ILO
International labour Organization
Re:work
International Institute of social History

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3

Forced Labour

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Pp77-115

In its 1930 Convention, the International Labour Organization (ILO) defined 'forced or compulsory labour' as 'all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily'.[1] Representatives at the Geneva Convention further clarified forced labour as a particular 'practice of compulsory labour exacted by a state or by agencies of a state, other than as a punishment for a criminal offence or for the purpose of the military defense'.[2] Colonial powers felt enormous pressure to sign on to the 1930 ILO Convention, and several states delayed ratifying the convention. Despite this general agreement on the abolition of forced labour, despite increased pressure from non-governmental humanitarian groups and despite efforts by colonial reformers – including Jules Marcel de Coppet (1936–1938), the Governor General of French West Africa (FWA) , and Henrique Galvão, inspector of the Portuguese colonies and former governor of Huila Province in southern Angola – forced labour in colonial Africa persisted in many regions of Africa through decolonization and into the present.[3] Forced labour

[1] International Labour Organization, *Forced Labour Convention 1930 (No. 29)*, Article 2.1.

[2] Joseph Folliet, *Le travail forcé aux colonies* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1934), p. 5.

[3] Jeremy Ball, *'I Escaped in a Coffin'. Remembering Angolan Forced Labor from the 1940s*, Cadernos de Estudos Africanos – Memórias Coloniais, 9/10/2006, URL:http://cea.revues.org/1214, p. 4; National Archives

in twentieth-century Africa was a widespread means of building and maintaining infrastructure, supporting the mining sector and in developing and servicing the export oriented agricultural sector in French, German, Belgian, Portuguese, Italian and Spanish colonies in Africa, and, to a lesser degree, in the British colonies, where public labour ordinances, compulsory labour ordinances and communal labour ordonnances served similar goals. Decolonization did not, however, end forced labour. Several postcolonial states have continued this practice, often under thinly disguised forms of military recruitment.

This chapter examines the variety of practices of forced labour during the colonial period on the African continent and its persistence into the postcolonial period. It provides a framework for understanding the context in which the Western colonial powers engaged in forced labour and describes the major forms of forced labour used by both the colonial powers and the newly independent African nations. Forced labour was part of a wider set of practices using coerced labour. This chapter focuses on forced labour as a practice of state mobilization of labour in Africa during the twentieth century. As Frederick Cooper reminds us, 'the five hundred years in which Europeans and Africans have known each other rather well, no element has been more central in their relationship than work'.[4] Forced labour was a central part of that relationship.

The ILO and the Debate around Forced Labour in the Interwar Period

The ILO was founded together with the League of Nations following the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, during a heady time when social theory and social engineering provided the means to imagine that societies and economies were malleable and could be changed to promote humane treatment of workers and general well-being. One of the ILO's first actions was designed to regulate and protect female workers' health and maternity during the postwar era of pro-natalist thought and policy.[5] This reflected ILO concerns with vulnerable labouring populations, especially at a time when a large proportion of the world's population resided in

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of Senegal, Dakar, 1/K8, Letter of General Governor of French West Africa Federation to the Ministry of Colonies, 25 January 1937.

[4] Frederick Cooper, *On the African Waterfront. Urban Disorder and the Transformation of Work in Colonial Mombasa* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 1.

[5] Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization without Sexes. Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917–1927* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Nora Natchkova and Céline Schoeni, 'The ILO, Feminists and Expert Networks: The Challenges of Protective Policy (1919–1934)', *Globalizing Social Rights: The International Labour Organization and Beyond,* ed. Sandrine Kott and Joëlle Droux (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan and ILO, 2013), p. 49.

colonies and colonial possessions. Moreover, the ILO's founding also coincided with the 1919 Treaty of St. Germain-en-Laye, which required the League of Nations to investigate 'slavery in all its forms regardless of geography or sovereignty'.[6]

The ILO's mandate to investigate and regulate forced labour emerged out of the debates held at the Temporary Slavery Commission of the League of Nations. The ILO was represented on the Commission from 1924. In particular, the Commission received a report written by the American sociologist Edward Alsworth Ross detailing rampant abuses of Africans being forced to work in the Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique.[7] The League and the ILO received reports of similar abuses in the Belgian Congo, the French mandates of Cameroon and Togo, as well as New Guinea and the Dutch East Indies.[8] Being forced to work was similar but not identical to the definition of slavery used in the 1926 Slavery Convention and thus the League directed the ILO to oversee the process of drafting regulations to deal those types of coerced labour that did not stem from the property relationship inherent in the Slavery Convention's definition.

From the mid-1920s, the ILO's Native Labour Section actively collected information on forced labour and its abuses and became a node in a network of individuals and non-governmental organizations pursuing antislavery and labour abuses in the colonies. As the ILO worked on the forced labour convention, colonial powers exerted influence at every step of the deliberations. Representatives of these colonial powers argued that any restrictions on forced labour would hinder their civilizing missions and their work in promoting economic and social development in their colonies. Such intervention yielded the Convention on Forced Labour in 1930 that committed each signatory to 'suppress the use of forced or compulsory labour in all of its forms within the shortest possible time' but offered a five year transitional period during which forced labour could only be used for public purposes and only on an exceptional basis, 'subject to the conditions and guarantees provided by the Convention'.[9] Of the major colonial

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[6] Suzanne Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century. The Evolution of a Global Problem* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2003), pp. 58-65.

[7] Edward Alsworth Ross, *Report on Employment of Native Labor in Portuguese Africa* (New York: The Abbott Press, 1925). See also Dr Oliveira Santos's official Portuguese reply to Ross's accusations, *Reply to the Accusation Addressed to the League of Nations by Mr. Edward A. Ross, Against the Portuguese in Angola* (Lisboa, Tipografia inglesa, ltd., 1930).

[8] J. P. Daughton, 'ILO Expertise and Colonial Violence in the Interwar Years', *Globalizing Social Rights,* ed. Sandrine Kott and Joëlle Droux (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan and ILO, 2013), pp. 85–86.

[9] *Ibid*., pp. 85–97; G. A. Johnston, *The International Labour Organisation: Its Work for Social and Economic Progress* (London: Europa, 1970), pp. 234–35.

powers, only Great Britain, France and the Netherlands signed the Convention in 1930. France did not hesitate to use the loophole in the Convention that permitted members to employ compulsory military recruitment., in principle only for ‘work of a military character’ (Article 2), , to yield compulsory labour mostly for public works. France only abolished forced labour in 1946 as part of its broader postwar commitment to extend metropolitan political, economic and social legislation to its colonies.[10] Belgium did not ratify the Convention until 1944, and Portugal ratified only in 1956 but did not abolish forced labour until 1961 with the outbreak of anticolonial revolts in Angola. The ILO added new regulations to protect agricultural workers in 1936 and 1939, which were designed to suppress compulsory rural labour exerted through contracts with the assistance of colonial officials and to extend protections to rural areas where abusive working conditions persisted by mandating labour inspections.[11]

The ability of the ILO to influence conditions within colonies, however, reflected the influence of imperial powers within the governing body of the ILO and the institution’s general lack of enforcement capacity. Article 35 of the ILO’s original constitution was framed within these tensions and thus provided signatories wide latitude of action regarding the implementation of ILO regulations and conventions. Members of the ILO ‘undertook to apply’ the conventions they signed and which were designed for metropolitan contexts ‘to their colonies, protectorates, and possessions which are not fully self-governing, (a) except when owning to the local conditions its provisions are inapplicable; or (b) subject to such modifications as may be necessary to adapt its provisions to local conditions. Each Member shall notify to the International Labour Office the action taken in respect of each of its colonies, protectorates, and possessions which are not fully self-governing.”[12] The ILO required members to submit reports regularly.

From Slavery to Forced Labour: A Continuous Use of Coercion in an Imperfect Labour Market

Slavery is an ancient and dynamic institution in Africa that changed over time and in response to market forces and to the coercive capacity of masters to exploit their slaves. Slavery mobilized extra personnel for households and fed growing plantation economies in many parts

[10] Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship Between Empire and Nation. Remaking France and French Africa, 1945–1960* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).

[11] Daniel Maul, *Human Rights, Development and Decolonization: The International Labour Organization, 1940–70* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan and ILO, 2012), pp. 23–27.

[12] Johnston, *The International Labour Organisation,* pp. 232–33, quoting the original.

of Africa. With the gradual decline in the transatlantic, trans-Saharan, Red Sea and Indian Ocean slave trades in the course of the nineteenth century, more slaves became available for use in Africa. Coerced labour persisted in Africa because of demands for such labour and because of profound imperfections in African labour markets.

Gareth Austin argues that, since 1500 at least, most of sub-Saharan Africa had high land to labour ratios (an abundance of land) with relatively little available liquid capital that could be invested in appropriate technologies (such as the plow). Moreover, the tropical soils were easily eroded and thus retained relatively little long-term fertility in the absence of easily available green manures, which where themselves limited by the livestock diseases.[13] Within this context, African farmers interested in 'raising the rate of return' innovated with new crops and turned primarily to coerced labour to augment output. 'In such context', Austin argues, 'it is not surprising that the internal labour markets of precolonial Africa mostly took the form of slave and pawn rather than wage labour'.[14]

This was the context in which European powers engaged in the Scramble for Africa starting in the last three decades of the nineteenth century. While securing claims to African territory involved various means, including signing treaties of protection, all colonial powers relied on conquest to some degree. Many African soldiers fighting in colonial armies were recruited from volunteers, including runaway slaves and informal auxiliaries hoping to share in the booty of conquest. All colonial armies required additional armies of porters to carry the material of war as well as food. Few porters volunteered for this labour. Most were recruited through coercion. Some were recruited from liberty villages that housed 'freed' slaves rescued from African enemies and strategically situated along the routes the armies traversed. Thus, the very foundation of colonies largely rested on coerced labour.

