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CHILD AND FEMALE LABOUR IN KIAMBU DISTRICT 1902 - 1960

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Declaration

This Thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University

KINUTHIA S.M.

This Thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as University Supervisor.

DR. M.A. ACHOLA (MRS)

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ABSTRACT

Child and female labour is an aspect of labour in general which has been ignored by Kenyan historians. The role of women and children in development and maintenance of the colonial economy has only been attempted by the sociologists. However, the sociologists tend to discuss it in over-general terms. Child and female labour is an integral part of labour in general and cannot be discussed in isolation. Thus, the study is carried out within the framework of labour problems and policies in colonial Kenya.

In the pre-capitalist Kikuyu society, women and children were important. Exploitation was minimised by the fact that nearly everybody had access to the wealth he or she had helped to create. The knowledge children got through work was more important than the work they did.

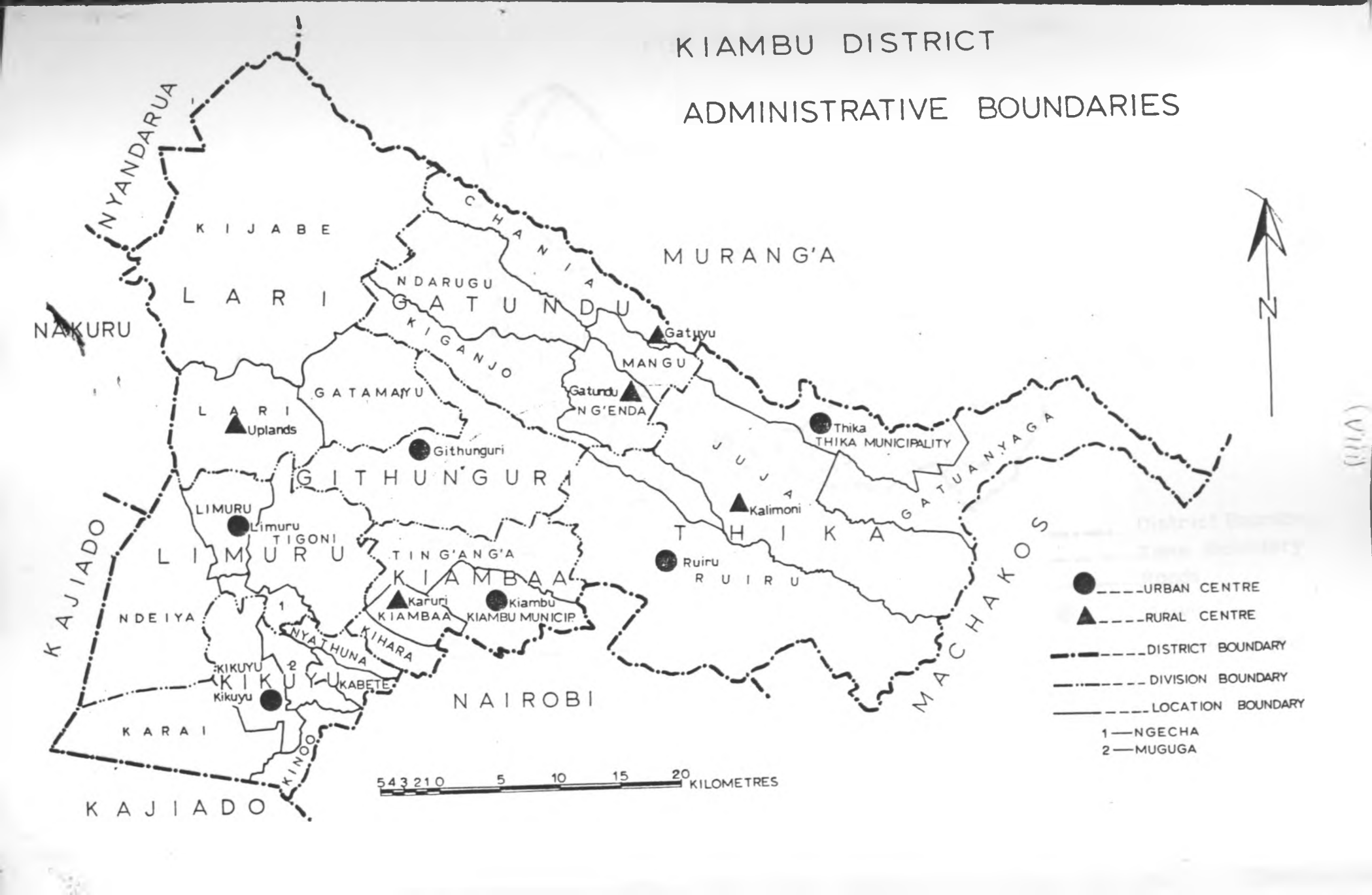
With the coming of the Europeans, there were new developments in the Kikuyu society. Land alienation, introduction of host of taxes and the creation of powerful colonial chiefs created a class of labourers which included women and children.

The invitation of the soldier settlers after WorldWar II resulted in more of the alienated land being brought under cultivation. This led to a severe shortage of labour. With the help of colonial administration and unfavourable colonial legislations, women and children were increasingly brought into the labour-force.

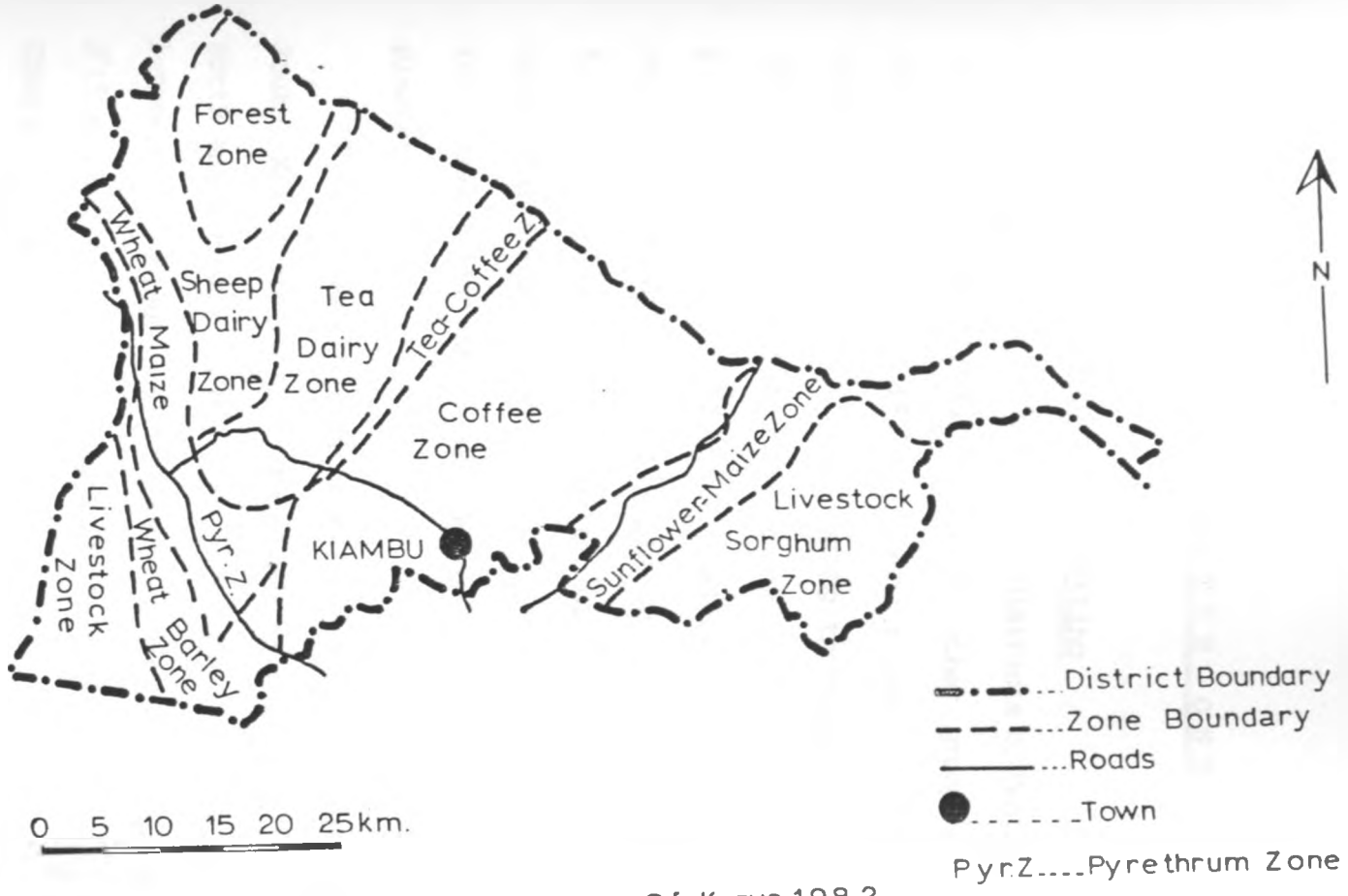
Child and female labour was even more extensively used during difficult years such as the emergency period. Women and children from poor families were already used in providing labour for wage and therefore many of them volunteered to do manual work. Furthermore, the economic difficulties of the 1940s and 50s also posed a challenge for survival and women and children responded to them by aggressively entering into the wage labour.

Therefore, child and female labour was extensively used by the colonial settlers in Kiambu. This was necessitated by first, the shortage of able-bodied men to work on the settler farms and secondly, the monetary cheapness of women and children.

LOCATION OF KIAMBU DISTRICT


KIAMBU DISTRICT
ADMINISTRATIVE BOUNDARIES
NYANDARUA
KIJABE
CHANIA
MURANG'A
NDARUGU
LARI
GATUNDU
NAKURU
KIGANJO
Gatuyu
MANGU
GATAMAIYU
Gaturdu
NG'ENDA
LARI
Uplands
Thika
THIKA MUNICIPALITY
Githunguri
GITHUNGURI
JUJA
GATUANYAGA
LIMURU
Limuru
TIGONI
Kalimoni
KAJIADO
LIMURU
TING'ANG'A
THIKA
Ruiru
RUIRU
KIAMBAA
MACHAKOS
Karuri
KIAMBAA
Kiambu
KIAMBU MUNICIP.
NDEIYA
1
NYATHUNA
KIHARA
KIKUYU
2
KIKUYU
KABETE
Kikuyu
NAIROBI
KARAI
KINOO
KAJIADO
N
URBAN CENTRE
RURAL CENTRE
DISTRICT BOUNDARY
DIVISION BOUNDARY
LOCATION BOUNDARY
1—NGECHA
2—MUGUGA
5 4 3 2 1 0 5 10 15 20 KILOMETRES

Kiambu District
Agro—Ecological Zones



From Farm Management Handbook Of Kenya 1982

CHAPTER ONE

(i) Introduction: Gographical Setting

Kiambu makes one of the five districts of Central Province of Kenya. It is predominantly Kikuyu though other groups of people have been settling there since 1920s. Kiambu is one of the districts which were settled by the white farmers owning thousands of acres of land. It is therefore one of the first districts where European farmers began plantation farming. Although statistics are missing to show the total percentage of land occupied by plantation farming, it would be reasonable to argue that well over a quarter of the total land of the district is under plantation farming. The major plantation farming includes coffee, tea, sisal and pyrethrum, coffee and tea being the most important of these plantation crops.

Today, Kiambu district is bordered by Nairobi and Kajiado to the South, Nakuru to the West, Nyandarua to the North East, Murang'a to the North and Machakos to the East. The district lies South of the equator between 0^0 25 minute and $1^0$20 minute. It lies between 39^0 30 minute and $3^0$15 minute longitudes. The North boundary follows the Thika and South Chania rivers down to Goliba Settlement Scheme. The South Eastern boundary starts at Kilimambogo along the Athi River to Nairobi River and up to Gatharaini Stream.

Kiambu can be rated among the best agricultural districts in Kenya. It is well watered with an average of 1500mm of rainfall per year in the North and 500mm per year in the drier parts. It has two rainy seasons. The long rains occur in April and May while the short rains take place in October and November. Thus, there are two planting and harvesting seasons

in a year.

Climatically, the district can be divided into three zones. One, the high potential zone covering Gatundu, Githunguri, Limuru, Kikuyu and Kiambaa. The medium zone occurs around Thika and Juja areas. The low potential areas cover Ndeiya, Munyu and Goliba. The temperatures are generally moderate but they get colder as one goes up Limuru, Githunguri and Gatundu. However, the areas of Ndeiya, Munyu and Goliba are hot and dry.

The land rises gently from about 1430m to 2400m above sea level. The district is dominated by many shallow valleys and ridges most of which have rivers or streams flowing in them. All Kiambu rivers, apart from Thika, South Chania and Ndarugu, flow into the Athi River. The other three flow into the great Thagana (Tana) River.[1]

(ii) Background

The research was carried out in Kiambu district and it sought to establish to what extent child and female labour was used in Colonial Kenya. This necessitated a serious research to find out the role women and children played in the development of the large tracts of land alienated from the Africans by the colonial government. It is assumed that history belongs to both the old and the young.

The colonial definition of a child was that of any non-white person who was under the age of sixteen years. This was clearly shown in the report of a select committee entitled "Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, Report of the Employment of Juveniles Committee of 1938". In the above report, a juvenile labourer was defined as, a native whether an Arab or Comoro Islander, a Malagasy or a Somali who has not reached the age of

sixteen years.[2]

A young person was said to be any non-white above the age of sixteen but below the age of eighteen[3]. This notion was only changed in the early 1960s when the definition of a juvenile was extended to include all non-whites under the age of 18 years.

In the constitution of Kenya after independence the definition of a child was a person under 18 years. This was important because persons under 18 years are normally under the care of their parents or guardians and cannot be held responsible for any decision they make. Again with the establishment of universal education, the majority of persons under the age of 18 years are normally in school. Hence, they cannot be regarded as adults. During the colonial period, education was a prerogative of a few. Although the African parents only came to acknowledge the importance of formal education in the 1930s, the government could not provide enough schools for the willing children. Even where schools were established by the European employers, children were required to work for half a day and attend classes in the other half of the day[4]. Thus, colonial schools on settler farms were only a means of attracting child labour.

In the Kikuyu traditional society, a person ceased to be a child after circumcision. However, the proper age at which a child was circumcised varied from one person to the other. Nevertheless, we can argue that girls were circumcised at the age of thirteen and boys at the age of fifteen.

Labour can be said to be the means by which natural resources (goods of nature) are converted into consumable products. In a capitalist

economy, this is done by people who are paid a wage by the owner of the means of production. Because there is no universal means of measuring labour, some employers prefer measuring it "by clock". This means that an employee is supposed to work for a particular number of hours to get a wage. Other employers measure work through piece-rate. Thus, a person is given a certain measure of work by which on completion he is given a particular sum of money. Since the driving motive in a capitalist is profit, he will try to ensure that the labourer gives more hours of work than he is paid for. This is normally done by subjecting the labourer to long hours of work while the wages are kept low. Furthermore, only in rare cases is the worker compensated for the extra work he does outside the stipulated hours. During the colonial period, a worker who claimed compensation for the extra work done could be accused of cheating and dismissed.

Children were preferred for wage labour because they were paid less money than the adults, though they worked for the same number of hours. However, the colonial settlers argued with some justification that the output per hour for children was less than that of adults. Therefore, children did not deserve the same wage as the adults. Even where the young people did the same work as adults, they were still paid less wages than the adults. This was based on the assumption that since young people were unmarried, they did not have family responsibilities. This assumption was wrong because many young men were carrying the heavy burden of being the only cash-earning members of, sometimes, very big families[5]. Furthermore, even in traditional Kikuyu society, a young person who was born in a family with no adult male was supposed to take all the

responsibilities of such an adult. In some places, for example, in pyrethrum and tea estates, children were preferred for the picking because they were said to be more efficient than adults. In fact the Select Committee of 1938 found that settlers employed children because they were said "to have more delicate and nimble hands than the adults". However, that was only an excuse to appropriate child labour because the Committee also found out that children whose height was "under four feet and nine inches tall were not employed" in tea and pyrethrum estates where they were more suited[8].

The use of child labour did not start with the advent of colonialism. Pre-colonial economies had long made use of it. However, the process of labour relations in the pre-colonial economies were revolutionized during the colonial era by the introduction of a wage. Jomo Kenyatta talking about the traditional Kikuyu society says that,

> Children begin their activities in production when they are young as their part of training in agriculture and herding..... As soon as they are able to handle a digging stick, they are given small allotments to practice on..... as a child grows, its sphere of activities in gardening increases. Instead of small fields, a large one is provided according to the ability of the child. Of course the work is done collectively. The crops, thus, cultivated are under the care of the mother who is the managing director of food supply in the homestead. Children cooperate with their parents in production and distribution of the family resources and wealth[9].

Permenas Githendu adds that in the Kikuyu society, every one's labour was in the interest of the whole community as well as for his own benefit[10]. This is the background under which child labour as adopted by the colonial settlers in Kiambu is discussed.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The existing literature dealing with labour in the colonial Kenya does not dwell adequately on child labour. No author has attempted a critical analysis of how child and female labour were procured and exploited within the colonial framework. Those authors who make some effort to mention child and female labour do not put much emphasis on the subject. The result then is that information on the subject remains both inadequate and fragmentary.

There are many gaps in the existing literature dealing with child labour. During the colonial period, many women and children were going out to seek for wage labour. The main thrust of the discussion will be an explanation of why children were going to seek for wage labour. The question whether women and children engaged in wage labour voluntarily or through compulsion is examined. It is assumed that at the beginning of colonialism many Africans were not acquainted with wage labour. Indeed, wage labour among the Bantu of Central Kenya was totally alien. Therefore, the European Settlers, unable to attract wage labourers from the African reserves, used violence to get labour. It is also argued that the whole policy of alienating fertile African land and the imposition of a host of taxes on the African communities was responsible for the migration of Africans to the settlers' farms. It is after this investigation that we shall give a comprehensive study of the extent to which child labour was deployed in Kiambu district during the colonial period.

The introduction and encouragement of child labour by the colonial regime led to the separation of families. This is more so because

children were reported to be leaving their families and wandering from one European farm to the other in search of employment. Some young men never returned home while young women got married in the farms. Therefore, the study will also come up with an explanation of the consequences of labour on children.

OBJECTIVES

The aims of this study are; one, to investigate the causes of the involvement of children in wage labour, two, to determine the consequences of the use of child labour on the part of the young people; three to determine the impact of child labour on the family life and four; to attempt a comprehensive study of the extent to which child labour was deployed in Kiambu district in the colonial times.

JUSTIFICATION

The study of child labour is an important aspect of labour as a whole in colonial Kenya. Any historical study that ignores the contribution of children in the labour force is therefore incomplete. The study of the contribution of the youths in social-economic activities in both the colonial and post colonial Kenya has generally been left to sociologists. Nevertheless, it is my contention that in order to understand fully a historical phenomenon like child labour, the contributions of various disciplines are important. Therefore, the author feels that it is important to carry out a historical study on this subject.

The chosen period of this study will be between 1902 and 1960. The

year 1902 is an important land-mark in the history of colonial Kenya. It was in this year that the first group of white settlers arrived in Kenya[10]. It was also in 1902 that the British Government issued an Order in Council which authorised the Commissioner to alienate Crown lands, which included all "public lands" subject to the control of or acquired by the British Government[11]. Therefore, the alienation of African land and the consequent invitation of European settlers to Kenya forced all categories of Africans into wage labour. This is supported by the complaints of the settlers in Kenya in 1908 that"

> It is grossly unfair to invite the settler in this country, as has been done, to give him land under conditions which force him to work, and at the same time to do away with the foundation on which the whole of his enterprise and hope is based, namely, cheap labour, while the native is allowed to retain large tracts of land on which he can remain in idleness"[12].

Labour in return for a wage can actually be attributed to the arrival of the white settlers in Kenya. This was because after acquiring large tracts of land for themselves, the settlers found that they needed African labour to develop their land. Most settlers had little or no capital at all[13]. Those who had little capital started engaging Africans for a wage. However, those who did not have capital employed women and children who were paid in kind[14].

The year 1960 has been chosen to mark the end of the study because politics in the colony had drastically changed and both Africans and

European settlers had started suffering from independence fever. The colonial state had also started to disintegrate.

HYPOTHESES

From the various issues relating to child labour during the colonial times, we have advanced the following hypotheses.

First, children were forced to join wage labour by the prevailing economic conditions resulting from the imposition of colonialism in Kenya. Second, child labour hampered the education of the youth in Kiambu district. Finally, child labour contributed to the disintegration of the authority of the elders in Kiambu district during the colonial era.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The review below intends to demonstrate how neglected child labour is in the existing literature.

Bill Freud in the African Studies Review Volume 27(2), 1984 has written an article entitled "Labour and Labour History in Africa". In this article, he analyses the work of various authors dealing with labour issues in both Africa and Europe. He concentrates, in particular, on both forced and migrant labour. Although he makes it clear that it is the introduction of cash economy that brought about a pattern of oscillating labour migration that increasingly dominated the lives of most Africans he does not have anything to say about children.

Stitcher, in her detailed book, Migrant Labour in Kenya: Capitalism and the African Response 1895-1975 (London, Longmans, London, 1982)

explains in great depth the problems of labour in Kenya. She argues that land alienation, taxation and administration coercion[15] transformed Kenyans into wage labourers. The author holds the opinion that a big number of Africans joined wage labour during depressions such as those of 1921-22 and 1930-35. When taxation became a real hardship migration of labourers caused by economic hardships in the reserve did not result in the supply of labour as expected by settlers. Stitcher quotes a District Commission for Kiambu complaining that,

> the loss of all this labour, for even the women and children are valuable in coffee picking, in a District in which the demand increase every year, is viewed with considerable dissatisfaction by the local planter[16].

Sharon Stitcher believes that due to the migration of able bodied men from Kiambu to the urban areas and the Rift Valley, labour,

> on the nearby coffee farms, which reached a peak during harvest season, rapidly became the province of women and children from Kiambu rather than men. Settlers found them adept in picking coffee beans and also cheaper: they were paid on piece rates by the debe[17].

The book, therefore, does not give a coherent account of children in wage labour. When women and children are mentioned in the book, it is only in passing. However, the author makes it clear that from one third to a half of the employees in the picking season in Kiambu were women and children.

Saul Dubow's book entitled, Land, Labour and Merchant Capital (University of Cape Town, 1982) is based on labour problems in South Africa. The author narrates how the black African labour was recruited by the white settlers. However, he ignores the contribution of children in the provision of labour for the white settlers. He only tries to explain how the dependence of children on wage labour was developed. He says that,

> in their extreme forms these dependences were expressed in terms of indentured labour where children were given food and clothing in exchange for their labour service[18].

However, although the above statement is revealing about child labour in South Africa, it is the only one in that book that touches on child labour. The study, therefore, does not give a clear picture of what was happening in South Africa within its period of discussion.

M. Stanland, in his book entitled The Lions of Dagbon (Cambridge, London, 1975), has devoted one chapter on forced labour in West Africa. He gives a case study of Northern Ghana. By analysing the consequences of forced labour on African rural economies, he omits how children were incorporated in the wage labour economy of the Europeans. However, the author states that during the critical times of farming, young men were recruited to join the carrier corps. He quotes the District Commissioner for Tamale in 1914 as saying,

> in the Tamale District alone, over four thousand boys were taken from their farms for periods varying from four to thirty days[19].

Nevertheless, the author does not give a coherent account of how the situation was regarding children in general.

Another piece of work worth considering is the report that was given by the select committee of 1938 which was charged with the task of investigating the extent to which children were employed in the territory. This report is contained in a document entitled Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, Report of the Employment of Juveniles Committee (Government Printers, Nairobi 1938). The committee gave a rich survey of the exploitation of both female and child labour. It revealed pathetic cases where children of below ten years were employed by European settlers.

Nevertheless, although the committee revealed that the employment of those juveniles under ten was undesirable, it did not offer concrete recommendations of how to avoid employment of such children. The committee also disagreed with the witnesses that problems like drunkness among children was as a result of child labour far from parental control. In mitigation, the committee argued that, "children were taking beer even in the reserves which could be explained by the slackening of the old sanctions"[20].

It recommended that children should be given pass certificates to prevent them from becoming vagrant once they were away from the reserves. The committee also proposed that children should not be allowed to work away from home for long periods.

R.D. Wolff in his book Britain and Kenya, 1870-1930 (Yale University, New Haven, 1972) has devoted one chapter to African labour. After giving a brief survey of the problems of securing labour in the early colonial period, he attributes the adoption of child labour to the shortage of African males ready to work for wages. He concludes that due to this shortage of adult male labour the Europeans resorted to employing the labour of youths especially "when the ground has to be cultivated, seeds sown and crops harvested"[21].

Again, by 1920s forced labour had generally been replaced by incentives to make people work. The withdrawal of compulsion in the labour field made the Europeans seek to supplement labour supplies with both non-Kenyan Africans and Kenyan women and children[22]. Wolff finally discusses the settlers meeting in Kikuyu in 1925 where they resolved that more women and children would be involved in wage labour in East Africa to offset the

imbalance of labour supply. The author estimates that by 1927 women and children comprised 20 per cent of the total work force in Kenya. He says that;

> within the purely agriculture labour women and children accounted for as much as 35-40 per cent of the total employees at the coffee picking season[23].

