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II.

BECOMING WORLD HERITAGE

The ‘State Party’ Behind Mt. Kenya’s 1997 Heritage Listing

The World Heritage Committee declared Mt. Kenya a natural World Heritage Site during its twenty-first session, held at the beginning of December 1997 in Naples. The World Heritage Committee welcomed Mt. Kenya, together with forty-five other heritage sites, onto the World Heritage List with the following official statement:

The Committee inscribed this property under natural criteria (vii) and (ix) as one of the most impressive landscapes of Eastern Africa with its rugged glacier-clad summits, Afro-alpine moor lands and diverse forests, which illustrate outstanding ecological processes.

UNESCO (1997: 38)

A year earlier, the Kenyan state party had submitted an application to grant Mt. Kenya World Heritage status. In this chapter, I unpack this ‘Kenyan state party’: among other things, I consider whom it consisted of, how it legitimized itself and where it caused friction. In short, I give the Kenyan state party that prompted Mt. Kenya’s World Heritage designation a face – or better still, faces. This will reveal a range of conflicts and negotiations that the abstract notion of state party otherwise conceals.

In this chapter, I take the position that it is crucial to consider the actual people involved in individual World Heritage designations, in order to begin formulating an answer to the question of what World Heritage really represents and conserves. I reveal that the actors behind Mt. Kenya’s World Heritage listing did not have a nationalist agenda, as is often assumed of World Heritage

participants, but that they were primarily interested in securing management authority. This was a result of long-standing conflicts over resource control. These conflicts have their roots in how colonial administrators shaped forest and wildlife supervision, both legislatively and practically, from roughly the beginning of the twentieth century onwards. In light of this, I will argue that Mt. Kenya's World Heritage designation reinforces a set of colonial histories. Thus, it is not only a tribute to outstanding ecological processes, as UNESCO's official statement suggests, but also to former colonial rule.

The 1996 application

David Western, who in the mid-1990s served as director for the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), the national institute for the preservation of Kenya's wildlife and nature (that is introduced in more detail later), told me that the idea to nominate Mt. Kenya for World Heritage status had come from someone within IUCN. At a certain moment in 1995 or 1996 Jim Thorsell, a Canadian conservationist who headed IUCN's World Heritage Programme between 1984 and 2003, had contacted Western and had pointed out Mt. Kenya's World Heritage potential to him. Western¹⁶ remembered how Thorsell had said that the 1990s were 'a good time' to nominate Mt. Kenya for World Heritage status. Western himself explained to me that he had interpreted this as a compliment regarding his directorship. He stressed that his predecessor had left the KWS in chaos, and indicated that only after he had cleaned up did the KWS become an efficient and transparent institute. He reckoned that IUCN had witnessed and appreciated his efforts, and that by 1996 it was ready to accept the KWS as a credible World Heritage partner.

But there were also other explanations of what 'a good time' could have referred to. A former IUCN employee who used to be stationed at IUCN's head office in Gland, but who moved back to Kenya a few years ago to take up another job, offered a different perspective. To him, the 1990s marked a period in which IUCN tried to gain control over the excessive growth in World Heritage Sites. He indicated to me that the institute foresaw that this growth would inflate World Heritage status and, in response, IUCN began to take measures to slow down the number of designations. One of these measures was benchmarking, i.e. making sure that at least the most extraordinary places were on the World Heritage List so that these places could serve as a threshold to prevent the designation of less remarkable or less exceptional sites. Together with a range of other African alpine, for instance the Ruwenzori mountains in Uganda and Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, Mt. Kenya was such a benchmarking site the former IUCN employee stressed to me, and he believed that Jim Thorsell's comment primarily related to these institutional dynamics. It should be added that Thorsell himself did not recall he had said anything about timing at all – in fact, he wrote in an email to me that he was unsure whether he had taken the initiative for Mt. Kenya's World Heritage application at all.

Nevertheless, in a recent interview, Thorsell did point out exactly those developments that the former IUCN employee had also described to me (IUCN n.d.).

Regardless of precisely whose idea it had been to nominate Mt. Kenya for World Heritage status, and regardless of whether it had been developments within IUCN, the KWS or both that had paved the way for the application, David Western immediately recognized the possible benefits of World Heritage status. Although he had not known in advance whether Mt. Kenya's application would be approved, he nevertheless thought of the project as a positive way to inform international communities on the conservation progress that Kenya was making at the time. In short, he said to me, World Heritage was good advertisement. He could use such an advertisement, he stressed, because his predecessor had left Kenyan conservation stigmatized by corruption, militarization and violent top-down fortress conservation. He believed that World Heritage status for Mt. Kenya could improve the KWS's reputation, and could reconcile it with international donor organizations that had backed out after previous misdeeds.

With this in mind, David Western contacted Bongo Woodley¹⁷ and asked for the latter's assistance. Woodley was the senior warden of Mt. Kenya National Park, and hence the person Western deemed most knowledgeable about the area. Woodley agreed to participate, and together with another KWS colleague called Joseph Mburugu he drafted Mt. Kenya's World Heritage application – Mburugu delivered a map on which the boundaries of the proposed heritage site were drawn, and Woodley wrote a short document of some ten pages that emphasized the uniqueness of Mt. Kenya's natural habitat, the content of which is discussed in more detail later.

After Bongo Woodley and Joseph Mburugu completed the document, David Western authorized it and signed it on behalf of the Kenyan State Party (The Government of the Republic of Kenya 1996: 6). The small bundle of papers was subsequently delivered to the World Heritage Centre in Paris, which considered it complete and forwarded it to IUCN for specialist evaluation. Next, IUCN sent one of its advisors to Mt. Kenya. This happened to be Jim Thorsell. After his field visit, Thorsell drafted an evaluation report, in which he raised a few concerns in relation to Mt. Kenya's potential World Heritage listing. Most importantly, he noted that parts of Mt. Kenya's forests were logged extensively and had degraded into arid and eroded lands (IUCN 1997: 69-70). Woodley and Mburugu had suggested designating all of Mt. Kenya's forests as a World Heritage Site, but Thorsell maintained that certain parts were not worthy of World Heritage status. He therefore advised the World Heritage Committee that Mt. Kenya was qualified for World Heritage listing, yet only on the condition that severely logged areas were removed from the application. This demonstrates that arguments for World Heritage justification are strongly embedded in processes of boundary setting, and it offers some insight into how World Heritage cuts out sites piecemeal from wider surroundings in order to satisfy, in this case, criteria of ecological integrity.

In reaction to Jim Thorsell's evaluation, Bongo Woodley composed a new map of what Mt. Kenya World Heritage Site was to look like, and drafted a site that excluded the most critically affected areas.

Like Joseph Mburugu's map, this one was rudimentary and basic, and the adjusted boundaries were simply drawn in by hand. Today, such practices are unthinkable and at present World Heritage applications must be accompanied by GPS maps, which are time-consuming and expensive to produce. But, at the time, IUCN and the World Heritage Committee accepted Woodley's revised nomination. Subsequently, the World Heritage Committee voted in favour of Mt. Kenya's World Heritage listing. From December 1997 onwards, Mt. Kenya World Heritage Site was a fact.

The above shows that the 'state party' that applied for Mt. Kenya's World Heritage listing only comprised two wildlife officers, namely Bongo Woodley and David Western. Western, moreover, hardly contributed to the preparation of the nomination, and only validated it afterwards. In essence, Woodley was the sole creator of Mt. Kenya World Heritage Site. With hindsight, Woodley told me that he had taken on the task opportunistically: neither him, nor Western, had had a clear understanding of what World Heritage would bring them, for Mt. Kenya would be the country's first World Heritage Site.¹⁸ He explained to me that, although Western and he had had certain ambitions for Mt. Kenya's World Heritage listing, it had nevertheless been unclear where the project would end up, if anywhere at all. 'We just went ahead and thought let's see where it leads' he remarked. Like Western, Woodley had aspirations that Mt. Kenya's appearance on the World Heritage List would improve the KWS's reputation. But for Woodley, the importance of this exceeded the mere purpose of positive PR: since his appointment in the late 1980s he had been caught in an unresolvable administrative dilemma with regard to Mt. Kenya's daily management, and he had hoped that World Heritage Status would help him to gain international support for solving the dilemma to his benefit.

Bongo Woodley's management problems were rooted in administrative structures inherited from the British colonial government. Imperial laws and regulations had problematized the supervision of Kenya's natural resources ever since their introduction in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The next two sections deal with this matter further and lay the basis for a lengthier discussion of Woodley's plight that follows later in this chapter.

A Game Department, a Forest Department, and the Royal National Parks

In 1895, the British administration established the East African Protectorate, which included the territory that in 1920 became the Colony of Kenya. The regulation of the protectorate's game and forests was one of the administration's immediate concerns, and already before the turn of the century it founded a Game Department. This Game Department paid heed to the spirit of the age, for in 1891 the British Foreign Office had called for the need to implement stricter game regulations on the African continent. This was a reaction to the fierce decline in game numbers that was especially apparent in South Africa, where large mammal hunting was the order of the day (Prendergast & Adams 2003: 252).

Hunting had always played an important role in British society and was a key social practice for elite classes in Victorian England (see MacKenzie 1988). By the end of the nineteenth century, it had largely come to play a symbolic role in England, not least because of a decline in hunting possibilities. But when the African continent opened up it made available a wilderness that offered ample opportunity to revive the sport. The colonies presented the British with seemingly limitless opportunities to again exercise the sport, and to confirm class, status and pedigree (*Ibid.*). This took place against a backdrop of white settlers' collective awe for Africa's wilderness, which was embedded in an imperial ideology that separated enlightened and culturally superior colonists from savage, wild and uncivilized Africans, who stood in direct contact with nature (see for instance Birch 1998; Comaroff & Comaroff 1991; Garland 2008). For Kenya, such awe later resonated in the popular writings of authors such as Elspeth Huxley and Karen Blixen, who romanticized big game hunting and brought glamour to the white hunter myth (Steinhart 1989: 254; Steinhart 2006: 102). Indeed, under safari hunters such as Blixen's husband Baron Bror Blixen, or her lover Denys Finch Hatton, Kenya's hunting industry bloomed in the early twentieth century (Adams & McShane 1996: 29).

While hunting experienced a renaissance in the empire, a group of prominent Englishmen in the metropole began to protest against it. Among them was Edward North Buxton, who cofounded a conservation organization that turns up in a later chapter and who argued that colonial hunting was reckless and irresponsible. He and likeminded advocates claimed that the sport had been stripped of its former ethics and rules of play, and had turned into mere killing that lacked any true sense of sportsmanship (Prendergast & Adams 2003). Together, these men succeeded in putting tighter control over colonial hunting on the agenda, and in 1900 the 'Convention for the Preservation of Wild Animals, Birds and Fish in Africa' was adopted in London. It was within this setting that the protectorate's Game Department came into being in 1899.

