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Creating extractive provinces

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Creating extractive provinces. Historical accounts have so far overlooked the impact of the extractive sector in Angola's territorial organization. This is particularly visible in the cases of diamond-rich Lunda and oil-rich Cabinda. A regrettable lacuna that this paper partially seeks to fill with an account of the role of the diamond sector in the creation of Lunda Norte and Lunda Sul provinces. It posits that an analysis that places the extractive sector at its centre represents an important contribution to our understanding of the territorial formation of colonial and postcolonial Angola and African states more generally.

KEYWORDS: DIAMANG, territorial division of Lunda, diamond sector, colonialismo; Angola.

Criando províncias de extração. Os relatos históricos têm ignorado o impacto do setor extrativo na organização territorial de Angola. Isto é particularmente visível nos casos da Lunda, rica em diamantes, e de Cabinda, rica em petróleo. Este artigo procura preencher parcialmente esta lacuna, analisando o papel do setor diamantífero na criação das províncias da Lunda Norte e da Lunda Sul. Defende que uma análise que enfatize o papel central do setor extrativo representa um importante contributo para a compreensão da formação territorial de Angola colonial e pós-colonial e dos Estados africanos em geral.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: DIAMANG, divisão territorial de Lunda, setor diamantífero, colonialismo, Angola.

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Creating extractive provinces

*God created diamonds, but the nation needs protection.*¹

INTRODUCTION

The Anglophone and Francophone scholarship yielded numerous studies on the extractive industry and their role in organizing the territories of colonial and postcolonial states. Most notably, Coquéry-Vidrovitch's landmark monograph on the relations between the State and mining companies in French Equatorial Africa is an irreplaceable intellectual guide for this paper (Coquéry-Vidrovitch, 1973). Yet more recent scholarship has given relatively little attention to these themes. In the face of the retreat of the central state from the periphery in the aftermath of the structural adjustment programmes imposed across Africa by international financial institutions, scholars have turned their attention to the local dynamics of the extractive sector, and specifically to the relations between companies and communities. In such circumstances, the statement made by Anthony Hopkins almost thirty years ago that facts in the history of business in Africa had "the status of beliefs rather than knowledge," remains applicable to much of the literature on the relations between the state and extractive companies, and specifically on colonial Angola (Hopkins, 1976, p. 2).

This lacuna is striking given the extractive sector's role in the formation of modern African states. As leading historians have established, colonial administrators were not state-makers in any sense comparable to the historical experience of the modern state in Europe, but rather gatekeepers who frequently had to rely on the extractive industry to extend control within the mining-rich but often distant parts of their territories (Cooper, 2002, pp. 196-197). Actors

1 Instituto Português de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento (IPAD henceforth), Folder G7.4.41, 17 July 1971, p. 110. Taken from a letter written by a Portuguese settler in October 1972 to the Governor General. Presenting himself as a wealthy Portuguese from Alentejo, "with revenues from Switzerland", who travelled across the colonies "to see Africa, to see Portugal", the settler described in those words his stay in Cafunfo.

such as mining companies, for their part, did not challenge the de jure primacy of the state and, most importantly, obtained what they needed most: access to resources. In the late colonial period, colonial rulers, vested with a developmental mission by the metropolis, gradually reclaimed some of the state-like functions previously assigned to mining companies (Lonsdale, 1981).

It quickly became apparent, moreover, that the political fortunes of post-colonial leaders in mining-rich countries could not be easily severed from the interests and preferences of the mining industry. Recognizing their continued dependence on the mining industry as the conduit through which State power found its way into the hinterland, many postcolonial leaders went out of their way to maintain or restore the relationship with the mining sector forged in the colonial period. As the case of this paper shows, neither independence nor post-independence radically changed the nature of the relationship between mining companies and African states.

The case of the diamond sector in the Lunda provinces further shows that regional dynamics in the relation between the state and the extractive industry are often ignored at the expense of national ones. From a merely statistical viewpoint, the importance of the diamond sector to the economy of post-colonial Angola appears to be in constant decline, as the immense, and still growing, disparity between oil and diamond revenue in the past decades is undeniable. In the process, the viability of the state came to be defined by the oil industry, with the diamond sector being relegated to a secondary role.

As a result, while leading scholars of Angolan history and politics have addressed in detail the “rise and rise” of the *Sociedade Nacional de Combustíveis de Angola* (SONANGOL), the national oil company and *raison d'être* of the Angolan state since independence, few have looked at the implications of extractive companies at the regional level (Oliveira, 2007). As Justin Pearce recently noted in a talk in Lisbon, the scholarship on Angola has grown exponentially in the past decade and a half, but remains essentially national – regional narratives have yet to emerge.²

Yet the diamond sector has been central – albeit in different ways – to the political strategies of the state elite. Diamond companies provided the means for the colonial Portuguese and postcolonial Angolan elites to accumulate revenues, distribute rents, defend territories, and in defining Angola's place in the international system. Even as the diamond sector lost its predominance to the oil sector as the State's fiscal lifeline, it remained instrumental as the State's holder of the monopoly of power in the diamond-rich territories, while it also

2 *Primeiro Congresso Internacional de Angolanística*, National Library of Portugal, Lisbon, 17 October 2019.

played a vital role in the patronage strategies of the postcolonial state. Hence, the diamond sector, even if economically marginal from a national perspective, continued to play a major role in the projection and consolidation of state power.

