The Origins of War in Mozambique

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CHAPTER 2
Characteristics of Maúa and the Process of Colonisation

Drawing on research conducted in the Maúa area, this chapter explores how the residents of Maúa responded to Portugal’s colonial rule and what historical and social changes the region underwent prior to the country’s liberation.

The area and people of Maúa

Overview of the Maúa area of Mozambique

The focus of attention is an area in Mozambique which became known, during the liberation struggle, as Maúa Circumscription (Circunscrição de Maúa). Lying between two rivers, the Lúrio and the Lugenda, it fell within Niassa District (Distrito de Niassa) in northern Mozambique. This district was surrounded by Tanganyika (now Tanzania) to the north, the Moçambique District (now Nampula Province) to the south, Cabo Delgado District to the east and Nyasaland (now Malawi) to the west.

The Niassa District had the largest land area and the least population density of all the circumscriptions in the country. Furthermore, the district was ethnically diverse: the Yao in the north, the Nyanja on Lake Nyasa/Lake Malawi (Lago Niassa) in the west and the Makhuwa in the south. It was also home to a small number of the Ngoni.

The majority of the residents were Makhuwa. Originally, Maúa Circumscription was a lower-level administrative post (posto administrativo) falling, until 1942, under Amaramba Circumscription and thereafter under Marrupa Circumscription. When attacks by FRELIMO intensified in the late 1960s, the colonial administration reorganised the administrative structure in the area and made a decision to upgrade Maúa in January 1968 from an administrative post to a circumscription. It existed until just before the country’s independence.

Maúa Circumscription was divided into four administrative posts: Revia in the north; Maúa Sede in the centre; Nipepe in the south and Nungo in the east (see Figure 8). Each administrative post was further divided into regedoria, territories of traditional authorities called régulo as discussed in the previous chapter.
After independence, Mozambique was “upgraded” from an overseas province (província ultramarina) to a state (estado). Consequently, Niassa District (distrito) became a province (província) and Maúa Circumscription (circunscrição) became a district (distrito). Among the administrative posts in Maúa, Revia was incorporated into Majune District, and Nipepe became a district on its own.

The study under discussion is primarily focused on the post-independence Maúa District, that is, the former Maúa Sede Administrative Post. However, this book also includes discussion on Maúa District during the liberation struggle, which at that time contained Maúa Sede, Revia and Nipepe. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, colonial documents were used as one of the primary sources of this book; secondly, Revia was strongly affected by FRELIMO activity during the liberation struggle and lastly, many residents in Maúa Sede had relatives in Revia and Nipepe.

As the focus of this book is the liberation struggle period, the area under discussion is mainly referred to as “Maúa District”. However, when referring to the period prior to 1968, the term “Maúa Administrative Post” is adopted. When reference is non-specific to any period the “Maúa area” or “Maúa” is used.

It is important to note that the colonial administrative division of Maúa District did not necessarily correspond to the geographical and cultural area defined by the local residents. “Maúa” as a place-name originated in Muwa (often written Mua), the chief with the highest authority in the area, literally, “a person who falls”. The Makhuwa, who relied on slash-and-burn farming and needed to relocate frequently, did not perceive their territory as a fixed location. The area concerned therefore came to be known as Maúa only after Mwene (Chief) Muwa settled down there, which was thought to be relatively recently. Borders between village communities shifted each time groups relocated, while colonial authorities changed administrative borders many times in order to achieve effective control of the colony, mostly disregarding the locals’ needs or circumstances. To add to the confusion, the administrative areas were further subdivided after independence, also without considering the relationship between the various areas and the inhabitants. As a result, the notions of “territory” and geographical borders for many Mozambicans were frequently at odds with those of the colonial authorities, and later the state. These anomalies and the consequences of these are addressed later on in this chapter and elaborated on further in Chapter 5.

What was the Maúa region like in the colonial days? As noted earlier, Niassa was an inland district in the north of the country and the colonial economy reached here later than any other part of the country. Furthermore, Marrupa Circumscription was the least densely populated in the district and was also the most difficult place in the country for the colonial authorities to access. As a result, administrative structure was far less organised than in other regions. However, this did not mean that the area had no importance for the econo-politics of this region. Historically, Marrupa and its surrounding areas had been considered as the crucial midpoint along the route that connected Lake Nyasa/Vila Cabral (the capital of Niassa District) and Porto Amélia (the capital of Cabo Delgado District).

During the First World War the Portuguese/British allies and the German army fought
in and around Marrupa, and the fleeing Germans set up camp along the river. Marupi, a cereal the Germans ate, started to grow on the banks, and the area became known as Na-marupi (the people of marupi, meaning “those who brought or planted marupi”). After the Germans had retreated, the Portuguese arrived and asked locals the name of the place. They were told: “Namarupi”. The Portuguese wrote it down as “Marrupa”. It could be inferred from this episode that the area was unknown to the Portuguese before the First World War. Even then it seems it failed to attract any formal attention. Neither a place-name nor a division called Marrupa appeared in the 1940 census. It was only later that Marrupa Circumscription was established under the development policy of the northern region and a colonial office was set up in order to control cotton production in the surrounding areas.

Nova Freixo was the capital of Amaramba Circumscription, to which Maúa Administrative Post belonged until 1942. Nowadays it is called Cuamba and is the largest city in Niassa Province. Because of its proximity to Nyasaland, which was a British protectorate, the Portuguese colonial army aimed to conquer Nova Freixo in 1899, earlier than any other place in Niassa District. It also had appeal as it was on the planned route of the main road and the railroad which were to connect the inland with the Indian Ocean. It appealed further because its climate was well suited for agriculture and attracted many inhabitants.

Maúa Administrative Post was situated between Amaramba Circumscription and Marrupa Circumscription, and so like other areas in Amaramba Circumscription, it had a favourable climate for agriculture and was densely populated. At the same time, it had the same “marginality” of Marrupa Circumscription and, for a long time, was little known to whites. This is partly why colonial rule was late in prevailing here despite its large population. To Africans, however, the Maúa region was far from being an insulated location. In the late nineteenth century, Maúa played an important role as a relay point between the slave-supplying inland and the slave-shipping coast on the Indian Ocean. Unlike the Yao route through Marrupa, this route was only used by the allies of the Makhuwa chiefs. The Portuguese and the British knew about it but, unlike the Yao route, did not use it for exploration and other purposes.

The people of Maúa

It is important to look at who settled in the Maúa area and how. The overwhelming majority of residents in Maúa Circumscription spoke Makhuwa. As seen in Figure 19, the Lugenda flowed through the northern end of Maúa Circumscription (the Revia Administrative Post). To the north of the river were Yao settlements. The Maúa Circumscription was on the borders of Makhuwa settlements and Yao habitations. It was at the most northern part of Makhuwa habitations, together with Marrupa Circumscription in Niassa District and Montepuez Circumscription in Cabo Delgado District.

The Makhuwa-Lomwe, the largest ethnic group in Mozambique, live in Niassa District, Cabo Delgado District, Moçambique District and Zambézia District. As discussed in
the introduction, “ethnicisation” in Mozambique is a recent phenomenon. It should be noted that “Makhuwa” as an ethnic name and classification was first used by colonial rulers. “Makhuwa” means “barbaric”, “primitive” or “outsider”. Importantly, it was the name originally used by others, not by the group itself, and therefore the classification of “Makhuwa” as people should not be understood as given or arising from within. Over the years, however, people started recognising themselves as the Makhuwa and the classification became meaningful both for outsiders as well as insiders.

The criteria that have been used for defining the “Makhuwa” as an ethnic group are: (1) language (Makhuwa); (2) culture, customs and social systems (tattoos, rituals, etc.); (3) common mythology (the worship of Mount Namuli as their original home); and (4) self-perception (“I am not a Yao or Nguni”). Archaeological findings suggest that Makhuwa people could well be the descendants of the Bantu who moved from one of the lake areas in central Africa to Mozambique around the tenth century. According to common mythology, however, all Makhuwa ancestors descended from Mount Namuli in the north of Zambézia District and hence the mythology and worship of Namuli is common amongst Makhuwa people. In conversation, Mount Namuli, for instance, is often referred to as “the mountain where all the races lived and all the plants grew”. It was then believed that group by group, leaders called nikhoto (the first ancestors and mwene) took their people down the mountain and settled in various locations. In this way, Mount Namuli is the “home” for all Makhuwa people, the present clans and lineages derived from the leaders who came down the mountain.

Some researchers have confirmed this mythology, but in terms of timing there are several theories. In all likelihood there were probably several big waves of migration, the most recent possibly being during the 1820s when drought brought about famine. Significantly though, many of the current Makhuwa inhabitants, who are spread all over northern Mozambique, are relatively new and that, however geographically far from each other, they share the same mythology and ancestral history.

However, the Makhuwa cannot be defined as a single group of people, as its components have been reorganised and influenced by the many changes in contexts and circumstances within which the group and its parts exist. According to Lerma, who conducted research on the Makhuwa people in Maúá and wrote O Povo Macua e a Sua Cultura (Makhuwa People and their Culture), Makhuwa-Lomwe can be divided into three major sub-groups and four smaller sub-groups. The former are “Macua Interior” (Nampula and Niassa), “Macua-Meto” (Niassa and Cabo Delgado) and “Macua-Lomwe” (Zambezi and Niassa); while the latter are “Macua Rovuma” (near the Tanzanian borders), “Macua Chaca” (the south of Cabo Delgado and the north of Nampula), “Macua Chirima” (the north-west of Nampula) and “Macua Litoral” on the coast.

There are other possible classifications, but this book draws on the classification most widely used currently and divides Makhuwa speakers in Maúá Circumscription into two: Makhuwa-Metto and Makhuwa-Xiríma. The former live in the north-west and the east of Maúá Circumscription (the Revia Post and the Nekutho territory), while the latter live in the centre and the south of the circumscription (Sede and the Nipepe Post).
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Figure 19  Transition of the habitations of each ethnic group in northern Mozambique (mid 18th century)

Medeiros, 1997:47.  
(Some spellings changed by the author)
The Makhuwa-Metto and the Makhuwa-Xirima not only speak differently but have specific and clearly defined features in terms of geographical distribution, the direction of migration, sacred places and blood relations. They distinguish themselves from each other through self-perception as well (Makhuwa-Metto or not).

