

# **“Drinking too much, they can’t Work”: The Settlers, the Hehe Work Discipline and Environmental Conservation in Mufindi, Tanzania, 1920-1960**

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## **Abstract**

*The colonial state’s relation with the settlers and with plantation owners in Tanganyika was largely precarious. This article uses the Mufindi area to navigate the contrasting views of the settlers and the colonial state on poor response of the black labourers to work and ‘poor environmental management’ amidst increasing number of ‘natives’ between 1920 and 1960. The available data indicates that the colonial state remained a settlers’ broker in securing farming land while acting as the guardian of the natives’ interests of land ownership. As such, state responses exhibited a high degree of pragmatism. In Mufindi area of Iringa district, German settlers specialized in tea farming while British nationals were engaged in wheat production in the Sao Hill. The settlers, despite their numerical inferiority, pressed hard the government to grant them more land and create policies to compel Africans to work on their farms. Building on primary and secondary sources, this article adds to the existing historiography on colonial agriculture by analyzing the settler complaints over labourers’ low work discipline in previously unexplored area of Mufindi.*

**Keywords:** Mufindi, settler economy, labourers, tea plantations, environmental conservation.

## **1. Introduction**

While it is well documented that in Tanganyika settler agriculture was almost absent, the few places which practiced settler farming like Mufindi, the voice of those settlers with regards to the labour question is missing in the historiography of labour history in Tanzania. This paper adds to the rich historiography of labour history on the aspects of mission and experience of the iota settlers in Mufindi during the British colonial Tanganyika (1920-1960). The labour history scholarship is broad as it captures many themes from colonial to postcolonial period. One of the key areas the labour scholarship has focused on is the settler agriculture and its core values. Settler agriculture has been connected with crown British colonies such as Kenya and Zimbabwe. However, this article follows a different course by affirming that although the British in Tanganyika dedicated their policies to the promotion of peasant and plantation agriculture, in some areas like Mufindi in the Iringa Province, the colonial state tolerated settler agriculture. This article brings to light key complaints of the settlers of Mufindi and their respective responses from the British colonial state between 1920s and 1960. These complaints of the settlers were against labourers' behaviour such as drunkenness, indolence and desertion.

## 2. Historiographical Note

The colonial labour history of Tanzania, because of its two phases of colonialism under German and British occupation, is both rich and diverse. Many scholars interested in the labour question have debated the origins and historical location of migrant labour in Tanzania and other destinations such as the mines in South Africa. This article, however, debates the labour history of Tanzania and the dynamics which shaped the transformations over time during the colonial era between 1920 and 1960.

The establishment of colonial rule in Tanzania was based on the motive of exploitation of the natural resources within the colony.<sup>1</sup> The advent of colonialism radically altered the fundamental attributes of the peasant economy, which had been the dominant mode of production during the pre-colonial period. Because of colonialism and the subsequent development of colonial economic systems, capitalism was gradually introduced into colonial Tanzania. Subsequently, between 1920 and 1930 the economy witnessed a shift from a predominantly peasant-based production system to a plantation economy with the introduction of cash crops.<sup>2</sup> From there, a proletarian class emerged largely subsisting on

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Roderick Neumann. "Forest Rights, Privileges and Prohibitions: Contextualizing State Forestry Policy in Colonial Tanganyika." *Environment and History* 3 (1997), 47.

<sup>2</sup> Paschal Mihayo. "Industrial Relations in Tanzania." In Ukandi Damachi et al. eds., *Industrial Relations in Africa* (London: Macmillan Education, 1979), 240-272; See also, Marjorie Mbilinyi. "Agribusiness and Casual Labour in Tanzania." *African Economic History* 15 (1986), 120-125.

labour employment in the newly founded plantations – mainly sisal. They formed a pioneer colonial labour force which increased in size as the plantation economy expanded.<sup>3</sup> The development of the cash economy also initiated the growth of the export sector. However, tea plantations did not yet form one of these big migrant labour destinations in these formative years.

As was a dominant characteristic in most other colonies, the main challenges in the Tanzanian colonial economy were transport and the shortage of labour. Bill Freund succinctly argued that “the basic question of all concerning labour in Africa was how to get it”.<sup>4</sup> Because of the transport challenge, the main economic projects were set in the vicinity of coastal areas of Tanzania, in modern Tanga, Dar es Salaam, Lindi, Morogoro and Kilimanjaro.<sup>5</sup> To indicate how critical the challenge of transporting goods from the interior was, the British noted with frustration in 1928 that “to transport

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<sup>3</sup> Walter Rodney. “The Political Economy of Colonial Tanganyika, 1890-1930.” In M. Kaniki (ed.). *Tanzania under Colonial Rule* (Dar es Salaam, Historical Association of Tanzania, 1979), 137-140.

<sup>4</sup> Bill Freund. “Labour and Labour History in Africa: A Review of the Literature.” *African Studies Review* 27, No. 2 (1984), 2.

<sup>5</sup> The German white settler agriculture was limited mainly to the Usambara. See for example, Walter Rodney, “The Political Economy of Colonial Tanganyika”, 128-160; John Iliffe. *A Modern History of Tanganyika* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 287.

coffee from Mbinga, to the coast, cost twice as much as shipping it thence to Europe".<sup>6</sup>

The expansion of communications networks to the interior was inevitable. As a result of the expansion of communication networks to the interior, between 1924 and 1935 plantation agriculture developed significantly with migrant labour also played a critical role in that growth. By 1929 the railway line from Dar es Salaam to Tanga; built by the Germans in 1912 the Tanga-Moshi railway line was extended to Arusha in 1930; and by 1932 the Tabora-Kigoma railway line had been extended to Kinyangiri, where coal deposits had been discovered. Similarly, between 1927 and 1938 road mileage had increased from 2,650 to 12,000 penetrating areas suitable for the production of cotton, sisal, coffee and tea.<sup>7</sup> German stereotypes viewed local ethnic groups as lazy especially, the coastal people, who were described as having "inborn laziness", "indolent" and "idle".<sup>8</sup> Consequently, both the Germans and the British preferred migrant labour, mainly from the hinterlands of Tanzania. These areas were referred to as labour reserves, which literally meant that they were areas with a large and reliable pool of 'hardworking people'. These areas included Tabora

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<sup>6</sup> Iliffe, *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Mihayo, "Industrial Relations in Tanzania".

<sup>8</sup> Juhani Koponen. *Development for Exploitation, German Colonial policies in Mainland Tanzania, 1884-1914* (Helsinki: Finnish Society for Development Studies, 1995), 323; See also Thaddeus Sunseri. "Labour Migration in Colonial Tanzania and the Hegemony of South African Historiography." *African Affairs* 95, No. 381 (1996), 592.

(Nyamwezi, Sukuma), Lake Zone area (The Sukuma), Kigoma (Ha), and Iringa (Bena and Kinga). The selection criteria used to designate these hardworking ethnic groups stimulated many scholarly debates, not only on the description of people within the binary notions of lazy and hardworking, but also on the trafficking of the very 'hardworking' people from Tanzanian hinterlands to the coastal sisal plantations. Juhani Koponen explored exhaustively the German colonial-period labour question with regards to measures of sustaining labourers. Issa Shivji discussed how laws unfolded in resolving the clashes between the state, the planters and the working class in the sisal industry.<sup>9</sup> John Iliffe discussed the labour question during both the German and British colonial periods with regards to the brutality of the Germans and the intensified taxation as a means of applying indirect force by the British in recruiting labourers.<sup>10</sup> These studies expanded my understanding of the dynamics of the labour question in Tanzania.

