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BORDERLANDS, BOUNDARIES, AND THE CONTOURS OF COLONIAL RULE: AFRICAN LABOR IN MANICA DISTRICT, MOZAMBIQUE, c. 1904–1908*

By Eric Allina-Pisano

Borders and borderlands occupy an important place in the study of African colonial history. They figure significantly in the imperial history of conquest, as European powers wrangled over the division of the continent.¹ Borders are also central to the history of African experiences of colonialism, in studies of labor migration, economic change, ethnic identity, and resistance to colonial rule.² The subtitle to a

* This essay draws upon research I conducted in Mozambique between 1995 and 1998, with support from a Fulbright-Hays fellowship, the Yale University Program in Agrarian Studies, and the Yale University Graduate School. Many people have assisted me in developing the ideas presented here. I would like to thank in particular Jeanne Penvenne, Pauline Peters, Robert Harms, and Jessica Allina-Pisano.

¹ One case that is especially relevant to this essay was the Anglo-Portuguese conflict over the borders of Mozambique and its hinterland (present-day Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi). See Eric Axelson, *Portugal and the Scramble for Africa, 1875–1891* (Johannesburg, 1967); Philip R. Warhurst, *Anglo-Portuguese Relations in South-Central Africa, 1890–1900* (London, 1962); Malyn Newitt, *History of Mozambique* (Bloomington, Ind., 1995), Chapter 14. David N. Beach takes a different and enlightening approach to the same subject in “The Origins of Moçambique and Zimbabwe: Paiva de Andrada, the *Companhia de Moçambique*, and African Diplomacy, 1881–1891,” Working Paper 89, Department of History, University of Zimbabwe (Harare, 1992). A Portuguese translation of this paper appeared in *Arquivo* 13 (1993), 5–80. Other well-studied cases include the setting of borders along the lower Zaire River and parts of West Africa where British and French territories abutted. For an overview of these cases and others see Simon Katzenellenbogen, “It Didn’t Happen at Berlin: Politics, Economics, and Ignorance in the Setting of Africa’s Colonial Boundaries,” in Paul Nugent and A. I. Asiwaju, eds., *African Boundaries: Barriers, Conduits, and Opportunities* (London, 1996), 21–34.

² A far from exhaustive sampling of this literature includes A. I. Asiwaju, “Migrations as Revolt: The Example of the Ivory Coast and Upper Volta before 1945,” *Journal of African History* 17, 4 (1976), 577–94; William Miles, *Hausaland Divided: Colonialism and Independence in Nigeria and Niger* (Ithaca, 1994); Patrick Harries, *Work, Culture, and Identity: Migrant Laborers in Mozambique and South Africa, c. 1860–1910* (Portsmouth, 1994); Joel Maurício das Nêves, “Economy, Society and Labour Migration in Central Mozambique, 1930–c.1965: A Case Study of Manica Province” (Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1998); Ruth First and others, *Black Gold: The Mozambican Miner, Proletarian and Peasant* (New York, 1983); Colin Murray, *Families Divided: The Impact of Migrant Labour in Lesotho* (Cambridge, 1981). Igor Kopytoff explores the importance of frontiers—related to but different from borders—in precolonial African societies in his introduction to *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies* (Bloomington, Ind., 1987).

collection of essays on the subject, *African Boundaries: Barriers, Conduits, and Opportunities*, concisely captures the meanings and importance often ascribed to borders in Africa.³ They were simultaneously a means by which colonial powers divided African peoples and territories; portals through which people, goods, and ideas might pass; and zones of opportunity for the ambitious and intrepid. Given such interpretations, African migration across colonial boundaries can and frequently has been understood as a form of resistance to colonial rule and as an economic strategy. This essay explores a third aspect of African movements within borderlands, arguing that labor mobility was crucial to the constitution of colonial power.

The events examined here concern people's movements in a border zone during the first decades of colonial rule in central Mozambique. Africans returned from Southern Rhodesia to central Mozambique seeking to exchange British for Portuguese rule. The returnees negotiated the terms of their settlement in Portuguese territory with local administrators, extracting exemptions from labor recruitment as a condition of their return. The agreement they reached with the colonial administration concerning the disposition of their labor became the focal point of these African communities' relationship with the colonial state.

Divided internally between three separate colonial administrations and sharing borders with three neighboring colonies, central Mozambique was a classic borderland in the first half of the twentieth century. Variations in colonial policy and practice helped generate population movements in nearly all directions across internal and international boundaries.⁴ These movements and scholarly analyses thereof exemplify the full spectrum of border studies. The cross-border movements can be analyzed as resistance to colonial demands for tax and labor; economic strategies to take advantage of wage differentials, better working conditions, or increased educational and commercial opportunities; motors of economic change, including the underdevelopment of certain regions; and triggers to identity formation and change.⁵

³ Nugent and Asiwaju, *African Boundaries*.

⁴ Malyn Newitt, "Labour Migration from the Tete District," unpublished paper; Leroy Vail and Landeg White, *Capitalism and Colonialism in Mozambique: A Study of Quelimane District* (Minneapolis, 1980), especially 169–78; Leroy Vail, "The Political Economy of South-east Africa," in David Birmingham and Phyllis M. Martin, eds., *History of Central Africa*, II (London, 1983), 200–250. For the late colonial era, see Corrado Tornimbeni, "'Working Boundaries': Boundaries, Colonial Controls, and Labour Circulation in Beira District, Mozambique, 1942–1960s," in Malyn Newitt, ed., *Community and the State in Lusophone Africa* (London, 2003).

⁵ Asiwaju, "Migrations as Revolt," made the classic statement for migration as resistance. For studies of central Mozambique, see Allen Isaacman and Barbara Isaacman, "Resistance and Collaboration in Southern and Central Africa, c. 1850–1920," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 10, 1 (1977), 31–62; Allen Isaacman, *Cotton is the Mother of Poverty: Peas-*

The borderland movements that this essay examines could be understood in most if not all of these ways. Even colonial administrators at the time could see how cross-border movements reflected strategic decision-making on the part of Africans who faced a choice between British and Portuguese administrations. These movements do represent another case of such decision-making, but they also reflect far more about the exercise of colonial power. At issue was nothing less than the constitution of colonial power itself, which this essay suggests revolved around control over labor. That the movements occurred along an international border made them all the more crucial to the colonial state, which was especially concerned with policing its borders.⁶ The borderland aspect was secondary, however. The exercise of colonial power demanded control over people and their labor, regardless of their location.

Bill Paton has argued that control over people's movements, especially those of labor migrants', was crucial to and even constitutive of the colonial state in southern Africa.⁷ Colonial administrations were desperate to collect revenue and command labor, and establishing control over population movement was indispensable to these efforts. Paton examines the policies pursued by labor-exporting colonies in southern Africa as they sought to wring profit and power from labor migrancy. Like a host of historians who preceded him, Paton considers the state-level actions and negotiations that governed the flow of labor throughout the southern African region. The best-known of these was the so-called *modus vivendi* struck

ants, Work, and Rural Struggle in Colonial Mozambique, 1938–1961 (Portsmouth, 1995), 210–13; das Nêves, "Economy, Society and Labour Migration." Michael Adas has made important contributions to the literature: "From Avoidance to Confrontation: Peasant Protest in Precolonial and Colonial Southeast Asia," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 23, 2 (1981), 217–47; Adas, "From Footdragging to Flight: The Evasive History of Peasant Avoidance Protest in South and South-east Asia," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 13, 2 (1986), 54–86. For the broader theoretical underpinnings of these arguments, see James C. Scott, "Everyday Forms of Resistance," in Forest D. Colburn, ed., *Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Armonk, N.Y., 1989), 3–33. For the broader economic effects of migrations, see Newitt, "Labour Migration in the Tete District"; Vail, "Political Economy of East-Central Africa." The impact of borders on ethnicity is the subject of A. I. Asiwaju, ed., *Partitioned Africans: Ethnic Relations across Africa's International Boundaries 1884–1984* (New York, 1985). For borders' impact on other forms of social identity, including gender, see Megan Vaughan, "Household Units and Historical Processes in Southern Malawi," *Review of African Political Economy* 34 (1985), 35–45; Stephen C. Lubkemann, "Situating Wartime Migration in Central Mozambique: Gendered Social Struggle and the Transnationalization of Polygyny" (Ph.D. thesis, Brown University, 2000).

