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# Money, Power and Landscapes of Consumption

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*Money, Power and Landscapes of Consumption:  
The Political Ecology of Conservation in Tanzania*

Most of Tanzania's landscape is considered an aesthetically pleasing natural beauty by much of the western world. With enormous mountains and craters and endless forests and savanna inhabited by large, majestic mammals, Tanzania, much like the rest of Africa, is revered as a place to be preserved in the midst of global industrialization and the spoiling of nature in the First World. Such beliefs regarding the keeping of 'nature' in Tanzania have existed since the colonial era and subsequent conservation policies implemented first by colonial regimes and then by the independent Tanzanian government have alienated locals from their land and livelihoods, primarily through the creation of national parks and reserves. Protected areas are either designated human-free zones or prohibit certain activities within them which are often essential to local subsistence. Regardless of the fact that the formal definition of conservation allows for the use of land within its biological limits, conservation in the Tanzanian context has often been de facto preservation, thereby stripping locals of their use and settlement rights to hereditary lands. At present, it is estimated that 25 percent of land in Tanzania is under some form of protection which often prohibits cultivation and settlement despite the fact that 80 percent of Tanzanians lead rural, land-based livelihoods (Neumann, 1998).

This paper aims to explain why the creation of national parks in Tanzania has inhibited the capacities of the peoples within them to maintain their livelihoods using a political ecology method. I will attempt to illustrate not only how conservation impacts local people and the environment, but what multi-scale factors contribute to the creation and perpetuation of conservation policies. Furthermore, I attempt to highlight the micro-level politics of indigenous

resistance at the local scale and how these acts of defiance have attempted to delegitimize top-down conservation.

### **Context in the Literature**

It has been well established within mainstream literature that conservation in Tanzania (and in most other third world contexts) has had adverse effects on land-based livelihoods. Neumann (1998) has written extensively on colonial underdevelopment and displacement of local people in Tanganyika with a particular focus on the Wameru struggle for their customary land rights in what is now Arusha National Park. Dowie (2009) highlights the pattern of evictions in Serengeti National Park, Ngorongoro Conservation Area and Mkomazi Game Reserve in his book *Conservation Refugees*. Guha (1997), through a series of examples on the global scale, asserts that western conservation is ‘authoritarian’ and ‘inhumane,’ disregarding the welfare of local people in the name of preserving mega-fauna. Other authors who have contributed to the discussion on the adverse implications of conservation in Tanzania include Goldman (2003), Mkumbukwa (2008), Goldstein (2005) and Brockington (2002), among others.

I aim to examine the reasons behind this adverse people-parks relationship through a political ecology lens, using a temporally and structurally-sensitive analysis that also takes into account the crucial role of discourse on its various scales in the conservation debate.

### **Methodology**

To address my question I rely on the various literatures regarding conservation in Tanzania. Much of this literature is based on case studies of specific national parks or game reserves, and based on these I attempt to draw out the general patterns that have characterized the relationship between local people and big conservation in Tanzania. Additionally, I utilize

literature concerning conservation, politics and economics at the global scale in order to contextualize the situation at the smaller ones. I also draw upon my personal experiences in Arusha, Tanzania where I encountered a micro-culture based on ecotourism and the intense marketing of safaris to national parks.

### **Historical Roots of Conservation in Africa**

Conservation in the sense of sustainable use of land is not a new concept; it encompasses living within an environment's biological limits, which many pre-colonial African societies no doubt did. Livelihoods depended on sustaining environmental resources for the long term. Regarding the preservation of flora and fauna, there is evidence that there were taboos against the killing or consumption of certain species, as well as reverence of certain elements of the landscape that called for its maintenance (Mkumbukwa, 2008, Goldstein, 2005). European-style conservation as applied to Tanzania and much of East and Southern Africa was a rather different concept that involved bounding up large tracts of land for exclusively European use. According to Kjekshus (1977), the origins of the national park can partially be traced to the feudal era in Europe when areas of land with high concentrations of wildlife were reserved for nobles to hunt. However, much of the logic behind "fortress" conservation in Tanzania had to do with European perceptions of wilderness and certain aesthetic tastes. Crandell (1992) posits that western conceptions of nature are informed by the way landscapes are portrayed in pictures. In other words, a landscape can only be considered 'natural' if it resembles that pristine landscape depicted in popular landscape paintings, or, in a more contemporary context, those landscapes printed on postcards and in travel magazines. Thus in the colonial African context, European colonists were able to familiarize themselves within a foreign terrain by identifying the African landscape with the images of nature projected through European art. Neumann (1998) writes that

“...landscape painting was capable of producing enduring mythologies of place and nature, rich in imagery and symbolism, yet convincingly realistic. (19)” At the same time, this landscape served as an Eden of sorts that had been lost to a rapidly industrializing Europe. Cronon (1996) argues that urbanized, industrialized societies often have nostalgia for the undeveloped, ‘wildernesses’ that once characterized their own homelands. Being in such a ‘wilderness’ marks a return to beginnings and an encounter with the sublime. This myth of wild Africa continues to dominate the western mind today, perpetuated particularly through the tourism industry. One travel guide for Serengeti National Park reads, “Tanzania provides travelers with a profoundly rewarding glimpse of a land unspoiled by the ravages of modern civilization...” Another reads, “... see the wilds of Africa – lions, zebras, antelope, elephants – roaming freely. Or experience the sublime beauty of the Serengeti plain with its violent sunsets and golden dawns...” (Honey, 1999).

Given these sentiments regarding ‘nature’, colonial Europeans had a strong desire to preserve Africa as the last piece of ‘nature’ under their control (as do contemporary westerners). The European romanticism with ‘natural’ landscapes was, of course, not the only motive driving the colonial creation of national parks in Africa. As in the European feudal era, parks were a means for exclusive resource control, particularly over game but also over timber. Besides allowing for the colonial exploitation of resources, national parks were a means of asserting power and control over local populations (Neumann, 1998; Neumann, 2001; Peluso, 1993). National parks, then, were an essential tool in solidifying the authority of the colonial state.

