Connecting Past and Present: The Archaeology of the Contemporary Past in the Glades of Embobut, Kenya



Samuel Lunn-Rockliffe

St Hugh's College

University of Oxford

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Abstract

At its most basic, this project aims to explore the recent archaeology and history of Sengwer communities and the Embobut Forest in the Cherangani Hills, Kenya, in order to better understand how they conceptualise their 'indigeneity'. Such work is especially relevant in Cherangani given recent attempts by Kenya's national government to move the Sengwer from the forest within the context of the 'National Resource Management Project' funded by the World Bank. These evictions resulted in a legal case hinged upon the issues of conservation and 'indigeneity', partly due to a change in the World Bank status of the Sengwer from 'Indigenous People' to a 'Vulnerable and Marginalised Group'. This alteration was rejected by the Sengwer not least because the term 'Indigenous People' is both a part of a much larger, international dialogue and alludes to a relationship between humans and their landscape in a way that 'Vulnerable and Marginalised Group' does not. Thus, the Sengwer have been attempting to re-assert their right to live in Cherangani by drawing upon a range of historical and cultural ideas that demonstrate the importance of the relationship they bear with their landscape.

Unfortunately, realising this aim has been hindered by a lack of wider intellectual interest, since no academic studies have hitherto explored the history, archaeology or ethnography of the Sengwer in any detail. As such, I have worked with the Sengwer community in order to conduct a diachronic analysis of how they have constructed their landscape and engaged with their forest environment. In turn, a more rigorous understanding of the temporality and materiality of the Embobut landscape as understood from the ground up helps contextualise what has become a complicated and contested narrative of landscape modification over the past century. Indeed, different perspectives of deforestation and conservation as gleaned from government reports and activist documents illuminates how landscape change is multifaceted, not only being caused by shifting livelihoods of the people residing there, but also the imposition of conservation boundaries by the colonial Forest Department in the early twentieth century. Ultimately, then, my work aims to bring a more materially centred approach to help better comprehend how the Embobut Forest has changed in conjunction with different perceptions, understandings and experiences of the landscape.

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Part One

Chapter 1 : Introduction and Theoretical Framework

How can archaeology, a discipline that is inherently concerned with the past, engage with the social, economic and environmental conditions of the present? Recently, archaeologists have proposed that through its unique methods and theoretical perspectives, their discipline is in a strong position to study the rapid social and technological change that humanity has experienced throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first (Buchli and Lucas 2001; Harrison and Schofield 2010). One particular area of contemporary relevance is how people are both physically and socially bound to their environment through the construction of their landscapes (Ingold 2000; Balée 2013) and how this interplays with issues of cultural heritage and community rights to land as understood through local and international concepts of 'indigeneity' (ACHRP 2006; UNDRIP 2007).

At its most basic, this project aims to explore the long-term history of Sengwer communities in the Embobut Forest of the Cherangani Hills, Kenya, in order to better understand how they conceptualise their 'indigeneity'. This is especially relevant in Cherangani given recent attempts by Kenya's national government to move the Sengwer from the forest within the context of the National Resource Management Project funded by the World Bank (Lynch 2006, 2016; Forest Peoples Program 2013; Lang 2015). These evictions resulted in a legal case hinged upon the issues of conservation and 'indigeneity', partly due to a change in the World Bank status of the Sengwer from 'Indigenous People' to a 'Vulnerable and Marginalised Group'. This alteration was rejected by the Sengwer not least because the term 'Indigenous People' is both part of a much larger, international dialogue and alludes to a relationship between humans and their landscape in a way that

‘Vulnerable and Marginalised Group’ does not (Lynch 2016). Thus, the Sengwer have been attempting to re-assert their right to live in Cherangani by drawing upon a range of historical and cultural ideas that demonstrate the importance of the relationship they bear with their landscape. Of particular note is the highlighting by Sengwer community activists of their former hunter-gatherer identity in a direct appeal to the 2010 Kenyan Constitution and its pledge to allow ‘traditional’ hunter-gatherers to live in their ancestral lands (The Constitution of Kenya 2010: Articles 63 and 260; Forest Peoples Programme 2013).

Unfortunately, realising this aim has been hindered by a lack of wider intellectual interest, since no academic studies have hitherto explored the history, archaeology or ethnography of the Sengwer in any detail. As such, I have worked with the Sengwer community in order to conduct a diachronic analysis of how they have constructed their landscape and engaged with their forest environment. In turn, a more rigorous understanding of the temporality and materiality of the Embobut landscape as understood from the ground up helps contextualise what has become a complicated and contested narrative of landscape modification over the past century. Indeed, different perspectives of deforestation and conservation as gleaned from government reports and activist documents illuminate how landscape change is multifaceted, not only being caused by the shifting livelihoods of the people residing there, but also by the imposition of conservation boundaries by the colonial Forest Department in the early twentieth century. Ultimately, then, this thesis aims to bring a more materially centred approach to help better comprehend how Embobut has changed physically and bring this into conjunction with different perceptions, understandings and experiences of this landscape.

Of particular importance to this discussion is the contested nature of identity and perceived rights to land, especially in light of the concepts of 'indigeneity' and 'hunter-gatherer' ways of life. In this first chapter, I take an intellectual journey that seeks to explore the history behind these categories in order to comprehend the main theoretical developments behind them, how archaeologists have approached them and the application of these terms within the context of this project. To achieve this, I have split the chapter into three sections. In the first, I examine the history from which the 'hunter-gatherer' category emerged before exploring how developments within archaeology over the twentieth century have influenced how hunter-gatherers have been studied. Finding these approaches unsatisfactory, I turn towards an alternative understanding of hunter-gatherer lifeways through what Thomas Widlok (2016) has described as 'hunter-gatherer situations'. This framework aims to relocate hunting and gathering away from broad models of hunter-gatherer behaviour to the level of habitual practice (cf. Bourdieu 1977). In the second section, I problematise the concept of 'indigeneity' by examining its use in anthropological discourse, before turning to how the term has been wrested from these debates and placed within international legislation. Here I expand on the importance of this for self-identified 'indigenous' communities in Africa with specific reference to the Sengwer. Bringing section two to a close, I explore how archaeologists have attempted to engage with 'indigenous knowledge' and further emphasise the inherent problems with what has been termed 'Indigenous Archaeologies' (Atalay 2006). I then turn to recent studies of the contemporary past in order to demonstrate how such investigations can contribute to a better understanding of how people conceptualise their 'indigeneity'. The final section of the chapter brings together these narratives into a basic premise and structure for the rest of the thesis and expounds the methodology I employed for examining long-term history Sengwer.

1.1 Archaeological Approaches to Hunter-Gatherers

"One cultural difference between the Sengwer and those [Marakwet and Pokot] other groups is that the Sengwer are a traditionally hunter-gatherer people who occupied and practiced those livelihoods both in the highlands, forests and lower slopes of the Cherangany Hills area".

(Forest Peoples Programme 2013: Annex 2).

This quotation, taken from a document produced by Sengwer activists and the human rights group the Forest Peoples Programme, makes a strong point of highlighting the Sengwer's hunter-gatherer identity. It thus provides an apposite starting point for discussing the theoretical framework employed by this project. In broad terms, I aim to historicise the contemporary context of the Sengwer community as situated within the materiality of the Embobut landscape. This discussion is important because debates surrounding Sengwer history and rights to land are wrapped up in ideas of identity that have often been understood discursively with little emphasis on how they are expressed through what people actually *do* on a day to day basis. As such, I aim to explore how the changing nature of quotidian life is materialised in the landscape in order to shift contemporary discourse away from political rhetoric and ground it in the materiality and temporality of everyday tasks.

The historicising of Sengwer foraging identities stands in contrast to an examination of lifeways as situated within broader models of hunter-gatherer behaviour (e.g. Kelly 2013; Bettinger *et al.* 2015). For reasons expounded below, I am reluctant to pigeon-hole Sengwer foraging identities into models of 'simple' and 'complex' hunter-gatherers (Price and Brown 1985) and have been further disinclined to conduct an ethnoarchaeological study of the Sengwer with the aim of creating analogies with the distant past. This approach has been the tendency of many lines of archaeological inquiry

and has in some ways hindered understandings of hunter-gatherer diversity both past and present (Finlayson and Warren 2017). Such is the case with the Ogiek of western Kenya, who have faced similar political struggles to the Sengwer (Barume 2010), but have nevertheless been used as analogies for understanding the subsistence strategies of Holocene Later Stone Age foragers at the Kansyore site of Siror near Lake Victoria, Kenya (Dale *et al*. 2004), and others in the central Kenyan Rift Valley (Ambrose 1986).

The direct analogical approach of ethnoarchaeology can be problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, it harks back to Enlightenment imaginings of hunter-gatherer societies as placed within the parameters of economic progress. Here, economists such as Adam Smith (1776) postulated that hunting was the lowest stage of economic development followed by shepherding, farming and commerce. Within this paradigm, hunting and gathering populations were understood as the antithesis to the technologically and morally advanced West, being depicted as savages and barbarians who were irrational, illogical and economically underdeveloped. Anthropological observations and archaeological discoveries in the nineteenth century only further contributed to an increasing body of evidence that ostensibly ratified the establishing paradigm of social evolution (e.g. Lubbock 1878), an idea that posited that humans existed on a unilinear scale of progress of which hunter-gatherers occupied the bottom rung. Such was the argument of the American anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan (1985 [1877]), who divided up human progress into three distinct phases: savagery, barbarism and civilisation, with hunter-gatherers being placed firmly in that of savagery.

Clearly the use of ethnoarchaeology as a contemporary research method does not operate within this same social evolutionary framework, but Morgan's (1985 [1877]: 41)

description of 'savage' and 'barbaric' populations as "monuments of the past" cuts to the crux of several conceptual problems that have dogged the archaeological and anthropological disciplines ever since their inception (Kuper 2005). These issues can be traced to the historic *Man the Hunter* conference in 1966 (Lee and DeVore 1968), where the model of hunter-gatherer societies as impoverished humans was completely overturned. Instead, foraging communities were described as the "original affluent society" (Sahlins 1972) with their way of life being termed the "most successful and persistent adaptation man has ever achieved" (Lee and DeVore 1968: 3). A significant consequence of this conference was that it marked the beginning of a more rigorous acknowledgement and pursuit of hunter-gatherer diversity both past and present. This led to the creation of dichotomous categories, such as Binford's (1980) 'foragers and collectors' and Woodburn's (1980) 'immediate return' and 'delayed return' hunter-gatherers, that aimed at creating broader models of hunter-gatherer behaviour[1].

The diversity in social structure, settlement patterns and subsistence strategies observed with continued research eventually led to the creation of the broad models of 'simple' and 'complex' hunter-gatherers. (Table 1.1). Using these categories, some archaeologists have suggested that there is an observable progression from simple communities, 'bands' or 'tribes' to complex societies (Price and Brown 1985; Bettinger *et al*. 2015; c.f. Rowley-Conwy 2001). Indeed, in Price and Brown's (1985) book '*Prehistoric Hunter-Gatherers: The Emergence of Cultural Complexity*', it is suggested that complexity developed throughout prehistory with 'simple' hunter-gatherers being the first instance of social organisation. Such an idea is based on the premise that, as population growth occurred

[1] Binford and Woodburn set up these categories as heuristic devices with the understanding that hunter-gatherers are not to be pigeonholed as either/or, but rather exist on a continuum with these dichotomies at either end of the spectrum.

within a given environment, the number of available resources per capita decreased. As such, food procurement had to be both diversified and intensified, often culminating in an improvement in technology, the reorganisation of labour and possible introduction of social hierarchy. In short, social and economic life shift in conjunction with increased social and environmental stress, leading to a number of societal traits summarised in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Comparison between simple and complex hunter-gatherer groups (Source: Kelly 2013, Table 9.1)

	Simple	*Complex*
Diet	Terrestrial game and plant food mix	Predominantly marine and plant foods
Settlement Size	Small	Large
Residential Mobility	Medium to high	Low to sedentary
Demography	Low population density	High population density
Food storage	Little to no dependence	Medium to high dependence
Social structure	Egalitarian	Hierarchical
Land tenure	Social boundary defence	Perimeter defence
Warfare	Rare	Common
Slavery	Absent	Frequent
Competition	Not tolerated	Encouraged
Exchange	Generalised reciprocity	Wealth objects, competitive feasts

Whilst it may hold true that many foraging groups have transitioned from 'simple' to 'complex', the overall notion that hunter-gatherers develop from one to another in a unidirectional way (a notion that itself is contested [Rowley-Conwy 2001]) must be approached with care, not least because the history of the archaeological discipline is tainted with such unethical and erroneous ideas (Kuper 2005). Archaeologists must thus be aware of the semantic connotations behind their models as they are in part responsible for how different societies, both past and present, are imagined and presented (Lane 2014a). In other words, if we assume that hunter-gatherer communities develop from simple to complex in a linear direction, we are inherently classifying 'simple' hunter-

gatherer communities of the contemporary world as remnants of the past, a notion that can have wide social and political ramifications beyond that of academic discourse. The removal of Bushmen from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve in Botswana is a case in point where the then president Festus Mogae stated: "How can you have a Stone Age creature continue to exist in the age of computers? If the Bushmen want to survive, they must change or, otherwise, like the dodo, they will perish" (Daley 1996: 3).

It is in this vein that the notion of the timeless hunter-gatherer harks back to Morgan's (1985 [1877]: 41) "monuments of the past". This became the crux of the so-called 'Kalahari Debate', a fervent discussion concerning the state of southern African hunter-gatherers in relation to their cultural histories. Sprawling over a majority of Botswana and eastern Namibia, the semi-arid Kalahari Desert has been lived in for thousands of years by different groups hunting and gathering wild foodstuffs. While these communities had been in contact with food producers for at least two thousand years (Barham and Mitchell 2008), hunting and gathering as a subsistence strategy continued to prevail into the twentieth century (Lee 1979). In the spirit of the *Man the Hunter* symposium, the Harvard Kalahari Research Group, spearheaded by Richard Lee (1979), presented the Ju/'hoãnsi (!Kung) San people as independent, affluent foragers who were autonomous in their social structure and economic activity, leading a way of life that has been successful for thousands of years as evidenced by a relatively continuous archaeological record (Solway and Lee 1990). This perspective, however, came under heavy criticism from the so-called 'Kalahari revisionists', who accused Lee and his contemporaries (or the 'traditionalists') of unethically portraying contemporary the San people of the Kalahari as fossils of the Stone Age (Wilmsen 1989; Wilmsen and Denbow 1990). They instead argued that the Kalahari San have long been a part of the wider political and social network spanning the

entirety of the Kalahari, integrating with Iron Age agropastoralists and becoming relegated to a lower social class behind those of cattle owners. In reply, Solway and Lee (1990) acknowledged the importance of historical contact, but emphasised that different San groups engaged with surrounding food producers in varying ways, thus reiterating their original model that the Ju/'hoãnsi were a relatively autonomous community in comparison to some other San groups.

The theoretical undertones of the Kalahari Debate left a lasting impression on hunter-gatherer studies and anthropological and archaeological theory as a whole (Barnard 2004; Barham and Mitchell 2008: 430). Aside from the nuanced, often pernickety, details that defined much of the debate (Barnard 2006), one broader implication that should be highlighted is the notion that people who hunt and gather have long and complicated histories, both in terms of how they themselves have changed over time and how they have interacted with groups around them. This poses some theoretical challenges concerning the use of ethnoarchaeological analysis in order to create analogies with foraging communities who are spatially and temporally removed from the community subject to such studies. Both present-day societies and those in the past have unique histories that have shaped them in different ways, thus rendering direct analogy a frequently tenuous activity (Finlayson and Warren 2017).

Whilst it is possible to acknowledge the contributions that ethnoarchaeology has made to our understanding of foraging behaviour (Lane 2014b), archaeologists who have concentrated their efforts on trying to make robust analogies have often made light of the role that history has played in shaping the hunter-gatherer groups they were studying. As

Gosden (1999) clearly states, this raises an interesting ethical issue in relation the exploitation of a community as an analogical tool:

"…we have no justification for using the present of one society simply to interpret the past of another, especially as the present is often seen as a latter-day survival of stage passed elsewhere in the world, for instance where hunter-gatherer groups from Africa or Australia are used to throw light on the European Palaeolithic. Societies ought to be studied as interesting in their own right or not at all." (Gosden 1999: 9).

It is clear then that an ethnoarchaeological approach, being both conceptually and ethically problematic, is an unsatisfactory way of negotiating the history and archaeology of the Sengwer. In line with Gosden's statement, the following section explores how I aim to historicise the contemporary context of the Sengwer by relocating hunting and gathering away from broad models of hunter-gatherer behaviour to the level of habitual practice.

1.2 Hunter-Gatherer Situations

In historicising the current situation of the Sengwer, this project's approach is in tune with the keynote presentation, '*Hunter-Gatherer Situations*', given by Thomas Widlok (2016) at the 11th Conference on Hunting and Gathering Societies. Widlok's argument stems from the German word, 'lage', which, when translated, not only refers to the 'location' of something, but also to its 'position', 'condition' or 'situation'. From this, he claims "that in hunter-gatherer studies we have focused too much on location, and to some degree on position…we have not given enough attention to condition and in particular to *situation*" (Widlok 2016: 2; emphasis added). Location is a term that has been used to examine the geographical and environmental setting of hunter-gatherers as locations that facilitate hunting and gathering activities in different ways (e.g Binford 1980). Position has been explored in relation to their social and historical relationship to surrounding groups (Barnard 2004), such as 'marginalised minorities' or an 'underclass' (e.g Wilmsen

1989). In contrast, situations are defined as the "social space created by habitual practices that are associated with hunter-gatherer ways of life. Practices that are habitual (i.e. have some temporal depth) and that in turn create open loops that pre-structure future actions" (Widlok 2016: 6).

Importantly, this concept shifts hunting and gathering away from a label that describes a group of people to the level of habitual practice, freeing up debates as to who is or is not a 'hunter-gatherer'. This subtle adjustment remains important with regard to the case of the Sengwer, where it will become clear that many people in the Embobut Forest have also kept small numbers of cattle to complement their foraging activities (Chapter 5; Chapter 7). Does this mean that they are not true 'hunter-gatherers'? Perhaps so if we are to box groups of people into strict economic categories and models of hunter-gatherer behaviour. But by refocusing our attention to hunter-gatherer 'situations', Widlok is calling for a far more nuanced examination and microanalysis of the social spaces created by particular practices associated with hunting and gathering activities. This kind of analysis has clear links with Bourdieu's (1977) concept of *habitus* and theory of practice that I discuss in depth in Chapter 6. Importantly, Bourdieu's *habitus* proposes that individuals possess an internalised knowledge of how to behave and interact with their surroundings without consciously thinking about operating within a strict system of extant rules. Understood in this way, the notion of hunter-gatherer 'situations' is a departure from trends that examine the 'foraging mode of thought' (e.g. Barnard 2004). For we are not looking at cognitive processes or belief systems of hunter-gatherers, but rather at habitual practices that do not require conscious thought processes or elaborate ideologies to accompany them (see also Ingold 2011).

Whilst Widlock's argument has significant analytical potential, Schweitzer (2016) notes that the notion that "people can move in and out of hunter-gatherer situations" (Widlok 2016: 9) needs clarification. I agree with Schweitzer that 'situations' within this context could be misinterpreted as being separate and distinct from the social, historical and ecological relationships in which humans are enmeshed. I do not think, however, that Widlok is alluding to a structured set of hunter-gatherer practices into and out of which people drift. Instead, he is suggesting that "hunter-gatherer situations only materialize when both, ecological affordances and people's skills and abilities, come together" (Widlok 2016: 6). In some respects, this idea is in tune with Ingold's (2000) 'dwelling perspective' which, as I expound in Chapter 5, seeks to explore how social and ecological relationships are always coming into being, arising from localised daily practices and tasks. In this context, hunter-gatherer situations cannot be seen as separate from the ecological and social milieu with which they are entwined, but rather as part of their broader dwelling experiences that are constantly emergent (Ingold 2000, 2011).

In light of this discussion, in Chapter 5 I focus on how habitual foraging practices have created certain types of location within the Embobut landscape. This reverses positions that emphasise *locations* in which hunting and gathering can occur, to examine how hunting and gathering as practices precede and often *create* locations (Widlok 2016). As I explore further below, an archaeological gaze adds a temporal perspective to this analysis, exploring how, as people move in and out of hunting and gathering situations, the materiality of the landscape and entanglement of different places changes through time.

It is important to note that this framework does not address the Sengwer as a group of 'hunter-gatherers' *vis-à-vis* surrounding populations. As will become clear in Chapter 7, such an approach lends itself to futile debates as to who is or is not a hunter-gatherer within what in reality is a complex situation of different groups identifying in different ways in the light of nuanced and contested histories. By focusing on the materiality of lifeways through 'situations', I aim to strengthen claims to land through a more rigorous understanding of long-standing use and practice. It needs to be acknowledged, however, that this more nuanced approach might stand in contrast to the rhetoric employed by Sengwer activists and the Forest Peoples Programme quoted at the beginning of this section, who have appropriated the 'hunter-gatherer' category as a form of identity in order to distinguish themselves from surrounding populations and in light of the Kenyan Constitution (2010). The use of this category as understood as a form of group identity is part of a broader narrative of how the Sengwer have been asserting their right to live Embobut through a number of cultural and historical ideas.

My unpicking of simplistic categorical identifications such as hunter-gatherers is intentional not least because, in the negotiation of contemporary politics, who people say they are can be contradictory, contentious and subject to deconstruction (Chapter 7). As such, how people identify should be contextualised and grounded in what they do and in how this shapes their worlds. In light of this, the following section continues to unpack categories of identification by exploring how the Sengwer have highlighted their 'indigenous' status, a highly disputed term in the anthropological literature.

1.3 The 'Indigenous Debate'

In order to understand the contested nature of the term 'indigenous', it is necessary to once again turn back nineteenth-century ideas of social evolution in relation to the concept of 'primitive society'. In his influential book, '*The Invention of Primitive Society'* (1988), Adam Kuper critically discusses how the idea of a 'primitive society' is a mere fabrication of the anthropological discipline that is closely linked with the ideas of Morgan and Lubbock discussed above. Nevertheless, the term remained in use well into the twentieth century, often in reference to hunter-gatherers, as evidenced by its frequent use in *Man the Hunter* (Lee and DeVore 1966). As such, Kuper (1988) saw it as an important intellectual exercise to unpack the history behind its use in order to deconstruct its validity.

Whilst his initial argument was highly influential, in 2005 Kuper thought it necessary to publish a second edition of his book entitled '*The Reinvention of Primitive Society*'. Here it is argued that, instead of abandoning the concept of 'primitiveness', the literature is simply using the euphemisms 'Indigenous' and 'Native' which belong to the same essentialist ideology of culture that does not reflect the complexities of group identity in time and space. Kuper (2003) originally published this argument in a provocative paper entitled 'The Return of the Native', drawing particular attention to the agenda of the Indigenous Peoples' Movement and how it has used the concept of 'indigeneity' in order to gain 'privileged rights' for particular populations (Kuper 2003: 390). The subtleties of Kuper's argument are illustrated through a case study in Canada that addresses how the presence of different institutions, namely the Innu Nation, The Labrador Inuit Association and the Canadian government, have laid down different criteria as to who has the right to live where. In Kuper's reading of the situation, the Innu Nation are 'demanding' the

restoration of ancestral lands, part of which overlap with land claimed by the ethnic movement of the Labrador Inuit Association. An added complication arises with the presence of European descendants, referred to as the Settlers, who have lived in the same area for several generations and have thus been integrated into the Inuit way of life through marriage and trade. Whilst the Labrador Inuit Association will accept Settlers under particular conditions, the Innu Nation sees them as their adversaries and the Canadian government treats them as squatters if they do not have the correct bloodline (Kuper 2003: 392). Allocating rights by upholding the principle of descent as the primary factor for who is 'indigenous' can lead to racist perspectives similar to the 'blood and soil' ideologies of citizenship upheld by right-wing politics in Europe (Kuper 2003: 395).

Unsurprisingly, Kuper's paper drew a response from scholars with varying degrees of endorsement and rebuttal. In particular, Kenrick and Lewis (2004) published an extensive critique of Kuper's work by highlighting his oversimplification and misrepresentation of the history behind the Indigenous Peoples' Movement and all that it has achieved in giving a voice to populations facing discrimination and dispossession from more powerful groups and governments. Asch and Samson (2004: 261) tackle Kuper's case study and highlight how the Innu Nation in Canada is continually reducing the size of its land claims and making concessions to the Canadian state, despite the state selling off land supposedly still under negotiation in the Comprehensive Land Claims process. It is also noted that the very notion that the Canadian government views Settlers as squatters is inherently false since both Settlers and businesses living on a land claim have an equal right to live there (Asch and Samson 2004). Aside from the discrepancies over Kuper's

case studies[2], the predominant counter-argument to his paper is one of definition. Instead of understanding the concept 'indigenous' as an essentialist term, Kenrick and Lewis (2004) argue for a relational understanding that is hinged around the issues of power and dispossession. From this perspective, referring to people as 'indigenous' is to address one side in a relationship between unequally powerful groups, with the 'indigenous' representing the side that has been dispossessed, not the 'quintessential primitive' as Kuper suggests.

This can be further understood by examining Alan Barnard's (2006) contribution to the debate. Whilst Barnard (2006: 8) suggests that there is "no theoretically-unproblematic anthropological definition of 'indigenous', to reject the term on a theoretical level is not the same as rejecting it as a legal concept or political tool". The fact that it has been appropriated and defined by international bodies such as the UN means that it can be used meaningfully. By way of comparison, Barnard demonstrates how the term 'refugee' has no meaningful anthropological substance in itself, but that when used as a relational concept defined by international bodies with reference to people and nation states it becomes a useful legal term. Likewise, if 'indigenous' is to be used by international bodies as a legal tool for political persuasion, it has to be ruptured from notions of primitive society and essentialist ideologies of culture.

Thus, 'indigeneity' has become a legal tool to protect the rights of marginalised communities whose cultural way of life is at risk. This is subtly different from the notion of 'autochthony'. Whilst the terms have been used synonymously, 'autochthony' has had

[2] Many of which are rather pernickety, resembling some of the rhetoric of the Kalahari debate (see Barnard 2006)

a slightly different historical trajectory that has given it different connotations. In general terms, 'autochthony' refers to the notion of being 'born from the soil' and is often used in relation to populations who are not necessarily marginalised by more powerful groups, but nevertheless feel that their resources, culture or power are threatened by migrants (Gausset *et al.* 2011). In contrast to 'indigeneity', which has been positively appropriated by organisations on an international level, 'autochthony' is laden with negative connotations due to its role in inspiring violent efforts to exclude 'strangers', a notion that is acutely evident in parts of Africa (Ceuppens and Geschiere 2005; Gausset *et al.* 2011). Such is the case in the Democratic Republic of Congo where conflict since the 1990s has led to a rise in violence as well as elite and popular discourses surrounding issues of belonging and exclusion (Jackson 2006). As Jackson (2006: 96-97) explains, within this context autochthony is "dangerously flexible in its politics, nervous and paranoid in its language, unmoored from geographic or ethnocultural specificity, borrowing energy both from present conflicts and deep-seated mythologies of the past".

The line between 'indigeneity' and 'autochthony' is not, however, clear cut, especially where both uphold the value of connecting people to place. Indeed, in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP 2007), Indigenous people are allowed the collective rights to land, territory and natural resources (Articles 25-29), and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) states that "a key characteristic for most [indigenous people] is that the survival of their particular way of life depends on access and rights to their traditional lands and the natural resources thereon" (ACHPR 2006:10). Thus, with such a fine line between 'being indigenous' and the 'blood and soil' connotations of 'autochthony', it is not surprising to see academics

such as Kuper reluctant to endorse their use, regardless of whether they are bound to an essentialist ideology or not.

Despite these concerns, the term ‘indigenous’ has now become cemented in international law. With this has been a shift to the use of the term ‘Indigenous Peoples’ (with a capital I) that places the notion of ‘indigeneity’ within a more formalised legal definition (Lane 2017). The use of this term has become increasingly pervasive since the passing of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (henceforth UNDRIP). The process of agreeing UNDRIP was long and complicated, again due to the multifaceted meaning of the term ‘indigenous’ and its context specific implementation. In 1971, the UN Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities appointed José Martinez Cobo as a special rapporteur to produce a study that looked at the problem of discrimination against indigenous populations (Willemsen-Díaz 2009). The report was presented in several stages in the early 1980s and contributed to the initial drafting of UNDRIP by the Working Group for Indigenous Populations (WGIP), a body established by the UN Economic and Social Council in 1982. From here, the declaration took a further 25 years to complete and implement into international law, being subject to a lengthy procedure of amendments due to the input of numerous institutional bodies, national and international, all contributing to the declaration with varying agendas and interpretations as to what ‘indigeneity’ means (Charters 2009; Hendriksen 2009).

The declaration was expected to be adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in November 2006. However, a group of African states (the African Group), spearheaded by Namibia, called for a deferral (Barume 2009; Pelican 2009). In a draft aide memoire

issued by the African Group, it was highlighted how "Africa is still recovering from the effects of ethnic based conflict.", and that the lack of a legal definition of indigenous peoples could thus "create tensions amongst ethnic groups and instability within sovereign states" (African Group 2007 *cited in* Pelican 2009). Moreover, where the idea of self-determination should only apply "to peoples under colonial and/or foreign occupation", in post-colonial African states it could facilitate secessionism, "thus threatening the political unity and territorial integrity of any country" (African Group 2007 *cited in* Pelican 2009). The right to self-determination, however, had been deemed an integral part of UNDRIP formulated in part under the rubric of human rights: "understood as a human right, the essential idea of self-determination is that human beings, individually and as groups, are equally entitled to be in control of their own destinies, and to live within governing institutional orders that are devised accordingly" (Anaya 2009: 187)[3].

Easing the concerns of the African Group, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) responded with an advisory opinion (Pelican 2009; Barume 2009). In particular, the response claimed that a rigid, legal definition of 'Indigenous People' was inappropriate given that the concept of 'indigeneity' within an African context is different to that on other continents. Indeed, the ACHPR stated that commonly accepted concepts of 'aboriginality' as a benchmark for who is 'indigenous' are not appropriate in Africa, not least because of the complexities behind group migration over time, the departure of colonial powers and the subsequent renegotiation of ethnic identities in post-colonial Africa (ACHPR 2006: 10; Lynch 2006, 2011b). As well as this,

[3] The process of integrating the right of self-determination into UNDRIP was itself highly contentious, taking numerous negotiations between different parties with conflicting ideas (see Anaya 2009; Charters 2009).

the ACHPR iterated that the right to self-determination and land rights should be read alongside Article 46 of the declaration, which guarantees the inviolability of the integrity of nation-states. Prompted by this response, and in conjunction with further negotiations, the African Group agreed on nine amendments, leading to the passing of the declaration on the 13th September 2007.

1.4 The Case of the Sengwer

The concerns raised by the African Group discussed above cut to the heart of the nuanced complexities behind the concept of 'being indigenous', particularly within an African context. Where many understand 'indigeneity' to be intimately linked to how long a community has lived somewhere, the question of continued and original residence is problematic in sub-Saharan Africa due to intricate historical narratives of migration, interaction and changing group identity (Lynch 2006, 2011b). The general consensus between African academics is that, prior to the colonial period, group identity was relatively flexible, permeable and highly complex (as I discuss in more depth in Chapters 2, 3 and 7). It was only in the colonial period that ethnic identity became rigidly organised as European administrations 'invented' clear, territorially defined ethnic boundaries for administrative purposes (Ranger 1983; Berman 1998; Lynch 2006, 2011b, 2016). After the colonial period, however, these ethnic boundaries became increasingly ambiguous, contested and reinvented as people became engaged in the renegotiation of ethnic labels in response to ever-changing socioeconomic situations, sometimes through the assertion of their 'indigeneity' (Berman 1998; Lynch 2006, 2011b, 2016).

In this vein, the assertion of 'indigeneity' is important for African communities who self-identify as 'indigenous' as it gives certain rights that are recognised at a global level. Such is the case with the Ogiek communities residing in the Mau Forest of Kenya's Western

Highlands. The Ogiek have historically had a subsistence strategy orientated around beekeeping, honey storage and hunting, using altitudinal gradients to exploit different forest ecological zones in different seasons (Blackburn 1973; Kratz 1980; see also Chapter 2). However, this important relationship with the forest came under threat in the late twentieth century as they experienced a number of evictions from the region at the hands of the government (Barume 2010). Through continued claims that the government had violated their indigenous rights, as well as maintaining a commitment to demonstrating the importance of the forests for their way of life, the Ogiek eventually won a landmark court case in May 2017 when the African Court on Human and People's Rights ruled that they had been wrongfully evicted from the forests (African Court 2017; Forest Peoples Programme 2017). Notably, it was claimed that "the Court recognises the Ogieks are an indigenous population that is part of the Kenyan people having a particular status and deserving special protection deriving from their vulnerability" and that "the Court holds that by expelling the Ogiek from their ancestral lands against their will…the Respondent violated their rights to land as defined above… in light of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of 2007" (African Court 2017: Supra paragraph 112 and 131).

This narrative is similar to the case of the Sengwer populations residing in the gazetted Kapolet and Embobut Forest blocks in the Cherangani Hills, western Kenya, who have also been trying to assert their right to live there in the face of evictions. These people have a long and complicated history in terms of how they have been perceived as well as how they have self-identified that I discuss in depth throughout Chapters 2 and 3. Nevertheless, by way of introduction here it is important to outline some of the major

developments of this history in order to contextualise the aims and methods of this research project.

In the early twentieth century, the British colonial administration understood the Sengwer to be associated with dispersed Ogiek or Ndorobo communities. The name Ndorobo (or Wandorobo and Dorobo) derived from the Masai term "Il Torobbo", a derogatory label that refers to people who are so poor that they have no cattle and consequently have to eat wild meat (Distefano 1990; Barham and Mitchell 2008: 412). The status of the Sengwer, however, seems to have changed over the course of the twentieth century as they increasingly became associated with neighbouring Marakwet and Pokot populations who practise farming (Chapter 3). These narratives are highly contested and contribute to what Lynch (2016) calls the 'politics of naming' that cuts to the crux of the complexity behind how people self-identify in the present-day. Within this complicated historical narrative, the Sengwer community has united in attempting to assert their 'indigeneity' as a result of continued evictions from the gazetted highland forests by the Kenyan government (Forest Peoples Program 2013; Lang 2015).

An example of these complex narratives comes from research conducted by Lynch (2006, 2016) who describes how, since the early 1990s, the Sengwer have struggled to maintain access to the Kapolet Forest on the western side of the Cherangani Hills. In 1993, President Daniel Arap Moi ostensibly promised the Kapolet Forest and three-quarters of an Agricultural Development Corporation Farm called Milimani Farm to the Sengwer as a settlement scheme at the request of Sengwer community members. By the end of 1996, however, a majority of plots had been allocated to populations other than the Sengwer, prompting over a thousand Sengwer to invade the area in an act of protest. Eventually, a

compromise was reached by which the Sengwer would leave the farm and be resettled in the Kapolet Forest in a scheme that was to take place in two phases. Phase I started in 1998 and consisted of allocating Trust Land areas. In 2000, Phase II began, but made little headway as the area was never degazetted, and by 2003 a Government notice had been put up stating that people were living in the forest illegally and had to leave. After failed negotiations in 2004, the Sengwer invaded the Phase II area (Lynch 2006). Interestingly, most of the invaders came from West Pokot District, not the areas in which the Sengwer have historically been concentrated, and were people who, until relatively recently, had self-identified as Pokot. These 'Sengwer-Pokot' began meeting and corresponding with the Sengwer of Kapolet Forest at the beginning of the 2000s once they had become aware of the Kapolet Forest Settlement Scheme (Lynch 2006). Their claim to Sengwer ancestry stems from records that document a relocation program in the 1930s by the British colonial authorities that saw Cherangani populations move into what is now West Pokot County (Lynch 2006: 52). The invasion in 2004 was in part a success as the administration decided to allocate two areas of the Phase II site to the Sengwer. The process was, however, further complicated by the fact that a number of Pokot groups followed the 'Sengwer-Pokot' into the settlement areas, with some Sengwer claiming that these Pokot 'intruders' cleared large areas of forest that led to further evictions at the beginning of 2005 (Lynch 2006).

An equally complex narrative has unfolded on the eastern side of the Cherangani Hills in the Embobut Forest block, the focus of the greater part of this thesis. The contested nature of perceived rights to land and evictions experienced in Kapolet and Embobut are further complicated by the fact that they have existed within the context of the World Bank-funded National Resources Management Project that was approved in 2007 and closed in

June 2013 (Lynch 2016). This project aimed to improve water and forest resources management in order to reduce the impact of drought, floods and water shortage in river catchment areas, whilst improving the livelihoods of participating communities. However, the forceful evictions experienced by the Sengwer in the name of conservation led to a legal case and investigation into the actions of World Bank. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the Sengwer were unhappy with their change in World Bank status in June 2011 from 'Indigenous People' to a 'Vulnerable and Marginalised Group' (VMG) (Lynch 2016). This is because the term 'Indigenous People' not only provides access to a certain package of rights, but also because it alludes to a relationship between humans and their landscape in a way that VMG does not. Thus, whilst the Sengwer are attempting to demonstrate how they are intrinsically connected to their landscape and have managed their forest environments over time, the removal of the status 'Indigenous People' ignores this connectivity and, in doing so, removes certain rights to land, resource management and ultimately their way of life.

In light of this discussion, the question remains as to how archaeologists can actively engage with the issues presented by the Sengwer. Before I expound the methodology and aims of this project, however, there are a number of points that need to be addressed regarding how archaeologists negotiate alternative accounts of the past without undermining different perspectives and historical narratives. This is particularly pertinent with reference to issues of 'indigeneity' and land rights discussed above, where different people may hold conflicting accounts of the past that not only contradict each other, but also with that of the archaeologist. In the following section, I explore these issues with reference to what has been termed 'indigenous knowledge' by discussing how postcolonial archaeologists have negotiated historical knowledge production.

1.5 'Indigenous knowledge', Historical Knowledge Production and Postcolonial Archaeology

How historians and archaeologists document and produce knowledge of the past depends on their research agenda (Stump 2013a). Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that historiography is not an unveiling of the 'true' past, but rather consists of a certain suite of questions, theories and methods that collectively produce a particular understanding of the past. In short, an archaeological approach is the product of Western epistemologies and disciplinary history. This point remains both theoretically problematic and ethically delicate, particularly if archaeological investigations stand in opposition to the political claims of local populations.

In many respects, the problem here stems from how 'Western' scientific epistemologies perceive and document a set of events that exist in a tension with different accounts of the same event. The problem is neatly summarised by Ingold (2000: 13) in an exploration of how Cree hunters in Canada perceive a particular behavioural trait of caribou. When a pursued reindeer becomes aware of the hunter's presence, there is a moment when the animal stops and stares in the direction of the hunter, standing motionless instead of running away. This behaviour has been explained by biologists as an adaptation to predation, where both the reindeer and a pursuing wolf pause before taking flight in a final, decisive chase. Since it is the deer that usually acts first and breaks the deadlock, it has a slight head start and gains an advantage for escaping. It is this very tactic, however, that renders it vulnerable when encountering human hunters equipped with firearms. In contrast to this explanation, the Cree people have a different understanding as to why caribou are easy to hunt, stating that, at preciously the moment it stops and stares at the hunter, the animal is intentionally offering itself to the hunter. The body of the caribou is

not taken by the hunter, it is received. In drawing parallels between the pursuit of animals, the seduction of women and equating the act of hunting to sexual intercourse, killing a caribou is not seen as a termination of life, but rather as an act that is essential for its regeneration (Ingold 2000: 13).

The question that stems from this is how do we negotiate the relationship between the two different accounts of the same event? Ingold (2000) explores this in terms of how people engage with the environments within which they are entangled. In the case of the Cree, their understanding of caribou behaviour arises from an intricate set of interactions, or a 'sentient ecology', that is an integral part of the Cree human-animal lifeworld. This kind of knowledge production is not formalised in the Western epistemological sense. Rather, it is based in feeling, sensitivities and habitual skills that have accrued through experiences of conducting life in particular environments and with certain animals. In the framing developed by Widlok (2016) discussed above, the behaviour of the caribou from the perspective of the Cree stems from a set of habitual practices that are grounded in specific situations arising from certain hunting and gathering activities.

In broader terms, perhaps the most common way of dealing with these tensions in anthropological literature and scientific epistemologies is through 'etic' and 'emic' accounts, the former offering a more scientific description of the world and the latter exploring the cultural meanings that people place upon it. In the case of the caribou, biologists claim to study the animal's behaviour 'as it really is' (etic) whilst the anthropologist examines the ways in which its actions are imagined or 'cognised' within a certain cultural framework (emic). Although this distinction can be theoretically problematic in its own right (Ingold 2000), it serves to highlight the fact that scientific

understandings and alternative epistemologies are not necessarily incompatible depending on the research questions being asked.

More recently, writers within anthropology's so-called 'ontological turn', most notably Viveiros de Castro (2014) and Descola (2013), propose that, instead of attempting to understand different *worldviews* (epistemologies), questions should focus upon how people occupy and see different *worlds* (ontologies). In other words, an epistemological understanding attempts to explain how people come to know and interpret the world 'out there'; one world with different worldviews projected onto it. An ontological approach, on the other hand, does not view the world as singular but rather approaches it in terms of the multiple. This is illustrated through the work of Viveiros de Castro's (2014) *Cannibal Metaphysics,* which offers a comparative synthesis of the Amazonian literature that examines the 'perspectivism' of Amerindian thought. Within this perspectival logic, humans perceive humans as humans, animals as animals, and spirits as spirits. Any animal that is prey to a human, such as wild pigs, will see humans as predators. Likewise, predatory beings, such as jaguars, will see humans and other lifeforms as prey. However, all beings, human, animal or spirit, *perceive themselves* as a human person with a social life similar to that of an Amerindian village. As such, they are human in the skin of a non-human, a notion which is entwined with Amazonian mythology. From their own perspectives, then, all beings are human, perceiving and engaging with their surroundings in a human way – jaguars see blood as manioc beer and vultures see worms in rotten flesh as grilled fish. Following this line of thinking led Viveiros de Castro to conclude that perspectivism has foundations in an entirely different metaphysics to that of Western academic thought. The robust nature/culture dichotomy of the latter, referred to as 'multiculturalist', is built upon the premise that nature is a universal, objective ground

and that culture is infinitely variable in its ways of representing and engaging with it. In contrast, the perspectivism of the Amerindian can be termed as 'multinaturalist', a mode of thinking that postulates that there are many natures perceived in different ways by different beings, but that every being is human and belongs to one culture.

This, then, is an example of the ontological turn within anthropology. Despite becoming a fertile ground for theoretical debate, the ontological turn is supposed to be more methodological than it is theoretical (Holbraad and Pedersen 2017). In other words, questions being asked by the researcher attempt to take seriously the different worlds that people may occupy, rather than reducing it to a belief system or mere symbolism. For example, if shamans *can* actually transform into jaguars, and do not merely *believe* they can in order to understand jaguar perspectives, how does the rest of that world appear (Harris and Cipolla 2017: 174)? Whilst I remain sympathetic to the agenda posited by the ontological turn and in its attempt to take other worlds seriously, it has not gone without criticism, most noticeably in relation to the multifaceted nature of the term 'ontology' (Venkatesan 2010; Heywood 2012). As well as this, the Amerindian 'perspectivism' that has been observed by Viveiros de Castro and Descola (2014) simply did not exist in my engagement with Sengwer informants in Cherangani. To seek out such an ontology of these people would be disingenuous and not reflective of how they have lived in relation to the forests through time. In fact, much of the ways in which informants spoke of animals and plants resonated with my own 'Western' understanding of the world, with little emphasis on spirits, shamans, or myths and a greater focus on their practical uses. Truly grasping a richer understanding of local ontologies would have to involve a competence in local dialects that digs into how people describe their world, an activity well beyond the scope of this study.

As well as this, whilst exploring different epistemologies or different ontologies as a line of anthropological inquiry is no doubt a valuable exercise, there are a number of stumbling blocks here that give rise to a series of more pragmatic problems. For example, the suggestion that shamanic dreams should be heard as evidence in Canadian land rights issues is a case in point (Brody 2001: 135-136). Here it was proposed that if there was a lack of appropriate historical sources, the court should take evidence from shamans, who are able to see in dreams the arrangements that their ancestors made with the first European settlers. Yet taking these explanations into account in a legal sense would likely challenge the epistemological framework of the court as it would have to suspend any scientific understanding of causation (Stump 2013a). There is no simple solution to this example and it serves to further highlight the tensions between historiography and alternative epistemologies in the sense that different forms of knowledge production in the present-day contribute to different accounts of the past.

This last point is particularly pertinent for the archaeological discipline in wake of the postcolonial critique and the acknowledgement that colonial archaeologies justified their imperialist activities with the excuse that colonised populations were inferior (Gosden 2001; Lyndon and Rivzi 2010). The ramifications of such perspectives have been acute in the sense that 'subaltern' groups have not been given a voice in interpreting their own archaeological heritage, a problem that is still reverberating around the discipline today (Spivak 1988; Lyndon and Rivzi 2010). Indeed, it has been argued in Joost Fontein's (2006) *'The Silence of Great Zimbabwe',* that historiography has seized knowledge of the past at the site of Great Zimbabwe through 'disembedding mechanisms' and claims to objectivity, thus marginalising alternative understanding the past through a sense of place, memory and body (see Ingold 2011). Excavations between 1902 and 1904 saw the

destruction of more recent burials in favour of older archaeological remains. As well as this, the removal to Europe and South Africa of sacred soapstone birds alongside the ringfencing of the area to promote conservation and discourage vandalism had the effect of alienating people from the site. Given that Great Zimbabwe has now become a national and world heritage site, it is argued that such disjuncture continues to this day. As Fontein states: "The continued alienation of Great Zimbabwe from local communities has resulted in both a silence of unheard voices and untold stories—the unrepresented past of local communities—and the silence of anger—the alienation, and indeed the desecration of Great Zimbabwe" (Fontein 2006: 12)

How, then, may archaeologists negotiate different accounts of the past within a postcolonial framework? Stump (2013a) has explored this question in relation to how different systems of archaeological knowledge production can intersect with what has often been termed 'indigenous knowledge'. Although I have already discussed the conceptual problems behind the term 'indigenous', the phrase 'indigenous knowledge' has nevertheless become entrenched in the 'development' literature and is often used as a synonym for 'local' or 'traditional' knowledge (Sillitoe 1998). It has thus penetrated into both applied archaeological and anthropological lines of enquiry that place a particular emphasis on engaging with contemporary issues and I therefore use the term throughout this section in order to remain consistent with the literature.

One way in which archaeologists have engaged with 'indigenous knowledge' is through the paradigms of the 'usable past' and 'applied archaeology' that have increasingly been involved in engaging with policy, development projects and conservationist debates and programmes (Andah 1995; Hayashida 2005; Davies and M'Mbogori 2013; Stump

2013a). Broadly consisting of the same research agenda, 'applied archaeology' and the 'usable past' use archaeology to challenge or confirm assumptions or interpretations where there may not necessarily be formalised Western historical data or indeed where previous studies produced within Western epistemologies have created erroneous conclusions. Furthermore, investigations have focused on local technologies or resource exploitation strategies with the aim of informing and/or benefiting social, economic and/or environmental conditions for contemporary populations. In the latter vein, Erickson (1994: 147) has noted how "In many cases, archaeological and traditional systems may be more sophisticated, more environmentally sound, more culturally appropriate, and more productive than those introduced from the outside". This has produced some insightful pieces of research, particularly in South America, such as the rehabilitation of pre-Hispanic agricultural infrastructure in the Peruvian Andes (Kendall 2013).

Within an East African context, the archaeological visibility of 'indigenous technology' has often proved too little to reproduce past resource exploitation strategies or model their future resilience in a way that could inform developmental practice (Stump 2013b). This is to say that not only is there often a lack of sufficient physical remains, but also of an in-depth analysis of a suite of interrelated practices that collectively form 'indigenous knowledge' institutions that produce and maintain resource exploiting strategies. That said, studies of the 'usable past' produced by Davies and Moore (2016; Davies 2012) have drawn upon a range of environmental, ethnographic, historical and archaeological sources to create a diachronic picture of environmental change and land use patterns amongst the Pokot and Marakwet communities of northwest Kenya. When contemplated diachronically, these farming systems appear both fluid and flexible, where innovation

and improvisation contribute to a form of 'cultural resilience' that has to some extent helped accommodate population growth, climate fluctuations and erosion (see Chapter 5). Any development scheme wanting to seriously address contemporary issues, such as water and food insecurity and deforestation, would require engaging with these dynamics in order not to disrupt long-standing resilient approaches of the community itself: "To overlook the longer-term context of an ecological system while attempting to re-engineer that system is thus not just an oversight, but it is fundamentally bad science." (Davies and Moore 2016: 82).

A more common approach of the 'usable past' in East Africa has been to interrogate false historical or environmental narratives that may otherwise influence development and policy (Davies 2012). An example of this can be seen in Lane's (2009) analysis of how policies aimed at controlling soil erosion in the Kondoa area of the Irangi Hills, north-central Tanzania, have been shaped by differing environmental narratives. Here, the predominant idea that recent local farming, herding, and other land use practices have primarily been responsible for the soil erosion is challenged. Geomorphological research has demonstrated that the causes of severe soil erosion are multifaceted and have in fact been ongoing for at least 12,500 years with both human and natural drivers. Both the archaeological and ethnographic data from contemporary communities suggest that farming communities have been living with soil erosion for hundreds of years, adapting their land use strategies by relocating themselves accordingly.

Where many projects that operate within the 'usable past' paradigm have involved examining 'indigenous knowledge', technologies and resource exploitation strategies from a diachronic perspective as grounded in social and environmental context,

alternative epistemologies often make way for Western explanations of causation. As a result, interpretations created from applied archaeology and the usable past may differ substantially from 'indigenous' historical accounts and consequently "sensitivity would be required if aspects of the archaeological data were employed to guide modern actions" (Stump 2013a: 292). Furthermore, it is worth noting that whilst these paradigms have made substantial efforts to engage with 'indigenous knowledge' in different ways, they do not necessarily seek to create, epistemically speaking, an 'alternative' archaeology that incorporates different accounts and perspectives of the past (Lane 2011). This mantle has instead been taken up by archaeologists proposing 'Indigenous Archaeologies' or 'hybrid archaeologies' as a way of producing syncretic histories and hybrid epistemologies (Atalay 2006). Thus, the aim of 'Indigenous Archaeology' is to engage 'indigenous' communities with the process of archaeology in a collaborative approach that "blends the strengths of Western archaeological science with the knowledge and epistemologies of indigenous peoples" (Atalay 2006: 301) in a call for an archaeology that incorporates indigenous knowledges that is capable of "decolonizing archaeological theory and practice" (Smith and Wobst 2005: 1).

Although well intentioned, a number of criticisms have been levelled at this approach. Firstly, Stump (2013a) objects to 'Indigenous Archaeology' as a hybrid research strategy on the premise that if the local conception of the past is incompatible with the archaeologist's frame of understanding, then it can be acknowledged but must be ultimately rejected if the archaeological method of historical knowledge production is not to be undermined. On the other hand, if an 'indigenous knowledge' of the past is not incommensurate with the archaeological method, then there is no need to work in the paradigm of a hybrid archaeology in the first place. In Stump's view, this notion has led

to a fair amount of rhetoric from scholars who propose 'Indigenous Archaeologies' with little focus on actually creating a serious model for incorporating "Indigenous systems of knowledge and power" (Atalay 2006: 297), partly because "a historian working within the western tradition is obliged to reject accounts or concepts that are incommensurate with their own" (Stump 2013a: 282).

On a more conceptual level, it can also be argued that the creation of 'Indigenous Archaeologies' fails to move away from the anthropological discourse surrounding the term 'indigenous' already addressed in this chapter. Indeed, McGhee (2010) has debated against the validity of an 'Indigenous Archaeology', arguing in a similar manner to Kuper (2003) that the various forms of 'Indigenous Archaeology' currently being employed by archaeologists are based on a paradigm of cultural essentialism that perpetuates the idea of the culturally static 'aboriginal'. If archaeologists really want to engage with this, McGhee (2008) argues that they should be questioning the historical assumptions on which the paradigm of 'indigeneity' is based – the notion that local communities have endured as stable entities over great periods of time. In response, archaeologists advocating the multifaceted approach of 'Indigenous Archaeologies' (presented as a plural) criticise his oversimplification of the theoretical framework in which they are operating (Colwell-Chanthaphonh *et al.* 2010; Wilcox 2010).

Whilst Colwell-Chanthaphonh *et al.*'s (2010) argument may well hold some weight in relation to Australian and North American archaeology, Lane (2011) notes how the idea of 'Indigenous Archaeologies' has gained less currency within sub-Saharan Africa for similar reasons to those I have already raised, namely the multifaceted nature of the term 'indigenous', particularly within post-colonial Africa. As well as this, Lane (2011: 17) holds that the distinction between 'archaeological' and 'indigenous' knowledge systems

should be abandoned altogether. This is because it reifies a false division between their respective strengths while also encouraging the search for 'original' and untouched elements of indigenous systems and, in so doing, defines 'indigenous knowledge' as ahistorical.

My own view is that, whilst I sympathise with the post-colonial framework that 'Indigenous Archaeologies' operate within, the conceptual base of 'indigeneity' appears too fragile to ground a sub-discipline within, particularly within an East African context. This does not mean, however, that archaeologists cannot meaningfully engage with discourse surrounding 'indigeneity'. Indeed, given that the 'indigenous' category has in some ways been ruptured from its anthropological foundations and firmly placed within international legislation, it is possible to engage with the term in a less conceptually problematic way due to the fact that it has now been appropriated by communities in the light of UNDRIP (2007). That is to say, rather than conducting an 'Indigenous Archaeology', one can study the long-term history and the material correlates of communities who self-identify as 'indigenous' through the incorporation of a wide variety of local voices in interpreting archaeological residues.

One way of engaging with this, and one that is of particular relevance to this study, is through the notion of community claims to land. Such approaches are particularly evident in Australia in relation to 'Native Title', where Aboriginal Australians are given the chance to reclaim land if they can show a continuing physical, cultural and ritual attachment to it (Gosden 2001; Veth 2010). An archaeological contribution to these debates is clear, with Veth (2010) describing the numerous ways that it can provide evidence for continuing connection to landscapes before, during, and after colonisation as well as highlight transitions that communities may have experienced through enforced

changes. Such lines of evidence may include the depiction of European artefacts such as ships and firearms in different forms of artwork; foraging patterns detected at food-processing sites; ceremonial activity as evidenced through engravings and ongoing ceremonies at sites with known time depths; quarrying of stone still that is still distributed as well as the sustained circulation of valued commodities such as pearl shell; the formation and maintenance of totemic estates that is expressed in rockart; and the mass reproduction of glass objects found at contact sites (Veth 2010: 268).

Amongst different examples, Veth (2010) points to the important ceremonial places of the *thalu* sites of the Pilbara, in northwestern Australia. *Thalus* are locales where people help ensure the survival of important animals, such as the kangaroo, as well as the reliable onset of rainfall through the performance of a range of actions and songs that have been recorded since the beginning of the twentieth century. Often marked by structures such as circular stone arrangements and standing stones, *thalu* sites have a material component that can be documented archaeologically. In conjunction with ethnohistorical accounts and a direct engagement with 'indigenous knowledge', the archaeology of these sites indicates that some of them date to before contact and sovereignty for Western Australia (1829) and demonstrate that they were part of larger Aboriginal cultural landscapes. Importantly, the layering of more modern acrylic paints on older paints, and then before that on ochre, demonstrated diachronic and repeated use of these sites. This example demonstrates how "There is a clear need to marry the archaeology of the recent past with Indigenous knowledge systems and to maintain the integrity of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of both sites and places" (Veth 2010: 280).

Here, Veth's comment emphasises that archaeological studies of the recent past can bring interesting insights to the study of contemporary society in ways that cannot be achieved

through anthropological or sociological investigations. Buchli and Lucas (2001) reinforce this point, claiming that archaeology is in a unique position to foreground or materialise that which has been overlooked, forgotten, concealed or obscured by dominant narratives of contemporary society in an act of making the 'absent present'. Their 'excavation' of an abandoned 1960s council house helps illustrate this, where an explicitly archaeological approach was taken to examining the materials of recent livelihoods by means of photographing deposits and systematically surveying and cataloguing objects. Such methods not only help provide provisional interpretations regarding the livelihoods of the house's occupants, but can also be viewed as 'creative act' that facilitates an engagement with the lives of those who lived there.

Further to this example, Harrison and Schofield (2010: 6) claim that there are three specific and arguably unique perspectives that archaeology brings to the study of the recent past: firstly, archaeological investigations, whether they are concerned with prehistory or history, begin with material culture including objects and landscapes; secondly, archaeological studies incorporate a recognition of time depth and longer-term processes; and thirdly, this long-term awareness facilitates a profound understanding of change. Addressing the latter of these, instead of confining research questions within broad frameworks of 'past' and 'present', archaeologists can bring into focus the notion of 'multiple temporalities' (Lucas 2004) that examine the dynamics between different phenomena occurring at different physical and social temporalities. Indeed, climate fluctuations through daily, seasonal, decadal and millennial trends intersect with daily and seasonal activities of human life, as well as longer-term stories of migration and construction of identity, and their material correlates. Thus, diachronic investigations of different phenomena at varying temporal scales can contribute to a richer understanding of the contemporary world. Methods for studying these phenomena predominantly come

in the form of excavation, surveying, artefact analysis and classification and the creation of both schematic and GIS maps (Harrison and Schofield 2010). There are other methods, however, that are utilised when studying the archaeology of the contemporary past that are perhaps more anthropological in nature. Harrison and Schofield (2010: 75) suggest that using oral accounts and engaging with people's memories of, and relationship with, aspects of material culture (including objects, architecture and wider landscapes) are equally important methods for studying the contemporary past and should be conducted in conjunction with more explicit archaeological techniques.

Whilst social anthropologists, historians and political scientists are certainly equipped to deal with the discourses around 'indigeneity' (de la Cadena and Starn 2007), I contend that an archaeological perspective can bring new and important insights to them. With the renegotiation of ethnic identity in post-colonial eastern Africa (Lynch 2006, 2011a), the complexity of the political situation in Cherangani is inherently wrapped up in contested historical narratives (Lynch 2016). Untangling such narratives must involve long-term analysis and, where many of these communities do not have written histories, archaeology is well equipped to achieve this through diachronic studies of land-use patterns and material culture (e.g Davies and Moore 2016). As well as this, and as highlighted by the ACHPR, recognising African 'indigenes' should involve understanding how livelihoods are connected to place. Methods of analysing 'indigeneity' must thus examine the relationships between humans and environment, including vegetation/plants, animals, and the localisation of daily practices or tasks within wider understandings of space (Balée 2013). An important contribution to such work is Tim Ingold's (2000) 'temporality of the landscape', which seeks to explore the changing nature of human landscapes over time as expressed by the spatial and temporal activities, or the 'taskscape', of daily life (see also Chapter 4 and 5). By deconstructing the nature/culture dichotomy, we are to

understand ‘landscape’ here not as a passive backdrop for human activity to act upon, but rather as an integral part of human life and identity (Ingold 2000; Tilley 2006).

Ultimately, then, I not only aim to unravel contested histories of contemporary politics, but also provide an alternative account that is both materially and temporally centred in order to demonstrate how the Sengwer and the Embobut Forest in which they lived have constructed each other over time. In turn, an understanding of daily practice and place-making can provide a strong foundation for land claims even if it appears to undermine more simplistic claims to land constructed through rigid identity categories. With this in mind, the final section of this chapter expounds the methodology that this project has employed to examine the temporality and materiality of Sengwer landscapes.

1.6 Project Aims and Methodology

At its most basic, this project aims to explore the long-term history of the Sengwer over the past century. As noted above, debates surrounding Sengwer ‘indigeneity’ and rights to land are wrapped up in what Lynch (2016) calls ‘the politics of naming’, with ideas of identity at a local, national and international level often understood discursively with little emphasis on how identity is expressed through what people actually *do* on a day to day basis. As such, this project employed a methodology that explored how the changing nature of quotidian life is materialised in the landscape in order to shift contemporary discourse about ‘indigeneity’ away from political rhetoric and ground it in the materiality and temporality of everyday tasks.

Data collection broadly took place over two seasons totalling approximately eight months from July to November 2016 and March to May 2017. Throughout these two field seasons, I was living on the eastern edge of the Embobut Forest in a small commercial

centre called Kakamiti (see Chapters 3 and 4). This meant that I had relatively easy access into the gazetted forest block to create maps and could interview community members who had recently been resettled outside of the forest. With this in mind, a number of methods were employed:

Conducting Interviews and Participant Observation - Interviews were conducted with a Sengwer research assistant, Joseph Kimatai, who speaks the local Sengwer and Marakwet dialects. Forty-seven semi structured interviews were conducted with community elders (Appendix A), predominantly throughout the first field season (July to November 2016) and at the beginning of the second (March 2017). A majority of these interviews were carried out inside the forest, often within the old homestead from which the interviewee had been evicted. With my research focusing on the materiality and temporality of the landscape, sitting within these areas proved incredibly insightful as the interviewee could point and show us particular features of the forest and surrounding hills. The interviews explored different aspects of life in Embobut:

- *Oral histories* - Oral histories were collected that focused upon the tasks of everyday life in the past and how this has changed over the past 100 years. Particular emphasis was placed upon what Sengwer hunter-gatherer identity looked like and why this changed with the onset of farming. Furthermore, in order to paint a picture of how Sengwer history is rooted within the landscape, important locales such as clan boundaries, community forests and ceremonial grounds were documented that were later mapped as a part of the participant mapping sessions (see below). Finally, family lineages were documented with the aim of understanding the changing nature of settlement patterns and longer-term narratives of migration into the Embobut Forest.

- *Ethnobotany* - Alongside oral histories, interviews that focused on different plant species were carried out in order to understand how these are used for medicinal, nutritional, economic and ceremonial purposes. Questions orientated around how plant use and value has changed over the past century were also asked[4].
- *Anthrozoology* - Interviews also examined how animals are important to different parts of economic and social life. Questions explored what animals were hunted and the methods that were employed. Particular emphasis was placed on understanding the importance of beekeeping and cattle rearing, how these were integral to subsistence, trade, and notions of territory and how this was affected by the onset of farming.

Participant Mapping Sessions – Participant mapping sessions were conducted in the latter half of the first field season and throughout the second. Where maps have the ability to evoke relationships between place, lived experience and community, they can be used as a powerful research tool (Powell 2010). Participant mapping has been used for anthropological research purposes for understanding local perceptions and use of landscape (e.g. Oetelaar and Meyer 2006; Oetelaar and Oetelaar 2006), development schemes aiming to better understand community use of land (International Fund for Agricultural Development 2009) and activist purposes to help strengthen community rights to land (Mapping for Rights 2016). For these reasons, I employed the following methods:

- *Individual Participant Mapping* - As a part of the interview process, individuals were asked to undertake a pen and paper exercise and draw their environment as they perceive

[4] Whilst this was an important exercise for the purposes of this project, data collected also feed into a broader collaborative project with the University of Eldoret that aims to document the botany of the Elgeyo Escarpment.

it. Whilst individual maps were compared with each other in order to detect commonalities, the aim of these sessions was to use the process of map-making as an interview technique to evoke memories and explanations.

- *Group Participant Mapping Workshops* - towards the end of the first and second field seasons, workshops took place that were a collaborative exercise in discussing the maps that had been produced. This process stimulated conversation and collective memories emerged that enriched the individual maps already collected.

Landscape Mapping - Informed by the interviews and participant mapping sessions, I documented and mapped the materiality of the Embobut landscapes:

- *GPS mapping* - A handheld GPS was used to map the positioning of key areas within the broader landscape, including oral historical sites (as above), domestic sites, initiation sites and other ceremonial grounds. Old trackways were marked alongside newer road networks in order to understand how people have moved through the forest and how this has changed. Of particular importance was the mapping of three historic forest glades where people were living and how these have changed over time. One of these was taken as a sample in order to create a more fine-grained understanding of how territory is organised and how people managed their forest resources. These sites and tracks were mapped with community members in order to involve them in the process of research.
- *Detailed surveying* - Particular abandoned sites that were shown to me warranted the creation of scaled drawings and the documenting of surface scatters. These included rock shelters that exist as an important part of oral histories, as well as a series of archaeological features in the form of circular depressions that suggest older periods of occupation.
- *Geographical Information System* - The GPS data collected from the fieldwork were

implemented into GIS software for further analysis and presentation alongside the comparison of historic aerial photographs.

Archaeological Excavations – In May 2017, a number of test pit excavations were conducted on earthworks that had been become apparent from the landscape mapping. These took the form of shallow bowl-shaped depressions that are reminiscent of Sirikwa hollows that are common across the western highlands of Kenya (Sutton 1973). The excavations were undertaken in order to give a better understanding of the long-term occupation of the Embobut forest as well as act as a tool for stimulating discussions with the Sengwer community members in relation to how they perceived their own history. Unfortunately, very little archaeological material was found. As such, they are only presented here in an appendix to this thesis.

1.7 Thesis Structure

This introductory chapter has taken the reader on a journey to explore the categories of 'hunter-gatherer' and 'Indigenous People' in order to contextualise the application of these terms within the context of this project and to lay the theoretical foundation for the remainder of this thesis. The first part of my argument emphasised that an ethnoarchaeological study of the Sengwer would be both conceptually and ethically inappropriate. The same holds true for the pigeon-holing of Sengwer foraging activities within broader models of hunter-gatherer behaviour. Rather, I use the concept of hunting and gathering situations (Widlok 2016) as a of point departure for exploring how different foraging practices create certain locations in Embobut. In some senses, this approach stands against activist rhetoric that uses the category of the hunter-gatherer in order to distinguish itself from surrounding populations. I then problematised the term

'indigeneity' by examining how it is an anthropological contestable notion that nevertheless holds a place in international law. It is within this context that I emphasised the inherent problems with the sub-discipline of 'Indigenous Archaeologies', particularly within an African context. Despite this, however, it is still possible for archaeology to engage with how people self-identify and conceptualise their 'indigeneity' through a diachronic analysis of changing landscapes. The interrogation of identity categories in this introductory chapter has been necessary as it lays the foundation for further discussions that demonstrate how the utilisation of 'indigeneity' and 'hunter-gatherer' can serve to reinforce disputed histories and simplistic notions of belonging (see Chapters 3 and 7). The methods and theories employed by this project aim to counteract much of this rhetoric by offering an alternative account that is both materially and temporally centred. Whilst such an approach may indeed contradict current political claims, it provides a more rigorous understanding of how the Sengwer and Embobut Forest have constructed each other over time and provide a stronger case comprehending how people are connected to place.