⁶ Aside from the importance of controlling movement in and of itself, colonial administrators especially worried about people moving into territory controlled by a different European power. Metropolitan rivalries were mapped onto the African continent and colonial administrations continually worried about losing face to neighboring colleagues. Asiwaju, "Migrations as Revolt," 581, 592.

⁷ Bill Paton, *Labour Export Policy in the Development of Southern Africa* (London, 1995).

between Portugal and South Africa, regulating the Witwatersrand's recruitment of African mine workers in southern Mozambique.⁸ Paton's concern is with the development of independent state authority in southern Africa and he consequently focuses on state-to-state relations, with the occasional intervention of non-state, elite corporate bodies, such as the South African Chamber of Mines.⁹

This essay examines analogous actions and negotiations, but at the local level. Control over labor was, as Paton suggests, crucial to the development of state power. However, the development of that power was not limited to state actors negotiating treaties between sovereign nations. It also involved local actors and thus African actors. Africans faced serious constraints in their interactions with agents of colonial rule, given the state's readiness to resort to the use of violence. European colonial power clearly bore the greatest determinative influence, but it was not all-determining. Even within a structurally subordinate position, Africans helped determine the contours of colonial rule, injecting their interests into the formation of colonial power. Village-based African leaders in central Mozambique negotiated with colonial administrators from a position of relative strength, exploiting their position in a borderland. They neatly split competing interests for African labor within the colonial sphere and largely managed to retain control over that labor within their communities.

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Manica, a region in central Mozambique, was the site of the gold fields Europeans believed held the riches of Solomon or Sheba, depending on the myth invoked.¹⁰ By the late nineteenth century Manica commanded the attention of the Mozambique Company, a Portuguese chartered company that ruled central Mozambique with quasi-sovereign authority for fifty years. Manica's wealth had long been treasured by both African rulers and European colonizers. In precolonial times African authorities in Manica forbade their subjects to mine gold on pain of death.¹¹

⁸ Simon E. Katzenellenbogen, *South Africa and Southern Mozambique: Labour, Railways and Trade in the Making of a Relationship* (Manchester, 1982); First and others, *Black Gold*.

⁹ Paton, *Labour Export Policy*, 21–22.

¹⁰ Terry Elkiss, *The Quest for an African Eldorado: Sofala, Southern Zambezia, and the Portuguese, 1500–1865* (Waltham, Mass., 1981); H. Ellert, *Rivers of Gold* (Gweru, 1993). An 1894 article in the *Correio da Beira* referred to Manica's mines as those "from whence the Queen of Sheba got the large quantities of gold with which she made her presents to King Solomon," *Correio da Beira* 56 (22 April 1894), 122.

¹¹ Sometimes this was because African rulers themselves sought exclusive control of gold recovery and trade. In other cases they wanted to avoid Portuguese interest and the resultant destabilization that such interest often brought. H. H. K. Bhila, *Trade and Politics in a Shona Kingdom: The Manyika and their African and Portuguese Neighbors, 1575–1902* (Essex, 1982), especially 97–100; S. I. G. Mudenge, *A Political History of Munhumutapa, c. 1400–1902* (Harare, 1988), 171–72.

Portuguese documents attest to Lisbon's efforts to control the flow of gold more than three hundred years before the European Scramble for Africa in the 1880s.¹² At the dawn of the colonial era, Britain and Portugal clashed over control of Manica's mineral wealth; the resolution of the conflict in 1891 and an imperial accord between colonial powers fixed the present-day borders of Mozambique.¹³ Portugal sought to shore up its tenuous hold on the colony by chartering private companies to administer large tracts of land in the name of the Portuguese Crown.¹⁴ The nearly bankrupt Portuguese state turned to private investors to establish effective occupation in large chunks of Mozambican territory. The intense rivalry between European states that characterized the Scramble for Africa in the 1880s had not entirely dissipated and Portugal feared that powerful British and German interests had designs on Mozambique.¹⁵ In a 62,000 square mile swath of territory—half again as large as Portugal itself—the Mozambique Company was the state.¹⁶ The Company was, in effect, a form of privatized government: a mechanism for Portugal to project its sovereignty throughout Mozambique while avoiding the burden colonial administration placed on its treasury. There is no meaningful distinction to be made between Company and colonial administration: in central Mozambique they were one and the same.¹⁷

¹² See the published sources in *Documentos sobre os Portugueses em Moçambique e na África Central* [Documents on the Portuguese in Mozambique and Central Africa], 9 volumes (Lisbon, 1962–1989).

¹³ These events are covered in such classics as R.J. Hammond, *Portugal in Africa, 1850–1910: A Study in Uneconomic Imperialism* (Stanford, 1966); Warhurst, *Anglo-Portuguese Relations in South-Central Africa*; and Axelson, *Portugal and the Scramble for Africa*.

¹⁴ Studies of chartered company rule in Mozambique include Leroy Vail, "Mozambique's Chartered Companies: The Rule of the Feeble," *Journal of African History* 17, 4 (1976), 389–416; Barry Neil-Tomlinson and Leroy Vail, "Discussion: The Mozambique Company," *Journal of African History* 18, 2 (1977), 283–86; Barry Neil-Tomlinson, "The Niassa Chartered Company, 1891–1929," *Journal of African History* 18, 1 (1977), 109–128; Neil-Tomlinson, "The Growth of a Colonial Economy and the Development of African Labor: Manica and Sofala and the Mozambique Chartered Company, 1892–1910," in *Mozambique: Proceedings of a Seminar* (Edinburgh, 1978); Miguel da Cruz, "História da Formação da Classe Trabalhadora em Manica e Sofala ao Sul do Pungue, 1892–1926" (Licenciatura thesis, Eduardo Mondlane University, 1982); Barry Neil-Tomlinson, "The Mozambique Chartered Company, 1892–1910" (Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1987); Inês Nogueira da Costa, "No Centenário da Companhia de Moçambique, 1888–1988," *Arquivo* 6 (1989), 65–76; Eduardo da Conceição Medeiros, *História de Cabo Delgado e do Niassa (c. 1836–1929)* (Maputo, 1997).

¹⁵ Vail, "Mozambique's Chartered Companies"; Newitt, *History of Mozambique*, 358–60.

¹⁶ In its efforts to appeal to European investors, the Company administration most often described its territory as larger than England and Wales together.

¹⁷ The conflation of commercial and sovereign entities is far from unique to Mozambique or Portuguese colonies. As Crawford Young notes, Britain, France, Belgium, and Germany all made

When the Company took over its concession in the early 1890s it compared its territory to pre-1848 California—"an unknown country full of savages"—and predicted the African equivalent of the Gold Rush.¹⁸ The first dozen years of Company rule saw the building of a port at Beira, the completion of a rail line that linked British territory in the interior to Beira, and the construction of the physical and administrative infrastructure required to govern the territory. It also saw the gradual but total conquest of African communities throughout the territory. The Company demanded formal recognition of its authority, and it backed up the demand with military force. Those who initially resisted had their villages and fields burned, livestock stolen, leaders executed, and vulnerable members kidnapped and ransomed.¹⁹ Open resistance was short-lived and not effective in parrying the Company's demands.

