Working While Walking: Forced Laborers' Treks to Angola's Colonial-Era Diamond Mines, 1921-1948

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In 1912, prospectors found seven small diamonds near Musalala Creek in the Lunda region of the Portuguese colony of Angola. Less than five years later, on October 16, 1917, Portuguese, English, Belgian, South African and American investors formed the *Companhia de Diamantes de Angola* (Diamang) to exploit the diamond deposits that had been identified in the interim. In 1921, the Portuguese colonial government granted Diamang exclusive mining and labor procurement rights over a vast concessionary area. Using these monopolies, Diamang became the colony's largest commercial operator until Angolan independence in 1975.

The wealth was generated on the backs of African laborers, many of whom were forcibly recruited to work on the mines. While the metropolitan government instituted forced labor schemes, or *shibalo*, throughout its colonial possessions, nowhere else did it grant a concessionary company such exclusive access to African labor. Over the course of its operational existence, Diamang enjoyed a virtual monopoly on power and labor unrivaled by any other enterprise in Angola.

Upon the commencement of Diamang's operations in 1917, most local residents simply ignored the company's presence. However, a far-reaching agreement in 1921 consummated by the company and the colonial state, which required local colonial administrators, or *chefes do posto*, to actively

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procure laborers for Diamang rendered indifference increasingly less viable.[1] For regional residents, this system became a daily feature of life for roughly the next forty years until the state partially dismantled it in the 1960s, though it continued to ensnare residents up until Angolan independence in 1975.

For these forcibly contracted laborers, or *contratados*, the engagement process began when their *sobas*, or headmen, offered them to African police, known as *cipaios*. These colonial enforcers would then lead ever-accumulating convoys of recruits from villages to regional colonial administration outposts, or *postos*.[2] At the *postos*, recruits were obliged to enter into contracts with Diamang, thereby legalizing the engagement. From the *postos*, *contratados*, as well as any family members who willingly accompanied them, next set out on foot for the company's headquarters at Dundo and eventually to their future worksites, an arduous dangerous trek that could reach over 1,000 kilometers and take months to complete. Only from 1948 did the company provide truck transport to Dundo, thereby greatly alleviating this aspect of the engagement process.[3]

Based on company and colonial records, as well as oral testimony collected from former mineworkers, this paper examines the experiences of these forced laborers who trekked on foot from their home villages to Dundo, from the company's earliest usage of these workers, in 1921, to its implementation of motorized transport in 1948.[4] The journey was fraught with potentially fatal features, including food shortages, river crossings, exposure to the elements during the rainy season and, at times, even lion attacks. As such, these treks generated numerous fatalities and even prompted Diamang to reject recruits it had initially deemed healthy, but who, upon completing the journey were no longer physically able to supply productive labor.

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[1] The agreement also called for the company to grant to the colony 40% of its net profits, 100,000 shares of Diamang stock, and a series of loans at very favorable repayment rates. Moreover, the pact formally exempted Diamang from all current and future tax obligations on profits, imports, and all of its diamond exports – an arrangement not even enjoyed by missionaries operating in the colony.

[2] Over time, *contratados* comprised roughly forty percent of Diamang's African labor force. The remaining workers were known as *voluntários*. Yet, although *cipaios* did not forcibly remove most *voluntários* from their home communities, there was, in fact, very little voluntary about most *voluntários*' engagement with Diamang. Instead, the majority of *voluntários* were men who resided within reasonable proximity of the mines and were forced to report to the company on their own for employment, and thus this category is also crudely geographical in nature.

[3] The company often funneled recruits from the southern stretches of Lunda though Saurimo, which acted as a processing center at which company officials could better gauge and control flows to Dundo. Yet, because passing through Saurimo did not qualitatively change the trekking experience, I have chosen to omit this parallel experience.

[4] Fieldwork was conducted in Portugal and Angola from 2003 to 2006.

