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*Land and Colonialism in Mozambique – Policies and Practice in Inhambane, c.1900–c.1940**

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The land question has been one of the key topics in the historiography of colonial eastern and southern Africa. With a few exceptions, in relation to colonial Mozambique this topic has by and large been overlooked. Little is therefore known on how African use and access to land was progressively curtailed in the first decades of the twentieth century, or how Portuguese colonial land policies such as ‘native’ reserves and a growing settler presence impacted on the lives of rural dwellers. This article surveys the key land policies formulated both in Lisbon and in Mozambique between 1900 and 1940 and places them in their particular historical context, in the process unveiling the tensions and debates that helped shape them. It then evaluates the practice of such policies in the province of Inhambane, where different types of land struggles spanning contemporary Portuguese rule in the region have been documented. By examining these struggles alongside pivotal themes in the history of southern Mozambique, this article makes the case for a closer examination of the land question in the history of Portuguese colonialism in Mozambique.

I. Introduction

With a few exceptions, the historiography of contemporary colonial Mozambique has by and large overlooked the consequences of colonial rule in the territory in terms of rural land use and access for African populations, particularly in the period before European settlement started in earnest in the late 1940s.¹ This neglect can be explained to a considerable extent by the fact that in this period local communities were shielded from significant alienation by such factors as low population densities, scattered African settlements, an abundance of land and an embryonic European administration and agricultural sector. This contributed to a marked ineffectiveness in government policies. Labour and tax policies were largely instrumental in the introduction of colonial rule in the lives of rural dwellers and these, together with continuing occupation wars, were thought to be the main reasons behind resistance in that period. In this context, it is not surprising how little scholarly attention has been given to the formation of land policies in the colony such as those regulating African

*Archival research for this article was conducted in the *Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino* (AHU), the *Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo* (ANTT), both in Lisbon, and the *Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique* (AHM), in Maputo. Support for this research was granted by the *Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia*. I thank Nuno Domingos, Victor Pereira, Isabel Corrêa da Silva and Elisa Lopes da Silva for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article.

¹ Exceptions to this trend are the works of Zamparoni, Negrão, Neves and Soares, all focusing on different regions of Mozambique: V. Zamparoni, ‘Entre ‘narros’ & ‘mulungos’: colonialismo e paisagem social em Lourenço Marques, c.1890–c.1940’, (PhD thesis, University of São Paulo, 1998); J. Negrão, *Cem anos de economia da família rural africana* (Maputo, Promedia, 2001); J. M. das Neves, ‘Economy, society and labour migration in central Mozambique, 1930 – c.1965: A Case Study of Manica Province’, PhD thesis, University of London, 1998); P.R. Soares, ‘O caju e o regime das propriedades no Mossuril entre 1930 e 1950’, *Arquivo*, 4 (1988), pp. 91–104. For an analysis of the land question in Mozambique in the late colonial period and after independence, see M.L. Bowen, *The State against the Peasantry: Rural Struggles in Colonial and Postcolonial Mozambique* (Charlottesville and London, University Press of Virginia, 2000).

ownership of land, 'native' reserves and landlord–tenant relations, as well as their role in the Portuguese colonial project.

More careful attention to previously analysed material as well as new sources, however, presents a different picture. In this article, the author hopes to contribute to the timely effort of disaggregating the 'native population'. This article also aims to help shed light on the extent of the transformations taking place and the complexity of power relations in rural colonial Mozambique, by investigating the extent to which Portuguese rule transformed African peasants not simply into labourers but also into squatters and 'native' reserve dwellers, living in often very different social and economic circumstances.² It will first examine the social and historical conditions behind the creation of land policies for Mozambique between 1900 and 1940. Special attention will be paid to the main legislation in this field and to the evolution of policies in the context of different political regimes. The practical effects of those land policies will then be evaluated in a specific province, Inhambane – particularly known because of labour migration of its populations to South Africa – where different types of land struggles spanning contemporary Portuguese rule in the region have been documented but have not been included in a broader interpretation of the political economy of the province.

II. Colonial Land Legislation and Policy for Mozambique

At the dawn of the twentieth century, as authorities in Lisbon pondered how best to expand the Portuguese presence in the African continent, land, tax, and labour policies were regarded as essential instruments in the promotion of economic development in the colonies. Earlier colonial land legislation, such as Sá da Bandeira's 1856 decree, failed to create the secure environment officials had hoped for.³ The impact of Portuguese colonial rule was then concentrated in coastal areas and along commercial routes, but the lives of many Africans were nonetheless considerably transformed by the slave trade, officially abolished in 1836 but still practised after that date. The growing European competition for spheres of influence and resources in Africa led to the 1884–1885 Berlin Conference and several bilateral agreements, following which the Portuguese felt that their position in Angola and Mozambique, based in historical rights, had been seriously undermined.⁴ They were humiliated by the British *ultimatum* of 1890, in which the British government effectively secured the frontiers of the future Rhodesia and halted Portuguese ambitions to expand their territory from Angola to Mozambique. The British action made them aware that a nominal sovereignty in Africa would be insufficient either to ensure control over expanding markets, or to safeguard national interests in the face of the ever-present competition of other European powers in the region. Against this background, the Portuguese constitutional monarchy, struggling with an internal political and financial crisis, took several steps to consolidate its rule in the colonies. Military campaigns and

2 On the call for a disaggregation of the 'native population' in studies of colonial Africa, see E. Allina-Pisano, 'Resistance and the Social History of Africa', *Journal of Social History*, 37, 1 (2003), p. 189.

3 See *Carta de Lei* of 21 August 1856, *Diário do Governo* n.º 202, 27 August 1856. See also E. dos Santos, *Regimes de terras no ex-ultramar português: Evolução da política legislativa até 1945* (Lisbon, UTL-ISCS, 2004). On the role of Sá da Bandeira in relaunching the Portuguese imperial project in the African colonies and on the state of Portuguese presence in the region in the nineteenth century, see V. Alexandre, 'O império português (1825–1890): ideologia e economia', *Análise Social* XXXVIII, 169 (2004), pp. 959–979 and V. Alexandre, 'Ruptura e estruturação de um novo império' in F. Bethencourt and K. Chaudhuri (eds), *História da expansão portuguesa*, Vol. 4 (Lisbon, Temas e Debates, 1998), pp. 85–88.

4 M. Newitt, *A History of Mozambique* (London, C. Hurst & Co., 1997), pp. 341–342.

battles ensued in the southern part of Mozambique in the late 1890s and elsewhere in the territory in the coming years to overthrow local chiefdoms.⁵ Newly appointed colonial officials were entrusted with reorganising administrative structures and with creating the conditions to attract investors and launch economic activities, including plantation agriculture.⁶

To a considerable extent, the situation in much of Mozambique in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century mirrored that of southern Portugal, where vast areas of *incultos*, or unfarmed land, dominated the landscape. While deploring Portugal's economic backwardness, several prominent statesmen and personalities devised plans to tackle what was perceived to be a major national crisis, suggesting measures such as a strong intervention in property relations and the opening up of the south for so-called internal colonisation.⁷ In a clear manifestation of the strong link between the internal situation of Portugal and that of its African territories, for which similar solutions were envisioned over time, many people also dreaded the possibility that Mozambique would be left in the hands of absentee landlords similar to those who dominated unproductive *latifúndios* or large estates in the south of Portugal.⁸ Some also greatly feared what they regarded as the 'denationalisation' of Mozambique, in other words the increasing power of commercial interests of Portugal's rivals in the region, considered a threat to Portuguese sovereignty. The lack of funds to govern Mozambique had already pushed Portuguese authorities to agree to controversial concessions in the provinces of Manica and Sofala, Niassa and Zambezia to mostly foreign-owned commercial companies.⁹ It was felt that an adequate land regime would facilitate European settlement, promote investment and ensure Portuguese sovereignty in Mozambique.

