MUEY C. SAETEURN

Expanding Their Frontiers: The Enriching Lives of Rural Kenyan Tea Estate Laborers in the Late-Colonial and Post-Independence Era

In 1966, at the age of twenty-three, Samuel Kipkurui Bor, became an employee at a Brooke Bond-owned tea plantation estate near his home village of Kapkatet located in present-day Kericho County west of the Kenyan Rift Valley.[1] Situated in the country's tea growing belt, Kapkatet is positioned not too far from a number of large-scale plantation estates primarily owned by multinationals such as Brooke Bond, a former subsidiary of Unilever, and James Finlay & Company, a UK-based conglomerate. Despite the grueling manual labor and demanding schedule, working for Brooke Bond was a boon for Bor who grew up poor and without a father. Since he had lost his father at a young age, any monetary income earned from odd jobs that he held throughout his adolescence, which included being a fieldhand for a neighbor and herding his uncle's cattle, along with his work at the tea estate as a young adult, not only went toward building his own social capital and economic wealth but towards supporting his mother especially as she aged.

His first job at the Brooke Bond estate required him to prune tea leaves and he earned a starting salary of 120/- a month, which was standard for adult agricultural manual contract laborers at the time.[2] In the span of six years, in 1972, Bor worked his way up to become a supervisor at the same tea estate and would take home a monthly salary of 170/-.[3] Although a modest increase in pay, Bor seemed to have enjoyed a relatively comfortable lifestyle, especially since the cost of living in Kenya in the years immediately following political independence in 1963 remained low. The price for a loaf of white bread, for example, increased slightly from .083/- in 1967 to .085/- in 1972.[4] Through his earned income Bor was able to assume the role and responsibilities of adulthood—he married in 1972, the same year he received his promotion, and thus became the head of his own household. He remained employed at the tea estate for forty years until his retirement in 2006.[5]

The monetary income provided by his employer was thus significant in helping Bor fulfill his familial obligations and in allowing him to establish his own household.

But it was not all that he was entitled to as a Brooke Bond employee. Working for the multinational tea firm also meant having access to resources and amenities that enabled him to improve not only his material condition but also allowed him to broaden the scope of his life in the countryside. Access to social halls whereby he could intermingle with co-workers from various ethnic communities from across the country and East Africa, opportunities to watch television and movies, and recreational activities that included competitive football games against other workers at nearby tea estates eventually became part of Bor's compensation package throughout the years.[6] These social amenities were in addition to the standard welfare provisions—housing, schooling, and health clinics—given to the employees who made their way onto the large-scale plantation estates that had developed into cosmopolitan company towns by the 1960s.

Along with their regular monthly salaries, the workplace amenities and its diverse environment were invaluable to employees like Bor. These benefits ultimately provided material goods and life experiences that were impactful long after their employment ended. Using oral histories conducted primarily with rural Kenyans who resided on the tea estates as unskilled manual laborers in the late-colonial period and early-independence era, along with colonial and business archival sources, this article shows how the plantation estates constituted more than exploitive and oppressive places for those individuals directly involved in the production of lucrative commodity crops for the global economy. A number of rural Kenyans who were part of the commodity chain at the local level were indeed engaging with the process and spread of capitalism that was unfolding throughout the global South in the mid-to-late twentieth century on their own terms. Put simply, rural Kenyan tea estate workers like Bor capitalized on their situation while they labored for capitalists.

By contending that rural Kenyans made the deliberate decision to work within rather than against the exploitative systems created by capitalists, this article builds on the substantial literature on labor and capital in the global South that proliferated in the 1970s and into the 1980s.[7] Influenced by dependency theory, labor historians of this era underscored in their works the exploitative nature of capital across time and space.[8] Discussions about sub-Saharan Africa's complex historical relationship with global capitalism, in other words, often centered on the ways in which foreign corporations exerted complete control over the lives and livelihoods of the local indigenous communities rather than on how African workers found ways to use capitalism even as it used them.

The close attention paid to multinationals, however, did not mean that the working class was completely ignored by Africanists at the time.[9] For Africanist historians who were interested in analyzing the lived experiences of workers, it was the "stabilization" and "development" policies championed by imperialists and capitalists in twentieth-century Africa that ultimately became the dominate lens through which they sought to illuminate the conditions of laborers on the ground.[10] Yet this fundamental literature on African labor stabilization primarily focused on the social and cultural dimensions of worker stabilization programming in southern African contexts at the exclusion of other regions across the continent.[11]

In recent decades, historians, particularly Africanists interested in economic history, have both nuanced and widened the scope of their narratives about labor as they returned to this subject of historical study since leaving it behind in the 1990s. The updated literature usefully explains labor transformations in Africa over time by privileging global perspectives and highlighting the experiences of unpaid and unfree workers, for example. Moreover, recent publications on the history of capitalism have offered important historical insights into the limitations of foreign investors in the context of Africa's turbulent decolonialization era and early-independence period.[12] This article, consequently, contributes to this rediscovery of African labor history by focusing on the ways in which motivated and ambitious rural Kenyans in the mid-twentieth century deliberately interacted with an economic system in which they were embedded not as passive victims but active agents. Further, it diversifies the debates about "labor stabilization" to include Kenya's tea industrialists who understood very well that they, like their counterparts in southern Africa, needed to provide housing, schools, and other social services to vital workers that had to be retained for their businesses to survive.

The renewed interest in the history of labor has also resulted in a robust scholarship on the history of commodities in the past few decades.[13] This growing body of literature has been produced largely by scholars and researchers with interdisciplinary backgrounds keen on drawing attention to the production, circulation, and consumption of global commodities through innovative research methods and updated theoretical concepts. Specifically, the scholarship has made the "commodity frontier"—a world-systems inspired concept developed by Jason W. Moore to emphasize the "interrelationships between the production [of a commodity] in one place, and the expansion of capitalist space in general"—as their unit of analysis.[14] Yet in focusing too closely on how the production and distribution of specific commodities resulted in the uneven rise of multinational capital in the periphery, this scholarship has often presented a commodity chain (or commodity frontier) void of economic actors who understood very well that the jobs they assumed on the fields and in factories came with more than monetary benefits. Often missing from this discussion is important talk about what participating in the commodity chain meant for local economic actors, especially when they relocated to the estates burdened with familial responsibilities and with high hopes for a brighter future. As this article maintains, ordinary rural Kenyans did go to work for the tea estates precisely *because* they offered practical benefits—housing, medical, and welfare amenities—they needed for upward mobility. Accordingly, a historical case study about rural Kenyan tea estate workers serves as a reminder that the global commodity chain is often made up of ambitious local people who had their own needs, desires, and expectations.

