

BRIEF HISTORY OF MKOMAZI GAME RESERVE

Part 1 :- Pre- 1969

Throughout this paper, Mkomazi Game Reserve (MGR) means that area which is covered by the original reserve gazetted in 1951, less the border areas excised by the Government. Confusion has arisen because at the time of regionalisation, this reserve, which lies in two districts, was divided into two reserves 1) the Mkomazi (in Upare or Same District) 2) the Uмба (in Usambara or Lushoto District).

This history is compiled from Government records, David Anstey's personal records and Hezekiah Mungure's notes and records.

In 1916, during the withdrawal of German authority in Tanzania, a group of the Maasai Kisongo clan, resident around Losogonoi, had fought a group of the Kwavi clan in the lower Kitwai *mbuga*.¹ This is in southern Maasai District². The reason was use of grazing in the area. As a result, the group of Kwavi moved from the Kitwai/Saunyi area towards the Usambara Mountains. In the 1920's, this small group of Kwavi made an arrangement with the Sambaa chief (or Jumbe³) to come into the area at the foothills of the north west Usambara Mountains, where they had some connections in the past. This is roughly the Mnazi / Lelwa area, outside the reserve. The Jumbe told David Anstey that this was during the year 1926. Anstey recorded this in his diary.

By the late 1940's (circa 1948), the Maasai had over-grazed and degraded the Ruvu Game Reserve (gazetted in 1904 by the German administration). This lies on the western borders of Upare (Same) District along the Ruvu River and adjacent to Maasai District. It had become unsuitable as a sample of that type of biodiversity due to the high numbers of cattle degrading the vegetation. More Maasai were moving out of Maasai District into the lowlands on the *western side* of the Upare and Usambara Districts. (Note: the Mkomazi Game Reserve lies on the *north eastern side* of the Pare/Usambara mountain chain). More Maasai were approaching the Upare and Usambara Mountains and were causing problems associated with the impact of heavy grazing pressure. The Upare and Usambara African District Councils were concerned with this trend.⁴ It was likely to deny hitherto little used lowland grazing land in this segment of the two districts to the Wapare and Wasambaa. They were being encouraged to bring their livestock from the overgrazed hill areas. As part of this encouragement, the Government had already organised anti-malarial schemes to make the lowland villages more attractive to these highlanders who were more susceptible to malaria. This scheme was carried out by Dr Draper.

Even before this, the District Commissioners of Upare and Usambaa Districts had been aware of the problems this outward movement of Maasai from

¹ Mbuga : Kiswahili for grassland drainage line

² Masai District or Maasailand had been set aside for the Maasai by the early administrations as it was realised that these pastoralists were liable to lose their vital dry season grazing core areas to agriculturalists if the core areas were not preserved.

³ Jumbe : Kiswahili for sub chief or village headman

⁴ Anstey. Pers comm.

Maasai District posed to their already heavily populated districts. The District Commissioners had made administrative orders that Maasai would not cross the Tanga / Moshi railway line.⁵

The African District Councils said that as a 'quid pro quo' for the degazettement of the Ruvu Game Reserve for livestock grazing purposes for the Maasai (thereby keeping most of them west of the Tanga / Moshi railway line), the area along the Kenya / Tanganyika border would be set aside as an alternative, as it was not permanently inhabited. The interest in the gazettement of MGR had therefore come from the African District Councils, probably more to help them solve their problems with Maasai than wildlife conservation, but it does indicate that they had no animosity against setting aside this area as a game reserve.

The procedure under the Land Acts of the time was for :

- a) The African District Councils to consider any alienation of land
- b) The African District Councils would put their suggestions to the District Commissioners who were the representatives of the central administration
- c) The District Commissioners would pass on these recommendations to the Provincial Commissioners
- d) The Provincial Commissioners would pass these onto the Minister

The Tax Collection records at the African District Councils (ADCs) did not list any persons in the area proposed for the reserve. The ADCs provided a statement to that effect to the District Commissioners. After an extended investigation by Mr G Swynnerton of the Game Department HQ, the proposal was sent to Government at Dar es Salaam. The reserve was included in the Flora and Fauna Conservation Ordinance which was published in 1951.

The Usamabara District section of the reserve was already a game controlled area. Because of the permanent Uмба River, it had a dry season water supply. The presence of tsetse fly both along the Uмба and at the base of the Usambara Mountains from the Mwakijembe / Diluni road to Kamba made that area unsuitable for livestock. The Kwavi, Sambaa, Arab, etc. cattle were in the Mnazi Lelwa area to Mabili Usambaa Hill and outside the reserve. They were of low density.

After two years of negotiations, the ADCs and the two District Commissioners, Mr Thorne and Mr Smithyman, certified that according to their tax records there were none of their taxpayers living in the area proposed and they were agreeable for the land to be made into a game reserve, provided the Ruvu Game Reserve was degazetted.

