

Journal of Retracing Africa

Volume 3 | Issue 1

Article 3

December 2016

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Ndanyi, Samson K.. ““God Was With Us:” Child Labor in Colonial Kenya, 1922 - 1950s.” *Journal of Retracing Africa*: Vol. 3, Issue 1 (2016): 1-20. <https://encompass.eku.edu/jora/vol3/iss1/3>

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Cover Page Footnote

I would like to extend my gratitude to Michelle Moyd and Brett Berliner for reading the first draft and commenting on it. I am also grateful to the staff at the Kenya National Archives (Nairobi), The National Archives (Kew, United Kingdom), and other institutions in Kenya for guiding me through their repositories. This research would not have been completed without the financial support I received from Indiana University's history department and African Studies Program.

“God Was With Us:” Child Labor in Colonial Kenya, 1922–1950s

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Abstract: Contentious debates about the allowable minimum age of child laborers informed the discourse of child labor in colonial Kenya between 1922 and the 1950s. Beginning with the Harry Thuku Uprising of 1922 that instigated the discussion over labor policy concerning juvenile wage laborers and heightened the tension between the British colonial administration and African adult workers, the British government in Kenya struggled to forge coherent labor policies concerning the ages of African child workers. Frequent changes in labor laws made it easier for labor recruiters and employers to manipulate the system by recruiting younger children for work thus drawing them into the orbit of an alien labor force that often interfered with their childhood. The uncertainty surrounding the minimum age engendered acrimonious debate between white employers and anti-child labor advocates over who among them had the moral authority to speak for the children and act as their moral guardians and avuncular figures. This article discusses child labor in colonial Kenya. Focusing almost exclusively on African boys as actors in child labor, the article analyzes labor history that highlights changes in the meaning of minimum age in an economic system that promised African children prosperity. It frames age as a category of analysis that explains the intersection of colonial labor laws and juvenile workers. The close analysis of African children and their labor situation also reveals a mosaic of everyday life in colonial Kenya that brings children into an acknowledged circulation of imperial ideas and imagination.

Keywords: Child Labor, Kenya, History, Africa

Introduction

“What do you advise me to fix as the minimum monthly rate of pay (in addition to rations and housing) for [juveniles between twelve and eighteen years]?” wrote the District Commissioner (DC), Turkana, to J. Ian Husband, the Labor Commissioner (LC) in Kenya, in September 1955.¹ Husband advised the DC to pay children between twelve and fourteen years old a minimum monthly rate of ten shillings, fourteen shillings to children between fourteen and sixteen years,

¹DC, Turkana, to J. Ian Husband, “Minimum Wages,” 7 Sep. 1955, Minimum Wages-General ABK/1/36 Kenya National Archives (KNA), Nairobi (NRB).

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and sixteen shillings to children between sixteen and eighteen years.² “Totos [children] of good physique,” Husband added, “often do quite as much manual work as an adult, when the work is not sustained for long hours.”³ Confident of the “precocious strength” of an African child to perform manual labor, but aware of the loafing behaviors African adult workers exhibited, Husband urged the DC to raise these rates by ten percent in case adults refused to work more than six hours per day. Hoping that children would work on average between four and six hours per day, Husband wished they would surpass this mark,⁴ a rather misguided wish that would have violated the law that required “no person” to “employ or require to work any juvenile for a total period of more than six hours in any one day.”⁵

Based on the logic of precocious strength, Husband expressed the view that minor workers consumed more food than their adult counterparts, and he suggested that if the rations were such that a laborer needed to buy supplementary items, “then the youth wages must be sufficient to ensure that extra food is bought.”⁶ He hoped that DCs in the colony would ensure the recruitment and retention of minor workers, payment of children on time, protection of children from unscrupulous employers who delayed their wages, and discouragement of children from emulating their parent’s loafing behaviors. As this article demonstrates, the reality of the matter made Husband’s view look like a complete joke. Two registers come through the conversation between Husband and the DC. First, the conversation reveals the colonialists’ official thinking about wage labor and child laborers, three decades after Harry Thuku (discussed below) complained against the tendency to exploit juveniles for economic gains. Second, it suggests that child labor informed the colonial officials’ everyday discourse; however, extant scholarship on labor during the period tends to focus on the labor relations between African adult workers and

²Husband to DC, Turkana, “Juvenile Wages,” 20th Oct. 1955. Minimum Wages-General ABK/1/36 KNA, NRB.

³Ibid.

⁴Husband to Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education Labor and Lands, “Employment of African Women and Children on European Farms,” May 22, 1958, Minimum Wages ABK/1/36 KNA, NRB. But Archdeacon W.E. Owen of Kavirondo pointed out that children were expected to work “for a seven-to eight-hour day.” Owen, “Child Labor in East Africa,” *The Spectator*, January 6, 1939.

⁵C.H Hartwell, Member for Labor, “The Employment of Juveniles (Hours of Work and Welfare Rules, 1952),” June 4, 1952, Employment of women and children- Kenya CO859/302, TNA.

⁶Husband to DC. Turkana, Minimum Wages-General ABK/1/36 KNA, NRB.

European employers.⁷

Several writers have proposed competing definitions of what constituted a “child” in colonial Africa. Luis F. López-Calva writes that the term “child” is easy to recognize, but it holds “varying definitions.”⁸ This concept does not render itself to cavalier definition, particularly during the colonialists’ heyday in the mid-twentieth century. In *Invisible Hands: Child Labor and the State in Colonial Zimbabwe* and “Child Labor and Africanist Scholarship: A Critical Overview,” Beverly Grier defines “child” as prepubescent boy or girl. Grier is aware that this definition is problematic and is “not without its fault,”⁹ but she quickly adds that the stages of puberty vary and are not uniformly attained. Wiseman Chijere Chirwa expands this definition to include three broad criteria: chronological age as outlined by law, institutional affiliation and collective behavioral pattern, and social and cultural factors.¹⁰ Even then, Chirwa confines his study to unmarried persons below the age of fourteen and between fourteen and eighteen, but still part of their parents’ or guardians’ family units. This definition is consistent with the views expressed in Kaushik Basu and Pham Hoang Van’s oft-quoted study, “The Economics of Child Labor,” in which child workers appear to be “persons below the age of 15 years.”¹¹ According to Basu and Van, historically, child labor was not the preserve of third world countries in Africa, Latin America, and Asia, but the “bulk of child laborers” found on these continents “belong to the 10-to-14-year age category.”¹² Whereas Basu and Van suggest ten years as the minimum age, Sudharshan Canagarajah and Helena Skyt Nielsen have lowered that age to include persons between “age 7 to 14.”¹³

The extant scholarship has tended to assume the standard Western definition

⁷Examples include Frederick Cooper’s *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa*, a comparative study that focuses on “working class” and “African workers”; Kaletso E. Atkins’s *The Moon is Dead! Give us our Money!: The Cultural Origins of an African Work Ethic, Natal, South Africa, 1843–1900* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1993), which highlights the plight of “black working [Zulu] men” who forged “African work ethic” in nineteenth-century South Africa; and Iris Berger’s *Threads of Solidarity: Women in South African Industry, 1900–1980* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), which focuses on white and black working-class women “hidden from [labor] history” in South Africa between 1900 and 1980.

