

## The Plight of African Worker and Economic Starvation: A New Historicism Theory Survey of Kiswahili Drama in Five Decades

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### Abstract

This paper analyses Kiswahili drama in the quest to signify that for decades, the sorry state of workers has informed the lack of economic growth in many African states other matters notwithstanding. The marginalization and paying only lip services to workers' plights have impacted negatively the socio-economic development across the continent. This paper argues that, the unceasing industrial unrests in the workforce in many African states is the reason economies in Africa have stagnated for decades. To lead the discussion, the paper sought to indulge three selected Kiswahili playlists using New Historicism Theory for data. The selected texts are: *Kilio cha Haki* (1981), *Visiki* (1984) and *Mstahiki Meya* (2009). The paper hypothesizes that, poor working conditions and opaque and draconian labour laws are responsible for the mess. The turmoil is further compounded by greedy political elites and mean economic players. The discussion concedes that, for Africa to jumpstart socio-economic and political development, its economies aided by a strong workforce is necessary. The paper concludes that Africa needs to reap benefits from big workforce and stop migrant workers that leave to seek for favourable working conditions elsewhere. Strong labour laws, workers' representations and inter-state free labour movements will help ease labour shortage in the continent. Reaping into immense natural resources and discouraging economic zoning by selfish individuals would see Africa rule the world.

**Key Words:** *Economy, Kiswahili Drama, Decades, Plight, Workers, New Historicism*

### Introduction

The plight of workers in many African states spins in decades as portrayed by the Kiswahili playlists. *Kilio cha Haki* (1981) is set in 1960s immediately after Kenya's independence when most manufacturing companies were still purely in the management by foreigners. It's a decade that spun the abuse of workers' rights and their representations were criminalized. The state security organs and justice agencies due to the involvement of political players into the labour industry, they were turned into private armies that suppressed workers rather than support positive changes. Workers were viewed as ungrateful rebels whenever they agitated for proper working conditions. As a result, two decades later, the plight of workers remained unaddressed as it's evidenced in the selected Kiswahili playlists (*Visiki*, 1984). Workers still wrestle with hunger and starvation because the political elite and few individual entrepreneurs have put profit ahead of the donkey.

The situation is worsened by lack of priorities. Flower farms are preferred ahead of food products that the African worker desperately needs first. Due to poor enumerations and despicable employment in many nations, poverty and hunger is the order of the day for workers. So dire is the situation so much so that, workers can't help but witness the demise of their malnourished children helplessly. The decades that follow, spell more doom as is manifest in *Mstahiki Meya* (2009). Workers lack right equipment in their places of work especially in the hospitals. Many health institutions are without drugs. There's a lot of looting from the state coffers unashamedly by the leadership who give a blind eye and a deaf ear to the plight of workers. It's ironical that African states want to industrialize while its working population is infringed. Many workers still stay as squatters for decades and possess neither land titles nor places of residence for themselves (*Visiki*, 1984).

Indeed, the Kiswahili playlists assert that, in the glare of corruption and unequal distribution of national resources, Africa cannot dream of economic take off (*Mstahiki Meya*, 2009). That there

exists political gangs and tribalism is a norm that informs economic beneficiaries in many African states. This is no-brainer as revealed in the selected Kiswahili playlists (Kilio cha Haki; 1981; Visiki, 1984). In the exploits of the selected Kiswahili drama, this discussion seeks to state that, African states and indeed the continent of Africa cannot jumpstart its economic industrialization to attain global stature as long as African states don't tap in their incomparable huge workforce. Africa must stop unnecessary migrant workers both within and without her boundaries by creating good working conditions in member states. She should address with urgency the question of citizenship and inter-country passes as a catalyst for economic development.

