

History of Labour on the Mwadui Diamond Mine
1940 - 1975
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Abstract

The recruitment and stabilization of a cheap African labour force for the production of raw diamonds at Mwadui, since 1940, had been attributed to the management of the mining company, the Williamson's Diamonds Limited, until recently, the history of labour on the Mwadui Diamond Mine, and even of the whole of the Tanzanian mining industry, was comparatively neglected.

This study attempted to describe the recruitment and maintenance of cheap labour under both colonial Tanganyika and neo-colonial Tanzania through a case study of Mwadui Diamond Mine for the period between 1940 and 1975. During this period, Tanzanian workers invariably maintained their ties with the rural sector where they owned some means of production in the form of landed property. With the penetration of the capitalist market forces into the rural sector and the subsequent expansion of economic horizons among the peasantry, more and more people had become increasingly dependent on employment in the modern sector to meet their basic needs. This was the context within which the development of the mine labour force at Mwadui was examined.

It was hoped that this study would give a human face to the study of economic history by examining the interactions between economic change and human experience not only in the Mwadui Diamond mining industry, but also in the context of the mining industry in Tanzania as a whole.

The study presented a historical account of the relationship between the level of the development of productive forces and the people involved in the mining industry. It then examined the forces behind the process of 'proletarianisation' which brought the mine's labour force into being. In the same vein, the social conditions on the mine were assessed by specifically examining the forces behind the stabilisation of the mine's labour force and

those forces behind the development of working class consciousness which led to strikes and trade unionism.

A re-examination of the history of Labour at Mwadui mine revealed 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 demand for cheap raw materials from the underdeveloped world to the industrialized 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.

Indeed, the making of the Mwadui Mine labour-force depended on external and external factors. The external factors were products of the imposition of the capitalist mode of production on the traditional self-sufficient rural economies. Taxation and the increasing penetration of market forces into the rural areas drove men away from rural societies to wage employment in the centres of raw materials production. The internal factors such as the relatively high wages and the attractive social amenities on the mine combined with the aforesaid external factors to attract labour from the rural areas.

Secondly, it was also observed that the maintenance of the African labour-force depended largely on a multiplicity of control measures by both the management of Mwadui Diamond mine and the state machinery. Part Of the remuneration, which was made in kind, rather than big money wages complemented the compound system in 1940s and 1950s to stabilize the labour-force.

In the course of the development of Mwadui mine, African labour became increasingly abundant. There was an increasing 'proletarianisation' in Tanzania and a process of mechanising production on Mwadui Mine. 'Proletarianisation' gave rise to a large unskilled labour force, while mechanisation reduced the need for a large number of unskilled labourers.

With regard to workers' consciousness, it could be argued that there was hardly any collective bargaining prior to 1958. Two major economic factors accounted for this low working class consciousness during the first 18 years of the mine. First, there was the process of 'proletarianisation' which was at a lower stage of development in 1940 than in 1958. This process increased as the penetration of money-commodity economy increased in the rural areas. Increasing scarcity of land in the rural areas and increasing interest of urban life spurred on the workers to struggle for 'better' life on the mine. Secondly, the process of mechanisation which was accomplished in greater part in 1956 began to make the most unskilled workers redundant.

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 machineries 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.

the revenue Although it wanted, the working the industrial conditions and improved the commercial and the Government bourgeoisie obtained of the world capitalist system had continued to make profits through the exploitation of the Mwadui workers during the colonial and neo-colonial epochs.