



Environment & Society Portal



The White Horse Press

Full citation:

Matheka, Reuben. "Antecedents to the Community Wildlife Conservation Programme in Kenya, 1946–1964." *Environment and History* 11, no. 3 (August 2005): 239–67.

<http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/3237>.

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Antecedents to the Community Wildlife Conservation Programme in Kenya, 1946–1964

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ABSTRACT

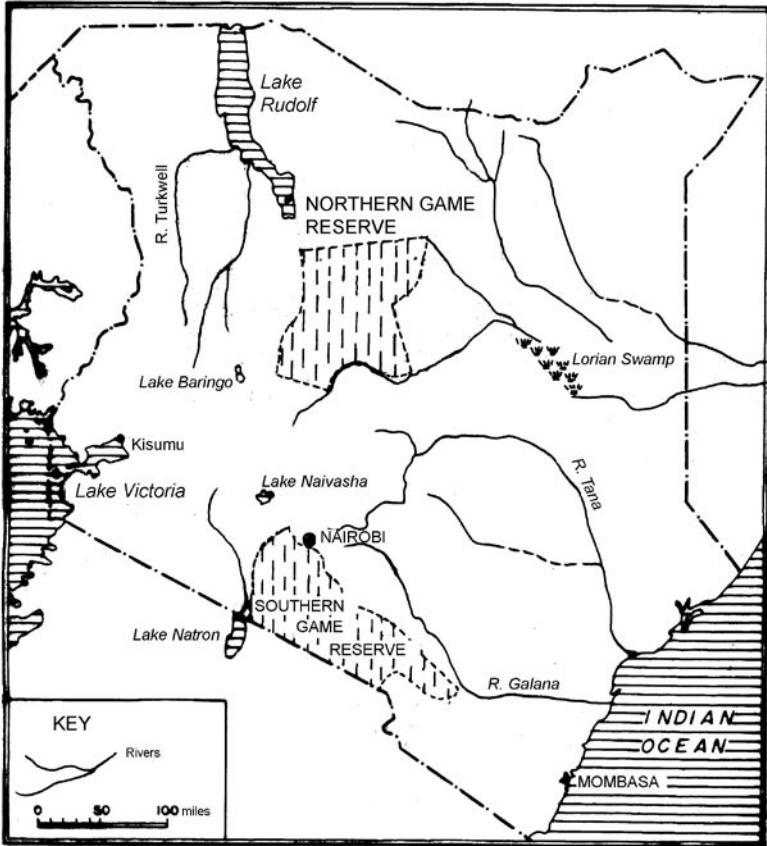
Studies on wildlife conservation in Kenya have tended to overlook the efforts made by the colonial administration to involve African communities in wildlife conservation. In most of the existing studies, wildlife conservation in colonial and early independent Kenya is viewed as the perpetuation of a 'Western' or conventional conservation ethos emphasising separation of wildlife conservation from other socio-economic activities. Consequently, the evolution of community wildlife conservation in the country from the late 1970s is portrayed as a programme without antecedents. But as this paper demonstrates, attempts to involve Africans in wildlife conservation in Kenya have a long history.

KEYWORDS

Kenya, park adjuncts, national reserves, game reserves, controlled areas

INTRODUCTION

Shortly after the first international conference on the preservation of African wildlife held in London in 1900, two game reserves were formally established in Kenya, which were aptly named Southern Game Reserve and Northern Game Reserve. Both reserves initially covered large game areas brought under protection during the late 1890s. But by 1910 the southern reserve had been reduced to about 10,000 square miles while the northern one was now 14,000 square miles (See Map 1). These reserves were considered adequate for the protection of the unique fauna of the two main regions of the country. The Northern Game



MAP 1. Early game sanctuaries in Kenya, c. 1910

Reserve in particular would provide sanctuary to sub-species not found in the southern half of the country such as Grevy's zebra and reticulated giraffe.

Interestingly, the game reserves were set up in areas already under human occupation. This was not an oversight as Kenya was at that time regarded as 'a country in which native and game alike [had] wandered happily and freely since the Flood'.¹ Consequently, areas set aside for use by African communities (native reserves) were also regarded as areas of wildlife conservation by the colonial administration. The communities in the areas covered by the game reserves were therefore expected to co-exist harmoniously with wild animals, a situation in line with the colonial government's policy of preserving game to the greatest extent possible while insisting that agriculture and pastoralism were paramount. Such an ambivalent policy, however, adversely affected African communities as their methods of dealing with marauding animals had

been proscribed and the Game Department was too weak to accord adequate protection of life and property.

The Southern Game Reserve was coterminous with the eastern part of the Masai Native Reserve (Kajiado District), while the Northern Game Reserve covered a large portion of the land inhabited by the Samburu.² Being pastoralists with no tradition of hunting, neither the Maasai nor the Samburu were perceived as a threat to the wildlife in their areas.³ The colonial state therefore expected little human–animal conflict in the areas inhabited by the two communities. But by 1920 formal wildlife conservation, along with other colonial policies (like land alienation and disarmament), had begun to cause tension between pastoralism and conservation. Competition for pasture, water and saltlicks between livestock and wild herbivores, as well as increased destruction of livestock by carnivores, had become manifest in the areas occupied by the two communities. In 1920, for example, H. E. F. Frost, the game ranger for the Southern Game Reserve, reported increased competition for water and pasture between Maasai livestock and game in the reserve. This paper examines the evolution of these problems and the measures taken to ameliorate them.

EARLY MANIFESTATIONS OF HUMAN–ANIMAL CONFLICT

Reports of wildlife–livestock competition for resources in the Southern Game Reserve led to a debate on the issue in the early 1920s. The debate, which involved the Society for the Preservation of the Fauna of the Empire (SPFE), the British government, and the colonial state, centred on the rationale for maintaining the eastern portion of the Masai Native Reserve as a game reserve. The district administration and the Chief Native Commissioner (CNC) were of the view that wildlife conservation in the area was detrimental to Maasai pastoralism and therefore the game reserve needed to be abolished. But the governor, R. T. Coryndon, informed his superiors in London that the situation was not serious enough to warrant such an action. The different opinions surrounding wildlife–livestock competition in Maasailand at the time was summarised by the head of the Game Department (game warden) in the following words:

The game and the Masai cattle get on pretty well together as of old but from our point of view the cattle rather crowd the game. From the point of the Officer in Charge, Masai Reserve, the game crowds the cattle!⁴

The main culprits in the competition between livestock and wild herbivores for pasture and water were plains game such as zebra and wildebeest. By the mid-1920s the competition was so intense that when ‘sportsmen’ flocked into the western part of the Masai Native Reserve (Narok District) to get zebra hides, which were then in high demand, the District Commissioner (DC) could not hide his glee. He enthused:

One does not take exception to the extermination of a species of game which is annually responsible for unwarrantable damage done both to grazing and water in the district. Were it possible to do so, there is much to be said in favour of limiting the quantity not only of zebra, but also of wildebeest and perhaps one other species whose numbers tend to be a menace to the grazing and water supplies of the district.⁵

At that time, the 'sportsmen' were killing about 300 zebra each per month, while the Dorobo in the area had the DC's permission to kill zebra, wildebeest, and hartebeest for food.⁶

Besides the competition for resources, wild animals also infected livestock with diseases. The situation was compounded by restrictions imposed on pastoralists by colonial boundaries as they could not prevent their livestock from coming into contact with disease-carrying game in the now restricted rangelands. In 1921, for example, it was claimed that eland had introduced pleuro-pneumonia into the herds of the Siria Maasai. Five years later, the Narok DC recorded:

The Masai have maintained for some time that cattle which graze where wildebeest have calved are liable to contract a fatal disease whose most salient feature is marked constipation. The idea was ridiculed for some time, but has now been recognised in South Africa, where it is known as *Snodziokte*. Little is known of the disease which is said to be incurable.⁷

The problem of communication of diseases between domestic and wild animals was especially serious during the first three decades of colonial rule when large numbers of wild animals existed in many parts of Kenya.

Increase in the population of herbivores meant increase in the numbers of carnivores such as lion, leopard, hyena, and wild dog. These animals harassed pastoralists by attacking their livestock. The problem was worsened by government interference with institutions which had helped control these animals like *moranism* among the Maasai and the Samburu. In 1925 the game warden noted:

The breaking down of the Moran system, with the consequent racial emasculation to which the Masai have been subjected, has 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.⁸

All this occurred against the background of a Game Department which was too weak to protect Kenyan communities against the depredations of wild animals.

