



African Workers & Colonial Racism: Mozambican Strategies & Struggles in Lourenço Marques, 1877-1962 (Social History of Africa)

By Jeanne Penvenne

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This path-breaking history of the African working class in Lourenço Marques proceeds from the assumption that Mozambican labor history was less about skills, wages, or productivity than it was about racism, human dignity, and contested masculinity. African attempts to improve their lives through hard work were frustrated time and again by white employers determined to keep them in their place. Brutal forced-labor policies made it difficult for rural Africans to survive despite their continued access to agricultural land and family labor. Thus the majority of African men living in southern Mozambique spent their adult lives in wage labor, whether they worked in the South African mines or took low-paying jobs in and around the port city of Lourenço Marques. This lively and balanced analysis brings the voices of African workers to the foreground. By detailing the individual experiences of gang laborers, stevedores, domestic servants, and petty clerks, the author focuses our attention on the human dimensions of colonial racism.

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Review

Jeanne Penvenne's book breaks away from the platitudes of colonial history writing and brilliantly seeks to evoke the actual experience of Africans working in the Mozambican capital.... This study is an achievement of the creative imagination as well as one of meticulous scholarship.?-International Journal of African Historical Studies

About the Author

JEANNE MARIE PENVENNE is an assistant professor of history at Tufts University, having previously taught at Boston University, Brandeis University, and the Universidade Eduardo Mondlane. She conducted extensive oral and archival research in Maputo (formerly Lourenco Marques) and in Portugal, and has published articles and working papers on Mozambican history. She is currently writing a social history of African women in the capital city during the critical closing decades of the colonial era in Mozambique.

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