Résumé

A. Isaacman — Le Mozambique colonial vu de l'intérieur : l'autobiographie de Raûl Honwana.

L'ouvrage de Raûl Honwana, Memôrias, constitue un témoignage incomparable sur le Mozambique colonial. Lors de sa parution en 1985 il reçut un accueil très élogieux en même temps que controversé. Dans son livre, Honwana aborde plusieurs problèmes importants, par exemple le statut ambigu des « assimilados » ou la manière dont le racisme structure la vie quotidienne des non-Européens, indépendamment de leur position de classe ou des différentes stratégies que les Mozambicains adoptent pour faire face ou lutter contre l'oppression coloniale. Cette autobiographie témoigne également de l'ancienneté des liens existant entre les nationalistes du sud Mozambique et l'African National Congress.

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Social scientists groping with the impulse to write 'history from the bottom up' have turned increasingly to autobiography. In doing so they have explicitly challenged the assumption held by most students of autobiography that this genre belongs exclusively to 'men of letters'. Recent work by feminist scholars and analysts of working-class culture have challenged this assumption on the ground that it uncritically reproduces the prevailing gender and class biases in the literature (Passerini fthcg.; Maynes fthcg.; Samuel 1981; Vincent 1981). According to Maynes (fthcg.: 4), a feminist scholar and social historian, autobiographies 'can emerge from a variety of impulse and follow a variety of models' and are not just the literary expression of the bourgeoisie'.

Similarly, personal narratives written by the colonized are both an invaluable form of intellectual discourse and an important source of social history. Until recently, however, this genre has not figured prominently in African historiography except in the more traditional mode depicting the lives of the great and the powerful. To be sure, there are works such as An Ill-Fated People (Vambe 1972) and The Autobiography of an Unknown South African (Nokgatle 1971) which testify to the hope, dignity and struggle of the oppressed, but they are few in number.

Although autobiography as a genre has not figured prominently in African historiography, the void has been partially filled by recent work in the field of life history. Life histories are oral narratives which 'represent an extensive record of a person's life told to and recorded by another, who then edits and writes the life as though it were auto-

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biography' (Langness 1965: 4-5). According to Mintz (1979: 34), the life historian has two overarching responsibilities—to 'define his or her place between the informant and the reader' and to 'help the reader to see the informant within the culture and society'. The first requires the fieldworker to acknowledge the significant, though varied, role which he or she played in the production of the final text. The second serves to remind us that the individuals whom we study cannot be disembodied from the social reality in which they live. Life historians must grapple with the ways in which their subjects 'are at once products and makers of the social and cultural systems within which they are lodged' (ibid. : 23-24).

In African studies, the recent life-history literature has been produced primarily by feminist scholars working on gender-related issues in Anglophone regions. It is important to note, however, that well before either African history or women's studies enjoyed any standing as legitimate academic disciplines, there were a number of scholars who recognized the untapped potential of these oral texts. None made a more important contribution than Mary Smith. Working in northern Nigeria in 1949, she spent six weeks recording the interviews which became the basis of her classic study, *Baba of Karo: A Woman of the Muslim Hausa* (Smith 1954). Her narrative provides a gendered view of Hausa society and addresses a number of critical issues which most anthropologists had understated, overlooked or just simply misrepresented.1

If Mary Smith's work as well as such widely heralded studies as *La Vida* (Lewis 1965), *Sun Chief* (Simmons 1942) and *Workers in the Cane* (Mintz 1960) pointed to the untapped possibilities of life narratives, African historians were slow to recognize this potential. It was only in the 1970s that feminist scholars began to turn to oral autobiographies as the most direct and immediate evidence for reconstructing and understanding the social reality of women. In this regard, Marcia Wright's widely cited essay, 'Women in Peril', published in 1975, represents a major turning point in the literature. Drawing on the life history of three ex-slaves, it provides a strategic entry from which to analyze the varied but vulnerable position of women in East-Central Africa around the turn of the century.

During the past decade feminist scholars, and a small but increasing number of social historians, have used life narratives to reexamine important issues and to define new research agendas. They have, for

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1. This point is made quite persuasively by S. Geiger (1986: 341-342). She notes that 'Baba's narrative frequently contradicts and invalidates M. G. Smith's generalizations about Hausa society, especially on subjects central to Baba's life such as marriage, divorce, household and compound relations, kinship and, most particularly, social relations among women. While M. G. Smith dismisses women's relationships as of little importance, Baba's narrative consistently demonstrates their power and vitality in Hausa life'.
example, challenged the androcentric tendencies implicit in the slavery debate. In their important study, *Women and Slavery in Africa*, the editors Robertson and Klein (1983: 1) remind us that 'most slaves in sub-Saharan Africa were women. But many accounts of African slavery are written as though the slaves were exclusively men'. A number of the essays in this collection draw upon extant life histories to explore the diverse experiences of slave women including how they understood the choices and constraints which shaped their lives (Alpers 1983; Strobel 1983; Robertson 1983; Wright 1983). Personal narratives have also figured prominently in unearthing the important role of women in the labor process. Here, I have in mind Luis White’s forthcoming study of prostitution in colonial Nairobi and two recent publications which examine the intersection of race, class and gender under the apartheid regime, *Maids and Madams: A Study in the Politics of Exploitation* (Cock 1984) and *Working in South Africa* (Dovey et al. 1985). Marks’ pioneering study (1987) of the separate worlds of three South African women provides a somewhat different cut into apartheid’s complex social order, while Mbilinyi’s work on Rungwe women (fhcgc.) suggests the value of life histories as a hidden transcript from which to analyze ‘the way in which class relations are embedded in the relations of nation and gender’.

Feminist scholars have also relied upon life histories to recast the study of protest politics and resistance in more nuanced ways attentive to issues of gender while not losing sight of class, ethnic and religious factors. This position is laid out most clearly by Geiger (1987: 19) in her analysis of the social composition of the Tanzania Nationalist Union (TANU). She attributes the preponderance of women in its ranks to ‘TANU’s promises of equality, dignity and respect [which] stood in sharp contrast to informants’ characterization of the daily oppression women experience as women’. Geiger went on to note that her informants ‘clearly distinguished between colonial oppression and gender oppression, and saw in TANU a chance for further escape from the latter’.

In sharp contrast to the work done by feminist scholars in the former British colonies, life-history research in Francophonie Africa has lagged far behind. The structural emphasis of Francophonie researchers, both Marxist and non-Marxist, has left little analytical space for the study of individuals. It is not surprising, then, that the literature is marked by a conspicuous absence not only of all forms of autobiography but of biographies as well, and that the most significant autobiographical representation is actually a novel—Camara Laye’s classic, *The Dark Child* (1954) (see also Biaya 1987; Vincent 1976).

