

CLEVELAND, TODD. *Stones of Contention. A History of Africa's Diamonds.* [Africa in World History.] Ohio University Press, Athens (OH) 2014. xii, 225 pp. Ill. Maps. \$26.95.

The discovery of large diamond deposits in Kimberly, South Africa, in the 1860s had a major impact on the political economy of the region as well as on its labour and racial relations. When diamonds were found in other regions of sub-Saharan Africa, history repeated itself, albeit in various forms and with different outcomes for the lives of the people involved. At the same time, these discoveries caused major changes in the global diamond commodity chain. Todd Cleveland captures this long and important history in a lucid narrative that combines the big story of geopolitics and global economy with individual life stories and testimonies of representatives of the colonial states and mining companies as well as the voices of African labourers. The book is an easy read and very suitable for students, who will profit from the further reading suggestions. Scholars will find the book a good introduction to the topic, though they will miss elaborate references, especially to the primary source materials Cleveland must have used for parts of the book.

Cleveland starts with an introduction to the history of diamonds in Africa in a global context, followed by an interesting chapter on the centuries of exploitation and use of African minerals by Africans. The minerals (especially gold) had a mythical attraction to people outside Africa and led to the first encounters between Europeans and sub-Saharan Africans in the pre-colonial period. The third chapter describes the discovery of diamond deposits in and around Kimberly. Large-scale alluvial finds attracted both African diggers who worked and owned claims as well as white diggers from all over the world. Soon, a struggle over land and mineral rights followed, first between the Griqua, then between the Afrikaners and the British. Later, after the discovery of the very rich primary, kimberlite mines, wealthy international businessmen entered the arena and started to buy up claims and farmland containing diamond deposits.

Workers in the diamond mines were often seasonal migrants from black societies south of the Zambezi River. Though many of them voluntarily went to the mines, they did so only during the slack season in agriculture or during a certain stage of life to save cash for commodities or a brideswealth. Constant labour shortage therefore characterized production in the mines, leading to high wages, but also to the introduction of pass laws to control labour. In practice, these laws were applied to black workers only. The hut tax and the establishment of so-called locations (designated areas where Africans had to reside) forced Africans into wage labour in the mines. At the same time, white diggers started to exclude black diggers from the most profitable mines by accusing them of theft, a policy later adopted by the government of the Cape Colony. With the development of deep mining, capital-intensive technology was introduced and claim owners transformed themselves into joint stock companies, eventually leading to the monopolistic De Beers cartel, whose history Cleveland describes in Chapter four. Reduced wages (a consequence of the monopoly) and the danger involved with deep mining made a steady supply of labour even more problematic than before. Convict labour and closed compounds – developed in close conjunction between the Cape parliament and De Beers – were the answer to this problem. Appalling labour and living conditions, including severe racial discrimination of black workers, were the consequence of these measures and led to various forms of workers' protests well described by Cleveland.

Since the developments in Kimberly were, in many ways, a blueprint of what would happen elsewhere in Africa, Cleveland's detailed description of them is justified. Much of

the information he provides comes from the classic works by Turrell and Worger.¹ However, Cleveland extracts and presents this information in a very comprehensive and balanced way and adds the later story of De Beers, including its slightly more beneficial labour policies, but also its increasing control over the global diamond commodity chain. The London-based De Beers Central Selling Organisation achieved an almost worldwide monopoly on the sale of rough diamonds, while the firm also gained control over the deposits discovered in the German colony of South West Africa (Namibia) and signed exclusive contracts to purchase the output from mining in the Belgian Congo, Angola, the British Gold Coast (Ghana), Sierra Leone, and the British colony of Tanganyika (Tanzania).

The establishment of diamond-mining operations in these regions at a time when the African continent came under European colonial rule is the topic of Chapter five. Its focus is the labour-recruitment and labour-management policies (including housing, healthcare, and compensation) of the colonial states, the extractive companies, and the African headmen. It also signals the consequences these policies had for workers. Though Cleveland is clearly best informed about Angola, the topic of his PhD research,² he also provides interesting information on the British Gold Coast, South West Africa, and Sierra Leone, illustrating the significant differences in policies and consequences, as the following two examples show. Most active in forced labour recruitment was the Portuguese colonial state in Angola. In 1921, it granted Diamang, a monopolistic private enterprise, exclusive access to African labour in its operational area in return for half of its profits. Roughly forty per cent of Diamang's labour force was forcibly contracted, often from villages hundreds of miles from the mines and often with the help of local headmen. At the other end of the spectrum, we find the British colonial authorities in the British Gold Coast who permitted African rulers to retain the mineral rights associated with their traditional lands. They rented access to the highest bidding foreign mining company. Since cocoa farms, gold mines, and the colonial state were a major source of competition for labourers, migrant workers from beyond the colony's borders were effectively seduced to move to the mines by competitive wages, free housing, and medical care.

