulo* did not govern only by coercion; he had to maintain sufficient legitimacy to negotiate with lineage heads and headmen as well as with colonial officials. Nonetheless, *régulos* who consistently failed to satisfy quotas or recruited workers with a high rate of absenteeism were detained or dismissed. The colonial state in Mozambique was never fully bifurcated; local autonomy was compromised by subordination and separation of powers repeatedly violated.

#### *Custom and class at the end of the colonial period*

At the beginning of the 1960s, much of the legal basis of the *Indigenato* was reformed or abrogated. The changes responded to mounting ILO-led international pressure against forced labour and to the strengthening

41. Throughout most of Mozambique, residence was dispersed in the pre-colonial period, and in many places remains so today. People lived and farmed in separate household clusters, rather than in villages. The boundaries of the political community were defined by traditions of co-residence and use of land by allied lineage groups.

42. M. A. Pitcher, 'Disruption without transformation: agrarian relations and livelihoods in Nampula Province, Mozambique', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 24, 1, (1998) p. 122, notes that colonial officials ignored Makua institutions below the *régulo/muene*, defining units by population size rather than lineage and kinship.

43. The legitimacy of pre-colonial kings and chiefs was itself contingent. In southern Mozambique, for example, the depredations of nineteenth century rulers of the Gaza kingdom are still legendary. In Nampula, widespread domestic slavery linked to the slave trade created a hierarchical lineage system, C. Geffray, 'La condition servile en pays makhuwa', *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, 100, xxv-4 (1985), pp. 505-35.

44. Harry G. West, 'This neighbor is not my uncle: changing relations of power and authority on the Mueda Plateau', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 24 (1998), pp. 141-60.

45. Vail and White, *Capitalism and Colonialism*, p. 272.

46. Carlos Fortuna, *O Fio da Meada: O algodão de Moçambique, Portugal e a economia-mundo (1860-1960)* (Edições Afrontamento, Porto, 1993), p. 150.

anti-colonial movement, but also reflected post-war concern with modernization and labour inefficiency as a drag to capital accumulation.<sup>47</sup> In 1959, officials were denied the right to recruit forced labour directly for public works, and in 1960 those sections of the 1928 Native Labour code authorizing recruiters and officials to use penal sanctions to prevent native workers from breaking labour contracts were revoked.<sup>48</sup> In 1961, forced cropping was abolished, a labour inspection service was created, and in September the Statute of the *Indigenato* was itself revoked, so that all native-born inhabitants of Angola, Guinea Bissau and Mozambique became Portuguese citizens.<sup>49</sup> The new Rural Labour Code of 1962 gave workers a free choice of employer, prohibited employers from refusing to pay fieldworkers for uncompleted tasks, and abolished beating.<sup>50</sup>

Legislative reforms were accompanied by other changes in the organization and language of state administration. The rudimentary schools were closed and more regular state primary schools opened, particularly in urban townships.<sup>51</sup> In agricultural statistics the terms of dualism were redefined: the 'native sector' became the 'traditional' sector and some of the larger Mozambican commercial producers were reclassified in the 'evolved' or 'enterprise' sector.<sup>52</sup>

The abolition of the *Indigenato* did not entail any fundamental change in the organization of local governance in rural areas. The hereditary *regulado* was not abolished; rather its position within local government was regularised.<sup>53</sup> *Régulos* and *cabos* were given uniforms and put on a regular salary, and administrative boundaries were adjusted. The distinction between customary and civil law was not abrogated, though in principle all could choose to adopt civil law.<sup>54</sup> The native reserve system remained intact, though regulations governing land formerly classed as native

47. Harris, 'Race, conflict, and reform'; Wuyts, 'Economia politica'; M. A. Pitcher, 'From coercion to incentives: the Portuguese colonial cotton regime in Angola and Mozambique, 1946-1974', in A. Isaacman and R. Roberts (eds), *Cotton, Colonialism & Social History in sub-Saharan Africa* (James Currey, London, and Heinemann, Portsmouth NH, 1995), pp. 119-43.

48. Harris, 'Race, conflict and reform'.

49. Decree 43893: Revogação do Estatuto dos Indígenas Portugueses das Províncias da Guiné, Angola e Moçambique, República Portuguesa, Ministério do Ultramar, 1961, Legislação do 6 de Setembro de 1961 (Imprensa Nacional de Moçambique, Lourenço Marques, 1961).

50. Vail and White, *Capitalism and Colonialism*, p. 383.

51. Judith Marshall, 'Making education revolutionary', in John Saul (ed.), *A Difficult Road: The transition to socialism in Mozambique* (Monthly Review Press, New York, 1985), pp. 155-210; Maria Clara Mendes, *Maputo antes da Independência* (Memórias do Instituto de Investigação científica tropical, No. 68, Lisboa, 1985).

52. Detailed agricultural surveys were initiated in the late 1960s using the standard FAO methodology. Here the language was less evaluative: Sector A and Sector B (the former 'native sector').

53. Decree 43896, Regadorias nas províncias ultramarinas, and Decree 43897, Usos e costumes locais reguladores de relações jurídicas privadas nas províncias ultramarinas, República Portuguesa, Ministério do Ultramar, 1961, Legislação do 6 de Setembro de 1961 (Imprensa Nacional de Moçambique, Lourenço Marques, 1961).

54. A. Rita Ferreira, cited in Hall and Young, *Confronting Leviathan*, p. 6.

reserves<sup>55</sup> were relaxed to open more land to private tenure.<sup>56</sup> Urban local administration in the 1960s also continued to depend, in an officially ambiguous way, on the functioning of the urban *régulos* in neighbourhoods where black Mozambicans lived. Migrants from other areas were subordinated to the urban *régulo* but settled in areas inhabited by people from their own region or ethnic group, and relied on their own networks and traditions for resolving conflicts and problems.<sup>57</sup> Many migrants were still registered on tax roles in their areas of origin rather than in the cities.<sup>58</sup>

The regulatory tasks of the rural *régulo* did not change dramatically with the abolition of the *Indigenato*. He continued to be an intermediary for labour recruitment, though penal sanctions were relaxed. Men now had freedom of movement within provinces, but this still depended on possession of an identity card vetted by the local authorities (women's movement depended on authorization by a male family member as well). *Régulos* took gifts from local settlers and commissions from contractors. In labour reserve areas they were still accountable to the district administrator for the quality and quantity of workers provided. They continued to monitor commercial crop production, accompanying the government-employed extension agent rather than the company foreman. Changes in land laws gave *régulos* a greater role in negotiating the appropriation of reserve land by settler farmers and by a small number of Mozambican commercial producers, including the *régulos* themselves.<sup>59</sup>

The repressive power and obligations of local authorities were strengthened during these years with the onset of the war for national liberation. The PIDE security police extended their web of paid informers down to the local level. Colonial officials were both concerned with assuring the loyalty of the *régulos* and deeply suspicious of them. In both Zambezia and Manica administrators took to paying social visits to *régulos* and showing interest in local customs (part of the prescribed 'psycho-social'

55. Under the 1961 law this was referred to as 'land proper for collective attribution to populations for occupation in harmony with their practices and customs', Ministério de Agricultura, República Popular de Moçambique, 'I Seminário nacional de agricultura, 25 a 30 de Maio' (Marrupa, n.d.).