The historiography of Lusophonic Africa is somewhat different. Although there have been few fully-developed life histories, several scholars and journalists did use oral autobiographical sketches to analyze the recruitment strategies and social base of the liberation movements. Here, too, the most detailed research focused on the experiences of
women both prior to and during the armed struggle (Manceaux 1976; Urdang 1979).

Since independence, local researchers, at least in Mozambique, have expanded this line of investigation to focus on the lives of workers, peasants and freedom fighters. In an editorial introducing the first issue of Não Vamos Esquecer! ('We won’t forget') the Oficina de história do Centro de estudos africanos (1983a: 5) declared the need to formulate a 'popular and revolutionary problematic' which necessarily recognizes that 'the living history resides in the bosom of the people and it is they who are the principal source of its inspiration and production'. Despite increasingly difficult military and economic conditions in Mozambique, the Centro de estudos africanos has launched a number of projects in which the life histories of workers and peasants figured prominently. The best known of these is Black Gold: The Mozambican Miner, Proletarian and Peasant (First 1983), which includes the work histories of six Mozambicans who labored in the South African mines. In addition, short, but valuable, interviews with factory workers in Maputo, pressed-ganged laborers on the northern sisal plantations, southern peasant women forced to cultivate cotton and participants in the armed struggle have been published in Não Vamos Esquecer!, the scholarly journal Estudos moçambicanos and the weekly magazine Tempo. Together they provide rich insights into the daily workings of colonial capitalism as do Sheldon’s preliminary findings (1985, 1986) on working women in colonial Beira.

Raúl Honwana’s oral autobiography Histórias ouvidas e vividas dos homens e da terra: memórias e notas autobiográficas (1985), referred subsequently in this text as Memórias, makes an important contribution to this literature. Honwana’s text departs, however, from the previous works in two significant respects. To my knowledge, it is the first full-length life history of a Mozambican. It is also written from a self-consciously nationalist perspective without any reference to Marxist categories. When published in 1985, the book was both widely acclaimed and quite controversial. Its content provides a unique view into colonial Mozambique. In the process, Raúl Honwana addresses a number of important issues including the role of 'assimilados', the ways in which racism structured the daily lives of non-Europeans irregardless of their class position and the variety of mechanisms which Africans used to cope with and struggle against colonial oppression. His autobiography also documents the long-standing ties between nationalists in southern

Mozambique and the African National Congress (ANC)—a subject of obvious contemporary as well as historical importance.

Raúl Honwana was born in 1905. He has lived through and participated in many of the important events which have shaped Mozambican history. His autobiography has significance as a 'marker of a transition' from colonialism to independence. In 1983, at the age of seventy-eight, he set out to tell his story. A man of prodigious memory and fiercely proud of his African heritage and Mozambican identity, Honwana sought 'to preserve the past and to remind the young people of Mozambique of the long and rich history which antedated the armed struggle'. He was particularly concerned 'that the contributions of men such as João Albasini, Robert Machava as well as the founders of the Instituto negrófilo and the Congresso nacional africano who fought against racial oppression not be forgotten'.

The idea for writing Memórias dates back at least forty years. From the time his eight children were very young, Raúl Honwana sought to instill in them an appreciation of their African roots as his mother had done for him. 'Almost every night', remembered Raúl Junior, 'our father told us stories about the past. He discussed his life and his family's history'. His sister, Maria Violante, stressed that through these historical accounts 'our father taught us to be proud of our African heritage and he never let us forget that we were Mozambicans entrapped in a colonial situation and not Portuguese'. Raúl Junior and Maria, like so many African children, learned through these narratives to understand the social reality in which they lived. Maria remembered her sense of pride when she first heard her father describe the military exploits of Gungunhana and Maguiguana. And she recalled her feeling of despair when her fourth-grade history teacher refused to accept an essay because it depicted these men in heroic terms struggling against Portuguese invaders. For her older brother Luís Bernardo Honwana, who has become one of his country's most prominent writers, the values taught at home provided a nationalist bond with Mozambicans of his generation.

In the late 1950s, he joined the Mozambican association of African secondary students (NESAM). In small, but not insignificant ways, Luís and his agemates challenged the racial and cultural agenda of the

4. The term 'marker of transition' is taken from B. Laslett 1987.
5. Interview with Raúl Honwana, May 27, 1987. Unless otherwise noted, all the interviews were collected by me (A.I.).
colonial regime. A decade later, several of these student activists fled into exile and helped to found the Mozambican Liberation Movement known more commonly as FRELIMO (Frente de libertação nacional de Moçambique).10 Luis remained inside Mozambique engaged in clandestine activity and was arrested by the Portuguese secret police in 1964.11

Throughout these turbulent years, Raúl Honwana’s passion for history—instilled by his mother and nurtured at the Swiss Missionary School—grew. He would spend his leisure reading voraciously, compiling diaries and collecting photographs and when not discussing history, he extolled the achievements of contemporary African leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah, Patrice Lumumba and Julius Nyerere.12 He also engaged in an ongoing exchange with other literate Mozambicans who shared his love of the past and concern for the future.

On more than one occasion, Raúl Honwana expressed a desire to write his memoirs. Over a thirty-year period he did, in fact, outline a few of the historical episodes included in his autobiography. But, for the most part, they remained in his head. Colonial censorship, his ambiguous position both as an interpreter in the State bureaucracy and an African nationalist, the demoralizing effect of Luis’s incarceration and his own short imprisonment all served to frustrate his dream. So, too, did the colonial State’s increasingly repressive policies.

It was only in the late 1970s after Mozambique had become independent and Raúl’s sons, who had been in FRELIMO, returned home, that the idea of writing his autobiography surfaced again, although there is some uncertainty among family members as to who actually raised it. Whatever the case, everyone agreed that Raúl’s advancing age and the young nation’s need to rediscover its past made this a particularly auspicious moment to undertake such a project. FRELIMO’s successful literacy campaigns offered the added incentive of a reading audience hungry for such a work. Honwana’s renewed commitment to this design occurred then in a context of optimism and hope. The final production of Memórias several years later, however, was to take place within a very different context—one of political and economic crises and personal loss precipitated by South Africa’s destabilization campaign.13

