

TRACING THE ITINERARIES OF WORKING CONCEPTS ACROSS AFRICAN HISTORY

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This essay takes as its starting point a question: do historians of Africa's early and more recent pasts need each other's labor histories when studying the relationship between work and mobility?¹ A response in the negative foregrounds the differences between the economic and political worlds of Africans living before the fifteenth century and the economic and political worlds of merchant capitalism, industrial capitalism, colonialism, independence, and neoliberalism.² This answer suggests that as people moved for the purpose of work from the early modern period, the ties forged (and severed) between people and with objects were dramatically changed from the strategies of earlier communities. We may well ask whether "labor" is even an applicable concept for periods before interactions between Africans and Europeans.

It is easy to agree that there are great differences in the histories of movement and work across the chronological divides that structure African historiography. But we might also imagine these divides as thresholds through which we peer, gaining a rich but necessarily partial view of each other's knowledge about the common problems and questions that animate our scholarship in different ways. When we survey each other's fields to (at the very least) keep abreast of trends that impact our teaching, we

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recognize change and continuity differently: what is foreign on one side of the threshold is often well-known and well-studied on the other side. Practices that appear novel in the early modern and modern periods might look like an iteration of a durable strategy from the perspective of the medieval and early African pasts, not the least because specialists in these periods tend to write about much longer periods of time.

Some of the articles in this issue already straddle such chronological thresholds, looking both forward and back to draw out continuities and changes. Martino, for example, recognizes parallels between the colonial labor regimes of the plantations of Spanish Fernando Pó and earlier regimes of slavery. These similarities have inspired some scholars, Martino explains, to suggest the emergence of “neo-slavery” in West Africa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Yet, Martino also insists that the legal framework of the labor contract changed significantly the strategies of *touts*, “recruiters,” who would have been responsible for enslavement in an economy based on neo-slavery. The efforts of *touts* were, Martino argues, a unique, non-violent form of banditry that was entirely dependent on the skill and *savoir-faire* of trickster-recruiters. In contrast, Keese looks forward in time. He describes the complex history of forced labor in the French Congo and compares the strategies of the colonial state to those of the post-colonial state. Keese uses Jean-François Bayart’s argument that political control and labor control depended on corporeal punishment in independent Africa, seeing in Bayart’s thesis great continuity with the colonial period, even while keeping open the possible influence of Soviet labor regimes on post-colonial labor practices.³

Like Martino and Keese, this essay seeks to peer across chronological thresholds, albeit from the perspective of a student of earlier periods. The insistence that “precolonial” pasts matter is by no means a new perspective. For well over a decade historians have called for (and demonstrated the significance of) greater attention to histories that predate colonialism in efforts to understand the twentieth century.⁴ The success of the earliest such calls have, themselves, been called into question, as historians increasingly focus on writing postcolonial histories and as fewer train in the methods of recovering earlier, undocumented pasts.⁵ But it is possible to perceive in recent scholarship a (perhaps growing) interest in connecting the recent past to much older histories. New work tracks across centuries and sometimes millennia how earlier ideas about race and ethnicity, perceptions of the environment, and changing practices of faith, motherhood, and politics inform the histories of colonialism and even the decades after Independence.⁶ A few have even suggested that, in some cases, the colonial period—the focus of most essays in this collection—was more like a pause

or intermission in a much longer history of processes of change initiated by Africans before colonization and taken up again after Independence.⁷ Landscapes created decades, centuries, and millennia ago coexist with those built up in the shadow of high modernist developmentalism and the crumbling ruination of more recent centuries; the close proximity of these coexisting material worlds open possibilities for new pasts and futures simultaneously.⁸ Resilient conceptualizations (of work and labor, wealth and poverty, to name a few) were simultaneously preserved and changed in the face of colonial labor laws and neoliberal economic policies.⁹ The affordances opened up by coexisting layers and intersections of material and conceptual worlds were avenues of creative change in earlier periods, too.¹⁰ Taken together, this scholarship has helped us recognize the power of the durable, flexible material and cognitive worlds crafted by African men and women for understanding all periods of African history.

In this essay, I build on these efforts, imagining what a father, potter, or farmer who lived in the more distant past might recognize within avowedly “modern” histories of work and mobility. I am not a labor historian, as other contributors to this volume might be designated, but an interest in mobility and livelihood in Africa’s deeper pasts makes clear that many of the concepts valuable to the current approaches of historians working on migrant labor in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries—concepts like cosmopolitanism and social age—actually describe strategies with very long, regionally-specific histories in many parts of the continent. This essay asks questions about the possible itineraries of some of these working concepts over the *longue durée* and suggests the ways in which historians of Africa’s earlier and more recent pasts might learn from each other’s approaches to work and mobility. I do not cover the geography or chronology of the continent evenly; nonetheless, I hope that the observations I offer from my area of particular expertise—central, eastern, and southern Africa from the last few millennia BC to the mid-second millennium AD—stimulate questions of value beyond this narrow scope, in the many historical contexts that constitute the field of African economic history. In particular, I want to draw out three thematic clusters around which historians of work and mobility across all of Africa’s pasts might fruitfully converse: infrastructures of and boundaries to mobility, compulsion and coercion, and, finally, knowledge and worldliness.

Infrastructures and Boundaries

The theme of this special issue, “Work and Mobility in Africa,” immediately conjures up the twin concerns of infrastructures facilitating movement

and the forms of boundary-making that curtail it. Hart's chapter takes up these themes directly in the story of "Operation Keep Right", the National Redemption Council's campaign to change driving practice from the left to the right-hand side of the street in the early 1970s, aligning Ghanaian infrastructure with the driving practices of countries beyond its national borders. Dougnon and Ocobock teach us that young men—even those classified as "children"—drew on their connections to relatives and friends to build a social, rather than material, infrastructure that facilitated travel to places where young men could find work. Schenck similarly tells a story in which ties of friendship and affection were instrumental in the experience of Mozambicans who traveled to Germany to work in the 1970s and 1980s and in their political efforts since the 1980s. We have learned from Mudeka about women's attempts to smuggle themselves across the borders of colonial states in order to join their husbands or participate in the economies of colonial cities. Communities avoiding labor demands also manipulated international boundaries and the differing labor policies of colonial states. As Keese demonstrates, sometimes the very chiefs complicit in fulfilling state demands for labor initiated the flight of their communities when state demands overstepped the prerogatives of chiefs. But colonial boundaries also made it possible to protect labor that was captured, as Martino shows with his study of the provision of agricultural workers for the plantations of Spanish Fernando Pó in the early twentieth century. Once they crossed the colonial boundary, Africans were compelled by Spanish law to work; the short arm of British law rarely reached across the boundary to assist such trafficked individuals. As Hernandez teaches us with the case study of Mozambique, colonial officials also ignored African labor migration as they crafted reports to carefully build the case that Africans were lazy and in need of the civilizing, redemptive powers of labor. Ironically, the same colonial state commissioning reports on the poor work ethic of Africans funded itself by taxing wages sent back into the colony by the South African state on behalf of Mozambican laborers who traveled to the mines for work. Building on a rich scholarship on consumer culture and the social life of things, the mobility of people and their work in many of the studies offered here was most socially productive (or disruptive) when travelers brought new objects into the business of making and maintaining social ties.¹¹ Taken together, the articles in this collection emphasize in particular the significance of social infrastructures and the boundaries of legal frameworks. The latter was certainly something new in many parts of non-Islamic sub-Saharan Africa, but the former is a particularly important way to think about labor and mobility in earlier periods.¹²