This article also builds on the recent work done by researchers who have sought to better understand the dynamics of commodity frontiers by paying closer attention to the direct experiences of those involved in the production and trade of commodities. This literature specifically foregrounds the hopes and struggles of participants who are situated in different nodes along the commodity chain.[15] The scholars of this recent aspect of commodity-chain research, in other words, have offered more textured analyses rooted in the local. This article, consequently, follows the local-centric path forged by contemporary researchers studying the histories of commodities. Thus, it contributes to both the literature that has sought to humanize the commodity chain and to the scholarship that has explored the desires and motivations of transitory laborers who have engaged in the process of global capitalism on their own terms.[16] By exploring the daily lives, work experiences, beliefs, horizons, and desires of tea estate workers, this article makes clear that for certain people producing cash crops on behalf of the capitalists/multinationals was not a zero-sum game.

Oral History as Method

Oral histories are a centerpiece of Africanist historical scholarship. Indeed, since the field of African history was founded in the 1960s, historians of Africa have made the case for the importance of oral sources particularly because very few societies in sub-Saharan Africa had written languages.[17] The work of Jan Vansina was instrumental in turning the generational memory of Africans into reliable sources for scholars to utilize and appreciate. Vansina's publications on the validity of oral traditions and his arguments for the use of spoken text, in particular, provided historians with valuable methods that continue to influence how many in the present go about constructing the African past.[18] Specifically, historians of modern Africa, influenced heavily by Vansina's work, have relied on the methodology of oral history as a means to provide a more comprehensive analysis of the past that takes into account the meaning of that past for those who experienced it. In so doing, they have been able to center Africans in the telling of their own history.

Life histories, a particular form of oral histories, have also become popular with Africanist scholars specializing in the colonial period and postcolonial era who are interested in writing "history from below."[19] Through conducting interviews, Africanist scholars have been able to bring to light the lived experiences of those individuals whose actions and stories were either underwhelming or unimportant for colonialists to document and thus to preserve. The official archives of the colonial state and, subsequently, the nation-state have therefore been insufficient and problematic for scholars interested in accessing the forgotten and ill-documented histories of marginalized actors. Further, because archives are also places where the process of erasure and the act of forgetting may occur, Africanist historians have looked to oral histories as a way to restore the names and experiences of ordinary people to the historical record. The practice of oral histories is therefore essential for Africanist scholars as it allows them to move beyond the limited source material housed in the national archives and local repositories.

Even if Africanist scholars have been able to elucidate the histories of those less powerful, some have remained cautious while others have argued for a more critical approach to the use of the oral history method.[20] Luise White's criticism about her own claims made in reference to the superiority of oral histories, for instance, serves as a reminder that even the most ardent proponents of the method can become disillusioned with it.[21] To be sure, no historical evidence is without its limitations and prejudices. Oral histories certainly produce problematic source material that have led to more questions than answers for the researcher. The interview process, as Lynn Schler has put forward, "is widely recognized as an encounter that can produce biases, distortions, and oversights."[22] The positionality of the interviewer, the motivations of the informants, the types of questions asked, and even the space in which the interview(s) occurs shapes the dynamics and outcome.

The oral history sources that are utilized throughout this article, for example, were not collected by the author but instead by another Africanist historian, Paul Ocobock, who shared the transcripts in the spring of 2021. The sources are thus limited in that I neither asked the questions I wanted the answers to, nor did I choose who was interviewed. Since Ocobock conducted the interviews for his book, *An Uncertain Age: The Politics of Manhood in Kenya*, all the participants were men who came from various ethnic communities throughout Kenya. The important experiences of women tea laborers are therefore missing from this article. The life histories used in this article were completed in 2008. Thus, the interviews took place in the immediate aftermath of the 2007 post-election violence, so the political situation was hanging in the air during the interviews but did not seem to factor too much into the conversations that were primarily focused on the interviewees' childhood and adolescence.

It is also important to note that the fieldnotes and interview transcripts I received from Ocobock allowed me to have a small glimpse into how the interview process played out from *his* unique perspective—privileged, white, male, and foreigner. The interviewees' answers and remarks to Ocobock's specific questions, namely about their time working on the tea estates, must therefore be read against the grain. It is reasonable to assume that some interviewees might have been circumspect with their responses because of the status of Ocobock and his research assistants who were young, educated, and male Kenyans (likely) from outside the ethnic communities in which they worked. The fact that I was not present during the actual interviews prevented me from fully comprehending the nuances and the hidden meanings behind the interviewees' responses. My own interpretations and analysis of the oral histories, in other words, is incomplete since I was only able to read rather than bear witness to how the interviewees revealed their past lives in real time.

Although there are methodological problems involved with utilizing oral histories, particularly life histories that were collected by another researcher, many historians continue to appreciate how the oral history method shifts the focus so that a "more realistic and fair reconstruction of the past" can be heard.[23] The insights and information gleaned as a result of Africanist scholars practicing the method of oral history certainly allows for more inclusive accounts of Africa's past to exist. Furthermore, despite Ocobock and I using the same source material, the information we wanted to glean from the interviews differed significantly—he was interested in how Kenyan boys became men while I have focused my attention on the types of lives the men had while employed on the tea estates as minors and young adults. Consequently, of the eighty life histories that were shared, I focus my analysis primarily on four individuals who worked on large-scale tea plantations in western Kenya during the late-colonial period and throughout the post-colonial era. These were the interviews with the most details about my subject matter. While limited, these oral sources offer great insights into the direct experiences of those involved in the production and trade of commodities and thus their central role in the building of world history.

Kenya's Tea Industry: A Brief Background

Agricultural commodities in general and tea exports in particular are a significant source of revenue for the Kenyan nation, particularly since the 1970s when the country surpassed Malawi to become the leading African producer and exporter of black tea.[24] In 1972, when Bor became the manager at his tea estate, the agricultural product as a percentage of Kenya's GDP was 30.8 percent.[25] The volume of tea exported during this period was also noteworthy as evidenced by a USDA economic report published in 1976. According to the agricultural report, Kenya had exported 51,472 metric tons of tea at a value of about $47.5 million in 1973.[26] This substantial figure made tea the nation's second highest valued export commodity following only by coffee.

