Mineralogical Mythmaking and the Roots of the Canadian Mining Industry in Colonial Tanganyika: The Williamson Diamond Mine (1940-1958)

Devin Murray

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By: Devin Murray

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Dr. Alison Rowley, Chair of Department (History)

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ABSTRACT

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Devin Murray

In the 1980s the Canadian mining industry began a process of global expansion, transforming into a world-leading industry that tapped into mineral resources on virtually every continent. Many scholars associate this development with the economic changes brought about by Structural Adjustment, which opened large swathes of the planet to foreign investment, but there is a much longer history of Canadian mining abroad. This thesis explores the Imperial roots of the mining industry through an analysis of a lesser-known mining project undertaken by a McGill geologist in the late 1930s, the much-mythologized Williamson Diamond Mine of Tanzania. The Williamson Diamond Mine provided invaluable industrial material during the Second World War, eventually becoming one of the most technologically advanced schemes in British Africa. The mine hosted a unique community of Canadian and European experts tasked with operating that technology while supervising the much larger African workforce, a situation reflected in the segregated, racial division of labor and associated investment in security of the mine, which still haunts contemporary Canadian mining projects. By locating the origins of Canada's global mining industry in colonial Africa —and the life trajectory of Williamson himself —this thesis also aims to draw attention to the unstable yet durable transnational connections that linked different sites within the British Empire, Canada and Tanzania, through decolonization and past the Cold War period. In the process, this work sets out to make a contribution to Canadian Global History that highlights the importance of further study into Canada-Africa relations.

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This thesis was written on the unceded territory of the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation on the occupied Island of Tiohtià:ke/Montréal. I acknowledge my own presence on these lands and recognize that the resource extraction detailed in the following pages is inextricably linked to the historical and continued theft and destruction of Indigenous lands across the globe.

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Introduction: A last-minute Knighthood

In the Autumn of 1957, a series of letters and cabinet meetings threatened to spark a minor diplomatic incident between Canada and Great Britain. The debate centered on the prospective knighthood of a prominent Canadian, the owner and operator of a diamond mine in Britain's Mandate Territory of Tanganyika, a colony that would become the East African nation of Tanzania in the early 1960s. The man, whose name was John Thoburn Williamson, would soon die of throat cancer, of this the participants were sure, but the British had hoped to have his knighthood confirmed before the new year, reasoning that he could hold on until then. The problem, for the Canadians at least, was that Canada did not allow for its citizens to be knighted, and the Prime Minister, John Diefenbaker of the Progressive Conservative party, who had only assumed office a month before the debate, had no interest in being "associated with a Ministry which restored titles in Canada".[1] The British, on the other hand, were keen to celebrate the life of a man who they would later acknowledge had "given great prosperity to Tanganyika after a great many years of privation and service in the discovery of the diamond mines".[2] There was also the matter of a magnificent diamond broach that Williamson had gifted to Queen Elizabeth on the occasion of her wedding back in 1947, proof of Williamson's deeply held monarchist convictions.

Over three cabinet sessions the British representatives and Canadian cabinet ministers argued back and forth, the question soon became one of nationality; was this man actually a Canadian? If he had given up his Canadian citizenship and taken on British, or Tanganyikan instead, then the cabinet couldn't technically refuse the request, although they agreed to stage a

[1] "Honours and Awards; United Kingdom Request for Knighthood for Doctor John Thoburn Williamson." (Cabinet Meeting, August 29, 1957), RG2 Privy Council Office, https://recherche-collection-search.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/home/record?app=cabcon&IdNumber=16215&q=knighthood%20and%20Williamson.
[2] "Tanganyika Independence Bill" (London: Hansard's, November 8, 1961), 13.

strongly worded protest, fearing that any knighthood would reignite the controversy over the holding of aristocratic titles by Canadians. When it was established that yes, Williamson was indeed a Canadian citizen, travelling on a Canadian passport, the British responded with one last appeal; he might be a Canadian, but the place of residence listed on his passport was Tanganyika, and he had resided there "for the last twenty-two years and had visited Canada only occasionally" and "that, during the war, he held a Tanganyikan passport, and that he now holds a certificate of permanent residence in Tanganyika."[3] They continued, claiming that he "had a greater connection with Tanganyika than Canada during the active and creative part of his life, and that his achievement had been in Tanganyika."[4]

Despite the British insistence the Prime Minister and his cabinet stood firm: there would be no knighthood for this Canadian-Tanganyikan geologist. Williamson would die, fabulously wealthy but without title, on January 8, 1958 on the grounds of his beloved mine.

Positioning Canada-Tanganyika Connections within Empire

This anecdote from the life of John Williamson is illustrative not just of the trajectory of his biography but also of the themes that tie it to the histories explored in this thesis; the exceptional, the mythic, and the small.

Exception

In the most literal sense, the push to award him a knighthood was an attempt to recognize something exceptional about Williamson, in this case his perseverance and the contribution of his mine to the economy of Tanganyika. Versions of Williamson's story that emphasize these

[3] "Honours and Awards; United Kingdom Request for Knighthood for Doctor John Thoburn Williamson."
[4] "Honours and Awards; United Kingdom Request for Knighthood for Doctor John Thoburn Williamson."

aspects of his life at the expense of less flattering ones are common, printed in newspaper articles and official reports, and after his death recycled and redeployed in fictional narratives and marketing initiatives for the Canadian mining industry.[5] The Williamson Diamond Mine was a unique formation, emerging out of the convergence of European colonial efforts in East Africa and the professionalization of geology born out of the Canadian colonial experience. The mine, maybe the sole example of a truly one-man show when it came to mining operations in the 20th century, brought together people from all kinds of backgrounds and interests to what one mine employee, viewing Mwadui from the air, described as "a self-contained town that appeared literally to have been dropped from the skies into the midst of the bush".[6]

This thesis aims to present a reevaluated biography of John Williamson in order to push back against those narratives that failed to position his success within the colonial contexts which made it possible. In many ways his story was exceptional, he was one of the first Canadians to open a successful mine outside of Canada, he helped establish and run one of the most modern, secure, and strictly segregated communities in East Africa, and he forged lasting alliances with some of Tanganyika's most powerful political figures in order to advance his interests. What makes Williamson's story so compelling is that all these facets that made him exceptional in the 1940s and 1950s became commonplace in Tanzania in the 1990s and 2000s, when Canadian mining companies returned to the region and began operating as if continuing the Williamson legacy. In effect the focus on the exceptional in the past serves to contextualize that which has become mundane in the present.

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[5] Stanley Uys, "Jack of Diamonds," *Maclean's Magazine*, November 15, 1947; John Gunther, "Diamonds Have Made Him: The World's Richest Bachelor," *The Washington Post and Times-Herald*, October 17, 1954, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Washington Post; "United Nations Visiting Mission to East Africa Report on Tanganyika and Related Documents," Trusteeship Council Official Records (Lake Success, N.Y.: United Nations, March 19, 1951), 83, 122–23, Trusteeship Council. Official Records. Supplement, United Nations Digital Library; John Gawaine, *The Diamond Seeker* (Johannsburg, South Africa: Macmillan, South Africa, 1976); "John T. Williamson (1907 – 1958)," accessed August 9, 2022, https://www.mininghalloffame.ca/bert-wasmund-copy.
[6] P. H. E. Burgess, *Diamonds Unlimited* (London: The Adventurers Club, 1960), 23.

Myth

Stories told about the mine and especially its origins did more than just celebrate its exceptional nature, they took on a mythic character that served to contextualize the mine, in different periods, within an established library of references familiar to interested readers. A mythical narrative began to emerge in the late 1940s that retold the story of John Williamson's discovery of diamonds in a way that emphasized his rugged individualism, his perseverance through disease and primitive conditions, hardships that were unmistakably African, and his personal sacrifice in the service of Empire.[7] That these character traits were the very same put forth by the British Government in their request for a Williamson knighthood only serves to reinforce the correlation between the image presented by press and biographers and the one promoted by the British Empire; that of a white, educated, pioneering figure discovering fabulous wealth in a far off colony.

In recent years myths about Williamson's life have gained new purchase in the material produced by the Canadian mining industry. In 2011 the Canadian Mining Hall of Fame, organized by the industry aligned Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada, inducted John Thoburn Williamson into its ranks, celebrating his "pioneering efforts" and "fierce determination", echoing the tone and content of the fictional portrayals mentioned above.[8] This resurrection of the mythic John Williamson calls to mind the work of Robert Vitalis's on the history of ARAMCO, the formerly American mega-corporation that developed and exploited the oilfields of Saudi Arabia, and the myths that the company told about itself in order to obscure

[7] Uys, "Jack of Diamonds," 56; Jacqueline Sirois, "Diamond King: Canadian Placid Over Owning Richest Mine in World," *The Standard*, August 13, 1949, R6430-0-1-E, MG30-B171 John Johnston O'Neill fonds, Library and Archives Canada; Gunther, "Diamonds Have Made Him: The World's Richest Bachelor"; Gawaine, *The Diamond Seeker*, 106–10.
[8] "John T. Williamson (1907 – 1958)."

what Vitalis calls it's "Jim Crow system" of racial segregation.[9] The company fostered a "familiar" mythos, presenting itself as having acted "more generously and less exploitatively than enterprises of other nations, say, British plantations or mining firms in Africa."[10] This story in nearly identical to the one that the Canadian Mining Industry, using myths about John Williamson and others, likes to promote, and like ARAMCO they ignore histories of strict racial segregation, exploitation of non-white workforces, participation in colonialism, and more, in order to tell it.

Small Places

The Williamson Diamond Mine was constructed on top of a geologic formation referred to as a kimberlite pipe; a vertical cluster of diamond-bearing rocks from which diamonds are commonly extracted.[11] The kimberlite formation identified by John Williamson, which he dubbed the Mwadui Kimberlite, is one of the largest ever uncovered, and although it has been in continuous operation since 1940 its current owners estimate it will not be exhausted for another 40 years.[12] Despite the impressive size of this deposit the history of the Williamson Diamond Mine is really a history of relatively small places, like the towns of Northwestern Tanganyika or the McGill University geology department, where the personal connections that made it possible for a Canadian geologist like Williamson to find success far from home were more easily available.

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[9] Robert Vitalis, *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier* (London: Verso, 2009), x, 98–104.
[10] Vitalis, xxviii.
[11] John Thoburn Williamson, "The Williamson Diamond Mine," in *Rhodesia and East Africa*, ed. Ferdinand Stephen Joelson (London: East Africa and Rhodesia, 1958), 99–100.
[12] "Williamson Diamond Mine," Petra Diamonds, accessed March 27, 2023, https://www.petradiamonds.com/our-operations/our-mines/williamson/; A. J. A. Janse, "A History of Diamond Sources in Africa: Part II," *Gems & Gemology* 32, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 5.

In fact, it was the very smallness of Canada, compared to the powerful colonial Empires that politically dominated the African continent during the period under study, that led Williamson to find himself prospecting in East Africa in the late 1930s. While Canada, and especially McGill University, was becoming a center of mining education during the 1920s and 30s, the funding for geological surveying remained limited, especially during the crisis years of the Great Depression.[13] Geology students like Williamson had the choice to either find alternative employment or accept contracts in faraway locales that lacked their own centers of geological training.

Historiography

This thesis is informed by a wide selection of works, including histories of colonialism, mining, and more with a focus on Canada and Tanzania. In the postcolonial period the extent to which European and North American companies dominated African mineral resources became a focal point of critical African scholarship.[14] More recent work on transnational mining has illuminated the lengths to which states and private interests have colluded to establish control over mineral resources, complicating the binary between support for and opposition to mining by looking at how companies purposefully divided communities. These works explore the continuities between colonial and contemporary mining projects through the racialized division of labour they share and the inequality they promote.[15] In Canada new histories of mining are finally

[13] Morris Zaslow, *Reading the Rocks: The Story of the Geological Survey of Canada, 1842-1972* (Toronto : Ottawa : Ottawa: Macmillan Company of Canada ; Department of Energy, Mines and Resources ; Information Canada, 1975), 359–360, 373.
[14] Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (New York: International Publishers, 1966); Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Brooklyn: Verso, 2018).
[15] Megan Black, *The Global Interior: Mineral Frontiers and American Power* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2018), 8-10. 84-86; Marina Welker, *Enacting the Corporation: An American Mining Firm in Post-*

reversing decades of writing Indigenous Peoples out of geology and incorporating the history of indigenous mining into the narrative.[16] Other contributions focus on a Québécois point of view to show how the same mining boom of the 1920s and 30s that saw Canadian mining schools like McGill University became global centers of geological training in the early 20th century, also contributed to Canadian mining corporations being allowed to exercise significant influence over government mining policy[17]

At its core this thesis is a transnational work of Canadian and Tanzanian history. In the past few years historians of Canada in the World have expanded our understanding of the relationship between Canada and different parts of the African Continent. In the run up to decolonization Canadian diplomatic officials tasked with analyzing African Nationalism came to conclusions that were much more conservative than even their British contemporaries, their arguments for continued white rule complicate notions of Canadian support for former colonial nations through peacekeeping and at the United Nations.[18] On the other hand, non-official contact through organizations like the Canadian University Overseas Service (CUSO) operating in Tanzania in the 1960s and 70s was characterized by a growing leftist radicalism informed by African postcolonial scholarship and the everyday personal contacts forged by Africans and Canadians working together on rural development projects.[19]

Authoritarian Indonesia (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 73–82; Hannah Appel, *The Licit Life of Capitalism: U.S. Oil in Equatorial Guinea* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 57, 60–75, 92–93, 281.

[16] John Sandlos and Arn Keeling, *Mining Country: A History of Canada's Mines and Miners* (Toronto, Ontario, Canada: James Lorimer & Company Ltd., Publishers, 2021), 13–25.

[17] Stephane Castonguay, *The Government of Natural Resources: Science, Territory, and State Power in Quebec, 1867-1939*, Nature, History, Society (Vancouver ; Toronto: UBC Press, 2021), 26–30, 45, 69.

[18] Kevin A. Spooner, "'Awakening Africa' Race and Canadian Views of Decolonizing Africa," in *Dominion of Race: Rethinking Canada's International History.* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2018), 206–27.

[19] Will Langford, "International Development and the State in Question: Liberal Internationalism, the New Left, and Canadian University Service Overseas in Tanzania, 1963-1977 / 184," in *Undiplomatic History: The New Study of Canada and the World* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019), 184–205.

When it comes to scholarship that directly addresses the history of Canadian mining in Tanzania the little that has been written has proved invaluable. In one piece that offers a nuanced yet critical look at Canadian mining in South America and Africa attention is called to the killings attributed to the police employed at the North Mara mine in Tanzania, owned by the Canadian mining giant Barrick Gold, and the effect the many similar atrocities committed in the name of Canadian mining have on the industry's image in the Global South.[20] The monograph that provides the most information about Canadian mining in Tanzania is Paula Butler's *Colonial Extractions: Race and Canadian Mining in Contemporary Africa*. Consisting of Butler's research alongside interviews she conducted with Canadian mining professionals who have worked in Africa, it illustrates the extent to which Canadians; lawyers, diplomats, and mining experts, worked to open up African nations to Canadian investment in the 1980s and 90s.[21] In Tanzania Canadian state pressure helped to ensure that the mining laws were rewritten with text lifted straight out of Canadian legislation.[22] A few years later, when Barrick Gold was accused of helping to murder Tanzanians who refused to allow their livelihoods to be bulldozed to make way for a mine in the village of Bulyanhulu, the Canadian government again stepped in and used diplomatic pressure to convince Tanzania to forget about the incident.[23]

While the sources listed above make up an important part of the secondary research that grounds this thesis, none of them explore the history of Canadian mining in Tanzania beyond the last few decades. In fact, the only scholarship that mentions the Williamson Diamond Mine in more than passing are two articles, one recounting a business disagreement and the other

[20] Karen Dubinsky and Marc Epprecht, "Canadian Business and the Business of Development in the 'Third World,'" in *Canada and the Third World: Overlapping Histories*, ed. Karen Dubinsky, Sean Mills, and Scott Rutherford, Chapter 3 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 60–87.
[21] Paula Butler, *Colonial Extractions: Race and Canadian Mining in Contemporary Africa* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 138–45, 175-175.
[22] Butler, 138–39, 144–45.
[23] Butler, 146–59.

analyzing the oral history of artisanal mining, alongside a few unpublished, inaccessible graduate theses from the University of Dar es Salaam.[24] It is this lacuna in the scholarship that this thesis attempts to address.

[24] John Knight and Heather Stevenson, "The Williamson Diamond Mine, De Beers, and the Colonial Office: A Case-Study of the Quest for Control," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 24, no. 3 (September 1986): 423–45; Rosemarie A. Mwaipopo, "Ubeshi - Negotiating Co-Existence: Artisanal and Large-Scale Relations in Diamond Mining," in *Mining and Social Transformation in Africa: Mineralizing and Democratizing Trends in Artisanal Production*, ed. Deborah Fahy Bryceson et al., Routledge Studies in Development and Society 37 (London New York: Routledge, 2014), 161–76.

Chapter 1: Historical Context of the Williamson Diamond Mine

Colonial Opportunity: The John Williamson Story

In the early 20th century, a transnational network of geologists began to emerge, connecting experts and educational institutions in North America and Europe to mines located in colonies around the world.[1] One of the nodes in the network was the Williamson Diamond Mine in the East African Mandate Territory of Tanganyika, opened by a McGill educated Canadian geologist, John Williamson in 1940. Williamson's trajectory, from Canada to South Africa then to Tanganyika, is illustrative of the immense opportunity and mobility that was afforded to white, well-educated men in the British Empire during the Interwar period. In order to chart this trajectory, we must first establish the historical contexts that contributed to Williamson's success, starting with his home region of Quebec, the Tanganyika Territory, and his family history.

The State of Mining in Quebec in the 1920s

Stéphane Castonguay's informative monograph *Government of Natural Resources: Science, Territory, and State Power in Quebec, 1867-1939* picks up the thread of Canadian geology and stretches it into the 20th century. When John Thoburn Williamson entered McGill University in 1924, the Quebec government was in the middle of a decades-long expansion of the civil service that transformed the landscape of professional geology in the province.[2] Quebec had been late to support the mining industry. For a long time, the government was content to let the Federal

[1] For an analysis of this network focused on American mining experts, see; Stephen Tuffnell, "Engineering Inter-Imperialism: American Miners and the Transformation of Global Mining, 1871–1910," *Journal of Global History* 10, no. 1 (March 2015): 53–76, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022814000369.
[2] Stephane Castonguay, *The Government of Natural Resources: Science, Territory, and State Power in Quebec, 1867-1939*, Nature, History, Society (Vancouver ; Toronto: UBC Press, 2021), 21–25.

Geologic Survey dictate mineral exploration, and the survey was staffed with several Quebec-trained geologists anyway. Supporting independent geologic work was seen as prohibitively expensive.[3] While asbestos extracted at Thetford Mines and the town of Asbestos made the province an important source of the fibrous mineral for the world mineral market, mining professionals worried that Quebec was neglecting the development of other mineral deposits.[4] Of great interest to experts and mining investors was the flurry of gold and silver exploitation that began in the early 1900s just across the provincial border in the Porcupine region and the area around Lake Temiskaming of northern Ontario.[5]

Geologists were keenly aware of the fact that mineral deposits existed outside of the spatio-political boundaries imposed by nation states, even if provincial politicians were slow to catch on. In the 1920s, the Quebec government, propelled by business interests, finally initiated a new wave of geologic exploration focused on exploiting and settling the north-west of the province that went hand-in-hand with a push to extend a rail line to the interior of the province.[6] When rich gold and copper deposits were successfully identified in the area of Rouyn/Noranda, interest in Québec mining accelerated and new laboratories and professorships were opened up alongside new opportunities to practice geology as a member of a federal or provincial survey.[7] For Castonguay, the advancement of geological expertise in Quebec was illustrative of a growing accord between the government and the "techno-scientific" experts it employed, shaping their

[3] Castonguay, 13, 26–27, 29–31, 36.
[4] Jessica Van Horssen and Graeme Wynn, *A Town Called Asbestos: Environmental Contamination, Health, and Resilience in a Resource Community*, Nature, History, Society (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2016), 7, 28–32, 34–42; John Sandlos and Arn Keeling, *Mining Country: A History of Canada's Mines and Miners* (Toronto, Ontario, Canada: James Lorimer & Company Ltd., Publishers, 2021), 101–3.
[5] Castonguay, *The Government of Natural Resources*, 56–62; Sandlos and Keeling, *Mining Country*, 92–92, 101–2.
[6] Castonguay, 27–28, 43-44. 62-63; For railway project see Castonguay, 51–54.
[7] Castonguay, *The Government of Natural Resources*, 28–30, 62–63.

interlinked development into the 20th century.[8] While this is a valuable contribution to the literature on Quebec history and the history of geology and other expert fields there is much to be gained by widening the lens to include the alternative paths staked out by Quebecois geologists who either didn't find a place in the emerging modernized state or deliberately set out to leverage their status as Imperial subjects for a greater prize, away from home.

In 1924, the young Williamson entered McGill University to study law, funded by his father's success in the lumber business.[9] His life trajectory might have been drastically different, if not for a series of summer trips to Labrador and Northern Quebec that exposed the lawyer-in-training to a love of the natural world, a development that convinced him to switch his major to geology on his return to McGill.[10] The University was one of the best places to study geology in the 20s and 30s. There were no dedicated mining schools in Quebec until the opening of the Ecole des Mines at the University of Laval in 1938, but both McGill University and Polytechnique Montreal had strong geology programs.[11] Many McGill geology professors travelled around the province with students in tow, on contract with the Bureau of Mines, working on identifying traces of mineral deposits and calculating the logistical investment it would take to exploit them.[12] One of these geology students, Dr. A.O. Dufrense, who had studied at both Polytechnique and McGill in the 1910s, was appointed the head of the Quebec Bureau of Mines in 1927 and continued to increase the provinces' support of geology education.[13] The expansion in public sector employment in Quebec, which saw the number of provincial employees increase 10-fold over the three decades between 1899 and 1930, was accompanied by

[8] Castonguay, 10–13.
[9] "Dr. J. T. Williamson, Quebec Geologist, Won Africa Empire," *Montreal Star*, January 8, 1958, MG4184 Jean Rogers Fonds, McGill University Archives.
[10] Stanley Uys, "Jack of Diamonds," *Maclean's Magazine*, November 15, 1947, 22.
[11] Castonguay, *The Government of Natural Resources*, 26–29.
[12] Castonguay, 60–61.
[13] Castonguay, 63–64.

a hiring wave in the mining sector in the 1920s that coincided with the expansion of Quebec's geological surveying and the opening of dozens of new mines.[14] Williamson's training and the relationships he made at McGill were key to his later successes.

Joseph Austen Bancroft's Transnational Geology

An enormous influence on the career of John Williamson was Joseph Austen Bancroft, who taught geology at McGill University from 1913 to 1929. Bancroft was born in North Sydney, Cape Breton Island in 1882; he pursued studies at Acadia University, at Yale, and in Germany before finally receiving his Ph.D. from McGill in 1910.[15] While teaching at McGill he undertook several trips for both the federal and Quebec surveys, working on the British Columbian coast, extensively up and down the Ontario-Quebec border and in the Eastern Townships.[16] What made Bancroft different from his colleagues was his attraction to the economic side of geology, which contributed to his spending less and less time at McGill during his later career. In 1917, he accepted a private contract to survey for bauxite concentrations in the Caribbean colony of British Guiana, and he took several more leaves from the University to complete more private industry work in British Columbia in the later stages of his career.[17]

In 1927, he accepted the position that would define the rest of his geological career, as a high-ranking surveyor in Ernest Oppenheimer's Anglo American Corporation working in the Copperbelt region of Northern Rhodesia, in Southern Africa. Bancroft officially left his professorship at McGill in 1929 to fully devote his efforts to his private industry work, and he

[14] Castonguay, 21–23, 28.
[15] R. A. Pelletier, "J. Austen Bancroft, B.A., A.M., Ph.D.," *Transactions of the Geological Society of South Africa* 61 (1958): 1.
[16] Pelletier, 1; Castonguay, *The Government of Natural Resources*, 60–63.
[17] Pelletier, "J. Austen Bancroft, B.A., A.M., Ph.D.," 1–2.

would spend the rest of his career in Africa with Anglo American and the De Beers Corporation. While some Canadian mining interests were already active in Africa in the early 20th century (most notably Alcan had done some survey work in French Guinea in 1916 and began operations in the colony through a subsidiary in 1928) Bancroft was one of the earliest Canadian geologists to take their geologic expertise to the continent.[18] He was part of a group of geologists who embraced the opportunities provided by Empire; as an educated white male from an industrializing nation he was able to leverage his particular expertise, which happened to be invaluable to state and private led colonial mineral extraction projects underway in the interwar era.