Conquest was accompanied by demands for annual tax payment and labor service. Tax payments were important, as an acknowledgment of Company authority and an important source of revenue, but it was labor service that dominated people's experience with Company rule. The territory's physical infrastructure had to be built out of whole cloth, and a wide tsetse fly belt that precluded the use of draft animals together with the Company's low capitalization meant that the Company was in constant need of labor.²⁰

The demand for labor in Manica district exceeded any other part of the territory. The district's mining industry, lacking much working capital, needed a substantial work force. Moreover, the Company made Manica its showcase and invested heavily in developing local infrastructure. Two factors gave the Company an unusually powerful interest in supplying labor to the area's fledgling economy: first, the Company often held a minority stake in the private enterprises that existed

use of chartered companies from the 1880s to the early 1900s or longer. Young, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective* (New Haven, 1994), 103–105. Belgian King Leopold's Congo Free State is probably the best-known case, having been chronicled most recently in Adam Hochschild's *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Boston, 1998). Other works on chartered company operations include Coquery-Vidrovitch, *Le Congo au temps des grandes compagnies concessionnaires 1898–1930* (Paris, 1972); John S. Galbraith, *Crown and Charter: The Early Years of the British South Africa Company* (Berkeley, 1974). *African Economic History* published a special issue in 1983 on "Business Empires in Equatorial Africa" that includes many articles on the topic.

¹⁸ Mozambique Company, *Handbook of the Mozambique Company* (London, 1893), xii.

¹⁹ For more on the Company's conquest of its territory, see Barry Neil-Tomlinson, "Mozambique Chartered Company," Chapter 3; Cruz, "História da Formação da Classe Trabalhadora," Chapter 1; Eric Allina-Pisano, "Negotiating Colonialism: Africans, the State, and the Market in Manica District, Mozambique, 1895–c. 1935" (Ph. D. thesis, Yale University, 2002), Chapters 1 and 2.

²⁰ Neil-Tomlinson, "Mozambique Chartered Company," Chapter 4.

in the territory; second, the Company had deliberately chosen to avoid direct participation in most economic activities. Instead, it granted numerous sub-concessions and planned to earn revenue from its state-like powers to collect taxes, levy customs duties, and charge fees.²¹ Its profit depended directly on the successes of others. Without African labor, no one, not even the Company, would earn anything. In 1904, the Company census showed the district population in Manica to be about 3,700.²² Even had rural-dwellers been interested in wage labor on the Company's terms, the Company would have been forced to recruit additional workers from other parts of the territory.

The relationship between Manica's rural population and the Company's district administration—still characterized by a “fictitious obedience”²³ more than a decade into Company rule—was about to undergo a transformation. Relying on the physical protection offered by local geography and the economic vigor of household agricultural production, agrarian communities in Manica retained a substantial degree of autonomy. Two factors contributed to this autonomy. The first was that most African chiefs in the district had succeeded in rejecting Company efforts to control or co-opt them. The second factor was the weakness of the local colonial economy, which—hobbled by a lack of external investment and regional instability²⁴—functioned only sporadically and limited the growth of a local labor market. Over the next several years, both factors would change: the local economy would grow markedly and Manica's chiefs would come to recognize Company authority. Surprisingly, however, the confluence of geography, economy, and politics in Manica meant that far from any colonial “conquest of African labor,”²⁵ control over African labor remained firmly in African hands.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 43–45, 101–107, 114–16.

²² Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique [AHM], Companhia de Moçambique [CdM]/Secretaria Geral [SG]/Relatórios/Caixa 225: Circumscrição de Manica, Relatório do ano de 1904, SGR/4029/01, 58. The Company's archives are held in the Historical Archives of Mozambique, located in Maputo. The Company's census was undoubtedly an undercount, but even if it were off by as much as 50 percent, the local population would not have been able to supply the number of workers that the Company sought.

²³ AHM, CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 223: “Cobrança do imposto de palhota em Morivane,” [Hut tax collection in Morivane] dated November 30, 1895. The “fictitious obedience” characterization is that of Manica's district administrator, S. Bettancourt. He made the statement in 1895, but as I have shown elsewhere, the statement still resonated into the opening years of the 20th century. Allina-Pisano, “Negotiating Colonialism,” 70, 101.

²⁴ Between 1897 and 1902 there were no fewer than three major military actions in the region: the 1896–1897 Chimurenga uprising in Southern Rhodesia, the 1899–1902 South African War, and the 1902 Barue rebellion in Tete, located in the upper Zambezi valley a couple hundred miles from Manica.

²⁵ AHM, CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 231: Circunscrição de Manica, “Relatório do arrolamento de palhotas e recenseamento da população indígena, Ano de 1908,” SGR/4988/01, 14. The

By 1904 African communities in Manica were acting to secure their position in the district. Two factors contributed to their move. In 1904 the British South Africa Company (BSAC) doubled the head tax paid by Africans in Southern Rhodesia from 10 to 20 shillings.²⁶ The Mozambique Company shrewdly held its own hut tax at 10 shillings (2\$250 *reis*), giving people who had emigrated out of Manica to British territory in previous years an incentive to return. The border was barely a decade old and the initial actions of colonial conquest and administration in British and Portuguese territory had provoked movement in both directions. The differential created by the BSAC tax hike was all the more enticing given the second factor: the economic slump that struck the region in late 1903. The slump was due in part to reduced transit trade to Southern Rhodesia. Competition from South Africa's Cape rail line reduced activity through Beira, eroding customs revenue and investor interest in the Territory.²⁷ A fall in the London market for gold shares intensified the downturn and, beyond depressing the region, made it almost impossible to raise capital for mining in Manica.²⁸ By 1904, the virtual cessation of mining activity in Manica district reduced the demand for African labor. The district administration cut back on coercive recruitment, relieving the pressure it had put on rural communities during the first several years of the century.

Some communities began their return to Manica the previous year. In 1903, Chief M'vumbi approached the district secretary for native affairs, João de Oliveira Amaral.²⁹ M'vumbi was a son of Mutasa, the Shona chief who had ruled over a wide area of Manica prior to the imposition of Portuguese and British authority.³⁰

words are those of João Pery de Lind, district administrator of Manica, speaking of his dealings with the African population.

²⁶ Neil-Tomlinson, "Mozambique Chartered Company," 202; AHM, CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 224: Circunscrição de Manica, "Relatório referido a 30 de Setembro de 1903," SGR/4925/01, 1.

²⁷ Neil-Tomlinson, "Mozambique Chartered Company," 204; AHM CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 1: Relatório do Governador 1904, SGR/0004/01, 2. As Neil-Tomlinson notes, though the Cape rail line itself was longer than the line from Beira, the shorter shipping time from Europe made the Cape route faster overall. *Ibid.*, 200.

²⁸ *Relatório e Contas da Companhia de Moçambique (Gerência de 1902) Apresentados à Assembléa Geral Ordinária de 25 de Agosto de 1903* (Lisboa, 1903), 21. Neil-Tomlinson, "Mozambique Chartered Company," 209.

²⁹ This account is based on the October 1903 report of the section of native affairs for Manica District, 3. See AHM, CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 224: Circunscrição de Manica, "Relatório referido a Outubro," SGR/4926/01.

³⁰ Amaral uses the word *filho*, or son, but M'vumbi may well have been a more distant junior male relative. Mutasa's rule is covered in Bhila, *Trade and Politics*. For an account of the three-way diplomacy and maneuvering that led up to the 1891 Ultimatum, see Beach, "Origins of Moçambique and Zimbabwe."

M'vumbi requested permission to occupy part of his (now deceased) father's lands that lay within the territory. Amaral acknowledged that "he had the right to succeed his father" and granted permission. Told through Amaral's words, M'vumbi's request reflects unequivocal recognition of Company authority.