### **Conservation in Colonial Tanganyika**

In order to understand the current struggle over parks in Tanzania, it is crucial to understand the country’s colonial history with conservation. That the post-colonial state

maintained and even intensified the colonial conservation system speaks volumes about the relationship between conservation and state power, revealing parallels between the independent government and its imperial predecessors. The following section documents the progression of colonial conservation in Tanganyika, emphasizing the ways in which the German and British regimes reordered claims to space so to better facilitate their own interests of wealth and power while simultaneously diminishing local accesses to resources.

After solidifying its claims to Tanganyika with the signing of the Berlin Conference in 1884, the German colonial government established the first state forestry in 1892 and in 1904 a system of forest reserves was created under the Forest Conservation Ordinance. Within these reserves, which numbered 231 by 1906, all settlement, cultivation, burning and grazing was strictly prohibited (Neumann, 1998). Hunting was also strictly regulated, with 18 reserves in which no one, including Europeans, could hunt (Neumann, 1998, Baldus, 2001). In order to hunt anywhere else in the colony it was necessary to obtain a license from the colonial government. Officially, these licenses could be obtained by Africans, but due to the high prices of these licenses it is unlikely that locals had the ability to hunt 'legally' (Honey, 1999). During the German period a hunting license cost an African 10 rupees, over three times the local head tax (Kjekshus, 1977). All violators of these prohibitions, whether European or African, were fined or imprisoned. Africans, however, were subject to much harsher penalties, often in the form of corporal punishment or chain confinement (Neumann, 1998).

It has been argued that under German colonial control, conservation was more about environmentalism than resource extraction (Baldus, 2001). However, it remains that European trophy hunters were actively and enthusiastically diminishing game resources despite the typical

colonial claim that Africans were responsible for the mass ‘extinction’ of local wildlife (Honey, 1999).

By 1911 the colonial government had officially demarcated some 30,000 square kilometers of protected area, most of which was already inhabited by Africans (Honey, 1999). Locals, however, were in no way passive in the colonial alienations of their land. The Wameru, for instance, engaged in battle with German soldiers over the sale of their land to German missionaries, though they were eventually defeated (Neumann, 1998).

Following Germany’s defeat in World War I, Britain was awarded Tanganyika by the League of Nations. Though the British maintained much of the German system of protected areas and similar prohibitions, its policy toward indigenous resource-use was much more “liberal” (Neumann, 1998). The British colonial government’s 1921 Forest Ordinance prohibited most resource-use within protected forest areas; however, licenses for prohibited acts within these areas were theoretically available to locals. The Game Preservation Ordinance was similarly prohibitive against the hunting of protected species and required a license and consent of the governor in the case of locals, but also provisioned laxer regulations in times of famine or for locals who consistently depended on hunting for survival (Neumann, 1998).

Regardless, it remained that Africans had significantly altered resource access under colonial policies to the extent that livelihoods were diminished. Land loss was exacerbated with the influx of European settlers in the early twentieth century and Africans were not only robbed of the best agricultural land (confined to land known as ‘agricultural slums’), but also access to important water and grazing resources. In some cases this meant submitting oneself to labor on European farms in exchange for access to pasture (Neumann, 1998).

Resistance to such an oppressive system was evident within local societies. The Ikoma of the north, for example, regularly threatened any ranger who tried to prevent them from hunting. Resistance was not always confrontational; a substantial amount of defiant acts were carried out covertly. Scott (1985), who has written extensively on how subordinate groups resist oppressive authorities emphasizes “everyday forms of peasant resistance – the prosaic but constant struggle between the peasantry and those who seek to extract labor, food, taxes, rents and interest from them. Most of the forms this struggle takes top well short of outright collective defiance. Here I have in mind the ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups: foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth.”

According to Neumann (1998) the Wameru of the Meru Forest Reserve (now Arusha National Park) frequently used a strategy of everyday resistance against the colonial regimes. They only regularly grazed their cattle on reserve territory but repeatedly moved the markers of protected forest boundaries in a careful manner so as to clandestinely reclaim land. Violators of colonial policy were repeatedly acquitted in local courts while Wameru forest guards turned a blind eye to herding within forest reserves.

That locals were resisting British policy in the first place suggests that it was not so “liberal” if there ever was a liberal colonial policy. It was nonetheless perceived this way and vehemently denounced by the influential London conservationist organization, the Society for Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire (SPFE), which lobbied for a completely human-free set of wildlife reserves. The SPFE, discussed later, would eventually play a crucial role in the shaping of conservation in Tanganyika and independent Tanzania.

Despite the SPFE’s constant lobbying efforts, the colonial government continued to allow local resource use within protected areas, though with high regulation. Reasons for this are seen

to be primarily political and economic, but in some cases moral. Foremost, it is necessary to note that Kenya, not Tanganyika, was Britain's major colony. Fewer resources were thus poured into the latter and colonial administrators expected to profit little off of its territory, hence the more "liberal" native resource-use policies (Goldstein, 2005). Furthermore, with limited civil servants and infrastructure, the colonial regime in reality had little control over rural populations and feared that too oppressive policies would lead to local uprising. Finally, allowing for subsistence-level resource-use allowed the British to pay local laborers smaller wages, and as long as locals were prevented from utilizing resources at a market level, their labor would be ensured to the colonial regime (Neumann, 1998). To some extent, "liberal" policies can be explained by more sympathetic colonial attitudes. Contrary to the typical colonist prototype, there were advocates for a system more favorable to indigenous rights. These individuals argued that "natives" should have the moral right to obtain food for subsistence, protected area or not. Others disagreed that the colonial government have a right to royalties on timber within the territory (Neumann, 1998). These voices, however, were not substantially influential, and it was primarily the aforementioned factors that led to the formation of British policy.

