

**LABOUR EXPLOITATION IN COLONIAL EAST AND WEST AFRICA: A
COMPARATIVE STUDY OF UGANDA AND GHANA**

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Abstract

There is a strong concurrence among scholars that African labour was important to the attainment of the course of colonialism. Colonial exploitation was not limited to materials and mineral resources. African labour was also exploited to serve the interest of the colonizers. The undue exploitation of African labour continued by the post-colonial leaders have partly resulted in their mass migration to European and American countries for better working conditions. This massive brain drains compounded by harsh economic realities spells doom for the economy of Africa. To curb this ugly trend, there is need to examine in a broad manner, how African labour was exploited during the colonial era when the precedence of exploitation was laid. Although colonial labour exploitation was done using different methods and took varying dimensions and patterns in different colonial territories in Africa, there were still similar patterns noticeable across the continent of Africa. This study investigates this conclusion by comparing labour exploitation in colonial East and West Africa using Uganda and Ghana as case study. The study compares labour exploitation patterns in the two countries, examines reactions of African workers to colonial exploitation and the responses of the colonial powers cum capitalists. The study reveals that colonial labour exploitation was achieved in connection with African chiefs using both hard and soft powers and that labour found ways to register its objections. It concludes that labour will not capitulate to wanton exploitation for too long but will find a way to fight or flee. The study adopts a historical method of analysis, using primary and secondary sources of information.

Keywords: Labour Exploitation, Colonial Africa, Comparative, Uganda, Ghana

Introduction

The history of labour relations in East and West Africa gives Schumpeter's imperialist theory, which tried to dissociate capitalism from imperialism, another deadly blow. According to Schumpeter, capitalism is antithetic to imperialism.¹ The insatiable avarice of capitalism which was ignited by the industrial revolution drove her agents to the shores of Africa to exploit her surplus labour. To succeed, they had to make use of repression, coercion, subjugation and other tactical means to exploit African labour. As a scholar has noted, labour – capital relation is normally characterized by contestation, resistance and domination; and labour is dominated either through despotism or hegemony.²

As it would be shown in this paper, labour relations in East and West Africa was characterised by government domination and exploitation. Labour relation is supposed to be a tripartite relation between Labour, State and Capital, with the State playing a mediatory role between labour and capital. But in colonial Africa as we shall see, it became a relation among four parties in theory (Labour, State, Capital and Semi-Capitalists (African Chiefs)), but two parties in practice. Both the State, Capital and Semi-Capital all formed a capitalist coalition against the African labour. The few skirmishes between State and the European Capitalists should not blind the eyes to this reality, every relationship, even conjugal, has its own conflict. But that does not suggest that there is no relationship.

The task of this paper is to compare the nature of the relations that took place between African labour and the colonial capitalists in East and West Africa, using Uganda and Ghana respectively as case study. This will be seen in the light of labour policies, recruitment strategies and scope [categories of people recruited], remuneration system, general work conditions and interest mediation. It would be seen that it was only through the use of force and other coercive means that the colonial administrators and

collaborate chiefs exploited African labour. But as the study of labour relations cannot be complete if it is one-sided, it is also important to look at the reactions of labour to capitalist exploitation. Thus, in the second section, a comparison of the reactions of African labour in the two countries under study is done. The reactions of labour will show whether the relation was actually exploitative in their own view or not. For a balance, the responses of capitalist coalition (led by the State) in form of interest mediation to the reaction of African labour in the two countries are also compared. Thereafter, a general conclusion is made.

Similar Patterns of Labour Relations in colonial Ghana and Uganda

Although labour policies were adjusted from time to time in the two countries as occasion demanded, all policies followed the same principles. The major principles that shaped labour policies in the two countries are cost-minimization, avoidance of proletarianization, keeping the supply of labour regular by all fowl means, avoidance of overt and direct involvement in the recruitment process, restriction of labour unions from political activities among others.