Even given local administrators' propensity to cast themselves in the best possible light, it is likely that M'vumbi was mindful of at least the Company's coercive power. After all, less than a decade had passed since the Company's forces had displayed resisters' severed heads as a warning to others.³¹ It is less clear what he or any other of Manica's residents thought of the Company's claim to sovereignty over the land on which their ancestors had lived for generations. Regardless of the claim's legitimacy, it went virtually unchallenged in light of the Company's comparative advantage in the exercise of violence. The power imbalance stemming from that advantage did not mean that interactions between rural communities and the district administration were wholly one-sided. M'vumbi did not intend to return alone: fifteen families had accompanied him, and these families were what balanced the interaction. Standing among them, he made Amaral an offer. They would settle in Manica district, and if the Company did not forcibly recruit them for labor service, they would remain and M'vumbi would use his influence to induce still more people to return from British territory and settle in Manica.

M'vumbi probably saw the move as an opportunity to escape pressures in Southern Rhodesia. Beyond the increased tax, he may have sought to avoid the increasingly obnoxious demands of the BSAC administration. The Southern Rhodesian administration coupled the tax hike with measures to restrict African access to land,³² at a time when African producers were expanding production.³³ Out-migration would have offered relief from incipient land pressure and any conflict it might have triggered with white settlers or other African communities. The move to Company territory gave M'vumbi a clean slate of sorts. Only a decade old, the international border was already more than an abstract arbitrary boundary—it had real material significance. The central Mozambique region had once fallen entirely within Mutasa's realm. The colonial partition of his lands established a borderland wherein imperial differences created the type of fluidity and opportunity

³¹ Neil-Tomlinson, "Mozambique Chartered Company," 61.

³² Charles van Onselen, *Chibaro: African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia 1900–1933* (London, 1976), 90.

³³ When the supply of South African grain was interrupted during the South African War, African producers quickly responded to the demand for their surplus production. Elizabeth Schmidt describes the early years of the 20th century as one of "peasant prosperity" and points to the major role that women played in an expanded agricultural production. *Peasants, Traders, and Wives: Shona Women in the History of Zimbabwe, 1870–1939* (Portsmouth, 1992), especially 53–61. See also Ian Phimister, "Zimbabwe: The Path of Capitalist Development," in Birmingham and Martin, eds., *History of Central Africa*, II, 256.

so commonly attributed to borderlands. Basing his claim to authority on Mutasa instantly gave M'Vumbi credit in the eyes of the Portuguese, who barely more than a decade earlier had based their own claims to a greater Manica on Mutasa's sovereignty over a wide area.³⁴ The move to Manica was a chance to establish himself as an independent ruler in his own right.

The agreement offered relief to his followers as well. Most immediately, they would avoid the burden of the 100 percent tax increase they faced if they remained in Southern Rhodesia. Perhaps more significant was the creation of the Rhodesia Native Labour Bureau, founded to reduce labor costs in the wake of the London share market collapse in 1903.³⁵ Reduced labor costs translated directly into lower wages, which were imposed especially on locally recruited coerced workers. Within the Rhodesian mine labor force, local recruits were "the poorest paid and most despised group of African miners."³⁶ The return to Company territory would take them beyond the reach of the newly constituted Bureau. With the cross-border move M'vumbi's followers could count on freedom from labor service for at least the next year and they—as well as anyone—knew how easily the border was infiltrated. If they needed to, they could make use of its camouflage in the future.

Amaral, no doubt with an eye toward a future increase in hut tax receipts (and the percentage of that revenue he would receive), accepted M'vumbi's offer and promised him that for the next year, "none of the people who accompanied him would be called to work, giving them time to establish residence and proceed with field preparation and planting."³⁷ Amaral predicted that the agreement would succeed in bringing many of the people who had fled Manica in past years to return to their old villages.³⁸

³⁴ Beach, "Origins of Moçambique and Zimbabwe."

³⁵ The tax increase of 1904 was the outcome of explicit lobbying by the Rhodesian mining industry, which had initially proposed a tax of £4 to be levied on any African male who did not "work continuously for more than four months in the year." Van Onselen, *Chibaro*, 94.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 92.

³⁷ AHM, CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 224: Circunscrição de Manica, "Relatório referido a Outubro," SGR/4926/01. Regulations on hut tax collection specified the percentage of the tax revenue due to those employees who participated in the census and collection process. The district administrator received 4 percent of the tax collected, regardless of whether or not he had participated in either part of the process, while the district secretary—who usually conducted the census—received 6 percent of the hut tax revenue. If the district administrator conducted the census himself, he received the entire 10 percent. See *Boletim da Companhia de Moçambique* No. 176 (17 December 1900), Circular no. 83 da Secretaria Geral.

³⁸ Malyn Newitt has written on movements in both directions along the Mozambique-Malawi and Mozambique-Zimbabwe borders in the upper Zambezi valley province of Tete; see his "Labor Migration from the Tete District," unpublished manuscript. My thanks to him for making this study available. This type of negotiated return was probably practiced by African communities

Two years later Amaral's predictions proved true. In 1905, he noted an increase of more than 250 huts in just one part of the district.³⁹ The huts' residents had come from British territory, and he suggested that still more would come if the Company did not pursue them too vigorously for labor recruitment. As he had two years earlier, Amaral promised that the Company would not conduct any recruitment drives in their villages for the rest of the year, since "their villages and fields were not yet in order."⁴⁰ From the perspective of potential returnees, the offer merited consideration. Though the exemption was only for one year, they may have decided the move was worth the risk. After all, if conditions in the territory turned out to be too harsh, they could always cross the border back into Southern Rhodesia, or, during the dry season, cross the Pungue River at low water north into Barue, where Company authority did not extend.⁴¹

Amaral was not oblivious to these options and he warned of future problems should the Company attempt to recruit more intensively than the communities deemed acceptable. There was a well-established pattern of flight from the incursions of the Company police, who had "committed all sorts of abuses."⁴² In explaining to Amaral their desire to return to their former settlements, the returnees claimed, "Now the [recruitment] is regulated and from each village leave only the number of blacks that it can supply."⁴³ Their assessment of recruitment activity may have reflected the depressed economy more than restraint on the part of the Company police. Regardless of the cause, however, they were freer to settle and plant their fields.

In making these agreements, Amaral revealed unusual if not blinding insight into the organization of rural life in African communities. Though he maintained the racist assumption that it was freedom from work in and of itself that concerned the returnees, Amaral demonstrated a deeper understanding than most other Company officials. Explicit in his reasoning was the calculation that recently relocated agrarian communities would have to be intensively occupied in opening new fields. Amaral did not concede the returnees any fundamental right to pursue their livelihood—he simply made what he considered to be a pragmatic short-term compromise. Still, his

all along newly created colonial boundaries. For a similar account of such local-level deal-making in the Congo Independent State, see Robert Harms, *Games Against Nature: An Eco-cultural History of the Nunu of Equatorial Africa* (Cambridge, 1987), 192–93.

³⁹ AHM, CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 227: Circunscrição de Manica, "Relatório do mez de Junho de 1905," 7.

⁴⁰ Ibid., "Relatório do mez de Junho do ano de 1905," 7.

⁴¹ Ibid. Amaral was aware of some of the options available to Africans who sought to avoid recruitment.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid. Here Amaral is reporting what the returnees apparently told him.

recognition that such activities were of cardinal importance to rural dwellers showed a clearer grasp of the organization of African economic life in the district, in particular the rural labor process, than that possessed by most Company officials. The agreements threw into sharp relief the relationship between African communities and the Company administration. In the coming years, that relationship would increasingly turn on the control of household labor.