By the early 1920s the Game Department in Kenya had realised that conservation of wildlife would attract little sympathy from farmers and pastoralists unless something was done to minimise conflicts emanating from conservation policies. Since the policies allowed individuals little leeway to protect themselves and their property against marauding wild animals, the government undertook

to limit tension between wildlife conservation and other interests. This led to the practice of wild animal control, which essentially entailed the destruction of animals that threatened socio-economic activities or human life. Animals which raided crops, preyed on livestock, spread human/animal disease, competed with livestock for pasture and water, or threatened human life became the responsibility of the government. By reducing such threats, the government hoped to win support for its conservation efforts from communities sharing their land with wild animals.

The realisation that game/vermin control was an essential aspect of wildlife conservation led to the establishment of the institution of honorary game warden in Kenya in 1922.⁹ With only a skeleton staff and a large territory to attend to, the game warden petitioned the governor in 1921 to allow the department to recruit keen sportsmen interested in game preservation as honorary game wardens. This led to the appointment of four such officers in 1922. By 1937, when the Game Department had only six white officers and some 70 African scouts, the number of honorary game wardens in the country had risen to 100. These wardens mainly worked among white settlers and without pay. 'They enforced regulations, were active in game control, and were of immeasurable assistance to the overworked department, freeing the staff to spend most of their time in African areas.'¹⁰

In 1928 the Game Department recruited two game officers specifically for game control work. These officers travelled throughout the country responding to complaints about wild animals. They poisoned, trapped, or shot offending animals in both African and European areas. They also organised game drives aimed at confining wild animals to designated areas. In these activities, the game control officers worked closely with the emerging African authorities – Local Native Councils (LNCs) – as well as the provincial administration.¹¹ The LNCs provided some of the funds required for control work, while administrators were duty bound to enforce game regulations. Game control officers sometimes also enlisted hunting communities such as the Dorobo in vermin control activities and rewarded them with the resultant meat.

But animal control measures were rarely adequate, leading to complaints from the affected communities. In the African pastoral areas, complaints against gregarious herbivores became common during the climatically difficult late 1920s and 1930s. The situation was compounded by the fact that culling of wild animals could not be carried out within the game reserves. This resulted in frequent loss of livestock from conditions emanating from conservation policies. During the 1927–28 drought, for example, large numbers of Samburu cattle died of trypanosomiasis as circumstances forced the community to graze their animals in areas known to have been infested with tsetse fly. 'The game in the district [also] suffered considerably from the prolonged and severe drought...'¹² By the early 1930s Samburu cattle could not get enough pasture within Samburuland, especially during droughts. Consequently, the colonial administration at times

allowed the Samburu to graze outside their designated areas in order to avert catastrophes. During the 1933 drought, for example, the Provincial Commissioner (PC) allowed the Samburu to graze temporarily on the southern side of the Uaso Nyiro River. All the same, the drought claimed about 20 per cent of the community's livestock.¹³

The conflict between wildlife conservation and pastoralism featured prominently during the Kenya Land Commission (1932–34) where both the Maasai and the Samburu presented memoranda. Appointed by the British Government in April 1932 to investigate land problems in Kenya, the commission started its work in 1933 and produced a 600-page report in 1934 after hearing 736 witnesses from various backgrounds and receiving 507 memoranda. On the contentious Southern Game Reserve, the commission report stated:

It is evident that the presence of large herds of game diminishes the available pasture and might be prejudicial to the development of the Masai [Native] Reserve as an efficiently managed pastoral country, which we hope it will ultimately become If ... the Masai in future show a disposition toward improved pastoral or agricultural methods, any obstacles which the existence of a game reserve presented should not be allowed to stand in the way of useful development and the Game Reserve should be limited or abolished as circumstances dictate.¹⁴

Despite evidence of a conflict between wildlife conservation and pastoralism, little was done to solve the problem. Instead, problems of inadequate pasture and land degradation in areas inhabited by pastoralists were explained in terms of overstocking by the colonial administration, settlers and conservationists. These groups therefore advocated destocking as a solution to the problem of land degradation among pastoralists like the Maasai and the Samburu. Rarely was the presence of large herds of wild herbivores in pastoral areas perceived as part of the problem except by the respective district administrations, which defended their charges against accusations of a supposed cattle complex.¹⁵

Because of increasing land degradation in Sambururand, the government decided in 1937 to cull Samburu cattle during the following year. This agitated the Samburu who insisted that the government should cull the game on their land before they could consider reducing their herds. Consequently, the Game Department eliminated some 3,000 zebra in areas outside the game reserve. This did not satisfy the governor who ordered that another 5,000 zebra be exterminated before he could approve the culling of livestock in Sambururand. But when the governor eventually authorised the destocking, the Samburu refused to cooperate. Instead, they started defying government authority by grazing in forest reserves and in areas outside their reserve. They also threatened government chiefs, reinstated *moranship* (warriorhood) and organised proscribed dances.¹⁶

The government eventually defused the tension by calling off the forced destocking programme. The Samburu were also allowed to graze in the forests in their reserve, although they had to lease the pasture from the government

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through their LNC.¹⁷ The Game Department also continued to destroy game in an effort to reduce competition with livestock. The Game Department annual report for 1939 records:

The number of game particularly zebra in Laikipia and Samburu has caused considerable concern during the year. It is held that it is impossible for either Europeans or Natives to farm stock in conjunction with vast herds of game. Not only do they destroy grazing and temporary water supplies but they are counted the cause of spreading some of the diseases among cattle.¹⁸

In Maasailand, culling of game was carried out in areas outside the Southern Game Reserve. In 1938, for example, the government hired John Bonham, a hunter, 'to kill some 8,000 zebra and 5,000 wildebeest in Narok [District] to provide extra grazing land and to reduce the incidence of malignant catarrh'.¹⁹ But these efforts had little impact on the conflicts between wildlife conservation and pastoralism as large areas of Samburiland and Maasailand were within the game reserves. Consequently, in 1939 the colonial administration set up a game policy committee (GPC) to look into various issues pertaining to wildlife conservation.

ESTABLISHMENT OF PARK ADJUNCTS/NATIONAL RESERVES

The establishment of a game policy committee in Kenya in April–May 1939 was to some extent a turning point in the history of wildlife conservation in the country. Following the recommendations of the committee, national parks and park adjuncts administered by a board of trustees were set up in the country from 1946. These not only provided a firmer foundation for wildlife conservation in the country but also led to diversification of the programme. For the first time in Kenya, special areas were allocated solely for the proliferation of wild fauna and flora. The board of trustees also opened up the national parks and park adjuncts for tourism, thereby initiating the non-consumptive exploitation of wildlife.²⁰

The realisation that some of the best wildlife areas in Kenya were already under human habitation and therefore could not be made national parks forced the 1939 GPC to recommend the establishment of park adjuncts in such areas. Unlike national parks, which precluded most human activities and gave the interests of wildlife precedence, park adjuncts allowed the conservation of wildlife in inhabited areas so long as this did not compromise the interests of the inhabitants of such areas. The idea of park adjuncts was also born out of the realisation that some of the areas which had been recommended as national parks were not self-contained ecosystems as the wild animals in them migrated seasonally into surrounding areas. Where a migration area could not be included in a national park due to established human interests, then a park adjunct was the best means

of providing the animals in the national park with a more complete habitat. The idea of park adjuncts also emanated from the need to create more manageable conservation areas in place of the two expansive game reserves existent in Kenya since 1900. The two game reserves were therefore to be de-proclaimed as soon as the recommended park adjuncts became operational.

Like the national parks, the park adjuncts would be under the Kenya National Parks Trustees (KNPTs), while the Game Department would protect wildlife outside these two types of sanctuary. The Game Department would deal with such issues as animal control and safari hunting, while the KNPTs would develop national parks and park adjuncts for tourism. The trustees were therefore expected to provide such infrastructure as roads, airstrips and rest houses in national parks and park adjuncts with a view to promoting non-consumptive exploitation of the wildlife resources in these areas. The trustees would also protect the wildlife in the designated game sanctuaries.

Since human interests were paramount in the park adjuncts, the 1945 National Parks Ordinance required the KNPTs to obtain permission from the affected community before creating a park adjunct on their land. Such permission was to be sought through a 'competent authority' (often the PC or Officer-in-Charge of the particular area) who in turn had to consult the affected community – often through its LNC.²¹ It was only after such permission was granted that a park adjunct could be created in a 'native reserve'. A similar process had to be followed whenever the KNPTs wished to undertake any form of development within a park adjunct. They had to seek permission to build roads, lodges, airstrips, and so on.