1<sup>st</sup> of May, (Kilio cha Haki), is a very commemorative date in the history of Kenya's independence. It's a day for the celebration of workers and their patriotic contributions to the economies of their nation since independence. That it coincides with the day the leader of workers (Lanina) in the farm of Delamon is being arraigned in the court of law raises a red flag. It only points to the cruelty and injustices that the African worker is subjected to (Kilio cha Haki: 2). In this particular day, no worker is expected to be in the office and that includes judges. Who, therefore will rule on this particular case involving workers and Lanina? The colonial hang-over still persist in many places of employment in Africa. Workers are exploited and their human rights abused every day. The law is only in existence to punish the poor worker. The oppressor is a king (Kilio cha Haki: 69-70). The playlist of *Mstahiki Meya* sums it up in one sentence: The workers in Africa need good working conditions and remunerations urgently. Arege writes:

SAUTI: Maslahi bora ni haki yetu  
Malipo bora ni haki ya mfanyikazi  
Huduma za afya ni haki yetu  
Tumechoka kudhalilishwa  
Na daima kupuuzwa  
(Arege, 2009:30-31).

VICE: Good working conditions is our right  
Good remunerations is a worker's right  
Health services is our right  
We're tired of being dehumanized  
And always being ignored

(Arege, 2009:30-31) (Our translation)

It's with certainty that economic growth cannot take off in a state of confusion as illustrated by the workers' voices. A quick solution is needed to arrest the situation.

### Theoretical Framework

The discussion in this paper used New Historicism Theory from the American school of thought. This theory recognizes that literature and society are intertwined therefore inseparable. What it means is that, literature draws its content from the daily occurrences in the society in which the originator is a member. The implication also is that, literary works cannot be analyzed outside the society in which they originate. The theory states that literary texts only mirror on what transpires in day today activities in the society whence matters such as the plight of workers, corruption, poor leadership among others. The theory further recognizes the importance of analyzing and understanding the historical context when studying literary works (Wamitila, 2002). This is so because the content creator acts as a 'witness, 'eye' and 'ear' in time and documents what ails the society on its behalf. The analysis of literary works should therefore reflect the events in the historical time. In essence, literature is viewed by new historicism as a product of time and cannot exist in isolation (Njogu and Wafula, 2007). The basic interpretation of this is that, literary works are not fully an act of creativity but a mixture of both realities and the imagined. The analysis should therefore be cognizant of both aspects of a literary piece for proper study of literary works. From the summative survey of this theory, the following come out as important pillars of New Historicism Theory:

- a) Literary and none literary works co-exist and complement each other. In other words, historical contents form part of the plot in literary works.
- b) Literary works change with time in line with the changing circumstances.
- c) Literary works should be judged in the context of time in which they're conceived.

Events of the author's context in time influence his philosophical thinking and the interpretation of the content thereof. Part of what the creator of the literary works does is to incorporate historical characters in the plot of their literary pieces (Wamitila, 2002). Another way is to collapse the entire historical occurrence and give it a new narration line in a more creative manner. Indeed Wafula asserts that, adequate interpretation of any literary works can only be realized within the paradigms of the society in which it originated (Wafula, 1999). The other important aspect of this school of thought is that, the study of literary works cannot act unaware of capitalist tradition because it informs the existence and practice of capitalism economy in the society of the author. That is what informed this discussion to use this particular theory in its analysis of selected Kiswahili drama playlists. This theory also factors in the understanding that, the way the current generation views and interprets some subject matter is arguably different from the incoming generations. Time and space are vital elements of how literary works should be studied according to this theory. Wafula is quick to caution however that not every analysis leads to a successful study of any given literary text (Wafula, 2004).

### **Literature Review**

The role held by literary works in the society is so pertinent and cannot be ignored in the study of literature contents (Senkoro, 1988:10; Iribemwangi & Mukhwana, 2011:93). Language as used in literary works has denotative and connotative meanings and thus the need for interpretations (Leech, 1969). That informs why literature is an art whose main architect is language (Mbutia & Iribemwangi, 2014). In other words, literary works apply language creatively to bring out subject matter in a compelling manner. The role of a literary writer is to awaken the society and offer the much needed solutions for its members (Arege na Matei, 2005:142-43). Kiswahili is a global lingua franca and the value of its literary works cannot be underestimated in the study of literary works across the globe (Iribemwangi & Mukhwana, 2011:93-4). Wamitila (2003) and indeed Wellek & Warren (1949:94-5) state conspicuously that, literary works uses language creatively in order to mirror on matters affecting the society by and large.