The large production figures and milestones are impressive considering that Kenya's tea industry started modestly in 1925 even though European farmers had grown tea in the territory since 1903. It was in 1925 that Brooke Bond and James Finlay acquired a total of 328 acres of land in the districts of Kericho and Kiambu for the purpose of cultivating the tea plant, *Camellia sinensis,* on a commercial scale.[27] Officials from both Brooke Bond and James Finlay decided at this moment in time to expand their respective tea commercial enterprises beyond India and Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) into the sub-Saharan African continent, especially in Kenya, because of favorable global conditions that included the stabilization of the world market price for tea and a spike in consumer demand worldwide.[28]

Favorable environmental conditions and local government incentives also contributed to the multinationals' decisions to finance the development of tea production in Kenya. Kenya's climate was ideally suited for tea plant cultivation, particularly for the Assam plant variant that had thrived in central Kenya since two British settlers brought it into the region in 1903. More importantly, the local colonial government, which was desperate to attract capital in order to sustain itself, provided the tea manufacturers with large pieces of land in the coveted "White Highlands"—an area covering both sides of the Rift Valley comprised of arable land and that was, until 1960, reserved only for Europeans. The European-based tea firms were therefore able to acquire large pieces of valuable land from the Kenyan government on very generous terms that included 999-year leases.[29]

Under these favorable conditions, Brooke Bond and James Finlay began the process of commodifying the tea plant in the post-World War I era. Throughout the interwar period, the multinationals established large commercial farms across Kenya's highlands, especially in locations west of the Rift Valley that had the ideal climate and volcanic soils with a high content of organic matter needed for tea cultivation year-round. Although the expansion of Kenya's tea area was interrupted by the events of World War II, the industry did extremely well as the war dragged on and there were prolonged disruptions to global trade and supply chains. By the end of 1942, for example, Kenya's agriculture was in high demand when the war situation changed as a result of Japan's advancement and the entrance of the United States into the war.[30]

In the postwar era, the tea multinationals continued their expansion with the full backing of the late-colonial Kenyan government. In 1955, for example, two large-scale tea producers, the African Highlands Produce Company and the Kymulet Tea Company, both subsidiaries of the James Finlay and Company, increased their acreage size from 5,500 acres to 12,000 acres and from 5,000 acres to 8,000 acres, respectively.[31] The tea producers added to their acreage because Kenyan government officials who were intent on growing the nation's agrarian-based economy via commercial cash-crop farming were unwilling to further extend an international agreement to restrict tea growing in the country, which was first introduced in 1933 as a means to prevent a saturation of tea leaves in the world market.[32] This type of support on behalf of the late-colonial regime and, subsequently, the independent all-African government paved the way for Kenya to become the leading African producer and exporter of black tea by the late-twentieth-century.

Consequently, by the time that Bor was promoted to manager on the Brooke Bond owned tea estate in the early 1970s, Kenya's large-scale commercial tea producers devoted over a hundred thousand acres to tea cultivation with thousands of acres planned for future development.[33] The impressive growth of the tea industry in the postwar era was also the result of the multinational investments in processing facilities, nurseries, and a research center at Kericho. All these investments were dedicated to increasing the production of tea so that Kenya's large-scale commercial farmers would be able to meet the world demand for the stimulant.

Although the multinationals were responsible for a large portion of Kenya's successful tea industry, the late-colonial government also implemented important socio-economic policies that played a crucial role in growing and sustaining the billion-dollar tea industry in the decolonization period and early years of independence. As historians of modern Kenya have shown elsewhere, the government-sponsored agrarian development projects, specifically the African smallholder tea growing scheme, and the land redistribution programs of the late-1950s and 1960s were necessary in moving the nation economically and politically forward.[34] The late-colonial government, in particular, was compelled to address the plight of ordinary Kenyans as a result of the Mau Mau crisis.

The Mau Mau Emergency, which historians of Kenya have concluded was largely a civil war fought in the Central Province between land-rich Kenyans backed by the colonial government and land-poor Kenyans who were frustrated with their plight, had profound implications for ordinary Kenyans and capitalists.[35] By the time the local Kenyan government had officially declared the Mau Mau conflict to be over in 1960, the territory was racing toward political sovereignty from Britain, which officially occurred in December 1963.[36] Furthermore, by the dawn of political independence, ordinary rural Kenyans were keenly familiar with a number of agricultural development schemes that were supposed to achieve two important goals: namely, they were to improve their livelihoods *and* to maintain the nation's lucrative agricultural industries.

Brooke Bond Tea Company: A Dominant Force in Kenya's Economy

By the time Bor became a worker on a Brooke Bond tea estate in the late-1960s, Brooke Bond was operating more than twenty estates in and around Kericho with over 10,000 acres of land devoted to tea cultivation.[37] With this significant number of acres in Kericho under its authority, Brooke Bond was one of two large-scale manufactures, the other being James Finlay and Company, which dominated the center of the tea growing industry located 180 miles northwest of Nairobi towards Lake Victoria. In 1962, for example, large-scale growers across Kenya planted over 44,000 acres of tea stumps of which 24,000 acres were situated in Kericho making the region the biggest producer of tea leaves in the territory.[38]

Brooke Bond's dominance in Kericho was also compounded by the fact that the multinational held a number of tea estates across Kenya's "White Highlands." In the same year that the transfer of ownership of the White Highlands from the white settlers to African farmers began, in 1960, Brooke Bond had over two thousand acres of tea planted in Limuru. This region is on the eastern edge of the Rift Valley where two British settlers had planted the first Assam tea plant variant in 1903.[39] Along with its impressive acreage, the Brooke Bond company also sponsored a research station devoted to the study of tea, built the "tea hotel" that catered to tourists and expats, as well as developed a number of processing facilities and nurseries that eventually made it one of the leading producers and exporters of black tea in East Africa. Locally, ordinary Kenyans were well aware of Brook Bond's existence. The multinational's presence was especially felt by those individuals who made their way onto the Brooke Bond owned plantation estates in order to earn a cash income and to have the opportunity to gain access to important resources and experiences that served to enrich their lives as they remained in the countryside.

Tea Estates: A Practical Choice

Having spent much of his life surrounded by the rolling hills of green tea bushes, Bor's newfound employment at the estate in 1966 made sense for him even though he could have, as a newly-minted Kenyan citizen, freely traveled to urban centers like Nairobi and Mombasa to search for job opportunities that were not as strenuous as working on the land and that did not require one to work under a tight production schedule. The goal of securing wage-employment that had little to do with toiling on the land was indeed the motivating factor behind why many rural, young, and able-bodied Kenyans made their way to the overcrowded townships in the late-twentieth century. The exodus of young rural Kenyans into the townships was especially pronounced in the years immediately following political independence from Britain in 1963 when the inaugural all-African government, led by Jomo Kenyatta, sought to Kenyanize certain sectors of the economy. For example, the movement of Kenyans from rural areas to urban centers increased from 7.1 percent in the 1948 to 1962 period to 10.1 percent between 1962 and 1969.[40]

Despite this massive rural-to-urban migration happening around them, going to work for one of the many tea estates that surrounded Kapkatet was what a number of Bor's neighbors and his age-cohort that lived around this area had done since Kenya's tea industry came into existence in the mid-1920s. This was due to a few important factors. First, the recruiting of laborers for the tea plantations was often done directly within the rural areas and often by hired Africans whom the tea firms relied on to get the workers. Often the recruiters enlisted their relatives and neighbors from their home villages. As Paul Ocobock has shown elsewhere, hiring private professional recruiters paid dividends for the larger tea firms that were able to obtain cheaper labor, while extending their reach into African communities without any interference from District and labor officials.[41]