At the earliest stage, they made the policy that the chiefs should supply a particular quantity of labour. The labourers were not paid. As early as 1894, through the Trade Road Ordinance in Ghana, the chiefs were empowered to call upon their people for six days labour in each quarter.³ Unpaid communal labour was also used in Uganda until 1909 when the colonial state imposed *kasanvu* (paid compulsory labour).⁴ The *luwalo* (unpaid communal labour) was no more sufficient. The chiefs were still saddled with the responsibility of procuring the paid labourers. Recruitment of paid forced labourers in Ghana started earlier; that is 1907. But the *abusa* system, where the labourers received one-third share of the proceeds when the farm was harvested, was used as a remunerating method. Later the *nkotokuano* system where labourers received a fixed sum per load for all the cocoa he harvested for his employers⁵ was used. In both

countries, paid forced labour was abolished in 1922, and other laws encouraging voluntary wage labour followed. Here, the ordinances and laws mentioned above formed the foundational colonial labour policies in both countries. While it may not be necessary to name the various labour laws and policies initiated and implemented in the two countries for want of time and space, (and because they will still be discussed in section three), it is necessary to emphasize the principles governing all such policies.

The laws, in addition to the principles that we have already mentioned, tended to restrict the mobility of labour, set work periods, designed and meted out punitive measures to dissenting labourers, mediated when necessary between state and capital especially when their interests temporarily clashed, provided minimum 'protection' for the African labourers against employer's over-maltreatment, all in the bid to keep them available for exploitation. It has been noted that the central aim of any labour regime is to ensure that labour is kept compliant to an exploitable condition.⁶ This also means by implication that the division of labour between Africa and Europe that had crystallized by the 1930's as periphery-metropole was not to be tampered with. To achieve that, Africans were to be directed into one of two activities: production of cash crops for export (those few that could have access to land), or the sale of labour-power to employers (at a price determined by the employers).⁷

Forced labour was used in both countries. In Ghana, forced labour was used to work the mines. In Uganda, they worked in plantations. We must not limit forced labour to just labour coerced by state power. Labourers can be forced to work by push factors, that is, a set of factors relating to the living condition of the workers, political context and state coercion.⁸ Also, state coercion can be direct or indirect (through local chiefs). The use of forced labour in British colonial Africa was so rampant and so abused that it became necessary to enact a law in 1923 to restrict it⁹. Necessity and urgency however determined the direct involvement of the colonialists in labour recruitment. Official papers and formal pronouncements are hardly dependable for accessing the real

situation on ground at that time. During the World Wars, Africans were recruited directly by the colonial government into the British Army. Even when carrying out military campaigns against Africans to pacify them, African able-bodied men were conscripted into the British Army to fight.¹⁰ The official sanction against forced labour (actually directly recruited forced labour) in 1923 was done some years after the First World War. But when the Second World War erupted, the issue at stake became stronger than law, and once again African labour was recruited to fight on the British side.¹¹

In the area of recruitment, we notice similar patterns again in both Uganda and Ghana. The strategies used to recruit labour in both countries were mostly indirect in nature at the earlier period. In Ghana, the colonial administration saw loopholes in using African chiefs to procure forced labour and quickly used it.¹² The colonial rulers like Pilate washed their hands in the public as innocent rulers, but they were the ones that gave the death sentence of the thousands of Africans that eventually died working at the mines and the plantations. They 'encouraged' and supported the chiefs to supply labourers by any means available to them. The colonial officers did more than mere indirect involvement in influencing the African chiefs to procure the slaves. In Ghana, they got involved in labour campaign, touring districts and encouraging them to work, holding out elusive promises of huge cash, better life and more. They even took and brought make-believe pictures showing labourers at the mines 'before' and 'after' work to persuade the people to see prospects in selling out their labour power;¹³ but at the same time expected the African chiefs to mandatorily supply a given quota of labourers.

Later, realizing their own double standard, the colonial government in 1923, aptly advised by the Chief Commissioner A. Philbrick, decided to use the loophole well. They decided to leave recruiting of the labourers in the hands of the chiefs and to focus on assisting the recruitment process with only finance and 'introducing' recruiters to the African chiefs.¹⁴ This was a recourse to the use of mainly soft power. Actually, what

really informed the change was the fact that Britain abolished paid forced labour in most of her colonies in 1922. The new course was a way out of the 'restriction' official papers had imposed on them.

