

Domination, Collaboration and Conflict in Cabo Delgado's History of Extractivism*

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Abstract

A long history of extractive industries and activities have shaped the societies of northern Mozambique, and the Cabo Delgado province in particular. For centuries, the growing international demand on local resources had a great impact on the northern micro-societies. The demand for cheap labour and natural resources, ranging from ivory and cotton, to timber, rubies, land, gas and more, involved thousands of local actors in its extraction, reproducing systems of local power. The persistence of poverty, inequality and conflicts, as well as simmering and sometimes grand-scale violence, fits into a long-term trend of extractivism. Through a historical approach and field observations, we focus on the political economy of extracting natural resources.

We point out the persisting basic patterns of extractivism that accompanied Mozambique's integration into global markets, and continued or even deepened, in the post-independence period. These activities are oriented towards foreign markets. They are instigated by foreign investment, but invariably carried out in

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collaboration with a chain of national gatekeepers. In a clientelist system, local elites resort to their proximity to the state to reproduce their power, often at the expense of state expropriation. Weak state institutions have the functional effect of reproducing the elites, also serving the interests of extractivist capital. It is, however, a system with many and profound contradictions, producing conflict and violence, which also recurrently put those interests at risk.

Keywords

Mozambique, Cabo Delgado, resource curse, war, violence, insurgency, extractivism

‘We estimate Estrela de Fura to be sold in excess of \$30 million [...]. Hopefully we’ll be able to see it just setting a new record for Mozambique rubies.’

Uni Kim, a specialist in Sotheby’s jewellery department, Hong Kong, on the stone unearthed from mining company Fura’s ruby mine in Montepuez in July 2022¹

‘The people of Montepuez, we suffer, suffer, suffer. Everyone beats us. The security guards of the ruby mines beat us. The police beat us. The armed forces beat us. The [government allied] militias beat us, the criminal gangs beat us ... and now we are waiting for the Al-Shabaab to beat us.’

Woman (67), community activist of Montepuez district in Cabo Delgado

1 A society shaped by a history of extractivism

Mozambique and Cabo Delgado hosted a prolonged boom in extractive industries and activities since the late 1990s – timber, minerals, precious stones, African fauna and more – topped by the discovery of giant natural gas deposits offshore of the province. However, the large-scale commodification of Cabo Delgado’s natural and human resources for sale on the world market has taken place for hundreds of years, ever since European and Indian Ocean sea-faring forces started to covet resources of the lands that are Mozambique today. Since then, the extraction of natural resources has strongly shaped the society of Mozambique’s northern province of Cabo Delgado. It is a society dominated throughout history by the interests of the extractive machinery – with foreign-backed overseers and local elites as middlemen. It created a long history of grievances and conflict, with violence erupting into the open regularly. The multiple social, economic and political effects of extractivism are indispensable for the background upon which to understand the current warfare in the province.

This article aims to show the patterns in the political economy of the extraverted resource extraction and commodity production of Cabo Delgado, and to contribute to the academic debates on extractivism and the problems of natural resources and economies based on the export of natural resource commodities. Whereas the authors’ historical interpretation is informed and inspired by recent field work and a network of contacts in Cabo Delgado, this article leans heavily on a reading of literature about Mozambican and Cabo Delgado history. We describe the history of extractivism of Cabo Delgado in three parts, each dealing with a historical period and the extractive activities that characterised them: the first deals with the early and late colonial period; the second discusses the immediate post-independence period

1 See ‘Sotheby’s to auction world’s largest ruby in New York in June’, Reuters, 17 April 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/lifestyle/sothebys-auction-worlds-largest-ruby-new-york-june-2023-04-17/>.

with its revolutionary regime and nation-wide warfare; the third deals with the 'liberal period' after the peace settlement of 1992, characterised by the newest boom in the extractive industries.

1.1 The recent commodity boom and the patterns of extractivism

Shortly after the newest war of Mozambique broke out in its northern province of Cabo Delgado in 2017, analysts in journalism,² think-tanks and academics turned to the resource curse as a favourite trope for what was happening.³ There were many indications that things were going the wrong way in the country. While hotels and restaurants boomed in the cities, inequality was rising and poverty was persistently stubborn, plaguing the mass of the population. Despite the reduction of average national poverty levels in some periods, the northern provinces tended to be poorer.⁴ The regime of the ruling party Frelimo was rocked by numerous corruption scandals – the worst being the so-called hidden debt scandal⁵ – and Mozambique scored ever more poorly on international indexes of democracy and governance. Then, in 2017, a jihadist militia locally referred to as the *Machababo* or *Al-shababi* started attacking government forces, then isolated villages, and later district headquarters. The war that followed, and is still ongoing, probably cost thousands of lives and drove around a million people from their homes.⁶ In short, to many it seemed that Cabo Delgado was suffering from a curse associated with its resources.

But the resource curse remains a better metaphor for global level tendencies than as an explanatory framework for local phenomena, and the term induces several blind spots. One is that it is ahistorical, since the resource curse theory tends to focus on the extractive industries of the last few decades – in Cabo Delgado typically on the incipient development of installations to convert the offshore gas into LNG. This may lead to awkward attempts at demonstrating causal links between the most recent and best-known extractive industry, and current conflicts and problems, such as the jihadist insurgency.⁷ It also disregards that these and many other resources have been there all along, and that large-scale resource extraction has also taken place for a very long time. Neither are poverty, violence, displacement, corruption and the other ills associated with the 'curse' a new phenomenon in the province. Furthermore, it is not the resources, but the human relations that govern their extraction that creates the

2 See for instance 'The natural resource curse in Cabo Delgado', Mail & Guardian, 21 October 2020, <https://mg.co.za/africa/2020-10-21-the-natural-resource-curse-in-cabo-delgado/>.

3 A. Armand et al., 'Does Information Break the Political Resource Curse? Experimental Evidence from Mozambique', *American Economic Review*, 110, 11, November 2020, 3431–53, <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.20190842>; J. Hanlon, 'Turning Mozambique into a Mafia, Resource-Cursed State', *The Round Table*, 110, 3, May 2021, 405–6, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00358533.2021.1932949>.

4 G. Barletta et al., 'The Evolution of Inequality in Mozambique: 1996/97–2019/20', WIDER Working Paper (Helsinki: UNU-WIDER, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.35188/UNU-WIDER/2022/284-3>.

5 E. Cortez et al., 'Costs and Consequences of the Hidden Debt Scandal of Mozambique' (Maputo & Bergen: CIP & CMI, 2021), <https://www.cmi.no/publications/7841-costs-and-consequences-of-the-hidden-debt-scandal-of-mozambique>.

6 See Cabo Ligado at <https://www.cabologado.com/> for the only available statistics on the death toll, although we are convinced the real numbers of deaths is far superior to the number of casualties confirmed at Cabo Ligado.

7 See 'Putting Mozambique's resource curse back on the agenda', an ISS/PSC report, published on 22 September 2022 at <https://issafrica.org/pscreport/psc-insights/putting-mozambiques-resource-curse-back-on-the-agenda>, and 'Terror in Mozambique. The curse of natural gas', in Spiegel International, published on 5 July 2021 at <https://www.spiegel.de/international/world/terror-in-mozambique-the-curse-of-natural-gas-a-837db8bd-d37d-4c90-b5cb-025a8444e965>.

problems. Evidently, the more fruitful question is about the mechanisms through which resource extraction provokes misery, in order to unearth the depth of the problem. We therefore need to study extractivism as a historically-determined social practice, with the human relations involved in the commodification of resources (natural and human), the institutions under which it takes place, the main actors with individual and group interests – in short, the political economy of extractivism in Cabo Delgado. It is these that set the stage for the struggles and conflicts of today.

We here highlight persisting patterns that, *mutatis mutandis*, repeat themselves in Cabo Delgado's history. Where local populations in the latest boom engaged in small-scale agriculture or fishery for local consumption, many added incomes by engaging with one of the extractive activities, directly or indirectly, formally and informally, and often clandestinely or illegally. Yet throughout history, many others were forced by external powers to engage in extractive activities. The extractive sector has always been extraverted and externally driven, producing commodities for a foreign market, and generated huge profits for its investors based in far-away lands. Yet the activity could only take place by leaning on the collaboration of elites of Mozambique as gatekeepers and middlemen, some based in Maputo or other cities, others with strong local ties. These invariably benefitted more than most people of Cabo Delgado, thus driving the production of inequality. The constant struggles over control of the profitable extractive processes have led to resistance, conflict and often violence.

1.2 A historical approach to extractivism

The many problems associated with extraction and commodification of natural resources became a particularly acute topic of study during the worldwide so-called commodity boom in the early 2000s, in large part driven by the enormous economic growth in Southeast Asia. While the Bretton Woods institutions would praise its ability to lift people out of poverty,⁸ and recommend an export and natural resource extraction-based development strategy, most academics engaged in a critique of its problematic sides. Much of it relates to problems of extractive industries in the poorer and developing parts of the world.

In the case of Mozambique, many academics have studied the extractive industries economy from a variety of angles in the last 20 years. Most resisted the framing of the country as a growth and poverty-reducing champion. Prominent economists such as Castel Branco noted that foreign direct investment in extractive industries 'became the fundamental shaper of the Mozambican economy, creating the foundations of the extractive economy as a mode of capital accumulation.'⁹ It has ensured the persistent leakage of value from Mozambique to the exterior. As such, 'the other side

8 See for instance 'How the commodity boom helped tackle poverty and inequality in Latin America', published at IMF on 21 June 2018 at <https://www.imf.org/en/Blogs/Articles/2018/06/21/blog-how-the-commodity-boom-helped-tackle-poverty-and-inequality-in-latin-america>.

9 C. N. Castel-Branco, 'Growth, Capital Accumulation and Economic Porosity in Mozambique: Social Losses, Private Gains', *Review of African Political Economy*, 41, October 2014, S26–48, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2014.976363>.

of the “miracle”, therefore, ‘is shown in the extractive, porous and vulnerable character of the process of capitalist development that generates poverty and exclusion.’¹⁰

One strand of extractivism theory focused on how extractive industries tend to result in the dispossession of land for vulnerable and poverty-struck populations in the areas where the resources are extracted.¹¹ This has also been a particular concern for authors on Mozambique, specifically in relation to the large-scale coal mining in Tete province,¹² but also in the case of the preparations for the gas industry in Cabo Delgado.¹³

In addition to traditional forms of dispossession, Lesutis discusses how the extractivism of Mozambique’s coal mining operations in the Tete province also involve ‘violence of capital that promises a “better life” whose actual realisation, directly implicated in circuits of “free” market economy, is constantly deferred to the future.’¹⁴ The mirage of prosperity never realised is how it is experienced by poor women and men in the areas with a heavy presence of the extractive industries. In forming vulnerable people’s expectations, it creates a life-world of disappointments and disillusionment, and distrust in government promises. It is but one local, or on-the-ground result of the exuberant expectations for extractive-based wealth affecting local rulers in places such as Mozambique, in what has been dubbed the ‘presource curse.’¹⁵ It refers to the phenomenon in which even prior to (pre-) the actual extraction of the resources, a number of problem-creating behaviours of the political elite set in, such as irresponsible borrowing and a scramble for land in the expectation of large-scale revenue streams and investments in extractive industries.