By the 1930s, recruiters were aided in their efforts by motor transportation, which they used to transport workers living both far and near to the estates in and around Kericho for seasonal work. This practice seemed to continue throughout the decades. Bor, for example, recalled that in the early-1970s "when the schools closed there was a vehicle which went around to collect the young children" to work at the Bureti Tea Company.[42] The employment of minors seemed to be a standard practice for tea firms going back to the 1920s, because they were able to offer child workers half of what adults were paid.[43] Moreover, minors were highly desired by employers who presumed that children were better suited to pick tea "because the dexterity and co-ordination of hand and eye comes more easily to a juvenile than an adult."[44] Despite the colonial government's attempt to regulate the employment of juveniles by passing a law in 1949 requiring parents to provide a certificate of consent for their child(ren) to work, a number of young laborers from places like Kapkatet seemed to have made their way onto the tea estates because of the recruiters. The proximity of the plantation estates to their homes in and around Kericho, consequently, meant that the local population was often co-opted by job recruiters who were relentless in their approaches to hire the necessary labor needed to maintain the production of tea.

Helping the recruiters with their effort was the fact that the locals understood very well that working at one of the nearby tea estates in the region was a convenient way to earn fast cash without having to embark on a long-term absence from their homestead and community. Joseph Kibelyon Korir, a former tea worker who was born in Kericho, made this point abundantly clear when he explained why he periodically worked for the tea estates throughout the years. "We were never interested in doing permanent work," he noted, "once the rains were back and we planted and the livestock were healthy we would forgot about it [work]…also when there was an urgent need to pay tax, then one would go there and work for say two months…after getting the money to pay the tax, he would walk away."[45]

The tea estates also appealed to rural Kenyans because non-agricultural jobs in the coveted townships were competitive. Since many people in Kapkatet were not formally educated, the highly competitive white-collar jobs that were vacated by European settlers in the independence era were simply out of reach for them. Even though certain ethnic communities, like the Kikuyu, took full advantage of the basic educational training provided by missionaries and the Kenyan government during the colonial era, there were communities that remained resilient and thus reluctant to accept that their children would be educated in the ways of the *wazungu* (white people). It was also easier to keep children home rather than send them off to far away mission stations and government schools that required fees.[46] For these communities, many of whom lived along the tea growing belt, finding work off the land was a difficult and, for some, a seemingly worthless pursuit.

Finally, for young people like Bor and Korir, leaving the homestead for extended periods of time was not feasible because they had familial responsibilities that required them to remain closer to home.[47] Helping to make sure that the family's limited land

and precious livestock were properly attended to were important obligations that fell on the shoulders of young rural Kenyans. It was especially burdensome for those individuals living in a single-parent female household. Thus, the tea industry was (and continues to be) a leading employer in places like Kapkatet, which historically has been home to the Kipsigis ethnic group, a sub-group of the Kalenjin community. Poor young Kipsigis men like Bor who neither owned cattle nor had any real claim to land, both of which were crucial for wealth generation amongst the agropastoral Kalenjin people, made the short trip from their homes to work on one of the local tea estates in order to build a life for themselves.[48]

More than a Paycheck: Tea Estate Offerings

Once they relocated to the multinational tea estates for work, Bor and his peers were entitled to important provisions like housing, health facilities, and food rations that were fundamental in helping them save and thus accumulate their social and economic wealth. While working on a tea plantation was certainly a tiring job for both the old and young, poor rural Kenyans still flocked to the estates in search of opportunities. In so doing, they not only gained access to resources that improved their material condition but that also enhanced their life experiences as they remained in the countryside.

Daniel Langat, who was born and raised in the neighboring village of Kabiagna, was one of the young worker recruits who was able to use the majority of his salary earned at a tea estate to improve his lot back at home because his basic needs were covered by his employer. In 1946, Langat moved to the Chamji tea estate for work following his father's death and when "life became unbearable back at home."[49] At the Chamji tea estate, Langat worked alongside his older brother who was also recruited at the same time. As an unskilled young laborer, Langat recalled that he did menial jobs that mostly involved building shades to cover the planted tea seedlings. Langat does not provide any details in his interview as to why he was given this particular task over that of plucking tea leaves, which would have been the typical work done by juveniles like him who were considered by their employers as better suited for picking the tea leaf buds given their small fingers. It was likely the case that the estate already had enough tea pickers on hand and thus Langat spent his time not harvesting tea leaves but completing other necessary tasks to ensure the production continued. For his work, Langat received weekly food rations, attended school on site, and lived in company-owned housing—a mud house with grass thatch roof. These provisions were in addition to his monthly salary of 5/-.[50]

It is not known for how long Langat actually worked for Chamji because it is not covered in the interview transcripts. Irrespective of the length of time, however, working on the estate seemed to be a significant experience for Langat who recalled how his family's material conditions improved because of both his and his brother's monetary contributions to the household income. Similar to Bor, Langat had lost his father at a young age—when he was thirteen years-old—so his modest salary went to his mother who saved and would "later buy goats" to raise and eventually sell for cattle, which was the form of local currency needed for upward mobility. This arrangement between mother and sons had profound implications for the household. "Our living standards improved," remembered Langat, "because there was milk to sell apart from livestock." The family's upgraded status was made possible likely because, according to Langat, "there was enough food" on the estate and so, presumably, he did not need to spend his salary on eating while working.[51] His income was therefore used for important matters back at home. Living and working on the tea estates, in other words, was advantageous for Langat (and his family).

Image 1: Tea Estates, Circa 1940s. Source: "From Photographs, 20th century. Records of James Finlay & Co, administrative records." Courtesy of University of Glasgow Archive Services. GB 248 UGD 091/1/12/16/11.

Similarly, Kimeli Too also found working on a tea estate to be useful in the long run. Because they were neighbors, Too was employed at the same tea estate as Langat during the late-1940s. As the only son in his family, Too went to work at Chamji tea estate because of the "hardship at home" and his desire to "work and earn some money."[52] It is unclear when exactly Too relocated from his village to the Chamji tea estate, but he and Langat seemed to have been co-workers, so it was likely that he was also recruited for work around 1946. Too's duties, however, did not include building sheds but instead carrying sacks filled with harvested tea leaves that were picked by other workers to the drying yard. Even though he was "happy working there [at Chamji]," Too's tenure on the estate ended in 1953 when he went to work as a kitchen hand for a settler family in Kericho.[53] By 1958, Too had returned to Kabianga where he worked for a farm and tended the cattle that his father had helped him purchase using his earnings, especially the money he made while working on the tea estate. Like Langat, Too was able to save a significant portion of his monthly 5/- salary because his basic needs, which included weekly food rations consisting of “maize flour, beans, and salt,” were met by his employer.[54] The tea estates, in short, provided ordinary rural Kenyans like Bor, Langat, and Too with the types of practical benefits that were essential for them to have in place so that they could start building a better life for themselves and their families.

