

**POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS BETWEEN
SOUTHERN RHODESIA AND MOZAMBIQUE
1892-1942**

Joel DAS NEVES(*)

Since long ago Southern Africa constituted a group of countries and people that preserve historical, cultural and economical ties.

However, the region presents a great disparity both concerning the colonization processes and the economic differences and instabilities of its countries, which are at present facing problems of national integration.

The emergence of the Mozambican nation is not circumscribed only to the level of political liberation : it also extends to the economic area. The analysis and the correction of Portuguese colonial models and structures are very important.

My simple contribution intends to present some considerations about this question as well as to appraise the economic relations between Mozambique and Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), which are based on migrant labour supply and the utilization of the central zone's harbour and railways for their import and export requirements, and its significance to define national and regional integration.

(*) Département d'Histoire, Université Eduardo Mondlane, Maputo.

During Portuguese colonial rule, the economic structure of Mozambique was constituted by three distinct economic regions. The centre and north of the country were leased to foreign chartered companies¹ and the south became a labour reserve for the South African mines. This factor contributed negatively to the harmonious development of the country. It means that the unity of the territory in the colonial and post-colonial periods has a special character.

Particularly in Mozambique's central region, the weakness of the Portuguese bourgeoisie in developing the country in function of their accumulation allowed greater influence of regional capital. Of course, economic and political relations of much of the central region of Mozambique with Southern Rhodesia in this period (1892-1942), led the Portuguese colonial government to subordinate the area to the economic interest of Rhodesia, principally through migrant labour and the development of railways and harbours linking to the hinterland.

These developments were not directed to satisfying Mozambican interest in general ; they did not promote complementary projects integrated in the context of local economic development : on the contrary they created a dependent economy.

This pattern of development has continued to the present. Still today Mozambique has a long and densely settled coastline from which communications run to the hinterland but which has little or no unity within itself².

Thus, the presence of Portuguese settlement and the establishment of economic relations with Southern Rhodesia influenced the pattern of the central Mozambique's economic integration and did not develop a system of transport capable of stimulating the development and expansion of a National Market, one of the important considerations in the consolidation of the Mozambican Nation.

1. The economical relations between Mozambique and Southern Rhodesia : The question of labour

The development of plantation agriculture and mining in Southern Rhodesia regulated the integration of Mozambique in Southern Africa economical environment.

The bordering character of Tete and Manica provinces, the difficulties of the capital to impose a greater dynamism to the economy of these territories, as well as the economical instability between Mozambique and Southern Rhodesia,

1. For more details, see Leroy Vail, "Mozambique Chartered Companies : The rule of the Feeble", *Journal of African History* (J. A. H.), XVII, 3, 1976, pp. 389-416.

2. M. D. D. Newitt, "Towards a History of Modern Mozambique", *Rhodesian History*, 5, 1974, p. 41.

contributed to increase the migrant labour of the zone to that British colony, mainly in Tete province, which geographic position transformed it into a "peninsula" among the British territories of Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Nyasaland (Malawi).

The Mozambican migrant labour to Southern Rhodesia was one of the main characteristic of the colonial economy history in Mozambique and Zimbabwe and it was a reflex of several endogenous and exogenous social, political and economical factors. The lack of undertakings in Mozambique, as well as the taxes, low wages, forced labour and the lack of commercial incentives³, played an important role to migration.

Otherwise, the feeble economic dynamism and the application of political and administrative measures were the main reasons of the exodus.

For Rhodesia, the necessity of a cheap and unqualified workforce mainly for mines and plantation agriculture, resulting from the conflict between the foreign and local capitals⁴ constituted the principal catalyst for the attraction of Mozambican. On the other hand, Southern Rhodesia, in comparison with Mozambique, could provide better conditions in terms of works and salaries. Tax collection was less violent and local commerce was more dynamic and profitable.

The stability of the peasantry in Southern Rhodesia, despite the application of political and administrative rules enfeebling it, did not make the supply of labour easy to those colonial enterprises, apart from the competition offered by the South African economy in the attraction of its labour resources⁵.

So, we can consider that this migratory movement was an expression of colonial domination and it reflected the needs of accumulation of mining and planting capital in Southern Rhodesia.

The conflict to define the reserves for labour recruitment in Mozambique, forced Rhodesia to negotiate with South Africa (its principal competitor) and with Portuguese colonial authorities⁶.

After about thirteen years of negotiations the British South Africa Company (BSAC) celebrated the first agreement in 1913⁷ which legalized the recruitment of labour in Mozambique and granted Southern Rhodesia the right of control and supervision of the Nyasaland migratory route, through the Tete corridor, as a means of facing South African competition as well⁸.