Gita Honwana, one of Mozambique’s first female judges, took a

10. Among the senior members of NESAM who played a leading role in FRELIMO were Eduardo Mondlane, the liberation movement’s first president, Joaquim Chissano, currently President of Mozambique, Armando Guebuza, currently Minister of Transport, and Mariano Matsinke, currently Minister of Security. Interview with Esperança Abiatar Muthenna, Apr. 15, 1979, and with Albino Magaia, June 7, 1979, both collected by Isabel Cassimiro.
13. On October 16, 1986, Raúl’s son, Fernando Honwana, was killed in the mysterious crash which also took the life of President Samora Machel. For a discussion of South Africa’s destabilization campaign, see ISAACMAN 1988.
leading role in the production of the text. Beginning in 1983, she spent eighteen months, working on weekends and holidays, transcribing the episodes which Raúl recounted in Portuguese and occasionally in Rhonga. ‘My father felt much happier’, she remembered, ‘talking about the past than trying to write it’. She recalled that ‘for Raúl speaking was a much more comfortable manner of transmitting information’. In addition to transcribing the narratives, Gita occasionally reminded her father of historical details which he had omitted or questioned him about a particular fact. She made no effort, however, to rewrite or restructure any of the narratives.1

The two were often joined by Raúl’s wife Naly Honwana, whose sharp memory and strong personality left an indelible mark on the final text. Gita recalled the critical role her mother played: ‘My father would start speaking and when he got to a point in the episode where he was uncertain he would stop abruptly and turn to my mother. If she was not in the room he would call her. My mother reminded him of what he had told us when we were growing up. On other occasions, she would intervene without being asked. Sometimes she would take issue with a particular point or interpretation and my parents would then get into a long discussion in Rhonga. My father had great respect for her insights. She had a wonderful memory and everyone in the family knew it’.13

As work on the historical narrative progressed from discussions of the more remote to the recent past, Raúl relied increasingly on the breadth of Naly’s knowledge. Periodically, one or more of the children would also pass by their parents’ home and would be drawn into these discussions. Fernando Honwana, who as special assistant to President Machel was often out of the country, made a point of participating when he was in Maputo. He provided moral support as well as detailed reminiscences of how the family coped with the crises of Raúl’s imprisonment. These discussions regularly spilled over to the weekly Sunday lunch which most members of the Honwana family attended. In addition, on three occasions Raúl, accompanied by Gita, sought out old friends to help fill in gaps in his memory.16

16. Interview with Gita Honwana, Aug. 7, 1987. Gita Honwana and Raúl Honwana met with several elders to talk about the past. The quality of these conversations varied considerably. Raúl Honwana spent a particularly frustrating afternoon with an aging family member whose close ties to the colonial regime made him reluctant to discuss a number of issues which he feared would be compromising. On the other hand, he engaged in two afternoons of animated talk with Nuro, the son of an old Muslim teacher, Ahmad Dulla Ismael. They recalled with delight common experiences and old friends. Throughout these exchanges Gita took elaborate notes which became the basis for the chapter on the early Islamic community in Lourenço Marques. The encounters with Nuro also brought back to life important moments in the early
In a very real sense then, *Memórias* is more than the product of Raúl Honwana’s prodigious memory and intellectual labor. To be sure, the oral narrative which he told his children provided both the content for and the structure of the text. Nevertheless, *Memórias* is ultimately the result of extended dialogue within the Honwana family dating back several generations. The initial sections which outline the origin of his family, the Gaza Nguni invasion and the wars of resistance against the Portuguese are all derived from oral traditions told to him by his mother Vulande and other relatives. Vulande, he recalled (Honwana 1985: 11), ‘often described accounts of African resistance. She was a fine storyteller’. The influence of oral forms shows up in the episodic and anecdotal quality of his accounts.

The bulk of the autobiography is based on Raúl’s oral narratives which became part of the family’s collective memory—a collective memory rooted in Raúl Honwana’s representations of the past. The discussions and debates which radiated through the entire Honwana family brought old ideas to life and, undoubtedly, helped to shape new ones. In this sense, Luís Bernardo Honwana is correct when he emphasizes his father’s dominant role but, at the same time, places the project within a broader collective context. ‘The ideas of the book and the values they embodied are Raúl’s, but it was our family which provided its context’.  

Just as the book is not simply one man’s autobiography, it does not fit easily into one historical genre. In many respects, it is a hybrid reflecting the different worlds in which Raúl Honwana lived and worked. The first section shares many of the features associated with oral traditions, and embedded in these accounts, which are widely known throughout southern Mozambique, are recollections of the past transmitted from one generation to another. That Honwana probably added details to

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history of the Congresso nacional africano about which Raúl had only dim recollection. In addition to these encounters, Gita interviewed Reverend Abraão Aldasse. He helped to piece together the events leading to the arrest and murder in 1972 of Pastor Zeleuais Manganhela, a popular leader and head of the Presbyterian Church (interview with Gita Honwana, May 8, 1987).

17. My own participation in this project was quite limited. Indeed, I had no involvement in the production of the original Portuguese text. More than a year after it had been published, I received a letter from Gita Honwana asking if I could help to get *Memórias* published in English. I agreed. I had already skimmed the book and had the impression that it made an important contribution to Mozambican history. A careful re-reading confirmed this assessment and, at the same time, made it clear that for *Memórias* to reach a wider audience the original text needed to be accompanied with comments, derived from oral interviews and Portuguese sources, see ref. fn. 3.


19. Unfortunately, there has been very little fieldwork done in southern Mozambique. The task is complicated because of the repeated attacks by the South African-backed Mozambique national resistance. Nevertheless, research conducted by S. Young (1978) on the pre-colonial and early colonial period as
these oral traditions derived from early Portuguese colonial writers such as António Enes (1945) and Joaquim Mousinho de Albuquerque (1913) as well as from the Swiss anthropologist and missionary Henri Junod (1913), does not invalidate their legitimacy as historical documents. It does serve to highlight the book’s hybrid character as well as the problems posed by ‘feedback’ or contamination from published sources.

In a formal sense, Memórias lies somewhere between autobiography and life history. These categories, however, are not always mutually exclusive. The tendency of social historians to advance new analytical forms such as ‘oral autobiography’ and ‘popular autobiography’ tends to compound the problem of classification (Passerini fthcg.; Maynes fthcg.). Nevertheless, Memórias clearly fits within the genre of autobiography. The book was, after all, inspired by the author’s desire to tell his story and the story of his generation. And like other autobiographies, it seeks to impose order, form and meaning on the facts of an existence.

But unlike standard autobiographies, Memórias is essentially an oral narrative reduced to writing after years of discussion and debate. It is these features which link the book to other life histories.20 It also shares with other life-histories studies an emphasis on ‘the experiences and requirements of the individual—how the person copes with society rather than how society copes with the stream of individuals’ (Mandelbaum 1973: 177). However, the process through which Honwana’s oral narrative was inscribed on the page was an unusual and special one. Memórias differs from most standard life histories since the persons who write them down are generally outsiders and engage far more in the act of ‘conceptual translation’ for an audience than did Gita Honwana.21

Whatever its appropriate classification, Memórias clearly makes an important contribution to our knowledge of Mozambican history, providing an ‘inside view’ of a colonial society in flux. From the outset, it is important to stress that Honwana’s representation is just one view.