Although innovative, the idea of park adjuncts proved difficult to implement mainly because of mutual suspicion between the affected communities and conservationists, led by the KNPTs. African communities such as the Maasai feared that they would lose their land through these projects. Such fear was understandable, given the impact of previous land alienation on Africans. For their part, the KNPTs doubted the viability of park adjuncts because they were not only legally insecure but were also weighed down by bureaucracy. The trustees in particular viewed as inimical to successful wildlife conservation the involvement of 'unsympathetic Africans' in making decisions regarding the establishment and development of the adjuncts. The establishment of these sanctuaries was therefore beset by many problems, despite the provincial administration's attempts to mediate between the trustees and the affected African communities.

One of the main critics of the principles underlying the park adjuncts was Mervyn Cowie, the director of the Kenya National Parks (KNPs) and the executive officer of the KNPTs. In May 1945, Cowie wrote a memorandum criticising the idea of park adjuncts. First, he claimed that the scheme did not accord the trustees security of tenure in the park adjuncts, and so they could not plan for long-term development of the areas. Although the agreement between the

trustees and the 'competent authority' for the establishment of park adjuncts was supposed to hold for 20 years, there was no guarantee that it could not be nullified before maturity due to pressure from the owners of the land. Second, the idea '[was] far too complicated, and would never be effectively conveyed through interpreters to the shrewd suspicious mentality of the native elders'.²² Cowie therefore viewed negotiations with Africans as futile. Finally, he deemed unworkable the notion that the trustees' rights in a particular park adjunct be based on effective wild animal control by the Game Department in the areas occupied by the consenting community.

Cowie's solution to these difficulties was that the National Parks Ordinance be amended to replace the term 'park adjunct' with 'national reserve'. In his view, a national reserves scheme was likely to transform Africans into proponents of wildlife conservation within a short period as they would benefit from the resultant roads, tourism, and trade. Cowie believed that national reserves could confer more benefits on Africans than park adjuncts, and were therefore more suited to changing African attitudes towards wildlife conservation. He, however, doubted their viability in the long run:

The National Reserves may not remain as such for ever. There will be many conflicting causes. Pastoral tribes may become agriculturalists. Fencing may be introduced on a big scale.... The final outcome should be to place some portions of the National Reserves into proper National Parks and deproclaim the remainder.²³

As a result of the confusion surrounding the idea of park adjuncts, the KNPTs set up a subcommittee to make recommendations on what the trustees could do and on what terms. The subcommittee consisted of Cowie, the game warden, and two other people. In its report in June 1946, the subcommittee addressed a variety of issues. It reported that the government had excised Leroghi Plateau, an important grazing area for the Samburu, from the Northern Game Reserve and added mounts Kulal and Marsabit to the sanctuary. It recommended that this game sanctuary be taken over by the trustees as Marsabit Park Adjunct under regulations acceptable to the relevant 'competent authority'.²⁴

The subcommittee further reported that the two Maasai LNCs had rejected a proposal for the establishment of a park adjunct at Mara during their joint meeting in February 1946. It therefore recommended a tactical approach to the issue, as 'the Masai [had] unfortunately gained the false impression that a Park Adjunct involve[d] the immediate excision of their land'.²⁵ The subcommittee therefore advised the trustees to give the Maasai an undertaking that the Southern Game Reserve would be dissolved within five years of the establishment of specific park adjuncts in specific areas of the game reserve. The trustees also needed to assure the Maasai that the development of the park adjuncts was to their advantage.

Following these recommendations, the trustees decided to negotiate for the establishment of park adjuncts. In 1947 application was made to the relevant

authorities for the acquisition of Marsabit, Ngong, and Amboseli park adjuncts. The Maasai were reluctant to assent to the proposals and the government had to intervene for the trustees. In August 1947 the acting governor, Gilbert Rennie, assured a meeting of the two Maasai LNCs that the government intended to de-proclaim the Southern Game Reserve and leave only two sanctuaries around the Ngong Hills and the Amboseli area. He also assured the LNCs that game would be considerably reduced elsewhere in Maasailand.²⁶

The governor's intervention did not win Maasai support for the establishment of park adjuncts on their land. Consequently, in December 1947 Eric A. Sweatman, the Officer-in-Charge of the Maasai Extra-Provincial District, requested the member (minister) for agriculture and natural resources to convene a meeting for the two to discuss the issue with the game warden and the executive officer of the KNPTs.²⁷ When the officers met in January 1948 they recommended the postponement of the establishment of park adjuncts until the National Parks Ordinance was amended to allow the formation of national reserves. They also recommended that the de-proclamation of the Southern Game Reserve be timed to coincide with the establishment of national reserves in Maasailand. The government then mandated the Officer-in-Charge of Maasailand, the game warden and the executive officer of the KNPTs to investigate and recommend areas of Maasailand which could be declared national reserves.

By March 1948 the government had formulated a wildlife policy 'favourable' to the Maasai and the onus of explaining it to them was left to the provincial administration. In May 1948 Sweatman assured the Kajiado LNC of the government's commitment to de-gazette the Southern Game Reserve and leave only small areas. The councillors were further assured that they 'would be asked to agree in principle to these areas being taken over by the [Kenya] National Parks' Trustees'. They were also assured that 'the Masai would in no way be adversely affected and might as well have a large say in the administration of the new National Reserves'.²⁸ A month later Sweatman told a meeting of the two Maasai LNCs that the areas required by the trustees for the establishment of national reserves were Amboseli, Ngong, Western Chyulu, and Mara. He then explained that the Maasai would from time to time be asked to agree to the erection of small rest houses and to the construction of roads in the areas. A committee of Maasai elders under the DC would also be set up for each national reserve to advise the government on all matters affecting the inhabitants of the areas. After assurances that the Maasai would not lose any land through the national reserves scheme, and that fences would not be erected to exclude herdsmen from the reserves, the LNCs approved the scheme.²⁹ This facilitated the proclamation of a number of national reserves in late 1948 and 1949 (See Map 2).

The first national reserve to be proclaimed was Marsabit in September 1948. It covered an area of about 10,000 square miles mainly in Samburu and Marsabit districts. The sanctuary was simply a transposition of the Northern Game Reserve involving the excision of the Leroghi Plateau and the inclusion



MAP 2. Wildlife sanctuaries by the early 1960s

of mounts Marsabit and Kulal. Although the area was not as rich in wildlife as Maasailand, the trustees considered the national reserve a worthwhile acquisition as it would 'be many years before the needs of the inhabitants force[d] game out of the area'.³⁰ The reserve was also considered home to unique sub-species like the greater kudu, reticulated giraffe, oryx beisa and Grevy's zebra – besides fair numbers of all the major mammals found in Kenya.

Attempts by the KNPTs to attract tourists to the Marsabit National Reserve were generally unsuccessful. Despite the establishment of tourist facilities in various parts of the reserve, the region remained more of a wildlife 'conservation area' than a tourist destination. In 1949 the Samburu DC reported:

Out-posts of [Kenya] National Park rangers have been established at Baragoi, Barsaloi, Wamba, Barsaliga and Irer, and the warden has completed a road along the Uaso [Nyiro River] from Archer's Post to Barsaliga. There has been no noticeable increase in tourists. The only effect the National Reserve has had so far on the administration of the district is to increase the number of petty cases for game offences brought to the DC.³¹

The tourist position remained generally unchanged in the following year despite the construction of five tourist *bandas* (cottages) and a ranger post at Nyama Yangu on the Uaso Nyiro River. This was in contrast to the situation in Amboseli where by 1947 the number of tourists entering the area was causing concern to conservationists. As Cowie observed, Amboseli had become so popular that the 'number of visitors' entering the area was 'causing considerable disturbance to game'.³²

Amboseli was the most popular of the national reserves created in the late 1940s. As proclaimed in November 1948, the reserve covered some 1,259 square miles of the former Southern Game Reserve.³³ The core area of the reserve was the basin of an extinct lake north of Mount Kilimanjaro. The 90-square-mile basin has swamps which are fed by underground water from Kilimanjaro. Around these swamps existed one of Africa's highest concentrations of animal and bird life. In 1946 G. H. Anderson, who knew Amboseli well, commented:

Having travelled and hunted in many different countries in Africa, I have never seen anything to compare with the variety of game that is to be seen in a radius of 10 miles of Amboseli. I do not believe there is any country in Africa, including National Parks or otherwise, that has such variety of game in such a small area. It also has the great advantage of a healthy climate, fine scenery, and at most times a magnificent view of Kilimanjaro; cars can travel practically through the country for the purpose of viewing game, and what is more, close up views of all game can be obtained from a car.... I know no country that is so suitable to be turned into a National Park than Amboseli: it is absolutely unique.³⁴

Amboseli was not just wonderful game country; it was also the lifeline of a number of Maasai groups. Being in the rain shadow of Mount Kilimanjaro, Amboseli generally receives less than 400 millimetres of rainfall per year. The swamps were therefore an important seasonal refuge for the local Maasai as well as neighbouring clans/sections during droughts. Proclamation of the national reserve in 1948 and the development of tourism around the swamps (popularly known as Ol Tukai) therefore put conservationists and the Maasai on a collision course.

