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1 In the late-19th-century heyday of European imperialism in Southern Africa, the heavy and coercive hand of the colonial state was needed to procure for its enterprises the African labor that the market's "invisible hand" could not supply. With this in mind, colonial administrators quickly realized that controlling land was of secondary importance to controlling a sizeable and inexpensive African work force. To this end, they sought to tax and restrict local land ownership in order to force Africans into an exploitative wage-labor market from a poor bargaining position. Even though the work carried out was pre-industrial in nature, this system of production resembled a manufacturing process; similar to the mass-produced components of a factory's machines, African workers were a commodity to be utilized and ultimately replaced when they became no longer fit to toil.

2 These "economies," in which untold amounts of wealth and surplus value were extracted and dispossessed from subordinate peoples, were ones where contracts, individual choice, and workers' rights played no meaningful part. Notwithstanding the theft of generations of labor-power, the violence workers encountered could also be seen in their wretched living conditions and in the physical abuse that Europeans employed as "discipline." In sum, it was forced African labor, carried out under circumstances similar to those of the chattel slavery system first outlawed by Great Britain in 1833, that was largely responsible for building the colonies of Southern Africa.

3 In *Slavery by Any Other Name: African Life under Company Rule in Colonial Mozambique*, historian Éric Allina provides a dramatic portrayal of the territorial conquest, company and state formation, capitalist expansion, and proletarianization that occurred during the Portuguese government's 50-year (1891-1942) concession of the provinces of Manica and Sofala to the privately financed Mozambique Company (*Companhia de Moçambique*). Based on material from long-lost and previously unstudied company archives, *Slavery by Any Other Name* meticulously examines how the Portuguese authorities ushered in a regime of forced labor, camouflaged by the rhetoric of a "civilizing mission." The text then goes on to survey the impact that this brutal system had on the lives of Africans. In a convincing manner, Allina assembles oral histories, inter-company correspondence, and postcolonial scholarship of pre-independence Southern Africa in order to document a slavery-like labor system that was widespread in Portugal's African colonies until the 1940s, more than a century *after* the country officially "banned" slavery in 1836.

4 In company-era Mozambique, there was a major disjuncture between the public assertions of officials, which proclaimed that slavery had been "eradicated," and the actions taken by lower-level functionaries, whom Allina calls "men on the spot" (p. 11). In a cynical and self-deluding fashion, elite state and company administrators carefully drafted for the eyes of outsiders[1] "laws" supposedly protecting the rights of Africans and regulating the conditions of their "employment." When these insincere measures failed – such as, for instance, when humanitarian organizations got word of the atrocities of Portuguese rule in Mozambique – officials responded by privatizing the company's labor-recruitment apparatus. After this action, colonial administrators could once again make the spurious claim that their operation complied with international standards, even as the private subcontracting outfit undertook forced labor recruitment with implicit company support. At the other end of the spectrum, the local-level "men on the spot" regularly disregarded colonial laws in their management of everyday affairs, resulting in improvisations that were often times illegal. Of the thousands of

Mozambicans forced to work for the company on a yearly basis, some did receive their paltry wages, though these amounts were frequently far less than those mandated by law. Moreover, state and company employers conceived a number of predatory "credit" schemes to ensure that Africans would continue to toil in debt.

5 In chapters four through six, Allina describes the strategies employed by Africans to mitigate, deflect, and outmaneuver the burdens imposed on them by the company and state. A common tactic was to flee to British or Afrikaner territory, resulting in a loss thrice over for the company: "loss of laborers, erosion of the tax base, and concrete evidence that Africans preferred life under [foreign] rule than under Portuguese rule" (p. 95). While some Mozambicans succeeded in amassing wealth and gaining degrees of sovereignty, this feat was accomplished more often by African men shrewdly passing off the company's onerous labor requirements to their wives and younger relatives. Likewise, Portuguese officials were keen to compensate, often generously, chiefs who procured their villagers' labor for colonial enterprises, which in effect made the chiefs the company's recruiters.

6 As shown above, *Slavery by Any Other Name* provides a forceful description of colonial brutality in Mozambique, yet its general approach can at times focus too intently on historical narrative and archival findings. As such, it seems that Allina favors too heavily diachronic analysis at the expense of trying to integrate this "history" with a more synchronic, Comaroffian account of colonial society. Even though he completed interviews with more than one hundred Mozambicans, Allina gives the reader little ethnographic richness or information on the lives of specific individuals who experienced company rule in Manica and Sofala. For example, the author spells out in detail company actions and policies, historical events, and the "civilizing mission" ideology of the colonists, but rarely does he contextualize these accounts with material he collected in the interviews. This attempt to discern a panoramic sweep of company-era Mozambican history prompts larger questions about the nature of diachronic historical scholarship. While it is clearly not Allina's intention to interrogate matters of knowledge production, one wonders if this past can ever be recovered and written as "history," especially one that, at times, fails to incorporate the everyday experiences of its protagonists.

7 Methodological and epistemological reservations aside, *Slavery by Any Other Name* is a welcome addition to the growing body of scholarship that focuses more on the exceptionally brutal nature of Portuguese colonialism than on the traditional Lusotropical narratives emphasizing Portugal's "weakness" as colonial power (when compared to British and French equivalents). The former interpretation, to which Allina and Michael Taussig would no doubt be sympathetic, demonstrates how Portugal compensated for its inability to build and sustain effective institutions by governing through terror and violence. Furthermore, the author succeeds in contextualizing the case of company-era Mozambique within the international debate of the early-20th century that brought to light issues such as forced labor in the colonies, workers' rights, and the nature of imperialism. This was a conversation that extended from the hinterlands of Mozambique and Southern Rhodesia to the imperial seats of Lisbon and London and to the fledgling League of Nations. In a bitter irony, the claim by Portugal and other imperial powers to have eliminated the slave trade in Africa indirectly served to legitimize the expansionist efforts of their countries' colonists and settlers.

8 Allina is most successful, however, in his portrayal of a contradiction at the heart of the colonialism in Mozambique and elsewhere: the tension between the superior position of whites maintained at the expense of indigenous subjugation, on the one hand, and imperial pretense to saving, improving, and civilizing colonized peoples, on the other. While Portuguese colonial officials publically promoted a policy of "assimilation" to European norms, the number of Africans who were permitted to attain this status (and its limited privileges) was insignificant, so as not to challenge white colonists' position of supreme advantage. Complicating matters was the fact that Africans frequently thrived in endeavors at which the Portuguese failed, most notably commercial agriculture in the country's dry and rocky interior. Thus, whites' resentment of African success, combined with their baseless claims to racial superiority, came to nurture the very antagonism that would lead to the eventual demise of the Portuguese colonial project in Africa some decades later.

Notas

1 The expression in Portuguese *para inglês ver*, "for the Englishman to see," is notable in this regard. In Mozambique, as elsewhere, colonial officials were apt to make simple cosmetic changes to a problem in order to demonstrate their "concern," so as to avoid difficult questions from inquisitive, well-intentioned outsiders (e.g., the proverbial "Englishman"). Of course, their "willingness" to tackle a thorny issue was only superficial and did not address any of the underlying concerns.

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