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Wildlife Conservation in Kenya's Maasailand, 1850s-2000: Contested Histories of an African
People and their Landscape

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of
Philosophy in History

by

Willis Mathews Okech Oyugi

2014

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Wildlife Conservation in Kenya's Maasailand, 1850s-2000: Contested Histories of an African
People and their Landscape

by

Willis Mathews Okech Oyugi

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Los Angeles, 201

Professor Edward A. Alpers, Chair

This dissertation deals with the problem of human-wildlife conflicts in Kenya from 1850 to 2000 and seeks to contribute to the larger discourse on indigenous peoples' notions of the environment and its conservation. I examine alarming declines of wildlife populations of upwards of 60 percent by the 1990s that were attributed to persistent human-wildlife conflicts in and around the expansive Maasai group ranches/game sanctuaries bordering Amboseli National Park and Masai Mara Game Reserve, two of Kenya's foremost wildlife sanctuaries. I specifically focus on the Maasai, one of Kenya's best known ethnic communities who are often romanticized as paragons of ecological virtue, to question the potential of traditional environmental knowledge and perceptions to alleviate human-nature contestations. By focusing on the British-Maasai relationship during the colonial period the dissertation illuminates ambivalence reflected in how outsiders have often defined and reproduced certain Maasai identities as timeless. I examine the

colonial administration's creation of the Masai Reserve in 1904 upon which it embarked on a failed quest to modernize the traditional Maasai animal husbandry. I also discuss how by the 1940s these endeavors coupled with the promotion of wildlife conservation in Maasailand profoundly impacted the transhumant nature of the Maasai pastoral economy and respectively led to increased Maasai antipathy towards wildlife and exacerbated progressive ecological degradation. The study also reviews the transformation of expansive Maasai Group Ranches (MGRs) from the early 1960s as livestock development schemes to prominent wildlife sanctuaries by the late 1990s. An assumed traditional Maasai "conservation ethic" that MGRs in their current capacity are predicated upon, however, clouds our understanding of the historical nature of human-wildlife contestations in Maasailand.

The dissertation of Willis Mathews Okech Oyugi is approved.

Christopher Ehret

Vinay Lal

Judith A. Carney

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2014

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ANP	Amboseli National Park
ALARM	The Arid Lands and Resource Management Network in Eastern Africa
ALDEV	African Land Development Organisation
BLCAS	Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies
CAMPFIRE	Communal Area Management Plan for Indigenous Resources (Zimbabwe)
CBC	Community-based Conservation
CNC	Chief Native Commissioner
EAP	East Africa Protectorate
EAPHA	East African Professional Hunters Association
EASM	East African Scottish Mission
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
HAK	Historical Association of Kenya
IBEACo	Imperial British East Africa Company
KAR	Kenya Africa Rifles
KNA	Kenya National Archives
KNP	Kenya National Parks
KNPT	Kenya National Parks Trustees
KWLS	Kenya Wild Life Service
KWS	Kenya Wildlife Service
LLC	Lawrence Land Commission
MGR	Masai Group Ranch
MMGR	Masai Mara Game Reserve
NCC	Narok Country Council
RH/RHO	Rhodes House Library
RNP	Royal National Parks
SPEF	Society for the Preservation of Fauna of Empire
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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As the first in my family to earn a college degree I wish to thank all my teachers who nurtured and inspired me to achieve a lifelong desire. I must first pay homage to the members of my committee for your patience, guidance, and suggestions. I will forever be indebted to Professor Edward Alpers, my Committee Chair and mentor. I consider myself extremely lucky to have experienced your scholarly diligence and encouragement with which you advised me through every step of my research and writing, not to mention your unparalleled patience when I had my lengthy periods of "writer's block" as well as during the equally trying non-academic challenges. To Professor Christopher Ehret, *ero kamano ahinya japuonj*, you opened my eyes to the power of language and oral traditions and allowed me to interrogate the history of human-nature interactions from earliest times. To Professor Vinay Lal who greatly expanded my horizons on the nature of British imperialism my quest to prevail upon you to at least credit some of the colonial environmental conservation policies as genuinely being well intended continues. And to Professor Judith Carney I wish I could have done more to reflect the long history of our gendered environment.

Besides my committee, this work also benefitted from many interactions with other faculty within and outside UCLA's history department. Indeed, this journey truly began outside

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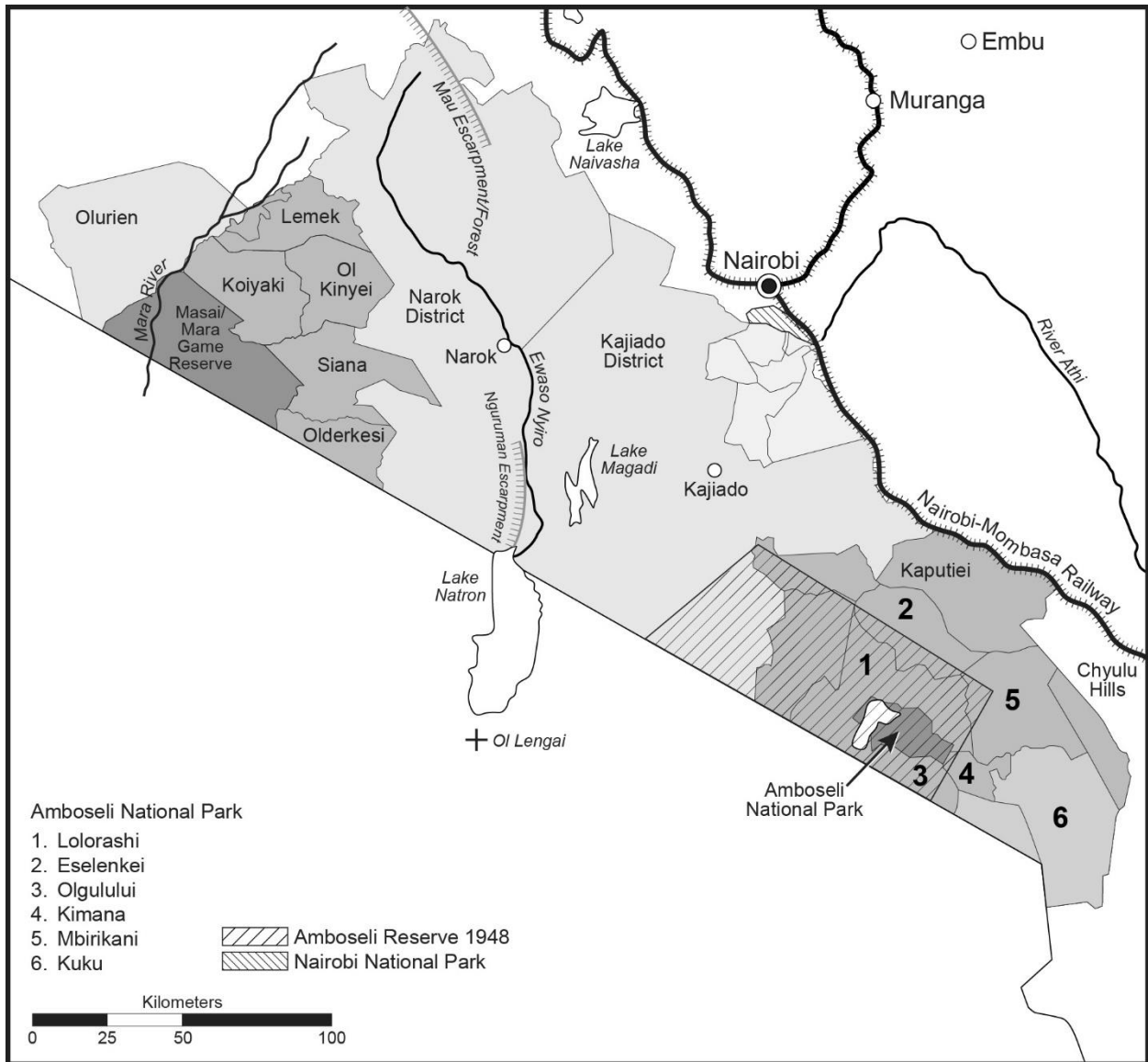
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CHAPTER 1: MAASAILAND AND WILDLIFE: CONCEPTS AND FRAMEWORK



Map 1.1

Kenya Maasailand: Mara & Amboseli Group Ranches, 1960-2000

Introduction

In 1996 the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) celebrated the country's national parks' Golden Jubilee by launching the "Parks Beyond Parks" theme that symbolized a commitment to "work with local communities and landowners to conserve biodiversity."¹ Aimed at mollifying a growing antipathy towards wildlife conservation by people living next to protected areas, the government encouraged local communities to invest in tourism-related projects. KWS's theme was predicated along the much-touted people-oriented or community-based conservation (CBC) models that gained traction in the early 1980s and that sought both local development and sustainable resource use.² The integrationist policy also came in the wake of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature-sanctioned World Conservation Strategy of 1980. Under this policy, governments were obligated to promote inclusive wildlife conservation policies that took into account the social and economic interests of indigenous people.³ It was certainly understandable that the participatory approach should consider the needs of indigenous people given the unfair burden placed upon them as "custodians" of nature due to the significant correlation between areas of great biodiversity and protected areas, to areas inhabited by indigenous people.⁴

In Kenya, it was imperative that Maasailand be coopted into this critical partnership. The

¹ Esther Kamweru, David Round Turner, Lisa Lawley Nesbitt, and the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), *National Parks of Kenya: 50 Years of Challenge and Achievement*, 'Parks beyond Parks' (Nairobi: Kenya Wildlife Service, 1997), p. 2.

² *Ibid.*, p. 37.

³ International Conservation Union, *World Conservation Strategy* (Gland: IUCN, 1980).

⁴ See e.g. Monique Borgerhoff Mulder and Peter Coppolillo, *Conservation: Linking Ecology, Economics, and Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 81-88; David Harmon, "Losing Species, Losing Languages: Connections between Biological and Linguistic Diversity," *Southwest Journal of Linguistics*, 15 (1995), pp. 89-108.

pastoral Maasai, whose expansive group ranches (hereafter MGRs) abut two of the country's foremost wildlife conservation areas—Amboseli National Park (ANP [hereafter Amboseli]) and the Maasai Mara Game Reserve (MMGR [hereafter Mara]), had always been part of its wildlife conservation history. Up until the mid-1970s, the Maasai had been expected to co-exist with wildlife on their land without utilizing it as a resource, despite the increased competition between livestock and wild animals over pasturage and water this presented. The integrationist policy was therefore a laudable departure from past exclusionist policies that disenfranchised local livelihoods adjacent to protected areas without compensation.⁵ Nonetheless, alarming declines of over 60 percent of individual wildlife species and populations in and around many of Kenya's national parks continue.⁶ These declines are mostly attributed to increased human-wildlife conflict. They present significant challenges to both Kenya's conservation endeavors, as well as its wildlife-dependent tourism industry that in recent years has accounted for over 12 percent of its GDP.

This dissertation, a study of African environmental history, examines the problem of human-wildlife conflicts in Kenya. Broadly defined herein, human-wildlife conflicts present

⁵ See, e.g., Roderick Neumann, *Imposing Wilderness: Struggles over Livelihood and Environmental Preservation in Africa* (Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1998).

⁶ See e.g., W.K. Lindsay, "Integrating Parks and Pastoralists: Some Lessons from Amboseli," in David Anderson and Richard Grove (eds.), *Conservation in Africa: People, Policies and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 149-167; Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), "A Policy Framework and Development Programme, 1991-96: Annex 6: Community Conservation and Wildlife Management Outside Parks and Reserves" (1990), pp.105-116; Michael D. Broten and Mohammed Said, "Population Trends of Ungulates in and around Kenya's Masai Mara Reserve," in A. R. E. Sinclair and Peter Arcese (eds.), *Serengeti II: Dynamics, Management, and Conservation of an Ecosystem* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 169-193; Richard H. Lamprey and Robin S. Reid, "Expansion of Human Settlement in Kenya's Maasai Mara: what Future for Pastoralism and Wildlife?" *Journal of Biogeography*, 31 (2004), pp.997-1032; Robin S. Reid, M. Rainy, J. Ogutu, L. Kruska, K. Kimani, M. Nyabenge, M. McCartney *et al.* "People, Wildlife and Livestock in the Mara Ecosystem: The Mara Count 2002," *International Livestock Research Institute, Nairobi, Kenya* (2003).

direct and indirect threats to a relatively harmonious coexistence between humans and wildlife. Examples include anthropogenic barriers that limit or block natural game migratory corridors that are essential to wildlife procreation and dispersal, loss of life for humans and animals (domestic and wild), and the destruction of crops. Fieldwork was primarily carried out among the predominantly pastoral Maasai sections residing within several MGRs adjacent to Amboseli specifically Eselenkei, Lolorashi, and Kuku, as well as those around the Mara including Koiyaki-Lemek, Ol Kinyei, Siana, and Olchoro Oirowua (See Map 1.1). Further research was carried out in the United Kingdom and the United States.

I specifically focus on the Maasai,⁷ one of Kenya's best-known ethnic communities who are often romanticized as paragons of ecological virtue to question the potential of a presumed indigenous conservation ethic to mitigate the prevailing human-wildlife contestations. Since the 1850s when explorers and naturalists first brought them to the west's attention by demonizing and exoticizing them as warlike cattle rustlers subsisting on a protein-rich diet and co-existing peacefully and ahistorically with their natural surroundings, and thus representing quintessential Africa, the Maasai have continued to remain in the public eye. The study follows how these identities have been shaped throughout colonial and independent Kenya alongside its history of wildlife conservation. It highlights major events and personalities within and outside Maasailand that have produced and reproduced these identities and also revisits scholarly complacencies that uncritically portray the Maasai as "natural keepers of the wild."

The study emphasizes how the Maasai reluctantly endorsed the group ranch project when this was first imposed upon them in the 1960s. It examines the evolution of MGRs from their

⁷ The correct spelling is Maasai to denote "Maa"-speakers. Where Masai is used this reflects how it appears in the source as is commonplace in colonial records e.g. the Masai Reserve or the Masai Game Reserve.

infancy in the mid-1940s as controlled grazing schemes seeking to improve Maasai traditional livestock husbandry. Colonial agricultural and veterinary officers, for example, presented to the Maasai the “ease” of disease control and the provision of water and feed as some of the advantages of having smaller herds to try and convince them that destocking campaigns were for their own good. Most MGRs finally came into fruition during the 1960s as radical land adjudication-cum-livestock development programs funded by FAO/UNDP under the Kenya Land Development Program. At roughly 5870 square miles, group ranches within the expansive Kajiado District rose steadily from fourteen in 1970 to thirty-six in 1974 and finally to fifty-one by 1980, a corresponding exponential increase of 10, 25, and 75 percent of the total land area. The much larger Narok District had a further seven group ranches spread across 9000 square miles.⁸ Even after the original concept was dissolved in 1983, by the late 1990s several of these expansive MGRs had morphed into significant wildlife conservation areas (See Map 1.1). In line with the government’s integrationist policy, this trend ensured that pastoralism continued to be a principal economic activity within CBCs, which also meant that in the absence of a sustainable balance the competition between livestock and wildlife over pasturage and water remained a challenge to their success.

Yet from the outset, livestock development schemes in Maasailand were set up in opposition to wildlife conservation. By the end of colonial rule, the Maasai, colonial officials and non-officials alike all viewed conservationists and their endeavors as an impediment to the advancement of the Maasai pastoral economy. White settlers, especially members of the East

⁸ See e.g. Hans G. Hedlund, *The Impact of Group Ranches on a Pastoral Society*. IDS Staff Paper # 100, Institute of Development Studies, University of Nairobi, Kenya (1971), p. 3; J. M. Halderman, *An Analysis of Continued Semi-Nomadism on the Kaputiei Group Ranches: Sociological and Ecological Factors*. Undated report prepared for SIDA c. 1971; John Galaty, “Land and Livestock among Kenya Maasai: Symbolic Perspectives on Pastoral Exchange, Social Change and Inequality.” *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 16, No.81 (1981), pp. 67-88.

African Professional Hunters Association (EAPHA) that was set up in 1934, were out to secure the future of their hunting pursuits, a pastime many had engaged in since the Kenya Colony first came into existence as the British East Africa Protectorate. In pointing out this distinction, the study emphasizes that, in and of itself, the transformation of MGRs into wildlife sanctuaries continues to present a conflict of interests for a majority of its predominantly pastoral group members. It is an issue that has been conspicuously ignored by advocates of community-based wildlife conservation initiatives, governmental and non-governmental alike, yet it deserves a critical analysis if we are to understand the complexities and changes over time that are pertinent to traditional Maasai-wildlife interactions.

That the Maasai have made invaluable contributions to Kenya's wildlife conservation history is beyond doubt. Nonetheless, I primarily adopt cultural anthropologist Eugene Hunn's "epiphenomenon theory" or "side effect" (as opposed to formal conservation), which premises seasonal mobility as significant to maintaining sustainable resource use among indigenous people,⁹ to argue that the continued idealistic perception of the Maasai as exemplary "indigenous conservationists" obscures a structural dissonance that has existed between Maasai perceptions of wildlife and the official conservation ethos practiced in colonial and contemporary Kenya. I predicate this assertion upon the belief that a failure by wildlife conservation bodies and, in particular, by advocates for indigenous-based wildlife conservation initiatives to reevaluate the clash between Maasai traditional values pertaining to land and livestock and modern land individuation policies is a major threat to the future of Kenya's wildlife conservation endeavors. In other words, I contend that unless aligned with contemporary or formal conservation

⁹ Eugene S. Hunn, "Mobility as a Factor Limiting Resource Use in the Columbia Plateau of North America," in Nancy M. Williams and Eugene S. Hunn (eds.), *Resource Managers: North American and Australian Hunter-Gatherers* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1982), pp. 17-43.

ideologies, a presumed indigenous “conservation ethic” as has been advanced by scholars such as David Western, Keith Lindsay, Reuben Matheka and others in and of itself does not guarantee the future of wildlife conservation in Kenya.¹⁰ It certainly calls into question the accuracy of traditional Maasai-wildlife relations as depicted in the expropriation, human-rights, and economic development scholarship that have within the last three decades accompanied the proliferation of community-based conservation endeavors in Maasailand and elsewhere across Africa.

I use the term “formal conservation” in a general sense—but justifiably—and premised upon a conscious human agency that involves some design or level of systemic management of resources. The term is not exclusively synonymous with “Western” conservation ideologies. Nor do I seek to present a diachronic distinction between formal and indigenous environmental ethos because evidence exists that validates how forethought that is embodied within the moral and existential universe of indigenous people guarded against individual wasteful or overexploitation of a natural or communal resource. To this end, I build upon Hunn’s distinction between formal conservation, which he rationalizes as either inclusive or exclusive and where both involve costs and benefits, and epiphenomenon or indirect contributors to sustainable use of limited resources.¹¹

Equally instructive are Raymond Hames’ 1987 definition of “conservation” to mean a deliberate human effort that promotes “short-term restraint for long-term benefits”¹² and the

¹⁰ David Western, “Amboseli National Park: Enlisting Landowners to Conserve Migratory Wildlife” *Ambio*, 11, 5 (1982), pp. 302-308; Reuben Matheka, “Antecedents to the Community Wildlife Conservation Programme in Kenya, 1946–1964,” *Environment and History*, 11 (2005), pp. 239-267.

¹¹ Hunn, “Mobility as a factor,” pp. 20-21.

¹² Raymond Hames, “Game Conservation of Efficient Hunting,” in B. J. McCay and J. M. Acheson (eds.), *The Question of the Commons: The Culture and Ecology of Communal Resources* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press,

contribution of Eric Smith and Mark Wishnie, who define conservation as “intentional or evolutionary processes that are designed to prevent or mitigate species depletion or habitat degradation.”¹³ More recently (2007), Hames qualifies the term “formal” as a critique to postmodernist scholars such as Paul Nadasdy who believe “conservation is a biased, judgmental, western-construct foreign to” indigenous people’s beliefs.¹⁴ But unlike Hames’ reluctance, I fully embrace the ability of indigenous customs and traditions to contribute to sustainable resource use, whether directly intended or not, thus allowing for indigenous versus formal environmental ideological distinctions.¹⁵

In evaluating the conflicting economic interests within MGRs as wildlife sanctuaries, I discuss how the search for a pristine and exotic Africa—premised on its landscape and its people—which perpetuates and re-creates “Edenic” timelessness is contradictory as this ideology continues to be defined by outsiders, both within and outside Kenya. Reminiscent of Europe’s late nineteenth-century “Scramble for Africa,” the last two decades in Maasailand have witnessed a rush by both local and international investors who are anxious to stake out claims to what many see as the rapidly dwindling “pristine” African landscapes. Indeed, much to the chagrin of John Akama, this trend was already evident by the end of the 1990s. Akama laments

1987), pp. 92-107; Hames, “The Ecologically Noble Savage Debate,” *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 36, 1 (2007), pp. 177-190.

¹³ Eric Alden Smith and Mark Wishnie, “Conservation and Subsistence in Small-Scale Societies,” *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 29, pp. 493-524.

¹⁴ Hames, “The Ecological Noble Savage,” p. 181.
Cf. P. Nadasdy. “Transcending the debate over the Ecological Noble Indian: Indigenous People and Environmentalism,” *Ethnohistory*, 52 (2005), pp. 291-331; Mara J. Goldman Paul Nadasdy, and Matthew D. Turner (eds.), *Knowing Nature: Conversations at the Intersection of Political Ecology and Science Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

¹⁵ Hames, “The Ecological Noble Savage,” pp. 181-182.

the proliferation of “enclave resorts linked to external control and support” that socially and economically alienate locals and thus “accentuates existing neocolonial tendencies and reinforcement of structures of dependency in developing counties.”¹⁶ The proliferation of low budget camping accommodations to exclusive and prohibitively exorbitant luxury tented lodges patronized by royalties and the so-called celebrities around Amboseli and the Mara within the last decade alone attests to this new scramble for the African wilderness.¹⁷ It is just as perplexing that what are purely profit-seeking capitalistic-oriented scrambles for a foothold in and around protected areas comes in the wake of empirical studies that have shown that an increased human footprint and vehicular overcrowding in parks continues to exacerbate the decline of an already fragile environment. Significant wildlife population declines and loss of vegetation cover that precipitates ecological degradation were already major concerns by the late 1980s.¹⁸

It follows then that for us to situate Akama’s, Nasdasdy’s and leading South Asian environmental historian Ramachandra Guha’s damning critiques of Western conservation policies, we certainly need to reevaluate the dilemma of wildlife conservation in Kenya that is almost exclusively reliant on international visitor-fee collections and donor funding. Guha, much like Akama, challenges “American environmentalism” as a “postcolonial capitalistic” intrusion into Third World nations that exacerbates “social costs of state conservation.”¹⁹ Yet in reality,

¹⁶ John Akama, “Neocolonialism, Dependency and External Control of Africa’s Tourism Industry: A Case Study of Wildlife Safari in Kenya,” in Michael C. Hall and Hazel Tucker (eds.), *Tourism and Postcolonialism* (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 140-152.

¹⁷ See e.g. Ann Abel, “The Ultimate New Safari Playground: Richard Branson’s Mahali Mzuri In Kenya,” *Forbes*, January 1 2013, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/annabel/2013/07/01/the-ultimate-new-safari-playground-richard-bransons-mahali-mzuri-in-kenya>, retrieved April 24, 2014; Jean and John Comaroff, *Ethnicity Inc.*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

¹⁸ See e.g., David Lovatt Smith, *Amboseli: Nothing Short of a Miracle* (Nairobi: Kenway Publications, 1997), pp. 34-36.

¹⁹ Ramachandra Guha, “The Authoritarian Biologist and the Arrogance of Anti-Humanism: Wildlife Conservation in

Kenya's, and indeed, much of Africa's wildlife conservation parks are largely beholden to the "international non-governmental organizations; city-dwellers and foreign tourists thirsting for 'wild' adventure; the ruling elites championing the conservation of signature species such as elephants and tigers as nationalistic emblems," which Guha lambasts effusively when it comes to environmental conservation in India.²⁰ Akama makes a similar accusation towards the West's conservation efforts in Kenya.²¹ We are, after all, living in the era of globalization that is informed, among other things, by the global continental as well as intercontinental contestations over knowledge, knowledge production, and the sites of consumption of this knowledge. As I subsequently discuss in Chapter 3, these contestations have been at the heart of some of the themes, shifts, and trends of African environmental knowledge, as mostly set in opposition to those of the West.²²

Laudable as community-based conservation initiatives are in correcting an unjust history of wildlife conservation in Kenya, for example in providing economic and social benefits to the Maasai, this study still adopts two contrarian viewpoints. Although I do not advocate for a state-centered protectionist agenda *per se*, and certainly not a divestment of the Maasai from their

the Third World," *The Ecologist*, 27 (1997), pp. 14-20; Guha, "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique" *Environmental Ethics*, 11 (1989), pp. 71-83.

²⁰ Guha, "The Authoritarian Biologist," p. 14.

²¹ Akama, "Neocolonialism, Dependency, and External Control," pp. 140-141. Cf. Peter Szapary, "The Lewa Conservancy in Kenya: A Case Study," in Herbert Prins, Jan Geu Grootenhuis, and Thomas T. Dolan (eds.), *Wildlife Conservation by Sustainable Use*, Conservation Biology Series, (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Press, 2000), pp. 35-50; Dan Brockington, *Fortress Conservation: The Preservation of the Mkomazi Game Reserve, Tanzania* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002) on the involvement of Hollywood celebrities and other philanthropists in support of wildlife conservation.

²² See e.g. Tom Griffiths and Libby Robin (ed.), *Ecology and Empire: Environmental History of Settler Societies* (Edinburgh: Keele University Press, 1997) that are set in opposition to the apparent pedagogic domination of US environmental history.

land, I posit that the maintenance of a buffer between humans and wildlife is vital for the latter's preservation.²³ In the past, a combination of biotic and abiotic factors accounted for significant buffer zones, where wildlife proliferated in the absence of permanent human presence. Such areas included tsetse fly infested areas around the present day Mara that the Maasai had tended to avoid as late as the 1970s; drought-prone areas were equally also less densely populated. Population-induced human encroachment in and around protected areas and the success of tsetse fly eradication programs over the course of the last fifty years has progressively inhibited, reduced, and eroded such critical buffer zones.²⁴ Additionally, with the push towards land individuation I build on studies that correlate the adoption and support of formal conservation ethos among Maasai elites that though premised primarily on economic returns also have the ability to promote wildlife conservation.²⁵

In making this contention, I also espouse the idea that wildlife proliferation mostly occurred in areas occupied by those Maasai sections that aspired to a "purely" pastoral identity. I accept this restrictive identity because though it was not often attained or sustained for eternity, it was nonetheless strived for and to many Maasai a purely pastoral livelihood was perceived to be the ultimate identity of "Maasainess."²⁶ Indeed, the emergence of Maasai identity as distinctive

²³ Brockington, *Fortress Conservation*, p. 10; Jeffrey D. Hackel, "Community Conservation and the Future of Africa's Wildlife," *Conservation Biology*, 3, 4 (1999), pp. 726-734.

²⁴ See e.g. Richard Waller, "Tsetse fly in Western Narok, Kenya," *The Journal of African History*, 31, 1 (1990), pp. 81-101; James Giblin, "Trypanosomiasis Control in African History: An Evaded Issue?" *The Journal of African History*, 31, 1 (1990), pp. 59-80; Katherine Homewood, Michael Thompson, and E. Coast, *In-Migrants, Livelihoods, Resource Access and Exclusion in East African Rangeland Buffer Zones, Final Research Report ESCORR7638* (London: Department of International Development, 2001).

²⁵ See e.g., Michael Thompson and Katherine Homewood, "Entrepreneurs, Elites, and Exclusion in Maasailand: Trends in Wildlife Conservation and Pastoralist Development," *Human Ecology*, 30, 1 (2002), pp.107-138; W. T. Vickers, "From Opportunism to Nascent Conservation: The Case of the Siona-Secoya," *Human Nature*, 5 (1994), pp. 307-337.

²⁶ See e.g., Galaty, "Being 'Maasai'; being 'People-of-Cattle': Ethnic Shifters in East Africa," *American Ethnologist*, 9, 1 (1982), pp. 1-20.

from other Maa-speakers and their claim as “pure pastoralists” before the early nineteenth century is still up for debate. Within the last decade, Christian Jennings’s 2005 article “Beyond Eponymy” revisits previously neglected yet significant pre-1850 missionary documentary evidence in a convincing critique of long held views within Africanist scholarship regarding the relationship between the Maasai and the much larger Iloikop pastoralist group.²⁷ Jennings challenges the widely accepted views espoused by leading Africanist scholars who have often elevated Maasai identity as distinct or superior to other sub-groups within Iloikop, a much larger pastoralist group.²⁸

Jennings’ revelation also reiterates the Maasai as practicing a mixed economy and reinforces the *Oloshons* or autonomous units as emerging from Iloikop. This argument certainly undercuts any purist notions of the Maasai as having been “custodians of the environment” for “centuries” if they only emerged as a distinct pastoral unit, as I explain shortly, much closer to the early nineteenth century. Nonetheless, archaeological and linguistic evidence shows that a specialized form of pastoralism where farming, hunting, and gathering were deeply detested was distinctively evident among the Ongamo-Maa-speakers, the language group from whom the Maasai descended, by the early seventeenth century.²⁹ In East Africa, the Mara and Amboseli

Cf. Thomas Spear, “Being ‘Maasai’, but not ‘People of Cattle,’” in Thomas Spear and Richard Waller (eds.), *Being Maasai: Ethnicity and Identity in East Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1993), pp. 120-136.

²⁷ Christian Jennings, “Beyond Eponymy: the Evidence for Loikop as an Ethnonym in Nineteenth-Century East Africa,” *History in Africa*, 32 (2005), pp. 199-220.

²⁸ See especially; Henry Fosbrooke, “An Administrative Survey of the Masai Social System,” *Tanganyika Notes and Records* 26 (1948), pp. 4-5.

Cf. John Bernstein, “The Enemy is Us: Eponymy in the Historiography of the Maasai,” *History in Africa*, 7 (1980), pp. 1-21; Alan Jacobs, “The Traditional Political Organization of the Pastoral Masai,” Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Nuffield College, Oxford, 1965, pp. 2-3.

²⁹ See in particular, Gabriele Sommer and Rainer Vossen, “Dialects, Sectiolects, or Simply Lects?: The Maa Language Group in Time Perspective,” in Spear and Waller, *Being Maasai* (1993), pp. 25-37; Christopher Ehret, “Linguistic Testimony and Migration Histories,” in Jac Lucassen et.al, *Migration History in World History: Multidisciplinary Approaches* (Boston: Brill, 2010), pp.113-154.

fall within areas archaeological and linguistic evidence have established as home to the emergence of a distinctive form of herd management which Maasai ancestors are known to have borrowed from other Nilotic and Cushitic societies at least by the fifth millennium BCE.³⁰ John Onyango-Abuje and Simiyu Wandibba also point to unearthed archeological artifacts including bones of cattle and sheep found in Narosura, within Narok District. These artifacts date back to the Neolithic era and reveal an apparent inclination or bias towards pastoralism in this area, which is inferred from the absence of domesticated seeds, although up for debate is whether the presence of grind-stones in the same areas might have been exclusively used for grinding ochre.³¹

In exploring the subject of Maasai-wildlife relations and conflicts, I consider such questions as: To what extent can we speak of uncontested landscapes in Kenya or elsewhere in Africa? What assumptions have been made concerning indigenous modes of “conservation” and how they compare to those practiced in the West? Can we really speak of an indigenous or African conservation ethic? Could the argument also be made that the Maasai have been conservationists by default? How have cross-cultural interactions within the last century affected Maasai-wildlife relations? Indeed, given that traditional African livelihoods have been subject to colonial and contemporary socio-political and economic policies are community-based

³⁰ See e.g., Ehret, *Ethiopians and East Africans: The Problem of Contact* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1974), pp. 7-8; Stanley H. Ambrose, “Archaeology and Linguistic Reconstructions of History in East Africa,” in Christopher Ehret and Merrick Posnansky (eds.), *The Archaeological and Linguistic Reconstruction of African History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 104-157; Peter Robertshaw and David Collett, “A New Framework for the Study of Early Pastoralism in East Africa,” *The Journal of African History*, 24, 3 (1983), pp. 289-301; Ehret, “Linguistic Testimony and Migration Histories,” p. 141.

³¹ J. C. Onyango-Abuje and Simiyu Wandibba, “The Palaeoenvironment and its Influence on Man’s Activities in East Africa during the Latter Part of Upper Pleistocene and Holocene,” in Bethwell Ogot (ed.), *Ecology and History in East Africa: Proceedings of the 1975 Conference of the Historical Association of Kenya* (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1979), pp. 24-40.

conservation initiatives overly reliant on theory at the cost of practicability? Might current human-wildlife conflicts be rooted in policies and practices of the colonial state? Further, who decides what “Wild Africa” should look like?

These questions and others form the basis of this dissertation. The issues are important to me personally and intellectually and they demand scholarly attention. While this chapter sets the stage and situates the study within pertinent theoretical frameworks, I lay out a more expansive historiography relevant to African environmental literature and to Maasai cultural and environmental identity in Chapters 3 and 4. First, however, I find it useful in Chapter 2 to deliberate at length on the subject of whether or not humans have lived or can ever have coexisted in perfect balance with nature. The subject was central to the “Ecological Noble Savage” debates that heated up in the 1990s and is at the heart of this study as I analyze both scholarly and popular representations of the Maasai as “natural custodians” of the land.³² This subject has been debated at length within the natural and social sciences. More often than not, rigid disciplinary orthodoxies premised on biocentrism, evolutionary, and developmental theories, among other predispositions, form the basis upon which scholars either support or discredit the ability of humans to coexist harmoniously with the natural world.³³ Of course, we also should not understate the power of popular literature to influence these debates.³⁴

³² For comprehensive reviews of the “myth of the ecological savage” and subsequent debates see Lore M. Rutan and Monique Borgerhoff Mulder, “Are East African Pastoralists Truly Conservationists?” *Current Anthropology*, 40, 5 (1999), pp. 621-652; Smith and Wishnie, “Conservation and Subsistence in Small-Scale Societies;” Hames, “The Ecologically Noble Savage Debate.”

³³ See e.g. Shepard Krech, *Indians, Animals, and the Fur Trade* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1981); Krech, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York: Norton, 1999); Jared Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* (New York: Viking, 2005); Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Civilizations: Culture, Ambition, and the Transformation of Nature* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001).

³⁴ See e.g., Raymond Bonner, *At the Hand of Man: Peril and Hope for Africa's Wildlife* (New York: Knopf, 1993); Peter Matthiessen, *The Tree Where Man Was Born*, Revised Edition with an Introduction by Jane Goodall (New York: Penguins Classics, 2010).

I examine among other topics the “myth of the ecological noble savage” debates and Hunn’s epiphenomenon theory that began in the early 1980s. As a parallel to these two subjects that were mostly situated outside Africanist scholarship I also engage in the scholarship from the 1990s that focused on the degradation and resiliency debates. These discussions are part of the overarching theme of African agency that seeks a historical understanding of the balance between humans and nature. Subsequently, Chapter 3 first presents and analyzes the wide and ever-increasing African environmental historiography. Human-nature reciprocity from the earliest times to the present, as well as the lasting impacts of the colonial contact on African ecologies and their environments are among the key themes that feature in this literature. I seek to emphasize Kenya’s environmental historiography and point to its multidisciplinary strengths and weaknesses. Just as it is with African history in general when the discipline emerged during the 1950s and 1960s, the multidisciplinary methodological approach that includes the use of oral sources and traditions reflects some of the strengths of its environmental history scholarship. Whereas I mostly draw from and build upon the continent’s well-trodden environmental historiography, I also broadly review Euro-American and other environmental literature that not only provides for comparative analysis but at times also underscores the West’s heavy imprint in Africa’s environmental history. This connection, as I will discuss in the next chapter, has itself been subjected to much scholarly debate.³⁵ In any case, the global nature of environmental issues justifies comparative discussions with other non-Western regions.

Curiously enough, Kenya, despite its prominence as one of Africa’s countries richly endowed with great wildlife diversity, lacks an extensive scholarship in environmental history

³⁵ Gregory H. Maddox, “Africa and Environmental History,” *Environmental History*, 4, 2 (1999), p. 162-167; William Beinart, “African history and Environmental History,” *African Affairs*, 99 (2000), pp. 269-302.

such as exists for other major wildlife-viewing destinations like South Africa and Tanzania.³⁶ A careful assessment of the evolution of human-wildlife interactions since the colonial era could provide the knowledge necessary to contribute to the development of appropriate wildlife policies. But equally imperative is a critical analysis of the compatibility between traditional African economies and wildlife as well as their interactions with the environment prior to the colonial period.

Chapter 4 broadly explores the equally extensive multidisciplinary scholarship on the Maasai. I focus on their “cattle complex” and their “warlike” representations that present them as representing quintessential Africa, especially when these are complemented by their perception as “custodians of the wild.” Since the 1960s this literature has addressed the significant changes and challenges, during and after the colonial period, as respective governments sought to integrate the formerly semi-nomadic Maasai into a modern economy. Observable changes in their socio-economic livelihoods including their transition towards a more sedentary lifestyle, permanent housing, and diversification into large-scale agriculture, with wheat and maize as the preferred crops are well documented.³⁷ These changes are clearly evident around Amboseli and the Mara. But while scholars have debunked the notions of Maasai ultra-conservatism and resistance to modernity, a historical account of their traditional perceptions of nature and how these have been affected by changes to land tenure and their immersion into a market economy

³⁶ See e.g., Gregory H. Maddox, James Giblin, and Isaria Kimambo (eds.), *Custodians in the Land: Ecology and Culture in the History of Tanzania* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1996); William Beinart, *The Rise of Conservation in South Africa: Settlers, Livestock, and the Environment, 1770-1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

³⁷ See e.g. Phyllo Evangelou, *Livestock Development in Kenya's Maasailand: Pastoralists' Transition to a Market Economy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984); Killian Holland, *The Maasai on the Horns of a Dilemma: Development and Education* (Nairobi: Gideon S. Were Press, 1996).

demands closer scrutiny. The study not only builds upon existing literature, including ethnography, archaeology, anthropology, and historiography, it also utilizes both archival sources as well as oral histories and narratives to address the existing gaps and limitations in these sources.

Chapters 3 and 4 also engage recent scholarship that reflect the transformation of individual and corporate identities and the notion of “indigenusness” in Maasailand and other areas in Africa. Indeed, claims to Maasai authenticity within the last three decades present a fitting conclusion to the 1850 to 2000 period covered within this dissertation. Arbitrary as many other chronological schemes are in historical scholarship, this period encapsulates the ambivalence that at times characterized Maasai identities, be they political, social, or economic constructions.³⁸ While 1850 sets the scene for discerning the etic perceptions of the Maasai throughout much of the last century, the 1980s ushers in the opportunity for an emic perspective; what do the Maasai regard as their place to be in Kenya’s wildlife conservation history? What is their opinion of community-based conservation? Are they wholly predicated on economic and social benefits for the member communities?

In seeking answers to these questions I find James Scott’s “forest management” metaphoric model in *Seeing Like a State* to be particularly instructive. He discusses how the “invention of scientific forestry in late eighteenth-century Prussia and Saxony” subsequently informed knowledge and simplistic standardization such as population censuses, agricultural development, and villagization that were particular to colonial hegemonic control. Both colonial and independent governments, Scott argues, used simplified universal codification to

³⁸ See e.g., Spear and Waller, *Being Maasai*.

Cf. William Cohen and Atieno Odhiambo, *Siaya: The Historical Anthropology of an African Landscape* (Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya Ltd., 1998), on the ideological and physical constructs of Luo identity after the colonial period.

“manipulate and control their subjects.”³⁹ Autocratic and technocratic institutions thus coopt simplistic uniformity to carry out large-scale social and environmental engineering to maintain hegemonic power, with the ability to manipulate its subjects’ movements being paramount.

Scott elaborates how ambulatory native communities were particularly targeted for forced settlement. Authorities explicitly embarked on policies aimed at their “sedentarization” to ease their “legibility” upon which it could then “tax, conscript, and prevent rebellion.”⁴⁰ More often than not, the imposed projects were destined for failure because they “did not successfully represent the actual activity of the society they depicted, nor were they intended to; they represented only that slice of it that interested the official observer.”⁴¹ Above all else, the search for an authoritarian or capitalistic-oriented homogeneity was doomed at its inception due to the lack of understanding or failure to incorporate local processes and knowledge.⁴²

In Chapters 5 and 6 I revisit the relationship between the Maasai and the respective governments in colonial and independent Kenya within the context of administration. Chapter 5 first briefly discusses the events and deliberations over what became known to the administration as the “Maasai Problem” that revolved around proposals to create the Masai and other native reserves.⁴³ Maurice Sorrenson’s aptly titled *Origins of European Settlement in Kenya*, one of the

³⁹ James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 11.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 3; Bernard Cohn, *The Bernard Cohn Omnibus: An Anthropologist among Historians and Other Essays; Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge; India: The Social Anthropology of a Civilization*, with a foreword by Dipesh Chakrabarty (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁴² Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, pp. 6-8.

⁴³ See T.H.R. Cashmore, “Your Obedient Servants. 1895-1918,” Rhodes House /Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies [hereafter cited as RH or RHO]/ Mss.Afr.s.1043 (2).

earliest definitive historical accounts, merely focused on the establishment of the Masai Reserve⁴⁴ in 1904 as just compensation for the Maasai when they lost their dry-season grazing highland areas to European settlement during the first two decades of colonial rule.⁴⁵ Within the last decade, Lotte Hughes reviewed the 1912/1913-court case where the Maasai sued the Attorney General as they sought to reverse their forcible relocation. She also revisits the supposed blood brotherhood between the Maasai and several British settlers that symbolized the misunderstandings manifested in “white mischief” as European officials and non-officials sought to assuage their aggrieved “brethren” through constant manipulation.⁴⁶ Although the Maasai failed in the court case, their quest to revoke the treaties continued, most notably during the deliberations of the Kenya Land Commission of 1933-34.⁴⁷ The Maasai and the uniqueness of the reserve, despite it being a fraction of their former precolonial rangeland, also places them as the only indigenous community within British colonial rule who managed to essentially safeguard expansive territorial rangeland for perpetuity through a “negotiated” treaty.⁴⁸

Whereas the reserve served to further colonial economic and political interests, its significance as a validation of the supposed moral obligation of British imperialism to advance

⁴⁴ In this study I adopt the Masai Reserve interchangeably with Maasailand to avoid confusion with subsequent changes to the name of the reserve that still maintained the same boundaries from 1911, though with slight amendments in 1915 and 1933. In 1924 the name was changed to the Masai Province and in 1933 renamed the Masai Extra Provincial District. In 1953 the reserve became part of the larger Southern Province.

⁴⁵ Maurice Keith Sorrenson, *Origins of European Settlement in Kenya* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1968).

⁴⁶ Lotte Hughes, *Moving the Maasai: A Colonial Misadventure* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 7-8.

⁴⁷ *Report of the Kenya Land Commission, September 1933* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1934). Within the last decade the Maasai have continued to seek reparations and recompense from both the British and Kenyan governments pursuant to the termination of the 99-year lease as stipulated in the Anglo-Masai Agreement of 1904; Gray Phombeah. “The Maasai’s Century-Old Grievance,” *BBC-News Online*, September 1, 2004, Retrieved on April 28, 2014, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3614808.stm>; Parselelo Kantai, “In the Grip of the Vampire State: Maasai Land Struggles in Kenyan Politics,” *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 1, 1 (2007), pp. 107-122.

⁴⁸ See e.g. Charles Speller, Review of Native Policy of Kenya, July 1931, RH/Mss.Afr.a.1178. ff. 336-409.

the uncivilized” Maasai is often generalized in passing. I emphasize the uniqueness of the reserve and its pertinence to how British rule engaged in social and environmental engineering has been largely overlooked. As an ethnic template mapped out by the British, it epitomized the “tribal” Africa as imagined by the European colonizer,⁴⁹ who overlooked the distinct Maasai sections, some of them in German East Africa at the time. In revisiting the deliberations over the formation of the reserve I highlight the competing interests among European officials and non-officials alike where the Maasai were nothing more than pawns. During these discussions British officials did not recognize the profound impacts the appropriation of parts of Maasailand would have on their traditional pastoral livelihood. Instead, the debates emphasized the ways in which the reserve provided a basis through which the modernization of the Maasai pastoral economy would be carried out.

European official and non-officials alike both perceived the Maasai pastoral economy to be rudimentary to contribute to the agriculturally based national economy. They also believed their transhumant lifestyle was wasteful of resources (land) and the large herds were inimical to the environment by accentuating vegetation loss and soil erosion. The administration therefore initiated an ambitious policy seeking to wean the Maasai off their supposed “cattle complex” where cattle were presumably simply amassed for their symbolic and prestigious value rather than for their economic potential.⁵⁰ Whereas the administration also justified their efforts as a moral duty as benevolent trustees out to advance and safeguard the interests of their subjects,

⁴⁹ Crawford Young, *Ethnicity and Politics in Africa* (Boston: Boston University African Studies Center, 2002), p. 1; Richard Waller, “The Lords of East Africa: The Maasai in the Mid-Nineteenth Century (c.1840-1885),” Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge University, 1979, pp. 12-18; John Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), see especially Chapter 10.

⁵⁰ See Melville J. Herskovits, “Cattle Complex in East Africa,” *American Anthropologist*, 28 (1926), pp. 230-272.

these lofty goals never even considered incorporating certain beneficial aspects of the traditional Maasai transhumant livelihood. The practice involved planned seasonal movements mirroring the rain patterns in search of water and pasturage that allowed for vegetation and ecological rejuvenation. Yet by the end of colonial rule the administration's endeavors to modernize the livestock industry that had done little to advance the Maasai pastoral economy had progressively enhanced ecological degradation in Maasailand.

I discuss these failures within the context of the inconclusive Maasai-specific taxation amendment proposals carried out from 1911 to 1918, educational development, quarantine restrictions, and destocking campaigns. I also analyze the Kenya Land Commission's decision in the early 1930s to encourage Kikuyu immigration into Maasailand in the hopes of imbuing upon the Maasai the benefits of settled agriculture so as to fully harness their agropastoral potential and contribute to the national economy. By the 1940s, however, concerns were raised over the rate of deforestation linked to Kikuyu farming and subsequent soil erosion in the Mau and other highland areas. The presence of these immigrants would also spark tensions with the pastoral Maasai who were concerned at the continued loss of the few remaining dry-season grazing areas that had not been appropriated for European settlement. At the behest of the local administration, ecological studies in the late 1950s and early 1960s carried out in Maasailand—most of these through international collaboration—specifically correlated increased ecological degradation to land use changes.⁵¹

To this end, I draw from the work of L. James and others who have pointed out that the creation of the Masai Reserve with its finite boundaries and the subsequent increase in human

⁵¹ See e.g., Dr. Lee Talbot's Report of 18 November 1960 in DC/KAJ/1/7 (KNA); Harold F. Heady, *Range Management in East Africa* (Nairobi: The Government Printer, 1960).

and livestock populations ultimately intensified ecological desiccation.⁵² Whereas before 1911, according to James, “an increase in the number of cattle merely meant grazing further afield, higher cattle densities in latter decades exacerbated soil erosion.”⁵³ Isaac Singida also made a similar critique during the rangeland and development debates of the 1980s and 1990s where scholars deliberated on the role played by “unplanned” pastoralism towards contributing to famine and poverty in Africa.⁵⁴ Singida focused on among other issues the rapid population growth rates in Kajiado and Narok Districts after independence and how these compounded overstocking-induced soil erosion. Arguing that this problem was rooted in the colonial state, Singida explored how the creation of Masai Reserve and its limiting boundaries altered Maasai “traditional spatial and ecological order” was further destroyed by the imposition of policies that promoted crop production on a fragile ecosystem that was least suited to settled forms of agriculture.⁵⁵

Chapter 5 also discusses how the identity of the Maasai as a timeless people, their representation as virile and warlike, as simplistic cattle rustlers and herders—and therefore the archetypal African, was reproduced and maintained in public discourse during the colonial period. I specifically focus on the administration’s deliberate and futile efforts to dismantle *moranhoo*-the institute of Maasai military organization as well as their decision to discontinue

⁵² L. James, “The Kenya Masai: A Nomadic People under Modern Administration,” *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 12, 1 (1939), pp. 49-73.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁵⁴ Isaac Singida, “Land and Population Problems in Kajiado and Narok, Kenya,” *African Studies Review*, 27, 1 (1984), pp. 23-39.
Cf. The World Bank, *Kenya Population and Development: A World Bank Country Study*. Washington D.C.: The World Bank, 1980.

⁵⁵ Singida, “Land and Population,” pp. 27-29.

Maasai conscription into British war efforts, a move that I argue was largely informed by fear that in doing so they would be promoting the real or imagined Maasai militancy. This fear first played out during the brutal retributive attacks against recalcitrant natives such as the Nandi and the Kikuyu in the early 1900s; it was clearly evident during the First World War; and in the 1950s during the Emergency period also informed local administrators in the two main Maasai districts of Kajiado and Narok into revising several policies. Much of the discussion pertinent to the early Maasai-British military alliance has largely been limited to how it served the interests of both parties, and how if at any point the Maasai might have considered to challenge British rule, they were well aware of the military might of the British and thus resigned their fate to the futility of resistance.⁵⁶ I therefore seek to address how this relationship contributed to the unofficial reproduction and inadvertent reification of the image of the Maasai as warlike as had first been presented in the 1850s.

Chapter 6 equally focuses on the Masai Reserve but I highlight its centrality to state engineering of nature during and after colonial rule as well as its prominence to the history of protected areas in Kenya. Not only do I draw historical parallels to the challenges facing MGRs in their capacity as wildlife sanctuaries to those experienced in their primary capacity as livestock ranges, I also compare these challenges to those experienced in the greater Masai Reserve before MGRs were created. Manifested in these challenges are the competing interests between official—local versus state—interests and those involving agriculturalists, pastoralists, and vested commercial interests on the one hand, against ardent conservationists on the other. To the extent that Maasai interests and their place within or alongside game conservation reserves

⁵⁶ See, e.g., Robert Tignor, “The Maasai Warriors: Pattern Violence and in Colonial Kenya” *The Journal of African Studies*, 13, 2 (1972), pp. 271-290.

were taken into consideration, these were often misrepresented through unsolicited Eurocentric representation. This indirect misrepresentation was certainly evident during the 1930s deliberations that set the stage for the creation of national parks and national reserves in Kenya. I highlight how even after the value of Maasailand to the future of wildlife conservation was reiterated during these deliberations, competing interests among European officials and settlers prevented the government from permanently securing the future of wildlife conservation areas in the Masai Reserve for at least another two decades.

I also analyze the government's laissez-faire and ambivalent attitude towards game conservation for much of the last century. Among other issues, I highlight the contradictory mandate of the underfunded and understaffed Game Department during the first three decades of colonial rule in its capacity as both protector of game and eradicator of vermin, where settler interests in the latter case remained paramount. With Europeans and non-Masai natives accounting for much of the large-scale destruction of game by the 1940s, one can understand why a growing antipathy towards the Maasai who customarily did not hunt or exploit wildlife for commercial gain would by the mid-1950s worry ardent conservationists.⁵⁷ Thus I revisit the events leading up to the formation of the 1956 Game Policy Committee whose recommendations two years later were considered largely unpopular and controversial. For zealous game conservationists the recommendations were a reversal to the considerable gains they had made over the past decade in creating national parks and reserves whose security prior to 1945 had been tenuous at best.

Yet the committee's recommendations did little to change what many conservationists

⁵⁷ See e.g., Noel Simon, "Masai Parks," *Wildlife: Kenya Wild Life Society Journal*, 2, 1 (1960), pp. 1-36.

saw as an alarming trend with the apparent Maasai antipathy towards wildlife. Conservationists largely perceived the committee's proposals, which though seeking to find a balance between the socio-economic needs of the Maasai and that of game conservation, as controversial and a reversal of any gains they had made thus far.⁵⁸ This trend continued into the late 1990s as local versus state interests, oftentimes bogged down by political and ethnic supremacy battles, overshadowed what remains the uncertainty of the future of Kenya's flagship game reserves—Amboseli and the Mara.⁵⁹ Similarly, an analysis of the diametrically opposed conservation ideologies of Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) directors Richard Leakey and his successor David Western during the 1990s encapsulates the inconsistencies that have continued to mark the history of wildlife conservation in Kenya. While Leakey's tenure was marked by an overtly protectionist agenda, where he even proposed fencing off all wildlife conservation areas to alleviate the challenges of human encroachment, Western was instrumental in promoting the "Parks Beyond Parks" project.⁶⁰

Finally, the chapter discusses the evolution of MGRs as wildlife sanctuaries and the challenges they face that are manifested in the opposition between livestock development and wildlife conservation that they seek to serve. It is on this paradox and the challenges they face in their current capacity that I stake my challenge on complacent representations of the Maasai as

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Local and international conservation groups immediately protested a presidential directive of September 28 2005 that downgraded the status of Amboseli from a National Park to become a National Reserve. With an upcoming Constitutional Referendum later in the year many read politics into the decision as being aimed at coaxing the Maasai to support the new constitution. Court injunctions were immediately filed with the High Court of Kenya ruling and reversing the Presidential order as illegal. Cf. Paul Jimbo and Martin Mutua, "Kenya: Council, KWS in Standoff over Amboseli Park," *East African Standard*, October 18, 2005.

⁶⁰ Kamweru *et. al.*, *National Parks of Kenya*, p. 37.

custodians of nature. I argue that to the degree that we can speak of local environmental knowledge upon which MGRs as CBCs were predicated they also present a case study that showcases the limits of traditional knowledge in promoting a harmonious co-existence between humans and the environment. Under the appropriated concept of “Metis,” Scott discusses how practical or indigenous knowledge is culturally distinct and its effectiveness limited to localized or similar ecosystems.⁶¹ Most importantly, the success of local or practical knowledge was its fluidity and dynamism marked by the “ability to adapt successfully to constantly shifting situations...to respond to a constantly changing natural and human environment.”⁶² It is this changing landscape that proponents of indigenous conservation ethics overlook as they assume a constant compatibility of traditional knowledge and formal conservation ideologies.

I therefore submit that to the degree that we can speak to the specificity and localized nature of the harmonious coexistence between the Maasai and wildlife that was premised upon their culture-specific moral proscriptions and prescriptions, then we must also acknowledge the limitations of these traditions to effectively contribute towards expected environmental sustainability. Indeed, Maasai culture has not been immune to all the cross-cultural influences it has been subjected to for the past 150 years. In exploring the challenges faced by MGRs as wildlife sanctuaries I focus on how Maasai semi-nomadic lifestyle was irreversibly impacted by changes to land tenure imposed with the advent of colonial rule. In reiterating Hunn’s “epiphenomenon theory,” I describe how the factor of mobility, a critical yet overlooked aspect that promoted wildlife proliferation, was progressively limited. Starting with the 1904 finite boundaries of the Masai Reserve that were further reduced when MGRs were created in the

⁶¹ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, pp. 311- 312.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 313.

1960s, by the late 1990s, with increased individuation of the formerly expansive MGRs as well as the push towards permanent settlements, pastoral mobility was essentially non-existent.

Besides, traditional does not equate to unchanging cultural and economic practices. I further contend that, alongside the economic and social benefits already realized within the Maasai group ranches and other indigenous-based wildlife sanctuaries, the development of an aesthetic environmental value (perhaps akin to the Western-oriented tenet of wildlife conservation) by Maasai is imperative for alleviating human-wildlife conflicts. As Killian Holland states, the Maasai are not necessarily living in two worlds; rather, they have had to adapt to a “world of pressures and needs in the contemporary market-economy they live in.”⁶³

Objectivity, Morals, and environmental history

The question of whether or not it is appropriate for scholars to explicitly use their own experiences as sources or pass moral judgment on public issues no doubt raises the question of objectivity.⁶⁴ My professional experience working among the Maasai as a naturalist for over two decades presents such a dilemma. Although I do not seek to explicitly insert my career interactions with the Maasai to this debate, it nonetheless reflects some of the issues raised in the available literature. As a case in point I revisit my career as a nature and cultural photographer, a trade I mostly honed courtesy of my interactions with my Western clientele, well before I decided to pursue higher education. I submit images that represent both the outsider (as a non-Maasai) and insider (as an African) perspective and contribution to the subject of how domestic and international tourism continues to re-create or maintain popular or idyllic Maasai identities

⁶³ Killian Holland, *New Needs and New Maasai Adaptive Strategies*, Discussion Paper No.9: East African Pastoral Schemes Project, Department of Anthropology, McGill University, (1989), p.1.

⁶⁴ See e.g. Richard T. Vann, “Historians and Moral Evaluations,” *History and Theory, Theme Issue 43* (2004), pp. 3-30.

(See Photos 1.1 & 1.2). When I staged this image in 2002, I clearly had the Western or Westernized audience in mind and it was perhaps fitting that the company I worked for at the time decided to use it for its marketing purposes.⁶⁵ It depicts Richard Mukotio, a Maasai and fellow workmate at Mara River Camp, as representing the image of “wild” Africa. In retrospect, the image justifies the potential of my professional experience to contribute to discussions on the reproduction of ethnic identities, including how it is re-created and maintained through artistic expression, itself a sub-theme within African environmental historiography.⁶⁶

Just as early explorers, naturalists, and colonial officials and non-officials represented Maasailand as representing Europe during the Pleistocene, international tourism (cultural and wildlife) primarily thrives on the exoticization of the “other.” Maasai pastoralism, Edward Bruner and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett write, is presented as “pristine and independent but depends for the production of this idealization on Maasai adaptability and interdependence” as Maasai morans are the “quintessential” African (See Photo 1.1).⁶⁷ When Mara River Camp—where tourists marveled at its pristine location, where hippos kept you awake at night as they mowed its lawns, and where it was not uncommon for elephants to visit for breakfast as they sought the fruits of the rumored narcotizing *Warbergia Ugandensis* tree within the campground, as they had perhaps done for hundreds of years—was abruptly closed in 2003, after two decades of operation it was a painful business decision my former boss had been mulling over for a

⁶⁵ See Origins Safaris Ltd, <http://www.originsafaris.com/>

⁶⁶ See e.g. David Bunn, “An Unnatural State: Tourism, Water, and Wildlife Photography in the Early Kruger National Park,” in William Beinart and Joann McGregor, *Social History and African Environments* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003), pp. 199-220.

⁶⁷ Michael Bruner and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “Maasai on the Lawn: Tourist Realism in East Africa,” *Cultural Anthropology*, 9, 4 (1994), pp. 435-470

while. In the end, he simply asserted that it had become increasingly difficult for him to market a camp where the wailing of domestic dogs drowned lion roars at night to remind tourist of the urbane comforts...and where they first had to drive ten kilometers through a “shanty” town and tens of “tin-roofed” Maasai villages as they maneuvered the rocky terrain to the park gate (See photo 1.2).⁶⁸ Indeed, the authors in *Nature Unbound* describe how local communities such as the Maasai residing around protected areas are expected to fit within a prescribed framework set by the government, conservation bodies, and tourist operators promoting eco-and-ethnotourism that includes an “ethnic” dress code. As part of the tourist attraction they are thus “repackaged as part of the landscape, wild, primitive, and pre-modern.”⁶⁹

In addressing these difficult questions I also seek to contribute to a rarely discussed issue in African environmental history, that of wildlife reserves and parks as either emblems of regionalism—including fomenting ethnic tensions and divisions—or national identity. With increased land individuation from the early 1990s many MGRs in both Amboseli and the Mara have witnessed merges and purges that generally reflect how individual and group members view wildlife’s economic potential. Competition over revenue allocation has led to protests within respective MGRs as well as against local and national government.⁷⁰ Thus I also draw from and build upon the work of environmental historian Jane Carruthers who has vividly illustrated this opposition where “the national park has mitigated against national unity rather

⁶⁸ Interview with Steve Turner, Managing Director of Origins Safaris and Mara River Camp, September 21, 2010, Nairobi, Kenya.

⁶⁹ Dan Brockington, Rosaleen Duffy, and Jim Igoe, *Nature Unbound: Conservation, Capitalism and the Future of Protected Areas* (Sterling: Earthscan, 2008), p. 141.

⁷⁰ See e.g., Mark Ole Karbolo, *Facing Modern Land Loss Challenges: The Loita Maasai Pastoralists and the Recent Controversy over the Naiminia Enkiyo Indigenous Forests in Narok District* (Kampala: Center for Basic Research, 1999).

than for it” in three South African case studies that also reflect upon the country’s history of race and politics between the 1920s and the late 1970s.⁷¹

Still the study seeks to go further on two other issues of disciplinary importance. Broadly, it aims to add to the disciplinary debate that asks whether environmental historians should restrict their findings within the intellectual arena rather than also ascribe moral judgment based upon individual scholarly viewpoints.⁷² While this dissertation analyzes empirical evidence that reveals the socio-economic and political changes over time to challenge the appropriateness of current wildlife preservation policies in Kenya’s Maasailand, I submit that besides its scholarly contribution to our understanding of indigenous notions of nature, it is equally worthy of influencing public policy.

With the wide audience that environmental literature draws among scholars and general readers, as well as the interdisciplinary nature of environmental history, the study also hopes to alleviate an alarming trend threatening Kenya’s historical scholarship. By extension, this threat also presents a challenge to the future of African history and its historiographies. With particular reference to the state of history studies in Kenya since the 1980s, Bethwell Ogot, the doyen of Kenyan and African history, laments a worrying gap in general readership for history, declining student enrollments, class availability, and concern over curriculum expansion, as well as the apparent state apathy towards its development. Yet the issues Ogot raises that threaten historical studies in elementary and higher institutions of learning are not unique to Kenya, as discussed by

⁷¹ Jane Carruthers, “Nationhood and National Parks: Comparative examples from the Post-Imperial Experience,” in Tom Griffiths and Libby Robin (eds.) *Ecology and Empire: Environmental History of Settler Societies* (Edinburgh: Keele University Press, 1997), pp. 125-138.

⁷² See e.g., Kendall E. Bailes, “Critical Issues in Environmental History,” in Kendall E. Bailes (ed.), *Environmental History: Critical Issues in Comparative Perspective* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1985), pp. 1-21.

Carruthers in a review of South Africa's environmental history scholarship, especially its post-Apartheid trends.⁷³ Indeed, Ogot has tirelessly argued that besides disciplinary diversification and interdisciplinary collaboration, African historians must adapt their studies to changing national and international issues and channel these to a broader audience. Flexibility is thus paramount to the integrity of the discipline in respect to intellectual and institutional relevance as has continued to be the case in recent decades across universities in Europe, America, and Japan.⁷⁴

There is no doubt that Maasailand has been invaluable to Kenya's wildlife conservation history, and it still holds great potential for the future. With the proliferation of community-based conservation in Maasailand in recent decades, however, we also need to rethink the burden that has been placed upon the Maasai as custodians of Kenya's wildlife. Whether on private or public land, wild animals are invaluable national resources whose preservation remains the prerogative of the government. The question must therefore be asked: are all members of a community that was disproportionately marginalized and aggrieved in colonial and independent Kenya's wildlife conservation endeavors fully committed to and feel obligated to continue sacrificing their personal goals for the general public good? This moral dilemma has been glaringly overlooked in Kenya's environmental literature and advocacies.

Environmental historian Margaret McKean was among the first to bring this subject to

⁷³ Jane Carruthers, "Tracking in Game Trails: Looking Afresh at the Politics of Environmental History in South Africa," *Environmental History*, 11 (2005), pp. 804-829.

⁷⁴ Bethwell A. Ogot, "African Voices and the Search for Autonomy and Authenticity in African History," in Bethwell Ogot, *History as Destiny and History as Knowledge: Being Reflections on the Problems of Historicity and Historiography* (Kisumu: Anyange Press, 2005), pp. 29-69; Mildred A. J. Ndeda, "Nationalistic Historiography in Kenya: A Look at the Changing Disposition of B. A. Ogot's Work since 1961." *Paper Presented at the Codesria's Thirtieth Anniversary Celebrations, December 10-12, 2003, Dakar Senegal*; Ogot, "African Ecology in Historical Perspectives: Problems and Prospects," in Ogot (ed.), *Ecology and History in East Africa*, pp.1-8.

light during the 1982 International Conference on Environmental History held on the University of California's Irvine campus. McKean's study was based on the evidence of sustainable ecological practices within one of rural Japan's commons spanning the late nineteenth to twentieth centuries where moral proscriptions and prescriptions agreed upon by individual members of the commons were credited.⁷⁵ Discussed within the context of Garrett Hardin's controversial adoption of a Malthusian approach in "The Tragedy of the Commons,"⁷⁶ her proposal offers a lens through which we can also engage the individual and group dynamics reflected in the short history of MGRs in their dual capacity as cattle ranches and wildlife sanctuaries.

According to Richard Leakey, the *laissez-faire* attitude with which the Kenya government, which is often beholden to political and economic interests and shenanigans, regards conservation policy continues to pose the greatest threat to protected areas in Maasailand. Leakey laments the sheer ineptitude of the economic-driven rationales, especially by non-governmental organizations and other CBC proponents to grant MGRs full autonomy over the control of game conservation, when these are inexorably linked ecosystems with Amboseli and the Mara. Metaphorically, in our conversation Leakey reiterated that "just because there is poverty in Maasailand does not mean the government should simply give them the keys to the Central Bank."⁷⁷ Short of the government fencing off the Mara and Amboseli he thinks both parks are doomed to being non-existent in a decade or two. If anything, he views such moves

⁷⁵ Margaret A McKean, "The Japanese Experience with Scarcity: Management of Traditional Common Lands," in Kenneth Bailes, (ed.) *Environmental History: Critical Issues in Comparative Perspective* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1985), pp. 334-373.

⁷⁶ Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science*, 162 (1968), pp. 1243-1248.

⁷⁷ Interview with Richard Leakey, Mara Game Reserve, September 2, 2013.

towards autonomy as only contributing to further ethnic differentiation as well as increased state versus national contestations over resource use.⁷⁸

Recent calls to grant more autonomy to the resident Maasai stakeholders may be well intended. Questions must also be asked whether local control, much of which is largely driven by economic incentives and the premise that the Maasai have always coexisted with wildlife, will guarantee the future of wildlife conservation without reliable management initiatives. Prudence demands a critical interrogation of how Maasai oral traditions and their pastoral livelihood both directly and indirectly accounted for wildlife abundance. It is imperative that we understand the complex nature of the relationship between indigenous people and nature that was guided by their customs and traditions. Maasai semi-nomadism, which I submit indirectly contributed to wildlife abundance, had already been significantly impacted by the accelerated pace and changes brought about by land and livestock development schemes that began in the latter part of the 1940s.⁷⁹ By the late 1990s, increased land individuation had all but put an end to their semi-nomadic lifestyle with many having transitioned into building permanent settlements. The following chapter delves into how Maasai-wildlife relations were premised upon their oral traditions and histories to place them within the context of the myth of the ecological noble savage debates.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ The African Land Development in Kenya (ALDEV) unit was established in 1945 to oversee agricultural and land-use development and settlement schemes all over the colony. Among the projects it oversaw in Maasailand were the demonstration grazing schemes.

