

Logging Dividends: The Maasai, Politicians and Timber Extraction in the Mau Forest, 1895-1960.

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Abstract:

While the Mau Forest Complex is considered a critical water tower area in Kenya, the ecosystem is under increasing threat from irregular and poorly planned settlements, encroachments and illegal logging. Maasai Mau Forest which is part of the larger Mau Forest complex is experiencing pressure of unprecedented levels. As such, this study presents a comprehensive historical examination of the intricate interplay between the Maasai communities, national politics and timber extraction in the Mau complex in Kenya. Drawing upon a case study analysis of the Maasai section of the Mau Forest, this study delves into the dynamics shaping the relationship between indigenous peoples and the timber industry. Through a combination of qualitative interviews, document analysis, and ethnographic fieldwork, the research explores the complex socio-political, economic, and environmental factors influencing indigenous perspectives on timber extraction. Key issues identified here are for example nature of land rights and ownership, the impact of resource exploitation on indigenous livelihoods and cultural heritage, power asymmetries in decision-making processes, the role of legal frameworks and regulations in shaping indigenous rights, and the significance of community empowerment and advocacy in resisting unsustainable practices. Additionally, the study examines the influence of corporate interests, government policies, and international interventions on Maasai experiences with timber extraction. Findings reveal diverse Maasai responses to timber extraction politics, ranging from resistance and activism to negotiation and collaboration with external stakeholders. Moreover, the study underscores the importance of recognizing indigenous knowledge systems, cultural values, and land stewardship practices in promoting sustainable forest management and fostering equitable relationships between indigenous communities and the timber industry.

Key words: Mau Forest, land use, colonial policies, pit sawing, settlement, Maasai.

Introduction:

Most writings on environmental history on colonial and contemporary Kenya has unfurled the mega and micro narratives of forestry in terms of social conflict or ecological enquiry. Forests are represented as a contested landscape which exists either in harmony or in conflict with the human world. Under the aegis of colonialism forest lands in Kenya underwent massive, phenomenal changes

and transformation. The colonial power in one form or other started to contemplate on the question of establishing a hold over the forest land. The process of asserting absolute ownership over the natural resources was necessitated through a highly developed politico-administrative infrastructure. After politically subjugating the Kenya Colony, the British found themselves fully equipped to exploit

the virgin resources of the area and thereby intervening into in the ecological fabric of the Kenyan colony (Ofcancy,1984). In the case of the Mau Forest, the Maasai mounted a spirited demand to also get access to forest resources especially land and timber. In most of the cases, the colonial administration conceded to their demands. Conceding to these demands together with the colonial dilemmas of meeting Settler interests for forest land and timber, revenue collection in form of royalties, construction of the Uganda Railway, timber for construction of government buildings, export, private companies, demands from the natives and furniture is argued in this paper to have been the epitomic source of Maasai Mau Forest section degradation and depletion.

Mau Forest Land in the Colonial Kenya:

Background:

Prior to the advent of colonial rule in Kenya, the Mau Forest land did not appear to have been inhabited because the forest was known to be cold, wet, and high in altitude while much of the down land was swampy. During the rain seasons, the grass downland was known to be tussocky and sour. There was almost total lack of minerals in the grazing areas that cattle could benefit as saltlicks. The grass dried up extremely rapidly as soon as the rains were over. During the pre-colonial days, these areas were probably used only for temporary grazing by the Maasai. From the time of the signing of the Anglo-Maasai agreement in 1904, the Mau and Melili highlands of the forest experienced increase in population (See, Baldgya et al, 2007). But it is important first to look at the location description of the area of interest of this study according to colonial records.

Several Maasai of the Il Damat, Keekonyokie and Purko sections instead of moving to Laikipia as arranged, shifted westwards onto the Mau Forest from the Rift Valley. When the movements of the Maasai from Laikipia to the southern reserve took place in 1911, three of the main routes of entry converged on top of the Mau Forest. Here a large number of the Purko section, finding the grazing good at the time, established themselves instead of pushing on as was intended into the new reserve

land on and around the Loita plains. While the colonial administration partially tried to rectify this congestion, very large numbers of them remained. Despite the harsh climate and other drawbacks, the forest had several important advantages. The East Coast fever did not occur here, rainfall and grass continued to grow for nine months of the year and was at the maximum in August and September when the Maasai lowlands were at their driest, water was plentiful and close at hand except for a few weeks in every year and hyenas, lions and other predators were hardly seen in the forest.