In Uganda, the involvement was even deeper. After getting the news of the plan to officially abolish *kasanva* (forced paid labour), the planters and expatriate commercial interests tried to persuade the colonial government to use more draconian state intervention measures to reap maximum fruit of the cheap paid forced labour. They suggested the use of passbook system for Africans, the creation of central registers for the *luwalo*, *kasanva* and contract labour performed by each African male, stimulation of inter-tribal rivalry to promote labour recruitment, prohibition of labourers leaving Uganda to work elsewhere, penalizing those Africans who had not completed a 30 day work ticket within 45 days by forfeiture of pay, introduction of salary for chiefs instead of tax rebates, enforcement of share-cropping by squatters on large European and African estates and the European supervision of the *luwalo*.¹⁵

These expatriates sought through these suggestions to be more indirectly involved in recruiting, by using all sorts of pull factors, and to be more directly involved in meting out discipline. Another indirect recruiting strategy used in both countries is taxation. Tax imposition was used to compel African labourers to offer themselves for work in order to get money to pay the tax. What the whips of the colonizers could not do was now easily accomplished with tax. Tax spurred even the 'slothful' ones into taking employment.¹⁶ The imposition of poll tax in outlying districts stimulated the flow of migrant labour to Buganda.¹⁷ When the planters complained that the African chiefs had the unfair advantage of misappropriating the *luwalol* labour for use in their personal estates (*bwesengezes*), the unpaid forced labour was commuted to tax. Apart from the obligatory tax, there was also the punitive tax – used as a punitive measure. Higher tax was levied on those who were self-employed as retail traders, and those who could not complete their wage labour during the year.¹⁸

During the building of the first railway in Ghana, the Sekondi Railway, imposition of tax by the colonial officers squeezed out the juice of Northern Ghana – a free flow of labour – to work at the construction site in order to make money to pay tax.¹⁹ In 1951 for example, the revenue generated in the colony, principally from taxes on the incomes of the people and companies was over thirty-four million pounds.²⁰ Other indirect strategies used to recruit African labour against his own will in the two countries included the deliberate under-development of some parts of the country in order to make such places labour reserve areas. In such places, cash-crop production was discouraged; means of communications were left undeveloped. Such ruralised places had to supply the labour needed at the centres of economic activity.

In Ghana, for example, the Northern territories supplied a larger bulk of the labour used at the Gold Coast.²¹ In Uganda, as early as 1906, migrant labour from Toro, Bunyoro and Ankole found themselves in Buganda, because their homes had been left underdeveloped and converted to labour reserves.²² In both Uganda and Ghana, migrant workers from outside the colony and protectorates came to offer themselves for work. Also relevant was the discouragement of industry and self-employment in form of large scale business in the two countries. While not totally barred, local industries were to be fostered under foreign ownership, and had to be focused on processing of raw materials for commerce, rather than for local consumption (in Uganda) and for extractive processes (in Ghana).

Also, Africans were restricted from going into large trading businesses by the cumbersome protocol of obtaining bank loans, land alienation especially in Uganda, among others. In Ghana, a way out was the pawning system and the less strict land rules. Even at that, the pawning system had its limits. Also, in Uganda, the 1932 Produce Marketing Ordinance stipulated stringent requirements for wholesale traders, and traders were to have permanent buildings.²³ In Ghana, the huge capital requirement for mining kept many Africans away. The colonial administrators used these strategies to

make sure that apart from being hindered from competing with European capitalists, Africans were available for labour service. Educational policies were also used to train people for white collar jobs in the two countries. Technical education was discouraged as that could upturn the centre-periphery order, by making the African workers stand on their own. Apart from that, uncensored education could upturn the colonial order.

All these were indirect means used by the colonial government to recruit workers. Economic liberalism was also a weapon used by Britain in the two colonies to indirectly recruit labour from outside the two countries. The policy of economic liberalism adopted by Britain in almost all her colonies stimulated a mass exodus of African workers from French territories to the nearby British territories including Gold Coast in Western Africa and Uganda in Eastern Africa. What worked in tandem with British liberal economic policy to facilitate the mass movement of African labour to British colonies was the harsh and protective economic policies in place in French colonies and protectorates. Whether planned or unplanned, all these were indirect ways through which the colonial officers recruited labour.

Now, a cursory look at the categories of people recruited to work for the colonial government in the two countries under study will further show the exploitative and inhumane nature that characterized colonial labour relations in colonial East and West Africa. One interesting but disturbing pattern of labour exploitation in these countries was the use of child labour. The International definition of child labour as given by the International Labour Organization is 'any economic activity performed by a person under the age of 15.'²⁴ The same body accepted that children of ages 13 or 12 may be acceptable for 'light work' which is not harmful, and which does not affect their school attendance.