⁸Luis F. López-Calva, “Child Labor: Myths, Theories and Facts,” *Journal of International Affairs* 55, no. 1 (2001): 60.

⁹Beverly Grier, *Invisible Hands: Child Labor and the State in Colonial Zimbabwe* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2006), 26.

¹⁰Wiseman Chijere Chirwa, “Child and Youth Labour on the Nyasaland Plantations, 1890-1953,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 19, no. 4 (1993): 662-680.

¹¹Kaushik Basu and Pham Hoang Van, “The Economics of Child Labor,” *The American Economic Review* 88, no. 3 (1998):414.

¹²*Ibid.*, 414.

¹³Sudharshan Canagarajah and Helena Skyt Nielsen, “Child Labor in Africa: A Comparative Study,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 575 (2001): 73.

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of child, which defines children rather narrowly. For the most part, European colonialists in Africa considered a child as any person between seven and eighteen years old. This definition excludes from consideration the labor contribution of five and six-year-old workers, who often worked in settlers' plantations, homes, and on factory floors. Other studies have pointed out that the "universal agreement" puts the "legal age of maturity [at] 18."¹⁴ The so-called universal agreements often exclude the opinions of the Africans, South Americans, and Asians. Needless to say, universal agreements are Western constructs that tend to consider nineteen-year-old African workers as adult laborers. It is precisely for these reasons that Osita Agbu argues that the "legal definition of the child as seen from [international] legal documents is not wholly acceptable in the African context, even in today's world."¹⁵

Building on the views of scholars who suggest that "it's not certain who should really be considered a child,"¹⁶ this article broadens the working definition of a child to include unmarried persons with mental or physical disability requiring parental or guardians' consent in matters that effectively altered the trajectories of their lives, such as initiation or wage labor. The expanded definition considers children who might have depended on their parents or guardians long after their eighteenth birthdays. As archival sources at the Kenya National Archives reveal, children with disability in Kenya also worked for wages and were taken to work miles away from their homes. In any case, in most African societies, until marriage, children remained dependents of their parents, who exercised authority and control over them in many ways.¹⁷

The unstable age definition of childhood in colonial Africa was related to capital accumulation in the form of wage labor, where colonial governments in Africa responded at some level to the nineteenth and twentieth-century economic changes taking place in Western Europe. As European colonialists in Africa increasingly drew African children into the labor market, evidence suggests that in Britain and the United States, child labor declined in the second half of the 19th century.¹⁸ As it turned out, black bodies were to be used for labor. Prior to the concept of Western wage labor in Africa, African children engaged in domestic labor (e.g. household chores, tilling, and herding), much like what they did in

¹⁴Anne Kielland and Maurizia Tovo, *Children at Work: Child Labor Practices in Africa* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2006), 1.

¹⁵Osita Agbu, "Child Labor in Contemporary Africa: Issues and Challenges," in *Children and Youth in the Labor Process in Africa*, ed. Osita Agbu (Dakar, Senegal: CODESRIA, 2009), 12.

¹⁶Kielland and Tovo, 1.

¹⁷Hamilton Siphon Simelane, "Landlords, The State, and Child Labor in Colonial Swaziland, 1914-1947," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 31, no. 3 (1998): 575.

¹⁸López-Calva, 64.

European households and farms; the only difference being that work in the pre-colonial era was light and had no monetary reward.¹⁹ Employing African children in agriculture and domestic chores was not a creation of the colonial economy, but it gained notoriety during the colonial era.²⁰ Child labor in colonial Africa drew children into the ambit of capitalism with a promise of material gains and upward mobility as long as they exchanged their labor for wages on factory floors and settlers' farms and households.

The Harry Thuku Factor

Ian Husband's vision of African children workers was logical in theory but unattainable in practice. The subject of child labor in colonial Kenya involved more than simplistic expressions of "good physique" and "precocious strength," phrases that informed the thinking of most officials in the colony,²¹ especially after 1922, when Harry Thuku, commonly regarded as the doyen of African nationalism, prodded the government to reform repressive labor laws that "forced" women and children to work for free.²² "I saw a large number of young girls and women cutting reeds under the supervision of tribal police," Thuku complained in March 1922 while on a political tour in Central Kenya to popularize the East African Association (EAA), a political association he and his "friends" from other "tribes" founded the previous year.²³ Thuku insisted that the colonial administration forced women and young girls to cut enough reeds to thatch the police station in Nyeri, the administrative seat of the colonial government in Central Province. Citing Winston

¹⁹Kevin Shillington, *History of Africa* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 14-15; Atkins informs us that "very commonly youngsters were kept busy every day with light work around the homestead. Little boys from about the age of five or seven, would go out to herd small livestock such as goats, valves, and sheep." See Atkins, 58. She also adds that children who were hired for paid labor received their payment in the form of cloths, blankets, knives, hatchets or a lump of iron currency; see page 95.

²⁰Chirwa, 664.

²¹P.B.E. Thompson, Divisional Engineer's Office, Coast Province, to Fred, "Wages-Male Employee Under 21 Years of Age," April 12, 1961, Minimum Wages ABK/1/36 KNA, NRB. Referring to the output of African casual laborers between the ages of 18-20, Thompson informed Fred that "in fact, their youth and strength ensures that their output is as high."

²²Before Thuku's Uprising, however, in 1914 and 1915 the Giriama people of coastal hinterland, under the charismatic leadership of Mekatilili, a woman, rose up in arms against taxations, wage-labor, and land alienation. Mekatilili hoped to prevent Giriama men from laboring for the British and to support the revival of traditional Giriama way of life. See Cynthia Brantley's *The Giriama and Colonial Resistance in Kenya, 1800-1920* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1981). Today the Giriama's participation in wage-labor is minimal. The community relies on agriculture and grain production. Critics of early resistances in Africa dismissed them as "romantic reactionaries" and "premature nationalists." See Bruce Vandervort, *Wars of Imperial Conquest in Africa, 1830-1914* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998). For counter-argument, see Terrence O. Ranger, "Connexions between 'Primary Resistance' Movements and Modern Mass Nationalism in East and Central Africa," *The Journal of African History* 9, no. 3 (1968): 437-453.