The intense debate that followed the presentation of a draft land bill to the lower house of Parliament (*Câmara dos Deputados*), in 1901, epitomises the complex issues at stake at the time. Presented only a few months after Overseas Affairs Minister Teixeira de Sousa took office, the 1901 draft was part of a comprehensive package of measures designed to tackle perceived problems in the colonies, partly brought about by British and German competition for Angola and Mozambique.¹⁰ When introducing the draft, the Minister explicitly stated that its main goal was to encourage potential settlers and investors to obtain land in the colonies while avoiding 'denationalisation'. A renewed version of the emphyteutic system used throughout the Portuguese empire, according to which freehold rested with the state and the right to use was transferred to a lessee in exchange for an annual rent, mitigated by prospects of freehold when part of the land was productively used, was at the core of the proposed

5 On the military campaigns launched in Mozambique since the mid-1890s see Newitt, *A History of Mozambique*, pp. 374–382, 398–401 and especially René Pélissier, *História de Moçambique: Formação e Oposição 1854–1918*, 2 vols. (Lisbon, Editorial Estampa, 2000).

6 Newitt, *A History of Mozambique*, pp. 380–385.

7 This important debate, a key feature of nineteenth and early twentieth century Portugal, cannot be summed up here. For more on the agrarian history of the country, see M.V. Cabral, *Materiais para a história da questão agrária em Portugal, sécs. XIX e XX* (Porto, Editorial Inova, 1974).

8 For the intimate relation between Portuguese ambitions and plans in Africa and agrarian policies in Portugal, from a history of ideas perspective, see R. Ramos 'Um novo Brasil de um novo Portugal: a história do Brasil e a ideia de colonização em Portugal nos séculos XIX e XX', *Penélope*, 23 (2000), pp. 129–152.

9 On company rule in Mozambique, see B. Neil-Tomlinson, 'The Mozambique Chartered Company, 1892–1910' (PhD thesis, University of London, 1987); L. Vail, 'Mozambique's Chartered Companies: The Rule of the Feeble', *Journal of African History* 17, 4 (1976), pp. 389–416; L. Vail and L. White, *Capitalism and Colonialism in Mozambique: A Study of Quelimane District* (London, Heinemann, 1980).

10 A. Teixeira de Sousa was Marine and Overseas Minister between June 1900 and February 1903. A. Monteiro, *Conselheiro Dr. António Teixeira de Sousa – Ministro e Secretário de Estado da Marinha e Ultramar* (Lisbon, Agência Geral das Colónias, 1937), p. 134.

model.¹¹ In the several sessions that followed the presentation, members of parliament agreed on the need to stimulate private investment and settlement, but disagreed on how to reconcile the powers of metropolitan and local government, how to accommodate each territory's needs in a general bill, on the possible extension of the *prazo* system to other colonies and elsewhere in Mozambique, and on African rights to land.¹²

The basic objectives of the draft bill regarding African tenure – that ownership of all vacant land was vested with the state and that African rights to land, mostly confined to occupation, cultivation and grazing, were undisputed. However, the draft also adhered to the principle of so-called African ownership of regularly cultivated and grazed land, already suggested in previous reports and draft bills but never adopted.¹³ In theory it allowed Africans to become landholders, albeit through an extremely bureaucratic procedure and only after 20 years of continuous, productive use. For Teixeira de Sousa, this principle would create an incentive for Africans to fulfil their 'moral obligation' to work, deter shifting agriculture and stimulate commodity production.¹⁴ For prominent colonial experts of the period, some form of respect for 'native property' was indeed necessary, both morally and, at a more practical level, in order to avoid rebellions and delays in the Portuguese occupation of the territory. The widespread 'custom' of 'communal' holding of the land, those specialists suggested, was an expression of the backwardness of the populations. But through contact with European 'civilisation', they would, in time, come to appreciate the advantages of individual property.¹⁵ But for several members of parliament this benevolent way of dealing with Africans was dangerous and irresponsible.¹⁶ Teixeira de Sousa came under such criticism that he was forced to admit how in fact he intended African rights to land to be kept to a minimum.¹⁷ To reassure members of parliament, he also stressed that speculation and 'denationalisation' would be avoided by keeping land transactions under strict control. Land transfers between 'natives' and 'non-natives' would require an official sanction, while custom would apply in transfers between 'natives'.¹⁸

The 1901 land law based on Teixeira de Sousa's draft, adopted in spite of the controversy, together with its regulatory bill, which included a chapter on 'native property', therefore turned Africans into tenants or squatters in state-owned or alienated

11 *Diários da Câmara dos Senhores Deputados*, session no. 6, 12 January 1901, p. 11.

12 The *prazos* were land grants designed to encourage settlement and establish control of the region along the valley of the Zambezi River since the seventeenth century. Classic works on the *prazo* system are Newitt's and Isaacman's. M.D.D. Newitt, *Portuguese Settlement on the Zambezi: Exploration, Land Tenure and Colonial Rule in East Africa* (London, Longman, 1973); A.F. Isaacman, *Mozambique: The Africanization of a European Institution; the Zambezi Prazos, 1750–1902* (Madison, Milwaukee, London, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1972).

13 *Diários da Câmara dos Senhores Deputados*, session no. 19, 14 February 1901, pp. 11–12.

14 For more on the 1899 labour law and the 'moral obligation' to work that it imposed, see Newitt, *A History of Mozambique*, pp. 382–385.

15 L.V. de Sampayo e Mello, *Política indígena* (Porto, Magalhães & Moniz, 1910), pp. 341–345, 413–414; J.F. Marnoco e Sousa, *Administração colonial – Prelecções feitas ao curso do 4º ano jurídico do ano de 1906–1907* (Coimbra, França Amado, 1906), p. 239. For more on representations about colonial peoples in the context of the Portuguese empire, see P. Ferraz de Matos, *As côres do império: representações raciais no império colonial português* (Lisbon, ICS, 2006) and I. Castro Henriques, 'A sociedade colonial em África: ideologias, hierarquias, quotidianos', in F. Bethencourt and K. Chaudhuri (eds), *História da Expansão Portuguesa*, Vol. 5 (Lisbon, Círculo de Leitores, 1999), pp. 216–275.

16 *Diários da Câmara dos Senhores Deputados*, session no. 23, 25 February 1901, p. 7.

17 *Diários da Câmara dos Senhores Deputados*, session no. 15, 9 February 1901, pp. 35–36.

18 The fear of foreign land speculators was shared by other colonial powers. At the International Colonial Institute session on land tenure in the colonies, held in 1903, representatives of other countries voiced the same concerns over land transfers between Africans and settlers and proposed similar solutions to those adopted in the 1901 bill. Institut Colonial International, *Le régime foncier aux colonies, rapports présentés par G.K. Anton*, 2nd ed. (Brussels, ICI, 1904), pp. 314–315, 357.

land.¹⁹ Land could be alienated even if it was occupied by Africans, and it would be a matter for landholders to decide if the rural dwellers could remain in their properties. 0.25 hectares per hut would have to be set aside for them if the landholder decided to keep them on his estate.²⁰ Alternatively, he would have to compensate dwellers for their crops and huts and evict them.²¹ In the areas set aside for them on the estates and in vacant lands, Africans were expected to be ruled by 'custom'.²²

In the spirit of decentralisation championed by important colonial officials at the time, the authorities in Lourenço Marques felt the need for a new, tailor-made land law for Mozambique to correct the perceived flaws of the 1901 legislation.²³ Freire de Andrade, then governor general of the territory and former head of the survey office, drafted the project in the late 1900s with the help of local experts.²⁴ In one of his famous reports about Mozambique he had noted how the 1901 bill and regulation were in fact hindering the development of the colony and failing to grant adequate protection to Africans, who were negatively affected by settlers and companies in terms of land access and use.²⁵ One of his draft bill's goals was to grant 'sufficient' protection to 'natives' against land alienation.²⁶ In 1909, a new bill based on this draft was swiftly approved in Lisbon. It allowed all Africans to squat on vacant, unfarmed and unfenced land and determined that squatters in alienated land could be either compensated or moved to vacant lands with similar conditions to the ones found on the estate.²⁷ All these measures were purportedly meant to promote progress among the 'natives', but in fact contributed to gathering and stabilising the labour force and maintaining commodity production.²⁸ The originality of the bill was that it gave the Portuguese government and the governor general of Mozambique the power to set aside reserves exclusively for Africans, a proposal also previously made by Freire de Andrade in his report. Within the reserves Africans could occupy any tract of land but could not become

19 *Carta de lei* of 9 May 1901 and *Regulamento geral provisório para a execução da carta de lei de 9 de Maio de 1901 sobre concessões de terrenos no ultramar*, of 2 September 1901, *Colecção da Legislação Novíssima do Ultramar – 1901*, Vol. XXIX (Lisbon, Companhia Typographica, 1902).

