

**“Who Took Our Land - The World Bank or the State?”  
The Land Question in the State Plantation Forests in Tanzania:  
The Case of the Sao Hill forests, 1962-2012**

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*Abstract*

The Sao Hill plantation forest, with 135,903ha, is the biggest state plantation in Tanzania. Its history goes back to 1939. The postcolonial period tremendously increased its acreage from 18,000ha in 1962 to 135,903ha by 2012. Despite the biggest share of the land it holds, there is little documentation by scholars, especially on the aspects of the source of capital and the process it went through to acquire land from customary owners in the 1970s. This article discusses the expansion strategies of the sole state-owned Sao Hill forests, with a glance at the source of capital and land for the expansion in postcolonial Tanzania. The paper raises the problems that arose because of the expansion and the response of customary land owners and the state between 1962 and 2012. It uses archival sources and interviews as the main sources of data to arrive at its conclusion. The main findings show that the World Bank directly and indirectly influenced the introduction of Sao Hill plantation forestry as it was its loan conditions that determined the size and geographical locations of the land to be planted trees. Therefore, the post-planting period experienced land contestations from the formerly customary land owners as the planting exercise's pace was determined by the World Bank.

*Keywords: Tanzania, Mufindi, Sao Hill, forests, land.*

**1. Introduction**

The Sao Hill plantation forest, the biggest plantation forest in Tanzania (135,903ha), was established in 1939 by the British colonial government with scientific justification on environmental conservation (IBRD, 1961; Voss, 2005: 18; Barton, 2002:75); McCracken, 2003: 157-176; Swai, n.d.; Showers, 2005: 135-176). The tea plantations and an iota of white farmers at Sao Hill area were at the centre of the environmental conservation (Chuhila & Kifyasi, 2016; Olwig et al., 2015; Zahabu et. al., 2009). The tea farms in Mufindi district were established by German expatriate veterans of the First World War in 1926 (Kangalawe, 2012). In the post-colonial period, the Sao Hill plantation underwent a tremendous expansion by the state in the rubric of industrialisation and rural transformation. The Sao Hill plantation forest expanded its acreage through the villagization policy of 1971. The policy was implemented by resettling the then scattered rural people into state-selected centres, which the state claimed that the process would make it easier to provide social services like schools and dispensaries (Shao, 1986).

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The land left by the Mufindi villagers when moving into the new villages—famously known as *ujamaa* villages (socialist villages)—in some parts of the district was ‘negotiated’ (Shivji, 1998; Mukandala, 2015) to be used by the forest department to expand the Sao Hill plantation forest for a pulp and paper mill, which was envisaged to open in 1984 (Hurst, 2004). The government extended resettlement when it got a promise of a World Bank loan in 1972 (World Bank, 1976). The Bank conditioned the disbursement of the loan to a legally owned land by the state. The government was forced to get the land from the resettled villagers by hooks and crooks to secure the World Bank loan, which was planned to be signed in 1976. The government used influential party leaders of the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), councillors and village elders to lobby for the land (Locher, 2015). When the country faced an economic crisis between 1978 and 1980s amidst population boom, the villagers started claiming for the rights to their land be reverted. The state responded by forming land commissions of inquiry. This article discusses land contestation between the state and the villagers in the adjacent villages in the Sao Hill forest through the land commissions of inquiry formed in 1988 (Iringa Region), and 2012 by the Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism.

## **2. Methodology**

The data for this article was obtained through archival sources—a methodology indispensable for historians—and interviews. The archival sources were obtained from the Tanzania National Archive in Dar es Salaam, and at Sao Hill Forest Plantation Headquarters in Mufindi district in 2016. Interviews were administered in Mufindi district and in Dar es Salaam between 2015 and 2016. These data were collected as part of the main project of doctoral thesis entitled ‘Plantation Forestry in Tanzania: A History of Sao Hill Forests, 1939-2015.’ The data obtained were analysed qualitatively to develop the history on the measures deployed by the post-colonial state in Tanzania to get land and capital for acreage increase of the Sao Hill forest between 1962 and 1982.

## **3. Historiographical Note on Sao Hill Forest and Villagization in Tanzania, 1962-2012**

This article draws on Lawi’s (2007) remarkable research into the villagization experience in Iraqwland, in North Central Tanzania. Lawi’s work on villagization brought to light measures taken by the state to enforce nucleated villages in Tanzania. In many cases of villagization in Tanzania, the resettled communities went back to their old homes and farms in the early 1980s because they failed to sustain even their basic needs in the newly created villages. This return to the old homes and farms, after the collapse of villagization, proved the case in Lawi’s study. However, in Mufindi, as this article will show, the land vacated by the resettled people was promptly appropriated by the state for expanding the Sao Hill plantation forest. Thus, the people of Mufindi in the villages surrounding the plantation forest lost their land permanently, under the pretext of villagization. This article interrogates this state-driven coercive afforestation.

The striking feature in the case of Mufindi is that, after negotiating with the village and district commissioner, the state surveyed the land to determine the respective land needs of the villagers. After determining the excess land in those villages, the land was clearly demarcated to separate between the new established homesteads under villagization, and the old homesteads (*mahame* in the Hehe language). The Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism (henceforth ‘the Ministry’) gazetted the surveyed and ‘abandoned’ land in 1976 to create the Mbalwe-Mfukulembe forest reserve. The Mbalwe-Mfukulembe forest reserve became the biggest forest reserve forming the third division of the Sao Hill Forest Plantation Forestry (Mtuy, 1979).