The global shift taken by Bancroft's career reflected the increasingly transnational character of geologic expertise in Imperial contexts that characterized the 1920s, 30s, and 40s. Investment in mineral extraction projects by both private capital and colonial states created a demand for professional, white mining experts that outpaced the availability of locally available geologists. A corollary to this development was a shift in centres of geologic training, from Europe to Canada and the United States, a reflection of opportunities for practical training on summer survey trips or mine visits made possible by that the accelerated pace of mining development in North America. Bancroft was directly involved in both processes. From his office at Anglo American's headquarters in Johannesburg, he directed young white South African geologists to complete their graduate work at McGill, his former employer and his preferred source of mining experts, promising them a job with De Beers on their return.[19] By the early 1930s, South African students were coming to McGill based solely on the fact that so many of

[18] Yves Engler, *Canada in Africa: 300 Years of Aid and Exploitation* (Black Point, Nova Scotia ; Winnipeg, Manitoba : Vancouver, B.C: Fernwood Publishing ; RED Publishing, 2015), 145–46.
[19] Bert Gerryts, *A Diamond Digger's Anecdotes and Stories* (Wandsbeck, South Africa: Reach Publishers, 2016), 19–21.

the geologists already working in their country were McGill graduates.[20] Bancroft was partially responsible for this too, as he had brought McGill geology graduates with him when he came to Northern Rhodesia in 1927, and he was keeping close tabs on the top students in each year's Ph.D. class, offering them positions with Oppenheimer companies upon their successful graduation.[21]

The Tanganyikan Context: The 1930s

When John Thoburn Williamson arrived in the British Mandate Territory of Tanganyika in 1936 to begin work with a South African mining company, at the twilight of the Great Depression, he was entering what John Iliffe suggests was one of Britain's poorest and least prioritized colonial holdings.[22] Ostensibly, Tanganyika was different from Britain's other colonies in that it was a League of Nations Mandate, granted to Britain in the aftermath of the First World War for an indeterminate period of time on the condition that, as the mandate read, it maintained "the peace, order, and good government of the territory" and "promote to the utmost the material and moral well-being and the social progress of its inhabitants".[23] In practice, Tanganyika was a colony of the British Empire, as the paternalistic character of the Mandate agreement was little different than Britain's colonial policies elsewhere, and the League was powerless to enforce its tenants in any case.[24] Between 1916, when the British occupied the territory after kicking out German

[20] "'Diamond King' Interested in Developing East Africa," *The Montreal Star*, October 1, 1946, John Johnston O'Neill fonds, Library and Archives Canada.
[21] Pelletier, "J. Austen Bancroft, B.A., A.M., Ph.D.," 2; "'Diamond King' Interested in Developing East Africa"; Castonguay, *The Government of Natural Resources*, 64–65.
[22] John Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, African Studies Series 25 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 261, 302.
[23] "British Mandate for East Africa (Tanganyika Territory)," in *Terms of League of Nations Mandates/Textes Des Mandats de La Société Des Nations* (Lake Success, N.Y.: The United Nations, 1946), 101–9.
[24] Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, 246–47.

colonial forces, and the 1930s, there had been few concerted attempts at economic development. The few projects that were undertaken were moderately successful at best. An illustrative example was the expensive scheme to expand the German-era central rail line to reach the lucrative Copperbelt of Northern Rhodesia; the line was only extended as far as Mwanza on the shore of Lake Victoria, when the onset of the Great Depression tanked the demand for copper, and the projected expansion was cancelled.[25]

The 1930s were hard for Tanganyikans, both Africans and Asians. In 1931, citing economic concerns, the British suspended the promotion of African clerks, and a year later, to secure a loan from the British Government and avoid impending bankruptcy, the colony agreed to halt development projects until 1942.[26] Signs of economic recovery began to appear in 1937, but few changes were made to the low wages and restrictive business regulations leftover from the Depression, leading to strikes and riots in locals across the colony.[27] Wages remained low, and when they did finally start to rise during the war years they failed to catch up to inflation and the punishingly high cost of living.[28] On top of low wages and the rising cost of living, the threat of agricultural crisis loomed overhead throughout the 1930s, finally leading to localized famine in 1943 when wartime logistical interruptions slowed food imports.[29] With these conditions in mind, we can understand how African miners were willing to accept the dangerous work, low pay, and poor living conditions at the Williamson Diamond Mine.

Resistance to colonization had always been expressed in a myriad of ways in Tanganyika, from outright rebellion epitomized in the bloody slaughter of the Maji-Maji war of the German

[25] Iliffe, 302–3.
[26] Iliffe, 344–45, 356–57.
[27] Iliffe, 346–47.
[28] Iliffe, 352–54.
[29] Iliffe, 347–52.

period war to the strikes that would soon break out.[30] In the 1930s, new forms of political expression were blooming amongst the Africans and Asians in Tanganyika. For the politically involved, like young Julius Nyerere, who engaged in candlelight discussions of African Nationalism with his secondary school teacher in Musoma, independence was slowly coming into focus, but questions around what that independence would look like, and how it might best be achieved, were still to be resolved.[31] In the cities, more African unions and associations were appearing in the 1930s and 40s, some based along ethnic lines and some catering to a broader slice of the urban working class, just as the labour movement was picking up steam and testing its strength with agitation and strikes.[32] The African Association, a proto-nationalist political association, was founded in 1929 in Dar es Salaam, and in the following years its influence would spread throughout the territory, engaging new members in spirited political discourse and providing the template for later, more focused endeavours through the Tanganyikan African National Union political party (TANU), under the guidance of future president Julius Nyerere.[34] Tanganyika in the 1930s was a land on the edge of transformation, change was coming, but the exact shape it would take was not yet apparent.

The state of mining in Tanganyika in the 1930s

John Williamson originally set out for Tanganyika in 1936 in order to take on a contract with a South African mining company, the Tanganyika Diamond, and Gold Development Co. While the most important economic sector in Tanganyika was agriculture, the Territory was also home to

[30] John Iliffe, *Tanganyika Under German Rule 1905-1912* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 18–23.
[31] Paul Bjerk, *Building a Peaceful Nation: Julius Nyerere and the Establishment of Sovereignty in Tanzania, 1960-1964* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2018), 24–25.
[32] John Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, African Studies Series 25 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 389–90, 395–97; Samantha Moyes, "A Case from Domestic Workers: Labouring for Futures Denied," in *Dis-Trusting Human Rights: The UN Trusteeship in Late Colonial Tanganyika (Tanzania)* (Montreal, QC: Concordia University, 2022), 148–87, https://spectrum.library.concordia.ca/id/eprint/991131/.
[34] Iliffe, 406–9, 412–17.

vast mineral wealth, and some mines were already being exploited when Williamson took up his contract. The value of these mines paled in comparison to the Rhodesian Copperbelt or the South African gold and diamond mines, which powered those inequitable but rapidly modernizing colonies. Prospecting continued in Tanganyika, and it was hoped that new deposits would yield a jackpot. During the German period, several independent prospectors and state-sponsored geologists attempted to map out Tanganyika's mineral resources. Geologists like Julius Kuntz, who already had experience identifying gold deposits in South Africa and *Deutsch-Südwestafrika* (Namibia), created extensive reports on the territory's economically viable geological deposits. When Kuntz visited German East-Africa between 1906 and 1908, he travelled throughout the colony in places where German control was strong, making note of what kinds of geological exploration had already been carried out and where future German efforts should be directed.[35]

In 1906, a prospector struck gold at Sekenke in the modern-day Singida region near the Territories geographical center, but it turned out to be only a modest deposit and the dreams of a new gold rush quickly petered out. Kuntz visited the mine on his survey trip and found that despite its small size, it was the most profitable mine he had encountered in his time in German East Africa, leading to increased state investment that helped Sekenke become the most heavily worked gold deposit during the German Colonial period.[36] Other important minerals were identified and tentatively developed by German agents, including mica, garnet, coal, and even uranium.[37] In 1910 there were 76 separate prospecting fields of various minerals, and over 100

[35] Julius Kuntz, "Beitrag zur Geologie der Hochländer Deutsche-Ostafrikas mit Besonderer Berücksichtigung der Goldvorkommen," *Zeitschrift für Praktische Geologie* 17 (1909): 205; E. O. Teale, *Tanganyika Territory, Its Geology and Mineral Resources* (London, 1928), 18–20.
[36] Chachage Seithy L. Chachage, "The Meek Shall Inherit the Earth but Not the Mining Rights: The Mining Industry and Accumulation in Tanzania," in *Liberalized Development in Tanzania: Studies on Accumulation Processes and Local Institutions* (Uppsala, Sweden: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1995), 48; A.D. Roberts, "The Gold Boom of the 1930s in Eastern Africa," *African Affairs* 85, no. 341 (October 1986): 555–56.
[37] Chachage, "The Meek Shall Inherit the Earth but Not the Mining Rights: The Mining Industry and Accumulation in Tanzania," 48.

claims registered by the colonial administration.[38] South of Lake Victoria in the Sukumaland region, not too far away from the railway terminus in the town of Tabora where Williamson would eventually arrive, there were even faint traces of diamonds.[39]

When the British took over the colony they also took over the mining projects and geological survey material maintained by German experts. Since gold was the most sought-after mineral, the mine at Sekenke continued to be developed, as did other gold deposits at the Lupa goldfields and mines at Mara, Buhemba, Saza, and Geita.[40] Lupa was by far the most unique extraction project of the early British period, as it constituted a genuine gold rush that lasted through booms and busts for almost a decade and employed tens of thousands of labourers of varying specializations.[41] The sheer quantity of labour concentrated in the goldfields led to notable population migrations into agriculturally viable land near Lupa in order to meet the growing demands for food and amenities for miners.[42] The Lupa Rush's instability also differentiated it from the other mining projects. From the perspective of African labour, underground mining at Mara or Geita paid well but was dangerous, hard on the body, and "cursed with overbearing foremen", while work in the Lupa goldfields was less regimented, with higher rewards but higher risks. Miners faced theft and violent crime, a polluted water supply, expensive logistics, and the threat of being cheated out of wages.[43]

The Mara gold mine was more representative of the common mining experience in the 1930s Tanganyika. Mara is located on the Eastern shore of Lake Victoria, and the gold mine that

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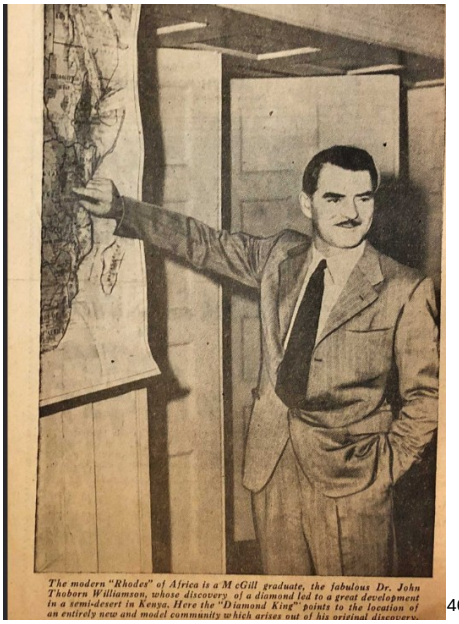
[38] Chachage, 48.
[39] A. J. A. Janse, "A Histoy of Diamond Sources in Africa: Part II," *Gems & Gemology* 32, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 3; Teale, *Tanganyika Territory, Its Geology and Mineral Resources*, 20–22.
[40] Chachage, "The Meek Shall Inherit the Earth but Not the Mining Rights: The Mining Industry and Accumulation in Tanzania," 48–51; Roberts, "The Gold Boom," 555–60.
[41] Chachage, "The Meek Shall Inherit the Earth but Not the Mining Rights: The Mining Industry and Accumulation in Tanzania," 49–50; Roberts, "The Gold Boom," 556–58.
[42] Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, 293–94; Roberts, "The Gold Boom," 560.
[43] Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, 308.

shares its name was an underground operation, employing a few thousand Africans at most during its profitable operating period, which only lasted about five years.[44] It was brought into operation in 1935 by the Tanganyika Diamond and Gold Development Co, and it is likely that Williamson visited or even worked at the mine when he was working for the Development Co. Even when the mine was up and running at full capacity, it wasn't particularly viable, and it was sold to another South African mining concern in 1937. The other main property owned by the Development Co. in Tanganyika was the Mabuki diamond mine just south of Mwanza city on Lake Victoria, which was also the first operational diamond mine in the Tanganyika Territory.[45] The diamond deposit had been identified just before the First World War while the Territory was still a German colony, but no diamonds were extracted there until 1926. Mining would not become a significant part of Tanganyika's economy until Williamson's mine began production in the 1940s, and since then it has only grown in importance in Tanzania, through independence up to the present.

[44] Chachage, "The Meek Shall Inherit the Earth but Not the Mining Rights: The Mining Industry and Accumulation in Tanzania," 50; Roberts, "The Gold Boom," 556.
[45] Teale, *Tanganyika Territory, Its Geology and Mineral Resources*, 20; Mousseau Tremblay, "Geology of the Williamson Diamond Mine, Mwadui, Tanganyika" (Montreal, QC, McGill University, 1956), 11.



[46]

Figure 1:
"The modern 'Rhodes' of Africa is a McGill graduate, the fabulous Dr. John Thoburn Williamson, whose discovery of a diamond led to a great development in a semi-desert in Kenya. Here the "Diamond King" point to the location of an entirely new and model community which arises out of his original discovery."
The Montreal Daily Star
Jan 14 1950
"Diamond King" McGill graduate doing great community work

The Family Williamson

John Thoburn Williamson was born in 1906 in Pointe-Fortune, Quebec to Rose and Bertie Williamson.[47] He grew up in the area and went to primary school there and attended Macdonald High School in Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue on the Western tip of the island of Montreal.[48] He grew up down the street from his extended family, anglophones of Scots-Irish descent, close relatives of the MacLaurins and Redferns, who were also prominent settler families on the Quebec-Ontario border. His father, Bertie, who preferred to be called John, and his uncle William Williamson were successful local businessmen, running a lumber company together until some kind of disagreement led to a commercial split.[49] The company, Laurentian Lumber, had been founded by William in 1908 and operated out of an office on St. James street in Montreal.[50] The

[46] D. B. MacFarlane, "'Diamond King': McGill Graduate Doing Great Community Work," *The Montreal Daily Star*, January 14, 1950, R6430-0-1-E, MG30-B171 John Johnston O'Neill fonds, Library and Archives Canada.
[47] Valerie Verity, *The Williamsons, MacLaurins and Redferns: An Illustrated Family Memoir* (Chute-à-Blondeau, ON: Heritage Press, 2002), 61.
[48] "Dr. J. T. Williamson, Quebec Geologist, Won Africa Empire."
[49] Verity, *The Williamsons, MacLaurins and Redferns*, 38.
[50] Verity, 15.

capital used to fund the family business was accumulated through the running of a general store out of William's imposing stone home in Pointe-Fortune, Quebec. The house had been built in the early 1800s by John Macdonnell and his Metis wife Magdeleine Poitras. John was a fairly important figure in early Canadian history, a partner in the North West Company, notable fur-trader, and a member of the Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada. Unfortunately, Macdonnell suffered financial troubles later in his life, one friend blamed his impractically large house, and his descendants seem to have been happy to sell it to William Williamson in the 1880s.[51] The home still stands today, kept as a museum by the Ontario Heritage Trust.[52]

Geology and its place in the Nation

Coincidently, the progression of fortune from John Macdonnell, a fur trader, to William Williamson, a lumberman, to John Thoburn Williamson, a geologist, mirrors the temporal progression of economic staples outlined in the work of famed Canadian political economist Harold Innis.[53] The Canadian economy, always focused on export, was originally constructed around the mass harvesting of furs for the markets of continental Europe, until the furs were exhausted and demands shifted to make lumber into a more prized commodity. By the turn of the 20th century, the demand was shifting once again: exponential technological change, intensified industrialization, and a primal demand for gold in both Europe and North America led to a

[51] "Biography – McDONELL, JOHN, Le Prêtre (1768-1850) – Volume VII (1836-1850) – Dictionary of Canadian Biography," accessed November 27, 2023, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcdonell_john_7F.html.
[52] "Macdonell-Williamson House," Ontario Heritage Trust, accessed November 27, 2023, https://www.heritagetrust.on.ca/properties/macdonell-williamson-house.
[53] Harold A. Innis, "Factors in Canadian Economic Development," in *Essays in Canadian Economic History*, ed. Mary Quayle Innis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 204–5, 209; Harold A. Innis, "The Canadian Mining Industry," in *Essays in Canadian Economic History*, ed. Mary Quayle Innis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 312–15, 318–20; Harold A. Innis, the most succinct formulation of this progression can be found in *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (Toronto ; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 384–85.

gradual increase of interest in mineral extraction. Mining aspirations were an important facet of the Canadian settler-colonial project from its beginnings. The early enthusiasm for mining going back to the 16th century pioneers Jacques Cartier's and Martin Frobisher's separate attempts to kick-start mineral extraction in pre-colonial Canada, attempts that, coincidently, both failed once the "diamonds" and "gold" arrived in Europe and were identified as worthless quartz and pyrite.[54] In the succeeding centuries the pace of mining increased, in the coal fields of Cape Breton and the gold rushes of the North-West, a trend that continued in the decades leading up to Williamson's geological training.[55]

Suzanne Zeller's work *Inventing Canada: Early Victorian Science and the Idea of the Transcontinental Nation* traces the development and professionalization of geology as a scientific discipline through the 19th century. Her arguments emphasize its status as an inventory science, a technology deployed for the mapping, enumerating, and reification of the Canadian environment that was essential to building the idea of Canada as a state. Geology also played an important part in the linked colonial project, justifying removal of Indigenous Peoples, settling yterritories, resource extraction, and framing all of this as ideologically consistent with nation building.[56] When the geologic survey of Canada was founded in 1841, those objectives were crystalized into a state-funded scientific institution tasked with making available the mineral resources that would power Canadian industrialization and facilitate the expansion of the frontiers of settlement into a territory that was geologically but not necessarily agriculturally

[54] Sandlos and Keeling, *Mining Country*, 26–27; Jacques Mathieu, "Napou Jacques Cartier," *Cap-Aux-Diamants: La Revue d'histoire Du Québec*, no. 41 (Spring 1995): 12–14.
[55] Sandlos and Keeling, *Mining Country*, 31; Suzanne Elizabeth Zeller, *Inventing Canada: Early Victorian Science and the Idea of a Transcontinental Nation*, Carleton Library Series 214 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 13.
[56] Zeller, *Inventing Canada*, 4–5, 53–54, 110–12.

important.[57] Zeller shows how geology played an important role in the 19th century processes of colonization that built a Canadian nation, but her work stops short of following that narrative into the 20th century, or to other colonial contexts.

John T. Williamson the Geologist

Williamson completed his bachelor's degree in 1928, achieving first class standing, with multiple summer trips into the interior under his belt.[58] He would subsequently complete both his M.A, in 1930, and his Ph. D. in 1933 at McGill. While he was completing his graduate studies, Williamson shared an apartment with a South African geology student named Norman Schindler.[59] The two were frequent study partners and one can easily imagine that the topic of discussion might have turned to comparing South African and Canadian geology and making plans for their future careers. Williamson's M.A. thesis was a very close study of a specific rock outcrop near the town of Badger, in the Dominion of Newfoundland.[60] For his Ph. D. work, Williamson set out to determine the geologic origins of the chromite deposits of the Eastern Townships region of Quebec, completing his fieldwork in 1931 as an assistant for Bertrand T. Denis of the Quebec Bureau of mines.[61] Denis was one of the first geologists hired for a new dedicated geological division of the bureau, which had previously worked in a more ad hoc

[57] Zeller, 47–49, 51–54.
[58] Uys, "Jack of Diamonds," 22.
[59] "'Diamond King' Interested in Developing East Africa."
[60] John T. Williamson, "A Detailed Petrographic Study of Ten Mile Rock Occurrences Hall's Bay Road Newfoundland" (Montreal, QC, McGill University, 1930).
[61] John T. Williamson, *The Origin and Occurrence of the Chromite Deposits of the Eastern Townships, Quebec* (Montreal, QC: McGill University, 1933), 1–4; Bertrand T Denis, "The Chromite Deposits of the Eastern Townships of the Province of Quebec," in *Annual Report of the Quebec Bureau of Mines for the Calendar Year 1931* (Paradis, 1932), 7.

manner, and he had been a colleague of Bancroft's, working in Northern Rhodesia for Anglo-American.[62]

Unfortunately for Williamson, while the prospects for Quebecois geologists were on the rise when he began his studies at McGill, his graduation coincided with the onset of the Great Depression, during which the profitability of mining and demand for geological expertise plummeted. Contracts were drying up, young geologists who had just finished their studies were faced with an inability to find work, and geology students were jumping ship for other, less precarious careers.[63] However, Williamson's work had caught the eye of Joseph Bancroft, who offered Williamson and his roommate Schindler positions with Anglo American or one of its subsidiaries in Northern Rhodesia.[64] The pair accepted without hesitation.

The subsequent period of Williamson's life is difficult to parse. Williamson only ever published one article in his lifetime, and he never bothered to set the record straight regarding his early career. Many of the sources referenced here are newspaper articles, letters, and semi-fictional books of varying quality and questionable accuracy. Some primary sources claim that Williamson originally went to South Africa with another McGill professor, Dr. Richard Graham for a lecture tour, or that he was recommended by a third professor, J.J. O'Neill, directly to Anglo American as a result of his good grades.[65] Other primary sources disagree on the companies that Williamson worked for once he arrived in South Africa, or on his itinerary

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[62] Castonguay, *The Government of Natural Resources*, 64–65.
[63] Morris Zaslow, *Reading the Rocks: The Story of the Geological Survey of Canada, 1842-1972* (Toronto : Ottawa : Ottawa: Macmillan Company of Canada ; Department of Energy, Mines and Resources ; Information Canada, 1975), 359–60, 373.
[64] "'Diamond King' Interested in Developing East Africa"; Uys, "Jack of Diamonds"; "'Never Would Amount to Anything,' Canadian May Become Richest Man," *The Evening Telegram*, October 26, 1946, John Johnston O'Neill fonds, Library and Archives Canada; John Gawaine, *The Diamond Seeker* (Johannesburg, South Africa: Macmillan, South Africa, 1976), 29.
[65] Gawaine, *The Diamond Seeker*, 26–29; "'Never Would Amount to Anything,' Canadian May Become Richest Man."

between his arrival in 1934 and his move to Tanganyika in 1936.[66] While it is possible he was drawn to South Africa by a combination of these factors, the totality of sources suggest he was contacted by Bancroft, based on Bancroft maintaining close tabs on McGill graduates, and the role he would play in a later episode in John Williamson's life.

While there is general agreement that Williamson worked for one of the many companies or subsidiaries owned by the Oppenheimer family of De Beers and Anglo American fame, there is confusion over whether Williamson worked for them on mines in South Africa, prospecting in Northern Rhodesia, or if he went directly to Tanganyika. The weight of the evidence suggests that he arrived in South Africa in 1934 but was on his way to Northern Rhodesia before the end of the year.[67] There is even a photograph that claims to show Williamson in Northern Rhodesia in the 1930s, on contract with Loangwa Concessions, one of the De Beers corporation's many subsidiaries.[68]

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[66] John Gunther, *Inside Africa* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1955), 410; Bob Deindorfer, "Penniless Canadian Geologist Became Richest Man," *The Gazette*, April 24, 1958, MG4184 Jean Rogers Fonds, McGill University Archives; "Dr. J. T. Williamson, Quebec Geologist, Won Africa Empire," 8.
[67] Uys, "Jack of Diamonds"; "'Never Would Amount to Anything,' Canadian May Become Richest Man"; "John Williamson, Diamond Miner, 50," *New York Times*, January 9, 1958, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times; John Gunther, "Diamonds Have Made Him: The World's Richest Bachelor," *The Washington Post and Times-Herald*, October 17, 1954, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Washington Post.
[68] "Williamson, the Diamond Seeker of Mwadui," accessed October 30, 2023, http://www.mwadui.com/index.htm.

