



SPECTACLE: The Semiotics of Albinism in Tanzania

JANE L. SAFFITZ
Denison University

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6207-0862>

“We often speak about getting lost in the dark, but it is also possible to get lost in the light.”

— Bayo Akomolafe, *These Wilds beyond Our Fences*

During a seven-week span in 2014–2015, two toddlers living hundreds of kilometers apart in rural Northwest Tanzania were abducted from their mothers’ arms and murdered. Four-year-old Pendo and Yohana, eighteen months old, were the latest victims of what had become known as “albinicide,” the killing of people with albinism, allegedly to satiate demand in an illicit speculative economy for their body parts (Jangu 2012). By this point, violence against people with albinism had been reported on for a decade, and more than a hundred Tanzanians had been killed or permanently disfigured. In Mwanza, the bustling metropolis where I was living and the region most prone to albinism-related violence, seemingly every headline, conversation, and prayer lamented the tragedies. For weeks around me—at friends’ homes and on the radio, in the market and outside storefronts—I took part in a kind of collective mourning, a quiet desperation as friends and strangers cast doubt on the ability of the state, media, or even a robust transnational humanitarian apparatus to quell violence against some of its most marginalized citizens.

CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY, Vol. 40, Issue 2, pp. 249–275, ISSN 0886-7356, online ISSN 1548-1360. *Cultural Anthropology* is the journal of the Society of Cultural Anthropology, a section of the American Anthropological Association. *Cultural Anthropology* journal content published since 2014 is freely available to download, save, reproduce, and transmit for noncommercial, scholarly, and educational purposes under the Creative Commons BY-NC 4.0 license. Reproduction and transmission of journal content for the above purposes should credit the author and original source. DOI: 10.14506/ca40.2.03

I spent many of these days with Yakobo, a regional leader of the grassroots Tanzanian Albinism Society (Chama Cha Ualbino Tanzania), as he talked to the press on behalf of NGOs, pressured law enforcement to beef up their investigations, and coordinated support for the families.¹ At a secondary school in Katoro, a rural part of Geita teeming with gold and diamond mining not far from where Yohana had been taken, he spoke to journalists, government officials, parents, and teachers, before answering students' questions. *Who is doing this? Why here? What are they doing with albino body parts?* Yakobo reiterated points I had heard at similar events: it was an election year, and in a region known for powerful healers and intense competition not only in political races but across extractive industries, traditional healers (*waganga wa kienyeji*) were using albino body parts to cleanse others' *nyota* (sing. and pl.)—the literal translation of which is “star,” “fortune,” or “fate,” but in this context invokes a practice of restoring brightness to an embodied and invisible lifeforce.

Yakobo condemned the consumers of *dawa* containing albino body parts,² allegedly politicians, businesspeople, and laborers in extractive industries. In doing so, he expressed an understanding of albinism-related violence that circulates across forms of media worldwide. These representations purport that violence stems from an Indigenous cosmology that devalues the humanity of people with albinism on the basis of their alterity, making them prime targets for nefarious “traditional” healers who orchestrate their murder and dismemberment to stimulate demand in a grisly market for human body parts (Brocco 2015; Bryceson, Jönsson, and Sherrington 2010; Imafidon 2019; Masanja, Imori, and Kaudunde 2020; Mulemi and Ndolo 2014; Taylor, Bradbury-Jones, and Lund 2019). As Yakobo surmised, while the dehumanization of those with albinism and the use of their body parts in *dawa* was age-old (*toka zamani*), it was the relative newness of competitive, capricious extractive economies, the commodification of traditional healing, and the advent of multiparty democracy and neoliberal capitalism that had created an “albino fetish.” Hence Yakobo’s claim that albino body parts were used by healers in *dawa* to “cleanse the stars” (*safisha nyota*) of their patients—that is, to intuit through divination one’s alignment with socio-bodily and ancestral forces that presage future successes or challenges.

Initially, I conducted fieldwork with questions aligned with the students in Katoro. I spent thirty months, mostly between 2014–2016 and 2018, following interventions surrounding albinism. This involved working with self-proclaimed albinism rights stakeholders (*wadau*), among them geneticists and physicians, journalists and academics, politicians and religious leaders, and development

workers and humanitarians.³ By attending albinism rights events, I learned that stakeholders see violence as the result of a failure to recognize albinism as a recessively inherited genetic condition and false beliefs (*imani potofu*) attributing properties to body parts that they don't *really* have. In other words, it is the fetishizing of albino body parts—of imbuing fragments of bone or hair with agency and value—that explains what happened to Pendo and Yohana.

Like Yakobo, many stakeholders relied on the notion of brightening one's *nyota* to explain this process of misattribution: Yasi, a Lutheran pastor and middle-aged man with albinism, for example, preached about the superstitions of miners who overvalued the potential use of his limbs to clean their *nyota* while undervaluing his personhood, which he rooted in biomedical, Christian, and rights-based notions of human difference. The correct valuation, he preached, is that body parts are worthless, mere things devoid of agency that must be demystified, while whole subjects are immeasurably worthy. Further problematizing *nyota* were tweets like “New albino violence is emerging and now girls and women are being raped in the belief that star cleaning will prevent AIDS.”⁴

Taken by our collective mourning and intrigued by these representations, I also worked with those maligned by these narratives. By entering into



Figure 1. Media groups like the Swahili Times report on others' erroneous beliefs, in this case the notion that raping a person with albinism cleanses one's *nyota* and thus prevents HIV/AIDS.

knowledge exchanges with healers, conducting oral histories with chiefs and elders, and shadowing artisanal gold and diamond miners and fishermen, I learned that there is no unified, generalizable theory of albinism that can be contrasted with albinism as strictly biomedical. There are, however, disparate instantiations of albinism beyond biomedicine. For some of my interlocutors in mining enclaves, for instance, albinism emerged in part through its use in *dawa* that could in theory be used for myriad purposes, including healing *nyota*, though not in ways that abide the logics of fetishism nor in ways that necessitate violence. They described *nyota* as a constellation of fate, soul, blood, and vitality, the health of which reflected one's standing with the humans and nonhumans around them. *Nyota* also manifested a radiance that was representational and material, embodied and transcorporeal. As I came to see by accompanying miners to traditional healers adept at treating extractive laborers, radiant *nyota* enable forms of seeing needed to succeed in extractive industries.

As an ethnographic concept, *nyota* enables a different understanding of recent interventions, one that does not reify albinism, violence, and activism as ontological pre-givens, but rather approaches these categories as emerging through the interventions themselves. My use of *intervention* intentionally spans the work of stakeholders like Yakobo and Yasi and of miners and healers: I found the categories invoked in explanations of albinicide (e.g., “violence” and “humanitarianism”) and the narrative certainty with which stakeholders came to know the causes and effects of their actions surrounding albinism to be untenable. In contrast, I show how interventions prejudged as either humanitarian or illicit produce cascading effects, making it difficult to discern between practices that help or harm, elucidate or obscure. This requires a semiotic approach that traces how a minoritized group becomes valuable for differently positioned actors. I approach interventions through the embodied qualisigns of lightness and darkness that compel them. Here I am thinking of lightness neither in terms of whiteness, racial or otherwise (Bashkow 2006; Redfield 2012), nor of relative degrees of weightiness (Munn 1986).⁵ Rather, lightness evokes illumination and visibility as requisite qualities for seeing, coveted by albinism stakeholders and by healers and extractive laborers.