A branch of the literature has made important contributions in the last few years that highlight the analysis of highly unequal relations of power in the ‘three-way relationship’ between the three key actors – local populations, investors and the local elite.¹⁶ In its nuanced forms, it brings forward the necessary perspective that local elites are often willing participants in the unscrupulous assault on local resources in poor and vulnerable areas, regardless of the impacts on local societies and their environment – it is not simply global capitalism against its victims. Extraction isn’t simply taking place in pockets where weak states have lost their sovereignty. In a twist to this analytical strand, Schubert¹⁷ makes the important observation that not only local

10 Ibid., S27.

11 J. A. Ayelazuno, “The “new extractivism” in Ghana: A critical review of its development prospects’, *The Extractive Industries and Society*, 1, 2, 2014, 292–302, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2014.04.008>.

12 N. Wiegink and A. K. Garcia, ‘Surplus to Extraction: Resettlement as a “Make Live” Intervention in Mozambique’, *The Extractive Industries and Society*, 9, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2021.101036>; G. Lesutis, ‘Spaces of Extraction and Suffering: Neoliberal Enclave and Dispossession in Tete, Mozambique’, *Geoforum*, 102, 1 June 2019, 116–25, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2019.04.002>.

13 P. Salimo, ‘The Politics of LNG: Local State Power and Contested Demands for Land Acquisitions in Palma, Mozambique’ in J. Schubert, U. Engel and E. Macamo (eds) *Extractive Industries and Changing State Dynamics in Africa*, Routledge Studies in African Development (London: Routledge, 2018), 89–111.

14 G. Lesutis, ‘Scenes of Subjection: Extractive Frontiers, Symbolic Violence, Dispossession’, *Geoforum*, January 2023, 1, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2023.103681>.

15 J. G. Frynas and L. Buur, ‘The Presource Curse in Africa: Economic and Political Effects of Anticipating Natural Resource Revenues’, *The Extractive Industries and Society*, 7, 4, November 2020, 1257–70, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2020.05.014>.

16 L. Buur et al., ‘The Politics of Natural Resource Investments and Rights in Africa: A Theoretical Approach’, *The Extractive Industries and Society*, 7, 3, July 2020, 918–30, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2020.06.004>.

17 J. Schubert, ‘Wilful Entanglements: Extractive Industries and the Co-Production of Sovereignty in Mozambique’, *Ethnography*, 21, 4, December 2020, 537–58, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138118802953>.

elites, but also actors in the local civil society as well as other well-meaning agents in the international development community are ‘wilfully entangled’ in the production of ideas and practices of the state in the extractive industries. He observes, in conclusion, that they display ‘complicity and a coproduction, where it is profitable for all concerned to uphold an idealised vision of development through extractives’.¹⁸ Although we don’t want to exaggerate the responsibility of complicity, this literature points research toward not only the power-struggles on the ground, but also how they are mediated by the mindset and ideas of those involved.

The latter school tends to focus primarily on the resource extraction as a very modern, present-day phenomenon, taking place in the era of neoliberal capitalism since the late 20th century. A final source of theoretical inspiration comes from a school that draws the lines further back: the vast body of Africanist literature dealing with exploitation from the early days of extraction of slaves and ivory, until the late days of colonial domination and plantation-based extraction. As summarised by Pereira and Tsikata,¹⁹ ‘extractivism is understood to refer to a mode of accumulation embedded in a long history of colonialism and exploitation of the Americas, Africa and Asia, which involves the extraction and production of raw materials – primary commodities – from erstwhile colonies to satisfy demand from the metropolitan centres.’ In Mozambique a large body of work has been carried out by historically oriented authors who each in their own way have focussed on the central role of extractivism to the colonialists’ entire enterprise in Mozambique.²⁰ Recently, feminist scholars have added that it is important to study the harmful effects of extractivism as gendered experiences, today as well as in the colonial past.²¹

In our approach to extractivism, we recognise the above discussed insights from these theoretical approaches to the study of Cabo Delgado. We here use the term extractivism to signify not only a focus on the extractive industries and their activities per se, but also in a wide sense as the dominant mode of production: centuries of extractive activities have shaped the society around them, including the economic infrastructure, social relations of the workplace, labour practices and the environment, even culture – and it has invariably been associated with widespread sentiments of injustice, conflict, resistance and violence. Even though the resources extracted, and the commodities produced, vary over time, and the international players and local rulers change, the basic patterns of socially organised production tend to repeat themselves.

18 Ibid., 553.

19 C. Pereira and D. Tsikata, ‘Contextualising Extractivism in Africa’, *Feminist Africa*, 2, 1, 2021, 17.

20 E. A. Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves in East Central Africa* (London: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1975); A. Isaacman et al., ‘“Cotton is the Mother of Poverty”: Peasant Resistance to Forced Cotton Production in Mozambique, 1938–1961’, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 13, 4, 1980, 581–615, <https://doi.org/10.2307/218197>; A. M. Gentili, ‘A Subversão No Distrito de Cabo Delgado Entre 1950 e 1960 Segundo as Fontes Administrativas Locais’, *Boletim Do Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique*, 14, 1993; R. Pélissier, *História de Moçambique: formação e oposição (1854–1918)*, Imprensa universitária (Lisboa: Editorial Estampa, 1987); M. Newitt, *História de Moçambique* (Mira-Sintra: Publicações Europa-América, 1997).

21 Pereira and Tsikata, ‘Contextualising Extractivism in Africa’; T. Cunha and I. Casimiro, ‘“Cinderellas” of Our Mozambique Wish to Speak: A Feminist Perspective on Extractivism’, *Feminist Africa*, 2, 1, 2021.

It follows from this historical approach to the analysis of extractivism in Cabo Delgado that its entrenched problems cannot be erased or resolved by the simple application of a correct ‘information package’, as some researchers have suggested.²² Neither is it likely that forsaking resource extraction is a way forward. After all, the province’s economy and the life-worlds of its people have been shaped by extractivism, to the point at which it is difficult to imagine the place without it. We need to understand why historically and currently, they have become so impoverished and why they have been set up in situations of petty competition and squabbles over the minute rents left locally – while profits are extracted from the province and into pockets in the national capital and in bank accounts of foreign industrial centres. In Schubert’s words, Cabo Delgado produces little material for an ‘idealised vision’ of what extractivism can offer.²³

2 The extractivist colonial penetration

2.1 Slave and ivory trade

From the mid-18th century, the increased need for manpower for the sugar plantations on the French Indian Ocean islands, as well as, although to a lesser extent, for the American continent, brought profound changes to northern Mozambique. On the north coast of Mozambique, Portuguese and French ships began to dock to load slaves. Portuguese, Swahili, Arab or Arabised traders from the coast participated in this process, but also from Zanzibar, Comoros, Madagascar and other archipelagos northeast of the current Mozambican territory.²⁴ If slaves were initially obtained along the coast, the increase in international demand triggered kidnapping and capture practices in inland areas, such as in the Rovuma River basin and its environs.²⁵ Although the search of slaves was, at the time, a practice on the coast of Inhambane and Sofala, the North of Mozambique represented the main supply area.²⁶ The formation of African caravans was intensified to capture adult men and women in the hinterlands of northern Mozambique, involving the Yao and other peoples from the interior. They were later resold on the coast. In coastal societies, the buying and selling of slaves for foreign markets became a lucrative and widespread practice – including among female Muslim chiefs²⁷ – combined with naval commerce, fishing and some agriculture and crafts.²⁸ Every year, thousands of slaves were shipped out of the northern coast of Mozambique,²⁹ generally clandestinely, even though in

22 Armand et al., ‘Does Information Break the Political Resource Curse?’

23 Schubert, ‘Wilful Entanglements’, 553.

24 J. Capela, *O tráfico de escravos nos portos de Moçambique, 1733–1904* (Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 2002), 103.

25 Newitt, *História de Moçambique*; E. Alpers, ‘Islam in the Service of Colonialism? Portuguese Strategy during the Armed Liberation Struggle in Mozambique’, *Lusotopie*, 6, 1, 1999, 95.

26 Newitt, *História de Moçambique*, 249; Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves in East Central Africa*, 219.

27 L. Bonate, ‘Matriliny, Islam and Gender in Northern Mozambique’, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 36, 2, January 2006, 143, <https://doi.org/10.1163/157006606777070650>.

28 J. Capela and E. Medeiros, *O tráfico de escravos de Moçambique para as ilhas do Índico, 1720–1902* (Maputo: Núcleo Editorial da Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, 1987), 112.

29 In the 1830s, around 30,000 slaves were sold at Ilha de Moçambique and other smaller northern harbours (Newitt, *História de Moçambique*, 249).

connivance or collaboration with the Portuguese authorities.³⁰ For centuries the slave trade had been accompanied by the trade in ivory³¹ and gold.³² The trade in these products constituted one of the mechanisms for tying coastal and inland social formations to a long-distance mercantile economy that was increasingly integrated into the Indian Ocean.³³

Slavery had a profound impact on local social and economic structures. The intensification of the slave raids generated large migratory movements. British consuls in Mozambique, David Livingstone and Henry O'Neill, reported the emptying of areas south of Lake Nyasa or along the Rovuma River because of man-hunting carried out by Yao chiefs.³⁴

In a scenario of economic collapse, violence and increasing banditry, the difficulties of isolated populations to protect themselves increased. Only the most militarised groups managed to survive.³⁵ Parallel to the growing demand for slaves there were the invasions of the Ngoni, who not only subjugated the occupied populations, but also participated as slave traders.³⁶ Populations from the Rovuma basin took refuge in the Makonde plateau where they established independent and fortified settlements with a low population concentration.³⁷ From the plateau, these small groups that are known today as the Makonde, also participated in the capture of men and women in the lowlands. They married some; others they demanded ransom for or sold as slaves, the proceeds of which they used to acquire weapons and gunpowder, which they in turn needed for protection and for increasing their power.³⁸ The export of slaves resulted in a clear decrease in the labour pool. That had an impact on food production, which in turn led to an increase in imports, not only of food, but also of weapons and clothing.³⁹ Even if slavery had an external impulse, the truth is that it also benefited the ruling classes of African societies. The practice of slavery was incorporated into the socioeconomic relations of the coast, where forms of forced labour exploitation mixed with paternalistic/patriarchal relations. The strong hierarchy of the different sectors of the population continues to be observed in the small plantations along the coast.⁴⁰

30 Capela, *O tráfico de escravos nos portos de Moçambique, 1733–1904*, 55.

31 Hunting elephants for ivory is an ancient practice. Large quantities of ivory were transported from the interior to the Mozambican ports before the slave trade became systematic. The combination of the ivory trade and the slave trade led to the insertion of people from the hinterland into the international economy (Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves in East Central Africa*, 54). The Ajauas, from the western part of the current province of Niassa, made journeys of 1200 miles to the coast, with caravans of 3,000 to 4,000 individuals (Capela, *O tráfico de escravos nos portos de Moçambique, 1733–1904*, 235).