When the active phase of the Scramble for Africa ended around 1898, nearly all sub-Saharan Africans were engaged in agricultural, pastoral, fishing and hunting pursuits. Most of these pursuits were seasonal and provided significant opportunities for diverse commercial,

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[13] There were exceptions, of course, including the 'closed-cropped zone' surrounding Kano, where large herds and slave labour promoted intensive agriculture rather than the more common extensive practices. See especially Polly Hill, *Population, Prosperity, and Poverty: Rural Kano, 1900 and 1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

[14] Gareth Austin, 'Resources, Techniques, and Strategies South of the Sahara: Revising the Factor Endowments Perspective on African Economic Development, 1500–2000', *Economic History Review*, 61, 3 (2008), 609. See also Gareth Austin, *Labour, Land, and Capital in Ghana: From Slavery to Free Labour in Asante, 1807–1956* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2005), Chapter 8.

artisanal, mining and small-scale manufacturing work that fed regional and long-distance trade in Africa and overseas. There were scattered pockets of dense urban, political and religious agglomerations that supported full time military, bureaucratic, religious, commercial and mining specialists. With its much longer history of colonization, South Africa had already developed major centres of mining and urban development. Nascent colonial states had also established burgeoning central places of bureaucracies, harbours, commerce and communication. In general, these urban pockets swelled seasonally, as rural workers streamed in to add labour to infrastructural projects only to dwindle again when the planting, herding or fishing demands resumed.

The discovery of diamonds and gold in South Africa in 1867 and 1886, respectively, stimulated Africa's 'gold rush' and inspired European imperialists to think of Africa as a vast treasure trove with fortunes waiting to be discovered. Gold and diamonds were discovered elsewhere in Africa, but the large, concentrated and lucrative mines of South Africa were not found elsewhere. Nonetheless, gold mines were established in Southern Rhodesia, the Gold Coast, the French Sudan and Tanganyika, among other places. Additional gold and diamond sources were discovered later during the colonial era.[15] The great potential of other minerals, such as copper, which was to crucial to the global electrification and communication of the twentieth century, helped stimulate enclaves of development in Africa, especially in the aptly named copperbelt of the Congo and Northern Rhodesia.

Mining required labour. Whether there was little investment in heavy mining machinery or significant investment in capital intensive mining, mining capitalists wanted cheap labour. The cheaper the labour, the higher were the potential profits. Conditions of mine work were often so onerous that few workers wanted to stay on beyond the terms of their contracts. In this manner, the colonial pattern of circular migration was born. Moreover, since the pay for mine work was so low, few African workers could support their families on their wages. Many Africans preferred to return to their wives and families in their rural homelands as soon as possible.

Colonial economists advanced the concept that African workers were motivated by certain 'targets' – such as sufficient cash to pay taxes, to buy a bicycle, or enough for bridewealth – and once they achieved their goals, they quit working and returned home. This

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[15] Raymond Dumett, *El Dorado in West Africa: The Gold-Mining Frontier, African Labor, and Colonial Capitalism in the Gold Coast, 1875–1900* (Athens, OH: Ohio University. Press, 1998).

concept of the target worker, which was phrased in economic terms as 'the backward-sloping supply curve of labour', became an excuse for employers to keep wages low; if they paid higher wages, workers would achieve their goals sooner, quit, and thus leave employers scrambling for new workers. Some workers did indeed have targets in mind, but the conditions of work and the poor pay meant that few had a long-term interest in remaining in those jobs.[16]

Circular migration of Africans was a rational response to a bad situation. Pressure to generate cash; pressure to leave dangerous and demeaning work as soon as possible; pressures to return home to invest in the future: all this contributed to the peculiar forms of migration generated by colonial capitalism. Even though agricultural work was hard and the profits usually slim, at least African peasants worked for themselves or their families. By working for their families, these Africans also invested in their futures, because they expected that their sons would also work for them. For others, migrant labour became a new rite of passage signifying the transition to adulthood.[17]

With the end of slavery in Africa, which occurred at an uneven pace on the continent, some former slaves remained with their former masters, while others left to return to their homelands to build new communities or to establish independent households. Far from swelling the ranks of the unemployed and thus willing to sell their labour, former slaves most often chose to work for themselves or their new communities.[18] Colonial officials, European employers and African capitalists continued to face a profound labour shortage. To justify the compulsion to labour, which resembled slavery, colonial officials argued that coercion was necessary to overcome Africans' inherent 'inertia and laziness' by claiming that such obligatory labour was 'educational'. And second, officials implemented administrative, legal and disciplinary regulations to produce streams of forced labourers. Throughout Africa, legal distinctions separated citizens from subjects and subjected subjects to the often coercive legal regimes,

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[16] See for example, Elliott Berg, 'The Backward-Sloping Labor Supply Function in Dual Economies: The Africa Case', *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 75, 3 (1961), 468–91; Marvin Miracle and Bruce Fetter, 'Backward-Sloping Labor-Supply Functions and African Economic Behavior', *Economic Development and Change*, 18, 2 (1970), 240–51.

[17] See Sara Berry, *Fathers Work for Their Sons: Accumulation, Mobility, and Class Formation in an Extended Yorùbá Community* (Berkeley, CA: University. of California Press, 1984) and Paul Ocobock, 'Earning an Age: Migration and Maturity in Early Colonial Kenya, 1895–1952', *African Economic History*, 44 (2016), 44–72.

[18] Frederick Cooper, *From Slaves to Squatters: Plantation Labor and Agriculture in Zanzibar and Coastal Kenya, 1890–1925* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980); Martin A. Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa* (New York: Cambridge University. Press, 1998); Suzanne Miers and Richard L. Roberts, eds, *The End of Slavery in Africa* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988).

including some aspects of customary law that put villagers at the behest of village chiefs, and 'administrative law', such as the French *Code de l'indigénat*, which put African subjects at the behest of colonial officials and subject to a range of punishments for minor infractions, including obligatory labour. In the British colonies, the obligation to provide labour for communal public works legitimized forced labour. To enhance their coercive capacities, colonial states throughout Africa worked through systems of indirect rule, incorporating African chiefs into their wider systems of taxation and labour mobilization. Ironically, in exploiting the moral influence and authority of chiefs, colonial administrations progressively undermined them by transforming them into instruments of colonial policy. In addition, all colonial powers employed various forms of a paramilitary police, sometimes called *gardes de cercles* in French colonies or *cipaes* in Portuguese colonies.

Weak Colonial States and Taxes as Forced Labour

Reliance on forced labour was one of the outcomes of the transition from slavery and the imperfections of the labour supply in colonial Africa. Africans sought whenever possible to avoid employment in the mines, plantations and fields of European capital and settlers. Precisely because Africans had alternatives for much of the colonial period to selling their labour at the poor rates offered by employers, settlers, capitalists and colonial administrators, it put pressure on colonial states to organize labour outside of the labour market to supply them with cheap labour. Compulsion thus became a central feature in the operation of colonial labour markets. Compulsion manifested itself differently in response to demands for labour in different parts of the continent and for different economic sectors.

This is how the International Labour Organization understood the emergence of forced labour in colonial Africa:

> It is well known that in the early stages of European economic penetration Africans showed little inclination to look for paid employment of their own accord. They went about their customary activities according to the traditional rules of the society to which they belonged; they had not experience of the European system of work in return for pay, and memories of the slave trade, which lived on in some territories, encouraged them to keep away from European undertakings.
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> As a result the offer of labour may be said to have been practically non-existent. This was the dominant feature of the labour market with which

> governments and private enterprise were faced. In order to carry out public works such as roads and railways and to satisfy the manpower needs experienced by undertakings such as plantations and mines, various methods of direct and indirect pressure were adopted.
>
> The result was the more or less widespread and systematic imposition of forced labour on the African population … Native chiefs were required periodically to supply contingents of able-bodied men, the numbers of which were fixed by the authorities. These men were used primarily for public works, although some of them might be turned over to private employers. Moreover, even in the case of recruitment by private individuals, coercion played a large part since such operations were carried out with the help and direct participation of the authorities.[19]

The ILO report also argued that head or hut taxes constituted an 'indirect form of forced labour, since only through paid employment could many Africans hope to find the necessary money.' By the time this report was published in 1958, during the last phase of empire, the ILO argued that forced labour had more or less disappeared as 'normal economic incentives' had proven 'increasingly effective in inducing Africans to seek paid employment of their own accord.' This last statement underestimated the profound social, economic and political changes in most of colonial Africa that had by the beginning of decolonization deeply eroded the viability of the rural sector. Taxation was a central element of forcing Africans to work.

The process of colonial conquest and building colonial states was uneven and drawn out over the course of nearly fifty years. Building colonial states was not easily accomplished. On the one hand, there was the 'weak' colonial state: 'the paternalistic mediator struggling to maintain a precarious sovereignty over contending interests' and hobbled by inadequate resources and little coercive force. It had only a 'facade' of power. On the other hand, the 'strong' colonial state continually expanded its bureaucratic apparatus and 'intervened in ever-widening areas of colonial political economy, directing change to serve the interests of metropolitan (or, in the case of Kenya, settler) capital, and containing and suppressing indigenous social forces'.[20] With the backing of white officials, rural chiefs in South Africa

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[19] International Labour Office, *African Labour Survey* (Geneva: ILO, 1958), p. 295.

[20] Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa. Book One, State & Class* (Athens, OH: Ohio University. Press, 1992), 140–76.

became 'decentralized despots' and contributed to the creation of an authoritarian colonial regime that relied on divisions of urban and rural, white and black.[21] In other parts of colonial Africa, the state's ability to intervene significantly in the lives of its subjects varied temporally and spatially and depended upon the colonial state's ability to 'broadcast' its power. Colonialism was therefore a process prone to contradictions, fragilities and deep structural weaknesses and faced the constant struggle to generate sufficient revenue locally to pay for colonialism without relying on metropolitan resources.[22] Despite their different native policies, all colonial powers developed forms of indirect rule that responded to the need to construct a colonial administration 'on the cheap'. All colonial states became dependent upon African chiefs, intermediaries and employees.[23]

Few metropolitan governments were willing to pay the direct costs of governing colonies. Instead, colonial administrations were ordered to generate various forms of revenue locally in the colonies. Some revenue came from excise taxes collected on imports and exports. But the bulk of revenue came from direct taxes.[24] Collecting taxes was, however, not easily accomplished. Colonial violence manifested itself in the episodic or systematic use of violence to force Africans to work for the new colonial economies and pay taxes. All colonial states imposed direct taxes on Africans, either in the form of head, hut or native taxes *(impoto indigena* in Portuguese colonial Africa), or labour taxes (discussed below). Africans often experienced colonialism first through taxes, which drew them more closely into the new colonial order.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the annual tax campaign had become a regular part of life under colonial rule and pulled Africans into wider worlds of commodity and labour markets. Africans had five primary means of generating the cash needed to pay the taxes: they could sell their crops, assuming that there was demand for them; they could plant new crops that had market demand within the colonial economies; they could extort commodities

[21] Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); Crawford Young, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994).