56. Decree 43984, Regulamento da ocupação e concessão de terrenos nas Províncias Ultramarinas, República Portuguesa, Ministério do Ultramar, 1961, Legislação do 6 de Setembro de 1961 (Imprensa Nacional de Moçambique, Lourenço Marques).

57. Ana Maria J. Loforte, 'A persistência dos valores 'tradicionalis' nas comunidades urbanas e a etnicidade', *Trabalho de Arqueologia e Antropologia* 6 (1989).

58. Ferreira, *Os africanos*, p. 159.

59. Under the Statute of Native Agriculture of 1961, the local administration could grant concessions from reserve lands for individual appropriation for permanent farms; Bruce, *Options for State*, p. 2. Local residents could, with the authorization of the *régulo* and his counsellors, either rent or become tenants of reserve lands, generally no more than 50 hectares. Private acquisition of reserve land applied to Mozambicans as well as to settlers and allowed appropriation of communal grazing land for commercial production. The law also allowed the concession of land outside the reserves to the inhabitants of the *regadorias*, but only if the areas were of one hectare or more and if construction was permanent, Ministério de Agricultura, 'I Seminário'.

approach to resistance).<sup>60</sup> Frelimo was also courting and pressuring *régulos*, asking for free movement through their areas and for support in feeding and supplying troops. At one point in Mecuburi, an outlying area of Nampula where people were suspected of collaboration with Frelimo, twenty-nine out of thirty *régulos* were imprisoned.<sup>61</sup>

The abrogation of the *Indigenato* did not extend citizenship to most Mozambicans, did not lead to major reform of local governance and did not reinforce the legitimacy of the colonial regime. The national liberation movement took these failures and gave a new gloss on the dualism of colonial society—citizens were alien oppressors; natives were Mozambicans. In 1973 voting qualifications were lowered to admit anyone who could read or speak simple Portuguese; one million were eligible to register for the 1973 legislative elections but only 111,559 did.<sup>62</sup> The abrogation of the *Indigenato*—within longer-term processes of restructuring of capital, livelihoods and forms of struggle—had, however, greater impact on both rural and urban class structure. These changes were of major importance for post-colonial politics.

Penvenne traces the significance of the abolition of the *Indigenato* for urban workers.<sup>63</sup> For the first time since 1904, Mozambicans could legally quit a job. The state could no longer intervene directly to depress wages in the private sector. The abolition of registration meant that it was easier to enter the city and to move between town and country. Many, both men and women, did.<sup>64</sup> For the first time since the depression, Mozambicans could legally take on more than one job, including self-employment and informal sector work. The reforms did not eliminate racially based dualism in urban labour markets. Seven years after the abolition of the *Indigenato*, black Mozambican workers were still not covered by unemployment and pension schemes, nor integrated in unions, nor covered by the same minimum wage provisions as Portuguese workers.<sup>65</sup> Separate wage scales were set for 'rural' workers employed in industry. Most Mozambican workers were paid on a daily or weekly basis, whereas Portuguese workers were paid by the month; industrial statistics in the mid-1960s showed that the latter group earned seven times more than the former.<sup>66</sup>

In the countryside, the end of the *Indigenato* had regionally differentiated implications for the class structure. Reclassification of reserve land and

60. CEA Research, Lugela, 1980; Jocelyn Alexander, 'Land and political authority in post-war Mozambique: a view from Manica Province', (1994), manuscript.

61. Pitcher, 'Disruption without transformation', p. 123.

62. Hall and Young, *Confronting Leviathan*, p. 11.

63. Penvenne, *African Workers*, pp. 152ff.

64. In 1973, only about one-fifth of the black Mozambicans living in the city of Maputo had been born there, Mendes, *Maputo antes*, p. 328.

65. Ferreira, *Os africanos*, pp. 387ff.

66. *Ibid.*, pp. 346.

settlement schemes promoted as barriers against nationalist forces brought settler farmers into new areas of central and northern Mozambique.<sup>67</sup> Some Mozambicans were brought into settlement schemes, though on a segregated and restricted basis.<sup>68</sup> With the end of forced cropping, the state withdrew cotton extension and marketing in areas with low yields. By 1970, only 26 percent of rural households were cultivating cotton. The number fell further in the last years before independence as settlers took over prime cotton land in some parts of Nampula. Concurrently, in all regions of good agricultural potential, commercial producers emerged from the peasantry—the mainly male ‘*machambeiros*’ or ‘*agricultores autonomos*’. They benefited from a rising demand for food on the domestic market and for cashew internationally, the development of irrigation schemes, government price subsidies for some crops, and credit and extension provisions organized through new state crop authorities—the cotton and cereals institutes.<sup>69</sup>

The end of forced labour did not lead to withdrawal of the peasantry from wage-labour, but increased labour mobility, rising urban employment and competition with specialized peasant commercial production obliged employers to compete for labour, and led to greater stability of employment for some. Improved transport made it possible for both firms and workers to take advantage of new mobility. Large plantations ran their own bus services. The Mozambique railways and small private transport lines opened routes to major labour-supply areas.<sup>70</sup> The large estates offered incentives to workers to persuade them to sign contracts. Sena Sugar gave workers a shirt, trousers and a blanket when they signed their contracts.<sup>71</sup> The tea plantations added a plate, cup, spoon and fork, wine and cigarettes.<sup>72</sup> A well-stocked shop with extension of credit was another important way of attracting workers, particularly for seasonal tasks.<sup>73</sup>

67. CEA 1980; CEA research, Zambezia, 1982; Maureen Mackintosh, ‘Agricultural marketing and socialist accumulation: a case study of maize marketing in Mozambique’, *Journal of Peasant Studies* 14 (1987), pp. 243–67; Gregory Myers and H. G. West, *Land Tenure Security and State Farm Divestiture in Mozambique: Case studies in Nhamatanda, Manica and Montepuez Districts*, LTC Research Paper No. 110 (Land Tenure Center, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1993); Alexander ‘Land and political authority’; Pitcher, ‘Disruption without transformation’.

68. Manghezi, ‘Ku Thekela’, p. 22, n.5; K. Hermele, *Land Struggles and Social Differentiation in Southern Mozambique: A case study of Chokwe, Limpopo, 1950–1987* (Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala, 1988); C. Tanner, G. Myers, R. Oad, J. Eliseu and E. Macamo, *State Farm Divestiture in Mozambique: Property disputes and the issues affecting new land access policy—the case of Chokwe, Gaza Province* (Land Tenure Center Report, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1992), p. 10; Alexander ‘Land and political authority’.

69. Mackintosh, ‘Agricultural marketing’; Habermeier, ‘Algodão’.

70. CEA Lugela Research, 1980; A. Pereira de Lima, *História dos Caminhos de Ferro de Moçambique*, 3 volumes (Lourenço Marques, 1971).

71. J. E. Torp, *Industrial Planning and Development in Mozambique* (SIAS, Research Report No. 50, Uppsala, 1979), p. 52.

