

**THE TRANSFORMATION OF AFRICAN WORKERS IN KISUMU  
COUNTY 1895-1963**

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## DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been submitted for a degree in any other university.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my father Mr. Joseph Ogola, my husband Mr. Marcus Odhiambo and our children Mel, Anita, Wandago and Gregory.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

AWF	-	African Workers Federation
CMS	-	Church Missionary Society
DC	-	District Commissioner
EAA	-	East African Association
IBEACO	-	Imperial British East African Company
ILO	-	International Labour Organization.
KANU		Kenya African National Union.
KAU	-	Kenya African Union
KDC	-	Kisumu District Commissioner
KFR TU	-	Kenya Federation of Registered Trade Union
KICOMI	-	Kisumu Cotton Mills.
KKWA	-	Kajulu Kathimo Welfare Association
KNA	-	Kenya National Archives
KTWA	-	Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare Association
KUPS	-	Kenya Union of Sugarcane Planters
LCN	-	Local Native Council
LUTATCO	-	Luo Thrift and Trading Corporation
NAO	-	Native Authority Ordinance
NKWA	-	North Kavirondo Welfare Association.
NRO	-	Native Registration Ordinance
PC	-	Provincial Commissioner
RAWA	-	Ramogi African Welfare Welfare Association.
WWII	-	World War Two

## **OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS**

**AFRICAN LABOUR** - Is a dependent variable that contributed fundamentally to the growth of capitalist economy.

**AFRICAN LABOURERS** - Africans who performed physical work or manual tasks in return for a wage, which was often unskilled or semi-skilled.

**AFRICAN WORKERS** - Africans who performed labour for a specific company or individual for compensation, e.g traders, professional civil servants or administrative work.

**CAPITALISM**-This is wealth accumulated in the hands of a group of people who own the means of production, for example, industries, raw materials, machines, entrepreneurship and money.

**CHANGE** - Refers to transformation, transitional process or variation from one form of state to another.

**COLONIAL LABOUR POLICIES** – Is an independent variable which allowed the colonialists to control the pre-capitalist economy.

**COLONIALISM**-This is the practice of domination, which involves political and economic control of one country or territory by another through exploitation of resources.

**LABOUR** - Human effort used in the making of goods and services. It is the physical and mental work that Africans engage in to contribute to new modes of production.

**MODE OF PRODUCTION** -It is the force of production that defines the economic foundation and interactions for example the social, political and economic strata.

**ORDINANCES**- Laws or regulations enacted in the colonial period in Kenya to assist the colonialist control Africans for capitalist development.

**POLICY** - Are a set of rules and regulations established by the colonial government in their areas of jurisdiction under their control influencing certain aspects of modes of production.

**RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION** - Involves the interactions that workers or labourers enter into in the process of production.

**TRADITIONAL ECONOMY** - This is an economic system deeply rooted in culture, traditions, and beliefs of a people in the society.

**TRANSFORMATION** - Significant change in individuals over time where change is driven by various factors such as economic shifts.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

<i>Akuno</i>	-	A wild fruit that grows at the river banks or near swamps.
<i>Amerikani</i>	-	Types of clothes sold by the Indians to Africans living in Kisumu.
<i>Andiwo</i>	-	A species of sorghum which is very short in size and matures faster
<i>Apoth</i>	-	Vegetables that grow on their own in places that are freshly ploughed.
<i>Askari</i>	-	A soldier or security officer.
<i>Atipa</i>	-	A type of vegetable that grows on its own in places that have been ploughed.
<i>Baghdad boys</i>	-	Vigilante group.
<i>Beti</i>	-	Machete
<i>Boma</i>	-	City
<i>Budho</i>	-	Pumpkin
<i>Busaa</i>	-	Traditional brew
<i>Chir</i>	-	Informal education
<i>Chira</i>	-	Curse
<i>Dala</i>	-	Home
<i>Dek</i>	-	A type of vegetable.
<i>Dholuo</i>	-	Luo mother tongue
<i>Gunda bur</i>	-	The ancestral home where all the family members originate.
<i>Gweng</i>	-	Location
<i>Gwenge</i>	-	Many Locations
<i>Jaluo</i>	-	A Luo person.

<i>Jobilo</i>	-	Diviners
<i>Jodak</i>	-	Tenants who are migrants
<i>Joka-jok</i>	-	A section of the River- Lake – Nilotes.
<i>Jokakwaro</i>	-	People of a lineage
<i>Jokisuma</i>	-	People who depend on charity
<i>Jokristo</i>	-	Converts
<i>Jopango</i>	-	Town dwellers
<i>Josomo</i>	-	Elites
<i>Juakali</i>	-	Informal sector artisans
<i>Kal</i>	-	Millet
<i>Kimirwa</i>	-	A child without a family or born out of wedlock.
<i>Kimirwa</i>	-	A child without a family or born out of wedlock among members of the Luo ethnic community.
<i>Kinda e teko Riwruok e teko</i> – Through struggle and persistence, we find unity and strength		
<i>Kipande</i>	-	Identity card
<i>Kisumu ndogo</i>	-	A term used to refer to small enclaves or areas where members of the Luo community settled in different urban areas away from Kisumu
<i>Kwer</i>	-	A hoe.
<i>Ligala</i>	-	A newly built home
<i>Lop kwaro</i>	-	Ancestral land
<i>Maembe</i>	-	Mangoes.
<i>Mapera</i>	-	Guavsa.
<i>Midenyo</i>	-	Hunger

<i>Mikai</i>	-	First wife
<i>Misri</i>	-	Dispersal area for the cushites
<i>Mondo</i>	-	A garden for the head of the family.
<i>Ng''or</i>	-	Cow peas.
<i>Nyachira</i>	-	The last wife
<i>Ochuoga</i>	-	A wild fruit that grows in the forest.
<i>Ochuti</i>	-	A species of sorghum that is grown in dry regions and matures fast.
<i>Odielo</i>	-	A species of vegetable.
<i>Oganda</i>	-	Beans
<i>Ojalo</i>	-	Machete
<i>Ombasa</i>	-	A wild fruit.
<i>Osuga</i>	-	A type of vegetable.
<i>Ot</i>	-	House
<i>Panga</i>	-	Machete in Kiswahili.
<i>Piny owacho</i>	-	Refers to the government in Luo language (The voice of the people)
<i>Pubungu</i>	-	Dispersal area of the Luo in Uganda
<i>Punjabis</i>	-	A tribe from India skilled in railway construction.
<i>Puonj din</i>	-	Catechism
<i>Saga</i>	-	An alliance formed to make work easier or be finished in good time.
<i>Shamba boy</i>	-	A boy or man working in the garden or house belonging to a colonial officer
<i>Sumo</i>	-	To borrow

<i>Susa</i>	-	Pumpkin leaves
<i>Wali</i>	-	Chief
<i>Wasumbni</i>	-	Immigrant
<i>Wuon dala</i>	-	Owner of the home

## ABSTRACT

This study discussed the evolution of African workers in Kisumu County from 1895-1963. The population transformed from native systems of production to new forms of production with new aspects of labour provision, which included wage labour, forced labour and compulsory communal labour. This new labour system restructured labour relations which disengaged many Africans living in Kisumu County, from their traditional production. This led to a fundamental transformation in the lives of African workers that the study has analyzed. The objectives traced the pre-colonial labour relations among the Luo of Kisumu County up to 1895, examined the various colonial labour policies that led to establishment of colonial economy and transformation of African workers in Kisumu County from 1901-1945 and assessed the changing nature of colonial labour policies and practices on African workers in Kisumu County during the decolonization period 1946-1963. The study employed both Articulations of modes of production and modernization theories to examine how the colonial government used the colonial policies to exploit indigenous modes of production that changed the traditional practices and life of the African labourers in Kisumu County. Consequently, Kisumu County transited into a modern entity with profound colonial labour challenges. Methodologically, the research design that was employed included a descriptive survey with interview schedules that were administered to Kisumu County residents who were willing to give information. The target population included pioneer labourers, civil servants, Asians who worked in the railway line construction sites and those who engaged in trade, children and grandchildren of former government representatives. Purposive and snowballing sampling methods were employed and a total of 50 respondents who reside in the town were sampled based on age, experience and expertise. Data collection methods include primary and secondary, where government reports and archival data were sought. The results of this research work indicates that the colonial government used discriminative labour policies to exploit Kisumu county's natural resources using African labour. Africans' modes of production were transformed from traditional to new modes of articulation. This change in the mode of production, left the African peasant economy unattended. By the mid-1950s African workers of Kisumu had embraced capitalist work ethics however throughout the colonial period labour challenges became a menace that overlapped into the post-colony. Despite the challenges that African went through, the study has revealed that Africans contributed to capitalist economy by providing wage labour and land.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

The issue of labour has manifested itself in so many ways across the globe. For instance, Galenson (1984) outlined the white servitude as one of the major institutions in the economy and society of early colonial British America. He analyses the structure of the indentured labour force and gives quantitative understanding of indentured immigrants. However, some migrants who could bear the cost of transport never joined the indentured labour force. These workers provided solutions to initial problems of labour shortage that characterised the new world in the early times of colonisation in the Americas.

Looking at the history of labour in South Asia in cities of Bengal and North-East India, Van Schendel (2006) outlines the rural industrial complexes which dealt with extraction of various minerals and work in the plantation farms, within domestic service and state employment. He reiterates that these big capitalist economies were founded in colonial times based on foreign capital and a migratory labour force. This led to the formation of working-class versus working dichotomies within these cities. Such dichotomization of labour would later inform some of the protests and disparities in the labour industry not only in South Asia but also other parts of the world.

Similarly, Linden (2008) discussed “workers of the world” giving an example of issues of labour in Germany. He conceptualizes labour in three areas that is; who are the workers? Why free wage labour and why chattel slavery. Linden believed in commodified labour which comes through free wage labour. He also strongly

believed that workers have only their labour to sell and nothing else. On the same note, while giving an elaborate account of Africa labourers who worked in France, Richard (2019) contends that as early as 1918, Africans had already started to engage in labour supply outside the African continent. French officials recruited men from its vast federations of territories in West Africa because of its proximity to the metro pole and front. Africans in France supported the war, worked in factories, ports, on farms as labourers, porters, and soldiers. This is because Africans were capable of doing hard work.

In Africa, a number of studies have captured African labour in various parts of the continent. For example, Wood (1968) ascertained that in Central and Southern Africa particularly in Nyasaland and South Africa, vigorous prosecution of missionary and administrative endeavours resulted in the displacement of tribe's men from their rural settlements in reaction to the demands for labour. Africans worked in the mines, plantations and secondary industries, as carriers, as soldiers and as domestic workers. This culminated into the disruption of their traditional economy in terms of transformation and family composition because young men migrated into the urban centers. However, with migrant labour moving into the urban areas, new social institutions arose in town life.

Similarly, Thomas (1973) discussed coerced labour in Ghana's Gold mines in the Northern territories of Tarkwa-Prestea. He argues that public works bordered between kinship and coerced labour because Africans were reluctant to offer labour in the mines. He contends that the private companies liaised with the colonial government for recruiting labourers under strict labour disciplines and sometimes putting up punishments for breaching contracts within the set up of criminal law.

The colonial government also introduced a pass law which had more negative impacts on the mine workers' traditional social relations and units.

This view is supported by Arrighi (1973) who contends that in the early colonial rule in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Africans were not yet ready to be subjected to forced labour, due to the fact that they had and locally engaged with subsistence farming that enabled them to meet their daily needs. This led the colonial government to contend with the challenges of supply of labour. Consequently, the colonial government had to put in certain measures such as taxation, land alienation, the pass system and the establishment of reserves to make Africans provide labour for the colonial government.

Raymond (1984) as well as Cooper (1996) discussed how getting African labour was not easy in South Africa. According to these scholars, the native problems in Africa for the colonial regime were the African labourers and to a lesser extent the businessmen. The two scholars have argued that administering and acquiring African labour was difficult in the middle of the 1930s because of the primordial African culture traits. Therefore, Africans had to be put under constant security checks based on tribal and career choice.

Closer home, Fuller (1977) contends that capitalist institutions in Uganda interfered with traditional subsistence economies. This is because the structures and institutions of the capitalist economy had to be implemented. Fuller (1977) argues that the most pervasive characteristics of the modern economic patterns were the quest for African labour by the colonial powers and its economic counterparts. As a result of this interaction, Africans were able to realize the need to alter themselves and their society to better face the impacts and challenges of colonial rule.

Looking at labour challenges in Tanzania Mwaruvie (2012) observed that Tanganyika was confronted with challenges of labour after the exportation of labour from their country Tanzania to Kenya to assist in the building of the railway line from Kenya to Uganda. He posits that it was fear of lack of labour in Kenya that had necessitated the importation of labour from Tanganyika during the labour crisis in the 1920s. As a result, the only alternative that the colonial administration in Kenya had was to seek labour from Tanganyika territory. Labour movements across the East African protectorate were normal and the colonial system, having assumed and controlled the means of production, had the capacity to draw labour from any part of the protectorate in order to achieve her capitalist agenda within its areas of jurisdiction.

In Kenya, Mohamed (1978) underscored the economic and social life of African labourers in Mombasa between 1895 and 1939 and denoted that the life of Africans in Mombasa was poor and labourers responded either individually or as a group in tackling the problems they faced. This led to the rise of nationalism by the 1930s. But also, Africans in Mombasa had to react against poor working conditions especially in the harbor as demonstrated by dock workers who at some point would stage strikes and work boycotts to demand for better working conditions and pay.

Colonialism in Kenya distorted Africans' modes of production and at the same time brought some challenges. Berman and Lonsdale (1980) for instance, points out some of the bottlenecks that came up with settler agriculture in Kenya during the colonial period. They have argued that for profitable settler farming in Kenya to be realized, there was a need to access fertile land as well as cheap labour by the European settlers. Easy access to these two means of production was paramount in order to

push for the colonial agenda in Kenya. Although labour was paramount for the success of settler agriculture, just like in other British colonies in Africa, its supply posed a great challenge and labour supply posed a great challenge. The colonial government therefore, had to use a combination of market forces, seasonality and land tenure policies to acquire labour. These are a few of the western forms of knowledge authorised by the West, which characterized Kenya's postcolony with the onset of colonialism.

According to Zeleza (1993), the types of labour offered by Africans were three-fold; the forced, the squatter and “free” wage labour. Zeleza further argues that labour was acquired through forced means and legislation was passed to effect its acquisition, for example, penal consequences for breach of work were put into action. The recruiters for labour were free to use any method whether dubious or cruel in order to get it. The labour force did not entail only working in the farms, railway and road construction sites, missionary centers and administrative areas but was also used as military men and carrier corps in the First and the Second World Wars. This was not just a misuse of African labour but it also demonstrated the exploitative nature of colonialism. Surplus or excess labour by Africans was never compensated by the colonial masters.

Anderson (2001) argues that due to lack of employment creation strategies for the youth in the rural villages, the urban centers became places for the economic venture for the Kenyan population. This forced many Kenyans to migrate to urban centers. These centers attracted Kenyan labourers for either industrial, commercial, farming or other forms of labour. Towns like Mombasa, Nakuru, Nairobi, Naivasha and Kisumu among others mainly developed during the colonial period as bases, depots

or administrative units. In these economic spaces, provision of labour by Africans became the driving force for the sustainability of these economic bases and depots.

Looking at the issues of rural-urban migration during the colonial period, Akumu and Olima (2007) allude to the fact that there were a lot of reverse of native restrictions and laws. This led to mass rural-urban migration and reduced farming activities in the rural areas. With rapid shifts to the urban areas, African labourers faced problems of overcrowding, poor housing, unemployment, high crime rate and many other problems.

Within Kisumu region, Osamba (1996) examines the role of colonial capitalism and underdevelopment in the Asian owned sugar cane farms. The colonial government favored the establishment of settler farming in Kenya with a few Asian farmers apportioned pieces of land in lowland areas of the district. These low land areas were considered climatically unsuitable for white settlement (See also Omenya, 2010). Therefore, Asians capitalized on this by establishing sugarcane plantation farms by drawing labour mostly from the locals within Kisumu County and other neighbouring counties. Although Asians in sugar plantations in the wider Nyanza region, their activity complemented the colonial capitalist agenda that was in place. Although the Asian sugarcane farms attracted male labourers, labour issues in the colony and more so Kisumu were also gender based.

Okuro (2006) explores the gendered dimension of labour in Kisumu County and argues that the missionary and colonial activities in *Seme* location in Kisumu County led to gendered conflicts in the traditional marriage institution such that dissatisfied women fled their homes to the urban centers where they worked as women labourer in wage employment. It is, therefore, important to note that the colonial systems

favoured a gendered labour system as a way of enhancing exploitation of African labour. Colonialism, therefore, created conditions which forced both men and women to adapt to the prevailing new market economies that slowly emerged within the colonial state.

Most studies of labour history in Kenya and beyond have tended to concentrate on general issues. Little attention has been given to labour issues affecting a particular urban center. The transformation of African workers in Kisumu County in the colonial period has inadequate or fragmentary historical documentation. Thus, the study endeavours to analyze how capitalist economies used African labour to take over from and transform the traditional economy.

The African worker in Kisumu County would later on transform into a wage labourer for the sole purpose of helping the colonial state to develop a capitalist economy. Wage labour was totally new to Africans all over Kenya and Kisumu County in particular hence, the colonial government used force or coercion to ensure labour was provided either to the colonial administration or the settlers. It is significant to understand that taxation as one of the labour policies as well as other various land ordinances forced Africans to migrate into the urban centers to look for wage employment. These policies had their profound consequences on the people which is worth historical analysis.

There is evidence from the above observation that the discourse done on labour issues within the context of this study is too general since most of the arguments do not tackle local issues relating to the evolution of African worker in Kisumu town and the impact that the transformation of African labour had on the population of Africans within Kisumu County. For instance, several studies touching on labour

issues have been done targeting towns such as Mombasa (Mohamed, 1978), Nyeri (Kiruthu, 1979), Mumias, (Murunga, 1998), however, these works are only tenable on the global and regional levels and have not been able to address specific issues touching on the transformation of labour in the colonial period with specific reference to Kisumu County.

Although other studies have been undertaken with specific reference to Kisumu, each of these studies have addressed specific issues in Kisumu differently by using different approaches. For instance, Ogal (1977), Francis (1995), Anyumba (1995), Zeleza (1996), Ogot (2016), Omenya (2015), Akinyi (2017), Awasi (2018), Omondi Ouma (2023) have all focused-on Kisumu but their studies fell short of specifically addressing transformative issues as far as African labour within the colonial context in Kisumu was concerned. In spite of the significant role African labourers had in the establishment of colonial rule in Kenya and Kisumu by-extension, no discourse has been done to this area of scholarship. More so, there is scarce literature to document this historical development. Based on this gap in scholarship, this study, therefore, seeks to interrogate the transformation in the history of African workers in Kisumu from 1895-1963.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

During the colonial period African workers went through significant transformation because of colonial policies and existing economic structures that were created by the colonial government. These policies included the establishment of forced labour, the development of the migrant labour system and disruption of the traditional economy. These changes led to the decline in the standards of Living, land alienation and the coming up of new forms of labour relations. Colonial government

enacted various policies to get labour from Africans to meet the demands of the colonial economy. The colonial government had to employ stringent measures to ensure Africans transitioned to capitalist modes of production through taxation, land alienation, creation of reserves, compulsory communal labour hence, Africans were compelled to work. Coercion and forceful recruitment ensured that Africans completely evaded their traditional labour obligations. Forced labour was blended with migrant labour that forced Africans to migrate from their rural areas and work in various capitalist economy sites. Africans were removed from the highlands and pushed into the reserves to pave way for the settler's economy which disrupted the traditional economy, consequently labour migrancy became a common future. With the existing economic structures, there was a long term dependency on capitalist economy.

It can be argued that during the colonial time the labour demands were dreadful, arduous, and dangerous and the wages were very low therefore, Africans maintained their traditional modes of production as a subsidy. The paltry wages and back breaking work characterised the provision of labour, where the colonial government could not easily get labour, they depended on forced recruitments which were organized by chiefs, village headmen and private recruiters. It is evident that Africans were required to work for colonial masters and devote less time to their subsistence farming. This increased their vulnerability to famine, food insecurity and poor labour relations. To date, not only is famine realized in Kisumu but also in the whole country of Kenya, simply because the colonial government made Africans to pursue and to prioritize more on cash crops than food crops. These conditions led to poverty because of the extortion of African labour by the colonial government,

informal settlements to house Africans increased because Africans had migrated to towns to look for a means of livelihood but could not afford proper housing. Female headed households became the norm in the villages as men went out to look for wage labour in the towns. The disruption of traditional economic, social and political structures in essence transformed African labourers from participating in largely self-sufficient economies to a workforce dependent on the colonial economy, facing new forms of exploitation and new forms of social strata. The origins and nature of these challenges can be fully understood if a detailed analysis is given on the transformation of African workers in the unit under study.

Many discourses on labour have been done at the continental, regional and even national levels with much generalisation. This study has focused on a county and employed the historical aspect to ascertain the validity of some of the generalisations that are tenable at a broader level. The study ends at independence laying a strong foundation on which the post-colonial analysis can be undertaken. In earnest the traditional economy declined because the labour that was much needed had transited to capitalist economy. Capitalist economy made Africans become labour providers instead of labour creators which existed in the traditional economy. These problems are still evident in the post-colony labour sector not only in Kisumu County but also in Kenya generally. It is in this light that the study analyses the historical transformation of African labour, the growth of Kisumu as an urban Centre on African labour and changes that occurred.

### **1.3 Study Objectives**

This study sets out to:

- i. Analyse the pre-colonial labour relations among the Luo in Kisumu County up to 1895
- ii. Examine various colonial labour policies that led to establishment of colonial economy and the transformation of African workers in Kisumu County, 1901-1945.
- iii. Assess the changing nature of colonial labour policies on African workers in Kisumu County, 1946-1963.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

The study answers the following research questions;

- i. What were the pre-colonial labour relations among the Luo in Kisumu County up to 1895?
- ii. What were the various colonial labour policies that were established to transform African labourers in Kisumu county from 1901-1945?
- iii. What were the changes and continuities in the colonial labour policies on the African workers of Kisumu County during the decolonisation period?

#### **1.5 Research Premise**

The study is informed by the following research premises;

- i. The pre-colonial labour relations may have informed the traditional modes of production of Africans in Kisumu County.
- ii. The various colonial labour policies enacted by the colonial government were used to transform African labourers of Kisumu County
- iii. The colonial labour policies established in Kisumu County led to the transformation of African labourers in the decolonization period.

## **1.6 Justification and Significance of the Study**

The results of this study are important to the academia and scholars who stand to gain new knowledge, by understanding the genesis of the problems of acquiring and application of labour policies in our society today. The research will also benefit policy makers and government agencies by providing and suggesting various ways of mitigating the challenges faced by labourers during the colonial times and the contemporary society today.

The choice of the area of study is relevant because there is scanty historical documentation on African workers in the study locale. Kisumu town is thus, one of the few urban centers in Kenya that historically developed as a result of colonial penetration. It therefore epitomizes the height of colonialism in its very early stages and is historically important since different aspects of labour were negotiated and contested by Africans in the light of colonialism which characterised Kenya as a colonial state. Such experiences require historical documentation.

In terms of theoretical and empirical approaches, the study is a significant contribution to Kenya's historiography in that the modes of production approach is used in theorizing labour issues in specific areas. Most labour discourses have been informed by articulation of modes of production theory which is general in approach as per analysis of labour situation is concerned. Scholars like Sticher (1982), Ndeda (1991) and Suda (1986) have focused on the impact of labour in the whole country Kenya, Siaya and labour organization on small farms in Western Kenya respectively.

The study covers the periods 1895-1963. The year 1895 marks the declaration of Kenya as a British colony which laid the foundation for a new labour economy in

Kenya. Kisumu became an important urban center as it became the terminus for the Uganda railway making it an inland port harbour and the colonial administrative headquarters of the region. The year marks the start of colonial rule not only in Kisumu but for the whole country of Kenya especially when the western boundary was defined under the sole jurisdiction of the British East African Protectorate. The results of colonial labour policies on the workers of Kisumu are traced up to 1963. The year is significant because it marked the end of colonial rule with the country gaining independence and Africans gaining more freedom from colonial capitalist ideology.

### **1.7 Scope and Limitation of the Study**

The study was carried out within Kisumu County which is located at the shores of Lake Victoria at the cups of Winam gulf. The town extends within the six sub-counties of Kisumu East, West and Central, Seme, Nyando, Nyakach and Muhoroni. Kisumu County neighbours Siaya, Vihiga, Nandi, Kericho, Nyamira and Homa Bay Counties.

Some of the limitations that the study encountered included the vastness of the area under study and how to find the right informants. To overcome these limitations, the study employed research assistants who were familiar with the area and helped the researcher to access various places and respondents. The services of former pioneer labourers, children and grandchildren of former colonial representatives for example chiefs, assistant-chiefs and the elderly, who witnessed the colonial rule, helped the study to get valuable information.

## **1.8. Literature Review**

### **1.8.0. Introduction**

This section discusses scholarly works on labour and issues dealing with labourers on the international, regional and local levels. These scholars have made contributions in areas of labour relations, labour protests, the rise of mass politics, socio-economic and historical related to industrial workers in different areas of the globe.

### **1.8.1 Literature Review**

Globally various scholars have discussed labour and issues in different set-ups. Galenson (1984) discusses white servitude in the USA, as one of the greater institutions in the society and economy of the old British American colony. He outlines the quantitative explanation of the indentured immigrants to the USA. He further argues that some of the immigrants to America did not get into America as indentured labourers during the period of America's colonization since they had to bear the cost of transportation. More importantly, these indentured labourers played a key role in the early colonial British American economy. Although Gelenson (1984) study was general in nature and specific to the USA context, it provided a good basis to analyse and understand labour issues and the demand for labour by the colonial government in Kenya and more so in Kisumu County.

While interrogating issues of labour in Britain, Addison (2005) denotes that by the 1990s labour supply in Britain was in the downward trend. Hence there was very little to write about, apart from writing on the theme of "cultural turn". He encouraged historians to write more on the World Wars, gender, citizenship, national identity and race. Addison's discourse is therefore important to this research

work as it helped in the analysis of the labour situation within Kisumu County around the World War I and II period. The work, therefore, helped in shedding more light on the importance of African labour towards war effort as a way of helping the British in securing their colony in Kenya.

On the other hand, Schendel (2006) examines labour historiography in South Asia in places such as Bengal and North East India. The megacities of Kalkata, Dhaka, Chittagany, and Guwahiti became the centers for rural industrial complexes. The Industries in these places mainly dealt with coal and gas extraction, tea plantations, oil, domestic service, fisheries, trade crafts and state employment. Large scale capitalist enterprises developed on the basis of foreign capital and migratory labour force. This resulted in the formation of the working class and diverse worker experiences. The current study borrowed a lot from Schendel's work to examine various dynamics of labour relations as well as its impacts on the people of Kisumu.

Van Linden (2008) denounces the nationalism and Euro-centrism ingrained in the historiography of labour of transnational and supranational as opposed to Eurocentric approach on labour issues. Various kinds of workers over the world and projects on workers who do not own their labour power "subaltern workers", workers whose labour force are sold out to the capitalist under economic or non-economic compulsion. The study utilized Van der Linden work with a view to understanding whether African workers of Kisumu were either considered as subaltern workers or not.

In South Central Africa, Rayner (1962) examined Europeans presence in Mashonaland. He argues that Europeans held a belief that they could not work with their hands while Africans were available to offer labour. The work outlines

Europeans' attitude towards Africans in terms of labour provision. This study utilized the observations above to advance the arguments of compulsory forced labour enacted by the colonial government. Similarly, Berber (1967) discussed the development of urban centers in the former Northern and Southern Rhodesia. These were centers where Europeans settled and Africans provided labour. This study utilized Berber's work to broadly discuss some of the forms of labour that Africans living in Kisumu engaged in during the colonial period.

Within central and southern Africa, Arrighi (1967) denotes that during the early stages of colonial administration especially in Rhodesia, Africans were hesitant to engage in wage labour because they had the ability to meet their financial needs and obligation from subsistence farming. This literature is significant to the study since it has helped us to analyze some of the measures adopted by the colonial government to ensure that they captured and appropriated African labour for their own economic interests. These acts demonstrated how capitalist colonialism characterized the social and economic spaces of Africa.

In West Africa, the work of gold miners bordered between communal and forced labour. There was reluctance by the locals to offer their labour in the mines. Thomas (1973) observes that the private companies liaised with the colonial government for organized recruitments through tighter labour regulations and brought suits for breach of contract under criminal laws for African labourers. The study applied the argument to underscore some of the private companies that were based in Kisumu County and how they cooperated with the colonial government in labour recruitments.

In Uganda, Fuller (1977) asserts that capitalist institutions interfered with traditional subsistence economies. This was because a new economic pattern introduced by the colonialist demanded for African labour, a situation which introduced wage labour. The study utilized Fuller's work to understand how Africans were integrated into wage labour and how their integration undermined traditional economies of Kisumu County. Wage labour was the hallmark of colonial economy and as Lonsdale and Law (1976) posited, it became the second colonial occupation which informed how the colonial capitalist mode of production heavily relied on African labour.

In Tanganyika, Mwaruvie (2012) discussed labour challenges that Tanganyika labourers went through during the building of the railway line. Malnutrition, poor housing and diseases are woes that African labourers in Tanganyika had to contend with. The study has applied Mwaruvie's assertions to unearth some of the appalling conditions that African labourers in Kisumu had to contend with and how these conditions influenced labour relations between Africans and the colonial masters.