During its first ten years, the protectorate's Game Department was hardly operational – between 1901 and 1907 it only knew one ranger (Steinhart 2006: 149). This ranger was Captain Arthur Blayney Percival, who was born in Newcastle and had participated in an ornithological expedition in Arabia before coming to East Africa at the turn of the century. Percival was joined by Colonel T.H. Patterson in 1907, who directed the game department for roughly a year or two (*Ibid.*: 151). Afterwards, Patterson became somewhat of a celebrity due to the publication of his memoir called *The Man-Eaters of Tsavo* (1907), in which he recounted his experiences with an exceptionally aggressive pride of lions that he had fought while supervising the construction of a railway bridge near Tsavo¹⁹ on the Mombasa-Uganda line. The book became an instant success.

In 1919, Arthur Blayney Percival officially became the Game Department's managing director, but in practice he already had long been the department's most influential figure (see MacKenzie 1988: 245). Percival was largely oblivious to the calls of Edward North Buxton and associates to curtail colonial hunting (Steinhart 1989: 255). In fact, he was an ardent hunter himself and he maintained that it was the Game Department's primary task to protect white settler estates against the

invasion of dangerous and destructive wildlife. Contrary to the upcoming conservation lobby in the metropole, Percival regarded Africa's wildlife a notorious pest, as did many other administrators and settlers (Steinhart 2006: 150). Besides, Percival understood the economic benefits that derived from the sport: he saw how Nairobi was developing into the centre of elite hunting, and he observed how the money derived from licence fees and duties paid on trophies significantly contributed to the treasury (Mackenzie 1988: 247).

When Arthur Blayney Percival retired in 1923, Captain Archie Ritchie succeeded him. Ritchie further cemented the Game Department's prioritization of settler needs and, like Percival, he paid little attention to England's rising game conservation lobby. Ritchie was a man of military distinction, and he reorganized the Game Department into an army-like corps that drilled its black workforce. He always insisted on being called by his military rank, and he recruited his rangers on the basis of sporting skills and soldierly qualities (Steinhart 2006: 158). Percival and Patterson had been military men as well, but both had shown more indulgent and lenient methods and neither had been as strict as Ritchie was (*Ibid.*). Yet, Ritchie's military attitude was not at all uncommon in the protectorate. The enforcement of law was a constant concern, and settlers continuously called upon the administration to tighten control over African subjects in order to protect them and their possessions (Anderson 1991; Killingray 1986). Immediately after annexation, the British administration had employed martial law, which it soon replaced with locally recruited police forces that were considered less confrontational, and less costly (Waller 2010: 525). These police forces continued to employ aggressive and coercive methods, and most of the Europeans hired to direct them had gone through some sort of military training. They were often brought in from other colonies, most notably South Africa, where they had learned the ropes (Anderson 1991: 184). Overall, the protectorate established a thoroughly militarized society that incorporated all branches of administration – Ritchie's Game Department was no exception in this regard.

A few years after the foundation of the Game Department the colonial administration also established a Forest Department, which was meant to oversee the protectorate's commercial logging. The Forest Department was founded on the ambition to make the protectorate's forests as profitable as possible, for the protectorate's annexation had been much more expensive than calculated. This was largely due to the high costs of the construction of the Mombasa-Uganda railroad, which started in 1896 and lasted until 1901. Through commercial forestry the metropole hoped to earn some of its investments back (Kantai 2007) – it was eager, as Lonsdale put it, to 'capitalize on the politics of conquest' (1992^A: 19).

C.F. Elliot was the Forest Department's first leading man, recruited in 1902. Elliot had studied forestry in France and before coming to the protectorate had served as a forester in India. He strongly believed in European scientific forest management, as did many of his contemporaries, and he considered African forest usage a threat to forest survival (Ofcansky 1984). During the eighteenth century, African communities had been romanticized into noble savages who lived in harmony with

nature. In fact, as Grove (1989) notes for South Africa, eighteenth-century state interventions in natural resource control were mainly directed at curtailing settler agriculture rather than at restricting the activities of Africans. But, in the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the presumption that African primitives lacked the knowledge to understand nature's working replaced the earlier image of the noble savage (see also Brantlinger 1988: 38-39). As a result, it became widely accepted that Africans needed close supervision, in order to prevent them from destroying their surroundings (Ranger 1989; see also Beinart 2003).

C.F. Elliot at once drew up a set of regulations and restrictions concerning the use of the protectorate's forests. But since the Forest Department only hosted three forest rangers he lacked the manpower to enforce his ordinances (Ofcansky 1984: 138-139). Elliot retired from the department in 1905, after which the institute lapsed into administrative paralysis. Elliot's successor, called D.E. Hutchins, came in in 1907 but his appointment did not immediately solve the impasse. Hutchins advocated forest conservation rather than exploitation, and he actively went against the administration's ambition to make forestry profitable. For instance, he objected to private enterprise and thus angered the entrepreneurs who had come to the protectorate for the purpose of setting up wood firms (Castro 1995: 46). In general, Hutchins paid little attention to commercial interests (Ofcansky 1984: 140), but instead launched forest stations and tree nurseries, and expanded the department's staff.

Hutchins's directorship over the Forest Department lasted until 1911. As the protectorate's leading forester, he had called into question the administration's stance on forest exploitation, but with the onset of the First World War such debates largely ebbed away. After the war, and in the course of the 1920s, the colonial administration established more tree nurseries and plantations. These plantations were modelled on the Southeast Asian example (see Rajan 1997; Vandergeest & Peluso 2006), and operated on the basis of agro-forestry labour arrangements. The model came to be referred to as the *shamba* (cultivated field or garden) system. Within the *shamba* system individual farmers were allotted forest plots for cultivation, on the condition that they planted trees amongst their crops and moved on to other plots once these trees had matured. The system was justified on the grounds that it offered benefits to all parties involved: it provided Africans access to land under conditions of rapid population growth and food scarcity, and it guaranteed the Forest Department a source of inexpensive manpower in an institutional context of continuous cutbacks (Castro 1995: 70).

Some fifteen to twenty years after its foundation the Forest Department had developed into an authoritative institute that upheld a comprehensive system of penalties and licences. It strictly supervised and curtailed African use of forest products and it was suggested that, in doing so, it became one of the most unpopular colonial bureaus among colonial subjects (Castro 1995: 77). At the same time, the Forest Department had its own adversary: the Game Department. Initially, the Forest Department and the Game Department had had little to do with one another, as each focused on its own tasks. But as the number of tree nurseries and forest plantations grew steadily after the First

World War a problem emerged. Seeds and saplings attracted foraging game, and due to financial constraints the Forest Department was mostly unable to defend its nurseries and plantations against invading wildlife. It considered this a responsibility of the Game Department, but the latter, also on a constrained budget, gave priority to settler needs. It dedicated its scarce resources to the protection of European farms, and it hardly responded to the Forest Department's complaints (Ofcansky 1984: 141). Over time, the relationship between the two institutes toughened and grew more vexatious, as we will see.

There was yet a third administrative development that interfered with how the supervision over forest and wildlife gained shape in colonial Kenya. The previous chapter showed how thanks to, among others, John Muir, a typically American mentality towards nature and nature conservation emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These American circumstances resonated with the African continent in different ways. For example, colonial Africa offered new outlets for the macho confrontations with wilderness and savagery that characterized American chauvinism, and different key American political figures participated in African travels. Theodore Roosevelt was one of them: He undertook a collecting and hunting trip to East Africa under the auspices of the Smithsonian Institution between 1909 and 1910 (Steinhart 2006: 115). Roosevelt's travels contributed to the rising popularity of East African safaris. In fact, Steinhart claims, it was only with the particular event of Roosevelt's expedition that the word *safari* entered the English vocabulary as game hunting. Prior to that, the term safari, a derivative of the Kiswahili verb *kusafiri*, had referred to travel more generally and had long since been associated with Arab mercantile, trading caravans and slave trades (*Ibid.*: 113).

A few years before Theodore Roosevelt's expedition, the British politician Winston Churchill had also gone on a trip to East Africa. Yet, Churchill had had different intentions than Roosevelt: Churchill was not so much interested in big game hunting and natural history, as in promoting the empire before the British populace. At the time, the British public was sceptical about the expenses that had been made to annex the territory, and Churchill set out to show that East Africa was a justifiable investment that would soon pay off (Neumann 2013). Neumann suggests that the different orientation of the two men was illustrated in the memoirs that they later published: in Roosevelt's *African Game Trails: An Account of the African Wanderings of an American Hunter-Naturalist* (1910) the African landscape was presented as a vast expanse heaped with game, but in Churchill's *My African Journey* (1908) the African landscape was dotted with cotton, rubber and fibre plantations, and showed a railway line that brought modernity and development (Neumann 2013: 1379-1380).

Especially after the Second World War, conservation advocates in the metropole and in North America began to object to African trophy hunting more strongly (Steinhart 2006: 174). These advocates argued that game stocks had dwindled in the course of only a few decades due to excessive wildlife killing, and they asserted that Africa's large mammals found themselves on the verge of extinction. On the one hand, such protests resulted in increasing numbers of former white hunters who

began to employ the skills and knowledge they had obtained through safari hunting for the benefit of conservation work. On the other hand, such protests and calls to 'manage scarcity' (Shiva 1992: 229) paved the way for the introduction of the American national parks model on African territory. This model found its ways to the continent in various ways: administrators and hunters, for instance, became acquainted with it following participation in international fora such as the British East and Central Africa Conferences (Matheka 2008: 121; see also Mackenzie 1988²⁰), or they brought home ideas after visiting the United States themselves.

Colonel Mervyn Cowie specifically played a key role in relation to the introduction of the national parks model in Kenya (Steinhart 2006). Cowie was a Kenyan-born descendent of Scottish farmers, who had briefly left the colony for an education at Oxford University in the 1920s. When he returned from Britain in the early 1930s he observed that Kenya's wildlife stock had greatly diminished in the years that he had been abroad. He witnessed how this trend continued in the years that followed, and he soon fully committed himself to conservation. Cowie obtained a position on Kenya's Game Policy Committee, which was founded in 1937 in response to his calls to consider the future of wildlife more seriously (*Ibid.*: 190), and he began to advocate the need for wildlife sanctuaries. The Second World War briefly interrupted his petitions, but in 1944 he finally managed to get his plans off the ground: a new institute, called the Kenya National Parks, was founded and Cowie himself became its first director (*Ibid.*: 182). By that time, there was a ready audience in Europe and North America for adventure stories like Cowie's and in 1951 a film recounting his struggles was released, called 'Where No Vultures Fly' (see also Paris 2003).

In the years that Mervyn Cowie ran the Kenya National Parks, renamed the Royal National Parks of Kenya in 1950, he maintained that it was essential to establish closed-off areas to protect the colony's last strongholds of wild nature (see for instance Cowie 1955: 9). He envisaged these areas as conservation islands to balance the processes of modernization that swept over the colony. 'It would be illogical to seek the protection of all wildlife since there must be development' he wrote, addressing the Fauna Preservation Society in 1955. 'It is, however, reasonable that, before it is too late, Africa should be divided into zones so that each claimant for the use of land can have a fair share. And in this division there must be a place for wildlife' (*Ibid.*: 10). Cowie's campaign illustrated how the American national parks model, once it gained ground on colonial territory, translated to fit African circumstances: in the United States national parks had primarily been established to protect extraordinary landscapes, but on the African continent the emphasis was on the survival of large mammals (Adams & McShane 1996: xvi). Both interpretations, however, seemed to carry the ability to arouse nationalist sentiments. In South Africa, for instance, the popularity of game viewing partially ameliorated tensions between former sportsmen, elite white classes, and poor white classes (Carruthers 1989: 188-189, but see Brooks (2005) for the political and material limits to conservation's contribution to South African nation-building).