²³Harry Thuku, *An Autobiography* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1970), 32.

Churchill's order of 1921 to the Governor of Kenya to stop coercive labor, Thuku asked the tribal policeman supervising the women to dismiss them, and he vowed to stick around until everyone "had gone back home."²⁴ By forcing women and young girls to work for free, the tribal policeman was, in Thuku's mind, "acting illegally."

Thuku's roadside drama in Nyeri angered the government. Eager to stop him from "poisoning" other Africans, on March 14th, officials arrested him in a pre-dawn police raid at a friend's house in Nairobi. Concerned that detaining him for long in Nairobi would exacerbate tension and further promote disturbances, officials deported Thuku to Kismayu in the Jubaland Province later in March 1922 without the benefit of a trial. Three years later, Thuku was transferred to Marsabit in the Northern Frontier Province.²⁵ In 1929, Thuku was still languishing in detention.²⁶

It is beyond the scope of this essay to explore the merits of Thuku's lengthy deportation, but two notable aspects of his short political life are worth considering. First, Thuku was a polarizing individual in colonial Kenya. People who admired him did so with passion, so much so that they believed in his causes and risked their lives to defend them. His detractors, however, loathed him and conspired for his downfall. "Chiefs and missionaries," Thuku wrote in his oft-quoted autobiography, "had been collecting affidavits against me."²⁷ Secondly, whether or not Thuku was

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵The circumstances in which Thuku was deported from the Kikuyu Reserve to the coast are set out fully in the Command Paper 1691 published in May 1922.

²⁶Thuku's prolonged detention without trial embarrassed officials in Britain, who often bragged about the superiority of the British judicial system known for its fairness. Incensed Labor Members in the House asked the Undersecretary of State for the Colonies to try or forthwith release Thuku. The House heard from the Secretary that the Colonial Office was in consultation with the Governor of Kenya on the subject of the arrest and deportation. Calls to release or try him intensified in 1930. Unable to justify the lengthy detention without trial, the Colonial Office in London, which had previously insisted that only three African protestors died in March 1922, asked Henry Monck-Mason Moore, the acting Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, to allow Thuku to leave Marsabit to reside within his reserve on condition that he maintain peace and order. Moore released Thuku, but warned him of re-arrest and re-deportation to Marsabit if he violated the terms of his release, which included, among other things, displaying good behavior and loyalty to government. Judging from Thuku's retreat from active politics soon after his release—for instance, he opposed the Mau Mau war, refused to support African nationalists, and boycotted independence day celebrations in 1963—one must ask whether Moore's threats disrupted his inner foundation, or whether the British system of penal transportation and detention without trial worked as an effective instrument against African agitators. See The Command Paper 1691 published in May 1922. *The Nation* newspaper put the number of dead Africans at twenty-five. See *The East African Standard*, "Colonial Office Dispatch to Kenya Governor," December 21, 1929; *The Nation*, "The Man They Call A 'Black European,'" January 31, 1960; Henry Monck-Mason Moore to the District Commissioner, Marsabit, December 4, 1930, Political Prisoner—Harry Thuku DC/MBT/7/8/1 KNA, NRB. Also see "Precis of Interview given by His Excellency the Governor to Harry Thuku at Marsabit on March 11, 1928 in a 'Confidential' dispatch, Political Prisoner—Harry Thuku DC/MBT/7/8/1 KNA, NRB.

²⁷Thuku, *An Autobiography*, 32.

an agitator or champion, he set in motion the processes that led to labor reforms in Kenya, especially reforms involving child labor in the 1920s and thereafter.

Neither Thuku nor those who agitated against juvenile labor (e.g. Jomo Kenyatta writing from Britain)²⁸ disclosed the children's ages, but their persistent agitation brought the subject of child labor to the public's attention in Kenya and Britain. In 1924, for example, the government, in a circular to provincial and district heads, acted by stating that laws and regulations governing the compulsion of native labor were "imperfectly understood." To put the matter straight, the government outlined that the compulsion of labor was restricted to able-bodied African men. Women and children, the circular read, "must not be ordered or compelled" to work on public roads and government stations.²⁹ Although by 1927 women and children were unpaid and unfed, the government attempted to end forced labor.³⁰ Moving expeditiously to reassure their critics at home and in London, officials in Nairobi defended themselves by pointing out that the government did "not countenance" the employment of women and children for work on public roads, and did not call out such labor at any time.³¹

²⁸Jomo Kenyatta, the future president of post-colonial Kenya, was one of the many voices that campaigned against child labor. While in London to complain about the Crown Land Ordinance of 1915, which nullified the right of native ownership of land and made the Kikuyu mere tenants of the Crown, Kenyatta submitted short protest articles to the press in Britain simplifying the on-going labor dispute in Kenya to the British public. Kenyatta linked Thuku's arrest to his opposition of "forced labor and other repressive measures." He reminded the readers of *Times and Tide* that the lengthy detention without trial defied the British system of "fair play and justice." To the readers of the *Daily Worker*, Kenyatta assured them that Thuku was not a monster. "All the people followed Thuku and saw that what he said was right," Kenyatta wrote, and maintained that Thuku agitated "against the forced labor of girls and also against the taxes." Because of Thuku's efforts, Kenyatta concluded: the Government had to *abolish the forced labor of girls*, and to reduce the poll and hut taxes again from sixteen shillings to twelve. Therefore, Thuku was still more popular, and the *girls* and *young men* made songs about him and sang them in the villages [emphasis added]. See, Jomo Kenyatta, "East Africa," *Times and Tide*, December 13, 1929; Kenyatta, "An African People Rise in Revolt," *Daily Worker*, January, 20, 1930.

²⁹G.V. Maxwell, Chief Native Commissioner, Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, Native Affairs Department, "Compulsory Labor," Circular No. 33, September 4, 1924. Employment of Natives on Roads, CO533/748, TNA.

³⁰Female Labor in Kenya, November 15, 1927 Employment of Natives on Roads, CO533/748, TNA. In 1927, an unidentified settler who planned to start a campaign against forced and unpaid labor in colonial Kenya wrote to the colonial office in London to complain about compulsory labor practices. According to the settler, "about 80 women [and children]" worked in Government stations under the supervision of Tribal Retainers. "These women," the settler added, "were neither paid nor fed." See Settler Comment Upon Native Labor Conditions in Kenya—in 1927 (July 5, 1927), Employment of Natives on Roads, CO533/748, TNA.

³¹Acting Governor to Secretary of States for the Colonies, July 31, 1927, Employment of Natives on Roads, CO533/748, TNA.