[22] Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014); Sara Berry, *No Condition is Permanent. The Social Dynamics of Agrarian Change in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993).

[23] Benjamin N. Lawrance, Emily Lynn Osborn and Richard L. Roberts, eds, *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks: African Employees in the Making of Colonial Africa* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006).

[24] Ewout Frankema, 'Colonial Taxation and Government Spending in British Africa, 1880–1940: Maximizing Revenue or Minimizing Effort?' *Explorations in Economic History*, 48, 1 (2011), 136–49.

and cash from their neighbors or underlings; they could sell their labour to the emerging mining, urban and capitalist agricultural sectors; or they could migrate to regions where the pressures to pay taxes were, at least temporarily, less acute. These five options were not evenly dispersed throughout the continent. The range of crops that the colonial markets wanted was narrow, and not all crops flourished well in all areas. In zones of settler agriculture, the colonial state coerced Africans not to grow crops that would compete with settlers' output. Whenever they could, Africans preferred to farm for themselves in order to meet their tax commitments.

Within this context, forced labour was a prominent feature in all of colonial Africa. Africans had to be pried from their rural occupations in order to labour for wages not because they were somehow backward and lazy. Instead, they were forced into the labour market because they understood all too well how dangerous, unhealthy and poorly compensated they were in the colonial labour market. Although compulsion took place in rural areas through pressure from village chiefs, through the barrel of a gun from colonial officials, or through pressure from colonial officials who were assisting private labour recruiters, the conditions in which African workers found themselves differed depending upon the sector that employed them: public works; mining; concession companies that controlled vast tracks of land; settler agriculture. The means of recruitment also differed.

Varieties of Forced Labour in Colonial Africa

In 1930, the ILO Conference on Forced Labour identified five types of compulsory work: requisitioned labour, which was generated by direct pressure on African chiefs to provide male labour; prestation, which was a form of direct labour tax often for a fixed number of days per year; the so-called 'second portion' of the annual military draft, selecting those who were not quite able-bodied for public works labour, with some labour funneled towards private enterprises; penal labour, which was a form of coerced labour widely used for public works but sometimes also hired out for private enterprise; and forced cultivation of certain crops, especially those deemed essential for 'national security' and colonial development. We should also include two additional categories: indentured labour and, more generally, military conscription. Although Africa was often a source of indentured labour recruitment, indentured labourers were also imported into South and Eastern Africa in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[25] Military conscription or the draft was a mechanism of coerced

[25] Peter Richardson, 'The Recruiting of Chinese Indentured Labour for the South African Gold-Mines, 1903–1908', *Journal of African History*, 18, 1 (1977), 85–108; David Northrup, *Indentured Labor in the Age of*

recruitment into the military and widely used throughout the world. Both voluntary enlistment and coerced conscription took place in Africa, especially during conquest and around the two world wars. Forced labour always involved extra-economic pressure, but the nature of the forced labour differed according to the context in which it was performed and the length of time required. Moreover, the forms of forced labour changed over time, especially with the development of international scrutiny during the interwar period after the establishment of the League of Nations and the International Labour Organization. Colonial states and many postcolonial independent states used forced labour as punishment for what they considered vagrancy.

Requisitioned labour

Once primary African resistance to conquest was crushed, colonial officials found themselves in charge of vast territories with few natural waterways and harbours. The colonial state immediately confronted the need to build infrastructure: ports, railways, roads, dams, bridges, telegraphs, barracks, etc. Colonial officials were also confronted by the need to transport materials over long distances, thus requiring porters. Porterage and infrastructure construction required labour. Some labour could be drawn from colonial troops, but the bulk of the work of building infrastructure fell to Africans forced into this labour service. Most of the infrastructure was built using simple hand tools, meaning that the labour was hard and dangerous. All colonial states used some form of requisitioned labour for this purpose. The most common method was for colonial officials to approach village chiefs, who were then instructed to produce a certain number of workers. In French West Africa, Africans requisitioned for labour received a daily ration of food if their work took them more than five kilometres from their homes. Sometimes, requisitioned labourers received token cash payments, especially if they were obliged to travel far from home. In British colonial Africa, women and children formed part of the requisitioned labour on infrastructure, especially road work. Few formal rules governed requisitioned labour during first two decades of colonial rule. Britain abolished the provision of requisitioned labour for private enterprises in 1908, but retained it for building and maintenance of roads, bridges, sanitation and irrigation. By 1912, however, colonial governors began to enact legislation

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Imperialism, 1834–1922 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Jelmer Vos, '"Without the Slave Trade, No Recruitment": From Slave Trading to "Migrant Recruitment" in the Lower Congo, 1830–90', *Trafficking in Slavery's Wake: Law and the Experience of Women and Children in Africa*, ed. Benjamin N. Lawrance and Richard L. Roberts (Athens, OH: Ohio University. Press, 2012), pp. 45–64.

governing requisitioned labour by limiting the numbers of days per year individuals could be required to work for the colonial state and prohibiting using women's and children's labour on state projects.

Most of requisitioned labour flowed from chiefs, who responded to pressures from the colonial administration. Chiefs often had wide latitude in choosing recruits for requisitioned labour, and some chiefs used such authority to favour friends and kinsmen and harm rivals. In Kenya, chiefs thus became 'big men' and essential allies of the colonial state. In 1919, the governor issued a circular, instructing government officials in charge of native areas to use all lawful means to 'induce' able-bodied males into the labour market, especially the labour scarce settler agricultural sector. The Colonial Office ultimately repudiated this circular, although other mechanisms of coercive labour, including the *kipande*, or identity card, and restrictions on breaching labour contracts effectively limited free labour. In French colonies, chiefs requisitioned labour for infrastructure but also for use on private plantations and concession companies in French Equatorial Africa (FEA). In FEA, chiefs requisitioned over 127,000 workers to build the Congo-Océan railway, where mortality rates where upwards of 25 per cent. Chiefs in Upper Volta requisitioned 22,000 workers to build the Thiès-Kayes railway in the early decades of the twentieth century, and then thousands more to build the massive irrigation works of the Office du Niger in the 1930s.[26] In Senegal, requisitioned workers were also used to haul barges and unload shipments belonging to European and Lebanese traders. On other occasions, they were mobilized as porters, particularly in areas were access was difficult. Porters had to carry administrators on hammocks, with their luggage. In Guinea, where before 1914 portage was the main mode of transportation, the entire output of rubber, from the Région Forestière to Conakry on the coast, was carried by porters. About 55,000 porters were annually enrolled in this *corvée*. Chiefs in Gabon requisitioned labour for the private lumber concessions.[27] In Portuguese colonial Africa, forced labourers were mobilized under the status of *contratados* (contract labourers). Edward Ross described in 1924 how the labour system was functioning as 'virtually state serfdom': government recruited the *contratados* and sold them to the private employers for several months without any warranty of their pay. Jeremy Ball

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[26] Myron Echenberg and Jean Filipovich, 'African Military Labour and the Building of the *Office du Niger* Installations, 1925–1950', *Journal of African History*, 27, 3 (1986), 533–51; Monica van Beusekom, *Negotiating Development: African Farmers and Colonial Experts at the Office du Niger, 1920–1960* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001).

[27] Jeremy Rich, *A Workman is Worthy of His Meat: Food and Colonialism in the Gabon Estuary* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2007).

recalled the complaints of a former *contratado*: 'You were not able to buy cloth for your wife with what we were paid, much less a shirt for your child. It was obligatory work, we did it not because we wanted to, but because they wanted us to, hence it was not good.'[28] Unscrupulous recruiters duped southern Nigerians into entering their canoes only to wind up in forced labour on the harsh plantations on the island of Fernando Po (now Bioko) in Equatorial Guinea.[29]

France turned to a mix of different types of forced labour to build the port of Dakar and the Dakar-St Louis railway during the second half of the nineteenth century. Finding both skilled and unskilled labour and retaining such labour long enough to build these public works projects proved a challenge. Some skilled labour for the port project came directly from the Navy, but unskilled labour flowed mostly from the nearby prison. During the planting season, the French recruited Kruman from Liberia to augment the supply of prisoners. To secure workers for the railway project, the French negotiated with Lat Dior, the Damel of Kayor, to supply labour. Lat Dior in turn pressed village chiefs along the railway line to supply unskilled labour. In return, the French helped Lat Dior return to the throne, only to be faced with a rebellion once Lat Dior realized that the railway was an instrument of conquest. The employment agents of the Société des Batignoles, which organized the construction, were forced to bring in carpenters from the south of France, bricklayers and workmen from Spain and the Italian Piedmont, and foremen from Morocco. Chiefs along the railway line continued to provide unskilled labourers, most often by forcing them to work.[30]

Although we cannot draw a direct causal connection between the rubber scandal in the Congo Free State and the enactment of rules limiting requisitioned labour, the timing suggests that the scandal of labour abuses in the Congo Free State had significant implications for labour regimes in the rest of Africa. Despite huge global demand for ivory and rubber, which was plentiful in the Congo, the Congo Free State did not have the capacity to collect these commodities. In 1891, King Leopold decreed the *regime dominal*, in which the state acquired all vacant land and all the products on that land. Central Africans did not have land rights in the terms Europeans understood, and thus they were considered trespassers on state land, subject to fines and imprisonment. By 1892, the Congo Free State began to provide vast tracts of state land to European companies in exchange for rents. Leopold gave himself an enormous tract in

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[28] Ball, *'I Escaped in a Coffin'*, p. 8

[29] Enrique Martino, '*Panya*: Economies of Deception and the Discontinuities of Indentured Labour Recruitment and the Slave Trade, Nigeria and Fernando Pó, 1890s–1940s,' *African Economic History* 44 (2016), 91-129.