Mervyn Cowie's National Parks added yet another layer of policing to an already stringent and repressive colonial regime. As mentioned, he carried military stripes, and he recruited men with a similar background. In 1949, for instance, he hired David Sheldrick, who had commanded the Fifth Battalion of the King's African Rifles, and appointed him warden of Tsavo National Park. Tsavo National Park had been founded a year earlier, and Sheldrick was to bring down the high levels of poaching. Bill Woodley (father of the aforementioned Bongo Woodley), then a nineteen-year-old junior, soon joined him as assistant warden and together the two men came to master the art of military conservation in unprecedented ways (Steinhart 2006: 192-193). They optimized wildlife patrolling based on army principles, and they caught poachers through intelligence gathering as well as by conspiring with former poachers who worked for them as local spies (*Ibid.*: 198).

David Sheldrick's and Bill Woodley's military conservation methods gained shape alongside growing African opposition to the colonial regime. In the 1950s, the administration announced the Mau Mau Emergency, which I discuss in more detail in the next chapter, and Woodley joined the troops that aimed to combat native resistance. One journalist later suggested that Woodley was extremely dedicated to the task, going as far as dressing like Mau Mau, wearing the scalps of his victims on his head to resemble Mau Mau, and eating only forest fare so that his excrement smelled the same as those of the people he chased (Brown 2008). Woodley's contributions to fighting the Mau Mau have been mythologized, but his efforts nevertheless earned him a Military Cross and on his return to Tsavo he brought with him the war techniques he had picked up and employed them in Sheldrick's anti-poaching campaigns (Steinhart 2006: 197). This further reinforced the military character of Tsavo's management, and of the National Parks more generally, and virtually all the officers who later served alongside Sheldrick and Woodley were experienced counter-insurgency warriors or veterans of the Mau Mau war (*Ibid.*).

The Game Department watched the successes of men like Mervyn Cowie, David Sheldrick and Bongo Woodley with unease. Prior to the 1940s, the department had been the sole caretaker of the colony's game, and since the beginning of the century it had been in full control of regulating and policing. But from the mid-1940s onwards, the National Parks began to interfere with its monopoly (Steinhart 1994: 61). In addition, the Game Department and the National Parks had diametrically opposed goals: the first set out to protect settler interests and routinely killed wildlife, while the second combined forces to prevent 'the disastrous destruction of God's great beasts' (Cowie 1955: 11). Needless to say, the National Parks and the Game Department found themselves in opposite positions, and while the National Parks steadily gained the reputation of a professional and efficient institute, the Game Department increasingly appeared as a demoralized lot that failed to understand the importance of wildlife conservation. A long-lasting rivalry over prestige and influence ensued (Steinhart 2006: 192).

On the whole, the aggressive enforcement of colonial game and forest legislation articulated and, at least initially, consolidated imperial authority (Neumann 1996). All over the continent, colonial

policies criminalized African subsistence hunting and forest use, and after the National Parks ideology had gained a foothold entire populations were relocated and displaced so as to create safe havens for African wildlife (Beinart 1989; Carruthers 1989; Duffy 2000; Grove 1989). By the time the end of the Colony of Kenya began to appear inevitable and the prospect of independence was ushered in, European and American conservationists feared that a transfer in governance would mark the abolishment of nature conservation – they assumed that Kenya’s new leaders would be hostile towards it, because it had become such a vivid symbol of repressive governance and discriminatory laws (Matheka 2008: 122). But their fears proved unwarranted and the political elite that emerged after independence largely continued colonial conservation practices (see also Gibson 1999), as the next section discusses.

Former colonial offices turned into state corporations

When the Colony of Kenya was declared an independent nation in 1963 both the Game Department and the Forest Department were incorporated in the new administrative system. They were put under the supervision of different ministries, and an African workforce largely replaced their former white staff. The situation differed for the National Parks: it had been a corporate body directed by a board rather than a colonial office all along (see the Colony and Protectorate of Kenya 1944) and, as such, it had never been part of the imperial bureaucracy. After independence, the National Parks retained its autonomous status and continued to fall outside Kenya’s state apparatus (Leakey & Morell 2001: 31). Mervyn Cowie nevertheless retired. A man called Perez Olindo succeeded him, and a new board was appointed.

Throughout the 1960s and the 1970s, the Game Department and the Forest Department were hardly operational. Both had been financially constrained for a long time, but during the last stretch of colonialism serious budget cutbacks had immobilized them entirely (Poole & Leakey 1996). This inertia continued after 1963 since both remained dependent on government funds, which they were mostly denied. The National Parks, on the other hand, managed to designate more and more land as protected area, and collected revenues through the entrance fees that it raised. While the National Parks supervised all wildlife inside officially gazetted conservation areas, the Game Department was supposed to control wildlife outside such sanctuaries (*Ibid.*: 55-56) – in practice, however, the latter for the most part lacked the resources to do anything at all.

In 1976, and due to further financial constraints within both institutes, the Game Department and the National Parks merged. The organization that thereby came into existence was called the Wildlife Conservation Management Department (WCMD). The union took place under pressure from the World Bank, which had promised a loan for \$26 million on the condition that Kenya organized its conservation bureaucracies more efficiently (Leakey & Morell 2001: 31). Shortly after the

transformation, Perez Olindo resigned and Daniel Sindiyo, from the Game Department, assumed directorship of the WCMD.

A range of conservationists inside and outside of Kenya favoured the fusion of the Game Department and the National Parks, but there were also sceptics. They pointed out that park wardens, trained as conservationists, would have to kill wildlife to secure farmlands and other white properties. At the same time, Game Department rangers, whose job it had been to hunt down problem animals, were relocated to national parks where they were likely to continue their habits (see for instance Leakey & Morell 2001: 31). Moreover, with the fusion the National Parks lost its former independent corporate status and was absorbed into the state administration. As a result, the revenue collected through park fees, which used to fund the maintenance of parks, disappeared into the treasury of the centralized government. The Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife, which hosted the WCMD, subsequently refused to deliver adequate funding, just as it had withheld resources from the Game Department. From its foundation, the WCMD was hampered by a lack of decent equipment and by ill-paid salaries. The institute was generally perceived as highly corrupt (Poole & Leakey 1996: 56) and the acronym WCMD was soon translated into ‘Wildlife Poaching and Mismanagement Department’ (see for instance The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust n.d.).

By the late 1980s, a little more than a decade after the establishment of the WCMD, the Kenyan government was again pressed to reorganize the nationwide administration of wildlife conservation. Due to the lack of government funds, the WCMD had become highly dependent on money provided by NGOs, which were eager to sponsor the institute directly because this saved them the trouble of going through state bureaucracies, where statesmen were likely to cream off their funds (see also Poole & Leakey 1996: 57). But when reports of increased poaching began to mushroom in the 1980s, and because WCMD wardens and rangers were widely implicated in the killings (Martin 2012: 30), these NGOs eventually delivered an ultimatum: either the Kenyan government would clean up the WCMD and discharge its corrupt staff, or organizations would simply cut off the money supply. This ultimatum was made in the context of alarmist prognoses that marked the 1980s more generally, and that were fed by a number of ecological disasters as well as by a rising concern for global warming. Environmental lobbies gained in influence, and the basis was laid for what Bindé came to call a ‘tyranny of emergency’ (2000) that legitimizes radical and far-reaching conservation interventions on the basis of the argument that time is running out – it was against this background that NGOs began to exert pressure on the Kenyan government.

In response to the demands by international aid organizations, the president of Kenya appointed a new WCMD director in 1989, called Richard Leakey. Leakey replaced Perez Olindo, who had been reappointed two years earlier. Initially, Olindo had refused to work for the WCMD (Leakey & Morell 2001: 31), but after Daniel Sindiyo had been removed for nepotism and corruption Olindo had nevertheless taken on the job (*Ibid.*: 9). According to his own recollection of events, Leakey was never consulted, or even asked whether he wanted the position – instead, he learned about his promotion

through a newsflash on the radio (Leakey & Morell 2001: 9). At the time, Leakey was the director of the National Museums of Kenya in Nairobi, and he was already somewhat of a national celebrity. His grandfather, reverend Harry Leakey, had come to the protectorate as a missionary at the beginning of the twentieth century. Ever since, different members of the Leakey family stood in the academic and political limelight. Both of Richard Leakey's parents, Mary Leakey and Louis Seymour Bazett Leakey, had been central to the development of palaeoanthropology in Kenya and the latter had furthermore been a noted advisor to the colonial administration during the Mau Mau Emergency. Richard Leakey himself, moreover, gained academic acclaim when, following in the footsteps of his parents,²¹ an archaeological team under his supervision stumbled upon a near-complete hominid skeleton near the Nariokotome sand river around Lake Turkana in 1984 (Walker & Leakey 1993).

After he became WCMD's new director, Richard Leakey dismissed most of the institute's workforce and hired experts from the private sector, mostly expatriates. He believed that, in general, well-trained people were reluctant to work for the Kenyan government due to bad working conditions. He believed that, as a result, the country's state apparatus largely lacked competence (Poole & Leakey 1996: 60). In consideration of this, he offered his newly hired staff terms of employment that were considerably better than in any other government office. In addition, Leakey managed to revive the National Parks' former independent corporate status and, with presidential approval, moved the WCMD out of the state bureaucracy. To this end, the Kenyan government adopted a new Wildlife Act that officially dissolved the WCMD and established the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS). Like the National Parks in earlier times, the KWS was allowed to keep the revenue it earned so that it could sponsor its own operations. Leakey had also demanded that the KWS be responsible to the office of the president only, so that the institute was spared the clientelistic politics that played out on a ministerial level – yet, this was never fully achieved and different ministers and politicians continued to interfere with the KWS's mode of operation, Leakey later admitted (Poole & Leakey 1996: 56). To enable the entire reorganization, the World Bank promised a loan for \$60 million, and Leakey managed to guarantee further funding from different donors in the United Kingdom, Japan, the United States and the Netherlands (Leakey & Morell 2001: 134).

After the KWS had been established and new staff had been recruited, Richard Leakey began to train his ground troops. Without adequate skills and decent equipment, the KWS would never be able to fight Kenya's well-organized poaching syndicates, he argued (see for instance Leakey & Morell 2001). He convinced the president of the need to arm his rangers, and began to organize training camps where newly recruited staff were disciplined in military manners. At the time, different photos circulated that showed Leakey as an army general presiding over his forces. For instance, there was one that showed him marching between two lines of uniformed ranger-soldiers, all facing forward and gazing into the distance with chins up, weapons down and boots clasped. Leakey passes them sideways in a lighter uniform with shoulder chain, in a military tread with clenched fists and arms stiff to the body (see Leakey & Morell 2001: photo appendices at the centre of the book).

