

“No Real Freedom for the Natives”: The Men in the Middle and Critiques of Colonial Labor in Central Mozambique

Late in the day on December 31, 1923, as he prepared his year-end report, the director of the native labor department for the Mozambique Company wrote a short letter to one of his local agents, requesting that he look into allegations of African workers' ill-treatment at the hands of white-settler maize farmers. The director had worked for the company since the beginning of its rule in 1892, when it received a charter from the Portuguese crown to govern the central Mozambican provinces of Manica and Sofala. During these opening decades of colonial rule, he had seen many similar cases, and in his letter he pointed out that such abuses violated Portuguese labor law and the company's own regulations; he gave special weight to his belief that “discontentment” among the African workforce was “highly prejudicial to agricultural development.”¹ His concern had been triggered after he had received a letter some days earlier from the local administrator in a Zambezi valley district, who had written of just the sort of discontentment the director feared. The impressions brought home by recently returned workers of their experience working for the very maize farmers in question “could not be worse.” The workers reported being beaten, poorly and insufficiently fed, forced to work excessively long hours, and denied medical treatment. “This bad impression,” the administrator pointed out, “hurts each and all, principally the recruitment services, the farmers themselves—who will find it difficult to obtain the labor they need—administrative operations, and the interests of the Mozambique Company.”²

An investigation followed, launched by Mozambique Company officials early in January 1924, largely confirming the reports, with several farmers themselves admitting to some infractions of the company's labor legislation and the administrator of Manica district personally observing others.³ Warning that repeat offenders would be denied access to company-supplied laborers, the district administrator issued a circular reminding settlers of their responsibility to observe labor regulations.⁴ Little came of his action, however, because he did not remain in his position long enough to follow through on his warning. In response to the circular, the district's farmers sent an eight-page letter to the company governor, complaining of the administrator's actions, claiming he was rude, disrespectful, and mentally unbalanced. By the end of February he had been replaced with a long-serving company official who, the governor expected, would not have the same conflicts with the settler farming community.⁵

The director of the native labor department could hardly have predicted the exact

chain of events that would follow from his New Year's Eve correspondence, but neither could it have greatly surprised him. One of the company's longest-tenured employees, he had served as director of the native labor department ever since its creation in 1911. As well as anyone else in the company's service—and perhaps beyond—he knew how “unrewarding and nettlesome” the task of labor recruitment was, a charge that required one, he believed, to “vest oneself with an evangelical patience.”⁶ Complicity (and even culpability) of public authorities in highly abusive labor practices was hardly unknown, in Mozambique or elsewhere in colonial Africa, where it ranged from the occasional to the quotidian.⁷ Yet as this minor drama unfolded on the small stage of district-level colonial administration—where to suggest that white settlers respect even the limited bundle of rights colonial law afforded Africans was tantamount to an act of insanity—a greater performance was stirring in Geneva, where the young League of Nations was preparing to hold hearings on the “question of slavery.” Those hearings would produce Conventions on Slavery (1926) and on Forced Labor (1930), both deeply flawed and limited in impact, but which laid the groundwork for subsequent, more effective agreements.⁸

The administrative incident described above is noteworthy both because of the immediate historical context and as part of a longer narrative of debate over what forms of colonial labor were acceptable within modern empires (or, as Frederick Cooper has put it, “what kind of colonialism was unacceptable in polite company”) and how they might be squared with Africans' rights—if they indeed possessed rights that had to be respected.⁹ That debate lacked clarity largely because of the nature of colonial rule in the twentieth century, ever unbalanced between Africans' subordinate and unequal status as subjects of empire and colonizers' self-justifying principle of the civilizing mission. Indeed, normally any impulse toward debate was swallowed whole, and after the decades of discussion surrounding what sort of labor regimes might follow on abolition, a “new silence opened up in colonial discourse: the realities of labor recruitment could not be discussed forthrightly.”¹⁰ Any discussion of African rights was consequently inchoate, in large part because colonial labor policies throughout Africa were, at a fundamental level, incompatible with the triumph of an ethics-based attack on slavery as immoral. Beyond the right “not to be enslaved,” or what Cooper identifies as a legacy of the Congo Reform movement, “the human rights minimum,” rights talk was rare.¹¹ Most of those charged with colonial governance would have considered ludicrous the idea that Africans possessed rights, since they believed (or claimed to believe) that Africans inherently lacked the moral capacity necessary to exercise them. Instead, agents of empire claimed for themselves the responsibility and the privilege to make decisions for Africans; any belief in the notion of African rights was spectral at best. Political or economic matters exceeding a certain scale were deemed to lie within the purview of colonial authorities, representing the interests and sovereignty of the imperial metropole. Most colonial policymakers were willing to concede African authorities the right to rule over some aspects of their people's lives, especially those seen to be governed by spiritual beliefs or other outgrowths of culture; the British graced this concession as a policy called indirect rule, also practiced by other powers in various forms under other labels.¹² Africans' rights were thus quarantined in the realm of custom. Any protosocial rights, especially

those attached to labor, were limited to those conferred by colonial labor codes. Moreover, because those same codes established criminal penalties, with imprisonment and corporal punishment for workers who exited labor contracts, Africans' ability to claim such rights was highly constrained.¹³ Africans' rights—not that such a term was used in the first decades of the twentieth century—were seen as inhering in the collectivity of kinship, clan, or “tribal” groups, often manifest in the personal sovereignty of autochthonous rulers. Individual sovereignty and the ability to claim rights, as an individual, did not exist as such.

This essay follows a series of conversations among colonial administrators who at times broke the mold and came close to asserting a case for African rights (though it would be anachronistic to suggest that this is how they saw it). These “men in the middle” were exposed to the pressure inevitably generated at the point where the often lofty demands and expectations of colonial policy and politics met the grittier human experience of practice. For those even modestly familiar with the history of empire in Africa, it might seem odd for a discussion of Africans' rights to center on the perspective of local administrators, individuals who more commonly figure as the ground-level enforcers of colonial oppression, wielding the blunt force of empire's rod.¹⁴ Notwithstanding this generally accurate image, the men in the middle, while aware of the imperatives of the system in which they served, were also sometimes clear-eyed observers of how such imperatives, in their impact on those subject to them, were internally inconsistent and even self-defeating. Some few also saw the moral bankruptcy associated with fulfilling their duties. Their correspondence and reports illustrate how such pressures could, and did, force political and moral ambiguities out of the shadowy wings they normally occupied and onto center stage. The inherent ambiguity in the imperial project in Africa came from its embrace of antislavery ideology and simultaneous insistence that former slaves—and African subjects in general—not be “too free,” in order that they would work, in sufficient numbers, at low enough wages, and where commercial enterprises or public authorities deemed necessary.¹⁵ In the early heyday of imperial expansion, few gave thought to the tension between the “radical implications” of postemancipation labor policy—that laborers be free—and the accompanying, more conservative, faith that suffused the imperial mindset, which never “seriously considered” the idea that Africans could exercise free agency as economic actors.¹⁶ At district-level administration, consumed with the far from glamorous day-to-day workings of ministerial policy, the underlying ambiguity and the tension it wrought came into focus in the middle-ground view.

The resulting tension between opposing principles opened a space between the two, both discursively and in practice. In the latter realm, a raft of labor abuses filled the gap between law as written and as executed; in the former, colonial authorities tended to explain even manifestly unjust actions as being in Africans' own interest. Perhaps the dominant paradigm examining the history of this tension is that of colonial oppression and African resistance, and such a dynamic does characterize a good deal of how policy and practice interacted in Africa's colonial era.¹⁷ Another dimension examines the history of humanitarian critique, most especially of labor practices, and colonial defense.¹⁸ This essay considers a different dynamic that unfolded within a colonial bureaucracy, in which some unlikely critics produced a

spirited and penetrating critique of colonial labor policy. Despite their deep implication in a forced labor regime, often as press-ganger-in-chief, they attacked it root and branch, criticizing both the principle and practice of forced labor.¹⁹ If resisting Africans launched their attacks from below and within, and humanitarian critics did so from above and outside, the voices examined here lay somewhere in between. Here the focus is on some of the bit players in the broader drama, with the aim of showing that, notwithstanding great distances and differences in scale, local and midlevel administrators were aware of their place in the broader discussion of colonial labor, one circling the globe, linking Lisbon to New York and Kobe, remote southern African borderlands to London and Geneva. In foisting their often unwelcome views on their superiors, these administrators struggled to introduce some clarity to the conversation on colonial labor and African rights.²⁰