Lubembe (1968) and Mboya (1986) trace the genesis of nationalism through the rise of trade unions in Kenya. Their studies examined the poor working conditions and other socio-economic and political problems that arose in Kenya during the colonial period that agitated Africans to form trade unions. The two scholars believed that the only way Africans could petition the colonial government over poor working conditions was through the formation of trade unions. From the mid-1930s to early 1960s trade union movements were some of the tools that Africans used to petition for freedom. The study utilized these ideas forwarded by Lubembe and Mboya to explore the rise of labour movements and how these movements influenced the participation of African labourers in the colonial economy within Kisumu. It would

also be important to explore how these trade unions rallied African workers to resist bad colonial policies within Kisumu County.

Vanzwanenberg (1972) in his work, "*labour and agricultural production*", alluded that the colonial government established primitive accumulation for the settler farming in Kenya. Consequently, settler agriculture flourished at the expense of peasant agriculture. The study borrowed a lot from the observation above because Africans in Kisumu County were used by the colonialists in the large-scale production process to generate capital at the expense of Africans' pre-capitalist economy. The use of taxation, coercion, detention and recruitment of African labour coupled with the kipande system as examined by Vanzwanenberg are aspects that have extensively informed the research.

Brett (1973) explores the kind of link between underdevelopment and colonialism and argues that the settler economy underdeveloped indigenous African economy. The study also gave a general understanding of economic underdevelopment in colonial Kenya and how this underdevelopment impacted the growth of Africa's economy. Brett's work has been useful to this study since it has helped in shedding more light on how colonialism informed the underdevelopment of some regions in Kenya. It is within the same breadth that this study explored how such underdevelopment might have been experienced in Kisumu County with the extension of colonial rule in Kisumu. This is because the colonial economy was propped up by the colonial government to serve the colonial state economy through exploitation of African labour at the expense of the indigenous African economy.

However, Atieno-Odhiambo (1974) looks at the plight of African traditional farmers from a different perspective and gives a positive analysis that it was still possible to

find wealthy and successful independent African farmers with surplus food to trade on. Nevertheless, she concurs with other scholars that the exploitation of African labour was primarily a colonialist creation for the benefit of capitalist economy. Atieno-Odhiambo's work thus enriches our arguments concerning the traditional changes in the African labour force in the colonial period and the introduction of the capital market economy within economic spaces of Kisumu.

Similarly, Leys (1975) concurs with Brett (1973) and Atieno Odhiambo (1974) on the issue of underdevelopment in Africa. Although Leys (1975) presented a radical break with most previous works on Kenya, he considered the modern history of Kenya in its light by looking at the features of the economy and the transition to neo-colonialism which according to him began in the 1950s. He further outlined the problems of social classes in a social setting characterized by class formation and class struggles. This study has extensively borrowed from Leys' work to interrogate the issue of migrant labour and how the issue of migrant labourer informed class formation and class struggles within the social and economic spaces of Kisumu County.

Mwanzi (1977) largely tackled the foundation of the social institutions and society in Kipsigis. He looked at the role of chieftaincy in the colonial periods and how they acted as proprietors of economic and social change during the colonial period. The existence of the institution of chiefs in pre-colonial and colonial Kipsigis communities provided a useful base for comparison on the role of chiefs in Kisumu County with a view of examining whether they formed part of the petite-bourgeoisie as echoed by previous scholars. Similarly, Mwanzi's work formed the basis upon

which chiefs as agents of colonialism and drawers of colonial labour policies in Kisumu County were explored.

In Mombasa, Mohammed (1978) discussed the economic and social life of the African labourers from 1895-1939. The life of Africans in Mombasa was generally poor and the labourers responded either individually or as a group in tackling the problems they faced. The poor working conditions made Africans react against their colonial employer by organizing strikes and work boycotts. These became part of the early forms of nationalistic activities. The current study utilized Mohammed's work to analyze various African responses to poor working conditions and how such reactions shaped labour relations between Africans and their employers when they were mostly European settlers.

Furthermore, Lonsdale (1980) examined the creation of wage labour in colonial Kenya and cites some stereotypical names that were aimed at giving false identity and representation to various races within the colony. For example, the Indians were referred to as traders while Africans were regarded as farm hands. With this stereotypical representation of both Indians and Africans, the colonial administration also went further to protect the white settlers from economic rivalry and competition posed by other races, to protect Europeans as superior and dominant. The colonial administration also went further to protect the White settlers from economic rivalry and competition posed by other races. This protection provided a chance for Europeans to continue exploiting Africans and their labour. Exploitation, according to Lonsdale, made Africans take up arms against colonialism. A survey of the rise of nationalism among African labourers in towns like Kisumu may have developed as a

result of these conditions. The study has utilized these observations by Lonsdale to explain the emergence of African nationalistic activities within the area of study.

According to Swainson (1980), Africans benefited during the colonial period by accumulating wealth hence the rise of a national African bourgeoisie. The rise of the African bourgeoisie was bound to create conflict and class issues. This study therefore, utilized Swainson's work to expound on the evidence that African labourers in Kisumu also accumulated wealth based on the new mode of production. Langdon (1975) also holds the same opinion and thoughts as Swainson regarding the rich African bourgeoisies. While Swainson has referred to these categories of people as African bourgeoisies, Langdon (1975) used the term traditional rich to mean the same thing. This group of people would later transform themselves into a class of accumulators in the colonial period. The colony was therefore not only about white supremacy, but also about a class of black Africans who accumulated wealth and assumed the position of black capitalist among fellow Africans.

Driving the same agenda, Kitching (1980) uses the term "Petit Bourgeoisie" to identify Africans who had accumulated wealth in the colonial period. The two studies by Langdon (1975) and Kitching (1980) were useful to this current study by helping to ascertain whether Kisumu also had rich or petit bourgeoisie during the colonial period and who later on transformed into the rich class in Kenya after independence. The fundamental question which this study is grappling with is how African workers contributed to the formation of these classes.

On the other hand, Bermans and Lonsdale (1980) observed the colonial government's application of two levels of modes of production, the colony and the metropole. The colonial state applied a form of capitalist production besides various

indigenous modes of production. This was a complex means of articulation which required the use of force in order to achieve their objectives. This study has appropriated Berman and Lonsdale's works in order to help in tracing how the colonial government applied these two levels of modes of production; the pre-capitalist and capitalist to their economic benefit.

Njonjo (1981) discussed the African farmers in Rift-valley who became wage labourers at the expense of being producers of agricultural commodities. They lived in self-insufficient households and became workers owning small pieces of land. This transformation into wage labour by African farmers interfered with their agricultural activities. Based on Njonjo's work, our study has attempted to prove whether the advent of colonial capitalist production undermined the traditional economy that characterized African societies and whether this scenario affected the African labourer in Kisumu.

In his work, Sticher (1982) examined African response to migrant labour in Kenya. He observed that the development and subsequent expropriation of the wage labour economy was seen as coming through four levels; one, territorial conquest, followed by development of the migrant labour system then, to consolidation of the rise and establishment of contradictions and lastly post-migration phase. The observation above by Sticher was useful in this study since it helped in correlating how capitalist penetration in Kisumu County led to partial dissolution of indigenous modes of production since the indigenous population did not completely stop working on their traditional economies.

Aseka (1989) analyzed both the traditional and colonial economic and political systems in the Baluhya land. He examined alienation of land, exploitation of labour,

taxation, commodity production, trade and exchange in this community. He explored how the community of indigenous farmers entrenched themselves into wage labour force for colonial capitalist benefit. The current study utilized Aseka's work in outlining various economic and political systems that workers in Kisumu County adjusted to during the colonial period. By providing a detailed survey of various types of social reforms on the modes of production and process of wealth accumulation, Aseka's work, therefore, helped in laying the foundation upon which the modes of production and the means of production by workers in Kisumu would be based before and after the onset of colonialism. Aseka's work was also useful to the current study as it helped in shedding more light on the changing nature of colonial labour policies and their application on African workers in Kisumu County.

In Gusii land, Omwoyo (1992) examined how the colonialist turned parts of Gusii indigenous farmers and entire population into wage labour. He reiterated that the Gusii families suffered from inadequate land which led to uncertainties like food shortage. The literature helped the study in shedding more light in the challenges that African labourers of Kisumu went through.

Zezeza (1993) traced the genesis of labour history in Kenya by looking at the penetration of capitalist economy and the creation of the working class. He argued that the African labour migration was exaggerated and the modes of production of capitalist and pre-capitalist can never coexist amicably even in close proximity. Consequently, one sector or mode of production had to become predominant. Nevertheless, the observation by Zezeza formed the foundation upon which issues of migrant labour and the intersection of traditional and capitalist modes of production in Kisumu were assessed. Kiruthu (1997) also looked at the issue of African labour

in a similar manner by giving a systematic analysis of the emergence of Nyeri town into an urban centre as well as African labour force. He avers that Africans were forced to settle in Nyeri town in order to provide wage labour in various plantation farms and to be enlisted as military men in the World Wars.

Spencer (1982), Ndeda (1991), Osamba (1996), Omenya (2010) and Omondi Ouma (2023) are some of the scholars whose works have reference to Kisumu town directly or indirectly through touching on different aspects of history; their works have been of significance to this study. For example, Spencer (1982) examined aspects of Christianity bringing into the discussion the contributions of Archdeacon Owen and the formation of Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare Association. Spencer provided some important information on the interaction between the missionaries and the population of Kisumu County. On the contrary, she does not deal with labour aspects which are the main focus of this study.

Osamba (1996) examined the role of colonial capitalism and underdevelopment in the Asian owned sugar plantations. He cited how the colonial government favored the establishment of white settler plantation in Kenya with few Asian farmers granted land in Kisumu district. The study used the above discourse to highlight the colonial discriminative aspects when it came to allocation of basic amenities against other races in Kisumu County.

Ndeda (1991) discussed the results of migrant labour on rural women in Siaya District. The study inferred that Siaya was one of the sources of migrant labour. Ogot as cited in Ndeda (1991) explained how Africans were recruited as carrier corps during the war period 1919-1945 and were maimed and weakened by various diseases. These are ideas that the study anchored its arguments on.

On the other hand, Omenya (2010), analysed the dynamics in the Afro-Asian relations in areas of Kisumu in his work, he raises issues on identity formation and race relations against the backdrop of socio-economic and political history in Nyanza region. The study has utilized the analysis done by Omenya to expound on the relations between different races living in Kisumu during the colonial period and how these racial relations might have positively or negatively affected African labour relations especially in the Europeans farms and various institutions.

Ndege (2019) discussed the intrigues of profitable cotton farming in Kenya and argues that the beginning of cotton growing in Kenya was full of trial and error. This is because the colonial government did not have technical skills required for cotton growing. Cotton was henceforth introduced in the regions within the former Nyanza province. However, the cotton growing industry in Kenya was based on race and not individual expertise. The work has shed more light on racist attitudes that characterised various working places where Africans ventured into in the colonial period.

Omondi Ouma (2023) examined the activities of vigilante groups in Kisumu city, specifically the *Baghdad boys* who emerged in 1986 as a result of state security failure, unemployment, ethnic animosity, economic hardships and political marginalisation, leading to the repeal of section 2A of the Kenyan constitution in order to allow multipartism. He explained that the resurgence of vigilante groups and vigilantism in Kisumu was as a result of KANU's struggle to retain power and its several years of establishing a repressive system of governance. The study utilized the analysis done by Ouma to shed more light on various informal and formal organizations that were started by African workers in Kisumu County during

the colonial period to address labour concerns, the social and economic needs of African labourers.

From the literature reviewed above, it is evident that as much as there are abundant documentations pertaining to colonial labour histories globally, continentally, regionally and within parts of Kenya, the evolution and transformation of African labour relations within Kisumu County has been largely ignored by scholars thus the study has filled this gap of knowledge.

### **1.9. Theoretical Framework**

In analyzing labour history many theories have been advanced to help understand events, behavior or situations that work in a limited range of settings. The study employed two theoretical frameworks, that is, modernization and articulations of modes of production theories. Both theories helped to expound on the concept of African workers and how traditional modes of production were overtaken by the capitalist modes for the creation of surplus goods which the capitalist government appropriated through the process of unequal exchange.

The modernization theory emerged in the 1950s. The proponents included colonial historians, apologetics and administrators such as Walter Rostow, W. A. Lewis and Talcott Parsons among others. They argued that colonialism was beneficial to developing countries because it enabled these countries to progress by transforming themselves into modern entities. They believed that underdevelopment by third world countries was due to persistent application of traditional modes of production, whereas development could only occur if they imported western technology and capital to boost agriculture and industrial production (Tadaro, 1977).

For development to happen less developed states have to follow the same historical path that the developed countries followed. The theory of modernization contends that capitalism created development throughout underdeveloped nations. Yet, the theory ignores the exploitation of the third world by the colonialists while emphasizing two aspects that are social harmony and compatibility on the use of labour (Goldsworthy and Mboya, 1955). The theory is inherent with our study because the perspective of modernization theory is historical and its assumptions cannot be scientifically proven. More so, two countries cannot follow the same path to development. However, the theory claims universal validity for western models of development which is wrong as time is not one dimensional (Bernstein, 1976).

The historical perspective fronted by Bernstein (1976) however, ignored the process of development in its various historical and concrete manifestations. Being under colonial rule, there were linkages between the pre-capitalist and capitalist modes of production in Kisumu, a sign that there was some form of change from traditional modes of production to a modern mode of production as far as the tenets of modernization theory is concerned, within the context of production and transformation of African labour in Kisumu County. It is important to note that modernization theory was part of the western forms of knowledge that was authored and authorized by the west as a tool to analyze development amongst non-western societies. Its application is, therefore, useful in understanding not only the modes of production but also the dynamics of African labour and its transformation during the colonial period. The assumption of this theory within the context of our study area is that there was no development in Kisumu County before the coming of capitalism and that the traditional modes of production were also “primitive” or “backward”

Modernization hence brought economic development that saw the growth of African labour and its subsequent contribution to the enhancement of capitalism. Modernization theory forwards the belief that only third world countries like Kisumu County can transform into developed countries of the west.

The articulations of modes of production theory equally demonstrate the link between underdevelopment and development. The theory holds that various modes of production in any particular society are interrelated under the dominance of one. For example, capitalism is understood to dominate the other mode of production in the sense of determining the nature of their existence. The existence of a traditional economy is based on kinship relations, which is provided by cheap labour power for the industrialized capitalist economy. However, this position has been criticized because of the overall law of capitalism that defines the economic formations. At the same time, it is not always necessary that all elements of capitalist modes of production be present to define a system as capitalist (Wolpes, 1978).

Additionally, the theory regards production and the participation in social relations as two most important characteristics of social production. These modalities in the modern economy are always in conflict with the further development of human productive capacities. In any society, different types of production existed along with each other, coming through mutual obligations and trade. It enabled types of productions to correlate with different social classes among the population. For example, the modern capitalist industry co-existed with traditional subsistence production for simple exchange hence old and new modes of production could combine to form a super economy (Wolpes, 1978).

Moreover, the theory shows that when the capitalist market expands, it dissolves and displaces traditional modes of production over time. The modern modes of production comprise of two elements; forces and relations of production. This force includes ecological factors which are; climate, soil, raw materials and technology, tools used, skills, strength, knowledge and inventiveness of labour. These are man's modes of appropriation of natural resources. A relation of production is how labour is organized and reproduced and all these according to the theory are linked in a dialectical relationship since the two are interrelated (Berman, 1996).

By focusing on forces of relations of production and changes that occur in them constantly, the articulations of modes of production can be used to analyse change in any society. This enabled the study to define the linkage between two societies whose modes of production are dominated by a different development dynamic or logic. The articulations of the capitalist modes of production with African modes of production during the colonial period was a process of struggle and uncertainty in which Africans were partially transformed and preserved in the interest of capitalism. It undermined the ability of domestic forms of production to reproduce them. The study utilizes the articulations of modes of production theory to analyze change that Kisumu County underwent as new labour relations were introduced in the region vis a vis the traditional modes of production. Kisumu County had to go through new forces of production to transform into a super economy through the use of African workers (Berman, 1996).

Traditional modes of production may have existed, although, subordinate to the capitalist system through a process of preservation and destruction or dissolution and conservation, by which, they formed diverse relations with capitalist systems,

more particularly through unequal exchange relations. Kisumu County emerging from pre-capitalist modes of production did not integrate some of its sector into the capitalist economy for it to achieve some kind of economic benefits. For example, the fishing sector did not readily integrate into the colonial economic mainstream, as much as the colonial government could change them to inexpensive labour force or commodity producers. The theory has been useful as it approaches history through a dialectical process where change flows largely from the contradiction and internal tensions with a given situation (Goodman, 1986).

The theory has helped us to put Kisumu County under the contradiction and internal tensions because there is a break in self-sufficiency of the people from pre-capitalist production like other places in Africa. The impact of colonial capitalism and the demand for labour led to the imposition of taxes, and the people had to transform to new modes of production. Though it can be noted that the pre-capitalist modes of production were not destroyed as they still are, to maintain their role in the traditional production process. Furthermore, the articulations of modes of production are a complex unit of relations and forces of production, which focuses on people to provide labour and get paid for work done. On the other hand, the colonial government used Kisumu people' inexpensive labour to get more profits. This is opposed to the kind of labour dynamics that existed before the capitalist economy. Before then, labour was never paid for and was very cheap. In essence, the capitalist relations were to ensure that there was a rise in capital to the extent that wages were low and to allow the colonial government to make higher profits. Consequently, African labourers of Kisumu had to be subjected to long working hours with little wages, thus justifying the process of contradiction and tension that characterises the

articulation of modes of production theory. In conclusion, therefore, land alienation, taxation and administrative coercion of labour transformed the Africans in Kisumu into wage labourers. This situation led to the struggle and uncertainties that African workers in Kisumu experienced.

## **1.10 Research Methodology**

### **1.10.0 Introduction**

This section outlines the methods that the study has employed to collect data. The description of the study area, sampling procedure and sample size, research instruments, data collection procedure, methods of data analysis and ethical issues and considerations are all described under this section.

#### **1.10.1 Research Design**

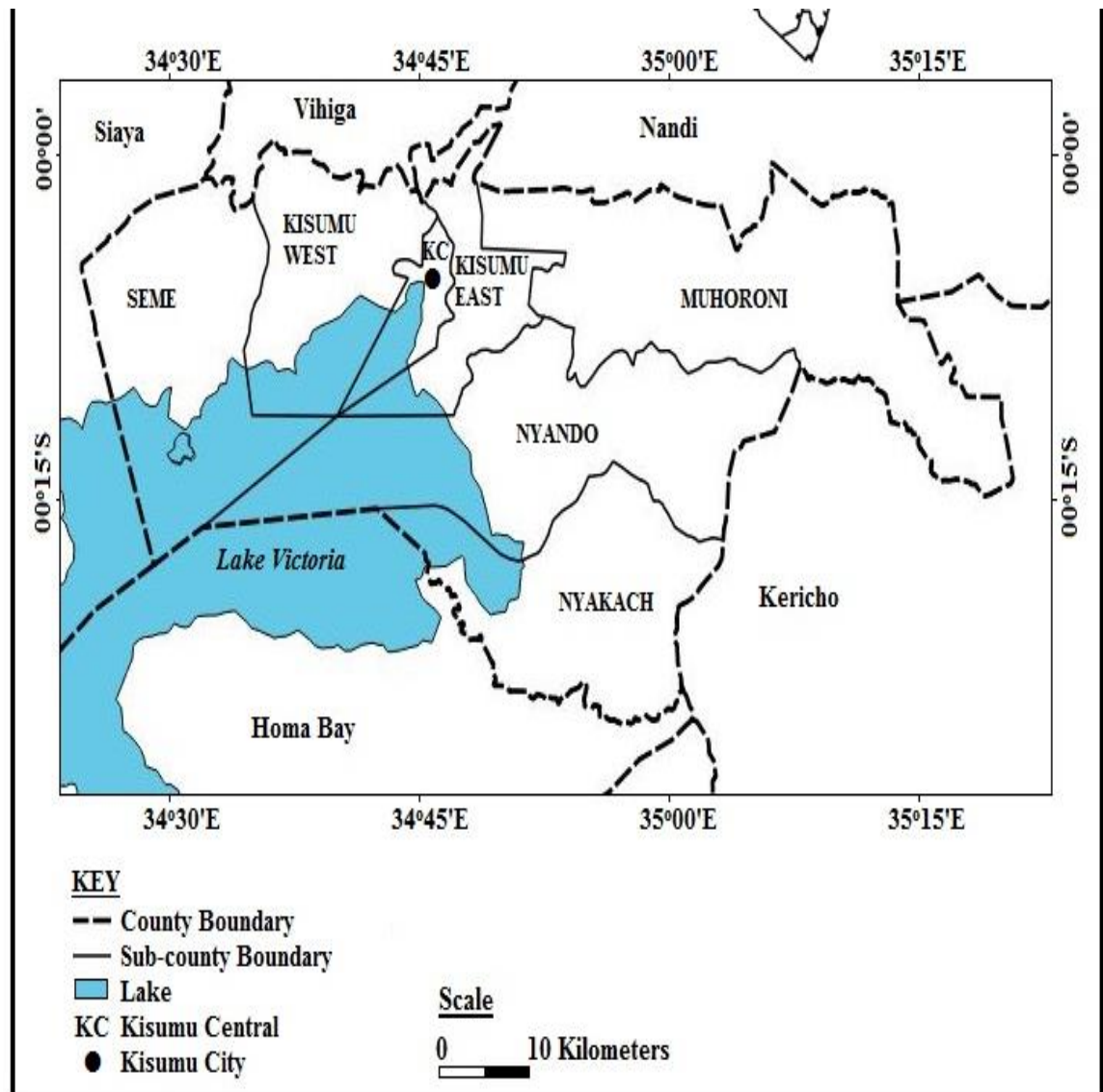
The study employed descriptive survey research design. The descriptive Survey research design is a method of research which deals with the present phenomenon in terms of conditions, relationships or trade, processes, practices and beliefs (Aggarwal, 2008). Descriptive research, therefore, is devoted to the gathering of information about prevailing conditions or situations for the purpose of descriptive and interpretation (Aggarwal, 2008). This type of research method is not simply about amazing and tabulating facts but includes proper analysis of changing trends and dynamics of African labour in Kisumu County, the area of study. It was also useful in the description of how labour policies affected relations not only between the workers and their employers but also between the colonizer and the colonized within the study area.

### **1.10.2. Research Locale**

Kisumu County is located at the shoreline of Lake Victoria with an elevation of 1,131m above the sea level and is about 320 km North West of Nairobi. According to the 2019 national census, Kisumu County has a total population of 1,155,574. Kisumu city is the third biggest city after Nairobi and Mombasa. The city sits on a total of 2085.9 km<sup>2</sup>. Being the headquarter of the county (Nyanza province), it has seven sub-counties, which includes Kisumu West, Central and East, Seme, Muhoroni, Nyando and Nyakach. Kisumu County shares a border with, Siaya County to the west, Vihiga County to the north, Nandi County to the north east, Kericho County to the east, Nyamira County to the south and Homa Bay County to the south west.

Its climate is modified due to the presence of Lake Victoria with a relief rainfall that ranges between 1200mm and 1300mm with an average temperature of 22.9 degrees Celsius. Kisumu metropolitan region comprises the city and its suburbs and the satellite towns of Maseno, Kondele and Ahero. The dominant ethnic community living in this city are the Luo, who speak a predominant dholuo language (Kenya's travel blog 20 November 2015)

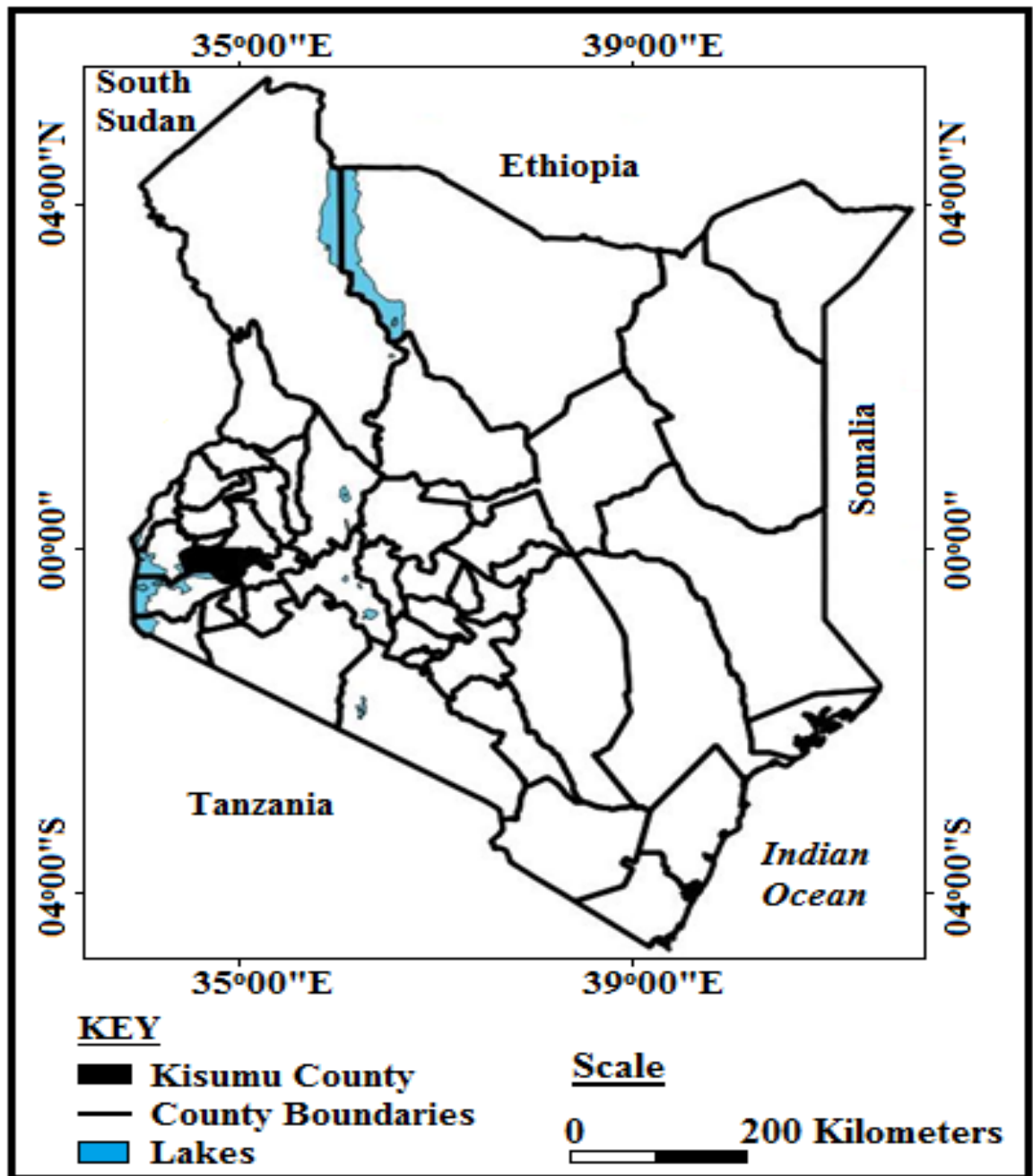
**Figure 1: Location of Kisumu Region**



**Map of Kisumu County Showing Sub- County Boundaries and the Location of Kisumu City**

**Source: Kisumu County Integrated Development Plan (2018-2022)**

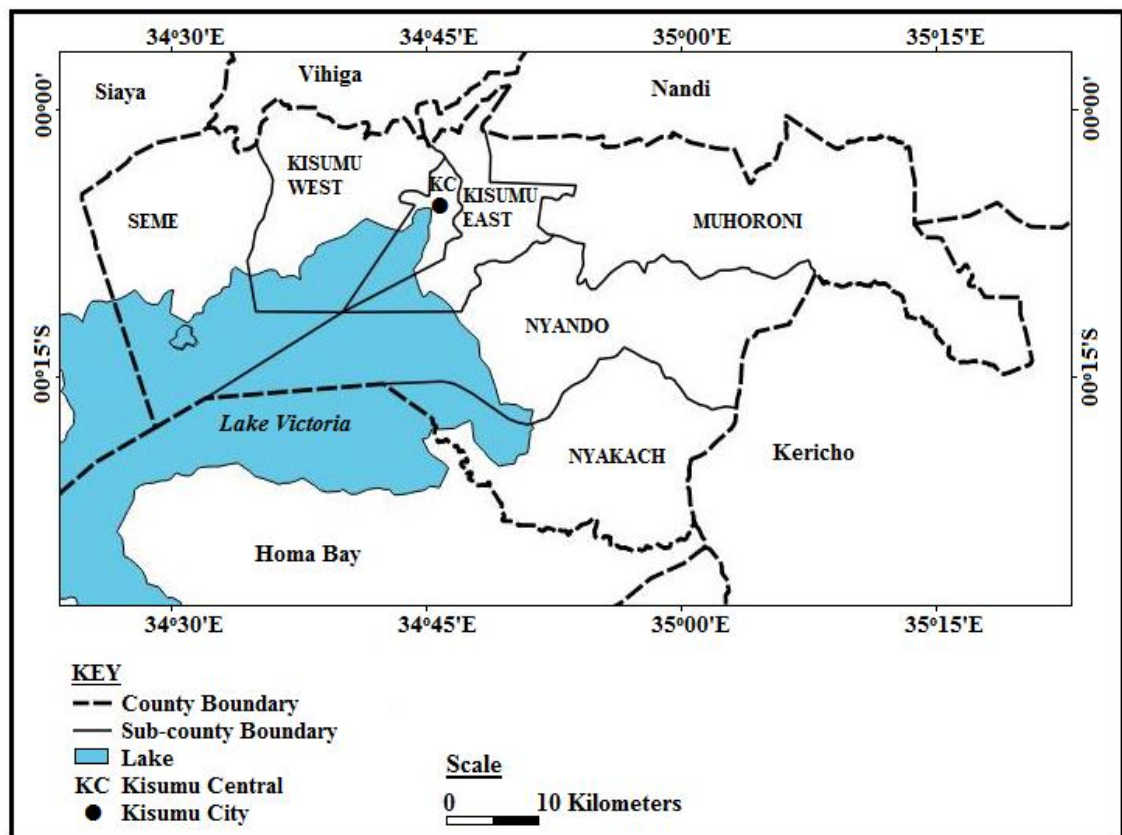
Figure 2: Administrative Boundaries



Map of Kenya Showing the Location of Kisumu County

Source: Kisumu County Integrated Development Plan (2018-2022)

**Figure 3: Map of Kisumu County Showing Sub-County Boundaries and the Location of Kisumu City**



**Kisumu County Map highlighting sub-county boundaries and Kisumu city’s location**

**Source: Kisumu County Integrated Development Plan (2018-2022)**

### **1.10.3 The Target Population**

The target population was drawn from the unit of study which had a population of 1,155,574 (according to the 2019 National Census) The study purposively targeted members of the society who lived in Kisumu County who included Asians, former African labourers (pioneer labourers), children and grandchildren of ex-service men and women, colonial representatives for example, Provincial Officers, District Officers, colonial chiefs and assistant chiefs who lived in Kisumu town around the period covered by the study and might have witnessed their parents work under white settlers and colonial government. More so, the study also relied on personalities who worked for the colonial government as well as those who were affected by the colonial labour policies in one way or another within Kisumu County throughout the period under study.