Kifyasi (2015), investigated the livelihoods of the surrounding communities around the Sao Hill plantation, the original aims of the foresters vis a vis their current trends on employment, and social responsibility to the surrounding communities. However, Kifyasi’s research neglected the role of the World Bank and other development partners that were key players in the expansion of the Sao Hill Forest in post-colonial Tanzania (Chamshama, 2011). Thus, this article not only fills that lacuna in Kifyasi’s analysis, but also challenges his argument by showing how important were the previously-ignored role of the World Bank and other multinational organisations in the original foundation of the Sao Hill plantation forests between 1962 and 1980. In addition, it challenges a key contention by Kifyasi in attributing the strategies used by the state on securing land for expansion in the 1970s as ‘land grabbing’. Instead, this article argues that there is evidence that genuine participatory methods were employed by the Ministry to acquire land for expanding the Sao Hill forest between 1975 and 1976.

Moreover, this article discusses the instrumental role played by the World Bank on the expansion of the Sao Hill by drawing from Chamshama’s work on the role of the development partners generally in plantation forests, particularly in East Africa and the Horn of Africa. Chamshama summarised the role of development partners in these two regions without discussing the role of the economic partners in the Sao Hill plantation forest (Chamshama, 2011: 17). Furthermore, this article challenges the contentions of Coulson (2013) and Wangwe (1987) who described villagization as an uncertain project intended to transform the country economically but failed miserably. The two scholars explored other factors that faced the country in the late 1970s—like the oil shocks of 1973/74 and 1979/1980, and the War with Idi Amin (1978/1979)—but did not consider the role played by the World Bank loan between 1976 and 1980.

This article also engages with the works of Shelter (2007) who studied the creation and expansion of the Serengeti National Park in North-western Tanzania, which also expanded its boundaries during the villagization programme (1973-1976). Shelter argued that the Serengeti National Park increased its boundaries at the expense of the surrounding communities as the state undermined customary land rights and access to wilderness resources. The community around the Serengeti National Park understood land ownership in terms of clan or descent group membership and use rights to larger wilderness resources, while the state

understood and exercised a European definition of property rights originating from the colonial era in which the state controlled all lands. Shelter's analysis on the Serengeti National park will be used in this article as an example of other state-owned projects that expanded during villagization, as was also the case with the Sao Hill plantation forest. The Serengeti National Park and Sao Hill forest are examples of state projects that expanded their boundaries in the pretext of creating nucleated villages (villagization). This article, however, will not discuss the creation of national parks as Shelter did, but will confine itself on the expansion of the Sao Hill forest during the villagization period.

Moreover, this article extends Sunseri's (2009) argument that some villagers in Lindi region encroached forest reserves because in the new nucleated villages, villagers perceived that they needed more immediate basic needs instead of considering the sustainability of forests. Sunseri points out that forest reserves in the east coast suffered much as in some cases the ruling party condoned encroachment of forest reserves (*ibid.*). Sunseri's discussion, however, is limited to the east coastal communities, whereas this article uses the case of Sao Hill in south-western Tanzania. Finally, while Sunseri argue that villagization was a key factor in *deforestation*, this article will turn this argument on its head by showing that, at least in some cases, villagization was a factor for increasing *afforestation*.

#### **4. Early Activities in the Forest Division Relating to the Sao Hill Plantation Forest**

After independence, the state envisaged the Sao Hill plantation forest as a capital-intensive investment project. The idea was to bring in the biggest sawmill in the country, and also attract pulp and paper mills into the project. As was the case with many projects in post-colonial Tanzania, the main obstacle towards this objective was shaky funding sources from the government between the late 1960s and 1970s.<sup>1</sup>

The forest division of the Ministry transferred powers from the British to Africans gradually in the mid-1960s. British foresters—who pioneered plantation forests in Tanzania in the 1950s—retired back to the UK, while others found their way to the Dominion forest services. Other foresters went to work with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) (Hurst, 2003; Cliffe, 1969). G. J. Kileo, Tanganyika's first professional forest officer, was appointed the Chief Conservator of Forests in 1965. Before being a full-fledged Chief Conservator of Forests, he acted the position from 1963 to 1964 (URT, 1963). The move of expatriates from the forest division was a signal to the country to train its own forest professionals. In this regard, the forest school at Olmotony in Arusha introduced a course for full-trained foresters in late 1961, and expanded its enrolments in 1963 (URT, 1963; Hurst, 2003).

Other notable events that marked the move to plantation forestry after independence were the drafting of the three-year plan that started its implementation in 1963 to 1965. The three-year plan recorded 5160 acres of fast-

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Modest Mtuy, 20.5. 2016 Ubungo Oil Com.

growing exotic softwoods countrywide in 1963. Out of 5160 acres planted nationally, the Sao Hill plantation recorded an astonishing 1311 acres, which was the highest nationwide for a single forest plantation. The 1963 planting record was a new milestone after independence as it came when the country was having shortage of funds not only for the expansion of plantation forests, but also for running the government (URT, 1963: 12). By 1963, the government had started envisioning suitable forest industries for processing forest products to supply the nation with its requirements and build up a valuable exports trade in fine timber, plywood, wood pulp and other forest products (URT, 1963: 2).

##### **5. The Status of Plantation Forests left by the Colonial Regime in Mufindi**

As noted in the introduction, the colonial regime left 18,000ha of forest plantation in Mufindi planted at Irundi area/Division One of the current Sao Hill forest. After independence, those forests fell under the administration of the Forest Division in the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism. These forests had a mixture of pines, cypress, and eucalyptus trees that were planted between 1951 and 1961. These plantations lacked best silvicultural practices after independence, and hence new options of administering them were to be sought.