While the vast majority of coerced recruits were acquiescent in the face of the increasingly aggressive forced labor regime, many potential laborers throughout this period were able to avoid laboring for Diamang by relocating prior to the arrival of *cipaios* in their villages. Not all residents who stayed behind, however, were merely passive victims of *shibalo*. From the implementation of the *contratado* regime in 1921 until the introduction of truck transport, many recruits deserted at some point during the multi-segmented journey. Desertion patterns changed over time as the colonial state and Diamang consolidated power, making this option more difficult to pursue – though never impossible owing to the porous, proximate Belgian Congolese border. Still others opted not to desert, but creatively responded to the challenging conditions associated with the trek. Their actions included having spouses accompany them, intentionally delaying their arrival in Dundo and illegally exchanging company-issued clothes for much-needed food en route. While these strategies did not completely alleviate the hardships associated with the trek, they went a long way towards tempering the experience and were generally less risky and complicated than flight.

By drawing attention to the experiences of these trekking recruits and family members I aim to illuminate an under-examined portion of the broader forced labor process in colonial Africa. Even the massive body of literature that examines mining operations in South Africa, which relied heavily on cyclically migrating laborers from across Southern Africa, rarely explores these journeys.[5] As such, this paper seeks to begin to redress this historiographical absence and, more particularly, to precipitate a reconsideration of how Angolans experienced forced labor. Although the strategic exodus of Angolans from the colony to escape forced labor schemes is well-documented, my exploration of the range of strategies that those Africans who stayed behind employed – which included, but was not limited to, desertion – is intended to expand existing understandings of the ways that these colonial subjects creatively engaged the regime.

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[5] A notable exception is Patrick Harries' work that follows laborers from Mozambique to the South African mine. Patrick Harries, *Work, Culture and Identity: Migrant Laborers in Mozambique and South Africa, c. 1860-1910* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1994).

1. The Geographic Scope of Diamang's Labor Procurement

Until 1921, Africans residing beyond Diamang's immediate area of operations most likely knew little about the enterprise's activities. Up to that point, Diamang had lacked the political wherewithal to expand its recruiting efforts much beyond its mining environs. This scenario changed, however, with the landmark 1921 agreement, which committed the Angolan government "to provide all possible support for the recruitment of the indigenous personnel necessary for the intense mining of the diamond beds."[6]

Emboldened by the state's readiness to furnish laborers, Diamang cast its gaze not only upon the local, ethnic Chokwe population, but also further west to Malange and south to Moxico for desirable recruits. Company officials deemed these areas of greater population density as collectively vital to supplementing Lunda's relatively few inhabitants.[7]

2. Tugging in Many Directions:
Spousal Accompaniment Policies and Strategies

Regardless of from where Diamang drew *contratados*, though, company officials displayed great enthusiasm for the relocation of families – or partial families for men with multiple wives – to its mines.[8] Company administrators determined that workers accompanied by family members deserted less frequently, were generally more "stable," and were more likely to remain on after they had fulfilled their contracts. As such, during the 1920s, the company introduced a series of measures to encourage this scenario. In 1922, for example, Diamang was offering monetary bonuses to *sobas* for each wife that accompanied and remained with her contracted husband. Three years later, the company began offering women a half-ration for the journey and, in 1929, a *pano* (cloth used as a wrap-around garment) upon arrival in Dundo. In 1930 and 1945, respectively, Diamang enhanced these incentives to sixty percent and an additional *pano* upon the conclusion of the contract. The historical record, however, is replete with instances in which the company only partially delivered, or even fully reneged on, these promised incentives, thereby undermining these designs.

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[6] *Boletim Oficial da Província de Angola*, I série, no. 20 (May 14, 1921): 37.

[7] Company officials regularly fixed Lunda's population density at two people per square kilometer, though censuses were inaccurate and this figure was bandied about well before the first census was ever taken.

[8] Only on the Copperbelt that stretched across Zambia (Northern Rhodesia) and the (Belgian) Congo did companies similarly encourage male laborers to bring wives and children with them to the mines.