20 Article 139 of the 1901 *Regulamento*. An 1891 rule required landlords to set aside one hectare per hut. Article 46 of the *Regulamento de concessões de terrenos por aforamento na província de Moçambique e sobre ocupação provisória dos mesmos*. *Decreto* of 2 May 1891, *Colecção da Legislação Novíssima do Ultramar – 1891*, Vol. XIX (Lisbon, Imprensa Nacional, 1894).

21 Article 139 of the 1901 *Regulamento*.

22 A few Africans did obtain some form of land titles in Mozambique under the 1901 provisions. For the full list see Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, *Concessão de terrenos. Moçambique: catálogo* (Lisbon, ME, IICT, AHU, 1989).

23 One of the leading supporters of decentralisation was António Enes, envoy to the negotiations between the Portuguese and the British on the Mozambican–South African borders and a key figure in the history of Mozambique. A. Enes, *Moçambique – Relatório apresentado ao governo*. 4th ed. (Lisbon, Agência Geral do Ultramar, 1971 [1893]), pp. 230–235. The *Organização Administrativa da Província de Moçambique* (*Decreto* of 23 May 1907, *Diário do Governo* n.º 119, 29 May 1907), enacted when Aired de Ornelas – one of the followers of Enes idea's – was Minister of Overseas Affairs, would mark a key official step towards decentralisation and further political and financial autonomy of the colony.

24 Freire de Andrade was governor general of Mozambique between October 1906 and November 1910. In his second report about Mozambique he credited Sousa Monteiro and Bellegarde for drafting important parts of the draft land bill. A. Freire de Andrade, *Relatórios sobre Moçambique*. Vol. II. (Lourenço Marques, Imprensa Nacional, 1907), p. 244.

25 A. Freire de Andrade, *Relatórios sobre Moçambique*. Vol. I. (Lourenço Marques, Imprensa Nacional, 1907), pp. 87–89.

26 *Diários da Câmara dos Senhores Deputados*, session no. 26, 23 April 1909, p. 23.

27 Article 20º of the 1909 *Regime provisório para a concessão de terrenos do Estado na província de Moçambique*, of 9 July 1909. *Colecção da Legislação Novíssima do Ultramar – 1909*, Vol. XXXVII, (Lisbon, Companhia Typographica, 1910). See also Articles 7 and 8 of the 1914 native labour code on the possibility of squatters fulfilling their labour obligations through permanent agriculture in vacant land or in alienated land. *Regulamento Geral de Trabalho dos Indígenas nas Colónias Portuguesas*, *Decreto* n.º 951, of 14 October 1914, *Diário do Governo*, 1ª série, n.º 187, 14 October 1914.

28 *Diários da Câmara dos Senhores Deputados*, session no. 26, 23 April 1909, p. 24.

landowners.²⁹ The bill was silent on the circumstances that could justify reserves, the conditions of the land to be set aside, on when and how Africans would be encouraged or forced to move to the reserves, which rules would apply inside the reserves or on how their boundaries would be set and enforced. All was left to the discretion of the Portuguese government and the governor general. 'Native' reserves thus seemed to be an answer from the 'man on the spot', not the bureaucrat in Lisbon, to existing or future land shortage caused by land alienation. It was, in a way, a feature of the modern colonial state in Africa, or at least of neighbouring British colonies, whose land tenure principles Freire de Andrade was so keen on mimicking.³⁰ His strand of state paternalism towards Africans was welcomed by local officials as well as by colonial specialists in Portugal, who nevertheless feared that keeping Africans in reserves, separated from the positive influence of Europeans, would delay their progress.³¹ Under the provisions of the 1909 land law, several reserves would be created from 1911 onwards, for different reasons.³² The practice of this law and reactions to it in Mozambique will be analysed below.

With the establishment of Portugal's First Republic in 1910, parliamentary debates were held and administrative and economic reforms were agreed on to tackle what consecutive governments considered urgent problems. New legislation, including in land matters, was issued to promote economic development in Africa, still a distant goal for Portugal. A 1914 decree was the first step towards change in this area, alleviating bureaucratic procedures in land transactions, reducing the powers of governors general in Mozambique to authorise large land grants, and imposing more stringent demands on settlers and concessionaires.³³ A new land law for Mozambique was issued only in 1918 because of political instability in Portugal and the impact of the first World War, but it remained largely unaltered until 1961, spanning several decades and three political regimes.³⁴ When it came to African rights to land, the 1918 bill, consistent with the 1914 Organic Law for the colonies which denied 'natives' access to 'European' rights and institutions, determined that they could no longer become landowners, even after 20 years of continuous and productive use of a tract of land, but could only receive titles of occupation under specific conditions.³⁵ At the same time, the bill indicated that there would be a stronger involvement of specialised state officials in the creation of reserves and in mediation of relations inside alienated land, as both became spaces

29 *Diários da Câmara dos Senhores Deputados*, session no. 26, 23 April 1909, p. 24; Freire de Andrade, *Relatórios*, vol. 1, p. 94. For the origins of reserves in Rhodesia, South Africa and Kenya and the different debates they raised see, respectively, R. Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia* (London, Heinemann, 1977); C. Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry*, 2nd ed. (Cape Town and London, David Philip, James Currey, 1988); and B. Berman, *Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya: The Dialectic of Domination* (Athens, Ohio, Ohio University Press, 1990).

30 Freire de Andrade, *Relatórios*, vol. 1, pp. 67–69.

31 Sampayo e Mello, *Política indígena*, p. 345; R. Ulrich, *Economia colonial* (Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade, 1910), p. 153. For examples of similar views about reserves in Kenya see Berman, *Control and crisis*, pp. 111–113, 160–161. Palmer notes that in the late 1890s the Colonial Office considered reserves to be 'oases of barbarism compared to the civilizing influence of locations on farms'. Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination*, p. 60.

32 A reserve was created in Magude, in June 1914, to promote cattle grazing. Portaria n.º 797, of 18 June 1914, *Boletim Oficial de Moçambique* n.º 26, 27 June 1914. For a reflection on reserves created in the province of Zambezia, see Negrão, *Cem anos*, pp. 140–141. In Angola, the first of several 'native' reserves was created in 1922 in the district of Bembe. Portaria provincial n.º 113, of 8 June 1922, *Boletim Oficial de Angola* n.º 23, 1^a série, 10 June 1922.

33 *Decreto* n.º 1145, of 3 December 1914, *Diário do Governo*, 1^a série, n.º 226, of 3 December 1914.

34 *Regulamento para a concessão de terrenos do Estado na província de Moçambique*, *Decreto* n.º 3983, of 16 March 1918, *Diário do Governo*, 1^a série, n.º 62, 27 March 1918.