These fringe benefits in fact were commonplace by the 1950s and were even required of the plantation estate owners across Kenya who dominated the production of lucrative commodity crops such as tea, coffee, pyrethrum, among others. The requirement that the employers had to ensure their laborers had access to basic welfare amenities was due in large part to the reality that Kenya’s large-scale tea manufactures, like many others in the agrarian sector, were desperate to not only recruit but to retain laborers on their farms in order to maintain their businesses. While anxieties over labor shortages have plagued Kenya’s tea industry since its inception in the 1920s, the labor problem was especially acute in the 1950s following the political and social upheaval the former British colony experienced due to the anti-colonial fervor sweeping across Asia, the Middle East, and Africa in the second half of the twentieth century.

For example, industry executives and Kenyan government officials in 1952 estimated that “the tea industry’s acreage by 1957 would be 37,000 acres, and its labour requirements [were] 45,000 units.”[55] The number of tea plantation fieldworkers in 1956 was far below this required amount due to the Mau Mau rebellion and, more realistically, because the tea firms’ attempts to recruit local Kenyan laborers to be permanent tea farm workers had been unsuccessful.[56] The loss of field laborers, even for a short period of time, was especially problematic for tea estate owners because they were growing a crop that required year-round maintenance. A reliable workforce was needed to pluck, crush, shred, and package tea leaves for demanding world markets.

Accordingly, the tea industry had no real alternative but to provide more than a paycheck to its workers. Providing basic provisions like food and housing, along with investing in welfare amenities like schools and social halls, were necessary expenditures that the tea producers had to absorb if it were to have a steady workforce. In outlining the costs associated with operating a tea estate in Kericho, a late-colonial Kenyan official specified that tea estate owners not only were responsible for the wages outlined in the workers’ contracts but that they ought to provide a standard of living on the tea estates that were likely unparalleled to what the laborers had known.

> *Tea estates pay the wages laid down by the K.T.G.A. (Kenya Tea Growers Association) and provide similar ration scales, costs of running an estate appear to vary considerably depending upon the method of accountancy*

used by the particular company and estate…costs must include a proportion of a) free housing supplies b) medical attention and hospitals c) schooling d) welfare, including adult classes and social activities, such as the provision of cinemas, papers, and social halls e) free fuel and water f) free transport to and from the reserves g) 15 days of paid leave h) free uniforms and capes.[57]

As the above passage makes clear, the expenditures associated with running a tea estate were significant and expensive. It was, therefore, likely that a number of employers failed to (or simply ignored) the guidelines noted by the colonial officials. Several tea estate inspection reports conducted in the 1960s suggest that some of the tea firms were indeed not able to adequately provide their employees with even the basic provisions and, when they were provided, often the amenities in the company towns were insufficient. The Managing Director of the Buret Tea Company, for example, was cited by the Labor Officer in Kericho, A.W. Baraza, for the abysmal conditions found at Chomogo and Chemosit estates both of which were owned by the mid-sized tea producing firm. Baraza reported that workers' quarters were "badly in need of repair," and he even enclosed a copy of the employment (sanitation) rules for the Managing Director because "sanitation at these camps," he wrote, "left much to be desired."[58]

While the inspection reports illuminated the subpar amenities and facilities found at certain tea estates, examined in another way, they can also show how tea estates were opportunistic and convenient places of employment for workers who had little in the way of a safety net. The reports essentially revealed that the housing, medical, and welfare amenities actually existed and, more importantly, that they were in use by the workers on site. The 1965 inspection report for the Kymulot estate located in Kericho and owned by the African Highlands Produce Co., a subsidiary of James Finlay, for example, noted that "855 working men plus 224 dependents" resided in one of the "10 camps" maintained by the estate.[59] Along with the housing, workers and their families at Kymulot had free access to the estate's "one primary school up to standard IV managed by the D.E.B. and two football grounds."[60] Similarly, the 1966 inspection report for Kitoi estate, also located in Kericho but owned by Kenya Tea Company, mentioned that there was "an estate dispensary manned by a qualified dresser" and that the 360 employees enjoyed welfare amenities like "a social hall, wireless set, a canteen from which beer is sold, [and] a school up to std. VII."[61]

Although the information about the condition of the facilities and services at Kymulot and Kitoi were minimal and there is no indication of the actual number of people who used the amenities, the inspection reports still offer important details about the types of resources ordinary Kenyans could often take advantage of in the hopes of enrichening their lives as tea laborers. The amenities outlined in the inspection reports were indeed what former tea plantation workers underscored when they discussed their time on the estates. Langat, for instance, revealed that he attended the Chamji tea estate's primary school and thus took advantage of his time on the estate to continue his educational pursuits. "I went up to standard III," he recalled.[62] This accomplishment most certainly would not have made Langat eligible for any of the white-collar job positions in the townships, but it likely helped him to learn to read and thus better understand the world around him.

In addition to detailing the amenities workers had at their disposal, the inspection reports support the recollections of the former laborers which suggest that the estates were multi-ethnic places where people engaged regularly with individuals who were outside of their communities. Since the agricultural sector in general and the tea industry in particular had been desperate for (cheap) laborers since its inception, employers did not seem to have limited their estates to a particular ethnic community. The tea estates were therefore reasonably diverse in terms of ethnicity. In the inspection reports noted above, particularly for the Kymulot and Kitoi estates, it was clear that the company towns were home to various groups of people within and outside of Kenya.

For instance, the 1,104 employees on the Kymulot estate in 1965 were listed as coming from eight different ethnic communities. The ethnic breakdown of Kymulot employees included groups who lived in close proximity to the estate like the Kipsigis and Kisii and even those individuals who identified as coming from as far as the Belgian Congo mandated territory of Ruanda-Urundi.[63] A much smaller operation in comparison to Kymulot, the Kitoi estate in 1966 was comprised of 360 employees whom the labor inspector identified as being from four Kenyan ethnic groups: the Luo, Kipsigis, Kisii, and Kikuyu.[64]

Even though the reports do not provide the specific figures for each community listed, they do point to how the labor force was usually made up of the local communities surrounding the tea estates. Where the tea estate was located, in other words, was indicative of which ethnic communities were to be found on site. This observation was also made by Langat and Too who remembered that the Chamji tea estate had a large number of Kipsigis employees because it was located in Kericho district which historically has been inhabited mainly by this community.[65] A 1955 notice from the Labor Office in Kericho also underscores the point that those who worked on the tea estates were primarily local. The Luo, Kisii, and Kipsigis were listed on the notice as being the top three communities employed in the tea industry in Nyanza Province—a region that was predominately home to these ethnic groups. 10,062 Luos, 8,214 Kisii, and 4,204 Kipsigis were known to colonial authorities to be officially employed on the large-scale tea estates across the region at this time.[66] The reality that the tea industry was dominated by the local communities in which the estates were built does not negate the argument that these were diverse workplaces where ordinary rural Kenyans could expand their understanding of the people who were outside of their villages. Rather, the opposite.