Central Mozambique under Company Rule

Tension between colonial subordination and any defense of Africans' rights was evident at the outset of the colonial era, above all in colonial law that codified African subordination, such as France's *indigénat* and Portugal's *indigenato*.²¹ In Portugal's colonies, authorities built the *indigenato* on an 1899 labor code that governed the lives of nearly all Africans in Portugal's colonies and lasted until 1961, when Portugal caved at last to external pressure and abolished the system after Ghana had filed a complaint with the International Labour Organization.²² António Enes, Lisbon's royal commissioner in Mozambique in the mid-1890s, wrote the 1899 labor code for all of Portugal's colonial territories; while he paid lip service to the civilizing mission and faith in the moral value of labor, he also expressed concern that the "apostles of abolition" had gone too far, teaching that Africans should have "the freedom *not to work*, the freedom to continue to live in a state of savagery."²³ To correct this "error," the labor code established the principle that all Africans living under Portuguese rule "were subject to the legal and moral obligation to acquire through work the means of subsistence and to improve their own social condition." The law stated that they had "complete liberty to choose how they might meet this obligation, but if they failed to meet it in some fashion, public authorities would impose it upon them."²⁴ The code thereby set out a principle by which conflicting positions might be resolved. It was a principle widely shared; even as Enes was drafting the code, a local official in central Mozambique proposed a regime strikingly similar to Enes's. Acknowledging that "it might be a bit severe," but seeing no other possibility, he stated, "Either we must dominate the black or he us."²⁵

In central Mozambique as in much of the rest of southern and south-central Africa, establishing the "effective occupation" imagined by Europe's imperial planners at the 1884–85 Berlin Conference did not begin in earnest until the early to mid-1890s.²⁶ Colonial authority came in the form of the Mozambique Company, a private company that received a fifty-year royal charter to govern a 160,000-square-kilometer territory with near-sovereign authority. In return for granting a monopoly on the territory's resources, Lisbon received 7.5 percent of all net declared profits and could claim to noisy nationalist boosters, more or less credibly, that the area remained part of Portugal's empire.²⁷ The company had its counterparts in the imperial pantheon—

Cecil Rhodes's British South Africa Company is best known, though there were other analogs in French and German colonies—but none enjoyed powers as extensive or ruled for as long.²⁸ So completely did the company mimic the operation of a colonial state that, especially in day-to-day administration, it was indistinguishable from one: the company was the state.

Eager to demonstrate its “effective occupation,” the company moved quickly to occupy and conquer its enormous territory; conquest was accompanied by demands for annual tax payment and labor service. Tax revenue extracted from Africans established an immediate cash flow, though its secondary, if no less important, effect was to drive Africans into the labor force, since anyone who lacked the cash payment could, under law, be set to forced labor.²⁹ Drawn in part by long-standing myths that south-central Africa had been the source of Solomon's and Sheba's riches, settlers and resources soon poured into the company's territory, with many hoping that gold mines Africans had worked for centuries might prove to bear wealth like that of South Africa's Witwatersrand, and others eager to straddle a strategic gateway to the vast British hinterland (what would become the Rhodesias and Nyasaland).³⁰ European settlers—mostly Portuguese, but also Belgian, British, German, Greek, and Italian—who came to the territory brought virtually no capital for investment and depended mightily on company-supplied forced labor.³¹

To meet the growing demand for forced laborers, the company created a centralized native labor department in 1910, and along with it an administrative infrastructure to identify, locate, seize, transport, and oversee tens of thousands of African laborers every year. Local officials drew up maps showing the location of each chiefdom and village in their district, indicating in each the number and age of the men, women, and children, and the number of boys and men “fit for labor.” Twice yearly, district administrators sent police out on fixed dates to seize African workers, and as each one entered the system, the company recorded a wealth of data: name, village, and chiefdom; contract length, advance payment if any, and wage rate; dates of departure from and arrival to the sites of conscription and of work; name of employer, type of work, and location; salary paid at work, illnesses, injuries (and compensation for work-related injury or death), sick days, and salary due upon return home; and instances of flight, death, or “re-enlistment.”³²

After implementing the centralized system, the company made great strides in enlisting African chiefs in conscription operations. The labor department aimed to integrate chiefs' authority and influence into its own operations, both in the initial seizure of forced recruits and over the length of its “contracts,” by paying them for each conscript taken from their chiefdom—an incentive to cooperate and also to help hunt down those who fled.³³ At the height of its operations, the labor department's annual report made manifest how completely its bureaucracy blanketed the population, with a 142-page listing of African authorities, naming more than eight thousand chiefs and village headmen—one for every thirty-five Africans in the territory—and a tally of population figures for each chiefdom, including the number of male residents considered “fit for labor.”³⁴ Bureaucratic administration, with its capacity for rapid communication, decentralized decision making, and easily dispersed resources, put the power of the modern state—broad in reach and intense at point of

contact—behind labor exploitation. The period of enforced labor slowly increased over the years: the 1911 regulations that established the company labor department increased forced labor contracts from four to six months, and in 1920 the contract length was doubled to a full year.³⁵

The Middle-Ground View

From their front-line position in the labor regime, some of the company's men in the middle raised objections to the forced labor system they operated, decrying its manifold abuses. One called the work of rounding up Africans "an insane undertaking," while others objected to private employers' abusive labor practices, rather than the system itself.³⁶ Company officials objected, for example, when white farmers' African field workers had no more than maize flour to eat.³⁷ Reporting on one farmer's ill treatment of her workers, an official wondered openly whether the abuse was a consequence of "wickedness, stupidity, or lack of conscience," concluding that it "merits our most formal condemnation."³⁸ In one maize belt district an official ventured a mild self-criticism of sorts, maintaining that the company had an obligation to see that workers received "the nutrition their bodies needed . . . [and that] they deserved no less than a donkey, mule, or horse, for which the food provided contains the essentials of life." Workers, he said, had a far higher standard of living at home in their own villages.³⁹ Another official, a district administrator in an area of intense settler activity, broadly condemned the company's labor regime, especially its routine violation of its own regulations and failure to respect the terms of the contracts it foisted on African workers, referring to "this unjust and degrading system of cheating the black."⁴⁰ The company's own inspector general, in an assessment of the labor department's operations, referred in 1924 to employers as "brutes" and censured them for the "barbarous, cruel, and hateful" abuse they visited upon workers the company delivered to them.⁴¹

Such dissent emerged early from within the company's administrative ranks. Its labor recruitment system, almost wholly lacking in organization during the first decade or so of company rule, operated in open violation of the limits that recognized Africans' right to a degree of individual sovereignty. Alfredo Augusto Freire de Andrade, district administrator in Manica and director of the company's mining department from 1899 to 1902, remarked on the great demand for African workers, both for wild rubber collection and for mine work, and pointed out that some had been taken for three-month contracts, yet "who remain here very much longer, always asking to go home to rest, and whom we have kept until we could find substitutes, which has been impossible."⁴² Commenting on the system's lack of organization, he wrote to the company governor that African workers ended up in a revolving door of labor recruitment, "leaving the service of this *senhor* to end up working for any other, thus arriving at the end of the year without having had the rest to which they believe, rightly so, they have the right." Freire de Andrade assailed the practice on principle, stating that "it is not fair," but also on practical grounds, pointing out how it could backfire, since such serial conscription resulted in Africans "abandoning the district, fleeing for others where they are less sought after, even to English territory."⁴³ His opposition to abuses and concern for fairness was fleeting, however, and he soon

demonstrated a flexibility of mind regarding Africans' rights that would come to characterize his long career in the service of Portugal's empire. Responding the next year to reports of worker complaints of beating and excessive demands from employers, he downplayed the legitimacy of their claims, writing that "it all depends on the meaning given to the word *excessive*, because for the black all work is excessive."⁴⁴ Moreover, when Andrade spoke of Africans' right (*direito*) to a respite from colonial demands, he was referring to limits defined by company and Portuguese law, rather than suggesting a minimum degree of personal sovereignty for Africans.