Literature plays a very significant role in awakening the society to have opinion on topical matters or offer solutions accordingly (Wamitila, 2003; Arege & Matei, 2005). Literary works seek to portray the daily happenings in the society by dramatizing those highlights and experiences overtime figuratively. Literary works thus unveils the glaring truths in arrange of issues such as politics, economy and plight of infringed members of society like workers and socio-economic matters. As indicated by Senkoro (1988) and Iribemwangi & Mukhwana (2011), the universal role of literature is to address the emerging issues. This means that literary works also serve the role of keeping historical events in time and maintains the values and traditions of the society. The content and plot in many literary works thus revolve around the characters and themes that emanate from the society in place and time.

The reader of any literary text has a duty to interpret as accurately as possible the signified in order to unveil the underneath meanings for the benefit of the reviewer. Connotative meanings in the literary works though are dependent on the factors such as the context and societal trends as illustrated by the proponents of New Historicism Theory. Those elements are capable of altering the signified because literary works comprises the realities and creativity (Shariff, 1988:27). Accordingly, literary works don't exist as an independent art. It bears resemblance with what happens in the society. Literary works consequently carry a two-edged meaning. This is what is referred to as connotative meaning of a text (Bradford, 1997). The deeper meaning of a literary text is realized by how successfully, its interpretations is executed by the reader by referring to evidence drawn from the text therein (Wales, 2011). Literary works have the role of highlighting the feelings and thoughts of the members of society and bringing out the suggested meanings with precision.

### Selected Themes Explored in the Kiswahili Drama

In our study, we pursue the following themes on whose analysis of the selected Kiswahili playlists concerning the plight workers.

#### *Workers Held Hostage & the Political Elitism in Employment*

Hunger and starvation for long has been used as political tool by political class and investors to silence workers into submission to poor working conditions. To accomplish the heinous act, the actors impoverish the workers. The idea is to institute beggar nationals that are easy to manipulate and rally against each other. In the play, (Visiki 1984), the author states:

Jioni-siku ile ile. Ndovu na Bibi Tamaa wanaonekana wamesimama nyuma ya utando kwenye mwinuko kuwachungulia maskwot. Halafu tunawaona Ndovu na Bibi Tamaa wakigeukianageukiana kuonyesha kwamba wao wazipeleleza shuguli za maskwota...(Ongeti, 1984:32).

Evening-that very day. Ndovu and Ms Tamaa are seen hidden behind a hill spying on the squatters, then we see Ndovu and Ms Tamaa keep consulting an indication that they're spying on what the squatters are doing. (Ongeti, 1984:32) (Our translation)

The intention for the political and industrial players is to divide the masses who apparently form the bulk of the workforce. New Historicism Theory states that, literary works mirror on what transpires in the society on day today. As illustrated by the two politicians (Ndovu and Tamaa), workforce in Africa is not based on expertise but is anchored on tribal affiliations. The behavior by the political elite in many African countries is to cause chaos in the workforce. That's why it's easy for them to apply divide and rule mentality whenever the unity of workers threaten their greed.

The New Historicism Theory recognizes the importance of analyzing the historical context of the text under scrutiny when studying literary works (Wamitila, 2002). Arresting the union leaders as the case of Lanina (Kilio cha Haki, 1981:1-3) and fueling tribal divisions as illustrated by Ongeti in the play, *Visiki*. This goes on to inform why industrial revolutions in Africa is but a mirage as shown in the play entitled, *Mstahiki Meya* by Arege. The playlist is spot-on as witnessed from workers voices. Arege states:

SAUTI: Tumechoka kudhalilishwa

Na daima kupuuzwa

(Arege, 2009:30-31).