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20 As in the case of biographies the critical methodological issue raised about life histories is whether they lend themselves to broader historical generalizations and theorizing. Marcia Wright (1975: 802) raised this point in her provocative essay, ‘Women in Peril’, in which she sought to determine ‘the extent to which a focus upon individual lives in a particular region and period can be taken to dramatize or generate hypotheses about elements in the experience of women more universally’. Apart from the question of representativeness of an individual life, critics of this methodology often question the subjectivity of the sources. For an assessment of life histories as a historical methodology, see Geiger 1986; BERTAUX 1981.

21 I am grateful to Richard Price for pointing out this distinction. For a discussion of the methodological and substantive issues posed when family members collect life histories, see Kikumura 1986.
There is no ‘authentic voice’ which speaks for all Mozambicans. There is no unity of that sort transcending Mozambican history.²² Raúl Honwana’s voice is only one of a number of voices—peasants and workers, illiterate and educated, women and men—that need to be heard. At a minimum, these ‘inside views’ enable historians to formulate hypotheses for future testing. They can also provide valuable insights into the choices and constraints, perceptions and emotions which shaped the way men and women of Honwana’s generation struggled for survival and self-improvement.

And because Raúl Honwana was hardly a ‘typical’ Mozambican, his narrative needs to be set within the broader historiographical tradition. In 1950, he was one of approximately 5,000 Africans out of an estimated population of 5,650,000 who had gained the legal status of assimilado. As the term suggests, assimilados were Mozambicans, both black and mulattoes, whom the colonial State considered to have met Portuguese language and cultural terms. Theoretically, their legal position guaranteed them rights and opportunities denied to 99 percent of the African population.²³ ‘Assimilated’ and part of the State bureaucracy, Honwana was thus located in an atypical, and somewhat ambiguous social position. In a colonial capitalist context marked by acute race and class oppression, he had gained a measure—but only a measure—of legal protection and relative economic security. His life history speaks honestly not only about these opportunities but about the regularity with which these legal guarantees were violated when they collided with the prevailing racist ideology. Memórias thus offers one inside view. It is an inside view radically different from the colonial accounts which sought to distort if not obliterate the past. But it is a view which is sometimes at odds with that of other Mozambicans who did not share Honwana’s opportunities—a subject to which I will return.

Honwana’s unassuming style and obvious modesty lend credibility to what he conveys. Unlike many autobiographers, Honwana is not primarily concerned about leaving a record of his personal achievements for posterity. To the contrary, throughout large parts of the text he remains invisible and when he appears he rarely plays a central role in the narrative. While other political prisoners, for example, highlight or embellish their accounts of incarceration and suffering, his jail diary is little more than a chronicle of events (Timmerman 1981).

Although not concerned about his self-aggrandizement, Honwana’s

²² A similar point is made by J. Swendells fthcg.
²³ Henriksen 1983: 219. Henriksen indicates that the official State statistic of 4,349 refers only to Africans who were assimilados and not to mulattoes. Even if he is right and mulattoes were not included, it would not substantially alter the miniscule percentage of assimilados relative to the larger non-white population.
willingness to address sensitive issues, including several which confront the new orthodoxies of the independence period, further enhances the book's interest. Nowhere does he confront this new orthodoxy more explicitly than in his treatment of Gungunhana, the late nineteenth-century Gaza Nguni ruler. His account departs radically from both the colonial presentation of a drunken renegade and terrorist (Botelho 1934; Wheeler 1968), and from the heroic FRELIMO version. With independence, the new Mozambican government resurrected the memory of Gungunhana, shrouding him in nationalist garb. This campaign reached its zenith in 1985 which marked both the ninetieth anniversary of Gungunhana's final struggle against the Portuguese and the tenth anniversary of Mozambican independence. To coincide with the celebrations, the government arranged that Gungunhana's remains be returned from the Azores where he had died in forced exile. At a State reception celebrating the event, the late President Samora Machel praised Gungunhana unequivocally: 'He was the first great Mozambican leader to confront directly modern imperialism, and to oppose the new forms of domination and exploitation which the Portuguese and British colonialists introduced in southern Africa'. Machel went on to note how the example of Gungunhana's heroic resistance 'was with us in 1962 when we founded the FRELIMO, inspired us in 1964 when we fired our first shots, joined with us in exhilaration on Independence Day and today celebrates with us our first decade of liberty'.

For his part, Raúl Honwana painted a much more ambiguous picture of the historic leader. While chronicling Gungunhana's military exploits against the Portuguese invaders, Memórias also refers to his exploitation of the indigenous population. It was this exploitation, Honwana argues, which motivated a number of the chieftaincies in the Inhambane region to aid the Portuguese. Even among Gungunhana's own Nguni soldiers, Honwana contends, the ruler's authority rested 'on terror more than love'. He underscores this point by summarizing oral traditions which describe the sense of relief that his soldiers expressed when Gungunhana was finally arrested.

'It has never been possible to find out quite what the Nguni's feelings were toward Gungunhana. Undoubtedly, they recognized him as their military and political chief, but they held him more in fear than in love. The story goes that when Gungunhana was finally led away by Mouzinho de Albuquerque's troops, the crowd shouted: 'Hamba kowanyana kadi njeda inkuku zetu' which is Zulu for 'Away with you vulture, slaughterer of our chickens'.' (Honwana 1985: 20).

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24. This was clearly a controversial issue within FRELIMO. There was a contending view that referred critically to Gungunhana and a number of other indigenous authorities as 'feudal chiefs'.
It is this nuanced sense of events which enabled Honwana to tackle the complex and highly sensitive issue of the place of assimilados in colonial Mozambique. His account neither glorifies nor demeans their historical experience. It does have a clear point of view—one which challenges the prior representation of the colonial regime as well as many of its academic critics. Honwana’s discussion of the social identity of assimilados, his analysis of the contradictory pressures which they experienced and of the racial, cultural and emerging class cleavages which divided them will be of particular interest to African social historians and to students of comparative race relations. Although defined in non-racial terms, assimilation was clearly a type of ‘cultural whitening’. Theoretically, any African or mestiço could become classified as assimilado or civilizado. In practice, the candidate had to meet a number of stringent criteria. As Honwana (1985: 52) tells us:

‘Africans who wanted to be considered “civilized” had to pass an examination by answering certain questions and by allowing a committee to go to their homes to see how they lived and if they knew how to eat at a table as Whites did, if they wore shoes, and if they had only one wife. When Africans passed these examinations, they were given a document called the “certificate of assimilation” for which they paid half a pound sterling or its equivalent’.

If successful, they enjoyed a number of legal and material benefits.

‘This document gave them the right to legally register their children’s births and enabled them to have access to the courts [...] The status of assimilado also freed Africans from having to pay the hut tax, and of being conscripted into the forced labor system’ (ibid).