35 *Lei orgânica da administração civil das províncias ultramarinas*, *Lei* n.º 277 of 15 August 1914, *Diário do Governo*, 1^a série, n.º 143, 15 August 1914. For more on the different mindset inaugurated by the 1914 Organic Law, see N. Coissoró, 'O regime das terras em Moçambique', in *Moçambique: curso de extensão universitária: ano lectivo 1964–65* (Lisbon, ISCSPU, 1966), pp. 419–420.

for labour stabilisation. Building on the practice of previous years, four provisions detailed the procedures for the establishment of 'native' reserves for settlement, cultivation and/or grazing. Provincial governors were encouraged to suggest new reserves in areas suitable for those activities and to indicate their boundaries. The native affairs and survey departments, as well as a Land Commission, would be heard on the proposed reserves, but the governor general retained a margin of discretion on the final decision, to be taken in line with the interests of the state and of the 'natives'. As already highlighted above, inside the reserves populations would be ruled by 'custom'. The 1918 bill also entrusted the native affairs and the survey departments with overseeing compensation and eviction procedures in alienated land, on which in principle African squatters had to be consulted before a decision was taken. Local administrators were in fact urged to defend 'natives' from any 'attacks' against their rights of occupation.³⁶

Soon after the May 1926 coup that put an end to the First Republic, the Military Dictatorship and later the Estado Novo began to reverse several past colonial policies.³⁷ When it came to the land question, however, the existing policy was not only confirmed but reinforced when provisions limiting African access to private property were integrated in the constitution, even though respect for 'native possession and property' was guaranteed on paper.³⁸ As conflicts between landlords and tenants intensified in rural Mozambique, further legislation was enacted providing more specific definitions of African rights to land and ordering a stronger state involvement in landlord–tenant relations. A commission was also entrusted with drafting the rules on the amount of land to be reserved for squatters inside estates in 1927. Two categories of land were defined, and two corresponding areas for squatters generally recommended: "poor" soils, where tracts for Africans should be of five hectares per hut, and "rich" soils, where two hectares per hut would be sufficient. In the late 1930s, two decrees were issued to prevent abuse of squatters on settler farms. By demanding that tenancy be made official in a contract approved by local authorities, where rural dwellers agreed to pay landlords in cash, wage work or kind, squatters were transformed into wage labourers.³⁹

'Native' reserves were still considered necessary in the 1930s and 1940s by both advisors in Lisbon and officials in Lourenço Marques as an instrument to 'protect' African populations from evictions, to stimulate commodity production and even to avoid emigration, as in many regions authorities continued to deal with what was perceived as a drain of labourers to neighbouring countries.⁴⁰ A map of the existing 'native' reserves included in the annual

36 See Articles 152 to 155 of the 1918 *Regulamento* on the procedure for demarcation of reserves and Articles 156 to 164 on African rights to land outside reserves.

37 A.K. Smith, 'Antonio Salazar and the Reversal of Portuguese Colonial Policy', *Journal of African History*, XV, 4 (1974), pp. 653–667.

38 See Article 8 of the *Estatuto político, civil e criminal dos indígenas*, *Decreto n.º 16473* of 6 February 1929, *Diário do Governo n.º 30, 1ª série*, 6 February 1929 and Article 17° of the *Acto colonial*, *Decreto lei n.º 18570*, of 8 July 1930, *Diário do Governo, 1ª série, n.º 156*, 8 July 1930. The Acto Colonial was integrated in the Portuguese Constitution of 1933.

39 Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique (AHM)/Fundo da Direcção de Serviços dos Negócios Indígenas (FDSNI)/caixa 1275/file 1926–1927: Director de agrimensura, circular n.º 893 A/9/B of 6 May 1927, p. 2, annex to Director de Agrimensura to Director dos Negócios Indígenas, nota n.º 1951 of 14 October 1927. Portaria provincial n.º 3286, of 19 January 1938, *Boletim Oficial de Moçambique n.º 3, 1ª série*, 19 January 1938 replaced in 1939 by Portaria provincial n.º 3796, of 23 August 1939, *Boletim Oficial de Moçambique n.º 34, 1ª série*, 23 August 1939.

40 The *Conselho Superior do Império*, an important advisory board to the Ministry of Colonies, thought reserves were needed to compensate 'natives' for evictions in its report of June 1940 on a new draft land bill. The report was published in the *Boletim Geral das Colónias*, XVIII, 202 (1942). See especially pp. 53–54. On further reasons to create new 'native' reserves, see J.T. de Bettencourt, *Relatório do Governador Geral de Moçambique — respeitante ao período de 20 de Março de 1940 a 31 de Dezembro de 1942*, Vol. II (Lisbon, Agência Geral das Colónias, 1945), pp. 70–72; Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (AHU)/1667/1B/MU/ISAU/MÇ 1938_1942/Relatórios de governadores: P. A. do Rêgo. *Relatório do governador (interino) da Província do Sul do Save — 1942, 1943*, pp. 248–252.

report of the governor general of Mozambique for the years 1940–42 showed that more than half of the area south of the Save River was reserved for Africans, while north of the Zambezi only a few areas had been set aside.⁴¹ By the beginning of the 1940s, then, Portuguese officials had also gradually reduced African rights to land, as well as strengthened instruments of direct control over the labour force, and internal and external migration.⁴² African access to the best lands was constrained in the name of economic development and indirectly they became mere reserve dwellers and wage labourers in alienated land. The effects of the land legislation and policies analysed in this section were uneven throughout Mozambique and over time, but the evidence gathered points to the need for a more careful examination of the role of the land question in the lives of Africans in the first decades of the twentieth century.

III. Land, Labour and Alcohol in Inhambane

In order to understand the practical consequences of settler presence and land policies and legislation in colonial Mozambique, as well as how local circumstances and interests influenced their implementation, a more in-depth, case study approach is required. Our specific focus here will be on the rural aspects of these processes in Inhambane in the first decades of the twentieth century, where different types of land struggles spanning contemporary Portuguese rule in the region have been documented both in primary sources and in recent historiography, but have not been included in a broader interpretation of the political economy of the province.⁴³

Bordering Gaza to the West, Manica and Sofala to the North and the Indian Ocean to the East and South, the southern Mozambican province of Inhambane, where immigrants from the Indian sub-continent had built powerful commercial networks, had historically witnessed considerable economic activity around its port located in the capital, also named Inhambane, particularly in the trade in ivory and, until the 1850s, in slaves.⁴⁴ Contrary to early enthusiastic views, which deemed it one of the most fertile provinces in the colony, Inhambane's soils were in fact predominantly sandy and poor in water, and the rainfall irregular. It was prone to hunger and drought. Most of the population and the economic activities of the province were understandably concentrated in the 9,000 km² of coastal areas where fertile land could be found, rather than in the barren hinterland.⁴⁵ From the 1860s, Natal's sugar plantations and later the Rand's mines began recruiting workers from Portuguese East Africa. Many of the province's rural dwellers joined what was to become a strong labour migration current bound by bilateral agreements signed between South African

41 Bettencourt, *Relatório*.

42 For an overview of policies of labour control in Mozambique see Newitt, *A History*, pp. 382–385, 406–410, 482–516 and D. Hedges (ed.), *História de Moçambique, Vol. 2: Moçambique no auge do colonialismo, 1930–1961* (Maputo, Livraria Universitária, 1999), pp. 83–101.

43 Evidence of land conflicts can be found in the following documentation: AHM/Fundo do Governo Geral (FGG)/Estudos/caixa 2202; J. A. Pires, *História do regime de propriedade no distrito de Inhambane*, 1941; AHM/ FGG/Estudos/caixa 2244: Comissão de estudos de planos de fomento – Grupo de trabalho da promoção social, *Promoção da população rural integrada nas regedorias*, 1962, p. 75–80; Arquivo Nacional da Torre to Tombo (ANTT) – PT/TT/SCCIM-A/26/1: Comissão Distrital de Cadastro, *Propriedades em Litígio – Inhambane*, 1972; J. Capela, *O álcool na colonização do Sul do Save: 1860–1920* (Maputo, J. Capela, 1995), p. 12; D.A.F. Machava, 'Evolução e funcionamento da administração e propriedade da terra no Distrito de Jangamo – Inhambane' (B.A. thesis, Eduardo Mondlane University, 2005), pp. 13–20.

44 Newitt, *A History of Mozambique*, p. 160–166; P. Harries, *Work, Culture and Identity: Migrant Labourers in Mozambique and South Africa, c.1860–1910* (Portsmouth N.H., Heinemann; Oxford, James Currey; Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press, 1994), p. 25.