VOICE: We're tired of being dehumanized

And always being ignored

(Arege, 2009:30-31) (Our translation)

The playlists fall short of suggesting that workers in Africa should take matters into their own hands and stop economic sabotage by the political elite and the rogue investors for Africa's economic and industrialization to take off. Most of the labour laws exhibit colonial mentality before political independence. The scars of oppressions are still rife in many nations on the continent. A worker's daughter is mauled by dogs and the perpetrators still stay put. In the *Kilio cha Haki* the author states:

DEWE: Hiyo ndiyo sheria ya kibeberu. Haikuwekwa kulinda au kutekeleza haki! La! Imewekwa kulinda wanyonyaji... Si unakumbuka ile kesi ya yule msichana wa kishamba. Alitetafunwa-tafunwa na majibwa ya bwana shamba... Bwana shamba huyo amefanyiwa nini hadi leo? (Mazrui, 198:3)

DEWE: That's how colonial the law is. It was not formulated to protect and to serve justice! No! It's there to protect the oppressors... You recall the poor rural girl. She was mauled by dogs belonging to the farm owner. Have any proceedings been instigated against the farm owner to date? (Mazrui, 198:3) (Our translation)

Wafula in the quest of reflecting on new historicism theory asserts that, adequate interpretation of any literary works can only be realized within the paradigms of the society in which it originated

(Wafula, 1999). The workers' plight in Africa is dire and it's time to separate political inclinations from industrial development for the economies in Africa to prosper.

***Capitalism and Labour Markets in Africa***

Capitalism has often been cited as the cause for labour disputes and mistreatment of workers in Africa. As Dewe in *Kilio cha Haki* insinuates, capitalism is to blame for unceasing industrial unrests and economic stagnations. Mazrui notes:

DEWE: Hiyo ndiyo sheria ya kibeberu. Haikuwekwa kulinda au kutekeleza haki! La! Imewekwa kulinda wanyonyaji... (Mazrui: 3)

DEWE: That's how colonial the law is. It was not formulated to protect and to serve justice! No! It's there to protect the oppressors... (Mazrui: 3) (Our Translation)

The role of a literary writer is to awaken the society and offer needed solutions for its members (Arege & Matei, 2005:142-43). The character of Mzee in the historical context of the play, *Kilio cha Haki* (Mazrui, 1981: 5) is to ignite and engage the entire continent to seek remedy for the ailing economic situations from their rich historical inheritances and utilize their huge human resource capital to drive their nations forward. The author writes thus:

MZEE: Kwa nini ewe bara la Afrika  
ewe nchi uliyejipamba kwa weusi  
ewe roho ya kizazi chetu  
tukutiliaye mbolea siku baada ya siku  
kwa kutaraji utatuzalia matunda ya umoja wetu...  
(Mazrui 1981:5)

MZEE: Why you the continent of Africa  
you that is coloured in black  
you that is the essence of our generations  
you who that we toil for every single day  
in expectations that you'll foster our unity...  
(Mazrui 1981:5) (Our translation)

New Historicism Theory recognizes that literature and society are intertwined and are inseparable. Therefore, literary works cannot be analyzed outside the society in which they originate. The excerpt above goes to inform that indeed the presence of this character symbolizes rich history and inheritance that has been ignored for decades in Africa. It signifies the lack of ideology and philosophy and development in Africa is pegged on nothing. Africa needs homegrown solutions now than ever.