### **The Creation of the National Park**

Though the SPFE failed to achieve its entire environmental agenda in Tanganyika, it was central to the creation of the national park in the colony, a category of protected land that would ultimately be the most restrictive to local access. Inspired by Yellowstone National Park in the United States and Kruger National Park in South Africa, the SPFE aspired to create a multitude of similar parks in Tanganyika and other British colonies. Its lobbying efforts led to England's signing of the Convention for the Protection of the Flora and Fauna of Africa at an international convention in London in 1933. This convention, ratified from nearly 5000 miles away, set the

stage for a new era of conservation in Tanganyika by explicitly encouraging the creation of national parks in colonial territories on the African continent. The SPFE's rationale behind the national park was threefold; it would provide fauna 'protection' from the African, it would reduce crop predation and human-wildlife conflict, and it would provide for a potential tourism industry (Neumann, 1998). With England's signing of the convention the SPFE gained new leverage for their agenda as they could now pressure the colonial Tanganyikan government to fulfill its obligations to an international conservation treaty.

In 1940, as a direct result of the London convention and the SPFE's efforts, the Serengeti National Park, composed of the Serengeti and Ngorongoro game reserves, was born though its boundaries were not solidified until 1951. Initially, all persons "whose place of birth or ordinary residence [was] within," or who owned 'immovable' resources within the park, such as grazing pasture, could enter or reside within park boundaries (a provision the SPFE strongly opposed) (Neumann, 1998). This, however, brought up the question of who had customary rights over the land within the national park to live on and utilize its resources – who was a *native*, according to the British.

Though the National Park Ordinance explicitly protected customary rights to land, it also granted park authorities the power to create their own regulations regarding hunting and land and resource use. Thus, park authorities again turned to their own 'pictorialized' illusion of what a natural landscape should look like. In practice, there was a large disconnect between the rights outlined in the National Park Ordinance and those enjoyed on the ground. On top of a prohibition of hunting, park authorities banned all cultivation as agriculture represented civilization, a stretch beyond the primitive society that could be negotiated into a 'natural' landscape. There were widespread evictions of communities found to be cultivating within park boundaries (Neumann,

1998). Maasai, who were regarded by Europeans as the ultimate representation of the “*native noble savage*” were permitted to stay (albeit for a short while) under the false impression that they were exclusively pastoralists, though their movement was strictly regulated (Honey, 1999).

The onset of these restrictive park policies was met with a decade of civil unrest within the Serengeti. Inhabitants of the park simply refused to abide by the sudden regulations arbitrarily set forth by park authorities. Customary hunting rights continued to be exercised, as did regular migratory patterns and resource use (Honey, 1999). It was reported that Maasai purposefully set fires as acts of resistance against the European-seized landscape (Neumann, 1998). When rangers challenged prohibited activities they were met with threats of violence. The native courts in which violators were meant to be tried were advocates of customary land rights and were thus false instruments of the British, repeatedly letting offenders go unpunished. On the contrary, violators of British policy were regarded warmly as much of the material benefit acquired from the natural environment was shared communally. Park authorities on the other hand, were viewed as the true criminals, exemplified by one incident in which a mob attacked a group of scouts in pursuit of a “poacher” (Neumann, 1998).

From the British perspective, parks and people were simply not working. In the words of one park authority, “The interests of flora and fauna must come first...those of man and belongings being of secondary importance. Humans and a National Park cannot exist together.” In 1959, amendments to the National Park Ordinance made parks a completely human-free zone. 50,000 pastoralists living and grazing in the Serengeti were displaced (Dowie, 2009).

### **European Conservation Discourse in Tanganyika**

An important theme within the realm of political ecology is that of discourse, an invisible structure of knowledge and ideology that heavily influences public opinion and the actions and policies taken as a result of such opinions. According to Peet and Watts (1996), a discourse is dispelled by a particular set of institutions, usually at the center of power within a society. As a means for maintaining a certain ideology, some ideas or realities are obscured while others are highlighted. An examination of discourse provides a better understanding of the course conservation took in colonial Tanganyika, and will thus be the subject of this section. Drawing again upon Crandell (1992) and Neumann (1998), Europeans, heavily influenced by art depicting ‘nature,’ arrived in Africa with a ‘pictorialized’ view of what the landscape should look like. Africa was to remain an untouched, pristine wilderness that evoked nostalgia for the beginnings, a last Eden to be saved from man’s industrial contamination. As Neumann (1998) contends, the African, at least initially, could be accommodated into this European vision of wilderness for they too, as ‘primitive’ humans, represented a return to beginnings. The African was in this way conceptualized as another element of the landscape to be preserved and protected, so long as the particular African group conformed to European mental portraits of ‘primitivity.’ Paradoxically, however, Africans were later expected to have limited interaction with the landscape they inhabited as the restrictive conservation policies described above reveal. Colonial administrators, for example, perpetuated the idea that, as opposed to the noble, European *sport* of hunt, local (subsistence) hunting was not only cruel and brutal, but of a magnitude that threatened game with extinction despite the fact that European “sport” hunters were the culprits in any sizeable decline in animal populations during this period (Honey, 1999). Within discourse regarding local hunting practices, terms such as “slaughter,” “victim,” “inhumane,” “mass killings” and “extermination” were employed, all in contrast to European hunting, which was considered a

gentleman's sport. Words play a powerful role in discourse because they are endowed with cultural and social meaning. By labeling African livelihood strategies in a particular way, new meanings manifest in relation to such activities. As Neumann (1998) writes, "Under colonial conservation laws, the collection of fuelwood became wood theft, the hunting of animals became poaching, and pasturing of cattle became grazing trespass, with all the ramifications of violence that these meanings imply."