Following the semiotics of Charles Peirce (1955), abstract qualities such as lightness are qualisigns, or abstract properties of yet unrealized signs (see also Chumley and Harkness 2013). Properties like hotness and redness, for instance, do not exist on their own: they become signs when they are embodied in things like fire or chili peppers, even if these properties appear intrinsic. In these

examples, it is not only fires and peppers that signify; it's also the qualities of being hot and red. Peirce called these qualia. When qualia are conventionalized such that subject/objects are seen as having particular qualities, they become qualisigns (Harkness 2015; Parmentier 1994). Anthropologists have explored qualia and qualisigns across a range of ethnographic sites, highlighting what they mean and do, rather than how they are subjectively or mentally experienced (Chumley and Harkness 2013). Famously, Nancy Munn (1986) showed how the semiotics of quality impart positive and negative value. While she showed how value was created through processes that reproduced Gawan society, my analysis reveals how value emerges through the spectacle created around a minoritized group.

With a semiotic approach, I show how, in different ways and for different actors, the lightness of albinism is iconic of human rights and genetic understandings of difference, including in melanin; God's love and triumph over the dark powers of Satan; and *nyota*, shiny minerals and fish, and the possibilities of *dawa* to enable forms of seeing.⁶ Lightness thus transcends bifurcations of meaning and matter. Unlike Saussurian semiotics, where signs are abstract, dyadic entities emergent through language, Peircean models of the sign are triadic relations in which an entity (object) is represented by another (sign-vehicle or representamen) and is represented *to* a third entity (interpretant). This approach emphasizes the centrality of interpretation to processes of signification and roots such processes in settings beyond language and human cognition (Keane 2003; Kohn 2007; Parmentier 1994). Further, Peircean semiotics is "ontologically flexible" in that objects, sign-vehicles, and interpretants can be material or immaterial. It thus offers a privileged vantage point from which to understand competing theories of agency and value (Chumley 2017; Kockelman 2006; Munn 1986).

Tracing qualia of light and dark across disparate interventions, I suggest that the extraordinariness of albinism comes not from Indigenous cosmologies or exogamous forces but from their imbrication—and from the spectacle surrounding albinism. By locating violence in the cumulative effects of myriad forms of intervention, I also situate the tragic deaths of Pendo and Yohana within a framework of spectacle. If activist efforts to see albinism more clearly have enabled violence vis-à-vis spectacle, then my efforts here are not to elucidate "what happened," for I often came up against the limits of knowability in a context where the effects of my actions were unknown and where asking questions created its own spectacle. My aim, then, is to trouble the idea of activism as itself ethical (Dave 2012) and instead point to a postactivist sensibility predicated on complicity and

entanglement (Akomolafe 2021; see also Rubaii and Varma 2023). While activist sensibilities are rooted in the notion that stopping violence requires seeing more clearly and that interventions are external to rather than constituent of spectacle, postactivist politics and ethics are relational and understand socio-bodily health as mutually constituted among humans and nonhumans (Zigon 2019). I explore what this means for the livelihoods of people with albinism and others through a miner's quest for healthy *nyota*.

PENETRATING DARKNESS

Because miners and traditional healers were already implicated in narrative explanations of albinism-related violence, many hesitated to be represented in journalistic or academic work. In keeping with the requests of my interlocuters to remain untraceable, I describe my fieldwork with “Nsembi,” a composite of three miners with whom I worked. One of the individuals represented in Nsembi introduced me to the other two, and as I got to know them over a few months, I heard overlapping and sometimes contradictory stories, only some of which I witnessed firsthand, but that revealed the importance of light *nyota*. What I present here is a triangulation of their stories, our experiences, and our analyses, one that is partial and defies the possibility of a definitive account. While this piece itself constitutes an intervention and form of spectacle, I aim to question the value of lightness and its assumed binary opposition to darkness, as well as to offer an alternative framework of violence and activism as co-constitutive. A theory of violence rooted in spectacle might best align with Nsembi's understanding of people with albinism as broadly valuable to others. It helps destigmatize extractive laborers and traditional healers who engage “dark power.” For albinism rights stakeholders, the semiotics of spectacle holds the potential to inspire—and in some cases it has led to—different kinds of interventions, including those that work across sometimes incommensurable theories of agency and value.

Over games of pool and checkers, Nsembi and I discussed everything from the atrocities of mining accidents to the joys of English Premier League football. Keen to talk about my fieldwork, he became a point of contact around mines, explaining my presence to others and encouraging them to chat with me. His interest in my work did not seem to emanate from a desire to convince me of anything. Rather, he seemed motivated by his philosophical nature, as well as by his boredom, the result of temporary bans on artisanal mining in “unregulated” areas.

After two decades of agrarian-based socialist development, economic liberalization in the 1980s opened Tanzania to foreign investment and paved the way for the expansion of the mining sector. Like much of Africa's mineral boom, mining has largely consisted of, on one hand, large-scale miners employed by multinational companies who use tools to extract minerals on titled land and thus contribute to "development" and, on the other, artisanal miners who occupy questionable legal status, lack employment or mechanization, and work in collectives that evade state control. Their ambiguous legal and economic position has contributed to their reputation as unscrupulous, despite evidence that artisanal mining enclaves are organized, relatively democratic spaces (Smith 2021). In Tanzania, this reputation has led to state efforts to license, tax, and regulate 1.5 million artisanal miners (URT 1997, 1998) and rebrand them as micro-entrepreneurs worthy of worker protections and mineral claim-holdings (Bryceson, Jönsson, and Sherrington 2010; Fisher 2007; Hayes 2008; Mwaipopo et al. 2004). Fraught relations between miners and state actors intensified during my fieldwork: not only was an election causing the president to crack down on artisanal mining but negative international media attention surrounding albinism also exacerbated depictions of miners as mired in "false beliefs" (*imani potofu*).⁷

In anthropological literature on the "modernity of witchcraft," beliefs in an unseen realm function as idioms through which to grapple with inequality, conspicuous consumption, and the opacity of neoliberal markets (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999; Geschiere 1997; for critiques, see Holbraad 2012; Kapferer 2002; Pederson 2011). At the heart of these interpretations are questions of agency and value: not only whether an albino arm can possess agency but also whether its value is rooted in the thing itself or is displaced from some other "real" source of value (e.g., a seemingly inscrutable extractive economy). Similarly, scholars of albinism have begun from the premise that body parts are objects onto which others have projected false beliefs (Brocco 2016; Bryceson, Jönsson, and Sherrington 2010; Imafidon 2019; Myhre 2017; Tanner 2010). Of particular import in this literature is both a history of Indigenous practices surrounding albinism and political economic changes in the transition from Tanzanian socialism (i.e., *ujamaa* or familyhood) to neoliberal capitalism that explain the recent explosion of practices to cleanse *nyota*.⁸

In this vein, albinism represents the latest fetish in a litany of violent episodes. Simeon Mesaki (1994, 2009), for instance, interpreted the murders of elderly Sukuma women rumored to be witches to result from forced relocation schemes (i.e., villagization) that disrupted systems of voluntary movement and

heightened tensions, as well as from the commercialization of traditional healing and its infiltration by charlatans. And interpreting the skinning of children in southern Tanzania in the 1990s, reportedly for sale in cross-border trade, [Todd Sanders \(2001, 173\)](#) argued that episodic fits of violence be taken as a desire for “meaningful modernity” with equitably distributed and transparently accumulated wealth. While indebted to approaches rooted in material conditions and structural transformations, this article charts a different course by tracing the creation of value surrounding albinism. Approaching albinism semiotically affords a different understanding of violence vis-à-vis spectacle and offers a methodological entry point for the study of justice-based movements rooted in entanglement.