The social, economic, and material infrastructures of mobile work in earlier pasts are often overlaid by those built in more recent periods, as Hart observes. Those of very distant pasts are particularly difficult to locate with much precision and to study in any detail. But, we have learned a great deal about such earlier infrastructures, particularly those of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In central and eastern Africa, for example, research on caravans and porters has dramatically changed how we think about the labor force involved in long-distance trade in the last centuries of the precolonial period. If we once assumed that the human infrastructure of caravan trade relied on undifferentiated slave labor, we now know much more about the masculine cultures of porters and the training and knowledge that undergirded their success. The aspirations of these mobile workers were deeply rooted in the cassava fields and beer pots of the communities they passed through; friendships, marriages and romances provided the intimate social context of the decidedly local economic transactions that sustained porters' labors across long distances. The men of the caravans were also dependent on the hunters of the interior, especially members of specialist elephant hunting guilds, which flourished as caravan trade extended deeper into the continent. Like porters, such hunters created a culture of work and mobility that undergirded new ideas about masculinity and wealth.¹³ Both Africans and, later, Europeans depended on the social and economic infrastructure supporting late precolonial trade in west central and eastern Africa.¹⁴

The research methods and questions of scholars studying the deep pasts of central, eastern, and southern Africa remain decidedly rooted in space compared to those of our counterparts studying the early modern and modern periods.¹⁵ Archaeologists are developing new methods to track objects across space through the study of glass bead chemistry, the signatures of pots' clays, tempers, slips, and inclusions, and the isotopes sealed into layers of dentine as they build up over a lifespan of travel across watersheds.¹⁶ Other historians similarly compare material culture (form, technique, etc.) to track movement and contact across space.¹⁷ These methods suggest the rich potential for bringing movement into our study of early histories. But we need to think carefully about how to connect such evidence for the movement of objects (and, sometimes, people) to the history of work, labor, and livelihood. Historians using language evidence tend to focus on the political, social, and economic histories of speech communities located in regions. Indeed, it is something of a relief when the speakers whose histories we study through language evidence adopt semi-sedentary agriculture, for we can more confidently locate them in space (albeit, quite large regions). In some areas, we do not yet have good enough language

classifications, absolute dates, and diachronic phonologies to write histories solely on the basis of the loanwords that indicate the movement of ideas through, for example, the travels of itinerant specialists.

In spite of the challenges of these sources, we could do more to connect such early histories to those of the early modern and modern periods around common questions and topics. As we build up our datasets for earlier periods, we may well find that mobile forms of work—from seasonal salt collection to professionalized long-distance hunts—were central to historical developments we usually associate with or conceptualize as “trade.” Like the social infrastructures supporting mobile laborers in stories of more recent pasts, whether Dougnon’s Ghana Boys or Rockel’s Nyamwezi porters, we may find that workers on the move in earlier pasts also depended on social infrastructures that stand outside the institutions whose histories we typically study in earlier periods. The study of work and mobility in deeper pasts may reveal the historical importance of cohorts of friends, lovers, teachers, peers, networks of technicians, members of supply chains, and professional associates, just as they do in the modern period, as exemplified in contributions by Dougnon, Ocobock, and Schenck.¹⁸

Studies of mobile work in the eighteenth through twenty-first centuries have alerted us to the significance of gender and age in the social infrastructures of migrant labor, especially changing ideals of masculinity and maturity. We might connect the fascinating ways in which men in these recent centuries used their mobile work cultures to invent forms of masculinity and claim maturity to stories of similar strategies in deeper pasts, a point explored below. As Guthrie suggests, taking a broader regional approach to the entire economy of migrant labor helps us better understand the range of opportunities available to African men and women.¹⁹ Will we be able to similarly weave these stories across our chronological thresholds—and to what effect? What might we learn from a history of masculinity among mobile workers across different professions (porterage, hunting, forging, guiding, laboring for wages, collecting scientific specimens, soldiering, and so forth) and over centuries or even millennia—from the precolonial through the colonial periods? If work and mobility were long-standing pathways to success for men in eastern and central Africa, for example, what impact would such a story have on the argument that the colonial economy opened opportunities for young men, opportunities with which they rapidly “earned an age,” as Ocobock suggests, thereby challenging their elders and upending the customary foundations of male elders’ authority? Such an approach might teach us about the durable strategies through which youth had long fashioned opportunities and managed the risks of working in dramatically changing economic circumstances, strategies they may

have learned, in part, from their elders. As we will see, the mobile work cultures of one kind of labor influenced and shaped other contemporaneous and subsequent cultures of labor. A *longue durée* approach to the social infrastructures of mobility and work foregrounds the contingencies of continuity and the ways in which dynamic, vernacular intellectual and cultural histories of masculinity, mobility, and work built on what was known as much as they took advantage of what was new, opening opportunities for some and severely constraining the aspirations of others.

