

African Encounters with Domesticity

The small, densely populated township of Mtendere affords an unobstructed view of the high-rise hotels and office buildings in Zambia's capital city of Lusaka—a vivid illustration of the proximity of poverty and wealth in urban Africa today.

In *Keeping House in Lusaka*, Karen Tranberg Hansen draws on two decades of field research in this former squatters' colony to challenge assumptions about the rural-urban divide in Africa that have dominated the thinking of much of Western social science. Focusing on such broad themes as household dynamics, gender politics, and informal economy in Mtendere, the book opens a window on the experiences of urban people living through one of Africa's most dramatic economic declines in the postcolonial era.

Keeping House in Lusaka argues that African urbanism is not purely a product of colonialism but a result of a wide variety of influences both local and foreign. Set against the backdrop of Zambia's colonial history and its political and economic conditions since independence in 1964, Hansen's study provides rich insight into the cultural effects of rapid urbanization and development in the Third World.

KAREN TRANBERG HANSEN is Professor of Anthropology at Northwestern University. She is the author of *Distant Companions: Servants and Employers in Zambia, 1900-1985*, and editor of *African Encounters with Domesticity*.

"Karen Tranberg Hansen says she likes cities—and she shows it in *Keeping House in Lusaka*, the vivid ethnographic record of a quarter-century's close engagement with one township in the capital of Zambia. The emphasis on gender casts new light on the anthropological classics from urban Zambia in the colonial era, and Hansen's long involvement with the city and the country through difficult times allows a remarkable view of social and economic change, and of the differences in living conditions between generations of ordinary Lusakans. Her examples set high standards of urban anthropology."

—Ulf Hannerz, author of *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places*

"Meticulously researched, superbly theorized, and vividly written, *Keeping House in Lusaka* both repays Hansen's twenty-year fieldwork commitment and reformulates the body of pathbreaking urban studies produced in Zambia since the 1940s. Its originality and scope will open windows on contemporary Africa for many audiences."

—Roger Sanjek, author of *Fieldnotes: The Making of Anthropology*

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Cover illustration: Women neighbors with their children at bath time.
Map of Lusaka, 1985. Both from the interior.
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