### **1.10.4. Sample Size and Procedure**

Sampling is the selection of a given number of subjects from a defined population (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). Purposive and snowballing sampling techniques were employed to select a total of 100 respondents. Purposive sampling technique allows data to be collected from all the potential respondents, while snowball sampling technique allows data to be collected from known to unknown. The respondents consisted of Asians, former African labourers (pioneer labourers), children and grandchildren of former ex-service men and women, colonial representatives, for example, chiefs, assistant chiefs and village headmen. Samples were also drawn proportionately from the seven sub-counties of Kisumu comprising Kisumu west, Kisumu central, Kisumu east, Seme, Muhoroni, Nyando and Nyakach. This was to ensure an equal representation of the targeted population for the study.

Both age and gender of the respondents informed the choice of the targeted population for the study.

#### **1.10.5 Research Instruments and Equipment**

The study employed interview schedules which were administered orally in collecting data. The interview schedules for the respondents were drawn from the objectives of the study. Tape recorders were also used to store the information collected. These instruments ensured a greater depth of response, which stimulated the respondents' feelings, hence getting complete and detailed data.

#### **1.10.6. Data Collection**

In order to obtain relevant data, both primary and secondary sources were employed. Primary data was obtained through archival documents from Kenya National Archives and Provincial National Archives and interview schedules drawn from the objectives of the study. The provincial (Nyanza) and District Annual and Quarterly Reports, Intelligence Reports and Political Records, Minutes of Local Native Councils and correspondences on matters such as labour, trade and agriculture which were some of the documents that the study relied on. These documents gave information on the pre-colonial economy and the integration of the capitalist economy with the traditional economy. The information obtained from the archival data enabled the discussion with the respondents during oral interviews. Interview schedules were important in guiding the respondents to give precise responses and to allow the respondents to express ideas freely. Respondents included pioneer labourers, Asians, ex-chiefs and grandchildren and children of colonial civil servants who had knowledge on areas of the interview schedules on labourers from the traditional economy to capitalist economy in the colonial period.

Secondary sources were considered to supplement the primary sources. These included both published and unpublished works on African workers. Books and articles in journals, seminar or conference papers, government annual reports, newspapers and theses which were obtained from various universities and libraries, for example, from History Departmental Library, Post Modern Library (Kenyatta University), Jomo Kenyatta Foundation Library (University of Nairobi) and the Kenya National Library Service, Kisumu branch were all beneficial to the study. The information from this collection were classified thematically in relation to the objectives of the study.

#### **1.10.7. Data Analysis**

To have data that adequately reflected a cross-section of views, a representative sample was drawn. The informants were selected based on several factors. First, the colonial civil servants who worked in Kisumu during the period under study were identified from the correspondence and written reports from the KNA. Colonial servants provided very important information because they had first-hand experience of colonial labour conditions. Second, we identified workers who were staying in Kisumu during the period under study, the Luo, Asians, as well as other people who were employed by the Europeans, Indians traders and individual Europeans.

The study strived to interview men and women to get data that would reflect the experiences of all the African workers in Kisumu. An attempt was also made to interview colonial African traders in the town and those from the neighbouring Sub-counties. These were very important information for primary data on the impact of the workers in Kisumu town. Those who had received a Western education and

those who had first-hand information became handy as their views made an impact, as the education they received transformed their perspective and outlook on society. The African soldiers who participated in both the First and the Second World Wars were also looked for and interviewed because the war experience had a very big impact on the African labourers.

A total of 50 informants were interviewed and gave significant qualitative data which provided data on the behaviours and feelings of African labourers in the wake up of the new socio-economic and political framework. These kinds of data obtained were imperative, especially in social studies where research has to bring out the interrelationship of different people in the social system and especially in an urban situation like Kisumu town.

The data that was obtained from the interview schedules, archival sources and secondary sources were edited and classified into various themes and sub-themes. Qualitative data analysis procedures were employed to ensure analysis was done as planned. A separate code sheet was used to establish and interpret data. Tape-recorded information was also transcribed and translated into English for all the interviews that were done in the local dialect. Terms used in the interviews were coded as they were. Content reviewed in secondary data analysis was corroborated with primary sources to arrive at a consistent result of the study. Generally, our data collection and analysis strategies were aligned with issues highlighted in the objectives.

#### **1.10.8. Validity and Reliability**

Validity is the degree to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure for a particular purpose and group. The instrument for this study was

validated by relying on the consistency of the results from the study at the same time expert judgment by the researcher, professional views of colleagues, supervisors as well as expert advice given through discussions, comments and suggestions were relied upon. The reliability of the instruments for this study was assessed through a pilot study in one of the neighbouring counties.

#### **1.10.9. Research Ethics**

Ethical considerations are the moral principles guiding research from interpretation through completion and publication of results. The study was carried out with a lot of objectivity and confidentiality of the informants, which was taken into consideration and the informants whose voices were recorded, their consent was sought. The study is devoid of any plagiarism as it has been checked through the plagiarism similarity index test and is within the university's permitted similarity index. Lastly the study got permission from NACOSTI through Kenyatta University Graduate School. Additional research permit and authorization was also obtained from the County Commissioner of Kisumu before going into the field to collect data.

#### **1.11. Summary**

This Chapter has discussed the introduction and background to the study, basically giving a preview of the ideas that informed the discourse. The statement of the problem validates the study connecting it with the objectives and the research questions. It is noted that the history of transformation of Kisumu County labourers has not received an orderly account; most scholars have done some work about Kisumu but have ignored the history of labourers from the pre-colonial period into the colonial period. The study has also looked at a wide range of relevant literature which has enabled us to identify knowledge gaps for the study. The conceptual and

theoretical frameworks made the study to be historical. The modernization and articulations of modes of production theories which correlate with the transformation of workers in Kisumu County to modernity and to new modes of production has been employed to shed more light on the study. The two theories enabled the study to be anchored in the theoretical realm of historical research. Research methodology has outlined how data was collected and analyzed. The next chapter discusses the pre- colonial labour relations of the Luo community who are the major ethnic community in the study locale.

**CHAPTER TWO**  
**THE PRE-COLONIAL LABOUR RELATIONS AMONG THE LUO IN**  
**KISUMU UPTO 1895**

**2.1 Introduction**

This section begins with the historical background discussing the migration of the Luo from the cradleland up to their settlement in areas of Kisumu County. The chapter also examines the pre-colonial political, social and economic organization. During this period, the Luo labour relations were intertwined in their socio-economic and political activities. Furthermore, the emergence of Kisumu town and the establishment of colonial rule up to 1895 has also been discussed. The chapter concludes that by 1901, Kisumu transforms to become a foreign enclave town for all the races, the Europeans as administrators, Asian and Indians who find settlements after the contract of building Uganda railway line is over.

**2.2 Migration and Settlement of the Luo Community in Nyanza Province of Kenya**

The communities in Nyanza and Western Kenya situated to the East of Lake Victoria originated from different directions (Ndeda 1991:51). One being the Bantu community, which is the largest linguistic group in Kenya. Various sources allude to the fact that the Bantu linguistic group were the first to have arrived at the East shores of Lake Victoria. They came from *Misri* and arrived in three ethnic groups, that is, Abagusii, Abaluhya and Abakuria. The Abaluhya are likely to have been the earliest immigrant settlers around the Lake region to the North of Lake Victoria before A.D 1000 and latest by about A.D 1700 (Osogo 1969:30). Between 1490 and 1520 A.D., the Abalogoli and the Abagusii travelled south along the River Nzoia

valley, arriving close to Lake Victoria. They settled near the head of Goye Bay in Yimbo, Nyanza, after travelling east along the lakeshore. Their territory stretched across what is now Ulowa, Sare, and Unyejra at the base of Ramogi Hill. They were discovered colonised here by Luo migrants (Nga'nga 2006:47). According to Abagusii tales, they spent two generations residing in Goye Bay. The tiny Abagusii and Abalagoli community faced a significant security danger when the Luo component of Joka Jok moved into the region. According to Nga'nga' (2006:49), the Luo invasion and settlements in the Abagusii and Abalagoli's territory progressively became to be a serious issue and a security risk. The Abagusii and Abalagoli were compelled to leave these regions due to the Luo's increasingly frequent and audacious livestock raids. Ochieng mentions their migration for the reasons listed below:

It would seem from the evidence that the Luo did not attack the Gusii and the Logoli right away. When the Luo later increased the frequency of their attacks on the nearby Bantu clans, they came into touch with one another; nevertheless, the groups started to disperse one after the other in order to avoid the raiders' clubs and spears. The majority of the Bantu clans listed above escaped to Samia and Bunyala, where they are still present today (Ochieng 1974:42-43).

Other Scholars like Abuso (1975), Ogot (1967: 200-203), Ochieng (1975 :22-23) and Ayot (1973: 61) also indicates that by A.D 1500 or there about, the earliest Bantu roamed the entire South Nyanza from the interlacustrine region to the borders of Tanzania. Although they were the first to have arrived in the area understudy, the Luo later on migrated into these places by displacing them or absorbing them (Ogotu 2009). The Luo of Kenya presently occupy four counties. They include;

Siaya, Homabay, Kisumu and Migori. They inhabited the territorial bordering Lake Victoria to the North, and South Nyanza gulf extending to Tanzania. They have since migrated a lot and lived in several other counties in Kenya (Ogot 1967). Due to a large population and other causes, the Nilotes had become a separate group by the year 1000 A.D. and were living together in the eastern regions of the Bahr-el-Ghazal provinces of the Republic of Sudan and the huge open plains of modern-day Eastern Equatoria.

Over the course of several generations, the Luo slowly migrated from the north into western Kenya and Uganda. They took control of Wipac on the banks of the Bahr-el-Ghazal River after their commander Dimo helped them cross the Nile north of Juba. They split around Pubungu, close to Lake Albert, after migrating southward from Wipac up to the Nile (Nga'nga' 2006:47-48).

Ogot reports about the Wipac movement:

*One team under Nyipir's direction crossed the Nile to the west and settled the areas that the Landu-Okebo-Madi group had previously held. Here, they created a system of chieftainships and a pattern of dominating ancestry over Sudanic people. Labongo led another troop that proceeded southern, crossed the Somerset Nile, and attacked Bunyoro, establishing the Bito dynasty and giving the nation its name. The Luo spread from Pawir in Bunyoro to Acholi, Lango, the Alurland lowlands, northern Busoga, and portions of Budama. (Ogot 1967: 46).*

The Luo initially entered western Kenya peacefully from Uganda; but, when successive waves arrived, they became increasingly hostile and drove the Bantu out of the places they had taken over. After being compelled to leave the lowlands and

the lakeshore, the Bantu ethnic groups relocated to higher, safer regions (Ogot 2009). By interfering with Bantu ethnic communities that had already settled in the lake region, the Luo community were in a way defining and establishing their modes of production that would later on define their relations with other ethnic communities living around them. Between 1580 and 1620 A.D., the Abagusii and Abalagoli, commanded by Mogusii, left Goye Bay to settle first near Lake Gangu in Alego and subsequently at *Kisumo* (Kisumu) for security and to relieve strain on the land. The extreme drought that drove them to relocate to the Kano plains caused the Kisumo village to disintegrate. The name Kisumu is derived from the Luo word *Jokisuma* which can be literally translated as "people who depend on charity." The Luo of Kisumo heavily relied on their neighbour for grains (Nga'nga' 2006:50). When the Luo raided the Abagusii settlement in *Kisumo*, the Abagusii were forced to move to Kano which lasted between 1640 and 1755 A.D. The Bantus settled in Kano plains for five to seven generations, however with stock raids and violence by arriving Luo immigrants, and consistent raids against the Abagusii inhabitants of Kano plains, this led to eventual migrations of the Abagusii out of this area. The plight of these Bantu communities occupying Kano plains as more and more Luos arrived in the area has been reported by Ochieng:

*In the spirit of Luo pride, which regarded the non-Luos as slightly sub-human, Jokano wondered why they should not, in fact, dispossess the Gusii of their large herds of livestock and if necessary, turn them into serfs and headsmen. Convinced that this was the right and normal thing to do, Kano warriors began to raid the defenseless Gusii homestead, when Gusii warriors retaliated, the Luo followed with even more raids, driving away Gusii cattle and burning their huts as well. (Ochieng 1974: 81-82)*

Eventually the Abagusii moved out of Kano plains into the Gusii highlands leaving these areas for Luo occupation. The Journey of Luo migration and settlement in

Kisumu and central Kavirondo was done through time and space. The migration into western Kenya can be traced between 1000 and 1500 A.D from Bahr el- ghazal in Sudan to Uganda and to parts of Nyanza region where Kisumu County falls. Reasons for their migrations according to scholars like Ayot (1973), Ogot (2009), Were (1974). Ochieng (1975) and Herring (1975) were drought, famine, overpopulation, search for pasture land and family feuds.

For the communities they settled in, the Luo migration had political, social, and economic effects. Through the absorption of some groups, their movement contributed to the formation of modern civilisation. In addition to increasing the population of Eastern Africa, their migration patterns may have contributed to the breakdown of several cultures. Securing final settlements emerged in Nyanza Province (present-day Siaya, Kisumu, Homa-bay, and Migori Counties) as a result of inter-clan land conflicts. As a result of their movement, new crops including sorghum, groundnuts, and simsim may have been introduced as results of commercial activity. In certain areas of eastern Uganda, nomadic pastoralism was also introduced. Additionally, new cultural practices, languages, and traditions were nurtured by their migrations. The invading population either escaped to other areas or were assimilated. There may have been a high death toll as a result of the Luo and other tribes' battles, and the invasion of the Luo was likely to have caused instability in the places they went through or occupied. Change in terms of production modes was influenced by their relationships with these groups (Ndeda 2019).

The Luo had colonised much of Central and Southern Nyanza by the seventeenth century. It's crucial to remember that the Luo were invaders who had battled to take over populated regions, including modern-day Kisumu. The Luo towns in Central

Nyanza, and Kisumu specifically, were nearly finished by 1850. According to Malinowski (cited in Anderson 1970:10), the many clans had established their economic organisation and created political constitutions, processes, agencies, and other derived requirements. These factors had an impact on all civilisations.

### **2.3. The Political and Social Organizations of the Luo Community in the Pre-Colonial Period**

Politically, the Luo were organized into exogamous clans consisting of several families with decentralized political organization before the British intrusion. The community's kinship system acted as their political bond for a people who traced their descent to a common ancestor and source of authority from the most senior (Ogot 1967:48). The *Gwenge*, which are semi-autonomous political units, comprised *Oganda*, the greatest political entity to which a Luo would belong. The *Oganda* was a whole territory which was made up of several clans for security and protection against their neighboring alliances. *Oganda* which was an amalgam of many clans, for example some of the major clans of Jo-Kisumo included, *Kanyakwar*, *Kajulu*, *Abwao-kadianga*, *Kogony*, *Kadea*, *Kolwal*, *Rabuor* (Midega, Onyango, Vitalis O.I .2022).

The Luo territorial grouping was for unity and would be a source of labour when need arose and helped in times of communal tasks. The clan elders formed the council of elders who were dominant and worked under a supreme chief called *Ruoth* or *Ker*, who had a council (*Buch Piny*) which discussed issues affecting the whole community. *Ker* had the power over the means of production and could define how people related in terms of provision of labour. He was able to mobilise labour for purposes of production and ensure that the community had enough food.

Although traditionally, the role of *ker* was political, he also determined the economic direction that the Luo community would take.

*Gwenge* which was equivalent to a small political area of jurisdiction had *Ruoth* with *doho* as their council. *Doho* dealt with local matters for example, land issues, adultery, arson and witchcraft. The council was made of *jodong' gweng* (Village elders). *Ogulmama* (law enforcement unit) was to enforce decisions from *doho*. Clans were important centers for identity, reference and reputation and the Luo pride were in the clan lineages (*Jokang'ane*) (Ogot 1963:252, Whisson 1963:23-24, Ochieng 1974:49). Labour relations ran a long clan lineages and the members would mobilise and share means of production for purposes of food security. Furthermore, labour relations were gendered as it involved both men and women based on the division of labour as per what the society expected either men or women to do. The cultural practices of the Luo above all, determined the kind of labour relations that existed in the pre-capitalist period.

Every sub-group consisted of several clans which were governed by the oldest, highest ranking or elders of the community because the Luo were an acephalous community. The clan elders were always at the center of all clan activities whether political, social, religious or economic activities. They ensured that labour relations in any economic activity was peaceful, harmonious and managed the internal affairs of the clans with minimum supervision because of the subtle relationship which existed between kinship and politics (Vaughan, 1986). The division of land, inheritance and peaceful settlement of disputes was their responsibility as well as making deliberations that touched on labour issues for example, when planting,

going to war and selecting young men for warriorhood. This shows that the clan elders had enormous political and social authority (Anyango O.I 2022).

Similar concept is reiterated by Cohen and Atieno (1989), that the council of elders addressed issues which included overcoming disease outbreak, prolonged drought, flooding, storms, and issues of inheritance. They also organized sacrifices to appease and venerate the ancestors. Decisions were agreed upon unanimously devoid of voting. The elders gave forms of punishment and offered solutions to problems for example, cleansing ceremony, compensation, imposition of fines or sacrifices to appease the ancestors. Decisions made were final and people abided by them or suffered consequences. Hobbley who wrote of the Luo pre-colonial chiefs noted that:

*There is no denying that chiefs were significantly more powerful in the past than they are today, and a strong leader with several marriages might produce enough offspring to start a sizable clan. (Hobbley, 1981).*

Hobley's observation above points to the fact that the issues of labour was very paramount among the Luo and marrying many wives was not just to ensure security and continuity of the clan but also to bring forth children who would be able to provide labour not only for the family but also for the entire clan since provision of labour was communal.

The Luo had their social life as a community anchored in the norms and taboos. Every aspect of their culture was as a result of their traditional practices that Ogot, (1967:48) called "*Luo Kitgi gi timbegi*" (the Luo and their customs). Every activity they engaged in was an aspect of their culture. For those who went against the culture *Chira* (curse) would befall them (Midega, O.I. 2022). The evolution of the Luo had elements of intermarriages between them and the non-Luo groups. The

non-Luo (*Jodak*) were absorbed as they did not belong to the Luo lineage (Ayot 1990, Ndeda 1991:74). The Luo had a strong Kinship which included people related by blood or marriage. Kinship was a determinant of one's place of residence, ownership of property, it regulated behavior, controlled the community and individual access to resources and production (Ndenda 1991:74).

It regulated the social framework of social-ritual activities as well as marriages. Kinship served as an ideology and a symbolic code for men's and women's relationships. It was quite close-knit, with several families sharing a property based on how many wives and kids a guy had. According to Ogutu (1975:18), polygamy was a measure of a man's wealth and value, which improved his political and economic standing and improved labour relations. Every home (*OT*) took care of its members' necessities and work. Prosperity was also a result of labour power, employment, and production. A large family constituted the foundation of work force and provided security (Otieno-Ochieng, 1968). A farmhouse, which housed many children, was prestigious and crucial to the growth of the old labour economy (Wilson G 2018: 21-24).

Ceremonies and rituals were organized by the elders. Sacrifices were offered as customs dictated. Traditionally, rituals formed part of their labour relations. The clan's eldest man was the first to cultivate and plant crops during the *golo kodhi* (new planting season). The remaining members then followed him (Ndege 1987 :52). It was the responsibility of *wuon dala* (*the head of the homestead*) to organize a new planting season as a show of seniority in the homestead (Mzee Oguta O.I.2022). These arrangements followed during planting and harvesting for purposes of order.

*Saga (communal labour)* was incorporated in any slightest activity that needed labourers.

The seasons allowed for order in the manner in which crops were grown (Ndege 1987:53). The people knew when to start clearing land for cultivation, when to plant and when to harvest. They knew which crops to plant during long and short rains and the type of crops that would do well in each season (Peterlis O.I. 2021). The Luo believed in *Nyasaye (Supreme Being)* whom they invited in daily labour activities for blessings. The services of specialists like medicine men, rainmakers, prophets, seers, mediums, elders, Routh and Priests were also employed (Ochola 1986:34). Skills such as blacksmith, leather work, singing, traditional herbalist, roof thatching, granary building and teeth extraction were regarded highly by the families and often were inherited (Ogutu, 1975:15). These men who had special skills were known beyond the clans and their services were sought after (Julius, O.I.2021). Many homes and families had livestock named after important personalities or individuals in the family (Leonida O.I 2021).

Males were usually the ones who inherited property. Due to lineage propagation, husbands assigned wives land to farm. Women never had properties on their names even at the death of their husbands. The economic security of women rested with their sons (Hay 1996). A woman who never had a son did not have the right of owning property, instead, the husband would pick a son from the other co-wives and install in the house to allow the woman to have right to inheritance (Anyango O.I.2021). Women socially worked hard in farms to provide food for the immediate family members. They also used the produce to engage in social ceremonies like beer brewing, initiations and marriages. The Luo had around fourteen rituals that

were performed at death from dividing the property (*keyo nyinyo*) to *rapar* (remembrance) (Buswell 2012). Children received education and socialization from the family members (Meillassoux 1973). This education according to Ogot (1999) was organized through *chir* (*education*) which were classrooms for instructions for children below age 10-20 they were taught the taboos and norms of the Luo community. The households were competitive units whenever family resources were allocated. *Jokawuoro* and *Jokamiyo* competed and cooperated depending on the economic circumstances (Opondo 1997)

#### **2.4. Economic Practices and Labour Relations of the Luo in the pre-colonial period**

During the pre-colonial period, the Nyanza and Luo economies were essentially mixed, encompassing commerce, agriculture, fishing, and cattle rearing (Onduru 2009). Hunting, the production of iron, and handicrafts were among the secondary economic activities that the South Nyanza people engaged in concurrently. Membership in the social unit provided access to the means of production. Patterns of exploitation and the reproduction of the relations of production marked the allocation of resources (Butterman 1979).

The Luo started their economic endeavours on land, which was a valuable resource for Luo households. Land rights depended on cultivation; any member of the society may clear land, and as long as they kept cultivating it, the property was theirs. Rights to land expired when it was left fallow and turned back into bush. No other land was inherited since the sons of the women who farmed it and their spouses inherited the farmed land. Three possessions belonged to women: a vegetable garden, poultry, and milk from the morning or evening milking (KNA/1/2/3/8

Special report September 1909:53-55). There were no title deeds or formal documents of land possession belonging to the people living in Kisumu at this time or were not exempted (KNA/ DC/KSM/1/3/86 “Agricultural annual report “1954).

The number of hours put in farming and associated activities was low as a lot of time was wasted in idleness hence a great deal of under-utilized male labour time, because most of the agricultural work was left to women. Farming, hunting, gathering, fishing, and trade comprised their many daily activities (Ogo’nda and Ochieng 1992:14). However, with the advent of the colonial masters, the economic activities became a mechanism for introducing the general laws of capitalism. These laws entailed the stripping of land, rearticulating and restructuring of various means of production, simply to meet the demand of colonial agriculture imposed on Africans (Hymer 1970).

The extended family, known as *Joka-kwaro*, which consisted of the grandpa, his wife or wives, his son or sons, and their wives and children, held the property in South Nyanza, as was the case throughout Luo-country. The size of a family influenced the type of work relations in pre-colonial civilisation. The same was true in South Nyanza during the pre-colonial era, when the process of material appropriation heavily relied on labour and land. According to Luo customary law, the community owned the land. According to Onduru (2009), the family only kept it in trust for the community.

By about 1850, the original Luo had settled in Nyanza, and their economy had shifted significantly from pastoralism. They turned to farming and fishing, which served as the foundation for their work relations. The change of environment made them adopt new kinds of labour relations as they adjusted to new climatic

conditions. Two reasons necessitated this one, cattle epidemics which killed their livestock leaving them without means of livelihood. Two, population increase ate into areas where pasture could be found. As they settled, they engaged in a mixed economy to cushion them from famine. They did not stop livestock keeping completely because of the animal products that were useful to the families for food and trade.

The earliest aspect of labour relations and economic activity of the Luo was hunting and gathering, because it was one of the oldest means of earning a livelihood. It supplemented their food production. The hunters had a leader *Jagodwar* who ensured hunting and gathering was done harmoniously in two forms, communal and in small groups. The communal hunting involved many people hunting big animals, they used spear, bows and arrows, clubs, knives and the dog helped them in hunting. The game killed was divided among the hunters in an organized way, which had rules, for example the one who killed the game would take the largest share. The division of the hunted game animal also demonstrated the pre-colonial relations of labour where not only human beings were involved but also animals such as dogs. As a domesticated animal, a dog had a major role to play in the economic activities of the Luo community. Hunting as a mode of production had a very distinct form of division of labour sometimes based on age, sex and the level of participation. Surplus labour was rewarded with surplus quantities of the animal hunted. Much more specific rules were also in place to define the relations of labour.

Gathered fruits and vegetables included *akuno, ochuoga ombasa, chwa, atipa, dek, apoth, osuga, ododo, mushrooms*. Insects included, *onyoso, oyala, and ng'uen* were gathered in the forests, around swampy areas, besides the river banks and other

places. Hunting enabled the Luo to be self-sufficient during famine or drought because the type of labour relations they engaged in was purposely for subsistence and to cushion them from hunger (*midenyo*). Domesticated animals enabled them to have permanent provision of food, for trading and for formal payments such as bride price, fines, land transaction, for sacrifices and a measure of one's wealth. Animals helped in farming activities to draw the plough.

The Luo acquired cattle through keeping, raiding, breeding, and warfare or bride wealth transactions. The cows, goats and sheep were important and became part of community cultural and social assets (Ayayo 1953). Women had to know how to keep livestock because during political instability, men went for peacekeeping, and women had to assume the responsibility of looking after the cattle. The Luo community became mixed farmers to cushion them in times of natural calamities (Johnson 1980). During wars men went along with cattle to settle legal disputes and to negotiate for peace (Ndeda 1991).

Land defined the kind of economic relations the community engaged in. There were communal resources consisting of firewood, timber for building houses, salt licks and thatching grasses (Wilson 2018:7). There was land set aside for communal grazing, and clan elders allocated land for their members. Basic crops that were cultivated included millet, sorghum (red and white varieties), cassava, sweet potatoes, sim sim and legumes which were mainly drought-resistant crops. Other crops included potatoes, barley, pumpkin, red beans, green grams and maize. Some of these crops were used in ceremonies and rituals for example, sorghum that was used to make '*busaa*' or traditional brew for entertaining guests. These crops were also medicinal in a way for example, if you had diarrhoea, you could be given

porridge made from sorghum and the diarrhoea would go away (Christine, O.I.2021). The medicinal crops made the Luo to be disease free for work. The type of foods eaten by the Luo gave them a lot of energy and helped them to work over a long time without getting tired (Onono O.I. 2021). Traditionally, work begun any time without supervision, and everybody within the age of work, went to the farms without coercion as it was a training ground for future responsibilities. Work in farms and in the fields had elements of specialization. The labour power was largely for direct consumption and families with many children had more labour power than the rest (Onono, O.I.2022). Production of surplus was to the advantage of the family as it would be used in various celebrations like entertaining guests, relatives and the larger family. Kenyatta states that:

*A person is not seen as a deserving member of the tribe if they are unable to invite their friends to come and partake in the results of their effort (Kenya 1978).*

Women controlled the domestic economy and stayed longer in the fields and worked longer than men. Tilling of the land was organized culturally such that not every wife went out to cultivate at her own discretion. There were arrangements that were observed from the first wife (*mikai*) to the last wife (*nyachira*). This kind of setup allowed for peaceful labour relations within traditional norms. It was a taboo for the last wife (*Nyachira*) to be the first to break the land for farming (Masawo O.I. 2022). Women were responsible for major processes of food production, storage and distribution. They monopolized family food cultivation and trade (KNA/MC/363DC/FH3/1 Report on the kikuyu 1950-1951: 91). This system ensured there was enough food distribution during *midenyo* (hunger) and nobody would starve (Ndeda1991). Chores like carrying water, grinding millet, brewing

beer and cooking were still the burden of women. All heavy duties were left for men as evidence of Labour specialization (Oswand 1918).