Scholarship on earlier periods has much to offer the contributors to this volume and others interested in labor history in modern Africa. Although the relationship between mobility and work can be harder to discern, certain forms of labor offer a useful window into the histories of social ties supporting mobile work in deeper pasts. The long history of spirit mediums in the Great Lakes region illuminates one such form of labor. Spirits in the Great Lakes region were initially territorial spirits, connected to particular places and engaged through mediums and attendants. But supplicants and mediums uprooted their spirits from the landscape during a major shift in settlement and subsistence, perhaps as early as the late first millennium. The transition from rooted territorial spirits and attendants to mobile spirits and itinerant mediums was vital for the successful settlement of good banana lands. The mobility of spirit mediums remained integral to many political innovations along the coast of Lake Victoria into the twentieth century.²⁰

Metallurgy—both smelting and smithing—are another form of work that has been fruitfully studied through the lens of mobility and social networks. Archaeologists and anthropologists have produced numerous studies about the role of seclusion and secrecy in smelting at sites removed from the bush. Mobility here was limited to the travel required for the collection of the raw materials of the smelt and the shorter trip to a secluded smelting location, which, in local cosmologies, was thought to protect the work from the interference of jealous neighbors, witches, and malevolent spirits, even if smelter's efforts were still subject to the comportment of their wives. Travel to the worksite—its secrecy and seclusion—was a form of mobility that was understood to be vital to the success of the smelt. Interestingly, in most areas of central, eastern and southern Africa, the mobility associated with the task was grafted onto the technical process several centuries after communities first learned to smelt.²¹ In other words, the association of mobility and social seclusion with the work of smelting constitutes an historical problem that can be dated and studied.²² That association was central to the reconfiguration of networks of labor and training in nineteenth century west central Africa.²³ Such ties may teach

us about “new” technologies, mobilities, and their social infrastructures in twentieth century Africa, such as the forms of metallurgy and car repair undertaken by young men—*fundi*—in East Africa’s *gereji*.²⁴

The myriad forms of hunting undertaken by (mostly) men in Africa over the last several millennia offer a third point of intersection between practices and ideas developed in deeper pasts but implicated in the strivings of Africans living in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Communities in south central Africa, for example, used a series of new, gendered technologies and social ties to idealize hunting as a unique form of mobile labor, which, not unlike the forms of migrant labor studied by Ocobock, Dougnon, and Schenck, endowed its successful practitioners with the high status of demonstrated maturity. These ideas have been long-standing, to be sure, for we see evidence of their legacy up to the present day, but they are not primordial: they were invented in the last centuries of the first millennium.²⁵ The cultures of hunting developed in south central Africa shaped in critical ways the adoption of European technologies, the creation of expert scientific knowledge, and the development of environmental conservation and management practices throughout the twentieth century.²⁶ As we will see below, ideas about hunting and raiding were also implicated in the reconceptualization of gendered work and labor in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in southern Africa.

We have seen that scholars studying forms of mobile labor practiced in more recent centuries, from rural youths moving to the city in search of work, to porters carving out new caravan trails and hunters trafficking in illegal bush products, have demonstrated the vital role of these mobile forms of labor in the construction of new ideals of masculinity and maturity, often in ways that were deeply dependent on robust social infrastructures. But the work of historians, archaeologists, and anthropologists suggested as early as the 1990s that developments in *cosmological infrastructure* were central to the changing relationship between mobility, work, and belonging. Although some of the connections between mobile labor, its social infrastructure, and its cosmological underpinnings have been taken up by scholars of modern Africa—and usually by scholars of African ritual life and practice—such concerns remain rare in the historiography of African labor.²⁷ What can transformations—or continuities—in the ideologies used to interpret the social meaning of (gendered) traveling work teach us about, for example, the invention of particular cultures of work at sites of migrant labor, such as mines, or inter-generational contests between fathers and sons over the relative age and responsibilities of unmarried migrant laborers? How, in other words, do the histories of work-on-the-move and movement to workspaces articulate with much older vernacular

intellectual histories, of how the world worked and how one worked in the world?

Compulsion and Coercion

Historians studying forms of work and livelihood before the early modern period have much to learn from our colleagues working in more recent periods, where compulsion and coercion have long had a prominent place in research on work and mobility. The history of slavery dominates scholarship at the nexus of violence, mobility, and labor before (and into) the twentieth century. We have direct evidence for the role of compulsion in, for example, the militarization of the kingdoms of the Great Lakes region.²⁸ We also assume coercion was part of technologies like gold mining in Zambia.²⁹ But, in general, we know very little about the histories of violence, coercion, and control over others' bodies, labor, produce, and movements before the early modern period.

Violence and coercion are particularly difficult histories to access in early periods, particularly for acephalous societies. In part, this is a problem of sources. We rarely excavate direct (skeletal) evidence for violence. Linguistic evidence is a very democratic kind of historical source, but that makes it difficult to disaggregate communities sharing a language into the kinds of contesting social groups of interest to historians. As words are invented or change meanings, we can sometimes discern contest in the reasons why such meanings change (imagine a word for "famine" deriving from a root with an older meaning of "bad governance"). But, like archaeologists, historians working with linguistic data rarely see direct evidence for conflict within social groups sharing languages (speech communities) unless they focus specifically on the lexicon of violence, coercion, and compulsion. Few have done so.³⁰

In the absence of a rich archive shedding light on violence and coercion, many scholars working on the early histories of eastern, central, and southern Africa have used more recent, better documented pasts (often those documented in ethnographic record of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) to make educated guesses about what kinds of conflict might have been relevant in earlier societies. These imagined relations of potential contest, perhaps between juniors and elders or lineage heads and ambitious, charismatic Big Men assume that more recent concerns existed in similar forms in the deep past. Such guesses are necessarily anachronistic, but they insert a kind of timelessness and universality that is far more palatable to social historians: that gender, caste/class, age, and so forth are universal pivots available for alliances and contestations. This raises an

important consideration for historians of all periods: as we hunt for histories of violence, do we seek contests and actions that meet our definition of coercion or that of the community we study?³¹ Should we assume that power over others is a culturally specific ambition or a universal human truth?³²

Reconstructing the cultures of violence and power for early periods is difficult. We seek to narrate history as a story with ever more nuanced understandings of how legitimate social, political, and economic action and speech are defined and controlled and to what ends. Following Keese's approach in this volume, attention to the particular cultural and historical meanings of violence and practices of power will give us much greater purchase on the coercive histories of labor in the deep past and the role of mobility in such histories.³³ But concepts like compulsion or coercion may have very little explanatory value in the most common social context of the early African past: small-scale acephalous societies.

