

to historical understanding, Warnier wants to change the sorts of evidence we consider and how we attempt to analyse them.

In the light of this, it is sad that I have to end on a negative note. The text is blighted by a succession of English solecisms which betray the lack of a native speaker in the editorial process. Most of the time I could follow the discussion, but I found it irritating and it distracted from a complex and important argument.

University of Kent

DAVID ZEITLYN

AN ECONOMIC HISTORY OF THE ZAMBIAN COPPERBELT

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Copper Empire: Mining and the Colonial State in Northern Rhodesia, c. 1930–64.

By LAWRENCE J. BUTLER. Houndsmill, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Pp. xii + 425. £60 (ISBN 978-0-230-55526-6).

KEY WORDS: Zambia, economic, industrial, labour, mining.

There have been a number of labour histories of the Northern Rhodesian/Zambian Copperbelt, but, with the exception of a single seminal article by Andrew Roberts, the economic history of these mines has remained rather under-researched.¹ The social impact of the mines of Northern Rhodesia/Zambia has long been a profitable field of study for social anthropologists and more recently social historians. Indeed, a recent re-analysis of the works of the Rhodes Livingstone Institute and the ‘Manchester School’, which dealt extensively with the social effects of industrialization, urbanization and migrant labour, led to one of the more rumbustious and entertaining debates in African studies.² As regards the actual nitty-gritty of the economic history of mining companies in relation with the colonial and imperial state, there has been no systematic overview as comprehensive as the book under review.

Based on extensive archival research, primarily in the National Archives in Kew, this seven-chapter book seeks ‘to explore the development of the copper mining industry in Northern Rhodesia, from its early stages in the late 1920s until the independence of Zambia in 1964’. The book’s focus is ‘the response of the British colonial state, and of the imperial state to which it was answerable, to this development’, with an aim to providing ‘a case study of business–government relations under colonial rule in a dynamic and volatile sector’ (p. 1). In doing so Butler charts the complicated multiple relationships that existed between copper mining companies, the Northern Rhodesian colonial state, the British South Africa Company and the imperial state. In what was ‘an extraordinary chapter in Britain’s relationship with Africa’ (p. 299), Butler shows that the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt was an example of large-scale foreign investment that brought rapid

¹ A. D. Roberts, ‘Notes towards a financial history of copper mining in Northern Rhodesia’, *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 16 (1982), 347–59. As regards labour histories, see Francis L. Coleman, *The Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt 1899–1962: Technological Development up to the End of the Central African Federation* (Manchester, 1971), and Elena L. Berger, *Labour, Race, and Colonial Rule: The Copperbelt from 1924 to Independence* (London, 1974).

² James Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt* (Berkeley, 1999).

benefits for the metropole; whereas, for Northern Rhodesia proper, 'the colonial state needed the mining industry, particularly because of the latter's revenue-producing significance, more than the mining industry needed the state' (p. 6). What becomes immediately clear is the intricate and dialectical nature of the many and varied relationships that could and did exist, for instance between the Colonial Office, various mining companies, government ministries and Northern Rhodesian settler interests. Butler does not shy away from seeking to explore and describe these relationships.

Chapter 1 charts the development of the mining industry on the Copperbelt and the emergence, by the 1930s, of a 'corporate structure ... which would remain unchanged in essentials until the 1960s' (p. 17). Two major mining groups emerged, Rhodesian Anglo American (RAA), largely South African-owned and controlled, and Rhodesian Selection Trust (RST), controlled primarily by American capital. Between them RAA and RST effectively controlled the copper industry of Northern Rhodesia. The chapter illustrates clearly that whilst, between 1923 and 1941, the mining companies made gross profits of around £25 million, 'The central paradox of Northern Rhodesia in the 1930s ... was a growing awareness of a disparity between the wealth generated by the new copper industry, and the fact that the territory as a whole remained mired in poverty' (p. 34). Due to a myriad of factors, the Colonial Office and its officials were unable to translate the prosperity of the mining industry into prosperity for the territory as a whole.