Prior to the arrival of the *cipaios*, married recruits, their wives, and even extended families had almost always already reached a collective decision as to whether wives would go or stay behind. Beyond the initial years of the *contratado* regime, the arrival of *cipaios* in villages was neither shocking nor unanticipated and, in fact, residents of oft-visited villages came to regard these incursions as part of the rhythm of life. One of the most important factors influencing this decision was any primary or secondary knowledge that couples and families might have had about life on the mines. In general, recruits who were fulfilling second, third or even fourth contracts, were more amenable to having their wives join them. Even secondhand knowledge, though, usually allayed recruits' concerns. Prior knowledge, however, could also dissuade husbands and wives from traveling together to the mines. Informants' most regularly cited reason for having wives remain in the village was not a "fear of the unknown," but rather awareness that women were often coveted by assertive co-workers or, worse, by aggressive African overseers (*capitas*) or European employees. Fueled by incidents of sexual abuse on the mines, this form of trepidation persisted throughout the *contratado* regime.

Recruits and their wives also factored in the sheer distance to the mines, though after Diamang introduced transportation from *postos* to the mines in 1948 this issue was less salient. The data related to accompanying wives is sporadic, but it does suggest that those wives coming from further away were less inclined to join their husbands. In particular, couples from Camaxilo and Songo, 775 and 745 kilometers, respectively, to the west of Dundo, were indicative of this trend. For example, in 1937, although the company-wide rate of accompanying wives was 25.7%, contratados from Camaxilo and Songo registered rates of only 5.0% and 4.6%, respectively.[9]

When men and women did decide to proceed together to the mines, male informants most often cited their wives' practice of cooking for them, both during the journey and upon their arrival on the mines, as the greatest value. In fact, when I asked Sacabela Sacahiavo if emotional factors played any role in his wife accompanying him in the late 1940s, he laughed and declared, "No, no. I didn't bring her out of love – only to cook!"[10] Ultimately, the decision concerning spousal accompaniment was a complex one that involved a number of contextual and personal considerations. While certain logistical and perceptual factors militated against spousal accompaniment, the benefits derived from this arrangement appear to have provided effective counter balances.

3. Walking to Work: From the Village to the *Posto*

Whether *contratado* recruits set out alone or with family members, the arrival of *cipaios* in the village marked the beginning of this odyssey. Early on, both the colonial state and the company expressed concerns that the vicious acts that *cipaios* often committed would deleteriously affect recruitment. In 1922, for example, Angolan High Commissioner Norton de Matos called for the expeditious recruitment of *cipaios* for Lunda to assist in the procurement of labor, but cautioned that, "These *cipaios* ought to receive instruction from civil police agents… and the best care ought to be taken to obtain, via this instruction, the most… rigorous discipline, and through constant supervision ensure that they do not commit even the slightest shameful or extortionate act towards the indigenous populations. To end with these humiliations will be the cornerstone of the future occupation of Lunda."[11] Less than a year later, however, a company official was reporting that *cipaios* were abusing recruits, explaining that, "Armed *cipaios* invaded the indigenous populations, encircling their homes, whipping the *sobas* and their wives… I saw, during the interrogations I attended, the deep traces of the beatings; they took everything that was valuable in order to sell it."[12]

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[9] Departamento de Antropologia da Universidade de Coimbra (DAUC) – Folder 86 35.º – Companhia de Diamantes de Angola, *Nota de informação sobre a parte relative a mão de obra indígena pelo Ministerio das Colonias* (February 22, 1938): 2

[10] Interview, Sacabela Sacahiavo, August 12, 2005. Male recruits also occasionally brought children or young relatives to assume this complementary, mitigatory role.