Nevertheless the information given in this book on child labour is both inadequate and fragmentary. The author gives the employment of children in wage labour a secondary importance. He cannot therefore help historians to understand child labour in the colonial period.

The miseries of children working for wages are exposed by M.K. Jinadu in his article in "Children in especially disadvantaged circumstances proceedings of the Regional Pre-workshop Nairobi, Kenya, 10th - 11th April 1985" (ed. N.O. Bwibo and P.P.M. Onyango). The author gives an account of how children are exploited by their parents and relatives in West Africa. Taking the case study of Nigeria, the author says that children from neighbouring countries are recruited in large numbers to serve as domestic workers. Such children working away from home are sometimes sexually abused and in other cases are introduced into prostitution by the so called relatives[24].

The incomes of those children are paid to the relatives and in the end the lucky ones would only be given a paltry sums of the money on their return to their home countries[25].

The document serves a very important role in highlighting the abuse of child and female labour in Africa in the post-colonial era. It comes to grips with the pertinent question of whether children volunteer to join wage labour or sometimes-are forced by their parents or guardians.

Tabitha Kanogo who studied squatters in the Rift Valley gave children a small section of chapter four of her book Squatters and the Roots of the Mau Mau (Heinemann Kenya Limited, Nairobi, 1987). The author says that children were valued by the white settlers as a form of cheap labour. Sometimes having big children who could supply labour was a pre-condition for squatter's own employment[26]. In her opinion, throughout the year, children performed all manner of odd jobs on settler farms as kitchen toto, herdsboys or just as totos working alongside their parents[27].

Kanogo's work gives a clue to the role of children in the maintenance of the colonial economy. It is the first historical analysis of the role played by children on the settler farms during the colonial times. However, the author admits that she was only raising child labour issues in passing. Therefore, an exclusive study of child labour is important to understand the historical implications of child labour in Kenya.

Theoretical Framework

The study is carried out within the framework of labour problems and policies in colonial Kenya. The analysis brings us to the shortages of labour and their consequences that led to the recruitment of women and children in the labour force. The author has argued that the migration of the able-bodied men to both the urban areas and the white highlands in search of higher wages left women and children at the mercy of colonial chiefs and settlers, who turned to them whenever they needed labour. The colonial chiefs and tribal retainers were important in that they were the agents of the colonial state. They were sometimes given a quota of the

amount of labour to supply. In areas where they could not get enough able bodied men, they recruited women and children to meet their labour obligation.

Child labour cannot be discussed in isolation from the general framework of labour in Kenya during the colonial times. This is because it was one of the alternatives available to the settlers to alleviate the shortages of labour in their plantations.

The theory underlying the employment of child and female labour in colonial Kenya was that of the extraction of surplus value to make a profit. The European settlers had come to Kenya to make a profit and therefore, they could use any means at their disposal. In this case, the settlers had the state machinery which they manipulated to their advantage. Our argument becomes more plausible when we consider that children were given very low wages. In some cases women and children were paid in form of foodstuff and other basic necessities. This corresponds to the capitalist goal of getting maximum profits based on minimum investments.

The cost of production determines the cost of the products and hence the profit which can be made from a particular product. From this premise, I can argue that the lower the cost of production the higher the profit a capitalist is likely to make. The higher the cost of production the lower the profits would be. Therefore, the settler community found that by using children to enhance their production they would reap higher profits.

It will be argued that the relationship between wage and labour is that "they stand in inverse relation to one another"[28]. Profits rise to

the extent that wages fall. Consequently, when wages rise profits fall. By employing women and children who would get a half the wage of adult men the settler community was sure of reaping a higher profit. This was the rationale used by the white settlers to subject women and children to wage labour especially in the absence of adult men willing to work for such meagre wages.

Wadada Nobudere's theory of the capitalist appropriation of a whole family's labour to increase his profits has also been used. The theory runs that the capitalist uses his capital to apply it to living labour requiring the labourers to work for longest hours possible[29]. But as the machinery becomes better and capable of being manipulated by women and children, the process is intensified against the whole family, who now work for much longer hours for the same or slightly more wages compared to those which would have been worked by an adult bread winner[30]. In this way, the capitalist gets a higher rate of profit and surplus value. Nabudere argues that as this process continues, the workers start struggling with the capitalist demanding for shorter working hours and against the employment of women and children. The workers therefore set conditions for their own exploitation[31].

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this study comprises oral interview, guided by a prepared questionnaire. I prepared the questionnaire at the University of Nairobi. To supplement information got from oral informants, the library and National Archives of Kenya were extensively used for both published and unpublished material which have a bearing to

the study. Lastly, observer-participant method was also used. In this respect, since a good historian has an obligation of understanding the present to enable him to interpret the past, this method was found to be very appropriate.

The interviews were carried out in the selected individual homes through prior appointments. Other individuals who were far from the author's centre of operation were visited without prior notice. The advantage with this method was that it minimised time wasted in the field for the questionnaires, where possible, were administered in the presence of the researcher. In this respect, the researcher could raise any issues which did not come out clearly from the informants. The major asset in this method was, therefore, to avoid going back to the informant which would have meant wasting valuable time with a few informants.

However, the major disadvantages with this method was that there were attempts by individual informants to take a lot of time talking about themselves at the same time avoiding the major issues of the questions. Other informants were afraid of giving information freely due to fear that such information could be used to victimise them. For example, some informants, despite much persuasion, continued to believe that the researcher was either at the service of the Government, or their employer. Hence, even when they agreed to talk they only gave selected information. Others remained adamant and they refused to answer the questions claiming that they did not have answers for the question. For example, in Lari forest, the Kenya African National Union (KANU) Locational Chairman had to intervene pleading with people to give the author information freely for it would only be used for academic purpose. It was then that a few

informants gathered courage and volunteered to give information. Another problem encountered in the field was that some informants were demanding money as a compensation for the information given. They were arguing that other researchers who had sought information from them had remunerated them accordingly. Such remuneration was given as a token of appreciation. This, unfortunately, necessitated the researcher to be carrying a lot of money with him.

To deal with the above problems, the author conducted group interviews to avoid self-glorification on the part of some informants. In this respect, any person who attempted to distort information deliberately was corrected by the other members of the group. Since the questionnaire was prepared in English, the author always availed himself to translate the questions in Kiswahili or Kikuyu to suit those who were not familiar with the English language. This had the advantage of ensuring that each informant understood the questions clearly.

To deal with the problem of fearful respondents, the author always carried his University identification card and a copy of the research permit from the Office of the President. These two documents, accompanied by repeated assurances that the information given was for academic purpose did the trick of persuading the informants to talk freely.

For the informants who demanded presents before giving information, the researcher refused to give them because it would have amounted to buying information. However, the researcher always appreciated the information given freely by giving small presents.

With the observer-participant method, the author employed some

research assistants whose notes he could compare with his to avoid bias. This helped the author to find a compromise to come up with objective findings.

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CHAPTER TWO

LABOUR IN THE TRADITIONAL KIKUYU SOCIETY:

II. Children in the Kikuyu Society

In the traditional Kikuyu Society, children were not only valued for the prestige they brought to the family but also, as a necessary part of the economic unit. Traditional Kikuyu society was acephalous with authority and power being widely diffused throughout its varied components[1]. The family could then be seen as a separate entity that cooperated with other families in time of need. Circumstances leading to the cooperation of various families were warfare, agricultural activities, herding, and other social events. These activities were dictated by the Kikuyu social organisation and were important in the maintenance of the society in general. The above socio-economic activities brought about the integration of the interests of the family. They also necessitated the participation of children in organised activities in cooperation with the family members and other groups. To ensure that children played their roles in the society, methods of food production and rearing livestock were imparted to them through a long process of informal teaching.

It is opportune to point out that the Kikuyu society both tilled the land and kept domestic animals. Agriculture was the mainstay of their economy while domestic animals had both social and economic functions. For example, domestic animals were the standard currency, used throughout the Kikuyu country[2]. They were used in land and marriage transactions and for paying fines for crimes

committed. Goats and sheep were particularly important in sacrificial offerings especially when there was a national catastrophe. Livestock were therefore, used as one of the yardsticks to measure a person's wealth. Thus, a man with a wealth of livestock could afford to marry many wives who, in turn could bear him many children. The Kikuyu valued a big family because it was advantageous especially when it came to defending the homestead. Again, having a big well organised family qualified a person to hold a high office in the society[3],

Children were valued for both prestige and religious reasons[4]. Any marriage that did not result in children was considered to be a shameful failure. Although barrenness did not result in divorce, a woman who did not have children became a laughing-stock in the community. One informant emphasised that a woman who did not have children of her own could not punish a child she found misbehaving. To do so would have invited ridicule from other women who would say that she was doing that because she did not know the pain of child-bearing[5]. Therefore, children also brought respect to their parents.

Marriage promoted the status of a girl to that of a woman. Nevertheless, the ambition of every married woman was to get many children. This gave her the coveted title of mother of so and so[6]. In social classification, such a woman belonged to Kang'ei group. It is therefore, reasonable to argue that children were an important determinant of the social status parents enjoyed in the society. In any case, a poor family with many children consoled itself with the

popular Kikuyu saying, gutiri i kahii itakaruguo mutwe or there is no home with a boy-child where the head of a he-goat shall not be cooked[7]. Such a family hoped that at least some of the children would turn out to be hardworking, become wealthy and exonerate the rest of the members of the family.

Agriculture was one of the major sources of livelihood among the Kikuyu. The Kikuyu were also involved in a number of celebrations throughout the year. This made it necessary for every homestead to produce surplus food to entertain people on such occasions. Apart from celebrations, the social system made it imperative for each homestead to invite friends and relatives to show its generosity. The importance of these invitations were elaborated by Kenyatta when he wrote,

> a man or a woman who cannot say to his friends, come and eat, drink and enjoy the fruits of our labour, is not considered a worthy member of the tribe[8].

To meet these demands of the society then, each man was eager to have many children and wives who could help him produce enough food to entertain friends and relatives.

In a social system where machanisation was hardly known, human resources were deployed to the maximum to maximise the exploitation of the environmental resources. A man with a big family, thus, could cultivate a big shamba (gardem) and therefore, produce surplus food. This was important in that after entertaining friends and relatives, the surplus was taken to the market to be exchanged with other commodities the family needed. Items exchanged with food

crops ranged from farm equipment to livestock[9]. Livestock were also used to pay dowry for the sons' wives to swell the size of the family.

Male children were particularly valued in the Kikuyu society. They were entrusted with the task of continuing the lineage to ensure the survival of the clan. Unlike girls who became members of a different Mbari (gardem) after marriage, boys were regarded as permanent members of the family to whom all the secrets of the clan and the society in general were told. Both parents and grandparents were charged with a responsibility of instilling the spirit of discipline and hard work in the young boys[10]. This was accomplished through folklore and actual work. The grandparents were particularly important in folklore because they were very free with their grandchildren. For example, a grandmother could freely teach her grand-daughter how to avoid getting children out of wedlock. This was done by teaching the daughter the functioning of a female body, pointing out the time a female is likely to conceive. On the other hand, a grandfather could freely teach his grand-son how to behave in the society to earn respect and praise.

For example, Muriuki, who has done research on the history of the Kikuyu writes,

> Children were often more free with their grandparents than they were with their fathers and mothers, and are said to have had a "joking relationship" with them that would not have been possible with their other relatives[11].

Kenyatta who has written an anthropological work on the Kikuyu added that;

> Symbolically, the children belong to the same age

> group as their grandparents, the name given to the first male child is that of his paternal grandfather, and at the time of birth, it is announced that it is"he" who had come. Owing to the supreme authority which grandparents have in the family group the children, while with them, are given the feeling that they are with their equals[12].

This was the basis on which the grandparents played an important role in shaping the personality of a Kikuyu child.

III. Educating children on Labour

Children spent most of their time with their grandparents13. This gave the grandparents a good opportunity to teach the youth what the society expected of each sex. The teaching was first done inclusively through folklore in general. This included story-telling, proverbs, and riddles. The stories told constantly compared the lazy and the hardworking people in the society. The lazy people were always ridiculed while the industrious were highly praised. For example, a person who refused to look after his father's livestock was reminded that he needed goats, sheep and cattle to get a bride. It was expected that every Kikuyu boy would get married at the appropriate age and raise his own family. So, the youth were reminded of the old saying that, mburi na ng'ombe itionaquo ni ithayo; goats and cows do not come the way of a lazy person or wealth is not a prerogative of the lazy[14]. Another popular story told to the youth involved a certain bird called Nyoni ya nyagathanga. This bird was said to be neat and hardworking. Thus, the stories connected to it were meant to encourage boys and girls to be industrious in life[15].

The theme of hard work, to eliminate poverty, was raised beyond the storytelling level through composition of songs. Songs were popular in the Kikuyu society in carrying out day to day activities especially among the womenfolk. A simple analysis of those songs reveals that they revolved around hardwork and its fruits. The most successful people in the society were constantly mentioned and their wealth was attributed to hardwork. On the other hand, the songs ridiculed the lazy people and their poverty. Songs also featured prominently in the Kikuyu dances regularly held in the evenings. Boys and girls were encouraged to participate in those dances. It was in those dances that boys and girls started impressing one another. For example, a boy who was known to be hardworking was praised by girls and he became the envy of all his age-mates. On the other hand, a girl who had a reputation of working hard found herself attracting more boys than her peers[16] .

In the above dances, boys and girls challenged one another to prove their worth as members of their sex. Any young person who deviated from what was expected of his age became the centre of ridicule. Under normal circumstances, a girl could only marry a man who had a good reputation in the society. The same also applied to men. Any person who married a lazy and indisciplined partner said, "I have married poverty"[17].

The traits of a hardworking person started showing when he was young. He became popular among the old people and his peers in general for his reputation easily spread across the ridges. The thirst for a good reputation among the youth worked as incentive in

inducing the spirit of discipline and hardwork. Therefore, the work of moulding the youth into responsible members of the society then started when they were young[18]. To demonstrate how this task was accomplished, it is necessary to examine the Kikuyu education system.

Education among the Kikuyu was both elaborate and continuous. It supposedly went on throughout a person's life. Kenyatta puts it succinctly when he says that it started with birth and ended with death[19]. When a person reached a certain age and he could accompany his parents to the shamba, the practical part of the education was set in motion. Nevertheless, the folklore continued though it was now confined to the evenings when people were resting after work. In most cases, this was when they were waiting for the food to cook. At about the age of five, the children were introduced to proverbs and riddles which embodied the Kikuyu knowledge[20]. Among the Kikuyu, the art of conversation was regarded very highly, and a youth who could use proverbs and riddles appropriately in his conversation was respected by the whole society[21].

The stories also told at this age basically featured the prominent figures of the society. For example, there were the popular stories featuring Ndemi and Mathathi, the first settled ancestors of the Kikuyu people[22]. These stories glorified the two ancestors stressing both their courage and hard-work. They were said to have cleared the forests and started the actual tilling of the land[23]. They conquered the animals of the forest and drove away the Gumba and Dorobo deep into the forest. Such stories impressed

the youth so much that they always imitated these great ancestors in their plays. This was common especially when boys were grazing livestock away from home.

To illustrate the above argument, Ngugi wa Thiong'o a known Kenyan writer, in his book The River Between[24] describes a good scene of boys quarreling over who was to be Ndemi and who was to be Mathathi while looking after their fathers' livestock. He starts with a picture of boys playing while grazing on the plains. He then portrays how Waiyaki lost his temper when he was told by one of the playmates that he could not act the part of Ndemi. In his response to the challenge, Waiyaki took an axe and rushed to a tree which was at a distance. In Ngugi's own words;

> he began to cut it with all his strength and soon the stick that was the axe fell into pieces. At first the other boys had laughed. But they soon followed his example and went around cutting down trees and clearing the forest ready for cultivation just like Ndemi and Mathathi[25].

From the above illustration, it is easy to envisage a situation where children worked hard to impress one another. A young person who played his part well got a good reputation among his age-mates of both sexes.

The above stories taught a Kikuyu child that a good reputation could only be got from hard work that characterised the ancient heroes and heroines of the society. Indeed, this was so because a good reputation was almost revered in the Kikuyu society. The plays performed by children not only demonstrated how much knowledge they

had absorbed from their teaching but also justified Kenyatta's statement that; "play is anticipatory to adult life"[26].

Another motivation to workhard among the Kikuyu youth was the ridicule hurled at lazy people. Statements like kiguuta giki or you lazy bone, riu wee utukitie u? or you are not one of us[27], were common among the old people addressing themselves to the lazy youth. For the girls, the question, who will marry you? was bad enough considering that every normal woman was expected to get a husband. In any case, the scorn and ridicule were actually taken as a kind of a curse since they came from the old people. The words of old people were both feared and respected in the Kikuyu society. Thus, any words coming from the elders were taken as a kind of a curse, though indirect.

Direct curses were also common especially to people who were both lazy and anti-social. To demonstrate the above, the responsibility of rearing the youths in accordance with the tribal norms rested on both the parents and the clan. If a youth from a particular family continuously failed to adhere to the norms of the society it was his parents who shouldered the blame. The clan also got a bad reputation because the youth was said to belong to the mbari of so and so. In return, the parents of the youth could curse him saying, "may your children treat you with disrespect as you have treated us"[28]. Indeed such a curse, especially after the parents in question were dead, was much feared in the society. This was so because such a curse could not be nullified by purification.

On the other hand, children who adhered to the social code of conduct brought respect to both the family and the clan. In

general, such children became the envy of the society. Thus, when other parents were addressing their children, they would tell them, why don't you behave like the children of so - and - so[29]. Therefore, children who portrayed obedience and hardwork were favoured when it came to inheritance. The spirits of the dead were sometimes invoked to guide them to greater heights in their social-economic endeavour[30].

IV. The Role of Children in the Kikuyu Society

In the Kikuyu agricultural society, children started learning how to till land and to rear livestock from an early age. This was inspired by the belief that children must learn the importance of the soil when young so that they respected it when they became older. It was in this respect that children started imitating their parents when they were young. They were taught that the soil supplied them with;

> the material needs of life through which spiritual and mental contentment is achieved. Communion with the ancestral spirits is perpetuated through contact with the soil in which the ancestors of the tribe are buried[31].

This meant that it was not only the life which was sustained by the soil but also, the spirit of the ancestors took refuge in it.

The Kikuyu children were introduced to the social division of labour at an early age. Below the age of five, the teaching of both boys and girls was undertaken by the mother. She guided them slowly teaching each child what the society demanded from its sex. This teaching was so effective that by the time children attained the age

of five, each had a clue of its role in the production and distribution of the wealth of the clan[32]. However, at around the age of seven, the greater part of the boy's teaching passed to the father while the mother continued with the daughter. They entered the stage of "apprenticeship"[33].

In the garden, the children were introduced to digging and planting. They were given small digging sticks befitting their strength. Sometimes children were given their own small gardens to work on. This was meant to make them learn as they struggled to imitate the parents. It was through this training that children learnt endurance and diligence in their work[34]. Experience taught the parents that instructions accompanied with practical lessons were beneficial to the youth. Children became very proud of their small gardens and they derived pleasure in working on them. Commenting on this, Kenyatta says,

> children are very proud of their small gardens and take great interest in learning how to become good agriculturists.....the children are very enthusiastic in their work and frequently like to take their playmates and proudly show them round the small garden, saying look how our crops are growing nicely, surely we are going to have a good harvest and then we can have a big feast as a result of our labour[35].

On the shamba, children were taught the names of different plants and their use. They were taught how to distinguish between the edible and dangerous plants. They learned that while some plants could be used for food others could be used to cure various ailments[36]. Nevertheless, during the resting period, boys were taken to the forest to be acquainted with more species of plants. The

most important of these plants were those which could be used to give medicinal effects[37].

Kikuyu men kept bees for honey. Honey was important for both trade and brewing traditional liquor. Most of the Kikuyu elders possessed beehives. Fathers who kept bees, therefore, showed their sons how to make beehives and where to place them to get honey. The commonest way of making beehives was to hollow-out logs and then splitting them into two along the length to allow for collection of honey. The hives were then hung on trees and the honey and bee-wax were harvested from time to time[38]. This teaching also included the time of the season when honey could actually be found in the hives. This was, of course, during both the long and the short rains after plants had flowered.

Male children were also trained to take care of the livestock. At approximately the age of five, a male child could not accompany the bigger boys and the elders to the grazing fields. He was therefore, given the work of holding kids and calves to prevent them from following their mothers[39]. Once the big animals were taken away from home, the young boy took the responsibility of caring for those kids and calves for the rest of the day. He ensured that the animals grazed around the homestead and were given water at mid-day[40]. This routine continued until the boy attained the age of about ten when he could accompany the bigger boys to the grazing fields.

Grazing the kids and calves around the homestead helped the young boy to accumulate the knowledge of grazing in the plains. In

a society where gadgets of recording time were not known, boys were trained to tell time by observing the position of the sun. Every Kikuyu herdsboy was taught that the animals were taken out for grazing shortly after sun-rise. They were watered and allowed to rest at mid-day and taken home before sun-set[41]. By observing both the position of the sun and the size of his shadow, a herdsboy could easily keep the above specified times[42].

The teaching on how to tell time was emphasised to ensure that a herdsboy did the right thing at the right time. Any herdsboy who did not keep time was seriously punished. This was because the Kikuyu country was inhabited by dangerous animals such as hyenas, wolves, leopards, lions and other dangerous carnivorous beasts. These animals were a menace to both the animals and the herdsboy. They normally attacked in the evening and especially when the animals were late in going home. Another important factor to consider was that cattle raiders attacked at dusk. The Maasai, in particular, were known to hide in the nearby bushes and attacked at dusk[43]. Therefore, animals had to be taken home early enough to evade such dangerous elements.

On the other hand, boys who took home the livestock earlier than usual were also punished. This was because, it was taken to be a serious sign of irresponsibility. Thus, the importance of this teaching was to maintain a balance between taking the animals home so early and so late.

While grazing, the herdsboy was expected to graze the animals where there was good pasture. This ensured that by the time the

animals were taken home, they had eaten enough. At the same time, the herdsboy was exhorted to safeguard against grazing in the cultivated field. To allow the animals to feed on food crops was again, regarded as a show of irresponsibility. Furthermore, the father of the herdsboy was required to compensate the owner of the crops destroyed. To avoid such an embarrassment, parents urged their children to be vigilant especially when grazing near the cultivated fields[44]. Great care was taken when driving animals to either the field or home since these were the occasions when the livestock were likely to invade the cultivated fields. It was therefore, a common practice among the parents to discourage boys from over-playing when grazing[45].

Punishments meted out to boys who contravened the above rules included serious beating, denial of food and a threat to be chased out of the homestead[46]. Although all the above punishments were effective, the last one was particularly feared because it threatened to relegate the culprit to the status of an outcast. However, this was only done to big people who constantly defied the social code of regulation. Nevertheless, it acted as a warning to children who were mischievous. In the Kikuyu society, it was indeed difficult for an outcast to get refuge even among the relatives. No parent would have allowed his children to have social intercourse with the victim[47]. It was believed that such a person could contaminate others with his bad behaviour. For children above the age of fifteen, the peers acted as a check on excessively bad behaviour. A child who constantly defied his parents was ostracised

by his age group[48]. Estranged people in the Kikuyu society were sad because they could neither visit nor get visits from their peers. It was, therefore, in the interest of every child to avoid such a situation by conforming to the norms of the society.

The reward a good herdsboy expected from his parents is illustrated by the following song;

Nderiruo ni baba	(I was promised by my father
Ndariithia wega	if I take care of his livestock
Niakanguranira[49]	he will pay bridewealth for me).

The above promise then acted as a kind of incentive to the herdsboy to take great care of his father's livestock. Other rewards included the assurance of inheriting the father's wealth. Any boy who brought a bad name to the family for his laziness was altogether excluded from the inheritance. Furthermore, whenever the father was returning home from a feast, he always remembered to carry a piece of meat for the herdsboy[50]. This and other rewards motivated boys to do their work diligently to win the favours of their parents.

V. Girls in the Kikuyu Society

The division of labour tied the girl to the mother. Her first interests centred around the household chores. These were activities like preparing food, washing utensils, collecting firewood, blowing embers into a bright flame, and fetching water not to mention caring for the younger children. The purpose of these

activities was to prepare her for the world of womanhood. From an early age, a girl learnt what was expected of her sex by watching the mother in her daily activities[51]. After watching these activities for a considerable period, the girl started pleading with the mother to allow her to perform some of the activities. For example, in cooking, a girl watched with mounting enthusiasm as the mother prepared meals. After sometime, she started urging the mother to allow her to prepare a meal. On her part, the mother watched the growing interest in her daughter. This continued for sometime until she was sure that her daughter could attempt the work. She was then allowed to prepare a meal in the presence of the mother[52]. After the meal, the mother praised the daughter for the effort she had made but at the same time she pointed out the mistakes so that they could be avoided next time. This continued regularly until she became an experienced cook. However, at the apprentice stage, a girl could not be allowed to cook for her father. The traditions dictated that the father could only take food prepared by his wife in the homestead[53].

From the homestead, the girl also accompanied her mother to the field. In the garden, she was given a small digging stick proportionate to her size. At first, the work of digging with those sticks was rather excruciating but sooner or later, the girl got used to it and became an experienced farmer. Kenyatta says that with time the girl could handle the cultivating knife,

> with amazing skill with her right hand while with the left she clears the soil away and gathers the weed and grass in bundles[54].