In addition, assimilados could travel without permission and had access to higher-paying jobs. In theory, they enjoyed many of the race and class privileges reserved for Europeans. It is clear, however, that to gain such privileges they had to undergo a very degrading scrutiny of their lifestyle. They also had to exhibit a combination of patience and ability to fill out the mountain of papers which the bureaucracy demanded. It also helped to have a European patron or the support of a benevolent colonial administrator. Even after they satisfied all these requirements and had been awarded this lofty status, assimilados still faced the prospect that their privileged status could be taken away at a moment’s notice. In 1948, for example, the Central Office of Native Affairs undertook a systematic investigation to weed out those assimilados who were ‘back-

26. For a discussion of comparative race relations which addresses many of these issues, see Skidmore 1974; Cell 1982; Van Den Berghe 1967; Frederickson 1981.

27. For the earliest assimilation legislation, see Portaria provincial no 317, Boletim oficial de Moçambique (BOM), Jan. 9, 1917, and Portaria provincial no 1 041, BOM, Jan. 18, 1919.
sliding' or who did not meet new, more stringent requirements (Penvenne 1979a: 19).

It is worth reemphasizing that the 'assimilado' ideal as well as the twin myths of 'multi-racialism' and the Portugal 'civilizing mission' were the ideological products of a colonial capitalist regime. These concepts were intended to weaken non-white solidarity, co-opt potential insurgents, and legitimize the exploitation of cheap non-assimilado African labor. The presence of black and brown Portuguese citizens also enabled Lisbon to proclaim that its commitment to a multi-racial society was unique among all the European colonial powers. Listen to the words of Portuguese Foreign Minister Franco Nogueira (quoted in Bender 1978: 19):

'We alone, before anyone else, brought to Africa the notion of human rights and racial equality. We alone practiced the principle of multi-racialism, which all now consider to be the most perfect and daring expression of human brotherhood and sociological progress. Throughout the world no one questions the validity of the principle; but hesitation is shown in admitting that it is a Portuguese invention and in recognizing that the Portuguese nation practices it, for this would be to grant us moral authority and would impose a feeling of respect which would be incompatible with the designs aimed at us'.

Memórias demonstrates that for all Nogueira's moral posturing and civilizing rhetoric, the colonial State erected numerous barriers to block Africans and mulattoes from becoming assimilados. The official view that Africans merely represented a source of cheap labor for whom it made little sense to develop an educational infrastructure emerges as a truer mark of the colonial regime's intentions (Ferreira 1974). A. A. Freire de Andrade, Governor-General of Mozambique from 1906 to 1910, was quite explicit on this point: 'The education we offer to the native must be above all else designed to turn him into a productive laborer—and not to engender the false notion that he is equal to Whites...' (Andrade 1909, I: 74). Consider the fact that in 1929, more than a decade after the State had announced its assimilation policy, less than 30,000 Africans attended schools and virtually all were enrolled at the most rudimentary level (Newitt 1981: 140). Little wonder that the Colonial Minister Arminho Monteiro (1935: 108-109) confidently predicted in 1933 that: 'We don't believe that a rapid passage from their African superstition to our civilization is possible. For us to have arrived where we are presently, hundreds of generations before us fought, suffered and learned, minute by minute, the most intricate secrets in the fountain of life'. Indeed, a decade later only a handful of Africans had graduated from high school.

That Raúl Honwana managed to become an assimilado occurred in spite of these colonial barriers. His life history testifies, above all else, to the profound love of learning which his mother had instilled in him:
It is significant that, in spite of being illiterate, my mother was always particularly concerned with my education. She would only believe that I had passed with the highest grades when I showed her the gift I had received from school, which in Ricatla was customarily given to the best student [. . .]. Then she would always kill a chicken to cook and would have a little party to which I could invite my friends (Honwana 1985: 30, 32).

He also benefited from a family network connected through marriage to the prosperous Indian merchant community as well as from the nurturing and intellectual stimulation he received from the Swiss missionaries. Junod, in particular, took a personal interest in his star student’s development. Honwana readily acknowledged that he was one of the fortunate few. 28

Honwana’s autobiography suggests that in their zeal to discredit Lisbon’s claim of ‘multi-racialism’, critics of the colonial regime, including myself, may have oversimplified the social and political position of assimilados. Henriksen (1983: 15), for example, characterized them as ‘a tiny and subservient proto-bourgeoisie’, although he acknowledged that not all were collaborators. Referring specifically to assimilados in Angola, Marcum (1969: 21) noted that they ‘were expected to break off all association with their country’s unworthy traditionalist society—even family’. Newitt (1981: 142) extended this argument, claiming that ‘those Africans who did become civilized formed part of the world of the mestiços’. Thus, the consensus among leading scholars of Lusophone Africa was that assimilados abandoned their past and opted for a more privileged position, often collaborating with the colonial regime in the process.

The picture which Honwana presents, although skeptics might dismiss it as self-serving, merits serious consideration. Assimilation, he contends, was a mechanism for coping with the most grievous abuses of colonialism.

and again in our conversations. And it is confirmed in interviews with other assimilados as well (Penvenne 1979b: 20). If assimilation offered a strategy for survival and an opportunity for self-improvement, it did not necessarily imply cultural suicide and a rejection of one's African roots. To the contrary, argued Honwana (1985: 72):

'I know of very few Mozambicans of my generation who really aspired to become assimilados in order to be considered Portuguese. It should be understood that one thing was our feelings, our personalities, our pride in our African culture; this we all shared. But it was something else again to have the courage to stress our values openly, thus rejecting the colonial values. It was almost suicidal to do this on an individual basis. And most of our people only managed to cope during those very difficult years because of a finely-honed instinct for survival'.

This deeply-held commitment to retaining an African identity certainly characterizes Honwana's life. His participation in the Instituto negro filo and the Congresso nacional africano as well as the values he instilled in his children makes this point quite clearly. Honwana also attacks the assumption that assimilation was tantamount to collaboration. He acknowledges that a number of assimilados did, in fact, support the colonial regime. 'Unfortunately, I am aware that there were Mozambicans who internalized Portuguese values—values which the colonial regime used to demean and oppress us. But that kind of behavior was not the automatic result of assimilation' (ibid.). To underscore this point, he reminds readers of the many chiefs 'who served colonialism so well and enslaved their brothers. They weren't assimilados' (ibid.). In our discussions, he also referred to the biographies of such prominent Mozambican nationalists as Joaquim Chissano and Armando Guebuza, both of whom came from assimilated families. He emphasized that they internalized from their parents a sense of pride in being Africans and a desire to be free.29

Honwana's account (ibid.: 64-65) also takes issue with the claim that black assimilados were drawn into the world of the racially mixed mestiços. He describes, in some detail, their willingness to join non-white alliances, but their refusal to subordinate their racial and cultural identity. He documents how both the Congresso nacional africano and the Instituto negro filo were founded by discontented Africans unwilling to remain under mestiço domination. Throughout the book, Honwana returns time and again to the twin themes of racial injustice and the struggle of the oppressed. But he is not merely interested in chronicling suffering or presenting an extended victim's analysis, nor does he paint a glorious picture of ongoing insurgency. Rather, Memórias stresses the daily struggle for survival and self-improvement as well as the periodic acts of defiance and insurgency which culminated in the armed struggle.