45 M. de Albuquerque, *Moçambique, 1896–1898*. Vol. II (Lisbon, Agência Geral das Colónias, 1934), p. 36; C.A. dos Santos, *Relatório do governo do distrito de Inhambane nos anos de 1931, 1932, 1933 e 1934* (Lisbon, Agência Geral das Colónias, 1937), pp. 14–15.

authorities and Portugal.⁴⁶ By 1906, Inhambane, with an estimated population of 311,808 Africans, was the heaviest contributor to this stream, with 17,079 people migrating to the neighbouring territory.⁴⁷

Land grants in Inhambane, some of them thousands of hectares in size, date as far back as the early 1860s, when some of the individuals formerly involved in the slave trade headed to the region in search of new business opportunities.⁴⁸ Because of the multiple layers of complex land legislation enacted since 1856, partially analysed above, the lack of supervision and the then limited knowledge of the territory, land grants were made precariously. Property limits were poorly defined in official documents, and landowners extended their estates virtually at will. The authorities were well aware of these practices but failed to curb them, due to the promise of economic development and because of a reduced administrative infrastructure in the region.⁴⁹ Prospects for agricultural production in Inhambane were limited in some areas, while others, mostly along the coast, were appropriate for crops such as oilseed. Cashew and palm trees became important exports of the province as French and Portuguese firms required them for the soap and oil industries.⁵⁰ The creation of sugar mills had been suggested as early as 1830, as sugar cane was thought to be particularly suited to the local ecology.⁵¹ Indeed, many of those who benefited from land grants in Inhambane since the 1860s became cane growers, but they did not wish to invest in substantial sugar production or lacked the capital for it. Instead, they ventured in the *sópe* business, the local name for the alcoholic spirit made from sugar cane that Africans had become accustomed to drinking copiously. A member of parliament recognised in 1902 that distilling was the main industry in the province: “Everyone distils, black and white; everything is distilled”.⁵² Thomaz Garrett, Inhambane governor between 1905 and 1906, argued that by the end of the nineteenth century some of these producers were making impressive profits of between 428 and 857% of the capital invested in the crops.⁵³ The *sópe* business attracted farmers from Europe and the Indian sub-continent but also former colonial officials and even missionaries.⁵⁴ As techniques were disseminated, Africans also became producers of

46 For Rita-Ferreira, a Portuguese administrator and author of several works on southern Mozambique, Inhambane’s ecology was one of the factors accounting for migration to South Africa. A. Rita-Ferreira, *O movimento migratório de trabalhadores entre Moçambique e a África do Sul* (Lisbon, Junta de Investigações do Ultramar, 1963), pp. 35–38. Between 1959 and 1960 Marvin Harris, a north American anthropologist who disputed this view, and Rita-Ferreira engaged in a debate on the pages of *África*, the journal of the International African Institute, on the origins of migration of southern Mozambicans to South Africa. See M. Harris, ‘Labour Emigration among the Moçambique Thonga: Cultural and Political factors’, *África*, 29, 1 (1959), pp. 50–66 and Rita-Ferreira’s *O movimento migratório* for the authors’ full arguments.

47 Freire de Andrade, *Relatórios*, vol. 1, p. 57. On the history of colonial penetration in the South of Mozambique and the importance of migrant labour in the region, see C. Serra, ed. *História de Moçambique*, parts I and II (Maputo, Livraria Universitária, 2000), pp. 348–400. For the specific case of Inhambane see CEA, *O mineiro moçambicano: um estudo sobre a exportação de mão de obra em Inhambane* (Maputo, Centro de Estudos Africanos – Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, 1998) and Harries, *Work, culture and identity*, pp. 24–25.

48 Capela, *O álcool*, p. 10. In 1894 15,000 hectares were granted to Salomon Benchimol in the province of Inhambane. *Colecção de legislação novíssima do ultramar – 1883–1884*, Vol. XII (Lisbon, Imprensa Nacional, 1896).

49 AHM/FGG/Estudos/caixa 2202: J. A. Pires, *História do regime de propriedade no distrito de Inhambane*, 1941, p. 1. In the early 1940s governor general Bettencourt complained that illegal occupations and inadequate property demarcation were still widespread in the colony. Bettencourt, *Relatório*, pp. 51–54.

50 J. M. Pedreira, ‘O sistema das trocas’, in F. Bethencourt and K. Chaudhuri (eds), *História da expansão portuguesa*. Vol. 4 (Lisbon, Círculo de Leitores, 1998), p. 257.

51 F. Santana, *Documentação avulsa moçambicana do arquivo histórico ultramarino*. Vol. II (Lisbon, CEHU, 1967), p. 910.

52 *Diários da Câmara dos Senhores Deputados*, session no. 53, 11 April 1902, p. 6.

53 T. Garrett, *Um governo em África: Inhambane 1905–1906* (Lisbon, Empresa da História de Portugal, 1907), p. 137.

54 J. Nunes, ‘Inspeção das circunscrições civis do distrito de Inhambane’, *Boletim da Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa*, 38, 7–12 (1920), p. 108.

alcoholic drinks, namely *sópe* and cashew and palm wine, but these were harshly repressed by authorities.⁵⁵ Elsewhere in Mozambique, especially on the famous Hornung-owned estates along the Zambezi River, rum was being produced in vast sugar plantations for the South African market, also at a considerable profit.⁵⁶

While in the colony the sugar cane sector was growing stronger, in Portugal the wine sector faced a crisis. Overproduction led producers to look for a solution in the African colonies, one of their traditional markets. After some lobbying in Lisbon, Portuguese mercantile interests managed to secure a ban on the production of colonial rum through a 1902 law drafted by Minister Teixeira de Sousa, thus finding a protected market for the wine they failed to sell at home.⁵⁷ In Mozambique a toxic, adulterated version of the Portuguese wine, known as '*vinho para o preto*' ('wine for the black'), adjusted to suit what producers felt was the taste of African consumers, was widely sold to replace *sópe*, rum and other locally produced alcoholic drinks. For landowners in Inhambane, the 1902 regulation was considered a blow, but sugar cane production continued in spite of it, with the tolerance of local authorities. While they criticised the fact that alcohol was the main output of the province, authorities hoped cane growers would make profits that could later be invested in less lucrative food crops. Moreover, authorities complained that the 1902 ban led Africans to migrate in search of regions where the alcoholic drinks were sold. Paradoxically, officials recognised that in Inhambane the very alcoholic drinks that endangered the health and lowered the productivity of African labourers were necessary to lure them.⁵⁸ By 1906, two companies, the British-owned 'Inhambane Sugar Estates' and 'Massamby' estate, had hundreds of hectares of sugar cane under cultivation for sugar production, as well as other crops. Several smaller properties could also be found in the region dedicated mostly to the monoculture of sugar cane, employing little capital and elementary agricultural techniques. Companies and smaller landowners alike resorted to African labour on their estates. According to Garrett, a few Africans, who had numerous palm trees and extensive gardens, had become the main farmers in the region.⁵⁹

In the 1910s, attempts were made to curb the production of alcoholic drinks in Inhambane, to end monoculture farming and encourage investment in food crops. These attempts failed in most

55 A. Cardoso, *Relatório do distrito de Inhambane – 1907–1909* (Lourenço Marques, Imprensa Nacional, 1909), p. 83; M. A. Alves, 'A instabilidade da população ante a repressão do fabrico do álcool', in *Relatórios e Informações – Anexo ao Boletim Oficial – Ano de 1908* (Lourenço Marques, Imprensa Nacional, 1908), pp. 118–125; E. Medeiros, *Bebidas moçambicanas de fabrico caseiro* (Maputo, Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique, 1988), p. 84.

56 Vail and White study the history of Hornung's Sena Sugar Estates in *Capitalism and Colonialism*. An important study of alcohol consumption and colonial policies in East Africa can be found in J. Willis, *Potent Brews: A Social History of Alcohol in East Africa, 1850–1999* (Athens, Ohio University Press, 2002). For a perspective on this topic in Southern Africa, see the essays collected in J. Crush and C. Ambler, eds *Liquor and Labor in Southern Africa* (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1992).

57 J. Capela, *O vinho para o preto: notas e textos sobre a exportação do vinho para a África* (Porto, Edições Afródite, 1973), pp. 10–15. For more on the competition between locally produced alcoholic beverages and Portuguese-made wine see L.A. Covane, 'Migrant Labour and Agriculture in Southern Mozambique with Special Reference to Lower Limpopo Valley, 1920–1992' (PhD thesis, University of London, 1996), p. 104; Capela, *O álcool*; G. Pirio, 'Commerce, Industry and Empire: The Making of Modern Portuguese Colonialism in Angola and Mozambique, 1890–1914' (PhD thesis, University of California, 1982), pp. 266–294 and Freire de Andrade, *Relatórios*, vol. 1, pp. 11–20.