In 1951, David Anstey arrived to take the position of Game Ranger. During 1952/53/54/55, he undertook extensive safaris to check the accuracy of the African District Councils' and tax collectors' statements that there were no tax payers living in the reserve.

Anstey undertook safaris to the villages on the eastern/northern side of the north Pare Mountains. There he found that cattle owned by Wapares of the northern hills at Kwakoa, and adjacent villages at the base of the north Pare

⁵ Same District Book and Anstey pers comm.

Mountains, depended on water originating there. He also found some Maasai in this area. At the request of these Wapare, Government built two concrete water tanks some miles out from the mountains to extend their dry season grazing range. The siting of the tanks was such that a distance of 10 miles or so was left unused before the Ndea section of the reserve boundary. At Maji Kununua Mountain in the central Pares, he found two Chagga families, the wives of whom wanted to move to the north Pare Mountains outside the reserve, and asked Anstey's assistance. On the Same / Kisiwani road beyond Kampi ya Simba, there was dense elephant dry habitat. Kisiwani village had no direct contact with the reserve boundary (there was bush between the village borders and the reserve) and the sisal estate provided a trouble free boundary. In the Tussa Mountains, he found the evidence of some huts (two or three) which his Kamba guide told him had been of two men who had been suspected of antisocial activities and sent away from their villages. His guide had previously been their guide in unlicensed elephant hunting during the 1940's. Before the reserve was gazetted, the men had left and returned to their villages. One man was still alive and lived up above Gonja in the hills.

Further along the boundary southward, Anstey found a detribalised group who were engaged in salt production and were herders for Wapare cattle owners who lived in the hills. Many of them were itinerant workers, hence the absence of any tax tickets. Anstey excised this area (approx 89 square miles) from the reserve boundary in 1957, and cut a 15 yard wide swath for the revised boundary so that these people would have sufficient area outside the reserve for salt production and grazing. Anstey called the area Kalimawe. It stretched upstream towards Gonja Maore.

In the Usambara District area of the reserve there were no persons permanently resident in the reserve area. There was the small group of Kwavi living at sites at the northern end of the Usambara Mountains. Some of the Kwavi used to graze along a series of grass plains, in an area which was inside the new reserve, out to the Kenya border. This grazing took place during the the 4/5 months of the year when there was seasonal water at the border area. The largest water hole was Katamboi which held water for 3 / 4 months. Katamboi was found later by David Anstey to be some miles into Kenya and within the borders of the Tsavo National Park. When Katamboi dried up, these Kwavi grazed back to the Uмба River. They seemed to do no damage to the grazing capability and were an isolated example of ecologically sound land-use in semi-arid areas. The original records of this group of Kwavi found there in 1952 have not been found, but references have been found⁶ showing there were 69 people in all (including men, women and children) and about 3,000 cattle. It was agreed that they should continue their grazing pattern as they did no damage to wildlife. Anstey did not give them documents establishing right of occupancy to land in a game reserve.

At Mwakijembe outside the reserve in Tanga District, there were some Wakamba, led by a notorious elephant hunter called Jumbe Mohamed, who killed elephants illegally around Kilimangombe/Ngarevi (in the reserve) and also in Kenya.

⁶ TNA File Ascension re: 481 Series

In the 1950's there was a Maasai Range Development Project in Maasai District, whose purpose was to build on the pastoralist expertise in arid area cattle management and induce changes in the traditional way of life towards a more modern utilisation combined with sustainable development. Although the Project was approved by the Maasai Council, more conservative Maasai tended to adhere to their traditional individual freedom of action. This caused some of the Maasai to come out of their District and move towards Upare District. This was in contravention of the administrative ruling that the Maasai remain west of the Tanga /Moshi railway line. However, the Maasai moved into Upare District and the area subsequently attracted many other Maasai until it had become overgrazed. They then moved into the Lake Jipe area⁷ and increased in number of both people and cattle beyond the carrying capacity of the land. They then moved along the Kenya / Tanganyika border (on the Kenya side) towards the Katamboi waterhole, which was being used by the Kwavi (abovementioned). The Kwavi sent news that their grazing was being ruined.⁸ The situation was considered at a Tanganyika / Kenya meeting and it was agreed that these Maasai were to go back to Toloha and to their original areas west of the railway.⁹

The Usambara lowlands were not overgrazed until the invasion in the 1950's and 60's by the non-Kwavi clans of Maasai. These men originated in the Ruvu area and had migrated via Kilometa-Upare to Ngulu Gap-Upare, to Toloha-Upare, and subsequently to the Kwavi grazing areas near Mnazi-Usambara. This invasion upset the whole ecology and sustainable capacity of the grazing areas outside the reserve. It caused a chain reaction of land degradation, which has affected not only the natural resource bank in the reserve, but also the collapse of the intentions for the planned utilisation of the lowland areas by Wapare and Wasambaa livestock from the overgrazed hills (as abovementioned). This is the basic problem to this day.