During this period also, the Mau Forest land was inhabited and surrounded by several communities. The colonial administration was able to classify them as follows. The Maasai had several sections that included the Purko-Mau and Lemein sub-sections, the Uasin-Gishu, Keekonyokie, Il Damat and the Loita. There were also the Maasai-Kikuyu and Maasai-Kipsigis. Inside the forest there were the Wadorobo who were also known as the Ogiek (Silingi,2008). The Maasai Purko were by far the most numerous. They were almost entirely pastoral and occupied the whole of the open country of the Mau downs and most of the Melili downs as far south as Entontol on the west and to a few miles north of Nairagie Ngare on the east. Along the south of the forest, they lived on the patches of grassland which occurred on the ridges in the "Leleshwa" scrub and in the recent burns of the forest margins from the Seyabei River to Ololung'a.

According to colonial records, the Mau Purko who inhabited the Mau and Melili highlands confined themselves to the open downs and the larger marginal glades and considering their numbers caused remarkably little damage in the forests. Fires seldom occurred owing to the wet climate and to the fact that the available grass was so closely grazed. Their demands on the forest were limited to bamboos and cedar bark for building and for firewood. They used the margins for grazing in dry weather and maintained stock routes running through the forest to the low country. These were considered essentials and would not be foregone lightly. On the other hand, so long as they

maintained their pastoral habits and the population did not greatly increase, the colonial government did not find it difficult to plan which provided their requirements while at the same time ensuring adequate forest protection (Troup, 1922).

Then there were these foreign squatters who were all nearly Kikuyu and Kipsigis or crosses of these tribes and Maasai mainly practicing agriculture. At this time, because of their influence, the Maasai were showing an increasing tendency to depart from their exclusively animal diet to growing of food crops. They did not however contemplate working on the *shambas* themselves but relied on marrying Kikuyu women to cultivate for them. Other foreigners, Kisii, Kikuyu and Kipsigis filtered into the Mau Forest and settled whether with the permission of the Maasai or not. Majority of the Kisii entered the forest as loggers employed by the Maasai who had acquired licenses to harvest timber. While an increase in agriculture in suitable areas was no doubt desirable, it became uncontrollable along the borders of forest land. The effect was disastrous and was second only to fire in its menace. Not only did the settlers cut out and burnt the forest for their *shambas* but the stock they owned were mostly goats which were more than any other domestic animal destructive to the tree growth (Siringi, 2008). As these communities engaged in their socio-economic activities in and around the Mau Forest land, they were not aware that the Protectorate administration was busy formulating laws, policies and rules on how forests were to be managed and more specifically the Mau Forest.

The first forest regulation was put in place in Kenya in 1897 under the Ukamba Woods and Forests Regulations. The regulations were later amended in 1900 and 1901. The regulation preserved the courthouse in Nairobi within five miles and two miles of the railway line with the exception of private land. Local revisions placed forests within one mile of the railway and gave authority for them to be managed by the railway administration while the rest beyond were administered by the District Officer. The first Conservator of Forests was appointed in July 1902.

C.F Elliot was tasked with the responsibility of working under the “East Africa Forestry Regulations”. There were forests that were proclaimed under this regulation as the first reserved forests. The regulations provided for the gazettements and degazettments of forests in Kenya (Trapnel and Longsdale, 1962). Forest offences were enlisted and provision for punishment and arrest given, authorization for the issuance of licenses and allowed utilization of a free charge by bonafide traveler of fallen and dead woods for firewood. An interesting aspect of this regulation involved a provision allowing the compounding offences where the Conservator of Forests through mutual agreement with the offender could accept a sum of money in compensation instead of engaging in a court process. Again, under the regulations, there was no mention of royalties or fees. An amendment was made in 1905 with the inclusion of arrest and search by police officers on forest offenders (See, Berry, 1989).