Some others among the company's local administrators commented, like Freire de Andrade, on the negative practical consequences that followed from such labor abuses; one, his counterpart in the neighboring district of Moribane, pointed out the results, describing "damage up and down the line: [hut tax] revenue falls, the influence of authority is lost, and our power over the natives becomes a fiction."⁴⁵ Especially in border areas, these local officials worried about flight and population loss—always a concern for the senior administration—which hurt the company's bottom line and their own income, because they received a cut of the tax receipts.⁴⁶ Yet the more senior officials rarely accepted the logic of the criticism. On the cover of the Moribane administrator's report, one reader higher up the administrative ladder wrote, "The ideas and language of this report are such that it does not bear serious examination. Its only value is to prove that it would be to the company's advantage to relieve the author of his duties."⁴⁷ Especially among the labor-sending areas of the territory, the company's administrators were mindful of the repercussions of forced labor recruitment and, concerned about the potentially messy outcomes of their own actions when they followed their orders, they urged moderation. Still, most did so cautiously, for fear of seeming insufficiently dedicated to their duties. One, noting a "certain reluctance" on the part of chiefs to meet recruitment quotas, hastened to make clear that he "abstained from making any judgments about worker recruitment, lest my words be misinterpreted," fearing he would be suspected of "harboring any ill will toward this work."⁴⁸

One of the company's "men on the spot," however, shed all caution in writing to his superiors, offering only straight talk about labor recruitment.⁴⁹ José Luiz Ferreira served as district administrator in Moribane from 1909 to 1928. A backwater that served as little more than an undeclared labor reserve supplying conscripts for "small-man" gold mine operators and settler farmers and plantation-scale sugar cultivation in neighboring districts, Moribane shared an extensive border with Southern Rhodesia and, in its southern reaches, saw so-called clandestine emigration to South African gold mines.⁵⁰ Ferreira faced the classic dilemma of a colonial functionary, caught between meeting his responsibilities as district administrator and coping with the attendant political and economic costs that were sure to follow. During his two decades of service, he saw the evolution of the company's labor regime from its make-shift beginnings to an example of fully fledged bureaucratic rationality in the form of the native labor department. Several years into that transformation, as the company prepared to double forced-labor service contracts from six months to a full year, Ferreira sounded a warning in 1916, pointing out that as "recruitment for half a year is difficult, much more so will it be for a full year."⁵¹ Several years later still, after the

doubled service length had been suspended when a major rebellion broke out in the midst of World War I, he urged that yearlong contracts not simply be suspended temporarily “but rather eliminated absolutely.”⁵² Nor was he alone in his opposition, for one fellow administrator warned that the doubling would be a “disaster,” and another reported that his announcement of the change provoked “great discontent” among the African residents in his district.⁵³

Ferreira, though, gave more than a mere warning, developing a critique based on logic and morality. He argued first on the logic of labor efficiency, echoing in one sense the authors of Portugal’s labor code, who justified forced labor as the only way to achieve productive economic activity in “the dark portions of Africa.”⁵⁴ He made the opposite case, however: a year-long contract “might be logical if all the tasks undertaken—whether in agriculture or in mining—required specialized skills,” yet the work forced laborers undertook “is limited to agricultural tasks which all natives learn from childhood in their villages.” Straying close to a more humanitarian standpoint, he noted, “The contract is repugnant to all natives. Many times I have said it and once more I put it in writing. All recruitment, for the native, represents violence.” Then, returning to the safer ground of practical outcomes, he pointed out that forced recruitment made little sense and was counterproductive if it created an “unnecessary and general ill-will among the natives.”⁵⁵ Within a few years, he was offering the same defense of Africans’ rights that Freire de Andrade had made nearly a quarter of a century earlier. In his annual report for 1924, Ferreira detailed how hundreds of forced laborers had been kept past the terms of their contracts because replacement workers were late. “It is true that agriculture has its needs,” he wrote, acknowledging white settlers’ dependence on African laborers, “but it is also true that what has been undertaken must be adhered to, and in my opinion the latter takes precedence over the former. That which has been agreed to must be carried out.”⁵⁶

Bogus as the company’s contracts were, made under threat of violence, Ferreira still proposed that they ought to be upheld. His language, dry as it may have been, nonetheless made the claim, radical for the context, that Africans had rights—in this instance, the right to have a fictional contract, with the meager limits it placed on their exploitation, enforced—and that such rights superseded Europeans’ perceived needs. Though at this point Ferreira was resigned to his protests’ irrelevance, his words nonetheless reflect what a French official in Senegal would capture more than a decade later: such imperial failures demoralized “civil servants by asking them to apply, on paper only, regulations inapplicable in practice.”⁵⁷ Ferreira was aware that few shared his views, comparing himself to a prophet: “I am, as one says, crying in the wilderness.”⁵⁸ His backwater district on the Mozambique–Southern Rhodesia border was, to be sure, isolated, and the critique he voiced was not part of a chorus—but he was not so alone as he imagined, either.

“Justice and Equality for All” or “No Real Freedom for the Natives”?

The forced labor regime the company erected had its analogs elsewhere in Mozambique and Portugal’s other colonies. So extensive a system did not go without drawing attention and criticism, especially because Portugal had been a target of international critics since at least the 1860s, when David Livingstone blasted its anemic efforts to

stamp out the slave trade. With the imposition of its widespread forced labor system in the colonial period, and notwithstanding the near ubiquity of forced labor under all colonial powers in Africa, Portugal attracted ongoing attacks from latter-day abolitionists, who sought to eliminate slavery “in all its forms.”⁵⁹ English critics such as Henry Nevinson and John Harris published broadsides on what Nevinson labeled, first in a *Harper's* article in 1905 and then in a short book, a “modern slavery.”⁶⁰ In response, the Portuguese government published vigorous defenses of its policies and practices, though these amounted to little more than denial and stonewalling.⁶¹ The attempts at rebuttal aside, the attention gave Portugal an enduringly poor reputation for its labor policies, making it vulnerable to a new generation of critics in the post-World War I era.

Even while the League of Nations was still a gleam in Woodrow Wilson's eye, delegates to the Paris Peace Conference were discussing matters that would soon occupy the new body. Libert Oury, a London-based director of the company's board, traveled with its inspector general to Paris while conference delegates met in April 1919.⁶² There they encountered none other than Freire de Andrade, now retired from his service in Mozambique and one of Portugal's representatives at the conference. Possibly owing to conference corridor murmurs about the need to address colonial labor practices, Freire de Andrade approached Oury, “requesting very detailed information on the subject of labor and the treatment of blacks in the Mozambique Company's territory.”⁶³ Freire de Andrade, who had not only his experience as a company administrator but also service (1906–10) as governor-general of the entire colony of Mozambique behind him, was unsatisfied with the responses he received from Oury and the inspector general and requested written follow-up. The inspector general, aware that a response judged inadequate might trigger highly unwelcome interest and perhaps even intervention in the company's labor practices, sent a masterpiece of bureaucratic dissembling in which he cited chapter and verse from the company's regulations, which to his mind “clearly proved [the company's policy] is run on very sound humane [*sic*] and yet firm lines which leave but little to be desired for the protection of the native.” This despite the fact that less than five years earlier he himself had called for investigations, noting that employers' abuse of African workers had left some “stone deaf” and others blind.⁶⁴

When the League first took up “the question of slavery” several years later, in 1922, and asked member states to report on measures taken to suppress slavery, the Portuguese government pointed to its record in Africa as a triumphant success, with only indirect reference to “calumnious accusations” against its reputation as a colonizing power. Its official response to the League's request, a fifty-eight-page report on its labor policy and practice, opened with a remarkable claim: Portugal was “one of the first States to solve the intricate problem of the utilisation of Black labour.”⁶⁵ Admitting that “restrictions in connection with labour” would be hard to eliminate, it defended any delay, because “wherever a buyer is to be found, there will always be a seller to deliver the goods.” Portugal compared the difficulty of banning forced labor in Africa to outlawing liquor in the United States: “A striking example of this is furnished by the situation which prohibition has brought about in America, rich and powerful country though she is.”⁶⁶ It simultaneously assured the League that Portu-

guese laws respected “individual liberty” and the “principles of justice and equality for all,” even as it questioned “whether certain philanthropic ideas are not sometimes, as applied to the negro races of Africa, likely to produce an effect contrary to that intended.” “Bitter disappointment” could follow from failure to “convert the native of the bush . . . into a European.” To guard against such unintended consequences, the “negro has to be civilised by his labour and must be made to co-operate by this labour in the process of civilising himself and developing tropical Africa.”⁶⁷

The League convened a Temporary Slavery Commission, and its meetings produced especially revealing debate on colonial policies regarding forced labor, which the commission called “perhaps the most difficult of the problems before it.”⁶⁸ While the commission debated just how far a League convention should go in placing limits on forced labor, Freire de Andrade—now in his latest post as Portugal’s representative—told the gathered parties that he had

always insisted that it was necessary to induce the natives to work for the development of their territory. The demand for native labour, however, must be proportionate to its capacity. There were certain native races who were absolutely incapable of labour. If natives were willing to work on their own fields or to take service with individual employers, he did not think they should be compelled to work in other ways. If, however, they were entirely idle, they must somehow be persuaded to work, at any rate, for a certain definite period in the year.