During the colonial period, however, in Tanzania migrant labour was sometimes considered to be a noble duty in

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<sup>9</sup> Koponen, *Development for Exploitation*, 321-440; Issa Shivji. *Law, State and the Working Class in Tanzania, C.1920-1964* (London: James Currey, 1986).

<sup>10</sup> Iliffe, *Modern History*, 309-325; John Iliffe. *Tanganyika Under Germany Rule, 1905-1912* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 9-20.

certain corners of the territory – especially for those who went to those destinations out of their own choice (rather than being coerced), particularly to the mines in South Africa. The Southern Highlands people of Tanzania travelled all the way on foot to Malawi. Labourers from Songea or Southern Iringa districts embarked at Mwaya, a port on Lake Nyasa, to travel to Kotakota, a distance of 250 miles.<sup>11</sup> Some of the migrant labourers joined the migrant labour sector to get money to buy cattle for *lobola* (dowry), or as a way of accumulating wealth for prestige.<sup>12</sup> The bottom line is that sometimes labour migration was a voluntary exercise, yet force and compulsion by the colonial state in labour migration were dominant.

Some scholars have written about the migrant labour destinations and labour conditions. Iliffe, for example, alludes to some historical names in Tanga to reflect the areas from which the migrant labourers came. These places were “Chumbageni” (the alien’s place), “Ugogoni” (a place for Gogo people from Dodoma region), “Ubena” (a place for the Bena people from Njombe), and “Unyanyembe” (a place for the Nyanyembe people from Tabora).<sup>13</sup> James Giblin surveyed and recorded the names of the Bena (famous migrant

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<sup>11</sup> Shivji, *Law, State and the Working Class*, 44-45; See also Bill Freund. “Labour and Labour History in Africa: A Review of the Literature.” *African Studies Review* 27, No. 2 (1984), 1-58, here at 20.

<sup>12</sup> James Giblin. *A History of the Excluded, Making Family a Refuge from State in Twentieth-Century Tanzania* (Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota, 2005), 107-155; Sunseri, “Labour Migration in Colonial Tanzania”, 592.

<sup>13</sup> Iliffe, *Modern History*, 309.

labourers) people which reflected their participation in migrant labour in the coast – Tanga.<sup>14</sup> Names such as “Kaziulaya”-European work, “Baharia”- sailor and “Msafiri”-traveller, became common among the migrant labour from Njombe.<sup>15</sup> Sunseri’s discussion focused on the recreation of the labourers besides their tight working schedules. The *ngoma* (drum) dances in the sisal plantations were appreciated by the planters as they were thought of as effective in retaining labourers.<sup>16</sup> These scholars enable us to reflect on the multiple dimensions of labour history in Tanzania.

The study of the labour migrations also shifted the focus to women as custodians of the homesteads in the absence of their husbands in the early 1980s. Deborah Bryceson, Marjorie Mbilinyi, Thaddeus Sunseri and James Giblin have debated the socio-economic pressures endured by women in the absence of their husbands, who had gone in search of work in the coastal areas of Tanzania.<sup>17</sup> The colonial planters

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<sup>14</sup> Giblin, *History of the Excluded*, 111-116.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 114-115.

<sup>16</sup> Sunseri, “Labour Migration in Colonial Tanzania”, 591.

<sup>17</sup> Deborah Fahy Bryceson. “The Proletarianisation of Women in Tanzania.” *Review of African Political Economy* 17, (1980): 4-27; Marjorie Mbilinyi. “Agribusiness and Casual Labour in Tanzania.” *African Economic History* 15 (1986), 121-122; Giblin, *History of the Excluded*, 107-155; See a case from South Africa by Jacob Troup. *Natures of Colonial Change, Environmental Relations in the Making of the Transkei* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), 59-62.



sometimes preferred women migrants who came with their husbands, as they were believed to stabilize working conditions for their spouses. Sunseri points out that “women were integral to the plantation system as producers and as reproducers of the social amenities needed to support male migration”.<sup>18</sup>

The brutality of the German labour recruitment system and forced labour, particularly during the Maji Maji War between 1905 and 1907, is well documented in German colonial historiography.<sup>19</sup> The Maji Maji War to some extent altered the kind of administration as well as the labour contracts. Governor Rechenberg believed that all forms of forced labour in German East Africa were a source of the Maji Maji War and henceforth he encouraged a willing seller-willing buyer system enshrined in the 1909 labour ordinance.<sup>20</sup> Because of the Maji Maji War, the post-war labour laws on plantations led some employers to opt for the employment of women and children instead of men.<sup>21</sup> When the British took over the colony from the Germans officially in 1920, a mandatory system built on Recheberg's policy of willing seller-willing

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<sup>18</sup> Sunseri, “Labour Migration in Colonial Tanzania”, 589; Tiyambe Zeleza. “Women and the Labour Process in Kenya since Independence.” *Transafrican Journal of History* 17 (1988), 69-70.

<sup>19</sup> Koponen, *Development for Exploitation*, 229-240; Iliffe, *Modern History*; *Idem, Tanganyika Under German Rule*, 9-20.

<sup>20</sup> Thaddeus Sunseri. “Working in the Mangroves and Beyond: Scientific Forestry and the Labour Question in Early Colonial Tanzania.” *Environment and History* 11, No. 4 (2005), 383-387 (365-394).

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Mbilinyi, “Agribusiness and Casual Labour in Tanzania”, 121-128.

buyers was continued, but with the use of compulsory taxation as an indirect force to compel Africans to work on those plantations.<sup>22</sup> The willing seller-willing buyer labour recruitment system went well with the indirect rule of the British.<sup>23</sup> Concerns about shortages of labour in Tanganyika, however, compelled the first British Governor, Sir Horace Byatt, to discourage settlers from forced labour recruitment until after the Second World War.<sup>24</sup> The problems of labour in Tanganyika led to the wide use of the pejorative term “Black man’s country” as a reference to the economy of the country, which the British Governor claimed was primarily based on peasant agriculture.<sup>25</sup> Consequently, the planters during the British colonial era referred to the shortage of labour in Tanganyika as the “labour calamity”.<sup>26</sup>

In the wake of the rise of black African nationalism after the end of the Second World War, the labourers formed trade

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<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Walter Rodney. “The Political Economy of Colonial Tanganyika, 1890-1930.” In M. Kaniki ed., *Tanzania under Colonial Rule* (Dar es Salaam: Historical Association of Tanzania, 1979), 144-160.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Jacob Orr. “Where our House was, I found only Trees”: Colonial Development and Shared Memory in the Village of Itulike, Tanzania (Concordia University: M.A. Thesis, 2016), 13-16.

<sup>24</sup> Roderick Neumann. “Forest Rights, Privileges and Prohibitions: Contextualizing State Forestry Policy in Colonial Tanganyika.” *Environment and History* 3 (1997), 49.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Hanan Sabea. “Mastering the Landscape? Sisal Plantations, Land, and Labour in Tanga Region, 1893-1980s.” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 41, No. 3 (2008), 420.

unions to demand better wages and better working conditions. This has been the subject of much scholarly attention.<sup>27</sup> Trade unions sometimes organized their members to engage in collective job action and strikes. In Tanzania the dockworkers took a lead in strikes. In Dar es Salaam two major strikes took place between July and August 1939.<sup>28</sup> The dockworkers' strike marked the beginning of strikes in other colonial economic sectors as they resisted decasualization.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, this rich scholarship on the labour history in Tanzania has formed the background of this article.

