



The Making of an African Working Class

Politics, Law, and Cultural Protest in the Manual Workers Union of Botswana

Pnina Werbner

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It is now 50 years since E.P. Thompson published his classic, *The Making of the English Working Class*. *The Making of an African Working Class* follows Thompson in exploring the formation of working class identity among low-paid African workers. In arguing for a radical public anthropology of worker identity, the book seeks to analyse the cultural, legal, ideological and experiential dimensions of labour activism often neglected in other labour studies.

Pnina Werbner shows that by fusing cosmopolitan and local popular cultural forms of protest, unionists have created a distinctive, vernacular way of being a worker in Botswana: one that does not deny workers' roots at home, while being cognisant of a wider world of cosmopolitan labour rights. The assertion of working class dignity, honour and respect, Werbner argues, is a powerful motivating force for manual workers.

The Making of an African Working Class argues that through challenging the government - their employer - in court, African workers' protests become deeply rooted in society, forming a strong bond of solidarity that reaches through ethics, social justice and the law.

Pnina Werbner is Professor Emerita of Social Anthropology, Keele University and author of the Manchester migration trilogy: *The Migration Process* (1990/2002), *Imagined Diasporas* (2002) and *Pilgrims of Love* (2003).



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