3. See Joel Das Neves, "Tete e o Trabalho Migratorio para a Rodésia do Sul, 1890-1913", *Arquivo*, nº10, Outubro, 1991, pp. 83-102.

4. See I. Phimister, *An economic and social history of Zimbabwe 1890-1948*, London, Longman, 1988.

5. Jame, Duffy, *A question of Slavery*, Oxford Clarendon Press, 1967.

6. See P. Warhurst, "The Tete Agreement", *Rhodesian History*, vol. I, 1970, pp. 31-41.

7. *Boletim Oficial de Moçambique* (B.O.), Nº 41, I Série II de Outubro de 1913, pp. 720-722.

8. Warhurst, *op. cit.*

For the Portuguese authorities the agreement was an instrument to regulate the recruitment and not the migration, as it was already a practice that Portuguese authorities could do little to stop it, although it was supposed to be possible to restrict clandestine migration and turn the agreement into an instrument for the collection of revenues.

Table 1
Revenue from Portuguese curator in Salisbury (Harare)

Years	Receipts
1934	4.500.00.0
1936	5.175.00.0
1938	8.568.18.4
1940	11.219.01.2
1942	14.046.17.4

Source : A.H.I./F.N.I. cxs 107 and 108 ⁹

The following agreements were celebrated in 1925 and 1934¹⁰ as a result of a greater dynamism of the Rhodesian economy and the growing demand for a cheaper workforce to cheapen their investments in farms mines and secondary industry.

According to these agreements, Rhodesian authorities could recruit a maximum of 15.000 labourers, with whom contracts lasting one year could be signed.

In spite of the formal functioning of these agreements, it was not easy for the administrative authorities to limit clandestine migration. In fact, it can be argued that owing to the existence of the agreements, clandestine migration was predominant, due to feeble internal economic development and the violence of the local administrative authorities. This situation was related to the attraction that Rhodesian economy exercised, and also to the availability of free transport -lorries (*uleres*)¹¹ crossing Tete territory, linking the neighbouring British colonies,

9. Arquivo Historico de Moçambique (A. H. M.) : Fundo dos Negócios Indígenas (F. N. I.) cxs 107 and 108, Relatórios da Curadoria de 1934 a 1946.

10. B. O., n°18, I Série, 1. 5. 1926, pp. 116-119 ; B. O. n° 39, I Série, 26.9.1934, pp. 615-61.

11. See Peter Scott, "Migrant labour in Southern Rhodesia", *Geographical Review*, (N. Y.), 44, (1), 1954, pp. 29-48.

as well as the reluctance of population to acknowledge the colonial borders, which were badly supervised by the authorities¹².

The prevalence of this kind of emigration affected greatly the Rhodesian Native Labour Bureau (R.N.L.B.), the only Rhodesian organism authorized to recruit workers in Tete¹³.

This situation was worsened by the attitude of tolerance which was taken by the Rhodesian authorities and incited by the colonists, who preferred the cheaper clandestine labourers. In 1923, the hostility towards the R.N.L.B. by the colonists was so severe that they gave up the use of its services.

In the 30 and 40s, the period in which the policy of economic nationalism politic was undertaken in Salazar's New State - consolidated in Colonial Act of 1930 -, some undertakings were realized in Tete, as a result of the construction of the Tete-Moatize-Trans-Zambezi Railway, which connected the province of Tete to the port of Beira.

Although these undertakings could attract some local labourers and stimulate the commercialization of peasants agricultural produce it was not possible to invert the population movement.

Table 2
Migration from Mozambique to SR

Years	Entering SR	Estimated total
1934	10.286	26.068
1936	11.431	32.577
1938	10.749	49.976
1940	11.437	62.349
1942	9.431	76.608

Source : A.H.M./F.N.I. cx 107, 108 and 676¹⁴.

Although Mozambican migration in this period was dominated by Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesian suppliers, it proved possible to maintain interdependent relations between the two countries, at the level of local formations.

12. A. H. M. / F. N. I. cx 1066, Informação do Intendente da emigração do Governo de Tete.

13. See Charles Van Onselen, *Chibaro, African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia, 1930-1933*, London, Pluto Press, 1976.

14. A. H. M. / F. N. I. cxs 107, 108, 676, *op. cit.*

As mentioned above, the agreements were an instrument to maintain good relations between the two colonies. It is very important to stress that the revenues obtained from migrant labour, as well as the deferred pay did not benefit Tete's development. Instead, the territory was relegated to a transit statute and a labour reserve.

2. The question of Railways and Beira harbour

Considering the migratory labour as the first step of this integration, we can also consider the harbour and rail services as the second most important achievement that consolidated this situation.