The forests that were planted in the 1950s faced several challenges after independence. For example, cattle owners in the surrounding villages grazed in forest plantations, which caused soil erosion, compacted soil, and destroyed roads. It was difficult for the Forest Division to prevent the surrounding communities—who once owned the land before the establishment of the forest despite being compensated (SHPFA, 1978)—from trespassing into the forest. Uncontrolled grazing was a problem until 1980 in the Irundi Forest Reserve (Division Number One) in the southern part of the Sao Hill forest reserve. Grazing in the forest reserves caused soil compaction, which reduced water infiltration and hence increased surface run-off. For instance, according to the Sao Hill forest manager, the Irundi Forest Reserve was grazed to the extent that soil surface was like ‘iron sheets’ (Sao Hill, 1977).

Furthermore, there were subsistence farmers who encroached the valleys of the forest plantation during dry seasons for gardening. Unfortunately, forest workers also engaged in this practise. The Sao Hill project manager issued a circular to prohibit this habit in 1974. The circular prohibited gardening in the valleys as it was done during the dry season, which was a fire-risk season. In the circular, the manager directed, among other things, that: *“No one will be allowed to cultivate in valleys within the Sao Hill Forest reserves without getting permit from the Sao Hill Forest Manager from 31.8.1974”* (SHPFA, 1974). The project manager also noted that illegal cultivation was sometimes carried out in the hidden areas of the project, and hence the plantation forest administration was to stay alert on those encroachers.

In addition to encroachment in the forests, some individuals at the Kibao village claimed that they were not compensated from their relinquished trees in the forest reserve in the late 1950s, while at Mninga village people, especially those who

owned cattle, wanted to be compensated for the right of way (ibid.). The sub-chiefs<sup>2</sup> of the villages reported the complaints of the villagers to the Forest Project Officer at Sao Hill. The sub-chiefs of Kibao and Mtemakuwanzi, reported that there were 53 acres of trees belonging to the villagers that were uncompensated (SHPFA, 1965). The Forest Project Officer rejected the claims as trivial because the forest department had cleared all compensation in 1960 (ibid.). The Forest Project Officer added that those who owned cattle could use the forest firebreaks and fire-lines when sending their cattle to grassland areas.

Fire incidents in the forests were reported throughout 1966 due to a prolonged dry season all over the country. Above all, the worst fire was reported at Sao Hill forest whereby it swept through 660 acres of *Pinus Patula* and *Pinus Elliottii*. Most of those fires were reported to be deliberately started, and several persons were brought to court and successfully prosecuted in 1967 (URT, 1966). The reason behind forest fires was aggrieved peasants who lost their land to the forest, herd boys cleaning farms and honeying.<sup>3</sup>

Routine silvicultural operations (like thinning and pruning in the planted forests in the 1950s) were neglected between 1962 and 1975 because of the lack of fund from the government.<sup>4</sup> The delayed or ignored thinning and pruning were unfavourable for the production of large girth and good quality saw logs (Sao Hill, 1977).

The Tanzania Wood Industry Corporation (TWICO) harvested the exotic trees planted in the 1950s by the colonial government in the 1970s. The trees planted during colonial rule were harvested by the Sao Hill Saw Mill that started operations with two circular saw line in early 1976. The Norway Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) (Bavu et al., 1983) provided technical assistance to TWICO based at Mafinga until early the 1990s. The Saw Mill was set at Ihefu, the headquarters of Division Two of the Sao Hill forest formed from Lord Chesham's land (Gran, 1991). With regards to output use, the Sao Hill Saw Mill aimed at providing saw logs and pulpwood to local industries. The Tanzania Investment Bank, the government, and NORAD funded TWICO jointly. The first phase of the World Bank ended in December 1981. The Southern Paper Mills was envisaged to start up in 1984 with coal as a source of energy. The Sao Hill inventory of 1974 and 1980 and harvesting records of 1975 to 1983 revealed that a large part of the plantation established in the 1950s was understocked due to inadequate and varying spacing of the plants, ignored beating up (infilling/replanting) in the years after planting, and heavy thinning.

## **6. The Pulp and Paper Mill Vision and the Sao Hill Plantation Forestry**

In 1966, the government envisaged the Sao Hill project would reach 15,000 acres of softwood per year for timber, paper, and pulp mill by 1984.<sup>5</sup> Planting was

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<sup>2</sup>In Tanzania, a sub-chief supervised a sub-chieftom which that can be equated to a ward of nowadays.

<sup>3</sup>Interview with Fidelis Mwanalikungu, Public Relation Officer, Sao Hill forest, 23.3.2016.

<sup>4</sup>Interview with Fidelis Mwanalikungu, Public Relation Officer, Sao Hill forest, 23.3.2016.

<sup>5</sup>Interview with Mathias Lema, Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism, Dar es Salaam, 8.4.2016.

planned to start effectively in 1968. The project, however, waited for the FAO Timber Trend Study report that indicated the index for the shortage of timber worldwide in the late 1960s. That report became a blowing whistle for large-scale planting in two regions of Iringa (at Sao Hill Hill) and Mbeya (at Kawetire) in Tanzania. The Kawetire acreage, however, was low compared to that of Sao Hill plantation forest. There was another factor for this anticipation: the Tanzania Zambia Railway Authority (TAZARA) proposal was confirmed. The TAZARA railway was anticipated to carry goods wagons of timber, paper, and pulp to the Dar es Salaam market and for export. The paper mill was situated at the Mufindi TAZARA station in the extreme south of the district (Monson, 2009). The land for expanding plantation forests for pulpwood and paper production was envisioned at that time too by the colonial government (URT, 1966).

