

# THE COLONIAL INVENTION OF MOZAMBIQUE: FROM AFRICAN EMPIRES TO OVERSEAS COLONY AND PROVINCE

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## Introduction

Mozambique, a country situated in southeastern Africa, lies between South Africa and Tanzania, washed by the waters of the Indian Ocean, forming the Mozambique Channel with the island of Madagascar. Like all African countries, it inherited borders from colonization and forged its national identity based on the premise of combating colonial occupation. The country's historical formation resembles an "African mosaic" with a "scent of the Indian Ocean" resulting in a pronounced multiculturalism (Liesegang 1996). Capela (1996, 9) emphasizes the "civilizational and cultural heterogeneity of the peoples summoned to constitute the nation" and suggests that "approaching this fragmented reality cannot be done on the assumption of a sociologically nonexistent national unity".

Therefore, it is a country whose territory in the 19th century, still as an Overseas Province, was undetermined, being an "area without certain limits or defined borders" (Lobato 2008, 15). Administratively, there was a Governor-General assisted by District Administrators. After its independence in 1975, it became a sovereign state within the borders defined by colonial powers.

In this sense, Mozambique is a modern invention from the late 19th century and represents a "significant break with the set of previous identity representations and perceptions" before the colonial project (Meneses and Ribeiro 2008). Since then, the reconstruction of this region has been based on the Portuguese colonial imagination.

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Therefore, investigating Mozambique implies “thinking of a territory full of ancient diversities reflected in a set of identity tensions whose cartography is far from linear or even visible”, a territory understood as “a meeting point between cultures and people” that refers to “millenary maritime and continental routes” (Meneses and Ribeiro 2008, 7). For the poet Eduardo White, Mozambique is a “window to the East.”

It should be noted that, for Portugal, the shaping of Mozambican territory meant the expansion of its wealth and borders, a process that lasted until the last quarter of the 20th century, in 1974. For the indigenous peoples, it meant the suppression of the kingdoms of Monomotapa or Gaza, and other great states like the Great Zimbabwe, the Kingdom of Manica, Barué, Danda, Butua-Torua, Teve, the State of Rundos, Changamires, Carongas, Undis, the sheikdom of Quitangonha and Sancul, the Sultanate of Angoche, and other peoples who lived in defined territorialities before the advance of colonization.

In a broader consideration of Portugal’s place in global colonialism, Rodney (2012) understands that:

Europeans used the superiority of their ships and cannon to gain control of all the world’s waterways, starting with the western Mediterranean and the Atlantic coast of North Africa. From 1415, when the Portuguese captured Ceuta near Gibraltar, they maintained the offensive against the Maghreb. Within the next sixty years, they seized ports such as Arzila, El-Ksar-es-Seghir and Tangier, and fortified them. By the second half of the 15th century, the Portuguese controlled the Atlantic coast of Morocco and used its economic and strategic advantages to prepare for further navigations which eventually carried their ships round the Cape of Good Hope in 1495. After reaching the Indian Ocean, the Portuguese sought with some success to replace Arabs as the merchants who tied East Africa to India and the rest of Asia. The 17th and 18th centuries, the Portuguese carried most of the East African ivory which was marketed in India; while Indian cloth and beads were sold in East and West Africa by the Portuguese, Dutch, English and French (Rodney 2012, 103).

In that sense, understanding the history of Mozambique means comprehending the history of a collection of peoples and cultures who share the common experience of Portuguese colonization. Therefore, Ngoenha (1992, 11) acknowledges that “the origins of Mozambique do not lie in ethnic or human reasons, but in ideas of one man’s domination over another, in the name of a presumed superiority”.

According to Fonseca and Moreira (2007, 13), two realities were in continuous conflict in Mozambique: the colonial society and the African

society. In this regard, the existence of a territory called Mozambique is due to the process of formation of the modern world, in which the colonization of the African continent is a central piece. Mozambique is a modern concept, and if its history is understood through this lens, its creation was associated with an imperial political project that marked the identity of the territory.

In this panorama, the concept that underpins the discussion of Mozambique's history in this article is colonialism. One way to understand colonization or colonialism is as the historical process of transforming power structures, knowledge, and life, which varied depending on the location and the metropolis<sup>2</sup>. According to Badejo (2008, 17), colonization involves the exploitation of human and natural resources in territories called colonies in favor of the interests of the metropolis. Césaire (2000) sees the colony as a “safety valve” for the imperial projects of modern societies.

For Mudimbe (2013, 7), the phenomenon of colonialism implies the “transformation of non-European areas into fundamentally European constructs”, whose result is not only political and economic domination but, above all, the colonization of knowledge structures. Additionally, according to Baró (1979, 92), there are general characteristics of a colony. It can be understood as territorial occupation characterized by the political subjugation of natives, foreign appropriation of natural wealth, expropriation of accumulated profits, utilization of the native population as the primary workforce, the creation of a market geared towards foreign industry supplied by that same industry, and the lack of capital accumulation in the hands of natives.