The Makhuwa-Metto lived mainly in the south part of Cabo Delgado District. From the mid to late nineteenth century a centralised Confederação de Mêto (Metto Confederation) was formed. Later they moved west to the present location but still have many relatives in Cabo Delgado. The habitations of the Makhuwa-Xirima are not confined to Maúa Circumscription; they live beyond one of the main rivers, the Lúrio in Amaramba Circumscription (Alto, or upper Lúrio), and also on the west side of Mozambique District. “Xirima” means “to go around the skirts of a mountain (oxerema)”. Their ancestors are thought to have come down the mountains near Mount Namuli, ranging from the north of Zambézia District to the west of Moçambique District. Therefore they have blood relations to the south-east of their location, unlike the Makhuwa-Metto whose relations hail from further east.

However, these classifications are far from fixed. People in Maúa identify themselves first and foremost as part of the lineage group, which forms the basis of their village community, or as part of an overarching nihimo or nihimu (clan). It has only been more recently that they have become conscious about “Makhuwa” as a concept that shapes their group. Therefore, the distinction of Metto and Xirima is only meaningful in order to note the influences that their distinctive historical and geographical experiences have made, not to examine cultural or linguistic difference.

History of settlement

Settlement of Muwa

It is useful to hone in on the migration of Mwene Muwa (also known as Mahua or Mua by the Portuguese), who was the first Makhuwa chief to settle in the Maúa region and from whose name the place-name “Makhuwa” originated. As discussed earlier, the first Muwa lived in Mount Chalau situated in what later became Malema Circumscription in Moçambique District. The chief took his people across the Lúrio to the north, won the battle against the Yao who lived there, and put down roots in the area. This has been confirmed by Ivala, who conducted research in Malema, and Medeiros who estimates that the first Muwa crossed the Lúrio between 1935 and 1940.

However, there appears to be no written record of Muwa’s migration together with his followers. Although Ivala suggests that the reason for the migration could have been a conflict inside the family, the widespread drought around this time could well have been an influential precipitating factor. Another factor that fits temporally, and hence could be included in the list of possible influences, could have been slave trade-route conflict. The Yao, the original inhabitants of Maúa, were well known for trading in slaves. Mwene Muwa fought against Yao chiefs during the height of the slave trade. Figure 14, which is a
trade route map of the late nineteenth century compiled by Medeiros, shows that caravans travelled from southern Nyasaland (the British colony) to Cuamba to Maúa to Mwalia (or Mwaliya/Mualia) to the coast. Raqui Muhoco, an elder of the Muhoco group, a sub-group of the Muwa, spoke of it as follows:

Some fathers and uncles killed elephants. They took ivory to the coast and brought clothes back. It took three men to carry a tusk. They needed helpers to carry all the clothes they received in exchange for the tusk ... Beeswax could also be exchanged for clothes. There was a slave trade relay point between here and Cuamba.33

After establishing themselves north of the Lúrio, Muwa’s people and the neighbouring Mwalia repeatedly attacked the Yao, eventually driving them north of the Lugenda.34 From then on, the first Muwa presided over other groups that would arrive in this area. They had to ask permission from him to settle down. From the mid-to-late nineteenth century, Muwa had the highest authority over a vast area from the Lúrio in the south to the Lugenda in the north, from the Luluxi in the west to the Mwalia territory. Henry O’Neil, the British consul in Mozambique Island (where the office of the Portuguese governor-general was located), said that “Mua” (Muwa) was one of the most powerful among the Makhulu chiefs to the north of the Lúrio.35

Interestingly, though, O’Neil never visited Maúa himself. Around the time of the inland exploration (1880–1890), many exploration teams from Portugal and Britain travelled to the north of Mozambique, but none went to Maúa across the Lúrio. The Maúa area was left as a blank in the maps drawn by various explorers.36

When the territory of Mozambique was demarcated in 1891, the most northern part was incorporated into the Nyassa Company. The Portuguese colonial army later conquered that area. Yet, Maúa remained untouched. After fighting against the neighbouring Mwalia in 1900, the Portuguese army did not go to Maúa but instead advanced to the north and fought against the Yao (see Figure 20).37

Later, the Portuguese army placed the area around Lake Nyasa under its control and an administrative post was established in Niassa. It was only in January 1902 that the first white man travelled to Maúa. Sergeant Graça, an assistant to the administrator, was exploring various places in Niassa when he met Mwene Muwa and obtained permission from the “ageing Makhuwa régulo” to raise the Portuguese flag in his land.38

Muwa established the regional capital north of the Lúrio around 1902 and at this time had the whole area under his control. However, due to a serious drought during this period and consequent famine he was soon forced to leave the capital.39 It was Muwa II who moved the group near to the present Maúa Sede. Today the grave of Muwa II remains revered as an important religious site.40 The “ageing Makhuwa régulo” that Graça met with was therefore not Muwa I, the “powerful chief” described by O’Neil, but his successor. Muwa must have known that the neighbouring Mwalia lost to the Portuguese in 1890. Facing the famine, the Muwa group would not have been in a position to stand up to the
The spellings of chiefs are not corrected.

Names of Makhuwa and Ngoni Chiefs have been underlined.


Figure 20: Yao's Diaspora, 1840-1880
white sergeant. This probably explains why Muwa II agreed to raise the Portuguese flag without protest.

As for chiefs or groups other than Muwa and his people, there are even fewer records to be found and it is therefore extremely difficult to comment on or track their specific migration paths. Oral tradition, however, helps to piece some of the fragments together.

It seems that Muwa I had many sons from different women. First Vatiwa and Kuviri (or Kuvi/Kuvir/Cuvi/Cuviri), then Nipepe and Hamela, followed their father across the Lúrio to the north. The sons of Muwa I later played colonial roles as régulos in Maúa.41

Traditionally, Makhuwa is a matrilineal society. The successor of a mwene is not his biological son but his younger brother or a son of his sisters. It is interesting therefore that the sons of the first Muwa followed their father, as they would have in fact been subordinate to the brothers of their mothers. One explanation could be that their mothers were slaves. Slaves were taken out of their original communities and did not officially have brothers. Therefore, the sons of slaves had no uncles on their mothers’ side to be subordinate to and would have been free to follow their father.42 That the four sons each belonged to a different clan supports this theory.

Historically, Makhuwa groups had a tendency to split into smaller groups. Since they depended on subsistence farming, group size and growth was an acute problem. To address this problem kidnapping women, or obtaining them as slaves, was common and considered a way of securing the means to reproduce and thus expand the next generation as well as to increase the work force for food production. It also influenced the future social structure of the group. In the late nineteenth century, slave trade became an important economic activity among the Makhuwa chiefs, and slaves were easily obtained. The sons born from female slaves were strategically used to secure the trade route. Ivala illustrated this using Chief Comala of Moçambique District as an example.43 It was not uncommon that a mwene kept a nephew close to him as a successor and deployed his sons from female slaves to the surrounding areas or along the trade route. As the area north of the Lúrio was scarcely populated, it was possible to move to and settle in a new location without having to fight against former occupants as Muwa did. The method of slave transport was a long-distance walk. It was therefore essential to have places to provide food and porters along the route in order to transport slaves quickly and safely. It was also necessary to have allies along the route to safeguard against attacks and robbers. It was not uncommon for traders themselves to be attacked by armed locals, captured and sold as slaves.

The important point here is not whether the sons of the first Muwa who relocated with their father were slaves or not, but rather that the migration of the first Muwa to Maúa was probably a strategic move in order to occupy the area north of the Lúrio effectively. It is noteworthy that Vatiwa and Kuviiri, then Nipepe and Hamela, who were later appointed as régulos by the colonial authority, were the sons (thus not even rightful successors) of the first Muwa and that the colonial authority treated the four “sons” as equal to Mwene Muwa, their “father,” by appointing them as régulos, though they should have been placed under Mwene Muwa in the traditional pecking order. This demonstrates that, although
the colonial authority appeared to use or include the traditional social structure, it did so without fully understanding it. This point is important in connection with the liberation war and will be explored in more detail in Chapter 5.

After the first Muwa and his sons conquered Maúa, late-comers had to accept their authority in order to be allowed to settle there. Not only Mwene Muwa, but also his strategically placed sons, exercised authority in each mwene territory as the first settlers over the groups that arrived later.

Other groups of the Maúa area of Mozambique

The Ntepo group, which tried to settle on Vatiwa’s land, tell of the establishment of the Muwa group as follows:

The first Ntepo, who used to live in Umpuhua [in current Nampula], took his people across the Lúrio. The land had been occupied by Vatiwa. Vatiwa, a powerful mwene, said, “I wouldn’t permit it unless you kiss my foot.” Ntepo said no, fought against Vatiwa and lost. There was hardly anybody left. Eventually, Ntepo II went back to the other side of the Lúrio. When white men showed up, they crossed the river again and went into Vatiwa’s land. They didn’t fight this time because they had a common enemy.

From this fragment of oral history, we can deduce that: (1) the Ntepo group is originally from near Mount Chalau in the Malema Circumscription and their relations can be traced back to before the crossing of the Lúrio; (2) there was always the possibility of wars breaking out when newcomers did not accept the authority of the existing occupants; and (3) the advent of white men changed the relationships among chiefs.

It should also be remembered that there were often existing relationships between the Muwa and other mwene groups who arrived after the Muwa group. They would most often have been former neighbours of the Muwa group in the Alto Lúrio (Malema, Ribábuè, Laláulà). This is confirmed by Ivala’s research conducted in the areas where the groups had lived prior to the migration. The research findings of this project corroborate this, confirming that the ancestors of these groups originally lived in the Alto Lúrio. They left their homeland for different reasons. The first Muwa and his sons probably made a strategic move for slave trade, as discussed earlier, while many other groups moved in order to escape colonial oppression. Ivala explains as follows:

Muwa forms a large chieftaincy in the present Maúa District. The group relocated here from Malema [the Alto Lúrio], leaving many relatives behind. When the remaining relatives encountered the Portuguese here, the existence of Muwa made it easy for them to relocate to the north [the Maúa region] and settle there.
The encounter with the Portuguese in Malema and subsequent migration took place over four separate periods. The first was at the end of the nineteenth century when the Portuguese army placed the Alto Lúrio (Moçambique District) under its control and the colonial authorities started to impose compulsory taxes and labour on locals. Many Makhuwa chiefs attempted armed resistance against the colonial army in vain. They left for Maúa or Cuamba, which were the territories of the Nyassa Company, across the Lúrio. The second was during the First World War when the Portuguese tried to punish the chiefs for allegedly assisting the invasion of the German army in this area. The third was from 1928 to 1933 when many mwenees and their groups fled from the compulsory labour service imposed by the colonial authorities for road construction taking place between the inland areas and the coast. As a result, the population around the Alto Lúrio decreased from 20,000 to 8,175. The fourth period was from 1932 to 1950 when the construction of the railroad began to connect Nyasaland and the Nacala port and many local people were mobilised as labourers.
Every time the Portuguese tightened its control, people living in the Alto Lúrio moved to the Maúa region, fringe areas for the whites, as well as to British Nyasaland and Cuamba, where their relatives had already settled. One can infer therefore that those who migrated in one of the four periods were closely related to the Muwa group.