Perhaps it was conceptualized that as part of the landscape Africans should be passive beings, unobtrusive to colonial interests and noncompetition for desired resources. Yet one could also theorize that European discourse transformed as interests changed or intensified; as the desire to capitalize on timber or exercise the sport of game hunting grew, so did ideas regarding the African and the landscape. Where once the African was part of nature he became its enemy, someone Europeans needed to 'protect' nature from (in order to better capitalize on it themselves). Africans no doubt challenged such discourse through acts of resistance, fully aware that their loss in land rights was inversely related to European gain. From noncompliance with policy to armed confrontation with park rangers to explicit acts of sabotage, it is clear that Africans themselves did not internalize the narratives used to justify conservation and colonialism.

Discursive control implies an ability to dispel myths as truth which no doubt wields incredible power. For Europeans in colonial Africa, discursive control became a means for resource control and people control. Neumann's (2001) account of the expansion of the Selous Game Reserve in southeastern Tanzania provides an illustration of how the colonial British government used environmental discourse as a tool for control of the population residing in the neighboring Liwale district. In 1944 the British annexed 15,000 square miles of Liwale into the

Selous Game Reserve with the aim of relocating the approximately 30,000 residents into neighboring districts. This was the third major expansion of the Selous in twenty years. In the 1920s the game reserve had been expanded first south and then east in order to accommodate the government's plan for concentrating elephants in the park while exterminating them in human 'zone' of Liwale. Those living within the new reserve boundaries were forced to evacuate their highly fertile land as the rising population of elephants heightened the frequency of crop predation to the extent that communities could no longer reside there. Thus, government policy (concentrating elephants in one region) created a new 'wilderness' in which people had no place. The creation of high-density elephant populations paired with the practical exodus of the local population reinforced the notion that the territory was a 'wilderness' and thus human-free, when in fact it had been a highly productive agricultural zone before British intervention.

The 1944 relocation scheme used the same technique of creating wilderness so as to displace the local populace. The official rationale behind the Liwale evacuation was that the district was plagued with disease and heavily populated with wildlife. As one colonial administrator put it, Liwale was "infested with tsetse from end to end and teem[ing] with game [and] largely affected by the presence of sleeping-sickness" (quoted in Neumann, 1998). Under these circumstances, the local population would be better off being relocated to another area and the territory annexed to the Selous. On the surface, then, British administrators were acting in the interests of Africans and granting official 'wilderness' status to the 'wilderness' Liwale already was. Behind this rhetoric, however, was the colonial desire to better control the Liwale populace who had for decades been a challenging district for the British to govern, particularly in the area of tax collection. By resettling this 'cumbersome' population in more governable areas, the Liwale 'problem' could easily be resolved. The Liwale case is unique in that the colonial

government utilized a discourse focused on the well-being of the people, rather than wildlife, to justify the expansion of the protected areas. The expansion of the Selous, however, was not necessarily a primary motive but instead an additional prize gained in addition to the main goal of greater control of the local population.

The Selous case provides just one way in which discourse was utilized to advance colonial interests. The Liwale 'wilderness' narrative as a justification for resettlement was developed by officials based in Dar es Salaam. In many cases, however, the discourse that directly influenced Tanganyikan conservation policy was dispelled from London, particularly through the voices of the SPFE and their supporters. Conservation and all that it implied for local people was designed from thousands of miles away by individuals who had never set foot on the African continent.

### **The Continuity of Conservation in Independent Tanzania**

The 1959 amendment to the National Park Ordinance which designated parks people-free was a last minute achievement for conservationist organizations, it being well known that Tanganyika was near independence. International conservation organizations, concerned that Prime Minister Julius Nyerere would not maintain the conservation structure his colonial predecessors had created when Tanganyika gained independence, pressured him to pledge commitment to the maintenance of existing conservation policies and the future expansion of protected areas (Goldstein, 2005). By this time, Lake Manyara National Park had been gazetted as the second park in Tanganyika and the Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA), formerly part of the Serengeti, had been carved out as a territory of park-level status with the exception that pastoralist Maasai were allowed to reside within its boundaries.

In 1961, Nyerere delivered the Arusha Manifesto, which was essentially an affirmation of his compliance with international conservationist organizations. As quoted in Tanzania's official Wildlife Policy (URA, 1998),

"The survival of our wildlife is a matter of grave concern to all of us in Africa. These wild creatures amid the wild places they inhabit are not only important as a source of wonder and inspiration but are an integral part of our natural resources and of our future livelihood and well being.

In accepting the trusteeship of our wildlife we solemnly declare that we will do everything in our power to make sure that our children's grand-children will be able to enjoy this rich and precious inheritance.

The conservation of wildlife and wild places calls for specialist knowledge, trained manpower, and money, and we look to other nations to co-operate with us in this important task the success or failure of which not only affects the continent of Africa but the rest of the world as well."

Conservationists were no doubt delighted by the language of this speech, most likely because it had been written by members of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) (Honey, 1999). The Arusha Manifesto essentially pledged a dedication on the part of all African people and especially Tanganyikans, to preserve and revere the "rich and precious inheritance" of African landscapes and wildlife that were bound up within areas they were prohibited from entering. Meanwhile, some of the creatures that evoked "wonder and inspiration" destroyed local crops or spread livestock disease. As one minister observed, "...the almost mystical and romantic regard for wild animals which some people have, has often puzzled the peoples of Africa..."(Tewa, 1963). In Nyerere's own words, "I personally am not very interested in animals. I do not want to spend my holidays watching crocodiles. Nevertheless, I am entirely in favor of their survival. I believe that after diamonds and sisal, wild animals will provide Tanganyika with its greatest source of income. Thousands of Americans and Europeans have the strange urge to see these animals (quoted in Neumann, 1998).