Minimum Age

Long before Harry Thuku exposed “problems” in the child labor policy, the colonial government in Kenya was content with exploiting African children. An examination of labor ordinances before 1922 suggests that the government hardly considered child labor an immediate problem worthy of consideration.³² But things changed after the consequential confrontation. Beginning with The Master and Servant (Amendment) Ordinance, 1924, the government outlined its labor policies and guidelines. Although this particular Ordinance ignored children and child labor, children worked on colonial farms and in homes as domestic servants. In 1926, the government, for the first time, in The Custody of Children Ordinance, defined “child” as a person appearing to be under the age of sixteen years.³³ But this definition would not be the last; it changed in subsequent years. For example, in 1934, the Juvenile Ordinance defined a child as anyone below fourteen years, a change in policy that allowed employers to recruit younger children without the fear of repercussions.³⁴ Much to dissenters’ objections, four years later the government revised the minimum age. Under Section 28 (3) (b) of Ordinance No. II of 1938, the minimum age was reduced to ten years. “No juvenile who appears to be below the age of ten years,” the Ordinance declared, “shall be allowed to enter into a contract of service.”³⁵ It was clear that in 1938 and beyond there had been a very considerable progress in discussing the practicability of fixing a minimum age for industrial and non-industrial employment involving children. A generation later, the Prevention of Cruelty to and Neglect of Children Ordinance, 1955, left the definition of “actual or apparent age” to the courts, but it defined a child as a person under the age of sixteen years.³⁶

The failure to definitively set a minimal age for wage work persisted throughout the colonial period. In 1956, less than seven years before the end of colonialism, a company manager responsible for recruiting was unaware of any ordinance that prevented his company from recruiting juveniles.³⁷ Frequent changes in labor policy created such unnecessary confusion and made the work of labor

³² The first ordinance to address labor related concerns in colonial Kenya was the East African Protectorate: Ordinances and Regulations, Vol. IV. January 1st to December 31st 1902, which only considered “employer” and “servant.”

³³ The Custody of Children Ordinance, 1926, KNA, NRB; The Custody of Children Ordinance, 1926, CO533/700, TNA.

³⁴ The Juveniles Ordinance, 1934, KNA, NRB.

³⁵ The Employment of Servants Ordinance, 1938, KNA, NRB.

³⁶ Children and Young Person Legislation in Kenya CO859/574, TNA.

³⁷ K. Archer, Manager, Eastern Produce & Estates, to DC, Kakamega (August 18, 1956) Labor Policy DC/KMG/2/12/13 KNA, NRB.

officers who tried to enforce the law difficult,³⁸ yet the government expected them to “thoroughly understand the Labor Laws and have a good working knowledge of criminal law.”³⁹ As the conversation between the DC, Turkana, and Husband reveals, officials lagged behind and expected the Labor Commissioner in Nairobi to guide them.

The prohibition against employing underage children came into sharp focus in 1938. As outlined in the Employment of Servants Ordinance, 1938, no juveniles were to be employed as porters, fuel cutters, trolley or rickshaw boys, or in any other class of labor for which, in the opinion of a Government medical officer, they were physically unsuitable.⁴⁰ In addition, the Ordinance forbade professional recruiters from recruiting juveniles under sixteen years of age. According to official thinking, the forms of employment normally open to juveniles were domestic service, commerce and offices, institutions, local authority, grass-cutting, cleaning or gardening, and agriculture.⁴¹ Contrary to these provisions, however, and, as figure 1 illustrates, children worked odd jobs.

³⁸For instance, Ordinance No. 35 of 1950 amended the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Ordinance. Without defining “young person” or setting the minimum age, the new law prohibited labor officers from employing them as trimmers or stokers in any ship. See The Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children (Amendment) Ordinance, 1950.

³⁹Memorandum for Guidance of Officers of the Labor Department, Prosecution by Labor Officers Under Various Ordinances ABK/1/4, KNA, NRB.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Colin S. Owen, Principal Probation Officer and Chief Inspector of Approved Schools, “Memorandum on the Employment of Juveniles,” Employment of Juvenile Africans and Others BZ/14/1 KNA, NRB.

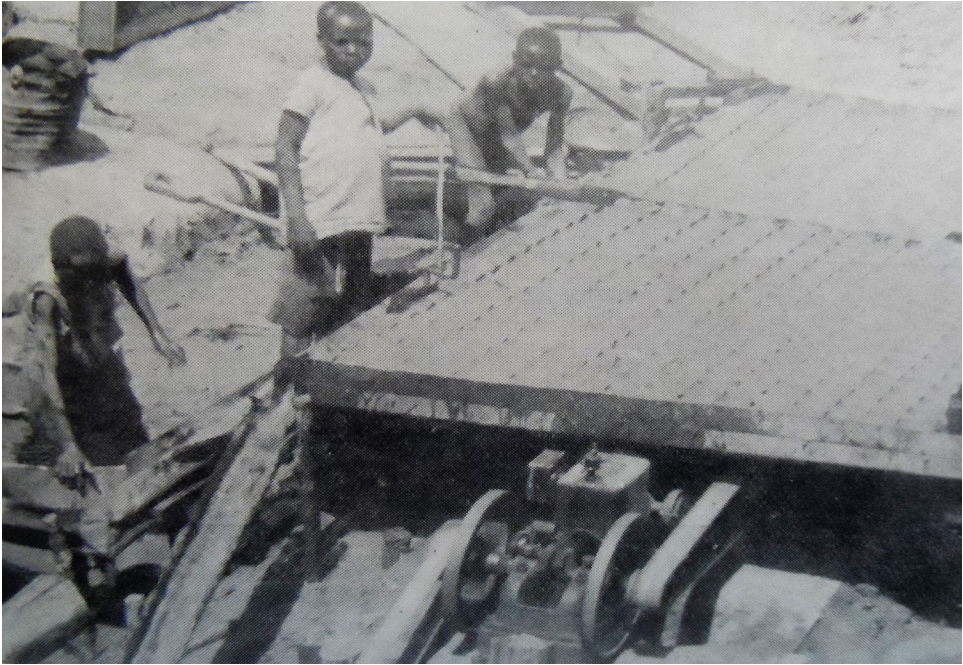


Fig. 1. Three African children at work on one of the oscillating tables from which the alluvial concentrates passed to a smaller table. Although we cannot independently verify their ages, the children's tiny bodies suggests that they were too young for this kind of physical labor. Source: *East African Standard*, "Alluvial Working in Kakamega," March 2, 1935. Photo: L Pemberton.