Nsembi and his friends often discussed the unpredictable, opaque nature of extractive spaces that, while occasionally tremendously lucrative, posed grave danger. Esteemed for her work treating miners and fishermen, “Bujukano,” an elderly Sukuma healer, Muslim convert, and also a composite, explained the unique nature of extractive maladies ([Langwick 2011](#)) as resulting from the exceptional spaces the people who incurred them inhabited.⁹ I understood her to be referring not to the horizontal spatiality of decentralized mining enclaves, which have been shown to magnify the political economic tensions of post-structural adjustment Africa and reconfigure relations between state and non-state actors ([Ferguson 1999](#); [Reno 1998](#); [Smith 2011](#)). While this work refers to the horizontal dimensions of mining lifeworlds and deals mostly with the visible realm (e.g., regimes of taxes and governance), Bujukano was instead pointing to



Figure 2. Artisanal miners in Misungwi, Mwanza illegally dig for diamonds during a temporary ban on artisanal mining. Photo by Jane L. Saffitz.

vertical spatiality and the invisible worlds that exist below ground—to subterranean thresholds (De Boeck 2005; Meyer 1995; Niehaus 2000; Victor 2019). As she explained, entering a space of extraction meant engaging a different social order governed by *majini* (pl., spirits).¹⁰ In darkness, conditions of being with *uchafu*—dirt, disorder, and disarray—indexed not only a substance one must see through to find shiny minerals and fish but also a broader way of being that required navigating the moral hazards associated with darkness.

Nsembi narrated his experiences with *uchafu* one evening, as we sat around the guesthouse where I had rented a room. We were a few hours and a ferry ride from Mwanza, and since the Pentecostal family I lived with made clear their demurrals for miners and healers who, they claimed, engaged dark forces, I often spent a few days at a time at the guesthouse so as not to offend my family, especially given their status as elders at a church known for its albinism advocacy. Between drags of a cigarette, Nsembi explained that once after being divined, a healer revealed that his *nyota* had been closed by a displeased *jini* who owned the pit where he had been digging. Channeling the *jini*, the healer relayed its dissatisfaction with the infrequency with which Nsembi's team had been showering, as well as with their time in bars and with prostitutes. The *jini*, offended by the forms of *uchafu* ushered into the mine, signaled to the healer that if his crew were to continue their behavior, they would further incur its wrath through the concealment of minerals or, worse, accident, sacrifice, or some sinister act of misfortune that would surely tarnish Nsembi's *nyota*.

The most distinguishing aspect of mines and lakes, then, were the non-humans that were more irascible with demands harder to intuit than their land counterparts. The arbiters of subterranean thresholds guarded the flow of minerals and fish, controlling the terms of their extraction and making them visible to laborers only when they saw fit. Fickle and vindictive, they had been known to cover the eyes of miners to prevent them from seeing gold or trick them into digging in the wrong location. In this sense, extractive labor is not a matter of locating fixed entities, but, rather, a complex process of engaging unseen realms where resources move in and out of existence, becoming visible or invisible in the process (Calvão 2013; Coyle Rosen 2020; Niehaus 2000; Smith 2021). That resources are only visible under certain conditions suggests that success requires proper (that is, *safi*, or clean) social relations, such as showering regularly and not committing adultery. From this perspective, subterranean thresholds are spaces of uncertainty (Johnson 2017; Victor 2019). Part of extracting of resources, then, was the removal of *uchafu* and the opening of Nsembi's ways,

which required the visions of a skilled healer to intuit the *jini*'s demands. Semiotically and ethnographically, dirtiness and darkness are qualisigns of negative value that connect the embodied act of seeing below ground with the moral perils of unsavory practices. As much as Nsembi joked with friends about his vices or boasted the natural protection of his *nyota* that comes from having strong *mizimu* (ancestors), he was often reminded of the stakes: getting minerals is a matter of miracles, he would repeat. Engaging darkness was inevitable.

Negative valuations of darkness took on particular significance for albinism stakeholders, many of whom are devout Christians. Christian stakeholders fiercely opposed any engagement with a non-godly unseen realm and thus saw divining and treating *nyota* as shrouded in darkness, rather than as restoring luster to what was tarnished through witchcraft. For both Yasi and Yakobo, Christian valuations of dark power (*nguvu ya giza*) evoked the power of Satan to rule over God's kingdom, which manifested in the use of albino body parts to cleanse *nyota*. In this context, penetrating darkness by disparaging the belief *nyota* as indexical of evil was constituent of a broader mission to fight satanic power and usher in the light of God.¹¹

Beyond religious organizing, darkness indexed the ignorance of improperly valuing albinism and understanding who or what possesses agency. Here, nonbiomedical understandings of albinism—for instance, questioning whether albino body parts can generate wealth—indexed obscurantism and thus complicity in violence. Darkness was similarly invoked to lament the opacity surrounding investigations into Pendo's disappearance and Yohana's murder, as Yakobo denounced politicians, prosecutors, and police who he said had the power to transparently bring about justice but, owing to their own possible consumption of albino body parts, refused. As a result, stakeholder interventions often centered on the need to eradicate forms of darkness that pointed to conditions of ignorance, malfeasance, or erasure.

As a qualisign of negative value, darkness enables an understanding of what is semiotically continuous across disparate interventions (Harkness 2015). For Nsembi, qualisigns of darkness and dirtiness evince a need for healthy *nyota* and, by extension, a properly relational social order that grants the ability to see in subterranean thresholds. For differently positioned albinism rights stakeholders, negative valuations of darkness compel interventions to "correct" beliefs in *nyota*, including through Miss Albinism pageants, skin and vision caravans, documentary films, summer camps, red carpet events, and more. I read these interventions as forms of spectacle that signal the value of albinism. That *nyota*

index lightness for some and darkness for others points to the importance of interpretation in processes of signification, and to signs as sites of ethical, epistemological, and ontological contestation (Chumley 2017; Peirce 1955; see also Parmentier 1994).

Despite the differing metaphysical commitments underlying them, practices of illumination are fraught. Although albinism stakeholders see their interventions as acting on a preexisting spectacle, the visibility they create is turned on its head by spectators who interpret the value—and demand—surrounding albinism in unpredictable ways. In contrast, Nsembi felt less sure of the effects of his interventions and understood his actions as already caught in spectacle. Rooted in entanglement, his mode of seeing less concerned a binary opposition between light and dark, and more their tendency to exist inside each other (Barad 2007). This struck me as ethical work and resonated with my own sense of complicity and entanglement—who had seen me attend albinism rights events and the homes of traditional healers, and what had they suspected about me? In this way, working with Nsembi allowed me to imagine a postactivist ethics grounded in relationality that parsed the effects of interventions semiotically, rather than through reified categories or crumbling narratives.

SEEKING LIGHTNESS

A prominent albinism intervention, International Albinism Awareness Day (IAAD), has been celebrated every June 13 since its initiation by the United Nations in 2015. At the inaugural event in Sengerema, NGO and state officials hosted radio and television broadcasters and journalists, all of whom preached the need to protect people with albinism. As they spoke, crowds surrounded a newly built monument on a roundabout in the town center, created by the Canadian evangelical NGO Under the Same Sun (UTSS). As UTSS explained, the Nithamini Monument, or the self-respect monument, “portrays a life size metal statue depicting an *enlightened* father who does not have albinism holding his child with albinism on his shoulders while an educated mother, also without albinism, puts a wide brimmed hat on the child’s head to protect him from the sun.”¹² Signaling the lightness of properly valuing albinism as genetic and addressing the potency of the equatorial sun, the monument was erected at a site that UTSS claims was once a ceremonial gathering place for healers exercising “dark power.”

I stood silently as NGO representatives read the names of people with albinism who had been killed. Afterward, we lit candles to commemorate them in a



Figure 3. Erected in 2014 by albinism rights NGO Under the Same Sun, the monument in Sengerema town features the love two black parents have for their child with albinism. With the names of people with albinism painted around it, the monument is said to be built on top of a “sacred site” where healers once practiced. Photo by Under the Same Sun.

process that many albinism rights stakeholders, me included, found comforting. Looking back, I understand how events like the IAAD generate spectacle, not only showcasing albinism as valuable but also capable of enabling societal transformations. After the commemoration, walking to the bus stand, I overheard two bystanders remark on the robustness of albinism activism. “Those with albinism have much security in society,” one said. The other retorted, “If you even touch one, you will face big consequences.” They laughed and continued debating how many years one would spend incarcerated and how much money one would have to pay for “touching a person with albinism.” Casting a shadow over the day’s events, their laughs stayed with me, for they revealed how albinism interventions designed to ameliorate violence nevertheless signal the value of albinism through the creation of spectacles.