After more than a decade of Company activity, Manica's colonial economy was about to enter a period of sustained growth. Much of that growth would come unexpectedly from Portuguese-run maize farms. Manica's well-watered, fertile soil was a boon to the white farmers, most of whom lacked the means for even the most rudimentary forms of investment.⁴⁴ The farmers may also have benefited from population movement within the district. Some African communities had sought to distance themselves from the Company's district administration and consequently may have left empty some of the most accessible tracts of land. There was a ready market for agricultural produce, since the territory had long relied on expensive imported foodstuffs.⁴⁵ The white farmers' success quickly spurred new levels of activity in the mining sector, which was rejuvenated by the low-cost food supply.⁴⁶

Despite these changes, household-level agricultural production continued to demand the great bulk of African labor power. Local agricultural production still met the majority of people's material needs, but new demands—such as the need for cash to pay taxes and purchase newly available consumer goods—meant that such production was a necessary but no longer sufficient condition for material existence. The emerging colonial economy offered a number of possibilities for earning cash incomes.

Manica's African population, particularly its young men, increasingly found certain opportunities for wage labor an attractive opportunity, above all seeking employment that kept them above ground. Seeking out wage labor on their own, rather than as Company recruits, the workers had a certain degree of freedom and flexibility, choosing for themselves their employer, type of work, and length of service. Most importantly they could choose when to work, which allowed them to choose periods that would conflict the least with household agricultural labor needs. Growth in the regional economy—within the territory and in neighboring Southern

⁴⁴ Neil-Tomlinson, "Mozambique Chartered Company," 242; AHM, CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 223: Manica, 1898 Mensais e Anual, Report of 8 March 1897, SGR/4889/01, 7.

⁴⁵ AHM, CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 64: Repartição de Minas, Relatório Anual 1899, 266–267; AHM, CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 64: Serviço de Minas, Relatório Anual de 1899, SGR/1305/01, 247; AHM, CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 230: Circumscrição de Manica, "Relatório Anual de 1908," SGR/4978/01, 251–255, 312.

⁴⁶ This process is discussed at length in Allina-Pisano, "Negotiating Colonialism," Chapter 4.

Rhodesia—created a market outlet for surplus agricultural production that Manica's African farmers could supply. Together with the indeterminate power relations between the district administration and the African population, these opportunities meant that the rural population continued to have a strong interest in controlling the disposition of their labor power.

Negotiating a *Modus Vivendi* ⁴⁷

By 1907, economic growth in the district brought the relationship between the Company administration and the African population to a breaking point. The competition for African labor among rural African households, white employers (primarily farmers and miners), and the local administration far outstripped the available supply. The established practice of commandeering African labor through predatory recruitment sweeps (though often with the assistance or intervention of local chiefs) was not effective in Manica due to the porosity of the border with Southern Rhodesia. Even as white farmers and miners demanded ever-greater numbers of African workers, people in Manica became ever less willing to be contracted by the Company. Manica's chiefs and the district administration inched toward an agreement on the use of African labor that would stand for the next two decades.

The *modus vivendi* negotiated between the chiefs and the district administrators had its roots in the agreements made several years earlier with communities seeking to return from Southern Rhodesia. Their ability to negotiate such an agreement demonstrates the type of opportunity that typically emerged in borderlands through the interaction of local and colonial interests and hierarchies. In the wake of the district's economic growth, however, the stakes were much higher than those of just a few years earlier. Although the administration's coercive capacity in rural areas remained limited, it faced ever-growing demands for African workers. Pressure to meet these demands stemmed from the Company's dependence on private enterprise for the fees and taxes that comprised Company revenue. Beyond the general linkage of Company interests with those of private employers, supplying African labor was good business. Over the years from 1904 to 1906, the fees charged on top of the recruits' salaries generated a steady profit for the district

⁴⁷ My use of the term *modus vivendi* is a deliberate attempt to enter into dialogue with the historiography of southern Africa. Like the agreement that governed the flow of African workers from southern Mozambique to the Witwatersrand, the arrangement in Manica was a solution to the region-wide scramble for African labor. The arrangement that channeled southern Mozambican labor the Witwatersrand figures significantly in studies on migrant labor from Mozambique to South Africa: First and others, *Black Gold*; Katzenellenbogen, *South Africa and Southern Mozambique*; Luís António Covane, *O Trabalho Migratório e a Agricultura no Sul de Moçambique (1920–1992)* (Maputo, 2001); Harries, *Work, Culture, and Identity*; Alan H. Jeeves, *Migrant Labour in South Africa's Mining Economy: The Struggle for the Gold Mines' Labour Supply 1890–1920* (Kingston and Montréal, 1985).

administration.⁴⁸ There were political as well as financial pressures, since the introduction of “backward” Africans to the “modernizing” influence of wage labor was considered a measure of the success of colonial rule in Southern Africa.⁴⁹ The Company’s labor regulations reflected Portuguese colonial efforts to legitimize forced labor with references to Africans’ “moral obligation” to seek paid work.⁵⁰

In the face of these pressures, Manica’s population sought a way to limit the extraction of rural labor. Rural-dwellers were determined to restrict their exposure to the labor market and to control how, when, for whom, and at what price they would sell their labor. Their aim was twofold: to sustain the viability of subsistence agricultural production and to maintain their freedom to enter the labor market on their own terms.

Though the *modus vivendi* was reached in 1907, the dynamic that drove it began building earlier. In March 1906, seasonal rains had rendered many of the district’s roads nearly impassable. Like the rains, the damage was seasonal.⁵¹ While the rains fell (generally from December to April), tall grass overgrew the roads, rivers swelled and washed away bridges, and mountain run-off and perennial streams tore out roadbeds and drainage ditches. The district administrator, João dos Santos Pereira Jardim, was reluctant to continue the established practice of using African workers employed by the district Department of Public Works to conduct the repairs. As Company recruits, the workers earned a monthly salary and received daily food rations. This was—in Jardim’s words—“totally uneconomic.”⁵²

Instead, he sought out the chiefs of the villages that lay near the areas most in need of repair and demanded that they send men to clear and repair the roads. The roads that had suffered the worst damage ran from Macequece to the southern limit

⁴⁸ AHM, CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 225: Circunscrição de Manica, “Relatório do Chefe,” ano de 1904, SGR/4929/01, 58; AHM, CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 228: Circunscrição de Manica, “Relatório do ano de 1905,” SGR/4953/01, Secção dos Negócios Indígenas; AHM, CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 229: Circunscrição de Manica, “Relatório do ano de 1906,” SGR/4965/01, Secção dos Negócios Indígenas, 1.

⁴⁹ This was the principle underlying the 1899 labor code for Portugal’s colonies.

⁵⁰ For more on this aspect of colonial labor legislation in the colonies, see James Duffy, *Portuguese Africa* (Cambridge, 1959), especially 155–57, and *A Question of Slavery* (Cambridge, 1967), especially 139–40.

⁵¹ During February 1906, Manica received over 1000 millimeters of rain, more than triple the average for that month and roughly 85 percent of the average total annual rainfall. AHM, CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 229: Circunscrição de Manica, Relatório Annual de 1907, SGR/4966/01, 196; CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 70: Direcção de Minas, Relatório Annual de 1911, SGR/1479/01, 52; Relatório Annual de 1912, 64; CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 11: Relatório do Governador 1924/25, 361.

⁵² AHM, CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 228: Circunscrição de Manica, “Relatório do mez de Março de 1906,” SGR/4956/01, 9.

of the district, the Zonue River; from Chua to Chimezi; and from Muza to Chimezi. Not coincidentally, the latter two stretches traversed areas of white mining and farming activity and linked them with Macequece, the district center. The chiefs had each agreed to accept responsibility for a given section of road that lay close by their villages. They mustered the men who cleared and repaired the stretches of road. Those employed with reconstructing roadbeds and earthworks received a daily food ration but no salary, while those who cleared grass and debris received nothing.

