

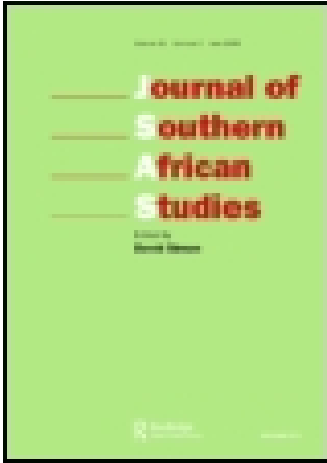
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*Proletarianisation, Agency and Changing Rural Livelihoods: Forced Labour and Resistance in Colonial Mozambique**

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In current analytical approaches to rural poverty in Southern Africa, the more we see the term 'livelihoods', the less we see the concept 'proletarianisation'. This displacement is partly a response to warranted criticism of teleological and functionalist tendencies in some Marxist work on proletarianisation, but it also reflects a troubling retreat from history, politics and class analysis in current livelihoods frameworks. This paper attempts to detach the concepts of livelihoods and agency from the micro-economic language of possessive individualism and strategic gaming and to reclaim them for a Marxist terrain of class struggle. It shows that the multiplicity and variation in rural livelihoods in Mozambique today are the outcome of a historical process of proletarianisation grounded in violent and repressive regimes of forced labour during the colonial period. Forced labour – and resistance to it – shaped the ways in which labour and agricultural commodity markets worked and developed. Qualitative shifts in the organisation of rural livelihoods resulted from processes of commoditisation that made proletarianisation, although contingent, also irreversible. The struggles of Mozambicans against forced labour and forced cropping enmeshed them in a world where both means of production and labour-power were commodities to be bought and sold. If we become so absorbed in documenting the complexity of multiple livelihoods and individual creativity that we can no longer see broad patterns of class struggle in historical change, then the concept of livelihoods is an ideological mask rather than a useful analytical tool.

Shifting Visions: from Proletarianisation to Multiple Livelihoods

Over the last twenty years, our vision of rural poverty in Southern Africa has shifted radically. In the mid-1970s we saw imperialist regimes carving up the countryside into labour reserves and using political instruments – taxation, forced labour and collusion with pre-capitalist elites – to force young men to migrate to work for a pittance. We saw WENELA/TEBA agents scattered across the region contracting cheap labour. We saw the subsistence production of women in rural households producing the labour-power of these migrant men (thus subsidising the wage that made rapid accumulation of mining capital possible). We saw rural areas as a refuge that absorbed the old, the incapacitated and, in moments of market crisis, the temporarily unemployed. We saw a process gradually undermining its own conditions of existence as rural families became increasingly depen-

* This paper draws heavily on work done by researchers at the Centro de Estudos Africanos, Eduardo Mondlane University. I would also like to thank those who gave helpful comments on earlier drafts: referees of this journal and participants in the workshop on Changing Livelihoods, University of Manchester, 9–10 June 2000, and the Rural Development Seminar, Institute of Social Studies, The Hague.

dent on commodities, and thus monetary income, both for current consumption and for financing investment in their own agricultural production.

From the mid-1980s onwards, the causes, patterns and consequences of labour migration for rural life have appeared more contingent and contradictory. We no longer see capital hungering for cheap unskilled labour, but rather mine redundancies and rural unemployment. We see no clear divide between household subsistence production and migrant wage-labour. Rather we see people in rural households combining food production with diverse ways of generating income – brewing, making charcoal, repairing shoes, queuing for food aid, doing casual wage-labour, receiving remittances and pension payments, selling livestock. We see no emerging class opposition between a landless rural proletariat and commercial farmers (black or white), but rather people earning their livelihoods in diverse ways. Some households combine doing wage-labour with hiring wage-workers for their own fields for commercial production. Others live from relief and petty trade. Others reside in the countryside but depend almost entirely on earnings from wage employment, investing not in cattle but in the education of children or in a good house. Households are themselves now seen to be unstable units rather than corporate groups. We follow individual members of households with diverse gendered resources and constraints pursuing their own livelihood strategies, which may not conform to the interests of other household members. Men, women and children may float through various households, drawing on and contributing to household livelihoods, coping with insecurity in diverse and unpredictable ways.

This shift in vision has been accompanied by a sharp reorientation in analytical approaches to the causes of poverty. Marxist emphasis on broad historical and structural processes of proletarianisation and differentiation driven by the accumulation of capital has yielded to institutionalist approaches that describe how individuals with different capabilities and entitlements piece together their livelihoods in diverse ways. In short, we talk about diversification of livelihoods, or even de-agrarianisation, but we rarely mention the term ‘proletarianisation’.

A recent exchange on rural poverty in contemporary Mozambique illustrates this analytical divergence. Relying on evidence from the southern province of Gaza, Cramer and Pontara argue that too little attention has been paid to the existence and interests of poor rural wage-workers on the one hand and to the conditions of accumulation of agrarian capital on the other.¹ In a critical response, Pitcher contends that Cramer and Pontara rely on figures that exaggerate the control of capitalist enterprises over commercial land, do not attend adequately to regional differences that tied rural families in northern Mozambique to cash-cropping rather than migrant labour, and underestimate the overlapping multiple livelihood strategies in which control over land remains important even for those who are rural wage-workers.² She argues against the image of sharpening class divisions implicit in the concept of proletarianisation:

The pressures that the countryside in Mozambique is facing do not lend themselves easily to either/or approaches such as wage labour versus land, companies versus smallholders. Rather, the challenges are fluid and intricate, historically derived and differentiated by region, by method of production, by status and by economic position. Future research needs to recognise and disaggregate this complexity.³

1 C. Cramer and N. Pontara, ‘Rural Poverty and Poverty Alleviation in Mozambique: What’s Missing from the Debate?’, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 36, 1 (1998), pp. 101–138, and ‘Reply to Pitcher’, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 37, 4 (1999), pp. 711–722.

2 M. A. Pitcher, ‘What’s Missing from “What’s Missing”? A Reply to C. Cramer and N. Pontara, “Rural Poverty and Poverty Alleviation in Mozambique: What’s Missing from the Debate?”’, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 37, 4 (1999), pp. 697–709.

3 Pitcher, ‘What’s Missing’, p. 706.

Whereas Cramer and Pontara see broad historic patterns of proletarianisation and accumulation of capital reflected in the lives of rural women, Pitcher emphasises regional differences in history and the need to disaggregate even further the complexity of rural livelihoods.

This paper argues that Pitcher is correct to emphasise diversity in rural livelihoods, but wrong to dismiss Marxist class analysis. If we wish to understand rural poverty in Mozambique, we need the concept of livelihoods, but it should be embedded within a broad historical understanding of proletarianisation. The diverse patterns of rural poverty today are rooted in qualitative structural shifts in the organisation of rural livelihoods that took place under the forced labour regime of the colonial period. These shifts were not simply imposed from above, but were the dialectical result of class struggle. Patterns of diversification in rural livelihoods today were shaped both by exploitation and oppression and by resistance to them. Entangled in the documentation of everyday life, we can miss the fact that proletarianisation is also a real historical tendency in Southern Africa, a history that while not inevitable is irreversible.

The following section of this paper discusses the critique of Marxist work on proletarianisation in southern Africa and the theoretical underpinnings of the alternative presented by the livelihoods frameworks. The next section outlines the relationship between the organisation of the forced labour system and the space of resistance. It illustrates how resistance to forced labour, very often attempting no more than a defence of livelihoods, resulted in revolutionary ruptures in the organisation of rural life that entwined people in the class relations of capitalism. The concluding section draws out the implications of this analysis of forced labour for the way we understand rural poverty in Mozambique today.

Agency as Individual Strategy: the Dislocation of Class

Criticism of Marxist work on proletarianisation in Africa has focused on two analytical problems – teleological functionalism and reductionism. Marxists were so convinced, it is said, that African peasants were on the march towards the proletariat⁴ that we could not recognise the importance of peasant production and saw peasant-based political movements as inherently populist. We were so concerned, it is claimed, with showing the exploitative and hegemonic power of capital and the state during the colonial period that we robbed African peasants and workers of agency, their distinctive histories and their cultural identity.