### **3. The Coming of the Settlers in Mufindi**

Most Europeans in Mufindi, as was the case in other parts of Iringa district during the 1930s, were German smallholders. At the very beginning of colonization of Tanganyika, the Germans were interested in settler agriculture, Iringa district being one of the focal points after the Northeastern Province. The Maji Maji War of 1905-1907 and the First World War of 1914-1918 disturbed the long plans of the German planters in Iringa district. Seven years after the First World War, German settlers were allowed to come back. These German

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<sup>27</sup> Issa Shivji, *Law, State and the Working Class in Tanzania, C.1920-1964* (London: James Currey, 1986), 165-178; Gundula Fischer. "Power Repertoires and the Transformation of Tanzanian Trade Unions." *Global Labour Journal* 2, No. 2 (2011), 127-131.

<sup>28</sup> Shivji, *Law, State and the Working Class*.

<sup>29</sup> Fischer, "Power Repertoires"; Freund "Labour and Labour History in Africa".

settlers began to arrive in 1926.<sup>30</sup> Most of them rushed to the Southern Highlands under the supervision of a German Consul based in Nairobi. Their economic activities were financed by the Uhehe Trading Company and the Usagara Company. Both companies were supported by the German government and used to buy all the settlers' produce. There were only few Germans who worked independently on their own.<sup>31</sup>

By 1930s, there were already more than 80 settlers in Iringa district, most of whom were Germans. In fact, until the outbreak of the Second World War, German settlers were the majority among the European farmers in the Iringa district. The British settlers began to arrive in great numbers following the news about the Germans' return to Tanganyika. Governor Cameron's attitude towards British Settlement in the colony had slightly changed. Once opposed to expatriates, he became sympathetic especially when Kenyan

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<sup>30</sup> See, Hezron Kangelawe. "The History of Labour Process in the Tea Industry, Mufindi, 1960-2010s" (University of Dar es Salam: M.A. Diss., 2012), 36. See also, Weiner Voigt. *60 Years in East Africa: Life of a Settler 1926 to 1986* (Ontario: General Store Publishing House, 1995), 58-63.

<sup>31</sup> Martin Mkuye, "The Failure of Settler Agriculture in Southern Highlands, Iringa district: Case 1920- 1961" (University of Dar es Salaam, 1976), 16.

settlers began to show an interest in the Southern Highlands.<sup>32</sup>

The Colonists Ltd formed in 1925 with a capital of only £6,000 provided chiefly by Delamere, Lord Egerton of Tatton and Sir John Ramsden, assisted the British settlers in Mufindi. The company's activities were those of land agency. Word went around that the Southern Highlands was to become a "Second Kenya", which led to an exodus from Kenya to Tanganyika particularly to the Southern Highlands. Other British settlers went to Iringa through individuals acquiring large portions of land and advertising in Europe and India for prospective individuals to come and lease it. The case in point is the Lord Chesham who formed the Chesham Estates Ltd at Sao Hill after making the necessary advertisements.<sup>33</sup>

Throughout the late 1920s and the whole of 1930s British settlers kept arriving in Iringa district; some coming from as far as Australia so that after the Second World War the number of British settlers had increased tremendously. Other settlers in the district included the Greeks specializing in tobacco production in the northern part of Iringa district especially after the Second World War and Asians who bought and occupied most of the farms of departing British

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<sup>32</sup> Robert Mabele. "The Economic of Smallholder Tea Production: The Case of Njombe District" (University of Dar es Salaam, PhD Thesis, 1987), 11.

<sup>33</sup> Mabele, "The Economic of Smallholder Tea Production".

Settlers especially in the 1950s as Tanganyika's independence was looming large.<sup>34</sup>

After their return to Tanganyika from 1926, the Germans remained in the country until the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. During this whole period, the Germans had attempted to establish commercial farming with little, if any success. The crops they attempted to grow included pyrethrum, tea, wheat and other food crops such as maize, beans, peas and vegetables.<sup>35</sup>

With the outbreak of the Second World War, German tea planters were expelled and their tea and other farms were placed under the custodian of Enemy Property. When the hostilities of the Second World War commenced, the tea estates were run in management groups under the control of the Assistant Custodian at Mufindi,<sup>36</sup> assisted by six experienced managers from Nyasaland (Malawi). The management by this Department continued until the end of 1939<sup>37</sup> when the estates were leased to the Tanganyika Tea

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<sup>34</sup> Mkuye, "The Failure of Settler Agriculture in Southern Highlands".

<sup>35</sup> Mabele, "The Economic of Smallholder Tea Production", 17.

<sup>36</sup> The Mufindi tea plantation which before the Second World War was owned by Germans, was put under Enemy Property of Tanganyika Enemy Tea Estates were situated in the Southern Highlands Province, one group of 24 estates being at Mufindi and 5 were at Tukuyu.

<sup>37</sup> Many scholars have estimated the lease year to be in 1940.

Company.<sup>38</sup> In early 1940, 24 German estates and a processing plant fell under the control of the Kenya Tea Company, which established an affiliate concern at Mufindi under the name of the Tanganyika Tea Company.<sup>39</sup>

Unfortunately, in 1941, there was a big demand for local seed in East Africa, and war conditions prevailing at the time made the importation of seed from India impracticable. In 1942, the necessary seed was imported from India but the delays in transport occurred in India due to war conditions and most of the seeds were useless on arrival and the percentage of germination was disapprovingly low. A very small number of local seeds were available at the time in East Africa, and all other estates required all the seeds produced by them to be used by themselves. At this stage, in Mufindi, the area of vacancies was estimated to stand at 546 acres. An order for seed was again placed in India but considerable delay was experienced in getting an export license. The seeds did not arrive until January, 1944 and again the germination was poor, averaging only 35%. A further order for seeds was thereupon placed in India for delivery in January 1945.<sup>40</sup>

The lessees imported new seeds, regenerated neglected fields and built a new factory with a larger capacity. Tea production soon obtained a reputation of such high quality

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<sup>38</sup> D.R. McDonald. *Enemy Property in Tanganyika* (Cape Town: Hortors Limited, 1946), 35.

<sup>39</sup> Mkuye, "The Failure of Settler Agriculture in Southern Highlands", 17.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

that a comfortable margin of profit was maintained as one comment from the London tea auction testifies:<sup>41</sup>

Growth is much slower at Mufindi than in other tea areas in East Africa and the tea bushes take much longer to reach maturity, but on the other hand, the tea from the Mufindi estates receives a high price on the London market. The high quality of the tea is due partly to the fact that the lessees have built a modern and efficient factory and are able to turn out the best quality tea under the best conditions.<sup>42</sup>

The other reason why tea from Mufindi was so tasty was that the labourers, the Wakinga in particular, were careful in plucking only the most tender leaves, the two leaves and a bud for processing. Recognizing the importance of the workers' contribution to their success, the Tanganyika Tea Company tried to provide the best possible working conditions for their labourers.<sup>43</sup>

When the estates were taken over by the Tanganyika Tea Company, it soon became apparent that many of them had been seriously neglected and much work was necessary to

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<sup>41</sup> James D. Graham. "Changing Patterns of Wage Labour in Tanzania: A History of the Relations between African Labour and European Capitalism in Njombe District, 1931 - 1961" (Northwestern University, PhD Thesis, 1968), 130.

