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Eric Allina. *Slavery by Any Other Name: African Life under Company Rule in Colonial Mozambique.* Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012. xiii + 255 pp. $49.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8139-3272-9.

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Forced Labor in Mozambique

Eric Allina's *Slavery by Any Other Name* examines the history of the Mozambique Company from its creation in 1892 to the conclusion of its royal charter in 1942 in the eponymous colony. While concessionary companies were reasonably common in Portugal's African empire, Lisbon granted the Mozambique Company an exceptional level of sovereignty within the enterprise's expansive domain, which stretched from the Indian Ocean coast to the South Rhodesian (Zimbabwean) border in the heart of the colony. Host to an array of industries and private operators, the company "transformed and sustained servile labor" by instituting a pervasive forced labor regime to furnish the African workers that these various commercial endeavors required (p. 12). The conditions under which these labor conscripts toiled were acutely exploitative, and often inhumane. Company officials were not only aware of these oppressive arrangements, but were often complicit or even actively involved in engineering them. Yet, like most Portuguese colonial administrators, they typically only privately lamented the violence if they did at all, while publicly denying the existence of coercion, disingenuously reciting official colonial labor policy (versus actual practice "on the ground"), or simply citing the benefits of any formal, indigenous work regimen as a key pillar in Lisbon's broader "civilizing mission."

Allina fruitfully compares the forced labor regime in place in the Mozambique Company's territory to a variety of different forms of unfree or conscripted labor, characterizing this local expression of coercive recruitment and ensuing drudgery as "virtual slavery." In fact, the corpus of criticism towards the labor policies in Portugal's African colonies has long been accreting, comprised of international and, on rare occasions, domestic critiques that date back to the end of the nineteenth century, an accumulation that Allina thoroughly chronicles in the text. Its articulators have included abolitionists, missionaries, social activists, politicians, and scholars, among others, and via *Slavery by Any Other Name*, Allina adds his own voice to this chorus. Allina rightly points out that Portugal was not unique in its employment of forced labor, as each of the European imperial powers instituted analogous regimes of one sort or another in their respective territories. Rather, he suggests that Portugal's was different due to "its longevity and its dominance of the colonial economy" (p. 12). In particular, Allina claims that the Mozambique Company developed a system of forced labor "more efficient and extensive than any in Africa" (p. 13). Although the subjective nature of this claim renders it impossible to substantiate–a consideration of cases just from Portugal's colony of Angola may well be sufficient to problematize it–the conviction in the statement nonetheless conveys a ruthless model of labor conscription that remains beyond dispute.

In an attempt to trace the dynamic of "response and counterresponse," Allina also traces Africans' actions and reactions to the Mozambique Company's forced labor regime, including their underlying motivations and objectives, the shifting strategies they employed, and the divergent degrees of success they enjoyed. Although indigenous men constituted the primary targets (and victims) of this forced labor scheme, Allina also considers the plights of African youth and women, who often found themselves similarly toiling as conscripted workers. In exploring the creative responses of men, women, and children to this crushing labor regime–strategic reactions

that Allina suggests fell somewhere between "thralldom and (open) resistance"–he highlights the limits of colonial/corporate power, but also its significant reach (p. 16).

Allina draws heavily on the Mozambique Company's own "long-lost" archive to reconstruct this story. Though the whereabouts of this invaluable collection of reports, documents, and correspondence was for some time unknown, the archive was eventually located in a rudimentary repository in Beira, the coastal city that formerly served as the site for the company's headquarters. The archive is now housed at Mozambique's Historical Archives (AHM) in Maputo and, from the mid 1990s, has been open for scholarly inquiry. An MA thesis from the 1980s by a Mozambican student reflects limited access to these materials, but *Slavery by Any Other Name* is the first book to make extensive use of this "long-lost trove" (p. viii). In his mining of the archive's constituent materials, Allina carefully teases out Africans' varied motivations for their noted actions, as well as their shifting objectives and strategies as they engaged with the powerful company. As part of the research process, Allina also mined, among other sources, an array of colonial documents housed in Portugal and Mozambique, while also gathering oral testimony to assist with the construction of the narrative.

Allina has also incorporated a series of superb photographs, presumably from the company archive, which are featured as a set in the middle of the book, rather than periodically embedded in the text. These images illuminate the working and living conditions, as well as the asymmetrical racial relations, that predominated in the Mozambique Company's territory. Maps in the introduction are useful in geographically situating the reader and also provide a spatial understanding of the events and developments that appear in the narrative.