Chapter 2 charts the further growth of the Copperbelt under the boom of increasing demand for copper in the context of the Second World War, a theme maintained in Chapter 3, which deals with the boom up to the establishment of the Central African Federation in 1953. In the context of the Second World War, the position of labour had led to wage increases of 30 per cent for European labourers and 25 per cent for African ones. Yet, 'labour relations continued to dominate Copperbelt affairs in the post-war period' (p. 133), with African unions being legally formed in 1949 and successful strike action in 1952. Chapter 4 deals with the attempts by authorities, both imperial and colonial to gain control of both tax and royalty revenues between 1939 and 1952. In addition, the chapter deals with the establishment of a new colonial mining policy following the victory of the British Labour party in post-war elections. The establishment of the Central African Federation, between Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland and Southern Rhodesia, in 1953, coincided with a boom in copper prices on account of rearmament programmes triggered by the Korean War. At this time 'the Copperbelt accounted for around 90 per cent of Northern Rhodesia's exports and government revenue' (p. 209), and was of vital importance to the economy of the federation. It is this theme that is dealt with in Chapter 5. Butler notes that, whilst the 'skyline of Salisbury was transformed by impressive building projects, Federal economic development served only to confirm widely-shared African suspicions that the white settler minority was benefiting disproportionately' (p. 210). The boom in building in Southern Rhodesia's capital was mirrored by increasing labour militancy on the Copperbelt throughout the 1950s. Chapters 6 and 7 deal with the disintegration of the Central African Federation and the mining industry, in the run-up to Zambian independence in 1964. A final postscript deals with the prospects of the copper industry at Zambian independence. Of importance in the postscript is the information provided on the courting of nationalist politicians by the mining companies at the advent of independence. In conclusion, Butler notes that, far from the mining companies being opposed to independence, the opportunity of renegotiating taxation and the calculation of royalties had the consequence that 'the mining industry ... may have felt that it stood to gain more than it might lose from decolonisation' (p. 303).

In conclusion, in dealing with the mining industry in Northern Rhodesia, a reading of Butler clearly indicates that the role of the Colonial Office was often secondary to that of the mining industry and other ministries in the imperial government. Indeed, this reader could not escape from the impression that there was a certain amount of *Schadenfreude* on the part of Butler with regard to the inability of the Colonial Office and its officials in both Northern Rhodesia and London, to gain control of and rein in the mining companies to the benefit of Northern Rhodesia proper. Butler notes early on in his book that

it has long been acknowledged that tensions are evident between the Colonial Office ... and expatriate firms, reflecting a fundamentally unsympathetic attitude among civil servants towards business, derived from snobbery, distaste for the world of commerce, and a paternalistic ethos of 'romantic anti-capitalism'. (p. 8)

In completing his book, Butler effectively shows up the inefficacy of the Colonial Office and hammers yet another nail into the coffin of the mythical monolithic imperial state.

A word of caution: this is not a book to be taken lightly; readers will not dip into *Copper Empire* for a spot of light reading. The book is not an easy read, does not suffer fools lightly and does not allow for selective reading or the culling of single chapters. Butler has marshalled an impressive amount of archival material and sought to make the evidence speak for itself. Unfortunately, he has not sought to draw out or make his arguments explicit and his densely written history is essentially the presentation of one damned thing after the other for 306 pages. Nevertheless, anybody dealing with Zambian history, whether they like it or not, will have to deal with *Copper Empire* – it is quite simply the standard work on the economic history of the Zambian Copperbelt during the colonial era, and all future economic histories of Zambia will be measured in terms of their position vis-à-vis *Copper Empire*.

African Studies Centre, Leiden

JAN-BART GEWALD

ORGANIZED MINE-LABOUR IN INDEPENDENT ZAMBIA

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Mineworkers in Zambia: Labour and Political Change in Post-Colonial Africa. By MILES LARMER. London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007. Pp. viii + 270. £47.50 (ISBN 978-1-84511-299-8).

KEY WORDS: Zambia, labour, mining, trade unions.

Organized labour, regarded as an important player in many nationalist struggles in Africa, has been widely dismissed in the postcolonial period by scholars, government bureaucrats and development specialists as apolitical, privileged and reactionary. The Zambian copper miners and their powerful union, the Mineworker's Union of Zambia (MUZ), have been a poster child for this argument. The union's demands for increased wages in the years after independence have been seen by many political scientists and development economists as proof that the mineworkers were a privileged elite, selfishly putting their own demands above the needs of state-led economic growth and social development. In the 1980s, international financial institutions and their academic and policy allies dismissed