Embodied qualities of light became more explicit in IAAD celebrations with annual themes like “Shining Our Light to the World” in 2018 and “Made to Shine” in 2020. In commemorating the 2018 event, the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, Marta Santos Pais, said, “We must all shine a bright light of compassion and protection upon the darkness of violence and discrimination that too many children with albinism



Figure 4. An annual event rooted in demands for greater visibility and thus conditions of light, International Albinism Awareness Day themes also celebrate the lightness of albinism. Image by Under the Same Sun.

endure.” She ended by appealing to the goals of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda: “We must ensure that no child, including those with albinism, is left behind in the dark. Together, let us shine their bright light to the world” (UN-VC 2018). Themes at IAAD thus indexed the material lightness of albinism as it manifests in skin, hair, and eyes, and the concepts of enlightenment and illumination that connote expanded consciousness and higher orders of knowledge. Also invoked as a means of combatting the ways in which people with albinism had historically been marginalized and “kept in the dark,” the lightness of albinism was understood to promote visibility and normalize difference through medical, religious, and rights-based modes of personhood.

As Yasi explained to me a few months after the first IAAD, stakeholders consider visibility a primary aim. From behind the desk in his office at church just outside of Mwanza, he articulated the need to bring light—in this instance, something akin to transparency—to seemingly dark processes that made it nigh impossible to know what happened to Pendo and Yohana, and who was doing what with albino body parts and why. For him, lightness meant a media that could freely report on violence without fear of state violence or repression, a government that could effectively investigate violence and bring perpetrators to justice, and a population that could curtail the power of healers by rejecting

the temptation of albino body parts and channeling one's inner darkness into religious faith. Preaching the need to abandon "African traditions" steeped in darkness, particularly around "beliefs in *nyota*," Yasi averred the need to both accumulate wealth transparently and assimilate genetic understandings of human difference.¹³

The strategy of "shining a light" on albinism was not lost on artisanal miners and healers, who questioned why people with albinism were capable of attracting powerful people like journalists, scientists, humanitarians, and academics. Like the dialogue I overheard at the bus stop in Sengerema, conversations about albinism were frequently motivated by albinism rights interventions, especially on TV and radio, rather than by personal conviction, rumor, or shadowy visits to healers. During these conversations, Nsembi and his team pointed to the fetishization of albinism at the hands of various stakeholders who, for their own purposes, possessed highly visible interests in working with populations with albinism, this article no exception. Not surprisingly, discourses disparaging miners as indifferent to the plight of people with albinism and ignorant of "the truth" about them angered Nsembi, as did the tendency of stakeholders to circumscribe *nyota* within a discourse of fetishism, such that the former came to signify a failure to correctly value the agency of human bodies and parts.

Yet Nsembi's quest for shiny *nyota* formed part of his desire to align with the forces that determined his fate. During an exchange with Bujukano, she told me that *nyota* are mostly imperceptible to the bodies they inhabit and must be checked by healers through divination. As she accesses an unseen realm, a patient's *nyota* reveals itself to her through subtle atmospheric perceptions brought by her ancestors or her *jini*, allowing her to intuit their malady. In this sense, *nyota* are harbingers of disease. On another occasion, Bujukano elaborated that as a symptom of bewitchment, *nyota* could be stolen, tarnished, and made crooked through the baneful acts of others; in this way, dark or dirty *nyota* signal despair, while those that are light, shiny, open, and straight portend success. The oracular quality of *nyota* caused Bujukano to analogize, "*Nyota* is *ndagu* [Sukuma: fate], like knowing your CD4 count."¹⁴ That is, like CD4 T lymphocytes that measure the strength of one's immune system and the progression of HIV, *nyota* is unseen protection that can deteriorate and leave one vulnerable to attack, whether from pathogens or subterranean *majini*.

Toward the end of our time together, after Nsembi's team had been working for weeks with no payout, the team asked that he have his *nyota* checked. In February 2016, I accompanied him to Bujukano's *kaya* (Sukuma: homestead).

We sat cross-legged on woven mats in what she called her house of culture (*nyumba ya utamaduni*), where she displayed her *dawa*. She instructed Nsembi to speak his intentions; then she closed her eyes and through a slow, breathy whistle summoned her *mizimu* (ancestors). She chanted, shaking a basket, and causing its contents—old coins, petrified wood, shells, and peanut-sized iron bells—to rise and fall. On opening her eyes, she read their configuration and told Nsembi that his *nyota* was dirty. To restore its lightness, she had us return the following day with a small white chicken that she slaughtered, dried, and added to a mortar. After adding water and stirring with a cow tail, she began to gently whip the soaked tail across Nsembi's bare back.

We left with a plastic water bottle of *dawa* and instructions for Nsembi to wash three times the following day, far from any latrines, and meet her the following evening at the pit where his team had been digging. When we arrived, Bujukano asked the pit's *majini* for permission to enter, then lit a small bouquet of incense. Nsembi removed his shirt and kneeled before her, while she mixed *dawa* and, using a cloth that facilitated her ancestors' presence, quickly washed Nsembi's shoulders before portending light *nyota* by the week's end.¹⁵

Later Bujukano explained that the chicken's lightness catalyzed the *dawa* she used to brighten Nsembi's *nyota*, allowing him to see in extractive thresholds. I understand her use of seeing (*kuona*) to encompass ideas and practices beyond ocular processes, like the ability to manifest particular futures (Smith 2021). She also mentioned treating Nsembi with a category of *dawa* that enabled him to attract shiny minerals. It was similar to *dawa* she had prepared for fishermen who used it at night to wash the lanterns used in the lake to attract swarms of white-bait, as well as for businesspeople who would wash the walls of their stores to attract customers. In this case the efficacy of Bujukano's *dawa* lies in its ability to manipulate the terms of one's visibility, which for Nsembi the light chicken made possible. Yet for albinism rights stakeholders, agentive chicken (or human) parts reflect a fundamental misunderstanding of who or what can act (e.g., ancestors who direct divinations, demons who own pits, or body parts that attract certain entities). It is for this reason that Yakobo and Yasi condemn practices of healing *nyota* and aim to stabilize the boundaries between whole people who are valuable and agentive, and commodified parts that are not. While strategies of demystifying, illuminating, and solidifying the boundaries of albinism appear sensible, especially given what is at stake, they generate spectacle and, in this way, enable further interpretations of the possible value that coheres in the bodies of those with albinism.

VALUING ALBINISM

Nsembi never asked about the additives in his *dawa*, nor did he inquire about the root cause of his tarnished *nyota*.¹⁶ It was not typical for patients to ask about ingredients, since *dawa* depended on the “articulated visions” rendered through their divination and on the networks of humans and nonhumans through which their knowledge emerged (West 2007). Additionally, the efficacy of *dawa* for treating *nyota* rests only partly on material composition: potency cannot be disentangled from the therapeutic encounter between healer and patient, where ritual practices fuse with words and intentionality (Green 1996; Langwick 2011; Stroeken 2013). This means that while mutually agreed-on kinds of *dawa* exist—for example, *samba* (Sukuma: to attract) or *kukingia* (Swahili: to protect)—what proves efficacious in one encounter may not in another (Feierman 2000). Similarly, *dawa* comprising the same ingredients might treat different afflictions, while *dawa* containing different materials and administered with different speech acts and intentions may produce similar effects.