This paper focuses on a key and so far overlooked moment in the territorial formation of Angola: the period between 1976 and 1986, during which the Angolan government decided to divide the Lunda provinces and then dismantle the diamond sector. This account, based on untapped archives and interviews, goes against well-established beliefs that the MPLA government adopted anti-private sector rhetoric, that the influence of the diamond sector greatly diminished after independence, and that the division of Lunda was based on ethnic grounds.

It proceeds as follows: first, it looks at the political dynamics in the years leading up to the independence of Angola behind the decision to divide Lunda in two provinces. The following section addresses the specifics of the partition of Lunda. The last section discusses how the partition deeply affected the reality of Lunda territory in the postcolonial era. It concludes by noting that even in the most remote and conflicted parts of Angola and Africa more generally, borders, even regional ones, do matter.

It is important to note from the beginning that this paper does not seek to provide either an exhaustive account of the history of the mining sector in Angola or a historical sociology of the mining communities in the Lundas. Rather, it is chiefly concerned with distinguishing the ways in which the private sector played a constitutive role in the territorial formation of the Lundas.

However, the paper also indicates that central State actors and mining companies can and do police their territories, but they almost never do so on behalf or to the benefit of local mining communities. Some scholars have indeed argued that, within the changing environment of the artisanal economy, civic groups and local business entrepreneurs can reclaim important social space and become the engines of change. Yet in the Lundas, continuities in the mode of governance left little space for mining communities to carve out their space. Contemporary mining politics in the Lundas resemble those of colonial mining politics in the 1930s, with rampant human rights violations and the permanent exclusion of the local population.

THE DIAMOND SECTOR IN THE FACE OF INDEPENDENCE

Launched in 1921, *Diamantes de Angola* (DIAMANG) went on to play an outstanding role in the political and social landscape of colonial Angola. It took over almost all the functions commonly attributed to the State in the area

where it operated, the eastern province of Lunda, which became one of the most developed parts of the colony.

DIAMANG organized the territory according to its own industrial priorities. While Saurimo, then named Henrique de Carvalho, served as the southern gateway to the concession, Dundo embodied the control of the company. The corporate-administered site hosted the company headquarters, acted as the *de facto* capital of the province, and served as the flagship of the Portuguese civilising mission in eastern Angola. Soon after independence, however, Lunda was divided into two provinces, and the role of the cities reversed: Dundo's power declined along with the company and Saurimo assumed the role of the region's *de facto* capital. Despite the collapse of DIAMANG a decade after decolonization, in 1986, the diamond sector continues to define the relations between the province and the rest of the country (Alencastro, 2019).

In the years leading up to independence, DIAMANG had become an indispensable ally of the Portuguese. Since the emergence of the diamond industry, the State had been discharging to DIAMANG significant authority over colonial Lunda for the prospection of diamonds. Over time, colonial leaders allowed that authority to include a variety of state-like powers, erecting a comprehensive private indirect government, administered by DIAMANG, which came to be known as a "state inside the State". In the process, diamonds evolved into a leading source of revenue for the colonial and the metropolitan states alike (Cleveland, 2008).

It is not clear whether the metropolitan state initially intended to divert State control from the hands of colonial administrators to DIAMANG administrators. A level of agency is clearly discernible on the part of Lisbon but a complex phenomenon such as State control cannot be accounted for by one cause alone. State discharge to DIAMANG did, however, corroborate the general strategy of the *Estado Novo* (New State) towards colonial Angola. After the brief experience of Republican colonial autonomy, which was perceived poorly after 1926, Lisbon sought to unequivocally subordinate the colonies to the interests of the metropolis. By giving DIAMANG the leading role in State-building and by cultivating direct links with the company that bypassed Luanda, it marginalised its own colonial administration and, by extension, the insubordinate bourgeoisie of Luanda. At any rate, the continued transfer of State-building responsibilities from the colonial state to the diamond company in eastern Angola provides clear evidence that, whatever their initial intentions, New State authorities – like their *First Republic* (1910-1926) predecessors – found in DIAMANG a welcome and advantageous partner for governing the colony (Alencastro, 2019).

The success story of the New State-DIAMANG partnership contrasts with other cases of State-mining companies' relations in Central Africa. The actions

of the company placed the New State in a comfortable position, with DIAMANG providing the necessary infrastructure for Portuguese colonisation of eastern Angola, generating rent for the elite and strengthening Portugal's position in the international system via its alliance with the global mining industry. This is at odds with the turbulent, and sometimes counterproductive, contributions of extractive companies to colonial states elsewhere in Central Africa or other Portuguese colonies, such as Mozambique (Vellut, 1979; Isaacman and Isaacman 1983). Remarkably, Portugal, the European colonial power most reluctant to embrace extractive companies, yielded one of the most successful public-private partnerships of the entire colonial era.

However, changes in colonial politics in the aftermath of the Second World War brought a profound transformation to the diamond mining industry. Far from being deterred by the changing political winds, several companies began to explore the potential of colonial Angola's mining-rich territories. The more the mining industry diversified its activities and involved new investors, the more DIAMANG's monopolistic system came under scrutiny (Alencastro, 2019).³ It had evolved into a symbol of colonial rigidity and anachronism for the new wave of modernising bureaucrats to emerge in that era.

Nevertheless, state delegation of crucial functions to DIAMANG continued unimpeded. Although war constrained DIAMANG's efforts to maintain and reinforce the physical apparatus of its private indirect government, it also provided further opportunities for the company to reaffirm its role as the principal representative and defender of the state in Lunda. The regional patterns of the military conflict in eastern Angola, especially after 1966, and the historical tendency of the state to discharge authority in the region, meant that the state continued to task DIAMANG with an essential coercive role in Lunda.