32 Initiated by peasants during the dry season, as a complementary activity to agriculture, gold exploration in the Zambezi plateau dates back to the 11th century (Newitt, *História de Moçambique*, 182), later included in trade routes in the Indian Ocean. See F. Balsan, 'Ancient Gold Routes of the Monomotapa Kingdom', *The Geographical Journal*, 136, 2, 1970, 240–46, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1796283>.

33 Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves in East Central Africa*.

34 Capela, *O tráfico de escravos nos portos de Moçambique, 1733–1904*, 283; H. G. West, 'Villains, Victims, or Makonde in the Making? Reading the Explorer Henry O'Neill and Listening to the Headman Lishehe', *Ethnohistory*, 51, 1, January 2004, 15, <https://doi.org/10.1215/00141801-51-1-1>.

35 Newitt, *História de Moçambique*.

36 Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves in East Central Africa*, 249.

37 J. Dias, *Os Macondes de Moçambique: Aspectos históricos e económicos. I* (Lisboa: Junta de Investigações do Ultramar. Centro de Estudos de Antropologia Cultural, 1964), 59–61.

38 Dias, 79; West, 'Villains, Victims, or Makonde in the Making?', 24–27.

39 Capela, *O tráfico de escravos nos portos de Moçambique, 1733–1904*.

40 A. R. da Conceição, *Entre o mar e a terra: situações identitárias do norte de Moçambique (Cabo Delgado)*, Coleção Identidades (Maputo: Promédia, 2006), 203–5.

Since the entire economic structure was based on slavery (not only in the North of Mozambique but in the entire Portuguese colonial enterprise), its abolition faced considerable resistance. The formalisation of criminal processes of slave trade was hampered by the fact that everyone was involved.⁴¹ The Portuguese colonial State itself resisted putting an end to slavery since, to do so, it needed a military force that it did not have. Europeans and Asians (Christians and Muslims) continued to trade slaves discreetly, and no one denounced it, because it was represented as a socially acceptable practice. Clandestine slave trade lasted until the first decade of the 20th century.

The colonial State faced international pressure to effectively occupy and administer the region, but was unable to do so.⁴² Therefore, the Portuguese government opted to lease large areas of the territory to the *Companhia do Niassa*, the Niassa Company. In 1891, the region between the Lúrio and Rovuma rivers, and between the Indian Ocean and Lake Niassa (currently the provinces of Niassa and Cabo Delgado) was transferred to the company. The Niassa Company was granted the right to build transport infrastructure and exploit natural resources, collect taxes, as well as to colonise and administer the territory. The company's shareholders were unable to gather large amounts of capital. Instead of investing in the territory, they speculated with the company's own shares or invested in the European stock markets.⁴³ Nevertheless, at the turn of the century, campaigns to occupy the interior of Cabo Delgado began. With questionable success, officials sought to collect hut taxes, often through violent practices. It also rented out local labour to South African mining companies.⁴⁴

During World War I, northern Cabo Delgado was the scene of some of the fiercest fighting on the continent. Most able-bodied men were pressured into serving as porters and road builders, translating into labour withdrawal from agriculture and food insecurity. Conservative estimates put the number of Africans killed because of the war at 50,000.⁴⁵

In 1929 the company ceased to exist, but its actions had allowed the occupation and administrative division of the territory. The State apparatus incorporated the Niassa Company's former staff into the local administration,⁴⁶ giving continuity to the company practices. Policy regarding the indigenous authorities was changed, so that the old chiefs and legitimate authorities were replaced by loyal individuals with some qualifications capable of strengthening local government towards the end of more effective labour extraction and tax collection.⁴⁷

41 Capela, *O tráfico de escravos nos portos de Moçambique, 1733–1904*, 287–89.

42 West, 'Villains, Victims, or Makonde in the Making?' 18.

43 Newitt, *História de Moçambique*, 372.

44 B. Neil-Tomlinson, 'The Nyassa Chartered Company: 1891–1929', *The Journal of African History*, 18, 1, 1977, 119.

45 Neil-Tomlinson, 120–21.

46 B. B. João, *Abdul Kamal e a história de Chiúre nos séculos XIX e XX: um estudo sobre as chefaturas tradicionais, as redes islâmicas e a colonização portuguesa* (Maputo: Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique, 2000).

47 *Ibid.*, 76.

2.2 Mandatory and compulsory work systems

By the 20th century the international abolition of slavery made it difficult to implement large colonial projects. In this context of low mechanisation, the realisation of such projects was only possible through the recruitment of large amounts of cheap labour. After World War II, there was an increase in investment in central and northern Mozambique, namely in tea, rice, cotton and sisal plantations, as well as in economic infrastructure, despite the relative lack of capital for the development. As in other areas of Mozambique, the populations in the North were caught at this crossroads of a strong demand for labour for colonial projects. Paying comparatively lower wages, the colonial companies in Mozambique were unable to compete with the big capitalists in the neighbouring colonies – mainly South African mining or plantation capital in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), but also in Tanganyika (today, mainland Tanzania). Attracted by better contractual conditions and consumption opportunities and intending to avoid paying the hut tax in Mozambique, an important part of the population emigrated to the neighbouring colonial territories. That aggravated the problem of the lack of manpower. The realisation of colonial economic plans without increasing wage costs required greater rigour in the labour system. Thus, the colonial authorities chose compulsory recruitment methods through the regime of the *indigenato* (a juridical regime for the indigenous people). *Indigenas* (all those who had not obtained an assimilation permit to the Portuguese culture and become *assimilados*) were subjected to a regime of mandatory work, commonly known as *chibalo*. Spurred by the manpower crisis, Governor-General Bettencourt issued decree 818/D7 of October 7, 1942, stating that all men who could not prove their work as an employee could be captured by the head of the administrative post, brought to the headquarters and, for a period not exceeding six months, recruited by the plantations or for public works. A hierarchy of village chiefs, who were exempt from taxation and forced labour, assisted the Portuguese administrative officials with the census, tax collection and labour mobilisation. Through these processes, the colonial administration acquired control over Mozambique's main commodity: its labour force.⁴⁸ The abolition of slavery, and to transition to colonial plantation capitalism, gave rise to a new practice, every bit as painful, namely compulsory labour. From the 1960s onwards, internal and external protests and resistance brought about real transformations at the level of social and production relations. In 1961, the *indigenato* was revoked and obligatory crop cultivation ended, although some practices persisted, throughout the same decade.

2.3 Compulsory crop cultivation

In the south of Mozambique, the exploitation of the labour reserve generated important revenues from (and for) the mines in South Africa,⁴⁹ and in the centre of the

48 J. Head, 'A Sena Sugar Estates e o Trabalho Migratório', *Estudos Moçambicanos*, 1, 1980, 53–72.

49 CEA, *O mineiro moçambicano - um estudo sobre a exportação de mão-de-obra em Inhambane* (Maputo: Imprensa Universitária, 1998).

country, where most of them were concentrated, for the plantations.⁵⁰ In the North, by contrast, a large reserve of ‘unproductive’ labour remained. The situation was unsustainable for the colonial State, so vast areas of the region were set aside for cotton production, to the benefit of the metropolitan textile industry.⁵¹ In this scenario, the colonial government launched a vigorous campaign with a view to extending geographical areas dedicated to this crop, defining the number of peasants obliged to cultivate it and the hours dedicated to its production. As in other areas of the country, the populations of northern Mozambique were thus pressured, *en masse*, into serving as commodity producers. The number of peasants from northern Mozambique incorporated into this system increased from 80,000 in 1937 to 345,000 in 1940 and to 465,000 one year later. This number represented about one third of the adult population and excluded the high number of children, who informally were assisting their parents.⁵² The production process was streamlined, precisely defining the composition and organisation of the workforce to be used. If the implementation of this practice was accompanied by coercive and violent practices (which included physical aggression, detention, forced labour or exile to remote locations), it also relied on the collaboration of many local leaders, through a system of benefits, allowing many to accumulate capital.

2.4 Collaboration and resistance to extractivism

Collaboration

This massive extraction and exploitation of African labour was only possible with broad collaboration of local elites, who not only participated, but also benefited greatly from it. Slavery was a very lucrative activity for slave traders, but also for coastal traders, who extended their power through the practice. Later, the system of compulsory labour and forced crop cultivation was only possible in collaboration of the ‘autochthonous’ authorities designated as such by the colonial administration, principally the local area headmen, the *régulos*. In addition to registering the hut tax and recruiting manpower, their role in the colonial system implied a wide variety of political and judicial functions. In view of their administrative fragility, the state and the concessionary companies transferred tasks of supervising cotton production to *régulos* and other local chiefs who were granted a series of benefits. As Isaacman⁵³ illustrates, support ranged from attributing an annual salary as government employees, depending on the total tax collected, to bonuses for the support to local labour recruitment, exemption from payment of taxes and heavy work duty to the allocation

50 Head, ‘A Sena Sugar Estates e o Trabalho Migratório.’

51 Isaacman et al., ‘Cotton is the Mother of Poverty’, 583; Y. Adam, ‘Mueda, 1917–1990: Resistência, colonialismo, libertação e desenvolvimento’, *Boletim do Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique*, 14, 1993, 19.

52 A. Isaacman, M. P. Meneses and A. José, ‘Camponeses, Trabalho e Processo de Trabalho: O Cultivo Forçado de Algodão em Moçambique Colonial (1938–1961)’ in *Moçambique – 16 Anos de Historiografia* (Maputo: Coleção Painel Moçambicano, 1991), 205.

