

Exploitation Paradox: Sao-Hill Forest Plantation and the Indigenous Community Livelihoods in Mufindi, Tanzania, 1970s to 2010.

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Abstract

This paper discloses the fundamental paradox of independent African states, which promised to be pro- “poor” (wanyonge), consultative, and consensual – the reality of centralised, bureaucratic and disciplinarian governance committed to communities’ livelihoods. It shows that nationalistic goals of using surrounding resources to improve peoples’ wellbeing, fronted by political elites in most independent African countries, were hardly realised. Indeed, numerous development projects launched to mitigate economic and social hurdles that faced the people aroused great expectations. Yet, the failure of the projects to improve peoples’ livelihoods resulted in great despair. The paper uses Sao-Hill Forest Plantation, which was among state development projects espoused by the Tanzanian government soon after independence, to illuminate the ways in which local communities’ expectations turned to desperation. It shows that, prior to the establishment and expansion of the plantation, the government assured the surrounding communities of social and economic benefits. However, the study reveals that the indigenous communities marginally benefitted from the yields of the plantation. Communities’ weak bargaining power and lack of political will were behind the despair. The paper integrates archival, oral, and secondary sources to contribute knowledge to studies examining resources and the wellbeing of the adjacent communities.

Key words: Sao-Hill, Forest Plantation, Indigenous Communities, Livelihoods, Mufindi, Tanzania.

1.0 Introduction

During the post-colonial period, like many other independent African countries, Tanzania spearheaded an agenda of building the nation and bringing development to its citizens. The government endeavoured to achieve self-reliance. It stressed development in rural areas, among other attempts – places where colonial governments marginalised their socio-economic prospects. Consequently, the government was devoted to using its natural and artificial resources as a bridge to self-reliance and rural development. Furthermore, the post-colonial government instituted several development projects and schemes to reach the desired development goals for the rural communities and the nation at large.¹ It is against such a backdrop that the post-colonial government financed the large-scale forest

¹ See Michael Jennings, “‘We Must Run While Others Walk’: Popular Participation and Development Crisis in Tanzania, 1961-1969,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 41, no. 2 (2003), 163-187; Priya Lal, “Self-Reliance and the State: The Multiple Meanings of Development in Early Post-Colonial Tanzania,” *Africa Journal of the International Institute* 82, no. 2 (2012), 212-234; Theobald Frank Theodory, “Julius Nyerere’s Perspectives on Natural Resources: A Reflection on the Desired Development Trajectory of Industrialization in Tanzania,” in *From African Peer Review Mechanisms to African Queer Review Mechanisms? Robert Mugabe, Empire and the Decolonisation of African Orifices* edited by Artwell Nhemachane and Tapiwa V. Warikandwa (Bamenda: Langaa Research and Publishing CIG, 2019).

plantation project at the Sao-Hill area in Mufindi District, currently in Iringa Region. The ambition to use the Sao-Hill Forest Plantation (SHFP) to bring development to rural dwellers of Mufindi and the country was not new. Instead, it was in place since the colonial era. The British colonial government, for instance, envisaged that the plantation project would transform the Mufindi community from a peasant to an industrial economy.² Indeed, the preceding assertions enlighten that livelihood of the indigenous community were communicated during and before the establishment of the plantation by both colonial and post-colonial governments. Nevertheless, many recent studies on development projects conducted within and outside the country, in different disciplines attest that where there were resources either natural or artificial, the local communities surrounding them profited either marginally or not at all. The resources and wealth exploited were repatriated either outside the country or to towns and cities and left the local people with multiple scars connected to diseases, land-use disputes and a polluted environment.³ Likewise, studies on

² Tanzania National Archives (hereafter TNA) 24/19/21, a letter from Conservator of Forests, Morogoro to the Provincial Commissioner, Southern Highlands Province, 5.12.1949.

³ Samwel J. Kabote and Elliot P. Niboye, *Socio-economic Effects of Large-scale Gold Mining on Artisanal Minerals in Tanzania: Experience from Bulyanhulu Gold Fields*, (Dar es Salaam, 2013); Willy Malinganya, Salatiel Moyo Simon and Renatus Paul, *Large Scale Mining Activities and the Livelihood of Adjacent Communities in Tanzania: A Case of Geita Gold Mine* (Dar es Salaam, 2013); Said Nuhu *et al.*, "Regulatory Framework and

state-funded development projects show that many of the funded projects failed to bring about socio-economic development in the indigenous communities. They demonstrate that states viewed the funded projects through the fiscal lens of revenue needs, discounting the fate of the surrounding communities, which were custodians of such projects.⁴ This paper enhances the general understanding of the implications of states development projects on the socio-economic wellbeing of the indigenous communities by analysing a case of a large-scale forest plantation – a development project under the Tanzanian government.

Studies on forest plantations have generated nuanced attestations over prospects of the indigenous communities. Mike Garforth and colleagues in Australia notes that town dwellers benefited more from forest products, employment opportunities and other economic benefits compared to the rural communities surrounding forest plantations.⁵ In

Natural Gas Activities: A Curse or Boon to Host Communities in Southern Tanzania?”, *The Extractive Industries and Society* 5, no. 4 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2020.05.004>

⁴ Cf. James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Jennings, “We Must Run While Others Walk”; Lal, “Self-Reliance and the State.”

⁵ Mike Garforth, Natasha Landell-Mills and James Mayers, “Plantations, Livelihoods and Poverty,” in *Plantations, Privatization, Poverty and Power: Changing Ownership and Management of State Forests*, edited by M. Garforth and J. Mayers (London: Earthscan, 2005).

contrast, a study conducted in India by S. Sankar and colleagues shows that local communities got benefits in economic and social services from forest plantations.⁶ Case studies from several African countries examined the benefits accrued by people in the forestry sector, mixing up the opportunities offered by naturally occurring forests with those of forest plantations. They reached a consensus that the forestry sector offers employment opportunities and other related benefits to the entire communities.⁷ Compatibly, the general contribution of the forestry sector to the national economy is conceivable. In Tanzania, for instance, the sector contributed 2% in 1987 and 3.3% in 1998 to the country's GDP.⁸ The SHFP, which is the focal point of this paper, has mostly attracted researchers from biological science who investigated plant species and other scientific issues, taking little interest in examining the implications of

⁶ S. Sankar, P. C. Anil and M. Amruth, *Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Plantation Forestry in India*, (Bogor: Centre for International Forest Research, 2000).