A substantial corpus of historical research on Southern Africa rather demonstrates the complexity of rural class structure, the contingency of proletarianisation and the importance of peasant politics. There is no continuous homogeneous pattern of increasing proletarianisation based on the cheap labour policies of *apartheid*, nor has the decline of non-wage contributions to household subsistence proved to be inevitable. Detailed case-studies on colonial Zimbabwe, such as Ranger's work on Makoni, have suggested that colonial occupation and alienation of land did not necessarily lead to the destruction of peasant production.⁵ Historical work on farm labour in Southern Africa shows no clear irreversible

4 This was the subtitle of an excellent collection of papers by É. le Bris, P.-Ph. Rey and M. Samuel, *Capitalisme Négrier, la Marche des Paysans vers le Proletariat* (Paris, Maspero, 1976), dealing with labour migration and proletarianisation in West Africa.

5 T. Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerilla War in Zimbabwe: a Comparative Study* (London, James Currey, 1985), p. 29, shows self-peasantisation in the aftermath of conquest. See also E. Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders, and Wives: Shona Women in the History of Zimbabwe, 1870–1939* (Portsmouth, NH, Heinemann, 1992); A. Cheater, *Idioms of Accumulation: Rural Development and Class Formation among Freeholders in Zimbabwe* (Gweru, Mambo Press, 1984).

movement towards wage-labour. Within a single district or even on a single farm, wage-labour could coexist with share-cropping and tenancy; farms that used principally wage-labour at one point could revert to tenancy arrangements and back again. Moore and Vaughan in their historical study of the Bemba labour reserve area of Zambia showed that cash-cropping has had a healthy revival.⁶ Beinart and Bundy showed that, by the 1920s, rural struggles in South Africa reflected the complexity and diversity of rural lives.⁷ They were not just isolated populist rebellions against power, but instead linked communities, even bridging at times the rural/urban divide. Ranger argued both that there was a distinctive peasant consciousness in Zimbabwe and that it had been deeply involved in the struggle for independence.⁸

Historical work also documents the contingency of capital accumulation and the imperfect promotion of capitalist interests by colonial governments. If pre-capitalist forms of lineage organisation and customary tenure survive, it is not just because capital needed cheap labour-power. Cooper documented the importance of struggles by migrant workers not to become a class, to invest at home, to maintain independent production.⁹ Historians of resistance have argued that proletarianisation was not inevitable in Africa, in part because rural people did not want it to be. They showed workers and peasants evading, mocking and sabotaging those who exploited them.¹⁰ Migrant wage-labour and commodity production predated colonial rule in some areas, and were organised by rural people themselves. Isaacman argued that, in stressing the devastating effects of commodity production on African communities, Marxist scholarship on cotton production in Mozambique reduced all cotton-growers to victims, neglecting the ways in which they coped with, and struggled against, the cotton regime.¹¹

For those, such as Isaacman, who think that Marxist approaches neglect individual agency, the livelihoods frameworks now widely employed in development studies (and the associated area of development cooperation) would appear to offer a less deterministic account. This approach has, at its centre, strategising individuals, equipped with variable portfolios of material and non-material assets, attempting to employ them in ways that maximise the preferences and priorities of each one, in an environment of risk and uncertainty.¹² Like Amartya Sen, upon whose entitlements and capabilities approach they draw, the designers of the livelihoods frameworks have attempted to disrupt the neo-liberal consensus by introducing issues of equity and vulnerability couched in the methodological individualism of neo-classical economics.¹³ Class is present, but only as context, one among

6 H. L. Moore and M. Vaughan, *Cutting Down Trees: Gender, Nutrition and Agricultural Change in the Northern Province of Zambia, 1890–1990* (London, James Currey, 1994).

7 W. Beinart and C. Bundy, *Hidden Struggles in Rural South Africa* (London, James Currey, 1987).

8 Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*.

9 F. Cooper, 'Urban Space, Industrial Time and Wage Labor in Africa', in F. Cooper (ed), *Struggle for the City: Migrant Labor, Capital and the Struggle for Urban Africa* (Beverly Hills, CA, Sage, 1983), pp. 7–50.

10 See *inter alia* Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*; C. van Onselen, *Chibaro: African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia, 1900–1933* (London, Pluto Press, 1976); A. Isaacman, *Cotton is The Mother of Poverty: Peasants, Work and Rural Struggle in Colonial Mozambique, 1938–1961* (Portsmouth, NH, Heinemann, 1996).

11 Isaacman, *Cotton is the Mother*, p. 240.

12 See for example J. Farrington, D. Carney, C. Ashley and C. Turton, 'Sustainable Livelihoods in Practice: Early Applications of Concepts in Rural Areas', *Natural Resource Perspectives*, 42 (ODI, June 1999), <http://www.oneworld.org/odi/nrp/42.html>, and various contributions on livelihoods frameworks in *Emerging Issues in Rural Development: a Background Paper* (London, ODI, January 2001), <http://www.agronor.org/RDbackground.html>.

13 On the influence of A. Sen, *Poverty and Famines, an essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1981), see for example: R. Chambers and G. R. Conway, 'Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: Practical Concepts for the 21st Century', Institute of Development Studies Discussion Papers No. 296 (Brighton, University of Sussex, Institute of Development Studies, 1992); F. Ellis, *Rural Livelihoods and Diversity in Developing Countries* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000) and the institutionalist approaches that dominate <http://www>.

many complex historically derived institutions that shape the unequal distribution of assets, capabilities and opportunities.

This is a very reduced vision of agency, power and history. Within the livelihoods framework, structure is the contingent outcome of micro-processes of decision and thus analytically redundant. The specificity of capitalist class relations is effaced as social networks become possessions, possessions become assets and assets become capital. The concept of class struggle, with its emphasis on collective agency, confrontation and the specific political power of the state, is replaced by concern for the affirmation of individual agency and identity, understood in terms of strategising, preferences, priorities and choice. Agency is reduced to individuals strategically choosing between options so complex that they remain largely outside anyone's control. The legitimacy of revolutionary political agendas, positing radical rupture with existing class relations, has yielded to concern with poverty alleviation programmes that pretend to make it easier for individuals to cope by increasing or protecting their assets, entitlements and capabilities. For the poor, there is creative coping, and affirmation of self-worth (identity and dignity), but no class struggle.

Marxism itself offers a more powerful analytical approach to the question of agency, one that is specifically concerned with the problematic and contingent relations between individual and collective agency and between consciousness and action. Teleological functionalism characterised the evolutionary Marxism of the Third International, but it is not consistent with an analytical emphasis on contradiction and class struggle, and thus not inherent in a critical Marxist perspective. Indeed, much of the best of the history of resistance explicitly addresses a Marxist problematic.¹⁴ Marxists see exploitation and oppression as inherently laden with conflict. Thus, resistance does not have to be explained; rather, it is the ways in which it is expressed, confronted or suppressed that are of interest.