Upon appearing in the village, the *soba* would typically welcome and regale *cipaios*. Muhetxo Sapelende, first contracted in 1940, explained that when the *cipaios* arrived, "A fowl would be killed and eaten and the people who had been ordered by the *soba* to appear as the village's recruits would be brought before the *cipaios*, who would then accept or reject these men… *Sobas* would ask for one or two people from a family… *Cipaios* would also walk through the village looking for strong men, especially if the *soba* was not offering particularly strong ones."[13] In return for their compliance, Diamang periodically rewarded cooperative *sobas* with small gifts, including money, alcohol, seeds, cloth and surplus Portuguese military uniforms.[14] Thus, far from the stalwarts against colonial encroachment that they had been in the first decades of the twentieth century, by as early as the mid-1920s subjugated *sobas* were vital cogs in the *contratado* machine.

For those recruits who had been selected, the prospect of traveling to and working on the mines now consumed them. As time passed, many recruits and their wives already had some personal or second-hand knowledge of what this existence would be like and used this information to help themselves prepare mentally. Even for those who possessed no firsthand knowledge, though, the mere physical reappearance in their villages of returning laborers, illness- and accident-free, helped to temper their fears.

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[11] Arquivo Histórico Nacional de Angola (AHN) – Caixa 4871 – Lunda. Letter, summarization of despacho numero 6/L, of January 5, 1922, issued by the Alto Comissario of Angola, Norton de Matos (January 16, 1922).

[12] AHN – Caixa 319, Malange, Cota #19. Much to Portugal's chagrin, University of Wisconsin Professor, Edward Ross, brought incidents of this nature to international attention via his damning 1925 report, declaring: "Most of the brutality from which the natives suffer is inflicted by *cipães* who are given virtual carte blanche by their Portuguese superiors… Under threat of being tied up, the villagers compete in bribing him not to hit them too hard… The *cipãio* is often a criminal or a bad character." Edward Ross, *Report on Employment of Native Labor in Portuguese Africa* (New York: The Abbott Press, 1925): 16-24. Ross did not visit Lunda while in Angola, but he did collect statements in areas near Diamang's far western recruiting zones and, regardless, this was a problem that colonial and commercial officials alike generally accepted as endemic throughout the colony.

[13] Interview, Muhetxo Sapelende, August 11, 2005.

[14] Diamang also honored cooperative *sobas* with portraits hung in the company's Dundo Museum, though officials could also remove these portraits as a means of shaming those *sobas* who failed to provide sufficient numbers of laborers. For a fascinating examination of this practice, see: Nuno Porto, "'Under the Gaze of Ancestors': Photographs and Performance in Colonial Angola" in Elizabeth Edwards & Janice Hart, eds., *Photographs, Objects, Histories* (Routledge: London & New York, 2004): 116-24.

When it was time to depart, *contratado* recruits left their villages behind and accompanied the *cipaios* to subsequent villages to collect additional recruits. Cohorts from individual villages typically ranged between three and ten, though it was not uncommon for a lone recruit to set out from a village or for a village to lose up to fifteen members at once. Over the course of the *contratado* regime, cohort sizes remained relatively constant, suggesting an awareness by officials that it was prudent to spread the recruitment burden across multiple populations rather than cripple individual villages. While contributions from single villages may have had a rather small range, the overall size of an amassed group could stretch from dozens to hundreds. In general, both the size of groups and the frequency with which *cipaios* collected recruits increased over time as Diamang's operations expanded and its need for laborers grew.

The march for *contratado* recruits from their villages to regional *postos* varied considerably depending on a village's distance from the local *posto* and at what point during the journey a recruit joined the group. Regardless, recruits always made the journey on foot, as generally only footpaths linked villages to one another.

When recruits fled during the march to the *posto* (typically at night), *cipaios* would often return to the village from which the deserter, or *fugido*, had come and demand a replacement from the *soba*, and at times the deserter's wife, too, purely as a punitive measure. Other times, the *cipaios* would catch the deserters themselves, especially, according to former *contratado* Luciane Kahanga, "if the deserters had no family and were living out in the countryside like goats."[15] However, the successful capture of *fugidos* was a rare occurrence and the state's preferred method was simply to demand replacements.

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[15] Interview, Luciane Kahanga, November 18, 2005.

