

History and Culture

Areas such as Mozambique were already part of a wider economy as early as the sixth century, when Arabs maintained a trade post in Sofala. The discovery of a sea route to India by the Portuguese sailor Vasco da Gama in 1498 heralded incorporation of the region into a European dominated political and economic system which in the end resulted in its integration in a colonial world order. Colonialism has had a profound influence on countries such as Mozambique. Although brief and fleeting (effective occupation, an ambition incited by the Berlin Conference of 1884-85, lasted but half a century, as only in the 1920s African sovereignty was fully quenched), Portuguese rule implied a specific process of incorporating the different segments of Mozambican society in the global political, economic and cultural system.

Initially, the Portuguese concentrated their attention on the coast in the Centre and North of the country, where they established permanent trade posts in Sofala (1505) and Ilha de Moçambique (1507). Delagoa Bay was discovered by the Portuguese navigator, Antonio de Campo, one of Vasco da Gama's Captains and appears for the first time on a map in 1502.

In 1545 another Portuguese sailor, Lourenço Marques, stayed in the area. His arrival meant the start of hunting elephant for their highly sought after ivory. The Portuguese established contact with King Nhaca of Inhaca Island, who allowed them to establish a trading post on the small nearby island which thus became known as the Island of the Portuguese, it was used as trading headquarters throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. British surveyors in the eighteenth century called it the Portuguese Elephant Island, so named after the ill-famed trade. It remains today as Portuguese Island.

Later, the Portuguese established themselves on the mainland. In 1782 they built a fortress, which became the nucleus of a white settlement named after Lourenço Marques. In the late nineteenth century this settlement expanded as a result of economic development in South Africa, and in 1898, it substituted Ilha de Moçambique as the colony's capital.

In 1861 Navy Captain Bickford, had declared Inhaca and Elephant islands British territory; an act protested against by the Lisbon authorities. In 1872 the dispute between Great Britain and Portugal was submitted to the arbitration of Adolphe Thiers, the French president; and on 19 April 1875 his successor, Marchal MacMahon, declared in favor of the Portuguese. An administrator known as the Chefe do Posto was appointed and housed in a semi-fort built on a cliff facing the bay. This semi-fort is still in existence to this day. The lighthouse was built at Cabo Inhaca near the Northeast point in 1894. Today 2M, a popular beer brewed in Mozambique is named after MacMahon. Parts of the shores and dunes were declared nature reserves by the Mocambican government in 1965 and further reserves were introduced since 1976, incorporating land areas and some of the shores and coral gardens. After independence in 1975, the new government renamed the city Maputo, after King Mabhudu that had ruled the south of the country in the eighteenth century. Notwithstanding the relevance of colonial occupation to the actual cultural, socio-economic and political conditions in southern Mozambique, until the late nineteenth century local imperialist ambitions were more important as to defining the destiny of political entities in the region. The Nhaca Kingdom is a case in point. When the Portuguese arrived, King Nhaca ruled over a large area around Delagoa Bay. Nhaca's main settlement was west of Maputo city, on the Umbeluzi river. In the eighteenth century, the Nhaca lost their influence due to the encroachment of various other local rulers and were forced to retreat to Machangulo Peninsula and the island that today still bears their name. Later, even here the Nhaca were defeated by the Tembe who conquered the entire region south of Maputo city between the Lubombo mountains and the ocean. At the height of its power, in mid-eighteenth century, the Tembe Kingdom became divided into two parts. One part covered the area between the Lubombo mountains and Maputo river and was ruled from Catembe, just across the Bay in front of what today is Maputo City. The other part covered the area east of the Maputo River and extended from Inhaca Island in the north to the lands of Sangandabe and Mepelenda in the south. Its ruler was King Mabhudu, who had headed the conquest of this area on behalf of his father. Mabhudu resided at a place called Macassane, about 20 km south of Salamanga. He died between 1790 and 1795.

On Inhaca, the Nhaca were turned into vassals of Mabhudu but remained the Island's nominal rulers until the late nineteenth century. In a report to the District's Governor dated 9/6/1884, Lieutenant Vincente de Miranda, commander of the military garrison at Inhaca, refers to "Nango, Secretary of the Queen of Inhaca, who is subordinated to the Régulo [King Mabhudu]". In another missive dated 23/4/1885, he mentions only the Secretary of Régulo Mabhudu. In subsequent reports, no further reference is made of the Queen of Inhaca, either. The Nhaca's lost their power as a result of a conflict between Nhaca and Unguanaze, the Régulo. Unguanaze ordered his Induna (captain or councillor) Panguissa to occupy the island and take over control. In the early 1990s, the last Panguissa died and the Nhaca claimed back their position as the Island's traditional rulers.

Although the struggle between local rulers such as Nhaca and Tembe/ Mabhudu should be understood from local rather than global dynamics, it is also true that alliances and commerce with European traders heavily influenced the outcome of that struggle. Mabhudu's rise to what may be seen as "South-East Africa's first great ruler" was largely due to "a network of patronage and coercion" based on ivory trade with Europeans. His power followed the exchange rate of beads, brass and cloth for ivory, which doubled between 1770 and 1780.