Branquinho, who studied traditional Makhuwa authority on the request of the Serviço de Centralização e Coordenação de Informações de Moçambique (SCCIM: Information Centralisation and Coordination Service of Mozambique), the Mozambican intelligence agency, during the liberation war, wrote in his report that a mwene and the majority of his group ran away from the Alto Lúrio during the First World War (the second in the four periods) and settled in the habitations of Nipepe (a son of the first Muwa) and the Muela group. Many remained in the area and, together with Mwene Nipepe, became régulos and chefes after the colonial administrative structure was established.49

The mwenes and their groups who moved in the third period headed for Nyasaland or Cuamba. After the First World War, the German army left Maúa and colonial rule was strengthened. Muwa and other group members were banished. Therefore, many Alto Lúrio residents chose British Nyasaland as their destination, instead of Maúa.

Only the Vatiwa group went to Maúa.50 Vatiwa was a son of the first Muwa. The group crossed the Lúrio but for an unknown reason crossed back again and settled in Malema. Soon after, Mwene Vatiwa was captured by the colonial administrator and banished for two years. As soon as he came back from exile, he secretly took the entire group across the river again and settled in Maúa.51

As mentioned earlier, according to the present Vatiwa, the group crossed the Lúrio to flee from the hard labour of railroad construction, settling in the southern part of Maúa Circumscription around 1926 to 1928.52 Mwene Vatiwa was later appointed as régulo.53 Branquinho praised the Niassa provincial governor for giving such generous treatment to the fugitive. It is said that he thought that this was the appropriate attitude to capture the heart of African traditional authority and that the “punishment” meted out by the Malema administrator was counterproductive.54

It seems that migration, until the mid-twentieth century when colonial rule was being established, was mainly strategic and groups tended to gravitate to places where blood relatives had already settled. Initially there were conflicts and even wars among groups, for example, in the case of the Ntepo group and the Vatiwa group. Later, however, it became more important to flee from the whites – the common “enemy”. The Maúa area, which was the “last frontier” for the whites, became the “place to escape” from for Makhuwa people in the Alto Lúrio (Makhuwa-Xirima). While the Makhuwa on the coast and Muwa’s neighbour Mwene Mwalia (Makhuwa-Metto) resorted to armed resistance, the ancestors of the Makhuwa residents (people originally from the Alto Lúrio) instead opted to flee as an attempt to try to escape the constraints of colonial rule. Their flight was effectively the last means of resistance under the increasingly powerful colonial rule from the end of the nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. Importantly, the unit of the migration was not an individual or a family but rather as a whole village community (lineage group) with a mwene as a leader. Hence, in the northern part of Mozambique where colonial
economy was late to arrive, the traditional social structure was still functioning reasonably well and far from collapsing as in other parts of the country.

The traditional social structure and its transformation

Migration track

Historically the Makhuwa relocated regularly. Significantly, these collective movements were far from random but, as seen in the examples of Muwa and other mwenes, were very strategic. The migration track is referred to as a niphito (a route of community migration) in the Makhuwa language. In rituals, it is repeatedly referred to when relating and describing the origins of the group. The territories of Makhuwa-Xirima and Makhuwa-Metto in Maúa, illustrated in Figure 22, in fact overlap with their niphito. Their relocation, which the colonial rulers may well have interpreted as mere “movement” or “flight”, were generally highly elaborate manoeuvres and would have taken into account many factors, such as the relationship among mwenes (conflict, social order, alliance, etc.), the historical experience of the group and the strategy based on their own concept of the area. These strategies undoubtedly had an important bearing on groups during the liberation struggle period.

Resultant influences on Maúa dwellers include: (1) each group did not have a strong tie with its new home, Maúa; (2) groups tended to be small and stayed away from each other; and (3) the relationship between groups was not strong. The Makhuwa society, which had never had a centralised political structure, became even more fragmented after the migration.

Traditional social structure

Prior to colonial rule, according to anthropologists, the political and social structures of the Makhuwa tended to be matrilineal, segmented and scattered. The smallest social unit is erukulu. This means “uterus” in the Makhuwa language and signifies a matrilineal extended family, descending from a common mother. An erukulu thus includes the maternal grandmother, her daughters (their mother and aunts), their siblings and cousins. In effect this is the basic unit of production. The eldest uncle on the mother’s side (tata or atata, with respect) plays an important role as the head of the family in making decisions on family matters such as production and distribution. Because tradition requires the husband to live in his wife’s village, the husband of the mother is placed under the authority of the tata. The “biological father” does not have a say in the future of his children and has to leave it to the tata, the “social father”. As polygamy is permitted, the husband is perceived as an outsider to his wife’s family. Several erukulus form a nkoto, which Lerma refers to as a “lineage segment”. Since it consists of direct descendants of the same woman (four to seven generations), the nkoto members have the same clan name (nihimo). A marriage between a man and a woman with the same nihimo is taboo.
For Makhuwa people, the most important social unit is *nloko* which Lerma called a “unidades uterinas” (uterus unit). A *nloko* was originated by the leader who took the groups to the new land (*nikhoto*). Its components include several *nkotos* that accept the authority of their *nikhoto* and his rightful successor *mwene*. Members of a *nloko* use the same *nikhoto* name for their residential territory (a village community) and have obligations rooted in brotherly bonds, such as respect, mutual assistance, the usage of common land.
and participation in funerals. The geographical sphere of a mwene’s authority is called a ntthete. Anybody living in a ntthete has to accept the authority of the mwene and the religious authority of the pwiyamwene (usually the mwene’s sister or a daughter of the sisters), who embodies the “common mother” as the symbol of unity.

Like the founder (nikhoto), the mwene is expected to lead his people diligently by, for example, making a decision to move the group to new land when it faces a crisis, such as famine. However, he is not allowed to make singlehanded decisions affecting the group; any decision concerning the whole group has to be made by consensus at a so-called council meeting, attended by all the humus (heads of the nkotos). This is called a pwattaphwatta in the Maúa area. Moreover, the mwene has to consider the opinions of both the pwiyamwene and the mapili (an advisor to the nkoto). The selection of a new mwene (from maternal brothers and nephews of the last mwene) is also based on consensus of the humu, while respecting the late mwene’s will. Hence, the “authority” of the mwene is not necessarily equate to “power” because of the segmentation and independence of the nkoto.

After four to seven generations, a nkoto splits from the nkolo that it belongs to and forms a new nkolo. This mirrors the founding nikhoto who left his original nkolo and started his own when he moved his people to a new location. This is one of the explanations for the geographic expansion of the same clan (nihimo) and why the authority of the mwene, the head of the most fundamental social unit, the nkolo, never becomes centralised. When a humu, head of a nkoto, becomes embroiled in an internal problem pertaining to his particular nkolo, or finds himself at odds with his mwene, he has the option to move his nkoto to a new location and begin a new nkolo. One of the important consequences of these traditional social structures is that the Makhuwa society has become segmented and scattered, with no centralised kingdom – unlike the paternal societies found in central and southern Mozambique (even though Makhuwa also experienced slave trade).

Historical changes

Naturally the above-mentioned “traditional” social structure has not remained fixed, becoming, over time, more diverse and flexible. For instance, as Makhuwa chiefs became more actively engaged in the slave trade in the late nineteenth century, they began to form alliances. Another example is that at times, particularly in terms of political decision-making, mwenes would have had the final say rather than awaiting a council’s consensus. The slave trade was a very lucrative economic activity and for the Muwa during this time it would have invariably led to an increase in power. As the first Muwa and his people settled in Maúa at the height of the slave trade, and also because they were warring against the Yao, the group became comprised of two social classes: “free” (nethi) and “slave” (epottha). The succession to mwene was hence swayed by whether the candidate was from “superior lineage” or “inferior lineage”.

There were what could be described as five major structural characteristics of the Makhuwa society. Some of these characteristics remain today and those that have changed
or disappeared have nevertheless had an important influence on the fabric of the group: (1) the most important units (village communities) were lineage (nkolo); its heads (mwene) became régulo or chefe in the colonial administration; (2) since succession to a mwene was matrilineal, the pwiyanmwene, the female authority, was also significant; (3) the authority of the mwenes and the pwiyanmwenes was not necessarily equal to their political power. In the decision-making process, the consensus by all the heads of nkotos (humu) was essential; (4) a nkoto could split from the nloko it belonged to and form a new nloko; (5) as a result of (4), a nloko was relatively small in size, did not have a long history as a group and was therefore unlikely to centralise.

The ways in which traditional chiefs operated in the Maúa region were very different from what the colonial government expected from régulos or chefes. A response to political or other change for Makhuwa people has historically been to relocate and reform – this continues to be true today.

The social order outside the lineage groups further complicates the social relationship among the Makhuwa. For clarity it is useful to recap a bit and also to note that the reason why an understanding of these structures is so critical is that although some may have disappeared or been adapted, many remain in place and whether still in existence or not have had, and continue to have, an enormous influence on how Makhuwa people have responded to change over time. Nkolo (lineage) is an important social unit, but nkolo members are also affected by nihimo (clan). The history of nkolo is retained through oral tradition over four to seven generations – thereafter it will probably be lost due to the segmentation of groups and the deterioration of memories. Nihimo connects people who were originally from the same nkoto but have, over many generations, become dispersed. There are hundreds of lineage names but only about ten clan names. Among the mwene who have the same nihimo traditional rank, established over many years, this remains important. Traditionally a mwene would regularly consult someone of a higher rank about a problem in his nkoto. He may belong to a different nkolo and may live hundreds of kilometres away but is still regarded as being superior. Nihimo has a special significance when a nkoto considers leaving its nkolo and moving outside its living space (ntthete). They often only decide on the destination after taking into consideration their relationship with other nkolo that belong to the same nihimo.