There existed an ethos of colonial power. Within the framework of the colonial conception of power, the main element was the need to maintain order, which was to be established from the outside in, a process characterized by Fanon (1963, 32) as a violent method that, beyond economic and political domination, was cultural, psychological, and physical. In Africa, generally, colonial politics manifested as “indigenous policy” and involved the entire continent in a colonial network based on common ideas and beliefs, such as the discourse of civilizing mission and the articulation between State, Church, and commercial interests (Betts 2010, 375).

Mozambique became independent in 1975 after the national liberation struggle led by the Mozambique Liberation Front (*Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*, FRELIMO, in Portuguese) between 1964 and 1974, marking the commencement of the national state-building process. Subsequently, the

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2 In the case of Portugal, between the 19th and 20th centuries, Imperial Charters were issued to commercial companies in exchange for the responsibility of maintaining “law and order,” as will be explained further (Cabaço 2009, 45).

country plunged into a civil war that antagonized the FRELIMO regime and the Mozambican National Resistance (*Resistência Nacional Moçambicana*, RENAMO, in Portuguese) between 1977 and 1992, when the Peace Accords were signed. However, it is a fact that the attainment of political independence by a colonial territory did not signify, nor does it signify, the total elimination of dependency relations (Mazrui 2010).

The aim of the paper is to examine the historical formation of Mozambique based on the colonization process and to identify historical milestones in the shaping of Portuguese colonial action until the first half of the 20th century. Through an interpretative-analytical approach, grounded in the review of literature on Mozambique's history, the article seeks to answer the questions: What kingdoms inhabited this territory before colonialism? How was the colonial process in shaping Mozambique? What role did colonialism play in the invention of Mozambique?

At the core of the reflection proposed in this article lies the relationship between colonial power and the formation of national territory. In the case of Mozambique, this occurred through a process whose tensions were never peaceful, requiring an independence war between 1964 and 1975 to end centuries of foreign, colonial domination. Thus, the relationship between these two processes harks back to a long history that began with the imperial occupation of this territory.

Therefore, the importance of a historical perspective for the proposed interpretation must be recognized. History serves as the instrument to question the reality of the relationships between colonial power and the formation of Mozambique. The aim is to comprehend these phenomena based on their significance, context, and connections to broader issues of power relations. Hence, two concepts of colonialism are brought into dialogue with the proposed argument.

Following Meneses (2019), broadly speaking, colonialism is a political project based on violence that erased the history of dominated peoples and, in many ways, persisted beyond the end of colonial empires. In the case of the African continent, for instance, Mudimbe (2013) indicates how Africa remains the object of Eurocentric knowledge through a set of concepts, discourses, and paradigms resulting from the political appropriation of colonial projects – the colonial library.

For this author, the colonial organization of a territory implies the articulation of three devices: (i) the domination, distribution, and exploitation of the territory (domination of space); (ii) policies of acculturation of natives (reforming of minds); and (iii) the implementation of new modes

of production, i.e., capitalist modes oriented toward the metropolis market (integrating local economic histories into Western perspectives) (Mudimbe 2013, 7). Thus, during the period of shaping the modern world, colonialism and imperial domination connected most of the world, establishing the most fundamental relationships between Europe and the rest of the world.

The working hypothesis is that the process of historical formation of Mozambique resembles an African mosaic, constituted by multiple peoples, states, and empires that inhabited distinct territorialities and were historically marked by the Portuguese colonizing structure/action, encompassing the physical, human, and cultural aspects of the experience of domination and exploitation. This process is part of the broader framework of the constitution of the modern-colonial world.

To achieve this, the text is divided into three parts. The first delves into the subject with a historical consideration of the African kingdoms that inhabited the current territory of Mozambique before colonization. The second part presents the broad strokes of Portuguese colonization in the African country, emphasizing the process of territorial conquest. The third part addresses the consolidation of colonial policy in Mozambique in the first half of the 20th century.

## **Kingdoms and African empires in Mozambique**

According to Meneses and Ribeiro (2008, 10), the “Indian Ocean was, since the 10th century, a place of a complex trade network, dominated by Arabs and Swahilis until the 15th century, and later by the Portuguese from the 15th century onwards.” This commerce took place along routes connecting the Asian coasts of the Persian Gulf, India, and the East to the eastern coast of the continent, extending to the south of Mozambique. It’s worth noting that in the 19th century, Portuguese presence was still limited to the coasts, organized in isolated trading posts, interconnected solely by sea (Boxer 1969). According to Abdul Sheriff:

the sea was a pathway for contacts and interaction with the outside world. Hence, one of the main aspects of the history of the eastern coast of Africa over the last 2000 years was not isolation, but the intermingling of two cultural currents that formed a new amalgam, the Swahili coastal civilization. The vehicle for this process was trade, which facilitated the integration of the East African coast into the international economic system (Sheriff 2010, 627, our translation)<sup>3</sup>.

According to Ferreira (1999, 50), the settlement of populations from the Persian Gulf, one of the main trade centers in the Indian Ocean, on the eastern coast of the African continent took place between the 9th and 13th centuries. With the expansion of trade and the advent of Islam, political communities such as sheikhdoms and sultanates were established, later suppressed by the Portuguese.