Marxist criticism of some of the resistance history (including, for example, Scott's work on 'hidden transcripts' and 'weapons of the weak') does not, therefore, deny the importance of resistance. Rather it has made two fundamental criticisms of the ways in which different forms of resistance are interpreted. First, the literature of resistance is sometimes populist, failing to see differentiation in peasant response. Second, it does not always distinguish sufficiently between protest that challenges the terms of oppression and exploitation and that which allows people to cope – to just get by within it.¹⁵ Insurrection is the same as foot-shuffling; singing about suffering is the same as doing something about it. Since Marxism is concerned with how organised political protest and revolutionary emancipatory change develop, the differentiated forms and consequences of resistance matter. History is

Footnote 13 *continued*

- livelihoods.org. For an extended discussion of the colonisation of the social sciences by the methodological individualism of neo-classical economics, see B. Fine, *Social Capital Versus Social Theory: Political Economy and Social Science at the Turn of the Millennium* (London and New York, Routledge, 2001).
- 14 The work of the resistance historians was inspired by Hobsbawm's *Primitive Rebels* and that of Aptheker, Foner and Genovese writing on slavery. H. Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts: Nat Turner, Denmark Vesey, Gabriel, and Others* (New York, International Publishers, 1963); E. J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1959); Eric Foner, *Nat Turner* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice-Hall, 1971); Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: the World the Slaves Made* (New York, Pantheon Books, 1974). Incidentally, my reading of Marxist scholarship on cotton production in Mozambique does not find all peasants reduced to victims nor resistance neglected.
- 15 T. O. Ranger, 'The people in African resistance', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 4, 1 (1977), pp. 125–146, provides a good summary of the Marxist criticisms of that time and of his response (in a time of optimism about socialist revolutions in Africa). T. Brass, *Towards a Comparative Political Economy of Unfree Labour: Case Studies and Debates* (London and Portland, Oregon, Frank Cass, 1999), p. 254, builds a robust Marxist attack in the South Asian context on J. C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1990) and *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1985).

shaped by the struggles of oppressors as well as those of the oppressed, but the outcomes are not necessarily those envisioned or intended by either.

What is happening in southern Africa today is better understood on the Marxist terrain of class struggle than on the chessboard of possessive individualism and strategic gaming. Only by reintroducing explicit analytical concern with long-term structural processes and the dialectical relationship between exploitation and resistance can we understand the options that rural people confront, as they piece together their livelihoods in diverse ways that may or may not include wage-labour. In the history of forced labour in colonial Mozambique, coercion and exploitation provoked change in the organisation of rural livelihoods, as did struggle against them. In resisting forced labour, Mozambican women, men and children were most often trying to protect their livelihoods; they seldom affirmed anything as abstract as class. Yet these struggles often had outcomes they neither predicted nor chose, including a deeper involvement in capitalist relations of production; that is, proletarianisation.

Proletarianisation does not necessarily imply that everyone becomes and remains a wage-worker. Capitalist economies are characterised by the continual movement of people between wage-labour, non-marketed labour (particularly in the case of women and children), self-employment and unemployment. Nor does proletarianisation have as a pre-condition the loss of land. What forced labour, and resistance to it, achieved in Mozambique was to make production of commodities a necessary part of rural livelihoods, to tie rural livelihoods to global market movements, to make labour-power a commodity that was routinely bought and sold in diverse ways, and to give those who had capital the capability to exploit.

Forced Labour, Resistance and the Transformation of Rural Livelihoods

Historically, colonial occupation did not initiate processes of commoditisation in Mozambique. In the nineteenth century, before the gradual extension of effective Portuguese occupation, young men were tramping to the plantations of Natal and the diamond and gold mines of South Africa.¹⁶ Food crops and oil seeds produced by peasants moved out of ports in northern Mozambique and supplied coastal settlements in the nineteenth century.¹⁷ Forms of labour recruitment and migration in the twentieth century strongly resembled press-ganging of workers and export of labour by *prazo*-holders in central Mozambique after the formal abolition of slavery in 1879.¹⁸

Yet to stress continuity between pre-colonial and colonial worlds is to belie the scale and range of expansion of capitalist enterprises within the Southern African region and the corresponding sharp demand for Mozambican labour in the twentieth century. Mines in South Africa, Rhodesia and even the Congo recruited Mozambican migrant workers. The colonial authorities were under pressure to grant recruitment rights to the French Indian Ocean colonies and to São Tomé cocoa-planters, and themselves needed manual labour for

16 Patrick Harries, *Work, Culture and Identity: Migrant Laborers in Mozambique and South Africa, c. 1860–1910* (Portsmouth, NH, Heinemann, 1994); Luis A. Covane, 'Considerações Sobre o Impacto da Penetração Capitalista no Sul de Moçambique, 1850–1876', *Cadernos de História*, 7, 2 (1988) pp. 91–106.

17 L. Vail and L. White, *Capitalism and Colonialism in Mozambique: a Study of Quelimane District* (London, Heinemann, 1980); E. A. Alpers, "'To Seek a Better Life": the Implications of Migration from Mozambique to Tanganyika for Class Formation and Political Behavior', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 18, 2 (1984), pp. 367–388; C. Serra, 1986, *Como a Penetração Estrangeira Transformou o Modo de Produção dos Camponeses Moçambicanos — O Exemplo da Zambezi, 1200–1964*, Volume II (Maputo, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, 1986), p. 29; S. Ishemo, 'Forced Labour, Mussoco (Taxation), Famine and Migration in Lower Zambézia, Mozambique, 1870–1914', in A. Zegeye and S. Ishemo (eds), *Forced Labour and Migration: Patterns of Movement within Africa* (London, Munich and New York, Hans Zell, 1989), pp. 109–158.

18 J. Penvenne, *African Workers and Colonial Racism, Mozambican Strategies and Struggles in Lourenço Marques, 1877–1962* (Portsmouth, NH, Heinemann, 1995), p. 105; Newitt, *A History*, p. 383.

public works.¹⁹ New agricultural enterprises recruiting Mozambican field labour were established: multinational and British-owned plantations of sugar, copra and sisal on the coast and inland along the great river valleys; highland tea estates in Malawi and Zambezia; and settler farms producing food for domestic markets. Railroads and busy ports, linking Lourenço Marques and Beira to exporters in South Africa, Rhodesia and Nyasaland, were built and operated by Mozambican workers. Cotton was developed as a new cash-crop with concessionary companies opening ginning factories throughout the country in the 1940s. Portugal imported 190 tonnes of baled cotton fibre from Mozambique in 1930, and 39,718 tonnes in 1960.²⁰ Urban industries recruited Mozambican workers, as well as better-paid Portuguese settlers.

This rapid expansion of commodity production in Mozambique implied a major refashioning of rural livelihoods. This was not a harmonious process of voluntary reorganisation of assets and regular exchange. It hinged on the exercise of repression and violence. This was a world where basic political rights of assembly and franchise were denied to the colonised subject and where corporal punishment, detention and deportation were routinely used to discipline work. To regulate the recruitment of the massive number of workers the expansion of capitalist production required, and to drive down the level of wages and prices paid to peasants for export and food-crops, Portuguese colonial authorities relied on a system of forced labour.

Until 1961, under the labour codes of the *Indigenato*, only 'citizens' (Portuguese or assimilated) enjoyed the right to determine where, how and under what conditions they worked. All able-bodied men defined as 'native' were obliged to work, an obligation considered satisfied only if they had capital sufficient to live off the income, or exercised a profession, or cultivated fields of a size fixed by statute, or produced export crops in specified quantities, or did wage-work for a minimum period fixed at six months per year.²¹ Women were initially assumed to have a productive role in agriculture or in the domestic economy. Men over 60 and under fourteen years were exempt, as were the ill, infirm, police and customary officials.

Initially, forced labour was limited to impressment, or *shibalo*.²² Men not satisfying conditions of exemption were recruited for migrant labour. A small wage was paid when they returned to their home areas, if they were adjudged to have satisfactorily completed their six months of work. Both men and women were impressed for undefined periods of public service to the state, for road or rail construction. Both men and women were impressed for variable periods of punitive labour for non-criminal offences such as not paying tax, or escaping from contract labour. Penal labour was also used for public works and let out to private employers.²³ In the 1940s, the forced labour legislation was extended to forced cropping, obliging peasants, both men and women, to satisfy their obligation to 'work' by cultivating, usually on their own land, cotton or rice for obligatory sale to a concession-holder. Within households, particularly in central Mozambique, the two kinds of obligation sometimes overlapped. In some districts, men were recruited for plantation labour while women were obliged to cultivate cotton.

Despite the repression and violence that surrounded forced labour, there was resistance.

19 Newitt, *A History*, p. 409.

20 C. Fortuna, *O Fio da Meada: O Algodão de Moçambique, Portugal e a Economia—Mundo (1860–1960)* (Porto, Edições Afrontamento, 1993), p. 180.