<sup>42</sup> Graham, "Changing Patterns of Wage Labour in Tanzania", 131.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*



put the estates in order. Lalang and Couch grass were firmly rooted in many areas, especially in newly planted areas, where it was obvious that the land had not been properly cleaned before planting. In addition, the percentage of vacancies in newly planted areas and some of the mature areas was abnormally high and in some immature areas only occasional tea plants had survived.<sup>44</sup>

Tea gardening was in its infancy in Tanganyika at the outbreak of the war and Mufindi estates were still in the course of development. The economic unit at that time was considered to be 175 acres and licenses had been issued to many estates for the planting of additional areas in order to bring the tea areas up to 175 acres.<sup>45</sup>

The tea farms were threatened with decline as the British settlers who leased some of them did not have the financial support provided by the German organizations. In his report for the year 1939, the Provincial Commissioner for the Southern Highlands clearly showed how important German activities had been in the economy of the province at the time of the outbreak of the Second World War. Before the Second World War, 90% of the plantations and farms were owned by Germans, and 75% of all agricultural inputs and farm materials were supplied by German enterprises. Most finance and credit facilities were controlled by German firms and they even owned 50% of all garages. Shortly before the

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<sup>44</sup> McDonald, *Enemy Property in Tanganyika*.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

outbreak of the Second World War, experiments were made in the Mufindi area to grow pyrethrum, and many of the tea planters took the opportunity of inter-planting the young areas with pyrethrum, in order to enable them to obtain ready cash from their pyrethrum.<sup>46</sup> The shortage of capital threatening the tea plantation in Mufindi came to an end in 1940 when the Brooke Bond, a transnational company with a lot of experience on tea gained in India and which had by then gained a strong foothold in the Kenya tea industry, leased on an annual basis all former German tea farms and the factory in Mufindi. In 1949, the Brooke Bond Company was granted a longer-term lease.<sup>47</sup> These settlers had many complaints and observations towards the African labourers and indeed the state on curbing such problems.

#### **4. The land question for settlers, 1930s-1960**

The availability of extensive suitable areas is a prerequisite for settlers' agricultural scheme. In Tanganyika land was held by the state by virtue of the 1923 Land Ordinance but acquisition of land involved discussions and negotiations with the customary owners. These discussions and negotiations were important in areas where the land in question was in great demand by various land users, as was the case in Mufindi. The acquisition of land in Mufindi

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>47</sup> Mabele, "The Economic of Smallholder Tea Production", 16.

(around tea farms) was difficult, because the customary owners of the land thought that settlers would rob them of their land.<sup>48</sup>

Firstly, the settlers acquired land from two big colonial settlers in Mufindi, namely Lord Chesham and Israel Masada. The history of Lord Chesham went back to 1936, when Iringa district in the Southern Highlands Province underwent massive land alienation of approximately 120,000 acres to a limited company formed for the purpose of developing the land by “non-native settlement” on mixed farming lines.<sup>49</sup> That scheme was famously known as the Lord Chesham Scheme, which was made public in the press towards the end of 1936.<sup>50</sup> Lord Chesham advertised his appropriation throughout the late 1930s:

Even in the middle of the day the air is fresh and invigorating, the sun pleasantly hot, but a fire is welcome in the evening almost the year round. Malaria, tsetse fly and drought, the three main pests

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<sup>48</sup> M.C. Mtuy. “Mufindi Afforestation Project Report Record No.8” (Unpublished Report, 1979), 6.

<sup>49</sup> L. Chesham. “Settlement in Tanganyika.” *Journal of the Royal African Society* 37, no. 147 (1938), 2.

<sup>50</sup> Tanzania National Archives, hereafter TNA, “Land and Land Settlements” in Provincial Book-Southern Highlands Book VOL. II. ca. 1920-1940.

of Africa, are not to be found there [Sao Hill] nor is the locust, the bane of all settlers, to be expected.<sup>51</sup>

Lord Chesham bought part of the farm from Col. Arthur Focus, who had attempted to settle the British nationals in vain at Sao Hill in 1925. After the failure of the first plan, Col. Arthur Focus imported horses, cattle, sheep and pigs to Sao Hill. The second project failed too as Nodular worms in the sheep prevented progress. Focus died in 1935 and his land was relinquished to Lord Chesham, who increased its acreage tremendously.<sup>52</sup> Lord Chesham, however, paid due compensation for disturbances to the customary owners, who numbered 278. The customary owners surrendered their rights of occupancy willingly in terms of three options. The first choice allowed the customary owners to continue with their right of occupation, the second was to surrender their rights of occupancy to the company and to move to another area after receiving compensation fund for disturbance, and the third was to remain on the land as a tenant of the company. The natives unanimously chose to move on receipt of disturbance compensation fund, which was assessed by the administrative authority and confirmed by the Governor too.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Chesham, "Settlement in Tanganyika", 189.

<sup>52</sup> TNA, "Land and Land Settlements".

<sup>53</sup> TNA, "Land and Land Settlements".

The Hehe, however, heavily resented the taking of their lands at Sao Hill in 1937, when it was reported that the land was leased to a European for permanent settlement. The Sao Hill land owned by Chesham formed the subject of one petition in 1956 filed at the UN headquarters, which alleged that a number of the Hehe in the UN Trust Territory of Tanganyika had been turned off their land by the British. The petition alleged that the land grab had happened in the sub-chiefdoms of Mufindi, Kibengu, Kilolo, Mahenge and Idodi.<sup>54</sup> The late Lord Chesham was alleged to have bought several hundred square miles of good land and to have kept it idle and had given part of it to “his fellow whites”. After Lord Chesham’s death, Africans (The Hehe) asked for that land back. One statement in the petition is worth quoting: “The Hehe have great fears that one day their fertile land might be declared ‘White Highlands’”. The petition ended by adding that the Hehe did not want their country become another Kenya and urged the UN to intervene on their behalf.<sup>55</sup> The other similar case which found its way to the UN from Tanganyika was that of the Meru people in North Central part in 1952. The Meru people were resettled from their customary land to allow expansion of European land holdings.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> A. Thompson, *Report from UN: Africa Today: Land Grab in Tanganyika* 3, no.5 (1956), 10-11.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> M.L. Bates. “Tanganyika: The Development of a Trust Territory.” *International Organisation* 9, No. 1 (1955), 44.

Lady Chesham, the widow of the late Lord Chesham, relinquished the land to the colonial government in the late 1950s. She was one of the most popular women in the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) Women's Wing and she even got a seat in the Legislative Council in the 1958 general election to represent the Hehe ethnic group in the Southern Highlands Constituency of Iringa.<sup>57</sup>

Israel Masada owned part of the Sao Hill plantation of today in the east of the Division I of today with 87,000 acres.<sup>58</sup> Israel Masada acquired the land in lease form from the colonial state in 1927. Nothing of value was developed on Masada's land as he was too occupied with other investments in Kenya.<sup>59</sup> Because of that, a number of the local African population encroached on his dormant farmland. The land was revoked by the state in 1961 for plantation forestry. Those local people who encroached on his farm were not compensated by the forest department as they had encroached illegally on privately owned land.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Salma Maoulidi. "Racial and Religious Tolerance in Nyerere's Political Thought and Practice." In Chambi Chachage and Annar Cassam. *Africa's Liberation: The Legacy of Nyerere* (Dar es Salaam: Fahamu Books, 2010), 135.

<sup>58</sup> Sao Hill Settlers Association to the Governor, 16.11. 1958 in TNA Acc. 257 AN/1/21/015 –Sao Hill Mufindi Settlers' Association.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Interview with Kambaulaya Mtavangu, 19.5.2016 at Mtili Village, Mufindi, Iringa Region.