Tourism at Amboseli started long before the area became a national reserve. In 1924 Percy St Lawrence Gethin, who had noticed the area's rich wildlife when fighting in World War One, began taking visitors there for photographic safaris. He eventually set up a staging post at the foot of Ol Donyo Orok Hill and in time developed it into the Namanga River Hotel.³⁵ In December 1937,

Gethin sought the permission of the local Maasai and the DC to build a temporary tourist camp at Ol Tukai. He continued taking tourists to the area until August 1939 when World War Two broke out and the government ordered the camp closed. Gethin subsequently joined the military, precipitating a lull in tourism at Ol Tukai until June 1945 when another entrepreneur established a camp there 'for the purpose of showing members of His Majesty's forces some of the wild life of Kenya'.³⁶

In November 1946 Gethin returned to Namanga and requested the provincial administration to allow him re-establish his Rhino Camp at Ol Tukai in accordance with his 1937 agreement with the Maasai. After consulting the local Maasai leaders and the KNPTs, who were already contemplating taking over the area as a park adjunct, the administration allowed Gethin to erect temporary tourist structures on the understanding 'that if he wished to construct additional buildings for visitors to his camp he had to ask for permission to do so and the matter would have to be referred back to the Maasai for their consent'.³⁷

With the prospect of Amboseli becoming a park adjunct, the KNPTs also started showing interest in Ol Tukai in 1947. In February that year, Cowie invited the member (minister) for agriculture and natural resources in the colonial government to join the KNPTs as their guest on a weekend trip to Amboseli 'to examine, on the spot, some of the duties and problems that needed to be met in the Park Adjunct proposal and see how far it might be possible to provide some sort of tourist facility at Amboseli'.³⁸ This reconnaissance trip was followed by discussions on the future of tourism at Amboseli between the KNPTs and other interested parties, like Gethin, from May 1947.

The establishment of the Amboseli National Reserve in late 1948 marked the beginning of a long struggle between the Maasai and the provincial administration on the one hand and conservationists led by the KNPTs on the other. Coming at a time when the provincial administration was seeking ways and means of improving Maasai pastoralism, the timing could not have been worse for the KNPTs – for the provincial administration was uncompromising on Maasai land rights. To make matters worse, Cowie had little faith in national reserves and wanted to see Amboseli transformed into a national park.³⁹ This not only made him impatient with the Maasai but also caused him to frustrate plans for multiple use of Amboseli. The situation was compounded by the Amboseli environment, which has friable volcanic soils and is susceptible to drought. Concentration of livestock, wild animals, and tourist vehicles in the area during the dry season threatened to turn it into a dust bowl, a development the KNPTs and other conservationists largely blamed on Maasai livestock.⁴⁰

The first source of difference between the KNPTs and the provincial administration in Maasailand was the draft regulations for the national reserves. In an effort to assert their authority within the reserves, the KNPTs proposed regulations which would authorise them to close certain areas of the reserves to human activity whenever they deemed it necessary. This undermined the two

principles underlying the reserves: that the interests of the local people were paramount, and that the KNPTs would operate under the provincial administration. Consequently, the proposals elicited a swift reaction from the provincial administration which had promised the Maasai that the creation of national reserves would not hinder their movements, and which also feared the erosion of its own powers.⁴¹

The trustees were forced to revise the regulations to the satisfaction of the provincial administration. The controversy, however, led the provincial administration into rethinking the national reserves issue. Roger A. Wilkson, who was the Acting Officer-in-Charge of the Masai Reserve at the time – and who seems to have been close to Cowie – proposed that the Maasai be induced to give up Ol Tukai through a land exchange and the abolition of the larger Amboseli National Reserve. The KNPTs would then be free to make the Ol Tukai area a national park.⁴² This marked the beginning of a long drawn-out struggle between the Maasai and conservationists over the Ol Tukai swamps.

Besides competition over land and differences over regulations, Amboseli was also vulnerable to poaching. In the period 1949–52 the poachers included the local Maasai, Kikuyu, and Akamba living within the reserve, as well as Dutchmen (Afrikaners) from Tanganyika. The latter caused most damage as they operated from motor vehicles, and rangers on foot could do little to stop them. However, the KNPTs were soon able to bring the poaching problem under control through close patrols in the reserve and cooperation from the Game Department of Tanganyika. By the end of 1951 the reserve had a warden and eight rangers.

The KNPTs were also fast in developing the tourist potential of Amboseli. By early 1951 they had leased a 50-acre plot from the Kajiado LNC for building temporary tourist accommodation at Ol Tukai at £250 per annum. This plot was to be shared with Gethin and tourist firms interested in operating in Amboseli. All the tourist enterprises were to share the revenue they collected from tourism in the area with the Maasai. A two-shilling rate was to be paid for every tourist who spent a night at Ol Tukai, while three shillings (Shs) would be paid for every vehicle entering the area. The Maasai would also earn three shillings from every aeroplane that landed at Ol Tukai. Revenue to the Kajiado Maasai from these sources increased from Shs2,480 during the last quarter of 1951 to Shs6,466.50 during the first quarter of 1952.⁴³ By the latter date, the KNPTs were in the process of building a road which would connect Amboseli with the Tsavo National Park as part of a tourist circuit stretching from Malindi to Namanga.

Another important national reserve proclaimed in late 1948 was Mara. Unlike the other Maasailand sanctuaries, the Mara area of Narok District was never part of the Southern Game Reserve. The area's magnificent wildlife was first publicised in the early 1920s by F. H. Clarke, then an assistant game warden based in Narok, who noted that white hunters did not venture into the area be-

cause of horse-sickness and tsetse fly. It was also noted that the Narok Maasai only took their livestock to the area during severe droughts when losses from starvation were likely to be higher than those caused by trypanosomiasis. Consequently, the tsetse-infested area came to be known as 'the fly area' in official circles. Since the area formed a triangle bound by River Mara in the east, the Siria Escarpment in the west, and the Kenya–Tanganyika border in the south, its other name was the Mara Triangle.

The move to turn the Mara Triangle into an official wildlife sanctuary was initiated by the 1939 GPC. But it was not until 1946 that conservationists started agitating for the establishment of a park adjunct in the area. The Narok DC was particularly vocal about the issue as he did not see why an area that was apparently uninhabited could not be used for what suited it best – wildlife conservation:

I think this area of the Mara Triangle should be protected and declared a Game Reserve or Game Adjunct in the near future. The Masai have so far failed to recommend it as a Game Park Adjunct partly because they did not really appreciate the point of it and their outlook has somewhat been prejudiced against concessions concerning land and the approach to the problem of Native Settlement areas and leasing land to Wakamba. The decision however rests with the Native Lands Trust Board if the game park trustees [*sic*] wish to take the matter to the board and personally I would recommend that this proposal for a game park adjunct should be approved by the trust board as it is obviously important from the game point of view.⁴⁴

The DC was mistaken in his estimation of the importance of the Mara region to the local Maasai. The area not only provided a refuge (albeit a risky one) during severe droughts but was also used for small stock. It also had saltlicks which were important to the Maasai pastoral economy. The DC's views were based on a misconception of Maasai distrust of the government's intentions and their opposition to the erection of fences on their land. In 1948 the DC reported:

The Masai continue to oppose strongly a proposal of the government to create a barrier in the fly country. The object of this barrier was to keep within the tsetse fly country the vast herds, particularly of zebra and wildebeest, which at certain seasons of the year migrate to the Loita Plains and eat up a large amount of grass available there, at the same time carrying disease. The benefits to the Masai and their stock from the erection of this barrier would be considerable and refusal of the people to agree is more than usually short-sighted. It is based on the habitual distrust of government and fear of the erection of any fence which they always consider is likely to be put up in order to keep them out of the land reserved for them.⁴⁵

Maasai behaviour in this incident was entirely rational. Being transhumant pastoralists, the Maasai had an 'open access' land-use system which served their predominantly pastoral economy well by reducing the risks arising from an unpredictable climate.⁴⁶ The erection of a barrier would therefore deny them

access to resources in the game area during severe droughts. Moreover, fencing in the large herd of wild herbivores would have destroyed the area's value as a dry season refuge.⁴⁷ Maasai distrust of the colonial government on land issues was based on their experience of land alienation earlier in the century.