58 Thomaz Garrett supports this view and Freire de Andrade agrees with him. Freire de Andrade, *Relatórios*, vol. 1, pp. 18–21. In later years the deteriorating health of the labour force would become a greater concern for officials in Inhambane. Correia Henriques, province governor between 1913 and 1915, concluded that given the population density and the amount of *sópe* produced, each African individual was incapacitated for work 101 days per year. C. Correia Henriques, *Relatório do governador. Distrito de Inhambane. 1913–1915* (Lourenço Marques, Imprensa Nacional, 1916), p. 38. The topic of alcohol was also the subject of numerous articles in the local *mestiço* press, where the colonial administration was explicitly blamed for the declining health of Africans. See, for instance, 'O sópe – Assalto à vida do preto', *O Brado Africano* (30 January 1920).

59 Garrett, *Um governo*, pp. 120–121.

cases partly due to protests from the cane growers. Unlike in the provinces of Gaza and Lourenço Marques, Africans in Inhambane continued to favour local drinks over Portuguese wine, and local producers readily responded to this demand.⁶⁰ Between August 1913 and August 1915, 598 licences were granted for *sópe* production alone, amounting to 1,909.5 hectares of sugar cane under cultivation and an estimated 34,371,000 litres of the distilled drink, all of which were consumed by Africans.⁶¹ In 1922, up to 328 land grants had been registered in the province and 340 agricultural units existed, mostly owned by Portuguese nationals.⁶² In a period of widespread crisis in Mozambique, a new law banning locally produced alcoholic drinks finally took a toll on the Inhambane cane growers in the 1920s, who lost interest in their lands, contributing to a 'decline' of properties in the region. However, as the value of copra and cashew nuts soared in the markets, conflicts over the ownership of the thousands of coconut palms and cashew trees arose between landlords, who were now interested again in these crops, and their African tenants, especially in the harvest season.⁶³

'Native' Reserves in Inhambane

The consequences of the appropriation of African land in Inhambane were powerfully described by José Cabral, governor of the province between 1910 and 1912 and later governor general of Mozambique, as well as by other officials working in the province.⁶⁴ Africans whose *machambas* or gardens were located in *machongos*, fertile but unpromising peat soils, were particularly targeted by land-hungry settlers. Once an authorisation for permanent or temporary access to those lands had been obtained, Africans were forced to cultivate sugar cane for *sópe* production for their new landlords. While the latter, locally known as *machongueiros*, benefited from the lucrative trade in that alcoholic beverage, Africans, the main consumers of the drink and increasingly incapacitated for work and in poor health as a result, reacted passively to what they perceived to be an unfair situation, in accordance with the fact that they would not obtain redress from authorities.⁶⁵ The same sense of resignation pervaded Júlio Pires' account on the history of property and the reactions to land alienation and the establishment of servile relations between Africans and landowners in the province.⁶⁶

Writing on the land question in Inhambane, the *machongueiros* and their African tenants, in the early 1910s José Cabral argued for the creation of a 'native' reserve in Zavala, a district with a high population density. More generally, the local governor believed that reserves should be established not only for 'natives', where only registered users would be handed plots, but also for Europeans. All areas with a population density of above 50 Africans per km² would be set aside for their exclusive use.⁶⁷ For José Cabral, reserves could be created for different purposes: to secure land for 'native' agriculture, to implement a 'sound policy' of separation between the 'dominators' and the 'dominated' and even to facilitate labour recruitment.⁶⁸ Cabral's proposals were well received by the central administration in

60 Capela, *O vinho para o preto*, pp. 10–15.

61 Nunes, *Inspeção*, pp. 100–101.

62 Capela, *O álcool*, p. 81.

63 AHM/FGG/Estudos/caixa 2202: J. A. Pires, *História do regime de propriedade no distrito de Inhambane*, 1941, pp. 1–6.

64 J. Cabral, *Relatório do governador, 1911–1912 – Distrito de Inhambane* (Lourenço Marques, Imprensa Nacional, 1912).

65 Cabral, *Relatório de 1911–1912*, p. 38.

66 AHM/FGG/Estudos/caixa 2202: J. A. Pires, *História do regime de propriedade no distrito de Inhambane*, 1941, p. 6.

67 Cabral, *Relatório de 1911–1912*, pp. 48–49.

68 Cabral, *Relatório de 1911–1912*, pp. 47–48.

Lourenço Marques, which in 1911 proclaimed the first 'native' reserve in Mozambique under the 1909 land law, covering the entire 1795 km² of the district of Zavala.⁶⁹ In 1913, local administrators were requested to provide information on the need to create further reserves in their respective districts for settlement, agriculture or cattle grazing, preferably bounded by natural elements such as water lines, and after consulting with chiefs in meetings locally known as *banjas*.⁷⁰ In the reply from the interim governor of Inhambane, several examples were provided of land shortage in the province. In Massinga, for example, the district administrator went as far as suggesting that the best lands, at the time illegally in the possession of settlers, needed to be returned to Africans.⁷¹ In September of the same year, temporary demarcation licences were altogether suspended in Inhambane, a measure intended to curb the leniency with which settlers and companies had been granted land in the province without valuable results in terms of food crop production.⁷² In 1923, the district of Homoine, also densely populated, was declared a 'native' reserve.⁷³

There is little information on the population, the way of life and the economic activities carried out in Mozambican 'native' reserves.⁷⁴ Evidence shows that creating a reserve on paper did not necessarily mean that boundaries would actually be demarcated or respected, that landowners in the land to be set aside would be expropriated. Neither did this signify that parts of reserves would not later be alienated, that the land set aside would be suitable for cultivation or grazing, or that Africans would welcome, voluntarily settle or produce commodities on them. The chief of the native affairs department conceded that reserves had not been set aside before land was alienated, thereby leaving the worst lands for Africans, and other accounts confirmed the poor physical conditions of reserved areas.⁷⁵ In Inhambane, the Zavala reserve was considered incomplete in the late 1920s, and authorities were criticised for not having expropriated the existing landowner to ensure wider 'protection' for local populations.⁷⁶

Outside reserves, however, the results of an inspection conducted in 1915 showed that vacant land in the province proved to be mostly sandy and possibly useless for agriculture. The governor's report for 1917 confirmed this evidence.⁷⁷ In the 1930s, absenteeism was the norm on Inhambane's estates, but land allocated to Africans in the fertile areas of the province continued to be extremely limited.⁷⁸ Africans living in unalienated lands or in lands

69 Portaria n.º 429-A, of 7 August 1911, *Boletim Oficial de Moçambique*, 1ª série, n.º 33, 19 August 1911. In 1913, Zavala, with 1,795 km², reportedly numbered 36,464 huts, 115,960 African inhabitants, 9,000 of these working in the Transvaal, and a population density of 76 people per km². AHM/FDSNI/caixa 1274/file 1913: Chefe da Circunscrição de Zavala to Secretariado do Governo de Inhambane, nota n.º 120 of 30 September 1913, pp. 1–2. According to a later report on the province of Inhambane, in 1917 Zavala had a population of 102,575 *indígenas* (and the highest population density, at 63.9 inhabitants/km², less than in 1913), immediately followed by Inharrime district, with 60,000 inhabitants, while the total in the province was of 339,501 'natives'. J.B. de C. Araújo, *Relatório acerca da administração do distrito de Inhambane – 1917* (Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade, 1920), p. 110.

70 AHM/FDSNI/caixa 1274/file 1913: Intendência dos Negócios Indígenas e Emigração to Chefes de Circunscrição, circular n.º 3/934, 14 May 1913.

71 AHM/FDSNI/caixa 1274/file 1913: Chefe da Circunscrição de Massinga to Secretariado do Governo de Inhambane, nota n.º 123, 16 September 1913.

72 AHM/FDSNI/caixa 1274/file 1913: Director dos Serviços de Agrimensura to Intendente dos Negócios Indígenas e Emigração, nota n.º 147, 7 October 1913.