In Ghana, children's rights were seriously abused, as many of them, even minors, were used to make up for the labour force the colonial government badly needed in Ghana.²⁵

Ghana had lots of resources to be exploited. To the colonial officers, the schools were sometimes seen as hiding places for those not willing to work and thus, the chiefs and commissioners teamed up to carefully select those children qualified to go to school.²⁶ By holding fast to the tradition that allowed only boys to go to school and girls to do the house chores, the colonial officers turned the female children to exploitable labour. That only boys were generally eligible for school did not mean that all the boys went to school. It only meant that those to be selected had to be from the male gender. One could only imagine how the muscular and healthy-looking ones would have been reserved for labour in the selection process. Thus, the selection process, was one stone used to kill two birds. It was not only a process of selecting children eligible for school, but also children 'eligible' for work. Children who had no flair for school ran into the waiting arms of colonial labour employers; some of them even came all the way from French territories of Mali, Niger, Benin and Togo.²⁷

In Uganda, although female child labour did not exist in pre-colonial era, and was not so pronounced in the colonial era, child labour was heavily exploited as in Ghana. In the ginneries, where cotton was processed, child labour was heavily relied on.²⁸ In Uganda, the children were subjected to very bad working conditions especially in the ginneries. The serious quest for labour made the colonial government and the capitalists to involve child labour in the plantations also. Thus, they were involved in both the processing and the extractive processes,²⁹ and all these of course, were energy-demanding works.

When the British Government made a law in 1940 to prohibit the employment of children under the age of twelve in any occupation, it still left a window of opportunity for itself and its collaborating capitalists by inserting a clause; "except the employment was with the child's own family."³⁰ Child labour survived many years still. In 1954, 36% of school children in Ghana were 'gainfully employed,'³¹ combining school and work.

In the two countries, the labour power of women was also exploited. In Uganda, although women labourers were used, they were more of migrant labourers.

In Ghana, women were also subtly manoeuvred to work for the colonial government. They were moved from the North down to the Gold Coast. The regulation of Employment Ordinance in 1921 provided among others that 'women in number up to 15% of the total may accompany the labourers.'³² What were they to accompany them for? A scholar has noted that the women provided 'care labour' for the men, which lowered daily costs of the men's labour as well as providing sex and meals to mitigate the depressing condition of work at the work places.³³ In other words, both their productive and reproductive labour power was used; the former to maintain existing labour, and the latter to produce future labour population.

Moreover, it is hard to see how the colonial government could have resisted the temptation of using women both to satisfy their sexual urges and their profit urge, and not involve them in any part of the mining work. We have seen that in addition to the able-bodied men, they used the labour power of minors, male children, female children, teenagers, even women – the categories of people that should have been spared from labour exploitation. Both the labour of women and children were also used and unpaid for at the domestic level, because they had to do the work that the able-bodied men left to work for the colonial government.³⁴

Using working condition to compare labour relations in the two regions, we see similar patterns again. The general working conditions were very poor. In the Ugandan cotton ginneries, the housing conditions were unhealthy. So were the sugar plantations.³⁵ Migrant labour faced the hardship of long journey on foot through the boring, narrow migrant routes, overcrowded and inadequate housing, poor health facilities and long hours of work. It is on record that even children sometimes worked for as long as twelve-hour shifts.³⁶ Simply put, working conditions were unsafe, as workers were

exposed to all kinds of diseases and on top of it all, the remuneration was poor. People had to do two jobs sometimes to survive. The workers were sometimes beaten, especially forced labour. The road between Tabora and Mwanza in Uganda became known as *ibalabalaiyamagongoie*, that is, the road of beating.³⁷

In Ghana too, the working condition was poor. There were unsatisfactory housing conditions, polluted and insufficient water supply, inadequate medical arrangement and high death rates. The death rates among mining labourers was very high and equally alarming.³⁸ There is no doubt that the colonial officers popularized wage labour in Africa, but added to the already bad condition of work, the wages were abysmally low. Employment for wages often meant worse accommodation and food. The minimum wage set by the colonial officers(150shillings per month) was not always adhered to; workers were paid below it especially in rural areas in Uganda.³⁹ Some places like Kinyara and Bunyoro still paid as low as 3.40 shillings and 3.25 shillings in 1971.⁴⁰ In Accra, Ghana, artisans and labourers formed a union in 1920 and threatened to call a strike if their demand for increased wages was not honoured.⁴¹