After roughly two decades of rampant desertion, by the end of the 1930s the flood of *fugidos* had tapered off to a trickle, falling to only 2.8% by 1937. This reduction is attributable to a number of factors, including increased vigilance on the journey.[16] Yet, as long as those who had fled stayed away from their home villages, either temporarily or permanently, desertion proved to be an effective method of avoiding *shibalo*.

4. Walking to Work: At the *Posto*

For those recruits who had opted not to flee, the arrival at the *posto* represented a transformative moment as they came directly under colonial control for the first time and symbolically transitioned from recruits to *contratados*. These recruits became full-fledged *contratados* simply by signing contracts, usually in the presence of a Diamang official and the *chefe do posto*. That virtually all *contratados* could not read the document that bound them to labor for Diamang was inconsequential, as they were well aware that they were entitled to a salary, clothing, and rations, in exchange for six days of labor each week for a set number of months.

Indicative of the exploitative nature of the *contratado* regime, *chefes* immediately put arriving recruits to work, although they were compensated only for work performed from Dundo onward. Typically, *chefes* assigned only men tasks, which consisted mainly of various cleaning and weeding projects in the general vicinity of the *posto*, though they were not restricted to this. For example, in 1937, a Diamang official supported the decision of a *chefe do posto* to have gathered recruits work on the local airstrip, as "we do not want lots of idle men."[17] As such, the labor process for these African employees commenced well before any of them helped to extract a diamond from the Lunda soil.

Recruits also occasionally fled the *postos*, typically prompted by harsh treatment. A particularly aggressive administrator of Caluango *posto* in western Lunda, for example, helped to precipitate a string of desertions in the early 1940s by forcing recruits to weed the terrain near the Luita River, some days until approximately 7:00 p.m. and without providing any rations.[18]

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[16] It is also possible that the Depression and the attendant collapse of commodity prices dissuaded many recruits from fleeing, as Diamang may have represented the only revenue-generating option.

[17] DAUC – Folder 86 34º – Henrique de Sousa Noronha. Relatório, da Viagem do Secretário a Vila Silva Pôrto, em September 16, 1937 (October 25, 1937): 13.

Before embarking for Dundo, Diamang also administered a medical exam for some recruits, which was intended to exclude those unfit for mine labor. With this measure, Diamang hoped to avoid paying for unsatisfactory recruits' trips to Dundo, where a more comprehensive examination was administered, only to have them rejected there. The company first introduced these exams in 1938, but administered them only sporadically and cursorily, and thus medical personnel in Dundo continued to reject many would-be laborers. In fact, informants rarely reported having to undergo a medical examination, or even any type of physical scrutiny, suggesting that Diamang had largely abandoned these exams by the 1950s.

5. Walking to Work: From the *Posto* to Dundo

Prior to 1948, *contratados* and any accompanying family members were required to set out on foot to Dundo from the *posto*. Before departing, *chefes* distributed rations, which *contratados* were then responsible for carrying to Dundo. Although allocations were most often inadequate for the journey, they still typically weighed upwards of 25-30 kilograms, and had to be consumed judiciously in order to ensure that they lasted for the entire trip. Further, even when parsimonious company officials acknowledged standard journey times to be greater than one month, they were reluctant to issue more than thirty days worth of rations. One official commented in 1926 that, "Consequently, *contratados* arrive in Dundo appearing as though they came from the middle of the jungle."[19]

An infamous 1928 journey undertaken by *contratados* from Bailundo, over 1,000 kilometers away from Dundo, highlights the company's frugality. This trekking party included 250 families, consisting of 550 adults and