In other words, a Makhuwa belongs to a nkolo, a village community, and is affected by the social relationship inside the nkolo while maintaining connection with the nihimo of the same name as his in other areas. The importance of clan relations means that people still have a sense of belonging and a sense of security from being part of a broader network, even when their lineage relations are under strain and in threat of fragmentation. This phenomenon has also accelerated the Makhuwa’s tendency for segmentation and high mobility. Men in particular have many opportunities to travel, visiting their home nkoto and the leaders of the same nihimo, and are able to form a dynamic network which is supportive as they live in their wives’ community (ntthete) and not where their own clan is.72

In addition to the ranking of lineage and clan, there is a social order related to geographical territory. A group is not permitted to occupy new land unless it recognises
the authority of the former occupants. If not, newcomers have to fight for their place in the same way that the Muwa and Ntepo groups did.

Traditional social order was therefore far from simple and frequently underestimated and misunderstood by the colonial rulers. It was multi-layered and organic in the region, in the clan, in the lineage and in the segments (slaves or not). Moreover, despite the matrilineal system, the status of women was not in fact that high and the authority of the pwiyamuwe was largely religious or symbolic. Women belonged to the uncle on the mother’s side, the husband, the mwene and their brothers. They had no say in decision-making. The political status of a young man was also low, first as an under-age child belonging to his uncle and, after marriage, as an “outsider” husband, unless he himself became the “uncle”. This factor contributed to the high mobility of Makhuwa males.

In the traditional Makhuwa society where people relied on agriculture – which generally only provided a subsistence standard of living – the complex social order and lines of authority did not therefore necessarily mean that there was a vertical power structure. However, the slave trade in the late nineteenth century transformed this, introducing a vertical power structure. The social structure then changed again in the early twentieth century as a result of the changes in international relations, colonial policies and environmental crises. More precisely and firstly, the slave trade stopped completely; secondly, the colonial army conquered powerful chiefs; thirdly, another vertical power structure (colonial rule) penetrated local communities, and fourthly, droughts and locusts devastated local agriculture.

A recent trend is to look at the impact of environmental factors on the people. For the Makhuwa the deterioration of the natural environment on which it relied so heavily for its survival radically influenced the community, changing power relations among people and among groups. For instance, food shortages could lead to violence over food or result in a group leaving their chief who could no longer distribute food adequately. As a result, existing power structures changed or collapsed.

When Sergeant Graça, as the first white man to visit Maú during the First World War, met Mwene Muwa, the society was in the midst of these difficulties. If the famine in 1901 to 1902 forced the Muwa group to abandon their capital and move to another location, as Medeiros pointed out, the authority of the then mwene (Muwa II) would have become much weaker than his predecessor. This was a large factor contributing to the Maú residents’ accepting the Portuguese flag without armed resistance.

**Establishment of colonial rule**

*Maú during the First World War*

Colonial rule finally reached Maú during the First World War. Due partially to the region’s geographical remoteness, it had been left alone until then as the Nyassa Company, under which the region was placed from 1894 to 1929, had a weak financial base and hence resources and capacities were limited.
In 1907 the Nyassa Company set up a military post (posto militar) in Maúa. It is unclear, however, what exactly this comprised of. As in some instances, it could have simply been a Portuguese flag, as promised by Sergeant Graça. Elders of the community say that whites only started to live in the region after the “Germans’ War” (Guerra de Jarmane), their term for the First World War. It is probable that Maúa was still largely devoid of colonial rule before the First World War.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the territory of the Nyassa Company became a battlefield between the German army and its askari (Swahili meaning African soldiers), coming from its east African territory in the north, and the Portuguese–British alliance. The Germans formed an alliance with local African chiefs who were resistant to Portuguese colonial rule, and this alliance enabled them to hire guides who had intimate knowledge of the terrain, allowing them rapid advancement through northern Mozambique. Figure 16 demonstrates how the German reconnoitring party entered Niassa near the eastern shore of Lake Malawi, went through the Yao habitations and reached the most northern part of the Makhuwa habitations such as Maúa and Montepuez. It also shows how the German army moved throughout northern Mozambique during the course of about a year from November 1917 to September 1918.

In May 1917, Paul Emil von Lettow-Vorbeck, a German general in the Imperial German Army and the commander of the German East Africa campaign, sent a major to the Makhuwa chiefs, including Muwa III, in order to persuade them to form an alliance with the Germans against the Portuguese. It seems an agreement must have been reached as the fifth platoon, led by Von Lettow-Vorbeck, remained in Maúa in February 1918. However, two months later, a British-Portuguese battalion arrived in Maúa and, after a battle, took over the German barracks.

How did the Maúa residents respond to what they call the “Germans’ War” and how do they remember it? It seems that, on arrival, the Germans and the “blacks who spoke Swahili” requested food and porters. The Maúa residents largely assisted them out of fear – being the first white people they had encountered and who wielded mighty firearms. The present Muwa suggests that chiefs in northern Mozambique, including the then Muwa, played an active role in the alliance: “An armed force called the Germans came, but its main force was comprised of blacks. Its leader was Nikepele. The Germans were in alliance with Mozambicans from Makhuwa, Makonde and Maputo. It was like FRELIMO [consisting of people from various ethnic groups and from different regions within Mozambique]. They fought against the white allied force of the British and Portuguese.”

Due to resistance to Portuguese colonial rule, as detailed earlier, it would make sense that Makhuwa chiefs would have been open to other options. It has been documented that during these times the Germans formed alliances in many places by promising African chiefs that they would ensure that they “regained their sovereignty”. Nevertheless, how actively the original occupants of Maúa cooperated in the white men’s war is uncertain.

The author was told by inhabitants of this region that when they were “passing time” with the Germans, “the major and others came.” Aroni Caisse from Revia in northern Maúa said:
The Germans came and said, “Tell us where the British will enter.” The Portuguese said the same thing before … People fled. To the Lugenda. The Germans went from here to Makonkwa, where the British caught up. They had four battles. Neither side won. They scattered and both the British and the Germans left. Only the Portuguese stayed.

There are many different versions of events that took place in the region during the First World War period, however eight “acts” seem consistent: (1) the Germans came; (2) people did not refuse cooperation; (3) the Germans sometimes used them as porters, but their treatment was, all in all, “not too bad”; (4) surprised by battles, many tried to flee; (5) the British and the Portuguese also used them as porters but treated them badly; (6) the war brought no benefits for residents; (7) many died in the “Germans’ War”; and (8) many groups moved to even more remote locations, thinking, “We shouldn’t live in such a bad place.” The Muwa group stayed where they were. Sancho Afia Amisse, a “son” of Muwa IV and a younger brother of Muwa V, commented on events after the war:

Muwa III was banished to the Mozambique Island because he rejected the British and Portuguese armies that came to this land in the Germans’ War. People had to select a new Muwa and did so, according to the tradition. The Portuguese couldn’t get involved in the selection. The new Muwa, Muwa IV, told his people to obey the Portuguese because he too would be banished otherwise, because the Portuguese were more powerful. As a result, we started to live with the Portuguese.

Henceforth, the actual colonial rule in the Maúa region began. During the battles between the German army and the British/Portuguese army, Maúa residents were to witness the powerful weapons of the white men. The exile of Muwa, the ultimate authority, and the colonial intervention in traditional authority dampened the momentum of vigorous resistance. Moreover, a severe drought throughout Mozambique, as well as an influenza outbreak in 1919, further affected residents negatively. It is estimated that as many as 50,000 Africans lost their lives in northern Mozambique between 1914 and 1922. People in the Maúa region would remember the First World War as the beginning of a new, and bad, era.

The early days of colonial rule in Maúa, the “land of escape”

In the early days of colonial rule in Maúa, Muwa and other African chiefs, who were considered to have cooperated with the German Army actively or passively, were captured and were either executed or exiled. Portugal, which had previously battled to conquer all of Mozambique due to it being part of the victorious allied forces, now found itself in a powerful position. It succeeded in not only keeping its colony but also was able to finally place the northern part of the country under military control. It established military
posts in newly-conquered areas such as Maúa, and especially in locations which had been occupied by the Germans. The Nyassa Company, on the other hand, ceased its meagre investment altogether and increasingly relied on forced labour and hut tax as a source of revenue. New administrative posts were set up in the interior for easy exploitation of Africans, rather than for development. In 1923, the Nyassa Company established its first administrative post in Maúa (Conselho de Maúa). It was realigned as an administrative post of the colonial government in 1926.92

Under the supervision of the chefe do posto of the Nyassa Company and cypaiño (African policemen attached to local administration office), mwene were expected to collect the poll taxes that were imposed on female residents.93 Having experienced the “Germans’ War”, witnessed the exile of their highest authority Mwene Muwa, and having been faced with drought and disease, Maúa residents and other mwene in Makhuwa accepted the taxes without resistance. However, inhabitants were still able to move around relatively freely and as there was still much land left where no white men had yet entered, many groups, such as the Muela, the Nihava and the Mwapula, quietly moved to even more remote places in the forests of northern Maúa.94

However, the Muwa group, and other groups under the authority of Mwene Muwa, “decided to get used to colonos (colonial rulers)”.95 Since the new Muwa, Muwa IV, had no other choice but to accept colonial rule, the groups under him made a decision to share his fate. It is unclear though to what extent this was compulsory, and if it was compulsory, whether it was made so by colonial rulers or by Muwa IV. It must have been difficult to flee after being witness to the overwhelming military power of the Portuguese and later the “authority” of an administrative post that had been established in the midst of their land.

Nevertheless, despite the establishment of an administrative post and the commencement of tax collection, the existence of the Nyassa Company did not have an immediate effect on the lives of Maúa residents. The vast territory and the lack of resources made it impossible for the company to control the region effectively and thoroughly. While company officials forced the mwene to collect taxes and provide labour, the mwene resisted them in many different ways. The settlements were scattered, resident numbers were under-reported, and many adults hid in the forests when sipaiño made their rounds. When hut tax was introduced, as a countermeasure, they reduced the number of huts. When life became intolerable, an entire group would flee at night to an even more remote area, placing themselves, even if only temporarily, out of reach. These resistance measures are still much talked about amongst present day Makhuwa residents.