For the historian reconstructing the topography of power, authority, and compulsion within both centralized and decentralized societies in periods before (and, perhaps, during) the early modern period, the level of detail available in labor histories of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries offers a feast of ideas worth chewing over. Social pressure is one such idea. Mudeka brings into our sights the challenge of family pressure. Women and their families in colonial east central Africa renegotiated customary forms of authority as some family members created new kinds of ties that were forged through the state and through companionate marriages, ties that were increasingly stressed by the demands of migrant labor. How, her article inspires us to ask, did changing marriage practices articulate with those forms of mobility implicated in the pursuit of social and material wealth in earlier periods?³⁴ Dougnon, Ocobock, and Schenck remind us of the challenges of peer pressure and the striving for recognition not only by the generations above, but among one's own cohort, among the opposite sex, and among those below. We might, for example, imagine the role of peer pressure and ridicule in the power dynamics across and, especially, within the boundaries of language groups spoken by early African communities, including those of egalitarian societies.³⁵

Martino brings to light the power dynamics involved in a form of trickery that depended on knowledge of labor demands and practices elsewhere (across a colonial border, in this case), control over the means of transportation, and a knack acquired through studied practice to affect a nonchalant offer of assistance to a peer. Tricksters, deceit, and trustworthiness are common themes in early modern slave narratives, especially around the moment of "capture", but these themes may well deserve some

consideration in earlier periods as well. As Martino and Hart remind us, street-smarts on the frontiers of distinct social and political worlds were needed by those on the move through such areas for work, both legitimate and not, in the case of the smuggling facilitated by Operation Keep Right. As Martino demonstrates, such geographical knowledge—the street-smarts of a borderlands—was a powerful tool for enterprising individuals of the frontier, who made a go of it by manipulating the trust and goodwill of those on the go. Early ethnographies stressed the importance of clan ties in securing safe passage; historians of early Africa have adopted this logic, but have done little to differentiate and historicize the threats to and cultures of journeying in different times and places.³⁶

The models we invoke in thinking about the politics of early African societies often stress followers' ability to "vote with their feet" and the role of aspiring leaders to challenge established leaders by rallying a following and moving away.³⁷ Keese's study of flight from labor demands in the French Congo demonstrates how inconvenient demands for labor (or tribute) from competing or over-arching authorities may well have inspired local level leaders to organize and manage the flight of their followers. His contribution raises the question of the middling layers of authority in earlier pasts—local notables, neighborhood elders, wealthy lineage heads—who may similarly have been involved in facilitating or even rallying followers to vote with their feet and, as Keese reminds us, to return. Hernandez inspires us to ask whether authorities even cared to know who was on the move for work, when such knowledge undermined official narratives of dependency and was divorced from the flow of material benefits accruing from migrant laborers' work (in the form of taxes, in this case).

Giftng, flight, peer and family pressures, ridicule, and the uneven distribution of knowledge of one place in the strategies of the inhabitants of another place—all of which were differentiated by gender, age, location, class, caste, and skill—offer ways into a politics of work and mobility in deeper pasts, including the ability to compel or inspire others to move and labor. Even as these topics, strategies, and themes offer alternative lenses through which to understand the power dynamics in early histories of labor and mobility, they also bring to the fore the significance of knowledge and conceptualizations of worldliness in experiences of work and movement.

Knowledge and Worldliness

Specialists are particularly well-represented in histories of work and mobility before the twentieth century, when the social, economic, and cosmological contexts in which skilled practitioners worked were institutionalized

through guilds, professional associations, and clans.³⁸ In contrast, the history of work and mobility in the twentieth century is—by the numbers, at least—largely a story of unskilled labor, or labor that colonial governments and employers deemed to be “unskilled.” There are many exceptions, such as those women who honed their homemaking businesses in the informal economy of colonial Nairobi or participated in illegal beer-brewing.³⁹ And, of course, long-standing European ideas about how culture and ethnicity worked ensured that some kinds of skill and some cultures of work were understood by Europeans to be features of particular ethnic groups.⁴⁰ If differing cultures of work and mobility were brought together through expanding consumer economies, colonial tax policies, and labor and vagrancy laws, what might durable African practices and ideals of work and mobility offer scholars of labor and movement in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries?

I would like to propose two final avenues of potential connection and perhaps even collaboration across the chronological thresholds of our shared labor histories. The first point involves the site of the body as a remarkably durable context for our common goal of understanding histories of work and mobility. The material worlds of labor shifted over time; products, technologies, tools, and the bodily movements that made them productive all had the potential to change quite dramatically. Yet, even as our concerns with the recent histories of commodities, of colonialism, and of control over the mobility and productive efforts of workers highlight the rapid changes of the nineteenth through the twenty-first centuries, we ought to ask, as Hernandez does, how workers themselves conceptualized what they were doing and what was changing.

Men and women who endured the often violent and even terrifying demands of expanding consumer economies, colonial tax policies, and labor and vagrancy laws often made sense of these changes through a language that focused on commensurability and sought to describe changes by emphasizing durability and likeness. For example, Hernandez points out that in southern Mozambique, the local word *chibalo*, a term for an injustice, random abuse, or suffering was applied to forced labor. To learn more from this semantic innovation, we should ask what earlier forms of unjust suffering named by *chibalo* looked like. What durable ideas and experiences were in play when forced labor was named *chibalo*? Did earlier forms of abuse similarly arise from the coercive demands of rulers?

Drawing on the methods of conceptual history and historical linguistics, Axel Fleisch reconstructs how understandings of the concepts of “work” and “labor” changed among different communities speaking Nguni languages from the tenth to the twentieth century. He traces how these

concepts changed in unique ways among societies participating in different iterations of the shift from subsistence economies to migrant labor regimes. Contrary to studies highlighting the importation of European ideals of work or even the binary of new European and persistent vernacular understandings, Fleisch tracks the prolonged process by which new ideas about work were adopted and older ideas adjusted in surprising ways. For example, speakers of IsiNdebele adopted the new verb for work, *ukuberega*, from Afrikaans, but applied it to older forms of gendered work like agriculture, animal husbandry, and craftsmanship that had been spoken of in earlier periods with the indigenous verb *ukusebenza*. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, speakers began using the long-standing Nguni verb *ukusebenza* to refer to modern forms of migrant and wage labor (alongside other words, including *ukuphangela*).⁴¹ IsiXhosa speakers adopted the same new Afrikaans word, *ukuberega*, and conserved the same older Nguni words, *ukusebenza*, a kind of work in which a task is carried out and usually undertaken for oneself, and *ukuphangela*, a kind of work that is completed in order to fulfill a responsibility toward shared needs. In this case, however, isiXhosa speakers adapted to new labor regimes their older, durable gendered distinction between, on the one hand, *ukusebenza*, the kind of work that was a chore or function and, on the other hand, *ukuphangela*, an episodic kind of gendered work that was an act or action that could (and should) be completed, such as raiding and hunting. As Anne Mager demonstrates, the first term took on connotations of professionalism, repetition, training, and self-improvement connected to European colonial and missionary understandings of the pacing and goals of labor. The second was also applied to new regimes of work associated with the European economy, but used to talk about the efforts of Xhosa men who left to work in the colony and returned to distribute wages for the well-being of the household.⁴² As this work suggests, the conceptual history approach foregrounds the resilience of some Nguni understandings of the ties between social and economic life in spite of great changes in regimes of labor.