The child labor law of 1938 underscored the significance of recruitment certificates, and it forbade labor agents and professional recruiters from recruiting juveniles without first obtaining a certificate from a District Officer stating that "the permission of the father or guardian of such juvenile has been obtained."⁴² Children who obtained certificates of employment were permitted to enter into a contract of service, but it was up to them to comprehend the contract's terms. In other words, the law did not completely forbid children from entering the labor force. Rather, it encouraged unscrupulous recruiters to take advantage of the "permission" loophole to beat the system. Most recruiters and employers ignored the section of the law that required them to appear in person with the juvenile and the juvenile's father (or if his father was dead, his legal guardian) before a District Officer prior to obtaining a permit to recruit.⁴³

The manipulation of employment loopholes by recruiters and employers came

⁴² Employment of Servants Ordinance, 1938, KNA, NRB.

⁴³ H. de Warrenne Waller, DC, Kitui, to Township Plotolders and all employees of labor, July 17, 1953, Labor Employment of Juveniles MV/10/16, KNA, NRB.

to light in the case involving Suleiman Said, a recruiter and employer. On July 8, 1945, Said recruited fifteen boys for work in the Manoni Sugar Factory (Eastern Province). According to one of Said's recruits, Said promised to pay "each of us Shs. 6/- per month, plus posho. Nothing was said about housing."⁴⁴ Together with his Swahili driver, Said "put" the boys in a lorry and left Kitui that morning. Along the way, the two pulled over at a house in Mazi, where they consumed alcohol and *nyama choma* (grilled goat meat). The boys were never fed. After four hours, Said and his driver emerged from the house "very drunk." In the boy's own words, on their way to Kibwezi:

The lorry was swerving all over the road because the driver was drunk. We cried out and were very afraid. . . the lorry was driven so badly that the lorry left the road and crashed through some sisal and finally turned over on its side throwing us out. Two persons were killed when the lorry overturned. One was a man to whom we had given a lift from Hawi and the other was a juvenile aged about 8 or 9 years. His name was Kilanyi Njeru of Kitui. We seven were all hurt slightly and suffered from shock. Seven others were injured and taken to hospital at Voi. The driver was not hurt. Suleiman was injured slightly.⁴⁵

The matter came to the attention of colonial officials because the lorry carrying the children was involved in an accident. According to the government's version of the incident, all the children escaped with their lives.⁴⁶ Said was charged on fifteen counts, one of which was later withdrawn. Citing Section 28 (1) of Ordinance II of 1938, which forbade private and professional recruiters from recruiting children unless such juveniles had obtained a certificate from a DO, the Magistrate fined Said twenty shillings, "I.D. three days imprisonment," and ordered him to pay to the Labor Department the cost incurred in repatriating the recruited juveniles.⁴⁷

The incident involving Said was not an isolated one. In South Kavirondo, a clerk in the Labor Office stopped five "children all under 10 years old . . . on the

⁴⁴Recorded Statement of Kilanda Kiondu, July 16, 1945, Labor Employment of Juveniles MV/10/16, KNA, NRB.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶DC, Voi, to Labor Commissioner, Nairobi, July 14, 1945, Labor Employment of Juveniles MV/10/16, KNA, NRB.

⁴⁷1st Class Magistrate, November 24, 1945, Labor Employment of Juveniles MV/10/16, KNA, NRB.

Railway Station . . . when they were about to embark for Taveta,⁴⁸ about 675 miles away. One boy, Mlando, was “deaf and dumb,” and it is unclear whether or not the recruiter explained to him the object of the trip and the nature of the work. What was clear, though, was that the DC repatriated the boys and vowed to act against the recruiter who had already left for Taveta with other children.

In another incidence, Lokonyi Asala, a recruiter in Bushimuli, Idakho location, recruited Romanus Okal, a juvenile under twelve years of age and a pupil of Standard Four at Eregi Primary School, for labor on the estate of the Septum Tea Company of Songhor (Kisumu) without his parents’ knowledge and against their wishes.⁴⁹ Unlike the recruits involved in Said and Matonye’s botched missions, Okal arrived at Septum Tea Company and reported for duty before his mother asked “that her son be returned to her as soon as possible.”⁵⁰ Company officials agreed to repatriate Okal after the DC of North Nyanza intervened.

Incidences such as the aforementioned occurred frequently, and the three examples illustrate in the words of Sir Granville Orde Browne that “the provision of the law which insist[ed] upon the children being accompanied by a parent or guardian [was] too often observed with a considerable measure of laxity.”⁵¹ Despite Browne’s observation, the government did not act quickly to punish offenders. Its rate of prosecution was dismal. For example, in 1955 and 1956 only 48 and 46 employers respectively were prosecuted for the illegal employment of juveniles.⁵² The dismal figures emboldened recruiters to break the law with

⁴⁸DC, South Kavirono, “Child Labor,” June 30, 1938, Labor Agents Permits DC/KSM/1/17/66 KNA, NRB. It was not uncommon for children to walk long distances away from home. Archdeacon noted in 1939 that “some children may have to go as far as 500 miles from home” for work. Owen, “Child Labor,” *East African Standard*, January 20, 1939. Also see Owen “Child Labor in East Africa,” *The Spectator*, January 6, 1939; Owen, “Child Labor,” *East African Standard*, January 20, 1939. In 1947, “four totos [children]” were said to have walked “from Taveta to Voi [sixty-eight miles] having been recruited by an Assistant Recruiter. The DC, Voi, gave them subsistence allowance and repatriated them under escort. DC, Voi, to DC, Kitui, “Juveniles—Labor,” June 20, 1947. Labor Employment of Juveniles MV/10/16 KNA, NRB. In addition, C. Campbell, DC, Machakos, complained to the PC (3), Southern Area about the view that children Machakos who go to Nairobi (forty miles) were not “young criminals.” Campbell to PC, “Wakamba Juveniles,” February 9, 1956. Labor Employment of Juveniles MV/10/16 KNA, NRB. Leeds, Labor Officer, Thika, complained to DC, Kitui that children were leaving Kitui for Thika (eighty-one miles) to work at Messrs Bobs Narries Ltd. Leeds to DC, “Employment of Children,” December, 20, 1958. Labor Employment of Juveniles MV/10/16 KNA, NRB.

⁴⁹L.T. Ross, Principal, St. Augustine’s T.T. Centre, to DO, Kakamega, “Tea Estate Labor: Romanus Okal s/o Bukachi,” May 28, 1957, Labor Policy DC/KMG/2/12/13 KNA, NBR.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Sir Granville Orde Browne’s Report to the Secretary of State for the Colonies on Labor Conditions in East Africa. November 22, 1945, Labor Employment of Juveniles, MV/10/16/ KNA, NRB.

