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Eric Allina. *Slavery by Any Other Name: African Life under Company Rule in Colonial Mozambique*. University of Virginia Press. 2012. 284 pp.

Eric Allina's *Slavery by Any Other Name* examines the system of forced labor in colonial Mozambique under Portuguese rule. The book combines historical background with thematic analysis, which helps the reader understand both the origins and how the system worked. In Chapters 1 and 2, Allina explains how the Portuguese state granted large territories to private companies, especially the Mozambique Company, which controlled the provinces of Manica and Sofala. This company was not simply an economic actor. It also functioned as a political authority, which particularly made its power strong. It collected taxes, enforced laws, and organized labor, often without effective oversight. In this system, there was no clear boundary between government and business. Power and profit were closely connected, which created strong incentives for exploitation and abuse. To support this argument, Allina draws on company archives, government documents, and oral testimonies. By combining these sources, he reveals both the official structure and its underlying realities, thereby strengthening the credibility of his analysis.

In Chapters 3 to 5, Allina analyzes how the system of control worked in practice. He shows that coercion relied not only on violence. It also depended on economic mechanisms, especially taxation (pp. 68, 72-80). By imposing cash taxes, colonial authorities pushed African men into wage labor. The Mozambique Company also used its administrative and policing system to restrict African mobility. In 1909, it made unauthorized movement out of the territory a criminal offense and established patrols and police outposts to control migration (pp. 95-96). African chiefs were also used as local agents of colonial authority. They helped with tax collection and labor recruitment. Some chiefs were required to meet specific recruitment quotas (pp. 107-110). If they refused to cooperate, they could face severe punishment. This included imprisonment and corporal punishment with the *palmatória* (pp. 107-108).

In Chapters 6 to 8, Allina shifts the focus to African responses, showing that African workers were not passive victims. Instead, they engaged with the co-

lonial system through a range of strategies. Within their communities, elders sometimes tried to protect social structures. They did this by sending younger men to fulfill labor obligations (pp. 125-131). At the same time, Africans demonstrated strong economic awareness. Some workers moved to higher-paid South African mines (pp. 142-145), while others chose voluntary employment to avoid the harshest forced contracts (pp. 139-141). African farmers also developed commercial agriculture. This allowed them to produce surpluses and obtain legal exemptions from labor obligations (pp. 166-169). Overall, these practices show that Africans still had some agency and bargaining power under the restrictive colonial system.

Beyond these broader strategies of adaptation and resistance, Allina also examines how colonial labor policies shaped everyday life. Despite their limited options, Africans adopted a variety of strategies to cope with the system. Some fled to neighboring territories such as Southern Rhodesia to escape taxation, forced labor, and other forms of colonial control (p. 93), while others tried to evade recruitment or sought less demanding jobs, such as working as skilled drivers, before they could be forced into harsher labor (pp. 140-142). These actions show that African workers were not passive victims but made strategic decisions and adapted to changing conditions. To capture these experiences more fully, the book makes extensive use of oral testimonies. For example, some people memorized this period as the time of running, which reflects the constant fear of labor raids and sudden violence. These testimonies are particularly valuable because they offer perspectives that are largely absent from official records. At the same time, they reveal the emotional impact of the system and its effects on everyday life, aspects that colonial documents often fail to capture.

The book also places Mozambique within a broader global system. Colonial economies were shaped by export and resource extraction, and they were closely connected to global markets. African labor and agricultural production were directed toward international trade, while infrastructure such as railways and ports was built to move goods efficiently (pp. 30, 70). These developments were often presented as signs of progress, but they mainly served the interests of colonial powers and foreign investors. As a result, Mozambique became part of a wider economic network by supplying labor and raw materials, but most of the profits flowed outward, a structure that created long-term inequality and limited local development.

From a critical perspective, Allina's argument is particularly convincing in demonstrating how free labor was often not truly free, even when it appeared to be legal. A major strength of the book lies in its use of both archival sources and

oral testimonies. This approach enables readers to see not only the official system but also the lived experiences of African workers, thereby making the analysis more balanced and convincing. However, while the book offers a detailed account of institutions and policies, it pays less attention to social and cultural life. Issues such as gender roles, family structures, and everyday community relations are mentioned but not fully explored. As a result, the analysis is fierce at the structural level but underdeveloped at the social. A deeper discussion of those aspects would make the study more detailed by explaining how different groups experienced the system in different ways.

The case study of Mozambique shows that systems of exploitation did not disappear after the abolition of slavery but changed form and became less visible. The case study's historical background also helps us understand changes in today's world, especially the growing relationship between Africa and China. The system described in *Slavery by Any Other Name* shows a long history of inequality. From a Chinese perspective, this history stresses the need for new forms of cooperation. Today, Africa-China relations are often discussed as part of South-South cooperation, emphasizing mutual support and reducing dependence on Western powers. By engaging with China, African states can play a more active role in shaping their own development, reflecting their historical experience of resisting colonial domination. Although Allina writes about the past, his work also helps us reflect on the present, encouraging exploration of a more equal and sustainable path for Africa-China cooperation.

Slavery by Any Other Name highlights a central contradiction of colonial rule. Colonial powers claimed to bring civilization and freedom, yet they relied on coercion and exploitation. This contradiction was not accidental, but inherent to the structure of colonial governance itself. By exposing this tension, Allina invites readers to rethink what freedom meant in colonial contexts and how labor and power were inextricably linked.

Xinyu Chen
Institute of African Studies, Zhejiang Normal University
Jinhua, Zhejiang, China
keaixxin1018@gmail.com