The April 1974 military coup in Lisbon resulted in a drastic change in the Portuguese government and its overseas policies. The coup ended the Estado Novo ("New State") government which began in 1930 when Antonio de Oliveira Salazar assumed leadership of the Republican government, and opened the way for the decolonization of Portugal's overseas territories. Discussions between the post-coup Lisbon government and FRELIMO have resulted in the establishment of a transitional government in Mozambique and 25 June 1975 has been set as the date for the formal transfer of national sovereignty in Mozambique. (1) In a message to the new transitional Mozambique government, the president of FRELIMO, Samora Machel, stated that economic priority must be given to agricultural development. (2) Mozambique's economy is, and is likely to remain for the near future, an agriculturally-based one. In order to assess Mozambique's future economic development, it is important to consider land settlement policies within the country in the past. Assessing the value of previous land settlement policies would help us pinpoint the main obstacles to Mozambique's future development. In order to keep this paper both short and concise, I have examined the relevance for the future economy of Mozambique of two previous policies which were implemented from the turn of the century to 1961, when the recently ended armed conflicts in Portuguese Africa began.

Although the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama first sailed up the coast of Mozambique in 1498, land concessions there were granted by the Portuguese Crown only in the middle of the seventeenth century. These prazos, located on both sides of the Zambezi River, were intended to act as an encouragement to Portuguese nobility to settle and exploit economically the territory. But the settlers on the prazos gradually began to assume many of the characteristics of the local African peoples. This development of large familial groupings, or clans, on the prazos also bears a resemblance to the large, aristocratic, patriarchal families in control of a large land concession, a sesmaria, in colonial Brazil prior to its secession from Portugal in 1825. But one major difference between the prazos of Mozambique and the sesmarias of colonial Brazil was that there were hardly any attempts to establish in Mozambique a plantation economy which would "exploit the land agriculturally for an overseas market". (3) In colonial Brazil, engenhos (sugar mills) and fazendas (cattle ranches) were established on the sesmarias, although all agricultural exports were required to be sold or to be re-exported from Lisbon. (4)

*This seminar paper was written for the purposes of discussing two previously unexplored aspects of Mozambique's agricultural economy, in the light of its independence on 25 June 1975.
The lack of economic development in Mozambique was mainly due to the lack of investment capital and the scarcity of an exportable agricultural surplus, rather than the lack of an abundance of land or a large labour force. After the Berlin Conference of 1885, which divided Africa into spheres of European colonial domination, Portugal began to reconsider its inefficient attempts to exploit economically its African territories. This reconsideration was partly due to the fact that other European colonial powers were now looking with longing eyes on both Angola and Mozambique. In 1886, a royal commission, headed by J. P. Oliveira Martins and including Antonio Enes, was sent to Mozambique to investigate why the prazo system had not led to the economic development and settlement of the major agricultural area, the Zambezia district, which had been expected. One of the commission’s conclusions was that the district’s development rested on the establishment of a plantation economy; Zambezia "could never thrive as a home for white settlers or as a centre of commerce". (5) Three years later, Enes was appointed the royal commissioner for Mozambique and proceeded to reform its land legislation. Under these land reforms, the prazos would be rented out for shorter periods of time than previously, and by public auction rather than as land concession grants; in addition, the African peasant farmers’ rights to their own crops were to be respected and protected by the leaseholders of the auctioned prazos. (6) The rest of the colony’s territory was divided between the areas which were administered by large chartered land companies (the Moçambique Company and the Niassa Company) and the areas which were directly under Portuguese colonial administration.

As already mentioned, this paper will be restricted to only two aspects of land settlement policy in Mozambique. While this arbitrary restriction is not entirely satisfactory, a full discussion of the complexity of Portugal’s land settlement policies in Africa, with its diverse objectives, is not possible in a paper of this scope, and has been undertaken elsewhere. (7) The first aspect to be considered is the Portuguese attempt to encourage the acceptance of small-scale, freehold land tenure; the second, Portugal’s efforts to create a rural African agricultural elite assimilated to Portuguese values and based on small-scale, freehold land tenure. Of course, their significance can only be understood if the total dependence of Mozambique’s economy on cheap labour for both export and internal use is fully taken into account. Finally, these attempts will be assessed in terms of their instructive value for future policy-making in an independent Mozambique.