⁷ Yonika M. Ngaga, *Forest Plantation and Woodlots in Tanzania* (Nairobi: African Forest Forum, 2011); Winston Mathu, *Forest Plantations and Woodlots in Kenya* (Nairobi: African Forest Forum, 2011); Mike Garforth and James Mayers, *Plantations, Privatization, Poverty and Power: Changing Ownership and Management of State Forests* (London: Earthscan, 2005); Thaddeus Sunseri, *Wielding the Ax: State Forestry and Social Conflict in Tanzania, 1820-2000* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009).

⁸ Goldon A. Mackenzie, *Climate Change Mitigation in Southern Africa: Tanzania Country Study* (Roskilde: UNEP, 1999), 19; FAO, *Forests and Climate Change issues into National Forest Programmes*, Background Paper for the National Workshop in Tanzania, (2010), 7.

the plantation on the livelihoods of the surrounding communities.⁹ This paper, therefore, attempts to fill that void.

Most scholars examining communities' livelihoods leaned on the resource curse theory. The theory examines the ways in which countries rich in natural resources such as fossil fuels and minerals failed to use that wealth to boost their socio-economic development in the indigenous communities and nations at large than countries without an abundance of natural resources. Advocates of this theory generally claim that weak governance, as well as insufficient policy and legal framework guiding the natural resources, were behind the failure.¹⁰ Despite its usefulness, the resource curse theory leaned its analysis on natural resources leaving artificial

⁹ Romanus C. Ishengoma, "Charcoal Production from Softwood Residues at Sao-Hill" (MSc. Diss., University of Dar es Salaam, 1980); Njilekiro Ringo, "Basic Density and Heartwood Content of *Pinus patula* Grown at Sao-Hill" (MSc. Diss., University of Dar es Salaam, 1977); Raphael E. L. Ole-Meiludie, "Skidding by Farm Tractors at Sao-Hill, Southern Tanzania" (MSc. Diss., University of Dar es Salaam, 1980).

¹⁰ Richard Auty, *Sustaining Development in Mineral Economies: The Resource Curse Thesis* (London: Routledge, 1993); Dawda Adams et al., "Globalisation, governance, accountability and the natural resource 'curse': Implications for socio-economic growth of oil-rich developing countries," *Resources Theory* 61 (2019), 128-140; Giles Atkinson and Kirk Hamilton, "Savings, Growth and the Resource Curse Hypothesis," *World Development* 31, no. 11 (2003), 1793-1807; Vera Bekkers and Bartjan Pennink, "The Natural Resource Curse: A Country Case Study—Tanzania," *Energy, Economy, Finance and Geostrategy* (2018), 257-274.

resources, such as plantation forest, untouched. This paper uses political economy theory, which was initially coined by the classical political economists, Adam Smith and David Ricardo, to fill this theoretical gap. The political economy theory expresses the relationship between the political and economic affairs of the state. It examines the ways in which political interventions into the economy enhance or impede people's needs.¹¹ In this regard, the paper uses this theory to examine the ways in which political decisions to establish and exploit forest plantation resources in Mufindi impacted the livelihoods of the local communities.

Generally, research literature shows different views on the contribution of forest plantations to national and community development. By judging from these studies, forest plantations may or may not have considerable significance to the local communities' livelihoods. However, such a hypothesis has not yet been tested in the case of the SHFP. Therefore, it is an endeavour of this paper to contribute knowledge to studies examining resources and the wellbeing of the surrounding communities using the SHFP as its case study. The paper begins with a brief history of the SHFP, then examines the influence of the plantation

¹¹ Neera Chandhoke, "Marxian Political Economy as Method: How Political is Political Economy?" *Economic and Political Weekly* 29, no. 5 (1994), 16; Pekka Kosonen, "Contemporary Capitalism and the Critique of Political Economy: Methodological Aspects," *Acta Sociologica* 20, no. 4 (1977), 371; James A. Caporaso and David P. Levine, *Theories of Political Economy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 2.

to the emergence of industries in Mufindi District and how the industries responded to the wellbeing of the surrounding communities. It then discusses the issuance of timber harvesting licences and their perplexities, the implications of the SHFP in social and economic infrastructures of the surrounding communities, and the final section draws some conclusion. Data for this study were collected in different places of Tanzania from August 2014 to February 2015. Archival information was gathered in the Tanzania National Archives (TNA), the East Africana section of the library at the University of Dar es Salaam, the documentary section of the SHFP and Mbeya Record Centre (MRC), where different reports, monthly letters, national development plans, forestry policies and laws, books, journal articles, dissertations and other documents on forest plantations were consulted. Oral information was obtained from respondents in different villages surrounding the plantation.

2.0 Concise History of the Sao-Hill Forest Plantation

Sao-Hill Forest Plantation is among the sixteen forest plantations owned by the government of Tanzania. It is in Mufindi District that is 100 Kilometres from Iringa Municipal and 15 Kilometres from Mafinga town. Its history dates back to the 1930s following the trial of different exotic species and the establishment of “Mufindi Afforestation Scheme” in

Mufindi District.¹² The decision to establish a plantation forest in Mufindi was conceived by the British administration in 1927, following the increasing environmental degradation in the district and the need of timber for export as well as for heavy constructional works such as road bridges and railway sleepers, and fuel woods for the British settlers.¹³ Up to the 1950s, the British administration had planted more than 9,700 ha, and the post-colonial government extended the plantation into a large-scale from the mid-1960s.¹⁴ Currently, SHFP is the largest forest plantation in Tanzania, covering more than half of the total area of government forest plantations. Records for the year 2014 showed that the SHFP covered a total area of 135,903 ha, whereby 52,070 ha were planted with trees, 48,200 ha were set aside for natural forests on catchment areas, 1,700 ha were used for residential houses and offices while 33,933 ha were annexed to the forest for

¹² TNA 270/Y/6, a letter from Assistant Conservator of Forests, Bukoba to the Forest Department, Lushoto, 14.02.1927; Maximillian J. Chuhila and Andrea Azizi Kifyasi, "A Development Narrative of a Rural Economy: The Politics of Forest Plantations and Land Use in Mufindi and Kilimanjaro, Tanzania; 1920 to 2000s," *International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research* 4, no. 3 (2016), 530.