His views on the matter were shared by the representatives of missionary societies with whom he had frequently discussed the question. He could not agree that all forms of persuasion, even moral persuasion, should be regarded as involving forced labour. The Director of the International Labour Office had himself stated that there was certain work to be done in native territories and that the natives must be persuaded to undertake it. He would ask Mr. Grimshaw [director of the international labor section at the ILO] whether he maintained that natives had a right to abstain from all labour. If such a right was not recognised, the question arose what form of persuasion should be brought to bear. Mr. Grimshaw agreed that the native had no right to abstain from all labour.⁶⁹

None of the commission members expressed a contrary view; “there was no question of the Commission being opposed to the encouraging of natives to work.”⁷⁰ As for forced labor practices, the commission judged that they were sometimes a disguised form of slavery to be avoided unless impossible.⁷¹

Even as Freire de Andrade struck his moralizing poses on African “idleness,” he worked energetically *sub rosa* to help shield Portugal from any unwanted scrutiny when the League received a letter—forwarded from the Antislavery and Aborigines’ Protection Society—expressing concern over labor practices in the Zambezi Valley region. The letter’s author, G. A. Norton, wrote that he had “lived and traveled all over South Africa, Rhodesia, Nyassaland and Portuguese East Africa for the last 28 years,” spending the period 1919–24 in Mozambique. Coming straight to the point, Norton stated in his opening paragraph that “there appears to be no real freedom for the natives of this territory.”⁷² Recounting a wide range of abuses—beatings of workers, sexual assault of African women, widespread forced labor—he expressed

particular concern regarding official complicity. Freire de Andrade, on receiving the letter, wrote to the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stating that while the letter contained some “great exaggerations,” it could not be dismissed out of hand. He urged “something be done” to deal with labor abuses, so as to undermine any attack on Portugal’s position on “the question of slavery.”⁷³ In response, colonial ministry officials proposed conducting an official inquiry, with “much publicity” surrounding the severe punishment of offenders, “should any be found.” The same should be conducted by the Mozambique Company’s administration, they requested, and it was to be greatly desired that all such actions be taken “before the session of the Temporary Slavery Commission and above all before the General Assembly of the League” in September 1925.⁷⁴

Portugal scrambled to defend its record against new attacks, this time from the American sociologist Edward Ross, who had traveled to Angola and Mozambique in 1924 and published a highly critical report.⁷⁵ Ross injected pointed criticisms, based on evidence he had collected on the ground, just as the Temporary Slavery Commission was holding its hearings. A defensive response came from an oblique angle, far from Geneva, Lisbon, or Mozambique. The Portuguese consul in Kobe, on reading an article Ross had written for *The Nation* (republished by the *Osaka Mainichi*, an English-language weekly), wrote a letter to the editor defending his country’s reputation. He cast doubt on the reliability of the report, suggesting that Ross’s reliance on African testimony was a defect, since, the consul pointed out, the “standard intelligence of an average African native is little better than a gorilla.” Africans, he claimed, lacked “intelligence enough to look after their own well-being,” which justified Portuguese regulations “to protect them from themselves.” Seeking to elevate Portugal’s standing, he compared Lisbon’s policies favorably to those of Ross’s homeland, where “the bars put up by certain Southern States in America, to keep Negro labour from migrating to the North, constitute a distinct encroachment on the rights of a citizen, for Negroes born in the States are American citizens.” Unlike “our repressive laws, enacted solely for the benefit of the natives themselves,” the southern states simply sought to “keep the States well supplied with labour for the cotton plantations and other works.”⁷⁶

Freire de Andrade and the company administration had, perhaps, little need to worry: none of the League members represented on the commission—Belgium, Britain, France, Italy, the Netherlands, and Portugal—was willing to commit wholeheartedly to far-reaching changes in the practice of forced labor. Britain was well aware that slaveholding persisted in parts of India and Burma; its Colonial Office was unable and unwilling to enforce complete abolition there.⁷⁷ France had yet to abolish slavery in its Moroccan protectorate, and Belgium could not claim to have eliminated all slaveholding in the Congo. Portugal itself sought to avoid or delay any scrutiny. None of the colonial representatives imagined any end to all forms of forced labor. In the end, the commission members, as Suzanne Miers puts it, “used their report to play the antislavery game for the benefit of their own countries.”⁷⁸

Back in Mozambique, it is unlikely that Ferreira knew of such game-playing, but he was aware that the League, “the highest world body,” as he described it, had “the question of native labor on the agenda.” For him, it was a matter of hard-won vindi-

cation, and he pointed out that, seven years earlier, he had predicted as “a point of faith that in the near future, the subject of native labor will have to be dealt with, by whoever has the right to do so, in its fundamental basis of justice and equality.”⁷⁹ Ferreira drew great satisfaction from knowledge of the commission’s deliberations, writing how “it was with no small pleasure that I learned that its regulations include a clause that [public] authorities should not be recruiters. I declared as much in my annual report for 1918, and made the case enough times in subsequent reports.”⁸⁰

The League’s final Convention on Slavery statement that “all forms of compulsory or forced labour should be prohibited except for essential public works and essential services” was watered down, with its assurance that member states “remain free to define what they understand by ‘compulsory labour’ and by the term ‘essential public works and services.’”⁸¹ The commission called the “obligation placed on the native to work on his own land, for his sole benefit,” a matter “in which each State would exercise its own discretion,” while acknowledging that “indirect or ‘moral’ pressure” on Africans to work for private employers might be “tantamount to compulsion.” Still, it urged no more than “prudence on the part of the administration.” Although these final terms amounted to more light than heat, the Mozambique Company responded by abolishing its native labor department, eliminating district administrators’ official responsibilities for labor conscription. Ferreira, recounting this decision, expressed an almost celebratory note, “congratulat[ing] himself for having put an end to forced labor . . . and offer[ing] respectful reverence to the Governor” who had issued the order. He referred to “the many years I had pursued a campaign against” forced labor and acknowledged his criticisms had “earned me the slur of a negrophile,” a label Ferreira accepted calmly, for “it didn’t trouble me as my conscience rested well.”⁸²

In the years immediately following the slavery convention’s adoption, British critics pushed for a second convention to address the disguised slavery of forced labor. The League delegated the task of drafting a convention to the International Labour Organization, but Belgium, France, and Portugal each worked, with success, to limit any restrictions on specific practices. The end product, the 1930 Convention on Forced Labour, contained a number of exceptions and ambiguities that reduced its effectiveness, and ratification committed the parties only to “suppress the use of forced or compulsory labour in all its forms within the shortest possible time period.”⁸³ In the end, only Britain and the Netherlands adopted it promptly. Italy waited until 1934, France until 1937. Belgium did not sign on until 1944, Portugal until 1956.⁸⁴

Individual Rights versus “the Good of the Nation”

Following the passage of the League of Nations’ 1926 Slavery Convention and the decision to close its native labor department, the Mozambique Company’s director of native affairs, António Cardoso de Serpa, fretted about how to develop a labor policy that could thread the needle between what he believed were contradictory principles. “Presently this task is quite complex: if we don’t develop our colonies, for which native labor is indispensable, the economists will come and say that we don’t have the right to keep them if we can’t make them produce the resources humanity needs; if we aim to get the native to contribute his labor to develop the territory in which he

lives, the humanitarians will come and accuse us of using a disguised form of slavery. It is not easy, then, to reconcile these two principles, so much discussed in the League of Nations.”⁸⁵ He noted in his report for 1927, however, that at a recent conference in Nairobi—attended by governors from British colonies as well as representatives from Mozambique—all had agreed that any “fit” African who “showed tendencies toward idleness should be made to understand that the government expects him to produce a certain amount of work.” Then, reflecting an apparent familiarity with the Temporary Slavery Commission proceedings, he remarked, “This way of thinking was highly praised at the League of Nations and, in my opinion, is entirely relevant in the Territory of the C.M.”⁸⁶