29. Interview with Raúl Honwana, June 1, 1987.
Memórias emphasizes, above all else, the extent to which racialist ideology and practices structured the daily lives of the colonized irregardless of their class position. His autobiography testifies to the pervasive influence of racism in colonial Mozambique and its pivotal role in shaping colonial relations of domination. Consider the fact that at age fifteen Honwana was forced to drop out of school because Africans his age were not permitted to take fourth class exams (ibid.: 34). Even after Lisbon bestowed upon him the honor of being ‘civilized’, he could not escape the racial injustices which were so deeply embedded in the fabric of Mozambican society. The legal guarantees theoretically extended to assimilados did not protect him from being beaten, humiliated or arrested (ibid.: 107-111). Nor did they insure access to ‘white’ dining rooms or to the segregated social and athletic clubs. As a civil servant he remained frozen into the lowest paying jobs, ‘because positions above that in the colonial administration were reserved for Whites’ (ibid.: 97). Similarly, he was only allowed to purchase five hectares of land, while there were no restrictions placed on European farmers.

The institutions of law and social custom helped to reproduce this system of racial oppression. Africans were expected to live according to the rules of their ‘traditional’ legal systems, as interpreted and applied by the colonial administrators aided by local chiefs. Assimilados, on the other hand, theoretically enjoyed all the rights of Portuguese citizenship (Isaacman & Isaacman 1982: 282-290). In reality, these legalistic formulations gave way to subtle and not so subtle discriminatory practices to insure race and class privileges of the settlers and the reproduction of the colonial capitalist system. Existing laws were often modified, reinterpreted, arbitrarily implemented or simply disregarded. Honwana recounts (1985: 41-42, 80-83) how African workers accused of laziness were beaten and arrested, how European farmers robbed African peasants of their cattle and then accused them of stealing, and how black passengers were incarcerated for inadvertently sitting in the ‘white section’ of the train station.

Even the most dispassionate reader will be moved by Honwana’s accounts of ‘frontier justice’, especially the branding of a chibalo, or press-ganged labor, and the lynching of an imprisoned African domestic worker named Hassan. The latter was dragged from his cell by an angry mob of settlers, assisted by the local administrator, after he had stabbed his employer in a violent confrontation. The following day the local administrator returned to the jail expressing dismay that the prisoner had escaped:

‘When we all went back outside, the administrator and the other Whites feigned surprise upon finding traces of blood on the ground. We followed their trail, which headed toward the Incomati River [. . .] Stuck to stones here and there were bits of hair that looked to be from an African [. . .] We came upon a strip of
sand that had a lot of footprints. The administrator and the other Whites made a big scene out of finding Hassan's body in the water nearby [. . .] The body clearly showed signs of torture, and it was tied up with heavy rocks to keep it from surfacing. At this point, Alberto Isaquis sneezed. The administrator, Simoes da Silva, turned and slapped him hard in the face, then said: 'Shame on you. Today you're crying because your black brother lies there dead in the water. Yesterday, when a white man died, you were drinking beer and having a great time over at the shop'. [. . .] Some days later press reports about the case quoted the governor-general, who was Dr Moreira da Fonseca at the time, as saying that justice had been done' (ibid.: 37-38).

This State-condoned vigilantism, Honwana points out, stood in sharp contrast to the local administrator's concern that appropriate juridical procedures be followed in an equally violent murder where both the victim and the accused were Whites (ibid.: 47). It is a similar colonial mind set which allowed one local administrator to write to another: 'Entering your administrative area are twenty, duly manacled volunteers'.

But this distortion of reality was more than just the product of a colonial mind set. Fear, terror and racial discrimination were also instruments of a colonial capitalist system which sought to create obedient workers and servile peasants. Unwilling to make appreciable investments in Mozambique, representatives of industrial capital in Portugal as well as merchant and settler interests in Mozambique could only prosper by appropriating African labor in one way or another. António Enes's observation at the turn of the century remained relevant sixty years later: 'Our tropical Africa will not grow without the Africans. The capital needed to exploit it, and it so needs to be exploited, lies in the procurement of labor for exploitation: abundant, cheap and solid labor [. . .] and this labor will never be supplied by European immigrants' (quoted in Cunha 1955: 144). Honwana's narratives (1985: 45-47, 80-81) bear out Enes's candid assessment of the material basis of Portugal's racialist policies. He recounts how the best lands in southern Mozambique were expropriated from African peasants. He describes how settlers, foreign companies and the State all profitted from press-ganged chibolo labor. And he details (ibid.: 58) how European farmers enjoyed preferential market agreements:

'When the cotton was ready for harvesting, the administrator supplied the sacks, and both the peasants and the settlers brought their cotton to the administration to be classified, weighed and paid for before a designated agricultural official. Then what happened was that settlers' cotton was designated as premium quality, while peasants' cotton was nearly always declared to be third or lowest quality'.

30. This account is not in the original Portuguese text. Raúl Honwana recalled this event after he had written Memórias. It is included in the English version, see ref. fn. 3.
For most of the peasants, the returns which they received were insufficient to pay their taxes, much less buy food or any other basic commodities. The results were devastatingly predictable.\textsuperscript{31}

For all the racial injustice which Honwana observed and experienced, his account is surprisingly devoid of rancor and condemnation of Whites \textit{qua} Whites. Such disparaging references as \textit{mumaji}, which roughly translates as 'backward immigrants', or \textit{kubvana}, 'poor white trash', are conspicuously absent (Penvenne 1979b: 21-22). Nor do we find broad stereotypes of Portuguese as 'petty, niggardly, jealous, and inept' \textit{(ibid.)}—traits which are often articulated in songs and interviews. Honwana resists such generalizations. Instead, he presents an account which acknowledges both how deeply racism was rooted in Mozambican society and how individual Whites were able to transcend and, on occasion, struggle against the prevailing racialist ideology (Honwana 1985: 55-58, 121-124).