Continuing with Ferreira (1999), there is evidence that, since the 8th century, the northern coast of Mozambique was part of the Swahili world, where Islamic conceptions and practices were shared. Even in the south of the country, in the present-day province of Inhambane, there were locations operating within the sphere of Islamic culture and economy. In the 15th and 16th centuries, Angoche, Sofala, Cuama, and the island of Mozambique were under the rule of the Kilwa king, who controlled all the gold and ivory trade with Great Zimbabwe. From 1505 onwards, the Portuguese occupied these regions, leading to the decline of Swahili enclaves in the central and southern parts of Mozambique.

Before colonial occupation, there was the coexistence of various peoples in the territory that now encompasses Mozambique, such as the matrilineal tradition of the Maconde people in the northern territory, the Macuas, the Yao, among many others. Along the coast, there were predominant small Afro-Islamic kingdoms formed from the 16th century by Islamic dynasties originating from the Swahili centers located north of the Rovuma River, notably Kilwa and Zanzibar. In the central Zambezi valley, various peoples resided, including the Chuabo, Sena, and Nhungué.

South of the Zambezi River were the patrilineal tradition peoples, the Shona, inhabiting the present provinces of Sofala, Manica, and Tete, heirs of the old power structure of the Monomotapa, the Tsonga, prevalent

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3 In the original: “o mar foi uma via de contatos e de interação com o mundo exterior. Portanto, um dos aspectos principais da história da costa oriental da África durante os últimos 2000 anos não foi o isolamento, mas a interpenetração de duas correntes culturais que constituíram um novo amálgama, a civilização costeira swahili. O veículo deste processo foi o comércio, que facilitou a integração da costa oriental africana no sistema econômico internacional” (Sheriff 2010, 627).

throughout the region south of the Save River, the Chope and Bitonga, and the Nguni. Furthermore, in the south, mention should be made of the Changané, Mundaús, and Chenguas.

There were, therefore, multiple African states in this territory, many of them in competition. The Gaza State had a period of expansion and organization between 1821-1845, extending from the Incomati River in the south to the Zambezi in the north (Rodney 1971). In 1895, the administrative center of Gaza was burned by the Portuguese, and Ngungunyane, the last emperor of the Gaza Kingdom, was captured in Chayimite near Chibuto on December 28, 1895.

The period between 1895-1900, according to Serra (2000), marked the process of destruction of the political unity of the old states, which progressed with the appointment of rulers, a way of classifying the authority of “tribal chiefs” or Portuguese colonizers who occupied the region. In Maputo, Moamba, Matola, and Tembe, the rulers were members of the old royal lineage but became part of the colonial administration. In Gaza, the appointment of “*régulos*” continued with members of the royal lineages that had dominated before the arrival of the Nguni until the disintegration of the Gaza State. In 1897, Mouzinho de Albuquerque established negotiations with the South African Republic regarding migratory labor, aiming to benefit through regulating emigration to South African mines.

The contradiction is that Mousinho de Albuquerque became a national hero for leading the campaigns of 1895, and the armed resistance of Mozambique Africans was considered a rebellion (Albuquerque 1935). However, it was only between 1900 and 1930 that Portuguese colonial power was consolidated in southern Mozambique (Boxer 1969).

## The Portuguese colonial action in Mozambique

Henriques (2004, 16) defines three key aspects of the Portuguese colonial action in Mozambique. Their strategy consisted of (i) establishing forts or trading posts in coastal regions to ensure the establishment of commercial relations and use these installations as a source of knowledge about the interior. They also had a clear goal of defending the territory and protecting traders, missionaries, and navigators, so the forts faced both inland and outward; (ii) the strength and impact of European techniques applied to ships, firearms, production techniques, agriculture, construction, and trade were employed to ensure the continuity of Portuguese presence in the occupied

territories; and (iii) the structuring of hierarchical relations between men and women, organizing the African territory in a significant operation of social and cultural landscape transformation, with the introduction of patriarchy.

Within the context of colonization, trade is characterized not only by its economic dimension but as a political operation, influenced by civilizational logics aimed at ensuring control of the colonial space. In this scenario, Portuguese trade imposed the logic of mercantilist commercial organization, based on the exploitation of African populations.

Furthermore, Portuguese settlement was grounded in the religious character of the Catholic faith. By settlement, we can understand the establishment of “a population of European origin that guaranteed Portuguese sovereignty” in the territories that are now called Mozambique (Capela 2010, 118). It’s worth mentioning that Portuguese attempts to introduce sufficient armed forces to support their claims of sovereignty began during Vasco da Gama’s time, who reached the Mozambican coast in 1498 on his voyage to India.

Another important factor to consider in Portugal’s colonial history is that its independence, since the first half of the 12th century, arose from two military conquests: (i) the Portuguese expelled the Arabs and Berbers who occupied the land of the Iberian Peninsula, and (ii) they maintained an “attack-defense policy” regarding Castilian threats, a situation only resolved in 1385, at the Battle of Aljubarrota, with the support of the Burgundy dynasty, which brought the Avis Dynasty to power that same year (Henriques 2004).