Cardoso de Serpa had not risen through the company ranks—from the position of mere district-level employee in 1908 to director of native affairs (later becoming secretary general and acting governor)—without a certain mastery of bureaucratic vernacular.⁸⁷ Following the unwelcome attention triggered by the Ross report and the League’s hearings, the company promoted a privately run labor recruitment association in place of a company labor department. Orders published in the company *Bulletin* carefully excluded its own employees, as public authorities, from the association’s private activity.⁸⁸ That exclusion notwithstanding, Cardoso de Serpa wrote a series of circulars and memos cataloging the instructions given to district administrators, which neatly camouflaged the coercive measures they were expected to use as being “in perfect harmony with the principles discussed and approved in the meetings held in Geneva by the League of Nations.”⁸⁹

When the Portuguese government, now under the control of finance minister and soon-to-be dictator António Salazar, issued a new labor code for its African colonies in 1928, the decree announcing it referred directly to the League, an unusual rhetorical tactic in view of Lisbon’s thorny relations with Geneva; perhaps more unusual, however, was the assertion that Portugal was a champion of Africans’ rights. Portugal’s law was not only “in harmony with the highest principles of human rights proclaimed in international Conferences and Congresses, from Vienna in 1815 to those of today’s League of Nations. It represents the continuation of the civilising mission which fundamentally guided the Government of Portugal since the fifteenth century.”⁹⁰ Claiming that Portugal’s principles had always met or exceeded those now prevailing, the 1928 code suggested that Portuguese policy had long acknowledged the “common nature, origin, and destiny of all human beings.” Having occupied the “vanguard” in the imperial past, Portugal now claimed that role for the present as well, asserting that “Europe today, turning its protective gaze toward the people of the colonial domains, is still long from reaching a balanced humanitarian and spiritual position to which . . . Portugal’s laws were subject since the beginning of its overseas activities.” Despite these lofty claims, the new labor code retained systematic forced labor at its core.

Several years later, in March 1931, Cardoso de Serpa, now company secretary general, wrote to all district administrators, notifying them of a recent report in a metropolitan news weekly that the company, as part of a strategy to compel tax payments from male residents, “imprisoned African women far from their homes, with occasional beatings.” The news piece went on to point out that such facts “could bring serious complications to the country because the League of Nations is full of

zeal concerning the well-being of natives in our colonies.”⁹¹ In their corresponding replies, most administrators frankly acknowledged detaining the female relatives of delinquent taxpayers as a standard practice, expressing little awareness of why it might be seen as a problem. One, in particular, admitting that women were imprisoned at the district center in order to ensure tax payment by their male relatives, argued directly against allowing international actors any influence. “We should not let ourselves be misled by sentimental feelings or half-baked humanitarianism. There are those in Portugal who live in much worse conditions and whoever mentions Portugal speaks of Europe as well, where many families who, not having paid their taxes or rent, are stripped of their belongings and put out in the street.”⁹² He saw no tension in linking Africans’ rights to prevailing European norms, but reflecting perhaps either a hardscrabble Depression outlook or a belief in “common human destiny,” he did not see a moral imperative to spare anyone hardship, either.⁹³

Later in the decade, following locust infestations, drought, and flooding in 1937 and 1938, the company director of native affairs developed new instructions and tactics that only thinly concealed ongoing conscription. He referred to “acts of god” and “public calamity,” evoking (if not explicitly citing) the circumstances in which the 1930 Forced Labour Convention authorized forced labor.⁹⁴ He looked with favor on any “persuasive methods” district administrators might use to get Africans to seek work and urged them not to “back away from the orders and other methods which might be necessary to force [Africans] to uphold [labor] contracts.”⁹⁵ In the coming years, the native affairs department repeatedly referred to the 1930 Convention as it sought to euphemize forced labor practices as consistent with the convention’s principles.⁹⁶

In the midst of World War II, the company’s senior administrators in Mozambique made the case for ramped-up forced labor, in view of the “present emergency.” “That we are at the present moment facing an act of God cannot be doubted. That we are victims of one of the greatest cataclysms which might come to conquer Humanity, as is war, visiting its economic flux on the Portuguese Nation, also cannot be doubted.” Even the Geneva principles, expressed in the 1930 Forced Labour Convention, “do not scruple in permitting forced labor to prevent famine.”⁹⁷ Noting the passage of a recent law in Southern Rhodesia authorizing forced labor, the authors of the 1942 report made their intent clear: “All must come together to put the specter of famine among the natives to flight . . . We shall force the native to cultivate rice. The authorities lack neither the force of law nor the force of reason. If ‘in the heat of battle you do not clean your weapons,’ as the saying goes, even less can one cross one’s arms in the face of a threat that menaces all.”⁹⁸ The final recommendations left little doubt of what was to come: “Hands to work and seed to earth, for the good of the Nation.” The last phrase, *à bem da nação*, the Salazar regime’s all-purpose salutation, more and more commonly used throughout the 1930s, signaled a ritual recognition of the dictatorship’s authority and suggested that any individual interest must be subordinated to that of the nation, and in the broader imperial context that Africans’ role was to serve metropolitan imperatives.⁹⁹ Africans’ rights would be plowed under, the better to nourish empire’s strength.

Conclusion: The View of the Men in the Middle

From their middle-ground position, some colonial administrators derived their critiques and objections from logic and morality, but this had little enduring effect.¹⁰⁰ In the short term, Portugal was much like its counterparts, who made no significant move to end forced labor until after World War II. Administrators' language reflected prevailing discourse and mode of thought, according to which notions of Africans' rights were thin and fragmented. The postwar period saw a splitting of the imperial pantheon, with France and Britain moving with surprising rapidity to end forced labor, and what is more, soon recognizing a right to sovereignty.¹⁰¹ Portugal, with the dictator António Salazar firmly in control, made no such moves, and in a domestic landscape bereft of political rights of expression or association for either citizen or subject, there was little possibility for a similar discourse on rights, let alone any analogous institutional change.

In the colonies, administrators' objections were at times surely a matter of self-interest. Aware that abuses could provoke flight or other disruptions to smooth colonial governance, for which they themselves might be blamed, they aimed to preempt any criticism. At other times, however, their outspokenness seemed also a matter of self-concern, with some administrators disgusted at being implicated in a "degrading" system that stole Africans' labor and ignored their humanity.¹⁰² Owing to their position in the middle, poised between African subjects and colonial demands, local administrators often had a grasp not only on how best to meet their "recruitment" quotas but also on the broader consequences of doing so. They warned their superiors of worker flight and uncooperative chiefs, as well as of negative repercussions that might follow from company policy—falling tax revenue, breakdown in chiefly authority, and widespread social disruption.¹⁰³ These men saw a brittleness in the colonial system, and so they urged caution and moderation even as they fulfilled conscription orders. None questioned Africans' "need" for discipline and for colonial authority, but a number expressed an ambivalence of mind, questioning the morality and the logic of the system they were helping to maintain.

Ferreira's letters and reports, in particular, reveal that the international debate over what forms of labor were considered acceptable in a European-dominated Africa had not only circulated between London, Lisbon, and Geneva but also extended to the backwater of the Mozambique–Southern Rhodesian borderlands. His words suggest that he largely shared the principles behind the system he helped operate, above all with regard to supposed African inferiority and incompetence when it came to making decisions about work. Yet if those participating in the conversation agreed on the underlying principles, the very ambiguity contained therein made it difficult to maintain coherence as the conversation stretched out over time and space. Consensus there may have been on the supposed benefit of European colonial rule, yet no such consensus existed on how such benefit should be made concrete, or to what extent it might justify coercion and brutality. Ferreira's was the most consistently dissident voice. Freire de Andrade, in contrast, personified ambivalence and ambiguity. Early in his career he admitted to a lack of fairness in the company's contracts, even as he imposed them. After his ascent from a middle-ground position to representation of

Portugal in Geneva, however, his view became more two-dimensional. No longer concerned with African rights, he demonstrated little of his earlier openness. In Geneva, defending Portugal's interests before the world, he showed only complacency about the coercion necessary for "persuading" Africans to work for settlers or for the state.