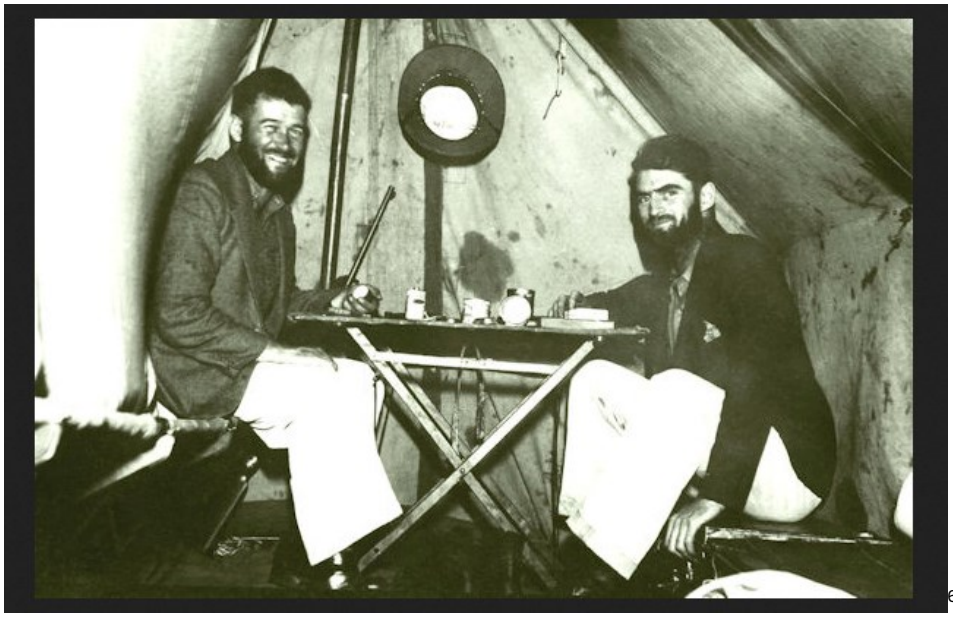
 [69]

Figure 2:
Photograph that purports to depict John Thoburn Williamson (seated right) and his colleague Richard Roberts during their time working for "Loangwa Concessions" a subsidiary of De Beers, sometime in the 1930s

"Williamson, the Diamond Seeker of Mwadui," accessed October 30, 2023, http://www.mwadui.com/index.html.

An early article in Maclean's Magazine claims that Williamson butted heads with Ernest Oppenheimer, founder of the Anglo American corporation, while in Rhodesia which led him to quit the company a year after he began his contract, vowing "never to have anything to do with Oppenheimer's company again".[70] This was most likely an exaggeration, or a pure invention, engineered to foreshadow the very real commercial conflict that would later break out between the two men. For whatever reason, Williamson did leave the Anglo American corporate orbit

[69] "Williamson, the Diamond Seeker of Mwadui," accessed October 30, 2023, http://www.mwadui.com/index.htm.
[70] Uys, "Jack of Diamonds."

sometime in 1935, taking up a new contract with the Tanganyika Diamond and Gold Development Co. which was also held by South African capital.[71] The Development Co. appears to have been a much smaller operation than anything carried out by Anglo American, and Williamson seems to have taken on expanded responsibilities when he switched employers. The company owned both a gold mine and a diamond mine in Tanganyika, both of which were showing signs of flagging profitability by the time Williamson was hired.

Williamson Goes Independent

Despite what the majority of writing on Williamson's time in Tanganyika claims, likely in an attempt to inflate Williamson's prospecting prowess, the Territory had been extensively prospected by both private and state concerns since the arrival of Europeans in the late 19th century. Dr. Mousseau Tremblay, who wrote his PhD. thesis at McGill on the Williamson mine in 1956 and would go on to work at Mwadui as a geologist, provides a list of previous geological studies of the Mwadui area.[72] Between 1926 and 1939, six geological reports were produced on the area around Mwadui, mostly by surveyors and geologists working with the Tanganyika Geological Survey. The area had also been surveyed during the period of German colonization, the reason British surveys had come to the Shinyanga area was mostly because of traces of deposits uncovered by German geologists and prospectors. All the reports noted the existence of diamonds in the region, but like the gold mines mentioned above, none of them were particularly lucrative. Alongside the mine at Mabuki there were three other diamond mines active in the

[71] Uys; Chachage, "The Meek Shall Inherit the Earth but Not the Mining Rights: The Mining Industry and Accumulation in Tanzania," 51.
[72] Tremblay, "Geology of the Williamson Diamond Mine, Mwadui, Tanganyika," 12; Tracey Ludington, "Rotary Hears Williamson Story: Diamonds, Diamonds Everywhere, But Scientists a Queer Breed," *The Westmount Examiner*, n.d., MG4184 Jean Rogers Fonds, McGill University Archives.

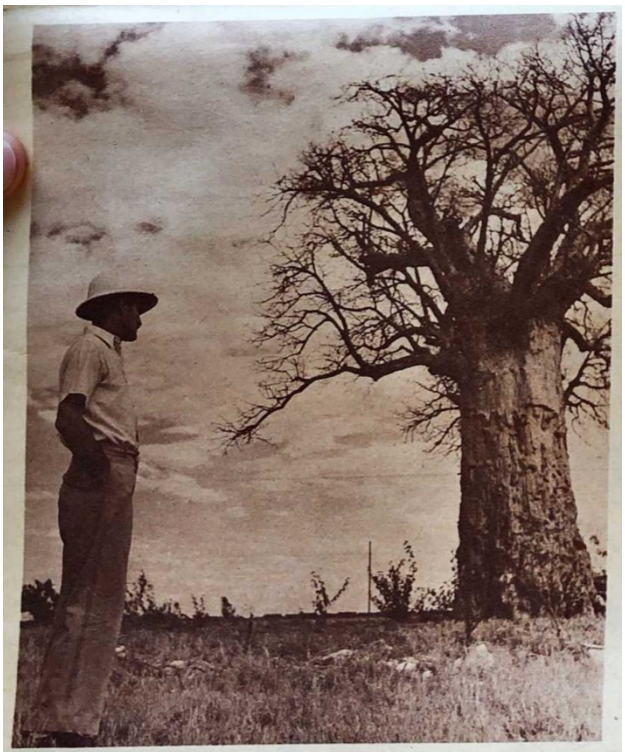
period before Williamson set out on his own, at Kizumbi, Usongo, and Udehe. None of these mines produced diamonds in great numbers and Tanganyika Diamonds Ltd., the company which developed most of them since 1923, went under in 1938.[73] A similar reversal of fortune befell the Tanganyika Diamond and Gold Development Co. At some point in late 1936 or 1937, the company either reduced its operations in Tanganyika or left entirely. As mentioned above, the Mara gold mine was sold to another South African company in 1937, and some sources claim that the Mabuki diamond mine was sold to John Williamson in the same year, but it's unclear if some prospecting was financed into 1940 or if all operations ended in 1937.[74] Whatever sequence of events occurred, what is clear is that by 1937 Williamson had made the decision to strike out as an independent prospector.

When Williamson split off on his own and began prospecting, he was following in the footsteps left by decades of work by other white prospectors, and an unknowable number of local African miners. In his work with the Development Co. he had become convinced of the existence of a large diamond deposit somewhere between the central rail hub of Tabora and the South shore of Lake Victoria. His conviction rested on his own work, but also on the quantity of evidence produced by others that had come before him. Williamson himself admitted as much in the single article he published during his lifetime, in which he summarized the early German and later British exploration of the wider area around Shinyanga and described his own search for what he believed would prove to be the source of the diamonds that had been cropping up since the First World War.[75] Another story suggests that Williamson might have also used non-

[73] Tremblay, "Geology of the Williamson Diamond Mine, Mwadui, Tanganyika," 11.
[74] Uys, "Jack of Diamonds"; Roberts, "The Gold Boom," 556; Gawaine, *The Diamond Seeker*, 30–33; Tremblay, "Geology of the Williamson Diamond Mine, Mwadui, Tanganyika," 12.
[75] John Thoburn Williamson, "The Williamson Diamond Mine," in *Rhodesia and East Africa*, ed. Ferdinand Stephen Joelson (London: East Africa and Rhodesia, 1958), 99–100.

geological methods in his search for diamonds, alleging that he followed the trail left by Indian traders who were purchasing contraband diamonds from unlicensed artisanal African miners in the Shinyanga region, acquiring a rough idea of where the source might be located through clandestine observation.[76]

The Mythical Origins of the Williamson Diamond Mine



EXACT SPOT where he found first diamond at Mwadui is remembered by Williamson. The giant baobab tree at right is where he was camping at the time. Discovery was clue to rich diamond "pipe."[77]

Figure 3:
"Exact spot where he found first diamond at Mwadui is remembered by Williamson. The giant Baobab tree at right is where he was camping at the time. Discovery was clue to rich diamond 'pipe.'"

Williamson Diamond Mine, Mwadui, Tanganyika Territory
The Standard (Montreal)
Aug 13 1949
Diamond King: Canadian Placid Over Owning Richest Mine in World
(Photos by George Rodger)

There are as many versions of the story of how Williamson found the first diamond of the Williamson Diamond Mine as there are newspaper articles, books, and private papers recounting it. One of the original myths of colonial gold mining tells the story of three Spanish peasants who

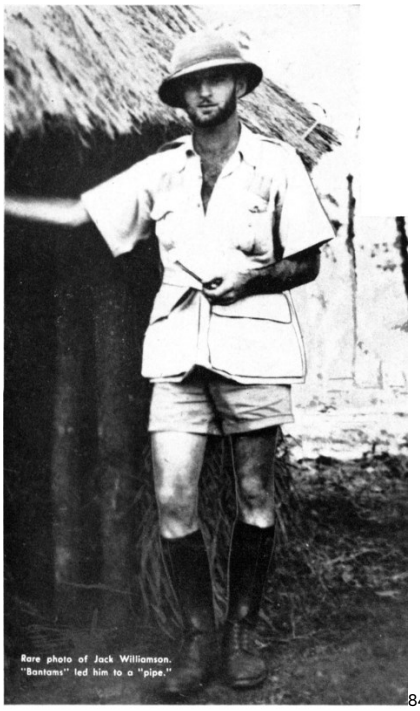
[76] Janse, "A History of Diamond Sources in Africa: Part II," 5.
[77] Sirois, "Diamond King: Canadian Placid Over Owning Richest Mine in World."

had sold their possessions to pay for passage across the Atlantic to chase legends of gold.[78] For weeks they toiled away under the hot sun until, starving and exhausted, they collapsed under the shade of a nearby tree. On the brink of giving up, one of the men had a sudden epiphany; God would surely not let their faith go unrewarded if they simply persevered. As soon as the last words left his mouth, one of his companions cried out and jumped forward to uncover a gold nugget shining in the brush, and soon the men had filled their boots with chunks of gold. They returned to Spain wealthy men, proof that faith in God and perseverance brought fabulous rewards.[79]

A version of this story retold almost verbatim but replacing the peasants with Williamson and the unspecified Caribbean Island with Tanganyika, is told in the majority of the narratives that recount the Canadian geologists original diamond find in 1940. In one legend an exhausted and rain-drenched Williamson pauses to rest under a Baobab tree with his African helpers on the bleak Shinyanga plain, only to stumble upon a fabulous diamond uncovered by the torrent of monsoon- like rains.[80] In another, a discouraged and sickly Williamson is driving home from an unsuccessful day on the plain when his car strikes a mud patch and, while cranking the jack, he spots two shining diamonds resting in the depression left by his car tire.[81] In less sensational tellings, Williamson just happens to be prospecting near a baobab tree when he, or one of the Africans prospecting with him, comes across a large, high-quality diamond.[82] Williamson himself would only go as far as confirming that the first diamond of the Mwadui Diamond Mine

[78] Kendall W. Brown, *A History of Mining in Latin America: From the Colonial Era to the Present*, Diálogos Series (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012), 1.
[79] Brown, 2.
[80] Gawaine, *The Diamond Seeker*, 107.
[81] Uys, "Jack of Diamonds," 56.
[82] Jacqueline Sirois, "Diamond King: Canadian Placid Over Owning Richest Mine in World," *The Standard*, August 13, 1949, John Johnston O'Neill fonds, Library and Archives Canada; Deindorfer, "Penniless Canadian Geologist Became Richest Man."

was found in the vicinity of a baobab tree that was still standing next to his original house on the grounds of the mine.[83]



[84]

Figure 4:
"Rare photo of Jack Williamson. 'Bantams' led him to a 'pipe.'"

Jack of Diamonds, MacLean's


[85]

Figure 5:
"Young Dr. Williamson stands before the 'door' of his native-constructed 'office' in *darkest Africa.*"

"Never would amount to anything" Canadian may become richest man, The Evening Telegram (Toronto), Oct 26 1946

African Testimony: "Discovering" the Williamson Diamond Mine

While myths about Williamson and his mine became popular reading for Westerners in newspapers and fictional narratives about his life, Tanganyikans preserved more grounded memories about Williamson's prospecting. South African geologist Bert Gerryts, who worked at

[83] P. H. E. Burgess, *Diamonds Unlimited* (London: The Adventurers Club, 1960), 27; Gunther, "Diamonds Have Made Him: The World's Richest Bachelor," 5; Williamson, "The Williamson Diamond Mine," 99–100.
[84] Uys, "Jack of Diamonds."
[85] "'Never Would Amount to Anything,' Canadian May Become Richest Man," *The Evening Telegram*, October 26, 1946, R6430-0-1-E, MG30-B171 John Johnston O'Neill fonds, Library and Archives Canada.

the mine, heard stories of the mine's early days from his African colleagues, which he recorded in his memoirs. The story he tells is much less hagiographic than those told by journalists, and it hinges on Williamson's erasure of African contributions to his eventual success. Two local brothers, James and Issa Ashton, were hired and trained by Williamson as geologic prospectors to help him with his survey of the area around Shinyanga.[86] The brothers worked with Williamson during his years in the Tanganyikan bush, using the same surveying methods as the McGill trained geologist.[87] In later years, James was even tasked with training new arrivals to the Williamson mine, often young white geologists who had also studied at McGill, in the prospecting techniques used in the original survey of Mwadui. In fact, according to Gerryts it was actually James having found the first diamonds, who convinced John Williamson to rush to Mwanza and secure the mining claim for the area that would later become the Williamson Diamond Mine.

Gerryts writes that one day James was walking east from where Williamson was camped, heading to meet some family who lived nearby, when his keen eyes noticed the shimmer of diamondiferous gravel on the edge of a footpath. When James passed the spot again on his return, he bent down to dig up some samples to bring to Williamson and was lucky enough to strike a diamond just under the gravel.[88] When Williamson arrived at the site later, he also found diamonds just under the surface, the first traces of what would be developed into the Williamson Diamond Mine. John Williamson himself never shared this story with anyone; he would become cagey if someone asked too many questions about the original diamond discovery. Although white geologists arriving at the mine often trained with the African man who may have uncovered the diamonds, James Ashton's lack of English may have kept him from sharing the

[86] Gerryts, *A Diamond Digger's Anecdotes*, 40.
[87] Gerryts, 42–44.
[88] Gerryts, 40.

story of his discovery. Once the Williamson Mine was established, James and Issa Ashton were essentially paid off; Williamson gave them a generous retirement pension and land on the grounds of the now defunct Mabuki Mine, an act that was possibly meant to buy off their silence.[89] After Williamson's death in 1958, the company that took over the mine awarded James Ashton with a medal in a ceremony acknowledging the role he played in the foundation of the mine, something Williamson never did.

African Memories of the Williamson Diamond Mine

Another narrative of Williamson's prospecting comes to us through oral tradition preserved in the area around Mwadui, recorded by Tanzanian scholar Rosearie A. Mwaipopo, who worked extensively in the region. According to the accounts presented by Mwaipopo, when Williamson started looking for diamonds in 1938 local Tanaganyikans were already aware that diamonds existed somewhere in their territory.[90] Williamson hired some local men, perhaps including James and Issa Ashton, and told them to spread out from Shinyanga town looking for traces of diamond deposits. One of these men heard rumors of a place where they played *Bao,* a traditional East African board game, with unusually brilliant stones, which caused Williamson to suspect they were using diamonds as game pieces.[91] Where this story differs radically from all those mentioned previously is that when Williamson arrived in this area, a loose village cluster around Mwadui, he sought out the diamonds through diplomatic means, and not rugged, individualistic prospecting as reported by journalists and the British Government. Before he could register his

[89] Gerryts, 44–45.
[90] Rosemarie A. Mwaipopo, "Ubeshi - Negotiating Co-Existence: Artisanal and Large-Scale Relations in Diamond Mining," in *Mining and Social Transformation in Africa: Mineralizing and Democratizing Trends in Artisanal Production*, ed. Deborah Fahy Bryceson et al., Routledge Studies in Development and Society 37 (London New York: Routledge, 2014), 164.
[91] Mwaipopo, 164.

claim or begin digging for diamonds, Williamson had to enter into negotiations for access to the land with the chief in charge of the Mwadui area, Chief Makwaia.[92] Chief Makwaia would later join Williamson's legal advisor and business partner, Iqbal Chand Chopra on the Tanganyikan Legislative Council, one of only two African members in the 1940s, becoming "one of the most prominent African politicians" in the colony, described as a moderate who rarely challenged the colonial status quo.[93] He would later become even more involved with the Williamson Diamond Mine, joining its directorial board after Williamson's death, and eventually being politically sidelined after running afoul of the emergent TANU African nationalist party.

One of Rosemarie Mwaipopo's interviewees, a descendant of Chief Makwaia, remembers that Williamson granted the local people access to many of the mine's amenities in exchange for being allowed to exploit the diamonds at Mwadui.[94] Locals were allowed to use the mine's company store, their children were accepted into the nearby Shinyanga Secondary school, and eventually they were allowed to draw water at the two dams constructed for the mine in the 1950s. While these concessions must have been important to those living around Mwadui, these agreements only became meaningful when the mine came into production in the mid 1940s, and it is likely that Williamson offered something else in his first meetings with Chief Makwaia. A hint is offered by another Rosemarie Mwaipopo's interviewees, who linked Williamson's arrival to the beginning of widespread artisanal mining in the area, an activity called *Ubeshi* by Mwadui locals. Williamson is said to have taught people more efficient ways of sorting gravel and processing already sorted mine tailings for diamonds, and to have given locals limited

[92] Mwaipopo, 164.
[93] James R. Brennan, *Taifa: Making Nation and Race in Urban Tanzania*, New African Histories (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012), 144–45; Bjerk, *Building a Peaceful Nation*, 37.
[94] Mwaipopo, "Ubeshi - Negotiating Co-Existence: Artisinal and Large-Scale Relations in Diamond Mining," 164.

permission to continue this activity within the mine's grounds.[95] The Canadian geologist, with all his modern McGill training, was forever linked to the process of artisanal mining in the minds of some locals, and one resident even referred to Williamson as "the first mbeshi (Ubeshi practitioner) in Mwadui, although of a different kind".[96] *Ubeshi* continues to be practiced around the Williamson Diamond Mine to this day, as it became widespread in the 1970s and again in the 1990s-early into the 2000s.[97] In the contemporary period artisanal mining around Mwadui is associated with intense conflict between African miners and security forces employed by Petra Diamonds, the current owners of the Williamson mine, but local memories of Williamson are largely positive when it comes to artisanal mining.[98]

[95] Mwaipopo, 164–65.
[96] Mwaipopo, 165.
[97] Mwaipopo, 166–67.
[98] "The Deadly Cost of 'Ethical' Diamonds: Human Rights Abuses at Petra Diamonds' Tanzanian Mine," *RAID* (blog), accessed February 8, 2024, https://raid-uk.org/post-library/the-deadly-cost-of-ethical-diamonds/.

Chapter 2: The Williamson Diamond Mine from Foundations to Operation

In Chapter 1 we explored the wider historical contexts that contributed to the foundation off the Williamson Diamond Mine and the mythical origin stories that became associated with it. The following chapter zooms into the local context, the immediate prehistory of the mine and its construction, and the experiences of those who worked and lived there under the watchful eye of John Williamson.

A Friend and a Partner: Iqbal Chopra

Through the operation of his mine John T. Williamson developed relationships with most of the politically powerful figures in Tanganyika, including Colonial Governors and parliamentarians associated with the Colonial Office.[1] He even endeared himself to British royalty through the lavish gifts of diamonds he gave to Queen Elizabeth and her sister Princess Margaret.[2] His closest confidant though, was Iqbal Chand Chopra, a prominent lawyer and Asian member of the Tanganyika Legislative Assembly who was instrumental in the running of the Williamson Diamond Mine. In May of 1936 Williamson travelled to Lake Victoria and the town of Mwanza, the administrative capital of the Lake Region, seeking to secure the support of the local political figure Iqbal Chand Chopra.[3] Chopra's son recounted many years later how his father noted

[1] "House of Commons Debate: Tanganyika" (London: Hansard's, April 7, 1955).
[2] "Don d'un Canadien," *La Presse*, November 12, 1947, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec; "Dr. Williamson Faces Invasion: Princess, 40 Newsmen to Visit Fabulous Diamond Mine," October 9, 1956, Frank Cyril James Fonds MG 1017, McGill University Archives.
[3] Jarat Chopra, "The Pink Diamond," Sikh Heritage: Sikh Heritage in East Africa Part 3, accessed March 25, 2023, http://www.sikh-heritage.co.uk/heritage/sikhhert%20EAfrica/sikhsEAfricapart3.htm; Deindorfer, "Penniless Canadian Geologist Became Richest Man."

John's soft-spoken demeanor and gentle nature, and the two agreed on the spot to a working partnership that would last for the rest of Williamson's relatively short life.[4] Iqbal Chopra was one of the most politically active Indians in Tanganyika. As a member of the Assembly he would go on to be involved in high-level politics as independence approached in 1961, making a name for himself as a critic of the colonial government and an enabler of an emerging African Nationalism.[5] For Williamson, Chopra pulled the required bureaucratic strings of registering mining claims and navigating red tape, fought off "inspectors of mines and competitors" and may even have financed some of the diamond prospecting.[6] When Williamson and his assistants struck diamonds in 1940, it was Chopra who helped secure an exclusive licence for exploration. An entry in the July 19th, 1940 edition of the Tanganyika Gazette confirms this, recording mining claim #14246 held by a J.T. Williamson for diamonds in the district of Shinyanga, backdated to April of that year.[7] Two years later, when it was time to turn that claim into a fully operating mining company, it was once again Chopra who helped get Williamson Diamonds Ltd. Officially registered with the colonial authorities.[8] The company was headed by Williamson with 800 shares along with just two partners, his brother Percy (who held 300 shares), and Iqbal Chopra, (with the remaining 3).[9] Chopra and Williamson would remain friends for the rest of their lives,

[4] Chopra, "The Pink Diamond"; Burgess, *Diamonds Unlimited*, 15–17.
[5] Brennan, *Taifa*, 144–45.
[6] Chopra, "The Pink Diamond"; Canadian Press, "Diamond King's Aide May Be New Mine Boss," *Unknown Publication*, 1958, MG4184 Jean Rogers Fonds, McGill University Archives.
[7] "Tanganyika Gazette," July 19, 1940, 351.
[8] Williamson, "The Williamson Diamond Mine," 101; John Knight and Heather Stevenson, "The Williamson Diamond Mine, De Beers, and the Colonial Office: A Case-Study of the Quest for Control," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 24, no. 3 (September 1986): 427.
[9] "Dr. John Williamson," *The Times*, January 9, 1958, The Times Digital Archive.

the trust between them was strong, and Chopra was the person John trusted most to advance his interests within Tanganyika and on many business trips around the world.[10]

The Second World War and the Williamson Diamond Mine

Williamson's search for diamonds lasted for more than three years. While he and his African prospectors were deep in survey on the plains of Shinyanga, the world around them descended into a second World War. In the last war, Tanganyika had been one of the principal battlegrounds, as The British and their allies had fought the German colonial army down the length of the territory, north to south, over four years of gruelling warfare.[11] During the second World War, the fighting seemed to be taking place everywhere except for Tanganyika. As historian John Iliffe notes, the war became known in Swahili as *mpakani*, meaning 'at the borders', a reference to the fact that Tanganyikans fought for the British Empire on other fronts, but no fighting actually occurred within the Mandate Territory.[12] For John Williamson, the war brought opportunity, the fact that he made his diamond strike in 1940, early in the war, meant that his project received significant state support over other schemes making claims on the British Empire's thinly stretched resources. In the case of the Williamson Diamond Mine, it is hard to imagine the mine would have been developed to the same extent if not for the outbreak of the war.

