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"Introduction" & "The Sacred Life of Plants: Placing Royal Growth"

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SACRED TREES, BITTER HARVESTS

Globalizing Coffee in
Northwest Tanzania

BRAD WEISS



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GLOBALIZING COFFEE
IN NORTHWEST TANZANIA

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Allen Isaacman and Jean Allman, Series Editors

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INTRODUCTION

In his history of the Haya Kingdom of Kiziba, Francis X. Lwamgira, the eminent translator and scholar, advisor to kings and colonial officials, describes a very precarious—even touchy¹—meeting. The encounter in 1891 was between the Muziba king—or *mukama*—Mutatembwa and the first European, Wilhelm Langheld, to meet Baziba royalty. According to Lwamgira,

The European did not enter the palace because the King thought that he would bring an omen to it as they had never seen Europeans before. When the people saw him they stood on guard to prevent him from entering the palace. Each man came with two spears or a gun to protect the King. (1969: chapter 24, p. 75)

In response to the omen portended by Langheld, Mutatembwa chose a strategy that was part and parcel of the magico-political repertoire of both royalty and commoners in Africa's Great Lakes Region: "Mutatembwa asked the European to have blood relations with him. Some people say that the European accepted and the King gave him his son Musikura to perform the ceremony with him." The success of this strategy was demonstrated after Langheld's departure the next day: "When [the King's attendants] found him gone, they gathered at the palace and gave the King cows, goats, and clothes congratulating him on getting rid of the European."

By an ingenious practice, Mutatembwa was able to create a new relative and send him packing in a single stroke. Perhaps this apparent incongruity is explicable by reference to the fact that blood brotherhood in East Africa is a highly enigmatic relationship (White 1994; Schoenbrun 1998). As White has demonstrated, blood brotherhood provided the potential of elective affinity, an opportunity for men (and men alone) to forge a wide range of relations—it might secure clients for long-distance traders, or acquire heirs for a patriline in need of descendants. Blood brotherhood is, further, not only concerned

with inclusive connections; it might also serve to erect barriers of exclusion in relationships—specifically the barriers that precluded sexual relations among blood brothers and one another’s female kin. Schoenbrun makes the further central point (1998: 182) that, in the Great Lakes, blood brothers were *abakago* (pl.; *oumkago*, sing.), literally, “those who are protected by means of medicine,” and so “the exchange of blood was also the exchange of a type of medicine.” The social intimacies at issue in blood brotherhood were ineluctably, constituted by material transformations in the brothers’ living bodies. To this I would add that, like blood itself, the term “medicine,” *omubazi*, needs to be grasped as a relational matter, its value—“protective” or otherwise—derived from the context of actions and intentions to which it is applied. Thus, Haya today make it clear that “*omutambi n’omulogi*,” “the healer is also the sorcerer,” and so *omubazi* is simultaneously “medicine” and “sorcery substance.” Uzoigwe notes, then, that blood brotherhood was a common practice among long-distance trade partners in Kitara (Bunyoro in Uganda today) and that a violation of its terms caused one’s stomach to swell, which led to a painful death (Uzoigwe 1974: 448). All of these instances indicate that blood brotherhood could certainly generate bonds of intimacy and obligation, but this may be precisely because the force of intimacy and obligation so often lends itself to the conveyance of highly mixed messages and thus to duplicitous ends.

In the historical record of Bahaya encounters with German, British, and French colonial officials—from missionaries to military men—such acts of blood brotherhood are a commonplace, especially in the earliest years of the twentieth century. As the original example of Mutatembwa and Langheld demonstrates, this gesture is at once a willing embrace of new powers and a concerted effort to constrain the same. The content of this double-edged form of sociality is further embedded in the concrete form through which this relationship was established. Blood brothers imbibed one another’s blood in rites of “drinking one another” *okunywana* (see also Beattie 1958), and they did so by means of a very specific medium of interchange: coffee cherries. Coffee cherries, grown in the Great Lakes for the past several centuries (Jervis 1939), were, and continue to be, cooked for chewing in Buhaya. In rites of blood brotherhood, each man coats the coffee cherry with blood incised from his navel, and each then eats one of the two seeds contained within the cherry’s husk. In this way, the two seeds within the single pod provide an agricultural icon of the brothers’ assertion of bodily and social unity, the creation, as Haya always stressed to me, of “one blood” out of two different men.

By creating one blood, though, blood brothers impose regulations that restrict and delimit further circulations of blood. That is, one of the principle effects of blood brotherhood is that it establishes exogamous prohibitions, not only for the “blood” relations of the two men who enter into blood brotherhood, but for all members of their two clans. Marital and sexual exchanges

extending to persons quite distant from the blood brothers themselves are, thus, *cut off* through this exchange of blood (Weiss 1996c). From this perspective, the bodies of blood brothers are not simply united, for their union becomes an obstacle to further physical attachments. Indeed, the *presence* of bodily attachments can itself prevent the fabrication of new blood relations. Thus, one man explained the decline in blood brotherhood in contemporary Buhaya to me by saying that it was no longer possible to be certain that your potential blood brother had not already slept with your sister—a prior condition that would have destroyed these different bloods were they ever unified. The intimacy and separation that Mutatembwa successfully achieved via his blood brotherhood with Langheld, it would seem, accomplished exactly what blood brotherhood was meant to do. The two seeds in the coffee pod are, therefore, doubly iconic, exhibiting both a unity among differences, and a differentiation within unity.

It is coffee, the medium of this, and many more, complex and changing social connections in Northwest Tanzania, that is the subject of this work. The place of coffee in blood brotherhood, as just described, merely exemplifies many of the enduring qualities of this valuable substance. A central claim of this work is that the articulation of attachment and separation, inclusion and exclusion, intimacy and restraint is a critical process in establishing the symbolic and material dimensions of precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial relations. Coffee intended for chewing, like that once used in blood brotherhood, is still grown and prepared today in Haya villages with harvests taken from *robusta* varieties. Both *robusta* and some *arabica* varieties, introduced into the area early in the twentieth century, are also harvested and processed for sale on an international market. Coffee in Buhaya, then, is at the heart of this history because it has been made to serve as an effective vehicle of this articulation. The characteristic dialectic of participation and separation, often of participation as a means of separation, embedded in coffee's place in the social life of the eight Haya kingdoms at the end of the nineteenth century should not be taken as a model, or template, for all subsequent uses of coffee under successive colonial regimes.

The transformation of coffee and of the Haya sociocultural order is not merely a matter of reproducing a set of persistent structural contrasts. Yet, precisely because the transaction of Haya coffee in social life is *always* concerned with articulation—with reconciling hierarchical and even extractive relationships, with the flow of valued resources, and the recognition of proper authorities—the centrality of coffee in (post)colonial worlds has powerfully informed the shape of (post)colonial relations over the past century. German and British projects intended to transform Buhaya by means of promoting coffee production were themselves incorporated into Haya social practice in keeping with long-standing local understandings of the place of coffee in this regional world. The forms of meaningful sociality embedded in Haya coffee

came, therefore, to shape the meanings of social relations as they emerged historically in this milieu.

DETERMINING THE “GLOBAL” AND THE “LOCAL”

Given coffee’s prominence in the Great Lakes area, and in Buhaya (or Bukoba as the region was known in the colonial era, Kagera as it is known today) in particular, it is important to point out that the oppositional title of this work, *Sacred Trees, Bitter Harvests*, is not meant to be read as a simple narrative of the (post)colonial degradation of a once venerated material. This is not a chronicle of local gifts losing their luster on a global commodities market. Coffee has been revalued, not devalued, in Bukoba in the course of the past century. It would further be a mistake to presume that coffee’s value need be expressed as wholly positive, or negative—or even as one thing as opposed to another.

In the course of this discussion I aim to show how Haya farmers and traders have used, and continue to use, coffee to participate in a global order of commerce and capital, while in their very participation they also attempt to retain a critical distance from global forces when they threaten to overwhelm local orders of value. Coffee can be both a blessing and a scourge, a source of assertion as well as dependency. Thanks to profits from the coffee trade that were fairly widespread during much of the postwar period, the Haya were able to achieve extraordinary levels of education, such that the first African Cardinal and the first African Lutheran Bishop would come from this corner of Tanzania (Hellberg 1965). There is also good evidence to suggest that crashing global coffee prices in the 1930s contributed to the conditions that sent many women from Buhaya off to Kampala and Nairobi in search of the means to pay back the exorbitant bridewealth demanded by their former husbands, a search that has given Haya women a reputation for prostitution that is notorious throughout East Africa to this day (White 1990; Larsson 1991).

Coffee that was once essential to the sacrifices required for ancestral blessing, might also forebode the death of the farmer who cultivated it. Today, when coffee for chewing is offered to guests in every respectable home in Kagera, the most prized coffee is that which tastes most acrid—“Its sweetness is bitterness” as many men and women told me. Sacredness and bitterness, then, are less categorical contrasts, or a schema that might be used to organize a total system of oppositions (e.g., gift and commodity, status and contract, ritual and economics, tradition and modernity), than they are ever present potentialities that may be realized—at times in tandem, at times in discord—in any particular practice that makes use of coffee. I am inclined, therefore, to assess the social life of coffee in Buhaya with attention to what might be called the “double” possibilities of this substance; Haya enthusiasm for “modern” methods of coffee production and trade often veils an ongoing

indifference to these techniques, while apparently “traditional” uses of coffee are only possible because of fundamental changes in Haya economy and society. Over the past century of globalizing processes, coffee in Kagera has been deployed by those concerned to retain the plenitude of its possibilities, and it makes little sense to reduce its meaning—which is to say, its value—to a single underlying system, cause, or source.

The possibilities of coffee are always situated in zones of contact, of transaction and motion, a point that will prove absolutely central to my discussion of the ways colonialism and its attendant globalizing procedures reconfigure the forms and pathways through which this agricultural medium moves. An offering to ancestors and kings; hospitality provided to neighbors, affines, and honored guests; a harvest, winnowed and cleaned, shipped to a state-run cooperative; or even a mere bud on the branch offered in speculation to money-lending traders, in all of its guises coffee travels between and among persons and places. This ingrained mobility makes coffee an appropriate medium for an analysis that participates in ongoing discussions about the nature of “global” and “local” relations. It has now become something of a commonplace to study “global flows” through the lens of a concrete substance that makes a circuit through various locales (Mintz 1985; Sahlins 1989; Hansen 2001; Burke 1996; Howes 1996). The present work draws on the themes of such studies, although it makes a somewhat different claim about globalization than is often the case. Rather than focusing on the remaking of objects as they shift from one region to another, this analysis is grounded at an ethnographic level in a specific place, but it is a place that is itself the site of trans-regional connections. I do not, therefore, conceive of the “global” as a multiplication of dispersed “localities,” but instead understand globalization as a set of techniques for generating relationships. It is the orientation and scale of these relationships—whether they are attuned to the transmission of coffee trees between successive generations of farmers or to the collapsing price of *robusta* at the end of the twentieth century—that make globalization *and* localization co-present dimensions of all social fields.

Thus, even without fully tracing the trail of coffee to consumers in Europe and the United States (or Zanzibar and Dar Es Salaam), it is still possible to insist that sociohistorical practices such as the measurement of coffee volumes and the management of agricultural practice have become global aspects of coffee’s value as it is firmly situated within Kagera. The practices and discourses surrounding coffee in this corner of Tanganyika may appear distinctly “remote” from those of coffee markets, roasters, and retailers in the so-called consuming nations, but they are no less “global” for that (Piot 1999). I am interested in coffee in Buhaya, then, less out of the empiricist’s concern for following a material substance through a series of “local” positions in the “globe” (a method that, in any case, would unduly fetishize coffee and attribute to it some abstract, universal essence), than I am for the sake

of understanding, in the phenomenological sense, how this specific substance organizes and is organized by social action.

Of course, it would be absurdly narrow, to say nothing of politically naïve, to suggest that the value of coffee in Bukoba is exclusively a matter of the lived experiences of the Haya farmers and families who cultivate, cook, and chew it. Coffee production was central to British administrative rule of the region; indeed, the success of colonial rule in Bukoba was in many respects measured by its success in producing coffee for export. The directed, and as I will discuss, coercive enforcement of coffee planting campaigns under putatively “indirect rule,” to say nothing of the explosive and continuous development of mass markets for Third World products like coffee over the course of the last century, have forcefully contributed to the density of experience that is embedded in coffee in Kagera. Yet, I must make it clear that one of the principle claims of this work is that it is *not* possible to reduce the significance of coffee to its *determination* by these broad and powerful historical forces if we hope to understand the many and varied processes through which coffee has been made meaningful and valuable by Haya people.

The perspective offered here therefore differs from the approach of many exemplary studies that look at people like Bahaya through a lens trained principally on their position as producers of commodities consumed elsewhere (e.g., Mintz 1985 on sugar; Roseberry 1995 and Bunker 1987 on coffee). When cultural practice is held to be but a reflex of production, “locals” may then be understood to resist or accommodate themselves to the demands of a process to which they are marginal; but such options clearly tell us very little about how persons and objects and the relations between them are valued and acted upon in actual practice. Moreover, the study of global commodities tends to generate a division of global labor into “producers” and “consumers” that has often understood the place of culture and meaning as epiphenomenal, or derivative. Consumers, in this view, have the luxury of giving value to the things of their world, while producers are enchained to the dictates of an overarching system (cf. Mintz 1985, Roseberry 1996, but compare Coronil 1994 for a critique of this approach to global history). On empirical grounds alone this division does exceedingly rough justice to Haya farmers.