The Manifesto was in no way a representation of African perspectives to 'nature' and conservation; rather, it was purely a political strategy for the independent government to ensure

continued international funding for national parks in the hopes of developing a profitable tourism industry (Honey, 1999). International conservationist organizations played an enormous role in fulfilling the section in the Manifesto that calls for the technical training of conservation stewards, primarily through the foreign-funded establishment of the College of African Wildlife Management, an institution directly influenced by the ideologies of western conservationists that continue to finance it to some extent. Thus, in Neumann's (1998) words, "The continuity and connection between colonial natural resource professionals and those of the independent government are, in sum, quite direct. This colonial legacy of state-directed conservation continues to influence contemporary relations between park officials and local communities" (143).

Rather than address the grievances of those adversely affected by national parks under colonial rule the economically-motivated independent government in fact expanded the park system. While there were only two national parks and the NCA in 1962, there are a total of 15 in 2010 (TANAPA, 2010). What is significant about contemporary land policy in Tanzania is that it has maintained the colonial assertion that all land is government land, and therefore alienable at will. The 1967 Land Acquisition Policy provided the President with the power to alienate any land for whatever he arbitrarily considered the "public good" (URT, 1967). This power was further entrenched when it was incorporated into the constitution under the 1995 National Land Policy (Olenasha, 2005). Furthermore, under the 1974 Wildlife Conservation Act, it was declared that all wildlife resources, too, were the property of the government (Mkumbukwa, 2008). The extraordinary power of the state in Tanzania has been experienced by people living within or near protected areas in the form of continued resource-use restriction and mass eviction since independence. The following case studies serve to illustrate the continuity Neumann (1998)

described between colonial conservation and that of the independent government. Explicit motives for conservation between the colonial and independent governments are seen to diverge, the latter more focused on conservation for tourism. Both, however, share the theme of disregard for people.

### **Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA)**

“Within the crater rim, large herds of zebra and wildebeest graze nearby while sleeping lions laze in the sun. At dawn, the endangered black rhino returns to the thick cover of the crater forests after grazing on dew-laden grass in the morning mist. Just outside the crater’s ridge, tall Masaai herd their cattle and goats over green pastures through the highland slopes, living alongside the wildlife as they have for centuries” (Tanzania Tourist Board, 2010).

The NCA is one of the most popular ecotourism destinations in Tanzania, making the Ngorongoro district one of the highest grossing foreign-exchange districts in the country. Tourists flock to see the infamous Ngorongoro crater, which has been named the ‘eighth wonder of the world’ for its landscape aesthetic and archeological riches. As the above quote suggests, tourists also may come to see the mythical Maasai, insinuated to be living a peaceful pastoral lifestyle alongside the wildlife. What the tourist board doesn’t mention is that these Maasai are prohibited from grazing in many parts of the NCA and are living increasingly impoverished lifestyles due to a conservation system tourism is helping to reinforce.

The NCA was carved out of the western part of Serengeti National Park in 1959 as a consolation prize to Maasai pastoralists being evicted under the amended National Park Ordinance that forbade human settlement within national parks (Johnsen, 2000). The NCA was to be a special category of protected land in which Maasai and other smaller hunter-gatherer groups were permitted to live, as peoples perceived by British colonial authorities as ‘primitively’ in harmony with the environment. It was designed to function as a territory that accounts for the needs of both wildlife and people. As compensation for moving out of the Serengeti, which provided an essential water source during the rainy season, the Maasai were promised improved

water supplies as well as improved social services in the NCA (Olendorosa, nd). It was later revealed, however, that Maasai elders who agreed to the arrangement did not fully understand its stipulations (Olenasha, 2005).

Typical of park conservation, the British had separated and bounded up two territories that belonged to the same ecosystem – the Serengeti National Park and the NCA are part of a wider Serengeti ecosystem. The Maasai recognize this ecological unity; they regard the entire region as Maasailand – not as distinct conservation entities. As pastoralists, they depend upon traversing colonial demarcated borders to sustain their herds depending on the season (Goldman, 2003). Before 1959, the Maasai migrated to the short grasses of the Serengeti plains in the rainy season and retreated to the taller grasses of the Ngorongoro highlands in the dry season. With their eviction from Serengeti National Park, this vital migration was no longer possible. The British began a small water supply system in the NCA as promised, but only three years later the independent government abandoned the scheme (Olendorosa, nd).

Confined to the highlands of the NCA year-round, Maasai cattle became exposed to several diseases including rinderpest, east coast fever, bovine cerebral theileriosis and tick-borne diseases (Olendorosa, nd). Cattle populations suffered in following years; in 1987 the population had dropped to 113,000 from 200,000 in 1959 despite the fact that the human population in NCA had been rising at a rate of 3.5 percent a year (Boone et al., 2006). In effect, this means less cattle, and thus less available food and capital, per capita. It is estimated that for pastoralist groups, five cattle per capita is the minimum subsistence level. While cattle per capita averaged twelve in the NCA in 1960, it had dropped to five in 1979, and dropped again to three in 1994 following an outbreak of cerebral theileriosis (Johnsen, 2000). Faced with rising levels of poverty as cattle

stock declined, the Maasai increasingly turned to small-scale cultivation, which would later be banned completely.

As was the case in Serengeti National Park, there was a large disconnect between the rights park inhabitants had been promised and those they actually enjoyed. The Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority (NCAA), in a series of policies throughout the 1970s, effectively stripped many Maasai communities of their livelihoods. At play now was a discourse revolving around the environment-degrading pastoralist; a shift from the colonial-era myth of the pastoralist living in complete harmony with nature (Johnsen, 2000). Despite that the NCA had been created for wildlife *and* people the NCAA clearly favored wildlife and by extension, tourism income (Bellini, 2008).