¹³ TNA 270/Y/6, a letter from Assistant Conservator of Forests, Bukoba to the Forest Department, Lushoto, 14.02.1927.

¹⁴ TNA 336/IR/2, the Afforestation, Iringa Forest Division; Beati Ngulumbe, "Mradi wa Sao Hill Unavyosaidia Kuinua Uchumi wa Taifa," *Uhuru*, 13.02.1987.

other purposes.¹⁵ SHFP spread in four divisions of Mufindi District namely; Kibengu, Ifwagi, Kasanga and Malangali. However, the plantation does not occupy all villages found in those divisions except for 58 of them. Few hectares of the SHFP are found in Kilombero District of Morogoro region covering about 1,700 ha. (Figure 1).¹⁶ As a government project, the SHFP is managed by the Tanzania Forest Services Agency (TFS) under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism (MNRT).

3.0 Industries and the Local Communities

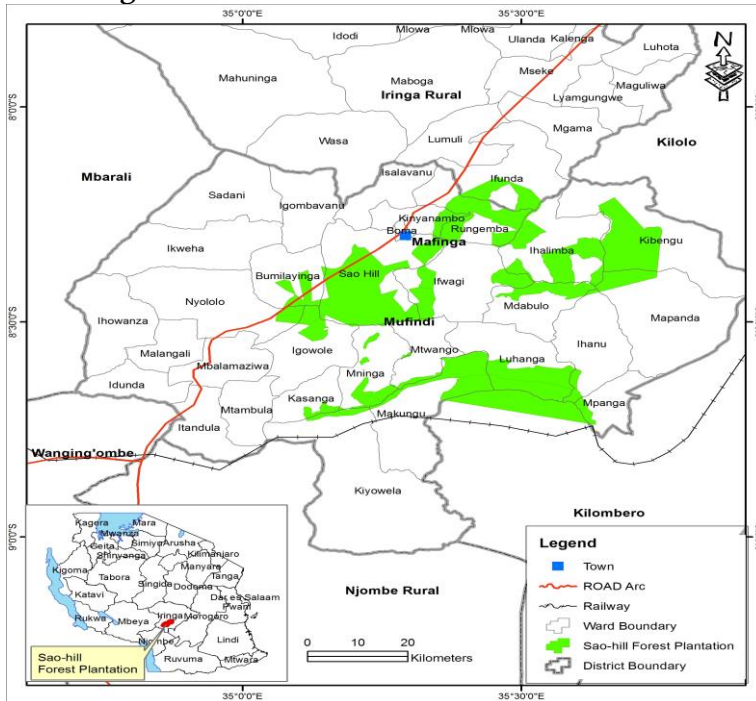
The presence of large plantation forest in Mufindi led to the establishment of several industries. The emergence of industries that consume forest products in the area was predicted since the inception of the plantation. During its founding phase, the Provincial Forest Officer informed Chief Adam Sapi Mkwawa that the plantation would inevitably attract commercial enterprises prepared to process the product either for the manufacturing of paper pulp, fibreboard or for eventual conversion into lumber. Compatible to this, the colonial government anticipated that the industries would create employment opportunities and

¹⁵ Sao-Hill Forest Plantation (hereafter SHFP) MU/9.04/B, Annual Reports Correspondence.

¹⁶ SHFP MU/9.04/B, Annual Reports Correspondence.

benefit the surrounding communities.¹⁷ Such statements imply that although colonialists did not build industries to consume forest products, they were aware that in the long run industries would be installed, and the indigenous communities would benefit.

Figure 1: Mufindi District and Wards under SHFP



Source: Courtesy of IRA, GIS Laboratory, 01.05.2015.

¹⁷ Mbeya Records Centre (hereafter MRC) 34/F.30/12, a letter from Provincial Forest Officer, Southern Highlands Division to Chief Adam Sapi Mkwawa, Kalenga, 11.01.1961.

Nevertheless, it took until the 1970s when exploitation of the plantation started where sawmills began to emerge.¹⁸ More mills were installed in the 1980s and the 1990s, following the increase of matured standing trees. The mills were in three categories, that is large, medium and small-scale. Large scale mills usually install permanent machines in the preferred areas. A number of those mills were installed in Mafinga, Ihalimba, Twico, Nyororo and other places where economic infrastructures such as roads and electricity facilities were available.

The first large scale sawmill to be established in the district was the Sao-Hill Sawmill. The mill was under the Tanzania Wood Industries Corporation (TWICO) which was instituted during the country's Second Five Year Development Plan (1969-1974). Other mills under TWICO included The Arusha Fibreboard, Kilwa Sawmill, Tantimbers, Mang'ula Sawmills, Sikh Sawmills, Tabora Misitu Products, Tembo Chipboards and Wattle Extracts Limited.¹⁹ Sao-Hill Sawmill was located within the SHFP area to ease the transportation of logs from the plantation site to the industry. The mill began to operate officially in the mid-1970s, consuming about 15,000 cubic metres of logs annually. In 1979, the demand for logs doubled to 30,000 cubic metres. The annual capacity was

¹⁸ SHFP MU/35.01/IV, Exploitation General Correspondence.