Such complacency overlooked the ambiguity and contradiction that robbed the principles underpinning colonial rule in Africa of any logical consistency. In the early stage of imperial expansion in Africa, those principles did not require sturdiness, and thus the ambiguity could remain. But beginning in the interwar period and more so at midcentury, they became burdened with a moral weight that exceeded their carrying capacity, and the resulting strain began to show above all in how local administrators tasked with the daily business of empire wrote about it. It was under this strain that the men in the middle used the language of rights, though only sparingly. Rights language surfaces in their writing largely when their sense of self-proprietty was at risk, when their actions or those of the people with whom they identified (such as the white settlers to whom they supplied African conscripts) seemed inconsonant with the norms of "civilized" behavior. Straitjacketed within the discourse of the civilizing mission—and its underlying assumption of an inherent, and thus nonnegotiable, inequality—the men in the middle largely lacked the language to express their misgivings in any other than negative terms. They might attack the inhumanity of employers' (and even their fellow administrators') actions, but absent a lexicon describing broadly held rights, Africans' interests could be defended only obliquely, if at all.¹⁰⁴

NOTES

Thanks to the editors of this dossier, who offered a truly constructive critique of the argument here, and also to Fred Cooper, who pointed out to me that I was giving short shrift to some of my more interesting evidence.

1. Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique, Fundo da Companhia de Moçambique (hereafter AHM/FCM), Secretaria Geral/Processos Confidenciais/Caixa 12 (hereafter SGPC/Cx.): Director Native Labor Department to Agent Macequece, December 31, 1923.

2. AHM/FCM/SGPC/Cx. 12: District Administrator Chemba to Director Native Labor Department, December 23, 1923. Though he noted that the farmers' treatment of the workers was illegal, it was not the violations themselves that troubled him but rather the "bad impression" he believed they made.

3. AHM/FCM/SGPC/Cx. 12: District Administrator Manica to Governor, January 22, 1924.

4. AHM/FCM/SGPC/Cx. 12: Circular January 4, 1924.

5. AHM/FCM/SGPC/Cx. 12: Governor to Managing Director, February 22, 1924.

6. AHM/FCM/Secretaria Geral/Relatórios/Cx. 112 (hereafter SGR/Cx.): Native Labor Department Annual Report 1920, SGR/2244/01, 124.

7. A long but necessarily incomplete group of references to work on forced labor includes the following: James Duffy, *Portuguese Africa* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959); Leroy Vail and Landeg White, *Capitalism and Colonialism in Mozambique: A Study of Quelimane District* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980); Jeanne Marie Penvenne, *African Workers and Colonial Racism: Mozambican Strategies and Struggles in Lourenço Marques, 1877–1962*

(Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1995); Luís António Covane, *O trabalho migratório e a agricultura no sul de Moçambique (1920–1992)* (Maputo: Promédia, 2001); Jeremy Ball, “‘The Colossal Lie’: The Sociedade Agrícola do Cassequel and Portuguese Colonial Labor Policy in Angola, 1899–1977” (Ph.D. diss., UCLA, 2003); Charles Van Onselen, *Chibaro* (London: Pluto Press, 1977); Roger G. Thomas, “Forced Labour in British West Africa: The Case of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, 1906–1927,” *Journal of African History* 14, no. 1 (1973): 79–103; Justin Willis, “‘Men on the Spot,’ Labor, and the Colonial State in British East Africa: The Mombasa Water Supply, 1911–1917,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 28, no. 1 (1995): 25–48; David Johnson, “Settler Farmers and Coerced African Labour in Southern Rhodesia, 1936–46,” *Journal of African History* 33, no. 1 (1992): 111–28; Helen Bradford, “Getting Away with Murder: ‘Mealie Kings,’ the State and Foreigners in the Eastern Transvaal, c. 1918–1950,” in *Apartheid’s Genesis, 1935–1962*, ed. Philip Bonner, Peter Delius, and Deborah Posel (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1993), 96–125; Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, *Le Congo au temps des grandes compagnies concessionnaires, 1898–1930* (Paris: Mouton, 1972); Babacar Fall, *Le travail forcé en Afrique occidentale française* (Paris: Karthala, 1993).

8. For more on the League and other actions, see Suzanne Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem* (Walnut Creek, Calif.: Altamira Press, 2003); Joel Quirk, “The Anti-Slavery Project: Linking the Historical and the Contemporary,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (2006): 565–98.

9. Frederick Cooper, “From Free Labor to Family Allowances: Labor and African Society in Colonial Discourse,” *American Ethnologist* 16, no. 4 (1989): 749.

10. *Ibid.*, 750.

11. Bonny Ibhawoh, *Imperialism and Human Rights: Colonial Discourses of Rights and Liberties in African History* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007), esp. 36–54; see also Cooper’s afterword to this dossier.

12. Thomas Spear delivers a masterful analysis of research in this field in “Neo-Traditionalism and the Limits of Invention in British Colonial Africa,” *Journal of African History* 44, no. 1 (2003): 3–27. Semakula Kiwanuka offers a useful comparative discussion in “Colonial Policies and Administrations in Africa: The Myths of the Contrasts,” *African Historical Studies* 3, no. 2 (1970): 295–315.

13. Daniel R. Maul makes this point in “The International Labor Organization and the Struggle against Forced Labour from 1919 to the Present,” *Labor History* 48, no. 4 (2007): 482.

14. The phrasing here comes from David Anderson’s essay on corporal punishment in British colonial military contexts, “The ‘Rod of Empire’: The Debate over Corporal Punishment in the British African Colonial Forces, 1888–1946,” *Journal of African History* 35, no. 2 (1994): 201–16.

15. This ambiguity—or, perhaps, hypocrisy—recapitulated that of the earlier postemancipation era. Frederick Cooper has pointed to this parallel, and Thomas Holt has written on the earlier British efforts to impose labor discipline on freed slaves. See Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832–1938* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); Cooper, “From Free Labor”; and Cooper, “Conditions Analogous to Slavery: Imperialism and Free Labor Ideology in Africa,” in Cooper, Thomas C. Holt, and Rebecca J. Scott, *Beyond Slavery: Explorations of Race, Labor, and Citizenship in Postemancipation Societies* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), esp. 113–26.

16. *Ibid.*, 120.

17. This literature is vast. Allen Isaacman’s overview is magisterial: “Peasants and Rural Social Protest in Africa,” in Frederick Cooper et al., eds., *Confronting Historical Paradigms: Peasants,*

Labor, and the Capitalist World System in Africa and Latin America (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993).

18. Henry Nevinson, *A Modern Slavery* (New York: Harper, 1906); John Harris, *Portuguese Slavery: Britain's Dilemma* (London: Methuen, 1913); Cooper, "From Free Labor"; Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century*; Kevin Grant, *A Civilized Savagery: Britain and the New Slaveries in Africa, 1884–1926* (London: Routledge, 2005); Ibhawoh, *Imperialism and Human Rights*.

19. From an ethics standpoint, their positions were often incoherent in that they made both consequentialist and deontological arguments, but in so doing they left little room for any defense of forced labor's violation of Africans' rights.

20. Bonny Ibhawoh notes how imperial powers' recognition of African rights, including the right not to be enslaved, amounted at times to little more than a justification for conquest. The argument here does not question Ibhawoh's assertion that we can trace an emergent category of human rights to this limited recognition; rather it illustrates that historical actors did not use the language of rights, and the sphere in which Africans' rights had to be respected was exceedingly small. Cf. Ibhawoh, *Imperialism and Human Rights*, esp. chap. 1.

21. Gregory Mann, "What Was the *Indigénat*? The 'Empire of Law' in French West Africa," *Journal of African History* 50, no. 3 (2009): 331–53; Isabelle Merle, "De la 'légalisation' de la violence en context colonial," *Politix* 17, no. 66 (2004): 137–62; Bridget O'Laughlin, "Class and the Customary: The Ambiguous Legacy of the *Indigenato* in Mozambique," *African Affairs* 99, no. 394 (2000): 5–42; Eric Allina, "'Captive to Civilisation': Law, Labor and Violence in Colonial Mozambique" (unpublished).

22. Exempt from the *indigenato* were *assimilados*, Africans judged to have assimilated to European values, as demonstrated in their use of the Portuguese language, conversion to Christianity, and adoption of European styles of dress and other visible cultural practices.

23. António Enes, *Moçambique: Relatório apresentado ao governo* (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional 1971 [1893]), 70–71. The apostles phrase has been widely used. William G. Clarence-Smith deploys it in a similar context in his *Third Portuguese Empire: A Study in Economic Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 52.

24. Article 1 of the Labor Code, cited in Joaquim Moreira da Silva Cunha, *O trabalho indígena: Estudo de direito colonial* (Lisbon: Agência Geral das Colónias, 1949), 147. The code applied to all indigenous peoples, not only Africans.