As former conservator of NCA Henry Fosbrooke recalls,

“Early one morning in March 1974 three Land Rovers entered the Crater, one going to each boma. They carried personnel of the paramilitary Field Force Unit, F.F.U., termed in Swahili *Fanya Fujo Utaona* (If you make trouble you will see!). Without explanation and without notice they ordered the immediate eviction of the inhabitants and their cattle. Their possessions were carried out by transport of the Conservation Authority and dumped on the roadside at Nairobi. No explanation was given and no arrangements made for the resettlement of the evacuees” (quoted in Neumann, 1998, 147).

In 1975, the NCA Ordinance was amended to prohibit all settlement within the Ngorongoro and Empakaai craters and around their rim (UNEP, 2008). Grazing and watering of livestock was also prohibited within the craters, which had been essential pasture for Maasai cattle during the dry season. Increased vulnerability of cattle stock through migratory restrictions made cultivation an even more significant means of sustenance, but just a year later this too was banned all throughout the NCA, one of the reasons being that cultivation was unsightly to tourists paying to see a pristine landscape (Bellisi, 2008). Many Maasai, however, continued to cultivate illegally (Boone et al., 2006). Though the cultivation ban was lifted temporarily in 1992

when the government acknowledged how extensive hunger was within the population of the NCA, poverty continues to affect its more than 40,000 residents (Johnsen, 2000).

There is a direct correlation between the progression of restrictive land-use policies implemented by the colonial and post-colonial states and the increasing poverty and undernourishment of the Maasai. According to Nestel (1989), with increased sedentarization of pastoral groups comes greater malnutrition. As evidenced by the high incidence of cattle disease experienced when the Maasai became confined to the NCA highlands, sedentarization lowers cattle stock, and thus the availability of the protein-rich milk core to a Maasai diet. A great number of Maasai communities within NCA now rely upon nutritionally-inferior maize flour to subsist (Johnsen, 2000).

Though the Maasai have sacrificed the most in ‘conserving’ the NCA and its wildlife for aesthetic consumption, they have profited the least from tourism (Johnsen, 2000). Their involvement in the tourism industry has largely been limited to selling crafts and putting on cultural shows for westerners. As Maasai activist Moringe ole Parkipuny remarked, “Cultural bomas are a sad life imposed on the people of Ngorongoro...They go there because of the denial of their share of the resources accruing from their land. Cultural bomas are negative but poverty is even worse. The only solution is to restore the rights of the people, to give them their rightful share of the resources” (Ndaskoi, 2009). The government has interpreted demands like Parkipuny’s to be monetary compensation or the building of schools and clinics for buffer zone communities (Neumann, 1998; Schroeder, 2008). These types of compensation have been the basis of community-based conservation (CBC) in the country since the Community Conservation Service (CCS) was established in 1988 (Goldstein, 2005). The pitfall of community conservation

in Tanzania, however, is that it does not address the underlying issue of land and resource loss at the root of community antagonism against conservation.

### **Mkomazi Game Reserve**

Mkomazi was gazetted as a game reserve by the British in 1951. Composed primarily of grassland, bush and woodland and rich in biodiversity, the territory has historically been used by a variety of livelihood groups including pastoralists, agropastoralists and hunters. Rangeland in the territory is reportedly high-quality pasture and relatively disease-free. When Mkomazi was designated a game park the residents there were guaranteed their customary rights to live within its boundaries. By the 1970s a large number of pastoralist groups ranged their herds in the Mkomazi whether officially resident or not (Brockington, 2002). Of particular concern to conservationists was the rising number of cattle within the reserve, which had grown by an estimated 40,000 in the late 1970s to a total of nearly 90,000 (Homewood & Brockington, 1999).

A common environmental narrative utilized by conservationists throughout the twentieth century has been that of the 'East African cattle complex,' a theory that posits pastoralists, such as the Maasai or Parakuyo, are so culturally attached to cattle that they lose all rationality in regards to carrying capacity (Johnsen, 2000). This was a myth that contributed to environmentalists' call for the eviction of humans in the Mkomazi; cattle were degrading the landscape and their herders too cattle fevered to notice or care. Later studies would prove both of these assertions incorrect. At the time, however, conservationist discourse prevailed and a campaign was started to 'rejuvenate' a 'degraded' ecosystem, which became a highly-publicized issue adopted by several celebrities in Hollywood (Brockington, 2002). In response to this discourse and its own perceptions of pastoralism, the Wildlife Division began a series of attempts throughout the 1970s and 1980s to cleanse the landscape of people and cattle,

culminating in an official and forceful eviction in 1988 in which 5000 Mkomazi inhabitants lost their homes and livelihoods (Neumann, 1998). The eviction was devastating to the pastoralist community who no longer had access to vital wet season rangeland for their herds.

Compounding rangeland deprivation was a high cattle disease incidence resulting from the crowding of herds into smaller areas outside the reserve. A year after the eviction Maasai and Parakuyo herders reported a loss of nearly 8000 cattle and 2,200 small-stock, though these numbers have been debated (Brockington, 2002). As Dowie (2009) questions, “Is it preferable to have people scattered about a protected area, foraging and cultivating under reasonable conservation restrictions, than to have them clustered and embittered in ramshackle makeshift camps and villages on the boundary of the reserve or park?”