For individuals like Lazarus arap Bor, the brother of Samuel Kipkurui Bor, working on the tea estates ultimately shaped the way he perceived people off the estates, especially those individuals who were from outside his community and thus were not Kipsigis. Like his brother, arap Bor also worked for Brooke Bond in the late-1960s though it does not seem that his role on the tea estate changed during the six years of his employment.[67] This was likely because he had struggled with an underlying health problem that often made it difficult for him to perform his work beyond a satisfactory manner. On the estate, his duties consisted mainly of picking and pruning tea leaves. It was while he was completing these particular tasks that arap Bor interacted with "many people" whom he would not have engaged with back in his village. His direct mangers, for example, were Luos and Kisii men whom he described as "very harsh."[68] While arap Bor did not elaborate on why his mangers were "harsh," it was likely that the supervisors were on tight production schedules and thus found themselves having to apply strict measures to ensure that their workers, particularly the leaf pickers, were meeting the quotas set for the day. The fact that arap Bor's health issues often caused him to work slower probably made him a target for his bosses and thereby colored his experiences with them. His interactions with his managers, however, did not diminish his admiration for his Luo co-workers whom he described as "organizing everything [because] they are the best organizers."[69]

The fondness arap Bor felt for his co-workers likely grew out of the shared experiences they managed to have while they were not busy picking tea leaves. His estate, for example, had a football team that was managed by an assistant manager. Rather than have teams comprised of the various ethnic communities, the estate had one team that would "play against other estates." This sport activity no doubt created opportunities for people to develop friendships and alliances off the field. The social hall on the estate also offered arap Bor the chance to mingle with others as he recalled there were "a lot of games" that were taking place at the venue.[70] During arap Bor's time, no alcohol was sold on site, but this would change in the 1980s, according to Samuel who was still working at the estate as a manger by then.[71] The ban on alcohol consumption probably helped to keep some of the problems and tensions between individuals and groups from escalating. Indeed, arap Bor and his brother maintain that their co-workers "were friendly" and there were no fights during their time on the tea estate, at least not any that they could remember or cared to disclose.[72]

Being in this cordial environment, however, did not mean that arap Bor and his co-workers refrained from gossiping about one another. Because tea estates were made up of people from various locations who often neither spoke the same language nor held similar cultural beliefs, they were arenas in which rumors ran wild and stereotypes went unchecked. The talk of certain ethnic communities on the estate practicing witchcraft on their enemies, for example, was a popular rumor that arap Bor vividly recalled in his interview. "It [witchcraft] was rampant, especially among the Alego and Ugenya clans of the Luo," he remembered, "you'd find somebody dying unexpectedly, just abruptly without being sick [or] someone who just went home and left the job."[73] Tales of witchcraft were among the many rumors that undoubtedly circulated throughout the estate and that certainly made an indelible impression on those who heard them. Over forty-years later, during his interview in 2008, for instance, arap Bor insisted that witchcraft was still practiced by these same groups of people because "it is in their nature."[74] While arap Bor's remarks are highly problematic (and even offensive), they are suggestive of how much his time on the tea estate continued to influence the way he understood others (both positively and negatively), particularly the Luos, long after he left the job. Working on the tea estates, in other words, had profound implications for individuals like arap Bor who had access to resources that ultimately resulted in them having improved material conditions and lasting life experiences.

Conclusion

The intensification of commodity agriculture throughout the twentieth century in former colonial territories like Kenya created vast spatial, social, economic, and cultural changes for local actors living within the commodity frontiers of the global South in regions across Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, and South Asia. Specifically, the cultivation and production of the *Camellia sinensis* plant into tea by the multinationals had profound implications for rural Africans' livelihoods and worldviews. Indeed, as the life histories of former tea plantation workers demonstrate, by the second half of the twentieth century, Kenya's large-scale tea estates were arenas in which a number of rural ordinary Africans not only participated in the making of a single global capitalist system but also became venues in which workers obtained crucial material resources and meaningful experiences that continued to shape their lives long after they left the grounds of the estate.

The premise that ordinary rural Kenyans were deliberate agents, rather than passive victims, who built material and social wealth from their involvement with capitalists not only builds on the historiography about capitalism in the global South, but it also invites world history instructors and students to be more nuanced in their interpretations about the subject matter. Specifically, because it focuses on the lived experiences of tea plantation laborers, this article provides world history teachers with a unique micro-study about the industrial complex process that was unfolding across sub-Saharan Africa during the late twentieth century. It also helps us understand Kenya as part of the multi-century, global, plantation complex begun by western European empires and continued in post-colonial nation states. An examination into the multiple ways in which unskilled Kenyan laborers benefited from their engagement with multinationals, in other words, offers us a glimpse into the "on the ground" realities of the individuals most impacted by major historical events and processes like colonialism and capitalism.

Muey Saeteurn is an Associate Professor of African History in the History and Critical Race and Ethnic Studies Department at the University of California, Merced, specializing in the history of decolonization, nation-building, socio-economic development, and agrarian change in twentieth century Kenya and the world. The thread that runs through her research and courses she teaches concerns the ways in which rural African women and men shaped large-scale historical processes while positioning themselves as central actors in the making of the modern globalized world. Her research has appeared in the *Journal of African History*. Her first book, *Cultivating Their Own: Agriculture in Western Kenya During the "Development" Era*, was published in 2020 with the Rochester Studies in African History and the Diaspora series at the University of Rochester Press. Muey Saeteurn can be reached at: msaeteurn3@ucmerced.edu.

Notes

[1] Samuel Kipkurui Bor, interview by Paul Ocobock and Henry Adera, Kapkatet, Bomet, 11 June 2008. This and all subsequent interview transcripts are in the personal possession of Paul Ocobock.

[2] Ibid; "Annual Report, 1964," *Ministry of Labour/And Social Services*, Republic of Kenya, Nairobi: Government Print, 1967, 34-37, From Institute of Development Studies Archives, *Ministry of Labor Kenya Annual Report Box*, accessed 4 June 2018.

[3] Bor, interview.