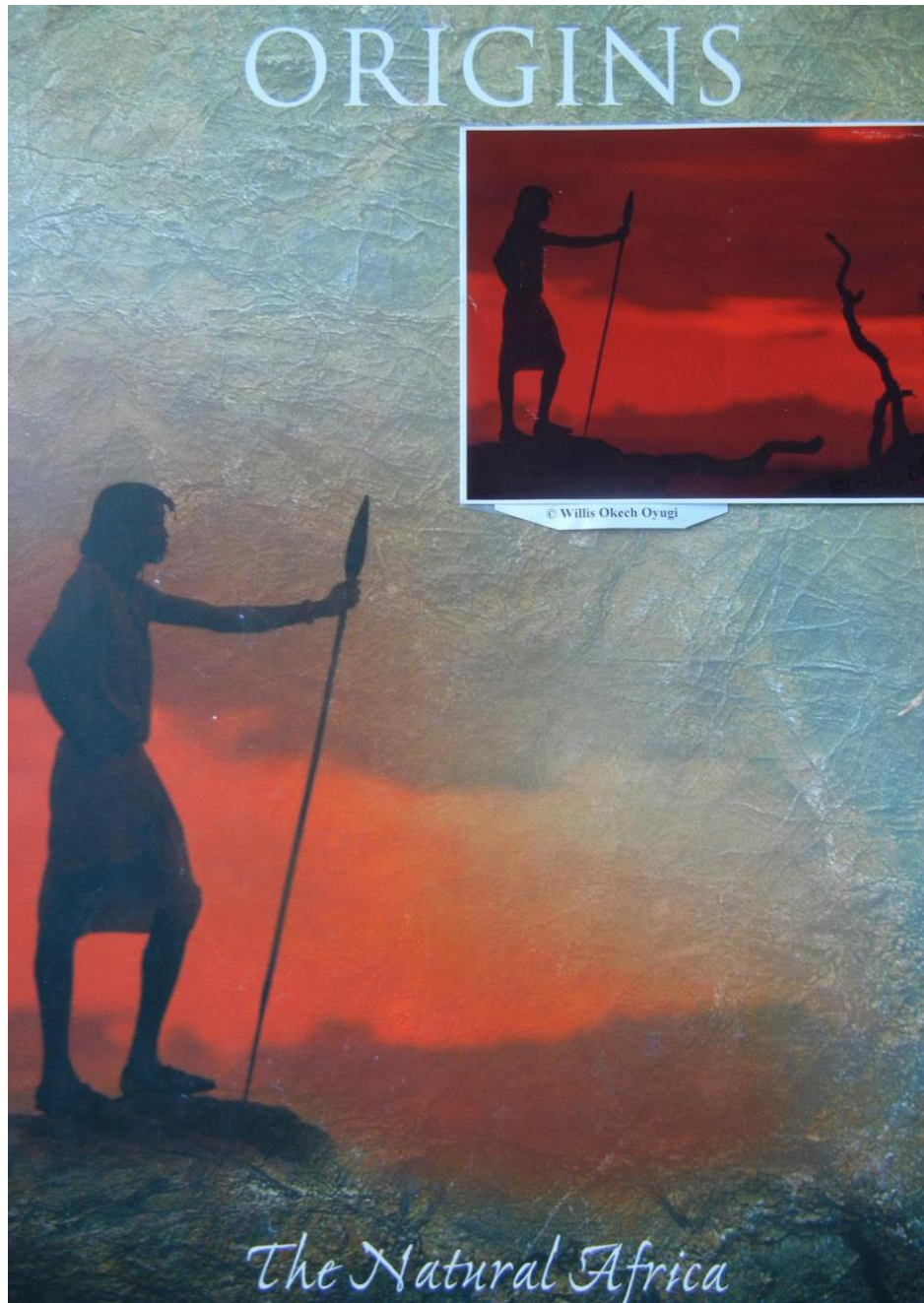


Photo 1.1: Richard Mukotio [insert] Mara River Camp, 2002 (© Willis Okech Oyugi)



Photo 1.2: Maasialand 1900-2000 (Photos © Willis Okech Oyugi)

CHAPTER 2: “SPOKEN AND UNWRITTEN POWER: MYTHS, TABOOS, FOLKWAYS AND MAASAI-WILDLIFE RELATIONS.”

Introduction

Opinions with regard to the extent and character of the means by which indigenous environmental knowledge and subsistence economies promoted sustainable resource use are varied. The subject was at the heart of the 1990s “the myth of the ecological noble savage” debates that mostly featured indigenous people residing in the New World. It is a topic that scholars within the social and natural sciences have continued to deliberate upon. The concept has also been viewed along a cultural-economic-political spectrum, where indigenous environmental knowledge is used as a political tool not only to create or reinforce ethnic identity, but also by human rights advocates to champion for indigenous peoples’ primacy to natural resources, whether for inclusive or exclusive use.¹

Africanist scholars have been conspicuously absent from the “ecological noble savage” debates *per se*. Their absence, however, does not mean they have not directly contributed to the subject; indeed, though periodic, they have been active participants in the debate. Moreover, they have dealt at length with the subject within the degradation and resiliency debates that were common during the 1990s.² To this end, Africanist concepts about the environment such as holistic, land ethic, epiphenomenon, and indigenous conservation ethics have been widely discussed within African environmental historiography. These concepts are often premised upon

¹ See Lore M. Rutan and Monique Borgerhoff Mulder, “Are East African Pastoralists Truly Conservationists?” *Current Anthropology*, 40, 5 (1999), pp. 621-652; Eric Alden Smith and Mark Wishnie, “Conservation and Subsistence in Small-Scale Societies,” *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 29 (2000), pp. 493-524; Raymond Hames, “The Ecologically Noble Savage Debate,” *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 36, 1 (2007), pp. 177-190.

² See e.g. Douglas Johnson and David Anderson, “Introduction: Ecology and Society in Northeast African History,” in Douglas Johnson and David Anderson (eds.), *The Ecology of Survival: Case Studies from Northeast African History* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988), pp. 1-24.

African rituals and traditions with the claim that these guarded against wasteful extraction of public resources. But with these concepts being compared and contrasted with Western conservationist ethos there is a danger the conflation of these two ideologies as functioning along similar principles often overlooks the dynamism of culture, environments, and socio-political realities.

As a boy, whenever I questioned the origin, appropriateness, of effectiveness of certain taboos, my mum's answer was simple: "For your sake and that of our family, the ancestors demand you follow them." Whether one believes in them or not, African myths and taboos impute on the individual and communities an ideological fear of the unknown. For many indigenous communities this fear of the unknown invoked the wrath of the ancestors or the supernatural that though unwritten has guided societal decorum and enforced communal conformity for centuries. As a naturalist specializing in ornithology, I strive to see as many bird species as I can and when in my home village most of my family members have readily accompanied and assisted with my checklist, at least until I ask about owls. Whereas the owl symbolizes wisdom in much of Western folklore, for the Luo it is regarded as a bad omen if one visited the village confines. It is considered an ominous sign with the possibility of extreme sickness or even death. The fear of owls meant they were not hunted or molested and therefore went a long way in promoting, perhaps inadvertently, their preservation.³

The viability of MGRs as big game conservation units certainly demands understanding

³ See e.g. David Maforo "Black White Relations in Kenya Game Policy: A Case Study of the Coast Province, 1895-1956," Ph.D. Thesis, Syracuse University, 1979, p. 5, on totemism and tabooism among the coastal Giriama people's traditional laws that guarded against indiscriminate killing of certain animals. Cf. Nancy Jacobs, "The Intimate Politics of Ornithology in Colonial Africa," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 48, 3 (2006), pp. 564-603. The comparison here is not so much the racial politics of colonial science that Jacobs discusses, but rather how African research assistants came to view their capability to contribute to natural science.

such complex intricacies. It is obvious that their effectiveness largely depends on an affirmative answer to the question: Do humans ever live in harmony with their environment? Although at its most basic core element of human-environmental reciprocity, a major theme in African environmental historiography, presumably speaks to a level of co-existence, the relationship does not explicitly infer that most subsistence African economies were exclusively premised on a desire to mitigate against future resource scarcity. Rather, a cost and benefit analysis over space and time may bring us much closer to addressing this challenge. For inferences into indigenous environmental knowledge that parallel formal or other traditional conservationist ideologies, an examination of Hunn's research among the Columbia Plateau peoples that vividly demonstrates how mobility among transhumance people can be a critical agency that contributes both directly and indirectly towards limited resource extraction, is appropriate.

The Myth of the “Ecological Noble Savage”, Holistic, Epiphenomenon, Land and Indigenous Conservation Ethic

Hunn coined and first used the phrase “epiphenomenal restricted resource use” in 1982 to explain the direct and indirect factors that accounted for seemingly sustainable resource extraction practices among the mobile Colombia Plateau peoples.⁴ Hunn explicitly argued that the relatively low resource extraction witnessed was “primarily as an epiphenomenon of their [mobile] subsistence strategy” directly corresponding to weather-related seasonal movements.⁵ Mobility is thus a common factor to both the pastoral Maasai, whose semi-nomadic lifestyle was often induced by a search of better pasture and water for livestock, and to the Colombia Plateau

⁴ Eugene S. Hunn, “Mobility as a Factor Limiting Resource Use in the Columbia Plateau of North America,” in Nancy M. Williams and Eugene S. Hunn (eds.), *Resource Managers: North American and Australian Hunter-Gatherers* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1982), pp. 17-43. See especially, pp. 20-21.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

peoples. He also suggested that limited technological capability (e.g. spears as opposed to guns), and a low population density that also contributed to a low consumer demand were equally significant factors that accounted for the limited resource use and extraction.⁶

By theorizing the concept and juxtaposing it against “direct—exclusive/territoriality and inclusive/conservation—restricted resource use,” Hunn presented an elaborate critique to cultural ecologists’ simplistic tendencies to premise land carrying capacity as an environmental constant. Rather, he espoused that a “carrying capacity of a given harvest cum technology,” was more appropriate and provided a more balanced measurement.⁷ Significantly, he argued that whereas both forms of direct resource extraction involved a cost, epiphenomenal resource use did not incur direct costs—the only costs being those of “opportunities not taken.”⁸ Hunn classified costs to exclusivity as those accounted for in the “defense of resources owned through force or litigation,” while costs to conservation were those that were at its core—the societal proscriptions and prescriptions such as “supernatural sanctions on waste” as well as “temporal and selective” resource harvesting that allowed regeneration.⁹ Accordingly, he also argued that as per the laws of natural selection, communities that had and were willing to protect their resources during times of scarcity were more likely to survive. Nonetheless, he also argued that unless costs of conservation were enforced, “wasteful” members of the community could still be able to survive while “suffering no more from shortages than conservationists.”¹⁰

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., p. 20.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

African environmental literature has also deliberated at length with the subjects of land-carrying capacity and indigenous conservation ethos, many of these specific to pastoral land-use practices. These studies, however, have largely focused on direct human influences and how both human and livestock population pressures reflect upon the land's carrying capacity, and by extension its ecological health, to be effective. Pastoral economies have therefore mostly been subjected to Garret Hardin's "tragedy of the commons" theory.¹¹ By adding the critical agency of mobility to these studies and others that acknowledge the erosion of Maasai cultural traditions and customs, which were equally effective in maintaining relatively sustainable utilization of wildlife as a resource, I also argue that it is imperative to understand the overlap between the epiphenomenal factors and direct traditional conservationist ethos that were predicated upon Maasai customary proscriptions and prescriptions. All of these factors contributed to the seemingly "Edenic" scenery witnessed and described by missionaries, explorers, and naturalists from 1850s.

The significance of Hunn's work must also be reviewed within the discussions that played out in the early 1980s and beyond on the myth of the "ecological noble savage." Shepard Krech set the debates in motion in 1981 when he challenged previous claims that had been made about Native Americans as being natural custodians of the wild.¹² He focused on Indian

¹¹ See e.g., D.J. Pratt and M.D. Gwynne, *Range Management and Ecology in East Africa* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977); Michael E. Meeker, *The Pastoral Son and the Spirit of Patriarchy: Religion, Society, and Person among East African Stock Keepers* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989); Katherine Homewood and W.A. Rogers, "Pastoralism, Conservation and the Overgrazing Controversy," and David Collett, "Pastoralists and Wildlife," both in David Anderson and Richard Grove (eds.), *Conservation in Africa: People, Policies and Practice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 111-129 and 130-148.

¹² Shepard Krech, *Indians, Animals, and the Fur Trade* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1981); also see Krech, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York: Norton, 1999). Cf. Calvin Martin, *Keepers of the Game: Indian-Animal Relationships and the Fur Trade* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978).

participation in the commercialization and subsequent overexploitation of many of the northern fur bearing animals to argue that they lacked any ideological ethos to conserve natural resources.¹³ Premised along a Western conservationist model that embraced dichotomous viewpoints, where native people are classified as conservationists or not, also informed other dissenters like Terry Rambo and Jared Diamond. Rambo's *Primitive Polluters* and Diamond's "The Environmentalist Myth" were based upon archaeological and ethno-historical reconstructions respectively.¹⁴

In 1990 ecologist Kent Redford reiterated these scholars' arguments in his satirically titled "The Ecologically Noble Savage" to explicitly challenge the myth endorsed by several cultural ecologists who were promoting Amazonian Indians as "timeless and living in balance [ecologically] in the natural world."¹⁵ According to Redford, it was a false comparison to simply juxtapose Indigenous peoples' knowledge of plants (some medicinal) and their low-level subsistence economies against "modernity's reliance on hospitals, fancy supermarkets, and microwaves."¹⁶ Redford also took issue with how indigenous people played out to their exoticization, partly to satisfy Western imaginations but also to use their "indigenoussness" to lay claim to preferential resource use. Yet when such rights are granted they readily engaged in indiscriminate overexploitation of these resources, as is often the case when they engage in commercial logging.¹⁷

¹³ Krech, *Indians, Animals, and the Fur Trade*, p. 8.

¹⁴ A. Terry Rambo, *Primitive Polluters: Semang Impact on the Malaysian Tropical Rain Forest Ecosystem* (Ann Arbor: Museum of Anthropology, University of Michigan, 1985); Jared Diamond, "The Environmentalist Myth," *Nature*, 324 (1986), pp. 19-20.

¹⁵ Kent H. Redford, "The Ecologically Noble Savage." *Orion, Nature Quarterly*, 9, 3 (1990), pp. 24-29.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

In defense of indigenous people as “keepers of the wild,” ecological anthropologist Janis Alcorn posed direct counter-challenges to Redford’s claims. She argued that since “indigenous people enter into discussions with powerful outsiders, they must meet on outsiders’ terms and use their vocabulary.”¹⁸ To buttress her rebuttal, Alcorn pointed to a common issue among social, cultural, and environmental scholars to find a direct non-Western translation of the word “conservation,” pointing to varied phrases such as “respecting nature,” “taking care of things,” or “doing things right.”¹⁹ The juxtaposition of concepts of “indigenous harmony” against state-induced resource overexploitation and ecological degradation, particularly during and after the colonial period, is therefore used to support how indigenous subsistence economies exerted minimal pressure on natural resources and were therefore likely to promote ecological sustainability.

The aforementioned arguments were also premised as a diachronic opposition, where pitting indigenous people versus the state or indigenous environmental ideologies in opposition to those of the West does not take into account the complexity of human-wildlife relations, nor allow for comprehensive comparisons. Citing these restrictive measures, other scholars sought nuanced explanations to explain reasons why some indigenous people overexploited their resources while others did not. By focusing on hunter-gatherer societies, some evolutionary scholars such as Hames theorize that in the absence of enforceable societal penalties agreed upon by members of a community, maximizing efficiency and costs incurred during resource extraction far outweigh any altruistic obligations individuals might otherwise have to fellow

¹⁸ Janis B. Alcorn, “Indigenous People and Conservation,” *Conservation Biology*, 7, 2 (1993), pp. 422-426.

¹⁹ Ibid.

community members.²⁰ Those in opposition of blanket condemnation of indigenous people cite resource-specific examples that support efforts to conserve. Ethnobotanists, for example, have long argued that plants, unlike animals, were not often subject to inclement externalities that may have forced indigenous communities to maximize resource extraction rather than space out their harvests.²¹

For his part, ethnobiologist Darrel Posey responds that besides undermining Western science the positions adopted by Redford and Alcorn and their respective disciplines are impressionistic and simplistic interpretations of indigenous cultures.²² Instead, Posey proposes a deeper comprehension of indigenous “myths and folklore...from an *emic* point of view [which not only] inevitably employs historical analysis” but also reveals indigenous peoples’ complex ecological management.²³ Key to Posey’s argument is that understanding the complex and varied moral values among indigenous people offers a lens through which we might be able to understand why some communities were able to live in apparent harmony with their surroundings when others did not.

From these deliberations it appears that the epiphenomenon theory may not be a simple phenomenon. The hunting pursuits of the Boni and Waliangulu hunter gatherers of coastal Kenya offers a counter-narrative to the restrictive theories espoused by evolutionary scholars who

²⁰ See e.g., Rutan and Borgerhoff Mulder, “Are East African Pastoralists Truly Conservationists?” p. 622; Hames, “The Ecologically Noble Savage Debate,” p. 185.

²¹ See e.g. Alcorn, “Comment on: Intraspecific Prey Choice by Amazonian Hunters, by M. Alvard,” *Current Anthropology*, 36 (1995), pp. 802-803.

²² Darrell A. Posey, “Diachronic Ecotones and Anthropogenic Landscapes in the Amazon: Contesting the Consciousness of Conservation,” in William Balée (ed.), *Advances in Historical Ecology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998) pp.104-118.

²³ *Ibid.* pp. 107-109.

dismiss any evidence of deliberate conservation ethic among indigenous people. Antony Dyer, a former president of the EAPHA, speaks to the high-handed colonial wildlife protectionist policies that criminalized the subsistence livelihood of the indigenous Boni and Waliangulu hunter-gathers. A chief advocate for the reinstatement of sport hunting as a high-return value wildlife conservation policy, as carried out in Southern Africa countries,²⁴ he blames the current elephant menace in Kenya to the preservationist-oriented KWS, which excludes consumptive utilization of wildlife as a resource. Dyer believes that Kenya's elephant overpopulation problem, which constitutes one of the major factors driving escalating human-wildlife conflicts, would not be an issue had local people been allowed to harvest elephants on a sustainable level. Famed for their stealth and skill in tracking elephants to within a few feet, they could accurately shoot a poisoned arrow to selected vulnerable parts of the elephants.

Dyer praises and defends their subsistence hunting to argue that their choice of prey prevented overexploitation and also sought to guard against elephant overpopulation.²⁵ He believes the Waliangulu and Boni preferred to hunt only teenage females that were close to puberty. Besides making it easier to harvest into manageable portions, killing young females served two significant purposes. First, there were no orphans left behind as is often the case with indiscriminate elephant hunting. Second, killing young females ensured these would not be able to give birth, thus safeguarding against overpopulation of elephants.²⁶ In contrast, Western sport hunting and other contemporary culling methods often prioritize killing males, yet according to the Boni and Waliangulu, this would have been considered less effective since males only

²⁴ Interview with John Dyer, at Borana Ranch, Isiolo, Kenya, August 2, 2006.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

constitute a small fraction of any elephant population.²⁷

People of the Land, People of Cattle and God's Wildlife

In their aptly titled “Are East African Pastoralists Truly Conservationists,” a significant Africanist contribution to the “ecological noble savage debate,” Lore Rutan and Monique Borgehoff Mulder reiterate how disciplinary distinctions among cultural biologists, evolutionary ecologists, and developmental theorists account for the misunderstandings on the definition of the word “conservation.”²⁸ It is certain that the varied connotative meanings related to the word “conservation,” and allied abstractions such as “sound management” and “sustainability,” propel what are no more than culture-specific nuanced distinctions. Under the “holistic” concept within African environmental historiography that seeks to explain human-environmental relations, James Fairfield and Melissa Leach, for example, write of native Guineans who literally adopt the identity “We the forest people,” a complex relationship that included both physical and spiritual (meaning through the ancestors) connection to the forests. These connections were further enhanced by moral values and flexibility to adapt to prevailing climatic and soil conditions that promoted sustainable planting practices and resource harvesting.²⁹

Fairfield and Leach’s example perhaps supports the conventional wisdom that often states how in many traditional African societies, a separation between humans and the surrounding environment did not exist, that Africans were always a “part of nature” rather than “apart from nature.” Yet in reality, the distinction is not as clear as this is often assumed since

²⁷ During the 1900 Convention for the Protection of African Flora and Fauna for Empire, members suggested a total ban on the killing of young female elephants.

²⁸ Rutan and Borgehoff Mulder, “Are East African Pastoralists Truly Conservationists,” p. 624.

²⁹ James Fairfield and Melissa Leach, *Misreading the African Landscape: Society and Ecology in a Forest-savanna Mosaic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 189-194.

ambiguous abstract distinctions characterize how Africans perceive their place with respect to their environmental surroundings. Take the word “bush” for example; *entim* to the Maasai, *thim* to the Luo. In its literal use it means the area just outside the apparent peaceful village confines. For the Luo and Maasai, the bush or “wilderness” was often associated with dangerous animals and mystique.³⁰ Its distance from the sanctity of the home was not constant and could shift by day and night.³¹ For the Maasai, their traditional multifamily homestead or *boma* included a thorn fence that separated the peace and sanctity of the homestead, where women gave birth and raised their children, from the wild natural world (bush) beyond it.³² This latter distinction certainly challenges popular as well as some scholarly perceptions that African societies did not distinguish between their physical being and the natural world.

Other examples support the case for such referents. Within my Luo community, as with many other indigenous African societies, land (*piny*), soil (*lowo*), and people (*jo-/ji* [plural]) are all synonymous with referents to the earth. Hence *jo-piny* which denotes humans would directly translate to “people of the earth.” When it comes to references of landscape, however, these are more descriptive of the physical features, thus *piny kaka gode* literally translates to “earthscape with hills.” To Maa-speakers, *Ekop* denoted land, the earth, or soil.³³ For the most part, a direct

³⁰ See e.g. Christopher Ehret, “Writing African History from Linguistic Evidence,” in John E. Philips (ed.), *Writing African History* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2006), pp. 86-111 on how language inferences can be made based on “divergence” and “evolution.”

³¹ Mark Ole Karbolo, *Facing Modern Land Loss Challenges: The Loita Maasai Pastoralists and the Recent Controversy over the Naiminia Enkiyo Indigenous Forests in Narok District* (Kampala: Center for Basic Research, 1999), p. 14.

³² See e.g. Kaj Arhem, *The Symbolic World of the Maasai Homestead*, Working Papers in African Studies, No.10 (Uppsala: Africa Studies Programme, Department of Cultural Anthropology, University of Uppsala, 1985), pp. 15-29.

³³ Christian Jennings, “Beyond Eponymy: the Evidence for Loikop as an Ethnonym in Nineteenth-Century East Africa,” *History in Africa*, 32 (2005), p. 212.

non-European translation of the word “conservation” whether among the Maa-speakers or other indigenous languages in Kenya, where these happen to exist mostly as phrases, are recent word borrowings upon European contact. Among the Luo the closest meaning to “conservation” as an adjective is *rito* or *rang* that translates to “protect or “look out for,” while *geng’o mondo kik kethree nikech lokruok biro*, literally translates “to look after to prevent so as not to spoil” and has other connotations such as “*kungo kaka rango bunge*” to mean “to preserve like the wilderness.”³⁴

Historically, the pastoral Maasai have had to contend with attacks on humans and livestock by predators such as lions, leopards, and hyenas as well as other game including elephants, crocodiles, and buffaloes. They also have had to deal with the cost of disease communication between wild animals and livestock that at times reached epidemic proportions.³⁵ Since hunting rarely constituted a significant part of Maasai sustenance and for the most part was limited to retributive attacks against dangerous game, it is imperative that we question what other benefits, beyond the limited consumption of wildlife during times of drought and for cultural rites, the pastoral Maasai had for having wildlife on their land that far outweighed the costs incurred from the threats posed by wildlife to both humans and livestock. I suggest below that there were no other benefits that might have obligated them to go out of their way to protect wildlife.

Within African environmental historiography, however, aside from the popular simplistic attributes that Maasai have always tolerated wildlife on their land that does little to address the

³⁴ See e.g., John Gray and Joy Adhiambo Gwendo, *Luo-English and English-Luo Dictionary* (Nairobi: Sunlitho Ltd, 2006).

³⁵ See e.g., Waller, “Emutai: Crisis and Response in Maasailand 1883-1902,” in Johnson and Anderson (eds.), *The Ecology of Survival*, pp. 73-112.

cost and benefit analysis, common concepts include holistic, land, and indigenous conservation ethics. Holistic concepts of nature generally relate to Africans having no clear separations between their physical existence or their ethnic identity and their natural surroundings. Farieda Khan adopts a “land ethic” concept to examine cultural-specific African perceptions and relations with nature. Khan then contrasts these principles with formal Western conservation ideologies that consciously entail direct management of areas set aside for natural resource preservation.³⁶ Khan specifically discusses the espousal of formal conservation ethic among black South Africans in the early twentieth century that she directly correlates to formal education and Westernized elitism. Prior to this conversion, Khan assumes that any explanation of a conscious conservationist ethic was predicated upon their “land ethic” that had the “unplanned consequence of protecting the environment.”³⁷

Among the Amboseli Maasai, Keith Lindsay similarly espouses a “conservation ethic” that he correlates to an absence of a new warrior group between 1977 and 1982 to explain an apparent significant reduction in Maasai-wildlife conflict during this time period.³⁸ But it should also be recalled that the first official private MGRs around Amboseli were created in 1977. Perhaps the economic incentives far outweighed the costs of losing cattle to predators and diseases. Rutan and Borgerhoff Mulder also focused on the social relations among the Barabaig pastoralists of northern Tanzania and present an insightful take on the interaction between

³⁶ Farieda Khan, “Rewriting South Africa’s Conservation History: The Role of the Native Farmers Association,” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 20, 4 (1994), pp. 499-516; Michael Thompson and Katherine Homewood, “Entrepreneurs, Elites, and Exclusion in Maasailand: Trends in Wildlife Conservation and Pastoralist Development,” *Human Ecology*, 30, 1, (2002), pp.107-138.

³⁷ Khan, “Rewriting South Africa’s Conservation History,” p. 502.

³⁸ W. K. Lindsay, “Integrating Parks and Pastoralists: Some Lessons from Amboseli,” in Anderson and Grove (eds.), *Conservation in Africa*, pp. 149-167.

‘individual’ and “group” communal grazing. They argue that individual pastoralists often seek to maximize foraging on communal land rather than “conserve” for future use or for fellow herders; any notion of conservation is thus accidental if not “epiphenomenal.” Besides, the authors claim that within a stratified society notions of pasture conservation can be attributed to those in positions of leadership who nonetheless use their power to maximize “extra benefits rather than for long-term conservation payoffs.”³⁹ Although Rutan and Borgerhoff Mulder’s arguments focus on conservation of pasture or lack thereof among communal pastoralists, their conclusions also provide a prism through which to look into the challenges and potentials of group ranches as wildlife sanctuaries.

Myths, Folkways, and Taboos

The classic narrative of lion hunting with spears carried out as either *Olamayio* (ritual) or as *Olkiyio* “war cry” (retributive) attacks against dangerous wild animals in general (including buffalo, rhino, and elephant) speaks to the Maasai warriors’ valor and bravery and continues to garner widespread popular and scholarly attention.⁴⁰ With cultural tourism demanding the exotic it is understandable why this might be so. The practice is relived around lodges in Amboseli and the Mara where cultural “experts,” among them native Maa-speakers, narrate the custom as symbolic of Maasai stoicism and quintessence in “wild” Africa.⁴¹ Traditionally aligned with the *Eunoto* ceremony that marked the male rite of passage into adulthood, the practice, in which many Maasai youth were maimed or even killed, implanting the fatal spear into the lion earned

³⁹ Rutan and Borgerhoff Mulder, “East African Pastoralists,” pp. 635-636.

⁴⁰ Most of my informants around Eselenkei and Lolorashi distinguished between *Olamayio* and *Olkiyio*, unlike those around MGRs where *Olamayio* represented both ritualistic and retributive killings.

⁴¹ See, e.g., Percival, *A Game Ranger’s Note Book* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1924), pp. 339-340.

one the highest societal respect and prestige. Yet according to Maasai tradition, even before the act was outlawed as illegal with the imposition of game regulations, the practice was self-regulating because transgressors, including the victors from lion kills who killed wildlife indiscriminately as opposed to this being in defense of humans and livestock, feared being cursed or ostracized.⁴²

It is not a surprise that Maasai customs and traditions that reflect their relationship with the environment abound in oral narratives as well as in popular and scholarly literature. More often than not these traditions are represented as the homogenous norm despite the existence of distinct Maasai sections. For us to better understand how Maasai environmental relations were embodied within their traditions that have been passed down for generations, it is not only imperative that sectional differences are taken into account, but it is also significant that we understand the broader and deeper context within which they are reproduced. In recent scholarship, such practices have readily been used by scholars to ascribe significant correlation between such rituals and sustaining a balance between predators and prey.⁴³

Within the last three decades, the alarming decline in lion populations within and around Amboseli and the Mara, mostly at the hands of humans, has reinvigorated scholarly attention towards the practice of Maasai lion killings.⁴⁴ In particular, the works of Leelah Hazzah *et al.* in

⁴² Interview with Edwin Selempo, Nairobi, August 17, 2013.

⁴³ See e.g. W. Keith Lindsay, "Integrating Parks and Pastoralists: Some Lessons from Amboseli," in Anderson and Grove (eds.), *Conservation in Africa*, 149-167; Reuben Matheka, "Antecedents to the Community Wildlife Conservation Programme in Kenya, 1946-1964," *Environment and History*, 11 (2005), pp. 239-267.

⁴⁴ See, e.g., Western, "Patterns of Depletion in a Kenya Rhino Population," *Biological Conservation*, 24 (1982), pp. 147-156; Leelah Hazzah, Monique Borgerhoff Mulder, and Laurence Frank, "Lions and Warriors: Social Factors underlying Declining African Lion Populations and the Effect of Incentive-based Management in Kenya," *Biological Conservation*, 142, 11 (2009), pp. 2428-2437; Seamus D. MacLennan, Rosemary J. Groom, David W. Macdonald, Laurence G. Frank, "Evaluation of a Compensation Scheme to Bring About Pastoralist Tolerance of Lions," *Biological Conservation*, 142, 11 (2009), pp. 2419-2427.

Mbirikani and Mara Goldman *et al.* in Mbirikani and Ngorongoro focus on lion attacks and review these as either being carried out for ritualistic or retributive purposes. Whereas Hazzah *et al.* distinguish between *Olamayio* and *Olkiyio* as representing the ritualistic and retributive construct, Goldman *et al.* adopt *Olamayio* to represent the blurring of both practices over time.⁴⁵ Both sets of scholars conclude that these killings should be viewed within a socio-economic framework where the Maasai view wildlife conservation initiatives the bane of the impoverishment of their traditional pastoral economy, hence protest towards both local and state wildlife conservation policies. Despite Mbirikani being one of the most celebrated CBC initiatives around Amboseli, the authors also highlight how the warriors at times engage in outright spiteful pre-emptive attacks on lions that “may someday” kill their livestock. Indiscriminate poisoning has been used in such attacks.⁴⁶ While Goldman *et al.* also view such killings as problematic since they are carried out despite a predator compensatory scheme seeking to prevent retaliatory attacks, they instead focus on how such preemptive attacks constitute the Maasai morans’ reinforcing a cultural norm, and also showcase the impotence of elders who despite their support of CBCs can do nothing to prevent morans from indiscriminate killings.⁴⁷

Yet in doing so, Goldman *et al.*, who seek to guard against presenting Maasai culture as timeless, end up undercutting their own disclaimer. No doubt Goldman *et al.* present a vivid distinction between retributive and ritualized lion killings and the complex relationship between

⁴⁵ Mara J. Goldman, Joana Roque de Pinho, Jennifer Perry, “Beyond Ritual and Economics: Maasai Lion Hunting and Conservation Politics,” *Oryx*, 47, 4 (2013), pp. 490-500; Hazzah *et al.* “Lions and Warriors,” p. 2429.

⁴⁶ Goldman, *et al.*, “Beyond Ritual and Economics,” p. 497.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

CBCs and state wildlife authorities. They focus, for example, on the traditional role of the morans as village protectors against outside attacks by humans and wild animals, whose duty it is to carry out *Olamayio* while other moran do “preemptive” strikes if lions are remotely close to villages and present these duty as a timeless practice that the warriors have to carry out.⁴⁸ While the Kenya Wildlife Service has the mandate to control problem animals this is often too late and at times, as the authors do highlight, is never done. Even the “preemptive” lion attacks the authors write about contrast their own promotion in earlier research “Maasai want lions around in the future because of their special role in Maasai culture and identity.”⁴⁹ Similarly, the use of indiscriminate poisoning is understated simply because it is considered a “cowardly act,” yet this practice has been more widely used with devastating effects; the resultant bio-magnification on the food chain trophic levels presents the single greatest threat to predators and prey alike in Amboseli, the Mara, and beyond.⁵⁰

As I discuss in Chapter 6, the irony of indiscriminate poisoning of wildlife as a form of game control has its roots in colonial Kenya. For much of the colonial period the Game Department was complicit in using poisons such as arsenic and strychnine as tools against vermin control.⁵¹ Nor do recent scholarship on lion killings and other illuminations on Maasai

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 495.

⁴⁹ Mara Goldman, Joana Roque de Pinho, and Jennifer Perry, “Maintaining Complex Relations with Large Cats: Maasai and Lions in Kenya and Tanzania,” *Human Dimensions of Wildlife*, 15 (2012), pp. 332-346.

⁵⁰ See e.g. Munir Z. Virani, Corinne Kendall, Peter Njoroge, and Simon Thomsett, “Major Declines in the Abundance of Vultures and other Scavenging Raptors in and around the Masai Mara Ecosystem, Kenya,” *Biological Conservation*, 144, 2 (2011), pp. 746-752; Wiline M. Pangle and Kay E. Holekamp, “Lethal and Non-lethal Anthropogenic Effects on Spotted Hyaenas in the Masai Mara National Reserve,” *Journal of Mammalogy*, 91, 1 (2010), pp. 154-164.

⁵¹ See e.g., Acting Game Warden F.H. Clarke, *Game Department Annual Report, 1936* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1937), pp. 14-15, RHO 753.14 r.27.

wildlife relations fully address the cost/benefit analysis that may speak to why the Maasai might seek to conserve wildlife on their land. Viewed alongside other narratives of environmental politics and injustice, Goldman *et al.*, also seek to highlight how lion compensatory schemes fail to act as deterrents to lion killings and how this may also be symptomatic of the failure of CBCs to address disproportionate revenue sharing among its members.⁵² But while these grievances also speak to the history of exclusionist wildlife policies in Kenya and state or outside control, the focus on local versus state or against other “outsiders” obscures other studies that apportion blame on local inter-clan or blatant mismanagement and embezzlement of funds by appointed or nominated local officials.⁵³ The incidences of “pre-emptive” lion killings certainly contrast popular narratives of how Maasai traditions guarded against unprovoked attacks on wildlife. But the killings also reflect Scott’s latter reversal in *The Art of Not Being Governed* where he argues that the failure of state developmental projects are manifested in local acts of resistance and intransigence.⁵⁴

We therefore need to guard against complacency in scholarship that might inadvertently romanticize these events as widespread and as such representing the Maasai as timeless, an issue the authors themselves acknowledge has been debunked for decades now.⁵⁵ Presented within the narrative of indigenous environmental knowledge the authors also seem to infer that these were conscious sustainable practices, which is not the case. Most importantly, a review of the context

⁵² Interview with Edwin Selempo, Nairobi, August 17, 2013.

⁵³ See e.g. M. Rutten, *Partnerships in Community-Based Ecotourism Projects: Experiences from Maasai Region, Kenya* (Leiden: African Studies Centre, 2004).

⁵⁴ James Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

⁵⁵ Goldman *et al.* “Beyond Ritual and economics,” p. 494.

within which lions were killed and their links to the *Eunoto* ceremony offers alternative interpretations that certainly challenge the popular abstract narratives. Although mostly ritualistic, the *Eunoto* ceremony marked the final codification of each age-set—the cornerstone of the Maasai political unit—as the warriors who had been together for the past 5-7 years graduated to become junior elders.⁵⁶ John Galaty, for example, challenges previous scholarship that dismissed the *Eunoto* ceremony as merely ritualistic and having no economic or political institutional basis within Maasai culture.⁵⁷

For all practical purposes, if each Maasai warrior had to kill a lion to validate his virility, there might have been no lions left at all. According to Edwin Selemo, a Maasai naturalist from Nairegi-Engare, Narok District, who works with one of the leading tour companies and who has had to sit through hundreds of fireside chats as “experts” lecture on the Maasai, most of the popular renditions of this cultural aspect of Maasai rite of passage are embellished. According to Selemo, rarely do these experts discuss non-retributive lion attacks within a broader context within which these were carried out, at the core of which was “youth sport competition.”⁵⁸ Selemo validates many of the Maasai myths and taboos, but he also cautions that their true meanings are broad, complex, and at times subject to abstract interpretation. He also adds that the different interpretations often reflected the numerous autonomous Maasai sections.

Adopting a sports analogy, Selemo claims that although the lion’s mane, teeth, and tail were the most prized assets, the warriors also paraded other souvenirs collected during their time

⁵⁶ See e.g., Henry Fosbrooke, “The Masai Age-Group System as a Guide to Tribal Chronology,” *African Studies* 15 (1956), p. 191; Alan H. Jacobs, “The Traditional Political Organization of the Pastoral Masai,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Nuffield College, Oxford, 1965), pp. 2-3.

⁵⁷ Galaty, “Ceremony and Society: The Poetics of Maasai Ritual,” *Man*, New Series, 18, 2 (1983), pp. 361-382.

⁵⁸ Interview with Edwin Selemo, Nairobi, August 17, 2013.

together. Among these other souvenirs were the ubiquitous ostrich manes that obviously were less dangerous to acquire. According to Sidney and Hildegard Hinde's oral recordings that they obtained among the Maasai between 1887 and 1899 during their tenure as Resident to the Masai Chief, Collector of Masailand, and ethnographer to the EAP the 2-3 foot wide-brimmed ostrich-plume headdress served a military purpose; it "originated in the idea of masking the actual number of fighting men from the enemy...thus one warrior gave the appearance of several men" that at times worked to the advantage of small raiding parties who were otherwise often outnumbered (See photo 2.1).⁵⁹ But equally dangerous and also representing bravery were the other symbolic emblems such as the warrior's body art and shield markings (these could be through different color coding) denoting the number of enemies one had killed during cattle raids or repelling attacks on the community.⁶⁰ Besides, while an individual who adorned the lion mane was considered the one who implanted the first spear into the animal or cut off the lion's tail during the hunt when the animal was still alive, the feat and its success was rarely undertaken without the group's collective effort when everyone rushed the lion.⁶¹

The Maasai traditional worldview is rooted in mythical beliefs revolving around cattle and the homestead. Widespread across the different Maasai sections is the belief that God bestowed upon them all cattle on Earth; grass was also provided for pasture. Those who aspired for a purely pastoral status, believed by Galaty to be the essence of "being Maasai" or "people of cattle," subsisted primarily on a diet of meat, milk, and blood. As such, those who engaged in agricultural and hunting practices, whether among themselves or in association with neighboring

⁵⁹ Sidney L. Hinde and Hildegard B. S. Hinde, *The Last of the Masai* (London: William Heinemann, 1901), p. 61.

⁶⁰ Interview with Edwin Selempo.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

communities, were generally ostracized and viewed with contempt as people who not only desecrated the earth upon which grass grew, but also as people who ate “soiled” food and “impure” wild meat.⁶² They even avoided eating fowl and eggs, as well as fish, which they equated to “slimy slippery snakes.”⁶³ Noticeably, however, while elders’ resistance to eating fish at Mara River Camp was non-negotiable, this was often not the case with the younger generation, who also could not find any justification as to why many of their elders did not eat chicken. Taraya Ole Nasi, however, an elder who worked as a cook at Mara River Camp, made inferences to vultures which ate carrion and thus he just could not bring himself to eat *motonyi* (birds).⁶⁴

Not surprisingly, these traditions also revealed a gendered environment. The ethnography by Alfred Hollis, East Africa Protectorate Secretary of Native Affairs in the early 1900s, which was primarily based on oral accounts, recorded a gendered differentiation relating to cattle and wild animals. Even when poisonous snakes were discovered inside huts they were not killed, as many might have assumed. Instead, believing that they “represented souls of deceased wealthy persons and healers who had come back to keep watch over their children,” women spilled milk over their heads before they were carefully ushered outside the village confines.⁶⁵ Indeed, among the Maasai of Selengai MGR (See Map 1.1) most black snakes were not killed since it was considered a good omen that would bring good fortune and wealth if one came across a black

⁶² Kaj Arhem, *Milk, Meat and Blood: Diet as a Cultural Code Among the Pastoral Maasai*, Working Papers in African Studies, No.35 (Uppsala: Africa Studies Programme, Department of Cultural Anthropology, University of Uppsala, 1987), pp.12-18.

⁶³ Interview with Taraya Ole Nasi, Mara Rianta, Narok District, July 12, 2009.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Alfred Claude Hollis, *The Masai: Their Language and Folklore* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), p. 307.

snake in the wild.⁶⁶ The only exception was *Ola-suyai loorachaoni*, the “elephant black snake” or black-spitting cobra, which was readily killed.⁶⁷ Also, depending on the clan, snakes were either revered or killed at the first sighting. With the latter action it was feared that rival clans would send venomous snakes to attack each other or use them to guard scarce resources such as water in times of drought⁶⁸ and, traditionally, the *Laibon* or medicine man was the only one who had the power to neutralize these venomous snakes by sprinkling milk on the reptiles.⁶⁹

Similarly, Meritz Merker recorded the mythical belief that the Maasai previously domesticated wild animals that were under the care of women, unlike cattle that belonged to men, who “carelessly” left the gates to the village ajar so that the game escaped back into the wild.⁷⁰ The context within which this myth is presented may vary but more than any other it comes closest to explaining why the Maasai rarely hunted or indiscriminately killed wildlife. The eland remains the only animal that the Maasai hunted and ate its flesh and its fat was given to children as a milk substitute because they considered it a “species of cow”; in contrast while the Great Kudu was also hunted for its prized spiral horns that was used as a call signal in times of battle and its skin, just like the eland’s used for making rope, its meat was rarely consumed.⁷¹ By

⁶⁶ Among these were blind snakes and others that were under 3 feet long.

⁶⁷ Interview with Kasaine Ole Naeno, Eselenkai Group Ranch, Lenkiseem, December 12, 2010.

⁶⁸ Hinde and Hinde, *The Last of the Masai*, p. 101.

⁶⁹ Interview with Lerionga Ole Seita, Lolorashi Group Ranch, Lenkiseem, December 10, 2010.

⁷⁰ See e.g., Meritz Merker, *The Masai: Ethnographic Monograph of an East African Semite People* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1910 [1904]), translation of: *Die Masai: Ethnographische Monographie eines Ostafrikanischen Smitenvolkes* (1904) for Human Relations Area Files (HRAF) files by Frieda Schutze, www.ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu; David Western, *In the Dust of Kilimanjaro* (Washington: Island Press, 2002), pp. 98-99.

⁷¹ Hinde and Hinde, *The Last of the Masai*, p. 85.

virtue of the fact that God had provided both cattle and wild animals, upon escaping back into the “wild” the latter were still God’s property since “they returned back to their owner.”⁷² It was this belief that instilled a fear among the Maasai not to indiscriminately attack or over-utilize “God’s” property for ritual purposes and face God’s wrath. The worst of these fears was if one should be condemned to the point they could not successfully raise livestock.⁷³ Yet there is no question that this fear was never taken into account when wildlife attacked and posed a threat to cattle, which though also granted by God, now were firmly and exclusively under men’s custodianship.⁷⁴

The strangler fig tree was also revered, its fruits were eaten by children and sacrificial goat offerings were often carried out under its huge shade to avert the tree falling close to an inhabited village that might “herald a great catastrophe.”⁷⁵ But other trees were also only harvested with specific purposes in mind. According to Raymond Bonner, who quotes verbatim the words of a Maasai elder in Ngorongoro, in the event that someone cleared trees to establish a new homestead and failed to do so for whatever reason, the person had to appease the spirits while proclaiming: “Good trees, I cut you because I thought I would come here, but I did not, so forgive me.”⁷⁶ Likewise, the custom in which Maasai boys killed birds to be worn as a mounted headdress during their circumcision initiation rite also had minimal impacts on birdlife.

According to Galaty, the unique practice symbolized both death and rebirth within the highly

⁷² Interview with Lerionga Ole Seita, Eselenkai Group Ranch, Lenkiseem, December 10, 2010.

⁷³ Selempo Interview.

⁷⁴ Interview with Sadera, Koiyaki Group Ranch, Mara Rianta, July 12, 2009.

⁷⁵ Hinde and Hinde, *The Last Masai*, p. 103; Interview with Edwin Selempo (phone), May 30, 2014.

⁷⁶ Raymond Bonner, *At the Hand of Man: Peril and Hope for Africa’s Wildlife* (New York: Knopf, 1983), p.177.

significant rite of passage into adulthood, since “initiates are seen to die in ritual, come alive after circumcision, emerge after healing and transition; birds are killed but are revitalized when stuffed and displayed as emblems of bodies glorified.”⁷⁷ Initiates who showed fear during the process were not allowed to hunt birds during the healing phase. Since only certain small birds were killed and others, such as go away birds which were revered or owls and ground hornbills, which were regarded as bad omens, were spared, coupled with the fact that initiations were carried out only every seven to eight years, the practice surely had minimal impact.⁷⁸

Apparently, these practices were not unique to the Maasai. Similar reservations with regard to specific animals are to be found among other Maa-speakers like the Samburu. The close cost-benefit relationship between elephants and humans presents a clearer comparative analysis. Onesmus Kahindi’s “Cultural Perceptions of Elephants by the Samburu People of Northern Kenya” is particularly instructive since it also contends that the relationship between the Samburu and elephants has largely informed the development of Samburu CBC projects.⁷⁹ Kahindi’s ethnography reveals a complex relationship that revolves around cattle, humans, and elephants and is primarily based on moral values and mutual respect. Similar to the Maasai, the Samburu believe all wild animals are “God’s creatures”. In contrast to the Maasai, however, the Samburu view elephants to be no different from their fellow human beings, with an ability to be hurt but also powerful enough to do harm to those who indiscriminately attack them. The Samburu view was informed through their keen observations of individual or individual family

⁷⁷ Galaty, “The Maasai Ornithorium: Tropic Flights of Avian Imagination in Africa,” *Ethnology*, 37, 3 (1998), pp. 227-238; Hollis, *The Masai*, p. 298.

⁷⁸ See e.g., Hinde and Hinde, *The Last of the Masai*, p. 104.

⁷⁹ See Onesmus Kahindi, “Cultural Perceptions of Elephants by the Samburu People in Northern Kenya.” MSc. Dissertation, University of Strathclyde, UK, 2001.

units that the Samburu see to be no different from Samburu social constructs.⁸⁰ Equating elephants to human beings thus means that the Samburu consider it immoral to “own a fellow moral being,” which according to Kahindi they equate to slavery and is reflected in the language elders use when referring to the wildlife-based revenue derived within their community conservancies.⁸¹

In contrast to common clichés in support of CBCs such as “local people own wildlife and wildlife belongs to the local people,” Samburu elders state they are “...drinking or suckling the elephant’s milk,” a phrase that also ascribes a deeper connection between women and elephants.⁸² Although the symbolic relationship between the Samburu and elephants is much stronger than Maasai-wildlife relations in general, they have more similarities than contrasts, including the fact that the Samburu did not consider it their obligation to prevent non-Samburu outsiders from killing elephants since as “fellow beings” the elephants should be in a position to defend themselves.⁸³ Nonetheless, the Samburu-elephant relationship, unlike that of the Maasai, was more personal and deliberate and incorporated into the running of CBCs in their area.

The potential of local knowledge to promote ecological sustainability among the Maasai is, however, strongly premised on religiosity and claims to direct lineage to the deities. During the 1990s, the fight over the control over the Naimina Enkiyio Indigenous Forest in the Nguruman Escarpment in Narok District was more than just a fight pitting local rights versus state authority. In June 1993, the Narok County Council (NCC), which oversaw environmental

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 50.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., pp. 51-52.

⁸³ Ibid.

conservation initiatives in the district, decided to gazette the forest as a game reserve. By September, the NCC, citing the forest's significance as a dispersal area to the Mara wildlife, had mandated itself the exclusive overseers of the reserve upon which no form of resource extraction could be carried out without its prior authority.⁸⁴ The decision did not go down well with the Loita pastoralists, one of the smaller autonomous Maasai sections who claimed ownership of the forest and surrounding land.⁸⁵ In making the decision, the NCC sought to arrest the rapid deforestation that not only threatened various animals and birds, but also exacerbated the fragility of the forest as an important water catchment preserve for many of the pastoral groups below. Increased human encroachment and diversification into crop farming offered the most significant challenges.⁸⁶

Following the official gazette, members of the Loita pastoralists, helped by environmental justice advocates, unsuccessfully mounted public and legal campaigns for the rest of the 1990s as they sought to reverse the decision. It is within this activist context that Mark Ole Karbolo presents a succinct exposé of the Loita pastoralists' challenge against the NCC to also reveal a history of socio-economic and ecologically-related internecine rivalry, which partly reflected a pastoral and agricultural divide. In particular, Karbolo illuminates the powerful role played by Maasai myths and legends that promoted ecological preservation and how these were at times subject to individual or sectional interpretation. To the Loita Maasai, the NCC's

⁸⁴ See Narok County Council (NCC) "Supplement" in *East African Standard*, July 31 1993 which covered Loita/Purko Naimina Enkiyio Forest, Mau Forest, and Suswa Caves as part of NCC's 1994-1998 Development Plan to "preserve their varied flora, fauna, and scenes, that are vital for posterity"; Nation Correspondent, "Council Plans Rejected," *Daily Nation*, August 18, 1993.

⁸⁵ Karbolo, *Facing Land Loss*, p. 2.

⁸⁶ See, Francis Karanja, Yemeserach Tessema, and Edmund G.C. Barrow, *Equity in the Loita/Purko Naimina Enkiyio Forest in Kenya: Securing Maasai Rights to and Responsibilities for the Forest* (Nairobi: IUCN, 2002), pp 3-4.

controversial decision was above all else a manifestation and extension of how the much larger Purko Maasai (the NCC is largely dominated by the Purko) had always lorded over other smaller Maasai sections. Underscoring the roots of this rivalry in the colonial period, Karbolo states how the members of the Purko section were relocated into Loita following the loss of Maasai land to European settlement during the first and second decade of colonial rule. At independence, members of the Purko Maasai dominated the political sphere in Narok district and have continued to influence most of the socio-economic policies to their advantage while the Loita pastoralists have seen few developmental projects such as roads and schooling.⁸⁷ Even though the NCC claimed that part of the revenue accrued from developing tourist facilities and entrance fees to the forest reserve would benefit local communities, the Loita pastoralists argued this was a mere ruse to appropriate the forest and push them towards land individuation as was already happening among other Maasai sections, yet this was something they had steadfastly resisted when the group ranch concept was first promoted in the 1960s.⁸⁸

Economic and political factors aside, it was, however, the challenge to their “rightful” role as guardians of one of the Maasai’s sacred sites that the Loita considered most aggrieving and nonnegotiable. *Naimina Enkiyio* or “forest of the lost child” was a religious shrine and revered haunt of the Maasai spiritual leaders. According to general Maasai myth, its impenetrable vegetation and thick canopy, as well as the presence of *Orkimusei*, a legendary giant, *Nenauner* the half-rock and half-human beast, and *Noonkareru*, a creature that was covered in moss and ferns, all combined to protect the shrine. Even the bravest of Maasai

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 6.

⁸⁸ See e.g., Karanja Tessema, and Barrow, *Equity in the Loita/Purko Naimina Enkiyio Forest in Kenya*, p. 4.

warriors feared venturing deep into the impenetrable labyrinth.⁸⁹ While to the Loita Maasai the forest served as dry-season grazing and as a traditional “pharmacopeia” among other uses,⁹⁰ to the Purko, the real or imagined guardians of the forest shrines dissuaded them from seeking its refuge.⁹¹ Additionally, the Loita Maasai claim direct lineage to Sendeu, arguably the last powerful Maasai *Laibon* and brother to Paramount Chief Lenana, who was known for resisting British colonial intrusion. Thus, with this direct claim the Loita consider themselves the true “guardians of Maasai culture.” Preserved in song and dance and praise, the direct connection to the deities that also reiterates Sendeu’s bravery with “eyes that resemble the Python’s,” the Loita pastoralists elevate their status as the undisputed custodians of the forest ecology and all of its biological entities.⁹²

Karboló’s thesis not only validates the role of cultural myths and traditions in contributing to ecological preservation, but more significantly demonstrates how cultural memory and perceptions of landscape have been used to uphold or even re-create ethnic identity. I expand on this topic, a widely discussed theme in African environmental historiography, in the next chapter.⁹³ Karboló’s Loita-centric focus certainly reinforces the Loita pastoralists’ claim to be the true guardians of Maasai culture and the environment. By the same measure, it dismisses the ability of recent immigrants into the area, including the Purko Maasai and the Kikuyu (there

⁸⁹ Interview with Edwin Selempo.

⁹⁰ Karboló, *Facing Modern Land Loss*, p. 11.

⁹¹ Interview with Tarayia Ole Nasi, Mara Rianta, July 12, 2009.

⁹² Karboló, *Facing Modern Land Loss*, pp. 15, 18.

⁹³ See, e.g. JoAnn McGregor, “Living with the River: Landscape and Memory in the Zambezi Valley, Northwest Zimbabwe,” in William Beinart and JoAnn McGregor (eds.), *Social History and African Environments* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003), pp. 87-105; Celia Nyamweru and Michael J. Sheridan (eds.), *African Sacred Groves: Ecological Dynamics and Social Change* (Oxford: James Currey, 2008).

is a prominent mixed Kikuyu-Maasai lineage around Morijo on the Loita Hills/Nguruman Escarpment [See Map 1.1) whose “diluted” customs cannot be trusted to uphold these critical values.⁹⁴ It also situates the Loita Maasai as relentless resisters to both British colonial rule and independent Kenya’s state power. When infused with being direct descendants of the rebellious Sendeu, these beliefs evoke in them the same identity as they challenge the NCC.⁹⁵

Such cosmological and existential ideas certainly characterized the Maasai in various ways and defined their relations with the natural environment. The relations were also subject to variation and abstract differentiation as by clan or geographical locality. The Maasai practices of *Olamayio* and *Olkiyoi* support Hunn’s epiphenomenon theory along the inclusive/exclusive cost and benefit analysis. While the Maasai did not practice consumptive use of wildlife, they nonetheless derived cultural significance from wildlife essential to their cultural identity and existence. The fear of being ostracized guarded against indiscriminate killings or wasteful exploitation of resources. Forethought guarded against such decisions that might have impacted the environment negatively and by extension the community. As these examples show there was a differentiation between the homestead, the bush, and nature, and thus it was incumbent upon the Maasai to coexist in relative harmony with wildlife as part of their natural surroundings. Yet we must also acknowledge that the homestead/bush dialectic had been profoundly impacted by political, economic, and social changes imposed during colonial rule.

⁹⁴ Cf. Karanja F, et.al, *Equity in the Loita/Purko Naimina Enkiyio Forest*. The authors also take note of the two distinct Maasai sections.

⁹⁵ See also Galaty, “The Eye that Wants a Person, Where Can It Not See?: Inclusion, Exclusion and Boundary Shifters in Maasai Identity,” in Thomas Spear and Richard Waller (eds.), *Being Maasai: Ethnicity and Identity in East Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1993), pp. 174-194 on account of the shared ritual ceremonies between the Loita and Siria Maasai, but where the former’s claim to direct lineage to Sendeu (Senteu in the text) is often used to justify a supposed superior status.

Even as popular representations of the Maasai present them as “natural keepers of the wild,” we must accept that the taboos and fear of “God’s wrath” were only limited to members of individual communities. As I lay out in Chapter 5, there is little evidence to suggest the Maasai ever spoke up against Europeans and other native communities who had accounted for much of the indiscriminate slaughter of wildlife in the Masai Reserve by the late 1930s. Arguably too, this indifference towards outsiders exterminating wildlife was still pronounced during the 1990s. To the extent that the Maasai considered themselves to be “keepers of the wild” this ideology was largely the result of them adopting a formal conservation ethos and often limited to officials, since the threat posed by outside groups and external poaching was now a direct threat to the social and economic incentives upon which most CBCs are premised. Such indifference might also explain the “preemptive” killings as previously discussed under the subjects of *Olkinyio* and *Olamayio*. Similar to the Samburu, to the majority of Maasai group ranch members, they cared little whether poachers killed off all the elephants or if baboons were indiscriminately poisoned. Additionally, with the increased land individuation and the economic diversification into settled forms of agriculture as continues to be the case within Loita forest, for example, many cared even less if these animals that threatened their harvests were eradicated.⁹⁶

Significantly, as much as one cannot doubt the value of these traditions in ensuring a balance between the Maasai and wildlife, questions must nonetheless be raised with regard to whether Maasai culture evinced a formal conservation or aesthetic ethic *per se*. In other words, we need to reconsider whether when compared to a formal Western conservation ethos it was more by default rather than conscious effort that wildlife was tolerated in Maasailand. It also

⁹⁶ Interview with Simon Turasha, Arusha, Tanzania, October 2, 2010.

should go without saying that since cattle were paramount to the Maasai, anything else, including wildlife, was secondary and they were wont to resist any threats to their traditional livelihood. Besides, we must also acknowledge that since they did not hunt or engage in other significant consumptive uses of wildlife, the Maasai simply had no obligation to conserve “God’s wildlife.”

Equally, one needs to take into consideration that the homestead/bush dialectic has been profoundly affected by cultural change within the last century. A brief comparison and contrast between formal conservation ethos and indigenous environmental knowledge is worth highlighting. Broadly speaking, formal conservation ideologies, heavily influenced by such individuals as John Muir, Gifford Pinchot, Ralph Waldo Emerson, George Catlin, and Henry David Thoreau in the lead-up to the establishment of Yellowstone and other national parks, incorporated aesthetic, preservationist, utilitarian, transcendentalist, and nationalist principles.⁹⁷ These same ideologies have been part and parcel of Kenya’s national parks history. Undoubtedly, the Maasai perceptions of place and the natural world (bush and homestead duality) were also embodied within their spiritual, dietary, and moral customs and reflect a people who valued their natural world. Yet an aesthetic appeal is seemingly absent. And although the Maasai valued their cattle and often did not disturb wildlife populations unless warranted, there is no evidence that they traditionally went out of their way to sustainably manage wildlife.

In the 1950s, conservationists in colonial Kenya raised concerns that the Maasai, who had previously tolerated wildlife, were now increasingly becoming antagonistic towards game as

⁹⁷ See e.g., George Perkins Marsh, *Man and Nature, or Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action* (New York: Charles Scribner & Co., 1869); John Muir, *Muir, J. Nature Writings*, William Cronon (ed.) (New York, NY: Library of America, 1997); Gifford Pinchot, *Breaking New Ground* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1947); Henry David Thoreau, *The Variorum Walden* (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1962).

exhibited in their violent protests when Amboseli National Reserve was established in 1948.⁹⁸ However simplistic their assumptions, the danger lay in their not recognizing that the supposed harmonious Maasai-wildlife co-existence described as early as the 1850s was in fact an epiphenomenon of their semi-nomadic livelihood. Without a conservationist model upon which we can compare and contrast Maasai-wildlife relations, I reiterate my contention that we must reconsider the existence of an assumed indigenous conservation ethic upon which MGRs continue to be largely predicated.

We certainly need to take into account the fact that by the 1960s the semi-nomadic lifestyle of the Maasai and the resultant lengthy periods of human absence that contributed both directly and indirectly to the proliferation of wildlife on their land had been radically compromised. While the formation of expansive group ranches offered conditions that enabled them to continue with their pastoral livelihood these were soon subjected to subdivisions and individuation. Understanding the rising Maasai intolerance towards wildlife by the late 1950s as reported by Simon and others only becomes clear if we consider the history of restrictive boundaries that started with the creation of the Masai Reserve in the early 1900s. The subsequent livestock development schemes of the late 1940s and 1960s also coincided with the creation of national parks and the push for private Maasai sanctuaries, respectively. The trend towards land individuation by the 1990s further intensified Maasai-wildlife tensions. These conflicts also called into question assumptions that Maasai-wildlife relations were predicated along the same Western/formal conservation ethos that came to govern many of the private Maasai sanctuaries that border Amboseli and the Mara.

⁹⁸ See e.g., Noel Simon, "Masai Parks," *Wildlife: Kenya Wild Life Society Journal*, 2, 1 (1960), pp. 1-36.



Photo 2.2: Maasai headdresses “ritual,” “retributive,” “defense” (Photos © Willis Okech Oyugi)

CHAPTER 3: KENYAN and AFRICAN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORIOGRAPHIES

Introduction

This chapter focuses on African environmental historiographies. It particularly emphasizes the main scholarly trends that developed before and after the field of African environmental history emerged in the early 1980s as it sought to distinguish itself from closely related fields such as political and social history.¹ Overwhelmingly, I adopt nature and cultural identity constructs as dictated by my subject and area of study. Within the last decade, as William Beinart and Joann McGregor note, Africanist historians who had previously shunned using the term “landscape” because it was seen as primarily being a Eurocentric construct, now embrace its broader definition “as an imaginative construction of the environment.”² As such, landscape is not only limited to the physical construct, but also includes conceptual constructs, which, as I briefly discussed in the previous chapter, allows for an analysis of the complex interplay between landscape—as a physical and ideological construct—and cultural/ethnic identity.³ Though the study concentrates largely on Kenya’s environmental history, it is prudent that its historiography is situated within the broader African environmental and ecological literature to reflect key unifying and contrasting themes. A broader approach to environmental and ecological

¹ See, e.g., William Beinart and Joann McGregor (eds.), *Social History and African Environments* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004); Jane Carruthers, “Tracking in Game Trails: Looking Afresh at the Politics of Environmental History in South Africa,” *Environmental History*, 11 (2005), pp. 804-829.

² Beinart and McGregor, *Social History and African Environments*, p. 4; Paige West, James Igoe, and Dan Brockington, “Parks and People: The Social Impact of Protected Areas,” *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 35 (2006), pp. 251-277 who look at protected areas as representing virtualism that affect those who reside within, adjacent, or even those in distant places.

³ See e.g. David W. Cohen, and E. S. Atieno Odhiambo, *Siaya: The Historical Anthropology of an African Landscape* (Nairobi: East African Publishers, 1989). With Siaya as its nexus, the Luo of Western Kenya reproduce their history and ideological ethnic identity in Nairobi, Mombasa, and Uganda, as men—in particular—migrate in search of work and due to other pressures. Siaya remains the point of departure where a homestead is groomed and maintained both for temporary return as well as final resting place in retirement and death.

scholarship also allows for global comparisons where these are appropriate.

The field of Kenyan environmental history first emerged as ecological history in the 1960s but with a strong social emphasis. During the 1967 Historical Association of Kenya (HAK) annual conference, eminent African historian Bethwell Ogot and then HAK president, encouraged Africanist historians to “pay particular attention to the influence of ecological factors on African history,” contending that “African social structures [could] be traced to environmental factors.”⁴ At a subsequent HAK conference in 1972, B. E. Conn, a graduate student also rallied Africanist historians claiming they were still peripheral to ecologically oriented studies.⁵ Conn’s “Ecology in Historical Perspective” espoused that there was a significant correlation between the migrations of pre-colonial Akamba people residing in the arid and semi-arid Kitui District and elephant migrations to and from Mount Kilimanjaro. Conn concluded it was only logical that Akamba would resort to hunting big game on account of the desolate habitats that restricted alternative modes of economic and subsistence modes of production.⁶ But it is equally important to note that back in 1960, at least a decade before Conn’s submission, ecologist Harold Heady lamented what he perceived to be a lack of objective ecological knowledge that included a historical perspective on East Africa despite the region’s great biodiversity.⁷

⁴ Bethwell A. Ogot, “Some Approaches to African History,” in Bethwell A. Ogot (ed.), *Hadith I: Proceedings of the Annual Conference of the Historical Association of Kenya 1967* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1968), pp. 1-9.

⁵ B. E. Conn, “Ecology in Historical Perspective: An East African Example.” Historical Association of Kenya Annual Conference, 1972, as quoted in Ogot (ed.), *Ecology and History in East Africa, Hadith 7* (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1979), p. 1.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Harold F. Heady, *Range Management in East Africa* (Nairobi: The Government Printer, 1960), p. 113.

It was apparent that Conn's conscientious initiative did not immediately garner the due attention it certainly deserved. Ogot acknowledged this oversight in his opening address at the 1975 eco-historical themed HAK conference where he honored Conn as informing his own thinking to champion the development of ecological-oriented history. He argued that more than anything else, the field's interdisciplinary inclinations were indispensable to the diversification and advancement of African history.⁸ But perhaps Conn's greatest honor, and no doubt an encouraging sign to the future of Kenyan and East African environmental historical scholarship in general, was the publication in 1979 of *Ecology and History in East Africa* that was dedicated to the 1975 conference proceedings. The text impressively stood out for among other strengths its multidisciplinary scholarship and the breadth of themes that span the prehistoric through the colonial period. During the conference discussion topics included "The Palaeo-environment and its Influence on human activities in East Africa during the Latter Part of Upper Pleistocene and Holocene," "Ecology Technology and the Social Spirit," "The Influence of Climate on the Migrations of the Central and Southern Luo," "Economic Variations among Maa-Speaking Peoples," and how ecological and dietary aspects were manifested in the "Underdevelopment in Agriculture in Colonial Kenya."⁹ These themes and others have been widely addressed in African environmental history in general, as I will show shortly.

Two largely complementary motifs have thus dominated Kenya's and African environmental and ecological historical literature. These themes equally highlight the close association between different fields that developed with the emergence of African history. The

⁸ Ogot, "African Ecology in Historical Perspectives: Problems and Prospects," in Ogot (ed.), *Ecology and History in East Africa: Proceedings of the 1975 Conference of the Historical Association of Kenya* (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1979), pp.1-8.

⁹ Ogot, *Ecology and History in East Africa*.

first, the reciprocity between humans and the environment, was initiated in the 1960s when Africanists were specifically encouraged to advance human agency as critical to the study of African ecology in historical perspective so as to be able to “deal with the story of man’s efforts to adapt himself to his environment and his environment to himself.”¹⁰ This trend continued and peaked during the 1980s and 1990s debates surrounding Africa as a continent in perpetual crisis as scholars promoted African environmental resiliency to challenge what many viewed as uncritical Eurocentric degradation narratives.¹¹

The second most pervasive theme has been colonialism and imperialism as environmental processes. As Beinart and Lotte Hughes pithily articulate, “European imperialism was also inseparable from the history of global environmental change.”¹² The critical period that marked colonial conquest and pacification, between the 1880s and the late 1920s, is presented as significant to subsequent changes to human-nature relations in both colonial and postcolonial Africa. Akin to Alfred Crosby’s assertion that “human beings are, before anything else, biological and political entities,”¹³ scholars focusing on this period examine subjects such as disease communication between Europeans and Africans as well as domestic animals and wildlife; invasive plant and animal species; and the deleterious effects of wars of conquest to African traditional economies, ecologies, and social life.¹⁴

¹⁰ Ogot, “African Ecology in Historical Perspectives,” pp. 1-8.

¹¹ See e.g. Robert Collins, “The African Environment: Origins of a Crisis,” in Robert Collins (ed.), *Problems in the History of Modern Africa* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1997), pp. 33-36.

¹² See “Introduction,” Beinart, W., and Lotte Hughes, *Environment and Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 1.

¹³ Alfred Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport: Praeger, 2003); Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*, New Edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

¹⁴ See, e.g., John Ford, *The Role of the Trypanosomiasis in African Ecology: A Study of the Tsetse Fly Problem*

Both motifs have not only been complementary within African environmental historiography and influenced early methodological approaches to scholarly debates, they have been manifested in subsequent discussions. Few would disagree with John Iliffe's high acclaim that "Africans have been and are the frontiersmen who colonised an especially hostile region of the world on behalf of the entire human race."¹⁵ Such scholarly exuberance, however, has inherent shortcomings, not least of which might be the reticence to attribute African agency to environmental degradation. One such critique, as presented by Beinart, is that there is a danger one may overlook the equally critical roles played by Europeans and other non-African races before, during, and after the colonial period in transforming Africa's environmental and ecological history.¹⁶

Within the last two decades, approaches to African environmental history not only sought to address such shortcomings, they were also aimed at promoting the global trend of collaborative scholarship, both transnational and transcontinental, and these two central themes have continued to feature.¹⁷ The field has also witnessed efforts to enhance several of its

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976); Helge Kjekshus, *Ecology, Control, and Economic Development in East African History: The Case for Tanganyika* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977); Nora Kelly, "In Wildest Africa: The Preservation of Game in Kenya, 1895-1933," Ph.D. dissertation, Simon Fraser University, 1978; Tom Griffiths and Libby Robin (eds.), *Ecology and Empire: Environmental History of Settler Societies* (Edinburgh: Keele University Press, 1997); Christopher A. Conte, *Highland Sanctuary: Environmental History in Tanzania's Usambara Mountains* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004); Emmanuel Kreike, *Re-Creating Eden: Land Use, Environment, and Society in Southern Angola and Northern Namibia* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2004); Edward I. Steinhart, *Black Poachers White Hunters: A Social History of Hunting in Colonial Kenya* (Athens: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹⁵ John Iliffe, *Africans: The History of a Continent*, Second Edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 1.