The Nyassa Company’s rule ended due to an economic crisis in Portugal and the subsequent rise of Salazar. Portugal unilaterally abrogated the ninety-nine-year lease of the Nyassa Company in 1929 and placed the former territory of the company under the direct control of the government. With this as a turning point, Niassa would undergo a sudden change and its “remoteness” lost, as pointed out by Isaacman.96
The introduction of the “Cotton Regime”

Cotton companies, colonial administration and their alliance with African assistants

The 1930 Acto Colonial (Colonial Act) placed the whole of Mozambique, including the area controlled by the Nyassa Company, under the direct rule of Portugal. Even the remote Maúá became a part of Mozambique, at least on the map. However, this policy change affected local communities only after the establishment of the “Cotton Regime”. That is, the formation of the Junta de Exportação de Algodão Colonial (JEAC: Colonial Cotton Export Board), the concessions given to private cotton companies and the appointment of José Tristão de Bettencourt as governor-general. In 1939, the majority of northern Mozambique was carved up among cotton companies (see Figure 18). As cotton growing was systematically forced on local residents, the colonial rule structure was formalised expeditiously.

The vast Niassa District, including Marrupa and Maúá District, was placed under the control of the Sociedade Algodoeira do Niassa (SAN: Niassa Cotton Society). Unlike the office of the Maúá Administrative Post, which was an old “hut” made of local materials and used by the Nyassa Company, the SAN office and the houses of its agents were concrete buildings. Cotton companies forged ahead in terms of infrastructure far more quickly than the colonial administration. First, private companies took hold of Maúá, and then the colonial administration secured its base – not vice versa. This has characterised Portuguese colonial rule since the end of the nineteenth century. In effect, the introduction of cotton growing in the land of the former Nyassa Company played a major role in constructing the colonial administrative structure. Both cotton company agents as well as colonial administrators jointly made sure that residents in the area grew cotton.

However, it is evident from ISANI, a report of the inspector dos negócios indígenas (inspector of native affairs) who visited Amaramba Circumscription (where Maúá Administrative Post was), that the relationship between cotton companies, colonial administration and African police was not necessarily cordial. According to the diário de serviço (service diary) of the Amaramba administration quoted in the report, Sermenho, a SAN manager, visited the administrative office of the circumscription and said:

Mr Sermenho says, “This area is infamous in Nampula because it does not produce cotton this year. An administrator who doesn’t produce cotton should be replaced.” He knows very well that natives in this area are not keen to grow cotton. Moreover, he knows very well that this area must produce enough cotton by the order of the district governor and that the administrator sent all the sipaios to the locations to make the natives obey the order, because many of them didn’t want to grow cotton. Therefore he easily complained to his superiors, when sipaios don’t do good work, they should degrade the administrator. In my observation, the SAN seems to think that they only
need to force the residents to produce cotton, without spending money, and by fair means or foul.  

Reflected here are the tensions that were present between the various parties: the cotton companies who were often just after a quick buck; the provincial governors (appointed by Governor-General Bettencourt), who were concerned about production volumes and the administrators, who forced local people to achieve production volume targets. This extract also suggests that a SAN employee had the power to dismiss an administrator. The service diary recorded that SAN’s non-payment to the *capataz* (foremen) or residents for four months was negatively affecting the cotton growing expansion campaign by the administrative government.

Cotton growing in Amaramba Circumscription began in 1939. In 1940 only 366 tons of cotton was produced. By 1941 production increased to 972 tons but increased again only marginally by 1942 to 1,010 tons. Significantly, the number of cotton growers increased from 10,652 in 1940 to 21,891 in 1941, though they slightly decreased in 1942 to 20,353 (see Graph 4).

The entry in the above-mentioned service diary illustrates the cotton companies’ irritation towards the administration, which could not mobilise local people to plant cotton, as well as the administrators’ frustration at their own inability to mobilise sufficient people to comply with their demands. Cotton companies and administrative officials blamed each other for people’s unwillingness to grow cotton. Both tried to achieve their objectives, not by changing their own ways, but by putting more pressure on residents.

In Maúa Administrative Post, forced cotton growing started around 1940 and Maúa was no longer the last refuge in Mozambique. It was around this time that many Africans began to flee to the neighbouring British territories from Maúa.

**Incorporation of the local communities**

In order to force locals to grow cotton, it became evident that it was essential to co-opt the help of the traditional authorities. The introduction of the *regedoria* system in the Maúa region was thorough. Traditional authorities, or *mwenes* (heads of village communities), were designated either as *régulos* or *chefes* depending on the size of the community, and were made responsible for internal affairs within each group. A *régulo*, in particular, was responsible for all the affairs in his territory (*regedoria*) and was imprisoned if he failed to collect taxes.

The pressure and consequent humiliation experienced was sometimes so extreme that the *mwenes*, who were placed on the bottom of the colonial administration as *régulos*, attempted to flee. Even members of the Muwa group who had chosen, albeit unwillingly, to get “used to the white men” at the onset of colonial rule, tried to flee. This was recorded in an administrative telegram dated 11 January 1941 as, “the information on the flight of Maúa residents.”
Graph 4  Cotton production in Amaramba and Marrupa Circumscriptions

Graph 5  Number of cotton producers in Amaramba and Marrupa Circumscriptions

Source: Bravo, 1963:140; 142; author’s calculations.
The administrative secretary of Amaramba Circumscription, who investigated the matter, reported to the governor-general’s office as follows:

According to Maúa Administrative Post, Régulo Cuvir [Kuviri] sent and gave the small firearms, which he stocked for self-defence, to the post. The régulo, accompanied by his people, was leaving this area to live with the former Régulo Mahua [Muwa], who is his brother-in-law in Nyasaland … The natives believe that the former Régulo Mahua sent lions to capture the relatives of two of Cuvir’s wives. I sent sipaios in plain clothes to capture the messenger of the former Régulo Mahua.

The telegram documents that Mwene Muwa, who was a régulo, left the Maúa region sometime between 1920 and 1941 and settled in Nyasaland. It also describes how a successor of Mwene Kuviri, a son of the first Muwa, attempted to travel to Nyasaland with his people and a collection of small firearms in 1941. This episode indicates that mwenes were not always obedient to the colonial authorities that were trying to coerce them to work for the system. The establishment of a vertical authority system, which ignored the traditional social order, and the cotton growing, which was forced through violent measures, was intolerable for many ordinary people and mwene alike.

Frustrated with the slow expansion of forced cotton growing, the colonial government sought alternative measures. The 1944 regulation regarding the local assistants (régulo, sipaios and interpreters), mentioned in the previous chapter, was to encourage them to promote cotton growing by offering them fees out of the cotton sales’ profits as well as from the taxes that régulos collected from group members. As a result, some régulos started to change their attitude. Amisse described this change:

From a certain time, mwene, who became régulo, started to ride maxila (palanquin) as if they were white men. They no longer walked on foot and instead rode on the shoulders of Africans. This happened during the reign of Muwa VI.

The inspector of native affairs who visited Maúa Administrative Post in 1944 described the conditions at the post as follows, suggesting the successful control over residents despite scarce resources:

There is no telephone at the administrative post or at the official residence of the chefe do posto. The road to connect the post and other locations can be used only during the dry season. Without repairing it every year, the road is not passable. It requires maintenance but they have little money. It’s a mystery how they manage to do it when the area is so thinly peopled.
Mocha Penpena, a Muhoco elder, talked about the intensification of public works which came with the introduction of cotton growing.

They made us cut down trees of many meters long to build a bridge. It was hard to carry sipaios on top. They beat weak ones up. They said this was a man's job and it was compulsory. Sipaios came around to houses at night and captured men. Some fled into the forests. Sometimes the government summoned régulos. Régulos ordered chefes. Each chefe had to collect a certain number of men. To build roads was a job for men and women. We carried sand from the mountains and made roads. We used hands to carry sand and soil. We were also made to cut trees and pull the roots.116

The answer, it seems, to the “mystery” that the inspector referred to was the oppression by sipaios and the utilisation of régulos and chefes. The same method was used for cotton growing. SAN agents and the chefe do posto ordered the régulo to gather up locals in his territory and then, under the sipaios's supervision, people were forced to plant cotton from morning until night, first in the field of the régulo and then in the field of the pwiyamwene.117

Incorporation of local residents and the end of the “land of escape”

Despite these measures, as in other areas, people continued to flee. As a further effort to combat this resistance the administration then introduced a quota system. A household with a husband and a wife was required to plant cotton on one hectare of land. A household headed by a widow or a wife, other than the first wife, had to plant half a hectare of land. Having thus been incorporated into the system, women also had to endure a heavy workload and a life characterised by oppression. One woman in Maúa said:

The cotton growing campaign lasted long. Capatazes, who were paid [by cotton companies], beat us. Some were imprisoned. Sometimes we were ordered to take capim (weeds) to the administrator to prove we were doing cotton work. Even old people were forced to work. There was not enough to eat. Desperately we asked men for help. Those days men and women worked together in the field.118

Division of labour between the genders was firmly entrenched in every aspect of daily life in Makhuwa society. Agriculture was mainly women’s work because it was related to food.119 However, growing cotton on one hectare of land was more than a woman could do, and husband and wife worked together. Still, the workload of women doubled because they had to work on the cotton field in addition to producing food for their family’s consumption. When the men, who loathed the farm work and forced growing thrust upon them, fled home to become migrant workers, the women were left to cultivate one hectare of land all
by themselves. If they failed to fulfil this quota, they had to endure unpleasant consequences, such as sexual violence by the *capataz* who did not belong to the community.

The Maúa region, which used to be the place to which people from other areas fled for cover, had now, under colonial rule, changed drastically. Yet, even with the oppressive measures outlined, it was not easy to force the residents to fulfil the quota because the men frequently fled. As an attempt to counteract this, the administration took the next step which was to count the residents and register them in order to control the population on an individual basis. Until this time, neither population registration nor census was conducted in the region, although these were essential for tax collection. The registration of cotton growers was thus the first population registration which took place in Maúa. The colonial administration issued cotton grower registration cards to all residents including children and elders.

It can be seen how the introduction of cotton growing drastically changed the modus operandi of local administration, enabling the colonial rulers to control people in Maúa for the first time in history.