The book features a series of chapters that are topically arranged, although within each of them a loose diachronic order can readily be discerned. Chapter 1 considers the genesis of Portuguese rule in Mozambique, the origins and establishment of the chartered company, the justification for and implementation of the forced labor system, and the ways that this scheme brutally exploited those Africans it ensnared. Chapter 2 widens and deepens the discussion of the forced labor system in the charter territory, including the ways in which its application was significantly more violent and cynical than even the Portuguese colonial officials who devised and sanctioned abusive labor policies in the colonies intended it to be. Allina provides examples of local company officials stationed on the ground who urged caution and moderation, even as they unflinchingly supported the forced labor regime, but these sentiments were predictably muted by others who were unconcerned with the immediate or long-term impact of extreme coercion. Chapter 3 taps the international and local debate regarding this form of "modern slavery," and also explores the ways that both the Portuguese state, in all its variations, and the Mozambique Company were able to weather recurring, if somewhat sporadic, criticism by invoking the moralistic "civilizing mission." Allina also includes mention of Africans' protests and their articulation of grievances, though these strategic undertakings had minimal impact and were, in practice, riskier than they were potentially efficacious. Chapter 4 traces a more effective pattern of noncompliance: mobility. This strategy took many different forms, including the relocation of entire villages, as well as individuals, ahead of labor recruiters. Often times, this act took Mozambicans across the proximate South Rhodesian border, but in many other cases, as far away as the South African mines. To help stem this exodus, the Mozambique Company resorted to extreme violence and, when coupled with its local consolidation of power, Allina indicates that, eventually, "mobility remained but a vestige of individual sovereignty" (p. 104). Correspondingly, most residents newly resigned themselves to some type of engagement with the company. Chapter 5 considers the ways that the Mozambique Company co-opted regional chiefs, forcing them to participate in the forced labor regime or else forfeit whatever (nominal) power that they still possessed. These somewhat sympathetic figures had little choice but to cooperate; if they demonstrated anything less than enthusiastic support, the company immediately turned on them. Chapter 6 traces the disruptive impact that colonialism and the labor regime had on local African society, including the distortion of existing gender and generational relations and the ways that individuals who occupied more secure social positions, e.g., adult and elderly men, "were less subject to principles of reciprocity, based on norms of mutual obligation, and could at times ignore them impunity" (p. 125). In this new power configuration, African women and youth had fewer opportunities for remunerated labor and, thus, declining social prospects. Chapter 7 once again highlights the discrepancy between company policy and practice, in this case regarding African residents' ability to freely choose their employer. Not surprisingly, the Mozambique Company aggressively circumscribed this alleged liberty, though Allina also establishes that many Africans outmaneu-

vered the charter company by deserting and then reappearing elsewhere as "voluntary workers" (*voluntários*), or by traveling to South Africa to secure employment on the mines. Chapter 8 offers a fascinating account of successful African farmers and their emergence as an indigenous elite in the charter territory. Perhaps the most interesting facet of this history is the facilitating role that wives played in these elite men's ascension. Regardless, Allina soberly reminds us that race trumped all other considerations and, thus, no matter how "European" these Africans acted or dressed, they could not escape Portuguese settlers' racist angst, jealousy, and violence. Finally, a conclusion briefly considers the decades following the conclusion of the charter in 1942 and the consequent absorption of the Mozambique Company's managerial apparatus into the colonial regime, which ultimately ushers the reader into the postcolonial period.

Allina's narrative evinces a gifted writer, one capable of turning a phrase while also crafting solid, functional paragraphs that keep the narrative moving forward and that flow seamlessly into one another. Although the book occasionally features unwieldy sentences (e.g., spanning seven or more lines of text), these passages are only conspicuous due to their infrequency. In general, Allina's prose is straightforward, making for a pleasant, enjoyable read, and he deftly weaves the prodigious data he has collected into the narrative. What he has produced is a text rich in description that brings this often unsettling history alive and, ultimately, offers us nothing less than the first detailed history of central Mozambique from the end of the nineteenth century through the first half of the twentieth.

Slavery by Any Other Name is at its best when Allina is forging compelling linkages and connections between the local application of forced labor in the Mozambique Company's territory and the shifting international discourse surrounding slavery, abolition, colonialism, labor, (im)morality, and modernity. While drawing important distinctions between different formulations of bonded labor, Allina situates the company's particular brand of forced labor in this broader context and demonstrates how local labor policy was influenced by this international debate, but also how it both fed and reinforced the sentiments of those who were at the center of this multicontinental discussion. In other words, this interplay provides an important historical example of the global shaping the local, and vice versa. Perhaps most importantly, Allina shows how even those international bodies with the mandate to curb or, eventually, stamp out forced labor, were riddled with a lingering racism that warped the way(s) that they framed the "labor question" and led them to confirm rather than condemn what were obvious, egregious examples of exploitation.