The relational and embedded nature of preparing and administering *dawa* suggests that it is not possible to speak of *dawa* containing albino body parts in the aggregate, as a homogenous category that abides by uniform logics to a prescribed set of ends, as the narratives of albinicide purport. Additionally, the centrality of ritual, evident in Nsembi’s need to be treated through a particularly sequenced set of events involving ancestors and other subterranean nonhumans, suggests that the efficacy of *dawa*—the source of power—lies not in the thing itself, as the logic of fetishism suggests. Rather, *dawa* becomes agentive through the social relations it comes to embody. By this token, an albino bone would not itself be valuable in that neither patient nor healer would aver its agency independent of the ritual practices that might imbue it with value.

Because his grandmother (*bibi*) had been a well-regarded healer and brought him to the bush to find *dawa*, Nsembi knew what was needed to brighten tarnished *nyota*. Shortly after rumors of albinism-related violence surfaced in 2006, she warned him that being treated with *dawa* containing human body parts was *uchawi* (witchcraft) and would bestow misfortune on their lineage; she also explained that body parts obtained through practices that severed social relations, like those obtained violently, were inert. Her sentiments echo what I heard from many traditional healers who acknowledged the extraordinary power of anomalous bodies to access an unseen realm and the use of their parts in *dawa*, both historically and contemporarily, as well as broader practices among Wasukuma related to human sacrifice (Mbogoni 2013). In her practice decades ago, she

diagnosed and treated tarnished *nyota*. At the time, she knew of the medicinal properties of albino body parts and condemned their use.

Years later, Nsembi equivocated about their possibilities, and sitting at a roadside restaurant where we were the only patrons, he relayed his *bibi*'s theory of the value of albinism. Long ago during competitions between Sukuma dance societies, he began, participants aimed to drum up support for their society by creating a spectacle (Bessire 2005). Using *dawa* to attract crowds and attack their opponents, troupes would try to find someone with albinism—a difficult feat since many were kept inside compounds set apart—and insist that they attend the competition. Such a spectator would invariably guarantee the spectacle they needed to win.

Nsembi interpreted his *bibi*'s story to mean that lightness attracted spectators. Extending her insights beyond Sukuma dance competitions, Nsembi reasoned that albinism similarly attracted scientists, journalists, missionaries, academics, and disability and human rights advocates—all of whom generate their own spectacle. By pointing to the value of albinism not for healers and miners but for powerful Tanzanian and international actors, Nsembi suggested that the demand for albino body parts might ultimately come from the value created through stakeholder interventions.

Prominent albinism rights stakeholders also entertained the possibility that demand may come from Westerners. Once when Juma, an albinism rights stakeholder who often worked with Yakobo and Yasi, and I were in the regional offices of the Tanzanian Albinism Society, he asked me what scientists “in my country” were discovering about the powers of his albino arm. When I asked him to explain, he elaborated that *wazungu* (Euro-Americans) were always discovering new things, so perhaps knowledge of the extraordinary powers of albino body parts was discovered in a laboratory—and then abused by healers. Articulating his value within biomedicine, Juma, too, pointed to the possibility of a non-African demand for albinism.¹⁷

Analytically, Nsembi and Juma blurred any neat separation between the lightness of biomedicine and genetics, Christian values, and human rights, on the one hand, and for purposes of polishing *nyota* and extracting resources, on the other. Instead equating a Sukuma attraction to albinism for healing purposes or in dance competitions with a biomedical attraction to albinism for treating skin cancer or a journalist's attempt to raise awareness, Nsembi showed how the value of albinism emanated from practices that illuminate, rather than from purportedly deeply held “traditional beliefs,” leaving open the question of what any given intervention might effect.

Nsembi returned to this conversation a few days later when he explained that the lightness of albinism could enable forms of seeing: “People with albinism can see in darkness.” Like ancestors who impart radiant *nyota*, he explained, people with albinism can illuminate subterranean spaces. As he spoke, I thought of my friends with albinism who had complained about the difficulty of seeing during the brightest hours of the day. I recalled an albinism seminar where an ophthalmologist diagrammed the physiological implications of albinism for the eyes, including an underdeveloped optic nerve that makes it harder to absorb light and thus easier to see in darker conditions. And I was reminded of the advocacy work of albinism rights NGOs who taught schoolchildren with albinism to sit in lower lit areas and close any curtains. Significantly, Nsembi rooted his observations about the possibilities of albino body parts in biomedical knowledge, which attests to the various kinds of interpretations emergent in albinism interventions.

He also makes a broader point about visibility and the consequences of being seen. As Yakobo explained, the idea behind awareness-raising campaigns is that they “sensitize” others to albinism and assimilate them to biomedical, rights-based, or religious frameworks. But as Nsembi showed, what albinism signifies is variable. In Peirce’s triadic theory of the sign, meaning is not inherent but relational (Kockelman 2005). To illustrate this idea, semioticians often draw on joint attention, a phenomenon where someone turns to observe what someone else is already observing. The idea that Nsembi—or anyone—was observing not only stakeholders but also anyone seemingly interested in albinism, and possibly interpreting my work as indexical of a demand for the bodies of people with albinism, whole or in parts, felt deeply unsettling, to say the least.

SPECTACLE

It is difficult to convey the affective intensity in Mwanza in the weeks and months following Pendo’s disappearance and Yohana’s death. Rumors abounded, frustrating stakeholders and journalists who became increasingly angry with state officials for what appeared to be a lack of political will. The absence of clear information prolonged our grief. At a televised Premiere League football game, players stood silently on the field while holding a baby or the hand of a child with albinism. And on a multiday protest march, college students walked hundreds of kilometers to seek the wisdom of Maria Nyerere, the former wife of *baba wa taifa* (the nation’s father). It is in this affective context that Yakobo was speaking to media, holding seminars, coordinating services, meeting with politicians, and

hosting foreign donors; and that Yasi, engaging in much of the same activities, was also preaching godly interpretations of albinism.

Two months after Pendo's disappearance, Yakobo informed me that a man had been arrested in Ukerewe with an apparent human arm bone the size of a small child. He was later released. I didn't investigate further, not because there were no leads to follow or rumors to trace, but because following them meant engaging in practices of illumination that I came to see as part of the problem. In retrospect, I suspect this man was looking for a buyer—one who would pay handsomely for the parts said to be so valued—but couldn't find one. I had seen similar stories of what seemed like supply without demand in newspapers articles, police reports, and court documents. Eventually I came to see the presumption of demand as the result of a semiotics of joint attention whereby a range of different actors were entangled in the interventions of another. Tragically, then, one is left looking for the demand that always lies elsewhere.

An analysis rooted in the semiotics of quality also raises questions about what constitutes activism. Compelled by understandings of fetishism that bifurcate who or what can act, albinism activism is predicated on a single ontology rooted in the idea that the motives, causes, and effects of any intervention can be transparently known. Activism also relies on partitioning those who act from those who are acted on, affording the former facts that enlighten, and the latter rumors that obscure. Except that if we follow valuations surrounding *nyota* and its relative qualities of lightness and darkness, we see that such partitions do not exist and that sign processes in one milieu can intimately shape another. Hence Nsembi's assessment rooting the extraordinary power of albino body parts partly in biomedicine. The historian [Florence Bernault \(2006, 2007\)](#) cautions against the "tendency to draw epistemic boundaries between western and African imaginaries." While she was speaking to historians and anthropologists, the same applies for humanitarians.

Beyond albinism specifically, spectacle demonstrates the importance of situating issues of representation and visibility inherent to social movements in broader processes of sign-making. This requires a particular openness to questions of who or what can act in semiotic processes ([Keane 2003](#)). Because stakeholders understood violence to stem from fetishistic error, their interventions strove to partition person from thing and foreclose the ontological possibilities of albinism beyond genetics ([Saffitz 2023](#)). I understand this activist practice to constitute an ethics of doing, in this case motivated by the desire to keep people with albinism safe, as well as by the operational narratives and categories that make stakeholder activism meaningful.