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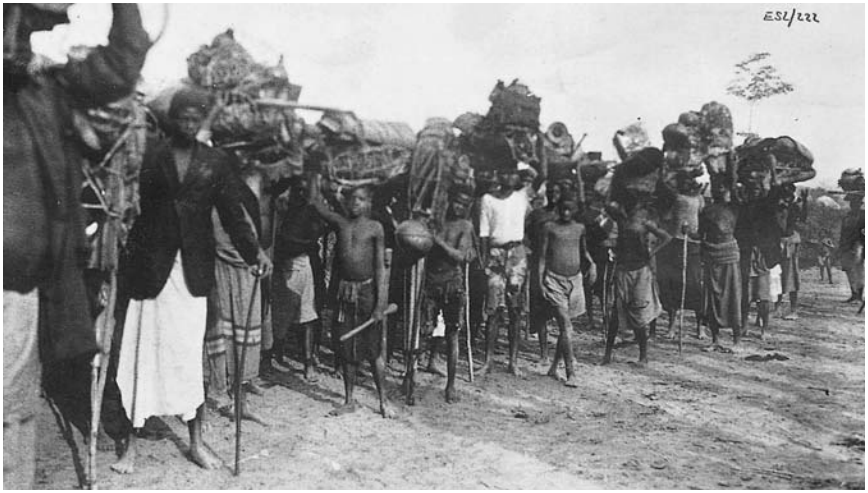
[18] DAUC – Folder 86 44° – Letter, from A. Pinto Ferreira, O Director Técnico na Lunda, to Sr. Agente da Diamang em Vila Henrique de Carvalho, "Contratados de Camaxilo" (May 26, 1944).

[19] DAUC – Folder 86 6° – Letter, from José Dias Mendes to Snr. Bernardo d'Almeida Azevedo, Chefe da Secção e Transportes, "Venda, pelos indígenas contractados, de artigos de vestuario" (May 24, 1926).



Families from Bailundo traveling to Dundo, 1928.
Arquivo da Diamang – Universidade de Coimbra – MAUC.

142 children, and one Diamang official, Francisco Abreu, who chronicled the excursion. Soon after departing, though, the trekkers found themselves short of rations and acutely hungry. During the first half of the trip, each member of the group – including Abreu – had been granted thirty days of rations, while they were only able to cover this distance in forty-five. After the second half of the trip totaled another twenty-three days, the party stumbled into Dundo on June 16, 1928. While Diamang officials exalted, Abreu immediately set about crafting a scathing account of the trek. In it, he admonished the company for failing to understand that the "realities" of the trip, which included eleven days of crossing rivers alone – an endeavor that at times required two days – should not be considered as "delays," but rather anticipated and compensated for in the provisioning of rations.[20]

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[20] DAUC – Folder 86 12º – Francisco Moreira da Fonseca Abreu. Relatório ao Snr. Representante da Diamang, acerca da viagem que fiz ao Dundo, acompanhado 250 familias indígenas, que veem aqui fixar residencia (June 16, 1928). Perhaps as a result of this trip, only slightly more than half of the recruits who completed this trek ultimately fulfilled their contracts. DAUC – Folder 86 17º – Letter, from S.T. Kelsey to Snr. Representante da Diamang em Loanda (August 12, 1929).

While the subsequent embarrassment that this episode generated prompted company officials to boost future provision allotments, going forward ration deficiencies were still the norm and trekking parties regularly arrived in Dundo complaining of hunger. For example, less than a month after Abreu's group had arrived, Diamang failed to provide any rations at all to another group of over one-hundred recruits, suggesting that the Bailundo debacle may have prompted nothing more than a series of hollow promises.

In order to rectify these food insufficiencies, some recruits traded their company-issued clothes or blankets to local communities they passed en route to Dundo. This strategic act explicitly violated instructions that they had received from *chefes* at the *posto*, but even the corporal punishment that awaited them in Dundo was preferable to starving. Consequently, Diamang experimented with withholding these items until after workers arrived in Dundo, though ultimately only truck transport permanently solved the problem.