Illustrating this point, a persistent rumor claims that Williamson had a rival, an Italian prospector also looking for diamonds in the Shinyanga region. Allegedly, the two were neck and neck in their race to register their claim with the colonial government. However, the state

[10] Deindorfer, "Penniless Canadian Geologist Became Richest Man"; Burgess, *Diamonds Unlimited*, 15–18; Chopra, "The Pink Diamond."
[11] Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, 242–46.
[12] Iliffe, 370.

ultimately sided with Williamson over fears that the Italian geologist would be classified as an enemy alien if Italy declared war on the Allies (which it soon did), delaying the development of a promising diamond deposit important to Britain's war efforts.[13] Another version of the rumor goes further by claiming that the Italian prospector was actually detained when he appeared at the government clerk to register his diamond find, allowing Williamson to register first. This unlucky prospector, whose name is recorded as either Bondini or Bonini, is said to have been interned in a POW camp, where he died of sickness or grief before the end of the war.[14]

Putting the Mine to Work: Industrial Diamonds and Strategic Minerals

The principal, less speculative reason to suggest that the mine might have had a different fate if not for the outbreak of the war was the importance of the minerals extracted there to the British war effort. One characteristic of the mine noted by observers was the high amount of industrial grade diamonds found there, around 50% of total production.[15] Industrial diamonds differ from gemstone diamonds in that they are irregularly shaped, discolored, and altogether unsuitable for sale on the precious stone market. This makes them perfect for industrial uses, where the unique hardness of diamond stones makes them ideal drill bits for precision manufacturing. These drill bits became essential to the war efforts of countries fighting in the Second World War due to the development of strong steel alloys that required diamond tools to precisely shape them into usable parts, and demand was always high as these tools were worn out with incredible speed.[16]

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[13] Janse, "A Histoy of Diamond Sources in Africa: Part II," 5.
[14] Gerryts, *A Diamond Digger's Anecdotes*, 45.
[15] Robert Kipp, "My Strange Encounter with the Diamond King," *Maclean's Magazine*, July 6, 1957, 17.
[16] Raymond Dumett, "Africa's Strategic Minerals during the Second World War," *The Journal of African History* 26, no. 4 (October 1985): 385–86, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853700028802.

Raymond Dummett, a historian of the British Empire with an interest in the history of mining, has argued that "diamonds were the continents [Africas] most vital contribution to the war effort since, as one source noted, 'there is no important war weapon used by our forces that does not employ the diamond in its manufacture'."[17] Interestingly enough, despite his otherwise exhaustive account of industrial diamond extraction in Africa during World War Two, Dummet fails to include the Mandate of Tanganyika in his work.[18] Williamson was often lauded for his contributions to the British Empire, in "diamonds which were invaluable to the war effort".[19] Unfortunately, it is difficult to calculate the extent to which the Williamson Diamond Mine was significant during the war. Figures for 1940-1945 are unreliable and vary by source but roughly 4,500 carats of diamonds were extracted in 1940, increasing to 29,000 in 1941, 40,300 in 1942, 53,000 in 1943 and 90,066 in 1944, ending the last year of the war 1945 at 100,000 carats.[20] This means that, roughly, 2,250 carats of industrial diamonds were produced by Mwadui at the start of the war, growing to 50,000 carats by the war's end, an increase of 2122% just from the opening of a single mine. Although this was less than was contributed by South Africa or the Congo, Tanganyika's production was clearly appreciated by the British arms manufacturers.

Historian Megan Black's work on the U.S. Department of the Interior and the role played by its bureaucrats in articulating American resource policy in the 20th century charts the development of arguments for transnational resource exploitation that rested on extraterritorial claims to "strategic minerals'. The United States, and other imperial powers zealously deployed

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[17] Raymond Dummet, "Africa's Strategic Minerals During the Second World War," *The Journal of African History* 26, no. 4 (1985): 385.
[18] Dummet, 386, 407–8.
[19] Uys, "Jack of Diamonds," 56; "World's 'Richest' Man Expected Home Soon to Visit Father," *The Montreal Daily Star*, September 25, 1946, John Johnston O'Neill fonds, Library and Archives Canada; "'Never Would Amount to Anything,' Canadian May Become Richest Man."
[20] Knight and Stevenson, "The Williamson Diamond Mine, De Beers, and the Colonial Office: A Case-Study of the Quest for Control," 435; Tremblay, "Geology of the Williamson Diamond Mine, Mwadui, Tanganyika," 10.

the concept of "strategic minerals" in the lead up to the Second World War, a concept legally defined in a 1939 act of Congress as minerals "essential to the needs of industry for the manufacture of supplies for the armed forces and civilian population in times of emergency".[21] The power behind an argument for mining that was couched in national security was that it could silence the resistance of anti-Imperialists in the Global South and make permissible, colonial mining projects in a time of war.[22] Colonial resource extraction during the Second World War was one of the most important factors in securing Allied victory over the Axis forces, tipping the logistical balance overwhelmingly in favor of Britain and the United States while proving the value of colonies to Britain in particular as sources of vast wealth to be extracted in times of crisis.[23] It was in this context that the Williamson Diamond Mine came into being. The war against the Axis didn't end the clamor for strategic minerals though, and one of Black's major contributions is the way her book traces the redeployment of arguments developed in the Second World War for the new reality of Cold War militarization and beyond.[24] The trajectory of the Williamson Diamond Mine reflects both the invocation of strategic mineralsin the forties and its reconfiguration in the postwar period as the mine continued to operate into the Cold War.

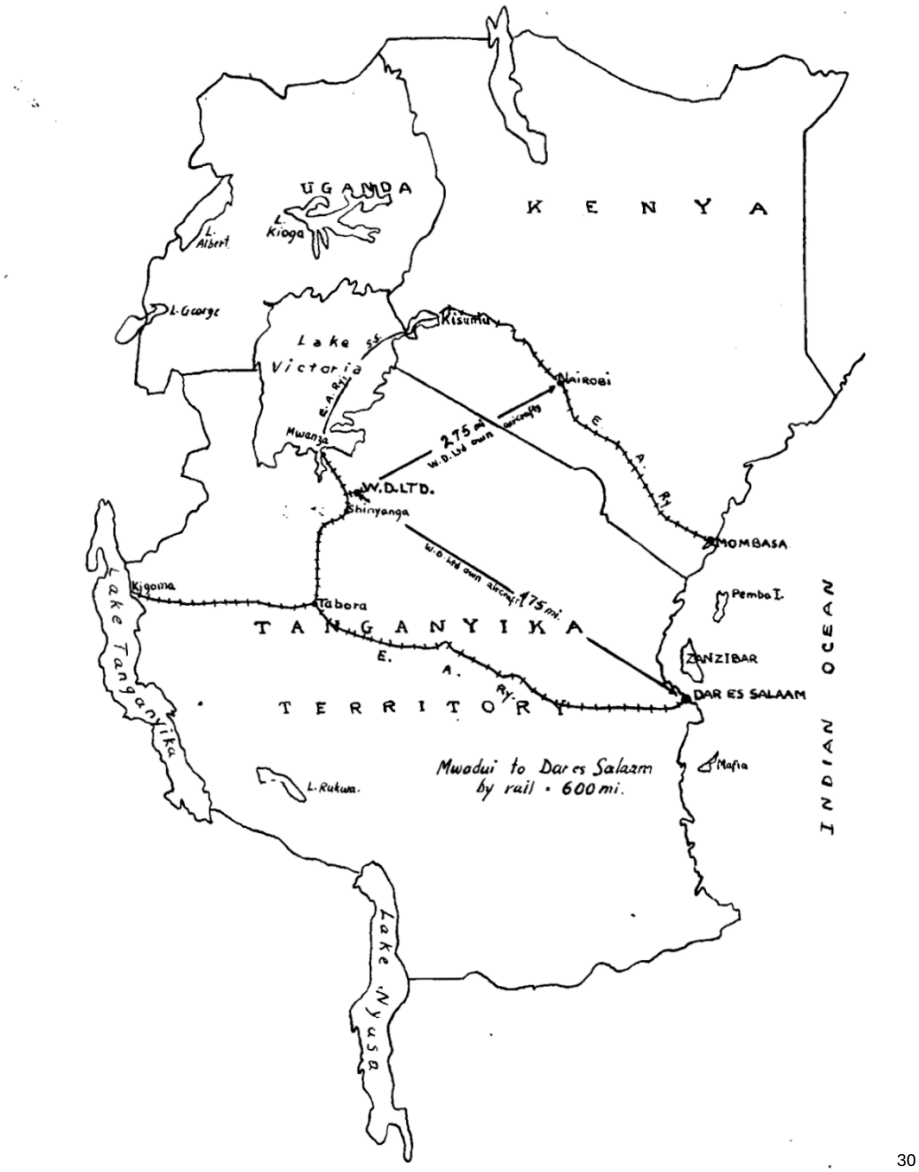
POW Labor and the Construction of the Mine

The construction of the mine in the early years relied on a unique supply of forced labor, Italian prisoners of war held in prison camps within Tanganyika. On the outbreak of war with Italy in 1940, the British moved quickly to intern and confiscate the property of all Italians and Germans

[21] Megan Black, *The Global Interior: Mineral Frontiers and American Power* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2018), 71; Dumett, "Africa's Strategic Minerals during the Second World War," 382–83.
[22] Black, *The Global Interior*, 6–10, 54–56, 68–72.
[23] Dumett, "Africa's Strategic Minerals during the Second World War," 382–93, 405–6.
[24] Black, *The Global Interior*, 121–30, 190–93.

living in the African colonies, including Tanganyika.[25] The next year, 3,000 Italians and roughly 9,500 other nationalities captured in Italy's African colonies of Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia were moved to concentration camps in Tanganyika, at Tabora and Arusha.[26] Around 3,000 people were kept in the camp at Tabora throughout the war years, and the British policy was to engage prisoners of war in forced labor until the cessation of hostilities. Tabora happened to be relatively close to the Williamson Diamond Mine and would later become the company town of Mwadui, and it is reported that a contingent of Italian prisoners housed at Tabora or one of the other camps in the territory was assigned to the construction of the mine, most likely in 1942.[27] One can't help but wonder if the Italian geologist Bondini might have been among the men who ended up working at the mine. Although sourcing detailed evidence concerning forced labor at the mine has proved difficult, the presence of italian language signage visible in a photo of a gravel sorting area lends credibility to the claim.[28] A website maintained by a former white resident of Mwadui, full of rich material on the mine, also repeats the claim that Italian prisoners of war built the original mine including its rail connection.[29]

[25] Stefano Baldi, *Italians in Tanzania* (Dar es Salaam: Embassy of Italy, 1994), 15.
[26] Baldi, 15–16.
[27] Edward Jay Epstein, *The Diamond Invention* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1982), 89; Chachage, "The Meek Shall Inherit the Earth but Not the Mining Rights: The Mining Industry and Accumulation in Tanzania," 52.
[28] Richard Harrington, "Photostory #142: Canada's Late 'King of Diamonds,'" *National Film Board of Canada*, January 28, 1958, NFB: box 75, Library and Archives Canada.
[29] David Hide, "Williamson, the Diamond Seeker of Mwadui," accessed March 26, 2023, http://www.mwadui.com/.



[30]

Figure 6:
Map of East Africa centered on the Williamson Diamond Mine "W.D.LTD." with its land, air, and lacustrine logistics network highlighted.
"Map of East Africa Showing the Transportation Facilities Available to Williamson Diamonds" in
Mousseau Tremblay, "Geology of the Williamson Diamond Mine, Mwadui, Tanganyika" (Montreal, QC, McGill University, 1956), 2a.

[30] Mousseau Tremblay, "Geology of the Williamson Diamond Mine, Mwadui, Tanganyika" (Montreal, QC, McGill University, 1956).

Mwadui Before the Mine

The town of Mwadui is located south of Lake Victoria, in the Shinyanga region of Tanzania, just 25 kilometers from the regional capital and the railway stop of Shinyanga town, in the homelands of Tanzanias most numerous ethnic group, the Sukuma people. There are few references to Mwadui before the arrival of John Williamson, but the sources that do predate the mine suggest that it was a small, dispersed village by at least the 1930s. In the 1932 and 1938 British Colonial Blue Books, annually published compilations of statistics and news from the colonial government, Mwadui appears in a list of villages in the Lake Province area, where it is associated with the larger community of Luhumbo/Lohumbo.[31] A complaint lodged with the United Nations visiting Mission in 1948 by a Sukuma chief, references local Africans who "had formerly lived in the present mine area (and) had been 'driven away'" by the construction of the mine, lending further weight to the evidence of Mwadui's existence pre-Williamson.[32] Finally, local oral tradition holds that when Williamson arrived to prospect for diamonds in the area of Shinyanga, following in the footsteps of geologists who had already surveyed the region, he heard stories of diamonds in the village of Mwadui, and he negotiated directly with a man identified as the village's local chief, chief Chief David Kidaha Makwaia.[33]

If Mwadui was an established village at the time Williamson arrived, and it seems that it was, then it is interesting that the original mining claim registered with the colonial government by Williamson and Chopra makes no reference to its existence. The claim is registered to a point on a cadastral map; "South A36/V.IV", unlike the majority of similar claims which list

[31] Tanganyika, *Tanganyika Territory Blue Book* (Government printer., 1932), 281, https://books.google.ca/books?id=_Ee9_J-88wYC.
[32] "United Nations Visiting Mission to East Africa Report on Tanganyika and Related Documents," Trusteeship Council Official Records (Lake Success, N.Y.: United Nations, March 19, 1951), 87–88, Trusteeship Council. Official Records. Supplement, United Nations Digital Library.
[33] Mwaipopo, "Ubeshi - Negotiating Co-Existence: Artisanal and Large-Scale Relations in Diamond Mining," 164, 165.

recognized villages.[34] When Williamson had the chance to describe the origins of the mine, he was even more vague, writing that the mine site was found "by the writer in March, 1940, near the village of Lukombo (almost certainly the Luhumbo/Lohumbo mentioned above), some 15 miles north-west of Shinyanga Station".[35] One reason for this evasiveness could be that neither Williamson nor the colonial government wanted to acknowledge that the African land and the community located on it had been expropriated to make way for the mine. This kind of expropriation was a potential violation of the United Nations Trusteeship Agreement, specifically Article 8 concerning land and natural resources, which obligated the United Kingdom to "take into consideration native laws and customs, and (…) respect the rights and safeguard the interests, both present and future, of the native population."[36]

Humble Beginnings: Building the Williamson Diamond Mine

Looking at the evidence, there was almost certainly a small, loosely concentrated village called Mwadui already located within the mining area registered by John Williamson in 1940, but its dwellings seem to have been demolished to make way for the mine and its people dispersed, a common occurrence at mining sites around the world, up to the present day. Over the original African community, Williamson's forced labourers and employees built the diamond mine, as well as two separate, racially segregated towns of vastly different character to house the workers and their families. The original claim for the Williamson Diamond Mine at Mwadui consisted of two adjacent prospecting licences acquired by Williamson in 1940, which were later combined into a single mining lease with the establishment of Williamson Diamonds Ltd. covering the

[34] "Tanganyika Gazette," 351.
[35] Williamson, "The Williamson Diamond Mine," 99.
[36] "Trusteeship Agreement for the Territory of Tanganyika as Approved by the General Assembly on 13 December 1946" (New York, N.Y: United Nations, June 9, 1947), 3–4, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3995999.

main center of mineral processing.[37] The mine was heavily fenced, one barbed wire fence enclosed the processing and digging areas as well as many of the older buildings including Williamson's house and the African workers compound, while another ran around the entirety of the mine area including the town of Mwadui, covering an area of more than 9 square miles.[38]

When John Williamson wrote about the operation of the mine he emphasized the extent to which it had changed over time. The basic type of surface mining carried out at the Williamson Mine required large chunks of rock to first be excavated by hand, explosive, or mechanical means. These rocks were then screened through a series of more and more complex sieves (through a multitude of machines including but not limited to centrifuges, magnetic arrays, water jets, and conveyor belts with human sorters), until complete separation of the valuable, diamond-bearing material and the residual gravel was achieved. This leftover weight, called tailings in mining parlance, was disposed of in a nearby dumping ground. Independent artisanal miners, operating in contravention of the law but with some level of approval from Williamson, would often attempt to gain access to this area to remove the little bits of diamond that sometimes passed unnoticed through the sorting process.[39] In the early years of the mine this whole procedure was accomplished by hand, using traditional hand panning methods, not too different from how prospectors worked the Klondike or Witwatersrand Gold Rushes.[40] The revenues brought in from selling the diamonds mined this way were used to purchase a great deal of heavy machinery, including front-loaders and dump trucks for excavating, and several different sorting machines that would grow into perhaps the most complex mineral sorting

[37] Knight and Stevenson, "The Williamson Diamond Mine, De Beers, and the Colonial Office: A Case-Study of the Quest for Control," 427; Williamson, "The Williamson Diamond Mine," 100.
[38] Burgess, *Diamonds Unlimited*, 38–39; Williamson, "The Williamson Diamond Mine," 100.
[39] Mwaipopo, "Ubeshi - Negotiating Co-Existence: Artisinal and Large-Scale Relations in Diamond Mining," 164–65.
[40] Williamson, "The Williamson Diamond Mine," 100.

facility on the African continent in the 1950s, although a great deal of work continued to be done with simple hand tools.[41]

Mwadui Town: Population of the mine

The Williamson Diamond Mine was an exceptional formation in many ways, a product of geologic professionalization in Canada and European-led extractive projects in East Africa, the mine's trajectory reflected the different colonial contexts of its two geographic poles. A Williamson employee observing from the cockpit of a survey plane described it as "a self-contained town that appeared literally to have been dropped from the skies into the midst of the bush."[42] The mine was home to a diverse workforce organized under a fundamentally unequal labor regime that privileged a small white elite, and to a lesser extent an even smaller East Asian contingent, over the Africans who made up the vast majority of its workforce. In 1948 the United Nations mission to East Africa visited the mine and produced a mostly glowing report on the labor situation there. They recorded 2,700 African men working in various capacities at the mine, mostly recruited from the surrounding areas, enjoying a higher standard of employment than most other Tanganyikan businesses.[44]

Although further demographic data about the mine has been difficult to track down, we do have some sources for the working and living populations at Mwadui. Williamson himself gives figures in an article published in 1958, the last before his death, noting that a total of 4,534 people lived in Mwadui in 1957.[45] That included 3,862 Africans, including 455 women and 472 children, 539 Europeans, and 133 Asians. Of those 4,534 people, 3,303 were employed at the

[41] Williamson, 100, 103–10.
[42] Burgess, *Diamonds Unlimited*, 23.
[44] "United Nations Visiting Mission to East Africa Report on Tanganyika and Related Documents," 122–23.
[45] Williamson, "The Williamson Diamond Mine," 122.

mine, 2,935 Africans, 310 Europeans, and 58 Asians (2,935 is coincidently the same number given by Williamson for the total population of African men in Mwadui, suggesting Williamson considered only men working at mine).[46]

Another source for the population in Mwadui gives more figures from 1957, recorded in an Ethnography survey of the wider Unyamwezi Region published in 1967. This text lists a total of 3,633 Africans living in Mwadui, 2,885 men and 748 women.[47] The figure is further broken down into "tribes", which is an imperfect category but gives us an idea to what extent the labor force at the Williamson Diamond Mine came from the local area. The majority of Africans are indeed listed as coming from the surrounding regions, with the highest number listed as belonging to the Sukuma people, and the rest coming from across Tanganyika but mostly the northwest from the south shores of Lake Victoria to the northern tip of Lake Tanganyika. Only 941 individuals are listed as "others", suggesting a failure on the part of the ethnographer to account for the difficulties of fitting people neatly into one tribal designation, or perhaps indicating origins outside Tanganyika or tribes that the researcher was unfamiliar with.[48] While the nearly 1,000 Africans of unknown origins do pose some fascinating questions related to the labour situation at Mwadui, the picture painted by the above figures aligns with the impression of representatives of the United Nations' mission who visited the mine in August of 1948, that the majority of workers were "recruited on a voluntary basis from the local Sukuma tribe and surrounding areas." [49]

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[46] Williamson, 112.
[47] R.G. Abrahams, *The Peoples of Greater Unyamwezi, Tanzania : Nyamwezi, Sukuma, Sumbwa, Kimbu, Konongo* (London: International African Institute, 1967), 23.
[48] Abrahams, 23.
[49] "United Nations Visiting Mission to East Africa Report on Tanganyika and Related Documents," 122

[50]

Figure 7:

Map of the town of Mwadui and the Williamson Diamond Mine.

The main diamond digging area is in the top-center of the image, under the air strip. Connected to the digging area by a conveyor belt is the diamond processing area, or "Main Plant". To the right of the main plant, with well spaces homed and expansive greenery, is the white area. To the left of the plant is the crowded African area, known as the "Eastern Township"

"Williamson, the Diamond Seeker of Mwadui," accessed October 30, 2023, http://www.mwadui.com/index.htm.

[50] "Williamson, the Diamond Seeker of Mwadui."

Mapping the Mine: Inequality and Segregation

Looking at the above map of Mwadui and the mine, hosted on a website maintained by alumni of the mine, we can identify three main areas. First, in the bottom left, is the cramped, square shaped collection of dwellings for Africans living at Mwadui, referred to as the "Eastern Townships" (a possible reference to the mining region in Quebec). To the right of that is a long rectangle with open green areas, the white section of the town with individual homes, schools, a hospital, restaurant, clubhouse, yacht club, and more. Above, in the center of the image is the mine itself, the main plant directly above the African township and directly above that the main area of open pit excavation. White mine staff were housed with their families in individual detached dwellings, with one bedroom, a living/dining room, and a detached kitchen area with a wood stove and bathroom area.[51] Each family was attended to by two or more African cooks, and domestic servants, while individuals without family were assigned one African who was responsible for both cooking and cleaning.[52] An enormous amount of effort and capital was invested into providing amenities for the whites of Mwadui, who made up at most 13% of the population. A European Club hosted nightly events, a restaurant seating 150 ran full time, and separate clubs for golfing, tennis, swimming, cinema, and even sailing were supported.[53] Out of the mine's airstrip, where a fleet of commercial aircraft operated from flying diamonds out of Tanganyika and supplies and people back to the mine, a handful of light aircraft were flown by the surviving members of the Mwadui flying club, which continued to operate despite a string of fatal accidents.[54] The white section of the mine also boasted its own school, where around 60

[51] Gerryts, *A Diamond Digger's Anecdotes*, 34–35.
[52] Gerryts, 34–35; Jean A. Rogers, "Diary, October 9th 1957 - January 29th 1958," October 9, 1957, 2–6, MG4184 Jean Rogers Fonds, McGill University Archives, https://archivalcollections.library.mcgill.ca/index.php/jean-rogers-fonds; Burgess, *Diamonds Unlimited*, 41–42.
[53] Williamson, "The Williamson Diamond Mine," 112.
[54] "Mwadui Airport MWN," accessed February 15, 2024, http://www.mwadui.com/Airport.htm; Burgess, *Diamonds Unlimited*, 180–81.

children were enrolled by 1957, and a hospital with 10 beds reserved for Europeans.[55] Poultry and beef were raised for eggs, meat, and milk, which was sold in the company store or "duka" as it was called in East Africa, alongside goods imported from the outside world by rail or airplane.[56]

Workers of South Asian ancestry also had their own facilities, including a badminton club as well as a small schoolhouse for about a dozen students and 2 beds set aside for them in the hospital.[57] Asians, despite these limited privileges, were the targets of racist sentiments at the mine. They were subjected to the same discriminatory searches and interrogations that Africans were when leaving or entering the mine; their cultural practices were openly mocked by white mine residents, and those whites that did associate with them publicly, like Dr. Williamson himself, were regarded with suspicion by their white peers.[58] Tensions between Africans and Asians were also high, as the pay and quality of accommodations for Asians were much higher than those provided to Africans.

Africans, separated from the rest of the mine's population by a barbed wire fence, received the least acceptable housing. The Report of the 1948 U.N. Mission describes the African quarters as "labour camps" that are "well constructed of whitewashed houses with thatched roofs", a far cry from the modern dwellings constructed for whites and East Asians.[59] The report, otherwise quite flattering to Williamson and the mine, also states that the African accommodations were in the process of being rebuilt to a higher standard, a tacit admission of their inadequacy at the time of the mission's visit.[60] In reference to amenities, the report records a

[55] Williamson, "The Williamson Diamond Mine," 112.
[56] Burgess, *Diamonds Unlimited*, 39.
[57] Williamson, "The Williamson Diamond Mine," 112.
[58] Burgess, *Diamonds Unlimited*, 32, 46–47.
[59] "United Nations Visiting Mission to East Africa Report on Tanganyika and Related Documents," 122.
[60] "United Nations Visiting Mission to East Africa Report on Tanganyika and Related Documents," 122.

school, a recently constructed hospital with over 60 beds, and recreation rooms as being offered to the African workers at the mine, as well as a company store where milk, meat, and other goods could be purchased at "considerably below market prices."[61]

Other visitors to the mine were less diplomatic about the state of African housing. Security chief P.E. Burgess, in a rare moment of clarity, observed that one thing Africans at the mine didn't mind doing was waiting, sometimes for hours to meet with him; for "what would they have been doing if they hadn't waited? Either working in the most unpleasant conditions or just lying on the earthen floors of their poorly built houses."[62] The African section of Mwadui, called the Eastern Townships, was built on a grid with rows of identical multifamily dwellings placed in close proximity to each other, crammed into a space that stretched from one of the mine's tailings ponds (potentially toxic) right up to the main barbed wire fence next to the heavily guarded mine entrance. When Burgess called their houses "poorly built" he was not just referring to aesthetics and comfort, but safety: in his memoir he tells the story of a devastating early morning fire that broke out in the African township in late October of 1951, which proved impossible to control with rudimentary firefighting equipment in the narrow alleys of the residential area.[63] After hours of burning, the damage was immense, dozens of dwellings were destroyed, as were warehouses and part of the African hospital.