Challenges like pests and diseases for example, army worms, locusts and stalk borers destroyed their crops. Drought, famine and poor storage facilities endangered the farming of the Luo because at some point they lacked enough food (Dunbar, 1969, Odawa. 1980, Magongo, 1998, and Orweyo 1998). Farmers used various methods to mitigate the destruction of crops by birds and wild animals. (Anyango, O.I. 2021). Traditional farmers never applied fertilizers, the lands were fertile and the only method of farming that they would apply if fertility of the soil reduced was fallow system (Ojuok, O.I.2021) however, some had learnt to use cow dung and chicken droppings to improve soil fertility (Zacharia O.I.2021). Married men had their own granary called *Mondo* as a reserve when other granaries were depleted. The produce from *mondo* was given to the junior wife and to her sons (Mss. Afr, S. 1672/4 Luo Customary law. Wilson G 2018: 32). There was *sumo* (*borrowing*) as the kinship ties did not allow one to go hungry. The Luo farming system ensured everyone had food and had land to work on to get food.

Craft and manufacturing industries were important economic activities in the lives of the Luo people in the Nineteenth century. These industries manufactured items which were vital to subsidise the agricultural activities (Wandiba 1992:17). For example, weaving and pottery was left for women and girls while iron smelting was an inclusive job of men. Those who smelted and engaged forging, acquired skills which were learnt and passed on from one generation to another. Such division of labour played well in pre-capitalist societies where production was not for profit making. Smelted iron implements included farm tools, weapons and other

equipment used. Basketry was widely practiced as it provided containers for both solids and liquids, for winnowing, measuring grains and for serving food. The Luo made *adita*, *atonga*, *odheru*. Other forms of basketry produced items like wickers, doors, granaries, strainers, bird cages, and fish traps. Craft industry used vegetable fibers, hand twisted strings made of pliable plants and creepers or palm fronds to make the items (Wandiba 1992:29). Those who got involved in craft and manufacturing industries had to dispose of special skills that were majorly inherited.

Fishing took place in lakes and rivers and fish was a staple food for the Luo people (Martin O.I.2022). They ate it freshly cooked or sun dried or smoked. Preservation was done to ensure that during shortages there was something to be cooked and to be bartered for other goods. The Luo taught other communities how to eat fish and engage in fishing. It led to exchange of culture with communities that neighbored them more so, communities that were far off the lake would barter their cereals for fish drawn from the lake, communities around Kisumu Karateng, Rabuor, Kajulu and Kombewa bartered their produce for fish while the Luhya, Nandi, Gusii and Samia traded with the Luo and exchanged their iron implements for fish. Marketplaces like Nyamonye, Dunga, Uhanya, and Usenge became trading centers where fish were bartered for other items that the Luo did not produce. During famines like *Nyadiemo* of the 1850s and *Otuoma* of 1900 dried fish became important as it was exchanged for goods from the hinterland with the Bantu who were ironmongers (Opondo 1997). Kisumu's pre-colonial economic areas were characterised by this helpful articulation of forms of production.

The Luo's diverse economy of agriculture, pastoralism, and trade allowed them to thrive in trade (KNA/PC/NZA/1/2/1906-1907) unfortunately, trade was

underdeveloped because of poor infrastructure and when over production occurred, a lot of food was wasted. Because not every tribe had access to all the necessary resources, trading became necessary. Because their neighbours possessed essential goods that they lacked and need for their livelihoods, people traded. As trade developed there were definite market places and days for trading with the Nandi, Kipsigis, Abaluhya and the Gusii (Ochieng 1985:18-40). They traded in livestock and obtained agricultural implements from Samia blacksmiths, and by selling pots, fish, salt, and cattle the Luo obtained grains from the more fertile inhabited highlands in the South (Were 1972:42-46).

Market centers included Alango, Ramula, Onguo, Ndere and Rabuor. Traders travelled on foot in groups carrying goods on their heads to various marketplaces. The bulky goods were carried on the back of donkeys (Anyango O.I. 2022). Women could balance pots or woven baskets on their heads as they went to the market centers (Vitalis O.I. 2022). These marketplaces had *Jodongo (elders)* who ensured peace and order, in return, they were given dues in terms of a small portion of traded goods (Onduru 1997). This is how a group of working class in the pre-colonial period emerged. The working class specialized in certain types of trades and this specialization informed how relations of production were organized not only among the Luo of Kisumu but also among other communities in Kenya in the pre-colonial period. They engaged in vigorous international trade that linked the shores of Lake Victoria with both Southern Uganda and Tanzania for example, Baganda, Busoga and Bakenhe. They exchanged beans, cassava, banana, iron commodities, canoes and fish for pots, goats, cattle and ivory with the people of Lake Victoria (Ochieng 1990:41).

Communal land ownership, division of labour and land inheritance from father to son was practiced (Schiller 1982). Land was never sold hence nobody would lack land from *Misumba* (slave), *Jodak* (tenants at will) or *kimirwa* (born out of wedlock) (Ndeda 1991). The lineage cooperation in work (*saga*) and division of work enabled them to afford the necessities for the households that were essential for their economic needs. In accordance with the principles of the Modernisation theory, the Luo community of *Kisumu* had to evolve along the same historical trajectory as the western nations. For Golds worth and Mboya (1955), it was to allow for development to occur if capitalist ideologies were applied by the people of *Kisumu*.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Kisumu's economic productivity was limited to subsistence and local market needs. Massive production was hampered by a number of problems, including the communal land tenure system, which prevented men from investing in or developing land for an extended period of time. In terms of worker quality, pre-colonial Kisumu's manpower shortage was significantly different from industrial societies, even in cases where a household had a sizable labour force (Ogonda and Ochieng 1992:14).

It is evident that the politics of division of labour, majorly based on gender and age among the Luo community of Kisumu (Cokumu 2001), resulted in some forms of organization of people based on the kind of work they could do in the society. This view is supported by Freud (2015), who contends that labour has a basic economic role regardless of the existence of the organisation formed by workers. Marxist economics gives labour a central place; the ruling class eventually survives on the surplus that is taken from the worker, and the mode of extraction affects more than just economic ties. Thus, Marxists in particular highlighted the wider social

implications of work. This is evident in how the pre-colonial society organized its workforce before colonialism and how the society forced them to transform into capitalist modes of production (Freud 2014).

According to the research of the process of transition during pre-colonial periods, although we observe a greater degree of agricultural productivity among the Luo, this was not the norm. Nga'ng'a (1980) criticises academics who believe that pre-colonial Kenyan society was homogeneous. According to Nga'ng'a, pre-colonial cultures were distinct. He makes a strong case that the accumulation of cattle, agricultural products, and commerce led to difference. He adds that the majority of the people who became accumulators were traders, soldiers, raiders, and elephant hunters. He notes that the rise of a new layer of petty bourgeoisie who had some form of missionary education caused this class of accumulators to vanish (Nga'ng'a, 1980). It is important to argue, therefore, that some aspects of transformation of African labour and workers took place in the pre-colonial Luo society even before the advent of colonialism.

#### **2.4. The Introduction of Colonial Rule and the Development of Kisumu as a Colonial Administrative Center**

Before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, “Kisumu” was a very beautiful landscape of a large area in its natural state. The Kano plains remained the border of Luo habitation until the first Europeans arrived in Nyanza in 1890. The main places where people settled were the Kavirondo Gulf and the South Nyanza Lake coast (Carlsen 1980:15). A people whose manner of life had altered somewhat over generations lived in the interior of East Africa when the British protectorate was established in 1895. To grow millet and beans and raise cattle, some farmers, herders and nomads destroyed

the woodlands. In contrast to other regions of Africa, there were no towns, highways, kingdoms, or principalities. Women carried goods on their backs because there were no proper means of transport or donkeys, there were no ploughs other than digging sticks. They wore skin and beads or shells were their currency, they used traditional medicine to cure diseases and the art of writing was unknown (Carlsen 1980:4). It is against this backdrop and understanding that the colonial government, settlers and entrepreneurs' begun to occupy the country Kenya and Kisumu in particular. The settlement of the Europeans in Kisumu was as a result of their imperialism, economic needs, prestige and strategic advantages lying behind their pacification. Following the arrival of Europeans in Kisumu, economic policies were developed that significantly disrupted and altered the local political, social, and economic structures (Carlsen 1980:4).

In the 1890s and 1900s, the construction of the Kenya-Uganda railway resulted in the creation of new urban centres or the alteration of existing ones to accommodate colonial administration positions. Kisumu was reframed as a location that facilitated colonial aspirations similar to previous colonies. Africans were forced to live in areas apart from those inhabited by Europeans and Asians, and they were exiled to the outside of the planned city's tidy squares, plazas, and estates. Even though Africans were marginalised when colonial control arrived, Kisumu's history as a developing metropolis was inextricably linked to theirs. Without the help of the settlers, the Europeans would not have been able to stay in Kisumu. The most notable aspects of British colonial policy were these. The British colonial authorities, who invited both Europeans and Indians to reside in the Kisumu region and participate in the development strategy plan of utilising the economic resources,

sought, publicly promoted, and claimed the latter at any given moment. The 1890s saw a massive inflow of Europeans, mostly from Britain, Arabs from the Middle East, and South Asians, many of whom were descended from the railway workers that the British had secured, as well as the Abaluhya and Abagusii, who were the Luo's neighbours and helped to define Kisumu (Larimore 1969:50-68).

The process of intrusion went through stages before the final stage. Two European special commissioners of Uganda and Kenya, Sir Johnston Henry Hamilton and Sir Charles Eliot supported European incursion to Kenya and Kisumu in particular by stating that the Kenya highland was good for agriculture and called for its people by the European settlers. In the fledgling East African protectorate, these concepts gave rise to new economic principles. transforming the railway into a profitable enterprise that would be able to reimburse the British government for the enormous quantities of money that were invested in it (Touabia, 2014:44). Sir Charles Eliot harboured prejudices towards Africans despite his desire for Europeans to settle in East Africa, especially in the Kisumu region. He believed Africans had low potentialities and abilities by stating that;

“at least in certain negative qualities they are somewhat low in the scale of civilization and have no political organization.” (Mosley 2009:14).

He also believed that;

*Small, poorly cured, and nearly worthless hides were the only products of the pastoral economy, which was seen as having little value. The only chance was to populate the vacant area with settlers who would convert the fertile soil into usable account by producing crops while the railway line carried and purchasing machinery and other things for it to carry. The agricultural tribes failed to produce any crops that the world desired (Nga'nga 2006: 680).*

Regardless of Sir Eliot's opinion on Africans, he considered European occupancy to be one of the top aims of British policy and law in order to establish Kenya as a Whiteman's colony. Because of this, Kisumu rose to prominence as one of the colonial era's most significant urban centres. Kisumu town was founded by the imperial authority from the beginning of the twentieth century when Europeans arrived. Following the numerous African uprisings, the town was placed under British Protectorate in 1901 and turned into a lake port and railway terminal. The British then set out to create an administrative structure in the recently acquired areas. This marked the start of more than 60 years of British rule.

The British government, fearing failure, assigned the Imperial British East African Company (IBEACo) to represent its interest in East Africa after the establishment of East Africa protectorate status over Kenya on July 1, 1895. In 1888, the British essentially established William McKinnon's British East African Company to manage the East African Protectorate, which comprised Kenya and Uganda. The business was renamed the Imperial British East African Company (IBEACo) after obtaining the Royal Charter of incorporation (Mungeam 1970:7). The British government granted the chartered firm permission to conduct business in the county. IBEACO was strategically established to prevent German incursions into the region (Hobbley & Mungean 1970:60) and to prevent French intervention in the region that would have blocked the Nile River's source in Lake Victoria, obstructing the route from the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean (Touabia 2014:35).

IBEACo was supposed to act as a cloak in the economy, hiding the consequences of British policy. Touabia claimed that William Mackinnon's attempts to establish an economic foundation to support the colonial government were pointless, and his

accomplishments were scant. His failure was attributed to inexperience, chaos, and a lack of capital to oversee the business' operations, which resulted in the widespread exploitation of minerals, cash crops, slaves, and other natural resources, which caused suffering for the local population. Africans continued to live in poverty and faced discrimination (Toubia 2014:36). This kind of exploitation by the IBEACo because they had a charter, made Britain to be held accountable under the international law for her activities in East Africa. IBEACo failed and was criticized as a 'ramshackle' and lost favor with the British government (KNA/PC/NZA/14/1908-9). The organization was poorly designed, terribly managed and chronically undercapitalized. IBEACo therefore, transferred over the rights of the charter to Her Majesty's government. In July 1895, the British government proclaimed the region that the firm had previously managed a protectorate (Salim 1973:72). The region was administered as the East Africa Protectorate as of December 1895. The task of expanding the protectorate's commercial potential fell to the British administration. The governor of the East Africa Protectorate Sir Charles Eliot had this to say:

*East Africa was established when the business paid the government 250,000 sterling pounds in 1895 for the remaining rights. All East African territories under Her Majesty's protectorate, with the exception of the islands of Zanzibar, Pemba, and the Uganda protectorate, are to be administered as a single protectorate under the name East African Protectorate, according to an official notice dated August 31, 1896. A decision was made to build the Uganda Railway. In 1895, the first tracks were installed, and in December 1901, the first train arrived at the Lake (Micheal & David 1993:79).*

Kisumu, Naivasha Districts, South Kavirondo, and all other areas that had been merged from the Eastern Province of Uganda were included in the protectorate that the British declared over Uganda in 1895. These areas were all placed under the control of the British East Africa Company, and eventually all of them became a

part of Kenya (Nyakwaka, 1975). Kisumu later on became the headquarters of Central Kavirondo. Other parts like Karungu became administrative centers of South Districts. The town developed because of the Uganda Railway line. Initially, the railway line was called Uganda Railway because the Nyanza region was part of Uganda protectorate until 1902. The rail was built by the European government to eradicate the slave trade, open up the region to commerce and secure Uganda and the Nile valley (Ogot 2016). The rail was developed using Indian indentured labour, and it was put into operation after the foreign office-appointed rail committee determined that:

*It would be hopeless to expect the railway could be constructed at any reasonable cost and speed unless the Indian office sanctioned the recruitment of labour in India (Miller, 1973)*

This suggests that foreign office had to seek for the services of the Indian labourer. A Punjab agent A.M. Jevanje was entrusted to recruit labour from Indian personnel from 1856-1939. Jevanje had been previously used by IBEAco successfully to recruit men for public works in India and other countries. In 1886 his firm was contracted to provide skilled labourers for the Uganda railway until 1922. Many workers left Punjab, Gujarat, and Sindh to come and build the railway. A total of 39,711 workers came from India compared to 2,600 who were pioneer labourers only from Kenya (Ogot 2016:9-10). It is reported that the work was odious with many deaths and invalids some were eaten by lions, a total of 2493 Indians died and nobody bothered to count the number of Africans who succumbed to the poor working conditions (Ogot, 2016:12).

Colonel Ternan, the head of the British colonial administrator in Nyanza, ordered in 1899 that the administrative headquarters for the Lake Victoria area be moved from

Mumias, where it had been located a few years before, to Ugowe, the modern-day town of Kisumu. This was done in preparation for the railroad's arrival to the selected endpoint, Port Ugowe. To create the new settlement of Kisumu, Charles William Hobbely, an assistant at Mumias, was sent. He was tasked with occupying, calming, and opening up Kavirono, which was then known as the Nyanza province. The Kitosh, Kakalewa, Nandi, Kakamega, Tiriki, and Uyoma were the targets of Hobbely's 1895–1900 punitive expeditions (Ogot, 1963). The Luo who formed the majority inhabitants of Central Nyanza collaborated with the British colonialists, because of the injunctions put by their diviners (*jobilo*), who had a lot of influence in Pre-colonial times. Their coming had been forecasted by the diviners and the people had been warned against any resistance or else they would incur the wrath of the ancestors henceforth they cordially welcomed the Europeans (Ogot, 1963).

The first rough map of Kisumu town was created in July 1899. There were hurriedly constructed grass cottages in the Northern Bay, which are now Bondeni and Otonglo. According to reports, Hobbely constructed a grass-thatched residence for himself, three servant houses, an office, and store rooms. Plots were distributed to a few European companies and Indians who arrived in Kisumu on contracts to construct the Uganda railway and chose to live near the terminus, according to a revised design that was created in May 1900. On Mumias Road, they occupied two rows of iron and wood businesses. The final rail was fastened on December 19, 1901, and there was a community of round tents for Nubian troops and families nearby (Ogot, 2016:9). Mrs. Florence Whitehouse, the wife of George Whitehouse the chief engineer who layered plates and supervised the building of the railway, was given the honor and privilege of symbolically hammering the last spike of the

903 km track. The terminus was then named Port Florence in her honour (Ogot, 2016:7).

The Uganda railway ended the era of large and costly caravans of porters carrying loads from Mombasa to Uganda. It became the link between the pre-colonial and early colonial systems of East African trade because the subsistence economy and wage-oriented economy met (Ogot 2016:7-8). After the rail arrived at Port Ugowe in 1901, Hobbley asked the British Foreign Office for permission to relocate the railway terminal to the South Bay for health reasons. According to records, Kisumu town progressively migrated to its current site during a 20-year period. The Europeans took all administrative posts as well as command of the Police force, prison services, the treasury because they regarded themselves as rulers and the rest of the population as their subjects (workers) (Ogot 2016:15). It is on the precincts of Africans being subjects and pioneer labourers of the Europeans that transformation is inevitable to meet the colonial labour ideals.

Within the railway line construction sites, Africans were used as semi-skilled workers who became pioneer labourers. The Indian coolies did the better part of the construction work because they had the technical know-how while Africans were used as majorly porters, they cleared areas where the rail passed and became security officers to the supervisors in the construction work, European homes as well as in the settler farms (Ogot 2016:16). Henceforth, Africans were forced to migrate from arable land for settler farming. The plantation farming also led to the creation of the native reserves to settle the landless Africans. When life became unbearable, they sought refuge as wage labourers in their own alienated land. The traditional land tenure system underwent a revolution and was replaced by a new one that was

enforced and modified to meet the demands of the Nyanza region's residents as well as those of Europe. a system of land tenancy that was created in accordance with British colonial policies, which gave preference to white people at the expense of Africans and foreign-born non-white settlers (Touabia, 2014: 41). Kisumu region henceforth, became a settlement region for many races.

Sir Elliot Charles the commissions and consul General of East Africa in his official report dated October 10<sup>th</sup>, 1902 also described Kisumu in this manner:

*Elephants occasionally occupied train stations, and their curiosity ravaged the booking office and took tickets which could not be accounted for afterwards and also how rhinos would delay passage of trains. Natives of all shades and from different parts were found in Kisumu. The Swahilis were brought in as potters, Nubians to constitute the Native constabulary force and Hindus apart from their connection to the railway line were quick to grasp the possibilities of trade. Somalis also settled in the town. (Boermeester 2009)*

The creation of human settlement in search of labour also elevated the status of Kisumu changing its traditional aspect of settlement, as the kind of houses migrants lived were upgraded from the olden structures. The physical plan of Kisumu town accommodated every race in the town. For instance:

*Downtown, a little distance from the European town center was a row of Indian shops and on the Eastern part was a distinctly separate Nubian village, Swahilis, Somalis and Luo. Nubian village for Nubian policemen was at the current Nubian estate, Swahili village for Swahili potters at the current Kaloleni and Shauri Moyo estate, while the Europeans reside in Anderso estate. The Luo who were the Lords of the soil had homesteads all over Kisumu. The modern building on the fringes of Kisumu town including the Aga khan hospital, Kisumu Bus Stop and Kibuye market, all stand on the land initially occupied by the Luo with traditional homesteads which were typically built in circle (Boermeester 2009).*

Hence it can be noted that Kisumu town became a railway terminal thus opening up the area to colonial activities. It made Africans to be tenants in their own land and

still gave much needed pioneer labour. The settling of Europeans in Kisumu as administrators and railway line construction supervisors changed the sleeping center for trade into a modern entity, with races competing to draw their livelihood from it. The town became a home to many races including the Europeans, Asians, Goans, Arabs, waswahili, Nubians, Buganda and the locals who were majorly the Luo, the Abagusii, Baluhya, Nandi and other communities (Ogot 2016:20). An administrative system for established agricultural inhabitants had to replace the social and political structures that defined the pre-colonial Kisumu region, which had a more nomadic and semi-pastoral way of life. Africans were forced to adopt a centralised form of administration by the colonial authorities, which contrasted sharply with the segmentary system that existed before colonization (Ogot, *Journal of African history*: 253). Africans and Indians became part of the pioneer labourers whose energy were used to build Kisumu to an urban center it is to date.

## **2.5. Summary**

This chapter has discussed the pre-colonial labour organization and relations of the Luo. It is evident that their modes of production were hunting and gathering, livestock keeping, growing of crops, fishing and trade. The wealth that was accumulated from their economic activities allowed men to patronage leadership and women. Their aspect of labour division and specialization led to peaceful, orderly and harmonious living. Children, young men and women each had a place in the economy. Labour was intertwined in everyday economic and social life. It entailed cooperation during wars, harvesting, planting, construction and various celebrations. The surplus was shared with relatives and friends. Land was very essential in the accumulation of wealth. Those who were lazy were condemned. The mode of

production used simple tools and labour was communal and free of charge for the benefit of the society (Ogot 1996). This aspect of production had very little social differentiation as opposed to capitalism. It is believed that the Luo and other labourers who found themselves in Kisumu County as it is called to date, transformed to an economic system totally different from the traditional one. Consequently, labour organization was disrupted and scuttled by the new economic practices. Africans were introduced to new modes of production where labour relations went through a serious change that many times detribalized communities. Forced labour, wage labour and migrant labour are some ideals that changed the traditional labour relations that the next chapter would want to ascertain. The next chapter examines various labour policies used by the colonial government to ensure African workers provided labour in 1901-1945.

**CHAPTER THREE**  
**COLONIAL LABOUR POLICIES AND THE AFRICAN WORKERS IN**  
**KISUMU COUNTY 1901-1945**

**3.1. Introduction**

The chapter looks at the various colonial labour policies that were enacted by the colonial government to get labour from the African workers of Kisumu County. The chapter is divided into four sections, the first section looks at the different forms of labour policies enacted as from 1901 to 1914, the second section looks at colonial labour policies enacted in the First World War 1914-1918. The third section looks into colonial labour policies during the interwar period 1919-1939. Lastly, labour policies during the Second World war 1939-1945. The chapter analyzes some of the colonial labour policies that assisted the colonial government and the settlers to tap labour from the Africans in Kisumu County.

The chapter examines the introduction of colonial labour policies with the onset of colonialism in Kisumu from 1901-1945. This is a defining period since it marks the beginning of large-scale alienation of African land and emergence of settler farming in Kenya. The period is also characterized by enactment of land and labour policies which later on shaped the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Consequently, the chapter explores the foundations of colonial labour policies in Kisumu County from 1901 to 1914 and how these labour policies distorted and reorganized the African traditional labour and land system within Kisumu. The chapter further examines the colonial labour policies during the First World War 1914-1919 period with a view of understanding how these policies played out towards the war effort. Similarly, the chapter explores the colonial labour policies

during the interwar period from 1919 to 1939. Lastly, the chapter interrogates the colonial labour policies and the dynamics of African responses to these policies during the Second World War from 1939-1945. Consequently, the chapter concludes that the foundation of nationalist movements witnessed within the study period was informed by the capitalist and racist colonial labour policies that characterized the colonial state and spaces such as Kisumu.

### **3.2. Foundations of Colonial Labour Policies in Kisumu County, 1901-1914**

1901 marks the beginning of colonial appropriation of African labour in Kisumu County. The town became a destination and a settlement area for the whites and other races. Africans had to first relinquish their pieces of land for the construction of the railway line as well as the settlements of the European (Touabia 2014) for example, the Kanyakwar, the Kamoth and Kowidi clans of Kisumu County had to relinquish their land for the European settlements. Kanyakwar clan migrated from Alego occupying areas by the lake shore at Dunga, where they met Kamoth and Kowidi, who were fishermen and by the time the colonial government arrives in Ugowe, according to Ogot (2016), there were six Kanyakwar villages' elders some of them includes. Mzee Osimbo, Otieno Alang'o, Okulo Polo, and Riaga Ochich who lived with their people in Ugowe, which later housed Kisumu town thus the town was built on their land. Later, the Kanyakwar people laid claim to the ownership of all the land in the old colonial town (Ogot, 2016). With the railway line in place, pacification became easy and land alienation began in earnest. The colonial state availed labour which was not only cheap and available in the right quantities setting forth the pioneer labourers in Kisumu. Since Africans relied on currency and labour taxes for their subsistence production, a variety of strategies

were developed to lessen their utter reliance on land. Restrictions on occupational mobility and profession kinds were among the other measures used to control labour costs, quality, and size.

The commissioner of Kenya Sir Charles Eliot, began in earnest to encourage white farms or plantation owners to engage in the production of cash crops as a way of supplementing the administrative costs. The introduction of the settler plantations resulted into a serious labour crisis because it conflicted with the existing labour demands within the African subsistence farming. The settlers' demand for cheap compulsory labour, pushed over to the African worker, became a burden as they had to heed to the call of labour for the traditional economy as well (Osamba, 1996). The colonial administration had to provide labour for the settlers because they had invited them to come to engage in settler economy (Stitcher and Lonsdale, 1982).

To support the development of a strong viable settler economy, the colonial administration came up with various labour policies. This would completely undermine and harm the growth of the productive forces in the African labourers' rural economy of Kisumu County (Carlsen, 1980:20). In order to guarantee a consistent supply of workers for government projects and for the white settlers, the colonial authorities implemented a number of policies. Several land regulations, such as the Crown Lands Ordinance of 1902, the East Africa Lands Order in Council of 1902, and the Land Acquisition Act of 1894, made it feasible for the settlers to settle in Kenya's highlands. These land statutes favoured the interests of the European settler-farmers in Kisumu County while ignoring the customary tenure of clan land.

The residents of Kisumu suffered as a result of the well-known public Lands law of 1902, which proclaimed all vacant African property to be public land (Mungean, 1976). This regulation introduced the land appropriation chapter in Kisumu County and Kenya. The ordinances made room for European colonies in the highlands by alienating large areas of land to settlers under the ownership of interest principle. As a result, Africans were compelled to live in the Kajulu and Kano reserves (Sorenson, 1965: 675).

Again, the Crown Land Ordinance of 1902 ordered the colonial administration to offer land to settlers at cheap costs in order to exclude African labourers. Sir Charles Elliot the commissioner (1901-1904), invited the settlers to occupy the Kenya highlands. Due to their inadequate capital, the settlers demanded for government support to help them prosper in their new environment. The governor used his powers to lease and sell land to the settlers and over the next decade, the colonial state issued rules under the terms of the ordinance for alienation of land in the highlands (Sorrenson, 1965:676). With more settlers engaging in large scale plantations, there was a need for cheap labour to work in the plantation farms. To address the shortage of labour for the settlers, the colonial government had no option but to enact another ordinance for Africans to give labour. In 1902 for instance, the Village Headman Ordinance was enacted which gave the headmen powers to mobilize labour for the building of any public road adjacent to headman's village. These labour laws institutionalized the establishment of forced labour henceforth, African workers had no choice except to provide the labour.

The first sector to have received migrant labour was the transport sector, especially in the construction of the Kenya-Uganda railway line. Its construction depended on

African labour as porters and security men to ensure peace prevailed in places where the railway line passed. The emergence of a few Africans earning wages also began taking shape as soon as the skeleton administration was laid out; these were the pioneer labourers. They were some skilled Africans, especially the Luo, who were nicknamed railway people. (Ogot & Madara, 2020:38). Many of the people who migrated to Kisumu town according to an interviewee, were Luo from Siaya, Seme, Sakwa, Bondo and the surrounding communities of Kajulu and Kano who at times easily commuted to work (Midega, O.I, 2021). More Africans came into the town to look for better social amenities and job opportunities. They began selling in the market stalls and open spaces furthermore, barter business also took place and there were also Asians who sold goods like rice. African traders paid money in proportion to the value of the produce. They also secured job opportunities in administrative units and government projects (Ogot, 2016).

More fundamentally than in the nineteenth century, the colonial authority in 1902 made sure that they not only controlled the political sphere but also created an atmosphere that was favourable to the spread of the capitalist economy (Maxon 1992:63). Land alienation for Europeans was made legal by the Crown Land Ordinance of 1902. This was a component of the state's structural initiatives to force Africans into the wage economy (Sorenson 1972). For instance, the destruction and displacement of five African homesteads consisting of twenty-three huts resulted in land alienation in the districts between Kibos and Kibiogori. They also expelled the Luo who were living on the territory west of Kibiogori, north of the railway line.

Within Kisumu district, further regions were vulnerable to land alienation. For instance, all of the *Jokajulu* and *Jokano* owned property between Kibos and

Muhoroni, which served as a buffer zone between the Luo and the Nandi, saw the displacement of Luo households. Following the evictions, the colonial authorities gave impacted Luo families 810 rupees for 60 communities in the Miwani region and 37 African homesteads in Kibos (Osamba, 2016:619). The evictions were one example of how the colonial government alienated land from African workers. These evictions would later lay the foundations for colonial labour policies that characterized Kisumu in the early times of colonialism. Vitalis (O.I, 2022) observes that his grandparents had to leave their ancestral land and moved to Rabuor to pave way for the large-scale agricultural farms that the government was securing for the Asians. The colonial capitalist modes of production would therefore distort the lifestyle of the workers leading to the loss of land held by *Jokanyakwar*, *jokajulu* and *jokano* who lived closer to Winam Gulf (Osamba, 2016:619).

As early as 1902-1912 about 12000 acres of African land in Kibos-Muhoroni-Miwani within Kisumu district had also been alienated for Asian settlement, surpassing initial land holding which ranged between 50-100 acres (Osamba, 2016:619). Land alienation this impacted on the people of Kabar who were natives of Kisumu and were later resettled by the colonial government in now Kabonyo settlement schemes. The people of Kabar were pushed by the colonial settlers in Muhoroni in order to give ways for the white farmers. Along Chemelil road, there were demarcated pieces of land to this effect. Kabonyo people suffered the same fate when the colonial government alienated their land to pave way for plantation farming, mainly sugarcane growing. Consequently, this move by the colonial government created a group of landless Africans in Kisumu some of whom were resettled in Kibigori. To date land ownership in these settlement schemes of

Kibigori, Kabonyo and Muhoroni has increasingly become controversial. Land rivalry between families, clans and ethnic communities in the area has become very common (Osamba 2016: 619). This explains the distortions and temporalities of space that characterized the colonial space in Kenya.