The destitution of the Nhaca coincided with the establishment of Portuguese colonial rule. The Mabhudu Kingdom, at that time governed by a queen called Zambi, became tributary to the Portuguese Crown as from 10 February 1888. (Before that, it had been tributary of Zulu King Dingane.) Since then, there was a Portuguese resident at the Royal Court. In January 1896, Zambi's son, King Unguanazi, tried to liberate himself from Portuguese rule but was defeated. The Portuguese ordered his destitution and detention, and Unguanazi and most of the population fled to his territories across the colonial border in what today is Kwazulu-Natal, where he died.

The military occupation of Mabhudu was most certainly only partially related to bi-lateral tensions between King Unguanazi and the Governors of Lourenço Marques. It had a clear global dimension. In the Scramble for Africa, Britain and Portugal disputed control over the Mabhudu area and more in particular Delagoa Bay. This Bay was a natural harbour to Transvaal and for Britain its control was essential to the domination of the Boer Republics. As a matter of consequence of this power struggle, the Mabhudu Kingdom became the apple of discontent between Portuguese and British colonial interests. In 1875, their conflict was officially settled by international arbitration. The president of France, MacMahon ruled that the Portuguese and British colonial dominions should be divided according to the line that today constitutes the border between Kwazulu-Natal and Mozambique but at that time cut straight through the Mabhudu Kingdom. However, reports by the Portuguese Resident at the Mabhudu Royal Court show that the Portuguese were afraid that, despite this settlement, the British would try to expand their control to the North by "courting" the rulers of Mabhudu, whose Kingdom happened to be on either side of the line drawn by MacMahon. In the light of British pretensions, military occupation was a better guarantee to effectuate Portuguese control in the contested area than the maintenance of a weak independent Kingdom.

After Unguanazi's defeat, the Portuguese reorganised the former Kingdom's administration. Machangulo became a chiefdom or "Regulado" administered from the Administrative Post on Inhaca Island within the district of Mabhudu. The Portuguese replaced the chiefs who accompanied their King in exile by individuals they thought they could trust. In July 1896, the Secretary of the Colonial Government asked "for a list of all areas that belonged to Chiefs that were discharged and to whom the vacated offices should be redistributed". Fortunately, the Tembe family had numerous ambitious members and the Portuguese did not have many problems finding suitable substitutes. Thus, the Chief of Machangulo, who had been among Unguanazi's captains and accompanied his King into exile, was replaced by Himbine Tembe.

Within the Portuguese colonial system, Régulos would be largely autonomous as to "indigenous" affairs. Their sole obligations to the colonial authorities were tax collection and the recruitment of the migrant labourers that constituted the region's most important export commodity. In addition, they were responsible for the recruitment of labourers for certain jobs the Portuguese would deem essential (forced labour - *chibalo*). Portuguese administrators dealt with affairs that exceeded the chief's management capacities or involved non indigenous. These administrators were based at the capital of each district and within the district at the "administrative post".

With the end of colonial rule in 1975, the system of indirect rule was abolished as well. The chiefs lost their powers to the administrative authorities that substituted the Portuguese, and to grassroots ramifications of the liberation front, Frelimo. The secretaries of "dynamizing groups" ("*grupos dinamizadores*") aggregated in "circles" and "cells" would execute many of the tasks that had been the Chiefs' and their Induna's privileges. The new order did not imply a complete rupture with the past. It is striking that in Machangulo the subdivision in cells follows the colonial division in Induna territories. Moreover, in many cases, the cells' secretary is a close relative of the late Induna; in two areas he is even one of his sons. One exception on this rule is the former Régulo's resident area, where he himself acted as the Induna. Here, a competing family occupies the position of secretary.

Independence was almost immediately followed by the outbreak of a civil war. Although it was a Mozambican guerrilla movement called National Resistance in Mozambique (Renamo) that challenged the authority of the Frelimo government, it was clear right from the beginning that in many respects this civil war was little else than a continuation of the late nineteenth century's Scramble for Africa. Civil war in Mozambique was the result of global rather than local conflicts. Frelimo sided with the Soviet Union and took a harsh stand against minority rule in Rhodesia and South-Africa. Renamo was first trained and financed by Ian Smith's minority regime in Rhodesia. It also received support from conservative US and Portuguese circles. After Smith's defeat in 1979, South-Africa took it upon itself to support guerrilla warfare in Mozambique. The geography of the Renamo raids confirms changing patronage: up to 1980 war was fought primarily in the centre of the country, where the movement could easily be supplied from Rhodesia. After Smith's defeat, from 1984 onward, war intensified in the South, especially near the South African border.

War affected mainly rural areas, from where many were forced to flee. In 1986, as Renamo raids intensified, it was the turn of the inhabitants of Machangulo to seek refuge. Almost all inhabitants abandoned the area in 1987, mostly for Inhaca, Maputo and South Africa. They started to return only after the Government and Renamo signed a peace treaty in 1992. Not a shot was fired on Inhaca Island during the war.

Source: Roland Brouwer