At the time it was proclaimed a national reserve the Mara Triangle was considered 'the last pristine sanctuary of fauna in Kenya' by conservationists. Because of its varied ecology, relative inaccessibility, and tsetse fly infestation, the area was one of the finest wildlife areas in Kenya in the 1940s. Conservationists, led by Cowie and the game warden, were hopeful that the Mara would be turned into a national park. Like the Narok DC, these conservationists did not appreciate the significance of the area to the local Maasai. Shortly after the proclamation, Cowie told Wilkinson:

I had a most enjoyable visit to the [Mara] Triangle and was impressed with its possibilities. I believe myself that if we could make some concession for access to salt[licks], it would be far better to obtain this area on full National Park status. You know my misgivings about the future of National Reserves, and since the Triangle seems to be so little in demand either by natives or by hunting parties, it may be the only area in which we could preserve game for any length of time.⁴⁸

Cowie's drive to transform the Mara Triangle into a national park was supported by the game warden who believed that opening the area to tourism would galvanise public support for the creation of a national park:

I am anxious that the public of all races should be given an opportunity to see this wonderful sight before it is too late. The public then may appreciate this wonderful asset and this appreciation will help towards the preservation of this area as a survival of prehistoric Africa and a unique feature in the world.⁴⁹

The Mara Triangle, however, was more important to the local Maasai than the conservationists were ready to admit. Although the struggle for the area's resources was not as intense as the Ol Tukai one, the Maasai could not assent to the establishment of a national park at Mara. They were only ready to sanction a national reserve as this did not entail loss of control over the area and its resources.

Unlike the Amboseli and Mara reserves, which were independent entities, Ngong and West Chyulu were migration areas for animals in the Nairobi and Tsavo national parks respectively. They were typical 'park adjuncts', although the Ngong Hills were also a wildlife haven in their own right. But this did not make the acquisition of the two 'adjuncts' by the KNPTs any easier. This was particularly so in the Ngong area where the trustees had to contend with various interest groups.

The Ngong Park Adjunct, as proposed by the 1939 GPC, consisted of the Ngong Hills and contiguous land on the Rift Valley floor. This area was considered by conservationists 'as absolutely essential not only for support of

the Nairobi National Park but also for its tremendous intrinsic merits'.⁵⁰ The Ngong Hills were not only a sanctuary for many wild animals but were also a recreational outlet for Nairobi residents. The trustees were therefore anxious to acquire the proposed park adjunct. But the creation of a park adjunct at Ngong was difficult despite strong support for the project from the Ngong Settlers Association. The main difficulty was reluctance by the Native Lands Trust Board to accept the boundaries proposed by the trustees. The hills were not only an important dry season grazing area for some Kajiado Maasai but had also been encroached on by Kikuyu cultivators who were facing a land shortage in their own reserve. The government was reluctant to evict the cultivators at a time when it was encouraging African communities experiencing land shortage to settle among communities that were not experiencing such shortage, like the Maasai. The rapid expansion of Kikuyu settlement on the upper reaches of the Kiserian Valley therefore complicated matters for the KNPTs.

The interests of Masai pastoralists were also an important factor. When approached by the trustees to approve the establishment of the Ngong reserve, the CNC and the Officer-in-Charge of Maasailand declined to 'give any kind of undertaking that the reserve would not be used for some kind of Masai grazing scheme.... Furthermore, they indicated that it would not be feasible to make any roads into the reserve other than for access, since the Masai would not favour the entry of visitors to any part of the reserve.'⁵¹ The trustees were therefore forced to abandon their 'claim' to most of the Ngong Hills despite the area's high potential for conservation and tourism. New boundaries were then drawn to exclude the area under cultivation and to include a portion of the plain south of the Nairobi National Park. This became the Kitengela Conservation Area.

Difficulties in getting the Ngong Hills declared a wildlife conservation area forced conservationists to think seriously about the future of wildlife in the country, especially in Maasailand. Since most of the national reserves were in Maasailand, some conservationists were of the view that the Maasai needed to be induced to lease areas like Amboseli and Ngong to the national parks trustees. But in early 1952 this proposal hit a snag when the PC for Maasailand told Cowie that he 'could see no possible hope of obtaining any concession from the Masai'.⁵² Besides, some conservationists doubted the viability of a conservation scheme based on land leased from the Maasai, as this was bound to lead other communities to demand rent for their wildlife areas. This led Keith Caldwell, then a Royal National Parks of Kenya (RNPK) trustee, to propose a revenue-sharing scheme as a way of making the Maasai partners in wildlife conservation:

The Ngong National Reserve is held to be an essential reservoir for the Nairobi National Park, and I consider that the cooperation of the Masai is of vital importance to enable a large head of game to be retained in both these areas. Such a result can ... be most easily achieved by paying them a small portion of the Nairobi National Park receipts. I only suggest a token sum, e.g. 5 cents in the shilling; but I believe

that they would be well content with some such payment, and would be willing to cooperate, especially if it was explained to them that we felt that, since much of the National Park game drifted in and out from their land in the Ngong Reserve, it is only equitable that they should to some extent share in the financial takings of the park. They would in time realize that it was to their interest to see that the game was not unduly interfered with. One thing certain is that National Reserves or parks situated in, or adjacent to the Masai can never be completely successful without the cooperation of the tribe themselves. The easiest, and in the end most economical way is to make them partners in the enterprise.⁵³

Progressive as Caldwell's ideas were, it took the Kenyan authorities a long time to embrace and implement them.

As a wildlife conservation area, West Chyulu was of little significance to the national parks trustees. Nor was the 150-square-mile territory of much use to the Maasai as it is relatively dry and was infested with tsetse fly. However, 'the establishment of this [national] reserve was sought' in the hope of 'winning an addition to the Tsavo National Park on the eastern slopes, and so place the whole range and its valuable forest under protection'.⁵⁴ Being on the windward side of the range, the eastern slopes of the Chyulu Hills are wetter than the western side and can support heavier biomass. But due to population pressure in Machakos District, the 1939 GPC did not include the eastern Chyulu slopes in the Tsavo National Park – although they were crown land and the Game Department had been protecting the wildlife in the area since the 1920s. The establishment of the Western Chyulu National Reserve in 1948 therefore intensified the struggle for the eastern slopes of the Chyulu range between the Akamba and conservationists.

NATIONAL RESERVES AND THE POST-WAR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

As conservationists had feared, the exigencies of economic development, among other factors, began to threaten the national reserves programme almost immediately. In 1949, for example, the provincial administration in Maasailand was contemplating 'lay[ing] out the country in ranching units of 50 square miles each; which [would] be divided into large paddocks, and eventually subdivide[d] and fenced'.⁵⁵ Since this affected national reserves like Amboseli, the administration suggested that they be reduced to smaller areas. Two years later, there were proposals that the Mara Triangle be cleared of tsetse fly and the land be turned into a Maasai settlement area as it was well watered. This led the game warden to claim that such a scheme would entail the slaughter of a million head of game, and to warn his minister: 'The day development invades this wonderful area, the Game Department should pack up and the Nairobi butchers with the Eldoret Dutchmen should take over!'⁵⁶

The drive for economic development led to the establishment of the East African Royal Commission (1953–55) to consider measures for improving the standard of living of a rising East African population. Of the commission's six terms of reference, the first three concerned the intensification of land use, especially among African communities. Specifically the commission was mandated to examine and recommend measures for 'the economic development of land already in occupation, the adaptations and modifications of customary tenure necessary for the full development of the land, and the opening for cultivation and settlement of land not fully used'.⁵⁷ These concerns were in line with government development programmes in African areas as manifested in projects such as the African Land Development (ALDEV) programme (1946–62) and the Swynnerton Plan (1954), schemes which adversely affected wildlife conservation by increasing competition for land and government funding.

After hearing presentations from various interest groups and individuals, some of whom were critical of wildlife conservation policies and practice in Kenya, the East African Royal Commission took the view that 'preservation of game must not be allowed to stand in the way of the urgent need for proper land usage'.⁵⁸ On the delicate issue of wildlife and economic development in African areas, the commission advised that:

The Masai in particular, and other nomadic pastoralists ... would do well to appreciate that their territories include first-rate ranching land, and that if they were to make proper use of this land, no-one could object to the clearance of game from the area. The European rancher will not tolerate game on his ranch, nor need the African rancher.⁵⁹

Ambivalent views like these underlay the land-use policies of the Kenya government by the mid-1950s and frustrated conservationists' attempts to overlook African land rights in their agitation for wildlife conservation. Questions about the impact of wildlife conservation on African communities, especially the Maasai, were also raised in the British parliament. This ensured that the colonial government remained committed to the policy of trusteeship when handling matters pertaining to African land.

Although doubts concerning the viability of national reserves had been aired in the very committee which recommended their establishment in 1945, and continued to be expressed by conservationists like Cowie in the subsequent period, matters came to a head during the 1952–55 period. Against a background of intermittent drought and the development of government-sponsored grazing schemes in Amboseli and Samburu District, conflict between wildlife conservation and community interests became so intense in the early 1950s that the government was forced to reconsider the national reserves issue.