By 1908, major forest blocks in the country had been declared. Early gazettements of forest lands in Kenya were done through descriptions from hilltop to hilltop and from rivers to rivers. This was later revised owing to the fact that some areas between hilltops and rivers did not contain forests. These areas could be utilized for agriculture and settlement. This paved way for excisions and additions to forest estates made. Survey of forest lands in Kenya also began at this time. It culminated into some 1,378 square miles being formally described and reserved by the beginning of the First World War. The war interrupted work which was later started in 1930. By the end of that year some 4,812 square miles were surveyed and gazette (Dale, 1948).

After the Second World War, a Forest Boundary Commission was established with the purpose of finding out areas for excision and addition to the forest estate. The Forest Department (FD) was not comfortable with this because the earlier government policy was geared towards reservation of forest land areas. The Commission was able to ensure provision of roads, fertile land for farming,

improved transport, and more financial allocation to the FD. Development in forest reservations were fine-tuned with periodic revisions and improvements of the forest legislation (Beinart,2000) For instance, the 1902 Forest Regulations were upgraded with the passing and enactment of the Forest Ordinance of 1911 that provided for the demarcation of forests which guaranteed more security. This later proved a mirage with deliberate negligence of the demarcation law of forest. The Ordinance also provided for punishment for counterfeiting of FD marks and beacons and a provision for the appointment of an Honorary Forest Officer given (See Beinart and Lotte, 2009, McCann,1997).

Exploitation of the Mau Forest Land and other Resources During the Colonial Period:

Exploitation of forests for timber in the interior of Kenya began with the need to supply them to the Uganda Railway constructors. The railway required two categories of timber for fuel and for sawn timber. The first saw milling activity was done at Tusu in the Aberdares in 1902. The sawing machine was able to saw, design, mortise and tonguing and grooving. Other sawmills were established in 1903 where government forests supplied timber to the railway constructor and the government. In 1908 the government granted a lease of 50 years to Messrs. Lirighan and Grogan over 94, 944 acres to exploit forest lands for timber. By the end of 1908 estimated 264, 410 acres of forest land had been leased to White settlers in Kenya. Actual sawing was started in 1912 where systematic felling with a 20-year felling cycle on 250 acre coups were licensed. This was as a result of rapid demand for timber in the territory. By 1919 there were 24 working mills. The first timber export from Kenya took place in 1920 with the export of 502 tons (Troup, 1922).

Demand for wood in Kenya became dire during the Second World War resulting in colonial government willing to grant license to anybody who showed interest and had some capacity to assemble sawing machinery. The demand was triggered by the military for use in the Middle East. Pit sawing became a fashion, and several Kikuyu

tribesmen were trained on this method. Saw milling later replaced the pit sawing and unprecedented exploitation of timber in Kenya was witnessed during this war period. The depleted forests were later replaced with exotic ones through the “Taungya” method. For twelve years after the establishment of sawmilling in Kenya, there was no much regulation of the industry from the government or the saw mills themselves on logging. It was not until 1919 that the government took steps to control cutting rights. In 1928, the first move was made towards trade organization with the formation of the Lumbermen’s Association of East Africa whose Membership included most of the sawmills. Its responsibilities included advisory, coordination, and dissemination of information in order to bring producers and consumers together. The export of cedar slats accounted for more than half value of Kenya’s Colony timber exports in 1934(Talbot and Talbot1960).

Later on in 1937 Major Oliphant noted that Kenya’s domestic and export markets of wood were bigger than those of other East African territories. In the domestic market, Europeans consumed most of the timber. The Kenyan population in 1934 stood at three million with 17,000 Europeans and 40,000 Indians. At the time there were twenty-five saw mills in Kenya compared to twelve and six in Uganda and Tanganyika respectively. Kenya was better technically and strategically placed compared to the rest of the East African territories for an expansion of timber export trade (See, Hutchins, 1909). He recommended that in all the three territories, local timber should gradually replace the imported ones and the export markets should also be “expanded”. Local timber at the time was used for various purposes that included mining, for decoration, interior woodwork and furniture, cart building, motor body framing and in the making of sleepers, heavy engineering work and erection of power line poles. He acknowledged that since 1911, replanting exercises had bore fruits by keeping pace with exploitation (Oliphant Report,1937).

