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**Review of Money, D. (2021) White mineworkers on
Zambia's copperbelt, 1926-1974: in a class of their own**
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Money, Duncan: *White Mineworkers on Zambia's Copperbelt, 1926-1974. In a Class of Their Own*. Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers 2021. ISBN: 978-90-04-46733-0; 294 S.

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The importance of the copper mines for the development of the Zambian state cannot be underestimated. Much of Zambia's wealth is dependent on the Copperbelt, which is both the name of one of its provinces and a natural region that extends into the Democratic Republic of Congo. The first president of Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda, famously stated that Zambians were „born with a copper spoon in our mouths.“¹ The national football team of Zambia is aptly nicknamed *Chipolopolo*, or the Copper Bullets.² Copper is thus hard to ignore when writing Zambian history. Scholars have widely recognized the „industrial, economic and geopolitical significance“ of the Copperbelt at large³, and over the years it has become one of „the most closely studied regions on the African continent.“⁴ Nevertheless, Duncan Money succeeds in bringing a unique perspective to the fore in this book.

As the book title already reveals, his monograph is „the first to focus on the white mineworkers who monopolised skilled jobs on the mines ... and became one of the most affluent groups of workers on the planet“ (p. 1). This book is based on extensive research that the author conducted for his doctoral thesis at the University of Oxford. His subsequent postdoctoral fellowship at the International Studies Group of the University of the Free State, in South Africa, contributed to transforming his doctoral research project into the book that is available today with Brill. Primarily a work of history, the author highlights a group of mobile, international workers that saw itself as a racialized working class. The white mine workers arrived at the Copperbelt from all corners of the globe and they subsequently „played a crucial role in shaping social categories of race and class“ in Zambia (p. 1).

In our popular conceptions about the white societies that resided in Africa during the era of colonization, we tend to think of the colo-

nial officers that produced the state. Yet, the author points out that in Central Africa white mineworkers significantly outnumbered not only colonial officials, but also white missionaries and farmers. The author thus concludes that „the miners' lamp is perhaps more representative of whites in Central Africa than the pith helmet“ (p. 2). Within the mines on the Copperbelt, however, white people constituted a minority of the workforce. This book is therefore not only a labour history, but also a history about race. For the white workforce, „race was a central part“ of their experiences and identity (p. 13). The white workforce enjoyed relatively high wages and other benefits, which only became possible through frequent strike action. The workers came from many different places around the world and had divergent political opinions, but collective action to improve their working and living standards was nevertheless successful, and this was organized around race.

This study is primarily based on careful archival research. The author makes extensive use of archives in Zambia, not just the National Archives that are located in Lusaka but, importantly, also the archives of Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines in Ndola. This underlines the relevance of non-state archives for the production of African history. The Zambian material is further complemented by data from South African, British, Australian, Dutch, and American archives. There is an interesting short discussion about Zambian archives and the digital turn, but unfortunately the author does not go into detail about the other repositories, their opportunities and limitations. It should be mentioned that he has compiled a useful overview of sources that are relevant for writing histories of the

¹ R. Declercq, D. Money, H.O. Frøland (eds.), *Born with a Copper Spoon. A Global History of Copper, 1830-1980*, Vancouver 2022.

² D. Chipande, *Chipolopolo. A Political and Social History of Football (Soccer) in Zambia, 1940s-1994*, unpublished PhD thesis, Michigan State University, 2015.

³ M. Larmer, E. Guene, B. Henriët, I. Pesa, R. Taylor, Introduction, in: M. Larmer et. al. (eds.), *Across the Copperbelt. Urban & Social Change in Central Africa's Borderland Communities*, Woodbridge 2021, pp. 1-24.

⁴ D. Money, Sources for the History of the Copperbelt, *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of African History*, February 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.1212>

Copperbelt elsewhere.⁵ In addition, the author had conducted a number of interviews with former white residents of the Copperbelt, people that are now scattered across different continents. This book is thus an useful example of global history that goes beyond the boundaries of the Zambian nation state.

On page 23, the author makes an interesting observation about the politics of passports in historical studies, when he describes that his nationality allowed him to travel widely in search of sources. He argues that this should „give us pause for thought about what kind of scholars are able to produce transnational or global history“. This is a thought-provoking remark that deserves more extensive discussion, as it is highly relevant to ongoing debates within African Studies and global history about what is often termed ‘the decolonization of the academy’.

This book consists of six chapters and is structured chronologically. Chapter 1, ‘Making Copper, Making the Copperbelt’, is essentially an extended introduction that provides a background to copper mining. Chapter 2, ‘The Wild West in Central Africa, 1926-1939’, describes the development of the copper industry from its establishment until the start of the Second World War. Chapter 3, ‘A Good War, 1940-47’, explains how white mineworkers managed to improve their working and living conditions during the war, for which the production of copper was crucial. Chapter 4, ‘Fruits of their Labour, 1948-55’, describes the rich social life that was enjoyed by white mineworkers. Importantly, this section of the book also describes the formation of a trade union for African mineworkers. Chapter 5, ‘Trouble in Paradise, 1956-62’, is premised around the sharp fall in copper prices of 1956. The author describes the industrial unrest that followed. Chapter 6, ‘Surviving Independence, 1963-1974’, analyses the relationship between white mineworkers and the powerful forces of nationalism that led to the formation of an independent Zambia.

Eloquently written, the author brings a colourful cast of characters to life. The miners that are central to this book travelled around the globe and they often led complicated, multi-layered lives. One example is

Jack Hodgson, a mine worker who was active in the white labour movement but later performed an important role in Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), the military wing of the African National Congress that successfully fought against the white apartheid regime of South Africa.⁶ The narrative of the book is complemented by a number of useful tables and statistics. While there is a small number of photos to be enjoyed by readers, more would have been welcome, as images are very effective in showcasing the enormous scale of mining operations and the social life of mine workers.

To conclude, this book is not just about Zambia, or mining per se, but has a much broader applicability: it covers mineral wealth and international capital, migration and labour, trade unions and economic development, and race in southern and central Africa. *White Mineworkers On Zambia's Copperbelt* is an incredibly rich book that deserves to be widely read.

Tycho van der Hoog über Money, Duncan: *White Mineworkers on Zambia's Copperbelt, 1926-1974. In a Class of Their Own*. Leiden 2021, in: H-Soz-Kult .

⁵ Money, ‘Sources’, 2022.

⁶ See for more information about Hodgson, D. Money, *Underground Struggles. The Early Life of Jack Hodgson*, in: K. Van Walraven (ed.), *The Individual in African History*, Leiden 2020, pp. 170-193.