21 Newitt, *A History*, p. 384.

22 The term is understood throughout the Southern African region, though other terms are used in central and northern Mozambique. Variant forms include *chibaro* and *chiballo*. This paper uses *shibalo*, as a phonetic approximation.

The derivation is possibly from the Southern Bantu shi prefix with the Portuguese word for work, *trabalho*.

23 After 1914, a small wage was also paid for penal labour, Newitt, *A History*, p. 411.

Although direct confrontation was rare, there is a rich historical record of flight, evasion and sabotage.²⁴ The following sections examine four aspects of the forced labour system that, while necessary for its functioning, also shaped the space for resistance. In each case, this resistance propelled revolutionary change in the organisation of livelihoods.

The Linking of Forced Labour to Free Labour and Commodity Markets

The 1899 labour law defined men's work as the production of commodities. Thus, the obligation to work could be satisfied by voluntary wage-labour or cash-crop production as an alternative to forced labour. Thus, forced labour functioned within free labour and commodity markets, depressing overall wages for manual labour and prices for peasant produce. Labour and agricultural commodity markets were also intertwined since rural men moved back and forth between wage-labour (forced or free) and cash-cropping (forced or free).

Forced cropping of cotton and rice neither created nor entirely displaced free crop marketing. It was possible to be released from forced cropping by obtaining recognition as a specialised commercial producer of other crops. There was a broad and changing range of produce marketed by the peasantry: livestock, sesame, peanuts, copra, mafurra, kapok, sunflower and particularly cashew. The development of plantations created a demand for cheap staple foods – principally maize and dried cassava – which was not satisfied by settler farms.²⁵ In 1955, textile-crops, mainly cotton, made up 46 per cent of the value of marketed peasant production in northern Mozambique, but 41 per cent came from oil-seeds freely grown and marketed.²⁶

Although all able-bodied men were by law subject to forced labour as they grew older, and became senior figures in their own lineages, they were increasingly likely to be recognised as commercial producers and thus exempt from *shibalo*. Many of these marketed substantial crop and livestock surpluses. Particularly in central and southern Mozambique, most households had at one point or another members producing food and cash-crops and others doing forced or wage-labour, i.e. they had a diversified livelihoods base.

The interdependence of forced and free labour and commodity and labour markets opened a space for effective forms of resistance to forced labour – voluntary contract labour and specialised cash-crop production. There was flight and evasion, but from one job to another, from one form of commodity production to another.

Absenteeism and desertion were common forms of resistance in times of labour shortage. In the 1950s, the absenteeism rates on sisal plantations in Nampula were around 60 per cent and between 45 and 55 per cent at the Marromeu sugar estate in Sofala.²⁷

24 See *inter alia* C. Tornimbeni, 'Labour Migration in Central-Southern Africa and Tete District, Mozambique, 1890–1945' (MA thesis, University of London, 1999); J. das Neves, 'Economy, Society and Labour Migration in Central Mozambique, 1930–c. 1965: a Case Study of Manica Province' (PhD Thesis, University of London, 1999); Vail and White, *Capitalism and Colonialism*; L. Vail and L. White, 'Forms of Resistance: Songs and Perceptions of Power in Colonial Mozambique', *American Historical Review*, 88, 4 (1983), pp. 883–919; van Onselen, *Chibaro*; Penvenne, *African Workers*; N. S. Bravo, *A Cultura Algodoeira na Economia do Norte de Moçambique*, (Lisbon, Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical, 1963); Isaacman, *Cotton is The Mother*; A. Isaacman and A. Chilundo, 'Peasants at Work: Forced Cotton Cultivation in Northern Mozambique 1938–1961', in A. Isaacman and R. Roberts (eds), *Cotton, Colonialism and Social History in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Social History of Africa series (Portsmouth, NH, Heinemann; London, James Currey, 1995), pp. 147–179.

25 M. Mackintosh, 'Agricultural Marketing and Socialist Accumulation: a Case Study of Maize Marketing in Mozambique', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 14, 2 (1987), pp. 243–267.

26 Calculated from *Estatística Agrícola de Moçambique* (Lourenço Marques, Direcção provincial dos serviços de estatística geral, 1955).

27 D. Hedges and A. Chilundo, 'A Contestação da Situação Colonial, 1945–1961', in A. Rocha *et al.*, *História de Moçambique*, Vol. III, *Moçambique no Auge do Colonialismo, 1930–1961* (Maputo, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, Departamento de História, 1993), p. 214.

Workers on tea estates in Zambezia, both contract and *shibalo*, fled from harsh employers – to other plantations – during the Second World War years of labour shortage. Migrant miners in Rhodesia took advantage of labour shortages to desert one boss for another, and passed on information about bad work conditions on particular mines.

A less risky way for men to resist *shibalo* was to find a better job first, whether within Mozambique or elsewhere in the region. The working class of Maputo grew both through *shibalo* impressment (dockers and rubbish-men) and through evasion of it.²⁸ Share-cropping agreements with large landowners or permanent work on settler farms could be better than being a seasonally recruited *shibalo* worker.²⁹ In central Mozambique, signing a contract with the plantations was a better option than impressment. The expansion of mining at Moatize gave workers in Tete an alternative to plantation-labour.³⁰

In central Mozambique, some workers signed contracts with the RNLB (Rhodesian Native Labour Board) or crossed clandestinely for work on mines and farms in Rhodesia. In southern Mozambique, Harris argued, the threat of *shibalo* underlay the apparently voluntary massive signing up of young men for work on the South African mines.³¹ In life-histories recorded in southern Mozambique,³² former migrant workers stressed that they avoided *shibalo* on settler farms by migrating, officially under contract or clandestinely.

Resistance to *shibalo* through flight was not therefore an escape from proletarianisation, but a way of finding a better-paid job, or any job. The ‘routinisation’ of occasional wage-labour in the organisation of rural livelihoods meant that any contraction of wage-employment or decline in commodity prices brought deepening poverty, not release. By the 1930s, young men were crossing borders in search of employment even when forced labour was not in great use. Newitt observes:

At first sight it may seem paradoxical that this great increase in emigration occurred during a decade when forced labour in Mozambique showed a marked decline. However, both the increase in emigration and the abandonment of forced labour has to be seen against a background of the great depression and the collapse of commodity prices. Wages were forced steadily down and the freedom to contact one’s labour voluntarily was a freedom to be exercised in a world of shrinking economic opportunities.³³

Resistance to forced labour through voluntary contract labour and migration thus propelled a central aspect of rural livelihoods in central and southern Mozambique (and in some areas of the north as well): the interdependence of wage-labour with peasant farming. Especially if traced over time, rural households had members both farming and using remittances to invest in cattle, implements and housing, to hire labour, to purchase food and to pay school and health fees.

Needing a wage-labour job is not, of course, the same thing as having one. Both forced labour and resistance to it tied rural livelihoods to the vagaries of regional and international market movements and to shifts in state employment policies. Following the depression of labour markets in the 1930s, the Second World War boom for copra and sugar, like the 1960s wave of industrialisation in Rhodesia, tightened labour markets and improved the position of Mozambican workers, but both came to an end.

28 J. Penvenne, ‘Shibalo e Classe Operária: Lourenço Marques 1870–1962’, *Estudos Moçambicanos*, 2 (1981), pp. 9–26.

29 Centro de Estudos Africanos, *Homoine research*, 1977.

30 Centro de Estudos Africanos, *Angonia research*, 1982.

31 M. Harris, ‘Labour Emigration among the Mozambican Thonga: Culture and Political Factors’, *Africa*, 29 (1959), pp. 50–66.

32 Centro de Estudos Africanos, *Archives*, J. Penvenne, *Port Interviews*; A. Manghezi, S. Zandamela, A. José, *Interviews*, Inhambane research, 1977, *Port research*, 1981; R. First, *Black Gold: the Mozambican Miner, Proletarian and Peasant* (Sussex, Harvester, 1983); and A. José, *A Greve dos Carregadores da Estiva do Porto Comercial de Lourenço Marques em Agosto de 1963 no Contexto da Luta de Libertação Nacional de Moçambique e Alguns Problemas na Reconstrução da História do Operariado Moçambicano* (Dissertação para o grau de licenciatura em história, Eduardo Mondlane University, Maputo, 1987).