¹⁶ See e.g. Beinart, *The Rise of Conservation in South Africa: Settlers, Livestock, and the Environment 1770-1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. xviii-xix.

¹⁷ See e.g., Beinart and Peter Coates, *Environment and History: The Taming of Nature in the USA and South Africa* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Stephen Dovers, Ruth Edgecombe and Bill Guest (eds.), *South Africa's Environmental History Cases and Comparisons* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003).

methodological strengths that have set it apart from its global counterparts. For example, cross-disciplinary scholarship that also takes into account how African oral traditions and histories might have been influenced during and after the colonial contact, as well as how these changes reflect subsequent changes to indigenous-nature interactions.¹⁸ Certainly, if we “avoid assumptions about environmental equilibrium” and accept, as William Cronon espouses, that “the *instability* of human relations with the environment can be used to explain both cultural and ecological transformations,”¹⁹ then we can readily justify the imperative for humans to adapt to the constantly changing environment as manifested in the changes to social, economic, and political institutions before, during, and after the colonial period.²⁰

Perhaps characteristic of what some critiques deemed to be the radicalized or activist nature of Africanist historical scholarship that developed in opposition to the western academy, up until the late 1990s it was not uncommon for its environmental historical scholarship to also be enmeshed in similar debates.²¹ Early debates over methodological orthodoxies were at times accompanied by blanket condemnation of colonial and western science and how these had ignored the value of traditional African environmental knowledge that might have otherwise

¹⁸ See e.g. JoAnn McGregor, “Living with the River: Landscape and Memory in the Zambezi Valley, Northwest Zimbabwe,” in Beinart and McGregor (eds.), *Social History and African Environments* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003), pp. 87-105; Celia Nyamweru and Michael J. Sheridan (eds.), *African Sacred Groves: Ecological Dynamics and Social Change* (Oxford: James Currey, 2008).

¹⁹ William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), p. 14.
Cf. Kevin Cleaver and Gotz Schreiber, *Reversing the Spiral: The Population, Agriculture and Environment Nexus in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 1994).

²⁰ See Gregory Maddox, James L. Giblin, and Isaria N. Kimambo, *Custodians of the Land: Ecology and Culture in the History of Tanzania* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1996), p. 2.

²¹ Kjekshus *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East African History* remains one of the most critical of colonial impact.

alleviated the environmental challenges afflicting colonial and postcolonial Africa.²² At a time when the size of protected areas had peaked exponentially, the latter studies were marked by the exuberance of literature promoting African resiliency and African-nature reciprocity in opposition to what many saw as uncritical Eurocentric degradation and declinist narratives. Common sub-themes in these debates included the role or lack of human agency in the prevailing alarming rates of deforestation, wildlife losses, soil, and desertification.²³

The imperative to diversify African environmental history scholarship is just as valuable to the discipline of African history. These endeavors are critical to not only mitigate against systemic institutional challenges such as funding shortages across the continent, but also its efforts to address alarming public apathy towards historical scholarship in general.²⁴ Jane Carruthers recently posited that African environmental scholars could do well to embrace the “African Renaissance” that was reinvigorated in the late 1990s and early 2000s, which though largely a “pan-Africanist intellectual movement” is premised on celebrating Africa’s unique cultural heritages and diversities.²⁵ Among Africa’s unique World Heritage sites and other environment features are national parks such as Mount Kenya National Park and architectural monuments. Thus beyond their intellectual value, these sites have a “pragmatic purpose, serving

²² See e.g., Douglas H. Johnson and David M. Anderson (eds.), *The Ecology of Survival: Case Studies from Northeast African History* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988); James C. McCann, *A Tale of Two Forests: Narratives of Deforestation in Ethiopia, 1840-1996*, Working Paper No. 209, History of Land Use Project at the African Studies Center, Boston University, 1998.

²³ See e.g. Lloyd Timberlake, *Africa in Crisis: The Causes, the Cures of Environmental Bankruptcy* (London: International Institute for the Environment, 1985); Michael Glantz (ed.), *Drought and Hunger in Africa: Denying Famine a Future* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

²⁴ Carruthers, “Tracking in Game Trails,” p. 807; Bethwell A. Ogot, “African Voices and the Search for Autonomy and Authenticity in African History,” in Bethwell Ogot, *History as Destiny and History as Knowledge: Being Reflections on the Problems of Historicity and Historiography* (Kisumu: Anyange Press, 2005), pp. 29-69.

²⁵ Carruthers, “Tracking in Game Trails,” pp. 810-811.

as a conduit for international attention to Africa and, of course, for funding and the exchange of ideas about policy, restoration, conservation...”²⁶

Other new approaches include incorporating cultural and social studies, eco-literary criticism, and revisiting African myths and traditions with regard to the environment. Kenyan historian and eco-literary critic Jeremiah Kitunda’s exposés on Ernest Hemingway’s escapades in Kenya and how his acclaimed writings were at times informed by his interactions with the Akamba people certainly contributes to the “African Renaissance.”²⁷ By all accounts, the recent push by the KWS “Park Branding Programme” that began in the year 2005 and where up to date about 20 National Parks and National Reserves have been “branded” is also in line with the “African Renaissance.”²⁸ Recent scholarship that has revisited indigenous mythologies and customs has at times correlated these to the reinvention of ethnic identity, claims to indigenous rights to heritage sites as well as resources or political representation that are at times simply driven by commercial interests.²⁹

African environmental historiography has also sought to promote collaborative scholarship, both transnational and transcontinental. This trend is not new as such since it first materialized in the 1990s with Australian environmental historian Richard Grove’s founding of the journal *Environment and History* in 1994 and publication of *Green Imperialism* a year later,

²⁶ Ibid.

Cf. Malegapuru W. Makgoda (ed.), *African Renaissance: The New Struggle* (Cape Town: Mafube Tafelberg, 1999); Bernard Magubane, *African Sociology: Towards a Critical Perspective* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2000).

²⁷ See Jeremiah M. Kitunda, "Ernest Hemingway's African Book: An Appraisal," *The Hemingway Review*, 25, 2 (2006), pp. 107-113; Kitunda, "Ernest Hemingway's Safari into Kamba Culture and Language: A Note on the Geographical and Temporal Setting of Under Kilimanjaro," *North Dakota Quarterly* 73, 1/2 (2006), p. 156.

²⁸ See Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), “Park Branding Programme” <http://www.kws.org/parks/>

²⁹ See e.g., JoAnn McGregor, “Living with the River: Landscape and Memory in the Zambezi Valley, Northwest Zimbabwe,” in Beinart and McGregor (eds.), *Social History and African Environments* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003), pp. 87-105; Nyamweru and Sheridan, *African Sacred Groves*.

albeit both were direct challenges to what he and others considered be nationalistic-driven and domineering American environmental history scholarship.³⁰ *Environment and History* thus promoted non-American environmental history scholarship away from the influence of American institutions where it was believed nationalistic pride that came in the wake of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) and its broad appeal in the 1960s and 1970s often downplayed environmentalism as having alternative roots outside the United States.³¹ *Green Imperialism* thus situates the early rise of environmentalism outside America by focusing on the ideas that gave rise to forest conservation in India, the Caribbean, and the Cape from as early as the 1600s. These events predate George Perkins Marsh's *Man and Nature* first published in 1864 (with a reprint in 1869) and its direct influence in American conservation history.³²

Likewise, Tom Griffiths and Libby Robin's 1997 *Ecology and Empire* drew upon Crosby's *The Columbian Exchange* as well as Beinart and Peter Coates's 1995 *Environment and History*, a comparative discussion on the "taming of nature" in South Africa and the United States, as one of the first texts to argue that environmental change was inseparable from British colonial rule.³³ But unlike Crosby's Eurocentric environmental diffusion, though with New Zealand as its epicenter, *Ecology and Empire* primarily promotes Australian eco-historical scholarship as a subaltern voice from the "frontiers" of Europe's imperialism to engage

³⁰ See e.g., Carruthers, "Africa: Histories, Ecologies, and Societies," *Environment and History*, 10, 4 (2004), pp. 379-406, a review of the tenth anniversary of *Environment and History*.

³¹ See e.g. Carruthers, "Tracking in Game Trails," pp. 812-813.

³² Richard H. Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens, and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Marsh, *Man and Nature*.

³³ See, Tom Griffiths, "Ecology and Empire: Towards an Australian History of the World," in Tom Griffiths and Libby Robin (eds.), *Ecology and Empire: Environmental History of Settler Societies* (Edinburgh: Keele University Press, 1997), p. 1; Beinart and Coates, *Environment and Empire*.

comparative investigation of the “intersection of ecology and empire” with the United States, South Africa, and Latin America.³⁴ Accordingly, Griffiths and Robin posit that while the “imperial framework is naturally comparative,” the “colonial one is instinctively nationalistic,” thus individualistic.³⁵ As such, these scholarships, though welcome and stimulating, have nonetheless contributed immensely to the imbalance in regional African environmental historiography, with South Africa as the beneficiary. It is within this context that Beinart’s and Hughes’s *Environment and Empire* recently repositioned British imperial expansionism at the center of environmental change and allows for chronological as well as thematic comparisons and contrasts across the globe.³⁶

In “Africa and Environmental History” Maddox questioned the wide acceptance that African environmental history borrows heavily from its counterpart in the US. With the exception of South Africa where there was earlier industrialization and urbanization than other regions in the continent, Maddox describes the fundamental role played by industrialization in North American environmentalism. Thus he emphasizes the uniqueness of African environmental scholarship as having a clear case of “the subversion of the ‘before and after’ distinction common to environmental history by demonstrating ways in which humans and the natural world mutually construct each other.”³⁷ In making this comparison, Maddox thus promotes a distinct contrast between African and American environmental histories

Maddox feared there was a danger of “transplanting American-style environmental

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 13.

³⁶ Beinart and Hughes, *Environment and Empire*.

³⁷ Maddox, “Africa and Environmental History,” p. 163.

history” in African environmental history that might encourage romanticized representations of Edenic Africa.³⁸ For instance, Maddox argues, early African environmental history tended to categorize indigenous African people as a homogenous entity much in the same way that Africanist history tended to stress ecological stability as a given in the continent. In itself, Maddox’s claim lends credence to the dilemma Africanist historical scholarship continues to face. Ogot asks the question what is a “truly African voice?” In other words, do Africanists have a voice that is distinct from its Euro-American antecedents? The answers to these questions, Ogot argues, have remained elusive to Africanist historians since the discipline was developed in the 1960s.³⁹ One of the earliest cases of this dilemma is Dent Ocaya-Lakidi’s “Ecology, Technology and the Social Spirit,” an exposé of the detrimental ecological impacts attributed to the Industrial Revolution in the West. While mostly a challenge for African historians to explore “deep into African history and traditional cultures for appropriate alternative social spirits or philosophies” it sought to mitigate against the likelihood of Africans adopting domineering European technologies.⁴⁰ Yet the irony remains that Ocaya-Lakidi’s article, which was also presented during the H.A.K conference in 1975, set out to promote African environmental history along Euro-American models.

Beinart, who has written extensively on central and southern African environmental histories, however, sees no major distinction that warrants exclusivity of African environmental history. Whereas he acknowledges that the environmental impacts of industrialization and

³⁸ Ibid., p. 166.

³⁹ Ogot, “African Voices and the Search for Autonomy and Authenticity in African History,” p. 45; Steven Feierman, “African History: The End of Universal Narratives,” in Gyan Prakash (ed.) *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Placements* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 40-65.

⁴⁰ Dent Ocaya-Lakidi, “Ecology, Technology and the Social Spirit.” In Ogot (ed.), *Ecology and History*, pp. 64-76.

urbanization were minimal outside South Africa, he contends that environmental transformations are too complex to be necessarily “mutually exclusive.”⁴¹ Elsewhere, Beinart and Hughes argue that “the idea of a frontier retains value and resonance” and therefore adopt the term ‘frontier’ with caution since it can be problematic when universally applied to settler societies.⁴² Rather than use the word ‘frontier’ which can “suggest constant, restless, expansion” they prefer to use commodity frontier in the colonial context to suggest meanings that are “spatial, environmental, and socio-economic.”⁴³ He concedes that while European resource extraction had its negative impacts on African livelihoods and its environments, it also stimulated the search for sustainable resource use. Beinart and Hughes thus reiterate that colonial resource extraction and the development of conservation policies by British scientists cannot be delinked. The knowledge accumulated in the colonies gave rise to policy development that sought sustainable management and resource extraction including those that were employed in forest conservation and sport hunting in Africa.⁴⁴

In maintaining the intrinsic links between colonial resource extraction and the rise of conservation Beinart challenges both Mackenzie’s “apocalyptic vision of global environmentalism”⁴⁵ and Kjekshus’ degradation narratives in *Ecology Control and Economic Development*. With particular reference to the impinging colonial contact in the Americas and Australia, Mackenzie’s apocalyptic view emphasizes environmental degradation and

⁴¹ Beinart, “African History and Environmental History.” pp. 272-274.

⁴² Beinart and Hughes, *Environment and Empire*, p. 2.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.4.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 13; Beinart, “African and Environmental History,” p. 271.

overexploitation of natural resources without recourse to sustainable use.⁴⁶ In Africa, Mackenzie adopts a similar strand of argument in his studies focusing on hunting and imperial control.

In *Empire of Nature*, Mackenzie vividly links the creation of wildlife reserves to land appropriation and describes how land preservation policies functioned as a tool for imperial control and racial separation within the British colonies. Not only did the fees from sport hunting licenses “subsidize the [formative years] of British Imperialism, through exports of ivory and skins, the provision of meat for African employees and allies...”⁴⁷ but the creation of wildlife parks—ironically, as a result of indiscriminate sport hunting by the Europeans—was also marked by racialized segregation between Africans and Europeans as well as the physical displacement and relocation of African ethnic groups. Thus, Mackenzie demonstrates that, “the development of notions of preservation... ‘into a sport of the elite’... and conservation marked the final stages of the appropriation of nature.”⁴⁸

Unlike African environmental history, focus on the subaltern voice as a particular feature of both South Asian environmental historical and South Asia history in general, has been identified as representing a distinct voice to that of the West. Paul Sutter, for example, highlights the influential work of Ramachandra Guha, a leading South Asian environmental historian, who adopts the subaltern voice to challenge the disruptive nature of colonial and postcolonial

⁴⁶ Mackenzie, “Empire and the Ecological Apocalypse: the Historiography of the Imperial Environment,” in Griffiths and Robin (eds.), *Ecology and Empire*, pp. 215-228.

⁴⁷ Mackenzie, *The Empire of Nature*, p. 116.

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp.22-23; Roderick P. Neumann, *Imposing Wilderness: Struggles over Livelihood and Nature Preservation in Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Leonard Guelke and Robert Shell, “Landscapes of Conquest: Frontier Water Alienation and Khoikhoi Strategies of Survival, 1652-1780,” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 18, 4, (1992), pp.803-824, which argues that the decimation of the quagga by the mid-eighteenth century can be attributed to indiscriminate hunting and expanding Boer settlements.

“capitalist expansion” to native economies as well as the “social costs of state conservation.”⁴⁹

But should we really worry about whether African history or its environmental history lacks a “truly African voice?” Surely not. In reality, to do so might negate the recent encouraging trends towards transnational and global collaborative scholarship.⁵⁰

Ogot maintains that while the search for an Africanist “identity” might be worth pursuing it remains elusive. Yet even if we were to attain it, it might also be counterproductive to recent endeavors to diversify the discipline through collaborative scholarship.⁵¹ For one who has been a strong advocate for transnational and transcontinental scholarship such a view is expected. From the onset, he proposed that Africanist historians should study “the evolution of different historical entities as well as the major different stages of development” African societies encountered. Further, he encouraged that such approaches be compared and contrasted to those of other global regions. Enhancing its main strengths including its interdisciplinarity may well further advance African environmental history’s scholarship. Within the last decade, non-African environmental historians have identified the field’s incorporation of historical linguistics and oral traditions among other sources as highly significant to their own diversification.⁵²

Whereas the field of African environmental history, as was the case with its global

⁴⁹ Paul Sutter, “What Can U.S. Environmental Historians Learn From Non-US Environmental Historiography?” *Environmental History*, 8, 1 (2003), pp. 109-129.

Cf. Ramachandra Guha and David Arnold, *Nature, Culture, and Imperialism: Essays on the Environmental History of South Asia* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998); Guha, “Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation,” *Environmental ethics* 11, no. 1 (1989): 71-83.

⁵⁰ See e.g., William Beinart, “African History and Environmental History,” *Africa Affairs*, 99 (2000), pp. 269-302. Beinart, one of the prominent African environmental historians provides an elaborate review on contrasting narratives of Africa’s environmental history.

⁵¹ Ogot, “African Voices,” p. 45.

⁵² Beinart and McGregor, *Social History and African Environments*.

counterparts, primarily came of age in the early 1980s, its environmental and ecological literature has its antecedents in the 1960s when African history was developed. This intrinsic link explains its multidisciplinary integration of sources including from the disciplines of anthropology, ethnography, archeology, economics, and ecology, not to mention the wide use of oral traditions, a hallmark of African historical methodology at its inception, to supplement the pre-1800s dearth of written sources. The remainder of this chapter mostly draws from eastern and southern regions of sub-Saharan Africa's environmental literature, with a bias towards big game in these two regions. The bulk of African environmental history no doubt concentrates on Eastern, Central, Western, and Southern Africa, while the paucity of environmental literature pertaining to African north of the Sahara may be reflective of the scholarly orthodoxies where the region's history has often been aligned with that of Middle East Studies.⁵³

Kenya's Environmental History, an Imbalanced Perspective

Kenya's environmental history scholarship paucity not only reflects the regional imbalance of the field across Africa, but also the debates surrounding the burgeoning field in the 1970s. Besides the methodological ambiguities and disciplinary orthodoxies, which consider ecological and cultural changes across time and space, the inadequacy is partly due to the dominance of nationalistic and social history, and to a larger extent institutional challenges that are beyond scholars' control. The paucity is equally symptomatic of the lack of progress made towards disciplinary diversification and interdisciplinary collaboration as first proposed in the early 1970s.⁵⁴ The dissertation thus not only illuminates regional imbalances in environmental

⁵³ This may have more to do with the Sub-Saharan Africa versus Middle-East scholarly divide where the history of North Africa is often accounted for in the latter.

⁵⁴ See e.g., Ogot, "African Voices and the Search for Autonomy and Authenticity in African History," In Ogot, *History as Destiny and History as Knowledge*, pp. 29-69; Mildred A. J. Ndeda, "Nationalistic Historiography in Kenya: A Look at the Changing Disposition of B. A. Ogot's Work since 1961," Paper Presented at the Codesria's

historical scholarship, but also illuminates strengths and weaknesses of the available literature. I also make suggestions in areas where scholarship on Kenya's environmental history might build upon existing literature.

There is no question that Kenya's rich environmental historiography mirrors as well as complements that of other African countries. But does this the imbalance constitute a lack of diversity? In reality, such a perception is far from it. Much of this imbalance reflects regional trends in scholarship and complementary themes adopted over time that have contributed to African environmental history's rich and diverse literature. For example, Beinart and McGregor emphasize the dominance of demographic and disease scholarship in East Africa; the roots of studies on indigenous knowledge in West Africa; discussions on the interplay between "religion and moralities of environmental control" in Southern Africa; and on agriculture and invasive species in South Africa.⁵⁵ Indeed, demographic change in Africa and how this relates to changes in the environment is another hotly debated topic in African environmental history. Critical to the developmental studies of the 1980s and 1990s, scholars were divided on whether or not the exponential population increases over the last century contributed to ecological degradation.⁵⁶ Increased human encroachment around or into protected areas such as wildlife sanctuaries and forests is widely viewed as a threat to the future of these areas. For many ecologists, increased human and livestock populations around the Mara and Amboseli game reserves exacerbate competition over land use, water, and pasturage and contribute to the alarming declines in

Thirtieth Anniversary Celebrations, December 10-12, 2003, Dakar Senegal.

⁵⁵ Beinart and McGregor, "Introduction," in *Social History and African Environments*, p. 9.

⁵⁶ See Maddox, "African and Environmental History," p. 165.

wildlife numbers.⁵⁷

Obviously, as I have briefly discussed, from the early 1960s, ecologists and historians in East Africa were cognizant of the benefits of promoting environmental and ecological scholarship through historical inquiry to avoid a blanket critique of Kenya's episodic environmental historiography. Bluntly put, however, it is fair to say that since *Ecology and History in East Africa*—itself denoting a regional as opposed to national collaborative scholarship—Kenyan historians have virtually been absent in the country's rich environmental scholarship that is still largely dominated by ecologists, anthropologists, geographers, biologists, sociologists, and political scientists among other disciplinary orientations. Unlike Tanzania, one of its regional allies, Kenya's episodic and fragmented environmental history scholarship has often been obscured by contributions from other disciplines within the social and natural sciences. It is telling that no single scholarly volume has been dedicated to studies on Kenya's environmental history.⁵⁸ As a case point, in William Ochieng's edited volume, *Themes in Kenyan History* (1990), the environment is not featured as one of the nineteen significant themes even as many of the case studies are also drawn from other disciplines.⁵⁹ The narrative is, however, not so gloomy.

Recent developments within Kenya's education sector offer promise for the growth of its environmental history scholarship and its beleaguered institutions. Within the last decade, in

⁵⁷ See e.g. Juhani Koponen, "Population: A Dependable Variable," in Maddox, Giblin, and Kimambo (eds.), *Custodians of the Land*, pp. 19-42.

⁵⁸ Cf. Kjekshus, *Ecology Control and Economic Development*; Maddox, Giblin, and Kimambo, *Custodians of the Land*.

⁵⁹ William R. Ochieng (ed.), *Themes in Kenyan History* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1990).

addition to contributions from Africanist historians from both within and outside the country,⁶⁰ Kenya has witnessed a proliferation of institutions of higher learning, private and public alike. Several of the private institutions are affiliated to accredited universities in Europe, Australia, and America and are therefore not bound by state financial constraints and political patronage that public universities in Kenya have been subjected to over the decades.⁶¹ At the same time, spirited public debates pertinent to the problems of wildlife and forest conservation, in their capacity as invaluable national resources, certainly reflects public engagement and vindicate the fact that environmental issues have significant national and oftentimes global repercussions. These national environmental concerns present an opportunity for environmental historians, both within and outside Kenya, to directly engage with public environmental advocacies while also contributing to Kenya's environmental historiography. Moreover, in doing so, they go a long way to justify why environmental history, especially when relevant to current environmental issues, should not be restricted by disciplinary orthodoxies to directly engage in environmental policy advocacies.

John Opie posed this question in a paper presented at the 1982 International Conference on Environmental History held on the University of California's Irvine campus.⁶² His inclination

⁶⁰ Osaak A. Olumwullah, *Dis-Eases and Medicine in the Colonial State: Medicine, Society, and Social Change Among the AbaNyole of Western Kenya* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002); Reuben Matheka, "Antecedents to the Community Wildlife Conservation Programme in Kenya, 1946-1964," *Environment and History*, 11, 3 (2005), pp. 239-267; Matheka, "Decolonisation and Wildlife Conservation in Kenya, 1958-68," *The Journal of Imperial and Colonial History*, 36, 4 (2008), pp. 615-639; Matheka, "The International Dimension of the Politics of Wildlife Conservation in Kenya, 1958-1968," *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 2, 1 (2008), pp.112-133; Steinhart, *Black Poachers White Hunters*; Alphonse Otieno, "Conjunction and Disjunction: Afforestation and Conservationism in Central Nyanza district, Kenya, 1940-57," *Africa Today*, 54, 1 (2007), pp.53-70.

⁶¹ There has been a growth of private universities, some of the notable ones have religious affiliations including Strathmore and Catholic University of East Africa, Nazarene University, Methodist University. Kenya also boasts a United States International University (USIU).

⁶² John Opie, "Environmental History: Pitfalls and Opportunities," in Kendall E. Bailes (ed.), *Environmental History: Critical Issues in Comparative Perspective* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1985), pp. 22-35; Joseph M. Petulla, "Environmental Values: The Problems of Method in Environmental History," in Bailes (ed.),

was evident for all to see when he argued that it was inconceivable that environmental scholars were averse to current environmental issues. Methodological restraints notwithstanding, Opie argued, inaction by historians who chose not to voice their viewpoints was perhaps akin to dereliction of moral obligation.⁶³ I could not agree more. Likewise, Australian environmental historian Stephen Dovers has stressed that “environmental history inevitably deals with current political and social issues as it seeks to unearth and reconcile different people’s versions of ‘facts’, and thus it must be public history in the sense of engagement with public life.”⁶⁴ Clearly, Kenyan environmental history could borrow a leaf from recent South African environmental scholarship where Elna Kotze incorporates her viewpoints to suggest comprehensive strategies to address current environmental challenges in Wakkerstrom. Georgina Thompson also engages political activism that reveals how past racial disenfranchisement in the country correlates to current contestations surrounding the ecological health of a wetland of international importance in the Lake St. Lucia region.⁶⁵

Reuben Matheka’s three recent articles focus on the history and development of community-based conservation (CBC) and their roots to the colonial state.⁶⁶ Matheka’s

Environmental History, pp. 36-45.

⁶³ Opie, “Environmental History,” p. 26.

⁶⁴ Stephen Dovers, “Commonalities and Contrasts, Pasts and Presents: An Australian View,” in Dovers, Edgecombe, and Guest (eds.) *South Africa’s Environmental History*, pp. 227-239.

⁶⁵ Elna Kotze, “Wakkerstrom: Grasslands, Fire, War—Past Perspectives and Present Issues,” pp. 174-190 and Georgina Thompson, “The Dynamics of Ecological Change in an era of Political Transformations: An Environmental History of the Eastern Shores of Lake St. Lucia,” pp. 191-212, both in Dovers, Edgecombe, and Guest (eds.) *South Africa’s Environmental History*.

⁶⁶ Reuben Matheka, “Antecedents to the Community Wildlife Conservation Programme in Kenya, 1946-1964,” *Environment and History*, 11, 3 (2005), pp. 239-267; Matheka, “Decolonisation and Wildlife Conservation in Kenya, 1958–68,” *The Journal of Imperial and Colonial History*, 36, 4 (2008), pp. 615-639; Matheka, “The International Dimension of the Politics of Wildlife Conservation in Kenya, 1958–1968,” *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 2, 1 (2008), pp.112-133.

“Antecedents to Community Conservation in Kenya” stands out first for its meticulous analysis of expansive archival sources that details elaborate discussions between colonial officials and non-officials alike. In shaping Kenya’s history of wildlife conservation, he also points to the external influence of the metropole. The fate of the Maasai and other native communities impacted by the creation of national parks are also discussed.⁶⁷ In particular, he considers the initial initiative to allow the Maasai limited access to water and grazing into the newly created Amboseli National Reserve (ANR) in the late 1940s as central to the partnership that evolved between local communities, the Local Native Councils, and the central government upon which CBCs are predicated.⁶⁸ In “Decolonisation and Wildlife Conservation in Kenya, 1958–68,” and “The International Dimension of the Politics of Wildlife Conservation in Kenya, 1958–1968,” Matheka examines development of a partnership between African governments and international conservation organizations.⁶⁹ While no doubt beneficial to game preservation, especially when this comes to funding, this partnership has also been marked by the dominance of Western conservationist ideologies over African conservationist initiatives.

This study certainly benefits from Matheka’s work; “Antecedents to Community Conservation in Kenya” is particularly instructive as I explore the transformation of the expansive Maasai Group Ranches (MGRs) from livestock development schemes in the 1960s to significant wildlife sanctuaries by the late 1990s. But as I have already discussed in the previous chapter, I challenge among other issues Matheka’s claim, albeit brief, that the ritualistic practice of *Olamayio* was central to keeping lion populations in balance. Matheka complacently premises

⁶⁷ Matheka. “Antecedents to Community Wildlife Conservation,” p. 243.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 246-247.

⁶⁹ Matheka, “Decolonisation and Wildlife Conservation,” p. 615.

this claim, perhaps uncritically, entirely on a statement made by the Officer in Charge (OiC) of the Masai Reserve in 1925 that took issue with the administration's efforts to dismantle the institute of moranhood.⁷⁰ According to the Game Warden Captain Ritchie's 1925 Game Report, the OiC had claimed that the increased incidences on lion attacks on livestock was simply as a result of "The breaking down of the moran system, with the consequent racial emasculation to which the Masai has been subject [that had] effectively robbed them of the power of dealing with feline marauders in the time-old manner...consequent[ly] the lions in parts of the reserve have lost all respect for man and kill cattle in daylight within a few yards of the herdsmen."⁷¹ Without deeper interrogation, there is a danger in such claims inadvertently reproduce idealistic images of the Maasai as practicing sustainable wild animal husbandry, which they clearly did not.

Osaak Olumwullah's *Dis-Eases and Medicine in the Colonial State* reminds us of the role of colonial public health discourse and biomedicine as tools that served to promote colonial hegemonic control, a fruitful area of study that is often an underrepresented topic within African environmental history. Olumwullah demonstrates how to Charles Eliot, the First Commissioner to the East Africa Protectorate, Europeans had a mandate to tame and reclaim nature in Africa that was "a diseased continent inhabited by 'savage' and 'primitive' societies."⁷² Thus the introduction of Western medicine that was presented as superior to indigenous herbal pharmacopeia was promoted as one way of ridding Africans of their supposed pagan tendencies. In contrast, Osaak asserts, the AbaNyole people of Western Kenya "problematized biomedicine

⁷⁰ Matheka, "Antecedents," p. 243.

⁷¹ See Capt. A.T.A. Ritchie, *Game Department Annual Report, 1925* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1926), p. 18, RHO 753.14 r.27.

⁷² Olumwullah, *Dis-Eases and Medicine in the Colonial State*, p. 4.

as both a cultural force and a tool of colonial domination.”⁷³

Likewise, Richard Waller’s “‘Clean’ and ‘Dirty’” focuses on the three livestock diseases of East Coast Fever (ECF), bovine pleuro-pneumonia, and rinderpest and how these factored into the development of Kenya’s colonial veterinary policy from 1900 to 1940.⁷⁴ Manifested in the policy’s transformation from one of “containment to eradication,” Waller argues, were racialized contestations over knowledge and power as well as socio-economic differentiation that initially catered to white interests.⁷⁵ Before the 1930s more research and funds went towards promoting the health of European stock. Quarantine measures against African stock were also used as a form of containment to ensure infected African stock did not come into contact with European farms. But with the realization that such measures were ineffective and inhibited the development of the national livestock industry, the policy shifted from one of individualized containment to one of universal inoculation by the mid-1940s.⁷⁶

Elsewhere, John Janzen’s 1978 comparative study of indigenous medical systems in Africa, Asia, and Central America describes the interplay between social differentiation and attempts at colonial hegemonic control and legitimization. Among the Kongo of Central Africa, for example, Janzen traces the efforts of “native Kongo *banganga* doctors, healing prophets, and Western medicine to legitimize themselves and discredit others, sometimes with the help of colonial or African government backing.”⁷⁷ *The Social Basis of Health and Healing in Africa*

⁷³ Ibid., p. 18.

⁷⁴ Richard Waller, “‘Clean’ and ‘Dirty’: Cattle Disease and Control Policy in Colonial Kenya, 1900-40,” *Journal of African History*, 45 (2004), pp. 45-80.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 46.

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 72-75.

⁷⁷ John M. Janzen, “The Comparative Study of Medical Systems as Changing Social Systems,” *Social Science Medicine*, 12 (1978), pp. 121-129.

offers a more comprehensive overview of diverse healing practices and knowledge in traditional African health and how these have been manifested in the social and cultural order from precolonial Africa to the present.⁷⁸ Charles Anyinam's "Ecology and the Ethnomedicine" laments how in a continent where herbal medicine accounts for 95 percent of therapy in rural areas, Africanist scholars have seemingly been complacent to correlate the rapid loss of forests, the increases in invasive and preference to commercialize exotic tree species and other ecological degradation to irreplaceable indigenous medical knowledge that African traditionalists have amassed over centuries.⁷⁹

As I have already discussed in Chapter 2, the fight over the Naimina Enkiyio Indigenous Forest among different Maasai groups in Narok District, was more than just a fight over local versus state control over natural resources. Karbolo's presentation of the forest as a natural pharmacopoeia elicits debates on the place of indigenous knowledge and ethnomedicine in conservation and also touches on the subject of heritage tourism while it also reflects the commonplace ethnic/local versus national identity debates. In Chapter 4, I also describe how studies on public health and diet in colonial Kenya were used to advance European hegemonic control and develop policies aimed at promoting modern medical and nutrition policies. These nutrition studies were used to ascribe racial superiority or inferiority complexes among different African communities, some of which had far reaching calamitous effects, as unfortunately happened in the case of Rwandan Genocide. In Chapter 5, I build on Waller's " 'Clean' and 'Dirty'" and other studies to demonstrate how the quarantine measures effected in the Masai

⁷⁸ Steven Feierman and John M. Janzen (eds.), *The Social Basis of Health and Healing in Africa* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992).

⁷⁹ Charles Anyinam, "Ecology and the Ethnomedicine: Exploring Links between Current Environmental Crisis and Indigenous Medical Practices," *Social Science Medicine*, 40, 3 (1995), pp. 321-329.

Reserve after the First World War contributed to massive overstocking and progressive desiccation of vegetation and exacerbated soil erosion in both Kajiado and Narok districts.

Lastly, Alphonse Otieno's article "Conjunction and Disjunction: Afforestation and Conservation in Central Nyanza District, Kenya" argues that individual colonial administrators, as opposed to a larger state-sanctioned conservation policy, were responsible for initiating afforestation programs in Nyanza. In the wake of the Second World War and a weakened national economy, complex negotiations between the local inhabitants and colonial officials led to afforestation programs seeking to address among other issues wood-fuel shortages, promotion of health, and transportation networks.⁸⁰ By highlighting the independence of respective colonial administrators and therefore emphasizing local initiative as opposed to state control, Otieno challenges our common understanding of the homogeneity of colonial conservation ideologies. Such studies are certainly welcome at a time when the state's efforts to reverse alarming deforestation of the Mau Forest Range, the largest water catchment area in East and Central Africa, which involved forcible relocation of squatters in the forest was caught up in ethnic-based political divides.⁸¹ Thus, recent contributions to Kenya's environmental history literature also come at a time when ethnic-based political polarization has been inflated by contestations over natural resource use.

Methodology and African Environmental History

In 1975, when Ogot encouraged historians to embrace multidisciplinary methodological approaches to promote eco-historical scholarship, he was of the opinion that this should not be done at the expense of some of the key underpinnings of historical inquiry. In particular, Ogot

⁸⁰ Otieno, "Conjunction and Disjunction," pp. 57-58. .

⁸¹ Since 2008, debates over the Mau forest have featured extensively in the prominent dailies.

cautioned, it was imperative that historical scholarship disengages itself from simplistic deterministic bottlenecks as was often the case in some of the social sciences where the environment had been used to explain cultural differences.⁸² He pointed to historical geographers who had addressed the problem of fixed landscape representations through a “diachronic approach” and cultural geographers who had co-opted “anthropological concepts of culture” as examples to build upon. Not only had these geographic fields successfully examined reciprocal interactions involving humans and their environments, Ogot argued, they had also explained how changes and choices in food production influenced human migrations and settlements.

Ogot reiterated these methodological imperatives in a recent critique of theories of environmental determinism. He specifically rebutted acclaimed geologist John Gregory’s 1897 *The Great Rift Valley*, which is one of the earliest text to ascribe environmental determinism to elevate certain elements of Maasai culture that continue to be idealized.⁸³ Gregory had claimed that the supposed Maasai militancy and their elegant physique were conditioned by the semi-arid and arid “hostile” landscape they inhabited. He premised this assertion primarily on account of the supposed uncritical assumptions made about nomadic people in general as having superior mental cognitions that was conditioned by their environment surroundings. Gregory contrasted these characteristics to the supposed feeble incompetence exhibited by servile-inclined forest dwellers.⁸⁴

⁸² Ogot, “African Ecology in Historical Perspective,” pp. 4-6.

⁸³ Ogot, “As Others Saw Us—Being an Analysis of Grassroots Imperialism in the 19th and early 20th Century Africa,” in Ogot, *History as Destiny*, pp. 112-147; John Walter Gregory, *The Great Rift Valley, Being the Narrative of a Journey to Mount Kenya and Lake Baringo with some accounts of The Geology, Natural History, Anthropology and Future Prospects of British East Africa* (London: Frank Cass and Company, 1968 [1897]), pp.318-319.

⁸⁴ Gregory also makes comparisons to “fatalism in India and Greek cultures” as being the result of their physical geological settings, p. 318.

With Africa having been subjected to Eurocentric biased theories of scientific racism to justify colonial rule and elevate supposed European superiority complexes over “African inferiority,” Africanist environmental historians have, just like their counterparts in African history, justifiably been cautious to ascribe environmental conditioning to the rich cultural diversities across the continent. Such theories were used to subjugate indigenous Africans as racially inferior and innately indolent and, as I discuss in Chapter 5, were also used by colonial officials and non-officials like to argue that Maasai traditional livestock husbandry was wasteful of resources (land) and that their large herds contributed to ecological degradation.

No doubt alert to the history of racial denigration at the hands of European colonialism, African environmental Africanist historians have been cautious to ascribe environmental determinism in shaping culture. Beinart had earlier drawn upon the legacy of the French *Annales* historians such as Lucien Febvre to critique geographer and evolutionary biologist Jared Diamond’s highly acclaimed *Guns, Germs and Steel*.⁸⁵ According to Beinart, Febvre argued that “culture and politics transcended specific environments” and had “insisted upon studying human history within the totality of the natural environment, or upon ‘geography’ as an element of history to energetically attack environmental determinants who laid too much emphasis on climate, or soil, in shaping culture.”⁸⁶

Climate, Environmental Determinism, and Human Agency in Precolonial Africa

To reconstruct human-environmental interactions during the precolonial period, African environmental history scholarship draws from other disciplines including archaeology,

⁸⁵ Beinart, “African History and Environmental History,” p. 286; Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel: A Short History of Everybody for the Last 13,000 years* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1998).

⁸⁶ Beinart, “African History and Environmental History,” pp. 269-270.

geography, geology, botany, including archaeological, botany, and linguistics. Climatic reconstructions often have varied interpretations. Paleoclimatic records during the wet Holocene period between 12000 and 3500 BCE, for example, have been used to reconstruct the spread of rainforests across the Congo Basin and West Africa and the independent innovations marked by the transition from hunting and gathering to the emergence of independent pastoral and agricultural economies.⁸⁷ Drawing from archaeological and linguistic records historians such as Christopher Ehret correlate the different climatic shifts during this time period to the spread of agropastoral civilizations across West Africa and the Sudan.

Cattle bone artefacts have recently been used to date the earliest independent domestication of cattle in Africa to around 8500-7500 BCE in the eastern Sahara while palaeoethnobotany places the development of seed agriculture including the cultivation of sorghum, gourds, and millet by 5000 BCE.⁸⁸ This revelation is a challenge to the widely held view that cattle were first introduced into the continent from western Asia through North Africa around 5000BCE.⁸⁹ Through linguistic stratigraphy, Ehret also uses the evidence of words connoting “cows” and “milking,” to support the archaeological evidence that the Sudanic Civilizations domesticated cattle as early 7000 BCE. Subsequently, these civilizations would enclose their homesteads with “thick thornbush fences” to safeguard the domestic animals from

⁸⁷ See e.g. Ehret, *The Civilizations of Africa: A History to 1800* (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 2002), pp. 59-62.

⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 66-76; Ehret, “Nilo-Saharan and the Saharo-Sudanese Neolithic,” in Thurstan Shaw, Paul Sinclair, Bassey Andah, and Alex Okpoko (eds.), *The Archaeology of Africa: Foods, Metals and Towns*, (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 104-25; Fred Wendorf and Romuald Schild, “Nabta Playa and Its Role in Northeastern African Prehistory,” *Anthropological Archaeology*, 20 (1998), pp. 97-123.

⁸⁹ See e.g. H. Epstein and Ian L. Mason (ed.), *Evolution of Domesticated Animals* (New York: Longman, 1984).

wild animal attacks.⁹⁰ Inferences can therefore be made that this time period provides evidence of early contestations between pastoralists and predators, which is useful in understanding the history of the current configurations of Maasai homesteads that are protected by thorn fences. For the contiguous East Africa, archaeological artefacts such as pottery, grindstones, and deep rock cut wells have also been used to place the first settlement of agriculturalists and pastoralists at around 1000 BCE.⁹¹

Judith Carney's *Black Rice* is more than just a parallel to Crosby's *The Columbian Exchange* as she weaves through the intricacies involving African rice, *Oryza glaberima*, and its origins in West Africa as early as 3500BCE, as well as its connections to slavery across the Atlantic world, from South Carolina to Brazil.⁹² It reinforces agriculture as a pervasive theme in African environmental history from earliest times to the present, besides the fact that it reiterates Crosby's theme of plant transfer across the continents. But *Black Rice* also contributes to other themes including how climatic shifts influence environmental change, gender and indigenous environmental knowledge, as well as the negative interplay between European imperialism and African natural resources. Carney describes how centuries before Europeans set foot on the West African coast, Africans had developed a labyrinth of elaborate irrigation channels that instead of plowing relied on gradient and the ebb and flow of tidal waves to sustainably grow rice in the fragile mangrove ecosystems. Women were also at the center of "such detailed knowledge [that] permitted the cultivation of rice under differing climatic and microenvironmental conditions over

⁹⁰ Ehret, *Sudanic Civilizations* (Washington, D.C.: American Historical Society, 2002), p.5.

⁹¹ See e.g. John Sutton, "The Settlement of East Africa," in Ogot (ed.), *Zamani: A Survey of East African History*, New Edition (Nairobi: East African Publishing Ltd, 1975), pp. 70-97.

⁹² Judith Carney, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

a broad region of West Africa.”⁹³

Elsewhere, Ehret discusses how the “clearing the grounds or plowing the lateritic soils—which would have then hardened when in contact with direct rainfall—would have otherwise compromised the future fertility of the land.”⁹⁴ Scott crystalizes a similar argument in his critique of the failure of Westernized “myopic credo of high-modernist agriculture” imposed in colonial and precolonial Africa that dismissed as rudimentary the practice of polyculture that was traditionally practiced by West African indigenous farmers.⁹⁵ Yet polyculture was not only effective in ensuring the delicate laterite soils were sheltered from extreme elements of wind, water, and the sun, the knowledge that was passed down through generations involved a complex understanding of diverse crops that were suited to specific environments and took into account the shifting and unpredictable patterns of these natural elements.⁹⁶ Ehret also places the specialized rice cultivation that was dependent on the tidal ebb and flow within the Niger Delta after 2000-1500 BCE when a marked decline in rainfall left this as the “major expanse of land with high potential.”⁹⁷ David Schoenbrun has built on these early agricultural innovations, which together with the discovery of iron metallurgy some 3000 years ago were critical in Bantu migration eastwards into the Great Lakes Region. Subsequently, the adoption of banana farming 1000 years later that did well in the “wet and dense rainforests” enabled them to inhabit and open

⁹³ Ibid., p. 68.

⁹⁴ Ehret, *The Civilizations of Africa*, p. 137.

⁹⁵ James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 273.

⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 274-275.

⁹⁷ Ehret, *Sudanic Civilizations*, pp. 27-28.

these up to settlement.⁹⁸

Africanist scholars have also incorporated climatology to review the rise and fall of precolonial African civilizations. Innocent Pikirayi in “Environmental Data and Historical Processes,” for example, revisits the debates, especially those pertinent to the role of environmental processes to the collapse of the Zimbabwe civilizations between the sixteenth and eighteenth century.⁹⁹ He reviews Portuguese documents relevant to this time period to challenge archeological evidence that primarily attribute environmental causation including droughts and famines to the collapse of Great Zimbabwe and other states in subsequent centuries.¹⁰⁰ Pikirayi argues that despite the series of droughts and famines, the principal driver of state collapses was the conflict among states as each sought to control the lucrative trade routes to and from the Indian Ocean that increased upon the arrival of the Portuguese in the later fifteenth century. While Great Zimbabwe’s collapse coincided with the arrival of the Portuguese, Pikirayi argues it was still subjected to population explosions and internal strife, which exacerbated resource implosion, to effectively cope with the droughts and famine. Mutapa and other states met similar fates as wars intensified. Like Great Zimbabwe, its collapse was precipitated with the overexploitation of resources such as minerals, wildlife, and livestock that fueled its trade with the Portuguese.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ See David L. Schoenbrun, *A Green Place, a Good Place: Agrarian Change, Gender, and Social Identity in the Great Lakes Region to the 15th Century* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1998), p. 80.

⁹⁹ Innocent Pikirayi, “Environmental Data and Historical Processes: Historical Climatic Reconstruction and the Mutapa State, 1450-1862,” in Beinart and McGregor, *Social History and African Environments*, pp. 60-71.

¹⁰⁰ See e.g. Graham Connah, *African Civilizations: An Archaeological Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 261-262.

¹⁰¹ Pikirayi, “Environmental Data and Historical Processes,” pp. 61-62; David N. Beach, *The Shona and Zimbabwe, 900-1850: An Outline of the Shona History* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1980), p. 50.

Elsewhere, Edward Alpers has argued that though insignificant, the changes in the environment of East Central Africa from the late fifteenth to the nineteenth century was most likely the “work of humans.”¹⁰² In *Ivory and Slaves*, Alpers examines how the development of international trade impacted changes in the modes of production and subsistence economies, the political and social organizations of the Makua-Lomwe, Yao, and Maravi peoples of East Central Africa. For the Yao, for example, he demonstrates how long distance trade in ivory and slaves from the late seventeenth and late eighteenth centuries, respectively, eventually supplanted their formerly agricultural economy. The agricultural economy was primarily the domain of women, an arrangement that allowed men to participate in other activities such as small-scale supplemental hunting.¹⁰³ Subsequently, as men engaged in the more lucrative ivory and slave trades—albeit with mixed fortunes as Arabs and Europeans merchants often dominated the profits—these came to define social and political stratification and also contributed to the overexploitation of elephant populations and other ecological degradations.¹⁰⁴

In contrast, before the 1900s Jan Vansina writes that the Central African Ituri forest inhabitants endeavored to master technological advancements, whether this was through trade or their own innovation, so as to optimize but not maximize food production. Hence, their drive to improve “fishing, hunting, and gathering gadgets...was rooted in a desire to achieve higher returns, but not at any cost.”¹⁰⁵ Likewise, societal morals that guided community decorum were

¹⁰² Edward Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves: Changing Pattern of International Trade in East Central Africa to the Later Nineteenth Century* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975), p. 5.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-19, 29-31, 251-253.

¹⁰⁵ Jan Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforest: Towards a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), p. 92.

based upon the cosmological beliefs of the Ituri people and generally kept in check those who sought maximization of wealth beyond individual needs else one might be accused of witchcraft, which was considered beyond earthly redemption.¹⁰⁶

Most notably, Richard Waller's "Emutai" links the catastrophic droughts and epizootic disease outbreaks in the late 1800s that adversely affected human and animal populations to the early alliance between the Maasai and the British. Coupled with years of internecine strife, famine, smallpox and cholera caused havoc on the human population, with estimates of 50 percent depopulation, while rinderpest and pleuro-pneumonia ravaged Maasai livestock, decimating upwards of 90 percent of their herds.¹⁰⁷ Maasai leaders such as Lenana were therefore believed to have entered into an earlier alliance with the British in a weakened state that engaged several hundred Maasai to serve as levies within the British-led pacification expeditions against recalcitrant communities such as the Nandi and the Kikuyu in the late 1890s and early 1900s. For their support, the Maasai were allowed to keep the confiscated livestock (war booty) and thus replenish their stock.¹⁰⁸ Just as they had historically sought refuge with their Kikuyu neighbors and even engaged in agriculture as an alternative form of sustenance it seemed that the Maasai—who had also engaged in cattle raids to replenish lost stock—did not view their alliance as any different to previous ones.¹⁰⁹

In the course of their alliance, however, Gordon Mungeam and Robert Tignor argue that

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p.97.

¹⁰⁷ Richard Waller, "Emutai: Crisis and Response in Maasailand 1883-1902," in Johnson and Anderson (eds.), *The Ecology of Survival*, pp. 72-112.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ See e.g. Waller, "Origin of an Alliance," p. 535.

as levies who witnessed the brutal suppression and scorched earth policy with which British forces broke Kikuyu and Nandi resistance, including with the use of the Maxim gun, it would have been foolhardy for the psychologically-scarred Maasai to think they could wage any successful armed resistance. Dissuasion thus became a factor in their choice to ally as opposed to resist.¹¹⁰ Paul Pavlis, however, in opposition to these views and more in disbelief that despite their reputed fearsome reputation the Maasai had offered no stiff resistance to colonial rule,¹¹¹ suggests that such claims merely “accepted the bromide that the Maasai constantly terrorized their neighbors, especially the Kikuyu and had become the most ferocious warriors in East Africa.”¹¹² The complacency of such scholarship, he contends, was due to the overreliance on informal literature by missionaries and explorers from the 1850s and influential settlers, including Elspeth Huxley. Yet Tignor had also argued that in the few notable cases in which the moran violently resisted the British, localized as these were, they reflected their displeasure with the imposition of various policies such as conscription and mandatory schooling as happened in 1918.¹¹³ More recently, Waller has reviewed these protests within the context of youth protest across East Africa to claim that the morans were protesting British appointment of elders and other leaders that was not aligned with Maasai social and political institutions.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Gordon H. Mungeam, *British Rule in Kenya, 1895-1912* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), pp. 39-40; Robert Tignor, “The Maasai Warriors: Pattern Violence in Colonial Kenya” *The Journal of African Studies*, 13, 2 (1972), pp. 271-290.

¹¹¹ Paul A. Pavlis, “The Maasai and the Mau-Mau Movement: Avenues for Future Research,” in William Ochieng and Karim K. Janmohamed (eds.), *Some Perspectives on the Mau Movement: Special Issue of Kenya Historical Review*, 5, 2 (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1977), pp. 253-273.

¹¹² Pavlis, “The Maasai and the Mau Mau Movement,” p. 254.

¹¹³ Tignor, “Pattern Alliance,” p. 273.

¹¹⁴ Richard Waller, “Bad Boys in the Bush,” in Andrew Burton and Hélène Charton-Bigot (eds.), *Generations Past: Youth in East African History* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010), pp. 135-174.

Colonial Science, Readings and Misreading the African Landscape

The narrative that often characterizes Africa's indigenous people's traditional livelihood as being inimical to the environment while crediting human agency in Europe with environmental consciousness was commonplace in colonial Africa. Western science and its assumptions about indigenous modes of production often relegated traditional knowledge as inferior. The sub-theme of political ecology in African environmental historiography thus emphasizes high handed imposition of colonial agricultural and environmental policies. These policies were also often accompanied by land alienation to promote wildlife and forestry that naturally bred African resistance. It was thus not a surprise that Africanist environmental scholarship in the 1970s was considered radical and set in opposition to colonial science and environmental policies.¹¹⁵

Political scientist and economist Helge Kjekshus's 1977 *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East African History* remains one of the influential texts in African environmental historiography. Adopting an anti-colonial rhetoric, it drew as much praise as criticism. The seminal study reflected the major themes of African environmental history including demography, wildlife conservation, agriculture, and indigenous conservationist agency. Its interdisciplinary scholarship also drew upon a wide range of disciplines like ecology, history, and anthropology; Kjekshus used these sources to complement his revision of archival sources such as documents by early explorers and missionaries.¹¹⁶ Briefly, he argued that the

¹¹⁵ See e.g. Beinart, "African History and Environmental History," p. 271; Fiona MacKenzie, "Contested Ground: Colonial Narratives and the Kenya Environment, 1920-1945," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26, 4 (2000), pp. 697-781; Neumann, *Imposing Wilderness*.

¹¹⁶ See e.g., Tore Linne Eriksen, *Modern African History: Some Historical Observations* (Uppsala: The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1979), p. 9.

intrusion of an overtly capitalistic colonial economy had adversely affected the ability of native Tanzanian agro-pastoralists to withstand climatic uncertainties and diseases such as smallpox and rinderpest leading to ecological and social collapse, including a large-scale demographic collapse in the scale of slave trade proportions.¹¹⁷

In contrast, Kjekshus detailed how prior to the arrival of Europeans, Africans practiced varied forms of economic sustenance including low-scale shifting agriculture and pastoralism that exerted less ecological stress while also allowing for surplus production. The introduction of mechanized agriculture during the colonial period exacerbated ecological degradation and as Africans favored mechanized agriculture over their traditional hoes, for example, their ability to revert to former sustainable modes of production was compromised when in subsequent years the administration did not invest in maintenance or upgrading of the new technology.¹¹⁸

Kjekshus also concluded that subsequent to demographic collapses of up to 50 percent in some areas, the absence of humans had far reaching effects to their future sustenance and ecological imbalances. The intensification of unchecked bush growth which allowed for increased tsetse fly infestation that then created a buffer zone for wildlife to proliferate while making these areas inhabitable for livestock keeping.¹¹⁹ Leroy Vail's "Ecology and History," also published in 1977, made similar arguments that linked a decline in pastoral economies to the spread of tsetse fly infestations during the colonial period.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Kjekshus, *Ecology Control and Economic Development*, pp. 22- 25.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 36-46.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 79.

¹²⁰ Leroy Vail, "Ecology and History: The Example of Eastern Zambia," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 3 (1977), pp. 129-155.

Among the first to critique Kjekshus's text was John Iliffe who argued that it lacked a critical and comprehensive representation of indigenous Tanzanian's oral histories and traditions. He questioned why, for example, Kjekshus adopted farming models from West Africa that were not compatible with those of precolonial Tanzanians to support his claims.¹²¹ Similarly, Tore Eriksen also explicitly challenged the demographic collapse narrative as being proportionate to the lives lost during the slave trade. Besides the gross misstatement of the fact, Eriksen suggested that Kjekshus also overlooked other variables such as social inequality and political developments as had been successfully employed elsewhere.¹²² Alpers, for example, details how slaving accentuated social inequality among various African groups where populations that were decimated could not match up with those who profited from engaging in the slave trade.¹²³

Indeed, with his overreliance on a materialistic theory, Kjekshus's work exemplifies the problem that runs through many degradation narratives in which Africans and their environments are often presented as timeless, static, and ever-resilient irrespective of complex variables that obviously undermine these characteristics.¹²⁴ In a revised second edition published in 1996 with a new introduction, Kjekshus begrudgingly acknowledges some of these criticisms, especially

¹²¹ John Iliffe, "Farm and Fly in Tanganyika," Review of Helge Kjekshus' *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East African History: The case of Tanganyika, 1850-1950* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1977), *The Journal of African History*, 19, 1 (1978), pp. 139-141.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹²³ See Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves*.

¹²⁴ See e.g. James McCann, "Agriculture and African History," *Journal of African History*, 19 (1978), pp. 139-140; David Anderson, Review of Helge Kjekshus' *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East African History: The Case of Tanganyika, 1850-1950*, reprint edition, with New Introduction and Additional Bibliography (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1996), *Environment and History*, 3, 1 (1998), pp. 109-111; Maddox, "Africa and Environmental History," p. 166. Cf. Maddox, Giblin, and Kimambo's critique of Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanzania* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp.12; 75-75 and Ronald E. Seavoy, *Famine in East Africa: Food Production and Food Policies* (New York: Westport Press, 1989), especially Chapter 2.

his data on the effects of the slave trade.¹²⁵ Yet for all its weaknesses one cannot doubt the influence of *Ecology Control and Economic Development* in highlighting indigenous environmental agencies and inspiring scholarly debate.

One of the significant texts to build on Kjekshus's pioneering work was *Custodians of the Land*. Although this anthology focused mostly on the livelihoods and economies of rural Tanzanians it also reflected African environmental historiographies' theoretical shifts in the early 1990s. The book's "Introduction" set the stage for a departure from past environmental literature by seeking to "avoid both the 'Merrie Africa' and 'Primitive Africa' tendencies..." so as to avoid "depicting precolonial societies in overly romantic hues by making untenable assertions [or placing] so much stress upon the precariousness of precolonial life that [might otherwise] suggest [Africans'] inability to overcome environmental adversity."¹²⁶ The studies reflected interdisciplinary methodological approaches that also included the incorporation of oral sources.

The contributors to *Custodians of the Land*, having identified the problem of chronological reconstruction in Kjekshus work,¹²⁷ also sought to address developments across time and space. In doing so they reveal the essence of continuity and change that was reflected within indigenous traditions and that also included their perceptions of nature, which have

¹²⁵ Kjekshus, *Ecology Control and Economic Development*, Second Impression with New Introduction and Additional Bibliography (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1996), Introduction, pp. xii-xxxi. Cf. Dorothy Hodgson. Review of Helge Kjekshus' *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East African History: The Case of Tanganyika, 1850-1950, Second Impression with New Introduction and Additional Bibliography* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1996), *Human Ecology*, 25, 2 (1997), pp. 35-37.

¹²⁶ Maddox, Giblin, and Kimambo (eds.), *Custodians of the Land*, p. 8.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 7. In this case the editors draw from James McCann who also critiqued Kjekshus's work as a "two-dimensional image of empirical study of agronomy, crop repertoires, disease, and climate patterns" to reflect chronology and change over space and time. Cf. James McCann, "Agriculture and African History," *Journal of African History*, 19 (1991), pp. 139-140.

always been subject to both short-term and long-term internal and external exigencies.¹²⁸

Custodians of the Land also evaluates how demography is critical to understanding the intricate nexus between environmental change and political economies at any time in history. Studies on demographic changes by Juhani Koponen, as well as on the environment and economic history by Christopher Conte, for example, described how these were dynamic and were always subject to long-term climatic, social, economic, and political changes during and after the colonial period. The chapters on “Environment and Morality” also contribute to our understanding of the changes in perceptions of nature among African communities before, during, and after the colonial period.¹²⁹ Indeed, *Ecology Control and Economic Development* has remained relevant to later developments in African environmental historiography.

Beinart’s article “African and Environmental History” was one of the comprehensive reviews of African environmental historiography to 2000. It reiterated most of the aforementioned issues but also proposed among other topics an elaborate interdisciplinary scholarship—in the true sense of the word that should be based upon theoretically sound analyses of scientific sources and assumptions that underpin most conservation initiatives. Beinart also emphasized deeper analyses of local knowledge through further oral methodology that took into account change over time, especially as a result of socio-economic and political changes after the colonial period, as well as further studies on political ecology.¹³⁰ Some of these suggestions had already been carried out and perhaps only reflected regional imbalances in

¹²⁸ Maddox, Giblin, and Kimambo (eds.), *Custodians of the Land*, pp. 15-17.

¹²⁹ See e.g., Thomas Spear, “The Political and Moral Economies of Land on Mount Meru,” pp. 213-240; Christopher Conte, “Ecological History in the Plateau Forests of the West Usambara Mountains,” pp. 96-122; Juhani Koponen, “Population: A Dependable Variable,” pp. 19-42—all in *Custodians of the Land*.

¹³⁰ Beinart, “African History and Environmental History,” pp. 289-291.

African environmental scholarship.

The pioneering works of Yusuf Lawi and Tamara Giles-Vernick, both in 1999, used “cognitive” issues to study how indigenous peoples’ perceptions of nature had evolved over time and space even when it was clear some of these had been lost in memory.¹³¹ Lawi’s “May the Spider Web Blind Witches and Wild Animals” and “Where Physical and Ideological Landscapes Meet” focus on the Iraqw of central Tanzania. He analyses their oral traditions and limited written records available by the 1890s and how the “core cultural and social principles [guided] landscape and natural resource use” sustainably prior to the European contact.¹³² These traditions, he writes, remained relatively intact until the 1920s with “predictable ecological zones, homesteads, and environmental beliefs.”¹³³ By the 1940s, however, these cultural values exhibited significant declines that he attributes to the changing economic, social (education, religion, and demographic), and political influences.¹³⁴ By the 1960s, Lawi asserts that Iraqw forests were almost depleted due to unrestricted use by locals and by outsiders thus literally facing the “tragedy of the commons.”¹³⁵ Lawi also maintains that “the emphasis on the role of ecological ideas on landscape utilization should not be construed as cultural determinism,” since he takes into account that although the Iraqw appropriated nature to their needs from previous

¹³¹ See Yusuf Lawi, “May the Spider Web Blind Witches and Wild Animals: Local Knowledge and the Political Ecology of Natural Resource Use in Iraqwland, Tanzania, 1900-1985” (Unpublished Ph.D. Boston University, 1999); Tamara Giles-Vernick, “We Wander Like Birds: Migration, Indigeneity, and the Fabrication of Frontiers in the Sangha Basin of Equatorial Africa,” *Environmental History*, 4, 2 (1999), pp. 168-97. See especially Maddox’s review “Africa and Environmental History,” p.6.

¹³² Lawi, “May the Spider Web Blind Witches and Wild Animals,” and Yusuf Q. Lawi, “Where physical and ideological landscapes meet: Landscape use and ecological knowledge in Iraqw, northern Tanzania, 1920s-1950s,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* (1999), pp. 281-310.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid., pp. 288-291.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 300.

traditions, they nonetheless adopted a pragmatic approach in light of “new challenges and experiences.”¹³⁶ Besides, Lawi stresses the need for critical analysis of oral sources. He noticed there were differences in the interpretations of landscape ideology between his younger and older informants with the formers’ interpretations being closer to direct English translations.¹³⁷

Giles-Vernick’s studies among the Mpiemu-speakers of Cameroon and Central Africa reveal that they invoke their oral traditions to reminisce about their lost cultural and economic fortunes that have historically revolved around the Sangha forest. To the Mpiemu-speakers the protectionist conservationist policies of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) are the cause of their current impoverishment.¹³⁸ In Giles-Vernick’s *Cutting Down the Vines*, a testament to the dangers of simplistic reiteration of the resiliency of African environments without factoring in cultural malleability, she argues that “perception alone does not guide how environments, people, and resources constitute one another.”¹³⁹ These views are certainly significant to this study with regard to the pastoral Maasai who have certainly not been immune to cross-cultural influences over the past 150 years.

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed Africanist scholarship that challenged colonial science and the degradation narratives propelled by the depiction of Africa as a continent facing a perpetual environmental crisis. James Fairfield and Melissa Leach are among those scholars who have challenged colonial and Western scientific models like the equilibrium theories. They

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 296.

¹³⁷ Ibid. p. 285.

¹³⁸ Tamara Giles-Vernick, “*Doli*: Translating an African Environmental History of Loss in the Sangha River Basin of Equatorial Guinea,” *Journal of African History*, 41 (2000), pp. 373-394.

¹³⁹ Tamara Giles-Vernick, *Cutting the Vines of the Past: Environmental Histories of the Central African Rainforest* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2002), p. 202.

adopt a “pluralistic eco-historical approach” to argue against how Western science systematically “misread” traditional agro-ecological practices as being prone to degradation which then informed governmental environmental policies in colonial and independent Africa.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, scholars have also convincingly correlated the observable environmental crises and degradation in colonial and contemporary Africa to climate and other non-human factors.

Positing a moral aspect of colonial science, David Anderson and other scholars, however, argue that while colonial conservationist policies were often uncritically presented as superior to traditional knowledge, it was the manner in which they were implemented, rather than the intent (moral obligation) that bred African resistance. Writing about colonial Kenya’s soil conservation policies in the 1930s, Anderson states that while the colonial state “may have been correct in its policies and wise to resort to compulsion, it failed to show the farmer what tangible benefits it could do on the land, and rarely could it provide an adequate incentive for this effort.”¹⁴¹

Accusing postcolonial African governments of “historical amnesia,” W. H Connelly contends current developmental policies including those seeking to reduce soil erosion are not any different from those imposed during the colonial period.¹⁴²

Demography, Gender, and the Environment

In recent years feminist scholars have begun to interrogate fruitfully the relationship between gender and the environment. In this study I limit my discussion to pertinent Maasai

¹⁴⁰ James Fairfield and Melissa Leach, *Misreading the African Landscape: Challenging Received Wisdom on the African Environment* (Oxford: James Currey, 1996); Leach and Robin Mearns (eds.), *Lie of the Land: Challenging Received Wisdom on the African Environment* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1996).

¹⁴¹ David Anderson, “Depression, Dust Bowl, Demography and Drought: The Colonial State and Soil Conservation in East Africa During the 1930s,” *African Affairs*, 83, 332 (1984), pp. 321-343.

¹⁴² W. Thomas Connelly, “Colonial Era Livestock Development Policy: Introduction of Improved Dairy Cattle in High-potential Farming Areas of Kenya,” *World Development*, 26, 9 (1998), pp. 1733-1748.

mythologies that reflect their relationship with wild animals and the environment manifested in the totemic association of women as custodians of wildlife in contrast to men as the owners of cattle.¹⁴³ Two central themes have dominated these studies within the last two decades. At its core, the motif is that the environment is inherently gendered. Nature's symbolism in gendered terms thus has powerful resonance. The second common theme is the subject of power relations.¹⁴⁴

Many of these studies feature women's inequality in access to and control over resources. With the universality of patriarchy gender thus becomes a critical tool of analysis for socio-cultural, economic, and political structures, as well as the environment. Some of the most prominent voices have been those of Dorothy Hodgson and Naomi Kipuri who argue that contrary to conventional knowledge that depicts Maasai social structure as highly paternalistic, this arrangement only became the case during and after the colonial period, and further manifested in the androcentric power bias in independent Kenya. Fiona Mackenzie also remains one of the fiercest critics of colonial science and conservatism and how these accentuated the marginalization of women in social, economic and political circle.¹⁴⁵ Economic theorists Kevin

¹⁴³ Most of these mythologies are well documented in popular and scholarly literature, see e.g. Sidney L. Hinde and Hildegard B. S. Hinde, *The Last of the Masai* (London: William Heinemann, 1901); Alfred Claude Hollis, *The Masai: Their Language and Folklore* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905); David Western *In the Dust of Amboseli* (Washington D.C.: Island Press, 2002).

¹⁴⁴ See e.g. Kathleen Sheldon, "Writing About Women: Approaches to a Gendered Perspective in African History," in John Edward Philips, *Writing African History* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2006), pp. 465-489.

¹⁴⁵ See e.g. Dorothy Hodgson, "Once Intrepid Warriors?": Modernity and the Production of Maasai Masculinities," *Ethnology*, 38, 2 (1999), pp. 121-150; Naomi Ole Kipuri "Age, Gender and Class in the Scramble for Maasailand," *Nature and Resources: Managing Our Common Resources*, 27, 4 (1991), pp. 10-17; Kipuri, "Seeking space in Postcolonial Politics: the case of Indigenous Peoples in East Africa," In Kathrin Wessendorf (ed.), *Challenging Politics: Indigenous Peoples' Experiences with Political Parties and Elections* (Copenhagen: Eks-Skolens, 2001), pp. 246-277; Kipuri, "Human rights violation and indigenous peoples of Africa: The case of the Maasai people," In Julian Kunnie and Nomalungelo Ivy Goduka (eds.), *Indigenous Peoples' Wisdom And Power: Affirming Our Knowledge Through Narratives* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 246-256; Fiona D. Mackenzie, "Contested Ground: Colonial Narratives and the Kenyan Environment, 1920-1945," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26, 4

Cleaver and Gotz Scheiber adopt a neo-Malthusian approach to romanticize a precolonial “Merrie Africa” past where sparse human populations crisscrossed the vast continent as transhumant pastoralists or as subsistence cultivators of the land through shifting and fallowing to contend these factors as well as the “limited capital and limited technological know-how,” contributed to “ecological and economic equilibrium.”¹⁴⁶ They juxtapose this positivist view with a pessimistic gloom that has befallen the continent since the 1960s. In countries such as Zambia and Ghana, the authors argue that in the face of an exponential population growth that encroaches on rapidly dwindling forests, gender imbalances in the rural areas and the inability of African governments to advance technological and environmental management plans to counter rapidly changing environments has resulted in poor agricultural productivity and exacerbated ecological degradation.¹⁴⁷

Cleaver and Schreiber reiterate how the aforementioned factors contribute to an endless cycle of poverty, environmental degradation, and higher population growth and is compounded, albeit tacitly, by the changing gender roles in modern African economies. They posit that the absence of adult male labor in rural areas—an imbalance that has its roots in the colonial legacy of rural-urban migration—and the lack of capital intensive technology, places an extra burden on women as the ultimate heads of households to perpetuate this cycle. In the pervasive polygynous African households women who otherwise find themselves engaged in labor intensive farming practices that yield little may be less inclined to “*demand* fewer children as they seek social and

(2000), pp. 697-718; Mackenzie, “Land Tenure and Biodiversity: An Exploration in the Political Ecology of Murang’a District, Kenya,” *Human Organization*, 62, 3 (2003), pp. 255-266.