In the whole of the Marrupa Circumscription, which oversaw Maúa Administrative Post, 690 people were registered as cotton growers in 1942. The number increased almost 45-fold to 29,158 by 1943. The main reason for this dramatic increase was that the registration process started full scale when the Marrupa administrative office was established in 1943. However, these numbers were short-lived and cotton growing may well have met with resistance from the Marrupa residents. The number of registered growers decreased very significantly again, to 9,011 in 1945, as these coercive measures did not have a continuous impact.

According to Isaacman, cotton growers constituted 50 per cent of the total labour force in Marrupa Circumscription, the second largest proportion in Mozambique after the neighbouring Montepuez Circumscription in Cabo Delgado District. The figure reflects that the colonial administration impacted hugely on the local community, and during the Second World War, accelerated cotton growing exponentially. The high proportion of cotton growers was achieved, mainly due to Maúa Administrative Post, which was highly populated and had the most suitable environment for cotton growing in Marrupa.

However, the actual figures need to be treated with caution, as it was only the cotton growers that were registered and hence the estimate of the entire labour force could be inaccurate. There is also a possibility that the *régulo* reported smaller population figures than were actually the case in order to alleviate the burden of taxes and forced labour on their people. Importantly, upon the introduction of cotton growing many men fled to the neighbouring British territory and became migrant workers.

Yet undeniably, many people started to grow cotton within a short period of time (1940–1945), and the impact of this accelerated production on traditional society was enormous. Graph 4 demonstrates that cotton production by “African peasants” in Marrupa Circumscription doubled every year from 1942 and peaked in 1949 (4,379 tons). Thereafter, it fluctuated between 1,151 and 3,949 tons. This provides evidence that the change in Portugal’s colonial policy in the Second World War transformed the
northern-most area of Mozambique, which in the past had merely been a “frontier” for colonial rulers and the colonial economy (see Graph 2).

These figures and official archives do not, however, depict how life was for local people, who continuously and mostly desperately tried to escape colonial control. The number of men in Maúá who left home as migrant workers peaked during the period of forced cotton growing. These men went to Tanzania in the north, Nyasaland in the west and Rhodesia in the south, counting on the support from their brothers, parents and relatives as they sought better-paid jobs. Rhodesia was the most popular destination because of its high wages and more favourable work conditions, but was difficult to reach due to its distance.

Working in different countries had its own influences. It was during this time that the Islamic faith began rapidly spreading amongst Maúá residents. It became a trend, especially among upper-class people (nete), to learn Islam in Tanzania whilst working as a migrant labourer. Nyasaland was a popular destination because of its proximity and family connections – the ancestors of many Maúá residents had moved there.

After the Second World War, “international pressure against despotic conduct”, as feared by Governor-General Bettencourt, was revived. In addition, the number of cotton growers, as well as production, decreased throughout Mozambique. This forced policy-makers to look for an alternative to coercive measures. In order to secure stable production, the Portuguese government introduced a “price incentive”. In 1946 it became obligatory for cotton companies to set up cotton markets that fell within a 15 kilometre radius of the various cotton fields, and in locations approved by the local administrator. It was hoped that this measure would partly reduce the burden for cotton growers who previously had to transport their cotton great distances to markets.

However, this decree-law had an unexpected effect when it was executed in local communities because it gave authority to the administration to relocate the villages that were out of the control of the Maúá Circumscription. The chefe do posto ordered regulos and chefs to relocate villages closer to easily accessible roads. For example, the Muela group, which had fled to the Miombo forest (Makonkwa, near the Lugenda) in the north, was recalled to Maúá, 80 kilometres away.

One woman recalls: “I was born in Makonkwa. The administrator ordered us to come to this side. I was still a young girl. There was no proper road. I had twenty kilograms of food on my head and walked to Xapalango (Xaparango, Xapalanco, Xapawango). I was scared because I didn’t know what was going to happen.”

Another person remembers: “Makonkwa was in Majone Circumscription. The chefe do posto said that Muela was no longer ours. We were ordered to come back here, Xapalango.”

Similar things happened to Mwapula groups: “When we were near the Luluxi, a chefe do posto called ‘Bombeia’ ordered us to move close to the road so that it would be easier to sell cotton. He said, ‘Get out of here. Move towards Maúá.’”

Bravo commented: “Cotton growers used to walk fifty kilometres to reach cotton markets. Thanks to cotton companies, they only have to walk fifteen kilometres.” Furthermore, in 1948, the JECA started to register “more productive” male growers as agicultores do algodão (cotton agriculturists). African villagers were hence no longer
forced cotton growers but became specialised agriculturists. After having agreed to plant one hectare of cotton (and an additional 0.5 hectare per wife), cotton agriculturists would receive technical assistance from the government and were allowed to move to a concentração (cotton community), comprising of scattered cotton farms joined together and divided into several blocks. This made production easier and was also intended to improve the standard of living of growers by providing some infrastructure. Cotton growers and their families were relocated to concentração. Colonial officers emphasised the benefits and significance of these changes. However, not everything was as beneficial as it was presented. For the groups that lived in remote places and away from colonial influence, it meant forced emigration. This is exactly what happened to the Muela and Mwapula groups mentioned earlier. Furthermore, in order to create cotton agriculturists, the colonial administration needed to gather up local residents into accessible locations. Xapalango, where the Muela group was made to relocate, was one of the concentração locations. Other groups such as the Muhoco, Punhala, Meníkwa, Namarica and Ntepo were taken to a designated concentração in Mount Txonkori in the north-west of the administrative post. Muhoco people have described the move as follows:

A colono called Brito worked with the administrator to relocate people to the land suited for cotton growing. The Muhoco group was asked to move as they thought the residents of Muhoco knew best about cotton growing. We agreed because we thought we could make more money if we could produce more cotton. All of us got on a truck and moved. Nothing was left, no animals, no household goods.

The policy change “from coercion to incentives” by the Portuguese authority really meant “stronger control over local people” who fell at the bottom of the colonial administration. Those who tried to run away from cotton growing were easily caught. Their sorrow was vividly described by a Muela elder, Amisse Muripa: “Suffering (ohawa) is the cotton campaign. At that time we came here from the Lugenda. We suffered. But there was no place to flee to.”

In effect people in Maúa lost all means of escape and through these new dispensations they finally became fully incorporated into the colonial system. Every aspect of people’s lives, including their levels of production, was watched over by the local mwene (who became a régulo or a chefe), the sipaió, attached to the administration and the capataz, the foreman. The only option was acceptance.

Makhuwa-Xirima and Makhuwa-Metto

So far we have discussed the historical experience of the people who were originally from the Alto Lúrio and later settled in the Maúa region, that is the migration, the settlement and the colonial experience of the people who had close relations with the Muwa group who spoke the Makhuwa-Xirima language. However, Maúa Circumscription was also
home to the Makhuwa-Metto. They too revered Mount Namuli but their original dwelling area (the track of *niphito*) was Cabo Delgado District. The Metto had close relationships with people on the coast and, as a result, many were both Muslims and goods traders. Also, contrary to the traditional Makhuwa tendency to segment and decentralise, the Econi clan, as mentioned earlier, formed an alliance and united with the Makhuwa-Metto. Among the chiefs who became powerful, due in part to the firearms obtained in the course of the slave trade, was Mwene Mwalia, Mwene Muwa’s neighbour. Many Makhuwa-Metto chiefs, including Mwene Mwalia, would have clashed with Yao chiefs, who had already been active in the slave trade, due to their geographic proximity. It was no doubt convenient for Mwalia that Muwa, a fellow Makhuwa, won a battle against the Yao and moved into the area, previously occupied by the Yao. Due to their historical links, the Muwa and the Mwalia were aligned as they attacked Yao habitations together and shared a long-distance trade route. In this sense, the classification such as Makhuwa-Xirima or Makhuwa-Metto is politically meaningless.

Anthropologist Medeiros, an expert on the history of Makhuwa-Metto, comments: “The difference between them is not much. In terms of social relations, clans are more important.” The current residents of the Maúa district often echo this. For example, there is no traditional restriction of marriage between the members of the two groups. In fact inter-marriage is quite common. Sometimes, Metto members live under a Makhuwa-Xirima chief and vice versa. That clans with the same names (*nihimo*) exist in both Makhuwa-Xirima and Makhuwa-Metto suggests that the two were related many generations ago. Another important point is that very few residents in Maúa call themselves Xirima or Metto. The actual usage of these terms is to indicate different dialects, not different groups. As discussed before, various words are used by the colonial authority, catholic priests or scholars to describe Makhuwa people in southern Niassa, and academics have not agreed on the term. It can be surmised that the difference between the two is not big enough to constitute an “ethnic” one.

However, it is not true to say that the two terms are therefore rendered completely meaningless, as there are important differences in the experiences of the people. For example, Mwene Mwalia (Metto) and his people armed themselves and vigorously resisted colonial rule while Mwene Muwa (Xirima) did not take up arms. One of the reasons is that some of the Makhuwa-Metto, such as the Mwalia, lived near the coast, which enabled their chiefs to engage in the slave trade at an early stage, accumulate firearms and create a centralised system. Moreover, because the Nyassa Company, which had headquarters on the nearby Ibo Island, often intervened, the Makhuwa-Metto developed a stronger apathy towards colonial rule than did the Makhuwa-Xirima, who could cross the river and flee. In any case, the colonial army destroyed and burned down the capital of Mwalia in 1900. Mwene Mwalia and his people fled to the mountains and continued their resistance from there. Two years later in 1902, a Portuguese flag was raised in the domicile of Mwene Muwa.

Perhaps the difference between the Makhuwa-Metto and the Makhuwa-Xirima is most notable in each *niphito*. In other words, it lies at the centre and the direction of the group’s...
particular network. As shown in Figure 22, the groups that speak Makhuwa-Metto such as the Nekutho and Revia live in the east and north parts of Maúa Circumscription. The author’s interviews revealed that these groups have moved around within Cabo Delgado District and the niphitos (tracks of the group) are very different from those of the Xirima people. This has created a difference in their relationships with relatives and how they associate with other groups. Many people in the Nekutho and Revia groups frequently mix with Metto in Cabo Delgado, while the Xirima group, like the Muwa, have closer relationships with people in the Alto Lúrio, where they originated from. This does not necessarily mean that they had an exclusive relationship that mirrored the alliance between Mwene Muwa and Mwene Mwalia. Makhuwa people often married Yaos, against whom they fought. In this way, the frameworks such as “ethnic groups” (Yao or Makhuwa) or “sub-groups” (Makhuwa-Metto, Makhuwa-Xirima) are not fixed but flexible.145 Having said that, the network of Makhuwa-Metto groups tends to be close to the Makhuwa-Metto in Cabo Delgado and Makhuwa-Xirima groups tend to look towards Alto Lúrio (the inland of Nampula District).