33 Newitt, *A History*, p. 511.

Finding an alternative to forced cotton-growing was more difficult than evading *shibalo*. There is much historical evidence of peasants sabotaging their own crop to evade forced cropping of cotton, which was poorly paid and labour-intensive. The companies required a certain volume of production to make ginning and marketing profitable in a particular area. One of the tasks of the cotton board was to decide which areas were agronomically suitable. In some areas, therefore, peasants worked at lowering cotton yields, by parboiling cotton seeds before planting,³⁴ or by refusing to tear up and burn old plants.³⁵ They haggled over price by subverting the grading and weighing system, burning their cotton, strewing it along the roadside as they carried it to distant marketing points, or simply refusing to sell.³⁶

Some other commercial alternative had, however, then to be found – contract labour, migration or some other source of cash income. Cross-border migration to Tanzania, Kenya, Malawi or Zambia was a way for men to avoid forced cropping in the north.³⁷ Common language allowed Makonde, Ajaua and Makhua migrants from Mozambique to assimilate into communities on the Tanzanian side of the border.³⁸ New commercial crops such as hybrid maize, cashew, kapok, castor bean, sunflower and dried cassava were introduced throughout the colonial period by peasants and migrant workers, as well as by traders, administrators and settler farmers. It was, however, difficult to obtain a commercial farmer's card. In southern Mozambique, a few mission communities (on the South African model), where men were not subject to forced labour, became centres of agricultural innovation and marketing.³⁹ Cotton under some extension schemes was, for some, a good commercial crop. Isaacman and Chilundo argue that those who gained from cotton were principally chiefs, but there were also specialised commercial cotton-producers among teachers, itinerant merchants, returning migrant labourers and salaried cotton-gin workers.⁴⁰

Those who were able to defend themselves against forced labour by becoming commercial farmers did not escape from capitalist class relations by doing so. They employed wage-labour and were most often themselves skilled wage-workers or political office-holders. Using wage-income to hire casual wage-workers (*ganho-ganho*) remains a common way of organising smallholder commercial farming today throughout Mozambique. Those hired are generally women and youths who work on a piece or target basis and may be paid in food (or, say, notebooks) as well as cash.

State-regulated Monopsony

To keep wages down, coercive recruitment was complemented by state regulation of competition between employers and traders and restrictions on the mobility of labour. Recruitment accords with the South African and Rhodesian authorities established the pattern of regional variation in dominant forms of exploitation that still marks rural class structure today in Mozambique: mine labour and wage-labour on settler farms in the south, plantation labour in the centre and smallholder cotton in the north.

International recruitment agreements were reinforced by monopsonistic institutions that

34 Isaacman, *Cotton is the Mother*; Hedges and Chilundo, 'A Contestação'.

35 Bravo, *A Cultura Algodoeira*.

36 A. Isaacman *et al.*, 'A Resistência Popular à Cultura Forçada do Algodão em Moçambique, 1930–1961' (CEDIMO Série A, 10, 1980–08–12), p. 6.

37 E. Alpers, "'To Seek a Better Life'".

38 Adam and Gentili, 'O Movimento', p. 49.

39 A. Manghezi, 'Ku thekela: Estratégia de Sobrevivência contra a Fome no Sul de Moçambique', *Estudos Moçambicanos*, 4 (1983), pp. 19–40.

40 Isaacman and Chilundo, 'Peasants at Work', p. 171.

regulated the recruitment procedures of smaller enterprises. The South African Chamber of Mines set up a common recruitment service, WENELA, for both gold and coal mines with offices in rural areas throughout southern Mozambique. When tea production expanded in Upper Zambezia, small producers were pressured to join a planters' association that regulated offences such as hiring workers who had deserted from another plantation.⁴¹ In coastal zones, the state used the forced labour codes and enforced statutory payment of rent in money to break the labour-rent arrangements used by old land-owning elites that blocked access to labour for mine and plantation recruitment.⁴² In the cotton-growing areas, each concessionary company was given exclusive right of purchase within a particular zone, usually that surrounding its ginning factory. Reconciling competitive demands for labour was one of the principal tasks of district administrators, a recurrent theme of official correspondence in colonial archives.

Central to the regulation of competition for labour was the restriction of personal movement under the pass system. It was used both to control compliance with forced labour obligations in Mozambique and to prevent employers throughout the region from hiring workers who had fled from another farm, mine or contractor. Men, women and children required authorization from the colonial administration for any change of residence or movement beyond their area of origin. Men of productive age had to pay for, and carry, a native identity card, as did adult women living in administrative centres or towns.

Protecting labour monopsony also required limiting the development of African commercial farming. The alliance of WENELA, settler farmers and plantation capital lobbied to prevent the development of an indigenous rural petty bourgeoisie that would compete for seasonal labour and draw away contract labour.⁴³ The cotton companies thought that small commercial farmers would drop cotton for less labour-demanding and more lucrative crops. By imposing onerous financial conditions for land acquisition outside the reserves and by regulating traders' licenses and export permits, the state limited the development of black commercial farmers.⁴⁴

Breaking monopsony therefore usually meant braving controls and risking detention to cross borders. In central Mozambique, men avoided both *shibalo* and RNLB contracts to sign themselves on directly at Rhodesian mines. They also managed to subvert the regional divide by moving on step-wise to South Africa.⁴⁵ In southern Mozambique undocumented agricultural workers, both men and women, crossed in the 1950s to Natal, where farmers breached labour accords to hire them.⁴⁶ Along borders, families frequently acquired two sets of documents. It was difficult to break the buying monopolies of the cotton companies; unginning cotton is hard to smuggle because it is bulky and difficult to transport.⁴⁷ In central border districts such as Sussundenga, Angonia and Milange, peasant farmers in Manica, Tete and Zambezia sold maize on both sides of the border, but had to ensure that they sold

41 Centro de Estudos Africanos, Alta-Zambézia research, 1981.

42 D. Hedges and A. Rocha, 'A Reestruturação da Sociedade Mocambicana, 1938-1944', in Rocha *et al.*, *História de Moçambique*, pp. 112-113.

43 Local WNLTA staff monitored all developments that might affect recruitment in their areas. For example, the regional WNLTA manager wrote a directive in 1961 attributing a drop in recruitment in Zavala, Inhambane, to the development of agricultural marketing cooperatives. Centro de Estudos Africanos, Archives, WNLTA LTD, Circular D/A No 15a/61, 22 May 1961.

44 J. W. Bruce, 'Land Policy and State Farm Divestiture in Mozambique' (Madison, Land Tenure Center, University of Wisconsin, 1990), p. 2.

45 Van Onselen, *Chibaro*; Tornimbeni, Labour Migration; das Neves, Economy, Society and Labour.

46 Lincoln, 'Plantation Agriculture'.

47 Only in some border areas were there occasional possibilities of improving the terms of trade by smuggling cotton for sale in adjoining countries. Isaacman, *Cotton is the Mother*, p. 220.

enough in Mozambique to maintain their status as commercial farmers exempt from *shibalo*.⁴⁸

Personal names, maize varieties, house-decoration, the language of work⁴⁹ and evangelical religious movements reflect the ways in which histories of trans-regional movement became a customary part of rural livelihoods in most areas of Mozambique except Nampula. Such movement created new collective identities: a vaguely defined but materially important Southern African working class; and, with each detention or expulsion from South Africa or Rhodesia or Tanganyika, the concept of a Mozambican nationality. The patterning of regional mobility created regional identities that remain economically and politically important today in Mozambique. To be from the south, the centre or the north reflects not only variation in language and culture, but also different histories of exploitation under the forced labour system. Migration put Mozambicans in touch with emerging nationalist movements within southern and eastern Africa. So also did the processes of rural differentiation and privileges of class that allowed the sons of chiefs and specialised commercial producers to pursue their studies and to engage with revolutionary intellectuals outside the boundaries of Mozambique.