¹⁹ United Republic of Tanzania (hereafter URT), *Third Five Year Plan for Economic and Social Development, 1976-1981*, 26.

projected to climb to 60,000 cubic metres in 1982.²⁰ Regrettably, the Sao-Hill Sawmill was privatised and its name changed to Sao-Hill Industries Limited (SHIL) during the 1990s' wave of privatisations.²¹ However, the mill continued to depend on the raw materials from SHFP, in which, under the contract signed in 2004, the MNRT committed to supplying 150,000 cubic metres of logs per annum.²² In 2009, the supply of logs to SHIL doubled to 300,000 cubic metres per year, following the increase of production activities. To warrant effective production at the SHIL, the MNRT committed to providing 300,000 cubic metres of logs per annum for twenty years period commencing from 2009 to 2029.²³

From the early 1990s, more sawmills under private investors such as Sheda General Supplies, Ihembe Industries, Lesheya Industries, Mufindi Wood Poles and Timber Limited and Mena Wood Company Limited were installed in the district. Sawmills of different categories rose in the 2000s following

²⁰ Aaron Sam Mosse Mgeni, "Yield Forecasting and Cutting Policy in *Pinus patula* Stands at Sao-Hill Forest Project" (MSc Diss., University of Dar es Salaam, 1979), 13.

²¹ Interview with Kalikenya Kivaula Chengula, Sawala, 21.01.2015.

²² URT, Agreement on Logs Supply for Sao Hill Saw Mill, 9.06.2003; SHFP MU/35/01/XV, Exploitation General Correspondence.

²³ URT, *Agreement for the Sale of Pine and Eucalyptus Trees between Forestry and Beekeeping Division and Sao-Hill Industries Limited*, September, 2009.

the increased surplus of raw materials in SHFP.²⁴ Unlike the large scale, medium and small-scale mills used portable machines to process logs. Their mills were installed on leased land near harvesting sites to ease transportation of logs. Surely, small scale millers were many compared to the large and medium, though they consumed a low quantity of raw materials because of their limited capital. For instance, the total volume of logs sold by SHFP in 2007/2008 harvesting season was 655,800 cubic metres in which small-scale customers consumed only 230,500 cubic metres.²⁵

The mills provided employment opportunities to the local people and others from different parts of the country. In the 1970s and the 1980s, the rate of exploitation was low, and job beneficiaries were few. In contrast, from the 1990s and 2000s, exploitation rose, and labourers were many. However, the local people were dismissed from lucrative jobs. As a result, they performed less-profitable jobs such as loading and unloading the logs, loading timber, processing logs into timber, felling standing trees, driving vehicles, and as security guards. Shabaan Adha, who was also a District Forest Officer, estimated that more than 2,000 casual labourers worked in such jobs a year from the 2000s.²⁶

²⁴ SHFP MU/35.01/VIII, Exploitation General Correspondence; Ngaga, *Forest Plantation and Woodlots in Tanzania*, 67.

²⁵ SHFP MU/35.01/XVI, Exploitation General Correspondence.

²⁶ Interview with Shabaan Adha, Mafinga, 9.01.2015.

Admittedly, these labourers did not earn enough money to afford living costs as they were lowly paid. Similarly, working and living conditions were far from satisfactory. For instance, loggers working in small scale sawmills complained of not being given enough food nor working clothes as well as health insurances from their employers. Loggers registered several complaints, including unfair treatments from their bosses when they got injuries at the workplace. I met several loggers who lost their fingers, arms and legs by being cut by machines or hit by logs, but they could not get adequate medical care. Informants mentioned that their bosses usually repatriate the victims forcibly without giving them any compensation.²⁷

Apart from sawmills discussed above, the SHFP gave birth to the Southern Paper Mill (SPM), which was built to lessen the importation of paper and other related products from abroad.²⁸ Its establishment processes began in the mid-1960s when the government commissioned several studies to investigate the possibilities of founding pulp and paper production in the country. Subsequently, feasibility studies recommended the institution of an export-based pulp mill in

²⁷ Interview with Immanuel Kibiki and Damson Luhwago, Mwitikilwa, 20.01.2015.

²⁸ Carl Christiansson and Johan Ashuvud, "Heavy Industry in Rural Tropical Ecosystem," *Ambio* 14, no. 3. (1985), 123; Anthony Ngaiza, "Paper at a price: Southern Paper Mill, Tanzania," *Ambio* 16, no. 5 (1987), 281.

the Sao-Hill-Mufindi area.²⁹ The industrial project was backed by the World Bank, the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA), the *Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau*, the Kuwait Fund, the Nordic Investment Bank, the European Economic Community, the Commonwealth Development Corporation and the Tanzania government itself.³⁰ The Tanzanian government formally authorized the construction of SPM in January 1977 and anticipated to commence the production by mid-1983.³¹ Like other government-owned parastatals, the government of Tanzania sold SPM to a Kenyan-based private company, RAI GROUP, in 2004, which re-named it “Mufindi Paper Mill” (MPM). However, the MPM continued to be fed by the SHFP where it consumes more than 150,000 cubic metres per annum.³²

²⁹ Lars Hakanson, “The History of Southern Paper Mill Project: Planning and Decision Processes,” in *Effects of Industrial Investments in Developing Countries: Planning Processes, Environment and Socio-economic Impacts* edited by Lars Hakanson (Dar es Salaam: Bralup, 1986), 48-55; “Kiwanda cha Mufindi, Mradi Mkubwa Kupita Yote,” *Uhuru*, 18.10.1985.

³⁰ Christiansson and Ashuvud, “Heavy Industry in Rural Tropical Ecosystem”, 123; Hakanson, “History of Southern Paper Mill Project”, 56.

³¹ Lars Hakanson, “Identification and design of industrial Development Projects,” *Geografiska Annaler-series, B, Human Geography* 64, no. 2 (1982), 105.

³² Simon Magava, “The Implication of Mufindi Paper Mill on Socio-Economic Development of the People of Mufindi, Tanzania” (MA Diss., University of Dar es Salaam, 2011), 3.