¹⁴⁶ Cleaver and Schreiber, “*Reversing the Spiral*,” pp. 4-8.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-10.

economic dependence on men and sons.”¹⁴⁸ Such simplistic reasoning perhaps only muddles the equally contentious debates over links between mechanized agriculture and accelerated ecological degradation.¹⁴⁹ Also debatable is Cleaver and Schreiber’s neo-Malthusian approach that indirectly correlates rising fertility rates to prevailing social and economic factors.

Besides, pre-independent African population censuses were episodic and unreliable with only two censuses, in 1948 and 1962, being carried out in colonial Kenya. Consequently, one may question the validity of the science to correlate the rise and fall in fertility rates to the “bursts and booms” that Africa’s populations have experienced since the earliest times to present.¹⁵⁰ On the back of Kenya’s high national birth rate that stood at 3.9 percent by the early 1990s, Isaac Singida’s work among the Kenya Maasai looked at the reasons why they had an impaired fertility rate that stood at a much lower birth rate of 2.2 percent in comparison, as well as how this was reflected in women’s roles and their effect on fertility.¹⁵¹ Focusing on Narok District, Singida argues that a combination of semi-nomadism and low education levels among girls played a role in this imbalance. Essentially, the longer girls pursued education, especially if they attained higher diplomas and degrees, the more likely they were to delay marriage while girls who got married at a younger age were also likely to exhibit poor hygiene levels which might also factor into lower fertility rates.¹⁵² In the long-term, however, Singida postulates a stable trend towards higher fertility rates as the Maasai progressively transition from

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ See e.g. McCann, “Agriculture and African History”; Johnson and Anderson (eds.), *The Ecology of Survival*.

¹⁵⁰ See e.g. Isaac Singida, *Population Change Among the Maasai* (Addis Ababa: OSSREA, 1996), “preface”; p. 22.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 1-2.

¹⁵² Ibid., pp. 28-29.

a largely pastoral to a mixed agro-pastoral or even exclusive settled forms of agriculture. A population increase would in turn increase pressure on the fragile Narok District ecosystem.¹⁵³

Barbara Thomas-Slater and Dianne Rocheleau, in contrast to Cleaver and Schreiber, espouse a more explicit view of women as the driving force behind the 1980s and 1990s efforts seeking sustainable energy use and alleviation of soil erosion in rural Kenya. For most Kenyan communities where traditional customs excluded women from inheriting family land, increased land individuation during this period exacerbated gender-based inequality and marginalization.¹⁵⁴ The authors argue that while male political dominance inhibits the power of women to “maintain state stability, engage in political participation, and [effective] resource allocation,” women who in absence of their husbands are literally the heads of households also have to deal directly with the challenges of resource overexploitation.¹⁵⁵ Faced by wood-fuel shortages, rural women in Kenya fully embraced energy-saving earth-ware cook-stoves and participated in reforestation that had far-reaching effects on the environment, including alleviating the soil erosion and ecological degradation.¹⁵⁶

But it is the work of Kenyan environmentalist and Nobel Peace Laureate Wangari Maathai, the doyenne of the feminist environmental movement in Africa and leader of The Green Belt Movement, that epitomizes the power of both women and grassroots organization to influence positivist environmental change in the face of male-dominated political intransigence.

¹⁵³ pp. 84-85.

¹⁵⁴ The promulgation of the 2010 Constitution in Kenya opened the door for daughters to inherit family land prior to which only male sons were considered.

¹⁵⁵ Barbara Thomas-Slater and Dianne Rocheleau, “Gender, Resources, Local Institutions: New Identities in Kenya’s Rural Women,” in Barbara Thomas-Slater and Dianne Rocheleau (eds.), *Gender, Environment and Development in Kenya: A Grassroots Perspective* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995), pp. 7-22.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-18.

From the *Green Belt Movement*, first published in 1985, to *Replenishing the Earth* (2010), Maathai's populist scholarship builds upon her own experience as a girl growing up in rural Kenya who witnesses changes to the environment that result from the mundane search for sustenance but also commercial resource overexploitation. She correlates the unsustainable demand for wood-fuel and commercial forest overexploitation to rivers drying up, while ineffective environmental regulation and pollution render clean water sources unfit for domestic use.¹⁵⁷ As the first person to notice these changing conditions, her work illuminates the power of the "individual" and "women empowerment" as rural women have engaged in grassroots reforestation programs throughout the country and the continent that have eased their predicaments to an extent but have also done something to challenge authoritarian regimes.

Yet, while no one can doubt Maathai's effectiveness as an environmentalist and human rights advocate who thrived at the intersection between politics and the environment, few would regard her brief stint as a politician and Assistant Minister for the Environment as anything but a failure. No significant environmental policies that reflected her stature as many Kenyans and the international community had expected were enacted. This failure is not an indictment of her persona *per se* but rather her subordinate position to a male who on paper lacked any prior knowledge or interest in environmental issues and who obviously reflected Kenya political machinations and bureaucratic intransigence. In fact, upon losing her political seat in a subsequent election she was instrumental in championing the overdue initiatives to arrest runaway deforestation that threatened the Mau Forest Range where tracts of land had been lost to

¹⁵⁷ See Wangari Maathai, *The Green Belt Movement: Sharing the Approach and the Experience*, Revised Edition (New York: Lantern Books, 2003); *Unbowed: A Memoir* (New York: Knopf, 2006); *The Challenge for Africa* (New York: Pantheon, 2009); *Replenishing the Earth: Spiritual Values for Healing Ourselves and the World* (New York: Doubleday, 2010).

human encroachment, most of which was politically instigated.¹⁵⁸

Maathai's failure as an assistant minister nonetheless brings to mind recent research by Kenyan historian Phoebe Musandu who raises important questions with regard to how we should conceptualize the roles of women in politics. Although Kenya's newly promulgated constitution demands that at least one-third of the legislators have to be women, Musandu wonders how effective women legislators will be when under the current political climate female political appointments seem to be mere "tokenism."¹⁵⁹ As I discuss in Chapter 6, one of the main challenges faced by MGRs in their capacity as wildlife sanctuaries is the push towards land individuation that gained ground during the 1990s. I point out how women have been systematically marginalized under the group ranch project since at its inception only males who had attained their eighteenth birthday were eligible for registration. No doubt resource-related marginalization of Maasai women is a fruitful area of study.

Heritage Parks & Indigenous Rights; Community Conservation & Development

Terence Ranger's 1989 "Whose Heritage is it?" exposed the racial divide that characterized claims to heritage of the Matopos Hills in Zimbabwe. While the indigenous people predicate their claim along lineage ancestry and spiritual attachments, the whites have continued to perceive the area as their leisurely recreational abode.¹⁶⁰ In South Africa, Jane Carruthers

¹⁵⁸ See e.g.

¹⁵⁹ See e.g. Phoebe Musandu, "Tokenism or Representation?: Priscilla Abwao's Nomination to Kenya's Legislative Council in 1961," paper presented during the "Migration and Sociopolitical Mobility in Africa and the African Diasporas International Conference Honoring Edward A. Alpers," held at University of California, Los Angeles, April 11, 2013.

Cf. Marc Michaelson, "Wangari Maathai and Kenya's Green Belt Movement: Exploring the Evolution and Potentialities of Consensus Movement Mobilization," *Social Problems*, 41 (1994), pp. 540-561.

¹⁶⁰ Terence Ranger, "Whose Heritage? The Case of the Matopos National Park," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 15, 2 (1989), pp. 217-249.

demonstrates how manifested in local versus state contestations over control of local and private parks are underlying socio-economic, political, as well as heritage and identity issues that are significant to both regional and national cohesion. By virtue of their definition as “national” parks or “national,” reserves, these protected areas that are symbols of national pride are equally capable of becoming vehicles for regional fragmentation and bitter ethnic-based resistance to state control.¹⁶¹

Recently, Michael Sheridan and Celia Nyamweru’s *African Sacred Groves* also dealt with the complexities that encumber deciphering the validity of indigenous landscape perceptions and claims to historical attachment to forests and other environments. As a case study, the authors focus on coastal Kenya’s Kaaya Forests, at the center of which are contestations are the local Mijikenda who claim spiritual attachment to the forest and regard themselves as “keepers of the forest,” from time immemorial. The Mijikenda are pitted against conservationists who primarily view the forests as endemic primeval relics that the local inhabitants threaten. Nyamweru disputes both accounts pointing to evidence revealing that since the coming of the Arabs to the coast the locals, including the revered “keepers of the forests”, have actively engaged in their commercialization and evolving status. The forests are thus anything but undisturbed.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ Carruthers, “Nationhood and National Parks: Comparative Examples from the Post-Imperial Experience,” in Griffiths and Robin (eds.), *Ecology and Empire*, pp. 125-138.

¹⁶² Celia Nyamweru and Michael J. Sheridan (eds.), *African Sacred Groves: Ecological Dynamics and Social Change* (Oxford: James Currey, 2008). Cf. Sabine Luning, “Ritual Territories as Local Heritage? Discourse on Disruptions in Society and Nature in Maane, Burkina Faso,” *Africa*, 77 (2007), pp. 86-103. These scholars explore forests as sacred nature spaces and as places of memory and power, which also enabled wild animals to proliferate with minimal disturbance. Also see David Maforo, “*Black White Relations in Kenya Game Policy: A Case Study of the Coast Province, 1895-1963*,” (University Microfilms, 1981), p. 5 Farieda Khan, “Rewriting South Africa’s Conservation History: The Role of the Native Farmers Association.” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 20, 4 (1994), pp. 499-516; Michael Thompson

The collection of essays in *African Wildlife and Livelihoods* remains one of the significant texts dedicated to the scholarship on community conservation premised along the concept that conservation and development, though mutually exclusive, at times work in opposition to each other. The anthology presents six-themed sections that explore the evolution of CBCs since the early 1980s, success, challenges, and future of community-based conservation efforts across Africa.¹⁶³ These themes are framed within three principle tenets of community conservation, “community-oriented as opposed to state-centric conservation initiatives; sustainable exploitation of natural resources; and market-driven incentives.”¹⁶⁴

Zimbabwe’s Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPIRE) remains one of the flagships of community conservation in Africa. It is perhaps befitting that CAMPFIRE features significantly in many of the issues addressed that include the meaning of “community” in resource management, restrictive governmental oversight, intra-communal differentiation in revenue appropriation, redistribution, and influencing conservation policies, as well as theoretical underpinnings of community conservation.¹⁶⁵ James Murombedzi and Russell Taylor, in particular, cite the ambiguities surrounding the ownership of land in Zimbabwe and the contestations between state and local representatives that have been identified as the main challenges that bedevil most CBCs.¹⁶⁶

and Katherine Homewood, “Entrepreneurs, Elites, and Exclusion in Maasailand: Trends in Wildlife Conservation and Pastoralist Development,” *Human Ecology*, 30, 1, (2002), pp.107-138.

¹⁶³ David Hulme and Marshall Murphee (eds.), *African Wildlife and Livelihoods: The Promise and Performance of Community Conservation* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2001), especially the co-editors’ “Introduction,” pp. 1-12.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ See e.g. in *ibid.*, Jones and Murphee, “The Evolution of Policy” pp. 49-51; Murphee, “A Case Study in Ecotourism Development from Mahenye, Zimbabwe,” pp. 177-194; Ivan Bond, “CAMPFIRE and the Incentives for Institutional Change,” pp. 227-243.

¹⁶⁶ James Murombedzi, “Communities, Rights, Costs and Benefits,” pp. 208-226; Russell Taylor, “Participatory

As antitheses to state-controlled conservation and development initiatives, the role of local and international non-governmental organizations are also widely evaluated. Across much of Africa, however, wildlife as a natural resource is considered public or state property and thus presents a dilemma. This arrangement is certainly true in Kenya with notable exceptions in South Africa where private owned preservation areas dominate. In Kenya, the mandate of KWS to oversee the conservation of wildlife in both private and public property attests to this reality and the dilemma it presents when it comes to local versus state rights.¹⁶⁷ MGRs, and CBCs in general, have mostly been predicated on the existence of an assumed traditional conservation ethic but with a strong economic rationale. The premise is that economic and social returns to local populations will go a long way in alleviating contestations over resource use, including promoting wildlife and forest conservation. Within CBCs and much of rural Africa therefore, poverty alleviation is seen as inseparable from natural resource conservation.

With CBCs promoted as the panacea to human-wildlife contestations, often ignored is the question raised by scholars like Jeffrey Hackel and Dan Brockington who both wonder what should happen in the event that CBCs are economically viable. Hackel argues that the economic returns from wildlife are generally marginal to those in the rural areas and thus while CBCs can “work to produce a better relationship between wildlife and people,” their efforts are doomed to fail unless “a vast improvement in the lives of rural Africans is achieved.”¹⁶⁸ Brockington,

Natural Resource Monitoring and Management: Implications for Conservation,” pp. 267-279, both in Hulme and Murphree, *African Wildlife and Livelihoods*.

¹⁶⁷ See e.g., Edmund Barrow, Helen Gichohi, and Mark Infield, “The Evolution of Community Conservation Policy and Practice in East Africa,” in Hulme and Murphree (eds.), *African Wildlife and Livelihoods*, pp. 59-73; Brian Jones and Murphree, “The Evolution of Policy on Community Conservation in Namibia and Zimbabwe,” in Hulme and Murphree (eds.), pp. 38-58.

¹⁶⁸ Jeffrey D. Hackel, “Community Conservation and the Future of Africa’s Wildlife,” *Conservation Biology*, 13, 4 (1999), pp. 726-734.

however, offers a more controversial proposition to the debate on whether local participation is vital to the future of protected areas. He proposes that in locations where local people are unwilling to recognize the value of protected areas as their own, then the imposition of state or outside control is imperative to protect fragile ecosystems. The power of fortress conservation in ensuring the global environmental sustainability (think globally act locally), he contends, should not be held hostage to competing local politics.¹⁶⁹

It equally behooves us to revisit Akama's and Guha's musings, as discussed briefly in Chapter 1, pertaining to the interplay between environmental conservation and the politics of neoliberalism that accentuate class and social inequalities. For former colonies like Kenya and India, these contestations are intricately linked to the politics of decolonization as well as the environmental politics of neoliberalism.¹⁷⁰ As Basil Davidson succinctly states, "the transfer of power at independence [for African governments], was above all, a transfer of crisis."¹⁷¹ In their search for economic security newly independent African governments during the 1960s and early 1970s initiated policies that propelled rapid industrialization, mechanized large-scale agricultural development, pastoral rangeland development, and forestry extraction.¹⁷² Kenya continued to advance the agricultural and rangeland development projects such as the MGRs that had been

¹⁶⁹ Dan Brockington, "Community Conservation, Inequality and Injustice: Myths of Power in Protected Areas Management," *Conservation & Society*, 2, 2 (2004), p. 411.

¹⁷⁰ Ramachandra Guha, "The Authoritarian Biologist and the Arrogance of Anti-Humanism: Wildlife Conservation in the Third World," *The Ecologist*, 27 (1997), pp. 14-20; Guha, "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique" *Environmental Ethics*, 11 (1989), pp. 71-83; John Akama, "Neocolonialism, Dependency and External Control of Africa's Tourism Industry: A Case Study of Wildlife Safari in Kenya," in Michael C. Hall and Hazel Tucker (eds.), *Tourism and Postcolonialism* (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 140-152.

¹⁷¹ Basil Davidson, *The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State* (New York: Times Books, 1992), p. 190.

¹⁷² See e.g. Richard P. Tucker, *A Century of Environmental Transitions* (Washington D.C.: American Historical Association, 2011), p. 17.

initiated during the colonial period. The country also embarked on an aggressive campaign that witnessed the creation of national parks and reserves soon after independence as it sought to harness the potential of wildlife-based tourism to contribute greatly to its national economy. If the Maasai hoped independence would prevent further appropriation of their land for wildlife conservation, they were soon proved wrong.

Unlike in colonial Kenya where competing interests among white officials and non-officials marked government ambivalence towards wildlife conservation, such interests did not automatically transfer at independence. Increasingly, however, international conservation groups that had been growing in stature after the Second World War were directly or indirectly driving most of the wildlife preservation initiatives.¹⁷³ Many of these international groups were fronted by former European colonial powers in the wake of the proceedings of the Bukavu Conference of 1953 that by itself was a turning point for environmental conservation in Africa.¹⁷⁴ The conference was organized by the Belgian Government and brought together the Commission for Technical Cooperation in Africa South of the Sahara, UNESCO, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, the International Council for Bird Preservation, and the Scientific Council for Africa. It followed studies carried out from the 1930s through the early 1950s by Belgian, French, and American ecologists in the Congo forests and East African savannahs, respectively.¹⁷⁵ During these studies scientists identified plants and animals such as

¹⁷³ See e.g. Reuben Matheka, "The International Dimension of the Politics of Wildlife Conservation in Kenya," pp. 113-114.

¹⁷⁴ *Proceedings of the Third International Conference for the Protection of the Fauna and Flora of Africa*, Bukavu, October 26-31, 1953 (Belgian Congo: Commission, 1953).

¹⁷⁵ For a comprehensive review of the Conference and the specific studies see Kai Curry-Lindhal, "The Story of Conservation in Africa During the 1960s," *Biological Conservation*, 6, 3 (1974): 170-178.

elephants as keystone species that were critical to successive ecological regimes but which were threatened by changes to land use and overexploitation of natural resources.¹⁷⁶

Simply put, Africans were now considered as presenting the single most threat to African ecosystem and Europe and America were uncomfortable with entrusting the incoming African governments to put in place sound environmental policies. Henceforth, international environmental politics, a key theme in African environmental historiography, as attested by Akama's critique of wildlife-based tourism and protected areas, became intertwined with the politics of decolonization. The continued presence of international environmental conservation groups such as IUCN, UNEP, and WWF in the history of Kenya's wildlife conservation since the early 1970s attests to this partnership.¹⁷⁷ For the most part this partnership, as I elaborate in Chapter 6, was underpinned by the rationale that national parks and national reserves were seen as promoting wild animal species conservation for the public good. Recent developments, however, for which I am unreservedly aligned with Akama and Guha, point to wildlife conservation accentuating social and class divides.

John and Jean Comaroff's *Ethnicity Inc.*, is particularly instructive in understanding the disturbing trend where in some cases protected areas have transitioned from serving the public good to serving corporate gain. A case can be made that for the most part local and international environmental conservation bodies such as UNEP and WWF have endeavored to promote conservation for the general public good. Nature Conservancy's recent acquisition of Lewa Downs, a private ranch in Kenya, however, points to the promotion of wildlife for individual gain. Lewa Downs Conservancy was until this acquisition a private family ranch that also

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 173-175.

¹⁷⁷ See e.g., Matheka, "The International Dimension," pp. 113-114.

doubled up as a successful rhino sanctuary, hosting and breeding rhinos, many of which had been relocated there from other parts of the country to safeguard them from the menace of poaching in the 1980s. The problem, however, is that with perhaps the cheapest accommodation within Lewa Downs costing US\$500 per day, such costs are outside the reach of not just many of the locals but also to many international visitors.¹⁷⁸

No doubt African environmental historiography encompasses a wide range of multidisciplinary perspectives. The complex interplay between human-environmental reciprocities has remains pertinent to it rich and diverse literature that revolves around cultural and ethnic identity as well as how these relate to landscape, both in its physical and ideological constructs. Equally manifested within the complexities of human-environmental interactions are social, economic, and political constructions. By the early 1980s the myth of a “Merrie Africa” that exhibited a human-ecological equilibrium had all but been debunked and there has been a wide acceptance among scholars that while unpredictable climatic shifts and other natural factors such as diseases influence African social and economic activities, there is no doubt that human activity has the ability to effect the environment in various ways. In contrast to the earlier disciplinary rigidities that often set traditional African environmental ethos in opposition to Western environmental ideologies, recent trends towards transnational and international collaboratory scholarship certainly reflect the interconnected global world for which local environmental issues are never far from affecting other regions of the world.

Just as much, we must also accept that over the past 160 years Maasai environmental ideologies that often guarded against indiscriminate resource extraction have profoundly been

¹⁷⁸ See Nature Conservancy, “Northern Kenya Rangelands: A Sustainable Future for Wildlife and Communities,” <http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/africa/africa-tnclewa-final.pdf>, retrieved on May 16, 2014.

compromised by changes to land tenure (from communal to individual), formal education, and economic diversification among other factors. Although no one can doubt Emmanuel Kreike's recent assertion that Africans have been "architects of nature" from the earliest times to the present,¹⁷⁹ the question remains to what extent can we attribute conscious or unconscious forethought to such actions. I reiterate that the conservation of wildlife—large mammals in particular, demands the maintenance of a buffer zone that is critical not only as wildlife dispersal zones but also to mitigating against human-wildlife contestations that have in recent years contributed to alarming declines in wildlife populations. We simply cannot assume that Maasai traditional knowledge has the capacity to sustainably promote the future of wildlife conservation unless these are supported by known effective sustainable environmental practices.

The constant merges and purges within MGRs witnessed within the last two decades certainly support the Comaroffs' argument that the commercially driven symbiotic relationship bringing together corporations and ostensibly "authentic" societies is constantly maintaining or remaking ethnic identity.¹⁸⁰ In the next chapter, I focus on the historiographies pertaining to Maasai identities. Their pastoral image, in particular, has been subject for debate for the last 160 years since the Maasai were first brought to the West's attention by missionaries. This pastoral identity, as I argue, it is central to understanding their relations with wildlife.

¹⁷⁹ Emmanuel Kreike, *Environmental Infrastructure in African History: Examining the Myth of Natural Resource Management in Namibia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 1.

¹⁸⁰See e.g., Lotte Hughes, "Rough Time in Paradise: Claims, Blames, and Memory Making Around Some Protected Areas in Kenya," *Conservation and Society* 5, 3 (2007), pp. 307-330; Comaroff and Comaroff, *Ethnicity Inc.*, p. 4.

CHAPTER 4: MAASAI REPRESENTATIONS: A HISTOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

Whereas Kenya's environmental historiography reflects interdisciplinary imbalances the same cannot be said of the literature on the Maasai, to which historians have made valuable contributions. Ethnic identities are complex, contingent, and dynamic given that they are always subject to cross-cultural influences. From the late-1840s scholars have discussed Maasai identities, including their origins and ethnic etymology, with particular emphasis on their pastoral economy and how this reflects upon their social and political constructions. By the early 1970s there was wide acceptance that the Maasai generally engaged in a mixed economy, although several sections sought a purely pastoral identity. But even those seeking a "purely" pastoral identity were known to engage in other economic means of sustenance during periods of debilitating droughts and epidemic disease outbreaks.¹

As I briefly discussed in Chapter 1 the emergence of Maasai identity as distinctive from other Maa-speakers and their claim as "pure pastoralists" before the early nineteenth century has recently been challenged. Indeed, Jennings's "Beyond Eponymy" was a direct challenge to John Berntsen's 1980 "The Enemy is Us: Eponymy in the Historiography of the Maasai."² Jennings reviews missionary documents from 1844 published by Johann Krapf, Johann Rebmann and Jacob Erhardt to argue that contrary to conventional acceptance these documents were not so ambivalent as to warrant their apparent neglect in previous scholarship.³ Jennings argues that the

¹ See e.g., John L. Berntsen, "Economic Variations Among Maa-Speaking Peoples," in Bethwell Ogot (ed.), *Ecology and History in East Africa: Proceedings of the 1975 Conference of the Historical Association of Kenya* (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1979), pp. 108-127.

² Christian Jennings, "Beyond Eponymy: the Evidence for Loikop as an Ethnonym in Nineteenth-Century East Africa," *History in Africa*, 32 (2005), pp. 199-220; Berntsen, "The Enemy is Us: Eponymy in the Historiography of the Maasai," *History in Africa*, 7 (1980), pp. 1-21. .

³ Jennings, "Beyond Eponymy," p. 203.

initial descriptions by Krapf, Rebmann, and Erhardt that the Maasai were part of the larger group of pastoralists called Iloikop was later subverted by Joseph Thompson and others who placed the Maasai at the nexus from which other Maa-speakers emerged.⁴ The challenge is all the more significant considering Bernstein's status as one of the prominent contributors of Maasai historiography since the 1960s and therefore by extension it was a direct challenge to the very underpinnings upon which much of the Maasai identities, social, economic, and political structures have been discussed for the past fifty years. The publication of *Being Maasai*, one of the comprehensive texts on the historiographies of the Maasai and other Maa-speakers acknowledged "John Bernstein's imposing presence and path-breaking contributions to the field of Maasai history."⁵ According to Jennings, it is this latter version that seemingly prevailed or at least received wider audience.

Alan Jacobs's 1965 doctoral thesis "The Traditional Political Organization of the Pastoral Masai," was equally significant in espousing a Maasai pastoral "purity" in opposition to other members of the Iloikop.⁶ Based on several Maasai oral traditions and myths, Jacobs characterized this distinction on among other factors the Maasai who looked down upon other Maa-speakers engaging in farming as people who ate "soiled food" and "desecrated" grass while

Cf. Bernstein, "The Enemy is Us," p. 9.

⁴ Jennings, "Beyond Eponymy," p. 205.

Cf. Joseph Thompson, "Through the Masai Country to the Victoria Nyanza," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, 6 (1884), 692.

⁵ See Thomas Spear and Richard Waller, "Acknowledgments," in Thomas Spear and Richard Waller (eds.), *Being Maasai: Ethnicity and Identity in East Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1993).

⁶ Alan Jacobs, "The Traditional Political Organization of the Pastoral Masai," Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Nuffield College, Oxford, 1965, pp. 2-3; Steven Feierman, "Economy, Society, and Language in Early East Africa," in Philip Curtin, Steven Feierman, Leonard Thompson, and Jan Vansina, *African History* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1978), pp. 117-146.

those who hunted such as the Dorobo were considered to be no different from wild animals (“vicious predators”).⁷ On a different note, Jacobs’s 1975 “Maasai Pastoralism in Historical Perspectives,” draws upon archaeological and biological evidence to contend that the high levels of *immuglobium IgA* found among the Maasai, unlike their fellow Maa-speakers, was evidence of protein-rich diet content by the early fifteenth century. Hence according to Jacobs, the Maasai were “purely” pastoral and shunned agriculture and other subsistence economies.⁸ I shortly discuss expand on how colonial studies on native diets were used to inform health and other nutritional policies. Nonetheless, that Maasai identities have been revisited within the last decade certainly attests to how the Maasai together with their pastoral economy have occupied public and scholarly imagination for the past 160 years.

I have already deliberated on the subject of Maasai-wildlife relations and the Maasai identity as “custodians of the wild” in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. In this chapter, I primarily focus on three key Maasai identities that since the 1850s have equally come to define Maasai representations in public discourse and have continued to the present. These identities are their supposed “cattle complex,” their warlike character, and their apparent reluctance to embrace modernity. As I subsequently discuss in Chapters 5 and 6, these identities were reproduced and inadvertently reified during the colonial period and continued into the twenty-first century. In Chapter 4, I discuss how these identities were perhaps inadvertently solidified under colonial educational development, war conscription, and the attempts to modernize the Maasai pastoral economy; likewise in Chapter 5, I explore how the development of wildlife conservation in

⁷ Jacobs, “The Traditional Political Organization,” p. 27.

⁸ Alan A. Jacobs, “Maasai Pastoralism in Historical Perspectives,” in Théodore Monod (ed.), *Pastoralism in Tropical Africa; Studies Presented and Discussed at the International African Seminar*, 1972 (London: International African Institute, 1975), pp. 406-425.

colonial and independent Kenya fostered the identity of the Maasai as representing the archetypical wild Africa where humans and wildlife lived side by side in relative harmony.⁹

Along with the image of the Maasai as coexisting harmoniously with wildlife, these three characteristics are central to my study and also constitute some of the main themes within Maasai historiography, especially those that developed after the 1960s. From the 1970s through the 1990s the Maasai featured extensively in the development and underdevelopment discourses that focused on issues such as the apparent cycle of poverty and livestock-induced ecological degradation among pastoralists. In recent decades, the Kenya Maasai and their Tanzanian counterparts dominate the poster-emblems of indigenous and human rights, as well as environmental justice activists seeking remonstrations emanating from colonial and postcolonial land appropriation.¹⁰ As I have already laid out in Chapter 1, the Maasai have also factored immensely in deliberations among participatory conservation activists to include indigenous people as part invaluable partners within CBC initiatives.¹¹

In light of the alarming wildlife population declines by the late 1990s, a correlation between the “purely pastoral” Maasai livelihoods and wildlife proliferation demands that I explore how this distinction contributes to our understanding of Maasai ethnic identity. By 2000,

⁹ Cf. Peter Rigby, *Cattle, Capitalism, and Class: Iparakuyo Maasai Transformations* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), p. 50. Rigby proposes four main phases of Maasai historiography i.e. “circa 1640; 1640-1890; 1890-1960; and 1960 to the present.”

¹⁰ See e.g. Mark Ole Karbolo, *Facing Modern Land Loss Challenges: The Loita Maasai Pastoralists and the Recent Controversy over the Naiminia Enkiyio Indigenous Forests in Narok District* (Kampala: Center for Basic Research, 1999); Lotte Hughes, *Moving the Maasai: A Colonial Misadventure* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 7-8.

¹¹ See e.g., J. Terence McCabe, “Giving Conservation a Human Face?: Lessons from Forty Years of Combining Conservation and Development in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Tanzania,” in Dawn Chatty and Marcus Colchester (eds.) *Conservation and Mobile Indigenous Peoples: Displacement, Forced Settlement, and Sustainable Development* (New York: Bergham Books, 2002); Dorothy L. Hodgson, *Being Maasai, Becoming Indigenous: Postcolonial Politics in a Neoliberal World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011).

it was acknowledged that the Maasai, traditionalists and progressives alike, who seemingly continued to aspire to amass as many cattle as possible, even as increased land individuation reduced individual acreages more than at any other time in recent memory. Between 1977 and 2002, for example, it was estimated that cattle in Koiyaki Group Ranch (973 km²) had increased at a rate of about 6.4 percent per annum. As a result, between 1999 and 2000, 25 percent more cattle were grazing within the Mara Game Reserve after quickly depleting pasture within the group ranch and in the process increased the potential for intensified tensions between humans and wildlife.¹² Understanding the interplay between the supposed ideological and ecologic-economic identity revolving around livestock thus is imperative to understanding Maasai traditional relations with wildlife.

In exploring the history of the evolution of Maasai identity it is relevant to consider the primordialist and the instrumentalist models of examining ethnic dynamism. Whereas the primordialist approach considers ethnicity to be exclusively rooted in individuals or groups of people exhibiting linguistic, physical, or cultural similarities thought to be “natural or inherited,”¹³ the instrumentalist model premises ethnicity as “rationally oriented toward fulfillment of specific goals like nationalism, access to economic power, or freedom from colonial rule.”¹⁴ Nonetheless, generalizations from relevant studies that take into account both

¹² See e.g., Richard Lamprey and Robin S. Reid, “Expansion of Human Settlement in Kenya’s Maasai Mara: What Future for Wildlife and Pastoralism?” *Journal of Biogeography*, 3 (2004), pp. 997-1032, specifically pp. 1014-1018; Robin Reid, M. Rainy, J. Ogutu, L. Kruska, K. Kimani, M. Nyabenge, M. McCartney *et al.* “People, Wildlife and Livestock in the Mara Ecosystem: The Mara Count 2002,” *International Livestock Research Institute, Nairobi, Kenya* (2003), pp. 18-26. These scholars take into account obvious population disparities. The increase per head is attributed to better veterinarian care and also to tourism-related revenue among other reasons.

¹³See e.g., Archie Mafeje, “The Ideology of ‘Tribalism,’” *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 9, 2 (1971), pp. 253-261.

¹⁴ Roy R. Grinker and Christopher B. Steiner. “From Tribe to Ethnicity: Kinship and Social Organization,” in Roy R. Grinker and Christopher B. Steiner (eds.), *Perspectives on Africa: A Reader in Culture, History, and Representation* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), pp. 1-10.

the primordialist and instrumentalist approaches are hesitantly made in this study to reaffirm the argument that Maasai identity has always been subject to internal and external cultural influences and as such challenges any notion of a timeless Maasai people. An analysis of how Maasai identity has been defined before, during, and after the colonial period reveals how the role of cattle, their protein-rich diet, and their phenotypic features were used to define Maasai identities.

Historian Steven Feierman, for example, contends that the relationship between Europe and Africa was not the “unidirectional influence of Europeans on African cultures that was often inferred from romanticized Africanist nationalist and cultural discourse.”¹⁵ But even as Feierman acknowledges the case for cultural hybridity that takes into account the inevitability of cultural interactions and malleability, he also, compellingly, shows that many African traditions have their own histories that deserve critical analyses to tease out their complex meanings. He highlights the misinterpretations of many African traditions by Europeans who more often than not did not comprehend their deeper symbolism. It is little wonder that given the dearth of written records relevant to the Maasai and other African societies before the mid-1800s, the idealistic representations of the Maasai by European missionaries, travelers, and colonials dominated the imaginations of many in the West. The continued scholarly debates and cultural representations and misrepresentations that followed these initial perceptions for decades to come attest to a people who remain in the public eye.

In their immense contribution to the discourse of Africa’s colonial cultural interactions, as Feierman also notes, ethnographers Jean and John Comaroff adopt the instrumentalist model

¹⁵ Steven Feierman, “Colonizers, Scholars, and the Creation of Invisible Histories,” in Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt (eds.), *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p.184.

to contend that besides taking into account the power of the impinging European cultures one must also consider the “specific social and cultural conditions, conjunctures, and indeterminacies [that] have imparted to distinct African communities their own particular histories.”¹⁶ Such an approach is vital for analyzing indigenous ethnic identities that were subjected to radical domineering European influences during the colonial period. Likewise, Leroy Vail employs the same model to analyze the evolution of ethnic consciousness among blacks and whites in the multi-ethnic Southern African states of South Africa, Mozambique, and Zambia from the 1890s. In their response to subsequent changing political, economic, and social conditions he concludes that claims to original land ownership increasingly became a symbol of ethnic identity well into the twentieth century.¹⁷

Independent Kenya continues to witness resource-related internal wrangling among the Maasai. Land remains an emotive issue that, as I briefly discussed in Chapter 1, is rooted not only in the appropriation of Maasai land following the Anglo-Masai Agreements of 1904 and 1911, but also in how the Maasai continued to lose land to wildlife conservation and outside settlement after independence.¹⁸ These internal tensions have increased with the high value of the

¹⁶ John and Jean Comaroff, “Introduction,” in John and Jean Comaroff (eds.), *Modernity and Its Malcontents: Ritual and Power in Postcolonial Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. xiii. Also see, Thomas Spear, “Neo-Traditionalism and the Limits of Invention in British Colonial Africa,” *Journal of African History*, 44 (2003), pp. 3-27, especially his critique of Terence Ranger, “The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa,” in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.) *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 211-262; & Ranger, “The Invention of Tradition Revisited: The Case of Colonial Africa,” in Ranger and Olufemi Vaughan (eds.) *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth-Century Africa: Essays in Honour of A.H.M. Kirk-Green* (London: 1993).

¹⁷ Leroy Vail, “Ethnicity in Southern African History,” in Grinker and Steiner (eds.), *Perspective on Africa*, pp. 52-68. Also see Gerrit Groen, “Education as a Means of Preserving Afrikaner Nationalism in Kenya,” in Bethwell Ogot (ed.), *Politics and Nationalism in Kenya: Proceedings of the 1971 Conference of the Historical Association of Kenya—Hadith 4* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1972), pp. 150-163.

¹⁸ See Munei Ole Kimpei and John G. Galaty, “Maasai Land, Law, and Dispossession,” *Cultural Survival*, 22, 4 (1999), pp. 68-71; Lotte Hughes, “Malice in Maasailand: The Historical Roots of Current Political Struggles,”

expansive MGRs doubling as wildlife sanctuaries, where powerful Maasai families and politicians have often been complicit in the grabbing of formerly communal land and claiming individual title. Over the past two decades, increased purges and merges within various MGRs tend to reflect clan lineage, competition over revenue sharing, and even political differences dating back to Kenya's independence.¹⁹

I also make the case that though these divisions are generally localized and lineage-based, recent developments where CBCs are increasingly seeking economic autonomy may pose a challenge to national cohesion and complicate efforts for effecting national environmental policies. It is worth reiterating that all wildlife in Kenya belongs to the government and as a natural-national resource policies relating to their future are under the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), a parastatal body that oversees their conservation in public and private lands alike. A hesitant adoption of the instrumentalist model thus supports the notion that ethnicity reflects both continuity and change.

The Early Pastoral Complex, 1850s-1905

A voluminous literature addressing the complexities and ambiguities pertaining to Maasai origin and identity exists. Often premised along a pastoral and non-pastoral diachronic opposition, the works of German missionaries-cum-explorers Johann Ludwig Krapf, Johann Rebmann, and Jacob Erhardt during the 1850s offer scholars common points of departure. Published in 1854, Krapf's *Vocabulary of the Engutuk Eloikob* documents the "Wakuafi and Masai"—names that he claimed were derived from the coastal people—as pastoralists feeding on

African Affairs, 104, 415 (2005), pp. 207-224; Jim Igoe, "Becoming Indigenous Peoples: Difference, Inequality, and the Globalization of East African Identity Politics," *African Affairs* 105, 420 (2006), pp. 399-420;

¹⁹ Hughes, "Malice in Maasailand," p. 217; "Rough Time in Paradise: Claims, Blames, and Memory Making Around Some Protected Areas in Kenya." *Conservation and Society* 5, 3 (2007): 307-330.

a protein-rich diet including milk, butter, and the meat of black cattle, goats, sheep, and wild game, but having a disdain for farming and agricultural produce which they believed made them feeble. These two pastoral groups, he wrote, both called themselves “Orloikob,” which according to some of his Maasai oral informants translated to “possessors of the land.”²⁰ Krapf does not offer an explicit distinction between the two besides a nuanced religious difference; according to him the Wakuafi, unlike the Maasai, had an intermediary between them and their supreme being, a claim that he repeats in his introduction to James Erhardt’s 1857 *Vocabulary of the Enguduk Iloigob*, a text that also premised the “Kikuafi” and “Kimasai” Iloikop pastoralists.²¹

Between 1883 and 1884, renowned Scottish explorer Joseph Thompson, who was sponsored by the Royal Geographic Society, laid claim to the honors of being the first European to traverse across a supposedly dreaded Maasailand.²² Thompson’s first journey culminated in the publication of *Through Masailand*, a widely read book that besides reiterating the Maasai protein-rich diet added this was supplemented with grains and cereals. While comparing them to their “murderous and thievish” Kikuyu neighbors, Thompson also wrote of the Maasai as “ferocious and arrogant warriors who were.... indifferent to death because they did not bury their dead.... to the extent that the mere sighting of one Maasai warrior was quite sufficient to stampede a hundred Wa-nyika and Wa-digo.”²³ Despite his relative youth during sixteen years of

²⁰ Johann Lewis Krapf, *Vocabulary of the Enguduk Eloikob, or the Language of the Wakuafi-Nation in the Interior of Equatorial Africa*, (Tubingen: Germany, 1854); Krapf, *Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours during an Eighteen Years Residence in East Africa, together with Journeys to Jagga, Usambara, Ukambani, Shoa, Abessinia, and Khartum; and a Coasting Voyage from Mombaz to Cape Delgado* (London: Trubner and Co., 1860), p. 361; “Part II,” pp. 233-257 includes Rebmann’s travel accounts.

²¹ James Erhardt, *Vocabulary of the Enguduk Iloigob, as Spoken by the Masai-Tribes in East Africa* (Ludwigsburg: Ferdinand Riehn, 1857).

²² Most of the references of a dreaded Maasailand were attributed to Arab caravan traders between the coast of Mombasa and Chagga country around Mt. Kilimanjaro.

²³ Joseph Thompson, *Through Masai Land: a Journey of Exploration among the Snowclad Volcanic Mountains and*

journeying through much of East, Central, and North Africa, the significance of Thompson's writings and achievements cannot be understated.²⁴

An image of the Maasai with a propensity to merciless brutality and engaged in perpetual warfare against their neighbors had clearly taken root by the mid-1880s. Writing in 1886, naturalist-explorer Harry Johnston, who later became a colonial governor in Uganda, concluded that the violence in Maasailand was merely internecine strife. He argued, however, that while both the "agricultural Kwavi" and "pastoralist Masai" claimed the name "Oloikop" the wars were significant in distinguishing between the two groups.²⁵ In contrast, however, German explorer Ludwig Hohnel in 1887 directly challenged the prevailing identity of the Maasai as people who were inclined to violence. While traversing across parts of Maasailand he described those he came across as "solemn, dignified, and welcoming," and also noted that they peacefully coexisted with wildlife, a claim that both Krapf and Thompson had earlier made.²⁶ It is equally important to reiterate the contributions made by renowned geologist John Gregory to Maasai historiography before the end of the nineteenth century. In 1896, besides attributing the supposed Maasai elegant physique to environmental determinism,²⁷ he also espoused a "Kikuafi- Kimasai" distinction that he partly based on his encounters among the Njemps, a group of Maa-speakers

Strange Tribes (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1887), pp. 254-255.

²⁴ Besides opening trade routes, Thompson signed treaties and produced detailed maps that assisted in British acquisition of protectorates while also contributing to the larger European partitioning of Africa. See e.g. Robert I. Rotberg, *Joseph Thompson and the Exploration of Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 9.

²⁵ See Harry Johnston, *The Kilima-Njaro Expedition. A record of Scientific Exploration in Eastern Equatorial Africa. And a General Description of the Natural History, Languages, and Commerce of the Kilima-Njaro District. With six maps and over eighty illustrations by the author* (London: K. Paul, Trench, & Co., 1886), p. 313.

²⁶ Ludwig Hohnel, *Discovery of Lakes Rudolf and Stefanie: A Narrative of Count Samuel Teleki's Exploring and Hunting Expedition in Eastern and Equatorial Africa in 1887 and 1888*, translated by Nancy Bell (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1894), p. 132.

²⁷ See Ogot's direct critique of Gregory discussed in Chapter 3.

residing along the shores of Lake Baringo, to conclude they were former Maasai who had lost possession of their cattle herds and resigned to non-pastoral economies such as fishing.²⁸

At the dawn of the twentieth century, two ethnographies by German Meritz Merker and Alfred Hollis in 1904 and 1905, respectively, heralded further scholarly interest on the Maasai. Premised along Social Darwinism and other biased theories of scientific racism, Merker propelled the Hamitic Myth to claim that the Maasai were direct descendants of the nomadic Semites, thus rooting Maasai origins to the Arabian Peninsula. This connection, Merker, argued, explained the “elegant and regal physique” that has continued to fascinate the Western mind in artistic reproductions.²⁹ Hollis was quick to challenge Merker’s misguided suppositions by questioning among other issues the validity of Merker’s oral informants and how close to the original narrative his transcriptions were.³⁰ President Roosevelt’s likening the “valiant” Maasai to the highly rated soldiers of Ancient Egyptian Kings Thothness and Rameses who are honored in Egyptian tombs only underscores the influence of informed opinion in promoting exotic images of the Maasai.³¹

Africanist historians of course dismissed the Hamitic hypothesis in the early stages of the discipline’s development. Ehret, for example, explains why it was problematic to continue using

²⁸ John Gregory, *The Great Rift Valley, Being the Narrative of a Journey to Mount Kenya and Lake Baringo, with Some Accounts of the Geology, Natural History, Anthropology and Future Prospects of British East Africa* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd/John Murray, 1896), p.119.

²⁹ Meritz Merker, *The Masai: Ethnographic Monograph of an East African Semite People* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1910 [1904]), translation of: *Die Masai: Ethnographische Monographie eines Ostafrikanischen Smitenvolkes* (1904) See “Introduction” by Rainer Vossen, for Human Relations Area Files (HRAF) files by Frieda Schutze, www.ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu.

³⁰ See Alfred Claude Hollis, “Letter to the Editor,” *The Record*, November 17, 1905; Hollis, “The Masai and Their Traditions,” *The London Quarterly Review*, July 1907, both in “The Autobiography of Alfred Claude Hollis,” Volume III RH/Mss. Brit. Empire.s.295.

³¹ Theodore Roosevelt, *African Game Trails, An Account of the African Wanderings of an American Hunter-Naturalist, Reprint Edition* (New York: St. Martin Press, 1988), p. 202.

the term “Hamitic” that was initially synonymous with the Cushitic speakers in general. The term had been appropriated within biased Eurocentric theories of scientific racism by colonists, and at times within scholarship,³² to infer the dominance of Cushitic and other Hamitic descendants over other African civilizations and language groups. Such biased and simplistic reductions thus overlooked key aspects of cross-cultural interactions that often involved mutual integration and borrowing to promote diversity.³³

As I have already discussed in Chapter 2, Hollis’s *The Masai*, was directly based on the oral accounts of Maasai informants to reveal various facets of Maasai economic, social, political, and spiritual, including their myths, riddles, and proverbs—mostly relating to cattle—and certainly significant to this study, gendered environmental ideologies.³⁴ A less discussed ethnography, however, is the 1901 *The Last of the Masai* that was authored by Canadian-born Sidney Hinde and his wife Hildegard. As I elaborate in Chapter 5, their work highlights among other issues the dilemma faced by colonial officials who interacted with the Maasai during the formative years of the EAP. Hinde and Hinde, for example, wondered if they were complicit in enabling a supposed recidivist culture that was based on cattle raiding they endeavored to

³² See e.g. Edith Sanders, “The Hamitic Hypothesis: Its Origins and Functions in Time Perspective,” *The Journal of African History*, 10, 4 (1969), pp. 521-532.

³³ Christopher Ehret, “Cushites and the Highlands and Plains Nilotes to A.D. 1800,” in Bethwell A. Ogot (ed.), *Zamani: A Survey of East African History*, New Edition (Nairobi: East African Publishing House Ltd., 1975), pp. 150-169.

Cf. Jan Vansina, *Antecedents to Modern Rwanda: The Nyinginya Kingdom* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004); Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). In the wake of the Rwandan Genocide, Jan Vansina and Mahmood Mamdani reveal how colonial administrators officially institutionalized Hutu and Tutsi ethnic identities premised upon the Hamitic Myth and how these contributed to the cataclysmic events of 1994. Disregarding the fact that both ethnic identities spoke *Kinyarwanda*, it was the German colonists who, based purely on phenotypic deductions, first elevated the “elegant and tall Tutsi” herders into privileged positions of political and economic power over the “Bantu Hutu agriculturalists.” The Belgians tapped into the preexisting “Tutsi” monarchy to maintain their indirect rule by imposing Tutsi chiefs in predominantly Hutu areas.

³⁴ Alfred Claude Hollis, *The Masai: Their Language and Folklore* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905).

abolish.³⁵

Prominent anthropologists accounted for influential Maasai-oriented ethnographies from the 1920s through the 1960s. Eminent scholars like Melville Herskovits, the “doyen of American Africanists,”³⁶ endorsed the codification of the popular images of the Maasai as timeless, indolent, and being irrationally resistant to modernity, claims that were already commonplace among settlers and colonial administrators. In Chapter 5, I point out that well before Herskovits lent scholarly credence to the apparent Maasai “cattle complex,” a construct that continued to be debated for decades, the concept was reiterated as conventional knowledge among colonial officials in the EAP. Such representations of the Maasai subsequently informed policies including targeted destocking campaigns seeking to modernize Maasai traditional livestock husbandry and educational development.³⁷ I expand on Herskovits’ work shortly.

Colonial Diets, Physiques, Public Health, and Cattle Complexes

It is common knowledge that the colonial period, in particular, fostered and codified an exotic “otherness” that was attributed to colonial subjects. Often, indigenous Africans were accorded an inferior identity when juxtaposed against a supposed European superiority complex. Such distinctions were, however, commonplace in British imperialism. The role of public health studies carried in the 1920s and 1930s in influencing ethnic identity is equally important in evaluating the stereotypical Maasai tropes common in colonial discourse. Similar to British

³⁵ Sidney L. Hinde and Hildegard B. S. Hinde, *The Last of the Masai* (London: William Heinemann, 1901), pp. 8-9.

³⁶ See Sally Falk Moore, “Changing Perspectives on a Changing Africa: The Work of Anthropology,” in Robert H. Bates, Valentin Y. Mudimbe, and Jean O’Barr (eds.), *Africa and the Disciplines: The Contributions of Research in Africa to the Social Sciences and Humanities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 5.

³⁷ I discuss these representations in Chapter 5 under the inconclusive Maasai-specific taxation debates among colonial officials between 1911 and 1918.

India, Africanist scholars have correlated the hegemonic character of postcolonial public health policies to British rule in tropical Africa.

Writing on colonial India, for example, David Arnold reviews among several scientific studies the highly influential “Orr and Gilks Study that was carried out in the 1920s. Led by John B. Orr and John L. Gilks who were both scientists from the Dietetics Committee in Aberdeen, Scotland, the research focused on diet and malnutrition among native Indians. Arnold illustrates how a flattering British “exotic’ identity, in the form of preference to vegetarianism, had earlier emerged in the mid-1800s, where backed by scientific studies, the colonists promoted a combination of a native vegetarian diet and abstention from alcohol consumption as ideal for British colonists to acclimatize during the challenging hot and humid Indian climatic extremities.³⁸ In contrast to India, Megan Vaughan focuses on the discourse of colonial medicine in Malawi to argue that “though fragmented and contested,” public health discourse constituted a powerful tool used by the colonial state to create a “colonial subject” as backward and thus justify the apparent civilizing mandate.³⁹

Instructively, the Maasai protein-rich diet factored greatly in Orr’s and Gilks’s subsequent comparative study carried out in Kenya between 1926 and 1931. Among other clarifications, the study sought a correlation between the Eurocentric perception of the Maasai as exhibiting elegant “hamitic” phenotypic traits and their pastoral diet. For control purposes, the two scientists comparatively analyzed the Maasai “carnivorous pastoral diet” consisting of meat,

³⁸ David Arnold, “The Discovery of Malnutrition and Diet in Colonial India,” *Indian Economic Social History Review*, 31, 1 (1994), pp. 1-26.

³⁹ Megan Vaughan, “Health and Hegemony: Representation of Disease and the Creation of the Colonial Subject in Nyasaland,” in Dagmar Engels and Shula Marks (eds.), *Contesting Colonial Hegemony: State and Society in Africa and India* (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 173-201. Also see the discussion on colonial health and medicine in Western Kenya discussed in Chapter 4 where Osaak Olumwullah made similar arguments.

milk and diet against an assumed Kikuyu “vegetarian/agricultural” diet.⁴⁰ In their conclusion, Orr and Gilks attributed the supposed Maasai muscular strength, above average height, and “elegant physique” exhibited by the Maasai warriors to their protein-rich diet and high calcium intake. In contrast the Kikuyu were reported to be shorter in stature and suffering from frequent protein deficiency ailments such as “pellagra and infantile oedema,” as well as “ulcers and pneumonia.”⁴¹

Prior to historian Cynthia Brantley’s historical rebuttal of the Orr and Gilks study in 1997, much of the literature generally reiterated Maasai diet within the cultural construct. Eminent anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski in his 1936 article “Culture as a Determinant of Behaviour,” compared the Maasai and their Chagga agricultural neighbors’ economies. Unlike Gregory, who looked at the physical environmental conditions in Maasailand, Malinowski advanced cultural determinism as critical to explain each community’s physical and moral behavior, as well as how these reflected their respective economic and political organizations.⁴² Thus, among other assertions, Malinowski claimed that the Chagga political organization was simply premised on the societal imperative for security whereas for the Maasai their elaborate “military organization and the political system [were] outcomes of a periodic need for predatory economies.”⁴³ But as I expand on shortly, the claims to a distinct pre-nineteenth century Maasai

⁴⁰ John Langton Gilks and John Boyd Orr, “The Nutritional Condition of the East African Native,” *Lancet*, 29, 5402 (1927), pp. 561; John Boyd Orr and John L. Gilks, *Studies in Nutrition: The Physique and Health of Two African Tribes* (London: HMSO, 1931).

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 64; *Veterinary Department Annual Report, 1938* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1939), p. 3.

⁴² Bronislaw Malinowski, “Culture as a Determinant of Behaviour,” *Scientific Monthly*, 43, 5, Harvard Tercentenary Conference of Arts and Sciences (1936), pp. 440-449; Malinowski, *The Dynamics of Culture Change: An Inquiry into Race Relations in Africa*, 3rd Printing, edited by Phyllis M. Kaberry (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947).

⁴³ Malinowski, “Culture as a Determinant of Behaviour,” p. 442.

ethnic identity and that of “pure pastoralism” have recently been challenged.

Revisiting the findings of the Orr and Gilks study, Cynthia Brantley’s rebuttal that the findings were biased and misleading no doubt validates Vaughan’s contention. Brantley reaffirms how the study’s sole purpose was to further the colonial administration’s political interests. She also cites the study as the beginnings of later attempts in the 1970s and 1980s to address the subject of human nutrition as being distinct from famine and hunger where such claims that “all colonial populations feeding on vegetarian diets [were] malnourished were commonplace.”⁴⁴ Elsewhere, Alexander Moradi’s 2009 “Towards an Objective Account of Nutrition and Health in Colonial Kenya,” appears to be a veiled attempt to challenge the perception of disproportionate representation in the post-colonial Kenya military that favored the Kikuyu. Moradi contends that such misrepresentation had its roots in the colonial state where the Orr and Gilks nutrition studies were used as justification that the Kikuyu were weak and thus barely recruited into the Kenya Africa Rifles (KAR).⁴⁵

Whereas Orr and Gilks were instrumental in informing colonial health policy, it was, however, eminent anthropologist Melville Herskovits’s cattle complex theory that scholars debated for at least four decades. In his aptly titled 1926 “Cattle Complex in East Africa” article, Herskovits contended that East African people were enjoined by an irrational “cattle complex” emanating from their contact with culturally conservative pastoralists, specifically the Maasai and the Nandi. These two communities, he claimed, merely hoarded cattle for their symbolic and

⁴⁴ Cynthia Brantley, “Kikuyu-Maasai Nutrition and Colonial Science: The Orr and Gilks Study in the late 1920s Kenya Revisited,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 30, 1 (1997), pp. 49-86.

⁴⁵ Alexander Moradi, “Towards an Objective Account of Nutrition and Health in Colonial Kenya: A Study of Stature in African Army Recruits and Civilians, 1880-1980,” *The Journal of Economic History*, 69, 3 (2009), pp. 719-754.

ritualistic worth, irrespective of ecological constraints and without concern for their market value.⁴⁶ Herskovits built upon this theory fourteen years later in *The Economic Life of Primitive People* where he asserted that although cattle symbolically substituted for the lack of currency, “cattle [could] in no sense be considered money; for nothing [was] acquired with them except women in marriage.”⁴⁷ He also made a point of emphasizing that with the Maasai

Cattle are eaten only on certain ceremonial occasions, or when an animal dies, nor have they any other utility aside from that of supplying milk, since they are never employed as beasts of burden. They are merely possessed, and esteemed for the prestige their possession brings. But they are not money.⁴⁸

The influences of Herskovits and Malinowski in informing colonial policies as well as accrediting certain Maasai identities as supposedly immutable in the scholarly circles cannot be overstated.⁴⁹ Anthropologists Neville Dyson-Hudson and David Pratt reiterated the “cattle complex” theory in their publications based on other East African pastoralists in the 1960s and 1970s.⁵⁰ Broad generalizations and misrepresentations by Orr and Gilks equally attest to the biased role of colonial-sanctioned academic studies in maintaining European imperialism but also served to codify a romanticized notion of the Maasai as the ideal “noble savage” feeding exclusively on meat. Nonetheless, in this study, I cautiously adopt the notion of an exclusively

⁴⁶ Melville J. Herskovits, “Cattle Complex in East Africa.” *American Anthropologist*, 28 (1926), pp. 230-272; Herskovits, *The Economic Life of Primitive Peoples* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1940).

⁴⁷ Herskovits, *The Economic Life of Primitive Peoples*, p. 233.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ See e.g. Moore, “Changing Perspectives on a Changing Africa,” pp. 7-9.

⁵⁰ See e.g., Neville Dyson-Hudson, “Factors inhibiting change in an African Pastoral Society: The Karimojong of Northeast Uganda,” *The Transactions of The New York Academy of Sciences*, 24, II (1962), pp. 771-801; D.J. Pratt and M.D. Gwynne (eds.), *Rangeland Management and Ecology in East Africa* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977).

Cf. Paul Spencer, *The Pastoral Continuum: The Marginalization of Tradition in East Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

pastoral diet, but only as far as it informed cultural construct among those Maasai sections seeking a purist pastoral livelihood.

Indeed, elaborate cattle sales between the Maasai and their neighbors by the early 1900s challenge the notion that they were disinclined to engage in cattle exchange for profit. Waller, Tignor, and other scholars have examined these elaborate cattle sales and the protests that at times ensued when traditional cattle markets were closed and forced destocking programs introduced. Waller details mutual cattle sales between the Maasai and Somali pastoralists between 1914 and 1915, before the colonial army closed the traditional market, while Tignor highlights livestock exchanges between the Maasai, Akamba, and Kikuyu from the 1900s to the 1940s.⁵¹ Likewise, Nyaga Mwaniki draws on the evidence put forth by Tignor and Waller to argue that the passive and open protests held by the Akamba and Maasai herders in colonial and independent Kenya were the result of these communities being “‘driven to resist’ forced destocking and livestock price controls by the government... [for fear] of adopting risky, inappropriate, and meaningless” policies that they felt did not bode well for their livelihood, especially given the ecological conditions in which they resided.⁵²

In contrast to Herskovits’ extreme theories, the seminal work of Henry Fosbrooke, who like Hollis before him in Kenya also worked as a government sociologist in Tanzania from 1931 to 1949 among the Tanzania Maasai and their counterparts in Kenya, is particularly instructive. His scholarship has gone a long way in informing different aspects of Maasai social, economic, and

⁵¹ Robert Tignor, *The Colonial Transformation of Kenya: The Kamba, the Kikuyu, and the Maasai from 1900 to 1939* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 344; Tignor, “Kamba Political Protest: The Destocking Controversy of 1938,” *African Historical Studies*, 4, 2 (1971), pp. 237-251; Waller, “The Maasai and the British, 1895-1905: Origins of an Alliance,” *Journal of African History*, XVII, 4 (1976), pp. 529-553.

⁵² Nyaga Mwaniki, *Pastoral Societies and Resistance to Change: A Re-Evaluation* (Bloomington: African Studies Program/Indiana University, 1981), pp. 5-7.

political structures.⁵³ Fosbrooke is credited with being the first writer to introduce the use of age-sets to study Maasai political structure that provided a template upon which subsequent studies have often built. Fosbrooke's "The Maasai Age-group System as a Guide to Tribal Chronology" discusses among other issues how the Chagga and Gogo age-group system was borrowed from the Maasai.⁵⁴

In a similar discussion, William Lawren's 1968 "Masai and Kikuyu" demonstrates how, and under what conditions, certain aspects of cultural diffusion involving the Kikuyu and Maasai between 1750 and 1850 were reflected in Kikuyu socio-economic and political structures.⁵⁵

Lawren was among the first to challenge Herskovits's cattle complex theory, and by extension historians of East Africa and their apparent complacency to accept the "synchronic approach" that the cattle complex was based upon. He also challenged scholars who accepted that cultural diffusion among the Bantu and their so-called Nilo-Hamitic neighbors was a "phenomenon conditioned by history."⁵⁶ As a case in point, Lawren critiqued one of the Kikuyu origin myths propagated by two authorities on Kikuyu culture, Harald Lambert and H. R. Tate, the latter a former East Africa Protectorate District Commissioner. The myth supposedly speaks to how three sons and their choice of three tools offered by their father determined whether the son's respective descendants would become Maasai (spear), Akamba (bow and arrow), or Kikuyu

⁵³ See e.g. Henry Fosbrooke, "A Day With the Maasai," *East African Annual, 1935-36*, pp. 119-123; Fosbrooke, "An Administrative Survey of the Maasai Social System," *Tanganyika Notes and Records*, 26 (1948), pp. 1-50.

⁵⁴ Fosbrooke, "The Maasai Age-group System as a Guide to Tribal Chronology," *African Studies*, 15, 4 (1956), pp. 188-296.

⁵⁵ William L. Lawren, "Masai and Kikuyu: An Historical Analysis of Culture Transmission," *Journal of African History*, IX, 4 (1968), pp. 571-583.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 571.

Cf. Robert A. LeVine and Walter H. Sangree, "The Diffusion of Age-Group Organization in East Africa," *Africa*, XXXII, 2 (1962), pp. 97-109.

(digging stick/hoe).⁵⁷ As opposed to Lambert and Tate who infer that the spear was a symbol of pastoralism, although in any case the “agricultural” Akamba also chose bows and arrows which were military tools, Lawren posits that the spear should be regarded as evidence of Maasai military superiority. It was this military power rather than their “ritual-economic influence” that influenced cultural diffusion.⁵⁸ He also draws upon linguistic evidence that reflect Maasai-Kikuyu cognates to explain the latter’s borrowing of Maasai-military systems including the age-grade organization—albeit with significant differences and the Kikuyu word *rikii* that translates to the “track of stolen cattle.”⁵⁹

Whereas Lawren may have overstated that the Akamba were agriculturalists, as opposed to practicing a mixed agropastoral economy that also included hunting, his article is particularly instructive. As I discuss in Chapter 5, Lawren’s thesis is useful in analyzing the administration’s attempts to ban all Kikuyu immigration into Maasailand during the Emergency period. Yet this paradox is manifested in the administration’s encouragement of Kikuyu immigrants into the Masai Reserve in the 1930s and 1940s, which was part of its endeavors to promote settled agriculture among the Maasai. Such prejudiced and reactionary undertakings were primarily driven by an implicit fear that the “restive” moran might join the Mau Mau uprising. In seeking to prevent Kikuyu immigration various officials in the Masai Province sought to promote a supposed Maasai “purity,” perhaps oblivious to the long history (at least a century before the

⁵⁷ See Harald E. Lambert, *The Systems of Land Tenure in the Kikuyu Land Unit: Part I* (Communications from the School of African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1949), p. 9; Lambert, “Land tenure among the Kamba.” *African Studies* 6, 4 (1947), pp. 157-175; H. R. Tate, “The Native Law of the Southern Gikuyu,” *Journal of the African Society*, IX, 1 (1910), p. 236.

⁵⁸ Lawren, “Masai and Kikuyu,” p. 581.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

advent of European intrusion) of cross-cultural diffusion involving the Maasai and the Kikuyu that had often been marked by mixed marriages.

Such apparent denial of cultural diffusion in Kenya's recent history in the face of reality underscores how resource-related claims to indigenous "purity" continue to undermine as well as re-create ethnic identity. The ethnic clashes in Narok District during the 1990s that were propelled by among other issues the remarks by William Ole Ntimama, one of the powerful Maasai politicians and Maasai rights activist in recent decades, and by other Maasai rights activists for resident Kikuyu "intruders" in Narok District to "lie low like an envelops" attests to the dangers of identity-based contestations over economic and political power.⁶⁰ More recently, political expediency and "fears" that Maasai heritage and their pastoral identity were threatened by frequent droughts and low river levels linked to deforestation in the Mau Forest precipitated Ntimama's vociferous support of the calls to evict members of the Kalenjin and Kikuyu communities who had been squatting in the forests, some for the past two decades.

Maasai and Pastoral Identities

Thomas Spear and Richard Waller's 1993 *Being Maasai* features contributions from eminent scholars whose work has dominated Maasai literature since the 1960s. With most of the scholars adopting the instrumentalist model to frame Maasai and other Maa-speakers' identities, it remains one of the most comprehensive historiographical texts that focuses on the traditions of the Maasai and other Maa-speakers over space and time remains.⁶¹ The book offers a comprehensive overview of the various Maa-speakers whose economies included gathering,

⁶⁰ See e.g. Protus Onyango, "Ntimama Won't Quit Despite Pressure," *East African Standard*, October 22, 2012, <http://www.standardmedia.co.ke/?articleID=2000069012>, retrieved May 16, 2014.

⁶¹ Thomas Spear and Richard Waller (eds.), *Being Maasai: Ethnicity and Identity in East Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1993).

hunting, and settled agriculture, as well as emphasizes how the Maasai were one of the late arrivals—in the seventeenth century—to East Africa; their “specialized” pastoral identity was an even later phenomenon that came to dominate the plains in the late eighteenth century but due to a series of droughts and epizootic diseases was in “retreat” by the end of the nineteenth century.⁶² The emergence of the pastoral ideal among the Maasai is set in opposition to other subsistence modes of production practiced by other Maa-speakers. Accordingly, the contributors claim that the pastoral ideal “enjoys a revival” in colonial and independent Kenya.⁶³

John Galaty’s “Maasai Expansion and the New East African Pastoralism” provides one of the perceptive contributions within the text. Galaty presents a comprehensive overview encapsulating the major archaeological, anthropological, and historical studies on the widely distributed Maa-speakers that had been produced from the 1960s. He also seeks to answer the question as to whether or not the Maasai exhibit a unique and specialized form of pastoralism and whether this was independent from other forms of indigenous subsistence.⁶⁴ Similar to Ehret’s emphasis on cross-cultural influence on Maasai culture, Galaty details how the limiting ecological and geophysical features coupled with their interactions with the Southern Cushitic and Southern Nilotic peoples might have contributed to diversified forms of subsistence among different sections of the Maa-speakers. Galaty concludes that although “specialized pastoralism [Maasai] and pastoralists predominated” Maasailand by the mid-nineteenth century, it “was, and still is today, socially and economically complex.”⁶⁵

⁶² See Spear, “Introduction,” in Spear and Waller (eds.), *Being Maasai*, pp. 1-18.

⁶³ Spear, “Introduction,” pp. 1; 11.

⁶⁴ John Galaty, “Maasai Expansion and the New East African Pastoralism,” in Spear and Waller (eds.), *Being Maasai*, pp. 61-86.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

Not surprisingly, for much of the last 160s years, cattle symbolism has been central to Maasai historiography, a historiography that has been accompanied by multidisciplinary scholarship. While it was acknowledged that several Maasai sections may have sought a purely pastoral economy, it was, nonetheless, widely accepted that most of the Maasai sections practiced a mixed economy. By the early 1980s Herskovit's "cattle complex" theory had effectively been repudiated. Archaeologists Peter Robertshaw and David Collett, for example, espouse a "pastoral ideology" to explain the origins of specialized pastoralism in East Africa. They contend that the "cultural bias exhibited by the Elmenteitan and Ondishi peoples in 200 A.D. who lived in the fertile Central Rift Valley in East Africa but who sought the possession and exchange of livestock may well have exceeded their functional value."⁶⁶ Robertshaw and Collett point to the evidence of Elmenteitan lithics and pottery to infer a transition period when those who had lost their herds chose to remain in areas of optimum pastoral potential by surviving on alternative forms of subsistence including hunting and farming.⁶⁷ Parallels can be drawn between this transition period and the Maasai seeking refuge with their neighbors, or during their alliance with the British, after periods of devastating droughts or famine before returning to their pastoral ways when conditions improved.

Equally relevant in examining the emergence of a specialized form of pastoralism in East Africa is the role of historical linguistics and other multidisciplinary approaches. Ehret primarily

⁶⁶ Peter Robertshaw and David Collett, "A New Framework for the Study of Early Pastoralism in East Africa," *The Journal of African History*, 24, 3 (1983), pp. 289-301; Marshall, "Origins," p. 884.