The above teaching then introduced the girl to the circle of the annual agricultural activity(ies). When weeding, she was taught to distinguish planted crops from weeds. She learnt that some of the wild plants were edible and they could be used as vegetables. In the same vein, she was taught why it was not good to touch some plants especially those which were believed to be poisonous[55]. It was at that juncture that the mother introduced stories referring to people who had tried to eat the dangerous plants and how they met their death. Fear of death made the apprentice to grow aware of the plants which could be used for food and those which had to be avoided.

During the planting season, the girl again accompanied her mother to the garden. She was given instructions on how to plant seeds like beans, maize, millet and sorghum. She also learnt to plant other crops such as sugar-cane, bananas, arrow-roots, cassava, yams and pumpkins. At first the girl just watched her mother as she did the real planting. Later on, she could do it even in the absence of her mother. It was assumed that the experience she got through working with the mother prepared her for her roles as a future wife[56]. Like the boy, the girl was also given a small shamba where she grew her own crops. She kept this garden till she was married. If the family had enough land, such a girl was allowed to keep that garden even after joining her husband's family. In that way, the ties of kinship between her family and that of her husband's were strengthened[57].

Girls were also given training in other communal activities,

like building a house. In the Kikuyu society building of houses was done communally with "proper" division of labour[58]. Both men and women had specific roles to play. For example, the work of constructing the framework of poles and rafters and fetching the required materials from the forest belonged to men and boys. Girls and women only collected grass from the plains and thatched the house.

Whenever the neighbour had a house to be thatched, the mother encouraged her daughter to join other women in collecting grass from the plains and carrying it home[59]. She was also to be around when the actual work of thatching was taking place. These lessons gave a girl the preliminary knowledge which benefitted her on becoming a married woman.

Another economic activity in which girls participated was pottery-making. Although pottery-making was a specialised craft, it was solely done by women. Any man who participated in it was seen as contravening the rules governing the division of labour in the society[60]. Such a man was referred to as Muthuri kihunguiyo. From an early age, a girl was trained in making earthenware vessels. The preliminary lessons included teaching her to recognise good clay suitable in making such vessels. The major point of emphasis in this lesson was observation to distinguish suitable from less suitable clay. The next stage involved beating and softening the clay to make moulding possible. Once the girl had learnt that, she was then allowed to engage in the actual work of moulding items. Nevertheless, moulding was rather challenging for items to be made

were market oriented[61] and had to satisfy the tastes of the consumers.

Pottery, however, was a part-time work done when there was little to do in the fields. This was particularly when people were waiting for the rains or crops to ripen. Other part-time works related to pottery included baskets and trays making. Baskets were important for carrying foodstuff, while trays were used for both winnowing and drying grains in the sun. Notwithstanding the importance of the items made, girls were not paid for this work since the knowledge they gained was more important than the work they did[62].

VI. Communal Work

Irrespective of sex, children in general were introduced into the communal system of work. The Kikuyu people believed that working together minimised fatigue and made work more enjoyable[63]. Therefore, children were taught that mutual help had to be rendered extending from the family group to the tribe in general. For instance, children were trained in carrying activities appropriate to the season. Such activities included tilling land and harvesting crops. They were encouraged to organise themselves to help the grown up people in whatever task they were performing. Any person who received the help of the youth had only the obligation of treating them to a feast after the work[64].

Collective work strengthened the cohesion within the members

of the clan and the society in general. It enforced both a uniformity of synchronized behaviour and close cooperative union of the family members, and activated the ties of kinship[65]. To illustrate the above, two examples will suffice. Children learnt that it was their duty to help the society at large. If there was an old person who did not have children of his own, he was taken care of by the children of the neighbours. He had his hut repaired, his gardens cultivated, and his water and fire-wood fetched. Kenyatta puts it more clearly when he writes,

> if his cattle, sheep or goats are lost or in difficulties, the children of his neighbours will help to bring them back, at great pains and often at a considerable risk. The old man reciprocates by treating the children as though they were his own[66].

In the above case, there was no conflict of interest because the parents were aware that their children had responsibilities to others in the family group. Therefore, parents were always ready to afford time for their children to help others in the society. Any child who was reluctant to join in the communal work was rebuked by his age group and risked being ostracised.

The second example is that of working in the fields. By watching their parents, older brothers and sisters and relatives working in groups, children learnt that group work was more enjoyable than individual work. Even when a member of the ridge was sick, people organised themselves so that her gardens did not remain uncultivated. This was done so that the person did not remain behind in her routine duties[67]. Children were, therefore, made aware of the overwhelming spirit of cooperation that existed in the

society.

The bahaviour of adults acted as an encouragement to cooperation among the youth. It was in this respect that parents provided models for their children to copy. For example, the biggest task of a boy was that of looking after the livestock. While on the plains, he mixed his herd with other boys to lessen his work. Cooperation in grazing was important in that if one boy had an unruly animal in his herd, others could help to bring it under control. Furthermore, the Kikuyu country was invested with animals of prey and grazing in a group enabled the boys to ward them off[68].

The major cereals grown by the Kikuyu included millet, sorghum and maize[69]. When approaching the ripening stage, crops like millet and sorghum involved the tedious task of scaring off birds. This task demanded the attention of a person from morning to evening[70]. Although this work was meant for men, boys also participated in it. They were armed with slings and stones for this purpose. It was important for boys to be introduced to this task so that they could become effective when they grew up. This followed the rationale of the society that since boys were the men of tomorrow, they had to be properly trained in men's work. Apart from the above assumption, a boy from a home without a grown up man could not evade it. In such a case, he became the protector of the homestead and had to take up all the responsibilities of a father[71].

As Kenyatta puts it, any work in traditional Kikuyu society was essentially communal[72]. Sometimes bird scaring was done

communally especially by people who had neighbouring shambas. Birds like pelikans, aquileas and wivils which could cause mass destruction on crops required communal efforts to ward them off. This was necessary especially when crops were ripe awaiting harvesing. Further communal effort was required when dealing with destructive insects like locusts and army worms which could easily cause famine. One respondent said that sometimes a village could mobilise all their children who were told to catch as many locusts as possible to reduce their number. Although this was a crude way of dealing with the problem, the respondents emphasised that it was better than watching helplessly as their crops were destroyed[73].

Still in the shambas, communalism was practised at the level of harvesting. Due to the belief that working together minimised fatigue and brought joy in work, villagers grouped together and agreed to work on each participant's shamba until all the crops of the whole village were harvested. Each villager had only the obligation of giving a feast after work on his/her shamba. Other examples of communalism in shambas were to be found in threshing of crops like beans, cow peas and black beans[74]. Nevertheless, any member of the community who breached the social contract of working together could not hope to get any assistance from the rest of the society even when he was in great need for assistance.

Other examples of communalism included bridging rivers especially during the rainy season. Because of the temporary nature of the bridges in the traditional society, elders from neighbouring ridges could often come together to lay down strategies of how a

bridge could be put up to facilitate movement from one ridge to another. Of course the real work of laying down bridges was done by young men who went to the forest to look for appropriate logs for the work[75]. Women and young girls from both ridges had the obligation of preparing a feast for the workers. This work was constantly done for the bridges were often washed away by heavy torrents. In the whole of Kiambu, apart from "ruma thi", a bridge across river Theta which is believed to be natural, all the other bridges had to be constructed by young men.

Young men were the stronghold of the Kikuyu society. Although they are portrayed as warriors in the literature, suffice it to say that they were not always engaged in warfare or raids Indeed, some never went to war at all. To paraphrase Muriuki, they acted as kind of youth service to the community[76]. Therefore, they were the major actors in nearly all communal services directed to community development. In this respect, they communally participated in clearing bushes for and digging virgin lands, clearing village paths and routes connecting the three Kikuyu districts. Foot highways clearing was done during ituika and were meant to facilitate trade between the three districts[77].

VII Trade

Trade was also very important among the Kikuyu. There was both internal and external trade. Internal trade was basically conducted between the ridges or districts. It was important because of climatic and environmental variations in the Kikuyu country. Therefore, some important crops and commodities found in some

districts were not available in others. For example, yams and some vegetables which were found in plenty in Murang'a were very scarce in Kiambu. Again, the people of Kiambu who had close contact with the Maasai got beads, soda ash and even leather which they sold to the people of Murang'a. In return, the Kiambu people got red ochre, pig iron, implements and tobacco[78].

Internal trade gave both boys and girls an opportunity of getting into contact with the neighbouring districts or ridges. For example, a girl accompanied her mother to the market helping her to carry some of the items of trade. However, the importance of taking a girl to the market was more than making her carry the items of trade. It was meant to make her learn the tricks of barter trade[79]. Since one item was exchanged for another item, a girl had to know what quantity and quality of one item could acceptably be exchanged for another of different nature. Furthermore, a girl was supposed to be acquainted with the bargaining tricks and adopt a persuasive tongue to convince her customers. She was also encouraged to walk around the market, to see how other people bartered their goods and their equivalents. At a later stage, she was sent to the market alone to either buy or sell commodities. If she brought home the expected quality and quantity of goods, the mother knew that her daughter had learnt the "game" and most of the times she went to the market alone[80]. The same applied to the boys with the goats.

Markets were held after every four days. During the market day, all the other activities were halted including raids. In most markets, apart from livestock which were handled by boys and adult

men, commodities like guards, leather garments, pottery, iron, salt, soda ash and red ochre were very common. Some of these commodities were obtained from carravan traders who traversed the Kikuyu country. Although there were no major markets in Kiambu, places like Thika, Ruiru, Wangige, Dagorreti and Rongai were constantly mentioned by my respondents as centres for exchanging commodities[61]. Thika, for example, was the exchanging centre for both the Agikuyu and the Akamba. The Agikuyu got poisoned arrows, livestock and sometimes glassware from the Akamba. In return the Akamba got grains and pig iron from the Agikuyu. Dagorreti and Rongai (Limuru) were the centres of the Agikuyu and Maasai trade. The Maasai sold livestock to the Agikuyu in return for red ochre, grains and arrows. Boys and girls participated fully in this local trade for it did not involve walking long distances[62].

There were other small markets in every ridge where commondities obtained from external trade and carravan traders were exchanged. The local residents were in this way able to obtain goods which were not locally available. These small markets were transformed into bigger market centres and shopping centres during the colonial period.

External trade also existed in Kiambu. However, it did not offer the same advantages to both boys and girls as was the local trade. This was because it involved walking for long distances through dangerous territories. Unmarried girls were therefore, not allowed to participate in it. This trade was basically conducted by women who were past child bearing age who could not attract

kidnappers and other dangerous elements[83]. Women were preferred for this trade because of the immunity they enjoyed in most of the African communities. Attacking a woman was regarded as a cowardly act. Nevertheless, men lacked such immunity. They were regarded as spies and could not escape the wrath of the community warriors. There were well marked trade routes either inter-connecting the three Kikuyu districts or the neighbouring territories. For example, Muriuki argues that "throughout the Kikuyuland, there were well kept roads (foot high-ways) from Nyeri to Kiambu"[84].

Where there were streams, the young people of the ridges were given the task of building and maintaining the bridges. The foot high-ways were also cleared and maintained by the young people with the direction of the elders.

VIII. Women in The Homestead

The conscription of women into wage labour at the beginning of colonialism caused a misunderstanding between the Kikuyu and the Europeans. This was because wage labour for women conflicted with their social obligation. Traditionally, the work of a woman was to be found within and around the homestead. Apart from inter-territorial trade, women could not engage in activities far away from home.

A woman in the Kikuyu society was basically a home-maker. No house without a woman could qualify to be called a home-stead for the duties performed by a wife converted a house into a homestead. For instance, it was the duty of a woman to keep the homestead

clean. She looked after her husband and children making sure that they were well are fed. In a homestead of more than one wife, they adopted a "duty roster". This indicated when each was to clean and light fire in the husband's thingira or hut. However, the task of providing food to the husband fell on all of them[85]. Other duties included milking and feeding the livestock.

In addition to duties in the homestead, women had their own gardens to cultivate. They had to work hard to produce enough food to feed their husbands, children and friends. The surplus food produced was then taken to the market to be exchanged with other items the homestead needed. From the garden, each woman carried foodstuffs such as sweet potatoes, cassava and arrow-roots. Those who did not have big enough children had an added responsibility of collecting fire-wood and fetching water before they started preparing supper. It was only after completing that tight programme that a Kikuyu woman could have a rest. It would therefore, be noted that a Kikuyu woman had so much to do in the homestead that she could hardly get time to indulge in wage labour without necessarily neglecting some of her duties[86].

However, the above should not be miscontrued to mean that cultivation was solely women's work. Men participated fully in cultivation and there were particular crops referred to as men's crops. For example, they cultivated crops like bananas, sugarcane and yams. They also took the heavy duty of clearing virgin land and breaking the ground to extend the farming land. Men also

participated in harvesting of crops which were in turn carried home by women and children[87]. Therefore, contrary to the popular view advanced by the Europeans that African males only drunk beer while the women laboured for them, men had their equal share of garden work in the traditional Kikuyu society.

Finally, in the homestead, it was the work of a wife to entertain her husband's visitors. She welcomed them to the homestead and showed her generosity by providing them with food. It is interesting to note that if the husband's age groups came from far, they were accorded the privilege of sleeping with one of the wives[88] (if the husband had more than one wife). This was done through mutual agreement among the members of the same age group. It could not, therefore, raise sexual jealousy for the husband would be accorded the same hospitality when he visited his age groups.

IX. Conclusion

Women and children played a very important role in both social and economic spheres in the Kikuyu society. Children in particular were seen as people who would take-over the duty of maintaining and expanding the society after their parents had died. The boy's importance also lay in the defence of the society. Throughout the Kikuyu country, the institution of wage labour did not exist. It was negated by the mutual help rendered to those in need by the society. Indeed, collective work was the basic means by which the community produced and distributed its wealth. The system of collective work had two major advantages. First, it assured the

survival of the weaklings of the society. Those who were old, weak and devoid of children could still count on the support offered by the rest of the society. Second, it was the system of collective work that made it difficult for the emergence of a class structure comprising the rich few and the majority poor.

Laziness was not tolerated in the society. Anybody who showed laxity in his work became the centre of ridicule. His parents also did not escape the blame for it was said that they had failed in giving their child proper education on tribal regulations. This explains why it is really difficult to talk of child labour without necessarily talking about education in the Kikuyu society. It was through that education that the lazy and anti-social people were noted.

Wage labour destroyed the traditional education system. This was more so because it was accompanied by detribalization. Young people started leaving their home to settle in the newly acquired European farms where there was no proper control of their behaviour. Furthermore, a child who left his parents in the reserves took it that he had acquired his longed-for independence. He could behave in any way and nobody could be bothered about him. The code of conduct strictly adhered to in the reserves became obsolete in the Europeans farms. In fact those young people who found it difficult to cope with the strict control of the elders in the reserves ended up working as hired labour in the European estates. In a word, the introduction of wage labour marked the start of the slow decline of the authority of elders in the Kikuyu society.

There was child labour in the Kikuyu society as it has been demonstrated in the chapter. But this was necessarily in training the youth to become responsible members of the society[89]. Furthermore, there was no exploitation because, with others, children could enjoy the fruits of their labour. Even where the elders accumulated wealth in terms of livestock, young people could count on having access to it. In contrast, Europeans took child labour as a means of enriching themselves. Children became a source of cheap labour which could be exploited for quick returns. Nevertheless, Europeans had introduced colonial capitalism which was based on the principle of "minimum investment for maximum harvest"[90]. Hence, children became the target of the early primitive accumulation as will be shown in the following chapters.

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CHAPTER THREE

THE COMING OF THE EUROPEANS

1. Introduction

In the preceding chapter, I discussed labour and how it was divided among the age groups and sexes in the traditional Kikuyu Society. I emphasised the value of the labour of women and children. In this chapter, I will discuss how labour relations[1] were changed by the coming of the Europeans in Kenya. The imposition of colonial capitalism on the Kikuyu society, it will be argued, dealt a big blow to the traditional methods of subsistence. The chapter will examine the measures adopted by the colonial government to induce the Kikuyu to sell their labour for wages. These measures included land alienation, introduction of taxes and the appointment of colonial chiefs with enormous powers to see to it that the colonial settlers did not suffer from shortage of labour. The chiefs were particularly important in this case because they were given powers to decide who should join wage labour and who should not. The above measures, played an important role in creating a class of labourers in Kenya that included women and children.

Kenya became a British protectorate in 1895[2]. However, the intercourse between the Southern Kikuyu and the Europeans had started in the early 1890s. The year 1890 is particularly important in the history of the Kikuyu because it marked the construction of a European Fort at Dagoretti. The Imperial British East African Company (IBEA Co) agents were consequently settled there. At first

the company's agents only concerned themselves with buying food from the Kabete Kikuyu[3]. Nevertheless, some of the indisciplined elements of the Company's agents started harassing the Kikuyu. Some even engaged in raiding for food in the neighbouring cultivated fields. This raised tension between the Kabete Kikuyu and the company which resulted in the destruction of fort 'Kiawariua' in 1891[4]. A punitive expedition was sent against the Kikuyu who were subsequently defeated and ordered to compensate the Company with goats and a labour force of about three hundred men to rebuild the fort[5]. The British-Kikuyu conflicts continued until the Kikuyu were finally defeated and brought under the British control by the beginning of the twentieth century[6].

II. Land Alienation

The first group of European settlers arrived in Kenya in 1903. In fact, the year 1903 is usually regarded as the beginning of an active policy of European settlement when the policy received great encouragement under commissioner Elliot[7]. To settle the Europeans, large tracts of land were alienated from the Africans. For example, by 1929, the total alienated land in Kenya stood at 7,173,760 acres[8]. Kiambu District in particular suffered greatly from this "land grabbing' scheme because of both its proximity to Nairobi and its favourbale climate[9]. Although land alienation and the consequent invitation of European settlers was aimed at generating capital to pay for the railway and to maintain the colony's economy,[10] it sooner acquired new implications. It forced the

Africans who found themselves with little or no land to eke out a living to move and settle in the newly alienated land. By 1914, land alienation had created a class of labouring Africans. The victims of this "land grabbing scheme" joined the above class in large numbers. Although there are no clear figures indicating exactly how many Kikuyu people were in wage labour before 1914, it is evident that some of them had become squatters selling their labour for survival. Wives and children of squatters were also encouraged to work for their new masters.

By 1904, the Kikuyu people had been defeated and British rule established over them[11]. The colonial government had used so much capital on the wars of conquest that even the colonial office in London was alarmed[12]. Consequently, the effects of the severe military expeditions could be interpreted to explain how they forced the Kikuyu people to join wage labour in large numbers. With the assistance of modern weapons, the colonisers overcame the African resistance virtually ridge by ridge by burning their huts, looting their crops and rounding up their cattle[13]. The result of these conquest campaigns was that the Kikuyu were faced with a series of famines which threatened to exterminate the group[14]. These catastrophes rendered a good number of Kikuyu desperate. Those who found life increasingly difficult in the reserve sought refuge as wage earners in the alienated land.

However, a good number of the Kikuyu still possessed enough land from which they could still eke out a living. Tabitha Kanogo observes that:

> although there was evidence of land shortage before 1914, during this period, the application of the term land shortage was relative. While some clans in Kiambu District had owned enough or even surplus land, land alienation had rendered many families in the area completely landless especially in the Limuru area. As a result there had already been a wave of Kikuyu movements to the white highlands in search of land as far back as the early 1910s[15].

Some of the dispossessed Kikuyu moved with their families to settle in the European plantations either within or outside Kiambu District. While those who had enough land continued to cultivate it to meet their daily needs, those who had small pieces of land started to patronise the European estates intermittently for wage labour.

Land alienation did not produce the anticipated result of converting whole Kikuyu families into wage labourers before the first World War. The big number of early wage earners were the traditionally landless people called Ahoi. A Muhoi was a person who acquired cultivation rights on land belonging to a family other than his on a friendly basis. Generally, there was no payment for the use of such land[16]. However, due to the tension caused by land alienation, the Ahoi were increasingly pushed out of the land by their hosts and had to seek refuge on the European estates. Consequently, the Ahoi and their families were the first among the Kikuyu to sell their labour to the Europeans[17]. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the early joining of the Ahoi in wage labour was a realistic attempt of dispossessed persons to earn a livehood. In the traditional Kikuyu, those in need of land could be allowed to occupy the excess land of another family or clan. So the Ahoi viewed settling on the uncultivated alienated land in the sense of the traditional Kikuyu land tenure rather than a way of accumulating

the money income[18]. Squatting, therefore, became a response to the challenge posed by the alienation of land.

The greatest impact of land alienation and the creation of reserves which did not cater for future expansion was to create a surplus Kikuyu population in the reserves. Those who had particularly small pieces of land found them uneconomical to till and opted to settle on the large tracts of un-utilised European land for both cultivation and rearing of livestock. This argument is justified by Kanogo's finding that those who took to squatting were not led by greed for money but rather by the existence of large tracts of land which they were allowed to put into use[19].

Land alienation greatly disorganised the formerly "organised" Kikuyu society. It particularly disturbed the institution of the family. Godffrey Wilson, a Central Africa historian, has pointed out that the most immediate factor following land alienation was detribalization[20]. The harmonious village life where elders could control the youth using the authority conferred to them by the tribal code of conduct was seriously challenged. Families separated never to unite again as young people started leaving their villages to work on the European estates[21]. For those who became squatters, the Europeans emphasised the need for their wives and children to work. For example, the Native Labour Commission of 1912 - 13 heard evidence from C.M. Tylor from Kiambu who said that:

> One squatter had eleven wives and twenty children and supplied him with five or six boys all the year round. To show that they appreciated living on the farm, and that no force was used to make

> them work, he stated that having had a great deal of trouble with one of them, he had to warn him to leave but the man had offered him two girls to work for him for the rest of his life, if he would only allow them to remain[22].

Tylor also stated that he used to get labour from his employee's children. Survival on the European estates, therefore, became a matter of life and death to the African parents.

Finally, land alienation had telling effects on the traditional Kikuyu system of education. Before the coming of the Europeans, parents were providing a role model to their children in both behaviour and daily activities in life. This role model disintegrated when Europeans started demanding the labour of both children and parents. With little or no land at all[23], it became obvious that some families were destined to join wage labour. Children started being left in the villages with little or nothing to do. So parents could no longer take their children to the shamba to train them on the economic life of the society. Furthermore, the small gardens which children were given for practising in the pre-colonial Kikuyu society were no longer available. Therefore, the habit of learning as they struggled to imitate the grown-ups to a large extent, disappeared.

III. Taxation:

Taxation was first imposed on the Africans to pay for the cost of administration[24]. The first tax was introduced in 1901 in the Coast Province and it was levied on all dwelling places. It became popularly known as hut tax. Hut tax was later introduced in

Kikuyuland in 1906 and was paid at the rate of three rupees[25]. Poll tax was also introduced and was imposed on young unmarried men. However, the real purpose of these taxes was to draw labour from the African reserves[26]. It was calculated that the introduction of taxes would make it necessary for the Kikuyu to take wage labour to secure money to pay the taxes. However, taxation, like land alienation was not as successful as it was anticipated[27] before 1914.

To understand the official conception of the desired effects of taxation on labour, the words of the Governor would suffice. In the East African standard of February 8th 1913, Sir Percy Girourd was quoted saying:

> we consider that taxation is the only possible reserved method of compelling the native to leave his reserve for the purpose of seeking work. Only in this way can the cost of living be increased for the native..... and it is on this that the price of labour depends[28].

Girourd was only raising the view of the majority of the European settler community[29]. Some of the white farmers even proposed the introduction of further taxes such as cattle and produce taxes[30]. It is in the light of this view that the rate of taxes was rising fast. For example, the hut tax in Kikuyuland was paid at 3 rupees per year in 1906. However, it had reached 5 rupees in 1915 and finally 16 shillings in 1921[21]. This highlights one of the contradictions of the colonial state. Thus, while taxes were rising so fast, the salaries of the labourers either remained constant or went down altogether. In fact in 1921, salaries reduced by one third while taxes remained the same. Norman Leys, a colonial government doctor, suggested that real wages had fallen because the

prices of necessary commodities had risen. Van Zwanenberg, a known historian, supports Leys by demonstrating that given that the salary of a labourer was 5 rupees, it needed such a person to work between two and three months to fulfil his tax obligations[33].

The introduction of poll tax in 1910 was yet another failure on the part of the administration. Young men evaded it by drifting to the European farmers so that only those who remained in the reserves paid it. The failure of poll tax alarmed Hollis, the secretary for Native Affairs. In his opinion, Hollis told the Barth Commission that poll tax had no effect on labour and it was easily evaded[34].

Although land alienation and the introduction of taxes were to some extent successful among the poorer section of the Kikuyu, their impact upon the relatively wealthy section of the society was minimal.

Sharon Stitcher, emphasising this point says:

> Richer in foodstuff than the Akamba and less pressed by hostile neighbours, the Kikuyu had less need to cooperate with the British..... Portering and other manual work for wages was not nearly so common among the Kikuyu as among the neighbouring Kamba. For many Kikuyu, the proceeds from rich agricultural land undoubtedly cut any incentive to offer for wages[35].

Even those who laboured in the nearby coffee estates retreated to the reserves as soon as they got enough money to pay for their taxes. Women and children in particular did not go to the European farms at the early stages to work for wages. In fact, Hancock, a farmer in Kiambu told the Barth Commission that:

> a good deal of the lighter work on the farms was done by women, who were allowed to take fuel away in payment of the work performed[36].