## 5. The labour question and the Hehe Culture

In Tanganyika, during the British colonial rule, Iringa was among the intensive labour exporting regions but, ironically, settlers of this region suffered from labour shortage throughout their stay in the region particularly in Iringa district.<sup>61</sup> Many economists claimed that the situation was a unique character of the Africans showing that market forces failed in Africa. In fact, the whole mission of colonization was manifested in making the Africans work in different colonial projects, settler economy being one of them. Koponen says that to most Germans, colonization meant making Africans work.<sup>62</sup> Settlers accused the Hehe of Iringa which included Mufindi, of not working unless taxation forced them. Different complaints from tea planters in Mufindi were about the shortage of the 'native' labourers. The settlers explained that in the tea industry, an all-important factor was the availability and efficiency of 'native' labour. They further complained that the government had sanctioned the importation of Tamils from south India in the event of local labour proving insufficient and unsuitable.<sup>63</sup> In one visit of the governor to Mufindi in 1933, the settlers pressed the following complaints:

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<sup>61</sup> Mkuye, "The Failure of Settler Agriculture in Southern Highlands", 22.

<sup>62</sup> Koponen, *Development for Exploitation*, 321; See also the context of Malawi by Peter A. Walker. "Roots of Crisis: Historical Narratives of Tree Planting in Malawi." *Historical Geography* 32 (2004), 89-109.

<sup>63</sup> TNA Acc. 24/26038: Tea Cultivation in Usambara Mountains by Captain M. F. Bell.

We press for the Registration of natives in the manner already adopted in Kenya. This has previously been asked for, but the government, owing to the expense involved has not yet been able to see a way to do it [...]. I would point to your Excellency that at present if we break a contract, we are quite rightly fined fairly heavily, whereas if a labourer does so, he is practically never punished. So, registration would benefit the settler in stopping sudden desertions, and it would place on the native a responsibility which he would find difficult to evade.<sup>64</sup>

The governor responded to the settlers that based on his experience on African labour, the only way of maintaining a good supply was to popularize employment by catering for workers' comfort by means of providing good housing and adequate food of the kind they were accustomed to and by establishing shops in the neighborhoods.<sup>65</sup> The problems of labour in Tanganyika led to the wide use of the pejorative term "Black man's country" as a reference to the economy of the country, which the British Governor claimed was primarily based on peasant agriculture.<sup>66</sup> Consequently, the

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<sup>64</sup> Shivji, *Law, State and the Working Class*, 99.

<sup>65</sup> TNA Acc. 24/23266: Railway Rates on Tea.

<sup>66</sup> Neumann, "Forest Rights, Privileges and Prohibitions", *op. cit.*



settlers during the British colonial era referred to the shortage of labour in Tanganyika as the “labour calamity”.<sup>67</sup>

There were further complaints by the tea and wheat settlers in Mufindi that the Hehe were drinking local beer excessively. The planters claimed that the habit had detrimental effects on the efficiency of labourers on the tea estates and wheat farms. The governor replied that the Native Liquor Ordinance had been applied to the whole area of Mufindi since 1932 and he added that accordingly, no one was entitled to brew or sell native liquor within the areas without a license. On the licenses issue, the District Commissioner [Iringa] reported to the governor that only 8 licenses by then had been issued to the native brewers. Furthermore, the governor added that the native authority of Uhehe had in 1932 passed a bylaw under the Native Authority Ordinance (NAO) which prohibited the brewing and selling of beer in or near settlers' farms. The governor concluded by urging the District Commissioner (Iringa) to increase enforcement of the law by using the sub-chiefs in the Mufindi area and subsequently, the Police Post at Kibao was established. Kibao was the main business centre in Mufindi by then.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Hanan Sabea. Mastering the Landscape? Sisal Plantations, Land, and Labour in Tanga Region, 1893-1980s.” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 41, No. 3 (2008), 420.

<sup>68</sup> TNA Acc. 24/23266: Railway Rates on Tea.

Controlling excessive use of local brew was given a pivotal emphasis around Mufindi and when one reads from the archival sources, one finds that drunkenness was deemed to be the main reason for the Hehe's poor response to settlers' farms. Many complaints were claimed to have solution on policing the Native Liquor Prohibition of 1932. In the following quotation, the Area Commissioner [District Commissioner] was responding to one settler's complaint via the police superintendent at Sao Hill on excessive use of local brew around his farm.

A resident of the Sao Hill area has complained that the *pombe* shops in his neighbourhood supply so much *pombe* that his African Staff is perpetually drunk, and has asked if I can do anything to prevent this. I explained that the licensing of native liquor in this area was under the Native Authority and that I doubted if I could take any effective action with the law as it is. Cases of disorderly conduct can, of course, be dealt with by the police of the Police post at Sao Hill, but they have no powers to supervise the running of the existing *pombe* shops. It would be possible for the Native Liquor Ordinance (Chapter 77 of the laws), to be applied to a described area, for example, a circle with radius of three miles from John's Corner [Mafinga] and if this were done, the licensing and supervision of the *pombe* shops would pass from the

hands of the native administration into the hands of the Administration police. Hours at which *pombe* can be sold would be limited, licenses would be for consumption on the premises only, unless in a specified case an African were allowed to take *pombe* home, and might be possible in this way to reduce drunkenness in the area if this is at present prevalent.<sup>69</sup>

Drunkenness behavior among the Hehe was indeed deemed a stumbling block to labourers in Mufindi area by the settlers. The evidence provided was from the roll calls or muster on the farms. The settlers sometimes reported such disorder to the District Commissioner and to the police officers at Iringa headquarters:

We regret that, once again, we have to draw your attention to the excessive consumption of liquor by the Africans of the Mufindi district. This habit is, in our opinion, becoming serious, particularly during weekends. Our muster of labourers on Monday morning is far below our normal strength and furthermore many of those that do report for work are not in a fit state to carry out their duties. As employers who have every intention, of improving condition for our labour it is extremely discouraging to see the brawls, misconduct and drunkenness that go on near Kibao during the weekend. The advantages

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<sup>69</sup> TNA Acc. 24/ A2/8, 1934-1952: Native Liquor Prohibition.

that would normally accrue to the native through good and regular pay appear to be entirely lost by their increasing expenditure on liquor. Furthermore, this habit must have a very serious effect on their health. The writer visited Kibao yesterday afternoon and had to stop his car and interfere in a fight that was proceeding in the middle of the road and within the space of a mile; at least twelve natives were seen to be drunk and incapable. During the quarter of an hour that was spent in this area no native policeman was to be seen. We are willing to co-operate to the best of our ability and we make an urgent request that the number of licensed beer shops should be reduced to a minimum and those that remain should be under strict supervision. In a settled area of this description, we consider the present situation as serious.<sup>70</sup>

The Southern Highlands Provincial Commissioner report of 1936 to the Governor noted the same problem of the Hehe of Iringa district's failure to respond to market forces by putting it in this way:

The tea estates in the Iringa and Rungwe districts and coffee estates between them provided employment for some 3,000 natives. In the Iringa

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<sup>70</sup> TNA Acc.24: The Tanganyika Tea Company Limited.

district the Hehe who constitutes the principal tribe are noted for their reluctance to seek work unless forced to do so by economic necessity, consequently Bena and Kinga from Njombe form the bulk of the labour force in this district [Iringa].<sup>71</sup>

The case of labour shortage found in Uhehe was similar to the one experienced in the areas of sisal plantations in Kilosa and Tanga. To the government, it was necessary to attract migrant labour because many of the Africans who lived along the Coast and the Central Railway were simply not interested in wage labour. This was partly due to the oppressive and debilitating climate there; most of the people near Kilosa and Tanga, for example, did not respond to opportunities of the labour market. From the earliest days of plantation farming during the German era, the supply of local labour was found to be entirely insufficient and workers had to be brought in from other districts. The work on the sisal estates consisted of cleaning and planting, cutting the sisal leaves and transporting them to the factory, where they were decorticated, washed, dried, brushed, pressed and baled. Such work was disdained by many Africans in Tanga Province, where Islam was widespread and it was felt that manual labour was undignified and a suitable occupation for slaves only.<sup>72</sup> Even with migrant labour it was always difficult to obtain good sisal cutters. Cutting was very

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<sup>71</sup> TNA: Southern Highlands Province Book Volume II.