The Amboseli National Reserve (1,259 square miles) in southern Kajiado District covered most of the area occupied by the Il Kisongo section of the Masaai. This section was bounded in the east by the Tsavo National Park, in the north

by the Chyulu Hills, and in the south by the Kenya–Tanganyika border along the foothills of Mount Kilimanjaro. Traditional pastoralism in this low rainfall area was organised around the seasonal availability of water and pasture. During the rainy season pastoralists would spread out along the range but retreat to the perennial springs around Kilimanjaro when water became scarce. In times of severe drought the system broke down and the few areas of permanent water, such as the Ol Tukai swamps, supported larger numbers of livestock than usual. In a bid to promote uniform distribution of livestock over the range throughout the year, the colonial administration and the Kajiado African District Council (ADC) initiated the Il Kisongo grazing scheme in the early 1950s in what was legally a national reserve.⁶⁰ This led to struggles which affected wildlife conservation in the area for a long time.

Until the abolition of the Amboseli National Reserve in 1961 the crisis affecting it had two aspects. There was the problem of the ‘larger Amboseli’, where the government and the Kajiado ADC were developing grazing schemes for the majority of the clans of the Il Kisongo section. Then there was the issue of Ol Tukai, the core wildlife area in the reserve, which belonged to the Laitayok clan but whose ample resources were also exploited by other clans of the Il Kisongo during periods of severe drought. This created the impression that land in the whole area was communally owned and that the Laitayok could be removed from Ol Tukai and settled elsewhere in the section without interfering with the land-use pattern. Conservationists therefore insisted on the provision of additional water sources outside Ol Tukai so that the Laitayok clan could be persuaded to move elsewhere. But as it turned out, the clan could not be absorbed permanently by the rest of the section and only a suitable land exchange could solve the problem. However, the RNPk trustees were reluctant to exchange a portion of Tsavo National Park for Ol Tukai.

Conflicts between wildlife conservation and pastoralism in the larger Amboseli by the early 1950s were similar to those in the Marsabit National Reserve and were repeatedly denounced by the affected communities and the provincial administration. In a memorandum presented to the East African Royal Commission in 1953 the Il Kisongo Maasai stated the following on Amboseli:

The area occupied by this reserve is of importance to us. We feel that our economy is directly affected by the policy which is being applied to this area as a national reserve. Game is increasing at the expense of the Masai and their stock. The danger of disease carried by wild animals and passed on to our cattle is increasing, and loss of life caused by these protected beasts has increased. They also very much decrease our grazing.⁶¹

Similar sentiments were expressed before the commission by the Samburu whose district was largely part of the 10,280-square-mile Marsabit National Reserve.

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The Samburu memorandum, which seems to have been prepared by the DC, not only highlighted the problems caused by wild animals in the district but also proposed solutions. It recommended that the Marsabit National Reserve 'be drastically reduced in size and perhaps confined to the large forest areas'. The memorandum further recommended that wildlife in the newly started Samburu grazing schemes be treated the same way it was treated on European farms as it not only competed with livestock for grazing but also damaged dam walls and water resources in general. The memorandum also recommended that wildlife outside the national reserve be reduced to a minimum.⁶²

The provincial administration in Maasailand could have readily identified with the sentiments expressed in the Samburu and Maasai memoranda. Soon after the proclamation of the Amboseli National Reserve in 1948 the provincial administration hinted that dual land use in the area was bound to cause conflicts when Maasai ranching schemes were initiated. The administration then started agitating for reduction of the national reserve to its faunal core at Ol Tukai. In 1954 the PC for Southern Province told his superiors:

The boundaries of Amboseli National Reserve were ... fixed arbitrarily when the reserve was first gazetted and it is possible that the area could be considerably reduced in size without in any way interfering with the game. I would go further and say that as development plans are worked out for Kajiado District, the Amboseli National Reserve will have to be restricted to an area to include the camp at Ol Tukai and possibly cover about 300 square miles instead of the 1,000 [?], which is the position today.⁶³

Although there was a general consensus among the parties concerned with wildlife conservation that national reserves were difficult to sustain because of conflict between the interests of conservationists and those of the affected communities, an amicable solution was difficult to find. This was especially so during the 1952–55 drought which heightened the conflict. The situation was particularly serious in Amboseli where it was estimated that an average of 50,000 to 80,000 head of cattle congregated around the Ol Tukai swamps during the drought. The concentration of people and livestock in the core area of the national reserve infuriated conservationists who viewed it as inimical to wildlife conservation. Citing problems such as the spearing of problem animals, the outbreak of fires, the exploitation of vegetation for constructing dwellings and overgrazing, conservationists argued that Maasai pastoralists could not coexist with wildlife within the core area of the national reserve. They therefore called for a development scheme which would provide alternative water sources for Maasai pastoralists outside the main game area so as to leave Ol Tukai solely for wildlife.

But the government was reluctant to exclude the Maasai from Ol Tukai since water was not the only resource which attracted pastoralists to the area. Investigations carried out by the Kajiado DC in October 1952, and again by

the provincial veterinary officer in September 1954, showed that the Amboseli swamps were the only dry weather grazing area for the Laitayok clan of the Il Kisongo section. In times of drought the area was 'also used by Masai of other sections in accordance with the Masai custom of pooling their grazing and water resources in times of need'.⁶⁴ Moreover, the area had saltlicks which were exploited by the Laitayok clan and their neighbours.

As the debate on national reserves escalated, some local conservationists began to argue for greater community involvement in wildlife conservation. In 1954 W. P. Keller, a Machakos resident who claimed to be an ardent conservationist with intimate knowledge of the wildlife–livestock problems in pastoral areas, urged for greater involvement of communities like the Maasai in wildlife conservation. Basing his arguments on surveys he claimed to have carried out in Maasailand, Keller observed that pastoralism and wildlife conservation could coexist amicably if pastoralists got more benefits from conservation. He therefore urged for a scheme which would give the Maasai a share of the proceeds from tourism:

[W]e simply must recognise the fact that game as such in Masai[land] represents a very much greater revenue to the Colony as a whole than can ever be measured in terms of mere game licences, game fees, etc. The fact that upon the Masai as a tribe falls the lot of sharing their reserves with this game, in order to insure its perpetuation, should warrant some remuneration in the form of a larger share of the revenue which the game produces both directly and indirectly.⁶⁵

If this happened, Keller argued, the Maasai would start viewing game as an asset rather than 'the Queen's cows' that competed with their own.

Among the people who supported Keller's views was Denis Saphiro, the game ranger in Kajiado District. In January 1955 Saphiro wrote a memorandum in which he detailed the problems of wildlife conservation in Maasailand. The memorandum, which was endorsed by the game warden but earned the wrath of the secretary in the ministry, emphasised the sharing of benefits of wildlife conservation with the people who bore the burden associated with the enterprise:

The Masai must be shown that the government of the Colony appreciates the part played by themselves and game in attracting tourists and stimulating business generally. The only way that can be done is by returning to them a large part of the funds otherwise lost to general revenue and emphasising that this money represents the actual cash returns accruing from game. It hardly seems just that the Masai should be expected to share their reserve with game, which in fact will mean less stock than would otherwise be able to keep, and also pay heavily into general revenue. The revenue contribution which they would make in preserving this area as a wildlife paradise of world renown and attractiveness is an adequate share of the colony's burden for such a limited number of people to bear.⁶⁶

While calling for a meeting of the relevant authorities to discuss wildlife conservation in Kajiado District, Saphiro observed that 'no policy of game conservation in the Masai Reserve [could] be effective without the wholesale cooperation of the Masai themselves'.⁶⁷ He also advocated payment of benefits to individual Maasai rather than their ADC.

Calls like the foregoing probably induced the government to set up the 1956 Game Policy Committee. As constituted in late 1955, the committee was dominated by conservationists and excluded the provincial administration. This was pointed out by Sweatman, a long-serving administrator in Maasailand, who felt that such a committee would not come up with impartial recommendations and demanded representation for the administration. Consequently, the PC for Southern Province, which included Maasailand, was included in the committee. A Maasai, Dr J. C. Likimani, was also appointed a member of the GPC.