Haya farmers’ coffee production is distinctive, although by no means unique. There are no plantations in Kagera, no laborers who toil for wages earned by tending to the growth of coffee trees. Further, coffee has a very long history in this region. Its precolonial uses are still relevant in many ways a century after colonization. When talking about “consumers” it is necessary to distinguish between a wide array of consumption practices (many of which have nothing to do with drinking coffee) even in just Buhaya, and when describing coffee “production” it is necessary to recognize that coffee is not a unitary “thing” to be produced. Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere (Weiss 1996c), the complexities of cultivating distinct forms of coffee for a diverse set of “consumers”

introduces important ruptures in a putatively coherent, and determinant system of production. When Haya men and women asked me in 1989, “We Haya grow this coffee, we harvest it, and then we sell it to you in Europe. But what do you Europeans do with it?” they were not expressing their ignorance of international markets, but rather demonstrating the limits to such markets’ capacity for constraining the consciousness of those “dependent” on them.

AGENCY AND VALUE

Aside from the real, material specificities pertinent to the place of coffee in Kagera, there are important theoretical reasons to critique a view of Haya coffee that conceives of it—*simply*—as the peripheral product of a global system of capital. The questions with which to propose such a critique are among the most vexing in an ethnographically grounded social theory today: how is it possible to assess complex sociocultural orders in ways that recognize that while social beings are always powerfully constrained by a host of forces (as Haya coffee farmers most certainly are), they also understand and act upon their world in terms that cannot be reduced to those constraints? How, that is, is it possible to locate and acknowledge the meaningful agency of all social actors even in the face of systemic oppressions and inequalities? The central purpose of this book is to explore the historically shifting potentials of coffee in Haya communities, and thereby to illuminate these pressing theoretical questions.

Examining the history of relationships between material forms (commodities foremost among them) and social actors, within the context of overarching historical movements like colonialism, globalization, and the making of modernity has been a hallmark of much contemporary research, in Africa and elsewhere. The best of this work demonstrates the ways that the peoples caught up in often wrenching processes make use of such material objects, both novel and enduring, to articulate altered capacities for participating in the worlds in which they find themselves embroiled. Certainly the Comaroffs’ seminal work on the “civilizing mission” to Tswana communities in Southern Africa (1991 and 1997) places conflicts over the meaning of such material forms as money, agricultural technique, and pastoralist practice at the center of the “dialectics of modernity” characteristic of these colonial encounters. Sharon Hutchinson’s moving account of Nuer society presents a detailed discussion of the manifold possibilities that cattle markets have created in the Southern Sudan. Far from simply reacting to, or withdrawing from the commodification of these iconic beings, Nuer men and women have imaginatively developed highly innovative categories of both cattle and cash, categories that bespeak both the historically shifting meanings of age, gender, and marriage in Nuer society and the often brutally oppressive political-economic conditions the Nuer confront (Hutchinson 1996).

Using a rather different framework, Jonathan Glassman's study of popular rebellion and "class conflict" on the Swahili Coast of Tanzania at the apex of the caravan trade makes comparable claims (Glassman 1995). Glassman's work is attuned to the way that the expansion of commercial opportunities and availability of commodity forms were shaped by a highly contentious structure of status relations, exchanges, and social obligations, even as they contributed to an intensification of the most repressive forms of slavery. Emmanuel Akyeampong's engaging history of drink in Ghana presents certain formal similarities to the present study as well, focused as it is on a highly prized commodity form whose contemporary significance is plainly shaped by the prior meanings of libation, even as "traditional" offerings of alcohol have been redefined by a colonial history of commodification, taxation, and health care (Akyeampong 1996). Like all of these works (and a spate of others), mine argues here that it is possible to grasp the abilities of people to creatively act on their worlds, even when facing intense and sustained socio-historical pressures, by understanding how they give value to things.

The present book, not surprisingly, is most directly related to my first book on contemporary Haya cultural practice (1996a). In *The Making and Unmaking of the Haya Lived World*, I was also concerned to show how processes of commodification and globalization can be fruitfully explored by grounding them within a lived world of experience and action. In that work I took pains to demonstrate how commodification was never a scourge of meaning, but was rather a potent set of possibilities whose significance was concretely realized in cultural forms of bodily experience (like affliction, satiation and hunger, or modes of sexuality) and inhabited space (like mobility along paths and roads, metaphorized relations between urban and rural locales, or the built form of homes and hearths). These fundamental concerns, and my ethnographic appreciation for the cultural significance of lived experience, unmistakably shape the analyses presented in this work. While the focus of *Sacred Trees, Bitter Harvests* is the single object of coffee, it nonetheless expands and develops the themes and scope of my previous book in several respects. It moves beyond the "ethnographic present" in which *The Making and Unmaking of the Haya Lived World* was firmly situated in order to interrogate how the contemporary sociocultural order of Buhaya, its ways of determining, producing, and representing value, has emerged through its broader connections over time and space. In examining the nature and transformation of these connections I consider coffee as a switchpoint between a range of interpenetrating possible lived worlds, since it is coffee, above all other objects, that has been the sustained focus of multiple projects that aim to generate and signify various forms of value in Bukoba.

In an important contribution to material culture studies in precisely such zones of contact as Haya coffee routinely finds itself, Patricia Spyer notes that the characteristic movement of fetishes across borders facilitates the formation

of innovative modes of meaning making and value production. In transit across permeable frontiers, fetishes can (Spyer 1998: 3) “open up novel spaces for the construction of agency,” spaces that “invite comparison between distinct social orders, possibilities, and schemes.” With respect to the materials at hand, I find it especially useful to think about agency as embedded within these conditions of *motion* and *comparison*. What constitutes agency, in this view, is the capacity to act in a world the social actor confronts as a set of possibilities. This characterization highlights the connection of agency to value, for value, as Graeber asserts in his refreshing account of the question, “the way people represent the importance of their own actions to themselves” (Graeber 2001: 45). I would add (as is implicit in this claim) that value is both a way of determining the importance of activity and, further, that value is created by activity. For these reasons agency itself is best grasped not as a specific *class* of actions (e.g., independent, transformative, collectively oriented, or contingent acts), or a particular intentionality (e.g., as a subject position, or a distinctive “voice”), but rather as a relative capacity for producing value. As value is created by actions, so agency must be defined with respect to the ways it can (and cannot) produce culturally specific forms of value. This, perhaps peculiar, understanding means that agency need not be limited to reactions to encompassing forces; further, it need not be limited to those acts that, either by intent or outcome, contribute to demonstrable change. Recalcitrance and refusal, as well as surviving and suffering, all are forms of acting and being in the world. They all require an active engagement with a reality in terms whose importance will be represented and, so, evaluated.

The perspective on agency entailed in both Spyer’s and Graeber’s models clearly situates activity in the context of alternative possibilities in which a course of action is pursued. Agency thereby becomes a means of effectively moving between different registers of value and meaning. This amounts to much more than simply making a “choice,” but asserting the relevance of particular criteria by which to evaluate social action. Let me offer a brief ethnographic example that illustrates how such movements across terrains of value can constitute modes of agency. In contemporary Kagera, there are, primarily, two ways of using coffee: coffee can either sold to local state-run cooperatives, or coffee (of indigenous *robusta* varieties) can be prepared for chewing. While both of these practices are commonplace, in fact Haya farmers are required to sell *all* of the coffee they grow to the cooperatives, and so the preparation of coffee for chewing is a pervasive, if petty offense. As de Certeau has suggested, such modes of “taking pleasure” within the dictates of an overarching system of value production, constitute a kind of popular tactic from the margins (de Certeau 1984: 24–28). Persons within a dominant “order of things” are able to turn that order to their own ends by a process of *diversion*, a strategy that de Certeau describes as *la perruque*, “the wig,”² This economic diversion of a worker’s time, or a factory’s resources (e.g., de

Certeau describes [1984: 25] “a secretary’s writing a love letter on ‘company time’ . . . or a cabinetmaker’s ‘borrowing’ a lathe to make a piece of furniture for his living room” as examples of *la perruque*), becomes a means of inserting “a sociopolitical ethics into an economic system” (de Certeau 1984: 27).

The French worker who borrows tools, or the Haya farmer who diverts his crops, participates in an encounter between alternative modes of evaluation, and in the shifting between these alternatives—a movement that, as de Certeau notes, may not change, or even disrupt the “actual order of things” (de Certeau 1984: 26)—the social actor defines the value of his or her action. This does not deny the reality of the constraints of this “actual order of things,” indeed, a diversion entails a routinized order from which *la perruque* diverges.³ In withholding coffee from the market to prepare it for chewing, Haya farmers are recognizing a *difference* that revalues the significance of both the coffee they offer their guests, as well as revaluing *themselves* as persons whose relationships to one another are constituted, in part, through this divergence. Agency, in this case, is not reducible to resistance to the coffee cooperatives, for offering coffee to guests has its own logic, but the value of this practice in contemporary Kagera cannot be extricated from this context of divergent possibilities. As I will illustrate, much of the history of Bahaya sociocultural practice in the twentieth century can be characterized as an attempt to grapple with a set of alternative registers for valuing coffee.

ON SOURCES AND METHODS

What follows in these chapters is a frankly idiosyncratic assessment of the history of a particular people as grasped through movements of a concrete substance. I do not offer a recognizably linear chronicle of Kagera, although one could probably be pieced together from the materials presented. I fully admit to the glaring gaps in my knowledge of Haya history and culture, but do not feel that they mean that my analyses are unsubstantiated. I have drawn freely on the excellent accounts of Austen (1968) and Curtis (1989), and Rald and Rald (1976), as well as the works of Cory and Hartnoll (1945, Cory 1949), Rehse (1910) and Cesard (1937, 1938a and b, 1939) produced in the colonial era to provide much of the evidence presented here. Although this is by no means a thorough study of missionization in Buhaya, the principal archival sources I made use of are some fascinating materials gleaned from the annual reports, apostolic letters, and diaries of the White Fathers, which I acquired during two months of research in Rome. Above all, in evaluating all of these sources I have been guided by my own eighteen months of field research in Kagera during the late 1980s.

Considering these sources as sources, though, reveals very little about the methods that have guided my interest in making use of them. The meaningful dimensions of social life—problems of embodiment, lived experience, and

reflexively organized, culturally constituted practice—which I find the most anthropologically compelling, and which I have attempted to assess here are notoriously difficult to collect (or to “verify”) by ethnographic methods; these difficulties are only compounded when analysts ask the same questions of historical materials. In my view, this is because so much sociocultural meaning, that is, the way that people make sense of the world they live in, is simply taken for granted and appears as self-evident to those who are engaged in the business of living their lives. Because it rarely rises to the level of self-conscious reflection or commentary, the meaningful character of our everyday and ordinary experience is not typically preserved in the kinds of sources to which historians have access. Small wonder, then, that crises, contestation, and rupture are so vigorously examined in some of the best social history, for it is frequently the case that a “crisis” is precipitated when the taken for granted is called into question, and so becomes explicitly articulated, and knowable in novel ways.

There is widespread recognition of the fact that archives and oral traditions tend to privilege rather particular perspectives; but even “the intelligence of everyday life” which a more catholic historical methodology pursues (Cohen 1989) may pay relatively little attention to the quotidian features of social practice. All of the secondary sources on the history of Buhaya, for example, note that the *arabica* variety of coffee was introduced by the White Fathers in the first years of the twentieth century (Jervis 1939). Yet the White Fathers’ records from these years scarcely make note of the fact and provide even less insight into the significance of this introduction. How was this coffee distributed? To whom? How was it planted? Where did the Fathers plant their seedlings, and (above all) for what purpose? As I describe below in chapter 4, the Fathers did take an active interest in the growth of trees (of many kinds) in Kagera, but just *how* they did so was not an issue they felt worthy of documenting. Similarly, it was all but useless to ask Haya farmers in the 1980s about the introduction of *arabica* coffee, and not simply because none were old enough to remember that colonial enterprise. Indeed, not only the introduction of *arabica* a century before, but a host of transformations, regulations, and innovations surrounding this crop all carried out in the decades prior to independence were of little historical interest. It is as though coffee cultivation was so commonplace it scarcely registered as a matter worthy of remembering.

All of this is not to say the social actors are simply mute and passive bearers of self-generating meanings. On the contrary, my primary assertion—and guiding methodological principal—is that meaning is an intrinsic feature of our experience because we *make* it in our routine activity. And it is this link of meaning, not to subconscious structures buried in the recesses of “minds,” but to *actions* that can provide us with a method for carrying out an anthropologically informed historical practice. To return to the last example, while the events and actions that gave *arabica* its place in Kagera were unremarkable in

the view of late-twentieth-century Haya farmers and traders, their pragmatic attitude toward this variety made them quite interested in the many problems that cultivating this coffee entailed. The potentially deleterious effects of *arabica* on their banana gardens, the costs of inputs to fertilize it, the fact that it was so fragile a plant that it was often more trouble than it was worth—all of these were matters that anyone and everyone could discuss with me. These commentaries, in my view, provide a kind of pragmatic history, or perhaps an understanding of “history in practice,” for embedded within these meaningful claims are a totality of colonial and postcolonial interventions that have shaped the place of *arabica* coffee trees in contemporary Haya life. It is precisely through such daily practices, I argue, that the meaningful character of historical processes is revealed.