53 Isaacman, Meneses and José, ‘Camponeses, Trabalho e Processo de Trabalho: O Cultivo Forçado de Algodão em Moçambique Colonial (1938–1961)’; A. Isaacman, ‘Régulos, Diferenciação Social e Protesto Rural: O Regime do Cultivo Forçado do Algodão em Moçambique, 1938–1961’, *Revista Internacional de Estudos Africanos*, 6–7, 1987, 37–82.

of uniforms and shoes. The *régulos* or *assimilados*⁵⁴ were also the main beneficiaries of the limited technical assistance offered by the local colonial cotton board (the *junta algodoeira*) and the concessionary companies in choosing the best land, and in supplying high quality seeds, hoes, shovels and other basic tools. This in turn they sometimes distributed to their subordinates in an informal system of patronage. Their land was used to demonstrate the principles of scientific agriculture, and the *régulos* were presented as model producers, even benefiting from the compulsory work schemes. The colonial cotton fund itself served to raise the standard of living of many chiefs, namely by building houses, financing the acquisition of water pumps,⁵⁵ granaries, and agricultural equipment. Chiefs were also privileged in terms of the prices they received for their cotton. These incomes allowed a small number of local elites to invest in sectors hitherto closed to Africans, opening stores in rural areas, or ‘investing thousands of dollars in cooperatives that the State placed under its control’,⁵⁶ purchasing tractors and employing seasonal workers.

Capital accumulation by local authorities was carried out at the expense of their subjects, for whom mandatory crops represented a strong threat to their social reproduction strategies. Compulsory crops resulted in an increase in the number of hours worked producing cash crops (including on the fields of the chiefs), to the detriment of food crops,⁵⁷ without this translating into an improvement in income. Thus, mandatory cotton cultivation resulted in periods of famine and widespread poverty.⁵⁸ These factors fed the existing social differentiation between chiefs and their subjects, in terms of access to the Portuguese material⁵⁹ and cultural world, aggravating the contradictory position of local chiefs, both vis-à-vis the State and peasants.⁶⁰ Cotton production became an arena of intense conflict between peasants (who sought to regain control over the situation, circumventing or openly challenging local authority) and the chiefs, who sought to maximise their profits.⁶¹

From silent resistance to armed struggle: Forms of social protest

The penetration of these projects faced a lot of resistance from the population, in more or less subtle ways, such as sabotage, social cynicism or simple non-cooperation. With the aim of escaping forced labour and cropping regimes, payment of the hut tax or other colonial arbitrariness, an important slice of the population

54 Adam, ‘Mueda, 1917–1990: Resistência, colonialismo, libertação e desenvolvimento’, 24.

55 João, *Abdul Kamal e a história de Chiúre nos séculos XIX e XX*, 89.

56 Isaacman, ‘Régulos, Diferenciação Social e Protesto Rural’, 65.

57 João, *Abdul Kamal e a história de Chiúre nos séculos XIX e XX*, 98.

58 Isaacman, ‘Régulos, Diferenciação Social e Protesto Rural’, 53; Isaacman, Meneses and José, ‘Camponeses, Trabalho e Processo de Trabalho: O Cultivo Forçado de Algodão em Moçambique Colonial (1938–1961)’, 220.

59 Isaacman, ‘Régulos, Diferenciação Social e Protesto Rural’, 64 illustrates how prosperous chiefs had built houses with running water, electricity and plumbing. Many wore Portuguese uniforms, lived in European-style houses, sent their children to missionary schools and ‘arrived themselves with all the accessories of “civilization” that their resources allowed them’. See also João, *Abdul Kamal e a história de Chiúre nos séculos XIX e XX*, 98–100.

60 To the extent that they were seen as the hesitant enforcers of an unjust colonial policy, they often became the target of popular discontent. As Isaacman explains in Isaacman, ‘Régulos, Diferenciação Social e Protesto Rural’, 70, in many parts of the colony, the term *régulo* came to mean privileged collaborator: “‘You, Chugela, are proud of your position”, mocked the peasants of southern Mozambique. “But you are only a chief and made by the white man”’. These song narratives were analogous to the sculptures of northern Mozambique, which ridiculed the prosperous and pot-bellied rulers, who strutted around with their canes, wearing European uniforms.

61 Isaacman, ‘Régulos, Diferenciação Social e Protesto Rural’, 70.

emigrated to neighbouring colonies or to areas where colonial administration was less forcefully implanted.⁶² Following the sisal industry expansion in Tanganyika,⁶³ thousands of Mozambicans crossed the border to the neighbour territory,⁶⁴ beyond the control of the authorities, a movement facilitated by the ethnolinguistic proximity to people on the other side of the border.

Those subjected to compulsory crop cultivation did not fail to hatch strategies of undeclared resistance, ranging from badmouthing of the colonial authorities to social cynicism and outright sabotage, such as the boiling of seeds, burning of crops or otherwise deliberately reducing the cultivation.⁶⁵ Through sculpture, Makonde populations of the North sought to affirm their local traditions, while at the same time exercising their social criticism of the colonial administration and *cipaios* (African policemen),⁶⁶ representing the settlers as avaricious, distrustful, inept and often cruel and despotic at the workplace and in commerce.⁶⁷

If the peoples of the interior of the North saw assimilation with the Portuguese overlords an opportunity for social ascension – even if severely limited – the Islamic peoples of the coast remained on the margins of the colonial world, not least because it was perceived as too westernised. This resistance to assimilation to Portuguese culture was viewed with particular distrust by the colonial masters.⁶⁸ The colonial administration imposed limitations on the creation of madrassas or Islamic teaching, ordered the closure of mosques or the burning of Islamic symbols, among other insults and injustices.⁶⁹ Several Islamic leaders were arrested by PIDE, the Portuguese political police, and imprisoned in prisons in Pemba or Ibo, where some ended up dying.⁷⁰ Alongside Protestantism, communism and African nationalism, Islamism was seen as one of the threats to the Portuguese presence in Africa.⁷¹

The most assertive forms of protest were brutally repressed,⁷² with the Mueda massacre as the most famous case, generating multiple interpretations, often with

62 L. Vail and L. White, *Capitalism and Colonialism in Mozambique: A Study of Quelimane District* (University of Minnesota Press, 1980); João, *Abdul Kamal e a história de Chiúre nos séculos XIX e XX*, 100.

63 F. B. C. C. Bastos, “‘A fonte dos Wamakonde’: migração laboral, associativismo e anticolonialismo na indústria sisaleira do Tanganyika (1880–1960)” (PhD thesis, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, Instituto de Filosofia e Ciências Humanas, 2022), 116–19.

64 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 / Revue Canadienne Des Études Africaines*, 18, 2, January 1984, 367–88, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00083968.1984.10804068>.

65 Isaacman, ‘Régulos, Diferenciação Social e Protesto Rural’; Isaacman, Meneses and José, ‘Camponeses, Trabalho e Processo de Trabalho: O Cultivo Forçado de Algodão em Moçambique Colonial (1938–1961)’; Isaacman et al., ‘Cotton is the Mother of Poverty’; C. Serra and D. Hedges (eds), *História de Moçambique. Parte II – Agressão imperialista, 1886–1930* (Maputo: Imprensa Universitária, 1999), 111–12.

66 M. Stephen, ‘Makonde: Sculpture as Political Commentary,’ *Review of African Political Economy*, 17, 48, September 1990, 109–10, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03056249008703866>.

67 On Makonde masks and songs, see P. Israel, *In Step with the Times. Mapiko Masquerades of Mozambique*. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014).

68 Conceição, *Entre o mar e a terra*, 193.

69 L. Macagno, *Outros muçulmanos: islão e narrativas coloniais* (Lisboa: Instituto Ciências Sociais, 2006), 186; E. Morier-Genoud, ‘A Prospect of Secularization? Muslims and Political Power in Mozambique Today,’ *Journal for Islamic Studies*, 27, 2007, 245, <https://doi.org/10.4314/jis.v27i1.39936>; L. J. K. Bonate, ‘Muslims and the Liberation Struggle in Northern Mozambique’ in H. Sapire and C. Saunders (eds), *The Struggle for Southern Africa: New Local and Global Perspectives* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2013), 58–75.

70 Alpers, ‘Islam in the Service of Colonialism?’, 175; Macagno, *Outros muçulmanos*, 184.

71 Alpers, ‘Islam in the Service of Colonialism?’, 163.

72 J. P. Borges Coelho, ‘O Estado Colonial e o Massacre de Mueda: Processo de Quibirite Divane e Faustino,’ *Boletim do Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique*, 14, 1993, 129–54; Gentili, ‘A Subversão No Distrito de Cabo Delgado Entre 1950 e 1960 Segundo as Fontes Administrativas Locais’.

political motivations.⁷³ In response to the lack of formal spaces for participation, more violent responses emerged. The populations of the coast and the plateau became aware of Julius Nyerere's independence movement. In the diaspora, a group of Makondes formed several clubs and associations, such as the Tanganyika Mozambique Maconde Union (TMMU), Mozambique African Association (MAA), Zanzibar Club or the Zanzibar Macondes and Macuas Union (ZMMU), with the aim of improving the conditions of their members.⁷⁴ Facing rising unemployment in Tanganyika, these emigrant populations sought to negotiate with the colonial authorities of Cabo Delgado to get better conditions for integration in Mozambique, where heavy systems of racial discrimination still prevailed. The Portuguese dictatorship transformed Makonde clubs based in Tanganyika, from their previous goals as mutual support associations and with the intention of returning to Mozambique, into more politicised groups, with a desire for direct confrontation with the colonial government. In the neighbouring Tanganyika, more politicised organisations flourished, such as Mozambican African National Union (MANU) and National Democratic Union of Mozambique (UDENAMO), which in 1962 gave rise to the Liberation Front of Mozambique (Frelimo). In September 1964, Frelimo started an armed struggle in the north of the country, later spreading through the provinces of Niassa, Tete, Sofala and Manica.

2.5 Colonial villages as a counter-insurgency strategy

In order to keep the populations from having contact with Frelimo, which could provide it with support in terms of logistics, information and guerrillas, the colonial army promoted the compulsive displacement of thousands of dispersed peasants into colonial settlements (particularly in Cabo Delgado and Niassa and later in the province of Tete). Under the control of the army, the settlements were the concretisation of the propaganda effort around the improvement of the living conditions of the Mozambican rural population,⁷⁵ through the implementation of assistance programmes. In Cabo Delgado alone, around 250,000 people were displaced to 150 villages, seeking to form a belt south of the Messalo River.⁷⁶ The relocation of the population into settlements with modern street designs took place in a compulsive and violent manner. Those residing in the surroundings were concentrated in these villages defended by militias organised by the Portuguese military.⁷⁷ Populations were only authorised to cultivate their crops in the vicinity of the village, under military surveillance, and subject to strict entry and exit times, at the risk of punishment.