[30] Babacar Fall, *Le travail forcé en Afrique-Occidentale française, 1900-1946* (Paris: Karthala, 1993).

the heart of the colony. Concession owners needed labour to collect rubber and ivory. Demand for rubber and ivory in Europe was booming due to the transportation revolution (bicycles, cars, trucks) and middle-class consumption of leisure (pianos and billiards) and for use as false teeth. Not surprisingly, the concession owners and Leopold turned to requisitioned African labour, eventually requiring Africans to work for the state or the concession companies for up to 280 days per year. Such labour requirements threatened Africans agrarian economies, which had been eroded by the land alienation act. Few Africans came forward willingly. The state turned to the *Force Publique*, the African army of the Congo Free State, to secure African labour, resulting in the horrendous crimes and massive death toll. Reporting from men on the ground and journalists including Roger Casement, E.D. Morel and William Henry Sheppard, raised public awareness in Europe and caused a scandal. . The Belgian Parliament held an independent inquiry into the abuses in the Congo in 1905, and, in 1908, the Parliament voided Leopold's claim to the Congo and annexed the territory. Concerned about continued loss of African population, the Belgian Congo introduced laws limiting requisitioned labour and prohibiting labour recruitment from regions suffering extreme depopulation. Old Congo Free State concessions were disbanded, but new ones were auctioned off. Concession companies remained a significant feature of the Belgian Congo's economy, and they continued to requisition labour.[31]

We know surprisingly little about forced labour in North Africa. Jacques Berque only mentions in passing that 'the working masses were sometimes engaged in large-scale public works, such as the Algerian dams, or that harbor at Casablanca …' but does not explore the issue more deeply.[32] Requisitioned labour was certainly used to build the Suez Canal and other major public works in Egypt and in building and maintaining the railways, harbours and road networks in North Africa, but scholars have focused on other aspects of labour mobilization, such as 'semi-feudal' peasant relations and conscription during wartime.[33] North Africa remains an area where important comparative research still needs to be conducted.

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[31] Jean Stengers, 'The Congo Free State and the Belgian Congo Before 1914', *Colonialism in Africa, 1870–1960*, ed. Louis H. Gann and Peter Duignan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), vol 2; Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (New York: Houghton Mifflin: 1998). See also John Higginson, *A Working Class in the Making: Belgian Colonial Labor Policy, Private Enterprise, and the African Mineworker, 1907–1951* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).

[32] Jacques Berque, *French North Africa: The Maghrib between Two World Wars*, trans. Jean Stewart (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), p. 42.

[33] See for example, Ellis Goldberg, 'Peasants in Revolt: Egypt 1919', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 24, 2 (1992), 265–80; Nathan Brown, *Peasant Politics in Modern Egypt: The Struggle Against the State* (New

It is important to distinguish between requisitioned labour for public works projects and for private enterprises, even if few Africans understood the difference. The work was harsh and brutal in both sectors. Demand for requisitioned labour put direct state pressure on village chiefs, who mediated between colonial states and broader African communities, and who had to balance state pressures for workers and the well-being of the village. Alexander Keese describes how chiefs in Congo-Brazzaville used requisitioned labour to fill the demands of the state but also forced them to work on their own fields.[34] An updated history of African chiefs remains to be written, but the debate on the invention of tradition has suggested that chiefs were actively complicit in the invention of tradition, and that they benefited from the augmented authority this process provided. In many areas of colonial Africa, village and canton chiefs used unpaid requisitioned labour for the state to increase the size of their own fields. Village chiefs often had wide latitude in whom they recruited for requisitioned labour. The freed slave villages in French West Africa during the era of conquest, where slaves of France's enemies were sent, often formed a reserve army for that military's needs for porters and workers on infrastructure.

Indentured labour

Africans were recruited into various systems of indentured labour that fed labour needs in the Atlantic world, the Indian Ocean world and on various plantation sectors in or near Africa. In addition, Indian and Chinese indentured labour flowed into Africa as part of a global movement of unfree labour in the aftermath of the abolition of slavery. Indentured labour was a public-private system that funneled millions of workers around the world from the 1840s through the 1930s to meet demand for labour largely in tropical agriculture. Hugh Tinker and other scholars have labelled indentured labour a 'new system of slavery', wherein labourers worked for little more than maintenance in brutal conditions not of their own choosing.[35] Other scholars have argued that workers 'freely' entered into indenture agreements that were carefully overseen by

Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990); Reinhard Schulze, 'Colonization and Resistance', *Peasants and Politics in the Modern Middle East*, ed. Farhad Kazemi and John Waterbury (Miami, FL: Florida International University Press, 1991), pp. 171–202; Zeinab Abul-Magd, *Imagined Empires: A History of Revolt in* Egypt (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013), pp. 82–93.

[34] Alexander Keese, 'Slow Abolition within the Colonial Mind: British and French Debates about "Vagrancy", "African Laziness", and Forced Labour in West Central and South Central Africa, 1945–1965', *International Review of Social History*, 59, 3 (2014), 377–407.

[35] Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery; The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830–1920* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974).

British officials.[36] In general, however, few labourers were made aware of the labour conditions they were to enter or the exact terms of their contracts, nor were their decisions to accept indenture made without coercion, since many faced significant poverty and had few alternatives. Indentured labour was not a significant part of the African coerced labour scene; its most significant presence was in the sugar sector of Natal, South Africa, where South Asian indentured workers were recruited to build this new sector in the absence of a steady stream of African wage labour. More than 145,000 Indian indentured workers were imported into Natal between 1875 and 1911 to augment the 6,450 Indian indentured workers who had been imported at the beginning of the sugar boom there. In the late nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century, nearly 40,000 Indian indentured workers were imported into East Africa for railway construction. Between 1904 and 1907, 63,695 indentured Chinese labourers was recruited to work the gold mines of the Witwatersrand in an effort to keep the mines operating and to undercut the growing tendency of African workers to resist the mine owners' demands for disciplined low wage workers. During this period, Chinese indentured labourers constituted 35 per cent of the total labour force on the Rand, but the Chinese proved more demanding about labour protections than African labour, and the experiment was abandoned.[37]

By far the largest numbers of indentured workers were imported into the Indian Ocean islands of Mauritius and Reunion, which emerged as major sugar producers in the aftermath of the decline of sugar production in the Caribbean. Together, these Mascarene islands imported 527,402 indentured Indians of whom 86 per cent went to Mauritius; 34,219 indentured Africans, almost all of whom went to Reunion; and slightly over two thousand indentured Chinese. Conditions on these sugar islands varied by plantation and the price of sugar. Some indentured workers renewed their contracts; others returned home; and a significant number sought out other forms of livelihood on the islands once their contracts ended. In all cases, during the period of indenture, these workers had no choice to leave their employers and many

[36] David Northrup, 'Overseas Movements of Slaves and Indentured Workers', *The Cambridge World History of Slavery, Volume 4: AD 1804–AD 2016*, ed. David Eltis, Stanley L. Engerman, Seymour Drescher and David Richardson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 20–48.

[37] Rachel K. Bright, *Chinese Labour in South Africa, 1902–10: Race, Violence, and Global Spectacle* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

were subject to harsh conditions and brutal punishments. By 1922, indentured labour was largely ended.[38]

Prestation or labour tax

Prestation, however, became a more formal means of forcing Africans to labour on public works projects. In both French and British colonial Africa, the number of days required for *corvée* began to be fixed in the years before World War I. In French colonial Africa, prestation was a form of annual labour tax, in which all able-bodied men were required to work for a set number of days on public work projects. Legislation set the maximum number of days of obligatory labour but gave the various colonies latitude in setting the exact duration ranging from eight to thirteen days every year. In Senegal, Africans were obliged to work eight days per year, while in the French Sudan, it was fixed at twelve days. Prestation labour in Senegal was reduced to four days in 1922. About 90 per cent of 35,000 kilometres of roads were built under the supervision of the *commandants de cercles*. In Senegal, in 1923 alone, prestation labour generated 4,969,840 workdays. Workers mobilized under the regime of prestation were not remunerated. Only a daily portion of food was given to each worker, and even this was not guaranteed. Among the frequent abuses of prestation were the retention of the *prestataires* for longer than the allowed period and the practice of using the same workers twice. The regulations that workmen would not be sent to work on sites located more than five kilometers from their villages were routinely ignored. In FEA, labour tax was introduced in 1918, set at seven days per year; but due to continued labour shortage, in 1925 it was raised to fifteen days to help recruit workers for railway construction. Food was supplied only to those working more than thirty kilometres from their homes. Although Britain abolished requisitioned labour for private companies in 1908, it left intact obligatory 'communal labour' under village chiefs. Women and children were forced to maintain roads and sanitation works in the Gold Coast as well as in other British colonies.[39] Obligatory communal labour persists to this day in rural South Africa.

In 1906, Henry Nevinson published a scathing critique of the abuses in organizing and using forced labour in Angola that came just on the heels of the Congo scandal. Nevinson was

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[38] Richard B. Allen, *European Slave Trading in the Indian Ocean, 1500–1850* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2014); Gwyn Campbell, ed., *Abolition and its Aftermath in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Alessandro Stanziani, *Sailors, Slaves, and Immigrants: Bondage in the Indian Ocean World, 1750–1914* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

[39] Kwabena O. Akurang-Parry, '"The Loads Are Heavier than Usual": Forced Labor by Women and Children in the Central Province, Gold Coast (Colonial Ghana), ca. 1900–1940,' *African Economic History* 30 (2002), 31–51.

particularly incensed with how Africans were enslaved for 'debts', marched to the coast, where they were 'freed' by Portuguese officials only to be sent to São Tomé as 'voluntary' labour.[40] Elsewhere in Portuguese colonial Africa, labourers in Angola were forced to work for two weeks or until the 'quota is maintained by shift'. Edward Ross – who interviewed hundreds of workers and whose report on forced labour in Portuguese Africa shamed the League of Nations into taking action on forced labour – mentioned in 1924 a case in one of the villages he had visited: "The soldiers come, catch the people, children included, and tie them up. They take about half of the family, leaving the other half to change off with it."[41] The paradox was that the Portuguese, under Prime Minister António de Oliveira Salazar, were finally gaining control over the vast interior of their colonies and imposing increasingly harsh labour requirements just as France, Britain and Belgium were restricting *corvée* labour, including the establishment of a prohibition on recruiting forced labour during the active agricultural calendar.

In French West Africa (FWA), the first real reform of forced labour coincided with the Popular Front in France and, more specifically, the appointment of De Coppet as Governor General of FWA in 1936. In 1937, De Coppet instituted the system of *rachat des prestations,* which allowed wealthier Africans to redeem their labour taxes in cash. Prior to his appointment, only a few people had the right to do so. The *rachat* policy swelled local budgets so that administrators could hire skilled workers for the construction of roads. At the Brazzaville Conference in 1944, Charles de Gaulle rewarded Africans for their support of the Free French with the promise of an eventual repeal of the hated labour tax and the hated *indigénat*. De Gaulle also promised to introduce a modified form of representation government by permitting political parties and establishing colonial legislatures to advise colonial rule.[42]

Military conscription

Demand for men to fight, to carry war materiel and to grow crops that were essential to conquest, but especially during World War I, led to significant and sustained intervention in African economies. Britain, France and Belgium increased the recruitment of African soldiers. France turned to the draft to recruit Africans for the front in Europe; Britain increased its

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[40] Henry Woodd Nevinson, *A Modern Slavery* (London and New York: Harper, 1906).