Through the KWS, Richard Leakey reinvigorated the military nature of former colonial policies, and his conservation approach was reminiscent of Mervyn Cowie and other one-time National Park figureheads such as David Sheldrick and Bill Woodley. Thus, the KWS became part of a wider post-colonial tradition in which African states continue to replicate repressive imperial conservation regimes (see for instance Duffy 1999; Ellis 1994; Igoe 2004). Like his colonial predecessors, Leakey was a strong proponent of fortress conservation based on principles of human exclusion, and he considered strict control key to effective wildlife management. Some fanatical nature lovers admired Leakey's hands-on techniques, but his methods also raised eyebrows. Especially the KWS's shoot-to-kill regulations, which made it possible for Leakey's rangers to use lethal force against suspected poachers without being prosecuted, shocked critical observers and academics alike (see for instance Gibson 1999; Haynes 1999; Neumann 2004) and it has been suggested that within two years of Leakey's directorship more than a hundred alleged poachers were killed without a chance for defence or trial (Peluso 1993: 205-206).

In the first years of his appointment Richard Leakey managed to free the KWS of the stigma of corruption and ineffectiveness that had clung to the WCMD. In 1991, he even managed to secure another loan worth \$150 million from the World Bank, of which \$60 million was paid immediately and the remaining \$90 million spread out over the next five years (Leakey & Morell 2001: 192) – apparently, the World Bank had no objections to Leakey's martial methods. But from roughly 1993 onwards, the authority he had built began to splinter. In early July his private aircraft crashed, in what many believed was an assassination attempt organized by one of his political adversaries involved in a poaching cartel. Leakey lost both legs in the accident and his recovery was slow. Early the next year he was forced to resign after what he himself called a 'nearly month-long vilification campaign' (*Ibid.*: 272): national newspapers painted him as a racist imposter, and suggested that he was as corrupt as his predecessors (Martin 2012: 150).

In March 1994, the president appointed a new KWS director, called David Western, who was, in many respects, the complete opposite of Richard Leakey. Since the late 1960s, Western had worked in Amboseli, a conservation area in southern Kenya close to the border with Tanzania. Here, he had studied the symbiotic relationship between pastoralists and the Amboseli ecosystem, and while doing so he had become convinced of the need to involve communities in conservation programmes (see for instance Western 1989). Western's community-based approach contrasted sharply with Leakey's fortress conservation methods, which had banned communities from conservation areas and which had been firmly grounded in an idealized image of unspoilt African nature untouched by human interference.²²

The opposition between David Western's community-based philosophy and Richard Leakey's fortress conservation doctrines resonated with a broader shift in global conservation rhetoric taking place at the time. Throughout the 1980s, and even more so in the 1990s, NGOs and multilateral lending agencies had begun to link nature conservation to the aims of economic growth and social

justice. This connection illustrated the upcoming trend of participatory development programmes more generally, which claimed to offer a more just alternative to state-orchestrated development programmes (Brosius et al. 1998; Gibson & Marks 1995; Jones 2006). Such intentions notwithstanding, it did not take critical observers long to point out that community-based tenets came with a set of problems of their own. Critics found fault with, among other things, how both development and conservation agencies tended to take communities as homogeneous and harmonious entities, thus disregarding the dynamics of internal power inequalities (see for instance Brosius et al. 1998; Dzingirai 2003; Li 1996), and some pointed out how the jargon of community empowerment concealed that many programmes in practice continued to be top-down or state-controlled (see for instance Cooke & Kothari 2001; Hill 1996; Marks 2001). Nevertheless, the shift from one ideology to another was nearly absolute, and with the introduction of community-based conservation principles fortress conservation was no longer politically defensible (Brockington 2004).

As the second KWS director, David Western openly criticized Richard Leakey for what the latter had made of the institute, and neither of the two men made a secret of their mutual rancour. Western had intended to gear the KWS towards a more people-friendly approach, but renewed budget constraints made this difficult. Among other things, the World Bank became less forthcoming with the loan that it had promised Leakey since Western meant to turn the entire organization on its head again, and the ongoing rumours of corruption troubled Western in making international donors enthusiastic for his plans. After serving a four-year term Western was written off, both by the public as well as by Kenya's political establishment. The latter fired him twice: the first time he was rehired because of demands made by a number of embassies and funding organizations.

By 1998, the KWS hit bottom. The larger public considered it thoroughly fraudulent and demoralized, and on the verge of bankruptcy (see for instance The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust 1998). In a somewhat unforeseen twist of events Richard Leakey was brought back in and reinstated as KWS director in September that year. A clear message went out from this decision: David Western's community-based approach had spared the rod and spoiled the child, and a firm hand was needed again. This time, Leakey stayed in office only for a short period, and roughly a year later he retired from the KWS for the second time to become the country's Head of Civil Service. It was the highest administrative position after the president, and Leakey's political upgrade caused considerable commotion. African newspapers reported that the IMF and other donor organizations had commanded the promotion (see for instance *Africa Confidential*, 6 August 1999), and the larger public maintained that it marked a neo-colonial mindset in which former imperial powers tried to resume control over Kenya's administrative system.

After Richard Leakey's second term with the KWS the institute became characterized by a high turnover in leadership. Numerous directors followed in his and David Western's footsteps, among whom Nehemiah Rotich, Joseph Kioko, Michael Wamithi, Joseph Mutia, Evans Arthur Mukolwe, Julius Kipng'etich and William Kibet Koprono. This, as well as ongoing financial setbacks, hampered

the KWS's performance and not long ago Leakey was quoted as saying that he had come to think of the institute as a complete failure (Martin 2012: 155).

Whereas after independence the Game Department and the National Parks went through a number of institutional reorganizations the Forest Department was largely left intact. In 1963, the colony's forest plantations had been nationalized, and legal ownership shifted from the British administration to the government of Kenya. Like the WCMD later, the Forest Department was not granted the revenue that it generated with commercial forestry and returns went straight into the public treasury. Similar to the Game Department's fate, the ministry that hosted the Forest Department subsequently withheld funding and, like other government agencies after independence, the Forest Department became fully reliant on international donors. It lapsed into excessive illegal logging in which it cut far more than its plantations could sustain – and while the government abused its mandate to allocate timber concessions, Forest Department executives and politicians shared the profits (see for instance Kariuki 2006; VanLeeuwe 2004).

Illegal logging manifested itself in various ways. For instance, when the Forest Department was brought under the Ministry of Environmental and Natural Resources in the 1990s a bureaucratic infrastructure emerged that consolidated and institutionalized illegal logging: the Forest Act allocated the right to adjust forest boundaries to the minister in charge, but the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources was a political appointee of the president who continuously excised forestland and gave out concessions to foster patronage (Klopp 2012: 356). The reintroduction of multiparty politics in 1991, which is discussed in the next chapter, further intensified illegal logging, since politicians suddenly gave out plots of forestland to their constituencies in exchange for votes (*Ibid.*: 354). Besides, Klopp (2012) suggests, multiparty politics in general encouraged politicians to get their hands on as much forestland as possible in the shortest possible time, because they were always unsure how long their term would last. She quotes an informant who confided to her: 'if there were an election every year, there would be no forests left' (*Ibid.*).

In addition to these developments, modifications to the shamba system accelerated logging practices. Initially, the colonial government had introduced the shamba programme to foster commercial tree growing and to improve food security among African peasants. Before and immediately after independence the shamba programme at least partially contributed to such goals, some maintain (see for instance Standing & Gachanja 2014). But after Kenya's rising intelligentsia had begun to argue that the system relied on the exploitation of cheap African labour the programme was adjusted: after 1975 shamba farmers received levies for the trees they grew, and were under the obligation to pay rent for the plots they cultivated. The motivation for these changes had arguably been noble, but the new regulations turned agro-forestry into a lucrative business opportunity (*Ibid.*). People began to cut Kenya's forests merely for the purpose of replanting for payment, and Forest Department officials hired and sold plots to landless farmers while putting the money in their own pockets (Kariuki 2006: 7).

The Forest Department's overall reputation worsened, both nationally and internationally, up to the point that it was widely and routinely distrusted. This led to the withdrawal of most of the department's international funding, especially during the wave of structural adjustment programmes that hit Kenya in the 1980s and 1990s. Among other things, this caused the dismissal of about six thousand officers between 1994 and 1998 (Standing & Gachanja 2014). Meanwhile, the Forest Department's malpractices gave way to a national forest conservation lobby, marked by platforms such as the Green Belt Movement founded in 1977 by Wangari Maathai, at the time a university lecturer who had studied in the United States. Initially, the Green Belt Movement merely meant to criticize the revised shamba programme, but the more Maathai depicted the shamba system as just one example of how Kenya's corrupted political regime operated, the more she gained the reputation of a political activist, rather than a conservationist (see for instance Klopp 2000).

It did not take the Green Belt Movement long to gain the support of international watchdogs such as UNEP and the World Bank. In 1987, this impelled a number of policy changes, including the total banning of the shamba system. But the ban, in turn, created new problems: from one day to another former shamba peasants had lost their rights to land and their income. Those who refused to leave shamba plantations became illegal squatters on state land, and in different locations this subsequently led to large-scale evictions (Standing & Gachanja 2014: 6).

Notwithstanding the efforts made by national and international pressure groups, the Forest Department refused to change its habits or tackle its widespread corruption. Instead, it continues to practice excessive tree felling. This is a thorn in the flesh of the KWS, which claims that Kenya's forests are indispensable wildlife habitat that must be preserved at all costs. Forestry and wildlife officers have never been on good foot (for the former felt the latter failed to protect nurseries and plantations, as I indicated in the previous section), but due to the Forest Department's ongoing logging the already tense relation was exacerbated from the 1990s onwards. Today, the KWS is hardly free from corruption itself, but at least it has managed to raise its public profile to some degree. With the reorganization of the WCMD into the KWS, the Forest Department's corrupted nature began to stand out even more and at present a sense of inferiority plagues foresters. 'When [KWS] rangers are armed and we are armed,' one of them told me when discussing the problems that he faced in running his forest station, 'we still feel that they are *more* armed'.²³ He added that the KWS receives the most conservation donor money, which was later confirmed by a zoologist working for one of the larger international conservation NGOs. This zoologist indicated to me that forestry in Kenya continues to be disadvantaged in terms of budget, and that forest executives and wildlife executives are continuously in direct competition over funds and authority. How this competition affects Mt. Kenya, and how it complicated the mountain's 1997 World Heritage nomination, is the topic of the remainder of this chapter.

KWS and Forest Department rivalry on Mt. Kenya

From the moment that Bongo Woodley became Mt. Kenya's senior warden in 1989, his task to police and to conserve the mountain was complicated by the Forest Department's sway over Mt. Kenya's lower forest ring, which dated back to the 1910s. In 1912, the colonial administration issued the first large logging concession for Mt. Kenya's forests (Castro 1995). Prior to that, D.E. Hutchins, the colonial Forest Department's second director after C.F. Elliot, had largely managed to prevent the release of such permits. When the concession was eventually given out, it was never practiced: the Forest Department failed to attract a suitable candidate for the job, and a few years later it abandoned the idea of one large concession altogether. Alternatively, it began to hand out small-scale and short-term licences (*Ibid.*).