For Nsembi, avoiding the deadly dangers of mining and receiving even a modest payout required that he be divined and washed with *dawa* to lighten his *nyota*. To interpret these practices as “superstitious beliefs” misses how the value of lightness emerges relationally and how interventions contra *nyota* generate spectacle. At the same time, his postactivist ethics and politics were attuned to being in alignment with the forces around him, whether nonhumans or albinism stakeholders, and thus find meaning relationally, rather than through an individual or group (Zigon 2019). This meant deferring when it came to the powers of albino body parts—to neither avowing nor abnegating their agency. It also meant assimilating notions of the biomedical body that genetic explanations of albinism espoused and the bodies that *nyota* inhabit, which come into being as sick or healthy only through the relations they manifest. And it meant remaining suspended between *nyota* as they manifested social relations and extractive commodity chains as they obscured them.

Instead of activist strategies that can lead to forms of hypervisibility, postactivist practice moves beyond humanitarian categories and the logics of identity politics to foreground the practices that give rise to them. Aligning with Peirce’s model of the sign and Nsembi’s relational ethics emergent in healing *nyota*, postactivism approaches agency relationally rather than categorically or essentially. Beyond social movements, the analytic of spectacle provides a way forward in recent debates about anthropology in light and dark times (see, for example, Ortner 2016). Exposing how conditions of lightness and darkness exist inside each other, spectacle moves beyond the light/dark binary in anthropological theory by focusing on regimes of visibility that afford different ways of seeing.

ABSTRACT

In the past fifteen years, scores of high-profile murders of Africans with albinism have sparked a robust global movement for albinism rights. In Tanzania, disparate albinism stakeholders (wadau) attribute violence to an illicit market for albino body parts run by traditional healers and their patrons, who are said to believe in the extraordinary powers of these parts to access an unseen realm. This article tacks between stakeholders with albinism and composite sketches of a healer and her artisanal miner patient, to offer a theory of violence rooted in spectacle rather than belief. Focusing on albinism interventions as sites of spectacle, I employ a semiotics of quality to show how albinism becomes central to broader processes of illumination (kungeza nuru). A semiotic approach to social movements moves beyond the sedimented categories and narrative tropes that compel activism to reveal a postactivist politics and

ethics grounded in relationality. [albinism; lightness; social movements; semi-otics; qualisign; violence; Tanzania]

MUHTASARI

Katika kipindi cha takribani miaka kumi na tano iliyopita, matukio mengi ya mauaji ya Waafrika wenye ualbino yamechochea vuguvugu kote duniani la kupigania haki za watu hao. Nchini Tanzania, wadau tofauti tofauti wa ualbino wanahusisha vurugu na soko haramu la viungo vya watu hao linaloendeshwa na waganga wa kienyeji na wateja wao, ambao wanadaiwa kuamini katika uwezo wa ajabu wa viungo hivi kufika kwenye ulimwengu usioonekana. Makala haya yanahusu wadau wenye ualbino na hadithi ya mganga na mgonjwa wake mchimbaji madini mdogo, ili kutoa nadharia ya vurugu iliyojengeka na tamasha lenye mvuto badala ya imani. Nikizingatia kuingilia kati kwa ualbino kama maeneo ya tamasha lenye mvuto, ninatumia semiotiki yenye sifa ilikuonyesha jinsi ualbino unavyokuwa kitovu cha michakato mipana katika kuongeza mwonekano. Mtazamo wa semiotiki wa harakati za kijamii unasogea zaidi ya kategoria zisizo badilika na mambo yote ya kawaida ya kila siku ya kuchochea wadau kwenye kuweka wazi siasa na maadili za wanaharakati zilizoengwa katika mauhusiano. [ualbino; nuru; harakati za kijamii; semiotiki (masomo ya alama na ishara); qualisign (sifa zinazowasiliana kama ishara); vurugu; Tanzania]

NOTES

Acknowledgments I am immensely grateful to the friends, colleagues, and interlocuters in Tanzania who have enabled my research and writing, especially Yakobo, Yasi, Nsembi, and Bujukano. I also thank Angelina and Juma Kibela, Ester Gotfried Rwela, Steve Bugumba, and Elisha Kazima Maganga, as well as Under the Same Sun and the Tanzanian Albinism Society. Marisol de la Cadena, Donald Donham, Cristiana Giordano, Justin Haruyama, Veerendra Lele, Laura Meek, Shiri Noy, Lisa Morrison, James Smith, and Brad Weiss offered invaluable feedback, as did anonymous reviewers and the *Cultural Anthropology* Editorial Collective, in particular Matilde Córdoba Azcárate. This research and writing were funded by the National Science Foundation, the Fulbright-Hays Program, the Wenner-Gren Foundation, as well as the Departments of Anthropology and African Studies at the University of California, Davis, and the Office of the Provost at Denison University. Despite assistance from Ester Gotfried Rwela and Ann Biersteker, any errors in Swahili translation are my own.

1. The names presented in this piece are pseudonyms.
2. Generally translated as “medicine,” *dawa* involves a more capacious category that includes substances and immaterial practices that catalyze socio-bodily transformations. Rather than making them equivalent, I leave *dawa* untranslated.
3. Despite criticisms that the term *stakeholder* homogenizes the actors and interests in any given movement (Fortun 2001), I use the term because it best corresponds with the word used by Yakobo, Yasi, and others (*wadau*). While I highlight common narrative tropes related to albinism, I do not wish to imply uniformity across diverse groups with various ties to albinism.
4. *Swahili Times*, Twitter Post, January 12, 2017, 11:44 PM, <https://twitter.com/swahili-times/status/819767147849220096>

5. While some occasionally used race as a rubric through which to interpret violence, this tended to cause confusion among non-English speaking Tanzanians, where the Swahili word for *race* (*ubaguzi wa rangi*, or separation by skin) evoked South African apartheid. While acknowledging the centrality of white supremacy in humanitarian apparatuses (Benton 2016), my focus on lightness in relation to the eyesight of people with albinism moves away from skin as a key element of the alterity of albinism.
6. Koen Stroeken (2011) has written about *mwanga* (light) in relation to albino body parts. His use differs from mine in that he treats *mwanga* as a metaphorical connection bridging the symbolic world of enlightenment and the material world of mining political economy.
7. Mwanza has been the site of negative media attention surrounding the exploitation inherent to extractive capitalism. See, for example, the documentary film *Darwin's Nightmare* (2004), directed by Hubert Sauper, which represented Tanzanian politicians unfavorably and to this day instills tensions surrounding others' efforts to represent extractive economies in the region.
8. Practices of cleansing *nyota* are not new, nor is *dawa* to attract or illuminate. While many healers explained historical uses of cleansing *nyota*—for instance, to ensure healthy crops—they also acknowledged that the need for light *nyota* has recently increased alongside the rise of extractive industries, privatized media, and multiparty democracy.
9. Bujukano is composed of three healers who worked in the Mwanza region treating miners and fishermen, among others. Because divining is criminalized in Tanzania, I combined elements of multiple divinations and healing practices to disguise potentially distinguishing features. I did not visit healers who advertised for their services, nor did I visit those known for illicit activities. Instead, I visited reputable healers, mainstays in their communities, all of them located through word of mouth by my research assistant or me. These healers were majority Sukuma but ethnically and religiously diverse.
10. Ethnically and religiously Muslim, *majini* that live in subterranean thresholds differ from those on land. (Larsen 2008; Lindhardt 2019). Many healers described long-term relationships with *majini* who guided their work. *Mashetani* (sing.: *shetani*), generally translated as “spirits” or “demons,” or in the singular as “Satan,” are said to inhabit bodies for their own ends and must be exorcised by a pastor or placated by a healer. Bujukano and Nsembi also evoked *mapepo* (sing.: *pepo*), sometimes as synonyms for *majini* and *mashetani* and sometimes as its literal translation (winds) to describe the agency of nonhumans. While differences between nonhumans vary across regional, ethnic, and religious contexts, my interlocutors used them interchangeably when describing the hazards of extractive labor. These nonhumans differ from *mizimu*, ancestors who also require sacrifices and can be difficult to please but are generally thought to be benevolent.
11. Valuations of light and dark and their association with cleanliness and dirtiness also evoked Muslim moral sensibilities embedded in healing practices derived from the Swahili coast (Giles 1995; Lindhardt 2019; McIntosh 2009). They speak to the multiplicity of practices of making light across religious, ethnic, and geographic differences.
12. Information taken from an Under the Same Sun Newsletter, 2014.
13. Albinism rights stakeholders occasionally evoked colonial logics that once ascribed darkness continent-wide to refract the lightness of European civilization. On darkness in Africa, see Achebe 2016 and Conrad 2008.
14. Koen Stroeken has written about *ndaqu* as “curse” (Stroeken 2008b, 475) and as “ancestral guides” (Stroeken 2008a, 160). Bujukano used the term in the latter sense.
15. As is common for healers in the region, Bujukano drew on a range of therapeutic techniques and medical traditions beyond the Sukuma knowledge she inherited. These include Maasai herbalists and Waswahili healers from the coast whose practices include insights from the Quran (Giles 1995; Wilkens 2011).