73 M. Cahen, 'The Mueda Case and Maconde Political Ethnicity', *Africana Studia*, 2, 1999, 30–31; P. Israel, 'Mueda Massacre: The Musical Archive', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 43, 6, November 2017, 1159, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070.2017.1382186>.

74 Cahen, 'The Mueda Case and Maconde Political Ethnicity', 33–35.

75 O. R. Thomaz, "'Escravos sem dono': a experiência social dos campos de trabalho em Moçambique no período socialista", *Revista de Antropologia*, 1, 51, 2008, 185; F. Gallo, 'Deslocamentos Coloniais em Tete, Moçambique: Cruzando Fontes Escritas e Oraís', 2015, 5, http://www.snh2015.anpuh.org/resources/anais/39/1424807193_ARQUIVO_Txtcompleto_fernandaGallo.pdf.

76 Gallo, 'Deslocamentos Coloniais em Tete, Moçambique: Cruzando Fontes Escritas e Oraís', 6.

77 J. P. Borges Coelho, *Protected Villages and Communal Villages in the Mozambican Province of Tete (1968–1982): A History of State Resettlement Policies, Development and War* (Bradford: University of Bradford, 1993), 79.

Population concentration in a small space triggered phenomena of social differentiation such as land expropriation, the creation of families without sufficient agricultural areas to provide for their livelihood and the usage of infertile agricultural land. Of mainly an administrative and military origin, the project brought no significant transformation in technical conditions, nor in the political or productive relations. But it did create a pattern for population control that the post-independence state learnt from.

3 Revolution or continuity? Attempts to communalise the countryside, forced displacements and violence in the post-independence period

After 10 years of armed struggle, the Portuguese State negotiated a ceasefire with Frelimo and the conditions for Mozambique's independence. The post-independence period generated profound social and economic reforms that in many respects represented continuity with colonial practices. In areas where settlements were established, large state-owned companies were built, and thousands of peasants were resettled in hundreds of communal villages.

3.1 Communal villages and cooperatives

The communal villages sought to constitute the process of socialist transformation of rural areas, where the pattern of dispersed population settlement would be replaced by modern and planned settlements with access to public services. It was expected that the population would organise itself in production cooperatives or that it would constitute a reserve of agricultural labour for state companies.⁷⁸ The province of Cabo Delgado was constituted as a model for the socialisation of the countryside. In 1984, of the 1400 to 1500 officially registered communal villages, around 600 (more than 40 per cent!) were located in this province.⁷⁹

The communal villages represented a continuation of the colonial settlements, with the same problems generally recurring. The concentration of people into villages meant an increase in distances between housing and fields, with repercussions for the entire agricultural system.⁸⁰ The agglomeration of populations implied a scarcity of land next to the settlements, leading to the reduction of production areas, or the tilling of areas unsuitable for agriculture.⁸¹ The arrival in the villages represented the establishment of new relationships of power and subordination between the families who already resided there and the *vientes* – the 'newcomers'.⁸² Difficulties in supplying the villages due to the dismantling of rural commerce, as well as the lack of banking

78 A. Y. Casal, 'A Crise Da Produção Familiar e as Aldeias Comunais em Moçambique', *Revista Internacional de Estudos Africanos*, 8–9, 1988, 180.

79 M. Cahen, *Mozambique, la révolution implosée: études sur 12 ans d'indépendance, 1975–1987* (L'Harmattan, 1987), 52.

80 Casal, 'A Crise da Produção Familiar e as Aldeias Comunais em Moçambique', 167; Adam, 'Mueda, 1917–1990: Resistência, colonialismo, libertação e desenvolvimento'.

81 Adam, 'Mueda, 1917–1990: Resistência, colonialismo, libertação e desenvolvimento'.

82 Y. Adam, *Escapar aos dentes do crocodilo e cair na boca do leopardo: trajetória de Moçambique pós-colonial (1975–1990)*, Coleção Identidades (Maputo, Mocambique: Promédia, 2005), 306.

services, contributed to the drastic reduction of conditions for replacement and renewal of production factors, which over time retarded agricultural production.⁸³ Tensions were added resulting from cultural differences between ethnic groups who were suddenly crammed together, clashes between state power structures and traditional authority (connoted with the colonial regime) or clashes between post-colonial state laws and customary laws, or between social classes. Conflicts often took on magical-religious dimensions, even if kept secret.⁸⁴ The peasants' reluctance to join the villages or to participate in communal work was considered irrational and reactionary, and the government used force against those considered as leaders of the movement to abandon villages. Faced with resistance, state structures increasingly resorted to violence.⁸⁵ In addition to the violence, the colonial practices of compulsory work (through communal workdays) and institutions to issue travel permits (*guias de marcha*) were reproduced.⁸⁶

The 1980 population census in Mueda – one of the main districts of the Makonde ethno-linguistic group – reported that there were 80 men for every 100 women,⁸⁷ which was an indicator of the export of the workforce to southern Tanganyika, but also of the significant presence of Makonde men in the Mozambican armed forces. If the Mueda plateau was presented as the cradle of socialist transition policies, in practice it reproduced the model of the colonial economy, based on migratory work.⁸⁸

3.2 Re-education camps

As part of the 'revolutionary justice', thousands of Mozambicans were sent to re-education camps in the north of the country throughout the first years of independence. They were people considered by the revolutionary authorities as 'saboteurs', 'marginals' or 'enemies of the revolution', as well as those who displayed colonial or bourgeois habits that were scheduled for elimination with a view to creating the New Man. The lists of deportees included Frelimo dissidents, *régulos*, sorcerers, the 'compromised' and 'connoted' (individuals suspected of having committed themselves to the old colonial order), students considered subversive, Jehovah's Witnesses, single mothers, or prostitutes, among others.

By the end of the 1970s, there were 25 re-education centres throughout the country, of which 8 were in Niassa and 3 in Cabo Delgado.⁸⁹ In this province there were several notorious camps: Chaimite (mainly reserved for Frelimo dissidents), Ruarua (where common criminals shared space with Frelimo guerrillas who deserted during the liberation struggle) and Bilibiza.

83 Casal, 'A Crise da Produção Familiar e as Aldeias Comunas em Moçambique', 158.

84 On Muave ceremonies or lion-making myths, see Adam, *Escapar aos dentes do crocodilo e cair na boca do leopardo*, 313, or Israel, 'The War of Lions'.

85 Adam, *Escapar aos dentes do crocodilo e cair na boca do leopardo*, 306–9.

86 C. D. Quembo, 'O poder do poder: operação produção e a invenção dos "improdutivos" urbanos no Moçambique socialista, 1983–1988', *Cadernos de História de Moçambique*, 1, 2012, 78.

87 Adam, *Escapar aos dentes do crocodilo e cair na boca do leopardo*, 311.

88 *Ibid.*, 326.

89 B. Machava, 'Reeducation Camps, Austerity, and the Carceral Regime in Socialist Mozambique (1974–79)', *The Journal of African History*, 60, 3, November 2019, 431, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853719001014>.

The camps were located in remote places, with little infrastructure and marked by enormous austerity in terms of access to clothing, food and health services. Starving was frequent, as well as corporal punishment. Daily activities boiled down to communal agricultural production, political indoctrination sessions or, sometimes, cultural activities.

Likewise, in 1983, in what became known as Operation Production, tens of thousands of urban citizens were deported to the north of the country. They were people considered 'unproductive', which in practice meant all those who could not prove that they worked for others, including workers in informal activities. Once again, the goal was resocialisation in cultivated fields, in remote places, with emphasis on Unango, in the province of Niassa. It is estimated that up to 100,000 individuals have gone through experiences in re-education camps and the Operation Production.⁹⁰

3.3 Renamo and the war

Frelimo's policies for rapid modernisation – always defined from top-down – will explain most of the support given by many rural sectors to Renamo. Although Renamo – first known as the Mozambican National Resistance, MNR – started out as an externally induced mechanism of aggression, the truth is that it managed to use popular discontent to its favour during the post-independence War of 16 years⁹¹ (1976–1992). The dissatisfaction resulted from the marginalisation and abuse to which local/traditional authorities were subjected after independence – accused of collaborating with the colonial regime⁹² – or the failure to reconstitute rural trade networks.

The secular nature of the post-independent state constituted an offense for the most religious, including the Muslims,⁹³ who had already been deeply discriminated against in the colonial period.⁹⁴ In the post-independence period, in remaining faithful to Islamic principles, coastal Muslims failed to display the necessary revolutionary spirit.⁹⁵ Their conservatism was taken as resistance to the Central State, and politically capitalised by Renamo. In the first half of the 1980s, Renamo penetrated the north of the country in general, and reached the province of Cabo Delgado. Its capacity to create destabilisation grew in rhythm with the contradictions in government policies.

90 Thomaz, 'Escravos sem dono'; Quembo, 'Poder do poder'; Machava, 'Reeducation Camps, Austerity, and the Carceral Regime in Socialist Mozambique (1974–79)'.

91 The 'war of 16 years' is often employed as a neutral term to designate the armed conflict between Renamo and Frelimo. Whereas members of Frelimo tend to highlight Rhodesian and South African support for the rebels and call it a 'war of aggression', Renamo militants tend to highlight the internal contradictions in Mozambican society and call it a 'civil war'.

92 C. Geffray, *La cause des armes au Mozambique: anthropologie d'une guerre civile*, Les Afriques (Paris: Karthala, 1990); A. Y. Casal, *Antropologia e Desenvolvimento: As Aldeias Comunitais de Moçambique* (Lisboa: Ministério da ciência e da tecnologia. Instituto de investigação científica tropical, 1996).

93 L. Bonate, 'Islam in Northern Mozambique: A Historical Overview', *History Compass*, 8, 7, 2010, 573–593.

94 In the north of the country, an episode that took place on the island of Mozambique is often narrated, in which President Samora allegedly entered the central mosque with his shoes. This episode became a 'metaphor incident' that stimulated narratives about Frelimo's negative relationship with Muslims in northern Mozambique. The rumor quickly circulated through the population, leaving the episode marked in the (selective) memory of many Muslims, mostly Makua and followers of some of the branches of the brotherhoods of northern Mozambique. Cf. Macagno, *Outros muçulmanos*, 214–15.

95 Conceição, *Entre o mar e a terra*, 196.

4 The 'liberal' period – renewed interest in the natural resources

After the War of 16 years, there was a renewed interest in the search for natural resources – wood, precious stones, ivory, gas and land – in the north of Mozambique in general, and in the province of Cabo Delgado in particular. Once again, it would come to have profound impact on the local economy and society.