⁵²Colin S. Owen, Principal Probation Officer and Chief Inspector of Approved Schools, June 21, 1958, “Memorandum on the Employment of Juveniles,” Employment of Juveniles Africans and Others BZ/14/1 KNA, NRB.

impunity. Moreover, they treated official complains with contempt. Henry Oyuwa, a driver/recruiter for Chemoni Tea Estate, told off the DC after the latter inspected his bus and discovered that a minor worker was inside. Appearing to be “under the influence of drink,” Oyuwa dismissed the DC and told him “that this was no concern of his as the fellow was an employee of long standing.”⁵³

The drama surrounding the ages of child workers vexed officials throughout the colonial period in Kenya. Key actors in the labor industry such as DOs, employers, and recruiters hardly understood what constituted minor workers or their minimum ages. Indeed, Husband seemed confused on this subject. Three years after he instructed the DC in Turkana that the child workers’ ages should be between twelve and eighteen years, Husband advised the Permanent Secretary (PS) in the Ministry of Education, Labor and Lands to consider juveniles as “males and females under the age of 16 years.”⁵⁴ In other words, those between sixteen and eighteen were to be considered adults. Yet, in making this critical guideline, Husband did not refer to any ordinance, an oversight suggesting that the recommendation was his personal view.

The inability to resolve the question of minimum age engendered serious problems throughout the colony. First, most company managers ignored age and turned to height as the criteria for recruitment. Writing to the DC in Kakamega to ask him to issue recruitment permits to his company recruiters, K. Archer, Manager, Eastern Produce & Estates, also requested he be “allowed to recruit juveniles over 4’ 11 high.”⁵⁵ By turning to height, Archer probably thought that tall boys, although young in age, were physically ready for manual labor. He was least concerned with the psychological effects of height that people, especially persons of short stature, deal with every day. Needless to say, the use of height as a measure of success often undermined the pride and self-esteem of short people.⁵⁶

Secondly, unwilling to go through the tedious process of applying for recruitment permits for their recruiters, some company managers kidnapped children and forced them to work on their estates. In 1952, for example, the Mombasa branch of the Kikuyu General Union (KGU) wrote to Fenner Brockway, a British Member of Parliament and member of the League against Imperialism, to complain about Major C.E.V. Buxton, a European farmer in Limuru, who kidnapped fourteen juveniles from Limuru and took them to Vipingoni Estates

⁵³District Commissioner, North Nyanza, to Messrs. Chemoni Tea Estate, “Recruiting of Labor,” May 11, 1957, Labor Policy DC/KMG/2/12/13 KNA, NRB.

⁵⁴Husband to Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education Labor and Lands, “Employment of African Women and Children on European Farms,” May 22, 1958, Minimum Wages, ABK/1/36 KNA, NRB.

⁵⁵K. Archer to DC, Kakamega, June 30, 1965 Labor Policy DC/KMG/2/12/13 KNA, NRB.

⁵⁶Kate Gilbert Phifer, *Tall and Small: A Book About Height* (New York, NY: Walker and Co. 1987).

in Kilifi District (about 346 miles away).⁵⁷ Led by Wilson Maina Macharia, KGU officials informed Brockway that Buxton treated the children “as slaves.” They accused him of compelling the children to work “from 6 a.m. until 6 p.m. without giving them food for [the] whole day.”⁵⁸ Pointing out that the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and the Attorney’s General Office were aware of the matter but had so far failed to act, KGU members observed that Britain had outlawed the slave trade, yet the slave trade was “still going on in Kenya by underground movements, and this [was] carried on by settlers.”⁵⁹ Macharia stated that KGU’s members “rescued” the fourteen boys and brought them back to Nairobi before sending them to their respective homes in Kiabu, Muranga, Machakos, and Kitui districts. On the boy’s behalf, KGU sued Buxton, and the court fined him Ksh. 600.⁶⁰

Increased incidences of mistreatment of children, especially minor workers, prompted the passage of the “Prevention of Cruelty to and Neglect of Children Ordinance 1955,” popularly known as “The Children’s Charter,” which was based largely on the United Kingdom’s principles and practices. This Ordinance was ineffective due to staffing problems that undermined its execution. Seeking to strengthen the Ordinance and perhaps lessen cruelty to children, the Cabinet Office proposed the appointment of Probation Officers in Nairobi, Mombasa, and Nakuru. If the proposal proved impossible to implement, the Office advised the Treasury to set aside finances to enable the hiring of civilian employees.⁶¹

Self-Appointed Uncles

The “large and increasing number of boys under Registration age employed in towns in Kenya” caught the attention of the Church of Scotland Mission in the country.⁶² Indeed, the employment of young boys was a subject of discussion during the Annual General Meeting of the Kenya Missionary Council, an arm of the Church

⁵⁷Letter from Kikuyu General Union (Mombasa Branch) to Hon. F. Brockway, November 4, 1952 (Lord Leslie Hale Papers) Reel LLH/1/81 KNA, NRB.

⁵⁸The Kikuyu General Union, Mombasa Branch, to Attorney General, “Complaint Against Major C.E.V. Buxton For Kidnapping,” July 18, 1952 (Lord Leslie Hale Papers) Reel LLH/1/81 KNA, NRB.

⁵⁹Letter from Kikuyu General Union to Hon. F. Brockway, November 4, 1952 (Lord Leslie Hale Papers) Reel LLH/1/81 KNA, NRB. For a similar discussion about the kidnap of children in South Africa for slave-like labor, see Atkins, 16.

⁶⁰Wilson Maina Macharia interview with Samson K. Ndanyi, June 22, 2016, at KNA. Kidnapping in colonial Africa occurred frequently. See for example Beverly Grier, “Child Labor and Africanist Scholarship: A Critical Overview,” *African Studies Review* 47, no. 2 (Sep., 2004): 5-6

⁶¹Cabinet Office, Nairobi, March 27, 1956 Children and Young Person Legislation in Kenya CO859/574, TNA.

⁶²A.R. Barlow, Hon. Secretary, Church of Scotland Mission, Kikuyu, to Chief Native Commissioner, March 29, 1927, Alliance High School, 1923–1930 MSS/3/619 KNA, NRB.

of Scotland Mission, in February 1927. The Council deplored child labor and asked the government to stop the practice as it contributed to the degradation of a minor's moral and physical well-being.⁶³ What bothered Council members the most was the section of the law that required children who sought employment, but did not reside with their parents, only to acquire permits from Labor Officers. According to Council members, the prevailing conditions in the Native quarters in big towns threatened to erode the moral behaviors of unaccompanied minors. "When children under Registration age are employed away from home," the Council informed the Chief Native Commissioner in Nairobi, "special arrangements should be made to conserve their moral and physical well-being."⁶⁴