***Distribution of Resources and Development Projects***

There's no equity in the distribution of resources in African countries and this has been a major concern for workers. According to Markey (1999) and Eugenio (2003), poor leadership emanates from weak political systems and dishonest politicians who hold the public hostage. There exists a lot of distress in the workforce and indeed the entire population due to weak democracies and distribution of development projects. The political elite and business entrepreneurs are biased when it matters to which places to allocate what resources and projects. More often or not, the key factor is where the politician hails from and tribal tag they carry along with them. As witnessed in some East African countries like Rwanda in 1994, the poor workers and indeed masses are regarded as machines for genocide to drive a political agenda rather than an economic one. The groups are poisoned to distaste their neighbours in order not to focus on the exploiters of their resources and sweat as has been illustrated in the play *Visiki* (1984). Thus the author writes:

NDOVU: Karibu tutaangamizwa. Kabila letu litaangamizwa Wavirindwa (Ongeti, 1984:41)

NDOVU: Soon we shall be wiped out. Our tribe shall be wiped out by Wavirindwa. (Ongeti, 1984:41) (Our translation)

Ndovu the politician was poisoning Huzuni against Matanga using his tribe. The same with Ms Tamaa with Matanga. The author of *Visiki* writes:

BI. TAMAA: ...alikuwa skwota hadi ile siku ambayo watu wa kabila lake walipopewa mashamba huko karibu na mji. (Ongeti, 1984: 40)

BI. TAMAA: ...he was a squatter before his tribesmen were allocated farms near the town (Ongeti, 1984: 40) (Our translation)

According to New Historicism Theory, the analysis of literary works should reflect the events in the historical context of time. Literary work is viewed by new historicism as a product of time and cannot exist in isolation (Njogu and Wafula, 2007). The themes emanating from the above excerpt amplifies the magnitude of how resources and tribe have been for long a graveyard for good intentions by hard working workers in Africa. The politician in Africa wants to control resources but doesn't support development nor develop the worker.

### ***The Politics of Tribalism and Labour Prejudice***

Politics in Africa doesn't give a voice to the voiceless workers. The workforce and industrialization like politics is tribal and regional rather than national. The scheme is so deliberate and intended to serve a specific purpose. There are workers' movements in Africa that are devoid of state manipulations. Workers are made to believe they belong to a tribe before any other associations. This is clearly evident in the *Visiki* (1984). The author writes:

NDOVU: Hata hivyo, kukosa chakula siyo hoja. Tutazungumza tu na kucheka pamoja. (*Anajichekesha. Ni wazi kwamba Huzuni haelewi*) Sisi ni watu wa kabila moja ... Lazima ujali. Karibu tutaangamizwa. Kabila letu litaangamizwa na Wavirindwa. (Ongeti, 1984: 1-7)

NDOVU: Lack of food is not the issue. We shall talk and laugh with each other (*Laughs. It's obvious that Huzuni is confused*) We belong to one tribe... You need to be careful... Soon, our tribe will be wiped out. Our tribe will be wiped out by Wavirindwa (another tribe) (Ongeti, 1984: 1-7) (Our translation)

As indicated by Senkoro (1988) and Iribemwangi & Mukhwana (2011), the universal role of literature is to address the emerging issues. This means that literary works also serve the role of keeping historical events in time and maintains the values and traditions of the society. The confusing laughter by Ndovu signifies the true characters of politicians in Africa. Ndovu is a blatant liar. That's why African workers suffer. The political players are not answerable to their workers nor electorates. Workers need to fight for good working conditions for themselves. The character of God in the play *Visiki* by Ongeti enforces the same. He writes:

MUNGU: Nanyi mnetumia akili zenu kukataa. (*Kimya*). Nilipomwumba binadamu, nilimpa kila mmoja macho ya kuona, masikio ya kusikia, mdomo wa kukana na kukubali, ubongo wa kufikiri (Ongeti, 1984: 4).

MUNGU: You should have used your heads and refused. (*Silence*) When I created humans, I gave each one of them ears to hear with, a mouth to speak what you agree with or refuse that which you don't agree with and brains to discerning. (Ongeti, 1984: 4) (Our Translation)

The role of a literary writer is to awaken the society (Senkoro, 1988:10; Iribemwangi & Mukhwana, 2011:93). 'Silence' as depicted by the character sends a very powerful warning to the masses in the African countries. Workers should be wary of the so called employers and political class.