Given this methodological foundation, I have no qualms about reading much of colonial history through the lens of the fullness (but never *completeness*) of ethnographic experience. I freely follow the “hunches” (Pels 1999) I derive from this experience (in ways suggested by my brief discussion of *arabica*) in order to pose questions of the past never quite posed in the same way by those whose accounts of the past are available. Through all this I aim to demonstrate how a fine-grained interpretation of incomplete evidence (as evidence always is) can help to illuminate some enduring problems in the study of consciousness and agency, meaning and value as these are grounded in a context of colonial encounter. Coffee is the medium by which such problems were most directly confronted in Northwest Tanganyika, now Tanzania, in the twentieth century, and so coffee provides nothing more—but also nothing less—than a convenient excuse for reexamining some abiding anthropological questions.

STRUCTURE

These questions are explored in the course of six chapters, organized primarily by thematic concerns. The first chapter describes a kind of template for the way that Haya coffee—or *akamwani*—is understood to embody creative, productive forms of value. While I do not claim to establish a kind of precolonial “baseline” for “local” forms of coffee upon which colonial interventions are imposed (indeed, much of my evidence derives from ritual, agricultural, and exchange practices that were documented in the 1970s and 1980s), I am attempting to provide a set of meanings that relate to royal patronage, ritual offerings, and tree planting techniques that have a constitutive effect on the historical transformation of Haya economy and society in the twentieth century. Chapter 2 considers the consequences of coffee’s capacities to store and mediate value in transactions—in short, to serve as a currency—for the ways that other colonial currencies, cowries, and later rupees, were understood and engaged with in Haya communities.

I offer an assessment of currencies in the Interlacustrine world of the late nineteenth century that juxtaposes Haya pragmatic understandings of material

wealth with both Simmel's and Marx's analyses of money as a currency form. From this perspective, the colonial growth and marketing of coffee in Bukoba, revalued by new currencies, and Haya people's participation in these processes, are shown to be fundamental to the wider remaking of wealth, the significance of objects, and the attachments of persons and things. Given these new possibilities for defining and producing wealth, I turn my attention in chapter 3 to the consciousness (often contradictory) of value that emerged along with the rapid expansion of coffee marketing in Buhaya. The White Fathers articulated a plainly moralistic and anxious discourse about the dangers of the excessive materialism and deracination ushered in by the growth of coffee marketing, even as their own practices facilitated the ever wider spread of coffee planting, distribution, and marketing. For Haya men and women, moralistic concerns about materialism are also voiced in this era, but in ways that highlight the vulnerability of local farmers to deceptive "out-ider" (including missionary) practices.

Chapters 4 and 5 jointly address the transformation of the Haya landscape that commercial coffee production exemplifies. I begin by examining the way in which value and identity are generated through household agricultural practice, considering the spatial and temporal meanings of land holding and cultivation, the gendered character of growth and food production, and the symbolic significance of trees and "fertility" more generally. This provides a framework in which to evaluate the significance of colonial agrarian reforms, beginning with White Fathers' introduction of a vast number and variety of new trees for timber, as well as the massive British coffee planting campaigns of the 1920s.

Finally, chapter 6 turns to a critical dimension of coffee evaluation, namely measurement. The success of coffee marketing in Bukoba in the twentieth century was plainly dependent upon the adoption of new forms of determining how coffee could be measured. The problem is not simply one of introducing new standards of measurement (although this is powerfully important as well), but of recognizing how measures of volume and weight (as well as of "price" and "grade") are both units of standardization and forms of experience that come to constitute the qualities and characteristics of social relations. Rather than unfolding in a chronological sequence, each of these chapters considers data drawn from various moments throughout the twentieth century in order to explore different dimensions of colonial encounters in Kagera, encounters understood as contesting modes of producing value.

NOTES

2. I am indebted to David Howes for suggesting the connection to de Certeau to me.

3. On diversions as a strategy of value creation see also Munn 1983 and Appadurai 1986. I use this term advisedly, with due consideration of the "tactile" (Pels 1999) nature of the encounters under consideration.

1

THE SACRED LIFE OF PLANTS: PLACING ROYAL GROWTH

In the earliest times the Wahuma of Unyora regarded the lands bordering on the Victoria Lake as their garden, owing to its exceeding fertility, and imposed the epithet of Wiru, or slaves, upon its people, because they had to supply the Imperial Government with food and clothing. Coffee was conveyed to the capital by the Wiru.

—John Speke (1863: 245)

Karagwah grows according to some, according to others, imports from the northern countries along the western margin of the Nyanza Lake, a small wild coffee, locally called mwámí. Like all wild productions, it is stunted and undeveloped, and the bean, which, when perfect, is about the size of a corking-pin's head, is never drunk in decoction . . . In Karagwah a single khete of beads purchases a kubbah (from 1 lb. to 2 lbs.) of this coffee; at Kazeh and Msene, where it is sometimes brought by caravans, it sells at fancy prices.

—Richard Burton (1860 [1995]: 395)

That Nyerere, he may have ruined this country; but at least he got rid of those kings!

—Laurean Buberwa (personal communication 1988)

The origins of kingship in the Lakes Region of Central Africa remains a contentious subject. This contention flourishes in spite—or perhaps because—of nearly a century and a half of investigation of this topic by a battery of European and American explorers and academics, to say nothing of at least several centuries of discussion on the subject by the inhabitants of this area's kingdoms and polities. Were the Hinda (or Hima in some areas—the “Wahuma” of Speke's “Unyora”) a pastoral people of Nilotic origin who conquered indigenous Bantu agrarians (Speke 1863; Seligman 1966)? Or did royalty and

its attendant aristocracy, the Balangila, ascend to their authority from within earlier social arrangements by consolidating control over cattle and arable lands along the lake (Carlson 1989; Schmidt 1978)? Did the successful kings of what became Bunyoro and Buhaya buttress their authority by enshrining their ancestors, the Bacwezi, as deities of collective ritual action; or were these kings able to assert hegemony by appropriating what had long been spirits and spiritual practices recognized by what would become Bairu (the “Wiru . . . slaves” in Speke’s account), or “commoner” clans (Berger 1981; Schmidt 1978)?

I pose these broad contrasts, not in order to describe a straw man, easily dismantled by a more sophisticated understanding; nor even, in fact, to enter into these debates and seek an adequate answer to these questions. Rather, I cite these concerns because all the participants engaged by these questions suggest that the establishment of Interlacustrine kingship was fundamentally concerned with a reordering of fundamental relations that were at once material and cosmological. The power of kingship in the region inhabits the land on which its subjects sustain themselves, and becomes embodied in crucial ways through the spiritual forces that allow these royal subjects to heal and reproduce (Schoenbrun 1998).

Of course, simply recognizing that royal power is embedded in a lived landscape and incorporated into bodily practices only serves to bring us to the truly challenging questions: precisely *how* does kingship pervade the organization of a cultural order—and, perhaps more fundamentally, exactly *what is* royal power? In order to pursue just such questions I will consider the specific material forms and practices relating to an apparently commonplace substance—coffee—that had a unique, if not privileged place in the workings and meanings of the Interlacustrine world. The values and actions surrounding the uses of coffee will further be grounded in the particulars of the Haya kingdoms of what is now the Kagera Region of Northwest Tanzania. It is useful to proceed from such a rigorously focused perspective, not because “culture” must be understood as a carefully bounded system of categories and dispositions, but rather because the specific *situation* of subjects and objects—the potential of persons and things in a given field of encompassing relations—reveals the embeddedness of all such positions in a wider world. In the specific character of situated practices, “local” activities emerge *as* “global” process, just as a “global” order comes into being through its manifestation as “local” phenomena.

The purpose of this chapter is to lay a foundation that will allow me to describe this embeddedness of local and global perspectives in the historical transformation of coffee in this region. While I do not claim to establish an original “baseline” against which such transformations can be measured, I will attempt to characterize a kind of template for the Haya production of power and value, a template that is exemplified by royal interests in coffee at

the turn of the last century. In the course of this chapter I concretize this productive process by considering the place of kingship and coffee in the construction of the local landscape (especially the cultivation of trees), and the ritual procurement of blessings (especially through sacrifice and royal ceremony) The model I describe here, I would add, resonates in crucial ways down through the course of the twentieth century; it informs the historical transformation of coffee in Kagera even as it has been reshaped by that transformation.

The long-standing interpenetration of local and global dimensions of Haya royal practice is, in fact, suggested by the quotations cited above. A “wild” crop that is cultivated in distant gardens, brought to central royal courts by subjugated laborers, produced for local consumption and sold at “fancy prices,” coffee is a product that intrinsically articulates social and material relationships in the Interlacustrine world, in contexts that—even in the mid-nineteenth century—are already inseparably regional and transregional. In describing that process of articulation, I want further to suggest that these early British explorers have—albeit unwittingly—presented a cryptic model of kingship itself. Royal power in the Lakes Region, like such power in many contexts (de Heusch 1982; Sahlins 1985; Valeri 1985), is implicated in the totality of relations, while somehow standing apart from them, is simultaneously “wild” and carefully cultivated. Kings characteristically enslave for the sake of a “stunted and undeveloped” trifle, like coffee.

At least since the earliest encounters between Europeans and Africans in this area, it has been quite clear that the capacity of kings to exercise the power at their disposal, in different ways and for very different ends at different times, has been closely connected with their control over coffee. Furthermore, my friend’s ironic comment about the demise of Haya kings—which expresses a widely shared sentiment in the Kagera Region today—is made possible, from a certain perspective, by the ways in which these kings’ connections to coffee were configured and reconfigured by colonial and neocolonial socioeconomic arrangements. As the fortunes of Haya royalty have long been linked to coffee, I will also consider (in subsequent chapters) how the fate of that royalty was equally tied to this product.

Access to coffee was not only one of the prerogatives of kingship, in many respects the social deployment of coffee was vitally important to *constituting* royal power in the Haya kingdoms. This might seem a rather grandiose claim. Yet if it is indeed the case, as most observers have conceded, that royal power depended upon and was manifest in the reordering of material relations and resources that have inherently cosmological implications, it should not be surprising to find that coffee is an integral element in that reordering. Which brings us, yet again, to some complicated questions. Just as it is important to ask what is the power of Haya kings, so too it is important to ask *what is coffee* that it should be so appropriate a vehicle for exemplifying and creating

this power? What, for example, are the concrete qualities exhibited by coffee? What kind of substance is it? How does it grow? When and where does it flourish? These are all, I insist, *cultural* questions, part of the situated, contingent character of coffee in this transregional world. To address them I will examine coffee as an icon of agricultural practice and of royal authority, as the preserve of kings and the product of laboring minions. Locating coffee in a concrete world, and tracking its movement through that world, also mean discussing the the sociocultural constitution of place in order to understand the practices through which that world is created, and the kinds of potencies with which it is endowed. In this chapter I offer a way of considering these issues as they are revealed in the dynamic relations between Haya kingship and coffee, relations in which material practices of cultivation, propitiation, and exchange work to generate culturally privileged forms of power and value.

FORMS AND SUBSTANCE: HAYA COFFEE IN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY INTERLACUSTRINE WORLD

To what, specifically, do I refer when I describe “Haya coffee” or *amwani* in the Haya vernacular? The species of *robusta* coffee is identified as *Coffea canephora*, now known as *Bokubensis* after Bukoba, the port city established by Emin Pasha in 1890 that has since been the administrative capital (no matter the administration) of this region. But this botanical stock grows in a number of regions of East and Central Africa (Jervis 1939: 51–52) and is not the distinctive feature of *amwani*. *Robusta* coffee grown in the Haya region becomes “Haya coffee” through the unique manner of its preparation. To prepare *amwani*, unripened coffee cherries—the technical term for the seed pod, each of which holds two beans—still in their green husks, are boiled along with grassy herbs in large pots. The cherries, perfumed with the herbal flora, are subsequently dried and smoked, but not roasted, over an indirect flame for a period of several days (see Reining 1967: Appendix for a description of this process by a Haya coffee preparer). The coffee cherries prepared in this way are ready to be consumed, not by further grinding, crushing, extracting, or infusing, but simply by chewing the *amwani* whole and spitting out the husks. To state the perhaps not so obvious, then, Haya coffee is prepared to be chewed.

Jervis claims that this method of preparing coffee cherries was derived from Arab preparation of spiced coffees, the local herbs used for Haya coffee replacing the ginger, anise, and cardamom of Arabic coffee (Jervis 1939: 49–50). Regardless of this possible influence, it is certainly clear that Haya communities did not adopt the Arabic habit of *drinking* coffee prepared in this way. Nor have Haya men and women ever eaten coffee, to the best of my knowledge, with any additional embellishments, as, for example, was the

case for Ethiopians whose “only food . . . consisted of coffee berries . . . roasted and pulverized . . . which were mixed with grease, rolled into balls, and carried in leathern bags” (Cheney quoted in Jervis 1939: 49). The mere fact of coffee’s being prepared and consumed (or, as I shall discuss, transported and exchanged throughout the region) in these ways tells us something about the values it possessed in the Haya kingdoms.