[41] Quoted in William H. Worger, Nancy L. Clark and Edward A. Alpers, *Africa and the West: A Documentary History. Vol. 2: From Colonialism to Independence, 1875 to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 51.

[42] Babacar Fall, *Le travail forcé en Afrique-Occidentale française, 1900-1946* (Paris: Karthala, 1993) *;* Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

voluntary recruitment of soldiers in West Africa and in East Africa primarily for the military campaigns in Cameroon and East Africa. All colonial powers recruited far more labourers than soldiers, since fighting in Africa was labour intensive. In the absence of railways serving the military fronts, war materiel, food and shelter had to be carried overland. David Killingray argues that far more Africans were forcibly recruited as labourers for the war effort than all of the workers forcibly recruited for the mines, concessions, plantations and settler farms in Africa. Coercion to fill the pressing need for carriers during wartime was widespread. Britain turned to forced recruitment for the East African Carrier Corps than ultimately proved essential to defeating the Germans, but it also resulted in an extraordinarily high mortality rate due to disease and malnutrition. Killingray argues that forced recruitment 'stripped bare' the African populations in large areas of eastern Belgian Congo, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, German East Africa, Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland and the northern regions of Portuguese East Africa. He estimates that half of the total male population of the African reserves in Kenya had been forcibly recruited; overall, Britain conscripted over half a million men in its African colonies by 1918.[43] Belgium increased recruitment of Africans for the *Force Publique* and the carrier corps, which played crucial roles in the defeat of Germany in Rwanda and Burundi. By 1918, however, pressure for recruitment decreased everywhere, with the exception of French Africa.

France, which had suffered a massive loss of young men as soldiers during World War I, decided to continue with the annual military recruitment in colonial Africa. Throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s, French colonial states discovered that they could use the annual military draft to identify two categories of young men: able-bodied recruits for the military and those deemed too unhealthy to serve. Those considered healthy were subject to a lottery system out of which would flow military recruits for a three-year stint in the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais*.[44] Those not selected were placed in a vague 'reserve army' category, but not conscripted. During the interwar period, France sought to promote colonial economic development through massive public works projects but faced the challenge of finding adequate labour for these projects. A decree dated 31 October 1926 authorized the enlistment of men from among those examined and found fit, but not needed by the military authorities, to be used for public work. They constituted the *tirailleurs la pelle* – soldiers with tools. Men in the second portion, which was

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[43] David Killingray, 'Labour Exploitation for Military Campaigns in British Colonial Africa 1870–1945,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 24, 3 (1989), 483–501.

[44] See Myron Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts: The Tirailleurs Sénégalais in French West Africa, 1857–1960* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1991) for the classic study of the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais*.

the largest share of this population, were drafted into two-year 'contracts' for public service. The French West African model of the 'second portion' was fashioned on one started in Madagascar two years earlier. In 1928, French officials used this 'reserve army' of healthy recruits for public works, including the massive irrigation scheme of the Office du Niger, which was building huge irrigation works using largely manual labour, and for building the Thies-Niger railway. Between 1928 and 1946, nearly three thousand men were conscripted into the 'second portion' labour annually. The peak in recruitment occurred under the Vichy administration in 1941 and 1942, when 4,700 and 5,550 men, respectively, were conscripted as soldier-workers in the colony.[45] The decree of 1926 also provided the legal basis for sending workmen to private cotton and sisal plantations in eastern Senegal and French Sudan. The inhuman working conditions of the 'second portion' are illustrated by the August 1945 report of a committee headed by the former Governor General (1936–39) of French Equatorial Africa, Joseph-François Reste de Roca: 'Out of a thousand soldier-workers employed, 921 suffered from general morbidity and 19 died of dysentery over a four and half month period.' The report concluded that the Office du Niger was a complete failure in both human and economic terms.[46]

Military recruitment resumed with the outbreak of World War II. Following a decade of slackening commitment to African development during the Great Depression, wartime mobilization of men and commodities led to far more intensive colonial interventions in the economy. Commodity marketing boards, 'grow more' campaigns and coerced labour in all sectors were hallmarks of this new interventionism. Innovations in aircraft and weapons led to a frenzied search for minerals needed for advanced technologies. This greater intervention during the war led immediately after to war to an era of enhanced commitment to development, public and higher education, health care and infrastructural investments.[47]

Forced cultivation

Most Africans farmed for at least part of the year and for parts of their lives. Most African farmers responded positively to price incentives and innovations in transportation by increasing their output and bringing their crops to market. This was certainly the case, for example, with

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[45] Echenberg and Filipovich, 'African Military Labour'.

[46] Babacar Fall, *Social History in French West Africa : Forced Labor, Labor Market, Women and Politics* (Amsterdam : the South-South Exchange Programme for Research on the History of Development [SEPHIS] ; Calcutta : the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences [CSSSC], 2002), p. 11.

[47] Frederick Cooper, *Africa since 1940: The Past of the Present* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

palm oil, peanuts and cocoa in West Africa and with sesame and coffee in East Africa. Why then did colonial states resort to compulsion to force Africans to cultivate certain crops?

Most of the crops or commodities colonial authorities demanded as part of this regime of coercion were those in high demand in Europe. Rubber was one of these commodities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which fed a growing demand for bicycle tires among other products. This demand put downside pressure on the regions of Africa where wild rubber flourished, especially the Congo. Among the worst abuses was the forced collection – a variant of forced cultivation – of wild rubber in the Congo Free State, discussed above. Africans individually or as collective villages were assigned quotas of wild rubber, and failure to meet those quotas led to severe punishments that ultimately led to the collapse of the Congo Free State and its annexation by Belgium. Vegetable oils derived from palm kernels and peanuts did not seem to warrant coercion, since peasant producers responded with alacrity to price incentives. Cotton, however, proved to be the crop most susceptible to coerced cultivation and most consistently in demand in metropolitan economies.[48]

Demand for cotton in Europe expanded exponentially with the industrialization of the textile industry during the second half of the nineteenth century. Since cotton does not grow in temperate European climates, industrialists had to draw on supplies thousands of miles away. This was true of all major European colonial powers: Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Belgium and Portugal. Some promoted cotton production for export in the late nineteenth century, but the era of intensified cotton production occurred in the interwar period.

Coerced cotton production took many forms. In peasant zones of West and East Africa, colonial officials expected market forces to yield sufficient cotton to feed metropolitan demand. Metropolitan cotton mills wanted higher quality product, lower prices and steadier supplies than available on the world market. Because African peasants had a keen sense of the labour demands for various crops, they often devoted their efforts to crops that had higher yields and better market prices. Cotton was usually not their choice. Cotton was labour intensive, often interfered with food crops and sometimes fetched higher prices locally than in the export market. Colonial officials were mostly disappointed by the quality and quantity of cotton delivered for export, and they increasingly turned to more coercive means: forcing peasants to

[48] For the range of colonial efforts to promote cotton, see Allen Isaacman and Richard L. Roberts, eds, *Cotton, Colonialism, and Social History in Sub–Saharan Africa* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995).

cultivate cotton, forcing them to bring their harvest to market and often forcing them to sell their harvest at fixed prices.

Among the most coercive cotton regimes emerged in Portugal's colonies of Angola and Mozambique. Despite the relatively small metropolitan cotton textile industry, colonial officials were under significant pressure to produce colonial supplies. In 1928, Angola and Mozambique only provided 2 per cent of Portugal's cotton demand. The Portuguese cotton lobby played an important role in Salazar's *Estado Nuovo* and pushed Portuguese colonial officials to turn to forced labour to increase colonial cotton production in Angola and Mozambique.[49] By 1946, these colonies produced 95 per cent of Portugal's demand for raw cotton. But the cost to African peasants was extremely high. As Allen Isaacman has described, the colonial state put enormous pressure on African chiefs and headmen to force African peasants to cultivate cotton despite its low yield and its interference with subsistence crops. By 1944, vast tracts of Mozambique were formally directed as cotton concessions, and well over 800,000 Mozambicans were forced to cultivate cotton and bring their harvests to official markets even as prices for cotton fell. Mozambique achieved such results only through a brutal regime of labour control and punishments exerted by African headmen and police.[50] In the Ivory Coast, the development of coffee and cocoa plantations after 1930 was accomplished by compulsory cultivation and by the conscription of workmen for the benefit of French settlers.

In Italian Somaliland, Italian settlers and colonial officials along the fertile Juba River responded to the scarcity in agricultural labour through introducing a unique recruitment approach. In a system that was locally referred to as 'Italian marriage', girls and women were forcibly married to men on the condition that they work on the settlers' farms for a set number of years.[51]

Africans faced forced cultivation on smaller scales everywhere. Most prominent were the 'chief's fields', sometimes called the '*champs de commandant*' (fields of the colonial district officer). Some of these fields were designated as experimental fields, where new crops were grown to assess their economic and agronomic viability. But chiefs throughout colonial

[49] Alexander Keese, 'Searching for the Reluctant Hands: Obsession, Ambivalence and the Practice of Organising Involuntary Labour in Colonial Cuanza-Sul and Malange Districts, Angola, 1926–1945', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 41, 2 (2013), 238–58.

[50] Allen Isaacman, *Cotton is the Mother of Poverty: Peasants, Work, and Rural Struggle in Colonial Mozambique, 1938–1961* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1996).

[51] Francesca Declich, 'Italian Weddings and Memory of Trauma: Colonial Domestic Policy in Southern Somalia, 1910‑41', *Marriage by Force? Contestation over Consent and Coercion in Africa*, ed. Anne Bunting, Benjamin N. Lawrance and Richard L. Roberts (Athens, OH: University of Ohio Press, 2016), pp. 109–34.

Africa benefited from their control over requisitioned labour and directed village labour to their own fields, which benefited them directly.[52] This was a central part of the 'bargains of collaboration' that provided the incentives of Africans to serve their colonial overlords.