The First World War brought most of Mt. Kenya's small-scale and short-term logging to a halt, because the involved businessmen entered the military en masse. After the war, Mt. Kenya's timber industry revived a little: this was mostly due to an extension of the Mombasa-Uganda railroad that headed for Nanyuki. These developments notwithstanding, Mt. Kenya's timber commerce remained largely local. Transporting logs out of the highlands was simply too laborious and expensive, and Mt. Kenya's timber entrepreneurs did not participate in world markets (Castro 1995: 72-73). Nevertheless, in 1932, all of Mt. Kenya's forests below an altitude of 11,000 feet were designated as a forest reserve (Emerton 1998: 6). The colonial administration had already drawn boundaries in 1913 that had formally ended the right of Africans to enter Mt. Kenya's forests without permission (Castro 1995: 49), but with the official designation the colonial administration assumed yet tighter control and access began to be regulated more strictly.

Mt. Kenya's timber industry expanded with the onset of the Second World War. At the time, demands for fuelwood and timber increased quickly because of nearby dehydration factories, which produced dried food rations for British armed forces (Castro 1995: 174). Initially, such increased demands caused the Forest Department to give out more temporary logging permits, and the number of pit sawyer licences issued to Africans increased steadily. But when European- and Asian-owned sawmills began to protest against these pit sawyer licences, which affected their own income, the Forest Department stopped renewing African permits (*Ibid.*: 75-79). This decision frustrated African pit sawyers, who by the early 1940s were embittered over their exclusion from the profits made in Mt. Kenya's timber industry. This bitterness later found resonance during the Mau Mau upheavals: while the colonial administration tried to suppress the Mau Mau rebellion, former pit sawyers aided the movement's fighters in finding groves and caves for shelter, and shared their intimate knowledge of Mt. Kenya's forests with them (Castro 1995: 83). In fact, some Mau Mau figureheads, such as Dedan Kimathi and Waruhiu Itote, both introduced in more detail in the next chapter, had a background in

forestry: Kimathi used to collect seeds for the Forest Department, and Itote had been a fuelwood merchant offended by racial and unfair forest regulations (*Ibid.*: 82).

Commercial and large-scale logging on Mt. Kenya continued throughout the 1940s and 1950s. By the mid 1960s it became evident that ever-increasing demands for timber began to outstrip supply, and local wood shortages began to emerge (Castro 1995: 98). These shortages increased in the decade that followed and eventually a number of measures were taken. Amongst these measures was the establishment of the Nyayo Tea Zone on Mt. Kenya's southern slopes in 1986, in the vicinity of a town called Embu. Essentially, the Nyayo Tea Zone was a state corporation designed to function as a development scheme, and that was sponsored by the World Bank. It had been founded in light of the high prices for tea at the time, which reached record levels worldwide in 1983 and 1984 (see Castro 1995: 99).

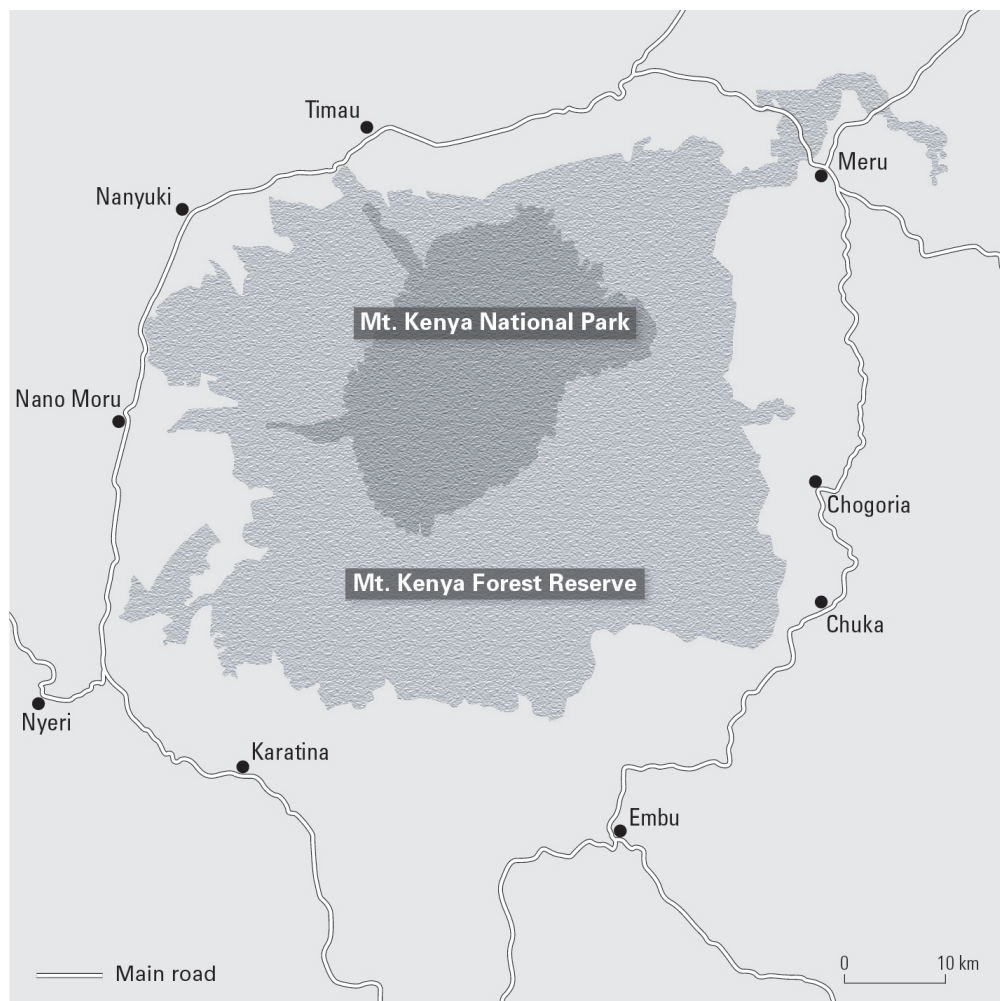
The Nyayo Tea Zone corporation mainly aimed to serve two goals. Firstly, it meant to provide villagers, who were encouraged to cultivate tea in exchange for a percentage of the sale, with an income. In practice, however, this arrangement fed into forms of labour exploitation that recalled the shamba system (see for instance Klopp 2012). Secondly, the Nyayo Tea Zone plantations were to halt forest encroachment, which had intensified ever since the abolition of the shamba system in 1975, by forming a buffer zone between village settlements and forest land (see for instance Castro 1991; VanLeeuwe 2004). Yet, for Mt. Kenya the scheme primarily engendered a different set of consequences: the land around Embu was already densely populated, and in order to make room for tea plantations large tracks of forests were cut down. Moreover, after the Nyayo Tea Zone plantations became productive a number of nearby tea factories were established. These factories required large amounts of fuel wood to dry tea leaves, and as such placed a further burden on Mt. Kenya's already over-stressed forests.

In order to cope with the ever-increasing demand for timber the government expanded Mt. Kenya's tree plantations throughout the 1980s. This again resulted in more logging because forest patches were cleared to make room for such plantations. As the Forest Department failed to supervise these clearings landless pit sawyers moved in and settled in the emptied forestlands (Castro 1995: 102). In 1989, many of these forest dwellers, identified by the Forest Act as illegal squatters, were evicted on government order. According to one source, more than 17,000 people were removed (VanLeeuwe 2004: 188) and the evictions were carried out with much violence. The people who were expelled mostly took up residence just outside Mt. Kenya's forests, on narrow strips of infertile land next to roadsides – little else was available to them because the area was already densely populated. They remained dependent on Mt. Kenya's resources and continued to collect firewood, graze cattle or burn charcoal in Mt. Kenya's forests (Kariuki 2006).

In the years that followed, and related to Kenya's upcoming lobby for forest protection as well as to increased global concerns for environmental conservation more generally, large-scale logging on Mt. Kenya became a matter of public concern. Politicians blamed forest destruction entirely on

villagers, whom they said continued to exploit the forest illegally. Yet, as critical observers such as Bussmann (1996) and Castro (1991) have pointed out, villagers' small-scale offtake arguably had little effect on the mountain's overall grave condition. What really threatened Mt. Kenya, they maintained, was commercial logging carried out with high-tech logging equipment. Politicians turned a blind eye to such practices in exchange for a share in the profits, but in an attempt to save face they deployed what Apter has called the 'formula of blaming the victim' (2005: 33).

The Forest Department steadily increased its influence over Mt. Kenya from the 1930s onwards, but it was not the only institute that claimed authority over the region. In 1949, the National Parks called into existence Mt. Kenya National Park. This Park covered the entire surface above the 11,000 feet boundary of the forest reserve.²⁴ As such, the National Park was essentially founded as an island in the midst of forests that were under supervision of the Forest Department. The map below shows the situation:



DeVink Mapdesign Ltd

The foundation of Mt. Kenya National Park gave way to an administrative division that eventually proved highly problematic.

In the first decades after 1949, the arrangements did not cause many problems. In 1959, Mt. Kenya National Park came under the auspices of Bill Woodley – after he had served under David Sheldrick throughout the 1940s and 1950s he was promoted to chief warden of both Mt. Kenya and the neighbouring Aberdares mountain range. Woodley was familiar with the Mt. Kenya area, which he had come to know well during his contribution to the fight against the Mau Mau (Herne 1999). In fact, after Woodley became warden for Mt. Kenya and the Aberdares, he scouted some of his one-time Mau Mau enemies for his ranger team. It has even been suggested that one of the Mau Mau's former commanders, called Muhangia, eventually became Woodley's right-hand man and closest confidante (*Ibid.*: 279).

Due to its rocky surface, and due to the low temperatures typical for Mt. Kenya's higher altitudes, Mt. Kenya National Park never hosted much wildlife apart from some rodent and bird species. For Bill Woodley this was not necessarily a problem: he considered it his main task to fight poaching (see Steinhart 2006: 200-201) and, although Woodley only had an official mandate over the national park, there was no rule or piece of legislation that prohibited him from pursuing poachers in Mt. Kenya's lower forests.

In 1978, Bill Woodley left his post on Mt. Kenya and the Aberdares mountain range and returned to Tsavo National Park. In the years that followed the management of Mt. Kenya National Park largely stagnated, not least due to the integration of the National Parks and the Game Department that I discussed earlier. The situation changed when Richard Leakey took over the WCMD in 1989. Among the new staff recruited by Leakey was Bongo Woodley, one of Bill Woodley's sons, whom Leakey appointed as the new warden of Mt. Kenya National Park. Leakey demanded that Bongo Woodley follow the KWS's military training camps – it was an experience, Leakey later wrote in his memoirs, that made quite an impression on the young Woodley. He quoted Bongo Woodley saying:

I had been born and raised in Kenya, but like most white kids I mingled more with white than with black. So there I was in the barracks – all black Kenyans and two whites, me and my brother, Danny.²⁵ Initially, it was tough: who was I going to talk to besides Danny? But I found out that all of us shared basic issues: worries about our homes and families, those who were sick or who had died. And we shared common goals: protecting the parks, building up KWS, surviving the training. So it gave me a very different feel for what Kenya is about.