73 Despacho do governador geral of 6 October 1923.

74 No study similar to the reports of the Rhodesian Native Reserves Commission of 1914–1915, for instance, could be found about reserves in Mozambique. See Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination*, pp. 104–105, for the detailed information gathered about Rhodesian reserves.

75 A. Cabral, *Raças, usos e costumes dos indígenas do distrito de Inhambane* (Lourenço Marques, Imprensa Nacional, 1910), pp. 52–53; Soares Zilhão, 'Reservas indígenas', *Jornal União* (20 January 1934).

76 AHM/FDSNI/caixa 1275/pasta 1926–1927: Director dos Negócios Indígenas to Director de Agrimensura, nota n.º 426/49, 22 February 1927, pp. 1–2.

77 Nunes, 'Inspeção das circunscrições', pp. 124–125; Araújo, *Relatório acerca da administração*, pp. 115–116; Henriques, *Relatório*, pp. 93–94.

78 J. Nunes, 'Questões indígenas', *Boletim da Sociedade de Estudos de Moçambique*, 7 (1933), p. 16.

owned by absentee landlords maintained a margin of autonomy. In contrast, sources show how some Africans living inside the reserves resorted to wage employment to pay for their taxes and sometimes rented land on settler estates to grow food crops.⁷⁹ Although some measure of proletarianisation ensued for most Africans in the region, the percentage of cases of wage work, labour tenancy, rent tenancy and sharecropping over time are difficult to establish. Sources do however suggest that those relations were in many cases unequal and violent and that local authorities were largely spectators of the conflicts that emerged.

In Inhambane's *machongos*, for example, where *sópe* was under production, there seemed to be a pattern of labour tenancy in the beginning of the twentieth century such as that described by José Cabral. As long as they were needed as labourers or as consumers of *sópe*, landlords allowed Africans to remain on their estates. Once colonial authorities attempted to ban locally produced alcoholic drinks, including *sópe*, and with labour legislation in place, Africans were evicted from the *machongos*.⁸⁰ In 1915, a report on the districts of Inhambane confirmed this evidence. Landlords were known to threaten Africans with eviction or preventing them from expanding their crops if they failed to work for them in the sugar cane sector, a situation made worse by the fact that areas set aside for Africans inside estates were not properly demarcated.⁸¹

In the next decades conflicts emerged elsewhere in Inhambane, such as at Ravene Estates, where landowners demanded 2\$50 (escudos) of annual tax by hut in exchange for African squatting in the farms, or over rice crops on some estates where African tenants complained of violence and unlawful evictions.⁸² In some cases authorities mediated the conflicts and managed to reach agreements. In the late 1920s, conflict over the ownership of coconut palms and cashew trees arose on the estate owned by Fernando Paiva in the district of Maxixe. After tenants protested against Paiva's attempt to gain control over the trees to benefit from the surge in the price of copra and cashew nuts, an agreement was reached: tenants would pay two barrels of cashew nuts annually to remain on the estate.⁸³

Reactions to Reserves

Reactions to the creation of reserves were understandably negative among cane growers and farmers, who perceived them as threats to their own economic activities. Governor José Cabral was particularly criticised for the measures he introduced in Inhambane.⁸⁴ In a book about southern Mozambique, the vocal settler Eduardo d'Almeida Saldanha accused officials of using reserves to undermine 'white' ambitions in the region. In his view, 'native' reserves were meant to house Africans evicted from alienated land and should be composed of poor quality lands to force Africans to look for wage employment.⁸⁵ In a document sent to the

79 J. Nunes, 'Apontamentos para o estudo da questão da mão de obra no distrito de Inhambane sob a influência da migração para o Transval com especial referência à circunscrição civil de Homoine', *Boletim da Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa*, série 46, 5–6 (1928), pp. 121–122.

80 AHM/FGG/Estudos/caixa 2202: J. A. Pires, *História do regime de propriedade no distrito de Inhambane*, 1941, p. 8.

81 Nunes, 'Inspeção das circunscrições', p. 124.

82 Incidentally, in the 1972 report of the *Comissão Distrital de Cadastro de Inhambane*, a solution for the land conflict between Ravene Estates and its tenants was yet to be found. ANTT –PT/TT/SCCIM-A/26/1: Comissão Distrital de Cadastro, *Propriedades em Litígio – Inhambane*, 1972, p. 6; AHU/2245/1B/UM/ISAU/MÇ/1943_1947: Júlio Augusto Pires, *Relatório da inspeção dos serviços administrativos e de negócios indígenas, das divisões administrativas de Inhambane* 1947, pp. 184–192, 347.

83 Pena, 'Distrito de Inhambane', p. 39.

84 Araújo, *Relatório*, pp. 115–116.

85 E. d'Almeida Saldanha, *Colónias, missões e acto colonial* (Vila Nova de Famalicão, Tip. Minerva, 1930), pp. XXXVII–XXXVIII.

Minister of Colonies in 1929, the *Associação do Fomento Agrícola da Província de Moçambique*, representing the interests of European farmers of Mozambique more broadly, argued that since Portuguese 'native' policy was not aimed at segregation between Africans and settlers, and since there was no land shortage, reserves could harm the interests of the colony.⁸⁶

In several articles and editorials in the *mestiço* press in the 1920s, where the Afro-Portuguese petite bourgeoisie had an opportunity to voice its concerns, reserves were a regular topic.⁸⁷ These included reports of alienated reserves, of dwellers forced to pay rents to remain in the supposedly rent- and tax-free reserves, of reserves occupied by European farmers and their crops.⁸⁸ Official land policies were considered such a failure that *O Brado Africano* supported the idea of full access to individual property for 'young' Africans, while the communal or 'tribal' land regime was to remain the norm for 'old people'. Instead of the racial gap of the 1918 land law, the newspaper favoured a differentiation at the generation level. In the typically ambiguous tone of many of the articles published in *O Brado*, where the betterment of the lives of the 'natives' was envisioned within the colonial system put in place by the Portuguese, individual property was to provide security of tenure for Africans and also make them more productive farmers.⁸⁹

It is difficult to evaluate the reactions of Africans in Inhambane to 'native' reserves in the first decades of the twentieth century. A report on the district of Homoine argued that the fact that Africans produced more commodities in the local reserve than on estates was a sign that the reserve was successful. The author, however, did not convey the views of a representative group of Africans in his report.⁹⁰ A more telling but still partial source helps us evaluate at least the views of a few chiefs. In 1926, a group of *naturais de Inhambane* composed of local chiefs presented a written plea to authorities on the land shortage problem in the province and asked for individual plots to be assigned to them inside the 'native' reserves.⁹¹ Limits between different landholdings and between landholdings and reserves were so uncertain, with cases of European encroaching on the latter, that perhaps chiefs wanted to at least some measure of security of tenure for their communities.⁹² This request could also be an indication that social differentiation was taking place among rural dwellers, as individual titling was being valued by populations supposedly attached to 'traditional' views on land tenure.⁹³ In any case, the chiefs were actively seeking to better their position and, at least on this occasion, used the colonial structures and channels available to do so. When consulted on the chiefs' proposal, Augusto Cabral, director of the native affairs department, firmly objected to it.

86 J. Cardoso, 'Associação do Fomento Agrícola da Província de Moçambique', *Boletim da Agência Geral das Colónias*, 54 (1929), p. 161.

87 For more on the *mestiço* press and its role in Mozambique's colonial society, see Newitt, *A History of Mozambique*, p. 443 and A. Rocha, *Associativismo e nativismo em Moçambique: contribuição para o estudo das origens do nacionalismo moçambicano: 1900–1940* (Maputo, Promedia, 2001), p. 185.

88 'Reservas indígenas', *O Brado Africano* (7 March 1925); 'Reservas indígenas', *O Brado Africano* (11 June 1927).

89 'Terrenos para pretos', *O Brado Africano* (24 November 1928); 'Agricultura indígena', *O Brado Africano* (9 March 1929).

90 Nunes, 'Apontamentos para o estudo da questão da mão de obra', pp. 121–122.

91 AHM/FDSNI/caixa 1275/file 1926–1927: Direcção de Agrimensura to Director dos Negócios Indígenas, *nota* n.º 1470, 25 August 1926.

