

BOOK REVIEW

Zachary Kagan Guthrie. *Bound for Work: Labor, Mobility, and Colonial Rule in Central Mozambique, 1940–1965*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2018. 225 pp. Maps. Photographs. Bibliography. Index. \$45.00. Cloth. ISBN: 978-0813941547.

Zachary Guthrie's book *Bound for Work: Labor, Mobility, and Colonial Rule in Central Mozambique, 1940–1965* raises some critical questions regarding labor in colonial regimes and how this issue should be approached. More concretely, the author focuses on the way labor was arranged, lived, eluded, and enforced in the former Portuguese colony of Mozambique. *Bound for Work* revealed itself to be a reading pleasure since its six chapters are neatly organized in an engaging and intelligible way which compels the reader to the author's historical narrative. This is due to the presence of social actors and their views—or feelings—on the nature of the colonial power, as captured by the author's oral-history interviews of his actors, as well as to the intrinsic interest of the topic investigated: workers' agency in racialized and oppressive contexts.

Together these make the reader “see” the story—or rather, the many stories—of central Mozambique at midcentury as it unfolds. The reader has almost the sensation of being there. That is the power of Guthrie's writing; he takes you on a journey through the complex history of Portuguese colonial rule in Mozambique and, in particular, the history of migrant labor in southern Africa and in Africa in general. Not only does his work allow the reader to picture the life experiences of migrant laborers by using the conceptual tool of mobility within labor history, but it also reveals the diverse work- and life-possibilities of migrant workers in a colonial society, something not limited to the Portuguese Empire. The complexity of such a colonial past is thus rendered more legible.

Diverging from prior histories of migrant labor in colonial Africa, which mainly focus on reconstructing the root causes of migrant labor, *Bound for Work* offers a unique perspective by expanding on the dynamics of autonomy and coercion within workers' travel to and from worksites and by showing how these workers were able to use labor to their advantage.

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Anchoring his analysis on the main argument that in order to understand labor and its historical importance, it is essential to look at the mobility of African workers and intersect that with labor options across economic, political, and social boundaries. Guthrie's book deserves a place within the field of Labor and Development Studies as well as in the history of Mozambique, southern Africa, and labor in Africa.

Guthrie examines labor mobility in central Mozambique during the 1940s and 1950s, a period during which, differently from eastern and western Africa, colonial power over labor and society was still well ingrained until the 1960s. Even though national and international borders were opening to Mozambican workers due to the economic boom's labor shortage, the reintroduction of forced labor by Portuguese authorities as well as the high concentration of colonial employers remained a threat. Workers didn't have many options to help them navigate all the possibilities and limitations of labor within late-colonial capitalism. Focusing on a thematic history of "mobile" workers' lives rather than a diachronic one, Guthrie gives the reader a more complete picture of that specific historical period. This is a welcome departure from the institutionalized separation between books written for academic specialists and non-specialists, and makes for a delightful and invigorating reading for all of those who are interested in Portuguese colonial Africa and beyond. It is also indispensable reading for specialists in the field as well as for students, as Guthrie's work stresses the importance of humanizing the experiences of History's social actors within the contexts of labor in a colonial order, which was exploitative, virulent, and built upon social and racial hierarchies.

Zachary Guthrie makes an important contribution to the world of academic research, and to the public in general, especially in the present world of refugee crises. As the author concludes, "controlling mobility remains essential in controlling labor" (158), as it remains a continuous push and pull between migrants' quest for improved economic working situations and governments' control over workers' mobility and working conditions for their own economic and political purposes.

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For additional reading on this subject, the ASR recommends:

Allina, Eric. 1997. "Fallacious Mirrors: Colonial Anxiety and Images of African Labor in Mozambique, Ca. 1929." *History in Africa* 24: 9–52. doi:10.2307/3172017.

Whitaker, Beth Elise. 2017. "Migration within Africa and Beyond." *African Studies Review* 60 (2): 209–20. doi:10.1017/asr.2017.49.