

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

Jeanne Penvenne



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This path-breaking history of the African working class in Lourenco 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 Lourenco 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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