Leakey & Morell (2001: 195)

As a son to Bill Woodley, Bongo Woodley had been brought up to care for Kenya's wildlife, and father and son formed a couple that inspired different adventure and travel books (see for instance Caputo 2002; Holman 1978; Ridgeway 1999). More importantly, Bongo Woodley inherited his father's military outlook on wildlife control. In an interview with a South African newspaper Bongo Woodley said that he had always thought of his father as a hero, who had 'an amazing job' (*Mail & Guardian*, 11 June 2003) that 'involved everything' (*Ibid.*) that he himself later did on Mt. Kenya. A

local mountain guide called John Mwangi,²⁶ who had already been climbing Mt. Kenya for decades by the time we met in the course of 2012 and who had observed how Bongo Woodley had directed Mt. Kenya over the years, said that Bongo had been a strong leader who successfully scared off criminals. ‘Bongo used to be very strict so you had to be very good’ he stated, and added that Bongo Woodley was very effective in scaring and killing poachers.

After Bongo Woodley had taken the post on Mt. Kenya, relations between the Forest Department and the KWS became more problematic. In the course of the 1990s, emerging global conservation lobbies began to underscore the need to safeguard key wildlife habitats, and slowly old colonial ideas that the protection of wildlife primarily consisted of preventing and tracing poaching began to be complimented with wider ecological concerns. Accordingly, the problems inherent to Mt. Kenya’s administrative division began to show: wildlife rangers argued in favour of protecting Mt. Kenya’s forests for these were, amongst others, vital habitat for elephants and different antelope species, yet rangers had no power to actually intervene in forest management. In the meantime, the Forest Department was rapidly depleting Mt. Kenya’s forests. There was little that wildlife officers could do – the Forest Department had a mandate to carry out its activities while the authority of wildlife rangers was limited to the National Park where, ironically, there was hardly any wildlife due to its rugged terrain and the low temperatures.

In the context of globally changing perceptions about what ‘good wildlife conservation’ looked like, the ongoing depletion of Mt. Kenya’s forests was an eyesore to Bongo Woodley. He could not guard Mt. Kenya’s wildlife as long as forests were being felled, and he held Forest Department executives responsible. During one of our conversations in which he recounted his time on Mt. Kenya he indicated that the higher he got in the Forest Department hierarchy, the more difficult it had been for him to seek cooperation. He explained that all managerial issues were forwarded to higher offices, where decision-making was typically delayed or put off entirely. Field officers were simply told to obey orders from above – they generally followed instructions, for their jobs and income depended on the goodwill of their superiors. He added that, in general, he had had a good understanding with the foresters located on Mt. Kenya but stressed that these lower-ranking employees were in no position to challenge the ways in which logging on Mt. Kenya, or in the country at large, had been institutionalized over the decades. From the provincial level up, Bongo Woodley had found that Forest Department staff showed little interest in forest conservation. ‘There was a strong cover-up mentality’ he concluded. Mt. Kenya’s forests were being plundered, he said, but higher officials publicly maintained that logging was not taking place.

Bongo Woodley’s hands were tied. As long as the Forest Department was in charge of Mt. Kenya Forest Reserve there was little that he could do to change the situation. In 1992, the KWS and the Forest Department had signed a memorandum of understanding that was supposed to improve the cooperation between the two institutions in areas where, like Mt. Kenya, both were active. But the memorandum was mainly the result of donor pressure, and the agreement never became much more

than an official statement. In the meantime, the struggles between Bongo Woodley and the Forest Department continued. It was against the background of this conflict that Bongo Woodley drafted Mt. Kenya's World Heritage application in 1996.

World Heritage consolidating colonial legacies

Bongo Woodley's frustration over the Forest Department's commercial logging set the contours for the World Heritage application. Woodley indicated to me that he was convinced that it was necessary to withdraw the Forest Department's mandate and to give the KWS full authority to oversee both the national park and the forest reserve. With this in mind, different aspects of the World Heritage application document deserve closer attention.

First, the World Heritage Site that Woodley proposed covered a large area, and far exceeded the national park. Initially, Woodley had suggested including all of Mt. Kenya's forests in the designation, but following Thorsell's field evaluation he had adjusted the boundaries so as to leave out the most severely logged areas. Still, after this revision the World Heritage Site that Woodley proposed continued to include much forest land. In fact, the bigger part of it consisted of land designated as forest reserve (see the full page map at the beginning of this dissertation). Since Mt. Kenya World Heritage Site came to include large parts of a reserve under the supervision of the Forest Department, one might expect that the latter played a vital role in the application. This was not the case. On the contrary, according to Woodley, the Forest Department was never consulted or even informed about the proceedings.

A short factsheet accompanied Mt. Kenya's World Heritage application, which, among other things, made inquiries about the ownership status of the proposed site. It was suggested in this factsheet that the KWS owned the entire area under application (The Government of the Republic of Kenya 1996: 1). Here and there the Forest Department was referred to as the KWS's co-supervisor but no mention was made of the fact that, in practice, the KWS had no mandate whatsoever over the bigger part of the area addressed by the application. Since the application was kept completely within the KWS, with David Western finally authorizing it and sending it off, the Forest Department was never offered an opportunity to object. These conditions illustrate the process of 'rendering technical' – a matter I introduced in the previous chapter. The formal inquiries about Mt. Kenya's ownership status imply that sites have an unmistakable proprietor, which can unproblematically be identified and listed. But this conceals that heritage is a disputed property relation that, by its very nature, forestalls the presence of a self-evident or absolute owner. In the case of World Heritage, disputes are likely to materialize between different government institutes, for the World Heritage Convention endows states with exclusive management rights. By extension, the factsheet thus conceals that states are not

unanimous administrative blocks, and that debates over heritage ownership can pitch different state actors against each another.

Secondly, the application document that Bongo Woodley drafted only spoke of Mt. Kenya's natural features, and focused solely on the mountain's geographical and ecological qualities. Among other things, it stated that the region was extraordinary because Mt. Kenya is a tropical mountain with snow-capped peaks; it mentioned that Mt. Kenya is a vital water catchment area with notable geological formations; and it asserted that Mt. Kenya gives shelter to unique flora and fauna (The Government of the Republic of Kenya 1996: 5). It extolled the mountain's glaciers and tarns, and its richness in alpine and sub-alpine indigenous forests. But not once did the application document mention the human activities carried out on Mt. Kenya: it did not note Mt. Kenya's commercial logging or the presence of shamba system plantations and human settlements, nor did it discuss how people continued to collect firewood and graze cattle. On the contrary – in the document's final section, Bongo Woodley suggested that Mt. Kenya was a pristine wilderness area that 'never has or ever would be used for settlement, agriculture or industry' (*Ibid.*).

Of course, Bongo Woodley knew that a depiction of Mt. Kenya as pristine wilderness was not realistic. In fact, on different occasions he recounted to me how he had spent most of his days actively fighting all of the aforementioned activities. I think that Bongo Woodley nevertheless staged Mt. Kenya as a wilderness area to buttress his own command. After Richard Leakey had founded the KWS in 1990, the organization's wardens and rangers soon emerged as the ultimate and exclusive caretakers of Kenya's nature. This 'nature', in turn, drew heavily on colonial images of Africa as a wild and untamed place where human influences were largely absent. So for Bongo Woodley to appear as Mt. Kenya's only true, legitimate caretaker he only had to make sure that the area, at least on paper, appeared 'natural' enough.

The application document described Mt. Kenya's environment exclusively in the language of the natural sciences. This is another way in which Mt. Kenya's World Heritage nomination 'rendered the mountain technical'. This had various consequences. Among other things, the restricted use of a natural scientific discourse obscured alternative descriptions of Mt. Kenya, such as those that articulate the mountain's political, religious or ethnic histories – these histories form the basis for the next chapter, where I point out that Mt. Kenya's representation as a site of nature silenced other legacies that were politically delicate in the late 1990s. At the same time, the language of the natural sciences offered Bongo Woodley a chance to cover up how political his venture actually was: he was not merely interested in conserving Mt. Kenya's lakes and tarns and animal species, but he aimed to nullify the management mandate of the Forest Department and wanted to assume control over the entire region. And thirdly, the document's use of natural scientific jargon concealed that what the application proposed to conserve was not 'real nature', understood as actually identifiable ecological processes (Soper 1995), but ideals of nature reminiscent of colonial domination. Let me clarify this last point.

Bongo Woodley was one of the implementing agents of KWS policy. Under supervision of KWS director Richard Leakey this policy came to reinforce the colonial stereotypes of an African nature devoid of people and of military fortress conservation that I demonstrated earlier. Bongo Woodley personified these stereotypes. He made no secret of his warlike operations (one of which I describe in more detail in the next section), and he paraded his disciplinary methods and as well as his sternness. Tellingly, after Bongo Woodley retired from the KWS he did not pursue a career in nature conservation. Instead, he worked for security and aviation companies such as the ArmorGroup and Everett Aviation, where he put the military and intelligence skills that he had cultivated on Mt. Kenya to further use. Since Bongo Woodley was responsible for the entire application I argue that Mt. Kenya's World Heritage listing reproduced the colonial conservation ideals that Woodley represented. These ideals were based on colour bar distinctions, and poised white conservationists against black offenders (see among others Adams & Hutton 2007; Brockington & Igoe 2006; Carruthers 2006; Duffy 2000).

Although I find it necessary to problematize Bongo Woodley's position and his background, as otherwise we might fail to see how colonial principles of nature and nature conservation became a part of Mt. Kenya World Heritage Site, I do not mean to put the burden of this on Bongo Woodley personally. Rather, different structural conditions underpinned his actions. Woodley indeed embodied a militaristic conservation style that characterized colonial conservation efforts, but his practices were sustained by Richard Leakey's reorganization of the KWS. This reorganization was supported by the World Bank, which, in turn, was an effect of the global environmental pessimism that characterized the 1980s and 1990s that itself stemmed from culturally specific ideals of unspoiled nature. I have no intention of defending Woodley's fortress-style conservation, and I disapprove of his military tactics, but I also see how he was part of a larger system kept in place by a set of dynamics far beyond his control or his personal intentions.

This notwithstanding, we should not forget that Mt. Kenya's World Heritage application was the private project of one white officer only. I want to stress this point, for it seems that Mt. Kenya is not unique in this regard. Peter Howard,²⁷ a conservationist who worked for different large organizations including IUCN, and who established an online database of all of Africa's World Heritage Sites (African World Heritage Sites n.d.), told me that especially during World Heritage's first decades white communities largely controlled the designation of African World Heritage Sites. He clarified that it had mostly been expats and white residents who had nominated African sites for World Heritage listing. They had had little trust in African state administrations, he said, and they had taken World Heritage to be a venue for protecting what they considered valuable African properties against failing state bureaucracies. I believe that this indicates that World Heritage is even more Western-centric than scholars like Byrne (1991) and Smith (2006) have already suggested.