Prior to 1948, Diamang made only gradual and sporadic improvements to this portion of the journey. For example, by the late 1930s, Diamang had constructed shelters along some of the more well-traveled routes to Dundo at intervals of approximately one-hundred kilometers at which recruits were supposed to replenish their supplies. However, the company spaced the shelters unevenly and sufficiently stocked only a handful of them. Further, the shelters were in constant disrepair and during the rainy season offered inadequate cover for larger groups – or none at all if the group failed to cover the distances between them. Meanwhile, even on the eve of the implementation of mechanized transport, Diamang was still presenting to the metropolitan government a multitude of reasons why it was not feasible: "It was impossible during the (Second World) War because of a lack of vehicles and tires and restrictions on gasoline, and even today there are significant difficulties, including the long distances to be covered, the increased number of *indígenas*… and the (probable) necessity of special vehicles that can accommodate… with a certain comfort level, an appreciable number of individuals."[21]

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[21] Torre do Tombo – Folder AMC51 – Letter from Ernesto de Vilhena to Marcelo Caetano, Ministro das Colonias, "Nota de Informação para O Ministro das Colonias" (January 27, 1947): 1. Diamang did, however, pick up any ailing recruits or accompanying family members in company trucks that daily traversed these routes.

In response, some recruits elected to delay their arrival in Dundo by either intentionally proceeding slowly or making unsanctioned detours. For example, in 1926 Diamang accused a group of *contratados* coming from Moxico of purposely taking extra time – in this case, ninety days – to reach their destination. Officials subsequently concluded that, "the only way to avoid this abuse that the *indígenas* commit was to guarantee them rations for only 30-35 days of the voyage."[22] This measure produced further hardships for trekkers, but also some successes for Diamang. Yet, a report from 1940 indicated that a group of *contratados* traveling from Camaxilo that year had returned to their villages after having received their rations before proceeding on to Dundo. Officials bemoaned that this diversion had delayed recruits' arrival by over a week and, owing to their depleted rations, that they arrived in a weakened state.[23]

More dramatically, many *contratado* recruits opted to flee during the long march from their respective *postos* to Dundo. In the early years of the *contratado* regime, recruits pursued this strategy rather facilely, as they often traveled to the mines unchaperoned. During the first full decade of the company's operations, records suggest that approximately 10-25% of recruits deserted, though on occasion whole groups failed to arrive in Dundo, infuriating officials and impairing production. These mass desertions caused considerable distress for the company officials and mine bosses who were counting on these new arrivals. A 1921 letter from Diamang to Angola's High Commissioner reveals both the prevalence of this strategy and the immediate fiscal damage it caused, in addition to the much larger issue of thousands of lost man-hours: "About five months ago I requested 400 men of which I only received one-hundred, and twenty-two from another request for one-hundred, the rest having fled, without having up until now been substituted (for). Of two groups of thirty and another of fifty, not one worker arrived at the work site, and for all of them we had already paid out expenses, taxes and salaries, as well as rations during their

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[22] DAUC – Folder 86 5º – Letter, from Antonio Brandão de Mello to Sr. Antonio Cyrne, "Abono de rações a indígenas recrutados no Moxico" (April 10, 1926).

[23] DAUC – Folder 86 40.º- Letter, H.J. Quirino da Fonseca to the Snr. Rep. da Diamang (July 6, 1940).

Truck transport of recruits, c. 1948.
Arquivo da Diamang – Universidade de Coimbra – MAUC.

time at the *postos* and for the voyage, which are all now useless and non-reimbursable."[24] Given this outlay, Diamang began to arrange for personnel to accompany and watch over their human investments during this segment of the trek. During the 1930s and 1940s, escalating profits enabled the company to either pay for the necessary personnel or ensure that *chefes* made the proper arrangements. Consequently, recruits, and especially those with accompanying family members, were decreasingly able to seize upon this portion of the journey as their moment to escape.