In this disclosure, Hancock was strongly supported by T. Howitt, another farmer from Kiambu. Howitt said that he had employed about 135 boys and had a good deal of daily labour from women living in the adjacent reserves. Women worked up to mid-day and left for the reserves with a load of firewood for the work done[37].

Therefore, a part from the money income, the Kikuyu women laboured for other basic necessities made scarce by land alienation. Nevertheless, even among the desperate Kikuyu, wage labour did not become popular before the First World War. This was partly because the working conditions remained poor. While medical attention was so poor in some estates, flogging the workers in public for committing petty offences was still going on. Wage labour therefore, became easily comparable to slave labour. Lal Patel, a former Kenya lawyer, comparing forced labour and slave labour before 1914 comments:

> Under the slave system a victim was kidnapped and subsequently compelled to work for his master. The fall of slavery did not bring about the change of attitude towards labour. Compulsion and not incentive was the weapon used to obtain labour. Coercion was resorted to by almost all administrators[38].

The above comparison was a reality among the Kikuyu who could not understand how a person could be employed by another for wages[39]. Working for wages was wholly alien in the Kikuyu society. Any person who was in need of labour had only to invite others to give a hand. The only obligation such a person had was to treat his

guests to a feast to show his gratitude[40]. The Europeans did not understand this Kikuyu-labour relations. This misunderstanding became the basis of forced labour.

IV. Chiefs and their role in procuring labour

The third weapon used by the British to force the Kikuyu to join wage labour was the creation of the institution of the chieftaincy. In the pre-colonial Kikuyu society, there was no one person with political authority over the rest of the society. Such authority existed at the family level. Leadership in the Kikuyu society was situational (when there was a national crisis). Explaining this point further, Muriuki says:

> the family was the fundamental basis of its (Kikuyu) social structure, while recruitment of the males into corporate groups of Coerals, through initiation was the sine qua non for political interaction and organisation. Consequently, there were no formalised administrative units until the beginning of this century when these were curved by the British administrators..... The failure of the British to recognise this factor led to serious administrative difficulties, the more so when a few individuals were recognised as chiefs where none had hitherto existed[41].

The colonial chiefs were entrusted with a lot of authority over their own people. The administration made it clear to those chiefs that they had to be obedient to the government failure to which they would be dismissed. One respondent, Kamau wa Ndotono argued that:

> Most of the appointed chiefs were opportunists who dared not disobey their European bosses. In any case, they owed their authority to the colonial government and not to their people[42].

The imposition of those chiefs in the Kikuyu society precipitated a political crisis. It led to serious misunderstanding between the chiefs and their subjects on one hand and the government administrators on the other.

In Kiambu, some of the colonial chiefs went to work with vigour to impress their masters. Others like Kinyanjui abused their authority so much that some British administrators opposed them[43]. However, the power of the chiefs was based on the Village Headman Ordinance of 1902 which empowered them with the task of maintaining roads and imposing fines on their subjects. Some European farmers started viewing the chiefs as a means of recruiting labour. This section of the settler community went to the extent of bribing chiefs and Headman to force their people to work for wages[44]. The bribes were presented as rewards and were popularly known as bakshishi. Many chiefs were eager to receive bakshishi and therefore, they ruthlessly misused their power to force people to work for wages[45].

The situation worsened in 1906 when professional recruiters appeared on the scene. Professional recruiters were the agents of the European farmers in the recruitment of labour. They were paid in accordance with the number of people they recruited. Professional recruiters invaded the Kikuyu reserves and in collaboration with the chiefs, used every means at their disposal to get labourers. Commenting on professional recruiters, Clayton and Savage the authors of the famous book, Government and labour in Kenya 1895 - 1963 say:

> these men went into the reserves and obtained manpower, sometimes by bullying or bribing chiefs or even posing as government officers! They were often unscrupulous characters who wielded great powers in a particular area without any proper check[46].

The fact that professional recruiters were white men was enough to make the chiefs tremble at their presence. Some chiefs in Kiambu became easy preys to them. Chiefs became so oppressive that some people decided to migrate from their villages to the white highlands[47]. Those who were not ready to abandon their land were left with no alternative other than to obey the chiefs' orders to supply labour to the neighbouring coffee and tea estates.

The above discussion therefore, makes Ochieng's defence of the colonial chiefs, especially in Kiambu, vulnerable to criticism. For example, Ochieng, a Kenyan historian argues that:

> in fairness to the chiefs, it must be said that if some were oppressive, their use of force was sometimes justified, especially when they enforced projects like building of schools, latrines, cattle dips, stopping of soil erosion, and promotion of new agricultural techniques and crops[48].

However, Ochieng over emphasises the positive contribution of chiefs at the expense of their brutality. For example, he down-plays issues like forcing people to leave their shamba at a critical time and seizing goats belonging to those who refused to join wage labour. Although we are not denying that there were some chiefs who were sympathetic to their people[49], it is our contention that most of them were self-seekers, and cared little for their own people.

The behaviour of the colonial chiefs must be explained by the fact that those who did not cooperate with the government were

either sacked or flogged in public[50]. For example, a document entitled chiefs and their character in Kiambu (K.N.A.) gives a list of all the chiefs, Headmen and tribal retainers in the district between 1902 and 1960. The document shows how some were punished or sacked for failing to implement the government policies they did not like at the village level. Therefore, most chiefs, eager to preserve their power, forced both young and old people to leave their reserves to join wage labour. Clayton and Savage referring to the Native Authority Ordinance of 1912 say that:

> a hard pressed chief might turn to women and children for communal work. A visiting Scotts Minister found a girl of 12 obliged to work for 18 days as a tribal police hut cleaner away from home in Nyeri[51]

Another factor which can explain the chiefs brutality was that each was given a quota[52] of labourers to supply. Any chief who failed to meet his quota was seen as disobedient. Therefore, in case of any shortage, the chiefs turned to women, children and old people to meet the demand.

Prior to the year 1908, forced labour could only be legally applied for both communal and Government projects. Thereafter, the Government abandoned compulsion and the official policy changed to "encouragement". Nevertheless, the chiefs and Headmen continued to compel their subjects to join wage labour. The settler community and some administrators continued to put pressure on the chiefs to provide labourers. Norman Leys, explaining the prevailing situation said:

> When the Headmen are summoned to bomas and lectured, as they frequently are- it is the

> avowed government policy - on their duty of supplying labour for both Government and Private employers, it is not they who are to blame for the use of compulsion. Loyalty to the Government is their only motive in a cause which they know make them unpopular with their own people. Encouragement by District Officers means compulsion in practice or it means nothing. The whole basis of Government in the Reserve is that the wish of the District Officer is law[53].

Unscrupulous settlers exploited the above confusion to get more labourers through the chiefs.

In 1908 there was a perceived shortage of labour. The chiefs, with the bakshishi at stake intensified their activities so much that even the administration was shocked. Chief Kinyanjui from Githunguri was even reprimanded by the administration for press-ganging people to service.

> those who refused to go were fined a goat inorder to substitute and in certain cases were flogged for disobedience to Kinyanjui's orders[54].

1908 marked a year when many European farmers were changing from stock to grain farming which was more labour intensive[55]. This coincided with the drift of some Kiambu people to either Nairobi or the white highlands where life was said to be better. In fact, white farmers in Kiambu felt that if Kiambu people could be restricted to their district there would be no shortage of labour in Kiambu[56].

Nevertheless, another factor explaining the shortage of labour in Kikuyuland was the attitude of Hollis, the head of the Department of Native Affairs, and his assistants. To this should be added the character of Governor Sadler. Hollis was sympathetic to the Africans and was opposed to the policy of forced labour. This

sympathy excited the resentment of a section of the settler community. Rumours started circulating in the press that Hollis and his assistants were discouraging labour. Clayton and Savage say that although this rumour was baseless,

> at least one assistant in Kikuyuland was however telling people that the chiefs had no power to compel them to work if they did not wish to, and this may have appeared to ordinary Africans as a Government statement that if they did not wish to work they could stay at home[57].

Sadler, on his part, had showed reluctance in legalising forced labour. He strictly adhered to his opinion that the problem of the shortage of labour could be redressed through "creating wants by moral suasion and by good conditions"[58]. Sadler's opinion annoyed the settlers so much that they staged a demonstration calling for his resignation. Nevertheless, although Sadler resigned in the same year, the labour conditions remained unstable.

Thus, we can argue that the early shortage of labour were created by the contradictions of the capitalist economy. For instance, while the employers concerned themselves so much with procuring labour, they paid little attention to the best methods of attracting the labourers. Their sole reason was to make money with as little investment as possible. Furthermore, the conditions of work remained deplorable. For example, when Churchill, a British politician, (later a colonial secretary) visited Kenya in 1908, he was met by a group of some 300 men walking home from a site over 150 miles away from their homes. He described them as skinny scarecrows crawling back to their homes after a few weeks of contact with Christian civilization[59]. Others were forced to work for long hours

while their wages were with-held by the employers. Such mistreated people when they went back home spread rumours about the poor conditions of work they were subjected to by white employers. This and other cases make Borg, a colonial historian, comment,

> the long journey to work and the risk of death and sickness once there would have been enough to restrain most Africans from enthusiastic entry into wage employment unless they were desperately poor or had some burning needs for money income and could not earn it in any other way. Land was abundant relative to the number of Africans who lived off it, and rural misery of the harshness common in some Middle East or Asian countries was rarely encountered in Africa. Hence, it is unreasonable to expect that men would willingly expose themselves to the wage earning experience in the circumstances, that they would trade certainty and security of village life for the risks and discomforts of working outside for money. The wonder is not that Africans in the beginning showed little enthusiasm for paid employment and the money income would be earned. The real wonder is that there were as many volunteers as there were[60].

It was not surprising that the Europeans had to use force in the first two decades of the twentieth century to make Africans leave their village to work for wages. It is doubtful whether without force the Europeans would have succeeded in inducing the Africans to leave their villages to work for money. Nevertheless, the high demand and low supply of labour and the choice of paying abnormally low wages should be seen as an economic contradiction inherent in a capitalist economy[61]. Thus, the imposition of capitalism among the Africans was bound to be violent.

V. Demand for Child and Female labour:

When the available adult labour became increasingly inadequate to meet the demand, some settlers started demanding for indentured child labour. Children at first accompanied their mothers to the neighbouring European farms as totos. They were not paid any wages for they were said to be helping their mothers[62]. Nevertheless, as the labour situation continued to be turbulent, the 1906 Master and Servants Ordinance was amended in 1910 to indicate the place of children in the labour force. The most important features of the amendment were, reducing the length of contract from three to two years, abolition of salaries in kind, reduction in the number of offences in which Africans were liable to fines and imprisonment, and the provision of food and housing for the workers who could not return home. A new clause was also introduced which referred to apprentices.

The clause on apprenticeship was borrowed from South Africa where it had been used to recruit children into the labour force. Juvenile labour in South Africa was only paid for in kind[63]. It was assumed that a person who engaged a young person was training him to become a responsible citizen of the future. In Kenya, the Master and Servants Ordinance of 1910, section twelve stated that,

> A father or in case of a fatherless child, the guardian of an Arab, or a Native above the age of nine and below the age of sixteen years, may, with the consent of such a child testified by his or her execution of the deed of apprenticeship, apprentice him to a trade or employment in which Art or Skill is required or as domestic servant, for any term not exceeding five years.

Section seventeen added that,

> Whenever an Arab or Native child under the age of

> sixteen is without a guardian, a Magistrate of the District in which such child resides or is found, may authorise the apprenticing of such child to a trade or employment ..... and may appoint some fit person to execute the deed of apprenticeship and to generally act as a guardian to such child[64].

The above clauses can be seen as legalising child labour in Kenya. As in South Africa, an employer could appropriate child labour under the pretext of teaching him a trade. Furthermore, the clauses were explicit in stating that such children could be employed as domestic servants. However, apprenticeship did not attract European farmers in Kenya as was the case in South Africa. It wa only the missionaries who took the advantage of the above clauses. The Missionaries started luring children into their mission industrial centres where they worked as apprentices and possibly receiving no salary at all. For the Europeans, the provision requiring a Magisrate's approval proved to be an adequate deterrent[65].

Before 1910, there was little evidence that the European settlers were engaging women and children in wage labour. However, between 1910 and 1912 there was another severe shortage of labour in the protectorate. The Governor of Kenya, Sir Percy Girouard instituted a committee to investigate the alleged shortage of labour. The committee set out to work on 19th September, 1912 and ended its investigations on 30th April, 1913. The investigations of this committee led to the first public exposure of child and female labour in the protectorate. It interviewed a total of 284[66] witnesses throughout the country.

Most of the European settlers witnesses from Kiambu explained

to the commission how they had resorted to child and female labour to avert the labour crisis in the district. For instance, the evidence of J.M. Drury showed explicitly how women and children were put to labour for small wages. He was quoted telling the commission that,

> he was a farmer near Limuru and employed from 25 to 30 men, women and children, all Kikuyu. Women were paid RS 3/= per month and men RS 4/= without food[67].

Although Drury stated the wages he paid to men and women, he was silent about the wages of children. This silence could be taken to mean that he was paying them nothing. This should not be surprising given that children were seen as helping their parents. It was only n rare occasions that they were paid in kind.

The commission also received several proposals suggesting that child labour could be legally adopted to supplement the dwindling adult labour. Bowker, a white farmer from South Africa, was very vocal in this suggestion. He was of the opinion that indenturing young natives could go along way in alleviating the shortage of labour[68]. Bowker was supported by a number of European farmers. For example, H. Scott from Limuru argued that.

> he had splendid result from utilizing child labour on his farm, both boys and girls of about 14 years of age. Work had been done by them in half the time and at half the expenses of that done by adult labour. Children were paid at the rate of RS 1/= for 14 days actual work without food[69].

A good section of the settler community held the above opinion. Scott's explanation of adopting child labour went beyond

the ordinary European reason that they were adopting child labour to counteract the shortage of adult labour. Rather, Scott realistically declared that his use of child labour was for economic reasons. Child labour, in his opinion, was therefore, cheaper than adult labour. To illustrate the above argument, the 1910 Master and Servants Ordinance made it compulsory for employers to provide food and housing to their employees. However, children did not require housing and in most cases were not provided with food. This was because they were either said to be residing with their parents on the farm or were going to join their families in the reserves after work[70]. Therefore, they were not affected by the 1910 Ordinance. At any rate children did not know their rights and could not complain even when they were overworked.

The above was yet another contradiction of the capitalist economy. While the European farmers claimed that it was their avowed mission to civilize the black man[72], they simply meant that it was their right to appropriate the African families labour. Child labour became particularly dangerous because it had physical, psychological and moral effects, which could interfere with the general development of an African child. Parental care at an early stage of a child's growth shapes the personality of a child. Separation of children from their parents could lead to some abnormalities which may be difficult to reverse in a child's life. Frantz Fanon, a psychiatrist says,

> a normal child that had grown up in a normal family will be a normal man[73].

But apparently, an African child exposed to wage labour and

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> a normal child that had grown up in a normal family will be a normal man[73].

But apparently, an African child exposed to wage labour and

and the "native child" being made or rather taught to work[77].

Where European farmers started schools for the Africans' children, they were only meant to attract child labour. A.G. Leakey, a European farm manager, confidently stated that, the owner of the farm he managed had established a school in 1906. In that farm school, all the pupils were required to do a half day's work and then attend school for the other half of the day[78]. In a word, Leakey was explaining how children could be lured to the wage labour to augment the adult labour supply. The education such schools offered was meant to teach African children to be obedient to their white masters.

Some Missionaries were also in favour of child labour in Kenya before 1918. However, they emphasised apprenticing children as stipulated by Master and Servants Ordinance of 1910. Nevertheless their argument suggested that apprenticeship was to aim at creating a better African labourer in future. To this point, Reverend Bernhard of St. Austin Mission in Kiambu was very vocal. He told the Barth Commission that,

> his mission worked on the principle of encouraging the natives to work. With that objective in view, a coffee plantation had been established (in the mission) and the building trade being taught to 27 apprentices[79].

Although Bernhard said that he was remunerating his apprentices, there were many other missions where they were getting nothing at all. This was the cause of Girourd's complaint in 1910 that in many of the small mission's, labour was used in a way that even the administration found disagreeable[80].

However, even the administration supported the idea of apprenticeship to make the African youths industrious and more reliable in labour. The assistant District Commissioner for Kiambu C. Dundas, told the Barth Commission that the laziness of the Kikuyu adults emanated from their training in their youthful period. Therefore, training the Kikuyu youths would go a long way in redressing the problem of laziness. Thus Dundas said that,

> Youths of 14 to 16 years old should be trained to work on Government plantations under the direct control of the District Commissioner, and similarly any who had committed petty offences, and of whom the chiefs and elders had a cause to complain, should be sentenced to work there for a certain period[81].

Dundas statement was reminiscent of some sections of the Master and Servants Ordinance of 1910. It could therefore, be said to represent the official view on African children. The lessons the children were to be given were to teach them their role in the whole colonial structure. Furthermore, if labour in the Government plantations was to be provided by criminals as Dundas suggested, it could then be perceived as something meant for wrongdoers. This contradiction would have made it difficult to explain the dignity of work to African children. It is also in this respect that we argue that Europeans hardly understood the Kikuyu culture. By arguing that the laziness of the Kikuyu adults emanated from their upbringing, Dundas exposed his ignorance of the Kikuyu education system where everybody was exhorted to be working hard. This resulted in misunderstanding between the Kikuyu and the Europeans.

Evidence of female labour in Kiambu before 1914 is scanty.

The first plausible record is only dated 1906. The information was supplied by H.E. Scott who was an educationist. She recalled seeing women working in a farm near Kikuyu station. Those women were employed by a white settler who had the contract of supplying the Station with firewood fuel for locomotives[82]. However, Scott was only commenting on what she saw as she was walking around Kikuyu area. More reliable evidence of female labour came to the limelight during the Barth Commission. Some of the witnesses confessed that they employed women who were receiving smaller salaries than men. For instance, J.M. Drury, E.M. Tylor and R. Hancock all from Kiambu said that they employed women to supplement the dwindling male labour[83].

The most informative evidence on female labour was given by chief Munene wa Murema from Ndarugu Location, Gatundu Division. In his defence to the accusation that he had refused to supply labour to a Mr. Harris, Murema retorted that;

> he had very few men and two or three days ago had sent to him (Harris) 180 women to work on alternative days for him, and for themselves and to be paid on completion of 30 days work[84].

Murema's claim that he had very few men in his location should not be surprising given that the harshness of the chiefs had made many men leave their villages[85]. In any case, Kiambu was adjacent to Nairobi where wages were said to be better than labouring on the Europeans' farms. This argument corresponds to Stitcher's finding that;

> Kiambu men either became specialists, or went to the higher wage markets in Nairobi. Daily labouring on the nearby coffee estates became the

province of women and children rather than men[86].

The outbreak of the First World War worsened the labour situation in Kiambu. Adult men were either conscripted to the carrier corps or left their reserves in fear of conscription[87]. The majority of the Kiambu ridges became dominated by women, children and old people. Although agricultural expansion in general was halted, due to the involvement of some European farmers in the war, the labour situation remained turbulent in Kiambu. In the absence of men, women and children were left at the mercy of chiefs who turned to them in case of labour demand[88]. However, even without the shortage of adult male labour, it is evident that European farmers would have turned to female and child labour because of its cheapness. A section of the settler community argued that they found women and children adept at picking beans and also cheaper than adult men[89].

VI. Conclusion

In conclusion, we have seen that the majority of the settler community in Kenya came from South Africa. It was in South Africa that women and children had been compelled to sell their labour in the 1850s when there was a real labour crisis. Paul Dubow[90] confirms this when he says that children in particular were paid in food and clothes. It was, therefore, not surprising for Bowker and his supporters from South Africa to argue that it was only indentured child labour which could alleviate the labour situation in Kenya. We have also seen that child labour attracted the European farmers

because of its cheapness. This was because most of the white farmers had very little capital[91]. Furthermore, some of those farmers were of bad character and had left their homes with doubtful records[92]. Therefore, they would have abused child and female labour as long as they had the control of the legislative council[93] as we shall see in the next chapter.

Footnotes

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE INTER-WAR PERIOD 1918 - 1939

(i) Progress After World War I

The decade following the end of the First World War in Kenya witnessed considerable economic expansion only interrupted by the slump of 1920 - 21. The arrival of the soldier settlers in the protectorate meant that more of the alienated land was brought under use[1]. This means that more labourers than before were required to meet the increasing demands of labour. By 1920, the shortage of labour had become so acute that it became the concern of both the European farmers and the administration. Child and female labour continued throughout the inter-war period until 1937 when a select committee was instituted to investigate to what extent child and female labour was abused in the colony. The select committee gave it's report in 1938 which, again, became a major point of controversy[2] in Kenya.

The post World War I shortage of labour in Kenya was exacerbated by the fact that a great number of the able-bodied men who had participated in the war were either injured or killed. Ivor Robinson estimated that about 200,000 Africans from Kenya had served as non-combatants and seventeen percent of these died of wounds and disease[3]. An equally big percentage was seriously injured and could no longer be of use in the labour force. This meant that the above numbers of men were removed from the labour force when the demand was actually increasing. Another important factor that affected the labour situation was that the African adults continued to work only

when they had pressing needs for money like paying taxes. These two factors persuaded the European farmers to turn to female and child labour to offset the imbalance[4].

To deal with the shortage of labour, a Resident Native Ordinance[5] was enacted in 1918 affecting all Africans living on settler farms. It stated that all Africans residing on the alienated land had to enter into a contract with the European owner of the farm whereby they pledged to work for the farm owner for at least 180 days in a year. In return, the squatters would get both cultivation and grazing rights on the farms. This Ordinance was important in that when a labourer was settled on the European farm, his children and wife or wives were also required to offer their labour, especially during the harvesting season. In Kiambu, European farmers had attracted a large number of "resident labourers" due to the shortage of land in the Kikuyu reserves[6]. Therefore, this Ordinance marked an attempt by the colonial government to encourage African families to settle on the European farms for the purpose of providing labour.

John Ainsworth, appointed chief Native Commissioner in 1918 was known to be sympathetic to the African interests. For example, he was opposed to the imposition of forced labour on the Africans. However, his efforts to protect the Africans were rendered hopeless by the existing relationship between the colonial state and the European settlers. The settlers had full control of the legislative council (Legco) and were vocal politicians[8]. Mcgregor Ross, the director of Public Works Department, described the settlers as

strong politicians who controlled the government through their constant criticism of its policies[9]. The ambitions of the settlers were only checked by the intervention of the colonial office[10].

The second decade of the twentieth century in Kenya closed on a controversial note. In October 23rd 1919, the Government of Northey issued a controversial circular popularly known as the Government Circular Number one. The Circular stated that all government officials in charge of native areas must exercise every possible lawful influence to induce able-bodied native males to go into the labour field. Where farms were situated in the vicinity of native areas,

> women and children should be encouraged to go out for such labour as they can perform[11].

"Native' Chiefs and Elders were also exhorted by Circular Number 1 to render all possible lawful assistance to ensure that the "Natives" supplied labour to the European farmers. The Circular added that the elders should repeatedly be reminded that it is part of their duty to "advice" and "encourage" all unemployed young men in their areas to go out and work on the European farms.

The Circular aroused criticism especially from the protestan missionaries within the protectorate. A group of Missionaries belonging to the church of England and Uganda[12] felt that it was wrong for the government to involve women and children in wage labour. The members of the newly formed Alliance of Protestant Missions emphasised that compulsion of labour could only be allowed when exercised for government use[13]. Thereafter, the Bishops wrote a memorandum to petition the government on what they saw as

unfair policy towards women and children. The memorandum stated in part,

> Compulsory labour, so long as it is clearly necessary should be definitely legalised..... It should be confined to able-bodied men. No government pressure should be brought to bear on women and children. When they work on plantations, it should be of their own accord[14].

The Bishops' Memorandum also quoted another circular which was issued by the District Commissioner for Kiambu advising farmers who wanted to use child labour to contact him. The District Commissioner's circular was issued on 7th October, 1919 and it stated in part,

> as I understand that a considerable amount of labour will be required to get in the coffee plantation, and as I intend to arrange for temporary child labour from the Reserves, I shall be glad if any coffee grower who may like to employ these children will write hereon, stating the number required and the time for which they may be most needed[15].

The Bishops pointed out that the Northey circular Number 1 and the Kiambu District Commissioner's circular were a clear indication that the government was coercing women and children to sell their labour to private employers[16]. The bishops viewed both circulars as a concerted move to satisfy the demands of private employers.

The Bishops' Memorandum attracted the attention of the Colonial Office in London. In the British Parliament, a motion was introduced in the House of Lords to discuss the Northey circular. However, the day the motion was to be discussed, the secretary to state sent a telegram to Northey Ordering him to write a supplementary circular. But Northey's Supplementary Circular did

not differ much from the first one[17]. It only stated that,

> Women and children should be allowed to return to their homes every night; that care had to be taken that chiefs did not use favouritism or oppression in sending labourers away to work for wages[18].