The Headman Ordinance of 1902 laid the foundation for subsequent labour policies that would follow in Kenya. Its application in Kisumu had devastating effects on many households. Kisumu's economy was included into the capitalist system and local patterns of production were articulated through the implementation of the first labour law. Integration led to forceful seizure of land, livestock as well as ecological problems (Ogot, 2016). The village Headmen Ordinance of 1902 was used alongside the Headman Ordinance. The Village headman Ordinance of 1902 allowed African leaders to get labour forcefully. Consequently, many men were forcefully recruited to provide labour in areas such as building roads, forts and bridges as well as in the farms. Other Africans were enlisted in the military services and worked as soldiers, carrier corps' while others became porters in the building of Kenya-Uganda railway. All these became useful through the exploitation of the traditional modes of production by the British administration. As a result, Africans were forced to join the wage labour at the expense of their traditional economy (Ogot, 2016).

The introduction of migrant wage labour in the early colonial period, therefore, had profound social and economic effects on African households not only in Kisumu but also in other parts of the country. For instance, a number of migrant labour from Mumias not only found working in Kisumu favourable but were also preferred by the colonial administrators. For instance, cases of single parenthood, family separations or divorce were witnessed. As noted by the PC Nyanza:

*The railway report varied favorably on labour because the report indicates the preference that was given to other labour migrants. For example, they preferred men from Mumias instead of Kisumu, the former being better workers and of better physique. A fair number have worked for the railway for over the two years (KNA/NPAR, 1905/6).*

The intensity of seeking for African labour increased as white settlers embarked on establishing firms in various economic sectors in Kisumu. For example, in 1907, Bousted and Clarke limited operated large stocks of wine spirits, groceries, soft goods and general merchandise. It was a leading exporter of the country's produce and were official brokers and auctioneers. The company was also an agent of all mission societies in Central Nyanza (Ogot, 2016:10). The workers here were Europeans, Arabs, Asians and 130 Africans. This is evidence that as early as 1907 African workers had transformed and joined the Europeans' capitalist economy leaving out the traditional economy unattended. More so, labour relations and means of production became multi-racial with the sole aim of achieving the capitalist nature of the colonialist.

The British East African company which was founded in 1907 also set up grinding mills in Kisumu town which produced four tonnes per day for maize and millet grains. The same company also began exploring the regions considered promising for cotton cultivation. Therefore, trained agriculturalists were sent with supplies of selected seeds for distribution to Africans. The Africans were given practical training on how to plant and reap their crops. Ginning factories were also established and Kisumu region became a neutral collection Centre with cotton being transported by steamers from areas around the Lake. Experimental farms within Kisumu County for example in Kibos and Rabuor employed many Africans as labourers.

Large scale agricultural production provided spaces where African labour interacted with other means of production. Labour relations became so fluid in these spaces despite the racial categorization which informed European colonialism in Kenya. The colonial economy then was characterized by different types of cash crops and African labour became vital in the production of these cash crops. The Europeans engaged in rubber, sugar cane and coffee plantations in large estates near Kisumu. Private estates also came up, for example, the 1000-acre cotton estates of J.H.S. Tood at Fort Tennant. These companies attracted African labour from Kisumu, thereby enhancing social and economic relations between migrant labour from Kisumu and the non-Luo ethnic groups living in Fort Ternan. Likewise, European farms within the outskirts of Kisumu in such places as Nyang'ori, (located about eight miles North of Kisumu) where rubber experimental farms were set, attracted African labour too.

These new labour activities affected the African workers either as individual families or as a community because it forced them into new labour practices. Yet, they were not ready to forego their traditional labour practices and offer much needed labour to the Europeans (Ogot, 2016:15). By 1905 there were 500 to 600 European settlers in Kisumu County and eventually increased in 1907 to 2000 (Clayton and Savage, 1974). The more the Europeans settled in Kisumu town, the more Africans joined the wage labour and the more the traditional economy lagged behind or burdened women and children in equal measure. African labour was appropriated through various labour policies. For instance, the Village Headmen Ordinance of 1907 created the chieftaincy and headmen positions which became so crucial as far as labour relations were concerned within the colonial state. In

Kisumu, for instance, there were groups of Luo men who were selected for appointment as colonial chiefs and headmen. Consequently, Mr Nyangaga was appointed as the chief of Seme, with Mr. Ongago and Mr. Kola as his Village Headmen. Similarly, Mr. Ogola Oyieke was appointed as a colonial Chief representing Kisumu Karateng among others. These chiefs were responsible for maintenance of law and order, collection of taxes and to ensure supply of labour for public works within Central Nyanza (KNA/ NPAP/1907/8, Ogot 1963:253).

Although the Luo of Kisumu had their own political organization and leadership before the onset of colonialism, the role of the chiefs had to change with colonialism in order to accommodate the colonial government's capitalist agenda. Moreso, the chiefs had to deal with and resolve many land disputes which was the major problem among communities at this time (Deflam, 1994). The provincial commissioner nominated each chief, and the federal government provided funding for them as public officials (Ogot, 1963:253). Colonialism, therefore, introduced monetary reward for labour, an aspect which was never there in the traditional African economy.

The 1907 Courts Ordinance, which established Native Courts and acknowledged tribunals and the chiefs' direct authority, significantly expanded the chiefs' powers. By creating such policy frameworks, the Native Authority Ordinance expanded the authority of chiefs and reorganised their spheres of influence, which were thereafter referred to as regions whose borders allegedly aligned with those of pre-existing clans. These ordinances not only transformed the pre-colonial political structures from a decentralized indigenous institution, to a centralized political system with all

the problems that came with the latter, the ordinance also identified the labour force catchment area for the colonial state (Ogot, 1963:253).

As Kenya entered the second decade of British protectorate, the colonial government enacted more labour laws in order to streamline the agricultural and industrial sector. The Master Servant Ordinances of 1906 and 1910 went into effect at this period. In order to regularise and regulate the African work force that squatted on European fields, the government established the Master and Servants Ordinance. In order to create labour relations between the master and their employees, this law was frequently used (Hay & Paul, 2004:34). According to the regulation, the employer would cultivate land on their estates for free and engage workers on a yearly basis. This made it possible for Africans to work for three months or more at a mutually agreed-upon remuneration (Berman, 1965). This, therefore, kept Africans captive of their masters since in cases of desertion they were bound to prosecutions by criminal tribunals. The criminal tribunal would impose a two-month deduction of African wages or imprisonment when found guilty (Toubia, 2014:64).

The Master Servant Ordinance was one of the many other abusive ordinances that attracted the attention of the Secretary of the Department of Native Affairs in 1907. When investigations were done, it revealed the austerity of the ordinance. In some cases, labourers starved and were left without transport back after the end of the contracts. Then-Colonial Secretary Churchill commanded sanity in the government's or white men's search for work. A circular prohibiting the use of force by headmen and chiefs to recruit Africans was issued in this regard. Additionally, Churchill counselled his administration to abandon the direct coercive tactic right now. The

colonial secretary's protective policy of the Africans interests did not go down well with the settlers (Mungean 1970:192). The people of Kisumu region felt the oppressiveness of colonialism through these various ordinances that made them lose their dignity in the labour they offered to the colonial government.

Areas where labour was needed most in Kisumu ranged from Kibos, Miwani, Chemelil and Muhoroni; these are areas which formed the sugar belt region of Nyanza Province. Both rubber and sugar cane plantations were planted on an experimental basis along the Kenya–Uganda railway for ease of accessing labour as well as transportation of products from the farms to the markets. Although Asians were the first to engage in sugarcane plantation, Europeans' entry into the white highlands as sugarcane farmers affected labour supply into these farms. These Europeans cane farmers would pose as competitors to the Asian cane farmers on issues dealing with labour recruitment (Wanga-Odhiambo, 2016).

The economic burden imposed on the African workers of Kisumu left them with no choice other than to seek wage labour to get cash for taxes (Okuro 2002:70). The type of taxes levied by the colonial government also facilitated exploitation of indigenous labour and natural resources. Taxes were required to both support the intended public expenditure and guarantee that the cost of doing so was shared fairly (KNADC/CN/3/5). There was little indication that taxes caused significant hardship for the majority of households when examining the tax structure from the start of colonial administration to the start of World War I. They fulfilled their tax obligation by selling hides and skins or bringing sesame to the neighbourhood shops to be turned into cash. An indirect form of compulsion into the work market was the hut tax, which was imposed on African homes. In violation of the principles of pre-

capitalist labour relations, the levy was an obvious indication of the cooptation of Kisumu's African workers, who were now tax-paying subjects of the monarchy. After that, the hut tax was raised to three rupees across the protectorate, and it continued until 1910 (Berman 1965).

### **3.3. Tax Collection, Evasion and Impacts on Africa's Traditional Economy in Kisumu**

Every tax, whether in form of material or cash imposed a real burden on the labourers in Kisumu. As much as chiefs were given authority to collect taxes in the colonial period, they did it with a lot of impunity. Many workers were charged for not paying taxes as it happened to one woman in the Kolanya area of Kisumu (KNA/KDAQ/1908-1918). Failure to pay taxes attracted other penalties such as confiscation of livestock and other personal properties. Such violent colonial acts compelled Africans to forcefully offer their labour in European farms. The demand for labour in Kisumu was very crucial as evident by the fact that a Commission of Labour had to be set up to look into this issue. According to the Kisumu District Annual report, this commission was set up to investigate and report on issue of labour demands and supply in the colony for instance:

*Local people sought wage employment in the Asian sugar plantations during the tax collection period in the months of September to March than during other months (KNA/KDAQ/1908-1918).*

According to Osiri (O.I, 2022), taxes were collected late into the night when many people were at home. This was because during the day, people would hide or leave to other areas to evade taxation. Other ways of evading taxes also involved crossing the borders by Africans to other neighbouring districts where they would stay with their relatives during tax collection period (KNA/DC/KSII/3/7/1912). As a

mitigation measure to tax evasion, the colonial government restricted African workers to their reserves and were not even allowed to cross borders to another district. In some cases, letters would be written by Chiefs to their counterparts where tax evaders had run to, compelling them to return to their districts. Luo labourers from Central Kavirondo would migrate as far as Samia, Kericho and even Kisii (1190/L&O.17/8/1/32). These kinds of reports cite evidence of many of the Luo people who represented the bulk of African migrant labourers in Kisumu.

Taxation changed the traditional modes of production and social formations of the African workers of Kisumu County through wage labour, commodity production and livestock sale. This led to the money economy being intertwined in the traditional economy. Taxation also created economic differentiation between the chiefs and the subjects through surplus accumulation of wealth. Consequently, taxation was a burden to the African workers more so to young men and women of Kisumu County because as a labour policy it changed the African workers of Kisumu to tax paying agents of capitalism (Butterman 1979:124).

The period between 1908 and 1910 were defining moments in the history of labour not only in Kisumu but also Kenya in general. New forms of taxes were introduced at the same time compulsory communal labour was legalized. Communal labour entailed African labourers being engaged in the repair of roads, bridges and harbours. Compulsory labour was adopted where voluntary labour was not forthcoming. Chiefs were simply informed that a certain number of labourers were needed and they were required to produce them in line with the Native Reserve Ordinance of 1910 (Ndeda 1991).

**Table 1: Labour Returns for the Quarter Ending 30th July 1912(Luo Kisumu District)**

Magadi	941
Fuel contract	43
Nairobi	94
Muhoroni	609
Conservancy	25
Marine	181
B.E.A Corporation	-
Uganda railway	46
P.W.D	157
Misc	147
Estimated number who left the district	350
Kibos unregistered	1500
<b>Total</b>	<b>4086</b>

**SOURCE; Nyanza Provincial Annual Report, 1912**

The number of African labourers leaving their communities in search of employment increased steadily by September 1912, reaching at least double the previous quarter's population (PC/NZA/1/7/1911-1912). The number of Africans working in various departments increased in Kisumu alone. This rise implied that

now was probably the best moment to hire workers. As a result, the Native Labour Commission was founded in 1912 with the discriminatory assumption that Africans are naturally lazy. It was believed that Africans were sluggish and that their children could only inherit the virtues of civilisation and a strong work ethic by forcing them to work hard (East African Native Report, 1920). Ewart Grogan also looked at Africans through the same lens. The same belief was echoed by a European settler Johnson who stated that:

*Male natives lives, in most cases, live in a state of idleness, while their women do all the work of the field and household besides rearing the family for him ("East African Natives," East African Standard, 24 Dec 1920).*

Such stereotypical representation of Africans as 'lazy' depicted the ambivalence of the African postcolony despite the fact that the colonial economy solely relied on African labour especially in areas such as Kibos, Miwani, Koru and Chemelil within Kisumu County. While looking at the traditional economy Africans worked hard and ensured there was plenty of food throughout all the seasons. Nobody went hungry and Africans had a solid subsistence economy. Such stereotypical thinking could only be fronted by the capitalist proponents.

A few years prior to the start of World War One, there was a surge in the need for workers, which prompted the colonial administration to establish a labour commission to look into and document Kisumu's labour supply and demand concerns. African witnesses who testified before the panel expressed dissatisfaction about pressure from headmen and chiefs to engage in wage employment. Additionally, it was said that certain chiefs were dishonest and that those who bought their favour were excused from work conscription. Conversely, it has been recorded that early colonial chiefs such as Se Oriri Kamdigo had positive

relationships with the earliest Asian settlers in Kibos and encouraged his people to look for wage work on Asian plantations (Hay 1976).

With the Native Authority Ordinance of 1912 as well as the policy of land alienation in place, both Asians and Europeans became the major beneficiaries. For instance, about 1200 acres of land were alienated for the Asian plantation establishment in areas of Kajulu and Kano of Kisumu district (Omenya 2010). Both Kano and Kajulu clans became part of the migrant labour within the labour configurations of Nyanza. This status changed their labour relations, agricultural practices and even places of residence.

The first phase of early colonialism saw a lot of experiments being done with cash crops in order to find out which crops performed well in certain geographical areas of Kenya. In Nyanza for instance, cotton, a colonial crop, was experimented with mixed results of success and failure through the use of African labour. Reed (1975) argues that the failure of cotton growing in Nyanza province was due to lack of African initiative, the high value African workers placed on leisure time, to lack of character, competence or economic sense coupled with a rigid adherence to traditional systems of agriculture. Nevertheless, the colonial government lacked a rational plan for developing the industry. Nyanza cotton farmers maintained their traditional farming methods and political structure to ameliorate the impact of imposed colonial policy on cotton cultivation in Kisumu (Reed 1975). As much as the colonial government relied on inaccurate guesses to determine areas suitable for the crop production, racial discrimination characterized cotton growing industry hence cotton growing in Kisumu failed as the colonial government watched (Ndege, 2019). According to Awara, a resident of Kano:

*Cotton growing was a colonial project for the Africans. Colonial agricultural officers, through the chiefs were used, to enforce cotton growing in areas of Kano, Kendu Bay, Kajulu and majorly within the then Great Nyanza Province” (Awara, O.I. 2022).*

The colonial government functioned under the presumption that the African population would supply a consistent supply of inexpensive labour from the reserves, while the European sector would take the initiative to boost the colony's economy. How to force Kisumu labourers to leave their villages and offer employment was the primary issue facing the colonial authorities in the first ten years of colonial control. Because village life was simple and inexpensive, the residents did not see the need to leave the village to supply wage work, as the colonial administration had required (Onduru, 1992:124).

Though, it is significant to note that, within Kisumu County, labour supply by African workers came from the adjacent villages of Seme, Siaya, Kano, Kombewa and Nyakach which benefited a lot from the rural-urban migration. From the onset of colonialism, provision of African labour was to help in the development of the capitalist economy in the protectorate, but at the same time African labourers became part of the colonial economy through earning of wages as a source of living (Okuro 2002). The capitalist economy transformed Africans and made them labour providers, job seekers and not labour producers. Ochieng (1992) observes that generally, the demand for African labour was not by market forces alone but was also influenced through political mechanisms that ensured labour supply at low wages. Ideally, colonial labour policies and reward for African labour was both racist and exploitative.

Colonialism altered the traditional configuration of labour within Nyanza province. Labour provision by Africans went beyond plantation farms to the houses of Europeans where African men worked as domestic workers. It was not easy to find African men working as domestic servants in the traditional society. This was driven by economic considerations as the only source of income in the early years of colonial rule. Initially, African women were denied this kind of work because the European women feared the immorality of African women and also argued that a child brought up by a black nurse risked being imprinted with an inferior culture. This was contrary to the African culture on gender roles because women were responsible for house chores and nursing of babies and not men (Maxon 1992). The choice of labour at the household level was therefore determined through gender cultural considerations.

Although migrant labour had a negative impact on the African families, the people of Kisumu had no options but to comply. The demand for male labour increased as the country approached the World War. The pre-war effort saw the demand for African male labour rising in places such as Kombewa in Seme as more men were needed as soldiers and porters. The other sector that also had high demand for African labour was the railway and Public Works Department. The public works agency and railways had the greatest need for labourers because Kavirondo had few inhabitants. About 650 Luo were employed by the railway, whilst 800–1450 Luo were employed by the public works department (KNA, NPAR /6/1905). Kisumu was thus becoming the labour pool for the entire colony.

Those who engaged in wage labour as early as the colonial government set foot in Kisumu amassed wealth and became rich. For example, Carlsen (1980:22) believes

that even African workers became wealth accumulators. For example, local chiefs, in addition to their salary could exploit their position as tax collectors and the recruitment of communal forced labour became new means of wealth accumulation. Henceforth, colonialism in Kisumu pitted the peasant household against capitalist enterprise. The peasant household was the primary site of production and reproduction for the vast majority of Kisumu workers. The way labour was organised in the peasant families changed dramatically and subtly as a result of the labour demands placed on them by the nascent capitalist firms. As a result, moving forward, the rhythms of time and work as well as space and work have to alter (Zeleva 1992:172).

Colonial agenda of linking the traditional economic system to a capitalist market economy seemed to augur well for some African labourers because capitalist economy was transforming young men by helping them to move away from their traditions to modernity as an aspect of modernization. Africans wanted to feel the capitalist economy and to many of the migrant workers capitalist ideology was as good as bringing change to where it was expected. Onduru (1992) believed that young men engaged in migrant labour to get money to pay bride wealth. Professional labour recruiters both European and Asians would be deployed to ensure more African labourers were conscripted into this capitalist system in order to bridge the gap of labour shortage in Kisumu at some point (KNA/NPAR/1903-1908). This led to the enactment of Master Servant Ordinance No. 4 that allowed labour agents or messengers to recruit labour for other employers making more African workers to join wage labour. This led to labour recruitments as far as Western province areas of Mumias from where labourers migrated from and joined

wage labour in Kisumu town. Though it was abhorred by the colonial government, such instances were rampant by around 1911.

Women and girls began to react to the establishment of colonial institutions, such townships, in the pre-war era. Indeed, the colonial government began to express alarm at this time (Okuro 2002). The P.C of Nyanza, feeling perturbed by the remarkable trend of women and girls leaving to townships especially of Kisumu noted that:

*The question of natives belonging to the reserves coming into the townships and stations, thus cutting themselves a drift from the community control was becoming a serious matter that required dealing with, without further delay.*

In response, the P.C gave instructions that:

*Chiefs, headmen and elders should be invited regularly to visit the locations in such townships and if they find people unemployed, they should be allowed to take back with them to the reserves. But also, juveniles and women living without husbands should go back with the chiefs (KNA/P.C/NZA/2/3/1911).*

As we moved closer to the beginning of World War One, the number of African labourers in Kisumu rose almost every day. For example, by 1914 this number had risen to about 6000, a number which would be adequate in providing labour towards the war effort (KNA/NPAR/1912). However, as pressure on land mounted, the colonial policies strip Africans of their fundamental means of production, forcing many to look for work. According to a European settler, the ideal reserve is a recruiting ground for labour, a place from which the able-bodied go out to work, returning occasionally to rest and beget the next generation of labourers. This suggests that reserves served as labour reservoirs (Wanga-Odhiambo 2016). The table below shows the number of labour recruitment in nyanza in the First World War.

**Table 2: Labour Recruitment in Nyanza between 1914 and 1917**

	<b>Carrier corps</b>	<b>Other labour</b>
1914-1915	18,169	26,245
1915-1916	24,184	17,138
1916-1917	21,900	18,577

**Source: Nyanza Provincial Report, 1917**

**Table 3: Shows the Labour Registered Between 1914-1915 in Kisumu**

Carrier corps	4572
Public works department	1292
Ferstry	263
Other department	3237
Private individual	4883
<b>Total</b>	<b>14247</b>

**Source: Kisumu district Annual Report, 1915**

The advent of the world wars in 1914 saw many Africans recruited into the military because of more demand for labour. More people were forcefully made to join the carrier corps and to work in other departments. The colonial government gave out serious punishment for evasion of work in Kisumu through the Native Registration Ordinance and Native Followers Ordinance the government ensured the District Commissioners and Chiefs were given the responsibility to avail labour (Cokumu 2001:72). In contrast, males in Nyanza sought wage employment to increase household output and pay taxes, but these were not the only motivations; men also sought wage labour to fulfil other commitments and purchase consumer items like clothing and bicycles (Wanga-Odhiambo 2016).

### **3.4 Colonial Labour Policies in Kisumu during the First World War 1914-1918.**

Workplace problems in colonial Kisumu were directly impacted by World War One. As more Africans joined the carrier corps, became porters, and served as *askaris* (soldiers), the conflict increased the demand for work. The poor working conditions of the *askaris* and carrier corps continued to deter Africans from volunteering for the war effort (Wanga 2016:173). Because it caused the workers to endure unspeakable pain, the labour shortage turned into one of the black bears that the colonial authorities had to eradicate. The unfavourable working circumstances claimed far more lives than real conflict.

The British colonial government had stated previously the goal of peaceful recruitment of labour as well as armed raids. In the First World War, porters were required to carry soldiers' weapons to remote and unplanned locations where using cars or animals was not an option and man was the only dependable way to

complete the operation. This became another ground for forceful recruitment of carrier corps who reacted negatively and vehemently due to fear of working as soldiers (Maxon 1992: 326).

By 1915, the brutality of the conflict and horrifying tales of African labourers being draughted into the carrier corps by the Native Followers Recruitment Ordinance of 1915 had deterred many of them from pursuing military duty, leading them to choose employment in public service and on European farms. Because not many Africans were willing to be recruited, the colonial government conscripted them against their will. One of the informants recalled his Uncle Mandanga of Kajulu who became a carrier corps and went to the battle fields within East Africa, never returning alive (Owili O.I. 2022). Others left military service and went elsewhere; others went back to their homes; some hid with friends and family; yet others ran away into the wilderness and joined mission stations (Maxon 1992:327).

African labourers were not only needed as carrier corps but also to build roads and bridges in order to facilitate the movement of the troops. The high demand for labour during the wars fuelled the settler's competition with the state in acquisition of labour (Wanga 2016: 173). Because of the war, many African labourers migrated from Nyanza province to other places towards the war effort (Maxon 1993:329). In return, many other workers relocated to Uganda during the War to escape being enlisted as carrier corps. Desertion increasingly became a means of protest against labour conditions at a particular workplace. Working and living conditions were harsh to those who were employed. Work was odious, wages were poor and food ration was small. More carrier corps and *Askaris* died from poor working and living conditions (Claytone and Savage, 1987: 243). As the war continued, the government

came up with another ordinance to strip away the right to land from Africans. This would ensure African labourers provided labour where the government proposed. The Crown Land Ordinance of 1915 permitted the conversion of property owned under an earlier legislation into 999-year leases. Furthermore, it was a key factor in the start of proletarianization. Africans kept losing land, which forced more workers to look for work on white farms and during the war as a substitute for subsistence farming. To evict Africans from their economic productions, other ordinances were passed later.

The Native Follower's Recruitment Ordinance of 1915, recruited many African workers for more working contact periods which went even for a year. Compared to their family output, men worked more for the Europeans. When the carrier corps recruiting was discontinued later in 1919, Kisumu County labour contracts fell precipitously, demonstrating the war's impact on labour relations. (Maxon 1992: 67-68). The introduction of Native Registration Ordinance of 1915 introduced the set pass controls for African workers. Pass restrictions for African males of working age were imposed at 15 years old under this law. They had to get a fingerprint proof of identification, known as the *Kipande*, and register with their local government. The *Kipande* legislation limited workers' freedom of movement and ability to look for fulfilling job. It meant that even if an employee earned minimal pay, they may still face legal action and could not just quit their job. This boosted the government recruitment towards the war effort. (Elaine 1995: 467).

Despite being advantageous to the employers, primarily settlers, and the war, *Kipande's* introduction did not end the labour shortage. However, it was harmful and despised by the African workers because it not only limited their ability to negotiate

for higher wages but also limited their freedom to move to the area where they could find work. Furthermore, the colonial government refused to let employers to contract any African worker without *Kipande*. With all these measures put by the government, desertion, shortage of labour was still rampant. (Wanga 1989:184).

The situation became worse with the economic recession which befell Kenya and Kisumu County in particular. It caused the cost of manufactured items to rise and the price of farm commodities to decline. As a result, African labourers' pay were cut by about one-third (Wanga 1989:177). Many African labourers were deterred by this circumstance and decided that working on their farms was more advantageous than working for pay. The colonial authority chose to exploit the Africans by further increasing the hut and poll taxes to a total of Shs. 16 per person yearly in an attempt to recoup labour and control the financial crisis that had been brought on by the war and post-war recession (Ross 1908:234).

The colonial government again in 1916, came up with the Resident Native Ordinance that required all male Africans above sixteen years to register for compulsory labour while the war effort got a boost. As much as the ordinance, targeted African squatters living outside the reserves to work for the settler under a regular contract. The Ordinance gave support to the new War Council in 1916 which enabled European settlers to bargain and benefit from available labour. This was seen when the settler's acquired membership in the council to benefit them by recruiting their own labour and its retention. This made it possible for them to amend the Master Servant Ordinance in 1916, making labourer desertion a felony that would result in police arrests without a warrant. This made sure that workers stayed on the job in spite of the unfavourable working circumstances. The colonial

government was persuaded by the War Council to lower the carrier corps' monthly salary from 10–15 rupees to 5–6 rupees. Because it did not make more sense to risk one's life serving in the carrier corps than to earn the same amount of money on settlers' farms, this was done to reduce the government's and settlers' competition for labour (Zezeza 1989: 50). The settlers, thus capitalized on the war to get what they wanted. These labour policies still favored capitalism more than the African labourers.

With many Africans not ready to be recruited to assist in the war, the years 1917 and 1918 witnessed a great demand for labour. As the war progressed, a severe drought known as Kanga caused famine in Kisumu County. The hunger persisted into 1919, affecting areas in Kano and Nyakach. While some of the residents sought work in the sugarcane plantations, others were compelled to relocate to locations like Nandi and Kericho in search of food (Osamba 2012:58). As a result, the working conditions on the settlers' farms somewhat improved, and many people moved to the towns in search of employment and food. An estimated 300 Ramogi clan households from the Nyakach area relocated to Muhoroni in order to work for pay (Van zwenberg 1975:108). However, the drought made Africans to be malnourished and too weak to offer labour in the farms and elsewhere as required (Osamba 2012:58).

The aftermath of the war was the depletion of the reserves from male bodies to work as recruits. It may be said that the events leading up to World War I had a variety of effects on the life of Kisumu's African labourers. Africans faced a social and economic conundrum: should they labour for the settlers or the colonial authorities? Many African labourers were left without their own master, and it also had an impact on the settlers who departed for the war. African labourers took over the

farms and became the de facto rulers and managers of the recently captured holdings, filling the void left by the settlers' departure for the war. When the white farmers departed for the front lines, others took over their land. Africans later became legitimate landowners as a result of the war's repercussions, and as a result, a new work system known as squatting emerged. While their masters were out on the battlefield, Africans were absorbed and sustained in their new job of maintaining the capitalist economy thanks in large part to this new labour structure (Touabia 2014:67).

By the time World War one was coming to an end in 1918, labour shortage was taking a toll on the Europeans as many people shied away from wage labour. The number of wage seekers decreased as a result of the wartime experience, compulsory conscription, and numerous illnesses. Sensing the situation, the colonial administration urged the government to utilise the same methods that had been successful in solving the labour problems at the start of the war to recruit the carrier corps (Maxon 1992:146). Maxon (2009) claims that Africans who were transported to Mombasa in cattle carriages and then placed on ships bound for German East Africa frequently had a very unpleasant wartime experience. Numerous people lost their lives or became crippled. In many regions of Kenya, the ongoing need for military manpower had resulted in significant population loss and displacement by 1918. Famine and social unrest ensued because there were not enough males at home to produce sufficient farming. Many guys died in a conflict that didn't interest them and never came back. By the time the war was coming to an end many African workers had transformed into military men, *askaris* and as porters embracing new modes of production.

### **3.5. Colonial Labour Policies during the Inter- War Period, 1919-1939.**

The Luo people of Central Nyanza had a difficult time in the years immediately following World War I. The drought of 1918 and 1919 caused a serious food scarcity, forcing the residents of Nyakach, Kadimo, and Uyoma to sell a large portion of their stock in order to buy food. Individuals responded differently to these situations (Omenya, 2010). Some chose to permanently leave their homes and relocate in other locations, such as Lumbwa (Kericho District) or South Nyanza, while a sizable portion left the reserves in search of employment. Between March 1919 and March 1920, about 6,021 labourers from Central Nyanza were enrolled; 3,123 more were hired by government agencies. Several government agencies, the Uganda Railway, and European and Indian farms also hired a lot of people without keeping records (Ndeda, 1991).