To begin with, while the coffee varieties used to produce *amwani* grew in other regions, these preparation techniques were only practiced in Bukoba. These fully cooked coffee cherries were then traded throughout the region as consumable products.¹ In other words, control over the entire production process, from cultivation and harvesting through boiling and drying, could be exercised within the region, often by the same individual farmers. This process formed a totality with “finished goods” being transacted by producers. If this method of production affords a greater degree of control over the coffee crop, so too, does the particular form of consumption described. Compare, for example, tea that is consumed through infusion. In his account of how sugar came to be a staple of the working-class British diet through the medium of hot tea, Mintz argues that tea is a drink that is readily adaptable by those with limited resources. This is so, claims Mintz, because it can be “successfully adulterated” by diluting it, thereby allowing even the poorest consumers to stretch their supply of tea by ever weaker brewing (Mintz 1985: 112). Haya coffee, once prepared for chewing, is not further processed or added to, and so cannot be “stretched.” It is eaten by the handful in individual cherries, a method of consumption that allows of very little economizing. Either one eats coffee or one doesn’t. Weak coffee may be less palatable than weak tea, at least according to Mintz, but it is not even a recognized possibility under these regional conditions.

These preparation techniques would seem to create a product whose possibilities for future consumption have been carefully prescribed and delimited. Let me make it clear, then, that I am not suggesting that these methods of coffee production strictly determined the forms and meanings of coffee consumption. It is certainly the case, for example, that coffee was prepared not simply for eating, but for transaction, and the values associated with those transactions—in the nineteenth century, to regions as distant as what is now far Eastern Uganda—are in no way *dictated* by this production process. While I have no evidence to suggest that Haya coffee was ever reprocessed (e.g., ground, mixed with other substances, infused, etc.) prior to being eaten, it is the case that the ways such coffee was consumed—the pragmatic dimensions of its being eaten, the contexts in which it was consumed, and the relationships such consumption instantiated—were no doubt highly varied in the Interlacustrine world of this period (a variation that persisted through the twentieth century). Indeed, one of the central points I hope to demonstrate is that the range of consumption practices needs to be taken into consideration

in order to evaluate the significance of such products, commercial or otherwise. What I would suggest, though, is that given the presumption that coffee will be consumed in the finished form in which it is prepared, these productive techniques permit coffee to be understood and treated as a crop that could be used in the Haya world to express and demonstrate an important measure of control. As a product meant to be—if not actually—consumed by itself and not as a component of a more complicated food, as a completed product that could be made to circulate in that finished form, in and of itself the chewable coffee cherry provided a means of asserting and extending control over those contexts in which it would be used.

TREES IN HISTORY

“[I] told [Rumanyika, King of Karagwe] the history of the creation of man. After listening attentively, he asked what thing in creation I considered the greatest of all things in the world; for while a man at most could only live a hundred years, a tree lived many; but then earth ought to be the biggest, for it never died.”

—John Speke (1863: 223)

The importance of coffee as a medium of control is demonstrated, in part, by the extent of Haya royal interests in it. Indeed, coffee trees and the coffee trade are said to have been monopolized by the Balangila throughout the nineteenth century, if not earlier (Austen 1968: 95; Curtis 1989: 54; Hartwig 1976: 111; Lwamgira 1969). Coffee cultivation could only be undertaken with royal permission, and a specified quantity of harvested coffee was routinely included as part of the “tribute” kings and their clansmen demanded of their clients. Again, these arrangements require some specification, since the significance of a “royal monopoly” for a crop that does appear to have been used by both commoners and nobility in this period, as well as the institutional organization of coffee cultivation and collecting “tribute” tell us little about the historical practices through which these patterns are realized. I think it is therefore useful and necessary to attempt to put coffee production in a wider material context in order to appreciate what it might have been that made coffee in particular the focus of this extensive royal apparatus, and the objectification of power that it was.

It is worth noting, as a part of this material context, that coffee is a tree crop. While the consequences of this “fact” has been much debated by agroforestry specialists and others interested in the “development” potential of a host of African communities (Shipton 1994), relatively less attention has been paid to the kinds of value and meanings that trees possess for those who cultivate, harvest, or otherwise encounter them within specific regional contexts. The root for “tree” in many Bantu languages, for example, is the same as the term for “medicine.” This identification reflects not only the fact that many

medicines throughout Africa and elsewhere are derived from tree products, but it speaks to the kinds of transformative potentials that trees are felt to exhibit across a range of cultural contexts. This potential for growth, agency, and intervention is, moreover, often connected with regimes of power, as tree iconically present the powers of local histories, social upheavals, and dynasties (Schmidt 1978; De Boeck 1994).

In the Haya context, trees are crucial to the processes through which kings and commoners come to imbue the landscape with power, significance, and history. Royal authority is frequently recognized and memorialized by the presence of certain trees, and these tree sites are often associated, even to this day, with the exploits of particular royal, or cosmological figures. Moreover, the land itself can be appropriated and inhabited in categorically different ways once it has been planted with trees. Both the spatial and temporal order of a kingdom are implicated in the growth of trees in a region, while the continuity of the land for those who occupy it as well as the force of kinship and clientship are all made possible through cultural understandings of, and encounters with trees. In short, trees are crucial means by which spatial relations are imbued in Haya consciousness with a sense of “place” (Parkin 1991; Feld and Basso 1996).

Consider the recollected history of Haya kings as recorded by Lwamgira early in the twentieth century (Lwamgira 1969). The hunter and traveler Igaba rests under a large tree on his way to visit Wamala, the last and most celebrated king in the Cwezi dynasty. This tree, he is told, is called Mubito. When Igaba bewitches Wamala, thereby seizing control of kingship in Kiziba (the northernmost of the precolonial Haya kingdoms), he has his royal drums made from this tree; and his clan, that has ruled in this kingdom ever since, becomes the Babito clan taking its name from the Mubito tree (Lwamgira 1969).

The equally celebrated Hinda king of Kyamutwala, Lugomola Mahe, establishes his regime by planting trees with seeds acquired from Mugasha, the powerful spirit of Lake Victoria. Lugomola plants entire forests, trees that mark his iron works, and a tree that demonstrates “he will not be chased” from his kingdom (Schmidt 1978: 317). In particular, trees are planted in order to demonstrate and memorialize decisive acts and judgments, acts that literally transform the landscape by means of the planted tree. Thus, the waters of Lake Ikimba in the inland kingdom of Kianja are held to have receded when the old mother-in-law, who caused the lake to flood in the first place, planted her hoe in the ground and asserted, “I destroy one village and save another.” At this very site, on what became the shores of Lake Ikimba separating land from lake, submerged from surviving village, the hoe she planted has grown into a large thorn tree that can still be seen today.

Similarly, Mugasha saves Lugomola Mahe when, after his flooding threatens the king’s palace, he plants an *omulumula* tree that causes the flooding to

subside (Schmidt 1978: 325). This *omulumula* tree, whose very name means “tree of judgment,” is the variety of tree that routinely marks the boundaries of Haya household farms (*ekibanja*, sing.). Royal judgments, as Seitel has pointed out with evidence derived from his extensive knowledge of Haya epics, are characteristically concerned with “setting things straight,” instantiating categorical imperatives, and permanently “fixing” rules in place (Seitel 1986). Trees figure prominently in the implementation of such justice, as is iconically demonstrated by the fact that they are characteristically markers of boundaries, between land and water, between neighboring farms and villages, and perhaps even between successive dynasties (as the origins of the Babi o suggest).² Royal tree planting is understood in the late nineteenth century (as it undoubtedly was for a much longer period of time) to actively reconfigure and redefine the landscape as trees provide enduring evidence of the dynamic practices that produce them.

Named trees in contemporary Haya villages and towns continue to be recognized, even by very young boys and girls, as sites that are associated with such transformative acts. Typically, such trees are associated less with historical figures or activities than with powerful spirits, Bazimu (Muzimu, sing.), or in some parts of Buhaya, Bacwezi.³ The generic term for such tree site in Kagera, regardless of the particular species of tree, is *ekigabilo* (*ebigabilo*, pl.). I want to explore different dimensions of social practice that surround these trees, often, and not inappropriately, described as “shrines” in the literature (Cory 1949; Reining 1967; Rald and Rald 1975), in order to consider how processes of empowerment, value production, and historical transformation become embedded in these sites. More concretely, I also hope to show how an understanding of these processes can help to illuminate the significance of trees, kings, and coffee, as well as the implicit connections between them in the precolonial Haya kingdoms.

Even in contemporary Kagera, tree shrines in Buhaya possess an array of important characteristics. To begin with, they are always *named* objects. An *ekigabilo* most frequently bears the name of the Muzimu associated with that tree. The Muzimu may have carried out some action at the site, or the tree may simply be described as a spontaneous manifestation embodying the spirit, or growing from the grave where the Muzimu was buried. The name of the *ekigabilo* may also come to have a wider spatial reference; that is, the farm, or even the village in which the tree grows may bear the name of the tree. In addition to names providing links of the persons, the past, and places, there are other important identifications embedded in the experience of these trees. The land on which such shrines are present ties the spiritual figure embodied by the tree to those who inhabit the land. Even **today**, families, and successive generations of families who occupy land that includes an *ekigabilo* feel an obligation, of some sort, to recognize these trees as shrines—even if that recognition only entails refusing to uproot the tree.⁴ Indeed, the continu-

ous recognition of such trees over successive generations, and the spiritual connections established between landholders, trees, and Muzimu are frequently offered as forceful demonstrations of a family's right to occupy their land, and further generate obligations to *continually* recognize these connections even when former residents leave the land.⁵

This recognition of attachments to place engendered by these trees also has implications for the ongoing experience of kinship relations in Buhaya. Haya today describe their clans (*oluganda*, sing.) as patrilineal and totemic categories. But, as I have described elsewhere (Weiss 1996a), as a means of organizing and recognizing social relatedness, the notion of clan is profoundly dependent on Haya understandings of place and locality. Haya men and women will say they are of one clan, not merely because their clans have the same totems, or even the same names, but because they share common places of origin (*amaiga*, or *ekisibo*). The sense of "origin" people use when referring to the past is usually flexible—it may be the place from which all members of a widely dispersed clan are said to come, or it may be the place from which more immediate relations (e.g., one's grandfather, or great-grandfather) moved before arriving at a current village of residence. When people describe their own origins, they most frequently cite the most recent place from which their antecedents came before arriving at a present locale.

Let us take, for example, two men who are sons of brothers that left their natal homes and moved to separate villages in order to build homes and marry. These brothers' sons would (probably)⁶ recognize that they were members of the same clan, and that they shared the same origin. By origin, in this case, they mean the homes from which their own fathers had departed before they were born, and not some prior location from which these brothers' father, grandfather, or other antecedent generation had come. Origins, then, formulate points of connectedness for spatially dispersed relations, but they also ~~serve~~ serve to differentiate successive generations as they move. This is the case, again, because, once members of a clan have moved, their descendant generations will recognize different points of origin, and thus no longer recognize clanship with those who claim different origins.

Most important about the ways that kinship is formulated in spatial and temporal terms are the implications of trees in defining these relations. Haya family farms (*ekibanja*) have long been the site of intensive, perennial banana cultivation. For at least the past two centuries, villages have been composed of multiple farms, all adjacent to one another, all covered by bananas at various stages of growth. Such farms are clearly recognized to have the potential for extending connections of kin in time and space. The land (*ensi*) itself should pass from one generation to the next, and each generation expects to be ceded access to this land whether as an inheritance or at some other time of bestowal. Trees play an important part in organizing this access. Specific trees could be designated by a household head (*nyin'eka*) to particular heirs;

often daughters, who had no expectation of inheriting land until the mid-1950s, could expect, even in the precolonial period, to be ceded particular trees (notably barkcloth and coffee trees) for carrying out rites associated with the death of senior men and women (Rehse 1910: chapter 9).

This understanding of trees and land planted with trees contrasts strikingly with the control exercised over the grasslands, *orweya*, that surround or border Haya villages. These grasslands, even today, are worked by women, collectively and individually, in small fallowed plots. The land itself is often said to be “unowned” or “empty” *busha*, and acquiring a gardening plot on such land is relatively easy.⁷ However, Haya do attempt (as they have for a very long time) to convert open grasslands into land that is planted with trees. In the past only the payment of a nominal fee to the king’s administration was required to plant a few trees and establish a woodlot, *ekishembo* (Reining 1967; Rald and Rald 1975). Planting grasslands with trees allows that land to come under clan-based tenure, to become *ekibanja’ ky’oluganda*, a farm of the clan. Such land is now definitively different from grassland, a point critical to understanding of the transformation of the Haya landscape in the twentieth century. The presence of trees means that such land is no longer “open,” or “empty” (even though open *orweya* may be full of women’s crops), it is under the aegis of a recognized clan and has a radically different potential, or trajectory. Indeed, in Kagera in the late 1980s I found that household heads who lived adjacent to large tracts of what appeared to be “open” grasslands would plant a tree or two in these lands—lands being worked by women cultivating peanuts and Bambara nuts—in order to assert their claims to possess these (only apparently) grasslands. Trees give land a depth and complexity of relations and values that are drawn on and invoked over time, generation, and distance.

What is true of everyday trees is especially so of tree shrines. The spatial and temporal horizons of “origins” in shaping relatedness, and the special force that trees, and especially *ekigabilo* have in anchoring Haya households to their farms, indicate that trees are not just fixed, recognized objects, but rather that they are places whose significance extends over space and time. It is not only the families who occupy a farm that contains a tree shrine who validate their attachments to their land through the recognition of these sites, but even the future generations who elect to leave these lands that trace their connectedness to one another by recognizing their common origins. Tree shrines, even in contemporary Kagera, exhibit a power that extends beyond the confines of the ground they occupy. These shrines make possible a “gathering” of experiences, acts, and meanings that characterize and shape a sense of place (Casey 1996: 24–26). They orient ongoing and future actions, allowing places to be known by the names they bear, obligating those who live with them to recognize their significance, and inspiring those who move away from them to remember their origins and retain their connections even as they move across the landscape.