Similarly, Ruund speakers living in the old Lunda heartland named with a widespread, preexisting root meaning “to cultivate, to farm” both general concepts like “work, job, task” and also salaried wage labor.⁴³ Fleisch’s and Mager’s studies of Nguni concepts inspire us to question which changes were masked and claims foreclosed through this act of naming, especially if women had once been at the center of the agricultural workforce but were largely excluded from formal wage labor. What was commensurate between cultivating fields and salaried wage labor? Their value in paying tax? Their contribution to the costs of social reproduction at the household level? We might also wonder to what degree Lunda men and women participating

in rapidly changing regimes of work understood themselves to be acquiring new knowledge and practicing new skills in the physical experience of work. We can push these questions further by taking into consideration other domains in which durability resides: the body and the material world. Were older words used in new contexts because the bodily experience of the work was commensurate? Did kinaesthetic memory transfer skillsets across domains of work in ways that made them feel quite familiar? Was cutting out a new field like carving out a railway line, or hoeing a field like road repair? Such kinaesthetic parallels certainly mattered during major shifts in regimes of labor and mobility in earlier central African pasts.⁴⁴ Indeed, we might ask whether greater precision in the historical geographies of skill and specialized work in earlier periods might contextualize off-handed comments attributing “nimble-fingers” to particular groups, perhaps revealing something more than the racism or ethno-typing of European observers.⁴⁵

As these examples show, durable understandings of work often lie in the actual experience of work but also in what comes before or after: how one accesses the opportunity to undertake a new enterprise, what one does with the fruits of one’s labor, or how one *feels* about any of these efforts. This last point takes us into the affective domain, the final avenue of research into *longue durée* histories of work and mobility, which concerns the durability of the relationship between knowledge and affective life that we might gloss as “cosmopolitanism” or “worldliness.” We have already considered as social infrastructure the networks of friends, family, and lovers in histories of work and mobility in Africa. Many of the contributions to this volume also insist on the significance of knowledge of elsewhere—a kind of worldliness—facilitated by patterns of mobility connected to new labor regimes or, in the case of Hart, new technologies of mobility. Sometimes the significance is applied to quite instrumental uses. For example, Hart’s story reminds us that knowledge of driving cultures beyond Ghana’s borders was valuable to drivers in during Operation Keep Right; also at stake, some believed, was the international reputation of the state and its new government, which wanted to be known in the world as a measure of its legitimacy. In the stories told by Dougnon, Martino, Mudeka, Ocobock, and Schenck, knowledge of places elsewhere carry much more personal affective and sensory valences to which we ought to be more attentive.⁴⁶

Rather than universalize the link between mobility and affectations of worldliness, we can treat as historically contingent the social and cultural meanings of opportunities to travel, of new forms of work, and of the material “proof” of travel, knowledge, and social ties embodied in rare objects. We know well that expensive material affects like *shukas* were limited to

particular segments of society and that cash economies and wage labor changed access to such goods across Africa. Similarly, we have learned of the importance in earlier decades of new clothes and bodily regimes to ideas about selfhood. The changes wrought by clothes and soaps are still recalled in recent years with rich sensory detail: the squeaking shoes and billowing silk shirts described by old men remembering for Ocobock their experience of mobility and work in colonial Kenya; the shiny, good-smelling Ghana boys who Dougnon explains were sniffed out before they even reached their home villages. What might we gain by thinking about these new habits of dress and hygiene as iterations of older, durable strategies of self-realization through travel and the accumulation of knowledge and objects?

We may well ask what a deeper understanding of culturally and historically contingent affectations of worldliness in earlier pasts would contribute to our understanding of the relationship between migrant labor, work-on-the-move, and cosmopolitanism so clear to us in the cultures of nineteenth caravan porters, the conflicts between fathers and their sons over the appropriate work of young men in Kenya in the early twentieth century, and the notoriety and *savoir faire* of *touts* purporting to assist the travels of free men and women in colonial Nigeria in order to ensnare them in labor contracts in Spanish Fernando Pó. What kinds of people could live in ways we might describe as “worldly” or “cosmopolitan” in the early African past? Between the mid-eighth and mid-thirteenth centuries, central Africans speaking languages of the Botatwe branch of Bantu invented words to talk about famous technicians; these word’s derivations demonstrate how new mobilities and technological expertise allowed such figures to “live” at geographical and temporal scales unavailable to other community members. Word histories also allow us to trace out technicians’ networks because technical vocabulary for spearcraft and metallurgy was often borrowed between ancient proto-languages. Famous, talented spear-men and smelter-smiths participated in indirect, down-the-line trade and long-distance expert networks even without traveling the entirety of the network themselves.⁴⁷ If work, knowledge, and mobility were implicated in the creation of a new politics of reputation and fame in south central Africa one thousand years ago, can we historicize such durable but still contingent links between worldliness, work, and mobility over longer periods and in other regions of Africa? The historical geographies of “worldliness” and the historical geographies of labor and mobility were distinct but, nevertheless, related.

There is something of a continental bias in histories of cosmopolitanism in the early modern period onward. Transformative travel and exchange

in these histories most often span distances between continents, rather than distances within them. Histories of work and mobility that have been framed as imperial, global, and modern have a homogenizing effect on other, durable ideas about the experience, value, and meaning of connectivity within the distances and diversities internal to the continent and crafted before and alongside interactions with foreigners to the continent. What, exactly, was recognized as new beyond the objects and locations (the content) marking affectations of worldliness in the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries? Perhaps it has always been as hard to make distance as it was to cross it. Where was “far away” located according to societies living in earlier periods? What was its geography and how were its borders policed and transgressed? Was there a point (whether a geographical location, a manner of speaking, a way of dressing, or a method of accessing the spirit world) beyond which anything or any person was foreign or otherworldly and, therefore, potent with power? Can we recover enough of this cultural geography in early periods to write histories of worldliness, of knowledge of what lay beyond that point? As an historian of earlier pasts, I’m worried when scholars of more recent pasts do not tie their arguments about novel opportunities to craft forms of modern, cosmopolitan living rooted in access to new places, objects, knowledge and work in the early modern and modern periods to older local and regional intellectual projects that also marked the political value of worldliness, of monitoring how people, objects, and ideas were thought to change (or not!) as they crossed the boundaries between the “right here” and the “elsewhere.”