In the history of Portuguese colonization, the sea emerged as a platform for the articulation of worlds. Previously, in Europe, mere reference to the sea provoked fear. According to Delumeau (1978), the sea only assumed a recreational function from the 18th century, and sailors were recruited from incarcerated criminals. In Medieval Europe, the prevailing geography taught that Africa was a “torrid zone”, uninhabited and uninhabitable.

This fear of the sea was partially overcome through the Portuguese colonial experience. Bartolomeu Dias’ voyage in 1488 opened the route to the East, and the settlement of the Cape Verde Islands occurred during the reign of Afonso V (1438-1481) when Portuguese elites were interested in occupying (present-day) Morocco. At that time, São Tomé and Príncipe had no indigenous population and were settled by Africans, but land usage was adapted and determined by the European continent (Serra 2000).

The history is well known: the Portuguese navigated the African coast between 1430 and 1490, discovering the route around the Cape of Good Hope; between 1490 and 1520, they sailed from Europe to India, Indonesia,



and China. Christopher Columbus, a Genoese serving Spain, married the governor of Porto's daughter, from where he traveled to the Gold Coast in the Gulf of Guinea (modern-day Ghana, Togo, Benin, and Nigeria). Portugal also explored North America, the River Plate, the coasts of Madagascar, the Arabian Peninsula, and the islands of the Indian Ocean.

In this regard, colonization connected all peoples – Africans, Americans, Asians – with Europeans in hierarchical structures that were never peaceful. The violence of colonization and slavery was formative in the history of the modern world's formation, including Mozambique.

A historical milestone at the onset of Portuguese colonialism was the military conquest of Ceuta in 1415, ending the eight-century Muslim control in the Iberian Peninsula. The expedition departed from Porto in August 1415, comprising over a hundred boats, guided by twenty royal galleons carrying 19,000 men (Davies 1964).

In 1433, the King Dom João I was succeeded by his son, Dom Duarte I, and Dom Henrique persuaded the new king to mount an attack on Tangier that, if successful, would grant Portugal control of Moroccan territory. The expedition set off in 1437 but ended in disaster, and the king's son, the Infante Don Fernando, was abandoned as a hostage in the hands of the Arabs. However, by the late 1470s, after Dom Henrique's death, Portugal controlled four cities in Morocco (Boxer 1969).

Thus, with the gradual establishment of the Portuguese in Africa, the program of voyages and conquests that fueled the phenomenon of colonization began to take shape. According to Henriques (2004, 75), the conquest of Ceuta established the idea that "the military reputation of individual gentlemen could be very profitable". In the following century, during the reign of Dom Sebastião between 1557 and 1578, the perception was renewed that "Portugal's real destiny was the crusade in Morocco". In 1578, Dom Sebastião invaded Morocco with an army of twenty thousand men and perished in the Battle of Alcácer Quibir. The crown passed to Cardinal Henrique, the last male descendant of Dom João I.

In fact, the initial contacts of the Indian coast of Africa with Europe were Vasco da Gama's aforementioned journey in search of the route to the East. It is known that Vasco da Gama reached the region of Natal, present-day South Africa, passing through the island of Mozambique on this first occasion. Since its establishment in the 16th century, the Portuguese crown had two sources of income in Mozambique: customs duties from the island of Mozambique and, to a lesser extent, from Quelimane, and trade (Serra 2000). The accumulated wealth was directed to India or Lisbon.

According to Meneses (2009, 9), the major administrative change in Mozambique occurred in 1752, with the removal of the Mozambique government from the authority of the Portuguese State of India, introducing metropolitan municipalism in some settlements: Inhambane, Sofala, Tete, Quelimane, the island of Mozambique, and Ibo. In 1818, the capital, the island of Mozambique, was elevated to city status, with five thousand inhabitants. The Captain of Mozambique, Sofala, Rios de Cuama, and Monomotapa were elevated to the category of Captain-General (Boxer 1969). From an official standpoint, the General Captaincy of Mozambique, independent of Goa, became a colony.

Portuguese trade was not always a consistently high-volume activity. Liesegang (2000, 149) establishes two phases of foreign trade before 1800: between 1550-1750, there was irregular and low-intensity trade, based on the exchange of ivory for Indian textiles, and between 1750-1800, with the regular arrival of Dutch and English ships, ivory became the primary export product. However, in the second half of the 18th century, the demand for slaves to work in the French islands in the Indian Ocean (Mascarenhas, Bourbon, Reunion, and Mayotte), and especially in Brazil, surpassed the demand for gold and ivory (Rocha 1991). Indeed, the introduction of capitalism in Mozambique occurred in the large plantations in the last decade of the 19th century.

The Mozambican territory was politically organized under the concept of Crown Land Grants, one of the early models of the colonial state in the Zambezi River Valley region, based on the 17th-century idea that lands inhabited by Portuguese belonged to the Crown and were leased for a period of three generations, with the right to levy local taxes and exploit resources (Dinerman 2006, 90).