Narrating, naming, remembering, and recognizing. All of these can be thought of as actions that contribute to a process of concretization, in which, to follow Lass (1988), the significance or sense of particular places, texts, or objects becomes actualized in everyday life. That is, these particular ways of engaging with tree shrines are collective acts through which Haya men and women grasp the self-evident meaning of these objects. Through an *ekigabilo* the historicity of the land, the force of kinship relations, or the powers of spiritual forces can all be tangibly grasped, or “experienced as concrete reality” (Lass 1988: 462). The self-evident significance of these tree shrines for Haya villagers, their taken-for-granted force, is an aspect of how, in everyday life, “the world is *given to us* as meaningful in experience” (emphasis added, Lass 1988: 456). Understanding particular experiences of the “givenness” of the world one lives in, the commonplace sense of the self-evident, intrinsic meanings of the ordinary phenomena one encounters, may not only give us insight into the processes by which meaning is culturally constituted, but also to the ways in which those meanings are laden with power. The self-evident character of commonplace experiences suggests that the world is given to us as meaningful, and further, in that very self-evidence indicates that those meanings can have a *hold* over us. Like the mountains and streams that “stalk” the Western Apache who occupy those landscapes (Basso 1990), Haya encounters with trees often reveal the force entailed in meaning.

Fortunately, there is no need to rely exclusively on the language of Husserlian phenomenology to discuss how power and meaning are conjoined in the “givenness” of places and objects in mundane Haya experience. Haya men and women routinely act on precisely such understandings and describe their actions in straightforward terms. When speaking about the “authenticity” of a particular site, object, or even practice, a Haya person will say, “*Nika-shangam*”—“I found it (this way).” What makes an experience valid, and I would further say its significance self-evident, is the fact that the person “found it” just as it is at present (in effect, for all to see). This is a mode of authenticating a concretized meaning that is, moreover, not confined to specialized objects like tree shrines. When Haya men and women talked to me about their religious practices, the lands that they cultivated, or their obligations to kin they would say that they had found these things as they currently were. The act of “finding,” then, is a way of grasping the meaning, indeed, the truth of such phenomena. It should also be clear that “finding” things as they are also imposes certain constraints, and so embeds a form of power in this process of meaning creation.

Let me specify this connection between signification and empowerment by considering once again *ekigabilo* as “found” objects. One man who was my neighbor, and by his own admission very old, once described to me the importance of a *mukindo*, or palm oil tree, growing at the edge of our farm, that was widely recognized as an *ekigabilo* named for the spirit associated

with it. “You see that tree?” he asked. “Since I was a boy that tree has not grown or shrunk at all. That tree is exactly as I found it, and I have over seventy years!” This claim was offered as tangible evidence of the importance, indeed, I would even suggest the sacred character of this tree. The range of ritual observances (discussed below) that were once carried out at such shrines, and were certainly part of the memory of my neighbor, are no longer practiced. But the power of that tree was tied to his immediate experiences of it as an unchanging presence that he had “found” just as I (or anyone else) would find it today.

This understanding of power seems (but only seems) to be tied to an ahistorical, or at least radically conservative vision of social existence. Such assertions sound like claims that authority always lies in the past, and reality is “true” because “things have always been this way.” In fact, a Haya practical understanding of what it means to “find” things as they are is profoundly historicized. To “find” something in Haya sociocultural practice is to recognize that the phenomena encountered is the product of some past action that brought it about. In this way, the phenomena itself, whether a ritual, a farm’s border, or a style of dress, is evidence of the accomplishment of that prior act. Indeed, Haya men and women will generally describe the antecedent actors who made something available for them to “find” as they did—for example, “My parents were Christians, and so I found Christianity.” For my elderly neighbor, then, the existence of our *mukindo* tree was evidence of the fact that something had at some point brought that tree into being. The fact that we could continue to “find” this tree as he had (always) found it was further evidence of the tremendous power of the force that had created it in the first place. To say, then, that a tree is “sacred” because one “finds” it in a particular way is not to say that things must never change, and power lies in those things that are forever unchanged and unchanging. It is rather to say that this unchanging character demonstrates that the acts that created this place were truly, authentically, and self-evidently extremely powerful precisely because they were able so decisively to change the world we find ourselves in. It is because the world is one in which change and the human reconfiguration of objects, the land, and practice are *always* possible, that those changes concretized in places like tree shrines which preclude, or override future attempted changes must necessarily possess a significant force. Our concrete experience, the very evidence of our senses, thus confirms the truth of the powerful, historical transformation that brought about such places. How else could one continue to “find” them as they are?

A VISIBLE SACRIFICE

These acts of concretization—naming, narrating, recognizing, and perhaps above all (because most routinely enacted) finding—are important for under-

standing how objects (in this case trees) in Haya experience come to have a taken-for-granted significance in everyday life. I have also suggested that such self-evident meanings are often bound to cultural forms of power. To “find” a tree shrine, in these terms, is not merely to recognize the force of the transformation that created it, it is also to acknowledge and thus to *submit* to that force. This recognition and its power are relevant at the mundane level as well as the sacred. In the 1980s, I frequently spoke with Haya women cultivating fields on plots of land that were adjacent to one another and would ask them how they could differentiate their plots from others. Invariably, they would tell me that when they had come to turn the soil they had “found” some indication of another woman’s work (in the form of markers, plants, or other concrete evidence) that defined the spatial parameters of her work. Thus, when a working woman “finds” such spatial markers she both knows their meaning and submits to their terms. Acknowledging the value of a tree shrine, even if that means nothing more than refusing to uproot it, has a similar effect. These recognitions continue, in some form, and with regard to certain trees, even to this day in Kagera. But in the past, and as an aspect of kingship and its method of suffusing the landscape, there were yet more elaborate acts attesting to the significance of these sites. The very word *ekigabilo* derives from the benefactive form of the verb *okugaba*, to share, to divide, or (if I may generalize) to sacrifice. And such trees were, and for a very few Haya men and women still are, places at which a propitiator can make important offerings.

Offerings made at tree shrines were presented to the named spirit associated with that place. These offerings contrasted, or at least were distinct from, propitiations that might regularly be made to household, or ancestral forces. In the early part of the twentieth century (and in some Haya households today) each household head preserved a small enclosure (*ihangiro*) toward the rear of the house in which gifts to ancestors, usually the father of the household head, were offered (Rehse 1910: chapter 12; Cesard 1939: 15). Such offerings to ancestors had an element of routine about them; banana beer, for example, was set out at the *ihangiro* every day in order to secure the blessings of patrimony (Rehse 1910: chapter 12). Offerings at tree shrines were different. Some tree shrines were associated with particular Bacwezi figures who were known to overlook certain regions or activities. Mugasha, to whom I have already alluded, was the protector of the lake and of the fishermen who carried out their work on it; Irungu was the Mucwezi of the forest, and hunters made offerings to him to insure their success. Haya men and women often propitiated the spirit of an *ekigabilo* when they were to embark on an important journey, or if they anticipated the arrival of a distant traveler, confirming, yet again, the expansive spatial implications of these particular places (Jervis 1939; Rehse 1910: chapter 12; Cesard 1939: 20). I also found in the late 1980s that the blessings of particular spirits would be sought out after a

family had sought the aid of a diviner, suggesting yet another avenue for establishing connections between tree shrines and those who propitiated at them.

The objects offered at these tree shrines could include consumable foods, like banana beer (*olubisi*) and cooked plantains; or grain such as finger millet; or tokens of exchange value, like cowry shells (*ensimbi*); or metallic currencies, like rupees and shillings. And coffee cherries, objects that (as I will argue later) in the regional world of the Lakes Kingdoms, conjoined the qualities of food and currency, and processes of consumption and exchange, were the sine qua non of these offerings. These materials were set at the foot of the *ekigabilo* atop an unblemished leaf (Jervis 1939), much as meals were, and still are taken on “plates” of whole banana leaves in most of rural Kagera. Indeed, Haya men and women I spoke with in the late 1980s described these offerings as ways of “feeding” *okulisa* the spirit in order to acknowledge their presence in social life by means of the primary media of social relatedness, namely food (See Weiss 1996a *passim* for discussion of food and sociality).⁸ While people might describe this process as feeding, the term for making offerings in this way at these shrines through these explicit ritual practices is *okubonekya*, “to make visible,” to cause to be seen.

Elsewhere, I have described, in some detail, the aesthetic and political dimensions of seeing and visibility in everyday Haya sociocultural life (Weiss 1996a). Haya aesthetics, their interest and attention to the sensory form and perceptual qualities of material objects and especially the spatial dimensions of their presentation, is profoundly concerned with enclosure as a means of assuring control over objects, relations and social processes more generally. Value, I have argued, is incorporated in Haya practice by interiorizing productive processes, removing them from exterior and (relatively) more public relations. Thus, covering, veiling, closing, screening, and wrapping are all routine dimension of productive Haya engagements with their world. They are cultural practices undertaken in order to enhance the value of a given activity. To expose, or to *disclose* in such a world is therefore to offer access to another, to cede power to that other who would otherwise be excluded and removed from the values that one has so carefully enclosed. From this perspective, then, “[b]eing able to see something is to engage it in a profoundly powerful way, to act as a subject with respect to what is being seen, but also, possibly, to be subjected to it. . . . [This makes the capacity to see a] form of power as well as perception, and making things visible is essential to Haya constructions of authority. The right to see and be seen are central means of demonstrating relative rank, position, and privilege in Haya social relations” (Weiss 1996a: 121). Offerings made to spiritual forces must then be understood as means of accessing power in terms of precisely how, and what, and to whom they “make things visible.”

Consider the following invocation, one that Ishumi (1980: 71–72) tells us he recorded from a village elder making an offering of thanksgiving for the success that his son had achieved:

Katonda Nyamuhanga ishewange;	God the Creator, omnipresent;
Owamaisho nkolugega;	Of the myriad eyes to see everywhere;
Entabonwa, embonwa luboni omurubaya;	The unseen, seen only inside the hidden, secret place
Nikwehongela kakimo hamoi neka yange.	I commit myself along with my household to you.
Iwe mulinda byona; Boneka akamwani n'Enkologo ezikagenzileo.	You watch over everything; Receive a bit of coffee and its accompani- ments.
Iwe eyatwete omwilu wawe mutabaniwa Akatabaala amwitunda akashuba kutabaluka.	You who have led your servant my son out to seek wealth, and to return with it.
Omuwe amani nobumaza ashube ashubeyo;	Be his strength and courage to return yet again
Ahone ebindi ebyokusimisa.	He should see more things with which to thank you.
Iwe ishewanga, boneka.	You omnipresent, receive. ⁹

In this text I have highlighted the references to seeing and vision, *okubona*, a theme that clearly characterizes both the power of Katonda (one of many terms for God common in a contemporary Christian vernacular) and the relationship of the propitiating father to Katonda.¹⁰ Katonda is all-seeing with “a myriad eyes,” yet he remains “unseen” (*entabonwa*), or paradoxically seen only when simultaneously hidden. And the elder’s relationship to this deity is instantiated with an utterance “*Boneka akamwani*” that exemplifies this perceptual capacity. Here, this plenipotentary source of vision is offered a token (the *akamwani* is the diminutive form of coffee, *amwani*) with the stative form of *okubona*, “to see,” which I would prefer to translate “Let it be visible.” The sociolinguistic form of this propitiation is important, because it shows how the father *establishes* the power of the deity in the very act of invoking it. The invocation, that is, emphasizes the potency of Katonda as a being with extraordinary powers of vision; the entreaty, *boneka*, thereby provides a performative event in which that ability is demonstrated. This father, then, does *not* ask the deity to act, in spite of the term “receive,” a poor translation of *boneka* that reflects a notion of prayer and sacrifice in which deities “receive” in anticipation of the blessings they might provide as return “gifts.”

Indeed, the propitiator does not even ask Katonda to *look at*, or *see* what has been made visible. Rather, Katonda is acknowledged as all-seeing, and his propitiator, therefore, comports himself in accordance with that divine ability.

The ritual practices of the father do not attempt to act upon the deity, to attract it, to cajole it, to make use of it, to make a request of it, or even, in fact, to *thank* it. Instead, the invocation describes the totalizing strength of Katonda, relates the successes of the son—here, again, the “servant” (*omwilu*) of Katonda’s acts—and asks the deity to continue, simply, to *be* (*Omuwe*). To *ask* the deity, even to ask it to “receive,” would be to *subject* the will of that supreme power to the will of another, thereby diminishing it. The propitiator of these rites makes virtually no reference to his own action—other than his own *reflexive* action upon himself (*Ninkwehongela*, “I commit myself”)—which strengthens the assertion that constructive agency lies exclusively with the spirit. In effect, these ritual acts are designed to demonstrate the pervasive potency of the deity, and then to act in a way that conforms with the definitive features of that evident force. “In the presence of You who *see* all,” I would paraphrase, “this offering is *visible*.” And it is seeing, *okubona*, this text suggests, which is so encompassing a form of mastery (so encompassing, in this case, that its agent remains unseen) that to be visible to that force is to *participate* in it in empowering ways. The offerings are made effective, not because they transform or otherwise act upon a recipient, but because the form in which they are presented best allows them—and their provider—to be subject to a totalizing dominion.