From its inception, the government expected that the SPM would contribute to the national economy and improve rural people's livelihoods, especially among people in the surrounding areas. A feasibility study report of 1974 showed that the mill would hire around 1,000 people.³³ Fortuitously, in 1987, a few years after the mill started to operate, it multiplied the government's projections, employing about 2,000 people working in the chemical-pulp-mill, bleach-plant, mechanical-pulp-mill, two paper machine rooms, steam and power generation plant, finishing, and administration departments.³⁴ Regrettably, after the mill was privatized, the number of employees declined enormously. Simon Magava noted that from 2005 to 2009, permanent employees were between 500 and 600, and casual labourers around 400 and 800, both locals and foreigners. Worse still, foreign employees worked in skilled jobs and had permanent contracts which entitled them to good salaries and satisfactory working environments. In contrast, many locals were subjected to non-skilled jobs and mainly worked as casual labourers with meagre payments and harsh working conditions.³⁵

The SHFP further fed match industries located in Moshi and Dar es Salaam regions. Feeding match industries was consistent with the government's plans for the extension of

³³ Hakanson, "The History of Southern Paper Mill Project", 62.

³⁴ Ngaiza, "Paper at a price", 284.

³⁵ Magava, "Implication of Mufindi Paper Mill", 48.

forest plantation during the post-colonial period. Research intended to test species suitable for match manufacturing started in 1963. The trial was firstly conducted in North and West Kilimanjaro Forest Plantations. A few species of pines were found suitable after manufacturing trials. However, the available quantity of raw material to feed match industries in the time did not match-up with the requirements of the industry. Subsequently, the government encouraged plantings of *Pinus patula* and *Cupressus lusitanica* to ensure an adequate supply of timber logs both in quantity and quality.³⁶

Although abundant raw materials suitable to feed match industries were at Mufindi District, investors, for unknown reasons, built the industries in Kilimanjaro and Dar es Salaam. Yet, the two major industries, Kibo Match Group Limited and Alfa Match Industries Limited, depends on their raw materials from SHFP, which is more than 600 kilometres away from the industries.³⁷ In 2009, the Kibo Match Group Limited opened a splint making plant in Njombe Region, which is close to Mufindi, to curb transport costs.³⁸ It is untold what prompted the Kibo to found a plant in Njombe while the Mufindi District still has investment areas and is the home to SHFP. Indeed, the influences of match

³⁶ MRC 34/30/12, Forestry Increased Productivity Plans.

³⁷ SHFP MU/35.01/XXII, Exploitation General Correspondence.

³⁸ SHFP MU/35.01/A/XX, Exploitation General Correspondence.

industries in employment opportunities are conceivable. For instance, in 2000, a Kibo Match Group Limited industry hired about 600 to 1000 permanent employees and more than 2,000 casual labourers per year in Moshi town.³⁹ Consequently, ferrying raw logs from Sao-Hill area to Moshi, Dar es Salaam, and elsewhere vanished opportunities for employment and other associated benefits to the local people, which were vital in improving the local economy.⁴⁰ It further exacerbates rural-urban migration and thus goes against the national goal of mitigating rural-urban migration through setting industries in the peripheries.

4.0 Entanglements of Harvesting Licenses

As hinted earlier, the exploitation of the Sao-Hill Forest Plantation started officially in the 1970s. During that time, trees planted by the British colonial government in the 1930s started to be harvested. Besides the Sao-Hill Sawmill, a few customers, most from the villages surrounding the plantation, benefited from harvesting licenses.⁴¹ Consequently, throughout the 1970s, most of the customers were small scale producers who needed small quantities of raw materials since most of them processed logs into timber through pit-saws and a few owned portable sawmills.⁴² Exploitation pressure began in the 1980s when the Southern

³⁹ SHFP MU/35.01/A/XX, Kibo Match Group Limited-Moshi to the Principal Secretary Department of Forestry and Beekeeping, 03.12.2009.

⁴⁰ Interview with Zakayo Kilyenyi, Mafinga, 04.02. 2015.

⁴¹ Interview with Kalikenya Kivaula Chengula, Sawala, 21.01.2015.

⁴² Interview with Dominick Mpiluka, Magunguli, 26.01.2015.

Paper Mill started to operate as it demanded copious raw materials. Compatibly, demands for forest products increased and hence prompted more customers to apply for harvesting licenses. Providentially, a large number of trees reached their maturity stage; thus, annual allowable cut increased too. Findings of this study show that many local people acquired harvesting licenses when they were allowed to use pit-saws because it did not demand large capital. For instance, by September 1996, there was much pit-sawyers lumbering in the plantation, and most of them were from the local communities.⁴³ However, from 1996, following the headway in lumbering technology and the ambition to feed the global timber market, the government halted the issuance of harvesting licenses to pit-sawyers. Accordingly, from October 1996, harvesting licenses were only issued to clients with industries and portable sawmills.⁴⁴ Indeed, this was the initial step of estranging local people with low capital in harvesting the forest since most of them could not afford to buy portable sawmills. Thus, since the state's goal was to collect revenues and local pit-sawyers could not compete with big-capital clients, outsiders dominated harvesting logs.

⁴³ Interview with Abdalla Mdemu, Mafinga, 09.01.2015.

⁴⁴ SHFP MU/35.01/VII, a letter from SHFP Manager to Divisional Managers, 30.09.1996.

Worse still, in 2004, the MNRT introduced new regulations to be adhered by clients and the plantation management in applying and processing applications. Under the new regulations, the management had to consider applicants with sawmills, registration certificates of their companies and business licenses. Other qualifications included, registration certificates verifying that they were dealers in forest products and evidence of owning harvesting devices such as chain saw and transport facilities. On top of that, they had to justify their ability to hire professional workers such as sawmill operators and saw doctors.⁴⁵ Admittedly, the new regulations further contracted the chances for consumers with limited capital in obtaining harvesting licenses since most of them could not meet the established criteria. As a result, the position of the small-scale pit-sawyers, who were mostly from the villages surrounding the plantation, became precarious and questionable. Surely, many of them could hardly afford to purchase sophisticated harvesting devices and transport facilities. The new regulations inform about the state's move into modernism – attempts which James Scott argues impacted the socio-economic development of the many rural communities negatively.⁴⁶ To this end, I argue that the government, whether intentionally or unintentionally, built a favourable environment for people with substantial capital and modern

⁴⁵ SHFP MU/35.01/XVI, a letter from Director of Forestry and Beekeeping to SHFP Manager, 11.06.2004.