However, Northey's Supplementary Circular still emphasised that it was the duty of the Native Authority to "advice" and "encourage" all unemployed young men under their jurisdiction to seek work in the plantations. Northey's second circular showed the Governors determination to please the settler community by including a clause that assured them of a continued supply of child and female labour. Northey "ignored" the fact that the terms "advice" and "encourage" were bound to be abused by the local authorities. Norman Leys, describing the abuse that might arise from the term "encourage" said that "encouragement" by "District Officers means compulsion in practice or it means nothing"[19].

Another interest group comprising Europeans sympathetic to the Africans also voiced its concern over Northey's circular through the press. A number of articles appeared in the East African Standard criticising the government's advocacy of "encouragement" and "advice" to women and children to supply labour to the private employers. The editorial of the East African Standard of November 13th 1919 stated in parts,

> the decision to encourage women and children to labour bearing in mind the meaning that will be read into the word encouragement seems to us a dangerous policy. The children below a certain age should be at home or in school. The women must work at home..... To encourage as the Native Headman would encourage women and girls to go out from their homes into the neighbouring

> plantations would be to court disaster, physical and moral. Whatever labour legislation is introduced, the women and children must at any rate be left out of it[20].

Despite all these criticisms, the Government of Northey stood firm for various reasons. The most important reason was that the Governor was fearful of certain elements in the settler community, the type who had demonstrated against Governor Sadler in 1908 calling for his resignation for showing sympathy towards Africans[21]. Articles appeared in the East African Standard praising Northey for his 'patriotism'. Some of the European farmers who wrote to the press were quoted as saying that "they at least knew where they stood"[22].

However, some Protestant bishops had refused to support the "Bishops' memorandum" for the reason that it was not radical enough. One such bishop was Frank Weston of Zanzibar. Criticizing both Northey's and the Kiambu D.C.'s circulars, Weston dismissed the whole policy of forced labour as "both anti-Christian and political and moral madness". Weston even arranged a meeting with the Secretary of State for Colonies in London to "air" his protest. The meeting of the two took place in London in 1920 and Milner showed Weston the "Bishops" Memorandum" alleging that they had supported compulsory labour albeit with conditions. Frank Weston condemned the Bishops Memorandum" dismissing its authors as traitors[24]. Referring to the bishops of Mombasa and Uganda, Weston was quoted as saying,

> I am heart-sick with christian institutions, though you find Christ riding on such assess[25].

Weston even wrote a pamphlet entitled "The serfs of Great Britain" where he accused the Government of introducing a new kind of slavery in Kenya[26].

(ii) The Early 1920's Abuse of Child and Female Labour

While the second decade of the twentieth century closed with labour controversies, the beginning of the third decade did not seem to offer any solution. The shortage of adult labour continued due to the rapid expansion of the European agricultural sector after the war[27]. On the other hand, the African population had fallen after the war and did not rise again till 1930s[28]. The stagnation of the African population in the first two decades of the century was caused by both the savage campaign of the European conquest and a series of famines that followed the conquests. The stagnation of the African population and the increased amount of land brought under European cultivation meant that the supply of labour could not meet the demand. Women and children were therefore, needed more than before to assist especially during the harvesting season.

The labour conditions also deteriorated in the 1920s. Although the amendment of the Native Authority Ordinance of 1920 was meant to rectify the working conditions, its success was checked by the shortage of the supervision officers. To demonstrate the abuse of female and child labour that ensued, Mcgregor Ross, the Head of the Public Works Department gives a variety of cases but one example would suffice here. He quotes the case of A.C. Archer, the

President of Ruiru Farmers Association who had employed a boy of about fifteen years. The juvenile had worked for Archer for some months and then decided to return to the village to help his parents. Archer described that act of the juvenile as desertion. He wrote to the local government station, Ruiru, demanding that the juvenile should be seized and punished. The officer in-charge of the station complied with Archer's demand and the juvenile was seized and detained in the police station[29].

This and other examples were given by Ross to show the vulnerability of the African youths to the European malpractices. Although the Master and Servants Ordinance of 1920 prohibited the employment of youths under sixteen in heavy manual work, this continued to flourish all over the protectorate in the 1920s. For example, it was reported in 1924, that, "recently labour inspectors stopped children eight or nine years of age from breaking heavy stones for their European employers"[30]. Those children were lucky in that one of the few labour supervision officer's noticed them. There were other less fortunate children who continued to work in heavy manual work in the European farms.

Administrators who opposed female and child labour were either forced to retire[31] or were transferred to unfavourable areas[32]. For example, Ross cited a case where Oldfield, the commanding officer in-charge of Ruiru Police Station went on leave. A Mr. Cook came across a youth who had been detained at the police station for 35 days as a porter without pay. Cook also found that the youth was not charged with any particular offence. He therefore, released the

youth and ordered him to be paid his dues. When this action became public, the President of Ruiru Farmers Association denounced Cook as inefficient and dangerous to the interests of the European farmers. Pressure was also brought to bear on the administration by the convention of European farmers to have Cook dismissed. Finally, a select committee was appointed to investigate the allegations against Cook and although the committee did not come up with anything against him, Cook was transferred to Wajir[33].

Nevertheless, the Africans were not passive spectators of events in the 1920s. The atmosphere of the 1920s was highly charged politically as was to be proved by the Dagoretti meeting of 1921[34]. The meeting was attended by chiefs like Munyua, Koinange and Njonjo together with some missionary educated young men. Among the young educated men was Harry Thuku who was to play a leading role in Kenya politics before he was detained. Although the initial purpose of the Dagoretti meeting was to complain about reduction of wages and the rising rate of taxation[35], the issue of forced labour was also mentioned. The most disturbing case of forced labour cited involved women and young girls. The meeting was also attended by the Chief Native Commissioner, the District Commissioner, and some labour officials from Nairobi. The elders told the chief Native Commissioner that women and young girls were being ordered to leave their reserves to work on European farms far away from their homes. They alleged that this compelled labour of women and girls was done with the authority of the District Commissioner[36]. Clayton and Savage add that the elders,

> cited sixty who had been taken to a European farm

> to work, listing those who had been raped there. Other complaints alleged that goats were taken from families who objected, and that headmen who did not produce their quota were made to carry heavy loads as a punishment or were detained[37].

The elders also produced a list of those who had become pregnant in the process[38].

In mitigation, the Chief Native Commissioner and his officials from Nairobi promised to investigate those cases. However, they reiterated that the Government approved of female and child labour only when they could return home in the evening. Nevertheless, European farmers did not hold the above rule in high regard and they violated it whenever it was in their interest to do so[39]. The neglect of women and children in the European farms became particularly dangerous and it explains why rape cases were rampant. At any rate, when working on the European estates, women and children were left at the mercy of unscrupulous African overseers[40]. One respondent, Wambui wa Ngotho explained that the character of the overseers was doubtful. They used their enormous powers to harass females who refused to give in to their sexual demands[41].

To further expose the widespread abuse of female and child labour, another embarrassing case of harassment was cited by Mcgregor Ross in 1923. In a home of an assistant District Commissioner, Ross found several girls detained far away from their homes. (See the photograph attached). The girls had been given the task of filling the District Commissioner's tank with water. Those girls were, however, using gourds with a carrying capacity of half a gallon. They were supervised by an overseer from their village.

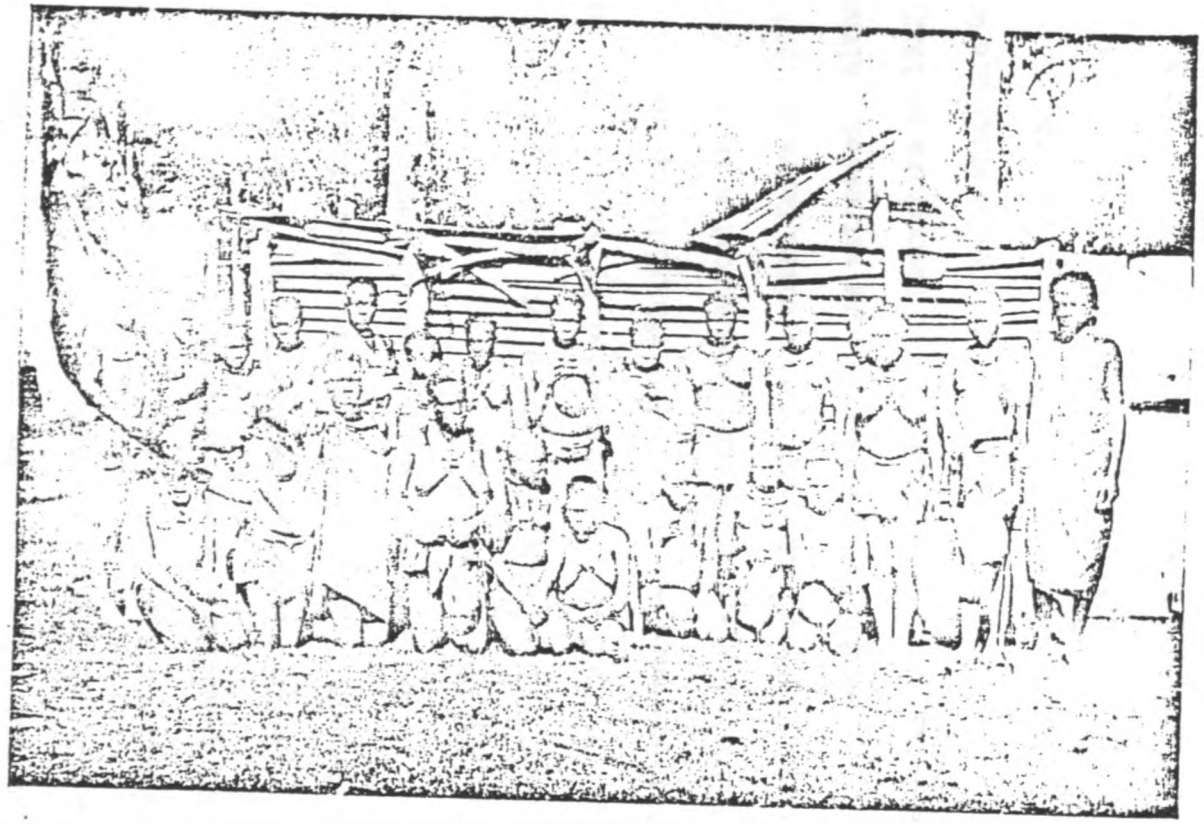

PLATE II.—COMPELLED LABOUR OF GIRLS IN 1922, DETAINED FROM THEIR HOMES WITHOUT FOOD OR BLANKETS

BY MCGREGOR ROSS : KENYA FROM WITHIN, GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD LONDON 1927
OPPOSITE PAGE 112

Since the girls could not finish the work on the same day, they were forced to spend the night in a tent so that they could resume the work the following day. In the tent, they were without blankets and in very poor clothing[42]. Ross released them and his complaint of this and other cases he had encountered led to the enactment of the Master and Servants Ordinance of 1923. The new Ordinance stated that no woman should be allowed to work on a European farm unless accompanied by her husband or father. Further, proper accommodation was to be provided for single women[43]. This ordinance was later followed by a circular in the Government Gazette warning against the abuse of child and female labour[44].

Lord Milner, the Secretary of State for Colonies resigned in 1921 and was succeeded by Winston Churchill. Churchill was more sensitive to British public opinion at home than Milner and was also more acquainted with the Kenyan situation. In fact, Churchill had visited Kenya in 1907 and had criticized the labour conditions he witnessed. Although Churchill was replaced by the Duke of Devonshire in 1922, he nevertheless initiated labour reforms in Kenya which are worth noting. Immediately after taking over as the Colonial Secretary, Churchill reacted sharply to the policy of "encouragement" of labour. He stated that, compulsory labour could only be adopted if the Government sought permission from him. Even so, such permission could only be granted when it was absolutely necessary for essential services[45]. It is only

during his tenure in office that poll and hut taxes were reduced from 16 to 12 shillings in Kikuyuland. ^General Northey, a governor who had showed his determination to support the cause of the European settlers was also retired. Although the labour situation did not improve during Churchill's tenure in office, at least compulsory labour was minimized[46].

During and after the depression of 1920-21, the problem of securing labour continued to be a thorn in the flesh of the European private employers. Earlier, the Residents Labour Ordinance of 1918 had been seen as going a long way in alleviating the labour shortage problem. Most farmers in Kiambu had applauded it because it had promised them the labour of the whole family especially during the picking season. Nevertheless, the demand during the peaking season continued to exceed the supply[47]. In 1925, one labour officer Allen, was quoted as saying that there was an increasing number of Kavirondo juveniles employed on sisal estate in Thika.[48] Employing juveniles became a realistic attempt by the private employers to solve the labour crisis.

The above labour officer's comment was revealing in that when the Kiambu labour supply could no longer meet the demand, the private employers sought to get labour outside the district. The "Kavirondo" juveniles are reported to have started flocking into Kiambu from the early 1920s. Our respondents recalled that the "Kavirondo" boys were transported from Kisumu to Nairobi by train. On reaching

Nairobi, they were then distributed to the various farms around the town[49]. Mbugua wa Kiriro in particular, remembered that the "Kavirondo" boys were brought in groups. A group of about six boys was put in one house. They were then given posho and blankets[50]. Cege wa Kamau added that the Kavirondo boys were also given clothes since most of them came naked[51].

(iii) Recruitment of The "Kavirondo" Juveniles

The Kavirondo boys in the above section were recruited to work in Kiambu farms through various methods. However, generally, the recruitment of "Kavirondo" juvenile workers can be put into two categories. There were those who were already living in the coffee, sisal and tea estates in Kiambu and were encouraged by the overseers to join wage labour. Others were directly brought from Western Kenya by train and were recruited by private employers' agents.

Some "Kavirondo" juvenile workers in Kiambu had settled on various farms with their parents. The farm overseers then started putting pressure on the parents to allow their children to assist in the work especially during the harvesting season. Harun Othach[52], a "Kavirondo" who came to Kiambu in 1924 explained that he had come from Kisumu with his parents and had settled in Murera Coffee and Sisal Estates in Ruiru. He started accompanying his parents to their working places and soon the *Munyapara* suggested that Othach could work for his own ticket, though with a smaller wage. There were also twelve other boys who were recruited with him.

Other Kavirondo boys came directly from Kisumu. These were the juvenile labourers who came on their own leaving their parents in Nyanza. To recruit these juveniles, our respondents explained that a European settler sent one of his adult Kavirondo employees to recruit them. The adult agent was given both money for transport and presents for both chiefs and parents who would allow the boys to accompany him. Michael Otieno explained that those agents of the settler employers went to Nyanza with fascinating stories about life on the European estates in Kiambu. Some went to the extent of saying that there were schools for all children on the European farms. Such blatant lies persuaded the "Kavirondo" boys to accompany the settlers' agents[53]. Furthermore, some unscrupulous parents could not resist the presents they were given to allow their children to accompany the settlers agents. In any case, the presents to the chiefs and parents were accompanied by the assurance that the boys would be brought back after a few weeks[54]. Although these assurances were not honoured, the European agents continued to bribe both the chiefs and the parents to get juvenile labour.

On the other hand, there was another group of rebellious juveniles who, tired of the rural life of poverty, were ready to accompany the European agents irrespective of the will of their parents[55]. This was the group which was adventurous and sometimes sneaked from home to join the settlers' agents. This group of juveniles thought that they were only taking a

ride in the newly established railway transport[56]. However,direct force was sometimes used to coerce the "Kavirondo" juveniles into wage labour. Seven out of the twenty three "Kavirondo" men interviewed claimed that they were seized by the settlers' agents against their will. The parents of the seized juveniles at the beginning could not make their complaints public because they feared to be victimized by the chiefs who were in league with the settlers agents[57]. This was the basis of Bishop Owen of Nyanza's complaint to the employment of juveniles committee of 1938 that the "Kavirondo" boys were taken under contracts to work on the plantations as far as 400 miles away from their homes[58].

Allen, the above mentioned labour officer, pointed out that most of the "Kavirondo" juveniles were physically unfit for the work they were performing on the European estates. He also said that the existing labour conditions were unsuitable for those juneviles whose ages ranged from ten to about eighteen years. They were also not medically examined before they were taken out of their reserves as stipulated by the law. These conditions were exacerbated by the strange environment they found themselves working in. These juvenile workers received six shillings for a three month contract. They were given posho and beans to make up their diet. Meat was rarely given and sometimes the juveniles looked for wild green vegetables to supplement their diet[59]. The tendency of feeding the "Kavirondo" juveniles with posho throughout their

stay in the estate made the kikuyu have a low opinion of *ugali* which they said was meant for *Ngirimiti* or slaves[60].

The working conditions were also not favourable to the juveniles. Working on most of the estates started at six in the morning and continued till five in the evening. There was no lunch-break in the mid-day[61]. Although the juvenile workers were extremely tired by the time they returned to their sleeping 'camps', they were still expected to collect firewood for their cooking and also fetch water from the nearest rivers. This added to their tiredness and it is a small wonder that some of the juveniles worked for three days to complete the measure of one day ticket[62]. It is not surprising then that those juveniles working under three month contract ended up working for about five months[63]. The problem was more acute where a group of four juveniles were kept under the guardianship of one or two adult men. In such a case, the adult person converted the juveniles into servants. The juveniles took up the responsibility of cooking, washing the utensils, cleaning the house, fetching water and doing all the household duties for the adult. The adult guardian could also punish any juvenile under him who refused to perform such duties[64].

Equally, the sleeping houses were small. Although none of our respondents could tell the exact size of those houses, they were in agreement that most houses could not accommodate more than two people. Nevertheless, the size of the houses varied from one estate to another. Okello Owiti, talking about housing in Tassia coffee

estates said that,

> The houses were poorly constructed huts with mud walls. The roofs were thatched with grass. In most cases those roofs were leaking and they were the abode of rats and sometimes dangerous snakes. Some of the walls had big cracks that allowed in wind freely. The houses were very cold at night[65].

Although Okello's description of houses in Tassia Coffee Estate could have been exaggerated, it is true that those houses were a health hazard to the workers. There were no health facilities and minor ailments were treated by the Mzungu[66]. Those whose suffering was serious were either taken to Kiambu hospital for treatment or were extradited back to their reserve[67].

Eating the same diet for a considerable time was a major cause of health problems among the workers. Norman Leys observes that a diet of posho and beans without change was found to be the cause of some of the problems, like stomach pains and diarrhoea among the workers[68]. The above, coupled with long hours of work and little medical attention explains why some workers had constant health problems. However, and interestingly, most of the respondents claimed that they were satisfied with the salary they were getting at that period. They argued that the standards of cost were low and they were saving more money than they do today. In fact one respondent reported that their need for money was minimal. Apart from buying clothes, the rest of the money was sent back home to purchase goats and sheep not to mention paying taxes[69].

The Agriculture Census of 1927-28 shows that there were about 15,428 juveniles and 4,802 women engaged in wage labour in the protectorate. These figures, compared with those of the early 1920s

show that the employment of females was declining while that of juveniles was on the increase. For example, in 1923 there were 9,942 juveniles and 6,609 women in wage labour[70]. In Kiambu alone, there were about 2,957 juveniles and 3,089 females under employment[71]. Land brought under agriculture by the Europeans was also on the increase in Kiambu. For example the Agriculture Census of 1922 shows the following:

Table 1

Year	Total Agricultural Land	Total Area under coffee farming
1920	30,906 Acres	14,581 Acres
1921	34,665 Acres	16,939 Acres
1922	39,221 Acres	21,206 Acres

SOURCE : Agricultural census 1922.

The rapid expansion of settler agriculture made it necessary for the introduction of casual labour to meet the increasing demand of labour. The increasing number of females and juvenile labourers can therefore be explained by the introduction of daily paid or casual labour[72]. Casual labour attracted women and children from the adjacent reserves because they could be paid their dues in the evening and had no obligation to report to work the following day[73]. Nevertheless, a considerable number of women and juvenile continued to reside on the farms;

The Agriculture census of 1925 shows that there were about 12,000 juveniles and 6,000 women in wage labour. These figures rose to 17,295 for juveniles in 1928. However, the number of women seem

to have fallen from 6,000 to 4,654 in the same period[74]. The fall of females in the labour force can be attributed to the decline of the compulsion of labour in the 1920s.

The 1920s witnessed more criticisms levelled on both child and female labour. In response to these criticisms, the Department of Public Works decided to make it clear that it did not approve the employment of juveniles under the age of twelve years[75]. Supervision Officers had reported cases of juveniles of between eight and nine employed in heavy manual work in 1924. One Report in that year stated that;

> Recently, labour inspectors stopped children eight or nine years of age from breaking heavy stones for the European employers- the allocated task being 17 cubic feet each day[76].

Although there was no legally accepted age of employment for juveniles, stating that twelve years was the minimum employable age was ridiculous because a child of twelve was too young to join wage labour however light it was. Nevertheless stipulating the age of twelve as the minimum employable age was in line with the argument of the European farmers that the African children had to be introduced to hard work if they were to grow up to become industrious adults. However, the decision of Mcgregor Ross to stipulate the minimum employable age for children was doomed to failure because no attempt was made to increase the number of supervision officers to enforce it. Even the governments' failure to implement the policy of registration of all employed people including juveniles should be seen in the light of the shortage of supervision officers. Moreover, even where the registration was

done, the names of those juveniles under twelve years were omitted from the register. This made the Agriculture Census of 1933 raise the complaint that the records of casual juveniles and those who were under twelve years were not produced by the employers[77].

In 1927, the last labour commission to inquire into the shortage of labour in the Protectorate was instituted by the Government. This Commission, as was that of 1912 - 13, interviewed various European farmers and administrators to establish the cause of the shortage of labour. After its enquiry, the commission estimated the requirement of labour in the colony as follows

TABLE II

Year	Minimum	Maximum	Source: Native
1927	170,000	203,000	Labour Commission
			Report 1927
1928	187,000	222,000	p.9
1929	206,000	No maximum	

It also noted that;

> The annual increment of the number of women and children seeking light employment such as coffee picking and weeding justifies the belief that the extra demand for large coffee crop of 1927 will be met[78].

The 1927 Native Labour Commission proposed that women and children be encouraged to join wage labour to supplement the increasing demand for labour. "Encouragement" was to be applied especially to those women and children near the coffee plantations[79].

Due to the economic difficulties experienced in the colony,

the Government appointed an Economic and Finance Committee to find out ways of reducing the Government expenditure. In 1925, this committee estimated that males between 15 and 40 years were suitable for wage employment. However, it was also noted that the Government was restering for employment a large number of people below the age of 15 and above 40 years[80]. The committee also recommended that "native children" should be taught a "double handed" picking of coffee[81]. It, therefore, endorsed the policy of both the colonial state and the private employers of employing juveniles to alleviate the alleged shortage of labour.

However, some of the juvenile workers in Kiambu were volunteers. It has been argued that they joined wage labour at small ages because of the progress achieved by their peers who had done so before them. For instance, the juvenile workers returned back to their villages wearing a pair of shorts and shirt which made them look very smart. Some of them could even afford shoes which made them to look like Wazungu[82]. So, the introduction of new tastes among the Africans made many youths join wage labour. Other juveniles and especially those who worked during the school holidays did so to secure money to pay for their school fees[83].

Thus, while the government was enacting laws "restraining" children of a particular age from working for wages, the children themselves were constrained by necessities to look for money. Poverty, created by land alienation , taxation and the introduction of new wants all combined to reduce alternatives and bargaining power available to the Africans.

To ensure that African children's labour was available on demand, the 1927 Native Labour Commission proposed that the main school holidays should be synchronized with the coffee harvesting season[84]. Although the Commission emphasized good housing and proper feeding for both women and children, it refused to recommend any punitive measures to be meted out to the defaulters of those obligations. Thus, making recommendations and enforcing them became two different things. The Commission also appealed to the Government to convince the missionaries that it was in the interest of christian children to work for wages during school holidays[85]. The Commission stated that the perceived shortage of labour in 1924 was due to the arrival of a great number of the soldier settlers and the expansion of agriculture in the alienated land.

The rapid expansion of agriculture on the European farms was not accompanied by greater incentives for the African labourers. Therefore, most of the Africans continued viewing wage labour as only a means of securing money for paying the government taxes. Another factor that exacerbated the shortage of labour in the 1920s was that due to the number of deaths connected with World War I and the immediate post war conditions, the history of Kenya demonstrates a sharp decline in the African population. From a population of about three million in 1912, the number had fallen to about two and a half million by 1924[86]. Therefore, the white farmers continued to experience a severe shortage of labour in the 1920s.

Juvenile labour continued to attract European farmers who could not get enough adult labourers to meet the demand. According

the Agriculture Census of 1925, Kiambu farmers who numbered a few hundreds employed an average of 2,400 juveniles per month. The monthly figures published by the census indicated the following for both juveniles and females in Kiambu.

Table III

Month	1923	
	Females	Juveniles
July	1,897	2,278
August	1,729	2,184
September	1,887	2,182
October	1,846	2,189
November	2,454	2,419
December	3,172	2,759
Month	1924	
January	2,676	2,752
February	2,529	2,027
March	2,642	1,769
April	2,488	1,757
May	2,646	2,269
June	2,972	2,630

SOURCE: Agriculture Census 1925

From the table above, the demand for females and juvenile labour was greater in some months than in others. An attempt to divide the year shows that more juveniles worked between November and June. The number then declined slowly between July and September. The rise and fall of the demand for juvenile labour can be explained in that there are normally two coffee picking seasons in Kiambu. The biggest harvest starts in October and reaches its height in

December. Another mini-picking season between April and June does not demand many labourers for the harvest is small. The Kikuyu call it Ndara mwaka (when only a few coffee berries are ripe for picking.