⁶⁷ Ibid. The evidence of pottery has been linked to some of the earliest grain collection and cultivation in Africa. John Berntsen "Economic Variations Among Maa-Speaking Peoples," in Bethwell Ogot (ed.) *Ecology and History in East Africa, Proceedings of the 1975 Conference of the Historical Association of Kenya, Hadith 7* (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau), pp. 107-127 also makes this claim of a transition period when pastoralists who had lost their herds survived on agriculture.

argues that “word borrowing histories are registers of demic and social encounters.”⁶⁸ He builds on archaeological evidence to reconstruct the origin and history of the Maasai as descendants of the proto-Maa-Ongamo language group, themselves descendants of the Nilo-Saharan/Sudanic Civilizations, and places their arrival (proto-Ongamo-Maa) into northern Kenya around the eighth century.⁶⁹ But in East Africa Ehret asserts that the earliest pastoralists were the Southern Cushites who arrived in East Africa three to four thousand years ago.⁷⁰ He further contends that by the 1500s when the proto-Maasai are believed to have expanded into north-central Kenya they were an “obscure group with a culture little different from their neighbors.”⁷¹ Inferred from Ehret’s work is that the Maasai and their ancestors borrowed or practiced a form of pastoralism that was little distinguished from their neighbors, both within the Eastern Nilotic group that they belonged to as well as outside groups such as the Southern Nilotes and the Southern Cushites. This inference not only traces the origin of specialized form of pastoralism in Africa but also points to cross-cultural interactions to which the Maasai have not been immune.

Pastoralism, and Rangeland Development

Maasai pastoral livelihood also featured extensively in the development and underdevelopment discourses that focused on pastoralists and other semi-nomadic societies during the 1970s and 1980s. Understanding the interplay between livestock and wildlife in Maasailand was considered an imperative from the early 1960s. D. J. Pratt and M. D. Gwynne’s

⁶⁸ Ehret, “Linguistic Testimony and Migration Histories,” in Jan Lucassen, Leo Lucassen, and Patrick Manning (eds.), *Migration History in World History: Multidisciplinary Approaches* (Boston: Brill, 2010), p. 140.

⁶⁹ Ibid.; Stanley H. Ambrose, “Archaeology and Linguistic Reconstructions of History in East Africa,” in Christopher Ehret and Merrick Posnansky (eds.), *The Archaeological and Linguistic Reconstruction of African History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 104-157.

⁷⁰ Ehret, *Sudanic Civilizations* (Washington D.C.; American Historical Association), p. 5.

⁷¹ Ehret, “Cushites and the Highland and Plains Nilotes,” pp.158-177.

Rangeland Management and Ecology in East Africa (1977) was partly premised along Melville Herskovits' "cattle complex" theory.⁷² Among other topics the authors examine the competition for pasture between livestock and wildlife as well as disease transmission between the two and how these factors challenged the push towards commercialization of traditional livestock husbandry.⁷³ Reflecting upon the intensification of human-wildlife conflicts from the 1970s due to increases in human and livestock population increases, as well as the historical tolerance towards wildlife that the Maasai had exhibited for many centuries but which was not guaranteed as these contestations increased, the threat to the ecological health of the rangelands compounded the challenges of promoting commercial livestock development.⁷⁴

Nonetheless, while the contributors mostly endorse the commercialization of traditional livestock husbandry, they also write about the escalating human-wildlife contestations in the 1970s. Attributing these escalations to conflicts of interest between pastoralists and conservationists, Pratt and Gwynne contend that conservationists often view pastoralism as inimical to both wildlife conservation and general ecological health. Yet these authors also emphasize "it is only because of the tolerance of the pastoralist to wild animals that substantial populations still exist."⁷⁵ Indeed as I emphasize in this dissertation tolerance levels towards

⁷² D.J. Pratt and M.D. Gwynne, *Range Management and Ecology in East Africa* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977), pp. 22-34.

⁷³ Ibid. See also Phylo Evangelou, *Livestock Development in Kenya's Maasailand: Pastoralists' Transition to a Market Economy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984), pp.76-77.
Cf. Michael E. Meeker, *The Pastoral Son and the Spirit of Patriarchy: Religion, Society, and Person among East African Stock Keepers* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), pp. xii, 107-121; 136-154. Meeker's study is based on the Nuer and Dinka pastoral communities of South Sudan; he contends that pastoralists effectively controlled their herds to prevent environmental degradation.

⁷⁴ Pratt and Gwynne, *Rangeland Management and Ecology*, p. 222.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 223.

wildlife were significant in minimizing human-wildlife conflicts rather than an indigenous Maasai conservation-ethic *per-se*.

Literature on the compatibility between wildlife and pastoralism has not been restricted to the colonial and postcolonial period. In “Pastoralists and Wildlife” Collett investigates the “pastoral threat to wildlife” in Maasailand based upon archaeological records covering 2500 years.⁷⁶ He evaluates among other chief artifacts how proportions of faunal assemblages, which are then split between wild and domestic animals, constituted the diets of the prehistoric pastoral people. From these artifacts, Collett contends that wild animals constituted an insignificant proportion of the prehistoric pastoralists’ diet for them to have been of any sizeable threat.⁷⁷

Also contributing to studies on wildlife and livestock compatibility are Katherine Homewood and W. A. Rogers whose article “Pastoralism, Conservation and the Overgrazing Controversy” reviews various theoretical models used to measure land carrying capacities, especially where these involve livestock grazing.⁷⁸ Since most of the scientific models, past and present, often reveal wide disparities regarding vegetation succession and overgrazing levels, Homewood and Rogers argue, it is inconclusive to assume that traditional African pastoralism directly led to overgrazing. Therefore they challenge popular claims that Maasai overstocking and their “unplanned” grazing inevitably leads to environmental degradation since other variables including climatic and political developments play a more significant role in the long-term environmental impacts.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Collett, “Pastoralists and Wildlife,” in Anderson and Grove (eds.), *Conservation in Africa*, pp. 129-148.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 135-137.

⁷⁸ Katherine Homewood and W.A. Rogers, “Pastoralism, Conservation and the Overgrazing Controversy,” in Anderson and Grove (eds.), *Conservation in Africa*, pp. 111-128

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 112-115.

Isaac Singida has contributed to the rangeland debates by focusing on the rapid population growth rates in Kajiado and Narok Districts. At the time of his research both of these districts were experiencing rapid population growth rate which Singida argued if left unchecked would exacerbate soil erosion in these districts and might even lead to famine.⁸⁰ Singida lay the blame squarely on the colonial administration which had altered Maasai “traditional spatial and ecological order” through policies that promoted settled agricultural production, biased quarantine regulations, and unsuccessful attempts at destocking campaigns that all contributed to ecological degradation.⁸¹ These problems were exacerbated during the colonial period, Singida argues, by the creation of the Masai Reserve, which as I also point out in Chapters 5 and 6 had finite boundaries.

Scholarly discussions in the 1970s also focused on the creation, development, and challenges of Maasai Group Ranches (MGRs) around Kajiado and Narok districts, with some focusing on how these influenced individual and group dynamics among the Maasai community. In 1970, Richard Davis described the conflicts of interest faced by committee members who increasingly found it difficult to institute policies to reduce cattle herds as hoped for when MGRs were instituted. For many of the Maasai, Davis writes, there was real fear that MGRs would inevitably lead to grazing disputes as well as social inequalities.⁸² Indeed, only a year later, Hans Hedlund described the factional rivalries within group ranches that were not only emblematic of

⁸⁰ Isaac Singida, “Land and Population Problems in Kajiado and Narok, Kenya,” *African Studies Review*, 27, 1 (1984), pp. 23-39.

Cf. The World Bank, *Kenya Population and Development: A World Bank Country Study*. Washington D.C.: The World Bank, 1980.

⁸¹ Singida, “Land and Population,” pp. 27-29.

⁸² Richard Davis, *Some Issues in the Evolution, Organization and Operation of Group Ranches in Kenya* (Nairobi: Institute for Development Studies, University of Nairobi, Discussion Paper No. 3, 1970), p. 27.

the different Maasai sections but where these cleavages were characterized by lineage obligations, elitism—the few educated against the ‘backward’ traditionalists, and political undertones. These issues reflected a misunderstanding of traditional Maasai social units that individual and group ranches were premised upon.⁸³

Writing in the late 1970s and early 1980s Galaty re-emphasized the aforementioned issues to conclude that MGRs had failed in their attempts to commercialize traditional Maasai pastoralism. Along a continuum where governments either acknowledge the land rights of nomadic peoples or appropriate them without compensation as a national resource Galaty contended that by the late 1970s MGRs represented both. At best, he argues, they were evidence of benevolent governmental gesticulation towards semi-nomadic pastoralists since the Kenya government “played an assertive role in the implementation of MGRs [but] left the control and subsequent initiative” to individual group members.⁸⁴ The hope that Maasai egalitarianism might safeguard against individual landlessness and appropriation of land by outsiders while ensuring the land remained intact to promote livestock husbandry was not as practical as initially thought. Factional rivalry, rapid individuation and the subsequent sale of land to non-Maasai became commonplace by the late 1970s. The dissolution of the group ranch concept in 1983 did not offer much reprieve to many, even as several MGRs morphed into wildlife sanctuaries. Supporting Hedlund’s earlier assertion, it was evident that these rapid changes, while not representative across the board, were often tied to levels of education and political influence.⁸⁵

⁸³ Hans G. B. Hedlund, *The Impact of Group Ranches on a Pastoral Society* (Nairobi: Institute for Development Studies University of Nairobi, Staff Paper No. 100, June 1971), pp. 37-38.

⁸⁴ Galaty, *The Maasai Group Ranch: Politics and Development in an African Pastoral Society*, Symposium on Change and Development in Nomadic Societies, The 10th International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnographical Sciences, Delhi, 14th December, 1978.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-17; Hedlund, *The Impact of Group Ranches*, p. 37.

Elliot Fratkin's article on "East African Pastoralism in Transition" posits that the collapse of MGRs was inevitable since they were heavily financed through Western aid whose developmental models were predicated along Garret Hardin's "tragedy of the commons" theory.⁸⁶ Presupposed on the equally controversial Malthusian hypothesis, Hardin claimed that due to inevitable exponential population growth, unrestricted use of and competition over basic yet finite resources by all eventually would lead to their depletion and subsequently ecological degradation.⁸⁷ Accordingly, development theorists argued that allowing the large Maasai livestock herds unrestricted grazing, irrespective of how expansive an area may be, would exacerbate fragile environmental conditions. Although Fratkin argues that the failure of MGRs was due to a misunderstanding of Maasai group dynamics, he nonetheless reiterates that we cannot ignore the observable socio-economic changes and stratifications exhibited by the Maasai and other pastoralists in Kenya.⁸⁸ Undoubtedly, with the recent individuation of land and dwindling free ranges in Maasailand an exponential increase in both people and livestock adds pressure to resource use.

Although these studies also took note of the droughts and famine of 1973-74 in Maasailand, they did not grab the world's attention as did those in the 1980s that affected much of East and Northeast Africa. Almost immediately, Africanist scholars in the 1980s and 1990s

⁸⁶ Elliot Fratkin, "East African Pastoralism in Transition: Maasai, Boran, and Rendille Cases." *African Studies Review*, 44, 3 (2001), pp. 1-25.

⁸⁷ Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science*, 162, 13 (1968), pp. 1243-1248. Also see Thomas Malthus and Philip Appleman (eds.), *An Essay in the Principle of Population*, 2nd Edition/Norton Critical Edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004), pp. 21-25, on the incompatibility of a geometrical population growth rate against an arithmetic rate of food production which hypothetically should have led to threats to the human race due to food shortages.

⁸⁸ Fratkin, "East African Pastoralists," p. 20.

responded to the fixating images of decimated herds and famished pastoralists on popular media that promoted Africa as a doomed continent. While arguing against the degradation and resiliency narratives these scholars also extended their criticism to academic work. They argue that such work lend credence to such popular misrepresentations, especially those that predicated their claims on the failure of traditional modes of production along developmental models. In essence, pauperization had become synonymous with drought-induced livestock losses among African pastoralists.

Notably, Richard Hogg's 1986 article, "The New Pastoralism, Poverty and Dependency in Northern Kenya,"⁸⁹ was roundly critiqued as promoting the idea that traditional African pastoralism exhibited cultural anachronism. With regard to breaking up the poverty cycle, Hogg describes how the fortunes of pastoralists in northern Kenya changed during and after the colonial period and how this reflected upon the national economy. Those pastoral communities who did not diversify their sources of income or were unwilling and reluctant to adopt modern animal husbandry contributed little or nothing to the national economy, which in turn exacerbated economic stress. Given that pastoral communities reside in semi-arid or arid areas with low rainfall averages the fortunes of the progressives—often the educated—and those who diversified their modes of production were often better.⁹⁰ Hence those who chose not to do so remain stuck in a cycle of poverty.

Two notable texts that argue in opposition to Hogg's claims are *The Ecology of Survival* and *The Poor Are Not Us*. Many of the contributors in these two edited volumes re-emphasize

⁸⁹ Richard Hogg, "The New Pastoralism: Poverty and Dependency in Northern Kenya," *Journal of the International African Institute*, 56, 3 (1986), pp.319-333.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 321.

the conflicts of interest and ambiguities manifested in the relationship between the government and pastoralists and how these translate to perceptions of poverty and development. Whereas economists and government planners premise modern livestock husbandry with calls for herd reduction and the promotion of agricultural-based sedentarization to be fundamental in raising development indexes, pastoralists believe such policies are the bane of their impoverishment. To East African pastoralists such as the Maasai, the Turkana, and the Somali, expressions of poverty were are not limited to socio-economic status they are also characterized by cultural “moral and metaphorical” constructs.”⁹¹

Accordingly, misplaced socio-economic and political policies instituted in colonial and postcolonial governments not only reflect a gross misunderstanding of the complex relationship between pastoralists and livestock; they also impact the evolving fortunes of the Maasai. These changing fortunes have profoundly impacted their sense of community and place just as much as on the role of cattle and land as regards perceptions of wealth and development. According to these scholars, widening gaps in personal wealth in recent decades contrast the cultural egalitarianism exhibited by pastoralists prior to the colonial era. Often, a strong sense of community was structured along morally-induced reciprocities.⁹²

Yet questions need to be raised regarding the true nature of these reciprocities and if indeed African communities were—at least prior to the colonial period—or continue to be truly egalitarian in the sense of the word. As Jennifer Coffman reveals in her study of group dynamics

⁹¹ David Anderson and Vigdis Broch-Due (eds.), *The Poor are Not Us: Poverty and Pastoralism in Eastern Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1999), p. x.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 20.

Cf. Tomasz Potkanski, “Mutual Assistance among the Ngorongoro Maasai,” in Anderson and Broch-Due (eds.), *The Poor are Not Us*, pp. 199-217.

within several MGRs around the Mara, the common perception that group ranches are “organic and homogenous” is often not true. Despite many of them having been composed along lineage lines, she argues that in actuality, MGRs in their capacity as wildlife conservation sanctuaries reflect an “ad hoc group of neighbors who have agreed to participate in a particular conservation program.”⁹³

In *The African Poor*, a study of modern poverty, John Iliffe draws from studies of poverty in Europe to distinguish between structural and conjunctural poverty. At its basic core, he regards structural-induced poverty as permanent since it is premised on the idea that the structurally poor do not have basic resources such as land to alleviate their condition. Conjunctural poverty on the other hand is considered to be temporary as has been the case where prevalent droughts decimate pastoral herds only for these to rebound during better times. Iliffe argues that whereas much of the West has been able to put in place structures and policies to guard against both structural and conjunctural-induced poverty with efficient welfare programs and other charitable institutions to assist the destitute, across Africa the gap between the extremely poor and those with sufficient means of sustenance continues to widen.⁹⁴

Although Iliffe premises his book on land ownership or lack thereof, he nonetheless dedicates a chapter on pastoralism where not only does he analyze precolonial Africa’s wealth and poverty relations but he also challenges any uncritical acceptance of African pastoral egalitarianism. He cites as examples the open inegalitarianism exhibited by Tuareg and Moor pastoralists of North and West Africa that were largely based upon hierarchical stratification and

⁹³ See e.g., Jennifer E. Coffman, “Buying (into) and Selling Conservation Among Maasai in Southern Kenya,” in William G. Moseley and B. Ikubolajeh Logan (eds.), *African Environment and Development: Rhetoric, Programs and Realities* (Logan: Ashgate Publishing, 2004), pp. 161-188.

⁹⁴ Iliffe, *The African Poor* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 2-3.

warrior nobility, respectively.⁹⁵ Drawing from studies that have examined how in many pastoral societies one could be able to acquire stock or rebuild lost herds through payment acquired from herding for those with larger herds or through reciprocal loan arrangements, he claims that such accepted social norms “disguised inequalities,” in wealth status.⁹⁶ Elsewhere, in *The Pastoral Son and the Spirit of Patriarchy* Michael Meeker also contrasts the “high degree of cooperation and reciprocity”⁹⁷ that was traditionally commonplace in the land and herd management among the Nilotic Nuer and Dinka pastoralists of South Sudan, against the “antagonism and oppositional individualism”⁹⁸ exhibited by the Cushitic Somali and several Bantu agropastoralists such as the Hima of the Nkore Kingdom of present-day Rwanda.

An example of a perceptive, detailed study of Maasai poverty is Waller’s “Pastoral Poverty in Historical Perspective.”⁹⁹ Waller builds on Iliffe’s *The African Poor* with specific reference to the structural and conjunctural models to historicize precolonial perceptions of wealth and poverty in Maasailand and how these have evolved since the advent of European colonialism. He also draws from his earlier studies on the epizootic and famine-induced crisis that profoundly impacted livestock and Maasai demography alike. While the Maasai population rebounded and rebuilt their livestock herds largely due to social reciprocities within and outside

⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 66-67.

⁹⁶ Richard Waller, “Emutai: Crisis and Response in Maasailand 1883-1902.” *The Ecology of Survival: Case Studies from Northeast African History*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988), pp. 73-112 ; Vansina, *Antecedents to Modern Rwanda*, p. 47, Vansina describes the concept of “Ubuhake”—an unequal contact between patrons where even the king loaned cattle to their subjects for usufruct use but still maintained ownership rights to them.

⁹⁷ Michael E. Meeker, *The Pastoral Son and the Spirit of Patriarchy: Religion, Society and Person among East African Stock Keepers* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), p. xiii.

⁹⁸ Ibid., pp. 111-113.

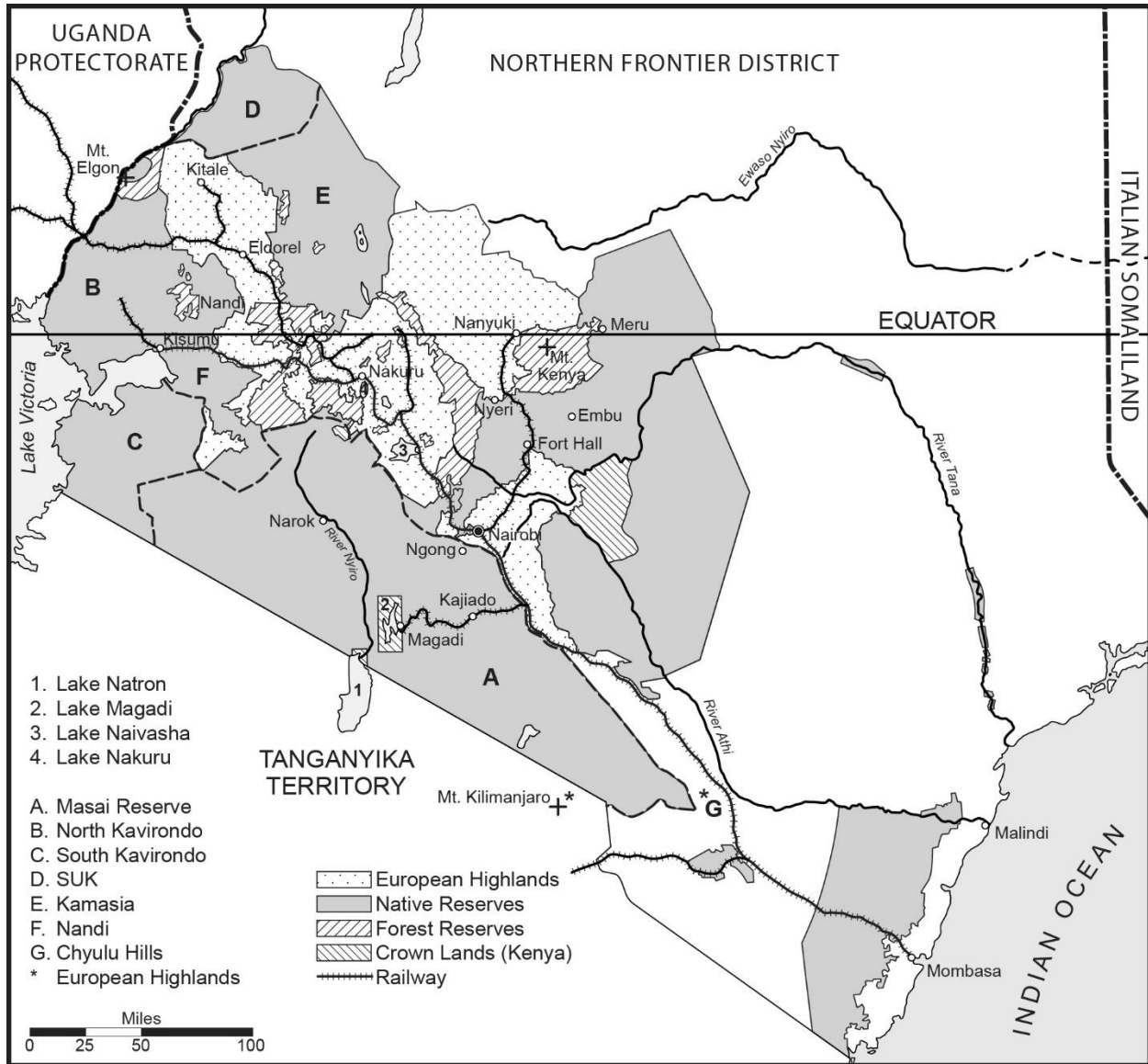
⁹⁹ Richard Waller, “Pastoral Poverty in Historical Perspective,” in David Anderson and Vigdis Broch-Due (eds.), *The Poor are Not Us: Poverty and Pastoralism in Eastern Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1999), pp. 20-49.

Maasailand, he nonetheless reiterates Iliffe's claim that wealth inequalities (women and youth as opposed to men) have long been understated. He describes how contrary to popular perceptions that morans automatically kept the spoils from cattle raids, these were actually incorporated into their fathers' stock. Due to the polygynous nature of Maasai marriage, inheritance of the father's stock was limited to only those cattle that had been put under each son's respective mother to derive subsistence use since women were not allowed to actually own them.¹⁰⁰ Waller further examines how socio-economic policies in colonial and independent Kenya affected Maasai cultural constructs and continues to exacerbate wealth and gender inequalities.

There is no question that Maasai historiography accounts for one of the most expansive of any of Kenya's forty or so ethnic communities. From the 1850s when missionaries and explorers first brought them to the West's attention as warlike pastoralists and cattle rustlers who fed on an exclusive protein-rich diet of meat, milk, and blood, these images have continued to be recreated especially in popular media. From the 1970s it was also widely accepted that although some Maasai sections yearned for an exclusive pastoral identity this was never always attainable and for that reason a mixed economy with variations was more appropriate. Nonetheless, for us to understand how the image of the Maasai as being resistant to change and modernity continues to be uncritically presented in popular media, it is important, as I discuss in Chapter 5, to understand how the British-Maasai relationship during the colonial period were inadvertently reified such identities. With exotic tourism demanding the exotic these identities, as well as that of the Maasai as "keepers of the wild" that I focus on in Chapter 6 are part of the idealized images commonplace in travel brochures and popular media.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

**CHAPTER 5: MAASAI-BRITISH RELATIONS IN COLONIAL KENYA:
COMPLEXITIES AND CONTRADICTIONS**



Map 5.1
Kenya Colony & Protectorate Native Reserves, 1940.

Introduction

In 1938, H. S. Scott, former Director of Education in Kenya, presented a damning critique on the failure of anthropologists—including those who were employed by the state—as well as missionary and government educators who had never even considered incorporating early childhood indigenous modes of knowledge and training into the school curriculum.¹ This inexplicable neglect, according to Scott, which was marked with advancement of technical education aimed at matriculating Africans for subordinate roles, was “analogous to regarding the matriculation or the school certificate course as a beginning and end of Western education.”² Scott drew from Scottish missionary Donald Fraser’s 1928 *The New Africa* that questioned whether in their dual mandate to evangelize and educate Africans missionaries were doing enough to advance pertinent Christian teachings that if adhered to promoted sustainable resource use.³

According to Fraser, it was imperative to impress upon their African converts that as farmers who were privileged to till “God’s earth” they also had an obligation to ensure their farming did “not impoverish the soil, but [instead also] enriched and replenished it.”⁴ Marked by the introduction of exotic crops that were less suited to local conditions and the shunning of indigenous crops and livestock that had adapted to these areas, Scott maintained it was not surprising that such initiatives at times contributed to soil erosion and ecological degradation.

¹ See. H. S. Scott, “The Development of the Education of the African in Relation to Western Contact,” in Harvey L. Usil (ed.), *The Year Book of Education 1938* (London: Evans Brothers Ltd, 1938), pp. 693-739.

² *Ibid.*, p. 695.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 732; Donald Fraser, *The New Africa* (New York: Missionary Education Movement of the United States and Canada, 1928).

⁴ Fraser, *The New Africa*, p. 177.

Similarly, with the education focused on producing native artisans and Africans forced to abandon their modes of sustenance in favor of cash crop production it was only a matter of time before food shortages were felt.⁵ Although Maasailand was never targeted for intensive cash crop production until the late 1950s when wheat was introduced, the ecological challenges it had experienced by the end of colonial rule that resulted from the administrations endeavors to modernize Maasai pastoralism mirrored the issues raised by Fraser and Scott. By the early 1960s expansive parts of the region had experienced “chronic surface soil degradation and erosion” that was accentuated by an overstocking, highland deforestation, small-scale crop production by non-Maasai natives, all compounded by an exponential population growth rate that has continued to the present.⁶

This chapter focuses on the two main Maasai districts of Kajiado and Narok to examine Maasai and British conflicts of interest that were manifested in their way of thinking within the context of colonial administration between 1900 and 1964. It highlights the ambivalent and contradictory nature of their relationship and how the British predicated this relationship on an assumed political, economic, and ideological superiority. Thus the chapter emphasizes the highly paternalistic nature of the relationship involving the British and the Maasai, which generally favored European settlers and was manifested in the coercive policies that profoundly impacted the Maasai. Specifically, the chapter argues that while colonial conservationist policies were often well intended these were uncritically presented as superior to the neglected traditional environmental knowledge that often times bred Maasai resistance and compromised the success

⁵ Scott, “The Development of the Education of the African,” p. 730.

⁶ See e.g., Isaac Sindiga, “Land Population Problems in Kajiado and Narok, Kenya,” *African Studies Review*, 27, 1 (1984), pp.23-39; The World Bank, *Kenya Population and Development: A World Bank Country Study* (Washington D.C.: The World Bank, 1980).

of the imposed projects. In other words it was the manner in which conservationist policies were implemented rather than the intent (moral obligation) that contributed to the failure of concerted efforts from the 1930s to destock Maasai cattle and mitigate against the progressive vegetation loss and soil erosion within the Masai Reserve.⁷

The chapter also reiterates that the British-Maasai relationship was both complex and contradictory. A seemingly acquiescent and relatively non-confrontational attitude adopted by the Maasai towards the British ensured that the state of their socio-political and pastoral economy for much of the colonial period was very much a result of their own initiatives as much as it was due to contact with Europeans. It reflected both continuity and change and therefore reinforced the malleability and dynamism of a culture that was anything but timeless. Equally, the chapter details how the competing rhetoric among colonial officials and non-officials ensured that the idealized images of the Maasai prevailed throughout much of the colonial period, despite evidence to the contrary. In particular, the chapter revisits the Maasai Moves, educational development, stock-specific taxation proposals, labor and war conscription, as well as efforts to dismantle the institution of moranhood. Modernization of traditional Maasai husbandry was caught up in the competing interests of officials and non-officials alike.

The Maasai Question

The arrival of the 584-mile Uganda Railway on the shores of Lake Victoria in 1901 forever changed the fate of the Kenya Maasai, some of whom until then resided in what was still designated as the eastern parts of the Uganda Protectorate (See Map 5.1). The line had been constructed at an exorbitant cost of £5.55 million to the British taxpayer and with the Foreign

⁷ See e.g. David Anderson, "Depression, Dust Bowl, Demography and Drought: The Colonial State and Soil Conservation in East Africa During the 1930s," *African Affairs*, 83, 332 (July, 1984), pp. 321-343.

Office insisting that the nascent East African protectorate (EAP)—present-day Kenya—contribute towards recouping these costs, the local administration earmarked the Rift Valley highlands for European settlement to engage in commercial agriculture as a means to achieve this. Payments were made until 1938 when the Kenya Colony succeeded in its waiver application.⁸ Unlike British South Africa where extensive mineral deposits including diamonds and gold had been discovered by the late 1880s, EAP lacked the wherewithal to finance even the most basic administrative costs. Exploratory work for precious minerals by the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEACo) that administered the protectorate as a charter from 1890 to 1895 had largely been unsuccessful.⁹

Subsequently, the promulgation of the Crown Lands Ordinance in 1902 earmarked the Rift Valley highlands for European settlement and commercial agriculture to drive the economy. As per the ordinance, the Maasai and other Africans were assumed to have no recognizable title to the land, customary or otherwise, which immediately left them at the mercy of European land policies. In March of the same year the protectorate was expanded to include the areas lying to the west of the railway line from the shores of Lake Naivasha to those of Lake Victoria, the goal being to have both the railway line and the proposed white enclaves under a single

⁸ The final cost to the British exchequer in 1938, which included branch lines in the Kenya Colony and the extension into Uganda totaling 1,625 miles was £7.9 million. See Mervyn. F. Hill, *Permanent Way: The Story of the Kenya and Uganda Railway: Being the Official History of the Development of the Transport System in Kenya and Uganda*, I (Nairobi: East African Railways and Harbours, 1949), pp. 242-243.

⁹ Initial prospecting for precious minerals was carried out under the (IBEACo) by Charles Hobley, a trained geologist and later career administrator in EAP, while hopes of mineral wealth had drawn a sizeable number of immigrants from South Africa in the early 1900s. See Charles W. Hobley, *Kenya: From Chartered Company to Crown Colony: Thirty Years of Exploration and Administration in British East Africa* (London: Frank Cass and Company Ltd., 1929), pp. 50-53; *Report of the East Africa Protectorate for the Year 1903-4, Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty, January 1905* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1905), p. 15.

administration.¹⁰ Overnight the residency of the Maasai in present-day eastern Uganda changed. Perhaps had they remained under a British jurisdiction where the settler influence was not so powerful the nature of their relationship with the British EAP administration might have been quite different. But that was not to be and they were soon caught up in the competing interests involving the local administration, settlers, and the Foreign Office.¹¹

In the absence of valuable minerals, agriculture was identified as a substitute to anchor the protectorate's economic development and pay for its administrative costs. Charles Eliot, EAP's first Commissioner from 1901 to 1904 and architect of the white settler highlands, targeted an economy driven by cash crops, stock farming and afforestation, specifically of Indian rubber and fiber.¹² Highly optimistic, Eliot, a distinguished linguist, was also an ethnocentric ideologue who identified the highly fertile and well watered Rift Valley highlands as ideal for European settlement to undertake these incentives. The railway line would be used to transport their agricultural surplus for export. Asserting that economic development of the protectorate demanded the input of European men of "class and means," he contemptuously brushed aside proposals to settle Indians or Jews that his predecessor Sir Arthur Hardinge and others had earlier suggested.¹³ Eliot thus pushed for generous land grants and other financial concessions as

¹⁰ See *Lansdowne to Eliot, 6 March 1902* in Gordon H. Mungeam, *Kenya: Select Historical Documents 1884-1923* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1978) [hereafter, Mungeam/KSHD], p. 92.

¹¹ See Frederick D. Lugard, "Introduction" to Huxley, E. and Margery Perham, *Race and Politics in Kenya*, pp. 7-13; Lotte Hughes, *Moving the Maasai: A Colonial Misadventure* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 27-28; Maurice Keith Sorrenson, *Origins of European Settlement in Kenya* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 22.

¹² See *C. Eliot to the Marquess of Lansdowne, Confidential, June 18, 1901*, FOCP (7867) LXVI, 135-137, in Mungeam/KSHD, pp. 86-87.

¹³ See *Eliot telegram to Marquess of Lansdowne, "Jewish Colonization Scheme," February 11, 1904*, FOCP (8345) in David Throup (ed.), *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Report and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print, Part I, From Mid-Nineteenth Century to the First World War Series G, Africa, 1885-1914, Volume 17: British East Africa, 1887-1905* (Frederick: University Publications of America, 1995), p. 314 [Hereafter Throup, *British Documents*]; Sir Harry Johnston, "East Africa: Its Strategic Significance, and as the 'America of the Hindu,'" in *Report by His Majesty's Special Commissioner on the Protectorate of Uganda* (1901), Col. 671, p.7.

incentives to attract aristocrats and other landed gentiles from Britain and its colonies, including Canada and Southern Africa, most of them of English stock.¹⁴

Eliot's ethnocentric predilections were however not without precedent. Lord Frederick Lugard, the architect of British indirect rule that largely prevailed as official colonial policy, harbored similar thoughts during his brief stint leading military expeditions under the IBEACo into Uganda between 1889 and 1893. Lugard had identified the Mau escarpment that forms the western wall of the Rift Valley and nearby highlands that were still under the Uganda Protectorate as suitable for European farming. He was particularly optimistic that fruit farming as had been carried out in New Zealand and other British colonies might be successful.¹⁵ Similar proposals were made in 1901 by Sir Harry Johnston who soon after the Uganda Railway was completed remarked that the creation of a "white man's country" in the highlands would not in any way infringe on the livelihoods of its "wandering natives who [had] no settled home, or whose fixated habitation [was] outside the healthy area."¹⁶ The Maasai were particularly singled out as one of the significant roaming communities.

The immediate consequence of the appropriation of the highland areas for white settlement was profound for Africans and their traditional economies. In particular, it brought to the fore the vexing issue of how to address the grievances of those impacted and set the stage for the development of native policy. While the Kikuyu and other communities were equally

¹⁴ See e.g. Elspeth Huxley, *White Man's Country: Lord Delamere and the Making of Kenya*, 2 vols, (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd, 1935); Lord Bertram Cranworth, *A Colony in the Making; or, Sport and Profit in British East Africa* (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1912).

¹⁵ Frederick Lugard, *The Rise of Our East African Empire* (William Blackwood & Sons, 1893), pp. 419-420; Charles Eliot, *The East Africa Protectorate* (London: Edward Arnold, 1905), pp.150-155.

¹⁶ See Sir Harry Johnston (CMD/671) as quoted in William T. Morgan, "The 'White Highlands' of Kenya, *The Geographical Journal*, 129, 2 (1963), pp. 140-155.

affected, it was the Maasai predicament that most concerned the Europeans. Historically, their traditional pastoral economy had depended to a large extent on access to large sections of the Central Rift Valley highlands around Naivasha and Nakuru for their dry-season grazing (See Map 5.1). They soon lost these areas to European settlement and contributed to an underlying fear among the governing class that the allegedly militaristic Maasai might violently resist their impending eviction.¹⁷ Popular and official correspondence ensured that this commonly held view of the Maasai, whether real or imagined, obtained throughout the colonial period. In 1901, Eliot questioned their continued commitment to serve as British levies during the punitive expeditions when they were answerable to Lenana.¹⁸ He based this decision upon the previous year's report on the number of Maasai levies that had reduced to 18 from a high of 50, mostly due to desertions.¹⁹ Perhaps in anticipation of a possible violent reaction to their impending relocation the administration in 1902 had decided to discontinue any further recruitment of the Maasai as part of the Kings African Rifles (KAR), its native force, for "political reasons."²⁰

Given the past British-Maasai alliance it was understandable that the controversial decision to promote white settlement in the highlands sparked protracted debates for and against it among administrators and settlers alike. Prioritized by the administration as the "Maasai Problem" or the "Maasai Dilemma" because of its moral and physical challenges to both the local administration and Foreign Office, these debates continued even after the Maasai Moves

¹⁷ See, e.g., *Report of the East Africa Protectorate for the Year 1903-4*, p. 3.

¹⁸ See Eliot to the Marquess of Landsowne, Despatch # March 20 1901 in Throup, *British Documents*, p. 205.

¹⁹ See Captain Sharp to Lieutenant-Colonel Grant Hatch, February 16 1901 & Lieutenant-Colonel Grant Hatch to Sir C. Eliot, March 16 1901 on "Masai military qualities," both in Throup, *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*, pp. 205-206.

²⁰ Richard Meinertzhagen, *Kenya Diary 1902-1906* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1957), p. 6.

that established the Southern and Northern Maasai Reserves in 1904.²¹ The first move followed the terms of the first Anglo-Maasai Agreement of August 10, 1904 signed between Commissioner Sir Donald Stewart—Eliot’s successor—and twenty Maasai elders headed by Lenana, the *Laibon* or spiritual leader, whom the British had installed as Paramount Chief on assumptions he commanded sovereignty over all Maasai sections. The subsequent Anglo-Maasai Agreement of 1911 sought to relocate those in the Northern Reserve to the marginally expanded Southern Reserve.²²

Seeking to balance out Maasai and British interests these reserves were presented as just compensation that ensured that the Maasai’s loss of the dry-season grazing areas was minimized. Fervent official supporters of the native reserve also believed it would guard against European acquisitiveness as the number of their fellow immigrants continued to increase exponentially. The concern was certainly real since Lord Delamere, who soon became the *de-facto* leader of the strong settler lobby had obtained as much as 100,000 acres.²³ Those who opposed the creation of native reserves maintained the idea was counterproductive to British interests within and across the empire. Irrespective of whether one supported the formation of the Maasai reserve or not, the protagonists were united in their belief that their arguments better served their altruistic mandate to improve the Africans’ social, economic, and political traditions and bring these up to European standards.

Among the notable dissenters to the creation of the reserves were missionaries and

²¹ See T.H.R. Cashmore, “The Maasai Problem,” in *Studies in District Administration in the East Africa Protectorate, 1895-1918*, RH/ Mss.Afr.s.1043 (2).

²² See *Anglo-Maasai Agreement of 1904 & 1911*, both in Mungeam/KSHD, pp. 327-329 & 338-341.

²³ See. Huxley & Perham, *Race and Politics*, pp. 76-77.

administrators, most of them having had or were still in close contact with the Maasai. Frederick Jackson, John Ainsworth, and Charles Hobley, all highly influential administrators, were clearly conflicted between meeting the aggressive and insatiable settler demands for land and a cautious Foreign Office that seemed to acknowledge Maasai land rights.²⁴ Though they harbored fears of an armed Maasai retaliation, they ended up supporting the idea because they saw reserves as alternative “homelands” to their Maasai allies.²⁵ As Gordon Mungeam suggests, Hobley in particular feared “Maasai arrogance and refusal to resettle might lead to tensions and escalate into more violence should the administration be forced into quelling these through punitive expeditions.”²⁶

Not surprisingly, the most outspoken critic against the creation of native reserves was Eliot, though his actual position on the matter has often been subject to debate. There is no doubt that on principle, Eliot, especially as the chief architect of white settlement, saw the establishment of native reserves as being contradictory to the Crown Land Ordinance of 1902. The quasi-autonomous nature of the reserves or native homelands, at least by definition, which should then have allowed for basic Maasai land rights, went against the ordinance’s prohibition that Africans should enjoy any title to land in the protectorate. Publicly, Eliot’s exasperation with the Maasai pastoral economy, as opposed to a personal dislike of them as a people, was stated in generalities and with some circumspection. His belief that the Maasai and their pastoral lifestyle

²⁴ See e.g., Sir Fredrick Jackson, “Memorandum on Native Rights,” February 22, 1904, in George Ritchie Sandford, *An Administrative and Political History of the Masai Reserve* (London: Waterlow & Sons Limited, 1919), pp. 22-24.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ See Gordon Mungeam, “Introduction” to Charles Hobley, *Kenya: From Chartered Company to Crown Colony*, 2nd Edition (London: Frank Cass, 1970), pp. xi-xii.

reflected innate indolence and anachronistic tendencies, however, including their supposed militarism with a propensity to engage in violent cattle raids, was widely shared among the protectorate's administrators and settlers alike.²⁷

Officially, Eliot held the view that though the Maasai had "rights to inhabit" particular districts, they absolutely had no "rights to monopolize" these areas. Hence, while he acknowledged Maasai interests had to be considered, he held an uncompromising view that this should not be done at the expense of European primacy since "wandering tribes should not have a right to keep other superior races out of large tracts merely because they have acquired a habit of straggling over far more land than they can utilize."²⁸ As he put it, in reference to the Uganda Railway, the "the road to Uganda was more valuable than Uganda itself."²⁹ Fearing the Maasai might vandalize the railway line and cripple the administration's projects, he was at least willing to consider the creation of the reserves at a significant distance from the railway and the white settler highlands.

As the person charged with the protectorate's political and economic stability Eliot's unyielding position is perhaps understandable; repeats of vandalism and sabotage on the railway line as had happened in the past with the Nandi — "the only tribe who directly hindered the construction of the railway"³⁰ — might slow down or stifle the protectorate's progress. But it

²⁷ Eliot, *The East Africa Protectorate*, pp. vii, 143-144, 311; Sorrenson, *Origins of White Settlement in Kenya*, pp. 76-79.

²⁸ See Eliot, *Memorandum on Native Rights in the Naivasha Province*, September 17, 1903, in *East Africa Protectorate and Uganda* (London: HMSO, 1908), pp. 339-340.

²⁹ *Ibid.* Kenya's status as a "default" colony presents a case for understanding the obligations of civil servants to the metropole rather than to the indigenous people. With Egypt and the Suez Canal firmly under Britain's unilateral grip by 1888, controlling the headwaters of the Nile in landlocked Uganda became its primary objective. Besides Uganda, the British were also interested in the Sudan as a significant component of Cecil Rhodes "Cape to Cairo" objective.

³⁰ Sorrenson, *Origins of European Settlement in Kenya*, pp. 237-239.

was not simply the need to safeguard Uganda's lifeline that worried Eliot. As the numbers of settlers grew steadily, their political clout was also on the rise and so were their specific demands. Immigrants from Southern Rhodesia, for example, cited violent insurrections against Europeans where Africans had taken up arms to protest against the reserve policy. Many of them worried that, left unchecked, the inevitable rising African population within them posed grave danger to the outnumbered European population, particularly if this was accompanied by resentment towards white encroachment. A considerable distance between native reserves and their enclaves was therefore presented as necessary to counter any elements of surprise.³¹

It is out of such concerns that one can discern Eliot's deep loathing of the Maasai way of life as explicitly laid out in his official correspondences with the Foreign Office. In these correspondences he was deeply concerned there would be a breakdown in law and order should European stock farmers take up arms to retaliate against the inevitable Maasai stock theft if their homelands were proximate to the settler highlands.³² Moreover, he lamented the precedent of promoting ethnic-based reserves as being retrogressive and a challenge to achieving peaceful co-existence in the protectorate since these would foster "tribalism" and promote rebellion, hinder effective administration, and counter Europe's self-arrogated mandate to "civilize" Africans. Conversely, he held the opinion that it was retrogressive for the Foreign Office to dedicate homelands to the Maasai as this was akin to promoting their supposed recidivism and therefore counterproductive to administration's modernizing goals.³³

³¹ Cashmore, "Studies in District Administration," pp. 81-83; *Report of the Kenya Land Commission, 1905* (Nairobi: East African Publishing Ltd, 1905), p. 15. Cf., e.g., Terence O. Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia: A Study in African Resistance* (London: Heinemann, 1967).

³² Eliot, *The East Africa Protectorate*, pp. vii, 143-144, 311.

³³Ibid, p.105.

Eliot understandably knew his position was untenable when the Masai Reserve was created in 1904 with the full support of the Foreign Office. Though despondent, he was nonetheless recalcitrant in his opposition to native reserves in general; one of his official dispatches two months before he resigned in June 1904 bristled with vitriolic aspersions towards the Maasai that betrayed his deep-seated hatred of the community beyond their way of life. In the letter, where he also defended controversial land grants he had previously issued to two prominent settlers, he stated that while “[He] wish[ed] to protect individual Masais...[he had] no desire to protect Massaidom. It [was] a beastly, bloody system, founded on raiding and immorality, [that was] disastrous both to the Masai and their neighbours. The sooner it disappear[ed] and [became] unknown, except in books of anthropology, the better.”³⁴

Yet despite Eliot’s reprobate attitude towards the Maasai way of life, he unreservedly praised their relatively harmonious co-existence with wildlife. With respect to their relations with wildlife he fully supported proposals to have them reside within parts of the Southern Reserve, which at the time also doubled as a game reserve. He specifically attributed this fortunate set of events to their non-consumptive use of wildlife since they rarely hunted for sustenance.³⁵ I expand on this aspect of traditional Maasai livelihood in the next chapter. Nonetheless, while Eliot explicitly denounced the creation of the Maasai reserves, even those who supported their creation considered the “Masai problem” unique.

Eliot’s opposition to the Maasai way of life notwithstanding, his fear that promoting ethnic-based development would be disruptive to the protectorate’s harmony, both among Africans and with respect to whites, is often ignored. Given the history of Kenya’s socio-political

³⁴ See *Eliot to Marquess of Lansdowne*, “Memo,” April 9, 1904 in *The East Africa Protectorate and Uganda*, p. 353.

³⁵ Eliot, *East Africa Protectorate*, p. 279.

and economic disparities, especially those enmeshed in negative ethnic identities and their roots in the colonial period, Eliot's forethought during the formative years of colonial rule have uncharacteristically received little attention.³⁶ As I argue in Chapter 6, the current conflicts of interests between MGRs, in their capacity as wildlife sanctuaries, and the state exacerbate the problem of human-wildlife conflicts and were founded in granting the Masai Reserve some form of quasi-autonomy. That this benefit was not extended to other ethnic groups further continues to complicate the government's efforts to address the issue of human-wildlife contestations on private land.

Nevertheless, it was equally obvious that the administration's fear of an armed resistance had been overstated. No doubt some Maasai, the moran in particular, might have been willing to challenge their eviction by taking up arms. Physically and psychologically, however, as a consequence of their prolonged "unofficial" alliance with the British, they were not in any position to achieve much success.³⁷ From the early 1890s they often formed part of the punitive expeditions against other communities, including the Kikuyu and the Nandi, who had dared challenge colonial intrusion.³⁸ Most of these expeditions were carried out through a scorched earth policy where indiscriminate burning of crops and property as well as the confiscation of livestock was commonplace. Among the most notable involved their expeditions between 1902 and 1906 with Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen, who from the age of 24 was charged with

³⁶ See e.g. Bethwell A. Ogot, "Boundary Changes and the Invention of 'Tribes,'" in Bethwell A. Ogot, *History as Destiny and History as Knowledge-Being Reflections on the Problems of Historicity and Historiography* (Kisumu: Anyange Press Limited, 2005), pp. 267-295.

³⁷ Richard Waller, "The Maasai and the British 1895-1905: Origins of an Alliance," *The Journal of African History*, 17, 4 (1976), pp. 529-533.

³⁸ Sidney L. Hinde and Hildegard B.S. Hinde, *The Last of the Masai* (London: William Heinemann, 1901), pp. 8-9.

pacifying restive communities. His KAR regiment was composed of as many as 1000 Maasai levies, several of whom had personally been seconded to him by Lenana.³⁹ A heartless and unremorseful general who did not “believe in the sanctity of human life or its dignity,” Meinertzhagen is best known for the infamous assassination of Nandi Laibon Koitalel arap Samoei in 1906.⁴⁰ Although he claimed self-defense, many in the Colonial Office were unhappy that his covert operation “called into question the fair dealing and honesty” of the British in dealing with their native adversaries.⁴¹ He had carried out his actions without having to use the two KAR battalions, ten maxim guns, 1000 Maasai moran, and an armored train that was at his disposal.⁴² Maasai moran familiarity with the magnitude of weaponry and personnel at Meinertzhagen’s disposal very likely inhibited any thoughts of challenging their eviction by force.

No doubt, too, the level of brutal suppression employed by Meinertzhagen witnessed by many of his Maasai levies dissuaded even the bravest among them to challenge colonial authority. In 1902, for example, in preparation for a retributive expedition against the Kihimbuini Kikuyu who had repeatedly robbed trading caravans, defied government orders, and had recently murdered a settler and mutilated his body, he ordered his troops to kill “every living thing without mercy, shoot or bayonet every soul, burn all the huts and raze the banana plantations to the ground.”⁴³ On this occasion while children were spared, the women met the same brutal fate

³⁹ Meinertzhagen, *Kenya Diary*, p. 30.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

⁴¹ Charles Chenevix Trench, *Men Who Ruled Kenya: The Kenya Administration, 1892-1963* (London: Radcliffe Press, 1993), p. 23.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Meinertzhagen, *Kenya Diary*, p. 51.

Cf. Sir Arthur Hardinge, *The Philosophy of Force Memorandum* to the Foreign Office, April 25, 1897, in

as their men simply because they were reported to have also participated in the mutilation of the settler's body. For the Maasai moran, who according to tradition were conditioned to spare women and children when they took part in cattle raids or attacks on neighboring communities, such actions must have been mystifying.⁴⁴

Meinertzhagen's irrationality and ambivalence towards them may also have mystified his Maasai troops. While he praised their discipline and bravery in the KAR, he held little regard for their way of life. In 1904 during an expedition against the Irryeni Kikuyu he shot and killed two of his Maasai levies in cold blood. Unremorseful in his actions, he labeled them "bloodthirsty villains to whom the killing of women and children meant nothing" justifying his actions as disciplinary for the two having disobeyed his orders to spare women and children. The traumatic experience and the irony of his actions were certainly not lost on those Maasai who witnessed this execution.⁴⁵ One may also question his use of the word "nigger", especially as directed towards those among his regiment who had gone against his strict orders and the rebellious communities he slaughtered without mercy, which was never the case when he praised his troops.⁴⁶

Having been party to the brutality employed during the various punitive expeditions, the

Mungeam/KSHD, pp.128-129. Hardinge's "Philosophy of Force" memorandum became a template for his successors who never hesitated to resort to use brutal force if necessary to quell any challenges to Britain's political and economic interests.

⁴⁴ See, e.g., S. S. Ole Sankan, *The Maasai*. (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1971), p. xviii.

⁴⁵ Meinertzhagen, *Kenya Diary*, p. 143.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 32; 40. Meinertzhagen's sociopathic irrationalities were equally extended to revenge attacks on wildlife. A year before he murdered the two Maasai, he carried out a meticulously planned revenge attack on a troop of baboons that had just killed "Baby," his dog. Accompanied by 30 soldiers, he set off at 3 a.m. to their roost...cut off all possible escape routes and slaughtered at least 25 baboons, including of course all the dominant males in the group: Meinertzhagen, *Kenya Diary*, pp. 172-173.

Maasai levies were well aware of the futility of resistance. Additionally, years of internecine strife, plus the epidemic epizootic stock diseases and droughts that ravaged humans and livestock alike, had taken both a physical and psychological toll on the Maasai.⁴⁷ Despite having rebuilt their herds and their apparent large numbers within KAR, their fear of British military power had no doubt been greatly exacerbated by witnessing the brutal retribution against the Kikuyu and Nandi.⁴⁸

Likewise, though the British may have been careful to not undermine the Maasai military potential, they were nevertheless confident in their capability to suppress any violent uprisings with ease. It is thus a paradox that an underlying fear of the Maasai morans continued to inform the administration's immediate policies and relationship with the Maasai during the two World Wars as well as during the Emergency period, as we shall see below. Nonetheless, it is certain that their assumptions of military threat from the moran went a long way in promoting the militant Maasai image that extended well beyond the colonial period.

This ambivalent British attitude was not limited to their dealings with the morans. In the course of their punitive expeditions, perhaps driven by the need to maintain the loyalty of a previously reputed hostile community, the administration had done little to discourage the Maasai from keeping confiscated livestock despite the moral questions this raised.

Meinertzhagen, for example, did not believe that the Maasai or any European should personally benefit from the war booty, but rather that these should contribute to the public coffers. Although

⁴⁷ See e.g., Robert Tignor, "The Maasai Warriors: Pattern Violence in Colonial Kenya" *The Journal of African Studies*, 13, 2 (1972), pp. 271-290. Citing the prolonged Nandi resistance that immediately collapsed with their leader's assassination, Tignor writes that the psychological effects of war are far more devastating to the moral of the vanquished troops than the actual military defeat.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

he was powerless to influence local policies, he never hesitated to arrest those who directly sought to gain from confiscated stock.⁴⁹

Indeed, the decision to allow the Maasai to keep the confiscated livestock had from the onset confounded many officials. Sidney Hinde was particularly conflicted by this policy. Together with his wife Hildegard, who accompanied him as chief Maasai ethnographer, their scholarship has received little attention although it represents some of the earliest Maasai ethnography.⁵⁰ As a former Foreign Office attaché under the IBEACo Sidney recounts the turn of events between 1893 and 1896 when they had offered several thousand Maasai from the Kaputie, Matapato, and Keekonyikie sections refuge at Fort Smith. These Maasai had lost all their earthly possessions as a result of internecine strife, natural disasters, and cattle raids, as well as being at the mercy of the Kikuyu. While IBEACo officials had readily taken them in, they also embarked on encouraging them to take up settled farming. To the Hinde and others who expected the Maasai to settle down and concentrate on farming after suffering these losses in livestock and human life, it was unfathomable that they opted to return to pastoralism and “naturally” to their thievish and murderous “past-time” raiding their neighbor’s cattle. Hinde thus wondered if the British were perhaps complicit in promoting cattle raiding among their allies, yet it was a practice officials and non-officials alike abhorred as symptomatic of the community’s anachronism.⁵¹

Whereas British actions inadvertently promoted Maasai cattle raiding practice, to the

⁴⁹ Meinertzhagen, *Kenya Diary*, pp. 163-164.

⁵⁰ Hinde and Hinde, *The Last of the Masai*; Alfred Claude Hollis, *The Masai: Their Language and Folklore* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905).

⁵¹ Hinde and Hinde, *The Last of the Masai*, pp. 9; 442-445.

Maasai their alliance was premised on self-preservation. As they had historically done, they perceived their collaboration to be no different than many they had initiated with neighbors like the Kikuyu. During such periods survival depended on a willingness to engage in alternative livelihoods, including small-scale farming and hunting until it was feasible for them to return to pastoralism.⁵² Accordingly, in the course of the punitive expeditions where the British allowed them to keep confiscated livestock, one can surmise that the Maasai understood the circumstances to be no different from their previous relations with other neighbors. Cattle raids had equally contributed towards starting up or boosting herds lost to neighbors or natural disasters.

In fact, the only significant Maasai challenge to the Maasai Question and British overrule was the famous *Civil Case No. 91 of 1912* filed by eight Maasai morans from the Keekonyikie and Purko sections and led by a certain Ole Njogo on April 10, 1913 against the Attorney General of the East African Protectorate and others. The lawsuit was first heard on May 26, 1913.⁵³ The barrister who represented them, Alexander Morrison, had two mission-educated Maasai as his assistants, one of whom was Molonket Ole Sempele, whose education journey I discuss shortly. Morrison presented the plaintiffs as representatives of twenty existing Maasai clans and sections that challenged the authority of Lenana and his son Ole Segi, as lead signatories in the 1904 and 1911 agreements respectively, to act on behalf of all Maasai.⁵⁴ In

⁵² See e.g., Joan Knowles and D.P. Collett, "Nature as Myth, Symbol, and Action: Notes towards an Historical Understanding of Development and Conservation in Kenyan Maasailand," *Africa*, 59, 4 (1989), pp. 433-460; Waller, "An Alliance," p. 535.

⁵³ See East Africa Protectorate, *Judgment of the High Court in the Case brought by the Maasai Tribe against the Attorney-General of the East Africa Protectorate*; Great Britain House of Commons, 1911, *Sessional Papers*, Volume LII (1913), pp.705-731; *Civil Case No. 91 of 1912/1913, Cd. 6939* in Mungeam/KSHD, pp. 341-344.

⁵⁴ See, e.g. Lotte Hughes, *Moving the Maasai: A Colonial Misadventure* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp.89-104 for a detailed analysis of the court case. For the number of Maasai warriors see Belfied to Harcourt, Confidential, 16 Jan 1913, P.R.O., C.O, 533/116, as cited in Tignor, "The Maasai Warriors," p. 280.

addition, the Maasai sought £5,000 as damages for the administration's failure to build a road that should have eased travel between their two reserves as stipulated in the 1904 agreement, as well as unspecified compensation for stock loss and depreciation occasioned by the 1911 eviction. They also wanted a stay in their resettlement even though a majority had already left for the marginally expanded Southern Reserve. Finally, they denounced the unnecessary eviction of women and children as inhumane and claimed their leaders who signed both agreements never had legal counsel and thus these should be null and void. Accordingly, Morrison contended the moves were based on "agreements" rather than "a treaty" *per se*.⁵⁵

In the end, the lawsuit was quickly dismissed with costs on technicalities. Although in his ruling Judge R.W. Hamilton cited the Foreign Jurisdictions Act of 1890, which gave the EAP Commissioner the powers to act on behalf of the Crown, he insisted the High Court lacked jurisdiction over a treaty relating to Acts of State "between the Crown and representatives of the Maasai, a foreign tribe living under its protection."⁵⁶ In other words, the Maasai representatives entered into the agreement on their own volition rather than as British subjects. No doubt the Maasai plaintiffs must have been left baffled that they not only lost the case but also had to pay costs. As to why the Maasai would put their faith in a foreign court for which they had not the slightest idea how it operated, the deliberations and the outcome was symptomatic of the manipulations they would be subjected to by colonial officials and non-officials alike. The words of Ainsworth, who attended the court hearings as a witness to the consent of both parties—the Maasai representatives and Governor Donald Stewart—respecting the April 4, 1911 treaty, that

⁵⁵ See, e.g., *Civil Case No. 91 of 1912/1913, Cd. 6939* in Mungeam/KSHD, pp. 343-344.

⁵⁶ *Judgment of the High Court in the Case brought by the Maasai Tribe against the Attorney-General of the East Africa Protectorate; Civil Case No. 91 of 1912/1913*, p. 342.

he hoped Paramount Chief Lenana has “interpreted the treaties correctly,” certainly attest to such conniving.⁵⁷

The futility of the legal challenge notwithstanding, two aspects of the lawsuit stood out. First, the Maasai plaintiffs were encouraged to seek legal assistance by two of the handful of mission-educated Maasai, which challenges popular perceptions of all Maasai as being resistant to change.⁵⁸ Second, they explicitly questioned the absolute powers ascribed to their elders who negotiated the two treaties, a direct challenge to the administrations’ assumptions regarding Maasai political organization, in particular the supposed sovereign powers of the *Laibon*. As noted by Hughes, these two aspects equally point to the emergence of African agency among the Maasai in challenging colonial rule, at least a decade before the nationalistic movements of the 1920s.⁵⁹

It is worth noting, however, that even before the 1904 agreement was signed the British were cognizant of the challenges of imposing a leader on the Maasai, whose complex political structure was loosely acephalous in nature. No single leader commanded sovereignty over the fourteen or fifteen autonomous Maasai sections and yet they went ahead and installed Lenana as the Paramount Chief in 1901. Above all else, the imposition of the title to mirror those across the protectorate or in other colonies was an early attempt by Eliot and his successors to curtail the militaristic power of the restive morans, well aware that they were never directly answerable to

⁵⁷ *Judgment of the High Court in the Case brought by the Maasai Tribe against the Attorney-General of the East Africa Protectorate*, p. 709.

⁵⁸ See e.g. Sarone Ole Sena, *Colonial Education among the Kenya Maasai, 1894-1962* (Department of Anthropology, McGill University, 1986), p. 5, noting that there were fewer than a dozen mission-educated Maasai in 1911.

⁵⁹ Hughes, *Moving the Maasai*, p. 5; Tignor, “The Maasai Warriors,” p. 281.

the men of “wealth and prominence” among their own, let alone the paramount chief the administration went ahead and imposed upon them.⁶⁰

Attempts by junior officers to question the assumptions or intentions of the administration were often quickly dismissed. As a case in point, in 1902 when Meinertzhagen suggested to Eliot that an “educated and armed” African was bound to resist their confinement in reserves under deplorable labor conditions, the prophetic assertion was quickly dismissed. While Eliot was confident European primacy would withstand such challenges. Meinertzhagen was pessimistic that sooner or later Africans would emerge victorious.⁶¹ Arguably, part of Meinertzhagen’s prophecy came to pass with the input of the mission-educated Maasai in the unsuccessful court challenge. Likewise, under the cloud of growing resistance and disobedience coming from the morans towards their imposed leaders, the abolition of the title of Paramount Chief for all Maasai in 1918 and the restructuring of local governance to include all known Maasai sections in Kenya were belated attempts to have local governance reflect the complex Maasai social and political structures.⁶²

Both this case and the subsequent appeal directly challenge assertions that the Maasai were never proactive in their dealings with the British. Maurice Sorrenson, for example, claimed that the Maasai, unlike the Kikuyu, chose to “ignore” the Europeans and their customs and that the losses of their land “did not breed in [them] a spirit of rebellion.”⁶³ Despite the absence of a

⁶⁰ Lord Hailey, *Native Administration in the British African Territories, Part I. East Africa: Uganda, Kenya, Tanganyika* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1950), pp. 169.

⁶¹ Meinertzhagen, *Kenya Diary*, p. 31.

⁶² Hailey, *Native Administration in the British African Territories*, p. 171.

⁶³ Sorrenson, *Origins of European Settlement in Kenya*, p. 276; Also see Mungeam, “Masai and Kikuyu Responses to the Establishment of British Administration in the East African Protectorate,” *The Journal of African History*, 11, 10 (1970), pp. 127-143.

protracted armed resistance like that of the Nandi this was far from the case. Above all else their participation as levies during the retributive attacks plus the court case and subsequent appeal reflected both a willingness of the Maasai, with the morans in particular, to cooperate with the administration on matters they deemed beneficial to their own causes, while at the same time readily challenging authority both within and outside the community.

Yet Sorrenson also reflects upon the underlying irony resulting from the establishment of the Maasai Reserves, an issue that was overlooked by the protagonists as well as scholars revisiting the debates over their justification. In effect, the creation of the expansive reserve not only undercut the European mandate to “civilize” the Maasai, but equally, their endeavors to promote settled forms of agriculture. Having one of the lowest population densities in the protectorate at roughly 1.5 per square mile by the end of 1913, all the Maasai sections were guaranteed expansive land that ensured their traditional pastoral livelihood was maintained throughout the colonial period and into independent Kenya.⁶⁴ Though this arrangement was symptomatic of the shortsighted policies instituted under colonial rule, at least to them it was justification for European cultural supremacy and to their civilizing mandate.

The Maasai may have had their land safeguarded but at the most basic level the reserves’ distinct boundaries set the stage for profound changes to their transhumant lifestyle. While not immediately felt, the boundaries were set to confine their “wandering” ways. The Native Passes Regulations of 1900 and the Rules of Control to the Movement of Maasai of April 24, 1906 mandated the possession of passes for people and livestock to travel outside the reserve, even for limited time periods. European farmers residing in the surrounding areas of the reserve held the

⁶⁴ See *Evidence and Report of the Native Labour Commission, 1912-1913* (Nairobi: Government Printers, 1913), pp. 304-306 in Sorrenson, *Origins of European Settlement*, p. 277.

prerogative to issue and allow these passes which also sought to prevent disease communication between native and European stock.⁶⁵

To the administration the boundaries offered a platform through which they could now promote settled forms of agriculture while also curtailing outside movement of humans and livestock. Yet it must also be noted that from the onset, though it had not been lost on the administration that African agricultural input had to be harnessed to complement the limited European production, the challenge was that this was mostly subsistence in nature. Furthermore, for those administrators who sought to transform traditional pastoralism, it soon became evident that much of their land was unfit for farming, the best having actually been lost to European settlers.⁶⁶

Maasai Potentialities

The colonial administration at least held hope that they could immediately incorporate some of the traditional farming communities such as the Kikuyu into a cash crop economy. With such communities they held the view that it would be far easier to advance their traditional shifting "slash and burn" cultivation to a more stabilized, less "wasteful" agricultural practice. While this transition was intended to require European supervision, it would be moderate when compared to transforming the traditional Maasai animal husbandry. In the words of prominent settlers such as Lord Cranworth, for example, while the Kikuyu traditional livelihood was "economically useful," Maasai pastoralism was "economically useless."⁶⁷ Despite their large

⁶⁵ See "Regulations Relative to Movement of Livestock," Government Notice, August 1908, printed in *Agricultural Journal of British East Africa (AJBEA)*, 1, 3 (1908), pp. 203-216.

⁶⁶ Huxley and Perham, *Race and Politics in Kenya*, p. 35; *Legislative Council Meeting*, p. 38 in RH.Mss.Afr.s.1928.

⁶⁷ Cranworth, *A Colony in the Making*, p. 25.

numbers of cattle, the milk and beef quality of Maasai herds were considered worthless due to “generations of in-breeding” and could only be improved through cross-breeding with higher quality European stock as well as inoculation and control of prevalent animal diseases. Other potentialities included the breeding of both sheep and angora goats for wool export.⁶⁸ Having dismissed the traditional Maasai economy as rudimentary and worthless, it followed that to the administration the transition of the ambulatory Maasai pastoral economy to one of sedentarism, preferably farming, demanded a total overhaul.

In the eyes of the colonial governing class, if any one community justified the need for British trusteeship—the official British colonial policy—it was the Maasai. What better than the mandate to wean them off their proclivity to violence while also modernizing their traditional pastoral economy, which they disparaged as solely being predicated on stock theft? Unlike Eliot, who cared less whether the Maasai were “annulled to only be referenced in the footnotes of history”⁶⁹ or not, his successors believed otherwise. Yet trusteeship was not solely based on an obligation to advance their individual subjects’ interests, and thus collectively the world; it was pegged on the equal responsibility to advance British interests in the metropole.⁷⁰ The administration therefore sought to distinguish between the latent potentialities of the Maasai as a people and those of their possessions, including land and livestock.

⁶⁸ *Report on the East Africa Protectorate for the Year 1903-4, Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty, January 1905* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1905), p. 17.

⁶⁹ See Eliot, *Marquess of Lansdowne*, “Memo,” April 9, 1904.

⁷⁰ See in particular, *Memorandum on Native Policy in East Africa*, 1926; also see with specific reference to the work of Lugard, “Native Policy: General, Land, Native Production, Labour, Native Organisation, Education and Medical Services,” in *East Africa Report of the East Africa Commission Presented to the Secretary of State for the Colonies to Parliament by Command of His Majesty, April 1925* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1925), pp. 21-61; Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (London: William Blackwood & Sons Ltd., 1926); Lugard, *Revisions of Instructions to Political Officers on Subjects Chiefly, Political, and Administrative, 1913-1918* (London: Waterlow & Sons Ltd., 1919).

Immediately following the establishment of the reserves, taxation and educational development were advanced as the two most important tools best suited to fully harness the Maasai potentialities to benefit them and the national economy. By extension, these goals would also contribute to British economic and political interests. But with rough estimates putting the total Maasai population in the Maasai Reserve at just over 40,000 in 1911 and the moran constituting about 10 percent of this number, the cash-strapped administration remained pessimistic towards fully exploiting the potentialities of the Maasai as a people.⁷¹

It is worth recalling that all natives, including the Maasai, were subjected to taxation once such legislation was first promulgated in 1901.⁷² Increasing pressure from settlers, who believed the administration was obligated to provide them with subsidized, essentially free manpower, soon forced the government to advance discriminatory tax policies aimed at coercing African labor for white-owned farms.⁷³ Nonetheless, if not to meet settler labor demands, the cash-strapped administration also pushed a tax amendment to coax the Maasai youth to avail themselves for public works. To the administration, such labor would be crucial for the construction of schools, as well as for water boreholes that would cater for human and livestock consumption.