⁴⁶ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 240-242.

equipment to monopolize the timber industry and turned many local pit-sawyers into casual labour.

Nevertheless, in response to the 2004 regulations, a few local clients strived to boost their incomes to meet the qualifications. Others obtained loans from banks, while others sold their land for the same purpose. Yet, notwithstanding the SHFP policy to prioritise local customers, many of them could not get harvesting licenses.⁴⁷ This claim, however, conflicts with records from the SHFP which attest that in 2008/2009 and 2009/2010, more than 60% of customers who received harvesting licenses were from Mufindi District.⁴⁸ Findings of this study uphold that these official records are doubtful due to several reasons. Firstly, the methodology employed by the SHFP to identify local applicants is questionable. I noted that the only technique they used to recognise local applicants were through inquiring their addresses.⁴⁹ Under this ill method, it was probable for clients outside the Mufindi District to apply using local village addresses since the policy favouring local

⁴⁷ SHFP, *Jitihada na Utaratibu Unaofuatwa na Serkali katika Kuendeleza Misitu, Uvunaji na Kugawa Mazao ya Misitu kwa Viwanda na Wajasiriamali*, 4; Interview with Mandaro Salum, Sao-Hill Headquarters, 4.02.2015; Holowa Choga, Ihalimba, 4.02.2015; Felix Alwatan Mpwaga, Mtili, 26.02.2015.

⁴⁸ SHFP, *Taarifa ya Shamba la Miti la Sao-Hill kwa Kamati ya Kudumu ya Bunge ya Ardhi, Maliasili na Mazingira, Tarehe* 21.10.2013.

⁴⁹ Interview with Mandaro Salum, Sao-Hill Headquarters, 4.02.2015.

consumers was widely known. Secondly, according to the 2002 Forestry Act, a committee responsible for issuing licenses comprises the Deputy Director of Forestry and Beekeeping (Chairman), Regional Forestry Officer (Member), Plantation Manager (Secretary), Deputy Plantation Manager (Member) and a forester from the area where exploitation is proposed to be done (Member).⁵⁰ Consequently, there was no representative from the local communities to defend the fate of local applicants. Thirdly, oral testimonies support that the committee did not surely consider local consumers. In some villages such as Usokami and Vikula, none of the applicants obtained harvesting licenses although they applied in each harvesting season. However, other villages listed only one or two small scale customers who got harvesting licenses.⁵¹ These circumstances warrant to argue that the policy of favouring the local clients was defectively executed.

This study further noted that the incomes that people accrued from the timber industry attracted politicians, members of parliament, ministers and government officials to engage directly and indirectly in the business.

⁵⁰ SHFP MU/35.01/XXII, Exploitation General Correspondence.

⁵¹ Interviews with Batista Vangilisasi Mhengilolo and Zakayo Kilyenyi, Usokami, 14.01.2015; Gaston Mahanga, and Rebeca Longo, Vikula, 15.01.2015; Holowa Choga and Clement Msasa, Ihalimba, 16.01.2015; Felix Alwatan Mpwaga, Mtili, 21.01.2015; Kamilius Sutta and Dominick Mpiluka, Magunguli, 26.01.2015; Anjero J. Mgimwa, Shaibu S. Lyuvale, Mwitikilwa, 20.01.2015.

Undoubtedly, political elites and government officials used their influence to win harvesting licenses cheaply. Testimonies I consulted attest that many of them wrote letters to the plantation manager coveting a favour. For instance, one official from the sub-head office of the ruling party, *Chama Cha Mapinduzi* (CCM), Dar es Salaam, wrote a letter to the manager seconding the request of Mr “X”⁵², the son of one of the party’s veterans, who needed 1,500 cubic metres of logs. Part of the letter read: “The above named is the son of *mzee* “Y”⁵³, one of our party’s veterans. His father requested the retired Vice Chairman of the Ruling Party to assist his son in obtaining harvesting license [...] Please help him. This is a special request.”⁵⁴

Furthermore, other clients applied for licenses under the umbrella of the retired president of the United Republic of Tanzania (URT), honourable “Z”⁵⁵. For instance, the personal assistant to the retired president “Z” wrote a letter to the SHFP manager to favour Mr “P”⁵⁶, a relative of the retired president. Part of the letter read: “The above mentioned is a

⁵² The letter “X” is the pseudo name of the son of the party’s veteran.

⁵³ The letter “Y” is the pseudo the name of the party’s veteran.

⁵⁴ Translated from Kiswahili. See, SHFP MU/35.01/XVI, a letter from Sub-Head Office of *Chama Cha Mapinduzi* (CCM)-Dar es Salaam to SHFP Manager, 10.04.2008.

⁵⁵ The letter “Z” is the pseudo name of the retired president of the URT.

⁵⁶ Letter “P” is the pseudo name of the relative of the retired president of the URT.

relative of Hon. “Z”, the retired president of the United Republic of Tanzania. His request is to obtain harvesting license in your plantation. I request you to consider his application.”⁵⁷ Subsequently, the manager endorsed the requests directing the issuance of the demanded cubic metres of logs.

Additionally, other customers obtained licenses through what was so-called “Quota ya Katibu Mkuu” (Permanent Secretary’s Quota), and “Quota ya Mhe. Waziri” (Hon. Minister’s Quota). In 2007, the MNRT ordered plantation managers to allocate harvesting portions in each season for the Permanent Secretary and the Minister to issue to prominent persons where necessary.⁵⁸ As a result, in 2007 alone, the SHFP allocated 10,000 cubic metres, Buhindi Forest Plantation allocated 2,000 cubic metres, and Longuza Forest Plantation allocated 4,000 cubic metres.⁵⁹ Regrettably, such special allocations were inaccessible to the local people of Mufindi. Surely, Ministers, Members of Parliament, District Commissioners, children of government leaders and the Ruling Party officials obtained harvesting licenses promptly. Of course, as illuminated in the MNRT’s press

⁵⁷ Translated from Kiswahili. See, SHFP MU/35.01/XX, a letter from Assistant of the URT Retired President “Z”, Dar es Salaam to SHFP manager, 9.02.2010.