There were pre-existing reasons as to why Lunda did not become an active front in the liberation war. Chokwes historically held little national influence, even though they were the country's fourth largest ethnic group and the major ethnic group in Lunda. Confined to one of Angola's remotest corners, they participated only marginally in the commercial and military interactions involving Portuguese colonialists and other ethnic groups of Angola (Hodges, 2001, pp. 163-165). It is believed that because of this, and the successful security

3 The Overseas Ministry started to test the waters for the opening of the colony's diamond sector to other companies and foreign capital as early as in the mid-1960s, mainly in an attempt to expand diamond production beyond Lunda. The Decree-Law 89 of 9 March 1928 established all diamond-mining areas outside diamang's concession as state reserves. In April 1964 the economic department awarded prospecting licences to two prospectors and allowed the creation of the *Companhia de Diamantes do Oeste de Angola* (OESTEDIAM).

cooperation between the state and DIAMANG, no nationalist movement prospered in the province (Davidson, 1975, p. 109).

This section, however, seeks to underline the importance of another factor: the association between the absence of nationalist mobilisation and the comprehensive system of surveillance that was geared towards illegal diamond trade. The control of individuals entering and circulating within the concession provided an insulated environment that made it easier to monitor and suppress nationalist movements.

Facing the conflict, DIAMANG took measures alone and devised strategies of collaboration with the colonial State to protect Lunda. Documents show that, from 1961, the recruitment of workers focused on individuals already living in Lunda, on whom DIAMANG could run background checks. DIAMANG also became obsessed with radios, as recounted in different interviews.⁴ For a long time, the *Rádio Angola Combatente*, based in Brazzaville, was the MPLA's most important means of broadcasting anti-colonial ideas. To stop the spread of those ideas, and thereby neutralise the MPLA, DIAMANG went to great lengths to find and destroy every unauthorised radio within Lunda. Yet DIAMANG managed to keep the war at bay in Lunda not only through repression and surveillance. It is claimed by interviewees, including on the nationalist side that DIAMANG paid a "war tax" to nationalist movements from the early stages of the conflict: some of its administrators kept in direct contact with the movements' leaders to ensure that they steered clear from the company's operational area.⁵

Moreover, company and State adopted a twofold approach to the military conflict: the creation from scratch of a private military force and the *Flechas* units (Sá, 2006, p. 10). First, DIAMANG funded and controlled a private militia, known as *milícia* and *corpo de voluntários* [volunteer corps] in the early 1960s. With its headquarters in Cacanda, close to a well-known DIAMANG agricultural project, and bearing its own uniform and flag, the militia consisted of former Portuguese soldiers recruited during their stay in Lunda or else in Luanda at the end of their military service. Once formed, the militia acquired equipment from the Portuguese colonial State and South Africa. It erected stations and checkpoints in the key nodal points and – in keeping with DIAMANG's State-like authority over Lunda – it managed its own prison next to the Cacanda agricultural settlement located near Dundo. While it was initially built for imprisoning individuals involved in informal diamond trade,

4 Interview with former DIAMANG official now living in Lisbon, June 2012.

5 Interview with a former Portuguese public servant based in Luanda at the time, March 2011.

the prison also housed individuals suspected of involvement with nationalist movements.⁶ Second, DIAMANG actively participated in the management of the Portuguese army's irregular units. In 1964, three battalions of Katangese *Flechas* moved to colonial Angola following the debacle of Moise Tschombé's secessionist adventure in Katanga, which they actively supported. One of the battalions was housed by DIAMANG in Veríssimo Sarmento, a town located at the heart of the Dundo-Henrique de Carvalho axis (Larmer, 2013). While initially focused on securing Portuguese building crews in the region, the *Flechas* evolved into a strong military force and were converted into a political movement in 1969, when the Portuguese regime gave refugee status to another wave of Katangese, encouraging them to form a new front against the Mobutu regime, the *Front National de Liberation du Congo* [National Front of the Liberation of the Congo – FNLC] (Coelho, 2002, p.142). The FNLC found shelter at DIAMANG, which allowed them to work in the company and to resettle in the concession with their families in exchange for border patrol. This arrangement suited both sides: the Katangese, who, unwilling to recognise Portuguese administrative and judicial authority, found space to replicate their way of life in DIAMANG-controlled Lunda, and the company which gained the protection of a force with inestimable knowledge of the territory (Saunders, 1983, pp. 26-27).

In essence, whatever the changes in the ambitions of the State and the internal policies of the company, what really maintained the bond between the colonial state and DIAMANG was the indispensable role of the latter in defending a strategic region on behalf of the State. The security situation of eastern Angola meant that the Portuguese colonial State had little choice but to uphold the State functions of the company in order to preserve its control. This led to coordination between the state and DIAMANG in a way that complemented the general strategy of both actors towards the territory. The corporate-driven military apparatus succeeded in keeping Lunda on the margins of the conflict, even as elsewhere in eastern Angola experienced some of the worst violence of the war.

But the repression of nationalists was also invariably tied to the repression of artisanal miners, a chief security priority for the company, whose economic model depended on the monopoly over diamond production. Kept relatively under control since the early 1920s, criminal activities related to diamonds became a source of intense preoccupation for the state as well as for DIAMANG in the mid-1960s. Until the early 1960s, State officials deemed artisanal mining and informal trading as regional issues with few ramifications at the national

6 Interview with former DIAMANG employee, April 2011.

level. Artisanal mining, they thought, took place in regions difficult to access, far away from populated areas. Only loose informal networks existed, and traders offered low prices. Both the State and the company believed that welfare measures and transport surveillance sufficed to deter most would-be traders.