The rising political power of settlers and their increasing demands for African labor also presented a moral dilemma for the administration. Technically, and in theory, the government had hoped that the free market principle would take care of the settler labor demands. The

⁷¹ Sandford, *An Administrative and Political History*, p.108.

⁷² See *Hut Tax Ordinance, 1901* arising from *King's Regulation under Article 45 of the "East Africa Order-in-Council, 1897,"* and *Article 11 of the "East Africa Order-in-Council, 1899,"* in Mungeam/KSHD, pp. 407-408.

⁷³ Governor Heges Sadler to Elgren, Telegrams, March 23 and 24, 1908, PP. *Correspondence related to Affairs in the East Africa Protectorate*, Cd. 4122 (1908), 1-2 as cited in Mungeam/KSHD, pp. 376-378.

administration, which was also aware of public opinion in Britain being against any form of forced labor, were particularly reluctant to be seen as coercing African labor for personal gain.⁷⁴ Yet without any form of persuasion and having largely limited the use of indentured labor to the importation of semi-skilled Indian laborers during the construction of the Uganda Railway, the administration felt obligated to pressure the unskilled Africans to work on European farms lest labor shortages jeopardized its own developmental goals.⁷⁵

The administration also advanced policies aimed at expanding the tax base and increase revenue collection. To this end it promulgated The Native Hut and Poll Tax Ordinance of 1910 to replace the Hut Tax Ordinance of 1903. Highlighting the inelastic and punitive nature of these taxes directed at the African people, since people of European and Asian extraction were excluded, they maintained that the Rs. 3 obligation per African dwelling also to include polygamous households. Likewise, the “Poll Tax” of a similar amount was to be paid by all male African adults who were not liable to pay the hut tax.⁷⁶ Although Maasai men also practiced polygyny, there was no doubt that their ambulatory pastoral practices and their semi-permanent dwellings made collection of taxes a major challenge.

Exacerbating these concerns was the long-held view that pastoral groups were innately indolent. As pointed out by Margery Perham, the convenient theory pushed by prominent settlers such as Lord Delamere during the Labour Circular meeting of 1912 was that life in the reserves promoted indolence and laziness while work on European farms built “moral worth and provided

⁷⁴ See e.g., “The Bishops’ Memorandum on Native Labour, November 1, 1919,” *Paper No. 4 in Cmd. 873* (1920), in Mungeam/KSHD, pp. 395-399.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ See the Native Hut and Poll Tax Ordinance 1910 or Ordinance No. 2 of 1910, East Africa Protectorate Gazette.

dignity of labour.”⁷⁷ Consequently, settlers contended that unless the “wants of natives increased enormously beyond the need to increase their stock or purchase another wife” the self-sustaining nature of traditional economies rendered them unlikely to seek outside employment.⁷⁸

It is not a surprise that the Maasai were specifically targeted with such flimsy rhetoric. Yet the settlers had reason to be worried. Indeed, the Anglo-Maasai Agreements had essentially made them the only native community whose homeland was guaranteed by treaty. Indeed, following the Crown Lands Ordinance of 1902, while other communities lacked any dedicated homelands and were most likely to be driven to work on European farms, Maasai economics and their expansive native reserves ensured there would be little motivation for them to seek outside employment. The amended Anglo-Masai Agreement of 1911 guaranteed them exclusive use of the Masai Reserve, free from further excision or intrusion by Europeans as well as other natives without the approval of their elders.

But just as the government might have thought that the revised Anglo-Masai Agreement of 1911 had finally settled the “Masai Question” the issue of native taxation soon proved otherwise. Inconclusive Maasai-specific tax amendment debates among prominent provincial commissioners between 1912 and 1918 yet again reflected the conundrum the administration faced in their dealings with the Maasai. The debates dealt at length with the perception that despite their inordinate wealth in cattle, the Maasai were not remitting their fair share of taxes to the administration.⁷⁹ When the stock-specific tax amendment debates were therefore initiated at the behest of Rupert Hemsted, the first Maasai Provincial Commissioner (1912-1923) in a March

⁷⁷ Perham, *Race and Politics in Kenya*, p. 77; *Native Labour Commission Report, 1912*, p. 108.

⁷⁸ *Report of the East Africa Protectorate for the Year 1903-4*, p. 21.

⁷⁹ Sandford, *An Administrative and Political History*, p. 85.

21, 1912 circular to all provincial commissioners, it was an implicit acknowledgment that the Maasai dilemma and their pastoral livelihood was more complex than many had originally anticipated.⁸⁰

Among the first to broach the subject of broadening the tax base to cover Maasai stock were Charles Lane, Provincial Commissioner of Naivasha Province in June 1911, and E. C. Crewe-Read, Assistant District Commissioner in the Southern Maasai Reserve three months later. According to Lane, it was only the Maasai, out of several other ethnicities under his expansive jurisdiction, who should be mandated to pay stock taxes to reflect their “limitless” wealth in cattle instead of the hut tax.⁸¹ Alfred Hollis, Secretary for Native Affairs, also shared his sentiment in July 1912 that a poll tax would be more representative of their wealth. Crewe-Read’s proposals were nonetheless instructive not only in their specific details, but also because he believed by doing so they would encourage the Maasai to engage in livestock trade and thereby contribute towards the larger British objective to stimulate the protectorate’s economy.

In the first detailed report for the Southern Reserve since its creation, Crewe-Read lauded the marked increases in hut tax revenue from 1908 to 1911, the most significant of which was the 200 percent jump between 1908 and 1909. There were also modest increases of 25 percent and 17 percent in the 1909-1910 and 1910-1911 financial years, respectively. He projected these figures would be much higher if they instituted a “property” tax.⁸² Unlike Lane, he also remarked that these figures proportionally correlated to higher tax compliance per individual and were

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 86.

⁸² E. C. Crewe-Read on “Taxation,” *Southern Maasai Reserve Political Report from Commencement to December 31st 1911*, RH/Mss. Afr.s.1409, p.48.

certainly above the territorial average of 12 to 15 percent projected by Governor Percy Girouard in 1912.⁸³ Crewe-Read was also of the opinion that these figures would be greatly boosted if the administration maximized its tax compliance and collection.

But while Crewe-Read's proposals were theoretically plausible, in reality, they were never realized. He claimed, to support his case, that as many as half of the Purko, the most populous among the Maasai sections, had for the most part avoided or declined to pay their dues. To back his claims, he personally collected new revenue amounting to Rs. 2838, which boosted the 1911 totals to Rs. 11,925 or about a quarter of the Purko residing in one of the counties. Within the expansive district his actions only served to reflect the endemic personnel shortages plaguing the nascent administration.⁸⁴ Intriguingly, for all the representations of the Maasai as innately indolent and averse to manual labor, their highly praised "natural" skills as "houseboys, policemen, syces, herds [boys], forest, and veterinary guards" made them very much sought after by whites in the protectorate.⁸⁵ Yet it is the stereotypes that continued well after independence and are built into popular images of the Maasai representing "authentic" Africa.

Beyond seeking to boost the public coffers, Crewe also hoped a stock tax would solve another major problem, which was that it would encourage the Maasai to engage in regular stock sales. He believed stock-specific taxes directed at the Maasai would alleviate several issues including the Maasai disinclination to sell their cattle, the limited veterinary personnel in the protectorate, and the ecological pressures associated with large herds on limited land.

⁸³ See Report on British East Africa 1912, enclosure in Girouard to Harcourt, Confidential, February 19, 1912, C.O.C.P. African No. 954, 197-207, in Mungeam/KSHD, p. 429.

⁸⁴ Crewe-Read, "Taxation," p. 49.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

Accordingly, he believed stock-specific taxes would force the Maasai to engage in cattle sales instead of their preferred barter trade that largely involved the sale of surplus sheep, which they then used to purchase more cattle. Noting that it was only under rare circumstances that the Maasai were known to sell the odd old bullock to butchers in Nairobi, he hoped coercing them to sell their stock would not only stimulate trade in general, and by extension the economy, but also indirectly contribute towards mooted destocking campaigns. Nor were the Maasai known to be enthused about engaging in the hides and skins trade.⁸⁶

The tax debates were also aligned along the administration's goal to subsidize each reserve's developmental costs. In April 1912, John McClellan, who succeeded Lane in Naivasha, proposed higher taxes for the Maasai as a way to recoup some of the investments such as veterinarian care and water provision incurred in the course of developing animal husbandry. He argued that such investments had directly accounted for increases of upwards of 50 percent in Maasai herds.⁸⁷ Echoing McClellan's proposals, H.R. Tate, a long serving administrator among the Kikuyu, proposed a flat rate of 1 percent per for all stock. Citing the administration's "huge" investments, he even linked the apparent exponential livestock increases among natives in general to the Pax Britannica.

Going by Governor Girouard's 1912 financial report, a total of £5000 or approximately 0.6 percent of the total budget for the 1911-1912 financial year was allocated for combating stock diseases.⁸⁸ Perhaps it is only possible to analyze Tate's baffling tax proposals, as well as his Pax Britannica attributions within the subjective lens that traditional pastoralism was usually

⁸⁶ *Southern Maasai Reserve District Records, 1918*, p. 44.

⁸⁷ Sandford, *An Administrative and Political History*, p. 83.

⁸⁸ Girouard, in Mungeam/KSHD, p. 423.

viewed. His assertion is even more perplexing for the simple fact that while Africans were subjected to taxation, settlers were spared taxes during the first three decades of colonial rule.⁸⁹ Yet while settlers would demand and receive public services, African reserves received little if any funding from the government for the next two decades.⁹⁰ With respect to the Maasai, such disparities were especially pronounced and were among the reasons that the state of both educational and development projects in the Masai Reserve were significantly lower than in other areas, as I discuss below.

The 1912 proposals made by Ainsworth and Hopley were at least notable in seeking a balanced solution to the taxation dilemma. Both advanced a graduated tax code that was supposed to reflect an individual's herd size. Perhaps their proposals were not surprising given their earlier positions in the debates over the Masai Moves. The proposals also considered the externalities, natural or otherwise, which often times impacted cattle rearing in Maasailand. In this regard, however, they differed. Ainsworth argued that it would be risky to expect steady revenue from herds whose numbers were known to fluctuate drastically due to natural conditions. He nonetheless believed the fluctuations would be statistically insignificant if pegged to an average herd per person. In contrast, and certainly optimistically, Hopley hoped the challenges posed by natural disasters that contributed to the unpredictable nature of traditional animal husbandry as characterized by both massive losses and gains in cattle herds might finally

⁸⁹ See e.g. Elspeth Huxley and Margery Perham, *Race and Politics in Kenya: A Correspondence between Elspeth Huxley and Margery Perham, with an Introduction by Lord Lugard* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1944), p.97; *Report upon the British East Africa Protectorate, enclosure in Girouard to Crewe. Confidential. May 26, 1910, C.O.C.P. African No, 954, 123-5 in Mungeam/KSHD], pp. 111-113.*

⁹⁰ See *Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into and report on the Financial Position and System of Taxation of Kenya, 1936*, p. 133.

force the Maasai to rethink their resistance towards regular cattle sales.⁹¹

In late October of the same year, Sir Henry Belfield, who reported to the Secretary of State, echoed Crewe-Read's argument that, left uncontrolled, an exponential increase in Maasai stock would pose ecological dangers, including the spread of animal diseases. Belfield reiterated the need to promote agricultural and industrial economies of trade among the Maasai and wean them off their supposed pastoral-related anachronisms, including stock theft and indolence. Evidently, well before Melville Herskovits theorized the pastoral "cattle complex," the perception that the Maasai merely hoarded cattle for symbolic value that far exceeded their economic value was widely accepted in the protectorate.⁹² Taking into account the uncertainty surrounding the second relocation of the Maasai, although this was eventually accomplished by 1916, Belfield proposed taxing Maasai stock that exceeded a certain number. Although he left the number open to discussion he also proposed legalizing destocking campaigns as part of a wider policy aimed at revenue collection.⁹³

In the end, even after he reviewed the respective proposals in 1918, Hemsted was still unable to resolve or amend the tax code. While he was quick to dismiss Maasai cattle as not being worth even to be considered fit for local consumption, there is no doubt that the ambulatory nature of the Maasai livelihood factored heavily in his decision. He had admitted as much five years earlier. He was also aware of the challenges of enforcing the tax code among individual Maasai who traditionally spread their herd across multiple villages.⁹⁴ But Hemsted

⁹¹ Sandford, *An Administrative and Political History*, p. 84.

⁹² See Melville J. Herskovits, "Cattle Complex in East Africa," *American Anthropologist*, 28 (1926), pp. 230-272.

⁹³ Sandford, *An Administrative and Political History*, p. 85.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

also feared antagonizing the Maasai. Like most of the officials who had interacted with them, he showed deep understanding of many of their social and political customs. He knew it was considered taboo for a Maasai to count individual stock, a societal proscription they would certainly not take kindly to if an outsider did it. Besides, as he acknowledged, for a tax that could not be universalized, it was unfair to single out the Maasai and other pastoral communities and not impose it on other native communities who practiced settled forms of agriculture.⁹⁵ As things stood, the Maasai continued to be subjected to the 1910 hut and poll tax promulgations.

Yet the inconclusive tax debates seemed not to bother Hemsted, or his successors, and for much of the colonial period the issue was rarely discussed. For the Maasai, at least they got a reprieve even after the subject was unsuccessfully revisited in the early 1920s. Instead, Hemstead believed that a vigorous educational policy was vital if they were to fundamentally reorient the Maasai traditional outlook. Even if they were to resort to compulsive policies he saw this as prudent if they were to rid the Maasai of some “abominable” traditions including the widely detested practice of stock raiding. Despite the ban he had put in place in 1913 on cattle rustling, the morans still engaged in it with regularity. As laid out by Lord Delamere, then the chairman of the Kenya Land Commission, that the practice enabled the Maasai to remain economically self-sufficient was a widely held view among the settlers.⁹⁶

While the boundaries of the Masai Reserve changed after the 1911 Anglo-Masai Agreement when the Maasai from the Northern Reserve were relocated to a marginally expanded Southern Reserve, it still remained expansive (See Map 5.1). Even taking into account its reduction, at roughly 30 percent of the 49,755 square miles earmarked for native reserves by

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ See *Report of Labour Commission 1912-1913*, in Mungeam/KSHD, p. 383.

1938, the Maasai were no doubt more fortunate than the other forty or so ethnic communities in the colony. In fact, reiterating Eliot's earlier concern in 1917, Acting Governor Charles Bowring saw this imbalance as unduly favoring the Maasai and complicating any intentions of collecting land rent. Perhaps more revealing of his personal prejudices, he was worried that the British were perhaps perpetuating Maasai "recidivism" by offering them "special treatment."⁹⁷

"Conscientious Objectors": Education, Conscription, and Moranism

Conventional wisdom has it that the decreasing levels of enrolment in schools by the end of colonial rule in Kajiado and Narok Districts, as opposed to steady increases in other regions, reflected a supposed Maasai aversion and steadfast resistance to progressive policies.⁹⁸ The story of Molonket Ole Sempele, the first African Kenyan to seek higher education in the United States between 1909 and 1912, however, provides a compelling counter-narrative to these claims. Although his story is one of the exceptions to the rule, it nonetheless shows a willingness on the part of certain Maasai to participate in formal education. As a Maasai warrior who directly benefited from the early missionary-oriented education, Sempele's case is not only unique in challenging the views regarding the Maasai and education. As one of the first Africans to participate in nationalist politics it is also symbolic of the benefits and challenges of mission-oriented education.⁹⁹

All in all, the history of educational development in Maasailand was not only

⁹⁷ See Governor Charles Bowring, "Rents," and "Collecting Fines" in Sandford, *An Administrative and Political History*, p. 2.

⁹⁸ See e.g., Kenneth King, "Development and Education in the Narok District of Kenya: The Pastoral Maasai and their Neighbors," *African Affairs*, 71, 285 (1972), pp. 389-407. Cf. Tignor, "Maasai Warriors: Pattern Maintenance and Violence in Colonial Kenya," pp. 271-290;

⁹⁹ Kenneth King, "A Biography of Molonket Olokorinya Ole Sempele," in Kenneth King and Ahmed Salim (eds.), *Kenya Historical Biographies* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1971), pp. 1-28.

contradictory in its nature, it was also characteristic of the general misconceptions and ambivalence that dominated the British perceptions of the Maasai and their pastoral livelihood. In general, the mixed Maasai reactions towards educational policies mirrored the mixed result of education in Maasailand by the end of colonial rule.¹⁰⁰ It was during the promotion of educational development that the British first encountered direct violent resistance from the Maasai in 1918. While they did not mount any other violent threats, the Maasai readily undermined British efforts to improve the levels of education whenever they considered these to be a threat to some of their core traditions. Endemic structural problems such as lack of funding further bedeviled educational implementation throughout much of the colonial period.¹⁰¹

For the most part the administration's educational policies, as was the case in other British colonies, were ideologically and politically intertwined with the implementation of indirect rule for the purpose of cultivating a layer of indigenous civil service staff subordinate to European officials.¹⁰² Accordingly, three main objectives drove colonial educational initiatives in Maasailand. These were the provision of a subservient workforce to meet settler as well as public works demands, promotion of settled forms of agriculture at the expense of the traditional semi-nomadic pastoral livelihood practiced by the Maasai, and diminution of the organization and

¹⁰⁰ For the most detailed historical analyses of educational development in Maasailand see Alex Gorham, *Education and Social Change in a Pastoral Society: Government Initiatives and Local Responses to Primary School Provision in Kenya Maasailand* (Stockholm: Institute of International Education, University of Stockholm, 1980); Alex Gorham, *Inter-ethnic Differences in Reading Achievement in Kenya Maasailand* (Stockholm: Institute of International Education, University of Stockholm, 1979); Kenneth King, "Education and Ethnicity in the Rift Valley: Maasai, Kipsigis and Kikuyu in the School System," Staff Paper No. 113, Institute of Development Studies, University of Nairobi, 1971.

¹⁰¹ See e.g. *Education Policy in British Tropical Africa, 1925*, p. 5.

¹⁰² Rosalind W. Mutua, *Development of Education in Kenya* (Nairobi: East Africa Literature Bureau, 1975). Cf. Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

influence of the age-based moran institution. Guided by such ulterior motives it is not surprising that educational development initiatives were often viewed with apprehension. While elders initially welcomed formal educational advances, including directly contributing funds and manpower in the construction of schools, a growing antipathy replaced their progressive inclinations by the 1920s.¹⁰³

Outside the coastal region, where formal education had been introduced as early as 1848, the Maasai were among the first in the interior to whom formal schooling was offered. This reality serves to emphasize the low educational standards in Maasailand when compared to those in other communities by the end of colonial rule.¹⁰⁴ In June 1894, twenty-two Maasai youth from the Kaputie section were cajoled, in exchange for their parents accepting relief food from Fort Smith, into joining the East African Scottish Mission at Kibwezi, where they were offered vocational training. By 1898, however, all twenty-two had absconded and returned to their villages when their parents had returned back to pastoralism due to favorable conditions.¹⁰⁵ Without any students the Scottish Mission was forced to relocate to Dagoreti, where its educational success among the Kikuyu was unparalleled for decades to come.

In asserting that the Maasai were the first to be offered early education in Kenya's interior Kenneth King fails, however, to acknowledge that before their enrollment the mission school, which had opened in 1892, had largely catered to the local Kamba and coastal Swahili.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ See e.g. "Masai Native School, 1923," and "Narok School," in *Masai Annual Reports*, Vol. I, 1914-1939, PC/SP 1/2/1.

¹⁰⁴ German Missionary Johann Krapf, who was sponsored by the Church Missionary Society (CMS), founded the Rabai Mission School at the coast in 1848.

¹⁰⁵ Hinde and Hinde, *The Last of the Maasai*, p. 9.

¹⁰⁶ Kenneth King, "The Maasai and the Protest Phenomenon," *Journal of African History*, XII, I (1971), pp. 117-137.

Significantly, due to low enrolment and Kamba parents who, having unsuccessfully demanded compensation as they equated their children's participation in vocational training to work and pulled them out, the school had been on the verge of shutting down. Thus, despite reservations from other administrative officers, Francis Hall, who during his tenure at Fort Smith repeatedly enlisted the Maasai as mercenaries against the Kamba and the Kikuyu, enrolled the twenty-two Maasai youth as a token of appreciation for their military assistance and as an attempt to rescue the Scottish Mission.¹⁰⁷ Hall's undertaking also set a precedent that allowed almost exclusive educational promotion for the next quarter century to be the preserve of Christian missions with the government's participation being limited to availing land grants and assuring security to the missionaries.

Yet, and as already detailed in Chapter 4, this informal arrangement obscured what was clearly a desultory system when it came to educational provision. Nowhere was this *laissez-faire* attitude more evident than in the failure of various promising initiatives to establish the first native school as early as 1905 in Maasailand. According to Sarone Ole Sena, it was largely through the efforts of Lenana's brother Olguris, who was interested in learning English and who welcomed John Stauffacher, a young American missionary working for the African Inland Mission (AIM), that elders were convinced to pledge at least forty students to attend a proposed school along the Athi River in Ngong District. The school was, however, never built partly due to the mistrust arising from the Maasai Move and the relocation itself.¹⁰⁸ Stauffacher, who was to have administered the proposed school, was personally responsible for mentoring Molonket Ole Sempele and enabling him to become the first African Kenyan to pursue higher education in the

¹⁰⁷ McIntosh, *The Scottish Mission*, p. 107.

¹⁰⁸ Ole Sena, "Colonial Education among the Kenya Maasai 1894-1962," p. 3.

United States where he attended the Boydton Academic and Bible Institute in Virginia between 1909 and 1912.¹⁰⁹ Sempele's groundbreaking achievements are especially remarkable given the underdeveloped state of educational advancement for all races in the colony at the time.

On April 22 and August 19, 1905 *The East African Standard* published two editorials that spoke to the issues of race, religion, and the role of government in the development of Kenya's education. Given the racial politics of the time the two editorials were openly biased as each called for white settlers and their children to be granted preferential educational status. Both articles also revealed the dilemma faced by the administration that had until then only had a fitful interest in the development of formal education and had relied almost exclusively on missionaries to provide educational needs. The April editorial specifically noted the concerns among the majority Protestant-affiliated settlers whose only option at the time was a school run by Roman Catholic missionaries. Nor was it a secret that centers of education served as the epicenter of evangelization. With at least fifteen different denominations—but with clear territorial demarcations—spread throughout the protectorate by mid-1904 such concerns were at least acceptable.¹¹⁰ The Church Missionary Society, for example, was accused of being “singularly remiss and primarily concerned with proselytism” in its mission schools.¹¹¹ In a similar exposé, the August editorial pressured the government to follow up on its promise to found a central boarding school in Nairobi. Reiterating their skepticism about the effectiveness and influence of religious-based education, yet also acknowledging the government's limitations especially given the expansive distances between European settlements, they went so far as to

¹⁰⁹ King, “A Biography,” pp. 12-13.

¹¹⁰ *Report of the East Africa Protectorate, 1903-4*, p. 27.

¹¹¹ Editorial, “Education,” *East African Standard*, April 22, 1905.

argue that the promise and goals of European settlement might be adversely affected unless the government quickly addressed the issue. In effect they maintained that it was pointless for the government to continue enticing European immigrants if they could not guarantee them secular education among other public services.¹¹²

Not surprisingly, the Commissioner of Education report of September 8, 1906 dealt at length with proposals relating to the education of Europeans and Africans, as well as those of other races. The report prioritized schools that would exclusively cater to Europeans, Eurasians and Goanese, Jews and Boers, Indians and Arabs, and lastly Natives, in that order.¹¹³ While the government considered funding Muslim elementary schools based on past experiences in India, the education of Africans was to continue under the various missionary societies. Nonetheless, seeking secular-based as opposed to specific denominationally-based religious studies, the commissioner proposed vocational-oriented education that emphasized technical and agricultural education to prepare the African for an expected focus on industrializing the economy.¹¹⁴ It was apparent close to the end of the first decade of colonial rule that public pressure influenced the British government to appoint Professor J. Nelson Frazer of British India as Education Adviser to the EAP in 1908.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Editorial, "Education," *East African Standard*, August 19, 1905.

¹¹³ H.E. The Commissioner of Education, "Extracts from a Memorandum," September 8, 1906, in Mungeam/KSHD, p. 232. For prominent settlers who pushed for class-based schools for Europeans see for example, Elspeth Huxley, *White Man's Country: Lord Delamere and the Making of Kenya* (New York: Praeger, 1968); Bertram Cranworth, *A Colony in the Making; or Sport and profit in British East Africa* (London: Macmillan, 1912), pp. 82-83.

Cf. Gerrit Groen, "Education as A Means of Preserving Afrikaner Nationalism in Kenya," in Bethwell Ogot (ed.), *Politics and Nationalism in Colonial Kenya: Proceedings of the 1971 Conference of the Historical Association of Kenya—Hadith 4* (Nairobi: East Africa Publishing House, 1972), pp. 150-163.

¹¹⁴ Extracts from a Memorandum, pp. 233-234.

¹¹⁵ See John E. Anderson, *The Struggle for the School: The Interaction of Missionary, Colonial Government and Nationalistic Enterprise in the Development of Formal Education in Kenya* (Nairobi: Longman Kenya Ltd, 1970), pp. 2-3.

Still, with the formation of the Department of Education and subsequent opening of the first publicly-funded school in Machakos in 1911, it was not until 1918 that the first government school was established in Narok. This delay was partly due to the decision by the AIM, which was considered one of the wealthier missions, to decline government grant-in-aid support. Given the scarcity of funds and government sponsored teachers it was not a surprise that schools in much of Maasailand remained in the hands of the AIM for several years to come.¹¹⁶ The basis of this decision was largely due to the fact that the AIM was the most financially stable among the different denomination affiliates and therefore, without having to worry about governmental funding constraints, was free to push through with its evangelizing mission.

According to King, however, beyond its financial viability, there was more to the AIM decision to pass on government funding. The decision had more to do with Stauffacher's personal experiences and political inclinations. As an American his concern for the marginalized and views of colonialism were clearly at odds with those of the British, concerns which were only strengthened by his missionary calling. The appropriation of Maasai highland areas for white settlement reinforced his convictions so that he drew parallels between the plight of the Maasai upon their forcible relocation and what had transpired with Native Americans.

Stauffacher had hoped they would resist their eviction and relocation even if this were to involve taking up armed resistance. He even secretly purchased land adjacent to the AIM Kijabe mission station in the hopes of at least settling Sempele and some of his immediate family members, but this never materialized since the government granted no exceptions. Undeterred and left with no choice he followed his friend and flock to the Northern Reserve.¹¹⁷ Indeed, in a

¹¹⁶ McIntosh, "Scottish Mission in Kenya, p. 260.

¹¹⁷ King, "A Biography," p. 6.

letter to his fiancée written just before the Maasai were left with no choice but to relocate northwards, there was no doubting his political views, which were clearly at odds with those of most whites in the colony, administrators and settlers alike:

I don't care to say much as to what I think about this action on the part of the Government. This much I can say though, that should there be a general uprising, and all the English people killed they would even then get much less than they deserve. The Government Officers are intolerably cruel with the natives. They are driving the Masai from the favorite pasture grounds which were always theirs, to a little barren strip of country on which their large numbers of sheep and cattle cannot possibly live, simply that a few wealthy snobbish English Lords may buy up the land for their own selfish interests. O what a shame! Bright intelligent people caged up like a lot of animals that a few Englishmen may add to their already useless wealth. The injury that the English Government has brought to this country cannot be overbalanced in many years to come.¹¹⁸

While Stauffacher was unsuccessful in his attempts to prevent the Maasai Moves, beyond his evangelical and educational contributions in Maasailand his legacy in defining Maasai-British relationships cannot be underestimated. Certainly his influence on Sempele in the early decades of colonial rule deserves recognition alongside other studies that focus on the role played by missionaries in stimulating Africans' colonial resistances in later decades as the case was in other African colonies.¹¹⁹

By the 1920s a report by Director of Education for the Colonies John Orr cited Maasai patriarchy for its reluctance and total neglect in advancing girls' education unless asked to do so by their men. Orr suggested that young educated men initially supported the education of their fiancées because of the fear that "ignorant wives would drag them down." Consequently, as part

¹¹⁸ John S. Stauffacher to Flora Minch, 15 July 1904, Stauffacher Papers, as quoted in *ibid.*, p. 7.

¹¹⁹ See e.g. George Shepperson, "Ethiopianism and African Nationalism," *Phylon (1940-1956)*, 14, 1 (1953), pp. 9-18; Terence Ranger, "African Attempts to Control Education in East and Central Africa, 1900-1939," *Past & Present*, 32, 1 (1965), pp. 57-85. Cf. Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998) on the role of the church in postcolonial political activism.

of the larger objective of uplifting African civilization, it was incumbent upon the Europeans that with the high infant mortality reported in the colonies, women's education was geared towards teaching them the benefits of "motherhood and domestic hygiene," just as those of African men was premised on an industrial curriculum.¹²⁰ By the 1940s the promotion of girls' education in Maasailand pitted the progressives amongst them, who supported their education, against the traditionalists. To the Maasai, as long as education did not overtly seek to alter their customs they were generally willing participants.

In fact, that some Maasai were willing to participate in education was never really in question. The example of Sempele clearly reflects this reality. Despite the proliferation of government schools throughout the colony there were only four in Narok and Kajiado by the early 1920s. Most of these were courtesy of their local efforts. They willingly contributed funds towards the construction of schools, including the Narok Government School, through livestock sales. This trend continued throughout much of the colonial period.¹²¹

Even as Sempele fought for the creation of government boarding schools concerns were raised by the low attendance in much of Maasiland that threatened their institutional viability. In 1921 the Church of Scotland mission school in Ngong closed for this very reason. In their efforts to combat the endemic truancy that in most cases was linked to the seasonal movements of the Maasai in search of pasture, as well as the cultural rites and obligation of the male youth to go through moranism, the administration called for the development of more boarding schools.¹²² It

¹²⁰ John R. Orr, "Lessons derived from Twelve Years' Administration of African Education," December 21, 1923 in Mungeam/KSHD, pp. 237-251.

¹²¹ Sandford, *An Administrative and Political History*, p. 82.

¹²² Kenya Annual Reports, 1922, RH/Mss.Afr.s.515.

appears then that the administration's efforts to promote educational development in Maasailand were hampered more by Maasai semi-nomadic movements than their indifference to education *per se*.

The Maasai were, however, sensitive to the promotion of formal education being done at the expense of their cultural traditions. They were certainly against the administration's efforts to alter their youth initiation, both male and female, moranhood and female circumcision respectively. Indeed, besides the nature of their ambulatory economy, the low enrollment in Narok District was rooted in active resistance stemming from the years of the administration's attempts to enforce schooling as a ploy to ensure both their neutrality during the First World War and to dismantle the institute of moranhood. As I discuss shortly, it was only a matter of time before simmering tensions turned tragic.¹²³

War Efforts: Morans Under Fire

No doubt the failed court case of 1912/13 provided an insight into what the Maasai thought of their relationship with the British and their place in colonial Kenya. They considered themselves as equals seeking fair legal redress. Nonetheless, it was the events surrounding their coerced participation in the First World War that crystallized the paradoxical and ambivalent nature of this relationship. Although the Native Conscription Ordinance of 1912 stipulated that Africans had to be recruited to fight alongside their European counterparts into the KAR where many served as porters, scouts, and soldiers, several Loita and Purko sections continuously resisted governmental efforts to contribute their "fair share" to the East African campaign.¹²⁴ Discernible opinions among settlers and governmental officials alike played out against the

¹²³ See Tignor, "Pattern Maintenance," p. 281.

¹²⁴ Correspondence on Masai Refusal to join K.A.R. Cole to Cutterly, RH/Mss. Afr.s.1928, p. 22.

backdrop of the war.

Reminiscent of the 1902 decision to discontinue the recruitment of Maasai into the KAR, the British had been reluctant to conscript them until late in the war. In all certainty the apprehension was symptomatic of an underlying fear that continued throughout the colonial period, which though not explicitly stated inadvertently contributed towards reifying the European representation of the Maasai as militaristic. This view persisted well into independent Kenya where it became pervasive through popular media. Nevertheless, opinion was divided over what role the Maasai should play in the war and what effect the war might have on their perceptions of Europeans and British interests in the colony.

Of particular concern to the British was the proximity of the Maasai Reserve to German troops since its southern boundary stretched some 236 miles along the border with German East Africa. It was essential to Great Britain that the Maasai should remain allies or at least be neutral in the war to ensure the reserve acted as a “buffer zone” to safeguard against attacks on its troops and interests, particularly the Uganda Railway.¹²⁵ Opinion was also divided over the ability of the Maasai to maintain strict discipline required of any military success. Citing the historical success of Maasai militarism and the “cunning organization” of their morans, no one doubted these as great qualities that would be handy in the KAR or even as native police, with both areas experiencing massive shortages.¹²⁶ Nonetheless, repeated attempts to train them as KAR soldiers or as police had proved unsuccessful and, according to George Sandford, was a waste of the limited finances and manpower. With only a few exceptional individuals, he attributed the challenges of training them to moran indiscipline and “passive resistance” as they associated

¹²⁵ George Sandford, “The Masai in Connection with the War,” p. 126.

¹²⁶ Sandford, *An Administrative and Political History*, p. 110.

such training with coerced labor for European farms where many were employed as stockmen.¹²⁷ Sandford also held little hope that recent conscription efforts that were supposedly being carried out with the blessings and assistance of elders would achieve much due to the targeted morans' "proud conservatism," which he linked to their traditional military organization.¹²⁸

During a series of Legislative Council meetings between September and December 1918, settlers were equally split on the conscription efforts. According to Lord Cole, a prominent settler and Lord Delamere's brother-in-law who often rebuked the Maasai as lazy and backward yet employed many as herders, it was prudent to take into account the lessons from other wars, including in Haiti, San Domingo, and Liberia. He argued that in the course of these wars where native troops fought alongside Europeans from their respective colonial powers, a nationalistic spirit had been imbued among them. Accordingly, Cole was of the opinion that it would be foolhardy to awaken any sense of nationalism among the Maasai residing so close to the frontier with their German archenemies; it simply was not worth experimenting.¹²⁹

Indeed, there was a general fear that contact with Africans from other colonies in the course of the war would infuse nationalistic ideas among the native KAR troops. Pan-Africanism as espoused by Ethiopianism was particularly singled out and some were wary that returning soldiers might eventually popularize the notion of "Africa for Africans" in the protectorate.¹³⁰ Curiously enough, and no doubt too close for comfort, was the correlation made between the rise

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.; also see Correspondence on Masai Refusal to join K.A.R. Cole to Cutterly, pp. 23-24.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ See "European fears of effect of 1914-1918 War on Africans"/Minute by Private Secretary to Ag. Governor of E.A.P., October 1917, KNA file CN/51), KNA file CN/51, in Mungeam/KSHD, p. 483.

of Islamic fundamentalism and the ideas of Pan-Africanism in German East Africa. Many argued that the secular schools of German East Africa promoted an African Jihadist movement that was driven by political overtones.¹³¹ No doubt the possibility of a disciplined Maasai force being compromised by the Germans or being influenced by their brethren in German East Africa to join them against the British was something they had to guard against.

But in a rejoinder to Cole's specific claims, John Boyes and a Mr. C.B. Cluttenberg, who unreservedly supported the conscription of natives from all parts of the protectorate, argued otherwise. They particularly took issue with Cole's hypocrisy, particularly calls he made that the Maasai should be excused from the war simply because they had already contributed their "fair share" to British interests when they lost their dry-season grazing areas. Both argued that Cole's missionary-like inclinations were instead a guise to his selfish concerns that he might lose his cherished herders to the war efforts, or perhaps that they might turn against him upon their return. Boyes and Cluttenberg saw conscription as an opportunity where the "indolent" and "ungrateful" Maasai might finally contribute to nation building.¹³²

It is certain that to the Maasai, regardless of whether or not they were cognizant of their status as colonial subjects, many did not consider the war to be worthy of their efforts. The European conviction that the Maasai had an obligation to defend British economic and political interests at all costs was of course symptomatic of the paternalistic nature of colonial rule. Unlike during the punitive expeditions against the Nandi and Kikuyu, on this occasion most Maasai did

¹³¹ Ibid.

Cf. "The Mecca Letter Affair," discussed by Bradford G. Martin, "Muslim Politics and Resistance to Colonial Rule: Shaykh Uways B. Muhammad Al-Barawi and the Qadiriya Brotherhood in East Africa," *Journal of African History* 10, 3 (1969), pp. 471-486.

¹³² Cole to Cutterly, "Correspondence on Masai Refusal to join KAR," pp.24-31.

not understood the reasons for or the need for their participation in a war that had no direct benefit to their own interests.

The administration singled out several Purko chiefs and morans residing around Ololunga and the Loita Maasai in Narok District, as well as several morans around Ngong in Kajiado District as the most stubborn dissenters to the war. In September 1918 the Purko adamantly refused even to discuss new conscription orders from Acting Governor Charles Bowring and the Commandant of the KAR to provide fifty “askaris” [police] and 250 KAR recruits.¹³³ Resolute in their defiance, they proudly stated that they “were Masai and did not work.”¹³⁴ It was obviously clear the Maasai did not distinguish between their expected obligation as colonial subjects to fight for British interests (internal or external) and to engage in labor recruitment for settler farms, which they detested in equal measure.

Their obstinacy is even more significant considering the lengths to which the administration had gone to compel the chiefs to fulfill their recruitment quotas. Specifically, the Compulsory Service Amendment Ordinance of 1917 had imposed stiff penalties for anyone resisting recruitment as well as chiefs and elders under whose jurisdiction they resided. Respectively, dissenters faced three months imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 300 while the elders faced six months imprisonment plus a Rs. 3000 fine.¹³⁵ Indeed, earlier in April 1917, when the Military Commissioner for Labour sought to apply the Native Followers Recruitment Ordinance of 1918 to compel the Maasai around Narok to provide 250 youth as “donkey drivers,” albeit at a

¹³³ Ibid., p. 22; also see Waller, “Bad Boys in the Bush,” in Andrew Burton and Hélène Charton-Bigot (eds.), *Generations Past: Youth in East African History* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010), pp. 135-174; Sandford, *An Administrative and Political History*, p. 76.

¹³⁴ Cole to Cutterly, “Correspondence on Masai Refusal to join KAR,” p. 22.

¹³⁵ Sandford, *An Administrative and Political History*, p. 74.

time when the Maasai were about to undergo the *Eunoto* Ceremony, the elders refused. As noted by Hemsted, when given the choice between work and fines they were “willingly ready to pay ten times the maximum penalty rather than do work they considered derogatory.”¹³⁶ In pushing for such punitive measures, Hemsted, who also shared Eliot’s deep loathing of Maasai ways of life, had been particularly critical of cattle raiding carried out by the morans.

In his endeavors to neutralize their influence, Hemsted not only criminalized cattle rustling by instituting extremely punitive penalties, but also pushed for compulsory schooling if need be and labor recruitment drives for public works. He saw these as areas where the morans would perhaps be able to redirect their teenage “belligerence.”¹³⁷ It soon became apparent that though several prominent officials and non-officials alike were vocal against conscripting the Maasai for war efforts, at least it offered a temporary measure in contributing towards undercutting moran association and their influence. What the administration had not counted on was their unrelenting defiance against participating in the war.

It was such intransigence on the part of the Maasai that led another settler attending the Legislative Council meeting in December 1918 to rebuke them as “Conscientious Objectors” who acted as such with the support of indifferent aristocrats such as Lord Delamere and Lord Cole.¹³⁸ Of course the irony of his claim is that while the Maasai were suddenly being presented as British subjects to condemn their refusal to participate in the war, it was only a few years after many settlers had celebrated the May 1913 dismissal of their civil case on the grounds they were not. For their part, the Maasai attitude reflected the nature of their relationship with the British as

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 129.

¹³⁷ Hemsted, *East Africa Protectorate Annual Reports, 1914*, p. 35.

¹³⁸ Cole to Cutterly, “Correspondence on Masai Refusal to join KAR,” 25.

well as their perceptions of the colonial socio-economic and political policies imposed upon them. Yet while the element of mistrust was and would continue to characterize their association, it seems that their adamant refusal to go to war finally provided the administration with a reason to instill some discipline into the “lawless” moran.

It was under such circumstances that the tragic events of September 9, 1918 occurred in Ololunga when a KAR dispatch sent to enforce compliance with the recent conscription order surrounded a village in the early dawn. Before the troops became aware that the morans they hoped to arrest had not spent the night in the village, tensions escalated and in the process a soldier fired without orders killing two women and wounding three others, including an elderly man. Several cattle were also killed and two injured in the process.¹³⁹ Two days later, morans on a revenge mission attacked the KAR camp and in the process at least fourteen Maasai moran were killed and many more wounded. Others dispersed into a nearby forest among whom several who had escaped resorted to random acts of looting of local shops.¹⁴⁰ Though it took the intervention of Lord Delamere ten days to mediate a compromise between the government, elders, and morans and avoid a cycle of violence and counter-violence, Waller further adds that the compromise worked to the morans’ advantage. Though they had to pay fines, compulsory conscription was stopped and in its place a voluntary system—which naturally did not yield much—was adopted; accordingly, the moran had “forced the government and their elders to take them seriously.”¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Sandford, *An Administrative and Political History*, p. 77; Waller, “Bad Boys in the Bush,” p. 135.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. Waller puts the number of the dead at thirty and notes the numbers vary and also discounts the moran attack on the KAR camp as the first ever recorded violent attack as earlier claimed by Tignor.

¹⁴¹ Sandford, *An Administrative and Political History*, p.80-81; Waller, “Bush Boys,” p. 136.

In reality, British fears that the Maasai might side with the Germans in the war had been misplaced and largely overblown. The Maasai were not only neutral, they also contributed to the war effort as scouts and porters, while several were part of the KAR infantry. It was perhaps ironic that Sempele did not question the logic of fighting alongside the British in World War I; he willingly joined the Mission Volunteer Corps that fought against the Germans in Tanganyika. Above all their livestock, which Hemsted had dismissed as worthless, greatly contributed to feeding the troops, Africans and Europeans alike. In fact, between 1914 and March 1917, when the outbreak of pleuro-pneumonia in the Maasai Reserve necessitated an official quarantine against livestock movement and sales, Hemsted had personally overseen the acquisition of as many as 300,000 sheep and over 30,000 bullocks from the Maasai, half of which were commandeered while the rest often compensated at well below market values.¹⁴²

Whereas the refusal to join the war effort is readily cited as the main cause of the tragic events of September 9-11, there is no doubt that simmering tensions had been building up during the course of the war. In particular the steady loss of cattle to the war effort, as well as the decision in 1915 by the British to discontinue paying Maasai scouts who had willingly acted as scouts and informants, were significant in exacerbating the tensions.¹⁴³ Additionally, the exorbitant penalties Hemsted instituted to punish those who defied war or labor recruitment efforts, or through the criminalization of cattle raiding, which amounted to at least 3500 cattle and £10,000 in fines between 1913 and 1917, all contributed.¹⁴⁴ Often though, these other factors are neglected.

¹⁴² Sandford, *An Administrative and Political History*, pp. 127-128.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82.

The 1930s: The Carter Report Card and the Kikuyu Connection

The 1930s witnessed a general shift in the relationship between the administration and the Maasai. It was obvious to the administration that it was yet to realize any significant gains in their approach to promoting developmental objectives. The decade began with the Maurice Carter Kenya Land Commission (KLC) of 1933 reiterating the inordinate wealth of the Maasai that it based upon the size of their herds, although for the first time land was also identified as enhancing this status.¹⁴⁵ Even as the commission reiterated the primacy of Maasai rights that were enshrined in the 1911 Anglo-Maasai Agreement it nonetheless also opened the door for possible annexation or lease of parts of the Masai Reserve to outsiders. It was also during the 1930s, as I shortly discuss in Chapter 6, that lengthy discussions that culminated with the creation of national parks and national reserves from the mid-1940s were carried out. The future of Maasailand and the Maasai pastoral economy were central to most of these deliberations.

The KLC, echoing the words of Eliot three decades earlier, argued that while Maasai rights to the land was enshrined in treaty it would be retrogressive to the administration's mandate to prevent outside interaction within the Masai Reserve. The Commission considered it imperative that the Maasai should not be left in isolation lest their progress towards "civilization" stagnate or worse still that they degenerate. With reports that the spread of tsetse flies would soon render much larger parts of the Masai Reserve uninhabitable to human and livestock use, the KLC encouraged the settlement of the industrious Kikuyu who would "quickly clear the bush harboring the fly and replace it by cultivation."¹⁴⁶ It was thus hoped that the Kikuyu by making

¹⁴⁵ See *Report of the Kenya Land Commission, September 1933* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1934), p. 191.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 192-193.

use of land that otherwise “lay idle” would in the process also imbue within the Maasai the desire to engage in settled forms of agriculture.

By the 1930s, Maasailand, unlike in Tanganyika where concerted efforts to eradicate the tsetse fly menace were at advanced stages, was yet to receive similar attention. According to L. James the proliferation of tsetse fly bush in Maasailand reduced the land carrying capacity and was one of the factors that contributed to the rapid desiccation of Maasailand ecology in the 1930s. As the Maasai avoided tsetse fly infested areas, human and livestock population pressures in tsetse fly free areas directly led to vegetation loss and exacerbated soil erosion.¹⁴⁷ Likewise, Isaac Singida analyzes the dramatic increase of tsetse fly infestation in Maasailand from the 1890s and ties this to the advent of British colonial rule and the subsequent Masai Moves that allowed for the spread of bush and thicket in the absence of the Maasai who previously kept this under check through regular fire regimes. Singida also considers the spread of the tsetse fly as one of the significant ecological disasters that occurred in Maasailand.¹⁴⁸ It is certain that the significant depopulation of the Maasai by the mid-1890s that was a result of internecine strife and the natural disasters and famine that left the Maasai in a weakened state largely accounted for the set of events.

The KLC’s recommendation was, however, not made in a vacuum. For much of the 1920s Kikuyu cultivators had already been streaming into parts of the Masai Reserve such as Ngong and Loitokitok as “labourers for Masai cultivators,” only to turn around and bring their “villages” as well, an issue that the Maasai found disconcerting when they brought it up with the

¹⁴⁷ See e.g. L. James, “The Kenya Masai: A Nomadic People under Modern Administration,” *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 12, 1 (1939), pp. 49-73.

¹⁴⁸ Isaac Singida, “Sleeping Sickness in Kenya Maasailand,” *Social Science Medicine*, 18, 2 (1984), pp. 183-187.

KLC.¹⁴⁹ Nonetheless the administration now actively promoted further immigration of Kikuyu agriculturalists into highland areas of the Masai Province such as Ngong and Loitoktok in Kajiado District as well as Olenguruone, Nairengiare and Mau Narok in Narok District. Encouraged by the KLC Report, where for the first time land was explicitly identified as part of a Maasai resource, the colonial administration actively encouraged Kikuyu immigration as an indirect way of influencing the Maasai to see the benefits of and adopt settled forms of agriculture. By the mid-1930s it was reported that more Maasai around Loitoktok were engaged in cultivation, which must have been good news to the administration that saw this as a sign that the formerly resistant pastoralists were finally taking up settled forms of agriculture.¹⁵⁰

The administration would certainly have been elated at the turn of events had it not been that agricultural extension officers also raised concerns at the high levels of soil erosion being witnessed throughout Kajiado District. Due to lack of funds and staffing shortages the officers were unable to implement projects aimed at arresting the situation. By the 1940s the administration was clearly worried that the actions of the Kikuyu agriculturalists who were indiscriminately clearing forests and other vegetation to cultivate were intensifying soil erosion in the hillsides and also contributing to siltation of rivers and water sources.¹⁵¹ These challenges have remained with Maasailand to the present. Yet even before concerns were raised at the rate of deforestation and increased levels of soil erosion it was the decision to quarantine Maasai stock and the failed destocking campaigns at the end of the First World War that set in motion a

¹⁴⁹ See "OiC Kajiado Report" African Affairs Department Annual Report 1935 (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1936), pp. 21-22.

¹⁵⁰ See *Report of the Kenya Land Commission*, pp. 192-193.

¹⁵¹ See e.g., DC H. M. Grant to E. H. Windley, *Handing over Reports, May 10, 1940* & E. H. Windley to R. R. Wainwright *Kajiado Handing over Notes, 1946*, both in RH/Mss. 1248.

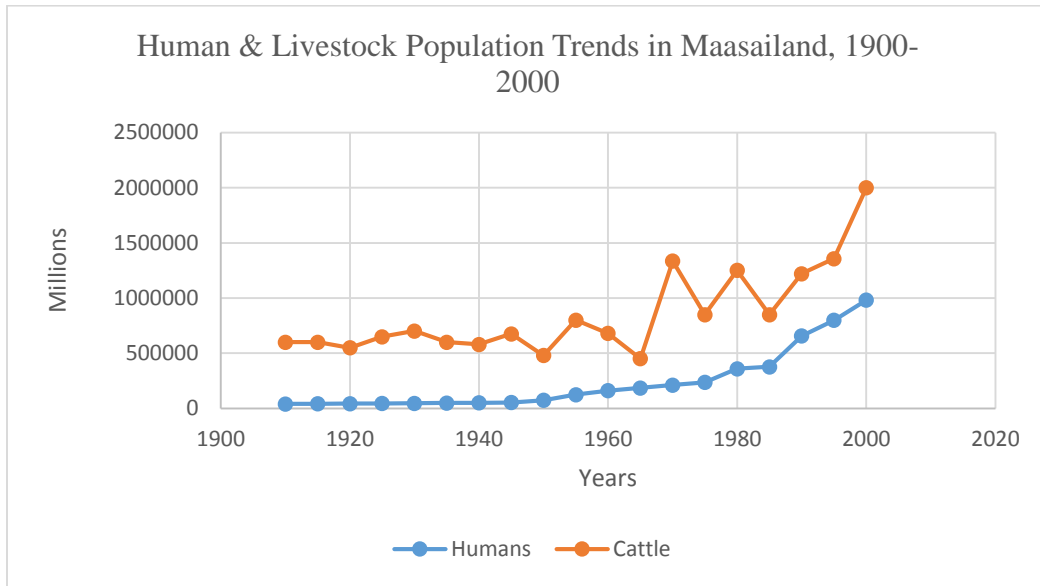
cycle of progressive ecological desiccation of the Masai Reserve.¹⁵² The situation would only get worse in subsequent decades that were generally marked by exponential increases in human and livestock populations. Despite a lack of reliable livestock censuses carried out during the colonial period it is fair to say that cattle numbers in Maasailand that fluctuated with increases in rain and droughts averaged around 600,000 head. Thereafter an average of around 1.2 million head from the late 1960s to the end of the late 1990s followed similar patterns (see Figure 5.1; Table 5.1).

Regardless of the ratio between and increase in cattle numbers relative to human population growth, the land carrying capacity around Amboseli and the Mara had significantly diminished by the late 1990s. This reduction exacerbated competition between livestock and wildlife over water and pasturage as well as between humans and wildlife due to changes in alternative land use activities that were accompanied by permanent settlements and economic diversification including into commercial agricultural practices. The 1970s and 1980s witnessed further development of large-scale agriculture (maize, beans, onions, tomatoes) around the highland and riverine areas of Loitokitok and Namanga adjacent to Amboseli; likewise, from the 1980s the Mara experienced increased human and livestock encroachment resulting from development of large-scale wheat (Lemek, Ololunga, and Mau highlands) and maize (Aitong, Ololunga) farming that diminished former wildlife dispersal ranges and communal grazing lands. Unlike traditional Maasai transhumant practices economic diversification into agropastoralism and large-scale farming were generally incompatible with wildlife conservation and intensified conflicts with humans.¹⁵³

¹⁵² See e.g. James, “The Kenya Masai; *Masai Annual Report, 1946* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1947), p. 1.

¹⁵³ See e.g., Phylou Evangelou, *Livestock Development in Kenya’s Maasailand: Pastoralists’ Transition to a Market Economy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984); Michael D. Broten and Mohammed Said, “Population Trends of Ungulates in and around Kenya’s Masai Mara Reserve,” in A. R. E. Sinclair and Peter Arcese (eds.), *Serengeti II: Dynamics of an Ecosystem* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 169-193; David J. Campbell,

Figure 5.1: People and Cattle population estimates in Maasailand 1910-2000



“Response to Drought Among Farmers and Herders in Southern Kajiado District, Kenya.” *Human Ecology*, 12, 1 (1984): 35-64; David Campbell, “Land as Ours, Land as Mine: Economic, Political and Ecological Marginalization in Kajiado District,” in Thomas Spear and Richard Waller (eds.), *Being Maasai: Ethnicity and Identity in East Africa*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1993), pp. 258-272; Mike Norton-Griffiths, “Property Rights and the Marginal Wildebeest: An Economic Analysis in Wildlife Conservation.” *Biodiversity and Conservation*, 5 (1996): 1557-1577; Katherine Homewood, Ernestina Coast, and Michael Thompson, “In-Migrants and Exclusion in East African Rangelands: Access, Tenure and Conflict,” *Africa*, 74, 4 (2004), pp. 567-610; Richard Lampey and Robin Reid, “Expansion of Human Settlement in Kenya’s Maasai Mara: What Future for Wildlife and Pastoralism?” *Journal of Biogeography*, 3 (2004), pp. 997-1032; Norton-Griffiths, “How Many Wildebeest do You Need?” *World Economics*, 8, 2 (2007), pp. 41-64.

Table 5.1: People and cattle population estimates in Maasailand, 1910-2000¹⁵⁴

Year	Humans	Livestock	Year	Humans	Livestock
1910	40000	600000	1960	160650	680000
1915	42000	600000	1965	185,000	450000
1920	43000	550000	1970	211000	1336000
1925	43646	650000	1975	235254	850000
1930	45745	702000	1980	359306	1252000
1935	47982	600000	1985	377089	850000
1940	50325	580000	1990	656931	1221300
1945	53000	675000	1995	799257	1357108
1950	73890	480000	2000	981000	2000000
1955	123766	800000			

Moreover, by the late 1990s non-Maasai immigrants—who carried out most of the non-pastoral economic activities—accounted for over 50 percent of the total population in both Narok and Kajiado Districts. The devastating droughts of the early 1970s also led to an increase in temporary livestock camps around permanent waters such as the Talek and Mara Rivers that are adjacent to the Mara as well as Ol Tukai and other riverine areas connected to Amboseli.¹⁵⁵ According to Richard Lampey and Robin Reid, for example, the permanent settlements around Talek (Talek River) and Mara Rianta (Mara River) began as “low density temporary livestock camps” during the 1970s but became established following immigration resulting from Maasai family displacements resulting from land sales or leases to commercialized wheat farming around Ololunga and Mau Narok highlands. These authors also demonstrate how Koiyaki Group

¹⁵⁴ Bold figures are gross estimates/projections based on prevailing trends. Figures are collated from various sources. See e.g. *African Affairs Department Annual Report, 1948 & 1962*; J.H. B. Prole, “Pastoral Land Use,” in W. T. W. Morgan (ed.), *Nairobi: City and Region* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press), pp. 90-97; International Livestock Centre for Africa (ILCA), Kenya, *District Level Development Briefs, 1979* (Nairobi: ILCA, 1979), pp. 7-22; Isaac Singida, *Population Change Among the Maasai* (Addis Ababa: OSSREA, 1996), “preface”; p. 22.

¹⁵⁵ ILCA, *District Level Development Briefs, 197*, pp. 7-9; 13-14.

Ranch experienced an explosion of temporary Maasai huts of close to 300 percent from 589 in 1974 to over 2000 by 1999 most of which were semi-permanent and permanent structures, a transformation that was also marked by heavy denudation of vegetation cover (bush thickets and trees for housing and wood fuel) and increased soil erosion.¹⁵⁶ As I also point out in Chapter 6, much of this immigration was as a result of land individuation from the early 1980s and subsequent increase in non-Maasai immigrants—many of whom bought or leased land from willing Maasai title-holders—and whose farming and alternative land-use activities were mostly incompatible with wildlife conservation just as much as it was to the Maasai traditional pastoral economy (Also see photo 1.2).¹⁵⁷

Pastoral Underdevelopment: Quarantines, Grazing Schemes, and Ecological Challenges

It was not until after the end of the First World War that the administration, through the veterinary and agricultural departments, embarked on a quest to combat the prevalent livestock diseases. Its efforts to inoculate Maasai stock against various epizootic diseases such as ECF, pleuro-pneumonia, anthrax, and rinderpest were, however, met with mixed reactions. ECF and pleuro-pneumonia were by far the most devastating of the stock diseases.¹⁵⁸ Although in the late-1890s a few Maasai seeking temporary residence at Fort Smith had been wowed by the magical “wonders” of Western medicine they had only adopted these to complement their traditional ways.¹⁵⁹ By 1919 this brief optimism had been replaced by reluctance, distrust, and even

¹⁵⁶ See e.g., Lampey and Reid, pp. 1011-1914; Campbell, “Response to Drought Among Farmers and Herders,” pp. 36-37; Homewood, Coast, and Thompson, “In-Migrants and Exclusion,” p. 570; Norton-Griffiths, “How Many Wildebeest,” p. 43.

¹⁵⁷ See for example author’s interview with Luca Belpietro, the proprietor of Kuku Group Ranch that is adjacent to both Tsavo West National Park and Amboseli, on the incompatibility between wildlife conservation and onion farming that is mostly carried out by Kamba immigrants around the riverine areas surrounding the expansive ranch.

¹⁵⁸ See e.g., Sandford, *An Administrative and Political History*, p. 59.

¹⁵⁹ See, Hinde and Hinde, *The Last of the Masai*, p. 42.

defiance largely due to the extreme measures taken by agricultural and veterinary officers in their efforts to contain the spread of the diseases, more so to safeguard European stock. Whereas the wholesome slaughter of infected stock was limited and often avoided, quarantine measures that prevented the Maasai from moving their stock within or outside the Masai Reserve without an official permit were repeatedly instituted to the annoyance of the Maasai.¹⁶⁰

According to Sandford, in May 1916, an outbreak of pleuro-pneumonia in slightly over a dozen villages with close to 18,000 cattle in Narok District led to the first restrictive quarantines. When this measure could not be enforced due to staffing shortages since many personnel were occupied with the war efforts, the disease spread to a farm in Ngong that was too close for comfort since this was near Nairobi. Initial efforts to slaughter 140 head of cattle in an adjacent farm were pointless and by January 1917, as many as 200,000 head, or roughly one-third of Maasai cattle in Narok District, had been infected largely due to the “illicit movement of cattle from quarantine areas” to meet the rising demand of military supplies.¹⁶¹ As a result the whole of the Masai Reserve was quarantined under the Diseases of Animals Ordinance on January 26, 1917 and by 1923 a permanent quarantine was instituted. Although this quarantine lasted for at least two more decades, occasionally the Maasai were allowed to move stock within the Masai Reserve for regular cattle sales for slaughter in Loitokitok, Narok, and Ngong, as well as to the Kikuyu.¹⁶² By the end of the war it was estimated that the Maasai had lost close to “100,000 cattle and as much as a million sheep” to a combination of prevalent epidemic disease outbreaks

¹⁶⁰ See e.g., Sandford, *An Administrative and Political History of the Maasai Reserve*, p. 60.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² See e.g., *Native Affairs Department Annual Report, 1932*, pp. 59-60.

including ECF, rinderpest, anthrax, foot and mouth disease, and pleuro-pneumonia, among others.¹⁶³

The quarantine measures effectively put an end to the fitful efforts that the administration had invested towards commercializing the livestock industry in Maasailand. Whereas in the Kajiado and Narok district schools, the curriculum attempted to teach dairy farming and other settled forms of agriculture, it was only the hides and skins trade that the Maasai could engage in. But even in this trade it was often argued that the quality of their hides and skins was not quite up to the export standards required. OiC Narok Windley, for example, laid the blame squarely upon the Maasai who he claimed preferred the “effortless” sun drying to the proper but labor-intensive shade drying method.¹⁶⁴ By the time Hemsted left office in 1923 there was little evidence to challenge his earlier perception that Maasai cattle were worthless. During the quarantine period, while permits were occasionally available, these were not issued to the Maasai unless there was absolute certainty that none of the livestock on the move would come anywhere near a European farm. Due to lack of enforcement, however, local movement within and across native reserves was not uncommon. The main problem, however, was that overstocking, coupled with subsequent advances in veterinary care and an inevitable population growth leading to progressive denudation of the top soil and surface vegetation soon became a permanent feature of the Masai Reserve.¹⁶⁵

By the mid-1920s agricultural and veterinary government officials readily acknowledged the challenges of stock rearing in the arid and semi-arid parts of Maasailand. The prevalence of

¹⁶³ Sandford, *An Administrative and Political History of Masai Reserve*, p. 59.

¹⁶⁴ See e.g. OiC Windley, *Handing over Report*, November 26, 1945, in RH/Mss. 1248.

¹⁶⁵ See e.g. L. James, “The Kenya Maasai,” p. 66.

drought that was often compounded by several epizootic diseases only brought to the fore the ecological limitations the Maasai now faced having lost some of the most significant dry-season grazing areas to European settlement. Former veterinary officer to Kajiado District R. H. Lewis, for example, who carried out inoculations drives during the 1940s would later effusively praise how the Maasai traditionally practiced a form of immunization against both rinderpest and contagious bovine pleuro-pneumonia.¹⁶⁶ Upon recognizing a mild form of the virulent rinderpest the Maasai were known to immediately take the rest of their herds to the area where they would build immunity.¹⁶⁷ With pleuro-pneumonia, Lewis states, “a piece of infected lung from an animal which had died from contagious bovine pleuro-pneumonia was inserted into a flap of skin in the bridge of the nose...to cause a local reaction, which though sometimes fatal, generally stimulated the production of antibodies against the disease.” Arguably, this reality also implicitly exalted Maasai pastoral resilience and undercut the commonplace subjective lens of officials and non-officials alike who callously dismissed their traditional mode of production, although this evidence did not prevent many from holding such views throughout the colonial period. A brief reexamination of Crewe-Read’s assertion that the Purko contributed the least amount of taxes to the economy, a claim he attributed to their non-compliance is perhaps in order. While non-compliance and lack of the enforcement were valid reasons, government-sanctioned studies in the 1920s and 1930s came to the conclusion that in comparison to the reputedly wealthier Loita Maasai, the Purko generally inhabited areas that were physically more challenging and prone to frequent droughts.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ R. H. Lewis, “The Maasai Traditional Way of Life,” in W. T. W. Morgan (ed.), *Nairobi: City and Region* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 67-77.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

¹⁶⁸ See e.g., *Department of Agriculture Annual Reports, 1920-1930* (Nairobi: Government Printer).

Studies carried out in the late 1920s studies revealed that the Purko were also the poorest in Narok District. According to the 1928 Narok District annual report, although the Purko held more sheep per family, their 24 cattle per household paled in comparison to the 64 head per household for the Loita Maasai.¹⁶⁹ Upon further review these studies also concluded that the variations in livestock held by each household generally corresponded to the climatic and physical conditions of the areas inhabited by the Purko, especially regarding proximity to the Mau Escarpment and the Mara River. Those residing in the drier “east averaged 1 bull to 22 female stock and 1 calf to 3 cows while those on the wetter west averaged 1 bull for between 6 and 11 cows and rather better than 1 calf to three cows.”¹⁷⁰ Elsewhere, Robert Tignor also argues that the forcible relocation of different Maasai sections into the Masai Reserve often led to inveterate-interneccine contestations. Among other reasons it was this relocation that explained the proclivity and stubbornness that the Purko exhibited towards the administration in general.¹⁷¹ These Maasai against Maasai contestations over resource allocation and political empowerment have continued to be revisited throughout the period of this study as already discussed in previous chapters.

The blanket quarantine that had been placed on the movement of livestock inside the Masai Reserve also meant that as long as it was in force no destocking could be carried out. This decision yet again highlighted the contradictory and ambivalent nature of Anglo-Maasai relations. If the colonial administration had hoped that destocking would reduce the pressure on

¹⁶⁹ See e.g. *Masai Annual Report, 1938*, Vol. II. 1914-1939, PC/SP 1/2/2 in RHO/Micr.Afr.515 (REEL 3).

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Robert Tignor, “The Maasai Warriors: Pattern Violence in Colonial Kenya” *The Journal of African Studies*, 13, 2 (1972), pp. 271-290.

the fragile environment, by the mid-1930s their efforts were having quite the opposite result. Coupled with advances in veterinary care that greatly reduced livestock mortality rates, the government acknowledged in 1935 that the problem of overstocking within the Masai Reserve demanded immediate action. The quarantine had effectively deprived the Maasai of an outlet through which they could have sold off or bartered surplus stock.¹⁷²

Despite the droughts and outbreaks of pleuro-pneumonia, rinderpest, and anthrax in the early 1930s, which in previous occasions—as had happened in the latter decade of the nineteenth century—might have led to livestock population losses of fifty percent and upwards and even stunted human population growth, widespread inoculation by agricultural extension officers who had traversed much of the Masai Reserve prevented this from happening. While rough estimates put the number of Maasai cattle at 600,000 head, a figure that accounted for about fifteen percent the total number of cattle in the colony, only about one-third were estimated to have been lost to the droughts. With a further 820,000 sheep, and 170,000 donkeys, Maasai livestock combined for close to twenty percent of the livestock in the colony.¹⁷³ In 1937 the veterinary department reported that while rinderpest continued to be a problem in the Masai Reserve, it was the first time that no active pleuro-pneumonia outbreaks were reported. The success of the vaccination drives were also helped to a large part by the Maasai who had relaxed their earlier reluctance to embrace western medicine, a change that was reflected in a rise in vaccinations from 337 in 1936 to 31,871 a year later. It was also in 1937 that the first suggestions were made for universal inoculation of all diseases that until then were openly biased towards safeguarding and

¹⁷² *Report of the Economic Development Committee* (Nairobi: Government of Kenya, 1935), p. 116.

¹⁷³ See e.g., *Native Affairs Department Annual Report 1933* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1934), pp. 20-22.

promoting European stock.¹⁷⁴

Funding constraints and the pressures of the Second World War, however, meant that it would be close to a decade later before universal inoculation against most of the bovine diseases became a reality. Little had been done in the way of establishing an effective water supply infrastructure as repeatedly recommended by agricultural extension officers in the Masai Reserve. The pressure on the few available watering points and reduced grazing denuded much of the vegetation and exacerbated soil erosion.¹⁷⁵ The Kedong Valley in Narok District was identified as deserving the development of a watering infrastructure to include boreholes and wells with the Maasai having lost the surrounding highland areas—their former dry-season grazing land—to white settlement as well as to other native agricultural communities.¹⁷⁶ With the government prioritizing cash crop production in other native areas while also encouraging Kikuyu immigration to farm in Ngong and Loitokitok in Kajiado District, much of the water was used upstream well before it reached the thirsty Maasai and their livestock downstream.

No doubt the OiC Masai Province was happy to report that the Maasai around Ngong were showing an “increasing tendency to agricultural development, [even though] the actual cultivation being done by Kikuyu wives or Kikuyu employees,” or that a Siria Maasai “asked permission to employ two Kavirondo to teach him how to plough,” suggesting that the seemingly resistant to change pastoralists were beginning to realize the value of settled agriculture.¹⁷⁷ Yet such advancement came at a huge cost to the Maasai pastoral economy and the ecological health

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 27-31.

¹⁷⁵ See *Report of the Kenya Land Commission, 1933* (London: HMSO, 1934), p. 190.

¹⁷⁶ See e.g. James, “The Kenya Masai,” p. 60.