4.1 Tropical timber extraction – a *take away* system

From the late 1990s onwards, there was an increased demand for wood in central and northern Mozambique, driven by an increased demand in Asian markets. The massive and very visible export wood for Asian markets, came to be known colloquially as 'Chinese take away'.⁹⁶ Cabo Delgado province was no exception. In 2006, 32,925.39m³ of wood was exported from that province alone,⁹⁷ a value greater than the total annual national production between 1988 and 1992. Innumerable concessionaires entered the scene, mostly logging companies, but also individual license holders and peasants.⁹⁸ Logging attracted many foreign individuals, especially Tanzanians and Chinese. Growing networks of non-licensed national operators began to act illicit logging, cutting down wood and later selling it to Chinese operators who held exploration licenses. Often cutting and transport equipment was provided by Asian companies, who were then in a position to determine the purchase price of the wood.⁹⁹

The popularisation of this practice of commercial logging opened economic opportunities for different sectors of society, from concessionaires, sawmill operators and their workers,¹⁰⁰ exporters, customs officials and members of local communities. The logging chain generated professional specialisation: scouts (native individuals and residents close to forest areas, who identified sites with forest species of commercial value); the sawyers¹⁰¹ (who cut wood using a saw or, sometimes, a chain-saw); or the porters who transported the logs to assembly points in the middle of the forest – or to warehouses of licensed companies. Each of these actors received specific remuneration, depending on the working time, the number of logs and the negotiation itself.¹⁰²

At the same time, a network of inspectors was deployed on the ground, accompanying the phenomenon, allowing activities to be carried out in exchange for bribes, in a rentier system. The village heads themselves and members of natural resource

96 C. Mackenzie, 'Forest Governance in Zambézia, Mozambique: Chinese Takeaway!', Final Report for FONGZA, 2006.

97 D. Ribeiro and E. Nhabanga, 'Levantamento Preliminar da Problemática das Florestas de Cabo Delgado' (Maputo: Justiça Ambiental, 2009), 21.

98 The presence of clandestine workers was evident from the concentrations of wood that exist in Mocimboa da Praia, in shipping areas or in backyards of residences, as well as in the change abandoned by manual sawyers, in the presence of inspectors.

Y. Adam, A. Klaey and J. Machele, "No fim não vai ficar nada": exploração dos recursos florestais em Cabo Delgado relatório do trabalho de campo em Namiune, Nkongá e 5º Congresso' (Maputo: Universität Bern. Centre for Development and Environment, 2011), 14, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/33086469.pdf>.

99 J. Maquenzi and J. Feijó, 'A Maldição dos Recursos Naturais – Mineração Artesanal e Conflitualidade em Namanhumbir', *Observador Rural*, OMR, 75, 2019, <https://omrmz.org/wp-content/uploads/Observador-Rural-75.pdf>.

100 Ribeiro and Nhabanga, 'Levantamento Preliminar da Problemática das Florestas de Cabo Delgado', 13.

101 During the fieldwork carried out in Nangade district, Adam, Klay and Machele identified an average of 10 sawyers in each village, with the most developed ones employing an average workforce of 15 people, "No fim não vai ficar nada", 21.

102 Maquenzi and Feijó, 'A Maldição dos Recursos Naturais'.

management committees were directly or indirectly involved in the timber business: 'either they were partners, or they received money to authorize the cutting'.¹⁰³ The different civil service hierarchies facilitated this process or were directly involved in it. State officials facilitated the acquisition of licenses and access to new zones, allowing exploration above the granted limit¹⁰⁴ or cutting outside the permitted zones, thus facilitating the export of unprocessed wood.¹⁰⁵ At the intermediate level, employees of state bodies benefited from *per diems* and offers from concessionaires or license applicants.¹⁰⁶ In this scenario, public officials requested unpaid leave to get involved in the process of furtive logging, including district directors and police commanders.

Income from this activity improved local consumption capacity in some places. Research carried out in Montepuez¹⁰⁷ showed that, in addition to spending on alcoholic beverages, scouts and cutters purchased bicycles, built their houses with conventional materials and/or invested in small stalls and other businesses. Many intermediaries (especially those who sold directly to Chinese operators) purchased motorcycles, household appliances and equipment. Some young people played an important role in households, taking responsibility for household expenses. Male labour shifted to logging and wood trading, with food production activities becoming more concentrated among female family members.

However, this phenomenon did not cease to generate social tension, mainly due to the non-transparent way of managing the funds resulting from extracting duty on the logging activity, since these funds were intended to benefit the affected populations in the logging areas.¹⁰⁸ The management of these fund was marked by the small amounts involved, the absence of plans for use, low economic benefits for the population, and lack of participation in deciding on how to invest the funds. That decision was generally the prerogative of the state recognised Community leaders (*líderes comunitários*) or members of the Natural Resource Management Councils, raising issues of transparency and integrity. There are also complaints of non-compliance with promises made by forest operators, a huge gap between the economic value of forest resources and export values, and the amount effectively allocated to local communities.¹⁰⁹

4.2 From precious stones fever to repression

Although artisanal mining is a very old phenomenon, it was mainly from the 1990s onwards, in a scenario of widespread poverty and severe State weakness with a

103 Adam, Klaey and Machele, "No fim não vai ficar nada", 15.

104 In 2010, pau-ferro was a very rare tree in northern Cabo Delgado, as well as large umbra or chanfuta species (Adam, Klaey and Machele, "No fim não vai ficar nada", 13).

105 Ribeiro and Nhabanga, 'Levantamento Preliminar da Problemática das Florestas de Cabo Delgado', 34.

106 Adam, Klaey and Machele, "No fim não vai ficar nada", 25.

107 Maquenzi and Feijó, 'A Maldição dos Recursos Naturais'.

108 Article 35, no. 2 of Law no. 10/99, of July 7 (Forestry and Wildlife Law) in conjunction with article 102 of Decree no. 12/2002 (law regulation) determine that 20% of fees from forestry and wildlife exploration are for the benefit of local communities in the area where the resources are extracted.

109 Adam, Klaey and Machele, "No fim não vai ficar nada".

consequent lack of government control, that its proliferation became out of control.¹¹⁰ At the end of the 2000s, precious and semi-precious stones were discovered in the Montepuez district. Just as with other artisanal mining booms, hundreds of individuals arrived within in a short time span, mostly from outside the province, including many foreigners, among them precious stone traders. The activity was carried out in an artisanal way, through systems of pits and underground galleries, without hydraulic systems or protection against landslides.

Some *garimpeiros* (artisanal miners or prospectors) managed to fill three or four one-kilogram sugar bags with precious stones daily, which they usually sold to foreign traders. Part of the local population got involved in the extraction process, abandoning the traditional economic activities they had been carrying out.

The growth in the number of artisanal miners triggered the emergence of new economic activities, related to transport to mining areas, making and selling drinks and food products, selling excavation tools, alcoholic beverages and prostitution services, in addition to boosting the housing rental market. The high population concentration and the financial volumes involved in these activities triggered a rapid inflation in the prices of goods and services. This 'Wild West' scenario triggered ostentatious consumption practices on the part of the more fortunate (acquisition of expensive vehicles, offer of alcoholic beverages in stalls to all individuals present), quickly spread throughout the region, fuelling the imagination and expectations of the population, resulting in ever more young people to this activity. The sale of rubies was responsible for a sharp increase in social inequalities. Those who stood out economically were the individuals who carried out business, directly or indirectly, linked to the extraction and commercialisation of precious stones. In a scenario of high male immigration, one would also observe the involvement of the *garimpeiros* with local women, prostitution and premature marriages.¹¹¹

The government's response was late, but it resulted in a progressive increase in the police presence and repression of the population, especially as the *garimpeiros* entered into direct competition with the interests of mining companies that had now been formalised. The attribution of a mining concession to the Mwiriti company, whose majority shareholder is the Mozambican reserve general Raimundo Pachinuapa (who later formed the Montepuez Ruby Mine in alliance with the British company Gemfields), was a milestone in the increase in police violence. The defence and security forces launched repressive actions, but also extorted miners and traders, limiting access to the mines, or conditioning access upon payment of bribes. The violence culminated in a series of coordinated and large-scale operations, between the end of 2016 and the beginning of 2017, with the aim of detaining, expelling or expropriating four to six thousand individuals from the mining area,¹¹² unless they could prove they were from the region. Many of these expelled citizens left their

110 S. Dondeyne et al., 'Artisanal Mining in Central Mozambique: Policy and Environmental Issues of Concern', *Resources Policy*, 34, 1, March 2009, 45–50, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resourpol.2008.11.001>.

111 Maquenzi and Feijó, 'A Maldição dos Recursos Naturais'.

112 Jornal Notícias, 'Garimpeiros Voltam a Pilhar Minas Em Namanhumbir', 11 September 2018.

homes, cars and other goods in the region and, sometimes, their families. The interruption of artisanal mining triggered the disruption of numerous economic activities, followed by the decrease in income and an increase in the ‘inactivity rate’ in the region, and the respective feeling of insecurity.

4.3 Increased demand for ivory

In the 20th century, the ancient practice of hunting elephants for food and ivory, became regulated by the central government. The increasing demand of ivory in Asian markets turned elephant poaching into a very lucrative activity, acquiring unsustainable environmental dimensions. It was practised not only throughout the Quirimbas reserve, but also in the northwest of the province, closer to the Niassa reserve. The poaching of elephants was particularly carried out by demobilised soldiers and firearms holders. The activity acquired greater intensity from the turn of the millennium onwards, due to the increased demand for ivory in the Asian market. Many operators in illicit logging who came across elephants and rhinos during their forays into the forest, began to dedicate themselves, in complementarity, to the furtive slaughter of these animals. As with the case of logging, the elephant and rhino poaching implied prior contact with the local chief (the *régulo*), hiring a local guide and carrying out the respective traditional ceremonies, so the activity started to involve the communities themselves. Elephants were slaughtered with crude trapping methods (V-shaped pits or electrical cables). Rhino hunting was carried out using firearms belonging to police and military units, therefore involving professionals belonging to the defence and security forces themselves.¹¹³

The ivory chain was similar to that of timber. Certain groups were directly involved in hunting elephants and rhinos. Others took on the role of intermediaries, purchasing the ivory and selling it to potential buyers, mostly Asian citizens residing in the provincial capital. The wide-spread poaching resulted in a sharp decrease, possibly halving, of the number of elephants in the decade until 2015.¹¹⁴

4.4 Increased demand for land

The tourist potential of the Northeast of Cabo Delgado (beaches and coral islands) meant that the new millennium came with a greater demand for land, particularly on the coast. Although the land market is prohibited by the Constitution of the Republic and by the Land Law, vast coastal areas were commercialised (restricting access to beaches), including islands along the Quirimbas archipelago, and including sales

113 Maquenzi and Feijó, ‘A Maldição dos Recursos Naturais’.

114 M. J. Chase et al., ‘Continent-Wide Survey Reveals Massive Decline in African Savannah Elephants’, *PeerJ*, 4, August 2016, e2354, <https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj.2354>; V. R. Booth and K. M. Dunham, ‘Elephant Poaching in Niassa Reserve, Mozambique: Population Impact Revealed by Combined Survey Trends for Live Elephants and Carcasses’, *Oryx*, 50, 1, January 2016, 94–103, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0030605314000568>.

through internet portals.¹¹⁵ The coastline of Cabo Delgado has emerged as a segment of luxury tourism, despite the lack of transport infrastructure and the surroundings of widespread poverty.