It is clear by now that the nature of this project is multifaceted and interdisciplinary, with many themes entangled throughout. In order to negotiate these themes, this thesis is split into three main parts. Part One aims to explore what can be learnt about the Cherangani Hills and the history of the Sengwer through an examination of academic journals, government reports and activist documents. These paint a particular picture of local livelihoods and philosophies of conservation as well as the potential breaching of human rights during the evictions. Part One thus has three chapters, including this introduction, that gradually introduce these different issues and perspectives. Chapter 2 aims to further contextualise some of the discussions introduced in this chapter within eastern African

history and archaeology by exploring the diversity of different lifeways and how this changed with the gradual introduction of livestock over the past 4000 years. Here I lay the foundation for contextualising the history of contemporary communities and how their fluidity became more rigid in the twentieth century with the colonial and post-colonial periods, contributing to the layered and contested nature of different identities in the present. In Chapter 3, I move on to introduce the study area of the Cherangani Hills and the forest environment they are characterised by. This discussion is premised by an exploration of the role that forest ecosystems play and why environmentalists feel the need to conserve them, itself a paramount notion for understanding the different philosophies to conservation that were first implemented within the colonial period. Many of these conservation practices are still implemented in the present and constituted a part of the World Bank-funded project that led to the evictions of Sengwer and Marakwet populations residing in the area. From this arises a discussion that expounds the political narrative surrounding the 'politics of naming' (Lynch 2016), where community members have become divided on how they should self-identify and a number of legal debates have emerged surrounding the categories of the 'indigenous' and the 'hunter-gatherer'.

In contrast to Part One, which explicitly explores what can be learned of the Cherangani Hills and Embobut Forest from the 'outside' looking in, Part Two aims to see what can be learned from the ground up based on the eight months of fieldwork I conducted there. Importantly, the discussions that surround identity and indigeneity are set aside (to resurface in Part Three) and make way for a suite of theoretical concepts that aim to dissolve the nature/culture dichotomy highlighted as problematic towards the end of Part One. Part Two is also split into three chapters that follow a multiscalar approach, starting with the macro-picture of the Embobut Forest and gradually focusing in on the household

level. With the aim of creating a richer understanding of human history and changing livelihoods in the Embobut Forest that is materially centred, each chapter is premised with a section of theory that helps contextualize how the data is examined. Chapter 4 explores how and when people migrated into the region, describing the major pathways between areas of settlement, as well as offering a preliminary examination of negotiated forest boundaries. Chapter 5 then zooms in on one forest glade where people had historically been living. This glade was selected in order to give a more detailed account of how clans organised the region into different territorial areas. Throughout this chapter I examine how these territories were managed, how people utilised the forest resources, while also documenting the different plant types that were being used. Chapter 6 then attempts to understand historical change in the Embobut Forest through Bourdieu's (1977) concept of the *habitus* and the habitual practices of individuals. In particular, I focus on the dynamism of changing households, how settlement has shifted through time and the broader implications this has had on landscape change over the past one hundred years.

It must be noted here that whilst Part Two of this thesis aims to create an understanding of changing lifeways from the ground up, it remains a part of an archaeological and anthropological means of inquiry that uses a particular set of methods and theories that lend themselves to a number of interpretations. Thus, I am not claiming to have an authoritative approach to the past or to be unveiling a 'true past' that will provide any set of concrete solutions to the contentious political debate that has arisen. Rather, in using both the archival data from Part One and primary data gathered with community members in Embobut explored throughout Part Two, I aim to emphasise the inherent complexity of the situation, add more rigour to the existing debate and provide an alternative account

that focuses on the materiality and temporality of Embobut. This comes into focus in Part Three of the thesis, where I reintroduce the issues of identity that I put to one side at the end of Part One and situate them within the observations made throughout Part Two. In this vein, Chapter 7 discusses the material correlates of different identities in Embobut with the aim of understanding how nuanced and often subjective identity claims can be understood as political instruments that are nevertheless grounded in *habitus* (Jones 1997). It concludes by emphasising how thinking about the materiality of the landscape and how a diachronic examination of change as informed by anthropological and archaeological theories gives a unique take on people's place within Embobut regardless of the difficulties surrounding identity. This leads onto the final, concluding chapter that is more reflective in nature. Given the highly complex histories examined throughout this thesis, I ask how we to are understand the 'here and now' of Embobut and the future of the region. In order to address this, I use the recently developed concept of the 'blasted landscape' introduced by the anthropologists Anna Tsing (2014) and Eben Kirksey (2014) in order to readdress the relationship that people have with environmental degradation and how they place hope within it.

Chapter 2 : Eastern African Mosaics and the Deeper History of the Sengwer

The long-term narrative of different groups residing in eastern Africa is rich, fluid and complex. To help us comprehend this better, Kusimba *et al.* (2005: 244) bring into focus the notion of mosaics defined as "a group of societies that inhabit a region together and that practice different economies and religions, speaking diverse languages, but related through clientship, alliances, knowledge sharing, and rituals". Through the exploration of shifting mosaics, this chapter conducts a diachronic analysis of different migrations into eastern Africa. I focus in particular on that of the migration of Southern Nilotic-speaking populations and the archaeological phenomenon known as 'Sirikwa holes', the makers of which appear to have been historically and culturally related to the Sengwer. Examining these long-term histories is especially important with regard to the Sengwer as their identity has remained somewhat hazy, with both European and local perspectives shifting over the course of the twentieth century. Thus, understanding this deeper history helps to contextualise the identity of contemporary populations, how they emerged and how they have continued to be constructed throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries. In particular, I focus on the history and identity of the Sengwer, Marakwet, Dorobo and Ogiek peoples, which provides a necessary groundwork for the remainder of the thesis.

2.1 Eastern African Mosaics: Migrations and Interactions

Livestock bones recovered by Barthelme (1985) at Dongodien in the Koobi Fora area on the east side of Lake Turkana in northern Kenya are part of a body of evidence marking the onset of pastoralism in eastern Africa *c.* 4500 BP (Lane 2013). The exact process of how pastoralism spread across the region remains complicated, not least because of the problems associated with the identification and interpretation of domestic faunal remains

and the multiple accompanying ceramic styles. Nevertheless, the broad picture that is often painted (e.g. Marshall 2000; Barham and Mitchell 2008; Lane 2013) is one of a 'trickle and splash', a phrase first used by Bower (1991) to describe the gradual appearance of livestock from *c.* 4500 BP followed by a much larger and more extensive adoption of pastoralism *c.* 3000 BP. The result of this drawn out process was a series of moving and static 'frontiers' (Lane 2004) between herders and foraging communities that created a complex and dynamic mosaic that is visible in the archaeological record. Such is the case at Enkapune ya Muto on the Mau Escarpment where pottery resembling Nderit and Ileret ware that is commonly associated with domesticated animals first appears *c.* 4800 BP, preceding a low frequency of caprines by several hundred years (Marean 1992; Ambrose 1998; Figure 2.1). These animals were thus probably not herded by the occupants, but instead obtained by theft or trade. Likewise, at the sites of Wadh Lang'o and Usenge 3 near Lake Victoria sheep and goats had been incorporated into a mixed subsistence strategy by Kansyore ceramic-using foragers by 3300 BP (Lane *et al.* 2007). Changes in pottery styles, stone tool assemblages and the relative procurement of fish and wild and domestic animals point towards an intriguing story of migration and inter-group interaction that saw behavioural and cultural change among Kansyore populations.

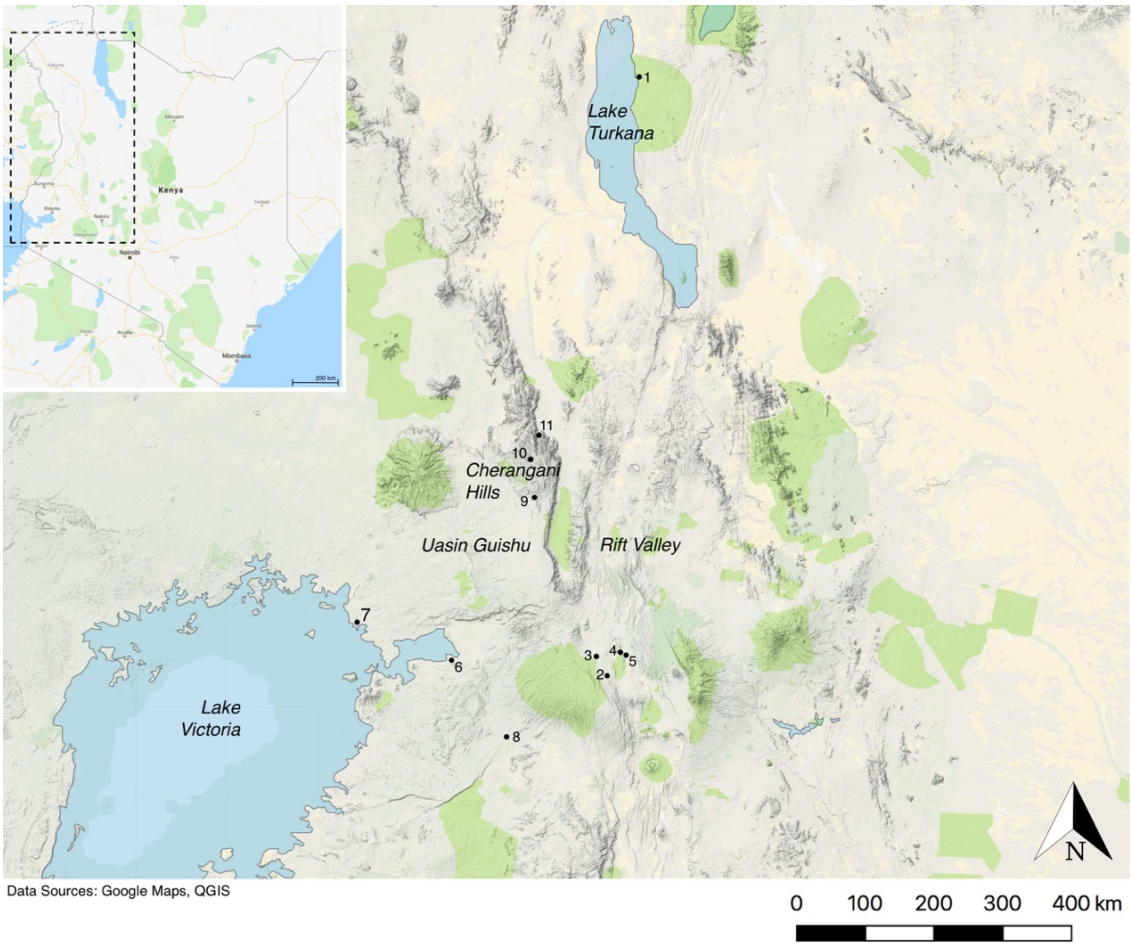


Figure 2.1:Main sites discussed throughout this chapter. 1. Dongodien, 2. Enkapune ya Muto, 3. Deloraine, 4. Hyrax Hill, 5. Lanet, 6. Wadh Lang'o, 7. Usenge 3, 8. Chemagel, 9. Muringa, 10. Kaisungurr, 11. Wei Wei Valley

Studies of linguistic distributions and loanwords indicate that the initial migration of herding populations in eastern Africa was from present-day Ethiopia and South Sudan by people who spoke proto-Cushitic languages (Ehret 2002). However, these Cushitic-speaking populations appear to have been assimilated by a later wave of people who were a part of the Nilo-Saharan linguistic family and are related to many contemporary populations residing in parts of South Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania (Ehret 1971, 1993, 2002). The Nilotic languages have broadly been classified into three main branches: Western Nilotic (e.g. Shilluk, Nuer, Dinka, Luo), Eastern Nilotic (e.g. Maasai, Samburu, Turkana, Karamojong) and Southern Nilotic (e.g. Datoga, Kalenjin [see below]).

Of importance for this discussion are the Southern Nilotic speakers, of whom the Sengwer are one. These populations appear to have migrated southwards from South Sudan and into western Kenya no less than a thousand years ago, assimilating Cushitic-speaking populations already residing there as indicated by a number of linguistic borrowings and cultural traits such as the prohibition of eating fish (Ehret 1971: 48; Sutton 1973: 15). This time frame appears necessary to account for the linguistic differences that are observable today between Southern Nilotic speaking populations (Ehret 1971: 28, 66; Sutton 1973: 15). The most obvious example here is that of the Datoga residing in present-day Tanzania, as their dialect appears to be attributable to the continued migration of Southern Nilotic populations away from western Kenya. Further linguistic divergence also occurred between those Southern Nilotic groups who remained in western Kenya, accounting for the development of different dialects that are observable today, the most distinct of which is Pokot. The historic mapping of these dialects seems to be fairly consistent with the location of present-day populations, although, as discussed below, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries many of these populations would have experienced the rapid conquest and subsequent collapse of the Eastern Nilotic-speaking Maasai in parts of Kenya's Western Highlands, which disrupted previously established distributions (Ehret 1971: 70; Sutton 1973).

Archaeologically speaking, the migration of the Southern Nilotes appears to have been slightly preceded by the gradual adoption of iron-manufacturing technologies across parts of the Central Rift, a period archaeologists have termed the Pastoral Iron Age or the Later Iron Age (Sutton 1993a; Lane 2013; Davies 2013). The early phases of the Pastoral Iron Age are still poorly understood, but it is likely that the Southern Cushitic populations had already adopted iron forging technologies before the Southern Nilotes had moved into the

region, prompting changes in weaponry, military tactics and settlement structure (Sutton 1993a, 1993b: 124). One of the earliest occurrences of iron working in the Central Rift, dated to *c*. AD 620–890, comes from the 'main site' of Deloraine located on the edge of the Mau Escarpment northwest of Lake Nakuru (Ambrose *et al*. 1984; Lane 2013). This site contains evidence of cereal cultivation and remains of domesticated cattle, as well as evidence for the manufacture and use of iron implements (Ambrose *et al*. 1984; Sutton 1993b).

Later archaeological remains found at Site II at Deloraine dating to the early twelfth century appear to mark a distinct break from those at the main site, resembling the earthworks of the Sirikwa, an archaeological phenomenon more closely aligned with Southern Nilotes (Sutton 1973; Sutton 1993b; Davies 2013; Figure 2.1). The Sirikwa appear to have spread into the Central Rift Valley in the twelfth century AD and continued to expand into the sixteenth century as indicated by radiocarbon dates obtained from Hyrax Hill near Nakuru (Sutton 1987; Kyule 1997). These excavations, as well as those at Lanet (Posnansky 1957) and various sites across the Western Highlands, including Muringa and Chemagel (Sutton 1973, 1987), have revealed that the Sirikwa tradition is characterised by rouletted ceramics and large bowl-shaped earthworks termed 'Sirikwa holes'. Approximately 12 to 20 metres in diameter and between 1 and 3 metres deep, Sirikwa holes often display dung middens and postholes near the depression's entrance and are hypothesised to have been a semi-defensive cattle kraal with people living outside it in surrounding dwellings. This theory challenged and replaced earlier interpretations that postulated that these hollows belonged to pit-house dwellings (Sutton 1973).

It was initially suggested that Sirikwa settlements represented small communities of mixed agropastoralists clustered together into small lineage-based units, with the defensive nature of the sites possibly pointing towards a time when small-scale cattle raiding was prevalent across the region. Further research, however, has since demonstrated that the Sirikwa tradition was more socially and economically diverse across time and space than originally thought (Davies 2013). For example, Sirikwa hole sites in the Western Highlands at Moiben and Chamegal showed a more agriculturally oriented economy with fewer livestock and more permanent, circular houses. Sirikwa holes at Hyrax Hill in the Rift Valley, on the other hand, point towards a more specialised pastoral economy with elliptical dwellings that were more ephemeral in nature as evidenced by the lack of robust structural features (Sutton 1987). The latter could further be interpreted as an earlier phase of the Sirikwa as evidenced by an older range of dates between twelfth and sixteenth centuries AD as opposed to those obtained from Moiben that date from the mid-17th century (Sutton 1973).

It is possible that the Sirikwa phenomenon spread into the northern Cherangani Hills to locations now occupied by the Sengwer[5]. Indeed, Sutton's (1973) surveys revealed Sirikwa holes at both Muringa and Kasiungurr to the south of the Embobut Forest and Davies' (2012) work in the Wei Wei Valley just to the north exposed Sirikwa-styled pottery. These observations support the hypothesis that the Sirikwa tradition and also the dwellings associated with it are thought to have been built by pre-Kalenjin/pre-Maa, or 'proto-Kalenjin' (see below), populations with a complex story of migration in and out of the region, with the practice of building 'Sirikwa holes' dying out no later than 200

[5] I conducted a number of surveys and test pit excavations in the Embobut Forest on a series of depressions resembling Sirikwa hole sites (see Appendix B). Unfortunately, no archaeological material was found at these sites.

years ago (Sutton 1987; Davies 2012, 2013). This disappearance was likely due to the expansion of Maa-speaking populations throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries into the Rift Valley and onto the plains of Uasin Gishu (see Figure 2.1), where they seized control of grassland areas and forced out Sirikwa populations whose small defensive kraals could not withstand their military tactics (Sutton 1973). The Maasai occupancy of Uasin Gishu was, however, short-lived, becoming fragmented as a result of a number of inter-Maasai wars that occurred in the aftermath of a large drought in the nineteenth century (Anderson 2016). Sutton (1973: 29) argues that this fragmentation contributed to the formation and distribution of current Kalenjin populations, including the Sengwer, who themselves are related to the formerly dispersed 'Sirikwa' people. The correlation between these populations is supported by different rouletted ceramic styles uncovered from Sirikwa hole sites that closely resemble contemporary forms of various Kalenjin pots (Sutton 1973: 30; Davies 2012). This is further supported by oral histories of people living in Sirikwa hole sites that were, in fact, a contribution to Sutton's (1973: 27) hypothesis that the holes were for cattle kraals and not pit-house dwellings. Likewise, oral testimonies collected from Kalenjin populations of the Pokot (Bollig 1990; Davies 2008, 2012) and Marakwet (Davies and Moore 2016) along with my own interviews with Sengwer elders (Chapter 4.5), attest to the formation and migration of current populations to their present locations over the past 250 years or so, a time frame that fits within the collapse of the Uasin Gishu Maasai and the abandonment of the Sirikwa way of life. As I now go on to explore with specific reference to the Sengwer, however, the formation and history of these different Kalenjin groups over the past two hundred and fifty years is far from simple, with complex and layered identities being created before, during and after the colonial period.

2.2 Contemporary Identities

The Sengwer community predominantly resides in the Cherangani Hills in the Western Highlands of Kenya where the three Districts of West Pokot, Elgeyo Marakwet and Trans Nzoia meet (see Figure 3.1 and Chapter 3.4 for an introduction to the study region). Although their exact numbers are currently unknown, Sengwer community leaders claim that their population is around thirty thousand, although this is likely bolstered to around fifty thousand once those in the diaspora are taken into account (Lynch 2006). Presently, the Kenyan government does not fully recognise the Sengwer as a distinct ethnic group as evidenced by their absence from the list of ethnic groups used in the application process for national identity cards (Lynch 2006). Little, if any, previous research has been conducted on the long-term history of the Sengwer, although attention has turned their way more recently in light of the evictions from highland forests, most notably from political scientist Gabrielle Lynch (2006, 2011a, 2011b, 2016).

In its broadest sense, the Sengwer are a part of the Kalenjin. Prior to the 1940s, the term 'Kalenjin' as a coherent political and cultural group did not exist. The term originally stemmed from a Nandi radio show hosted by John J.K arap Chellaman, who used the phrase 'Kalenjin', literally translated as 'I say to you' from the Nandi dialect, at the start of his broadcasts (Kipkorir 1973: 73; Lynch 2011a: 35). The term was appropriated and popularised by people wanting to unite 'Nandi-speakers' in an attempt to transcend the 'tribal' delineations formed by the colonial administration and create a more positive form of identification than that of 'Nandi-speakers' (Lynch 2011a). Thus, the unification of a number of culturally related populations residing in the Rift Valley and across the Western Highlands of Kenya under the term 'Kalenjin' gave them more political clout and helped them avoid being marginalised by larger and more powerful groups such as

the Kikuyu. By the time of Kenya's independence in 1963, the Kalenjin had become a self-professed and nationally recognised group.

The Kalenjin are thus constituted of a number of different populations, including the Marakwet, Nandi, Kipsigis, Keyo, Sabaot, Tugen and Pokot, although these labels in their own right have historically remained relatively fluid (Sutton 1973: 6-10). Indeed, prior to the twentieth century, communities were likely organised politically and socially into local units constituting a much finer grained 'mosaic' (Kusimba *et al.* 2004) of identities than the larger 'tribal' blocks designated by the colonial administration. This has contributed to the contested nature of identities in the present-day discussed in both Chapter 3.6 and 7.5. A clear case of this can be seen with the Marakwet who are near neighbours of the Sengwer. The Marakwet are subsistence farmers who occupy a 40km-long stretch of the Elgeyo Escarpment, extending their activities from the Cherangani Hills to the west to the lower-lying plains of the Kerio Valley to the east (Davies and Moore 2016). As with the term 'Kalenjin', the term Marakwet is a relatively recent invention, existing as a corruption of the term 'Markweta' which itself referred to one of several smaller communities living on the Elgeyo Escarpment rather than the much larger Marakwet 'tribe' of the present-day (Kipkorir 1973: 1; Sutton 1973: 6). Moore (1986: 16) notes how, prior to this formation, five politically decentralised groups were living in the region: Almo, Endo, Markweta, Kiptani and Cherangani (or Sengwer). From this perspective then, the Sengwer are directly associated with the Marakwet, with Kipkorir (1973), Moore (1986) and Sutton (1973) all describing them as a distinct subgroup who predominantly reside in the highland forests.

Early colonial understandings of the Sengwer's socioeconomic and cultural positioning within broader mosaics in the Cherangani Hills were limited. This is evident from one of the earliest mentions of the Sengwer (written as Sangwirr) in a report entitled '*Notes on the Tribes Inhabiting the Baringo District, East Africa Protectorate'*: "The hills behind Kapsagat are inhabited by the Sangwirr, who appear to be a mixture of Nandi and Masai; probably they are a tribe of poor natives akin to the Kony or Elgonyi of Mt. Elgon" (Dundas 1910: 65). Other references simply describe populations residing in the highlands as the 'Cherangani', with no mention of the Sengwer (e.g. The Kenya Land Commission 1934).

Further confusion behind the identity of the Sengwer can be attributed to their association with another Kalenjin group called the Ogiek (introduced in Chapter 1.4). In his survey of the Western Highlands, Sutton (1973: 9) stated that the Ogiek 'in no way constitute a tribe'. This is because they comprised by a number of small and seemingly separate communities residing in patches of highland forest across western Kenya. It has been argued that they descend from pastoralists and farmers who lost land and livestock in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (van Zwanenberg 1976; Chang 1982), but historical and ethnographic work carried out by Blackburn (1974) and Kratz (1980) has demonstrated that, despite being geographically removed from one another, the Ogiek have their own unique sense of identity with a different but related trajectory to that of their Kalenjin counterparts. Blackburn (1982) argues that more than thirty known Ogiek groups have been documented as sharing a distinctive suite of material culture, subsistence practices and social relations, as well as a clear sense of unity in relation to others that implies that the identity of most Ogiek is older than the political and economic events of the early colonial period (Distefano 1990). Indeed, linguistic evidence has

suggested that at least one group, the Omotik, may have diverged from other Kalenjin-speakers at least 1500 years ago, reinforcing the notion of a deeper history for the Ogiek that was different to that of those who inhabited 'Sirikwa' sites (Blackburn 1982). Thus, whilst their distinctive ceramics have been likened to those recovered from 'Sirikwa' sites, it has been suggested that the similarity stems from a close relationship that saw the exchanging of ideas and technology in a similar manner to Ogiek-Masaai and Ogiek-Kalenjin relations of the present (Blackburn 1973; Kratz 1980).

Similarly to the Sengwer, Ogiek subsistence strategy appears to have been different to that of other Kalenjin and Maasai agropastoralists, being historically oriented around beekeeping, honey storage and hunting using altitudinal gradients to exploit different forest ecological zones in different seasons. This led Dale *et al.* (2004) to describe them as moderate delayed return hunter-gatherers (*sensu* Woodburn 1980), although, as I have argued in Chapter 1.2, this form of categorisation remains unhelpful in assessing their actual history and perceived identity. Today, Ogiek groups generally live within close proximity to different Kalenjin groups (Nandi, Kipsigis) and the Maasai (Blackburn 1974; Kratz 1980). Kratz's (1980) sustained ethnographic work led her to conclude that, whilst the Ogiek are culturally distinct in many ways, they are also highly adaptable, usually speaking the language of larger neighbouring groups and sometimes even identifying themselves as being ethnically related to them for the purpose of officialdom. This, coupled with drastic socioeconomic change throughout the twentieth century, has led to a complicated entanglement of cultural identity (Blackburn 1974; Kratz 1980; Distefano 1990; Lynch 2006).

To complicate matters, whilst it is now recognised that there is an array of Ogiek groups as well as other foraging populations across Kenya, early colonial observations were overly simple, with explorers and ethnographers homogenising different hunter-gatherer communities under the umbrella terms of Dorobo, Ndorobo or Wandorobo (Neumann 1898; Hobley 1903; Huntingford 1955). Deriving from the derogatory Masai term "*Il Torobbo*", this refers to people who are so poor that they have no cattle and consequently have to eat wild meat. In a similar manner to the Turkana word '*Ngikebotok'*, meaning 'those who have nothing' (Derbyshire, *in press*), Dorobo was originally used by the Maasai in reference to a social class rather than to a distinct ethnic group or cultural type. Thus, it is possible to move between Maasai and Dorobo, as evidenced by the case of the Leroghi Dorobo on the Laikipia Plateau where individuals manipulated their identity for their own ends (Hodder 1982). Here, prolonged conflict between the Purko and Laikipia Maasai in the late 1880s resulted in a large number of Maasai losing their cattle. As a consequence, rather than building up new herds of livestock, these people decided to become hunter-gatherers and beekeepers, gradually becoming known as the Dorobo whilst retaining their Maasai dress and culture. Sutton (1973) has referred to this process as 'turning Dorobo' and it appears to have been a strategy adopted by different people across the region in order to escape cattle raiding, government persecution or drought. Hodder (1982) claims that, although the Dorobo have a real existence in the conscious thoughts of those who self-identify under that name, there is no symbolic expression of any difference between Dorobo and Maasai: "the outer surface of being Dorobo has two faces. The verbal signal identifies the Dorobo as being non-Maasai; the material culture signal shows the single identity of two groups" (Hodder 1982: 103).

The narratives of the Ogiek and Dorobo are particularly relevant here as the Sengwer have been associated with both labels. Indeed, in Blackburn's (1974) survey of Ogiek groups one community located in the Cherangani Hills is labelled as the 'Cheranganyi' (Figure 2.2). The reference to Cherangani populations as being an Ogiek group could be a remnant of early colonial interpretations associating the Sengwer with Ogiek groups due to their similar modes of subsistence, emphasis on beekeeping and dependence on foraging in the highland forests (Lynch 2006). Likewise, as described further in the following chapter, Sengwer community activists have more recently sought to align their identity with the Ogiek in an attempt to distinguish themselves from the surrounding Marakwet (Lynch 2006). The use of the term Dorobo within the context of the Cherangani Hills is somewhat more enigmatic. As I explore in Chapter 7.1, this label has not necessarily been used by academics or government officials, but rather has been appropriated (for still unknown reasons) by community members residing in the Embobut Forest.

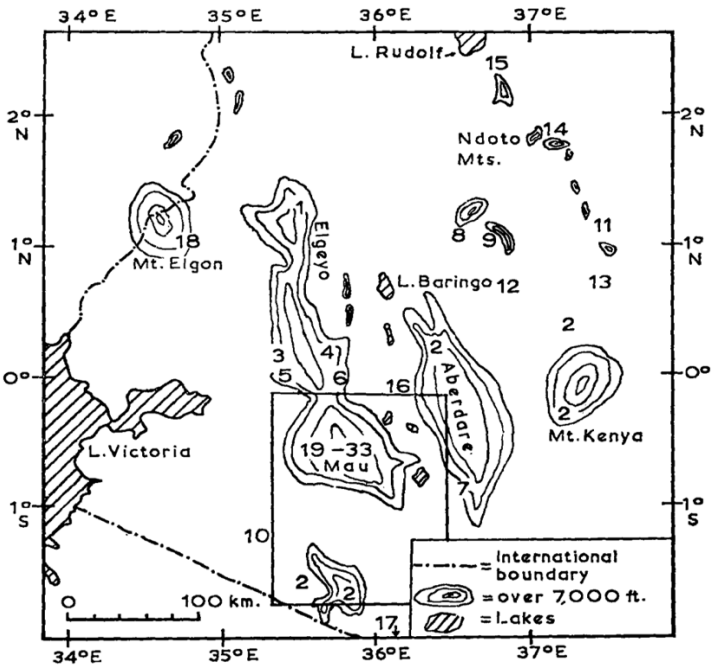


Figure 2.2: Distribution map drawn by Blackburn. Number 1 on the Elgeyo Escarpment is named the 'Cheranganyi' Ogiek (Source: Blackburn 1974, Figure 1).

From this discussion, it is evident that identities are fluid, layered and contested across time and space. The invention of the Kalenjin 'tribe' brought together several linguistically related groups under one umbrella, many of whom themselves had not existed as bounded ethnic groups prior to the colonial period. This process of colonial ethnic construction is exemplified by the Marakwet, a group to which the Sengwer are now commonly thought to belong. The labels of Kalenjin, Marakwet, Ogiek and Dorobo that have been discussed in this chapter remain central to this study and are brought into focus in Chapters 3 and 7 where the contested nature of local identities in the Embobut Forest is further explored.

2.3 Conclusion

In an attempt to illustrate the complexity of histories of eastern Africa, this chapter has taken a diachronic approach to contextualising present-day identities. The southward migration of Southern Nilotic-speaking populations no later than 1000 years ago remains an important part of the deep history of the Kalenjin people, with the archaeological remains of the Sirikwa pointing towards a long-term occupation of the Western Highlands by proto-Kalenjin people. These groups likely remained relatively diverse and fluid in terms of their political organisation, and it was the onset of colonialism, the delineation of 'tribal' blocks and the subsequent unification of the Kalenjin that led to the creation of present-day identities. Although their origin is not entirely clear, the Sengwer appear to be a part of this broader narrative, existing as one part of the larger Kalenjin community. Yet, as the following chapter explores, the ethnic labels that are currently being used are by no means neatly defined or set in stone. Instead, they are still reeling from the complex, fluid and layered history and politics of the region, with the case of the Sengwer typifying this process.

Chapter 3 : Environments and Politics

The diachronic narrative of fluid histories and changing identity expounded in the previous chapter acts as an important historical backdrop that, in conjunction with the theoretical underpinnings laid out in Chapter 1, helps to contextualise the contemporary politics of the Cherangani Hills. It is this contested political account that is the subject of this chapter, where I focus on issues characterised by different perspectives on how forest ecosystems should be conserved alongside contested local identities and perceived rights to land. In order to explore these issues fully, the chapter is broken into two main sections. The first expounds the importance of forest ecosystems with particular emphasis on the relationship between forests and water. Forest hydrology is a complex and developing field and in this opening section I only provide a brief overview of some of the main concepts. But given that the political debate in Cherangani pivots on the notion that forests are of fundamental importance to the ecosystem and wider water catchment area, it is important to understand the relationship between forests, water, climate and related factors such as flooding and erosion. This sets the scene for philosophies of conservation that were inherited from colonial ideas of 'fortress conservation', a notion that aims to exclude humans from particular areas in order to protect natural ecosystems (Neumann 2002). I then introduce the study region of the Cherangani Hills with particular emphasis on describing the importance of the ecosystem as one of Kenya's five 'water towers', how forest cover has been depleting in recent years and how the Kenya Forest Service is attempting to manage the region. This discussion lays the foundation for the second section of this chapter, which seeks to untangle the contested politics of the region by particularly focusing on the Kenyan government and World Bank's role in resettling the Sengwer people and the complex ways in which ideas of 'indigeneity' have been implicated in this process. Much of this disputed history has revolved around the World

Bank's actions in changing the status of the Sengwer from that of Indigenous People to that of a Vulnerable Marginalised Group. As I further explore through a brief synthesis of community activist documents and media reports, this name change is particularly contentious given that it occurred within the context of numerous forceful evictions that have seen the burning of houses, violent arrests and the shooting of at least one individual.

3.1 Forests and Conservation

Why conserve forests? The question may seem simple, but it remains an important premise for many environmental and political issues in the present day as conservation projects designed to protect forests (and other ecosystems) have historically often done so at the expense of people's livelihoods (Fairhead and Leach 1996; Redford 2018). At its most basic, a forest can be described as "a biotic community dominated by trees and woody vegetation that covers a large area" (Chang 2012: 2). Supporting complex ecosystems of different flora and fauna, there are many types of forest, with variations largely contingent on temperature and precipitation. Regardless of type, however, a forest's height and density of vegetation is greater and its root systems deeper than those of other vegetation types, thus allowing forests to perform unique environmental functions. The biological functions of canopies, stem and root systems are summarised in Table 3.1 alongside the environmental roles that these serve.

Collectively, the components of forest structures have wider environmental impacts. Precipitation rates reaching ground level are reduced due to canopy interception and large amounts of water are transpired into the atmosphere through the roots-stem-leaf system. The root system and litter floor increase the infiltration rate and soil moisture-holding capacity. The consequence of these processes is a slower and reduced overland runoff, resulting in a lower water yield than that found in non-forested watersheds (Chang 2012).

In turn, these mechanisms help reduce soil and wind erosion by increasing soil porosity, preventing fast overland runoff, and acting as an effective windbreak, thereby reducing the displacement of soil particles. The preservation of forests and planting of trees, particularly on steep slopes, can thus help to reduce the risk of landslides and mitigate flood damage (Sakals *et al*. 2006).

Table 3.1: Biological and Environmental Functions of Canopy, Stem, and Root Systems (after Chang 2012: Table 7.1, 125)

Component	Composition	Biological Functions	Environmental Functions
Canopy	Leaves Buds Flowers Fruits Stalks (petiole)	Photosynthesis Transpiration Respiration Reproduction Gas exchange Assimilation of foods Food storage	Precipitation interception reduces raindrop impact on soil Provides shade and creates cooler temperatures below Acts as shelter for birds and insects Wind break Affects solar radiation dissipation Acts as a carbon sink
Stem	Ligneous stems (rigid stiffened structure such as tree trunks) Herbaceous stems (frail, not stiffened)	Transports water and nutrients Support for canopies Storage of materials Use for plant regeneration Transpiration	Barriers to wind and water Support and nutrient provider for vines, mosses and lichens
Roots	Tap roots Lateral roots Fibrous roots	Absorption of water and nutrients Transport of water and nutrients Anchoring of plant Storage of materials Use for plant regeneration Respiration Nitrogen fixing (if legumes)	Reinforcement of soils Increased soil permeability Improved soil structure Addition of soil organic matter when decayed Depletion of soil moisture content

Forest ecosystems also provide important habitats for a huge variety of organisms. Significant alterations or the destruction of forests can thus affect the overall balance of ecosystems through loss of habitats, possibly leading to a collapse of food chains with much larger ecological ramifications. A reduction in biodiversity is not only a loss of possible food for local communities, but also a loss of potential resources of importance for human health and medicine[6].

On a macroscale, forests act as an important carbon sink. During the process of photosynthesis, approximately 50% of the CO_2 absorbed by plants is returned to the atmosphere through respiration, with the remaining 50% being stored as carbon in biomass (Chang 2012). This process is called carbon sequestration and, with ever-pressing issues of global climate change, has become an important concept in attempts to reduce atmospheric CO_2 levels. Thus, a major concern of widespread deforestation is that it produces an increase in atmospheric CO_2 due to a reduction of CO_2 uptake from plants on the one hand and the release of CO_2 through the combustion and degradation of forest biomass on the other.

Despite the apparent environmental importance of forest ecosystems, one of the predominant reasons for forest preservation and management is economic. Resources can be obtained for financial profit through the production of timber for construction and fuel. Often existing as a mono-culture and commonly comprised of introduced tree species, forest plantations do not have the specific aim of preserving biodiversity. They can,

[6] Examples of effective medicinal discoveries sourced from plants include the Madagascar rosy periwinkle (*Catharanthus roseus*) for the treatment of leukaemia, the Pacific yew (*Taxus brevifolia*) for ovarian cancer and qing hao (*Artemisia annua*) for treating malaria (Balick *et al.* 1996)

however, be managed to enhance the environmental functions outlined above, protecting soil structure and storing carbon.

3.2 Approaches of Conservation

Clearly, then, there are both environmental and economic benefits to conserving forested areas. Historically, the approaches that have been taken to achieve the preservation of woodland have varied. Many early colonial conservation strategies were built upon the premise that in order to preserve places of nature humans had to be excluded. Often called the 'fortress conservation' or 'fences and fines' approach, this became the dominant model in the twentieth century (Neumann 1998, 2002; Beinart 1989; Hutton *et al.* 2005). The roots of such strategies can be traced to British colonial attempts to introduce a uniform set of wildlife conservation laws with the establishment of the Society for the Protection of the Fauna of the Empire (SPFE) in 1903, a movement predominantly driven by an aristocratic group whose members were worried about losing access to hunting grounds (Neumann 2002). The SPFE was responsible for holding numerous international conservation conferences over the coming decades, the most significant of which became known as the 1933 London Convention. Here, a document was produced that aimed at establishing a set of international standardisations and definitions with regard to conservation, with the notable prohibition of traditional hunting practices by local communities. Although influential, these conservation standards were not always put into practice on the ground. In fact, prior to World War II, there were conflicting perspectives on notions of conservation in Africa, with some colonial officers creating 'slaughter teams' to cull wildlife populations in order to prevent the associated spread of tropical diseases that might otherwise plunge areas back into to a 'wild Africa' (Neumann 2002: 24-25). Arguably, it was not until after World War II that a more structured approach to conservation was adopted by the British Colonial Office. With notions of 'modernisation'

and ‘development’ becoming the dominant precedents for colonialism in the so-called ‘second colonial occupation’ (Low and Londsdale 1976), experts in different academic fields were employed by the expanding technical branches of the Colonial Office in order to bring greater scientific rigour to a reinvigorated development agenda (Anderson 1984; Adams 2003).

According to Neumann (2002), it was during this period that investment and interest in national parks in East Africa increased substantially for a number of different reasons. Firstly, the influx of trained biologists and ecologists saw the development of a previously lacking systematic approach to wildlife management, with census data being produced and the introduction of ecological concepts such as carrying capacity (Neumann 2002). Reports being written by ecologists, such as Pearsall (1957), who conducted an ecological survey of the Serengeti and the impact of Maasai pastoralists, contributed to the notion that humans should be excluded from certain areas in order to better preserve ecosystems. Secondly, with the establishment of international commercial air travel, the Colonial Office saw an income-generating opportunity based upon the concept of national park tourism developed in North America. Central to this model of tourism was the preservation of wildlife for Europeans to experience. This combination of conservation becoming an important part of the broader economy with the ecological model of excluding human populations from certain areas further served to enact fortress conservation (Neumann 2002).

Whilst fortress conservation prevailed as the predominant conservation strategy throughout the twentieth century, with many post-colonial governments inheriting and continuing it after independence, a widespread disillusionment with exclusively

protectionist approaches had developed by the 1990s (Inamdar *et al.* 1999). This was not only because of injustices suffered by those local communities who deemed their exclusions from national parks to be unfair or illegal (Neumann 1998), but also because the high economic costs of the 'fences and fines' approach rendered it economically unviable, particularly if conservation areas were not generating income through tourism (Iamdar *et al.* 1999). In addition, some evidence began to suggest that fortress conservation might not actually be as effective as originally stated in protecting and maintaining biodiversity (e.g. Hayes 2006).

As such, there was a move towards ‘new conservation’ or ‘community conservation’ in the 1990s (Hulme and Murphree 1999; Barrow and Murphree 2001; Adams and Mulligan 2012). This paradigm should not be understood as a simple shift of power and responsibility from the state to local communities, but rather as a complex suite of approaches towards conservation that involves collaboration between numerous participants with multifaceted aims (Adams and Hulme 2001). One way to comprehend this is to imagine community conservation as a spectrum (Adams and Hulme 2001). At one end lie schemes designed to support national parks and their conservation objectives, but where 'protected area outreach activities' replaced traditional 'protectionist' 'fines and fences' strategies with the aim of resolving disputes surrounding resource use and access rights (Barrow and Murphree 2001). In the centre of this continuum sit ‘collaborative management’ projects that advocate a pluralist approach to conservation between the state, local communities and the private sector (Adams and Hulme 2001; Barrow and Murphree 2001). At the other end of the spectrum exist projects aiming to achieve sustainable rural development and better resource management through the broad participation of local communities in decision-making activities and the incorporation of

local knowledge systems into management processes (Measham and Lumbasi 2013). Commonly labelled as community-based natural resource management projects (CBNRM), this approach hoped that biodiversity conservation would be a secondary benefit of sustainable ecosystem management. Although it can be argued that fortress conservation is still widely practised, and indeed strongly advocated by some researchers who are critical of CBNRM projects (see Hutton *et al.* 2005; Benjaminsen *et al.* 2013; Measham and Lumasi 2013), it is clearly evident that there has been a concerted effort from both international institutions and governmental bodies to involve local communities in a more dynamic approach to wildlife conservation. Thus, as Adams and Hulme (2001: 198) state: "Love it or hate it, community conservation (in one guise or another) is here to stay…The real issue is not whether conservation should be done with people, but how?". The question of 'how' nevertheless remains context-specific and sets the stage for the remainder of this chapter, with specific reference to forestry practice in Kenya over the twentieth century and specifically within the Cherangani Hills.

3.3 A Brief History of Forest Conservation in Kenya

The above narrative of conservation philosophy can be tracked by examining the history of forest conservation in Kenya. Large-scale forestry programmes were first introduced and developed by the British Government in colonial Kenya predominantly to manage resources for economic purposes rather than to protect biodiversity or create a tourism industry. The first colonial forest legislation came at the turn of the twentieth century and provided protection for the mangrove forests on the coast (Wass 1995). As well as this, the Ukamba Woods and Forest Regulations established in 1897 demarcated a strip of land two miles (3.2 kilometres) either side of the Ugandan Railway (Mogaka 2001). With the rapid expansion of this railway, which upon completion extended 572 miles (920.5 kilometres) from Mombasa to the east shore of Lake Victoria, huge amounts of wood

were being cut for both the railroad's construction and the subsequent powering of locomotives (Ofcansky 1984). As a result, the government appointed a former official of the Indian Forest Reserve, C. F. Elliott, to a newly created post of Conservator of Forests. Under the East Africa Forestry Regulation of 1902, Elliott opened the Forest Department in Nairobi, which not only helped in the demarcation of further forests along the Ugandan Railway, but also experimented with planting various exotic species, such as teak (*Tectona grandis*), in order to create tree plantations for future use. According to Ofcansky (1984), this reforestation with exotic trees in conjunction with the protection of forest reserves by the Forest Department became the backbone of Kenya's forest policy throughout the colonial period.

While the foundation for forestry practice had been laid at the beginning of the century, continued forest depletion led the government to commission an experienced forester called David Hutchins to conduct a report on the state of Kenya's forests in order to better determine how to manage them sustainably. From his *'Report on the Forests of Kenia'*, Hutchins (1907) proposed a policy of boundary demarcation with better policing of reserved forest, the establishment of tree nurseries, planting to assist natural regeneration and selective cutting to replace indiscriminate logging, leading to the establishment of the first major forest blocks by 1908 (Ofcansky 1984; Wass 1995). Surveying, demarcating, and gazetting gradually increased over the following decades, with a total of 43 forests defined as government forests by 1932, covering an area of 830,000 hectares, increased to 1,050,000 hectares by 1940. By 1990 some 1,930,000 hectares of forest had been gazetted (Wass 1995).

The numerous pieces of forestry legislation and actions undertaken by the Colonial Office before independence in 1963 point directly towards the 'fortress conservation' policies discussed above (see also Ofcansky 1984; Mogaka 2001). Being heavily influenced by colonial policy, it was not until 1994 and the emergence of new conservation paradigms that the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources prepared the Kenya Forestry Master Plan (KFMP) in an attempt to shift Kenya's natural resource management strategy away from a preservationist stance to a more participatory approach (Luukkanen 1996). This plan eventually contributed to the re-writing of the Forest Act in 2005, which saw the replacement of the Forest Department with the semi-autonomous Kenya Forest Service and an emphasis on the co-management of gazetted forests by the Kenya Forest Service and adjacent communities (World Bank 2007a). In the 2005 Forest Act, it is clearly stated that the Kenyan government "recognises that forests play a vital role in the stabilization of soils and ground water…and that they play a crucial role in protecting water catchments in Kenya and moderating climate change by absorbing greenhouse gasses" (Forest Act 2005: 7). Alongside the acknowledgement that forests support a large biodiversity and are an important resource for both local communities and wood-based industries, this means that the government is "committed to the inter-sectoral development and sustainable use of forestry resources" (Forest Act 2005: 7).

Subsequent to 2005, the Kenyan government has also been aiming to participate in REDD+, an international programme that has the aim of 'reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries' (UN-REDD Programme 2010; The REDD Desk 2016a). REDD+ is a branch of the UN-REDD programme that was conceived in 2005 by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to incentivise developing countries to reduce carbon emissions through

financial compensation schemes. In 2010, REDD+ had grown to include broader aims of reducing emissions from forest degradation, conservation of forest carbon stocks, sustainable management of forests and the enhancement of forest carbon stocks (The REDD Desk 2016a). Countries that want to take part in this scheme have to demonstrate that they have 'REDD+ readiness' by delivering a REDD+ strategy, a national Reference Emission Level or Forest Reference Level, a national forest monitoring system that is transparent and a system for providing information on how safeguards are addressed. The development of REDD+ readiness activities in Kenya is well underway (The REDD Desk 2016b), with the development of a roadmap to inform the establishment of a national reference level and a national forest monitoring system having been completed (Gichu 2012). The technical support for aiding Kenya's government in REDD+ readiness has in part been funded by the World Bank's National Resource Management Programme.

Of importance for the ensuing discussion is the claim by the World Bank that it has not financed "REDD+ activities that could threaten the livelihoods of indigenous forest-dependent peoples, such as through tree planting, carbon sequestration or civil works" (World Bank Inspection Panel 2014: 24). However, as I explore in more detail below, this statement is controversial, particularly in the case of the Sengwer in the light of the World Bank's National Resource Management Programme. In order to contextualise this in more detail, it is first necessary to turn towards the Cherangani Hills, introducing the geography and the importance of the region as a forest water catchment area. I then turn to review the colonial history of the region and how the Kenya Forest Service is currently managing the area despite a large measure of deforestation.

3.4 The Geography of the Cherangani Hills

The Cherangani Hills are considered one of Kenya's five 'water towers' alongside Mt Elgon, the Mau Complex, the Aberdare Range and Mt Kenya (Akotsi *et al.* 2006). Predominantly characterised by afroalpine forest, these 'water towers' form the upper catchments of Kenya's main rivers[7]. The annual rainfall in the Cherangani Hills varies from approximately 1200 mm in the east to 1500 mm in the west, with the main rainy season lasting from April to August and the dry season from December to February (Kenya Forest Service 2015).

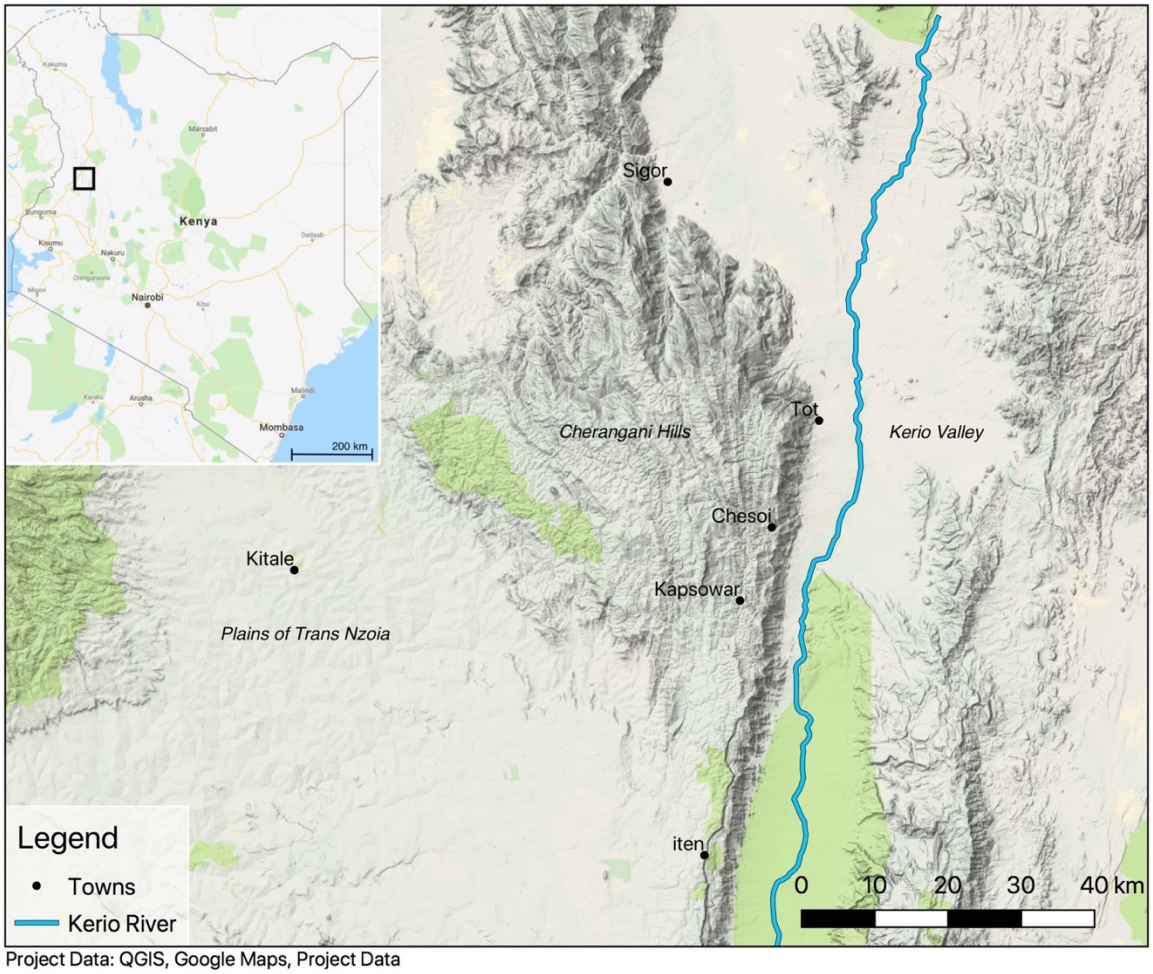


Figure 3.1: The geography of the Cherangani Hills

[7] With the exception of the Tsavo River, which originates from Mt Kilimanjaro on Kenya's border with Tanzania.

The rolling slopes of the Cherangani Hills form an undulating upland plateau formed from a variety of rocks, including hornblende gneisses, micas, schists, quartzite, limestone and marble. Whilst the hills gently level out to the west, their eastern side falls abruptly as the Elgeyo Escarpment drops to the floor of the Kerio Valley, itself a branch of the Rift Valley, approximately a kilometre below (Figures 3.1 and 3.2). The escarpment facilitates the presence of a rich biodiversity as altitudinal variation creates different ecological zones. The afroalpine belt occurs between approximately 1600 and 3000 metres above sea level and is distinguished by Red Stinkwood (*Prunus africana*), African Redwood (*Hagenia abyssinica*), Wild Olive (*Olea europaea*), East African Cedar (*Juniperus procera*), and Common Yellowwood (*Podocarpus falcatus*) (Kiage and Liu 2006; Kenya Forest Service 2015). Dominated by a variety of common heather species, the ericaceous belt starts at approximately 3000m above sea level (Kiage and Liu 2006). The forests of the Cherangani Hills are not uniform in their mixture of Afroalpine tree species, but instead form a mosaic of several different forest types dependant on topographical variation. The lower western slopes consist of *Aningeria-Strombosia-Drypetes* forest, mixing into *Podocarpus latifolius* forest higher up (Kenya Forest Service 2015). On the southern slopes, *Juniperus—Nuxia—Podocarpus falcatus* forest can be found. Large fragments of *Juniperus—Maytenus—Rapanea—Hagenia* forest can be found in the valleys of the upper peaks, interspersed with patches of bamboo (*Arundinaria alpina*) and tree ferns (*Cyathea manniana*) in stream valleys (Kenya Forest Service 2015). In clearings, scrubby grassland provides a diversity of wildflowers, and at higher altitudes the forest is broken up by a mixture of heath and bogs (Figure 3.2). This ecosystem supports an array of fauna, including elephants (*Loxodonta africana*), buffaloes (*Syncerus caffer*), bongos (*Tragelaphus eurycerus*) and leopards (*Panthera pardus*), although it is unclear to what extent these animals still reside there (Kenya Forest Service 2015). Other

fauna residing across the region includes black-and-white Colobus monkeys (*Colobus guereza*), De Brazzas monkeys (*Cercopithecus neglectus*) genet cats (*Viverra genetta*), mongooses (*Mungos mungo*), bushbucks (*Tragelaphus sylvaticus)*, warthogs (*Phacochoerus africanus*) and the sitatunga antelope (*Tragelaphus spekii*). Ecological surveys have also recorded over 73 forest-dependent species of birds that are characteristic of the many highland forests across Kenya (Kenya Forest Service 2015).

On a macro-level, the ecosystem of the Cherangani Hills creates a network of bogs, springs and streams that straddles the watershed, feeding into both the Nzoia and the Kerio river systems, supplying water to Lake Victoria and Lake Turkana respectively, thus rendering Cherangani an extremely important water catchment area. As I discussed in the opening section to this chapter, the environmental function of forested areas is extremely important, and the role that the forest ecosystem plays in Cherangani in absorbing and retaining water and preventing soil erosion cannot be understated.



Figure 3.2: Images of the Elgeyo Escarpment and Cherangani Hills going from east to west; a.) view across the Elgeyo Escarpment; b.) looking out across the Kerio Valley; c.) view over the eastern side of the Embobut Forest; d-e.) views of the highland moors and bogs above the main tree line in the Cherangani Hills; f.) view over western Cherangani Hills including Kapcherop Forest (see also Figure 3.4).

In an attempt to manage the region, the Cherangani Hills have been divided up into twelve forest blocks totalling an area of 110,181.3 hectares: Kapolet, Cheboyit, Chemurkoi, Embobut, Kaisungor, Kerrer, Kipkunur, Kiptaberr, Sogotio, Toropket, Kapkanyar and Lelan (Kenya Forest Service 2015; Figure 3.3). The history behind when and how these forest blocks became demarcated is complex as they were surveyed at different times in the early twentieth century. Describing the area as "one of the finest forests in the country" (Yearly Report on the Marakwet Station for the year ending 31st March 1920/21: 9), early reports produced by the Colonial Office describe how initial forest surveys in Marakwet were in motion by 1925 (Kerio Province Annual Report 1925: 21). In 1935, many of the forest blocks in the northern Cherangani were being demarcated, with the Kaptaberr and Chemurkoi blocks named as being complete by 1938 and the remainder completed by 1939 (Annual Report Elgeyo District 1939). The process of demarcation as carried out on the ground involved surveying and mapping the designated areas, including the placing of physical beacons that marked the edge of the Forest Reserve[8]. Once given this title, Forest Reserves were legally owned by the Government and were managed directly by the Forest Department (Wass 1995: 11). The access that local populations had to these reserves was limited, but there appears to have been a case-by-case negotiation between local populations and the Forest Department, with the latter granting grazing permits if they deemed it would not be destructive (e.g Kenya Land Commission 1934: 265).

[8] Given that most beacons have now been removed, it is difficult to reconstruct the original demarcation on the ground. In the present, as discussed in Chapter 4, there instead appears to be some form of mutually understood and negotiated boundary between local communities and the Kenya Forest Service.

The initial reasons for demarcating the Cherangani Forest Reserves appear to have been twofold. Firstly, and most prominently, the forests were seen as an important economic resource. In an attempt to manage the procurement of timber, saw mills operated alongside the planting of tree nurseries and the rotation of logging areas. The second reason seems to have been environmental awareness of the function of forests, particularly of their role in water retention. Indeed, in one early report it is stated that "It is most essential to preserve the forests, not only from the point of view of revenue, but from that of water conservation. Elgeyo and Marakwet are getting more and more dry, and the only explanation is the in-roads made in recent years for cultivation into the forests which protect the headwaters" (Kerio Province Annual Report 1927: 110).

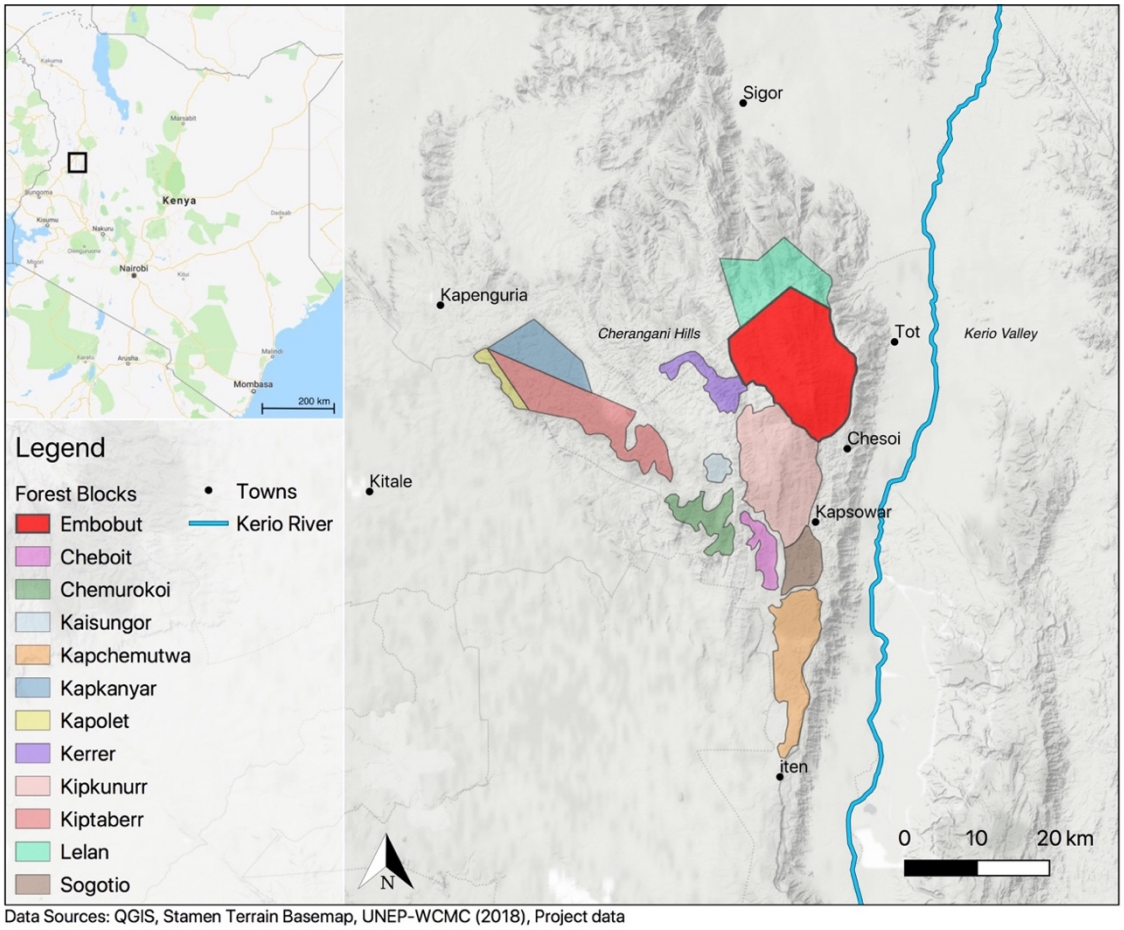


Figure 3.3: Map depicting location of different forest blocks in the Cherangani Hills.

Interestingly, prior to the official demarcation process, caution seems to have been taken towards the rights of populations already residing in the forest. It was noted how "it [the forest] is all owned individually by the natives, each one having rights for putting and placing his bee barrels and…for hunting in certain areas. The forest could not be justly alienated but this does not preclude the granting of concessions so long as Native rights are not infringed" (Yearly Report on the Marakwet Station for the year ending 31st March 1920/21: 9)[9]. Despite this initial sentiment of preserving local rights, demarcation appears to have gone ahead in the following years, resulting in a dissatisfaction from the local populations as the Forest Department's activities increased and seemingly took away their land rights. This came in the form of movement of community displacement, the planting of foreign tree species such as eucalyptus and cypress and increased logging from saw mills such as Algao Saw Mill near Moiben. From the point of view of the Forest Department, their activities appear to have been justified on the basis that "such timber should be looked on as an asset to the Colony and that Natives should benefit even against their will by the royalties accruing from it" (Kerio Province Annual Report 1926: 100).

Despite the creation of these Forest Reserves, there was a continued concern from the Forest Department at the rate of deforestation, with numerous incidents of forest fires and an increase in grazing and cultivation across the region being recalled. In 1939, uniformed forest guards were placed in Kapsowar in order to monitor and report on forest fires in an attempt to manage the area better. It would appear, however, that these precautionary actions did not provide a long-term solution, and instead forest loss continued. The narrative behind how deforestation occurred in conjunction with changing livelihoods

[9] The description of individuals owning particular areas of forest in which they can hunt and place bee hives aligns with my own interviews with community elders on former livelihoods in Embobut (see Chapter 4).

and infrastructure is no doubt long, multifaceted and relatively localised, unfolding in different ways across the Cherangani Hills over the twentieth century. This is illustrated throughout Part Two of this thesis with specific reference to the Embobut Forest, where I offer an in-depth history of occupation and landscape change over the past 250 years or so. It is nevertheless important to emphasise here that, since their demarcation in the 1930s, many of these areas have undergone significant landscape modification that has continued into the twenty-first century. Indeed, as depicted in Figure 3.4, it is possible to see deforestation in the region since 2000 to 2014 from Landsat images, with trees in this dataset being defined as vegetation taller than 5 metres in height (Hansen *et al.* 2013)[10].

A recent management plan put forward by the Kenya Forest Service (2015) observes how the loss of forest observable here is associated with settlement encroachment into forested areas and the felling of trees for building material and charcoal burning. As well as this, livestock grazing has become a major concern which has resulted in diminished pastures and an increased pressure on grazing inside the forest reserves. Furthermore, forest fires, often started by humans, have been reported to have destroyed large amounts of woodland, such as the 1986 fire in the Kapkanyar forest block that razed hundreds of hectares to the ground (Kenya Forest Service 2015).

[10] In contrast to this map, however, forest loss as seen from the ground, particularly in northern Cherangani, appears to be a lot more substantial (see Chapter 4)

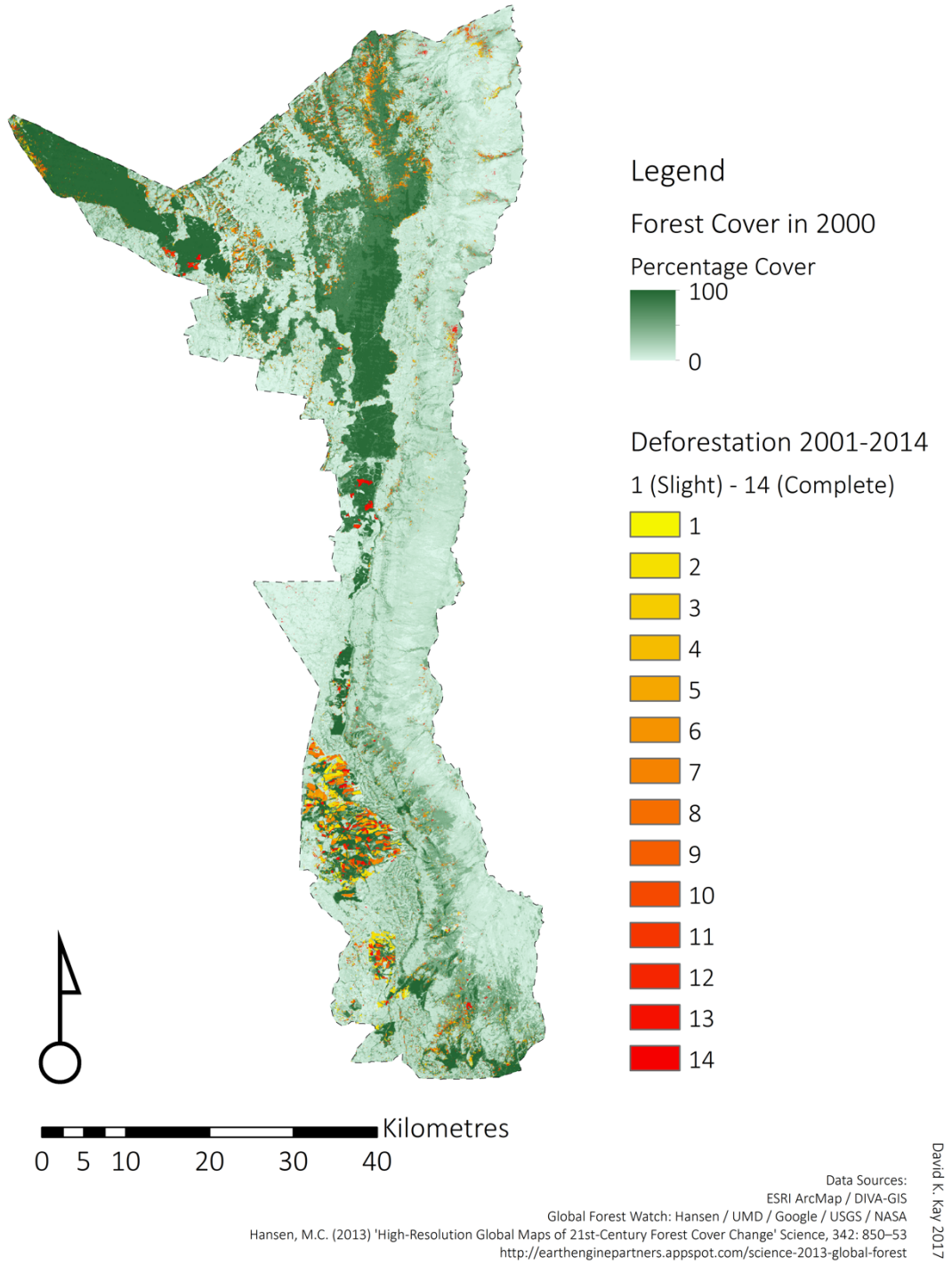


Figure 3.4: Map of Elgeyo Marakwet County depicting decrease in forest cover from 2000 to 2014.