However, State modernisation disturbed this calculation. At the regional level, DIAMANG's development of infrastructure and transport networks ended the isolation of diamond-rich regions and, more importantly, the mechanisation of mining activities sent a significant number of Africans to unemployment. Of the 1,000 Africans working in Cuango in 1968, only 200 remained employed by 1973, the rest forming a contingent of potential *camanguistas* with extensive knowledge of the territory.⁷ At the regional level, Belgian Congo's independence and the subsequent establishment of diamond *comptoirs* in Kasai's capital, Tshikapa, opened commercial outlets for Lunda's stones. Finally, at the national level, the deregulation of commercial trade created the conditions for informal diamond trading to develop in Lunda. As corporate and State borders became more porous, merchants began to bribe border guards and sell illegal products, such as alcohol, to Africans, creating a prosperous market of internal and informal market trade that involved African as well as European workers.

Thus, the seeds of artisanal mining and informal diamond trading that had been germinating since the early 1920s came into bloom in the early 1970s. In Lunda's capital Henrique de Carvalho alone, police reports on these activities leapt from ten to 56 a year between 1964 and 1972. In Lunda, the number of "diamond theft" cases nearly doubled in the course of a single year, moving from 533 in 1972 to 1,000 in 1973. Informal trading villages prospered around diamond-rich areas. One report from 1973 describes Caisse as a prosperous town located seven kilometres from the road between Cuango and Iongo, with "more than thirty houses and an amplified road, all in good conditions." Commercial houses in diamond-rich areas such as Fucauma and Catoca openly engaged in diamond trade, and some reported cases took place in the heart of the largest cities, such as at the Hotel Central in Henrique de Carvalho.

As artisanal mining and informal diamond trading moved from a marginal to a focal activity, accounts of violent acts multiplied. The colonial state and DIAMANG complained of lethal quarrels between artisanal miners, attacks on *capitas* and company-owned shops, and, most worryingly from their perspective, armed assaults on government soldiers and company officials.⁸ The State

7 *Camanguista* is the term used in the region for Africans involved in informal diamond trade.

8 In a document published on 9 April 1974, an estimation of prices in the informal diamond market is established and key locations and routes identified. Among the most important, →

and DIAMANG took several significant measures to repress artisanal mining and informal trade.⁹ They established new security structures aimed at fighting informal diamond trade “from the top of the pyramid and not from the bottom,” focusing on the “most perverse agents” and not those at the “primitive level.”¹⁰ Thus, while the *Polícia Judiciária* investigated diamond trade cases in Lunda, the *Polícia de Segurança Pública* followed up in Luanda. The *Direcção Geral de Segurança* [National Security Directorate] created a section for informal diamond trade in Lisbon. From the Cuango’s riverbeds and Henrique de Carvalho to the airports and ports in Luanda and Lisbon, a vast security apparatus integrating the colony and the metropolis came into being.¹¹ In addition, although its creation traces back in 1962, the *Polícia Mineira* [Mining Police] became operational in September 1972. Composed of hundreds of trained individuals, the Mining Police made use of vehicles and communication technology appropriate for remote areas and occasionally enjoyed the support of the Katanguese *Flechas* in their repressive operations.¹²

But this security apparatus had significant limitations. State and company officials accused one another of thwarting efforts to implement the measures. In 1973, Carlos Abecassis, DIAMANG’s director, mentioned his “extreme discomfort” when explaining to foreigners the colonial State’s incapacity to enforce its own laws. On the other hand, the colonial State reported on the “apparent indifference” of mining companies, such as DIAMANG towards the “diamond theft plague.”¹³

THE DIVISION OF LUNDA

There is a dearth of information on the origins and the decision-makers of the division of Lunda into Lunda Norte and Lunda Sul in 1977.¹⁴ The official

the *comptoirs* in Tshikapa, informal commercial houses in Cambulo, Fucauma and Catoca, as well as the Hotel Central of Henrique de Carvalho. The document also reveals a large list of notorious Portuguese whites involved in diamond trade. At the time, “diamond theft” existed in more than 80 locations of Lunda. IPAD, Folder G7/4/41, 17 July 1971, p. 54.

9 In January 1971, the state took initiatives to enforce Article 3 of the Diploma 20 from May 1961, stating that State and companies should take measures aiming at upgrading police capacities to monitor the transit of people and the circulation of people. IPAD, Folder G7.4.41, 17 July 1971, p. 72.

10 IPAD, Folder G7.4.41, document T132, 17 July 1971, pp. 104-108.

11 IPAD, Folder G7.4.41, document T132, 17 July 1971, p. 109.

12 IPAD, Folder 165/24/86/92-L/1, document T13, 8 June 1973, p. 1.

13 IPAD, Folder G7.4.41, 17 July 1971, p. 109.

14 The Angolan government only redrew the borders of Lunda and Luanda.

explanation for the division, which has rarely been questioned in the literature, is the endemic problem of artisanal mining and the informal diamond trade. In his speech announcing the decision in Saurimo, president Agostinho Neto invoked the *camanguistas* to argue that the creation of Lunda Norte would protect diamond rich areas and enhance their security. Accordingly, the new province inherited the majority of the diamond mines, leaving Lunda Sul with only one known kimberlite and minor alluvial deposits. Although this explanation is factually true, it is also insufficient: this decision to divide Lunda was intended not only to strengthen security and clamp down on informal mining, but to reinforce the private indirect government of Lunda and, through it, the projection and defence of state power in the region.