Before moving on, I also want to emphasize that, even though I believe there are good reasons to claim that Mt. Kenya World Heritage Site perpetuates colonial ideals and assumptions, I still maintain

that we must be careful in conceiving of African nature conservation in general as a mere neo-colonial venture. Political ecologists and post-colonial scholars have rightly pointed out how contemporary nature conservation efforts have come to incorporate older North-South inequalities (see for instance Adams & Hutton 2007; Brockington & Scholfield 2010^C; West et al. 2006), how they expose Africans to top-down Western-centric conservation ideals (see for instance Duffy 2000; Peluso 1993; Strickland 2001), or how they reinforce black-white boundaries (see for instance Garland 2008; McDermott Hughes 2005). Yet, merely understanding African conservation as a colonial relic does not account for the enthusiasm with which many African stakeholders subscribe to conservation stereotypes and welcome conservation NGOs (Drinkwater 1989; Garland 2008; Gibson 1999). So rather than readily accepting that international organizations impose nature conservation programmes on African subjects, I find it more productive to conceive of nature conservation as a form of negotiation. This necessitates that we study the physical settings where conservation ‘takes place’ (understood as both emerging from and seizing a particular locale), and also that we keep an eye on zones of contestation and constantly shifting positionalities (Brosius 1999: 283). If we refrain from doing so we are likely to perceive of African subjects as mere conservation victims, thereby depriving them of any form of agency (see also Carruthers 2006).

In closing, I want to say a few words on how Mt. Kenya’s World Heritage listing affected the way in which international observers came to judge Mt. Kenya’s plight. In the aftermath of the World Heritage nomination process different global onlookers criticized the Forest Department, not in the least due to Jim Thorsell’s evaluation report. In this report, Thorsell, in keeping with Bongo Woodley, spoke fondly of the KWS but demonized the Forest Department’s behaviour:

Current management of Mt. Kenya National Park is judged to be of a high standard. The park has a practical management plan which is being implemented with support from the European Union and others. New staff quarters and entrance gates have been completed with a loan from the World Bank. There is an active research programme and tourism is well-managed. Special plans for a fenced rhino reserve are being carried out and wildlife populations, though reduced from previous years, are still healthy.

The situation in the surrounding Forest Reserve is in sharp contrast to the high level of management existing in the National Park. During the field inspection IUCN observed the serious levels of encroachment that is [sic.] taking place in the Forest Reserve. The inadequacies of management of the forest reserve have been geographically presented in the recent study by Bussmann (1996) and the problems are widely known within Kenya. Primarily the threats come from overharvesting of forest products and illegal removal of Camphor and Cedar. Some areas have been taken over by settlement and exotic plantations have replaced much indigenous forests. Marijuana plantations have destroyed much natural forest in the south-east of the Reserve and no attempts are being made to control their spread.

(IUCN 1997: 69)

Thorsell presented the KWS as Mt. Kenya’s rightful and responsible custodian, and insisted that the Forest Department neglected its conservation responsibilities.

Later, World Heritage-related reports on Mt. Kenya echoed Jim Thorsell's. For instance, a 2003 IUCN report expressed worries over the Forest Department's capacities and mentioned being 'concerned about the lack of resources that hinder the Forest Department to make an effective contribution to the protection of the Site' (ICUN 2003: 3). A 2001 UNESCO decision document gave further voice to IUCN's concern over ongoing illegal logging and reprimanded the Kenyan Minister for Environment and Natural Resources, who was the Forest Department's direct supervisor and executive, for his intention to deforest 68,000 hectares for settlement purposes (UNESCO 2001: 25).

Ultimately, Mt. Kenya's World Heritage designation had mixed consequences for Bongo Woodley and his crusade against the Forest Department. Most importantly, the World Heritage listing had no juridical force. IUCN supported the KWS's position that the Forest Department exploited Mt. Kenya, but World Heritage status in itself changed nothing in terms of the KWS's authority. As such, the inscription on the World Heritage List did not have the effect that Bongo Woodley had hoped for. Perhaps this was inevitable, as the inscription itself was a derivative of the situation that it meant to solve – consequently, Mt. Kenya's World Heritage designation did not offer a solution to existing management problems, but rather recreated the power structures that sustained these problems. At the same time, Mt. Kenya's World Heritage listing introduced an additional layer of inspection, and it brought the mountain under closer surveillance of large organizations. As such, World Heritage offered Bongo Woodley a discursive sphere in which the Forest Department's corruption became a global concern, rather than a merely Kenyan affair. How this had an impact on the mountain's administration is the topic of the last section.

Mt. Kenya's tussles over mandate after 1997

In 2000, a revision of Mt. Kenya's administrative boundaries took place, aggravating the opposition between the KWS and the Forest Department. This revision was partially reinforced by Mt. Kenya's World Heritage designation, which had given the KWS more international acclaim, but it found its real origins in a set of developments that had started some five years earlier.

In 1995, national and international stakeholders who feared for the future of Kenya's forests founded the Kenya Forest Working Group (KFWG). Among these stakeholders were the East African Wildlife Society, IUCN and UNEP, and soon after foundation the KFWG was funded by Dutch and Swedish NGOs as well as by different UN programmes. The KFWG was essentially a lobby platform founded as a civil society organization and designed to expose the government's share in the country's corrupt timber industry. As such, the KFWG largely targeted an international audience – within Kenya, the general public was already widely aware of these practices. The KFWG used Mt. Kenya for its first shame-and-blame offensive. The choice was deliberate, one of the KFWG's earliest associates²⁸ told me during a meeting at the ministerial office where he worked in 2013. Mt. Kenya

had given name to the country, he stressed, and therefore it carried an unmistakable iconic value. Besides, by the time that the KFWG came round to planning its first campaign Mt. Kenya had just acquired World Heritage status. As such, international conservation audiences had been freshly reminded of the mountain's merits and importance, and of what would be lost if the mountain was not protected properly.

Although there was widespread talk about Mt. Kenya's grave condition at the time, the KFWG faced a problem: there was no official report with hard data. There were eyewitness accounts as well as a few files on the most severely affected areas, like Imenti on the mountain's northern slopes, but a diagnosis of Mt. Kenya's overall condition did not exist as yet – this was primarily a result of the inaccessibility of the mountain's thick forests, of the vastness of its terrain and of a number of other practical constraints, such as the dangers involved in aerial assessments due to the area's complicated aerodynamics. To fill this gap, the KFWG decided to carry out its own survey. To this end, a Belgian expat called Christian Lambrechts, who at the time worked for UNEP, visited Mt. Kenya in early 1999. During this visit, Lambrechts²⁹ contacted Bongo Woodley. Lambrechts recounted to me in June 2012 how he informed Mt. Kenya's senior warden of the KFWG's intentions, and managed to implicate Woodley in the KFWG's operation.

Two men subsequently began to make plans for an aerial inspection: Woodley would pilot the two-seater Aviat Huskey that he used for his air patrols, and Lambrechts would assess Mt. Kenya's forests from the passenger's seat. They soon faced the problem of funding, for the KFWG only had a limited budget. Bongo Woodley told me that they had therefore turned to Richard Leakey, who at the time was serving his second term as KWS director. He said that Leakey had agreed to subsidize the survey, and let the two men use the KWS's Aviat Huskey for free. In addition, Leakey promised that the KWS would cover the fuel costs, and that the organization would fund the publication of the survey's final results. Once the cooperation between the KFWG and the KWS had been established, Richard Leakey introduced another KWS officer, Gideon Gathaara, to the project. Gathaara was not meant to contribute to the survey's fieldwork, which was done entirely by Bongo Woodley and Christian Lambrechts. Rather, he was brought in to give the study a black face, one informant who opted to remain anonymous told me. This person explained to me that Gathaara's participation was intended to disguise the fact that, in practice, the survey was a white men's undertaking, and added how Leakey had indicated that the project was likely to be rejected as a neo-colonial conservation initiative if it was carried out entirely by white practitioners. Just before Leakey resigned from the KWS for the first time in 1994 he had personally experienced how Kenyan nature conservation continued to arouse racial critiques, and my informant believed that he had wanted to shield the survey from similar attacks. In the final report, Bongo Woodley and Christian Lambrechts were mentioned by name only once, in the introduction – after that they were anonymized into 'the survey's pilot' and 'the survey's rear seat observer' (Gathaara 1999: 6-7).

The report that resulted from the survey spread an alarmist message: it presented Mt. Kenya's condition as very grave and very urgent. For instance, it stressed the negative effects of charcoal production, overgrazing, marihuana cultivation and extensive illegal logging, and it supported such claims with impressive photographs. Christian Lambrechts told me that he and Bongo Woodley had deliberately made use of a specific survey method, called 'total survey count' (designed in the late 1970s for counting animals), knowing full well that this method would generate dramatic results. Total count surveys rest on data collected in a few relatively small geographic zones, which is used to make calculations for a larger area. Because total count surveys rely entirely on the findings gathered through the aerial inspection of a fairly limited number of demarcated blocks, biases become proportionally much more important (Norton-Griffiths 1978: 87). With respect to Mt. Kenya's survey, these biases were generated on purpose: Woodley and Lambrechts intentionally flew over the most severely affected forest patches, and generalized their findings for the mountain at large. The founder of the total survey count, a man called Mike Norton-Griffiths, later reviewed Bongo Woodley's and Christian Lambrecht's survey. Norton-Griffiths wrote a report on the biases and errors that had occurred (see Norton-Griffiths 2004), and told me in an email about the overall conclusion that he had drawn: Woodley's and Lambrechts's basic interpretation that Mt. Kenya's condition differed substantially from earlier decades was sound, but they had sensationalized their findings.

Bongo Woodley's and Christian Lambrechts's manipulation of survey data should warn us against uncritically receiving the 'evidence' of environmental threats. This is not to suggest that there are no real ecological processes taking place that should concern us, but in the political language that the conservation industry draws on such real ecological processes are easily confused with cultural models of what cannot be lost and should be preserved (Soper 1995: 196). This political language largely derives its authority from scientific material gathered for the purpose (see also Beck 1996: 3), through which it makes claims to objective truths (Feindt & Oels 2005; Hajer 1995; Mühlhäusler & Peace 2006). The problem is that when such 'objective truths' are dramatized in the public sphere, they tend to enable and justify immediate and drastic interventions (see also Bindé 2000; Büscher & Dressler 2007; Mehta 2001) – this is precisely what happened with regards to Mt. Kenya.

The survey report managed to elicit the international attention that the KFWG had aimed for, and it was widely received as an eye-opener. To this day, conservation organizations such as the World Wide Fund,³⁰ IUCN,³¹ and the Convention on Biological Diversity³² refer to it uncritically, as do scholars from various disciplinary backgrounds (see for instance Kariuki 2006; Kleinschroth et al. 2013; Teklehaimanot et al. 2004). But most importantly in terms of the developments that followed, Richard Leakey ratified the survey. As KWS director he wrote a short introduction to the survey report, in which he stated:

Kenya is best known as a land of arid and semi-arid habitats with little forest. Sadly, the little there is has been the focus of unplanned, usually illegal utilisation with disastrous consequences for bio-diversity,

catchment and loss of soil. As a country, Kenya cannot afford to watch the remaining natural forests being destroyed. The forests are a critical and invaluable national asset that must be protected.

This report is clear and provides unequivocal data on the current situation. I hope that with such evidence, actions will follow to put an end to the wanton degradation of our nation's natural forests.

Gathaara (1999: iii)

Action was indeed taken – by Richard Leakey himself.