By June, the men had completed work on the specified sections and more, for a total of nearly 84 miles of the district's road network.⁵³ In July and August alone, one group of men constructed a new stretch of road just over 25 feet wide for a distance of nearly two miles.⁵⁴ In return, the district secretary for native affairs assured the chiefs that the Company would not recruit labor among their villages for any other purpose that year. By the year's end, the chiefs had organized labor sufficient to rehabilitate over 150 miles of roads within the district. Beyond reconstructive work on the existing roads, the workers built three detours (probably to bypass unsalvageable stretches of road) and a new bridge over the Zambuzi River.⁵⁵

Although the district secretary, César Augusto Cardotte, reported that the men supplied by the chiefs had worked with what he called "good will," due to his promise to exempt them from recruitment, not everyone had accepted the agreement willingly.⁵⁶ The residents of four entire villages had moved across the border in protest, forcing Cardotte out into the hills in pursuit of them. Their unwillingness to participate in the scheme was deep-seated enough to compel him to visit several times. "All the people" of the villages gathered to hear him speak, and only after he spoke with what he called "great circumspection" did they agree to return.⁵⁷

Nor was circumspection alone sufficient. In their discussions, Cardotte offered what he called "the indispensable present."⁵⁸ What was telling was less the value of the unspecified present (or *saguete*, in Cardotte's words), but that Cardotte

⁵³ AHM, CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 228: Circunscrição de Manica, "Relatório do mez de Maio de 1906," SGR/4958/01, Secção dos Negócios Indígenas.

⁵⁴ AHM, CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 228: Circunscrição de Manica, "Relatório do mez de Agosto de 1906," SGR/5461/01, 6.

⁵⁵ AHM, CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 229: Circunscrição de Manica, Relatório Annual de 1906, SGR/4965/01, Secção dos Negócios Indígenas, Relatório de Dezembro de 1906, 2.

⁵⁶ AHM, CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 228: Circunscrição de Manica, "Relatório do mez de Maio de 1906," SGR/4958/01, Secção dos Negócios Indígenas. Cardotte succeeded Amaral, who was named the administrator of neighboring Chimoio district in 1905.

⁵⁷ AHM, CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 229: Circunscrição de Manica, "Relatório Anual de 1906," SGR/4965/01, Secção dos Negócios Indígenas, 2.

⁵⁸ AHM, CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 229: Circunscrição de Manica, "Relatório Anual de 1906," SGR/4965/01, Secção dos Negócios Indígenas, 2.

had to demonstrate a willingness to offer it.⁵⁹ Cardotte did not specify what exactly he gave as a present. Quite possibly it was an item such as cotton textiles (a common consumer item that would have been somewhat scarce in remote rural areas) that could be easily distributed among a number of households. The significance of the present lay in its symbolic importance as a gesture of compromise or reconciliation rather than its intrinsic value. The episode underscores the fact that Africans in Manica did not acknowledge Company authority unconditionally. In important ways, encounters between the two were characterized by negotiation, not capitulation. The relationship between the district administration and village communities was still a fluid one, and rural-dwellers could make the Company meet them part way.

In 1907, the rains fell almost without interruption from January 29th to March 4th, and the damage to the roads was especially severe. Jardim wrote that the repairs would require extensive use of recruited workers but feared that “the population would take to their heels if I were to break the promise I made.”⁶⁰ Instead, he was resigned to spending a substantial amount on paid recruits to make the roads passable again. Before the work was undertaken, Jardim died in May. His replacement, João Pery de Lind, faced the task of repairing the roads and still meeting the growing demands from white miners and farmers for low-cost labor. The solution he chose underscored the fluid state of power relations between the Company and African communities in Manica.

The agreement Jardim had made the previous year covered only part of the district and Company police continued to recruit among the remaining chiefdoms. In those chiefdoms people were far from abject subjects to Company authority. Feeling themselves overburdened by Company labor demands, villages once again began fleeing the Territory.⁶¹ The census numbers showed a noticeable dip in those chiefdoms along the border:

⁵⁹ *Saguate* is not Portuguese in origin, though it is in common usage in Lusophone Asia and East Africa. The Portuguese almost certainly borrowed it from Konkani, a language spoken in coastal Goa, one of the earliest Portuguese settlements in Asia. See Sebastião Dalgado, *Glosário Luso-Asiático*, II (Hamburg, 1982), 271. I am grateful to K. David Jackson for this reference.

⁶⁰ AHM, CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 230: Circunscrição de Manica, “Relatório de Fevereiro de 1907,” SGR/4968/01, 5. Jardim was referring to the agreement Cardotte had made.

⁶¹ AHM, CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 229: Circunscrição de Manica, Relatório Anual de 1907, SGR/4966/01, 126, 166. The link between forced recruitment and outmigration in border areas was widespread. See Lubkemann, “Situating Wartime Migration in Central Mozambique,” 80–82, for a discussion of the phenomenon further south in the Save River region.

Table 1. Population Change in Selected Chiefdoms, 1906–1907⁶²

<i>Chiefdom</i>	<i>Huts</i>		<i>Men</i>		<i>Women</i>		<i>Children</i>	
	1906	1907	1906	1907	1906	1907	1906	1907
Machipanda	87	72	55	47	87	60	114	75
Chazuca	98	62	62	36	94	62	126	72
Sambwanhe	98	74	70	53	95	73	108	81
Mandeia	93	61	77	51	93	59	118	80
Total	376	269	264	187	369	254	466	308
% loss 1907	28		29		31		34	

The greater tax liability people faced in Southern Rhodesia—twice the rate paid in Company territory—was a measure of their objection to the labor regime in Manica. The higher tax was a deterrent, however, and flight was as socially and economically dislocating as ever. A number of villages chose an alternative to the unappealing options of flight or forced labor. Their chiefs approached Pery de Lind and protested against recruitment.⁶³ Aware of the agreement reached the previous year, and still searching for the means to render the district's roads passable, Pery de Lind acknowledged their objections and made an offer to them and the rest of the district's chiefs. If they agreed to repair all of the district's roads in return for rations, but no cash payment, he pledged to exempt them from recruitment for the

⁶² AHM, CdM/SG/Processos/Caixa 320: Circunscrição de Manica, "Recenseamento da População Indígena (arrolamento de palhotas)," Ano de 1907, SGP/0438/22 (144). Overall the population increased slightly during 1907, most likely due to in-migration from Southern Rhodesia. It is possible that some of the population loss in the chiefdoms cited here registered as a gain in other chiefdoms. I feel it is safe to claim that most of the loss registered in the census was due to migration out of the district rather than within it for two reasons: the chiefdoms that registered losses were all located along the border, and only some of the chiefdoms that registered gains were adjacent to those registering losses.

⁶³ AHM, CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 229: Circunscrição de Manica, "Relatório Anual de 1907," SGR/4966/01, 126.

next year.⁶⁴ The chiefs accepted his proposal and by the end of the year had organized 160 men who completed the general maintenance work and reconstructed sections of road that had been entirely swept away in that year's floods. Only those men who undertook the heaviest work received any compensation at all: a daily ration of maize meal as a *saguete*.⁶⁵ Their willingness to perform such arduous work for no wages is an indication of just how much people wanted to avoid contract work, which was increasingly funneled to the white maize farmers.

The next year, 1908, was a watershed in more ways than one, but it also saw the institution of the agreement as an ongoing pact between the district population and the administration. That year the chiefs agreed to supply 158 men to perform the road maintenance work, beginning in April and concluding on September 8.⁶⁶ It is unlikely that the workers were any happier with the task than they had been the previous year, when their discontent moved the district secretary to propose compensating each of them with two shirts and bolts of cloth.⁶⁷ Still, having the prior year's experience, the workers were able to mold it to their advantage. Being themselves—with their chiefs—in charge of organizing the work, they had wide latitude to choose when and for how long they worked. They made no effort to conceal the fact that no one worked for much more than a week or two before a neighbor or relative replaced them, judging correctly that the administration cared little who worked or for how long, provided the work got done.⁶⁸ Finally, the roadwork paled in comparison to possible forced recruitment for settler maize farmers, who were rapidly gaining a reputation for vicious physical abuse, nonpayment of wages, and brutal labor conditions.⁶⁹

Evaluating the *Modus Vivendi*

In purely financial terms—which is how the administration tended to evaluate its effectiveness—the deal was a roaring success for the Company. In 1906, the year in

⁶⁴ Ibid. He did agree to pay the road workers a daily ration of maize meal, but since this was obtained from the fields planted and harvested by prisoners in the district jail, Pery de Lind proudly pointed out in his annual report that the Company incurred no direct expenses.