It should always be remembered, however, that although the Makhuwa-Metto and the Makhuwa-Xirima lived in Maúa Circumscription this was primarily the result of the administrative division introduced by colonial authorities and not based on any decision by its inhabitants. If Africans had been asked to create their own administrative divisions, it would probably have been totally different, or certainly they would not have created fixed administrative divisions. Maúa Circumscription was established independently from any input from the inhabitants and it so happened that its centre was positioned in the place where Mwene Muwa of Makhuwa-Xirima lived. Understandably, Mwene Muwa was affected by this new order.

In this way the Makhuwa-Metto people in Maúa Circumscription were to all intents and purposes treated as a minority group. Another important point is that in 1940 a Catholic church was built in a Metto chief’s (Nekutho) territory. The church produced many Mettos who became teachers and interpreters, and who played a significant role in colonial rule. This would begin to seriously impact on local politics after the Second World War, especially after the 1950s. This impact is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

**Conclusion – the formation of local community characteristics**

The characteristics of the Maúa area and its residents (mainly Makhuwa-Xirima) prior to the liberation struggle can be summed up in the following nine points: (1) they moved there relatively recently and their settlements were scattered; (2) the area was “the land of escape”, the migration destination for groups to flee from colonial rule; (3) Muwa and many others originated from the Alto Lúrio; (4) they attempted to resist Portuguese rule by forming an alliance with the German force but failed and were overwhelmed by the “white men’s war”; (5) upon its establishment colonial authorities banished Muwa and intervened in the selection of his successor; (6) colonial rule was established later than in other areas, after cotton growing started around 1940; (7) it became essential to
incorporate the traditional authorities in order to introduce cotton growing; (8) Muwa fled to Nyasaland and returned in the early 1940s; and (9) the administrator eventually took a firm stance with cotton growers, even dictating where they should live.

Collectively, residents in the Maúa region did not have much in their favour when it came to armed resistance against white rule, let alone individually. The only resistance available to them was to flee in twos and threes to places beyond the reach of the colonial rulers. However, after the “Cotton Regime” was established, their choices became even more limited and in the main they were forced to accept colonial authorities. However, Portuguese colonial rulers could not afford to send many administrators to Maúa Circumscription, which remained remote and had a low economic value for them. They therefore opted to utilise the existing traditional authority as they did in some other places. This was effective to some extent as the traditional communal way had not been destroyed, due to the particularly slow establishment of colonial rule and monetary economy in the area. Furthermore, at this point, there was no economic or educational divide within the community itself, which later would present challenges. Although many men left to find work as migrant workers, this was in fact sporadic, with the exception of Nyasaland. This was unlike in the south where leaving to find work across the borders had become institutionalised for many years – or as in the case of the Makonde and Nyanja people who had relatives across the borders. The most common destination was Tanganyika but the main reason to go there was to study Islam.

After the introduction of the “Cotton Regime” in 1940, the society changed drastically with colonial rule becoming very firmly established. Another two features of this time included the first Catholic church which was built in Marrupa Circumscription in 1940; and the introduction of forced tax and labour. However, because these were developed based on existing social structures and in collaboration with the traditional authority, it took a long time to transform the relationship between individuals and society. When the Catholic church and the church schools were established, their potential influence on people’s minds could have helped accelerate social changes. However, the majority of Maúa residents believed in the traditional religion (ancestor worship) on which their original society was based while the traditional authority (or the aristocratic class) adopted the Islamic faith during the slave trade era. Just prior to the church being built, the numbers of people converting to Islam had grown due to the amount of migrant work in Tanganyika and Zanzibar. On the other hand, the conversion of Maúa residents to Christianity was slow even though children in the territory of Régulo Nekutho were sent to the church school from an early age.

One of these children was Valentim Limas Necuto, a son of Régulo Nekutho who would later work for the colonial administration. Like him, graduates of the church school during the 1940s and 1950s became elementary education teachers in a system that was increasingly systemised during the time of the decolonisation movement. The Portuguese national force and the colonial administration found them very useful as “assistants”. Some, however, became involved in the liberation movement, as discussed in Chapter 5.
Importantly, although the systems which would change local traditional society (such as forced cotton growing and a Catholic church) started in Maúá in 1940, this occurred a lot later than in other parts of Mozambique. For this region the changes took place only about 20 years before the onset of the liberation struggle.
2. Characteristics of Maúa and the Process of Colonisation

Notes

1. Niassa District was created on 27 October 1929 when Portugal re-acquired the area from Nyassa Company, and separated from the adjacent circumscription of Cabo Delgado. After several name changes, it became Niassa District under Decree-Law no. 39.858 on 20 October 1954.

2. The land area is 119,720 square kilometres, 15.5 per cent of the total 771,125 square kilometres of the country.

3. Until 1945, Amaramba Circumscription covered the whole southern part of Niassa District, including Maúa Administrative Post. As of 1942, the circumscription was 35,985 square kilometres with a population of 87,516 (Anuário, 1950:21). After Marrupa Circumscription was established, Amaramba Circumscription was limited to the south-western part of the district.

4. Marrupa is an administrative circumscription that controls the eastern part of Niassa District. It was established under Decree-Law no. 31.896 on 27 February 1942, around the time when cotton growing began in earnest. After the first administrator was appointed, it started operating on 10 May 1943 (AHM-ISANI, cx.96, Circunscrição de Marrupa, 23/6/1944:1). Until the Decree-Law no. 39.858 of 1968 established Maúa Circumscription as one of the four circumscriptions of Niassa District, Marrupa stretched from the Mecula region on the borders of Tanzania in the north to the borders of Nampula District in the south.

5. During the liberation war, administrative divisions were changed (often subdivided) in many areas. This is detailed in Chapter 5.

6. Strictly speaking, Revia and Nipepe were established immediately after an attack by FRELIMO in March 1966. Nungo was temporarily incorporated into Maúa but later became part of Marrupa Circumscription and Cabo Delgado. This book does not include Nungo in Maúa Circumscription in its discussion.

7. Pedro Baina, the administrator of Maúa District from 1996 to 1999, who is from the area, explains that “Ma” means territory, thus “Ma-Muwa” means “the place of Muwa” (Pedro Baina, Maúa Sede, 29/7/1997). However, Frizzi, a linguist, rejects the explanation, saying that “Ma” is a prefix indicating second person plural and that the Portuguese misunderstood what locals were saying (Juseppe Frizzi, Maúa Sede, 3/9/2011).

8. About the discordance of administrative areas and cultural areas, Pedro Baina said: “This was the cause for the confusion and difficulty of the administration” (Pedro Baina, Maúa Sede, 25/8/1997).

9. In 1940, the population was 223,367 while the population density was as low as 1.86 people per square kilometres. The number of whites was 137 (Instituto Nacional de Estatística-Estado de Moçambique, IV Recenseamento Geral da População, 4 a Distrito do Niassa, 1970:XXXI). The present Niassa Province then formed Mozambique District, together with the present Cabo Delgado Province in the east and the present Nampula Province in the south (Censo 1940, v. “População Indígena”:6-7).

10. Interviews with five mwene in Marrupa (Mwene Telewe, also often written as Telèue; Mwene Nanangawiya; Mwene Rukulyia; Mwene Nampaha; Mwene Bwanusse, Marrupa Sede, 28/8/2003) and with Jome from Marrupa (“Jome” António Diwa, Cuamba Sede, 17/8/2003).

11. In terms of the administrative division and the place-name, the inspector of “native” affairs wrote as follows: “Marrupa is a name without a meaning (AHM: A/28: ‘Namrupi is correct, not Marrupa’). If it is coined, a Portuguese-sounding name would be better. Or, they should have maintained an historic name Metarica, a legend in this area. When the administrative activity was most difficult, this powerful régulo greatly helped our military conquer in the fight against an enormous enemy, Mataca” (Ibid:6). This indicates that the administrative division was not based on any real understanding of the local history by the local administrator.

12. Due to its altitude, Marrupa itself was not suited for cotton growing. It later became the third largest city in Niassa District and a white settlement.

This can be verified from the maps used by each exploration team (see for example, Medeiros, 1997:118).

Although Portuguese scholars and administrators called them “Ajaua” in the colonial era, this book uses “Yao” which is the present-day term and also the English term.

Lerma, 1998:64. It is said to have been used since the sixteenth century.

Ibid.:62.


Rita-Ferreira, 1975:37.


Some divide them according to the linguistic characterisation such as “Macua-Litoral”, “Macua-Macuana”, “Macua-Meto (or Medo)” and its variety “Acherima”, “Macua-Nyassa”, and “Macua-Lómuê” (Simões, 1961:51-68, in Ivala, 1993:8). These classifications concern researchers and do not reflect the way of living of the people classified. As Ivala points out, Xirimia should not be considered as a variety of Macua-Metto (Ibid).

Nekutho is also written as Necuto. In this book, Nekutho is used.

In terms of regedoria (territory of each régulo), Metto is spoken in Nekutho and Revia while Xirimia is spoken in the rest, that is, Maúa, Muluku, Nipepe, Vatiwa, Hamela, Vahiwa and Muela.

Medeiros, 1997:65. This political consolidation process failed in the twentieth century due to intensified colonial rule.

This is partly because the clan in Nekutho and Revia was not Econi/Ziconi, the most powerful clan of Metto, but Ajopa.

This group is classified as “Macua Interior” by Lerma, “Lómuê” by Medeiros and “Macua Niassa” by Simões. They are referred to here as “Xirimia,” the name currently used in Maúa.

Unlike Metto mwene, many Xirimia mwene talk about Mount Namuli. Traditionally, researchers classified Xirimia as a dialect of the Makhuwa language or as a sub-group of Makhuwa people. Recently, it attracted attention as the oldest Makhuwa language. Makhuwa people themselves prefer “Xirimia” to “Makhuwa”, which is an almost derogatory term used by others (Interview with Juseppe Frizzi, Mitúcue, Cuamba District, 13/8/2003).