To understand why the postcolonial state divided Lunda, it is important to understand why it needed DIAMANG in the first place. There are two arguments for this, which revolve around the institutional continuity between the colonial and the postcolonial period. Firstly, upon independence, like before it, the MPLA leadership quickly realised that the state inherited from colonialists was simply not designed to assume direct control in Lunda: the importance of DIAMANG's private indirect government was clear from the start. Indeed, it is hard to imagine how the Angolan State would have managed to assume responsibility for the company's 20,000 African workers, the largest concentration in the country – and their 150,000 dependents. All these workers, which had mostly not mobilised around the nationalist movements anyway, would have had to come to terms with the end of privileges, such as social services and free supplies – including electricity and water. This uneasy transition had the potential to fuel another revolt in an already unstable region. Secondly, the MPLA also assumed the State in a situation of war. The postcolonial State needed DIAMANG's security apparatus to protect the diamond-rich areas from incursions by its enemies. Considering that colonial rulers, even at the developmental zenith of the colonial State, could not do without the company, it is hard to conceive how the MPLA, facing the massive unravelling of the State and major internal and external challenges to its authority, would have found the means to replace the security apparatus of the company.

The rational option for the MPLA leadership was therefore to uphold DIAMANG's administrative and security apparatus. However, these leaders did not have the same ambitions as their predecessors in regard to the diamond company. Contrary to colonial rulers who initially envisioned DIAMANG not only as a channel through which to exercise control over contested territory but also to pursue their self-defined civilising mission, postcolonial leaders bluntly envisaged the company as an iron cage to securitise a potentially problematic region in a time when they exercised only notional control over much of the country.

The division of Lunda must therefore be understood as a solution to maximise the productivity of the company in the north of Lunda, which comprised a problematic enemy border with Zaire and kilometres of riverbeds with easily accessible diamonds. The Angolan State carried out selective interventions in the Lundas, attempting to establish a direct presence of the State in Lunda Sul while keeping the assemblage of legal, administrative, and security features that formed the private indirect government in Lunda Norte. This, in turn, recalls Béatrice Hibou's assertion that, while Max Weber saw such strategies of discharge as an "exceptional" or "temporary" measure for states short on fiscal and coercive capacity, State discharge in Africa has been the defining, and in many instances long-lasting, feature of relations between the state and the periphery (Hibou, 1998).

The next paragraphs examine how State intervention and non-intervention shaped different forms of mining governance in Lunda Sul and Lunda Norte, respectively. The state fielded a real, albeit limited, presence in Lunda Sul, but the last section will argue that Lunda Norte remained essentially corporate-dominated.

STATE CO-OPTATION, DIAMOND BUSINESS IN LUNDA SUL

Although the diamond sector remained influential, it is possible to discern a stronger state imprint in Lunda Sul province from the moment of its creation. Saurimo (formerly Henrique de Carvalho), the capital of Lunda Sul, inherited the majority of the limited colonial State apparatus. DIAMANG played a secondary role in the administration of Saurimo via a logistical site located in the premises of the governor's palace. Although the State continued to monitor the entrance and exit of the province, it opened a state *conservadoria* [civil registry], which greatly facilitated the mobility of the population. The State also established one of its largest *Centros de Instrução Revolucionária* [Centres for Revolutionary Training] in the area of Cazaji, Dala District, and brought in Cuban technicians to run the former Portuguese air base in Saurimo as early as September 1975.¹⁵ The army served as a vehicle of assimilation and social mobility, with a number of Lunda Sul residents selected for the first training missions in Cuba. Some of them eventually climbed the ranks of the MPLA structure, representing the province in national politics.¹⁶

15 "Luanda 01372", Wikileaks, 1975LISBONO1372_b, 1975.

16 It is also important to note the contribution of José Redinha, DIAMANG's most renowned ethnographer and anthropologist, in providing crucial information for the Angolan State →

As Aslak Orre notes, the MPLA allowed the mobilisation of traditional authorities on an *ad hoc* basis without a planned strategy or a legal framework. The systematic organisation of traditional authorities around the MPLA only started after the first peace agreement in 1991, when the state devised a strategy for local governance (Orre, 2010, p. 96). Nevertheless, some first efforts of co-optation are indicative of the extent to which Lunda Sul was taking a different road from Lunda Norte. Among the most important was the *Encontro dos Mais Velhos* [The Meeting of the Elders] between president Agostinho Neto and *regente* Nanguanza, a founding event in the provincial history of relations between the MPLA and traditional authorities after the disensions between the party and the population of eastern Angola in the late colonial period. Printed in the first Kwanza bills, the Chokwe statue of *Samanhonga*, commonly known as “The Thinker,” symbolises the State’s appropriation of Lunda symbols. Finally, Agostinho Neto regularly visited Saurimo, including in a very symbolic layover upon his return to Angola on 4 February 1975.

More “State” in Lunda Sul didn’t mean more security: on the contrary, the upholding of private indirect government in Lunda Norte had the collateral effect of steering an important share of artisanal mining to the less scrutinised Lunda Sul. “Owing to the absence of DIAMANG, police control was much lower in Lunda Sul,” notes a security services official at the time, “and this encouraged diamond smugglers to settle in the province.” By the early 1980s, the nominally State-controlled Saurimo had actually become the capital of artisanal mining in Angola: “There, *garimpeiros* were more professional and organised than in Lunda Norte.” Most of the diamonds originated in the same mining site, the Catoca kimberlite, located 30 km away from Saurimo. Known as *o bolso* [the pocket] at the time, it had been only partially explored by DIAMANG, ensuring that artisanal miners could easily mine the site with artisanal or small machinery. In a matter of years, *o bolso* dominated the local economy. It attracted thousands of artisanal miners controlled by different *chefes de mina* [mine authorities], who sold their diamonds to informal diamond traders under the nose of state authorities.¹⁷

Informal diamond trade is an activity of immense reward and even greater risk, in which individuals are either enormously successful or brutally repressed, and either way are reluctant to speak about their involvement. Largely neglected in the literature, the exuberance of early postcolonial infor-

→ on the ethnic composition of the provinces in the years after independence. I thank Manuel Ennes Ferreira for this information.