¹⁷⁷ See *Native Affairs Department Annual Report, 1933*, p. 85.

of Maasailand in general. The progressive loss of topsoil to these cultivators began to worry the department of agriculture in the 1930s, while the clearing of vegetation for farming and the loss of topsoil subsequently encouraged siltation.¹⁷⁸

The quarantine was also having an impact on the administration's efforts to develop the national livestock industry. In 1935 the Deputy Director of Agriculture Sir Daniel Hall, while "stressing the evils of overstocking," estimated that at a modest five percent per annum increase, 300,000 cattle a year would be added to the colony yet only 20,000 of these came from the Native Reserves.¹⁷⁹ It was also apparent that the bias towards promoting European stock at the expense of that of the Africans was weighing down on the administration's national objectives. Moreover, Hall claimed that at times the blanket restrictions on the movement of Maasai stock were unwarranted. At the Nairobi Abattoir where all meat was strictly inspected, it was reported in 1935 that no case of pleuro-pneumonia was found in any the cattle that had originated from the Masai Reserve.¹⁸⁰

Even after the rare occasion in which the Maasai were allowed to participate in the commercial livestock trade this did little to improve their fortunes. Indeed, earlier in 1928 the Narok District Commissioner surprisingly acknowledged the trade imbalance that disadvantaged the Maasai when he stated:

An accusation is frequently brought against the Masai that they produce nothing and take no part in the economic progress of the Colony. The value of the exports from this District for the year 1928 amounts to some £52,071.4.6 being 2/3 per capita of the estimate population, notwithstanding the fact that owing to the drought the value of the ghee sold was £2,000 below the normal. It must be remembered that the Masai are

¹⁷⁸ *Report of the Economic Development Committee* (Nairobi: Government of Kenya, 1935), p. 116.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*; *Department of Agriculture Annual Report of 1935* (Nairobi: Annual Government Printer, 1936), p. 7.

essentially a cattle owning tribe, yet there is no outlet whatsoever from this District for beasts on the hoof. Any cattle destined for the markets must be trekked to Mbagathi—an East Coast Fever area which is some eighty miles from Narok—through large tracts of waterless country infested with lions and hyenas. It is unreasonable to expect any people, who are by no means in financial straits, to trek oxen from Narok to Mbagathi for sale. Having survived the journey the cattle arrive in poor condition, yet the owners, and the prospective buyers, know that unless the beasts are sold within a fortnight of their arrival, they will probably contract East Coast Fever. With reasonable facilities, and careful handling, I am convinced that in very few years the Masai would willingly dispose of most of their surplus stock, thereby helping in no small degree, to solve one of the greatest economic disadvantages of the Colony—the high cost of living and the increasing cost of rationing labour.¹⁸¹

The Meat and Livestock Inquiry Committee of 1937 was equally critical of the systemic neglect of Maasai livestock husbandry. The committee began by reiterating the need to promote native commercial livestock production to boost those from European ranching. The overreliance on European livestock for the export market was falling way short of national export expectations. Not only were European stock grossly insufficient to sustain the livestock industry but there was a real threat to the development of the agricultural industry as a whole.¹⁸² The devastating droughts of the late 1920s and early 1930s only exacerbated the problem and highlighted the fragility of the agricultural economy that was at the mercy of infrequent rainfall and droughts. As a result the government starting in 1938 embarked on projects aimed at addressing the committee's recommendations as well as those from previous reports. Chief among these projects was the development of strategies seeking to promote and market Maasai livestock and have this contribute to the export trade.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ *Masai Annual Reports* Vol. I. 1914-1939 PC/SP/1/2/1 RHO/Micr.Afr.515 (REEL 3).

¹⁸² *Report of the Meat and Live Stock Inquiry Committee* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1937).

¹⁸³ See e.g. Narok DC Sidney H. Fazan report to His Excellency Sir Robert Brooke-Popham G.C.V.O, K.C.B., C.M.G, March 30, 1938, "A Report on Some Aspects of the Relations btw Government and Local Native Councils in Kenya," RH/Mss.Afr. S. 1153 (8).

In the process funds from the Colonial Development Fund that had previously only been used to build fertilizer factories were set aside to supplement the construction of an abattoir at Athi River, in the heart of Kajiado District. Upon completion, the local Kaputie and Kekonyukie Maasai sections were to be prevailed upon to supply at least 3,500 cattle each, to treat cattle purchased at a minimum of Sh. 5.¹⁸⁴ At first the plan was in jeopardy since the Maasai who were aware of the rise in cattle prices to as much as Sh. 70 were unwilling to sell their cattle at the minimum Sh. 5 to Messrs. Liebig, the government agent. The government nonetheless hope that this challenge was a temporary situation following good rains the previous year. The proposal was based off a similar plan in Southern Rhodesia where the government set aside funds to assist farmers purchase livestock breeds that were suitable for respective localities.¹⁸⁵

April 27, 1937 was also the first time the Cattle Cleaning Ordinance, first put in place in 1929, was effected, again reflecting the systemic challenges in implementing policies seeking to improve livestock husbandry. Under the 1929 ordinance the administration was to set up cattle cleansing areas primary aimed at combating ECF and other diseases, for which all livestock, European and African were now to be subjected.¹⁸⁶ And just as had happened during the First World War, the administration was willing to waiver stringent restrictions that might otherwise compromise their war efforts during the Second World War, this time against the Italians in Somaliland. By 1940 all quarantine restrictions had been lifted. While the market prices of cattle had also been increased to encourage the Maasai to engage in the livestock trade, this was promoted as a less intrusive way of destocking Maasai cattle that were now free to move within

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 2-3.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., pp.8-9.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

and outside the Masai Reserve.

By the mid-1940s Maasai livestock were back at an annual average of 700,000 head. Recent destocking campaigns that were instituted from the late 1930s had done little to significantly reduce this number as hoped by the department of agriculture. The lifting of the quarantine restrictions that allowed free movement of Maasai cattle soon posed a problem on account that though the Maasai readily sold sheep and goats they were still unwilling to part with most of their cattle as expected. Soon, however, the destocking campaign that was a noble effort to begin with then morphed into compulsory provision of meat during the war (See Table 5.2).

In 1944 despite the Maasai having contributed their fair share of livestock to the war effort, the Kajiado DC lamented that they were not making any progress convincing the Maasai that destocking was for their own betterment. He argued that the Maasai stock had far exceeded the land carrying capacity, since in any case they had to share pasturage with wildlife, and suggested that unless the number was reduced by at least 300,000 the rates and severity of soil erosion and vegetation loss could only worsen. By 1946 monthly cattle auctions were being carried out in Kajiado and Narok Districts. Seeking to assuage Maasai concerns over the enforced sales, the administration claimed that these were necessary to fund boreholes and wells as part of the development of the water infrastructure.¹⁸⁷

Maasai resistance to enforced stock sales was always a simmering undercurrent nonetheless and finally took a tragic turn during a livestock auction held at Moriyo in the Loita division of Narok District. On August 16, 1946 Narok DC Major H. M. Grant was speared to death by Karembu Ole Sendeu, a moran from the Engidongi (Laibon) Loita section after the two

¹⁸⁷ See DC R.E. Wainwright to R. A. Wilkinson Kajiado Handing Over notes, 1946 PC/SP 1/2/3 (RHO/Micr.Afr.515).

tussled over a black bullock Sendeu was unwilling to give up for sale. Unlike in previous occasions where the colonial administration would naturally have resorted to brutal retributive measures, a surprisingly restrained response followed Major Grant's murder. The government adopted a two-pronged legal approach that though corrective was nonetheless still punitive. While the assailant was sentenced to death after a failed appeal, his Engidongi clan was fined cattle worth £2000 which was to cover the "education of General Grant's children."¹⁸⁸ The government also used the case as an opportunity to confiscate 2000 acres of land from the Purko to set aside the Narok Ranch School. Maasai elders had earlier resisted calls to donate land for such ventures. The Maasai were of course not happy with the turn of events. They perceived the penalties as to be extreme retribution, especially since they could not understand the logic behind the collective punishment for the misdeeds of one.¹⁸⁹ As I shortly discuss the decision to punish the communities was to backfire ten years later.

In 1946 a joint decision by the Kajiado and Narok Local Native Councils had also sought free movement of Maasai livestock across the reserve, a decision that would in the end lead to rivalry among different clans especially during periods of drought. The decision also intensified pressure on certain areas that had previously experienced only minimal stock intrusion and overstocking continued to be a serious problem especially when compulsory sales were stopped a year later. In 1947 OiC Masai Province, perhaps influenced by the tragedy that befell General Grant, promoted controlled grazing schemes that had first been proposed a decade earlier as an alternative to limit stock movement.¹⁹⁰ In the mid-1930s grazing schemes had been mooted

¹⁸⁸ *Masai Extra-Provincial District Annual Report, 1946*, p. 2, PC/P 1/2/3.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ See e.g. *Kajiado District Annual Report, 1947*, AR/568 DC/KAJ/2/1/2 (KNA).

through “precept” and were considered the most appropriate means by which the administration could convince the Maasai to reduce their herds and advance their livestock husbandry. Starting in 1945 the schemes, which were placed under the management of the African Land Development Organisation (ALDEV), involved paddocking and controlled grazing during both the wet and dry seasons, as well as improving cattle stock through cross-breeding. Seeking to address the spreading tsetse fly infestation, the ALDEV also employed controlled fire regimes to increase the land carrying capacity by opening up more grazing land in Athi, Aitong, Trans-Mara, and the Siria Escarpment.¹⁹¹

In Kajiado District ALDEV created the Konza Grazing Demonstration Scheme in 1945. Over a period of two years a combination of sisal and wire fence ringed the roughly 22,000 acres to keep off wildlife. It was not until 1949 that ten families totaling about 90 persons from the Kaputiei section, were allowed to reside within the 4 nine-square mile paddocks. Spread across the scheme were three boreholes. The ten families were, however, obligated to abide by several rules including an agreed upon herd size at the beginning, “weekly dipping against ECF and regular inoculation against the other prevalent stock diseases, and rotational grazing.”¹⁹² The schemes were also premised on the notion that surplus stock would be sold off for slaughter and boost the livestock industry but as ALDEV soon found out, the Maasai only agreed to participate in the program on condition that this stipulation was omitted. This setback also meant that subsequent increases in cattle numbers which for the Konza Scheme had increased by 20 percent

¹⁹¹ A. N. Bailward to E. A. Sweatman, *Kajiado District Handing Over Report for August to October 1946*, pp.15-16; African Land Development Organisation (ALDEV), *African Land Development in Kenya, 1946-1955* (Nairobi: The Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, and Water Resources, 1956), pp. 8, 70.

¹⁹² Ibid.

between 1949 and 1955 only exacerbated the problem on the fragile environment.¹⁹³ To complement ALDEV's grazing schemes the government also introduced courses in animal husbandry with an emphasis on dairying as part of the mandated syllabus of the Narok intermediate school.¹⁹⁴

By the late 1950s as many as ten grazing schemes were spread out across Kajiado and Narok Districts. But despite the benefits marked by improved cattle breeds, widespread inoculation, and increase in livestock numbers, ALDEV had made little progress in convincing the Maasai to the benefits of a "rigid block grazing system,"¹⁹⁵ Funding constraints also limited the ability of agricultural and veterinary officers to combat the repeated outbreaks of pleuropneumonia and rinderpest. The infrastructure was also in need of regular maintenance. Siltation of the dams and storage tanks rendered these ineffective during periods of drought. Significantly, controlled paddocking inadvertently exacerbated soil and vegetation loss due to the large livestock concentrations around dams and watering holes.¹⁹⁶ As I discuss in Chapter 6, controlled grazing schemes also impacted wildlife conservation efforts. According to David Western, for example, the triple increase of cattle numbers (from 70,000 to 200,000) between 1940 when the development of dams and waterholes were initiated and 1960s that "left few areas beyond reach of heavy dry season grazing," led to intense overgrazing around Oltukai and other springs in Amboseli.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ See e.g., *African Affairs Department Annual Report, 1951*, p. 163.

¹⁹⁵ See *ALDEV, July 1, 1957 to June 30, 1958 Report*, p. 26.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 23-27.

¹⁹⁷ See David Western and Dan Manzoillo Nightingale, "Environmental Change and the Vulnerability of Pastoralists to Drought: A Case Study of the Maasai in Amboseli, Kenya," (2003), <http://oceandocs.net/handle/1834/436>, accessed May 30, 2014; *ALDEV, 1st July 1957 to 30th June 1958*, pp. 26-27;

It was inevitable that the set up of grazing schemes where only a few select families were allowed at a time would intensify quarrels among the different Maasai sections. These rivalries were especially intense during periods of drought. Families and clans who had not signed up to the project felt ostracized and were embittered when they lost herds due to drought and epidemic cattle diseases when denied access into the demonstration paddocks or veterinary benefits their counterparts enjoyed. In 1951 the DC Kajiado noted with pessimism how the good rains and resultant abundance of water and grazing diminished the value of the Konza scheme unlike during the drought years of 1949 and 1950.¹⁹⁸ In contrast, major disputes over grazing and watering rights arose between the Il Kisongo and Kaputiei and between the Lodekelani and the Kekonyukie in Kajiado District by the end of the decade. Not only was it clear that the Maasai were opposed to fixed boundary limitations but the administration realized was struggling to “protect the sectional interests in areas where other Maasai had paid for developments” yet were missing out on its benefits.¹⁹⁹

The government also acknowledged that rainfall and optimum pasturage and vegetation was unevenly spread across Maasailand with only a few areas having favorable conditions all year round. Narok District contained more arable land as opposed to Kajiado which was largely arid or semi-arid with perennial water shortages. Such uneven distribution was part of the reasons later given in the leadup to the creation of group as opposed to individual ranches.²⁰⁰ By the early 1960s all the grazing schemes had failed due to ALDEV’s inability reduce

David Lovatt Smith, *Amboseli: Nothing Short of a Miracle* (Nairobi: Kenway Publications, 1977), p. 54.

¹⁹⁸ See *African Affairs Department Annual Report, 1951*, p. 162.

¹⁹⁹ See *African Affairs Annual Reports, 1957* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1958), p. 84.

²⁰⁰ See e.g., *African Affairs Department Annual Report, 1951*, pp. 163-164; Prole, “Pastoral Land Use,” p. 92.

overstocking, lack of infrastructure maintenance (boreholes, wells), droughts and famine, game invasion, as well as overwhelming Maasai resistance. According to Singida, the collapse of the Konza Scheme “left behind a denuded gray plain with a degraded cover of sparse” short grassland and acacia thickets.²⁰¹

Such disputes further compounded the administration’s efforts seeking to convince the Maasai to set aside land for progressive development schemes in general. Following General Grant’s murder, for example, the government had also justified confiscating the land claiming it for educational development that were “in the interests of the younger generation of Masai.”²⁰² At a February 21, 1957 meeting with Purko elders, Narok District Commissioner A.D. Galton-Fenzi lamented his inability to convince them to set aside more land for progressive schemes because they insisted that the government first had to reverse the decision to confiscate their land that set up the ranch school ten years earlier.²⁰³ Yet again the Maasai were willing to challenge the government and participate in the development projects whenever they identified issues or areas which could be used as bargaining chips. On their part the government was quick to counter that the land had never been legally deeded for there to claim ownership, an ambiguity that dated back to the Maasai Moves of the first decade.²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ Singida, “Land and Population Problems,” p. 31.

²⁰² A.D. Galton-Fenzi to R.A Jeary, March 1, 1957, *Narok District Handing Over Report*, RH/Mss.Afr.s. 1258.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid. See in particular A.D. Galton-Fenzi letter to PC; PC ref. No. E/I/F/II/77 of February 21, 1957.

Table 5. 2 World War II Native Livestock (cattle & sheep) Purchases, from June 1, 1940 to December 31, 1942²⁰⁵

Province/District	Amount (Kenya Shillings)
Central Province	90,984.00
Nyanza Province	91,513.00
Rift Valley Province* (excluding Masai District)	94,593.00
Coast Province	146.92
Masai District	185,541.00
Northern Frontier District	47,582.00
Turkana District	1,124.00
Totals	511,483.92

The Emergency Period, Return to Basics

More than any other time, the contradictory nature of the colonial administration's relationship with the Maasai came to the fore during the emergency period between 1952 and 1957. Not only were their fears of the militaristic Maasai revisited, but paradoxically, they also embarked on policies seeking to maintain Maasai cultural "purity." Specifically, many of the policy proposals were aimed at controlling among other issues the decades-old immigration by the Kikuyu into Maasailand, reverse their intermarriages, and ironically even promote traditional Maasai pastoralism at the expense of more settled forms of agriculture including dairy farming and the cultivation of crops.

Unlike during the First World War where the British were initially worried that the Maasai residing along the border with German East Africa would not remain neutral, or that they would even sabotage the railway line, the Emergency period was purely an internal affair. The administration now sought to reverse the decision it had embarked on from the early 1930s when

²⁰⁵ Adopted from *Report on Native Affairs, 1939-1945* (Nairobi: Government Printers, 1947), pp. 42-43.

* Both Kajiado and Narok Districts were part of the Rift Valley Province that also included Nandi, Elgeyo-Marakwet, Baringo, Samburu, West-Suk, Turkana and the expansive Northern-Frontier District.

they actively encouraged Kikuyu immigration into the Masai Reserve. On May 1, 1957 Narok DC A. D. Galton-Fenzi made sure to emphasize to his successor Mr. R.A. Jeary that henceforth:

The policy is that never again should Kikuyu aliens be allowed to infiltrate into this District and take over sporadic cultivation in this area. All pure Kikuyu males reside in the Nairagiengare settlement area, which is strictly limited and controlled. The Kikuyu/Masai “nusu” [half-half] population will always be a problem... “the half-Masai, half-Kikuyu is dangerous because he has the interest of his Kikuyu charges more at heart than those of the Government or the Maasai. The only solution is to recruit chiefs for such areas from the ranks of the young educated Masai. The third problem relating to the Kikuyu is that of Kikuyu females married to Masai. We have been allowing the Masai concerned to have their Kikuyu wives with them in their ‘manyattas’ subject to there being no cultivation and the Head of the ‘manyatta’ signing a document guaranteeing the good behavior of the Kikuyu female concerned.”²⁰⁶

Since the mid-1940s the government had been taking active steps to encourage cultivation among the Maasai in both districts and reduce the domination of Kikuyu farmers in the highland areas around Namanga, Loitoktok, Ngong, Nairengiare, Melili, and Ololunga. In 1950 the Masai Council Land Usage By-laws gave the Kajiado and Narok county councils the mandate to control cultivation with the aim of protecting the interests of Maasai pastoralists as well as reduce overstocking and prevent further ecological degradation and soil erosion on the precipitous slopes. Through the African District Council, which replaced the LNC’s, efforts were made to limit encroachment by Kikuyu cultivators and revoking existing land claims and instead promote Maasai seed farming.²⁰⁷ Coming so close to independence these policies were also the most explicit attempts by colonial officials to reify representations of the Maasai engaged in “purely pastoral” economic production. Yet it was also an implicit reiteration of their fear, real or imagined, of the Maasai military institution.

The quest to develop Maasai traditional animal husbandry towards a money-based

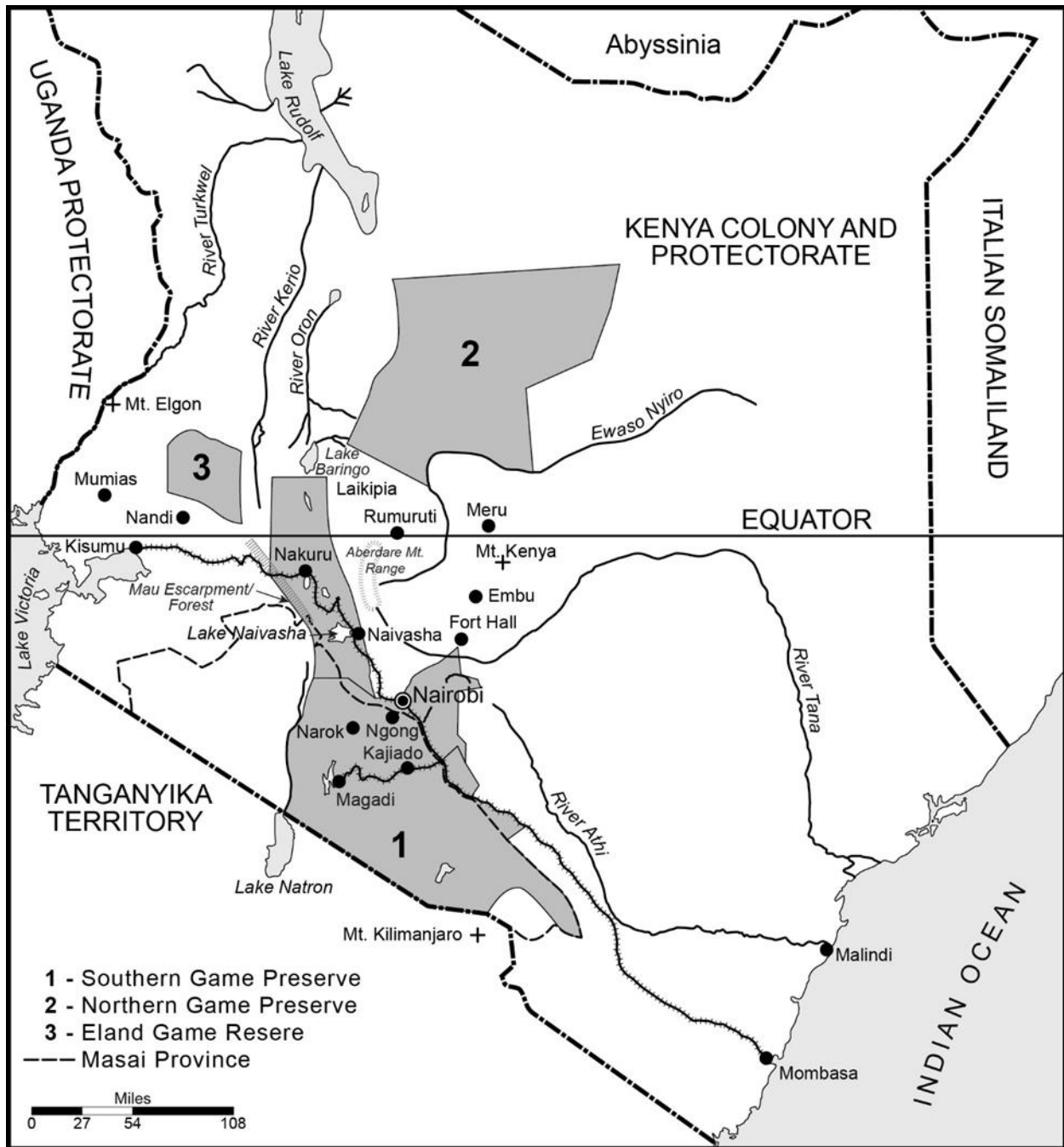
²⁰⁶ See Mr. A.D. Galton-Fenzi to Mr. R.A. Jeary, May 1, 1957, *Narok District Handing over Report, 1957*, p. 3, RH/Mss.Afr.s. 1258.

²⁰⁷ *Masai Extra-Provincial District Annual Report, 1952*, p. 11.

economy was a concerted effort throughout the colonial period. Yet it is telling that by 1959 when the Native Lands Registration Ordinance opened up native areas for subdivision and individual registry, the commercialization of Maasai pastoralism was far from achieved. Nonetheless, it was obvious that advancements in veterinary care from the 1930s against the prevalent epidemic livestock diseases went a long way in improving the general health of Maasai stock. Conversely, these improvements also contributed to the exponential increase in Maasai stock that due to directly increased pressure on the fragile environment by denuding the sparse vegetation and exacerbated extreme soil erosion.

Likewise, the promotion of agricultural crop cultivation along the fragile hillsides that was particularly coupled with the an increase of Kikuyu infiltration from the 1930s ensured that the few remaining highland areas in the Masai Reserve around Ngong, Mau, Loitokitok, and Namanga that had served as dry-season grazing areas were now subjected to increased ecological degradation. In Chapter 6 I follow up on this environmental theme as I discuss the history of wildlife conservation as well as the transformation of Maasai Group Ranches from the 1960s as part of the livestock development schemes to significant wildlife conservation areas in by the 1980s. I also point out that the framework within which the initial grazing schemes were set up did not envision their existence alongside wildlife sanctuaries; game was considered vermin and their eradication at all costs was considered to be imperative.

CHAPTER 6: MAASAILAND AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION, 1930s to 2000: TWO LASTING TRUMP CARDS?



Map 6.1
Kenya Colony and Protectorate Game Reserves 1925

Introduction

In a 1965 study co-sponsored by the Kenya Wild Life Service (KWLS) alongside the Conservation Fund of New York, ecologist Phillip Glover marveled at the abundance of game in the Maasai Mara National Reserve of Narok District. He remarked that the Maasai were a lucky community whom fate had gifted “two important trump cards which nobody else in the world can match; an abundant wild fauna and more land per capita than almost any other people.”¹ Although one can appreciate Glover’s fascination with what was clearly to him a stupendous and unparalleled wildlife concentration, the land factor, as already discussed in the previous chapter, was obviously connected to the Maasai Moves of 1904 and 1911. The moves inadvertently ensured that despite their relatively low population at independence, the Kenya Maasai, unlike any of the forty or so other Kenyan communities, had more land per capita than their counterparts.

More important for the purpose of this study, however, is how traditional Maasai-wildlife relations played out in Kenya’s wildlife conservation history. In particular, Glover’s remarks also raise the question as to what extent the representations of the apparently peaceful Maasai-wildlife co-existence was a result of their own initiative or whether this was by default. Only two years earlier, Noel Simon, former Director of the defunct Royal National Parks (RNP) and then Director of the Kenya Wild Life Society (KWLS), an ardent wildlife conservationist lobby, had lamented how of late the Maasai had uncharacteristically exhibited growing “antipathy and intolerance” towards wildlife and were likely to “take active steps to eliminate the herds of

¹ Glover was quoting verbatim the words of his host Noel Simon, Former Director of the defunct Royal National Parks (RNP) Phillip Earle Glover and E. C. Trump, *An Ecological Survey of the Narok District, Part II: Vegetation* (Nairobi: Kenya National Parks, 1970), p.138. Cf. Noel Simon, “How Should the Unused Dry Lands be Developed?” *Wild Life: Kenya Wild Life Society Journal*, 2, 1 (1960), p. 40.

animals by any means possible.”² Simon was reacting to what many conservationists saw as a controversial decision made by the Game Policy Committee of 1956 that the RNP be dissociated from any further game preservation responsibilities outside of national parks.³ The committee had been tasked with finding a long-term solution to the heightened competing interests that were clearly evident by the early 1950s of a growing population, economic development, and game preservation. In the wake of the 1956 Game Policy Committee, Glover’s ecological study was among several that sought to inform future wildlife conservation policy.

This chapter employs the recommendations of the 1956 Game Policy Committee as a point of departure to examine the changing nature of Maasai-wildlife relations and the contradictions that have often accompanied Kenya’s history of wildlife conservation from the advent of colonial rule. Controversial as the committee’s recommendations might have been, they were transformative to the future of wildlife conservation in the colony. I next move back in time to emphasize as being equally critical to this history the 1930s deliberations involving competing stakeholder interests—official and non-official alike—to establish wildlife national parks and reserves in the Masai Reserve and elsewhere. When the national park idea finally came to fruition in the 1940s, it was marked by complementary yet conflicting managerial trajectories; while the RNP was mandated with administering national parks and national reserves, the Game Department was tasked to oversee wildlife conservation in local county councils. Finally, these administrative measures and Maasai responses to them must be located in the wider context of Maasai-British relations that I discuss in the previous chapter.

² Noel M. Simon, Kenya Wild Life Society Memorandum No. 18 on the Future of National Reserves, 7 November, 1958, GH/7/83, 1957-1964 (KNA).

³ *Report of the Game Policy Committee*, Sessional Paper No. 7 of 1957/58 (Nairobi: Government Printers, 1958). Ditto, unless this falls under the Game Department Annual Reports.

Controversial or not, the Game Policy Committee recommendation was one of the first attempts to harmonize wildlife policing in Kenya, a challenge that continued to remain illusory even at the end of the 1990s. Whereas the alarming declines of wildlife populations of upwards of 60 percent in and around the Mara and Amboseli National Park (ANP) and adjacent MGRs in the late 1990s were largely correlated to human-wildlife conflicts, competing local versus state interests among other stakeholders were equally to blame.⁴ In other words, even as Maasailand was identified as indispensable to the future of wildlife conservation in the early 1930s, ambivalent policies marked by competing official and unofficial interests posed a great challenge to their future.

Whereas Maasai resistance to wildlife preservation has been extensively covered in both popular and scholarly literature, less attention has been paid to the competing interests of colonial administrators and settlers, as well as proponents of wildlife conservation with regard to the development of the Masai Reserve. Administrators often viewed calls for wildlife preservation as incongruent to their mandate as trustees to “civilize” the “wandering” Maasai and to modernize their supposedly rudimentary pastoral economy. For much of the colonial period, the underfunded and understaffed Game Department, prior to the RNP having the mandate to create and enforce wildlife conservation laws at its founding in 1939, struggled to convince the government that outside of hunting, non-consumptive wildlife tourism had the potential to contribute to the national economy or even rival agriculture and other preferred developmental projects. Even today, vested interests continue to challenge the success and future of Kenya’s wildlife conservation and its tourism-related industry, which in recent years has accounted for

⁴ See e.g., Lotte Hughes, “Rough Time in Paradise: Claims, Blames, and Memory Making Around Some Protected Areas in Kenya.” *Conservation and Society* 5, 3 (2007), pp. 307-330.

upwards of 25 percent of the GDP.⁵

I equally emphasize the conflicts of interests manifested in the evolution of several MGRs from their organization as livestock development schemes in the late 1940s to significant wildlife conservation sanctuaries by the late 1990s. The later evolution of these expansive ranches by the late 1970s into wildlife sanctuaries was also at odds with one of the fundamental reasons many of the Maasai agreed to the group ranch concept when these were mooted in the 1960s: that it would safeguard against future appropriation of their land to make way for wildlife preservation. Additionally, the chapter reiterates the absence of direct Maasai input during the national park deliberations of the 1930s. But even as this neglect later undermined efforts to integrate them as essential stakeholders in the history of Kenya's wildlife conservation, I contend that their "interests," at least as far as the European officials were concerned, were central to these discussions. It thus acknowledges the historical complexity of human-wildlife contestations and the policies seeking to alleviate them including the overtly racist and paternalistic nature of these laws. Consequently, the efforts to accommodate Maasai private sanctuaries as integral to the nation's wildlife conservation interests first took root in the late 1950s.

Even as deliberations in the mid-1950s spoke increasingly of Maasai antipathy towards wildlife and wildlife conservation sanctuaries, overstating this worry ignored key epiphenomena that equally contributed to the relatively harmonious co-existence between the pastoral Maasai and wildlife, central to which was their semi-nomadic lifestyle and the resultant lengthy periods of human absence that allowed for increased wildlife proliferation. Europeans, Indians, and non-

⁵ See e.g., Republic of Kenya: Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife, *The National Wildlife and Conservation Management Policy, 2012*, Nairobi: Ministry of Wildlife and Forestry, p. 1, <http://www.forestryandwildlife.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/The-National-Wildlife-Conservation-and-Management-Policy-2012.pdf>, (accessed June 1, 2014).

Maasai ethnic communities were mostly responsible for game decimation of game in Maasailand until that point. Proponents of integrationist conservation ideologies in popular and scholarly discourse focus on aspects of Maasai moral prescriptions and proscriptions that governed their relations with wildlife. While many have acknowledged that some of these customs were irreversibly affected by cross-cultural influences during and after the colonial period, the epiphenomenon aspects of Maasai environmental relations were equally critical to this debate.

The 1956 Game Policy Committee: Conflicts, Interests, and Controversies

By the early 1950s it was evident the advancement of economic development in Maasailand and wildlife preservation was at a crossroads. A rise in local and international public pessimism fueled by media attention and movies, particularly with regard to the steady decline of wildlife populations in Maasailand, necessitated the sitting of the 1956 Game Policy Committee to find a long-term solution to the competing interests of a growing population, economic development, and game preservation.⁶ With particular emphasis on Amboseli National Reserve (ANR), which was established in 1948, the release of the film *Where no Vultures Fly* in 1951 drew international attention to Mervyn Cowie's (the RNP's Founder and First Director) struggles and endeavors against settlers' hunting interests, as well as governmental livestock and agricultural development projects, to create national parks in Kenya.⁷

In a Minority Report rejoinder, Cowie was particularly perturbed with the committee's decision to limit the RNP's mandates to conserve wildlife in the colony. As per the committee's decision, all wildlife National Reserves, until then managed by the RNP and totaling

⁶ *Report of the Game Policy Committee*, Sessional Paper No. 7 of 1957/58

⁷ Harry Watt, dir., *Where No Vultures Fly* (United Kingdom, 1951). The film was released under the title *Ivory Hunter* in the USA.

approximately 12,388 square miles were to be abolished.⁸ Effectively, respective African District Councils (ADCs)—formerly local native councils (LNCs)—in the conjunction with the Game Department were accorded the prerogative to gazette and re-gazette new and existing wildlife sanctuaries as they saw fit.⁹

By limiting RNP's mandate to national parks, a fundamental change from the past twelve years where it had also been in charge of national reserves, the committee sought to end the “unworkable dual conflict” between RNP and LNCs. During this time RNP Trustees essentially held the mandate to conserve wildlife but lacked the power to control the interests of the local population, the latter being the prerogative of respective LNCs.¹⁰ The Committee's fundamental recommendation was also an attempt to align the colony's game conservation policies more closely with proposals made at the 1953 Bukavu Conference, where left unchecked, as I have discussed in Chapter 3, radical changes to land use and other human activities were presented as posing significant threats to the future of African ecosystems. Accordingly, it was the obligation of each government to ensure that “in each territory, the conservation and control of wild animals should be vested in a single authority, adequately staffed and suitably equipped.”¹¹ Much as it would have wanted to fully abide by this clause, the Committee was also well aware that besides the conflicting mandates, it was only RNP that was financially viable. It had been founded as an autonomous self-financing body to ensure, unlike the Game Department, its operations would

⁸ Mervyn Cowie, “Minority Report,” in Andrew P. Hume, *Game Policy Correspondence, 1956-1958*, RH/Mss.Afr.s.1436; Simon, Kenya Wildlife Society Memorandum No. 18.

⁹ *Report of the Game Policy Committee*, Sessional Paper No. 7 of 1957/58.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ See Esther Kamweru, David Round Turner, Lisa Lawley Nesbitt, and the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), *National Parks of Kenya: 50 Years of Challenge and Achievement, “Parks Beyond Parks”* (Nairobi: KWS, 1996), p. 12.

not be constrained by the government's perennial revenue limitations.¹²

Accordingly, the committee also proposed that a section of Amboseli be re-gazetted a national park and recommended closer cooperation between the aforementioned parties to also include honorary wardens and the East African Professional Hunters Association (EAPHA).¹³ The founding of EAPHA in 1934 was aimed at instilling and enforcing strict ethical obligations; the “how, what, and when” one hunted had repeatedly been called into question by conservationists and other hunters. EAPHA members would also be obligated to safeguard client interest and safety as it embarked on promoting professional sport hunting safaris.¹⁴ Rather confusing but no doubt reflecting the conflicts of interest between the RNP and the national and central governments were the sanctuaries that replaced Marsabit, Amboseli, West Chyulu, Ngong, and Mara National Reserves when the Trustees finally relinquished of their oversight over these game sanctuaries. Between January 1 and July 1, 1961 passage of African District Council By-laws immediately gazetted Masai Mara Game Reserve in Narok district and the Masai Amboseli Game Reserve, West Chyulu, and Kitengela Game Conservation Areas.¹⁵

Cowie was also apparently disturbed by the committee's statement that “just handing over the game interest ‘on a plate’ to the Trustee” perhaps inferred that they had lacked a clear framework to conserve wildlife and take into account local peoples' interests.¹⁶ In contrast, he

¹² Mervyn Cowie, “History of the Royal National Parks, 1946,” pp. 8-9, RH/Mss.Afr.s.398.

¹³ *Report of the Game Policy Committee*, Sessional Paper No. 7 of 1957/58.

¹⁴ See e.g., Kaweru *et al.*, *National Parks of Kenya*, pp. 8-9.

¹⁵ *Colonial Office Report on the Colony and Protectorate of Kenya for the Year 1961* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1963), p. 95.

¹⁶ See Andrew P. Hume to M. H. Cowie, 15 March 1956, “personal and confidential,” in Hume, *Game Policy Correspondence, 1956-1958*.

was worried that the invaluable fauna and flora of Maasailand were now casually placed under the care of the district councils due to “whims of mere policies” which national park status would have otherwise guaranteed.¹⁷ He remained pessimistic that in the absence of an impartial oversight and policy framework that ensured Maasai livestock numbers were kept in check, the future of these reserves would be in peril. Thus in his report he reiterated an earlier opinion entitled “Proper Land Usage in relation to the Preservation of Wild Life” to the effect that

The greatest danger to the continuing existence of wild life in Kenya lies not in poaching, which must and can be controlled, nor in hunting, which can also be controlled, but in uncontrolled human development or development which is not related to or based upon the scientific needs of the land. It is within the concept of proper land usage that the preservation of wild life has its rightful place in the balanced economic development of Kenya.¹⁸

No doubt Cowie had been cognizant of the Maasai people’s paramount rights within their faunally rich land when ANR was formed in 1948. It was a dilemma he struggled with before and after national parks and reserves first came to fruition in the 1940s. The RNP’s decision to allow the Maasai unrestricted access into the reserve when it was created as well as offers of royalties from tourism-related revenue had been taken with this awareness in mind.¹⁹ The Maasai, however, had been wary of such propositions as a ruse to eventually appropriate portions of their land for wildlife conservation, a history with which they were all too familiar.

Cowie’s position with regard to livestock-wildlife coexistence was no secret. During the deliberations in the 1930s to set up national parks he had taken a personal dislike to the presence of Somali pastoralists in the Nairobi commonage as he waged a personal crusade to have it

¹⁷ Cowie, “Minority Report”; Ditto for Cowie’s minority report. F.D. Corfield Game Policy Report, April 14, 1958 to Hume and Cowie, in Hume, *Game Policy Correspondence, 1956-1958*.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ See, Cowie, “History of the Royal National Parks, 1946,” pp. 8-9.

gazetted a national park. He considered unregulated livestock numbers to be one of the biggest threats to game preservation.²⁰ Aware of Cowie's unwavering position, Frank D. Corfield responded to his concerns on April 14, 1958 in a letter that was also copied to Andrew Hume who chaired the 1956 Game Policy Committee, by insisting that to ensure the viability of Amboseli and other reserves the "goodwill of the local pastoralists must be sought by the payment of adequate compensation."²¹ This particular correspondence reflected the debate over the coexistence of livestock alongside game that had been around for decades. All too often ardent conservationists such as Cowie and Simon found themselves at odds with the views of farmers and government officials over the competition or lack thereof between livestock and wildlife.

It was thus not a surprise that K.M. Crowley, PC Southern Province (the Maasai Reserve had now been merged with Machakos district) rejected the public pessimism with regard to the future of the ANR. By pointing to statistics between 1943 and 1956 that showed the number of Maasai cattle had remained fairly constant during this period, Crowley also challenged the claims that cattle were directly responsible for the alarming wildlife population declines.²² He strongly reprimanded the local and international press and game conservation enthusiasts who "failed to appreciate that ANR was part of the Masai Native Land Unit and that if it had happened to be situated in an area allocated to any other people or tribe than the Maasai, who do not hunt, it would not exist to-day as a national asset."²³ Though Crowley's claims with regard to

²⁰ See Lord Hingston's "Proposed British National Parks for Africa," and "Necessity for National Parks in Africa," presented to SPFE on March 9, 1931 in London as cited in Cowie, "History of Royal National Parks, 1946," p. 10.

²¹ Corfield, Game Policy Report, 14 April 1958.

²² See K. M. Crowley, Maasai Extra Provincial District Report, Southern Province, in *African Affairs Department Report of 1956*, p. 152.

²³ *African Affairs Department Annual Report, 1957-58*, p. 148.

the correlation between livestock and wildlife population declines might have been rather simplistic, given the relatively short period in question, one cannot doubt the reason he gave that wildlife abundance in Maasailand was partly correlated to the fact that traditionally many of the Maasai sections under his jurisdiction did not hunt for their sustenance.

Expectedly, Simon's response to the committee's recommendations was just as pessimistic as Cowie's.²⁴ Simon, as already indicated, was particularly concerned the report might exacerbate simmering tensions arising from Maasai uncertainty that the proposals were ploys to further alienate their land for wildlife preservation. Similar to Cowie's position, he reiterated the unenviable sacrifice and invaluable contribution the Maasai had made to the history of Kenya's wildlife conservation by emphasizing their pastoral economy, customs, and most importantly, their "tolerant attitude" towards wildlife.²⁵ He also mentioned the indirect role played by tsetse flies in contributing to the abundance of game in Maasailand by keeping the Maasai, who were wary of the diseases tsetse flies harbored including sleeping sickness, and their livestock that were equally susceptible to disease communication from wildlife, at bay. Cowie then contrasted these threats with the absence of tsetse flies and scarcity of game in the European highlands and other native reserves.²⁶

Reluctantly, however, Simon saw in the Committee's recommendations a possible solution not only to guarantee the future of Maasai livelihoods, but most importantly to avert the inevitable crises that might otherwise have accelerated the demise of wildlife. Acknowledging

²⁴ Simon, KWLS Memorandum No. 18.

Cf. F. Fraser Darling, *An Ecological Reconnaissance of the Mara Plains in Kenya Colony*, Wildlife Monographs, No.5 (Washington, D.C.: Wildlife Society, 1960).

²⁵ Simon, KWLS Memorandum No. 18.

²⁶ Ibid.

the “risks” involved should the Maasai not “honour their undertakings” and resist an “overhaul of their unsatisfactory” traditional livestock husbandry, he proposed they be encouraged to “take the initiative and set up their own private parks.”²⁷ He believed the potential substantial revenue derived would be crucial to allaying Maasai fears with regard to wildlife conservation and parks in general. To ensure the Maasai complied fully, he further recommended in 1960 that each private Maasai wildlife sanctuary be under a European director, certainly in line with the prevailing paternalistic attitude of colonial officials and settlers towards Africans.²⁸

To their credit, both Simon and Cowley emphasized Maasai tolerance towards wildlife, which coupled with other traditions contributed in one way or another to their relatively harmonious coexistence. But while Simon did note the role tsetse flies played in contributing to the abundance of wildlife in Maasailand, they both failed to acknowledge how the lengthy periods of human absence resulting from Maasai semi-nomadism boosted wildlife proliferation. The creation of the Masai Reserve in 1904, however, set the stage for range limitations as previously enjoyed by the Maasai and which enabled this crucial aspect of Maasai lifestyle to indirectly contribute to wildlife proliferation. More pronounced limitations came with the grazing schemes of the 1940s before the group ranch concept of the 1960s set their land on the path for individuation by the late 1990s. The intensification of livestock-wildlife conflicts resulting from increased competition over pasturage and water followed restrictions on their movement.

²⁷ Simon, “Masai Parks,” *Wildlife: Kenya Wild Life Society Journal*, 2, 1 (1960), p.32.

²⁸ Ibid. Simultaneous concerns in the mid-1950s were raised over the future of wildlife in Serengeti. Bernhard Grzimek advocated for the removal of the Maasai from the park arguing that Africans were innately incapable of fathoming the value of wildlife or of conserving them. Thus he asserted: “We Europeans must teach our black brothers to value their own possessions, not because we are older or cleverer, but because we do not want them to repeat our mistakes and our sins,” Bernhard and Michael Grzimek, *Serengeti Shall Not Die*, Translated by E. L. & D. Rewald (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1961), pp.167-170.

Undoubtedly, the limitations of land and subsequent exacerbation of Maasai-wildlife conflicts correlated to the alarming declines in wildlife populations over time. In 1960 American ecologist Lee Talbot concluded as such following research in the Mara. Talbot found an association between the large Maasai herds, and especially the controlled nature of their grazing, with intensified ecological degradation of vegetation and soil. Premised on the idea that Narok District was “particularly vulnerable to burning and overgrazing,” the study was sponsored by the United States Academy of Sciences at the invitation of C. Denton, Narok DC. Quite comprehensive, Talbot took into account all the ecological regions in Narok District including the Mau Forest region, Loita plains, Mosiro and Loita plateaus, and the Trans-Mara highland areas.²⁹

Talbot claimed that the nature of traditional Maasai livestock husbandry, where cattle are characteristically and repeatedly grazed for longer periods in one place while in close-knit bunches, exacerbated soil erosion. In contrast, he juxtaposed these traditional grazing habits to wildlife that instinctively spread out when grazing even while on the move; cattle often had to be forced to move and therefore the “close quarters while feeding was not only detrimental to the top soil cover, but in such tight bunches, their hooves cut top grass turfs.”³⁰ As opposed to the grazing schemes that emphasized paddocking and controlled grazing in relation to wet and dry seasons, Talbot’s study represented one of the first comprehensive accounts to reveal the complex linkages among livestock husbandry, wildlife, vegetation, and soil.

Certainly, unregulated pastoralism had the potential to degrade the environment. Yet what these studies failed to acknowledge was that traditional Maasai customs, which guided the

²⁹ See Dr. Lee Talbot’s Report of 18 November 1960 in AR 623: DC/NRK/1/7 (KNA).

³⁰ *Ibid.*

relationships between humans, livestock, and the environment had progressively and profoundly been impacted with the creation of the Masai Reserve at the turn of the century. As already discussed in Chapter 5 the creation of the reserve immediately impacted their transhumant livelihood that involved planned seasonal migrations in search of pasture and water. The reserve boundaries limited their previous widespread ranges, including into the highland areas that were now reserved for white settlement. By and large, though the population of Maasai herds fluctuated with natural droughts and disease, over time their quality and quantity continued to increase exponentially during and after the colonial period.

Such linearism was partly due to colonial advancements in veterinary care, as already discussed in the previous chapter, especially in reducing the incidence of disease communication between game and livestock.³¹ Likewise, the increased vegetation loss and soil erosion resulting from overstocking and intensive overgrazing was largely due to the failure of the colonial administration in their quest to modernize Maasai animal husbandry through quarantine restrictions and the controlled grazing schemes. Ecological degradation was thus inevitable given that with the controlled grazing schemes the Maasai were routinely drawn to specific dams and watering points without the option of watering and grazing their livestock outside the limiting boundaries of the Maasai Reserve.³² It is now in order to revisit the history of wildlife conservation in Kenya from the advent of colonial rule with particular reference to the assumptions made about Maasai-wildlife relations and the place of the Maasai within them as decided by colonial officials.

³¹ See, e.g., David Lovatt Smith, *Amboseli: Nothing Short of a Miracle* (Nairobi: Kenway Publications, 1997), p. 43. Smith was one of the RNP wardens who were present during the 1956 Game Policy Committee deliberations.

³² See, e.g., Isaac Singida, "Land and Population Problems in Kajiado and Narok, Kenya." *Africa Studies Review*, 27, 1 (1984), pp. 23-29.

The Maasai, Game Rangers, and Game Sanctuaries, 1900-1930

The jaundiced prism through which Maasai relations with wildlife have been depicted over time was reinforced during the formative years of colonial rule. The country's first two reserves, the 33,000 km² Southern and the 33,7500 km² Northern Game Reserves established in 1899 and 1900 respectively, implemented a licensing system to regulate wanton sport hunting (See Map 5.1). The former became part of the Masai Reserve when this was created in 1904, as were portions of the latter until 1911. In 1910 amendments to the Southern Game Reserve reduced its size to roughly 10,000 km² and its boundaries made coterminous with the eastern part of the Masai Reserve. Regardless, the decision was partly necessitated by the influx of profligate professional hunters and settlers into the protectorate seeking wildlife trophies but presenting themselves as tourists pursuing adventure. Lord Bertram Cranworth, one of the most vociferous leaders of the powerful settler lobby, for example, took a particular dislike to President Theodore Roosevelt's hunting 1909 hunting expedition describing it as "predatory, wasteful, and unethical to the sport."³³

The proponents of these two reserves also hoped they would preserve the rights of indigenous people such as the Maasai whom they allowed to reside within them. Seemingly a benevolent gesture, the rationale given at the time by Eliot and others was that the Maasai, with their sparse population, their semi-nomadic pastoral livelihood, and their indifference toward wildlife posed no immediate threat to the economic and leisure ventures of the professional hunters. In contrast, known hunting communities such as the coastal Giriama, the Kamba, and the Taita were promptly restricted or granted only limited access into game conservation areas

³³ Bertram Cranworth, *A Colony in the Making; or, Sport and Profit in British East Africa* (London: Macmillan, 1912), pp.314-316.

when game ordinances were first promulgated.³⁴ For instance, a Boni hunter was sentenced to five months in prison in 1926 for killing game despite his pleas to the effect that “I am a Boni, I therefore have no home, I know I must not hunt game but we have always done so always.”³⁵ In effect, these communities’ livelihoods were criminalized overnight when hunting by locals was declared illegal in game sanctuaries.

Nevertheless, regardless of whether the Maasai posed a significant threat to wildlife reserves or not, divided opinions over their place in them were discernible among colonial officials and settlers alike. Not surprisingly, many of the proposals put forward were rationalized along racist and imperialistic ideologies. Among the first to propose wildlife preservation reserves in Maasailand was Meinertzhagen, who was first charged with leading retributive expeditions against recalcitrant natives challenging the imposition of colonial rule. Known for the brutality of these expeditions, as we have seen, Meinertzhagen was nonetheless an avid naturalist whose unofficial accounts of the birds and wildlife he observed around the protectorate were valuable contributions to its natural history.³⁶

On April 18, 1904 at a meeting with Arthur Blaney Percival, who was the first Game Ranger employed in 1901 and subsequently went on to head the Game Department when this was created in 1906,³⁷ a position he held briefly until 1907, Meinertzhagen proposed game

³⁴ Cranworth, *Kenya Chronicles* (London: Macmillan & Company Ltd., 1939), pp.123-124.

Cf. David Maforo, “Black White Relations in Kenya Game Policy: A Case Study of the Coast Province, 1895-1963, (University Microfilms, 1981), p. 9, where he claims the coastal Giriama, a known hunting community, were the first to resist game policies which banned their source of livelihood.

³⁵ See DC/NFD 142, 1926 in PC/NFD/1/1/3 (KNA).

³⁶ See “Foreword by Sir Gerald Lathbury” to Introduction, Richard Meinertzhagen, *Kenya Diary, 1902-1906* (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1957), pp. vii-viii.

³⁷ It is worth noting that the Game Department was established ten years before the American National Park Service was established.

reserves where a clear separation between humans and wildlife was maintained. To Meinertzhagen the extirpation of big game was imminent unless measures were taken to counteract the rapid immigration of European settlers coupled with unrestricted sport hunting by local and international visitors alike. He found it even more alarming that the East Africa Protectorate administration that “cared nothing about game” was itself complicit in such unsustainable destruction of wildlife.³⁸

Yet Meinertzhagen, despite his fear that traditional Maasai grazing methods might end up being unsustainable in the long run, exalted them as “keepers of the wild” who had historically coexisted with game. He then proposed establishing an approximate sanctuary totaling between three or four thousand square miles within their expansive territory. Reiterating the prudence of maintaining a buffer between the settler farms and big game, and holding little faith the local administration would effectively endear itself to game preservation, he suggested that the proposed wildlife sanctuary should be “vested in trustees based in London and completely divorced from local government.”³⁹ It is worth recalling that Simon would later stipulate that if Maasai private parks were to succeed, these had to be under a European director, settler or otherwise.

Although technically the Native Reserves Act of 1904 mandated land rights issues to be governed by native law and customs, the newly established Game Department had prevailed upon the government to amend the 1904 Treaty that enabled them to establish the game reserve. They established it along recommendations made by The Society for Preservation of the Wild Fauna of Empire (SPFE), which was founded in London in 1903. The SPFE mandated

³⁸ Meinertzhagen, *Kenya Diary*, pp. 156-157.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

governments to have a buffer zone separating humans and wildlife and maintaining wildlife migratory corridors.⁴⁰ The appointment of Percival to head the Game Department might have reflected the government's recognition of and desire to develop the protectorate's natural resources along these stipulations. Nonetheless, it was soon clear that the interests of the departments of agriculture, veterinary, and forestry, whose heads were appointed around the same time, would become paramount.⁴¹ Meinertzhagen's fear came to pass since in just five years after the Game Ranger position was created its duties progressively shifted from "licensing hunters and enforcing game laws to that of primarily overseeing the clearing of animals from large tracts of land to permit settlement and agricultural development" by 1906.⁴² For the first two decades the Game Department merely existed in name only, with no significant conservation legislation advancements.

During this time the department was constantly stifled by financial and personnel constraints, even though hunting-related revenue it generated was crucial in advancing the development of its rival departments.⁴³ Percival, an accomplished sports hunter, was overwhelmed as the sole game warden and even though he had the assistance of a few African game scouts by the time he left the position in 1907 he could not keep up with the department's initial obligations to control predators and other problematic animals on settler farms. Colonel

⁴⁰ After the First World War it was known as the Society for the Preservation of Fauna of Empire (SPFE) before becoming the Fauna Preservation Society in 1950, the Fauna & Flora Preservation Society in 1980, and currently Fauna and Flora International from 1995. See, David K. Prendergast and William M. Adams, "Colonial wildlife conservation and the origins of the Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire (1903–1914)," *Oryx*, 37 (2003), pp. 251–260.

⁴¹ See, *Report of the East Africa Protectorate, 1904-1905*.

⁴² Kaweru *et al.*, *National Parks*, pp. 9-10.

⁴³ See Nora Kelly, "In Wildest Africa: The Preservation of Game in Kenya, 1895-1933." Unpublished PhD. Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1978; Edward Steinhart, *Black Poachers White Hunters: A Social History of Hunting in Colonial Kenya* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), p. 150.

J.H. Patterson, also a sportsman-cum-soldier-engineer famed for his role in tracking down the “Man-eaters of Tsavo” succeeded him, but fared even worse and only served for one year.⁴⁴

Unlike Meinertzhagen, who was quick to correlate the alarming decimation of big game to colonial economic and leisurely pursuits, others who subscribed to the notion that it was a “higher calling” for Europeans to oversee the preservation of African wildlife were seemingly blind to this reality and the irony it represented. Among this latter group was Roosevelt, who also pointed to the Southern Game Reserve as an example of the mandate “civilized” nations had to preserve the wilderness for all mankind as well as advance the interests of “wild pagans who were utterly powerless to improve the land they and their forefathers had occupied for countless ages.”⁴⁵ Though Roosevelt promoted wildlife preservation for the benefit of all races in the protectorate, poor and rich alike, he nonetheless asserted that these “should not be established in areas where they would be detrimental to the large body of settlers...the tillers of the soil, the men whose well-being should be the prime object in mind by every statesman.”⁴⁶

Obviously, farming and big game were incompatible without a buffer between the two. The lengths to which settlers went to rid their land of game while Africans were expected to coexist with them, yet not allowed to utilize game as a resource, underscores the overtly racist and imperialistic nature of Kenya’s wildlife conservation history in the early decades. From the outset, the bias towards settler agricultural development and their readiness to eliminate vermin—which was defined as any animal that threatened humans, their livestock, or crops—

⁴⁴ See John Henry Patterson, *The Man-eaters of Tsavo and other East African Adventures* (London: Macmillan, 1926).

⁴⁵ Theodore Roosevelt, *African Game Trails: An Account of the African Wanderings of an American Hunter-Naturalist*, Reprint Edition (New York: St. Martin Press, 1988), pp. 13-14.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

went hand in hand. Vermin or game control thus involved regular killings of lions, leopards, elephants, rhinos and many of the plains game.⁴⁷ While most of the predators were targeted for their threats to domestic stock, plains game were mostly vilified out of fear of disease communication to European stock. The understaffed Game Department had mostly delegated these duties to any willing settler with a gun. Poison was also regularly used. Such arrangements therefore meant that while the department continued to be inundated with complaints of game predations on livestock or crop destruction, it was equally incapable of enforcing any regulations and so the abuse of such mandates was widespread.⁴⁸

Not that Roosevelt's convictions were unique; many local sports hunters played and continued to have significant roles in the evolution of the protectorate's wildlife preservation. For many of these settlers, however, their support was only guaranteed so long as game reserves ensured the future of their leisure pursuits. Continued Maasai presence within them soon became grounds for contention, with many calling for their expulsion. The views of Cranworth, who was also an avid hunter attest to such "purist" views.

In 1910, Cranworth blamed an apparent lack of big game in the demarcated wildlife reserves on Maasai presence. Even more intriguing, and long before Melville Herskovits theorized the "cattle complex" to give it academic accreditation, Cranworth specifically asserted that Maasai "affluence," which he attributed to their inexplicable and irrational obsession with large herds of cattle that outweighed their sustenance value and the unnecessary competition for pasturage and water with game this presented, posed a grave threat to the future of the Southern

⁴⁷ Kelly, "In Wildest Africa," pp. 150-152.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Game Reserve.⁴⁹ Quite the opposite, he could not hide his joy in a subsequent journey through the Northern Reserve on August 31, 1911. Noticing the proliferation of wildlife that could “gladden the eye of the naturalist and stick the stomach of a porter,” he was quick to attribute his fortune to the absence of the Maasai and their stock following the second Masai Move earlier in the year.⁵⁰

Still, as Meinertzhagen’s musings reveal, there was genuine concern among several administrators with regard to Maasai rights and their pastoral livelihood. Many within the European governing class acknowledged the threats posed to their pastoral economy as wildlife preserves were set up on their land. Career administrator John Ainsworth, who had briefly served as PC Naivasha Province during the protracted deliberations leading up to the Masai Moves of 1904 and 1911, stood out as one of the voices seeking a balance between Maasai rights and game preservation. In a memo addressed to his superiors on September 1911 (by then he was the PC Nyanza Province) he reiterated the loss of their valuable dry-season grazing land to European settlement and how this was bound to profoundly affect their livelihood.

In the memo, Ainsworth argued that since game numbers had now “overrun” the Southern Reserve where more Maasai were relocated following the Anglo-Masai Treaty of that year and which had intensified the competition between game and livestock over pasturage and water, then it was only logical that its wildlife numbers be controlled. Unlike Meinertzhagen, who could not trust the local administration to cater to the Maasai interests and would rather prefer to see this done through trustees in London, Ainsworth proposed the licensing of mostly local European sport hunters to cull the wildlife regularly. He hoped culling wildlife would not

⁴⁹ Cranworth, *Kenya Chronicles*, p.123.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 131; also see Cranworth, *A Colony*, p. 238.

only assuage Maasai grievances, but that it would also derive the protectorate much needed revenue from hunting licenses and the export of meat and hides.⁵¹

While it took another four to five decades before marked indiscriminate attacks on wildlife by the Maasai exhibited their displeasure at being forced to coexist with wildlife, the latent hostility and suspicion towards wildlife and wildlife preservation efforts were rooted in the boundaries created by the Masai Reserve. The effects of the two Masai Moves were to profoundly impact both their transhumant economy and their relations with wildlife. It was only a matter of time before the limiting boundaries and the resultant intensified contestations, due to the exponential increases in human as well as wildlife and livestock populations, became evident.

Despite a subsequent amendment in 1915 to the Anglo-Masai Agreement of 1911 which ensured that at roughly 15,000 square miles (approximately 9.4 million acres) the Masai Reserve was undoubtedly considerably expansive compared to other native reserves, just over 70 percent of it was good for stock rearing. Unlike the pre-1904 unrestricted ranges, the remaining portions were either barren, thorny thickets or deep forests, or ridden by tsetse flies and therefore not conducive to cattle herding. Tsetse flies were vectors for trypanosomiasis, a devastating animal disease. While wildlife had developed immunity, domestic livestock had none. Indeed, the role of tsetse flies in keeping humans and livestock at bay has been widely documented as part of the environmental aspects that led to the proliferation of wildlife in parts of East Africa.⁵²

⁵¹ See John Ainsworth "Game Proposals, September 1911," in George Ritchie Sandford, *An Administrative and Political History of the Masai Reserve* (London: Waterlow and Sons Ltd., 1919), p. 49.

⁵² Among the first to make this indirect correlation was geographer Antony M. O'Conner, *An Economic Geography of East Africa* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1966), pp. 236-237; John Ford, *The Role of Trypanosomiasis in African Ecology: A Study of the Tsetse Fly Problem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976); Helge Kjekshus, *Ecology, Control and Economic Development in East Africa: The Case of Tanganyika, 1850-1950* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977).

Ainsworth's proposal that the administration should consider licensing sports hunters to assuage Maasai fears towards wildlife had a sympathetic audience. It came as no surprise therefore that the first calls to abolish the Southern Game Reserve in the 1920s revolved around the subject of the competition between wildlife and livestock over pasturage and water. Reports of the prevalence of game depredation and disease communication between wildlife and livestock were also commonplace.⁵³ In 1922, the CNC of the Masai Reserve remarked that contrary to popular perception that Maasai livestock and wildlife coexisted peacefully, "game crow cattle," a situation that complicated the local administration's efforts to improve the region's traditional livestock husbandry, which was constrained by game depredation and competition over pasturage.⁵⁴ The CNC Masai Reserve, supported by his district officials, even suggested abolishing the Southern Game Reserve to ameliorate Maasai concerns over game preservation. H. E. Frost, Acting Game Ranger of the Southern Game Reserve, equally reported that the increasing competition between livestock and game was unsustainable unless efforts were made to cull wildlife to address the imbalance.⁵⁵

Hobley, former administrator of the Masai Reserve, was among those who first deliberated the CNC's suggestions. A co-founder of the East Africa and Uganda Natural History Society he had just been appointed SPEF Honorary Member. He presented his opinion in support of maintaining the Southern Game Reserve to the SPEF meeting held at the London Zoological Society offices on March 24, 1922. Hobley's minutes were not discussed at the time, but they

⁵³ See e.g., Percival, *A Game Ranger on Safari*, pp. 246-247; 291-293. See n.66 below for full reference!

⁵⁴ See Keith Caldwell to Edward Buxton, 19 December 1922, KNA/KW 27/4, Folio 40a as cited in Matheka, "Antecedents to Wildlife Conservation Programme in Kenya, 1946-1964," p. 241.

⁵⁵ Matheka "Antecedents," p. 241.

considered for a subsequent meeting nonetheless.⁵⁶ Governor Robert Coryndon also weighed in claiming that though the interests of the Maasai had to be taken into account, abolishing the Southern Game Reserve would be a mistake and an extreme measure.⁵⁷ Both Hobley's and Coryndon's influences played a role in ensuring that no decision was made on the future of the Southern Reserve. It would be another two decades before a final resolution was achieved.

With Game Wardens seeking the protection of wildlife yet engaging in vermin control, mandates which seemed contradictory, it is no wonder questions have been raised about Kenya's pioneer game officials and their commitment to wildlife conservation. Of the first three who served between 1906 and 1921, it was only R.B. Woosnam, an entomologist, who served between 1910 and 1915, who seemed aptly qualified. While Edward Steinhart rightly observes that his tenure was "the only time during Kenya's colonial period that a scientist rather than a sportsman would head the Game Department,"⁵⁸ it is worth noting that Captain Archie Ritchie who headed the department from 1923-1945, holding the title of the first Game Warden, and who was instrumental in the 1930s deliberations that led to the creation of the first national parks, was a trained zoologist. Many do not question Percival's commitment, despite the ideological and financial constraints he faced during his brief first tenure, though his hunting pursuits may at times have taken precedence in his zealous efforts towards protecting the farming interests of white farmers against predation.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ See Society for the Protection of Fauna of Empire (SPFE) "Minutes of Meeting Held at the Zoological Society's Offices, London, March 24, 1922," in Cowie, "History of the Royal National Parks."

⁵⁷ Matheka, "Antecedents, p. 241.

⁵⁸ Steinhart, *Black Poachers, White Hunters*, p.151. pp. 154-155; R. B. Woosman, "The Relation of Game Animals and Disease in Africa," *The Journal of the East Africa and Uganda Natural History Society*, IV (1913), pp. 3-24.

⁵⁹ See e.g., "Editor's Note by E.D. Cuming" for Arthur Blaney Percival, *A Game Ranger on Safari* (London: Nisbet & Company Ltd., 1928), pp. v-vi.

According to Steinart, it was during Woosnam's tenure that the first Game Ordinance in 1909 was promulgated. The government intended to boost its revenue in the elephant ivory trade while promoting accountability by offering a fixed bounty on elephant ivory, irrespective of the source.⁶⁰ This offer may explain the reported participation of several Loita Maasai who supplied ivory to traders in Ngong.⁶¹ In the process the government's efforts backfired since it instead led to an increase of illegal smuggling as traders refused to sell to the government because of extremely low prices.⁶² Woosnam's untimely death in 1915 during WWI perhaps robbed the colony of a visionary leader intent on preserving elephants as an invaluable resource for future generations. In an effort to address the booming ivory smuggling trade, he proposed a total ban on the ivory trade to preserve the elephant as a "natural resource to attract sportsmen and naturalists" at the expense of losing much needed revenue in the short-term.⁶³ None of his recommendations came to fruition and upon his death the Game Warden position remained vacant for four years until Percival took over.

With no law enforcement during the interim and boosted by the proliferation of weapons during the war, the period was marked by escalation in the slaughter of game. Percival's arrival did little to reverse the situation. Seemingly, his years as a sportsman occluded his judgment during his second tenure from 1919 to 1922, before terminal illness forced him out of office. During this time he oversaw a department that was lax to enforce "pro-settler" game regulation

⁶⁰ Steinart, *Black Poachers, White Hunters*, p. 152.

⁶¹ See, e.g., E. C. Crewe-Read, A.D.C. Southern Masai District report, in *Southern Masai District Political Report Book from the Commencement to 31st December 1911*, RH/Mss.Afr.S.1409.

⁶² Steinart, *Black Poachers, White Hunters*, p. 152.

⁶³ See R. Woosnam to Colonial Secretary, 8 May 1911 and R. Woosnam to Chief of Customs, 15 and 29 October 1910, KNA KW/14/6 in Steinart, *Black Poachers, White Hunters*, p. 153.

policies, turning a blind eye to indiscriminate slaughter of wildlife at the hands of veterans and settlers eager to “supplement their farm income with trophy and game meat.”⁶⁴ At the same time, the elimination of vermin in the European highlands and other areas continued in earnest, ironically mostly funded by the resource poor department. When he left office in 1922, Percival’s preservationist ideals were stillborn. He had failed to establish a single game park or reserve that was aligned along SPFE’s 1903 recommendations requiring a buffer between wildlife and human economic activities.

By the early 1920s, with the exception of the Laikipia Plateau and the surrounding Aberdare and Mount Kenya forests, European settlers had systematically eliminated much of the game on or adjacent to the settler highlands.⁶⁵ To satisfy their leisure pursuits many had also turned to the Masai Reserve, as they always did, where in the guise of eliminating vermin and as stewards of African advancement indiscriminate slaughter of wildlife continued. Vermin control of plains game was also carried out because of fear that Maasai cattle might pass on disease transmitted from wildlife when being taken to markets via European settled areas.⁶⁶ Yet most of the licenses that were issued to carry out these acts were premised on simplistic unscientific reports. The case of the Narok DC in 1925 perfectly illustrates this point. Citing the administration’s efforts to dismantle the institute of moranhood which had been officially sanctioned by 1922, he blamed the reported escalation of lion attacks on livestock and humans to administrative disruption of Maasai traditional social order in these terms:

⁶⁴ Percival, *A Game Ranger on Safari*, p. 290; Steinhart, *Black Poachers, White Hunters*, pp. 154-155; Kelly, *In the Wildest Africa*, p.151.

⁶⁵ See *Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, Annual Reports 1920-21*, p. 27.

⁶⁶ See e.g., *Narok District Annual Report*, 1926, p. 42.

The breaking down of the Moran system, with the consequent racial emasculation to which the Masai have been subjected, had effectively robbed them of the power of dealing with feline marauders in the time-old manner. In consequence the lions in parts of the reserve have lost all respect for man and kill cattle in daylight within a few yards of the herdsman.⁶⁷

On the back of such indiscriminate slaughter it is indeed valid to question the commitment of the Game Department to conserve wildlife, especially for future generations.

Nevertheless, Percival's shortcomings should be reviewed in light of the prevailing conditions under which he carried out his duties. No doubt he did not stand up to the powerful settler lobby, who held sway both politically and economically; hunting by whites was also ubiquitous throughout the colony. Although he could not keep track of how many lions, rhinos, or elephants he had shot during his career as a hunter and game ranger, he was "primarily a naturalist" to whom "live animals [were] far more interesting than dead."⁶⁸ In 1921 his exasperation had been clear for all to see when he stated that game preservation reserves had no security of tenure as long as they were advanced as a sports hunters' paradise.⁶⁹ Besides, while he was not a scientist by training, he was an avid naturalist whose contribution to the knowledge of the protectorate's fauna and flora, just as was Woosnam's, was praised by many as invaluable.⁷⁰ No doubt, too, that for the perennially underfunded Game Department, whose goals were considered secondary to agricultural development and other economic activities, it was always an uphill struggle to carry through its objectives and enforce existing game regulations.