25. AHM/FCM/SGR/Cx. 223: Manica District Annual Report 1897, SGR/4889/01, 13.

26. The Gaza state did not fall until late 1895, and some *prazeros* submitted to Portuguese authority only several years later. The Makombe, rulers of the Barué region in the upper Zambezi Valley, retained a good deal of autonomy until 1917, when a widespread but ultimately failed rebellion against the Portuguese ended with the firm stamp of colonial power. See Allen F. Isaacman and Barbara S. Isaacman, *The Tradition of Resistance in Mozambique: Anti-Colonial Activity in the Zambesi Valley, 1850–1921* (London: Heinemann, 1976); René Pélissier, *Naissance du Mozambique: Résistance et révoltes anticoloniales (1854–1918)*, vol. 2. (Orgeval: Pélissier, 1984).

27. Barry Neil-Tomlinson, "The Mozambique Chartered Company, 1892–1910" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1982). Well-founded insecurity about the solidity of Portugal's territorial claims in Africa against imperial rivals fueled a nativist imperial lobby in Lisbon. Eric Axelson, *Portugal and the Scramble for Africa, 1875–1891* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1967); Malyn Newitt, *A History of Mozambique* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1995), chaps. 14–15. Leroy Vail discusses the politics surrounding the national identity of the

Company and its investors in “Mozambique’s Chartered Companies: The Rule of the Feeble,” *Journal of African History* 17, no. 3 (1976): 389–416.

28. The British South Africa Company comes close, but it ruled the territory later known as Southern Rhodesia only until 1923. There were others, though none had as much autonomy or lasted much past the conquest years: the Imperial British East Africa Company, the Royal Niger Company, the German East Africa Company. There were also France’s decision to rent out nearly 700,000 square kilometers of central Africa to concessionary companies and King Leopold II’s vast private fiefdom in the present-day Democratic Republic of the Congo.

29. *Boletim da Companhia de Moçambique* 10 (May 16, 1907). Other work on forced labor in colonial Mozambique includes Vail and White, *Capitalism and Colonialism*; Allen Isaacman, *Cotton Is the Mother of Poverty: Peasants, Work, and Rural Struggle in Colonial Mozambique, 1938–1961* (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1995); Penvenne, *African Workers*; Joel Maurício das Neves Tembe, “Economy, Society and Labour Migration in Central Mozambique, 1930–c.1965: A Case Study of Manica Province” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1998); Covane, *O trabalho migratório*; and Arlindo Gonçalo Chilundu, *Os camponeses e os caminhos de ferro e estradas em Nampula (1900–1961)* (Maputo: Promédia, 2001).

30. For the longer history of imagined wealth in what would become central Mozambique, see Terry H. Elkiss, *The Quest for an African Eldorado: Sofala, Southern Zambezia, and the Portuguese, 1500–1865* (Waltham, Mass.: Crossroads Press, 1981).

31. For more on this early history of white settlement in central Mozambique, see Neil-Tomlinson, “Mozambique Chartered Company,” chap. 3.

32. The company’s labor regime was based on fictional “contracts” that workers neither saw nor signed. Many of the labor department’s regulations were similarly fictional, most especially those regarding wage rates and payments. This and its implications are discussed more fully in Eric Allina, *Slavery by Any Other Name: African Life under Company Rule in Colonial Mozambique* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012), chap. 1.

33. Such payments, initially informally made, were later officially authorized and incorporated into regular district-level administrative practice. AHM/FCM/SGR/Cx. 1: Governor Annual Report 1901, SGR/002/01, 19; Cx. 256: Moribane District Report June 1898; Cx. 2: Governor Annual Report 1905, SGR/006/01, 46; Cx. 5: Governor Annual Report 1911, SGR/011/01, 20; SGP/Cx. 74: Circular 29/2010 September 1, 1916.

34. AHM/FCM/SGR/Cx. 113: Native Labor Department Annual Report 1926, SGR/2268/01, 18, 20–161.

35. *Boletim* 14 (17 July 1911), Order 3216, Art. 15(2); AHM/FCM/SG/Correspondência/Cx. 178 (hereafter SGC): Circular 2, February 2, 1920. The company had first attempted to impose a year-long contract in 1917 but suspended its implementation when the Barué uprising broke out early that year. AHM/FCM/SG/Processos/Cx. 70 [hereafter SGP]: Circular 46/2739, December 9, 1916; SGC/Cx. 177: Circular 7, January 30, 1918.

36. AHM/FCM/SGP/Cx. 72: D. A. Mocoque to D. A. Govuro, EXTRA November 27, 1909; SGR/Cx. 235: Manica District Annual Report 1912, SGR/5032/01, 140.

37. AHM/FCM/SGP/Cx. 71: Governor to Managing Director, no. 1441 November 3, 1910.

38. AHM/FCM/Associação de Trabalho Indígena/Correspondência Expedida/Cx. 1 [hereafter ATICE]: ATI Director to D. Adelaide Faria, February 21, 1927.

39. AHM/FCM/SGR/Cx. 226: Manica District Report June 1904, “Secção de Negócios Indígenas,” SGR/4935/01, 9.

40. AHM/FCM/SGR/Cx. 234: Manica District Annual Report 1911, SGR/5025/01, 155.
41. AHM/FCM/SGP/Cx. 69: Inspeção de Finanças e Exploração to Governor, no. 378, 28 August 1924, 5.
42. AHM/FCM/SGR/Cx. 223: Manica Report March, April, and May 1900, SGR/4911/01, 10.
43. AHM/FCM/SGR/Cx. 223: Manica Report March, April, and May 1900, SGR/4911/01, 10.
44. AHM/FCM/SGP/Cx. 74: Fuga de Indígenas para o Território Ingéz, D. A. Manica to Governor, no. 73, December 18, 1901, 5. Emphasis in original.
45. AHM/FCM/SGR/Cx. 256: Moribane District Report March 1902, 16.
46. As such, it is possible, even likely, that some who objected did so purely out of self-interest, rather than out of any concern for Africans. Nonetheless, those who criticized the policy most strongly and over longer periods of time appear to have transcended narrow self-interest.
47. AHM/FCM/SGR/Cx. 256: Moribane District Report March 1902.
48. AHM/FCM/SGP/Cx. 71: D.A. Gorongosa to Governor, September 30, 1909.
49. I take the phrase from Willis, “‘Men on the Spot.’”
50. Any African who left the company’s territory without explicit permission from the administrator of his home district was guilty of “clandestine emigration,” punishable by a sentence of forced labor for up to twenty-four months. In the southern reaches of company territory, thousands of men and adolescent boys nonetheless journeyed, illegally, to work in South Africa; in neighboring districts controlled directly by the Portuguese colonial state, their counterparts did so legally, under an agreement between Portugal and South Africa. Studies of this migratory flow include Ruth First, *Black Gold: The Mozambican Miner, Proletarian and Peasant* (Sussex: Harvester, 1983); Patrick Harries, *Work, Culture, and Identity: Migrant Laborers in Mozambique and South Africa, c. 1860–1910* (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1994); T. Dunbar Moodie and Vivian Ndatshé, *Going for Gold: Men, Mines, and Migration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).
51. AHM/FCM/SGP/Cx. 70: D. A. Moribane to D. A. Manica no. 116, December 28, 1916.
52. AHM/FCM/SGP/Cx. 70: D. A. Moribane to D. A. Manica no. 153, July 10, 1919. For more on the rebellion, see Isaacman and Isaacman, *The Tradition of Resistance*; Pélissier, *Naissance du Mozambique*.
53. AHM/FCM/SGP/Cx. 70: D. A. Mossurize to Governor, no. 187, June 12, 1919; D. A. Mocoque to D. A. Govuro, no. 319, September 9, 1919.
54. Companhia de Moçambique, *Handbook of the Mozambique Company* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1893), 17.
55. AHM/FCM/SGP/Cx. 70: D. A. Moribane to D. A. Manica no. 153, July 10, 1919.
56. AHM/FCM/SGR/Cx. 257: Moribane District Annual Report 1924, SGR/5559/01, “Mão d’Obra”; Cx. 258: Moribane District Report 2nd Trimester 1925, SGR/5561/01, “Mão de Obra.”
57. Governor General de Coppet to Minister, January 25, 1937, K 8 (1), Archives du Sénégal, as quoted in Cooper, “From Free Labor,” 752.
58. AHM/FCM/SGR/Cx. 239: Manica District Report 1st Semester 1920, SGR/5069/01, attached report from Moribane.
59. The phrase was included in the text of the Treaty of St. Germain-en-Laye and later became part of League of Nations debates on eliminating slavery.
60. Nevinson, *Modern Slavery*; Harris, *Portuguese Slavery*. Catherine Higgs explores the wider history of English concern over Portuguese labor practices, especially in the production of cocoa

destined for the chocolate maker Cadbury, in *Chocolate Islands: Cocoa, Slavery, and Colonial Africa* (Athens, Oh.: Ohio University Press, 2012).