To implement the state’s vision of paper and pulp mills, in 1964 the Ministry of Land and Natural Resources contracted the services of Sandwell and Co., a Vancouver-based global consultant on the feasibility of pulp and paper mills.<sup>6</sup> The company was to study the possibility of developing a pulpwood plantation and a pulp manufacturing site in the vicinity of the Indian Ocean coast (to cut transportation expenses) for export to the world market. The Sandwell company report came out in the 1966 Forest Division Annual report. They advised that the pulp and paper mill be situated at Kongowe in the Coast region should the criteria of the proximity to the Indian Coast be considered as the sole factor. The second site, which was more convincing, was in the area close the Sao Hill forest at a TAZARA rail-crossing area. Exotic trees proved a failure at Kongowe, which led to a shift to Mufindi (URT, 1963). Modest Mtuy, the longest serving manager at Sao Hill, added that the other reasons behind expanding the Sao Hill forest for the sake of having a pulp and a paper mill came from Mwalimu Nyerere, the then president of Tanzania:

*“The first President of Tanzania, the late Julius K. Nyerere, loved trees so much. He visited Sao Hill almost thrice during my tenure as a manager. In 1964, he invited Canadians to conduct a research on the possibility of a pulp industry. They produced a marvellous report in 1966. At first, they selected Mufindi and Kongowe-Kibaha (forest reserve). Later, in 1975, the silviculture personnel realised that exotic trees did not grow well at Kongowe. In 1972, his government invited the World Bank, which sent officials who visited both places and recommended an increase of land for forest extension, especially in the vicinity of Mufindi areas. Before the eyes of the state, it was lucky time as it was during villagization campaigns. That is why it was easy to get land for forest extension. Problems came later as those people wanted to go back to their old homes (mahame)”* (Interview, Modest Mtuy, Kigamboni, Dar es Salaam, 20.3.2016).

The state decided to construct a pulp and paper mill because at that time, long fibred pulp from coniferous trees with high strength was in high demand throughout the world for the manufacturing of paper and paper boards. The state report cited areas like Asia and Far East to have shortages of long fibred pulp and its derived products. Western Europe was estimated to experience a deficit of 3m metric tons per year

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<sup>6</sup>Interview with Modest Mtuy at Kigamboni, Dar es Salaam, 20.3.2016.

from the 1980s, and it was claimed by the Forestry division that it would not be possible to supply this from traditional sources in Europe. FAO conducted a research that came out with results showing that, as a whole, East Africa was considered to offer possibilities of low-cost pulp than either the traditional producing countries or other developing countries such as Chile (URT, 1965).

Sandwells assisted in the preparation of this plan and reported favourably on a project in Mufindi. The consultants started surveying areas that had softwood trees for pulp production in 1963. Mufindi was found to be better than the coastal areas as it was suitable for both growing softwoods and for being a site for a pulp mill. Sandwells' report attracted financing from the World Bank because of their positive support for the project:

Tanzania has a good opportunity to develop coniferous wood plantations, economically; market conditions indicate that the proposed industry should be planned for entry into export market; the coastal plains are strategically placed for plantation development, but their suitability for growing pulpwood has yet to be proved; and of the interior locations with proven pulpwood growing ability in Mufindi area offers the best potential and gives promise of an adequate return on investment for pulp production (URT, 1965: 2).

The government re-engaged the consultants in 1964/1965 to focus their attention on the Mufindi area. The government wanted to confirm the recommendations of the consultants' first report. The result of the second survey were positive too. Two suitable alternative mill sites were found in the extreme south of the railway junction in Mufindi. A way was found of transporting pulpwood across an escarpment separating part of the plantation areas from the mill.<sup>7</sup> Under the then price conditions, a satisfactory gross return of 14% of the capital to be invested was foreseen from the operation of a projected 400 tons of pulp per day. However, that rate of gross return was dependent on the extension of the railway to the vicinity of the proposed mill site, which materialised in the early 1970s (ibid: 2).

The consultants recommended the production of pulp (rather than paper), and anticipated the product to be exported principally to Asia and the Far East. The possibility of capital returns of the mill, therefore, was based on pulp rather than paper production. The pulp mill was planned to go into production in the 1980s or later. It was anticipated that by that time the local demand within Tanzania for pulp and paper boards would be up to 20,000 tons per year, which would be met from the mill at Mufindi. That internal market, though small in comparison with the envisaged production of the mill, was potentially valuable as it was relatively more profitable than the export one. Additional export markets were anticipated to be from Western Europe, which was claimed to be as equally accessible as the Far East market, where a high demand was certain to arise.

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<sup>7</sup> Interview with Modest Mtuy, Kigamboni, Dar es Salaam, 19.3.2016.



The production of pulp rather than papers arose because of the distance from Mufindi to Dar es Salaam. Moreover, pulp was recommended because of the high cost of carrying imported bleaching chemicals, which were not available in Tanzania by then.<sup>8</sup> Paper production was not considered by the consultants at the early stage, but was claimed by the government to have definite advantage when the local market for paper had been built (URT, 1965).

Based on the aforesaid reasons, the government of Tanzania invited enquiries from parties, other governments, international financing organisations, private organisations, which were interested in financing or providing a part of the finance for the development of pulp production in Tanzania (ibid: 3). The consultants summarised their findings on the Mufindi pulp project as follows:

This current report has been prepared to choose a suitable mill site in the Mufindi area. It has been concluded that the best site location would be below the Mufindi Escarpment, either close to the proposed site of the Mufindi Railway Station or close to the Kigogo Ruaha River. It has been also been concluded that the most economic method to transfer pulpwood down the escarpment would be by truck and would involve the construction of an all-weather road down to the escarpment (URT, 1965: 4).