72. CEA, *Plantações de Chá e Economia Caponesa, Projecto da EMOCHA*, Relatório A, 82/6 (CEA, Maputo, 1982), p. 68.

73. CEA research, Angonia, 1982.

Some of the smaller settler farms also provided services to local peasants in return for labour. They would irrigate a field, or lend an irrigation pump, or provide ploughing services in return for labour.<sup>74</sup>

Coercion and administrative control of labour markets did not disappear with the end of forced labour and forced cropping. *Régulos* continued to recruit unskilled agricultural labour, both men on contract and women and children for local tasks. The big plantations ran company towns and often recruited as they wished.<sup>75</sup> Workers on contract had to remit at least part of their wages. If they deserted, they were obliged by law to pay recruitment expenses, which made them once more vulnerable to penal sanctions.<sup>76</sup> An employee of various WENELA recruitment posts between 1950 and 1970 emphasized the continuity of his work routines. If voluntary recruitment was low, administrators would help out by, for example, setting up road-blocks to catch tax defaulters. Those caught would be asked if they would not rather go to the mines.<sup>77</sup> Coercively organized cotton production also continued for those, many of them women, who were not integrated in master-farmer schemes. Foremen, now employed by the state cotton institute rather than the cotton companies, measured plots and enforced the timing and intensity of tasks like weeding. They resorted to corporal punishment or complaints to local headmen to back up their authority.<sup>78</sup>

Yet, despite the continuing importance of coercion and control, Mozambique did not have at independence a dualistic economy and class structure. Portuguese settlers controlled skilled and professional jobs in urban areas, but Mozambican workers, including women, were finding permanent jobs in industry, and making their own jobs in the urban informal sector. Oscillating migration to mines, plantations and urban areas continued, but there was also a stable working class raising its children in the cities. Many rural households continued to produce most of the food they consumed, but needed income from wage-labour or cash-cropping both for inputs and important items of consumption. Settlers were taking over more commercial land, but there were also Mozambican farmers using tractors, obtaining credit and hiring wage labour.

74. CEA research, Baixo Limpopo, 1979.

75. Vail and White, *Capitalism and Colonialism*, pp. 385–86.

76. Harris, 'Race conflict', pp. 173ff.

77. Alpheus Manghezi, 'History and organisation of labour recruitment in southern Mozambique', draft manuscript, n.d.

78. I interviewed in Lugela, Zambezia, in 1980 a cotton foreman who continued to work after independence for the IAM (eventually converted into a State Secretariat for cotton). He was doing interesting work with a very small co-operative, but spoke of his insecurity about what his work was supposed to be, now that they no longer beat people as in the colonial period.

Part of the legacy of the *Indigenato* was a world polarized between black and white, settler and Mozambican, citizen and subject. These oppositions set the terms of resistance and political struggle for national liberation. Yet the world for which each side fought was not rigidly bifurcated, for the *Indigenato* as an instrument of exploitation shaped a complex world cross-cut by contradictions of class.

*Frelimo: deconstructing the Indigenato by constructing socialism?*

Frelimo as a political party emerged out of the merging of various nationalist groups in a national liberation front that succeeded in organizing itself militarily to take on the Portuguese army in a protracted war (1964–74).<sup>79</sup> It recruited and trained rural youth from the areas it occupied, and then brought in many new members as it negotiated independence with the left-wing government that took power in Portugal after the coup of 25 April 1974. Its leadership included people of different backgrounds and experiences—children of *régulos*, former seminarians, nurses, school-teachers, pan-Africanist Marxist intellectuals, technocrats, secondary school students, artisans, industrial workers, peasants educated through the liberation struggle. The ideological positions of its political leadership included a mix of African socialism, social democracy, Maoism and pro-Soviet communism. Despite this diversity and internal political differences,<sup>80</sup> Frelimo spoke with a consistent collective voice in the first years of independence; it projected a coherent revolutionary socialist vision of what needed to be done with independence. Consensus was woven from reflection and debate among Frelimo intellectuals on Mozambican history, post-colonial Africa and socialist revolutions. It was maintained through rigid conformity within the core leadership group (the ‘family of Frelimo’).

The consensus of the first years was projected nationally through Frelimo’s emphasis on structure and organization, through lengthy didactic speeches by Samora Machel broadcast and printed for wide distribution, and through extended didactic meetings. Mass participation and initiative, both in discussion and action, were considered important. This was imperfect democracy. Though hierarchy is not necessarily synonymous with authoritarianism, in practice information flowed upwards with difficulty and explicit directives from above were hard to question. Messages from political exiles promoting Mozambican capitalism had few open

79. In the reconstruction and interpretation of Frelimo policies in this section I rely principally on my own experience in Mozambique: going to rallies, listening to speeches and discussing with party cadres in Maputo, provincial capitals and rural areas, reading party and ministry documents, attending Saturday morning political study.

80. These political divergences shaped the context of research. Reports of the CEA critical of state farm organization and arguing that collectivization required understanding of the existing organization of rural livelihoods were supported by some within Frelimo and variously denounced by others as social democratic, Maoist or peasant-loving.

listeners; prominent political figures opposed to an explicitly socialist agenda were held in re-education camps and some were ultimately executed. Nonetheless in the first years of independence many people, in both country and city, enthusiastically invoked Frelimo's vision of socialist revolution in shared attempts to make their world better.

Frelimo's case for socialist revolution was based on an analysis of what was wrong with colonial Mozambique outlined in Eduardo Mondlane's *The Struggle for Mozambique*,<sup>81</sup> and developed in a series of widely heard and reproduced speeches by Samora Machel on the sociology of colonialism.<sup>82</sup> Frelimo described a fascist colonial state supporting a racially polarized society, which denied Mozambicans their identity and subjected the mass of the population to exploitation by foreign capital. A wealthy few, mainly white, were clustered in well-appointed urban centres while others lived in misery in rural areas or the suburbs of the city—without enough money even to bury their dead decently. The post-colonial state would have to be democratic, unitary and non-racialist. It would have to foster the development of a single national culture, provide everyone with equal social benefits—literacy, basic health care, a decent burial—and assure rapid economic growth to provide a better standard of living for all. This would be done through the nationalization of social services (including the sometimes ridiculed nationalization of mortuaries), trade, industry, and large-scale settler farms, and through the collectivization of peasant farming. In rural areas, people would move into communal villages provided with schools and health posts. They would eventually become either workers on state farms or members of co-operatives.

Class differences were not considered problematic for this project. Most Mozambicans were exploited peasants or workers and thus there was a natural alliance between them: the worker-peasant alliance was constantly invoked in speeches, songs and official documents. The flight of the settlers and the nationalization of capitalist enterprises ensured that there was no significant national bourgeoisie. Any emergent rural petty bourgeoisie was dependent on the political privileges accorded it under colonial rule. Its head could easily be lopped off—figuratively. The main difference between peasants and workers was in their degree of integration in the market; urbanized workers depended on it, but subsistence-oriented peasants had been brought into the market by force under colonialism and could survive without it.

81. Edward Mondlane, *Struggle for Mozambique* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1969).

82. Samora Machel, 'Mensagem lida na cerimónia da tomada de posse do Governo de Transição' (20/09/74), *Datas e Documentos da História da FRELIMO* (Imprensa Nacional, Maputo, 1975), p. 228; Samora Machel, 'Discurso de estado do camarada presidente da FRELIMO Samora Moisés Machel na tomada de posse do Presidente da República Popular de Moçambique', CEDIMO Doc. inf. CDI. B. Moçamb. (38, 1976-10-12), pp. 9-23.