In some respects, an increase in all of these activities can be attributed to significant population growth across the region. Indeed, national census data from 1979 demonstrate

how the population in Elgeyo Marakwet county increased from 148,868 in 1979 to 369,998 in 2009[11], although unfortunately there are no fine-grained official census data available for the immediate study area of this project. It must also be noted, however, that whilst there has been a general increase in population across the county, local narratives of population change are complex and nuanced as indicated by population surveys conducted by Dietz *et al.* (1987) and more recently by Davies (2012) and Davies and Moore (2016). Indeed, in the area of Tot/Sibou village in the Kerio Valley, population density may actually have decreased by as much as 40% between 1969 and 1979 as people moved up into the highlands, only to start increasing again in the 1980s with the establishment of the Kerio Valley Development Area farm (Dietz *et al.* 1987: 38-39). Likewise, in the Wei Wei Valley to the north of the Cherangani Hills, the Pokot appear to have been gradually drifting southwards despite the fact that their population numbers have actually been relatively stable for the past two hundred years (Davies 2012). It is thus important to bear in mind that whilst population growth is likely to have been a contributing factor to deforestation in the Embobut Forest, it exists as just one factor in a complex web of activities, including individual agency, household lifecycles, localised migration and shifting infrastructure (these factors are explored in depth throughout Part Two of the thesis).

As with the Kapolet forest block discussed in Chapter 1.4 with regard to the Sengwer's land rights, the Embobut forest block has become the centre of recent debates and, as the location of the majority of my fieldwork, will remain the central area of interest for the remainder of this chapter and study. The Embobut Forest block covers an area of 21,689

[11] National census statistics are available from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics website, http://54.213.151.253/nada/index.php/catalog [Date Accessed 21.08.2018].

hectares and has an altitudinal variation of around one kilometre, with the highest peaks reaching approximately 3300 masl. As explored throughout Part Two, since its demarcation in the 1930s, Embobut has undergone significant landscape modification as cultivation has increased in the latter half of the twentieth century. The Kenya Forest Service has described the people responsible for this as 'squatters', with approximately 5000 people living within the forest's boundaries (Kenya Forest Service 2015: 5). Given that the Forests Act (2005: Section 30, Section 52) prohibits anyone from occupying forest reserves, erecting buildings or enclosures, cultivating, grazing livestock, collecting honey or keeping bees, cutting and taking forest produce or hunting, the Kenya Forest Service has continually attempted to remove these 'squatters' by carrying out a number of evictions. As discussed below, the evictions started at some point in the 1980s and have continued into the present (see also Chapter 5.6). It is worth noting here, however, that many of these early evictions are better understood as *attempted* evictions in the form of repeated harassment and impromptu raids. This is less of a formal and successful removal of people from the forest on a permanent basis and more of an aggressive dissuasion to stop people living in the forest through the burning of houses and destroying of possessions. As I mention in Chapter 7.5, however, this approach did not work as people often ran and hid upon the arrival of the Kenya Forest Service, only to return and rebuild once their staff left.

In some respects, the current method of managing the Embobut Forest harks back to the 'fortress conservation' concept of the twentieth century discussed above, where assumptions about the best way to preserve the forest ecosystem required the elimination of all human activity in an attempt to allow the area to revert its 'natural' state. Unsurprisingly, this approach has remained highly controversial, not only because it has

failed to incorporate local communities in the sustainable management of their own forests in a way that the Forest Act (2005) set out to do, but also because people have been completely uprooted from what they claim to be their ancestral lands. I now go onto explore this narrative in more detail below, most noticeably with reference to forceful evictions that have included the burning of people's houses and violent arrests.

3.5 The Evictions

In 2010, the Sengwer Economic, Social and Cultural Program (SESCUP) submitted a report to the World Bank's Nairobi office complaining about a number of evictions carried out by the Kenya Forest Service. In their letter, they stated that "Forceful evictions and displacements of Sengwer Indigenous Peoples living in Empoput [Embobut] have been carried out for over 20 times since 1980s to date by government security drawn from forest guards and administration police officers" (SESCUP 2010: 2). In 2010, over 100 houses were burnt and personal possessions such as clothes, bedding, utensils and textbooks were destroyed, alongside maize granaries and portions of maize fields. As a result, food insecurity became acute, children dropped out of school and members of the community felt as if they had been subject to "psychological torture" (SESCUP 2010: 4).

The long-term narrative of impromptu raids that started in the 1980s is poorly documented, and it is only within the context of the World Bank Resource Management Project (see below) that started in 2008 that a clearer picture emerges of how a set of more enduring evictions unfolded. According to Sengwer community members, the Kenya Forest Service repeatedly carried out forceful evictions in the region on a yearly basis from 2007 to 2013 (except in 2012; World Bank Inspection Panel 2014). The most notable of these was in 2009, when it evicted around 450 families and destroyed numerous houses, possessions and crops in an attempt to prevent people from returning to the forest

(World Bank 2013b: Appendix 1). Taking place in April and May, these evictions appear to have been in part instigated by local leaders residing at lower elevations outside of the forest. They blamed the intrusion into Embobut Forest for poor harvests and lack of water and called for the Government to evict those living in the forest or face a situation where they themselves would conduct evictions (World Bank 2013b: Appendix 1). This threat was taken seriously by government officials who, following the post-election violence of 2007/2008, were worried of further conflict (World Bank 2013b: Appendix 1; Lynch 2016). The Government thus attempted to persuade people to leave the forest on the promise of resettlement schemes, only to burn the houses once people had left. However, the 2009 evictions were ultimately conducted without any formal resettlement plans in place, leading to a humanitarian crisis that saw a number of politicians vocalise their objection to the situation as well as the intervention of the Kenya Red Cross (World Bank Inspection Panel 2014: 22).

The unfolding situation eventually led to a high-profile meeting in June 2009 which led to creation of the multi-stakeholder Embobut Task Force (2010) that was to produce a report on the evictions and help find a lasting resettlement solution. The Embobut Task Force concluded that many people were opportunistically attempting to benefit from potential compensation of a resettlement scheme, but that there were also 2,964 ‘genuine squatters’ who needed resettlement. Importantly, some of these people were said to have been allocated grazing permits by the colonial authorities at some point in the 1930s (World Bank Inspection Panel 2014: 21). This remains of particular importance in light of my own interviews discussed in Chapter 5.6, where many community members referred to their permits as a form of title deed that allowed them to live inside the Forest Reserve.

The Embobut Task Force (2010) suggested that the genuine squatters should be allowed to return to the forest glades on a temporary basis whilst they waited for the Government to secure a robust resettlement plan. It was also noted that a large number of people were living in an area of the gazetted forest referred to as 'below the road' (east of the main road that runs along the top of the Elgeyo Escarpment; see Chapter 4.4). These people had not yet been affected by the evictions, but the Embobut Task Force nevertheless perceived it necessary to address their position. In considering this, it was recommended that the Government de-gazette "parts of the forestland below the road towards the valley where people have stayed for a long time" (Embobut Task Force 2010: 22 *cited in* World Bank Inspection Panel 2014; see also Chapter 4.9). Thus, evictees returned to the forest in late 2009. Despite the recommendations of the Embobut Task Force, further complaints were voiced of continued evictions in 2010 and 2011, although community members were not able to verify if these had occurred within the forest glades or surrounding woodland in which residence was still prohibited (World Bank 2013b: Appendix 1; World Bank Inspection Panel 2014). Throughout this period, resettlement schemes were also being suggested, involving promises of land in Rongai, Nakuru County or Moiben in Uasin Gishu County. These offers were all refused on the grounds that the Sengwer wanted to remain in or close to the forests and to be relocated as a single community to ensure that their cultural identity is not lost. In 2013, the Kenyan Government announced that it was struggling to find suitable area for resettlement and instead offered a compensation scheme that would incentivise people to leave the forest and buy land on their own terms. On 15th November 2013, President Kenyatta, Deputy President Ruto and Senator Kipchumba Murkomen, who had himself been born in the Embobut Forest, visited the region and promised to pay 400,000 Kenyan shillings (approximately £2820) to every

family living there (Daily Nation 2013; World Bank Inspection Panel 2014). The Government stated that it handed over a total of 1.149 billion shillings to 2874 families, with President Kenyatta stating: "All former regimes have been chasing you out of the forest while armed with guns and matchboxes to burn your houses, but my government has approached you differently with money to help you acquire land elsewhere as you move out of the forest" (Daily Nation 2013).

Whilst this scheme went ahead it by no means provided a long-term solution to the situation, with many people complaining that they had not received money to which they were entitled and others claiming that they had only received it on the basis that it was a form of compensation for damages suffered in the past. Indeed, in a statement to the REDD-Monitor activist group, it was said that: "We Sengwer never wanted to receive compensation for our lands, and were never consulted on this. Many of us received nothing, and those who did were told to take it because this was compensation for the harm caused by past evictions, and so they could take it and still stay" (REDD-Monitor 2015). As well as this, consultations with community members conducted by another activist group, the Forest Peoples Programme, stated that 400,000 Kenyan shillings was enough only to buy the equivalent of four cows or one acre of land, an amount that was and is "completely inadequate for enabling families to secure their livelihoods" (Forest Peoples Programme 2013: Annex 2)[12].

Finally, the resettlement schemes proposed by the government appear to have been problematic considering that people simply refuse to leave the forest: "Can they [Kenya

[12] Many of these complaints were confirmed in my own interviews that are discussed in more detail throughout Part Two of the thesis (e.g Chemeitoi Yego 18.08.2016; Paulo Cheptoms Losipa 27.08.2016; Paul Kipkemoi 01.09.2016).

Forest Service] not see that we have again and again returned immediately to our ancestral lands after evictions and will continue to do so for time immemorial?" (Forest Peoples Programme 2016: 2). In essence, this statement cuts to the crux of the evictions as a cyclical set of events whereby people keep returning to their former homes regardless of how many times they are burnt to the ground. Indeed, even though the compensation scheme went ahead in late 2013, reports from January 2018 are still documenting forceful evictions (Kimatai 2018 personal communication*;* Forest Peoples Programme 2018b; see also The Star 2018). Of particular note is the suspension of European Union funding to the Government's 'Water Tower Programme' in light of the fatal shooting of a 41-year-old Sengwer man by the Kenya Forest Service on 16th January 2018 (Forest Peoples Programme 2018b), itself an appalling turn of events in this long, harrowing narrative. In light of this, it is important to bring into focus how many of these recent evictions have occurred within the context of a World Bank-funded project called the National Resource Management Programme that ultimately led to an investigation into the World Bank's conduct.

3.6 The National Resource Management Programme and Request for Inspection

The World Bank National Resource Management Project (henceforth NRMP) was first approved on 27th March 2007 with a closing date set for 30th June 2013. The initial project stated that its objective was:

"To enhance the institutional capacity to manage water and forest resources in a sustainable and participatory way. Overall, the project will help to reduce the incidence and severity of water shocks in river catchments, and improve the livelihoods of communities participating in the co-management of water and forests." (World Bank 2007b: 1)

In order to achieve this, the project identified four components for which it would provide:

1) Water Resources Management and Irrigation; 2) Management of Forest Resources; 3)

Livelihood Investments in the Upper Tana Catchment; and 4) Management and Monitoring and Evaluation (World Bank Inspection Panel 2013a: 2). Of importance for the ensuing discussion is Component 2, which was developed in light of the new 2005 Forest Act that saw the replacement of the Forest Department with the semi-autonomous Kenya Forest Service and an emphasis on the co-management of gazetted forests with adjacent communities. Component 2 was designed to:

"operationalize the newly enacted Forest Act of 2005 by assisting in creating a transparent and accountable regulatory and institutional framework in forest resources management, from an exclusive Government conservation model to joint management with local communities and the private sector" (World Bank Inspection Panel 2013a: 2).

A part of this process would involve a number of land-related issues, namely to:

"1) hasten the provision of titles for land presently occupied and used by the communities in the Project areas including support for necessary steps, such as land survey, demarcation and registration of titles; 2) establish a comprehensive strategy to rehabilitate livelihoods of evicted people to the level of December 2002; and 3) offer assistance within the land restitution process to indigenous peoples to claim all lands over which they have lost control between 1895 and 2002" (World Bank Inspection Panel 2013a: 3).

The project as a whole was scheduled to come into effect in December 2007, but was delayed due to the post-election violence at the end of 2007, which saw the killing of over 1000 people and the displacement of almost 700,000 more. As Lynch (2016) observes, by the time the NRMP did come into effect in August 2008, the political context in which it was situated had shifted dramatically, with a set of reforms being triggered, most noticeably the inauguration of a new constitution in August 2010. This new constitution does not include a reference to Indigenous People and had subtly different definitions of minority communities including a marginalised people "that has retained and maintained a traditional lifestyle and livelihood based on a hunter or gatherer economy" (Kenyan Constitution 2010: Article 63). Within this shifting political context, the NRMP was restructured in June 2011 and commitments to addressing land-related issues were removed due to the fact that they were "overly ambitious, given the deeply entrenched

nature of the underlying issues and the limited mandate of the Project's implementing agency" (World Bank 2013a: 4). As well as this, the term 'Indigenous Peoples' was replaced by 'Vulnerable Marginalised Groups' (Lynch 2016).

It was this restructuring, in conjunction with claims of insufficient consultation and frustrated expectations, that motivated Sengwer activists to submit two requests for inspection to the World Bank (World Bank Inspection Panel 2014). Investigations were carried out by the World Bank Inspection Panel, a body that was set up in 1993 in order to establish a form of accountability within the World Bank (Lynch 2016). The Inspection Panel operates independently of its management and reports directly to the bank's Board of Executive Directors. It may investigate complaints and requests for inspection in order to determine if the World Bank has committed any form of non-compliance with any of its own policies. The Inspection Panel determines the eligibility of the request and, if the approval for an investigation is granted by the Board of Executive Directors, a full report is produced. The World Bank's Management is then given a timeframe in which it can respond before a final decision is reached by the Board as to how to move forward. Throughout the process, the requests for inspection, the eligibility report and the Bank's initial and final Management responses are published online as a part of an archive accesisible to the public (Lynch 2016). In the first request for inspection, the Sengwer vocalised a number of different complaints. Firstly, they claimed that they had suffered harm within the context of the NRMP through threats and intimidation, the burning of houses and the violent arrest of individuals in the Embobut and Kapolet forest blocks (World Bank Inspection Panel 2014). As well as this, they claimed that the use of 'Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups' instead of 'Indigenous Peoples' by the Kenya Forest Service and the Kenyan government without carrying out free prior and informed

consultations with Indigenous Peoples was a violation of their rights as specified in the United Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights and World Bank Operational Policy 4.10 on Indigenous Peoples.

The Investigation Panel that produced the final report on the request concluded that the evictions had *not* been supported by the NRMP, but that, given NRMP actions such as the realignment of forest boundaries occurred within the context of a longer-term history of evictions in the area, "more attention should have been given from the outset to identify risks for affected people and adequately mitigate for such risks" (World Bank Inspection Panel 2014, VII). The Inspection Panel also commented on the way that the term 'Indigenous People' had been replaced with 'Vulnerable Marginalised Groups'. Whilst the Panel found that "the use of the term VMGs instead of Indigenous Peoples did not in itself amount to non-compliance with Operational Policy 4.10 because the policy does not require its use to ensure protection of the rights included therein", they did note "that for the Cherangany-Sengwer the term Indigenous Peoples is central to their self-identity and therefore for the protection of their customary rights" (World Bank Inspection Panel 2014: VIII).

The significance of changing the Sengwer's status from 'Indigenous' to 'Vulnerable Marginalised Group' was played down in the response of the bank's management, which insisted that the World Bank had adopted the term at the request of the Kenyan government in order to remain in line with the terminology of the 2010 constitution which itself does not include the term 'Indigenous People'. Furthermore, the Management argued "that the adoption of the term VMG [Vulnerable Marginalised Groups] does not diminish the substantive protections and benefits available to beneficiary communities

under the policy" (World Bank 2014: 14). For the Sengwer, however, these responses were unsatisfactory and hypocritical, not least because the Kenyan constitution does not even mention Vulnerable Marginalised Groups in the same way that it does not reference Indigenous People. As well as this, and as I discuss further below, being categorised as 'Indigenous' gives access to a global conversation and package of rights embodied by the United Nations Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. On a more conceptual level, and as already discussed in Chapter 1.3, being indigenous also alludes to a certain connection to land and dependence on local resources in order to maintain a certain way of life in a way that Vulnerable Marginalised Groups does not. Indeed, as Lynch (2016: 217) observes: "'VMG' has not been the focus of local or international debate or regulations, and could – as interviewees were wont to remind one – refer as easily to street children in urban areas as to IPs [indigenous peoples]).

Subsequent to Lynch's (2006) initial observations and interviews surrounding land rights struggles in the Kapolet forest block (see Chapter 1.4), new debates arose amongst community members surrounding the names of 'Sengwer' and 'Cherangany' and how they should self-identify. This is highlighted in a second request for inspection that was submitted to the World Bank by the residents of the Cherangani Hills who self-identified under the name 'Cherangany' instead of 'Sengwer'. In addition to complaining about harm suffered at the hands of the Kenya Forest Service within the context of the NRMP, the second request stated that the World Bank had exclusively been using the term 'Sengwer' and only consulted Sengwer leaders rather than those from the 'Cherangany Indigenous Peoples Community'. This "non-recognition of the Cherangany Indigenous Peoples Community by the Kenya Forestry Service (KFS) and the World Bank who have not yet determined the real indigenous peoples" resulted in a "Community Identity Crisis"

(World Bank Inspection Report 2014: 6). This identity crisis was emphasised in meetings between the Investigation Panel and community members who identified under 'Sengwer' or 'Cherangany'. The panel stated that:

"Both of these ethnic groups recognize that the labels [Cherangany and Sengwer] constitute different names for the same ethnic community since they share a dialect, oral histories, a tradition of being forest-dwelling hunter-gatherers, and an identity of being indigenous to the Cherangany Hills. The division and tension revolve around the question of which ethnic label is the "correct one," and the assumed motivations that "others" have for insisting upon a particular name" (World Bank Investigation Panel 2014: 15).

Those who preferred the name 'Cherangany' highlighted that the label 'Sengwer' was too *exclusive* and mainly comprised members from one clan, who could impose the label onto the whole community in order to control its political economy. Furthermore, as noted in the previous chapter, historically the Sengwer label has been used less, appearing infrequently if at all in colonial documents. Using this label was likely to undermine community claims to land and resources in the Cherangani Hills. In contrast, those community members who advocated use of the name 'Sengwer' criticised the term 'Cherangany' for being too *inclusive*, allowing neighbouring Kalenjin groups (i.e. Pokot and Marakwet) undeserved access, rights and influence in the forests. The frustrations with this were brought into focus in Chapter 1.4 with regard to the resettlement schemes under President Moi in the 1990s and the subsequent contested land claims by both Sengwer and Pokot (Lynch 2006).

The Investigation Panel ultimately decided to try and stay neutral rather than attempting to mediate the politics of naming between the 'Cherangany' and 'Sengwer', and thus offered few recommendations to the Second Request. Furthermore, whilst recognising the Indigenous status of these communities, it concluded that the World Bank was not guilty of non-compliance with its own policy. The case finally closed in 2014 with the publication of the Inspections Panel's report. Little has developed since its closure, but

the publication of the final report online does mean that the investigation can be appropriated in different ways by community members to support future claims. Indeed, "research suggests community leaders in the Cherangany area are cognisant of this fact and seek to use the [Investigation] Panel, not just to issue supportive findings and recommendations in the short-term, but also to produce an archival residue that can be used to endorse future campaigns" (Lynch 2016: 222)[13].

This discussion brings into focus the contested nature of local histories, identities and community rights to land that all exist in a tension with international policy that attempts to safeguard forest ecosystems. These struggles are situated within the context of a broader narrative that has seen the violation of human rights. As such, I now go on to explore how these debates have been documented in the public sphere by examining both activist and media resources.

3.7 Media and Activist Narratives

This narrative of forceful evictions has been documented on numerous fronts over the past decade by both national and international newspapers, many of which recount unsettling testimonies as to how people have been treated (e.g. The Guardian 2014; The Star 2016). A particularly visually striking and intimate portrayal of these can be seen in a recent feature length documentary, '*Honey at the Top*' (2015), shot in 2014 by film

[13] Upon conducting my own interviews predominantly with community elders, the discourse of 'Cherangany' and 'Sengwer' was not apparent in the immediate vicinity of my field work and only the term Sengwer was used. For the purposes of this thesis, then, I acknowledge the importance of the political debate embodied by the Investigation Panel, but have chosen to use the term Sengwer in order to keep in line with the immediate community with whom I was working.

maker Dean Puckett. This film sets out to document the parts of Sengwer culture that are being lost, such as their traditional knowledge of different medicinal plants and the practice of honey harvesting. As well as this, the film presents video evidence of people's houses being burnt, people suffering injuries from raids and others being arrested. The film also describes how members of the community lack access to basic amenities such as health care and education and have been forced into living in semi-permanent shelters made of makeshift materials.

Given the numerous reports emerging out of the situation in Embobut, a number of human rights activist groups have become involved in helping to raise awareness of the struggles of the Sengwer. These include the Forest Peoples Programme, Survival International, REDD-Monitor, Amnesty International and Sengwer Aid. In particular, the Forest Peoples Programme, the aim of which is to ensure that "forests are owned and controlled by forest peoples in ways that ensure sustainable livelihoods, equity and well-being, based on respect for their rights, knowledge, cultures and identities" (Forest Peoples Programme 2018a), have documented and published the progression of events on its website. As part of its involvement, it has also actively written a number of open letters (all of which are publicly available), to President Uhuru Kenyatta, including a reminder of the Kenyan government's international commitments (Forest Peoples Programme 2013). Playing directly into the contention surrounding the actions of the World Bank discussed above, an aspect raised by the Forest People's Programme in their reminder was the term 'indigenous' with reference to United Nations Declaration of Rights for Indigenous Populations of which Kenya is a signatory. In particular they state that: "Indigenous peoples have the right [...] to be secure in the enjoyment of their own means of subsistence and development, and to engage freely in all their traditional and other economic

activities" and to “use, develop and control the lands, territories and resources that they possess by reason of ‘traditional occupation or use’” (UNDRIP 2007: Articles 20 and 26.2). Thus, “Indigenous peoples shall not be forcibly removed from their lands or territories. No relocation shall take place without the free, prior and informed consent” (UNDRIP 2007: Articles 9-10). States are responsible for "prevention of, and redress for... any action which has the aim or effect of dispossessing them of their lands, territories" or "any form of forced population transfer...undermining any of their rights" (UNDRIP 2007: Articles 7-8.2).

Alongside this piece of legislation which clearly demonstrates the importance of the Indigenous status in protecting certain rights, the Sengwer have also been appealing to a ‘hunter-gatherer’ identity in a further appeal to government commitments. Specifically, Article 63 of the 2010 Kenyan Constitution states that: “Community land shall vest in and be held by communities identified on the basis of ethnicity, culture or similar community of interest. Community Land consists of…(ii) ancestral lands and lands traditionally occupied by hunter-gatherer communities”. The depiction of the Sengwer as traditional hunter-gatherers was brought into focus by the World Bank Inspection Panel discussed above and is echoed in national and international media reports of the Sengwer. *The Guardian* (2014), for example, points out how “The forest…has been the ancestral home of marginalised hunter-gatherer Sengwer communities for centuries, but the area has been invaded in the past 20 years by many thousands of other people seeking land to grow food”.

This distinguishing of the Sengwer as hunter-gatherers in comparison to other populations who have acquired land for farming through the destruction of forests has become a point

of contention. A part of this notion is the idea that the foraging way of life of the Sengwer is inherently entwined with the forest ecosystem and is essential for its conservation in a way that other groups cannot emulate. Indeed, this point is emphasised in another letter written by the Forests Peoples Programme (2013: Annex 2) and Sengwer community members:

> *"The Sengwer would like the Government of Kenya to appreciate that their traditional hunter–gatherer culture and livelihood is perfectly compatible with forest protection, which Sengwer would also like to see protected and preserved. This is one practical reason (as well as the legal ancestral land claim) why they say they should not be evicted, when the Government's declared reason for their eviction is forest protection…Although these Sengwer former hunter-gatherer indigenous forest people are sometimes referred to as the Cherangany indigenous people, this should not be confused with the wider population of the Cherangany Hills which includes a range of different groups, including the locally dominant Marakwet and Pokot. The Marakwet and Pokot traditional livelihood and cultural patterns are more strongly agricultural or pastoralist"*

Following this statement is a proposal to solve the crises from the Forest Peoples Programme. In short, the suggested solution involves the recognition that the Sengwer have the wherewithal to protect the forest and should thus be able to return and live in a way which safeguards the ecosystem. If other groups wish to live in such a way, they too can reside in the forest, but those who do not must be resettled elsewhere. These specific ways of life are explored further in Chapter 5, but it is worth noting here that in this letter they are referred to as "Sengwer sustainability bylaws" (Forest Peoples Programme 2013: Annex 2). The language here suggests that it is the Sengwer alone, with their unique hunter-gatherer way of life and traditional knowledge of the forest, who know how to conserve the forest rather than surrounding groups. The intimate relationship between the Sengwer and Embobut is clearly evident in Figure 3.5, which is taken from the same letter (Forests Peoples Programme 2013: Annex 2). Here, the Sengwer have placed themselves in the centre of the forest ecosystem and as a distinctly separate group to their surrounding neighbours. As I explore throughout Parts Two and Three of this thesis, however, this is

in some senses the appropriation of a wider set of practices and knowledge that have historically been shared amongst other people in Embobut who identify differently.

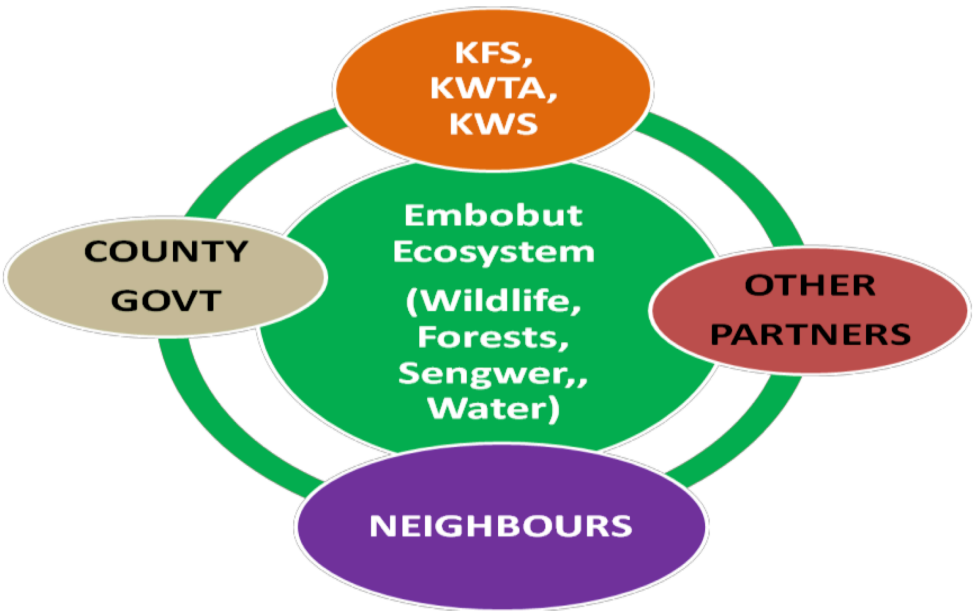


Figure 3.5: Image taken from Forest Peoples Programme (2016: 7) demonstrating the relationship between the Sengwer, the forest and surrounding population.

The inspiration to formalise community bylaws stems from a similar approach adopted by the Ogiek of Mt Elgon to the west of Cherangani who presented a set of bylaws to the County Government (Forest Peoples Programme 2013: Annex 2). It is in this vein that some Sengwer community activists have been affiliating themselves with an Ogiek identity despite their cultural similarities with their Marakwet neighbours. In other words, echoing some early twentieth-century understandings that the Sengwer were Ogiek due to their subsistence strategies (see Chapter 2.2), it is the historic and intimate relationship with the forest that sets them apart from other groups and acts as an 'ethnic amalgamation' with the Ogiek (Lynch 2006: 57). It is hoped by Sengwer activists that this approach may prove particularly fruitful given that in June 2017 the Ogiek, who have themselves had

similar struggles with maintaining access to Kenya's highland forests, were granted permission to return to their forests by the African Court (Land Rights Now 2017).

The above discussion has demonstrated how the situation in Embobut is highly volatile and cyclical. At the centre of the evictions are the Sengwer, who present themselves as a community who are intimately entwined with the forest through their unique hunting and gathering lifestyle. However, it is important to emphasise here that this depiction of the Sengwer, along with the contested history of identity and their rights to land, have been understood discursively with little emphasis on how these issues are expressed through daily practice and how this is historicised and materialised in the landscape. In light of this, I bring Part One of this thesis to a close by pulling into focus the main observations that have emerged from the analysis thus far and showing how Part Two will readdress this narrative by shifting contemporary discourse away from political rhetoric and grounding it in the materiality and temporality of everyday tasks.

3.8 Concluding Part One

The analysis of histories and politics in Embobut from archival work that I have presented throughout Chapters 1, 2 and 3 has brought out a multitude of themes. One of the most noticeable of these is the notion that eastern African mosaics are constituted by different groups interacting in different ways with complex histories and identities that were fluid and diverse across time and space. Today, these identities exist in tension with conservation policy and perceived rights to land. Not only is there a tension 'on the ground', so to speak, between community members as to how they should self-identify, but also within numerous legal frameworks that have emerged, particularly regarding the notion of being 'indigenous'. Despite the fact that the conceptual foundation behind this

category is problematic, as I discussed in Chapter 1, it has nevertheless been placed in international legislation as embodied by UNDRIP (2007). It is within this legal context that the Indigenous People category is important for the Sengwer's land rights struggles, with its appropriation acting as an avenue into national and international legal frameworks and thus as a fulcrum around which to pursue claims to land and resources. In a similar vein, the Sengwer have also harnessed the category of the 'hunter-gatherer' in order to distinguish themselves from surrounding populations. Aside from acting as an appeal to the Kenyan constitution, the utilisation of the hunter-gatherer category helps to produce a set of ideas that propose that a foraging way of life creates a relationship with the forest in a way that the agricultural or pastoral lifeways of the Marakwet and Pokot do not. In turn, this unique way of life feeds back into the notion that the Sengwer are the real 'indigenes' of the forest.

It is important to note that the above portrayals of the Sengwer as 'indigenous hunter-gatherers' have failed to engage with how people have actually lived with the forest and how this has changed through time. In light of this, Part Two of this thesis aims to understand the history and the relationship that people have had with their landscapes from the ground up. In other words, what can we learn about Embobut Forest and the people residing there by studying the materiality and temporality of the landscape? Instead of pigeon holing the Sengwer as a group of hunter-gatherers, I examine how hunting and gathering as a set of habitual practices (or what Widlok (2016) calls hunter-gatherer situations; see Chapter 1.2) have constructed different places throughout the Embobut landscape. This is important because hunting and gathering activities are a part of a bigger picture of daily practices that include the rearing of cattle and subsistence farming. These have been undertaken by both the Sengwer and Marakwet in Embobut in

complex ways, and once understood temporally it becomes clear that people move in and out of hunter-gatherer situations (Widlok 2016). In light of this, the questions posed in this study move beyond 'who is and who is not a hunter-gatherer?' and 'who is the real indigenous?', instead using hunting and gathering as a point of departure in order to examine how livelihoods and landscapes have unfolded together over the past two hundred and fifty years. The data to be discussed here are informed by anthropological and archaeological theory that aims to take the premise that populations residing in Embobut, including the Sengwer *and* Marakwet, are a part of the ecosystem. Thus, concepts of the 'indigenous' and 'hunter-gatherer' make way for discussions surrounding 'nature' and 'culture' and the place of people in the physical world.

Part Two

Chapter 4 : The Glades of Embobut

4.1 Setting the Scene: Nature and Culture

I begin this chapter with a comparison of two images. Figure 4.1a is a map of Embobut portrayed as a forest block as described throughout Part One of this thesis. Here the border demarcates the conservation area as designated by the Kenya Forest Service. In simple terms, anything inside this line is classified as 'forest' to be preserved and a place where people are not allowed to reside as enforced by a policy of 'fortress conservation'. Figure 4.1b depicts a close up of the same area portrayed as a palimpsest of places and pathways that have accumulated over time as understood from my informants. As will become clear throughout this chapter and the remainder of Part Two, the numerous lines in the Figure 4.1b are the lines of movement and the carrying out of everyday tasks that have changed through time. These are places within places, tied together through the ever-unfolding livelihoods inscribed in the landscape itself.

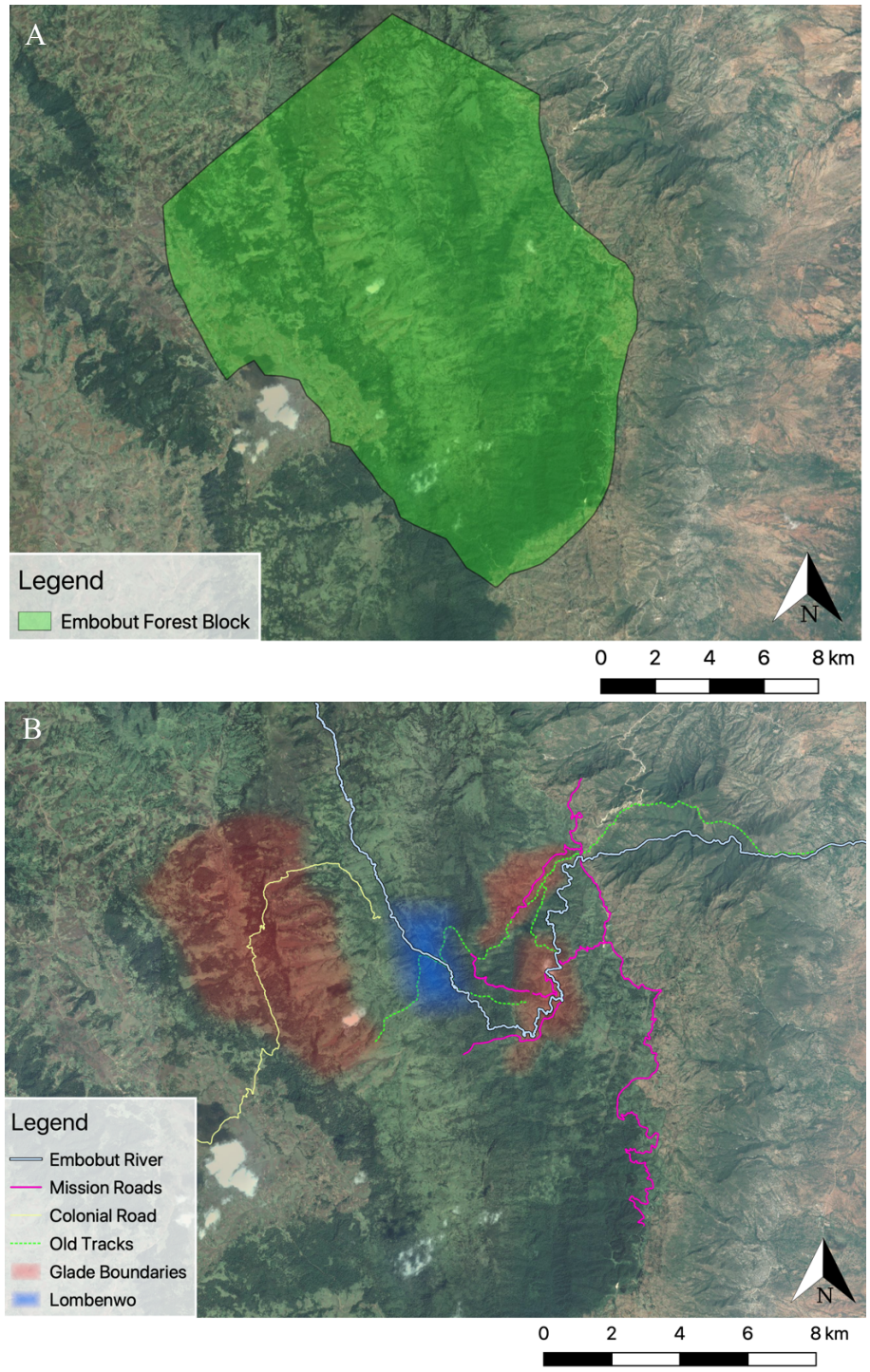


Figure 4.1: a) Embobut Forest Block; b) Pathways and places of Embobut discussed throughout this chapter.

I have started with this comparison as a heuristic device. Figure 4.1a is a projection that attempts to isolate nature in order to preserve what were once 'pristine' landscapes. This projection cuts to the crux of Latour's (2004) argument in '*The Politics of Nature*' where

he grapples with the relationship between nature and culture, arguing that to truly understand human relationships with the environment, the notion of 'Nature' (presented with a capital) has to die. The common Western scientific understanding of Nature is that it is split off from culture, existing as a detached reality that is complete and pure in itself. To explain this further, Latour (2004) employs the allegory of Plato's cave. Whilst in the original parable it was the philosopher who struggled out of the dark cave and into true reality, Latour postulates that it is scientists who travel to and from the cave, bringing valuable information from the natural world back to the rest of society which eagerly awaits their return. This, then, not only creates a rupture between Nature and society, but also a division within the cave itself as some people are valued above others because they have direct access to 'reality'. To move beyond an understanding of Nature as an ontology from which humanity is ruptured, Latour goes on to explain that a new model is needed, one that is based not upon a two-house system (that is to say a divide between nature and culture), but instead upon a *single* house, where humans and non-humans exist as a collective and where the distinction between Nature and culture is dissolved altogether. Such an approach helps eliminate the idea of a pure Nature, instead describing the multiple ways in which ecology might develop and the different ways in which these can be valued and opposed.

In a similar vein, Ingold (2000) claims that we must not perceive the surrounding environment as a mere backdrop on which human activity occurs, but rather as an entity with which we are engaged and to which we are integrally bound. Ingold rejects the dichotomous categories of nature and culture, replacing them instead with the synergy of environment and organisms. Within this synergy, the environment in which humans live is not the same as 'Nature'. According to Ingold (2000: 20), a world can only exist as

Nature if the beings perceiving it do not belong there, that is, they can look upon it from an objective, outside perspective. As such, the difference between the environment and Nature is equal to the difference between seeing ourselves as existing within the world to that of existing outside it. Thus, the ostensibly simple notion of the 'natural environment' must be treated with care, for in combining the two we rupture ourselves from the very world in which we live and with which are engaged.

I return to these arguments, and specifically those of Ingold, throughout this chapter, and indeed the remainder of this thesis. Firstly, however, I flesh out some of the roots of these anthropological insights by exploring the history of the philosophical movement of phenomenology and how it has informed contemporary scholars on the relationship that humans possess with their worlds.

4.2 A Brief Walk Through Phenomenology

Phenomenology as a philosophical movement has its roots in the work of the German philosopher Edmund Husserl (2001) in the early twentieth century. Husserl focused on creating a philosophical paradigm that examined the structures of subjective consciousness as experienced from the first person. Thus, with an essentially descriptive methodology, phenomenology developed into a framework that aims to uncover the principles of intentionality, consciousness and the human 'life-world' (Husserl 2001). One of the most influential thinkers to further develop this framework was Martin Heidegger (1977), who saw the world not as the blueprinting of human mental states and actions upon a separate material surrounding, but rather as a continuously unfolding mutual coexistence of humans with their world. In '*Being and Time'* (1973), Heidegger argued that human experience is context-specific and that the world is not experienced universally; we are always 'Being-in-the-world'. A clear ramification of this approach,

which remains a foundational notion for this thesis, is that humans have never existed objectively outside nature.

Heidegger (1962) further emphasised the practical nature of quotidian existence by employing the term '*Dasein'* (being there). To Heidegger, *Dasein* is an ability 'to be' that is realised through the different tasks that one enters into on a daily basis. His classic example here is that of a hammer. The status of a hammer can initially be seen as 'present-at-hand' as the individual considers it in its own right as a separate object before a task is undertaken. As a particular activity begins to unfold, however, the hammer transforms into being 'ready-to-hand'. Here it becomes integrated into an 'equipmental totality' comprised of the person, hammer, nail and wall. Interestingly, Heidegger scrutinised the term 'thing' etymologically, tracing it back to the old German term '*ding'* meaning 'a gathering'. Thus, he posited that all things are gatherings of relationships rather than simply existing as discrete, bounded objects separate from the world in which they are made and used.

Building upon Heidegger's ideas, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's '*Phenomenology of Perception'* (1962) predominantly focused upon our bodily engagement with the world, exploring how humans live and experience the world through their senses. For Merleau-Ponty, sensations are part of an individual's continual immersion with their surroundings rather than singular events that are experienced separately. A furthering of this line of thinking highlights how the boundaries between bodies and things become increasingly entangled. For example, Merleau-Ponty argued that, given that blind people use their sticks to reach out into the world in order to extend their the sense of touch, the sensory engagement with their surroundings is not coterminous with the boundary of their skin.

These phenomenological ideas have gained traction across different disciplines, with archaeology being no exception, notably in Chris Tilley's *A Phenomenology of Landscape* (Tilley 1994) and more recently *The Materiality of Stone* (Tilley 2004). Tilley critiqued the way in which archaeologists study landscape by drawing upon different phenomenological ideas and arguing that archaeology had become fixated upon studying landscapes through diagrams, maps and measurements that viewed the world from the sky looking down. He argued, however, that this is not how people see or experience their worlds. Rather, people engage with their surroundings through their bodies by walking, running, playing, building, looking etc. Thus, engaging with the qualitative aspects of landscapes by visiting them in person and experiencing them through one's own senses can help to create richer understandings of how places relate to the human experience. For example, trudging uphill to reach a particular location on a mountaintop, looking out from a high vantage point across the landscape, or approaching an imposing hill fort from below all help the archaeologist to grasp the human experience of different places and how these may have been understood in the past: "Things in front or behind you, within reach or without, things to the left and right of your body, above and below, these most basic of personal spatial experiences, are shared with prehistoric populations in our common biological humanity" (Tilley 1994: 74).

Whilst many of Tilley's archaeological interpretations have been criticised (noticeably by Fleming [2005, 2006]), there are also some conceptual problems with his work that need addressing. Indeed, as Brück (2005) posits, there are problems with presenting the body itself as universal. Tilley's experience may differ from that of an individual of a different gender or one who is less able bodied. Furthermore, where the body is inherently

entwined with, and shaped by, social relations and cultural values, experiences of material conditions can vary both within and between societies. Bodily actions, such as walking, stooping, kneeling or running, may have culturally specific meanings ascribed to them, which in turn may impact upon the individual's experience (Brück 2005). As such, our own subjective encounters with landscapes may not therefore match those of past people. As well as this, the very claim that we possess shared experiences with people in the past because of a shared biology is built upon the premise that we have the same nature but possess different cultures. In this framing, Tilley's phenomenology still appears to be grounded in the categories of nature and culture, thus falling short of former phenomenological paradigms that aimed to dissolve such dichotomies (Barrett and Ko 2009; Harris and Cipolla 2017).

Despite these criticisms, Tilley's ideas retain merit and remain influential in archaeology, and indeed this study, for the following reasons[14]. Firstly, despite some of its interpretive shortcomings, phenomenology as a philosophical standpoint as well as a methodology proved to be an important part of my fieldwork. Given that the nature of my study focuses upon working with living populations in order to understand their long-term history, I found that I could sidestep some of the conceptual issues highlighted by Brück (2004). In other words, walking the landscapes of Embobut with community members, young and old, male and female, facilitated a curbing of purely subjective experience detached from the people who lived there. Questions could be asked about locations and their uses, plants and animals, changing livelihoods and environments, and how the very movement of

[14] There are, of course, other ways of thinking phenomenologically within archaeology, such as those postulated by Julian Thomas (1993) who draws upon Heidegger's ideas surrounding things as gatherings of relationships in order to examine different artefacts in Late Neolithic Britain.

people through the undulating hills changed through time. All of this, in conjunction with my own sensory experiences, helped to create a richer understanding of the Embobut life-world. Before exploring this any further, however, I wish to take the phenomenological ideas of landscape in a particular trajectory by returning to the work of Ingold and his recent work on lines.

4.3 Landscape: Spaces, Places and Pathways

A key aspect in Tilley's work is the notion of 'landscape'. Landscape is an interdisciplinary and often contested term, with an array of literature tackling its etymological and conceptual roots (David and Thomas 2016). My aim here is not to provide a synthesis of these discussions, but rather, in the tradition of Gosden and Head (1994: 116), to acknowledge the 'useful ambiguity' of the term landscape, treating it as a concept that "stretches between the physical shape and properties of the land to the human use and conceptions of that land, bringing together themes that are vital to an understanding of human history". Having said that, I intend to develop an accumulative suite of ideas about landscape gradually developed by Ingold (2000, 2007a, 2011, 2015) that comprises his most recent work on lines.

First and foremost is Ingold's notion of the 'taskscape'. Originally conceived in a paper entitled '*The Temporality of the* Landscape', Ingold set out to link the notion that the experience of "human life is a process that involves the passage of time" with the idea that "this life process is also the process of formation of the landscapes in which people have lived" (Ingold 1993: 152). Through such an exercise, Ingold challenged both the view that landscapes are neutral, external backdrops to human activities, as well as the idea that landscapes are culturally constructed as the cognitive or symbolic ordering of space. Instead, he argues that landscapes are temporal entities continually unfolding and

emerging through the rhythmic patterns of dwelling activities of its inhabitants, or the 'taskscape'. Written at a similar time to Tilley's phenomenological work in the 1990s, this paper became highly influential, being reprinted in key archaeological texts (although more recently it has come under scrutiny for its portrayal of the nature of archaeological knowledge [Hicks 2016]).

Of the many interesting ideas put forward in Ingold's paper, I want to explore one particular statement that "landscape is not space" (Ingold 2000: 191). The relationship between 'place' and 'space' here is interesting. In Tilley's (1994: 15) original volume, he describes space as an abstract construct that provides a situational context for places. In other words, there can be no spaces without places, with the latter having primary significance as centres of activity and sentimental attachment. Interestingly, this attempt at distinguishing space from place is almost completely absent from Tilley's (2004) second volume, *The Materiality of* Stone, where, in a similar manner to Ingold (2000: 191-192), he focuses upon 'place' within 'landscape':

"Places gather together persons, memories, structures, histories, myths and symbols. Mental and material, symbolic and practical, wild and domestic, they constitute landscapes, collections of place-bound structures and meanings. Landscapes are thus structured in terms of the relatedness and relative depths of places within them" (Tilley 2004: 26).

Clearly for Tilley, such a distinction either became unnecessary for his argument, or theoretically outmoded within archaeological and anthropological thought. Indeed, we may turn to the argument posited by Ingold (2011) in a later essay entitled '*Against Space: place, movement, knowledge'* for a clearer understanding as to why this may be the case. Here, Ingold argues against the notion of space, refuting it as a concept that is empty and detached from the experiences of human life. Humans with all of their diverse livelihoods,

do not live or carry out tasks of everyday life in ‘spaces’, but rather in rooms, houses, fields, offices, villages, towns and cities.

How then has such an abstract concept become so commonly used to describe the world in which we live? Ingold (2011: 68) argues that one answer to this lies in what he calls the ‘logic of inversion’. This logic turns the lines along which we live into boundaries within which life is confined, reducing it to things that *occupy* the world, but do not necessarily *inhabit* it (Ingold 2011: 145). In other words, the world is a vessel filled with existing things, rather than an entity entwined from the threads of things ‘coming-into-being’. In turn, this logic of inversion transforms our understanding of place, movement and knowledge. Ingold’s argument is best understood by carrying out a pen and paper exercise whereby a line is drawn in an approximate circle. The question posed is how are we to interpret this line? In one sense, it is the pathway left by an action – that of an individual picking up a pencil, applying it to a piece of paper and moving their arm in a specific motion whilst applying pressure. However, if we view this line as a totality, as if it were already drawn, we may come to view it not as a pathway or trajectory, but as a static, complete shape, in this case a circle, projected onto a blank piece of paper (Figure 4.2a). This illustration helps us to better comprehend the logic of inversion, whereby the pathway of movement that brings places into existence are instead viewed as a boundary that delineates place from space.

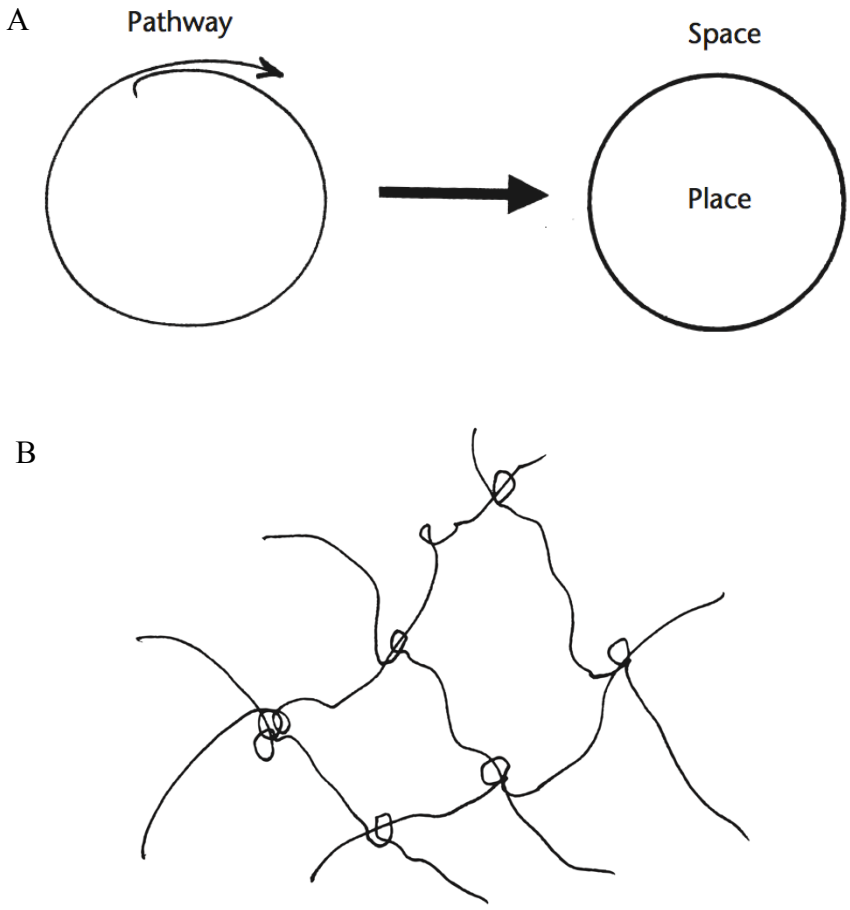


Figure 4.2: a.) Ingold's logic of inversion (Ingold 2011: 148); b.) the knots and pathways of Ingold's meshwork. (Ingold 2011: 152)

As such, and in opposition to Tilley (2004: 25), who states that human existence is place-*bound*, Ingold contends that it is instead place-*binding* (Ingold 2011: 148). This is to say that life is continually emerging and unfolding along pathways that, over time, are laid down both physically and conceptually, consciously and unconsciously, through the activities of quotidian life. In turn, these pathways become entangled in different ways and densities as individuals and communities meet, resulting in a knot of lifelines. In short, places are like knots, the threads of which represent pathways of lived lives that become bundled and entwined, before trailing off, creating a net-like web, or what Ingold (2007a: 80, 2011: 149) calls the *meshwork* (Figure 4.2b).

The logic of inversion in many respects lays the foundation for scientific Western epistemologies "by turning occurrences into discrete, self-contained facts" (Ingold 2011: 155). In other words, empirical data collected from experiments and fieldwork tend to focus upon particular points that can be measured and integrated into broader models of scientific knowledge. Paradoxically, these simplified notions of space-place are themselves the result of the quotidian practice of Western science. Take, for example, the case of the Embobut Forest. Conservationists have not purposefully created a boundary based merely on the premise that people and 'nature' should be separate. Rather, they conducted their daily practice by implementing what they had learnt about the degradation of ecosystems caused by human activity, with the best way to prevent this thought to be the erection of boundaries that exclude humans. Yet the collection of their data and the results obtained are integrated into broader scientific understandings usually at the expense of alternative ways of experiencing the world. This is particularly evident with the conservationist demarcation of the Embobut Forest block whereby the placing of beacons, surveying the topography and the systematic documentation of the ecology is conducted completely separately from the local inhabitants understanding and experience of the Embobut landscape.

In comparison, the argument presented throughout this chapter aims to focus upon Embobut as a series of knots and pathways along which life was and continues to be lived, rather than demarcated boundaries enclosing particular spaces of activity. To illustrate this, let us reflect back upon the comparison between the two maps presented in the opening to this section. The first map is representative of seeing the world through Ingold's logic of inversion, a border created to demarcate and contain a particular place.

In the vein of much traditional conservation policy, this place was once 'natural' and, with the concerted efforts of the Kenya Forest Service, will hopefully return to this state. Outside the conservation area, we have 'space' for human occupation, separate from the natural world on the other side. This chapter attempts to flip this logic of inversion around by focusing upon the pathways of human lifeways and their material correlates not as lines of enclosure, but as the lines of human life both past and present. It must be noted that the arguments presented here offer a basic description of life in Embobut on a macro-level that are only fleshed out in more detail in later chapters. This is particularly evident when I refer to 'knotted' places in Embobut created by certain activities such as resting and waiting, hunting and gathering, beekeeping, cattle rearing, house-building and cultivation. All of these activities are elaborated on in Chapters 5 and 6.

4.4 Approaching Embobut

There is only one access road to the eastern side of the Embobut Forest. It winds aggressively through the steep hills and was still in the process of being tarmacked when I arrived in July 2016. To the east of it sit numerous thatched houses and field systems, densely but evenly dotted across the upper slopes of the impressive Elgeyo Escarpment. The terrain to the west is equally dappled, but not with houses or fences. Rather, it is a patchwork of vegetation and open grassland with marks of old field boundaries and housing terraces that etch the hills. The greenery of the vegetation to the west provides a stark contrast to the brown hues of ploughed fields to the east, as if the road were the water-repellent *gutta* of a silk painting stopping the colours from bleeding into one another.



Figure 4.3: a) Approaching the Embobut forest block looking north with the conservation area to the west; b) Looking back south along the road currently under construction.

This, then, is the boundary. The very road that I drove along as we approached the location of my fieldwork was being used to demarcate the edge of the forest and consequently

where people were and were not supposed to live. At first glance, the conservation area seems to be a random yet uniform spread of old homesteads folding into one another across the undulating hills. It was not until after I had settled into my new house in the commercial centre of Kakamiti, spent time with my host family and had a few initial conversations with my research assistant, a local Sengwer man called Joseph Kimatai, that any form of understanding of the landscape began to appear, albeit rather sketchily. Drawn by Joseph and a community elder named Benjamin Kirop, the messy schematic map pictured in Figure 4.4 is the first piece of research that helped build a picture of the area. The title, *'Map of 3 Glades: Kaptirbai, Koropkwen and Kapkok'* provides initial insight into the organisation of place in terms of forest clearings, or glades, and the forest itself. Whilst informative as an object in its own right, it was the process of making this map and the surrounding conversations that it stimulated that helped me start building a picture of how life was lived prior to the 2013 evictions. Glades, roads, trackways, forests and caves (not cafes as spelled on the map!) all seemed to be interesting places with intriguing stories attached to them. Clearly, though, comprehending these hills could not be done by discussing schematic maps alone over hot cups of sweet *chai*. Thus began the documenting, mapping and interviews of my fieldwork. With the help of Joseph, the next eight months were spent learning about these hills and their entangled histories from the ground up.

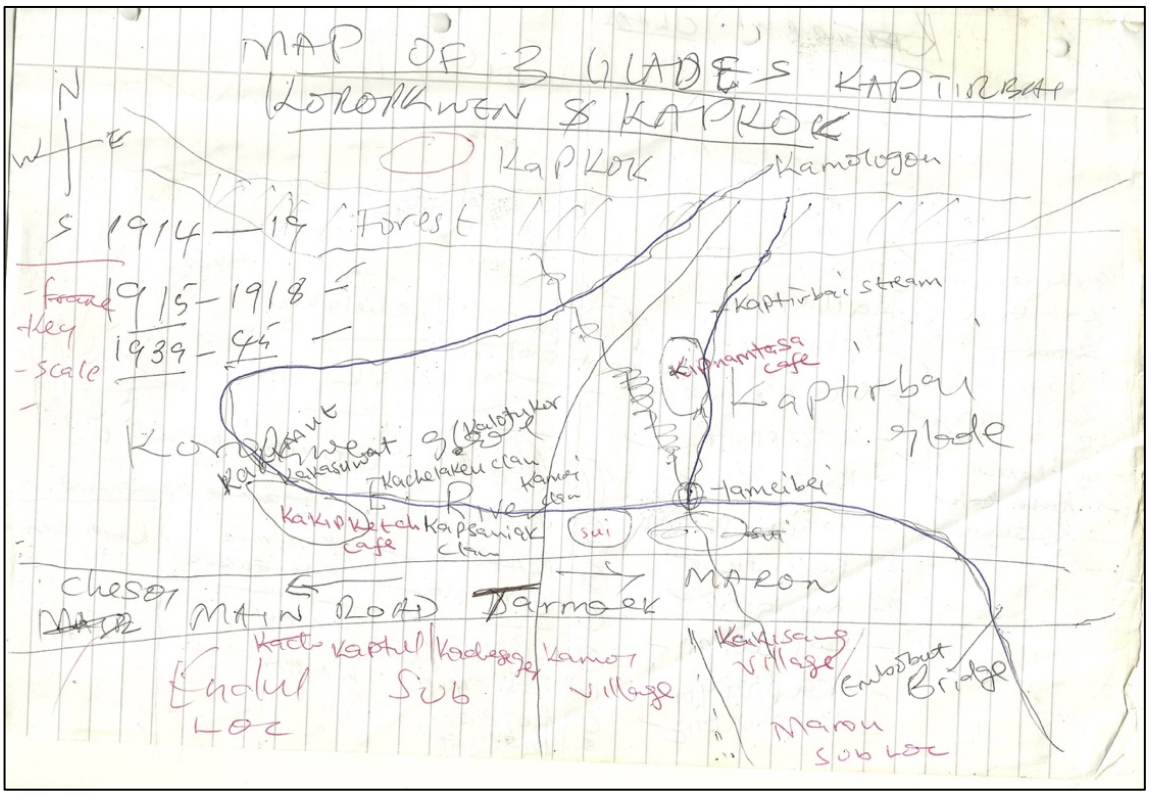


Figure 4.4: Very first participant map produced in fieldwork

Before exploring this, however, it is important to highlight that the conservationist perspectives discussed in the first part of this thesis with regard to the state of the highland forests are not unwarranted. This became most evident when walking through Embobut on foot with local informants, where it was clear that forest clearance has been rife across the region. Indeed, throughout my many excursions into the forest reserve, Joseph would repeatedly point out locations that used to be thick with forest vegetation or bamboo during his childhood. Today, these areas stand as open grass or shrub land with the occasional tree, stunted in growth or completely dead due to burning or partial cutting (Figure 4.5). In other locations, entire trees have been felled, with large branches taken for building materials and the trunk left lying on the ground so that people could come back and chop off large splinters to carry back for fire wood. Likewise, it was not uncommon to pass people carrying long bamboo shoots several metres in length that had been cut at higher elevations and transported out of the forest reserve to use as building

materials for fences and houses. As well as this, numerous plumes of smoke could be seen drifting up from gullies and hill tops as people appeared to be burning large patches of land (particularly in the dry season). Clearly, this was not for agricultural reasons since there is currently no farming inside the forest reserve. Many individuals brushed off my question as to why so much burning was happening, stating that it was the result of children being careless with fire. This seemed rather unlikely, and it became clear that it was at least partly the result of individuals burning shrubbery and ferns in an attempt to stimulate the growth of grass for cattle to graze on.

A natural forest under siege from human activity. This is the picture that greets the eyes of the Kenya Forest Service and other conservationists when they arrive in Embobut. The remainder of this chapter, does not deny that deforestation has occurred within Embobut. Rather, it aims to unpack in a more rigorous manner how people have lived within these hills and how the histories of environments and humans have mutually unfolded together through time. In order to achieve this, we must first grasp the approximate timeframe in which people actually migrated into the region.



Figure 4.5: Images of deforestation in eastern Embobut

4.5 Stories of Migration

In Chapter 2.1, I introduced the deeper history of the Western Highlands of Kenya with reference to archaeological evidence and wider literature. Whilst this project does not attempt to distinguish 'autochthonous' populations within the immediate study area for reasons addressed in Chapter 1.3, it is important to understand local narratives of migration into the region as glimpsed from oral histories in order to temporally frame the activities that have been undertaken. Some of these themes will be touched on again in the ensuing chapters, particularly with regard to specific clan migrations. For the time being, however, I introduce the broader time frame of when people started to live in Cherangani.

The majority of informants stated that the ancestors of their respective family lineages migrated into the Cherangani Hills from the areas of Mount Elgon and Trans-Nzoia to the west (e.g Kisang Kibor 04.06.2016; Kisang Kirotich 05.08.2016; Jacob Changwony Komen 06.03.2017). One prominent story originates from a particular place called Kiptaberr, a large rocky outcrop on the western side of the Cherangani Hills. This hill has a curious tale that tells of how people came to occupy parts of Embobut (Kipkorir 1973).

The story tells of how, a long time ago, there was no rocky outcrop, just the last flat piece of land of the plains at the foot of the Cherangani Hills. One evening, there was a huge ceremony where people were singing and dancing late into the night. Suddenly, a crow flew out of the darkness to warn them that a giant rock was going to fall from the sky and crush them if they did not move. Most people ignored the crow, instead continuing with the festivities of the evening. Some people, however, listened to the warning and left the ceremony, dispersing east across the hills. Soon after, a giant rock fell from the sky,

crushing everyone who did not leave the ceremony. It is this rock that is called Kiptaberr today and, when the rain falls, it is possible to hear the singing spirits of those killed. The people who left the ceremony travelled across the hills and dispersed into the highlands, with some moving into the forests and others onto the Elgeyo Escarpment and into the Kerio Valley on the eastern side of Cherangani.

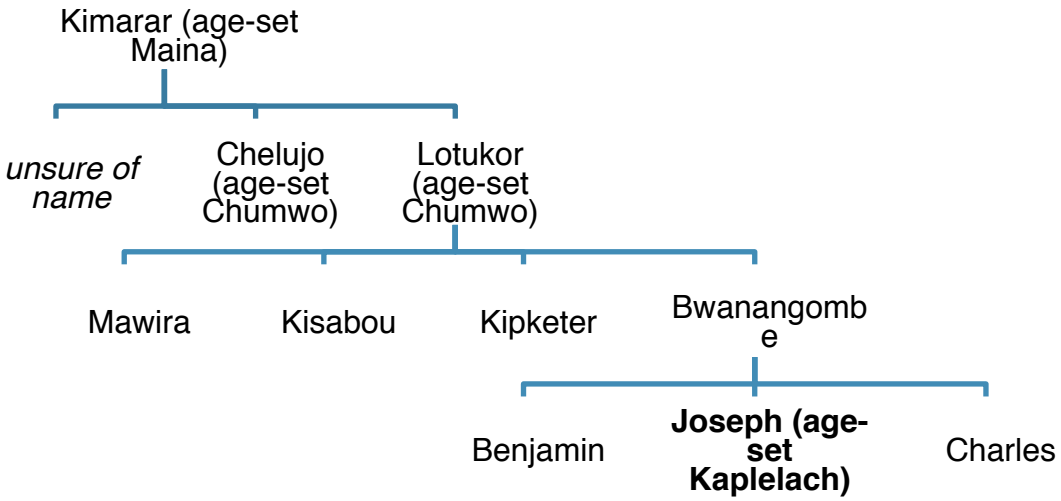


Figure 4.6: Rocky outcrop of Kiptaberr on the western side of the Cherangani Hills

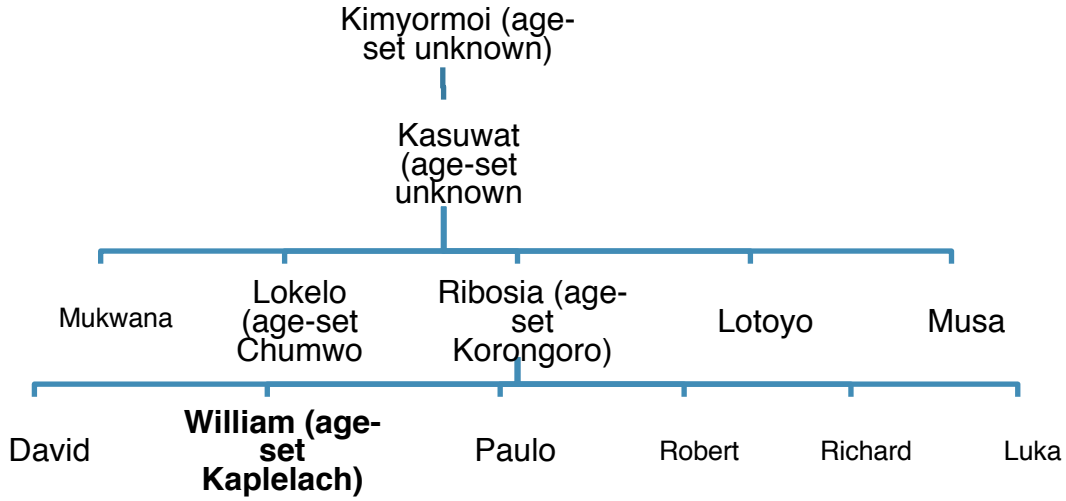
It must be noted that this story is not told by everyone across the region and that there are many variations and localised narratives of movement of different ancestors from different locations. For example, the clan of Kacheseker now residing on the Elgeyo Escarpment seems to have been founded from an individual called Kipkembich who fled his home in the Kerio Valley to the east (David Kay 2017, personal communication). The general narrative that can be extrapolated from these accounts is fragmented as a gradual movement of people from different directions into the highlands and the Elgyo Escarpment. Chronologically speaking, it is difficult to pinpoint a precise period in which

this movement happened. Oral historical accounts and genealogies carried out with community members seem to suggest that the area was populated between four and six generations ago. This is demonstrated in three examples below:

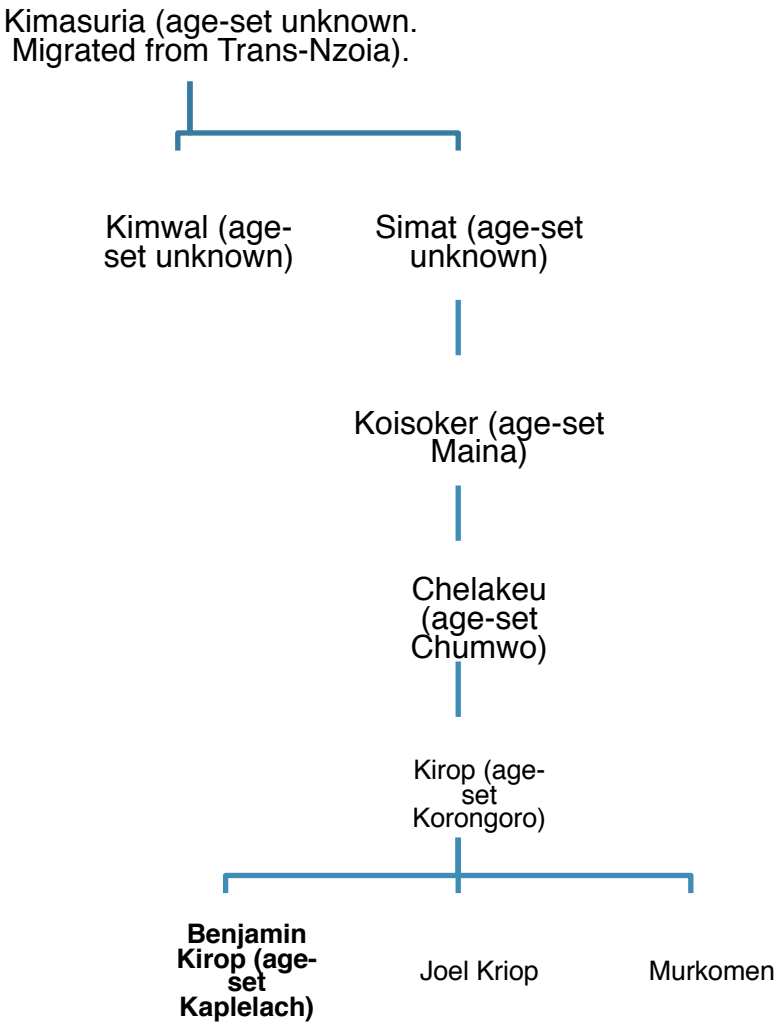
Family lineage of Joseph Toroitich Kirotich 10.03.2017



Family lineage of William Kasuwat (07.03.2017)



Family lineage of Benjamin Kirop Koiseker (28.09.2016)



A useful, albeit imprecise, device for approximating calendric dates can be achieved by using the 'age-set' system. This is a system possessed by all Kalenjin groups whereby every individual is incorporated into a named group with their peers by means of a ritual seclusion period and circumcision ceremony. Whilst men retain the same age-set throughout their lifetime, female age-sets are more transient as they acquire the set and clan of their husband upon marriage (Moore 1986). As such, genealogical time is orientated around the male lineage. In light of this, compiling the sequence of male age-sets and cross-dating them with calendrical dates helps to create a proxy for absolute time.

