

famous essay “Two Concepts of Liberty”, De Dijn does not address Quentin Skinner’s work on the neo-Roman concept of liberty, which he presented as a response to Berlin’s conception and which forms the basis of the republican theory of the influential contemporary political philosopher Philip Pettit. Skinner is thanked in the acknowledgements and his name appears twice in the book, but in neither case is any mention made of the neo-Roman theory of liberty and Pettit is not cited at all. This is surprising since, like Skinner, De Dijn argues that freedom/liberty in the ancient world probably emerged as an antonym for slavery and that this informed the ancient concept. Where Skinner has demonstrated this in relation to Roman law, De Dijn suggests that it was also true in Greek thought. The implications of this linking of Greek and Roman ideology is itself worthy of further investigation, not least since Eric Nelson’s account of the Greek origins of republican thought has taken a different route in placing less emphasis on liberty and more on equality.<sup>7</sup> I cannot be the only scholar working in this field who would have been interested to learn how De Dijn understands the connection between her account of freedom and the neo-Roman conception of liberty.

Despite the difficulties of providing depth and coverage there are undoubtedly advantages to adopting a *longue durée* approach. In the case of De Dijn’s book, there are certainly benefits to be gained from contrasting these two concepts of freedom, thinking about how they relate to each other, and tracing the centuries-long process by which we reached the situation in which we find ourselves today. In the end, I was convinced that this ambitious and exciting book succeeds in making the case for big intellectual history that De Dijn sets out in her introduction.

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General Labour History of Africa. Workers, Employers and Governments, 20th–21st Centuries. Ed. by Stefano Bellucci and Andreas Eckert. Boydell & Brewer, Woodbridge 2019. xx, 761 pp. Maps. £95.00. (Paper: £30.00.)

Although it may be in my self-interest to identify a modest revival in African labour history, this weighty volume is an unambiguous indication of such. Stefano Bellucci and Andreas Eckert have assembled an impressive collection of contributions on a wide array on topics in this collection, which is one of a number of books on labour supported by the ILO and published to tie in with its centenary in 2019. The book contains twenty-three chapters divided across six sections dealing with free and unfree labour, labour in key economic sectors, international dimensions and mobility, entrepreneurs and self-employment, and the trade unions and the state. These chapters cover the whole continent, gratifyingly eschewing the artificial divide between North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa.

A brisk introduction from the editors promises that the book is “a history of all working people” that will both bring labour back into Africanist history and imbue labour history

7. Eric Nelson, *The Greek Tradition in Republican Thought* (Cambridge, 2004).

with an Africanist perspective. They trace the historiography on labour from the requirements of colonial administration to the burgeoning literature in the 1970s on trade unions, strikes, and proletarianization. This was the heyday of African labour history, as is best perhaps illustrated by the remark of the late Bill Freund – a pre-eminent labour historian and contributor to this volume – in his 1984 survey essay that “No subject has in recent years so intruded into the scholarly literature on Africa as the African worker”.<sup>1</sup> Yet, this literature was centred on supposedly national working classes and predicated on a teleological assumption that labour would naturally develop along lines already established in Europe and North America.

The central ideas of the book emerge from the approach of global labour history, especially the necessity of broadening the focus of labour history beyond male industrial workers. As the editors and several contributors note, wage workers have only been a small minority of the workforce on the African continent and their numbers have shrunk not grown, as many scholars thought would happen. Key aspects of the experience of labour have been overlooked. Deborah Bryceson rightly stresses that “throughout African history, domestic labour time [...] had dwarfed any other labour time allocation” but this topic has received scant attention. In her superb chapter on mining, Carolyn Brown observes that miners “shaped the formation of African labour studies in the 1970s and 1980s” yet comparatively few people worked in the mines.

The result of this approach is a book attentive to the diverse forms that labour has taken. Central to this is the discussion on free and unfree labour, which Helena Pérez Niño argues convincingly in her contribution that there was no clear division between. Nor is unfree labour a phenomenon of the past and the era of the slave trade. Babacar Fall and Richard Roberts argue in their chapter on forced labour that free labour did not supersede or replace unfree labour and that unfree labour persists in different forms until the present.

The volume has a refreshing approach to labour history and includes contributions on topics that have not been regarded as “labour” (including chapter on illegal work by Laurent Fourchard or on professionals by Rory Pilosof). The staples of Africanist labour history are nevertheless covered well, including a chapter by Freund on trade unions and a chapter on the state and industrial relations by Akua Britwum and Leyla Dakhli. Attention is also paid to the other preoccupation of historians of working people: when they are not working or refusing to work, such as in Bellucci’s chapter on transport labour. Most chapters focus on the practices of work, rather than representations or ideology, though the latter are not entirely absent. A welcome contribution from Samuel Nyanchoga examines ideas of mutualism and the formation of cooperatives, which have been very much overlooked, and their relationship with new post-colonial states

The continental coverage is a real strength of this book as it encourages and enables the contributors to draw comparisons and contrasts beyond what is usually considered. Freund’s chapter on trade unions compares the role of migrant workers in establishing the trade union movement in Egypt with what happened in South Africa. Pérez Niño’s chapter on migration argues that almost all African societies experience the effects of labour migration and compares mining migration in Southern Africa with agricultural migration from the Sahel to the cocoa belt and migration from North Africa to Europe. Inevitably, the geographical coverage is uneven and some countries have little mention. Since much

1. Bill Freund, “Labour and Labour History in Africa: A Review of the Literature”, *African Studies Review*, 27:2 (1984), p. 1.

of my own work is about Zambia, perhaps I should not complain that almost every chapter has a reference to Zambia and its copper mines, but some may find this excessive.