The table below according to his findings show the volume of trade in cedar pencil slats from Kenya in the years 1929- 1934.

Table 1: Volume of Cedar Pencil Slats from Kenya in the years 1929- 1934.

Year	Quantity cuft	Value £
1929	19,034	7,249
1930	35,196	10,974
1931	13,616	4,003
1932	44,926	11,422
1933	46,010	12,476
1934	38,496	9,294

Source: Oliphant Report.

The market fall in 1931 was attributed to exchange difficulties and the dropping out of continental buyers. In 1934, the fall was ceased by the liquidation of the buying firm. The bulk of the timber trade in the 1930s and the preceding years were between Kenya Colony and England. Japan stopped in 1933 from importing wood from Kenya Colony because it was exploiting its own indigenous wood. The United States which had shown interest in the East African cedar stopped its importation because it adapted her own incense cedar and Californian redwood that produced cheaper grade pencils that helped ease out the shortage of Virginia cedar (Ibid).

Beeston Timber Company in the 1930s was licensed to cut cedar slats for pencil manufactures. Other companies that operated in the Mau Forest included Mariashoni Timber Company, Elburgon Saw Mills, Tinderet Saw Mills and Timboroa Saw Mills that were mainly concerned with local demands for timber. There was also a heavy demand for fuel in the Mau Summit and Molo areas for use in heating pyrethrum drying kilns (Ibid). Supplies of cedar were placed on the local market and delivered to the East Africa Timber Cooperative Society. A fair amount of cedar pencil

slats was sold, and a small quantity of cedar-wood oil distilled from cedar sawdust waste was sold to local exporters. In 1939, eight sawmills continued working in the East Mau Forest, removing therefore 124, 270 cubic feet of timber, which was only slightly less the figure for 1938. On the other hand, the Kenya and Uganda Railways and Harbours took one million cubic feet of wood fuel as compared with two million cubic feet in 1938 (KNA/K/6349/ECO/1750/1951).

Excluding pencil slats, over seventy percent of sawn timber from Kenya went to the East African market. Timber that was exported to Uganda consisted mainly of podo used for construction of buildings. Shipments to Tanganyika also comprised mainly of podo and were used in the mining areas on the South shore of Lake Victoria. However, exports of timber from Kenya diminished rapidly from the 1940s due to development of commercial forestry in Uganda and Tanzania. Later during the decade, timber exports from Kenya shrank as a result of the establishment of the Tanganyika Forests and Lumber Company and in Uganda the starting of the Munene and Minziro Forests. With the shrinking timber market in East Africa, Major Oliphant recommended that Kenyan saw millers and the State should find new markets. One of the markets was Abyssinia (Ethiopia) where large quantities of timber were a possibility since the country was embarking on reconstruction and development. Other possibilities for exports from Kenya included South Africa and South Rhodesia. It was reported that some consignment that had been taken were well received in South Rhodesia. Furthermore, according to this report, the saw milling industry in Kenya Colony was considerably advanced than in Uganda and Tanganyika as noted above. This advancement was as a result of the appointment of an engineer by the Public Works Department in 1926 with expert knowledge of Kiln seasoning (Ibid, See Beinart, 2000).

The table below shows the comparative figures for the sawn timber market in 1937.

Table 2: Sawn Timber in East Africa, 1937.

Territory	Sawmill output	Exports	Imports	Domestic Consumption
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
				Col 1 minus
				Col 2 plus
				Col 3
Kenya	423,800	100,000	150,000	473,700
Uganda	196,000	37,900	28,400	187,100
Tanganyika	136,000	28,700	80,500	187,900

Source: Oliphant Report 1937.

The table below also shows the distribution of wood exports from Kenya in 1933-1934.

Table 3: Distribution of Wood Exports from Kenya in 1933-1934.