According to Mondlane (1976, 12), the *Prazos* system in Mozambique dates back to the 17th and 18th centuries. The *prazeiros* were settlers and landowners of Portuguese territories and represented the embodiment of colonial authority. The Crown Land Grants were the material and structural basis for the formation of a patriarchal society in Mozambique. Along the way, a stratification was established, with the *muzungos* (lords) or *donas* (in cases where the authority was a woman) situated at the top, while the rest of society, the slaves, were distributed across various hierarchized orders (Capela 1996). The deadline system in Mozambique gave way to concession companies and lasted until 1942, only replaced by a more direct colonial administration (Mondlane 1976). The decree of August 13, 1832, abolished the Crown Land Grants, the lordships, and the “Alcaidarias-Mores”, but it did little to change the reality. In 1854, a new decree again abolished the deadlines

in the province of Mozambique. The shack tax was created, followed by land concessions to the majestic companies (Isaacman 1972).

It's worth noting that Portuguese colonialism was financially dependent on England, especially in the plantation sector, navigation, and railways, such as the regular monthly maritime connection services to Europe through the Suez Canal, opened for navigation in 1869, or via the Cape and with Asia through Zanzibar, guaranteed in 1874 by English companies (Ribeiro 2002).

An example of English presence in this region was the telegraph lines between Portugal and Mozambique, which began construction in 1875 and were set up by an English company (Kennedy 1971). The railways that linked Lourenço Marques to Pretoria were built between 1886 and 1894 with English capital, as were the lines from Beira to Southern Rhodesia. The two existing banks in Beira operated with English capital: the Standard Bank of South Africa and the Bank of Africa, while the press was limited to the Beira Post, an English newspaper (Silva 2001).

The emergence of Lourenço Marques as the capital and center of the country is linked to phenomena such as the growth of intensive elephant hunting, which increased ivory exports around 1850, the export of labor to the British colony of Natal, and the start of capitalist agricultural projects such as cotton and sugar plantations, and the construction of the port of Durban (Macdonald 2014).

According to Serra (2000, 40), between 1870-1875, the capital was still a "small colonial establishment," with a population of less than a thousand inhabitants where colonial authority was limited. In the 19th century, the fundamental change to understand the emergence of capitalism in Mozambique was the conjunction of two axes related to capitalist economy in Southern Africa in general and the strengthening of economic ties between Mozambique and the British colonies in particular: (i) the opening of the diamond mines in Kimberley demanded workforce migration, and (ii) the gold exploitation in Lydenburg, in eastern Transvaal, associated with the growth of commercial enterprises in the capital such as warehouses and hotels, and the expansion of the commercial network in the interior of the Portuguese colony.

Between 1885-1900, the opening of new gold mines in the South and center of Transvaal (Witwatersrand), the construction of railways, and the emergence of other industries also impacted the formation of Mozambique. The South of the country became the major supplier of labor for the South African mining industry, and the capital was one of the places that received the most revenue from Witwatersrand goods (Cabaço 2009).

It is important to note that the exploitation of the Portuguese colony was carried out with patronage granted to international capital and reproduced through a game of concessions and alliances with other colonial powers. This patronage and game of alliances corresponded to the stage of evolution of Portuguese capitalism in the 19th century. According to Vail (1976), Portugal conceded two-thirds of the territory of Mozambique to concession companies. The Mozambique Company occupied of the territory, the metropolitan government received 7.5% of all total profits, and in return refrained from taxing the areas under private concession.

At the end of the 19th century, to consolidate the occupation and exploitation of the territory that constitutes the current country, the Mozambican territory was divided into four concession zones: (i) the Northern region under the concession regime of the Niassa Company; (ii) a strip extending south of the Zambezi River, a portion acquired by the Mozambique Company and the Zambezia Company; (iii) in the center of the region, also under the Mozambique Company, and (iv) the District of Mozambique, administered directly by the Portuguese government (Vail 1976).

From a global perspective, the advancement of global colonialism was crowned when in 1884 the representative of Germany in England requested an audience with the Foreign Secretary, Lord Granville, to formally deliver a message from Chancellor Bismarck, requesting a meeting involving France, Portugal, among other countries, to discuss the issues and direction of colonial occupation in Africa. The well-known Berlin Conference, held between November 15, 1884, and February 26, 1885, institutionalized the right to occupy African territories, and this event took place in that city (Uzoigwe 2010).

According to Atmore and Oliver (2005, 118), the Berlin Conference, or the partition of Africa as it became known, changed the face of the continent. Until 1879, 90% of the region was controlled by Africans themselves. The initial stages of the partition of Africa involved demands regarding navigation along the coasts and rivers, and the establishment of the principle that only national firms/companies were authorized to exploit a specific territory. By the early 20th century, the partition had been completed, and colonialism had increased, although in Portuguese spaces, the most effective occupation dated from the post-World War II period.

