

# MIGRATION IN AFRICA

Shifting Patterns of Mobility from  
the 19th to the 21st Century

*Edited by*  
*Michiel de Haas and Ewout Frankema*

Cover image: TBC

First published 2022

by Routledge

4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge

605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

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*British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Names: Haas, Michiel de, editor. | Frankema, Ewout, editor.

Title: Migration in Africa : shifting patterns of mobility from the 19th to the 21st century / edited by Michiel de Haas and Ewout Frankema.

Description: New York, NY : Routledge, 2022. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2021049486 (print) | LCCN 2021049487 (ebook) | ISBN 9781032125299 (hardback) | ISBN 9781032125244 (paperback) | ISBN 9781003225027 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Africa—Emigration and immigration—History. | Migration, Internal—Africa.

Classification: LCC HB2121.A3 M534 2022 (print) | LCC HB2121.A3 (ebook) | DDC 304.8096—dc23/eng/20211221

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2021049486>

LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2021049487>

ISBN: 978-1-032-12529-9 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-032-12524-4 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-22502-7 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003225027

Typeset in Bembo

by codeMantra

# PREFACE

Migration experiences are central to the lives of millions of Africans. However, contrary to the extensive historical literature on Africa's external slave trades and the burgeoning social science literature on the recent outmigration of Africans to Europe, studies of migration *within* the African continent have remained fragmentary and regionally focused. In this volume, we aim to address this gap by offering a survey and synthesis of migratory developments within Africa from the early 19th to early 21st century. By situating shifting patterns of mobility in Africa within a global perspective, we highlight how the period between 1850 and 1960 can be considered as an "Age of Intra-African Migration." With the gradual demise of Africa's external slave trades and growing local demand for (slave) labor by expanding commodity exports – a process that had started well before the colonial "scramble" – the gravity center of African migration moved decisively inward. What followed was an era of heightened mobility within the region, marked by rapidly rising and vanishing migratory flows, increasingly diversified migration systems, and profound shifts in continental migration patterns. This era of intra-African migration came to an end with the resurgence of outmigration in the 1960s. This time Africans were more deliberately in search of extra-continental destinations, with new diaspora communities emerging specifically in the Global North. In 17 chapters contributed by 20 authors, we analyze major patterns of intra-African migration over the past two centuries, and propose an analytical framework to study them. Central to this framework is the distinction between "contextual" drivers of migration, which are endogenous to the spatial opportunity gaps that incentivize human mobility in specific times and places, and exogenous "macro-historical" drivers of shifting migration patterns such as demographic growth, state formation, technological change, capitalism, and changing belief systems, forces that can only be revealed through a long historical view.

The idea to compose a volume on migration in Africa took shape during conversations with several colleagues from the *African Economic History Network* during the XVIIIth World Economic History Congress in Boston, 2018. These dialogues led to the organization of three workshops held at Wageningen University (December 2018), the University of Barcelona (October 2019), and online (May 2020), in the midst of what later proved to be

the first wave of Covid-19. We thank the Wageningen School of Social Sciences (WASS) for funding part of our endeavor. We gratefully acknowledge financial support from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research to publish this book in Open Access. The funding pertains to the project “South-South Divergence: Comparative Histories of Regional Integration in Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa since 1850” (NWO VICI Grant no. VI.C.201.062) led by Ewout Frankema.

A special thanks goes to Dirk Hoerder, who planted the seed for this book, by pointing us to the lack of a work of synthesis on intra-African migration and to Patrick Manning for endorsing the idea and providing invaluable feedback on the outline of the project, and Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk for perceptive comments on the full manuscript. We also wish to thank Helena Hurd and Rosie Anderson, our partners at Routledge, who have steered the book through publication with impressive speed and diligence, and Kathrin Immanuel at CodeMantra, who coordinated the copy-editing. We cannot in person acknowledge the many colleagues, both authors and commenters, who have made distinct intellectual contributions to this book, other than saying that we tremendously enjoyed the journey. The volume is truly the result of a collective effort and commitment to the project, in which drafts were exchanged and deadlines met with impressive discipline. Our indebtedness is even larger to all historians who introduced us via their work into the dazzling world of long-run African mobility. Some of them, including Dennis Cordell and Patrick Harries, passed away recently. Others, such as Philip Geoffrey Powesland, Joel Gregory, and Francois Manchuelle, did so tragically, at the heights of their careers, as they were still advancing their own perspectives on intra-African migration. Perhaps this is one reason why a historical survey of the age of intra-African migration has been waiting for so long. We can only hope that the book sparks further dialogue and research on the topic, and those who inspired our efforts but were unable to engage with us critically would have been pleased with the result.

Michiel de Haas & Ewout Frankema  
Wageningen, 21 October 2021