Seeming incompatibility between wildlife conservation and other socio-economic activities was one of the main reasons for the establishment of the GPC. In August 1956 the committee produced an interim report which addressed the Ol Tukai problem, among other urgent issues. On the Ol Tukai debacle, the GPC recommended that additional water supplies be provided on the perimeter of the core game area and that livestock in the area be limited to the land's carrying capacity. This recommendation was discussed and approved by the cabinet in December 1956. The government hydraulic engineer was then instructed to explore water sources in the area with a view to preparing a plan for the proposed water scheme. The cabinet also recommended the renewal of negotiations with the Maasai.⁶⁸

In its final report in March 1958 the GPC recommended, among other things, that national reserves be replaced by game reserves. These would be areas of faunal, floral, and scenic interest which could be developed for wildlife conservation and recreation but could not be declared national parks because of existing human interests. Game in the reserves would be controlled by the government, which would ensure maximum conservation while promoting other human activities. Each game reserve would have a statutory committee which would not only advise the minister on how to manage it but would also exercise administrative and executive functions in connection with the day-to-day affairs of the reserve.

But some officers in the Game Department felt that nothing short of giving African communities control over the wildlife in their areas would reduce tension between conservation and other activities in such areas. They therefore began agitating for game reserves controlled by African District Councils (ADCs). This eventually led to the establishment of a Meru ADC game reserve in 1959 (See Map 2). The Meru Game Reserve then became a model for similar reserves in other areas. After protracted negotiations between the government and the Masai, the Amboseli and Mara national reserves (Map 2) were dissolved in 1961 and smaller ADC game reserves were established at Ol Tukai and in the

Mara Triangle. This also persuaded the Samburu to set up their own ADC game reserve around Nyama Yangu, and the sprawling Marsabit National Reserve was dissolved. Towards the end of 1963 the Isiolo ADC (now county council) also set up its own game reserve on the Uaso Nyiro River, directly opposite the Samburu one. In short, Kenya had several community-owned wildlife sanctuaries by independence in December 1963.⁶⁹

The abolition of the national reserves and their replacement by smaller wildlife conservation areas led to the intensification of the controlled (hunting) areas programme.⁷⁰ Introduced in Narok District in 1951, the programme spread to most parts of the country during the fifties. One of the main objectives of the programme was to induce African communities to conserve the wildlife in their areas by giving participating ADCs the revenue earned from hunting licences and game culling in their areas. This revenue enabled the ADCs to compensate victims of marauding animals and to provide communal infrastructure like dispensaries, primary schools and cattle dips. That way, communities sharing their land with wild animals would be more amenable to conservation as they could see its benefits.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing analysis, it is evident that attempts at involving local communities in wildlife conservation in Kenya have a long history. The colonial administration's decision to conserve wildlife in areas already under human habitation led to conflicts between the exigencies of conservation and other interests, thereby forcing the administration to negotiate the terms on which the affected communities could support conservation. The need to do so increased after the 1932–34 land commission which enjoined the colonial administration to respect African land rights, a policy the imperial government endeavoured to enforce. By 1946, when a national parks organisation was established in Kenya, areas of significant faunal interest in African reserves were unsuitable for the national park ideal. This gave birth to national reserves – a uniquely Kenyan phenomenon.

Alongside the controlled (hunting) areas programme and game culling, the national reserves programme gave local communities (especially the Maasai) some say on wildlife conservation. In the early 1960s, the national reserves gave way to community game reserves in which the participating communities benefited through revenue collected from tourism in these sanctuaries by their local authorities. All these changes came about because of agitation by the affected communities, which were supported by certain administration and Game Department officials.

This paper therefore challenges the notion of an overarching 'colonial wildlife policy', which is portrayed as immutable in some of the literature on the subject.

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While formal wildlife conservation in most colonial societies was a foreign imposition based on Western ethos, it was sometimes modified in line with local circumstances of ecology, culture and politics. This led to such diversity as was prevalent in Kenya by the eve of independence in 1963. At that time, Kenya's conservation programme consisted of state-run national parks, a controlled areas scheme under the Game Department, community game reserves, a community-game management scheme (at Galana), and even game ranching.

NOTES

¹ Lord Cranworth, *A Colony in the Making* (London: Macmillan, 1912), 310.

² During the colonial period, the Masai Reserve consisted of Kajiado and Narok districts, each of which was under a District Commissioner (DC). The two DCs were answerable to the Officer-in-Charge of the Masai Reserve, a position similar to that of a Provincial Commissioner (PC) in the rest of the colony. The Samburu, however, had Samburu District, which was part of the Rift Valley Province.

³ The two communities have close ethnic affinities, though geographically apart. In the pre-colonial period, members of the two communities rarely hunted animals except the killing of lions as a rite of passage for warriors (*morán*). Maasai and Samburu *morán* raided other communities for livestock and land while defending their communities' wealth from human and animal marauders.

⁴ KNA/KW 27/4, Folio 40a, Keith Caldwell to Edward Buxton, 19 Dec. 1922. The file contains correspondence among the various parties involved in the debate. KNA denotes Kenya National Archives, while KW is the chief classification of files on wildlife conservation.

⁵ KNA/DC/NRK 1/1/1, Narok District Annual Report, 1926: 46.

⁶ In colonial Kenya, unlicensed hunting was prohibited even for hunter-gatherer communities like the Dorobo. The DC's permission therefore had more to do with the need to reduce the herbivores than to meet Dorobo food needs.

⁷ KNA/DC/NRK 1/1/1, Narok District Annual Report, 1926: 42. Helge Kjekshus, *Ecology and Economic Development in East Africa: The Case of Tanganyika, 1850–1950* (London: James Currey, 1996) discusses some of the methods used by pre-colonial East African societies to reduce incidences of disease among livestock.

⁸ KNA/KW 23/72, Game Department Annual Report, 1925: 18. *Moranism* was actively discouraged by the colonial administration as it was viewed as a threat to state security.

⁹ The terms 'game' and 'vermin' varied over time. In the early twentieth century, for example, carnivores like lion and leopard were regarded as vermin, but later they became game.

¹⁰ Nora Kelly, 'In Wildest Africa: The Preservation of Game in Kenya, 1895–1933' (Ph.D. thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1978), 160.

¹¹ LNCs were set up in African reserves in Kenya from 1924 and were made up of a few elected councillors and government-appointed chiefs. The DC of the particular district was the president of the LNC while the PC/Officer-in-Charge was free to attend sessions of the council. Where a community – like the Maasai and the Akamba – inhabited more

than one administrative district, the community's LNCs sometimes met to discuss matters of importance to the whole community. Such joint LNC meetings were often chaired by the PC/Officer-in-Charge of the particular area. From the 1950s LNCs were renamed African District Councils (ADCs). The government required the local authorities in the various African reserves to provide money for the poison for killing vermin such as baboon, hyena, and bush pig. LNCs were also required to pay for the ammunition used in culling animals like zebra, wildebeest, and buffalo.

¹² KNA/DC/SAM 1/1, Samburu District Annual Report, 1928: 20.

¹³ KNA/DC/SAM 1/2, Isiolo District (NFD) Annual Report, 1933: 5.

¹⁴ His Majesty's Stationary Office (HMSO), *Report of the Kenya Land Commission* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1933), 203. See also KNA/KW 27/1, 'Parliamentary Debates, House of Lords, Thursday, 21st November 1929, Vol. 75, No. 21'.

¹⁵ Perhaps one of the strongest defences against accusations that pastoralists had an irrational attachment to cattle ('cattle complex'), and that they contributed little to the development of the Kenyan economy, came from the Narok DC in 1928. See KNA/NRK/1/1/2, Narok District Annual Report, 1928: 13 & 14. See also R. M. van Zwanenberg with Anne King, *An Economic History of Kenya and Uganda, 1800–1970* (London: Macmillan Press, 1975), chapter 5 for details on how the colonial state in Kenya sabotaged African pastoral economies in order to shield white ranchers from competition. For elaboration of the 'cattle complex' concept, see Melville J. Herskovits, 'The Cattle Complex in East Africa', *American Anthropologist* 28 (1926): 230–72.

¹⁶ KNA/DC/SAM 1/2, Laikipia-Samburu District Annual Reports for 1938 and 1939. Also see Paul Spencer, *Nomads in Alliance: Symbiosis and Growth among the Rendille and Samburu of Kenya* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 162. Anti-destocking protests also occurred among the Machakos Akamba in 1938. See J. R. Newman, *The Ukamba Members Association* (Nairobi: Panafrica, 1974).

¹⁷ Forests in Samburiland were gazetted as state property following the recommendations of the Kenya Land Commission. This was despite their importance to the Samburu during environmental crises such as droughts and locust invasions when they became important refuges. The Samburu, like the Maasai, were transhumant pastoralists whose grazing pattern depended on both lowland and highland pastures. During a locust invasion in June 1930 the Narok DC observed that the local Maasai moved their herds up the Mau and Loita Hills because these areas were too cold for locusts.

¹⁸ KNA/DC/SAM 1/2, Laikipia-Samburu District Annual Report, 1939: 26. Laikipia, a white settlement area, was outside the Northern Game Reserve.