The well-known Northey Circular defined the interwar era. Governor Sir Edward Northey wanted to win over the settlers, who were essential to his administration's success. He believed that by implementing forced labour recruitment, as was done at the start of the conflicts, he might accomplish his goal (Zezeza 1989:51). He therefore, issued a labour circular in 1919- the Northey Circular which required that all Provincial Commissioner (PC,) District Commissioner (DC) chiefs and village elders to avail labour at all costs by using any possible lawful influence or force to get labour for the settlers and other public works. The infamous labour circular of 1919 issued by the colonial government as recommended by Edward Northey explicitly stated that:

*All government officials in charge of native areas must exercise every possible lawful influence to induce able bodied male natives to go into the labour field”, (Labour Circular No.1, 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1919).*

The ordinance brought women and children on board to ensure various sectors did not lack labour. The Northey circular became a colonial labour policy that effected change in provision of labour. His directive on labour created some jitters within the colonial officers as it was a plan that had been objected to and had generated a serious scandal. It brought out glaring abuses that had come with labour compulsion. After the circular was published, for instance, a DC who wished to remain anonymous gave major instructions to gather all the young ladies for a month of work on an estate. A young guy whose sheep were taken by the chief because he refused to work for the government was the subject of another claimed maltreatment. The young guy refused to work since he needed to be excused because he had just completed six months of mandatory labour in Nairobi. According to some allegations, teenage girls were taken away for government projects and held for days away from their homes. A statement on labour in East Africa states that several tribal recruiters have occasionally sexually molested females (KNA, CO 533/250). These are the abuses that were reported in various labour farms.

The Northey circular brought with it abuses in Kisumu. For instance, Archdeacon Owen of the Church Missionary Society complained about the unlawful use of women and children to cut grass, which they had to transport long distances for meagre pay and in subpar transportation (Onduru 2009:368). The circular became a form of coercion that many scholars believed was simply slavery in other words. On the other hand, John Arthur the colonial representative for Africans in the Legco contended that he withheld evidence of abuses that had been reported to him by Archdeacon Owen. For example, children and women being coerced for forced

labour against their will. This was according to a memorandum by John W. Arthur. Owen provided further examples, such as his discovery of a group of African labourers working on a road in the Central Kavirondo District, close to Kisumu County. Of the 17 workers, six were minors. After questioning them and obligingly noting their names, he learnt that their local headman had ejected them to labour. Owen reported in a letter to the DC of Kisumu District in Nyanza Province that he saw a number of Africans using *Kibokos* (whips), to lead around fifty labourers in digging a patch for cotton cultivation (Okia, 2012:96).

As much as there was evidence that clearly depicted the kind of abuses Africans went through in the name of the Northey circular, the colonial government did not accept that the circular brought repression and exploitation of Africans through forced labour. Instead, Owen complained in a letter to the DC of Central Kavirondo that it was against the Native Authority Ordinance, which only required able-bodied males to labour, to force youngsters to work on the road. The primary issue with reporting work violations was that Africans lacked enough protection from headmen, colonial authorities, and administrative officials. This made it more difficult for them to testify against abusive parties (Okia, 2012: 97).

When the Soldiers' Settlement Scheme was implemented in the inter-war period, the demand for labour became dire as more soldiers and settlers came to Kisumu region. The new arrivals of the settlers increased the demand for land (Kanogo 1987:113-114). With the change of land tenure system, the colonial government still created landlessness among the Africans. Only those who could afford land bought theirs which again aggravated the issue of labour and despite the fact that the colonial state provided a very substantial portion of the colony's total agricultural output, by

1920s at least differentiation in the African sector had led to the emergence of petty bourgeoisie because Kisumu's agrarian based economies had been totally transformed by capitalist penetration. Africans tried to indulge in the growth of cash crops either through their own initiative or by government efforts, for example, the cotton growing scheme which was introduced in the Nyanza region early in the colonial period failed due to competing labour demands. Even though cotton was one of the cash crops of the people of Kisumu at the time, the Africans did not embrace its cultivation because of inadequate market upon harvest. The DC Nyanza noted in his report of 1922 as follows:

*Owing to the inability of the Africans to obtain a market for cotton some years ago, it was somewhat difficult to get the people to take this crop as a cash crop and individuals have planted very small areas but it is hoped that there will be largely increased output in 1923 (KNA/DC/CN/1/5/1/1922).*

This made money scarce, but with the construction of a ginnery in Kisumu town and other areas like *Samia* and *Ndere*, it was thought that the sale of cotton would boost further cotton growth in Kisumu. However, the colonial government also had trouble collecting taxes from Africans due to a lack of revenue from the sale of cotton and other crops. This difficult time was captured by the DC in his report of 1921 when he reiterated:

*The natives however have in most cases had to draw on their capital either by selling their stock or by digging up buried money, and it is thought that there is at this moment very little money left in the reserve (KNA/DC/CN/1/5/1/1921).*

Many Africans were unable to make money from the sale of their products because of the challenges they faced in the farming industry. Therefore, even during the depression years, young men were compelled to work on farms across Europe in order to earn money for taxes. The DC stated that it was likely that the rise in labour

registration numbers resulted from faster hut and poll tax collection, which led many of the younger males to go out and work (KNA/DC/1/5/1/1921).

According to Ochieng and Maxon (1992:69), the state was calling out up to 15,000 Africans annually by the 1920s. In order to get work throughout the interwar years, chiefs and village headmen continued to be important (Zezeza 1982). The colony's labour supply situation gradually improved during the 1920s, reaching levels that satisfied European employers (Wolf 1972:113). However, the discriminative and punitive nature of obtaining labour from African workers persisted throughout the inter-war period. The idea by the colonial government was that African workers were idle and they were to be pushed into wage employment. To force Africans to work for Europeans at wages sufficient to make up the gap in added transportation costs, a variety of techniques was employed. Africans were exempted from cultivating cash crops on their own farms as part of western form of knowledge that was employed by the Europeans to force Africans to offer their labour in the European plantation farms. Africans were not allowed to grow cash crops which could have helped them to get cash to pay taxes. Large tracts of land were denied to African workers of Kisumu and reserved for exclusive use by the Europeans. Hut and poll tax which had to be paid through the newly introduced monetary system were still levied on Africans (Maxon 1989:71).

Although the idea of forced labour continued in the interwar period, the colonial authority refuted this by claiming that if it existed then it was a way of educating Africans to be industrious. For the colonial state, this was a recourse to communal labour and was perhaps done in such a way not to raise eyebrows in the metropole because the use of communal labour did not require approval by the secretary of

state for colonies (Van zwanweberg 1975). However, people like Sir Humphrey Legget, the chairman of East African Section of Commerce had a different opinion on the industriousness of Africans based on forced labour. Sir Legget observed that the tax structure in Kenya was destroying the industriousness of the Africans and was drawing them backward in every way and advocated for some tax reduction. The advocacy by Sir Humphrey Legget realized the reduction in taxes from sixteen shillings to twelve shillings (Maxon, 1989).

Several privately held European-owned companies were hiring workers in Kisumu County in 1922. Among the private businesses were the Kenya Tea Company, a division of the Brooke Bond Company, which founded tea estates in Kericho in 1925, and the African Highlands Produce Company, a regional branch of the Glasgow-based James Finlay Company. In Kisumu, these businesses had their own agents. The Kisumu Provincial Commissioner was supposed to provide the private recruitment agents permits that would last for a year. From their labour camps, which were set up at key locations along Kisumu's main routes, the tea firms transported their workers. Due of its tiny size, workers were congested and subjected to appalling circumstances (KNA/DC/KSL/1/2). It should be noted that corruption and deceit often characterized the methods used by private recruiting firms and tea companies to get labour (Anyumba 2012:97). That is what characterized Nyanza economic spaces as far as labour issues were concerned, a situation which progressively led to the emergence of a working class in Kisumu (Clayton and Savage 1974).

Members of the Luo community who dominated Nyanza believed in their cultural ways of production and to some extent, were not so much swayed by western

knowledge and modes of production. According to Close (1924), the Luo youths were excellent cattle boys but were not much good for other work such as picking coffee and growing maize which they considered beneath their dignity and work for women. Nevertheless, this did not affect migrant labour. Labour relations in the agricultural sector were established not just in Kisumu but also in other regions of Kenya as a result of the African workers in Kisumu using migrant labour (Kiruthu, 2010). It also emphasises how labour was migratory, how colonialism warped Africans' traditional ties to their country, and how returning home was not always certain once they left to seek employment. This led to the creation of various Luo settlements known as Kisumu ndogo in other parts of Kenya especially where Luo labour migrants settled.

Levying of taxation still continued in the inter-war period and as it has been before, African workers still agitated against them. The first African political organisation in Nyanza, the Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare Association (KTWA), was founded and began operations in the 1920s. It provided information for African protests and resistance to harmful colonial policies and practices that arose in Nyanza's plural and hybrid colonial space (Omenya, 2010). As a result, African labourers would join nationalists in coordinated demonstrations (Reed, 1975:131).

African workers' protests were further heightened by salary disparities. As seen by the Master and Servant Ordinance, for example, the colonial authority was more focused on appeasing the settlers than the locals. Workers were readily exploited since colonial labour rules did not favour Africans and lacked explicit restrictions regarding the remuneration of African workers. This is due to the fact that the salaries paid by sugar cane, sisal, and maize farms varied. By 1923, the Sisal estates,

for instance, paid Shs. 12 with food for 1500 leaves or Shs. 24 without food for 1000 leaves cut (NADAR 1923:27). In addition to food, workers on the maize plantations received Shs. 10 each month. Because of "picking," or stealing corn during harvest, maize labourers' pay were lower than those of workers in other agricultural sectors outside the sugar business (NADAR 1923:32).

The increased labour outflow by 1925 reflects the relationship between Europeans, Asians, and African agricultural production and labour supply. This is precisely what corresponds with the lack of agricultural growth, as African agriculture by the end of the decade was no higher than it was at the peak of 1925 (KNA/DC/KSI/1/2). The number of people travelling out to work on European farms decreased after the 1928 malaria outbreak, which led to a further decline in the pricing of European agricultural commodities (KNA/PC/NZA 3/13, South Kavirondo Labour Report 1932). However, because male migrant workers shifted the burden on women, migrant workers had recourse to the traditional economy.

The worldwide depression, which started in 1929, struck Kenya in 1930. Kenya was impacted by a decline in global commodity prices, particularly for agricultural products (Ngesa, 1996:79). Kenya's international economic standing was impacted by the Great Depression after 1930, which compelled colonial government officials to look for any potential source of vitally needed exports. Primary commodity prices fell at this time, and trade in the majority of Kenya's African regions collapsed. The colonial authorities now saw African cash crops as a potential remedy for their financial problems, and they began concentrating on the production of cotton by Africans in Nyanza (Wolff, 1974:144).

Despite some innovations in African labourers' agriculture during the interwar period, most parts of African land in Kisumu remained marginal to wage labour. The innovations included the acquisition of ploughs, water-powered flour mills, harrows and maize hulling machines by certain Africans (Ndeda 1991). Insofar as they wanted to or were obliged to earn money income, the people of Central Nyanza found it more lucrative or congenial to hire out their services rather than exert themselves in cultivating unfamiliar and inedible crops such as cotton. According to Ochieng (1986:11), the majority of African peasants continued to be subsistence farmers, producing only enough to cover their immediate family needs. H.B. Partington, the previous District Commissioner for Central Nyanza, chose to use the small Asian enclaves as agricultural innovators after failing to pique their interest in cultivating cotton. He maintained that Asians had more Western agricultural and economic tendencies. Additionally, he lost faith in Africans' capacity to adjust to cash crops. He stated that:

We are locating small colonies of agricultural *Swahilis* and Indians at different points where small areas of land are available. These people agreed to plant economic products. As they do so, they will be an object lesson for the different 'natives' near them and the influence will spread (KNA, PC/NZA Annual Report 1907/08: xxxii).

The administration's efforts to boost cotton output peaked in the 1930s once more, when it was one of several measures intended to increase the colony's foreign exchange profits during the Great Depression. Even though the cotton crop had been brought to Nyanza earlier, a more organised and vigorous effort to boost productivity took place in the 1930s. In this instance as well, the local government's efforts were used to inform the public about cotton farming and to enforce it (Kitching, 1980:74, Kanogo, 1989:121). After initially focussing on South Kavirondo, the government's cotton planting effort expanded to neighbouring

regions. This campaign was intermeshed with the administration's zoning policy with the province being divided into three cotton production zones each with its own production targets and seed distribution system (Kitching, 1980:74).

In the meantime, the depression in the 1930s led to a financial crisis as the value of certain export crops like sisal, wheat, cotton and coffee decreased. Calamities such as poor climatic conditions and locust invasion also struck. These problems did not only affect agricultural productions destined for export, but also the labour market since large numbers of the labour force were turned away. Those who were lucky enough to get any work, had to take the little wages that were being offered. Consequently, there was a reduction in the number of African workers in the European farms from 2,732 in 1930 to 1,928 in 1931 and finally 1,228 in 1932 (Touaibia 2014:87).

With the easing off of the depression, Nyanza started to witness a growth in her economy with increased agricultural production. Cotton growing also increased in places such as Kibos in Kisumu, Alego, and Kendu Bay. The construction of various cotton ginneries in areas of Ndere and Kibos offered employment to Africans who were able to not only offer their labour but also sold cotton to the owners of the ginneries. Kisumu town henceforth attained some importance due to the significance of increased trade in the sale of locally produced items and those that were imported after the end of the economic depression years. The African agricultural activities also increased during the post-depression years as noted by the DC who argued that:

*The Africans of central Kavirondo are among the most progressive natives in the whole country. They go for mechanical aid to agriculture by cultivating using plough (KNA/NZA/1/26/1930).*

Cotton ginneries would thus become economic spaces where African workers would eke their living. In the ginneries, Asian owners trained the Africans in the new tasks, that is, how to gin cotton, operate the machines and how to weigh cotton. Asians too supervised Africans and taught them certain essential features of operations within the ginneries (Omenya, 2010).

By 1935 African labour was used in the sisal factories, for example, Chemelil Sisal Company had employed 400 African labourers (Maxon 1989). However, wages paid to African workers were still low. More so, labour supply in areas within Kisumu region like Muhoroni, Songhor and Koru farms experienced labour shortages. Wages differed depending on the work done because there was no standardized wage at any time. It was also based on gender and age where many times women were paid less than men. For example, in the sugar cane farms, activities like cutting and weeding which were strenuous and dangerous, attracted few labourers. Africans were able to recognize the discrimination involved in giving out tasks in places of work. Insults, cruelty, and poor handling of workers was common. But they withstood the cruelty due to the need for money to pay for their expenses (Wanga 1989:188).

The low pricing for cotton made it very difficult to persuade Africans to produce the crop about 1938. As a result, some ginneries were losing money (KNA, PC/NZA 3/1/353). African producers' lack of interest, brought on by the low price of cotton, was the reason for this output decline rather than poor seasonal circumstances that were not beneficial to the crop. Additionally, ginnery owners began to stop paying their share of the salary of the African cotton teachers, a situation that was brought to the attention of the Nyanza Province Cotton Association (KNA, PC/NZA/3/1/353,

Annual Report, 1934-51). The Asians enabled the colonial program of cotton cultivation. Therefore, the Africans' disinterest in planting cotton represented their ongoing opposition to Western capitalistic inclinations that are based on exploitation and supported by Asian commercialization efforts.

As we moved towards the end of the inter war period it is important to note that the year 1938 lacked solid agrarian policy that could ensure a decent labour for the Africans. With the various interventions in the tax system that was burdensome to the Africans still in place, the colonial government continued to levy other taxes. For example, custom and excise duties for the Local Native Council. All these taxes accounted for between sixty to eighty percent of the colony's revenue (Waris, 2007).

### **3.6. The Second World War and the labour Dynamics from 1940-1945.**

The Second World War 1939-1945 plunged the Africans workers of Kisumu County into jeopardy. The war reduced agricultural activities in Kenya and in Kisumu County in particular. This was because both the Africans and settlers were enlisted in the war. Again, like World War I, World War II had serious labour related effects. Conscripting more Africans took work away from the locals. Residents of the central Kavirondo Districts favoured enlisting the military to use their livestock for sustenance rather than their soldiers. The colonial administration nonetheless obliged the people to cultivate and sell agricultural goods like maize and sorghum to the troops despite the decline in the number of personnel. Additionally, they provided free manpower for building bridges and roads.

In return, the war made African workers suffer because of the conscription and forced growing of the grains. This shifted the burden to the women and also the prices of commodities rose consequently affecting the purchasing power of labourers.

As Makana (2007:114) observes, many African workers deserted their homes to evade forceful conscription into the military. A District Commissioner once reiterated that:

The unpopularity of conscript labour was evident that some deserters have been arrested and rearrested two and three times without any way damping their intentions to desert a fourth time, as for the soldiers, at one time there were as many as 15000 who were listed as having overstayed their leave, that is deserted (Zezeza 1992:185).

By the 1940s migrant labour had a significant impact on the rural social structure because it had drawn all taxable males away from home. Migrant labour drew able male away from their home area at any time because of the on-going World War II. Its effect on African workers of Kisumu was reduced production, where male roles of bush clearing were neglected or taken over by the already burdened women. Being that Kisumu County was majorly a labour reservoir, forced labour drew their able men away from home. Many problems like family break-ups, female headed household, child headed families emerged in the villages of Kajulu, Kombewa, Kowe, Rabuor, Kano, Seme and areas of Nyakach because African men continued to leave to look for wage labour in the towns as far as Kiambu in central parts of Kenya in the European plantation farms (Ndege 1987).

An oral informant whose father left home in Kajulu to go and work in Nairobi as a store keeper in the 1940s, narrates how the father would come home once a year and the family was left in the hands of their mother who was a housewife. What he could

not comprehend is how their family unit kept on increasing while their father, most of the time, was in “*Boma*” (city) working for the Asian migrants who had set up shops in the “*Boma*” (Ojuok, O.I.2022).

This scenario set other new forms of labour relations as men migrated to towns to give out wage labour in order to eke a living. Thadayo an oral informant recalls how their father after realizing that he had developed negative working relations with his employer in one of the cotton ginneries in Kisumu in the 1940s, decided to relocate to Uganda to work in the mines of Kesese (Thadayo O.I 2022). The African workers who left to engage in work elsewhere far away from home were obligated under colonial capitalism; African institutions were disrupted in order to serve wider colonial objectives. They were emptied of their social and cultural traditions and remoulded into vehicles of naked extortion and exploitation (Zezeza 1993).

Effects of migrant labour in the Second World War period were enormous ranging from shortage of labour for local production, reversed roles, rising nationalistic tendencies and increased African labour towards the war effort at the expense of local production (Zezeza 1993). Without the deployment of a sufficient number of workers, Kisumu County was unable to fulfil its pivotal role in supporting the colonial and imperial economies. This necessitated the implementation of a labour mobilisation program designed to provide the workforce required to carry out the colonial agricultural policy. This resulted from rivalry between civilian and military recruiters to get a sufficient number of labourers during World War II. As this progressed, conscription of African men to the military became urgent and was given priority by the colonial government, by 1942, labour shortage was cogently apparent (Makana 2007:146).

Consequently, European settlers encountered problems in finding African labour while Africans resorted to asking for higher wages for their labour from the European settlers. As a reaction to those difficulties, the colonists petitioned the colonial administration to move quickly to address the worker recruiting issue. To address the issue of labour recruitment for civil needs during the war, the colonial office turned to conscription for the civil service. This resulted in the creation of the *Essential Undertakings Board* in 1942, which was chaired by Walter Harrigan and tasked with implementing conscription to address the labour shortage and specify the benefits of conscripted labour for the settlers (Makana 2007:149). Even though the colonial authority used conscripted labour, only 10% of Kisumu's African working force was enlisted, and the majority of these forced labourers worked on the settler farms.

The colonial state in Kenya acted as an instrument of primitive accumulation for settlers as demonstrated by the theory of articulations of modes of production. This is due to the fact that the state appropriated land, cattle, taxes, forced labour, and uneven produce marketing and transportation in order to collect excess from African peasants. In the process, the extraction of surplus labour was subsidised by the peasant family. The colonial administration reformulated capitalist forms of production using the archaic means of production. Men were able to support the state through wage employment by using women and children in certain sorts of labour initiatives (Zeleva 1992:182).

These processes of articulation of pre-capitalist modes of production were destroyed but manifested back in new ways as an appendage of the emergent colonial economy. One aspect of this process that depended on communal labour and

symbolised the boundaries of capitalism articulation with pre-capitalist forms in the colony and Kisumu specifically was the colonial administration's development and capture of communal labour. However, Kisumu's African workers were subjected to coercive and forced labour, which was justified by the Europeans as a way to impart the value of hard work that they believed was lacking from their traditional labour practices (Okia, 2008). Most importantly, the colonial labour policies had to compete with the demands towards the war effort which negatively affected labour supply both to the European settlers and also to the African farms for purposes of agricultural production.

### **3.7. Summary**

This chapter has demonstrated the onset of colonialism in Kenya and by extension Kisumu County with a view of demonstrating how the colonial government utilized various labour policies to achieve their capitalist goal in Kisumu. First and foremost, to enhance their effective control of Kisumu during the colonial period. The colonial government moved their administration centre from Mumias to Kisumu. By 1901, the Kenya-Uganda railway had reached its terminus in Kisumu thereby allowing the colonial government to exploit and transport raw materials from Kisumu to the outside world. Various policies around this time dictated how labour was to be acquired and appropriated. For instance, the Village Headman Ordinance of 1902, the Master and Servant Ordinance of 1906 and 1910, the Native Authority Ordinance 1912, the Native Registration Ordinance and the North Circular were all policy frameworks which dictated how African labour was to be acquired and used. As the country headed to both WWI and WWII, most of the war effort was directed towards conscription of Africans to work as carrier corps in the military. African

men were thus recruited into military formations in order to help the colonial masters to achieve both their imperial and capitalist goals. The effect of this was that the cotton sector and the sugarcane sector within Kisumu County suffered. The formation of the Kavirondo Taxpayers Association around this period would later inform and lay the foundation for the national struggle for independence. In the next chapter, we explore the changing nature of colonial labour relations on African workers during the decolonization period, from 1946 to 1963.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THE CHANGING NATURE OF COLONIAL LABOUR RELATIONS ON AFRICAN WORKERS IN THE PERIOD OF DECOLONIZATION 1946- 1963.**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

The decolonization period marks a very fundamental period in the colonial history of Kenya. Around this time, the country experienced heightened political activities by Africans who were pushing for their political independence. At the same time, the colonial economy had to be sustained using African labour. The chapter, therefore, interrogates the nature of African labour in Kisumu in the post World War II period up to the emergency period of 1952. The changes experienced in the labour policies would later lead to a turnaround in the labour sector. Further, the chapter examines African response to colonial labour and agricultural activities during the decolonization period. The sections analyse how Africans interacted with and responded to colonial labour policies on agriculture and whether these responses achieved any results as Africans pushed for their independence. Finally, the chapter interrogates change and continuity in labour response by African workers of Kisumu in the decolonization period.

#### **4.2. Colonial Labour in the Post War up to Emergency Period. 1946 –1952**

For both imperial, metropolitan nations and their colonies, the end of World War Two in 1945 marked the start of a new era. The political and socioeconomic conflicts grew more intense in the years following the war. Secondary industry expansion, an increase in the proportion of Africans employed, and significant shifts in the agricultural sector were also seen (Ongile, 1988). The nature of labour and its

administration changed, in that, during this period there was more focus by the colonial government on the welfare of African workers compared to the previous years where the colonial administration only concentrated more on the activities that benefited the Europeans. Nevertheless, these changes were still to the advantage of the colonial state whose main goal was to incorporate African economy into capitalist economy (Hay, 1972)

In Kenya, the changes in labour relations were a consequence of the development of the settlers' plantation economy. Majority of African workers continued to be engaged in reciprocal labour. More workers were needed as porters due to insufficient transportation systems while others worked *askaris* and government station hands. Because of the good pay and tolerable working conditions in caravans, portering was a widely popular job. Caravan masters were also required to register workers, provide blankets to labourers, and tend to sick porters. Nevertheless, the system of governmental control over workers persisted even in the post-war era.

Although it wasn't extremely common in Kisumu, the growth of squatter work on settlers' farms became one of the main aspects of labour relations. Africans were permitted to live with their families on a farmer's property, work a small plot of land, and herd animals. They were required to give the white settlers a specific quantity of work in return, as well as services or in-kind rent. The Nyanza area was similarly characterised by this structure. The NLC's final report said that African workers were unwilling to work for Europeans because the pay was too low.

However, because a higher salary only allowed a worker to make what he might have made in two months, the settlers were certain that greater wages would not

expand the labour supply (Stitcher, 1982:19). Since their “requirements were very small” people could readily make the money they needed by selling livestock or agricultural goods (Stitcher, 1982:102). Because they worked just to fulfil certain needs, such paying taxes, buying specified consumer items, or paying bridewealth, Africans were really regarded as “target labourers” (Berman, 1990:19). Africans didn't offer themselves for wage labour again after the bridewealth or tax was paid.

Due to the tax load, married wage workers found it impossible to save money and were only able to support their families with their net income if they continued to have colonial access to property or squatting land. A mix of labour relations was promoted by this. As a result, taxes did not significantly increase the number of permanent workers, as the colonial administration had hoped. The labour supply only temporarily increased as a result of tax obligations. More labourers were available for government or plantation work when it came time to pay the tax, but when it was paid, the workers vanished and hardly ever returned.’ Most workers only worked for two months in a year, and when they earned enough to pay their taxes, they returned to the reserves’ according to *wali* (chief) of Kisumu. It was reported that ‘Six sittings of eggs or the sale of a few fowls sufficed to pay the Hut Tax’ (Berman, 1990:19).

The colonial labour relations were still felt in agriculture, employment, trade and other sectors. In agriculture, cash crops like cotton, maize and sugarcane that were grown on African land in the early years of colonial rule went through change. The colonial government allowed African workers of Kisumu to plant their own cash crops for commercial purposes. The African workers competency in agricultural production, trade and administrative jobs improved tremendously, for example, in

areas of trade, The Luo Thrift and Kavirondo African Welfare Association was founded to help Africans fight and contest for economic space within Kisumu County (Omenya 2010). This organized action moved the workers forward in their search for significant economic freedom. Earlier on, the domestic industry which preferred men as servants and shamba boys, also went through transformations: more men were required to work elsewhere within the growing industries and settler farms.

Labour movements and associations like Luo Thrift and Trading Corporation (LUTATCo) and Bondo Thrift Association were also started by African workers. Oginga Odinga being their front runner, collected money from members for business and for lending to members in distress (Omenya 2010:157). African workers were, therefore, becoming more serious traders with licensed associations as a way of organizing their labour and at the same time investing the proceeds of their labour for investments. Evidently, African labourers were slowly and steadily changing from their pre-capitalist thinking and mode of production to a capitalist kind of formulation through a linear process as stipulated by the Modernization theory. Labour relations were not only felt within the agricultural sector only, a number of workers were employed by Asians either as houseboys or house girls. Other Africans also started to venture in personal business where they worked as traders thus competing with Asians who had dominated trade and commerce within Kisumu town because the retail business was for many years dominated by the Asians;

It was the wish of Africans to get the reserve trade in their hands which of course by 1950s, the number of shops owned by Africans in the reserve with licenses were

397. This was entirely outside Kisumu town and trading centers (KNA/DC/NN/1/27).

Local people who operated retail shops purchased various items from the Indian traders to stock their shops. Africans began selling imported wares that were sold around by the Indians (Omenya, 2010: 2015). Consequently, flourishing trade was reported in central Nyanza (KNA/PC/NZA/1/26/1931). In the meantime, Africans continued to acquire skills in the automobile repair sector. The Indians taught Africans how to repair cars in an indigenized Indian mode (King, 1977). Africans became mechanics in the Indian garages because they were casual labourers and learnt the artisan on the job within the Indian garages. An informant argued that such people would take on a pittance but within a year or two would have mastered the skills and became skilled car repairers. These mechanics after gaining skills would relocate and work in other neighboring centers such as Rabuor, Kachok, Kondele and Kibuye taking skills to other parts of Kisumu County (Vitalis, O.I, & Kassam, 2022). This kind of training was informal without trade tests by the Indians. The readiness by Africans labourers to take up such trade skills from the Indians was because of rapid movement of many Indian families out of the confines of the caste craft system in the 1950s (Omenya, 2010:177). The skill acquired from Indians in the motor vehicle industry provided a pool of African labour which diversified the economy of Kisumu County and its environs (Onono, O.I, 2022).

The informal sector (*Juakali*) also developed because of the changing nature of the labour relations African workers replaced the Indian craftsmen who had moved into small manufacturing industries. Their places were taken over by an incipient African artisan society, they began selling and marketing cheap goods and services to the

residents of Kisumu County. The tin lamp technology (*Tach nyangile*) was not as a result of formal technical training but due to the presence of the Indian craft community in Kisumu County. This technology later on spread out to many parts of Kenya (King, 1977). As much as this technology or craft skills was an Indian skill and remained in the hands of Indians nevertheless, Africans gradually picked the craft and Africanized the technology by coming up with many tinsmith designs from 1950s and even after independence. This diversification demonstrated the capacity of Africans to undertake new forms of labour and employment which were largely new to their previous experience (Kiruthu 2010:189).