This discussion of Haya offerings (I would even say Haya sacrifice) clearly owes a great deal to Lienhardt’s account of the relationship between “actions” and “*passiones*,” the experience of action upon the self, in Dinka “symbolic action” (Lienhardt 1961; see also Kelly and Kaplan 1990: 140–141). What is especially important about Lienhardt’s discussion, and what is echoed in the present analysis, is the recognition that the iconic demonstration of the potency characteristic of such totalizing power, or as Lienhardt puts it “the discovery of an image which is the active counterpart of human *passiones*” is in fact a means of exercising *control* over experience (Lienhardt 1961: 151). Dinka sacrifice, for example, achieves its ends not by coercing divinity, nor by *failing* or refusing to act, but by allowing the Dinka “to create their own ‘situation as it really is’” (Lienhardt 1961: 250). An “existential truth” is thereby effected and enacted by human actions, a truth that demonstrates human weakness, subjugation, and dependence on divinity. Recognizing the dynamics of such understandings of power as they are actualized in social practice, a dynamic of willful subjugation to a thoroughgoing form of control as itself a means to acquiring, or at least enjoying the benefits of some of that potential force; combined with an appreciation of the concrete sensory and perceptual contours—the potency of seeing, and the visible subject of that gaze—of relations and actions that characterize and make possible this

dynamic, can actually go a long way toward helping us grasp the sense of coffee in both earlier *and* contemporary Haya social practices. Coffee needs to be examined as the quintessential medium through which the active constitution of power—exemplified, but not exhausted, by these ritual offerings—is realized as a feature of the Haya “situation as it really is.”

The phrase *Boneka akamwani* (“Let this bit of coffee be visible”) used to convey the offerings is telling in this regard. Coffee is understood in Haya communities to have qualities that lend themselves to visual acuity, to rendering the unseen visible. Coffee, for example, flowers in the midst of the “dry season” in Bukoba, and this flowering is viewed (and smelled) as an augury of the reinvigoration of the agriculture cycle as a whole.¹¹ In particular, the whiteness of these coffee flowers is noted as a positive sign. It should not be surprising to find that whiteness is closely linked to visual perception (cf. Turner 1967: 60–90; Weiss 1996a: 119–126), and so the potency and predictive ability of coffee is recognized as something that is powerfully “made visible.” Moreover, Cesard notes that earlier in the twentieth century coffee cherries could be used in divination practices in ways that emphasized these perceptual features: “The *mulaguzi* (diviner) in Buhaya ordinarily makes use of a basin of water and some coffee cherries. One divines according to the pattern presented by the cherries and therein finds that which had been hidden” (Cesard 1939: 19).¹² As a divinatory tool, coffee reveals “that which had been hidden,” making visible what could not otherwise be seen. The technique of placing coffee in water further highlights these visual qualities, as the transparency of water leads to a clarity of sight. In the late 1980s Haya friends told me of sorcery techniques using bowls of water and coffee in which the image of the person one intended to harm could be made to rise to the water’s surface, another more nefarious means of exposing a visible form. Indeed, the verb *okuela* means to be clear, to shine, to be white, to be pure—a semantic range typical of similar Bantu verbs—and the sensory appearance and divinatory uses of coffee flowers and cherries participates in all of these acts. It seems appropriate, then, that offerings “made visible” are presented as “a bit of coffee.”

The qualitative forms of coffee transactions—or perhaps conveyance is more appropriate than transaction, since even to assume that they have the capacity to compel a return gives them more credit than the discourse implies—display not only the extremes of power entailed in relations between donors and recipients, characterized by concrete perceptual and aesthetic features, they also suggest the kinds of value that are embedded in the concrete objects so transacted. *Boneka akamwani* is a phrase not confined to encounters with spiritual forces, or applied principally to ritual contexts, for *akamwani* is a standardized term for any token offering to another. Indeed, substantial items, including significant sums of money, livestock, or valuable commodities such as clothing and textiles, can all be presented (in the context, for exam-

ple, of marriage exchanges, or property disposition at inheritance) by a donor as *akamwani*, a bit of coffee. This characterization of offerings works, in effect, doubly to diminish the donor with respect to the recipient. The diminutive term *akamwani*, a bit of coffee, and never the standard *amwani*, in and of itself emphasizes the meager character of the offering. Further, the categorization of even goats and clothing as “just a bit of coffee” belittles, or at least renders extremely modest the very act of offering. Of course, it is not unusual for a donor to describe his or her offering as *akamwani* as a kind of false modesty, one that ultimately draws attention to the wealth that the donor commands, wealth that is so great that they consider even heads of cattle a mere “bit of coffee.” But such description, while it does not really seem to diminish the donor (and may have the opposite effect) confirms the significance of the category *akamwani* in describing an offering. “A bit of coffee” works to establish a pronounced *contrast* (and not just a difference) in values; either the *akamwani* made visible to the deity accentuates the power contrast between propitiator and spirit, or the magnificent bestowal characterized as a meager token draws attention to the wider control of wealth that the donor commands. It should also be clear that one does not “really” need to be wealthy in order to describe a significant offering as “a bit of coffee.” The practical significance of this description allows even the poorest donor to imply a wider control of wealth, to suggest even a certain profligacy that demonstrates a *command* over wealth (i.e., that wealth is no issue for me if I can call the goat I give away *akamwani*) even when extreme wealth is not *possessed*.¹³

ROYAL SIGHT, ROYAL STRENGTH

A little bit of coffee goes a long way. The *akamwani* category in Haya social practices generates a sense of value in a number of respects. In the contrasts it invokes, between lowly propitiators and all-powerful deities, apparently modest tokens and the appearance of magnificent wealth, gracious gestures and indifference to their material consequence, a bit of coffee concretely *makes* a highly valued offering. Moreover, it gives that value tangible, lived qualities. The play between the seen and the unseen, the potency of vision and the world made visible are aesthetic terms that have substantial political implications. In the very acts of imagining, as Lienhardt might say, encompassing powers with real perceptual capacities, the coffee donor may place himself in relation to those impressive forces, and thereby give the world a sense of reality so compelling that it exercises a hold over the donor herself. We choose our world, as Merleau-Ponty puts it, and our world chooses us (Merleau-Ponty 1962). Like the acts of “finding” that demonstrate the force of history in Haya experiential encounters with their world, the offerings presented as *akamwani* have a hold over their donors that discloses in their experience the sense and power of the donor’s acts.

The modes and terms of value configured in the bit of coffee were further elaborated—and embodied—in the very person of the Haya king, the *omukama*. The king's body, according to precolonial and early colonial reports (Speke 1863; Rehse 1910: chapter 26), is both the subject and object of a complex visual field. Kings are epitomized, even in contemporary Haya communities, as beings who were secluded from contact, and especially secluded from the view of others. A king must not only remain unseen by others while eating (a practice that is actually characteristic of Haya household meals more generally) but he eats by himself, in seclusion. Tanaganyika's renowned governor, Donald Cameron, noted of his visit to Bukoba as late as 1926 that the Bakama always brought their own food and drink with them (Cameron 1939: 156). The *omukama* also remains unseen while he drinks, never sharing his beer with others; in contemporary Haya villages this behavior is powerfully antisocial, and readily condemned as royalist. In many respects these gustatory acts of the king are stereotypical of institutions of sacred kingship, which allows the king's need for nourishment to be denied, and his sacred character thereby confirmed (Feeley-Harnik 1985; Hocart 1927; Sahlins 1985). This is certainly an important quality of the Haya *omukama*, but the visual character of this denial is also the focus of royal privilege. So that, for example, while the king remains largely unseen, his subjects relate to him as objects to be seen by him. "On [his] excursions," Speke reports of his encounter with Rumanyika in 1859, "no common man dare look upon the royal procession" (Speke 1863: 253). When the royal entourage passes through a public setting his subjects avert their gaze from him and declare "*Kaboneka waitu!*" "It is visible, our lord" a phrase that should be reminiscent of the coffee propitiator. Here, the subject reduces himself with the prefix "ka" the singular form of diminutive nouns (like *akamwani*, a bit of coffee). Haya subjects of kings and spirits make their diminished selves available to the gaze of an unseen potency. Further, Haya men and women to this day swear "on the face of the king," *Obusa bw'omukama*. As with divinatory procedures, the truth of what might otherwise "remain hidden" is authenticated before the very source of a kingdom's visual strength.¹⁴ From the face of the king who sees all no action can ultimately be concealed.

These royal prerogatives of "invisibility" and omni-optical presence are further conjoined with the power of coffee in some of the most important kingly rituals. In particular, the rite of the New Moon (*Omwezi Kwema*, or *Omwezi Kwela*) was the critical calendrical referent for royal ceremony. The New Moon itself "was auspicious both for its visual clarity, as well as for its 'newness,' the fact that it is a phenomena that initiates a process, and is therefore unsullied by the passage of time. As one neighbor put it, 'It is a period that has made no mistakes'" (Weiss 1996b: 142). The New Moon ceremonies carried out by the king were crucial demonstrations of authority, vital to the well-being of the king and kingdom, and configured around the potential for making seen and being seen essential to royal power. According to Rehse, the New

Moon ceremonies in the early years of the twentieth century, while celebrated by the populace of the kingdom as a whole, “is mainly for the chief (*sic*), who on his part on this day does reverence to his ancestors and especially his dead father” (Rehse 1910: chapter 15) Carlson adds that at the New Moon the king propitiates his own royal ancestors at each of their tombs (*amagashani*) as well as the royal Mucwezi, Wamala, the last king in the Cwezi dynasty—who “put an end to darkness”¹⁵—that preceded the Bito line of Kiziba and the Hinda lines elsewhere in Buhaya (Carlson 1989: 170). In this way the king embodies the totality of his dynasty—I would say of the kingship itself—as he propitiates both his immediate ancestors and the “outsider” ancestral figures that his own ancestors replaced. In making these propitiations, which always included coffee and would have been described as a whole as *akamwani* (Jervis 1939: 50) the king places himself in a compromising situation, but one that is characteristic of sacred kingship more generally. The king seems both the absolute sovereign of his kingdom, and yet himself absolutely subject to the very sources of his own supremacy. As the descendant of more powerful ancestors, and doubly the embodiment of a contemporary royal line that recognizes the supreme power of the Bacwezi, its own antecedents, the propitiations he offers call his stature as a sovereign into doubt. By making himself a subject acted upon by forces acknowledged to exercise supreme command, the king casts doubts on his own capacity for “overseeing” his “visible” subjects.

Not surprisingly, the period surrounding the New Moon was one of *tension* and uncertainty for the king as his capacity for effective rule was challenged. Yet the form that challenge took provided the occasion for a redemonstration of royal power in ways that make clear the links between subjugation and sacrifice, between visible and invisible forces. Rehse notes, for example, that the New Moon ceremonies have an especially ribald and extravagant character. While each household performs its propitiations to its own ancestors, the mood of non-royals is distinctively celebratory in Rehse accounts. The merrymaking, dancing, and drunkenness he describes might be taken as evidence of the waning powers of the king at this critical period, a threatened collapse of authority characteristic of the carnivalesque in such hierarchical sociocultural orders. I am reluctant to make such an argument (in spite of its convenient “fit” with the dangers posed to royal power that the New Moon portends), largely because of the exoticizing account that Rehse provides, and because Haya men and women in the late 1980s described New Moon ceremonies as more solemn in their intentions than Rehse suggests. Still, one aspect of Rehse’s report that seems worth noting (irrefutably objectifying and racist as it is) is the following description:

At the feast of the new moon the men wear their ox hides, the boys wear goat skins, the women barkcloth, and the girls dance naked, their bodies glistening with grease in the form of rancid, stinking butter. The ox hides

worn by the men look as though they had just been taken out of butter and on their bodies also is smeared the precious stuff. The long handles of their spears, RUSHABI, shine as though they had been extra specially smeared over, or it may only be that they have become greasy because of the men's buttery hands—one is unable to decide. The smallest quantity of butter is wasted on the boys. The women's barkcloths shine like the finest silk owing to its buttery gloss. (1910: chapter 15)

What might be made of this “rancid,” greasy mess? Rehse, with characteristic disgust, describes the Haya practice of rubbing themselves and their clothing with butter throughout his account, so his comments about the extremes of this practice during the New Moon ceremonies suggest that we may at least see them as a time for the relatively more liberal use of this emollient. Haya men and women, even in the current day, when petroleum jellies have replaced butter as the “grease” of choice, recognize that butter was used to coat people and things because it was “precious stuff.” Access to butter required access to cattle whether one's own or one's overlord and patron. Still, the power and meaning of these “smearing” practices is no mere reflection of the economic strength and status that its provision required.

As I have described elsewhere (Weiss 1996b: 147–149; see also Burke 1996), using butter, or other oils to coat—*okusiga*—the body and clothing is a cultural practice that Haya men and women appreciate for the pristine appearance it creates. A person's well-oiled skin removes the traces of activity—the scratches and blemishes that accrue on the body's surface; further, this oiling is held to inhibit such marks, preserving the unsullied, smooth appearance of a “new” skin. Moreover, the surface of a properly coated skin is shiny and brilliant, dazzling in its allure. It is not merely clear from marks, but literally “shines” with a beautiful glow. This lustrous beauty that preserves the unblemished appearance of the skin is further tied to Haya notions of time and growth. A person's skin coated with butter is likened to the appearance of newborn children and virginal brides, both of whom are unsullied, vigorous, and new. In all of these perceptual and temporal respects, the shining new surface of the oiled body so graphically described by Rehse recalls the qualities embodied by the New Moon, a concrete manifestation of clarity, visibility, and renewal.