<sup>72</sup> Graham, "Changing Patterns of Wage Labour in Tanzania", 72.

unpleasant because workers had to move about amidst sharp-pointed leaves and it required a certain amount of concentration because careless cutting would damage both the leaves and the plant. The Wabena were known as excellent sisal cutters.<sup>73</sup>

Wartime (1939-1945) demands for both men and material placed the sisal industry in Tanganyika in an uncomfortable position. The strategic uses of manpower increased, likewise the demand of labour increased. Thousands of Tanganyikans were conscripted into military service, including many of the Hehe from Iringa district. The conscripts from Njombe district were enrolled in the East African Military Labour Service (E.A.M.L.S) rather than KAR as their neighbours, the Hehe. E.A.M.L.S was established after Italy entered the war in order to provide unskilled labour along lines of communication and in forward battle areas. This varied experience of war by the Bena and the Hehe meant differences in perceptions and psychological orientation even in utilizing them as labourers.<sup>74</sup> The Hehe regarded themselves as brave people and it seems this belief still survives for some of them. They preferred what they regard as tough and respectable jobs (*migo dsa kigoosi-man works*). For them, such jobs included the army, police and prisons. Other works such as farming and trade were left for women

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

and other ethnic groups who migrated to Iringa from neighbouring districts, especially from the then Njombe.<sup>75</sup> Other scholars have gone further by claiming that essentially, the Hehe cherished wars more than any other job. They claim that it was from these wars where they survived through booty.<sup>76</sup>

The shortage of labourers in Mufindi area never ended in the 1930s, but went on until the 1950s when the Tea Board urged the government to discourage Southern Highlands' labourers going to Rhodesia and South Africa for mineral mining. The Board urged the government to stabilize the labourers by not moving the labourers from one place to another. The planters gave an example of the Northern Province, where the Kikuyu were being replaced by the Southern Highlands labourers, which increased the shortage of labour on the tea plantations.<sup>77</sup>

The labour question on the tea plantations, for example, was one of the hot agendas always. It was urged by the tea planters in 1952 that the tea industry due to its serious shortage of labourers had to have a direct representation on the Labour Advisory Board. The Board sent the following resolution to the government:

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<sup>75</sup> Joseph S. Madumulla. *Proverbs and Sayings. Theory and Practice with examples from the Wahehe of Southern Highlands of Tanzania* (Dar es Salaam: TUKI, 1995), 2.

<sup>76</sup> See, for example, Egid Crema. *Wahehe: A Bantu People* (Bologna: Italian Missionary Press, 1987), 18-20.

<sup>77</sup> TNA, Acc.24/27053: Tea Board Minutes of Meeting.

In view of the present and growing importance of the tea industry in Tanganyika and its dependence on labour, this Board requests that the Labour Advisory Board be enlarged to provide for direct representation of the Tea Industry. We suggest members to be nominated by the Tea Board with the approval of the Governor.<sup>78</sup>

Brown, the then district officer of Iringa district which by then included Mufindi, claimed that in seeking work, the Hehe preferred to remain as near home as possible and very few went outside Iringa district.<sup>79</sup> He claimed so by using examples of the poor response shown by the Hehe in many works which were procurable on government projects like European plantations and in the township, where traders employed a small number of labourers. He added by saying that on the whole, the Hehe did not like working for wages and that when they were forced to pay tax, they could do so by selling their livestock and some food crops like beans and maize in different nearby local markets established by Indians. But in real sense, insisted Brown, to the Hehe, working for wage was accepted as a necessary evil. Even when they decided to work, the Hehe were claimed to be very selective with the type of employers because they associated wage labour with

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<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> See, for example, the National Census 1957 in Tanganyika.



slavery through which they sold their neighbouring people, anyway.<sup>80</sup>

The complaints about the natives' failure to respond to market forces were noted throughout the territory as the Provincial Commissioner of Tanga was also heard saying that few Swahili locals worked for themselves. Those Swahili locals had the tradition that manual labour was undignified and indeed, according to them those jobs were suitable occupation for slaves only. He gave an example of the Digo who were said to be extremely lazy, poor agriculturalist, and that they did not like employment. It was due to such notion that the Germans brought the Nyamwezi who were said to be industrious.<sup>81</sup> As a result of these habits, some of the employers especially on the plantations did not prefer to have them at all by opting for their neighbours, the Kinga and the Bena who were claimed to be docile.<sup>82</sup>

## 6. "The natives are destroying the environment":

### Colonial state and peasant agriculture

Furthermore, the settlers in Mufindi had unique interpretation on the 'native' agriculture of Mufindi peasants. Their complaints directly and indirectly influenced

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<sup>80</sup> Gordon Brown and Bruce Hutt. *Anthropology in Action, An Experiment in the Iringa District of Iringa Province of Tanganyika* (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), 153.

<sup>81</sup> E. C. Baker. Report on Social and Economic Conditions in the Tanga Province (Dar es Salaam: Government Printer, 1934), 55.

<sup>82</sup> Brown and Hutt, *Anthropology in Action*, 154.

afforestation initiatives by the British colonial state in Mufindi. Early afforestation in Mufindi, which led to the establishment of the Sao Hill plantation forest, was influenced by the main background factors, namely environmental conservation and the economic prospects from tea, wheat, timber and pyrethrum. To intervene in what the colonial state referred to as the “reckless” kind of land management by the ‘natives’, the colonial state established the Kigogo arboretum in 1935 to test the possibility of growing the *Pinus Patula* tree species. The Kigogo arboretum was in the extreme far south of the Sao Hill area. The arboretum brought exotic tree species from Amani Botanical Garden (Tanga Province)<sup>83</sup> to Mufindi for afforestation. The exotic tree species proved to be potentially good for plantation in Mufindi.<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, the seedlings for trials in the so-called “Native Afforestation Schemes” in the Iringa sub-chiefdoms of Kalinga and Kasanga, in Mufindi sub-

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<sup>83</sup> The Amani Botanical Garden was the oldest one since the German colonial period. It was set up by the Germans in 1902 as an extensive arboretum of long-term botanical trial plots for exotic plant species. Species were introduced from various parts of the world for agricultural trials with different economic interests such as medicinal plants, fruits and spices, valuable timber, cosmetics, rubber, oil and ornamental plants. It was closed by the British in 1950. For details, see Tropical Biology Association. *Amani Nature Reserve: An Introduction, Field Guide* (2007), 7.

<sup>84</sup> TNA, Assistant Conservator of forests - Mufindi to the District Officer-Iringa, “Afforestation at Kasanga” 1st February, 1939. Acc. No. 24: File No. 19/4: Forestry.

district, came from Kigogo arboretum.<sup>85</sup> At some point, the arboretum collaborated with tea companies, specifically Tanganyika Tea Company, to test the growth of trees in the grassland areas of Mufindi. The Senior Forester applauded the role of the tea plantations in re-afforestation on the grasslands by putting it in this way: "Certain areas which I knew as grassland 12 years ago had been successfully forested. This is pleasing to note that it has been done and that fact precludes any suggestion as to the unsuitability of soil in these grasslands for the growing of trees".<sup>86</sup> Transport of seedlings from Kigogo arboretum to the trial sites was carried out by the native authorities, that is, by district authorities assisted by sub-chiefs. The problem of distance from Kigogo arboretum centre to planting sites was a stumbling block in the native afforestation efforts. However, the District Officer sometimes preferred establishing nurseries closer to the farms, especially at the Kasanga sub-chiefdom in the extreme west of the Kigogo arboretum

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<sup>85</sup> This was a programme by the British colonial government to plant trees for two reasons; one was to curb the 'natives' speed of using indigenous tree species for poles and wood. This was typically an environmental reason. Secondly, it was for pilot studies on three chiefdoms on whether the exotic tree species could be planted on Kasanga, Kalinga and Kilolo sub-chiefdoms. The Kasanga and Kalinga sub-chiefdoms proved to be good for those exotic tree species and that's the reason behind the Sao Hill plantation forests started in these two sub-chiefdoms.