The primary check on the socialist project was for Frelimo not class but the contingency of the Mozambican nation, the existence of ethnic and religious differences that had proved to be so important politically in earlier African independences. Cultural unity was the rationale for promoting Portuguese as a national language.<sup>83</sup> Regional radio stations broadcast in local languages as well as in Portuguese, the national radio broadcast music from all over Mozambique and Africa, and primary school texts were rewritten to reflect Mozambican experience. Frelimo tried to tease cultural fabrics apart, promoting some practices while attacking others that appeared unscientific, inconsistent with broad programmes of social emancipation, or potentially oppositional—such as witchcraft accusations, polygyny,<sup>84</sup> or bridewealth payment, or the beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses. Frelimo generally banned rituals carried out by *regulos*, rain-making, divination and exorcism, but did not oppose herbalism and ancestor worship.<sup>85</sup>

*The unitary design of local government and the problem of legitimacy*

Frelimo, like Mamdani, considered the reform of local government to be critical to overcoming the political dualism and ethnic divisions of colonial society. The *regulado* was abolished and the *regulos* and *cabos* and all others who had colluded with colonial rule were excluded from positions of authority in rural areas. Beginning with their slow march across the rural areas of Mozambique in 1974, Frelimo cadres announced in rally after rally that *regulos* were to be deposed because they were colonialists. Communities elected dynamizing groups to replace the *regulos*. The group was supposed to include women and younger men as well as respected figures in the community, such as school-teachers. All those who had collaborated with the Portuguese regime were excluded from candidacy, including *regulos*. At the district and post level, colonial administrators withdrew and a Frelimo cadre, usually an officer, took over. Popular vigilance groups were set up to support dynamizing groups at the local level. Backing up the popular vigilance groups were

83. Somewhat contrary to conventional wisdom today, this decision was intended to facilitate the sharing of local cultures, not their suppression or Europeanization.

84. A conference on directives for communal villages in Gaza in 1977, for example, concluded that each wife of a polygynous marriage should have her own plot but not adjoining those of her co-wives; *Provincia de Gaza, Comissão para o Vale do Limpopo Nomeada pelo Comité Político Permanente da Frelimo, 'Conclusões, Seminário Provincial das Aldeias Comunas, Realizado de 28 a 29 de Maio de 1977'*, p. 7.

85. Otto Roesch, 'Socialism and rural development in Mozambique: the case of Aldeia Comunal 24 de Julho' (PhD Thesis, University of Toronto, 1986), pp. 146ff. See also Geffray, *La cause: Alexander, 'Land and political authority'*; Mark F. Chingono, *The State, Violence and Development: The political economy of war in Mozambique, 1975–1992* (Avebury, Aldershot, 1996); Harry G. West, 'Creative destruction and sorcery of construction: power, hope and suspicion in post-war Mozambique', *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 147, 37–3 (1997), pp. 675–98; West, 'This Neighbor'.

armed and lightly trained popular militias, who reported to the Frelimo administrator rather than to local officials.

Dynamizing groups were intended to be an interim political structure. Communal villages were to elect assemblies, which would appoint local executives. The dynamizing groups would be transformed into party cells. A new unitary, but locally flexible, legal system would be set up to replace the customary courts. Lay judges were to be elected at the level of the village or township. Their task was to mediate and to seek reconciliation rather than to apply formal law; they were to draw on customary procedures for the settlement of disputes but were subject to broad national guidelines on their functioning.<sup>86</sup> Thus, for example, in contrast to practice under customary law, adult women could be judges and were allowed to represent themselves in the popular tribunals.

In line with classical socialist theory, Frelimo considered the development of institutions of civil society, mass organizations, important for democratization, but was deeply suspicious of the existing ones, particularly the Catholic church, which were, like the *régulos*, thought to be politically compromised. New mass organizations were to be national in focus and guided by Frelimo. As Mamdani observes, these were to be organizations of *all* Mozambican women, *all* Mozambican youth, and *all* Mozambican workers. Significantly there was no national peasants' organization; the peasantry as such was rapidly to disappear.

The Frelimo vision of post-colonial Mozambique was coherent. It drew on experiences of socialist revolution in different parts of the world, but was also based in historical reflection on the experience of colonialism in Mozambique. It provided answers (though different ones) to central questions asked today in Mozambique: how to democratize; how to build civil society; how to eliminate poverty? This vision clearly failed. Frelimo moved from a position of broad national support in 1975 to barely winning the elections of 1992. Mozambique today is very far from the socialist society foreseen, and Frelimo itself is a very different kind of political organization. What, then, went wrong? Contemporary analyses, like that of Mamdani, assign a great deal of importance to Frelimo's organization of local government, particularly in rural areas.

Some argue that Frelimo lost legitimacy at the local level—indeed that the peasantry was brought to the edge of angry armed rebellion—because of its suppression of traditional chiefs and customary institutions.<sup>87</sup> Proof for this position is found in the protracted history of the civil war. Frelimo

86. Nina Berg and Aase Gundersen, 'Legal reform in Mozambique: equality and emancipation for women through popular justice', in Kristi Anne Stolen and Mariken Vaa (eds), *Gender and Change in Developing Countries* (Norwegian University Press, Oslo, 1991), pp. 254–5.

87. Geffray, *La cause*.

lost control of vast stretches of the countryside, and Renamo, the opposition movement, reinstated *régulos* in the areas it held. In the light of this history, some have proposed that the *regulado* should be reinstated as the basis of local government today.<sup>88</sup> Others, like Mamdani, do not see customary chiefs as the answer to post-colonial crisis, but attribute Frelimo's loss of legitimacy in the countryside to its undemocratic imposition of a fixed Marxist-Leninist system. Alexander argues that 'it was less the creation of new structures than their repressive subordination to the Frelimo hierarchy and its agenda which created a loss of support'.<sup>89</sup> Hall and Young find an apparent ambiguity in Frelimo's leadership style: '... between, on the one hand, a commitment to popular power, mass participation and popular needs and, on the other, a puritanical and top-down vision of social progress and the hierarchical and centralised means to attain it'.<sup>90</sup> They attribute Frelimo's failure both to its loss of legitimacy in rural areas and to the imbalance between its modernist projects and the ineffectiveness of its underdeveloped and overextended state.<sup>91</sup>

These explanations seem to me partial, or even misleading, on a number of grounds: they exaggerate popular resistance to the suppression of the *regulado* and customary institutions; they underestimate the democratic content of Frelimo's reforms at the local level; they do not recognize that much of the envisaged system of local governance was never implemented at all; and, finally, they tend to be ahistorical, projecting the history of the 1980s on to that of the 1970s.

There is no evidence for mass discontent with the abolition of the *regulado*, though not all agreed with the exclusion of the customary authorities from new political positions. At local meetings, people were encouraged to tell about the misdeeds of the *régulo* in their area, and many did. Letters to *Tempo*, the national news weekly, denounced *régulos* who had forced people to work in their fields or imposed extra taxes. Alexander observes that Frelimo's denunciation of chiefs created space for the expression of popular resentment.<sup>92</sup> In Manica people poked fun at the *mambos*. Some former *régulos* and *cabos* ran for positions in the new dynamizing groups and were surprised when they were barred from candidacy, especially those who worked with Frelimo before

88. For critical discussion of these proposals and reflection on the meaning of the customary see Jocelyn Alexander, 'The local state in post-war Mozambique: political practice and ideas about authority', *Africa* 67 (1997), pp. 1–26, on Manica; West, 'Creative destruction', on Cabo Delgado; Pitcher, 'Disruption without transformation', on Nampula; Brouwer, 'A invenção', on Machangulo.