I am arguing, then, that at the moment when the supreme power of the king is in some doubt, a potency grounded in significant ways in his capacity to hold his kingdom in his gaze, his subjects make spectacles of themselves. The brilliance and luster of their shining bodies and clothing create a sight that is eminently *visible*. The sheen of a newly oiled skin, under the glow of a moon that makes its reappearance, incorporates a reinvigoration of the active body. Men and women attract attention and boast¹⁶ of their restored beauty with their extravagant oiling; no amount of butter, Rehse suggests, goes “unwasted.” Yet

it should also be clear that this vitality and renewal are equally critical to the king's strength and control. For in making themselves so impressively visible the king's subjects make themselves available to him in ways that acknowledge the very form of perceptual force that characterizes his power. The New Moon once again brings the kingdom to light, assuring the continued vitality of an all-seeing force, as all that he commands becomes visible.

STRENGTH, TIME, AND DEATH

This achievement by Haya men and women, the demonstration of their own shining vitality, can be understood as a counterpart to the sacrificial offerings already considered. By making themselves visible to the king, his subjects enable and enact his ascendancy. This revitalization shows that by making their sacrifice they are simultaneously participating in that power. They, thereby, enjoy the benefits of being subjects of a power they have successfully produced. Further, the king's power is restored in a doubled fashion at the New Moon ceremonies. As a revitalized subject he successfully commands a newly visible kingdom; and as a propitiator himself to the graves of his royal ancestors and to the shrine of royalty itself, he—like his own subjects—may participate in the power his own actions produce. In the dynamics of Haya sacrifice, perhaps best exemplified by New Moon ceremonies as they were practiced in the nineteenth century, thus the propitiants authorize the potency they create by their own actions (Valeri 1985). Those who sacrifice reap the blessing of that potency, revitalizing both themselves and the objects of their veneration, not as a “return” for the offerings they “give,” but by being incorporated into the reality they reorder, and thereby becoming infused with the very power they construct. If their sacrifices are successful, then the propitiants' own condition must embody the “existential truth”—the “situation as it really is”—of the world they have created.

In all these analyses of power made visible it is important not to lose sight of the place of coffee. Again, the coffee offered at New Moon ceremonies is iconic of the wider processes in which it participates. For example, the coffee variety that is most prized for use in such ceremonies is one that “when ripe, becomes a golden-yellow rather than the normal red and is known for this characteristic as *mibona*” (Jervis 1939: 55), a name related to *okubona*, “to see.” Further, the intermediaries of the king who collect coffee tribute from his clients for use in these ceremonies are called *Wabona*, “those who see” (Jervis 1939: 51). These properties of the coffee crop and its processing, like the qualities of whiteness and clarity embedded in divination and flowering, lend themselves well to the revitalizing appearance of the New Moon and its attendant ceremonies.

There is a still wider, and more specific range of connections between the growth of coffee and the reinvigoration of the king and kingdom that illumi-

nate the significance both of kingship and of coffee. New Moon ceremonies are rites of revitalization, and there is evidence to suggest that the king's vitality was in some danger during the days before this celestial body made its reappearance (Hellberg 1965). As the king's vitality is inextricably bound to the well-being of his kingdom as a whole (surely a minimal feature of sacred kingship), it is not surprising to find that the king's subjects celebrated the New Moon by displaying their own vitality. The vitality restored and displayed at this time, a potency that connected king and kingdom, was called a "life force," or *amagala* (Hellberg 1965). According to Hellberg it was this "life force" that was depleted prior to the appearance of the New Moon, a force that was necessary to the king's—and thus his kingdom's survival. *Amagala*, though, was not an exclusively royal asset. Each person, indeed each sentient being, was endowed with *amagala*; as a "life force" no life could exist without it. In particular, Haya men and women held that a person's "life force" was strongly connected to their coffee trees. The death of a coffee tree, for example, was taken as an omen of its owner's death, and it was thought that no person who planted coffee on his own (that is, without first acquiring royal approval) would live to see the crop (Jervis 1939: 53–54; Hyden 1969: 82).

These dimensions of coffee further illuminate its use as an offering in all of the ritual contexts described, for they suggest that coffee is itself a conduit and icon of the vitality that its offering promotes. I would add that these implications give greater credence to the notion that a donor's propitiation of a mere "bit of coffee" is, in fact, a form of sacrifice, an expenditure (perhaps even an extravagant one) with a highly valued potential that is surrendered as a life-enhancing gesture of one's subjugation.

The links between coffee, sacrifice, and life itself might be better understood if the qualities of this "life force," *amagala*, could be specified. The evidence that might permit us to do so are slim, but at least suggestive. Aside from the tangible interpenetration of life forces as suggested by the king's attachments to his realm, and the coffee grower's entanglements with his crop, there are reasons to think that *amagala* is a source of strength that has a periodic and fluid character. The term *amagala* is no longer (if it ever was) widely recognized in Haya everyday discussion, but a few older men and women were able to recall some of its implications and offer some insights into its workings in an embodied Haya cosmology. The first example anyone offered to describe *amagala* was when a neighbor took a piece of withered banana bast, dry, nearly rotting, and quite malleable, and contrasted that "lifeless" form with the green, moist, solid bast still growing on the banana stem. The latter still had its *amagala*, not simply because it was still "living" but because it had a supple, firm form. Some suggested that this repletion derived, not from some abstract principle, or generalized source in life, but to what one woman described as "the strength that comes from sleeping." Sleep, in these characterizations, was felt to be a period of restoration and renewal.

Haya conversation may not recognize the term *amagala*, but it *is* rife with references to, and concerns for, the restorative powers of sleep. “To spend a day without eating (*okusiga n’enjala*),” I was often told, “is sometimes possible; but to sleep without eating (*okulala n’enjala*, that is, to go to bed hungry) is really hard!” Such an assertion implies that sleep is an active process, that the work of sleep requires nourishment—perhaps even more than the work of waking activity—to be successful. Haya greetings make repeated reference to the quality of one’s sleep. One man suggested that the morning greeting “*Agalaileo*” was once taken to mean “How did your *amagala* sleep?”¹⁷ Again, the paucity of contemporary, or historical evidence makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions; but it does seem to be the case that Haya men and women physically feel sleep to be a bodily process that may index a person’s general well-being,¹⁸ and that, like the fluid that drains from a dried-out banana stem, well-being is a felt quality that is ever in flux, subject to ebbs and flows, diminishment and regeneration.

These felt qualities of *amagala* embody a set of parallels with the New Moon ceremonies already described. Such parallels suggest that the “life force” of the king, his kingdom, and indeed, all of the living beings that inhabit the region, have a temporal form that is characterized by periodic depletion and restoration. Like the darkness of an absent moon that sets the stage for renewed royal potency with the reappearance of the moon, and the restored possibility of presiding over a visible realm, the active powers of sleep during which the living body lies dormant allow the power of each body to be replenished. The implications of *amagala*, the fact that the king’s restoration depends upon—but also enables—the restoration of the kingdom as a whole, which is itself an instance of the clear conjunction of hierarchical relations, “sacrifice,” and renewal; or the links between eating well and sleeping well (or productively); as well as the ties between persons and the coffee trees they plant and harvest, indicate that this “life force” establishes profound interconnections between living beings. To have life is to participate in—but also be susceptible to—wider patterns of interchange and of being. Especially important for our purposes are the ways in which coffee is made to objectify the forms and values of these interconnections and their potentials for transformation, for being depleted and replenished. The offerings that *make* time, generating the pattern of revitalization that follows from diminishment are made possible through the medium of this product. A “bit of coffee” invokes the extreme contrasts that are necessary to the establishment of hierarchical order, and so make possible the flow of *amagala* in which subjugated propitiators participate in the potency they produce. If life itself is characterized by the transformative interpenetration of such forces, and such forces are channeled through, hierarchically organized by, and given temporal form by the presentation of coffee it is no wonder that the death of a coffee tree could be held to portend the death of its owner, as coffee clearly embod-

ies the possibility of having life. Recall, as well, the Haya assertion that planting coffee as an *individual* and outside the strictures of royal hierarchy will lead to the death of the planter. Such an act violates the very nature of *amagala*, which is intrinsically relational, achieving its fullest dimensions in the interchange between more and less powerfully living beings. These understandings of the ways in which coffee objectifies *amagala* indicate that one cannot attempt to control life in ways that defy its essential character. The implications of this understanding of power, and its grounding in social relations, can further be seen in the way that coffee trees were planted in the pre-colonial era, a topic I discuss below.

ROYAL GROWTH, ROYAL PLACES

Coffee's iconic presentation of active and activating potency, its mediation of hierarchical, yet revitalizing relationships, and its objectification of life itself—in short, its value in Haya social practice—made it a prized substance scrupulously controlled by kings and their noble brethren. Growing coffee was a prerogative of the Balangila, a privilege whose violation might lead to disaster. Still, coffee was grown, and had to be grown throughout the Haya kingdoms. Its use was essential to the sacrificial offerings I have explored, offerings that were not confined to royalty, and that, indeed, could not be confined to royalty if they were to be effective. As I shall describe further, coffee figured in an array of practices that were—and in many respects, still are—pervasive and quotidian in Haya collective life. In order to retain its value, a value grounded in hierarchical contrast, coffee had to be carefully controlled, but broadly accessible. These paired requirements were attainable through the methods of coffee cultivation and propagation, and the authorization of those methods as practiced in Haya communities at the turn of the century.

According to Jervis, Emin Pasha, the celebrated German resident of Bukoba, was the first to establish nurseries at the end of the nineteenth century (Jervis 1939: 53–54). Prior to these seedling nurseries planted through generative propagation, coffee was grown throughout the region by means of vegetative propagation. That is, rather than growing coffee trees from seed, Haya farmers would grow new plants directly from living trees. One method involved cuttings taken from mature trees. When branch cuttings were used for propagation, each end would be planted in the ground, and in this way two root systems and subsequently separate trees could be grown. Even more commonly, the Haya propagated new trees directly at the site of living trees by bending down their branches, pegging the branch ends into the soil, and thereby growing an independent root system. The branch with the newly established roots was then cut away from the mature plant and became a separate tree. In some instances, though, the independent root system was not cut away from the parent stock, so that separate trees maintained organic connec-

tions to one another. Such coffee trees could spread over a wide region as successive generations of trees had their branches used to create yet newer trees, all of which were tangibly connected back to a single tree of origin. Jervis reported in 1939 that examples of such trees could still be found in Bukoba “producing crops which in quality and quantity is equal to the yield from trees [which would have been grown from seedlings] planted several generations later” (Jervis 1939: 53).

These methods of propagation would surely have permitted the growth of coffee to be carefully scrutinized and restricted. It should be clear, to begin with, that a single branch of coffee might produce several dozen coffee seeds, each of which could become a coffee seedling and tree if planted. Yet, that same branch could only produce one or two new trees if propagated by Haya vegetative methods. These techniques not only limited the total yield of coffee in the region but allowed for royal control that authorized its propagation, thereby limiting the range of people who could grow coffee. To take a cutting from a tree without the knowledge of its owner, especially one as closely guarded as a coffee tree, would have required a good deal of secrecy. Haya practice safeguarded this propagation even further by requiring that each coffee grower be able to provide witnesses who could attest to his authorized cultivation. The supplier of a cutting, generally a person of high rank, would act as a witness as to the source of the coffee; and further, the cutting itself was never planted by the farmer of the coffee, but by another man (a friend or neighbor) who could act as a witness as to its proper planting (Jervis 1939).

All of these techniques clearly served the interest of a royal “monopoly” that could control access to an intentionally limited supply of coffee. It is also important to recognize, however, that these propagation techniques are much more than useful means of restricting the growth of a valued good. The control of coffee had a social form that was never simply economic in its determinants. To begin with, it is evident that the “monopoly” on coffee established “restrictions” that could never be exclusive, or completely exclusionary. That is, the very act of propagating by these methods established *connections* that linked royal and commoner, patron and client, and even growers to non-growers. Coffee is an intrinsically relational object in Haya social practice, as both its propitiatory capabilities and its propagation plainly demonstrate. No man grows coffee on his own, and no king, even one exercising a royal “monopoly,” restricts the growth of coffee to himself alone. The very fact that coffee propagation, like the provision of coffee as royal tribute (*enkologo*), was a means of ramifying royal authority throughout an administrative system reveals the interlinking forces entailed in the “monopoly” that kings exercised over this substance.

The specific techniques by which Haya controlled coffee at the beginning of the twentieth century not only formulate social relations, they also disclose some of the *values* of coffee as a meaningful entity. The particular pattern of

growth exemplified by coffee trees grown through vegetative propagation instantiates a wider Haya concern with the spatial and temporal form of growth more generally, and agricultural growth in particular. Coffee grown from cuttings or pegged branches concretely articulates generational relations, as parent stocks become vital to maturing plants. This method clearly contrasts with seedlings, as seeds contain within themselves the potential for a fully independent plant. This contrast is present even when cuttings are planted, for both ends of the branch are buried and rooted so that each root system is initially physically conjoined to one another. Branches may be severed from an original plant, and spatially relocated; but the planted cutting reinstantiates a paired relationship from which each plant must subsequently be separated. The technique of pegging branches from parent stock, which Jervis suggests was even more common than that of replanting cuttings, further emphasizes the spatial connection and physical dependency between generations that makes growth possible.