The main impact of this Conference on Portuguese colonialism was that despite the increased administrative control over the territories from 1850, the settlements from the metropolis were only systematically organized after 1885. Effective occupation of territory was a vital principle at the

Berlin Conference. Portugal did not sign the Berlin Act as it reasserted its “historical right” over a vast territory connecting Angola and Mozambique, of which the Pink Map was representative (Cabaço 2009). This Portuguese project to link Angola and Mozambique, passing through the territories of Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Malawi, displeased the British and created a dispute between the empires over these territories (Silva 2001). Portugal succumbed to British pressure through the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty of 1891.

Particularly, the Portuguese Empire utilized all available techniques to effectively occupy its colonies: trade was used as a weapon, white settlers enslaved populations, missionaries acted as “pacifiers”, and military forces occupied the coast; later integrating the “natives” into colonial society but with an inferior status (Mondlane 1976, 34).

It’s important to note that the English contested the territory of Mozambique with Portugal. Portuguese sovereignty over Delagoa Bay, later named Lourenço Marques (now Maputo), was only recognized in 1886 by the Boer Republic of Transvaal, as it provided exclusive access to the sea without British oversight. There was a reaction from the British Imperial Government, and the case was taken to the international arbitration of the President of France, Marshal Mac Mahon, who legitimized Portugal’s claims on July 24, 1875 (Ferreira 1999).

Only after the conquest of the southern region could Portugal focus its efforts in northern Mozambique, where the metropolis was yet to establish its military presence in the early 20th century. The conquest of the Makonde people in the current District of Cabo Delgado only occurred in the 1920s (Dinerman 2006).

António Enes, the first Portuguese High Commissioner for Mozambique, revived the Crown Land Grants through the decree of November 18, 1890, to promote industrial agriculture in the region. He also argued in 1893 that, given their natural inferiority, Africans should be compelled to work on plantations (Lourenço 2010).

António Enes was appointed the Regio-Commissioner of Mozambique in 1895 and became the founder of the Colonial State school. According to Marcello Caetano (1948, 573), António Enes should be “the cornerstone of all study of modern Portuguese colonial administration.” In his memoirs, Enes (1945) comments:

At the time of my arrival in Lourenço Marques, Portuguese authority was not exercised throughout the district, except in the capital and along the railway line (...). The railway line was in danger, and only the city could be considered safe, thanks to its European garrison. It was secure, but still wary. Via telegraph, news from Lourenço Marques warned that a band of “rebels,” estimated at three thousand, had assaulted the railway line and attacked Europeans (Enes 1945, n.p., our translation)<sup>4</sup>.

Aires de Ornelas, Minister of the Navy, who stood out in the conquest campaigns of Mozambique and was one of Enes’ disciples, introduced the administrative career in Mozambique in 1910, strengthening colonial policy. Following the establishment of the Republic in Portugal in 1910, the Ministry of the Colonies was created. It is worth noting that the civil administration in Mozambique was a repressive apparatus to enforce forced labor or migration to neighboring territories.

## From colony to overseas province

The Portuguese occupation of the 20th century was significantly marked by the involvement of Mozambique in the First World War. At the war’s outbreak, the Portuguese had not yet occupied a large part of the territories of Cabo Delgado or Niassa in the north. However, there was a possibility of German troops from Tanganyika invading the northern region of Mozambique, which led to an increased Portuguese military presence in the territory (Meneses 2011).

A German military column led by General Von Lettow crossed the Rovuma River into Mozambican territory in 1914. For nine months, German troops were on Mozambican soil and attacked Portuguese garrisons. Due to German interests in the northern territories of Mozambique, on August 24, 1914, a German attack destroyed a Portuguese military outpost located on lands owned by the Niassa Company. The Lisbon government took immediate military measures, sending a military expedition led by Lieutenant Colonel Pedro Francisco Massano de Amorim. However, according to Freire (2014,

4 In the original: “À data da minha chegada em Lourenço Marques, a autoridade portuguesa não era, pois, exercida, em todo o distrito, senão na capital e na linha férrea (...). A linha-férrea estava em perigo e só a cidade podia considerar-se segura, mercê de sua guarnição europeia. Estava segura, mas continuava desconfiada. Por telégrafo, uma notícia de Lourenço Marques avisava que um bando de “rebeldes” calculados em três mil assaltaram a linha férrea e atacaram europeus” (Enes 1945, n.p.).

12), there is “no historiographical record of any further military action at the border initiated by either party until the declaration of war in March 1916”. It is noteworthy that Germany declared war on Portugal in 1916.

In April 1916, the Portuguese reclaimed Quionga, a settlement near the southern bank of the Rovuma River, which had been captured by the Germans in 1894. This was Portugal’s only acquisition in the negotiations of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 (Freire 2014). These actions led the northern border of the colony to the banks of the Rovuma, also recognized by the Treaty of Peace of Versailles on June 28, 1919. Germany lost Tanganyika to England.

At the end of 1918, two English expeditionary forces disembarked from Nyasaland and Rhodesia, consisting of soldiers from West Africa (Nigeria, Gambia, and the Gold Coast). The significant presence of British soldiers aimed primarily to safeguard strategic positions in the context of the war’s conclusion negotiations.