Council members did not reveal the "special arrangements" they had had in mind, nor did they provide the data that supported the argument of moral decline. Quietly, though, the Council's Executive Committee asked its Secretary to ask missionary "friends" to monitor "the possible deleterious effect of the employment of young African children on farms and in towns."⁶⁵ The Council hoped that missionaries would "observe" the effects of employment on young children "during the period of their employment or subsequent to their return to the Reserve" and report their "opinions" to the Secretary. The Secretary wrote to a "dear friend" (perhaps a missionary) asking for the missionary's testimony "as to whether employment of young children away from home ha[d] any obvious evil effects or not."⁶⁶

Archdeacon W. E. Owen of Kavirondo was perhaps the sharpest critic of underage child labor. In 1939, Owen questioned the existing policy on child labor by pointing out that the "exploitation of child labor [was] probably the meanest policy in our African Empire."⁶⁷ He began by censuring Section 28 of the Employment of Servants Ordinance, 1938 (discussed above), which exempted children under ten years from employment. Owen then turned to the dismal pay and the "cheap food" given to the children. He then questioned the lack of workmen's compensation legislation to protect the children except in the mining industry. Pointing out that employers took no responsibility for the children's safety and failed to pay those who became sick,⁶⁸ Owen blamed them for failing to ensure that "children

⁶³Barlow to Chief Native Commissioner, March 29, 1927, Alliance High School, 1923–1930 MSS/3/619 KNA, NRB.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Barlow to "Dear Friend," January 17, 1927, Alliance High School, 1923–1930 MSS/3/619 KNA, NRB.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Archdeacon Owen, "Child Labor," *East African Standard*, January 20, 1939.

⁶⁸Archdeacon Owen, "Child Labor in East Africa," *The Spectator*, January 6, 1939; Owen, "Child Labor."

reach[ed] home after their term of employment.”⁶⁹ Short on evidential data, Owen complained that the employers’ lack of responsibility resulted in “lost” children who “wander[ed] from employment to employment.”⁷⁰

Owen was not done. More than anyone else, the venerable Archdeacon linked child labor to the “heavy taxation” the government imposed. He characterized the tactics used to collect taxes as “harsh” and argued that these were the “forces” that compelled many African parents to allow their children to go into wage labor. On the subject of moral problems, Owen, like the Missionary Council before him, argued that labor centers were dens of “sexual immorality,” where Europeans cohabited with African women. As was often the case, Owen, without revealing the source of his evidence, claimed that venereal diseases were on the rise in labor lines, where “many children [found] themselves employed.”⁷¹ But Owen did not disclose whether children in these centers carried venereal diseases, which would have meant that children’s bodies were diseased instruments of colonial labor. According to Owen, children working away from parental supervision were often found “to be rolling about drunk.”⁷² Owen characterized the recruitment of underage children as a “scandal,” and he added that “there was not the care for the welfare of the child outside of working hours which was necessary if the child’s character were not to be exposed unnecessary to moral perils beyond its power to resist [sic].”⁷³ He concluded by reminding the British public that the responsibility for colonial policies rested with them. In a tone bordering on paternalism, Owen insisted that “the very least *we* can do to protect those who cannot protect themselves is to see to it that no children under 14 years be taken to employment distant from their homes.”⁷⁴ Because of Britain’s self-appointment as trustee of African children, Owen urged his fellow countrymen to “be worthy of [their] trust.”⁷⁵

Owen’s criticism echoed throughout the world and in the settler community in Kenya, where it unnerved White employers.⁷⁶ To Denis N. Neylan, a settler in Nakuru, Owen was nothing but an “old crank” who made “libelous statements.”⁷⁷ Neylan dismissed Owen’s views and questioned the deafening silence of “his brother clergy, who [were] supposed to stand for absolute truth and honesty. . . in

⁶⁹Owen, “Child Labor.”

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Owen, “Child Labor in East Africa.”

⁷²*The Chicago Defender*, “Churchman Exposes Child Labor in British Colony,” January 11, 1938.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Owen, “Child Labor in East Africa.”

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶The criticism also drew the attention of *The Chicago Defender’s* editors, who wrote about it under the banner of “Churchman Exposes Child Labor in British Colony” on June 11, 1938.

⁷⁷Denis N. Neylan, “Juvenile Labor,” *East African Standard*, January 6, 1939.

respect of juvenile labor.”⁷⁸ Explaining the “absolute truth” from a settler’s frame of reference, Neylan argued that juvenile labor was “entirely voluntary,” and that minor laborers came and went “at their own sweet will.” Neylan concluded by stating that white employers “cared for juveniles.”⁷⁹

Similarly, M. Mallet, a settler from Ruaraka, rebuked Owen for most of his concerns. With a certain bravado, Mallet waxed enthusiastically about the “12 and 14 juveniles” who worked for him. At the end of his five-year farming career in Kenya, Mallet boasted how he had between “50 and 60 happy totos [children].”⁸⁰ He also boasted of his care, even suggesting that it was far better than what the children received from their parents. To Mallet, Owen was a “pet theorist” who held on to a “frail” straw so long as it helped him advance his pet theory. Against Owen’s view that heavy taxation compelled parents to allow their children to engage in wage labor, Mallet agreed with Neylan’s view of voluntary labor, and added that parents were “very pleased” to see their children employed. “There was no need of coercion,” he wrote, adding that “they came in little flocks and for everyone I took on I refused three, much to their disappointment.”⁸¹ Echoing Neylan’s view, Mallet noted that his juvenile workers—mostly males who worked as kitchen boys, chicken boys, horse boys, farm boys, dog boys, errand boys, and numerous other occupations that he could not recall—came and went “as they pleased.”⁸² He did not disclose how he arranged for their housing, but he insisted that he fed them “plenty of food,” provided them with “good housing,” and attended to “even the smallest scratch.”⁸³

Colonial settlers and missionaries held themselves as altruistic avuncular figures and moral guardians of the African child. They argued that they stood on the side of the African child, but, as an informant suggested, “God,” not missionaries or settlers, “was with us.”⁸⁴ Throughout the colonial period in Africa, missionaries and settlers constituted the thread that held together the rugged fabric of colonialism. As part of the colonial apparatus, they promoted an alien culture,

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ M. Mallet, “Child Labor in Kenya,” *East African Standard*, January 13, 1939.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Mallet, “Child Labor in Kenya.”

⁸³ Ibid. Caroline Allan, another settler from Kericho, invited Owen to meet settlers who harbored the welfare of Kenya at heart. In Allan’s view, Owen grossly “underestimated” Kenya’s settlers,” but the community had forgiven him for the “folly he no doubt unwittingly committed.” Unlike Neylan and Mallet, who countered Owen on the merits of his arguments, Allan’s letter to the editors of the *East African Standard* missed the gist of Owen’s main concerns. Instead, Allan focused on the willingness of the settler community to invite Owen to “a debate” that would “guide” and “put him right” so that he might not be “a waste of good material.” See *East African Standard*, January 6, 1939.