A Concluding Observation on Work, Mobility, and Endeavor

So far, I have taken as a given the idea that people in deeper pasts worked. And, to be sure, they did. But the labor histories we know from modern African history stand in stark contrast to how we imagine individuals to have worked in earlier periods. When we think about work in medieval and early African societies, we usually think about the many strategies of livelihood and subsistence. Histories of Africa’s deeper pasts are populated by farmers, herders, fishers, and hunters. Sometimes we also meet salt-makers, smiths, traders, bellows-workers, spirit mediums, and others who are often cast in the role of “specialists.” Sometimes subsistence strategies like hunting or fishing became a specialization when new surplus-generating subsistence technologies, such as bananas or cereal agriculture, were adopted.⁴⁸ If not the work of specialists, we might also conceptualize labors

like hunting, fishing, smelting, and potting to be supplemental, even seasonal efforts undertaken alongside the main activities of the subsistence economy.⁴⁹ All of these members of the community—whether specialists or those workers who formed the backbone of the subsistence economy—were concerned, we imagine, with the goal of ensuring prosperity or ameliorating precarity. The commodification of people and their labor from the early modern period onward seems to stand in stark contrast to the subsistence economy of earlier histories. To be sure, capitalist economies placed work that had been central to livelihoods in earlier subsistence economies into categories like informal labor, domestic labor, and vernacular forms of work. In fact, these two conceptualizations of how people worked actually have far more in common. Both of these perspectives share an underlying concern with identifying or even idealizing a single, a main, a central source of livelihood.⁵⁰

It is here that I think Africa has much to contribute to global histories of labor. This way of thinking about work as a singular enterprise is particular to European intellectual history and has its strongest roots in the theories of political economy generated during the Enlightenment. Stadial schemes and conjectural histories needed to define individuals, societies, and economies by singular forms of labor, marginalizing all other endeavors as informal, domestic, or supplementary, in order to identify where societies stood on the track of progress or, by the nineteenth century, in social evolutionary schema. These were strategies of identity politics as much as they were theories of political economy. The entangled histories of mobility (or, rather, rootedness through property holding) and of work in Europe are at the center of this set of ideals.

We have seen that many Africans took up and combined with their own categories some aspects of European ways of thinking about work and identity. But other ideas persisted, sometimes with little change. I will close with a plea for historians of work and mobility in Africa's many pasts to broaden our study of labor to better encompass all the endeavors that individuals and communities undertook as they imagined the value of doing and of moving. Enlightenment thinkers defined their ideals of work and labor in part by denigrating as mere hobbies, tinkering, specializations, unemployment, superstitions, temporary gigs, seasonal labors, and even entertainment a very wide range of human endeavor. The communities we study did not necessarily follow the divides of work and leisure or generalists and specialists any more than they distinguished material life from the influence of spirits. We need not reproduce that center and periphery in our histories. If we bring into the light those endeavors that have stood in

the nimbus of “proper” forms of “work,” what new intellectual, material, political, economic, and social histories might we illuminate about the experiences of living and striving across the thresholds of Africa’s history?

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Notes

1. My thanks to guest editor Zachary Kagan Guthrie and to Paul Ocozbek for this challenging assignment and the thoughtful feedback throughout the process of crafting the short essay. I also learned from the patient readers of the Africa Seminar at Johns Hopkins in December 2015 and the reviewers of this journal.

2. Of course, this periodization glosses over the long history of trade connections in the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean worlds. For this history as resistance to the narrative of the fifteenth century rise in European sea voyages and trade see Janet Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250–1350* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

3. Keese compares his story to that of Jean-François Bayart, “Hégémonie et Coercition e Afrique Subsaharienne: La ‘Politique de la Chicotte,’” *Politique Africaine* 111 (2008): 123–52. Consider also similar arguments in Nicolas Argenti, *Intestines of the State: Youth, Violence, and Belated Histories in the Cameroon Grassfields* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

4. Steven Feierman, “Colonizers, Scholars, and the Creation of Invisible Histories,” in *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*, eds. Victoria Bonnell and Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 182–216; Richard Reid, “Past and Presentism: The ‘Precolonial’ and the Foreshortening of African History,” *Journal of African History* 52, 2 (2011): 135–155; David Schoenbrun, “Conjuring the Modern in Africa: Durability and Rupture in Histories of Public Healing between the Great Lakes of East Africa,” *American Historical Review* 111, 5 (2006): 1403–39; Thomas Spear, “Neo-traditionalism and the Limits of Invention in British Colonial Africa,” *Journal of African History* 44, 1 (2003): 3–27.

5. Reid, “Past and Presentism.”

6. For a few recent examples, see: Bruce Hall, *A History of Race in Muslim West Africa, 1600–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Holly Hanson, *Landed Obligation: The Practice of Power in Buganda* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003); David Gordon, *Invisible Agents: Spirits in a Central African History* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012); Paul Landau, *Popular Politics in the History of South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Myles Osborne, *Ethnicity and Empire in Kenya: Loyalty and Martial Race among the Kamba, c. 1800 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Jan Shetler, *Imagining Serengeti: A*

History of Landscape Memory in Tanzania from Earliest Time to the Present (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007); Rhiannon Stephens, *A History of African Motherhood: The Case of Uganda, 700–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Rudolph Ware, *The Walking Qur'an: Islamic Education, Embodied Knowledge, and History in West Africa* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014). These recent titles build, of course, on earlier efforts, some of which are cited in other notes in this essay.

7. Richard Reid, *Warfare in African History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

8. Joost Fontein, *Remaking Mutirikwi: Landscape, Water, and Belonging in Southern Zimbabwe* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: James Currey, 2015).

9. Consider contributions to Axel Fleisch and Rhiannon Stephens, eds., *Doing Conceptual History in Africa* (New York: Berghahn, 2016).