The age-set system comprises eight named sets that repeat themselves in a cyclical manner. With each age-set lasting between 12-15 years (depending on regional variation), the entire cycle takes approximately 100-120 years in total. The male age-sets are as follows:

Maina → Chumo → Sawe → Korongoro → Kaberur → Kaplelach → Kimyikeu → Nyongi.

Table 4.1: Comparison of Pokot, Marakwet and Sengwer age-set dates. (after Davies 2009, Table B.1)

Author	**Bollig (1990: 80)**	**Moore (1986: 60)**	**Davies (2009)**	**Lunn-Rockliffe (2018)**
Group	Pokot	Marakwet	Pokot	Sengwer/Marakwet
Length of Set	Approximately 25 years	14-16 years	12-13 years	14-17 years
Order and dates of sets	Sowō Chumwō Koronkoro Kipkoimet Kaplelach (*c*. 1815) Merkutwō (*c*. 1840) Nyongi (*c*. 1865) Maina (*c*. 1890) Chumwō (1916-20) - Koronkoro (1956-59) - Kaplelach (1988)	Nyongi (1870) Maina (1885) Chumo (1900) Sawe (1916) Korongoro (1930) Kaberur/Kipkoimet (1946) Kaplelach (1961) Kimnygeu (1975)	Merkütwo (1873-85) Nyonki (1886-98) Maina (1899-1911) Chumwo (1912-24) Sowo (1925-37) Koronkoro (1938-50) Kapkoymot (1951-63) Kaplelach (1964-77) Murkütwo (1978-95)	Maina (*c*. 1885) Chumo (*c*.1900) Sawe (*c*. 1915) Korongoro (*c*. 1930) Kaberur (*c*. 1946/47) Kaplelach (1961/1962) Kimyigeu (1980 (unclear)) Nyongi (1991) Maina/Chumo (2018)[15]

In comparison with the work conducted by different researchers on Marakwet and Pokot age-sets, the order of age-sets documented on my fieldwork is consistent. What remains a little hazier is the timeframe of each set, with different research documenting slightly different periods of duration and initiation dates. My interviews are no exception to this,

[15] At the time of research, the Maina age-set had still not been initiated. Informants stated that the delay was in part due to the fact that Maina is associated with drought so it may be skipped.

with most coming from the Kaplelach age-set stating that the first circumcision ceremony was likely to have been 1961/1962 (the imprecise nature of this was purely down to the fact that some informants gave me different dates). Such differences in timeframe, as summarised in Table 4.1, may be due to regional variation, where there is not a unanimous date set across an entire region, but rather more localised initiation ceremonies. Indeed, the age-sets of the Pokot tend to be slightly behind those of the Markawet as it is said that they 'follow' them by a couple of years. This can be seen by comparing the dates posited by Davies (2009) obtained in the Wei Wei Valley with those of Moore (1986) from the Kerio Valley to its south. The age-sets documented by Moore (1986), are geographically closer to my study area than those of the Pokot, with the Kaplelach age-set date more closely matching my own (Joseph Toroitich Kirotich 03.10.2016).

Aside from the minor variation between these dates, there is a clear order to the eight age-sets as well as to their broad timeframes that helps us to approximate the period of arrival for some of the ancestors of the lineages given above. In these cases, informants can remember the names of ancestors who were of the Chumo age set, clearly demonstrating that people had inhabited the area by the early twentieth century. Extending this back to earlier individuals, however, has to include a level of assumption given that the informants did not know the age-set of the respective ancestors. Take, for example, the lineage of William Kasuwat who knew that his father's brother, Lokelo, was of the Chumo age-set. Kimyormoi, the ancestor who was said to have migrated into this area from the plains of Trans-Nzoia, was two generations above Lokelo (and three generations above William), meaning that he was very likely to have been of two age-sets above, or in other words Nyongi. Looking back at Table 4.1, we can thus infer that Kimyormoi moved into the region at some point in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The

lineage of Benjamin Kirop Koiseker appears somewhat deeper, with Kimasuria, the ancestor who migrated from Trans-Nzoia, being at least three age-sets above Chumo and two above Maina. This would mean that he was of the age-set of Kimyikeu and possibly migrated into Embobut in the middle of the nineteenth century. Such a timeframe is in line with the deeper histories explored in Chapter 2.1, where I explored how the formation and migration of current populations in Cherangani occurred over the past 250 years or so after the collapse of the Uasin Gishu Maasai and the abandonment of the Sirikwa way of life[16].

This general pattern of people migrating into the region seemed to be common across my interviews and, whilst not precise, helps paint a picture of when contemporary populations moved into the immediate study area. I now move on to explore the macro picture of the study region, looking at where people lived upon migrating here and how other aspects of the landscape became entwined with people's livelihoods.

4.6 The Glades of Embobut

"When I was growing up, the glades were beautiful. They were clearings in the forest made by God for animals to be in the sun"

Kimoi Suter Chebural, 03.08.2016

"The surrounding forest was thick and dark, it was a scary place full of wild animals. The glade was light and open".

Saniaka Chelanga, 08.03.2017

[16] As explored in Appendix B, I conducted work on the archaeology of the deeper history of Embobut with varying results. This included excavations of possible 'Sirikwa holes' and the observation of rouletted pottery similar to those associated with the Sirikwa tradition. Given that contemporary communities were unaware of the origin of these earthworks and pottery, it is likely that the region was populated in the past by different people. Whether or not these populations were proto-Kalenjin people remains unclear.

Throughout my interviews and informal conversations, the description of forest glades as safe, open places in comparison to the 'thick and dark' forest was commonly encountered. These forest glades, or *tirich* as they are called in both Sengwer and Marakwet vernaculars, appear to have been the chosen place of habitation when people started to populate the area. Loosely translated, *tirich* refers to a clearing that God made in the forest for animals to sun themselves.

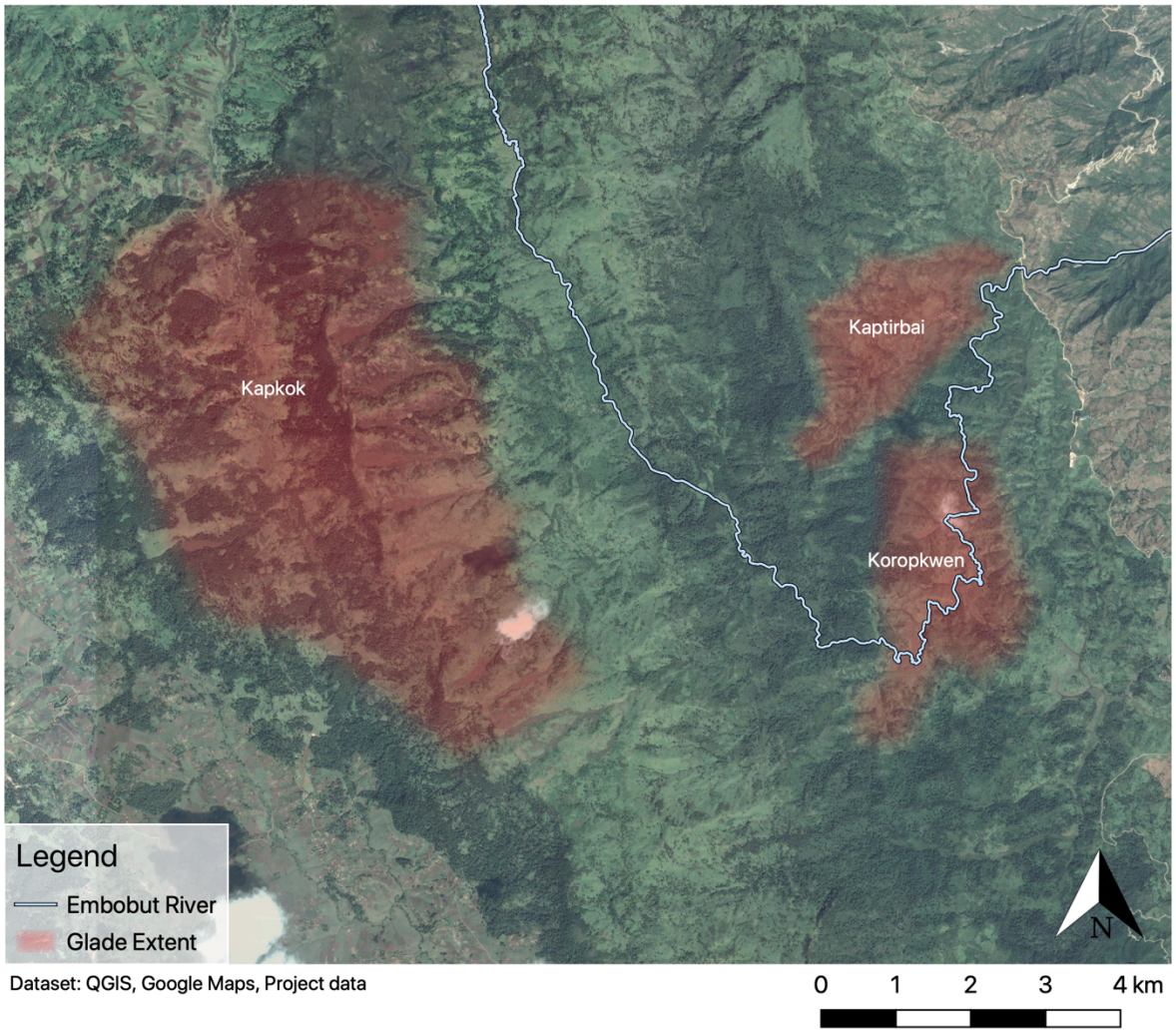


Figure 4.7: Map depicting present-day glades in Embobut

In and amongst the forest vegetation of Embobut, there were six of these glades that elders stated people had lived in: Koropkwen, Kaptirbai, Kapkok, Kesson, Sinen and Kewbas. During my fieldwork, I chose to focus on the first three of these glades, Koropkwen,

Kaptirbai and Kapkok, for two reasons (Figure 4.7). Firstly, and more pragmatically, mapping each glade was not logistically feasible in the timeframe available due to the distance between each one and the lack of infrastructure for reaching these locations. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly within the context of this study, only the first three glades were claimed to be the ancestral home of the Sengwer, with the other three being inhabited by the Marakwet (an interesting discussion in its own right that I address in Chapter 7.1).

Walking around these locations in the present-day, it is difficult fully to comprehend the exact size and nature of the glades due to the large amount of deforestation and changing nature of what is locally meant by 'a glade' or *tirich*. Indeed, with the undulating terrain now characterised by shrubbery and open grassland, the previous boundary of a 'thick' forest in comparison to a light open area is far less clear. This can be illustrated by examining a historical photograph taken 1967 by the Royal Air Force[17]. In this photograph, we can clearly see the openings of Koropkwen and Kaptirbai glades contrasted against the darker forest (Fig. 4.8). In comparison, contemporary satellite photographs available from Google satellite imagery show that these glades are no longer clearings within thick vegetation, but rather part of a broader mosaic of grassland and shrubland. This is even more evident when walking on the ground when I was guided by community elders around the former glade, where the 'edge' of what was once a more clear-cut distinction between forest and open grassland has long since disappeared. Nevertheless, one way of comprehending where the forest line use to sit, as described by elders, is to use a particular grass (the exact species could not be determined) as a proxy. Wirier in texture and browner in colour than the lighter kikuyu grass (*Pennisetum*

[17] These photographs were taken at various points in the mid twentieth century predominantly for topographic and land-use mapping purposes.

clandestinum), this grass still exists today and testifies to how people moved up away from the river in order to clear forest for new homesteads, leaving the land closest to the river abandoned and uncultivated (see Chapter 6.4). The lighter grass visible from these photographs is the result of deforestation and cultivation, a phenomenon that is also visible on aerial photograph and satellite imagery (Figure 4.8, Figure 4.9).

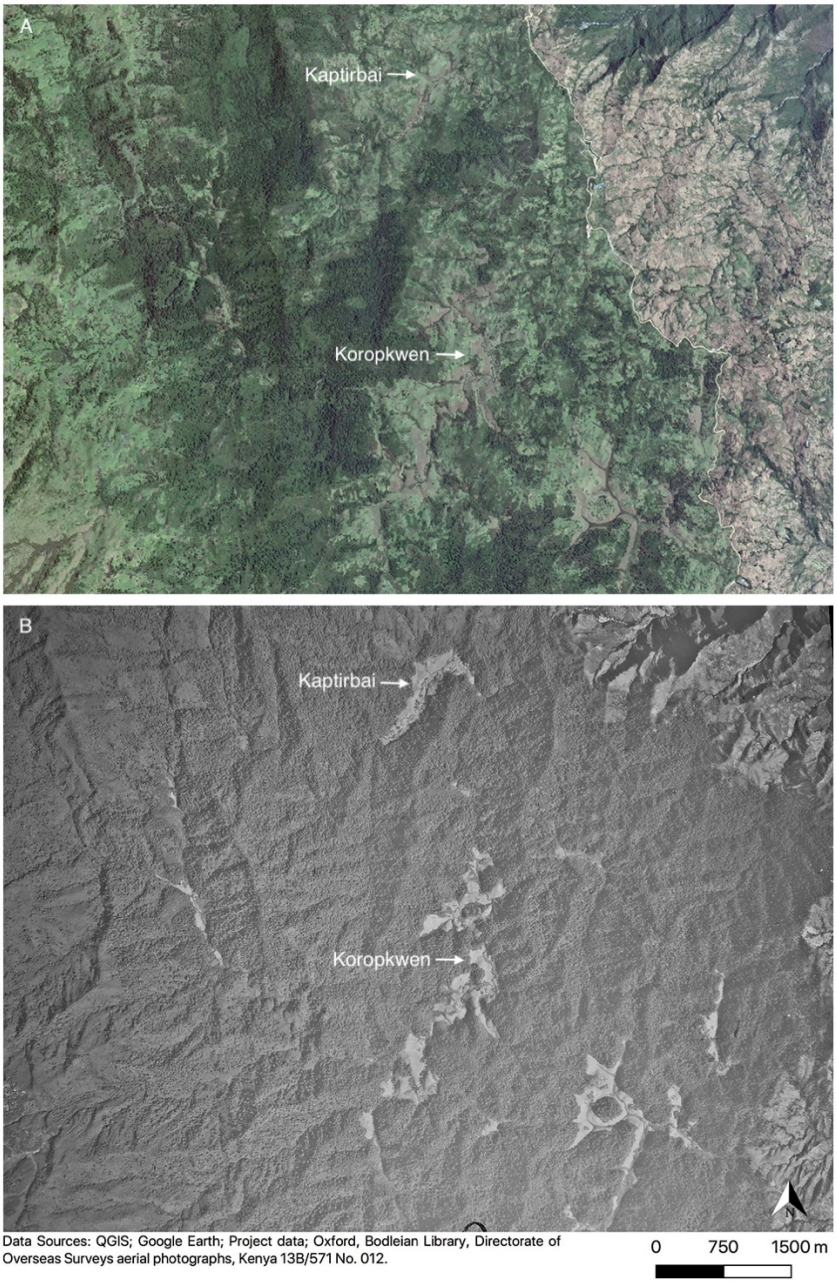


Figure 4.8: a). Google satellite image depicting the Koropkwen and Kaptirbai glades; b) 1967 Aerial photograph depicts the same area. Note how the approximate shape of the glades in the 1967 area is visible in the brown grass in the satellite images.



Figure 4.9: Inside Koropkwen glade. Note the change in grass vegetation, particularly in the lower image.

The aerial photographs as well as the different grass type can both be used as a proxy for the historic glades of Koropkwen and Kaptirbai glades. But what of Kapkok? This is the largest of the three glades discussed in this study and unlike the other two that are situated on the Embobut River, it is predominantly located on the Arror River at a higher elevation. Although Kapkok is locally called a 'glade', it is conceptually harder to grasp as an opening in the forest as it extends above the afroapline belt and onto highland heathland. Thus, small patches of trees exist within the undulating terrain across the highlands, but Kapkok is not a glade *per se* surrounded by thick forest. It is difficult to assess if Kapkok was a more definitive glade in the past, but, given the altitude, it is unlikely that it existed in the manner of Koropkwen and Kaptirbai. Furthermore, whilst its general location could be documented by means of walking the landscape with community elders, it was somewhat harder to identify how it has changed given the already patchy nature of heathland vegetation.

It is clear from this discussion that there is a certain sense of fluidity behind glades and *tirich* as places of habitation. Indeed, the very notion of identifying an 'historic glade' from photographs and vegetation invokes the idea that there is a contemporary glade different to that of the past. Interestingly, this posed a methodological problem as to how one 'mapped' the present-day understanding of these place given that the glade's 'edge' is no longer marked by a physical forest. In other words, it is not a distinguishable glade at all, but rather a more general place of residence that expanded out of a physical clearing over the course of the twentieth century. Thus, mapping the 'edge' is a somewhat arbitrary notion that is neither needed or used by local people. This became most clear to me when, after asking an elder if the glades are bigger today than in the past, he stated that "the *tirich* was where the houses were". This statement, I found, was a far easier way of

conceptualising the extent of the glades. For if people settled in the small forest clearings, and over time cleared forest to build new houses, then the very act of house building in the place of forests changed the size and shape of the glade. I have attempted to illustrate this concept in both Figures 4.7 and 4.8, where the glade is depicted as having faded edges in order to represent what is in reality a fluid place that has changed (and indeed continues to change) over time.

In light of this definition and given that there are no more houses[18], the maps that I created represent the extent of the glade prior to the 2013 evictions. With the sheer size and amount of abandoned housing platforms of former houses, it was not possible to map the location of all the homesteads. Instead, we walked around the furthest reaching abandoned house platforms that sprawled out from the historic glade, marking waypoints in order to glimpse an approximate size in comparison to the historic photograph. From this activity it is clear that the places of Koropkwen and Kaptirbai glades have expanded over time. Indeed, by projecting back the approximate size upon the historical photograph, we can glimpse a picture of how much it has changed over the last 50 years.

[18] With the exception of small shelters constructed by individuals tending to cattle (see Chapter 6).

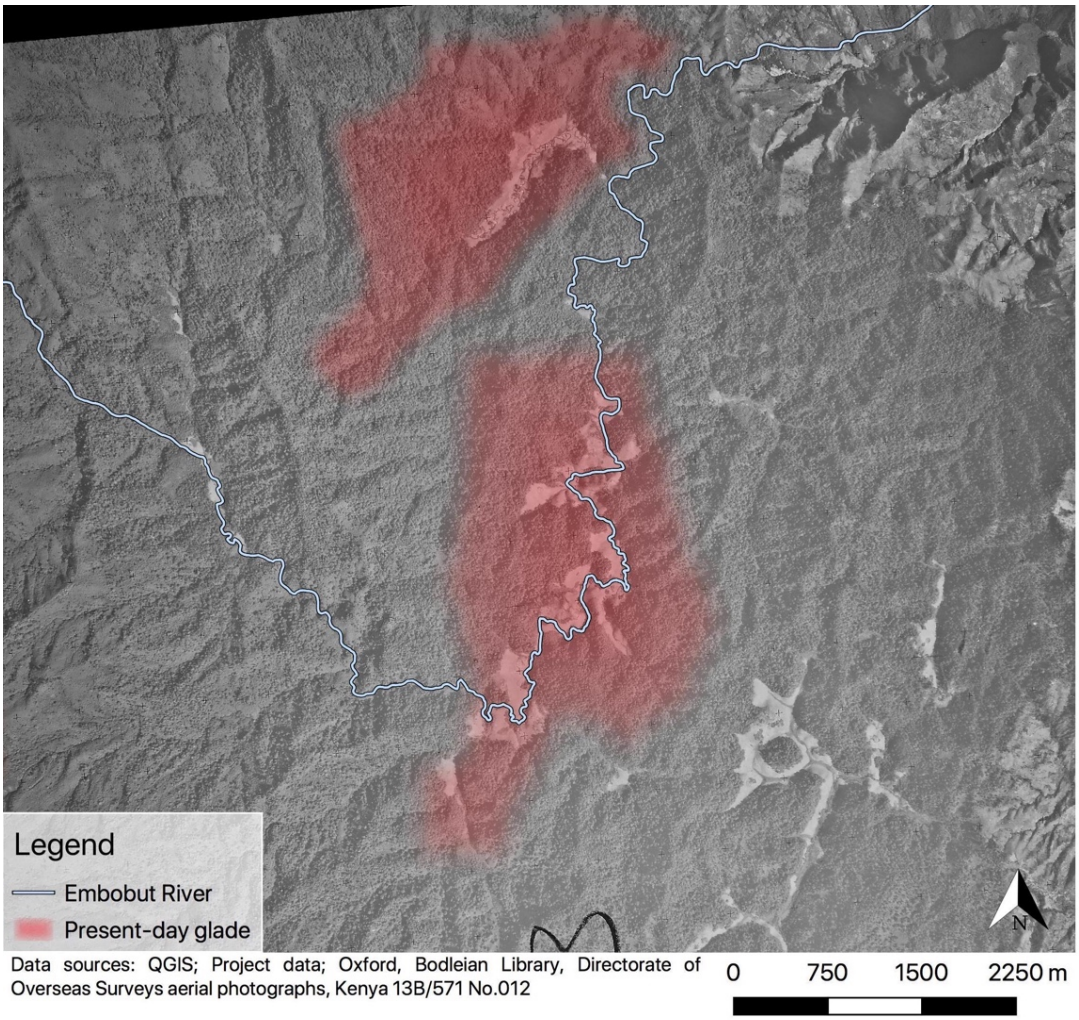


Figure 4.10: Approximate size of the contemporary glade in comparison to historic glade

4.7 Lines of Movement and Knotted Places

Thus far we have seen where people took up residence in the glades of Embobut Forest. As with Ingold's (2011) idea of knots, different places across the hills came to have different uses as particular activities unfolded in different locales. The glades themselves were places of residence, coming into existence through the activities of building and living in houses (see Chapter 6.4), tending to cattle and, in the second half of the twentieth century, cultivating (see Chapter 5.8). But these glades did not exist as isolated places separate from one another or from the surrounding forest. Rather, they were part of a wider meshwork of places. Crucially, the forests themselves were incredibly important

for people's livelihoods. The plural form of forests is used here to highlight how different clans had their own territorial forest areas that were used for foraging, hunting and keeping beehives for honey production. This framing sits in contrast to the forest block of Embobut as imposed by the Kenya Forest Service which homogenises what is a historically complicated locally constructed landscape into one single area.

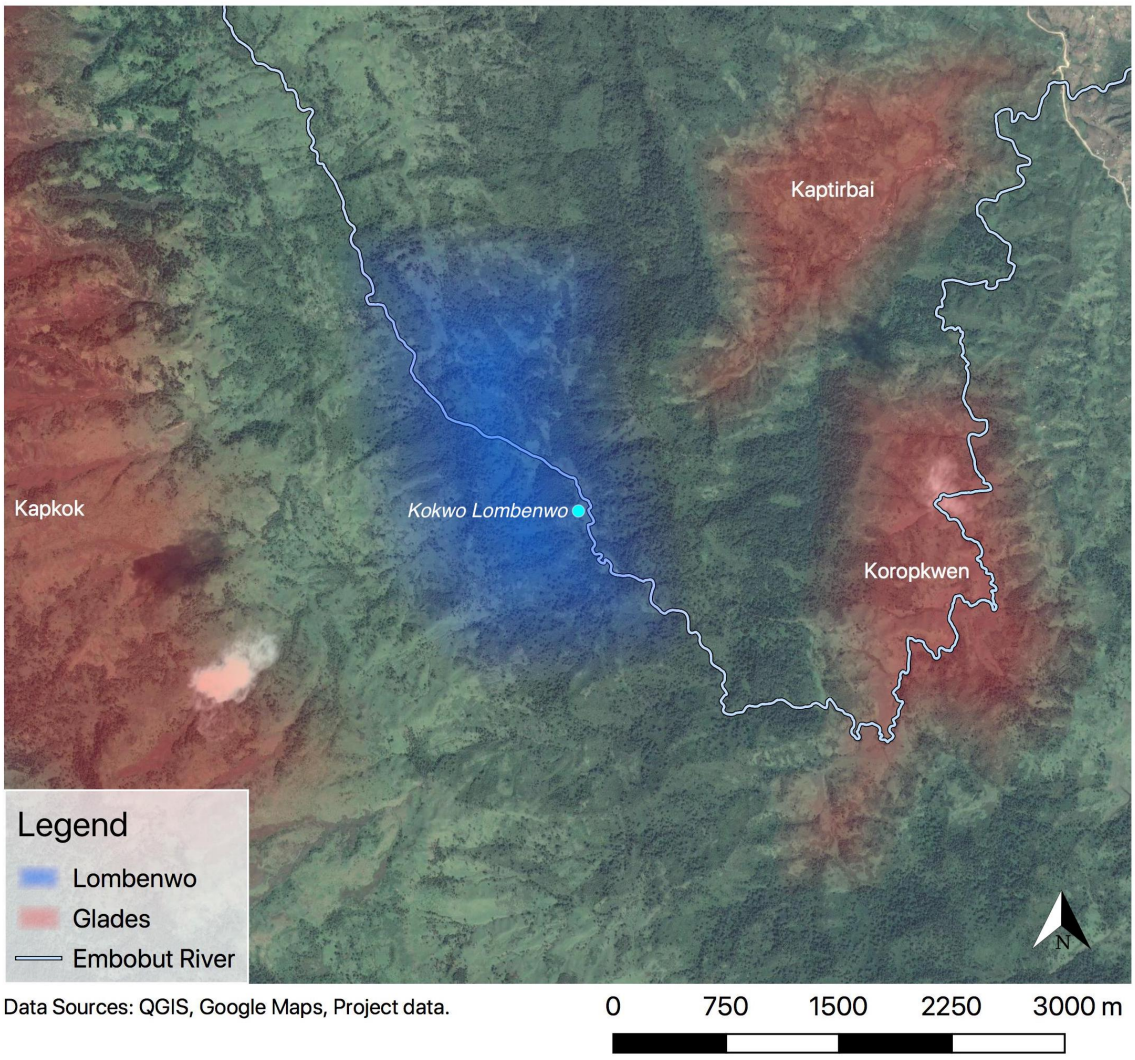


Figure 4.11: Location of Lombenwo

Areas of clan forest were located both immediately adjacent to the glades and slightly further afield. One of the predominant areas of clan forest for the people of Koropkewn, Kapkok and Kaptirbai is collectively referred to as a broader area called Lomenbwo (Figure 4.11). Roughly located between the three glades, it is characterised today by a

considerably larger amount of forest vegetation than that of the expanded glades. The apparent difference appears to be because people refrained from cultivating in Lombenwo, instead attempting to protect the forest resources for future generations (see Chapter 5.7). Although this may have been the case, forest growth is still stunted as evidenced by the cutting and burning of trees for building materials. In the following chapter I examine more closely how Lombenwo was organised in relation to the clans of Koropkwen as well as how the forests were used, including an examination of the different forest resources and the community rules that helped protect the trees. For the time being, however, it is important to acknowledge Lombenwo as a significant part of the hills where people came and went on a daily basis in order to attend to their beehives, hunt for animals and forage for plants.

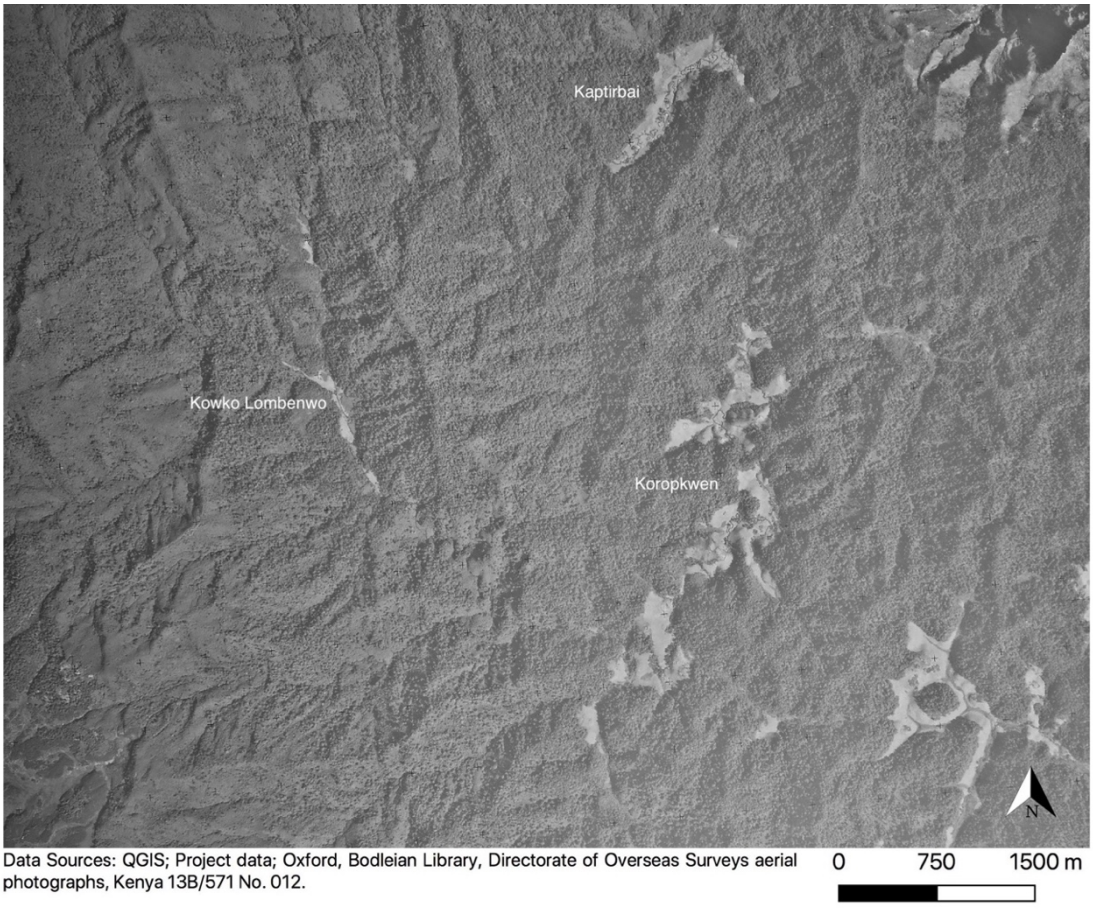


Figure 4.12: 1967 aerial photograph clearly depicting Kokwo Lombenwo glade

Whilst it is futile to talk of a border or edge of Lombenwo (as I found out on many occasions when naively trying to understand its size in a similar vein to that of the glades), it is possible to talk of a centre. This is not a geographical centre, but rather a centre of local importance nestled within the forest in the form of another glade called *Kokwo Lombenwo* (meeting place of Lombenwo). Despite the fact that this *tirich* is much smaller than Koropkwen, Kaptirbai and Kapkok, it is still visible on the aerial photograph of 1967 (Figure 4.12). As Joseph mused to me one day as we strolled through this *tirich*, this place is perhaps the closest representation in the present-day as to how all of the glades used to feel in the past. Indeed, as the Embobut River snakes its way through the small opening, the brightness of the sun does provide a contrast to the vegetation of the forest that still imposes on its edge. According to elders, this place was never permanently inhabited. Instead, it became an important resting place where people travelling to and from their clan forests could wait for others in order to travel onward together (Figure 4.13).

The use of Kowko Lombenwo as an important resting place emerges from the act of travelling. This was an important part of everyday activity, be it the localised movement within glades as people tended to their cattle, or the journeys taken to and from the surrounding forest of which appears to have been limited to major trackways that wound through the thick vegetation. These arterial routes were walked and mapped with community elders in order to understand how people used to move through the land (see Figure 4.15). If they wanted to travel to their clan forest in Lombenwo, there were only three major pathways from Koropkwen, Kaptirbai and Kapkok that wound across hill ridges to meet in Kokwo Lombenwo. From here people could disperse into their individual clan forests which were intimately known by each clan member. Whilst there is a separate path that travels from Koropkwen to Kaptirbai that cuts out the longer route through Lombenwo, if an individual wanted to journey up to Kapkok, they had pass

through Kokwo Lombenwo. The hike to Kapkok itself is a particularly long and exhausting journey, taking between three to four hours, as well as climbing almost 900 metres in altitude.

The act of walking along these paths appears to have been a communal activity whereby individuals would rest and wait in particular locations in order to travel with someone else. The reason for this, as stated by a number of elders, was safety: "Travelling was always done in groups as we were scared of wild animals that could hide in the thick forest" (Musa Koimen 05.03.2017). The glade of Kokwo Lombenwo was one of these places, where people could wait for others who had gone to their clan forests and travel back to the glades of residence together.

The act of journeying also had a performative element to it. Informants stated that before travelling a long distance they would take a growing tuft of grass and tie it in a knot at the entrance way to the forest in a practice called *kerat suswon* (Jacob Changwony Komen 06.03.2017; Daniel Kiptarus Kilimo 06.03.2017; Paulo Cheserek Kelimo 07.03.2017). The reason for this appears to have been twofold. Firstly, the knot was tied in an appeal to the sun to move slower across the sky, meaning that the daylight hours would be longer for travelling as it was unsafe to travel during the night. Secondly, given that the knots were tied in particular locations known by local people, if one passed by tufts of grass that were untied it was a warning that enemies from the outside or wild animals such as leopards had passed through and that one had to remain cautious.



Figure 4.13: View into Kowko Lombenwo glade from an old arterial trackway

Other than these arterial trackways through the forest, there also existed a major route from Kaptirbai glade, down the face of the Elgeyo Escarpment and into the Kerio Valley. One predominant use of this track was for taking cattle downslope where natural salt licks can be found. As there were no salt licks in the forest highlands, such a journey had to be undertaken once every two months, becoming an important recurring task. This trip took anything between three and five days depending on where one was walking from. Indeed, travelling from Kapkok added an extra two days of travel, where it took an extra day to walk from the pathway from Kapkok, through Lombenwo and into Kaptirbai where the access path to the valley was located. These trips appear to have been predominantly orientated around tending to cattle and collecting salt. Some people went as far as filling up animal skin bags (*torgal)* with the salty sand in order to take it back so that it could be mixed with water, filtered and used in cooking (John Cheboi Onontich 10.08.2016; Samuel Chemeitoi 17.08.2016). Opportunistic trade was not usually conducted on these

trips as individuals wanted to focus on caring for their herd (Murkomeu Kirop 11.10.2016). Instead, it was conducted on different occasions when people did not need to keep watch of their animals, journeying down to, or up from, the valley or the lower slopes of the escarpment in order to exchange meat, honey, milk and beehives for grains such as finger millet (*Eleusine coracana*). These were being grown at lower elevations before any form of cultivation occurred in the highlands (see Chapter 5.8; Davies and Moore 2016).

People making the longer journey from Kapkok often rested overnight at a rock shelter called Kimnamtasa located in the centre of Kaptirbai glade on the edge of the Embobut River (Figure 4.14; Chelimo Chepsiya 27.09.2016; Paulo Cheserek Kelimo 07.03.2017). This rock shelter is characterised by a large boulder that provides three distinct overhangs under which people could shelter. Due to the fact that this rock sits on a slope, the overhangs are located at slightly different levels and even in the present-day remain relatively difficult to access due to vegetation. The concealed nature of these overhangs rendered Kimnamtasa not only an important resting place, but also a location where local residents of Kaptirbai glade could hide when cattle raiders stole livestock (locally called *chemwal* and believed to have come from Nandi; Kanda Chebet 09.08.2016). Other informants stated that Kimnamtasa was also used for storing beehives, drying tobacco on top of the rock in the heat of the sun and grinding maize (Chemeitoi Yego 18.08.2016; Susana Toroitich 28.09.2016).

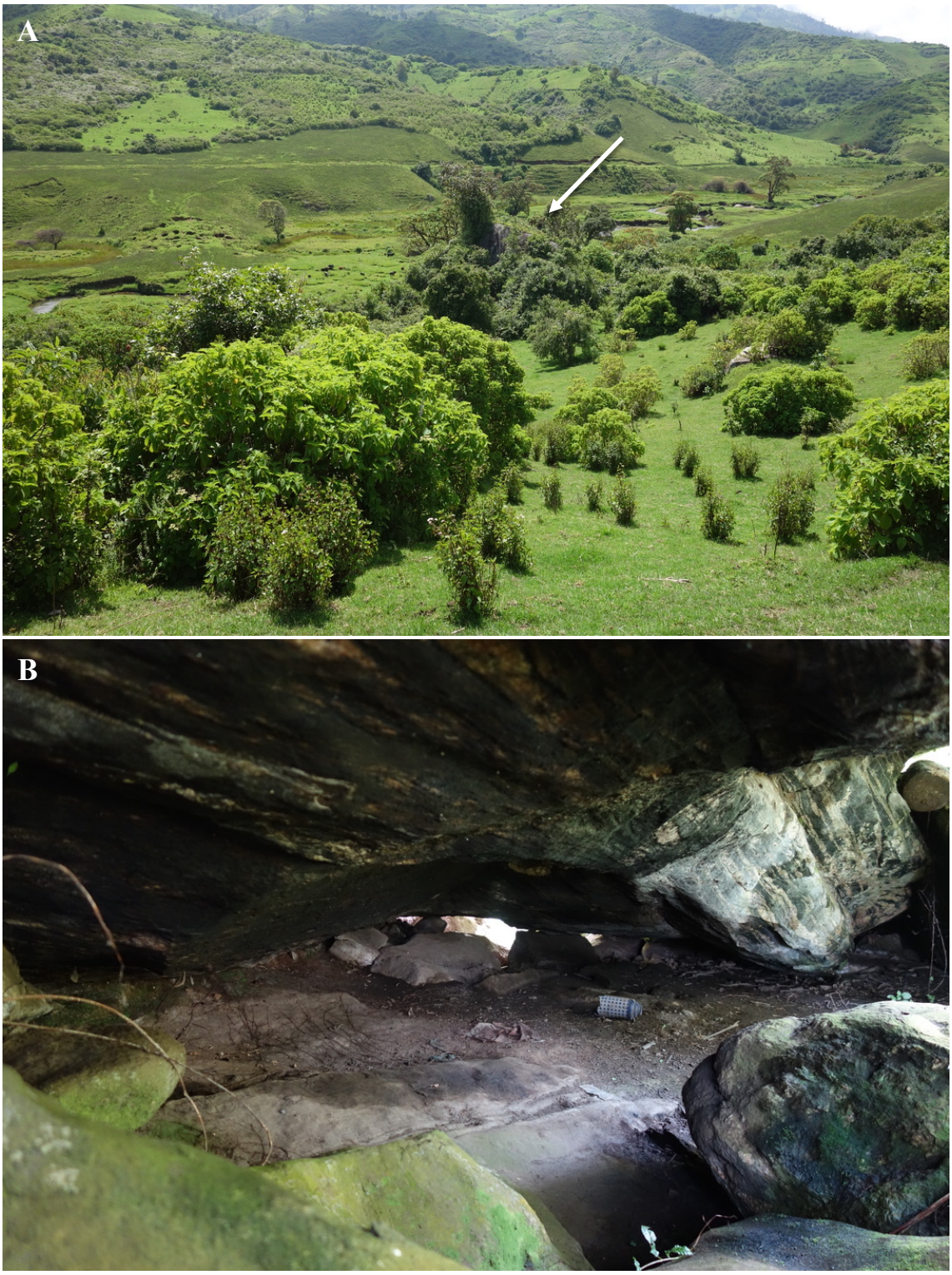


Figure 4.14: a.) Kimnamtasa rock shelter hidden amongst the vegetation; b.) underneath the highest overhang on the southern side.

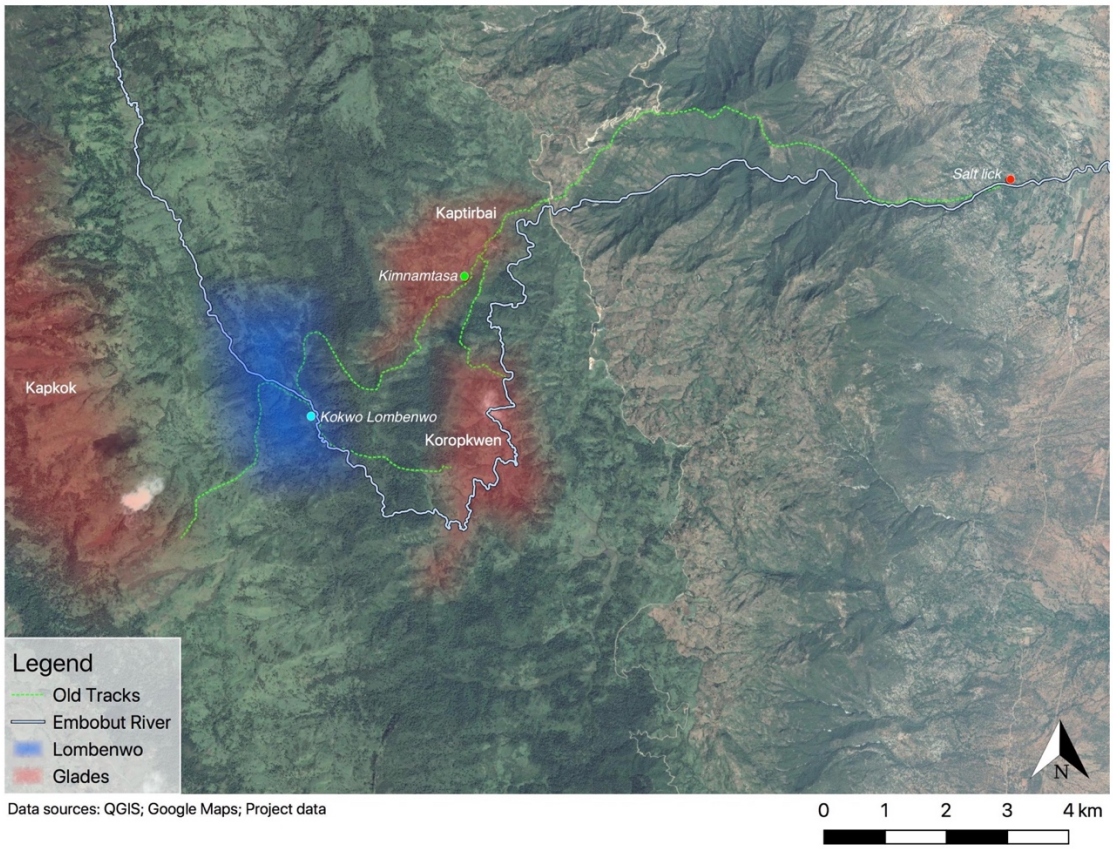


Figure 4.15: Arterial tracks that were used to travel between the glades and down to the salt licks in the Kerio Valley

Today, the crisscrossing of trails across the hills that creates a dense web of lines is a clear indicator that how people have travelled has changed. A number of events over the latter half of the twentieth century have impacted on this. First, as I explore in more detail in the ensuing chapters, people started to experiment with cultivation in the early 1960s. This resulted in a shift in settlement away from the river and subsequently the open areas of the glades became bigger. This unfolding of new landscapes in the form of more grassland and agriculture led to a decrease in forest vegetation along with the depletion of animals' habitats. A more open landscape in turn facilitated new ways of travelling: crossing the hills became safer and easier as visibility was greater and thinner forest vegetation more penetrable. This gradual process resulted in more pathways and routes being created through the repeated practice of walking between new houses as well as

taking short cuts to clan forests. As well as this, there was a decreased necessity for people to wait for groups in particular locales, such that particular resting places were frequented less and less through time. Interestingly, with the evictions of 2013 and the subsequent abandonment of houses and fields, walking in and around the conservation area has left an even more open landscape that in some ways facilitates the greatest freedom of movement for people since they arrived around 150 years before. This is to say that, where there are no fields or houses for pathways to wind between and around, people can now walk freely in any direction, cutting across grassy slopes at will.

According to the interviews that I conducted (e.g Chelimo Chepsiya 27.09.2016; Benjamin Kirop Koiseker 28.09.2016; Murkomeu Kirop 11.10.2016), another major factor in the changing use of pathways was because salt became increasingly commercially available through the second half of the twentieth century. This meant that instead of walking herds of cattle down to the Kerio Valley every two to three months, bags of salt could be purchased from commercial centres such as Chesoi and Kapyeigo and transported into the highland glades by foot or donkey. As such, the arterial pathways were not utilised to the same extent, with people remaining more sedentary as their cattle remained in the glades. Likewise, the growth of maize in the highlands resulted in less trade between people living lower on the escarpment and those in the glades (see Chapter 5.8), again further contributing to decreased movement.

This is not to say that these old tracks became completely obsolete. Indeed, fragments still remain intact today, with people using them when taking specific routes, most noticeably when walking from Kaptirbai and Koropkwen glades to Kokwo-lombenwo. Here, the well-trodden pathways used throughout the twentieth century are clearly visible

as they wind through parts of the still existing forest. A majority of the old arterial routes, however, have become completely abandoned, either becoming overgrown and barely accessible, or so indistinguishable from the open grassland or other newer pathways that it is impossible to know where the tracks of greater antiquity lie without information from elders. In the first case, the path that ran from Kaptirbai to Koropkwen as a bypass of Lombenwo is so thick with shrubbery and small trees that it has become almost completely impenetrable. By contrast, the old track from Kokwo Lombenwo that climbs up to the higher elevations of Kapkok is all but invisible since the slopes have been cleared, grazing has become prevalent and people take any route deemed the most direct to their desired destination. Likewise, the track down to the Kerio Valley, whilst occasionally used, is no longer the most prominent way of travelling down the escarpment, with a newer motorable road having been built in the 2000s (see below).

The picture gained from these pathways of movement is one of a changing relationship between human activities and their landscapes. Early arterial routes saw people travelling between the forests and glades and up and down the escarpment, carrying the tasks of quotidian life. The journey itself was an integral part to this, becoming 'knotted' in different places of activity such as the resting and meeting places of Kokwo Lombenwo and Kimnamtasa, the houses in the glades and the clan forests themselves (Chapter 5.2). These major tracks that carved their way through the forest were in no way the result of people enacting their movements on to a separate nature. Rather, the pathways that twist and turn along topographical ridges were the working out and repetition of movement through imposing thick vegetation that was full of dangerous animals (particularly leopards). But as landscapes and livelihoods mutually unfolded, new opportunities arose as to how people journeyed, with less emphasis on travelling long distances for trade or

to collect salt. Travelling thus became less of a communal activity, and places of rest and meeting were used less and less as the landscape became more open and free. As I now go onto explore, however, these were by no means the only pathways of movement in the region, with the introduction of roads appearing in the latter half of the twentieth century.

4.8 Roads - A Reorientation of Place

The roads of Embobut have had a different life history to those of the tracks I have already discussed. The first road that exists in the memories of elders was said to have been built in the 1950s by the colonial administration (Luca Toroitich Kiraton 29.09.2016). Indeed, this is the only road visible on the 1969 OS maps and follows my own GPS track that was created by walking the length of it (Figure 4.16). The road was built from the commercial centre of Kapyeigo and existed as a part of a network of roads created by the colonial administration that sprawled across the Cherangani Hills. Following the Arror River through Kapkok, it winds over the heathland to the east before plunging down just north of Lombenwo, stopping at the Embobut River. Given that this was not a gravel or *murram* (compacted soil) road, it was only passable to those who owned an off-road vehicle and was barely used by local populations except perhaps as a pathway to walk along in and out of Kapkok. There used to be two administrative outposts along the road, one for a member of the Colonial Office and the other an employee of Forestry Department.

This road remained the main access into western Embobut until the mid-1970s when the first Catholic missionaries arrived in the area. It was at this time that a gradual network of roads was built on the eastern side of Embobut between the late 1970s to 1990s to link together a series of churches, schools and dispensaries strung along the Elgeyo Escarpment that were on the fringe of the eastern historic forest line. A part of this narrative was the gradual building of four large churches (St Michaels, Kapchebau,

WeWo and Lemeiywo; Figure 4.16) that have become significant waypoints with commercial centres built around them as one drives along the escarpment edge. The first road into this region was the most easterly, winding its way along the escarpment from the first small church to be built in the vicinity that was later replaced by the larger Lemeiywo church. This road meandered further north, climbing to a small hill top, where a larger church called St Michael's was built in the 1980s. This impressive building sat slightly east of an old demarcation beacon that marked the edge of the forest reserve (see below). The church became the centre of missionary activity in the area, providing lodgings for the Catholic priest, Father Reinhald, as well as a school and a dispensary that provided basic health care for local populations. The area gradually became known as Kakamiti, growing into the commercial centre where I stayed for the duration of my fieldwork. Today it is characterised by a number of kiosks, a butcher and a few 'hotels' (cafes) for drinking sweet *chai* and eating chapatti.

The first easterly road eventually fell into disuse when Father Reinhald built a second, more direct road from the south to St Michael's that also continued further north up to WeWo church. Although the beacons no longer stand, this road was built just inside the forest historic reserve (see below). Sprouting off from the road were two more roads that penetrated into Koropkwen and Kaptirbai glades to the west inside of which two smaller churches were built. One elder suggested that it had been Father Reinhald's aim to link these near Lombenwo and with the colonial road further to the east. However, as is evident from Figure 4.16**,** these roads never quite connected. As with the colonial road, the roads built by Father Reinhald initially had little impact on how people travelled through the forests and glades. This is because they were built for vehicle use and were thus more meandering in nature in order to avoid steep inclines. Given that almost nobody

had a vehicle that could negotiate the terrain or the thick mud (particularly in the rainy season), people continued to use other more direct pathways in the manner described above.

This small road network was predominantly used by the missionaries to navigate the local landscape. However, as stated by Daniel Kiptarus Kilimo (06.10.2016), it also provided the necessary infrastructure for members of the Forest Department to visit the area more frequently. Consequently, the forest was more routinely monitored, eventually leading to the burning of houses in the glades as deforestation became more prevalent towards the end of the twentieth century (Chapter 3.5 and Chapter 5.7)[19].

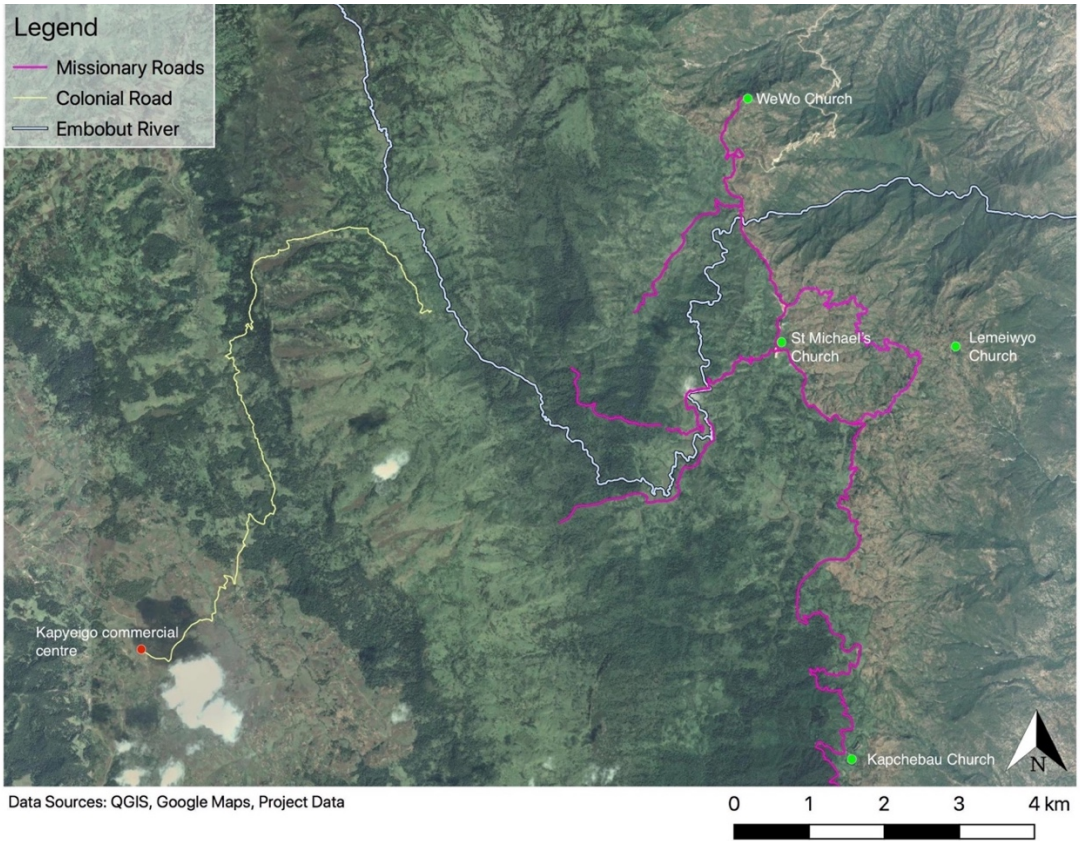


Figure 4.16: Roads constructed in the Embobut Forest in the latter half of the twentieth century

[19] A further impact that the roads brought to local livelihoods was that of clothes. The Catholic missionaries employed local people to help construct the roads and buildings, but rather than paying them in cash, they did so by donating recycled clothes from Europe (Susana Toroitich 28.09.2016; Benjamin Kirop Koiseker 28.09.2016; Kiplalwel Ketum Litan 07.10.2016).

In the mid-2000s, the road that ran north-south along the top of the escarpment that was initially constructed by the Catholic missionaries was reconstructed with *murrum* (compacted soil and gravel aggregate). The result was that more vehicles (particularly motorbikes) could use this road as a main arterial route in and out of the eastern side of the northern Cherangani Hills, giving rise to more commercial centres as well as contributing to the growth of those that were already established, such as Kakamiti and Sitat. Commercial goods such as salt, flour and sugar purchasable from Chesoi to the south that were previously transported on foot or by donkey were now brought into the area more quickly and frequently by an increasing number of vehicles. According to my research assistant Joseph, the commercial centre of Sitat was a product of this gradual growth, appearing once the *murrum* road had been laid. In Sitat today, there is a school, several cafes, a small church, a number of kiosks and a market once a month that sees numerous lorries driving to it from Eldoret four hours to the south. In 2013, this road started to be tarmacked, a process completed in 2017 that has only further contributed to an increase in transport and commerce.

It is in this way that one of the roads laid by the Catholic missionaries became the blueprint for the main route into eastern Embobut, seeing a reorientation of commercial life and trade around it. The other roads, on the other hand, appeared to go out of use as they were not maintained. This became clear through mapping the roads today, which showed that they now exist as an archaeological footprint faintly cutting along the hillside rather than as established tracks used by vehicles or people. As I now go on to explore, for people on the ground the main road that cuts along the escarpment is more than just a pathway along which people and goods are transported. It is also a physical boundary for

marking the edge of the conservation area that has in some respects reoriented social life, becoming a metaphorical fence that demarcates ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the forest.

4.9 Returning to Boundaries

As part of my fieldwork, I had aimed to map the edge of the conservation area in order to better understand how it has changed through time. It became quickly apparent, however, that this task was far more difficult than initially thought, not least because my access to old forest maps that show historic boundaries was restricted by the Kenya Forest Service. Furthermore, it was not necessarily the size of the conservation area that posed logistical difficulties in mapping the boundary, but rather the blurred nature of where the boundary actually is on the ground. This is to say that, in many places, there is no ‘boundary’ *per se*, but rather a mutual understanding or agreement between the Kenya Forest Service and local populations as to where people are allowed to settle. This is evident on the western side of the Embobut Forest block near Tangul, where there is an approximate forest line with houses constructed right up to the edge, but no physical markers, fences or roads are used to distinguish it Figure 4.17.



Figure 4.17: House on the western edge of Embobut Forest block. Note how there is no official boundary between the house and treeline.

A further issue encountered when attempting to understand the changing forest boundary arose when I asked my research assistant if we could try and map exactly where it used to be on the eastern side of the forest near Kakamiti and Sitat. He looked agitated, stating that, given how the original boundary was located to the east of the current one[20], the community would frown upon our mapping activities and start rumours that we were

[20] What is locally referred to as 'below the road' (Chapter 3).

expanding the conservation area with the aim of displacing more people. As such, I decided that asking questions and physically mapping the edge would be insensitive and instead asked a couple of elders with whom I had become well acquainted to point out the approximate locations of the hill tops where the beacons used to lie. In turn, this conversation led to the realisation that at one point the boundary was moved just west of the current one. Collecting GPS points for this, Joseph stated, would not be so insensitive as it is located inside the current conservation area. This amounted to five approximate GPS points where concrete beacons used to stand, only one of which was precise as its foundations were still visible.

In light of these experiences, the subsequent map presented below (Figure 4.18) does not portray an exact representation of past forest boundaries, but rather tells the story of the locally negotiated nature of the forest boundary as understood on the ground by populations immediately affected by it. The oldest boundary markings were put in place by the colonial Forest Department in the form of concrete beacons (Chapter 3.3), although people continued to live inside the demarcated Forest Block in the glades, with some elders stating that their parents were issued permits to do so by the colonial administration in the late 1930s and 1940s (see Chapter 5.6). As settlement changed inside the Forest Block, conservation policy saw an increased amount of evictions through the burning of houses in the 1980s in an attempt to move people to the east of the beacons. Within this context, negotiations between local populations and the Kenya Forest Service saw the moving of the beacons at some point in the 1990s to incorporate an area of forest to the west locally called Sui (Chapter 5.2). This adjustment allowed people who had settled inside the conservation area to live there legally, although exactly how and when this negotiation happened remains unclear. In the late 2000s, the road became the understood

boundary as recommended by the Embobut Task Force (2010; see Chapter 3.5), resulting in the increased burnings of houses that have been reported for the past decade. This was clearly distressful for the people who had decided to live inside the adjusted boundary, thinking they had negotiated a place to live legally only to be moved when the road became the demarcation. In contrast, the settlement within the glades has always remained within the forest block. As such, the negotiation between these people and the Kenya Forest Service did not exist as a dispute as to where they were living, but rather around the notion of permits as a form of title deed and a collaboration between community elders and the Kenya Forest Service that aimed to stop deforestation. The notion of permits will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

As I discuss further in Chapter 7, the physical demarcation of the Embobut Forest block was written on top, and in spite, of local ways of experiencing the world. In creating boundaries around certain areas that were deemed as important to protect, conservationists and environmentalists ignored the fluid pathways and threads along which life was lived, and instead drew a new series of lines as borders within which life was confined. Ultimately, this reduced the people living with the forests of Embobut into humans who illegally *occupied* a forest block rather than truly *inhabited* it (Ingold 2011: 145). Yet even these boundaries have not remained fixed since their implementation, shifting over time as they became increasingly entangled with different perceptions, understandings and the material compositions of the meshwork of Embobut.

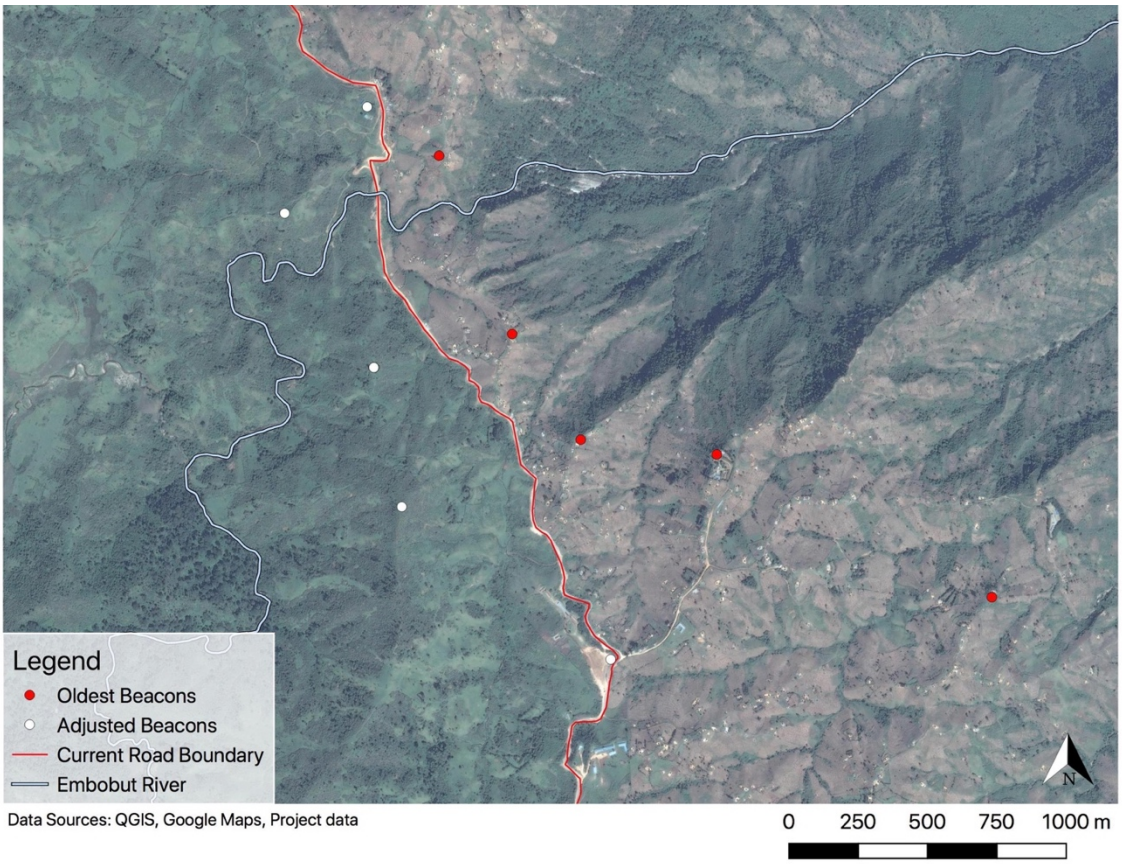


Figure 4.18: Map depicting the shifting nature of the Forest Block boundary. Constructed in the early twentieth century, the oldest beacons were adjusted at some point in the mid 1990s. These were then realigned with the road in 2010 (see also Chapter 3.5).

4.10 Conclusion

By employing a predominantly phenomenological methodology of walking the landscapes with community elders, I have attempted in this chapter to demonstrate how, in flipping Ingold's (2011) 'logic of inversion', we may create a different picture to that of a natural forest under siege from human activity. The forest was, and indeed continues to be, a complicated entanglement of pathways and places that become knotted in particular densities through time. For example, rather than focusing upon the road as a boundary that encloses a conservation area, examining the life history of the road itself illuminates the changing nature of commercial activity and trade for people in Embobut. This is not to say that the concept of the forest block is not important. On the contrary, it

was itself created through the practices and epistemologies of Western conservation science and exists as a part of a complicated history that tells the story of layered perceptions of what the Embobut Forest (or indeed forests of Embobut) means to different people. The problem lies with the placement as demarcating a 'natural' area in a manner that ignores the nuanced histories of local populations.

In sum, this chapter has offered a macro-picture of the forests of Embobut, describing how in the mid-to late nineteenth century the ancestors of contemporary populations migrated into the forest glades. These glades were linked by a series of major trackways that carved their way through the landscape weaving into other 'knotted' places of activity such as the clan forests of Lombenwo. Considered temporally, the livelihoods and landscapes of Embobut mutually unfolded together, with new opportunities arising as to how people journeyed as the landscape opened up with increased cultivation. In the second half of the twentieth century, these threads became intertwined with infrastructure associated with the expanding colonial and post-colonial Forest Departments and Catholic missionaries in the form of beacons, roads, churches and commercial centres. Whilst I have broadly illustrated the major places of importance here, the following chapter explores in more detail the relationship that people had with the glades and how particular activities created certain locations.