⁶⁷ *Game Department Annual Report, 1925*, p. 18.

⁶⁸ See "Editor's Note by E.D. Cuming" for Percival, *A Game Ranger on Safari*.

⁶⁹ Percival, *A Game Ranger on Safari*, p. 100.

⁷⁰ See e.g., Charles W. Hobley, *Kenya: From Chartered Company to Crown Colony: Thirty Years of Exploration and Administration in British East Africa*, Second Edition with a New Introduction by G.H. Mungeam (Frank Cass & Company Ltd, 1970), p. 202. You list the original 1929 edition in Sources, not this reprint. Cf. Percival, *A Game Ranger's Notebook*.

Moreover, whether he may or may not have been influenced by Meinertzhagen's proposals when they first met in 1904, his naturalist's instincts focused his attention to Maasailand. He held the Maasai in high esteem as he praised their unparalleled coexistence with wildlife when compared to European settler areas, where he considered the total extinction of game to be imminent. He was just as informed about Maasai traditional knowledge of nature and the customs that informed their relations with wildlife. Percival was among the first to realize that even if moran-initiated lion kills were taken into account, whether as a rite of passage or simply as "blooding their spears" in retribution for livestock predation, "the numbers thus slain cannot make any appreciable difference."⁷¹ Thus he saw their land as a bastion of game that deserved protected. Above all, even as he proposed game preservation on their land he was of the opinion that Maasai interests should not be undermined and that they should be compensated even as hunting continued alongside game preservation.⁷²

Percival's successors, Captain Keith Caldwell, Acting Game Warden from 1922 to 1929, and Captain Archie Ritchie (1923-1945), would also be faced with similar challenges of balancing out the competing interests of individual settlers (sport hunters, farmers) and others in the colony. Game control continued under their watch in much the same manner as they found it. They also did not waver in their preservationist inclinations. Caldwell was instrumental in revisiting the plight of the African elephant, especially the illegal ivory smuggling trade, in the same vein that Woosnam did. He later lobbied on behalf of SPFE at the international level just as was Ritchie's contribution to the deliberations on the national park idea and the policies that

⁷¹ Percival, *A Game Ranger's Note Book*, edited by E.D. Cumming (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1928), p. 6.

⁷² Percival, *A Game Ranger on Safari*, in particular pp. 130-131; 263-280.

came to define the future of Kenya's conservation policies in the 1930s.⁷³

In an effort to appease the powerful settler lobby and address wildlife-related depredation to crops and livestock, as well as attacks on humans, the Game Department had instituted a vigorous control program in 1922. In order to achieve their objective, the department instituted the position of Honorary Game Warden, of which the initial minimum qualifications were marksmanship. The first four were appointed the same year. In 1928 two Official Vermin Control posts were created to coordinate vermin control with the assistance of these honorary wardens. Ten years later the number of Honorary Game Wardens had risen to 80, and by 1954 this number had doubled and also included 220 African Game Scouts.⁷⁴ Game control continued throughout the colonial period and into independent Kenya.

The insecurity of tenure of game reserves as described by Percival and other conservationists continued into the late 1920s. Even as efforts were made to try to arrest runaway hunting, competing interests among administrators threatened to invalidate these. In 1928, at the behest of the Narok DC who continued to issue permits thoughtlessly, European sports hunters in the Mara shot hundreds of plains game each month. Many also took the opportunity to bag the "extra" lion and other trophy animals beyond their permit allowances. In response to the abuses, Ritchie instituted a "total prohibition of the sale of all trophies and game meat" unless he personally approved the license.⁷⁵ Still, the dilemma of balancing out the challenges of economic development in Maasailand against the need for game preservation remained.

⁷³ See especially, Steinhart, *Black Poachers, White Hunters*, pp. 155-159.

⁷⁴ See e.g., *Game Department Annual Reports of 1928, 1837, 1953-54*.

⁷⁵ *Game Department Annual Report, 1925; Game Department Annual Report, 1928*, p. 17.

National Parks: Deliberations, Challenges, and Dilemma, 1930-1960

Finally, on July 31, 1930 at the behest of SPFE and urging of Lord Passfield, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Governor Edward Grigg, was prevailed upon to convene a Game Conference in Nairobi. Held at Government House, the meeting continued deliberations on the best way to balance the vested interests of ardent conservationists and the administration's development projects. At a time when wildlife as a resource was yet to be considered worthy of contributing significantly to the national economy or even rival agricultural development in this regard, the meeting lay the groundwork for far-reaching implications with regard to wildlife conservation.⁷⁶

The significance of the conference was also reflected in those who were party to the deliberations. Apart from Governor Grigg and a Secretary of State for the Colonies representative, others included Hopley, then the Acting SPFE Secretary; Ritchie, who proposed three areas in the colony as conducive to the establishment of national parks; the Chief Veterinarian Officer, who ensured that the problem of disease communication between wildlife and livestock was taken into consideration; Lord Delamere, representing settler interests; and Samuel Frederick Deck—the PC Masai Province, whose presence attested to the value of Maasailand to the future of wildlife preservation but also reflected the concerns and challenges of developing the region's traditional livestock husbandry.⁷⁷

Following the Game Conference, a sub-committee, which also included the PC Masai Province, was appointed to discuss further the values of a national park as well as their most appropriate locations. While all acknowledged the invaluable potential of the Masai Reserve,

⁷⁶ See Cowie, "History of the Royal National Parks," pp. 6-7.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

many held back their opinions because they were afraid the Maasai were still too embittered by the loss of their land during the Masai Moves to welcome the idea of national parks. To this end, the sub-committee was simply mandated to ensure the Maasai did not revisit the events that led to the excision of parts of the Southern Reserve and resulted in the establishment of Nairobi District in 1909. Thus, the sub-committee was tasked with guaranteeing the Maasai

...raise no objection to the continuance of the Southern Game Reserve as at present constituted, in return for which undertaking they be offered a substantial acknowledgement in the form of certain special water and fencing schemes. That such agreement, if effected, be subject to revision every 25 years with a view to accommodating any new conditions which may arise, particularly in respect of Masai grazing and water requirements. And also that the terms of the acknowledgment for the first period of 25 years be set out in the agreement.⁷⁸

On September 19, 1930 the sub-committee agreed upon a tentative national park framework but deliberations still continued for the rest of the decade. In the interim, proposals for four parks were made. These were in the northern [Marsabit], central [Aberdare], eastern [Tsavo], and coastal [Boni-Dondori] areas of the colony. Curiously, Maasailand was exempted, although it was certain that the local administrators, whose views the PC represented and who considered the modernization of the Maasai livestock industry their primary mandate, held strong opinions against establishing national parks in the reserve. Whereas many of the proponents of national parks may have been encouraged by the 1930 Game Committee's concessions, it was obvious they were far from happy with the pace and turn of events.

It was no secret that the presence and influence of the PC, who claimed the "time was not ripe to approach the Maasai on the subject of permanent measures for the preservation of game within their Reserve," had a role in what came to be a temporary omission.⁷⁹ Understandably, he

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 9.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 10.

had valid reasons to think so. Besides the land-related grievances the timing of the proposals laying the groundwork for the creation of national parks could not have come at a worse time for the Maasai. They were yet to recover from the prolonged drought of 1927-28 where they lost over 30 percent of their livestock. More losses followed another drought in 1933. These losses were also compounded by rinderpest, pleuro-pneumonia, and anthrax outbreaks among other livestock diseases, as well as locust invasions which denuded most of the remaining pasture which forced many to retreat to tsetse fly infested parts of the Southern Game Reserve.⁸⁰

Historically the Maasai had avoided tsetse fly infested areas due to the prevalence of disease communication between wildlife and livestock. Seemingly a last resort, drought conditions forced them into once avoided areas and their presence only intensified their conflicts with wildlife, which existed in higher densities in such areas. Their predicament hardened their antipathy towards game and wildlife preservation efforts. It did not help matters that it was not until the early 1950s that proposals to compensate them for game predation and attacks on humans were seriously considered.⁸¹

Their retreat into forests during periods of drought posed other challenges. Tensions with farming communities such as the Kikuyu or hunter-gatherers such as the Dorobo were often intensified. Of particular concern to the administration, and of course to the Maasai, the recrudescence of stock theft tended to follow periods of prolonged drought and exacerbated such tensions. Their presence in the Loita and Mau forests in Narok district, and Chyulu and Nguruman forests in Kajiado district was equally discouraged by the administration which

⁸⁰ See e.g., *Native Affairs Department Report, 1932* (London: HMSO, 1934), pp. 20-23.

⁸¹ *Narok District Handing over Report, (NDHR); Kajiado District Handing over Reports*, RH/Micr. Afr.517_Reel 2.

viewed them as a threat to their conservation efforts. Although the Mau Forest would not be gazetted until 1951, in 1934 the Narok LNC passed laws forbidding the Maasai from building their *bomas* within four miles of the forest boundary to deter encroachment and trespassing.⁸² These restrictions further contributed to embittering the Maasai towards environmental preservation policies.

The PC's reluctance to approach the Maasai at this time may have been well founded, just as no one doubted the potential of wildlife-related revenue to contribute to the development of the Masai Reserve. There was concern, however, that game conservation should be done at the expense of other development projects, especially the stillborn efforts to modernize Maasai traditional animal husbandry. For many of the PCs, DCs, OiCs, and other colonial personnel who oversaw the Masai Reserve, wildlife conservation conflicted with their role as trustees to oversee the transformation of a supposed rudimentary animal husbandry into the twentieth century.

These administrators' opposition to advancement of game parks in the Masai Reserve would soon be boosted by the Kenya Land Commission report of 1933/1934. Among other issues relating to the historical land appropriation and land-use conflicts of interest suffered by Africans during colonial rule, the commission also revisited the possibility of abolishing the Southern Game Reserve. For much of the 1930s through the 1950s various administrators pronounced their opposition to the development of national parks. Yet doing so merely vindicated the fact that three decades into colonial rule, the development of wildlife as a resource worthy of generating significant revenue for the national economy, except for sport hunting, had received little attention. This challenge had always been among the greatest faced by the Game

⁸² See Report by S.H. Fontaine, Acting Chief Native Commissioner, *Native Affairs Department Report, 1934* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1935), p. 46.

Department since it was founded, which partly explains the minimal funding it received from the central government.

It is perhaps telling that the voluminous Kenya Land Commission Report only dedicates a single page to the subject of game preservation in Maasailand. The brief report was premised on the subject of competition between livestock and wildlife and how this feature played out in the larger context of game preserves. With wildlife presented as vermin, the committee seriously considered the earlier calls to abolish the Southern Game Reserve.⁸³ Symptomatic of the ambivalence and ironies surrounding Kenya's history of wildlife conservation, yet again two main reasons were given for putting such calls on hold.

One was the fear that Europeans taking advantage of the opportunity to rid the reserve of game might instead only focus on highly prized trophy predators such as lions, leopard, and cheetah. Inadvertently they would intensify competition for pasturage due to the resultant unsustainable population boom among ungulates. The second reason given was the age-old argument that Maasai conservatism meant that they irrationally resisted calls to reduce their livestock or adopt sedentary forms of agriculture. Significantly, however, the committee mandated the government to "assist with the reduction of game in their reserve" should the Maasai show any desires to settle down into modern agricultural practices, including large scale agriculture and dairy farming.⁸⁴ If anything, the commission's recommendations mirrored those from the Game Conference held at Government House on July 31, 1930; while proposals for a national game park in the Northern Frontier District were seen as imperative to improving its pastoral peoples' livelihood, they considered abolishing the faunally-rich Southern Game

⁸³ *Report of the Kenya Land Commission, 1933*, p. 203.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

Reserve.⁸⁵

It is worth reiterating the conditions which the Kenya Land Commission of 1933 stipulated had to be met if the PC was to appropriate land for public use. As Cowie would soon find out in his struggles to convert Amboseli into a national park, this provision made it impossible for him to act without the consent of the government-appointed Maasai headmen and other elders. It was the reason he settled on Park Adjuncts/National Reserves as he endeavored to guarantee the future of Amboseli.⁸⁶ Though KLC proposed that PCs had the prerogative to set aside land for public good, this could only be effected provided they consulted LNCs, who had to approve. Above all else, any land which was to be appropriated for public good was only to be approved if these decisions benefited the local inhabitants of the reserve under question.⁸⁷

Following this provision, the Maasai Land Unit was formed to act as trustees to the whole of Maasailand in accordance with the Natives Lands Trust Ordinance No. 28 of 1938 and the Kenya (Native Areas) Order in Council of 1939. In the words of Governor Philip Mitchell in 1946, reiterating the terms of the 1911 Anglo-Masai Treaty, the government “had a moral obligation to reserve Maasailand for the exclusive use of the Masai...so long as the Masai race [existed], and refrain from leasing or granting any land without the sanction of the paramount chief and the representative of the Masai tribe.”⁸⁸ The Governor, however, retained the prerogative to overrule and reverse any decisions made by any of these parties and it was this mandate that enabled Cowie and others to create Nairobi National Park and Amboseli National Reserve.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 225.

⁸⁶ See, Cowie, “History of the Royal National Parks,” p. 10.

⁸⁷ See *Report of the Kenya Land Commission*, pp. 391-392.

⁸⁸ See Governor Philip Mitchell, Despatch No. 44 dated April 17, 1946, AR/648 PC/CP 4/4/3 *Nairobi District Annual Reports, 1946-1948*.

The Kenya Land Commission also made a few exceptions that enabled the PC to appropriate land arbitrarily without having to consult the LNCs. They listed mining and forestry reserves, which unlike game reserves, had always been prioritized.⁸⁹ In any case, the colonial administration's biases towards minerals and forestry had never been hidden. As I have described in Chapter 5, the focus on agriculture as the backbone of the economy during the formative years of colonial administration followed several unsuccessful mineral explorations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During his first year in office Commissioner Charles Eliot established the Forest Department, which embarked on reforestation of exotic trees in most of the protectorate's highland regions. When Eliot appointed a Conservator of Forests in 1901, a man who had prior experience in India, he justified his action as imperative to safeguard vital East African Forests that he considered were under constant danger from "fires and unsustainable reckless destruction for obtaining wood fuel by natives."⁹⁰ Accordingly, the promulgation of the East Africa Forestry Regulation in 1902 forbade "any cutting, grazing or trespassing without a permit" into any forest reserve.⁹¹

Parts of the Masai Reserve did indeed contribute to the limited minerals that were later discovered. Though not substantial, gold was discovered in Lolgorien in the northwest of Narok District in 1920 while Kajiado District harbored unrivaled deposits of soda ash and highly valued magnesium-rich limestone.⁹² The bias towards mineral production perhaps explains why

⁸⁹ *Report of the Kenya Land Commission*, pp. 191-192. .

⁹⁰ See Cd.1626 (1903), in *Government Publications relating to Kenya, 1897-1963, EP Microform, 1976* cited in Henry F. Morris, *Annual Departmental Reports relating to Kenya and the East Africa High Commission, 1903/4-1963: Introduction to the Microfilm Collection, Publication No. R97282* (West Yorkshire: Microfilm Academic Publishers, 1984), p. 3.

⁹¹ Great Britain, *Annual Report of the East Africa Protectorate, 1903-1904/1904-1905* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1905), p. 14.

⁹² *Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, Annual Report, 1924* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1924), p. 11.

renewable concessions of at least 99 years in 1911 to the Magadi Soda Company and 35 years in 1949 to the Industrial Cements Limited of South Africa to mine limestone for a 1360 square mile concession were issued.⁹³ Industrial Cements Limited also offered royalties of at least £3000 and promised to construct and maintain four boreholes, which were in line with the local administrators' efforts to improve livestock husbandry in the district. With tourism offering no financial incentives at the time, it was only logical for the Kajiado LNC to consider such ventures.⁹⁴

Coming soon after the Kenya Land Commission report, it is no surprise that in 1935 the District Native Officer for Narok could not help but briefly “allude to two pests—the fly and the game” in the conclusion to his annual report.⁹⁵ The lengthy report had barely discussed the subject of game or wildlife conservation. Three years later, E.H. Windley, the OiC Kajiado District, was equally supportive of calls to rid the district of predators that posed a threat to livestock development. Windley, who as I have already discussed at length in the previous chapter, was among the first officers to directly challenge the unsuccessful attempts to disband the moran institution and dismantle *manyattas*—encampments where the morans spent their years together before becoming junior elders. But just to reiterate, he asserted that earlier efforts to dismantle the organization had instead exacerbated the degrees of “emasculatation and decadence” because the morans had no way to relieve themselves of pent-up youthful energy; instead he encouraged “sports, road work, and lion hunting with spears” as alternatives to the

⁹³ See e.g., John Augustin Elliot, “Kenya Correspondence Diaries, Magadi Railway Letters Home, RH/Mss.Afr.s.1179; L.F.G to R. S.Winsler, *Kajiado District Handing over Report, July 1950*, p. 16.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ See *Kenya Colony and Protectorate, African Affairs Department Annual Report, 1935* (Nairobi: The Government Printer, 1936), p. 22.

traditional roles played by the institution.⁹⁶ It was also common knowledge that while most of the lion killings carried out by the Maasai were either retaliatory for attacks on humans and livestock or during their rites of passage, the impact was negligible.⁹⁷

Although conservation enthusiasts had expressed reservations due to the ambiguity surrounding the 1930 Game Conference held in Nairobi, at least they held hope these would be addressed during the historic Convention Relative to the Preservation of Fauna and Flora in Their Natural State held in London on November 8, 1933. Under SPEF's aegis the conference defined the national park concept, as well as their establishment and the laws that would govern them across Great Britain's African colonies. According to Article 2 (numbers 1 & 2) of the convention, hunting, mining, and livestock activities were to be prohibited within established national parks. The parks were also to have an exclusive bias towards the development of tourism-related activities.⁹⁸

In 1935, however, a dispatch from W. Ormsby-Gore on behalf of the Secretary of State for the Colonies to respective African colonial governments put a pause to any premature celebrations ardent conservationists might have had. It muddled their hopes of creating parks with minimal human footprint. The dispatch sought to clarify any ambivalence surrounding the distinctions between national parks and national reserves and what activities could be allowed within them as stipulated during the conference. In particular, instead of reiterating Articles 1 & 2 as they stood, which applied to national parks as well as "strict national reserves," the dispatch

⁹⁶ See DC H. M. Grant to E. H. Windley, *Handing over Reports, May 10, 1940* & E. H. Windley to R. R. Wainwright *Kajiado Handing over Notes, 1946*, both in RH/Micr. Afr.517_Reel 2.

⁹⁷ See Percival, *A Game Ranger's Note Book*, p. 6.

⁹⁸ Society for the Preservation of the Fauna of Empire (SPFE), *Convention Relative to the Preservation of Fauna and Flora in their Natural State*, London, November 8, 1933.

not only sought to revise the stipulation that the development of national parks should not be premised exclusively on tourism-related activities, but it also opened the door for “hunting by members of the public” within them.⁹⁹ Yet during the conference the “menace of disease” from livestock, agriculture, trade in wildlife, and unsustainable hunting had been identified as the four main issues responsible for the decimation of game and thus the justification for national parks.¹⁰⁰

At least Ormsby-Gore’s dispatch left it open for respective governments to tailor individual park policies, a decision which renewed hope but still alarmed Cowie and other proponents of national parks. While administrators such as Windley and others may have indirectly encouraged lion hunting by the Maasai morans as a method of predator control, this had never concerned conservationist enthusiasts. Other administrators took the opportunity to forge ahead with their plans to commercialize the traditional livestock husbandry. With abundant discretionary powers, the Narok DC in 1938, for instance, issued a license to professional hunter John Bonham specifically to “kill some 8,000 zebra and 5,000 wildebeest...to provide extra grazing land and to reduce the incidence of malignant catarrh.”¹⁰¹ Such acts only validated the concern among national park proponents that livestock and hunting posed the greatest threat to their endeavors. Nevertheless, Ormsby-Gore’s dispatch stimulated their desire to create national parks against many odds.

Between 1936 and 1938 Cowie led the Legislative Council and the East African and

⁹⁹ See W. Ormsby-Gore’s “Secretary of State for the Colonies despatch, 1935, as quoted in Cowie, “History of the Royal National Parks, 1946” p. 17.

¹⁰⁰ See Lord Hingston’s “Proposed British National Parks for Africa,” and “Necessity for National Parks in Africa,” presented to SPFE on 9th March, 1931 in London as cited in Cowie, “History of the Royal National Parks,” p. 10.

¹⁰¹ See e.g., *Narok District Handing Over Reports, 1938*.

Uganda Natural History Society to lobby the government for national parks promoting non-consumptive use of wildlife. Also party to these deliberations, but obviously in opposition, was the newly founded EAPHA, whose members no doubt had been encouraged by Ormsby-Gore's dispatch and sought to ensure hunting was allowed within the national parks. While addressing the issues raised by the 1935 dispatch was priority, two other significant occurrences worried Cowie: the absence of Ritchie, who had been seconded to Malaya in 1935, and the presence of several Somali families with hundreds of livestock who had settled in the Nairobi Commonage. He had targeted the Commonage to be the first national park and previous attempts to expel the Somali had been unsuccessful. The pastoralists claimed they had been allowed to settle inside the Commonage as compensation for their services with the Uganda Rifles at the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁰²

Through meetings sponsored by the Rotary Club and the publication of strategically placed alarmist editorials with the help of the *East African Standard*, Cowie also aimed to win the public's support.¹⁰³ These unsigned propaganda pieces reiterated how for the past three decades settlers, with their bias towards agricultural-based economic progression, continued to pursue the total destruction of "worthless" wildlife. As had happened during World War I when the proliferation of arms correlated to widespread slaughter of game, Cowie now asserted similar acts disguised as sport were made worse by the use of KAR maxim guns.¹⁰⁴ While Europeans were accused of such "unethical" slaughter, an issue that had indeed necessitated the promulgation of the Wildlife Ordinance of 1930 to also check the lazy killing of game from the

¹⁰² Cowie, "History of the Royal National Parks, 1946," p. 24.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ See Cowie's memo to F. M. Clarke, Acting Game Warden, 24th January 1939, as quoted in "History of the Royal National Parks," pp. 17-24; "Demand for National Game Parks," *East African Standard*, March 9, 1939.

comfort of vehicles and hides, Africans were equally chastised for using poison to kill wildlife indiscriminately.¹⁰⁵

Pressure finally paid off, helped to a large extent by the timely return of Ritchie in 1938, and a year later the Game Policy Committee was constituted. It immediately passed a unanimous resolution demanding the establishment of national parks with “adequate game control and no further delay of a properly constituted National Trust for the preservation of the Colony's invaluable assets,—its fauna and flora.”¹⁰⁶ The Nairobi Commonage was set to be the first national park but this plan was delayed with the outbreak of World War II. At least Cowie was happy that he had achieved one goal although he was still unhappy that a few Somali families who had agreed to reduce their stock were allowed to stay.¹⁰⁷

The 1939 Game Policy Committee was also mandated to create and set up a management plan for six national parks and six national reserves to be financed by an initial £100,000 government grant. By 1942 it filled out proposals for Tsavo, Mt. Kenya, Aberdare, Ngong, Amboseli, West Chyulu, Marsabit and Mara Park Adjuncts. Later styled as National Reserves, Park Adjuncts were created in faunally-rich areas where the rights and interests of the local communities, as stipulated by the Native Lands Trust Ordinance of 1938, were to remain paramount. Maasai rights in Amboseli and the Mara certainly came to mind.

The promulgation of the 1945 National Parks Ordinance led to the founding of the Kenya National Parks Trustees (KNPT). Headed by Sir Alfred Vincent, the Board appointed Cowie as

¹⁰⁵ *Game Department Annual Report, 1931* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1933), pp. 48-49; Percival, *A Game Warden's Diary*, p. 162; *Game Department Annual Report, 1937*, p. 15, where Acting Game Warden F. H. Clarke Game even reprimanded a Danish bow and arrow hunter for using the “prohibited” weapon.

¹⁰⁶ Cowie, “History of Royal National Parks, 1946,” p. 28.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 19; also see “Proclamation No. 48. *The National Parks Ordinance, 1945*.”

its Executive Officer in August 1946 and soon after its Director, with Ken Beaton as the Warden of the soon to be proclaimed Nairobi National Park. Mandated with the “authority and duty to administer an independent organization,”¹⁰⁸ KNPT did not have to wait long to officially proclaim the Nairobi National Park after Governor Philip Mitchell signed the notice on December 16, 1946. Eight days later, Cowie finally realized his dream of establishing a park that was free of all forms of hunting and grazing: Nairobi National Park.¹⁰⁹ By this time the remaining Somali families had finally been removed and the Maasai were also prohibited from bringing their cattle into the park.

While KNPT would be in charge of National Parks and Park Adjuncts, the Game Department was mandated to oversee the preservation of game in other reserves. To Cowie, however, since Park Adjuncts were subject to respective district LNC approval, he was always wary that this arrangement would not secure their future. He did not consider his cause complete until he guaranteed the future of Amboseli as a national park, however, a cause that he believed would set him up on a collision course with the Maasai and their administrators.¹¹⁰ Once the park was gazetted as a national park, KNPT would obviously seek to limit the access the Maasai had previously enjoyed in its capacity as a national reserve.

Cowie’s initial achievement in establishing national parks had also been enhanced by changes in hunting fortunes and how this portended for the financial state of the Game Department. Acknowledged in 1931, and partly due to the global recession, a steady decline in

¹⁰⁸ Cowie, “History of Royal National Parks, 1946,” p. 9.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., see especially Sir Philip Mitchell’s *Proclamation No. 48 of The National Parks Ordinance, 1945* on December 16, 1946.

¹¹⁰ Cowie, “History of Royal National Parks, 1946,” p. 9.

hunting-related revenue plagued the cash-strapped department for the rest of the decade.¹¹¹ The same decade also witnessed an upsurge in non-hunting foreign visitors with the popularity of photography increasingly on the rise. By the end of the 1930s, revenue from photography safaris had surpassed hunting safaris.¹¹² According to Matheka, the development of photographic tourism around Amboseli between 1937 and 1945 was also largely due to the personal efforts of Percy Gethin, who had entered into an agreement with the Maasai to open a camp at Ol Tukai.¹¹³ The writings of Ernest Hemingway, who in the 1930s chose Amboseli as the setting for penning *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* among his short stories, were equally influential. By the early 1950s when *Where No Vultures Fly* was filmed in Amboseli, the economic potential of non-consumptive wildlife was finally being realized.

Parks for People, Parks of Conflict, 1945-1963

The proclamation on December 24, 1946 of the 44 squaremile Nairobi National Park (NNP) as Kenya Colony's first officially designated "park for wildlife's sake" was a personal triumph for Cowie but not for the Maasai. A turning point in the history of wildlife conservation in Kenya, he had just opened up to the public a placid "Edenic Wilderness" teeming with wildlife, a formerly desolate area ravaged by hunting and World War II bombings. All forms of hunting, whether for food or sport by locals, settlers, and foreigners, as well as grazing by Maasai and Somali pastoralists, was now prohibited.¹¹⁴ Whereas to Cowie the park was an

¹¹¹ *Game Department Annual Report, 1931* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1933), p. 46.

¹¹² See e.g., *Annual Report on the Social and Economic Progress of the People of Kenya Colony and Protectorate, 1938* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1939), pp. 21-22.

¹¹³ See Matheka, "Antecedents," p. 251; *Narok District Handing Over Reports, 1946*.

¹¹⁴ See Mervyn Cowie's "Foreword" in Ken de P. Beaton, *A Warden's Diary*, Vol. I (Nairobi: East African Standard Limited, 1949).

antidote to “the modern rush to fill the world with busy unhappy people,” to the pastoral Maasai the laws that accompanied its creation marked a pivotal point in informing their relations with wildlife and wildlife conservationists.¹¹⁵ The creation of Amboseli National Reserve (ANR) in 1948 further emphasized this predicament. NNP had formerly been part of the Masai Reserve until 1910, it was now under the jurisdiction of Nairobi District; ANR, however, was still at the heart of Maasailand.

It was worrying for the Maasai that in the same year the Southern Game Reserve was finally abolished and ceased to exist as an entity, a game reserve had yet again been imposed upon them. Only a year earlier, Acting Governor Gilbert Rennie assured the Kajiado and Narok LNCs that after the Southern Game Reserve was abolished, two small wildlife sanctuaries would be set up around the Ngong Hills and Amboseli. Besides, the government would continue with its mandate to alleviate competition and threats to their livestock from wild animals by significant game reductions. The elders present at the meeting were left unconvinced by such assurances.¹¹⁶ In February 1946 they had objected to the Forest Department’s intention to place portions of the Mau Forest under its control.¹¹⁷ Their suspicion of administrative development plans had a long history.

ANR was established against a background of resistance among the Maasai pastoralists backed by their respective Kajiado and Narok district administrators and LNCs. They explicitly resisted proposals made by the RNP Trustees who had also sought to create another park adjunct around Olorgesailie.¹¹⁸ To the Maasai, assurances that they would be granted unrestricted access

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ See, *East African Standard*, 11 Aug. 1947; Matheka, “Antecedents,” p. 248.

¹¹⁷ See *Report of Native Affairs, 1946-1947* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1949), p. 47.

¹¹⁸ Olorgesailie was to be set aside as a paleontological park.

into the park sounded hollow; they simply could not trust the government to uphold this promise. Supported by their LNC they remained wary that "unsympathetic Europeans, either in charge of game or Rest Houses, would cause trouble on the grounds that their cattle were bringing dust or flies etc."¹¹⁹ During this time Maasai morans were also encouraged to kill lions, especially marauding lions, even as it was noticeable that the predators' numbers had significantly declined. Additionally, they were paid to recover elephant ivory and rhino horns regardless of the cause of death.¹²⁰

It must be recalled that whereas the Kenya Annexation Order-in-Council dated June 11, 1920 effectively rendered the 1911 Agreement invalid, subsequent amendments to the local administrative structure had nonetheless granted Maasai elders more decision-making power in matters concerning the community. In 1930, two LNCs to represent Narok and Kajiado Districts replaced the Central Masai Council and the fourteen Native Councils of 1918. According to KLC's recommendations, even as the government retained the prerogative to annex Maasailand arbitrarily as it deemed fit for public use, it still was worth doing so after consultation with the appointed as well as other recognized traditional elders.¹²¹ Following the Native Authority Ordinance of 1937 Maasai chiefs, headmen, and sub-headmen who formed part of the LNCs acted as trustees and commanded more influence over legislative and executive branches.¹²² It was these elders that the national park trustees had hoped to convince of the benefits of national parks and reserves in Maasailand, no doubt a tall order since their priorities were closely aligned

¹¹⁹ See R. E. Wainwright to R. A. Wilkinson *Kajiado District Handing Over Notes, 1946*, p. 19.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ See *Kenya Land Commission Report*, p. 193.

¹²² See Lord Hailey, *Native Administration in British African Territories, Part I: Uganda, Kenya, Tanganyika* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1950), pp. 172-173.

with livestock development schemes.

Likewise, at a time when the government had been encouraging non-Maasai immigration into their land, the Maasai remained wary of governmental development plans. They had every right to be suspicious of game or forest adjuncts being promoted as beneficial to their interests. Having already lost significant portions of their dry-season grazing areas in the highlands to European settlement, the Maasai did not take kindly to such ventures. The increased immigration of the Kikuyu into the highland forests also presented ecological challenges to the administration. By the end of 1947, P. Wynn Harris CNC, Masai Province, called for the DC and LNC of Narok District to return the Kikuyu to their own land units. He lamented their progressive degradation of the Mau Forest through indiscriminate felling of trees which combined with their farming methods exacerbated soil erosion. Still, Kikuyu infiltration continued into Olenguruone for much of the early 1950s, some of it occasioned by the emergency period.¹²³ Nonetheless, the ecological problems brought about by their presence compounded the administration's efforts to convince the Maasai to destock voluntarily so as to alleviate soil degradation.

Equally unhappy, though not surprising, were various administrative heads in charge of the Masai Reserve. Many of them viewed the ANR as a direct impediment to their mandate to advance livestock and agricultural development in the reserve. Tacit or otherwise, the future of the ANR and wildlife conservation in Maasailand became the epicenter of Maasai discontent as well as differing opinions among European officials and non-officials alike. In 1945 CNC W. S. Marchant tried in vain to convince the two LNCs in Narok and Kajiado districts to lease parts of

¹²³ See *Report of Native Affairs, 1946-47* (Nairobi: Government Printers, 1949), pp. 19-20; E.R.St.A. Davies, Chief Native Commissioner, report of June 1, 1951, *African Affairs Department* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1952), p. 35.

the Masai Reserve to the Kamba, whose land had been affected by drought. It was estimated that the move would have led to the displacement of approximately 50,000 head of Maasai cattle, a tall order to say the least. Nor did it help matters that three years earlier 30,000 acres within the Masai Native Land Unit, in accordance with the Resident Labourers Ordinance of 1937, had been set aside for squatters leaving European farms. Most of these were Kikuyu families and by 1945 at least 450 families were in residence around Olenguruone area in the Mau highlands.¹²⁴ The suspicion and competition continued for the remainder of the colonial period. The deliberations following the 1956 Game Policy Committee recommendations manifested such conflicts of interest.

Similarly, A.N. Bailward, OiC Kajiado, argued that it was retrogressive to the Colony's wider interests for the trustees to propose "preserving grass" for plains game at a time when they themselves were at an advanced stage to launch demonstration grazing schemes. As I have already discussed in Chapter 5, grazing schemes were first mooted in the mid-1930s as part of the administration's destocking endeavors.¹²⁵ Bailward asserted that the inevitable intensified conflicts between humans, livestock, and wildlife would stifle their plans to finally convince the Maasai to settle down into meaningful livestock and agricultural production with reduced herds.¹²⁶

Furthermore, Bailward complained that the park adjunct proposals were compounding their efforts to convince the Maasai that other agricultural developments and schooling were for their own benefit. In addition to the grazing schemes, pilot wheat farms had been introduced in

¹²⁴ *Native Affairs Department Annual Report, 1939-1945*, p. 54.

¹²⁵ A. N. Bailward to E. A. Sweatman, *Kajiado District Handing Over Report for August to October 1946*, pp.15-16

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

Athi River in Kajiado and NgoreNgore in Narok District. At the time the Maasai viewed such developments as a ruse to prevent them from accessing these areas for grazing. Keeping wildlife from the wheat development schemes would be near impossible unless somehow they were able to erect fences, an expense they were not in a financial position to do. Instead, Bailward proposed, the trustees should concentrate their efforts on preserving game in other areas where they were in their natural state and not in direct competition with human development.¹²⁷ The chance that such areas existed outside of the sparsely populated Maasailand and the Northern District were dwindling rapidly with an increasing human population.

Nor were the Maasai convinced that the royalties expected from the development of touristic infrastructures, including campgrounds and lodgings would be worth it. In 1951 the Keekonyikie Maasai finally agreed to lease out a 50-acre site in Amboseli to the RNP for the construction of a semi-permanent camp, but the £250 they received a year later arguably paled in comparison to what they expected from other ventures.¹²⁸ As I noted previously, Industrial Cements of South Africa promised royalties of £3000 and upwards to lease 1,360 acres in addition to the construction and maintenance of four boreholes.¹²⁹ Unlike wildlife that competed with livestock for pasture, the mining company sought to promote the administration's efforts to advance the modernization and commercialization of the traditional Maasai livestock husbandry.

As has already been discussed, following the Masai Moves and without any recourse to alternative pastures the Maasai were often forced into tsetse fly-infested areas. Yet despite the prevalence of disease communication between wildlife and cattle, they were suspicious of the

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ See "DC Masai Extra Provincial District Report of June 1951 to E.R.S A. Davies, Chief Native Commissioner", *African Affairs Department* (Nairobi: Government Printers, 1954), p. 136.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 38.

government's tsetse fly eradication efforts, valuable as such efforts were to their pastoral livelihood. In 1954, the Maasai resisted efforts by Galton-Fenzi, DC Narok, to fence off parts of the tsetse fly ridden Aitong area adjacent to the Mara, viewing it as an "affront to promote further European settlement."¹³⁰ The Maasai had every reason to be suspicious since the eradication efforts, though premised on improving their livestock husbandry were also driven by tourism development incentives, including enticing the international film industry to the abundant wildlife in the tsetse fly areas.¹³¹ Indeed, by this time the government was intent on promoting tourism in the Mara.

Maasai Group Ranches and Wildlife Conservation, 1960-2000

The events of the late 1950s and early 1960s also coincided with radical advancements in land tenure laws that initiated the creation of group ranches. It is these expansive group ranches that enabled proposals to have private Maasai wildlife parks become a reality in the late 1970s and by the time the government scrapped the scheme in 1983 many of these ranches had morphed into significant wildlife sanctuaries. Yet a review of their evolution and, in particular, the main issues bedeviling them prior to their dissolution, reveals challenges that the pastoral Maasai confronted as many reluctantly agreed to accept modern land tenure laws that effectively governed individual and communal ownership to land. These challenges impacted their notions of space and community. The same challenges continue to be a bane for private wildlife sanctuaries in Maasailand with the move towards land individuation by the late 1990s.¹³²

¹³⁰ Galton Fenzi, *DC Narok Handing over Report of 1954*.

¹³¹ *Handing over Report, 1951*, p. 34.

¹³² See Kamau Kimani and John Pickard, "Recent Trends and Implications of Group Ranch Sub-Division and Fragmentation in Kajiado District, Kenya," *The Geographical Journal*, 164, 2 (1998), pp. 202-213; Ester Mwangi, "The Footprints of History: Path Dependence in the Transformation of Property Rights in Kenya's Maasailand," *Journal of Institutional Economics*, 2, 2 (2006), pp.156-180.

Leading up to the creation of group ranches were two significant land commissions that were carried out in conjunction with consultations with several international development agencies including the World Bank and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The first, the Swynnerton Plan of 1955, introduced laws that consolidated fragmented land holdings in an effort to increase subsistence levels and advance commercial agricultural development. It also set the stage for Africans to own land privately. Likewise, the Lawrence Land Commission (LLC) of 1965-1966 set out to subdivide and register individual and communal properties. Both land commissions predicted that once land was adjudicated and deeded, the security of tenure was enough incentive for their owners to invest in their property for economic advancement.¹³³

Intriguingly, the Maasai were not eligible for individual titles. Instead, a clause in the LLC plan encouraged them to register for group titles to safeguard against having a landless class, a stipulation that immediately angered the Maasai. Not that such a clause was a surprise for a community whom the white governing class in colonial Kenya, official and non-official alike, had often viewed as indolent. As has been seen, they were prejudiced against the Maasai pastoral lifestyle as being wasteful of resources, by being carried out in expansive and sparsely populated land, and inimical to the environment. The unsuccessful tax amendment proposals aimed at their ambulatory lifestyle, especially between 1911 and 1918, as well as the later introduction of controlled grazing attested to measures the colonial government had taken in its attempts to settle the Maasai permanently. Permanence, for the colonial and independent Kenya governments

¹³³ Swynnerton was the assistant director of agriculture in colonial Kenya while Lawrence was the British Minister of Overseas Development. The two commissions were comprised of both British and Kenyan government officials. R.J.M. Swynnerton (Kenya Department of Agriculture), *A Plan to Intensify the Development of African Agriculture in Kenya* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1955); J. D. Lawrence, *Report of the Mission of Land Consolidation and Registration in Kenya, 1965-1966* (Nairobi: Government of Kenya, 1966).

alike, was a prerequisite to ease the provision of basic social amenities such as education and health services for any community. The land commissions of the 1950s and 1960s built on such inclinations to further restrict the Maasai within boundaries, efforts to which they did not take kindly.

Contrary to the LLC's assertion that there was a wholesome progressive shift and desire among the Maasai towards joining group ranches, only a few politically-connected and progressives actually favored this development. Traditionalists were generally opposed to the group ranch concept or individuation of land along family or clan lines. According to Hans Hedlund, in 1965 a conservative Maasai elder pondered the future of the community, wondering: "If there is rain in Kenyawa (South Kaputiei) and people have ranches there, I cannot move in to that place. You educated people want us to settle down, so our land becomes like Kikuyu land."¹³⁴ By 1981, as Galaty reveals, "land rather than livestock [had become] the dominant resource in defining Maasai social relations."¹³⁵ Such claims underscore the value of land in a market-based economy that the Maasai had to adapt to, a progression initiated in colonial Kenya and one that continued to define their relations within and outside the community, as well as with wildlife, in independent Kenya.

On March 13, 1967 Maasai leaders, including their Members of Parliament and the heads

¹³⁴ Hans G. Hedlund, *The Impact of Group Ranches on a Pastoral Society*. IDS Staff Paper # 100, Institute of Development Studies, University of Nairobi, Kenya (1971), p. 4; Michael Thompson and Katherine Homewood, "Entrepreneurs, Elites, and Exclusion in Maasailand: Trends in Wildlife Conservation and Pastoralist Development," *Human Ecology*, 30, 1, (2002), pp.107-138; S. E. Migot-Adholla and Peter D. Little, "Evolution of Policy toward the Development of Pastoral Areas in Kenya," in Galaty, Dan Aronson, and Philip Carl Salzman (eds.), *The Future of Pastoral Peoples: Proceedings of a Conference held in Nairobi, Kenya 4-8 August 1980* (Nairobi: Institute of Development Studies, 1980), pp. 144-156, quoted at p.148.

¹³⁵ Galaty, "Land and Livestock Among Kenya Maasai: Symbolic Perspectives on Pastoral Exchange, Social Change and Inequality," *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 16, 81 (1981), pp.67-88.

of Narok and the Kajiado County Councils, challenged LLC's recommendations.¹³⁶ They wrote a protest memorandum, albeit veiled as a sympathy-seeking letter, to President Kenyatta. Arguing that it was unnecessary and hasty for the Ministry of Lands and Settlement to implement the LLC's recommendations before these were debated in Parliament, they sought a stay in the ministry's circular. They alleged that the LLC's recommendations were nothing but a "Two-Fold Destructive Innuendo" that threatened the very livelihood and future of the Maasai people. They also disputed any rationales that uncultivated parts of Maasailand were a waste of a valuable resource and therefore should be subject to confiscation by the government to be used to compensate landless and "enterprising" communities such as the Kikuyu and the Kamba.¹³⁷ Claiming their two county councils were more attuned to sort out their land issues, they also took particular issue with the Swynnerton Plan's and the LLC's "unfounded assertions that influential members were involved in land grabbing."¹³⁸

Despite such misgivings, five major factors enticed the Maasai to agree to the group ranch concept. Underscoring their pastoral lifestyle, the first priority for the Maasai was to secure exclusivity to water and grazing rights; they believed the group ranch concept guaranteed this. Ironically, although Kenya had just recently attained its independence, they feared that the government might abrogate the "negotiated" boundaries of the 1904 and 1911 treaties and settle

¹³⁶ Narok North Member of Parliament Hon Justus Ole Tipis signed the memorandum as leader of the delegation. Co-signees were M. T. Ole Kenah, Olkejuado [Kajiado] County Chairman, and M. P. Ole Nampaso, the Narok County Council Chairman.

¹³⁷ See "Memorandum to his Excellency the President, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta by both Narok/Kajiado County Councils and Members of Parliament of both Kajiado/Narok Districts and other Maasai Leaders" in BV/104/50/PROJ.MASAI/4 III (KNA). For more on how the freehold titles led to proliferation of non-Maasai on the fertile highlands of Maasailand see John Galaty, "The Maasai Group-Ranch: Politics and Development in an African Pastoral Society," in John Galaty and C. P. Salzman (eds.), *When Nomads Settle* (Montreal: McGill University, 1980), pp. 157-172.

¹³⁸ "Memorandum to his Excellency the President."

non-Maasai on their land. Second, they hoped that the concept, as opposed to individual titles, presented the only viable option of maintaining a “group” identity, so fundamental to pastoral ecology.¹³⁹ The idea of group ownership, at least in principle, would allow unrestricted movement of individual or family herds within what were still expansive ranches. In 1968, for example, the first 14 ranches (totaling 664,000 acres in the Kaputiei section of Kajiado District under the Kenya Livestock Development Program guaranteed each one of 100 occupying families an average 47,500 acres per ranch.¹⁴⁰ Third, group titles qualified as collateral, which could be used to secure financial loans and perhaps even increase their stock or invest in infrastructure such as cattle-dips. Fourth, with only males aged eighteen and above eligible to register for group titles, families believed the expansive ranches secured land for future generations. Last, but highly significant to their having lost substantial land to white settlement and wildlife parks during the colonial period, not to mention their increasing antipathy toward wildlife, they hoped that by registering their land, they were safeguarding themselves against further land loss to game conservation endeavors.¹⁴¹

The same year, in the midst of the registration of group ranches, Cowie, afraid Amboseli would be lost forever, embarked on a campaign to realize its national park status as recommended a decade earlier by the unpopular 1956 Game Policy Committee. His actions were immediately met with open Maasai defiance and set the stage for a series of violent confrontations. If Amboseli became a national park it could restrict their once open access into

¹³⁹ Hedlund, *The Impact of Group Ranches*, p. 3; J. M. Halderman, *An Analysis of Continued Semi-Nomadism on the Kaputiei Group Ranches: Sociological and Ecological Factors*. Undated report prepared for SIDA c. 1971, p. 4.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ See J.F. Lipscomb (Government House, Dar es Salaam) and Ministry of Tourism, Game, Forests and Fisheries reports, in *Governor's Office: Game Preservation Report, Colony of the Protectorate of Kenya, 1957-1964*, GH/7/83 (KNA).

the park. The fear of losing water and grazing rights in an area of perennial water scarcity—the permanent swamps in Amboseli fed by snowmelt emanating from Mount Kilimanjaro are oases— was something the Maasai were unwilling to give up. It only exacerbated the mistrust they already had towards the government and wildlife conservation authorities.¹⁴²

On August 8, 1957 Governor Sir Evelyn Baring made an official visit to Ol Tukai where at an open meeting that was also attended by all the representative Maasai Chiefs and Headmen he sought to reassure them of the government's commitment to develop the local water infrastructure and promote controlled grazing. Despite such reassurances that their welfare interests were preeminent, the Maasai remained apprehensive since the governor also insisted that even as these developments were carried out, game preservation in Amboseli remained the administration's priority.¹⁴³ In the same breath that Baring reiterated his administration's commitment and obligation to recognize and respect their inalienable rights within the Maasai Native Land Unit, pursuant to the Native Lands Trust Ordinance of 1938, he was also setting the stage for the government to appropriate their land for wildlife preservation for public good.¹⁴⁴ The Maasai were clearly not convinced and considering such reservations, it was perhaps inevitable that the simmering tensions which Simon warned about would turn violent.

It did not help matters that as Cowie lobbied to guarantee Amboseli's national park status a Maasai elder was gored by a rhino and gravely injured. Unable to reach the safety of a village by nighttime, he was allegedly killed by lions. To the incensed locals these events reaffirmed their fear that game was valued above humans since earlier calls for compensation were rarely

¹⁴² See, e.g., Lovatt Smith, *Amboseli*, pp. 77-79.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ See e.g., Noel Hardy, "Note on Amboseli," *Wildlife: Kenya Wildlife Society Journal*, 1, 1 (1959), p.36.

acted upon. In retaliation, the Maasai embarked on a violent rampage, indiscriminately spearing several rhinos, elephants, and lions. They even threatened to attack tourists visiting the park. By then, Amboseli's reputation as a leading wildlife-viewing destination had continued to attract international interest, with such threats even finding an international audience through the *New York Times*.¹⁴⁵

But while wildlife enthusiasts hoped the preservation of wildlife would continue, the local governance in Maasailand had other priorities. On December 20, 1967 for example, the Maasai Agricultural Development Scheme drew up a plan to develop all potable arable areas within Kajiado and Narok districts. Initiated in 1961, from 1965 the government encouraged the Maasai to take up large-scale wheat farming. In 1967, a 30,000-acre wheat scheme was planned for the Ololunga Location in Narok District and government assistance to the tune of £100,000 was set aside for this and other agricultural developments.¹⁴⁶ Yet, agricultural development again set the Maasai administrators on a collision course with wildlife enthusiasts. On December 13, 1967 tensions between wheat farmers and the members of EAPHA escalated. Previously, the professional hunting lobby had complained that their clients were being harassed; now an American tourist was being held.¹⁴⁷

If the Maasai had expected a change of attitude with regard to wildlife preservation in independent Kenya they were soon disappointed. Whereas its colonial counterpart seemed to

¹⁴⁵ See e.g. David Western, *In the Dust of Kilimanjaro* (Washington: Island Press, 2002), p. 94-97.

Cf. Great Britain, *Colonial Office Report on The Colony and Protectorate of Kenya for the year 1956* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1957), pp.17-18; Report on the International Recognition of Amboseli: Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, *Game Department Annual Report 1961* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1962), p.4.

¹⁴⁶ See e.g., *East African Standard*, November 20, 1967; "Wheat Scheme a Success," *East African Standard*, February 20, 1968.

¹⁴⁷ See "Masai Muddle," BV/104/50 KNA.

exhibit an ambivalent attitude with regards towards the value of wildlife, the government in independent Kenya identified wildlife as a cornerstone of its national economy from the outset.¹⁴⁸ The government was a signatory to the African Convention for the Conservation and Management of Wildlife held in 1965 at Kampala, where a unanimous decision was taken making it the obligation for the government to “assume full responsibility for all aspects of wildlife management.”¹⁴⁹ By 1971, under the control of the Wildlife Management Service the government set up a plan to assume the running of existing county council game reserves, including Amboseli and the Mara, and to elevate them both to national park status.¹⁵⁰ It was telling that President Kenyatta highlighted wildlife as the “prime mover of Kenya’s whole international economy” during the December 12, 1971 independence day celebrations.¹⁵¹

Subsequently, despite the violent events of 1968 during which the Maasai resisted Cowie’s advances, and despite their belief that registering for group ranches would safeguard their land from further appropriation for game sanctuaries, Amboseli was officially registered as a national park in 1974. Perhaps the only consolation was that at only 392 km², which was roughly 10 percent of ANR’s original size, it might have been considered a symbolic victory. The Maasai, however, were disappointed with the decision, which did little to assuage their indifference towards wildlife. They exhibited their disapproval with more indiscriminate spearing of wildlife, although these acts were limited and more random than previous

¹⁴⁸ See “Cabinet Paper of March 1969,” in *Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife, Government of Kenya: Policy on Wildlife Conservation and Management, July 1972*, KW/1/18, KNA.

¹⁴⁹ *Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife, Government of Kenya: Policy on Wildlife Conservation and Management, July 1972*.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

incidences.¹⁵²

Yet all hope was not lost. In 1970 the cabinet had also approved a new wildlife bill aligned to the UNDP/FAO Mission of 1970 to codify the state/public ownership of all wildlife. While the bill highlighted wildlife-based tourism's significance to the country's economy, it also encouraged cooperation between game authorities and stakeholders adjacent to wildlife parks.¹⁵³ Additionally, by the mid-1970s it was clear that with the subsequent changes to land tenure a radical approach from the "preservation whenever possible" policy that targeted areas of significant wildlife abundance was necessary.¹⁵⁴

As Maasailand was adjudicated further into group and individual titles, the Maasai now possessed legal deeds that allowed them to do as they saw fit with their land. It was prudent for the wildlife authorities to extol the benefits of "maximum returns from wildlife management on their land" that equaled or even surpassed alternative forms of land use.¹⁵⁵ Accordingly, "flexibility" necessitated the creation of the new Wildlife Service Department to take over the past responsibilities of the Game Department as well as the KNPT, who embarked on outreach programs in Maasailand.¹⁵⁶ Subsequently, this outreach paved the way for the establishment of the first private Maasai wildlife sanctuary around Amboseli in 1977 and the transition of more group ranches into wildlife sanctuaries in the 1980s and 1990s even after the government dissolved the original group ranch concept.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵² See e.g., Western, *In the Dust of Kilimanjaro*, p. 102.

¹⁵³ Galaty, "The Maasai Group Ranch," p. 165.

¹⁵⁴ *Statement on Future Wildlife Management Policy in Kenya*, Sessional Paper No. 3 of 1975, p. 2 (KNA).

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁵⁷ See e.g. David Western, "Amboseli National Park: Enlisting Landowners to Conserve Migratory Wildlife," *Ambio*, 11, 5 (1982), pp. 302-308.

Undoubtedly, divergent opinions, both internal and external, and the failure of the group ranches to meet their objectives, dictated the scrapping of the scheme in 1983. Likewise, the same core issues continue to bedevil many ranches that subsequently morphed into significant wildlife sanctuaries. Whereas the assumption was that all individuals belonging to these ranches were socio-culturally in sync, in reality this may not have been the case. According to Jennifer Coffman, who researched the concept of community participation in one of the group ranches around the Mara, “community should not be seen as [an] organic, homogeneous... whole, but rather as an ad hoc group of neighbors who have agreed to participate in a particular conservation program.”¹⁵⁸ But within the first years of the inception of the original concept many Maasai had become disillusioned with the idea, as was the government, which restricted access to loans due to non-repayment of previous borrowings. By the mid-1970s several group ranches in Kajiado began subdividing.¹⁵⁹

Fundamentally, the Maasai were discouraged to find that when group ranches were initiated they did not necessarily encompass dry and wet grazing ranges that are central to their traditional pastoralism. In turn, such limitations undermined their traditional grazing regimes that Meeker and others have argued helped maintain an ecological balance. Even with exclusive access to water and grazing, as well as fluidity within the internal ranch boundaries, unfavorable climatic conditions in 1970 and 1971 and external ranch boundaries limited grazing range, beyond which one would be trespassing and become subject to either park or civil penalties.

¹⁵⁸ See e.g., Jennifer E. Coffman, “Buying (into) and Selling Conservation Among Maasai in Southern Kenya,” in William G. Moseley and B. Ikubolajeh Logan (eds.), *African Environment and Development: Rhetoric, Programs and Realities* (Logan: Ashgate Publishing, 2004), pp. 161-188; also see World Bank Report: IBRD, “Kenya Second Livestock Development Project, Credit 477-KE. Review Mission, February 22-March 26, 1976” (Nairobi, 1977), p.1.

¹⁵⁹ See Phylo Evangelou, *Livestock Development in Kenya’s Maasailand: Pastoralists’ Transition to a Market Economy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984), pp.120-122.

Nor did the ranches reduce the immigration of non-Maasai into Maasailand. Since at their inception only males aged eighteen were eligible for group titles, internal pressure to accommodate a growing population that had increased by 75 percent between 1970 and 1980 for Kajiado District, for instance, became grounds for internal wrangling. Encroachment by non-Maasai people, especially the Kamba and Kikuyu, only exacerbated the situation. By and large, group members sought individuation or family titles for themselves and their future generations and some of these contestations over land turned violent.¹⁶⁰ Following land subdivisions in the 1980s increasingly more non-Maasai outsiders encroached into Maasailand. Just as had been the case from the 1930s with the Kikuyu infiltration, most of the immigrants were agriculturalists or speculative buyers who also did not share the same moral values that guided a harmonious human-wildlife relationship among the Maasai. For instance, in Kuku Group Ranch, which borders Amboseli, Tsavo and Chyulu National Parks, the proliferation of non-Maasai farmers along the river presents a challenge to wildlife conservation because their onion farms attract elephants and consequently intensify human-wildlife conflicts.¹⁶¹

A major failure of the group ranch concept, however, was its inability to reduce the population of Maasai herds as initially envisioned by the government. As predicated during the colonial period, the government advocated stock reduction to alleviate soil erosion. Instead, a couple of factors contributed to an exponential rise in Maasai herds with the result being the intensification of Maasai-wildlife conflicts. It was widely believed that by the end of the 1990s,

¹⁶⁰ See e.g., Killian Holland, *Land, Livestock and People: New Demographic Considerations for Kajiado Maasai*: Discussion Paper No.5: East African Pastoral Schemes Project, Department of Anthropology, McGill University, (1987), p.1; Galaty, "The Maasai Group Ranch," pp.8-9; Lotte Hughes, "Malice in Maasailand: The Historical Roots of Current Political Struggles," *African Affairs*, 104, 415 (2005), pp. 207-224.

¹⁶¹ Interview with Luca Belpietro, proprietor of Kampi Kanzi, a 16-bed luxury tented camp on Kuku Group Ranch, July 7, 2006.

the Maasai owned more cattle than at any time in their history even when this was factored alongside a ratio of cattle per family.¹⁶² Rather than keep cattle exclusively for beef with regular sales and contribute to the national economy as was originally hoped for when the group ranch concept was initiated in the 1960s, many Maasai instead continued to equate their livestock to "banks".¹⁶³ For many of the non-Maasai staff at the Mara River Camp staff in the 1990s, for example, they could not understand why their Maasai brethren would complain of going hungry or being in financial straits when they each owned at least 40 head of cattle. To the Maasai, this number of cattle was nothing and such inferences were not as simple as presented.¹⁶⁴

As had happened during the colonial period, the improvements in overall veterinary care and control of communicable diseases between wild animals and cattle facilitated the overall quality of Maasai stock. A major contribution to the exponential increase in Maasai stock within MGRs and other areas adjacent to the Mara and Amboseli has, however, been tourism-related revenue, which enabled the purchase of additional cattle. Between 1977 and 2000, cattle in the Koiyaki Group Ranch (973 km²) adjacent to the Mara increased by 6.4 percent per annum. In turn such increase affected the Mara with estimates of 25 percent more cattle grazing within the reserve by the late 1990s, following the depletion of pasture in the group ranches, thereby exacerbating livestock-wildlife competition and contributing to alarming declines of upwards of 60 percent in wildlife populations.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Robin S. Reid, M. Rainy, J. Ogutu, L. Kruska, K. Kimani, M. Nyabenge, M. McCartney *et al.* "People, Wildlife and Livestock in the Mara Ecosystem: The Mara Count 2002," *International Livestock Research Institute, Nairobi, Kenya* (2003).

¹⁶³ See e.g., Kimani and Pickard, "Recent Trends," p.205; Galaty, "The Maasai Group Ranch," p.12.

¹⁶⁴ Interview with Taraya Ole Nasi, Mara Rianta, July 12, 2009.

¹⁶⁵ See e.g., Lamprey and Reid, "Expansion of Human Settlement," pp 1014-1018.

Undoubtedly, the Maasai and Maasailand have made invaluable contributions to Kenya's wildlife conservation history, not to mention that private land has been part and parcel of this history. Nonetheless, the continued idealistic perception of the Maasai as archetypical "custodians of nature" clouds a dissonance that has existed between Maasai perceptions of wildlife and formal conservation ethos as practiced in colonial and contemporary Kenya. From the early 1900s the Maasai and the Masai Reserve were at the center of contestations among colonial officials and officials alike that ensured it was not until the mid-1940s that the first national parks and national reserves were created. The competition between wildlife as a national and natural resource against other modes of production especially agriculture and pastoralism reflected many of these contestations. The appropriation of Maasailand to make way for national parks and reserves also contributed to increased Maasai antipathy towards wildlife who until then—based upon their moral proscriptions and prescriptions—had been relatively tolerant of wildlife. Up until the late 1970s the imposition of exclusionist Western-oriented conservationist policies had done little to incorporate the Maasai of their traditional notions of nature that also contributed to this growing antipathy.

While it seemed natural that the integrationist policies pursued by the Kenyan government since the 1980s where they incorporated expansive MGRs that abut Amboseli and the Mara and thus critical to the future of these two protected areas, alarming declines in wildlife populations persisted into the late 1990s. Primarily predicated on the belief that conferring economic and accompanying social benefits to the Maasai as essential partners, the challenges faced by MGRs as wildlife sanctuaries that contribute to these declines are clearly rooted in the ambivalence that has marked Kenya's wildlife conservation history. The competing interests among various members of respective MGRs that are marked by merges and purges, as well as

between wildlife conservation and other economic modes of production including pastoralism and large scale agricultural production, mirror those that accompanied the development of wildlife conservation. Above all else, however, these challenges reveal the danger of complacent assumptions of the existence of a Maasai “conservation ethic” that proponents of CBCs propel despite the profound changes within the last century to Maasai traditions that had played a role in promoting relative tolerance towards wildlife. In essence, Maasai tolerance towards wildlife has been greatly compromised by the socio-economic pressures and needs of the contemporary market-based economy they live in.

Conclusion

Two Lasting Trump Cards?

This study has moved away from the reticence to ascribe human agency to negative environmental degradation that has characterized much of African environmental historiography. I challenged the assumptions that are often made about Maasai-wildlife relations that at times have been used to infer the existence of a “conservation ethic” that mirrors formal conservation ideologies. In the early 1980s proponents of community-based conservation used such assumptions to prevail upon the Kenya Wildlife Service to incorporate expansive Maasai Group Ranches (MGRs) as part of its integrationist wildlife conservation policies. Yet despite these laudable integrationist policies that contrasted past exclusionary wildlife conservation policies, alarming declines of wildlife population upwards of 60 percent continued to be witnessed within and outside these MGRS. It is therefore imperative that we understand the history of Maasai-wildlife relations in light of these declines and the threat that these pose to the future of wildlife conservation in Amboseli National Park and Masai Mara National Reserve that these MGRs abut.

There is no question that since the 1850s when missionaries and explorers first brought the Maasai to the West’s attention as warlike cattle rustlers who nonetheless coexisted with wildlife in relative harmony they have remained in the public eye. There is also no doubting the critical role that Maasailand continues to play in Kenya’s wildlife conservation history. Yet it is also evident that from the 1940s the escalation of Maasai-wildlife contestations bellies the notion of Maasailand as an uncontested landscape as was first presented in the 1850s. I have also demonstrated how colonial officials and settlers alike reproduced the earlier impressionistic representations of the Maasai. Moreover, the colonial period and the ambivalent nature of

relationship involving the British and the Maasai is significant in ensuring the place of the Maasai in the country's wildlife conservation history. The creation of the expansive Masai Reserve was crucial to understanding the benefits and challenges that the Maasai have experienced in this history.

I revisited how the idea of wildlife reserves was first introduced in the late 1890s primarily as exclusive sport hunting blocks. Although a game department was constituted soon afterwards it was not until the late 1930s that ardent conservationists were able to secure the future of wildlife protected areas. Manifested in this delay were the competing interests among various European officials, several of them mandated with advancing Maasai interests as they (Europeans) deemed fit. In their original state as general game reserves the Maasai were first allowed to reside within the Northern and Southern Game Reserves because they provided no direct competition to European sport hunting. By 1910, however, it was apparent that although the Maasai rarely engaged in consumptive wildlife exploitation nor did they hunt for sustenance, their large cattle herds competed with wildlife for pasturage and water and the decision was made to relocate them outside the game reserves. The competition between livestock and wildlife over pasturage and water and how to strike a balance between the two economic modes of production were central to the 1930s deliberations that culminated with the creation of national parks and reserves that preceded Amboseli and the Mara.

Yet, in highlighting the absence of a conscious “conservation ethic”—when aligned with formal conservation ideologies—my purpose has not been to rule out that the Maasai unknowingly sought to co-exist with wildlife. Nor, given the history of wildlife conservation in Kenya where they were marginalized and lost expansive land to game conservation, do I subscribe to the idea that the state should take over exclusive management of MGRs as wildlife

sanctuaries. Rather, I point out the complex nature of Maasai-wildlife relationships and how this contrasts with formal conservation ideologies. As I have demonstrated in Chapter 2, Maasai moral proscriptions and prescriptions that guided their relationship with wildlife contributed to an unrivaled tolerance toward wildlife. Equally, by design, their itinerant ways of life in areas considered marginal by most agricultural communities and the European settlers promoted the proliferation of wildlife for much of the last century. Yet even as the creation of the Masai Reserve ensured that the Maasai were able to maintain their pastoral livelihood throughout much of the colonial period and in the process also allowed for proliferation of wildlife, it also set the stage for progressive ecological desiccation. The reserve's finite boundaries also contributed to the intensification of human-wildlife conflicts that became more apparent from the 1940s.

But as I have demonstrated in Chapters 5 and 6 the colonial contact profoundly impacted the Maasai transhumant livelihood that had been key to promoting ecological rejuvenation and wildlife proliferation. In the absence of human and livestock presence when the Maasai moved in search of pasture and water, previously grazed areas had the potential to regenerate and human-wildlife conflicts would obviously have been absent or significantly reduced. Indeed as Singida succinctly states, “extensive alteration of traditional Maasai animal husbandry and cultural ecology led to severe land degradation” during and after the colonial period.¹⁶⁶ Following the creation of the Masai Reserve the failed attempts to improve the Maasai traditional animal husbandry after the First World War were first complicated by the prevalence of devastating stock diseases. When the colonial administration resorted to quarantine conditions and could not carry forth their planned destocking campaigns targeting the large Maasai herds, the resultant overstocking exacerbated overgrazing and rates of soil erosion. Nor did the introduction of

¹⁶⁶ Isaac Singida, “Land Population Problems in Kenya,” p. 31.

controlled grazing schemes from the mid-1940s through the late 1950s alleviate the problem. If anything, these controlled grazing schemes that favored certain Maasai families and clans contributed to sectional rivalries that were later also manifested in political, social, and economic differentiation. Current merges and purges within MGRs that challenge their viability as wildlife sanctuaries reflect these and other sectional differences.

It is also important to reiterate that these grazing schemes and the subsequent group ranch concept in the 1960s were set in opposition to wildlife conservation efforts. Moreover, these radical land development initiatives were not founded on the same Maasai customary land ownership principles that generally embodied reciprocity, communality and the true meaning of “group.” Rather, group ranches in Maasailand were founded on market-based principles that promote individualism and opportunism that have eroded the notions of collective responsibility that has traditionally been a significant aspect of Maasai pastoralism. And while the ranches are overwhelmingly predicated on economic and social benefits it is clearly evident that aligning traditional Maasai environmental ideologies with formal conservation ethos might be equally imperative if MGRs are to succeed in their current capacities. An aesthetic appeal, for example, besides being a cornerstone of the roots of nature conservation in the West and also a part of Kenya’s wildlife conservation history, continues to be a significant aspect of its invaluable wildlife-based tourism.

The study has also discussed how cross-cultural influences, including those of formal education, religion, and politics over much of the last century have all had profound impacts on Maasai culture and their traditional relations with nature to be anything but timeless. Although briefly alluded to in this study, there is no doubt that these cultural influences, wildlife conservation measures, and land tenure laws have all impacted Maasai traditional values that

guided coexistence with wildlife. Nonetheless, Lindsay's 1960s research among the group ranches around Amboseli attests to the force of culture change in the decline of wildlife-based group ranches. Evidently too, one cannot dispute the fact that Maasai tolerance of wildlife is even much lower than when Noel Simon highlighted their growing antipathy towards wildlife conservation in 1958.

Certainly too, now more than ever do the 1965 words of P. E. Glover encapsulate the challenge and potential of MGRs as wildlife sanctuaries. Glover's claim that the Maasai were a very lucky community whom fate had gifted "two important trump cards which nobody else in the world can match; an abundant wild fauna and more land per capita than almost any other people"¹⁶⁷ certainly rings true when we consider that they remain the only community in Kenya who were able to secure the future of parts of their former land under treaty with the British. Glover's words may still ring true amidst the alarming decreases in wildlife numbers although this may not be for long. Moreover, unlike during the colonial period when Maasailand was indiscriminately appropriated for wildlife conservation without due compensation or their traditional environmental ideologies being sought, the same cannot be said of the current arrangements that have been in place since the early 1980s.

There is no doubt, however, that persistent ideological notions of a timeless Maasai living in harmony with wildlife in the contemporary, despite evidence to the contrary, clouds our understanding of the historical nature of human-wildlife contestations in Maasailand. Current conflicts not only threaten the invaluable potential of community-conservation in Maasailand

¹⁶⁷ Phillip Earle Glover and E. C. Trump, *An Ecological Survey of the Narok District, Part II: Vegetation* (Nairobi: Kenya National Parks, 1970), p.138.

Cf. Noel Simon, "How Should the Unused Dry Lands be Developed?" *Wild Life: Kenya Wild Life Society Journal*, 2, 1 (1960), p. 40.

and directly impact on wildlife populations and diversity in Amboseli and the Mara, the threats to these two world-renowned wildlife sanctuaries also affect Kenya's wildlife-based tourism, which in recent years has significantly contributed to its national economy.

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VII. PERIODICALS (Miscellaneous Issues)

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