<sup>86</sup> TNA, Senior Forester, Dar es Salaam, to the Conservator of Forests, Morogoro, 17.3.1945. Acc. No.270, Y/6: Iringa Forests.

centre.<sup>87</sup> The native afforestation schemes, however, were small plots which could not be equated with the Sao Hill plantation forests at all. Until 1939, there was no more than four acres per sub-chiefdom between the fertile areas of Mufindi at Kalinga (sub-chief Dimilamahuti) and at Kasanga (sub-chief Mwatima).<sup>88</sup> The native afforestation schemes, despite being small in acreage, worked as a provenance test in the areas that were fertile in Mufindi.

The introduction of afforestation in Mufindi was also partly the result of the Report by the Tanganyika Secretariat on Land and Surveys in 1939. The report showed that Iringa districts' native population methods of agriculture as detrimental to the environment. The Agricultural Director, based in Morogoro, reported that the extensive deforestation and soil erosion of the most pernicious kind were the consequence of the Hehes' kind of agricultural practices, which produced no economic benefits to the nation at large. The director claimed that the Hehe were producing eleusine (sic) [millet] which was entirely utilized for local beer (*pombe*) making. The report claimed that Iringa district was situated in a province which deserved a model of soil conservation measures, but shifting cultivation obviated that

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<sup>87</sup> TNA, Assistant Conservator of forests -Mufindi to the District Officer-Iringa.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

possibility. The report continued by recommending that clearing and burning of forests for the production of grain crops were to be prohibited and in the absence of adequate administrative and agricultural staff, severe penalties were to be imposed on every delinquent caught. The agricultural director suggested to the Iringa districts' authorities to make their own local Soil Erosion Ordinance to curb environmental degradation. The agricultural director was ambivalent about such soil erosion ordinances, as he further reported that imposing them could be unpopular among the Hehe.<sup>89</sup>

These measures to curb environmental degradation in Mufindi, however, replicated those adopted by the British colonial state in India, where they imposed plantation forests on a population reluctant to adopt what the colonial state referred to as "best environmental practices".<sup>90</sup> Similarly, destroying forests for millet cultivation for making local beer was similar to what was happening in Northern Malawi in the 1940s. The 'natives' were alleged to have cut down trees and collect them in a large heap of about two feet high and burn them. The ashes of those trees were tilled into the

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<sup>89</sup> TNA, Tanganyika Secretariat, File Name: Land and Survey No: 26702: Soil Erosion in Iringa district in Director of Agriculture, Morogoro to the Chief Secretary, Dar es Salaam, 27.1.1939.

<sup>90</sup> Gregory Barton. *Empire Forestry and the Origins of Environmentalism* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002), 75.

ground and planted with millet.<sup>91</sup> The colonial rulers in Malawi intervened by compelling the ‘natives’ to practise contour ridging in the steep hills and to stop planting on river banks.

Soil erosion and ways to counteract it, however, were not new to the British. In the 1880s the Arabica coffee crop in colonial Ceylon failed because of soil degradation, which was induced by soil erosion. Erosion, which was on the increase, soon acquired extremely serious proportions. In a short time, the Ceylonese tea crop was also in danger because of soil erosion, which compelled the launching of soil conservation measures. In India the problem was soon reported as chronic. The Indian soil erosion was attributed to the destruction of forests. Stringent measures were introduced to control the rapid depletion of forests.<sup>92</sup> These measures were, among others, afforestation and strict control of bush fires. In Tanganyika, for example, the ridging or *matuta* system was among the measures which were applied in Uluguru Land Usage Scheme, and sparked fierce resistance from the

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<sup>91</sup> John McCracken. “Conservation and Resistance in Colonial Malawi, The Dead North Revisited.” In William Beinart and Joann McGregor. *Social History and African Environments* (Oxford: James Currey, 2003), 157-169.

<sup>92</sup> Bethuel Swai. “Crisis in Colonial Agriculture: Soil Erosion in Tanganyika during the Interwar Period”, University of Dar es Salaam, not dated, 30-31; See an extensive discussion on soil erosion in Lesotho by Kate Showers. *Imperial Gullies, Soil Erosion and Conservation in Lesotho*, (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2005), 135-176.

local population of Morogoro.<sup>93</sup> The British colonial state in the 1930s passed some resolutions to deal with the deteriorating environment in Africa. Plantation forests were one of the measures to curb the threat. For example, the Council of the Royal Society based in London passed a resolution in 1937; some of the wording is worth reproducing:

This council views with the gravest concern the widespread destruction of the African soil by erosion consequent on wasteful methods of husbandry which strike at the basis of rural economic native welfare, and it is of opinion that immediate steps should be taken for the adoption of a common policy and energetic measures throughout British Africa in order to put an effective check upon this growing menace to the fertility of the land and to the health of the inhabitants.<sup>94</sup>

Furthermore, the Conservator of Forests based in Morogoro, had the same reservations about the Hehe methods of agriculture which were claimed to be detrimental to the environment. The Conservator of Forests said:

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<sup>93</sup> Pamela Maack. "We don't Want Terraces! Protest and Identity under the Uluguru Land Usage Scheme." Gregory Maddox et al., *Custodians of the Land, Ecology and Culture in the History of Tanzania* (James Currey, London, 1996), 152-169. See also, Christopher Conte. *Highland Sanctuary, Environmental History in Tanzania's Usambara Mountains*, in the Mlalo Basin Rehabilitation Scheme (MBRS) in the Usambara Mountains in the 1940s-1950s, (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1997), 126-134.

<sup>94</sup> Swai, "Crisis in Colonial Agriculture", 34.

The Hehe system of cultivation (which is followed by the Wadzungwa too) destroys the agricultural possibilities of a country faster than any other I have seen and I agree with the recommendation that the question of reserving large tracts as forest reserve and removing the inhabitants should be more fully investigated and instructions have been sent to Assistant Conservator of Forests, Mbeya, to keep in close touch with the district officer, Iringa, and the Agricultural Officer of Iringa based at IHEME, with a view to a combined tour of the area East of Mufindi farm [tea farms] to select such areas and if possible arrange for the concentration of the population further away from the scarp face.<sup>95</sup>

The Conservator of Forests was ambivalent about establishing plantation forests as the best intervention measure, because he was worried about the expenses of a reservation in the poor market for local timber products in Tanganyika. The poor market for local timber in the Iringa district and the Southern Highlands Province at large was brought about by poor transport. Lack of professional expertise on scientific afforestation was the second factor which made the Conservator of Forests dislike afforestation

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<sup>95</sup> TNA, Tanganyika Secretariat, File Name: Land Utilization on the Udzungwa Scarp in Conservator of Forests, Morogoro, to the Director of Agriculture, Morogoro 16/March/1939.



as the best method of intervening in the shifting cultivation in Iringa district. He was also scared of the risk of fire, as he argued that the 'natives' agricultural practices, which included burning grasses, were not compatible with afforestation.