II

In its attempt to curb the legacy of large-scale land concession areas in Mozambique, Portugal passed the Colonial Land Law of 9 July 1909 (8), which further defined the Law of 9 May 1901, which was designed to unify land tenure legislation in all the Portuguese territories. Under the provisions of the 1909 legislation, all land which was not privately owned, granted as concessions, or traditionally occupied and cultivated under tribal custom, became part of the State domain. Any inhabitant of the colony of Mozambique who was subject to Portuguese civil law (i.e., not subject to tribal customary law) could obtain a land concession from the State domain by purchase or concession grant from the colonial administration. These concession grants were usually made on condition that the concessionaire undertook a certain minimum amount of development on the land within a certain time period. Any African who had "assimilated" Portuguese culture (this included his being able to speak and read Portuguese) and had subjected himself to Portuguese civil law, could apply for a land concession. But, owing to the difficulties in achieving the status of assimilado (assimilated African) and in acquiring the necessary capital to undertake the development of the concession area, few Africans received farming landholdings by right or private ownership (freehold).

In 1918, a decree was issued to regulate the concession grants from the State domain within Mozambique. All the State domain was divided into three classifications: 1) village areas, 2) areas reserved for the exclusive use of the indigenous population ("natives"), and 3) areas of land not included in either of the first two classifications, and intended for agricultural exploitation. This decree established for the first time the right of African peasant farmers to exclusive use
of specific areas of land. But there is little information on these African reserve areas, except that several are reported to have been created. The decree also established the process by which an African could acquire legal rights to a land area, within the reserve area. (9)

With the establishment of the Estado Novo under Salazar, an all-embracing Colonial Act for all the Portuguese overseas colonies was issued in 1930. Under Article 12 of this Act, the future granting of large-scale land concessions (with the rights to administrative jurisdiction and taxation) to either individuals or companies was prohibited; where such concessions existed, their charters would not be renewed. This especially affected the large companies which held land concessions under prezo law in Mozambique. In 1928, Salazar, as Minister of Finance, had offered these companies holding charters an compensation in exchange for the termination of their charters. Those companies which did not surrender their charters for compensation had them "unilaterally terminated" in 1930. (10) Even the large Niassa and Mozambique companies were not permitted to renew their land concession charters when they expired in 1929 and 1941 respectively. Although the companies lost their administrative and taxation rights in relation to their land concessions, however, they retained ownership over those plantations, farms, mines, and transport systems which they had established; these were then operated by private companies or individual owners. Despite these efforts, Mozambique's agricultural production still rested on large-scale plantations and farms; this in turn meant, as Lucy Mair pointed out, in 1936, that "economic development in Mozambique is based on plantation labour". (11)

At the local level, the Mozambique colonial administration made some concrete efforts to encourage small-scale, freehold land settlement by white settlers. Irrigation works and flood control dykes were constructed in the Incomati and Umbeluzi river valleys in the 1920s to encourage Portuguese settlers to develop those areas agriculturally. Three railway branch lines were constructed in southern Mozambique to link these settlements with the urban markets in Lourenço Marques and on the Reib. A settlement plan for the Limpopo River Valley was drawn up in 1925, which reserved all the agricultural land there for cultivation by small-scale (less than 500 hectares) farmers only. But it was shelved owing to lack of funds; when it was reviewed in the late 1930s, it had to be shelved again owing to the approach of the Second World War. Both prior to and after the termination of the Mozambique Company's charter in 1941, small-scale intensive farming was encouraged in the land area adjoining the Beira-Salisbury railway line and in the Manica Plateau area bordering on Southern Rhodesia. All of these efforts fell far short of their goals because of the lack of development capital and transport infrastructure, without which small-scale, cash-crop cultivation in Mozambique is not economically viable.