For all of *Slavery by Any Other Name's* myriad virtues, one can't help but feel that it could have been an even better book. The first issue the reader encounters is the absence of a central, organizing argument (or arguments). I read the introduction twice, but each time, though having been treated to an interesting, concise discussion, was unable to identify an overarching contention that the ensuing chapters would serve to bolster. In fact, the only time Allina makes an explicit argument, it is merely to assert what the African experience of forced labor in Mozambique was *not*–namely, "fundamentally different from that which had prevailed elsewhere in colonial Africa" (p. 12). It is unclear, therefore, what, specifically, Allina is arguing that will substantively alter existing understandings of, or open up new ways of thinking about, Africa's past. Consequently, it is impossible to assess the book's cogency; without clearly defined analytical and historiographical objectives, an evaluation of this nature is precluded. For all of the rich reconstruction Allina affords us, and the attendant knowledge generated, it is hard to determine how this book moves the field significantly forward.

In part, this may be an issue of audience. While a text intended for an undergraduate or even a general audience need not belabor or even showcase its analytical and historiographical contributions, the level of sophistication in Allina's prose, the extensive, original research conducted, the copious details provided and, finally, the pitch of other books in the series, collectively suggest that the book is intended for a scholarly audience. Perhaps an editor's note would have helped clarify and thereby signal the book's ideal/intended deployment?

Three key adjustments to the book's organization would also have enhanced the text. First, the introduction concludes without a chapter outline, so each successive chapter comes as somewhat of a surprise to the reader and often features only minimal (logical) linkages to the proceeding one, and vice versa. This effect is exacerbated because the chapters are topical, rather than chronological, so the reader moves rather blindly through the narrative jumping from topic to another with little, or no, forewarning. Second, because the book doesn't feature a central, organizing argument that is (re-)referenced in the ensuing chapters and since the organizational logic is never revealed to the reader via an initial

chapter outline, the way that the story is intended to be framed remains unclear. And, third, the chapter lengths are uneven, suggesting a glut of data in some areas and a paucity in others, which grants the narrative an uneven, unbalanced quality.

Finally, a more thorough engagement with the oral evidence would greatly enhance the study. While both the author and the book jacket boast of "more than one hundred interviews," Allina never critically engages with this oral evidence, even if only to identify basic mnemonic challenges associated with interviewing individuals about events that occurred at least fifty-five years earlier. Instead, the reader learns only that some interviews were conducted one-on-one, while others were done in groups, and that the author was concerned about inadvertently reproducing colonial-era relationships by posing a question related to age that prompted informants to produce their identification cards, reminiscent of colonial officials demanding Africans' pass cards. Allina also informs us that he assured informants that their identities would be kept confidential, which is a common enough scholarly practice under certain circumstances, but neglects to tell the reader why it was necessary in this case, thereby raising the question. An explication would surely offer interesting insights into contemporary power dynamics and historical memory in Mozambique–the presumable reasons for withholding the informants' names. Even more importantly, though, the anonymity renders the African voice in the narrative even more inaudible than it already is, as oral testimony barely features in the text. A scan of the footnotes section reveals that only roughly thirty-five, out of more than a thousand notes, have either a direct or indirect link to the oral evidence gathered. Given the scarcity of African voices in the text, the anonymity of the informants exacerbates their indefiniteness–in sharp contrast to the many Portuguese who feature so prominently in the narrative, some of whom we come to "know" reasonably well. In fact, interviews with former officials of the Mozambique Company would have been greatly welcomed: with the charter at the heart of this history, it is unfortunate that Allina elected to rely exclusively on archival material to reconstruct this dimension of the story. Of course, given that the terminal temporal parameter of the study is 1942, the author's reliance on archival sources is entirely understandable, but the allegedly important body of oral evidence that Allina collected is, at worst, underused, and, at best, overstated.

Notwithstanding the issues outlined above, *Slavery by Any Other Name* makes important contributions to understandings of: the Portuguese colonial project; imperial justifications and operations; forced labor regimes; the shifting (evolving?) international discourse regarding slavery, colonialism and indigenous labor; and the ways that Africans responded to oppressive conditions in the colonial past. For the casual reader, Allina exposes a ghastly, almost certainly unknown history through his carefully researched study, akin to Adam Hochschild's accomplishment via *King Leopold's Ghost* (1998). Students of both European imperial and African history will appreciate the action-reaction dynamic that featured within the Mozambique Company's charter and the ways that events and developments on the ground shaped colonial/corporate policy, and vice versa. Finally, scholars of Lusophone Africa will be grateful that Allina has at last colored in a heretofore reasonably blank geographical and temporal space in Mozambique's past. However, these same readers may also lament the fact that the book does not do more to deliver on the promise of its parent series' title: Reconsiderations in Southern African History. Despite the book's considerable edificatory value, its modest historiographical ambitions fail to prompt a serious "reconsideration" of current, widely accepted concepts and understandings of Africa's past, even as it undeniably deepens them. To be sure, it is not clear that was, in fact, Allina's aim; moreover, upon final review, the book's multitudinous strengths and realized contributions far outweigh its relatively scarcer potentialities.

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