¹⁹ Thomas Paul Ofcansky, 'A History of Game Preservation in British East Africa, 1895–1963' (Ph.D. diss., Syracuse University, 1979), 224.

²⁰ Licensed (safari) hunting in Kenya started early in the colonial period and had become a lucrative activity by the late 1940s. Tourism, however, is mainly a post-World War Two development.

²¹ One outcome of the recommendations of the Kenya Land Commission (1932–34) was the establishment of the Native Lands Trust Board which theoretically protected African land from alienation for any purpose, including the establishment of wildlife sanctuaries. In this arrangement, LNCs were considered the trustees of their communities' land.

²² KNA/KW 13/45, Kenya National Parks: Memorandum on Park Adjuncts, 24 May 1946.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ KNA/KW 13/45, Folio 8, KNPs: Park Adjuncts: Report by Sub-committee for Consideration of Trustees, 19 June 1946: 2–4.

²⁵ Ibid., 5.

²⁶ *East African Standard*, 11 Aug. 1947.

²⁷ The Masai Extra-Provincial District consisted of Narok and Kajiado districts, as well as Ngong.

²⁸ *East African Standard*, 20 May 1948.

²⁹ KNA/KW 13/45, Extracts from minutes of the Masai Council Meeting Held on Tuesday, 1st June 1948.

³⁰ KNA/KW 1/77, Mervyn Cowie, 'National Parks of Kenya', 9.

³¹ KNA/DC/SAM 1/3, Samburu District Annual Report, 1949: 16.

³² KNA/KW 13/45, M. H. Cowie to Member for Agriculture and Natural Resources, 26 Aug. 1947. Also see the Minutes of Executive Committee of the Trustees, Minute No. EC 112: Amboseli National Reserve, 10 Sept. 1947.

³³ The abolition of the Southern Game Reserve was approved by the Secretary of State for Colonies in October 1948. This paved the way for the proclamation of national reserves in Maasailand.

³⁴ KNA/KW 13/45, 'Amboseli', 21 March 1946.

³⁵ David Lovatt Smith, *Amboseli: Nothing Short of a Miracle* (Nairobi: Kenway Publications, 1997), 23 & 26. Some of the dates in this source do not conform to those in the archival records.

³⁶ KNA/KW 13/45, 'Amboseli', 21 March 1946.

³⁷ KNA/KW 13/45, E. A. Sweatman (Officer-in-Charge, Masai Reserve) to DC Kajiado, 1 July 1947.

³⁸ KNA/KW 13/45, M. H. Cowie to Colonel Gethin.

³⁹ See KNA/KW 1/76, Folio 33, Colonel Cowie (Director KNPTs) to F. W. Cavandish-Bentinck (Member for Agriculture and Natural Resources, Kenya Colony and Protectorate), 29 March 1949.

⁴⁰ For a discussion on the dust bowl phenomenon in colonial East Africa see 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): 321–43.

⁴¹ See KNA/PC/NGO 1/16/4, 'Note Ref: First Draft – KNPTs Ordinance: National Reserve Regulations, 1949', 28 June 1949.

⁴² KNA/PC/NGO 1/16/4, R. A. Wilkson (Acting Officer-in-Charge, Masai) to Member for Agriculture and Natural Resources, 8 Sept. 1949. Sweatman was on leave at the time.

⁴³ See KNA/KW 1/75, Folio 2 (30 March 1952) and Folio 12 (3 April 1952). At that time tourist enterprises were collecting Shs5 per vehicle, Shs7 per tourist for night accommodation, and Shs10 as landing charges per aeroplane. Also see correspondence between Cowie and the administration in KNA/PC/NGO 1/1/4.

⁴⁴ KNA/PC/NGO 1/16/5, DC Narok to Officer-in-Charge Masai District, 19 March 1946. Owing to population pressure in the Machakos Reserve, there were rumours that 'empty' Maasai land would be leased to the Akamba.

- ⁴⁵ KNA/DC/NRK 1/1/3, Narok District Annual Report, 1948: 16.
- ⁴⁶ See David J. Campbell, 'Land as Ours, Land as Mine: Economic, Political and Ecological Marginalization in Kajiado District', in *Being Maasai: Ethnicity and Identity in East Africa*, ed. Thomas Spear and Richard Waller (London: James Currey, 1993), 258–72.
- ⁴⁷ Like Maasai pastoralists, the wild animals in the Mara region moved over large areas according to season, thereby avoiding the overuse of any particular area.
- ⁴⁸ KNA/PC/NGO 1/16/5, Mervyn Cowie (Director, KNPs) to Roger Wilkinson (Ag Officer-in-Charge, Masai), 23 July 1949.
- ⁴⁹ KNA/KW 1/75, Folio 1, Game Warden (W. H. Hale) to Director, Royal National Parks of Kenya (Mervyn Cowie), 19 Nov. 1952. In 1952 the Kenya National Parks (KNPs) organisation was renamed Royal National Parks of Kenya (RNPK) after the British monarch became its patron.
- ⁵⁰ KNA/KW 1/77, Folio 3, Cowie, 'Kenya National Parks': 12.
- ⁵¹ KNA/KW 1/75, RNPKs: National Reserves: Tour of the Ngong Reserve by the Director RNPKs, Member for Agriculture and Natural Resources, Chief Native Commissioner, Officer-in-Charge Masai, and Nairobi National Park Game Warden.
- ⁵² KNA/KW 1/75, RNPK: Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Trustees' Thirty-first Meeting, 7 April 1952, Minute No. EC 312.
- ⁵³ KNA/KW 1/75, Keith Caldwell to Director RNPK, 29 April 1952.
- ⁵⁴ KNA/KW 1/77, Folio 3, Cowie, 'Kenya National Parks': 10. The boundary between Kajiado and Machakos districts divides the Chyulu Range into eastern and western sections. Chyulu West is therefore in Maasailand while Chyulu East is in Ukambani.
- ⁵⁵ KNA/PC/NGO 1/16/4, R. A. Wilkinson (Acting Officer-in-Charge, Masai) to Member for Agriculture and Natural Resources, 8 Sept. 1949.
- ⁵⁶ KNA/KW 1/74, Folio 105, W. H. Hale (Game Warden) to Member of Agriculture and Natural Resources, 10 Jan. 1951. Dutch settlers in colonial Kenya were considered some of the worst poachers of game.
- ⁵⁷ Y. P. Ghai and J. P. W. McAuslaw, *Public Law and Political Change in Kenya: A Study of the Framework of Government from Colonial Times to the Present* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1970), 102. See also *East African Royal Commission 1953–1955 Report* (London: HMSO 1955), xi.
- ⁵⁸ HMSO, *East African Royal Commission*, 299.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁰ The scheme was planned to cost £25,000: of which £15,000 was a government grant, while £10,000 was a loan to the ADC. See Government of Kenya, *African Land Development in Kenya, 1946–1962* (Nairobi: Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Water Resources, 1962), 75.
- ⁶¹ The 1953 memorandum is attached to another one on OI Tukai addressed to the PC Southern Province by Il Kisongo Sectional Councillors on 4 January 1957. See KNA/PC/NGO 1/16/4.
- ⁶² KNA/KW 87, Anon., 'Memorandum on the Position of Game and National Reserves vis-à-vis the Samburu Pastoral Tribe', n.d. Like the Maasai, the Samburu were investing a lot of money – mostly loans to the ADC – in the development of water resources under the controlled grazing schemes by the early 1950s. But animals like elephant and

buffalo did a lot of damage to water resources while others like zebra denuded the grass. See Kenya, *African Land Development*, 136–46.

⁶³ KNA/PC/NGO 1/16/4, E. A. Sweatman (PC, Southern Province) to Secretary African Affairs, 7 Sept. 1954.

⁶⁴ KNA/PC/NGO 1/16/4, Anon., ‘Notes on Amboseli National Reserve’, n.d.

⁶⁵ Keller’s article entitled ‘A Review of Masai Resources’ is reproduced in George A Petrides, *Kenya’s Wild-life Resource and National Parks* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1955), 25–31.

⁶⁶ KNA/KW 1/74, D. Saphiro (Game Ranger, Kajiado District) to Game Warden, 7 Jan. 1955.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ KNA/PC/NGO 1/16/4, Extracts from the Seventh (Special) Meeting of the Council of Ministers of 5 Dec. 1956; KNA/PC/NGO 1/16/4, Loshe (DC) to Ken (PC), 28 Dec. 1956.

⁶⁹ ADC/county council game reserves are the subject of a forthcoming paper by this author.

⁷⁰ West Chyulu and Kitengela became game conservation areas rather than game reserves.