This form of regeneration parallels in striking ways Haya methods for growing bananas, which were and continue to be the staple food grown on every family farm in the region (see the discussion in chapter 4). Indeed, Jervis reports that different forms of the coffee cherry were known by names for different varieties of bananas, suggesting a conscious pairing of these agricultural products (Jervis 1939: 52). For example, in Haya agricultural practice (since at least the latter half of the nineteenth century, as Rehse [1910] describes exactly the same practices), any individual banana plant is part of a set of three clustered generations of plants. A number of shoots are put out by mature plants, but Haya farmers uproot all but one in order to ensure that it gets adequate nutrition as it grows. The mature plant, at the second level, or generation, will have begun to yield fruit. Once these fruits have fully matured, the stem of the banana plant is hacked through in order to harvest the fruit. This hacked-through stem is allowed to remain standing and act as the third generation, the *ekisibo*, or “origin” which is, in turn, the “parent” of the mature fruit-bearing banana plant. In this way Haya cultivation practices produce a three-generational cycle of plants, from young shoots, to mature plants, to harvested stumps. What is crucial is that Haya engage in this method because they feel that the sustained material connections between these generation are necessary to the successful maturation of each banana plant. Shoots, which are the “children” (*akana*) of “mother” (*nyina*) plants “suckle” (*okuonka*) from the moisture of the mature plant, just as harvested stumps continue to feed (*okulisa*) and support the mature, fruiting bananas with the moisture they contain and the secure anchoring they provide (which helps keep the fruit-heavy plants from crashing down).

The temporal connections between generations of plants are, thus, *substantial* dependencies as parent stocks nurture offspring. The temporal form of this growth pattern has important spatial implications as well. The physical

connections between shoots and mature plants place shoots at the periphery of central points of development. In this way, each “origin” or *ekisibo* lies at the spatial center of a developmental process (and each plant, as it goes through this growth pattern and puts out its own shoots, becomes the successive center of new generations). Growth moves out from a central point of origin, but turns back in on itself as outgrowing elements become their own centers over time.

I would argue that this pattern, which thoroughly pervades Haya agriculture since each family farm grows dozens of banana plants, can also be said to characterize the growth of coffee trees. The trees grown at the site of parental branches, especially those that are never severed from these origins, clearly embody such a spatio-temporal pattern, as branches move out from their central “roots” only to establish their own roots and subsequent branches. So, too, do cuttings, that are not only peripheral to but spatially removed from their rooted origins, grow through the process of focusing central roots and moving out to new peripheries. Again, the method of planting both ends of a branch makes this clear, as each end forms a central root that only subsequently—that is, after rooting—is severed in half in order to create a peripheral branch at which coffee can fruit. In effect, the branches cut from original plants become mobile icons of growth, not simply replicating, or copying the parent plant—as seedlings do—but reinstantiating the relational qualities and tangible connections in both space and time that make growth possible. This iconicity further strengthens coffee’s claims to potency as it contains within itself the potential for an entire order, a fully realized “emplacement” (Feld and Basso 1996), of developmental relations.

What is more, this icon of spatio-temporal growth presented in coffee branches is equally an icon of the king himself. The fact that coffee circulates by royal edict, even in its propagation, alerts us to the links between royal power, mobility, exchange, and growth. It is crucial to note that this movement is not willy-nilly but rigorously grounded in the particulars of place. Coffee circulates because it carefully adheres to these particulars, to the requirements of substantive connections over time, and the recognition of central origins—and the same is true of kings. Like coffee, the kings’ development and reinvigorating growth also necessarily entail dynamic movement. For example, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries those sons of the mukama who were recognized as his potential heirs are never raised at the palace, the *ekikale*, of their father. Rather, they are raised “as far away as possible from the capital” (Cesard 1939: 28) by kin, a movement that protects them—and the king himself—from the intrigues of noble politics. When the new mukama assumes his authority, though, he does not reinhabit the palace of his predecessor; rather he constructs for himself a new *ekikale*, an act of self-placement that is always noted and celebrated in the chronicle of Haya kings (Schmidt 1978; Cory 1949; Lwamgira 1969). Moreover, the king not

only makes for himself a new home, he also continues to establish new strongholds throughout his reign, and moves among these households throughout the year (see also Beattie 1970). I would even suggest that this ongoing movement is critical to the continuous success of the king. The White Fathers at Kagondo, for example, were perplexed (although they reported their own perplexity in terms of “une chose bien mystérieuse pour les nègres”) to find that they could not keep track of the movements of their nemesis, the mukama Kahigi, because “at each new moon [the kings] rush to change residences” (Kagondo, 14 March 1903). The spatial relocation of the king at the period of the New Moon achieves a new centering of kinship, a centralization that is concomitant in temporal terms with the establishment of a grounded point of origin. The New Moon thus would have revitalized the power of kingship in its spatial as well as temporal dimensions.

The spatial form of this renewal has tremendous consequences for an understanding of royal power, and of the place of coffee in constituting the power. Origins and temporal precedence in Haya social existence are enclosed and centralized, not just in agricultural practice, but in a wide range of commonplace, ritual, and political activities (Weiss 1996a: Part I *passim*) The king’s actions instantiate this pattern, but they also *encompass* its possibilities. Haya farmers throughout the twentieth century (Cesard 1938a; Reining 1967; Weiss 1996a) have, for example, retained their authority in spatial terms by strengthening their attachments to particular places; by building houses that have a strong interior focus; by farming land so as to generate long-term patterns of growth and generativity; and perhaps most powerfully by “staying by the graves of one’s father,” occupying land once inhabited by those now dead. The king’s activities recognize these concerns with centrality and interiority as crucial to establishing and extending his dominion, as his concerns with carefully enclosing his own body at moments of potential challenge exemplify. Yet kings create these spatial and temporal dimensions, not through fixity, by holding fast to ancestral lands for example, but by embodying a *moving* center.

The king’s capacity to invoke the terms of authority, control, and productivity, to secure points of central origin and make them the grounds of extension and regeneration in time and space, is something I would suggest he carries with him. Kings can, therefore, focus their power in firmly rooted places, while simultaneously transcending these fixed strictures and remaking place through their continuous movement. And coffee, as I have indicated, similarly conjoins these bases of power. Always a center, grounded in substantial connections to points of origin, yet possessed of the capacity to recreate that central origin wherever it goes—these are the spatio-temporal qualities and concrete powers common to kings and their coffee.

These persistent and pervasive concerns with centrality and growth, embedded in the apparently self-generative force of Haya kings as well as

coffee to embody the productive qualities both of rigorous grounding in place, with those of continuously remaking place, draw our attention to important dimensions of coffee that have thus far only been suggested. These have to do with the fact that Haya coffee, and by implication Haya kingship—itsself expressed through and defined by a richly elaborated range of coffee related practices—is intrinsically mobile, and indeed transregional. I have considered a definitive, if relatively narrow, facet of coffee’s dynamic mobility—namely its imminently transactable character—through an intensive description of the perceptual and pragmatic conditions through which coffee’s meanings are actualized in Haya social existence. The intimate weaving of coffee into the nuances of an inhabited landscape, its condensation of historical valences, sensory immediacies, and constraining potencies, suffuse this substance with a sense of place, and in parallel fashion lends Haya places the tone and texture of the coffee that is made to dwell in them.

I want further to argue, as a means both of enforcing this description and setting the stage for an account of the more expansive horizons in which coffee figures, that these meanings are actualized, that is, the taken for granted “sense” that Haya men and women made, and to some extent continue to make, of coffee, as the value of that object. Coffee works in this place-world as an evaluative medium. The substance and the category of *akamwani*—their form and their content—display in their conveyance a recognition of extreme contrasts, contrasts that are ramified in a bodily, perceptual field (through the dynamics of vision, the play of *passiones* and action) engaged in inextricably relational actions. In the effective demonstration of such extremes, power can be generated and canalized. Life forces are sustained and reinvigorated through the clear enunciation, configured as the offering of “a mere bit of coffee,” that they are utterly limited—perhaps even entirely insignificant. At the same time, this expression of diminishment as a relative value, and a relative evaluation of the potency of the lives conjoined in the propitiatory “sacrifice,” is itself a self-sustaining power. Substantive, material relations of dependency through which generative, life-giving power can be appropriated are concretely manifest in the propagation of living coffee trees. Coffee, under these conditions, is the acknowledgment of an absolutely abject situation that, because it is always a relative diminishment, is bound to constitute a greater power. Wherever there is coffee there must be something more.

In order for coffee to project this potency—to instantiate these extreme contrasts and thereby evoke tremendous power—it has to be offered to others. I turn, therefore, in the next chapter from this account of the dynamics of power as iconically realized in the substantial form of coffee cherries and trees, to a consideration of the ways that coffee cherries figured in social transactions. Here I consider not only the ways that coffee was understood and made use of as a medium of value at the beginning of the twentieth century, but am especially interested in the historical transformation of coffee

through its articulation with other valued currencies. The introduction of colonial forms of money and coinage at the turn of the nineteenth century not only had historical consequences for the value of coffee in Bukoba, but each of these media were entangled in complex process of redefining the nature and meaning of wealth itself.

NOTES

1. A number of sources note that coffee was chewed in other parts of the Interlacustrine region, from Buganda in the East to Karagwe in the West (Burton 1860; Kajubi 1965; Tosh 1970; Uzoigwe 1971). This coffee, though, seems to have been chewed in a raw, unprocessed state, and was harvested from wild, not cultivated coffee trees (see below). In both of these respects coffee outside the Haya kingdoms was distinctive from “Haya coffee.”

2. Seitel has also pointed out that uprooting or chopping down trees is a characteristic practice of those who would question the judgments of kings and take issue with the categorical nature of their decision-making processes (Seitel 1986).

3. I do not mean to conflate these two categories, although for contemporary Haya, the distinction between Bazimu and Bacwezi is not significant. Bacwezi are recognized in Ankole and Bunyoro as spirits of an ancient royal dynasty who possess mediums, or *embandwa*, who are often associated with particular clans, or households; while Bazimu are simply the spirits of the dead. For most Haya, if they are at all concerned with such matters, the term Bazimu is used more frequently; the Bacwezi are simply understood to be one kind of Muzimu. As Schmidt points out, Bacwezi are spirits, and whether they were historical persons in the ancient past is not a concern (Schmidt 1978: 62).

4. One man I knew told me that when he decided to become a Jehovah’s Witness he had the tree-shrine growing on his farm chopped down. This, I would argue, is an exception that clearly proves the rule; he would not have made a point of chopping down the tree as an act of faith if he had not taken for granted that its existence was held to have some spiritual significance.

5. Cory and Hartnoll note that a family who had moved on to a farm where an *ekigabilo* grew could be fined or sued if the shrine were tampered with (Cory and Hartnoll 1945: 160–161).

6. As I describe in detail elsewhere (Weiss 1996a, chapter 7), brothers of the same father and mother may fall out and decide that they are no longer members of the same clan.

7. The gendered politics of grassland have become quite conflicted in recent years, as grazing rights for wealthy pastoralists and woodland rights for those who farm timber and firewood (all of which activities are controlled almost exclusively by men) have marginalized women’s agricultural production on these lands.

8. Ishumi also notes that sticks “representing firewood to cook the edibles” might also be offered, extending the iconic links to feeding and eating. The products, then, are offered not simply because they are valuable in themselves, but because they are meant to provide for the propitiated spirits.

9. I have altered Ishumi’s translation of this invocation slightly (cf. Ishumi 1980 71–72) to specify its verbal forms and their implications, as described below.

10. I recognize immediately that selecting an account from the post-independence period in Tanzania in order to illuminate precolonial practices is enormously problematic.

Let me make it clear that I am not asserting that there is a fundamental “historical continuity” in such rites that allows me to use this text. The deity addressed (Katonda), as well as the context for the rite (thanksgiving for having earned “wealth”), while not completely unknown in the nineteenth century, have certainly been subject to enormous transformation in this century. Nonetheless, the terms in which the relationship between the propitiant and spiritual power are expressed have clear historical precedents (cf. Rehse, Lwamgila, Cesard), and it is this “narrow” element of the invocation that is the primary focus of my exposition.

11. Bananas, the staple of Haya cuisine, can be harvested throughout the year, but their yields decline in the late summer months (July–August). The flowering of coffee at this time is taken as an index of the future banana crop.

12. All translations from the French are my own.

13. Compare this discussion to my earlier account of *okulongola*, a “premarital” exchange in Haya communities in which women offer men *akamwani* in return for luxurious gifts (Weiss 1996a, chapter 7).

14. Indeed, the blinding of a king or a contender for kingship is often reported in Haya histories as a fatally disabling event (Cory n.d.).

15. The name Wamala is taken from the panegyric “He who puts an end to darkness” (Rehse 1910).

16. The shiny appearance of spears carried during these ceremonies is characteristic of men’s “boasts”—*okwebuga*—as spears are icons of masculine virility, lineal descent, and household authority.

17. This is undoubtedly a “fictive,” if still perfectly valid, etymology. The infix *ga* could refer to any noun of the *ely—ama* class, and most Haya people translated *agalaileo* as “What is the *news (amakulu)* of sleeping?” The noun for “strength” in the Haya vernacular, moreover, is *amaini*, which also fits these grammatical patterns. The semantic content of greeting in any language are notoriously unrepresentative of any language as a whole. My argument, though, is not that people “really used to” ask one another about their “life force,” but rather that the sense of that force was understood through its associations with sleep and rest.

18. The connections between “eating well” and “sleeping well” make the qualities of sleep as an index of one’s overall well-being even more explicit, since eating in Haya social life, I have argued, is a means of generating and demonstrating satiation, repletion, and value (Weiss 1996a *passim*).