As was the case of NCA, exclusion from crucial resources on which communities depend upon for subsistence has resulted in a lower quality livelihood. In addition to losing cattle stock, Mkomazi residents also lost an abundance of wild plant species on which they had previously relied upon for up to 20 percent of their diets (Brockington, 2002). The effects of the eviction were also felt by the surrounding region as the economy based on cattle sales collapsed. It was only a decade after the destruction of the pastoral economy in Mkomazi that social science inquiries into the pre-eviction ‘degradation’ theory revealed there had been no scientific basis for concluding cattle were destroying the ecosystem. Gillson et al. (2003) suggests that the vegetation in the Mkomazi ecosystem is extremely variable and cattle, given the size of its population in the reserve at the time of eviction, were unlikely to have caused any substantial change in vegetative cover. These findings have gone ignored by park officials and many evictees have had to face an unresponsive justice system as they demand their use rights back (Dowie, 2009). Consequently, many pastoralists have resorted to using the park illegally –

collecting fuelwood, hunting and grazing within the reserve to compensate for the rights they have lost. If caught, however, these ‘criminals’ face large fines, usually in the range of two cattle (Brockington, 2002). In sum, the disruption of the pastoral economy based in the Mkomazi has severely altered the lifestyles and economic well-being of the affected communities. Most have come to rely heavily on cultivation, unable to continue a pastoralist livelihood to the extent that it was practiced in the past. The eviction has implications not only for the local economy and diet, but for a culture that is based on pastoralism. Without invoking the idea of the ‘East African cattle-complex,’ cattle remain a central aspect of pastoralist culture; they are not only a living bank account, but retain profound symbolic importance. One can only speculate what a sudden, necessitated shift from pastoralism to a predominantly agricultural livelihood means for the cultural well-being of a pastoralist community.

Both the Ngorongoro and Mkomazi cases serve to illustrate the way in which post-colonial conservation in Tanzania has remained top-down, heavily influenced by western conservationist discourse and degradation hypotheses and has often disregarded human well-being, especially in regards to pastoralists who carry a stereotype of being either degrading to the environment or unproductive in mainstream society. As current President Jakaya Kikwete remarked in 2005, “We must abandon altogether nomadic pastoralism which makes the whole country pastureland. . . . The cattle are bony, and the pastoralists are sacks of skeletons. We cannot move forward with this type of pastoralism in the twenty-first century” (Hammer, 2010). This comment demonstrates the same environmental and anthropological ignorance exhibited by the colonial conservationists of the twentieth century who succumbed to myths that better suited their agendas. Again, it is evident that there is a pattern of policymaking based on ‘truths’ that

accommodate elite interests. In the post-colonial context, these interests are economic development through ecotourism.

### **Contemporary Landscape Consumption through Ecotourism**

The objective of ecotourism (and tourism in general) today is not unlike the objectives of Europeans in colonial Africa. Ecotourists are very much inclined to ‘experience Africa’ by the ‘pictorialized’ version of the continent portrayed by mass media. Where the twentieth century European myth of the African landscape was informed by high-culture art, contemporary western myths of the African landscape are informed by *The Lion King*, National Geographic and travel magazines. Protected areas systems, *constructed* to be pristine and void of humans, serve to reinforce such myths for tourists. According to Smith (1984), “[National parks] are produced environments in every conceivable sense...[they] are neatly packaged cultural experiences of environment on which substantial profits are recorded each year.” Neumann (1998) further contends that “A national park is the quintessential landscape of consumption for modern society.”

Tanzania’s protected areas remain government-constructed and controlled landscapes designed for the consumption of high-paying western tourists. Modern ecotourists spend billions of dollars each year in order to *consume* the mythical landscapes they have been sold through visual narratives of Africa. In the early 1990s tourism was Tanzania’s fastest growing industry, rising 600 percent in from 1985 to 1990 largely as a result of the International Monetary Fund’s (IMF) structural adjustment program which opened up the country to foreign investment (Goldstein, 2005). In 2008 alone Tanzania’s tourism industry earned US\$1.3 billion, over 17 percent of its GDP (ETN, 2010). Currently the country hosts over 600,000 tourist arrivals annually and hopes to raise this number to over one million in coming years (Tanzania Invest,

2007). As the second most profitable industry after agriculture, the Tanzanian government perceives tourism, and thus its national parks and reserves, as a crucial tool for development. This emphasis on tourism is highly discernible in urban areas in the northern part of the country where the tourist infrastructure is most developed. In Arusha, a hub for international tourists departing on safaris in the surrounding region, the city center is almost composed solely of hotels, safari operators, bureau de changes and curio shops. During my studies in Arusha I would be marketed safaris multiple times on my two-block walk to class each morning. Most remarkable to me was the extent to which the local urban population had seemingly internalized the western conservationist precedence of wildlife and landscapes. When I would politely decline a safari, I would be asked, “But don’t you want to see a lion? We in Tanzania have beautiful wilderness. Have you been to Ngorongoro?” Constant reference to mega-fauna, nature and the beauty of the landscape, I realized, was not indicative of African adoption of western conservationist ideology, but an adaption to an economy increasingly dependent on the marketing of this wilderness to foreigners. Each time I inquired into the future plans or aspirations of male Tanzanian friends or acquaintances I was met with the same response – “I want to become a tour guide” or “I want to start a safari business.” The implications of conservation are now manifesting in urban areas as well as those in which it has directly affected livelihoods. By commodifying nature, conservationists and governments have successfully transferred their agendas to many urbanites.

### **The Political Ecology of Conservation in Tanzania**

Over the past century the course of conservation in Tanzania has been dictated, or largely influenced by, international actors with agendas informed by particular environmental or socio-cultural narratives about Africa. Particularly influential to the preservation of ‘wilderness’ in the colonial periods was the European fetish with pristine ‘natural’ landscapes inspired by eighteenth

and nineteenth century art. For colonialist administrations, and especially for conservationist organizations such as the SPFE, Africa's landscapes and majestic fauna were a last Eden, not to be spoiled as had been done to Europe. This landscape was to be preserved at all costs and it was up to Europeans to ensure this as Africans, in their 'primitive' states, were not capable of doing so. Beyond European delusions of Africa's mythical 'nature,' such discourse also served colonial economic and political interests. The control of land translated into control of valuable resources and better control of the people in and around that land. Elevating their own economic base while simultaneously diminishing that of locals reinforced the uneven economic and power dynamics that perpetuated the colonial system. The political and economic benefits of conservation paired with the acute European nostalgia for the aesthetic landscape translated into the gradual intensification of land fortressing in Tanzania. From conference rooms in London and Dar es Salaam, decisions were made to restrict local use of resources or forbid use altogether with little attention paid to what implications this had for African livelihoods.