17 Interview with former DIAMANG official, May 2013.

mal diamond trading is nevertheless anchored in the memories of individuals and continues to shape how Luanda perceives the provinces.

Between the late 1970s and the early 1980s, as the formal economy continued to shrink, the *camanga* – the merchandise purchased in the informal economy – dominated the region, and diamonds counted amongst its most traded commodities. For three reasons, the diamond business in Lunda Sul attracted a great deal of foreigners: first, the weak currency rate rendered foreign investment in artisanal mining extremely rewarding – a few dollars would suffice to acquire enough local currency to pay for the logistics and salaries of dozens of artisanal miners, mainly former DIAMANG employees. Second, diamonds could be bought in Lunda Sul for pennies on the dollar. As an interviewee who lived across the Zairian border at the time explains:

The local population had come into contact with diamond smuggling only very recently as DIAMANG had prevented them from trading stones. When foreigners came to town and offered to buy diamonds, locals had no idea of their value. I saw diamonds being traded for things as insignificant as a pair of sandals. [...] Congolese, Portuguese, Belgians, everybody was making money in Saurimo.¹⁸

Third, informal diamond trade networks between Saurimo and Lisbon emerged in the early 1980s, implicating Portuguese DIAMANG workers, *retornados* (Portuguese who left Angola at independence but retained extensive connections in the country), and Portuguese as well as Angolan airline officials. The influx of Angolan diamonds traded through the DRC became noticeable after 1983, with the steady increase in Congolese diamond exports. Diamond *comptoirs* became commonplace on the Congolese side of the border with Angola, with settlers from the Kasai area structuring an informal economy in which diamonds played a central role.¹⁹

A resident recalls Saurimo as a “kind of Far-West” in the mid-1980s.²⁰ Nobody effectively controlled the city: UNITA surrounded the city with troops, and the MPLA only controlled the airport located in an elevated area. Supply columns took months to arrive from Luanda. In the city, Russian counter-espionage officials co-existed with De Beers²¹ agents and Portuguese informal

18 Interview with diamond trader based in Saurimo, April 2013.

19 Interview with diamond trader based in Dundo, May 2011.

20 Interview with DIAMANG officials based in Saurimo, May 2011.

21 A founding investor of DIAMANG, De Beers, the South African mining behemoth, found itself struggling to maintain its grip over the crucial Angolan diamond market – now the world’s fourth largest.

diamond trade networks, including most importantly the *Grupo Caravela* and the *Diamante Clube de Portugal*.²² They provided supplies to artisanal miners, operated diamond *comptoirs*, and supervised the transport from the mine to the airport (Kononov, 2003, pp. 50-51). Over time, competing organisations emerged, such as the association between Angolans and Belgians trading diamonds in Antwerp and Congolese immigrants working on behalf of Lebanese firms based in Zaire.

As the share of profits and the number of individuals involved increased, the effects of informal diamond trading spread beyond the borders of Lunda Sul. Successful diamond traders established themselves in Luanda and their extravagant style contrasted with that of the residents who faced harsh economic conditions. In response to the growing problem of artisanal mining, the Angolan government turned to the military. Co-opting the population that was becoming involved in the informal diamond trade was never an option. In line with this logic, the government created a more organised and trained security agency, the *Divisão de Segurança dos Diamantes* [Security Division for Diamonds – DSD] in 1985. A group of 25 individuals, many with military experience, underwent a month of training in industrial and diamond-mining security at De Beers' offices in London, another instance of pragmatism by the Angolan authorities during the Socialist period. Housed within the *Ministério de Segurança do Estado* [Ministry of State Security] with offices in Luanda and all over the Lunda provinces, the DSD became responsible for gathering intelligence on informal diamond trading and rebel movements in diamond-rich areas. To avoid hiring anyone involved in the informal diamond trade, the DSD went out of its way not to employ locals. At its creation, the supervising captain came from Cabinda province and the second commander from Catete, in Bengo province. Civilians, public servants, and former military personnel from other parts of the country also composed the group.

The first intervention to tackle artisanal mining, initiated by an alliance between the DSD and the Angolan military forces, in 1985, resulted in a wave of arrests of individuals arguably involved in informal trading, in the case that became known as *Processo 105*, for the number of individuals who went on trial. According to sources, the government used military intervention to establish a grip on a profitable business before it fell completely into the hands of UNITA. A former DSD official notes how the *Processo* favoured the interests of the state: the anti-immigration, anti-foreign rhetoric, with a great deal of arrests among the Congolese; the purge of indiscipline in the military, with many local *Forças Armadas Populares de Libertação de Angola* [Popular

22 Interview with diamond trader based in Dundo, May 2011.

Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola – FAPLA] officials arrested; and the dismantling of local networks that operated outside the control of the State. The operation, as he puts it, “contained a message: that the army was now an active actor in the artisanal mining business.”²³

In a move with lasting consequences for the Lundas, the MPLA also used the *Processo 105* to drive home the association between artisanal miners and UNITA rebels. As a prominent member of the MPLA Roberto de Almeida declared:

The *camanguistas* caused an enormous prejudice to the economy of Angola, fed and supported the UNITA *grupelho* [a diminutive of group with a pejorative connotation]. At first sight, the *camanguistas* only sought personal enrichment, but their consequences and objectives were more ambitious: to destabilise the state. [Kononov, 2003, pp. 50-51]

The implications of the amalgamation of UNITA’s operations with artisanal mining and informal diamond trading are twofold: first, it allowed the Angolan military to insert itself directly into the security apparatus of the diamond sector. The repression of informal trade offered many opportunities for enrichment in the military, which partly explains their later business interests in diamond companies and the creation of Private Military Firms in the 1990s. Second, the militarisation of artisanal mining had an immense impact on the population of the Lundas. The lines between the residents, immigrants, and UNITA rebels became increasingly blurred, allowing the use of violence against any individual circulating in the area.