The consultants calculated that with the price conditions at that time (1964), the gross return on investment for 400 tons per day of unbleached kraft would be in the order of 14%. The return, however, was subject to the availability of land in the areas surrounding the mill site in Mufindi. The consultant made the following recommendations concerning land requirements for the Mufindi pulp mill:

Steps should be taken to reserve all suitable land for plantation development in the Mufindi area. Plantations should continue to be developed in this area. In addition, trial plantations should be initiated on the underdeveloped area below the Mufindi escarpment. Where several species of trees can be grown successfully the species which would have the best pulping characteristics should be selected (URT, 1965: 3).

The government used the silvicultural and management experience in the Mufindi area which had been implanted way back in the colonial era when the Kigogo Arboretum centre was established in 1938. From the Kigogo arboretum centre, planting continued on a small scale in high rainfall forest and bushland sites at Mpanga. From 1957 planting was extended into the grassland sites of Sao Hill, which gradually built up to a rate of 2,000 acres of new planting per year. Up to 1966, there were 6,714 hectares of pines planted at Sao Hill. Initially, *Pinus patula* and *Pinus radiata* were planted at Kigogo. However, *Pinus radiata* were affected by the needle blight, and thus the planting of the species was discontinued. Species planted for pulp wood, based on experience, was to be *Pinus patula*, and *elliottii* at Kigogo, Mpanga and Sao Hill, and *Pinus elliottii* at Kihata. Knowledge of the latter site was limited to trials of pines planted in 1964/65, but the site was confidently expected to be very satisfactory for *Pinus elliottii* (Mtuy, 1979).

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<sup>8</sup> Interview with Modest Mtuy, Kigamboni, Dar es Salaam, 19.3.2016.

Land availability was around 117,500 acres for pines, whose source was in three land categories: forest reserves, abandoned and revoked large farms, and public lands. The government held the ownership of the land in all the three categories. The public land, however, involved some resettlements of local people who engaged in subsistence farming. The freeing of this land from these people was negotiated by the government (URT, 1975: 8).

It was intended that the land required for plantations, plus a 10% allowance for dead land and mill buildings of the pulp project, be assigned as forest reserve at an early date to ensure its availability for use when required (ibid: 8). Therefore, the expansion of Sao Hill forest plantation was partly justified by scientific researches by consultants contracted by the state.

### **7. The Acquisition of Land to Meet the Pulp and Paper Mill Vision**

In 1975 the World Bank and FAO pointed out to the government of Tanzania that plans to have a pulp and paper mill to use the wood from the Sao Hill plantations would materialize if more land for afforestation would be available in the vicinity areas of the Sao Hill forest. The land to cater for the project had to be gazetted as a forest reserve. The estimated total net area required for the industrial plantations by the World Bank loan was put at 50000ha (Mtuy, 1979: 6).

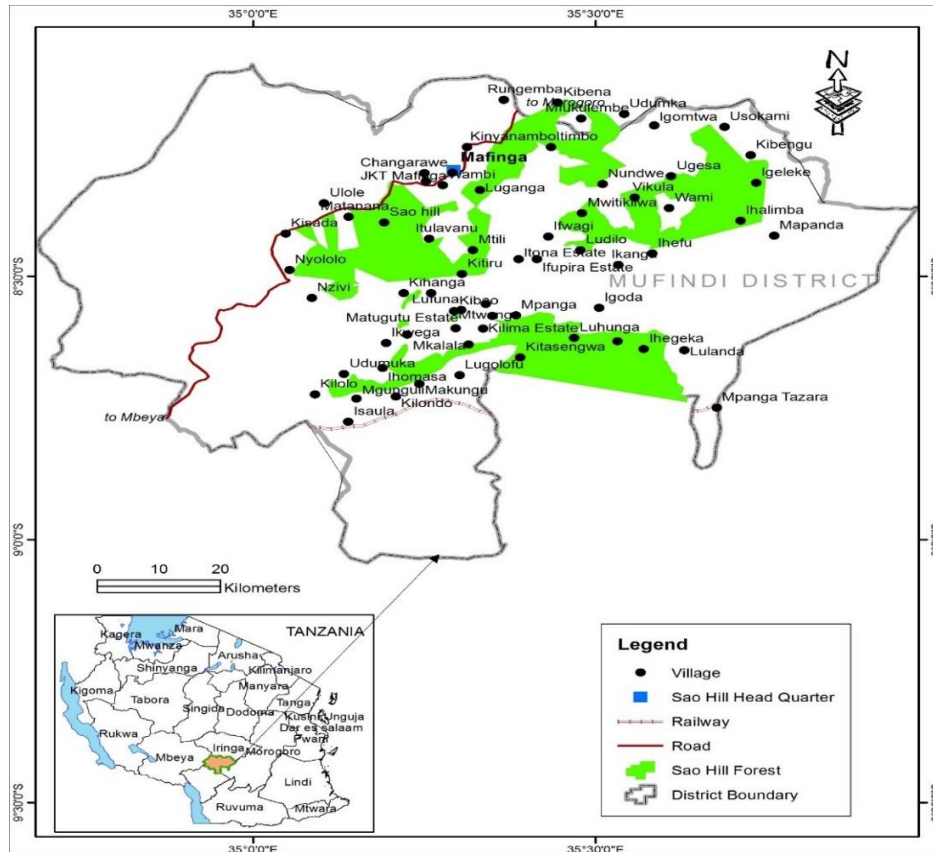
The selection of extension areas was conditioned by two factors. First, the selection and legalising land ownership process had to be carried out within a very short time to enable the first phase of the loan from the World Bank to be released. The World Bank was very insistent on this condition. The second was that of ensuring that the new land areas be located in the adjacent areas to the older Sao Hill forest farms for easy management since the Sao Hill plantation had few personnel.<sup>9</sup>