Country	Quantity cuft (1933)	Quantity cuft (1934)
Great Britain	38,125	32,076
India	4,021	3,527
Germany	2,016	1,921
Belgo-Luxemberg Union	1,080	900
Japan	722	-
France	34	-
Poland – Danzig	12	-
Australia	-	72

Source: Oliphant Report, 1937

Until 1949, no exploitation on a commercial scale had taken place in the Mau Forest. For example, in the Eastern Mau, the requirements of Narok Township and Boma were met by a Kikuyu pit-sawing contractor who cut timber to order near Rotian. This time, Indian traders of Narok applied for permission to pit-saw the dead cedar in the burnt lands around to provide up-loads for their lorries going to Nairobi. The District Commissioner considered that this would serve the double purpose of bringing royalty from timber which would otherwise go to waste and would also help reduce the fire risk by clearing the land of extremely inflammable dead wood. Permission was granted (Klopp,2020). Shortly afterwards, Mr. Mohamed Yasin applied for permission to install a

small mill at Rotian. The District Commissioner considered that that would serve a useful purpose as heavy building programme were in prospect and the local pit-sawyer was unlikely to be able to produce the necessary timber. Mr. Yasin was given permission to put up a purely temporary and moveable mill in Narok Township. He was not allowed to build outside the township area nor was he allotted a plot of his own as the whole layout of the town was under review. He started to erect his mill in 1950 on a portion of a plot rented from another trader and in a very short time it began to assure proportions for larger than were originally envisaged by the District Commissioner. In 1951 Dhillon Brothers who had also been given permission to open a small portable mill started

work in the forest at Rotian (See Beinart and Lotte, 2009, Ofcancy,1984, Klopp and Sang,2011).

The partial opening of the Mau Forest for commercial exploitation soon attracted a flood of applications from all over the Colony for concessions for both pit-sawing and sawmills. In particular, the Kikuyu Maasai who lived in the Chapaldarakwa area applied for permission to pit-saw dead cedar for export to Elburgon which was only thirty miles away by fair road. The District Commissioner considered that if the Maasai themselves could be interested in the timber trade, it would be of great help in overcoming their intransigent attitude with regard to the protection and development of the Mau Forest estate. Permits were given to a certain number of residents who were accepted as genuine residents of the area. They were accepted as Maasai and recommended by the Forest Committee to cut dead timber only As in the case of Mr. Yasin's sawmill this trade quickly assumed larger proportions (KNA/DC/NKR/1/7/1951. See, Boone,2009).

Up till the end of 1950 the arrangement for payment of royalty was that all timber from Rotian was brought to the District Commissioner's office to be measured and stamped by himself or the District Officer in the forest in the course of their normal safaris. A check gate was put up at the frontier on the Elburgon road at Ololongoi manned by tribal police whose duty was to see that no unstamped timber passed through. These arrangements were purely temporary pending the appointment of a Forest Officer and subordinate staff but already by the end of that year the exploitation had reached such an extent that it had become quite out of hand (KNA/ DC/NKR/1/1951).Taking advantage of the difficulty of access to the forest, over an extremely bad road impassable for six months in the year during the rains and the shortage of supervisory staff, felling of green as well as dead timber was going on in most wasteful and unorganized manner and apart from the authorized permit holders, a number of Maasai and Kikuyu were operating without permits. The Maasai concessionaries did not work themselves but imported foreign labour from the

Kikuyu or Kisii tribes to work for them and in many cases did not supervise in person leaving everything to a sub-contractor. The situation was aggravated when a Maasai who without a sawing permit had brought in a number of Kisii sawyers who removed a good quantity of podo without passes and payment of royalty. He was arrested and convicted under outlying District Ordinance and released on revision (Ibid, See, Siringi,2008).

In 1948 a company known as the Maasai Trading Company had been registered with the object of dealing with Maasai produce that gave promise of a solution to the problem as the chief difficulties in exercising control of the pit-sawyers were the scattered nature of their operations and their complete lack of cooperation. In addition, the shareholders in the company were among the most wealthy and influential Maasai. The company was therefore informed that their application was favourably considered and that investigations were proceeding as to the best method of working. In order to give greater powers of control of extraction and sale of timber than were contained in the Local Native Council Resolution No. 9 of 1948, a set of by-laws were drafted and passed (KNA/NKU/1/6/1951).