The Mozambican colony, bordering German East Africa, became involved in the war, which had a profound impact on the consolidation of modern colonial policies. The colonial administration institutionalized forced labor and transformed power relations between the metropolitan society and the colonized society, reinforcing the division between ‘civilized settlers’ and ‘native barbarians’.

According to Meneses (2014), in a context of a shortage of European soldiers, the metropolis turned to Africans and introduced *chibalo*<sup>5</sup>, a regime of forced labor critical in transforming peasants into carriers who would assist in transporting people and military equipment. In 1914, with the war’s onset, the Portuguese colonial administration trained between twenty to thirty thousand Africans. At this time, Portugal controlled the south of the colony while companies controlled the central and northern territories, each equipped with its own defense forces.

Following the war, an incipient import substitution industry emerged in Mozambique, producing goods for the small settler population, such as cement, maize flour, cigarettes, soap, and, of lesser importance, mineral water and ice. This marked the formation of the first layers of the Mozambican proletariat. The railway and port workers were numerically the most significant urban labor force and played a central role in the struggle against labor exploitation (Ngoenha 1992).

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5 The *chibalo* is understood as the colonial policy to minimize costs and increase control over the colonist. For Zamparoni (1998, 93) “it was on *chibalo* that economic growth in Mozambique was basically based”.

The occupation of Mozambique progressed in the 20th century in line with changes in the institutional and territorial organization of the colony. In 1907, Ayres de Ornelas, Minister of the Navy and Overseas, introduced the Administrative Reform of Mozambique, modernizing the institutional organization under a Governor-General and dividing the territory into districts, each with its District Governor. The districts were divided into smaller precincts forming councils, overseen by an administrator. Districts constituted the primary administrative units where traditional leaders were incorporated into the local level of colonial authority.

Before the Estado Novo (1933-1974) formally defined itself constitutionally, Salazar crafted the decree that reorganized the political project for the colonies. The “Colonial Act” of 1930 renewed colonial policy, characterized by an imperial phase and the “indissolubility of the empire”, which lasted until the end of 1951.

The Colonial Act (Portugal 1930) was a legal instrument that reaffirmed Portugal’s historical right and vocation to its possessions, clarifying that the overseas territories were called colonies and constituted the Portuguese colonial empire (article 3). It emphasized that this empire was “in solidarity” with its “parts” and “with the metropolis” (article 5), restricting the “alienation” of territories (article 7), reserving to the State the “administration” and “exploitation” of the colonies (article 11), providing remuneration for the work of “natives in the service of the State” (article 19), and assigning the “defense” and “protection” of indigenous peoples to the State (article 15).

The Indigenous Labor Code of 1928, which introduced compulsory work for public purposes as a replacement for slavery, the Colonial Act of 1930, and the Constitution of 1933 were instruments that shaped the legal framework of the new policy for colonial territories during the most centralized phase of the regime (Freire 2014). In 1953, another colonial mechanism, the Statute of Portuguese Indigenous People in Guinea, Angola, and Mozambique, the last legal device before the abolition of the *indigenato*<sup>6</sup> in 1961, was the instrument of colonial policy regarding assimilation. Assimilation was part of Portuguese colonial policy, whereby an “indigenous” person would gain the legal status of a citizen by becoming Portuguese. The Portuguese concept of assimilation had an ethical and Catholic dimension. The mission was a process of acculturation of the colonized, enhancing the Portuguese side while diminishing the African part. It was more of a cultural genocide.

According to Castelo (1998, 30), the new colonial policy of the 20th century broke from the past in three directions: the centralization of metro-

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6 Law that aimed to assimilate “indigenous” people into Western culture.



politan power exercise; the replacement of foreign capital with nationalization; and the development of the colonies in favor of the “integration of the empire.” The policy was formulated by Armindo Monteiro, Minister of the Colonies between 1931 and 1935, who conceived the empire as a “timeless” and “indissoluble” entity, above all interests.

Another characteristic of this period was the replacement of the term “colony” with “overseas provinces,” which corresponded to a declaration of national unity between the metropolis and non-contiguous territories. Some may argue that the term “overseas province” would be less contentious than “colony”, but according to Capela (1996, 167), the transformation of colonies into provinces was “devoid of any degree of true political autonomy; it was cosmetic and morphological”<sup>7</sup>.

It’s worth noting that throughout history, the territory of Mozambique had various designations: Captaincy of Sofala (1501-1752), administratively linked to Portuguese India; Captaincy-General of Mozambique, Sofala, and Rios de Sena (1752-1836), which was linked to Lisbon until its independence in 1975; Province of Mozambique (1836-1891); State of East Africa (1891-1893); Province of Mozambique (1893-1926); Colony of Mozambique (1926-1951); Province of Mozambique (1951-1972); State of Mozambique (1972-1975); and finally, the Republic of Mozambique from 1975 onwards (Cruz 2008).

However, the concept of an overseas province refers only to the period between 1951-1972 when the designation ‘Portuguese Colonial Empire’ was abolished, attempting to depersonalize Portugal as a colonizing country in international forums. The concept of an overseas province considered this territory no longer as a colony but an inseparable and integral part of Portugal, a ‘Multiracial and Pluricontinental Nation’.