10. On durable concepts, see Schoenbrun, “Conjuring the Modern”; Rhiannon Stephens, “‘Wealth’, ‘Poverty’ and the Question of Conceptual History in Oral Contexts: Uganda from c. 1000 CE,” in *Doing Conceptual History in Africa*, eds. Axel Fleisch and Rhiannon Stephens (New York: Berghahn, 2016), 21–48. On durable materialities, see Fontein, *Remaking Mutirikwi*. For a combination of the two, see Kathryn de Luna, “Marksmen and the Bush: the Affective Micro-Politics of Landscape, Sex, and Technology in Precolonial South Central Africa,” *Kronos: Southern African Histories* 41 (2015): 21–44.

11. From this large literature, these two classics energized scholarship around such questions: Arjun Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Timothy Burke, *Life-buoy Men, Lux Women: Commodification, Consumption, and Cleanliness in Modern Zimbabwe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996).

12. Islamic law certainly helped to regulate slavery and the domestic labor of concubines within Africa and also shaped the external slave trade. Within a vast literature, consider an example detailing the relationship between Islam and the External Slave Trade (Lovejoy) and an example detailing the relationship between Islam and slavery within the continent (Nast): Paul Lovejoy, “Islam, Slavery, and Political Transformation in West Africa: Constraints on the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade,” *Outre-Mers* 89, 336 (2002): 247–282; Heidi Nast, “Islam, Gender, and Slavery in West Africa circa 1500: A Spatial Archaeology of the Kano Palace, Northern Nigeria,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 86, 1 (1996): 44–77.

13. Allen Isaacman and Barbara Isaacman, *Slavery and Beyond: The Making of Men and Chikunda Ethnic Identities in the Unstable World of South-Central Africa, 1750–1920* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2004); S. Marks, *Large Mammals and a Brave People: Subsistence Hunters in Zambia* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976); Clapperton Mavhunga, *Transient Workspaces: Technologies of Everyday Innovation in Zimbabwe* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2014), 28–70; Stephen Rockel, *Carriers of Culture: Labor on the Road in Nineteenth-Century East Africa* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2006); E. Steinhart, “Elephant Hunting in 19th-Century Kenya: Kamba Society and Ecology in Transformation,” *International Journal of African*

Historical Studies 33, 2 (2000): 335–349; Achim von Oppen, *Terms of Trade, Terms of Trust: The History and Contexts of Pre-colonial Market Production around the Upper Zambezi and Kasai* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 1994). See also Ghislaine Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails: Islamic Law, Trade Networks, and Cross-Cultural Exchange in Nineteenth-Century Western Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). For an example of the coproduction of gender, women's work, and mobility across five centuries, see Heidi Nast, *Concubines and Power: Five Hundred Years in a Northern Nigerian Palace* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

14. For Europeans relying on the same social networks of support in central Africa, see Johannes Fabian, *Out of Our Minds: Reason and Madness in the Exploration of Central Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

15. Notable exceptions include regions linked to trans-Saharan and Indian Ocean trade networks as well as intra-continental mobility within and across the West African Sahel or along the river networks of the Inner Congo Basin. Two classic historical monographs for internal trade networks (connected to external networks) include George E. Brooks, *Landlords and Strangers: Ecology, Society, and Trade in Western Africa, 1000–1630* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993); Robert Harms, *River of Wealth, River of Sorrow: The Central Zaire Basin in the Era of the Slave and Ivory Trade, 1500–1891* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

16. Consider the data archaeologists are building up for the late first millennium trade routes linking Tsodilo to the middle Zambezi, pans, and coast: James Denbow, Carla Klehm, and Laure Dussubieux, "The Glass Beads of Kaitshaa and Early Indian Ocean Trade into the Far Interior of Southern Africa," *Antiquity* 89 (2015): 361–77; Edwin Wilmsen, David Killick, Dana Drake Rosenstein, Pheny Thebe and James Denbow, "The Social Geography of Pottery in Botswana as Reconstructed by Optical Petrography," *Journal of African Archaeology* 7 (2009): 3–39; Marilee Wood, Laure Dussubieux, and Peter Robertshaw, "The Glass of Chibuené, Mozambique: New Insights into Early Indian Ocean Trade," *South African Archaeological Bulletin* 67, 195 (2012): 59–74.

17. Colleen Kriger, *Pride of Men: Iron Working in 19th Century West Central Africa* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1999). See also contributions to the special issue of the journal *History in Africa* (2015) on "Archives and Material Culture," which features a sub-section on material culture in precolonial Africa.

18. In addition to the many descriptions of friendship, cohort, and professional colleagues in the contributions to this volume and citations in notes above, consider the stories of migrant labor, cohort, friendship and business enterprises in James Pritchett, *Friends for Life, Friends for Death: Cohorts and Consciousness among the Lunda-Ndembu* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007). Scholars of early African history have similarly emphasized the significance of friendship, particularly its instrumental value in cattle loaning and moving house: de Luna, "Affect and Society in Precolonial Africa," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 46, 1 (2013): 123–50; David Schoenbrun, *A Green Place, a Good Place: Agrarian Change, Gender, and Social Identity in the Great Lakes Region to the 15th Century* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1998), 145; Jan Vansina, *How Societies are Born:*

Governance in West Central Africa before 1600 (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004), 127–8, 159, 219–224.

19. Zachary Kagan Guthrie, “Labor, Mobility and Coercion in Central Mozambique, 1942–1961” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2014).

20. In the chronological order of the stories described: Schoenbrun, *A Green Place, A Good Place*; Neil Kodesh, *Beyond the Royal Gaze: Clanship and Public Healing in Buganda* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2010).

21. Eugenia Herbert, *Iron, Gender, and Power: Rituals of Transformation in African Societies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); Peter Schmidt, *Iron Technology in East Africa: Symbolism, Science, and Archaeology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).

22. For one history of the changing ideologies underpinning technologies of the bush, see de Luna, “Marksmen and the Bush.”

23. Colleen Kriger, *Pride of Men: Ironworking in 19th Century West Central Africa* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1999).

24. Joshua Grace, “Modernization *Bubu*: Cars, Roads, and the Politics of Development in Tanzania, 1870s–1980s” (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 2013).

25. Kathryn de Luna, *Collecting Food, Cultivating People: Subsistence and Society in Central Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

26. Nancy Jacobs, *Birders of Africa: History of a Network* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), esp. 58–61, 161–2; Clapperton Mavhunga, *Transient Workspaces: Technologies of Everyday Innovation in Zimbabwe* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014). On mobility, status, and maturity, see also E. Steinhart, “Hunters, Poachers, and Gamekeepers: Towards a Social History of Hunting in Colonial Kenya,” *Journal of African History* 30, 2 (1989): 247–264; E. Steinhart, *Black Poachers, White Hunters: A Social History of Hunting in Colonial Kenya* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006).