16. While it is typical for patients to request a specific kind of *dawa*, they do not, for the most part, inquire about certain ingredients, since this is known to be a private matter belonging to healers and the nonhumans who aid in their practice.
17. James Smith (2015, 17) had a somewhat similar experience in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo when he was approached as a possible buyer of an albino skeleton.

REFERENCES

- Achebe, Chinua
 2016 "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness." *Massachusetts Review* 57, no. 1: 14–27. <https://doi.org/10.1353/mar.2016.0003>
- Akomolafe, Bayo
 2017 *These Wilds beyond Our Fences: Letters to My Daughter on Humanity's Search for Home*. Berkeley, Calif.: North Atlantic Books.
 2021 "Encounters at the Edge." Institute of Postnatural Studies. December 16.
- Barad, Karen
 2007 *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Meaning and Matter*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- Bashkow, Ira
 2006 *The Meaning of Whitemen: Race and Modernity in the Orokaiva Cultural World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Benton, Adia
 2016 "African Expatriates and Race in the Anthropology of Humanitarianism." *Critical African Studies* 8, no. 3: 266–77. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21681392.2016.1244956>
- Bernault, Florence
 2006 "Body, Power, and Sacrifice in Equatorial Africa." *Journal of African History* 47, no. 2: 207–39. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853706001836>
- Bessire, Aimée
 2005 "Sukuma Figures, Boundaries, and the Arousal of Spectacle." *African Arts* 38, no. 1: 36–52. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3338066>
- Brocco, Giorgio
 2015 "Labeling Albinism: Language and Discourse Surrounding People with Albinism in Tanzania." *Disability & Society* 30, no. 8: 1143–57. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2015.1075869>
 2016 "Albinism, Stigma, Subjectivity, and Global-Local Discourses in Tanzania." *Anthropology & Medicine* 23, no. 3: 229–43. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13648470.2016.1184009>
- Bryceson, Deborah Fahy, Jesper Bosse Jønsson, and Richard Sherrington
 2010 "Miners' Magic: Artisanal Mining, the Albino Fetish, and Murder in Tanzania." *Journal of Modern African Studies* 48, no. 3: 353–82. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X10000303>
- Calvão, Filipe
 2013 "The Transporter, the Agitator, and the Kamanguista: Qualia and the In/visible Materiality of Diamonds." *Anthropological Theory* 13, no. 1–2: 119–36. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1463499613483404>
- Chumley, Lily
 2017 "Qualia and Ontology: Language, Semiotics, and Materiality; An Introduction." *Signs and Society* 5, no. S1: S1–S20. <https://doi.org/10.1086/690190>
- Chumley, Lily, and Nicholas Harkness
 2013 "Introduction: Qualia." *Anthropological Theory* 13, no. 1–2: 3–11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1463499613483389>

- Comaroff, Jean, and John L. Comaroff
 1999 "Occult Economies and the Violence of Abstraction: Notes from the South African Postcolony." *American Ethnologist* 26, no. 2: 279–303. <https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.1999.26.2.279>
- Conrad, Joseph
 2008 [1899] *Heart of Darkness*. Edited by Harold Bloom. New York: Infobase Publishing.
- Coyle Rosen, Lauren
 2020 *Fires of Gold: Law, Spirit, and Sacrificial Labor in Ghana*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Dave, Naisargi N.
 2012 *Queer Activism in India: A Story in the Anthropology of Ethics*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- De Boeck, Filip
 2005 "The Divine Seed: Children, Gift, and Witchcraft in the Democratic Republic of Congo." In *Makers and Breakers: Children and Youth in Postcolonial Africa*, edited by Alcinda Honwana and Filip De Boeck. 188–214. Oxford: James Currey.
- Feierman, Steven
 2000 "Explanation and Uncertainty in the Medical World of the Ghaambo." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 74, no. 2: 317–44. <https://doi.org/10.1353/bhm.2000.0070>
- Fortun, Kim
 2001 *Advocacy after Bhopal: Environmentalism, Disaster, and New Global Orders*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ferguson, James
 1999 *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Fisher, Eleanor
 2007 "Occupying the Margins: Labor Integration and Social Exclusion in Artisanal Mining in Tanzania." *Development and Change* 38, no. 4: 735–60. <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.2007.00431.x>
- Geschiere, Peter
 1997 *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.
- Giles, Linda
 1995 "Sociocultural Change and Spirit Possession on the Swahili Coast of East Africa." *Anthropological Quarterly* 36, no. 2: 89–106. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3318049>
- Green, Maia
 1996 "Medicines and the Embodiment of Substances among Pogoro Catholics, Southern Tanzania." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 2, no. 3: 485–98. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3034899>
- Harkness, Nicholas
 2015 "The Pragmatics of Qualia in Practice." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 44: 573–89. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-anthro-102313-030032>
- Hayes, Karen
 2008 "Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining and Livelihoods in Africa." Workshop Report. Common Fund for Commodities.
- Holbraad, Martin
 2012 *Truth in Motion: The Recursive Anthropology of Cuban Divination*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Imafidon, Elvis
 2019 "Some Epistemological Issues in the Othering of Persons with Albinism in Africa." In *Handbook of African Philosophy of Difference*, edited by Elvis Imafidon. 1–18. Geneva: Springer.