Chapter 5 : Honey at the Top

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated that nature and culture should not be treated as separate entities, but rather need to be seen as inherently entwined. By focusing upon the knots of different places that constitute pathways of activity, I began to shift focus away from the discussion of Embobut as a forest block that is a 'natural' ecosystem under siege from humans to examining when, where and how people came to inhabit the area. So far, I have only emphasised the broader history and locations of activity in the region. This chapter aims to examine more closely the activities that took place in the glades and clan forests by exploring the role of animals, plants and the very topography of the landscape in the lives of Embobut populations. In order to achieve this, I first offer a brief anthropological discussion examining human/animal relations stemming from the work of Donna Haraway (2008) that in turn feeds into a broader and more material focused examination of human/environment relations as explored through Ingold's (2000) dwelling perspective. From this, I take the glade of Koropkwen introduced in the previous chapter as a sample in order to demonstrate more closely how territories are divided up and how people utilised their clan forests. I then expound three case histories of different clans residing in Koropkwen in order to better comprehend understandings of different places on a more local level. Finally, I draw the chapter to a close by discussing how cultivation began to be practised in Embobut in the latter half of the twentieth century.

5.1 Dwelling in a Multispecies Weather World

In the previous chapter I offered a macro-picture of the major places of importance in Embobut. It is my intention here to explore in more depth the activities that took place and the role that different plants and animals had in aspects of people's livelihoods. In order to do so, I turn towards the work of the biologist and philosopher, Donna Haraway

(2003, 2008), who has been highly influential in studying human/animal relations. Haraway aims to rethink 'humanness' in relation to other animals by arguing that being human is inextricably tied to 'becoming with' companion species such as dogs. Companion species are not only to be understood as pets, but rather as all animals with which humans engage, be it at home, for leisure or at the work place. Arguing against the traditional robust divide between humans and animals, Haraway states that we 'become with' other animals because non-humans also have 'face'; they are active agents in the world. By way of example, Haraway (2008: 24) draws on an anecdote put forward by bioanthropologist Barbara Smuts (2001). Smuts' doctoral fieldwork studied the behaviour of baboons, during which she was informed not to disturb their 'natural' behaviour and to thus stay as still as possible. Interestingly, Smuts found that her behaviour influenced what baboons would normally be doing as they appeared to find the presence of a motionless human strange. The baboons only began to relax when Smuts started to respond appropriately by looking at and acknowledging them. As Haraway (2008: 24) states: "the monkeys, in short, inquired if the woman was as good a social subject as an ordinary baboon, with whom one could figure out how to carry on relationships, whether hostile, neutral, or friendly. The question was not, Are the baboons social subjects? but, Is the human being? Not, Do the baboons have 'face'? but, Do people?". Thus, baboon behaviour could not be documented by a scientist objectively located outside the baboons' world. Rather, it was by learning to engage with and respond to the baboons that Smuts was able to form a relationship with them and to study them. Both she and the baboons had to learn together – to 'become with' one another.

In taking other kinds of beings seriously, Haraway's project has remained highly influential, being drawn upon by anthropologists conducting 'multi-species

ethnographies' and engaging with anthropology's 'ontological turn' (Kohn 2013; Tsing 2014; Holbraad and Pedersen 2017). However, for reasons already mentioned in Chapter 1.5, ontological discussions within the context of this study remain far subtler than the proponents of the ontological turn may otherwise advocate. What remains more influential are the broader concepts that stem from Haraway's (2008) work that emphasise a different way of thinking about the active role that animals and plants have. This stands in contrast to frameworks that examine the economic or symbolic value of plants and animals as analysed in relation to how humans perceive them, frameworks that confine our understanding to the perception of ecology in peoples' minds (cf. Harris and Cipolla 2017).

An important contribution to the relationship between humans, plants and animals comes from Ingold's 'meshwork' introduced in the previous chapter that explores how humans and environments are constantly in the process of 'becoming'. To understand this further, I return once again to Ingold's (1993) paper '*The Temporality of the Landscape*' where he states that "the landscape is the world as it is known to those who dwell therein, who inhabit its places and journey along the paths connecting them" (Ingold 1993: 156). This statement can be seen as a part of Ingold's broader approach, termed the 'dwelling perspective', that is developed in *The Perception of the Environment* (Ingold 2000) where he pitches it directly against the 'building perspective'. The essence of the latter is that "the organisation of space cognitively precedes its material expression; settings and built environments are thought before they are built" (Rapoport 1994: 488). In other words, worlds are built conceptually before they are lived in, a notion that reinforces dualistic perceptions of humans being separate to, and enacting upon, a physical world 'out there'.

The dwelling perspective, on the other hand, has its foundations in Heidegger's essay '*Building Dwelling Thinking'*. Here, Heidegger (1971: 145-161) considers what it means to build and to dwell, and if there is a relationship between the two. He begins with what may be considered as the prevailing view that building and dwelling are separable but complementary activities. That is to say that houses are built so that we may dwell in them. To dwell, in this context, means to occupy a building which acts as a vessel for certain activities. Through an etymological argument, however, Heidegger contends that the process should be considered the other way around. In other words, building is encompassed by the notion that we dwell within the world: "We do not dwell because we have built, but we build and have built because we dwell, that is because we are dwellers" (Heidegger 1971: 148). In Ingold's view, this is the foundation of the dwelling perspective. From this we see how the different forms that people build, be it conceptually or physically, arise as the product of activity and engagement with the environment. As such, building should not be interpreted as a mere copy of a conceptual design projected onto a separate material world. Rather, the envisioning of form in advance of implementation can only be carried out by people already living as a part of the environment and of their being-in-the-world.

For Ingold, one consequence of the dwelling perspective is that it can look beyond the human and help to dissolve the nature/culture dichotomy. This is best understood by way of comparison between a house and an oak tree. The initial question that Ingold (2000) poses here is which of these should be seen as architecture? The house is clearly a product of intentional human design, whilst the tree may seem to be 'naturally there'. But on a closer inspection, the tree itself is inhabited by countless creatures as well as other plants that have grown on, in and around it. Particular trees may house different organisms, such

as bees that are attracted to certain pollen types, creating large hives and building their own architectural structures in or on the tree. Rodents may burrow dens under the roots, caterpillars eat the leaves and form cocoons, birds build nests on its branches and moss and lichen grow on its trunk. In this way, each tree is shaped into a different form over the years through the activities of the organisms that dwell within it. In fact, it is not only other animals and plants that have shaped these trees, but also the weather. The direction of sunlight and exposure to wind and rain can all impact the shape, size and location of trees within what Ingold (2011, 2015) has more recently called the 'weather world'. When humans encounter such a tree, it has not simply been there, but undergone years of formation as a part of a complex meshwork of activity. How humans engage with the tree, be it to shelter underneath the canopy, destroy it for building material or conserve it in order to protect a broader ecosystem, is a continuation of the meshwork as new relationships come into being.

A part of envisioning the meshwork and weather world is to contemplate the properties of different materials that constitute things and the "stuff of plants and animals" (Ingold 2011: 24). These very materials are constantly in flux, variable and transformative. Take, for example, a stone dipped in water that gradually begins to dry. Throughout this process, the stone feels different, appears to become matt and even produces a different sound if hit against the ground. The properties of a material like stone, something that at face value appears an immutable object, turn out to vary depending on the relationships the stone is caught up in at any one time. In short, the stone is not an immutable object, but has a sort of history. Ingold's focus on *material properties* is markedly different from archaeological trends that have focused upon the *materiality of objects* (Meskell 2005; Miller 2005; Boivin 2008;). Archaeological and anthropological approaches to

materiality have been diverse and it is not my intention here to offer an in-depth synthesis of this work. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that studies of materiality have focused on the "physicality of the material world" (Boivin 2008: 26), whilst emphasising that such studies "cannot simply focus upon the characteristics of objects but must engage in the *dialectic of people and things*" (Meskell 2005: 4, emphasis added).

Ingold (2013: 27) argues that this view of materiality has given it two faces: "on one side is the raw physicality of the world's 'material character'; on the other side is the socially and historically situated agency of human beings". This separation of the mental and physical harks back to age-old dualisms of nature and culture and mind and matter. By refocusing our efforts away from the less abstract term of materiality and towards the materials of everyday things, Ingold argues that things accrue certain histories and are brought to life through their entangled relationships with each other. In turn, this view moves away from arguments postulating that things have a form of agency in relation to human perception (Gell 1998), and instead become animated through the flux and interaction between different substances, surfaces and materials that constitute the very world of which humans are a part.

I do not wish to throw the baby out with the bath water here, finding, as with other archaeologists, that the term 'materiality' acts as a useful heuristic device for broadly conceptualising the landscape of Embobut as a physical entity enmeshed with human history, activity and perception. That said, Ingold's (2013: 27) preference for materials over materiality acts as a pertinent reminder that it is the actual materials of the forests and hills, in all of their diversity, that constitute the life-world of Embobut. Take, for example, Koropkwen glade introduced in the previous chapter. Historically, this glade

was characterised by a grassy opening in the otherwise thick, dark and dense forests. The contrast between these locations is a result of the properties of the organic matter of plant and animal life, with the leaves of the trees lowering light levels in the forest, tree trunks obscuring visibility and thick forest vegetation hindering movement. The open glade, by comparison, is comprised of various grasses that facilitate greater visibility across the hills, increased light levels and warmth during the day, and easier means of travelling to resources such as rivers. The transformative material configuration of this landscape as a part of the broader changing 'weather world' shapes and influences human agency. Where people choose to live, the materials they use to build their houses, the trees in which beehives are put are all influenced by the fluctuating material properties of the forest. In turn, this changes and impacts the glades and forests and facilitates the mutual unfolding of new landscapes and livelihoods. Thus it is not the mere 'physicality' of the forests and glades that has agency over people. Such a perspective can ignore the relational factors between materials, surfaces substances and forces (including wind and light) that constitute the world in which people dwell.

The theoretical threads explored here have delved deeper into how scholars have attempted to push past reductive notions of the nature/culture divide and begin to seriously engage with how animals and plants play an active role in constructing human experiences. An interesting and important strand of this has been attempting to think beyond the human and incorporate a multispecies perspective. Scholars have achieved this in a number of ways. In particular, Ingold's dwelling perspective posits that humans dwell within a complex meshwork of plants, animals and materials from which they cannot be disentangled. Indeed, as becomes clear throughout this chapter, past relationships with animals and plants were built upon ever unfolding relationships and

the dwelling tasks of everyday life. Be it the protecting of bees' habitats for honey production, or the resting places provided by the hollows of large trees or rocks, peoples' lives were constantly coming into being with the forest.

5.2 The Topography of Territories

In the present-day, the glade is a mixture of open grassland with steep rolling hills through which the River Embobut carves its way. To the outsider, these hills may seem fairly homogenous. On further investigation, however, the very hill ridges, gullies and streams around which I walked during my repeated visits to the area form a complex mosaic of territories each of which is entwined with nuanced local histories. Thus, topographical features marked where the territory of extended family lineages, or clans, start and end (Figure 5.1). Each hill is typically named after one of the founding elders who first laid claim to and resided in that particular location and demarcated where his land was. This use of topography as a form of demarcating places is widespread across the region, having been documented by Davies (2009) with the Pokot to the north as well as amongst the Marakwet in the Kerio Valley to the east (Moore 1986).

At the time of the evictions in 2013, a total of five Sengwer clans and two Marakwet clans resided in Koropkwen:

Sengwer: Kapsaniak, Kachelekeu, Kalotokur, Kapchebnai, Kakasowat.

Marakwet: Kamoi, Kaptebeko.



Figure 5.1: a.) Photograph taken from Kalotokur hill demonstrating how the topography divides up clan territories; b.) crossing over the gully dividing the territoties of Kakasowat and Kalomoitany.

These clans each had their own territorial locations within Koropkwen as depicted in Figure 5.2. The general residence pattern that is visible from this map is that each clan territory, with the exception of Kamoi, occupies one block of land inside the glade. One boundary of each territory is defined by the Embobut River whilst the others are defined by small gullies and hill ridges. Further to this, each clan has its own area of clan forest either located adjacent to the open glade or further afield in Lombenwo (see Chapter 4.7). This is particularly evident with the clan forest of Kalotokur which is located approximately three kilometres west of the outside of Koropkwen glade. Likewise, the clan forest belonging to Kapsaniak called Kosich is located approximately four kilometres to the west. The clan forest belonging to Kamoi is in a location called Sui located immediately to the north of Koropkwen, although, as discussed in more detail below, much of this forest has now disappeared.

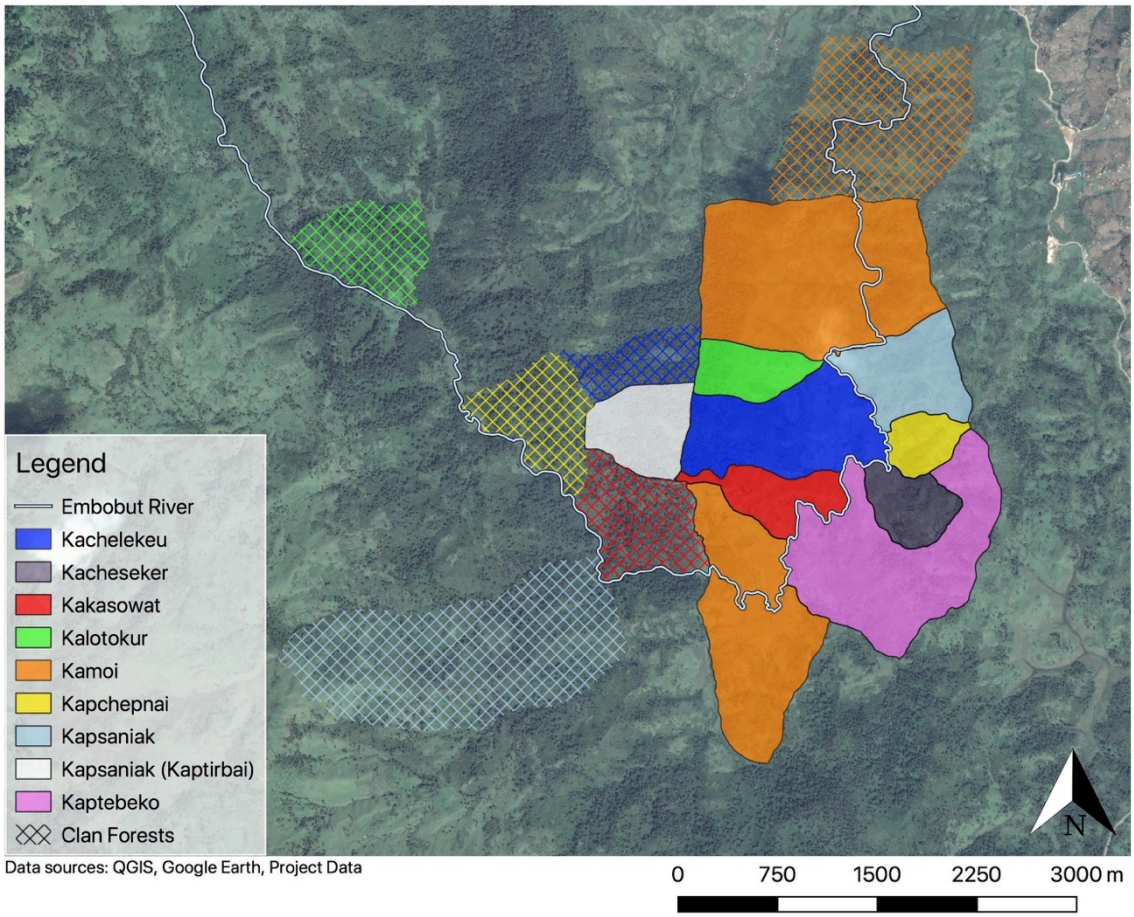


Figure 5.2: Koropkwen clan territories and their respective forested areas.

In some respects, the depiction of these territories as simple blocks ignores more nuanced understandings of land ownership. For example, the Marakwet clan of Kamoi had a number of elders who resided on several hills within the glade (e.g. Lomoitany, Kiplitan; see below). Thus, upon pointing to certain hills, local informants would state that it belonged to the 'clan' of that given elder, when in strict terms they were an ancestor within the lineage of the much larger Kamoi clan. As such, whilst the principle of topographical territory still remains, each hill should not necessarily be interpreted as the location of an entire clan, but rather as certain branches of a clan lineage that was established several generations ago through the process of localised migrations (Chapter 6.4). Furthermore, such movements meant that the territorial organisation of Koropkwen has not remained static since the arrival of people into the area in the nineteenth century.

An example of this can be seen in Figure 5.2 whereby the land claimed to belong to Kaptebeko is a result of a far more recent move into the area, with the hill originally being occupied by the Sengwer clan Kapchebnai (a reason why Kaptebeko does not have its own clan forest; Catherine Jelima Kipkure 21.10.2016). The disputed land claims and shifting nature of territory that arise from localised migrations are explored further in the case history of the elder Lomoitany of the Kamoi clan below.

Given that these forests were constituted by valuable plant and animal resources that were paramount for local livelihoods (Table 5.1), strict rules were in place as to how one exploited the resources within a given territory. For example, people were only allowed to carry out the respective tasks of foraging and beekeeping within their own clan forest (Kirop Kitanaoi Sikatom 04.08.2016; William Shakwa Masomei 10.08.2016). If an individual was hunting an animal such as an antelope and it crossed over into another forest territory, permission had to be granted from a member of that clan before the hunt could continue (Kisang Kibor 04.08.2016). In a similar manner, and as explored in more depth in the following chapter, men who wanted to start new homesteads could only do so in their own clan territory, typically with the permission from an elder who would show them an appropriate location (Chemeitoi Yego 18.08.2016). A consequence of these rules was that people intimately knew both their respective areas of clan territory and, to some extent, the relative location of those neighbouring it. However, there was much less understanding of the broader mosaic of other territories across the hills as people had no reason or right to access and exploit those resources. In this vein, people's knowledge of place remains fairly localised, being centred upon their personal dwelling tasks of everyday life as carried out within specific locales rather than across the forest as a whole. This became most obvious to me when creating Figure 5.2, where numerous hours were

spent sitting on hill tops and walking different gullies and ridges with different people, most of whom gave conflicting answers as to which hills belonged to whom.

That said, one aspect that did connect people's use of place on a broader level was the act of journeying between forests and homesteads. This typically involved travelling along specific pathways that were established through the repeated practice of walking, the main arterial routes of which were presented in the previous chapter. Further to these large tracks, and in light of the fact that each clan had their own respective forest regions, moving to, from and through these areas involved far more localised journeys and smaller pathways that were only used by specific clans. As a part of these journeys, people had their own local resting places where they could shelter if it started to rain or if they wanted to wait to travel with someone. These resting places were in the form of overhanging rocks, or trees so large and formed in such a way that one could shelter in their trunks, with a number being located in and around Koropkwen (Figure 5.3).

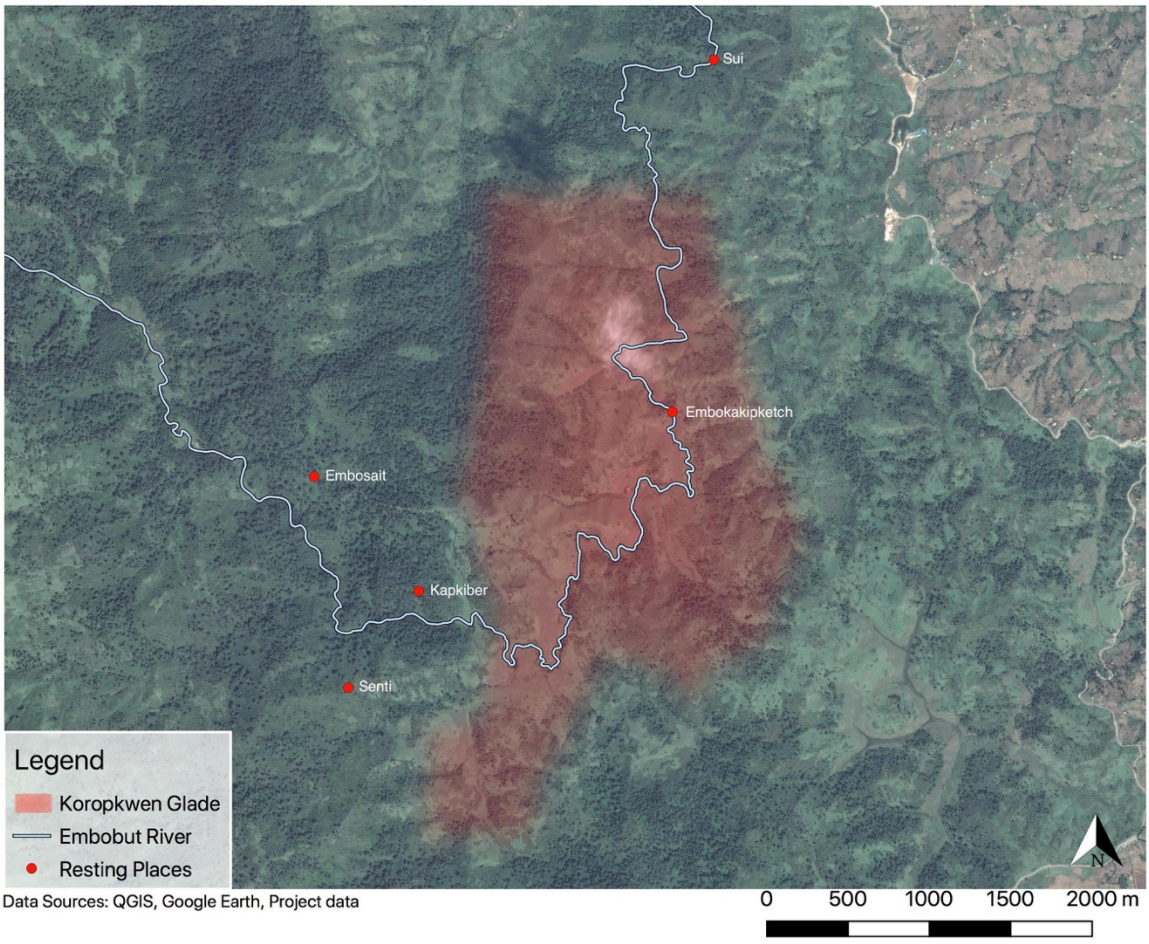


Figure 5.3: Map of localised resting places in and around Koropkwen glade

In light of this discussion, it is becoming clear how the Embobut landscape is not a separate, passive backdrop for human behaviour. Rather, the trees, rocks and the very shape of the land played an active role in how humans moved and rested in the forests and glades as a part of their dwelling tasks (Ingold 2000), being created through foraging situations (Widlok 2016). Topographical features of the land helped people divide and designate territorial areas of activity, in turn feeding back into their perception of the hills and where they could carry out their respective dwelling activities. Likewise, the materials of the dense forest vegetation as a whole hindered visibility, lowered light levels and restricted movement, playing an active role in the pathways and routes the people took and the locations where they built their houses. In a similar vein, individual trees

became important within the larger Embobut meshwork. Take, for example, the large tree called *Embosait* that acted as a resting place for members of the Kapchebnai clan (Figure 5.4; Catherine Jelima Kipkure 09.08.2016, 21.10.2016). Through its own process of formation within a multispecies 'weather world' (Ingold 2011), the tree had a history of its own, growing in such a way that, by the time humans arrived, it could be used as a place of refuge and rest within the human activities of everyday life. In this way, we can see how the tree, and indeed the clan forest within which it was situated, were an integral part of dwelling for the members of Kapchebnai, a notion that stands in opposition to the 'building perspective' that describes how people dwell in buildings and then go out into the 'natural' world. These ideas are explored further in the case histories below, but for the time being I explore the various wild animals, bees, cattle and plants that people procured in the forests.



Figure 5.4: Embosait resting place used by Kapchebnai clan. Elders stated that there used to be a larger tree in the same location.

5.3 Meat, Milk and Honey

As we have seen in Part One of this thesis, the people of the Cherangani Hills have both self-identified and been portrayed as hunting, foraging and beekeeping communities. The extent to which hunting actually took place in the forests, however, remains relatively unclear, with some informants stating that they never hunted them (Kimoi Suter Chebural 03.08.2016; Kisang Kirotich 05.08.2016) whilst others claimed that they would hunt there on a weekly basis (Kirop Kitanaoi Sikatom 04.08.2016). In part, this may have been down to the fact that the respective size of peoples' livestock herds varied from family to family. Indeed, whilst some individuals stated that they used to have between 20 and 30 cows and sheep (Musa Koimen 06.08.2016), others did not have any at all, or only acquired them in the mid-twentieth century (Joseph Toroitich Kirotich 03.10.2016). Livestock were the source of milk, itself an important part of the local diet and a commodity to be traded for finger millet from populations cultivating on the Elgeyo Escarpment and in the Kerio Valley. As well as this, livestock could be slaughtered for meat and animal skins used for clothing or bags (*torgul*) used for transporting goods. Consequently, looking after and increasing the size of livestock herds was a more important use of time and resources, resulting in less emphasis on hunting. This activity led many informants to state that it was looking after livestock that was one of the main activities of daily life, only to be complemented by hunting. In this way, livestock – particularly sheep and cattle – can be described as 'companion species' (Haraway 2009) in the sense that there was an incredibly important relationship between them and people. As one informant stated: "What would we do in the forest without cattle?" (Kirop Kitanaoi Sikatom 04.08.2016).

In light of this, the dependence on sources of wild meat from the forest appears to have been greater if one had less, or indeed no, livestock (as is demonstrated in the life history

of Joseph Toroitich Kirotich below). The meat obtained from the forests was not only used for personal consumption, but also traded for milk from those who had more cattle or finger millet from those who farmed. Hunting itself was undertaken with a bow and poisoned arrows, the poison for which came from the Kerio Valley to the east. The arrows were made by local blacksmiths who inherited and learned the trade from their fathers. Pieces of scrap metal gained through trade were reworked into arrowheads, although one blacksmith called Chemeitoi Kipyatich (11.08.2016) stated that his ancestors used to smelt their own metal, a skill which has now been lost (see Appendix B). Upon shooting an animal, it was then tracked until the poison had taken effect and the animal died. If, as stated above, the animal strolled into someone else's clan forest, one was expected to inform a member of that clan and share the meat with him.

The actual animals that people were hunting appears to have varied between individuals. Some informants stated that they hunted anything that crossed through their clan forest, particularly antelope[21] and occasionally buffalo (Kisang Kirotich 05.08.2016), whilst others claimed that some meat was a taboo to hunt and eat, especially that of warthog or colobus monkey (Catherine Jelima Kipkure 09.08.2016; Paul Kiptuka 29.09.2016). Eating warthog, one informant exclaimed, "would result in your cattle being unable to produce milk due to their teats drying up" (Paulo Cheptoms Losipa 27.08.2016). Despite a level of inconsistency behind what people stated they were allowed to hunt, Paulo's statement points towards a certain relationship between meat and milk that appears to have been prevalent across much of the region. Indeed, many elders stated that drinking milk and eating meat at the same time was forbidden as "animals could die and milk

[21] Although unspecified, these were likely to have been different species of game, including the sitatunga and bushback (see also chapter 3).

production would decrease" (Kiplalwel Ketum Litan 07.10.2016), although the exact reasons for this remain unclear and in the present day the practice is no longer observed.

Unlike hunting, the extent to which people engaged with beekeeping was far clearer. Much like the Ogiek groups on Mt Elgon and further south in the Mau forests (Blackburn 1974; Kratz 1980; see also Chapter 2.2), the Sengwer and Marakwet communities living in the Cherangani Hills undertook beekeeping as one of their main economic activities, particularly before the advent of cereal cultivation in the 1960s (see below). Honey production was not only important for daily consumption, often being mixed with water and drunk as an everyday staple, but honey was also fermented to make mead which was traded with neighbouring communities on the Elgeyo Escarpment for sorghum or finger millet, or used as a bride price in paying the family of a newly married woman (Samuel Chemeitoi 17.08.2016; Chemeitoi Yego 18.08.2016).

Making and tending to beehives was typically a male activity (Catherine Jelima Kipkure 09.08.2016; Chemeitoi Kipyatich 11.08.2016). Beehives continue to be made today are constructed from a variety of different woods, including Cedar (*Juniperus procera*) and African Redwood (*Hagenia abyssinica*) (see Table 5.1). A log approximately one metre long is cut from the tree and is split in half lengthways. Both of these halves are then hollowed out, with a hole placed in the top of one of them for the bees to enter. The halves are then placed back together and tied in a tree where bees eventually settle in them (Figure 5.5). Elders named three particular trees called *Losin, Borowo* and *Oon* (*Allophyllus abyssinicus, Dombeya torria* and *Polyscias fulva* respectively) and a shrub called *Topongwo* (*Vernonia auriculifera*). These were deemed to be very important for honey production due to the fact that their flowers attracted the bees (John Cheboi

Onontich 10.08.2016). Beehives were usually tied in the crown of these trees or nearby in order to increase honey production.



Figure 5.5: Beehives placed in a tree

Given that these plants flowered at slightly different times of the year, honey harvesting was not necessarily restricted to one particular season, but rather was spread out through the year depending on the flowering of the tree into which the beehive was put (although informants stated that a general timeframe was between February and March). Harvesting honey was typically conducted by men and in groups of two or more. The first man would light some moss in order to create smoke to help to pacify the bees. He then climbed the tree up to the location of the beehive using a rope made from a vine-like plant called *Cheptekaa* (*Mikaniopsis bambuseti*). Some informants said that they undressed and covered themselves in mud to protect themselves from the sting and to stop bees getting stuck in their clothes. Meanwhile, the second man stood on the floor with a pot full of water. This was a precautionary measure in case fire spread from the smouldering moss. Unlike the Ogiek, who appeared to have specific pots for honey collection (Blackburn 1973), the honey that was collected was then put into an animal skin bag (*torgul*) and carried back to the glade where it was transferred to multipurpose pots.



Figure 5.6: a.) Bonit that has been found in a tree trunk; b.) tying a rope around a tree to show how bonit has already been found; c-d.) Tapping an underground beehive for honey.

As discussed above, there were strict social rules attached to where a beehive could be placed in the sense that they could only be placed within one's own clan forest. However, there was one exception to this rule called *bonit,* a practice which states that if you find a

natural hive that sits in the hollow of a tree rather than in a constructed beehive, then it is acceptable to claim it as your own, regardless of whose clan forest it is in (Kisang Kirotich 05.08.2016). If one is lucky enough to find *bonit*, one can to tie a rope around the tree or make a slash in the trunk below it as a sign that the *bonit* has been found so no one else can harvest the honey. The concept of *bonit* also applies to a different bee species, likely to be a member of the *Meliponini* family found in parts of East Africa (Eardley and Urban 2010). Harvesting this honey did not require any form of smoke to pacify the bees as they are stingless. As well as this, they typically create nests underground and are thus relatively easy to harvest and only require one to dig around the hive before extracting the honey (Figure 5.6).

In this way, the creation, implantation and tending of beehives saw bees and humans, in a similar manner to cattle and sheep, becoming 'companion species' (Haraway 2008), existing with each other and constituting an important part of local livelihoods. In understanding and acknowledging the relationship that bees have with particular trees, humans were entwined with the forest ecosystem by encouraging pollination and honey production through habitat creation and forest protection. For many people, particularly some Sengwer elders, this relationship and way of life in some way helps to define their culture and identity, as clearly stated by Kisang Kirotich (05.08.2016) when he claimed that "we are the honey and forest people". This is further illustrated by a local story that draws upon beekeeping, the honey trade and the uniqueness of the Sengwer dialect in comparison to that of Marakwet:

> "One day, a Sengwer man went to trade the honey that he had harvested from his beehives. Without anybody knowing, he had filled the bottom half of a clay pot with sand, and the top half with honey so that he could cheat the man he traded with. When he went down into the Kerio Valley, he negotiated with a Marakwet man and sold him the pot. Before the Sengwer man left, the Marakwet man asked him "what is your name?". Knowing that the Marakwet could not fully understand,

> the Sengwer replied "I am the son of soil on the bottom, honey at the top and you will cry tomorrow". The Sengwer then walked back to the highlands whilst the Marakwet man went on his way. Sure enough, the next day when he discovered that only half of the pot was honey, he cried" (Joseph Kimatai 07.03.2017).

This story has many variants (one of which is told in the recent documentary '*Honey at the Top'* [2016]) and is told with both humour and pride at the cleverness of the man in the story[22]. Thus it is clear that beekeeping for honey production and cattle rearing were both vital for local livelihoods, with hunting for wild meat playing an important part in complementing the economic base of individual families. As I now go onto explore, the use of plant resources was just as important.

5.4 Plant Resources of the Embobut Forest

Plant resources appear to have been widely used across much of the Western Highlands, with recent studies revealing how different populations use plants for medicinal purposes in Mount Elgon (Okello *et al.* 2010) and Nandi (Jeruto *et al.* 2008). In this vein, a recent survey by Kipkore *et al.* (2014) offers an insightful overview of the different ethno-medicinal plants from across Elgeyo Marakwet County. Their study demonstrated that a much wider range of plants were being used than that of the survey conducted in Nandi (Jeruto *et al.* 2008), likely due to the amount of biodiversity provided by the ecological zones between the highland forests, Elgeyo Escarpment and into the Kerio Valley, with a majority of medicinal plants being utilised by herbalists originating from the escarpment and lowland areas. Of the total of 108 plants identified belonging to no fewer than 53 different families, only 19% were said to have been growing in the highlands.

[22] Whilst this story plays into the narrative that it is the Sengwer who were the honey producers, it must be noted that there were several Marakwet clans living in Embobut in a similar manner to that of the Sengwer. The ramifications of this will be explored further in Chapter 7.

In light of this, my own research has furthered this survey by both collating some of the results of Kipkore *et al.* (2014) with my own surveys that focused upon the different plants around the glades of Embobut. Plant names and uses were gathered through walking tours and discussions with local elders. These are presented in Table 5.1. From this list, and building on the observations of Kipkore *et al.* (2014), it is clear that many of the plants used by people living in the Embobut forest are ethno-medicinal. A large proportion of these, including *Chorwo, Sewerwo, Sait, Tolkoko* and *Tendwo,* appear to be used to treat unspecified forms of stomach disorder through the boiling and chewing of bark. The list also includes other plants not documented by Kipkore *et al.* (2014) that had other uses, including food, construction materials (predominantly for houses and fences) and for ceremonial purposes.

Table 5.1: List of plants and their uses[23]

Bennet*	*Podocarpus graciliar* Pligar	African fern tree/ bastard yellow wood	Tree	Bark	Boiled and administered to relieve hypertension
Borowo	*Dombeya torria* (J.F.Gmel.) Bamps	Forest dombeya	Tree	Wood Flowers Branches	General building material. Beehives are put in these trees as flowers are associated with honey harvesting. Stripped and made into ropes
Busungwo	*Clematis simensis* Fresen.	Pine hyacinth	Shrub	Leaves and seeds	Crushed in hand and then sniffed to relieve headaches
Chebokobil*	*Lippia javanica* (Burm f.) Spreng	Zinziba plant	Shrub	Leaves and twigs	Boiled together with maize, cassava and groundnuts for food flavouring. Also said to help cure amoebiasis
Cheptekaa	*Mikaniopsis bambuseti*	*Not found.*	Shrub	Vine	Used as a rope to climb trees and secure beehives
Cheserya*	*Zehneria scabra*	*Not found*	Shrub/climber	Leaves	Crushed and administered to relieve common colds/coughs
Chesiwoyo	*Not found.*	*Not found.*	Shrub	Leaves Twigs	Burnt and made into ash for treating fever (mixed with *Topongwo*). Also crushed and rubbed on skin to relieve rash. Used as toothbrush
Chorwo	*Nuxia congesta* R.Br. ex. Fresen	Brittle wood	Tree	Bark	Chewed or boiled to make a broth to relieve stomach disorder
Kabonbonet *	*Ehretia cymose var. silvatica Guerke*	Stamperwood	Shrub	Bark	Boiled and drunk to relieve stomach ache and flu
Kasisit/sisit	*Rhamnus prinoides*	Shiny-leaf buckthorn	Shrub	Branches	Leaves are stripped and the branches carried by men as they parade to the circumcision ceremony

[23] It is likely that many more plants could be added to this list but were simply not seen on walking tours or not remembered by elders in interviews. Plants marked * are taken explicitly from the plants documented in the highlands in the survey conducted by Kipkore *et al.* (2014) and were not observed in my own walking tours. Botanical and common names were obtained through collaborative research with Mr Bernard Wanjohi from the University of Eldoret and members from the Marakwet Research Station in Tot.

Kimele	*Urtica massaica*	Maasai stinging nettle	Nettle	Young leaves	Picked and cooked as a staple vegetable
Kimngaungua	*Not found*	*Not found*	Vine like climber	stem	Eaten and chewed to treat a disease that was unspecified by informants
Kiraita	*Basella alba L.*	Vine spinach	Shrub	Young leaves	Picked and cooked as a staple vegetable
Korkorwo*	*Erythrina abyssinica DC.*	Corpse flower	Tree	Bark	Boiled and drunk to cure mumps
Kubararia	*Not found*	*Not found*	Shrub	Leaves	Crushed and sniffed to relieve headache
Lopcho	*Cyathea couren ?.*	*Not found*	Fern-like	Roots	Deworming for humans. Eaten raw
Losin	*Allophyllus abyssinicus* (Hochst.) Radik	*Not found*	Tree	Fruit (*Los*) Flowers	Mixed with honey and eaten Beehives are put in the branches to produce honey from flowers
Maluut	*Asparagus falcatus*	Thorny creeper	Shrub	Leaves Branches	Leaves rubbed onto skin to relieve rash Woven to make serving dish
Mintiliwo	Bouyabis abyssinca	*Not found*	Tree	Berry Root	Eaten raw Boiled as and drunk as a male stimulant
Monmon	*Not found*	*Not found*	Shrub	Small red berry	Fruit eaten raw
Monwo	*Not found*	*Not found*	Shrub	Seed pods	Oil is extracted from the seed pods. This had numerous uses including lining a pot to make it less sticky, rubbing into skin clothes to make it soft, and covering men in it when they were undergoing a circumcision ceremony
Ongurwo	*Plectranthus barbatus*	Forskohlii	Shrub	Leaves	Commonly used as a tissue. Leaves also chewed to help cure stomach disorder
Oon	*Polyscias fulva*		Tree	Flowers	Associated with honey harvesting
Remit*	*Olea Africana Mill.*	Wild Olive	Tree	Bark	Boiled and administered to skin to help relieve rashes. Also dried and crushed and applied to infections around the eye
Sait	*Afrocrania volkensii* (Harms.) Hutch	Dogwood	Tree	Bark Wood	Chewed raw or boiled to relieve stomach disorder. Often mixed with *Chorwo* General building material
Sekut	*Eleusine jaegeri*	Goosegrass	Grass	Grass	Used for thatching houses

Seretetwo*	*Acacia lahai* (Steud. & Hochst. Ex) Benth	Red Thorn	Tree	Leaves	Pounded and mixed with other medicinal plants as a synergistic herb
Sesimo			Shrub	Leaves	Chew and spit to cure 'evil eyes'[24]
Sewerwo	*Hagenia abyssinica*	African redwood	Tree	Wood Bark	Hardwood for general construction. Beehives put up in these trees Boiled to relieve stomach disorder
Sigowo	*Solanum aculeastrum*	Soda apple	Shrub	Root	Boiled and used as a male stimulant. Mixed with root from *Mintiliwo*
Sinende*	*Periploca linearifolia*	*Not found*	Climber	Fruits/leaves	Used in unspecified ceremonies
Sinentwo*	*Cassia didymobotrya* Fres.	Peanut-butter cassia	Shrub	Dried Bark	Pounded and applied on bleeding wounds as an antihaemorrhagic
Sinonto	*Periploca linearifolia*	Silk vine	Shrub	Leaves	Ceremonial used for weddings/special occasions. When picked white residue comes out that looks like milk which signifies blessings
Sirirte*	*Faurea saligna*	Beechwood	Tree	Bark	Boiled and drunk to relieve period pains
Sokwon*	*Warburgia ugandensis* Sprague	East African green wood	Tree	Leaves	Soaked in water and gargled to relieve oral thrush
Sosurwo	*Ensete ventricosum*	Ethiopian banana	Tree	Seeds	Seed pods woven to make a necklace that is used in ceremonies for women after birth
Sosyon	*Not found*	*Not found*	Grass	Stem	Thatching grass
Tegan	*Arundinaria alpina*	Bamboo	Grass	Stem	Used ubiquitously for constructing houses and fences.
Tendwo	*Prunus africana*	African plum tree	Tree	Wood Bark	General construction for building houses and fences. Chewed for medicinal properties to cure upset stomach (possibly hypertension and enlarged prostate [Kipkore *et al.* 2014])

[24] Evil eye is an elusive condition where the affected individual can unintentionally curse or cause misfortune for those who they gaze upon.

Tinwo	*Schefflera volkensii* ?	Schefflera	Tree	Sap	Cut bark and wait for sap to harden. Fed to livestock to cure coughs. Humans also mix sap with tobacco and smoke it
Topongwo	*Vernonia auriculifera ?*	*Not found*	Shrub	Flowers Branches	Beehives placed in branches and associated with honey harvesting Used to make fences
Torokwo	*Juniperus procera* Hochst. Ex Endl	African pencil cedar	Tree	Wood Bark	General construction. Wood burnt for charcoal that is mixed with sour milk in a drinking vessel called a calabash. Stripped to cover beehives
Torokwo	*Not found*	*Not found*	Tree	Bark	Boiled and mixed with *Sait* to relieve stomach disorder



Figure 5.7: Flowering trees and shrubs that are important for honey production. a.) Losin tree (slightly stunted in growth); b.) Oon tree; c.) Topongwo shrub

For many elders, the most important of these plants were the flowering trees of *Oon, Borowo* and *Losin* and the shrub of *Topongwo* that are directly associated with honey production and harvesting (Figure 5.7). Other than these, informants stated that the most important food source that complemented their diet of milk, honey, meat and finger millet, was the leafy greens of *Kimele* and, to a lesser extent, *Kiraita*. *Kimele* is a form of stinging nettle and needs to be picked with care. The young leaves are more succulent and are left to soak for an hour in cold water before being boiled. The cream from fresh milk is then added and heated. *Kimele* is still consumed today, albeit much on a smaller scale, with introduced greens such as cabbage, spinach and kale being grown in homesteads becoming the predominant source of leafy greens.

5.5 Protecting Clan Forests

In light of the above discussion, it is clear that the forest contained many important resources for people dwelling in Embobut. In order to protect these, strict rules were in place as to how one managed these areas in order to stop people from destroying the forested areas (Murkomeu Kirop 11.10.2016). Firstly, and as already mentioned, an individual could only put up a beehive and hunt in his own forest area, with permission having to be granted to do so in somebody else's. As well as this, if wood was needed for construction, one was encouraged to scavenge and take resources from trees that were dead rather than cutting down a live one. If an individual did want to cut a live tree, permission had first to be granted from the community elders. If permission was not sought or granted, a meeting would take place amongst the elders of that clan who would discuss the appropriate punishment in light of the severity of the destruction. Normally, the individual responsible would be fined a pot of honey, a sheep, or occasionally a cow in order to reprieve themselves.

If the offence continued, however, greater action would be taken by elders, occasionally involving meetings from other clans and from other glades. The most severe punishment was in the form of a curse, or *mormon,* that meant death or disease was imminent for the individual(s) responsible. This was conducted in different ways, such as the throwing of a stone whilst shouting the accused's name, or saying the name through a hollow shoot of bamboo. The process of carrying out a curse was not done lightly as there was a risk it could land back on oneself, especially once the cursed individual passed away. As such, in order to be cleansed and protected after cursing someone, a ceremony would take place that involved the smearing of the contents of a sheep's stomach on oneself (Benjamin Kirop Koiseker 28.09.2016).

Interestingly, these rules have now been compiled into a three-stage process by community activists who have been seeking to reify old community bylaws, although there is no existing written source for this (Joseph Kimutai 07.03.2017):

Stage 1- Santa

> If people have cut a tree without permission, a small amount of action would be taken by clan elders to discipline them with a warning and perhaps a small fine to act as a disincentive.

Stage 2- Kokwet

> If people continue cutting trees and do not listen to elders, further action is taken. At least two clans will meet to discuss the consequences and enforce heavier fines.

Stage 3 - Bororiat

> The elders from at least ten clans meet to discuss the situation and the consequences of extensive rule breaking. This form of meeting takes place when there is continued deforestation of large areas, as well as other serious actions such as forest burning and the destruction of beehives. Fines can include a cow. The final measure taken happens in a meeting called *kilap* when it is decided whether a curse should be carried out.

Historically, elders did not strictly follow this three-stage system, but rather treated the breaking of rules on a case by case basis. Nevertheless, the formalising of old community bylaws into a more coherent format has now been undertaken by Sengwer activists in an attempt to unite and educate younger Sengwer members and reintroduce a former relationship with the forest that has since disappeared.

5.6 The Allocation of Permits

Alongside the mechanisms discussed above that helped to inhibit deforestation, elders stated that, prior to the 1980s when they started to experience evictions (Chapter 3.5), they could better help preserve the forest through a positive relationship with the then Forest Department (Esther Kipkore Kiplitan 07.10.2016; Charles Kipkore Kimesai 10.10.2016). Indeed, given that there was no forest station near Koropkwen glade, officers from the Forest Department would visit the area periodically in order to inspect and monitor the state of the forest. A part of this involved talking to people living there who hosted the Forest Department visitors by slaughtering a sheep and calling a meeting where issues of deforestation were discussed, the locations of it disclosed and any individuals who had repeatedly been involved reported.

This positive relationship was in part due to the fact that local Sengwer and Marakwet populations living in the glades had perceived themselves to have the legal right to live there because they had received permits to do so from the colonial administration (Chapter 3.3). Unfortunately, no permits survive today, and there is no mention of the allocation of permits in District Reports from the region in the first half of the twentieth century. That said, and as already mentioned in Chapter 3.5, they are referred to in the Embobut Task Force (2010) report, as well as repeatedly throughout my interviews (e.g Kisang Kirotich 05.08.2016). All informants stated that the permits were issued to the

age-set of Chumo and were allocated during the 1930s (although no one could give an exact date) by members of the colonial Forest Department who, upon passing through the area, observed how communities were living in relation to the highland forests and decided to allow them to continue living there. In Koropkwen, the permits were given to a number of people, both Sengwer and Marakwet (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2: List of names and clan of individuals allocated permits in Koropkwen glade

Name	**Clan**	**Sengwer/Marakwet**
Kiplitan	Kamoi	Marakwet
Lomoitany	Kamoi	Marakwet
Loimen	Kamoi	Marakwet
Chebenei	Kamoi	Marakwet
Teseimuk	Kamoi	Marakwet
Barbello	Kacheseker	Marakwet
Kasuwat (unsure if allocated).	Kakasuwat	Sengwer
Chelakeu	Kachelakeu	Sengwer
Kapsis	Kapsaniak	Sengwer

The permits were allocated to allow people to graze their cattle within the glades. The locations where these individuals were given permits are presented in Figure 5.8. It must be noted, however, given the dynamism behind household life cycles and local migrations discussed in Chapter 6.2, that some of these locations exist only as a proxy of the exact location, becoming particularly apparent when different informants gave conflicting locations. Indeed, the Marakwet elders Teseimuk and Loimen were allocated permits at the hills belonging to Kalotokur and Kapsaniak respectively whilst living there on a temporary basis (Paul Bowen Kipyatich 03.10.2016; Tula Margaret Chelauga 03.10.2016). Later, these two men moved closer to their community forests at Sui.

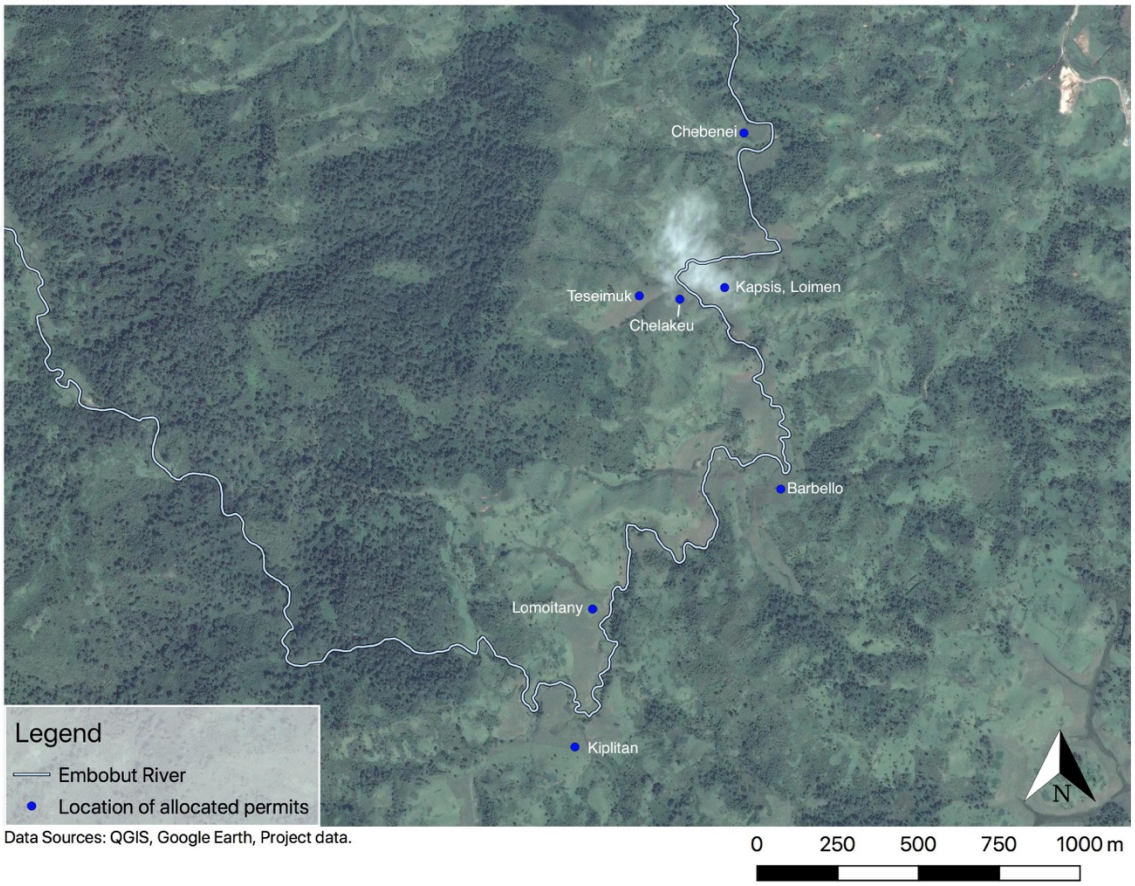


Figure 5.8: Location of allocated permits

The overall picture gleaned from this narrative is that people living within the historic forest glade in the first half of the twentieth century forged a positive relationship with the Forest Department, which respected local livelihoods and drew upon Sengwer and Marakwet knowledge of landscape use and change.

Thus far, this chapter has explored the topography of Koropkwen territories and expounded how each clan monitored, managed and procured its own forest resources. In doing so, I have attempted to illustrate how people dwelt within the landscape, forming relationships with different animals and plants, the most noticeable of which was the habitat creation and protection of bees and trees complimented by the rearing of livestock. The following section aims to ground these ideas in three case histories of different clans within Koropkwen glade. Each history aims to bring different themes into focus. The

history of the Sengwer clan, Kapsaniak, explores localised movement, the importance of resting places and local stories attached to them. The history of Kalomoitany, an elder who was a member of the Marakwet Kamoi clan, expounds the contested nature of land in light of localised migrations. Finally, the history of Dorobo/Sengwer clan, Kalotukor, examines how people balanced their dwelling tasks of foraging and beekeeping in order to increase the size of their cattle herd. As well as this, a third theme is brought into focus that begins to explore landscape change and sets the scene for the final section of this chapter.

5.7 Case Histories

Kapsaniak - Sengwer

Rising from the banks of the Embobut River on the east of Koropkwen glade is the hill of the Kapsaniak clan. Its slopes are steep, characterised today by the scars of old field boundaries, housing platforms and patches of shrubbery dappled upon open grassland that has been grazed by cattle (Figure 5.9). Oral histories collected from a number of elders described how the Kapsaniak clan grew throughout the twentieth century (Daniel Kiptarus Kilimo 06.10.16; Jacob Changwony Komen 06.03.17; Petro Kipyatich Kirop 09.03.17). Although some elders claim that the first person from the Kapsaniak clan to settle in the area was a man called Lombenwo who migrated to Koropkwen glade from the west, the first commonly agreed upon individual was Kiptoo Moyokwo, approximately five generations ago. Moyokwo is said to have had two sons, called Kapsis and Kaptembel. These men resided on the lower slopes of the Kapsaniak hill within close proximity to each other and the river, tending to their cattle and beehives in the manner described above.



Figure 5.9: a.) Kapsaniak clan hill in Koropkwen glade; b.) Embokakipketch rock shelter

Tucked out of sight and close to the river within Kapsaniak's territory is a small overhanging rock called Embokakipketch. This rock shelter remains relatively inconspicuous, and even in the present, when forest vegetation is sparse, it is easy to pass by without noticing it. Approximately five metres long with a depth behind the drip line of two metres, this cave has a curious story behind it that tells the tale of a brave woman called Chopo-Ngoswo. Although the details of the story vary, the basic narrative remains the same (Jacob Changwony Komen 06.03.2017; Eunice Talaa Kimwote 06.03.2017; Paulo Cheserek Kelimo 07.03.2017). Chopo-Ngoswo was a young woman looking after her cattle in a time of starvation. She lived in the cave with her husband until one day *chemwal*, a local name given to cattle raiders (presumed to have come from Nandi to the south) came to Koropkwen and found her. They cut off her breasts, stole her livestock and left her to die. It is said that this story is not only told in remembrance of Chopo-Ngoswo herself, but also as a reminder to any Nandi who wants to marry someone from Kapsaniak that they would have to undergo a special blessing to compensate for the events of the past. From a dwelling perspective, the location of the cave relative to past homesteads, alongside its concealed nature, rendered it an important local place, particularly when livelihoods were oriented around beekeeping and foraging.

Embokakipketch was not only used as a hiding place from *chemwal*, but also as a resting point for men coming from or returning to their homes through the then thick vegetation. Beehives could be stored under the rock and shelter taken there if it was raining.

The use of Embokakipketch is similar to that of Senti, an equally important place for Kapsaniak located in a second area of community forest to the west called Kosich (Figure 5.10). Rather than being a rock shelter, Senti consists of a large cluster of trees situated on top of a small hill. According to informants, there used to be a particularly large tree here that had grown in such a way that one could shelter in its trunk in a similar vein to the tree at Embosait discussed above. Again, people could store beehives and take refuge if it was raining, as well as congregating before travelling to or from Kosich as a group. This was important because walking to the far end of Kosich itself involves climbing a steep slope that rises approximately 500 metres in altitude. From the homesteads of Kapsaniak in Koropkwen glade, the entire walk can take anywhere between one and three hours, with Senti being situated an hour away. Since, as discussed in the previous chapter, walking longer distances in Embobut appears to have been a communal activity, Senti was an ideal place at which to meet.

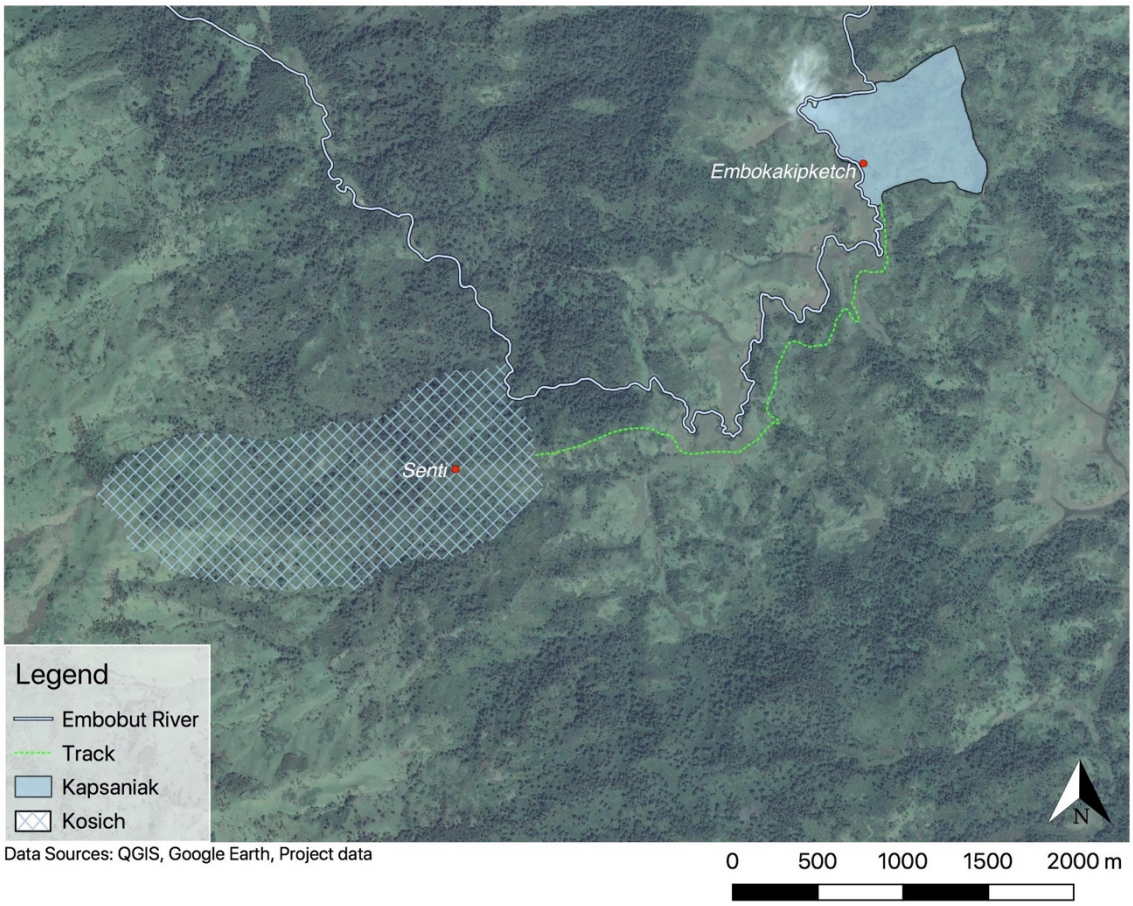


Figure 5.10: Map showing the relative location of Kapsanik's territory in Koropkwen glade and its clan forest, Kosich. The trackway demonstrates the main route walked between the locations.

By making this journey in the present day, it is clear that Senti is an ideal location to take a break as the topography levels briefly before jarring upwards again into the rest of Kosich. Although the hilltop is cooler with trees offering shade, the area is evidently a shadow of its former self, with a distinct lack of mature forest and any living trees stunted in growth due to burning and clearance. My research assistant, Joseph, spoke of how he had never seen the original large tree of Senti as it had already disappeared by the time he was born. Indeed, elder informants tell the story of how the area was burnt when somebody, rumoured to have been a child, found *bonit* in one of the adjacent trees. In attempting to harvest the honey in the dry season, the child did not take care to pacify the bees with smoke and the surrounding vegetation caught fire. The fire spread throughout

the area, not only burning some of the mature trees, but also numerous beehives. One elder wanted to curse this child, but was not sure who it was as he/she came from outside Kapsaniak. For people in Kapsaniak, this particular story exists as a significant memory in a longer narrative of change in Senti, Koropkwen and Embobut at large. Indeed, Joseph frequently pointed out to me the open grassy slopes in Kosich, describing how in his lifetime the thick bamboo forest that usually grows at this altitude has gradually disappeared. The time frame behind this change is difficult to pinpoint due its gradual nature, but a number of elders described how in the 1980s they acquired small plots of land in Kosich and were taking their livestock to graze as the glade was becoming crowded with farming. As well as this, and as explored in more detail below, the late 1990s and early 2000s saw an increased rise in cultivation, leading to an accelerated clearance of land by the younger generations.



Figure 5.11: a.) Looking across Koropkwen glade from Kapsaniak hill to Senti in Kosich; b.) Senti in the present

Kalomoitany - Marakwet

Occupying a hill in the southwest of Koropkwen glade, the territory of Kalomoitany exists as a particular lineage within the Marakwet Kamoi clan that spread across much of Koropkwen and onto parts of the Elgeyo Escarpment. The story of Kamoi is both long and complicated, as evidenced by the size of its territory today. At its most basic, it started when an elder named Cheptarus migrated into the area from what is now West Pokot County approximately six generations ago with his three sons Yator, Sugut and Sengeywo (Tula Margaret Chelauga 11.09.2016). Whilst Yatur and Sugut settled on the escarpment edge, Sengeywo stayed in Koropkwen glade, continuing with beekeeping and cattle rearing and laying claim to the forest at Sui to the north of the glade. Whilst the exact lineage of Sengeywo remains hazy due to inconsistencies between interviews (Tula Margaret Chelauga 11.09.2016; Paul Bowen Kipyatich 03.10.2016), it is clear that by the early twentieth century his descendants had set up homesteads on various hills in Koropkwen, a story linked with the permit holders.

Members from the Kamoi clan used the area referred to as Sui to store their beehives, hunt wild animals and gather any plant resources that were needed. Here there is a large boulder called *Kononop Sui* that lies tucked into the hillside. This place is similar in its use to that of Embokakipketch discussed above, providing shelter and a place of rest of the members of Kamoi moving to and from their homesteads and the clan forest. This location was a unique resting place for the people of Kamoi and, in a similar manner to Senti of the Kapsaniak clan, was historically characterised by dense forest vegetation. In the present day, however, the forest has since declined, predominantly due to an increase in maize farming that started in the 1960s and rapidly accelerated in the last decade (Tula Margaret Chelauga 03.10.2016).

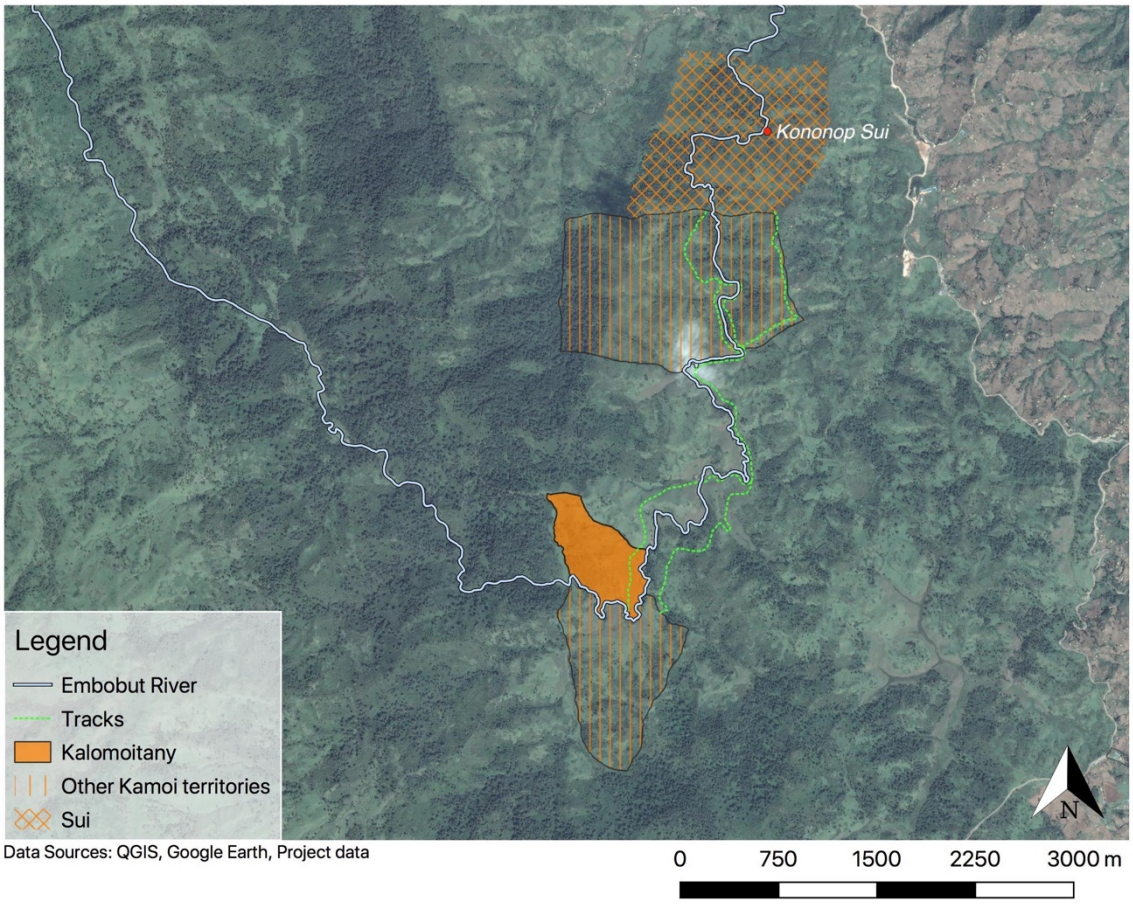


Figure 5.12: Territories of Kamoi including the Kalomoitany lineage and the trackways between them

Given that the descendants of Sengeyo moved to different parts of Koropkwen, they were living at different distances from Sui, with some living immediately adjacent, but others having to walk up to an hour (Figure 5.12). Such is the case with one descendant, Lomoitany, who was given a permit by the colonial Forest Department to graze his cattle in the glade at his homestead towards the south of Koropkwen glade (Figure 5.7). Here, the steep slopes of the hills level out briefly in a small plateau before plunging into the Embobut river. A distinct *Sewerwo* tree (*Hagenia abyssinica*) sits in the open next to where it is said Lomoitany lived approximately ninety years ago (Figure 5.13; Musa Koimen 05.03.2017). 'True' ownership over the hill that is claimed to belong to Lomoitany is contentious. This is because the narrative of how Lomoitany originally moved to live near the *Sewerwo* tree and lay claim to the adjacent forest is contested. The

son of Lomoitany, Musa Koimen, testifies that his father moved and built his house on his own accord, and that when he and his brothers did the same they acquired legitimate ownership over the hill. However, members of the neighbouring clan, Kakasowat, state that the hill was gifted to Lomoitany when he married a woman from their clan, and that in reality they have *de facto* ownership of the hill. This claim plays into complex and contested local histories as to how and where people obtained their territory. As well as this, such debates that are played out on a local level intersect with a much larger political dialogue that exists in Embobut surrounding the evictions and minority rights. This is because the Kalomoitany lineage identifies as Marakwet whilst Kakasowat identify as Sengwer. The upshot of this, as explained to me by a Sengwer community activist, is that Embobut truly belongs to the Sengwer and any Marakwet claim to ownership is secondary to this. The ramifications of this are explored fully in Chapter 7.1.