[61] "United Nations Visiting Mission to East Africa Report on Tanganyika and Related Documents," 122–23.
[62] Burgess, *Diamonds Unlimited*, 52.
[63] Burgess, 57–58.

 [64]

"Aerial view of Williamson Diamond Mines, Shinyanga, with the Plant and Industrial area in the centre."

Actually, a view of Mwadui. The compound closest to the plane is the African section of the town, the Eastern Townships. Above to the right is the white area, with the main mining sites located in the upper left of the frame.

The National Archives UK, *Aerial View of Williamson Diamond Mines, Shinyanga, with the Plant and Industrial Area in the Centre.*, January 31, 2011, photo, January 31, 2011, Colonial Office photographic collection, The National Archives UK, https://www.flickr.com/photos/nationalarchives/5405319514/.

[64] The National Archives UK, *Aerial View of Williamson Diamond Mines, Shinyanga, with the Plant and Industrial Area in the Centre.*, January 31, 2011, photo, January 31, 2011, Colonial Office photographic collection, The National Archives UK, https://www.flickr.com/photos/nationalarchives/5405319514/.

Experiencing the Mine: Non-African Contracts

Details about the labour situation of whites and Asians has been challenging to come by. A few throwaway lines in primary sources paint an opaque picture but give some idea of the character of the contracts. A common complaint among those who went to work at the mine was that the position they accepted before coming to Mwadui was quite different from what they experienced on their arrival. P.E. Burgess, hired on as the mine's security chief in 1951, was told he would be tasked with fighting diamond smuggling at the mine, only to learn that he was essentially being forced upon Williamson by the British Colonial Office in order to make him take the issue of theft more seriously.[65] Bert Gerryts, a South African geologist who studied at McGill after Williamson and was hired on as an assistant geologist alongside his fellow Mcgill alumni Mousseau Tremblay, also in 1951, learned that he was actually being assigned the position of head geologist when he arrived in Mwadui.[66] According to Gerryts, this would not have been so much of a problem, except that he was only *acting head geologist*, as John Williamson officially occupied that position, while Gerryts was expected to do the actual work.

Burgess stayed on at the mine for three years, his investigations into diamond theft had progressed to the point that the police were finally arresting white mine workers, a South African and an Italian, who Burgess believed to be directing some of the African thieves.[67] Unfortunately for him, this greatly angered Williamson, who preferred to avoid the potential for racial conflict brought about by arrests, and Burgess made the decision to return to his native Britain soon after. Gerryts remained at the mine for much longer. As acting head geologist he was responsible for directing the handful of geologists employed by the mine who travelled across the African continent investigating other potential mineral finds. He was there in 1956 when Princess

[65] Burgess, 10-14,.
[66] Gerryts, *A Diamond Digger's Anecdotes*, 31–35.
[67] Burgess, *Diamonds Unlimited*, 184–88.

Margaret stopped at Mwadui on her tour of Africa, and he went on to have a long career as a geologist in several different countries.[68] Mousseau Tremblay was one of those geologists working under Gerryts, he was also writing his doctoral thesis while employed at Mwadui, and his employment contract was for 30 months beginning on his arrival in 1951.[69] At the end of his contract, he left the mine and went on a roadtrip with his family up the horn of Africa and returned to Montreal by boat, but he also appears in the journal of Williamson's personal nurse, written in 1957, so at some point he did return to the mine.[70] Interestingly, the rest of the white geologists and mining experts named in sources and employed at the Williamson mine tended to stay on for many years, like Gerryts and Tremblay. According to Burgess, the average salary for whites at the mine was around 60 British pounds a month, alongside a fully furnished house and multiple domestic servants, while Asian employees received one third less, 40 pounds a month, also with housing.[71] In comparing these rates to those paid to Africans, even Burgess was forced to admit that he was surprised that this explicit racial inequality wasn't the cause of serious conflict between the majority African workforce and the mine administration.[72]

[68] Gerryts, *A Diamond Digger's Anecdotes*, 57–58.
[69] Gerryts, 76; Tremblay, "Geology of the Williamson Diamond Mine, Mwadui, Tanganyika."
[70] Jean-Paul Robillard, "Ce Géologue Fait Un Voyage de Noces de Trous Ans En Afrique," *Le Petit Journal*, Juin 1954, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec; Rogers, "Diary, October 9th 1957 - January 29th 1958."
[71] Burgess, *Diamonds Unlimited*, 140.
[72] Burgess, 140–41.

Experiencing the Mine: African Contracts

While there may not have been open conflict while John Williamson still ran the mine, there were those who expressly condemned the way Africans were treated at the mine. Williamson had a reputation for being quite elusive with the guests who visited the mine, unless he had some official business with them or found them personally interesting, and guests often ended up meeting with head of security, P.E. Burgess, instead.[73] One of those guests was a local elite, Chief David Kidaha Makwaia, a recurring character in the history of the Williamson Diamond Mine, the same man who is said to have originally negotiated with Williamson for the authority to open the mine, and it seems he continued to visit the mine to lodge complaints on behalf of the Africans employed there.[74] Chief Makwaia's contentions, reported by Burgess, touched on every facet of the Williamson Diamond Mine, and were articulated as part of a wider anti-colonial perspective that connected the mine to African exploitation across the colony of Tanganyika. Although the mine did employ many locals, almost all of the mining equipment and logistical supplies were brought in, either though Nairobi, Kenya, or from further away on one of Williamson's many company planes, and no attempts were made to stimulate local economies.[75] The Chief's overarching complaint was that Williamson himself was taking an obscene amount of wealth out of the colony, all while the colonial administration was desperately scrambling to fund development projects. Makwaia's solution was for Williamson to take a limited, reasonable fortune out of the mine as its acknowledged founder, and for the rest of the profits to go straight to funding the economic development of the territory.[76]

[73] Gerryts, *A Diamond Digger's Anecdotes*, 35; Burgess, *Diamonds Unlimited*, 29–32.
[74] Burgess, *Diamonds Unlimited*, 137–41.
[75] Burgess, 138; "Mwadui Airport MWN."
[76] Burgess, *Diamonds Unlimited*, 138.

Makwaia also called attention to the inadequate wages of Africans, their poor living conditions, and the lack of amenities especially compared to the Asians employed at the mine.[77] In 1948, the U.N. mission reported that contracts for Africans were for 30 8-hour days, completable in a 42 day period, with unskilled contracts paying out 22 shillings total, masons receiving 50 shillings, drivers over 80, and skilled labor getting up to 130 shillings per 30 day contract.[78] The mission noted that out of the African workforce of 2,700 only 300 were classified as skilled labor, while "semi-skilled" labor was being trained up to the skilled level in workshops, although the mission makes no mention of how successful that training program was.[79] Considering that the monthly wage works out to about 75 cents a day for backbreaking, potentially dangerous work, and that the mine only provided food for working men, not members of their family that lived in Mwadui, we can understand why many Africans were clamoring for advancement or other means with which they could increase their fortunes. Unfortunately, advancement seems to have been based less on performance than on the openly racist logic that was expressed by many whites working at the mine, encapsulated by geologist Mousseau Tremblay's claim that members of the Sukuma tribe shared "average low intelligence, and a poor physique", meaning they needed to be supervised by those of "other tribes who are of a higher mental capacity" and were rarely considered for training.[80] In the next section of this chapter we will see what some of these "unskilled" positions entailed.

[77] Burgess, 138–40.
[78] "United Nations Visiting Mission to East Africa Report on Tanganyika and Related Documents," 122–23.
[79] "United Nations Visiting Mission to East Africa Report on Tanganyika and Related Documents," 122–23.
[80] Tremblay, "Geology of the Williamson Diamond Mine, Mwadui, Tanganyika," 3–4.

The Photographic Record of African Work at the Williamson Diamond Mine

A particularly valuable source of information about working conditions at the Williamson Diamond Mine is the photographic record produced by visiting journalists and mine workers. Through these photographs, we can begin to imagine what 30 days of work at the Williamson Diamond Mine was like for some of the Africans employed there.

Labour Arrivals and Recruitment

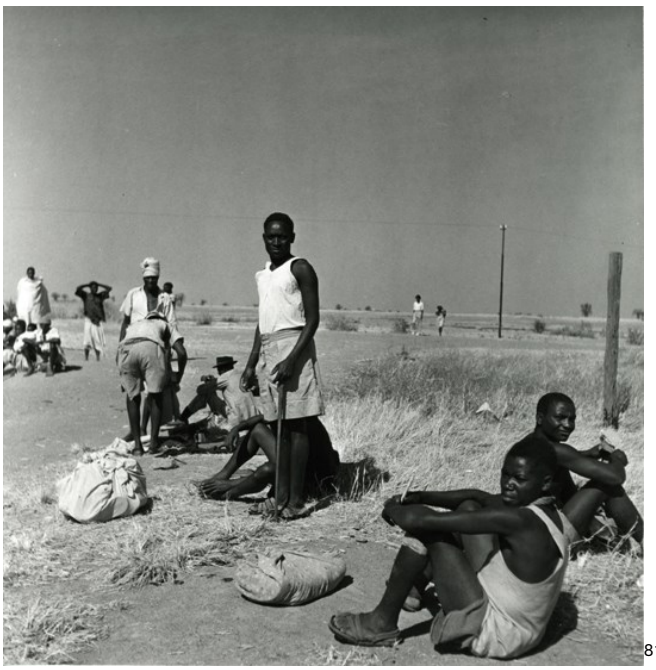
 [81]

Figure 9:

Williamson Diamond Mine (Natives waiting for passes to the protected area of the mine), c. 1947 - P2004.10.3

George Rodger collection

Benton Museum of Art

The first step of working at the mine was, of course, securing a job there. In British Africa white administrators spent a great deal of their time stressing over their ability, or more often inability, to control the flow of African workers towards the projects they wanted to prioritize. [82] Africans were accused of exploiting the capitalist economies that were imposed on them through

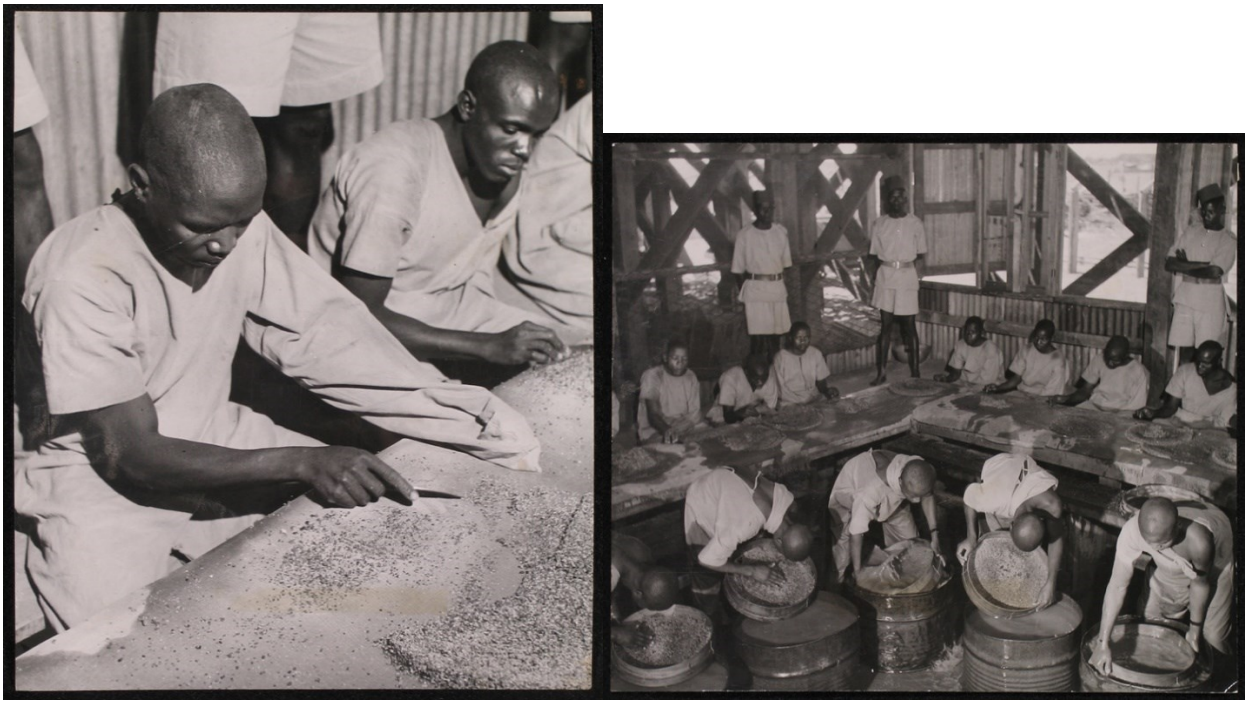
[81] "The Benton Museum of Art at Pomona College - George Rodger," accessed March 4, 2024, https://embarkweb1.campus.pomona.edu/artist-maker/info/1542.

[82] Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa*, African Studies Series 89 (Cambridge, [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 42–48.

colonization by only consenting to work as much as they needed to, just enough to pay a certain tax or purchase a particular good, before they returned to their communities.[83] The Williamson Diamond Mine approached the labour issues that plagued other enterprises in a few different ways, and did not rely on government recruiting agents.[84] Firstly, the wages paid to Africans at the mine were on the higher end compared to other businesses in Tanganyika, even if they were inadequate to support a family living in Mwadui and unreasonably low when compared to what East Asians and Europeans received. Secondly, the mine embraced the more casual work periods preferred by many Africans, offering 30-day contracts, and then encouraging men to sign on for additional work by dangling the carrot of potential advancement to the semi-skilled or skilled categories at a later date. [85] These two strategies helped the mine find workers, and while the colonial administration remained frustrated by the high rate of African turnover at the mine; there always seemed to be a steady stream of local African men waiting outside the gates asking about employment opportunities, as illustrated by the photo above.

[83] Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society*, 45.
[84] "United Nations Visiting Mission to East Africa Report on Tanganyika and Related Documents," 293.
[85] "United Nations Visiting Mission to East Africa Report on Tanganyika and Related Documents," 293.

Diamond Sorting: Child Labour at the Williamson Diamond Mine



[86]

Figure 10:
Williamson Diamond Mine (Natives examining gravel, one sleeve is sewn for security), 1948 - P2004.14.25
George Rodger collection
Benton Museum of Art

Figure 11:
Williamson Diamond Mine, 1948 - P2004.10.5
George Rodger collection
Benton Museum of Art

While almost all the sources consulted for this thesis refer solely to African men working at the mine, many children were also employed by Williamson, especially in the diamond sorting house. The Africans who sifted through fine gravel after it had been filtered by different manual and machine processes at the Williamson mine were, as a rule, children, and while the former chief of security at the mine claimed in his memoir that their "average age was about sixteen" it

[86] "The Benton Museum of Art at Pomona College - George Rodger."

is clear from photographs that many of them were much younger.[87] Tanzanian scholar Issa Shivji's work *Law, State and the Working Class in Tanzania: c. 1920-1964* highlights the ambiguous nature of child labor in the territory during the colonial period, and is especially relevant here due to the fact that mining interests in particular lobbied for exceptions to the few restrictions that were on the books.[88] The employment of children in Tanganyika only became illegal the year that John Williamson opened his mine in 1940, and as Shivji argues, the laws that were written were "never meant to be seriously implemented."[89] The first thing the new law did was define the age groups covered by legislation; someone 18 and under was a "young person", under 16 a "juvenile", and a "child" if under 14 years old.[90] Focusing on the provisions that applied to the Williamson Mine, there were no restrictions on the employment of young people, juveniles as well as women could not be forced to work between 5pm and 7am, juveniles could only be employed far from home with the permission of a labour official, they could not take on dangerous jobs, and they could not work for more than four hours consecutively.[91] Children, those under 14, had the most restrictions on their employment; they could not work in any industrial settings, they could only take on daily contracts, and were required to return to the place of their parent(s) or guardian's residence each night after their shift.[92]

In any case, any of these provisions could be exempted on the authority of the colonial governor for the needs of a specific business, and Shivji writes that as soon as the 1940 law was passed, letters began to arrive from unnamed diamond mines demanding an exemption for

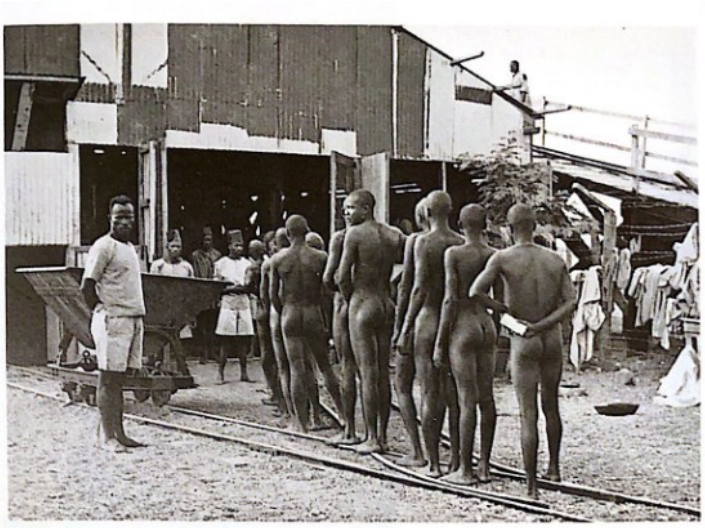
[87] Burgess, *Diamonds Unlimited*, 43.
[88] Issa G. Shivji, *Law, State and the Working Class in Tanzania: C. 1920-1964* (London Portsmouth, NH Dar es Salam: J. Currey Heinemann Tanzania publishing house, 1986), 64–72.
[89] Shivji, 72.
[90] Shivji, 70.
[91] Shivji, 70.
[92] Shivji, 70.

diamond sorting.[93] In mines across Tanganyika, children between the ages of 8-14 were already employed as diamond sorters and the governor at the time, Mark Aitchison Young, seemed to find this acceptable, as he immediately granted the exemption and made an allowance for children as young as nine to continue sorting diamonds. In 1942 this exemption, along with others made for the tea industry were challenged and the law was rewritten, but a loophole was added to allow parental guardians to include government labour officials and even potentially employers, who could then consent to children working, and Shivji argues that in effect, child labour remained common, even in contravention to the law, across Tanganyika into the 1950s.[94]

It is difficult to appreciate the gravity of the practice of child labour at the mine unless one is familiar with the specifics involved with diamond sorting. As we can see in the photos above, the children worked around a table sorting through gravel for diamonds on a long table and with water pans. Standing directly behind them are Askaris of the Mine's police force, watching their every move to discourage theft. Looking closer, we can see that each worker is clothed in an identical white uniform with one arm enclosed within a sleeve, again to discourage diamond theft. P.E. Burgess, who described the diamond sorting process in detail, noted that these shifts usually consisted of 14 boys, and that a European security officer was always present to supervise the sorting, evidently offscreen in the photographs presented here.[95] Many of the Europeans at the mine obsessed constantly over security, whether it concerned diamond smuggling or the spread of troublesome opinions among the African workforce, and the sorting room was one of the locations subjected to the most scrutiny, along with the vault where diamonds were stored and the main gate. During Burgess's tenure as security chief, he experimented with installing video cameras in the sorting hut that watched the children's every

[93] Shivji, 70–71.
[94] Shivji, 70–72.
[95] Burgess, *Diamonds Unlimited*, 43–44.

move, a cutting-edge technology for the early 1950s, and a few thieves were indeed caught with this new method once the tapes were reviewed by a group that likely included Williamson.[96]



[Public Relations Dept., Tanganyika

Diamond-sorting boys line up for searching

[97]

Figure 12:
"Diamond-sorting boys line up for searching."

Williamson Diamond Mine, Mwadui, Tanganyika Territory

Diamonds Unlimited
P.E. Burgess
1960

Pg. 93

The bodies of the children were also subjected to invasive security measures, the most extreme of which was full cavity searches carried out at the beginning and end of each shift by mine police. The boys, anywhere from 8-18 years of age, "were required to bend over and touch their toes while the searching officer, with a powerful electric torch in hand, examined them."[98] Police were attentive to the ears, nostrils, and even any open wounds that the boys might have had, as diamonds had been found in all of these places in the past, but Burgess is insistent that they were also directed to search the boys anal cavities, as there had been cases where diamonds has been found there "packed with shredded fibres of the thieves own clothing."[99] It is difficult to imagine the trauma suffered by children of these ages, many of them working illegally, bent over with a fine comb and with one hand tied off and unusable, who were then forced, twice a day, to expose

[96] Burgess, 64.
[97] Burgess, *Diamonds Unlimited*, 93.
[98] Burgess, 44.
[99] Burgess, 44.

themselves to grown men, strangers who were tasked with their discipline and who held immense power over them.

Unskilled Labour

Figure 13:
"The Mwadui deposit is a deep vertical kimberlite "pipe" topped by a shallow spreading layer like an ice-cream cone. Williamson's firm, still dredging diamonds from the surface, is years away from tapping the pipe's main supply. About 50% of Mwadui's diamonds are gem stones, 4-5 times as valuable as industrials."

Richard Harrington, *Des Travailleurs de La Mine Mwadui*, 1957, Photograph, 1957, Fonds de l'Office national du film, Library and Archives Canada, https://recherche-collection-search.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/home/record?app=fonandcol&IdNumber=4951640&q=rg53%20box%2075.

100

Williamson, and others who worked at the Williamson Diamond Mine, spoke frequently of the enormous amount of technologically advanced equipment that they imported into Tanganyika to increase efficiency of extraction.[101] The above photo is especially illustrative of the realities faced by African workers in their day-to-day labour of which the sources say so little about,

[100] Richard Harrington, *Des Travailleurs de La Mine Mwadui*, 1957, Photograph, 1957, Fonds de l'Office national du film, Library and Archives Canada, https://recherche-collection-search.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/home/record?app=fonandcol&IdNumber=4951640&q=rg53%20box%2075.
[101] Williamson, "The Williamson Diamond Mine," 100–110.

which were quite divorced from Williamson's imported machinery. A haul truck is parked in the background to the left of the workers, waiting to deposits its load of diamond bearing gravel onto the grate in the foreground, which hangs over a large conveyor belt spinning below, bringing the broken gravel to th next stage of processing. The African men, wearing shorts, loose fitting shirts and headscarves with their feet bare to the rocky shards, are breaking their backs lifting a rough assortment of mining picks and sledgehammers into the air and bringing them slamming down onto the large chunks of diamond bearing gravel, breaking it up into manageable pieces with the help of the metal grate. Behind them sits another African man, a supervisor or a fellow worker taking a rare break, and leaning against a wall off to the right, cloaked by shadow, is a shirtless European man, no doubt overseeing the work at the grate. On the wall is a lettered plaque with text in English, Italian, and Swahili (proof of the influence of Italian POWs on the mines early construction) listing signals that workers needed to be aware of. The wall with the plaque is sparse, there is a first aid box with a kettle and mug sitting above it, no doubt used to treat the not uncommon injuries that occurred at this stage of the diamond processing. Images like this help us remember that the vast majority of work carried out by most of the workers, Africans in the "unskilled" category, was accomplished with basic hand tools for much of the mine's operation, despite the insistence in the textual sources on technology and labour efficiency.