Differing Patterns in Labour Relation and Exploitations

In Uganda, land sale or transfer was not restricted. Colonial officers had taken over a good portion of the land and named it 'Crown Land' which practically belonged to the colonial government. Another portion was carved out as *mailo land*, to be held by the chief (kabaka) of Buganda in trust for the people. The chiefs also had personal estates allotted to them called the *bwezengeze*. Thus, the capitalist government (also representing the interest of European merchant capitalists) and the bourgeois African chiefs collaborated to take away almost all of Uganda's land, especially in Buganda. It was also agreed that wholesale alienation of land to foreigners was forbidden, especially in Buganda. If land was at all to be transferred to foreigners, it had to be with the approval of the colonial and traditional authorities. Africans were also not

allowed to use land as collateral. Although African chiefs employed labourers both in Uganda and Ghana, Ugandan chiefs employed more people than Ghanaian chiefs. The differing land ownership and transfer systems operated in the two countries as described above was responsible for this. In Uganda, the masses were left with little or no land. Migrant labourers and some Africans were thus employed by the African chiefs in their personal estates.

In contrast to Uganda, Ghana's land transfer system was loose and leisurely. Land was sellable in the Gold Coast and Southern Ghana. Only in Asante was land sale restricted, in the sense that land could only be leased out temporarily, not sold outright.⁴² Thus, there was a larger percentage of landowners in Ghana. The people that had access to land could not be available for labour service. African chiefs in Ghana did not have as much land as those in Uganda did, and so did not employ as much labour as they did. Ugandan chiefs exploited fellow Africans through the feudalistic labour relations they maintained with the labourers employed. Wealth from labour exploitation was more spread in Ghana than in Uganda where it was concentrated in the hands of chiefs and headmen. Another line of difference existed in the mode of indirect recruitment. Although chiefs were used to do the indirect recruitment in the two countries, recruitment agents were extensively used in Ghana. The miners sent out their agents to recruit labour.⁴³ One implication of this is that labour had to receive lower pay, since the employers had to pay agency fees.

Another interesting difference which is also related to mode of labour recruitment is the use made of 'labour campaign or crusade' in Ghana. To get more workers, the colonial officers used various means to 'campaign' workers to offer their labour power for money. Photographs of mining workers were taken and circulated. They were careful to take the workers 'before' and 'after' work when workers must have been in good condition. Some young men (who probably might have been paid to give a good report) were taken to visit the mines and come back to tell the others about the place. The

labourers that were thus cajoled to go and work in the mines eventually found out that they had been deceived. Many died of the influenza that broke out there, and the chiefs became reluctant about sending more people.⁴⁴ The reluctance of the chiefs reveal, if nothing else, that the condition under which the Africans worked was highly deplorable. The European capitalists had lied to them.

Another difference is the practice of pawning in Ghana which was not a common practice in Uganda.⁴⁵ While in Uganda, the high restriction on land transfer made it almost impossible for peasants to have and use personal lands as collateral in order to secure loan from money lenders to increase their own chances of being able to employ, land alienation through pawning of lands and houses in Ghana, provided room for some business men to access funds and increase their capability to employ. However, one disadvantage of the pawning system that developed in Ghana is that it gave way to bond labour there, which was however prohibited officially in 1908.⁴⁶ Wage labour replaced all forms of bond labour like human pawning, corvee, among others.

Again, the economic system in Uganda was more exploitative. Why this is so is not too difficult to see. There are external and internal reasons for this situation. While Ghana was purely a periphery in relation to Britain, Uganda was a 'peripherized periphery.' The British tariff system in East Africa accentuated for uneven development there, making some countries more dependent than others. This uneven pattern of development made Kenya for instance, the 'core', Uganda the 'semi-periphery' and Tanganyika the 'periphery.'⁴⁷We must not be confused, however, by such arbitrary appellations. It is clear that the real core or center was Britain. So, the real arrangement went this way: Britain the core or center, Kenya the periphery, Uganda the periphery of a periphery, and Tanganyika the periphery of a periphery under a periphery. While Uganda was a subsumed periphery, Tanganyika was a swallowed periphery.

Apart from the external factor, there was also an internal reason for higher exploitation in Uganda. The closed-door approach to land transfer edged out many from becoming land owners and competing with the few landed chiefs and aristocrats. Exploitation thrives in the soil of monopoly. The more-open land transfer system in Ghana reduced the level of exploitation there. In Ghana, some measures were put in place from time to time to check extreme exploitation. For instance, at a time, political officers had to interview the men being recruited for labour from the North to make sure that they were really going of their own volition.⁴⁸The use of labour campaign also discouraged the use of extreme force. This distinction notwithstanding, labour relation in the two countries was exploitative. The degree of exploitation is what differs, and that too depends on the yardstick of comparison.