⁸⁴ J.K. Mũtua, personal interview, June 28, 2016, Nairobi, Kenya.

patriotic motivations, and commercial interests.⁸⁵ Although they tended to claim that their core mission in Africa was to “cultivate” Africans to embrace new forms of physical hygiene, moral soundness, and spiritual attainment,⁸⁶ for the most part, missionaries often sided with secular governments to effect the colonial administrators’ policies. As John and Jean Comaroff put it, the two worked hand-in-hand to colonize the “consciousness” of the African people and to institute and enforce the “consciousness of colonization” in Africa.⁸⁷

As the debate between the church and colonial settlers over who qualified to speak for African children played out in public, the government created a committee to study the controversial issue and offer recommendations in 1939. In particular, the committee focused on Section 28 of the Employment of Servants Ordinance, 1938, with the goal of establishing whether or not the child workers’ minimum age should be raised from ten years. To the delight of the law’s critics, the committee recommended that the “age for agricultural and domestic employment be raised from ten to twelve [and] in industrial occupations from twelve to fourteen.”⁸⁸ Although frequent changes in minimum age created anxiety in the colony, the government propagated the notion that “the African youth is the future laborer and that, unless adequate steps are taken to integrate him into the economy . . . his own future, as well as that of the Colony itself will be imperiled.”⁸⁹

Conclusion

This article has attempted to demonstrate that juvenile wage labor interlaced African children into the fabric of a Western form of capitalism in Africa. Although the process was not an easy undertaking, the challenges exposed the colonizers’ inability to harmonize their conceptual view of an African child, and the frequent definitions and shifts in the meaning of age often undermined the harmonization process. Consequently, key labor actors employed multiple criteria (e.g. height, sturdiness, and age) through which they imagined African children. By all measures, colonialists failed to grasp the logic separating children and wage labor. By 1919, children and wage labor hardly proceeded in tandem, and the two were never considered in the international arena as two sides of the same coin. This

⁸⁵V.Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988), 45.

⁸⁶Timothy Burke, *Lifebouv Men, Lux Women: Commodification, Consumption, and Cleanliness in Modern Zimbabwe* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996); John and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution* vol. 1 & 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1991& 1997).

⁸⁷Comaroff, 309–314.

⁸⁸Owen, “Child Labor.”

⁸⁹Report of the Labor Department of Kenya, April 6, 1950. Employment of Children, Women and Young Persons, in Industry and Other Occupations—Kenya, CO859/191/10, TNA.

universally recognized logic is enshrined in the International Labor Organization's constitution (1919), but it meant little to Britain's "men on the spot," even when the evidence suggest that they understood ILO's spirit.⁹⁰ Contrary to ILO's Convention, which Kenya observed, and contrary to Kenya's own law, children worked without the prior parental consent. As such, the disconnection between government and international and domestic laws complicated the definition of an African child throughout the colonial era.

This article challenges the theory that links child labor to poverty in African households. At its core, the theory postulates that African families, poor in material wealth, willingly sent their children to work. This theory shifts the blame to African parents and excuses labor recruiters and employers who forced children into the labor industry. Ignoring multiple incidences of kidnapping of African children for labor, the theory fails to hold accountable the kidnappers, mainly labor recruiters acting on the behest of colonial settlers and employers. Two incidences discussed in this article are of particular interest. First, the forceful employment of Okal at the Septum Tea Company against his mother's knowledge and objection, who asked he be returned to her immediately. Secondly, the KGU's agitation against Buxton's kidnap of fourteen children from Limuru to Vipingoni Estates in Kilifi District. These incidences illustrate the African opposition to the colonial labor recruitment regime.

Finally, this article has implicitly exposed a gender binary that informed labor practices in colonial Kenya. Officials often employed child labor as a means to construct masculinity and separate genders. By recruiting mostly boys in large numbers to work on settler farms and in homes, factories, and mining, for example, they created a gender binary and defined masculinity based on the boys' physical makeup and ability to work. The "reconstruction of African childhood was and is a gendered process."⁹¹ Girls in colonial Zimbabwe, Nyasaland, and Swaziland, for example, had less freedom of mobility and very limited employment prospects in sprawling towns across the country.⁹² For the most part during the period under review, women generally had less access than men to the colonial economy and labor. Frederick Cooper sums up the disparity this way: "industrial man, in officials' eyes, was indeed a male."⁹³

The constructed categories were key to controlling black male bodies at critical stages of growth. As Dior Konate informs us in reference to the control

⁹⁰S.A. Ogilvie's letter, January 24, 1952, Employment of women and children- Kenya CO859/302, TNA.

⁹¹Grier, 17.

⁹²Ibid.; Chirwa, 665; Simelane, 572.

⁹³Cooper, 2; Also see López-Calva, 66.

of young female delinquents in colonial Senegal, “the definition of a legal age for children reveals the colonial authorities’ willingness to take on a greater role in the control of African youth.”⁹⁴ For the control to take hold, however, public institutions supporting this idealized thinking were established. Throughout colonial Africa, Approved Schools and Juvenile Courts suddenly emerged to institutionalize the control and make it permanent. In Kenya, with regard to the age group thought to be most prone to delinquency (fourteen to sixteen years of age), a figure from the Juvenile Court in Nairobi shows that between 1954 and 1957, “1579 children under 13 years, 4273 children between 14 and 16, and 792 children between 16 and 18 appeared before the Court” charged with multiple juvenile offenses that included withholding their labor by evading responsibilities, loitering at street corners, and truancy.⁹⁵ Generally, Approved Schools admitted those children the administrations believed could easily be rehabilitated before rejoining the labor force. Therefore, individuals and private and public institutions—like Owen, white employers, and the Church of Scotland Mission—that pretended to speak on the behest of African children while condoning colonialism in all its manifestation were more interested in taking part in the already elaborate control system.

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my gratitude to Michelle Moyd and Brett Berliner for reading the first draft and commenting on it. I am also grateful to the staff at the Kenya National Archives (Nairobi), The National Archives (Kew, United Kingdom), and other institutions in Kenya for guiding me through their repositories. This research would not have been completed without the financial support I received from Indiana University’s history department and African Studies Program.

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⁹⁴Dior Konate, “On Colonial Laws and the Treatment of Young Female Delinquents in Senegal: The Case of Léonie Guèye,” *Stichproben Wiener Zeitschrift für kritische Afrikastudien* 7, no. 12 (2007): 39.

⁹⁵Colin S. Owen, Principal Probation Officer and Chief Inspector of Approved Schools, “Central Probation Committee: Employment of Juveniles Sub-Committee’s Report,” (August 3, 1957). Employment of Juveniles Africans and Others BZ/14/1 KNA, NRB.