- Jangu, Menan
 2012 "Healing Environmental Harms: Social Change and Sukuma Traditional Medicine on Tanzania's Extractive Frontier." Doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan.
- Johnson, Jennifer Lee
 2017 "Eating and Existence on an Island in Southern Uganda." *Comparative Studies of Social Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 37, no. 1: 2–23. <https://doi.org/10.1215/1089201x-3821273>
- Kapferer, Bruce
 2002 "Introduction: Outside All Reason—Magic, Sorcery, and Epistemology in Anthropology." *Social Analysis* 46, no. 3: 1–30. <https://doi.org/10.3167/015597702782409310>
- Keane, Webb
 2003 "Semiotics and the Social Analysis of Material Things." *Language & Communication* 23, no. 3–4: 409–25. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0271-5309\(03\)00010-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0271-5309(03)00010-7)
- Kockelman, Paul
 2005 "The Semiotic Stance." *Semiotica*, no. 157: 233–304. <https://doi.org/10.1515/semi.2005.2005.157.1-4.233>
 2006 "Agent, Person, Subject, Self." *Semiotica*, no. 162: 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1515/SEM.2006.072>
- Kohn, Eduardo
 2007 "How Dogs Dream: Amazonian Natures and the Politics of Transspecies Engagement." *American Ethnologist* 34, no. 1: 3–24. <https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.2007.34.1.3>
- Langwick, Stacey A.
 2011 *Bodies, Politics, and African Healing: The Matter of Maladies in Tanzania*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Larsen, Kjersti
 2008 *Where Humans and Spirits Meet: The Politics of Ritual and Identified Spirits in Zanzibar*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Lindhardt, Martin
 2019 "Pentecostalism, Witchcraft, and Islamic Spiritologies in Central Tanzania." *Journal of Africana Religions* 7, no. 1: 84–93. <https://doi.org/10.5325/jafireli.7.1.0084>
- Masanja, Methusela Mishael, Marko Mwita Imori, and Ismail Juma Kaudunde
 2020 "Factors Associated with Negative Attitudes towards Albinism and People with Albinism: A Case of Households Living with Albinism in Lake Zone, Tanzania." *Open Journal of Social Sciences* 8, no. 4: 523–37. <https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2020.84038>
- Mbogoni, Lawrence E. Y.
 2013 *Human Sacrifice and the Supernatural in African History*. Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers.
- McIntosh, Janet
 2009 *The Edge of Islam: Power, Personhood, and Ethnoreligious Boundaries on the Kenya Coast*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- Mesaki, Simeon
 1994 "Witch-Killing in Sukumaland." In *Witchcraft in Contemporary Tanzania*, edited by Ron Abrahams, 71–86. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 2009 "The Tragedy of Aging: Witch Killings and Poor Governance among the Sukuma." In *Dealing with Uncertainty in Contemporary African Lives*, edited by Liv Haram and C. Bawa Yamba, 72–90. Stockholm: Nordiska Afrikanstitutet.
- Meyer, Birgit
 1995 "Delivered from the Powers of Darkness: Confessions of Satanic Riches in Christian Ghana." *Africa* 65, no. 2: 236–55. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1161192>

- Mulemi, Benson A., and Urbanus M. Ndolo
 2014 "Albinism, Witchcraft, and Superstition in East Africa: Explorations of Biocultural Exclusion and Livelihood Vulnerability." Department of Research, Catholic University of Eastern Africa.
- Munn, Nancy
 1986 *The Fame of Gawa: A Symbolic Study of Value Transformation in a Massim Society*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- Mwaipopo, Rosemarie, Wilson Mutagwaba, David Nyange, and Eleanor Fisher
 2004 "Increasing the Contribution of Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining to Poverty Reduction in Tanzania." London: Department for International Development.
- Myhre, Knut Christian
 2017 "The Power of a Severed Arm: Life, Witchcraft, and Christianity in Kilimanjaro." In *Pentecostalism and Witchcraft: Spiritual Warfare in Africa and Melanesia*, edited by Knut Rio, Michelle McCarthy, and Ruy Blanes, 163–87. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Niehaus, Isak
 2000 "Coins for Blood and Blood for Coins: From Sacrifice to Ritual Murder in the South African Lowveld, 1930–2000." *Etnofoor* 13, no. 2: 31–54. <https://doi.org/10.2307/25757991>
- Ortner, Sherry B.
 2016 "Dark Anthropology and Its Others: Theory since the Eighties." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 6, no. 1: 47–73. <https://doi.org/10.14318/hau6.1.004>
- Parmentier, Richard
 1994 *Signs in Society: Studies in Semiotic Anthropology*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Pederson, Morton A.
 2011 *Not Quite Shamans: Spirit Worlds and Political Lives in Northern Mongolia*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- Peirce, Charles Sanders
 1955 *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*. Edited by Justus Buchler. New York: Dover Publications.
- Redfield, Peter
 2012 "The Unbearable Lightness of Ex-Pats: Double Binds of Humanitarian Mobility." *Cultural Anthropology* 27, no. 2: 358–82. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1360.2012.01147.x>
- Reno, William
 1998 *Warlord Politics and African States*. Boulder, Colo.: Lynn Rienner Press.
- Rubaii, Kali, and Saiba Varma
 2023 "Troubling Complicities: The Anthropologist as (Im)moral Subject?" *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 13, no. 2: 377–93. <https://doi.org/10.1086/727740>
- Saffitz, Jane L.
 2023 "Realms Unseen: Albinism and Epistemic Decoloniality in Tanzania." *American Ethnologist* 50, no. 4: 582–94. <https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.13203>
- Sanders, Todd
 2001 "Save Our Skins: Structural Adjustment, Morality, and the Occult in Tanzania." In *Magical Interpretations, Material Realities: Modernity, Witchcraft, and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa*, edited by Henrietta Moore and Todd Sanders, 160–83. New York: Routledge.
- Sauper, Hubert, dir.
 2004 *Darwin's Nightmare*. Paris: Mille et Une Productions.
- Smith, James H.
 2011 "Tantalus in the Digital Age: Coltan Ore, Temporal Dispossession, and 'Movement' in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo." *American Ethnologist* 38, no. 1: 17–35. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1425.2010.01289.x>

- 2015 “‘May It Never End’: Price Wars, Networks, and Temporality in the ‘3 Ts’ Mining Trade of the Eastern DR Congo.” *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 5, no. 1: 1–34. <https://doi.org/10.14318/hau5.1.002>
- 2021 *The Eyes of the World: Mining the Digital Age in the Eastern DR Congo*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Stroeken, Koen
- 2008a “Believed Belief: Science/Religion versus Sukuma Magic.” *Social Analysis* 52, no. 1: 144–65. <https://doi.org/10.3167/sa.2008.520109>
- 2008b “Sensory Shifts and ‘Synaesthetics’ in Sukuma Healing.” *Ethnos* 73, no. 4: 466–84. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00141840802563923>
- 2011 “Resident Violence: Miner Mwanga Magic as War-Technology Anthropology.” In *War, Technology, Anthropology*, edited by Koen Stroeken, 120–34. New York: Berghahn Books.
- 2013 *Moral Power: The Magic of Witchcraft*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Tanner, Ralph
- 2010 “Ideology and the Killing of Albinos in Tanzania: A Study in Cultural Relativities.” *Anthropologist* 12, no. 4: 229–36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0972073.2010.11891161>
- Taylor, Julie, Caroline Bradbury-Jones, and Patricia Lund
- 2019 “Witchcraft-Related Abuse and Murder of Children with Albinism in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Conceptual Review.” *Child Abuse Review* 28, no. 1: 13–26. <https://doi.org/10.1002/car.2549>
- United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children (UN-VC)
- 2018 “‘Shining Our Light to the World’ on International Albinism Awareness Day—13 June.”
- United Republic of Tanzania (URT)
- 1997 “The Mineral Policy of Tanzania.” Policy document from the Ministry of Energy and Materials, October. <http://www.tzonline.org/pdf/themineralpolicyofTanzania.pdf>
- 1998 “The Mining Act.” <https://www.madini.go.tz/media/The-Mining-Act-1998.pdf>
- Victor, Letha
- 2019 “Those Who Go Underwater: Indignation, Sentiment, and Ethical Immanence in Northern Uganda.” *Anthropological Theory* 19, no. 3: 385–411. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1463499619832702>
- West, Harry G.
- 2007 *Ethnographic Sorcery*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wilkens, Katharina
- 2011 *Holy Water and Evil Spirits: Religious Healing in East Africa*. Berlin: Lit Verlag.
- Zigon, Jarrett
- 2019 *A War on People: Drug User Politics and a New Ethics of Community*. Berkeley: University of California Press.