A Dualistic System of Governance and Jural Identity

Coercion and regulation of the mobility of labour under the forced labour legislation were supported by the dualistic institutions of colonial governance. Portuguese citizens had rights to private property, enjoyed freedom of movement and were governed by the laws of Portugal; almost all Mozambicans of African origin – those subject to the *Indigenato* – held property under customary tenure and were subordinated to customary chiefs (*regulos*).⁵⁰

Everyday administration of the forced labour system depended on these customary chiefs and their police. District administrators received requests for labour and apportioned recruitment quotas to the different *regulos* under their jurisdiction. *Regulos* negotiated with lineage heads in their territories to identify those who would be recruited. They received bonuses for recruitment, collected taxes from the migrant worker's deferred wage, and used forced labour to cultivate their own fields.

The dualism of colonial institutions of governance put chiefs and headmen in an ambivalent position, caught between two opposed bases of legitimacy: the demands of colonial administrators and loyalty to their community. They did not always support the forced labour regime. There are instances of entire communities fleeing across borders with their chiefs in response to increased demands for labour recruitment or heightened pressure to increase cotton cultivation. A community in Niassa is said to have followed its *regulo* to the top of a mountain to avoid labour obligations and taxes and to have survived there for much of the colonial period eating bananas and herding goats.⁵¹ Most such flight resulted, however, in a change of colonial administration rather than in autonomy and self-sufficiency. Recalcitrant chiefs, or those whose quotas of recruitment and cotton fell below the norms, were usually replaced, detained or exiled by the colonial administration before they had the opportunity to flee.

The ambivalence of chiefs and the linguistic dualism of the *Indigenato* meant that it was sometimes possible to express resistance in jeering songs, making the hidden transcript

48 See M. Miracle, *Maize in Tropical Africa* (Madison, Wisconsin University Press, 1966), pp. 154–155.

49 The term used for rural day-labour in Malawi is *ganyu*, from *ganho-ganho*, an artefact of the border-crossing of rural workers from both sides.

50 See B. O'Laughlin, 'Class and the Customary: the Ambiguous Legacy of the *Indigenato* in Mozambique', *African Affairs*, 99, 394 (2000), pp. 5–42, for an analysis of the relationship between forms of local governance and forced labour.

51 Isaacman, *Cotton is the Mother*, p. 213.

public. As an overseer passed, for example, peasants chanted, 'This monkey is stopping here, why? He is stopping here because he has nothing else to do'.⁵² Chiefs, overseers and police who understood these jibes often disregarded their mocking tone and discounted their subversive potential.⁵³ Isaacman has argued that such defiance was an act of empowerment that heightened peasant opposition.⁵⁴ Yet songs of protest and suffering also normalised a world of cash-cropping and migrant labour. Mockery was tolerated as long as the singers kept working.

Much of the brunt of resistance was felt by *regulos* and lineage heads charged with the recruitment process. Resentment was particularly sharp if these *regulos* and lineage heads were themselves expanding their commercial production by demanding labour tribute. Resistance thus often took the form of generational tension, both in cotton-growing areas and in labour reserves. In Erati, Nampula, headmen expanded their own cotton production by mobilizing the labour of young men, who were thus forced to divert effort from their own fields.⁵⁵ Geffray hence suggests that what is sometimes interpreted as resistance to cotton as a crop was actually the resistance of young men to exploitation by lineage elders.⁵⁶ When cashew was introduced on a large scale in Nampula, headmen at first prohibited planting by subordinate men of the lineage and themselves recruited labour for large-scale planting. Forced individual planting of cashew seed helped younger men subvert the labour claims of elders. By 1961, not only most headmen in Erati, but also most men of the lineage, owned cashew trees, which they treated as their own individual property.

Forced resettlement along cotton roads (*picadas*) violated matrilineal rules of land access and uxorilocal household formation, but some young men chose the *picada* or migrated as a way of avoiding bride-service. There was also friction between women and their mothers over the allocation of work, since women had no control over the granary until their own daughters married. Smaller virilocal households had more control over their labour, but were particularly vulnerable to illness or crop failure since they enjoyed less social support.

In migrant labour reserves, labour demands fell particularly hard on young women, who, in the areas of patrilineal virilocal residence of southern (and parts of central) Mozambique, were newcomers to the household. They were just beginning to bear children and their bridewealth had not always been paid. Conflicts with in-laws led to break-up of some of these marriages and the emergence of women-headed households, particularly if an absent husband was not remitting regularly. A women's song from Inhambane captures this tension:

I weep, I suffer in this house, I weep for my husband.
 My mother, I don't even have a chicken in my home
 Now my mother, my little children are ill; I am alone
 Now my mother, I don't get any sleep in this house ...
 his relatives have deserted me ...
 Now mother I don't even have money to consult the diviner
 I have performed my duties as daughter-in-law
 but my mother-in-law has thrown me out of her home.
 Mother, I weep.⁵⁷

52 *Ibid.*, p. 223.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 222.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 225.

55 Christian Geffray, 'Transformations Historiques de l'Organisation Familiale Ma-Khuwa 1940-1975 (Erati)' (Paris, Rapport 4, 1985).

56 The point is a good one, but incomplete. The conflicts between cotton and better-paying commercial crops, and between cotton and subsistence cultivation (a particularly important question for women, who were the major producers of cotton in the labour-reserve areas), also affected attitudes towards cotton.

57 Centro de Estudos Africanos. Archives, sung by Dora Sathani Gwambe, Khambane, Homoine, 11 September 1979, recorded and translated by A. Manghezi.

When women left their in-laws, they could not always return to their own families. From the resultant smaller women-headed households came many of those who did casual wage-labour, on piece or target rate, or for food. In 1970, in Gaza province, 71 per cent of registered casual labour days in agriculture were done by women and children, a proportion much higher than in any other province.⁵⁸

The Gendering of Forced Labour

The forced labour system was gendered. Rural labour codes specified that men, not women, would be recruited as migrant labourers. Under the pass system, restrictions on the movement of women and children were tighter than for men; women required the authorisation of their husbands or male elders of their household as well as that of local authorities to move.⁵⁹ Women were required to bear responsibility for food production. In cotton-growing areas, men's cotton plots were twice as large as those of women, and men were considered to be the principal market agent in the household, even though women did much of the weeding and harvesting work on all plots. Only when men were physically absent, as in the irrigated rice-schemes of Gaza and Zambézia, were women recognised under the forced labour system as being their own market agents.⁶⁰ Since both migrant labour and petty commodity production were hinged on women's non-monetised labour, women's resistance included both defiance of overseers and disputes with men over the organisation of work and control and use of money.

Given pass laws, the patriarchal organisation of households and their concern for children, it was difficult for young women to follow men's path of resistance through migration. This did become possible in southern Mozambique in the 1950s when the growth of an urban settler community created a demand for women as domestic workers.⁶¹ More often, women resisted by protecting non-monetised subsistence production.

Tension between food crops and the forced crops of rice and cotton was inherent in the forced-cropping system. As a rain-fed crop, with heavy weeding demands, cotton cultivation was particularly onerous, competing with food crops for field clearing, weeding and harvesting. Women, who weeded the 0.5 hectare plots assigned to them and helped with the larger plots of men in the household, sought ways to minimise the time they put into cotton in order to feed and care for their families. Inter-cropping was forbidden, but the proximity of cotton and food plots made it difficult for field bosses to ensure that women were not diverting labour from cotton to food. Especially during weeding season, this meant hoeing food plots early in the morning and late at sunset, with women themselves extending the working day. The success of the struggle for subsistence was reflected in the low yields registered for cotton in many areas.⁶²

58 Inquérito Agrícola de Moçambique 1970 (Lourenço Marques, Moçambique, 1973).

59 A. Rita Ferreira, *Os Africanos de Lourenço Marques, Lourenço Marques*, Memórias do Instituto de Investigação Científica de Moçambique (1967–8), p. 156.