⁶⁵ AHM, CdM/SG/Processos/Caixa 320: Recenseamento da População Indígena (arrolamento de palhotas), Circunscrição de Manica, Ano de 1907, 6.

⁶⁶ AHM, CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 231: Circunscrição de Manica, "Relatório de Setembro de 1908," SGR/4987/01, [unpaginated] "No. 20 Comunicações."

⁶⁷ AHM, CdM/SG/Processos/Caixa 320: Recenseamento da População Indígena (arrolamento de palhotas), Circunscrição de Manica, Ano de 1907, 6. The district reports do not indicate whether the proposed compensation was paid. Given the Company's usual stinginess, it is unlikely.

⁶⁸ AHM, CdM, SG/Relatórios/Caixa 231: Circunscrição de Manica, "Relatório do arrolamento de palhotas e recenseamento da população Indígena, Ano de 1908," SGR/4988/01, 14.

⁶⁹ Allina-Pisano, "Negotiating Colonialism," Chapter 4.

which Cardotte initiated the agreement in a partial form, district expenditures for road maintenance came to 845\$000 *reis*, less than half the 1.919\$000 *reis* spent the previous year and not even a third of the 2.745\$000 *reis* spent in 1904.⁷⁰ The district's costs dwindled as Pery de Lind expanded the agreement: 747\$000 *reis* in 1907 and just 267\$042 *reis* in 1908.⁷¹ The Company sought to safeguard its investment in building the road network; it had funded half the costs of building the roads on mining properties, ostensibly private thoroughfares.⁷² For all its sovereign power, the Company valued the bottom line above all else, and cost reduction ranked high in the pantheon of administration goals.

Whatever the Company saved in salaries and food rations, it spent in symbolic capital. Though district officials did not admit or perhaps even recognize it, Africans in Manica had forced them into negotiation. When villagers initially rejected the request for unpaid labor in 1906, District Secretary Cardotte—and not the village leaders—was forced to make the trek into the hills to plead his case. Only the payment of a *saguete* sealed their participation. Cardotte's choice of words to describe the payment (and those he proposed making in subsequent years to each worker) strikingly reveals the delicate balance between local and Company authority.

The payment of a *saguete* had been an institution of Afro-Portuguese relations for several hundred years prior to the colonial era. Typically paid in cloth or alcohol, the gift facilitated the conduct of trade between Portuguese merchants and African rulers such as those of the Mutapa state.⁷³ In other parts of Mozambique, subordinate chiefs paid a *saguete* to more powerful rulers and sometimes to Portuguese authorities.⁷⁴ The logic, frequency, and form of such payments varied according to place, the parties involved, and specific power relationships. In some cases a *saguete* was akin to tribute with substantial value while in others the more powerful partner offered a symbolic gift in ritual recognition of a vassal's compliance. What was common to all *saguete* payments was an implication either of relations of reciprocity or of uncertain hierarchy.

Cardotte's use of the term conveys more than simple reliance on a received vocabulary. The continuity with precolonial power relations goes beyond the

⁷⁰ AHM, CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 231: Circunscrição de Manica, "Relatório de Setembro de 1908," SGR/4987/01, "Comunicações."

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² *Relatório e Contas da Companhia de Moçambique (Gerência de 1904) Apresentados à Assembléa Geral Ordinária de 31 de Outubro de 1905* (Lisboa, 1905), 11.

⁷³ For example, see Mudenge, *Political History of Munhumutapa*, 258–59, 349–50; Benigna de Jesus Lurdina Mateus Lisboa Zimba, "Overseas Trade, Regional Politics, and Gender Roles: Southern Mozambique, ca. 1720 to ca. 1830" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Michigan, 1999), 303–311.

⁷⁴ Harries, *Work, Culture, and Identity*, 81, 95–96.

language used to describe them. Just as eighteenth-century Portuguese traders and authorities had never been entirely secure in their control over African rulers who were supposedly vassals of the Portuguese crown, local Company administrators faced the limits of their own power. While the Company's comparative advantage in the exercise of violence gave it an upper hand—after all, less than a generation had passed since its forces had placed resisters' severed heads on poles to discourage opposition⁷⁵—the deal exposed limits to the use of force. The *modus vivendi* stabilized what was, after nearly fifteen years of direct Company rule, a highly fluid relationship. Far from being any “conquest” of African labor,⁷⁶ it guaranteed that Africans in Manica would enter the wage labor market on their own terms.

While the principal evidence portrays the deal as one struck between two parties, there were at least three groups involved: the district administrators, the chiefs, and the villagers.⁷⁷ The written record tends to elide any differentiation within the rural African population. Administrators' failure to disaggregate the *população indígena* (the indigenous population) masks the differential impact that the deal (and other processes) had on different sections of that population.

Of the three groups, the deal best served the interests of the district administration (though local mining and maize-growing interests clearly benefited from improved surface transportation as well). It got a guaranteed source of free labor to maintain the increasingly important road network. The deal also made it more likely that the African population of the district would increase (or at the very least, not decrease), safeguarding Company revenue.⁷⁸ Pery de Lind gave up the prospect of meeting local labor demands with recruited workers from within Manica district, but experience over the previous decade had shown that villagers were quite adept at evading recruitment attempts. Moreover, the local population density was fairly low compared to other districts and to the level of demand, and people from Manica had proven almost unanimously unwilling to perform some tasks, such as underground mine work. Even had the Company achieved greater success with local recruitment, it would still have had to import labor from outside the district. In sum, the Company gave up an uncertain source of labor for private employers but secured a

⁷⁵ Neil-Tomlinson, “Mozambique Chartered Company,” 61.

⁷⁶ AHM, CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 231: Circunscrição de Manica, Relatório do arrolamento de palhotas e recenseamento da população indígena, Ano de 1908, SGR/4988/01, 14.

⁷⁷ Much to my disappointment, not a single interviewee professed any knowledge of the deal, which has forced me to rely almost entirely on the written record. When the district administration unilaterally ended the deal in 1925, the district population fell by 28 percent. This exodus suggests that the deal had a very real significance for the population. Possibly the passage of time has blurred distinctions between the unpaid road labor and other forms of coerced labor that followed after 1925.

⁷⁸ And personal revenue, since the district administrator received a percentage of the district tax receipts (see footnote 37 above).

guaranteed source for public use. Finally, Pery de Lind ensured that the district roads would be maintained, and they were a visible, material manifestation of the Company's success in meeting its mandate to "develop" the Territory. The roads were also increasingly important to the district economy. Miners installing heavy crushing equipment depended on them almost as much as did the farmers, whose reliance on transportation infrastructure for market access would be laid bare in the fall of 1908.⁷⁹

The deal also served the chiefs' interests, if less evenly. They no longer had to contend with the unpredictable, predatory recruitment sweeps that greatly disrupted household life within their villages. Furthermore, the deal reduced the likelihood of confrontation with the Company police over recruitment, situations in which leaders were often held responsible for the actions of their followers. The chiefs had to deliver their people to perform arduous labor for no pay, but this was often the situation they faced in any case. Though they bore more responsibility for delivering a set number of workers, they had greater control over the process.

In accepting the responsibility, the chiefs did two things simultaneously: they assumed a greater role as a local enforcer of Company power while they also served as a buffer between Company authority and their people. Armed Company police would no longer sweep through the villages in search of men to meet a recruitment quota. The chiefs created a space—both discursive and physical—between Company and local action, and inserted themselves into it. In a purely physical sense, the deal substantially reduced the Company's presence in Manica's villages. Into that void stepped the chiefs, who assumed the mantle of Company authority. Under the terms of the agreement, it would be the chiefs themselves who levied labor from their followers. Though the order had its origin in the district center, Macequece, it was enforced through local African authority.