In independent Tanzania a similar pattern has emerged. Though interests are more focused on tourism than a fascination with the myth of wild Africa, conservation remains an economic and political tool that catering to the agendas of the elite. Decisions are still being made by distant bureaucrats or by park authorities who have shown little interest in human welfare, as evidenced by the cases of NCA and Mkomazi Game Reserve.

The policies set forth by the top have had tremendous implications for livelihoods on the ground. Restrictions to land and resource use not only reduce a community's ability to sustain its livelihood, but through the disruption of the local economy, some are required to submit themselves to wage labor in urban areas. In some contexts, this has distressed the social fabric of communities (May & McCabe, 2004).

The growth in Tanzania's tourism industry in recent decades suggests the government will continue to pursue a path of economic development based on its current system of national parks and reserves and most likely expand it. This has not gone without resistance. The top-down nature of conservation has been challenged in both the colonial and post-colonial periods. While colonial-era resistance was more covert in character ('everyday forms of resistance' such as illegal grazing and fuelwood collection), contemporary resistance has taken on a more visible, political form. With political liberalization following Nyerere's socialist regime in the early 1980s came opportunities for civic organization and collective action on the part of the many groups marginalized by protected areas. Before liberalization there were only 17 NGOs in Tanzania, by 1994 this number had risen to 813 (Goodman, 2002). At present, there are a substantial number of NGOs dedicated to land and resource rights, particularly of pastoralists who have been affected by conservation projects. These organizations have provided a forum and the resources for marginalized peoples to coordinate political activity and to challenge the ethos of fortress conservation in general.

Throughout Tanzania's conservation history, where there has been top-down policy there has always been a ground-level response. These responses have come in various forms, from everyday resistances to violent confrontation to collective political action. Local people have never been the passive subjects of western conservation ideology or discourse. While colonial policies and ideas have been imposed upon local communities, they have never been absorbed. Conservation in Tanzania, though well-established and seemingly undying, is still being challenged by the people it has adversely affected.

This paper has aimed to inform political ecology literature on conservation in the Tanzanian context by providing a more holistic perspective on the topic. Whereas much of the

literature has focused on particular parks, reserves and ethnic groups in analyzing conservation in Tanzania, this paper has attempted to sum up these various studies and illustrate the larger picture in hopes of further confirming the patterns documented in isolated studies.

### **Policy Recommendations**

Community-based conservation in Africa has been praised for involving local people into a system that has traditionally been run by top-level policymakers. Its major failure is that its involvement of local communities in no way addresses the losses they have experienced from conservation. Monetary compensation and even schools and clinics are not substitutes for land on which to grow food or herd one's cattle; this type of compensation does not support livelihoods.

I propose a policy that first requires a reevaluation of the meaning of conservation. That is the reincorporation of people into the 'natural' landscape. It is impossible to involve local communities in conservation when the communities no longer have a meaningful connection the landscape and its animals. The park and its animals now 'belong' to the government and locals are denied access to both. It is difficult to cultivate an interest in conserving resources one has been dispossessed of. Policies restricting local access to resources must be relaxed to some extent so that communities can reclaim their relationships to the environment. This would encompass recognizing local rights to various subsistence land uses in protected areas such as wood harvesting, hunting, grazing and cultivation. Currently this would be a very unlikely policy action the government would take given the conventional perception that humans, especially the poor, will degrade the environment when given 'free' use rights to it, as well as the desire on part of western tourists to see a human-less wilderness. These realities call attention to the need to address misconceptions about the relationship between humans and the environment, its myths

and its realities by listening to those who are not often accounted for in the debate on what is best for the environment – the people who live within or adjacent to protected areas and are most affected by conservation. Their stories can provide valuable insight not only into the pitfalls of conservation but also into the complexities of the human-environment relationship, perhaps legitimizing the human's place in 'nature.'

National Parks will most likely be a part of the Tanzanian landscape for the long term, but their meanings do not necessarily have to remain stagnant. Western conservationists and ecotourists must abandon their ideas of 'Africa' and 'nature' and embrace a more realistic nature-society relationship that does not always conform to human-free landscapes. This is no doubt a difficult feat but until the government sees that it can still profit despite a human presence in the landscape its policy of human absence will remain.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper I have attempted to highlight the multi-scale historical and contemporary factors that have contributed to a conservation system highly-detrimental to land-based livelihoods in Tanzania. Furthermore, I have illustrated the ways in which Africans resist colonization of their land in both colonial and post-colonial contexts.

The themes, patterns and processes of conservation in Tanzania are echoed throughout most conservation histories on the African continent. Throughout Eastern and Southern Africa parks and reserves have similarly displaced and diminished the livelihoods of local people. A common theme throughout western conservationist discourse, as Guha (1997) would assert, is 'anti-humanism' and 'authoritarian' biology. Though his use of words may seem exaggerated and sensationalist, they have proven to sometimes be true when scrutinizing conservation conflicts throughout history. To travel to the "wilds of Africa," "the Serengeti plains with its

violent sunsets and golden dawns,” is to deceive one’s self into believing it’s possible to live in a myth. What a tourist is really traveling to is a constructed wonderland of ‘nature’ created for western pleasure at the expense of local people.

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