Several chapters draw upon the author's geographical area of expertise rather than attempt a general survey, such as Sara Berry's chapter on entrepreneurs in Nigeria and Ghana. In some sense, this is appropriate as forms of labour differed greatly on different parts of the continent, though this adds to the uneven geographical coverage. Chapters that provide a more general survey often run into the problem identified by the editors: the narrow way labour history was previously conceived means there is a dearth of literature on many topics, so survey chapters based on secondary literature can only go some way to remedying this, as some authors reflect upon. Andreas Admasie notes in his wide-ranging chapter on sport, tourism, and entertainment – that covers all manner of things from the wages of griots in Niger to runners in East Africa – that he is constrained by the availability of secondary literature.

Although a work of Africanist scholarship, there are several themes and points of interest to a wider readership. Franco Barchiesi argues that informal work was not simply the failure of the formal sector to grow, as many scholars anticipated it would. African workers often engaged casual labour in preference to wage labour, and to resist incorporation into wage employment in workplaces that were sites of coercion. To what extent informal work reflected preferences by African workers to avoid wage labour, or trying to deal with a reality forced upon them is an interesting question. On a related point, Eckert points out that informal and precarious work, much discussed in relation to Europe and North America in recent years, is not a new development in capitalism and that African economies in the twentieth century can be seen as a model for global capitalism, where uncertainty and instability are the most common experiences of work.

In this sense, rather than being marginal, or confirming patterns already identified in other parts of the world, labour and labour relations in Africa are a harbinger of things to come. Predicting the future is a tricky business – and I could see a review article written in circa twenty years' time noting something like “historians in the 2020s adopted a reversed teleology and imagined Europe would conform to patterns already established in Africa” – but this seems to me a plausible line of enquiry for comparative history and Global Labour History.

There are pitfalls with this broader approach to labour history. African labour history previously had a clear focus and object of study, albeit one that did not reflect the reality of labour on the continent and was often plagued by teleological and Eurocentric assumptions and whose boundaries of study reflected the borders of recently established nation states.

What replaces this previous focus is less clear, at least to me. Fred Cooper observes that scholars have “flailed around” trying to find an alternative after the failure of proletarianization narrative, among them informal work and precarity. The more expansive definition of labour means the topic occasionally loses focus. Some chapters in the volume, while interesting and useful, are not self-evidently works of labour history. The chapter by Joël Glasman and Michelle Moyd on military labour, for instance, is largely about the role of African troops in colonial armies and the role of military in post-colonial politics, and less about the everyday work of soldiers and police. Yet, most of the time soldiers are not fighting and whether this history is a “labour history” is not clear.

A related issue are the categories of analysis adopted to examine wider forms of labour. Take the term “white collar”. Is this broadening the lens of what is considered an appropriate subject for labour history or is this an adoption of a North American category? Certainly, office workers have been overlooked in Africanist labour history, but is clerical and office

work in Africa analogous to North America or Europe? Are we talking about the same kind of work in different places?

What I felt was missing was a longer discussion or reflection about points of comparison or common themes emerging from the chapters. There are many fascinating points that emerge from the chapters that merit further consideration. Some of these are discussed in the concluding chapter by Cooper, where he argues that the study of worker agency should not be limited to collective action, but should include migration, education, or utilizing kinship ties. There is room for more reflections. The chapters are organized to cover different kinds of work and employment, but often people worked in many different kinds of jobs over one lifetime or even at the same time, as Dmitri van den Bersselaar discusses in relation to office workers in Cameroon taking on additional jobs during periods of economic decline as the value of their salaries dwindled.

It is inevitable that errors creep into a book whose scope is this wide. For instance, reference is made on p. 501 to a railway strike in South Africa in 1922/1923, when what really took place then was a strike and armed uprising by white miners known as the Rand Revolt. The chosen focus of some chapters arguably overlooks important issues. The chapter on the relationship between the ILO and Africa – examining the shift from the ILO virtually ignoring the continent to offering development and technical assistance – unfortunately entirely overlooks the role of the organization in the anti-apartheid movement. Newly independent African states successfully used the ILO as a forum to condemn and isolate South Africa internationally and in 1964 the ILO unanimously adopted a policy to work towards the elimination of apartheid.

There is a great deal to recommend in this volume for Africanists and labour historians alike and I expect that it will become the standard work of reference on the topic for years to come. Indeed, the book is appended what is termed a “select” bibliography but in fact runs to eighty pages and this is enormously helpful both for scholars and anyone approaching the topic for the first time.

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SOLIZ, CARMEN. *Fields of Revolution. Agrarian Reform and Rural State Formation in Bolivia, 1935–1964.* [Pitt Latin American Series.] University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh (PA) 2021. xiv, 266 pp. Ill. Maps. \$50.00.

Unless I am mistaken, the agrarian reform that followed the Bolivian National Revolution of 1952 has been ignored in Brazil both as a historical phenomenon and as a topic of political debate. This is probably not the case in other Latin American countries. However, there remains the impression that the place of agrarian reform in Bolivia has not yet been properly highlighted in relation to other similar experiences in Latin America. Although there are parallels with reforms carried out in Mexico, Guatemala, Peru, and Chile, *Fields of Revolution* demonstrates that the “Bolivia case” was unique. Nevertheless, Carmen Soliz’s main