Figure 5.13: View of the hill where Lomoitany resided. The lighter green grass around the singular tree can be used as a proxy for the location of his homestead.

Kalotokur - Dorobo/Sengwer

The hill occupied by the clan of Kalotokur is relatively small and located to the west of the Embobut River in Koropkwen between Kachelekeu and Kamoi (Figure 5.14)[25]. The ancestor of this clan, Kimarar, arrived in Koropkwen glade between five and six generations ago, having migrated through Kiptaberr to the west and across the Cherangani Hills. Upon arriving, he set up his homestead at the foot of the hill, close to the river and out in the open away from the then thick forest (Joseph Toroitich Kirotich 03.10.2016; 10.03.2017). Of his three sons, two supposedly moved away back over the hills due to a famine. However, the youngest son, Lotokur, stayed put in the glade, living there with his father. Unlike the Kapsaniak and Kalomoitany clans, Kimarar and his son Lotokur initially had no cattle. Thus, central to their way of living, and perhaps even more so than surrounding clans, was their reliance on beekeeping. Bees were kept in their community forests, located both immediately behind them extending up the hill and approximately an hour's walk to the west in Lombenwo. They also had a greater reliance on hunting animals in the forest, with the exception of warthog, which, for unspecified reasons, was described as being taboo. If they managed to kill a buffalo by means of a pit trap, the whole family could be fed and any extra meat traded for milk with neighbouring groups (Joseph Toroitich Kirotich 03.10.2016).

[25] Information on the history of Kalotokur was gathered from two interviews with one clan elder called Joseph Toroitich Kirotich (03.10.2016; 10.03.2017). I could not corroborate some of the exact details with other clan elders as they had all dispersed further afield before or after the 2013 evictions. Nevertheless, the observations that emerge from his general narrative remain important for the overall discussion.



Figure 5.14: View of Kalotokur hill

The great-grandson of Kimarar, Joseph Toroitich Kirotich, could only have heard stories of where Kimarar came from, but his memory of Lotokur was more concrete, stating that "Lotokur was a very humble man...making sure that people were not cutting trees without permission or a real purpose". From this, he recalled a proud story of how Lotokur acquired cattle and increased the wealth of the family. He achieved this through a process of exchange called *Chepkiku* that involved leasing land and labour for livestock. As Lotokur had plenty of pasture surrounding his house, a man from Kamoi clan called Teseimuk asked if he could temporarily move there with his cattle (a narrative confirmed by a relative of Teseimuk, Tula Margaret Chelauga 11.09.2016). Lotokur agreed and helped care for the livestock. In exchange for this work, Lotokur asked to keep a calf, rearing it by feeding it milk that he would otherwise have consumed himself. As alluded to above, a major condition of rearing somebody's cattle was that you could not eat hunted meat and drink the cow's milk at the same time (a taboo also noted by Moore (1986) in the Kerio Valley). As well as via *Chepkiku*, livestock could also be acquired through the direct exchange of a large quantity of honey or wild meat. By the time Lotokur died, there

were enough cattle for his four sons, Kipketer, Kisabou, Mawira and Bwanangombe (father of Joseph), to each inherit some livestock.

The initial lack of cattle in the clan's oral history has left members of this clan self-identifying first and foremost as Dorobo (a form of identification that also remains true for the Kapchebnai clan on the eastern side of the glade). As expounded in Chapter 2.2, the name Dorobo stems from the Masai term *"Il Torobbo"* that was used to refer to people who had no cattle. The term was appropriated by British colonial authorities to describe various hunting and gathering groups across eastern Africa regardless of whether they were culturally distinct from each other. With specific reference to the clan history of Kalotokur, the name Dorobo appears to have been acquired due to the fact that they initially had no cattle and were not given a permit like neighbouring families were. Indeed, Joseph tells the story of how his elders ran and hid in the forest as they were scared when the members of the colonial Forest Department arrived and handed out permits. Thus, although members of Kalotokur speak the Sengwer dialect as their first language and have a similar narrative of migration, Joseph is adamant that he and his family are first and foremost Dorobo and only then Sengwer. The appropriation of this name in reference to Lynch's (2006) 'politics of naming' is explored further in Chapter 7.

Through exploring these case histories, I have attempted to bring into focus different aspects of life in Koropkwen introduced in the first half of this chapter. In the case of Kapsaniak, the discussion highlights how small, localised areas have specific stories and uses attached to them that form an integral part of daily life. Unlike Kimnamtasa Cave in Kaptirbai glade, or Kokwo Lombenwo that are utilised by multiple clans travelling

arterial routes when taking their cattle to the Kerio Valley (Chapter 4.7), the small cave of Embokakipketch and the resting place of Senti are uniquely important areas for this clan and do not hold the same importance for other clans. In the vein of Ingold's dwelling perspective, the rocks and trees themselves are dwelling places that are used by particular groups carrying out the dwelling tasks of everyday life. This also remains true for the people of Kalomoitany, who used Sui Forest for their beehives and the small boulder as a resting/meeting place. Furthermore, the history of Kalomoitany highlights the complex nature of family history, the physical distribution of this across the landscape and the contested nature of local territories. Finally, in the case of Kalotokur, the brief narrative of *Chepkiku* exchange highlights the local importance of cattle in a localised economy where some individuals did not own livestock and had to depend more heavily on hunting. In turn, this possibly led to the appropriation of the name Dorobo as a form of self-identification. These case studies are returned to in Chapter 6.4 where I explore in more depth where people lived and how the landscape has changed as livelihoods shifted.

The discussion thus far has predominantly explored life in the glades of Embobut prior to the onset of cereal cultivation. As has been highlighted in the case history of Kapsaniak, the landscape of Embobut has undergone much change over the latter half of the twentieth century. This is in part because the relationship that people possessed with the forests shifted as local economies moved away from foraging and beekeeping and towards cultivation. The beginnings of this narrative are now discussed in the light of farming and trade with the broader region.

5.8 The Advent of Farming

"We were responding to Jomo Kenyatta's call to take the panga, take the axe, and fight poverty by farming". Kirop Kitanaoi Sikatom 04.08.2016

"Honey production reduced drastically after farming started. Now I only have one beehive, but it has no honey". Paulo Cheptoms Losipa 27.08.2016

Thus far in this chapter, I have examined the relationship that humans had with the forests and the glades of Embobut since their migration into the region in the mid- to late nineteenth century. Clearly, an incredibly important part of this economy was the ability to trade with neighbouring populations on the slopes of the Elgeyo Escarpment and in the Kerio Valley. This trade network was predominantly built on the fact that communities living at lower elevations below the forest line were farming a variety of cereal crops that were simply not grown in the glades but nevertheless remained an important part of peoples' diet. The working hypothesis currently postulated by Davies and Moore (2016) places the onset of intensive agricultural activity of the Pokot and Marakwet populations within the wider region between 200 and 300 years ago. Recent preliminary studies collated with oral historic data in Tot-Sibou village, located at the foot of the escarpment approximately ten kilometres east of Koropkwen glade and one kilometre lower in elevation, have identified more than 40 plant food varieties originating not only from Africa, but also from Asia and the Americas. The African cereal crops, constituted by different varieties of sorghum (*Sorghum bicolor*) and finger millet (*Eleusine coracana*), appear to have made up the earliest phases of farming in region that had been established by at least 200 years ago. Whilst it remains uncertain as to when observable varieties of peas and beans from the Americas and Asia were introduced, it is clear that a wave of new crops, such as cassava, cowpeas, bananas, onions and mangoes, were introduced in the early twentieth century (Davies and Moore 2016). These were followed by varieties

of maize by colonial agricultural officers (Kipkorir 1983), later to be complemented by other hybrid varieties of maize, finger millet and sorghum (Davies and Moore 2016).

Thus, it is clear that the Marakwet populations in the Kerio Valley adopted an increasingly wide range of crops over the past two hundred years or so. More recently, this narrative has been punctuated by a series of development interventions both by the national government and NGOs, the most recent of which is a 500 hectare irrigation scheme funded by the Canadian Red Cross that became operational in 2014 (Davies and Moore 2016). The success of many of these schemes remains questionable and yet to be seen, despite the fact that they often present themselves as the solution to a local agricultural system that needs 'modernising' in light of food insecurity and climate change. In fact, contrary to the 'doom and gloom' picture painted by these schemes, Davies and Moore (2016) propose that, when contemplated diachronically, the farming systems of the Marakwet and Pokot are both fluid and flexible, where innovation and improvisation contribute to a form of 'cultural resilience' that has, at least to some extent, helped accommodate for population growth, climate fluctuations and erosion.

Clearly, the livelihoods of people in Embobut partly relied on the resilience of these farming systems to produce cereal crops that could be exchanged for honey, milk and meat. Until, that is, the onset of farming within the glades, which according to interviews, started in the early 1960s (Samuel Chemeitoi 17.08.2016). Just why cultivation did not start earlier remains unclear, but the fact that there were strict community rules in place to protect the forest could have played a part. As well as this, the area was established under the colonial administration as a forest reserve to protect the forest ecosystem. Thus, unlike in the Kerio Valley, there was not the same level of state intervention to implement

or ‘modernise’ agricultural activity. On the contrary, populations in the glades were not encouraged to practise farming at all, but rather to continue with existing livelihoods of beekeeping, foraging and small-scale cattle rearing for which they were allocated permits.

The adoption of farming was both slow and gradual. Informants stated that they began by experimenting with a variety of maize called *chebolos*, initially just scattering seeds in a small plot adjacent to their house (Esther Kipkore Kiplitan 07.10.2016). Upon seeing the success of the crop, individuals became more confident of planting more each season and increasing the size of their plots. As well as this, people who had gone to work on large industrial farms in Trans-Nzoia came back and demonstrated improved farming techniques that they had learned such as planting the maize in rows (Paulo Cheptoms Losipa 27.08.2016). It is also likely that knowledge of better farming practice came from the slopes of the Elgeyo Escarpment and Kerio Valley where cultivation had been practised for much longer (Charles Kipkore Kimesai 10.10.2016).

By the 1980s, farming had become more prevalent, with a new variety of hybrid maize being introduced into the area (Murkomeu Kirop 11.10.2016). As well as this, people started experimenting with small-scale potato farming on the higher slopes towards and within Kapokok glade where it was too cold to grow maize productively (Luca Toroitich Kiraton 29.09.2016). At these elevations and outside the forest reserve today, potato farming has burgeoned into a large industry. Given that farmers state that they can get three harvests a year, truckloads of potatoes are filled daily from commercial centres such as Kapyeigo, being freighted across the country to the Kenyan coast as well as into northern Tanzania. Fully understanding the growth of this industry unfortunately lies beyond the scope of this project, but it nevertheless stands as a clear indicator of a

changing economy and relationship with the landscape. Indeed, prior to the 2013 evictions, potato farming was prevalent within Kapkok glade and no doubt an important source of food and money for families living there. To some extent this is echoed back in Koropkwen, where it is clear that by the time of the evictions maize farming had become hugely important to local livelihoods. The commercial success of maize, however, seems to be less than that of potatoes, with most farmers harvesting and grinding maize for their own personal consumption. How, then, did the relationship that people had with the landscape and forests change as farming gradually became more prominent? And, perhaps more poignantly, *why* did it change given the strict community bylaws that were in place in order to protect the forest? In the quotation at the beginning of this section, Kirop Kitanaoi Sikatom places the reason with Jomo Kenyatta's call for the people of an independent Kenya to fight poverty by farming. This was an incredibly common response that most elders gave me when queried about the advent of farming in the highlands. Whilst there may be some truth to this statement, the following chapter now goes onto explore the multidimensional elements of change in Embobut.

Chapter 6 : Ruined Houses, Living Platforms

In the previous chapter, I explored in greater depth the activities that took place in the glades and clan forests by taking Koropkwen glade as a sample and concentrating upon three separate clan histories. In addition, I examined the different roles that animals, plants and the very topography of the landscape had in shaping the lives of Embobut populations. The question left at the end of Chapter 5.8 was how and why did the relationship that people had with the landscape and forests change as farming gradually became more prominent? Investigating this question involves continuing with the multi-scalar approach of this thesis, focusing in particular on fine-grained historical narratives by exploring the transformation of domestic spaces over the twentieth century. In order to achieve this, I first bring into play Bourdieu's practice theory and his concept of the *habitus*. Bourdieu's ideas were influential for Moore's (1986) study of Marakwet homesteads and, perhaps more importantly for this study, act as useful heuristic devices that enrich our understanding of material change and the changing structuring of place through time. The theoretical framework provided by this initial discussion is paramount for the remainder of the chapter, where I examine the material composition of homesteads within the broader region, drawing upon studies conducted with the nearby Endo Marakwet (Moore 1986) and Pokot (Davies 2009) that document how homesteads are dynamic temporal entities with life-cycles of their own. I then turn to the observable ruins within Koropkwen, expounding specific narratives of changing settlement through further examination of the case histories of the three clans introduced in Chapter 5.7. This important exercise pinpoints nuanced histories, bringing into focus how local landscapes have changed through time and how people have negotiated the shifting dwelling tasks of quotidian life.

6.1 Building Foundations: The *Habitus* and Historical Change

As one walks through the hills of Koropkwen, a patchwork of old field boundaries and housing platforms can be seen etched into the hillside. These are the remains of former homesteads, spaces where individuals and family units carried out the tasks of everyday life at their most local level. In some senses, understanding the structuring of space and dynamic lifecycle of these now abandoned platforms helps to contextualise landscape change across the region. Before this can be achieved, however, it is important to lay a theoretical foundation in the form of Bourdieu's practice theory that remained highly influential for Moore (1986) in her study of Marakwet household space (see below)[26].



Figure 6.1: Hills in Koropkwen glade displaying the scars of old field boundaries

[26] In addition to contributing to understandings of the relationship between human agency, the structures of social institutions and historical change, the ideas explored in this section are highly important for the following chapter with regard to a practice theory of ethnicity (Jones 1996).

Prior to the post-processual turn in the 1980s, archaeological studies of architecture were often rooted within universalising principles of architectural form and evolutionary frameworks (Buchli 2013). However, with the emergence of Anthony Gidden's (1984) structuration theory alongside Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) theory of practice, archaeologists started to place fresh emphasis on meaning in relation to social and material processes. It is Bourdieu's work, in particular, that stands out, specifically his study of Berber people in Algeria, which revealed how the spatial organisation of the Kabyle house is intrinsically linked with daily activities and the understanding of gender roles. Most noticeable are the dichotomous categories of light and dark, high and low, public and private. The house is organised into two chambers, one of which is considered private with a lowered floor, creating a place to keep cattle at night with a sleeping platform for women located above it. The upper chamber, on the other hand, is larger and lighter and used as a living space for daily activities, hosting guests as well as containing an area for men to sleep. Men and women are directly associated with these areas and their corresponding categories, with men identified with the light and public areas, and women with the dark and private. In turn, the relationship between the house itself and the surrounding world can be seen as an extension of these conceptual and spatial dichotomies. That is to say that the house is a dark and private domain, represented and associated with a women's womb, whereas the outside world is public and light, with the light representing male fertility entering the womb of the house.

Bourdieu acknowledged that, whilst it is possible to analyse household space by reducing it to sets of structured oppositions, the isolation of such structures does not provide adequate explanations of meaning as it fails to examine the contextual social and economic conditions from which they are produced. This eventually led him to create 'the

theory of practice' whereby worlds acquire meaning through the practice of individual and collective actors who each have their own *habitus* — "systems of durable, transposable dispositions" (Bourdieu 1977: 72). *Habitus* explains how any given individual possesses an internalised knowledge of how to behave and interact with his or her surroundings without consciously thinking about operating within a strict system of extant rules. The dispositions of the *habitus* are generated by particular conditions and conceptual schemes constitutive of a given social environment (Bourdieu 1977: 77–78). Where other structural theories of culture have suggested that practices involve the automatic performing of a system of rules that exists outside individual and group history, Bourdieu's theory states that the embodied dispositions of the *habitus* are both constructive of and influenced by structuring principles. Consequently, they shape and are shaped by social practice in a kind of feedback mechanism. Where Bourdieu makes reference to material culture in *habitus*, explaining how space and objects become encoded and exist as 'structuring structures', as evidenced by the Kabyle house (Bourdieu 1977: 90–95), it is unsurprising that it has gained particular traction within archaeology in helping to understand meaning in spatial ordering and architectural form (Stewart-Abernathy 2006; Buchli 2013).

Whilst seen as a valuable contribution that attempts to surpass tensions between objectivism and subjectivism, Bourdieu's ideas have not gone without criticism. Indeed, as posited by King (2000), the *habitus* reneges on some of Bourdieu's more successful ideas that explore how the existence of objective social structures are reifications of certain moments in the social process which consists of individuals interacting meaningfully with each other and their worlds. The dilution of objective structures into complex webs of practice between individuals should not be seen as reduction towards

subjectivism. Rather, the understandings which inform individual practices are learnt from wider societal structures as informed by, and performed in relation to, other social actors. Within this paradigm, consistent negotiation of social relations between individuals is never static or timeless. Instead, relations maintained through different forms of exchange (verbal and physical) build upon a succession of exchanges that can subtly transform the meaning of past interactions and, therefore, the relationship itself (King 2000: 428). King posits that the problem with the *habitus* within this context is that it does not allow room for such gradual transformations. This is because if an individual possesses durable and internalised dispositions determined by objective conditions that inform the actions of that individual, then social change would not be possible. In other words, people would act according to the objective structural conditions in which they found themselves and consequently simply reproduce those conditions by repeating the same practices.

The rebuttal to this argument has come in different forms, recently spearheaded by Gorski (2013) in *'Bourdieu and Historical Analysis'.* In the introduction to this volume, Gorski analyses the relative citations of Bourdieu's work, particularly in Anglophone literature, demonstrating that the interpretation that Bourdieu's concepts only explain social reproduction (as opposed to social change) stems from a history of translation of his work and their subsequent selective reading, namely with respect to *Distinction* (Bourdieu 1984) and *An Outline of Practice Theory* (Bourdieu 1977). In these works, Bourdieu does indeed seek to explore the phenomena of social reproduction, noticeably in the former where he examines the persistence of social inequality in post-war France. However, in both his earlier and later work, his interests stem from exploring social transformation, such as his exploration of the character of economic change and social change in societies

in colonial Algeria (Bourdieu 1979). In light of this, Gorski (2013) claims that, with such an array of ideas and published literature, Bourdieu should be seen as a social theorist for both reproduction *and* change and that his ideas are powerful tools for analysing both: "one of the advantages of the Bourdieusian framework is that it allows one to analyze social reproduction and transformation and historical continuity and rupture, even simultaneously, and that that in fact is what most of Bourdieu's work does to one degree or another" (Gorski 2013: 12).

This mantle has been taken up on different fronts, such as the paper by Yang (2014), who responds to Bourdieu's (1990: 49) call of "thinking with the thinker against that thinker" in order to understand how the *habitus* fits into ideas of social change by using other Bourdieusian concepts of the 'field' and 'capital' (Bourdieu 1984: 101). A part of this task includes understanding that, with a degree of reflexivity, individuals can form a secondary *habitus* through 'methodical inculcation' rather than 'unconscious inculcation' (Yang 2014: 1532). In other words, it is possible for individuals consciously to acquire knowledge and new skills that gradually form a new *habitus* over an extended period of time. In a similar vein, Steimetz (2011) emphasises that a key part of Bourdieu's *habitus* is the idea of 'regulated improvisation', which facilitates a level of freedom within peoples' decision-making and, by extension, allows for gradual transformations through time (Bourdieu 1977: 78). In light of this, whilst the argument posited by King (2000) neatly highlights the problem with the *habitus* when approaching issues of historical change, other social theorists, including Bourdieu himself, have used it as useful tool for comprehending transformation. Thus, for the purposes of this study, the *habitus* remains a useful heuristic device for understanding how people structure their worlds both past

and present as well as how they coped with interventions from the government and Kenya Forest Service.

In some respects, Bourdieu's practice theory can be seen as an extension, or re-working, of Heidegger's earlier work on dwelling and 'Being-in-the-world' discussed in the previous chapters, with the idea of 'Being' as opposed to 'knowing' cutting to the heart of what Bourdieu describes as the *habitus.* As Ingold (2000: 162; 2011) illustrates, the *habitus* can be understood as the sort of practical mastery associated with skill that is internalised in our bodies and learned through the repeated carrying out of tasks rather than formal, conscious instruction. Bourdieu (1977: 87) calls this the body *hexis* – "A way of walking, a tilt of the head, facial expressions, ways of sitting and of using implements" – that is the embodiment of the *habitus* and a part of 'Being' rather than consciously 'knowing' how one is behaving. Furthermore, neither Heidegger's 'Being-in-the-world', Ingold's 'dwelling perspective', nor Bourdieu's *habitus* and theory of practice advocates a structured or objective world separate from any given individual or social group. Rather, worlds are built and acquire meaning through the activities and practices of dwelling actors, including those of non-human animals (Ingold 2011). With this in mind, I now turn to the homesteads in the Cherangani Hills with specific reference to the material composition of homesteads and structuring of place, documenting how houses are dynamic temporal entities with life-cycles of their own, emerging in new ways in conjunction with the practices of individual actors.

6.2 Household Lifecycles

In some respects, it seems futile to talk of an archetypal homestead within such a broad region across the entire region of the Cherangani Hills and the Elgeyo Escarpment, not

least because the latter half of the twentieth century has seen a rapid change in residential forms and materials that can be seen as the 'westernisation' of architectural form (see below). Indeed, one only needs to walk through the commercial centre of Chesoi (an hour's drive from where I was living) to notice how there is often a fusion of style and materials, from more traditional wattle-and-daub cone-on-cylinder structures to rectangular houses made from bricks and corrugated iron to the larger houses of wealthier individuals displaying all sorts of grand architectural features. As one moves further away from urban centres, however, the cone-on-cylinder house that John Sutton (1973) stated was the most common structure across the region almost forty-five years is still prevalent today (Figure 6.2b). Traditionally made from wattle-and-daub (with the exception of the distinctive drystone houses found on the Elgeyo Escarpment; Figure 6.2d), these houses measure approximately between four and nine metres in diameter and sit within an enclosed compound with other residential structures[27].

[27] These structures are built by a majority of Kalenjin populations, with the exception of the 20 m long, flat-roofed structures built by the Sebei to the north of Mount Elgon and the semi-permanent grass dome dwellings built by some of the pastoral Pokot towards Lake Turkana (Sutton 1973).

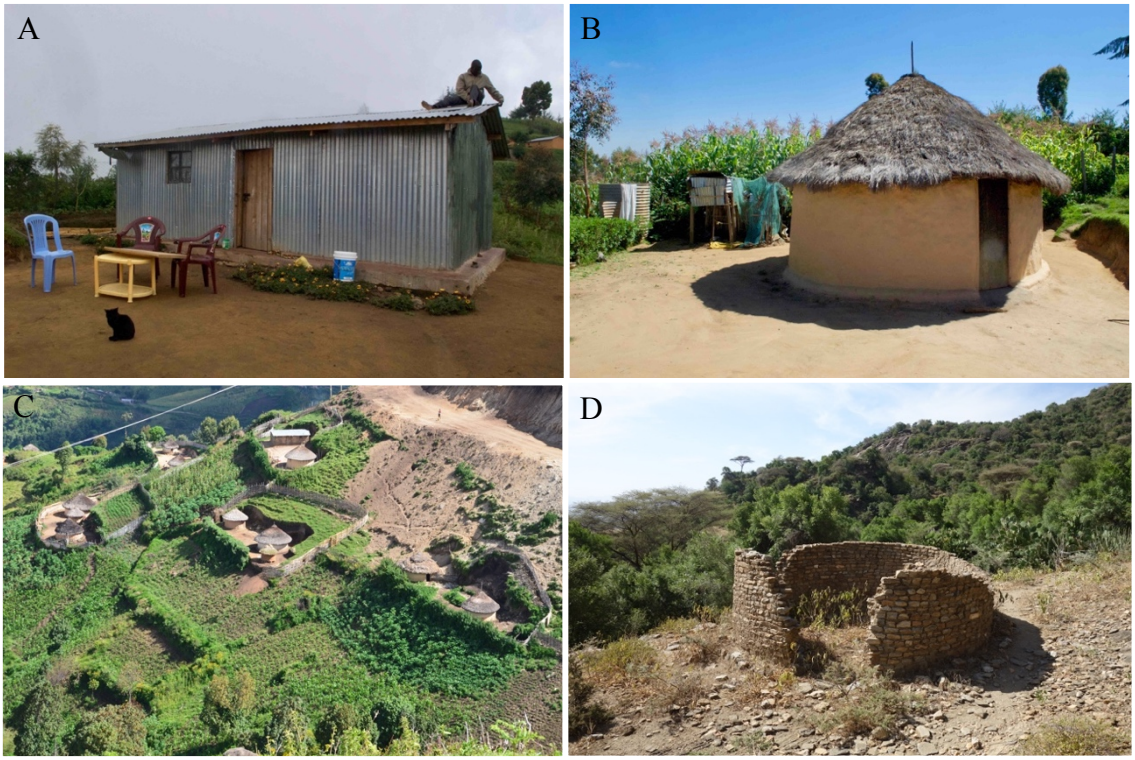


Figure 6.2: Different houses in the Cherangani Hills; a.) example of a corrugated iron rectangular house; b.) traditional cone-on-cylinder house; c.) view of different homesteads; d.) ruins of a dry stonewall house on the Elgeyo escarpment.

It is important to understand that, whilst many communities within the broader region live in residential structures that have a similar form, the houses and compounds they construct are not uniform entities separate from surrounding environments and local historical narratives. Rather, they are built and lived in as a part of the dwelling within the wider landscape. Indeed, by drawing upon Bourdieu's theory of practice, Moore's (1986) study of the Endo Markwet in Sibou village in the Kerio Valley demonstrates the importance of space in ordering social perceptions and experience on a localised level. Located on the slopes of the steep Elgeyo Escarpment, houses are built so that they never face out over the Kerio Valley to the east. Instead, they are constructed with the doors facing either north or south along the escarpment. When Moore initially conducted her study, most houses were typically thatched, sub-circular cone-on-cylinder structures, appearing as three types: wattle-and-daub, post-and-daub and mud-and-stone.

Traditionally, the principles behind the internal layout of houses were invariant, with a division into three areas: *kowerir* (the area of the bed), *kapkoschio* (an area for cooking) and *kuti ya tobot* (an area beneath the entrance to the roof store). In each house, the relative positioning of these respective spaces remained the same, with the bed located behind the door in the most private spot of the house and the hearth placed behind and to one side of the centre post. Where the entrance to the roof store was not placed above the sleeping or cooking area, it was usually put opposite the bed on the other side of the house. In an ideal compound, one house belonged to the women and the other to the man, although now they serve more functionally as a cooking house and entertainment/sleeping house respectively. This can be seen as a part of an increased influence from the growing commercial centre of Tot, located at the foot of the escarpment.

Moore's study also revealed a specific organisation of space in relation to the disposing of refuse, particularly ash and dung. Ash is most commonly placed on the side of the compound associated with the female/cooking house, whilst animal dung is disposed of closer to the area of the male/sleeping hut. This is not a mere functional differential of the relative positioning of the hearth or goat kraal. Indeed, dung will often have to be taken some distance to be disposed of in the correct area. Rather, the disposal of such materials arises from a "series of conflicts and tensions which arise between men and women concerning control of productive resources" (Moore 1986: 191). Moore's predominant argument is that the organisation of domestic space in the Marakwet household does not merely reflect cultural codes and meanings, but rather a context developed through practice. That is to say that meaning is not inherent in the spatial order of the homestead, but must be invoked through actions.

Another important observation that arose from Moore's (1986) study was that houses in Sibou are dynamic temporal entities whose life-cycles are entwined with those of their inhabitants. Indeed, whilst the layout of any given compound follows basic patterns of organisation, homestead comparison can often reveal a level of variation that appears dependent on the phase of a given household's life-cycle and individual choices. This is because homesteads are not static domestic spaces but dynamic. The life-cycle of a house can thus be broken into five broad phases. Phase One starts when a young man builds his own house away from his parents, usually when he marries, earmarking the start of a new compound. This is commonly used for an entertaining/sleeping house with the first becoming designated as a cooking house. The second phase sees the development of the household and occurs as children are born into the family. If the man marries a second wife, a third house is often built. Further to this, granaries may be built for storage, as well as a goat house if one has not already been constructed. Phase Three relates to the period when the household reaches its peak and the children are maturing. The eldest son may want to construct his own goat house and another house may be built for a widowed parent to live in. As Phase Four commences, the household begins to fragment as the children move away and start their own domestic units. Thus, structures that were once important for everyday life may fall into disrepair as the homestead shrinks. This gradual process continues into Phase Five as the individual compound continues to decline, until finally ceasing when both spouses pass away or the surviving spouse moves to live with one of their sons. It must be noted that these five phases are not fixed periods experienced uniformly across Sibou. Rather, we can use them as a framing device to help understand the material correlates of the life-decisions that face an individual man. Indeed, "the only fixed points, which are the same for all men, are that the process begins with marriage and ends with death" (Moore 1986: 98).

As I have noted at the beginning of this section, in the latter half of the twentieth century there was, and indeed continues to be, an increasing tendency to build rectangular houses that can be linked to the gradual 'westernisation' of architectural form and materials (Moore 1986). Moore's argument here, however, is not that change should be understood purely in terms of a causal relationship between the 'modern West' impacting upon a static Marakwet community. Rather, "the way it is actually changing has to do with how particular social and economic conditions make certain ideological or symbolic forms both possible and authoritative…In Sibou, the introduction of square houses and 'modern' household items is only viable in the context of a prestige system which values the 'modern' over the 'traditional'" (Moore 1986: 191). Since Moore's original study, Sibou and the neighbouring commercial centre of Tot have continued to change in multifaceted ways that can be seen as a part of a broader trend of change within many communities of the area and, indeed, much of East Africa (Davies and Moore 2016).

An important part of exploring such changes over time must involve expanding the time frame in question in order to identify the bigger picture of landscape modification. This approach can be seen in Davies's (2008, 2009, 2012) study of Pokot agricultural systems and settlement patterns in the Wei Wei Valley in the northern Cherangani Hills. Davies demonstrates that the Pokot hold similar principles to the Marakwet in terms of homestead layout and household life-cycle. A key part of his research states that recognising the temporality of household life-cycles in conjunction with wider systems of land-use is important for understanding settlement chronology within the region over the *longue durée*. In Wei Wei, land is initially obtained by slashing and burning the bush. Rights to that land are then passed down through the generations, forming linear strip territories called *korok* that follow ridges and gullies down the steep valley slopes. As such, each

clan holds a finite amount of land that is distributed between members of that lineage over time, a process that is related to the life-cycle of homesteads. Indeed, when a man starts a new household, the land upon which he builds is given to him by his father who, throughout his lifetime, will gradually distribute all of his land-holdings to his sons. Consequently, any given generation of men will hold less land than the generation preceding it.

With each *korok* existing as a finite amount of space, there is an inevitable increase in localised pressure on land that increases with time. Any extended household wishing to increase in size may accomplish this by encroaching into neighbouring areas and any successful household or lineage that achieves this often has a numerical advantage over their neighbours. Alternatively, individuals who are particularly unsatisfied with the quantity or quality of their land may decide to move further away from their families to a less densely populated area or even to instigate the clearance of virgin forest. If these new lands prove particularly fertile, more people may be attracted to the area, resulting in a gradual depopulation of the initial settlement region in favour of a new. The ramification of these processes is that, viewed diachronically, clan settlement can drift spatially through time. Davies (2009) conducted thirteen transect surveys from north to south along the Wei Wei Valley, documenting the ratio of lived in households to abandoned compounds. Reinforced by oral histories and small-scale excavations, his results demonstrate that over the past 250 years the agricultural Pokot population has been gradually drifting southwards up the Wei Wei Valley towards the highlands. Ultimately, these household cycles and shifting settlement areas can be extended into the broader understandings of landscape change, where Davies (2008, 2012) analyses the temporality

of irrigation, terracing and field boundaries, concluding that the temporal nature of the household is not bounded but extends across the landscape.

6.3 Abandoned Housing Platforms

Given that Koropkwen glade is not far from the studies conducted by Moore and Davies, the latter can act as a useful framing device for my own research, particularly for understanding household lifecycles and changing settlement patterns over time. It is important to note, however, that whilst some informants testified to holding similar principles of spatial ordering to those documented by Moore (particularly with regard to refuse disposal), my study does not focus directly on these structuring principles or the gender roles associated with them. This is partly because the specific area investigated and the household complexes in question are no longer occupied, thus posing the methodological problem of not being able to observe contemporary household organisation. Although it might have been possible to conduct surveys and interviews in homesteads located outside of the forests as a comparative study (Kay, forthcoming), the aim here is to understand what it means to have dwelt within the landscapes now defined as the Embobut Forest block. As such, the following section explores the materiality of household ruins in conjunction with oral histories in order to understand changing settlement, social activities and forest environments as situated in Koropkwen specifically and the forests of Embobut at large.

In Koropkwen, the numerous abandoned housing platforms observable today were built as terraces in the hillside upon which houses can be constructed. Much like in Wei Wei and on the Elgeyo Escarpment, this is a common practice across Embobut as it helps to create level platforms within the steep, undulating terrain. Houses were typically bamboo wattle-and-daub structures with thatched roofs, located high up on hill slopes away from

the river where there was more space to plant crops. Each compound usually (but not always) had additional structures such as a granary, livestock kraals within or immediately adjacent to the compound, a large hollowed out trough for use as a salt lick, a chicken coop, a drying rack and a latrine. Reminiscent of the Pokot, field systems typically extended downslope, with the housing platform sitting at the top of the plot. Fields were occasionally terraced in an attempt to prevent erosion on the steep slopes.



Figure 6.3: a.) Housing platform cut into the hill side; b) remains of an old granary; c.) stone hearth; d.) view of housing platforms from afar across Kapkok glade.

However, since the 2013 evictions and the subsequent burning, collapse and cannibalisation of these structures, the platforms have become the main indicator of where people were previously living. As documented below, the platforms appear in a variety of shapes and sizes, measuring anything between five and fifteen metres from the back of the terrace to the front edge of the platform and five to twenty metres across. Those that are not completely overgrown with vegetation or disturbed by livestock occasionally display surface features of former structures. These exist as the foundations of stilted granaries, foundations and walls of collapsed houses and the relative location of hearthstones (Figure 6.3).

Six detailed surveys of housing platforms that I conducted are presented below. These were sampled from different clans across Koropkwen glade in order to account for variation in terrace condition and size. Specific GPS points have not been given due to the fact that, as later discussed, some people continue to build small structures in the glades for sheltering and protecting livestock at night. Given that this is a contentious issue in light of the evictions and conservation policy, I was advised to leave the specific locations of contemporary dwellings out of my data. Nevertheless, individuals wanted me to tell their stories and the following archaeological residues are an important part of this.

Platform A

This platform sat on the outskirts of present-day Koropkwen on the shoulder of a hill looking east. At the widest point from the back to the front of the terrace it measured 4.1m and had a width of 11.2m. There was partial evidence of two houses and a collapsed granary. No additional structures were noticeable, but a small bowl-shaped pit was dug

near the back of the terrace cutting that a local informant said was used by the occupant so that the soil could be smeared on the houses if the rendering started to flake.

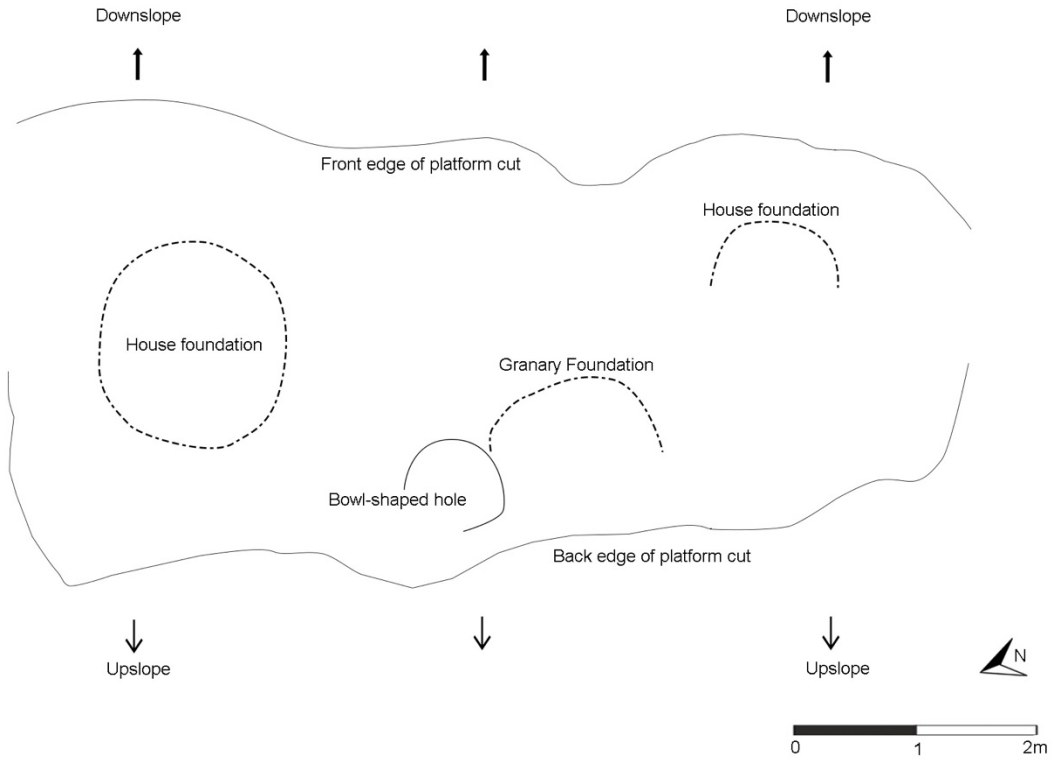


Figure 6.4: Abandoned Platform A

Platform B

This platform was cut relatively deep into the hillside with a back edge approximately three metres high. Measuring 10.8m from the front to the back of the terrace, and 19.5m from edge to edge, any evidence of house and granary foundations has disappeared. There was, however, a small livestock kraal to one side that is currently being used to keep calves and lambs, as well as a cattle crush (milking pen) used on a daily basis for milking cows.

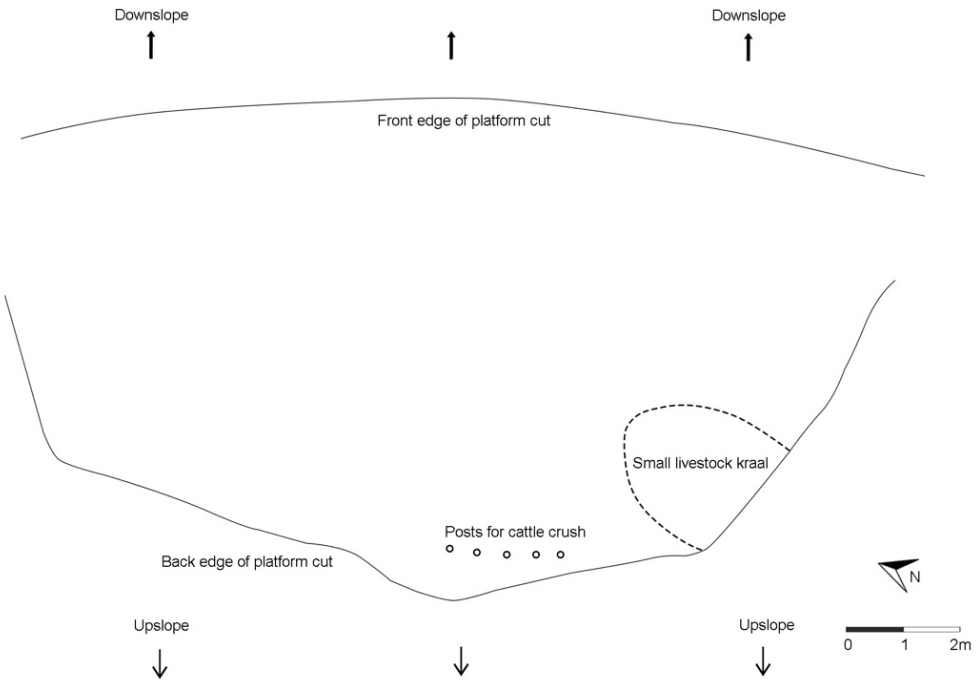


Figure 6.5: Abandoned Platform B

Platform C

The former cutting of this platform was completely indistinguishable due to the large number of nettles growing around the edge. This appears to have been done on purpose in part to conceal a small shelter on the inside as someone is still using the terrace on a daily basis. Once inside the compound, there was a clear bamboo fence around the perimeter and another down the centre that divided the compound into two. In the larger segment stood a cattle crush and a hollowed trunk used as a salt lick. In the second half was a small shelter. The walls were made from strips of bamboo woven together with no visible smearing that would have made it more impermeable to the elements, while the roof was made from two flat sheets of corrugated iron.

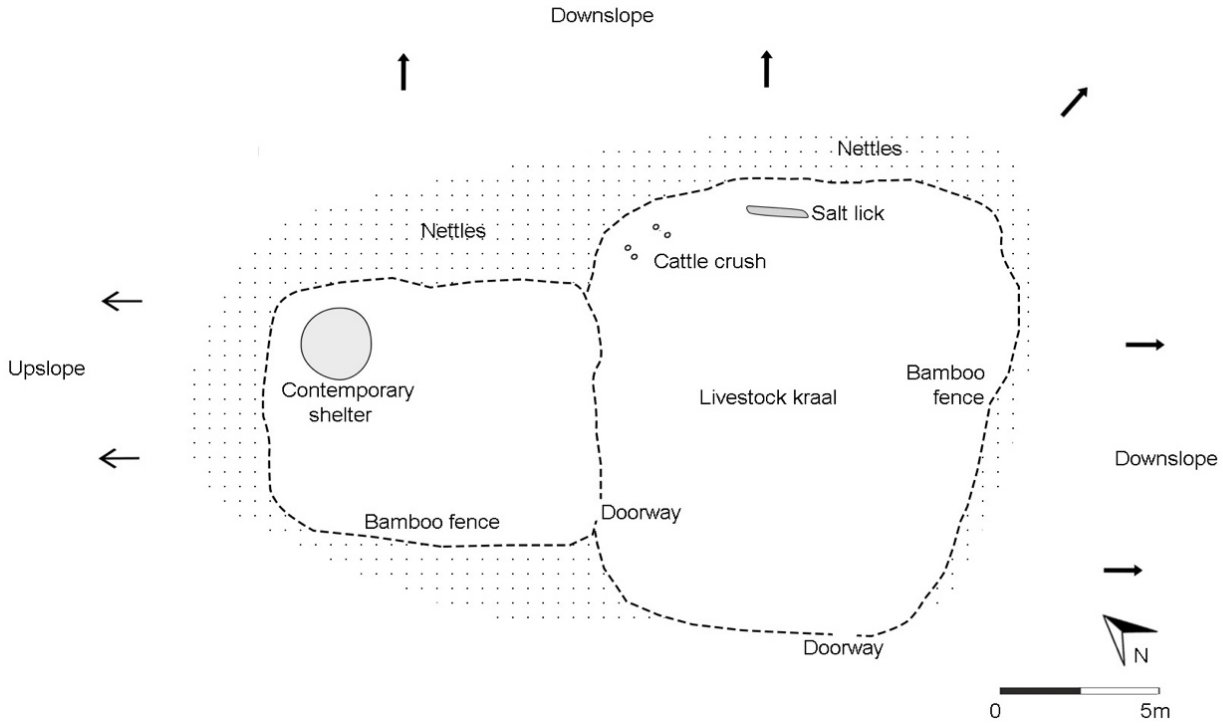


Figure 6.6: Abandoned Platform C

Platform D

Measuring 4.5m from back to front and 6.7m wide, this relatively small housing platform sat on a lower slope closer to the Embobut River. The only observable structures were the partial remains of a small house foundation estimated to have been just over two metres wide.

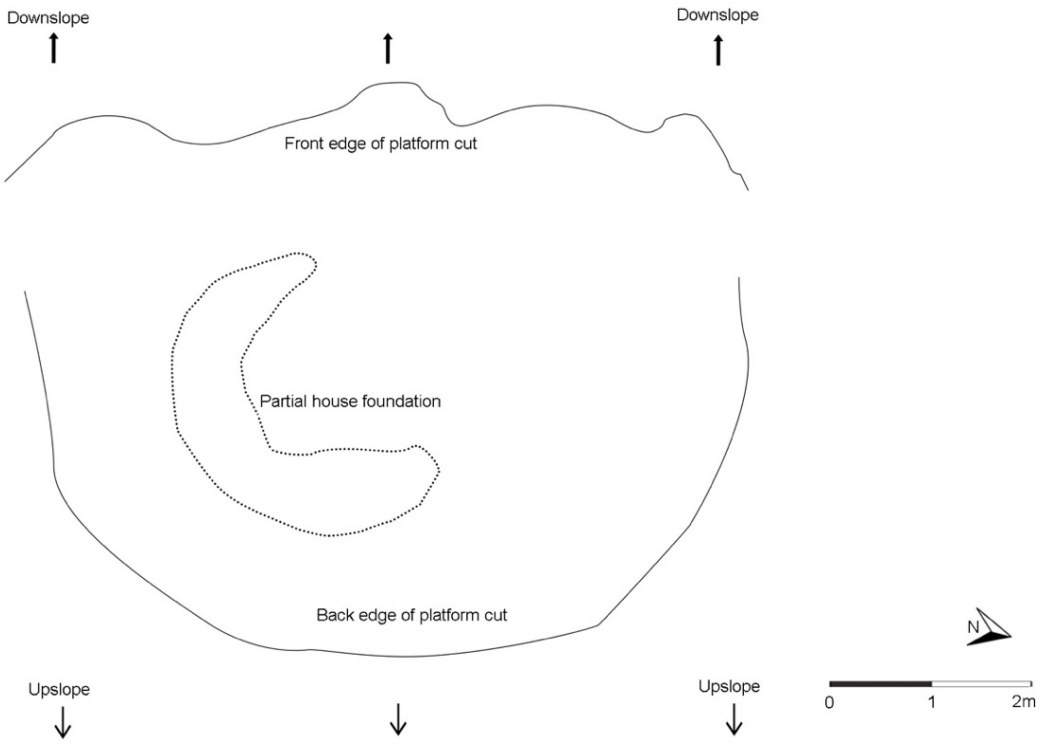


Figure 6.7: Abandoned Platform D

Platform E

This compound was the largest surveyed and had a number of different features. As with Platform C it was difficult to distinguish parts of the original terrace as, at the time of the survey, it had been re-appropriated by the original occupant. It was divided into different segments with woven bamboo fences, the largest of which had the former platform cutting running through the centre. This cutting was fairly eroded due to the herding of livestock in and out of the separate livestock kraal located to the side. The small, former livestock kraal was longer in use as the occupant's lambs had since matured. The largest segment had the western corner fenced off where a small structure no bigger than 2m in diameter sat. The roof was made from thatching grass, the walls of woven strips of bamboo with no smeared soil for weather-proofing. The occupant informed me that prior to the

evictions the compound was a slightly different shape than now as evidenced by the eroded housing platform cutting.

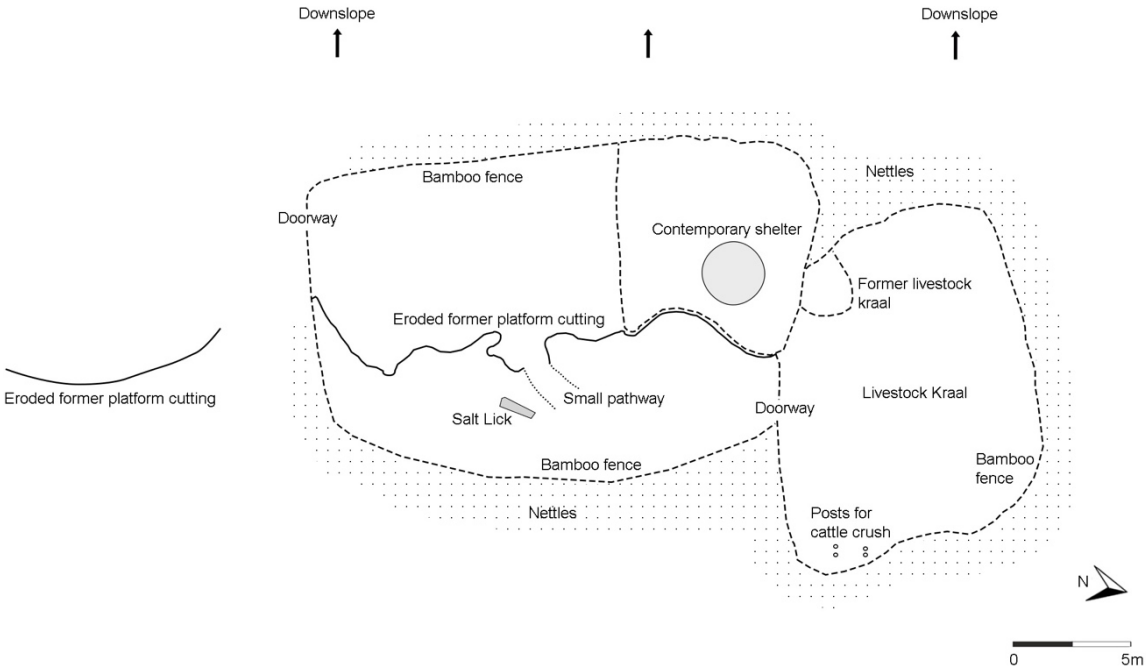


Figure 6.8: Abandoned Platform E

6.4 Settlement Surveys

Many of these housing platforms exist as particular points within the life migration of certain individuals. A key aspect to understanding this stems from the idea that homesteads have dynamic lifecycles that play into the decisions that face young men who want to move away from home. In order to expand on this and glean a richer understanding of settlement change over the twentieth century, GPS points were taken from the three clans (Kapsaniak, Kalomoitany, Kalotokur) whose histories I explored in Chapter 5.7. These points mark every observable housing platform within their respective territories in Koropkwen glade. Each area was surveyed systematically with a clan

member, the advantage of this being that these individuals have an intimate knowledge of where houses were located before the evictions, thus lowering the prospect of platforms being missed from the survey. A total of 134 platforms were recorded. In conjunction with this, elders from each clan were interviewed in order to obtain family histories and a richer understanding of the decision-making processes behind settlement change.

Before presenting this, however, I need to emphasise that not all of the documented house platforms were necessarily occupied at the same time prior to the evictions. Indeed, with Davies's (2009) surveys in the Wei Wei Valley it is possible to see interesting ratios of abandoned platforms to occupied homesteads in any given clan territory that exist as a part of a broader narrative of shifting settlement patterns. Given that no one now lives permanently within the conservation area, however, I was unable to document such ratios in Embobut. As such, whilst the ensuing discussion clearly shows elements of settlement growth and change, platforms should not be used as direct proxies for duration of occupancy or population density at the time of the evictions.

Kalomoitany

The hill claimed to be the territory of Lomoitany and his sons had a total of 22 housing platforms (Figure 6.9). As I discussed in Chapter 5.7, Lomoitany was an elder in the Kamoi clan who was given a permit to live in the forest at his homestead towards the south of Koropkwen glade. Here, the steep slopes of the hills level out briefly in a small plateau before plunging into the Embobut river. A distinct Sewerwo tree sits in the open next to where it is said Lomoitany lived approximately ninety years ago. His homestead, as described by one of his sons Musa Koimen (06.08.2016; 05.03.2017), consisted of two thatched, wattle-and-daub houses facing each other in an enclosure surrounded by a large

bamboo fence. In a similar vein to those described by Moore (1986) among the Endo Marakwet, one house belonged to his father and the other to his mother. When he and his siblings were young, they slept in their mother's house, whilst Lomoitany slept in his own house with his sheep. Their cattle were left outside in the compound.

Musa recalled how it was his age-set (Kaplelach), circumcised in the early 1960s (Chapter 4.5), who pioneered the clearing of virgin forest in order to start their own homesteads and grow their own maize. Fundamentally, this resulted in the expansion of settlement away from the river and higher up onto the hill and into the clan forests. Indeed**,** when Musa was first married at the approximate age of 19 (which I estimate to have been in 1967), he moved away from the house of his father located on the river bank and cleared forest on the higher slopes. Here there was more space to clear land for a homestead, keep his own cattle herd and even start to plant crops. His father and other community elders showed him where to construct his house and instructed him not to cut too much of the forest as it was still an exceptionally important resource for the community, particularly in relation to beekeeping. Musa noted that before he concentrated his efforts on farming he had around fifteen beehives in the forest. Over the next few years, however, these decreased to just four.

He lived in this initial location for several years before his younger brother, Samwel, was married and took over the household. Musa then relocated himself higher still and cleared an area for a second compound. Not long after this, he constructed a third compound adjacent to the second when he married a second wife. By this time, Musa stated that he did not require permission from his elders or need to wait to be told where he could build. Rather, he obtained land through slashing and burning on his own accord, choosing house

locations where he saw was most appropriate. One exception was in the in the mid-1990s when he built a fourth home outside Koropkwen glade in Lombenwo in the community forest of Kalotokur clan. This was because the land inside the glade was becoming overcrowded as cultivation increased, resulting in less pasture for livestock. In order to move his livestock to the pastures inside Lombenwo, Musa had to request permission from Kalotokur elders to build a house, which was granted on condition that he did not farm in that area. It is still possible to see where this house was nestled amongst the trees.

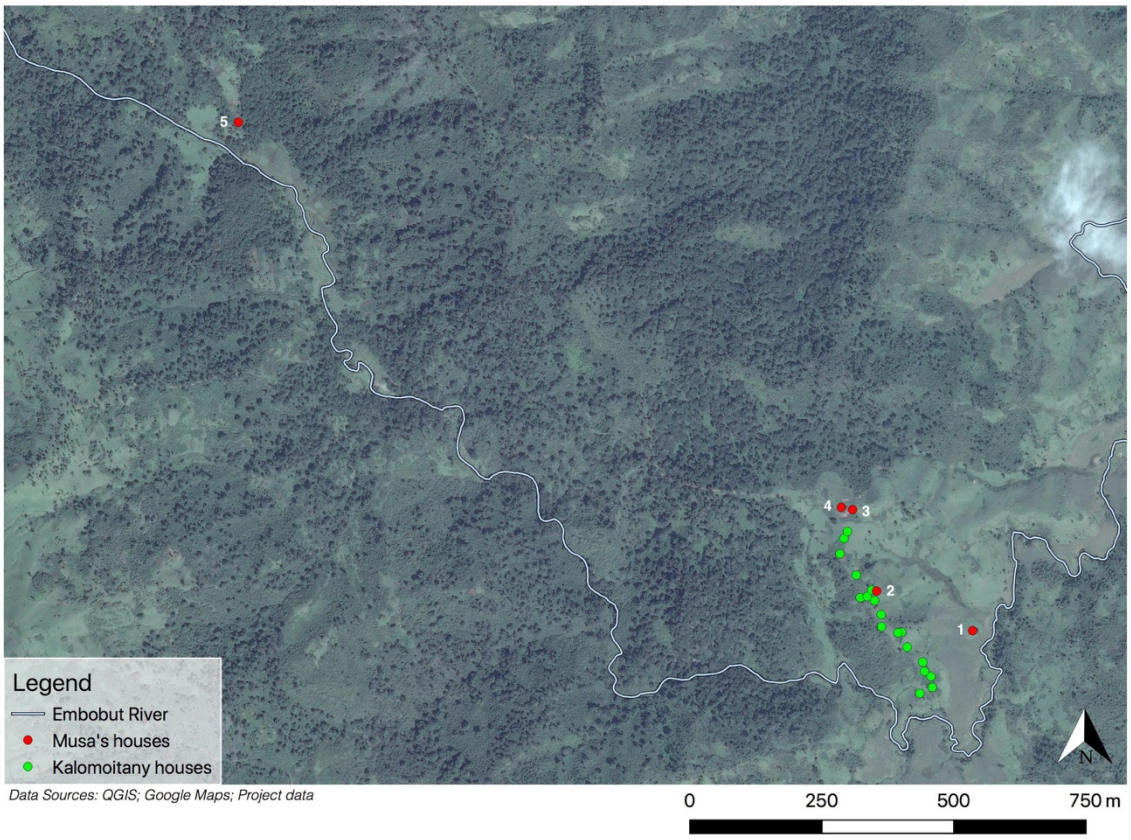


Figure 6.9: Former Kalomoitany Homesteads. Red dots indicate the location of Musa's houses, with number 1 being the oldest and 5 the youngest.

Kapsaniak

A total of 89 housing platforms were documented in the territory of Kapsaniak. Most of the elders interviewed from this clan were from the Kaplelach age-set whose members were circumcised in the 1960s (Daniel Kiptarus Kilimo 06.10.16; Jacob Changwony Komen 06.03.17; Petro Kipyatich Kirop 09.03.17). In line with the narrative posited by Musa, these elders testified to the fact that they were the generation that pioneered the clearing of virgin forest higher up the hill away from the initial area of settlement closer to the river. Not only was there more space to create homesteads with field systems here, but being away from the river had the added bonus of being warmer (Daniel Kiptarus Kilimo 06.03.17). Thus, the homesteads of the area's original settlement were gradually abandoned as men left home and set up their own households on the higher slopes. Unfortunately, there is no distinguishable archaeological footprint on the surface of these original compounds due to the fact that the houses were constructed from perishable materials and have since vanished. Moreover, subsequent agricultural activity or the founding of new homesteads on top of older foundations has also contributed to the disappearance of former compounds.

As with Musa's decision to relocate his livestock out of Koropkwen, so too did some individuals of Kapsaniak, once again due to overcrowding in their clan territory in Korpokwen glade. A number of elders described how in the 1980s they acquired small plots of land in their community forest of Kosich, taking their livestock to graze on the higher slopes away from the growing field systems. By the late 1990s and early 2000s, however, a rise in the commercial growth of potatoes lead to an accelerated clearance of land by younger generations for cultivation. This is evidenced by the total of 26 abandoned housing platforms surveyed in Kosich.

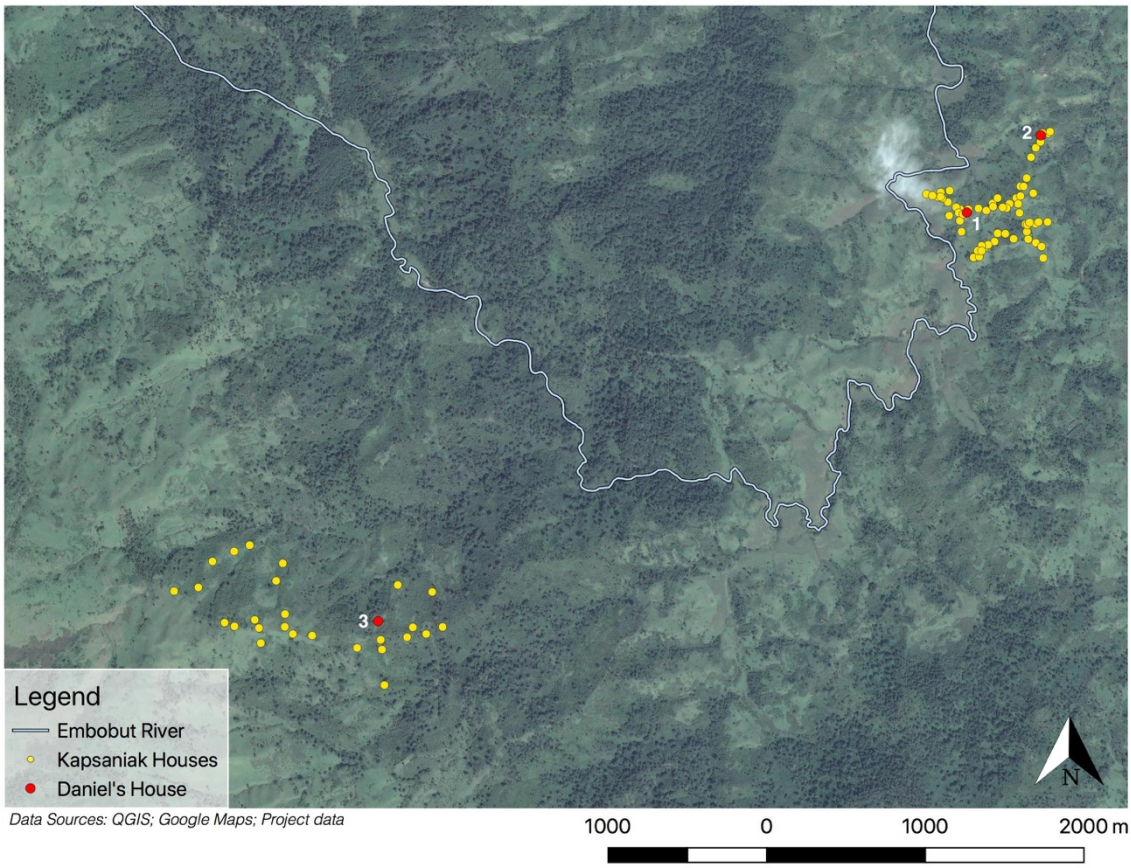


Figure 6.10: Former Kapsaniak Homesteads. Red dots indicate the location of Daniel's houses, with number 1 being the oldest and 3 the youngest

The narrative of settlement change is depicted in Figure 6.10. The red dots here depict the location of different houses in the life migration of Daniel Kiptarus Kilimo. Daniel is one of five sons of a Kapsaniak ancestor called Sobenchi. He initially lived with his father inside Koropkwen glade relatively close to the river, carrying out the tasks of everyday life described in the previous chapter. Unlike Musa, Daniel only married once and the house he subsequently built became his main homestead for the majority of his life prior to the evictions. In the mid-1980s, however, he found that the glade had started becoming overcrowded with cultivation so he decided to build a smaller dwelling higher in the community forest of Kosich in order to keep his cattle there.

Kalotokur

A total of 23 housing platforms were documented within the territory of Kalotokur (Figure 6.11). In a similar vein to the two previous clan settlements, the elder Joseph Toroitich Kirotich (03.10.2016; 10.03.2017) spoke of the same narrative of changing use of space in Kalotokur. Indeed, after Joseph was circumcised with the age set of Kaplelach, he moved away from his father's house, Bwanangombe, in order to start his own homestead. His father gave him permission to cut a small clearing in the forest in order to establish enough space for his house and small maize field. Joseph reminisced how at this time there was much debate amongst elders across the glade as a whole. This was because the community bylaws discussed in Chapter 5.5 that aimed to protect the forest and stated how individuals had to seek permission to cut trees seemed to be less and less observed during this period. Some elders remained convinced that the Kaplelach generation was ruining the forest and not protecting their bees' habitat. Others insisted that the very fact that people could grow their own crops meant that honey production was not needed on a large scale as they no longer needed to trade it for millet with people on the escarpment and in the Kerio Valley. In order to obtain a balance and stop so much destruction, many members attempted to preserve community forests in Lombenwo for future generations. Such is the case with Kalotokur whose members only used the land in their community forest for keeping livestock.

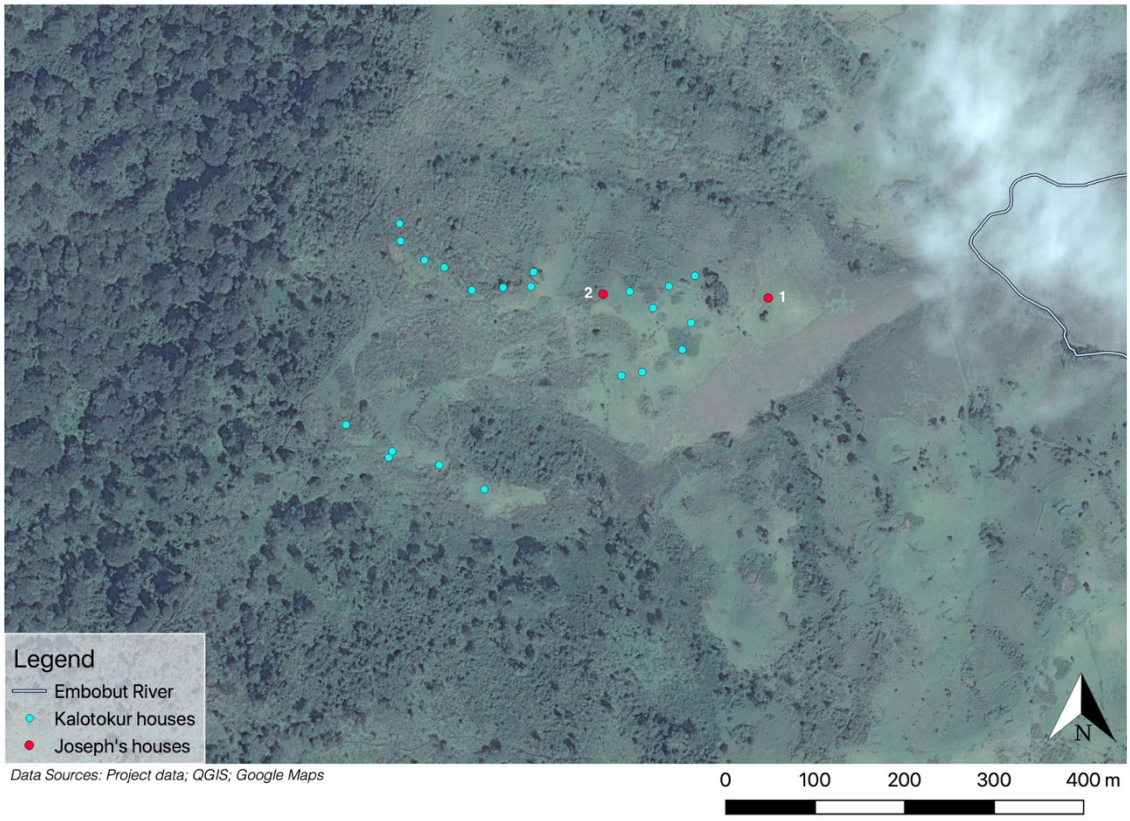


Figure 6.11: Former Kalotokur Homesteads. Red dots indicate the location of Joseph's houses, with number 1 being the oldest and 2 the youngest

6.5 Fields and Terraces

The above narratives of new homesteads and gradual movement away from the river clearly demonstrates how settlement in the Embobut Forest was undergoing continual change over the latter half of the twentieth century. Furthermore, as people moved onto higher slopes, areas of forest were gradually cleared and the landscape began to change, making it more and more open and dappled with field systems. As is typical across the entire region, these fields would have varied greatly in size and shape between different households. With such field systems came further landscape modification, the most obvious example of which (aside from the clearing of forest vegetation) is the construction of terraces and field boundaries. Still practised outside of the conservation

area, terracing remains an important part of agricultural practice (Figure 6.12), preventing downslope erosion through the construction low banks that cut across the gradient of the hill in order to level the incline and cause soils to deepen behind them. As documented amongst the Pokot in Wei Wei Valley (Davies 2014: 179) and from my own fieldwork observations, the terraces created across the region are by no means permanent structures. Rather, they exist as small barriers often in the form of wooden fences, lines of stones or the mere cutting and piling of turf, soil and loss of vegetation. Given the impermanent nature of these banks, they require reworking on a yearly basis, with the more substantial terraces only accumulating over many years of cultivation. As such, and in a similar vein to the household platforms, field terraces and boundaries must not be viewed as enduring structures that remain static over large periods of time, but are instead in a constant process of formation, not only entangled with the agricultural calendar, but also the life decisions of individual farmers as they experiment with different crops, change the size of their fields or abandon their homestead altogether (see Davies 2014).