By 1957, very large quantities of timber were passing out through Elburgon with complaints from the Forest Department that much of this was coming out without payment of royalty. It was found out that the District Commissioner's rubber stamp had been forged. A simple hammer mark which was next used was also forged and not until the Forest Department's hammer was obtained that this form of cheating was stopped. The situation however continued to be very unsatisfactory as the new organization was not sufficiently advanced to achieve control and the pit-sawyers remained entirely unready to cooperate in any way. Individual contactors competed against each other for the available transport resulting in Kikuyu lorries being paid fabulous rates for carrying timber between the Mau and Elburgon. Large quantities of timber piled up in the open on the siding at Elburgon awaiting the train exposing them to the sun where much were split and became worthless.

The final profit if any, made by Maasai contractors was very small(See, Klopp and Sang, 2011)

In order to gain time to straighten matters out and because of the difficulty of access in the rainy season, it was proposed to shut down all extraction at Chapaldarakwa during the rainy season but the Maasai contractors opposed this strongly and were supported by the members of the Forest Committee. It was finally agreed because of political reasons that pit-sawing should be allowed but no timber should be moved out of Mau Forest until after the rains had ceased. Afterwards forest scouts took over the post at Ololongoi and new unforgeable marking harmer was installed. As a result, the situation was brought under control as regards theft and operations by unauthorized persons. Regarding the actual exploitation, matters were as bad as ever. From April 1951, the direct road from Narok to Chapaldarakwa was closed and the journey had to be made via Nakuru and Elburgon. As a result, it was impossible to keep check on the widely scattered gangs of pit-sawers. Wasteful and unorganized felling of green cedar and podo continued forcing contractors to pile up a large stock of timber in the forest which they were unable to move out and sell for six months. As they lacked the capital to finance this stock piling, they were unable to pay their labour and royalties fell heavily in arrears. It became more and more obvious that the whole arrangement was thoroughly unsatisfactory, and some other means were to be found to enable the Maasai take a share in the exploitation of the forest (KNA/K/6349/ECO/1750/1951).

In 1952, the Forest Department under the recommendation of the Conservator of Forest decided to ban pit-sawing in the Mau Forest. Members of the Forest Committee vehemently opposed but were informed that if they wanted a mill, the former activity had to be given up. They were further adamant in their demand to be allowed to erect the mill at Ol Posimoru in the Chapaldarakwa area and not at Rotian. They were informed that this question would be further considered and that a final decision was to be given at the next Maasai Council meeting. This question

was further discussed by the administration and it was proposed that the erection of the mill by the Maasai Trading Company at Ol Posimoru might be permitted if and only if the Maasai agreed that the area of forest at Chapaldarakwa will include the block where the mill will be established and the gazetted area be administered by the Forest Department. The proposal was then put up to the Forest Department offices, Nairobi on 21st March 1952. The Conservator of Forests approved the scheme and pronounced himself ready and able to take over administration as from January 1953(KNA/NKU/1/6 1953).

As the Maasai opposed the establishment of a Forest Station in their territory, the Conservator of Forests earlier in 1950 had suggested that since the Olenguruone Settlement Scheme had been abandoned and the headquarters lying vacant, this would make the most suitable site for the proposed new forest station. It had the advantages that the necessary buildings and staff quarters were in existence and that while near enough to the Maasai Reserve and the site of the proposed mill to make adequate supervision possible, the station would be outside Maasai territory which would help make the arrangements less offensive to Maasai susceptibilities. The Assistant Conservator Londiani, in company with the District Commissioner and the Forest Officer, Narok visited Olenguruone and came to the following conclusions: that Olenguruone would be a suitable site for the new forest station if permission to use it could be obtained, the necessary buildings for a forest station were in existence and little if any additional construction would be needed and proposed boundaries for the area to be gazetted be decided upon. This did not require additional physical demarcation as it was included in the area of the existing Chapaldarakwa Native Reserve Forest of which the new area was an extension (Ibid).

The Assistant Conservator submitted a report laying down the duties of the forester who would take over the station by giving an estimate of the staff, equipment and financial requirements for its establishment. The sensitiveness of the Maasai

with regard to anything concerning the Mau Forest land arose partly from resentment at any form of closer administration that largely dates from the experiences of the 1911 agreement when the northern sections of the tribe were moved from Laikipia to their present reserves. This agreement was pushed through by Paramount Chief Lenana who wished to have both halves of the tribe united for his better control and was made against the wishes of many of the Purko who were the section concerned with the Mau Forest land use. At the same time, they considered themselves cheated by the colonial government on account of the excision of considerable areas of the Mau Forest downs land for European farms (Ibid).