Labour Reaction in Colonial East and West Africa Compared

Human labour power, being resident in humans who have feelings and sense of judgement, cannot just be exploited continuously without reactions. Humans can remain under the hurting boot of oppressors only for a while. So, Africans did not just capitulate to unrestrained and forceful exploitation of their labour power, they sought ways to resist. Some of the ways used to show resistance to labour exploitation are discussed below:

Africans were not so alarmed at first about the idea of working for the colonial government, especially at the road construction sites, since they were used to communal labour. But they soon found out that the white man's work arrangement was too gruelling, stressful and elongated with beatings they were rarely used to. And most importantly they found that the facilities built were used by the white man to carry away Africa's resources cheaply to England. They saw the need to resist this sheer exploitation of their labour power. They refused to come out to work. So outright refusal to work was one way they resisted exploitation. One other popular way they

resisted labour exploitation in the two countries was outright desertion. The workers left the mines and the plantations when they could and ran to unknown places where they felt they would not be compelled to offer free labour or cheap labour.⁴⁹

This desertion took the form of mass flight movement or individual disappearance. The choice to take to flight rather than fight was more of a choice meant to punish the colonizers and exploitative businessmen rather than the decision of the weak. They knew the mine and plantation owners badly needed their services. Another form of resistance was the recourse to strike or threat of strike actions. This is applicable both to Ghana and Uganda. In Ghana, there was the 1945 Rail and Meteorological Workers Strike. Also, in Uganda, workers in the District Administration went on strike to win an increase from 53 shillings to 73 shillings per month.⁵⁰ This was neither a fight nor a flight method but was rather a middle ground approach between the two. The strikes show that the workers had been pushed to the wall, and also showed that Africans were becoming more aware of their rights.

There were also threats of strike like the Artisans and Labourers Union in Accra, which threatened to call a strike if its demands for increased wages was not honoured.⁵¹ Although not a popular one, mobility between the modes of production was another resistance method. Sometimes, the people moved from farming to craftwork or from one industry to the other.⁵² Although the colonial administrators frowned at this practice and used all forms of strategies to make the people focus on cash crop production and other exchange goods, the people still found ways to move to more profitable works, especially when the orthodox work was not yielding enough profit.

Forming of associations was another method of resistance against oppressive labour policies. Although at the earlier stage African workers relied on the government to protect their rights, they had no strong unions. They soon borrowed leaf from the European merchants and started forming their own unions. For example, the Gold and

Silver Association was formed to protest against the Gold Mining Protection Ordinance of 1909.⁵³ One characteristic of British system of colonial administration is the 'accommodating' attitude displayed towards unionism unlike French and other colonies. It was however so allowed to avoid radical attitude to unionism. They allowed the unions to develop along a regulated course which spelt no danger for the colonial government. They opposed any union movement that toed any political line. Strike of workers involved in some essential services was declared illegal. And any colonial officer that went contrary to that 'official' blueprint of union formation received the boot from the home government in England.⁵⁴

Open campaign against colonial economic system in form of nationalism was another form of reaction against exploitative labour relations. One example of this mode of resistance is the use of print media to speak against exploitation. In November 1881, the Gold Coast Times urged its readers not to be passive onlookers at the foreigners taking away their lands to make them cheap labour materials, when the land belongs to the Africans.⁵⁵ Nationalist movements may have taken various shapes in various countries and regions of Africa, but Africa's historiography abundantly reveals that it was present in the whole of colonial Africa. The foregoing reveals that Africans were not passive and helpless onlookers who just submitted to exploitation of their labour power; and that the modes of resistance were essentially the same in the two regions under study.

State-Capitalist Response to African Labour Reactions Compared

The response of the capitalist coalition to labour resistance is also essentially the same in the two countries under study. Their response to African labourers' outright refusal to work was in two ways. First is the use of force, both directly and indirectly. They used tax policies to compel the Africans to work. The need to get money to pay tax and buy European goods brought out the Africans from their cocoons. They also made laws that

required that the people come out to work. Refusal to comply could lead to imprisonment.