27. Consider, for example, parts of Peter Geschiere, *Witchcraft, Intimacy, and Trust* (Chicago: University Press of Chicago, 2013) and later chapters in Jean Allman and John Parker, *Tongnaab: The History of a West African God* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), both of which bring labor history, including migrant labor, into their analysis of dynamic African ritual life and practice.

28. Holly Hanson, *Landed Obligation: The Practice of Power in Buganda* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2003); Kodesh, *Beyond the Royal Gaze*; Richard Reid, *Political Power in Pre-Colonial Buganda: Economy, Society, and Warfare in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002); Richard Reid, *War in Pre-Colonial Eastern Africa: The Patterns and Meaning of State-Level Conflict in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: BIEA, 2007); Jan Vansina, *Antecedents to Modern Rwanda* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004).

29. Innocent Pikirayi, *The Zimbabwe Culture: Origins and Decline of Southern Zambezi States* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira, 2001). Similarly, consider arguments about massive earthworks and building in the precolonial period, such as canal building in the Luba heartland described in Thomas Q. Reefe, *Rainbow and the Kings: A History of the Luba Empire to 1891* (Berkeley: University of California

Press, 1981). But, contrast this to arguments about the distribution of power and the construction of the major wall surrounding Jenné Jené (although heterarchy need not preclude coercion or violence): Roderick McIntosh, *Ancient Middle Niger: Urbanism and the Self-Organizing Landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

30. See vocabulary on slavery, violence, and fear in David L. Schoenbrun, “Violence, Marginality, Scorn and Honour: Language Evidence of Slavery to the Eighteenth Century,” in *Slavery in the Great Lakes Region of East Africa*, eds. Herni Médard and Shane Doyle (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007), 38–75. See also the vocabulary on war in Jan Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990).

31. Neil Whitehead, ed., *Violence* (Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research Press, 2004).

32. Consider the story of the shift from hierarchical to heterarchical political organization in medieval western Burkina Faso, dubbed an “egalitarian revolution” by archaeologist Stephen Dueppen. This transition might as easily suggest that ambition is not universal as it proves that such quests for power could be successfully undone. Stephen A. Dueppen, *Egalitarian Revolution in the Savanna: The Origins of a West African Political System* (Sheffield and Bristol: Equinox, 2012).

33. See also Argenti, *Intestines of the State*.

34. Stephens, *African Motherhood*.

35. Consider, for example, the role of ridicule in the relationship between Lozi elites, Tonga communities, and early explorers in the nineteenth century in south central Africa: JoAnn MacGregor, *Crossing the Zambezi: The Politics of Landscape on a Central African Frontier* (Woodbridge: James Currey, 2009).

36. In the region I know best, Elizabeth Colson’s longitudinal study has revealed a body of information about the role of mukowa clan ties among Tonga-speakers on the Batoka Plateau and in the Gwembe Valley. Compare: Elizabeth Colson, *Marriage and the Family among the Plateau Tonga of Northern Rhodesia* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1958); Elizabeth Colson, *Social Organization of the Gwembe Tonga* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1960); Elizabeth Colson, *The Plateau Tonga of Northern Rhodesia: Social and Religious Studies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1962).

37. Igor Kopytoff, *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

38. In addition to citations above referencing hunters and metallurgists, consider the rich scholarship on occupational caste in West Africa. For the early and medieval periods, compare: McIntosh, *Ancient Middle Niger*; Tal Tamari, “The Development of Caste Systems in West Africa,” *Journal of African History* 32, 2 (1991): 221–250. See also the classic study by Patrick McNaughton, *The Mande Blacksmiths: Knowledge, Power, and Art in West Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

39. Luise White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Justin Willis, *Potent Brews: A Social History of*

Alcohol in East Africa, 1850–1999 (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002), especially ch. 5–6, 10–11.

40. For a recent example, consider Myles Osbourne, *Ethnicity and Empire in Kenya: Loyalty and Martial Race among the Kamba, c. 1800 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

41. Axel Fleisch, “Conceptual Continuities: About ‘Work’ in Nguni,” in *Doing Conceptual History in Africa*, eds. Axel Fleisch and Rhiannon Stephens (New York: Berghahn, 2016), 49–72. Fleisch’s evidence complicates the argument put forward in J. L. Comaroff and J. Comaroff, “The Madman and the Migrant: Work and Labor in the Historical Consciousness of a South African People,” *American Ethnologist* 14, 2 (1987): 191–209. See also Anne Kelk Mager, “Tracking the Concept of ‘Work’ on the North-Eastern Cape Frontier, South Africa,” in *Doing Conceptual History in Africa*, eds. Axel Fleisch and Rhiannon Stephens (New York: Berghahn, 2016), 73–90.

42. Fleisch, “Conceptual Continuities,” 58–65; Mager, “Tracking the Concept of ‘Work’,” 76–7, 85.

43. Jay Nash, *Ruwund Vocabularies* (Champaign: Center for African Studies, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1991), 57, 60.

44. de Luna, “Marksmen and the Bush.”

45. Quote from Ocobock’s contribution to this volume; he is discussing the idea that Europeans found young men to have nimble fingers for particular forms of labor, not that particular “tribes” were known to be “nimble fingered.” See also Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling, and Skill* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

46. Similar arguments with reference to gender history are in Nancy Rose Hunt, “The Affective, the Intellectual, and Gender History,” *Journal of African History* 55, 3 (2014): 331–345.

47. Kathryn M. de Luna, *Collecting Food, Cultivating People: Subsistence and Society in Central Africa, 1000 BCE to 1700 CE* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

48. For example, Kairn Klieman, *The Pygmies Were Our Compass: Bantu and Batwa in the History of West-Central Africa* (Portsmouth: Heinenmann, 2003).

49. For example, Jan Vansina, “A Slow Revolution: Farming in Subequatorial Africa,” *Azania* 29/30 (1994/1995): 15–26. See also Amanda Logan and M. Dores Cruz, “Gendered Taskscapes: Food, Farming, and Craft Production in Banda, Ghana in the Eighteenth to Twenty-first Centuries,” *African Archaeological Review* 31, 2 (2014): 203–231.

50. de Luna, *Collecting Food*. See also Kathryn M. de Luna, “Conceptualizing Subsistence in Central Africa and the West over the Longue Durée,” in *The Diversity of Hunter-Gatherer Pasts*, eds. Bill Finlayson and Graeme Warren (Oxford: Oxbow Books, forthcoming).