However, in the tea and sisal plantations, picking went on throughout the year. Although our records show that there were very few tea estates in Kiambu by 1925[87], some children were employed in them. The acreage under pyrethrum was also increasing in this period. It is in tea and pyrethrum estates in particular where children were working in large numbers[88]. Table III shows that the greatest demand of women's labour took place between November and February. This corresponds to the picking season and pruning period in the coffee estates*. In Kiambu district there are normally two planting seasons. Oral informants were in agreement that planting in the reserves was done in March and April, during the long rains and September and October during the short rains. Harvesting took place between August and September, and January and February[89].

Thus, it is possible to conclude that the smaller number of women in wage labour between February and April and July and October was as a result of the planting and harvesting of the food crops in the reserves. Most of the work of planting and harvesting fell on women. Therefore, unless there was a pressing need for money income, or the chiefs were exercising force, most of the women and children opted to remain at home during these two seasons[90].

The Agriculture Census between 1923 and 1927 showed a great increase in the number of juveniles in wage labour while that of women was generally decreasing (see table below)

Table IV

Year	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927
Females	6,609	8,316	5,477	6,021	4,802
Juveniles	9,942	11,784	11,315	9,942	15,428

SOURCE: Agriculture Census 1927.

This new development could be explained in terms of the increasing cultivation of tea and pyrethrum where children were preferred to adults[91]. In tea and pyrethrum estates picking was continuous and therefore, children were employed throughout the year. Sisal was also becoming a popular cash crop in the 1920s and child labour was again in high demand in such estates. In fact, Kamau wa Ngotho was quick to recall that he was first employed in Murera Sisal estate when he was about seven years[92].

Although table IV shows the picture of labour in the whole protectorate, it is also true that the same proportion of women to juveniles applied in Kiambu. This is confirmed by the Agriculture Census of 1933 that revealed that Kiambu District had the largest number of juvenile workers in Central Province. The report indicated that out of 14,610 working in the colony, Kiambu alone had 2073 juvenile workers[93]. This number excluded those juveniles working in Thika sisal plantations.

Table V

District	Nairobi	Kiambu	Forthall	Nyeri Embu & Meru

Juveniles	68	2073	955	365	21

SOURCE: Agriculture Census 1933 p.25

The five district had a total of 3,504 juvenile labourers. This means that Kiambu juvenile labourers alone represented 54 percent of the total juvenile labour force. Nevertheless, the high percentage of juvenile work force in Kiambu corresponded to the high acreage of land under European cultivation in the district[94]. Although a great percentage of the alienated land in the district had remained idle in the first two decades of the century, the third decade witnessed more and more land being brought under cultivation (see the table).

Table VI

Year	1920	1921	1922	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929
Land occupied	315744	3333106	3804158	3985371	4192731	4420573	4337920	4996406	
Land under cultivation	176290	206959	234055	274319	346988	392628	463854	512643	592741

SOURCE: Report of the Agriculture Commission
October 1929 p. 26

However, the figures given above of the female and juvenile labourers were very conservative. It is very likely that there were more females and juveniles in wage labour than the figures portray. This is particularly so when one bears in mind that the records of

those juveniles working as casuals were not kept[95]. Although the white employers admitted that they were employing juveniles as casuals, they claimed that it was difficult to keep records of such juvenile workers[96]. This was because it would have been embarrassing for the white farmer's records to show the employment of juveniles contrary to the law, stipulating the minimum age of juvenile employment. Sharon Stitcher, explaining a related point says that by 1926, there was an even larger number than before of male children who were hired for light agriculture work[97]. Stitcher continues to say that the small number of women involved in wage labour,

> Compared to the number of adult and juvenile males, and the very slow rise in these numbers is due only to the introduction of the casual category and reveals that some 4,800 were employed on the more permanent basis[98].

Thus, it is possible to argue that even in Kiambu, if the number of casual women and children was properly recorded, larger figures would have been indicated. Nevertheless, even the small figure recorded acts as a basis for more research.

A large number of Kikuyu women and children employed for wages came from the adjoining reserves. Some, therefore, returned home in the evening. This contrasts with the "Kavirondo" juveniles who were housed on the farm. Captain Moores told the Native Labour Commission of 1927 that he had been ordered to supply 200 labourers to a group of estates in Kiambu for the coffee picking season. His source of labour were the "Kavirondo" who were willing to bring their wives and children with them[99].

The Native Labour Commission of 1927 reported receiving a memorandum from Len Lawford on the subject of employment of children. The memorandum argued that the employment of juveniles had been accepted by the Medical Department and the Chief Native Commissioner as being not harmful to children. It also refuted the allegation that the employment of children in the plantations could have evil influence on the children. Lack of discipline, in LawFord's opinion, owing to the loss of parental control in the estates was not a serious factor since parental control was little exercised in the reserves. The habit of hard work that the juveniles acquired was more important than anything else.[100].

In arguing for the benefits which could accrue to children working on the European estates, LawFord argued that the conditions of work in the estates were superior to those juveniles worked in the reserves. Furthermore the moral atmosphere in the plantations was fully equal to that of the reserves[101]. Thus, the juvenile farm workers as a class appeared to be happier and healthier than their brothers in the reserves.

In its discussions, the memorandum overlooked the fact that the inculcation of the habits of industry in the African juveniles was already being done in the African cultural set ups[102]. Furthermore, it was not accurate to say that parental control over children had ceased in the reserves in the 1920's. Although the introduction of wage labour among the juveniles had created a class of "disobedient children", the authority of the elders still played an important role in regulating the behaviour of the youths in the

reserves. In any case, the conflict of the elders with the youths in a society was not peculiar to the Kiambu reserves during the colonial era since such conflicts are always a part of human society. Lawford was, therefore, only sympathetic to the white settlers' labour problems as it would have been expected.

Lawford failed to point out that taking children away from their parents in the reserves for along time was the cause of the growing indiscipline among the African youth. As early as 1912, the elders of Dagoretti had complained to Beech that:

> Europeans want our young men to work for such long periods at a time they cannot help their families in the reserves..... Those who returned from work in towns were uppity and did not recognize the authority of the elders. Even those who returned from monthly work did not bring their money to their fathers as before, but kept it themselves[103].

Those complaints then contradicted Lawford's argument that taking children away from their reserves could not have effects on their behaviour. Again, the argument that children were better fed in the plantations than in the reserves could not be taken seriously with regard to Kiambu. Agriculture continued to thrive in the Kiambu reserves due to the favourable climate. Crops like maize, beans, sorghum, cassava, sweet potatoes, yams, arrowroots, and other wild vegetables were always in plenty[104]. Meat was also available because important ceremonies and rituals continued to be held where meat was provided to all the participants. These crops and meat diversified the diet of the reserves as opposed to the monotonous diet of the posho and beans in the plantations.

To state that a child was happier and healthier in the

plantations than in the reserve was another controversial point in Lawford's memorandum. Working from six in the morning to four o'clock in the evening without lunch break in the mid-day[105] could not be said to make a child look happier and healthier. Moreover, long working hours interfered with a child's right to play with its peers which is an important aspect of its psychological and physical development[106]. It is, therefore, not possible to see how children could be happier and healthier in the plantations than in the reserves. Parental guidance in the reserves was meant to make a child grow upright morally, physically, psychologically and spiritually. But in the plantations, the category of juveniles who came without their parents, either "Kavirondo" or Kikuyu were in danger of becoming delinquents[107]. This was particularly so because on Sundays and other public holidays, the children were free to visit the neighbouring towns where some of them started participating in gambling.

The Native Labour Commission of 1927 concluded that;

> through the establishment of an African population away from the reserves, the children would be brought up in an atmosphere contact with civilization and civilizing influences, also with industry, and could not fail to benefit and thereby become better citizens, removed from the temptations and bad effects of a life of indolence and ease[108].

The commissioners, therefore, favoured the detribalization of African children where they would be encouraged to leave their parents in the reserves and migrate to the plantations for wage labour. It was in this respect that African children were to be

made less dependent on their parents. Thus, Mcphee, another witness to the commission, stated with confidence that for coffee picking, he would only employ women and small totos[109]. Mcphee had worked for five years in Congo. He convinced the commissioner that since the system of inducing the whole family to participate in the wage labour had worked very well in Congo, it should be tried in Kenya. His suggestions were included in the commission's recommendation. Thus, the commissioners wrote,

> we regard this subject and its contribution so important that it has been embodied in this report[110].

(iv) Pressure From the International Labour Organization and the Colonial Government's attempt to humanize child labour

In spite of the early success of the settler farming in the 1920's, it was hard-hit by the depression of 1929-32. The value of Africa's commodities fell by 42 percent in all territories[111]. With diminishing returns, the settler community sought all forms of cheap labour to circumvent the effects of the depression. This took the form of increasing the employment of women and juveniles who could be paid less than adults. But the labour conditions in which those women and children were employed sparked off a new controversy among certain groups of missionaries in the 1930s. The Church Missionary Society in particular, became vocal in denouncing those labour conditions. The leader of the Missionaries came to be the outspoken Bishop Owen of Nyanza. However, the opposition of the Missionaries came to be compromised when they stated that they could condone child employment if it could be done under parental control[112].

Nevertheless, due to the Missionary criticism of child labour, a decision was reached stipulating that all employed children had to possess a pass showing that parental consent for their employment had been obtained[113]. Although this policy took long to be implemented due to the shortage of supervision officers, it nevertheless acted as a guide in the employment of the youths.

The International Labour Organization in Geneva continued to make its presence felt in the 1930s by releasing new conventions regarding the working conditions. The British Government had signed the I.L.O. conventions of 1919 and 1921[114] accepting its proposals on the improvement of the working conditions in the colonial territories. Under the I.L.O. convention, it was outlined that no child under the age of twelve was to be deployed in industrial undertaking or heavy manual work[115]. However, the clause on the deployment of children in heavy manual work was received with mixed feelings in the colony. The white members of the Legislative Council in Kenya felt that the above clause did not apply to Kenya where child labour had flourished so well. The Legislative Council members (Legco) supported child labour though with minor restrictions. Again those restrictions were only accepted where the interests of the white community were not at stake. To demonstrate our argument, one member of the Legco, Conway Harvey [116] went out of his way to attack the I.L.O. conventions. He was particularly opposed to the clauses setting the minimum age for the employment of children. He argued that in agriculture, there was no doubt that hundreds and thousands of children under the age of twelve could

profitably be employed in the type of labour suited to that age. He favoured the employment of such children in coffee and tea plantations under what he called "Kenya Conditions"[117].

Another member of the Legco to oppose I.L.O. conventions was C.G. Durham. Durham argued that in the Kikuyu reserves, the hardest working people were those around seven years of age[118]. The Attorney General (A.G.) also joined the controversy by stating that agriculture was not an industrial undertaking[119]. Therefore, in the A.G.'s opinion it was not affected by the two conventions. The position taken by the A.G. should be seen as an attempt to please the settler community which was bent on conserving female and child labour. The emphasis on agriculture was intended to protect the backbone of the colonial economy in which children were seen as playing an indispensable role.

Female and child labour increased rapidly in the 1930s. The Agriculture Census of 1930-31 showed the number of children in the labour force to be 19,393 with another 7,574 employed as casuals. However, it was not until 1933 that the Government found it necessary to pass legislation to protect African women and children. This was referred to as the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Ordinance[120]. It is important to note that the legislation was passed because of the mounting pressure exerted by the I.L.O. in the 1930s. The most important clauses in this Ordinance were; that no children under twelve years may be employed in industrial undertakings, that no child under fourteen years may be employed for work on machinery or open cast working or subsurface

working entered by means of a shaft or audit. No mention was made of agriculture where the bulk of the youth was employed[121].

The 1933 Ordinance on the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children was not satisfactory and it soon came under criticism from the missionaries and some British elements in London who were sympathetic towards the Africans. It was therefore, again amended in 1935. However, the amendment did not differ significantly from the 1933 Ordinance and it was again abandoned[122]. Another ordinance was enacted in 1937 and was referred to as the Employment of Servants Ordinance [123]. Among the prominent features of the 1937 Ordinance was the prohibition of children under ten years from entering into a contract of service. It also made it compulsory for any child employed to have a certificate from the District Commissioner of his area showing the consent of the child's parents.

Nevertheless, although the above features were designed to protect a child's welfare in employment, they were difficult to implement. The second clause in particular, demanding parental consent for juvenile workers was difficult to confirm. There is evidence showing that parental consent for children to work was sometimes given out of fear. For example, Van Zwanenburg quotes a case where one Provincial Commissioner recorded parents complaints that their children were being recruited for labour without their consent. The case of Kiambu reserves where parents were intimidated by headmen to allow their children go out to work also goes a long way to prove the difficult task of implementing the clause of

consent. (see chapter five of this work)

The other difficult clause to implement dealt with age. Although the law prohibited children below ten years from entering into a contract of service, it was always easy for European farmers to evade this rule. Children, driven by poverty to join wage labour lied to their prospective employers about their actual age [125]. Although it was possible to guess the age of a child, European employers were too eager to receive children who offered themselves for wage labour. In any case, the European employers were interested in making large profit and not the well-being of the African children. Furthermore, some unscrupulous parents eager to get money through their children could lie about their children's age. These loopholes made the 1937 Ordinance difficult to implement. The existence of such glaring loopholes enables us to argue that the 1937 Ordinance had purposes other than the protection of African children from unscrupulous European employers. Kayongo-Male states that, the most probable purpose of those clauses was both to make the Kenyan Legislation concordant with some of the international labour conventions and to avoid criticism of child labour in the colony and protectorate of Kenya[126].

Malcom Mcdonald became the Secretary of States for Colonies in 1937. Mcdonald was not a sympathetic to the settler's cause. It was through his efforts that the 1936 ordinance was amended in 1937. Mcdonald, like his predecessor, Ormsby Gore, was sensitive to I.L.O. and Missionary criticism of the labour conditions in the protectorate. For example, in 1936 the Governor, Brooke Popham had

argued that the Grigg Labour Circular of 1927 expressed very nearly what his views on labour were [127]. He even wanted to re-issue the Circular. But Ormsby Gore, fearing the Missionary criticism overruled Popham by arguing that the Circular had been overtaken by events[128]. Mcdonald had therefore, also to deal with Popham who was extremely sympathetic towards the settlers. It was through the efforts of Mcdonald that Popham appointed a Committee in 1937 to investigate the labour conditions of the juveniles in the protectorate.

The appointed Committee came up with a document here referred to as "Report of the Employment of Juveniles Committee" in 1938. The document was a detailed account of children in the labour force in Kenya. It defined a juvenile as

> "a native whether an Arab, a Bauchi, born in Africa or a Comoro Islander, a Malagasy or Somali who has not reached the age of sixteen years[129].

The definition the committee gave to the juvenile labourer in the above document was revealing in that it only referred to the non-white children. The report revealed that African children under the age of sixteen were working throughout the protectorate. However, it was quick to point out that only 14,000 were working at any one time. Sisal, tea, coffee, and pyrethrum estates were the greatest employers of children. The plantations alone were estimated to have been employing about 5,500 children per month[130]. Nevertheless, the committee defended the employers by stating that the conditions under which children worked were generally good[131]. Some employers were even reported to have established schools for

their juvenile workers. However, these were the type of schools where juveniles worked during the daytime and attended classes in the evening. The committee concluded that juveniles employed on the estate were better in many ways than those working in towns.

The committee rejected as alarmist, the report of Bishop Owen that children were taking alcohol on the tea estates. It stressed that although there could have been one or two such cases, that would not have been unique for children were also drinking alcohol in the reserves. The Committee's Report stated that the behaviour of drinking on the part of children could only be explained by the slackening of the old sanctions[132]. Finally, the Committee's Report adopted the Grey. Report prepared by I.L.O. recommending that children should not be employed on long term contracts. It also endorsed the 1937 ordinance stating that no juvenile should be employed far from his home without an identity certificate. The certificate was to indicate the child's name, tribe, parents or guardian's consent and the District Officer's signature of approval.

When the Report of the Employment of Juveniles Committee was made public, it was received with mixed feelings. While Bishop Owen and his supporters dismissed it as incomprehensive and biased, the Bishop of Mombasa applauded it as vindicating the government. Owen claimed that the report did not provide safeguards for children forced to work long distances away from their homes[133]. He also felt that the minimum employable age of twelve was inadequate. Nevertheless, it was the findings of this committee that led to the enactment of a law forbidding professional recruiters from

recruiting children. However, because of the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. the report and the subsequent legislation were not implemented until the end of the war as we shall see in the next chapter.

v) Conclusion

The labour shortages perceived by the white farmers in the inter-war period were not real. The Native Labour Commission of 1927 confirmed it when it dismissed the reported shortages of labour as a future problem[134]. The real purpose of the planters outcry was to win the sympathy of the administration and the colonial office. Nevertheless the sympathy they could get depended on who was in office. It is apt to argue that the huge deployment of female and youth labour was adopted as a means of increasing profits for the white farmers. This was confirmed by some planters who declared openly that they preferred female and juvenile labour because it was cheaper than that of adult males[135]. Women and juveniles were paid half the rate of adult male pay. Finally, it has come out clearly from the discussion that the colonial government supported child and female labour through its legal machinery.

Footnotest

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2 K.N.A., "Colony and Protectorate, Report of the Juvenile Committee", Nairobi, Government Printer, 1938.

3 Ivor Robinson, "Petit Bourgeoisie: An analysis of its social economic origins and its Contemporary role in the Political economy of Kenya", I.D.S. Working Paper presented on 27th July, 1971, p.12.

4. This was basically the aim of the Resident Labour Ordinance of 1918. It envisaged a situation where the whole family would work for wages on the European estates.

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28. Sharon Stitcher, Migrant Labour in Kenya p. 98. See also a full analysis in Richard Wolff, Britain and Kenya 1870-1930, Transafrica, Nairobi, 1974. p. 106

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31 Mcgregor Ross, Kenya from Within, p. 135

32. Clayton and Savage, Government and Labour in Kenya, p.113

33 Mcgregor Ross, Kenya from Within, p.135

34 Ibid. p. 225

35. Clayton and Savage, Government and Land in Kenya, p.120

36 Ibid. See also Mcgregor Ross, Kenya from Within, p.225

37. Clayton and Savage, Government and Labour in Kenya. p.120

38 Mcgregor Ross, Kenya from Within, pp 225-226.

39. Ibid, p.111.

40 Ibid.

41 Interview, Wambui wa Ngotho, 27th December, 1988, Githunguri

42 Mcgregor Ross, Kenya from Within, pp 110-111.

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44 Mcgregor Ross, Kenya from Within, p.111

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47 Sharon Sticher, Migrant Labour in Kenya, p. 145.

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50. Interview, Michael Mbugua Kiriro, 2nd January, 1989, Ruiru

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129 See "Colony and Protectorate, Report of the Employment of Juveniles Committee 1938" p.1.

130 R.L. Buell, The Native Problem in Africa, p.383. See in particular the amount of revenue allocated to African Education as compared to that allocated to European and Asian education.

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CHAPTER FIVE

THE WORLD WAR II AND ITS AFTERMATH

1939 - 1960

Introduction

The Second World War had great effects on the labour situation in Kenya. The war compelled many people to leave their homes to seek employment outside their localities. This inevitably led to the break up of families as members of various families were compelled by poverty to seek wage labour for survival. For the first time, Kenya was literary involved in the war because of its geographical position to the warring parties. The Kenya protectorate bordered Ethiopia and Somaliland which were occupied by the Italians who in turn were fighting the British. Therefore Kenya's proximity to the Italian-occupied territories led to its being a battle ground, particularly in the North-Eastern Province which was under frequent attacks from the Italian[1].

When the war broke out, the British administration mobilised Kenya Africans to join the military to augment her forces in the war. The military service attracted a substantial number of Africans because it offered relatively higher wages than those offered in the coffee, sisal, tea and pyrethrum estates[2]. In Kiambu, for instance, the effects of the war were such that some adult males joined the military while others "fled" to urban centres like Nairobi to evade military conscription[3]. The result was that most of the Kiambu reserve became dominated by women, children and old people.

There are various figures available showing the numbers of those who participated in the war in the colony. Ivor Robinson says that more than

200,000[4] Africa males served in one capacity or another during the Second World War. Out of this figure, seventeen percent died of wounds and diseases. Clayton and Savage are of the opinion that in all, some 97,000 Africans served in one capacity or the other. The maximum serving at any one time appears to have been some 75,000 in 1944[5]. These figures highlight the demand of the war on the African people leading to a labour crisis on the European farms.

ii) The War Period 1939 - 1945

One of the major effects of the World War II was that the government policies in the process of being implemented were abandoned. For example, in 1939 an Ordinance had been passed giving new conditions for the employment of women and children[6]. This Ordinance was based on the report of The Employment of Juveniles Committee of 1938. When the war broke out, its' implementation became difficult due to the shortage of supervision officers. The use of child and female labour, therefore, continued throughout the war period.

The attitude of the white farmers towards women and children in Kenya seem to have been borrowed from Britain itself. For instance, the available figures from Britain show an increase in the employment of women and children in the labour force in the war period. Their recruitment was possibly meant to replace the adult men who had joined military. The table below illustrates our argument.

Table I Coventry City

Males			Females	
Year	Over 18 years	Below 18 year	Over 18 years	Below 18 years
1939	76,200	86,000	18,300	6,700
1940	87,500	79,000	25,700	6,900
1941	91,000	78,000	30,700	6,400

SOURCE: Review of Economic Studies, Volume 11-12, p. 34.

Although the above figures refer to people working in industries, they are nevertheless, important in that they reflect the situation of women and children in Britain. The only difference was that while wage labour was voluntary in Britain some of the women and children were forced into it in Kenya[7]. Therefore, although the Ordinances of 1933, 1937 and 1939 were basically enacted to protect women and children in Kenya, they achieved very little towards that direction. In fact, they were only meant to appease the International Labour Organization and the liberal elements in Britain opposed to forced female and child labour in the colonies[8]. However, the white farmers in Kenya used the war condition to appropriate female and child labour arguing that this was important for the production of certain war commodities. The said war commodities were tea, pyrethrum and coffee which were exported to North America.[10]

Pyrethrum production was taking roots in Kenya during the war period and it became the greatest employer of female and child labour. Some European settles argued that children in particular were best suited for picking of pyrethrum and tea because of their height. Their hands were also said to be nimble and more delicate than those of adults[11].

In the war period, the colonial office continued to insist that the employment of children below the age of twelve was unacceptable. In 1940, the Colonial Office accepted an amendment of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act and stated that development funds would only be granted to colonies whose legislations protected trade unions and forbade the employment of children under fourteen[12]. No clauses were included to make exceptions for the emergency conditions. Furthermore, no war council was formed in the Second World War. This left the European farmers disillusioned about their position in the colony. Nevertheless, because of the shortage of the supervision personnel, some European farmers continued to conscript women and children in the labour force under the pretext of producing more food crops to feed the soldiers[13].

In 1943, there was a 'real' shortage of food in the colony due to a combination of bad weather and over-exportation of maize to other East African Territories[14]. The shortage became so bad that some parts of Central Province had to receive government famine relief. In Kiambu, for example, the Director of Medical Services started a kitchen to feed the Africans[15]. The European farmers used this food shortage to obtain labour in their farms. They argued that food should only be given to those Africans who laboured on the European farms, and that, more women and children in the reserves should be "encouraged" to go out and work so that

they can get money to pay for their own food[16]. Thus, women and children were recruited to the extent that 1943 recorded the highest official figure of the children working in the colony. The figure stood at 64,000 representing eighteen percent of the total labour force in the colony[17].

In Kiambu, where adult males had either joined the military or had "fled" to Nairobi, the European farms experienced a labour crisis. For example, in 1941, one government report commented that,

> the situation had been acute throughout the year and the farmers have complained that labour is almost impossible to get and what there is,is inefficient and careless[18].

Thus, increasingly, women and children were seen as the only alternative to offset the labour imbalance.

Because of the existing economic difficulties in the African reserves in the war period, more and more African women and children started volunteering to join wage labour. Ng'ang'a wa Gucu explained that after the devastating drought of 1943, men started exhorting their wives and children to join wage labour for survival[19]. Coffee picking in particular became popular among children in Kiambu especially during the school holidays. This was important for children because it enabled them to pay their school fees. Women's earnings supplemented the wages of their husbands which were increasingly becoming inadequate to meet the increasing demands of life.

A cross-examination of juvenile workers during the war period reveals that that they were of three categories. The first category included those children who joined wage labour for curiosity[20]. These are the so called adventurers. This category is represented by people like Mugo wa Gatheru who joined wage labour at the age of eleven years. Mugo

explains that when he joined wage labour, he was not in great need for money though his workmates could have been. He only wanted to know what people were doing in the European plantations. According to Mugo's account, children in the 1940s were paid at the rate of four shillings per month in addition to rations of posho[21]. However, the amount of work a child was apportioned varied from one estate to another.

The second category of juvenile workers included those children who had real financial problems. For example, Kinuthia wa Gacathi explaining his situation said that the departure of his father to Burma[22] necessitated his leaving school to help his mother in rearing their big family. Kinuthia was the first born in a family of seven. He started working for wages at the age of fourteen[23]. The combined efforts between Kinuthia and his mother enabled the family to survive until the father came back in 1945. However, the coming of the father did not offer any relief to the family because he was in poor health and could no longer work [24]. Later on, both parents died and the smaller brothers and sisters took up wage labour to cater for their own needs. Today, the whole family of seven is scattered in coffee plantations around Ruiru still working for wages[25]. The third category included those who were conscripted into wage labour by European farmers. This last group comprised squatter children who could be manipulated at will by the European settlers.