Faced with the above prime conditions, the following areas were presented before the district commissioner and village governments as target areas. The first was the area between Msiwasi, Sao Hill and Gulusilo Forest reserves. The second was the area in the Ifwagi, Nundwe, Itimbo and Mafinga villages. The third was the area south of the Sao Hill Forest Reserve up to Irunda Forest Reserve. The fourth was the area between the Old Great North Road and the western boundary of the Sao Hill Forest Reserve. The fifth was the area around east of Nundwe Ujamaa Village. Finally, the sixth area was the land in the east and west of the then proposed pulp mill site at Mgololo (see Fig. 1) (Mtuy, 1979: 3).

Targets one to three satisfied the scientific conditions of developing a plantation forest, but the villages in these areas had high demand of land for subsistence farming and other government projects. The land in category four satisfied the conditions but site quality was considered lower than in the Sao Hill Block. The land in category five had a lower population but it suffered the disadvantage of long

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with Modest Mtuy at Kigamboni, Dar es Salaam 20.3.2016.



**Figure 1: Map of Mufindi district showing the coverage of Sao Hill Forest with boundaries based on 1976 government gazette (GIS, UDSM, 2016).**

distance from Sao Hill that would increase logging and haulage costs. The land in category six was near the pulp and paper mill site but suffered the disadvantage of having to wait for the trials of species (ibid.).

The acquisition of land in areas around Msiwasi, Sao Hill, Gulusilo Forest Reserve, Ifwagi, Nundwe, Itimbo, Mafinga villages, Irunda Forest Reserve, Old Great North Road, and in the western boundary of the Sao Hill Forest Reserve was considered to be extremely important as Phase One of the loan from the World Bank to the project could be used to extend to those areas without waiting for preliminary trials for provenances.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, land acquisition in other

<sup>10</sup>Interview with Modest Mtuy at Kigamboni, Dar es Salaam 20.3.2016. Provenance refers to the adaption of new species to new environment/climate.

areas such as those under category five and six was essential to guarantee land availability for the envisaged afforestation programme. In fact, the loan agreement with the World Bank was conditioned on the acquisition of enough land for afforestation.

### **8. Strategies of Land Acquisition at the Ground (Village Level)**

The demand for more land for afforestation by the state came at a time when the Mufindi district authority was reorganizing and resettling people into *ujamaa* (socialist-nucleated) villages (Coulson, 2013; Lawi, 2007). These villages were a result of the resettlement of people from scattered areas to centralized settlements selected by the state (Scott, 1998). The Forest Department exploited this opportunity of using land left behind by villagers who were resettled into *ujamaa* villages between 1973 and 1974. Acquisition of land outside *ujamaa* villages was meant to restrict temptations from individuals who wanted to go back to their former areas.<sup>11</sup> The survey of the forest reserve boundaries also meant a survey of the *ujamaa* village areas, and hence the establishment of known boundaries between villages and the forest areas (Mtuy, 1979).

With this opportunity, the government approached district authorities detailing the Forest Department's plans for the acquisition of more land for afforestation and the target areas for acquisition. Discussions with the district authorities led to the establishment of the minimum area required for each village, and the Forest Department was permitted to start analyses of areas to be acquired. This was important as there were areas left by villagers that could not meet the climate and soil needs of exotic trees. It was agreed between the Forest Division and the district authorities that people would be informed that the Forest Division was looking for extension areas. Furthermore, the Forest Division would negotiate with the villagers on the location of the boundaries between villages and the extension areas, taking into consideration that each village must have a minimum of 3,000ha as its own land (ibid.).

The district authorities, however, ruled out the target areas around South of Sao Hill Forest Reserve to Irunda Forest Reserve because this was an extension area for the Kihanga Ujamaa Village. Consequently, this area was dropped out completely. The district authorities also ruled out the acquisition of land in the area under category number six as this would interfere with a ranch area, and thus it was again removed from the target list.<sup>12</sup>

### **9. Inventing Boundaries: The Surveying Process**

The surveying and mapping of the Sao Hill extension areas was completed between 1<sup>st</sup> April and 30<sup>th</sup> September, 1975. The survey was done hurriedly because the government was determined to start a pulp and a paper mill project with financial support from the World Bank, which was conditioned on the government acquiring more land for the project. The expansion meant the need for more land from

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<sup>11</sup>Interview with Raphael Lutumo, Ihalimba Village, Mufindi, 8.4.2016.

<sup>12</sup>Interview with Fidelis Mwanalikungu, Sao Hill Headquarters, 9.4.2016.

surrounding villages, which was acquired by the state despite some villages objecting to the exercise and the project altogether. The Forest Division was assigned to undertake the surveying of those new areas (Mtuy, 1979).

At the beginning, the method to be used to survey the area was expected to be aerial survey, a method that was thought to be cheap, quicker, and more accurate. However, it was unfortunate that there were no appropriate aerial photographs covering the extension areas, a situation that led to the use of ground survey. This method proved to be a difficult exercise that brought in many errors, which became a source of conflicts with surrounding communities. Moreover, the difficulty of the ground survey was exacerbated by the dearth of knowledge of the original boundaries between the villages and the Sao Hill forest (URT, 1976: 2). The ground survey was based on permanent features—be they man-made (like roads) or natural (like rivers)—already indicated on internal and external surveys. The use of man-made features had the advantage of reducing the amount of field work, and it was assumed that it would make boundaries permanent and visible to the extent that there would be no need of clearing or maintaining the boundaries in the future (ibid: 3-5).