61. A. A. Freire de Andrade, *Rapport présenté au ministre des colonies, à propos du livre Portugaise Slavery, du missionnaire John Harris* (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional, 1914); “Algumas observações ao relatório do Professor Ross,” *Boletim da Agência Geral das Colônias* 2, no. 7 (1926): 149–62; Ernesto Vasconcelos, “Os portugueses não são incapazes colonizadores,” *Boletim da Agência Geral das Colônias* 2, no. 7 (1926): 3–5.

62. Oury was more than a mere director, rather the company’s controlling shareholder. For more on Oury, his role in the company, and his intricate web of investments overall, see Landeg White, *Bridging the Zambesi: A Colonial Folly* (London: Macmillan, 1993), esp. chap. 2.

63. AHM/FCM/Administração de Lisboa/Processos/Cx. 28 [hereafter ALP]: Libert Oury to Managing Director, April 9, 1919.

64. AHM/FCM/ALP/Cx. 28: Libert Oury to A. A. Freire de Andrade, April 8, 1919, attached report from Inspector General; Inspector General, “Report of a trip of inspection to Sena, 1914,” 16.

65. League of Nations, Note of the Secretary General, September 27, 1924, enclosing “The Question of Slavery,” J. Chagas to League of Nations Secretary General, September 23, 1924, 11.

66. “Question of Slavery,” 51, 16.

67. *Ibid.*, 22–23.

68. League of Nations, “Report Presented to the Assembly by the Sixth Committee,” September 24, 1926, 2.

69. League of Nations, Temporary Slavery Commission, “Minutes of the Second Session,” July 21, 1925, 78. My thanks to Sandrine Kott, who helped me correctly identify Grimshaw’s position at the International Labour Organization.

70. League of Nations, Temporary Slavery Commission, “Minutes of the Second Session,” July 21, 1925, 77.

71. See Miers’s discussion of these negotiations among committee members, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century*, 100–114.

72. AHM/FCM/SGP/Cx. 733: G. A. Norton to Anti-Slavery Society, October 17, 1924 (copy).

73. AHM/FCM/SGP/Cx. 733: Director of the Eastern Colonies to Minister of the Colonies (copy), March 7, 1925.

74. *Ibid.*

75. Edward Alsworth Ross, *Report on Employment of Native Labor in Portuguese Africa* (New York: Abbott Press, 1925). For more on the report and its reception, see James Duffy, *A Question of Slavery* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967); Eric Allina, “Fallacious Mirrors: Colonial Anxiety and Images of African Labor in Mozambique, ca. 1929,” *History in Africa* 24 (1997): 9–52.

76. AHM/FCM/ALP/Cx. 29: Managing Director to Government Committee, November 10, 1925, attaching copy of “The Case for Portugal,” F. S. Souza to the Editor of the *Osaka Mainichi*, 12 September 1925. Regarding comments on southern states’ efforts to restrict African American labor mobility, see Jay R. Mandle, “Black Economic Entrapment after Emancipation in the United States,” in *The Meaning of Freedom: Economics, Politics, and Culture after Slavery*, ed. Frank McGlynn and Seymour Drescher (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992), 69–84. Several months later, in February 1926, Souza followed up with a second letter to the editor (also forwarded to the company administration), in which he revealed his particular interest: “I believe

we must give the Japanese people a good impression of our colonial administration, seeing that the Japanese are, today, taking great interest in the development of their trade with East Africa, so much that they will shortly open a steamship line to East Africa, with ports of call including ours in Mozambique.” ALP/Cx. 29: Portuguese Consul, Kobe, to Managing Director, February 20, 1926.

77. The history of British foot-dragging in South Asia is brilliantly told by Indrani Chatterjee in “Abolition by Denial: The South Asian Example,” in *Abolition and its Aftermath in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia*, ed. Gwyn Campbell (London: Routledge, 2005), 150–68.

78. Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century*, 110.

79. AHM/FCM/SGR/Cx. 258: Moribane District Report 3rd Semester 1925, SGR/5562/01, 9.

80. AHM/FCM/SGR/Cx. 258: Moribane District Report 3rd Semester 1925, SGR/5562/01, 8.

81. League of Nations Temporary Slavery Commission, Letter from the Chairman of the Commission to the President of the Council and Report of the Commission, July 25, 1925, 13.

82. AHM/FCM/SGR/Cx. 258: Moribane District Annual Report 1926, SGR/5568/01, 33.

83. International Labour Organization, Forced Labour Convention, Art. 1(1).

84. Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century*, 148.

85. AHM/FCM/SGR/Cx. 114: Native Affairs Department Annual Report 1927, SGR/2269/01, 3.

86. AHM/FCM/SGR/Cx. 114: Native Affairs Department Annual Report 1927, SGR/2269/01, 12.

87. AHM/FCM/SGR/Cx. 230: Manica District Annual Report 1908, SGR/4978/01, 250; Cx. 240: D. A. Manica to Governor, confidential, November 2, 1938, attached to Supplementary Report to the Manica District Inspection, December 1938, SGR/5126/01.

88. *Boletim* 16 (August 16, 1926), Order 5087, August 3, 1926; AHM/FCM/SGR/Cx. 114: Native Affairs Administration Annual Report 1927, SGR/2269/01, 5.

89. AHM/FCM/SGP/Cx. 68: Director Native Affairs to Acting Governor, October 21, 1927.

90. Suplemento ao *Boletim* 6 (March 19, 1929), Ministério das Colónias Decreto 16:199, December 6, 1928.

91. AHM/FCM/SGPC/Cx. 28: Secretary General to District Administrators, no. 5a21, March 3, 1931.

92. AHM/FCM/SGPC/Cx. 28: D. A. Govuro to Secretary General, March 10, 1931.

93. The phrase comes from the 1928 labor code. Suplemento ao *Boletim* 6 (March 19, 1929), Ministério das Colónias Decreto 16: 199, December 6, 1928.

94. AHM/FCM/Negócios Indígenas/Processos/Cx. 26 (hereafter NIP): Native Affairs Circular-note 1, March 4, 1938; Circular note 1, January 24, 1939.

95. AHM/FCM/NIP/Cx. 26: Native Affairs Circular-note 2, October 12, 1938.

96. One official, though, made clear his contempt for the convention, writing that France, Portugal, and Belgium had had the “good sense” not to ratify it, calling its supporters “puritanical theorists.” AHM/FCM/NIP/Cx. 32: Report of Observations on Native Labor, July 1942, 7.

97. AHM/FCM/NIP/Cx. 32: Report of Observations on Native Labor, July 1942, 14.

98. For the wartime resurgence of forced labor in Southern Rhodesia, see Kenneth P. Vickery, “The Second World War Revival of Forced Labor in the Rhodesias,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 22, no. 3 (1989): 423–37; Johnson, “Settler Farmers.”

99. Salazar’s authoritarian rule was not comparable to that of the Nazi regime’s, but the use of *à bem da nação* had its German parallel in “Heil Hitler” as a sign of obedience and political

conformity. The Portuguese phrase is depersonalized, reflecting the lack of a cult of personality surrounding Salazar, who was no charismatic leader of the masses. Nor was he fascist (despite the frequency with which the term is used in the scholarly literature) in the strict sense of the term, given that he was suspicious of the population at large and preferred that they remain politically demobilized.

100. Even when criticism came from a more influential and public figure, there was little change. Henrique Galvão, a former governor in Angola and senior figure in Portugal's colonial establishment, wrote a report condemning Portuguese colonial labor policy and submitted it to the National Assembly in 1947. The only meaningful outcome was that Galvão's political career was over: his support was suppressed and he was later jailed, yet for his involvement in a short-lived coup rather than for having spoken out. Douglas Wheeler, "The Galvão Report on Forced Labor (1947) in Historical Context and Perspective: Trouble-Shooter Who Was 'Trouble,'" *Portuguese Studies Review* 16, no. 1 (2009): 112–52.

101. For this history, see especially Cooper, "Conditions Analogous."

102. AHM/FCM/SGR/Cx. 234: Manica District Annual Report 1911, SGR/5025/01, 155.

103. I discuss these and other effects of the company's labor regime in *Slavery by Any Other Name*.

104. I am mindful that they may not have aimed to do so. As much as they complained and criticized, some were also remarkably callous.