[4] "Statistical Abstract, 1974, Kenya, U.S. agricultural attache, Nairobi," in *Agricultural Development in Kenya Since 1967,* Lawrence Witucki, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.: Economic Research Service, July 1976, 12, From USDA Archives, *USDA/FAER-123*, accessed 1 December 2021.

[5] Bor, interview.

[6] Ibid.

[7] A.G. Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa* (London: Longman,1973); Edward Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves: Changing Patterns of International Trade in East Central Africa to the Late Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975); B.J. Berman and J.M. Lonsdale, "Crisis of Accumulation, Coercion and the Colonial State: The Development of the Labor Control System in Kenya, 1919–1929," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 14, 1 (1980), 55–81; Leroy Vail and Landeg White, *Capitalism and Colonialism in Mozambique: A Study of Quelimane District* (London: Heinemann, 1980); Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Viking, 1985); Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System* (San Diego: Academic Press, 1989).

[8]Alice Amsden, *International Firms and Labour in Kenya, 1945-70* (London: Routledge, 1971); Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1974); Colin Leys, *Underdevelopment in Kenya: The Political Economy of Neo-Colonialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975); David K. Fieldhouse, *Unilever Overseas: The Anatomy of a Multinational 1895*-1965 (Stanford: Hoover Institute Press, 1978); Nicola Swainson, *The Development of Corporate Capitalism in Kenya, 1918–1977* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); Steven W. Langdon, *Multinational Corporations in the Political Economy at Kenya* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981); William Beinart, "Transkeian Migrant Workers and Youth Labour on the Natal Sugar Estates 1918-1948," *The Journal of African History* 32, no. 1 (March 1991): 41-63.

[9] Sara Berry, *Cocoa, Custom, and Socio-Economic Change in Rural Western Nigeria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975); Bill Freund, "Labor and Labor History in Africa: A Review of the Literature," *African Studies Review* 27, 2 (June 1984); Luise White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Beinart, "Transkeian Migrant Workers and Youth Labour on the Natal Sugar Estates, 1918–1948," 41–63.

[10] Jane L. Parpart, *Labor and Capital on the African Copperbelt* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983); John Higginson, *A Working Class in the Making: Belgian Colonial Labor Policy, Private Enterprise, and the African Mineworker, 1907-1951* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989); Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and Africa Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[11] Duncan Clarke, *Contract Workers and Underdevelopment in Rhodesia* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1977); Thaddeus Sunseri, "Labour Migration in Colonial Tanzania and the Hegemony of South Africa Historiography," *African Affairs* 95, 381 (October 1996), 581–598; Ulrike Lindner, "Transnational Movements Between Colonial Empires: Migrant Workers from the British Cape Colony in the German Diamond Town of Lüderitzbucht," *European Review of History* 16, 5 (October 2009), 679-695; Philip Booner, Jonathan Hyslop and Lucien Van Der Walt, "Rethinking Worlds of Labour: Southern African Labour History in International Context," *African Studies* 66, 2–3 (December 2010), 137–167; Francis Musoni, "The Ban on 'Tropical Natives' and the Promotion of Illegal Migration in Pre-Apartheid South Africa," *African Studies Review* 6, 3 (2018), 156–177; Henry Dee, "Central African Immigrants, Imperial Citizenship and the Politics of Free Movement in Interwar South Africa," *Journal of South African Studies* 46, 2 (2020), 319–337.

[12] Frederick Cooper, "African Labor History," in *Global Labour History: A State of Art,* ed. Jan Lucassen (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008), 91–116; Todd Cleveland, *Diamonds in the Rough: Corporate Paternalism and African Professionalism on the Mines of Colonial Angola, 1917-1975* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2015); Jason W. Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and The Accumulation of Capital* (New York: Verso, 2015); Frederick Cooper, *Africa in the World: Capitalism, Empire, and Nation-State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014); Zachary Kagan Guthrie, "Histories of Mobility, Histories of Labour, Histories of Africa," *African Economic History* 44, (2016), 1–18; Gareth Austin, "Capitalists and Labour in Africa," in *General Labour History of Africa: Workers, Employers and Governments, 20th-21st Centuries*, Stefan Bellucci and Andreas Eckert, eds., (Rochester: Boydell & Brewer, 2019).

[13] Sven Van Melkebeke, *Dissimilar Coffee Frontiers: Mobilizing Labor and Land in the Lake Kivu Region, Congo and Rwanda (1918-1960/62)* (Boston: Brill, 2020); Tycho van der Hoog, *Breweries, Politics and Identity: The History Behind Namibian Beer* (Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2019); Erika Rappaport, *A Thirst for Empire: How Tea Shaped the Modern World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019); Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (London: Vintage, 2015).

[14] Jason W. More, "Sugar and the expansion of the Early Modern world-economy: commodity frontiers, ecological transformation, and industrialization," *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 23 (2010): 410-411.

[15] *Commodity Frontiers*, which is the journal for the Commodity Frontiers Initiative created by Eric Vanhaute, Ulbe Bosma and Sven Beckert, is a recent example of scholars' growing and continued interest on commodities; Jonathan Curry-Machado, ed., *Global Histories, Imperial Commodities, Local Interactions* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

[16] Megan A. Styles, *Roses From Kenya: Labor, Environment, and the Global Trade in Cut Flowers* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019); Michiel de Haas, "Moving Beyond Colonial Control? Economic Forces and Shifting Migration From Ruanda-Urundi to Buganda, 1920-60," *The Journal of African History* 60, no. 3 (2019):379-406; Gabriela Soto Laveage, *Jungle Laboratories: Mexican Peasants, National Projects, and the Making of the Pill* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); Thaddeous Sunseri, *Vilimani: Labor Migration and Rural Change in Early Colonial Tanzania 1884-1915* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2002); Sharon Stichter, *Migrant Labour in Kenya: Capitalism and African Responses, 1895-1975* (London: Longman Group, Ltd., 1982).

[17] David Henige, "Oral Traditions as a Means of Reconstructing the Past" in *Writing African History* (Rochester: Rochester University Press, 2005); Luise White, Stephan F. Miescher, and David William Cohen, eds., *African Words, African Voices: Critical Practices in Oral History* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001).

[18] Jan Vansina, *Oral Traditions: A Study in Historical Methodology* (Chicago: Aldine Publication Company, 1965).

[19] Stephan F. Miescher, *A Dam for Africa: Akosombo Stories from Ghana* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, forthcoming June 2022); Rachel Jean-Baptiste, *Conjugal Rights: Marriage, Sexuality, and Urban Life in Colonial Libreville, Gabon* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014); Kenda Mutongi, *Worries of the Heart: Widows, Family, and Community in Kenya* (Chicago University Press, 2007); Luise White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

[20] Belinda Bozzoli and Mmantho Nkotsoe, *Women of Phokeng: Consciousness, Life Strategy, and Migrancy in South Africa, 1900-1983* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1991).