In the 2010s, as a result of the exploration for natural gas and the incipient development of the LNG industry – not least the mere expectations of a gas related boom – the great pressure on land intensified. In December 2012, a provisional DUAT (a land usage license) was issued for the 7,000ha natural gas liquefaction plant project on the Afungi peninsula in the Palma district of north-east Cabo Delgado. It would involve the resettlement of 663 households. The strong pressure on land resulted in an increase in the respective market values. Observations on the ground made it possible to verify that in the district of Palma, small plots of 600m², that in 2010 were sold for 7 to 10 thousand meticaís (metical/USD was ca. 30/1), reached the same amount in dollars three or four years later. Local populations in Palma complained about groups of individuals from Pemba or the Mueda plateau, often representing generals in the reserve or former combatants of the national liberation struggle, who acquired land, often without consulting the populations or even using threat. Many real estate agents took advantage of their proximity to the State, generating a feeling of insecurity, vulnerability and social injustice on the part of coastal populations. From the analysis of the mining cadastre portal in Mozambique, it is possible to see the strong pressure for the exploitation of natural resources in the province, translating into strong competition for access to land.

This situation generated some uproar. Once again, population resettlement processes were generally tense, fuelling speculation about the timing and practical process of compensation, as well as the quantity, whether in the form of cash payment or fertile land.¹¹⁶ Both on the part of the population and on the part of non-governmental organisations, there are reports of manipulated consultations, blocks in access to information and freedom of expression, including through threats.¹¹⁷ Inadvertent conflicts arose between the populations to be resettled and the populations residing in the places of destination, motivated by different amounts of compensation. Resettlements resulted in increased pressure on available resources, be it arable land and firewood, but it also resulted in political conflicts (between traditional leaders), as well as cultural and spiritual conflicts resulting from loss of cemeteries, transfer of graves and treatment given to sacred sites. In 2022, a DUAT was assigned for an area of 12,000ha to the Centre for Promotion of Economic Development in Cabo Delgado, just south of Afungi, in the middle of a period of military instability, which will imply the future resettlement of hundreds of local families.

Aiming at the adherence of the populations, the speeches of the authorities during the resettlement process were full of enticing promises related to development,

115 RTP, 'A ilha moçambicana do Congo, à venda na Internet, está no topo das atenções,' 3 July 2010, https://www.rtp.pt/noticias/mundo/a-ilha-mocambicana-do-congo-a-venda-na-internet-esta-no-topo-das-atencoes_n357346; R. Senda, 'Ilhas Moçambicanas à Venda – a Estória Repete-Se Em Cabo Delgado,' *Mediafax*, 27 October 2017.

116 P. Velasco, 'Processo de reassentamento em Palma: longe do direito à informação!', *Sekelekani*, 12 May 2017, <https://sekelekani.org.mz/?s=Processo+de+reassentamento+em+Palma%3A+longe+do+direito+%C3%A0+informa%C3%A7%C3%A3o>.

117 Velasco, 'Processo de reassentamento em Palma'; Salimo, 'The Politics of LNG'.

jobs, access to schools and hospitals. These optimistic speeches were responsible for the formation of exaggerated social expectations, as also happened elsewhere in Mozambique.¹¹⁸ The realisation of the investments dragged on for years, which was followed by periods of a lack of reliable and timely and locally available information, frustrating the expectations of the population.

4.5 The tense socio-political terrain and the emergence of the Al-Shababs

The signing of the General Peace Agreement (GPA) did not erase the persistence of great social and political tensions in northern Mozambique. The destruction of the war and neo-liberal reforms of the late 20th century increased poverty and social inequalities, forming a fertile scenario for the emergence of what Carlos Serra called 'mass anomie beliefs'.¹¹⁹ The transition to the new millennium was accompanied by a series of popular rumours, often about wild animal attacks or kidnappings that, mainly in periods of epidemics or shortages of consumer goods, were followed by riots and lynchings.¹²⁰ The myth of the bloodsucker (*chupa sangue*), originating in Zambézia but later spreading to Nampula and Cabo Delgado, reflected the belief that people's blood was extracted by syringes, during the night, to profit extra-communitarian interests. The action was often attributed to government officials, including health officials, wealthy individuals and/or outsiders to the community.¹²¹ Belief in the myth even generated lynchings as a reaction.

Likewise, on the coast of Nampula the population rioted against government officials and NGO staff, accusing them of introducing cholera into the waters, something that later spread to Cabo Delgado and Niassa. The rumours arose during a period of widespread unemployment (worsened by deindustrialisation in the cashew sector), the emergence of pests in food crops (cassava) or goat production, the spread of corruption in the fragile health sector, and the announcement of cases of cholera.¹²² Faced with frustrated requests for support from the State, the population became suspicious of public offers of chlorine to prevent cholera, accusing the Government, government appointed traditional chiefs and Community Leaders, as well as NGO workers, of spreading the disease. The targets of the popular revolt focused on the actors closest to the centres of power and modernity, who travelled on motorbikes or cars.¹²³

118 Wiegink and García, 'Surplus to Extraction'.

119 C. Serra, *Combates pela mentalidade sociológica: crenças anômicas de massa em Moçambique, seguido de mitos e realidades da etnicidade e de para um novo paradigma da etnicidade* (Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, Livraria Universitária, 1997), 27.

120 B. E. Bertelsen, 'Multiple Sovereignities and Summary Justice in Mozambique. A Critique of Some Legal Anthropological Terms', *Social Analysis*, 53, 3, 2010, 123–47; B. E. Bertelsen, *Violent Becomings. State Formation, Sociality, and Power in Mozambique* (New York & Oxford: Berghahn, 2016).

121 Serra, *Combates pela mentalidade sociológica*, 51.

122 C. Serra, *Cólera e catarse: infra-estruturas sociais de um mito nas zonas costeiras de Nampula (1998/2002)* (Imprensa Universitária, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, 2003), 32–33; 57.

123 Caught between poverty and modernity, rebels identified their scapegoats, accusing them of not doing something concrete that would benefit them. The state was simultaneously perceived as desired, but also as distant, non-distributive and insensitive to local needs, including as a perverse and opportunistic entity, which is only interested in its subjects during elections. Serra, *Cólera e catarse*, 9, 88–89.

Between 2002 and 2003, lion attacks against Muidumbe district villagers were locally understood as witchcraft actions carried out by the local economically powerful agents. The district administrator was accused of being behind the attacks and of selling the district to whites for three sacks of money.¹²⁴ According to local peasants, the administrator was practising sorcery for self-enrichment, creating jobs for only the closest family members.¹²⁵ The end of the socialist period meant the privatisation of State resources by local elites, who began to obtain incomes from clientelistic and rentier relationships with foreign investors, increasing their power at the expense of weakening the State. Popular revolts against the most powerful were a reaction to phenomena of social differentiation and the absence of the State in social regulation. For the villagers, while the Administrator 'ate well', people under his administration starved, were afraid of harvesting their food and faced the risk of lion attacks.¹²⁶

On the other hand, pre- and post-electoral periods generated quite violent discourse between Frelimo and Renamo parties, sometimes ending in real skirmishes, arrests or murders, the most notorious being the mass killings in Montepuez in 2000,¹²⁷ in Mocímboa da Praia in 2005,¹²⁸ or Mogincual in 2009. Reversing Clausewitz's postulate, politics actually represented the continuation of war by other means in the decades following the GPA. The electoral maps show that while Frelimo found strong support in the Makonde plateau (mostly Christian), in the coastal areas (with a strong presence of Mwanis, generally Islamic) it found more hostility.¹²⁹ Thus, political tensions began to be confused with ethnic issues.¹³⁰ Although all ethnolinguistic groups are marked by high levels of poverty, access to certain public resources is concentrated with the Makonde population. Beneficiaries of the former combatants' pensions are mostly individuals from this ethnolinguistic group. A relatively restricted group of Makonde families, shows a great capacity for political influence, including access to licenses for the exploitation of natural resources. Conversely, despite constituting the majority of the population in coastal areas like Mocímboa da Praia, the Mwani population is under-represented among civil servants, where other ethnolinguistic groups predominate, especially Makonde and Makua. This situation generates feelings of revolt among the Mwani (Islamic) peoples of the coast.¹³¹

The peoples of the coast maintain historical specificities, marked by their historical socioeconomic integration with the Indian Ocean, with East Africa and the Arab world (and not with Maputo, 2000km to the south), emerging as a specifically coastal

124 P. Israel, 'The War of Lions: Witch-Hunts, Occult Idioms and Post-Socialism in Northern Mozambique', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 35, 1, March 2009, 158, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070802685627>.

125 H. West "Governem-se vocês mesmos!" Democracia e carnificina no Norte de Moçambique, *Análise Social*, 18, 2, 2008, 347–368

126 H. G. West, *Kupilikula: Governance and the Invisible Realm in Mozambique* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

127 P. Nacuo, *Caso Montepuez – Grande Reportagem* (Maputo: Publicações Notícias, 2001).

128 A. M. S. Santos, 'History, Memory and Violence: Changing Patterns of Group Relationship in Mocímboa da Praia, Mozambique' (PhD thesis, University of Oxford, 2010), 246–50.

129 J. Feijó, 'Asymmetries in Access to the State: A Fertile Land for the Penetration of Islamic Jihadism?', *Observador Rural*, 93, 2020, 1–46; L. de Brito, 'Geografia eleitoral e insurgência em Cabo Delgado' in S. Forquilha (ed), *Desafios para Moçambique 2020* (Maputo: IESE, 2021), <https://www.iese.ac.mz/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/LBrito-Desafios-2020.pdf>.