The agreement also offered chiefs means to reward or retaliate against members of their communities. With the obligation to supply workers came the power to select them. Even if a chief did not seek explicitly to use that power to discipline or reward, the selection would have reflected locally dominant ideas about whose labor was expendable, when it was expendable, and for how long. Finally, as long as their people accepted the agreement, it would also bring the chiefs a financial gain. To the extent that it reduced flight—or increased in-migration—their chiefdom's tax receipts would grow, as would the chief's percentage of them.

Household members fared least well. Adult men and older boys had to perform labor for which they at best received a daily ration of maize meal. Digging drainage canals, felling trees and hauling timber for bridges, and constructing road beds in Manica's mountainous terrain and rocky soil was back-breaking work, and people could not have welcomed it. It took time away from household members'

⁷⁹ See Allina-Pisano, "Negotiating Colonialism," Chapter 4.

field labor, hunting, weaving, or rest. Moreover, a significant number of men had begun to seek out voluntary wage labor either within the district or in Southern Rhodesia, to earn cash for tax payment or consumer goods. Such workers had the benefit of determining themselves when they would work and for how long. Road maintenance work could have conflicted with a planned stint of wage labor or with time when they had expected to be at home.

On the other hand, under this arrangement adult men and older boys did not face forced recruitment to perform farm work for the district's notoriously brutal maize farmers. They avoided the humiliating, dehumanizing experience of being forced to work without pause in driving rain, under scorching sun, or at night, beaten and verbally abused at whim, forced to "thirty-six day" months, and given inadequate or inedible food.⁸⁰ Moreover, since they and their chiefs were responsible for organizing the roadwork, there was less potential for disruption to the household labor process. Generally, no person worked for more than two weeks at a time, being replaced by a relative or neighbor.⁸¹ Even those two weeks of work usually came at a time of year—between April and September—when agricultural labor needs were at an ebb. Finally, the roadwork was nearby and people did not have to leave their homes. If they did receive a food ration, they may well have sold it to nearby mine workers, or marketed more of their own agricultural production, giving them a way to accumulate cash.

Most broadly, the *modus vivendi* shows that the relationship between colonial power and local power was a negotiated one. Even though the relationship was—almost from its inception—inherently and grossly unequal, chiefs in Manica succeeded in forcing a compromise that protected certain local interests. The pact made in Manica underscores the mediated nature of colonial authority, which was increasingly articulated through local and African agents.

The greatest significance of the agreement emerges over the longer term. Between 1907 and 1925, the duration of the agreement, a robust group of African

⁸⁰ AHM, CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 230: Circunscrição de Manica, Relatório de Outubro de 1908, SGR/4988/01, Chefe de Sena to Chefe de Manica, No. 207 de 1/10/08; CdM/SG/Processos/Caixa 74: Processo 199, "Fuga de Indígenas para o território inglês," Chefe de Sena to Governador, No. 345/3146 de 1910, 8 Novembro 1910; CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 230: Circunscrição de Manica, Relatório de Outubro de 1908, SGR/4988/01, Chefe de Sena to Chefe de Manica, No. 516 de 3/10/08; CdM/SG/Processos/Caixa 67: Indígenas fugidos, "Cópia-Auto de Queixa;" CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 230: Circunscrição de Manica, Relatório de Outubro de 1908, SGR/4988/01, Chefe de Sena to Chefe de Manica, No. 203 de 29/9/08; CdM/SG/Processos/Caixa 71: "Indígenas para Manica/Diversas," Governador to Administrador Delegado, No. 1441 de 1910; 3 de Novembro de 1910. For a more complete discussion of these working conditions, see Allina-Pisano, "Negotiating Colonialism," Chapters 4 and 5.

⁸¹ AHM, CdM, SG/Relatórios/Caixa 231: Circunscrição de Manica, "Relatório do arrolamento de palhotas e recenseamento da população Indígena, Ano de 1908," SGR/4988/01, 14.

farmers evolved in Manica district. The freedom from forced labor recruitment enabled them to devote their labor power in two directions: toward household-based agricultural production and toward well-paying wage labor positions that they sought out on their own. They invested their wage income in the resources needed—oxen and implements—to expand production for the strong regional market in foodstuffs. As rural African communities in Mozambique and elsewhere faced increasing exploitation from strengthening colonial regimes, people in Manica prospered.⁸² Even when the colonial administration broke the agreement unilaterally in 1925, it was unable to institute a forced labor regime in the remaining years of the 1920s. The start of the Great Depression saw a drop in demand for forced labor as white businesses went under—European maize farmers in particular, who saw themselves replaced by African cultivators. Manica's African farmers prospered through the depths of the Depression, hiring extra-household labor and establishing themselves as an African elite that sold strawberries and cut flowers to the local European population, and whose wives and daughters dressed "in European fashion, modestly, and even with style."⁸³

Conclusion

This essay suggests that we consider borderlands, and specifically people's movements within them, as a site of production of colonial power. Geography was frequently a factor: mountains, rivers, rainfall, lakes, desert areas, and neighboring colonial powers could shape the web of relations that emerged. Yet as important as the physical characteristics of borderlands were, the dynamic relationships between different groups of people were crucial to the constitution of power. As anywhere else, borderland or otherwise, historical actors in Manica clashed in their pursuit of conflicting interests. A corollary that follows is that internal boundaries were sometimes just as significant as those that separated one colonial territory from another.⁸⁴ It is not surprising, then, that boundaries of various types—within administrative regions or between chieftaincies—emerged in different places, given the multiple and overlapping jurisdictions held by different levels of state administration, private employers, and African communities. These were the fault lines along which the powerful exercised their influence. As they did so, conflict produced the bulges and ruptures that characterize the historical topography of colonial power. The conflict described here did in fact occur in a conventional borderland, but it need not have;

⁸² See Allina-Pisano, "Negotiating Colonialism," Afterword.

⁸³ AHM, CdM/SG/Relatórios/Caixa 242: Circunscrição de Manica, Relatório da Inspeção a Circunscrição de Manica, Maio 1938, SGR/5127/01, 20. Moreover, their daughters attended local mission schools.

⁸⁴ See, for example, Tornimbeni, "Working Boundaries." The bulk of the literature focuses on international boundaries: Asiwaju and Nugent, *African Boundaries*; Asiwaju and Adeniyi, *Borderlands in Africa*; Asiwaju, ed., *Partitioned Africans*.

the tension of colonial rule created the potential for such encounters almost anywhere.

The interactions described in this essay were marked by the inherently unequal balance of power that defined the colonial setting. Yet it was the interaction of African and European interests that produced colonial rule in Mozambique and elsewhere in colonial Africa. Groups on both sides of the colonial encounter helped shape the contours of colonial rule.⁸⁵ Colonial dominance may well have been inevitable, but it was not imminent (or immanent), and neither colonial administrators nor Africans could afford to behave as if it were. Both compromised and accommodated when it met their individual and corporate interests to do so. This essay has demonstrated that the contours of colonial rule depended as much on factors internal to African communities as on the capacities of the colonial administrations. It affords Africans an equally creative, if not equal, role.

⁸⁵ A number of historians have demonstrated this theme: Sara Berry, "Hegemony on a Shoestring: Indirect Rule and Access to Agricultural Land," *Africa* 62, 3 (1992), 327–56; Frederick Cooper, "Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History," *American Historical Review* 99, 5 (1994), 1516–45; Barbara M. Cooper, *Marriage in Maradi: Gender and Culture in a Hausa Society in Niger, 1900–1989* (Portsmouth, N.H., 1997); David Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation: Muslim Societies and French Colonial Authorities in Senegal and Mauritania, 1880–1920* (Athens, 2000).