Prison labour

Created to discipline and punish, prisons in colonial Africa provided a stream of coerced labour for public works and private enterprise. Prisoners everywhere are under compulsion to work on the maintenance of the prison itself. Female as well as male prisoners worked in gendered roles within the prisons. Minors were increasingly separated from adults and sometimes sent to agricultural colonies, where they worked as part of their rehabilitation. In no cases were prisoners consulted as to whether they wished to work or not. They were compelled to do so. In most colonies, the law obliged prisoners to labour as part of their sentences. In French colonial Africa, prison labour was commonly used to provide supplementary manpower for public work projects. Prisoners were mobilized to build and repair harbours, for railroad construction and the maintenance of government buildings. Generally, mandatory penal labour did not involve the mobilization of large numbers of people. However, arbitrary arrests by the *commandants de cercle* under the *indigénat* usually resulted in assignment to work sites. In French Guinea, prisoners were obliged to work five days a week, with weekends and holidays off from labour. In French Equatorial Africa, prisoners were transferred to work for expatriate logging companies and into the hands of concession owners. In British colonial Africa, a parallel system of prisons – one for the native administrations and the other the central government prisons – funneled prisoners into different labour pools: one for native authorities' public and often private needs and the other primarily for public works. In some cases, as in South Africa, where the prison labour system was highly developed, prisoners working for private enterprise were paid a nominal wage, but this wage was actually paid to the prison administration as a way of financing the prison system.

South Africa developed the most comprehensive prison labour system. Already from the founding of the Cape Colony, prisoners worked on public works. South African prisons developed two models for using prison labour for other than public works. The first was the contract system, where light manufacturing was conducted within the prisons. On Robben Island, for example, prisoners produced dried seaweed that was sold internationally. The second

[52] Berman and Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley*; Keese, 'Slow Abolition'.

model was the lease system, whereby prisoners were hired out to private enterprises. At the beginning of the twentieth century, De Beers diamond mining at Kimberley was the largest employer of leased prison labour in South Africa. After the South African War, the gold mines of Witwatersrand increasingly used prison labour. After the 1913 Natives Land Act, white farmers found it difficult to recruit cheap African labour. With the massive increase in incarceration due to pass law violations, especially after the development of apartheid, the South African prisons faced severe overcrowding and escalating expenses. To reduce both, the prisons increasingly used the lease system to funnel prison labour to white farmers. In the 1950s, more than 200,000 prisoners annually were released on parole to white farmers for whom they were forced to work. These were termed 'farm jails'.[53]

In French West Africa, colonial authorities provided prison labourers to a private company, the Société des Salins du Sine-Saloum, between 1943 and 1956 and confined them to the disagreeable, harsh and underpaid task of salt extraction. Colonial officials justified this action as necessary in order to provide salt to the wider community of the French West Africa Federation, given that no free labour was willing to work under the prevailing conditions and for the low wages being offered.[54] The use of penal labour and government assisted recruitment lasted until 1956, ten years after the provisions of the Houphouët-Boigny law that legally prohibited the use of forced labour.

Africans' Resistance to Forced Labour and its Impact on African Societies

The height of forced labour recruitment occurred between 1920 and 1936. Until 1936, the only significant form of African response to forced labour was desertion. We should consider desertion to be a form of spontaneous rebellion that sometimes involved individuals and sometimes groups. Jeremy Ball has argued that in Portuguese colonial Africa 'the only clear act of resistance was to flee'.[55] Colonial officials assumed that at least twenty per cent of forced labour would desert. At notoriously abusive labour sites such as Samé, Diakandapé and Marakala in French Sudan; Kindia and Coyah in Guinea; and Wassadou and Koutal in Senegal, forced labour deserted at much higher levels. For these workers, desertion was probably the only viable form of resistance against oppression. Over time, Africans turned to other forms of

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[53] Allen Cook, *Akin to Slavery: Prison Labour in South Africa* (London: International Defence and Aid Fund, 1982).

[54] Ibra Sene, 'Colonisation Française et Main-d'oeuvre Carcérale au Sénégal: De l'Emploi des Détenus des Camps Pénaux sur les Chantiers des Travaux Routiers (1927–1940)', *French Colonial History*, 5 (2004), 153–71.

[55] Ball, '*I Escaped in a Coffin*', p. 2.

resistance to forced labour, namely sabotage, the refusal to work and songs that shamed African police, chiefs and officials.[56] Since recruitment of forced labour drew from widely dispersed regions, workers rarely developed the consciousness necessary to stage more organized labour stoppages. In the late 1930s, the resistance to forced labour became widespread. Workers complained more frequently about the quality of food, working conditions, failure to remit promised pay and the brutality of the supervisors. Between 1937 and 1945, we begin to see occupation of work sites, including management headquarters. Despite these organized labour actions, resistance to the colonial forced labour was primarily passive. Jeremy Ball argues ‘work songs lamented suffering the work regime’ but the forced labourers ‘did not directly challenge the system’.[57]

The long history of forced labour had a significant impact on the long-term health and sustainability of African populations. French Equatorial Africa gained ill fame for the widespread use of forced labour. Colonial authorities forced the able-bodied male population of Gabon and the Middle Congo to work at the timber camps whose products formed a large part of the colonies’ exports. On arriving at the lumber sites, Africans were forced to sign binding long-term contracts with European employers. The expansion of cocoa on São Tomé, Principe and Fernando Po depended upon coercing workers into contracts, often by subterfuge and other forms of coercion.[58] With so many able-bodied males away from their home villages, food shortages became endemic, leading to increased poverty and malnutrition, which in turn increased the villagers’ susceptibility to diseases including malaria, sleeping sickness and tuberculosis. In the timber-working districts, where there were few women, prostitution and syphilis spread, and drunkenness mounted catastrophically.

Around ten thousand forced labourers worked annually on the Congo-Océan railway from 1921 to 1934, linking Brazzaville to Pointe-Noire. Work on this railway was brutally hard, and mortality among the workers enormous. According to official data, in the early 1920s, twenty-five per cent of the workers perished annually from starvation, dysentery, other diseases and mistreatment. In response to international criticism and to the flight of workers to neighboring colonies, the French improved the labour conditions, and mortality declined to

[56] See the classic statement by Leroy Vail and Landeg White, ‘Forms of Resistance: Songs and Perceptions of Power in Colonial Mozambique’, *American Historical Review*, 88, 4 (1983), 883–919.

[57] Ball, *‘I Escaped in a Coffin’*, p. 2.

[58] Catherine Higgs, *Chocolate Islands: Cocoa, Slavery, and Colonial Africa* (Athens, OH: Ohio University. Press, 2012).

twelve per cent. This figure, however, did not include the porters and those who perished *en route* before reaching the construction site. As work progressed, colonial authorities could no longer recruit labour regionally. Instead, they were forced to recruit labour as far away as Ubangi-Shari and Chad, where workers had to travel over a thousand kilometres before reaching Brazzaville. Other workers from Ubangi-Shari and Chad who did not travel to Brazzaville were often forced to work on European owned concessions growing cotton. Africans did not wait around to be conscripted by their chiefs into the ranks of forced labour. Those Africans close of colonial borders fled to different colonies where the labour demands were less strenuous. This was the case in the French Congo, where Africans could flee to both neighbouring Angola and the Belgian Congo. Fugitives from forced labour, however, found themselves under even more draconian labour demands in Angola after the intensification of Portuguese colonial rule and forced labour demands in the 1930s, and from increasing vigilance against 'vagrancy' in the Belgian Congo.[59]

In French West Africa, the people the Mossi region of Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso) found themselves in an unenviable situation, where they were targeted by colonial authorities as an important labour reserve. From 1932 to 1946, fifty thousand workers were recruited annually for the coffee and cocoa plantations in Ivory Coast, and another fifty thousand were recruited forcibly to settle the cotton growing areas of the Office du Niger in neighbouring French Sudan. Increased labour coercion stimulated emigration to the neighbouring British colony of Gold Coast (now Ghana). Such emigration increased to 100,000 and should be considered a form of resistance to increased forced labour recruitment.

In the areas considered labour reserves where forced labour recruitment was especially intense, the absence of so many young men who formed the bulk of the able-bodied workers and who were off working in the mines, the cities or the zones of capitalist agriculture, led to declining agricultural output in the villages. Care for the weak, the infirm, the very young and the very old became precarious. Moreover, since the cash these migrating young men brought back was most often turned over to elderly male household heads and circulated within tight bounds of matrimonial exchanges, few resources remained to be invested in agricultural modernization, such as new technologies of production and new crops. In all cases, the powers of these rural despots also involved the ability to approve or deny access to new land to farm.

[59] Alexander Keese, 'The Constraints of Late Colonial Reform Policy: Forced Labour Scandals in the Portuguese Congo (Angola) and the Limits of Reform under Authoritarian Colonial Rule, 1955–61', *Portuguese Studies*, 28, 2 (2012), 186–200.

In some parts of Africa, especially where European settlers arrived, access to new and more fertile lands was blocked even more fully. Since relatively few women participated in these labour markets, the many women who remained in rural areas experienced increasing poverty precisely because so much male labour was absent working in the capitalist sectors. This is what Ester Boserup called the feminization of poverty, and it increased dramatically during the course of the twentieth century in Africa. Progressive impoverishment of rural areas pushed more men and women into the labour force and into the expanding urban areas of mid-century colonial Africa.[60]

International Scrutiny, New Humanitarian Sensibilities and the End of Forced Labour

The interwar period introduced new pressures on the colonial policy that senior colonial administrators and metropolitan governments could not easily ignore. The establishment of the League of Nations and the ILO in 1919, regardless of how ineffective they were in many areas, nonetheless changed the nature and the level of scrutiny to which the colonies were now exposed. In addition, new forms of documentary reporting exposed abuses throughout the colonial world. These international organizations and individuals put pressure on colonial ministries, which in turn put pressure on colonial administrators, to address these practices and abuses.[61]

In response to pressures from the League of Nations and from non-governmental organizations and journalists, the ILO established a Committee of Experts on Native Labour in 1927. These experts included colonial administrators, some of whom had served on the Temporary Slavery Commission, which had been appointed by the League in 1924. It also included representatives from labour and business interests. Befitting such a committee, among its first tasks was to assemble a questionnaire to be sent out to member governments. Just as with the Temporary Slavery Commission, these requests for information sent bolts of activity up and down the administrative ladder from various ministries of colonies to local governors and from local governors to district officers. Coincident with efforts to frame international conventions regarding slavery and forced labour, the 1920s also witnessed the emergence of a new humanitarian sentiment that was linked to the growing international women's movements and to the maturation of new forms of documentary reporting, which further opened colonial

[60] Ester Boserup, *Woman's Role in Economic Development* (London: Earthscan Publications, 1970).