89. Alexander, 'Land and political authority', p. 38.

90. Hall and Young, *Confronting Leviathan*, p. 74.

91. *Ibid.*, pp. 82–83.

92. Alexander, 'Land and political authority', p. 37.

independence. Others were presented as proposed candidates in mass meetings, and then vetoed by Frelimo.<sup>93</sup>

Discussions of opposition to Frelimo directives sometimes gloss over divided support for customary practices. Older women vehemently denounced Frelimo's suppression of bridewealth payment at a meeting in Gaza. Their argument, reflecting the generational tension in migrant households, was that bridewealth payment kept younger women from committing adultery while their migrant men were absent.<sup>94</sup> Geffray opens his discussion of the causes of the war with the eloquent testimony of Yamaruzu, senior woman of one of the noble matri-lineages of the Erati region.<sup>95</sup> She tells us that what Frelimo did caused the land to burn. Before, she says, when people saw the senior figures of noble lineages they stood up and only sat down when authorized to do so. Now they mock her when she passes. Geffray is elsewhere less sympathetic to his interpreter, a former migrant worker of slave lineage, who carried with him the booklets of Frelimo.<sup>96</sup>

Where resistance was generalized, it blunted the fervour of Frelimo's secular vision and mediated its opposition to some of the religious rituals that it considered politically based. Catechists, diviners, imams and Zionist preachers functioned openly in the rural areas. In his 1982 meeting with religious leaders, Machel defended the nationalization of religious hospitals, schools and newspapers, but assured greater public presence for religious organizations. In N'ganga, in Tete province, in 1982, the village secretary was the catechist for the Catholic church in the area; in another locality, researchers were taken by party members to see a dance of the once considered politically suspect *nyau* society.<sup>97</sup>

Frelimo's system of rural local governance was in many ways an important transitional advance in democratization relative to the repressive organization of the colonial state. Women were elected members of dynamizing groups, though most often as representatives of the women's organization or charged with social affairs. Judges included women, and in some areas women brought the majority of cases in popular tribunals.<sup>98</sup> Both men and women joined popular vigilance groups, continuing with their normal work but doing night patrols, watching for sabotage, theft or unusual events and reporting to the dynamizing

93. Candidates were rejected for being a collaborator with the colonial regime or a traditional holder of power, and for unacceptable behaviour, incompetence, laziness and passivity. Bertil Egero, *Mozambique: A dream undone: the political economy of democracy* (Nordiska afrikainstitutet, Uppsala, 1987), p. 125.

94. CEA research, Baixo-Limpopo, 1979.

95. Geffray, *La cause*, pp. 43–5.

96. C. Geffray, 'La condition servile en pays makhuwa', *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines* 100, xxv-4 (1985), p. 518.

97. CEA research, Angonia, 1982.

98. Berg and Gundersen, 'Legal reform', p. 265.

groups. Some women as well as men joined popular militias and received military training. In Zonguene, Gaza, the first president of the co-operative was a woman, as were the leaders of the vigilance and militia units.<sup>99</sup>

Emphasis on the importance of discussion combined with directives on issues such as the emancipation of women provided new opportunities and language with which to address central political issues in rural life. At a community meeting with the new party cell in a rural area of Inhambane, for example, members of the OMM (Mozambican women's organization) were asked for their opinion on starting a consumer co-operative. A woman stood up to speak, but used the question to put much more controversial issues on the agenda—gender hierarchy and the nature of leadership:

Comrades, you always blame women for not speaking up, but you do not seem to understand why they do not speak at meetings. A few minutes ago you stopped that man at the back from speaking. You interrupted him and he was embarrassed. We don't even know what he was going to say. Now you have just interrupted another man and he too had no chance to say all he had to say. At the same time you keep saying that we must let everyone express their views and that we must use these meetings to teach one another, to learn from one another. What you have just done to these two men is what you constantly do to women. Women have their own views on all matters but they are afraid to speak up. This is wrong and it must stop! I support the building of a consumer co-operative. *A Luta Continua!*<sup>100</sup>

Not surprisingly, many people, both Frelimo officials and ordinary rural men and women, understood this new system in terms of the colonial realities in which they had lived. Some village secretaries acted like *régulos*; others did not. Some people expected secretaries to act like *régulos* and treated them accordingly; others did not. Some members of the popular militias regarded themselves as *sipaios*; others did not. Nonetheless Frelimo's dynamizing groups and local-level political organizations brought new forms of participative decision-making to the local level, made it easier for the voices of women and youth to be heard, and gave people the chance to discuss options that took them beyond their own local communities.

Yet the new system of unitary local governance proved difficult to implement in the countryside. Few rural popular tribunals were set up; assemblies when finally elected did very little; party, state and dynamizing groups were at best overlapping in membership and function and at worst indistinguishable at the local level. New democratic legal and political structures were predicated on the existence of communal villages. By

99. Roesch, 'Socialism and rural development', p. 143.

100. CEA, Relatório da Brigada de Homoine, 14/7/1977; Reunião da celula Meu (Mheho), Homoine, recorded and translated by Alpheus Manghezi.

1980, it was clear, and accepted by Frelimo, that in many areas rural people would not immediately give up dispersed residence to move into communal villages.

Rural people were enthusiastic about Frelimo's social programme and eagerly built classrooms at the proposed sites for communal villages,<sup>101</sup> but moving there was another matter. Most communal villages existing in 1980 were the product of special circumstances. Communal villages were imposed<sup>102</sup> in the Limpopo and Zambezi valleys after the floods, and people were regrouped in protected hamlets in some parts of Manica during the war for Zimbabwe. Where communal villages formed, their spatial division into neighbourhoods (*bairros*) reflected pre-existing lineage and ward-based residence, even when Frelimo cadres explicitly attempted to oppose this.<sup>103</sup> The old Portuguese *aldeamentos* were renamed communal villages, but these began to erode as people moved out to be closer to their fields. Communities responded to aggressive villagization campaigns in Sofala by moving across the river to Zambezia. Dynamizing groups were often vocal in their opposition to moving to communal villages. In 1979, the person responsible for information in a rural dynamizing group in Nacaroa, Nampula, explained to researchers that his task was going around to listen to what people had to say. What they said, he explained, was that they wanted the school and the consumer co-operative, but they did not want to move to the site chosen for a communal village.<sup>104</sup>

At first Frelimo treated the peasant lack of interest in communal villages as a problem of ideological conservatism that would be resolved by providing successful models to emulate. Government support was provided for the durable construction of homes and schools, well-digging, and sometimes even electrification.<sup>105</sup> These model villages were only semi-occupied, however, as people refused to build houses in them or, if they did, maintained separate housing close to their fields as well. In the large sprawling villages established in Gaza after the floods there were shortages of water, fuel and building materials; much time was lost in walking to distant fields.<sup>106</sup>

Reports of widespread resistance to villagization led to revision of Frelimo policy. The national conference on communal villages held in

101. Primary school enrolments increased from 636,824 in 1974 to 1,462,282 in 1978, Judith Marshall, 'Making education revolutionary', pp. 162, 171.