For Ribeiro (2002), the 1951 revision was mainly triggered by international and domestic pressures that transformed Portuguese imperialism. Thus, in an attempt to silence centuries of domination, a colonial society became ‘pluricontinental’, and “a history of five centuries of colonization was converted into five centuries of relations between different peoples and cultures” (Castelo 1995).

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<sup>7</sup> However, by 1663, the expression overseas provinces was already being used in official documents, and that’s how the Portuguese Territories were referred to in the Constitutional Charter of 1821. Title X of the 1832 Constitution was titled “Regarding the Overseas Provinces”. As early as 1612, the Council of the Indies had already established this principle that these territories were “neither distinct nor separate from this Kingdom”. Was not new, therefore, the affirmation of unity between the center and its “parts”.

The Colonial Act was replaced by the Organic Law of the Portuguese Overseas in 1953. After World War II, Portugal sought to erase the vestiges of the imperialist conception in which overseas territories were colonies. Another significant legal instrument was the “Statute of Natives of the Provinces of Guinea, Angola, and Mozambique” approved in 1954.

Particularly, its chapter “On the extinction of the status of native and the acquisition of citizenship” defines the legal conditions that allow Africans to acquire Portuguese citizenship, namely: being over 18 years old, speaking Portuguese, working, owning property, displaying good behavior, and “acquiring habits” to apply “public and private law” (Portugal 1953).

In 1961, the colonial war began in Angola, and the Indian Union (present-day Republic of India) occupied Goa, Daman, and Diu, the last Portuguese territories in India. Internationally, Portugal found itself increasingly isolated, with numerous declarations within the United Nations condemning Portuguese colonialism. Salazar’s reaction was to adopt new measures concerning the colonies, such as sending troops and military equipment to Angola and altering legislation related to African populations, revoking the Statute of Natives.

At the border with Angola, the Congo became independent in June 1960, bringing the wave of decolonization to Southern Africa. At that time, Afro-Asian decolonizations were a significant force in international relations, and the first movements of resistance and armed struggle emerged in Mozambique. Throughout the fight for independence, these movements created conditions leading to the end of colonialism (Barrios Díaz 2022).

In essence, Portugal’s colonial action was based on the concept of colonies as overseas provinces, that is, as part of the metropolitan territory. The Portuguese aimed to preserve the unity of the Empire by all means. This Empire had two distinctive characteristics: sub-imperialism, as Lisbon operated under British dependence since the 18th century, and fascism since 1926.

This context persisted for many decades, and indeed, Portugal had no intention whatsoever of granting independence to its colonies but sought to integrate them into a complex relationship with the metropolis. Portugal propagated the myth of a new civilizing mission in the midst of the 20th century, presenting itself as a unitary, universal, and non-colonial state. This narrative positioned Mozambique to remain as a province, with Africans holding the status of Portuguese citizens.

## Conclusion

The article identified the historical antecedents in the formation of Mozambique over centuries of the establishment of African empires and states, along with the Portuguese colonization. Firstly, it situated the African peoples who had diverse historical experiences in this territory, which, in many ways, became homogeneous with Portuguese colonialism, encompassing the entire territory from the 20th century, but with a presence along the coast dating back to the 16th century. These peoples organized states that were subsequently conquered by Portugal.

Next, the work presented how the Portuguese sought to control this territory from various settlements along the coast, through a colonization effort that intertwined state, church, and market interests. From the mid-18th century, the slave trade to the Indian and Atlantic Oceans became increasingly significant, impacting the respective regions differently. Portuguese colonialism was established through military campaigns, territorial dominance, such as the Crown Land Grants, and concession of parts of the territory to concession companies, highlighting the central role of colonization in the modern formation of the country. When these concessions ended in 1942, the colonial state developed direct administration throughout the territory, headquartered in Lourenço Marques (Maputo).

Lastly, the work aimed to contextualize the changes implemented by the Empire in the 20th century to maintain the colonies, even though they were masked as overseas provinces. The article underscored the central role of Portuguese colonization while also pointing out the rise of national liberation struggles in the former Portuguese colonies in Africa, equally significant in the creation of Mozambique.

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## ABSTRACT

Modern colonialism denied the history of dominated peoples and, in many ways, persists beyond the end of colonial empires as a political project based on violence. In the case of the African continent, it remains an object of Eurocentric knowledge through a set of concepts, discourses, and paradigms resulting from the political appropriation of colonial projects. In this sense, discussing the history of Mozambique refers to a set of peoples and cultures that share the common experience of Portuguese colonization and the multiple processes of anti-colonial resistance over the centuries. The objective of this article is to examine the historical formation of Mozambique based on the colonization process and to identify historical milestones in the shaping of Portuguese colonial action until the first half of the 20th century.

Through an interpretative-analytical approach grounded in the literature review on Mozambique's history, the article aims to address questions such as: Which peoples inhabited this territory before colonialism? What was the historical process of Mozambique's formation? What role did colonialism play in the invention of Mozambique?

## KEYWORDS

Mozambique. Colonization. Empire.

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