[61] J. P. Daughton, 'Behind the Imperial Curtain: International Humanitarian Efforts and the Critique of French Colonialism in the Interwar Years', *French Historical Studies*, 34, 3 (2011), 503–28.

practices to wider scrutiny and debate. Such new forms of documentary reporting included travels accounts, such as those by André Gide on the labour abuses in Chad in the late 1920s, and journalistic reporting that sometimes embarrassed colonial officials but often sparked public outrage.[62]

By 1930, the Committee of Experts on Native Labour had pounded out the ILO Forced Labour Convention (No. 29), which defined forced or compulsory labour as 'all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily'. The Convention exempted military conscription, service in the event of an emergency, penal labour and 'minor communal services' that could be considered 'normal civic obligations incumbent upon the members of the community'. Forced labour for private enterprise and for underground work in mines was expressly forbidden. The 1930 Geneva Convention aimed 'to suppress the use of forced or compulsory labour in all its form within a shortest possible period'.[63] Not all colonial powers agreed to the 1930 Convention. It was ratified in 1931 by Britain and the Netherlands. Italy ratified it in 1934 and France in 1937. But ratification of the Convention was delayed in Belgium until 1944 and in Portugal until 1956. Some leading colonial officials, including René Mercier for the French side, argued strongly for the need to modify but maintain temporary forms of forced labour as a way of 'educating' Africans about the value of work.[64] France passed a bill on 21 August 1930 to regulate its coercive labour policies. *Travail forcé* was formally abolished, although it was replaced with *travail obligatoire.* Portugal, under the Salazar regime, chose instead to augment compulsory labour in its effort to promote the economic development of its African colonies.

By 1930, the League began to investigate complaints of compulsory labour recruitment and shipment of labour under government oversight from Liberia to Fernando Po. This commerce in coerced labour was at least three decades old and fed the growing demand for labour on the cocoa plantations on Fernando Po. Liberians were forcibly recruited and effectually sold to Fernando Po planters. The League's investigation revealed widespread official government complicity in this trade in coerced labour, resulting in a scandal that rocked

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[62] See André Gide, *Voyage au Congo* (Paris: Gallimard, 1927), and Albert Londres, *Terre d'ébène (la traite des noirs)* (Paris: A. Michel, 1929).

[63] International Labour Organization, *Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)* (Geneva: ILO, 1930); http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C029

[64] René Mercier, *Le travail obligatoire dans les colonies africaines* (Paris: Larose, 1933).

the Liberian Government. The investigation did not, however, look into the emerging compulsory labour recruitment for the Firestone Rubber plantations. In 1926, seventy-six per cent of the 10,500 workers on the rubber plantations had not signed on voluntarily. [65]

The deepening of the Depression in the 1930s and the rumblings of war blunted the potential reforms in Africa regarding forced labour and slavery. In some areas of colonial Africa, the Depression, which often reduced sharply the incomes of peasants and workers, led to the resurgence of forced labour practices such as pawning in order to secure cash for taxes. In the absence of significant other sources of wealth, pawning of people in exchange of loans was a well-established but declining practice in much of West Africa. During the Depression, however, there was a resurgence of pawning.[66] In response to the crises of the Depression, reformist governments were elected in several European metropoles. They contributed to increased attention to colonial reforms. In France, under the Popular Front, which came to power 1936, the hypocrisy inherent in abolishing forced labour but retaining obligatory labour was increasingly emphasized. In 1937, Governor General De Coppet denounced the persistence of forced labour: 'We are lying in France, in Europe, in the entire world, in Geneva and at the International Labour Organization when, regulations and circulars in hand, we speak of the organization of public works labor in the colonies. We dishonor our colonial administration and we demoralize our civil servants by asking them to apply, on paper only, regulations inapplicable in practice.'[67] Belgium finally ratified the ILO Forced Labour Convention in 1944 and Portugal did so in 1956, but forced labour practices in Portuguese colonies persisted until the outbreak of anticolonial revolts in 1961.

The outbreak of World War II witnessed the return of military conscription and forced cultivation in many African colonies. With the fall of France in 1940, most of colonial Africa remained with the Vichy regime (French Equatorial Africa sided with the Free French), and Vichy's corporatist ideology provided justification for forced labour in the 'public good'. Under Vichy rule, forced labour in French West Africa reached unprecedented levels. The

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[65] League of Nations, Secretariat (1930), *Report of the Liberian Commission of Enquiry* (C.658.M272). http://biblio-archive.unog.ch/Dateien/CouncilMSD/C-658-M-272-1930-VI_EN.pdf
See also I. K. Sundiata, *Black Scandal: America and the Liberian Labor Crisis, 1929–1936* (Philadelphia, PA: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1980).

[66] Paul E. Lovejoy and Toyin Falola, eds., *Pawnship, slavery, and colonialism in Africa* (Trenton, NJ : Africa World Press, 2003).

[67] Quoted in Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society : The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 31.

French were not alone in intensifying compulsory labour requirements during the war. Fascist Italy also intensified compulsory labour. Wartime demand for both manpower and tropical commodities increased the use of forced labour throughout the continent. In Southern Rhodesia, all male between the ages of 18 and 45 who were unemployed (i.e. not working for someone else) for three months or longer were conscripted by the state and funneled to settler farms. In both Rhodesias, Africans were conscripted both in the military and into the Labour Corps to be used as deemed necessary by colonial officials for building of new air bases, which trained pilots and crew for the Royal Air Force, food production, commodity production and for public works more generally. Scholars estimate that fifty thousand to one hundred thousand Africans were conscripted into the various Labour Corps each year from 1942 to 1945. While labour policies during wartime differed from colony to colony, Britain's loss of its Far Eastern colonies in Asia to the Japanese led to an intensified focus on Britain's African colonies for increased food and commodity production through the mobilization of 'non-combatant labour', the conditions of which were purposely left vague. This was especially true in East and Central Africa, where this region's production of rubber, sisal and pyrethrum led to labour conscription that worked under harsh penalties for desertion and resistance to recruitment.[68] In Nigeria, conscripted labour was used in the Jos tin mines.[69] Compulsory labour coincided with sustained draughts and crop shortfalls in East and Central Africa, which contributed to recruitment resistance and anticolonial agitation.

With the end of World War II, the situation become more favourable in French colonies for the implementation of changes recommended by the Brazzaville Conference in 1944. Thus, when the French National Constituent Assembly commenced its work in October 1945, the representatives of France's overseas territories argued that there was a fundamental contradiction between the concept of the French Union and the persistence of inequality and discrimination which characterized the relations between the colonies and France.[70] Following initiatives by its African parliamentarians, the Assembly voted for a succession of reforms. Decrees dated 22 December 1945 and 20 February 1946 abolished the system of penalties that had been a centerpiece of the *Code de l'Indigénat*. A bill presented by Ivory Coast's Félix

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[68] Killingray, 'Labour Exploitation for Military Campaigns'.

[69] Bill Freund, *Capital and Labour in the Nigerian Tin Mines* (Atlantic Highlands, NH: Academic Press, 1980); see also Gavin Bridge and Tomas Frederiksen, '"Order out of Chaos": Resources, Hazards and the Production of a Tin-Mining Economy in Northern Nigeria in the Early Twentieth Century', *Environment and History*, 18, 3 (2012), 367–94.

[70] Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation.*

Houphouët-Boigny abolished forced labour altogether on 1 Apri1 1946. With the end of forced labour, voluntary wage labour became the principal mode of recruiting workers in the colonial territories. By the late 1940s, with significant migration to urban centers, the shortage of manpower that had prevailed for much of the colonial period was reduced, and a free labour market appeared. The accelerated development of a free labour market also gave a strong boost to the struggles of trade unions for progressive social legislation, which climaxed in the passage of the Overseas Labour Law Code on 15 December 1952.

Various forms of officially coerced labour persisted well after the formal abolition of forced labour. All colonial powers retained provisions to punish vagrancy and idleness with periods of forced labour. Even Britain, which prided itself on its early abolition of forced labour, permitted chiefs to organize villagers for obligatory labour on roads and for other public works. All colonial powers had laws that permitted the mobilization of forced labour under emergency conditions. Some colonial officials invoked such emergency provisions when free labour was not available to carry crops to market well into the late 1950s.[71]

World War II, meanwhile, had accelerated the development of African nationalism and had provided the European powers with a context for reassessing their colonial policy. The end of the war also led to the creation of new international organizations, such as the United Nations, which, following the revelations of Nazi war crimes and the widespread use of forced labour, contributed to the new international conventions on human rights. The United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) called yet again for the abolition of all forms of slavery, servitude and the trade in slaves. The first acknowledgement of the continued presence of forms of unfreedom among UN member states was achieved in 1956, when the General Assembly passed the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery, which included debt bondage, serfdom, unfree marriages and exploitation of child labour among the prohibited acts. Defining the relationship between ordinary and exploitative child labour led to the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child and to the 1999 ILO Convention 182, Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour. And by way of recognizing that the problem of trafficking in persons was a global human rights problem, in 2000 the UN passed the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. The 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century witnessed the proliferation

[71] Keese, 'Slow Abolition'.

of both international conventions against trafficking, the development of international case law regarding trafficking and individual countries' efforts to legislate and enforce anti-trafficking laws.

New Forms of Forced Labour in Postcolonial Africa

Decolonization accelerated the end of colonial era forced labour. In the face of persistent use of forced labour, the ILO adopted a second Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (No. 105) in 1957 that 'specifically aimed at the abolition of the compulsory mobilization and use of labour by the State for economic development purposes, as well as of forced labour as a means of political coercion or as punishment for the infringement of labour discipline'.[72] Nonetheless, during the postcolonial period, coerced labour was a prominent feature of many state-sponsored development schemes.