The said "voluntary" labour went a long way to alleviate the labour crisis in Kiambu. Thus, the Kiambu District Annual Report of 1940 noted:

> except for a few inevitable individual cases, no settler in the coffee area surrounding the reserves have gone short of labour, or complained of shortage. There is widespread fear amongst them, however, that there will be a severe shortage in 1941 during a bumper crop, said to be the largest ever obtained in the district. The main problem seems to be that

> so many natives have been in highly paid employment in the military or Government service that there will not be enough to go around[26].

Although the report focussed doubts on the labour supply the following year, the administration was still confident that labour would be forthcoming. However, the report showed concern over a few farmers who were known to be bad employers and could not attract labour[27]. Save for such cases, Kiambu continued to attract labour including that of children, from as far away as "Kavirondo", Embu and Meru. One respondent, Wambui wa Ngotho recalled that most of the overseers at this period were either Embu or Meru[28].

The confidence of the administration was built on the anticipation that more women and children would volunteer to pick coffee. In the Local Native Council meetings in 1941, chief Muhoho was quoted as assuring the President of the council that, ".....women and children from his Division (Gatundu) had always gone out to work voluntary and would do so again"[29]. None of the local Native Council members opposed the employment of women and children, since they were said to be working "voluntary". The only issue that perturbed them was the conditions in which they were working. Several demands were issued to protect women and children. For instance, John Mungai from Limuru suggested that;

> if a group from any particular location went out to work, one of them should be selected as "Neopara" to look after the welfare of women and children. On many farms, Embu and Meru "Neopras" were put on Kiambu labour[30].

Chief Josiah Njonjo appealed to both the President and the Native Commissioner to request European farmers to pay a particular attention to the welfare of women and children[31].

The above appeals to protect women and children in the labour force suggest that there was abuse of this category of labour. But the L.N.C. delegates only opposed children and female labour in details rather than principle. Nevertheless we note that the members of the L.N.C. were hand-picked men who had a duty to support the colonial government. There is evidence showing that the Headmen appointed under the Village Headman Ordinance of 1902 could be sacked if they failed to implement the government policies at the village level. A document entitled "Chiefs and their character in Kiambu" gives a list of all the government appointees showing those who were sacked for failing to support the government[32]. With the knowledge of the negative sanctions available for the uncooperative appointees of the government, it was easy for the L.N.C. delegates to support female and child labour despite the abuses.

Our respondents revealed that there was a constant harassment especially of young girls who refused to give in to the demands of the overseers. For instance, Wambui wa Ngotho who was working in Riuki Coffee Estate narrated a case where she was forced to do extra-work for turning down an offer to spend the night in a Meru overseer's house[33]. Another respondent, Mumbi wa Kariuki, recalled how she was ambushed and consequently defiled when she was returning home from a European estate. The assailants were two Embu men in league with a Kikuyu man[34]. Children were also forced to do two day's work for one day's wage[35]. These and other cases were rife in many of the coffee and tea estate in Kiambu. Young unmarried girls were a special target for sexual harassment. The situation became so bad that in 1946 the L.N.C. decided to discuss the punitive measures to be imposed on any man who defiled a girl[36]. However,

many cases went unpunished for most of the assailants were not known outside the European estates they resided and therefore, escaped easily[37].

The European farmers either remained ignorant of the above abuses or deliberately refused to intervene. Moreover, the organizational hierarchy in the European farms made it difficult for individual labourers to present their grievances to the European directly. The hierarchy was emphatic on close adherence to the "chain of command". This meant that if a labourer had a "complaint" he/she had first to report to the overseer. The latter would then relay the grievances to the European "boss"[38]. Therefore, the labourer did not have direct access to the employer and this left him under the mercy of the overseer. It is possible, therefore, that some information concerning the labourer's grievances was either not well articulated or was lost altogether. Wangui wa Ndung'u, explaining the same point argued that it was futile to report one's case to somebody who acted as both the criminal and the judge.

In the pyrethrum estates, the situation was no better and women and children started boycotting them. This annoyed the Agriculture Production and Settlement Board (A.P.S.B.) so much that it held a meeting between 5th and 6th July, 1943 to review the situation. This problem was made worse by the fact that the government continued to adhere to the requirements of the colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940 by refusing to assist the private employers to recruit labour. In the meeting, the delegates of the A.P.S.B. made it clear that they held it to be the responsibility of the government to assist in every way possible to recruit female and child labour to pick pyrethrum[39]. Further, the Board demanded that the administration officers should visit pyrethrum estates and impress upon

the resident labourers on the importance of pyrethrum as a war product. They were also to impress the labourers with the need for their wives and children to turn out for picking pyrethrum whenever they were called upon[40]. On 17th of July, 1943, the chairman of the A.P.S.B. wrote a letter accusing the administration of being under the impression that it was illegal for women and children to work on the pyrethrum estates[41].

In accordance with the amendment of the Employment of Servant Ordinance of 1943, the administration had ceased to "encourage" women and children to sell their labour in the private employers' farms. The Ordinance had categorically discouraged the administration from recruiting labour for private employers. In fact, the Master and Servants Ordinance of 1937 had clearly stated that the place of children was at school[42]. However, T. Crowford noted the opinion of the European farmers to the President of A.P.S.B. on 15th July, 1943 stating that,

> Personally, in view of the fact that my own female relation in England are compelled to do work away from their home and in some cases are even compelled to be separated from their children, in my opinion, we would be on sound ground arguing that the wives and children of squatters should be compelled to work in limited and reasonable number of hours per day in production of pyrethrum on the farms on which they normally reside, by the promulgation of a Defence Regulation[43].

Nevertheless, Crawford cited a clear difficulty in recruiting female and child labour in that the government no longer supported the use of force. He felt that if compulsion was unpalatable to the government then the next best thing was to "encourage" the said women and children to work by providing incentives. The incentive he had in mind was the provision of maize meal and not "mixed meal"[44] to act as a bait to attract women and children to provide labour. The Suggestion to use incentives was a

positive development in the history of labour in Kenya. Nevertheless, most of the European farmers wanted to use a combination of incentives and force where necessary. For example, they argued that where baits could not attract enough women and children to the labour force, the administration should interfere directly to ensure that farmers were not forced to abandon the production of pyrethrum due to shortage of labour[45].

However, Crowford registered his pessimism on the ability of the administration to exhort women and children to supply labour when he wrote,

> I do not think any District Officer in this province is under the impression that the employment of women and children on pyrethrum estates is illegal. But on instruction from the Government Headquarter to District Commissioners to exhort women and children to work might do some good. However, none of my District Commissioners nor I like this kind of exhortations when we know perfectly well that if our exhortation fall on deaf ears we have no legal sanctions whatever to make them effective[46].

Crowford's letter was significant in that it revealed the policy of the Labour Government in Britain Under Creech Jones,[47] the Colonial Office had discouraged the colonial governments from using legal sanctions to compel women and children to sell their labour to private employers[48]. Labour was to be voluntary under all circumstances.

It was also through the efforts of Creech Jones that the amendment of the Ordinance of 1943 abolished the penal sanction for juveniles breach of labour contract. In fact, Creech Jones showed his annoyance when he found that the Registration of Juveniles Ordinance passed in 1939 had not been effected when the British Government was about to rectify the penal sanction convention in 1943[49].

The Labour Department's Annual Report of 1944 showed that juveniles continued to be employed in large numbers in tea and pyrethrum estates, and to a lesser extent in light work on sisal estates. The report also noted that juvenile labour was good especially when children were working in light work such as picking and plucking, and were accompanied by their relatives, and returned home in the evening. It is in this respect that we argue that the department sanctioned the employment of children in wage labour. Moreover, the report emphasized that wage labour was good for children especially in the absence of schools which could absorb them. It would be important to note that, although school facilities were lacking in Kiambu District, the government did not show enthusiasm in putting them up. Instead, it made it difficult for the Africans to establish even their own schools[50].

By the end of the Second World War, many Africans had started to appreciate the importance of formal education. Many parents in Kiambu were particularly eager to send their children to school to learn the "magic of the white man". This fact is supported by the emergence of a host of independent schools sponsored by Africans. However, the government and the missionaries did everything possible to hinder the establishment of such schools. For example, in 1952, most of the Kikuyu independent schools were closed down including Kenyatta's Githunguri College[51]. These schools were closed down under the Emergency Amendment Regulation 12A of 1952. This was done according to the Government notices number 1198 and 1199 which declared that the Kikuyu Independent Schools Association and kikuyu Karing'a Association were dangerous societies.

iii) From The War to The Emergency 1945 - 1952

Although we have argued that most parents in Kiambu had recognized the importance of formal education by 1945, we would add that there was a group of African children who were not keen on getting the "new" kind of education. Our respondents claimed that this category of juveniles comprised those who had long worked for wages[52]. Such children found it difficult to live without money. For example, Kamau argued that many children who had worked for wages refused to go to school because of the high discipline demanded by teachers. To them, going to school meant abandoning their "newly acquired independence" to put themselves under the "harsh" control of teachers[53]. The fact that there were some children running away from "parental control" to seek for wage labour is enough evidence to show that money had corrupted African children. Lack of universal compulsory education in the colony made it easier for children to have excuses for not attending schools. It is in this respect that the Department of Labour Annual Report of 1944 noted that until such a time as universal compulsory education was introduced in the colony, wage labour for children was to be supported[54].

The report concluded that,

> such employment of children was beneficial provided that they were engaged in light healthy jobs, with short hours of working in the open air, away from towns and with members of their families[55].

Although the statement sounds logical, the Department failed to address itself to the attitude of the private employers. In spite of the fact that rules existed guiding conditions for the employment of children, private employers flouted them whenever it suited them to do so. For

instance, our respondents explained that intimidating resident children who refused to work for wages was not uncommon. This took the form of flogging in public those squatter children who disobeyed the European employers 56. For instance, Kimani wa Gachathi, narrating his own case said that he was subjected to five strokes of the cane for refusing to labour in Tassis Coffee Estate. After dropping out from school at standard two, Kimani talked to an Indian who agreed to apprentice him as a mechanic in Ruiru town. Kimani's father also applauded the idea and wished him well. But when the (mzungu) owner of the estate came to know about it, he was very annoyed. He warned that the whole family would be evicted from his estate if Kimani took up work as mechanic trainee in Ruiru town. Further, the employer said that he had to punish Kimani for allowing himself to be influenced by an Indian. With the fear of eviction, Kimani's father gave in to the demand of the employer[57]. When punishing Kimani, the employer explained that if he had gone to Ruiru town, Kimani would have picked up bad habits which would have influenced other "good boys" working for him[58]. This is the situation squatter children found themselves in.

On coffee, sisal, and tea estates in Kiambu, a headman was employed to ensure that no squatter child of working age remained in the residential area during the day time[59]. Initially, the work of a headman was to arbitrate among the squatter workers. Later, the headman got powers to decide which resident children had attained the working age. The headman wielded so much powers that no squatter parent could oppose him when he put pressure on children to join the labour force. For instance, John Inegene who was a headman at Komina estate said that

although he was opposed to children joining the labour force under the age of fifteen, he constantly found himself under pressure from the employer to provide children under fifteen for labour[60]. This mostly happened during the picking season. With the fear of losing their jealously guarded authority, the headmen always obeyed their employers. It was argued that forcing children to join wage labour would protect them from becoming vagrants and therefore, delinquents[61].

It is important to point out that it would have been easier to prevent child delinquency by establishing schools on the estates, where all squatters' children would be forced to attend. When elementary schools were begun, children had to work for the white farmers in the morning and attend classes in the evening*. This supposed method of controlling child delinquency was counter- productive because the more children joined wage labour, the more they indulged in mischief. For example, on pay day, children used to visit Ruiru town where they engaged in gambling, locally known as kamari. Such children could sometimes gamble away all their money. Children who became addicted to this game of risks stole money from their parents to supplement their loses. Wanjiru wa Gatibui, for instance, recalled that she had three brothers who were working for wages in Tassia coffee estate. On pay day, the three used to give some money to their father who hoped to "accumulate" enough to buy a piece of land. One day, the youngest brother found out where the father was hiding that money. He secretly took all the money and stayed away for one week. When he came back home, he had lost all the four hundred shillings through Kamari.

Children who refused to work on the estates in which their parents resided were sometimes evicted by the farm owner. Parents who resisted the eviction of their children were also forced to leave the farm[62]. This accelerated the break up of families because parents who were reluctant to leave the estate opted to send their evicted children to relatives or friends living in other estates. Children who were denied the right of being with their parents could easily be tempted to indulge in crime. Boys engaged in habits such as stealing, drinking alcohol and other anti-social behaviour. Girls could very often engage in prostitution for survival. Drinking habits among the youth were increasing at an alarming rate in the 1940s. There were many cases where parents complained that money income for children was making them to indulge in drinking alcohol; a habit not common with the youth before. Kiboi Waigwa complained that it was easy for children with money to get beer in bars and other shady places where brewing was taking place. He attributed this to the fact that brewers, with their greed for money could sell beer to anybody who had money irrespective of age[63].

More evidence on the drinking habits among the youth was supplied by Chief Philip in his address to the Local Native Council in 1941. He said that;

> in former times youths did not indulge in liquor and adopt manly airs as they did today. Boys were now inclined to be circumcised very young with the result that they thought that they had become men and could do as other men did[64].

Working for wages, therefore had the result of reducing the control of parents over their children. It led to the collapse of the authority of the elders over the youth. However, this can also be attributed to the

changes taking place within the Kikuyu society where people were becoming more and more materialistic.

It is difficult to tell whether the administration was aware of the harsh treatment children received from the employers. However, the Labour Department Annual Report of 1944 revealed that in the reserves, children were leaving home without the permission of their parents and were travelling for long distances looking for work. The report attributed the defiance of the children to the growing spirit of independence among the African youth. The report pointed out that,

> .....the juveniles after working on the farm, departed for the attraction of the neighbouring towns. Such employment away from their homes is most undesirable. Isolated cases have occurred of illegal recruitment of juvenile from their homes.
> ..... the way of recruitment is usually made easy by the juveniles themselves, who, tired of parental control and tribal discipline, are eager to see the world and are only too willing to go out and work[55].

The report avoided a discussion of the conditions in which children worked in the European estates. While it indicated that after working on the estates for a short time, children left for the attraction of the neighbouring towns, the report failed to address itself to the reasons for children leaving the estates for towns. One of the reasons given by our respondents was that when adventurous children left their reserves, they had no idea of how life was like in the European farms. Many of the children who were going to work for the first time had only heard exciting stories about life on a European farm from their colleagues who had worked for wages before and who exaggerated them too much. However, within three weeks of working, some children realized that they could not cope with the situation and therefore, ran away to towns to seek for lighter work. For

instance, one respondent who had ran away from his village to work for wages said that after working for only one week in Murera Sisal Estate, he realized that the work was too much for him. The Nyapara was giving them a measure of work which could not be finished in one day. Yet a person could only get his wage after finishing his measure of work[66]. He then moved to Mutundu Coffee Estate where he worked as a kitchen boy for two months before leaving for Nairobi[67].

In the reserves, government reports were pointing out that juveniles were running away because they were dissatisfied with "tribal discipline". This was only true in some cases. It is more likely that the poverty that characterised the Kikuyu reserves in the 1940s and 1950s explains why parents did not object to their children entering wage labour, sometimes far away from their homes. Most poverty-stricken parents saw child labour as a blessing since some children sent some money back home. Such money assisted in purchasing foodstuffs and paying taxes[68]. The importance of this is highlighted by the fact that as food became more and more scarce, its prices also tended to become high. Kinoo Ndegwa said that,

> as food became more and more scarce, the generosity of the Kikuyu people also disappeared at the same rate. It became no longer easy to secure food from one's relatives as was the case before[69]

The result was that each family, given the shortage of land and its deterioration in productivity, had to mobilise all its' resources to ensure that it did not starve. This again, explains why the 1940s recorded the highest proportion of children in wage labour in the colonial history. For instance, in 1943 due to the famine of that year there was a record of 64,288 children under employment in agriculture work in the

colony[70]. This figure represented 18 percent of the colony's total labour force. However, the figure declined slowly until 1950s when it rose again due to the difficulties caused by the emergency.

According to Mcgregor Ross, the lot of the officials in Kenya could provide an entertaining field for psychological study[71]. Despite the laws enacted to safeguard the employment of women and children, none of the supervision officers were really keen on apprehending the employers who flouted them. For instance, the Department of Labour Annual Report of 1948 gave the following figures for the employers who flouted rules regarding the employment of juveniles:

Table: 2

	Race	Acquittals	Discharges	Withdrawals	convictions	TOTALS
Employing Natives, of below the minimum Age	European	-	1	-	5	6
	Asian	2	6	-	36	44
	Africans	-	3	-	3	6
Employing Juveniles Without a permit	European	1	1	-	14	16
	Asians	-	13	2	217	232
	Africans	1	1	-	29	31

SOURCE: DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR ANNUAL REPORT 1948

The above were prosecuted according to the Employment of Servant Ordinance of 1948. Nevertheless, the figure above does not show clearly the number of employers contravening rules guiding the employment of children. In fact, the number of Europeans and Asians who flouted the above rules was bigger than the table suggests. This is because forced recruitment of juveniles to join wage labour was still going on in the reserves[78]. The small number of convicted Europeans can be explained by the sympathy they

got from the labour supervision officers. The Asians did not enjoy the same degree of sympathy and hence their large number of convictions.

In 1947, the International Labour Organization (I.L.O.) released new conventions regarding the employment of women and children. The colonial government, eager to show its conformity to the international standards incorporated them in the 1948 Employment of Servants Ordinance. The new conventions increased the minimum employable age of children from 12 to 15 years. The I.L.O. also repeated its earlier call that children should not be employed in industrial undertakings or heavy work which could be injurious to their health. While the I.L.O. forbade the employment of children in heavy work ranging from agricultural to industrial tasks, the 1948 Employment of Servants Ordinance limited its stipulations to the industrial undertakings. It avoided the agricultural undertakings where the majority of children were employed. Although there were few industries in the modern sense of the word in Kenya, structures like coffee, tea, and sisal factories could be referred to as industries. Therefore, many children continued to work in the above factories. No effort was made to define the government's conception of the term industry.

The 1947 I.L.O. conventions forbade the employment of children at night. However, this clause made it difficulty for the colonial government to hide its contempt for the I.L.O. conventions. The 1948 Ordinance only stated that,

> a child could be employed at night in cases of emergency and provided that this was not a common occurrence. The Minister may authorise the employment of young persons up to 12.00 midnight or from 5.00 a.m.[13].

The intentions of this section of the Ordinance are easy to discern. During the picking season, coffee, tea and sisal factories operated throughout the night. Children were called upon to help in these factories[74]. This clause, therefore, was calculated to enable the colonial government to permit the mobilization of children at night whenever the need arose.

Employing children at night meant that they were separated from their families and this could have far-reaching consequences. This was the situation which was obtaining in England in the late 19th century. Referring to this period in England, Engel, wrote,

> the bourgeoisie clap-trap the family and education, about the hallowed co-relationship of parents and children becomes all the more disgusting; the more by the action of modern industry. All families among the proletariate are torn asunder and their children are transformed into simple tools of commerce and instruments of labour[75].

The 1948 Employment of Servants Ordinance had many loopholes which could be exploited by the private employers. For instance, by stating that children could only be employed at night in case of emergency, it assured the private farmers of child labour at night during the picking season which they equated with emergency. Furthermore, the government continued to fall short of supervision officers to implement the Ordinance. We can therefore, conclude that although the above ordinance was high sounding, it could still not be implemented.

Before 1950, it was a common practice for government reports to say that they only approved child labour when the child in question had a certificate showing parental consent. However, it was very difficult to ascertain that parents had actually given their consent. It was not until

1949 that the Department of Labour Annual Report acknowledged that it was really difficult to tell where parents had given consent and where they had not[76]. The 1950 Annual Report broke the old camel's back by realistically accepting that very few parents could actually give consent for their children to be taken away from their homes[77]. This report deviated from the tradition of its former editions because it started by analysing "the African" clan system. It stated that,

> It becomes clear that an African parent is unlikely to give specific consent: children are traditionally regarded as belonging to the family unit, and although a parent may not mind his children going out to work, he is not able to say so, as the child has other responsibilities to others in the family group[78].

With the above realization, it would have been wiser for the government to control the recruitment of women and children in wage labour. However, this was only the beginning of worse things to follow. The government reports continued to argue that "the African youth" was the future labourer and that unless adequate measures were taken to integrate him into the economy, his future and that of the colony would be imperilled[79].

The above statement constituted the colonial government's policy on child labour. It was therefore unrealistic to expect a redress for women and children from a government whose avowed policy was to continue making use of them. It is in this respect that government reports had long argued that even in school, agriculture was to prevail over the other subjects. The basis of this argument was the assumption that employing children at an early age would inculcate in them habits of industry which were generally so "badly lacking" in the African labour force[80]. To this end, the Provincial Commissioner for Central Province dispatched a

circular to all District Commissioners (D.Cs) suggesting that they prolong the December holidays so that children could assist in the coffee picking. In kiambu, this circular was presented to the L.N.C. where it was received with alarm. Although the Director of Education in Kiambu had endorsed it "the African delegates" of the L.N.C. opposed it vehemently. They argued that it amounted to forced labour for children. All the delegates were unanimous in stating that "the business of children was to go to school and not to pick coffee[81]".

It is also justifiable to argue that the colonial education offered to "African children" was aimed at teaching them where they belonged in the whole colonial structure. Walter Rodney points out that colonial education was aimed at "instilling a sense of difference towards all that was European and capitalist"[82]. It had the purpose of teaching African children that working for Europeans was beneficial. Any child who showed a divergent view was either punished or expelled from school[83].

Agriculture and religion comprised a bigger part of the school curriculum. Going to church on Sundays was compulsory for all students. However, our respondents contend that very few Africans were going beyond class four. Thus, the only knowledge they acquired from school was of religion and agriculture. A few could speak English language here and there[84]. Most schools had big compounds which were sub-divided into small plots. Every pupil was allocated "his own plot". The products children grew in "their plots" were appropriated by their school[85].

Thus, because agriculture was over-emphasized in schools and was portrayed as something good for the "African children", it acquired a punitive character. A child who misbehaved in school was made to do

agricultural work as punishment[86]. This became so common that 'African children' began to hate anything to do with agriculture. They began to see it as work meant for criminals and wrongdoers.

Religious instructions were compulsory in all schools since they were run by missionaries. The missionary activities in Kenya are surrounded by controversies. However, one can argue that missionaries were close allies of the colonialists. The education missionaries offered to "African children" was, to a greater part, aimed at teaching them humility, docility and acceptance of everything that was European[87]. This meant that "African children" were to be obedient to their white "masters". Furthermore, they were taught that they were pilgrims in this world[88]. Children were incalcated with those values so that they could grow up with a clear picture of their place in the colonial structure. This teaching was necessary because Europeans were complaining that they were running short of labour because Africans were not taught habits of industry from an early age[89]. So the purpose of agriculture and religion in school was partly to teach the "African Children" that their role was to labour for the European.

By 1952, the government reports were alleging that the labour conditions for female and children had improved considerably[90]. The Department of Labour Annual Report of 1951, even suggested that the number of children in agricultural work had decreased. However, the number of women in employment was reported to be rising. For instance, according to the report the figure for women rose from 34,479 in 1950 to 41,402 in 1951. That of children dropped from 46,664 to 43,664 in the same period[91]. The report attributed the decline for child labour to the rendering of

more accurate census returns by a large number of employers[92]. Although this is difficult to ascertain, we feel that the figures given of female and juvenile employment were very conservative. This is so because, given the demands of the I.L.O. conventions of 1947 and the Employment of Servants Ordinance of 1948, many employers would have been reluctant to give the accurate figures for children under their employment. This would have been more so with regard to children below the minimum employable age, and those who did not have certificates showing parental consent. However, a decline in child labour could be attributed to the number of children who had started attending school. This is well supported by the Department of Labour Annual Report of 1945 that commented that,

> Employers are slowly beginning to realise that in addition to housing, feeding and medical attention, recreational and educational facilities for workers are essential for a stabilized and contented labour force. During the year, several schools for employees' children have been opened up by the estates[93].

Further evidence to the above was given by the Department of Labour Annual Report of 1951 which indicated that the decline in child employment mainly occurred among squatters[94].

iv) The Emergency Period 1952 - 55

The slow decline of child labour which was achieved in the post World War II period was halted by the declaration of a state of emergency in 1952. The Kikuyu, Embu and Meru were regarded as the main instigators of the Mau Mau rebellion[95]. Throughout the emergency period, many Kikuyu, Embu and Meru were put into detention camps with hard labour. In Kiambu, most of the schools established in the post-war period were closed down

and pupils were sent home[96]. The removal of able-bodied Kikuyu men from the labour force in Kiambu District left female and children to work in their place. Hitherto, men were the bread winners for their families and women and children only came to supplement it. However, the effects of the emergency converted women and children into full bread winners of their families[97]. Facilitated by the closure of schools by the administration, more and more children joined wage labour to supplement their mothers' wages. For example, the labour annual report of 1952 showed that there were 42,827 registered children and nearly the same number of women under employment on the European farms.