African workers again transformed in the industrial training on job as apprentices. Majority operated machines they had no skill on previously, their quick adjustment to industrial practices was of great importance as much as they still practised peasant farming. What emerged was a degree of differentiation among the labourers depending on whether one had other resources in the reserves which could be monetized to increase wealth (Kiruthu, 2010:189). According to Ogot (1968:276) the decolonization period raised the standards of African workers' character and efficiency as a few people had acquired education and training. In addition to chiefs who could hold positions requiring extraordinary trust and responsibility, these individuals were needed to fill positions in the technical and administrative services (Ogot, 1986:276). Educating African workers therefore, meant civilizing them and introducing them to western form of education that was meant to transform Africans in what Kisiang'ani (2003:91) terms as an act of imposing certain binaries such as colonizer/colonized, religious/superstitious and primitive/civilized in the minds of Africans. Colonial education was thus instrumental and it continued to shape labour

during the decolonization period because men were being prepared to become administrators, craftsmen and to have knowledge on animal husbandry and in plantation agriculture. Members of households who had access to western education, and who were largely males, found that it opened avenues to relatively stable paid employment as teachers, church workers and clerks as opposed to unstable migrant labour (Maxon, 1992).

A major change in the political landscape and the beginning of the collapse of the European colonial system were marked by the wave of labour strikes that swept throughout the African continent in the middle of the 1940s (Mulugeta, 2023). In Kenya, these labour strikes aroused political consciousness as Africans continued to put more pressure for independence. These strikes were a threat to the British colonial economy and in addition to the Mau Mau uprising henceforth, a state of emergency had to be declared. Even in the state of emergency labour reports still indicated that the majority of the quarter of a million registered natives in employment who were not accompanied by their wives and children were migrant labourers. Consequently, there was a need for the Labour Department to cater for these Africans in search of work and maintain rest camps at Kisumu and Nakuru. The camps at Kisumu and Nakuru were so popular perhaps because they were not used as conscription camps like the ones in Nairobi.

Around 1949/50 there was a noticeable change in the demand for certain classes of African artisans because their market value had fallen considerably. There were many trained mechanics, blacksmiths, tinsmiths and electricians who were unemployed. This is because they were not prepared to work for less than Shs. 80 to 90 per month. The annual labour report 1950 states that if these Africans workers

would have accepted lower wages, they would have found ready employment just like in the building industry where African carpenters particularly were securing at least better wages far beyond their worth by the simple process of accepting only casual employment. But also a new minimum order for towns such as Kisumu alongside other municipalities and municipal boards were also brought into force as away of informing labour relations not only within the areas of study but also in other colonial economic space within Kenya (Labour Department Annual Report, 1949) .During this period , the department of labour struggled to improve relations between employer and workers which was gravely prejudiced by some so called leaders of the workers and every act of improvement affected by the department concerning the establishment of staff association and the negotiations of wage agreement was wilfully misrepresented for the workers as being to their disadvantage (Labour Department Annual Report , 1950).

Although the emergency period of 1952 affected labour Officers mostly in the Central Province region, its impact was not so much felt in Kisumu. Similarly, the base of the colony's wage structure for industrial as opposed to agricultural employees continued to be determine as a result of recommendation by the Wages Advisory Board which operated under the Regulations of Wages and Conditions of Employment Ordinance 1951, and was composed of independent members and employers and employees' representative in the proportion of 3:2:2. In this year, general minimum wages for unskilled labour in towns including Kisumu were reviewed twice. The basic wage rate, for instance, which came into effect in August, 1952 was about 44 and 50 per month in Kisumu as compared to say 52 and 25 in Mombasa. In case the employer supplied rations to the employee, an employer was

obligated to deduct the cost or part of the cost of such rations from the wages of employees on the minimum wage. However, the employer had to obtain permission from the Labour office first. The maximum deductions permitted by the Deduction from Wages (Rations) Order of 1952, in respect of the approved scale of rations, was Sh 17 per month, except for Kisumu where the maximum was Sh 11. More African workers from Kisumu were reportedly moving as far as Mombasa to work in the sisal farms to get better wages than sh 11 (Labour Department Annual Report 1952).

#### **4.3. African Response to Colonial Labour Policies in Agricultural Production in Kisumu in the Decolonization period.**

In agricultural undertakings, Europeans supported Africans in their quest for commercial agriculture. They provided the workers of Kisumu with title deeds which were legal documents, for ownership of land which enabled individuals to obtain bank loans that would empower them to better their status. Early colonial education that some of the African workers had obtained was to their advantage (Nyakwaka, 2013:77). It can be noted that the establishment of mission station schools in the areas of Kisumu transformed the lives of the African workers economically as the missionaries taught about farming. The emphasis on agriculture was cultivation of grains such as wheat and maize, beans, sesame to meet consumer needs.

To improve on agricultural activities, the colonial government established the department of Agriculture and Veterinary Services to provide extension services. However, the department lacked enough funds to operate effectively. To remedy this, the government began to give loans or credits to settlers and a few Africans

who had embraced farming to improve their production. There was rapid increase in mechanization thus the settler production was equally boosted. Again, there was the establishment of Agricultural Settlement Board to assist the ex-soldiers to settle in the highlands and this created intensive agricultural production (Kenyanhui and Ochieng, 1992:117), on the contrary, the area under cultivation by Africans for their own subsistence production decreased because of settlers' domination.

This reduced the land allocated to squatters and residents on plantations leading to an influx of people in the reserves. Nevertheless, as colonialism and its effect were releasing on African workers, discontent grew among them in the plantations as well as in the industries. By organising boycotts or industrial strikes, Africans were able to challenge some of the western kinds of knowledge that the west had created and approved. For instance, employees at the Victoria Nyanza Sugar Company, also known as Chemelil, went on strike for two days over salary deductions and the quantity of labour they were expected to perform. Many labourers were discontented and did not prefer to work diligently in their places of work because of many unnecessary deductions. Investigations by the labour office found out that the deductions were not justified. Henceforth, a series of strikes within Chemelil Sugar Company was witnessed. For instance, based on a more-work, more-pay strategy, the factory workers requested greater salaries and did not return to work until an agreement was reached (Wanga, 2016: 198).

Labour policies especially on poor wages triggered strikes across the country. Although the strike began in Mombasa in 1947, its impact was also felt in Kisumu. For example, a broad walkout in Kisumu, which lasted for many days, involved African workers, including government employees, maritime service workers, and

municipal workers, based on what transpired in Mombasa on employee salaries. The Thacker Tribunal was established as a result of this strike in Nyanza province in order to resolve the issues that led to the strike. The panel suggested that certain workers receive pay increases of 20 to 40 percent, and that businesses commit a certain amount of money to housing allowances, paid vacations, and paid overtime (Hoffenberg, 1971).

Artisans like carpenters, masons, plumbers and even the ex-servicemen of the Second World War who had also come back with skills such as driving increased the number of skilled workers who obtained employment in Asians farms and about eighty Africans, mostly ex-servicemen were employed as drivers in the Asian sugar farms to drive the lorries carrying sugar cane to the factories (Wanga, 2016:161). The entry of ex-soldiers into wage labour sensitized the workers as they were more aggressive and demanded for better wages and conducive working environment. It is noted that due to the ex-military mens' good organizational skills, most of the strikes in the agricultural industries happened and were successful because of them. Their entry into wage labour was important because it ushered in a change in the type of protests African labourers organized. The workers began to face the employers and bargain for better wages and conducive working environment instead of simply deserting the workplace as it were before (Wanga 2016:197). All these efforts were a response to the discriminatory colonial policy on minimum wage labour for African workers.

About 570 African labourers went on strike in 1950, calling for improved working conditions. Even the casual workers, who in 1952 called for a rise in their daily pay from Shs. 3 to Shs. 5, participated in the strikes. The sugar growers suffered if they

failed since the trucks that were dispatched to pick up the temporary workers would always return empty (Wanga, 2016:198). The strikes had a tremendous impact on Kisumu's African workers since they led to the cane labourers organising and realising that collective bargaining was a better way to resolve their issues. Workers created their own trade unions, the Kenya Union of Sugar Plantation Workers (KUSPW), as a result, bringing about change (Wanga, 2016:198). The associations that begin with the sugar industry workers increased the political temperature in Kenya and particularly Kisumu County which gave rise to a new spirit of militancy among the workers of Kisumu (wanga 2016:197). In 1950, some 570 African workers went on strike in protest of their poor working conditions. Even the casual workers took part in the strikes in 1952, demanding an increase in their daily wages from Shs. 3 to Shs. 5. Because the vehicles sent to pick up the temporary workers would invariably return empty, the sugar planters suffered if they failed (Wanga, 2016:198). African workers in Kisumu were greatly impacted by the strikes because they caused the cane labourers to organise and realise that collective bargaining was a more effective approach to settle their disputes. Change resulted from workers establishing their own trade unions, the Kenya Union of Sugar Plantation Workers (KUSPW). This was a great transformation for African workers who lacked prerequisite skills for growing cash crops (Kenyanhui & Ochieng, 1992:118).

The Swynnerton plan of 1954 also boosted African farming methods in one way or another. This is because the plan focused on land registration and consolidation, which would reduce population pressure and increase agricultural efficiency and productivity. It resolved the issue of landlessness, enhanced soil conservation, and reduced the volume of lawsuits resulting from land ownership issues. Despite

making allowances for traditional regulations pertaining to property inheritance, the Swynnerton plan introduced land ownership, titling, class, and gender difference. With the help of land tenure changes and goods for the urban and export markets, this strategy sought to boost African agriculture. According to Swynnerton, the architect of the plan, after whom it was named, argued that:

Sound agricultural development depends on a land tenure system that will provide African farmers with a unit of land and a farming system whose output could sustain their families at a level that is comparable to other occupations, taking into account the requirements derived from the farm. Through an indivisible title, he must be given the security of tenure that will motivate him to put his labour and earnings into the improvement of his farm and allow him to pledge his security against any financial credits he may want to obtain from any available sources (KNA/PC/KSI/Swynnerton/1/12/1954).

The concept planned to divide people into segregated towns, and then consolidate land surrounding Kisumu County's villages. For many years, the Swynnerton plan created friction and anger over land, salaries, forced work, and injustice. To many communities, it erupted into open revolt, resulting in the deaths of many Africans. The Swynnerton plan herded people into communities, maintained the administration's authority over them, and tried to keep 33 political dissidents under check. However, private land ownership and the Swynnerton plan placed a strong emphasis on using extension services to change agriculture and create landed and landless people, only for the advantage of the settlers and no other race. Detaching people from their customs and traditional farming methods was the goal of the Swynnerton plan. Because the locals were permitted to sell their property, move into

the city, and then purchase it back if they so desired, this was made feasible (Swynnerton Plan, 1954). The plan allowed for land titling which allowed anybody with money to access land. The decolonization period set forth sale and purchase of land that allowed any one with cash to own land freely. This gave African workers some freedom on the utilization of land which was impossible in the early years of colonial rule. The Swynnerton plan allowed for settlement in any location so long as one had money to buy land. Those who could not buy land under this plan responded to it by settling in the settlement schemes that the government made available such as, Muhoroni-Chemelil, Kibigori settlements schemes within Kisumu region.

The settlement schemes that the colonial government came up with around the Kibigori area was for those who claimed land in areas that the colonial government had alienated. The Nandi and the Luo claimed a stretch of 1100 hectares of Potopoto farm in Kibigori. The two communities who claim possession of the territory have been at odds ever since. In order to reclaim hundreds of acres of valuable land that were purportedly handed to Asian settlers prior to independence and whose 99-year leases had ended, a group going by the name Kajulu Kithimo Welfare Association (KKWA) was forced to set up camp in government buildings. This 5700-member organisation made demands for a sizable tract of agricultural land from Chemelil to the River Kibos. It is important to note that these were cases of misunderstanding that came with land alienation, which was a colonial government policy accomplished through the Swynnerton plan of 1954.

These conflicts led to dwindling agricultural activities because politicians took advantage of the land in question to whip up political and tribal emotions every

other election year. The problems of colonial land alienation in post independent Kenya led to tribal clashes, land disputes, competition for natural resources, encroachment into riparian land and public forests that began before independence. This was as a result of either the squatter issues or communities being removed from their original land to pave way for the settler farming by the colonial government. Since then, communities never acquired back their parcels of land because new land structures were put into place (Standard Newspaper dated 31<sup>st</sup> march 2012).

The idea of taxation that continued into the decolonization period introduced other aspects of economic lifestyle among the workers of Kisumu, a society of classes where the rich could afford to buy land to expand production while the less fortunate had to provide actual agricultural labour. For example, the colonial reports on Land Ordinances of 1956, reports on an African by the name Jonathan Okwiri who owned a farm of about 9 acres and employed 40 to 50 labourers (LAB.6/3/1/10A/19.8.56). This shows that as much as Africans were impoverished by taxation policies by the colonial government, they were able to buy land and employ fellow Africans, a new change in labour relation. In 1959, another Swynnerton plan was passed, which stated that all customary rights and interests would be nullified upon land registration. The power of the clan elders over land was abolished, along with customary rights and interests. Additionally, it meant that the elders would no longer be able to distribute land. Privately held land would now be reliant on financial resources rather than marriage or tribal ties.

Introduction of land consolidation in Kisumu greatly affected African traditional economies. First, it transformed Africans to land holders instead of communal land holding and, in this regard, livestock keeping as before was affected because the

owners of cattle could no longer herd in any open land. Farming too became restricted to each person's land and trespassing was not allowed as these open places were now divided into individual holdings. Shifting cultivation ended with continuous cultivation transforming the traditional Africans of Kisumu County to modern methods of farming. With all these changes the productivity of Africans reduced necessitating the colonial government to motivate farmers by giving prizes such as ox-drawn plough, jembes for better farming. The agricultural relations in the decolonization period came with policies that required African workers to embrace the kind of job opportunities available and the mastery of skills, enlightening Africans to demand for better working conditions.

#### **4.4. Change and Continuity of Colonial Labour Policies up to Independence in Kisumu.**

Cooper (1989) adds that there was a significant shift in British and French perspectives on the connection between wage employment and African society as the politics of decolonisation began to take main stage. Just as the war and the flaws in imperial economies highlighted the British and French necessity for their empires, even small working classes had the ability to go on strike and were endangering the limited routes of colonial trade. In an effort to formulate a forward-thinking colonial social policy and, more importantly, to control workers' responses to the stresses of their everyday life, the concept of "self-determination" was also gaining prominence in international politics at the time. Colonial administrators began to believe that creating an African working class would be beneficial in order to segregate the class from the hazardous masses that wandered between susceptible cities and the backward countryside (Cooper, 1989).

Evidently the rise of a working class as part of African labour was a clear change and departure from the migrant labour that characterized the Kenyan colony. This class of workers were evident with the position that they held within government agencies. These agencies included the Post and Telecommunications, government ministries while a group of working class also emerged in factories such as Miwani Sugar and other cotton companies that operated within Kisumu district. As Africans flocked into places of job opportunities in towns or sugar plantation areas in great numbers, the modernization theorists would suggest that they were entering the mainstream of modernity and the fact that an African was becoming an urbanite was an affirmation of modernity. African cultures evolved from traditional simple communities to sophisticated or western levels of socioeconomic and political organisation, with colonialism serving as the primary pushing force (Olumwullah 1986).

It is also important to note that the decolonization period would also bring back the purism of free labour ideology. The issue of agitation for better pay for African workers which dominated the first phase of colonialism continued into the decolonization period spanning from 1945 into the 1950s. The move and call by African workers for better pay opened up a new awakening amongst African labourers as far as labour relations was concerned. Unlike in the past, African labourers started to demand a pay rise consequently, some changes in the labour policy regarding wages had to be relooked into (Cooper, 1989).

Prior to World War II, international labour talks in Africa, which also influenced the Kenyan colonial state, centred on the question of force; Africa was isolated from Europe's active rethinking of labour management, welfare, and industrial relations.

When international meetings began after the war, a new set of concerns were on the agenda. The 1944 conference of the universal Labour Organisation (ILO) emphasised independent governments' duty for 'the well-being and development of dependent peoples', and examined the issue of establishing 'international minimum standards and the improvement of these standards'. Public health, housing, nutrition, education, child welfare, women's status, working conditions, wage earners' and independent producers' compensation, migratory labour, social security, public service standards, and overall production were all discussed in this meeting. The adaptation of ILO norms for European workers to the colonies was the focus of a new ILO convention on social policy at its next conference in 1947 (ILO 1944, 1947). As a result, worker welfare became a priority for African labour. Better accommodations for African workers became a concern as a result. To achieve this goal, housing was constructed, such as Anderson Estate in Kisumu. However, the colonial authority used soil degradation as an excuse to continue the practice of enlisting people to work on conservation initiatives (van Onselen 1976; Killingray 1986; Throup 1987).

In the meantime, commoditization of land and labour continued. However, the postwar vision suggested that African society was dualistic but that the worker lived a unified existence, in contrast to the migrant labour system and indirect rule, which assumed that African society possessed a unified traditionalism and that the African worker lived a dual existence between the workplace and the village. Even if the expenses of reproduction were higher than the market pay, the African working class had to reproduce itself (Cooper, 1989).

According to Njuguna (2019), there was one significant result of the colonial system of land ownership, which was upheld by regulations that strictly divided the settlers' degrees of differentiated rights from those of Africans. As a result, the white highlands were 'scheduled' for the settlers, creating a racial property ownership structure. Buying land in the white highland was very difficult for Africans. In many cases, African labourers remained in the reserve even during the decolonization period when the issue of land became one of the major grievances that Africans had against the colonial government.

Africans began to push for another wage increase in 1948. However, it was difficult for the labourers to receive a salary increase because of the circumstances that the former military personnel encountered on their farms. The majority of veterans were not persuaded that the farms had ever done well when they departed for battle. The white settlers were forced to look for money from money lending companies due to their massive debts from the machinery they had borrowed (Njuguna, 2019). However, African labourers protested in 1950, calling for equitable pay. In addition to selling off African animals in the African reserves, the labourers were irritated by working over twelve hours a day for little remuneration. This action was taken in response to accusations from white settlers that African labourers were ignoring their crops and cattle. This development annoyed African workers and because they were not in a position to oppose it, they opted to engage in a go slow in those settlers' farms (Njuguna, 2019). Go slows and boycotts were forms of resistance that African labourers in Kisumu utilized against western forms of labour discrimination.

The Master and Servants Ordinance that came early in the colonial period continued to feature prominently in the decolonization period. Njuguna (2019) noted that this

law was included into East Africa's statute book and was in effect until the 1950s. In colonial Kenya, the Master and Servant Ordinance used as a weapon to oppress African labourers in addition to regulating labour recruitment. To put it briefly, it was one of the several colonial labour laws designed to regulate employment in Kisumu County and colonial Kenya. Contracts were therefore used to regulate the workers' interactions with their masters. Although Africans were opposed to the labour policies in place at this time, a number of prosecutions were done by the colonial government especially in relation to communal labour. In Kisumu, just like in other parts of Nyanza, the Master and Servant Ordinance as a labour policy continued to be in place and defined the relations that African labourers had with their masters.

As a result, three groups of individuals emerged as key change agents: town residents (*Jopango*), elites (*Josomo*), and converts (*Jokristo*). These three groups had accepted features of capitalism ideology. Some introduced new crops in places they had been to. They also purchased newly introduced agricultural implements such as jembes and oxen-drawn ploughs. These agricultural tools and the new seeds defined the kind of modern capitalist economy that Kisumu as a county was introduced to. This was a shift from the food production process that they had hitherto practiced. This shift compelled Africans to sell their labour. The shift to wage labour as a colonial labour policy was because of the ever-increasing need for cash to meet the capitalist demands and obligations of the colonial state which African workers in Kisumu were grappling with. The workers could no longer depend on traditional agricultural production due to low prices (Onduru, 1992:203).

Continued application of labour policies triggered resentment from African workers which was manifested in different ways. Strikes and dissertations continued to be tools that Africans used to petition the colonial government for better living and working conditions arising from the continued bad labour policies that they were working under. These early strikes were organized majorly by the skilled and semi-skilled workers. The demand for a good wage and the rights of the working class reproduced itself on its own terms and informed the core demands of the working class in Kisumu County leading to industrial actions by the workers. These strikes and petitions were submitted to the colonial government by both labour organizations and political associations such as the East African Association (EAA) and Kenya African Union (KAU) which had national membership even from Kisumu. They sought the abolition of *kipande*, forced labour, higher pay and working conditions, lower taxes, and the restitution of confiscated land. The statewide strike inspired worker and nationalist militancy in the 1950s, ushering in a new age of labour movements throughout Kenya. Moreso, small umbrella bodies got impetus to demand for more socio-economic and political freedom. Associations such as the Central Nyanza Chamber of Commerce African Welfare Association (CAWA), the Nyanza Soldiers Association, and the Luo Union, as well as other clans and subclans' welfare associations, were founded to allow African labourers to express their problems. The defunct Piny owacho (a local political organisation) has also been recreated (Ogot, 1999:46).

Negotiations, demonstrations, and compromises occur inside Kisumu County's political and economic sphere. They were channels through which Africans in Kisumu reshaped their political and economic landscape (Omenya 2010:193). The

welfare organisations aimed to establish an economic kingdom as well as a national identity for African rural communities. They maintained the spirit of collective bargaining alive till independence (Atieno-Odhiambo 1995). For example, Oginga Odinga used one of Africa's most prominent commercial enterprises, the Luo Thrift and Trading Company, to mobilise traders, teachers, chiefs, and other locals under the motto *Kinda e teko, Riwruok e teko* (in struggle and persistence lies unity and strength) (Atieno Odhiambo 1995). However, both the strikes and trade union movements gathered momentum during and after the Second World War. This was as a result of many people who had joined the working-class bracket and its growing industrial concentration. Nonetheless, working and living conditions still deteriorated.

With living conditions not improving, obviously wages would still be lower than employees expected. Despite the growing number of the working class and the spiralling cost of living, the majority of the people still earned 40 shillings per month which was far below the expenditure required for even an individual worker. The wages did not take into consideration the needs of an individual regardless of their family responsibilities (Zezeza 1994:79). The Labour Commission in the 1950s, set up African Labour Efficiency Survey which recommended that 'the vicious cycle of low work output, low wages, malnutrition and poor housing must be broken' these were the expectations among many African workers that things would improve going forward, however, expectations ran ahead of hard realities (Zezeza 1992:190). This was because the provision of adequate housing and social services remained elusive as ever. According to a report by Vasey on African Housing in Township and Trading centres, many employers could not afford to provide housing for their

workers. The solutions to this problem lay in the building of houses by Africans for themselves or for the accommodation of other Africans. This was a recipe for slum development (Vasey, 1950).

By 1952, workers' grievances continued to be low wages guided by the wage policy in place. The differential wages cushioned the myth that paying Africans higher wages would encourage them to marry more wives (Booker, 1947). Report on the economic and social conditions of Mombasa labour dispute captured the minimum wage in Kisumu which was fixed at Shs. 45/50 per month. The low wages were not commensurate with the education that these Africans gained. Cases of workers' strikes stood at 80% by 1949 and these waves of industrial action rocked various urban centers it is reported that about 100 000 workers of both essential and non-essential services downed their tools in major urban centers like Thika, Nyeri, Nanyuki, Nakuru, Kisumu, Kisii, Kakamega and Mombasa. Although the government swiftly responded violently to these protests, Africans did not benefit since the government decided not to raise the minimum wage.

The issue of taxation continued as a colonial labour policy and it still made a number of African workers to migrate to various towns to look for wage labour. After they got jobs, they had to deal with underpayment, therefore many wage workers kept receiving subsidies from the communities in the form of corn, beans, and flour. Nevertheless, land alienation still made many African workers become squatters on Asian and European farms (Onduru 1992:205).

In all these developments, the level of class consciousness started to rise. Tougher labour regulatory measures were adopted by the colonial state to tame trade union movements whose membership had risen to about 27, 589 who were paid up

members of various trade unions (Zezeza 1996:192). The biggest trade unions at the time were EATUC and the African Workers Federation (AWK). With time, the Trade Union movements began to demand for representation in all government committees and the International Labour Organization (ILO) as part of East African representation. Consequently, the multiracial government which came into place in 1954 allowed for the voices of trade unionists like Tom Mboya to be heard. As a trade unionist, Tom Mboya was instrumental in not only spearheading the course of African workers in Kisumu but also in the whole country. Although the trade unions had challenges here and there, in their early years of operation the fact is, it kept the spirit of nationalism alive. Operations "Jock Scott" and "Operation Anvil" destroyed the labour movement, arresting and detaining hundreds of members and disappearing others entirely. The realignment within the leadership followed an obvious change from the militants who represented an upward sweep of the post-war strike wave to the moderates led by Tom Mboya, who took a backseat in an attempt to withstand a brutal crackdown as unions regrouped within Kenya (Zezeza 1996:193). These were some of the political concessions that characterized Kenya's political space alongside other economic reforms such as the land tenure system which was introduced through the Swynnerton plan.

The Swynnerton plan of 1954 would also transform how agriculture and relations of labour played out in the decolonization period in Kisumu and the rest of Kenya. This was a strategy to enhance the development of African agricultural policy in Kenya and provide a complete transition in agriculture from what the government referred to as a 'circle of subsistence or near-subsistence agriculture' (Swynnerton, 1954). The Swynnerton plan proposed reversing private tenure of property in agricultural

regions. It also urged that landowners grow income crops, which were formerly reserved for white farmers. The plan envisioned a twenty-year implementation period (Swynnerton, 1954). The Swynnerton plan, a comprehensive five-year plan for African land development, combined the need to find schemes and provide employment for African repatriates in reserves and on development projects, with the primary goal of increasing agricultural productivity and the land's human and stock carrying capacity (Njuguna, 2019). Throughout 1954, African labourers continued with their demand for better working conditions. This was mostly enhanced by increased political and trade union activities within the County.

Although there were reforms going on in the agricultural sector, there were intense activities by labour movements going into 1955. This was marked by a steady recovery by the unions and the registration of new unions bringing the total number of labour movements to 25 with an official membership of nearly 40,000 in the whole country. This became a strong reawakening, highlighted by the Inter-territorial East African Railways strike, which began in the late months of 1959 and lasted until the following year. This had a significant impact, exceeding all prior levels of militancy and generating an avalanche of strikes that touched all workers in the agricultural industry. African labourers working in the sugarcane zone, cotton growing areas and Kisumu railways were all affected. All these were happening when Kenya was under a state of emergency which was later lifted in 1960.

In June 1962, the colony's wide general strike that the government had feared and anticipated erupted towards independence. Little attention was given to Africans' interest and despite the Devonshire declaration, interest of white settlers still took preference. This prevented the overall change that Africans of Kisumu desired for

by the end of the colonial rule (Van zwanenberg 1975:141). By the time of independence, the Kenya labour movement had become more mature and survived in spite of the exploitative and racist nature of the state. The struggles by the labour movements and push for significant changes in the welfare of workers at least changed the wage structure, the working and living conditions of Africans. By the time African workers were getting into independence the colonial government had introduced a minimum wage for workers. Zeleza (1992) believes that there could be no better testimony to the long distance the Kenya labour movements had travelled by the time of independence. Workers across Kenya and Kisumu County in particular demonstrated remarkable militancy, solidarity and political leadership in the strikes and industrial actions that continued to take place as Kenya entered the final phases of colonialism.

It should be noted that the national liberation movements which characterised the decolonization period were built through the efforts of labour organizations led by Jomo Kenyatta, Tom Mboya, and Achieng Oneko as a response to bad colonial labour policies (Selim, 2016:281). These movements were often led by ordinary workers who were more radical than moderate in their resistance to inequality and privileges. These leaders' goals are linked to the political desire of anti-colonialism and national liberation, which leads to economic independence for African workers (Cooper 1996:248).

Furthermore, by 1962, child labour as a labour policy was drastically reduced, a clear evidence of drastic changes in labour policy as Kenya approached independence. Africans took their children to schools to acquire education just like the white settlers' children instead of working on the farms (KNA/DC/NKU/28/4

Annual Report 1960). It can be noted that Africans' perception about engaging in unskilled labour changed as they were willing to take their children to school and to vocational institutions in order to acquire skills that would enable them to compete favourably for jobs in the colonial civil service with other racial groups. This scenario continued into the post-independence government.

With Kenya's internal self-rule in 1963, Kisumu County also felt the impact of economic freedom that swept across the entire country. It can be noted that African labourers experienced a significant change as far as modes of production and labour relations were concerned. Some of the labourers transformed from unskilled to skilled workers. This is because the colonial government introduced training institutions for Africans to acquire certain skills like machine operators, administrators and entrepreneurs. The need to train Africans to acquire the necessary technical and industrial skills were as a result of changes in the colonial labour policies that were geared towards preparing Africans for the post-independence workforce (KNA/DC/NKU/28/4 Annual Report 1960). Africans were able to embrace new modes of production for developments.

#### **4.5. Summary**

The decolonization period was a transition period in the history of labour not only in Kenya but also Kisumu County. This period witnessed some heightened political and labour union activities by Africans, who were both pushing for their economic and political liberation as much as the colonial economy had to be sustained using African labour. The chapter argues that the colonial state continued with more of its bad colonial labour policies. The Crown Land Ordinances, Child labour, introduction of Kipande system, Master and Servants Ordinances which were

continuously enforced by the capitalist regime to ensure maximum exploitation of African labour. African workers found themselves working under these ordinances within the sugar belt areas, administrative units as domestic labourers, some in the railway construction sectors and in the cotton farms and factories with poor pay and working conditions. This was the exploitative nature of the colonial labour that African workers went through up to the emergency period of 1952 and into independence.