Many African nationalists heralded the end of colonial rule as the liberation of Africans from the chains of colonialism and forced labour and promised that independence and economic development would benefit all. Within a decade of the first wave of independence in the late 1950s and early 1960s, civil wars, military coups, economic mismanagement and corruption had undermined these promises and bred deep resentments. Liberation movements struggled against the remaining colonial and settler colonies of Guinea Bissau, Angola, Mozambique, Southern Rhodesia, South Africa, South West Africa and Ethiopia, which had annexed Eritrea. Secessionist movements broke out in Nigeria, the Congo and Ethiopia, among other states. In this context, nation states, secessionist movements and rebel movements turned to varieties of coerced labour. Virtually all independent states retained various forms of coercion in rural areas to sustain production of export crops and the supply of cheap food to feed the expanding urban centers in an effort to buy political peace from politically volatile urban dwellers. This pressure on rural areas encouraged the persistence of various forms of coerced labour there including forced marriages, slavery, and child labour to augment production. In this section, examples of coerced labour in economic development and in rebel movements will illuminate the range of coerced labour in postcolonial Africa.

Leaders of independent African nations faced many of the same problems of mobilizing labour that their colonial predecessors had faced. Many turned to old colonial methods of mobilizing labour through anti-vagrancy laws. Others exhorted and then obliged

[72] Quoted in International Labour Organization, *Strengthening Action to End Forced Labour,* Report IV (1), International Labour Conference, 103rd Session 2014, p. 7.

underemployed youth to join newly created Labour or Workers' Brigades – such as in Senegal under the county's first president, Mammadou Dia, or in Ghana under its first president, Kwame Nkrumah. Newly empowered chiefs in independent Mali, Guinea and the Congo turned to 'communal' labour to mobilize reluctant villagers to work and harvest crops to help build the new nation.[73] Other independent nations turned to even more draconian forms of forced labour under the guise of promoting development.

In 1967, independent Tanzania launched an ambitious economic development programme that President Julius Nyerere called *ujamaa*, a Swahili term referring to 'community' or 'extended family'. It became a shorthand for a linked set of political and economic reforms that was to yield prosperous and self-reliant rural villages centred on the provision of clean water and sanitation, access to community owned farming machinery and public education. Tanzanian peasants, however, were less convinced about the value of moving from their farms, where they understood the micro-endowments of various terrains, to the new *ujamaa* villages often far from their farms. Frustrated with the tepid response from peasants to take advantage of programmes designed to help them, the state turned to violence to compel peasants to move to the *ujamaa* villages. By 1973, under Operation Ujiji, the weight of the military was used to uproot peasants and force them to relocate to *ujamaa* villages. Faced with continued deterioration of rural and urban standards of living and with pressure from World Bank and International Monetary Fund structural adjustment programmes, in 1985, Tanzania finally abandoned many aspects of *ujamaa*.

In 1961, the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) began a thirty-year war of liberation against Ethiopia's annexation of Eritrea. The ELF created a highly disciplined army and support system that ultimately prevailed against a much stronger Ethiopian military. In 1991, Eritrea had become an independent country with an ambitious economic development agenda. To further build a sense of national identity, Eritrea instituted compulsory military service for all Eritrean men and women between the ages of eighteen forty years. Such service consisted of six months military training and twelve months of active service. Eritrea was making considerable strides towards its goals when war with Ethiopia broke out again in 1998. Reservists were called out to augment the active military recruits. The border war was enormously costly to the state's investment in economic development. In 2000, peace accords were signed to end the border

[73] Keese, 'Slow Abolition', 404–5; Klaus Ernst, *Tradition and Progress in the African Village: Noncapitalist Transformation of Rural Communities in Mali* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976).

war, but the Eritrean government did not demobilize its vast military. Instead, the government extended compulsory military service indefinitely under the label of the Warasi-Yikaalo Development Campaign (WYDC). Designed to be a 'school of the nation', WYDC was supposed to provide labour for economic development projects in the national interest, but it morphed into a 'modern form of slavery'. Men and women in WYDC worked 'under menace of penalty' (which is the classic ILO formulation of forced labour) and were subject to periodic police round-ups of deserters and draft dodgers.[74]

Smaller scale forced labour continues in many rural areas of independent Africa where chiefs continue to exert 'traditional authority' over prestation. Some of the most egregious cases can be found in post-apartheid South Africa, where basic human rights are enshrined in the constitution. However, the constitution continues to recognize the authority of rural chiefs, who claim traditional authority to call upon unpaid 'tribal levies' to work on village projects, including the chiefs' own fields. Tribal levies are essentially forced labour, which, given male migration patterns, tends to fall most heavily on women.[75]

In a review of the persistence of forced labour legislation in 1979, labour attorney David Ziskind surveyed the existence of forced labour legislation in independent Africa and identified which nations had provisions for exacting compulsory labour for which kinds of issues. At the time, the Central African Empire (now the Central African Republic), Kenya, Liberia, Tanzania and Uganda had laws that made it possible to imprison and to impose forced labour on individuals who opposed the 'established political, social or economic order'. Liberia retained provisions allowing it to forcibly mobilize labour under its 'Rules and Regulations Governing the Hinterland'. In Kenya, officials could require work for the conservation of natural resources. In Sierra Leone, the state could impose compulsory cultivation in case of extreme famine. Workers on strike faced imprisonment and forced labour in Benin, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda. Zaire, under President Mobutu, and Chad had provisions to

[74] Giam Kabreab, 'Forced Labour in Eritrea', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 47 (1), 2006: 41-72; Tricia Redeker Hepner and Samia Tecle, 'New Refugees, Development-Forced Displacement, and Transnational Governance In Eritrea And Exile,' *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development* 42 (3/4) 2013): 377-410.

[75] Ineke van Kessel and Barbara Oomen, '"One Chief, One Vote": The Revival of Traditional Authorities in Post-Apartheid South Africa', *African Affairs*, 96 (1997), 561–85; Christina Murray, *South Africa's Troubled Royalty: Traditional Leaders after Democracy*, Law and Policy Paper 23 (Australian National University, 2004).

force individuals to labour if they failed to pay their taxes. In Lesotho, chiefs could still require villages to act as 'messengers', a vague category of work.[76]

Failed states, widespread corruption, neopatrimonialism and economic mismanagement fueled resentments among Africa's independent populations. Rebellions and insurrections appeared in many regions throughout the continent. Some were supported by Cold War rivalries that used rebel movements as proxies. Some were supported by white settler regimes eager to destabilize neighboring states that harbored guerrilla groups fighting for majority rule. But rebel movements drew on deep resentments about the failed promises of independence. Some were secessionist movements seeking to separate territory from the nation state. Some sought to topple current regimes. And others were more inchoate movements against the status quo without clear a political agenda. All rebel movements required financing and new recruits to sustain themselves.[77]

A central feature of the late twentieth-century roving rebel movements in Africa has been the 'civilianization' of armed conflict. Organized militaries have traditionally sought to protect civilian populations, although rape and pillage by victorious troops has been common. The civilianization of armed conflict in Africa has meant that civilians are targeted directly and continuously. This is especially true in regard to the 'reproduction' of the rebel bands. Rebel movements in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Mozambique, Northern Uganda, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have preyed particularly on boys and often girls as child soldiers and girls as 'bush' wives. Founded in 1975 by Ian Smith's white minority government in Southern Rhodesia and later supported by South Africa, Renamo became a roving rebel band that led to a civil war and devastated vast tracts of Mozambique before agreeing to a cease fire in 1992. Among its tactics was to abduct girls who became bush wives and were forced to perform domestic and sexual labour. Evidence from the rebel movements of the 1990s have documented that some 120,000 children were forcibly recruited into these rebel movements. In the Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army, which abducted 25,000 children, child recruits constituted seventy to eighty per cent of the force, with girls composing about a third. Two to three thousand girls were forcibly recruited into the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone. While some girls fought, most were forced into marriages to provide sexual, domestic and reproductive services to the rebels. Fifty per cent of the bush wives in the

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[76] David Ziskind, 'Forced Labor in the Law of Nations', *Comparative Labor Law*, 3 (1979–80): 253–83.

[77] Thandika Mkandawire, 'The Terrible Toll of Post-Colonial "Rebel Movements" in Africa: Towards an Explanation of the Violence against the Peasantry', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 40, 2 (2002), 181–215.

RUF were under fifteen years old. In Somalia and Northern Nigeria, the al-Shabaab and Boko Haram rebel movements have abducted school girls and forced them into marriages to rebel fighters as a means of undermining western education and of providing sexual and domestic labour. In the eastern regions of the DRC, girls and young women abducted by combatants have been taken to bases in the forest where they are forced to provide sexual services and domestic labour.[78]

Conclusion

Forced labour was a subset of a wider set of practices using coerced labour. The focus of this chapter has been on forced labour as a practice of state mobilization of labour in Africa during the twentieth century. As such, the mobilization of labour by the state has been a feature of African labour history since the beginning of colonial conquest. In its efforts to conquer territory, build infrastructure and promote economic development (especially for export), colonial states in Africa faced African populations unwilling to work for the state or private enterprises at wages offered and for the conditions of work involved. To compensate for the deficiencies in the labour market, the state turned to formal means of compulsion to generate workers for its various goals. This chapter has identified seven prominent forms of forced labour in 20th century Africa: requisitioned labour, indentured labour, prestation (labour tax), military conscription, military conscription for non-military uses, forced cultivation, and penal labour.

Although African nationalists promised that independence would end colonial era forms of forced labour and bring wealth and well-being to all, many independent African states retained or modified colonial era laws that permitted forced labour. Rebel groups throughout postcolonial Africa also turned to forced labour to provide soldiers as well as girls and women to provide sexual and domestic services.

Almost ninety years after the adoption of the ILO Forced Labour Convention in 1930, calling on 'member States to suppress the use of forced labour and to criminalize the offense', the practice still exists, albeit in different forms from those that provoked such concern in the

[78] See Stacey Hynd, '"To Be Taken as a Wife Is a Form of Death": The Social, Military, and Humanitarian Dynamics of Forced Marriage and Girl Soldiers in African Conflicts, c. 1990‑2010'. *Marriage by Force? Contestation over Consent and Coercion in Africa.* ed. Anne Bunting, Benjamin N. Lawrance and Richard L. Roberts (Athens, OH: University of Ohio Press, 2016), pp. 290–310.

early twentieth century[79]. In 2010, the ILO estimated that 20.9 million people were victims of forced labour worldwide.[80]

[79] ILO, *Strengthening Action to End Forced Labour,* p. 1.

[80] International Labour Organization, *Global Estimate of Forced Labour: Results and Methodology* (Geneva: ILO, 2012), p. 2.

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