102. Not all resettlement was forced. In Zonguene, after the floods of 1976, people moved to the new communal village out of support for Frelimo, not because of coercion; Roesch, 'Socialism and rural development', pp. 94ff.

103. The 1977 Gaza commission ordered that people from the same *celula* should not be allowed to live together in the same *bairro* in order to 'break the conflicts that existed in their former communities', Provincia de Gaza, 'Conclusões', p. 7.

104. CEA Research, Nampula, 1979.

105. CEA Research, Nampula, 1979.

106. CEA Research, Baixo-Limpopo, 1979.

1980 emphasized that villagization was voluntary and declared that common residence would generally have to wait for changes in the organization of rural farming systems, in other words, communal villages would have to follow the development of collective production. The wave of new forced resettlement in villages in the 1980s documented by Geffray was a retreat to a defensive protected hamlet strategy similar to that followed by the colonial authorities, with no pretence of social provisioning.<sup>107</sup>

Some accounts assume that opposition between the state and the peasantry in the mid-1980s is an accurate reflection of the relationship between Frelimo and the peasantry in the late 1970s. They abstract from the politics of post-colonial transition Frelimo's response to resistance and, perhaps most importantly, the impact of the war. The peasantry was not seething with resentment in 1980; rather there were great expectations from the independence of Zimbabwe. Given the Cold War and the on-going liberation struggles in the region, Frelimo from the outset faced intense regional and international opposition to its revolutionary socialist and sometimes Jacobin political programme. Yet Renamo was not able to operate throughout the country until 1982–3, and even then it carried out classic low-intensity warfare—ambushes on roads, attacks on co-operatives, communal villages, and state farms, kidnapping and mutilation. Renamo occupation and administration occurred only in isolated areas until the mid-1980s. Accounts heard today of anger at the suppression of rain-making rituals must be treated with caution; their loss appears greater after decades of war and hunger.<sup>108</sup>

The interaction between external destabilization and internal change was a historical process that transformed not only Mozambican society, but Frelimo and its policies as well. War made it difficult for Frelimo to accept criticism and change direction; it contributed to the militarization of Frelimo, and fostered a climate of fear, suspicion and coercion.<sup>109</sup> The herding of people into strategic communal villages during the war and the forced rustification of urban unemployed in 1983 ('Operation Production', a vain attempt to return to the urban influx controls of the *Indigenato*), reflected not Frelimo's revolutionary vision, but its failure.

I agree that by the mid-1980s Frelimo had lost much of its base in the countryside (though not that this necessarily translated into support for Renamo). In the late 1970s, Frelimo's name was invoked constantly in the rural areas; people expected it to respond to their concerns. In the

107. Geffray, *La cause*.

108. Roesch, 'Socialism and rural development', p. 146, notes that when rain-making ceremonies were banned in Gaza, they were already in decline.

109. J. Alexander, 'Political change in Manica Province, Mozambique: implications for the decentralization of power' (manuscript, 1995), p. 10, and 'The local state'; L. de Brito, 'Une relecture nécessaire: la genèse du parti-Etat FRELIMO', *Politique Africaine* 29 (1988), pp. 15–27.

mid-1980s, even its own officials rarely mentioned Frelimo; rural people referred to 'the government' with cynicism and anger. I do not agree, however, that the suppression of customary authorities was the cause of this loss of legitimacy. Nor do I think that local government reforms were without real democratic content. To understand why democratization atrophied and why Frelimo was so vulnerable to rural destabilization, one must trace the economic and political consequences of a strategy of collectivization premised on a flawed dualist vision of colonial class structure.

### *Dualism and the failure of collectivization*

Frelimo saw the rural colonial economy as composed of a vast mass of traditional subsistence-oriented peasants and a modern settler sector. Its strategy of collectivization was to concentrate investment in the conversion of settler farms into modern agro-industrial complexes and to bring the peasantry into co-operatives where economies of scale were to lead to rapid improvements in productivity with only minimal state support. With the loss of its political base, the small rural petty bourgeoisie would rapidly disappear. The inappropriateness of this dualist strategy led to the stagnation of agrarian production, compromised rural livelihoods, provoked conflicts over control of labour, land and consumer goods and left vast rural areas vulnerable to Renamo incursion.

There was no redistribution of settler land to the peasantry at independence, even in areas of recent settler occupation. Frelimo asked workers and people in local communities to keep abandoned settler farms running and to prevent their takeover for individual occupation. There were occasional exceptions, but on the whole this was done. State farms were formed in areas of large concentrated holdings and smaller or isolated settler farms became co-operatives. Peasant rights to the use of land were accepted in the draft land law, but Frelimo was reluctant to recognize any specific regimes of peasant tenure since it was expected that all holdings would be reorganized as people moved into state farms and co-operatives.

In the absence of clear protection of existing rights to use of land, peasant holdings in areas of prime commercial potential became even more vulnerable than under the 1960s erosion of the native reserve. In Angonia, Tete, the state farm complex formed from scattered settler farms expanded to take over interspersed peasant fields, pasture land, watering paths and fallow.<sup>110</sup> In Gaza smallholder rights in *colonato* land were annulled in the formation of another large agro-industrial complex (CAIL).<sup>111</sup> In line with Frelimo's rigid distinction between workers and

110. CEA Research, Angonia, 1982.

111. Hermele, *Land Struggles*; Tanner *et al.*, *State Farm Divestiture*.



peasants, provincial authorities barred households with a permanent wage-worker earning 3500 *escudos* or above (then the minimum and prevailing wage for field workers) from land in the irrigation schemes.<sup>112</sup> Dynamizing groups and village secretaries had no real authority to dispute these decisions. Land conflicts also emerged in areas where communal villages were formed through dislocation of people to areas distant from the land they had been working. In Gaza and Nampula, some complained that their cashew trees were very distant or located in areas where others were now cultivating.<sup>113</sup> These conflicts were exacerbated by massive resettlement later in the war. In Erati, those dislocated had to borrow land and worked in the fields of others in return for food.<sup>114</sup>

Frelimo saw broad rural participation in collective fields in the first few years of independence as support for collectivization,<sup>115</sup> whereas many participants understood it as political support for Frelimo. In Nacaroa, Nampula, in 1979, I asked a lineage elder why he was so active in the co-operative. 'We did the work of the government in the past,' he said, 'and we do it now.'<sup>116</sup> Co-operative production remained marginal in rural life: the number of producer co-operatives remained very low, the area cultivated per number of members minuscule, the yield per hectare infinitesimal and the weight of debt crippling.<sup>117</sup> Co-operatives were most successful in peri-urban areas where they provided access to scarce commercial land. In most rural areas, people contributed labour for the collective field or co-operative, but gave priority to their own fields. Co-operatives lost members over time, and co-operative members never pooled their individual holdings to work together.