⁵⁸ SHFP MU/35.01/XX, a letter from Forest and Beekeeping Division-Dar es Salaam to all government Forest Plantation Managers, 1.08.2007.

⁵⁹ SHFP MU/35.01/XX, a letter from Forest and Beekeeping Division-Dar es Salaam to all government Forest Plantation Managers, 1.08.2007.

release of 20th May 2011, it is not restrained for political elites and government officials or their siblings to engage in timber businesses.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, applying under the umbrella of the ruling political party, retired presidents, and through Secretary's and Minister's quota, ruins fair races of the licenses. Indeed, a low income and less important person applying for the license would not compete fairly with officials and political elites. Consequently, their involvements limited the chance of small-scale customers, mostly from villages surrounding the plantation, to get harvesting licenses, despite meeting the required requisites. As a result, it exasperated protests and malice against the SHFP and the government. Some customers ended up into frustration and others engaged in illicit harvesting of the forest. Worse still, in some villages, citizens became reluctant in cooperating with SHFP in extinguishing a fire, and others burnt the forest as a means of expressing their discontents following the failure of the plantation to meet their prospects.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Jamhuri ya Muungano wa Tanzania (hereafter JMT), *Taarifa kwa Umma: Taratibu Zinazotakiwa katika Uvunaji wa Mazao ya Misitu Kwenye Shamba la Sao-Hill*, 20.05.2011.

⁶¹ Interview with Holowa Choga, Ihalimba, 16.01.2015; Felix Alwatan Mpwaga, Mtili, 21.01.2015; Zakayo Kilyenyi, Mafinga, 4.02.2015; Richard Mandili Usokami, 14.01.2015; Obadia Mtokoma, Vikula, 15.01.2015.

5.0 Forest Plantation and the Economic and Social Infrastructures

Economic and social infrastructures such as electricity, roads, schools, water supply and health care are indispensable for sustainable development. At independence, the Tanzanian government, through various schemes, such as “self-help”, solicited concerted efforts from its citizens to establish them successfully.⁶² Indeed, a forest plantation, and in this case, the SHFP, was an imperative agency for unfolding the mentioned infrastructures. For instance, the Tanzania Electric Supply Company (TANESCO), relied on SHFP for electric poles. Nevertheless, notwithstanding the source of electric poles being at Mufindi, electricity services from the national grid only reached the district in 1992.⁶³ Worse still, the supply of electricity services favoured industrial areas dismissing the surrounding communities. The 2012 census report delineates that Mufindi was highly populated than any other district in Iringa region. Yet, by 2011, TANESCO registered only 5,650 customers out of more than 300,000 population.⁶⁴

⁶² Jennings, “We Must Run While Others Walk,” 168.

⁶³ SHFP MU/35.01. IV, a letter from Manager, Wood pole Impregnation Plant-Mbeya to the Plantation Manager SHFP, 1.10.1991; SHFP MU/35.01.VII, a letter from Director of Forestry and Beekeeping Division to the Manager of Wood Pole Impregnation Plant, 3.01.1996; JMT, *Kumbukumbu ya Miaka 50 ya Uhuru wa Tanzania Bara: Mufindi, 1961-2011* (2011), 47.

⁶⁴ JMT, *Kumbukumbu ya Miaka 50 ya Uhuru*, 47; URT, *2012 Population and Housing Census: Population Distribution by Administrative Areas*

Furthermore, the presence of the plantation forest in Mufindi led to numerous movements of vehicles carrying timber, logs and other forest products mainly to villages surrounding the plantation. To a great extent, these vehicles have been blamed for damaging roads and making them impassable, particularly during the rainy season. The surrounding communities charged that the SHFP failed to improve road networks in their areas despite their customers contributing to road damage. The SHFP owns vehicles which are used in constructing roads within their plantation, but they were blamed for excluding roads surrounding nearby villages.⁶⁵ In contrast, documentary sources show that at different occasions, the SHFP repaired roads in Wami, Mfukulembe and Kitiru villages.⁶⁶ However, complaints disclosed by villagers from different hamlets I visited reflects that the SHFP has not done satisfactorily to reconstruct roads in villages surrounding the plantation.

Besides economic infrastructures, better health care, education, and water supply contribute profoundly to building efficient human capital capable of engaging effectively in production, which was vital in inciting

(Dar es Salaam: NBS, 2013) 106-109. By the 2012 census report, Mafinga Town had 51,902 residents and Mufindi District had 265,829.

⁶⁵ Interview with Gastoni Mahanga, Vikula, 15.01.2015; Kalikenya Kivaula Chengula, Sawala, 21.01.2015; Shaibu S. Lyuvale, Mwitikilwa, 20.01.2015.

⁶⁶ SHFP MU/12.13. IV, *Vijiji vya Ujamaa*.

development at national and community levels.⁶⁷ Under the principles of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), the SHFP was required to produce overall positive impacts to the surrounding communities by responding to social needs of the local communities, such as contributing to educational, health and other social programs.⁶⁸ Indeed, as the leading supplier of building and furnishing materials, the SHFP was anticipated to contribute dearly to improving social facilities to the surrounding communities. Contrary to the calculations, many schools in the district lacked enough desks, classrooms, tables, chairs, latrines, teachers' houses and other essential facilities. Alex Mwakasusa, who was also the District's Statistical Officer, affirmed that the mentioned facilities were enormously demanded in many schools for so long. By 2014, the district reported the shortage of about 4,269 desks for primary schools. The situation in some schools was even worse. For instance, in 2014, Igombavanu Primary School had only 70 out of 191 needed desks. As a result, students sat on the floor during class sessions (Figure

⁶⁷ Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1978-79* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 230; Quentin T. Wodon *et al.*, "Tanzania Economic Update: Human Capital – The Real Wealth of Nations (English)," *Tanzania Economic Update*, no. 12 (2019), 4.