The chapter also demonstrates that changes in the land tenure system were brought in through the Swynnerton plan of 1954 and 59 basically geared towards controlling African labour and their articulation of the modes of production. It is sufficient to note that these economic changes were also characterised by resistance from Africans who organised themselves through labour unions to fight for their welfare. These labour unions, together with political associations such as the Kenya African Union (KAU) were instrumental in pushing for the economic wellbeing of African workers. Through this push, the colonial government was compelled to form a labour commission to look into the issue of minimum wage which was consequently increased but not enough. Similarly, child labour policy also changed and Africans began taking their children to school.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1. Summary

The study has attempted to examine colonial labour and the various transformations that characterized this sector in relation to Africans whose labour was sought by the colonial state within Kisumu County as from 1895 to 1963. The study sets out to achieve the following objective: analyze the pre-colonial labour relations among the Luo in Kisumu County up to 1901; examine the various colonial labour policies established by the colonial government to transform African workers of Kisumu County, 1901-1945; assess the changing nature of colonial labour policies on African workers in Kisumu County, 1946-1963.

Although this study begins from 1895 when Kenya became a British sphere of influence a background historical account of the Luo community is analyzed before this period as a way of laying the foundation for the transformation of Kisumu and her workers from a pre-capitalist society. The transformation began with the construction of the Kenya-Uganda railway line to its completion in 1901. The year 1901, therefore, marked the effective extension of colonialism in Kisumu County and 1963 marked the end of colonial rule in Kenya. The study employed two theories, that is, the modernization and the articulations of modes of production theories as analytical tools to understand colonial labour and labour relations within Kisumu County. Modernization theory argues that for a society to transform into a modern society, it has to go through various development stages in a linear path without skipping any one of these stages. Perhaps, the colonial state believed that it is through this kind of development, brought about by colonialism and its agenda

that Kisumu County as a colonial space would prosper economically through the forceful use of African labour and articulation of modes of production.

The colonial government brought a modern transport system to link the County with the outside world for capitalist benefits. They embraced modernity for social harmony and compatibility. Although Kisumu County does not have similar structures for development like the capitalist West, there was going to be a linkage between pre-capitalist and capitalist modes of production which characterised exploitation of natural resources that included land and labour. On the same note the articulation of modes of production theory has demonstrated the relationship between underdevelopment and development aspects. The theory analyzed how the traditional means of production was rearticulated to fit the capitalist modes of productions. Therefore, various means of capital accumulation in Kisumu County would be interrelated under a superior one. Kisumu County pre-capitalist modes of production would correlate with capitalist modes of production through rearticulations for the pre-and capitalist modes of production to combine to form a super economy. This was witnessed through the growth of plantation agriculture, manufacturing industries and better trading activities.

Chapter two of this work dealt with our first objective by analyzing the pre-colonial labour relations among the Luo community. The discussion was premised on the assumption that the pre-colonial labour relations informed the traditional modes of production of the Luo in Kisumu County which included hunting and gathering, fishing and cattle keeping among others. The chapter laid the foundation of the study by tracing the migration and settlement of the Luo community as the dominant ethnic group in Kisumu County. The chapter also traced their migration from their

original homeland in Southern Sudan through Uganda to western Kenya where they settled briefly at Ramogi hills. Because of population pressure and many other specific reasons, they continued with their migrations further, where they settled and occupied the whole of the greater Nyanza region, with *Joka Jok* settling within the unit of study. Before the settlement of the Luo into the area of study, the Abaluhya, Abagusii and the Nandi had already settled within the region however, due to Luo aggression, they managed to push them out of the region. The Luo labour relations revolved around their modes of production. They initially kept livestock and later on became mixed farmers to cushion them during drought and other calamities. As livestock keepers and mixed farmers, division of labour was structured based on age and gender.

The study ascertained that labour relations amongst the Luo community was diverse and was meant for subsistence needs. The vastness of land, its tenure and the kinship mode of production characterised the African labour relation before the onset of colonialism. The study found out that the Luo were mixed farmers immediately they settled in Kisumu region with labour being free, non-compulsive beginning from household to communal level. Land was never titled and belonged to the community and political leaders protected it. The salient features of Luo economic activities was primarily subsistence and diverse in nature. The surplus would be bartered for essentials that they did not have. The tenure of land was embedded in the Kinship system and the application of labour relations was for the interest of the community and one's own benefit. The study also took cognisance of the fact that before the colonial period, Africans engaged in labour relations that was free without coercion and labour production involved the family with everyone having a role to play.

However, this kind of labour relations was revolutionised with the coming of the colonial master and the introduction of the money economy.

Colonialism and its manifestations in Kisumu County led to the building of Kenya Kenya-Uganda railway, making Kisumu the headquarters of colonial administration as well as a terminal for the railway port. The construction of the Kenya-Uganda railway was the beginning of colonial exploitation of African labour. This was achieved through the use of force by the colonial government to get labour. Therefore, it can be ascertained that labour and land became the most important aspect of the colonial economy, and the colonial government used that to ensure Africans transformed into new modes of production. The construction of the Kenya-Uganda railway began the first transformation of African labour from the traditional economy to a capitalist-oriented colonial system. It also saw the transformation of labour relations to the new modes of production, where labour became directly related and proportional to some form of capital (and the owner of the means of production).

The third chapter discussed the various colonial labour policies on African workers in Kisumu County, 1901-1945. The chapter was premised on the assumption that African workers in Kisumu County were adversely affected by the colonial labour policies in the early phases of colonialism. The colonial labour policies were characterised by ordinances and acts around labour conscription, land alienation, taxation, mobility, Kipande system as well as the creation of reserves. The study established that the labour policies informed the engagement that African workers would have with the colonial masters from the early phases of colonialism. These ordinances brought radical transformation in the development of labour relations.

This was made possible with the declaration of all pieces of land as Crown land under the Crown Land Ordinances. The study found out that the adoption of various labour policies like the Crown Land Ordinance of 1901 made Africans tenants of the Crown. The ordinance also set forth the exploitation of African labour and resources through land alienation, with the subsequent establishment of African reserves in Kisumu County. This was enhanced by the fact that Kisumu became a colonial administrative centre and thus became a focal point from where colonial labour policies were applied. Other acts and ordinances included the Dual policy, Native Registration Ordinance, East African Tax Ordinance, Native Hut Tax and Poll Tax, Northey Circular 1919, Master-Servant Ordinances of 1910 and 1912, as well as the Native Followers Recruitment Ordinance of 1915.

The acts or ordinances moved African workers from pre-capitalist and communal forms of production to forced wage labour, and the outbreak of World War I in 1914 ensured that most of the colonial labour policy was directed towards the effort. The Native Followers Recruitment Ordinance of 1915 became handy as Africans were coerced into new labour relations as either farm hand, carrier corps or soldiers. Some were also employed as domestic workers thus finding themselves in a kind of Master Servant labour relations. It can be noted that during the early phases of colonialism, African workers were subjected to forced labour with low wages. Subsequently, the colonial approach to African labour was transformative and moved from voluntary to forced labour as colonialism was characterized by exploitation and racial discrimination.

Wages in the capitalist sector of African societies remained relatively low because a large part of labourer's needs were still met by the traditional modes of production

in the rural set up while the wages had to meet the labourers living expenses only in the time of workers active production (Ndeda 1991:10).

Although this period witnessed penetration of capitalism into the economic spaces of Kisumu, this form of penetration was shaped by different pre-existing forms of organization. With contradictions in the articulations of capitalist and non-capitalist labour relations, for both traditional and modern forms of exploitation. For example, the colonial chiefs who were used by the colonial government to implement the labour policies were on many occasions rewarded in kind rather than in monetary terms. The idea behind this was based on the perception that capitalism had to use pre-capitalist modes of production to strengthen itself during the phase of transformation. This could be achieved by employing the chiefs as agents of this transformative agenda. Chiefs like Oriri Kamdigo and Owiti Kitoto of Kano got enough material rewards because they initially served not only as labourers but also as agents of labour recruitments. For the colonial administrators, those who could procure labourers stood the chance of getting material benefits from the administrators, security and appointments as colonial government officers (Kitching, 1980).

Kisumu town thus became a labour reservoir and administrative headquarter where the colonial government used to establish control over African labourers in the interior. More so, it became an extension for the establishment of colonial enclaves meant to exploit African labour. The earliest wage earners who were pioneer labourers were porters in the railway construction sites, British servants, tax collectors, chiefs, headmen and soldiers. Majority of them were foreigners while others were Luos, Abagusii, Nandis, and Abaluhya recruits from areas that had been

put under British control. These recruits were significant in the mass exploitation of African resources. As much as the basic unit of production in the pre-colonial Kisumu was the household or the extended family, the colonial pacification initiated a transformation in the patterns of production through forced labour, a colonial labour policy that would later inform African resistance to colonial rule. Forced labour was a product of settlers and colonial administration initiative because acquiring free labour in Kisumu County was difficult. This is because African labourers had fully embraced the traditional economy for their own subsistence needs rather than provision of labour for the sake of pushing the capitalist colonial agenda.

The colonial government's labour policies were enacted at every stage to deal with the dynamics of labour shortages and to suit the labour demands of the European settlers and the colonial government at the same time. For example, the Native Authority Ordinance of 1902 and 1912, the Master-Servant Ordinance of 1912 and the Northey circular of 1919 were put in place as responses to labour issues as they arose. The Poll and Hut tax compelled both younger men and men with families respectively to give labour (Clayton, 1971:165). It allowed the colonial government to know the number of men, women and children within a homestead. These labour policies, however, had far reaching negative and positive impacts on African households. To some households, wage labour was seen as a means of driving them away from their village life and families thereby introducing them into a money economy and urban life with better social amenities and money to pay bride wealth.

Although the colonial labour policies compelled Africans to work in large scale agricultural farms for production of cash crops in areas such as Muhoroni, Kibigori,

Kibos and Miwani, African workers would also spare time to engage in their own food production. This is a demonstration that colonial labour policies could not completely take away the cultural values that Africans attached to their agricultural production. These hybridities of production were a constant feature within the economic spaces of Kisumu County. It is evident that African wage labourers were still able to manipulate the capitalist economy to serve their own interests.

The observation above fits well with the articulations of modes of production as a theoretical framework and as an analytical tool where forms and efforts of capitalist formations are partly preserved through pre-existing modes of production. The Europeans being at the forefront in labour acquisition recruited the Asians and the Christian missionaries as agents of capitalist ideology. These were some of the dynamics of the colonial labour policies that did not only benefit European settlers directly, but Asians and missionaries also became {in} direct beneficiaries. The Asians too used African labour to enhance the agrarian policy of the settlers thus confining Africans into the non-arable lowlands within Kisumu County.

It has also been demonstrated that wage labour discriminated against Africans as the conditions of work were dehumanizing with poor wages. The entry of settlers into the economic space brought many other forms of discrimination as the colonial government favoured settlers over Asians and Africans throughout the colonial period. The highlands were left for settlers while Africans were pushed into the reserves of Kajulu and Kano. Wage labour, therefore, became an alternative source of income for families albeit the fact that Africans resisted forceful conscription. Colonial labour policies changed gender roles within African households as most men were absent from homes as WWII intensified. Consequently, women bore the

burden of migrant labour. Cases of divorce, poor parenting and sexual immorality became rampant. Overcrowding, slum dwellings and poor sanitation characterized these social places.

The study also demonstrated that African workers continued to experience labour challenges and the response of Africans was by desertions and labour protest. Migrant workers who were majorly young men, left their women and peasant economy unattended in the villages. Women also left for towns to look for jobs leaving children behind to look after themselves and or under the care of their grandmothers. In the depression years of the 1920s and 1930s, labour emerged as a key consideration as it was the only way of making ends meet within the capital economy that was now in existence. Africans who became migrant workers in urban centers kind of the study would argue chased better life in the concept of modernization theory.

The depression years saw an increase in the number of African workers were some of them became casual labourers, others piece rate under the target labour systems, and others became migrant labourers who migrated temporarily and sold their labour for a period of time then returned to their homes while others migrated permanently to various locations from where they established settlements known as *Kisumu ndogo* (small kisumu). Migrant labour was considered cheap labour and labourers were paid meagre wages which they sent home to sustain their families. Nonetheless, some Africans were able to accumulate enough cash to start their own retail businesses.

The emergence of political and welfare associations during the Second World War period was as a result of Africans response against the many labour grievances

arising out of the colonial labour policies. In this case, the Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare Association was very instrumental in driving the agenda of residents of Kisumu and Central Kavirondo at large as far as taxation issues were concerned. It could therefore be deduced that the early phase of colonialism which also covered the two World Wars was very significant in shaping African labour. The various ordinances that were enacted within the period addressed the needs of the colonial government towards the war effort while at the same time entrenched the colonial capitalist agenda which transformed the Africans concept of labour to the European capitalist labour practices where labour had to be exploited and rewarded even if not commensurate to the labour input in the production process. These developments continued during the decolonization period with some little changes.

In chapter four, the study assessed the changing nature of colonial labour policies and continuities during the decolonization period (1945-1963). The discussion was premised on the assumption that the colonial labour policy went through various changes and continuities where some of the colonial labour policies changed while other policies continued even up to post independence period. The study noted that the decolonization period did not detach Africans from providing labour. It is during this period that Africans workers had heavy tasks of balancing from provision of labour to the settlers to improving their traditional economy. Agriculture and especially cotton farming became a government project for African farmers. The plantation farms and the colonial civil service sectors became areas where application of labour policies were much felt. Yet still, the capitalist economy was still met with a lot of resistance because of forced labour and poll taxes that continued to be in force. Consequently, Africans were compelled to work in the

cotton farms, sugar plantations and milling factories owned by Europeans and Asians. African farmers on the other hand counted losses in cash crop farming, with the revolution of agrarian policy through the establishment of the Department of Agriculture and veterinary services. The department instilled in Africans the values and techniques of a capitalist economy as much as Africans still embraced the traditional economy.

The study found out that the Department of Agriculture used modern tools, better seed varieties suitable for different areas so as to incorporate Africans in the capitalist economy. These farm inputs intensified the transformation of African farming in the 1940s that those who took up the challenge became African bourgeois. By the mid-1950s sugar industry as an example was at its peak indicating the positive response the colonial government had put to resuscitate African farming through continuation of various labour policies that were already in place.

Despite the difficulties which African workers went through as a result of draconian labour policies, they were able to start various welfare and political organisations as they believed in *Riwruok e teko* (Unity is strength). The decolonization period led to the development of the informal sector in Kisumu County. The *Jua-kali* sector that developed as a small production industry, accommodated Africans who could not get employment in the formal sector. The sector was recognized because it originated from the Indian craft-industry and became very relevant where many people found jobs. The study found out that African workers in the post war period became much aware of their economic situations consequently coming together to form labour movements to fight against discriminative colonial policies. Associations like the Luo Thrift Trading Corporations, Bondo Thrift Association

and Ramogi African Welfare Association were local trade associations which became the focal point of collective bargaining power for the Africans of Kisumu County that later on joined other national labour movements.

The study found out that the African workers of Kisumu were never left behind in the demand for a better working environment. These local movements grew on to become full-scale militancy that later on shook the country in the 1950s. By 1952 onwards Africans were much aware of their destiny and when the state of emergency was declared, many African workers and politicians were arrested and detained. The void was filled with the Trade union movements that became both economic and political bargaining outfits. Desertion and communal revolts became the product of and a challenge to coercive labour controls because of the processes of primitive colonial accumulation and colonial state construction (Zeleva 1982). The mass workers movement that began in the early years of colonial rule into the 1950s became disruptive and no colonial government could ignore them. The colonial government dealt with these either by employing punitive measures against the strikers or trying to conciliate them by offering concessions that saw the introduction of colonial labour reforms in the spheres of colonial life. These reforms eventually led to downsizing of labour revolts and inclusion of labour movement into the colonial governance systems. Thus, both the course and effects of the mass strike movement in Kisumu County were shaped by social conditions which labour itself through struggle helped create.

By 1954 Swynnerton plan became another important development in the African economic sector and affected both land and labour provisions. The reform incorporated African farming and land-holding with security of tenure. Africans

could now be able to have land titles and would own pieces of land. The plan would again transform how agriculture and relations of labour played out in the decolonization period in Kisumu and the rest of Kenya. It was a plan to intensify the development of African agricultural policy in Kenya and give comprehensive change on agriculture from what the government termed a 'circle of subsistence or near subsistence agriculture (Swynnerton, 1954).

Nevertheless, within the same year, labourers continued to demand for better working conditions which was enhanced by increased political activities among Africans in the County. This took the form of political organizations and trade unions. By 1962, even child labour had drastically reduced, a demonstration of drastic changes in labour policies as Kenya approached independence. Consequently, constitutional reforms that were politically impacted on the colonial economy especially with regards to labour issues which arose due to bad colonial policies that were racist, exploitative and insensitive to Africans. As a result, African workers in Kisumu County were compelled to use industrial actions not only to push for better wages and working conditions but also to compel the colonial state to grant Kenya her own independence which was achieved in 1963.

## **5.2. Conclusion**

This thesis has discussed the transformation of African labourers of Kisumu County from 1895-1963. Kisumu County labourers transformed from traditional labour economy to capitalist economy by embracing new modes of production which created employment of African labour in the colonial administrative units, settlers and Asian projects within and outside Kisumu County. It can be deduced that wage employment to some extent interfered with African traditional economy especially

in areas of Kajulu, Kano, Seme, and Kibos locations from where many African labour forces originated. The wage labour force was characterized by low wages and poor labour relations which was exploitative. Moreso, wage labour and colonial agricultural production led to the rise of social classes within Kisumu County. Nevertheless, African labourers did not give up as they resisted these western forms of knowledge through protests and labour unrests, welfare and political associations for negotiating and petitioned the colonial government. These protests and the labour movements would later be organized within strong political organizations which pushed for Kenya's independence. The study has shown clearly that African workers of Kisumu County transformed from pre-capitalist economy to capitalist economy through monetization of their labour and land. In conclusion, therefore, it can be argued that labour relations in Kisumu were informed by traditional modes of production that were distorted by colonial labour policies in Kisumu. These policies affected African labourers in the early phases of colonialism as demonstrated by the levels of taxation, conscription of African labour in Kisumu and relations that emanated as informed by the Master and Servant Ordinance which was put in place by the colonial state. These observations therefore agree with the research premises of the study. In this regard the study has made significant contributions to the historiography of workers of Kenya during the colonial period.

### **5.3. Recommendation**

The study recommends that there is a need to put in place better labour laws and policies that can enhance quality production as far as utilization is concerned. Further, there is a need to diversify the economy so that workers can get jobs

voluntarily in other sectors without forcing into sectors that workers are not comfortable working in.

Further research needs to be undertaken in how the emergence of three groups for example the elites, (Josomo), the converts (Jokkristo) and town dwellers (Jopango) played significant roles as agents of change in Kisumu County in the colonial period. Finally, the study recommends further research on the impacts of the World Wars on labour relations in Kisumu County in the colonial period.

## ORAL INFORMANTS

<b>SNO</b>	<b>Informants Name</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>Place of Interview</b>	<b>DATE</b>
1	Thomas Awara	70	Kano	07/10/2021
2	Patel Shahh	75	Odera street	07/10/2021
3	Ptael Gudka	73	Odera street	07/10/2021
4	Vincent Odhiambo	68	Kajulu	08/10/2021
5	Zacharia Okelo	65	Kajulu	08/10/2021
6	Markus Onono	70	Adesa street	09/10/2021
7	Leonida Nyandiga	67	Kisian	10/10/2021
8	Margaret Anyango	64	Ojola area	10/10/2021
9	James Lando	72	Ojola area	10/10/2021
10	Alfayo Oingo	69	Manyatta	10/10/2021
11	Caren Adhiambo	70	Manyatta	10/10/2021
12	Patric Ojwang	66	Town center	02/11/2021
13	Onyango Ndalo	67	Town center	02/11/2021
14	Stephanus Ojowi	66	Town center	02/11/2021
15	Julius Chak	74	Kachok	03/11/2021
16	Martin Owino	50	Kachok	03/11/2021
17	Samsom Ojuok	72	Nyalenda	03/11/2021
18	Peterlis Owino	78	Round about to KPLC building	30/11/2021
19	Onyango Owidi	63	Mega city kisumu	30/11/2021
20	Christine Wasawo	70	Kibuye	30/11/2021
21	Jennifer Matere	67	Seme	11/12/2021

22	Papetua Onduru	66	Seme	11/12/2021
23	Asembo mc Onyango	72	Kibuye	11/12/2021
24	Leonida Osano	66	Kibuye	13/12/2021
25	Mathias Okello	67	Kibos	13/12/2021
26	Peter Oburu	68	Kibos	13/12/2021
27	George Otieno	67	Kibos	16/12/2021
28	Odongo Ochiel	74	Awasi	16/12/2021
29	Truphena Opiyo	77	Down town kisumu	16/12/2021
30	Onyango Ogwedhi	62	Airport area	21/12/2021
31	John Otieno	64	Posta lane	21/12/2021
32	Julius Osoo	70	Museum Road	21/12/2021
33	Okoth Martin	58	Dunga beach	16/01/2022
34	Masawo Ogwedhi	70	Obunga estate	16/01/2022
35	Nerea Lando	62	Shauri moyo	16/01/2022
36	Onam Owinyi	70	Obunga estate	16/01/2022
37	Amimo Onong	71	Milimani	17/01/2022
38	Mzee Oguta	80	Awasi	17/01/2022
39	Pattel Shas	66	Awasi	17/01/2022
40	Owili Athembo	70	Odera street	17/01/2022
41	Japtal Aziz	64	Odera street	20/03/2022
42	Kassam Singh	70	Mlimani	20/03/2022
43	Omar Jaycsh	68	Mlimani	20/03/2022
44	Omar Shar	80	Mlimani	20/03/2022

45	Patel Singh	78	Odero street	21/03/2022
46	Owino Masilus	68	Nyahera	21/03/2022
47	Zacary Obondo	53	Rabuor	21/03/ 2022
48	Kennedy Obiero	66	Rabuor	22/03/2022
49	Naftali ochoo	69	Nyahera	22/03/2022
50	Silvnce Adede	70	Nyahera	22/03/2022

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX AI: Research Authorization Letter by The University

  
**KENYATTA UNIVERSITY**  
**GRADUATE SCHOOL**

E-mail: [dean-graduate@ku.ac.ke](mailto:dean-graduate@ku.ac.ke) P.O. Box 43844, 00100  
Website: [www.ku.ac.ke](http://www.ku.ac.ke) NAIROBI, KENYA  
Tel. 020-8704150

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**Internal Memo**

**FROM:** Dean, Graduate School **DATE:** 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2021

**TO:** Ms. Margaret Ogola **REF:** C50/CE/29030/2015  
C/o Department of History, Archaeology  
& Political Studies

**SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL**


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This is to inform you that Graduate School Board, at its meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> August, 2021, approved your Research Proposal for the M.A. Degree entitled, "The Transformation of African Workers in Kisumu Town 1950-1963."

You may now proceed with your Data collection, subject to clearance with the Director General, National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation.

As you embark on your data collection, please note that you will be required to submit to Graduate School completed Supervision Tracking Forms per semester. The form has been developed to replace the Progress Report Forms. The Supervision Tracking Forms are available at the University's Website under Graduate School webpage downloads.

Thank you

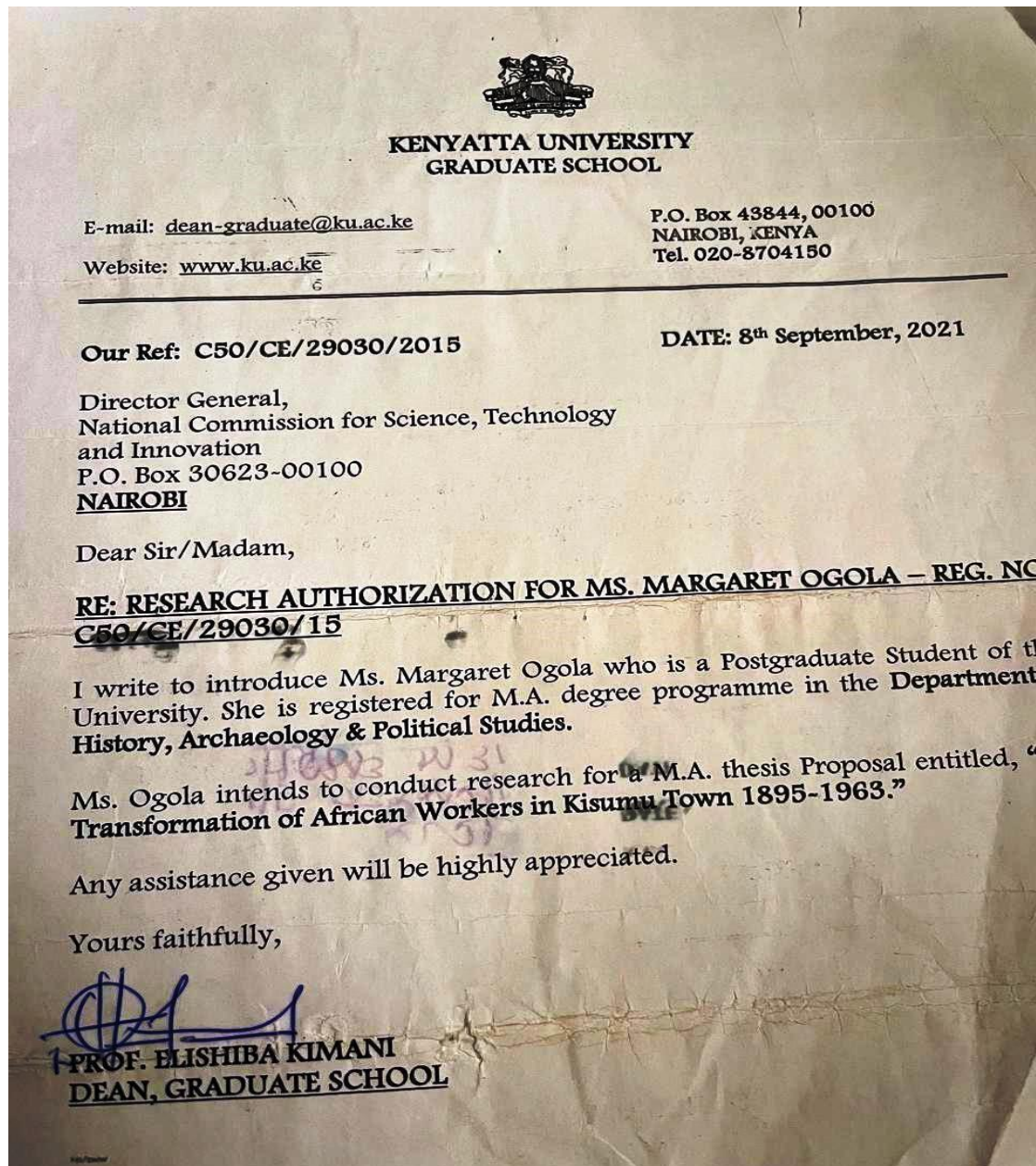
  
**HARRIET ISABOKE**  
**FOR: DEAN, GRADUATE SCHOOL**

**CC:** Chairman, History, Archaeology & Political Studies Department

**Supervisors:**

- Gordon Omenya  
C/o History, Archaeology & Political Studies Dept.  
Kenyatta University
- Dr. Enock Akattu  
C/o History, Archaeology & Political Studies Dept.  
Kenyatta University

APPENDIX AII: Research Authorization Letter by Nacosti



**APPENDIX AIII: Introduction Letter**

**Margaret Ogola**

**P.O BOX 333**

**RONGO.**

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

**RE: Request to collect data.**

I am a student at Kenyatta University, currently pursuing a Masters of Arts degree in History. I am doing a Research on “The Transformation of African Workers in Kisumu County 1895-1963.”

I would appreciate your help and cooperation in gathering important data on the aforementioned subject by conducting interviews and distributing questionnaires for responses. The provided information will be handled with extreme secrecy.

Your assistance will be much valued. Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Margaret Ogola.

## **APPENDIX AIV: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

Question guidelines for master's degree course research

**To respondent,**

The following is an interview guide for collect data on the following topic;

### **Transformation of African worker in Kisumu Town; 1895-1963**

You are requested to assist in responding to the following questions to the best of your ability.

The information will be confidential and it will be only used for research purposes.

#### **Part. A. general information**

Name\_\_\_\_\_Age\_\_\_\_\_

Place of interview\_\_\_\_\_ Time of interview\_\_\_\_\_

Male/Female

Level of Education

Physical Address

#### **B. General Questions**

1. How long have you lived in Kisumu?
2. Which part of Kisumu do you live in?
3. Did you witness the emergence of colonial rule in Kisumu?

YES ( )      NO ( )

4. If yes, explain what happened.

5. How did the colonial masters recruit Africans into wage labour in Kisumu?

6. What were some of the forms of labour that Africans engaged in?

7. Did the

12. What were the effects of joblessness to the people Kisumu Township from 1945 up to 1963?

**C: Railway workers.**

1. How old are you?

2. Where is your original home?

3. Did you witness the advent of colonialism?

a) Yes ( ) No ( )

b) If yes, were Africans ready for colonization?

c) If no, what do you know about colonization?

4. Was one of your parents a worker in the railway line?

5. Were there benefits that your parents gained as railway workers?

6. In your opinion were their policies introduced by the colonial administrators that affected the railway workers that you might have witnessed?

**D: Carrier Corps.**

1. How old are you?

2. Where do you come from?

3. Do you know anybody who become a carrier corps?

a) Yes ( ) No ( )

b) What was their experience?

5. In your opinion did Africans benefit from enlisting as carrier corps?

**E: Domestic and Administrative workers**

1. How old are you?

2. Were there people whom you know that worked in domestic units?

a) Can you explain how they related with the colonial masters?

b) If administrative, how did they relate with the colonial masters?

3. Do you think they were trained for the work? Yes ( ) No ( )

a) If yes, how?

b) If No, how did they get the job?

4. Did the colonial administration allow workers to form welfare organizations?

a) If yes, which welfare organization?

b) Did the associations benefit the Africans and in which manner?

5. Were there labour policies enacted by the colonial administrations?

6. How did these labour policies affect Africans?