The construction of Beira-Umtali Railway was a very important link to Mozambique and Southern Rhodesia. The line Beira-Umtali (Mutare) was Beira Railway Property, a company built by British capital, whose purpose was to construct the railway linking Indian Coast and the British hinterland, to satisfy the obligations of Mozambique Company, as referred to in decrees dated 11. 12. 1891 and 30. 7. 1891.

Due to financial matters, it was agreed that the railway had to start at a certain local of the Pungue River (Fontesvilla) passing through Neves Fereira to Chimoio. Until 1900, the goods were transported on barges on the Pungue River to this railhead, and from here they were transported by train to Chimoio ; afterwards they were discharged to the ox carts in which they transported to Umtali.

As this kind of transport was not suitable due to its cost and slowness it was decided to extend the railway from Chimoio to Umtali and from Fontesvilla till Beira.

The construction and operation of the Fontesvilla branch line was given to the Beira Railway Company in 1895, according to an agreement signed between Mozambique Company and Portuguese government. For this construction, this new company contracted Pauling & Cie to construct the railway to the border ; the work was concluded in October 1898.

In 1899 the railway linking Umtali to Salisbury (Harare) which was operated by the Mashonaland Railway Company was concluded. After the connection of the two networks of railroads, the three companies, Beira-Railway, Beira-Junction and Mashonaland Railway came together administratively to operate them jointly and in 1904 Rhodesia Railway was also associated to those companies¹⁵.

15. *Boletim Geral das Colónias (BGÜ)*, XXXII, n° 373, Julho, 1956, p. 108.

Since the Rhodesia Railway absorbed the Mashonaland Railway in 1926, this Company started to explore Beira branch line and in 1929 the Beira Railway was absorbed by the Beira Junction Railway, so increasing its capital funds to 1.050.000 of which 842.259 belonged to the British South Africa and the 175.000 to the Mozambique Company.

Meanwhile, in 1925 and 1926 contracts were celebrated in which the Mozambique Company was granted the construction and the exploitation of Beira harbour. As was agreed in the contract signed on 28 July 1926, the Mozambique Company subsidiary, the Beira Works Company allowed the railway enterprises to perform in the harbour all services related to traffic movement, such as loading and unloading, crane service, storage and workers supply.

From 1936 only two distinct companies existed, one of them operating in Mozambican railway, the Beira Railways Company and the other (in neighbouring countries), the Rhodesia Railway Company.

In 1942, with the end of the contract of the Mozambique Company, the Portuguese government substituted it in terms of rights exercised upon Beira harbour and so the Beira Harbours company now responded directly to the government.

Parallel to these developments, in 1922, a railway from Beira to the Zambezi, linking Nyasaland to Beira, began operation. In 1933-5, the operating company, the Trans-Zambezia Railway Company Ltd, completed the construction of the Zambezi bridge¹⁶.

Because of all these developments, Beira Railway became the most important route to the British hinterland. From this area mainly copper ores, chromium, asbestos, tobacco, tea, coal and maize were exported. Ascending, the main traffic was constituted by petrol, wood, machines, etc.

Through the Trans-Zambezia railway, Nyasaland could import and export the main goods being tobacco, wood, sugar, general cargo, etc.

In the 1940s, the railways were still an important factor and a necessary means for the agricultural, commercial, industrial and mining hinterland development, whose economic survival depended on its link to the sea. To confirm this tendency, in 1936 an association, "The Shipping Association of the Mozambique Company's territory, Nyasaland and the two Rhodesias"¹⁷ was founded.

16. Leroy Vail, "Railway Development and Colonial Underdevelopment : The Nyasaland Case", in R Palmer, and N. Parsons, eds, *The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa*, London, Heinemann, 1977, pp. 365-395.

17. A. H. M. /F. N. I. cx 107, Relatório do Curador 1936, p. 17.

Talking about its purposes, the Rhodesian Finance Minister said :

*"The political association was to work in harmony and cooperation with the navigation companies, to facilitate the development and progress of the territories depending on Beira Harbour"*¹⁸.

Although the railways were not so important to establish internal commercial links, it stimulated, however, a certain commercial movement between Mozambique and Southern Rhodesia, what can be confirmed by the following data :

Table 3

Years	Imports via Beira	Others
1935	3.388.772	2.987.462
1936	3.873.453	3.028.149

Source : A.H.M / F.N.I. cx 107 (1936 : 5)¹⁹

Table 4

Years	Exports via Beira	Others
1935	1.887.414	1.958.772
1936	2.540.724	1.934.560

Source : A.H.M / F.N.I. cx 107 (1936 : 5)

Table 5

Goods	Year		
	1930	1932	1934
Sugar	71.878	59.041	81.974
Fruits	538	1.862	5.211
Gold	497	3.367	47.774

Source : A.H.M / F.N.I. cx 107 (1936 : 19)

18. *Ibidem*.