Honwana is also quite explicit that racism and cultural arrogance were not the sole property of Portuguese settlers. He offers the first documented account of the racial tensions which divided the Muslim community in the capital city of Lourenço Marques at the turn of the century. In 1906, Muslims had organized an association called 'Kuate Ahwane Swafo', whose first President, Mussa Jive, came from a mixed African-Indian household. Despite his background and the heterogeneous composition of the membership, a type of \textit{de facto} segregation divided the co-religionists. At dances and religious occasions Muslims of Indian descent snubbed their mixed or African counterparts. Tensions increased and within a few years the organization had disappeared.\textsuperscript{32} A similar racial cleavage shattered efforts to build solidarity among mulattoes and Africans who had joined the Grémio africano, a social and civic organization founded in 1906. On two occasions, according to Honwana, Africans broke away from the organization because they resented the arrogance of the more established mulatto families who claimed privileged leadership position. In 1920 they walked out en masse and organized the short-lived Congresso nacional africano of Mozambique. The refusal of mulatto women to dance with black men ostensibly precipitated a second split within the Grémio africano a decade later. In protest, the dissidents organized the Instituto negrofilo.\textsuperscript{33} These ruptures

\textsuperscript{31} For a discussion of the cotton regime, see A. ISAACMAN \textit{et al.} 1980; ISAACMAN 1985; VAIL \textit{& WHITE} 1978.

\textsuperscript{32} The discussion of the 'Kuate Ahwane Swafo' was not included in the original Portuguese version of \textit{Memórias}. It is in the updated English version, see ref. fn. 3.

\textsuperscript{33} Raúl Honwana supported the walkout. He quit the Grémio africano and joined the Instituto negrofilo, although he subsequently concluded that the colonial regime had manipulated the tensions to undercut a non-white alliance (interview with Raúl Honwana, June 3, 1987). For a discussion of these splits, see FRIEDLAND 1978.
suggest that many of the older mulatto families had internalized the colonial racial and class stereotypes which set them apart from all Africans and protected some vestiges of their power and prestige (Honwana 63-64).

The Grémio africano and the Instituto negrofilo were part of a proliferation of non-white 'parallel institutions' spawned by the institutionalized racism of colonial Mozambique. As in the American South and South Africa, the growth of black churches and civic clubs, journals and student associations, athletic teams and agricultural cooperatives was a logical consequence of legal segregation and racial capitalism. These new institutions represented a relatively autonomous terrain within an enclosed authoritarian system. Honwana's accounts suggest (1985: 89, 96) how institutions as diverse as the agricultural cooperative at Tsombene, the African Sporting club of the Sabie and the Mozambican students association all helped their members to cope with some of the dehumanizing effects of colonialism. At specific historical junctures, several of these organizations, such as NESAM and the journal 
Brado africano, as well as a number of separatist Churches constituted 'counter institutions' where insurgent values and ideals were formulated and popularized (ibid.: 61-69, 113-116).

This spirit of insurgency is an important sub-text running throughout the manuscript. I recall sitting in Raúl Honwana's living room on several occasions when he expressed a sense of despair that a type of collective amnesia had enveloped Mozambican society obliterating the long history of protest between the nineteenth-century wars of Gungunhana and the independence struggle: 'Our history of the past sixty years has been undervalued. We had a long history before the armed struggle which needs to be reclaimed'.

In short, often fragmentary episodes, Memórias recounts the tenacity of African peasants, workers, students and elders, while not underestimating the limits of their power. The book records a long, if sporadic legacy of opposition. This spirit of insurgency took a variety of forms ranging from the rebellion of Maguiguana at the end of the century to the reformist activities of João Albasini, and ultimately to the nationalist struggle led by Eduardo Mondlane and Samora Machel.

Honwana (1985: 63-64) provides the first account which I have encountered of the origins of the Congresso nacional africano, a little known movement which 'won the support of the people living on the outskirts of Lourenço Marques [...] It may have been the first African organization here in the South which was essentially political'. He also

35. For a biographical sketch of Eduardo Mondlane, see Shore 1983. On the other hand, Ian Christie is currently completing a biography of Samora Machel, to be published at the Zimbabwe Publishing House.
documents this organization’s close political and cultural ties to the ANC and to Clement Kadalie’s Industrial and Commercial Workers Union, which at the time was the most powerful labor movement in South Africa (ibid.: 63-67). The chapter on the 1932 Santaca revolt provides one of the earliest examples of peasant opposition to forced cotton cultivation (ibid.: 58-61). The discussion of NESAM offers new insights into the student organization’s origin and early leaders, as well as the efforts of the colonial State to intimidate the membership. Until now little has been written about NESAM, which became a center for nationalist thought. According to Mozambique’s President Joaquim Chissano, who was an early member of NESAM:

‘From my point of view, and I say this retrospectively, NESAM contributed to the creation of a nationalistic spirit among the Mozambican youth. It was the only organization for educated Africans, I will not say intellectuals because we were merely secondary students. Many times we discussed questions of race, the value of our culture, the meaning of our history, and the nature of Portuguese oppression. We even tried to publish a newspaper, Alvor which discussed race relations. It was immediately repressed. We were very naive. But bit by bit we created a spirit of nationalism’.

At the center of this activity was Eduardo Mondlane, who helped found NESAM in 1949 and thirteen years later was elected FRELIMO’s first president. Honwana (1985: 103-106) provides us with personal recollections of this young Mozambican leader whose intellect, self-confidence, and popularity jump out from the text.

Although the importance of Memórias rests on its ‘inside view’, the study also points in extremely suggestive ways to the far-reaching ties which link the historical development of southern Mozambique and South Africa. While scholars have carefully analyzed the distorting economic and social effects of Mozambique’s dependence on its powerful southern neighbor, they have paid less attention to the political and cultural ties, many of which antedate this century. A number of lineages and chieftaincies straddle both sides of the frontier and familial links between rural Mozambicans and South Africans have remained quite resilient over the past century. It is not surprising, for example, that many of Gungunhana’s and Maguiguana’s defeated troops resettled with their families in Zululand and that thirty years later Santaca and his insurgents adopted a similar strategy.

Memórias also offers evidence that the miners and agricultural workers, as well as other laboring women and men who returned from South Africa, returned with more than just rands and ploughs. They carried back new

37. See, for example, FIRST 1983; MINTER 1986; MUNSLOW 1983; VAIL & WHITE 1980.
attitudes toward work and race, new cultural forms such as work dances and *timite*, ‘tea meetings’ or ‘teas’, new religious affiliations, and a new sense of the possible—all of which were shaped by their living and working experience in South Africa. A Portuguese secret police report written in the 1950s, for example, expressed concern over the proliferation of thousands of Zionist and Ethiopian Churches, most of which were organized by migrant laborers who had worked in South Africa. Honwana’s account (1985: 66) also suggests that at least some early Mozambican nationalists maintained a close relationship with oppositional forces in South Africa even after they returned home. Brown Paulo Dulela, the first President of the Instituto negrófilo, developed close ties to the ANC and the trade union movement of Clemente Kadalie while working in a South African cement factory.