Their response to desertion was the use of contracts to tie down labour. Labourers had to sign for a six-month or annual contract wage labour. This made desertion or disappearance difficult. Another strategy was the introduction of the Treasury Saving System. This system was used to compulsorily keep back a particular percentage of the worker's wages until the end of the contracting period. The money held back until the end of the contract was also used to hold the workers from fleeing. One other response to desertion was the use of laws or regulations to prohibit the action. The Regulation of Employment Ordinance of 1921 made desertion a penal offence.⁵⁶

Their response to strike action was not always the same. Sometimes they just ignored the striking workers. For instance, the Artisans and Labourers' Union strike which demanded for an increase in pay was ignored and their demand was refused by Guggisberg the then governor of Ghana.⁵⁷ Sometimes, however, the demands of the striking workers were met. For instance, the District Administration Workers' strikers' demand in Uganda was honoured with an increment in wages.⁵⁸

It must however be noted that the strike actions were not just about increment in wages; there were other factors that gave rise to strike actions. For instance, in 1924, there was a strike at the Ashanti Gold fields at Obuasi, in protest against the introduction of clocks to record working times by means of punched card.⁵⁹ The attempt of shifting between modes of production was not tolerated as that threatened the centre-periphery relationship between Europe and Africa that the colonial administrators tried by all means to maintain. Industry was discouraged. African labourers were tutored to maintain the role of cash crop producers for the development of the European economy or the selling of their labour power to their employers.⁶⁰ Their response to unionism has been pointed out already. Also, the response to nationalism was first sceptical, but later

as the international community gave their voice to it, the colonial administrators quickly prepared to retreat to their homes. At last, labour resistance won the day. This only shows that labour will always win the struggle between capitalists and the proletariats in a matter of time.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, it can be seen from the foregoing that apart from the few differences pointed out, colonial East and West Africa, represented by the two countries used as case study, had similar patterns of labour relations and exploitation. Colonial cum capitalist exploitation eventually gave birth to the proletarianization of African labour force. Interestingly, that proletariat overthrew the system that created it through nationalism as the colonized African countries clinched their independence. However, it soon became obvious that the victory of the proletariat was temporary as colonialism re-armed itself and continued to pull the strings through African leaders. Since then the struggle has continued.

However, the disturbing issue is not so much the exploitation of the Africans as the collaboration of African chiefs with the foreign colonial-capitalists coalition to carry on the exploitation of African labour. Roberts theory of articulation, which opines that African (pre-capitalist) modes of production were adapted and had the capitalist modes integrated into them to form the new mode of production,⁶¹ sounds truer when it is considered that African chiefs collaborated with the colonial administrators and capitalists to exploit African labour in the two countries studied. The synergy between the pre-capitalist [traditional] and capitalist [colonial] powers did not only give the duo a greater advantage over the African labour force, but also disarmed the latter as they saw the hand of the old in the new and felt no alarm at first. The state has a huge role to play in curbing the undue exploitation of the labour force and must consider that the

labour force is made up of the people or citizens it has pledged to serve. Better labour relation laws and practices should be adopted in African countries by the states.

The current mass migration of African workers to European and American countries to work, attracted by the prospects of greener pastures and better life is a new mode of labour exploitation. The only way for the state to curb this trend is to improve the lot of workers and provide better working conditions for them. Labour leaders must also continue to resist all forms of state oppression and exploitation. They cannot be passive in the strive for better working conditions for African labour.

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24. Mortein Boas and Anne Huser, "Child Labour and Cocoa Production in West Africa: The Case of Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana, Fufor Report 5 22, 2006
25. Children below the age of twelve years were employed in many occupations. It was so bad that the colonial government enacted a law, Ordinance 14 of 1940, prohibiting the employment of children under the age of twelve, except the employment involved the family. See De brennaLafa
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34. They also suffered other consequences. For example, in Uganda, some of the labour exporting areas suffered bad health due to malnutrition. The absence of male workers forced a switch of food crops to the less nutritious ones that could be easily cultivated. See Jan 113
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52. A. O. Britwun; For Uganda,Muganda landowner SopiriyaKadumukasa, applied for permission to erect a cotton ginnery on his own land, but his application was refused by the Cotton Control Board on the grounds that the ginning industry was already oversaturated (see Jan P. 154)
53. Kimbles; p. 44
54. A. O. Britwun. For example, J. S. Bradie was dismissed from Uganda for acting against 'official' trade union policy.
55. See A. O. Britwun
56. Kimbles; p. 42

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