130 P. Israel, 'Kummwanglela Guebuza. The Mozambican General Elections of 2004 in Muidumbe and the Roots of the Loyalty of Makonde People to Frelimo', *Lusotopie*, 13, 2, October 2006, 103–25, <https://doi.org/10.1163/17683084-01302007>.

131 Feijó, 'Asymmetries in Access to the State: A Fertile Land for the Penetration of Islamic Jihadism?', 36.

culture.¹³² Islam comes across as a form of demarcation,¹³³ but also of integration into society. In the mosques, the new realities were reinterpreted according to old categories, based on the idea that, throughout history, individuals from outside always arrived to manage local affairs: 'today, the new Whites all come from Maputo'.¹³⁴ Religion came to constitute a refuge, for propagating and exorcising pessimism, but also as a 'politically destabilizing element'.¹³⁵

The penetration of large projects generated new tensions. Low access to information fuelled rumours, various speculations, feelings of discrimination and the eruption of conflicts. There was a growing flow of migrants, representing a greater competition of *vientes* (newcomers) with the natives of the region. Among the local youth there is a perception of an external threat, claiming that the opportunities benefit those from the 'South' or 'Maputo', as well as 'foreigners'. Despite the increase in investment in the region, the reality is that, locally, there is a conviction that little has been done in favour of the local population, mostly Muslim. This discontent increases social tension and insecurity in the region. It was within this scenario that outbreaks of disturbances were recorded in different villages in the district of Palma. In May 2018, more than a hundred young people gathered in the district headquarters village, protesting the alleged blockade of work opportunities in the civil construction works in progress, claiming that such opportunities were exploited by individuals from the South, even though about half of the workforce hired by the construction company were natives of the region.¹³⁶ Groups of young people were involved in attempts to stop the construction of social infrastructure, in protest against alleged redundancies and illegal cuts in wages, as well as wage discrimination, for not having training, logically following the absence of schools and universities. With a very young demographic pyramid, the youth in waithood¹³⁷ stands out: it harbours strong feelings in relation to the state, due to its lack of protection and welfare provision, but also that it is incapable of providing education services that make them competitive in the market. Added to this is the feeling of threat on the part of the State itself, when the respective agents of authority began to persecute young people who engage in informal activities, in mining, in trade, as transporters, and more.¹³⁸

In a context of the penetration of numerous religious groups, and of close competition between them, from the end of the 2000s onwards, some Islamic sects began to emerge in the Northeast of the country.¹³⁹ Young Mozambicans, often with

132 Conceição, *Entre o mar e a terra*, 153.

133 Islam asserts itself as the opposition between a coastal world (self-represented as more cosmopolitan, sophisticated and civilised) as opposed to a more Christian and animistic inland world, peasant and considered less literate.

134 Conceição, *Entre o mar e a terra*, 185.

135 *Ibid.*, 185.

136 Savana, 'Alta Tensão Laboral Agita Palma', *Savana*, 26 October 2018, 9.

137 The concept of waithood describes young people before adulthood, in a 'state of limbo' and 'faced with the difficulties of integration into the labor market, obtaining income and, thereby, the possibility of consumption and social reproduction, or even civic participation' (J. Feijó, J. Maquenzi and A. R. Agy, 'Ingredients for a Youth Revolt – Poverty, Consumer Society and Frustrated Expectations', *Observador Rural, OMR*, 121, 2022).

138 Feijó, Maquenzi and Agy, 'Ingredients for a Youth Revolt'.

139 E. Morier-Genoud, 'The Jihadi Insurgency in Mozambique: Origins, Nature and Beginning', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 14, 3, July 2020, 396–412, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2020.1789271>.

migratory experience in East African countries, built their mosques, calling themselves Al-Sunnah Wal-Jamâa or, more popularly, Al-Shabab. The group rejected the institutions of the secular State, prohibiting access to secular institutions at the level of justice, health or education, as well as payment of taxes, participation in electoral processes, censuses or official ceremonies organised by the Government. Alternatively, they advocated building a society based on what they called Sharia or Islamic Law. Coming into conflict with the religious communities of origin, the group was denounced to the Mozambican state by the local structures of the Islamic Council of Mozambique (CISLAMO), and the state closed mosques and detained its followers. The group developed an armed component, providing military training to its members, and carried out the first attack in October 2017 in the main town of Mocímboa da Praia. At first, the targets were solely the defence and security forces. Later it moved on to attack state officials as well as anyone who denounced them to the Mozambican government.¹⁴⁰ Finally, all who did not join the group became targets.

The channels used to present their claims consist, above all, of small lectures after the attacks, indoctrination sessions with captured individuals, but also messages and small videos, which circulate on social networks. From the messages disseminated at these times, it is possible to observe that the group preaches the practice of fundamentalist Islam, despite not having a sophisticated theological elaboration or a well-defined political ideology. The group adopts an anti-government propaganda discourse, which it considers responsible for social exclusion and injustice. Problems such as unemployment, poverty and inequality, widespread corruption, social injustice or political exclusion are considered the responsibility of the government in Maputo, naming the current president of Nyusi.

Like any guerrilla movement, the Al-Shababs' behaviour oscillates from that of Dr. Jekyll to that of Mr. Hyde. Phenomena of profound violence (murders, kidnappings or forced marriages) with the aim of conquering the fear and obedience of the populations, are combined with reports of economic support for young entrepreneurs loyal to the insurgency, as well as charitable actions for the most disadvantaged, in exchange for collaboration.¹⁴¹ The religious discourse is articulated with a nationalist discourse ('Implement the Muslim religion, because the land is ours') and the primacy of locals in accessing power resources. In a populist way, it is lectured that the group intends to control the *campuni iamafuta* (oil company) and distribute jobs among the 'owners of the land', instead of the '*kafirs* of Maputo'. According to those who participated in the indoctrination sessions, their most seductive argument is the defence of the primacy of locals in the distribution of jobs.¹⁴²

140 Ibid..

141 J. Feijó, 'From the "Faceless Enemy" to the Hypothesis of Dialogue: Identities, Pretensions and Channels of Communication with the Machababs', *Destaque Rural, OMR*, 130, 2021, 1–12.

142 J. Feijó, 'Characterization and Social Organization of Machababos from the Discourses of Kidnapped Women', *Observador Rural*, 109, 2021, 1–30; Feijó, 'From the "Faceless Enemy" to the Hypothesis of Dialogue'.

5 Final reflections

Contrary to the dominant interpretation of a province marked by poverty, Cabo Delgado constitutes a territory very rich in natural resources. These were coveted by foreigners and regional elites to such a degree that resource extraction became the cog around which the political economy of the province revolved, albeit with changing actors, markets and commodities. Over the last few centuries, the international demand for resources (labour, ivory, cotton, precious stones, wood or land) has had a profound impact on the micro-societies of northern Mozambique. This process of integrating the peoples of Mozambique into the global economy was marked by four main characteristics.

Firstly, it took on a profoundly extractive and extraverted nature, aiming at exploiting and exporting resources in accordance with the interests of international economies, depending on the demands of the respective markets, which the country never controlled. Local populations specialised in the unbridled extraction of resources and subsequent channelling abroad, often clandestinely, either through ports or across land and air borders. Through these extractive activities, Mozambican peasants found complementary activities to agriculture, allowing their own financing. The post-independence period did not alter the extractivist logic, with the province's economy remaining dependent on the exploitation of labour, this time for state companies (which replaced the old settlements) or, later, on the exploitation of natural resources to satisfy external demand. The abrupt interruption of these activities (through the operation to expel miners from Montepuez, Operation Tronco or operations to burn ivory) had an impact on the logic of historical survival of the peasantry.

Secondly, far from constituting a process simply commanded from the outside, this extractive process relied on broad and deep local collaboration, incorporating these practices into the Mozambican system of social relations. Exploitation of these resources was only possible at the expense of the existence of large local chains that benefited from it. The actors closest to the state, *régulos* in colonial times, political commissioners, and secretaries of 'dynamising groups' in the post-independence period, and today, former combatants, civil servants and secretaries of the Frelimo party, established themselves in clientelist relations with the state. These social actors took advantage of their proximity to the state, becoming gatekeepers for external resources (foreign investors or aid) and the local populations. Although there were subtle forms of resistance in the relationship, it was marked above all by collaboration. At the top of this chain, national rentier elites were formed, serving as gatekeepers between big international capital (with which they established themselves in joint venture, usually in a non-transparent way) and the local hinterland. Over the last few centuries Mozambique has been self-extracting, to the benefit of the ruling classes of the moment. The change in political regimes led to a change in state actors, without profound changes taking place in the political economy of the region, very dependent on the exploitation of natural resources. Regime changes were responsible for the reconfiguration of power relations and the entry of new prominent political

actors, aggravating social cleavages. The prominence of Makonde generals among the new national political-economic elites gives them a decisive role in accessing state resources, fuelling old tensions and conflicts between coastal peoples (mostly Mwanis and Muslims) and the interior (Makonde and Christians). History demonstrates that the exploitation of natural resources in a scenario of a fragile state captured by political elites reproduced social inequalities.

Thirdly, this integration of Mozambique into the global economy was a process historically marked by violence, which took on multiple forms, from kidnapping, forced labour and displacement, corporal punishment, threats and other forms of repression. The experience of deterritorialisation thus accompanies the memory of a significant part of the population of Cabo Delgado. Invariably, the central elites that captured a weakened State imposed top-down models of development, with limited possibilities for participation and local consultation.

Finally, if this penetration generated a broad collaboration, which made it possible, it was full of resistance, based mainly on sabotage, social cynicism, subtle disobedience or slander, but sometimes taking violent forms. The scenario of inequalities in access to power resources, due to proximity to the state, and profound phenomena of social exclusion, generated a conviction, widely shared, that the country is rich in natural resources, but that there are few beneficiaries.¹⁴³ Despite the existence of distinct political discourses, armed groups such as Frelimo, Renamo or Al-Shababs were particularly adept at exploiting these social cleavages. In a scenario where there are no channels for social participation and access to justice, violence has been understood, over several generations, as the channel for participation that is available, thus becoming incorporated into various sectors of society. The structural conditions of the Mozambican political economy constituted fertile ground for the formation of violent organisations with an anti-state component. Of Marxist, democratic or religious inspiration, the various guerrilla movements proved to be able to adapt their respective discourses to local problems.

143 J. Rantala, 'Grande Riqueza, Poucos Beneficiários: Percepções Locais da Gestão dos Recursos Naturais em Moçambique', Research report (Maputo: IESE, 2022), <https://www.iese.ac.mz/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/research-report-portuguese-vers.pdf>.