The gradual disappearance of forest vegetation that the above activities lead to prompted action from the Kenya Forest Service in the 1980s, culminating in the 2013 evictions. Nevertheless, as I now go on to explore, the relationship that people have had with their former dwellings was by no means suddenly truncated. Rather, the narrative of dwelling within Embobut continues in the present day.



Figure 6.12: Examples of terraces and fields inside Kapkok glade (top image) and outside (bottom image) of the conservation area

6.6 Contemporary Shelters

After the 2013 evictions, people dispersed in different directions beyond the conservation area, building new households in neighbouring commercial centres by either purchasing land or leasing it. Indeed, Musa, Daniel and Joseph all have small plots of land in the nearby commercial centre of Kakamiti. As such, the extant homesteads in the glades were abandoned, collapsing into the ruins described above. Most of the materials from these houses, such as corrugated iron and furniture, were removed and reused in new houses outside the forest, with the walls of houses and granaries left to fall into disrepair. Clearly, then, the platforms observable today are no longer inhabited by people as they once were. Nevertheless, the glades still remain an important part of many people's livelihoods, resulting in a flow of people moving in and out of the conservation area on a daily basis. Furthermore, individuals have re-appropriated their former living spaces in order to attend to their livestock, a majority of which are still kept in the glades. I was informed that the reason for this was because land outside the conservation area has become particularly overcrowded, especially after the evictions when a large number of people were displaced. In conjunction with this, the abandonment of land inside the forest resulted in old field systems becoming transformed into open grassland and pasture for grazing. Such an open, more grassy landscape clearly shows that, as people create new ways of dwelling in Embobut, the evictions have not resulted in the intended regrowth of forest vegetation, but have instead opened the possibility of new landscape transformations.

The material correlates of how people use the glades today are expressed in some of the above surveys, from the singular small livestock kraal on Platform B (Figure 6.4) to the semi-permanent structures observed on Platforms C and E (Figures 6.5 and 6.7). Although people do not live here on a permanent basis, they do build small structures in

order to shelter from the rain and sleep at night, keeping watch of their livestock to ensure they are not stolen. Considering the number of local stories of livestock rustling, it is clear that this remains an important activity. Smaller than a permanent house, these shelters are not constructed to a high standard, with some made only with a flimsy bamboo wall, and others without walls at all. Makeshift materials such as tarpaulin and scraps of corrugated iron are also used as protection from the wind and rain (Figure 6.13). These dwellings are often built within or nearby the individual's pre-eviction compound, occasionally hidden amongst vegetation in order to stay out of view of the Kenya Forest Service who periodically carry out raids and burn the structures. As a result, the bare minimum of possessions is taken to the shelter: mugs for *chai*, aluminium pans, a small makeshift bed made from bamboo and some containers for collecting and storing milk. Outside, the compound is often divided into different segments in order to separate the sheep and cattle, with the latter area also containing a trough for a salt lick.

Below I explore the story of four individuals residing in their respective shelters in order to paint a picture of how they dwell in the Embobut forest today. Again, I have not disclosed the specific locations or names in order to protect individual privacy in light of the conflict created over staying on a semi-permanent basis inside the conservation area.



Figure 6.13: Semi-permanent dwellings in Koropkwen

6.7 Dwelling in the Present

The fire was stoked, spitting plumes of smoke as the damp wood dried by the heat of the flames. My research assistant, Joseph, and I had hiked for five hours up into the area locally known as Kamalogong in Kapkok glade. At 3200 metres above sea level, the air was noticeably cooler than that of Koropkwen glade. The small shelter we had arrived at was characterised by a large boulder protruding out of the hill side, providing a level of protection underneath it (Figure 6.14). A bamboo fence had been constructed in the face of the overhang, shielding the inhabitant from the wind as well as offering a small level of privacy. The hearth sat close to the fence where *chai* could be made along with *ugali* and leafy greens such as the wild nettle, *kimele*. The occupant of this shelter was a 23-year-old man. He stated that "this rock shelter has provided a place of safety for my family over the past decades whenever the KFS [Kenya Forest Service] came to burn the people's houses. We came to hide here to avoid being arrested. Once the KFS had gone, we would go back to the house and rebuild it".

Today, this man lives here on a semi-permanent basis, sleeping on a small bed that is characterised by a bamboo frame resting on a ledge near the back end of the rock. He has very few possessions stored at the shelter: four mugs, a calabash (drinking vessel), two aluminium pans, one bucket, two containers for milk, a small container for *chai*, some blankets, a jug, a box of matches and some clothes. Having minimal possessions, he stated, means that he can quickly gather important items and not lose anything of value if the Kenya Forest Service come. This has happened on several occasions, with the result that both his fence and bed have been burnt down over the past three to four years. Living here on a daily basis is predominantly orientated around looking after livestock, which for many people is their main asset. Every day the occupant wakes up and walks to a

nearby livestock pen he has constructed that is hidden from view. Sheep are let out to graze for the day, whilst the cattle, which are usually left out at night, are rounded up for milking. Some of this milk is kept for personal consumption (boiled as *chai*, drunk fresh or stored to produce sour milk). The rest is poured into a container and walked to the commercial centre of Tangul, approximately an hour and half away. Here, provisions such as maize flour and sugar can be bought for consumption back at the shelter. In the evening, the sheep are usually rounded back into the compound. When the occupant has to leave for a longer period of time, his father, who took financial compensation from the government in 2013 allowing him to purchase a small plot of land in Tangul, stays in the rock shelter to take over duties.



Figure 6.14: Rock shelter protruding from the hillside

After some time, Joseph and I left the small shelter, walking for not even half a kilometre to a second, larger overhanging rock face roughly seven metres in height. The southern end was characterised by a number of collapsed rocks. The northern side, however, was level enough for the construction of a cedar fence that enclosed a large hearth and a bed

at the back that had sheep skins and blankets lying on it. I had previously managed to talk to the elderly individual who used this dwelling place on a previous excursion. He had stated then that he periodically resides here as his house had been repeatedly burnt by the Kenya Forest Service. On this particular excursion, however, the elderly man was with his family in a commercial centre of Kapyeigo outside the conservation area. With his permission, Joseph and I were allowed to stay in his shelter for the night. Such an experience lends itself to further comprehend the hardship of this livelihood. At an altitude of 3200 metres, the night air temperature plummets. As well as this, the rainy season brings a thick mist that swirls for weeks on end, bringing with it a monotonous drizzle that dampens the surroundings. The result, as many informants told me, is that people residing here without proper shelter repeatedly become ill, including several cases of pneumonia.

Before we lit our fire, we scrambled around the southern end of the rock face to a final, smaller overhanging rock (Figure 6.15). A hearth lay in the centre, with two aluminium *sufuria* pans resting upside down on a rock next to four enamel mugs. Old fence posts stood in the face of the shelter, but no woven fencing panels had been constructed. A bamboo bed lay close to the floor across two rocks towards the back of the shelter. Returning at dusk from rounding up their sheep were a young married couple who periodically occupy this shelter. Upon arrival and greetings filled with laughter (how can a European be brave enough to stay here so late at night?), they boiled some fresh milk for a hot cup of sweet *chai* as well as cooking up a large helping of *ugali*. As we sat around the fire, the husband reminisced: “my grandfather built this hearth. He used to stay in this cave to hide from cattle raiders. He built this hearth to cook his milk (*maziwa*) and nettles (*kimele*). Back then the forest was thick and there was lots more space to keep

your cattle". Today, the shelter is used by the couple whilst their children are at boarding school. It is in close proximity to the husband's former house and is used as a shelter whilst they carry out the daily tasks of tending to their cattle and sheep.



Figure 6.15: Sheltering under a large rock in Kamologong, Kapkok glade.

As already noted, this small cluster of rock shelters exists as part of a much wider patchwork of semi-permanent dwellings across the entirety of the conservation area. Indeed, the following day we visited another shelter located approximately halfway between Kapkok glade and Koropkwen glade (Chapter 4.6). Unlike the shelters built on former housing platforms observed in the surveys described above, this shelter was located within a thick bush that had to be stooped under in order to reach the structure. The meandering path that led up to it was created by the occupant in a specifically windy manner so as to look as inconspicuous as possible. The reason for this, as the young occupant stated, was that this was now the seventeenth house that he had built. All previous houses or shelters had been repeatedly burnt by the Kenya Forest Service before and after the 2013 evictions.

The shelter itself sat in a small clearing that has been created through the cutting back of the thick vegetation. The occupant's livestock compound was completely separate, approximately a fifteen minute walk away from the shelter. The shelter itself was made from bamboo strips woven together covered by a large sheet of black tarpaulin to protect the inhabitant from the rain. Inside, was a thin bamboo bed covered in sheep skin for comfort and warmth. Again, he kept very few possessions at the shelter: three mugs, two aluminium pans, two milk containers, a radio, a knife, a box of matches and some clothes. Orientated around his livestock, his dwelling tasks remain similar to those of the individuals residing in the rock shelters. However, given that the location of this shelter is at least a three hour walk from the nearest edge of the conservation area and commercial centres, he had an arrangement to meet with a friend or family member in Kokwo Lombenwo (Chapter 4.7) in order to handover fresh milk which was then taken and sold in the commercial centres of Sitat or Kakamiti. Upon handing it over, he would receive

any provisions that had been depleted, as well as swapping a freshly charged mobile phone battery and an empty container to fill with milk so that the routine could be repeated the following day. With numerous shelters dotted around the conservation area, this practice is not uncommon, resulting in a flow of people moving in and out of the forests throughout the day, carrying and exchanging fresh milk and provisions. The occupant of this particular shelter claimed that he usually stayed here for up to a month at a time before rotating with a family member or friend to tend to the livestock.

In Koropkwen glade, itself only half an hour walk from the nearest commercial centre outside the conservation area, individuals need not stay for such long periods of time without leaving the forest. Instead, they carry their milk on a daily basis to and from their respective livestock herds in Koropkwen. Those that choose to reside here at night set up local arrangements with friends or family in order to rotate who sleeps in the forest. Within this system, most people build on or near their former housing platforms or in their clan forest. This is to say that notions of territory are still important and that one cannot build or keep cattle just anywhere. If a piece of land that does not belong to you seems suitable for grazing, permission has to be asked from community elders to build there.

The localised accounts of contemporary dwelling are told here not only to illustrate how people have negotiated the change brought on by the evictions, but because they exist as part of a continually unfolding relationship that people have had with their environments. In light of this, the conclusions of this chapter weave together the theoretical threads spun at its beginning in order to create a richer understanding of the entwined relationship between people and their changing environments.

6.8 Comprehending Change

Moore's (1986) eloquent study of Marakwet homesteads clearly demonstrates the importance of the ordering of space in relation to social life in established homesteads on the Elgeyo Escarpment. But how are we to understand the changing landscapes of Embobut as well as the contemporary structuring of space in a patchily scarred landscape constituted of old field boundaries, housing platforms and contemporary semi-permanent shelters? I contend for the time being that the theoretical notion of *habitus* brought into focus at the beginning of this chapter along with Ingold's (2000) 'dwelling perspective', act as useful and complementary framing devices for understanding the changing nature and structuring of place in Embobut.

As an important starting point, neither Bourdieu's (1977) practice theory nor Ingold's (2000) notion of 'the dwelling perspective' advocate a structured or objective world ruptured from any given individual or social group. Rather, worlds are built and acquire meaning through the social activities and practices of quotidian dwelling. In light of this, the growth of settlement in the glades should not be viewed as humans acting upon a pristine landscape through mere haphazard destruction. Instead, it signifies the 'working out' of particular ways of life as facilitated by the 'regulated improvisations' of the *habitus*. In order to illustrate this, this chapter has predominantly focused upon the homesteads and shelters within the forests and glades of Embobut. In particular, the principles of land tenure as facilitated by the dynamism of homestead lifecycles and the moving, clearing and building of new houses by younger men – themselves informed by internalised dispositions that aid decision-making processes – clearly allowed for the structuring and expansion of settlement from within the glade. Whilst community elders viewed this as a time of 'great confusion', there was general acceptance that a gradually

changing subsistence base by means of improvisation and experimentation orientated around maize proved beneficial in improving life. Indeed, as local informants told me "some of the elders were happy as they could start farming and did not need to depend on honey alone" (William Shakwa Masomei 10.08.2016). This meant that "life got better when people started to grow maize" (Kanda Chebet 09.08.2016), a statement reinforced by Kisang Kirotich, who claimed that "when you see your neighbours growing food, you will do the same. Food in the glades meant that you did not have to travel down [to the escarpment] to trade honey for millet" (05.08.2016). Simultaneously, however, it is evident that the forests still remained an important part of life in Embobut as some elders wanted to protect their respective community forests in Lombenwo: "When farming started people were happy as there was plenty of food. But we also tried to save Lombenwo for future generations so they had somewhere to put their beehives and use the forest for medicine" (Benjamin Kirop Koiseker 28.09.2016). However, many individual cases demonstrate that these attempts were unsuccessful as evidenced by Kapsaniak's community forest of Kosich where the vegetation has been substantially cleared and homesteads built.

Thus, the gradual expansion of settlements and shift of livelihoods stemmed from continually unfolding and negotiated actions and practices of individuals both young and old. An interesting way of conceptually framing how each individual negotiated such change stems from Bourdieu's development of the *habitus* as a "strategy-generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations" (Bourdieu 1977: 72). In other words, the internalised dispositions of individual actors helped them to improvise and adapt to continually unfolding livelihoods. This remains an interesting concept when considering how people coped during and after the evictions

with the uprooting of dwelling spaces and the tasks of quotidian life. Indeed, it is clear from the above accounts that the sudden change brought on by the evictions did not leave this area void of human habitation. Instead, people adapted as best they could, carrying out tasks within the forests and developing new systems of trade, movement and sheltering.

In a similar vein, the essence of the dwelling perspective, as grounded in Heidegger's (1971: 148) statement "we build and have built because we dwell", helps us to grasp how and why people continue to shelter in Embobut notwithstanding the hardships that this involves. As the ethnographic accounts given above show, contemporary life within the conservation area is far from easy. Living in partially constructed shelters or under overhanging rocks that offer little protection from the elements, often away from family for days, weeks or months at a time and at risk of further eviction, destruction and possible legal action, clearly requires individual will, perseverance and an enduring attachment to the land itself. This was stubbornly put by one elder who proclaimed: "I was born in the glades, and I will die in the glades" (Elias Kabrien 27.09.2016). This relationship is not the product of a mere political land claim, but rather draws upon the individual's *habitus* and personal and community ties to local histories, identities and memories that are rooted in the materiality of the constructed landscape itself. The changing dwelling tasks of everyday life and the expanding settlements are inscribed in the very hills, with each housing platform coming into being through the entangled activities of clearing, collecting and building. Thus, observable housing platforms in the present-day are not mere ruins of past lives. Their very presence is imbued with past dwelling practices that persist in actively structuring contemporary places in which people continue to shelter. In other words, the continuation of tending to cattle and dwelling in semi-permanent

structures is in part spatially structured by understandings of where people dwelt in the past as informed by the material correlates of former lives.

To conclude, this chapter has documented the ways in which life and settlement has changed in Embobut over the past one hundred years or so. More importantly, I have attempted to bring into focus how we may enrich our understanding of material change and the unfolding of different livelihoods beyond simple notions of haphazard deforestation by examining how people have dwelt through time. Furthermore, this chapter has set the stage for the ensuing discussions orientated around the notions of material histories, identity and ethnicity. Indeed, the three sample clans of Kalomoitany, Kalotokur and Kapsaniak I have discussed here all identify under a different name despite the similarities in livelihoods and settlement.

Part Three

Chapter 7 : Identities and Material Histories

Throughout Part Two of this thesis, I explored the different ways in which people have constructed and lived with the landscape of Embobut over time. Of importance to these discussions is the notion that people have not been simply been 'occupying' an area of pristine forest, but have been *dwelling with it*. Here in Part Three I readdress the issues of identity and conservation that emerged in Part One in light of the discussions of settlement, dwelling and landscape change as informed by anthropological theory explored throughout Part Two.

First and foremost, this chapter brings back into focus the contested notions of identity. By way of summary, the problem that was left there was that the notions of being 'indigenous' and the category of the 'hunter-gatherer' are both products of Western academia as well as being anthropologically contestable terms (Chapter 1.1, 1.3). However, in situating these narratives against the contemporary politics that have emerged in the Cherangani Hills, it became clear that we cannot simply discard the ideas of the 'indigenous' as they are exceptionally important for local expressions of how people are connected to their landscapes and aid political claims to land in light of international legislation, most notably the United Declaration of Rights for Indigenous Populations. While I have sought to unpack this connection of people to place by flipping what Ingold (2011) has called the 'logic of inversion', the question remains as to how it is possible to negotiate the 'politics of naming' (Lynch 2016) in light of the material histories and transformations discussed in Part Two.

The first section of this chapter attempts to tackle this problem by situating expressions of identity within Bourdieu's (1977) notion of *habitus* that I have already introduced in Chapter 6.1. Whilst this discussion provides a useful foundation for comprehending how identities are grounded in shared dispositions, practices and experiences, I also turn to a number of issues surrounding the appropriation of identity categories for political land claims, namely that nuanced histories can be overshadowed when certain people are seen not to 'belong' to the real 'indigenous' group. Such rhetoric has led to a finger-pointing exercise where blame for deforestation and the subsequent evictions are placed on opposing groups without any recognition that all parties involved, including the Kenya Forest Service, have been agents of landscape change. Following this I contend that the different groups living in the forests, despite identifying differently, are in fact *united* by the landscape of Embobut through their local experiences and understanding of place. From this, I suggest that a deeper understanding of shared experiences as written in the material landscape helps diversify the political debate away from the rigid identity categories that have previously eclipsed nuanced historical narratives. I conclude by taking this last point further, emphasising how fluid identities, livelihoods, conservation policies and ecological change are all mutually constructed in conjunction with the meshwork of Embobut itself. In acknowledging that people, animals, plants and materials have been conjointly transformative over the past century and beyond, it is possible to look towards a creative future that recognises this narrative of change and continues in an act of cocreation with the aim of generating livelihoods whilst preserving ecosystem functions and species diversity rather than attempting to return to the past.

7.1 Readdressing Identity

Three case histories of three separate clans (Kapsaniak, Kamoi and Kalotokur) were explored in Part Two to underline the inherent complexities behind the concept of identity in Embobut. Of particular notice was the fact that each clan identifies under a different label: Kapsaniak as Sengwer, Kamoi as Marakwet and Kalotokur as Dorobo. As I detailed in Chapter 2.2, the history behind these names is complex. To recap, the label 'Marakwet' was a colonial invention, existing as a corruption of the term 'Markweta' which itself referred to a particular group rather than the much larger 'Marakwet tribe' of the present-day (Kipkorir 1973: 1; Sutton 1973: 6). Whilst the Sengwer have been identified with Ogiek foraging groups living in some of Kenya's other highland forests, it is now thought that they are a part of the larger Marakwet 'tribe', existing as a distinct subgroup living in the Cherangani Hills (Sutton 1973; Moore 1986). Deriving from the derogatory term "*Il Torobbo*", the term Dorobo was used by the Maasai in reference to a social class rather than to a distinct ethnic group or cultural type. Originally, the Dorobo were people so poor that they had no cattle and consequently had to eat wild meat, but this term was appropriated by Colonial authorities and used to describe a number of different foraging communities who were not associated with each other. All three of these clans also identify under the term 'Kalenjin', itself created in the 1940s and 1950s by community activists who wanted to mobilise linguistically and culturally related populations for economic gain and political clout (Lynch 2016).

How and why the label Dorobo penetrated into the glades of Embobut remains unclear. What is apparent, however, is that it is wrapped up in perceived identities of hunting, gathering and beekeeping. An explanation offered by other clan members in Koropkwen is that the clans which identify as Dorobo (and there are more than one) were not given a

permit in the 1930s, perhaps because they did not own cattle at this time (e.g. Kosgei Chelanga Thomas 05.03.2017). Thus, they may be mobilising the term Dorobo as a political tool to harness a different package of minority rights and claims to land. This is to say that, whilst they speak the Sengwer dialect, they recognise that their family was not issued permits and so do not necessarily have the same legal rights to live in the glade as their neighbours. By appealing to the name of 'Dorobo' as a recognised name for a 'hunter-gatherer' way of life they are instead attempting to lay claim to ancestral land in accordance with the Kenyan constitution discussed in Chapter 3.7. Another explanation may be that the label was acquired by some people who did not have cattle during the Masaai occupation of Uasin Guishu Plateau before it fragmented in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Chapter 2.1). Given that the label in some respects referred to an economic class rather than a distinct ethnic identity, it may have been carried by people migrating into the Cherangani Hills in the mid-nineteenth century, despite the fact that they spoke the Sengwer dialect.

Either way, the labels in Koropkwen exist as an important structuring of group identity, becoming "inherently political due to the power relations involved and the discourses and actions they facilitate and hinder" (Lynch 2016: 208). This remains true with regard to the tension between the labels of 'Marakwet' 'Sengwer' and 'Dorobo' and the social and political ramifications associated with them. With the Sengwer in particular claiming to be 'an ethnic-minority, hunter-gatherer people' (World Bank Inspection Panel 2014: 5), how are we to understand these claims in light of the materiality of the landscape and material histories of household spaces discussed in Part Two of this thesis? Here I offer a discussion that expands on the inherent difficulty in analysing the relationship between

identity and material remains, particularly in the light of the negotiated and ambiguous nature of identity within present-day Kenya.

The difficulty that emerges here is what exactly are we talking about when we refer to identity? Are we examining different ethnic groups, economic classes, or localised clan/family identities? Post-structuralist frameworks have attempted to approach questions of identity from a non-essentialist standpoint, consistently changing in space and time rather than as static and immutable (see Tilley 2001). Discussing identity, then, can be challenging due to the polysemic nature of the term. Indeed, how one self-identifies can involve discussions surrounding age, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, political ideology, religion and nationhood among many other potential factors. A holistic approach to understanding the entanglement and fluidity to these concepts and perceptions, as called for by Meskell (2007), would no doubt be a valuable exercise, but lies beyond the scope of this study. Instead, in light of the group identities that have emerged throughout this thesis, I pay particular attention here to the concepts of ethnicity and their corresponding archaeological residues within Koropkwen glade. In order to achieve this, it is first necessary to briefly track how archaeologists have attempted to engage with African identities in order to contextualise the following discussion.

7.2 African Identities and Material Culture

The emergence of the cultural history paradigm within archaeology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries helped to develop a systematic framework for classifying cultures in space and time. This approach was based upon the predominant assumption that cultural entities and their material correlates are associated with particular peoples, ethnic groups, tribes or races (Childe 1929; Trigger 2006). This understanding of culture

assumed that the beliefs and practices within a given group comply with prescriptive rules of behaviour and that the transmission of cultural ideas and characteristics is the result of integration between individuals or groups. Gradual change within culture was attributed to internal drift, whilst rapid change was explained in terms of external influences and impacts such as invasion or ecological disasters. The predominant way of understanding the past was thus based upon particular assemblages, or 'archaeological cultures'. There are many of examples of this in eastern Africa, such as the Kansyore ceramic-using populations or the Sirikwa archaeological tradition discussed in Chapter 2.1.

As Sîan Jones (2007) notes, however, the concept of an archaeological culture results in the past being interpreted in terms of a distribution of cultures the history of which is a clear linear narrative of stability punctuated by objectified events, such as migrations, contacts, and conquest. Furthermore, the understanding of culture facilitated by the notion of an archaeological culture enables history, place and people to be tied together in a bounded, immutable manner common to essentialist representations of identity.

Forged in this disciplinary context, Africanist archaeologists tended to directly equate artefacts with cultural units during the colonial and immediate post-colonial periods. It was not until the latter half of the twentieth century that archaeologists became more sensitive to the fluid realities of African, and indeed global, identities (Trigger 2006). An influential piece of research within this field came from Ian Hodder (1982), who examined the boundaries between and within different groups in Kenya in Baringo to the east of Cherangani, documenting the differences in material culture in order to understand the role of objects and patterns in the structuring of identity. His conclusions had clear ramifications for the discipline of archaeology as a whole in as much as he demonstrated

that material culture is actively involved in masking, amplifying and contradicting types of information flow and social relationships between and within groups. For example, the symbols on calabashes (drinking vessels) were used by women to negotiate power relationships by means of creating a silent disruption of social control through the patterns that they painted. Unlike clothing and pottery, the styles of which were strictly monitored by men, calabashes did not have to conform to particular patterns. Thus, calabashes were frequently made and given by women to daughters, mothers-in-law and co-wives, often copying each other's decorations and borrowing tools to execute them. Where many of these women came from different and often widely separated origins as they married into a male-centred family, the calabash decoration could help support family ties of marriage and birth and existed as a silent dialogue between women that created a sense of solidarity between them in what was otherwise a male-dominated world.

A further example can be seen in the work of Dietler and Herbich (1998) in their study of the *chaînes opératoires* (operative sequences) of Luo ceramics to the south of Cherangani. Here it is demonstrated that pottery forms and styles are not directly associated with the subjective identity of different groups. Instead, ceramic forms accumulate through decisions structured by social dispositions and conditions (the *habitus*), limited by local technologies and diffused through complex networks of learning. Furthermore, Dietler and Herbich note how different microstyles are not the direct reflection of identity expressions, but rather of the technical choices of potter communities. Luo potters are typically female, learning their techniques from their mothers-in-law after they are married into the family. Consequently, these localised microstyles were shaped by the dynamics and dispositions of different potting communities and the choices they make during the manufacturing process. Thus, not only are the borders of territories and groups

not reflected in the distribution of ceramic styles, but the boundaries of style seem to fall into patterns that have no cultural meaning (Dietler and Herbich 1998: 254). Such research underscores Richard and Macdonald's (2015) observation that ceramics, although often the most prevalent material residue found on African archaeological sites, do not offer the direct pathway between identity and material culture that they were once thought to do.

Nevertheless, in an attempt to explore the relationship between material culture and identity in sub-Saharan Africa on a macro-level, Gosselain (2000) examines the geography of ceramic technology from largescale distribution maps. His predominant argument states that there is a correlation between the networks of social interaction upon which identities are constructed and the contexts in which technical behaviours in the production of material culture are established. Individuals may learn skills and acquire specific tastes by interacting with their surrounding community (relatives, friends, neighbours) and with neighbouring populations. As they consume particular goods, all of which may be used as symbols of belonging or differentiation, and as local social networks change across time and space, people accumulate a wide range of dispositions that constitute different facets of their identity (Gosselain 2000: 209). This has two main consequences. First, established technical traditions are influenced from multiple sources, with some being created and passed within a given group, whilst others are acquired from outside. Second, cultural elements do not necessarily develop in the same way. This is to say that some elements are deeply rooted and difficult to modify as symbols of group belonging, whereas others may be easier to manipulate as signifiers of group identity. Thus, it may be possible to differentiate among conspicuous, fluctuating, and superficial facets of identity on the one hand and subtler yet deep rooted ones on the other. In other

words, one could separate "between surface cultural expressions and deep structural dispositions." (Jones 1997: 92).

In light of this, Gosselain's (2000) analysis of ceramic types demonstrates that particular aspects of the pottery production sequence (pottery decoration tools and techniques) show greater vulnerability to borrowing and manipulation, particularly within multi-ethnic milieux where trade, marriage and labour are more entangled. Consequently, they fluctuate through time, are distributed widely through space, and tend to reflect artificial, situational and temporary facets of identity, but ones that can be exploited as symbols of belonging. Such is the case with rouletting tools being diffused among neighbouring but culturally unaffiliated populations. On the other hand, the fashioning stage, or the 'primary forming' or 'roughing out' (Gosselain 2000: 192), leaves no apparent traces on the finished product. It is far less salient in the sense that it is conducted on an individual basis through specialised gestures mastered through repeated practice and is subsequently internalised. This stage, then, has a greater resistance to change, having an intimate connection to the spatial development of learning networks and hence a tendency to reflect those most rooted and enduring facets of identity.

These examples serve to demonstrate further the complexity behind African identities, their material expressions and the ways in which archaeologists have approached them. A major part of this is recognising that there is not necessarily a one-to-one correlation between people, material culture and place, but rather a complex relationship between material expressions of identity and the structuring dispositions of individuals and groups, a notion that is paramount to the discussion below. A problem that emerges here within the context of this project is that, if surveyed and interpreted separately from any oral

histories, the material remains of former homesteads in Koropkwen glade (Chapter 6.3) would suggest the remains of one 'archaeological culture' in the sense that there is no way of distinguishing the variation of perceived identities that were expressed in interviews with former residents. This, of course, is an unsatisfactory way of thinking about identity in Embobut, but brings into focus the question of how archaeologists are to engage with the differences of perceived identities that exist in tension with material history within such a localised setting. Furthermore, exploring this is not simply an intellectual exercise, but also has political ramifications in the sense that it directly interrogates conflicting claims to identity and land in the light of the evictions discussed in Chapter 3.5.

In order to address this, I bring into focus the notion of 'ethnicity', an elusive and complex concept that appears at different resolutions and holds varying degrees of authenticity and validity across time and space (see Richards and Macdonald 2015). The reason for addressing this comes from the previously mentioned claim that the Sengwer are an 'ethnic-minority, hunter-gatherer people' (World Bank Inspection Panel 2014: 5). In the following section I ground ethnicity in Bourdieu's concept of the *habitus* and interrogate the relationship between perceived identities and the relationship people have with the Embobut landscapes before exploring how these ideas can help us better understand the appropriation of the 'indigenous' and 'hunter-gatherer' categories that have already been problematised.

7.3 A Practice Theory of Ethnicity

With the publication of his influential book, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries,* Fredrik Barth (1969: 14) asserted that ethnic categories are not objective realities but rather products of subjective boundary-making between groups, challenging the "one-to-one

relationship between ethnic units and cultural similarities and differences". From this, debates have focused upon the affective influence of primordial attachments (Isaacs 1974) verses the instrumental manipulation of culture in order to mediate socioeconomic interests of a group (Cohen 1969). Often labelled as the primordialist-instrumentalist dichotomy, this debate aimed to find an objective foundation to subjective identity claims (Bentley 1987; Jones 1997, 2007). Broadly speaking, a primordial framework attempts to understand the psychological and biological dimensions of ethnicity, exploring how it is primarily a phenomenon that can be explained on the basis of 'human nature'. Here, primordial bonds of basic group identity are acquired at birth when a child obtains a range of characteristics such as names, language and value systems. Thus, ethnic identities are forged upon the "ineffable coerciveness of primordial attachments" (Jones 1997: 68). Despite its ability to explain the strong emotions and deep attachment tied to ethnicity and the persistence of some ethnic groups over long periods of time, a number of criticisms can be levelled at the primordial perspective. Most prominently, primordial approaches are essentialist in nature, suggesting that ethnicity is determinate of an individual's self-identification as the primordial attachments that underlie it are involuntary (Jones 1997: 68). This leaves little room to address the fluid nature of ethnicity in the varied social and historical contexts that have been explored throughout this thesis.

In contrast to the primordial perspective, instrumentalist scholars view ethnic identity as 'instrumental' in the sense that it provides people with an opportunity to distinguish themselves from surrounding populations and mediate socioeconomic and political resources (Jones 1997, 2006). It is argued that ethnicity can be manipulated and mobilised in the pursuit of economic and political interests, as is potentially with the case of the

Dorobo discussed above, or the creation of the Kalenjin 'tribe' in the 1960s (Lynch 2011a). A particularly important contribution within this framework is the observation that ethnicity involves subjective processes of classification and that there is no straightforward or simple correlation between culture and ethnicity. That is to say, ethnic boundaries are not merely representative of distinct, bounded cultural units as had often been presumed. Although the instrumentalist paradigm helped to address the fluidity of ethnic identities, Jones (1997: 76) points to a number of problems with it, notably that the reduction of ethnicity to the organisation of economic and political relationships disregards cultural differences, limiting them to no more than a set of arbitrary symbols mobilised for individual and group interest.

Given the shortcomings with both the primordialist and instrumentalist stances, Bentley (1987) called for a 'practice theory of ethnicity' that seeks to explore the boundaries of group identity through Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* that was introduced in the previous chapter. Here, the dispositions of the *habitus* can be used to elucidate the ways in which subjective ethnic identities are grounded in the social conditions and cultural practices that characterise particular social units (Jones 2007: 49). As Bentley states:

"*According to the practice theory of ethnicity sensations of ethnic affinity are founded on common life experiences that generate similar habitual disposition. Whilst some people sense (correctly or incorrectly) likenesses and differences among themselves, practical mastery of these patterns does not require consciousness of their objective bases. It is commonality of experience and of the preconscious habitus it generates that gives members of an ethnic cohort their sense of being both familiar and familial to each other."* (Bentley 1987: 33-34)

Building upon Bentley's theory, Jones (1997: 94) states that ethnicity is not only constituted by a subconscious recognition of similarities, but is "essentially a consciousness of difference". Ethnicity is neither a passive reflection of the cultural similarities and differences into which people are socialised, nor is it purely the product

of the processes of social interaction and the manipulation of arbitrary cultural symbols in the pursuit of political and economic gain. Rather, it can be argued that the shared subconscious dispositions of the *habitus* which shape common practices provide a context for the subjective construction of ethnic identity when acknowledged in relation to different groups. In order to further illustrate this, Jones (2007: 50) draws upon a specific example regarding the conceptualisation and construction of Tswana ethnicity in the context of European colonialism (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992). Here, the Tswana and evangelist missionaries began to distinguish themselves from one another through interaction and communication: "to objectify their world in relation to a novel other, thereby inventing for themselves a self-conscious coherence and distinctness – even while they accommodated to the new relationship which enclosed them" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 245). The awareness of shared experiences and practices in *Setswana* (Tswana ways) as defined in opposition to *Sekgoa* (European ways) provides the basis for Tswana ethnicity. However, this uniting of the Tswana people through the objectification of a coherent body of practice and knowledge in the colonial context was different from the cultural identities that existed in the pre-colonial period when people were organised in a variety of ways including political groups based upon totems (Jones 2007: 50).

In summary, this more supple theoretical framework postulates that ethnicity is based upon the shared subliminal dispositions of social actors that shape, and are shaped by, commonalities of practice. These dispositions provide the foundation for the recognition of shared interests and sentiments. Or put even more simply: "the *habitus* is the link between subjective identity and objective context" (Shennan 1989: 16). This, however, leaves us with a fine line to tread with regard to the situation in Embobut given the claims

made by Sengwer activists of being an 'ethnic minority'. Indeed, the case histories explored throughout Part Two led to the conclusion that, on its most local level, the people who identified differently live in a context where the structuring principles of the *habitus* are fairly homologous between clans affiliating with different ethnicities.

Archaeologically speaking, the material correlates of this as inscribed in the landscape would suggest the remains of one 'archaeological culture' in the sense that there is no way of distinguishing the variation of perceived identities. As already mentioned, this is a wholly unsatisfactory way of archaeologically thinking about identity in Embobut, not least because it simplifies the complexity of the 'politics of naming' that run throughout this thesis. Nevertheless, it is hard to escape the fact that the material expressions of different identities appear to be both shared and homogenous across Embobut, from the larger arterial routes and settlement in the glades (Chapter 4.6), to the manipulation of plant species and organisation of territory (Chapter 5.2, 5.3) to the materiality and temporality of homesteads both before and after the evictions (Chapter 6.3, 6.4). Given this, we may want to jump to the 'instrumentalist' conclusion that the Sengwer and Dorobo are, for all intents and purposes, simply using epiphenomenal cultural symbols as a tool for political and social mobilisation and as a way of distinguishing themselves from the Marakwet. To some extent, this conclusion is understandable in light of the discussion in Chapter 3.7, where community members have indeed been using the category of the hunter-gatherer in light of Article 63 of the Kenyan constitution as a point of political leverage. But, as I have already argued, the manipulation of this does not simply take place in a void where individual agents set out to maximise their own interests, but rather is grounded in historical and cultural realities.

Thus, it is necessary to address the question of Sengwer ethnicity in a slightly more

nuanced approach that still takes into account the *habitus* despite the already mentioned homologous structuring principles and uniform archaeological material. Here we must take Bentley's (1987) concept that sensations of ethnic affinity are founded on common life experiences that create habitual dispositions with Jones's (1997: 94) elaboration on a practice theory of ethnicity as a 'consciousness of difference'. Throughout my research it became clear that members of the Sengwer community perceive, rightly or wrongly, their wider community as an entity, or 'imagined community' (Anderson 1991), that was historically living in the forests and practising a unique way of life. This sense of unity is further reinforced by the distinct Sengwer dialect. The Marakwet, on the other hand, are perceived to be a much larger group who, *as a collective*, have not lived in the same manner as the Sengwer since many reside in the Kerio Valley and on the escarpment with a much longer history of cultivation:

"[The difference between] The Sengwer and those other groups [Marakwet and Pokot] is that the Sengwer are a traditionally hunter-gatherer people who occupied and practiced those livelihoods both in the highlands, forests and lower slopes of the Cherangany Hills area…[the Sengwer] should not be confused with the wider population of the Cherangany Hills which includes a range of different groups, including the locally dominant Marakwet and Pokot. The Marakwet and Pokot traditional livelihood and cultural patterns are more strongly agricultural or pastoralist…" (Forest Peoples Programme 2013: Annex 2, pg. 2).

It is important to highlight here, however, that this objectification of culture *vis-à-vis* others is not necessarily a two-way street. This became apparent to me on numerous occasions, with one informant exclaiming to me over a cup of chai "But the Sengwer are Marakwet! We are all Marakwet!". As well as this, and as we have seen in Chapter 3.6 with regard to the 'politics of naming' and the local discourse surrounding the labels of the 'Cherangani' and the 'Sengwer', there are clearly different understandings of how shared dispositions give rise to different expressions of identify. Such distinctions may

have arisen, as Jones (1997) notes, from the fact that the shared dispositions that underlie ethnic affinities and provide a foundation for political mobilisation may not actually be agreed upon by the entire community. In this sense, community leaders who champion a particular avenue may gain support in different ways depending on how their experiences and interests correspond with those of the entire community: "those leaders will succeed whose personal identity myths resonate with evolving configurations of *habitus*, practice and experience" (Bentley 1987:47). Thus, given the turbulent and nuanced histories scattered throughout Cherangani, it is unsurprising to see different individuals champion different labels and histories with varying degrees of success.

The overall crux of this discussion is that, whilst it is feasible to claim that Sengwer community activists are using ethnicity purely as an instrument, this viewpoint does not acknowledge how the foundation for sentimental attachment to the Sengwer ethnic group is grounded in perceived shared practice and history. As should also be clear by now, however, the line trodden here is incredibly nuanced where the sentiments attached to 'being Sengwer' remain highly subjective.

7.4 The Utilisation of Categories

The above discussion of ethnicity clearly intersects with the categories of the 'indigenous' and 'hunter-gatherer' society. These categories have been appropriated in a political sense and, from a local understanding, have been performed on a daily basis both past and present. 'Indigeneity' may have been born out of the colonial foundations of the essentialist 'Other', and 'hunter-gatherer' out of the social evolutionary paradigms of the nineteenth century (see Chapter 1.1), but, alongside ethnicity, they are now incredibly important for expressing local livelihoods and a connection to land.

Take, firstly, the category of the hunter-gatherer. The fact that this term is in the Kenyan constitution as a qualifying factor for land is not the fault of communities in Embobut; the onus of this instead lies with the Kenyan government. In this sense, this category, with all of its connotations, has had a life of its own separate to the people residing in Embobut. Yet given that it resonates with the experiences of people in Cherangani, they are within their rights to claim it, particularly given their struggles to maintain access to the forests. One might argue that, as seen throughout Chapters 4, 5 and 6, many Sengwer clans in Embobut have had cattle and sheep for as long as they can remember. Does this undermine their claim to have been hunter-gatherers? Or are they now instead to be classed as pastoralists and must they therefore delegitimise their own historical interpretations of their subsistence strategies? If we impose strict economic boundaries created from Western epistemologies upon these people, then perhaps so. But, as I have repeatedly demonstrated, thinking within these categories is fraught with problems, not least because of the fluidity of economic modes of life, with livelihoods in Embobut epitomising this point. Whilst it is true that people in Embobut did indeed tend to cattle, it is also true that they hunted, foraged and kept bees for honey production, all of which were important activities that exist as strong memories for community elders. If community members identify with these activities and their understanding and experience of past forest landscapes have been structured by this, then it would be disingenuous to deny this from them purely because it does not fit rigid understandings of what being a 'hunter-gatherer' is. Furthermore, and as expounded below, if we adopt the framing of Widlok's (2016) hunting and gathering 'situations', it is possible to understand how habitual foraging practices are entangled with the materiality of Embobut, where the 'knotted' places of the meshwork described in Chapter 4.7 and 5.7 demonstrate how place and practice are mutually constructive. In this sense, community activists' appeal to the

hunter-gatherer category as a claim to land is legitimised, regardless of whether or not the traditional understanding of a 'hunter-gatherer' category should actually exist in national legislation.

In a similar vein, as should now be clear, the category of the 'indigenous' has also had a life of its own, again completely separate to the communities in Embobut. Nevertheless, it now exists as part of international law for people to appropriate. For the Sengwer, the frameworks for the self-identification of being 'indigenous' resonate strongly with the shared experiences of members of their community, in particular Article 10 of the United Nations Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Populations (2007) where it states that: "Indigenous peoples shall not be forcibly removed from their lands or territories. No relocation shall take place without the free, prior and informed consent of the indigenous peoples concerned and after agreement on just and fair compensation and, where possible, with the option of return"[28].

I have reiterated how local expressions of identity are grounded in shared experiences and practices in different ways. Importantly, the data presented throughout Chapters 4, 5, and 6 from my fieldwork do not undermine these categories, but rather highlight the inherent entanglement of landscape history and expressions of identity. This is not to say, however, that I remain uncritical of some of the ways in which these categories are being employed. Indeed, as I now go on to explore, there are a number of repercussions of this study that

[28] It is also worth bearing in mind that, in parallel the categories of the 'hunter-gatherer' and the 'indigenous', the category of a 'natural forest' separate from humans is equally problematic but, in a similar fashion, is nevertheless rooted in national legislation and forest conservation. Such a category was created through the dwelling practices of environmentalists and conservationists and remains important in their understanding of the world (see Chapters 3.2, 3.3 and 4.8, 4.9).

need to be addressed and that in turn make way for an alternative way of thinking about people's changing livelihoods and their relationship with landscape transformation.

7.5 Naming and Blaming

One pertinent question that has emerged from this analysis is not whether the various categories are legitimate, but rather do they end up excluding and silencing other local histories? This is to say that, whilst the Sengwer have fairly successfully distinguished and identified themselves as being distinct from surrounding populations, other people living in the glades of Embobut who identify with the same material histories and changing relationship with the forests have not had the same voice. In some respects, this problem again stems from a rigid understanding of group identity as being geographically bounded into neat groups, of which the Sengwer are one, occupying the highland forests of Embobut. But what of members of the Kamoi Marakwet clan who have walked the same pathways, collected honey from their own clan forests, attempted to protect forested areas even with the onset of cultivation and still reside in semi-permanent structures in a continued use of the glades after the evictions? Have they not encountered the same struggles faced by the Sengwer? Such a question is difficult to answer if we are talking in terms of community rights to land as defined by rigid cultural labels that do not reflect the complexity of group identity. Indeed, this has already become evident in light of the 'Sengwer-Pokot' land claims to the Kapolet Forest discussed by Lynch (2006; see also Chapter 1). In Embobut, it has helped to fuel a certain amount of naming and blaming:

"*Some communities in Embobut Forest have arrived more recently (including those who were landslide victims, and victims of cattle rustling and or insecurity along Kerio Valley), and others are internal migrants from neighbouring groups (such as the Marakwet) who appear to have moved into the area mostly for economic reasons such as to clear land to grow potatoes to sell…"* (Forest Peoples Programme 2013: Annex 2, pg. 2).

This narrative postulates that forest clearance is the fault of more recent populations moving into the region who did not respect how people already residing there were attempting to protect the forest. Such a point was also backed up by some of my own interviews, with one interviewee stating that after independence in 1963 some Marakwet people moved into the forests and started deforesting (Kirop Kitanaoi Sikatom 04.08.2016) and another noting how, in the 1980s, Marakwet outsiders came to Kapkok glade "from all directions to live and grow potatoes" (Luca Toroitich Kiraton 29.09.2016). These recent group migrations are to some extent materialised in the landscape as people establish homesteads and small farms upon moving into an area. The more recently established territory of the Marakwet Kaptebeko in Koropkwen glade as mentioned in Chapter 5 (Figure 5.2) is a case in point.

The labelling of '*the* Marakwet' as responsible for deforestation plays into the objectification of culture *vis-à-vis* others. This approach does not necessarily take into account localised narratives of different Marakwet clans that have been living alongside Sengwer clans since people migrated into the area approximately 250 years ago (Chapter 4). In fact, prior to the invention of the Marakwet 'tribe' by the British colonial administration (Chapter 2), it is likely that, given the fluidity of identity across time and space, the distinctions between '*the* Marakwet' and '*the* Sengwer' were historically non-existent. In light of this, labelling '*the* Marakwet' as being responsible for deforestation is disingenuous to Marakwet clans (such as Kamoi) that historically have shared experiences with the people identifying as Sengwer. By extension, these people should not be excluded from discussions surrounding community rights to the forest just because they fall into a different identity category outside the ethnic minority and 'indigeneity' status of the Sengwer. Ignoring this argument plays into the notion that 'autochthony' can

be used as a criterion to determine who has the 'true' claim to own the forest, a dangerous concept that ignores the fluidity of group identity, migration and the mutually constructive relationship people have had with their material landscapes.

Having said this, the Marakwet as an entity were certainly not the main group of people whom interviewees blamed for the state of the forest. In many people's opinion, it is the Kenya Forest Service that is the real culprit for forest degradation. This reasoning stems from the story of the permit holders introduced in Chapter 5. As already discussed, some clans living in the glades were given permits to do so based upon their way of life. These permit holders had a positive relationship with the predecessor of the Kenya Forest Service, the Forest Department, and they collaboratively protected the forest ecosystem together (Esther Kipkore Kiplitan 07.10.2016). However, from a local perspective there was a shift in dynamics between the Forest Department and Embobut communities in the 1980s that changed their perceived rights to land and the validity of the permits. In particular, this changing dynamic saw the repeated burning of numerous houses of everyone living in the area, permit holders included (William Shakwa Masomei 10.08.2016).

From the community's perspective, this had a number of consequences. Firstly, it demonstrated that the Forest Department no longer respected the Sengwer way of life and the relationship that they possessed with the forest, instead simply perceiving them as people illegally occupying and destroying Embobut: "KFS [then the Forest Department] arrived after 1982 destroying and burning houses. People were unhappy because they had permits to allow them to live there. It became a game of hide and seek" (Paulo Cheptoms Losipa 27.08.2016). Secondly, it undermined the authority of the permit itself and

transferred the perceived ownership of the land from the permit holders to the government. This meant that surrounding populations saw that permit holders no longer had protected rights to live there and thus gradually came in to farm (Daniel Kiptarus Kilimo 06.10.2016). Thirdly, the act of burning people's houses did not deter them from living in the forest. Rather, people hid in the forest until it was safe and then rebuilt their homesteads (William Shakwa Masomei 10.08.2016; John Cheboi Onontich 10.08.2016). The result of this, as stated by Benjamin Kirop Koiseker (28.09.2016), was that: "The KFS were responsible for lots of deforestation as every time someone's house was burnt, people went to the forest to cut more trees so they could rebuild".

Interestingly, the picture painted by early twentieth-century colonial district reports was that the relationship between local populations and the members of the Forest Department was fairly volatile, with different accounts of disagreement as to how forests should be managed and who rightfully owned them (e.g. Annual Report Elgeyo Marakwet District 1952: 15). That said, many of these accounts appear to be linked to specific locations and are anecdotal in nature, thus not necessarily reflecting the different negotiations with local populations that could have occurred in different forest blocks. Indeed, one of the only times the Embobut forest block is named in colonial reports stated in 1957 that "during November a foot safari was made to some of the glades in Embomut [Embobut] Forest over which the aircraft had passed. It was generally found that their condition was good and the cattle grazing there by no means excessive" (Annual Report Elgeyo Marakwet District 1957: 23). In this vein, it is possible to see that, from the perspective of the Forest Department, Embobut did not have any noticeable problems with deforestation and it is possible that the populations residing there formed a positive relationship with them.

The reasons for the commencement of burning houses in the 1980s as told by interviewees remain unclear, but it is worth bearing in mind that at this time broader governmental changes were occurring. With the death of Jomo Kenyatta in 1978, Daniel arap Moi, the succeeding president, began to make a number of structural changes to the government, one of which was the creation a new regional department covering Turkana, West Pokot, Baringo and Elgeyo-Marakwet called the Kerio Valley Development Authority (KVDA) (Hornsby 2013). Whether or not these structural changes had any impact on changing attitudes towards forestry within Cherangani is difficult to say, but it is not unreasonable to suggest that a shift in government personnel and policy could have contributed.

This said, perhaps a more obvious reason is that livelihoods in the glades in Embobut were not static, but had been changing throughout the twentieth century as cultivation became more widespread. In particular, Marakwet, Sengwer and Dorobo individuals of the Kaplelach age-set started to establish their own homesteads in the 1960s (Chapter 6). A part of this process saw experimentation with cultivation and gradual expansion of the glades as maize fields grew larger, contributing to the material transformation of the landscape: "When people started farming, the elders' age set of Chumo were not happy at the cutting of trees, but the Kaplelach age-set were brave and strong and wanted food for their family so started farming" (Joseph Toroitich Kirotich 03.10.2016). Upon asking Benjamin Kirop Koiseker (28.09.2016) if the Kaplelach generation was responsible for the deforestation, he replied: "Who can blame them for wanting to farm for food and their wives and children?". Indeed, the changes that occurred in the latter half of the twentieth century were on the whole greeted with a positive response, where people no longer had to travel to the Elgeyo Escarpment to trade honey and meat for millet or sorghum, but could rather grow food for themselves.

Unsurprisingly, this narrative feeds into the contemporary perspective of the Kenya Forest Service outlined in Chapter 3; Embobut Forest is under siege from thousands of 'squatters' who have been living and farming illegally in the glades. From this understanding, everyone residing inside the forest is responsible for forest destruction, regardless of the nuanced histories of past livelihoods and reasons for change. By extension, there is little understanding as to how the Kenya Forest Service and the Forest Department before it may themselves have been actors of change and deforestation through their own activities of burning houses and undermining perceived local rights to land.

The discussion thus far has contributed to a more rigorous and nuanced understanding behind the 'politics of naming' (Lynch 2006) by attempting to understand how claims to ethnic identity, 'indigeneity' and the 'hunter-gatherer' category are not simply instrumental, but rather grounded in the shared practices, experiences and dispositions that resonate with people in different ways. This is not to say that labels and categories are not used for political and social mobilisation, but simply that this appropriation does not take place in a vacuum ruptured from cultural and historical contexts. In the final section of this chapter, I pull into focus how the approach taken in Part Two of this thesis helps to diversify the debate surrounding peoples' connection to Embobut beyond notions of identity. By taking the changing material landscape of Embobut as a point of departure, it is possible to reverse Ingold's (2011) 'logic of inversion'. In doing so, differing identities are united in the pathways and places of Embobut in a manner that stands in direct contrast with the Kenya Forest Service's description of people as 'squatters' in conservation spaces.

7.6 Paths and Places against Conservation Spaces

Part Two of this study attempted to understand the Embobut landscapes from the perspective of the populations living there by examining how livelihoods and material landscapes are both mutually constructive and continually unfolding together. From this analysis emerged a very different picture to that of a 'natural' forest under siege from human activity as painted by the Kenya Forest Service. Instead, the forest appears to have been, and indeed continues to be, a complicated entanglement of pathways and places constituted by different living species (humans, trees, grasses and animals), materials (wood, leaves, rocks, water and the wider topography) and meteorological elements (light levels and temperatures) that become knotted together in different ways over time (Chapter 4).

In the vein of Ingold's (2000) dwelling perspective, the rocks and trees themselves become places of rest, shelter and storage that are used by particular clans carrying out the tasks of everyday life. This was illustrated in Chapter 5 where the examination of clan histories showed how locales were important for different people. For example, the place of Senti used by the Kapsaniak clan was characterised by a large tree that had grown in such a way that it provided refuge for people travelling along specific pathways to and from their homesteads to the clan forest of Kosich. Such trees, rocks and pathways are further entwined into the wider material landscape that saw the very hill ridges, gullies and streams that constitute the topography of the region becoming a complex mosaic of territories each of which have nuanced local stories attached. Still in use today, these territories are not the simple mental projection of boundaries onto external topographical features, but rather the structuring of places through the activities of beekeeping, foraging, building homesteads and, in the latter half of the twentieth century, cultivating land. Thus,

rather than existing as a landscape upon which symbolism and meaning are projected, the connectivity that people have with Embobut should be considered as *performative*. In other words, places acquire meaning, structure and material composition through the actions and practices of people (Bourdieu 1977). Importantly, this performative connection is not only created through the practices and experiences of humans, but is inherently entwined with the flow of material properties of the forest that themselves actively shape activities and knowledge.

When considered diachronically, the material composition of the landscape has undoubtedly changed alongside the practices that took place within particular locales. This is most evident when considering the forest glades and the respective areas of clan forest. As the glades expanded over the latter half of the twentieth century as farming increased, the forest vegetation reduced as field systems grew, creating a more open landscape to the point where today it is difficult to determine where one glade starts and another ends. Ultimately, the opening of the glades facilitated new ways of travelling and eventually led to the abandonment of old arterial tracks that wound their way through the previously thick and restrictive forest. With an increase in light levels, freedom of movement and a reduction in potentially dangerous animals came a decline in the use of specific resting and meeting places as it became less necessary to travel in groups.

Along with the shifting use of the glades and pathways, there have been continued localised migrations throughout the region, leading to constant alterations in the territorial organisation of the glades and clan forests. For the people residing in Embobut, such change was facilitated by the principles of land tenure, being entwined with the dynamism of homestead lifecycles and the moving, clearing and building of new houses, field

systems and terraces by younger men – themselves informed by internalised dispositions that aid decision-making processes – clearly allowing for the structuring and expansion of settlement from within the glade.

Yet landscape modification was not simply a process that occurred from inside the glades. An example of change coming from outside the region is materialised in the roads built by Catholic missionaries in the late 1970s. These laid the blueprint for what would gradually become a reorientation of place and commercial life (Chapter 4). Indeed, the now tarmacked main road that runs north-south along the edge of the Elgeyo Escarpment has become the main route into the eastern edge of the Embobut forest block, contributing to the growth of commercial centres around it and trade with towns such as Chesoi, Iten and Eldoret located to the south.

Perhaps more pertinently, the road stands in the present day as the material boundary for the conservation area and acts as a reminder of a very different understanding of how and when the landscapes of Embobut have changed for the people residing there. This is to say that, from a local perspective, landscape transformation is not simply characterised by *ecological* change in the form of forest loss (as conservationists would suppose). Instead, the first surveys of the forests throughout the Cherangani Hills in the early twentieth century by the Forest Department saw the cartographic mapping of new landscapes upon local understandings and experiences of place. Materially speaking, such change saw the physical placement of concrete beacons, the introduction of saw mills and planting of tree nurseries (Chapter 3). Ultimately, the demarcation of forest blocks signified new concepts of forest management and conservation that were ruptured from

the people already residing there, justifying a number of resettlement schemes and pointing towards future struggles over land ownership (Lynch 2006).

In viewing certain areas as pristine forest, the attempts of the Forest Department to protect the ecosystem were premised on the notion that it needed to be isolated from human activity and any future possibilities of landscape modification. In other words, the forest blocks aimed to create a sort of isolated zone that would be protected from environmental degradation. From a local perspective, however, it was with the physical demarcation and creation of forest reserves that signified a radical *onset*, rather than halting, of change within the forests that had very real material correlates in the long term. These were strange new landscapes that impacted people's livelihoods and their experience of the forests that nevertheless became entangled with the transforming meshwork of Embobut.

In this way, early colonial demarcations and perspectives of the environment were written on top, and in spite, of localised ways of experiencing and understanding the world. The legacy of these early colonial landscapes was inherited by the post-colonial Forest Department and the contemporary Kenya Forest Service after that. In their management of the Embobut forest block, the nuanced histories and livelihoods of people living there have been silenced. As I argued at the beginning of Chapter 4, the initial forest demarcations that later became the present-day conservation area are a product of 'fortress conservation' that imagines the world through what Ingold (2011: 68, 145) has called the 'logic of inversion'. In creating boundaries around certain areas that were deemed as important to protect as understood through their own dwelling practices, epistemologies and *habitus*, conservationists and environmentalists ignored the local pathways and threads along which life was lived, and instead drew a new series of lines

as borders within which life was confined. Ultimately, this reduced the people living with the forests of Embobut into humans who *occupied* a forest block rather than *inhabited* it. In other words, the forest was a vessel that contained human activity for which people were allocated permits, rather than an entity with which humans were entwined and that was constantly unfolding in new ways over time (Ingold 2011: 145). In turn, the perception created by the 'logic of inversion' of life as a form of 'occupancy' reinforces the idea that people can be described as 'squatters' illegally occupying a region rather than truly inhabiting it (Kenya Forest Service 2015). From these observations, it should now be clear that *every* group (including the Kenya Forest Service), regardless of its expression of identity, is to some extent responsible for the landscape transformation, be it in the form of deforestation, the establishment of field systems and terraces, building homesteads, constructing roads, demarcating physical boundaries or burning of houses.

Thus far, this chapter has readdressed the complexity behind the 'politics of naming' in Embobut and how this is entangled with the material landscape. Of particular importance is that, whilst different groups who have resided in the forests affiliate with different identity categories, their performative connection with the Embobut landscape is shared. Collectively, their lifeways have shaped, and been formed by, the material flows of the transforming Embobut meshwork itself. These collective lifeways stand in contention with alternative ways of viewing the forest as a conservation area that itself was created by the *habitus* and practices of Western epistemologies, reducing the pathways and places that life was lived along into an occupancy of a forest block through their own material transformations. In order to bring this chapter to a close, it is important briefly to situate these initial conclusions within a wider context in order to understand the relevancy of this research project.

7.7 Wider Considerations

Recently, the prominent conservationist Kent Redford (2018: 237) has argued, contrary to his formal training as a biologist, that conservation is "(1) about politics and power, (2) about people and societies and history, (3) about morals and values, and (4) about how people view the world and make decisions". This statement is clearly supported by studies that have documented conservation practice as a form of land grabbing, such as Benjaminsen and Bryceson's (2012) study of how wildlife and marine conservation across Tanzania can be seen as forms of 'green' and 'blue' grabbing through the dispossession of certain populations at the expense of capital accumulation by others. This is not to say, however, that conservation practice should not be undertaken. Indeed, protecting ecosystems is of paramount importance and there are examples of successful approaches (Larsen and Brockington 2018). It is simply to say that in attempting to protect ecosystems, wider social and historical structures must be taken into account.

This research project has attempted to engage with this position through its analysis of physical landscape change and how this is perceived, experienced and shapes different people through time. I have emphasised how the politics surrounding the conservation area of Embobut in the present day are wrapped up in complex identities that are grounded in fluid histories and practices of the people living there. Importantly, if careful attention is not paid, the different ways in which people identify, particularly in light of the notion of 'indigeneity' and international legislation, can overshadow differing narratives of people who fall into different identity categories. This last point became the centre of debate surrounding the displacement of the San from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, Botswana, in the early 2000s, where the anthropologist James Suzman (2002, 2003) described the use of the indigenous rights movement as "so inappropriate to post-colonial

Africa that no African country has seriously considered ratifying it" (Suzman 2002: 20). Suzman's comments came in part as a reaction to the activist group Survival International's involvement in attempting to raise the profile of the situation and aid the displaced populations. Suzman (2002) highlighted how, although well intentioned, Survival International had harnessed 'indigeneity' as a means of granting 'special rights' for specific populations and in doing so oversimplified the complex history of the situation and even hindered the political ambitions of the very people it was attempting to help by creating greater animosity between them and the Botswanan government. In this sense, Suzman's argument directly supports the concerns voiced by Kuper (2003) that the indigenous rights movement could lead to the creation of privileged rights for certain people and contribute to racist rhetoric between different populations (see also Chapter 1).

The similarities with this case and that of Embobut are clear in the sense that activist groups, such as the Forest Peoples Programme, are today using 'indigeneity' as conceptualised by community activists as a means to raise land rights issues. Yet there are also a number of distinctions that need to be acknowledged here. Importantly, since the legal case in Bostwana closed in 2006 (Saugestad 2006), the rights of Indigenous people have been further cemented in international law (e.g UNDRIP 2007) with a concerted effort to address the concerns raised by African nations (see Chapter 1). As such, whilst Suzman's (2002) scrutiny of the implementation of the 'indigenous' category is understandable, it should not be written off with such haste. Instead, studies such as this one must seriously engage with why the 'indigenous' category is important for local expressions of identity, the validity of this as grounded in the practices of different groups in the materiality of the landscape and how it is further entangled with different forms of

identification including ethnicity and being a 'hunter-gatherer'. How these identities are performed and materialised in the world produces a more constructive yet critical way of engaging with these ideas rather than the simply writing them off as inappropriate. A more in-depth analysis of how entangled identities are entwined with material landscape histories could likely have added a greater understanding of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve not simply as a 'reserve' occupied by the San, but as a series of places and pathways with complex histories of use through time by different people. The result of this approach is that categories of identity as a form of appeal to land rights become integrated into a more nuanced, appropriate and less exclusive understanding of how people are constantly coming into being with the physical landscape.

In a broader sense, this leaves us with the question of what role the United Declaration of Rights for Indigenous Populations should actually play for self-identifying 'indigenous' populations in land right issues in Africa. Pelican and Maruyama (2015: 70) examine how the heterogeneous nature of expressions of 'indigeneity' across Africa occurs "within a context that offers more opportunities for flexible engagement and disengagement with the indigenous rights discourse". For example, in the case the San, only the 189 individuals who filed the lawsuit were allowed to return to the reserve, with many others being excluded (Saugestad 2006). The San who did return were confronted with continued problems with access to water and other basic amenities in the reserve. Simultaneously, international NGO activity appears to have waned. As such, rather than engaging with continued legal battles connected to the wider international indigenous rights movement, the San began focusing on coping strategies on a local level. This has seen the growth of alternative bush dwellings outside the reserve and designated resettlement locations that have facilitated new ways of living, with frequent movement, exchange and mutual support occurring between the different locations. In turn, this

mobility has gradually contributed to the easing of tensions within the San community, particularly those who were not allowed to return to the reserve (Pelican and Maruyama 2015: 59). A further example of how the use of the indigenous rights movement has been diversified comes from the Mbororo community in northwest Cameroon who, in the wake of a leadership crisis, have created new strategies for raising public awareness (Pelican 2009; Pelican and Maruyama 2015). Here, initial enthusiasm of the possibilities provided by the UNDRIP quickly led to disillusionment as the political integrity of the Mbororo did not appear to improve. Thus, the use of the 'indigenous' platform was diversified through alternative approaches to lobbying, most noticeably through the use of social media.

This sort of changing political strategy has also been documented amongst Maasai pastoralists in Tanzania who, despite participating in the indigenous rights movement in the late 1980s, later turned towards a more nationally based discourse surrounding pastoral development (Hodgson 2011). Despite the fact that their involvement in the indigenous rights movement was hugely successful in terms of increasing their international status and bringing in NGO funding, an increasingly fractious relationship with the Tanzanian government led to continued failed attempts at protecting their lands, resources and way of life. Thus, Maasai activists gradually refocused their efforts away from the international stage and towards the national arena, engaging with, rather than fighting against, the government in a practice of "advocacy by engagement" (Hodgson 2011: 157). As part of this strategy, the Maasai's political struggles were reframed from the language of 'indigenous rights' to that of 'pastoralist livelihoods', a change that helped to bring pastoralism and sustainable livelihoods into focus in a positive way that was in line with government ambitions of development. This change in Maasai activism is similar to the shifts in both the Mbororo and San cases, which moved from employing

an indigenous rights discourse to apply international pressure to adopting a more collaborative approach with government institutions (Pelican and Maruyama 2015). Thus, "identification as an indigenous people is not the only or necessarily the most effective strategy for advancing claims; yet, depending on the context, it can still be one effective approach among others" (Pelican and Maruyama 2015: 69).

It is in this vein that this study has attempted both to contextualise and to broaden the foundations of the debate in Cherangani beyond that of identity discourse by exploring how fluid identities, livelihoods, conservation policies and ecological change are all mutually constructed within the meshwork of Embobut itself. Importantly, the materiality of historical change must be recognised, including the acknowledgment that different groups of people, animals, plants and materials have been conjointly transformative and emergent over the past century. When this point is fully comprehended, local communities, human rights activists and government bodies can look forwards in an attempt to envisage how landscape modification and livelihoods could continue to unfold together in a more positive way rather than centring arguments on the *returning* to former 'indigenous' lifeways or the *reverting* of the forest back to a past 'pristine' nature.

The discussion presented here, however, still does not offer a more concrete set of solutions for the future. Nor do I intend to do so. The final chapter of this thesis explores why this is the case by rethinking the 'here and now' of Embobut in an attempt to situate entwined perceptions and hopes within the broader issues presented in the 'Anthropocene'.

Chapter 8 : Conclusions – The Blasted Landscape of Embobut

This research project has tackled a number of issues in an attempt to offer an in-depth landscape history of Embobut and interrogate how different identities, perceptions and experiences are entangled with it. Thus far in Part Three, I have historicised how different groups who have resided in the forests affiliate with different identity categories. These are to some extent grounded in shared practices and dispositions that have structured group identity in different ways over time and at the same have been used to aid political struggles to land, occasionally in ways that overlap, contradict or eclipse alternative and nuanced histories. Such silencing has become particularly evident with regard to the appropriation of the 'indigenous' and 'hunter-gatherer' categories by the Sengwer who have portrayed themselves as distinct from their Marakwet neighbours. When considered collectively, however, both of these populations have had a shared performative connection with the material landscape of Embobut that has changed over the twentieth century in different ways. Collectively, these shifting lifeways have been eclipsed by alternative ways of viewing the forest as a conservation area that reduced the pathways and places along which life was lived into occupancy of a forest block, leading to the contemporary description of the Embobut communities as 'squatters' (Kenya Forest Service 2015).