The period after the Second World War saw increased efforts to remedy this lack of both capital and transportation systems. In 1947, Portugal authorized a £10 million loan to Mozambique for the development of natural resources and the improvement of communications. (12) The next year, several hydro-electric and irrigation projects designed to benefit agricultural land settlement were begun with Marshall Plan funds provided by the United States. (13) From 1951, the colonial administration began to undertake projects to provide reclaimed marsh land for the intensive cultivation of cash crops by Africans. These projects were implemented only in the Sul do Save (the region south of the Save River). The Inhamissa scheme, the main irrigation-drainage project, had settled 966 African families on 388 hectares of individually owned farming plots by 1953. (14) But this scheme was not of the colonato-type; a colonato is a planned agricultural village community in which settler-applicants are provided with a grant of freehold land, a house, farming machinery, and livestock. On other reclamation projects, the reclaimed land was distributed between Africans who had formed themselves into agricultural producers' co-operatives, but the Portuguese authorities paid very little attention to the improvement of African subsistence agriculture and instead encouraged the adoption of European methods. According to Adriano Moreira before he became overseas minister, these co-operatives were intended to improve African cultivation and "to help the establishment of individual property". (15) The absence of marketing co-operatives and the prohibition of alternative market outlets meant that the Portuguese purchased African production at government-fixed prices. A colonato was created in 1955 with funds from the Portuguese First National Development Plan (1953-1958). This was the Limpopo Colonato, which was a revised version of the 1925 settlement scheme for the Limpopo River Valley. The colonato was settled
by Portuguese families, since Africans were not admitted until 1959. As part of the
Second National Development Plan (1959-1964), another type of land settlement scheme
was started along the Revue River. Although it was meant to encourage small-scale,
freehold farming like that on the Limpopo Colonato, the Revue scheme settled both
Portuguese and African settlers as agricultural labourers on large-scale farms so
that they could receive "on-the-job" training in modern methods of agricultural
cultivation for use on their own freehold, small-scale farms.

The Portuguese efforts to encourage both Portuguese settlers and African
peasant farmers to accept individual freehold land tenure and small-scale intensive
cultivation took place in the southern half of Mozambique, especially in the Sul do
Savu. In the northern half, the prevalence of tsetse fly and the lack of transport
discouraged Portuguese settlers from seeking small, freehold farms. African peasant
farmers who might have sought similar farms were constrained by the system of cotton
concession. This system was implemented to increase agricultural production in
underdeveloped areas by the enforced cultivation of cash crops, mainly cotton. Under
this system, African peasant families within the "sphere" of a commercial company's
concession were required to grow a specific cash crop which, when harvested, had to
be sold to the company at prices fixed by the government, usually below market
prices. Henrique Galvão, in his colonial inspection report in 1947, described the
relation of the African peasant families to the cotton concession system thus (16):

The native is virtually reduced to the status of a
slave of the soil. He undergoes all the dangers
(and they are many) of the work - work forced upon
him, often by cruel methods. The concessionaires
incur almost no risk and are assured of profits.

Since every African in a concession "sphere" was required to grow a specific amount
of cotton regardless of its effects on subsistence food crops, the lack of food
crops would, of course, affect the concessionaires, although the African might
starve. This resulted in an annual fear of famine and the concession system met
increasing opposition in the north until it was abolished by law in 1961. Since,
moreover, individual freehold land tenure was no guarantee against the concession
system, African peasant farmers were not encouraged to adopt the concept. But in
the south, the acquisition of freehold land tenure was an acceptable alternative to
either migrant or domestic labour.

In the late 1930s, the Estado Novo began to pursue economic policies in
Mozambique and the other overseas colonies to increase the supply of agricultural
imports (at below world prices) for Portugal's developing industries, especially its
textile industry. In 1938, the Junta de Exportação do Algodão (Cotton Export Board)
was established in Mozambique to improve the quality of the cotton and to increase
its production. (17) At the same time, an attempt was made to create an African
agricultural elite, or, as Adriano Moreira's words, an African rural middle class.
Under provisions of both the Colonial Land Law of July 9, 1909, and the land
concession decree of 1918, African farmers subject to Portuguese civil law could
request or purchase a land area, but it was not until Mozambique's Six-Year
Development Plan (1938-1943) that any major efforts were made to instruct the
African peasant farmers in modern agricultural methods. The plan established
agricultural and cattle improvement stations "in order to further the interests of
the natives". (18) These agrarian stations were meant to introduce the African
peasant farmers to Portuguese culture and agricultural methods.