As a result, the Purko still cherished a sense of grievance and suspect that any action taken by the government was a prelude to another forced move or limitation of their territory against their wishes. Majority of the Maasai had little interest in the forest land and certainly did not appreciate the need for their protection. Fortunately however, their normal way of life did not entail serious destruction of forests. Meanwhile as the natives witnessed the exploitation of the Mau Forest resources by the colonial government, they began to raise concerns. These concerns included evictions, non involvement of Africans in decision making on the management and exploitation of Mau Forest and their rights to also benefit from exploitation of forest resources especially timber. Agitation by the Natives ushered in a new era of exploitation of the Mau Forest resources where Africans joined in the detrimentation. In 1952 for example at a meeting of the Maasai Council on April 24th, announced that the Maasai trading company would be allowed to erect a sawmill at Olpusimoru in the Chapaldarakwa area if they agreed to the area in which it would work being gazetted as Native Forest Reserve and administered by the Forest Department from a station probably centered at Olonguruone. The Maasai Council agreed to the arrangement (KNA/(DC/NKU/1/5, 1952).

Consequently, the District Commissioner, Narok and the Forest Officer made an extensive tour of Olonguruone and the proposed extension of

Shapaltaragwa Native Forest Reserve. They visited Olonguruone Settlement Headquarters with a view to examining its sustainability as Headquarters for the proposed New Forest Station which was intended to control the area of the Maasai Forest land which was to be gazetted as a Native Reserve Forest. It was decided that Olonguruone was in fact suitable and if the use of the buildings could be obtained, these would suffice for the purposes of the station and very little new construction would be needed. In considering the boundaries of the proposed new forest reserve, it was found that the boundaries originally suggested would not include all the area which had been worked over by pit-sawyers so a wider area was decided on. This was bordered on three sides by existing physical boundaries. The only portion not demarcated by natural or a ready existing Native land unit boundary passed through solid uninhabited forest and was not likely in need of demarcation at any rate for a considerable period (Ibid).

In a report prepared by the District Commissioner Narok on 2nd July, 1952, he informed the officer in charge of Forest Maasai District that two Indian mills were working normally. That there was an appalling destruction of the forest around Melili and Sakutiek by cultivators. The Il Damat had moved to Kosheva and the damage there was serious. He ordered that cultivation in these areas be stopped by invoking the forest by-laws. At the same time the African Forest Officer at Ololongoi reported that there was no exploitation of forest trees there. An aerial survey earlier in March had shown after a visit to the upper Amala River north of Kapkimolwa that the accepted Kipsigis settlers and Uasin-Gishu Maasai were seriously encroaching into the forest land. He proposed that settlers be moved across to the Malelo area where they were to be away from the Maasai boundary for easy administration. The alarming levels of encroachment necessitated the implementation of control measures to save the forest land. One of them was the training of Africans to be forest rangers. For example the officer in charge of Maasai Forests in Narok reported that the learner rangers Nelson Ole Napate and Meele Ole Kesio moved on July 7th to undergo a course with the

Assistant Conservator of Forests. Their tutors Mr. J. G. Mackley and F.N Betts arrived on 28th July (KNA/ NKU/1/3/1953, See Siringi,2008).

In a meeting held on 9th August of the same year in Narok, the District Commissioner outlined that the Maasai Trading Company was allowed to start preparations at Olpusimoru in 1953 and that area would be administered by the Forest Department. The two Indian mills at Rotian were given one-year license under very strict conditions and under no circumstances were they allowed to operate in the Mau Forest proper. They were also instructed not to close the track to Narok which was an important Maasai cattle track. He complained that the work of the forest guards was not satisfactory. He suggested to the Conservator of Forests that reduction of staff was inevitable. He reported that they were slack, inefficient, and not at the standard expected from their high rates of pay and recommended a review of their pay to be considered.