### ***Competence Based System of Education***

A competence based system of education is necessary for the production of workers that will change the political destiny of the continent. The continent cannot continue to operate in the guise of historical truism. The perception must change. The education of recitation must cease and pave way

for pedagogy that is synonymous with her economic needs. Africa requires favourable educational systems that are identical to their economic needs. This has been illustrated in the *Visiki* (1984) as indicated below:

MAJALIWA: Ilikuwa katika somo la historia. (*Kwa Nanjala*) Mwalimu alitufundisha kuwa watu wa kwanza kuishi duniani walikuwa watu weusi...ni sisi tulivumbua maarifa mengi yajulikanayo duniani saa. (Ongeti, 1984:23)

MAJALIWA: It was in a history lesson...Our teacher taught us that we we're the first human race to exist. ..We're the ones who invented the knowledge that was not world over. (Ongeti, 1984:23) (Our translation)

New Historicism Theory states that, interpretations of any literary works can only be realized within the paradigms of the society in which it originated (Wafula, 2004).Chorus of historical past and display of arrogance will not change the present economic quagmire the continent is experiencing currently. This is merely an admission of economic failure and sabotage. The recitation by the students of the character of their teacher unveils the shortcomings of knowledge based systems of education that have lived on the continent for decades. In the play *Visiki* (1984), the author notes:

We're the ones who invented the knowledge that was not world over.  
(Ongeti, 1984:23)

This is a revelation of the contempt associated with the African politics that for long has held their nations captive including workforce. Walter Nugent refers to leaders who favour politics of reform as progressive and profounder of politics of change that improve society (Walter, 2010). However, the same cannot be said of Africa. Viewed in the lances of Majaliwa, lack of proper education systems and homegrown ideologies is what has informed economic stagnations in many African states. Africa needs to re-invent itself in order to be globally relevant economically. What Africa needs currently is to embrace proper systems of education and technology to produce an up to task workforce. The challenge is, will politics support this course? The case study of Kenya serves to illustrate our case. In 2017, Kenya shifted from knowledge based system of education (8.4.4) to competence based (CBC) as part of the remedy. Africa needs a homegrown workforce and economic solutions synonymous with her needs.

#### ***Lack of Proper Interstate Structures for Migrant Workers***

Even after many years of independence, many African states still possess strict border laws for their people to move and seek employment in the neighbor nations. Many still suffer from basic proper identification documents. See the excerpt from *Kilio cha Haki* (1981) below in which Mazrui writes:

MUSA: Maisha yatakuwa magumu huku ugenini;bila ya vitambulisho itakuwa taabu kupata kibarua. (Mazrui, 1981:1)

MUSA: Life will be harsh in this foreign land; without personal identification documents, it will be hard to get some manual jobs.( Mazrui, 1981) (Our translation)

Many workers end up living like paupers and worse like animals. Most migrant workers end up being disconnected from their families and the idea is made worse by poor state of communication infrastructure in many African states. The increasing number of single families in Africa is partly aided by migrant workers. In Kenya alone, the statistics put it at 38.2 percent by 2019 (KNBS 2019). This has been shown clearly in *Kilio cha Haki* (1981) when the author says:

MUSA: Tumeanza kuishi kinyama.Tunashindana na mbwa na mapaka kung'ang'ania makombo yaliyotupwa mapipani na watu! (Mazrui, 1981: 1)

MUSA: We've started living like animals. We compete with dogs and cats for the left-over dumped by the people. (Mazrui, 1981: 1) (Our translation)

It's unfortunate that Musa and Dewe are languishing in a foreign nation because of industrial unrests in their own country. The basic interpretation of this is that, literary works are not fully an act of creativity but a mixture of both realities and the imagined. (Njogu and Wafula, 2007). The analysis should therefore be cognizant of both aspects of a literary piece for proper study of literary works.

