

History Labour on the Mwadui Diamond Mine: 1940 -1975

By

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The recruitment and stabilization of a cheap African labour force for the production of raw diamonds at Mwadui since 1940 has been attributed to the management of the mining company, the Williamson Diamonds Limited. A re-examination of the history of labour at Mwadui mine reveals that there were socio-economic and socio-political forces outside and on the mine which made it possible for the management to recruit and maintain the labour force. The colonial and neo-colonial cheap raw materials from the underdeveloped world to the industrialization nations had brought about the imposition of the capitalist mode of production on the traditional economies of Tanzania. By the time the mining operations commenced at Mwadui in 1940, the penetration of the capitalist market forces into Tanzania rural societies had made the availability of labour for the raw material industries relatively easier than at the beginning of colonialism. In the course of the development of Mwadui mine, African labour became increasingly abundant. There was an increasing proletarianization in Tanzania and a process of mechanising production on Mwadui Mine. proletarianization gave rise to a large unskilled labour force, while mechanisation reduced the need for a large number of unskilled labourers. Since 1958, very many unskilled labourers were being treated roughly or dismissed from Mwadui. As a result, the workers sought to organise themselves under trade unionist activities. This made it increasingly difficult for the management to control the workers in order to protect the industry, which was considered as one of the major sources of public revenue, both the colonial and later. The national state machinery intervened by controlling both the management and the trade unionist activities on the mine. The final result of this kind of protection of the industry was that the production of raw diamonds by cheap labour continued at Mwadui. Although the working conditions improved and the government obtained the revenue it wanted, the industrial and the commercial bourgeoisie of the world capitalist system have continued to make profits through the exploitation of the Mwadui workers during the colonial and neo-colonial epoch.