60 Whitehead and others, looking at gender issues in development in West Africa, emphasised that Boserup's notion that capitalist development brought men into the market while relegating women to the sphere of subsistence missed a central element in the process, namely that a good deal of the income earned by men through cash-crop production depended on women's farm labour. See A. Whitehead, 'Food Crisis and Gender Conflict in the African Countryside', in H. Bernstein *et al.* (eds), *The Food Question, Profits versus People?* (London, Earthscan, 1991), pp. 54–68.

61 Penvenne, *African Workers*, p. 152.

62 Isaacman, *Cotton is the Mother*, p. 236. The relationship between productivity and resistance was variable however, across time and between regions. In a CEA study of Lugela, Zambézia, we found records showing increases in total production, kilogram per producer and kilogram per hectare in the period between 1952 and 1960, Centro de Estudos Africanos, *Já não batem* (Maputo, Eduardo Mondlane University, 1981), Report 1981/3.

To protect their livelihoods, women also introduced new ways of working. In migrant labour areas, the recurrent absence of younger men cut into the labour available for field clearance and preparation. In southern Mozambique (and parts of Manica and Tete), this was partially redressed by the rapid switch to ploughing and intensive cultivation of alluvial soils. Those with oxen and ploughs acquired through work on the mines rented out their teams for ploughing or transport or ploughed for kin and friends in return for labour cooperation. Some women took on tasks such as ploughing and caring for cattle, which they had not previously done.⁶³ Those with few resources cleared plots in light sandy soils, which were easy to work but also were not very productive. In central Mozambique and parts of the north, women compensated for seasonal loss of men's labour by using the same fields over and over, carefully burying vegetal material in mounds that were broken down and rebuilt each year. Migrants' remittances were used to buy food and beer for a work-party, or to pay neighbours, particularly children, to help with tasks of cultivation.

These changes in the organisation of agricultural production entailed systematic dependence on purchased inputs, although the kind and quantity varied regionally – metal hoe-blades, ploughs, wagons, sledges, dipping, hybrid seeds.⁶⁴ Patterns of consumption shifted and domestic work changed, as consumer goods and services acquired through wage-work and marketing became part of everyday life – cloth (*capulanas*), blankets, tin pails for transport and measure, matches, oil, salt, kerosene, grain-milling, anti-malarials – all of which lightened the burden of women's work. In the south, mine wages were invested in cisterns, roofing material and bedsteads, while in central Mozambique returning migrants put glass in the windows of their carefully decorated and solidly built permanent houses. Remittances were used to purchase food locally in times of shortage or crop failure, and southern migrants sent bags of maize flour to their families from South Africa. Changing ways of working and introducing new consumer goods into everyday subsistence meant a redefinition of gender relations and thus often intra-household conflict, particularly around control and use of money.

As women protected subsistence by introducing a range of manufactured commodities into the everyday organisation of livelihoods, they also made producing for the market or selling labour-power not an option but a necessity. The cotton *capulana* that carried the child, the plough that cut through heavy alluvial soils and the tin that transported water made it possible to combine cash-cropping or migrant labour and production of everyday subsistence. Both forced labour and resistance to it enmeshed the everyday routines of rural men and women in the market. The demand for new kinds of commodities was rooted in broad changes in the organisation of livelihoods – transforming patterns of farming, residence household organisation, consumption and property.

The history of forced labour is thus also a history of resistance to it. Yet despite the polemical power of Cooper's depiction of migrant workers struggling *not* to become a class, whatever the complex, concrete and varied motivations of rural people, resistance *has been* about becoming classes. Men and women struggled in different ways in different parts of the country and in different periods to defend and improve their livelihoods. The outcomes

63 S. Young, 'Fertility and Famine: Women's Agricultural History in Southern Mozambique', in R. Palmer and N. Parsons (eds), *The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa* (London, Heinemann Educational Books, 1977), pp. 66–81.

64 Although Ranger's work in Makoni (in *Peasant Consciousness*) challenged the historical accuracy of some aspects of his account, Arrighi drew attention to the ways in which the loss of craft production could make peasants dependent on the purchase of manufactured commodities in Zimbabwe. See G. Arrighi, 'Labour Supplies in Historical Perspective: a Study of the Proletarianisation of the African Peasantry in Rhodesia', in G. Arrighi and J. Saul (eds), *Essays on the Political Economy of Africa* (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1973), pp. 180–234. Schmidt's work, *Peasants, Traders, and Wives*, drew attention to gender differences in technical change in rural production.

of their struggles were, however, a deepening commoditisation of livelihoods and a correspondingly greater involvement in capitalist class relations. This does not imply that their struggles were without consequence or had no impact on politics and consciousness. To the contrary, resistance to forced labour, like forced labour itself, propelled proletarianisation, new forms of political organisation and new visions of their world in ways still relevant in Mozambique today.

The history of forced labour in Mozambique shows why agency can neither be reduced to subjective intention nor analytically opposed to structure. Peasants in Mozambique struggled neither to become a proletariat nor not to become one. Their struggles expressed their identities, aspirations, resources and possibilities, but the outcomes of what they did both reflected and shaped structural consequences beyond their own visions. Those fleeing from *shibalo* on settler farms to the South African mines brought themselves more firmly into wage-labour relations and collectively influenced the terms of wage-labour in regional labour markets. Mothers-in-law in Gaza who sought to defend the subsistence of their households against the demands of forced rice- or cotton-cropping by pressuring their daughters-in-law to work harder did not intend to create women-headed households dependent on casual wage-labour. Those who signed up for credit and extension schemes for cotton did not intend to become petty capitalists, but they could not finish weeding without wage-labour. Capitalist enterprises and state agencies coercively recruiting contract workers in Mozambique were only trying to ensure a cheap, rural-based labour force, not to create a mobile migrant regional labour market, and certainly not a politically militant inter-class nationalist opposition.

Implications for Understanding Poverty in Mozambique Today

Forced labour was legally abolished in 1961.⁶⁵ In the 1960s, extension and credit were introduced for smallholder commercial cereal production in some areas, cotton production was cut back in marginal regions and Portuguese settlement was extended into areas previously considered 'native reserves'. Industrial growth, the construction of the Nacala port and the rail-line, and the expanded presence of the Portuguese army brought new wage-labour jobs to the north as well as to Beira and Maputo. Still the total wage-labour force was very small.⁶⁶

At Independence, Frelimo, deeply suspicious of private entrepreneurship, withheld credit and inputs from small private producers. The supply of consumer goods to rural areas was erratic and limited. The Chamber of Mines cut recruitment of Mozambican miners in the mid-1970s to about 40 per cent of its previous level. Investment in state farms, industry and public sector expansion was focused on creating a stable working class but, as the war progressed, plantations were burned or abandoned, state farms went bankrupt, and factories stopped working. Agricultural marketing was carried out by buying brigades with unpredictable schedules and limited cover. Roads were not safe. Rural people were displaced and harassed, sometimes retreating to areas far removed from market circuits. A structural adjustment programme initiated in 1986 was more aggressively implemented after the peace

65 Detention for desertion from a labour contract, use of corporal punishment to discipline work and local labour round-ups continued, however, until Independence.

66 Wield estimated that there were about a million wage-workers out of a total active population of 9 million; only about one quarter held permanent jobs; D. Wield, 'Mozambique — Late Colonialism and Early Problems of Transition' in G. White, R. Murray and C. White (eds), *Revolutionary Socialist Development in the Third World* (Sussex, Wheatsheaf Books, 1983), pp. 76–113.

accords in 1992. Public sector employment was cut. Manufacturing output has increased rapidly since 1995, but growth is concentrated in only a few sectors.⁶⁷

In this context, how can it make any sense at all to relate poverty to proletarianisation and the accumulation of capital, as Cramer and Pontara have done? And of what possible relevance is a history that ended over 40 years ago? From the perspective of livelihoods strategies, history is context, and class structure, if relevant, is reflected in the asset bundles that individuals hold. Thus, the appropriate way to understand poverty is to document, as Pitcher suggests, the complex, varying and fluid ways in which different individuals construct their livelihoods. The complex vision of rural livelihoods in Southern Africa sketched in the introduction to this paper probably holds true for post-war Mozambique. Certainly, we need much more detailed research on rural livelihoods of the kind Pitcher suggests. Her concern with complexity and disaggregation is, however, too open-ended. We need research that can use the particular to illuminate general processes underlying patterns of poverty. Simply documenting how individuals meet challenges fits with an alleviative approach to poverty that takes the existing structure of constraint as largely given by the market and emphasises finding patch-up measures for particularly disadvantaged groups. If, however, we are concerned with looking beneath all of the variation in livelihoods to find the contradictory structural processes from which poverty arises, then the history of forced labour can tell us many things relevant to the dynamics of poverty today in Mozambique.