This work, alongside the other tasks that the labourers on the Williamson Diamond Mine accomplished each day like driving badly maintained industrial vehicles or guiding mine carts, could be quite dangerous. Alongside the United Nations visiting missions, the United Kingdom also produced reports on the state of Tanganyika Territory each year, and statistics for industrial accidents were frequently recorded. Between 1952 and 1960, there were 15 deaths and 84

injuries tallied at the Williamson Mine, leaving out 1956 for which I could not find data.[102] The reports do not tell us anything about the nature of the accidents, but other sources do contain some detail. P.E. Burgess, head of security in the early 50s, wrote of several serious accidents which injured African truck drivers around the quarry of the mine.[103] There were two main causes of accidents; the sorry state of vehicle maintenance at the mine, and the unofficial driving lessons that many of the drivers would give to other workers who wanted to become truckers themselves in order to increase their salaries, which often led to trucks overturning and injuring their occupants. Another danger was the mine carts rolling along tracks that criss-crossed the mine; Burgess witnessed a young African worker lose most of his foot when it was crushed by one of these carts.[104]

Jean Rogers, John Williamson's nurse, also recorded a few accidents in the journal she kept during her time at the mine in 1957. On November 11th a worker was electrocuted to death in the morning and buried that same evening, and two days later, on the 13th, an undisclosed number of "boys" were severely burned by fuel when they lit cigarettes standing near the engine of one of the mine's aircraft.[105] Interestingly, the United Kingdom Administration report only records two deaths and one injury at the Williamson Mine for that entire year, while Jean Rogers writes of one death and several (at least two) injuries occurring in just the span of three days in November, 1957.[106] While this occurrence is *theoretically* possible, maybe one of the workers

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[102] See reports at the United Nations Digital Archive published between Secretary-General, "Administration of the Trust Territory of Tanganyika: Report of the United Kingdom Government for the Year 1952," July 28, 1954, 304, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/856485; Secretary-General, "Administration of the Trust Territory of Tanganyika: Report of the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for the Year 1960," August 11, 1961, 62, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/841256.
[103] Burgess, *Diamonds Unlimited*, 53, 172–73.
[104] Burgess, 88.
[105] Rogers, "Diary, October 9th 1957 - January 29th 1958," 6–7.
[106] Secretary-General, "Administration of the Trust Territory of Tanganyika: Report of the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for the Year 1957," September 10, 1959, 143, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/841733.

died from their burns and the other was injured, making the U.K. report accurate, it is highly unlikely that the only accidents in 1957 took place within three days in one month, calling into question the overall accuracy of the administrations' reporting. Unfortunately, these reports remain the only available comprehensive data on injuries and deaths at the mine, and challenging their conclusions will have to wait until more dissenting evidence is assembled, perhaps in a subsequent project.

Women's work at the Mine

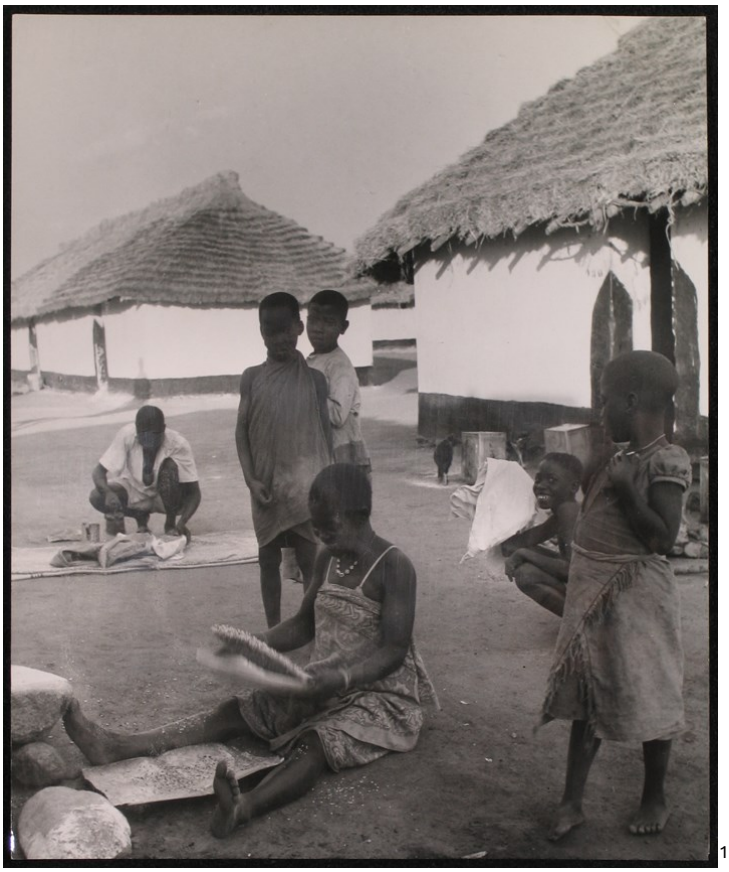 [107]

Figure 14:

Williamson Diamond Mine (Girl sifts through beans), 1948 - P2004.10.4

George Rodger collection

Benton Museum of Art

[107] "The Benton Museum of Art at Pomona College - George Rodger."

Figure 15:
Williamson Diamond Mine (Native workers queue up for beer), c. 1960 - P2004.14.24

George Rodger collection

Benton Museum of Art

If there is one major facet of work and life at Mwadui that is almost entirely absent in the sources, it is the role played by women in the town and at the mine that surrounded it. As reported in the population profiles of Mwadui quoted above, there were roughly 3,300 Africans living at Mwadui during the mid-late 1950s. Most of these individuals were men, but between around 450-700 were women, and although they are almost never recorded as employees, we know that they did work in the mine and in Mwadui, in several different capacities. A 1947 United Kingdom report on Tanganyika Territory contains a table that charts the combined labour force of all 15 diamond mines active during that year, listing 3 women as employees of these mines.[108] While it is impossible to know where these women worked, no specific mines are named, just counts of their employees; the Williamson Diamond Mine was the only significant

[108] Secretary-General, "Administration of the Trust Territory of Tanganyika: Report of the United Kingdom Governmnet for the Year 1947," Administering Authority Report, Tanganyika (United Kingdom) (New York: United Nations, May 28, 1948), 250, Trusteeship Council., United Nations Digital Library.

mine operating during this period, making it quite likely that they were indeed employees of Williamson.

More hints are provided by the two photos above, which show women working with food in the Eastern Township of Mwadui in different capacities. In the first photo, a woman, maybe a young girl, sits in the dirt in the open street between houses sorting debris out of dried beans. Around her are several children, staring or smiling at the camera, and a man in the background crouches over a bundle of fabric or maybe loosely wrapped meat. While male mine workers were provided with some food each week and encouraged to spend their hard-earned pay cheques on additional food at the company store, the women, and children he might live with received nothing from the mine administration.[109] As a result, it is not surprising that the woman in the photo above is involved in food preparation, presumably for her family pictured around her. While we cannot tell from this image if she was employed at the mine or worked in Mwadui, in either case, she would have been in constant contact with miners, the mine's security force, and any Europeans that worked in or around the African section of the town during her time there.

One anecdote related by P.E. Burgess illustrates the somewhat chaotic nature of the living situation in Mwadui. One night Burgess was awakened to a loud commotion emanating from one section of the African quarters, and when he arrived on scene, he found a crowd of Africans surrounding one of the thatched roof houses.[110] One of the mine workers, a large man from Southern Rhodesia, had kidnapped another man's wife and was holding her hostage behind the barred door. Apparently, the kidnapper had heard his white foreman make several comments about the woman's body, and, thinking he would be well rewarded if he could deliver her to him,

[109] Burgess, *Diamonds Unlimited*, 140.
[110] Burgess, 92–93.

had attempted to snatch her off the street late at night.[111] When the security forces arrived the man released the woman and was asked to leave the mine. Burgess is quick to excuse the white foreman for his comments and deflect responsibility, but it is hard not to imagine that this story alludes to the possibility of sexual violence that goes beyond a simple misguided kidnapping.

In the second photo we can see several women preparing what the caption tells us is beer, while a handful of men stand impatiently nearby, arms outstretched lifting their empty containers towards the open barrels. If the caption is correct and these men are mine workers, this is likely since most men living in Mwadui did indeed work at the mine, and these women are in the process of distributing a beer ration to the workforce and are therefore also employees of the Williamson Mine. Another job that women performed, also involving food, was acting as domestic servants for the European residents of the white section of Mwadui. Each white household was provided with one or more African domestic servants. Geologist Bert Gerryts, who arrived with his family in 1951, was assigned a cook and a servant of unspecified gender.[112] P.E. Burgess, who also lived with his family, also had servants, including a young woman named Anne, who unfortunately died of a liver disorder while working for Burgess.[113] While neither of these men wrote much about their servants, we can imagine that they had responsibilities comparable with those of Joseph, the domestic servant assigned to nurse Jean Rogers. Everyday Joseph cleaned, stocked the pantry, and cooked European style meals for Jean, including salad platters, asparagus soup, cured bacon and tea cakes, while adapting to her busy schedule as John Williamson's nurse, often working for 12-14 hours a day.[114]

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[111] Burgess, 93.
[112] Gerryts, *A Diamond Digger's Anecdotes*, 34.
[113] Burgess, *Diamonds Unlimited*, 127–28.
[114] Rogers, "Diary, October 9th 1957 - January 29th 1958, 3, 7."

Chapter 3: Williamson, postscript: Canadian Mining and Tanzania in the 20th Century

The 1950s were a decade of enormous societal and political change in Tanganyika, as Africans throughout the colony organized across geographical and social boundaries to take independence from a dream to a tangible goal just over the horizon.[1] The Lake Province, an area centered on the city of Mwanza, including the territories around the shoreline of Lake Victoria and stretching south through Shinyanga town, the Williamson Mine, and Mwadui, was a hotbed of nationalist agitation.[2] Inevitably, the Williamson Mine itself would be drawn into the political struggle. Influential African leaders developed ties to the mine and brought it into the spotlight, while its economic importance to the colony made it a topic of debates over an independent Tanganyika's financial prospects. Finally, the death of John Williamson radically shifted the course of the mine and opened up new opportunities for both African resistance and renewed foreign exploitation.

End of an Era: The Death of John Thoburn Williamson

On January 7th, 1958, nurse Jean Rogers arrived for work at John Thoburn Williamson's residence on the grounds of the mine as usual, where she spent the day caring for Williamson and administering his medication. After her shift she met up with two friends she had made while working at the mine, Pam, and Stan, for an evening showing of the Korean War film "Bridges of Toko-Ri" starring William Holden, Mickey Rooney, and Grace Kelly; the film ends bleakly with

[1] For the political struggle in the lead up to Independence, see Bjerk, *Building a Peaceful Nation*, 37–46; "The New Politics, 1945-55," in *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, by John Iliffe, African Studies Series 25 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 485–520; "The Nationalist Victory, 1955-61," in *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, by John Iliffe, African Studies Series 25 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 521–76.
[2] Andrew Macguire, "The Emergence of the Tanganyika Africa National Union in the Lake Province," in *Protest and Power in Black Africa*, ed. Robert I. Rotberg and Ali A. Mazrui (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 639, 642–43.

Holden and Rooney heroically sacrificing themselves in a desperate battle against the Communist hordes, a gentle reminder of the period's Cold War context. When Rogers returned home that night, she penned a short, sharp diary entry reflecting on Williamson's failing health. "How long can he go on?" asked Rogers, who had first treated the sickly geologist in 1956 when Williamson had returned to Montreal for what was eventually diagnosed as cancer of the throat.[3]

A few hours later, at 3:30am, she was awoken by a knock at the window. Mr. Merrick, another of the mine's medical staff, brought the news that Dr. Williamson had died 30 minutes ago. Rogers was needed immediately to help prepare his body for the funeral which would be held later that evening. The mine staff were familiar with death, which visited the mine frequently as a result of accidents, sickness, or ordinary mortality. Time was short, burials had to occur no more than 24 hours after death, as the climate of the region accelerated decomposition too much to wait more than a day, and Williamson was no exception.[4] Staff worked quickly, a flyer announcing Williamson's death and the funeral, to be held that day at 5 P.M., was rushed to print that morning and passed around the mine.[5] Outside contacts were also notified immediately, and before the end of the day the death of Dr. John Thoburn Williamson was announced in newspapers from London to Montreal, and "hundreds of wreaths" had arrived via Nairobi from "all over the world".[6] The funeral itself was held at the mine cemetery, led by William Maynard, the head of the African Inland Mission (AIM) affiliated Kolandota, or Kola Ndota Mission, located in nearby Shinyanga town.[7] On such short notice it was S. A. Walden, a provincial

[3] Rogers, "Diary, October 9th 1957 - January 29th 1958," 6, 8, 14.
[4] Burgess, *Diamonds Unlimited*, 175.
[5] Jean A. Rogers, "Funeral Documentation, Flyer," October 9, 1957, MG4184 Jean Rogers Fonds, McGill University Archives, https://archivalcollections.library.mcgill.ca/index.php/jean-rogers-fonds.
[6] Noel Mostert, "Kin of Dr. Williamson to Operate Diamond Mine," *Montreal Star*, March 18, 1958, MG4184 Jean Rogers Fonds, McGill University Archives.
[7] Rogers, "Diary, October 9th 1957 - January 29th 1958," 10, 14; Jean A. Rogers, "Funeral Documentation, Order of Service for Funeral," October 9, 1957, MG4184 Jean Rogers Fonds, McGill University Archives, https://archivalcollections.library.mcgill.ca/index.php/jean-rogers-fonds.

commissioner, who represented the Tanganyikan government at the funeral, as Governor Richard Turnbull could not make it on time.[8] Another guest representing the government was, of course, Iqbal Chopra, Williamson's friend. business partner, a member of the Tanganyika legislative assembly. They were joined by the majority of the mine's staff, including Jean Rogers, as well as "fifteen chiefs" identified by Chopra in a later interview, probably including Chief Makwaia, along with other local representatives of Britain's delegated indirect rule.[9] Williamson was laid to rest in the mine's cemetery, and at some later point a marble memorial was constructed above his grave, where it still stands today, albeit in a state of neglect.

The Future of the Mine

In the immediate aftermath of Williamson's death, the future of the mine was called into question. Rumours swirled that Iqbal Chopra might end up running it, or that the Tanganyikan government would take over the mine.[10] Since the opening of the mine, the De Beers Corporation, the infamously influential South African mining concern attached to the even more powerful Anglo American Corporation, that maintained a worldwide diamond monopoly, had attempted to purchase the mine from Williamson. [11] In 1944, at the height of the war when the mine had only just began to ramp up extraction, De Beers sent John Austen Bancroft, a former teacher of Williamson's from McGill who had taken up a senior position with a subsidiary of the De Beers company after leaving the University in 1929, to Mwadui in order to make an offer of

[8] "Diamond Millionaire Dies at Mine," *The Irish Times*, January 9, 1958, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Irish Times and the Weekly Irish Times.
[9] Mostert, "Kin of Dr. Williamson to Operate Diamond Mine."
[10] William Hickey, "The Williamson Diamonds Stay in the Family," *Daily Express*, January 18, 1958, MG4184 Jean Rogers Fonds, McGill University Archives; Canadian Press, "Diamond King's Aide May Be New Mine Boss."
[11] Knight and Stevenson, "The Williamson Diamond Mine, De Beers, and the Colonial Office: A Case-Study of the Quest for Control," 427–31.

£500,000 for the Williamson Mine.[12] Williamson rejected the offer from the man who had originally brought him to work in Africa, but he did sell his diamonds through the diamond cartel controlled by De Beers. This agreement was tenuous, more than once Williamson threatened to leave the cartel forcing the British Government to get involved in negotiations, and in 1951, he even froze diamond sales from the mine until he received a better price for stones from De Beers, but a visit from the De Beers director Harry Oppenheimer the following year patched over relations.[13] Once word of Williamson's death made it to the De Beers Corporation they began to prepare a new offer for the mine they had been attempting to take for over a decade.

Williamson's brother, the First World War veteran Percy Williamson, was now the majority stakeholder in the mine, and it was he who would be expected to either continue operating the mine or sell it to an interested bidder. Percy arrived at the mine about a week after his brother's passing, with sisters Mary Millar and Matilda Williamson arriving shortly after.[14] Over the next few days, the Williamsons attempted to acclimatize to the atmosphere of the isolated mine. A handful of journalists made camp in Shinyanga town, while their attempts to get access to the mine were barred by the guards. One journalist did manage to get a scoop; John Redfern, who wrote for the conservative-aligned *Daily Express*, secured a ticket on the London-Nairobi leg of Percy Williamson's trip from his home in Kelowna B.C. to Tanganyika. Redfern questioned Percy on the status of the mine and his plans but received little of substance in response.[15] It is unlikely that Percy himself knew much, until he got his bearings on his arrival in Mwadui. Redfern travelled on to Shinyanga, where he joined his colleagues at the Diamond

[12] Knight and Stevenson, 428.
[13] Knight and Stevenson, 436–38, 441.
[14] John Redfern, "Diamond King's Brother Flies to End Mystery," *London Daily Express*, January 1958, MG4184 Jean Rogers Fonds, McGill University Archives; John Redfern, "The Williamson Millions Mean Life behind Bars," *Scottish Daily Express*, January 23, 1958, MG4184 Jean Rogers Fonds, McGill University Archives.
[15] Redfern, "Diamond King's Brother Flies to End Mystery."

Fields Hotel, desperate for another interview but frustrated by the mine's formidable security.[16] Of course, some information did trickle out of Mwadui; the Williamsons confirmed to several publications that they intended to keep the mine in the family, putting out a statement in March 1958 claiming they had "absolutely no intention of disposing of any part of their shares."[17] Percy allegedly purchased himself a brand-new helicopter which was shipped to the mine, and plans were being made to maintain "the Canadian spirit" of the operation by hiring new Canadian management who would be expected to continue John Williamson's preferential hiring of Canadian mining experts.[18]

Running a mine in Tanganyika was not quite as straightforward as it seemed, and neither was settling the accounts of their deceased brother. The government of the colony appears to have been anxious to confirm the value of John Williamson's properties, hoping to calculate the potentially massive death duties that would be levied against his estate, which his heirs would have to settle.[19] It is likely that there was not much cash lying around; a great deal of the diamond wealth accumulated by the late Dr. Williamson had been put right back into the mine, expanding the water supply, importing expensive sorting and grading technologies, and hiring mining experts from all over the world. While the family was vocal about their intentions to keep the mine in the first months after their brother's death, some began to wonder if they were capable of devoting as much energy to the mine as the late John Williamson.

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[16] Redfern, "The Williamson Millions Mean Life behind Bars."
[17] "Williamson Mine Shares' Selling," *The Gazette*, July 10, 1958, MG4184 Jean Rogers Fonds, McGill University Archives.
[18] Mostert, "Kin of Dr. Williamson to Operate Diamond Mine"; "Dr. J. T. Williamson, Quebec Geologist, Won Africa Empire"; Redfern, "The Williamson Millions Mean Life behind Bars."
[19] Hickey, "The Williamson Diamonds Stay in the Family"; Mostert, "Kin of Dr. Williamson to Operate Diamond Mine."

Choosing a Successor: The Mine for Sale

For months, rumours of the mine's future filtered out of Mwadui, newspapers reported on who might succeed John. Would it be Chopra or his brother Percy, or was the colonial government of Tanganyika planning on repossessing the "partly-expired" Williamson mining lease?[20] Some sensationalist journalists even reprinted, without comment, Percy's outrageous claim (likely a bluff to drive the price up) that offers of up to $100 million had been made.[21] Despite denials communicated by Mr. Chopra and Williamson's family, in July of 1958, word finally began to spread of negotiations involving the De Beers Corporation, the colonial government of Tanganyika, the British Colonial Office, and the Williamson family.[22] In August of 1958, newspapers printed confirmation of the purchase, a joint agreement between De Beers and the colonial government, allegedly for a total of £10 million pounds sterling, or roughly $27 million dollars Canadian.[23] The actual terms of the deal differed from those originally reported, both in spirit and in monetary value, and all three parties seem to have gotten what they wanted. The Williamson family, faced with an enormous death duty owed on John's 800 shares in the mine, were anxious to sell; De Beers was "obviously concerned to acquire control over the mine" and finally bring its production under the diamond monopoly; and the colonial Tanganyika Government "was worried about future control and ownership" of one of the colonies most

[20] Canadian Press, "Diamond King's Aide May Be New Mine Boss"; Mostert, "Kin of Dr. Williamson to Operate Diamond Mine"; Financial Times Reporter, "Dr. J.T. Williamson: Diamond Millionaire," *Financial Times*, January 9, 1958, Financial Times Historical Archive, link.gale.com/apps/doc/HS2304261678/FTHA?u=concordi_main&sid=bookmark-FTHA.
[21] "Indécision Sur La Mine Williamson," *La Presse*, juillet 1958, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec.
[22] "Williamson Diamonds Share Deal Near," *Financial Times*, July 12, 1958, Financial Times Historical Archive, link.gale.com/apps/doc/HS2304264864/FTHA?u=concordi_main&sid= bookmark-FTHA; "Williamson Mine Shares' Selling."
[23] "La Fameuse Mine de Diamant de Williamson Vendue Pour $27 Millions," *Montreal Matin*, Aout 1958, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec.

significant economic drivers.[24] Mediated by the British Colonial Office, the final deal saw the De Beers Corporation purchase the entirety of the mine's shares from the Williamsons and Chopra for £5.5 million.[25] The company then transferred 320 shares to the Government of Tanganyika, who in turn paid De Beers £1.3 million for a further 280 shares, making them equal partners in the mine.[26]

A New Era of Extraction at Mwadui, a New Era for Tanganyika

The mine was no longer the fiefdom of one eccentric Canadian Geologist, it was now under the care of a seven-person committee directed by De Beers chairman Harry Oppenheimer.[27] Among the other members was Iqbal Chopra, also representing De Beers, and the committee's sole African member, Chief David Kidaha Makwaia representing the Tanganyikan government, "one of the most prominent African politicians" in the colony.[28] As mentioned in Chapter One, there is an oral tradition in Mwadui that Makwaia, who was a Sukumaland chief local to the Mwadui area, was the person who originally negotiated access to the mining area with Williamson back in 1940.[29] This was not the first time that Iqbal Chopra and Chief Makwaia met, as they had both served on the Tanganyika Legislative Council in the beginning in the 1940s, where Chopra had stood out as the radical compared to Makwaia. In 1947, the Tanganyika government considered a bill that would enhance the European minorities political representation at the expense of Africans and Asians, and while Makwaia merely abstained from the vote, Chopra and another Asian member of the council distinguished themselves in the eyes of anti-colonialists by voting

[24] Knight and Stevenson, "The Williamson Diamond Mine, De Beers, and the Colonial Office: A Case-Study of the Quest for Control," 442.
[25] Knight and Stevenson, 442.
[26] Knight and Stevenson, 442.
[27] Gawaine, *The Diamond Seeker*, 180.
[28] Bjerk, *Building a Peaceful Nation*, 86.
[29] Mwaipopo, "Ubeshi - Negotiating Co-Existence: Artisanal and Large-Scale Relations in Diamond Mining," 164.

against the government and publicly critiquing the bill.[30] Makwaia, on top of holding a chieftainship, was also junior minister for lands, a power position, and he continued to support the colonial government's policies throughout the 50s, earning the ire of emerging African nationalists like Julius Nyerere and other members of TANU.[31]

Through his close connections with the government, Makwaia gained a reputation as somewhat of a stooge, which was only solidified when he became one of the only African members of the conservative Capricorn Society.[32] The Capricorn Society was a settler-led political pressure group that sought to stem the tide of anti-colonial sentiment by securing "equal" democratic representation for all races in the colonies for elites only in order to nullify the overwhelming African demographic majority, and they had unsuccessfully reached out to Williamson in the years before the geologist's death.[33] Williamson also sympathized with their project, at the time he considered donating a large sum of money to the society, but his personal vow to stay out of politics kept him from contributing anything substantial. Chief Makwaia continued to play a prominent role in Tanganyikan politics while on the board of the Williamson Diamond Mine, often in opposition to Julius Nyerere and the dominant TANU party, and suspicions began to grow that he was even involved with a plot against the African-led government.[34] In 1962, he was arrested at his home in Shinyanga and detained for attempting to "inflame local feelings" against the newly independent government based on what was likely false evidence.[35]

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[30] Brennan, *Taifa*, 144–45.
[31] Bjerk, *Building a Peaceful Nation*, 37.
[32] Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, 481.
[33] Burgess, *Diamonds Unlimited*, 134–37; Alistair Ross, "The Capricorn Africa Society and European Reactions to African Nationalism in Tanganyika, 1948-60.," *African Affairs* 76, no. 305 (October 1977): 520–22, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.afraf.a096898.
[34] Bjerk, *Building a Peaceful Nation*, 86-88. 90.
[35] Bjerk, 90.

In a strange coincidence, another Tangnayikan politician with links to the Williamson Diamond Mine was a member of the TANU Cabinet that made the decision to prosecute Chief Makwaia, Paul Bomani. Having risen through the ranks of Tanganyikan political associations and after founding an important cotton co-operative in Shinyanga, Bomani was already an influential figure by the time he became a TANU member in 1954.[36] At independence Bomani was Minister of Agriculture, he would shift to become Minister of Finance in 1962 to replace Ernest Vasey, a white Briton ineligible for the post as a result of his lacking Tanganyikan citizenship.[37] Bomani had grown up in Musoma on the Eastern shore of Lake Victoria, his father took a job at the Williamson Diamond Mine in the mid 1940s and young Paul was chosen for a clerk position at the mine's company store.[38]

As the political situation heated up in Tanganyika and the colony moved towards independence, the status of the mine began to be called into question, and politically active figures like Makwaia, Bomani, and Chopra joined the debate over how the nations resources would be utilized, putting the spotlight on foreign companies, especially South African ones, exploiting Tanganyikan land.

[36] Macguire, "The Emergence of the Tanganyika African National Union in the Lake Province," 650, 663–64.
[37] Bjerk, *Building a Peaceful Nation*, 76–77.
[38] Macguire, "The Emergence of the Tanganyika African National Union in the Lake Province," 650.