During this period apart from encroachment as indicated above, there was rampant exploitation of timber in the Mau Forest. In 1953 for example, the District Commissioner Narok gave a report on the amount of timber extraction in the month of March as shown in the table below;

Table 4. Timber Extraction 1952.

Tree Type	Tons
Cedar Baulks	305.5
Logs	537
Podo Baulks	24
Logs	24
Cedar Fencing posts	45

Source KNA/DC/NKU/1/5/1952.

From the minutes dated 10th December 1952 chaired by the District Commissioner Narok, the Narok Forest Committee made some radical resolutions. The resolutions did not go well with Maasai members of the Committee. They protested that Europeans had left the Maasai with very little land and were scheming to remove what little remained. They further said that forest land

belonged to the Maasai and they could use or misuse it as they wished. They did not like the idea of a member of the Forest Department supervising the proposed mill at Olposimoru and asked if they could meet him. They wanted Mr. John Ole Keiwa to continue with his duties as they had appointed him to watch their interests. They were also suspicious of the posting of the two Maasai young men under training as rangers (KNA/DC/NKU/1/5, 1952).

The elders demanded that the Maasai should be allowed to start pit-sawing again at Chapaltarakwa and Rotian. They saw no reason why pit-sawing should get out of control as it had in the past. They also saw no reason for it prejudicing the success of the saw mill. The District Commissioner replied as follows:- it was government policy to teach the Maasai how best to use the valuable forest which was theirs, agreement had been reached for the Maasai Trading Company to start a mill in 1953 at Olposimoru, like all the mills in the country it would be necessary for it to be supervised by a member of the Forest Department who would live at Olonguruone under certain conditions imposed. The Maasai African District Council at its meeting at Kajiado had agreed to it and Mr Nangurai the Managing Director of the company was fully in the picture. He assured the Maasai not to have any fear about losing their land. It was proposed that two young Maasai in trainees should work under the Forester as rangers and this would make Mr. John Ole Keiwa's position redundant. The District Commissioner then gave the reasons why it was impossible for the government at any rate to allow pit-sawing to start up again. The system was extremely wasteful and figures showed that very little profit resulted. Operators had been guilty of a number of offences that included failure to pay their laborers who were not employees but sub-contractors. In addition, they had cut trees that were forbidden, exported timber without paying royalties and forged the hammer used to mark the baulks. Nine months after the closing of the forest, they owed the Council Shs.16, 000 in royalties. Further the government was not during the time of emergency prepared to allow influx of large numbers of pit-sawers into the district. The District

Commissioner felt that everyone should concentrate their attention on the mill in which shares could be bought by persons throughout Maasai land (KNA/NKU/1/6,1953).

Although the forest experienced a lot of extraction of high value timber at the time, the main forest block of the Mau along the upper border between the Narok/ Lengibere road and Olorkurto was an excellent block of cedar. This extended southward to a depth of three or four miles and could be exploited without difficulty as roads could easily be cut across the bordering downwards. The main block to the south was an unbroken, dense extent of virgin forest untouched by fire or man and extending at least twelve miles from north to south and from the Rotian River to the Mara River on the east and west. Though it contained valuable timber mainly podocarp, it was too steep and inaccessible to ever likely be a production forest.

Conclusion:

It is worth noting that much of the trees exported from Kenya came from the Mau Forest. This shows how the forest continued to face exploitation from the Europeans who at the beginning of the century had accused the natives for degradation through their retrogressive traditional economic practices. It can also be noted that the forest became a victim of the global dynamics that began from the turn of the century. These included capitalist thirst for raw materials especially timber to meet the demands for colonial modernization efforts, industrial needs back at home and the two World Wars. Other uses of timber within the territory included for construction of houses, construction of Kenya Uganda railways, furniture, and harbors. Of the colonial administration. In addition, the Maasai and other communities like the Kipsigis, Kisii and the Kikuyu were known to have been active in terms of exploitation and utilization of Mau Forest resources during the colonial period together with European settlers and the state. Colonial policies, rules and bureaucracy was deployed to ensure the desired objectives, and interests of the colonial administration are achieved. These included creation of legislations and policies that also

incorporated native demands to ensure peaceful coexistence of all interested parties.

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