19. *Idem*, p. 20.

Otherwise, the operations of the railways produced these results :

Table 6

Year	
1935-1936.....	427.181
1936-1937.....	552.995
1937-1938.....	553.404
1938-1939.....	498.033
1939-1940.....	453.005
1940-1941.....	433.552
1941-1942.....	451.423

Source : Marcelo Caetano, (1946 : 54)²⁰.

In conclusion, we can say that the Railway was an international traffic road depending from the development of Southern Rhodesia economy. Thus, Mozambique was depended and depend always on his western neighbouring.

20. Caetano, *op. cit.* p. 54.

FAMINTINANA

Tsy mijanona fotsiny amin'ny fanafahana politika ny fitsanganan'ny firenena mozambikana fa mihanaka any amin'ny lafiny toekarena koa. Tena manana ny lanjany tokoa ny famakafakana sy ny fanitsiana ny rafitra napetraky fanjanahantany paortogey.

Faritra ara-toekarena telo no niorenan'ny toekaren'i Mozambika nandritra ny fanjanahana paortogey. Raha ny fandrosoana mirindra ho an'ny firenena no jerena, dia ratsy ny vokatry nentin'io toe-javatra io. Midika izany fa nanana ny mahaizy azy manokana ny firaisam-paritra nandritra sy taorian'ny fanjanahantany.

Raha ny faritra afovoany ao Mozambika manokana no jerena, dia hita fa nampitombo ny lanjan'ny renivohi-paritra ny tsy fahombiazan'ny mpanankarena paortogey tamin'ny fampandrosoana ny firenena raha oharina amin'ny fanangonan-karena nataony. Ekena koa anefa fa, noho ny fifandraisana ara-toekarena sy ara-politika tamin'i Rhodezia atsimo nandritra io fe-potona io (1892-1942), dia voatery ny fanjakana mpanjanatany paortogey nandefitra teo anoloan'ny tombontsoa ara-toekaren'i Rhodezia, indrindra tamin'ny alalan'ny herim-pamokarana mpifindra monina sy noho ny firoboroboan'ny lalamby sy ny seranantsambo izay azo nifandraisana tamin'ny any ambanivolo rehetra any.

Tsy natao hahafa-po ny mozambikana amin'ny ankapobeny izany ezaka rahetra izany satria tsy nampisondrotra ny tetikasa fanampiny ho amin'ny fandrosoana ara-toekarena teo an-toerana. Vao mainka namorona toekarena niankin-doha aza no nataony.

Nanova ny fiorenan'ny toekaren'i Mozambika afovoany ny fisian'ny zanatany paortogey sy ny fifandraisana ara-toekarena tamin'i Rhodezia atsimo, nefa tsy nampitombo rafi-pitaterana afa-nampiroborobo sy nampivelatra tsenampirenaizany, kanefa izany indrindra no isan'ny fanoitra lehibe amin'ny fanamafisana ny Firenena mozambikana.

RESUME

L'émergence de la nation mozambicaine ne se limite pas seulement au niveau de la libération politique, elle s'étend aussi au domaine économique. L'analyse et la correction des structures des modèles coloniaux portugais s'avèrent très importantes.

Durant la colonisation portugaise, la structure économique du Mozambique était constituée par trois régions économiques distinctes. Ce facteur contribue de manière négative au développement harmonieux du pays. Cela signifie que l'unité territoriale durant et après la période coloniale revêt un caractère spécial.

Plus particulièrement, dans le cas de la région centrale du Mozambique, la faiblesse de la bourgeoisie portugaise dans le développement du pays proportionnellement à l'accumulation de richesses qu'elle exerçait a permis une plus grande influence de la capitale régionale. Bien entendu, en raison des relations économiques et politiques avec la Rhodésie du sud durant cette période (1892-1942), la majorité de la région centrale du Mozambique a amené le gouvernement colonial portugais à se subordonner aux intérêts économiques de la Rhodésie, en particulier au moyen de la main-d'oeuvre migratoire et à l'occasion du développement des voies ferroviaires et des ports permettant une liaison avec l'arrière-pays.

Tous ces efforts n'étaient pas faits pour satisfaire les intérêts Mozambicains en général, ils ne faisaient pas la promotion de projets complémentaires intégrés dans le contexte du développement économique local. Au contraire, ils ont créé une économie dépendante.

La présence d'une colonie portugaise et l'établissement de relations économiques avec la Rhodésie du Sud ont influencé la forme de l'intégration économique du Mozambique central et n'ont pas développé un système de transport capable de stimuler le développement et l'expansion d'un Marché National, alors que cela constitue une des plus importantes composantes de la consolidation de la Nation Mozambicaine.