In the post World War II period, European agriculture had flourished so much that the white farmers were optimistic about the future of the colony[98]. However, in the midst of European prosperity the African wages remained disgracefully low in relation to the rising standards of living. For instance, an unskilled African labourer was earning twenty five shillings for thirty days ticket. Nottingham says that such a salary was, by 1953, not adequate to satisfy the basic and essential needs of a labourer[99], let alone those of their wives and children. Land which hitherto was supplying most of the essential needs was becoming increasingly inadequate and unproductive so that some families were solely relying on wage labour. Taxes were also rising while salaries remained constant. This increased the miseries of the Kikuyu people. Moreover, even among the kikuyu who had enough land, they had not been allowed to grow more rewarding cash crops like tea and coffee, other than food crops. It is in the background of these economic difficulties that many young men in the Kikuyu society joined the Mau Mau rebellion.

During the Operation Anvil, about 27,000 Kikuyu adult males were sent to detention camps[100]. By the end of 1956, about 11,503 Kikuyu had been killed, 1,055 captured wounded, 1,550 captured unwounded, and 266,625 had been arrested[101]. All these figures added up give a rough estimate of the number of Kikuyu men removed from the labour force. They, thus, explain why women and children joined wage labour in large numbers in the emergency period. The following figures of children in the labour force in the period are revealing about the situation.

Table 3

Year	1952	1953	1954	1956	Total
Children in the labour force	42,817	43,994	44,394	43,642	174,847

SOURCE: Department of labour Annual Reports, 1952, 1953,1954 and 1956.

Although the above figures show the official record of children in the labour force during the emergency period, their accuracy is highly suspect because most of the labour supervision officers were mobilised to deal with the Mau Mau uprising. In any case, there are government records showing that many juveniles conspired with employers to work without being registered [102]. The number of such juveniles remains to be investigated. Although there are no clear records showing the number of juveniles working in Kiambu alone, it is possible to argue that the trend was the same as the other parts of the country. This is so because a greater part of Kiambu District was occupied by European plantation farmers.

Removing the Kikuyu from their former land and concentrating them into villages during the emergency caused untold suffering to the people

of Kiambu. The division of labour that characterised the Kikuyu society was disrupted. Women, dispossessed of their menfolk took up the work hitherto meant for men. Children also became bread winners. Poverty and its consequences caused by the declaration of a state of emergency in Kikuyuland are well narrated by Stephen Ngubia in his book A Curse from God[103]. Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Petals of Blood[104] demonstrates how women and children responded to this poverty by joining wage labour in great numbers.

By 1952, legislation on child and female labour had been adjusted to protect them from forced recruitment. However, the outbreak of the Mau Mau and the consequent declaration of a state of emergency made the implementation of any legislation difficult. The European farmers in Kiambu took the advantage of the emergency regulations to appropriate child labour. For instance, our respondents concurred that during the emergency all squatter children were required to accompany their mothers to their places of work. Those who were above the age of seven were confined around the coffee factories. The ostensible reason was that such children could be used by the kikuyu labourers to feed the Mau Mau gangs[105]. However, this was only an excuse to appropriate free child labour. At the coffee factory, the children were kept busy by being given the task of collecting coffee beans from the ground and returning them to the drying wire-meshes. They were only given sweets at the end of the day[106].

The Reports on Young Persons and Children of 1953 saw the increasing number of children in wage labour in terms of their increasing desire for freedom from parental control. For example, the report stated that,

> Absence of the male parents from home for economic reasons, the growth of the spirit of individualism, the coming of peace and freeing of the youth from the semi-military discipline of the clan,the material desire resulting from the contact with other races with higher standards of living..... have all had their effects. As a result, an increasing number of African children and young persons, particularly males, tired of village life and control, lacking educational facilities and unable to take advantage of those that there are and lacking opportunities for remunerative employment in their own areas, wonder from their homes in some cases after defying parents and tribal elders. Many of those move to the towns and other places where some develop bad habits[107].

Although the report summarised some of the most important reasons making children join wage labour, it was not comprehensive in its analysis of the causes of those factors. While it was true that some male parents were away from home for economic reasons, the great majority were either in the forest fighting for freedom or were languishing in detention camps for their involvement in the Mau Mau. Therefore, the increasing number of children either in wage employment orlooking for it should be seen as an effort by those children to supplement the wages earned by their mothers. The argument is more plausible given that in some cases, women were getting salaries equal to those of juveniles. For instance, the Department of Agriculture in Kiambu in connection with female salaries wrote in 1950.

> in case of males, a juvenile is one who has not got a registration book but as there are no registration books in case of females, it must be left to your discretion as to whether females come into the category of juveniles[108].

The discrimination in wages would have persuaded the "now single mothers" to encourage their children to join wage labour to cope with the rising

standards of living. It is not surprising that some parents removed their children from school to assist in rearing the family.

It is undeniable that there were some elements among the Kikuyu youth who abhored parental control. However, indiscipline among the youth was increasing because the colonial structure had offered incentives for children to become social misfits. The readiness with which children were received by European farmers was enough temptation for them to leave their homes[109]. However, the Committee's most important point was the recognition that such children no longer recognised any control other than that of police and the law courts[110]. Ironically, the colonial government was not ready to seek a remedy for such a problem. This attitude of the government should be understood against the background that it favoured the break up of the family network so that European farmers could continue getting cheap juvenile labour.

To make the use of female and child labour rather human, the colonial government enacted the Employment of Juveniles Ordinance of 1952. This Ordinance attempted to regulate the number of hours a child could work in a day to six. It also required the appointment of special supervisors in all farms employing more than fifty juveniles. Further, the 1952 ordinance report emphasized that at no one time did the government consider whether children should or should not be employed[111]. This was a true reflection of the colonial government's attitude towards "African children" because since 1912 when gross abuse of child labour was reported, the government had never intervened directly. It only tried to propose how children in the labour force should be treated. Moreover, although the colonial government's proposals were put on paper, no

efforts were made to implement them. Thus, the 1952 Ordinance was a true exposure of the colonial government's policy towards child labour.

Even the Slade Committee[112] of 1952 only recommended the tightening of the laws governing child labour. It also recommended that the existing legislation guiding child labour be brought in line with the I.L.O. conventions. The Slade Committee was appointed to look into ways of incorporating the I.L.O. conventions into the labour legislation of Kenya. However, it is possible to argue that the committee's selection was only to convince the I.L.O. that the Kenya government was doing something about the labour conditions in the country.

v) The Post Mau Mau Period 1956 - 1960

In spite of the fact that the Mau Mau uprising had been crushed by 1955, its repercussions continued to be felt in the reserves of Kiambu. Poverty continued to haunt the reserves while men suspected of being supporters of the Mau Mau continued to be detained. It is against this background of poverty that women and children in the reserves started joining another type of labour "baptized" communal paid labour. The communal paid labour was sponsored by the government and it attracted a good number of women and children. It involved clearing and sweeping the roads, and planting grass to curb soil erosion. On 10th January, 1956, the D.C. for Kiambu dispatched a circular proposing that,

> .....the paid labour gangs for kiambaa shall be reduced from 200 to 100 and the 100 so reduced would be substituted with "totos" from poor families. The pay of "totos" between 16 and 18 years of age shall be thirty shillings per month.....I would be very grateful if you would ask Mr. Cede to contact Chief Kimachia of Kiambaa.....so that he can sort out the 100 to be reduced in the labour gang and also supply the names of the suitable "totos" for replacement[113].

It was not clear from the circular whether the participants of this communal labour were forced into it or were volunteers. However, there is evidence to show that they were volunteers[114]. The circular emphasized that the "totos" to be recruited were those from poor families. For instance, Harry Maina who was 12 years in 1956 explained that he had volunteered to participate in these labour gangs to help his ageing parents to secure money to pay taxes[115]. Out of the 100 people interviewed, only seven mentioned force. Nevertheless, the seven respondents who mentioned force were not from extremely poor families. They attributed compulsion to the disagreements their parents had with their chiefs.

The 1948 Employment of Servants Ordinance was amended in 1956 to accommodate both the Slade Committee Report and the I.L.O. conventions[116]. However, the new Ordinance continued to define a juvenile as an African male or female below the age of sixteen. It defined a young person as an African above the age of sixteen but below the age of eighteen. The Ordinance had no remedy for child and female labour. In fact, it embodied the Slade's committee recommendation that it was in the interest of the parent that children should be employed. It was quiet on the conditions under which children should be employed. In general, the Amendment Ordinance of 1956 did not have any new ideas on the problem of child labour. For example, as it was the case with earlier ordinances, it did not attempt to define the term industry. Thus, coffee, sisal and tea factories were not seen as affected by the industrial undertakings forbidden to children by I.L.O. This was because coffee, sisal and tea factories were employing a large number of children. Therefore, to bring

them under industry would have meant losing the valuable cheap juvenile labour.

By 1960, there was still a considerable number of juveniles working in coffee, tea, sisal and pyrethrum estates[117]. Government records showed the figure to be 25,797[118]. Many of these children worked out of poverty. They had replaced their fathers who had either perished or were maimed during the emergency. Moreover, there were not enough schools to absorb a large number of African Children. Those who failed to secure places in the few schools there were, ended up in the neighbouring coffee, tea, sisal and pyrethrum estates as labourers. A good number of our respondents reported that even those Africans who joined school dropped out at a very early stage. The majority of children dropped out at standard four due to the examination popularly known as "Common Entrance". Mondo wa Gacathi, for instance, argued that this examination was deliberately kept there to check the number of Africans who received higher education [119]. Furthermore, the amount of revenue allocated to African education could not cater for many "African Children". For instance, as late as 1946, only 2.26 percent of the revenue was spent on African education[120]. This should be compared with the huge revenue spent on European and Asian education.

vi) Conclusion

Child and female labour became more pronounced during the Second World War period when a large number of adult males left both the reserves and the European farms to join the carrier corps. Another group of adult men who left the reserves in fear of conscription into the Carrier Corps

got married to new wives thereby, abandoning their families in the reserves. These two factors exacerbated the poverty already severe among some families in the reserves. Although the war ended in 1945, the resulting economic difficulties caused by the absence of the male parents continued to "bite" a number of Kikuyu families to the extent that more female parents started to encourage their sons to join wage labour. This was the case particularly where the male parents either died in the war or came back seriously injured. Although the colonial government was intent in making provisions safeguarding the employment of female and juveniles in its laws, it became apparent that those provisions could not be enforced. This was because of shortage of supervision manpower and the voluntary nature of the juveniles (even those) below the stipulated employable age.

The outbreak of the Mau Mau and the subsequent declaration of the State of Emergency added to the economic difficulties the Kikuyu families were already experiencing. The detaining of more than 266,625 Kikuyu men and the killing and wounding of many others meant that children had to join wage labour in large numbers to supplement their mother's wages to avoid starvation. Moreover, the closing down of the Kikuyu Independent and Kikuyu Karing'a Schools in 1952 released more children for wage labour. Although the schools were closed for security reasons and not to allow children to join the labour force, children who became idle in the newly created villages found themselves joining the labour force to help their parents. The end of Mau Mau in 1956 also failed to bring relief to juveniles and females working for wages. This was because a large number of male parents remained in detention camps while others had either been

killed or seriously wounded (injured)in the rebellion. By 1960, the available figures show that more than 70 percent of the detained men were Kikuyu. Thus, children continued to work for wages till 1963 when their number was drastically reduced.

Footnotes

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CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

The employment of women and children in wage labour in Kiambu farms was economically motivated. Within the colonial framework, women and children were seen as people who could be used as simple tools of economic development. While they were preferred for their cheapness, women and children were also seen as people who could not complain due to bad labour conditions. Thus, despite all the arguments advanced by the colonial settlers, child and female labour was meant to enhance the settlers' dream of getting "rich over-night".

In the traditional Kikuyu society women and children participated in production and distribution of the wealth of the society. Exploitation of women and children was minimised by the fact that everybody had access to the wealth he or she had helped to create. Furthermore, checks and balances existed in that whoever did not participate in production without a good reason was exempted from enjoying the products of other people's labour. Even where the elders accumulated wealth in terms of goats, sheep and cattle, that wealth was used for the good of the whole family. Hence the elders acted as the custodians of the family's and sometimes clan's wealth.

The introduction of colonial capitalism changed the traditional methods of production drastically. Children, who were made to work as a necessary training for the adult life became tools of exploitation. Women whose traditional role was to work within and around the homestead were made to work far away from their homes. This resulted in conflicts in the

homestead. Land alienation and introduction of taxes worsened the situation. Basic necessities like firewood which were hitherto easy to get in the family land became scarce. Women and children were now required to work for the land owner before they were allowed to go home with a load of firewood. Furthermore, small gardens which children were given to work on were no longer available. This meant that women and children, with little to do around the homestead, had to go and work for the white settlers. Although this was voluntary, there were certain cases where the said women and children were forced to go and work for the settlers.

For example, between 1906 and 1920 there were numerous cases of forced labour of women and children. These cases were attributed to the constant shortages of labour that ravaged the white settler farmers. Whenever there was a serious shortage of labour, the white farmers joined hands with chiefs to coerce women and children to provide labour. The white farmers also got support from the state sometimes clandestinely and other times quite overtly. For example, in 1943, some members of the legislative council could argue that in the Kikuyu country, the most hardworking people were those below the age of ten[1].

The government's efforts to improve the conditions of work for women and children were frustrated by its own labour officers. Although the government set conditions to be followed by the employers, the labour officers were not keen on apprehending the defaulters. This was perhaps because it was politically expendient for both the government and the labour officers to give "high sounding" conditions on the employment of women and children while at the same time showing reluctance to employ the

existing legal machinery to bring the defaulters to book. This contradiction is easy to understand given that any government officer who overtly showed sympathy towards the Africans was either forced to retire early or was transferred to unfavourable areas[2]. Therefore although the legislative Ordinances of 1923, 1933, 1936 and 1948 expressed the good intention of protecting African women and children from the greed of capitalism, they achieved very little in that direction.

The Europeans argued that child and female wage labour "liberated" them from the yoke of the authority of elders. This "liberation" up set the societal order in that the criminal elements among women and children could defy the authority of the elders and seek refuge in the aliented land. The "new freedom" therefore exercabated the disintegration of the family unit. For example, the 1927 Native Labour Commission argued that children separated from their families were being removed from the life of idleness and were being brought into contact with civilization[3]. Although the commission was fully aware of the negative consequences of female and child labour, it still continued to use faulty logistics to encourage child and female labour.

Sexual harassment, for example, for female workers was a social problem common in most of the coffee plantations. Although all the workers were protected from various forms of harassment in theory, the farm overseers took advantage of their enormous powers and the ignorance of the workers to harass women sexually. Furthermore, women who were not working with their husbands on the same farm easily indulged in sexual promiscuity.

Child labour greatly hampered the education of the youth. In this respect, some unscrupulous parents sometimes encouraged their children to work for wage instead of going to school. Among the squatter children, the mzungu forced them to work for him in the morning and attend school in the evening. Parents who opposed it risked eviction from the settler farms. Hence, because few parents could sacrifice their jobs on the alter of giving education to their children, squatter children started working at the age of ten. Thus, some government reports could indicate that children between eight and ten years were being employed in heavy manual work contrary to the law.

The separation of children from their parents was responsible for the arrogance and the general lack of respect among the working children. This was fuelled by the break-up of the age group system which had acted as a check against excessively bad behaviour in the "reserves". The temporary nature of the workers residence in one settler farm made the punishment of a criminal more difficult. For example, in the Kikuyu reserves, a man who defiled a female was liable to a fine of several goats. The culprit could not escape for the whole clan participated in enforcing the fine. But in the settler farms, attempts to apprehend the perpetrators of a crime was difficult because the culprit only moved to settle on another estate where he was not known.

Although 1943 recorded the highest official figures of female and juvenile workers due to the famine of that period, the emergency period also witnessed more juvenile workers in the agricultural sector. During that period, adult men who were the source of labour were detained. Women and children therefore joined the wage labour to fill the places of the

detained men. The closing of schools by the administration and the poverty that characterised the reserves forced women and children to aggressively join wage labour for their own survival. The closing down of schools had the consequence of exposing more children into the wage labour experience. Therefore, denied of their menfolk, mothers encouraged their children to work for wages to supplement their incomes. Furthermore, women were paid less than men and their salaries alone could not cater for their, sometimes, large families.

Therefore, we can conclude that the relationship between capital and labour within a colonial framework can best be understood within the context of the colonial exploitative relationship[5]. In the Kenyan situation, a dominant class of settlers heavily backed by the colonial state exploited African labourers. The colonised people were progressively led to lose their economic independence through land alienation so that they became dependent on the new economic structures designed by the colonial state.

With land alienation and the imposition of a host of taxes, the colonised people were progressively integrated into the capitalist world. Their traditional ways of production and distribution were made subservient to the new capitalist order. When capital was invested in the colonised territories, it was expected to produce profits. Profits were realised by mobilising both natural and human resources available. In Kenya, capital was invested in land and Africans were "forced" to work on it to produced the required profits. The amount of work done was paid for in form of wages. During depressions and peak seasons, when the demand for labour exceeded the supply, women and children were incorporated into

the wage labour system to enhance production. Because the capital invested by the individuals settlers was little, women and children were preferred by such farmers because they were cheaper than adult males. Thus, despite the various arguments advanced by the colonial settlers justifying their use of child and female labour, cheapness was the major reason for the preference given to female and juvenile labourers.

When the colonial capitalism was imposed on a pre-capitalist society, its social and economic organisation was drastically changed. For example, among the Kikuyu, the family was the basic unit of production. The work of production was essentially communal. Indeed, children were required to work so that societal values could be inculcated in them. Work was basically meant to give children training through participation to prepare them to accept hard work as necessary for success in life. Thus children were made to work within the family set up and as a necessary part of their education and training for adult life. Their work did not distabilise but strengthened communal and parental authority.

The introduction of the colonial capitalism had the opposite effects. When women and children were incorporated into the wage labour system, their "open rebellion" against the authority of elders was set in motion. Child and female labour became the vehicle of societal distabilization rather than a means of strengthening the cohesiveness of the society. Both parents and the clan found themselves with drastically reduced control over women and children.

The introduction of child and female labour in the colonial period gave impetus to the breaking up of communalism as practised in the traditional society. Individual accumulation of wealth became the motive

of all members of the society including women and children. Women and children who started accumulating wealth lost respect for the "traditional" authority system. Husbands, parents and elders began to appear as poverty stricken and out-dated in terms of "modern lifestyles".

The colonial state supported these developments for the purpose of securing both child and female labour for the settlers. Any labour officer who attempted to protest against the abuse of child and female labour was either forced to retire prematurely or transferred to unfavourable areas[6]. The behaviour of the colonial state was easy to understand given that it was the custodian of the welfare of the colonial settlers in Kenya whose interest was to establish a white settler plantation economy. Thus, the colonial state manipulated its legal powers and machinery to ensure that the white settlers did not suffer from want of labour while the African women and children stayed at home. This was the basis under which the East African Ordinance of 1910 was enacted. Although the rest of the Ordinances and Reports of the Select Committees like, the Barth Commission 1912-13, the Native Labour Commission 1927 and Slades's Committee, were well intentioned, the reluctance of the government to use its legal machinery to prosecute the defaulters was one indication that the government could not be trusted to protect women and children. This could be explained by the fact that most of the strong politicians who were involved in the formulation of the government's policies were also white farmers not likely to jeopardise their enterprises which they felt could not succeed without the labour of women and children.

For their part, the poorer African women and children could not resist the temptation of taking up wage employment to escape from poverty. Thus, the subsistence nature of the African economy in Central province, land alienation, poverty, large families and sometimes absentee male heads of households all conspired to demand the use of women and children as wage labourers even without direct force.

The introduction of wage earning employment among children had the effect of separating them from parental influences. For women, they were separated from their husbands and clan control. Otherwise women and children did not benefit much from this experience as wage earners because the work they did was largely unskilled. Consequently, even when children grew up, they continued to work as unskilled labourers despite the long period of time they had spent doing the same kind of work. Thus their salaries remained low for their experience in performing such duties did not count. The same applied to women. All in all, African women and children were taken as simple tools of economic exploitation by the white settler community to realise "quick returns".

Footnotes

1. K.N.A. " Kenya Legislative Council Debates 1933, Volume one" p. 40.

2. Mcgregor Ross, Kenya from within, p. 135.

3. K.N.A., "Native Labour Commission 1927".

4 IRL Bull, The Native Problem in Africa, Bureau of International Research, London, 1965, p. 353.

5 T. Kanogo, Squatters and the Roots of the Mau Mau, Longmans, Nairobi, 1987, p. 211.

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Agriculture Census 1920 - 1933

International Labour Organization and the Colonial Government's Correspondence.

(ii) NEWSPAPERS

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LIST OF INFORMANTS

1.	Macharia Mwangi,	4/12/88	Ruiru
2.	Nganga Gucu,	17/12/88	Nembu
3.	Kinuthia Gacathi,	16/12/88	Tassia, Ruiru
4.	Wambui Ngotho,	27/12/88	Githunguri

5.	Mumbi Kariuki,	22/9/88	Ruiru
6.	Ndungu Giciri	18/9/88	Pillion, Ruiru
7.	Njoroge Mbuthia	20/10/88	Tatu, Ruiru
8.	Kimani Gacathi	3/10/88	Tatu, Ruiru
9.	David Mutunga	26/11/88	Tatu, Ruiru
10.	Mbugua Inegene	26/11/88	Tatu, Ruiru
11.	Kaboi Waigwa	12/10/88	Gatundu
12.	Cege Kamau	17/11/88	Lari
13.	Ndungu Wairagu	17/11/88	Lari
14.	Wanjiku Mondo	15/11/88	Gatundu
15.	Kinoo Ndegwa	15/11/88	Gatundu
16.	Waruingi	20/10/88	Ruiru
17.	Kariuki Njoroge	23/9/88	Kiambu
18.	Josphat Wainaina	14/10/88	Kiambu
19.	Mburu Kimani	2/1/89	Ngenda
20.	Mondo Gacathi	4/1/89	Ruiru
21.	Ndirangu Kinya	18/11/88	Lari
22.	Nderitu Cege	20/10/88	Tatu, Ruiru
23.	Harry Maina	16/9/88	Githunguri
24.	Joshua Ogutu	24/11/88	Oaklands ruiru
25.	Michael Mbugua Kiriro	2/1/89	Ruiru
26.	Cege Kamau	13/11/88	Sasini, Ruiru
27.	Harun Othach	13/11/88	Sasini, Ruiru
28.	Michael Otieno	13/11/88	Sasini, Ruiru
29.	Joseph Msoda	13/11/88	Sasini, Ruiru
30.	Joel Oduor	13/11/88	Sasini, Ruiru

31.	Joshua Ogutu	14/11/88	Sasini, Ruiru
32.	Owiti Okello	14/11/88	Murera Ruiru
33.	Kamau Kungu	30/12/88	Juja
34.	Ndirangu Kogi	17/10/88	Thika
35.	Hezekiah Wambario	29/12/88	Kitemaiyu Ruiru
36.	Susan Wangeci	3/8/88	Juja
37.	Peter Waihenya	1/9/88	Gatundu
38.	Wangeci Cege	15/9/88	Murera, Ruiru
39.	Njeri Kamondo	25/12/88	Ruiru
40.	John Mungai	14/10/88	Sukari Ranch Ruiru
41.	Ezekiel Njuguna	14/10/88	Sukari Ranch Ruiru
42.	Joseph Mwenga	14/10/88	Sukari Ranch Ruiru
43.	David Kioko	14/10/88	Sukari Ranch Ruiru
44.	Philip Wambua	14/10/88	Sukari Ranch Ruiru
45.	Njoroge Ciondo	2/9/88	Githunguri
46.	Cege Nduati	30/10/88	Bloodgate Ruiru
47.	Kamau Ngotho	24/11/88	Murera Ruiru
48.	Kariuki Kagondu	13/9/88	Taurus Ruiru
49.	Mungaru Ngundo	17/10/88	Ruiru
50.	Waringa Ngugi	3/1/89	Limuru
51.	Wanjiru Kimani	3/1/89	Limuru
52.	Nyaga Njeru	3/1/89	Limuru
53.	Isaac Mburu	5/1/89	Limuru
54.	Pauline Nyokabi	5/1/89	Limuru
55.	Waithaka Kiboi	5/1/89	Limuru
56.	Njoka Muraya	10/1/89	Lari

57.	Wanjoro Nderitu	10/1/89	Lari
58.	Waithera Ndirangu	1/1/89	Limuru
59.	Pauline Nyokabi	1/1/89	Limuru
60.	Njoroge Wakahu	10/1/89	Lari
61.	Kimani Nyoike	10/1/89	Lari
62.	Kogi Ndungu	10/1/89	Lari
63.	Susan Wanjira	4/1/89	Kiambaa
64.	Nguni Kiarie	4/1/89	Kiambaa
65.	Rebecca Ndunge	4/1/89	Kiambaa
66.	Gitau Muge	2/2/89	Limuru
67.	Ndunge Wambua	2/2/89	Limuru
68.	Pauline Wangari	10/1/89	Lari
69.	Jeremiah Kaarii	10/1/89	Lari
70.	Wacu Kimani	10/1/89	Lari

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