Although this analysis has helped to contextualise the present-day situation, I have not offered any form of resolution to the issues surrounding the forceful evictions or forest degradation. This final chapter explores why I do not intend to do so by rethinking the 'here and now' in an attempt to understand the entwined perceptions and hopes placed in the 'blasted landscape', a term recently used by Tsing (2014) and Kirksey *et al.* (2014) to

describe landscapes of ecological disaster. In order to do so, I first introduce how anthropologists have used the concept of the blasted landscape within the Anthropocene in order to interrogate how different people (and species) may come to comprehend landscape degradation in conflicting ways. Following this, I explore how and why the blasted landscape as a figurative term is useful for cutting to the crux of the problems in Embobut if broader conceptualisations of degradation are taken into account. Finally, I bring the thesis to a conclusion by reflecting on where caution and hope should be placed in the face of the blasted landscape of Embobut.

8.1 Blasted Landscapes in the Anthropocene

The Anthropocene as a concept was formally introduced by the atmospheric chemist, Paul Crutzen, and the ecologist, Eugene Stoermer (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000), who used it to describe a new geological epoch in which humans have become a dominant earth-changing force. The term is still being formalised as a part of an ongoing review to see if it should be recognised as a new geological epoch (Zalasiekwicz *et al.* 2010; Steffen *et al.* 2011; Waters *et al.* 2017). However, this is no simple task, where the 'golden spike' that geologists seek as a marker to distinguish the strata between geological epochs, is highly contested. Some theories suggest that the transition from the Holocene to the Anthropocene started with the development of the Industrial Revolution in the mid-eighteenth century (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000; Zalasiewicz *et al*. 2008; Steffen *et al*. 2011), others that it could be placed in 1945 when the first artificial radionuclides appear in the Earth's strata (Zalasiewicz *et al.* 2010). In contrast, Ruddiman (2013) has highlighted how substantial anthropogenic deposits started thousands of years beforehand within the context of the Neolithic. Archaeological insights are no doubt important to this debate, where the intricate study of archaeological stratigraphy demonstrates how the entanglement between human/environment relationships is far more complex than the

homogenised strata of the Anthropocene may otherwise suggest. Indeed, it encodes complicated stories of how humans have manipulated their surroundings for thousands of years through the active destruction, transformation or enhancement of ecosystems and biodiversity (Hayashida 2005; Balée 2013).

Aside from the debate as to when the Anthropocene commenced, the conceptual foundations behind it are equally contentious (Sayre 2012; Lane 2015). One the one hand, it could be argued that the term acts as a useful heuristic device in merging geological factors with human agency, thus further dissolving the nature and culture dichotomy (Latour 2010: 10). In this framing, the Anthropocene becomes a potent metaphor for communicating the entangled relationship between humans and their environments, particularly given that it has grabbed the imagination of popular media and is now widely used within the global climate change research community. On the other hand, Clarke (2014) exuberantly claims that the Anthropocene is no more than a slogan, an unsubstantiated bandwagon jumped upon by academics and the general public alike. Clarke's (2014: 101) predominant complaint is that the concept is "literally determined to prejudge the issue between humanity and the Earth, to appropriate the modern Earth system not just for humanity in general, but also for 'scientific truth' altogether". As well as this, with the quest for unravelling when humans first started impacting environments on a substantial level, geologists have become fixated on disentangling human activity from a kind of natural baseline from which ecological and geological change is measured (Sayre 2012). Such a commitment could thus actually further endorse the epistemological foundations behind a nature/culture divide. This last point plays into common tendencies to associated the Anthropocene as human action being inherently *degrading* to 'nature' (Lane 2015). Such a perception is particularly apparent when discussing ecological

disasters and environmental degradation on large scales such as that created by the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill (see below).

Such areas of disaster have figuratively been described as 'blasted landscapes' (Kirkey *et al.* 2014) in an attempt to understand the relationship that humans bear when confronted with situations of environmental degradation. In her multispecies ethnography, the anthropologist Anna Tsing (2014, 2015) uses the term to describe specific degraded landscapes around the world that have facilitated the growth of the rare yet highly valuable matsutake mushroom (*Tricholoma matsutake*). She originally used the term with reference to the blasted landscape of Hiroshima, describing how "when Hiroshima was destroyed by an atomic bomb in 1945, it is said, the first living thing to emerge from the blasted landscape was a matsutake mushroom" (Tsing 2015: 3). Tsing's study builds on the notion that matsutake mushrooms require a nutrient-deficient landscape to thrive, such as that produced by the nuclear blast at Hiroshima, or degraded forest landscapes in Oregon or parts of Finland. Rather than existing as desolate places empty of life, these landscapes provide sustenance for local mushroom foragers, and in doing so, demonstrate how post-industrial disturbance of landscapes can, in fact, be life-giving. Where matsutake forests cannot be cultivated and instead require long-term sustained environmental disturbances, they teach "us about systems of world making and energy sharing that reach beyond the conceits of farming" (Tsing 2014: 88). In parts of Japan, people have attempted to recreate these disturbances and encourage the growth of matsutake mushrooms by cutting numerous trees and digging up and shifting the fertile humus that has accumulated from healthier forest environments, leaving bare steep slopes. Tsing (2014: 105) recounts how:

"In one reconstructed matsutake forest, the forester showed me where he had hired people to shovel out the topsoil, leaving crumbling rock. The slope was so steep we could

barely keep our balance. 'What about erosion?' I asked. 'Erosion is good,' he explained. The whole point is to privilege pine and matsutake'".

From this conversation, Tsing (2014: 88) is quick to point out that "this example does not justify environmental destruction, even if we learn to live with it". Yet it does force us to reassess how people live with environmental degradation and helps us to take a more considered approach in understanding the importance of them for local livelihoods and the hope that can be found in them for the future. Perhaps more pertinently, this example also prompts us to reconsider how we conceptualise the notion of 'degradation' itself. Indeed, 'destruction' or 'degradation' are not objective categories. Rather, they are relative and relational to the people who perceive, interact or dwell within landscapes in different ways. From an environmentalist's perspective, soil erosion and the removing of fertile humus in order to maintain nutrient deficient landscapes is the perpetuation of environmental 'degradation' as understood from conservation epistemologies rooted in Western scientific practice. These same 'degraded' forests, however, are life-giving landscapes both to the actual matsutake mushrooms that grow therein and the individuals who cultivate them. In other words, degraded landscapes for one individual (and species) can be viewed as productive one for another.

The term 'blasted landscape' has also been used by Kirksy *et al.* (2014) in *The Multispecies Salon*, a collection of essays that emerged out of an art show of the same name. In their evocative chapter "*Hope in the Blasted Landscape*", Kirksey *et al.* (2014) examine the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, asking "In the aftermath of disasters—in blasted landscapes that have been transformed by multiple catastrophes, what are the possibilities of biocultural hope?" (2014: 2). Inspired by the writings of the philosopher Jacques Derrida, Kirksey *et al* (2014) find hope in local artists and activists who responded to the Horizon spill by risking physical harm to save hermit crabs that

were not otherwise considered important enough to save from the oil spill and Corexit contamination. The *Multispecies Salon* as an art show was not only where artists came to express their relationship with blasted landscapes and hopes located within it, but also the hope of the researcher, in this case Eben Kirksey, who seeks a more positive and inclusive way of looking beyond common understandings of environmental degradation (Kirksey 2014: 47).

In this vein, there are many examples where landscapes within the Anthropocene could be considered degraded or 'blasted', particularly those rapidly transformed by disasters such as the Deep Horizon oil spill or the nuclear blast at Hiroshima. But if the blasted landscape is to be used to discuss different forms of landscape modification characterised by gradual processes of environmental change, then a far more nuanced approach has to be taken. Take, for example, forest clearance in Kenya. Recent studies have demonstrated how continued and increased agricultural activity has resulted in the loss of millions of hectares of forested areas (e.g. Akotsi *et al.* 2006; Baldyga *et al.* 2008), perhaps leading us to describe numerous parts of Kenya as 'blasted' or degraded. This may indeed be the case as understood from purely environmental perspectives that envisage forest ecosystems as the land in its 'natural state', particularly when considering the important functions that forests serve in water retention and the prevention of erosion (Chang 2013; see also Chapter 3). Environmental degradation in this context, however, is only really quantified and comprehended through epistemologies that prioritise the loss of hydrological and carbon sequestration functions over and above the unfolding of new landscapes in the form of open pasture that facilitates the growth of different grass types, larger livestock herds and an increase in human population. Indeed, these landscapes may not be considered degraded by the thriving new grass species, the livestock that graze

upon them or the people whose wealth and quality of life increases with the size of their herd.

In light of this, the question remains as to whether the blasted landscape is a genuinely useful concept to think with when addressing the 'here and now' of the Embobut Forest and, if so, can it bring together some of the more pertinent issues surrounding environmental degradation, conservation, identity and community rights to land discussed throughout this thesis? Indeed, the populations dwelling in Embobut over time have a more nuanced approach to degradation than conservationist narratives may otherwise advocate. In the following section, I unpack the different understandings of environmental change and shifting livelihoods by moving away from environmental change as the prominent narrative of comprehending the blasted landscape. Rather, I begin to bring this thesis to a conclusion by reflecting upon the blasted landscape in part for its figurative merit in cutting to the crux of some of the more pertinent issues grounded in the here and now of Embobut.

8.2 The When and Where of the Blasted Landscape of Embobut

I contend here that, in some senses, we may indeed describe Embobut as a blasted landscape for a multitude of reasons. From the perspective of the conservationist, the forest ecosystem has indeed been hugely degraded, existing as a patchwork of depleted forest vegetation, stunted trees, open grassland and abandoned housing platforms. Whilst it is perhaps visually striking to compare aerial historical photographs or approximations of forest loss from Landsat data (Chapter 3), it is not until the region is experienced from the ground that one gets a real sense of the forest degradation that has taken place. As I have initially described in Chapter 4 and repeatedly referred to through Chapters 5 and 6, walking through the hills with local informants reveals the extent of this deforestation,

where the clearance of vegetation caused by human activity has been rife (compare Figures 8.1 and 8.2). Areas such as Senti or Sui (Chapter 5) that used to be mature forest used by different clans for keeping beehives and as communal resting places are now open grass or shrubland with the occasional tree, stunted in growth or completely dead due to burning or partial cutting. Occasionally open grassy slopes display the sheer planes of small landslides, likely caused by the lack of forest vegetation that would otherwise hold the topsoil together. As well as this, huge patches of freshly burnt vegetation leave black blemishes on hillsides, some still smouldering with large plumes of smoke bellowing into the sky (Figure 8.2). In this sense, 'blasted' may seem like an extremely apt adjective to describe what meets the eye when walking through the region, and to environmentalists wanting to preserve the forest ecosystem this can truly be described as an ecological disaster. But this is not just an area of haphazard ecological degradation wrought by human hands. To think along these lines would be to endorse the perspective that the 'natural' forest was once pristine and has been impacted by humans who have simply occupied it recently.

As I have already discussed, the environmentalist perspective has its roots in the demarcations of colonial landscapes introduced in the early twentieth century. The notion of a 'forest reserve' that protected woodland areas for larger economic and environmental reasons would have been an alien concept to precolonial communities dwelling in Embobut. These new landscapes were projected onto local ways of experiencing Embobut and justified a number of resettlement schemes. With this came the writing of new identities into the landscape, with boundaries of who were 'Marakwet', 'Pokot', 'Cherangani' or 'Sengwer' simplistically forcing people into categories that did not reflect the fluidity of group identity in time and space. For these communities then,

twentieth-century conservation philosophies of protecting particular areas of land signified a radical onset, rather than halting, of landscape change within the forests.



Figure 8.1: Images of mature highland forest in the Kipkunurr Forest block a few miles south of Embobut. Compare with the degraded forest ecosystem in Figure 8.2 below.



Figure 8.2: Images of the 'blasted landscape' of Embobut. When compared to Figure 8.1, it is clear to see how this area can be described as degraded.

Thus, an alternative way of approaching forest degradation, and one that is articulated strongly by Sengwer activists, is that it was the concerted effort to *remove humans* from the overall ecosystem that has resulted in the real ecological disaster. In their eyes, if the Kenya Forest Service (and the Forest Department before that) had continued to co-operate with community members living in the glades and to respect their permits to do so, they could have collaboratively continued to protect the forest. The irony from this point of view is that it is the act of *removing the people* in an attempt to protect a separate and 'natural' ecosystem that has produced the contemporary state of a degraded forest

environment or blasted landscape. This is to say that people have, at the hands of the Kenya Forest Service, been 'blasted' from the hills, their houses burnt and their possessions destroyed in the exact same way that trees have been cut and vegetation destroyed (Figure 8.3). Given that the Sengwer activists in particular have presented themselves as an integral part of the ecosystem, in destroying their livelihoods the Kenya Forest Service has, by extension, destroyed parts of the forest.



Figure 8.3: Collapsed and burnt structures in Kapkok glade.

This may indeed hold true. But it must also be acknowledged that people living in the glades had also started experimenting with cultivation by the 1960s, at least a decade before the then Forestry Department started burning houses and evicting people (Chapters 5 and 6). As a consequence, this prompted a shift with regard to community rules for protecting forest, where the clearance of vegetation was a product of a greater emphasis on cultivating land instead of foraging for forest resources and beekeeping. The localised migration of different clans further accelerated forest clearance, resulting in a series of naming and blaming debates (Chapter 7). With this expansion of settlement came the changing nature of what is meant and understood by the term 'forest glades'. This is to say that, historically, the glades were bounded by the thick forest vegetation (Chapter 4). But as forest started to be cleared, these glades expanded to the point where, in the blasted landscape of the present, it is impossible to distinguish where one glade ends or another begins without any form of localised knowledge as to where these locations are.

Ultimately, these entwined, long-term narratives have culminated in the blasted landscape of the here and now in Embobut. Whilst it could be suggested that these landscapes gradually became ecologically degraded only when people started deforesting to cultivate, a far more poignant way of conceptualising degradation is to also incorporate local perspectives alongside environmental conservation narratives. In this vein, the removal of people from their former livelihoods (notably the 'formal' 2013 evictions), however ecologically destructive these had become, was the removal of people who have been integrally bound to the forests and glades. Thus, the blasted landscape of the present does not simply describe the results of forest degradation. Rather, it materialises a diachronic narrative of contested histories and layered understandings of how people have

lived in Embobut through time that accumulated into the 'blasting' of entangled local livelihoods and forest environments and lead to the volatile political debate of the present.

8.3 Dwelling with the Blasted Landscape

In Tsing's (2014) work, the emergence of degraded environments does not signal an endpoint. Rather, it points towards new ways in which people who use them for matsutake mushrooms continue to coexist with the heavily modified landscapes. Given that "Matsutake forests are lively blasted landscapes, but not all blasted landscapes are lively" (Tsing 2014: 87), how are we to assess the possibilities of people living with the current environment in Embobut?

It is fair to say that Embobut too can be described 'lively' in the sense that there are opportunities for people to continue living in and around the glades within it. In fact, it is not the lack of forest at all that prevents people from continuing to dwell in the forest reserve, but rather the continued destruction of people's houses by the Kenya Forest Service. The numerous abandoned housing platforms sprawling across the region exist as reminders of this, but they are by no means the mere ruins of past lives. Their very presence is imbued with past dwelling practices that persist in actively structuring contemporary places of how and where people can continue to dwell (Chapter 6). In the present-day, there is a flow of people moving in and out of the conservation area, creating new trade links, tending to cattle and dwelling in semi-permanent structures. These activities are in part spatially structured by understandings of where people dwelt in the past as informed by the material correlates of former lives (Chapter 6).

Given that there are no more permanent houses or field systems in the conservation area, as well as the fact that thick forest vegetation has been significantly depleted, the landscape has never been more open, providing large grassland areas for grazing cattle,

sheep and goats. Counter to the ambitions of the Kenya Forest Service, maintaining this open grassland is of importance to people who depend on their livestock as 'companion species' (Haraway 2008; see also Chapter 5) that provide milk, meat and, in a more general sense, household capital that can be accumulated through the growth of their herds. In continually grazing livestock, forest growth is prevented and the continued expansion of pasture encouraged. This, as alluded to by informants, is also achieved by setting fire to large patches of vegetation that have got too thick for livestock to penetrate, something viewed as an act of creating pasture rather than one of destroying forest[29]. As Tsing (2014: 87) states, "Ruins are now our gardens. Degraded ("blasted") landscapes produce our livelihoods. And even the most promising oasis of natural plenty requires massive interventions to be maintained".

In this vein, it is clear that the change brought on by the evictions did not leave this area void of human habitation (and neither has it restored forest vegetation). Instead, people continued to live with the blasted landscape, adapting as best they can, carrying out tasks within the glades and developing new systems of trade, movement and sheltering.

8.4 Reflecting on Hope and Caution in the Blasted Landscape

The figurative portrayal of Embobut as a blasted landscape in the present helps us to conceptualise how people not only live with environmental change, but are a part of it. This leaves us with the fundamental question of what possible solutions there are for the future. Unfortunately, this thesis is not the place to propose a robust set of answers to the ongoing situation. However, it is possible to at least return to the question posed by Kirksey *et al.* (2014: 2) at the beginning of this chapter and sketch some of the

[29] The burning of thick vegetation may not actually have the desired effect, instead stimulating the growth of large amounts of bracken rather than grasses.

possibilities of hope in this blasted landscape. From a personal point of view, tackling this question is highly subjective, multidimensional and must involve a level of caution. After all, different people hope for different things and find it in different ways.

Throughout my research it became clear that, for many evicted community members, hope was not necessarily placed in the knowledge that the blasted landscape could be restored to past forest ecosystems complete with humans, but rather simply in being allowed to return to their ancestral land that had been wrongfully taken from them. In fact, some informants openly admitted that they would like to return not to protect or restore forest vegetation, but to continue growing maize as there is now more space to do so. This point of view does not stand in good stead with the agendas of community activists (particularly those identifying as Sengwer), whose hope of returning to the glades is placed in the appropriation of certain categories of identity (i.e indigenous, ethnic minority, hunter-gatherers) that are grounded in particular practices and aspects of 'indigenous knowledge'. In other words, any hope of returning to the glades is placed in national and international legislation where legal processes help to protect the rights of certain groups of people. In doing this, Sengwer activists have envisaged their 'indigeneity' in a manner that is also in tune with environmental rhetoric that aims at protecting the forest. As I discussed in Chapter 7, this conceptualisation is not simply the appropriation of cultural practices for instrumentalist purposes, but is to some extent grounded in real life experiences of dwelling in the Embobut landscape that have contributed to the shared dispositions of the *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977).

It must be noted that the activists approach has also created a level of nostalgia in the sense that certain aspects of former livelihoods are emphasised over others, namely the

tending to beehives and foraging for forest resources over the activities of farming and grazing cattle. However, as my interviews showed, such nostalgia is not shared by everyone, especially given that many community elders were happy when their dwelling activities started to change towards a lifestyle more orientated towards cultivation (Chapters 5 and 6). There was more food for their families and they no longer had to hunt in the forest or periodically take their cattle to the Kerio Valley (Chapter 4). The cautionary side to this is that people living in Embobut need to acknowledge that they too have been agents of change, not just the Kenya Forest Service or outside clans who have more recently migrated to the region, and that any solution of returning to the glades that forbids cultivation may not be desirable for many community members. Likewise, as I emphasised in Chapter 7, caution has to be taken as to how the appropriation of categories can overshadow the histories of clans who fall outside of the 'indigenous' narrative of the Sengwer despite having similar material histories and past experiences.

From my own perspective, both hope and caution for a better future are materialised in the relationship that people still have with the blasted landscape. Hope is found when walking through the hills with community elders, hearing their knowledge of different plants and the active role that people used to play in protecting them. The continued attempts of recirculating this knowledge by community activists forces us to acknowledge that there is a genuine desire to keep certain forms of knowledge, practices and ecosystems alive. This became particularly apparent when walking through the hills of Embobut with one community activist, Elias Kimaiyo, who pointed out a number of geometric shapes across the upper slopes of some hills (Figure 8.4).



Figure 8.4: Areas of bamboo that have been ringfenced by community members for protection

Elias told me how these were ring-fenced areas of bamboo that certain community members were trying to protect from being cut down by other people. He asked me how the Kenya Forest Service expects these areas to be protected in the future if the Sengwer are not allowed to live in the forest and report such destruction? Clearly, then, there is a desire to work with government authorities to safeguard and re-establish the ecosystem. My own perspective, however, is that of a double-edged sword, where continued dwelling with this landscape has also led to the maintenance of its current state. Indeed, the process of keeping livestock in the forest does not allow for the regeneration of forest vegetation. Neither does the cutting of timber for construction materials and firewood, or the plumes of smoke that periodically rise from the hills as vegetation is burnt. But nor does the burning of peoples shelters and fences in the conservation area by the Kenya Forest Service, which has yet to grasp the real importance of this landscape for producing livelihoods and the fact that people will continually return to it to rebuild.

8.5 Impacts and Scope for Future Research

As already mentioned, this is not the place to offer a serious set of solutions. In fact, I feel that it would be disingenuous and contrived to fleetingly do so in the conclusion of a project that has spent the entirety of its argument highlighting the inherent complexity of the situation in Embobut. To contribute a more pragmatic set of solutions, this study must sit within a broader research agenda that explores a number of different aspects in more detail. This kind of research has, for example, been achieved in the seminal book, '*Reframing Deforestation: Global Analyses and Local Realities'*. Here, Fairhead and Leach (1998) demonstrated how forestry officials and conservationists misunderstood the effects of local peoples on the extent of forest cover in different countries in West Africa, concluding that instead of being forest destroyers, people were actually responsible for increases in forest cover. A part of the merit of their work was the use of multiple fieldwork and research methods that incorporated the biological, social and historical sciences. In this vein, detailed and quantitative studies of forest loss and ecological change, deeper understandings of regional climate fluctuations and wider studies of landscape use all need to be incorporated into future research across the Cherangani Hills. To some extent, these projects are already underway (Davies 2012; Davies and Moore 2016), with productive links and ongoing research being produced by the Marakwet Project of the Institute for Global Prosperity, University College London, in conjunction with the University of Eldoret and the British Institute in Eastern Africa.

My research has also already resulted in communication with groups such as Amnesty International and the Forest Peoples Programme. This, I feel, is particularly important in that my work can contribute a more nuanced way of approaching the human rights issues presented in Embobut. Namely, a narrative not exclusively limited to the self-identifying indigenous Sengwer, but rather a complicated history of different clans and unfolding

landscapes within the Cherangani Hills as a whole. In order to address the rhetoric of community activists and human rights groups, I have engaged head on with the anthropologically contested nature of 'indigeneity' rather than simply writing it off as inappropriate. In doing so, I have carved out a means of conceptualising how claims to ethnic identity, 'indigeneity' and the 'hunter-gatherer' category are not simply instrumental, but rather grounded in the shared practices, experiences and dispositions that resonate with people in different ways through time. This is not to say that labels and categories are not used for political and social mobilisation, but simply that this appropriation does not occur in a vacuum ruptured from cultural and historical contexts.

Ultimately, however, I would argue that the impact of my work comes not from analysing the discursive nature of identity politics, but rather through the examination of the materiality and temporality of the Embobut landscape itself and how this is entwined with what people do on a day to day basis. It is in this vein that this study has attempted both to contextualise and to broaden the foundations of the debate in Cherangani by unravelling how livelihoods, conservation policies and ecological change are all mutually constructed with the meshwork of Embobut. When this point is fully comprehended, local communities and human rights activists can look beyond ideas of *returning* to former lifeways that have been conceptualised as 'indigenous'. Likewise, government bodies, the Kenya Forest Service and conservationists can avoid narratives of *reverting* the forest back to a past, pristine 'nature' void of human habitation. Instead, in acknowledging that people, animals, plants and materials have been conjointly transformative and emergent over the past century and beyond, it is paramount that we recognise the materiality of historical change in order to look forward to creating a more positive future centred on the responsible management of ecosystem functions, species diversity and the livelihoods of the people with whom the forests of Embobut are enmeshed.

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Appendix A: Record of Interviews

Table A.1 provides a list of interviews conducted throughout my fieldwork in Embobut. A total of 47 interviews were conducted with my research assistant, Joseph Kimatai, who speaks both the Sengwer and Marakwet dialect. Of the 47, six were follow up interviews corroborating information or asking further questions to individuals who had already been interviewed once. Extensive interview notes were documented in my fieldwork notebook.

Table A.1: Record of Interviews

Date	Name	Sex	Age	Age-Set	Clan
03/08/2016	Kimoi Suter Chebural	F	*c*. 80	Silingwaa	Kapsaniak
04/08/2016	Kirop Kitanaoi Sikatom	M	81	Kipkeimet	Kakimesei
04/08/2016	Kisang Kibor	M	*c*. 70	Kaplelach	Kapcherichor
05/08/2016	Kisang Kirotich	M	78	unknown	Kapsaniak
09/08/2016	Catherine Jelima Kipkure	F	*c*.70	Silingwaa	Kapchebnai
09/08/2016	Kanda Chebet	M	*c*. 60	Kipkeimet	Kakisang
10/08/2016	William Shakwa Masomei	M	63	Kaplelach	Kamosomei
10/08/2016	John Cheboi Onotich	M	77	Kaplelach	Kakimong
11/08/2016	Chemeitoi Kipyatich	M	66	Kaplelach	Kakimong
17/08/2016	Samuel Chemeitoi	M	*c*. 67	Kaplelach	Kapkanawa/Kobil
18/08/2016	Chemeitoi Yego	M	unknown	Kabenir	Kapsuma
27/08/2016	Paulo Cheptoms Losipa	M	55	Kaplelach	Kakasowat
01/08/2016	Paul Kipkemoi	M	*c*. 35	Nyongi	Kalomoitany
06/09/2016	Musa Koimen	M	68	Kaplelach	Kalomoitany
11/09/2016	Benjamin Kirop	M	unknown	Kaplelach	Kamoi
26/09/2016	Elias Kimaiyo	M	unknown	Nyongi?	Unknown
27/09/2016	Chelimo Chepsiya	M	unknown	Kaplelach	Kapchepketau

27/09/2016	Silas Korir Yego	M	23	Kaplelach	Kapkuna
27/09/2016	Elias Kabrien	M	60	Kaplelach	Unknown
28/09/2016	Susana Toroitich	F	46	Cheptureru	Unknown
28/09/2016	Benjamin Kirop Koiseker	M	60	Kaplelach	Kachlakeu
29/09/2016	Luca Toroitich Kiraton	M	55	Kimyikeu	Unknown
29/09/2016	Pau Kiptuka	M	58	Kaplelach	Unknown
03/10/2016	Paul Bowen Kipyatich	M	76	Kaplelach	Kamoi
03/10/2016	Tula Margaret Chelauga	F	73	Silingwaa	Kamoi
03/10/2016	Joseph Toroitich Kirotich	M	56	Kaplelach	Kalotukor
06/10/2016	Daniel Kiptarus Kilimo	M	55	Kaplelach	Kapsaniak
07/10/2016	Kiplalwel Ketum Litan	M	73	Kaberur	Kiplitan
07/10/2016	Esther Kipkore Kiplitan	F	61	Chemari	Kapkiplitan
10/10/2016	Charles Kipkore Kimesai	M	59	Kaplelach	Kimesai
11/10/2016	Murkomeu Kirop	M	68	Kaplelach	Kachlakeu
21/10/2016	Catherine Jelima Kipkure	F	*c*. 70	Silingwaa	Kapchebnai
05/02/2016	Kosgei Chelanga Thomas	M	35	Nyongi	Kalomoitany
05/03/2017	Paul Kipkemoi	M	*c.* 35	Nyongi	Kalomoitany
05/03/2017	Musa Koimen	M	68	Kaplelach	Kalomoitany
06/03/2017	Jacob Changwony Komen	M	55	Kaplelach	Kapsaniak
06/03/2017	Eunice Talaa Kimwote	F	59	Tabesit	Kapsaniak
06/03/2017	Daniel Kiptarus Kilimo	M	55	Kaplelach	Kapsaniak
07/03/2017	Paulo Cheserek Kelimo	M	*c.* 56	Kaplelach	Kapsaniak
07/03/2017	William Kasowat	M	43	Kimyikeu	Kakasowat
07/03/2017	Joseph Kimatai	M	40	Nyongi	Kapsaniak
08/03/2017	Saniaka Chelanga	F	*c*. 60	Tabesit	Kapkiplitan

08/03/2017	Esther Kipkore Kiplitan	F	61	Chemari	Kapkiplitan
08/03/2017	Juliana Kimoi Murkomen	F	64	Tabesit	Kalomoitany
09/03/2017	Petro Kipyatich Kirop	M	60	Kaplelach	Kapsaniak
10/03/2017	Joseph Toroitich Kirotich	M	56	Kaplelach	Kalotukor
11/03/2017	Grace Cheserek Komen	F	59	Tabesit	Kabarbelo

Appendix B: Exploring the Deeper History in Embobut

Initial archaeological surveys carried out in the Cherangani Hills in March 2017 documented 68 circular depressions measuring between approximately eight and fifteen metres in diameter. These depressions are reminiscent of 'Sirikwa holes' that are common throughout the Rift Valley and Western Highlands. Furthermore, local farmers from the area testify to finding pieces of rouletted pottery that differ from the Marakwet and Sengwer styles produced by the contemporary populations, as well as evidence of iron smelting, a practice that is not in the oral histories and thus points towards a deeper timeframe to the human habitation in the area.

Test pit excavations were carried out in May 2017 on three different depression sites in order to further glean their archaeological make up. Work was carried out under Excavation/Exploration License reference number NMK/ACL/k/Vol.1, issued by the National Museums of Kenya and held by David K. Kay, and with the assistance of National Museums representative Mr Chris Kirwa.

Methodology

Surveys

In a previous field season in March 2017, a total of 68 depressions were recorded with the Gaia GPS app on an iPhone 5 (Figure 1). The observable depressions that were documented are most commonly located on small plateaux and shallow slopes close to the Embobut River, rather than on the steeper slopes that define much of the topography. In May 2017, it was decided that two clusters of depressions (EMB-17 Lomoi and EMB-17 Kamoi), and one individual depression (EMB-17 Saniak), were to be surveyed in detail and test pit excavated. These sites were judged suitable for investigation based on local knowledge of areas of minimal cultivation and disturbance, as well as the logistical factor of ease of access. Each site was base-line mapped using two thirty metre measuring tapes, in order to accurately record the surface archeological context for each test pit.

Excavations

Over the three sites, three different test pit strategies were employed. On the individual depression EMB-17 Saniak, one 3m x 1m trench was laid from the edge towards the centre to see if anything could be learnt from the stratigraphy in terms of construction. At the second site of EMB-17 Kamoi, two 1m x 1m test pits were placed in the centre of two of the four depressions surveyed. Two test pits were dug at the third site of EMB-17 Lomoi, one inside and one outside of a single depression.

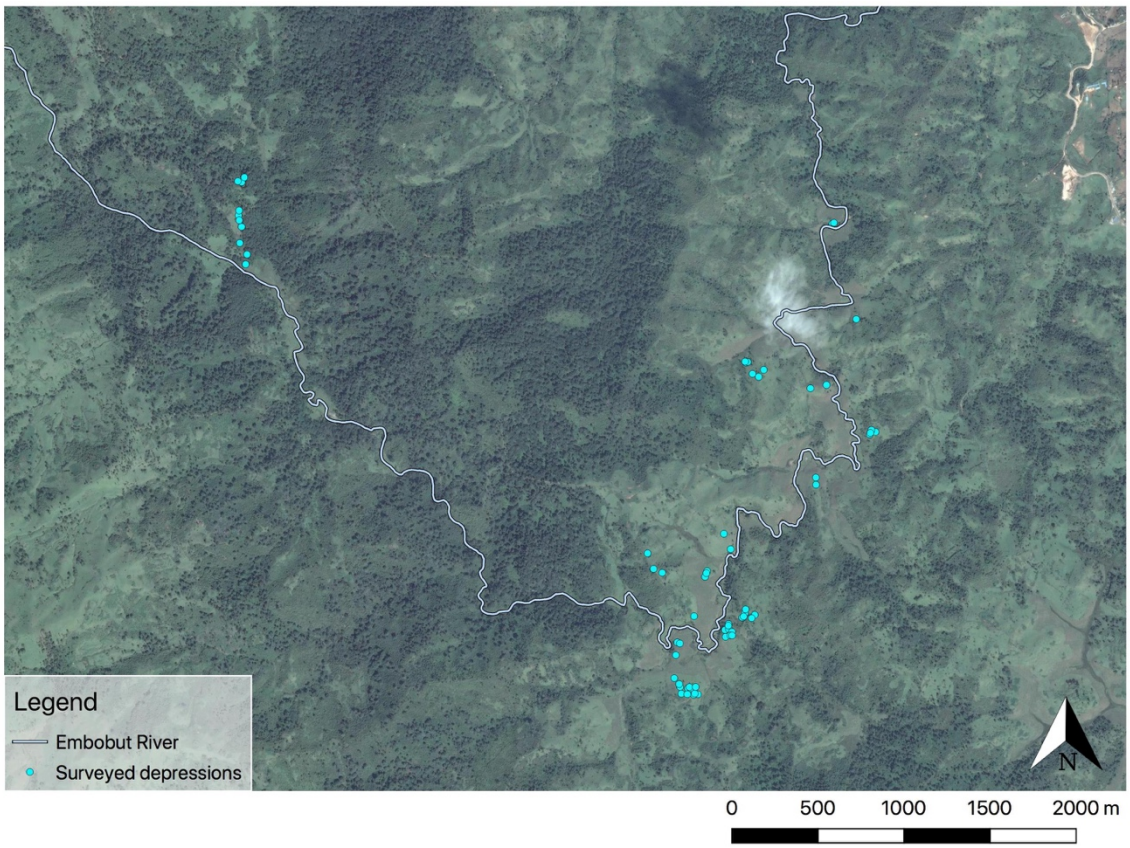

Figure 1: Location of surveyed depressions in and around Koropkwen glade.

Results

Surveys and Excavations

EMB-17 Saniak

Emb-17 Saniak is a single depression located on the north side of the hill belonging to Kapsaniak clan (1°11'29" N, 35°34'30" E). It is situated on the lower slope on a small plateau above the river (Figure 2). The depression is approximately 10.5 metres across with evidence of a small channel running from upslope into its centre.

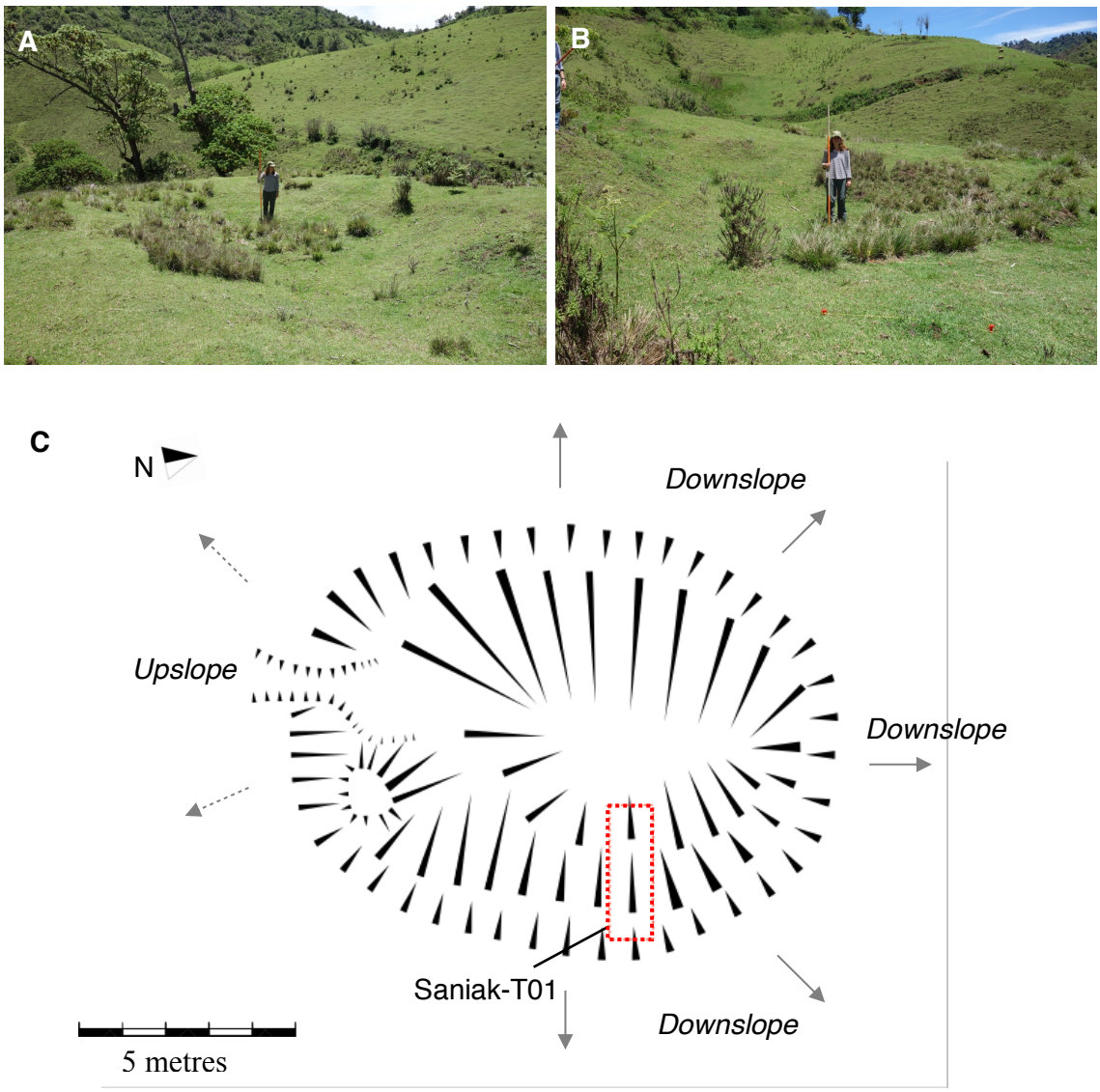

Figure 2: A.) Image of the site facing North; B.) Image of the site facing South; C.) Diagram of the depression

Saniak-T01

This trench was located in the depression EMB-17 Saniak. The 3 x 1 metre trench reached at a depth of 56cm below datum (56cm profile height) in the north end of the trench, and 89cm below datum (28cm profile height) in the south end. There were seven contexts:

Context 001

Basic description: Dark brown top soil below the turf
Adjacent contexts: 002, 003, 007 below
Boundary type(s): With 002 and 007 defined, with 003 diffuse
Coarse material: Occasional sub-rounded pebbles
Coarse/fine ratio: 90% fine
Percentage clay: 30% - 40%
Colour: Dark Brown

Ped shapes and aggregates: Apedal
Finds: None

Context 002

Basic description: A lighter brown soil underlying top soil
Adjacent contexts: 001, 003 above; 005, 006, 007 below.
Boundary type(s): 001 diffuse, others defined
Coarse material: Occasional sub-rounded pebbles
Coarse/fine ratio: 90% fine
Percentage clay: 30%
Colour: Mid-yellowy brown
Ped shapes and aggregates: Apedal
Finds: One cow tooth

Context 003

Basic description: A dark brown gravely layer in the northern part of the trench
Adjacent contexts: 001 above; 002 below.
Boundary type(s): All defined
Coarse material: Sub-rounded to sub-angular pebbles and gravels
Coarse/fine ratio: 50% fine
Percentage clay: 30%
Colour: Dark brown
Ped shapes and aggregates: Apedal
Finds: None

Context 004

Basic description: A very dark brown root mark through 002
Adjacent contexts: 002
Boundary type(s): Defined
Coarse material: None
Coarse/fine ratio: 95% fine
Percentage clay: 20%
Colour: Very Dark brown/blackish
Ped shapes and aggregates: Apedal
Finds: None

Context 005

Basic description: A very dark brown root mark
Adjacent contexts: 002 above; 007 below
Boundary type(s): Defined
Coarse material: None
Coarse/fine ratio: 95% fine
Percentage clay: 20%
Colour: Very Dark brown/blackish
Ped shapes and aggregates: Apedal
Finds: None

Context 006

Basic description: A very dark brown root mark
Adjacent contexts: 002 above; 007 below

Boundary type(s): Defined
Coarse material: None
Coarse/fine ratio: 95% fine
Percentage clay: 20%
Colour: Very Dark brown/blackish
Ped shapes and aggregates: Apedal
Finds: None

Context 007

Basic description: A natural weathered saprolite bedrock of gneiss with bands of quartz.
Adjacent contexts: 001, 002, 005, 006 above
Boundary type(s): Defined
Coarse material: N/A
Coarse/fine ratio: N/A
Percentage clay: N/A
Colour: N/A
Ped shapes and aggregates: N/A
Finds: N/A

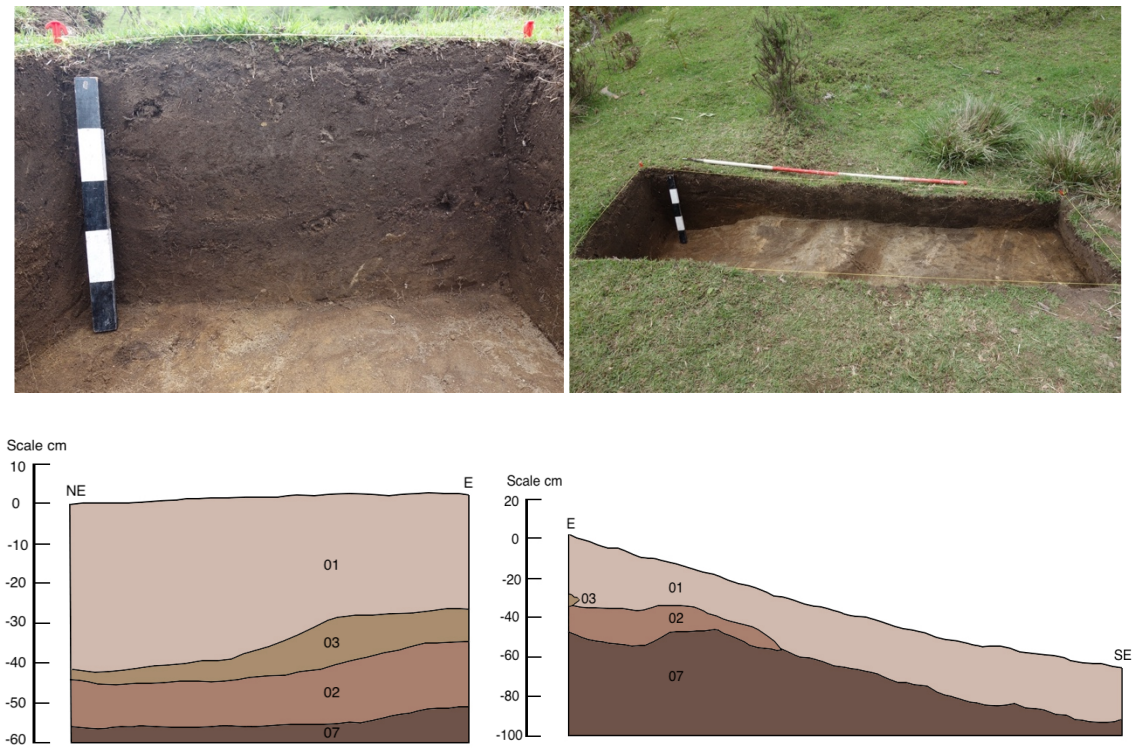

Figure 6: Stratigraphy of Saniak-T01

EMB-17 Kamoi

EMB-17 Kamoi is a cluster of four depressions located on the lower slopes of the area of Koropkwen belonging to Kamoi clan (1°11'47" N, 35°34'26" E). The depressions sit atop a small hill close to the river (Figure 3).

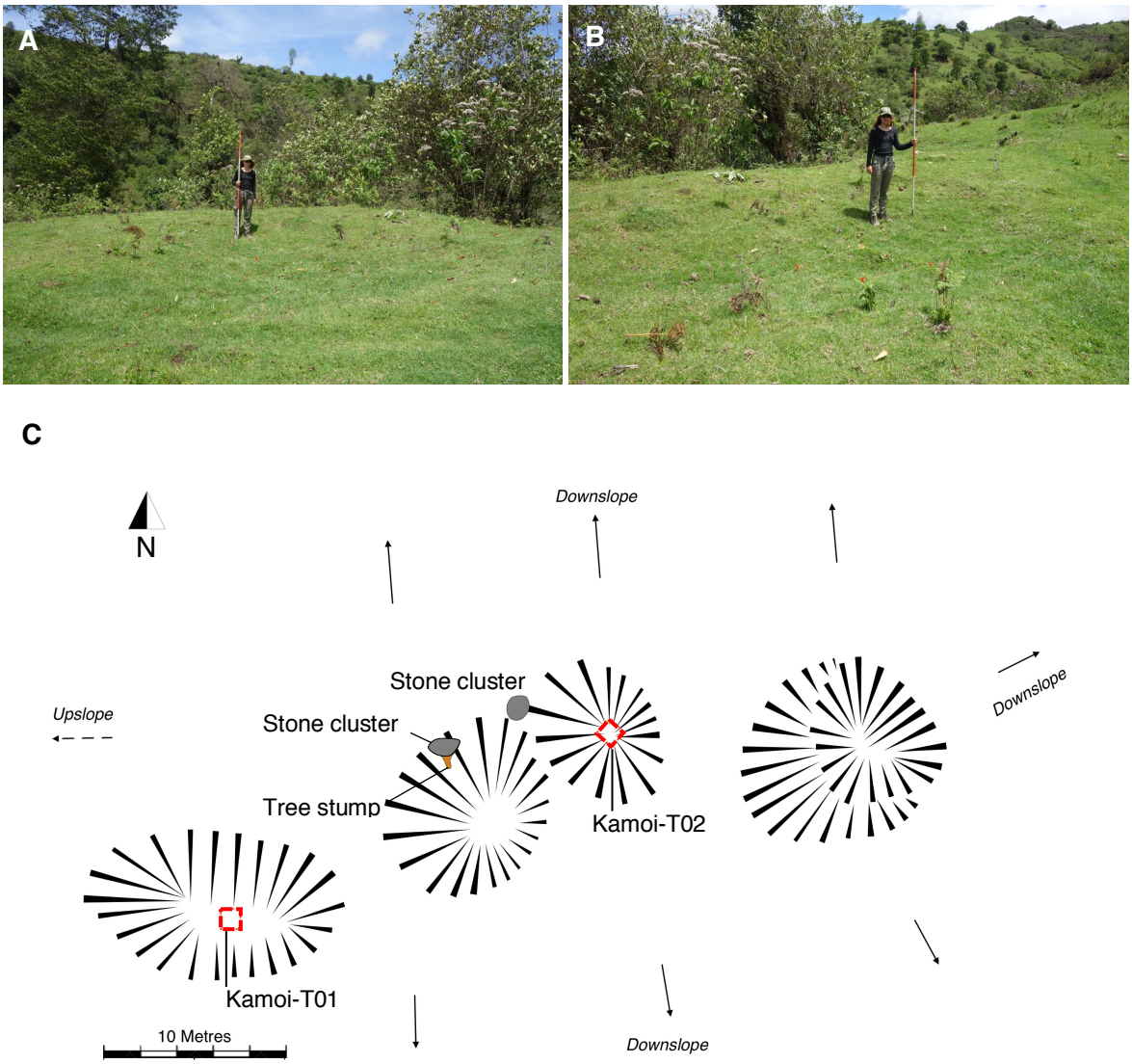

Figure 3: A.) Depression where Kamoi-T01 was placed; B.) Depression where Kamoi-T02 was placed; C.) Diagram of all four depressions at EMB-17 Kamoi.

Kamoi-T01

This trench was located in one of the depressions of EMB-17 Kamoi. The 1 x 1 metre test pit had five contexts:

Context 008

Basic description: Dark brown top soil below the turf
Adjacent contexts: 009 below
Boundary type(s): Diffuse
Coarse material: Occasional sub-rounded gravel
Coarse/fine ratio: 80% fine

Percentage clay: 20%
Colour: Dark Brown
Ped shapes and aggregates: Apedal
Finds: None

Context 009

Basic description: Mottled light and dark brown layer under top soil
Adjacent contexts: 008 above; 010, 011 below
Boundary type(s): With 010 diffuse, all others defined
Coarse material: Gravels and pebbles sub-angular to sub-round
Coarse/fine ratio: 70% fine
Percentage clay: 20%
Colour: Mainly dark brown with lighter and darker patches
Ped shapes and aggregates: Apedal
Finds: One piece of pottery was found that appeared to be a part of a jar handle

Context 010

Basic description: Lighter orangey brown layer
Adjacent contexts: 009, 011 above; 012 below.
Boundary type(s): All defined
Coarse material: Occasional sub-rounded pebbles
Coarse/fine ratio: 90% fine
Percentage clay: 30% - 40%
Colour: Orangey brown
Ped shapes and aggregates: Apedal
Finds: None

Context 011

Basic description: Very dark brown root stain
Adjacent contexts: 009 above; 010 below
Boundary type(s): Defined
Coarse material: None
Coarse/fine ratio: 95% fine
Percentage clay: 20%
Colour: Very Dark brown/blackish
Ped shapes and aggregates: Apedal
Finds: None

Context 012

Basic description: A natural weathered saprolite bedrock of gneiss with bands of quartz. Adjacent contexts: 010 above
Boundary type(s): Defined
Coarse material: N/A
Coarse/fine ratio: N/A
Percentage clay: N/A
Colour: N/A
Ped shapes and aggregates: N/A
Finds: N/A

Context 012 was reached at a depth of 75cm below datum in the centre of the test pit.

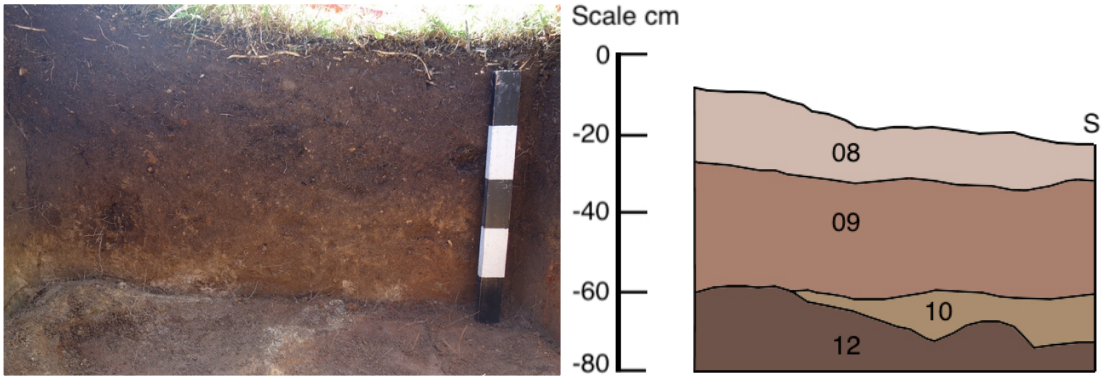

Figure 4: Profile of South wall in Kamoi-T01

Kamoi-T02

This 1 x 1 metre test pit was placed in a separate depression to *Kamoi-T01* and contained only two contexts:

Context 013

Basic description: Dark brown top soil below the turf
Adjacent contexts: 014 below
Boundary type(s): Defined
Coarse material: Occasional sub-rounded gravel, few pebbles at bottom
Coarse/fine ratio: 80% fine
Percentage clay: 20%
Colour: Dark brown
Ped shapes and aggregates: Apedal
Finds: None

Context 014

Basic description: A natural weathered saprolite bedrock of gneiss with bands of quartz. Adjacent contexts: 013 above
Boundary type(s): Defined
Coarse material: N/A
Coarse/fine ratio: N/A
Percentage clay: N/A
Colour: N/A
Ped shapes and aggregates: N/A
Finds: N/A

Context 014 was reached at a depth of 50cm below datum in the centre of the test pit

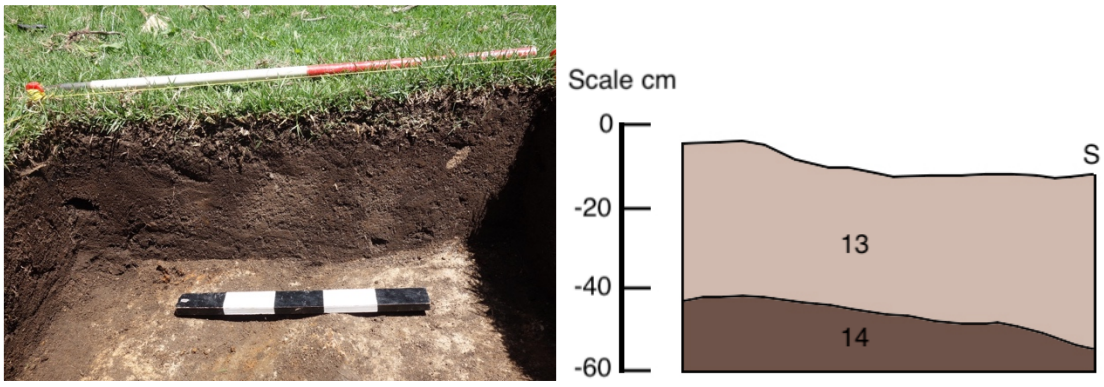

Figure 8: Profiles of south wall in Kamoi-T02

EMB-17 Lomoi

EMB-17 Lomoi is a cluster of five depressions located on the lower slopes of the area belonging to Kalomoitany (1°10'41" N, 35°34'2" E). The depressions are situated on a small plateau close to the river (Figure 4). The test pits were placed in the depression furthest to the south, which according to elders has never been cultivated.

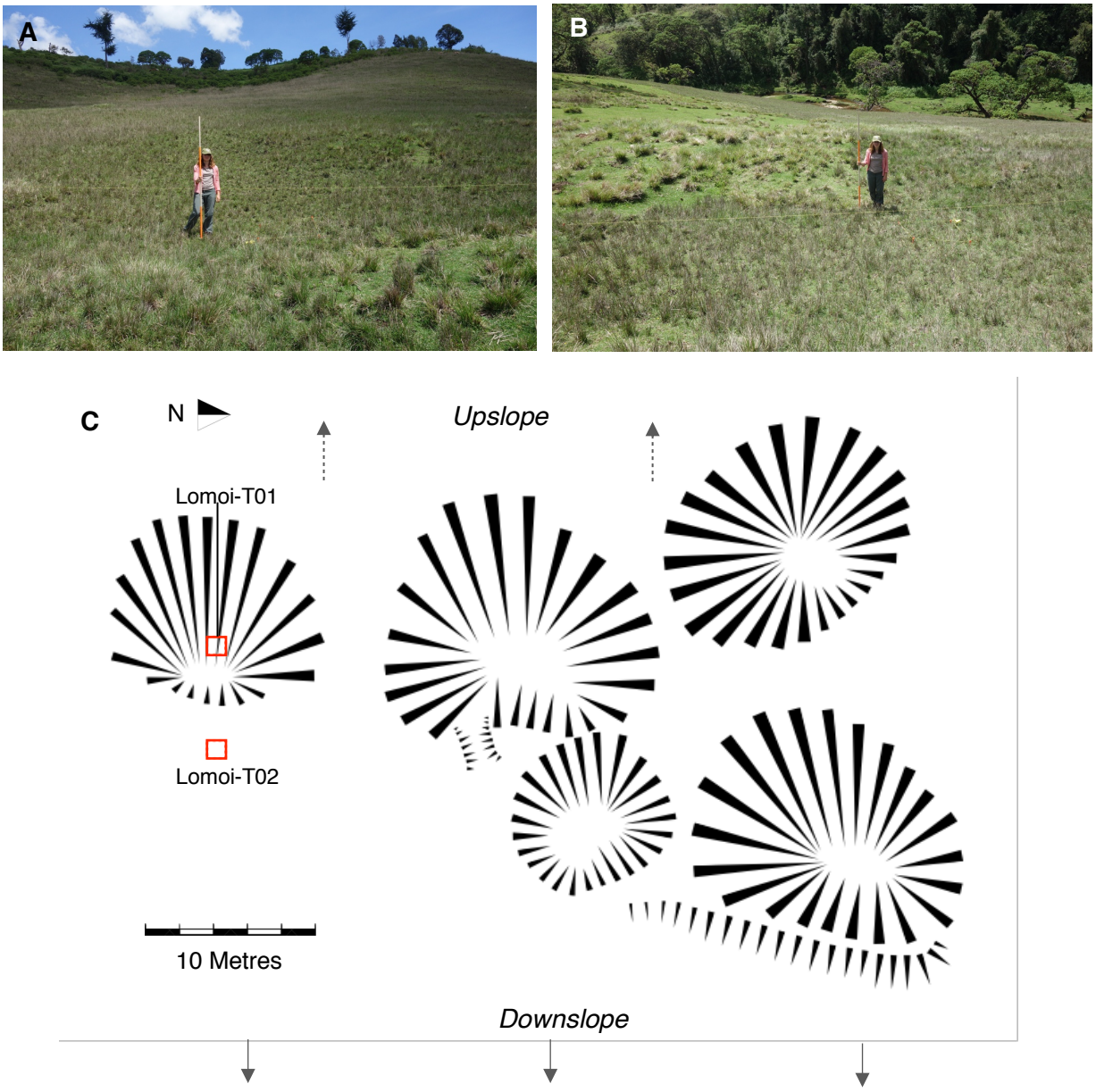

Figure 4: A.); Excavated depression facing upslope; B.) Excavated depression facing downslope; C.) Diagram of five depressions at EMB-17 Lomoi.

Lomoi-T01

This 1 x 1 metre test pit was placed in a single depression, which was surveyed alongside four others nearby. This test pit contained three contexts:

Context 015

Basic description: Brown top soil below the turf
Adjacent contexts: 016 below
Boundary type(s): Diffuse
Coarse material: Occasional sub-rounded gravel
Coarse/fine ratio: 80% fine
Percentage clay: 20%
Colour: Medium to dark brown
Ped shapes and aggregates: Apedal
Finds: None

Context 016

Basic description: A more compact layer of dark brown top soil below 015
Adjacent contexts: 015 above; 017 below
Boundary type(s): All diffuse
Coarse material: Occasional sub-rounded gravel
Coarse/fine ratio: 80% fine
Percentage clay: 30%
Colour: Dark brown
Ped shapes and aggregates: Apedal
Finds: One fragment of bone and one undiagnostic sherd of pottery

Context 017

Basic description: Orangey brown clay layer
Adjacent contexts: 016 above; N/A below as trench was finished mid-context
Boundary type(s): Diffuse
Coarse material: Flecks of sand and charcoal
Coarse/fine ratio: 90% fine
Percentage clay: 80%
Colour: Orangey brown
Ped shapes and aggregates: Apedal
Finds: None

A depth of 71cm below datum was reached in the centre of the test pit before excavation was stopped as it was sterile and no additional significant features were found. Four sediment samples were taken from the section for micromorphological analysis (see below)

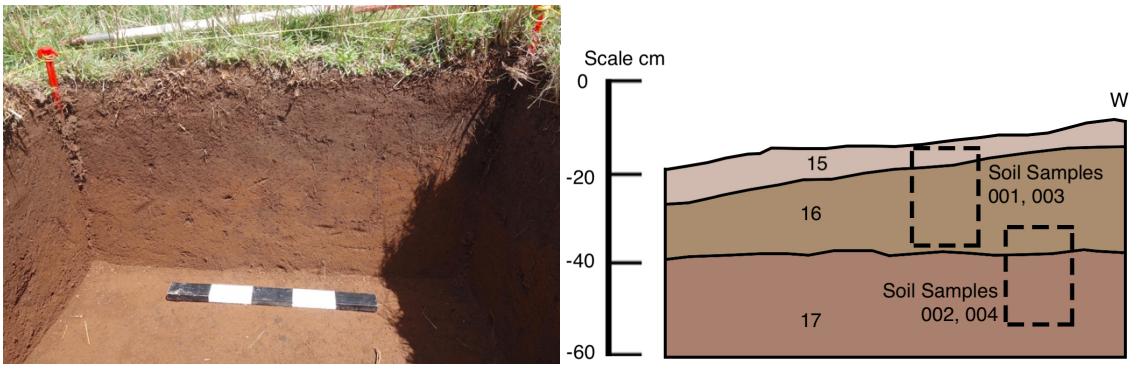

Figure 9: Profile of western wall from Lomoi-T01

Lomoi-T02

This 1 x 1 metre test pit was placed outside of the single depression that Lomoi-T01 was placed within, in order to see if there were any deposits downslope. This test pit had two contexts:

Context 018

Basic description: Brown top soil below the turf
Adjacent contexts: 019 below
Boundary type(s): Diffuse
Coarse material: Occasional sub-rounded gravel
Coarse/fine ratio: 80% fine
Percentage clay: 20%
Colour: Dark brown
Ped shapes and aggregates: Apedal
Finds: None

Context 019

Basic description: Mottled brown layer with patches of weathered ochre
Adjacent contexts: 018 above; N/A below as trench was finished mid-context
Boundary type(s): Diffuse
Coarse material: Occasional sub-rounded gravel
Coarse/fine ratio: 80% fine
Percentage clay: 20%
Colour: Dark brown
Ped shapes and aggregates: Apedal
Finds: None

Context 019 was excavated to a depth of 72cm below datum before being half-sectioned, with the western half being dug to a depth of 112cm below datum within the same context. Excavation was stopped mid-context due to the depth reached. The clay context from *Lomoi-T01* was not encountered. No additional significant features were found. Six sediment samples were taken for micromorphological analysis (see 4.4 Sediment Samples).



Figure 10: Profile of western wall from Lomoi-T02

Finds

Find 001: One cow tooth was found in context 002 of *EMB-17 Saniak-T01* (Figure 5a).

Find 002: One piece of pottery was found in context 009 of *EMB-17 Kamoi-T01.* The fragment appeared to be a part of a jar handle (Figure 5b).

Find 003: One fragment of bone of was found in context 016 of *EMB-17 Lomoi-T01* (Figure 5c).

Find 004: One undiagnostic piece of pottery was found in context 016 of *EMB-17 Lomoi-T01*.

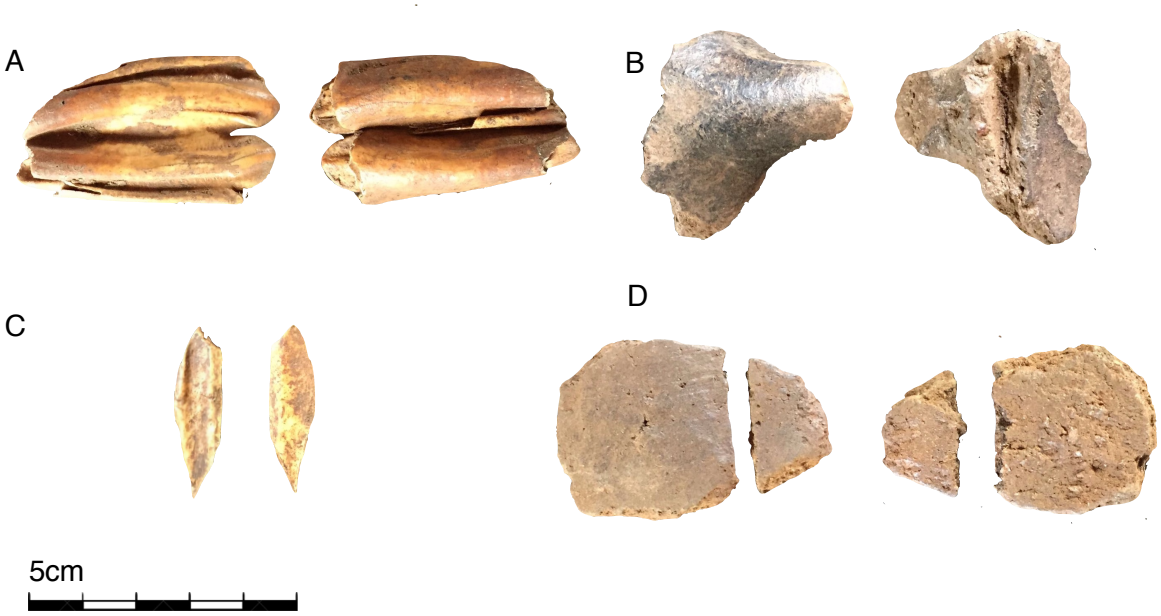

Figure 5: Artefacts found in excavations. A.) Cow tooth; B.) Pottery fragment; C.) Bone fragment; D.) Pottery fragment.

Sediment Samples

Sediment blocks for micromorphological microscopy analysis and matching small bulk samples for geo-chemical analyses were taken by David K. Kay from the EMB-17 Lomoi site. Sample numbers 001, 002, 003 and 004 were taken from the west section of Lomoi-T01. Sample numbers 005, 006, 007, 008, 009 and 010 were taken from the east section of Lomoi-T02. These samples will undergo preparation and analysis in the McBurney Laboratory for Geo-Archaeology in the Division of Archeology, University of Cambridge, U.K. The purpose of these analyses is to attempt to elucidate the microscopic structural traces of possible construction and post-depositional processes at EMB 17 Lomoi. This analysis will be conducted as part of David K. Kay's wider geo-archaeological investigations in Embobut Ward, Elgeyo Marakwet County (ref. NMK/ESC/ACL/k/VOL.1), and a specialist report will be forthcoming when the analysis is completed.

Conclusions

The excavations in Koropkwen were a relative success, although few interpretations can be drawn about the nature of the depressions due to the scarcity of artefacts found. The most significant observation comes from the tests pits at EMB-17 Lomoi where the difference between the contexts of Lomoi-T01 and Lomoi-T02 could shed light on the nature of its construction. As the compact clay context of Lomoi-T01 was not encountered in Lomoi-T02, it is possible that the depression was formed by hollowing out the side of the hill and dumping the material downslope thus forming the deposition of the deep brown context encountered in Lomoi-T02.

The scarcity of artefacts found could be due to the fact that, whilst we were informed otherwise, cultivation may have taken place over the areas excavated, and thus any artefact-containing deposits could have been disturbed or entirely removed. In order to further our understanding of these sites, and ascertain if they are related to the Sirikwa archaeological tradition, more research is needed with more extensive excavations undertaken on other depression clusters that remain less disturbed.