Survey teams from the Forest Division headquarters in Dar es Salaam were sent to the targeted villages with some terms of references. One of those terms was to reserve a piece of land within the targeted areas with a minimum net of 50,000ha. To execute such a demanding need, the surveyors worked with village leaders and district authorities to select the best land for exotic trees. Theoretically, villagers were free to show the survey team the best land for their subsistence farming, and that it was only the land that they considered bad land for agriculture that would be taken by the Forest Division. However, actually it was not always that the choice of villagers was the determinant of the land to be acquired by the state. Sometimes their suggestions were simply ignored. At the Mtili village, for example, the Forest Division surveyors rejected the selection of the villagers to use the western part of the village land, which was considered fertile for subsistence agriculture. They argued that villagers only looked at the fertility of land without bearing in mind the coordination of the new plantation forests. As such, while clear mapping was integral to the surveyors, the fertility of the land was vital to the villagers.<sup>13</sup> The bottom line is that the interests of villagers—the customary owners of the land—in the transfer of land was, in some instances, overridden by state interests in marking the boundaries of the Sao Hill plantation.

However, we must state here that surveyors from the Forest Division were not alone in setting boundaries between village land and the Sao Hill Forest at all levels. There was a committee for boundary-setting that was led by the Malangali Ward Division councillor, Issa Kaulete. Kaulete was nominated to lead the district committee by other ward councillors as he was claimed to be intelligent and prudent. His committee visited almost all villages with complaints on boundary

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<sup>13</sup>Interview with Kambaulaya Mtavangu at Mtili Village, Mufindi, 19.5.2016.

settings. Also, Sikauka Chang'a, a long-serving TANU and later CCM district chairperson, was engaged to bring consensus in setting boundaries. Albeit not being formally educated, Chang'a was an extraordinarily influential figure at the district and regional levels in bringing consensus during the setting of boundaries between villages and the Forestry Division.<sup>14</sup>

Each village was supposed to be allocated enough land for subsistence farming at the time of surveying, and for future planned developments. When allocating land to villages, the surveyors had to forecast village land needs, based on its population, for the next 20 years.<sup>15</sup> Land allocation in the villages was mainly for subsistence farming and cattle grazing.

The surveying committee had to liaise with district land officials who would advise on the suitability of land for agriculture. District land officials were also deemed useful in assisting the land surveyors since they understood well the local politics regarding land tenure in the targeted villages. Furthermore, district land officials were useful because the starting of a national forest reserve meant a technical legal transfer of land from district authorities to the national authority.<sup>16</sup>

Problems met in the process of surveying were brought to the attention of the district authorities who solved them either through the party channel, or the councillors' committee. It is important to note here that district authorities in Tanzania wielded both party and government powers from independence in 1961 to 1992, when a multiparty system was introduced in the country (Ngasongwa, 1992). As such, before 1992 a district authority could authorise contested land to be given either to villagers or to the government. In effect, a district authority's decision was, indeed, a government decision too (Mtuy, 1979: 5).

Since the surveying work was to be done in the shortest possible time to allow phase one of the World Bank loan to take off, existing and evident natural boundaries (valleys, rivers and hills) were preferred to artificial or constructed boundaries whenever possible.<sup>17</sup> Maps were produced as soon as the fieldwork was completed so that the gazettelement process could start (Mtuy, 1979: 5). The maps and village agreements were important as these were among the prerequisites of the World Bank loan. The then Minister for Land, Forestry and Water, Ole Saibul, gazetted the areas surveyed for forest reserves in September 1976. Because the transfer of land was so hurriedly organized, some post-survey and gazettelement problems arose in some villages. For example, the Mbalwe-Mfukulembe reserve had notorious encroachment problems since its inception in 1976<sup>18</sup> as some villages did not agree with the demarcations. These villages included Mapanda, Usokami and Igeleke.

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<sup>14</sup>Interview with Modest Mtuy at Kigamboni, Dar es Salaam, 20.3.2016, See also, Tropp (2003).

<sup>15</sup>Interview with Modest Mtuy at Kigamboni, Dar es Salaam, 20.3.2016.

<sup>16</sup>Interview with Fidelis Mwanalikungu, Sao Hill Headquarters, Mufindi, 6.3.2016.

<sup>17</sup>Interview with Modest Mtuy at Kigamboni, Dar es Salaam, 20.3.2016.

<sup>18</sup>Interview with Mathias Lema, Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism HQ in 16.5.2016.

This scenario meant that although there was an overwhelming support for the project in many villages, there were some that were opposed to it.

#### **10. Problems of Surveying in Extension Areas**

The surveying process met with several challenging problems in the field. The first problem was resistance from villagers who were not informed about the national afforestation project. For instance, surveyors met with threats from people in Usokami and Kibengu villages in the extreme east of the Mbalwe-Mfukulembe reserve. Threats in these villages escalated to the extent that villagers chased the casual labourers who were developing tree nurseries. Indeed, even planting in those areas was difficult. The then Sao Hill forest manager had to leave the resolution of the conflict to the district authorities as it was too tough to manage at his level.