The experiences and motivations of African workers in the mines during the colonial period are described in Chapter six. Strategic foreknowledge helped workers to decide whether to go to the mines, though the forced workers in Angola could only hope for the best – as Cleveland's interviews with former mineworkers testify. In response to the challenges and opportunities, mineworkers shared tasks, sang songs, socialized, but also formed unions, articulated their grievances, and engaged in strikes and work slowdowns, with various degrees of success. It would have helped the reader if the author had concluded these two thematically organized chapters with an analysis of regional developments over time. Also, the language used in these chapters is less nuanced than that of previous chapters. The claim that environmental concerns were “of course [...] far from the minds of colonial administrators and mining officials” (p. 112) is just one example of his unsubstantiated, biased remarks. These two shortcomings are also a blot on the very insightful seventh

1. Robert Vicat Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871–1890* (Cambridge, 1987), and William H. Worger, *South Africa's City of Diamonds: Mine Workers and Monopoly Capitalism in Kimberley, 1867–1895* (New Haven, CT, 1987).

2. Published as *Diamonds in the Rough: Corporate Paternalism and African Professionalism on the Mines of Colonial Angola, 1917–1975* (Athens, OH, 2015). This book was reviewed by Filipa Ribeiro da Silva in *International Review of Social History*, 62:1 (2017), pp. 151–154.

chapter on the postcolonial development of “blood diamonds” in Sierra Leone, Angola, and Zimbabwe.

Violent political upheaval after independence, the tendency of some rulers to assume and retain power at any cost, the easy access to alluvial diamonds, and the general culture in the global diamond trade and industry not to ask too many questions about provenance all help to explain how diamonds financed long and brutal civil conflicts. Both for Angola and Sierra Leone, Cleveland describes these conflicts in detail, but his analysis would have gained depth had he combined it with the information he gave in the previous chapters. Here, he explained how British indirect rule in Sierra Leone relied on paramount chiefs, and how it permitted illegal diamond mining and selling and a system in which miners were paid a share of what they found rather than in the form of a fixed wage. Ultimately, this undermined the state’s control and fostered corruption. This background helps us to understand the partial path-dependency of Sierra Leone’s postcolonial blood diamond history.

The penultimate chapter gives counterexamples and sketches the success story of diamond developments in Namibia, but most of all in Botswana. In Botswana, diamond deposits were discovered after the country’s independence, and its democratic government immediately nationalized the subsoil mineral resources. The very rich kimberlite mines proved to be enormously productive and caused huge economic growth that was also used to fund infrastructure, education, and health services. Although Cleveland observes the negative aspects of diamond developments even in these two countries, in his final chapter he ends with a tentatively positive view on the future of diamond developments in Africa.

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IVANOVA, GALINA, STEFAN PLAGGENBORG. *Entstalinisierung als Wohlfahrt. Sozialpolitik in der Sowjetunion 1953–1970*. Aus dem Russischen von Lukas Mücke und Shirin Schnier. Campus Verlag, Frankfurt am Main [etc.] 2015. 280 pp. € 34.90.

Soviet social policy, understood as a protective and coherent policy, was founded and implemented only after Stalin’s death and flourished in the following decades. Galina Ivanova has written the first comprehensive history of this process to appear in German.¹ The author examines the political, economic, and financial aspects of Soviet social policy from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s. Besides published sources, she has used materials from several central Russian archives, including the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI). Among the RGANI materials – most of which have been available to

1. There is, however, an earlier monograph by the same author in Russian. G.M. Ivanova, *Na poroge „gosudarstva vseobshchego blagosostoiannia“*. *Sotsial’naia politika v SSSR (seredina 1950-kh – nachalo 1970-kh godov)* (Moscow, 2011).