A Share of the Haul: Labour Action at the Williamson Diamond Mine

With the mines passing from John Williamson to De Beers, issues that had long simmered under the surface began to come into the light. Not even a week after the sale made its way into the papers, reports appeared of a strike at the mine.[39] Almost the entire African workforce and even some of the mine's police force participated, with the main motivation being a demand for higher wages.[40] Gawaine, in *The Diamond Seeker*, accuses "political agitators" at odds with Julius Nyerere's TANU government of stoking anti South African sentiment among the miners, many of whom had experienced overt racism at the hands of white South African overseers, and links the strike, "the first strike in Mwadui's history" to demands for better pay as well as the reinstatement of six unfairly dismissed miners.[41] While it is tempting to connect this particular strike to rising anti-apartheid consciousness among miners, especially as it occurred right after the mine was purchased by one of the most prominent South African companies in the world, other sources fail to either corroborate or invalidate Gawaine's claim. Gawaine's accusatory tone, his focus on this one instance of labour unrest, and his confusion about when TANU members gained government posts, suggest a weak grasp on the situation at the mine, conflating different labour actions with each other.

In fact, almost a year to the date of the August 1958 strike, the miners at the Williamson mine walked out again, this time in protest of cuts to their contracts from 30 days to 28 days,

[39] From our Correspondent, "African Diamond Men's Strike: Williamson Mine at Standstill," *The Times*, August 27, 1958, The Tims Digital Archive; "Mineurs Africains En Grève," *L'événement Journal*, Aout 1958, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec.
[40] From our Correspondent, "African Diamond Men's Strike: Williamson Mine at Standstill."
[41] Gawaine, *The Diamond Seeker*, 182–83.

likely without pay or time off adjustments.[42] The next year, in December 1960, the miners were on strike again, calling for a pay increase and for the reinstatement of six men allegedly fired for redundancy.[43] The importance of the mine to Tanganyika, now well on its way to becoming an independent nation, was underscored by the fact that the TANU Minister of Commerce, Nsilo Swai, flew to Mwadui to conduct negotiations in person, claiming that the strike "was ruining the country's economy".[44] The miners, perhaps thanks to their outsized influence on the nation's economy, were victorious, winning injury compensation, service increments for long serving miners, and a raise from 1.5 pennies a day to six.[45] They also had a prohibition against the "victimisation" of workers added to the agreement, suggesting that the fired men had been targeted in some way beyond just redundancy.[46]

Looking at these three examples of labour agitation at the mine, it seems probable that Gawaine conflates several different strikes in his narrative to present the argument that anti-apartheid activism, not labour conditions at the mine, was the root of the conflict. Instead, something about the death of Williamson seems to have provided an opportunity for making claims to a greater share of mine's profits and improved labour conditions that were absent before. At the same time, the national Tanganyikan labour movement was building up strength in the lead up to independence, allying more explicitly with TANU and their political goals, and becoming more unified under the Tanganyika Federation of Labour (TFL), which supported the more than 20 unions under its umbrella.[47] The first strike at the mine in 1958 appears to have

[42] "Diamond Mine Strike," *Financial Times*, August 27, 1959, Financial Times Historical Archive.
[43] Our Own Correspondent, "Diamond Miners' Strike Ends," *Financial Times*, December 20, 1960, Financial Times Historical Archive.
[44] "Diamond Strike Men Warned," *Financial Times*, December 16, 1960, Financial Times Historical Archive.
[45] Our Own Correspondent, "Diamond Miners' Strike Ends."
[46] Our Own Correspondent.
[47] Samantha Moyes, "Dis-Trusting Human Rights: The UN Trusteeship in Late Colonial Tanganyika (Tanzania)" (Montreal, QC, Concordia University, 2022), 156–59, 176–77, https://spectrum.library.concordia.ca/id/eprint/991131/.

been locally organized and independent, while the 1960 strike was linked to the Tanganyika Mineworkers Union and supported by the TFL.[48]

While there is little evidence that the anti-apartheid political struggle was as central to the outbreak of strike activity at the Williamson Diamond Mine as Gawaine claims, over time the mine did become explicitly linked to Tanganyikan debates over South Africa. Some foreshadowing of this link is present in an August 1958 article covering the sale of the mine to De Beers, which includes a statement by Harry Oppenheimer meant to pacify those critical of the deal between the government and his corporation, assuring reporters that the mine "would remain a Tanganyika industry and would not become a branch of the South African industry."[49] In the lead-up to official Tanganyikan independence in December of 1961, pressure was mounting on TANU members of the interim African government to take a hardline approach to South Africa's openly white supremacist policies.[50] Julius Nyerere, as the face of the new government, was unequivocally opposed to apartheid and instituted a boycott of South African goods once in government, but more militant Tanganyikans began to question why a prominent, taxpaying South African enterprise like De Beers was allowed to profit off their nation's natural resources in partnership with their ostensibly anti-Apartheid politicians. A 1961 newspaper report identifies these voices as "extremists" directly calling on Nyerere to end the partnership at the Williamson Diamond Mine, which he declined to do, likely because of the economic importance of the mine to a government in need of money on the eve of formal independence.[51] This importance was highlighted a year later when the government transferred responsibility for their

[48] "Diamond Strike Men Warned"; Our Own Correspondent, "Diamond Miners' Strike Ends."
[49] "Big Diamond Deal in Tanganyika," *The Irish Times*, August 18, 1958, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Irish Times and the Weekly Irish Times.
[50] Bjerk, *Building a Peaceful Nation*, 185–87.
[51] Noel Conway, "Nyerere's Dilemma: White Man's Praise Is No Help," *The Irish Times*, March 21, 1961, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Irish Times and The Weekly Irish Times.

share of the Williamson Mine to the portfolio of the newly established Tanganyika Development Corporation, clearly linking the mine to the funding of indigenous development.[52]

The Williamson Diamond Mine: Postscript

In the post-independence period Tanganyika, which became Tanzania in April 1964 after it merged with Zanzibar, moved further and further towards open hostility to South Africa, eventually becoming the continental hub of anti-apartheid activism, famously hosting exiled militants and supporting armed struggle, but De Beers remained in Mwadui.[53] In 1964, a foreign journalist reported that a Tanzanian official stated the government was "seeking to end its association with De Beers in Williamson's" over the conflict with South Africa, but mine representatives denied the claim, and the deal held for the time being.[54] The proclamation of the Arusha Declaration in 1967, which laid out the terms of Julius Nyerere's brand of African Socialism and projected a new future for Tanzania, marked the beginning of the end for the deal between the government and De Beers. Between 1967 and 1969, a handful of new laws relating to land usage were passed by the Tanzanian government, establishing broad powers of expropriation which would soon be turned towards De Beers.[55] In 1971, Tanzania nationalized the Williamson Diamond Mine as part of a wider project of nationalization of foreign capital.[56] For the next two decades, the mine was run by the state mining company, STAMICO, and this

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[52] Rasmus Hundsbæk Pedersen et al., "Rights to Land and Extractive Resources in Tanzania (1/2):" (Danish Institute for International Studies, 2016), 12, JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep13445.
[53] Paul Bjerk, *Building a Peaceful Nation: Julius Nyerere and the Establishment of Sovereignty in Tanzania, 1960-1964* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2018), 186–87, 188–92.; Andrew Ivaska, "Leveraging Alternatives Early FRELIMO, the Soviet Union, and the Infrastructure of African Political Exile," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 41, no. 1 (May 2021): 12–13, 15–16.
[54] "Tanganyika-De Beers Diamond Link," *The Irish Tims*, August 18, 1964, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Irish Times and The Weekly Irish Times.
[55] Chachage, "The Meek Shall Inherit the Earth but Not the Mining Rights: The Mining Industry and Accumulation in Tanzania," 60–61.
[56] Mwaipopo, "Ubeshi - Negotiating Co-Existence: Artisanal and Large-Scale Relations in Diamond Mining," 164.

period is notable for the intensification of artisanal mining activity that followed the nationalization of the mine and the deterioration of the national economy in the mid 1970s.[57] The mine is said to have performed poorly under STAMICO management, and De Beers was brought back into the Williamson Mine in 1994 in order to reinvigorate production, this time with 75% control against the government's 25%.[58] In 2008-2009, the mine was sold for a final time, this time to Petra Diamonds, an Australian company that continues to run the mine into 2024.

Petra has been involved with highly publicised conflicts with artisanal miners at Mwadui, shootings and beatings carried out by mine police and private security contractors occur all too frequently, and tensions run high.[59] In recent years, Petra has come into increasingly desperate conflict with the Tanzanian government; diamond shipments have been seized, flooding of tailings ponds has impacted local communities, and an especially embarrassing episode in 2020 saw the company try and fail to sell their shares under the table, without informing the government.[60] Recently, Petra Diamonds was able to complete the sale of half of its shares to a local mining contractor, Taifa Mining, but it remains to be seen whether or not the Australian company will succeed in fully extricating itself from the Williamson Mine.[61]

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[57] Mwaipopo, 166–67; Pedersen et al., "Rights to Land and Extractive Resources in Tanzania (1/2):," 12; John Loxley, "The Devaluation Debate in Tanzania," in *Structural Adjustment in Africa*, ed. Bonnie K. Campbell and John Loxley (London: Palgrave MacMillan UK, 1989), 13–36.
[58] Mwaipopo, "Ubeshi - Negotiating Co-Existence: Artisanal and Large-Scale Relations in Diamond Mining," 164.
[59] "The Deadly Cost of 'Ethical' Diamonds"; "Petra Diamonds Probes New Claims of Human Rights Abuses in Tanzania," *MINING.COM* (blog), February 9, 2021, https://www.mining.com/petra-diamonds-probes-fresh-claims-of-human-rights-abuses-in-tanzania/.
[60] "Petra Diamonds Shares Crater after Tanzania Seizes $15 Million Shipment," *MINING.COM* (blog), September 11, 2017, https://www.mining.com/petra-diamonds-shares-crater-tanzania-seizes-15-million-shipment/; "Petra Diamonds Suspends Operations at Tanzania Mine after Dam Breach," financialpost, accessed February 8, 2024, https://financialpost.com/pmn/business-pmn/petra-diamonds-suspends-operations-at-tanzania-mine-after-dam-breach; "Tanzania Halts Petra Diamonds' Decision to Sell Williamson Diamond Mine," The Citizen, November 1, 2020, https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/international/tanzania-halts-petra-diamonds-decision-to-sell-williamson-diamond-mine-2712024.
[61] "Petra Sells Williamson Stake for $15m," accessed February 8, 2024, http://www.idexonline.com/FullArticle?Id=48600.

Colonial Afterlife: John Thoburn Williamson in Memory

In 2011, John Thoburn Williamson was inducted into the Canadian Mining Hall of Fame for his "pioneering efforts" and contributions to "Canada's recent emergence as a center of excellence for diamond exploration and production."[62] Williamson spent almost all his career running the Williamson Diamond Mine in East Africa, established in 1940. The Hall of Fame entry for Williamson consists of a short, standard biography listing his education and accomplishments related to mining, but it also goes out of its way to emphasize the social benefits of the mine and the town that was built up around it. According to the Hall, the mine "created thousands of jobs and a socially progressive town-site" which was "a mining town without equal at the time, built for miners and their families with amenities such as schools, hospital and recreational facilities."[63] Conveniently, no mention is made of the fact that the "socially progressive" town was fully segregated, with white mineworkers and their families living in individual homes located in a fenced off area at a distance from the mine, staffed with African domestic servants, while the African workforce was crammed into a much smaller township flanked by a toxic pond and a police post. African men, women, and children worked the mine and were paid less, did more dangerous jobs, and were barred from advancement, while white mining experts flown in by Williamson were well compensated and had access to all the amenities listed by the Hall of Fame that Africans were barred from. This kind of racialized labour hierarchy was, and continues to be, common to white-run mines in the Global South, and narratives promoted by mining corporations do their best to obscure and downplay the extent to which an apartheid-like system has characterized so many resource extraction projects around the world. No doubt the Mining Hall of Fame was more anxious than most to silence that part of Williamson's legacy, as it

[62] "John T. Williamson (1907 – 1958)," accessed August 9, 2022, https://www.mininghalloffame.ca/bert-wasmund-copy.
[63] "John T. Williamson (1907 – 1958)."

complicated the other aspects of the mine they hoped to highlight, the number of Canadians (potential witnesses) employed by the mine and its importance to the development of Canadian mining. What else might remain obscured in the story of John Williamson? Which aspects of his story, beyond those highlighted by the Mining Hall of Fame, influenced the later history of Canadian mining?

Williamson in Imperial Discourse

In late 1961, a different sort of celebration played out as British parliamentarians gathered to read the independence bill of the soon-to-be sovereign Tanganyika Territory. In the middle of sharing colonial nostalgia, trading jibes over past political spats, and taking credit for perceived successes in the former colony's history, they paused to recognize their partners in colonialism. One figure in particular was consistently singled out; a man who brought "great prosperity to Tanganyika after a great many years of privation and service", whose "important addition to the wealth of the country" would help support the newly independent nation's economic development.[64] The same figure had been earlier recognized in parliament as "one of the finest employers in the Commonwealth" and an "old-fashioned prospector", a shining example of the British Empire's rugged, paternalistic spirit.[65] The man in question was Dr. John Thoburn Williamson, the founder and operator of perhaps the single most economically important project in colonial Tanganyika, and one of the largest diamond mines in the world.

While the Canadian mining industry seeks to incorporate a sanitized version of John Williamson's story into a marketing campaign that massages their image, they are certainly not

[64] "Tanganyika Independence Bill" (London: Hansard's, November 8, 1961), 13; "Tanganyika Independence Bill" (London: Hansard's, November 16, 1961), 1.
[65] "Colonial Affairs" (London: Hansard's, July 29, 1947), 10, 16; "Clause 1. - Functions of Colonial Development Corporation" (London: Hansard's, July 27, 1956), 23.

the first to take Williamson's story and shape it to fit a constructed narrative, as demonstrated by the above statements from Parliament. Williamson himself was an active and enthusiastic participant in the Empire, not just as the owner of an economically important extractive project moving wealth out of the colonies, but as a die-hard supporter of the British monarchy and their colonial project. The English Princess Margaret's 1956 visit to the mine was filmed and broadcast around the Empire, and the impressive pink diamond that Williamson gifted to the Queen in 1947 was cut into a broach, one of her favourite pieces, now displayed alongside the Crown Jewels. Other British and Tanganyikan political figures would make frequent visits to the mine, meeting with Williamson to discuss business and colonialism, enjoy the mine's amenities, or stage events for the press. During his life, Williamson was the subject of semi-frequent articles in Canadian newspapers, sometimes referred to as "the richest man in the world", he was treated like a celebrity when he took one of his rare trips home to Montreal. Those articles positioned the mine in much the same way as the Hall of Fame does, as a source of fabulous wealth, proof of Canadian ingenuity, and as a socially progressive, civilizing force in far-away East Africa. In postwar Canada, stories of Williamson served to remind Canadians of their links to Empire and draw attention to colonized Africa and the opportunities white, educated men might find there. Today Williamson's legacy is repackaged to support the contemporary activities of the many Canadian mining companies operating Africa, and we will now shift gears and look into how those companies brought Canadian mining back to Tanzania, and expanded into the African continent in the new millennia.

Figure 16:

Protests against Canadian companies mining companies around the world. (clockwise from top left) The Philippines, Turkey, and Argentina

(The Tyee, Reuters 2019, Reuters 2012)

The Canadian Mining Industry Today

It may surprise the reader to learn that Canada, a country of barely 40 million people often touted as the prototypical middle power nation, is the global centre of the international mining industry, and has been for over a decade. The most often repeated statistic claims that over 75% of global mining companies are headquartered in Canada, (a claim repeated on official government platforms) operating on the Toronto Stock Exchange, which has been the most important site of

[66] "Stephen Harper's Endless Campaign for Mining Profits," *The Tyee*, accessed March 4, 2024, https://thetyee.ca/Books/2012/11/22/Harper-Mining-Profits/print.html; Trinh Theresa Do · CBC News ·, "Mining Transparency Bill Finally Gets to Parliament - to Die | CBC News," *CBC*, January 31, 2014, https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/mp-john-mckay-resigned-to-glorious-death-of-mining-transparency-bill-1.2517581; Thomson Reuters ·, "Thousands Protest at Turkish Gold Mine Owned by Canadian Company | CBC News," *CBC*, August 6, 2019, https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/turkey-cdn-mine-alamos-protest-1.5237104.

mining investment in the world since the early 2000s.[67] According to government statistics published in 2022, while there are, in total, 1,412 Canadian mining companies collectively valued at $286 billion, 748 of those companies had operations outside Canada in 96 countries, representing $196 billion, or almost 70% of the total valuation.[68] In other words, 70% of the value of Canadian mining companies in 2021 came from mineral holdings outside of Canada. This global dominance is the result of a trend observed since the early 2000s that has seen Canadian mining companies benefit from worldwide changes to mining laws beginning in the late 1980s and early 1990s with the imposition of structural adjustment policies in struggling economies.[69] At the same time, the current Canadian mining industry did not emerge, fully formed and ready to take its anointed position as the international mineral leader, in 1990 at the behest of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, but is instead the result of the confluence of major Canadian and global historical processes. These include but are not limited to; the genocide of Indigenous peoples, European Imperialism, professionalization and gatekeeping of geology, and the scramble to rebuild a white world order in the aftermath of the Second World War and the collapse of the colonial system. The vast majority of writing on the history of the Canadian mining industry operating *outside* of Canada has been limited to the comparatively recent history of that industry's meteoric rise. At most, these writings touch on the

[67] Butler, *Colonial Extractions*, 8–11; "Minister Ng Promotes Canada's Mining Industry at Virtual Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada 2021 Convention," *Global Affairs Canada*, March 17, 2021, https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2021/03/minister-ng-promotes-canadas-mining-industry-at-virtual-prospectors--developers-association-of-canada-2021-convention.html; Bonnie Campbell, "Regulation & Legitimacy in the Mining Industry in Africa: Where Does Canada Stand?," *Review of African Political Economy* 35, no. 117 (September 2008): 367, 373–74.

[68] Natural Resources Canada, "Canadian Mining Assets" (Government of Canada, January 2021), https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/maps-tools-and-publications/publications/minerals-mining-publications/canadian-mining-assets/19323.

[69] Campbell, "Regulation & Legitimacy in the Mining Industry in Africa," 368; Bonnie Campbell, *Mining in Africa: Regulations and Development* (New York: Pluto Press, 2009), 1–5; Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert, "Canadian Mining in Latin America (1990 to Present): A Provisional History," *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies / Revue Canadienne Des Études Latino-Américaines et Caraïbes* 41, no. 1 (January 2, 2016): 96–102.

lead up to structural adjustment in the 1980s but stop there despite the admission of Canadian mining entrepreneurs themselves that their work goes back to the 1960s, and potentially even earlier.[70] In order to understand the truly transnational development of the Canadian mining industry, it is necessary to identify the roots of that industry and the global processes that contributed to its development, to historicize the global division of labour that has seen Canada mark out a distinct fiefdom in one of the most critical sectors of the global economy.

Structural Adjustment: The Industry Ascendant

Tanzania and Canada have long enjoyed what can be described as a special relationship. After the death of John Williamson there was no large-scale Canadian mining investment in the country for decades, but through other means the relationship of the two countries bloomed during the height of the Cold War. Developmental aid was the principal way in which Canadians became involved in Tanzania in the postwar decades, Tanzania was one of Canada's top development recipients in the 79s and 80s receiving between 20 and 30 million dollars in aid a year. In the 1975-76 and 1980-81 aid years, Tanzania received more Canadian aid than any other African nation.[71] Projects, like an attempt to build an expansive Tanzanian wheat farm in the style preferred on the Canadian prairies, which also served to turn Tanzania into a customer of Canadian-built farm equipment, is illustrative of the types of development funded by Canada.[72] In the late 80s, this type of development aid began to fall out of favour for a myriad of reasons, one of which was the increase in influence of the international financial institutions who much

[70] Butler, *Colonial Extractions*, 174–75.
[71] David R. Morrison, *Aid and Ebb Tide: A History of CIDA and Canadian Development Assistance* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1998), 456–60.
[72] Linda Freeman, "CIDA, Wheat, and Rural Development in Tanzania," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 16, no. 3 (1982): 479–504.

preferred private direct investment as a method of funding economic projects in Global South nations.[73] This change in approaches to development dovetails with the rise of the Canadian mining industry, and serves as a prologue to the changes in Canadian policy towards Africa that also included supporting mining interests operating on the continent.

The standard account of the rise of the Canadian mining industry follows the literature on neoliberalism in arguing that the process of structural adjustment which occurred in the 1980s and 90s rolled back fees and regulations, allowing for privatization and foreign takeover, creating investment opportunities for all kinds of industries, including Canadian Mining companies.[74] The countries that did sign on to this program were forced to accept major legal, economic, and political reforms in order to access loans from the IMF and the World Bank, in effect joining what is referred to as the "Washington Consensus" or the Neoliberal world order. This was an incredibly complex process, different across the diverse locals in which it unfolded, occurring at an uneven pace, but a generalized account would note that most of the countries forced to accept Structural Adjustment were formerly colonized nations, and that acceptance meant abandoning postcolonial development policies that were often socialist or otherwise working towards capitalist alternatives.[75] Reform wasn't limited to the formerly colonized either, in the 1980s, Canada also saw restrictions on private capital lifted. The gutting of the Canadian Foreign Investment Review Agency was a major factor which opened the floodgates to Canadian mining

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[73] James Ferguson, *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 182–93.
[74] Butler, *Colonial Extractions*, 10–11; Campbell, "Regulation & Legitimacy in the Mining Industry in Africa," 368; Campbell, *Mining in Africa*, 1–5, 245–47; James Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt*, Perspectives on Southern Africa 57 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 238–42; Todd Gordon and Jeffery R. Webber, *Blood of Extraction: Canadian Imperialism in Latin America* (Halifax ; Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2016), 216–18; David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 92–94; Studnicki-Gizbert, "Canadian Mining in Latin America (1990 to Present)," 96–102.
[75] Daniel Stedman Jones, *Masters of the Universe: Hayek, Friedman, and the Birth of Neoliberal Politics*, 1. paperback print. with a new preface by the author (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 8.

companies and allowed for the emergence of the liberalized, lightly restricted investment regime that exists today.[76]

This unevenness of structural adjustment is reflected in the investments of Canadian mining companies in Africa, which began to increase significantly at the tail end of the process. One requirement of many loan packages was the revision of all or part of a country's mining laws, depending on how open they were to foreign investment. Experienced Canadian mining experts interviewed in Paula Butler's *Colonial Extractions: Race and Canadian Mining in Contemporary Africa* spoke of working with the Canadian state and IMF officials to put pressure on African elites in the 80s and 90s. According to one interviewee, officials in Ghana, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe were coerced into changing their laws to match those of Ontario and Canada, allowing for more foreign ownership, looser labour protections, alongside reduced royalty rates and tax burdens.[77] Another interviewee encapsulated the disdain for the superseded postcolonial economic policies best by referencing Tanzania's late Prime Minister and an intellectual pioneer of African Socialism: "who would put a penny into Tanzania when Julius Nyerere was running it?".[78]

These legal changes ushered in a new era of foreign investment in African mining, but the effects were not felt immediately. In 2001, Canadian mining companies had just under three billion Canadian dollars invested in the continent of Africa, with Tanzania leading the pack with $750 million CAD.[79] By 2005, that total was doubled to seven billion Canadian dollars and in 2008 Bonnie Campbell, an expert on the Canada-Africa mining landscape, noted that aside from South African corporations, Canadian companies represented "the most important source of

[76] Butler, *Colonial Extractions*, 54–55.
[77] Butler, 139, 131–45.
[78] Butler, 139.
[79] Campbell, "Regulation & Legitimacy in the Mining Industry in Africa," 376–75.

investment in mining in Africa."[80] In 2010, that investment was again doubled, reaching 14 billion CAD, and by 2020 the total value of Canadian mining assets invested in Africa stood at 36 billion CAD.[81] Of the 748 Canadian mining companies operating around the globe in 2021, 100 were working in Africa in 29 different countries.[82]

The Canadian Mining Industry in Africa: Across the Continent

While some might see the above statistics as alarming, especially readers more comfortable with thinking of Canada as a friendly, inobtrusive, middle power nation, the Canadian government and the mining industry walk a fine line between boasting of what they see as their economic achievements and maintaining a low profile in the face of strong international, and gradually increasing Canadian opposition to the intensive mineral extraction practice by Canadian firms.[83] In fact, the use of generalized Canadian mining statistics to boost the industry has caused some scholars to question their validity, and when placed under the microscope some inconsistencies stand out. The most important caveat is that, of the 1,412 Canadian mining companies counted as Canadian Mining Assets (CMAs) by Natural Resources Canada (a mining company must be publicly traded in Canada, headquartered in Canada, and not be "foreign controlled" to count as a CMA) 1,244 or 88% of them are junior companies, or those that are valued at less than $10

[80] Campbell, 374.
[81] Natural Resources Canada, "Canadian Mining Assets (CMAs), by Country and Region, 2020 and 2021 (p)" (Natural Resources Canada, February 2023), https://natural-resources.canada.ca/maps-tools-and-publications/publications/minerals-mining-publications/canadian-mining-assets/canadian-mining-assets-cma-country-and-region-2020-and-2021/15406.
[82] Canada; "Canadian Mining Assets."
[83]"Minister Ng Promotes Canada's Mining Industry at Virtual Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada 2021 Convention"; "Minister Wilkinson Provides Update at PDAC on Federal Initiatives to Improve Regulatory Processes for Major Projects," *Natural Resources Canada*, March 7, 2023, https://www.canada.ca/en/natural-resources-canada/news/2023/03/minister-wilkinson-provides-update-at-pdac-on-federal-initiatives-to-improve-regulatory-processes-for-major-projects.html.

million CAD and concerned with exploration and limited development of mineral deposits, not mineral production.[84] This has been true for nearly 20 years, and the global mining industry is still the playground of comparatively massive corporations like Rio Tinto and Vale S.A., headquartered in Australia/U.K. and Brazil respectively (although it would be a mistake not to mention that both of these companies grew to their current sizes in part by acquiring two of the largest and longest operating Canadian mining companies, Alcan and Inco, both in 2007). That being said, the dollar value of these junior companies is only 6.3% of the total value of CMAs around the globe, with the senior companies accounting for $267.4 billion CAN out of the $285.8 billion total valuation of all CMAs.[85]

What this means is that, purely by volume, the Canadian mining industry looks larger than it actually is. While it is important to recognize that the oft-quoted figure of 75% of the world's companies being based in Canada is inflated by the large amount of very small companies registered in Toronto, it does not diminish the importance of the Canadian mining industry to the character of mineral extraction around the globe, especially when we take a closer look at mining operations from a regional point of view. The 2021 data provided by Natural Resources Canada gives us a total number of CMAs in a country and their collective valuation without allowing us to see the worth of each individual company, or which companies own multiple mining assets, which complicates the goal of identifying where junior companies actually inflate the importance of Canadian mining.