PRIVATE INDIRECT GOVERNMENT ON THE CHEAP IN LUNDA NORTE

In the mining province of Lunda Norte, the State opted for the familiar policy of discharging to DIAMANG the *de facto* responsibility of administering the province. The company continued to strictly forbid the use of the national currency, enforce company identification, and control the circulation of people inside the province. Its administrative-security apparatus remained firmly in control of the province, with an army financed and trained by the company continuing to exercise influence.

After the nationalisation of DIAMANG in 1977, the mining governance of Lunda Norte changed considerably – in order to stay the same. In contrast to the Portuguese-only structure that characterised the late colonial company, a

23 Interview with FAPLA official, May 2013.

patchwork of different nationalities joined the administration of postcolonial DIAMANG: Portuguese employees from the colonial period co-habited with an eclectic group of British, Belgian, and even South-Asian expatriates.²⁴ Other companies were contracted to recover infrastructure and help with logistical tasks. Most important of them all, Mining and Technical Services, the face of De Beers in Angola, took over mining operators, bringing along a contingent of South Africans under British passports.²⁵ On the shoulders of these companies, the nationalised DIAMANG continued to limp along for another decade, even reaching a new peak of production in 1979 (Annual Report, 1979, p. 3).²⁶

From an administrative perspective, the Portuguese community remained the centrepiece of governance in Lunda Norte. The DIAMANG community, neither urban nor rural, had a privileged status on account of their education and income. Some seized the opportunity of staying in DIAMANG even after decolonisation. “Our attachment to DIAMANG prevailed over national questions,” one Portuguese explained, “and so long as the company continued to operate, there was no reason to leave.” Others returned to DIAMANG years after independence, disappointed with the fate of *retornados* [Portuguese repatriates] in Portugal. They came along with a handful of new employees, many of whom saw in DIAMANG the last enclave of the New State (Botelho, 2007). From an operational level, foreign long-distance drivers, motor mechanics, miners, clerks, doctors, nurses, and cooks kept DIAMANG up and running. Intraco and Mining and Technical Services brought in a contingent of expatriates, from Filipino truck drivers to Belgian nurses to British engineers (Sardanis, 2007, p. 29). This reversal of hierarchies and the arrival of new actors eventually altered the routines of the company.

This eclectic administration successfully navigated through the early post-colonial period, retaining the private indirect government and increasing

24 After nationalisation, many of the company’s Portuguese employees, having found only chaos in Portugal, returned to DIAMANG under contract with the Angolan State. Several Portuguese companies did the same and return to Angola. Interview with former Portuguese employees of DIAMANG in Lisbon, May 2014.

25 Among other sources, a diplomatic cable from the American Embassy to Canada notes that a Canadian Pacific Western Airlines airplane flew into Dundo carrying food supplies. It underlines the “irony that supplies originated in South Africa and that Dundo was in the area controlled by the MPLA against whom South Africa was operating.” “Press reactions to student seminar’s on neocolonialism.” Wikileaks, 1976ACCRA00332_b, 9 January 1976. SONANGOL also used a similar strategy, persuading Gulf Oil to return to Angola shortly after independence.

26 For example, the renowned Engineer Ferrão from DIAMANG provided key support to the Angolan administrators during that period. By then, the DIAMANG administration consisted of four Angolan and four Portuguese officials in charge of assisting in the negotiations with partners and training new personnel.

the production of diamonds in relation to 1973 (DIAMANG, 1980). In 1980, DIAMANG's diamond production surged to 1.48 million carats, representing an export income of \$25 million. By then, however, the gradual subordination of DIAMANG had already begun to take a toll on European and African employees in Lunda Norte. The expatriate contingent, which had been suffering departures since the arrest and imprisonment of workers during the countrywide repression that followed a failed coup inside the MPLA on 27 May 1977, faced another wave of departures as the company slashed salaries amid deteriorating living conditions.²⁷ For African workers and residents, the downsizing of DIAMANG meant the complete reorganisation of the administrative apparatus. Since the economic difficulties early after independence, DIAMANG had been gradually replacing welfare policies with policies aimed at fostering the security apparatus. As DIAMANG began to wind down, the security footprint reached draconian levels.