Lack of political will in many African countries to accommodate workforce from member states keeps derailing economic development on the continent unnecessarily. The problem is compounded further with the scarce employment opportunities available in many African states. Musa and Dewe equate this poor state of things to death. That's hopeless the situation is. What is required now is for the continent to shake off shackles of colonialism that has blindfolded her into thinking development will come from the west. Dewe in the playlist, *Kilio cha Haki* (1981) is hit hard by the revelation after an encounter by the character, 'Mzee'. The author writes:

DEWE: Afrika...tama ya mtu mweusimashiko ya mtu mweusi. Bara linalonyonywa kwa magugu ya ubeberu! (*Anasimama. Musa naye anasimama*) Hapana Musa! Tumefanya makosa kutoroka nyumbani. Ni lazima turudi. (Mazrui, 1981: 5-6)

DEWE: Africa...the hope of a black man the inheritance of a black person. The continent being suffering in the shackles of colonialism! (He stands up. Musa also stands up with him) We made a mistake running away from home. We must return (home) (Mazrui, 1981: 5-6) (Our translation)

The role held by literary works in the society is so pertinent and cannot be ignored in the study of literature contents (Senkoro 1988:10; Iribemwangi & Mukhwana, 2011:93). Language as used in literary works has denotative and connotative meanings and thus the need for interpretations (Leech, 1969). The citation from the playlist serves to inform that Africa must stop migrant workers by tapping in homegrown solutions to the plight of workers. The effort of every citizen is needed for Africa to realize economic revolution. Any attempt to suppress workers is a catalyst for rebellion and a revolution.

#### ***Misinformation and Propaganda against Workers and their Unions***

The plight of workers in Africa is made worse by the media at times. There is misinformation by state organs who work in alliance with rogue industrial agencies to milk workers. This is what is signified by the newspaper, which is the only link that Dewe and Musa have between them and their home country as indicated by the author of the play, *Kilio cha Haki* (1981:1). Lanina, the workers' leader, is being vilified through unfounded news and propaganda in order to suppress the workers' agitations for improved working conditions. 1<sup>st</sup> of May, is a very significant date in the history of workers in Kenya. It's a day for the celebration of workers and their achievements and has been held since independence. Lanina being arraigned in the courts on this particular day illustrates the gloom the African worker has to endure. The state and industrial players collaborate to breach industrial legal mechanisms that bind the workers and employers by resorting to threats, imprisonment and deliberate abusive of their human rights. The law is protective of the tormentors rather than the tormented. The author of *Kilio cha Haki* (1981) thus writes:

DEWE: ...Lanina alichoea mgomo mkubwa wa wafanyikazi wa shamba la Bwana Delamon tarehe 1 Mei... (Mazrui, 1981: 2)

DEWE: ...Lanina orchestrated a major workers' demonstration in the farm of Mr. Delamon on May 1<sup>st</sup> ... (Mazrui, 198: 2) (Our translation)

The excerpt demonstrates the lack of freedom for workers and state protection from ungrateful employers. One of the tenets of new historicism theory is that, literary and none literary works co-exist and complement each other. In other words, historical contents form part of the plot in literary works. It's ironical that the judges are supposed to preside over a judgment on a holiday. The filing is improper and the crime is opaque. The reporting is based on misinformation thus damaging the already worsened state of workers. It's a fact that workers in many African nations are criminalized for agitating for their industrial rights. No economy can ever prosper in that kind of environment.

#### **Conclusion**

Our key finding of this study is that, that workers in many African nations are criminalized for agitating for their industrial rights. There is no equitable distribution of resources and job opportunities in many African states and employment is not more often based on merit but tribal



affiliations. There's neither deliberate effort from political elite and industrial players to unite workers nor is there effort to eradicate hunger and poverty in Africa to better the workers' working conditions. That has left African workers poorer and underpaid. There is need to redefine education systems to align with the economic needs of Africans states. There's also the need to embrace technology. The thesis of this study is that, home grown solutions to workers' plight are long overdue if the continent wants to achieve an economic leap forward.

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