[21] Luise White, "True Confessions," *Journal of Women's History* 15, no. 4 (Winter 2004), 144.

[22] Lynn Schler, "Space as Testimony: Collecting Oral Histories Among Nigerian Seamen," *Oral History Review 46,* no. 2 (Summer/Fall 2019), 324.

[23] Paul Thompson, "The Voice of the Past: Oral History," in *The Oral History Reader* 3rd edition, eds, Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (New York: Routledge), 36.

[24] International Tea Committee, *World Tea Statistics: 1910-1990* (London: International Tea Committee, 1996).

[25] "Statistical Abstract, 1974, Kenya, U.S. agricultural attaché, Nairobi," in *Agricultural Development in Kenya Since 1967,* Lawrence Witucki, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.: Economic Research Service, July 1976, 5, From USDA Archives, *USDA/FAER-123,* accessed 1 December 2021.

[26] Ibid, 5.

[27] "Thriving Tea Industry," *Times*, 3 June 1960, 20, The Times Digital Archives, accessed February 3, 2021.

[28] "A General Picture of East Africa," *The Tea Chest: Brooke Bond House Magazine*, Vol. 6, (Summer 1956): 23.

[29] "Council of Ministers: Grant of Land to Messrs. Brooke Bond East Africa Limited, 2 December 1957," From National Archives at Kew, England, CO/822/1397: Grants of Land to Leasers Brooke Bond, East Africa Limited, accessed June 2018; "Land Titles, 19 July 1963" From University of Glasgow Scottish Business Archives, Scotland, UGD 91/37/3/1: African Highlands Issues.

[30] David Anderson and David Throup, "Africans and Agricultural Production in Colonial Kenya: The Myth of the War as a Watershed," *The Journal of African History 26,* no. 4 (1985), 335; Erika Rappaport, "Hot Drinks Mean Much in the Jungle: Tea in the Service of War," in *A Thirst for Empire: How Tea Shaped the Modern World* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2017), 305-332.

[31] "Kenya to Grow More Tea," *Times*, 25 August 1955, 7, The Times Digital Archive, accessed February 3, 2021.

[32] "The Agricultural Ordinance, 1955 (No. 8 of 1955)," From Kenya National Archives, ACW/26/54: Development of Tea Growing and Tea Factories in Africa Areas, accessed May 2016.

[33] C.R. Harler, "The Tea Industry in Africa," in *Notes on Tea Estates in* Africa, Wilson, Smithett and Company (London: T. Skinner & Co., 1954), 16-22.

[34] Kara Moskowitz, *Seeing Like A Citizen: Decolonization, Development, and the Making of Kenya, 1945-1980* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2019); Daniel Branch, *Between Hope and Despair, 1963-2011* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

[35] David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: The Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005), 119-181.

[36] Ibid.

[37] T. Eden, "The Tea Industry in Eastern Africa," *Tea Estates in Africa*, (London: Mabey & Fitzclarence, 1966), 29-36.

[38] Tea Board of Kenya, "Licenses and Acres, 1962," Ministry of Agriculture, Nairobi: Kenya, 1962, From Kenya National Archives, DC/KMG/2/2/63: Tea Minutes and Meetings, accessed May 2016.

[39] Eden, "The Tea Industry in Eastern Africa," 35.

[40] Irving Kaplan, *Area Handbook for Kenya* (Washington, D.C.; U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976), 77.

[41] Paul Ocobok, *An Uncertain Age: The Politics of Manhood in Kenya* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2017), 68-69.

[42] Bor, interview.

[43] Sally Jemngietich Kosgei, "Commodity Production, Tea and Social Change in Kericho, Kenya, 1895-1963," (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1981), 63-65.

[44] "Joint Memorandum for the African Highlands Produce Co., Limited and Brooke Bond East Africa Limited, jointly operating the Labour organization known as the Tea Estate Labour Department, 12 December 1957," From Kenya National Archives, DC/KMG/2/2/63: Tea Minutes and Meetings, accessed May 2016.

[45] Joseph Kibelyon Korir, interview by Paul Ocobock and Henry Adera, Chepilat, Sotik, 8 June 2008.

[46] Derek R. Peterson, *Creative Writing: Translation, Bookkeeping, and the Work of Imagination in Colonial Kenya* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2004).

[47] Ocobok, *An Uncertain Age*, 59-87.

[48] Kosgei, "Commodity Production, Tea and Social Change in Kericho, Kenya, 1895-1963," 59-74.

[49] Daniel Langat, interview by Paul Ocobock and Henry Adera, Kabianga, Kericho, 13 June 2008.

[50] Langat, interview.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Kimeli Too, interview by Paul Ocobock and Henry Adera, Kabianga, Kericho, 13 June 2008.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

[55] "Notes on Conference between GOK and Tea Industry, October 1952," From Kenya National Archives, AB/12/152: Supply of Tea, 1951-57, accessed May 2016.

[56] Senior Labour Officer, Nyanza Province "Letter to C.H. Hartwell, Esq. Deputy Chief Secretary, 30 March 1953," From Kenya National Archives, AB/12/152: Supply of Tea, 1951-57, accessed May 2016.

[57] "Labour Costs in Kericho District 15 April 1955" From Kenya National Archives, AB/12/152: Supply of Tea, 1951-57, accessed May 2016.

[58] A.W. Baraza to Managing Director, "Labour Legislation Chomogo and Chemosit Estates, 28 January 1966," From Kenya National Archives, DC/KMG/2/12/50: General Labor, accessed May 2016.

[59] A.W. Baraza, "Labour Inspection Report: Kymulot Estate, 26/8/65," From Kenya National Archives, DC/KMG/2/12/50: General Labor, accessed May 2016.

[60] Ibid.

[61] A.W. Baraza, "Labour Inspection Report: Kitoi Estate, 17/2/66," From Kenya National Archives, DC/KMG/2/12/50: General Labor, accessed May 2016.

[62] Langat, interview.

[63] A.W. Baraza, "Labour Inspection Report: Kymulot Estate, 26/8/65."

[64] A.W. Baraza, "Labour Inspection Report: Kitoi Estate, 17/2/66."

[65] Langat, interview; Too, interview.

[66] "Labour by Tribes, Employed in the Tea Industry Nyanzan Province, During August, 1955," From Kenya National Archives, DC/KMG/2/12/50: General Labor, accessed May 2016.

[67] Lazarus arap Bor, interview by Paul Ocobock and Henry Adera, Kapkatet, Bomet, 11 June 2008.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Bor, interview.

[72] Ibid.

[73] arap Bor, interview.

[74] Ibid.