The military situation in Lunda Norte began to deteriorate markedly after 1984, with the supply routes between Lunda Norte and Luanda growing increasingly dangerous. Trucks and trailers had to be escorted by military vehicles, which frequently came under fire from UNITA. Three major UNITA breakthroughs led to mass exoduses of expatriates as well as the destruction of key infrastructure and precipitated the end of any Portuguese presence in the region.²⁸ First, on 23 February 1984, UNITA attacked a diamond mine in Cafunfo, taking 16 Britons hostage and forcing them to march 310 miles before being carried on trucks another 483 miles to Jamba. Second, on 31 December 1984, UNITA attacked Cafunfo itself, killing two Filipino employees while kidnapping 33 Portuguese, English, and Filipino workers and, also, taking them to the south of Angola (Sardanis, 2007, p. 35). Third, UNITA seized the diamond-sorting centre of Nzagi, formerly Andrada, on 10 August 1986, again kidnapping several Portuguese and Angolan DIAMANG employees. UNITA's harassment led to a tumble in production from 714,000 exported carats in 1985, to 360,000 carats in 1986 (Sardanis, 2007). In 1986, DIAMANG pulled out of the Cuango Valley and dismantled most of its remaining activities there later that year.

In the pivotal year of 1992, war broke out on a scale never before seen in Angola, with UNITA controlling up to 80% of the country and taking import-

27 In the extremely repressive climate that followed the Nito Alves coup attempt in May 1977 several Portuguese and European DIAMANG workers were arrested. This resulted in a number of DIAMANG engineers moving to Cabinda attracted by the prospects of working in the thriving oil sector, living in the famed Malongo compound and leaving Angolan political turmoil behind.

28 "16 British hostages are freed by Angolan rebels," *The Glasgow Herald*, 1983.

ant cities such as Huambo. In the Lundas, as elsewhere outside a few heavily defended urban enclaves, the MPLA was initially brushed aside by the rebel war machine. No longer able to rely on the now-defunct DIAMANG, the historical defender of the Lundas, the State could only watch as rebel forces conquered the two provinces and assumed almost complete control of the diamond trade.

The Angolan State responded to the loss of the private indirect government that had reigned – in one form or another – in the Lundas for nearly seven decades by going out of its way to revive the formal diamond sector, and did so through a familiar process: the discharge of State power. In line with this overarching continuity, the “state inside the State” that re-emerged in the Lundas during this period achieved precisely the same overarching goal as the one that had dominated the provinces in the colonial period: the subjugation of the population to the diamond sector and, by extension, to the state. It did so, however, with radically different methods: the centralised, orderly, and authoritarian DIAMANG apparatus gave way to a decentralised, disorderly, and arbitrary apparatus wherein diamond companies, *comptoirs*, and Private Military Firms operated loosely and chaotically together, and with little pretence of delivering public goods or welfare to the population. As an interviewee born and raised under DIAMANG described the transformation: “In the colonial period, I had no rights but I had order. Today, I don’t have rights and I don’t have order.”²⁹

CONCLUSION

This paper has explored the role of the diamond sector in the territorial division of the Lundas, a process that lasted between 1975 and 1988. It has argued that the longstanding, mutually constitutive relationship between the State and the diamond sector persisted throughout, even in the face of regime change and independence, civil war and economic collapse, nationalisation and territorial divide.

It shows that the relationship between the central state and DIAMANG, forged at the height of colonialism, survived the transition to independence. It did so because each continued to depend on the other. The State’s nationalisation of DIAMANG’s Portuguese capital aimed, first and foremost, to save the company from financial ruin in the face of the turmoil that engulfed Angola in 1975. Meanwhile, the company’s private indirect government in the Lundas

29 Interview 60, March 2011. I am aware that interviewees can colour the memories of the past in an attempt to emphasise their difficulties in the present, but I still think that this sentence is representative of the transition from DIAMANG to present day.

remained essential, as the state lacked any real formal presence there or the prospect of being able to develop it in the short or medium term.

Even the gradual disintegration of DIAMANG that ensued in the late 1970s and early 1980s did not radically alter the relationship between the state and the diamond sector. Rather than seek to dismantle the sector's private indirect government, the State went out of its way to reinforce it, dividing Lunda into two provinces according to the needs and wishes of the company. When the system of privatised governance in the Lundas finally collapsed, it did so to the detriment, not at the behest, of the central State. Indeed, the implosion of that system only underscored the co-constitutive relationship between the state and the diamond sector: without DIAMANG, the state lost all control in the Lundas.

This, in turn, entails two conclusions.

First, as argued throughout this paper, the overarching power of diamond companies in the Lundas is largely the result of a purposeful state strategy towards the periphery: for colonial and postcolonial State-makers seeking to extend the administrative grid, the horizon of formal State power historically ended at the gates to the provinces. Since the early years of diamond exploration, the urban and coastal elite saw diamond companies as best able to administer the Lundas. The episodic manifestations of nationalism – such as the visits of New State and MPLA high officials to Dundo and even the formal division of the provinces – have done little to hide the fact that the State has never sought to rein in the private sector or re-assume the extensive powers it has discharged to the diamond companies for the better part of a century – to the contrary.

This explains why the Lundas have continued to retain a marginal place in the Angolan national psyche. Within the spectrum of *Angolanidade* – the sense of Angolanness, of belonging to the historical Angolan core of the nation-state – the Lundas stand at the far opposite of the urban and “modern” Luanda. The Lundas' reputation as the “Wild East,” which persists until today, pre-dates the discovery of diamonds. It is associated with the imaginary of the “last frontier”: a hostile, transnational region, inhabited by an ethnic group with greater regional than national ties: the Chowke.

Second, the fact that diamond companies remain the strongest and most legitimate form of authority and social regulation in the provinces has continually undermined the prospect for a peace-building strategy that seeks to reduce the political role of the diamond sector in the Lundas. After all, the diamond sector owes its power in the Lundas to the State and wields it on the State's behalf. Its power, in other words, reflects the Luanda State's longstanding preference for privatised governance in the Lundas. That preference will

likely continue to prevent the establishment of robust formal state institutions – let alone accountable or democratic ones – in the long term.

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