92 There had been complaints in the press about how European farmers invaded reserves: 'Reservas indígenas', *O Brado Africano* (11 June 1927).

93 On the transformations in African customary law on land tenure in the context of colonial rule, see Berry, *No Condition is Permanent*, E. Colson, 'The Impact of the Colonial Period on the Definition of Land Rights', in V. Turner (ed.), *Colonialism in Africa 1870–1960*, Vol. 3 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 193–215 and M. Chanock, 'A Peculiar Sharpness: An Essay on Property in the History of Customary Law in Colonial Africa', *Journal of African History* 32, 1 (1991), pp. 65–88.

Setting aside plots inside the reserves would, in his opinion, violate the principle behind their very creation and would lead to the same ‘dangers’ for the rest of Africans living in them that had been identified inside European estates: differentiation and the establishment of servile relations.⁹⁴

Land and Labour in Inhambane

Labour is a key element in the interpretation of land policies in Inhambane in the first decades of the twentieth century. Labour migration from southern Mozambique was a fundamental aspect of Portuguese colonial policy, a steady source of revenue and the object of a contentious debate in Portugal and Mozambique from the 1880s.⁹⁵ For officials in Inhambane more specifically, even though migration was profitable, it benefited mostly Lourenço Marques and it negatively impacted on the already considerably low agricultural yield of the province.⁹⁶ In an expression of a ‘local economic nationalism’, to borrow Bruce Berman’s expression, officials felt that if Inhambane was ever to become more than a mere supplier of labour, more healthy men would have to be available to work at home.⁹⁷ Labour migration to South Africa was also criticised by smaller European farmers in Inhambane, including cane growers, allegedly incapable of offering better salaries than those paid across the border. Though some officials in Inhambane sided with the farmers, others such as the governor José Cabral dismissed these complaints as an excuse for the farmers’ inertia.⁹⁸

Officials in Lisbon, Lourenço Marques and Inhambane alike were keen, however, on developing the province through agriculture but held different views on how and when that goal would be realised. Africans had to be relied on for commodity production expansion, since most of the fertile land had been alienated to cane growers interested in quick profits and indifferent to the deteriorating health of labourers, and also because attempts to transform monoculture farming failed and authorities were not interested in providing financial and technical assistance to settlers.⁹⁹ That of course depended on African access to land, embodied in José Cabral’s idea of ‘native’ reserves. In sum, in a context of increasing pressure over limited fertile land, the coercion employed by the *machongueiros* to push African peasants into sugar cane cultivation and the ensuing land grabs created a problem for

94 AHM/FDSNI/caixa 1275/file 1926–1927: Director dos Negócios Indígenas to Director de Agrimensura, *nota* n.º 427/49, 22 February 1927. Though writing in 1925, Augusto Cabral was perhaps not aware that with a 1924 land law, Africans living in the Mozambique Company territory – the provinces of Manica and Sofala – were allowed precisely what the Inhambane chiefs had asked for: titling inside the reserves. See Articles 5 and 6 of *Ordem* n.º 4669, of 12 August 1924, *Boletim da Companhia de Moçambique* n.º 16, 16 August 1924. The first tracts inside reserves were titled in 1931.

95 Newitt, *A History of Mozambique*, pp. 491–498. For a summary of liberal and conservative views on labour migration and labour agreements with South Africa, see Harries, *Work, Culture and Identity*, pp. 149–150.

96 Freire de Andrade, *Relatórios*, vol. 1, pp. 236–239; S. Young, ‘Fertility and Famine: Women’s Agricultural History in Southern Mozambique’, in R. Palmer and N. Parsons (eds), *The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1977), p. 75.

97 B. Berman, *Control and Crisis*, p. 178. For a plan to reform labour agreements with South Africa to benefit Inhambane, see Garrett, *Um governo*, p. 151.

98 A. Cardoso, *Relatório do distrito de Inhambane – 1907–1909* (Lourenço Marques, Imprensa Nacional, 1909), pp. 43–44; Cabral, *Relatório de 1910–1911*, p. 63. See also Covane, *Labour*, pp. 164 ff. Crush describes similar reactions from European farmers in Swaziland, who felt they were being poached by the mines. J. Crush, ‘Landlords, Tenants and Colonial Social Engineers: The Farm Labour Question in Early Colonial Swaziland’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 11, 2 (1985), pp. 254–255. In the Transvaal, Trapido also noted that smaller landlords had more difficulties in securing tenants than larger ones. S. Trapido, ‘Landlord and Tenant in a Colonial Economy: The Transvaal 1880–1910’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 5, 1 (1978), pp. 31–32.

99 Freire de Andrade had already suggested in his first report about Mozambique that the largest part of Inhambane should become a ‘native’ reserve. Indeed, yield levels of European agriculture were disappointing.

Inhambane's governors. In common with 'kaffir' farmers elsewhere in southern Africa, cane growers sought quick profit from African labour and rents, and failed to industrialise or invest in food crops.¹⁰⁰ 'Native' reserves, by then undergoing a process of institutionalisation in other territories, were welcomed by different Inhambane governors in the 1910s partly as a solution to this problem. Considering the local tradition of emigration, reserves were regarded as a means of stabilising the recalcitrant population, who for several reasons had come to favour mine work to labour on local estates. Reserves would become a centripetal force, capable of attracting and confining populations to a limited space. Here, they could dedicate themselves to agriculture without settler interference, while being subject to more effective control by the authorities. They would act as incentives against internal and external migration flows, in turn operating as centrifugal forces. Reserves would also be symbolic spaces of exclusion, of separation between 'natives' and 'non-natives', but in this specific period they were considered pragmatic solutions to land alienation and commodity production expansion rather than a spatial dimension of an ideologically motivated segregationist policy.

However, because authorities were not interested in expropriating existing landowners and the best land in the province had been alienated before reserves were defined, land in reserves lacked the conditions to fulfil these goals.¹⁰¹ Commodity production would still have to be expanded outside reserves, on the estates, where conflicts emerged in the following decades between Africans and the landowners over issues such as uncertain boundaries and ownership of trees and fruits.¹⁰² Much of the land legislation from the 1920s on, as we have seen, tried to deal with relations and conflicts inside alienated land.

Conclusion

Careful consideration of the land question alongside labour migration, a more popular topic in the history of southern Mozambique, sheds light on the struggles of African rural dwellers faced with land shortage and evictions, on the differentiation taking place among them and on the dynamics of power relations in rural areas. On the whole, it makes clear that African use of and access to land was progressively curtailed in the period under examination even though not all communities were affected in the same way. The case of Inhambane illustrates how land and labour legislation and policies combined to institutionalise control over rural dwellers and natural resources. Once further knowledge is gathered about different cases, broader interpretations on the relations between land and labour in Mozambique will need to be made.

Overall, both the analysis of the origins and principles of legislation and policies and the case study also show that, in spite of a weak state infrastructure, conflicting interests and contradictory decisions, there is no reason to overlook Mozambique and Portuguese colonialism in general in comparisons with neighbouring countries when it comes to the land

100 For a comparison of different perceptions on and reactions to 'kaffir' farming in Kenya, South Africa and Rhodesia, see C. Youé, 'Black Squatters on White Farms: Segregation and Agrarian Change in Kenya, South Africa and Rhodesia, 1902–1963', *International History Review*, 24, 3 (2002).

101 In the 1930s Joaquim Nunes, Homóine administrator for 15 years, continued to support the solution so many others had put forth: a proper survey of the province would help solve the problems of Africans affected by land shortage. Expropriating the land that absentee landowners were not effectively occupying would take too many years, he argued. J. Nunes, *Questões indígenas*, *Boletim da Sociedade de Estudos de Moçambique* n.º 7, 1933, p. 16.

102 ANTT – PT/TT/SCCIM-A/26/1: Comissão Distrital de Cadastro, *Propriedades em Litígio – Inhambane*, 1972; Pena, 'Distrito de Inhambane'.

question. The dynamics of land, labour and capital in Mozambique therefore need to be incorporated in a broader history of southern Africa.

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