In the time between Bongo Woodley's and Christian Lambrecht's fieldwork and the publication of the final results, Richard Leakey had left the KWS again and had become Kenya's Head of Civil Service. In that capacity, and following the shocking outcome of the survey, Leakey announced in July 2000 that Mt. Kenya Forest Reserve was to be reclassified as a national reserve. This reclassification implied important changes: it took the management authority over Mt. Kenya's forests from the Forest Department and located it with the KWS, as the Wildlife Act identifies the KWS as the only lawful supervisor of national reserves. The Forest Act situated control over forest reserves within the Forest Department, but Leakey's intervention meant that Mt. Kenya *was* no longer a forest reserve. The Kenya Gazette, which publishes all government decisions, announced the administrative change in clear language and stated that, from July 2000 onwards, 'the Mt. Kenya National Reserve shall fall under and be managed by Kenya Wildlife Service' (The Government of the Republic of Kenya 2000).

On the very day that Mt. Kenya's forests were re-designated as a national reserve, Bongo Woodley carried out a large operation during which, he told me, about twelve hundred people were arrested on charges of using Mt. Kenya's resources illegally. I got the feeling from Bongo Woodley's account that he had primarily done this to demonstrate to the country that things had changed, and that, in the future, strict rules would be enforced to halt the degradation of Mt. Kenya. I understand the arrest campaign as a way of showing-off newly gained power. However, it soon became evident that the Forest Department had no intention of leaving Mt. Kenya's forests, even though its mandate had been suspended. Senior Forest Department officers took little notice of the legislative change. Instead, they asserted that, since the 1932 decree that had called into existence Mt. Kenya Forest Reserve had not been revoked, Leakey's decision was unlawful – even twelve years later, a regional forest officer³³ based in Nyeri insisted to me that there had never been any administrative change. One of his colleagues, a zonal forest officer³⁴ stationed at a nearby office, informed me that he continued to tell his staff to ignore the KWS's claim. He said that the re-designation was 'a misinterpretation by the government'.

Christian Lambrechts told me that he and Bongo Woodley quickly came to realize that, as long as the Forest Department refused to accept the judicial changes, the KWS's new mandate was of little value. Once the initial commotion created by the 1999 survey report began to ebb away, they feared that little would change after all. This encouraged the two men to once more take action. Lambrechts

explained to me that he and Bongo Woodley had primarily been concerned that the regazettement of the forest reserve into a national reserve would be swept under the carpet, and that it would end up as a useless document in the drawer of one or other minister. With this in mind, Lambrechts and Woodley decided to carry out another survey.

The second survey of Mt. Kenya took place in 2002. Bongo Woodley and Christian Lambrechts were again the two main instigators, but this time they were supported by a British doctoral candidate called Hilde VanLeeuwe who was affiliated to the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology, and by KFWG coordinator Michael Gachanja. The latter replaced Gideon Gathaara and, as a black Kenyan, assumed the mantle of lending the survey political credibility. This second survey used different methods than the 1999 survey, and it employed a sample collection count rather than a total survey count (VanLeeuwe et al. 2003: 9). As a result, the final output of the second survey was far less dramatic than the results of the 1999 survey, although Mt. Kenya's actual condition had hardly changed – Christian Lambrechts told me that a three-year timespan was far too short to measure the impact of forest regeneration measures. Nevertheless, the second survey was presented as evidence that Mt. Kenya's state of conservation had improved significantly after it had been put under the supervision of the KWS in 2000 (VanLeeuwe et al. 2003: 21-22).

The 2002 survey clearly meant to buttress the KWS's reputation but, according to Christian Lambrechts, this had not been its main purpose. He told me that he and Bongo Woodley had primarily taken the 2002 survey as an opportunity to spread the information that the forest reserve had been re-designated. The survey report's appendix therefore actually carried its main message: it showed a copy of Richard Leakey's decision as it had been announced in the Kenya Gazette, and it displayed a letter signed by the then Minister of Wildlife Francis Nyenze that confirmed that, from July 2000 onwards, the KWS had the sole legal mandate to act. Woodley and Lambrechts had anticipated that the 2002 survey report would reach a global audience, just as the 1999 report had done, and they reasoned that the more parties knew about the re-designation, the more difficult it would be for the Forest Department to pretend that it had not taken place.

Despite Bongo Woodley's and Christian Lambrecht's efforts, the Forest Department's executives never bowed to the re-designation. The situation was further complicated when the government adopted a new Forest Act in 2005. This act dissolved the Forest Department and called into existence the Kenya Forest Service (KFS), which mimicked the corporate structure of the KWS. The act gave the KFS a mandate over all Kenyan forests, regardless of their exact classification, and I have heard many foresters explain that it therefore overrules Richard Leakey's 2000 order. I never found anyone willing to admit that this legislative revision was motivated by the struggles taking place on Mt. Kenya. But it is not hard to imagine that those involved in Kenya's illegal commercial logging sector did not want to see Mt. Kenya's developments repeated elsewhere, and tightened their judicial hold on the country's forests out of precaution.

In 2006, after nearly seventeen years of duty and fighting the Forest Department's mandate, Bongo Woodley retired from the KWS. Different senior wardens followed in his footsteps. One of them, who asked to remain anonymous, having been reprimanded by his superiors shortly before our first meeting for sharing too much information with the public, complained extensively about the serious conflicts between foresters and wildlife rangers. Bongo Woodley had said that during his time the relationship between Mt. Kenya's Forest Department staff and KWS staff had been relatively peaceful, but this warden sketched an entirely different picture. He spoke of violent clashes, and recounted to me how a group of foresters had blocked one of Mt. Kenya's forest roads to prevent a KWS truck from entering. He also told me about arson that had recently destroyed a newly built KWS housing complex, and he was convinced that certain foresters played a key role in the poaching that his teams tried to fight. 'Otherwise, you explain to me why I find elephant carcasses next to their plantations' he noted. Overall, he expected that, sooner or later, foresters and rangers would fight out their disputes by taking up arms against one another.

When I asked foresters and forest guards for their views, they typically underscored their subordinate position vis-à-vis the KWS. For instance, they told me that the KWS has good and strong vehicles while the KFS lacks any mode of transport; they said that the KWS has first-rate arms while the KFS is given police force cast-offs; they complained that the KWS has fancy park gates and ranger quarters, while KFS foresters are confined to forest stations in a deplorable state; and they generally stressed that, while the KWS attracts considerable donor funding because it merchandizes its charismatic wildlife, the KFS's budget is so constrained that many forest stations do not even have a wheelbarrow for planting trees. Thus, both foresters and wildlife rangers uphold the rhetoric that the KWS is superior to the KFS, and that the latter is a mere shadow of the first. This rhetoric is saturated with suspicion, distrust and envy. Only occasionally did a wildlife officer speak fondly of a forester in my presence, or vice versa. Most of the time, both camps provided me with plenty of reasons why they were not on good terms, and illustrated this with examples of when and how they had fallen out.

Contrary to the above statements, which portray Mt. Kenya's KWS and KFS staff as fierce enemies that actively and continuously fight one another, foresters and wildlife rangers are not in a constant state of warfare. In fact, individual rangers and foresters from time to time admitted to me that they patrol together sometimes, or share other work. Still, their decades-old antagonism has established a script of unresolvable hostility that all parties concerned have learned well. One of the effects of this script is that it covers up rivalries with colleagues from the same institute: the enemy is the sister department, not one's colleagues or superiors. But discontent about the functioning of one's own institute is felt nevertheless. For instance, the warden mentioned above, who did not want his identity revealed, complained about how his superiors had made it a habit to play down management problems. He found this troublesome because, in doing so, they deprived him of the opportunity to make his grievances heard. Different foresters and forest guards also told me that they felt cheated by their superiors. The 2005 Forest Act had promised the entire KFS staff better working conditions and

better payment, but by 2012 many had not seen such promises come true. Shortly after the adoption of the act senior officials began to receive higher payment, but employees lower in rank were told to wait because the KFS did not have the means to raise all salaries at once. A number of underpaid employees told me that this had created a severe rift in the organization, and that it had put juniors in an uncomfortable position: they did not want to complain too loudly about how they were discriminated, out of fear of losing their job altogether.

Finally, the ongoing conflict between the KFS and the KWS makes the conservation efforts of numerous organizations and projects in the region difficult, and most initiatives die a slow death due to the administrative chasm – indeed, some organizations downright refuse to collaborate with the KFS such as the Green Belt Movement, which strongly disapproves of how the 2005 Forest Act reintroduced the shamba system, and other organizations simply witness how their projects stall because the KFS and the KWS fail to come to an agreement. One of these organizations is Rhino Ark, which in 2010 announced that it planned to fund the construction of a ring-fence around Mt. Kenya. Rhino Ark knew in advance that the project would be difficult because it had already carried out a similar project on the nearby Aberdares mountain range. And that had taken twenty-one years to finish.

Prior to Rhino Ark's intervention on Mt. Kenya there had been a range of smaller fencing projects on the mountain. These projects had mostly been carried out with funding from either the Bill Woodley Mt. Kenya Trust (BWMKT), founded by Bongo Woodley in remembrance of his father,³⁵ or from UNDP Compact, a small grants programme sponsored by UNDP and the Global Environment Facility. The building of these fences had not been coordinated, one of BWMKT's employees explained to me, and this had resulted in a number of problems. In some regions, the patchy distribution of fences had, for instance, funnelled wildlife into inhabited areas that were not yet fenced, where human-wildlife conflicts then rapidly increased. Also, the fences were generally of a low quality and therefore had failed to stop larger mammals such as elephants. Because of this, the inhabitants of some villages had come to perceive of the fences not as an intervention that meant to protect them, but as an intervention that meant to demarcate where they were allowed and not allowed to go. Out of protest these people had begun to cut wires, and they continue to do so whenever the fences are repaired.

Rhino Ark's approach differs notably from these small-scale and isolated fencing schemes: the organization plans to build a top-quality ring-fence that goes all the way round the mountain. Rhino Ark claims in different flyers and on its website that the fence will eventually be 400 kilometres long, and that the total operation will cost approximately \$12 million.

Not long after Rhino Ark had announced its plans the first problems emerged, one of the project's partners told me in confidence. Most importantly, the KWS and the KFS failed to agree on the fence's location: the KWS wanted it built at a low altitude so that the fence would encompass most of the mountain's forests, but the KFS wanted it built at a high altitude, approximately on the boundaries of

the National Park, because it feared that it would otherwise lose access to forest plantations. Moreover, the KWS and the KFS disagreed over the number of gates that the ring-fence was to have. The first wanted only a few entrance points so as to effectively control access to the area, but the KFS protested. The 2005 Forest Act granted the organization the right to sell permits to villagers for a range of forest activities, such as grazing cattle, collecting firewood, or shamba system cultivation. These were the KFS's only income-generating activities, but limiting villagers' access to the area would make it difficult to pursue them.

In sum, Rhino Ark's fencing project soon got caught in arguments over whether the KWS or the KFS had the power to decide. The project's partner told me that Rhino Ark had found a temporary solution to this: it had decided to start building in an area where it knew that there would be few disputes. This area was Embu, where Rhino Ark could follow the already-fixed boundary of the Nyayo Tea Zone, which was set up between forests and villages decades ago. But the project's partner also indicated to me that he did not know how to continue afterwards and he foresaw that, by the time that the fence passed Embu and headed further north and west, disputes between the KWS and KFS would escalate again. What the outcome of these disputes would be, no one could tell.