At the outset, I noted that *Memórias* was both highly acclaimed and controversial. The controversy centers around Honwana’s representation of *assimilados*, a portrayal shared by most of these. Manuel João dos Santos Tembe recalled:

‘I always carried the documents of a native, because I am a native. I am a Negro after all, aren’t I? But after a long time I also became an *assimilado*, and like the majority of natives here what convinced me was the possibility of earning a bit more money—it was for this reason alone. Those who were not *assimilados* were Negroes after all, and as such they always earned a pittance’ (quoted in Penvenne 1979b: 20).

Many less privileged Mozambicans expressed both envy and contempt for *assimilados* while not questioning their desire for self-improvement and a better life for their families. According to Penvenne (*ibid.*), who has done extensive research on the social history of the colonial capital Lourenço Marques:

38. *Freitas* 1956-57, and 1961 for a summary of his findings. There are scattered but fragmentary references, both in the ‘Negócios indígenas’ section of the Arquivo histórico de Moçambique and in the Malawian Archives, to returning miners who had joined Garvey’s United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) while working in South Africa. What is unclear is whether the few cases to which the documents refer are isolated examples. And if they were not, whether these migrant laborers, or others, actually formed UNIA chapters in Mozambique. Answers to these questions are likely to be found in the very rich holdings of the Arquivo histórico de Moçambique, which are currently being reorganized. For a discussion of Garvey’s influence in South Africa, see *Hill & Pirrie* 1987.

39. Research undertaken by Paulo Soares, Valdemires Zamoroni and Teresa Cruz e Silva of the Oficina de história do Centro de estudos africanos, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, also presents a very different interpretation than Honwana’s of the role of *assimilados* in colonial Mozambique. This material has not yet been published.
The majority of informants were poor and uneducated, never even in a position to consider assimilation, but they were simply of two minds about assimilados. There was often sympathy for those who were in a position to assimilate to make little headway in the system [. . .]. The consensus among all classes, however, was that the assimilado who used his privilege to lord it over his black brothers was a particularly despicable individual [. . .]. Those who aspired to go beyond the color of their own skins were seen as fools—dangerous fools, arrogant fools, but fools nonetheless.

Other informants were even less ambiguous:

'I remember when I was young, attending Catholic school on Saturday night we used to go to chitiquine, a kind of club, where we danced makway, massesse, and makwala. Usually at chitiquine the professional groups had their practice and the young such as me, had artistic lessons. Several times we were surprised by school teachers, and civil servants who were assimilados. They dispersed the singing and dancing groups and forced a number of us to attend catechism lessons where our songs and dances were condemned as evil. On occasion, I and my schoolmates were whipped because assimilados saw us dancing and reported us to the priest [. . .]. One son of an assimilado reported me to his father. His father informed the school officials. As a result I was forced to leave school for a year and my father, who worked for the local priests, was fired.'

In the heady post-independence days there was also a tendency among some FRELIMO officials to indict all assimilados as 'compromised' and 'mentally colonized' without any sense of history, culture or place.

These contending representations are not simply the idiosyncratic recollections of specific individuals nor do they merely reflect the class location of the informants or the political agenda of some FRELIMO leaders. Such divergent views suggest that we have to grapple in more subtle ways with the ambiguous social position of assimilados. This, in turn, requires serious theoretical debate as well as detailed empirical investigation. It may be that the term assimilado is itself much more significant as a colonial social category than as an analytical construct. It may also be that as a blanket term, like 'African peasantry', it hides as much as it reveals. We need to collect life histories and to begin to identify the different paths by which Africans and mulattoes became assimilados to determine the ways in which this process might have structured their self-identity and political consciousness. There is

41. In a highly publicized speech, Sergio Vieira (1977: 3-4), a leading member of the FRELIMO Central Committee, declared: 'The colonized man is the one who was mentally colonized, the one who assimilated colonialism, and not the one subjected to it but challenging it [. . .]. First we would say he is a person without a temporal dimension. He is a person unable to locate himself in history. A second aspect and a second lack of dimension which characterized the colonized man was the lack of his physical dimension, of his capacity to locate himself in space [. . .]. A third lack of dimension of the colonized man emerges, that is the absence of a cultural dimension [. . .]. This colonized man, in the historical circumstances of Mozambique, gave origin to the turncoat. . .'
Evidence, for example, that those who became *assimilados* via the 'civilizing mission' of the Catholic Church were more disposed to accept the proposition that 'we are all Portuguese' than those, such as Honwana, who had ties to Protestant Churches.42 We also need to examine the extent to which race, gender, generational and class divisions fractured the *assimilado* community. It is quite likely that different segments within this community pursued different agendas at different historical moments.43 In this respect, *Memórias* offers one rich and textured entry into the complex and changing world of the *assimilados*. Many more are needed.

Embedded in Honwana's life history are several other issues which remain unresolved and highlight the fact that life history is not only privileged but constrained by its inside position. There is, for example, the ambiguous role which Africans played in the colonial administration. While Honwana is generally critical of chiefs, he avoids any serious discussion of the position of African police and interpreters. Yet, it is clear from passing references in the text and interviews with a number of elders that they were an important, and often hated, cog in the State apparatus.44 Honwana's romantic treatment of a number of early mulatto opposition leaders, such as his boyhood hero João Albasini and Gerard Pott, also collides with reality. While he accurately portrays these opposition leaders as vocal critics of Portuguese racism, he fails to mention Albasini's position as the head of 'native services' at the Lourenço Marques port and railway complex or Pott's reputation as a price-gauging landlord.45 Similarly, women's experiences and struggles rarely emerge from the text. Despite tantalizing references to the growth of a *mestiça* elite at the turn of this century, to prosperous female entrepreneurs favored by the returning miners and to State policies which
precipitated a sharp rise in African and Indian prostitution, *Memórias* is a story about men.

These limitations notwithstanding, *Memórias* is an extremely important and honest account of one man’s search for a just and dignified life within a highly repressive colonial capitalist context. In understanding the choice and constraints, fears and emotions which structured the way Raúl Honwana responded, it is useful to return to C. Wright Mill’s axiom (1968: 158) written almost forty years ago: ‘The biographies of men and women, the kind of individuals they variously become, cannot be understood without reference to the structures in which the milieu of their everyday lives are organized’. At this juncture, many more life histories—of women and men, workers and peasants, *assimilados* and guerrillas—need to be collected. These testimonies not only challenge the colonial representation of the past but, without them, it would be impossible to reconstruct the complexities of Mozambican society much less to write ‘history from below’.

_University of Minnesota, Department of History, Minneapolis._

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