Furthermore, the establishment of plantation forestry in Mufindi by the British colonial government was delayed because exotic tree species took too long to harvest. The British colonial government used an example of cypress tree species, which were claimed to take almost up to 40 years to be harvested. Because of this, some British colonial government officials were in favour of leaving this long-term programme of planting exotic tree species to the native authorities than to the central government.<sup>96</sup> Based on these reservations, the Conservator of Forests in Tanganyika was of the opinion that these factors could lead to greater expenses for the forestry department.<sup>97</sup>

The 1931-1939 report on soil erosion for the Southern Highlands Province, contrary to the view of the conservator of forests, suggested that the key solution for the soil erosion problem in Mufindi was afforestation. The report noted that destruction of forests in the high rainfall area was evident on the great escarpment between Mufindi and Dabaga. The

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<sup>96</sup> TNA, Assistant Conservator of Forests-Mbeya to the District Officers-Iringa, "Tentative Memorandum on Native Afforestation, Southern Highlands Province" 26<sup>th</sup>, July, 1938. Acc. No. 24: File No. 19/4: Forestry.

<sup>97</sup> TNA, Land Utilization on the Udzungwa Scarp, op. cit.

report said that controlling the destruction of the forest reserves by the native population through the imposition of rules, enforced by district authority, was only limited to areas in the immediate proximity, while in the remote areas patrolling was difficult and hundreds of square miles of forests had been destroyed within living memory.<sup>98</sup> The area between Mufindi and Dabaga practised shifting cultivation partly because of high soil acidity and unsuitable crops planted in the area. The colonial state claimed that there was ruthless burning carried out by the local African population in the area between Mufindi and Dabaga on the pretext of counteracting such acidity. Furthermore, grass burning by the local population in the area between Mufindi and Dabaga was practised for the purpose of obtaining grazing areas during the rainy seasons. The misuse of fire by African peasants was an idea present among the Germans too. One of the early German foresters, Kruger, claimed that “African farmers [peasants] set fire to as much as a thousand hectares of forest in order to prepare a tiny parcel for sowing, and they burned large bushes in order to drive antelopes into snares”.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> TNA, The Southern Highlands Province Report on Soil Erosion by the Director of Agriculture, Acc. No. 77, File Name: Soil Erosion 2/33, 1931-1939.

<sup>99</sup> Thaddeus Sunseri. *Wielding the Ax, State Forestry and Social Conflict in Tanzania, 1820-2000* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2009), 51-52.

The suggestions by the colonial state to intervene in these practices by the local population were overwhelmingly focused on re-afforestation. The immediate solution by the state was simply prosecuting the offenders and the longer-term solution was re-afforestation of the areas affected.<sup>100</sup> The scenario was similar to that of the German colonial state, which aimed at replacing African shifting agriculture with intensive land use by applying fertilizer, technology, labour management and new crops in German East Africa between 1912 and 1914.<sup>101</sup> The Conservator of Forests in Tanganyika based in the Morogoro region was of the opinion that the forestry department in general had the role of imposing rural economic principles on the peasants by saying:

The aim should be a rural economy based on the sound principles of correct land use and this will not be possible without considerable interference with the habits and customs of the African. He must be saved from himself and cured of many malpractices. He must be taught the value of his forests and this will entail a forest department strong in personnel and with assumed financial provision over a long period.<sup>102</sup>

In the areas close to tea farms, the colonial state claimed that there were few patches of natural forests because of shifting

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<sup>100</sup> TNA, The Southern Highlands Province Report on Soil Erosion, op. cit.

<sup>101</sup> See, Sunseri, *Wielding the Ax*, op. cit.

<sup>102</sup> TNA 42054: The Conservator of Forestry, Morogoro, Forestry in Tanganyika, 1946.

cultivation. Most of the natural forests of the Mufindi district in the early 1930s were claimed to be denuded as a result of shifting cultivation. Shifting cultivation around tea farms was practised by the local African population to avoid couch grass-infested areas. As couch grass did not grow in mature forests, the peasants abandoned their old farms and went to clear a forested area, not because of soil fertility decline, but because couch grass had infested their farms. This practice led to most of Mufindi land being cultivated to exhaustion.<sup>103</sup> Behind the colonial state rhetoric, there were the potential economic prospects from the infant tea and pyrethrum industries in Mufindi. The Conservator of Forests put it in this way: “if tea and pyrethrum make stable industries [in Mufindi], there may be a demand for certain classes of timber, packing cases, plywood box frames, drying trays and fuel”.<sup>104</sup> The statement by the Conservator of Forests implied that tea and pyrethrum farming would bring demands for timber. This meant that apart from ameliorating the micro-climate, the forests had economic gains in Mufindi.

The complaints of the settlers in Mufindi to the colonial state on shifting cultivation by the local African population culminated into the afforestation of the destroyed land and

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<sup>103</sup> Mtuyi, “Mufindi Afforestation Project Report”.

<sup>104</sup> TNA Acc. 336/IR/2 The Conservator of Forests to the Assistant Conservator of Forests, Mbeya, “Mufindi Planting Plan” 31.7.1939.

creation of two forest reserves close to their farms.<sup>105</sup> The depletion of the natural forest in Mufindi worried the tea settlers there. After the Second World War, the settlers expressed their fears that tea production in the area would decline tremendously if the microclimate was not preserved and improved. The forest department was called in to establish large-scale afforestation to replace the destroyed environment.<sup>106</sup> The tea planters were mainly Germans who had started planting tea in Mufindi from 1926.<sup>107</sup> In the German times Mufindi was a site of hunting buffalo and elephants by the German colonisers at the Iringa garrison. It was these early German settlers who started planting trees, especially cypresses, and according to them, the name Mufindi came from the early cypress trees, which the 'natives' referred to them as *mivinyi* (plural) and *mfinyi* (singular) which eventually became Mufindi.<sup>108</sup>

## 7. Conclusion

This article has articulated the major complaints of the settlers of Mufindi who invested on tea and wheat. These

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<sup>105</sup> These forest reserves had different names during colonial rule. However, as it is now, they are referred to as Ihomasa and Iyegeya, Source: Interview with Joseph Sondi, 27.1. 2017. See the other scholars on this line like, Clement Gillman. "White Colonialism in East Africa: With Special Regard to Tanganyika Territory." *Geographical Review* 32, No. 4 (1942): 585-597, here 589.

<sup>106</sup> Mtuyi, "Mufindi Afforestation Project Report".

<sup>107</sup> See, Kangalawe, "The History of Labour Process in the Tea Industry, Mufindi, 1960-2010s," 36. See also, Voigt, *60 Years in East Africa*, 58-63.

<sup>108</sup> Voigt, *60 Years in East Africa*, 59-60.

complaints were directed at the state which seemed too docile to deal with the shortage of labourers and enforcing work discipline. From this debate one can conclude by three main arguments as far as the settler economy in Mufindi and Tanganyika at large is concerned. First, there was a high need of settlers to invest in the formerly German-owned plantations in Mufindi under the Custodian of Enemy Property. The poor response of the African labourers – the Hehe ethnic group – shocked the employers (settlers) who concluded that the root of the problem was to be found within the Hehe Culture. It was claimed that the Hehe drank a lot of local brew, which affected their work discipline. Because of that problem, the settlers were forced to seek solution from the state apparatus. Secondly, the settlers, beyond finding “laziness” in the African labourers, filed a lot of complaints such as taking more land from the Hehe who were judged as rapacious and reckless on sustainable land utilisation. Thirdly, the state response was neutral as it did not want to provoke the subsistence farmers on their customary land. While the colonial state perceived the problem of labour shortages to come from inability of settlers to provide environment that is conducive for labourers (pull factors), the settlers attributed almost all the problems to the state which failed to force the Hehe and other ethnic groups around Mufindi to work as it was in the colonies of Kenya, Southern Rhodesia and South Africa.