The composition of co-operatives and intra-co-operative conflicts reveal that the presumption of homogeneity of class interest among the peasantry was problematic. There were struggles for control of co-operatives formed from settler farms between former contract workers on the settler farm and surrounding households.<sup>118</sup> In Nampula, male heads of households were inscribed as the members of the co-operatives, but women and children did most of the work. Young men avoided the co-operatives because they wanted steady wage-work. Prosperous male farmers and community leaders, who joined the co-operatives for individual political

112. Provincia de Gaza, 'Conclusões', pp. 8–10.

113. CEA Research, Baixo-Limpopo, 1979. Christian Geffray and Mogens Pederson, 'Transformação da organização social e do sistema agrário do campesinato no distrito de Erati: Processo de socialização e diferenciação social' (Maputo, 1985), mimeo, p. 43.

114. Geffray and Pederson, 'Transformação'.

115. Helena Dolny, 'The challenge of agriculture', in John Saul (ed.), *A Difficult Road: the transition to socialism in Mozambique* (Monthly Review Press, New York, 1985) pp. 211–52.

116. CEA Research, Nampula, 1979.

117. Dolny, 'The challenge'.

118. CEA research, Moamba, 1978; L. Harris, 'Agricultural co-operatives and development policy in Mozambique', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 7 (1980); E. Ritter, 'Relatório sobre o sector das cooperativas no distrito do Limpopo Provincia de Gaza' (mimeo, 1978).

and economic advantage, came to dominate leadership positions. At a national co-operative meeting I attended in 1980, the president of a co-operative in Montepuez, Cabo Delgado, fiercely opposed a proposed statute to bar those who employed wage-labour from co-operatives. 'How', he asked, 'will I go to all these meetings, if I don't hire workers to help out my wife in our fields?' In a Marracuene co-operative, officers bought for their own fields the ploughs provided to the co-operative for the introduction of animal traction.<sup>119</sup> The poor women farmers who constituted the majority of the members of the co-operative could never afford to buy such inputs themselves. They did not protest, however, because their livelihoods depended on working for food in the private fields of the co-operative officers.

Frelimo's sharp distinction between workers and peasants did not correspond to the irregular demand of the state farms for low-paid casual labour. Labour shortages on state farms were not the result of traditional peasants clinging to their own production. Rather they reflected both the resistance of workers to low-paid jobs, with poor working and housing conditions, and the small number of days of employment the state farms offered to individual workers. Unskilled workers, classed as 'peasants', were paid on a daily basis, housed in hovels and given uncertain rations.<sup>120</sup> Monthly labour requirements were averaged across the year, disguising seasonal peaks.<sup>121</sup> Casual workers had difficulty finding consumer goods to buy with their wages. Rather than take these jobs, the most mobile—mainly young men—crossed borders and flowed into the cities.<sup>122</sup> The less mobile, mainly women, did better working for wages in kind for private commercial growers.<sup>123</sup> Labour shortfalls were one of the main causes of the poor economic results of the state farms.

Goods famine in the countryside was a deliberate Frelimo policy. Since it was thought that the subsistence-oriented peasantry could not contribute to accumulation and could survive without commodities, both wage goods and inputs were channelled to state farms or used as incentives to promote membership in co-operatives. The ploughs and inputs bought through the Marracuene co-operative were available elsewhere only at speculative parallel-market prices. Local political structures worked hard to have a consumer co-operative set up in their area, so that they could have access

119. CEA research, Marracuene, 1983.

120. CEA research, Zambezia, 1981, and Angonia, 1983.

121. CEA Research, Baixo-Limpopo, 1979, and Angonia, 1982.

122. Sex ratios by age groups and province drawn from the census of 1980 show imbalances are greatest in the historical labour reserve areas, but the absence of young men is also notable in northern Mozambique (e.g. 69 men per 100 women in the 25–34 age group in Niassa, 71/100 in Cabo Delgado, 77/100 in Nampula), B. O'Laughlin, 'Through a divided glass: dualism, class and the agrarian question in Mozambique', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 23 (1996), p. 11.

123. CEA research, Marracuene, 1983.

to more goods than came through the regular rural shops. In Nampula, communities could for a time only have a consumer co-operative if they already had some form of collective production.

Goods famine allowed political elites to turn offices in village and co-operative structures to economic advantage. Geffray and Pederson explain that in one locality in Nampula, 155 members worked a collective field of 5–6 hectares.<sup>124</sup> The political structures were all in the first team, which was always called first when goods arrived for the consumer co-operative, regardless of how many people had received nothing in earlier distributions. Co-operative members in Nampula knew that officers were siphoning off disproportionate shares of basic consumer items (cloth, sugar, salt, oil) for themselves, but they kept on working because they could not buy these goods in the shops. Necessity and commercial logic, not tradition, motivated these choices.

Since the most successful co-operatives were formed from existing settler farms, Frelimo's concentration of resources in state farms and co-operatives privileged the regional centres of commercial accumulation of the colonial economy. The labour reserve areas were left unprotected and in poverty. Investment went to targets that were easy to attack, gave rural families in outlying areas very little to defend, and provided no response (other than military recruitment) to the employment crisis of rural youth.

The simple dualism of Frelimo's model—co-operatives for the peasantry and state farms for rural workers—was thus constantly undercut by the complexity of the cross-cutting rural class structure. Frelimo's vision of a homogeneous subsistence-oriented peasantry did not recognize the diversity of rural livelihoods, the dependence of households on the market for inputs as well as consumer goods, the consequent importance of maintaining rural markets and transport, the importance of regular wage income, and the role of women in commercial production. Neither of Frelimo's agrarian options provided the kind of regular wage-employment that young men needed to begin their independent productive lives and many rural households used to complement their agricultural production. Frelimo's image of a modern state-farm sector employing a proletarianized labour force did not correspond to the highly differentiated organization of commercial farms and plantations and their massive dependence on the recruitment of cheap casual labour drawn from rural households. Frelimo was unprepared for the fact that politically important sections of the peasantry were specialized commercial producers, with little to gain immediately from the collectivization of production but quite capable of

124. Geffray and Pederson, 'Transformação', p. 10.

turning their hold on offices to their own advantage. Frelimo was thus unprepared for the rapid erosion of its rural support.

*Consequences of the failure of collectivization for local governance and politics*

The failure of collectivization meant that villagization could not proceed, and without villagization it was impossible to implement the proposed system of unitary representative one-party democracy and popular justice. The pluralist system of local government that emerged from the interaction between Frelimo and the divergent and differentiated forms of rural class interest was inefficient, compromised Frelimo's social programme, and increasingly answered the labour question in coercive terms.

In the emergent *de facto* system of local governance, the accountability of executives to democratically elected popular assemblies was only a formality. *Ad hoc* political structures were organized to mediate relations between the peasantry and the state. The administrative positions created for the census of 1980—chiefs of ten families and chiefs of 50 families—continued to be used to carry out other tasks. These positions loosely corresponded to the positions of lineage and ward heads under the *regulado* and, not surprisingly, were often held by those who had held these positions in the past.