First, history is irreversible. The dialectic between exploitation and resistance in *shibalo* and forced cropping did not operate in opposition to labour and commodity markets in colonial Mozambique, but within them. In doing so, it revolutionised rural livelihoods, making everyday production of subsistence dependent on participation in the market. The retreat from the market to a Niassa mountain-top has attained mythological status in Mozambican popular history, but it is not a real option. Communities that retreated to Renamo zones under the guidance of their former *regulos* suffered more than those who found wage- or self-employment as refugees in neighbouring countries and have had more difficulty in re-establishing rural production.⁶⁸

Second, the interdependence between labour and commodity markets forged under the forced labour regime means that it is not possible sharply to delimit one strategy for rural poverty and another for urban poverty, or one strategy for cash-cropping and another for employment. They have been historically linked by processes of migration. Cramer and Pontara are right to link rural poverty to proletarianisation and accumulation of capital, but should extend their focus beyond capitalist agriculture. Crises of accumulation and restructuring of capital in southern Africa have led to grave unemployment in formal-wage sectors, yet young people continue to flow out of rural areas looking for jobs. Very few are registered as formally unemployed. The marauding migrant ex-soldier charcoal-burners competing with women for wood in Maputo province in the 1990s⁶⁹ could be called small entrepreneurs making a living as best they can. In the parlance of southern Mozambique, however, a charcoal-burner (male) is a synonym for unemployed.

In Table 1 I have used some rough indicators of livelihoods differences (proportion of people identifying themselves as peasants, M/F ratios) to capture regional variation and to

67 C. Castel-Branco, C. Cramer and D. Hailu, 'Privatization and Economic Strategy in Mozambique', WIDER Discussion Paper No. 2001/64 (August 2001), p. 11.

68 C. de Sousa, 'Rebuilding Rural Livelihoods and Social Capital: Mozambique's Experience', paper presented at the UNU/WIDER project meeting on Underdevelopment, Transition and Reconstruction in Sub-Saharan Africa (Helsinki, 16–17 April 1999); G. Marzetti, 'Rural Livelihoods and Agricultural Change: The Dynamics of Poverty, A Case Study from Morrumbala District, Mozambique' (PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 2002).

69 J. McGregor, 'Violence and Social Change in a Border Economy: War in the Maputo Hinterland', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 24, 1 (1997), pp. 37–60.

Table 1. Indicators of the importance of migrant and wage-labour by region, 1980 and 1997

	Region									
	North			Centre				South		
	Niassa	Cabo Delgado	Nampula	Zambezia	Tete	Manica	Sofala	Inhambane	Gaza	Maputo**
Per cent of men classed as peasants* 1980	79.9	82.3	72.8	67.4	77.5	63.0	80.4	73.0	54.2	29.1
Per cent of men classed as peasants* 1997	78.1	83.6	75.3	77.9	79.3	58.0	46.9	67.8	65.11	27.9
Per cent of women classed as peasants* 1980	98.2	98.4	97.8	97.8	98.4	96.2	95.6	96.7	92.2	87.4
Per cent of women classed as peasants* 1997	94.2	96.8	96.1	95.9	92.9	88.4	87.1	90.6	92.3	66.7
M/F ratios, active population 1980	79	80	90	87	74	83	108	75	78	100
M/F ratios, active population 1997	107	95	106	91	92	102	104	64	52	101
Per cent female-headed households 1997	29.8	25.9	22.9	29.9	33.5	33.0	30.6	44.6	50.1	42.5

* independent producer or family worker in agriculture

** not including the city of Maputo

Source: calculated from *Os Distritos em Números, Recenseamento Geral da População de 1980* (Maputo, Conselho Coordenador do Recenseamento, 1983) and *II Recenseamento Geral da População e Habitação de 1997* (Maputo, Instituto Nacional de Estatística and Macro International, 1999, cd-rom).

see whether there is evidence of change between the two available censuses, those of 1980 and 1997.⁷⁰ There is no clear evidence of uniform movement towards proletarianisation. The number of women classed as peasants has declined everywhere but in Gaza province. The number of men considering themselves to be peasants in 1997 is, however, about the same as or even higher than in 1980, except in the provinces of Sofala, Manica, Inhambane and Maputo. Imbalances in sex-ratios have declined sharply, except in the provinces of Gaza and Inhambane. Yet the proportion of men not considering themselves to be peasants remains high in the provinces of labour migration and is nowhere less than 16 per cent. If we take into account the historical patterns of cyclical labour migration, the more balanced sex ratios and the higher proportions of men classed as peasants in provinces such as Gaza or Zambezia in 1997 are as likely to reflect declining regional availability of wage-employment as the recovery of cash-crop production.

Third, both the variation in livelihoods and the politics of poverty are marked by regional differences in forced labour regimes. Pitcher is correct to insist on the greater importance of cash-cropping in the north. Table 1 shows that it would be unwise for Cramer and Pontara to draw any generalisations for all of Mozambique from Gaza province with its missing men, large number of women-headed households, and relatively low number of men classed as peasants. Yet regional differences are often exaggerated in political discourse on poverty in Mozambique today, and their causes simplified. Table 1 shows that, in the south and centre, the intra-regional difference in livelihoods is greater than that between regions. It is often assumed that north/south differences in poverty (which are themselves overstated⁷¹) reflect Frelimo favouritism towards the south. Some of the difference has rather to do with long-term processes resulting in the localisation of centres of accumulation and thus shifting conditions of employment, both within Mozambique and in the region. Routines of migration that tie the organisation of livelihoods in southern Mozambique to South Africa have, for example, in the past linked central Mozambique to Zimbabwe, which may have something to do with current regional differences in out-migration.

Fourth, non-monetised or subsistence production, much of it agricultural and carried out by women and children, remains a central component of household livelihoods across all regions. The proportion of women classed as peasants declined between 1980 and 1997 and, despite the dislocations by war, the basic pattern of the forced labour regimes, women fixed on the land, remains intact. Non-monetised production is particularly vulnerable to the commoditisation of land-rights. Given the ambiguous land rights of women under customary law, the defence of non-monetary production in any system of land registration is an important poverty issue. This is particularly true since the incidence of women-headed households in 1997, although higher in the south, is over 20 per cent in all provinces (see Table 1). Cramer and Pontara are right to emphasise the importance of improving conditions of wage-labour for many poor women in Gaza, but perhaps too dismissive of their non-monetised production, particularly given the irregularity of employment in capitalist agriculture.

Finally, the dualist politics of the *Indigenato* still dominate Mozambique – there is again one set of institutions of governance for the countryside and another for urban areas. The history of the recent war – like the history of forced labour – shows that there is always

70 The census data do not capture multiple livelihoods well since they register only one's principal activity.

71 If the city of Maputo is excluded, head count income measures of poverty do not show that poverty is less in southern Mozambique. For a discussion of this, see M. Wuyts, H. Dolny and B. O'Laughlin, *Assumptions and Partnerships in the Making of a Country Strategy. An Evaluation of the Swedish–Mozambican Experience*, SIDA Evaluation 01/07 (Stockholm, 2001), pp. 22–26.

resistance, but that the form that it takes really does matter. Until there are forms of collective agency that once more cross the rural/urban divide and address issues of class, poverty will endure in Mozambique, no matter how creatively individuals piece together multiple livelihoods.

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