In 1941, a decree for the social and economic organization of the
indigenous populations in the Portuguese overseas colonies was drafted. (19) This
decree provided for the establishment of new "native villages" composed of either
detribalized or mission-educated African married couples. By improving the social,
economic, and hygienic conditions of these Africans "while leaving untouched the
traditional organization in the tribes to which these villages belong", the
Portuguese colonial administration hoped to create an agricultural elite which would accept Portuguese values and methods. It was hoped that an African elite which had assimilated Portuguese values would "operate in favour of the cultural and political unity for which the State stands" by becoming "assimilative influences, i.e. sources for the spread of socially significant behavior patterns". (20)

In addition to becoming an "assimilative influence", this rural African elite was expected to contribute to the Estado Novo policy of increasing the colony's agricultural production. This would improve Mozambique's economy, while increasing agricultural exports to Portugal. Vieira Francisco Machado, the Portuguese minister for the Colonies, speaking in Lourenço Marques on 17 August 1942, stated (21):

We must make a great effort to be self-sufficient by eliminating unnecessary expenditure and promoting intensive production, so that our goods can serve as a medium of exchange now that gold has ceased to fulfill its traditional function in that respect and mankind has returned to the uncivilized age of barter in international trade. Such an effort involves the creation of whatever is needed for the soil of Mozambique to produce all kinds of products. Its success requires the co-operation of all, including the Native population.... The economy of the colony would certainly be more stable if it were based on small Native holdings and on small undertaking managed by whites.

The colonial administration recognized the importance of encouraging an African agricultural elite to cultivate cash crops for export in Mozambique. (22)

In 1947, the Statute of the African Agriculturist came into effect in Mozambique. Under this legislation, African peasant farmers could apply for the status of agricultor africano, which permitted them to own their landholdings freehold under Portuguese civil law, and exempted them from the vagrancy laws and from native hut taxes; but, if their income reached a certain level, they became liable for the taxation at the level of the "civilized" section (the Europeans and assimilados) of the colony's population. Marvin Harris has pointed out that, "in practice, administrators award the certificate [agricultor africano status] only to those indigenas who possess plows and other farm machinery". (23) This practice restricted the status to those African farmers who held land in the south, especially the Sul do Save.

In the 1950s, several methods were tried to encourage the adoption of Portuguese customs and agricultural methods. There was the Inhamissa scheme in which African families were settled on drained and irrigated farming land. In other reclamation projects, the colonial administration assisted the formation of African co-operatives. African farmers were supposed to be admitted to the Limpopo Colonato from the beginning in 1953, but the first Africans were admitted only in 1959. According to Borges Leitao, administrator of the colonato, in 1964 (24):

More than 600 of these families (out of 2,000) are native Africans, and they live exactly as those who have emigrated from Portugal, Madeira, and the Azores. We are trying to absorb another 1,500, but it takes time for them to learn our ways.

Africans were allowed, from 1954, to "squatl" (legal under Portuguese civil law) on the periphery of the colonato, and received land which they had to farm themselves to retain their squatter's rights. But the applications of these Africans for full colono (settler) status were accepted only in 1959. The one other method tried was the "on-the-job" training by which African farmers accepted for the Revue settlement scheme received agricultural instruction while working on a large-scale farm. Although African peasant farmers sought to gain acceptance into these various settlement schemes and co-operatives, there were complaints of lack of financial
support and, in some cases, of actual exploitation. (25) Each of these methods was a further attempt by the Estado Novo to instruct the African peasant farmers and to create a rural African elite which would increase agricultural production while espousing Portuguese values. But, like the attempts to encourage the adoption of the concept of "individual land ownership", the creation of an African elite was principally attempted in the south.

The creation of such an elite can be seen as an attempt to accomplish two goals. Firstly, it would try to have the African peasant population settle land areas on a permanent basis. This, it was believed, would permit a more efficient agricultural exploitation of the land than had been made by the traditional shifting agriculture which an abundance of land had traditionally permitted; it would also increase cheap agricultural exports for shipment to Portugal. And, secondly, it would try and develop the African subsistence peasantry into an agrarian society of small-scale, intensive, freehold farmers. This attempt to settle the African peasantry was intended to augment the economic exploitation of the colony by bringing more land under agricultural cultivation.

IV

If a considerable number of African peasant farmers in Mozambique had accepted the concept of "individual land ownership" and had obtained freehold tenure to farming land, it would have resulted in a diminished supply of cheap African labour for both local and foreign labour recruiters. It would also have reduced the land in the State domain available for individuals subject to Portuguese civil law to request or purchase. The large-scale European farmers and plantation owners in Mozambique based their agricultural production on extensive cultivation of a large land area worked by cheap local African labour. Any increase in African freehold farming would directly affect them, especially as Mozambique Africans preferred to work for the higher wages paid in the neighbouring territories. Writing in 1955, Adriano Moreira stated (26):

The most important result of the setting up of a rural population in Sul do Save has been to decrease the migratory flow to the Union of South Africa, where the social conditions of the salaried worker is created. It seems proved that the Native, faced with the alternative of a salary or of private property, prefers the latter, at least as regards conditions offered by the Transvaal mines.