After 1963, the Maasai were beginning to lose their dry season heartlands in Maasai District. This was because the Government abandoned the concept of reserving the District for pastoralist land use and gave out blocks of the best dry season grazing to agricultural farms. This caused large areas of poorer land to be over-utilised. The original constraints and control mechanisms ceased to apply and the area surrounding the Mkomazi Game Reserve was degraded by overgrazing. The immigration into the Kalimawe area caused difficulties in the 60's because it was seen that these grazing areas outside the reserve, planned for Wapare and Wasambaa stock, were being destroyed by up to 15 times stocking capacity by the Losogonoi / Toloha Maasai. See report of Robinette¹⁰.

In 1964, the Game Division began a research programme in the game reserve to establish base line data for conserving the area as a game reserve or national park and what management techniques would be needed to improve it. Harris wrote the preliminary report on this in 1967.¹¹

⁷ File Ascension 481/723/111. Same District book Stock Census Figures, Same District Team 20/8/87 re: Stock

⁸ Anstey pers comm.

⁹ WLS/XIII/1/65, 8/9/A/338

¹⁰ Appraisal of Range Conditions of Kalimawe Controlled Area. 5/4/1966 at P/Gam, 8/7/66, Agricultural Division, Arusha

¹¹ Harris. L. 1967. A Preliminary Report on an Ecological Survey of the Mkomazi Game Reserve.

In 1965, the Igoma area fringing the South Pare Mountains was removed from the reserve to provide more land for cropping and grazing. At the same time, a small area of land of the Pangaro Valley to the north west was added, which is important as a dry season game habitat.¹²

In 1965/66, the Game Division also sought objective scientific appraisal of the reserve to determine whether or not it should be abandoned to livestock grazing and cultivators, due to the political tensions arising from the grazing pressure outside the reserve. The appraisal was ordered by the Minister and was undertaken by the Ministry of Agricultural Research Unit, Tengeru. The leader was Dr G D Anderson. It included an appraisal of the present and potential land use. A copy of this report is available.¹³

The report was divided into three parts. Part One discussed the land use potential of the game reserve itself, while Part Two attempted to present the facts about the situation in the country surrounding it and discussed solutions to the problems. Part Three of the report gives recommendations as to what action was needed to safeguard the resources of the area for future generations.

The issues examined were twofold : a) whether or not the wildlife resources of the area were sufficient to justify the existence of the reserve ; b) whether the existence of the reserve was compatible with, or of equal or greater value to the nation than the other human interests in the area.

The following were studied:

Physiography, relief, drainage, geology, climate, rainfall, vegetation and soils, ecological units and vegetation / soil associations and water resources.

In relation to: Present use of the reserve and land use potential of the reserve (arable cropping, free range grazing and ranching).

The appraisal also included a discussion on agriculture and land use problems in the country surrounding the reserve, problems affecting the pressure for land, potential for increased food production, livestock numbers and pasture management and availability of grazing areas.

After the study and analysis of the above the author, among other recommendations, concluded and recommended that MGR should retain its present status as a game reserve (a natural resource biodiversity site), should retain its present boundaries, remain as one unit and should develop its potential for tourism and wildlife utilization.

The report recommended that the Maasai and their cattle should return to their former grazing land in Maasai District. It also recommended that the Wakwavi who had been allowed to continue their pre-1951 grazing patterns by David Anstey, in a restricted segment of the reserve to Katamboi waterhole, should be settled on organised 'ranches' in the pre-1916 home in Saunyi area of Handeni District, as soon as permanent water could be made

¹² Excisions and additions ref: Ordinance Amendments Cap 302

¹³ Anderson. G. D. 1967. Reconnaissance Survey of Mkomazi Game Reserve and an Appraisal of Factors Affecting Present and Potential Land Use Production in its Environs. Land Planning Team, Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

available there. The other recommendations and conclusions are detailed in the appraisal.

In 1968, in order to carry out the appraisal's recommendations to assist the Wakwavi to resettle in Saunyi, David Anstey undertook an elephant cull, from which there was a considerable financial return. The proceeds of this cull amounted to approximately 12,000 sterling and was deposited in the National Bank of Commerce in Arusha as a resettlement fund for the Wakwavi. The Wakwavi's senior men visited the Saunyi area and the Government agreed on a plan to solve any tsetse and water problems there. However this exercise did not take place, probably because of a loss of senior Government staff at this time and loss of control owing to decentralisation.

In 1968, a new list of persons claiming rights to graze was produced by the game warden Tanga. This 1968 list of people claiming to be original residents were not in accord with the original 1952/3 lists which had been made with the Wakwavi representatives. This list was not approved by Anstey in his capacity as Principal Game Warden Northern Tanzania, and the 1952 Wakwavi list remained the only valid list of persons allowed to enter the Usambaa section of the reserve for grazing.

After 1969, Government was unable to provide the supervisory services for managing the Mkomazi Game Reserve and the close administration of the reserve collapsed. The Civil Appeal Court judgement refers.¹⁴

¹⁴ Court of Appeal of Tanzania at Arusha. Civil Appeal No. 53 of 1998