The second problem was the constant change of heart by villagers in the selected villages. It happened that in some cases villagers would agree on boundaries to separate their land from the forest extension area, only to come back to demand changes of boundaries the next day. This happened in Nyololo and Itimbo villages. The problem arose in areas left for the extension land by villagers that were not immediately planted. People in such areas thought that their land had no use to the government, and as such it was better it be reverted to the customary owners.<sup>19</sup>

Third, some villages refused to take land recommended as suitable for subsistence farming. This was the case with the Mtili village where the land north of the Msiwazi Forest Reserve was considered by the Forest Division to be fertile and suitable for agriculture. When setting boundaries for the extension land, the Forest Division recommended to the villagers that the area be apportioned to their land. Villagers who had previously resided on the western side of the Mufindi Circle road rejected the proposal, and instead suggested that they preferred the land on the western side. This was a serious conflict, which was resolved when the district authorities enforced the decision by the Forest Division (Mtuy, 1979: 5).

The fourth problem was the use of man-made features with no fixed name(s) as boundaries. Boundary descriptions were often set using names of rivers, hills, and big trees, which had no authentic names from the surrounding communities. This problem could not be solved, but it was hoped that the villagers who had agreed to the boundary knew the accepted boundary and that the map would show that boundary as well.<sup>20</sup>

Fifth, there was a problem of establishing villages in extension areas already surveyed. This occurred at Vikula whereby villagers from Nundwe and Ihalimba moved into an area already allotted to the project (Sunseri, 2009). Such problems were resolved by relinquishing surveyed land to the new villages. Similarly, Usokami, Kibengu and Igeleke villages claimed and extended their land into the extension areas after gazettment (ibid.).

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<sup>19</sup> Interview with Modest Mtuy at Kigamboni, Dar es Salaam, 20.3.2016.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Modest Mtuy at Kigamboni, Dar es Salaam, 20.3.2016.

The sixth problem was the issue of compensation. Some villagers tried to launch claims for their property (mainly bamboo, pines, and eucalyptus trees) in the areas acquired by the Forest Division. However, the government's stand was that compensation was payable only if it was resettling customary land owners. This was not the case since what the government was doing was acquiring abandoned land left behind by villagers who had been resettled in *ujamaa* villages. In this regard, there was no justification of people demanding compensation.

### **11. Massive Encroachment of the Sao Hill Plantation Forest**

The Sao Hill plantation was ailing from 1992 when funds from the World Bank ceased. In 2000 the government tried to salvage the situation by establishing the Logging and Miscellaneous Development Account (LMDA) to manage the plantation's forest revenues (URT, 2014: vi, 48). This move enabled the capacity of the Sao Hill plantation to improve gradually from 2007 when the plantation was able to expand planting in the expansion areas. Yet, this expansion could not cover a major part of the acquired village land. This encouraged the Wami-Mbalwe, Usokami, Kibengu, Igeleke, and Mapanda villages to encroach the Sao Hill plantation forest (ibid: 12). Also, the lack of the World Bank funds also coincided with the liberalisation of the Tanzanian economy in the late 1990s, which encouraged privatization. This encouraged—in some instances invited—the private sector to encroach and 'develop' the Sao Hill plantation since the government lacked the capacity to do so (ibid: 11). These two factors caused a massive encroachment of the Sao Hill plantation, which prompted the formation of the Ministerial Commission of Inquiry on Land Encroachment of the Sao Hill Plantation Forest in March, 2012 to investigate the matter.

In its first observation, the Commission said that there were contradicting and confusing authorities on who exactly could arbitrate the endless disputes on boundaries between villages and the Sao Hill plantation forest. For example, villagers were found to possess village land leases authorized by Iringa district and region land officials who had reverted part of the land belonging to the Sao Hill plantation forest to them. However, the Commission noted that the two aforesaid authorities had no mandate of reverting land to villagers, and declared this as illegal. So, all parties that had encroached the area were to be removed.

Nevertheless, the Commission recommended that individuals and companies that had encroached the Sao Hill areas be compensated for their trees, or be given a special contract lease until they harvest their trees, a view that was also shared by many villagers who advanced that they be allowed to harvest their trees and then revert the land back to the Sao Hill plantation forest.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, the district commissioner advised that, for the sake of peaceful transition, encroachers be registered and stopped from further planting new trees, but be allowed to come and harvest their trees when they are fully grown.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Interview with Gabriel Luvinga, Nyololo Village, 14.4.2016.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with J.W. Kasunga, District Commissioner, Mufindi, 17.5.2016, Mafinga Town.



## **12. Conclusion**

As mentioned earlier, some scholars have argued that the land for the expansion of the Sao Hill plantation forest (1962-1992) was taken by force from the customary owners. This argument does not hold water since, as we have seen here, the state followed some transparent measures to acquire the land from the villagers. The state wanted land for planting more trees to feed the envisaged Southern Paper Mills as part of industrialisation strategy but had no funds for its establishment, henceforth they resorted to the World Bank loan. It is the loan conditionalities of the World Bank that set the type and size of the land to be alienated. This paper, therefore, has set the extent from which the World Bank and the state influenced the land taken for the expansion of the Sao Hill forest.

However, as this paper has pointed out, there were villagers that were opposed to the move, and later this caused a collision with the state. As time and population increased in these villages, awareness and demand for more land increased some villagers' encroachment into the land reserved for expansion of Sao Hill forest. More land demand came when private companies also came into these villages for the same scarce land. Some villages dared to sell to private developers the already contested land between them and the Sao Hill plantation. Consequently, the state responded by forming different land commissions to solve the conflict. These commissions, however, did not become the panacea of the contestation between the Sao Hill and the villagers up to 2012.

Therefore, the paper has contributed to our understanding on the measures taken by the state to get more land for Sao Hill forest, and indeed the source of funds, and finally the response of the state to land encroachment by the villagers amidst multiple land users.

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