⁶⁸ Mallen Baker, *Corporate Social Responsibility-what does it Mean*, (2008), 1 in <http://mallenbaker.net/article/clear-reflection/definitions-of-corporate-social-responsibility-what-is-csr/> accessed on 28.06.2022.

2).⁶⁹ In other primary schools, pupils made desks out of mud, locally known as *maadobe*, to address the deficit. For example, pupils at Lugodalutali primary school used *maadobe* as desks for many years. Mwakasusa linked the mentioned challenges with unsatisfactory performances of some schools in the district.⁷⁰

Figure 2: Students at Igombavanu Primary School



Source: Courtesy of Oliver Motto in <https://olivermoto.blogspot.com/2014/09/> Accessed on 15.07.2020.

⁶⁹ Oliver Motto, “Wakaa Sakafuni kwa Kukosa Madawati,” <https://olivermoto.blogspot.com/2014/09/> accessed on 15.07.2020.

⁷⁰ Interview with Alex Mwakasusa, Mafinga, 04.02.2015.

Findings of this study show that in the late 1990s, the SHFP began to respond directly to some social challenges facing neighbouring communities. The direct assistance contrasted the indirect means where the plantation supported the surrounding villages in exchange for their labour force. The *Ujamaa* governments organized citizens to work for the plantation for some days in a month, and the money they received was directed to different economic projects such as the building of classrooms, hospitals and making of furniture.⁷¹ The direct support from the SHFP included giving the village governments portions of trees to harvest and transport for building materials such as sand, stones and bricks. The local people covered expenses related to fuel, allowances to a driver and his assistant as well as loading and unloading costs. Although charges for the mentioned items seem reasonable, some villages could not afford.⁷² Moreover, portions of trees granted to the village governments hardly solved a challenge of desks in schools. Instead, it prompted confrontations between village officials and the villagers in the course of collecting funds to cover costs related to the processing of logs into timber and allowances to carpenters.

⁷¹ SHFP MU/12.13/IV, a letter from the Plantation Manager to the District Commissioner-Mufindi, 07.04.1990; a letter from Chairman of Ihalimba *Ujamaa* Village to the Divisional Manager, Division III, 18.11.1988.

⁷² Interview with Batista Vangilisasi Mhengilolo and Zakayo Kilyenyi, Usokami, 14.01.2015; Gaston Mahanga, Titus Ubamba and Rebeca Longo, Vikula, 15.01.2015.

As a result, most of the village governments failed to process the logs and sold the granted plots.⁷³

Unsatisfactory remarks were also reported for health infrastructures. The surrounding communities grumbled over inadequate support of the SHFP in the health sector. Up to 2015, some villages surrounding the plantation such as Igomtwa and Mtili had never had health facilities since independence. Their people obtained health services in nearby villages. The local people of Igomtwa, for instance, went to Usokami and Ugesa dispensaries which were about twelve and six kilometres away. Thus, patients had to travel a long distance on foot, by bicycle or motorcycle seeking health services.⁷⁴ However, from the 2000s, following the growing complaints from the local people, the SHFP began to support the building of health service centres financially and materially. For instance, in July 2008, Kinyanambo villagers were helped with a truck to transport stones, sand and bricks for a health centre.⁷⁵ Moreover, in 2010, the SHFP purchased building materials worth Tshs 4,978,420/- for a house of a health worker in Itimbo village. In the same year, Ihalimba and Nyololo Njiapanda villages were helped with

⁷³ Interview with Zakayo Kilyenyi, Usokami, 14.01.2015; Gaston Mahanga, Vikula, 15.01.2015.

⁷⁴ Interview with Emmanuel Kihongosi, Igomutwa, 02.02.2015.

⁷⁵ SHFP MU/12.13/IV, a letter from SHFP Manager to VEO, Kinyanambo, 13.07.2008.

building materials for their dispensaries amounting to Tshs 4,947,150/-, and Tshs 4,976,000/- respectively.⁷⁶ Indeed, the positive response suggests that peoples' voices were of importance in bargaining the fate of communities living around resources.

Compatible to the above contentions, the SHFP modestly bettered water supply in the surrounding communities. Regrettably, the majority of the local people in the district depended on water from springs and streams which were not safe for their health. These water sources are found far from their households, and thus they walked long distances to fetch water for their domestic uses. This context imperilled their health and impeded communities' development. Yet, the SHFP remained silent about helping the local people with water supply. Instead, tap water was extended only around the SHFP offices and residences to save workers and for irrigating tree nurseries. The plantation's support in the availability of water to the community can at least be seen indirectly in its conservation roles. Evidently, water catchments are well conserved by the plantation, which, in turn, warrants efficient flow of water in villages surrounding the plantation.⁷⁷ Yet, overall, the SHFP has not brought substantive impacts on improving water supply to the local communities in Mufindi District.

⁷⁶ SHFP MU/12.13/IV, *Vijiji vya Ujamaa*.

⁷⁷ Interview with Zakayo Kilyenyi, Usokami, 14.01.2015; Gaston Mahanga, Vikula, 15.01.2015.

6.0 Conclusion

This paper has shown that complaints about skimpy benefits and unfulfilled commitments registered by people living around mineral compounds, gas, oil resources, and national parks were more like those encountered by communities surrounding the Sao-Hill Forest Plantation. Such similarities stem from the fact that the plantation economy is essentially a capitalist enterprise, whether undertaken by a state agency or a private company. As such, it is premised on capital accumulation. It is, therefore, not surprising that the appeasement schemes devised to sustain the project had little impact, as the indigenous communities did not benefit much from the different opportunities provided by the plantation. Indeed, the denial of rights to exploit or benefit from the resources prompted local people to perceive their surrounding resources as a curse rather than a boon for their livelihoods. The paper has shown that the government's assurance that the plantation would boost economic and social development cultivated high livelihood expectations among the local communities, which were hardly met. To this end, the Sao-Hill Forest Plantation project joins the list of the failed post-colonial state projects undertaken to bring national development and welfare to rural communities.