By 1947, a mixture of low-level government pressure and a desire to prevent workers from either deserting or even delaying their arrival in Dundo finally pushed Diamang to agree to phase in mechanical transport. Yet, while this development represented a watershed moment for *contratados*, the company's implementation of this new system was both fitful and problematic. Bridges and rafts needed to cross Lunda's numerous rivers had to be installed, logistical and scheduling difficulties often caused significant

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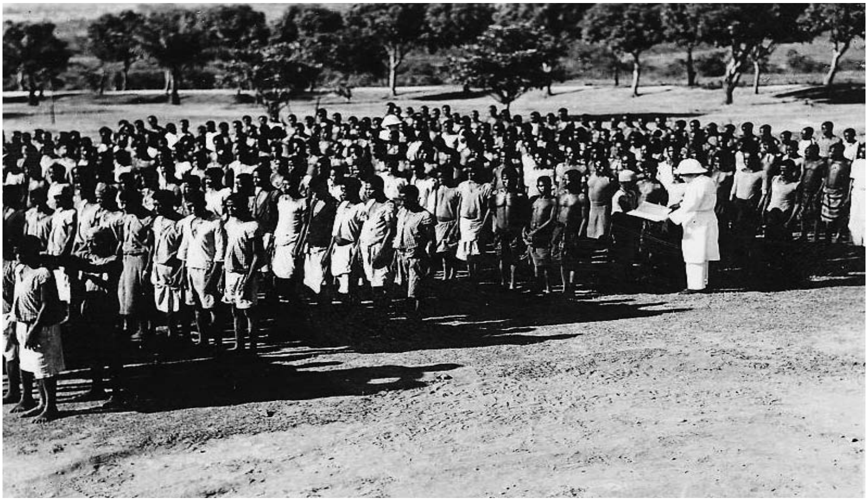
[24] DAUC – Folder 84K3 1º – Letter, from Antonio Brandão de Mello, Representante das Companhias de Pesquizas Diamantes e Petroleo de Angola, to the High Commissioner of Angola, (April 24, 1921): 5.



Inspection in Dundo of incoming contratados, 1938.
Arquivo da Diamang – Universidade de Coimbra – MAUC.

delays at *postos*, and customized transport trucks seemed to be in perpetual shortage, leading the company to substitute them with "regular" trucks.

6. Getting to Work: A Temporary "Home" in Dundo

Regardless of how they arrived in Dundo, personnel from the company's Health Services administered screening exams for all incoming male recruits.[25] These exams were intended both to keep workers carrying communicable diseases away from the mines and to disqualify physically incapable recruits. As early as 1922, for example, Health Services personnel were rejecting a significant number of recruits from Malange who were considered as: "very poor… and absolutely useless insofar as any kind of labor is concerned."[26] Throughout Diamang's first two decades, monthly and annual reports suggest that Health Services was rejecting approximately 10-15% of these contracted laborers.

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[25] Health Services personnel also vaccinated both men and women against smallpox beginning in the late 1920s, and later for typhoid and intestinal parasites, as well.

[26] DAUC – Folder 84K3 2.°; Letter from W. Rettie to Diamang representatives in Luanda (June 14, 1923): 1.

Table 1: Percentage of recruits refused in Dundo[27]:

Year	Percentage refused
1925	14,25
1930 (April)	14,26
1933	13,00
1934	9,45
1935 (December)	10,93
1937	8,96

Over time, rejection rates generally declined, owing to better – if erratic – screening in the field, but ironically continued to include (prior to 1948) many who would have passed the exam had they not just concluded the draining walk.

For those *contratados* who passed the medical exam, Dundo became their temporary home as they adjusted to the rhythms and nature of regulated labor and waited for deployment to the mines. Forcibly removed from their respective home communities months earlier, by now *contratados* had already endured lengthy, taxing treks and presumably unprecedented encounters with medical staff. In turn, these jarring experiences portended the formidable, unremitting challenges that *contratados* and accompanying family members would face upon eventually reaching Diamang's mines.

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[27] Compiled from the following sources: DAUC – Folder 86 20.° – Contract Men Received during 1925; Quirino Fonseca, Relatório anual das acitvidades da companhia contra a doença do sono 1934 (March 2, 1935); DAUC – Folder 86 28.°- Secção de Trabalho Indígena, Relatório de Julho de 1935 (August 9, 1935); DAUC – Folder 86 30.° – Zea Bermudez, Diamang, Secção de Trabalho Indígena Contratados, Relatório de Dezembro de 1935 (January 9, 1936).