Once shifting subsistence agriculture under tribal customary law was prohibited, African peasants preferred to adopt the concept of "individual land ownership" and modern agricultural methods; failing this, they have opted for migrant labour to one of the neighbouring countries, and only in the last resort have accepted poorly paid manual labour for local farmers and plantation owners.

The colonial government's need to maintain a regular supply of local African labour, however, and its desire to create an African agricultural elite have clashed in their implementation. The resolution of this clash of policies was achieved by maintaining a high rate of taxation. To meet hut and crop taxes, African peasant farmers were forced to seek wage employment to supplement their agricultural production, especially since their taxes had to be paid in cash and not in kind. Some African farmers did manage to adopt the Portuguese agricultural methods successfully, and were able to pay their taxes out of the sales of their cash crops and/or increased production of food crops. The success of this handful of African farmers appears to have satisfied the government's desire to create a rural agricultural elite, while justifying the heavy taxation imposed on the subsistence farmers.

Before discussing the value of these land policies for the future of Mozambique, I would like briefly to compare the way Angola resolved the question of
"land settlement" as against "labour supply". Angola issued a land decree in 1919 in precisely the same terms as Mozambique's decree of the previous year. In 1927, the Angolan land decree was further defined in relation to African land rights. Africans were to retain rights to a land area four times that which they actually occupied. Furthermore, Africans could not be required to leave their land except on payment of compensation and on a guarantee that they would receive an equal area of land in the reserve areas (27): Mozambique's 1918 land decree was not similarly redefined. In 1950, Angola issued a decree to encourage the development of agricultural production and native farming (28) for the metropolitan market. The Mozambique colonial administration failed to issue a similar decree, a repetition of Mozambique's failure to adopt Angola's 1928 African land decree. Since the Mozambique economy required a constant supply of cheap labour for local and foreign employers, the Mozambique African could not be allowed, in practice if not in legislation, to remove himself from the colony's labour supply by gaining freehold land tenure, although he might have increased the colony's agricultural production for export. Angola, in comparison, has a larger land area, a smaller population, and no external markets for its African labour force. Thus it was that Angola, unlike Mozambique, actively pursued a policy of encouraging African freehold land tenure and the adoption of Portuguese methods of agriculture for the production of quota crops for the metropolitan market at below world prices.

As a brief conclusion, I would like to point out some of the implications of these two aspects of land settlement policy in relation to the economic development of Mozambique (1900-1961) and their relevance to an independent Mozambique. Firstly, almost all the Portuguese colonial administration's attempts to pursue any form of African land settlement and independent crop production, however limited, were implemented in the southern half of Mozambique, especially in the Sol do Sava. This bias toward economic development in the temperate south over the hot, tsetse-infested north has created a major social and economic split in the country. This split was further widened by the imposition of the cotton concession system on the north, thereby effectively discouraging economic development in the region. Secondly, African peasant farmers adopted Portuguese agricultural methods and land tenure during the colonial period as an alternative to either migrant or domestic labour, as a way of acquiring sufficient cash to pay their taxes. But, after independence, it is not clear what incentives will be necessary to persuade peasant farmers to adopt modern agricultural methods and whether the national government will, in turn, be forced to tax these farmers into either growing cash-crops or seeking wage employment in order to maintain Mozambique's economy. During the colonial period, small, freehold farms were expensive to establish and their economic viability was marginal. Throughout the colonial period, large-scale farms and plantations accounted for up to 80% of Mozambique's agricultural exports. One of the major decisions a national government after independence will be forced to make will be whether to retain this plantation economy, with its demand for cheap local labour, or to introduce a more egalitarian economic system. Clearly, the possibility is that small-scale, communal farming villages, modelled on the Tanzanian ujamaa villages, will be created. Finally, we have seen that the colonial administration sought to encourage the cultivation of cash crops in Mozambique, in order to increase the agricultural exports available for Portugal's developing industries at below world market prices. Independent Mozambique will need to pursue a similar policy of increased agricultural production. The difference is that these future agricultural exports will be sold at world market prices.
Notes

(1) "Frelimo-led regime takes power in Mozambique", The Times (UK), 21 September 1974.
(7) For a full translation of this 1909 colonial land law, see Robert Nun-Igne, Mozambique: Its Agricultural Development (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1913), Appendix II.