Branquinho, who recorded the oral history in 1966, wrote “Chalaue”, but the official map in 1999 says Chalau (Branquinho, 1969:127; Direcção Nacional de Geografia e Cadastro 1999:#31, Malema). In terms of the migration of the Muwa group, information has been gleaned from the above-mentioned report by Branquinho; the report by Ivala; and the author’s own interviews with the present Muwa (Muwa VII), the present pwiyamwene and the brother of Muwa V (Muwa, Maúa Sede, 10/8/1997; Sancho Afi a Amisse, Maúa Sede, 30/7/1997).

Ivala, 1993:74.

Medeiros, 1997:74. This estimate is probably correct because the present Muwa commented that he was the seventh and that World War I broke out during the time of Muwa III; and because a battle between Muwa and Yao chiefs took place around 1840.

After speaking with Eduardo Medeiros, the author came to the conclusion that his hypothesis was probably correct (Figueira da Foz, Portugal, 7/8/2001).

Raqui Muhoco, Muhoco, 28/8/1999. His name reveals his father was Mwene Muhoco.


O’Neil, 1882:201-205. O’Neil also mentioned the names of Makhuwa mwene such as “Namurola” and “Muhemela”.


It was probably because the Muwa, unlike the Mwalia, did not resist the advancement of the army.

Vilhena, Ernesto Jardim de, Compañía:322-324, in Pellissier, 1994:371. At this point, Muwa did
not play the role of régulo, the rank in the colonial administration. That the Portuguese recorded him as such indicates that they called all African chiefs régulo, disregarding the administrative reality.

39 Medeiros, 1997:75.
40 It is symbolic that the headquarters of a cotton company would be built in front of the grave.
41 Kuviri became a régulo in the Metarica Administrative Post, west of Maúa.
42 Of course they were not “free” in a real sense because they were slaves.
44 Author’s interview with the elders of the Ntepo group (Ntepo, Maúa Sede, 9/8/1997).
46 Ibid.:53.
49 Branquinho, 1969:220-221; Ivala, 1993:50. Colonial rulers recognised the authority of Nipepe, the first settler and a son of the first Muwa, and appointed him régulo. Other mwene became chefe, either chefe de povoação (village chief) or chefe de grupo de povoação (chief of village group) according to the population of their group. Muela fled into the territory of Nipepe, was appointed as chefe de povoação, but later escaped to northern Maúa.
50 Ivala, 1993:51.
51 Ibid.:36.
52 Mwene Vatiwa said: “The first Vatiwa who came down Mount Namuli died in Munguli (the south of the Lúrio). The era under the second Vatiwa was the time of railroad construction and maxila (palanquin). People were forced to work like slaves. The third moved near here (in the Maúa Circumscription)” (Vatiwa, Maúa Sede, 23/8/1999).
53 Branquinho, 1969:127. This was also confirmed in the author’s interview (Vatiwa, Maúa Sede, 23/8/1999).
54 It is significant that this report was submitted in 1968 when FRELIMO began popping up all over Maúa and the Alto Lúrio region, and the political situation drastically changed. Branquinho paid attention to the oral history not because of his training as an anthropologist, but because of his intention to gather essential information in order to tip the scales of the political situation (local people were sympathetic to the liberation movement) in favour of colonial authorities. He believed that incidents in the past continuously influenced the local society and people, and that one could learn from the past failures of colonial rule in order to capture people’s hearts.
55 This trait would be repeated during the liberation war. In many cases, those who appeared to be simply running away in fact had put careful thought into who they went with and where they went to.
57 Makhuwa people do not have a centralised political structure because of the matrilineal system, although the alliance of mwene was formed from time to time, as seen in the case of Makhuwa-Metto. There was also an Islamic influence.
58 All the ethnic groups to the north of Zambézia in northern Mozambique (Makhuwa, Yao, Nyanja and Makonde except for Nguni, who are originally from the south) have a matrilineal system.
60 Ibid.:27.
61 Ibid.:14.
63 Ibid.:84.
64 It means “a person who leads” (Medeiros, 1985:23).

Her role is to make her clan prosperous and increase the population (Ibid.:25). The word itself is *pwiyamwene* but usually an honorific prefix “a” is added.

Medeiros thinks the term *pwattaphwatta* is only used in Maúa, as he has never heard it used in other regions. It is commonly used in Maúa, and Frizzi believes that it is linguistically meaningful. The author uses *humu* to explain the social structure and *pwattaphwatta* to refer to a “title” of those of the Maúa region.

Among the Makhuwa-Litoral on the coast, who were strongly influenced by the Swahili culture, Islamised Afro-Asian chiefs formed kingdoms. Due to the Islamic influence patrilineage is more and more valued and the traditional social structure is changing.

Pedro Baina, Maúa Sede, 27/7/1997.

This is based on the interviews that were conducted by the author in Maúa District (Muela 23/8/1997 and 2-4/9/1999; Mwapula, 25/8/1997 and 5-7/9/1999; Muhoco, 11/8/1997 and 27-29/8/1999).

Men are often called back to their home *nkoto*, especially when a man is chosen as a successor after a *tata* or *mwene* dies. He will often leave his wife and children, who belong to his uncle-in-law, return to his home group, marry another woman and lead a new life (Muela, Maúa District, 23/8/1997). In other words, for Makhuwa men, lineage is a temporary affiliation. More important and permanent social relations are based on their clan relations. Of course, slaves do not have a home village or clan relations. *Mwene* wanted slaves for this political reason, in addition to using them for trade and for increasing the population.

It may have been different before the slave trade era. The first leader who led the Muela group to new land was a *pwiyamwene* according to the elders of Muela (Muela elders, Muela, 24/8/1997). Her name, Muhuwa Ekoto, symbolically means “a person who creates wars” in Makhuwa. The introduction of Islam and the colonial system may have changed gender relations between *mwene* and *pwiyamwene*. No researchers have dealt with the question regarding the female authority in Makhuwa society in detail. This should be explored in the future.


Interviews with the elders of the following three groups: Muwa, Maúa Sede, 10/8/1997; Ntepo, Maúa Sede, 9/8/1997; Muhoco, Maúa Sede, 11/8/1997.


Ibid.


These were probably Ngoni, who moved north from southern Mozambique in the eighteenth century. Some of them settled in Niassa District.

Muwa, Maúa Sede, 10/8/1997.


Revia is a Makhuwa-Metto group. It would appear that the Makhuwa-Metto kept a more detailed account of the “German War” than the Makhuwa-Xirima.

It probably meant the British exploration teams at the end of the nineteenth century.


For example, many groups that live in northern Maúa such as Mwapula and Muela settled there after the “German War”. Mwapula, Maúa District, 25/8/1997.

Amisse knows more about the oral tradition of the Muwa group than Muwa VII. Some say there was a “traditional” problem in the “succession” of the present Muwa. It probably has something to
do with “the former régulo Muwa in Nyasaland,” which is elaborated on in Chapter 5.

The new Muwa, chosen as an expedient measure, could not take his own initiative because traditionally they could not choose a new Mwene Muwa before confirming the death of the previous mwene. A similar problem would be repeated during the liberation struggle period.

The post was planned in 1920 but set up only in 1923 (Medeiros, 1997:164).

At first, a cup of sorghum (staple food for Makhuwa people) was collected as taxes. They taxed women because it was easier to capture women than men (Ntepo, Maúa Sede, 9/8/1997).

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of the legitimacy of Muwa VII who succeeded him as Muwa. Similarly, there were omissions when discussing the liberation war against colonial rule. Taking various factors into consideration, the mwene who headed for Nyasaland appeared to be Muwa V. It is very likely that Muwa VI lost his authority in the “traditional” order because he was chosen during the absence of the legitimate mwene. Therefore, he needed to use the authority of the colonial rulers.

As of 1944, taxes were collected from 2,347 huts and the total amount was 609 escudo (AHM-ISANI, Circunscrição de Marrupa, 1944:5). The population of Maúa Administrative Post was 27,266 in the 1940 census, although the number is debatable. The total number of households is unknown but nevertheless tax collection was improving.

This manifests a pecking order in the local community under the colonial administration.

The cultivation of a new field was men’s work.

It was not only in Maúa but all over the country until the mid-1940s that the local governments did not have basic data such as population figures, which was vital for colonial administration. Even in Amaramba Circumscription, where colonial rule was best established in Niassa District, for example, only three marriages, one birth and three deaths were recorded between 1932 and 1944 (AHM-ISANI, cx.93, Circunscrição de Amaramba, 1944:3).

The number was the largest in 1942 (29,158) and stayed around 12,000-15,000 after that. See Graph 5.

In Montepuez Circumscription, cotton growers constituted 31 per cent of the total labour force in 1940 and 63 per cent in 1945 (Isaacman, 1996:77).

No other parts in Marrupa Circumscription were suitable for cotton growing because both Marrupa Sede (the Marrupa city and its surroundings) and Mecula Administrative Post in the north were situated was on the plateau.


Raqui Muhoco went to Rhodesia twice, with nine other men from Maúa and fourteen men respectively. It took them thirty days on foot, securing food on the way by weeding on others farms. Raqui Muhoco, Muhoco, Maúa District, 28/8/1999.

Circular Confidencial no.1041/D7, do Governador-Geral,1944 (AHM-ISANI, cx.77)


Pitcher, 1995:121. Pitcher thinks the effect was evident immediately after the policy adoption in 1946, while Isaacman reckons it took longer (Isaacman, 1996:125).

Decree-Law, no. 35.444 (Ibid.:130).

From the author’s interviews in the Maúa District, 29 to 30 August 1997 and 21 August to 11 September 1999. It is estimated to have taken place in the 1950s.


Bravo, 1963:219. The number of markets increased, but they were not created near the habitations, but near the places that were convenient for the colonial administration, which then moved people nearer to the markets.


Econi is called Ziconi around Maúa and its surroundings. This book uses Ziconi when the clan is referred to in Maúa.


Interview (Eduardo Medeiros, Figueira da Foz, Portugal, 10/8/2001).

Pélissier, 1994:368-370. This was also confirmed in the author’s interviews in 2005 (Mwalia, Balama District, Cabo Delgado Province, 21/08/2005).

Interviews with a Ntepo group confirmed that groups belonging to Xirima fought among themselves. “In old days, two mwenes would start fighting as soon as they met” (Ntepo, Maúa Sede, 9/8/1997).

