

Deborah Fahy Bryceson, Eleanor Fisher, Jesper Bosse Jønsson, and Rosemarie Mwaipopo (eds) (2014), *Mining and Social Transformation in Africa: Mineralizing and Democratizing Trends in Artisanal Production*, London/New York: Routledge, ISBN 9780415 709729, 323 pp.

Since the 1990s, many African countries have liberalised and restructured their mining sectors in the framework of structural adjustment programmes. Coupled with a rise in world market prices for gold and other precious minerals and metals, this has led to industrial and non-industrial mining booms in a number of sub-Saharan African countries, a trend the editors describe as “mineralizing Africa.” This book presents findings from empirical research about artisanal mining in Tanzania, taking issue with a popular representation of artisanal mining as a last-resort activity of impoverished rural populations. In the introduction, Deborah Fahy Bryceson and Jesper Bosse Jønsson propose, instead, looking at artisanal mining as a socio-economic domain that gives rise to new forms of occupation and social relations that are less hierarchical and more open to an individual pursuit of economic opportunities. A new kind of professionalism, a “frontier ethos,” and particular ways of redistribution and self-governance unite miners and hold the potential for what the editors call a “democratizing influence.”

In the first part of the book, “Miners’ agency and social relations,” the authors point out that artisanal mining is not only an economic alternative to subsistence farming for many, but also a new lifestyle. Social relations among miners tend to be more egalitarian than in “rural gerontocracy.” Work relationships are not strictly hierarchical, due to the possibility of a rags-to-riches career, or the reverse. Mining does constitute a career for those who manage to work their way up from simple labourers to pit managers and licence owners (Bryceson and Jønsson, chapter 3). Sexual relationships between men and women in the mines are generally short-lived, informal, and mainly based on material considerations, but that does not preclude the emergence of more stable partnerships (Bryceson, Jønsson, and Verbrugge, chapter 4). In contrast to stereotypes about irrational rushes to mining sites, Jønsson and Bryceson (chapter 2, 41) point out that “the mobility of miners is economically optimizing [...]. Miners’ decision to mine is rational in view of the economic alternatives, their moves are logistically sound in that they move away from sites of diminishing returns to better prospects, and overall, those who continue to mine are doing so because sufficient numbers of them are finding gold and garnering success.” The dark side of these new opportunities is the emergence of albino killings because of a belief that

albinos' body parts increase miners' luck (Bryceson and Sherrington, chapter 6).

The second part of the book, "Mining communities, organizational constructs and policy," discusses the mismatch between legislation and the actual practice of mining. The Tanzanian state's legislation is mainly geared towards attracting foreign direct investment by multinational corporations in the realm of industrial mining, which supports only a fraction of the labour force: "The labour-intensive artisanal sector is being eclipsed politically, despite the artisanal mining's rapid growth in the last three decades. Both artisanal and formal medium-scale capital-intensive domestic operations are not being supported in practice" (Bourgouin, chapter 9, 155). Although the Tanzanian state legalised artisanal mining in order to formalise the sector, very few miners are able to obtain mining licences: "The restricted capacity of mining authorities to disseminate legislative information on how to acquire licences to artisanal miners in a timely manner favours large-scale and junior mining companies as well as well-connected, typically urban-based, speculators" (Jönsson and Fold, chapter 7, 118). Thus, the majority of artisanal miners work informally, and sometimes illegally, as in the case of diamond miners who encroach on a commercial mine. Conflicts between rural populations, artisanal miners, and mining companies may result in court cases or in violence. The effects of fair trade initiatives in artisanal mining are limited by the small number of miners who have access to such programmes, by considerations about the different prices and services offered by fair trade organisations and alternative buyers, and by the fact that adherence to ethical standards means little to artisanal miners "who do not have a corporate reputation or shareholder value to defend" (Fisher and Childs, chapter 8, 142).

In the concluding third part, Deborah Bryceson and Eleanor Fisher (chapter 11, 195) argue, "The broad outline of mineralizing and democratizing Tanzania is relevant to several other mineralizing countries in sub-Saharan Africa. However, democratic tendencies are likely to be highly varied. We propose that such differences can be usefully compared by delineating African mining complexes on the basis of the relative institutional dominance of the state, artisanal mining and large-scale corporate mining." They go on to predict "the gradual displacement of artisanal mining by large-scale mining," which may drive artisanal miners to "resort to raiding large-scale mining sites for tailings in the absence of other livelihood options." Concerning the mining complexes, the authors distinguish between "absent states," "low-level state control," "autocratic state control," and "democratic state control." This categori-

sation can be useful for further comparative approaches to the regulation of mining in sub-Saharan Africa and beyond.

This volume presents up-to-date, empirically based accounts of mining in present-day Tanzania that are relevant beyond the country-specific details. Artisanal mining and its institutional context in other African countries evince many similarities that remain to be explored – as regards, for instance, the current significance of global standards and initiatives for processes of formalisation on the national and local levels. The focus on Tanzania and the fact that most of the authors are not anthropologists may explain why there is little reference to similar work by anthropologists in other mining areas of Africa. It may also explain the uncritical usage of problematic terms like “tribe” and “fetish.” However, these are minor points that do not diminish the quality of the volume that will be of great use for academics, students, policymakers, and activists who are interested in understanding artisanal mining in the context of neoliberal resource politics, economic crises and opportunities, and how artisanal mining contributes to the emergence of new ways of life in Africa.

- Katja Werthmann