By looking at the total valuation vs. the number of assets in operation, however, we can get a rough idea of the average value of assets in a particular country, hinting at the actual power

[84] Canada, "Canadian Mining Assets (CMAs), by Country and Region, 2020 and 2021 (p)"; Studnicki-Gizbert, "Canadian Mining in Latin America (1990 to Present)," 96–97.
[85] "Canadian Mining Assets."

wielded by Canadian mining in that country and allowing us to see some trends. For example, outside of the United States and Canada, where junior companies overwhelmingly outnumber senior companies, the next largest concentration of Canadian mining capital is found in Chile, where 62 mining assets have a valuation of $24.8 billion CAD, giving us an average of $401 million CAD per asset. Comparing this to the African country with the largest presence of Canadian mining, Zambia, where just 6 assets account for $9.4 billion CAD, which gives an average of $1,580 billion CAD per asset, we can see a marked difference. This is not just an outlier, as the top African countries for Canadian mining investment all have a much higher average asset value than in Chile, and an even higher value than the rest of the South American countries listed by Natural Resources Canada[86]. Only when we get to Tanzania, the fifth most valuable African nation in the eyes of the Canadian mining industry, do we see the average sink below that of Chile, at $296 million per asset, more comparable to the total average of CMAs in South America, $265 million. In 2001 the total value of CMAs on the continent of Africa was $2.7 billion CAN, 20 years later that number sits at $37 billion CAD. This investment is spread out over more than half of the countries in Africa (30), with Zambia ($9.4b CAD), Mali ($7.7b CAD), DR Congo (*confidential est. $7b* CAD), Mauritania ($3.1b CAD), and Tanzania ($2.3b CAD) being the top 5 recipients of Canadian mining investment in 2021.[87]

With these numbers we can see, albeit in a very limited and imprecise way, that the Canadian mining industry is inflated by the sheer number of junior companies, but less so on the continent of Africa. Outside of the Americas, Africa is the most important site of Canadian mining assets, and Canada plays an enormous role in shaping the continent's economic role in the neoliberal world order. That being said, the junior companies that operate in Africa also play

[86] Canada, "Canadian Mining Assets (CMAs), by Country and Region, 2020 and 2021 (p)."
[87] Canada; Campbell, *Mining in Africa*, 374–75.

a key role in spreading a certain type of mineral extraction identified by James Ferguson with the country of Angola. Contrary to what institutions like the IMF and the World Bank argued in the 1990s, the African countries that were benefiting the most from significant foreign investment, almost entirely in oil and mineral extraction, were those with the least democratic, most violent, least stable political situations.[88] Those nations that had accepted the imposition of structural adjustment policies were, in the 2000s, losing out to dictatorships and countries suffering from civil conflict, and Ferguson suggests this was because certain mining companies had found a cost effective way of proving their own security and operating with as little state oversight as possible.[89] The pioneers of this method were Canadian companies like Ranger Oil in Angola who bankrolled mercenaries fighting for the government in exchange for mineral rights alongside much smaller, "nimble" junior companies which exercised more operational freedom (read: low investor/government oversight) than the traditional giants in the industry like Anglo-American.[90] These companies exploited political chaos as the rule, trading stability for easy access to mineral rights, access that also covered the costs of hiring private mercenaries to secure those mineral rights. Finally, these companies then turned around and sold the secured mineral rights to larger companies, cashing out and potentially restarting the process somewhere else. Ferguson is quick to point out that this method was nothing new on the continent of Africa, drawing parallels to precursors in the colonial period.[91]

Through both senior and junior mining companies, Canada plays a surprisingly outsized role in the economic and political landscape in Africa. This is not a new observation, as Bonnie Campbell noted in 2008, that aside from South African corporations, Canadian companies

[88] Ferguson, *Global Shadows*, 196.
[89] Ferguson, 201–3.
[90] Ferguson, 205–6.
[91] Ferguson, 207.

represented "the most important source of investment in mining in Africa."[92] In 2005, that investment amounted to $6 billion, with Tanzania being the largest recipient of Canadian mining investment at $1.5 billion, a position it had occupied since at least 2001. This early importance of Tanzania to the Canadian mining industry should come as no surprise to those familiar with the close relationship shared by the two nations throughout the 20th century.

Canada and Tanzania in the 20th Century

After the death of John Williamson in 1958 no major Canadian mining projects were attempted in Tanzania. At most, Canadians continued working at the Williamson Mine under De Beers and then the Tanzania state mining corporation, STAMICO, but decades would pass before Canadian mining returned in a meaningful way; instead Canadians would involve themselves in Tanzania's development by other means. As mentioned above, Tanzania was, for a long period, the largest recipient of Canadian foreign aid on the African continent, and Canadian teachers, military instructors, technicians, and volunteers have worked in Tanzania since before it won independence in 1961.[93] Tanzanians were also brought to Canadian schools as part of training programs as part of the wider foreign aid policy, studying subjects related to active aid projects including wheat cultivation, civil engineering, and mining.[94]

Throughout the Cold War, the disbursement of aid represented a significant pillar of Canada's foreign policy. Criticism of inefficient programs, shifting budget priorities, and the

[92] Campbell, "Regulation & Legitimacy in the Mining Industry in Africa," 374.
[93] Morrison, *Aid and Ebb Tide*, 456–60; Andrew B. Godefroy, "The Canadian Armed Forces Advisory Training Team Tanzania 1965–1970," *Canadian Military History* 11, no. 3 (2002): 31–47; Ruth Compton Brouwer, *Canada's Global Villagers: Cuso in Development, 1961-86.* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014), 108.
[94] Freeman, "CIDA, Wheat," 500; Peter Trueman, "How Canada Is Involved in East Africa," *Toronto Daily Star*, November 29, 1965.

rapid decline of the Communist Bloc combined to pull the rug out from under Canada's foreign aid programs, and the spread of neoliberal economic ideas in the same period only accelerated the transformation of aid into a vehicle for economic investment.[95] Coming into the 1990s, development aid was in the process of being redefined; grants and training programs were defunded and creating the conditions for private investment in order to stimulate national economies became the primary goal of aid programs. This transformation was cemented in 2013 when the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) was dissolved and merged into the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATF).[96] This major shift in Canadian foreign policy, which occurred over more than a decade, created the conditions for the expansion of Canadian mining companies into new territories, or in the case of Tanzania, for a spectacular return.

In Tanzania, some of the same global forces that transformed Canadian aid were at work reshaping the country's legal and economic landscape to make it more receptive to foreign investment. When the Williamson Diamond Mine was nationalized in 1971 it joined a handful of other active Tanzanian mines under the supervision of the state mining company, STAMICO, which due to a number of internal and external factors failed to run them efficiently.[97] After nearly a decade of disappointing contributions from the mining sector to the state coffers, a new mining act was adopted in 1979, opening up the field to small scale, or artisanal miners, (many of whom were already working illegally) and leading to a boom in mining that seems to have

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[95] Morrison, *Aid and Ebb Tide*, 313–15, 370–71, 422–23; Michael Bueckert, "Cida and the Capitalist State: Shifting Structures of Representation Under the Harper Government," *Studies in Political Economy* 96, no. 1 (2015): 13.
[96] Bueckert, "CIDA and the Capitalist State," 3–4.
[97] Siri Lange and Abel Kinyondo, "Resource Nationalism and Local Content in Tanzania: Experiences from Mining and Consequences for the Petroleum Sector," *The Extractive Industries and Society* 3, no. 4 (November 2016): 1097, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2016.09.006; Nathaniel Chimhete, "Prosperity in a Crisis Economy: The Nyamongo Gold Boom, Tanzania, 1970s–1993," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 14, no. 3 (July 2, 2020): 576–77, https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2020.1774706.

offset some of difficulties associated with the economic agricultural crises of the early 1980s.[98] Over the years, the importance of artisanal mining in Tanzania has only grown, by the mid 1990s there were approximately 500,000-900,000 Tanzanians working in the artisanal mining sector, by the 2000s that number had grown to perhaps as many as 1.5 million, more than in any other African country.[99] This caused a problem, because while the liberalization of Tanzania's mining laws under the neoliberal economic policies imposed on the country was conducive to individual entrepreneurship and therefore artisanal mining subsequent legal changes also opened up the nation to foreign mining investment, creating a competition between small scale and large scale mining interests over Tanzania's mineral resources.[100]

Canadian mining companies, the legal experts they employed, and even the Canadian state were active in pushing the Tanzanian government to adopt mining legislation that favoured foreign mining companies during the 1990s. One Canadian mining professional even claimed that the Tanzanian laws enacted in 1998 were "modelled after Ontario and Canadian laws", and that "the mining code was written by Canadians and now the investment, the foreign direct investment in Tanzania is huge."[101] This mining act was controversial for many reasons, not least

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[98] Deborah Fahy Bryceson et al., "Unearthing Treasure and Trouble: Mining as an Impetus to Urbanisation in Tanzania," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 30, no. 4 (October 2012): 4–5, https://doi.org/10.1080/02589001.2012.724866; Abel Kinyondo and Christopher Huggins, "Resource Nationalism in Tanzania: Implications for Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining," *The Extractive Industries and Society* 6, no. 1 (January 2019): 183, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2018.08.005; Jesper Bosse Jønsson and Deborah Fahy Bryceson, "Beyond the Artisanal Mining Site: Migration, Housing Capital Accumulation and Indirect Urbanization in East Africa," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 11, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 5–7, https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2017.1287245; Deborah Fahy Bryceson, Jesper Bosse Jønsson, and Michael Clarke Shand, "Wealth and Poverty in Mining Africa: Migration, Settlement and Occupational Change in Tanzania during the Global Mineral Boom, 2002–2012," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 17, no. 3 (July 3, 2023): 493, https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2023.2265726.

[99] Kinyondo and Huggins, "Resource Nationalism in Tanzania," 183; Gavin Hilson and James McQuilken, "Four Decades of Support for Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Critical Review," *The Extractive Industries and Society* 1, no. 1 (March 2014): 105, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2014.01.002.

[100] Bryceson, Jønsson, and Shand, "Wealth and Poverty in Mining Africa," 493; Japhace Poncian, "Extractive Resource Ownership and the Subnational Resource Curse: Insights from Tanzania," *The Extractive Industries and Society* 6, no. 2 (April 2019): 336, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2018.08.013.

[101] Butler, *Colonial Extractions*, 139, 144–45.

of which because it contradicted Tanzanian land laws and allowed for the state mining commissioner to supersede local government in the event of a dispute in designated mining areas.[102]

While these laws were being worked out, Canadian mining interests were already expanding into Tanzanian mines, especially the country's most lucrative mineral, gold, before this mining code was adopted, and one of the first large scale mining deals signed in the mid-90s was with Kahama Mining, then a subsidiary of Canadian mining company Sutton Resources, concerning a gold mine at Bulyanhulu in the Shinyanga region of Tanzania.[103] This deposit was discovered by small scale miners in 1976 and soon developed into a local center of gold mining, and many of the artisanal miners who came to Bulyanhulu were experienced diamond miners, most likely from the Williamson Mine which was located only 130 kilometres to the east, in the same Tanzanian province.[104] Estimates vary widely, but by the time Kahama Mining arrived to take over the project there were at least 20,000, and perhaps as many as 400,000 artisanal miners working at Bulyanhulu, and the mining company was determined to evict them.[105]

In 1995, the company began legal proceedings to have the miners removed, but the Tanzanian courts were hesitant to evict the miners, granting a series of injunctions against the Canadian company. After a year of hearings, the management of Kahama Mining changed strategies, and in June of 1996, company representatives, alongside local police acting under the orders of the Shinyanga Regional Commissioner and with the blessing of the Tanzanian

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[102] Kinyondo and Huggins, "Resource Nationalism in Tanzania," 184.
[103] Poncian, "Extractive Resource Ownership and the Subnational Resource Curse," 336.
[104] Tundu Antiphas Lissu, "In Gold We Trust: The Political Economy of Law, Human Rights and the Environment in Tanzania's Mining Industry," *Law, Social Justice & Global Development Journal (LGD)* 2 (2001), http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/elj/lgd/2001_2/lissu1/.
[105] Butler, *Colonial Extractions*, 149; Lissu, "In Gold We Trust: The Political Economy of Law, Human Rights and the Environment in Tanzania's Mining Industry."

government, stormed the site of the mine and began forcefully evicting miners and their families.[106] A last minute court order to halt the evictions failed to stop the unlawful expropriations, but some local miners who believed the injunction would be followed returned to their mine shafts, and as many as 50 of them were killed when Kahama bulldozers began filling in the earth above them.[107] According to academic Paula Butler, the Canadian government had been pressuring the Tanzanian government to conclude the Bulyanhulu affair in favor of the Canadian mining companies since the court cases were filed in 1995. After the evictions Canadian diplomats worked to discredit the families who claimed to have lost loved ones and pushed the government to sweep the whole episode under the rug.[108]

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Figure 17: Untitled IV "Security" – David Chancellor Photography, North Mara, Tanzania David Chancellor, "Intruders" https://www.davidchancellor.com/works/intruders	Figure 18: Untitled XI "Intruders" – David Chancellor Photography, North Mara, Tanzania David Chancellor, "Intruders" https://www.davidchancellor.com/works/intruders

[106] Poncian, "Extractive Resource Ownership and the Subnational Resource Curse," 336; Lissu, "In Gold We Trust: The Political Economy of Law, Human Rights and the Environment in Tanzania's Mining Industry."
[107] Butler, *Colonial Extractions*, 155; Poncian, "Extractive Resource Ownership and the Subnational Resource Curse," 336; Lissu, "In Gold We Trust: The Political Economy of Law, Human Rights and the Environment in Tanzania's Mining Industry."
[108] Butler, *Colonial Extractions*, 146–53.
[109] David Chancellor, "Intruders," David Chancellor Photography, accessed February 26, 2024, https://www.davidchancellor.com/works/intruders/.

Today the Bulyanhulu mine is run by a subsidiary of one of the world's largest mining companies, Canada's Barrick Gold, which also owns two more of Tanzania's currently operating large gold mines, North Mara and Buzwagi.[110] The other two large gold mines are at Geita and New Luika, owned by a South African and a Tanzanian company respectively.[111] The North Mara mine is particularly emblematic of the sometimes deadly hostility that characterizes the relationship between the large foreign mining companies and the artisanal miners, as well as local residents. Events at North Mara have been referred to as "the most contentious in Tanzania's recent large-scale mining history."[112] Artisanal miners are often the targets of killings, and assaults, both physical and sexual, by mine security and police forces, and tensions have risen to the point that locals stage large scale protests against the company, penetrating the mines fencing in groups as large as 1,500, and facing the risk of being killed or wounded by mine police. Like Bulyanhulu, North Mara was the site of intense artisanal mining before it was taken over by a Canadian company in 2002. Since then there have been 75 reported killings and nearly 300 injuries attributable to mine police, most of whom are Tanzanian police on loan to Barrick Gold, and locals believe this is an incomplete tally of victims.[114]

These mines, especially those run by Canadian companies, are also accused of defrauding the government out of the revenue they are required to pay as part of their contracts to mine in Tanzania, already a low sum compared to most countries. In a 2016 review of mining in Tanzania, the authors tracked the payments of the 30% corporate tax levied against mining companies, finding that both Bulyanhulu and North Mara had failed to contribute a single cent in

[110] Lange and Kinyondo, "Resource Nationalism and Local Content in Tanzania," 1097; Poncian, "Extractive Resource Ownership and the Subnational Resource Curse," 336–37.
[111] Lange and Kinyondo, "Resource Nationalism and Local Content in Tanzania," 1097.
[112] "Briefing Paper: Police Violence at the North Mara Gold Mine" (RAID, March 14, 2022), https://raid-uk.org/post-library/briefing-paper-police-violence-at-the-north-mara-gold-mine/; Poncian, "Extractive Resource Ownership and the Subnational Resource Curse," 337.
[114] "Police Violence at North Mara," 5.

over 12 years of operation, while the only Canadian mine that did pay its tax, Tulawaka also owned by Barrick, made a single payment after seven years of operations, and then promptly closed down the year after.[115] A leaked audit report of Barrick Gold and AngloGold Ashanti, a South African company also operating in Tanzania, showed that between 1999 and 2003, both companies overreported their losses to the tune of $504 million USD in order to get out of paying further taxes.[116]

Unfortunately for Canadian mining companies operating in Tanzania, recent years have seen a rolling back of the recklessly permissive mining laws passed during the 1990s and early 2000s. As a result of parliamentary investigations into alleged fraud of over $200 trillion Tanzanian shillings (around $100 billion Canadian) perpetrated by Barrick Gold, the Tanzanian legislature passed an aggressive Natural Wealth and Resources Act in 2017.[117] The act affirms that all "natural resources in Tanzania belong to Tanzanians and thus they must benefit from them" and empowers the government to renegotiate perceived predatory mining deals signed in the past, restricts the repatriation of currency out of Tanzania, and mandates domestic dispute resolution, among other comparatively radical terms.[118] While it remains to be seen if these reforms will translate into a safer and more profitable mining industry for the majority of Tanzanians, they are clearly intended to address some of the excesses that had become ubiquitous among foreign mining companies operating in the country, just as they had been apparent in the operation of the Williamson Diamond Mine under its founder John Williamson in the 1940s and 50s.

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[115] Lange and Kinyondo, "Resource Nationalism and Local Content in Tanzania," 1097.
[116] Kinyondo and Huggins, "Resource Nationalism in Tanzania," 184.
[117] Kinyondo and Huggins, 184.
[118] Kinyondo and Huggins, 184, 188.

While Canadians have failed to learn from the history of the Williamson Mine, instead choosing to hold him up as a paragon of Canadian mining despite the dire social situation that characterized his mine, Tanzanians have reacted to the continuity in mining practices between Williamson and contemporary Canadian mining companies by firstly, demanding their own share of their natural resources through artisanal mining and determined protest, and secondly, ensuring that their elected representatives hold mining companies accountable through radical legislation that aims to address a century of shady financial dealings and brazen violence.

Conclusion

In a September 1964 edition of the French language Ottawa newspaper *Le Droit* a short report tucked into the corner of page ten contains the most significant evidence of the lasting impact of the transnational network anchored onto the site of the Williamson Diamond Mine.[1] The article recounts the arrival of nine African students from Mwadui in the sleepy northern town of Haileybury, Ontario, the most recent recruits of the Haileybury School of Mining. Weeks earlier M.O.E. Walli the director of the school had visited the Williamson Diamond Mine in order to confer with the mine management and select the students who would be following him back to Canada for a two-year intensive course. The course, designed to produce expertise in mineral analysis, milling, surveying, and administration, had been requested by the government of Tanzania, part of a program for the training of African technicians to replace foreign experts who enjoyed privileged access to the kind of education offered at Haileybury.

The article announcing the arrival of the students is more meaningful than it might seem on the surface. Since the arrival of German surveyors in the 1900s Europeans maintained a monopoly on geological expertise that was weaponized to keep Tanganyikans from accessing the mineral wealth of their lands, in spite of the long history of indigenous African mining. The advanced training of young men from Mwadui reverses the one-way transmission of authority over mineral resources that John Williamson took advantage of when he came to Tanganyika and opened his own private mine in 1940. The colonial division of labour that existed at the mine and in other colonial industries rested on the denial of opportunities for Africans to attain the same

[1] "Etudiants Du Tanganyika à Haileybury," *Le Droit*, September 24, 1964, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, https://numerique.banq.qc.ca/patrimoine/details/52327/4206472.

levels of expertise reserved for whites, a denial that is interrupted by the Mwadui geologists studying at Haileybury.

Two years after the first article, another report appeared in *Le Droit* announcing the winners of the Haileybury School of Mines academic awards for the year of 1966.[2] Among those celebrated for their academic achievements were Aaron Bubuku and Simeon Bulungu of Mwadui, awarded $50 CAD and $15 CAD respectively. The winner of the gold medal for students, alongside a bursary of $100 CAD, was Gabriel Malungu, also of Mwadui. The three students from Mwadui were the only students mentioned in the article who did not come from Ontario. The story of these students, who not only crossed the Atlantic Ocean to complete their studies in rural Canada but managed to excel in competition with Canadian students is one that deserves more than a brief reference in a local paper. Their histories have the potential to illuminate aspects of the Williamson Diamond Mine that are totally absent from the scholarship. Further scholarship that centres the experiences of students like these nine represent the next step in articulating a transnational history of Canadian-Tanzanian mining that contributes to the kind of "multi-sited historiography" advocated by historian Andrew Zimmerman.[3] Who were these students and how did they experience the Williamson Diamond Mine before they were sent to Canada for advanced studies? What was Haileybury, Ontario like for them? What kind of lives did they lead when they returned to Tanzania after two years in northern Ontario? In the brief window of time between the nationalization of the Williamson Diamond Mine in 1971 and the return of Canadian mining companies in the 1990s what did industrial mining look like in

[2] "Palmarès de l'Institut Des Mines," *Le Droit*, June 11, 1966, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, https://numerique.banq.qc.ca/patrimoine/details/52327/4214581.
[3] Andrew Zimmerman, "Africa in Imperial and Transnational History: Multi-Sited Historiography and the Necessity of Theory," *The Journal of African History* 54, no. 3 (November 2013): 331–40, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853713000728.

Tanzania? What, if anything, does the history of John T. Williamson contribute to contemporary Tanzanian debates over the rights afforded to foreign mining companies?

The histories of the Williamson Diamond Mine, its eccentric founder John Thoburn Williamson, and all the people and places who were impacted by this episode of Canadian colonialism in Tanganyika are essential pieces of the global history that ties places like Canada and present-day Tanzania together. These stories emphasize the long history of Canadian involvement with empire, and more specifically with colonialism in East Africa. They remind us that many Canadians were active and enthusiastic agents of colonialism, and that extracting wealth from colonized territories was central to the colonial *raison d'*être. A focus on the Williamson Diamond Mine also calls into question contemporary narratives, endorsed by a powerful industrial interest, about current Canadian mining activities, in Tanzania and around the world. There is much more to say about Williamson and his mine than could be recounted in these pages, just as there are many more examples of lesser-known Canadian involvement with colonialism in Africa and beyond for historians to sink their teeth into. Ultimately, this thesis aims to point towards new directions for Canadian global histories, following in the footsteps of decades of Global South scholarship, that centers mobile Canadian like John Williamson who became nodes in an imperial network, the contours of which shaped our history and remain visible today.

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