Frelimo officials thus first tacitly accepted and then encouraged the participation in local government of political elites—whether customary or petty capitalist—whose agendas were quite different from those traced by a strategy of socialist revolution. In 1979, in a communal village in Gaza, the largest private farmer in the area was formally not a member of the dynamizing group, but he came to most meetings, lent his tractor for transport for official tasks, and participated in the setting of distribution quotas for inputs delivered to the village secretary.<sup>125</sup> In Manica a prominent village secretary was also *regulo*.<sup>126</sup> In a communal village in Erati, Nampula, in 1982, the *humu* (ward chief) was also a Muslim religious leader, in charge of social affairs in the dynamizing group and a member of the party. One of his nephews was the village secretary, another was secretary of the party cell, and another in charge of the youth organization. His wife's eldest sister was in charge of the women's organization.<sup>127</sup> In N'ganga, Tete province, in 1982, the village secretary was a Catholic catechist, owner of a maize mill, and a major trader in wood and cross-border contraband.<sup>128</sup> In Machubo, the largest private farmer in the region, a nephew of the former *regulo*, was a leading member of the party.<sup>129</sup>

125. CEA Research, Baixo-Limpopo, 1979.

126. Alexander, 'Land and political authority', p. 44.

127. Geffray and Pederson, 'Transformação', p. 7.

128. CEA Research, Angonia, 1982.

129. Cea Reaearch, Marracuene, 1983.

Much of the inefficiency of the local state emerged out of the contradictions of its collectivization strategy rather than a clear imbalance between the capacity of its cadres and the grandeur of its modernist projects. Local government tasks organized by the *régulos* that wanted doing were no longer carried out. As rural roads rapidly became impassable, isolated communities remembered with regret the work they did under the *régulos* to maintain feeder roads.<sup>130</sup> The government concentrated on finishing bridges, paving the major north-south arteries, and improving access to state farms.

Outside the formal wage sector, most people in the countryside no longer paid any taxes at all. Frelimo had planned that, once living in communal villages, people would tax themselves for the provisioning of common social services. The failure of collectivization compromised the financing of Frelimo's social programme, which enjoyed broad social support. There was no budget for health-care facilities at the local level; communities were asked to choose a young person with basic education to go for brief technical training as a preventive and basic curative health-care worker. They were to be paid by the community, eventually from collective production. These basic health-care workers had no equipment, few drugs, could not provide curative care, and their salaries went unpaid. The state could not supply teachers for all the classrooms constructed at the sites of future communal villages. There was no budget to train and pay instructors to follow up on the initial enthusiasm of the national literacy campaign. Adult illiteracy rates remained high in the rural areas, particularly for women. Without knowing how to read, one could not move ahead in Frelimo political structures, nor learn much from the numerous short courses on technical and political subjects organized by the co-operatives.

With the stagnation of state-farm and co-operative production and of peasant marketing, Frelimo's answers to the labour question increasingly became those of the colonial order. Local government structures, particularly village secretaries and dynamizing groups, were told to mobilize people to resolve seasonal labour shortages on state farms. Village secretaries turned to lineage chiefs and school-teachers to help them. Women and children worked for notebooks or salt; their wages were not registered on the books of the state farm.<sup>131</sup> Secretaries feared that quotas of consumer goods for the locality might be reduced if the secretary could not get people out to work, or that they themselves might be regarded as politically unreliable. Nonetheless, physical coercion was not used in recruitment. People were not arrested for refusing to work on state farms, and recruitment was rarely sufficient.

130. CEA Research, Lugela, 1980, and Marracuene, 1983.

131. CEA Research, Angonia, 1982.

Local officials were harried by administrators to increase the official marketing of peasant cash crops in their areas. They were to ensure production of strategic crops like cotton, cashew and maize, and block the flow of produce into parallel and cross-border markets. Their exhortations rang false when, like the village secretary in Tete, they were themselves involved in parallel markets. In 1986, Mozambican journalist Salomão Moyana quoted the governor of Nampula as saying in a public speech, 'Producing cotton and cashew nuts is not a favour; it is the order of the State'.<sup>132</sup> The governor went on to argue that with 3 million people in the province a shortage of agricultural workers had to reflect the weak authority of the administrators, who from then on were expected to recruit workers for all state and private enterprises that needed them. Peasants were supposed to go to their cotton fields early in the morning and stay working till nightfall.

As Frelimo's language became increasingly coercive and oppositional, many of those involved in local government came to see their work in such explicitly colonial terms. In Lugela in 1980, elders asked that they be given uniforms, like those the customary authorities wore in the past.<sup>133</sup> Popular militias were asked to take on full-time tasks of patrolling, monitoring, portering, and message-running, much like the *sipaio*s had done. In some communities they were made up of unemployed young men who, armed and receiving no salary, requisitioned.

Frelimo's loss of legitimacy was an historical process in which democratization was blocked by the interaction between external aggression and the contradictions of its dualist strategy of collectivization. Resistance, war and the loss of legitimacy finally ruptured its public consensus on socialization of the countryside. Moyana's article was published in *Tempo*, a state publication, and provoked criticism of the governor's position within Frelimo. In 1983, after the Fourth Congress, its directive concerning the redistribution of state farm land—land should belong to those who have the capacity to work it—was interpreted by Frelimo cadres in two diametrically opposed ways: all peasants have a right to land; and those who have oxen, ploughs, tractors and/or capital should have privileged access to as much land as they can work.<sup>134</sup> Frelimo no longer had a common strategic response to the labour question.

### *Conclusion*

Hama Thai's evocation of the *Indigenato* in the constitutional debate of 1990 reflected its ambiguous legacy in Mozambican political life: the enduring importance of 'customary' institutions, the persistent dualism in

132. Salomão Moyana, 'Produzir algodão e castanha de caju não é favor é ordem do Estado', *Tempo* 836 (1986), pp. 12–15.

133. CEA research, Lugela, 1980.

134. CEA research, Marracuene, 1983.

all aspects of social and cultural life and the misrecognition that assigned dualism a clarity of classification that it never really had. The irony is that Frelimo, like many of its contemporary critics, saw the peasantry as homogeneous and traditional (semi-feudal in its Marxist-Leninist language) when it was not. This dualist illusion, just as much as the political, cultural and social dualism which embodies it, is the enduring legacy of the *Indigenato*. Resistance to collectivization was not a populist defence of tradition, but a realistic and differentiated defence of livelihoods, on the one hand, and class interests, on the other.

Mamdani's attention to the distinctive forms of local governance in the colonial state in Africa clarifies the reasons for the emotive importance of the debates around citizenship in Mozambique, reveals why the abolition of the *regulado* was such a decisive step at Independence, and why there is such sharp debate around its reinstatement today. Ultimately, however, in his effort to avoid economic reductionism, Mamdani yields to political reductionism, reifying the bifurcation of colonial and post-colonial African societies. The dualism of the political institutions of the *Indigenato* was real, but it also shaped a shifting series of ideological oppositions between native and citizen, traditional and modern, semi-feudal and capitalist, rural and urban, that were never as sharp as the system of governance implied. The creation of the customary was integrally linked to the construction of the cross-cutting relations of hierarchy and class.

Frelimo's vision of local democratization was unworkable, because it, like Mamdani, both recognized dualism and was deceived by it. Its answer to the 'native question' depended on its answer to the labour question—a strategic commitment to rapid collectivization of the countryside. The dualist premises underlying this strategy were far removed from the complex class structure of rural Mozambique at independence and thus rendered unworkable Frelimo's vision of a unifying socialist democracy. But Frelimo once understood that a process of democratization had to confront both the 'native question' and the 'labour question', both class and the customary.